



Puntland
Development &
Research Center

REPORT

**An assessment of Community Needs to
Inform the Design of Public Awareness
on State-building Issues in Puntland**

JULY, 2022

**AN ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY NEEDS TO
INFORM THE DESIGN OF PUBLIC AWARENESS
ON STATE-BUILDING ISSUES IN PUNTLAND**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2022, Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC) carried out a baseline assessment of community needs for public awareness and civic education on state-building in Puntland State. The assessment aimed to identify gaps in public knowledge and understanding on the current state-building processes to inform the design and delivery of effective, locally responsive and sustainable public awareness and civic education interventions.

Community engagement and participation in social and political dialogue are important conduits for empowering communities to share their perspectives, experiences and expectations which potentially promote inclusive politics and local ownership. Public involvement is vital for building peaceful, rule-based institutions and gives greater legitimacy to policy and decision-making processes and outcomes.

This report draws on data collected and analyzed from surveys, interviews and focus groups discussions with a total of 384 participants in six districts of five regions in Puntland State namely Garowe, Galkacyo, Jariban, Dhahar, Ufeyn and Bocame. The findings and recommendations of this assessment form the evidence base for a more holistic and participatory planning and implementation of Talo-wadaag II program interventions to achieve greater citizens engagement on governance issues, accountability and understanding rights and responsibilities relative to state and local governance.

Key Findings

- Fifty-five per cent of the respondents were unaware of the purpose and function of the government while 29% responded that they were aware.
- Fifty-three per cent of the respondents did not participate in local government.
- Sixty-seven per cent of the respondents identified the importance of inclusion and participation of women, youth, and minority in state-building process
- The majority of the responders stated radio/TVs, social media and public gathering were the best communication channels to use for awareness raising and civic education
- Fifty-four per cent of the respondents mentioned lack of civic education and awareness were the biggest challenges to greater citizens engagement in governance

- 57% percent of the respondents in five districts were unaware of the stages and processes antecedent of local government elections compared to 78% percent in Ufeyn district where early local government election took place in October 2021.
- The political program, personal standing or quality of the candidate and political association were the highest electability criteria for most of the while the clan affiliation was the least.

BACKGROUND

State building is defined as the construction of legitimate governmental institutions in countries emerging from conflicts (Paris & Sisk, 2009). Additionally, state building is a purposive action to develop the capacity, institutions and legitimacy of the state in related to effective and inclusive political process (OECD, 2008). This definition takes into account both the state's institutions and the people who give these institutions the authority and legitimacy to govern. Somalia has previously experienced a governance system characterized by highly centralized system with low level of public participation in decision-making processes. Following independence from colonial rule in 1960, a brief period of democratic rule was followed by the establishment of a military dictatorship, Siyad Barre's regime, that lasted for 20 years until the outbreak of the civil war in 1991. As a result, Somali people have little experience of public ownership and participation in governance affairs whether on a central or local level.

In 1998, the Puntland State of Somalia was established with a vision of bottom-up approach to state-building to bring government services closer to the citizens through a decentralized system of governance and preserving the unity of Somali people at the national level. The first step to realize the decentralization system was taken in 2003 when local government law 'Law No.7' was adopted. Since the Law was passed, numerous milestones have been achieved including the establishment of the decentralization champion office, and Puntland decentralization policy (PDRC, 2022). The relative peace and stability in Puntland and the peaceful indirect elections and transfer of power in the last two decades coupled with the increased awareness and engagement of civil society have created the conditions and demand for democratic governance system that we see in Puntland today. The current Puntland administration, fulfilling the president's campaign pledges, moved the democratization process in Puntland forward in a historic early local council election in three districts where the people voted and elected local councils.

Despite those milestones, majority of the people in Puntland are not involved in state building processes such as the democratization, peacebuilding and government accountability. Many people are not aware of the key issues about the democratization process in Puntland such as the timing of upcoming local elections, the electoral model, political associations and election financing. This is due to low level of public awareness in governance processes caused by lack of state policies and strategies fostering civic engagement and education. Citizen awareness and engagement in governance processes

engenders a sense of belonging and ownership of the governance process. Inclusivity and strong relationship between the state and society pave peace infrastructures that allow credible and legitimate elections to take place.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The baseline study was designed with the objectives to form an initial understanding of the Talo-wadaag II project's context in Puntland and to establish benchmarks in which progress against targets can be traced over time. The study also seeks to identify gaps in public understanding on current state-building process to inform the design and delivery of the planned public awareness and civic education interventions to ensure maximum resonance with the local audiences.

