



POLITICAL INCLUSION OF MARGINALISED GROUPS IN SOMALILAND

REPORT
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADAM – Academy for Development & Advocacy of Minority

CISU – Civil Society in Development

APD- Academy for Peace and Development

CRPD - The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

FGDS – Focus Group Discussions

KII – Key Informant Interview

MOLSA - Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Somaliland

MOFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs

PWDs - Persons with Disabilities

RVI- Rift Valley Institute

SIDA - The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

SONSAF - Somaliland Non-State Actors Forum

WHO - World Health Organization

Acknowledgment

This report resulted from a research conducted by SONSAF with the aim of gaining insights into how to enhance political inclusion for marginalized groups. The undertaking of this research reflects the sustained partnership between SONSAF and Guryosamo in pursuing the shared goals of inclusive democracy and social justice. We are appreciative of the funding provided by the Civil Society in Development (CISU), which has enabled the successful completion of this important study. We believe the findings from this report will provide valuable guidance on creating a more equitable political landscape where the voices of marginalized communities are heard, and their perspectives integrated. The content is solely the responsibility of the SONSAF and does not necessarily represent the official views of the funding organizations.

Executive Summary

It is now over 30 years since Somaliland reinstated its statehood. However, equitable inclusion of all citizens in public affairs remains still a significant governance challenge facing Somaliland and its democratic credentials. Inclusion presupposes that every person, regardless of grounds such as, age, gender, ability, clan background should have an equal opportunity to participate in or support the democratic process. Never the less, many citizens in Somaliland – especially from marginalized groups – view the state as accessible to only those with either economic might, right gender, without disability, or strong clan affiliations. Thus, exclusion of whole groups from the benefits of state-sanctioned development and the specific targeting of entire communities for discrimination is not unusual phenomenon in Somaliland. For many, the greatest sense of belonging and security derives not from the state itself but through the mediation of wealth, clan networks or physical characteristics they possess and gender. Women, Minorities, youth, and people with disabilities in the country remain some of the groups that have suffered most from this dynamic of exclusion.

Thus far, while political participation alone does not necessarily lead to inclusion, it is however the necessary first step in the long process towards bringing in the voices of communities and improving their status. This report, developed on the basis of a survey, focus group discussions and interviews with select representatives of marginalized groups and general stakeholders to the issues of the political inclusion of marginalized groups from August to October 2023, explored the challenges, existing gaps and opportunities for enhancing marginalized groups' political participation in Somaliland.

Key findings

- There is utter absence of recognition of marginalized groups as special interest groups in the Somaliland constitution, which is the highest law of the land. This leads to the perpetuation of the default discrimination and under representation of marginalized groups in the decision-making circles.
- The exorbitant cost associated with running for elective seats, totaling approximately \$100,000, poses a substantial barrier for candidates, particularly those hailing from marginalized groups who are already grappling with a multitude of challenges. This financial burden is further exacerbated by the fees imposed by the government on parliamentary election candidates, which are set at a staggering \$5,000 for parliament candidates, and \$2,500 for local governments' candidates.
- Despite efforts to improve marginalized groups' representation in the decision-making circles specifically in the legislature, the results are yet not very encouraging. With some groups such as the youth and the people with disability having zero representation in the lower house of the parliament. While women and minority clans have one representative each in the lower house. This degree of underrepresentation is consistent across all government arms and roles.

- Members of the marginalized groups aspiring to partake in Somaliland politics often face significant cultural barriers and negative societal stereotypes. Women, minority groups and people with disability are affected disproportionately by the cultural barriers and social norms that undermine their political aspirations. In addition to that, the four groups share a significant challenge posed by lack of ownership of financial resources and property that could be used to finance their political campaigns as they all suffer from high unemployment and absence of strong social network.
- A deeply ingrained patriarchal culture poses a substantial barrier to the acceptance of women into the political fold. This culture permeates through the social institutions that include political, public, private, and religious entities and institutions.
- On top of the cultural and financial barriers, youth face structural and legal challenges such as the minimum age for eligibility to run for public office, which is often set much higher than the age to vote, and in some instances set intentionally to disadvantage the youth. This has resulted in the absence of the youth from important institutions such as parliament.
- Somaliland is a majoritarian democracy. This reduces the chances of minority groups, dispersed across the 6 regions of Somaliland in small numbers, to garner enough numbers of votes needed to secure winning in the elections.
- Of the 1235 polling stations used for the 2021 combined elections, none was specially accommodating to the special needs of the PWDs. Absence of conducive and assistive environment to accommodate the special needs of People with Disabilities (PWDs) to and at the polling stations such as accessible transportation, ramps, braille voting slips for the visually impaired, and sign language interpreters for the deaf not only at the polling stations but also during the national political debates pose a significant challenge to the political participation of people with disabilities.
- Marginalized groups have, in general, a limited understanding about election intricacies and laws, as well as the rights and responsibilities of the citizens to understand when their electoral rights have been violated, by whom, what action to take, and where.
- Political Parties/associations' structures do not provide an enabling environment for inclusion and participation of PWDs. This has been observed to take the form of non-inclusive and absence from and decision-making bodies within the parties and associations such as the executive bodies.
- Political parties do not have in their structures wings for the PWDs and minority groups, in the same way the parties and political associations have wings for the youth and women.

Key Recommendations

Who	Recommendations
Persons with Disabilities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure political venues, polling stations and other relevant facilities are accessible. 2. Ensure political information and materials are available in PWD-friendly formats, including braille, audio, and in sign language, ensuring that PWDs have access to critical information. 3. Provide language translation services at political events 4. Organize specific capacity and confidence-building training in accessible formats for persons with disability, to enhance their political skills. 5. Provide training and awareness to election officials, staff, and volunteers about the specific needs and rights of PWDs. 6. Create mentorship programmes to encourage PWD's political ambitions 7. Implement awareness campaigns about the importance of inclusive politics and challenge stereotypes and discrimination of the PWD. 8. Advocate for PWD quotas in political positions 9. Establish financial support programmes for persons with disabilities candidates to offset high candidacy fees
Youth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lobby for reduced age limits for political participation with specific focus on the legislature chamber's eligibility ages. 2. Assess the needs of the young women willing to participate in political and public life in order to provide adequate and tailor-made support. 3. Establish financial support programmes for young candidates to offset high candidacy fees.
Women	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advocate for gender quotas in political positions. 2. Create mentorship programmes to encourage women's political ambitions. 3. Engage with media to promote role models for women to combat gender stereotypes and sexism. 4. Engage traditional and religious leaders to challenge the patriarchy and promote women political participation. 5. Establish financial support programmes for women candidates to offset high candidacy fees.
Minorities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage diverse representation in political advertisements. 2. Organize specific capacity- and confidence-building training for persons from minority groups, to encourage them and enhance their political skills. 3. Promote the participation of minority groups in the internal structures of the political parties, including at leadership levels, and consider the introduction of voluntary quotas. 4. Advocate for minority quota in political positions.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Enhance voter registration in minority areas 6. Establish financial support programmes for minority candidates to offset high candidacy fees
<p>All marginalised groups</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Civil society to continue lobbying and advocating for national laws that promote the participation and inclusion of marginalized groups in politics and national development agenda. 2. Civil society to lobby for campaign finance reform to promote responsible financial management in political campaigns, which is essential for creating a more equitable environment. 3. Initiate outreach programs to bring civic engagement and education to rural areas to bring them on board. 4. Build platforms and networks dedicated to experience sharing and mentoring of the political aspirants from marginalized groups 5. Provide capacity building programs that includes leadership training, campaign management workshops, public speaking seminars, and gender-sensitivity training for men in politics 6. Provide programs that aim to enhance political literacy by providing accessible information on election intricacies, laws, citizens' rights, responsibilities, and steps to take when electoral rights are violated. The aim should be to empower marginalized individuals to participate fully in the democratic process and advocate for their rights

Introduction

Participation in public and political life is a critical element of socially inclusive development, along with the realization of human rights. The right to participation in political and public life is well established human right internationally. However, marginalized groups in Somaliland particularly the youth, women, minority clans and people with disabilities face difficulties in participating public sphere. The common denominator among these marginalized groups is poor access to resources and opportunities and general alienation from the state administration affairs. Their weak voice in governance restricts their ability to address most of the issues facing them and increase their vulnerability in the face of environmental, social, economic and political problems. They suffer from low levels of income, literacy and educational performance, and absence of assistive physical infrastructure.

Added to that, Somaliland faces a peculiar situation when it comes to the representation of marginalized groups. There is the issues of a lack of both actual and constructive recognition, and discrimination by institutions of government, which appear to be allowed by law – either actively or by default. Most laws in Somaliland are fashioned to allow individual claims, while obstructing group identity rights or claims. Yet, communal solidarity is essential to the marginalized group's identity and chances for political inclusion. For instance, the Constitution, in Chapter One, Part Three that deals with human rights, is boldly titled: **'The Rights of the Individual, Fundamental Freedoms and the Duties of the Citizen.**

Relying on this broad title and anchoring its position on article 8 of the Constitution (which deals with the equality of the citizens), one can rightly contend that the scheme of the protection of fundamental rights envisaged by our constitution is one where the individual as opposed to community or group rights are the ones enforced by the courts. Thus, any proposition to change the conditions of the marginalized group as groups, or even most cases brought by marginalized groups (as a group) would fail on technical legal grounds. This position has some of its roots in the development of the country's legal system which is founded on the jurisprudence that rights exist only as properties of individuals. Consequently, there is no specific dispensation or instruments in our constitution for the protection of marginalized groups as community. This has created a dilemma where the marginalized groups are suffering alienation as a group in the form of political, development, cultural, social and financial exclusion based on their group identity yet they cannot seek remedy to their plight as a group.

Historically, these groups, particularly the women and youth, have played critical role in the struggle for Somaliland independence and statehood, the peacebuilding and the state formation efforts¹. Notwithstanding, however, their fortunes with respect to gaining recognition and political representation did not change in any significant way. For instance, in the successive parliamentary elections of Somaliland, the seat capture for these groups has never reached

¹ Academy for Peace and Development (2002). Women's Rights in Islam and Somali Culture, Hargeysa, Somaliland.

beyond one seat for women, none for the youth and people with disabilities. The minority groups have for the first time won a seat in the parliament (see the table below).

Table 1: The representation of the marginalized groups in the House of Representatives

Period	Seats	Selection mechanism	Women reps	Minority groups	youth	PWD
1993-1997	82	Selection	0	0	0	0
1997-2005			0	0	0	0
2005-2021		Election	2*	0	0	0
2021-2026			1**	1	0	0

**One of the two came through special arrangement or “Is-xambaar”*

*** None of the women who participated in the 2021 elections won outright.*

The present women MP came as a reserve after the demise of the male occupant of the seat.

Nevertheless, if one looks beyond the government; the power structure of the political parties with respect to the inclusion of marginalized groups seems to have witnessed some marginal improvement for some groups. The table below shows the representation of marginalized groups within the parties’ executive committees.

Table 2: Inclusion of the marginalized groups in the political parties’/associations Executive Committees

S/N	Party	Number of the Executive Committee members	Number of Women	Number of Youth	Number of Minority clans	People with disability (PWD) members
1	Kulmiye	17	2	4	2	0
2	Wadani	21	4	10	2	0
3	Ucid	15	2	4	1	0
4	Hilaac	15	4	2	1	0
5	Ogaal	15	3	6	1	0
6	Kaah	30	4	10	2	0
7	Barwaaqo	27	3	12	2	0

Source: Political parties/Associations

The above table shows some gains for women and youth in the executive structures of the political parties and associations. Somaliland political parties/associations have no doubt about the centrality of youth and women to their future electoral prospects. Thus, this statistics reflect the fact that the youth and women profoundly impact their operations both in electoral and non-electoral periods. However, the current political parties and association’s structure perpetuates the traditional exclusion of the people with disabilities from all power centers.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method approach, amalgamating desk review and field research to provide a thorough examination of the obstacles surrounding the political inclusion of marginalized groups in Somaliland. During the desk review phase, we meticulously scrutinized a range of documents, theories, reports, and relevant records, thereby establishing a solid foundational knowledge base on the subject. Subsequently, our research adopted both quantitative and qualitative research methods, which allowed us to gather data and insights from a variety of sources and perspectives, facilitating an in-depth analysis and understanding.

The research encompassed the administration of questionnaires from late August to mid-September 2023 period in three key regions of Somaliland (see the table below for specifics). Our sample consisted of 100 potential respondents, with 60 of them from Hargeisa, 20 from Borama, and 20 from Burao, capturing a diverse demographic and geographical composition. This included 34% youth, 27% women, 18% persons with disabilities, 16% ethnic minorities, and 5% from other categories.

Table 3: Geographical distribution of questionnaire respondents

Region	City	Participant	Percentage
Maroodijeex	Hargeisa	60	60%
Awdal	Borama	20	20%
Togdheer	Burao	20	20%
Total		100	100%

Source: Study

Furthermore, we collected qualitative data from the same three cities. This included engaging in focus group discussions (FGD) with five groups representing various marginalized segments of the population, including women, youth, minorities, and people with disabilities. A total of 51 individuals participated in these discussions, as indicated in the table below.

