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BAREEDO PLATFORM SOMALIA



Bareedo Platform Somalia
Democracy | Digital Rights | Open Government

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DEMOCRACY

Support For Local Government Elections Held In Eyl, Qardho And Ufeyn In Puntland

Bareedo Platform has been supporting building democracy in Somalia and in particular to Puntland, an increased awareness and engagement of civil society have pushed Puntland to hold local government elections, and for the first time in more than half a century, three districts in the Puntland state of Somalia held “one person, one vote” elections in October 2021.

Bareedo Platform has been advocating inclusion of marginalized communities such as internally displaced people, refugees and minorities, and this resulted in that internally displaced communities (IDPs) to be included and exercised their rights to vote and run for public offices as prescribed in the constitution. Muhsin Abdullahi, an IDP candidate, was among the councilors elected in Qardo.

Bareedo Platform also played a role in monitoring of the election to ensure accountability and transparency where more than 28,000 people cast their votes in Eyl, Ufeyn and Qardo democratically electing 87 council members, of whom 23 are women. More than 51% of the registered voters were women, and the youth accounted for more than half of the votes in all the three municipalities as well.



Building The Leadership And Civic Skills Of Young People In Somalia

Somalia is building its nascent governance structure after decades of unrests, conflicts and instability, but sadly young people who make up 70% of the population are excluded from political processes and decision-making. Young people turned to negative coping mechanisms such as illegal migration, engaging in organized crime, and even joining violent extremist groups. In particular, young people from socially and/or economically disadvantaged communities are rarely engaged undermining the process of building an inclusive, more peaceful and prosperous society.

Bareedo Platform trained 2,200 young men and women throughout Somalia on leadership and advocacy skills and also taught them about their legal and constitutional rights to influence the decision-making process and exercise their role as responsible citizens.

Furthermore, Bareedo Platform also carried out series of advocacy and campaigning events that increased attention to the younger generation and its role in shaping society.





Promotion Of Digital Transformation Of Public Services In Somalia

Despite years of anarchy, Somalia has a successful ICT sector, providing one of the most cost-effective voice and data services in Africa where 1GB of data costs \$0.55 on average. More than 2 million people of the country's 15 million population use the Internet constantly, and the onset of COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions imposed to contain the spread of the pandemic has exacerbated the use of the Internet. Somalia ranks 191th worldwide in adoption of the e-government system, and the country developed its first ICT Policy and Strategy 2019-2024 to facilitate digital transformation, but national and local governments in Somalia still rely on legacy and paper-based systems to deliver public services, and there's little chance of meeting ambitions laid out in the strategy.

With support of Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) and in line with the objectives of Somalia's ICT Policy and Strategy 2019-2024, Bareedo Platform engaged local government authorities in Garowe and Mogadishu on digital transformation for efficient service delivery, citizen empowerment and government-citizen interactions through hosting of roundtables and advocacy campaigns.

- a) Four awareness rising and advocacy messages on adoption of e-governance policies and practices**

Bareedo Platform produced 4 videos to carry out awareness rising and advocacy on adoption of e-governance policies and practices to achieve ambitions laid out in the country's ICT Policy and Strategy 2019-2024:-

- 2 videos each in 2.5 minutes explaining and showing the public about the meaning, advantages of e-government, were posted in social media platforms in 5 popular media outlets. These videos reached 18,000 viewers online.
- 2 videos with scholars explaining e-government and how adoption of e-services by the local government can transform and facilitate more accessible government services, allow greater public access to information, and make government more accountable to citizens. These videos were broadcasted through Puntland TV and reached up to 10,000 viewers.

b) Two roundtable discussions for officials of local governments of Mogadishu and Garowe on adoption of e-governance practices and digitalization of their public services to citizens

Bareedo Platform organized and conducted two roundtable discussions for Mogadishu and Garowe Local Governments' officials on adoption of e-governance practices and digitalization of their public services to citizens. These roundtable discussions held in Garowe and Mogadishu each lasted two days and was participated by the local government officials such as department staff, local councils and other subordinate staff, academia, media and other important stakeholders.

In these discussions, Bareedo Platform presented more about e-government concept and also examples of cities that successfully adopted e-governance system. After the brief presentation, participants had an open discussion focusing on adopting e-governance system at local governments of Garowe and Mogadishu and how to be adopted and implemented the digitalization of public services and the challenges surrounding to the process.