Scope of the study

The study was intended to assess the public awareness needs of the community, to inform public needs of the community in state building issues. The study was carried out in six districts in Puntland namely Garowe, Galkacyo, Jariban, Dhahar, Ufeyn and Bocame in July 2022. These districts geographically represent the original five regions that Puntland was formed. Garowe and Galkacyo were added because they are populated towns where relevant information could be found.

Methodology

The study employed mixed methods approach. Survey questionnaire was used with a total of 384 people supplemented with five focus group discussions (FGDs) of a total of 30 people

Questionnaire

A close-ended questionnaire featuring a series of responses in a Linkert scale was designed to collect information from participants about their awareness and understanding of the ongoing public awareness and civic education.

Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions were conducted to complement the survey questionnaires by providing more in-depth qualitative data collection and analysis of the level of public awareness and engagement on democratization processes in Puntland State. A total of 5 focus group discussions were conducted; one FGD in each district. The FGDs focused on different groups of the society such as women, elders, minority groups and people with disabilities.

Study Sample

Since the population of the study areas was not known, the formula for identifying samples from the unknown population was adopted. The sample had a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error as expressed below.

$$S = (Z \text{ score})^2 * P * (1 - P) / e^2$$

$$S = (1.96)^2 * 0.5(1 - 0.5) / (0.05)^2$$

$$S = 3.8416 * 0.25 / 0.0025$$

$$S = 384$$

Table 1, Study Locations of Respondents, n=384

Location	Sample
Garowe	90
Galkacyo	90
Jariban	51
Became	51
Dhahar	51
Ufeyn	51
Total	384

Analysis

Ms Excel was used to analyze the quantitative data collected from the field. In addition, the qualitative data was transcribed, and content analyzed.

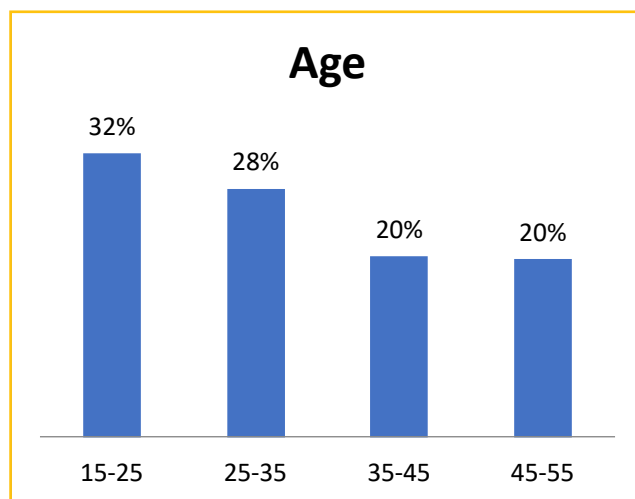
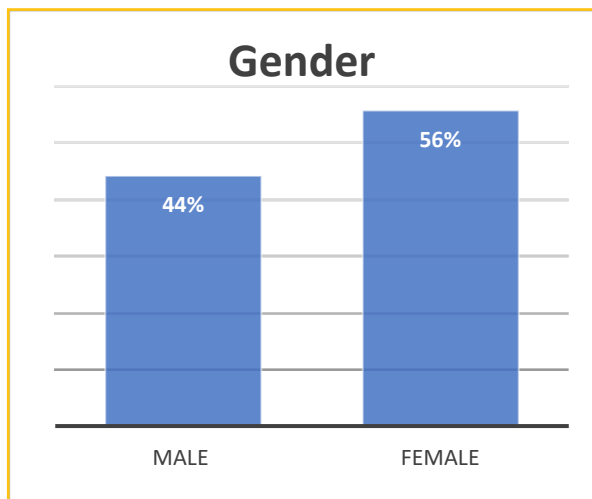
Assessment limitations