Table 4: Summary of participants

Location	Interview Type	Target Group	Gender	
			Male	Female
Hargeisa	FGD	Youth	3	5
	FGD	Women	0	12
	FGD	Minority	4	4
	FGD	PWD	3	3
Borama	FGD	Mixed	4	5
Burco	FGD	Mixed	5	3

Source: Study

To further enrich the findings and enhance the depth of the research, Key Information Interviews (KII) were also conducted (14 in total). These interviews were conducted with pre-identified target stakeholders. Including women, members of the parliaments, women candidates, youth

representatives, political party leaders and government representatives. However, it is important to note that one respondent (kulmiye party representative) chose to make written submissions. Though this had its limitations of the depth of information provided since there were no aspects of probing. But at least they answered all the questions submitted to them.

Key Concepts and Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined as follows.

Minority Group

In this research, Minority group shall mean Gabooye. A collective group that is sub divided into the following groups: the Madhiban and Muuse Dheriyo, Tumaal and Yibir-Anaas.

People with Disabilities

For the purpose of this study, Persons with Disabilities shall include only those who have long term physical or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Political literacy

In this research, political literacy and civic education have been used interchangeably to mean the understanding of how the government works, and possession of the necessary information to effectively participate in democratic life.

Political participation

For the purpose of this research, political participation means a range of activities through which a citizen influences the decisions that influence his life. These activities are: being a voter, candidate, or supporter and promoter of other candidates.

Youth

The Somaliland National Youth Policy defines young Somalilanders as those who are aged 14 to 35 years old. These years represent that significant stage in life when most young people move from childhood to adulthood, from school to work, from dependence to independence.

Context: Political inclusion of marginalized groups

People with Disabilities

Understanding Disability

Despite the global statistics on disabilities which estimates that one billion people, or 15% of the world's population, experience some form of disability². With a further breakdowns that 2.9 per cent of the global population has a severe disability while 12.4 per cent experience moderate disabilities; there is dearth of information about the people with disabilities in Somalia including Somaliland³. The WHO-World Bank World Report on Disability published in 2011 found no estimates for disability occurrence in Somalia, for instance. The data deficiencies are observed to be more pronounced in the rural areas, which is habitat for up to about half the population. The absence of sufficient data seems to have exacerbated the already limited awareness of disability issues among political leaders⁴.

By and large, disability has been defined to mean a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) defines PWDs to "include those who have long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others." This definition implies that a person with a disability may not be able to engage with full potential socially, economically, and politically⁵. Thus far, defining disability as an interaction recognizes the role that the environment plays, and makes it clear that disability is not an attribute of the person if the environment is completely inclusive and accessible to a person with an impairment. This definition also implies that a person with a disability may not be able to engage with full potential socially, economically, and politically if the world continues to remain silent on their needs.

In the Somaliland political and cultural context, persons with disability are viewed as passive victims – objects of pity who need care, and whose impairment is their main identifier. PWDs in Somaliland represent a significant number in the population but for a long time they have experienced marginalization. They are often stigmatized and have not been embraced well by society. In the past, disability was viewed as a curse to the family that has a person with disability resulting in many instances a situation where the PWDs are being abandoned in the rural areas⁶. Negative myths and stigma about PWDs are rife, such as the belief that they are

² WHO & World Bank. (2011). *World Report on Disability*. WHO & World Bank.

http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report.pdf

³ Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MOLSA). (2012). *THE NATIONAL DISABILITY POLICY*.

Republic of Somaliland.

⁴ Sida. (2014). *Disability Rights in Somalia*. Sida.

<https://www.sida.se/globalassets/sida/eng/partners/human-rights-basedapproach/disability/rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-somalia.pdf>

⁵

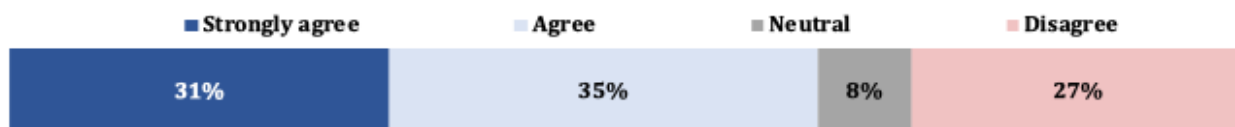
⁶ KII with Director of Disability Department, MOLSA, 31.08.2023

incapable of making positive contributions to society⁷. Consequently, PWDs end up with limited or no access to education, health, employment, and rehabilitation or other basic public and socio-economic services. This Results in PWDs having relatively higher rates of poverty, feeling of disempowerment and disconnection from the rest of the population.

Political and electoral engagement of people with disability.

Investigating their views on if disability affects their engagement in political activities, the responses offered by the PWDs were concerning. Most respondents saw correlation between disability and the restricted political participation within this group, In addition to the other multitude of barriers that the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) community faces daily in Somaliland. See the chart below.

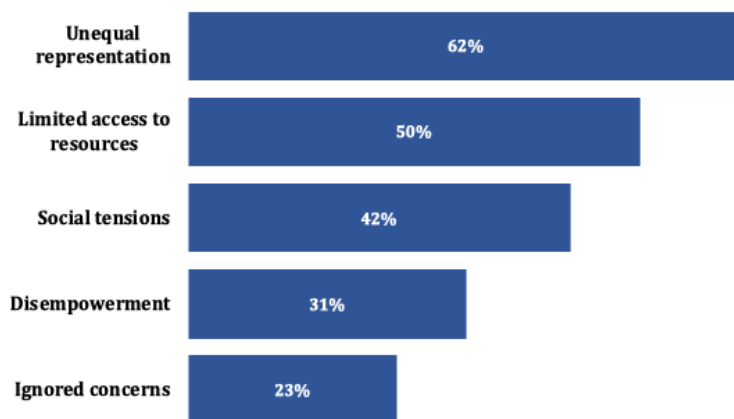
Figure 1. Percent of respondents who agree/disagree that disability affects their Political Engagement



The above findings show that a significant portion of individuals with disabilities believe that their disability affected their chances in political engagement, with a combined 66% (31% and 35%) indicating to be in agreement. This is corroborated by the findings from the FGD⁸. On the other hand, 27% disagree, contending that disability does not pose a hindrance to their political involvement. Only 8% remain neutral, suggesting a smaller portion of respondents have not formed a clear stance on this matter.

Asked about the impact of political marginalization that resulted from their disability on their lives, PWDs responses show more than one effect. See figure below.

Figure 2. Impact of political marginalization on People with Disability.



The responses show the multiple effects of political marginalization on People with Disabilities (PWDs). A substantial number (62%) of the respondents expressed concern about the absence of their voice from the decision making circles. Additionally, 50% are of view that marginalization has limited their access to resources significantly, underscoring the adverse effects on their well-being and

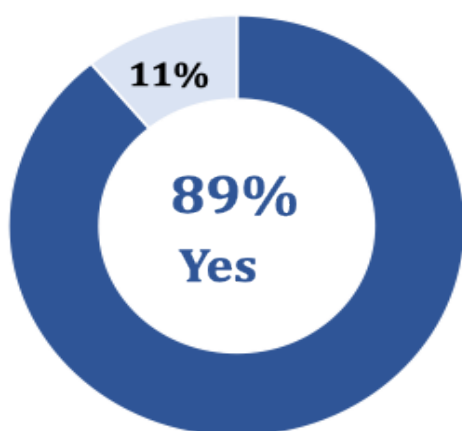
⁷ FGD Borama, 05.09.2023

⁸ FGD Borama, 05.09.2023

opportunities. Potential social tensions that could result from social inequality are a concern for 42% of respondents, indicating a disruptive influence of marginalization on societal harmony. Feeling of disempowerment is significant, affecting 31% of People with Disabilities, suggesting a loss of power and control over important decisions about their lives. Moreover, 23% of the respondents believed that their marginalization from the decision-making circles has resulted in their concerns to be ignored. These findings collectively highlight the multifaceted impact of political marginalization on the PWD community, emphasizing the urgent need for corrective measures to address these pressing issues.

Furthermore, in their endeavor to engage in politics, this study has also unearthed further hurdles confronted by PWDs when accessing public services or participating in politics.

Figure 3. Percent of Respondents Who Believe Accessible Polling Stations Can Improve Voting

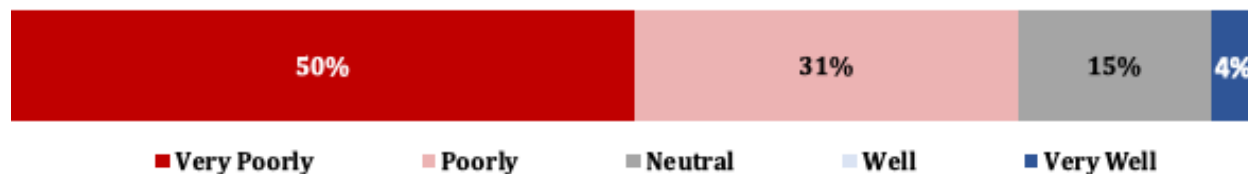


One notable challenge is the issue of physical accessibility. PWDs perceive transportation to and from polling stations, for instance, as a significant challenge. A staggering 89% of PWDs expressed the view that facilitating accessible transportation to polling stations could have greatly improved their ability to participate as indicated in the chart. Only 11% of the respondents believe otherwise.

Over all, Lack of access to public services such as basic education, healthcare facilities, and both public and private facilities and institutions, primarily stemming from the absence of appropriate assistive infrastructures and equipment, underpins the overall exclusion of people with disabilities from political participation and public life in general.

Particularity, as regards the suitability of the polling stations to accommodate the special needs of the people with disability, the over whelming response was that the polling stations are low on the suitability score. See the fig. below for the summery of the views.

Figure 4. Suitability of the polling stations for the people with special needs



According to Figure 4, the majority of respondents, accounting for 50%, expressed a view that polling stations are equipped "Very poorly" to address the needs of individuals with disabilities or mobility challenges. An additional 31% of respondents stated that they believe polling stations are equipped "Poorly." Thus, a combined 81% of the respondents view that the pooling station are not properly equipped to serve people with disability.

Only a small fraction, approximately 4%, indicated that polling stations are equipped "Very Well," While 15% of respondents took a "Neutral" stance on this issue, neither affirming nor denying the effectiveness of polling stations in addressing the specific needs of individuals with disabilities or mobility challenges. These responses reflect a significant level of concern and dissatisfaction with the current state and the suitability of polling stations to accommodate the special needs of people with disabilities or mobility challenges.

Similar views were expressed during the Focus group discussions and the interviews conducted, as most of the respondents' voiced concerns about the absence of conducive and assistive environment to accommodate the special needs of People with Disabilities (PWDs)⁹. In particular, the physical accessibility of polling stations, due to the absence of ramps; or the unavailability of braille voting slips or layover ballot papers for the visually impaired persons, and skilled people to assist the deaf and other persons with disabilities have been cited as challenge.

The data on the available amenities at the polling stations, collected from Somaliland National Elections Commission (NEC), also confirms the concerns expressed by the people with disabilities with respect to the absence of assistive infrastructure at the polling stations. The data (below) represents the state of the polling stations (country wide) during the combined elections of the 2021. See the table below.

Table 5: Somaliland Polling Stations during the 2021 elections

#	Region	Polling Stations	Available Facilities to Accommodate the Special Needs of People with Disabilities During Voting		
			Ramps	Braille voter slips for the blind	Interpreters for the deaf
1	Maroodi Jeex	345	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Awdal	153	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	Togdheer	209	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	Saahil	90	N/A	N/A	N/A
5	Sool	202	N/A	N/A	N/A
6	Sanaag	236	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: NEC

This unaccommodating environment poses challenge to the political participation for PWDs and often demotivates them from casting their votes for their preferred representatives. Hence, people with disabilities struggle with challenges at, and on the way to the polling stations and in their daily interactions with other people. The existence of these challenges limits the activities of PWDs and many prefer staying at home to engaging in activities that are far from their homesteads including engaging in political activities¹⁰. Thus far, despite their significant numbers, PWDs in Somaliland continue to experience systemic exclusion from mainstream governance. This exclusion has been particularly acute in the areas of political representation in elective and appointed positions, with limited efforts by political leaders to provide a conducive

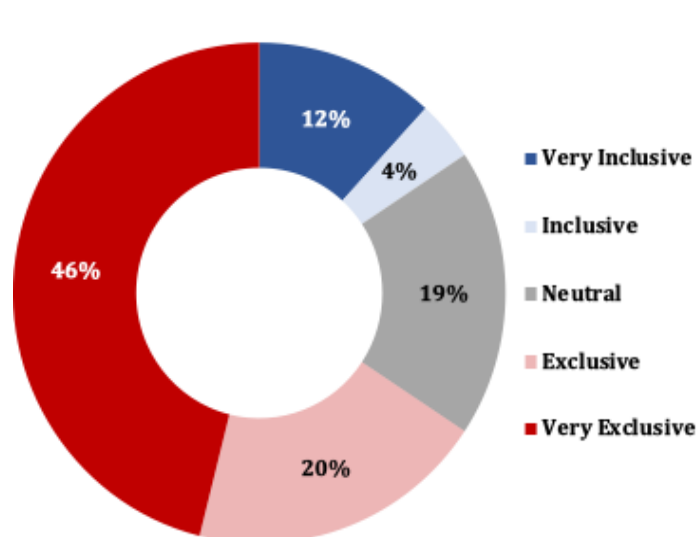
⁹ FGD, Disability group, 28.08.2023

¹⁰ KII with Director of Disability Department, MOLSA, 31.08.2023

environment for PWDs to engage in politics. These findings were in line with the findings from the survey questions.

