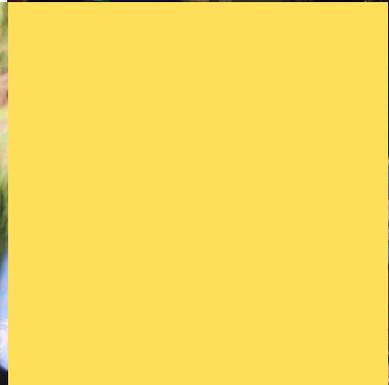


PDRC ANNUAL REPORT

2025



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



ABDINASIR MOHAMED YUSUF

On behalf of the Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC), Board members, staff, and associates, I extend my greetings to you all and wish you a splendid 2026. PDRC, its associates and supporters, including the generous international Community who availed absolute technical and financial support, the year 2025 was successful yet very challenging. It was the year when PDRC lost its Executive Director **Mr. Ali Farah Ali** who had devotedly served the institution for approximately two decades. *May his soul rest in eternal peace and his works be remembered forever.*

There were also political, economic, security, and social challenges and opportunities, with short and long-term impacts on local and national levels. The year was characterised by significant geopolitical changes across the world, which resulted in significant humanitarian crises and geopolitical/demographical tensions in Africa particularly in the Horn of Africa, affecting the entire funding landscape. This made it harder to achieve sustainable peace and developed in the region and necessitate new approaches and models to navigate the changing dynamics in 2026. These dynamics present social, economic, and political threats not only in Somalia and Africa, but the entire world.

At the regional level, sea piracy has continued off the coast of the Red Sea and the northeastern Indian Ocean, particularly in Yemen and Puntland. The continued conflict in Yemen against the Houthis has some influence on this resurgence. It is also a means and motivation for local fishing communities to combat illegal fishing operations by foreign poaching trawlers. This is considered a global issue that attracts the intervention of multiple militaries and is a major threat to the stability and security of the region. At the local level and despite continuous efforts to mitigate and address their root causes, during 2025, some clan conflicts occurred in Puntland such as in the Sherbi village in the Karkaar region but PDRC with support from its partners, has provided support to pave way for successful mediation and reconciliation.

As part of Somalia and a federal member state, Puntland State revives its glory by cultivating strategies and foundations for democratization, good governance, peace, economic growth, and development. Rehabilitation and recovery from civil war, political unrest, and lawlessness is not a smooth journey nor the sole responsibility of a particular segment of society. Close to three decades of misery, trauma, and limited functional government systems, all citizens and wellwishers of the Puntland State of Somalia and Somalia are duty-bound to work selflessly as a team to rebuild the country. It is our honour to have organised the 3rd PDRC Annual Peace Conference (APC) in Garowe which was both insightful and thought-provoking to discuss climate change, peace, and security in Somalia. Thanks to all technical and funding partners who made this a reality. PDRC is founded on a common goal of peacebuilding, promotion of democratization, and development with vibrant men and women willing to devote their efforts and time towards building success. We continue to liaise with both local and international partners to advance peace, democratisation, and development in Puntland and across all Somali regions. PDRC is premised on neutrality in politics and ensuring community ownership of interventions to ensure sustainable peace, democratisation, and development.

MISSION, VISION & STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

PDRC VISION

A conflict-free, resilient, democratic and developed Somalia

PDRC MISSION

To promote sustainable peace, democracy, governance, and the development of Somalia through evidence-based research, advocacy and awareness creation, dialogue platforms and institutional development and capacity building.

To empower and enhance communities' participation and ownership of peacebuilding and social cohesion initiatives, practices, and processes in Puntland and Somalia by 2027

To influence and support the establishment, enactment, & implementation of at least 3 national state level policies on prevention & response to violence & conflict, & peacebuilding by 2027

To promote, advocate and strengthen multiparty democracy and citizen engagement in transparent governance at state and local levels by 2027

To support and promote social economic empowerment and market skills development for at least 5,000 youth and women by 2027

To do environmental & climate change research & awareness to reach the 9 PL regions as well as neighbouring border regions by 2027

To promote the nurturing, preservation, and sensitization of Puntland culture and heritage annually.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

PEACEBUILDING & RECONCILIATION

THE ROAD TO SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE (R2P) PROGRAM

The Road to Sustainable Peacebuilding and Good Governance (R2P) Programme concluded, in Dec 2025, its last and fourth year. Three local partners, namely Puntland Development Research Centre (PDRC), Horn Centre (HC), and Academy for Peace and Development (APD) concurrently implemented the programme in the three respective regions of Puntland, Galmudug and Somaliland. The programme's goal aims to promote peaceful co-existence in and among the three regions. This can be achieved primarily by building the capacity and effectiveness of existing institutions and conducting inclusive reconciliation of communities, in addition to enhancing trust among the citizens and their respective governments. This summary report presents the PDRC work in 2025 under R2P peacebuilding milestone:

1. Mapping of Conflict Hotspots in Puntland

PDRC conducted this desk review in early 2025 to map security and political hotspots across Puntland, identifying conflict zones to guide targeted interventions. The report provides a comprehensive analysis of multiple regions, highlighting varying levels of conflict intensity and the need for strategic peacebuilding efforts.

Mudug Region remains one of the most volatile areas in Puntland, characterized by persistent inter-clan and cross-border conflicts. In North Mudug, inter-clan violence among Darod sub-clans continues over resources and revenge killings, with mediation efforts ongoing but conflicts persisting despite multiple intervention attempts. The region also experiences significant cross-border tensions with Galmudug, particularly between the Lelkase and Sa'ad clans near Galkayo and Galdogob, as well as between the Shiikhaal and Dir clans near Tawfiq and Afbarwaaqo. Although agreements have been signed to address these conflicts, they continue to recur sporadically, creating an unpredictable security environment that requires sustained attention. The Nugal-Sool border zone experiences ongoing tensions between Majerten and Dhulbahante communities primarily over access to pasture and water points. While a 2022 agreement successfully prevented large-scale warfare between these groups, intermittent revenge killings continue to occur, creating a volatile situation that requires sustained intervention and monitoring to prevent escalation into broader conflict.

Bari Region stands out as an area of relative peace, largely attributed to clan homogeneity within the region. A 2023 conflict between sub-clans over motel construction was successfully resolved through a government-led reconciliation process. Currently, there are no major outstanding contentions in the region, making it the most stable area within Puntland's security landscape. The situation in Sool, Sanaag, and Ayn Regions represents the most critical security challenge in Puntland. The emergence of SSC-Khatumo, which liberated Dhulbahante territory from Somaliland in 2023, has fundamentally altered the regional dynamics. This new administration now controls the area, but tensions erupted dramatically in December 2024 when SSC-Khatumo forces infiltrated Erigavo, the capital of Sanaag, leading to intense urban warfare.

Although Somaliland regained control of Erigavo, hostilities continue in surrounding areas with both sides actively mobilizing forces, raising the risk of a wider regional war. The Erigavo conflict has severely impacted Eastern Sanaag, where displaced Harti populations, including Warsangeli communities, have sought refuge. This displacement has intensified enmity with the Isaaq clan, led to large-scale Warsangeli military mobilization, and completely severed trade and travel routes between Puntland and Somaliland, creating significant humanitarian and economic consequences.