Garowe

Garowe is the administrative capital of Puntland state of Somalia and has population over 600,000. The roundtable discussion was held in Garowe on November 15, 2021 with participation of 29 officials from Garowe Local Authority and 21 persons from academic and media institutions, and also civil society members based in Garowe. After long discussion that lasted two days long, these are the main deliberations and commitments raised during the roundtable:-

- There is a fast growing private-led digital transformation in Garowe where vital services such as private-run public transportation, academic institutions, mobile money, banks and other sectors such as hospitals moved to online.

- After the COVID-19 onset, the State Government of Puntland swiftly introduced several online services such as continuation of education through online and also launched Learning Passport, a digital remote learning platform together with UNICEF and the Government of Puntland in Somalia in July 2020 in Garowe to enable children access educational content both online and offline from their homes.
- At local level, Garowe Local Government was already committed and in process of adopting e-services to take advantage of the growing Internet connectivity and technologies in Somalia.
- Garowe Local Government successfully digitalized 3 of its 15 public services, and introduced e-tax system and online land and property registration in 2020 where citizens can pay tax online, and also recently unveiled e-participatory platform (www.talo-wadaag.so) where residents in Garowe can rate and vote the public services offered by the Garowe Local Government, address their concerns and interact with local officials.
- Garowe Local Government also digitalized its revenue and expenditure where budget reports and data are available online to the public at Garowe city's website (www.garowecity.pl.so).
- Garowe Local Government plans to digitalize 2 more services in 2022 which are birth registration and business permits. And also committed to moving online fully in 2025.
- Participants raised some irregularities and difficulties over the use of the e-participatory platform (www.talo-wadaag.so) by the digitally illiterate people, and therefore, suggested to the Garowe Local Government to further improve and simplify e-participatory platform as well as make the platform available as an app in the future.
- The digital services introduced by the Garowe Local Government are not connected each other or not put all in one platform or gateway. Therefore, the participants suggested to the Garowe Local Government to harmonize all of its online services in an app or one gateway which is easier to the users, same as other local authorities of other countries such as Muscat.
- Apart from commitment, Garowe Local Government lacks a policy and strategy that guides their work toward digitalization of public services. Therefore, the participants suggested to the Garowe Local Government to come up strategy and policies necessary for their process of transforming public services, and engage public and civil society in preparation of such guidelines.
- Puntland State University, East Africa University and Bosaso University offered technical and capacity building support for the Garowe Local Government.

Mogadishu

Mogadishu is the capital and most populous city of Somalia with population over 2,388,000. The roundtable discussion was held in Mogadishu on January 20, 2022 with participation of 51

participants from Mogadishu Municipality's officials, commissioners of Mogadishu's districts, academia, media and other important stakeholders in Mogadishu, Somalia. After long discussion that lasted two days long, these are the main deliberations and issues raised during the roundtable:-

- Apart from insecurity and unstable situation in Mogadishu, the internet connection and accessibility has been getting momentum and residents of Mogadishu enjoy a high speed and cheap Internet and thanks that the city was the first in Somalia to get a fibre optic internet.
- There is a fast growing private-led digital transformation. Young people who make up over 70% of the population in Mogadishu use the internet more than ever before as the internet remained their biggest source of entertainment in the face of absence of vital recreational sectors.
- Mogadishu has been suffering from continued insecurity and instability where the extremist group often carries out bombings at high-profile locations in the city forcing many residents to hesitate seeking services from the government offices due to fear of such security concerns.
- In view of the tight security measures put in place after suicide bomb attack on Mogadishu Local Government's Building that left death of many officials including the mayor in August 1, 2019 which further jeopardized direct services to the residents in Mogadishu, all participants anomalously underscored that moving services to the online or digital can be the best solution. They also underlines that digital services will increase the reach, accessibility and quality of the services offered by the Local Government.
- There has been no prior commitment or plans that Mogadishu Local Government was to digitalize public services because of other appealing priorities of which security is the top on the agenda. But, the officials from Mogadishu Local Government said they have been thinking of e-governance system considering the growing private-led digital transformation. They said that 85% of the residents in Mogadishu use mobile money and nearly 60% of them pay major services such as electricity bills, transportation, TV subscriptions and other daily transactions electronically.
- Many education institutions have migrated to online classes to enable learning to continue while COVID-19 preventive measures are still in place, and this puts many young people to rely on the Internet more than before. There are about countless online shopping services in Mogadishu, with consumers making the greatest shift to online shopping.
- There is a well established government-to-government digital services, but there is no single local government service available to the public in digital format.