- Although greater care was given to ensure the reliability of the study, the study had certain limitations. The most challenging limitation was related to time. To study the public perception of large community required a lot of time. The study data collection was carried in one month; July in 2022.
- The issue of state building is complex. People's limited understanding of the concept itself was a problem. It forced the enumerators to give additional explanations about the concept and what it means in the investigation of this study. This misconception or lack of understanding of some respondents might have an impact on the study
- The literature on public awareness on state building issues in Somalia are limited which resulted in the absence of comparators with the study findings.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Profile of the respondents

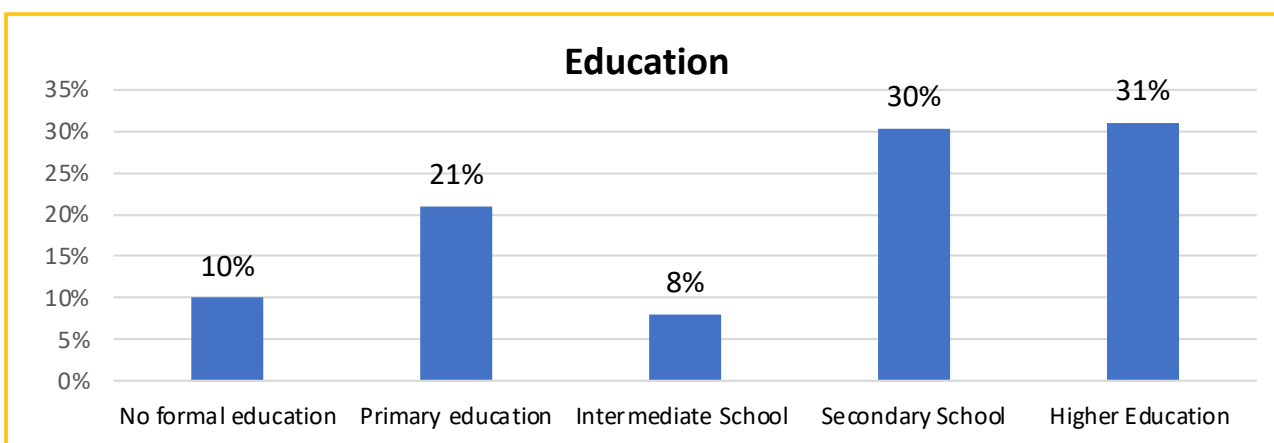
Gender and Age distribution of Respondents



Of the 384 respondents studied, 56% were female and 44% were male, a gender ratio which fairly represents the populations in these districts. Women are housekeepers who mainly do not get the chance to participate in the issues affecting the community.

As illustrated in figure 1, the 15-25 years age group is the largest respondent age category in the study, followed by the 25-35 age group, whilst 20% of the respondents were in the age groups of 35-45 and 45-55 respectively. This correlates with the available data that youth are the majority in the country, according to the UNFPA survey in 2014, youth constitute more than 75% of the Somali population.

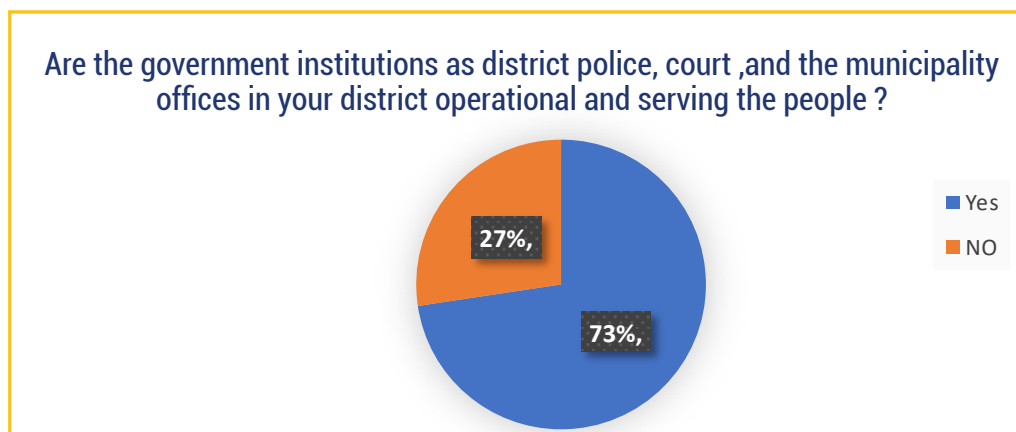
Education level



In relation to the educational attainment of the respondents, it was observed that 90% of the respondents had an educational background. Around 31% had achieved higher education, whilst 30% have secondary school. Also, 21% noted that they attained primary education,