Puntland-Somaliland relations remain highly hostile due to competing territorial claims over Sool, Sanaag, and Ayn regions. The situation in Mudug and Sool-Sanaag-Ayn regions requires immediate attention, with the Puntland-Somaliland standoff presenting the most significant risk of large-scale conflict escalation. However, a recent prisoner exchange in April 2025 signals a potential positive shift towards diffusing tensions and may open avenues for future dialogue and conflict resolution. This development offers hope that sustained diplomatic efforts could help de-escalate the current hostilities and establish pathways toward lasting peace.

2. Eyl Security and Peace Forum

On May 17, 2024, two significant events occurred in Eyl: the Puntland Development & Research Center (PDRC)-led Peace Forum and the inauguration of the NETFISH Fish Processing Facility. The Peace Forum was organized to mediate between conflicting groups, drawing attendance from traditional elders, local authorities, and civil society representatives. This forum successfully resulted in a temporary ceasefire agreement and a commitment to ongoing dialogue. Concurrently, the NETFISH facility, funded by the Dutch Embassy through the Nexus Skills and Jobs Program, was inaugurated with high-profile participation from Puntland government officials and Dutch diplomats. This facility aims to enhance local employment and stabilize Eyl's fishing economy, thereby reducing youth vulnerability to crime.

3. Erigavo Peace Process

The Sanaag region, one of the 18 regions of the former Somali Republic, is inhabited by divergent rival clans with the Issaq clan occupying the western and southwestern areas while the Harti clan, comprising mainly Warsangeli and Dhulbahante sub-clans, reside in the eastern and southeastern territories. Following the collapse of the Somali government in January 1991, the Somaliland government assumed control over the regional capital of Erigavo and Issaq-inhabited areas. When the Harti clan refused to subordinate to Hargeisa's authority, extensive inter-communal consultations were initiated between 1991 and 1993, culminating in the historic Erigavo Peace Charter signed on August 31, 1993. This agreement successfully maintained peace, stability, and clan harmony in Sanaag for over three decades until violence erupted in December 2024.



PDRC Executive Director with Sultan Said in Badhan to advocate for community based reconciliation processes

Despite this local peace framework, the Sanaag and Sool regions remained politically divided, with the Harti clan predominantly aligning with Puntland State through kinship ties while the Issaq clan supported the Somaliland government. These disputed territories received limited international aid since 1991. After tumultuous armed confrontations spanning 2007 to 2023, the Dhulbahante clan declared an autonomous federal entity called the Northeastern State in Las-Anod on July 30, 2025, claiming jurisdiction over Dhulbahante territories across Sool, Buhodle, and Sanaag regions, including Erigavo city.

To consolidate its authority, the Dhulbahante clan instigated fighting in Erigavo city on December 14-15, 2024, secretly smuggling militias and arms into the city with the intent of annexing it to their newly formed Northeastern State. Somaliland security forces, supported by Issaq local militias, successfully repelled the uprising, but the encounter resulted in widespread chaos, property looting, and mass displacement of Harti residents, including both Dhulbahante and Warsangeli communities, who fled to their ancestral clan territories. In response to this crisis, Somaliland President Abdirahman Abdullahi Irro declared a peace initiative on July 16, 2025, inviting conflicting clans to a Grand Peace Conference in Erigavo aimed at strengthening coexistence, unity, and de-escalating hostilities.

The Mayor of Erigavo officially launched the peace conference on September 24, 2025, and after extensive clan consultations with technical and financial support from the Puntland Development and Research Centre (PDRC) and the Academy for Peace and Development (APD) under the R2P programme, the Grand Peace Conference convened on October 21-22, 2025. Over 500 delegates participated, including traditional leaders, elders, parliamentarians, government officials, women's groups, and youth representatives from both Issaq and Warsangeli clans, though the Dhulbahante clan notably abstained. The Warsangeli clan's highest traditional leader attended, demonstrating significant political commitment. President Irro's attendance added considerable weight to the proceedings, and in his closing remarks, he thanked the Puntland President for collaboration, appealed to absent Dhulbahante participants to join the initiative, and expressed commitment to addressing their grievances.

The conference produced substantive resolutions including a six-point platform for reconciliation and peaceful cooperation, establishment of three sub-committees to adjudicate clan killings and resource disputes, a pledge from the Somaliland government to pay reparations for damages during the December 2024 battle, agreements on addressing Warsangeli political representation grievances, and creation of a 12-member follow-up committee (seven Warsangeli, five Issaq/government representatives) tasked with implementing resolutions within six months.

PDRC and APD, engaged in Puntland-Somaliland border peacebuilding since 2021, have provided critical technical support by facilitating consultations between traditional leaders including Sultan Said Sultan Abdisalam of Warsangeli and Boqor Bur-Madow of Issaq. The organizations propose joint interventions including research and policy advocacy, technical support to peace committees, multimedia awareness campaigns, capacity building workshops, reactivation of trained Peace Connectors, and establishment of joint monitoring mechanisms. However, significant risks remain as the Dhulbahante clan opposes the reconciliation process and seeks to annex Sanaag into their Northeastern State, creating potential for sabotage. PDRC and APD emphasize that while political will is evident and institutions are aligned, the process remains fragile and requires timely, coordinated, and adequately funded international support to ensure sustained peace, reconciliation, and social cohesion in Sanaag and beyond.

4. Galkayo Business for Peace Fair

The Galkayo Business Peace Fair 2025 was a landmark collaborative initiative implemented jointly by HornCenter (HC) Dialogue and Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC), held November 12-13, 2025, as the culminating activity of the Road to Sustainable Peace and Good Governance Programme. This groundbreaking cross-border event simultaneously took place in North Galkayo (Puntland) and South Galkayo (Galmudug), attracting 400 participants from both sides of the historically divided city. The initiative uniquely combined organizing the annual Galkayo Peace Week for comprehensive peace strategy development with conducting an innovative Business Peace Fair where enterprises from both sides displayed and sold products, creating tangible economic interaction that reinforced political dialogue. The event featured unprecedented high-level participation including the Minister of Interior of Galmudug, governors, mayors, police commissioners, ministers from both administrations, university chairmen, traditional elders, and extensive media coverage from 16 corporations.

The Business Peace Fair achieved significant concrete commitments that directly advanced peacebuilding infrastructure in the Mudug region. Business representatives pledged substantial financial and material support for the Joint Mudug Peace Committee and Peace and Development Forum, while Golis Telecommunications Company committed to transmit peace messages to all mobile subscribers free of charge. The conference generated comprehensive recommendations addressing immediate and structural peace challenges, including enforcement of rule of law, transparent addressing of conflict root causes, enhanced collaboration among authorities and civil society, and meaningful empowerment of women and youth. Critical consensus emerged around reforming harmful traditional practices, particularly escalating diya payments, with recommendations to bring criminals before formal courts rather than relying solely on traditional compensation mechanisms. PDRC's evidence-based presentation identified 18 root causes of conflict ranging from resource competition to modern challenges like drug addiction, arms proliferation, and Al-Shabaab manipulation.