When questioned about their views on the extent of political inclusivity in Somaliland, the respondents overwhelmingly pointed out that Somaliland politics is exclusive with respect to people with disabilities. The respondents agree that Persons with Disabilities face significant barriers and are often left out of the political spheres, emphasizing a critical need for improved inclusivity and representation for individuals with disabilities in the political landscape of Somaliland. See chart below:

Figure 5. Level of Political Inclusion of People with Disability



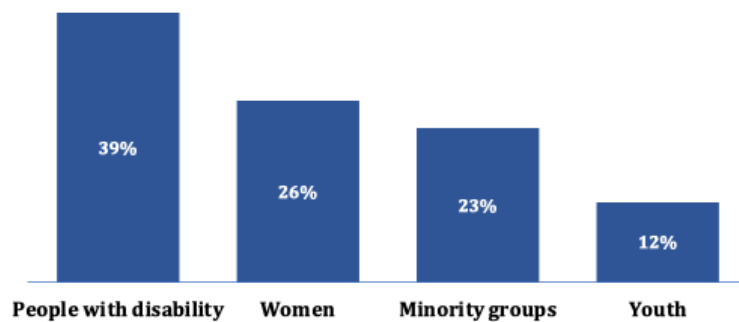
The data suggests that the perceived levels of political exclusion for people with disabilities is a call for significant concern. A large majority, comprising 46%, perceives it as "Very Exclusive," indicating that people with disabilities face substantial barriers and are largely excluded from the political process. Additional 20% find it "Exclusive," further highlighting the exclusionary nature of politics for this group. Only a bald 16% find it "inclusive," indicating that the vast majority (66%) of PWDs see the Somaliland politics as lacking inclusivity. 19%, remains neutral or undecided,

possibly indicating uncertainty about the level of inclusion. Overall, this data points to a pressing need for improving political inclusion for people with disabilities in the surveyed context.

The prevalent perception among the PWD that Somaliland politics is exclusive with respect to them is shared by the other marginalized groups, who see that the PWD are the most marginalized among the marginalized groups. All participants in the focus groups discussions and the interviewees unanimously agreed that, among all marginalized, the group most excluded from Somaliland politics is the PWD group.

The same views were expressed by the participants of the survey, when asked to identify the group that face the greatest challenges while engaging in politics, their views are summarized and are illustrated in the chart below.

Figure 6: Perceptions of the Most Barrier-Impacted Marginalized Groups in Political Participation



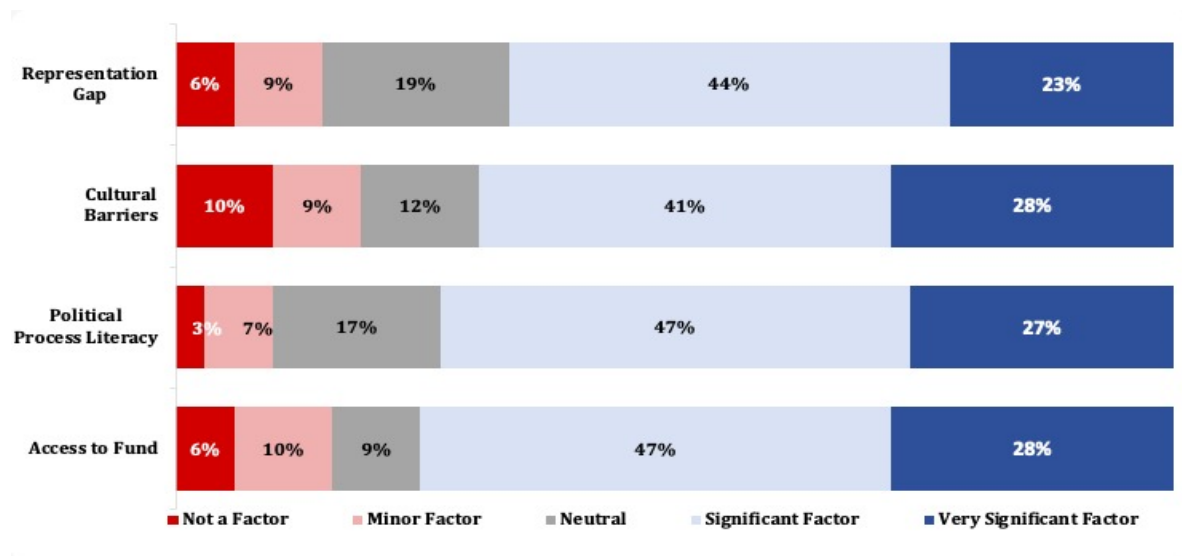
The chart confirms the widely held view¹¹ that among the marginalized groups, people with disability are the most marginalized. The chart notes that the people with disabilities (PWDs) are the most excluded, and they encounter the greatest hurdles to meaningful political inclusion when compared to other marginalized groups.

According to the views expressed by the respondents regarding the extent of marginalization, the order is as follows: people with disabilities experience the highest degree of marginalization, followed by women, minority groups, and then youth, respectively.

The majority of respondents (39%), held the view that people with disabilities face the greatest challenge. This is also corroborated by the data from structures of the political parties and the members of their executive committees (see Table 2, above). This suggests that ensuring political accessibility for disabled persons may need the most urgent special consideration.

In pursuit to further understand the underpinning factors for absence of the PWD from the political scene, the chart below shows the reasons pointed out by the PWDs:

Figure 7: Factors Affecting Political Inclusion of Persons with Disability



The chart (above) provides an overview of factors perceived to be influencing the political inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), organized by their respective levels of significance. This summary offers detailed insights into how respondents view each factor's importance,

¹¹ Among the participants of FGDs and KIs

highlighting the percentage of individuals who consider it a significant or highly significant in the effect of the factor on the political inclusion of PWDs.

Access to Fund:

The majority (75%) of respondents view access to funds as a significant or very significant factor affecting the political participation of PWD groups. Similar sentiments were expressed by the participants of the FGD and the interviewees who lamented a pervasive poverty among the PWDs which in practice translates into insurmountable obstacle to their political ambitions¹². This highlights the critical importance of addressing access to fund disparities to ensure equitable political participation and inclusion.

Political Process literacy:

A significant proportion of the survey participants (74%) recognize the political process illiteracy as a pivotal obstacle affecting political inclusion of the PWDs. Even among many participants of the FGDs and the KIIs, there was a widely held misconception that the constitution does not allow the PWDs to participate in politics since they are not “Fit physically”. This misconception has mainly resulted from lack of information in accessible format. For instance, the political materials, including election information (rules, regulations and laws etc.), campaign materials, and government documents, are not provided in accessible formats, such as in braille material, large print, or digital accessible formats, making it challenging for individuals with visual or hearing challenges to access vital information. This has resulted in a wide spread illiteracy, about the government workings and democratic processes, among the people with disability.

This findings emphasizes the urgent need to address this issue comprehensively, ensuring that individuals are well-informed and equipped with the knowledge and understanding of political processes, and their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Enhancing political literacy can empower individuals, particularly PWD, and marginalized groups in general, enabling them to engage more actively and meaningfully in the democratic processes of the nation.

Cultural Barriers:

A significant percentage (69%) of respondent’s regard culture as a barrier. This include traditions, customs, or norms, as a significant or very significant factor impacting political inclusion. There is a wide spread discrimination and stigmatization that resulted from a negative attitude and stereotyping towards the people with disabilities. For instance, there is pervasive view within the clans and the general populace that someone with disability cannot represent them¹³. PWD are seen as people who need help, hence they cannot help or represent others. This results in clans suppressing the ambitions of the PWDS, and preferring the other members of the clan to them. Addressing these cultural barriers is essential to promote inclusivity and ensure diverse voices are heard in the political arena.

Representation Gap:

¹² FGD, Disability group, 28.08.2023

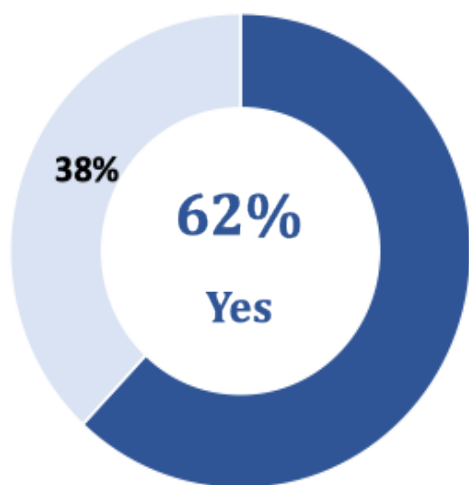
¹³ FGD, PWD, 28.08.2023

A notable portion (67%) of respondents see the representation gap, referring to underrepresentation or absence of PWDs groups, as a significant or very significant factor influencing their political inclusion. Improving representation is crucial to provide Persons with Disabilities groups with a platform to express their concerns and promote their interests within the political system.

These insights shed light on the perspectives of respondents regarding the significance of each factor in influencing the political inclusion of PWDs. Addressing these factors is vital for creating a more inclusive and equitable political landscape that represent the breadth of the nation.

In general, when questioned about their involvement in political processes, a significant number of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) confirmed their participation to some degree as illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 8: Political Participation by Persons with Disabilities



Overwhelmingly, the participants indicated that they participate in politics. Never the less, their engagement is largely confined to supportive roles, such as voting and endorsing candidates or political parties.

Noticeably lacking is their active participation in legislative, executive, and in leadership capacities within the emerging and established political entities¹⁴. Additionally, people with disabilities often face discrimination based on their physical appearance, rather than being evaluated on their abilities and capacities¹⁵. This exclusion has resulted in PWDs being overlooked by political decision-

makers across all levels in Somaliland, leaving them notably underrepresented in terms of developmental, social, economic, and political agendas.

The figure above shows that approximately 62% of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) who participated in the survey participate in political activities, mainly through voting and campaigning for other individuals. However, this level of engagement does not translate into sort of influence or impact on political decisions. The fact that PWDs, akin to other marginalized groups such as women, minority clans, and youth, are primarily confined to these limited avenues of involvement (i.e. voting and campaigning) is reflected in their either absence or marginal representation in decision-making circles.

¹⁴ KII with Youth Secretary, Wadani Political Party, 30.08.2023

¹⁵ KII with Youth Secretary, Wadani Political Party, 30.08.2023

Youth political participation

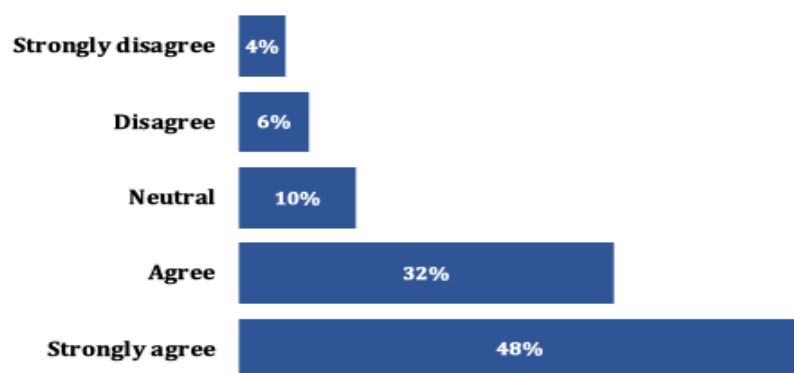
Young people are the largest demographic group in Somaliland. They are important political forces and they traditionally performed a wide range of roles in the political field as voters, party supporters and foot soldiers. It is always the youth that turn out to attend campaign rallies or meetings. Notwithstanding that, however, they are excluded from policy development and implementation more often. There is strong evidence that the political participation (beyond voting) of young people in formal, institutional political processes is relatively low when compared to older citizens. This can be attributed to the financial muscle of the older candidates and the cultural dogma that associate wisdom with age¹⁶. This challenges the representativeness of the political system in Somaliland and leads to the disenfranchisement of young people.