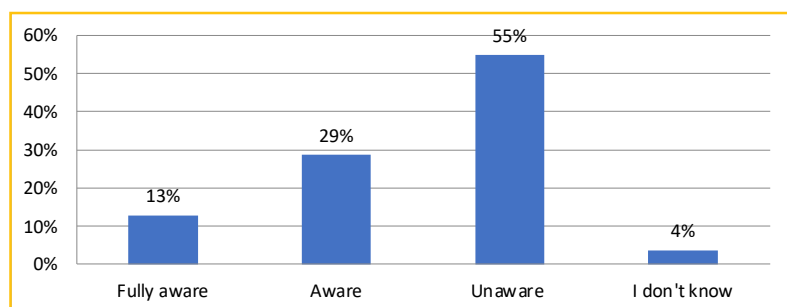
8% attained intermediate school and only 10% had no formal education. The data suggests that a significant number of the respondents were highly educated people. This number could have been skewed by the places where the data were collected, namely large towns of Garowe and Galkacyo. Regarding the occupation status of the respondents, the survey revealed that 44% of the respondents were unemployed whilst 40% of the respondents are self-employed, the remaining 16% are formally working for either the government or NGOs.

Operational level of government institutions



To determine the extent to which government institutions were operating and serving for the people, this study revealed that 73% of the respondents stated that government institutions were working whilst 27% said “No”. However, when a comparison was made between big districts and small districts, the data showed big variation. 77% of the respondent in Bocame district held that government offices were not operating while 33% said they were working. On the other hand, 53% and 57% of the respondents in Jariban and Dhahar respectively reported that work was going on in government institutions. While the differences could be attributed to the level of presence and service delivery of government institutions in a given areas, it also points to the low level of knowledge and awareness among the citizen about their government, which is an important factor in the lack of accountability and transparency in Puntland State. For the past several years, civil society organizations such as PDRC conducted a wider civic education intended to educate the people about the functions and powers of the government and their rights and responsibilities of citizens.

Community awareness on the purpose and functions of the government

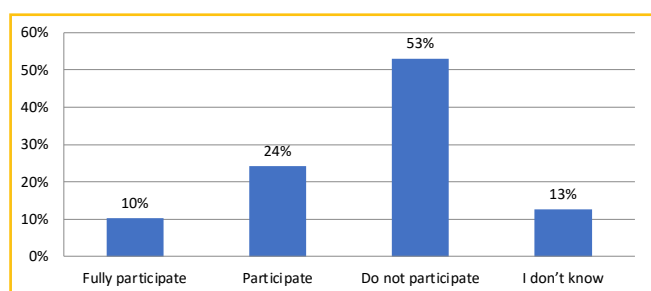


In your opinion, does your community have knowledge/ awareness on the purpose and functions of the government?

Regarding the level of community awareness on the purpose and functions of the government, the survey revealed that majority of the respondents do not think that their communities know the purpose and the functions of the government. 55% responded that community is ignorant on the functions of the government, 29% have some awareness while 13% answered fully aware, small number of 4% answered "I don't know". The study further inquired the respondents which level of government the people have more awareness. According to the finding of the study, majority of the participants were more informed on the roles and responsibilities of the local governments. However, only few could distinguish between the roles of local governments, state, and federal government. Only very few had even knowledge on the functions of the state government. One of the participants said; "People know what the functions of local government are, but we are ignorant of the role of the central government, the state and the federal government"

The familiarity of citizens on the role of the local government could be attributed to the civic education programs that were implemented over the past few years by civil society organizations to raise the civic knowledge of citizen's rights and responsibilities. When participants were asked if they could mention specific roles and responsibilities, about half of the participants listed the services such as social service provision, environmental development, housing, town planning and infrastructure development. All of these services were stipulated in the Puntland Local Government Act (Law No 7). Another important aspect is that there was no geographical difference between participants living in big districts and those in small districts except Dhahar district where many of the participants were unaware of the roles and responsibilities of the different levels of the government.