The Galkayo Business Peace Fair represents a paradigm shift in Somali peacebuilding by successfully demonstrating that economic interdependence and commercial collaboration are fundamental drivers of sustainable peace in historically divided communities. By creating tangible cross-border economic interaction, the initiative established practical economic interdependence that directly reinforces social cohesion between previously antagonistic Puntland and Galmudug communities, moving beyond political agreements to create sustainable economic incentives for peace maintenance. Most significantly, the initiative transformed Galkayo from a symbol of division into a model of cooperation with unified economic outlook, proving that sustained peace requires not only political will but also economic integration, social inclusion, and community ownership of peace processes, thereby establishing a comprehensive replicable template for peacebuilding that can be scaled across other conflict-affected regions in Somalia and globally.



Participants at the Galkayo Business Peace Fair

5. Culture for Peace

The Puntland Cultural Week was by the Ministry of Information, Telecommunications, Culture and Tourism with the support of certain activities by PDRC that contribute to supporting peace and security objectives. The event exceeded participation targets by 20%, reaching 300 direct participants from nine Puntland regions (Sanaag, Sool, Mudug, Bari, Karkaar, Gardafuu, Cayn, and Nugaal) and achieving widespread message dissemination across Puntland, Somalia, and the diaspora through strategic technology deployment. The week featured a poetry competition uniquely dedicated to counter-terrorism themes, with two of three winners being active-duty soldiers fighting extremist groups in CalMiskaad, and a horse racing competition in Bellay Valley that attracted high-level government officials, traditional elders, and business representatives, demonstrating successful Public-Private Partnership establishment for cultural financing.

The event effectively achieved its mandate to provide youth with safe outlets for peaceful self-expression while reinforcing national security narratives. By creating cultural heroes from the armed forces and showcasing regional cultural diversity through traditional dances, music, and handicrafts, the Ministry successfully steered youth toward positive role models and away from extremism. Key recommendations include accelerating institutional professionalization through structured training, formalizing a year-round Public-Private Partnership framework for sustainable financing, and expanding technology infrastructure for professional streaming and permanent content archiving to preserve Puntland's cultural legacy globally while positioning the Ministry as a leading government institute.



Participants at the Puntland Cultural Week showcasing traditional Somali basket weaving

3RD PDRC ANNUAL PEACE CONFERENCE

The third Annual Peace Conference (APC 2025), convened by the Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC) in Garowe, brought together over 250 participants to address the critical intersection of climate change, peace, and security in Somalia. The conference revealed alarming climate projections, including a projected temperature increase of +1.9°C within the next decade and drought cycles accelerating from once every 20-30 years to every 2-3 years. These environmental shifts have already contributed to over 3.8 million internally displaced persons, with time-series analysis confirming that climate change and conflict jointly drive displacement dynamics. The livestock sector has declined from over US\$530 million, while major crops have experienced up to 50% production declines.

A central theme was the erosion of traditional governance systems, with participants documenting over 36 customary laws, including the 500-600-year-old Dubigees water law, and indigenous adaptation practices such as Bakaar (underground grain storage), Waro (rainwater harvesting), and Eeg (grazing reserves). However, these systems have weakened significantly since the 1991 state collapse. The conference highlighted how 75% youth unemployment, combined with climate shocks, creates vulnerability to extremism and conflict. Women's leadership emerged as critical, with community-led schools demonstrating stronger gender-sensitive outcomes compared to INGO-led models.

Transboundary water challenges were prominent, with 90% of Somalia's river flow originating in Ethiopia, where at least 39 dams now alter downstream flows. Panelists emphasized the urgent need for bilateral water treaties and real-time hydrological monitoring. Community storytelling sessions from across Somalia and Kenya's Garissa County illustrated how flooding, drought, and resource competition drive displacement and conflict, while also documenting successful peace initiatives, including ceasefire agreements in Mudug and the deployment of neutral peacekeeping forces.

The conference concluded that sustainable solutions require shifting from top-down emergency responses to locally-led approaches that integrate traditional knowledge with modern governance. Key recommendations included channeling climate finance directly to communities, strengthening women's leadership and youth inclusion, harmonizing statutory, Sharia, and customary legal systems, and addressing root causes of conflict through integrated climate-peace programming. The communiqué emphasized that with 85% of the population vulnerable to climate shocks, transformation from reactive crisis response to proactive resilience building is not optional but essential for Somalia's future stability.



Panel for Communities Impacted by Climate-Conflict Dynamics from Pastoralists, coastal and IDPs of Puntland

GOVERNANCE & STATEBUILDING

THE ROAD TO SUSTAINABLE PEACE AND GOOD GOVERNANCE (R2P) PROGRAMME

Under the R2P programme, governance also formed part of the PDRC initiatives for the year 2025 with the following activities undertaken:

1. Civil Society Dialogue Forum on Local Government Law Revision

On February 4, 2025, the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs, and Democratization (MoIFAD) hosted a consultative meeting in Garowe to share the legal review of the Regional and Local Governance Law with civil society stakeholders, officially opened by Minister Abdifarax (Juxa). The forum identified critical governance challenges including incomplete decentralization, unclear powers of regional governors and local mayors, land disputes leading to conflicts, and ambiguous conditions for establishing new local councils. Consensus emerged on three priority areas: clearly defining administrative powers of regional governors to avoid legal overlaps, adjusting local council member numbers to ensure effectiveness and economic viability, and improving electoral procedures for mayors and their deputies to strengthen democratic governance.

The meeting successfully fostered collaborative engagement between government and civil society, with local government representatives committing to community visits and grassroots education initiatives. Key recommendations included establishing platforms for joint stakeholder analysis, recognizing conflict indicators, and reviving traditional dispute resolution mechanisms. These reforms are expected to significantly advance Puntland's governance structure by modernizing laws to reflect current community needs, enhancing transparency and accountability, and ultimately contributing to stability and development. Further regional consultations are planned to gather comprehensive input before finalizing the revised law, emphasizing inclusive and collaborative governance reform.

2. Women Early Advocacy and Election Model Training

PDRC conducted a two-day capacity building initiative on October 19-20, 2025, in Garowe under the Road to Sustainable Peace Programme, bringing together 50 women representing women's groups and election-related institutions to address persistent political underrepresentation. The training delivered comprehensive sessions by key stakeholders including Ministry of Interior officials, PDRC legal experts, Ministry of Women representatives, and elected female councillors, educating participants on existing legal frameworks supporting women's participation including the 1998 Charter, Puntland's constitution guaranteeing gender equality, Law No. 13's gender balance requirements, and the Gender and Social Inclusion Guideline mandating one woman per three candidates. Participants successfully developed a unified advocacy strategy centered on "Add women's quota in Puntland election laws," creating action plans that included preparing draft statements defining the 30% quota, establishing taskforces to engage the Electoral Commission and government branches, conducting early awareness campaigns, and nominating five women coordinators to lead advocacy efforts.