While Somaliland has undergone significant political and social change, Opportunities for youth to engage in governance and participate in political and decision-making processes are hindered largely by the political, socioeconomic, and cultural contexts where social norms in many ways result in multiple forms of discrimination against youth in general, and young women in particular. Patriarchy and gerontocracy still permeate the Somaliland political institutions in ways that disadvantage the youth. Relatively lacking in social and political capital, youth find themselves on the periphery of power and politics confined to and acting as mere “voting machines”¹⁷.

Nevertheless, the active participation of young people in politics through social media channels suggests that they do not lack interest in politics, but that the political systems in Somaliland marginalizes and exclude them from political dialogue, participation, decision-making, and policy implementation.

In addition to that, most of respondents in the study believe that youth participation in politics is crucial for the development and progress of Somaliland.

Figure 9: The Importance of Youth Participation in Somaliland Politics



The chart shows that most respondents strongly agree and agree (80% combined) that youth participation in politics is critical for Somaliland's development and progress. This signals a prevalent view that facilitating and motivating youth political engagement is essential as the country

¹⁶ Youth FGD, 24.08.2023

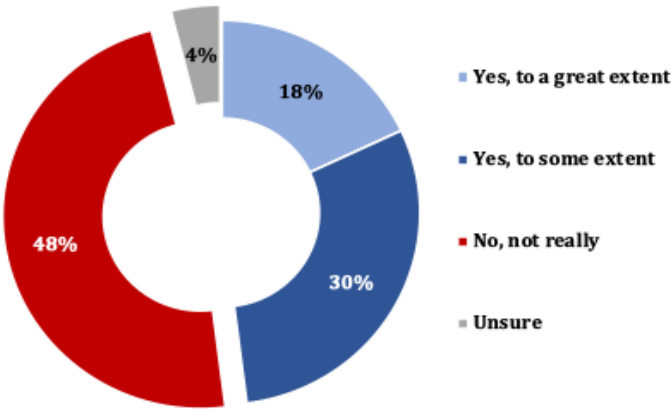
¹⁷ Ibid

moves forward. To accomplish this, policies and programs should be enacted to boost youth civic education, eliminate obstacles to political involvement, and create more opportunities for youth to take part in the political process. Overall, the data indicates that enabling greater participation of young people in the political realm will advantage Somaliland's ongoing development, according to respondents' views¹⁸.

On the other hand, for political systems to be representative, all parts of society must be included. When young people are disenfranchised or disengaged from political processes, this means a significant portion of the population has little or no voice or influence in decisions that affect their lives. Consequently, many tend to believe that their voices are not heard or that they will not be taken seriously even if they are heard.

When surveyed about whether current political leaders listen to and represent youth, most of the young participants in the survey responded in a way that's less than very optimistic, as shown in the chart below.

Figure 10: Youth Perception on Whether Current Political Leaders Listen to them.



The chart indicates that almost half of the youth surveyed believe their perspectives are not adequately heard or reflected by those in power. This suggests dissatisfaction and disconnect between the priorities of the younger generation versus the political establishment in the country. The high levels of discontent highlight a need for better youth understanding and representation in political decision-making to ensure their needs are accounted for as Somaliland progresses.

Overall, the chart reveals prevalent skepticism and negativity among youth when asked if they feel listened to by leaders.

The problem has the potential of becoming circular where politicians may lose interest in responding to the aspirations of young people if they feel they can no longer win their votes. This in turn can lead to young people being increasingly excluded from taking part in decision-making, or in debates about key socio-economic and political issues, despite their sensitivity to the demands for social equity and justice.

Thus, it is necessary to understand the interconnected nature of the obstacles to participation in these processes that young people encounter.

¹⁸ FGD, Youth, 24.08.2023

Obstacles to youth political participation

Significant obstacles to youth political participation occur at different levels and in different areas, including structural and individual levels.

Obstacles at the structural level include:

- **Age requirements to vote or run for office.** The legal voting age is an example of a threshold to conventional political participation mechanisms. In the case of Somaliland, the first barrier for youth participation is the minimum age for eligibility to run for office, which is often set much higher than the age to vote. For instance, for the local governments the minimum age is set at 25, whereas the eligibility age for parliament is set at 36¹⁹ and above. This latter age is set to suit older citizens disadvantaging the youth in the process. Consequently, in national politics, age limits to candidacy inhibit youth political participation. As it is often set far much higher than the voting age, age of consent, age of criminal culpability, and other markers of social or civic responsibility.

Thus, in practice and due to these formal regulations and laws, people under the age of 35 are rarely found in formal political leadership positions, specifically in the legislature. This is exacerbated by the absence of retirement laws. In Somaliland, there is no limit to how long one can serve. This makes the older people hold on to positions as a source of livelihood denying the youth the opportunities to serve their country²⁰.

- **Increased costs for candidate nomination** and campaigning, along with a lack of political finance regulations, make it even more difficult for youth to start a political career. In Somaliland, politics has long been a domain of older, often male and wealthy citizens²¹. This situation has resulted in the systematic exclusion of young people from decision-making and thus contributed to the underrepresentation of youth in politics. Despite a broad consensus that young people have an important role to play in politics and decision-making, a lack of financial capital limits youth participation. The fees imposed by the government on parliamentary election candidates is set at USD 5,000, and local government candidates are required to pay USD 2,500. This further hinders the political ambitions and participation of the youth.
- **Social and cultural traditions.** Beyond formal rules; cultural norms, social conventions, and distorting assumptions about young people and their engagement in political processes are prevalent. These misconceptions are often rooted in a lack of understanding and/or prejudice. These persistent assumptions inaccurately characterize the diverse everyday experiences of most youth, who do not constitute a homogenous group. This can lead to discrimination against young people, significantly hindering their chances to participate in political processes. Young women, in particular, face "double discrimination" based on both their age and

¹⁹ KII with Deputy Chairman of parliament subcommittee of social affairs/ justice and human right, 10.09. 2023

²⁰ FGD, Borama, 05.09.2023

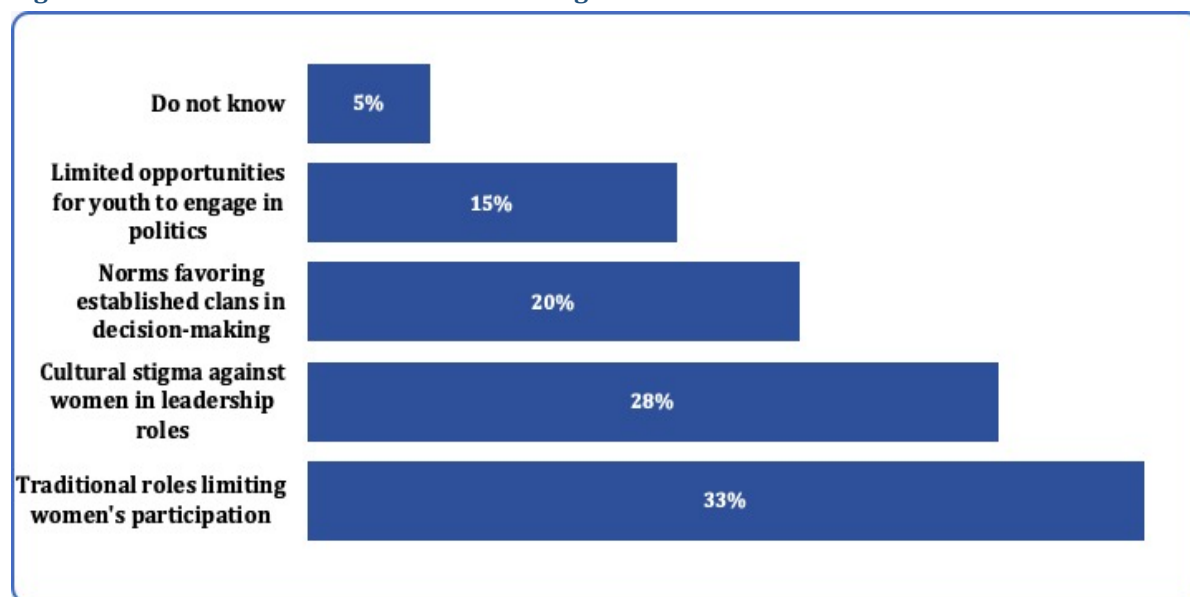
²¹ FGD, Youth, 24.08.2023

gender. They often experience additional obstacles compared to men due to general social conventions about gender.

Thus far, gender relations have particularly strong impact on the nature of youth political inclusion. In patriarchal societies, young women's participation in formal politics is hindered by the socialization of young people into gendered roles and male dominance over resources and public spaces²².

When surveyed, a majority of the youth respondents acknowledged the presence of cultural or societal norms as a significant barrier to greater political inclusion for the youth, as illustrated in the chart below:

Figure 11: Cultural and Social Norms Hindering Greater Political Inclusion for Youth



The chart highlights several critical cultural and social norms that pose significant barriers to greater political inclusion for youth. It underscores how these norms, deeply ingrained in society, can exacerbate the challenges faced by young people, particularly young women, in their aspirations for political participation. Among these barriers are traditional gender roles that limit women's involvement in public life, cultural stigmas that discourage women from taking on leadership roles, and the prevalence of established clan influence and interferences in decision-making processes. Additionally, the chart brings attention to the limited opportunities available for youth within the established clan structures to engage in politics, further complicating their path to political empowerment. These findings underscore the need for targeted efforts to dismantle these ingrained norms and create more inclusive and equitable spaces for young individuals, especially young women, to participate in the political arena.

²² KII, Director of Gender, MOLSA, 26.08.2023

- 1. Traditional Gender Roles Limit Women's Participation (33%):** Young women, like older women, are often constrained by traditional gender roles that confine them to domestic duties. This significantly reduces their time, opportunities, and societal support to engage in political activities.
- 2. Cultural Stigma against Women Leaders (28%):** Cultural biases against women assuming leadership roles exacerbate the obstacles faced by young women. The stigma attached to women leaders discourages them from aspiring to political positions, perpetuating gender disparities in political representation. This cultural bias is further reinforced by certain religious leaders who promote the misconception that women cannot hold leadership roles. A view that has no solid bases²³ in Islam.
- 3. Norms Favoring Established Clans influence in Decision-Making (20%):** As clan members, youth face additional barriers due to entrenched norms and influence of the established clan system in deciding who represents the clan in the decision-making circles. Due to the limited direct connection between aspiring young politicians and their respective constituencies, gaining approval from traditional clan chiefs and tribal sultans becomes a challenge. This marginalizes youth and limits opportunities for active political participation, further hindering representation.
- 4. Limited Opportunities for Youth Political Engagement (15%):** Although youth in general have very limited opportunities for meaningful political engagement, young women are disproportionately affected. They face dual barriers: being young and women further limits their chances for political participation and involvement. The traditional leaders who have great influence in the political processes often prefer male candidates to female candidates.

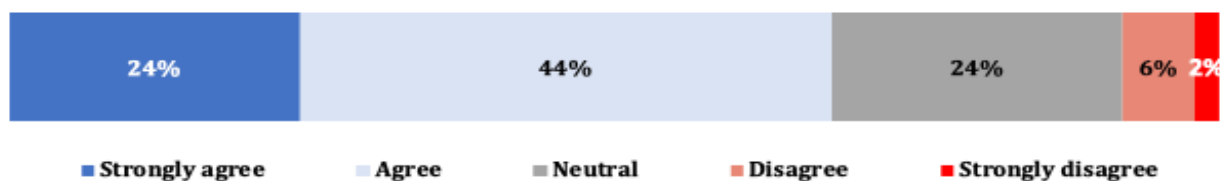
Hence, unfortunately, the political and cultural landscape in Somaliland is often biased towards wealthy, experienced, and well-connected older men, leaving young males and females with fewer opportunities to succeed. Additionally, young females face even more significant challenges in gaining approval from these leaders due to the limited connections they have within the patriarchal Somali society²⁴.

When asked about the influence of the traditional leaders and clan power structures on the youth political inclusion in Somaliland, the majority of young respondents answered that the traditional clan structure has significant influence, as illustrated in the chart.

²³ KII, Director of Complaints and Legal Service, HRC, 28.08.2023

²⁴ KII, Spokesman and member of youth wing, Hilaac Political Association, 20.09.2023

Figure 12: Influence of Traditional Clan Power Structures on Youths' Political Inclusion



The chart portrays the influence of traditional leaders and clan power structures on youth political inclusion. Specifically, 66% of the respondents think that the traditional structures hold significant influence on political inclusion processes. This indicates a prevalent perception among young people in Somaliland that traditional leaders and clan power structures play a substantial role in shaping political participation.

In contrast, only 8% disagreed with the notion of traditional structures influence. In general the responses of the youth supports the view that traditional structures hold great sway over the election results and processes. This underscores the necessity of acknowledging and addressing the influence of these traditional elements while striving for greater youth political inclusion in the region.