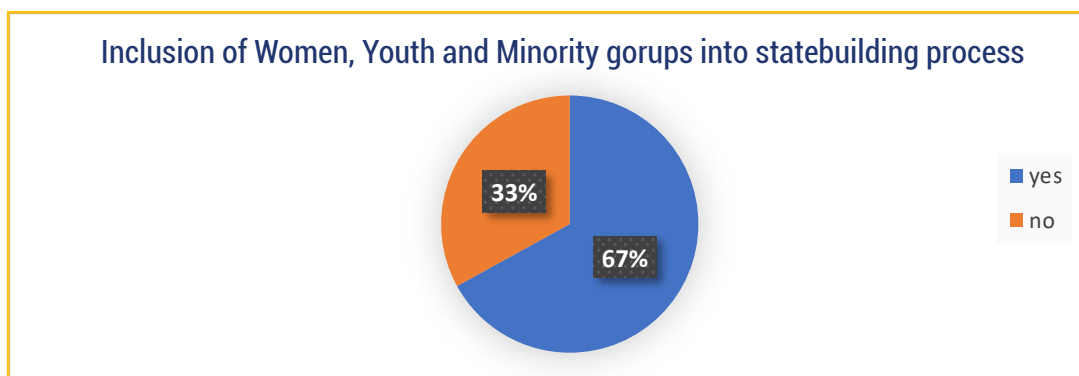
Community participation in Local governance



How does the community in your district participate in the local governance? (decision-making, planning, and implementation)

The study sought to assess the level of community participation in local governance and found that the participation of the community was very low with 53% reported they have not participated while 34% of the respondents either fully participated or participate the local governance of their respective districts. Thirteen percent did not know the issue

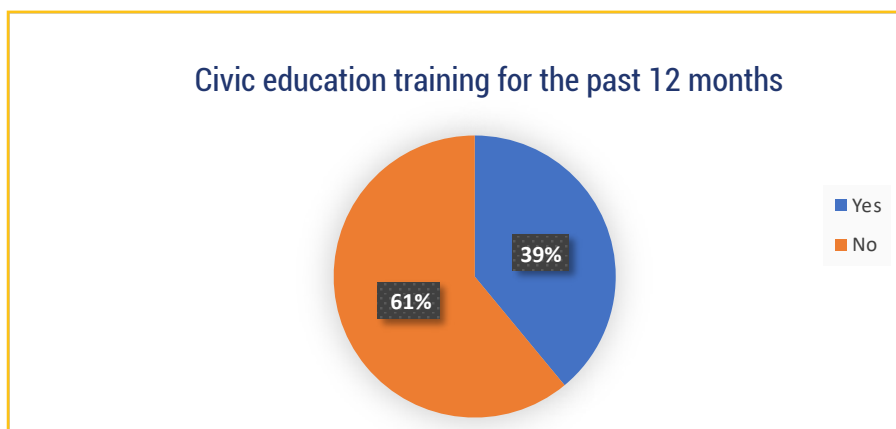
Inclusion of Women, Youth and Minority into state building process



Women constitute more than 50% of the population but experience low representation and participation in the decision-making processes. However, 67% of the respondents agreed the need to include women, youth and minority groups into the state building process while 33% of the respondents did not realize the need for inclusion of youth, women and minority groups. To ascertain how to empower and include youth, women and minority into the state building processes, the study inquired the respondents to suggest specific steps needed to enhance the awareness of women, youth, and minority groups on governance. According to the interviews with the respondents, the following were listed as key steps in the realization of these groups' participation in the governance