The training represents a paradigm shift from reactive to proactive political participation by emphasizing early advocacy engagement before electoral processes begin, enabling women to organize, network, and build influential coalitions that enhance their political leverage. Most significantly, participants proposed establishing a Joint Committee for advocacy and monitoring including government representatives, civil society organizations, women's associations, community leaders, and international observers to coordinate campaigns, track progress on legal inclusion, and provide regular stakeholder reports. This initiative extends beyond immediate capacity building to fundamentally transform women's political participation by creating sustainable advocacy mechanisms that could significantly increase women's representation in future elections, institutionalize the 30% quota in electoral laws currently under review, and create a multiplier effect as participants train others in their communities, ultimately contributing to broader democratic consolidation and inclusive governance in Puntland while serving as a model for similar contexts across Somalia.



Women Early Advocacy and Election Model Training on Puntland's constitution for guaranteeing gender equality under Law No. 13

3. Citizens' Forums between citizens and elected local councils

PDRC facilitated three citizens' forums in Jariban, Godobjiran, and Armo districts during 2025 under the Road to Sustainable Peace and Good Governance Programme, creating direct dialogue between newly elected local councils and residents following historic one-person-one-vote elections. Each forum brought together approximately 100 citizens with district council members, opening with traditional Quranic recitations before mayors presented their councils' early achievements and expressed readiness to receive public feedback. PDRC facilitators delivered comprehensive presentations on the roles and responsibilities of both local government and citizens, emphasizing council duties including basic service provision, security, town planning, public consultation, and development planning, while outlining civic obligations such as tax payment, security collaboration, neighborhood vigilance, and participation in local development initiatives, with particular emphasis on revenue generation through timely tax payments as essential for enabling effective service delivery.

The forums generated distinctive local achievements and commitments across districts: Jariban council reported decentralizing authority to approximately 68 villages through village committees, implementing staffing reforms, launching revenue collection campaigns, and planning to leverage Garacad port's economic potential while establishing vocational training centers, constructing a stadium, prioritizing local hiring by NGOs, and creating a dedicated unit for persons with disabilities following engagement with the Puntland Disability Network. Godobjiran and Armo councils presented their initial 100-day achievements while declaring commitments to transparency and ongoing public engagement.

All forums featured active citizen participation through interactive question-and-answer sessions where residents sought clarifications on governance matters that were extensively addressed by mayors and council members, with Armo achieving balanced gender representation (52% male, 48% female) and all districts pledging to institutionalize regular forums with documented citizen feedback integrated into future planning. These forums successfully strengthened trust between communities and elected representatives, demonstrated a replicable model for bottom-up collaborative governance, and established foundations for sustained accountability and participatory democracy across Puntland's local institutions.



Citizen forum in Jarriban to sensitize the public on their role in holding the local council accountable

4. Induction Training for Newly Elected District Local Council Members

PDRC conducted three two-day induction trainings during 2025 for newly elected district councils in Jariiban (May 24-25), Godobjiiraan (July 13-14), and Armo (October 7-8) as part of the Road to Sustainable Peace and Good Governance Programme, following Puntland's historic one-person-one-vote local government elections. Each training brought together 30 participants including all district councillors and local government department heads, with key officials such as mayors, deputy mayors, and Local Government Secretaries in attendance. The trainings were consistently facilitated by Prof. Abdulkadir from PDRC and experts from the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Democratization (MOIFAD), utilizing participatory methods including presentations, group exercises, and case studies. All three programmes covered comprehensive curricula addressing essential topics for effective local governance: the Local Government Act (Law No. 7), district council roles and responsibilities, planning and budgeting processes, revenue generation and collection, participatory planning approaches, transparency mechanisms, citizen engagement for improved service delivery, and conflict management techniques.

The trainings achieved significant outcomes across all three districts, including improved legal awareness of council mandates, strengthened capacity in resource management and budgeting, enhanced understanding of participatory planning methodologies, development of conflict resolution skills, and fostered stronger working relationships between elected officials and district administrations. Mayors consistently opened sessions by acknowledging PDRC's support and encouraging councillors to absorb knowledge to enhance service delivery effectiveness, while closing sessions featured expressions of gratitude and requests for additional capacity building support, demonstrating the programmes' success in meeting immediate institutional development needs. Key recommendations emerging from the trainings include providing ongoing technical mentorship to sustain capacity gains, holding quarterly reflection meetings to assess progress and address emerging challenges, and replicating the training model in other districts to ensure consistent governance standards across Puntland.

These initiatives mark pivotal steps towards building accountable, responsive local governments empowered to operationalize decentralization, promote transparent and inclusive governance, and better serve grassroots priorities across Puntland's democratically elected local institutions.



Training session for the local council in Jariiban district, Mudug region

5. Review of Puntland Electoral Laws Consultation Forums

Following Puntland's successful one-person-one-vote elections in 36 districts (2021-2024), the Puntland Electoral Commission (PEC) partnered with PDRC to organize three consultation forums during November-December 2025 to review and refine three electoral laws: the Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Councils Elections Law, the Voter Registration Law, and the Political Associations Law. The forums engaged all eight functional political parties and diverse civil society representatives including women's groups, youth organizations, LNGOs, professional organizations, academia, traditional leaders, and religious leaders in Garowe and Bossaso.

Political parties presented divergent views on critical issues including presidential election systems (parliamentary versus direct voting), party lifespans (5-10 years), registration fees (\$2,000-\$20,000), and voter residency requirements (6 months to 10 years). Common recommendations included implementing biometric voting systems, clearly stipulating candidate vetting procedures with 60-90 day submission deadlines, allocating seat quotas for women and persons with disabilities through one female candidate per three competing candidates, sharing voter registration lists with parties, adopting open-list election models, reducing government employee resignation timelines from 90 to 30 days before elections, and preventing misuse of public resources for campaigning.

Civil society emphasized inclusion of minorities, women, youth, and persons with disabilities, proposing allowance for independent candidates outside political parties, adopting open-list systems to address clan-based barriers, basing parliamentary seats on districts rather than clans, allowing PEC members to vote, limiting political association registration timeframes, increasing registration fees and electoral thresholds, requiring legal documentation for residency verification, and providing 20-day advance voter notification. PEC Legal Advisor clarified that the 90-day candidate submission accommodates vetting and ballot printing abroad, the five-year residency requirement addresses Somalia's instability while exempting original Puntland citizens, the 18-year voting age is constitutionally mandated, and commissioners abstain from voting to avoid conflict of interest. The forums successfully demonstrated strong collective commitment to improving Puntland's democratization process, with PEC acknowledging contributions and committing to refining laws to ensure they are inclusive, practical, constitutionally sound, transparent, and trusted.



SOMALI DIALOGUE PLATFORM

SSC-KHATUMO-PL POLITICAL SETTLEMENTS

Efforts to initiate discussions regarding potential political settlements between SSC-Khatumo and Puntland have been delayed due to competing priorities for both administrations. The complexities surrounding these negotiations are further compounded by the ongoing challenges in the region, including Puntland's active campaign against ISIS and Al-Shabaab (AS), which require significant resources and focus.

In addition, the conflict in Erigabo between SSC-Khatumo and Somaliland has emerged as a pressing issue, drawing the attention of both administrations and international stakeholders. This conflict not only escalates tensions in the region but also creates an unstable environment that hinders progress in addressing broader political settlements.