- The Statistics Unit was established recently and is under process of working fully, and there is also ongoing arrangements between the unit and Federal National Statistics Agency on issue of civil registration that will go on with digital system.
- In view of the insecurity and difficultness of collecting tax, Mogadishu Local Government officials pointed out that adoption of e-government will even contribute to the revenue growth and reduction of costs associated with collection of taxes from the citizens although they said tax collectors are targeted by the terrorist groups.
- Mogadishu Local Government officials promised to adopt digital transformation and will organize an internal meeting to initiate an immediate plan and move the matter forward.
- Participants suggested to the Mogadishu Local Government to prioritise the adoption of e-governance system, and break implementation down into small steps and for example, to adopt the below easy-to-transform services first and putting those require more time and resources in the second or suiting them to a long-term plan.
- All participants underlined that e-participatory platform, same as Garowe, can be introduced within 2022 and can be a great move toward implementing digital services in the near future. This platform can engage and bring residents in Mogadishu more closer to the Mogadishu Local Government and will be a channel where residents and officials communicate, interact and plan together.
- Mogadishu Local Government promised to digitalize property tax system, birth registration form and other services that are simple and attainable in 2022.





DIGITAL RIGHTS

Keeping Internet Open and Interrupted

Bareedo Platform defends and promotes openness of the internet and has been responding to emerging digital threats and monitoring of violations such as Internet disruptions, illegal surveillance, arrest of bloggers and the passage of hurtful legislation. Bareedo Platform undertaken the following achievements for this year:-

- Bareedo Platform has been advocating for keeping social media open during national exams in Somalia, and as result of the efforts and campaigns made to end the practice, the country's national secondary exams were concluded in June 2, 2021 without disruption of social media communications to discourage cheating any more. **Read more:** <https://bit.ly/3amiUyP>
- Bareedo Platform drafted and signed an open letter together with other 40 organizations, under a global network of #KeepItOn coalition and appealed to the Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble, to ensure that the internet, social media platforms, and all other communication channels are open, secure, and accessible throughout the election period. **Read more:** <https://bit.ly/3tzRpCb>

- Bareedo Platform signed together with other organizations several open letters sent to several countries to keep the Internet open during elections.

Digital Help Desk

Bareedo Platform established a Digital Help Desk in January 2020 and provides technical assistance for journalists and human rights activists in Somalia who are under intensified digital threats. The desk provided technical assistance for 80 journalists so far and also facilitated digital security trainings provided for 112 journalists in Somalia. The desk is run by one digital security expert, and apart from responding digital threats, desk collects digital data and produces reports and blog posts.

- With data collected by the desk, Bareedo Platform published an article showing how Somali people who are already struggling with the health and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, are also distressed by another pandemic of mobile money scams, making the country's largest financial service distrustful. **Read more:** <https://bit.ly/3Q1ZYWO>
- Bareedo Platform also published another article answering why parents worry in relation to their teenagers' extended use of the Internet and also presents the relevant recommendations that can be peace of mind for parents in order to maintain the country's growing digital transformation. **Read more:** <https://bit.ly/3GMClal>

PARTNERSHIPS

Bareedo Platform strengthened collaboration with and played an active role in the work of the following regional and global networks and coalitions:

1. [People Powered](#), a global hub for civil society organizations promoting participatory democracy or direct participation of community members in making the policy decisions that affect their lives.
2. [Design for Democracy Coalition \(D4D\)](#), a coordination mechanism between groups of democracy and human rights organizations around the world that are working at the forefront of technology and democracy issues.
3. [Africa Freedom of Information Centre \(AFIC\)](#), the largest membership pan-African civil society organization and resource centre that promotes citizens right of access to information in Africa.
4. [Open Data Charter \(ODC\)](#), a collaboration between over 150 governments and organisations working to open up data based on a shared set of principles.
5. [The Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa \(CIPESA\)](#), one of two centres established under the Catalysing Access to Information and Communications Technologies in Africa (CATIA) initiative.

6. [Bertha Foundation](#), an organization based in UK and supports activists, storytellers, and lawyers who are working to bring about social and economic justice and human rights for all.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The pandemic has dramatically affected the organization's work in terms of compelling staff to work from home to avoid close contacts and many activities to be moved to online. A significant budget was lost to buying COVID-19 PPE such as face masks, sanitizers and gloves to ensure the safety and protection of staff members and of the young people participating in some of the programme. A review must be done between the organization's entire team to develop rapidly a coherent set of measures to tackle the current challenges.

There have been continued challenges in accessing reliable, sustained, and flexible funding. Therefore, the resource mobilization team should work hard to secure sustainable funds and establish extra partnerships and collaborations to increase resources and support for the activities.

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