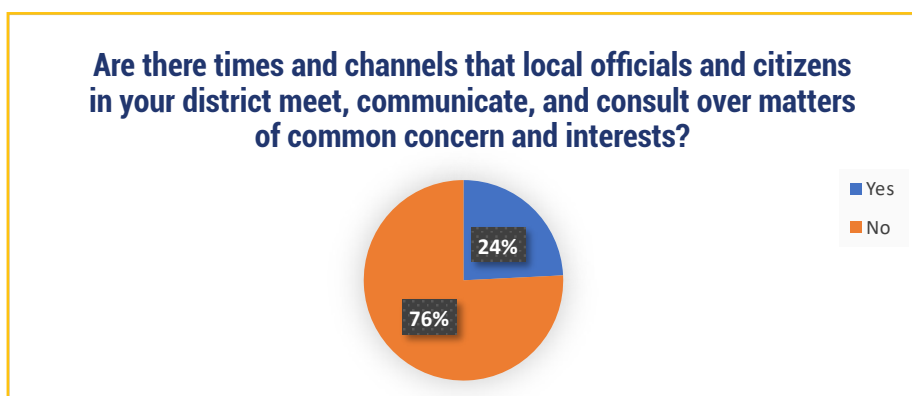
- The provision of education
- Capacity building training
- Economic and financial assistance
- Provision of life skills
- Including them into decision-making level of the government
- Regular meeting with women, youth and minority groups

Civic education training for the last 12 months



From above figure, 61% of the respondents have not received any training for the past 12 months. However, there was disparity among the districts in terms of civic education trainings they received. Eighty-two per cent of the respondents in Ufeyn district received civic education trainings on citizens' rights and responsibilities, sustainable development, and elections. The study further asked the participants to identify community civic education needs on governance issues. Majority of the respondents stated issues on promotion of local ownership trainings, civic education on citizens' rights and responsibilities, public accountability and transparency, elections and how the government works. The right to access information is enshrined in state and national laws and is an important pillar of good governance. Success depends on the provision of citizen preferences and needs on governance information. The second specific need was to enhance citizen rights and responsibilities. This is because where citizens do not know their rights, they cannot engage and discuss with the government about their needs. Other awareness needs that most of the participants mentioned include security, peacebuilding, taxation, social service delivery etc.

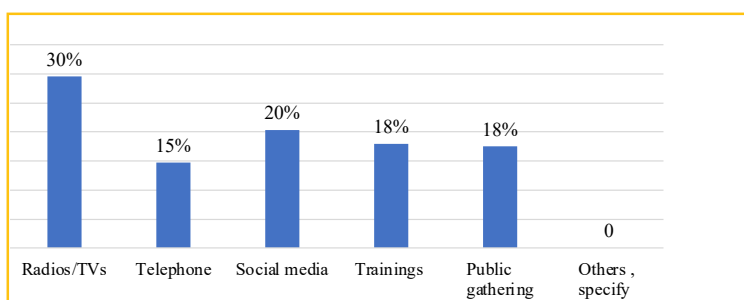
Channels of public communication



To ascertain factors that stymied citizens' engagement, the study sought to understand if there were available mechanism and methods for public communication in the targeted districts.

The study found out that there were no effective channels that local officials can meet with the people with 76% of the respondents reporting the lack of such platforms whilst 24% noted the existance of such channels.

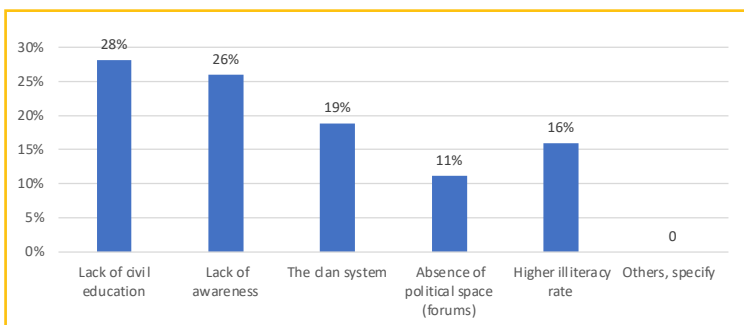
Preferred information sources and delivery channels



Which source of information or channels of communication do you / does your community rely on to get accurate information / communication / education?

Relating to the above question, the study further assessed the channels of communication that respondents relied on to get information. The study revealed that the radios/ TV is the main source of information in the surveyed districts with 30% responded respectively. Followed by social media, trainings and public gatherings with 20% and 18% of the respondents, whilst Telephone came fifth with 15% respectively. Somali people are traditionally oral society that communicate orally. As a result, they mainly rely on radios as their main source of information. In addition, the social media is becoming a popular source of information among young people.