Despite the delays, the need for structured dialogue between SSC-Khatumo representatives, Puntland politicians, and current members of the government remains critical. Such discussions are essential for resolving longstanding grievances, enhancing political inclusion, and fostering stability in the region.

Moving forward, creating an enabling environment for these discussions will require de-escalation of current conflicts and sustained efforts to address the security threats posed by militant groups. Strengthening coordination among key stakeholders, including local leaders, traditional elders, and international partners, will be vital in prioritizing and eventually advancing political settlement negotiations.

Consultations Regarding the Political Settlement between SSC-Khatumo and Puntland

A series of targeted consultations and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted in June 2025 to gather comprehensive perspectives on the complex political relationship between SSC-Khatumo and Puntland. The data collection process involved a total of 17 KIIs, with the majority (11) carried out in Garowe and six in Lasanod, engaging a diverse cross-section of society including titled elders, business leaders, civil servants, youth (Jamaahirta), political figures, and academics. This qualitative foundation was complemented by three distinct roundtable discussions designed to capture a spectrum of views. The first two roundtables, held at PDRC in Garowe on June 19th and 24th, brought together 21 participants from the SSC-Khatumo constituency and 19 from non-SSC-Khatumo constituents of Puntland, respectively. A third pivotal roundtable took place on June 25th at Nugal University in Las-anod, featuring 21 participants, including civil society leaders, traditional elders, youth, women, and members of the SSC-Khatumo Negotiation committee, ensuring that voices from the heart of the contested region were central to the dialogue.

The core objective of these intensive consultations was to deliberate on the evolving political dynamics, identify points of both contention and convergence, and explore viable pathways for a sustainable political settlement.

Discussions revealed deep-seated issues related to territorial claims, constitutional status, and governance arrangements that have fueled instability. However, they also uncovered a shared desire among participants to move beyond conflict and toward a mutually respectful coexistence. A key point of consensus was the urgent need to move from informal tensions to structured, facilitated communication. Participants across all three roundtables acknowledged that without a clear legal and political framework, the region remains vulnerable to further polarization and external interference, which undermines long-term peace and development for all communities involved.

Based on the rich insights gathered, a clear way forward was articulated, centered on four key recommendations. Foremost is the imperative to initiate a formal dialogue through a neutral, facilitated platform dedicated to addressing the core political and constitutional issues. This process must be underpinned by a comprehensive legal review to clarify the status and claims of SSC-Khatumo's political structure. Crucially, any negotiation must be grounded in community ownership, requiring extensive grassroots consultations with elders, women, youth, and civil society to build a durable consensus. Finally, the timing of these efforts is deemed strategically vital; it is recommended to begin negotiations ahead of the Federal Government of Somalia's electoral calendar to insulate the process from external political pressures and create the necessary space for a durable and locally-owned resolutions.

HBS – SPA – PDRC

ALLIANCE FOR NATIONAL DIALOGUE AND RECONCILIATION (ANDR) - ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS FOR ELECTORAL CONSENSUS-BUILDING

Consultations Background & Formation

The Alliance for National Dialogue and Reconciliation was established as a coalition of eleven civil society organizations, including think tanks and CSO umbrellas (SONSA, PUNSA, HIPS, SGEM, SPA, PDRC, JVI, Horn Center, IRAD Institute, and Balqis Insights). The alliance emerged to address Somalia's political tensions through inclusive dialogue, focusing on Federal Government-Federal Member State relations, electoral framework discussions, and constitutional review processes.

Vision: A Somalia where constructive national dialogue, inclusive political participation, and peaceful consensus-building underpin a stable, democratic, and cohesive society.

The core objective of these intensive consultations was to deliberate on the evolving political dynamics, identify points of both contention and convergence, and explore viable pathways for a sustainable political settlement.

Key Work Undertaken

1. Alliance Establishment & Framework Development

- Conducted two foundational virtual meetings to establish operational guidelines
- Developed ten guiding principles emphasizing impartiality, conflict sensitivity, do-no-harm approach, and inclusive participation
- Established SPA-PDRC as the secretariat for coordination and resource mobilization

2. Strategic Multi-Location Tour (December 2024 - January 2025)

The alliance deployed eleven representatives across three key political centers:\

Mogadishu Engagements:

- Met with Somali Salvation Forum (SSF) leaders representing federal opposition
- Engaged with three SSF representatives, including two former presidents/prime ministers

Baidoa Engagements:

- Conducted high-level meeting with South-West State President Laftagareen
- Held comprehensive civil society consultation with women's groups, youth organizations, traditional elders, academia, and marginalized communities

Garowe Engagements:

- Engaged with Gurmud Qaran (GQ) movement for change
- Conducted inclusive meetings with former ministers, intellectuals, local organization leaders, and women representatives
- Participated in comprehensive civil society consultations

Major Achievements

1. Stakeholder Engagement & Position Mapping

- Exceeded participation targets: Engaged multiple political actors and hundreds of citizens across all locations
- Documented three clear instances of coordinated civil society coalition engagement with federal and state-level political actors
- Successfully mapped stakeholder positions on electoral frameworks, constitutional priorities, and timeline considerations

2. Consensus-Building Progress

- Identified common ground across different stakeholders on electoral legitimacy, institutional capacity, and inclusive process design
- Clarified positions from FGS supporters, opposition groups, and civil society on constitutional review priorities
- Secured future engagement commitments from multiple stakeholders for alliance-facilitated dialogue platforms

3. Civil Society Empowerment & Coalition Building

- Strengthened civil society coalition capacity for high-level political engagement
- Enhanced public accountability mechanisms through systematic documentation of political positions
- Created permanent dialogue spaces for ongoing political discourse

4. Key Insights Generated

- Constitutional review identified as foundational to resolving electoral framework challenges (consistent across all stakeholders)
- Documented concerns about electoral readiness, including security limitations, legal gaps, weak institutions, and inadequate technical preparedness
- Highlighted persistent exclusion of women, youth, persons with disabilities, minorities, and rural communities from decision-making

Strategic Impact

The alliance successfully positioned itself as a credible mediator for electoral consensus-building efforts and demonstrated effective civil society capacity for dialogue facilitation during Somalia's critical political transition. The tour provided comprehensive understanding of electoral impasse challenges while establishing a foundation for continued stakeholder engagement and constitutional review dialogue.

Immediate Outcomes:

- Enhanced transparency through systematic documentation of stakeholder positions
- Strengthened civil society voice in national political processes
- Created roadmap for continued consensus-building efforts
- Received endorsement from political leaders and civil society for alliance's neutral facilitation role

DEVELOPMENT & ENVIRONMENT

The Shaqo Consortium, implemented by PDRC and partners from Somalia and Mogadishu with support from the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, aims to create sustainable livelihood opportunities for unemployed Somali youth aged 15-25, thereby empowering them to contribute to their communities' social and economic development. During the 2024-2025 period, Shaqo's vocational programs in Puntland focused on the service sector (Cleaning, Barista, Catering) and integrated technical training in electrical and automotive skills based on a regional assessment. All training was supplemented with customer service and soft skills to help youth market their new abilities. 2025 marked the end of Skills and jobs programme after a period of 4 years of interventions. The following were the activities implemented in 2025:

ASSESSMENT & CONNECTING TO HOSPITALITY JOB MARKET

Assessments in Bosaso, Qardho, Badhan, and Galkacyo adopted a demand-side approach to align training with local market needs. Key informant interviews revealed significant skill gaps in Automotive Mechanics, Plumbing, and Electrical Installation. To promote gender equity, Professional Cooking and General Business Development were also included, creating opportunities for youth.