Obstacle at the individual level

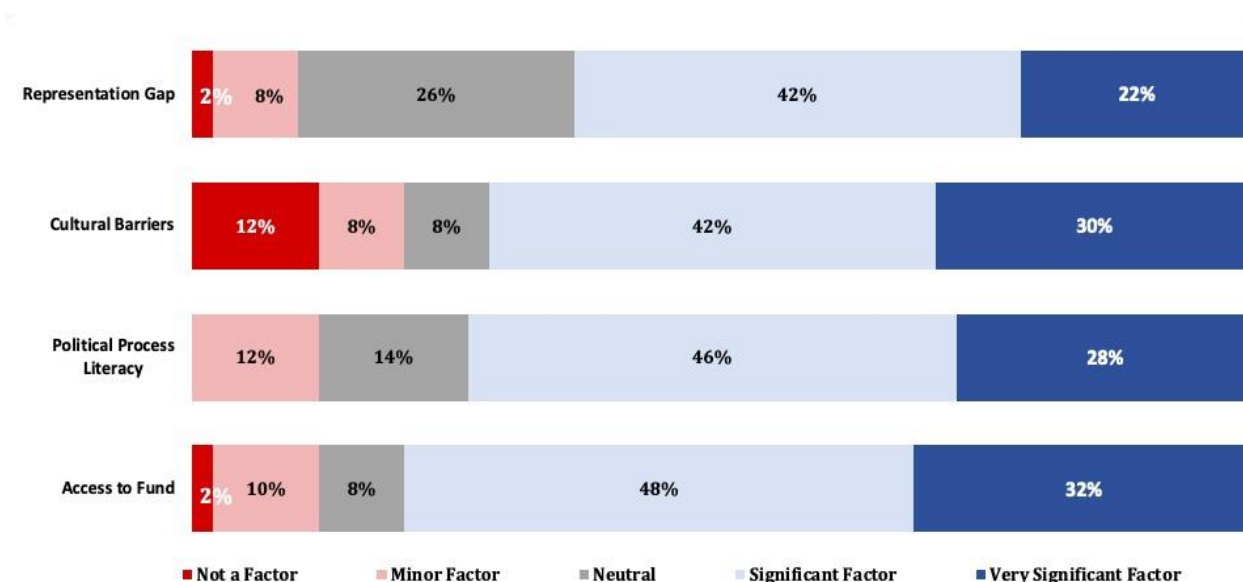
- **Processes.** Young people are grappling with understanding the complexities of democratic societies and formal political processes²⁵. A weak understanding of democratic principles and electoral processes makes it more difficult for youth to perceive elections as route to express their grievances, demand change, and hold governments accountable.
- **Economic exclusion/marginalization:** Social and economic exclusion, along with political marginalization, have become pervasive issues in Somaliland, especially for its young population. The pursuit of a sustainable job has transformed into a daily struggle, making it hard for many to envision a future beyond meeting their basic needs. Engaging in politics is often viewed as a luxury youth cannot afford²⁶. Hence, understanding these intricate social interconnections and barriers pose significant challenges to youths aspiring for political inclusion.

Thus afar, youth face challenges that include inadequate access to resources, limited political literacy, and a substantial representation gap in decision-making platforms, on top of formidable cultural and legal barriers. See the Chart below:

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ FGD, Youth, 24.08.2023

Figure 13: Factors Affecting Political Inclusion of Persons with Disability



The chart underscores how the factors outlined below are affecting the political inclusion of youth:

Access to Fund: This factor is seen as a significant barrier by 48% of the respondents and a very significant barrier by 32%. Combined, 80% of the respondents believe that limited access to funds is a substantial hindrance to youth political inclusion. This suggests that financial constraints play a crucial role in limiting young people's political participation.

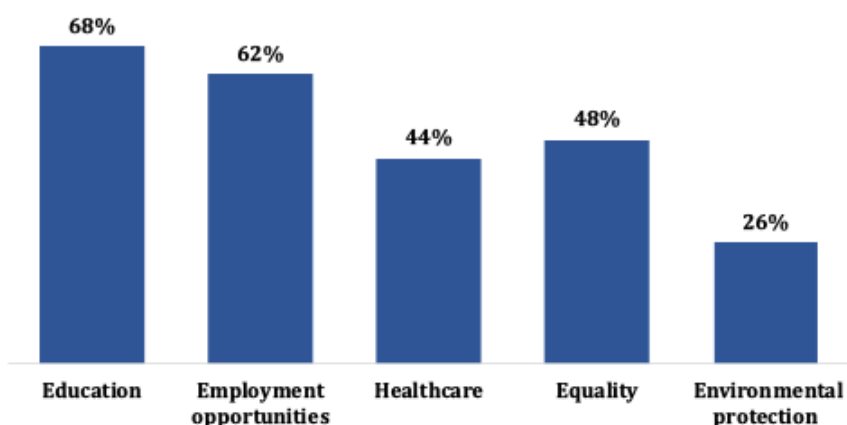
Political Process Literacy: While no respondents consider this factor as "not a factor," 46% find it significant, and 28% find it very significant. This indicates that a majority (74%) of respondents view a lack of political process literacy as a significant obstacle to youth political inclusion, highlighting the importance and the need for civic education and awareness among the youth.

Cultural Barriers: Cultural barriers, such as the view that the youth are not mature enough to take leadership positions are perceived as significant by 42% and very significant by 30% of the respondents. Collectively, 72% of the respondents see cultural barriers as a significant challenge, implying that deeply rooted cultural norms and practices pose substantial hurdles to youth participation in politics. This barrier comes second to access to funds.

Representation Gap: While only 2% of respondents view this as "not a factor," 42% consider it significant, and 22% find it very significant. In total, 64% of the respondents believe that the representation gap is a significant issue, indicating that young people feel underrepresented in political processes.

To respond to the formidable challenges faced by the youth, who constitute the majority of society, consideration needs to be lent to the views and priorities of the youth. Thus, when asked about the issues they deem essential for political leaders to address with utmost priority, their responses are graphically represented below:

Figure 14: Youth Perceptions of the Most Important Policy Issues



The chart indicates the prominent areas of concern for youth, shedding light on the issues they prioritize for political leaders to address with greater attention and effort. These findings offer valuable insights into the concerns and expectations of the

surveyed population regarding the focus areas for political leaders. Education and employment opportunities emerge as particularly prominent issues of concern.

1. Education (68%): Youth are deeply concerned about the education system and advocate for improvements, including enhanced access, improved infrastructure, better teacher training, and an enriched curriculum. They see education as a key factor for personal growth, societal development, and future opportunities. Moreover, they stress the integration of civic education into the curriculum from a young age, emphasizing the importance of understanding rights and obligations as citizens. This holistic approach empowers youth to actively shape their future through informed participation²⁷.

2. Employment Opportunities (62%): Youth are highlighting the pressing issue of unemployment and the need for more job opportunities. They are calling for policies and initiatives that encourage job creation, skill development, entrepreneurship support, and a favorable economic environment that fosters employment for young individuals. The recently established youth development fund and the national service program for the young college graduates are partly a response to these youth concerns.²⁸

4. Equality (48%): The youth emphasize the importance of equality across various aspects of society, including gender equality, social equality, economic equality, and equal opportunities for all. They want political leaders to address and work towards reducing disparities and ensuring a fair and just society.

3. Healthcare (44%): Healthcare is another significant concern, though a lesser priority than the education, equality and the employment, for the youth. They are advocating for improved healthcare services, better healthcare infrastructure, accessible and affordable healthcare,

²⁷ FGD, Youth, 24.08.2023

²⁸ KII, Director of Youth, MOYS, 28.08.2023

awareness programs, and initiatives to enhance the overall health and well-being of the population.

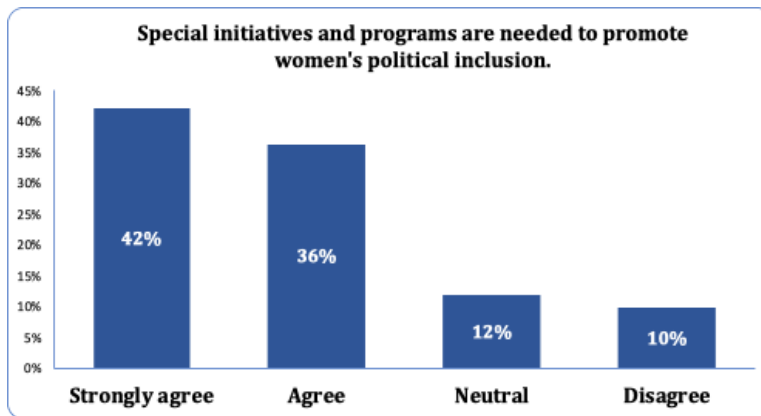
5. Environment (26%): Although not as high a priority as the other issues, the youth still express concern for the environment. They are calling for policies and actions that focus on environmental sustainability, conservation, addressing climate change, and ensuring a healthy and sustainable environment for current and future generations.

These responses collectively reflect the youth's desire for a better future with emphasis on education, employment opportunities, healthcare, equality, and a sustainable environment. Addressing these concerns is crucial for effectively engaging and empowering the youth in the political and societal spheres.

However, while youth, in general, encounter various social and economic barriers to their political inclusion, it is evident that young females face significantly more challenges. These hurdles encompass cultural stigmas against women in leadership roles and traditional gender norms that restrict women's active participation in public life. Therefore, addressing the obstacles faced by young females in politics requires specific and focused attention on top of the above aspirations they share with their youth male counterparts.

When asked about if special initiatives and programs are necessary to promote young women's political inclusion, respondents provided their perspectives, as illustrated in the fig below.

Figure 15: Level of Agreement for Special Programs to Promote Women's Political Inclusion

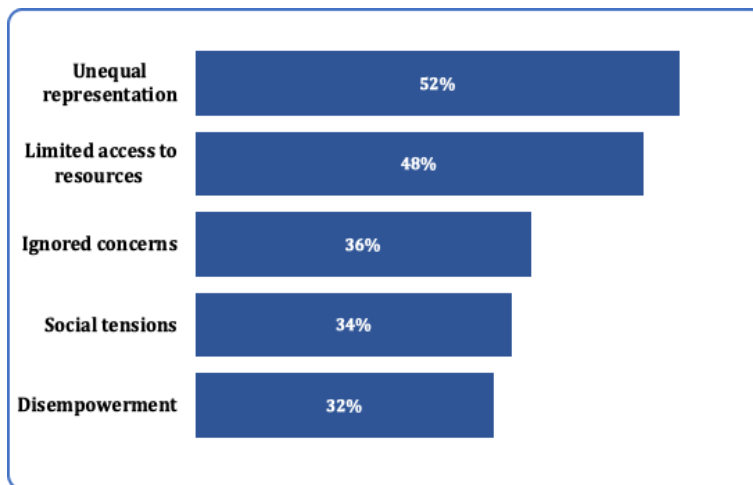


The presented data reveals a compelling consensus among respondents regarding the necessity of special initiatives and programs to promote young women's political inclusion. This shows a substantial majority (78%) supporting the implementation of tailored initiatives and programs to bolster young women's political inclusion. This unified agreement

(78%) underscores the wide recognition of the imperative to intervene to mitigate the alienation youth, especially women, encounter in the political realm.

Lastly, the youth participants highlighted that political marginalization has a significant impact on them in multiple ways, as illustrated in the chart below:

Figure 16. Impact of political marginalization on Youth.

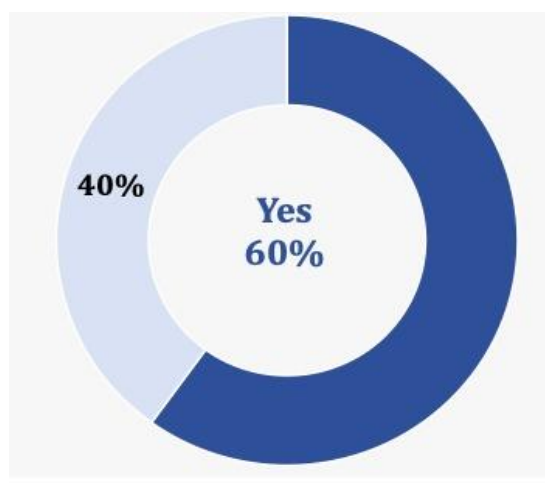


The figure provides a detailed perspective on the various impacts of political marginalization on youth, with respondents allowed to select multiple responses to capture the complex nature of their experiences. The percentages represent the proportion of respondents who identified each impact among the options provided. "Unequal representation" emerges as the most prevalent concern, with 52%

of respondents indicating its significance. This data shows that a substantial majority of youth feel that their voices and needs are inadequately represented in the political landscape, which can lead to feelings of disempowerment and frustration. Furthermore, "Limited access to resources" is identified by 48% of respondents, highlighting the challenges many young individuals face in terms of accessing the necessary resources for active political involvement. The chart also reveals other notable impacts, such as "Ignored concerns" at 36% and "Social tensions" at 34%, demonstrating the multifaceted nature of political marginalization's effects on youth. These findings emphasize the need for multipronged and comprehensive strategies and policies to address these challenges and empower youth to engage meaningfully in the political process.

Notwithstanding all the frustrations that the youth have reported, the research findings do indicate that a majority of the youth still engage in some form of political activities, as illustrated in the figure 17.