Major challenges on citizen engagement in state building processes



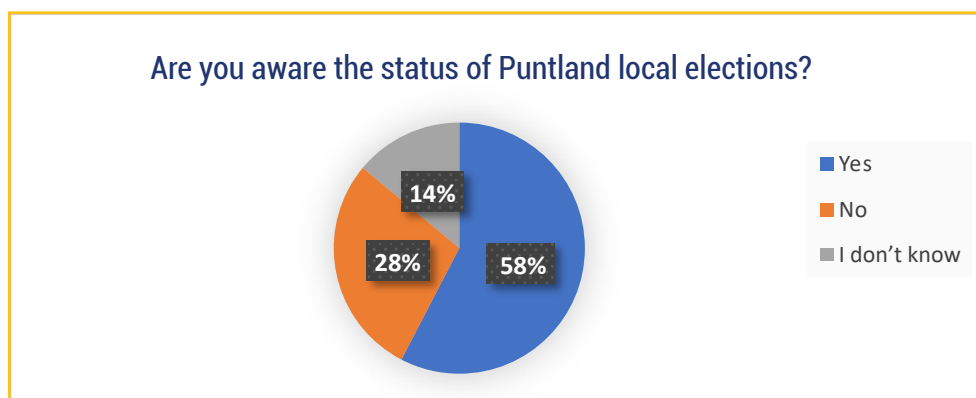
What do you think are the major challenges on citizens engagement, influence, and ownership of state building process?

As shown in the above figure, the respondents were asked to identify the main challenges on citizen engagement and ownership of the state building process. The major challenges identified include lack of civic education (28%), lack of awareness (26%), the clan system (19%), higher illiteracy (16%) and absence of political space (11%). Furthermore, participants of the focus group discussions added the lack of ownership itself as a challenge to the

participation of citizens in the process. One of the participants said: *"The problem is that we hear statebuilding but the citizens were not involved. We think the whole process is foreign project which is not intended to build our government"*

The findings about the challenges undermining citizen engagement concurs with a public survey conducted by PDRC in 2021 which identified lack of awareness as one of the challenges facing the democratization process. A similar post-election study pointed out limited civic education as an obstacle to the elections. On the other hand, another study conducted by Heritage institute on the impediments to good governance in Somalia argued *"the fragility of the Somali state and the embedded bad governance lie in the utter failure to connect citizens to the process of state building"* (Heritage institute, 2021). Thus, it can be noted apart from the structural impediments such as the clan system, most statebuilding programs ongoing in Somalia do not give the citizens to reflect their view in the process.

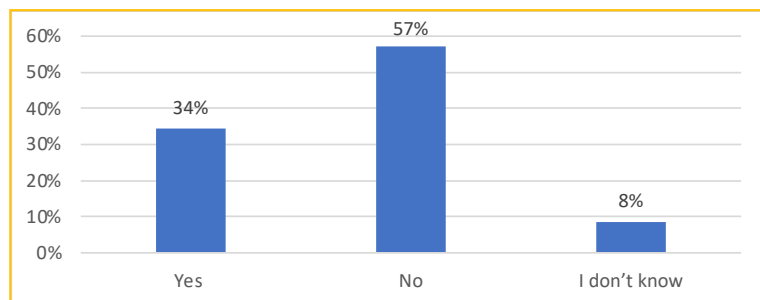
Level of public awareness of the upcoming local government elections



Democratization has been a priority in Puntland since its establishment in 1998. The framers of Puntland constitution envisaged that Puntland would transit from the clan system into a democratic system after three years of its formation. Since its establishment, Puntland government attempted several times to hold one-person-one-vote elections for local governments, to no avail. In October 2021, Puntland conducted direct elections in three districts (Qardho, Eyl and Ufayn) and the government is planning to compete local government elections in the remaining districts of the state. Therefore, the study has asked the participants about their awareness of the elections process.

The above chart reveals that 58% were fully aware the status of Puntland local government elections process, 28% had limited knowledge of the process and only 14% did not know the process. In contrast with other districts, the respondents in Ufeyn district scored higher in terms of the awareness of local elections with 56%, second to Garowe with 63%. The data suggests that the election information is widespread among the residents of Puntland districts, and the fact that democratic elections were the biggest issue that was and still discussed in Puntland.