SHAQO SKILLS & JOBS VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM FOR YOUTH FROM BARI & SANAAG REGION

This flagship four-month program (July-October 2025) targeted 40 youth (20 male, 20 female) from Bari and Sanaag. Implemented by East Africa University, it provided training in Electrical & Solar Installation, Fishing & Marine Science, and Food & Baking through a blend of study, practical sessions, and industry internships. The program achieved a 92% certification rate, an average knowledge increase of 26%, and secured 8 confirmed job placements. Challenges included diverse trainee educational backgrounds and logistical coordination, leading to recommendations for standardized foundational training and strengthened graduate tracking.



Youth in Bosaso in practical vocation sessions developing hands-on abilities in electrical workshops.

SHOWCASING FISH PROCESSING EXCELLENCE-NETFISH PLANT CONSTRUCTION AND INSTALLATION DOCUMENTATION

The official opening of the NETFISH Fish Processing Facility in Eyl on May 17, 2025, marked a major achievement. The facility addresses infrastructure deficits and provides vocational training and employment for youth. The opening ceremony was attended by high-level government officials, including ministers, the Governor of Nugal, and community leaders, underscoring its significance as a model for community-driven development.



Multiple Puntland Ministers attending the opening of NETFISH as a key employer in the coast town of Eyl.

EMPOWERING CLIMATE-RESILIENT AGRICULTURE THROUGH GREENHOUSE INNOVATION AND YOUTH CAPACITY BUILDING IN GAROWE

A greenhouse was successfully relocated and operationalized at the Cawo Cooperative Farm. A six-day training program equipped 15 young cooperative members with skills in greenhouse management, crop cultivation, and water salinity control, transforming the site into a model for climate-resilient agriculture.



The greenhouse now utilized by Cawo Cooperative Farm.

GAROWE BAKING SHOWCASE

A baking showcase and competition, held as part of the "Garowe Picnic," celebrated female entrepreneurship. The event provided a platform for women bakers to gain market visibility and demonstrated the growing demand for specialized confectionery. Four winners were awarded professional baking tools to enhance their business potential.



Young bakers showcasing baked goods at Garowe Cake Picnic.

SOFT SKILLS TRAINING FOR YOUTH IN PUNTLAND

Three soft skills training programmes were successfully delivered by PDRC to youth in Garowe, Puntland, targeting critical gaps in communication, teamwork, and time management. Each programme used experiential, participatory methods to achieve measurable improvements in participants' confidence and competencies.

i. Communication Skills

This programme trained 30 youth (19 male, 11 female) in public speaking, active listening, conflict resolution, and digital communication. Through role-plays and safe practice spaces, confidence in public speaking rose from 15% to 82%. Participants applied their skills in real-life settings, resolving disputes and improving academic presentations.

ii. Teamwork and Collaboration

A full-day immersive workshop engaged 30 youth in activities like the Marshmallow Challenge and Back-to-Back Drawing, using Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle. Participants learned structured feedback models and listening techniques. Post-training, 96% found the training relevant to their careers, and 92% reported increased confidence in teamwork.

iii. Time Management

This programme introduced 30 participants to tools like the Eisenhower Matrix, Time Blocking, and the Pomodoro Technique. A time audit helped identify distractions, and participants created personal time charters. All gained actionable tools, and 97% reported improved confidence in managing their time.

Overall, the programmes demonstrated that Somali youth are highly capable of acquiring essential soft skills when trained through culturally sensitive, hands-on methods. These interventions transformed participants into confident communicators, collaborative team members, and proactive individuals—equipping them to contribute meaningfully to their communities and the nation's future.



Soft Skill Session at PDRC Hall

RESEARCH



Health Services in Puntland: This study investigates the growing trend of Puntland residents seeking medical care outside the region, within Somalia, and abroad. It highlights the gaps in local health services, particularly the lack of specialized care, including cardiology, oncology, and neurology. It highlights the financial and logistical burdens associated with medical travel. Drawing on interviews with health professionals and patients, the research identifies systemic shortcomings in training, equipment, and oversight, while also pointing to opportunities for strategic investment and reform. The findings aim to inform policymakers, health institutions, and development partners about the urgent need to strengthen Puntland's health sector

Jointly developed by Somali Public Agenda (SPA) and Puntland Development and Research Centre (PDRC), this policy paper presents a range of options and potential solutions for resolving these three contentious political issues. The analysis herein is the outcome of mapping the three most critical political issues, roundtable discussions that brought together 142 Somali political and civic actors for focused discussions, two focus group discussions with Puntland and Jubaland government officials and key informant interviews. Based on these findings, this policy paper describes and explains the rationale, process, merits and limitations of each proposed option and potential solution.

This report examines ISIS's rise, the ongoing counterterrorism efforts, and the resulting humanitarian challenges while providing recommendations for long-term stability. Initiated by Puntland Development and Research Center (PDRC), the study aimed to analyze the factors enabling ISIS's entrenchment in Puntland, evaluate the effectiveness of Operation Hilaac and its impact on security and communities, assess the humanitarian consequences of the conflict, and propose actionable recommendations to address security gaps, humanitarian needs, and post-liberation stabilization. The study mainly used qualitative data, particularly interviews and focus group discussions with government officials, military officers, local elders, business owners, displaced persons, and humanitarian workers. The geographical scope of the study included Cal-Miskaad Mountains, Bosaso, Qandala, Iskushuban, and other districts in the Bari region.



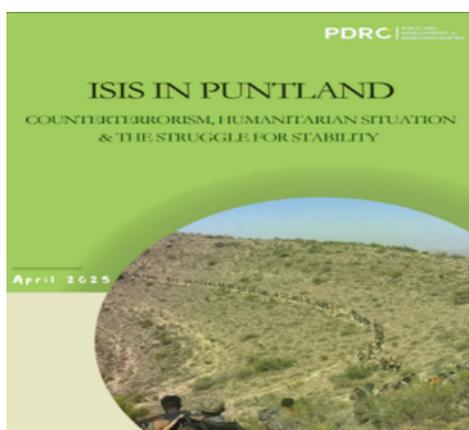
PDRC Puntland Development & Research Centre

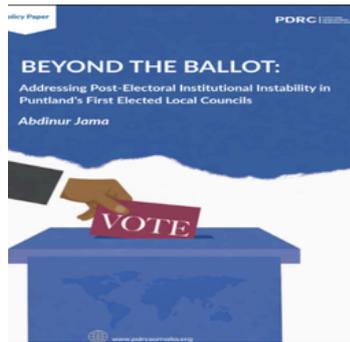
HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
HORN OF AFRICA

POLICY PAPER

BRIDGING DIVIDES: OPTIONS FOR RESOLVING SOMALIA'S FGS-FMS DISPUTES, CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW AND ELECTIONS

Small Public Agenda (SPA), Puntland Development and Research Centre (PDRC)
& Heinrich Böll Stiftung – Horn of Africa





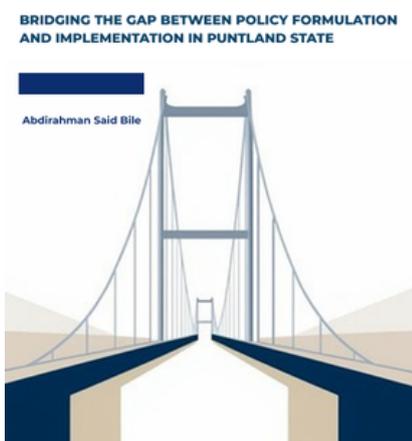
The study addresses a central paradox in Puntland’s governance trajectory: the extent to which democratic progress achieved through the ballot box is being challenged by post-election institutional fragility and political volatility. By examining the phenomenon of mayoral dismissals and broader council instability, the research provides critical insights for MOIFAD, political parties, development partners, and civil society actors working to consolidate democratic governance in the region.



