1.0 INTRODUCTION

Bareedo Platform is a non-governmental and non-profit youth-led organization founded in 2015 in Somalia by youth members to promote democratic values and institutions, participatory and inclusive society, open government, and digital rights in Somalia. Bareedo Platform, fully registered as a non-governmental organization in the state of Puntland in Somalia, serves the entire country. The mission of Bareedo Platform is to promote democratic values and institutions, a participatory and inclusive society, an open government, robust digital literacy, skills, and security, with the goal of achieving a country that upholds the core democratic values, principles, and standards, the human and political rights of all people, and the openness of government.

Bareedo Platform generally focuses on three thematic areas: a) participatory democracy; b) open government; and c) digital rights. In line with these three core focus areas, Bareedo Platform implemented three projects, including a) the promotion of meaningful and active participation of youth, women, and displaced people in the decision-making processes in Somalia; b) the promotion of citizen engagement through the innovative use of data and digital technologies in Somalia; and c) promotion of freedom of expression and information in Somalia.

This report summarizes the key activities, achievements, challenges, and recommendations of the projects implemented by Bareedo Platform in Somalia from January 1, 2022, to December 31, 2022.

2.0 KEY THEMATIC AREAS OF FOCUS

Bareedo Platform focuses on the following key thematic areas:

- **Participatory Democracy:** The Bareedo Platform promotes inclusive, transparent, and accountable public institutions that contribute directly to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 16. The platform advocates for widespread political participation, specifically emphasizing the involvement of youth, women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities.

- **Open Government:** Bareedo Platform advocates and promotes open government principles to enhance public access to information by utilizing modern, open technologies. It also aims to reflect public needs in decision-making to achieve various policy outcomes within the framework of the 2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals.

- **Digital Rights:** Bareedo Platform defend and promote digital rights by building citizens’ digital literacy and digital security skills, responding to emerging digital threats and monitoring of violations such as Internet disruptions, illegal surveillance, arrest of bloggers and the passage of hurtful legislation.

3.0 GEOGRAPHY OF FOCUS AND REGISTRATION
Bareedo Platform is registered at Ministry of Planning, Economic Development and International Relations of State of Puntland in Somalia as a nongovernmental nonprofit organization with certification number of 0000314. The organization was registered and exists in accordance with NGO Act 2016.

Bareedo Platform encompasses the entirety of Somalia, except for certain activities specifically implemented in specific localities, such as projects specifically implemented in the state of Puntland in Somalia.

Bareedo Platform is headquartered at Garowe, the capital of state of Puntland in Somalia.

4.0 DEMOCRACY

Summary of Impact

✓ Strengthened the political leadership and civic education capacity of 2000 youth, women, and displaced people.
✓ 6,000 people, primarily women, youth, and displaced people, learned about civics, the workings of government, the electoral process, current events, historical context, and campaign politics.
✓ Enhanced the capacity of 21 youth-led networks and groups to advocate for and encourage youth’s active participation in public affairs.
✓ Supported Mogadishu Municipality in adopting of e-governance practices and the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve the delivery of government services to citizens, empower citizens through access to information, and improve interactions between citizens and public officials.
✓ 34 journalists trained on Right to Information and Protection of Vulnerable Groups.

4.1 Promotion of Participatory and Deliberative Democracy in Somalia

4.1.1 Voter education for marginalized groups to strengthen their active participation in the local government elections in Puntland, Somalia

Puntland, an autonomous state established in August 1998 after the collapse of Somalia's central government, with a conducive political landscape, economic progress, and improved security measures, started the democratization process by holding the first local government elections on the basis of ‘one person, one vote’ in 2021 to fulfill the long-awaited dream of the people of Puntland. Puntland piloted the first local government elections in the three districts of Qardho, Eyl, and Ufeyn in 2021. Due to the clan-based political structure that has existed, as well as limited
leadership skills and civic education, vulnerable groups such as youth, women, and displaced people are largely marginalized in decision-making and are facing the same challenges in the ongoing democratic transformation in Puntland State, Somalia.

In response to these challenges, Bareedo Platform launched a civic education project that strengthened the political leadership and civic education capacity of 2000 youth, women, and displaced people in the districts of Garowe, Galkacyo, Burtinle, Goldogob, Jariban, Qardho, Bosaso, Caluula, Buhodle, Taleh, Qandala, Dhahar, Eyl, Iskushuban, and Badhan, with the objective of ensuring their active political participation in the 2023 local government elections in Puntland as voters, civic educators, supporters, candidates, and observers.