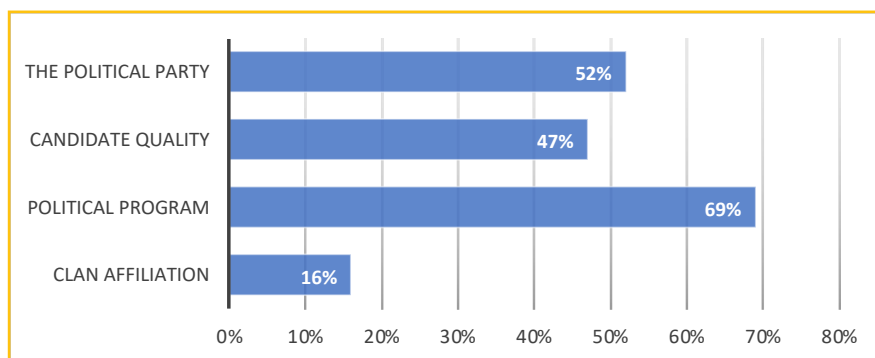
Measuring citizen's knowledge on voting procedures



Do you have any concept on the functions of the election such as voting process?

To further identify the knowledge on specific functions of the election, the study sought responses about some of the functions in the elections such as the voting process. It was revealed that 57% of the respondents did not know the voting process whilst 34% said they knew the process. Again, there was variation between districts, 78% of the respondents in Ufeyn knew the voting process whilst in Jariban and Bocame only 24% and 25% respectively accounted for having an understanding of the functions of the election. It could be argued that the residents in districts which held direct local government elections such as Ufeyn had more experience and knowledge than the districts that did not have in the past. A similar study “on the assessment of voter education in Puntland” conducted by PDRC showed similar results.

Criteria for electing political posts



On What criteria should candidates for public managerial and political posts be voted for and elected?

In multiple data response set, the study explored the criteria in which candidates should be elected. 69% of the respondents would base their choice on the political program of the party/candidates. 52% reported they would choose the political party he represented, 47% said the candidate quality as the criteria to give their votes. Furthermore, during the focus group discussions, majority of the participants emphasized the candidate's personal standing or quality and the political programs. On participant in Ufeyn district uttered;

“I would base my selection on the personal integrity of the candidates. You cannot choose a candidate when you know that he is dishonest. This is what happened in the last election. We elected people we did not know because of the system”.

The respondent was referring to the proportional closed list that Puntland used during the early elections. Previous studies found out similar results. A study on the role of political association in the early election published by PDRC asserted that the content of the political association, the leadership of the association and the candidate as the major determinant that voters used to vote for early elections of Puntland.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study suggests the following recommendations

To the government

- The government need to conduct a broader civic education and public awareness to raise the awareness and understanding of the communities on state building and highlight the processes and the gains for the past 20 years. It is evident that many young people are not aware of the challenges and achievements in state-building in the past
- The government needs to prioritize the public awareness on the critical state building issues that require immediate response interventions.
- The study recommends Puntland government to expedite the decentralization process and bring the government closer to the people. There are many districts that have not seen the fruits of the development brought by the decentralization process
- The government need to enhance people's participation in the decision-making processes by creating platforms enabling them to get involved in the planning and implementation of the programs.
- There is need to scale up the promotion of the state-society relations in order to enhance a culture of ownership and accountability

To civil society organizations

- Assist the government to connect with the citizens in order to engender state society relations
- Organize and increase public meeting spaces such as forums, training, and public gathering to bring together the people and the citizens
- There is need to revisit public outreach strategies and tailor with the context in which the public awareness should take place, this includes using social media and radios

To international actors

- State building should not only be viewed a process intended to strengthen state institutions, but a process aimed to rebuild the state as a whole, so the study recommends the international community to emphasize on building the people in order to promote community ownership
- There is need to expand the state building actors that international actors engage and include into traditional authorities and representatives from different segments of the population.

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ABOUT **PDRC**

Puntland Development & Research Centre (PDRC) is a successor body of former War-torn Societies Project International (WSPI), which operated in Puntland during 1997-99. On October 30, 1999, the center was founded as an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research institute dedicated to peace-building, promotion of democracy and respect for human rights.



www.pdrconsomalia.org