This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the political, security, and development trajectory of Puntland State of Somalia over a pivotal six-year period. It chronicles a critical juncture in the region’s history, focusing on the tenure of President Said Abdullahi ‘Deni’—specifically, his first term (2019–2023) and the early phase of his current second term. This era has been defined by a bold and ambitious project: the historic transition from a traditional clan-based power-sharing model, known as the beel system, to a modern, democratic one-person, one-vote (OPOV) electoral process.

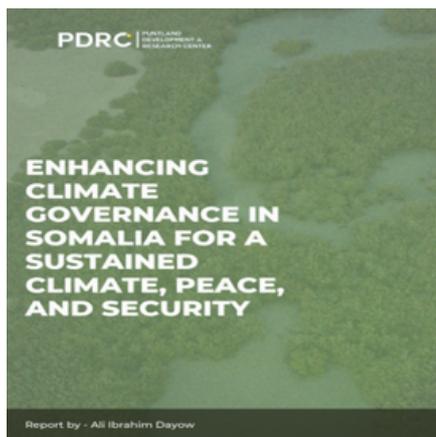


The report explores how digital platforms like Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp, and YouTube influence Somalia’s fragile peace and conflict situation. While social media has become an essential tool for communication, news, and mobilization among Somalis both locally and in the diaspora, it has also become a source of clan polarization, misinformation, and political incitement. The study emphasizes how online narratives often drive inter-clan conflict, with diaspora-based influencers identified as the primary sources of tensions. Based on surveys with 312 respondents across Somalia and interviews with 32 journalists, influencers, and policymakers, the research shows that most Somalis see social media as mainly having a negative effect on conflict dynamics.



Policy implementation remains a major challenge in developing countries, where many laws and strategies exist but are not effectively carried out. This paper examines the “implementation gap” in Puntland State, highlighting key barriers such as donor dependence, weak problem analysis, poor coordination, overlapping mandates, limited resources, and weak monitoring systems. These challenges lead to unresolved public issues, declining trust in institutions, and stalled economic progress. The paper recommends reforms including clearer ministerial roles, stronger central oversight, prioritization of high-impact policies, better links between policy and law, and improved monitoring and evaluation, alongside sustainable funding, staff retention, and stronger stakeholder engagement to ensure effective implementation.

POLICY BRIEFS



This paper connects legal frameworks, climate finance mechanisms, and governance structures to enhance coordination and facilitate devolution of climate action across all levels. It highlights the integration of traditional knowledge with modern policy, enhances transparency in climate finance, and empowers women and youth as agents of climate resilience (MoECC, 2020; UNDP, 2022). The analysis is grounded in a comprehensive desk review, examination of papers delivered during the PDRC 3rd Annual Conference on the Climate–Peace– Security Nexus, and rich reflections from panel discussions, providing triangulated and evidence-based insights into the persistent gaps in climate governance.



Jointly developed by Somali Public Agenda (SPA) and Puntland Development and Research Centre (PDRC), this policy paper presents a range of options and potential solutions for resolving these three contentious political issues. The analysis herein is the outcome of mapping the three most critical political issues, roundtable discussions that brought together 142 Somali political and civic actors for focused discussions, two focus group discussions with Puntland and Jubaland government officials and key informant interviews. Based on these findings, this policy paper describes and explains the rationale, process, merits and limitations of each proposed option and potential solution.

PDRCTALKS

PDRCTalks is one of PDRC's strongest public engagement tools. It brings together scholars, policymakers, practitioners, students, and citizens for open discussion on national issues. The platform creates space for informed dialogue at a time when public debate is often fragmented. It enables participants to hear expert perspectives, ask questions, and reflect together on governance, peacebuilding, social development, and culture. The forum has become an anchor of civic learning in Puntland and Somalia.

Quarterly, PDRCTalks hosts respected speakers who present evidence-based arguments drawn from research, historical experience, and lived realities. These sessions help bridge the gap between technical knowledge and community understanding. Livestreaming and social media have expanded this audience, reaching thousands across Somalia and the diaspora. This has turned PDRCTalks into a national reference point for thoughtful discussion.

The forum strengthens PDRC's mission as a solutions-focused institution. It supports public awareness, promotes critical debate, and encourages a culture of accountability. Over time, it has become a trusted platform for examining complex national challenges in a calm and constructive manner. Its effectiveness lies in its consistency, credibility, and capacity to bring diverse voices together in a shared conversation about Somalia's future.



PDRCTALKS 30: Governance by Remote Control of Somalia's Third Republic

1. Purpose and context

PDRCTalks 30 focused on Somalia's political order after 2000 and examined how state-building has unfolded under what the speaker described as the Third Republic. The session brought together more than 200 participants from government, civil society, academia, and local communities in Garowe. The event aimed to clarify how Somalia's governance system emerged, how it functions today, and why it struggles to meet the expectations of a modern state. The Executive Director opened the dialogue by underscoring the value of informed national discussion and the urgency of addressing governance challenges

2. Key arguments from the keynote speaker

Professor Keynan argued that Somalia's current governance model was created outside the country, lacks constitutional legitimacy, and does not meet the basic requirements of a modern state. He traced the historical evolution of states and compared Somalia's externally engineered political settlement to the organic development seen in other regions. He emphasized the severe mismatch between Somalia's political arrangements and the principles of sovereignty, rule of law, citizen representation, and territorial authority.

He described the Third Republic as a structure that transferred real power away from citizens, weakened institutions, enabled elite capture, and fueled corruption, while failing to address the rise of Al-Shabaab or consolidate national sovereignty.

3. Panel insights and audience engagement

The panel discussion highlighted the collapse of the Third Republic's founding agreements, especially the power-sharing framework and provisional constitution. Speakers noted the centralization of power, the erosion of federalism, and the government's inability to counter armed groups or deliver essential services. Participants raised questions about clan-based politics, the influence of external actors, and the future of state-building. Panelists warned that unresolved conflicts, the proliferation of weapons, and deep political mistrust risk pushing the country toward widespread violence. The session ended with a shared call for a new political order grounded in Somali realities and inclusive governance.