Figure 17: Youth Participation in Political Processes



The chart reveals that 60% of youth respondents have acknowledged their engagement in political activities. This reinforces the prevalent view among the youth participants in focus group discussions during the research that the youth often serve as the steppingstones and voting machines for older politicians. Their roles are frequently confined to voting and campaign activities. Regrettably, some participants lamented, once success is achieved, youth tend to be forgotten, and their voices silenced as if they never mattered.

That said however, worth investigating is the reason for 40% of the youth to disengage from formal political participation.

Minority Groups

As in many countries where majoritarian democracy is practiced, larger clans in Somaliland have historically enjoyed a distinct advantage in electoral politics, as the main basis for establishing political units is clan sizes. The subsequent divergence in representation is thus based largely on electoral boundary demarcations and the extent to which clans are concentrated within political units; thereby reducing the chances of minorities, who are thinly distributed²⁹ throughout the six regions of Somaliland, of garnering the numbers of votes needed to secure electoral victory in any of the constituencies. Consequently, minorities' political representation in Somaliland at the different level and bodies of governance needs attention.

Nevertheless, while spatial concentration of minorities is largely necessary to secure, an elective seat, it is by no means the only factor. There are other factors that complicate public life for the minority groups further. Although they share many of the factors with the other marginalized groups. The factors include issues such as cultural bias and stigmatization as well as low levels of literacy. In addition to that, there is a high level of pervasive poverty among the minority groups³⁰. This militates against their aspiration for political participation. Because winning an electoral contest requires considerable financial resources, and a candidate from the minority communities will invariably be unable to rely economically on his/her group for funding. Thus, the issue of lack of campaign finance was highlighted by many members of 'minorities' in focus group discussions and interviews as well as in the survey responses as significant. The findings from the FGDs and Key informant interviews were reinforced by the findings from the survey. See the figure below.

Figure 18: Factors Affecting Political Inclusion of Minority Groups



²⁹ KII with Deputy Chairman of parliament subcommittee of social affairs/ justice and human right, 10.09. 2023

³⁰ KII with Chairman of Parliamentary committee on Internal Affairs, 20.09.2023

The Figure highlights several key findings. Firstly, "Access to Fund" emerges as a significant factor affecting political inclusion. A combined 88% of the respondents viewed funds as the most significant hurdle. With 67% of respondents considering it significant, while 21% rated it as a very significant factor. This underscores the importance of financial resources in enabling political participation for minority groups. Secondly, "Political Process Literacy" is also perceived as a significant factor, with 67 % of respondents identifying it as such, indicating the need for enhancing political education and awareness within these communities. Additionally, "Cultural Barriers" are seen as the second biggest challenge after the finance. With 83% percent of the respondents viewing it as posing a challenge to the political inclusion of minority communities. Lastly, "Representation Gap" is considered a significant or very significant factor by a combined total of 79% of respondents, underscoring the critical need for addressing the underrepresentation of minority groups in political processes to foster their political inclusion.

The Findings from the KII and FGDs reinforced the trends observed in the survey data, providing additional depth and context to the above results by providing valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities for the political inclusion of marginalized groups, with a focus on minority clans in Somaliland.

Access to fund

Somaliland elections are very expensive for candidates. They spend a great deal of money, sometimes to bribe voters (Qat. Food, petrol etc.) In addition to the other logistics (events, rallies, travel, feasibility materials, etc) expenses necessary for the campaign. Political parties and associates play no role in funding the candidates, rather, they charge fees for nomination.

The table (below) shows, the big sums of money spent by the candidates during the 2012 elections in their attempts to get elected into positions of public office. The table assumes that the average expenditures in the 2012 election are the same for all 175 candidates in Hargeisa, plus the 2,193 candidates who ran for office elsewhere in the country.

These expenses and other fees make it highly unlikely that any candidates from a minority group will be able to stand.

Table 6: Comparison of Candidate Campaign Expenses, Local election, 2012

Area	Avg. reported expenses for successful candidates	Highest reported expenses for successful candidates	Avg., reported expenses for unsuccessful candidates	Highest reported expenses for unsuccessful candidates
Hargeisa	58,750	120,000	29,714	73,000
Rest of the country	24,817	68,000	16,078	29,000

Source: The economics of elections in Somaliland, RVI

Although these figures belong to the individual candidate expenses for the year 2012³¹; never the less, these figures are corroborated by the reports of expenses incurred by candidates for the year 2021 parliament elections candidates. For instance, one female candidate³² who is now heading the waiting list for parliament, reported that it costed her 100,000 USD to campaign for the parliamentary seat. Another female candidate (current MP) put the campaign cost figures between 70,000 to 80,000 USD for a parliamentary seat. These campaign expense figures claimed by the 2021 candidates fit well into the range of the 2012 elections expenses. Making Somaliland one of the most expensive places in Africa for political candidates.

So, if this is the average amount a candidate must spend to secure an election, this is beyond the reach of many aspirants from the marginalized groups in general. More so for the minority groups who are mostly confined to their traditional skills of blacksmithing and shoe making as a source of income. Consequently, the Somaliland elections shall remain the domain of the wealthy individuals from dominant clans seeking office to represent their own business interests; individuals financed by wealthy clan's men, and individuals who might take on personal debts in order to finance their campaigns. The latter requires assets to mortgage. Something most of the marginalized groups members do not possess.

Access to Basic Education and political literacy

Despite the existence of established educational system and programs in Somaliland, minority children still face limited opportunities for basic education. The majority of these children do not attend school; instead, they work in order contribute to their families' subsistence. This situation underscores how poverty adversely affects access to basic needs. Another factor preventing children from attending school is the discrimination the children of minority are exposed to at schools³³. This leads to low literacy levels. Something that findings of this study corroborates (see the figure above)

Cultural Barriers

The respondents emphasized the existence of cultural barriers that have historically hindered the political participation of marginalized groups, particularly minority clans. These cultural stigmatizations and marginalization based on an 'otherness' in relation to the majority clan groups have deep roots, excluding these groups from active engagement in political and public life. This highlights the importance of addressing not only legal and institutional barriers but also deeply ingrained cultural norms that affect political inclusion of these groups.

Representation Gap

Lastly, the representation gap is a major concern discussed by the interviewees and FGD members. Despite some positive steps taken by successive governments in Somaliland to address this issue, there is a perceived lack of sufficient representation for minority groups in political

³¹ Economics of election in Somaliland, RVI, 2015

³² KII with female candidate for the 2021 Parliamentary elections, **17.09.2023**

³³ KII with former Adam admin and current diplomatic corps member at MoFA, 02.09.2023

institutions. The respondents underscored the significance of increasing representation, especially at the ministerial level, to bridge this gap and ensure that the voices and interests of marginalized groups are adequately represented in decision-making processes.

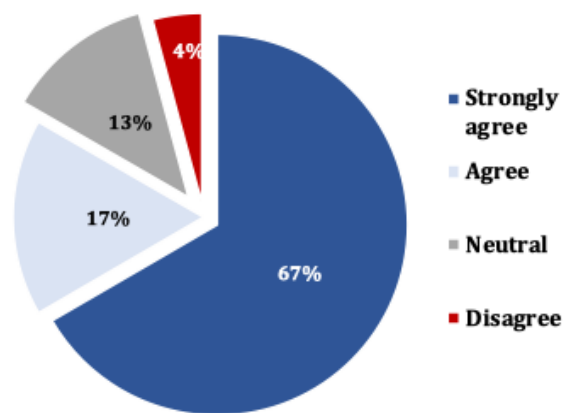
These insights shed light on the complex interplay between awareness, cultural barriers, and the representation gap in the context of political inclusion for marginalized groups in Somaliland.

Strategies for ensuring public participation of minorities

Despite the existence of these challenges, there is a general lack of strategic clarity on how to ensure increased representation for minorities. Nevertheless, many participants in the focus groups discussions and in the survey, see that inclusive policies holds the key to the solution of the issues of political exclusion of the minority groups. Others are of the opinion that awareness rising campaigns about the challenges the minority groups face and discussion of the plights of the minority groups in the political forums are sufficient to yield difference³⁴.

The chart below details the views of the survey respondents on whether special incentives and special treatment accorded to the minority groups can remedy the political participation inequality within the society. See figure 19 below.

Figure 19: Respondents' views on Incentives and Quotas to Promote Minority Inclusion in the Political System



The findings from the survey indicate that the majority of the respondents (84%) were of the conviction that the answer to the political marginalization lies in the institutionalization of affirmative action policies. Since they cannot garner sufficient votes to put through a candidate of their own, it is suggested that minorities need to have a pre-allocated minimum seats in the different government offices. Therefore, quota systems seem the most viable option as per the views of survey respondents.

Only 4% of the respondents believed that incentives and quota system are not important for remedying the political exclusion of the minority groups.

In addition to the necessity of affirmative action, as suggested by the survey respondents to address the political alienation of minority groups, participants in the Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) hinted the need to establish a dedicated office as a

³⁴ KII with Female MP, 10.09.2023

focal point for addressing minority group issues. They opined that this initiative would accelerate the integration of minority concerns into the mainstream politics.

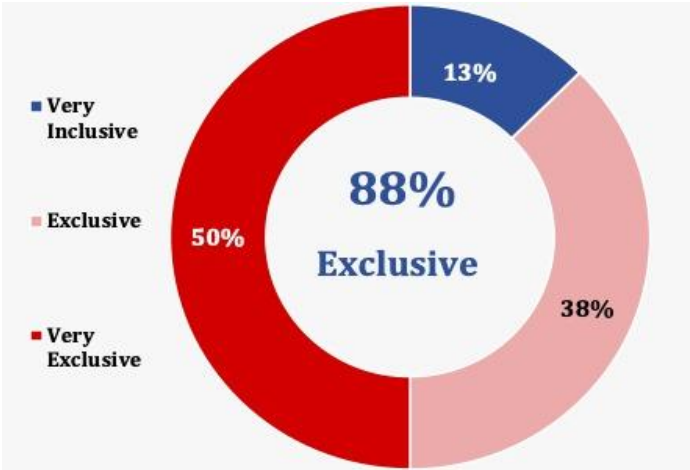
Level of Inclusion of Minority Groups

When inquired about whether they have ever participated in any political processes, the participants of the minority group from the FGD and KII responded that over the past decade, there has been a notable increase in the Gaboye community's political engagement. The political participation took the form of individuals from the tribe running for elections, particularly at the local council and parliamentary levels; as well as holding other appointive positions³⁵.

The successes of some candidates, like Barkhad Batun, have played a pivotal role in inspiring younger members of the community to get involved in politics. Nevertheless, some of the FGD respondents from minority groups highlighted that while there have been some positive changes in recent years, the minority groups still do not feel sufficiently motivated and represented in the political institutions, be they appointive or elective.

The survey data aligns with the insights gained from KIIs and FGDs, about the view on under-representation of minority group, see the below figure.

Figure 20: Level of Political Inclusion of Minority group



The data on the level of political inclusion for minority groups is also deeply disconcerting. According to the respondents, the vast majority perceive the level of political inclusion for minority groups as either "Exclusive" (38%) or "Very Exclusive" (50%). This widely perceived alienation (88%) implies that the minority groups perceive they are facing substantial barriers to meaningful participation in the political processes. Only 12% opined Somaliland politics is

"Very Inclusive." Notably, there are no respondents who view the situation as "Inclusive" further underscoring the challenges faced by these marginalized communities in accessing and participating in the political sphere.

The data reflects a significant gap in political representation and inclusion for minority groups, pointing to the need for comprehensive reforms and efforts to address these disparities. To promote a more inclusive political landscape, strategies should be developed that aim to dismantle the cultural and structural barriers that currently hinder the active involvement of minority groups. Such initiatives could include advocacy for greater representation in political institutions through affirmative actions, creating opportunities for education and leadership

³⁵ KII with former Adam admin and current diplomatic corps member at MoFA, 02.09.2023

development within these communities, and fostering awareness campaigns to challenge existing biases and stigmas.

Thus far, achieving greater political inclusion for minority groups is not only a matter of social justice but also a crucial step toward building a more representative and equitable democracy.

Women Political Participation

In Somaliland, Women are active in campaigning, voting, and fundraising processes. Nevertheless, there continues to be little female representation in political leadership. Very few of them manage to get elected or selected into the decision-making circles. Somaliland elections, in the end, boils down to clan representations³⁶ and clan contest. This does not favor women political ambitions. Efforts have been made to address the issues of increasing women's representation within the political scene, but there still has not been any significant breakthrough³⁷. The government, for instance, has tried to intervene over the years to resolve the issue of gender representation through the proposal of quotas and other mechanisms. In 2005, there was no proposed quota in place and out of six women who ran for elections, only one secured a seat.