More than 6,000 people, primarily women, youth, and displaced people, participated in voting education practical sessions where they learned about civics, the workings of government, the electoral process, current events, historical context, and campaign politics.

The project also enhanced the capacity of 21 youth-led networks and groups to advocate for and encourage youth's active participation in public affairs, with the goal of achieving an inclusive political structure and institutions at all levels. This critical stage could serve as a turning point in ensuring de facto youth engagement in Puntland’s emerging democracy.

4.1.2 Facilitated two virtual workshops to exchange and compile best practices: Displaced People
In a virtual workshop organized by People Powered, the global hub for participatory democracy based in the USA, that was attended by more than 41 members from civil society organizations and practitioners from Africa, Latin America, Europe, and Asia, Bareedo Platform actively contributed to the sharing of the best practices of inclusion of displaced people in decision-making with its rich experience of this topic in Somalia.

The main objective of this workshop was to share and exchange best practices and experiences regarding the inclusion of displaced people in decision-making to make participatory and deliberative democracy programs more inclusive of marginalized communities.

4.2 Promotion of Citizen Engagement Through the Innovative Use of Data and Digital Technologies in Somalia

4.2.1 Discussions on the planning of the adoption of e-government by Mogadishu Municipality in Somalia

Somalia has the cheapest telecommunications and Internet in Africa, and despite the development of the first ICT Policy and Strategy 2019–2024 to facilitate Somalia’s digital transformation, local authorities still rely on legacy systems, while 89% of the people would like to see the digitization of government services as well as improved citizen engagement. Due to these challenges, Somalia's citizens’ participation and engagement have remained low, particularly due to the exclusion and lack of engagement of marginalized communities such as youth, women, minorities, and displaced people in decision-making. This has remained a barrier to peace and development in an already fragile environment, where inclusive and participatory processes are essential for maintaining ongoing peace and state-building initiatives. The adoption of technology-facilitated initiatives to address governance and development challenges is the least progressive area in Somalia, and there is little chance of meeting the ambitions laid out in the country's ICT policy and strategy, as well as the aspirations of the African Union's Agenda 2063.

Bareedo Platform has been actively promoting and has strong experience and technical capacity in the implementation of programs strengthening citizen engagement through the use of civic technology solutions in Somalia. In line with this, Bareedo Platform organized a roundtable discussion for Mogadishu Municipality’s officials, commissioners of Mogadishu’s districts, academia, the media, and other important stakeholders in Mogadishu, Somalia.
The main objective of this discussion was to advocate and push for Mogadishu Municipality to adopt e-governance practices and the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve the delivery of government services to citizens, empower citizens through access to information, and improve interactions between citizens and public officials. In this meeting, they discussed the plans for adopting an e-governance system at Mogadishu Municipality, how to adopt and implement the digitization of public services, and the challenges surrounding the process. The discussion also addressed the challenges and barriers that residents and Mogadishu Municipality encounter in the process of effective and efficient service delivery in the face of continued insecurity and political instability, particularly in Mogadishu.

4.3 Promotion of Freedom of Expression and Information in Somalia

4.3.1 Training for journalists on right to information and protection of vulnerable groups in Garowe, Somalia

Bareedo Platform Facilitated Right to Information and Protection of Vulnerable Groups: Remote Training Units for 34 journalists from different media outlets in Puntland, mainly those based in Garowe, the capital city of Puntland State in Somalia. Puntland Media Co. and Caritas Somalia, in collaboration with the School of Journalism of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan,
Italy, funded the training. The Perigeo NGO and the Itstime Research Center of the Catholic University served as consulting partners for the project.

34 participants, including 21 male and 13 female journalists, editors, and other media personnel from prominent Puntland media outlets, primarily based in Garowe, Puntland's capital, participated in the 5-day training over five days from May 29, 2022, to June 11, 2022. 34 journalists and media workers from the key media outlets in Puntland improved their understanding of the international and national laws on freedom of expression, freedom of the press, human rights, and how to effectively address censorship and safety problems. Journalists gained the capacity and skills to use the existing digital tools to counter misinformation, disinformation, fake news, and unreliable contents. They received digital security knowledge and used the relevant digital tools to defeat the growing digital threats, do their vital work safely and effectively, and make their families and their sources considerably more secure. Furthermore, journalists understood their role in protecting vulnerable groups when reporting.