PDRCTALKS 31: SUSTAINABLE HEALTH FINANCING THROUGH LOCALLY DRIVEN STRATEGIES IN PUNTLAND



1. Purpose and context

PDRCTalks 31 addressed the urgent need to strengthen Puntland's health financing at a time of declining donor support. The Executive Director emphasized the pressure on the health sector and the importance of community engagement in sustaining primary health care. The session was designed to encourage realistic solutions rooted in local ownership rather than reliance on external aid. The event gathered government officials, health professionals, civil society actors, and community representatives.

2. Key arguments from the keynote speaker

Professor Khalif Bile outlined the foundations of primary health care and linked them directly to Universal Health Coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals. He emphasized that health is a human right and that Puntland's demographic realities require an approach grounded in community health workers, stronger district hospitals, and integrated services for displaced and nomadic groups. He highlighted the severe shortage of health professionals and called for reforms that strengthen local capacity, use research to improve service quality, and connect health system priorities to broader development results such as poverty reduction, gender equality, and climate resilience.

3. Panel insights and audience engagement

Panelists and participants discussed the causes of donor aid cuts, the need for stronger government commitment, and the urgency of shifting from donor dependence to community-based financing. Contributions emphasized practical steps, including public awareness campaigns, local revenue generation, targeted taxation, diaspora partnerships, and community insurance schemes. Several speakers stressed decentralization and public-private collaboration. A success story from Bargaal district showed how community contributions funded salaries for 20 health workers, making services free. The session concluded with a shared understanding that primary health care must be financed and organized locally for long-term sustainability.

PDRCTALKS 32: CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONFLICT: THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL RESOLUTION MECHANISMS



1. Purpose and context

PDRCTalks 32 explored how climate change is reshaping conflict dynamics and how Somali customary systems can contribute to conflict resolution. The session aimed to reconnect environmental pressures with local governance and traditional law. Elders, government officials, researchers, and community members attended the forum. The discussion framed climate shocks, displacement, and land pressures as long-term drivers of conflict that require both modern and traditional solutions.

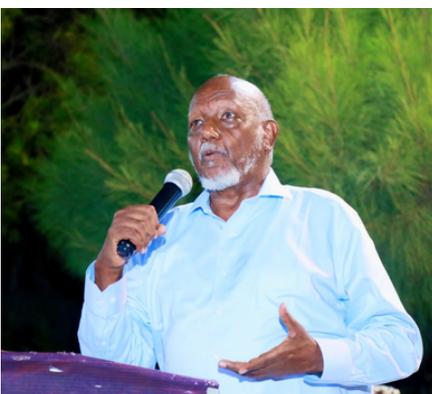
2. Key arguments from the keynote speaker

Speakers highlighted the depth and sophistication of Somali customary law, its procedures, and its emphasis on fairness and collective responsibility. Sultan Abdisalam explained the origins of Somali law, the five pillars of arbitration, and the roles of elders in maintaining order. He described how customary systems historically managed resource scarcity, protected grazing lands, and regulated access to water. Other contributors explained how environmental governance weakened following state collapse, resulting in deforestation, overgrazing, and rural displacement. They argued that combining traditional authority with modern institutions offers a pathway to address climatic stress and prevent disputes.

3. Panel insights and audience engagement

Panelists noted that climate-related conflicts are increasing, particularly around land, settlement expansion, and resource competition. They stressed the importance of selecting mediators who understand local history, culture, and conflict patterns. Speakers highlighted the need to revive useful customary practices while strengthening state capacity. The session concluded that Somalia sits between two incomplete systems: weakened traditional frameworks and fragile modern institutions. Harmonizing both is essential for managing conflict, supporting resilience, and guiding communities through ongoing environmental pressures.

PDRCTALKS 33: REVISITING MODERN SOMALIA: FORGETTING THE PAST MEANS RELIVING IT



1. Purpose and context

PDRCTalks 33 focused on Somali history, culture, language, and governance. The session aimed to encourage a more inclusive understanding of Somali identity and to examine how cultural narratives shape political development. Held at the PDRC compound on October 2, 2025, the event brought together government officials, civil society members, scholars, activists, and youth. It highlighted the role of research in correcting historical distortions and strengthening national cohesion.

2. Key arguments from the keynote speaker

Professor Mohamed Haji Mukhtar explained that Somalis share broad cultural foundations but have distinct subcultures that deserve recognition. He introduced historical revisionism as a research-based approach to correcting inaccurate or exclusionary narratives. He examined how Somali literature, poetry, and language have often centered the experiences of Af-Maxaa-tiri speakers while marginalizing other groups such as Maay speakers.

He argued that linguistic and cultural dominance have contributed to political exclusion and that national history must reflect all Somali communities. He also reviewed early state formation and noted long-standing inequities in power distribution.

3. Panel insights and audience engagement

Panelists discussed the feasibility of adopting inclusive language policies, revising cultural narratives, and rethinking governance structures. They highlighted the challenges of implementing federalism and the need for balanced regional representation. Contributions underscored the importance of integrating the Maay language into education and official communication to strengthen inclusivity. The discussion ended with a call for deeper cultural understanding, fairer political systems, and more representative state-building processes that acknowledge the country's full diversity.

TOLMO SOCIETY

With support from PDRC, the Tolmo Society Somalia's third cohort of the EmpowerYouth & Change Makers Fellowship successfully strengthened leadership, entrepreneurial, and professional capacities among participating youth through a five-month structured program combining learning, mentorship, and practical application.

The fellowship maintained consistent engagement through weekly sessions, guided readings, collaborative discussions, mentorship meetings, and initiative milestone reviews. Participants completed 23 weekly sessions supported by extensive mentoring, collectively examined over 40 articles, and engaged with experienced practitioners who connected theory to lived experience.

Fellows completed internationally recognized courses including "Learning How to Learn" (McMaster University/UCSD) and "Becoming a Change Maker" (University of Cape Town). They studied key texts such as "The Compound Effect," "Mindset," and "Leaders Eat Last," developing stronger analytical thinking and study habits. The program covered personal branding and career design, communication skills, critical thinking, and leadership development. Participants explored values, professional visibility, and evidence-based reasoning while learning to communicate effectively across diverse audiences. Fellows developed three structured initiatives applying human-centered design principles: INBAT Agrovate (climate-smart agriculture), Mind Voice Initiative (mental health awareness), and ELPI Initiative (peacebuilding). Teams also produced public videos addressing social challenges, with one gaining recognition through social media. Notable moments included guest lectures from national leaders, a residential retreat in Eyl that strengthened peer relationships, and mentorship relationships providing accountability and practical guidance. Collaboration with THINK School of Leadership enhanced curriculum delivery through simulations and facilitator training. Participants demonstrated increased self-awareness, improved communication abilities, stronger teamwork, more realistic initiative planning, and expanded professional networks.

The fellowship confirmed that structured investment in youth produces meaningful results extending beyond the classroom, with graduates now positioned as responsible leaders contributing to Somalia's social and economic progress.



Tolmo Society convening of multiple cohorts at PDRC

OUR STORIES

PDRC Annual Peace Conference 2025

Strengthening peace and Unity in the Sheerbi

Economic Development in Eyl - NETFISH Construction

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