In 2010, a proposed quota to enhance women representation was declared unconstitutional and faced a greater challenge. In the 2021 combined elections for the parliament and local governments, the quota system was voluntary, and all of the 3 political parties had agreed to run six women candidates in the six major regions, with the hope of having a total of 18 women joining the parliament. The public data shared by NEC (National Election Commission) shows there were 28 female candidates for the local council and parliamentary seats who have met all of the requirements. However, not a single woman was elected outright to parliament (they all went into the waiting lists in their respective regions/parties). This level of female exclusion from politics is unmatched³⁸.

'We feel utterly helpless. The absence of representation in parliament, local governments, executive, and judiciary arms leaves us facing exclusion and discrimination. No one stands to represent our interests. For example, all judges in Somaliland courts are men. In family matters, especially conflicts between husbands and wives, the lack of female judges means the woman (wife) struggles to fully convey her feelings and problems to the male judge. This absence of representation can result in decisions that negatively impact the woman and the children. As lawyers, we've advocated for female

³⁶ Abokor, A., et al. (2006). Further Steps to Democracy: The Somaliland Parliamentary Elections, September 2005. London: Progressio

³⁷ Saacadaale, N. (2022). Challenges of Building Effective and Inclusive Governance in Post-Conflict States: The Case of Somaliland. Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies. UoH.

³⁸ Ibid.

*advisors within the judiciary to assist in such situations, but our efforts have unfortunately been unsuccessful.*³⁹

The problem of women exclusion is not new. This poor result in the last elections, nevertheless, came despite some advance positive expectations. For many years, as previously noted, Somaliland's civil society organizations and government have campaigned for party lists to have a 30% gender quota to guarantee female political representation; something that never came to fruition.

What Keeps Women Out of Politics?

The persistent resistance to women in politics takes many forms in Somaliland. Several factors reinforce each other to prevent or hamper women's political participation:

In general, women suffer from insufficient financial means and a lack of political experience and the mobilizing power to build a broad and strong electoral base⁴⁰. In addition to that, the conservative nature of the political system and the social and religious institutions pose a challenge on the way of political inclusivity and parity, despite it being entrenched in the constitution. Hence, despite the adoption of some measures for women's greater participation in political and public life, numerous hurdles still remain on the way of greater women political inclusion. The gender norms and stereotypes which structure gender relations are a major obstacle to the equal representation of women in political and public life in Somaliland.

Thus, a single major barrier remains the deeply rooted cultural, religious and traditional stereotypes around the role of women in society. Women's identity is still predominantly conceived as being domestic in nature, and this continues to act as a barrier to women's entry into formal politics⁴¹. Therefore, the cultural beliefs that see politics as male territory is a challenge to women. Unfortunately, the constitutional provisions supporting citizen equality and rights are outweighed by the entrenched gender roles and the existing cultural barriers and stereotyping⁴².

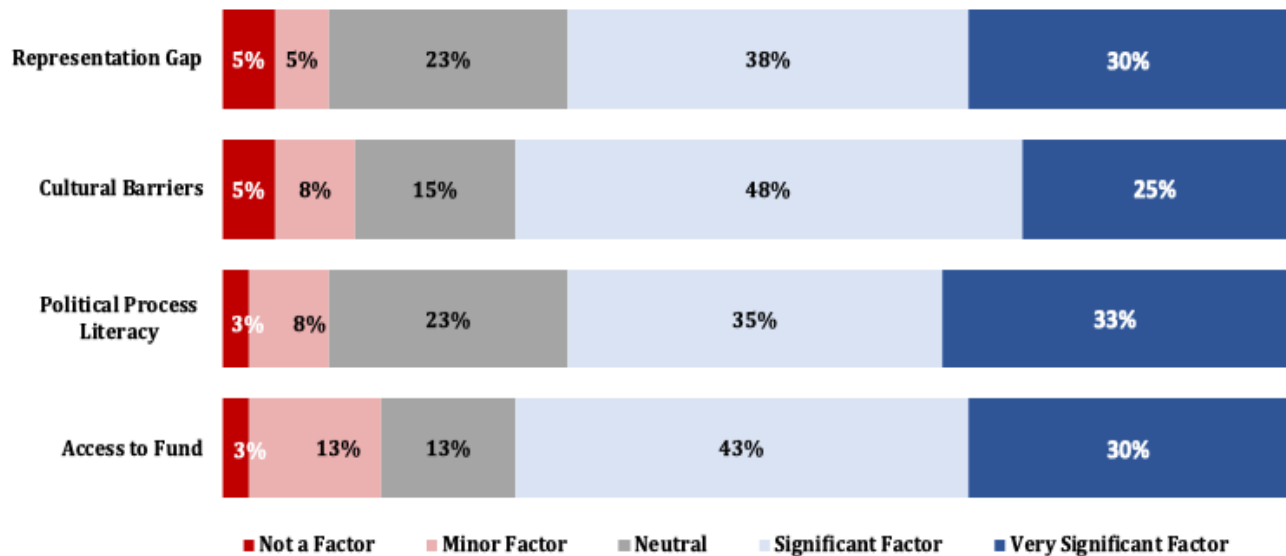
³⁹ Women FGD, 11.09.23

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ FGD, Borama, 05.09.2023

⁴² FGD, Burao, 03.09.2023

Figure 21: Factors Affecting Political Inclusion of Women



The figure, above, indicates that the culture and access to funds heavily weigh down on women political ambitions and participation potential in equal manner. 73% of the female respondents said that culture and social stereotypes stand on the way of political inclusion and participation for women. While equal percentage of women blamed lack of financial capital as the limiting factor for their capacity to participate in elections. These findings are in line with the views expressed by the FGD participants and the interviewees.

In general, the amount of money required for partaking elections in Somaliland is often large ranging from campaign expenses to considerable amounts that must be paid to be considered in the candidate nomination/selection process. Women lack access to and ownership of productive resource, limiting the scope of their political work. Additionally, women candidates usually cannot get the same amount of money if they try to fundraise for their campaigns as opposed to male candidates. The main reason often cited to be preventing women from access to capital is that the clan-facilitated fundraising is managed by traditional structures, and women are not represented in those informal institutions⁴³. However, it is noteworthy that the current government waived the mandated candidacy fees from both women and minority clan political aspirants⁴⁴.

The political will from political leaders.

The Somaliland multi-party democratic system adopted in 2001 did not usher in the expected significant improvement in women’s political participation. Political parties, which are the key gateway for women’s successful participation in elections, have serious issues themselves. They replicate the societal perceptions of gender relations. The inherently patriarchal nature of

⁴³ KII, Director of Gender, MOLSA, 26.08.2023

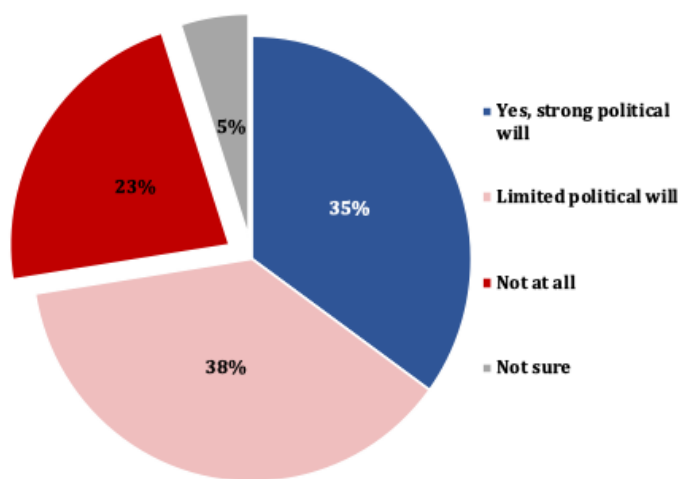
⁴⁴ KII. Female – Member of leadership team and gender focal point – Barwaaqo Political Association, 20.09.2023

political parties often hamper women’s ability to compete in elections⁴⁵. Consequently, political parties often harbor doubts about whether women can secure the necessary support from their clan bases or possess the requisite economic resources. Hence, there is neither the political will nor a genuine interest to address women issues and to implement reforms to accommodate women into the politics and public life in general. Many participants in the FGDs were of the opinion that politicians only listened to women during the elections to solicit vote⁴⁶, but after elections accessing them even becomes a problem.

“I approached the present parliament speaker during his campaigning for the house speaker, urging him to give some of the advisory positions in the parliament to women. He made the promise that he will do so. Unfortunately, no action has been taken to date. To provide some context, there are 23 advisors in the parliament, and none of them is woman”⁴⁷

Asked about their views on the presence of the will and the motivation among the current leaders to reform the political landscape, the views of the respondents are presented below.

Figure 22: Perception of Political Will and Motivation among Current Leaders



The figure shows that 73% of the respondents of the survey believe that there is political will to implement reforms to increase inclusion. While 23% believe in the absence of will and motivation for political reform. Thus far, there is considerable scope for political parties and leaders to listen and address women concerns and to provide support (e.g. material, training etc) for female candidates, as well as encourage them to participate in internal party leadership positions

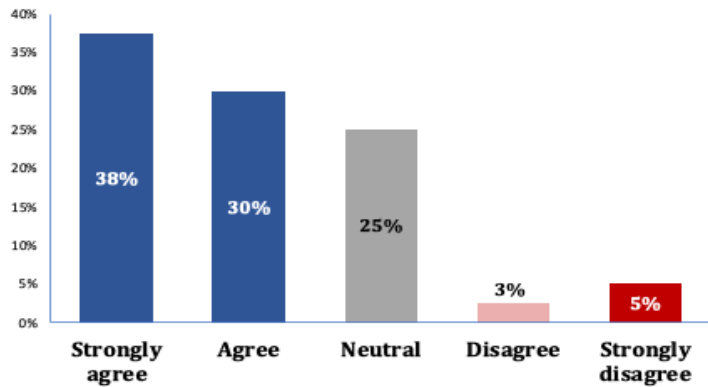
and the public life in general. On the other hand, enquired about the potential value of increased women representation in the political parties the respondents predicted positive results. See the fig. below.

Figure 23: Women’s Perceptions of Increased Inclusivity's Impact on Governance and Representation

⁴⁵ KII. Female parliament candidate. 07.09.2023

⁴⁶ FGD, Burao, 03.09.2023

⁴⁷ Women FGD. Former parliament candidate, 11.09.2023



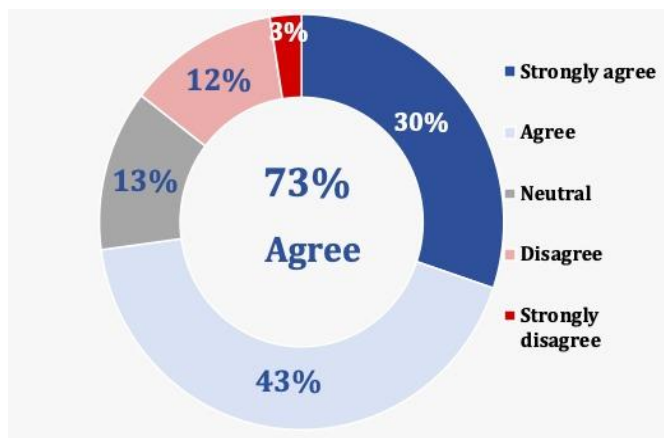
The data predicts that increased participation of women in political parties can lead to more responsive governance and a more effective representation of diverse interests. Notably, the figure illustrates that a significant portion of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with this assertion, with 38% and 30%, respectively. However, a substantial number remained neutral (25%),

while only a smaller fraction disagreed (3%) or strongly disagreed (5%) to the potential value of increased women participation. In general, there is substantial support for the idea that increased inclusivity of women can positively impact governance and representation. These findings offer valuable insights for policymakers and political parties seeking to enhance inclusivity and promote gender equity in the political landscape.

In addition to that, some women participants in the study held the view⁴⁸ that an increase in women’s numbers in the decision making platforms, in general, shall lead to the advocacy and adoption of new laws and new amendments. Legislation in the areas of, for example, domestic violence, rape and female genital mutilation. Also important is the symbolic role of women’s representation in breaking down patriarchal attitudes and creating a new political culture in which politics is no longer a “man’s world”.

Overall, when asked about the potential value of increased involvement of women groups in shaping political agendas and policies, the views of the respondents is presented in Fig 24.

Figure 24: Perceptions of Increased Involvement of Women in Shaping Political Agendas and Policies



The vast majority of the respondents (73%) believed that such increase would have the potential of changing people’s attitudes to women in politics and can contribute to positive societal changes. These findings are also supported by the views held by the female interviewees. They held the view that women’s increase in political involvement will make our democracy more beautiful and more inclusive. They believed women are more caring to social issues compared to men. Women are generally

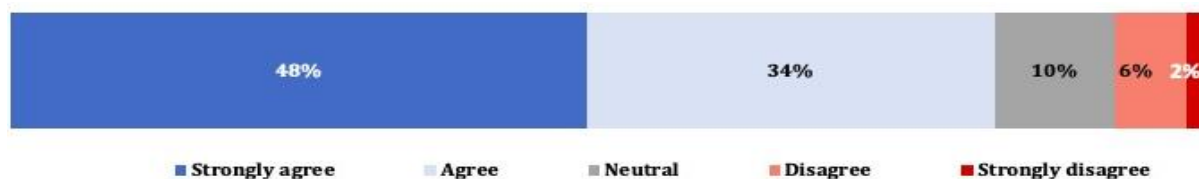
more creative and they could create better Somaliland. Furthermore, expanding political inclusion, another participant contended, can strengthens democracy, promotes justice, reduces

⁴⁸ KII, Director of Gender, MOLSA, 26.08.2023

inequality, fosters social cohesion and leads to more legitimate, responsive and effective governance for the benefit of all⁴⁹.