5.0 DIGITAL RIGHTS

Summary of Impact
5.1 Digital Security Training for 55 Journalists in Mogadishu, Somalia

Somalia is the world’s most dangerous country for reporters, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists. On a day-to-day basis, online harassment and censorship against journalists and social rights activists in Somalia are on the rise. Most journalists depend on the Internet and digital communications for research, interaction, and news distribution. Without basic digital safeguards, Somali journalists extensively use Internet and social media networks for news distribution and audience interaction. As a result, they face constant threats in online settings. These threats can take various forms, such as the dissemination of threats and disinformation, stalking, and the broadcasting of private or personally identifiable information. Authorities have established dedicated teams to troll journalists and report them to Facebook’s standard enforcers, with the aim of disabling their accounts and silencing critical media voices. Many journalists have given up their jobs because of these growing threats, and others have left the country.

To address these challenges, Bareedo Platform organized a 2-day digital security training for 55 journalists in Somalia, which took place in Mogadishu. The main goal of the training was to strengthen the digital security knowledge of Somali journalists, help them defeat growing digital threats, do their vital work safely and effectively, and make their families and sources considerably more secure.

The 55 participants in the training, who included journalists, bloggers, photographers, producers, editors, broadcast reporters, social media editors, publishers, and news directors, have been grappling with ongoing digital threats and risks. In this training, they learned available strategies and sophisticated digital security tools that could protect them in the digital space, including using secure email services, encrypting their data, or utilizing IP blocking services that help hide sensitive online activities. They also learned the basic security and privacy features of smartphones and Windows computers, as well as those of online accounts.

5.2 Digital Help Desk
The Digital Help Desk was established in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, and it is the only of its kind that exists in Somalia to provide timely technical assistance and advice to journalists, media organizations, and activists in Somalia who have been under or at risk of digital threats.

In 2022, the Digital Help Desk provided emergency technical support for more than 221 cases, mainly journalists and activists.

The desk assisted 55% of cases related to online attacks that involved hacking or taking over personal or organizational online accounts, 25% involved online gender-based violence attacks targeting female journalists and activists, and 15% involved the forceful seizure or theft of online devices. The desk provided sufficient digital support for these cases, as well as follow-up digital safety assistance.

In addition to this, the Digital Help Desk circulated and shared a handbook, "Information Security for Journalists," which is a very important practical tool for journalists, especially investigative reporters. The desk has been working on the translation of these digital resources to local languages as well as connecting journalists and activists who are at risk of digital threats to available digital safety resources and tools.

**6.0 PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION**

Bareedo Platform expanded its collaboration with global, regional, and national partners and stakeholders, as well as networks and movements with whom we share the same mission.

In 2022, Bareedo Platform signed a collaboration agreement with AfroLeadership, a pan-African non-governmental organization that promotes sustainable development as the result of a balanced sharing of power between state actors and citizens. Both Bareedo Platform and AfroLeadership committed to working together toward building participatory democracy, open data, and civic tech, as well as the capacity of the local governments in Somalia. This includes promoting and strengthening the capacity of the local governments to adopt participatory planning and budgeting in collaboration with the Association of Local Government Authorities of Puntland (ALGAPL) and the Association of Local Government Authorities of Somaliland (ALGASL).

**7.0 CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The challenges included the abandonment of Somalia’s federal government's planned direct election (one person, one vote) to break with past indirect election methods. The direct election plan failed due to technical, political, and security challenges, including resistance from
opposition leaders and several federal member states who felt that holding a free and fair election would be premature. As a result, the country abandoned the concept of democracy and reverted to clan-based elections in 2022. Even this impacted the other ongoing democratization activities in the state of Puntland in Somalia as the political leaders prioritized the federal elections over the ongoing democratization activities in Puntland, delaying the direct local government elections until next year. Bareedo Platform replanned many activities intended for supporting the democratic process in the federal government of Somalia.

Bareedo Platform, together with other stakeholders and international partners involved in supporting the ongoing democratization transition in Somalia, should make additional efforts and pressure the elected federal government administration to set a clear strategy and implementation timeline for the democratization process in Somalia. Furthermore, it is crucial to prioritize the continuation and finalization of direct local government elections in Puntland to guarantee the successful implementation of the democratization transformation in Puntland, Somalia.

One of the other challenges was that, due to funding limitations, Bareedo Platform was only able to implement the planned activities related to open government, including open data, a concept it has been promoting for many years in Somalia. Next year, we should prioritize resource mobilization, seek partnerships, and create opportunities to boost open government initiatives in Somalia. This is critical for inclusive and participatory policymaking, in which citizens are involved in the formulation, implementation, and follow-up of public policies.