Nevertheless, in addressing the representation gap underpinned by culture and socio-economic factors, many respondents contended that no significant change shall be realized unless affirmative actions in the form of quota and reserved seats in the decision-making circles, as well as other incentives are deployed in favor of women. See the figure below.

Figure 25: Utilizing Gender Quotas and other incentives to promote women participation in politics.



For instance, 82% of the respondents believe that quota system is needed if women representation in our political system is to change. Only 8% of the respondents think that quotas and other incentives for women political participation is unimportant.

The views of these respondents are in line with the general situation in Africa where more than half of the African countries (28) – 13 countries have legislated quotas in the form of reserved seats for women in their parliaments, while 15 have constitutional and/or legislated candidate quotas. These generally range between 20% and 30%. However, in several countries, such as Liberia, the quota is much lower – only five parliamentary seats have been reserved for women in terms of the Equal Representation and Participation Act passed in 2016.

Countries with legislated candidate quotas include Algeria, Lesotho, Mauritania, Angola and Tunisia, while reserved seats for women have, for example, been legislated in Uganda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Morocco, Rwanda and Senegal, though they each use different mechanisms to elect reserved-seat members of parliament (MPs). In Tanzania, for example, 113 of 393 seats (i.e., nearly 30% of all parliamentary seats) are reserved for women (allocated to political parties in proportion to their share of the electoral vote). Women also contest in the open seats. In Zimbabwe women can compete freely at the national level, but an additional 30% of the seats in parliament (91 seats) are reserved for women and are distributed among parties on a proportional basis.

Other countries that have instituted the practice of reserving seats to ensure that women constitute a minimum number or percentage of representatives in various elected bodies. While the actual number of reserved seats is sometimes low, the new arrangements almost always bring about an increase in women's representation. Some examples of countries that reserve seats for women are as follows:

⁴⁹ FGDs and KIs

Table 7: Reserved seats for women in selected countries

#	Country	Reserved seats for women
1	Djibouti	10 per cent of seats are reserved
2	India	33 per cent of seats in all local bodies (<i>panchayats</i> and municipalities) are reserved
3	Jordan	6 of the 110 seats in the House of Deputies are reserved
4	Pakistan	60 of 342 National Assembly seats (17.5 per cent) are to be allocated to women
5	Uganda	at least one woman from each of the 54 districts is guaranteed a seat (out of 304 seats)

Source: Compiled

Still other countries have adopted different types of special “affirmative action” measures, including the requirement that political parties to include women on their candidate lists. Examples include the following:

Table 8: Other types of affirmative action for women inclusion into politics

#	Country	Reserved seats for women
1	Argentina	party lists must have a minimum of 30 per cent women, placed in positions likely to result in election
2	Costa Rica	party lists must include at least 40 per cent women
3	Bosnia and Herzegovina	party lists must include at least 30 per cent women

Source: Compiled

Somaliland Constitution and the Rights of the Marginalized Groups

Somaliland Constitution emphasizes on rights as vehicles for the preservation of individual dignity. It does not make any provision to address specific concerns of the marginalized communities as groups. Thus, there is the issues of a lack of both actual and constructive recognition, and discrimination, which appear to be allowed by law. Laws in Somaliland are fashioned to allow individual claims, while obstructing group identity rights or claims. Yet, communal solidarity is essential to the marginalized group's identity and chances for political inclusion.

Table 9: Marginalized groups rights and the constitution of Somaliland

No.	Article		Remarks
1	Article 8(1)(b): Equality of Citizens	"All citizens of Somaliland shall enjoy equal rights and obligations before the law and shall not be accorded precedence on grounds of color, clan, birth, language, gender, property, status, opinion, etc."	Communal solidarity is essential to the marginalized group's identity and chances for political inclusion; yet these articles in our constitution makes allowance only for individual rights as opposed to communal or group rights. Hence, the constitution needs to recognize special interest groups such as the marginalized groups
2	Article 22: Political, Economic, Social and Electoral Rights	1. Every citizen shall have a right to participate in the political, economic, social, and cultural affairs in accordance with the laws and the Constitution. 2. Every citizen who fulfils the requirements of the laws shall have the right to be elected and to vote	
3	Article 41(3): Eligibility for Candidacy	Any person who is standing for election to the House of Representatives must be "physically and mentally fit to fulfil his duties"	To many PWD who have been surveyed, this article lends itself to ambiguities and creates confusion. The PWDs interviewed for this research believe that the "physical fitness" condition creates insurmountable challenge for the PWD political aspirations given the prevailing environmental conditions.

The present general absence of marginalized groups from political participation and decision-making contravenes the formal equality granted to everyone under Article 8(1) of the Somaliland Constitution. This means they do not enjoy the fundamental right to participate in the government of this country, either directly or through freely chosen representatives. Therefore, their recognition in the constitution as a special interest group and the subsequent quotas would be special compensatory measures to help them achieve the equality enshrined in the constitution. This can also serve as a remedy to the pervasive negative impact of the Somali clan system and traditional views on politics, which make it unlikely to achieve formal equality at the balloting place.

Thus far, to achieve the equality guaranteed in the constitution; similar to how the constitution recognizes individual citizen rights, the Somaliland Constitution needs to provide civil and political rights, as well as socio-economic **Group Rights**, to marginalized groups whose communal solidarity and identity enhance their chances for political participation. Consequently, the Somaliland Constitution shall needs to protect the rights of marginalized groups in three ways. First, it should recognize them and make substantive provisions to address the specific concerns of these communities as groups. Second, it should incorporate the concerns of minorities into government institutions, including political parties. Finally, it should establish institutions and mechanisms that empower marginalized groups.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The Study sought to interrogate the gaps, challenges and opportunity for political inclusion of marginalized groups. The study revealed the prevalence of physical, social, cultural, legal as well economic barriers that are posing significant challenges to the political aspiration and inclusion of marginalized groups. The study also revealed the absence of legal framework and constitutional provisions that recognize and provide for the inclusion of marginalized groups as special interest groups in the selective and elective politics. With that in mind, a set of recommendations are presented below.

The recommendations are presented in a strategic focus area suggestions that target three specific audiences: the government of Somaliland, political parties, and CSOs interested in this area.

Strategic Focus Area 1: Create enabling environment- regulatory and policy frameworks as well as the accommodative and assistive infrastructure

Promulgation of affirmative action laws. To enhance the political participation of marginalized groups, there is the urgent need to recognize the existence of marginalized groups within our constitution; and subsequently enacting laws that promote affirmative action and inclusivity. Not only does this help encourage marginalized groups through representation, but it also provides a way in which the marginalized groups such as women, youth, minority groups and people with disabilities can imagine themselves assuming political responsibilities at many levels in the future. Thus, affirmative action should be provided for in our laws so that its enforcement is justiciable in the courts. When the law stipulates the number of seats reserved for marginalized groups and the consequences of non-compliance. This enables CSOs, NGOs and other coalitions advocating for inclusion to work towards more realistic targets supported by legal provisions for the purposes of enforcement. In addition to that, a concrete policy frameworks shall also be needed to be adopted to support holders of quota-based seats/positions to ensure long-term sustainability.

To achieve this, engaging various stakeholders such as legislators, marginalized groups organizations, political parties/associations, and civil society groups is crucial for the success of the process. By involving these diverse stakeholders, consensus can be built, and support can be garnered for the proposed amendments and new laws.

Harmonize the legal frameworks for political participation .The election laws should ensure that no element of the electoral process disadvantages the marginalized groups either directly or indirectly. For example, the eligibility age to run for certain offices disadvantage the youth;

election laws requiring candidates to post large monetary deposits can work against marginalized groups in general. Literacy or education requirements is more likely to unfairly disadvantage people with disability. Allocating too few polling stations in some places can lead to long lines and discourage voting by women with small children. In contrast, marginalized groups-sensitive election laws can create an environment in which these and other problems may be avoided. Thus far, it is important to ensure conformity between the election law and any other national laws on non-discrimination and inclusion.

Create assistive environment for the persons with disability. Based on the insights gained from the survey data, it is important for the government to undertake a general audit of the polling stations and registration facilities to check the design, accessibility and the facilities at the polling stations and the election related offices with a specific focus on accommodating the special needs of the people with disabilities. Special considerations need to be lent to the needs of the wheelchair users, people with limited walking abilities, the sightless voters who need special voting materials and the hearing impaired who need interpreters and the sign languages.

Establish special department within the ministry of Internal Affairs or the Ministry of constitution for the marginalized group's affairs. There is a need for the executive arms of government to establish a department to coordinate the affairs of the marginalized groups and to provide space for the participation of marginalized communities, given that the Constitution does not currently establish any such institution. In addition to that, Lack of information continues to militate against effective participation of marginalized communities and the state is urged to ensure access to information in languages that are accessible to all groups covered under the umbrella of marginalized groups specially the people with disability, including through funding regular radio/TV programs and other relevant media, to enable marginalized communities to receive pertinent information.

Strategic Focus Area 2: Making political parties more inclusive

Partner with marginalized groups organization. Political parties are one of the most obvious vanguards of this political participation. They may very well be a popular avenue for marginalized groups to access the political arena and, hence participate in politics. Therefore, political parties have an important imperative to actively encourage marginalized groups participation in these spaces and become more inclusive. To this end, political parties should partner with organizations that represent the marginalized groups.

In addition to that, political parties should self-reflect on the impact they have on perpetuating political marginalization norms through their actions and their structures. Therefore, it would be beneficial for parties to examine their internal structures and see if there are ways to increase political participation of marginalized groups within the party structure such as creating wings for the minority groups and people with disability groups. And also to special consideration to the marginalized groups in the general staffing of the parties from the bottom-up.

Lastly, the political parties can earmark specific party funds and resources to support marginalized groups membership drives and party candidates. At the same time, eliminate or significantly reduce nomination fees for marginalized groups aspirants and candidates.

Strategic Focus Area 3: Civil Society Organizations engagement

Initiate outreach programs. More than half of the Somaliland population live in rural areas. Never the less, government agencies, and political parties continue to focus more in urban centers, which potentially could aggravate the rural/urban divide in the political literacy, awareness and participation. To this end, more outreach needs to be done to bring civic engagement and education to rural areas to bring them on board. Not only would this help solidify democratic values as a whole by bringing them and embedding them in with in the other parts of the country, but it would do much to help the marginalized people living in the rural areas and to ease this divide between rural and urban communities.

Consider building platforms and networks. Within this network, there could be shared learning and exploration, including marginalized groups participation in more local decision-making positions, and increasing this participation beyond just election cycles. This network would be different from other established networks because it would specifically be dedicated to experience sharing and mentoring of the political aspirants from marginalized groups.

Support capacity enhancement of candidates representing all marginalized groups. In the same manner in which support has been extended to women candidates. In general, civil society organizations needs to design and implement capacity building and support programs for marginalized groups in politics. Such programs may include leadership training, campaign management workshops, public speaking seminars, and gender-sensitivity training for men in politics.

Advocate for and lobby for the inclusion of marginalized groups. Civil Society organizations also need to continue lobbying for the political inclusion of the marginalized groups and the promulgation of national laws that safeguard the rights of and the interests of the marginalized communities. In addition to that, Civil Society organizations should engage in awareness campaigns through the media and also through organizing public dialogues/debates emphasizing on the political inclusion of marginalized groups at national and regional levels.

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Annexes

Political inclusion of Marginalized Groups in Somaliland_2023

Focus Group Discussion Guide:

1. What kinds of participation in political processes have you experienced? Voting? Supporting a candidate? Contacting leaders? Candidature?
2. Do you think your group is sufficiently represented in the elective and other bodies of government?
3. What do you see as the key factors or reasons for the lack of political inclusion and representation for your group?
4. How does political marginalization impact your community?
5. In your view, what could the government do that would be most helpful for promoting the political inclusion and participation of your group?
6. Do you feel current political leaders listen to and represent your community/group? Why or why not?
7. What issues would you like to see political leaders focus more attention and effort on addressing?
8. Have you or others in your community tried to contact political leaders to address political inclusion? What was the result?
9. How do you think greater political inclusion would impact policies and programs affecting your community?
10. What gives you hope that political inclusion and representation can increase for your group in the future? What makes you concerned that change may be difficult?
11. What actions do you think civil society organizations could take to promote greater political inclusion for your group?
12. Is there anything else related to this issue that you think is important to discuss today?