

HERITAGE

I N S T I T U T E

DISTRICT COUNCIL FORMATION THROUGH INDIRECT ELECTION IN SOUTHWEST STATE OF SOMALIA:

A MEANS TO DEMOCRATIZATION



BACKGROUND

Introduction to Southwest State

- Third oldest federal member state in Somalia.
- Comprises Lower Shebelle, Bay, and Bakol regions.
- Democratization journey began in 2017.

Historical Context

- Ousting of first president Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan in 2018.
- Persistent challenges from extremist group al Shabaab.
- Impact of al Shabaab: control over parts of the state, hindering formation of district councils.

BACKGROUND (CONTINUED)

Political and Social Landscape

- Political polarization and occasional violence.
- Nonetheless, Southwest has less active clan warfare or organized militia groups than other member states
- Emphasis on stabilization and reconciliation.
- Formation of local governments through indirect elections mediated by elders.

“Article 9 of the Southwest Local Government Law recognizes this distinction by stating “until circumstances and conditions allow holding popular local council election, traditional elders represent the clans residing in the district.””



Southwest state's regions and districts

Regions	Lower Shabelle	Bay	Bakol
Districts	Afgoye	Burhakabo	Hudur
	Walawen	Baidoa	Wajid
	Sablale	Berdale	Elbarde
	Awdhegle	Qasahdhere/Qansahdheere	Rabdhure
	Kuntuwarey	Dinsor	Tiyeglow
	Marka		
	Qoryoley		
	Barawe		






ESTABLISHMENT OF SOUTHWEST

Constitutional Framework

- Emphasis on decentralization: empowering districts and sub-districts.
- Southwest state's constitution and local government law as guiding documents.

Formation and Structure

- Established in its current form in 2014.
 - Consists of 18 districts with a diverse clan population.
 - Formation of local councils as a step towards democratization
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ESTABLISHMENT OF SOUTHWEST (CONTINUED)

Democratic Transition

- Indirect elections as a transitional phase from top-down appointments.
- **Goals: political stability, reconciliation, and democratic governance.**

“ Indirect elections transitioned these five districts from top-down and politically appointed officials to what one senior local government official described as “mini-social contract” Qouto

METHODOLOGY

Research Approach

- Utilized qualitative methods: interviews and consultations.
- Participants: technical experts, practitioners, policymakers, advisors, academics, and district council members.

Data Collection and Analysis

- Data collected in Baidoa and Mogadishu.
- Processes: transcription, categorization, and analysis.
- Supplemented by reviewing the Southwest constitution and local government law.






STABILIZATION AND INDIRECT ELECTIONS

Key Finding

Stabilization and indirect elections are intertwined, crucial for democracy, peace, and progress.

Quote

“Both stabilization and indirect elections are joined at the hip and their inseparability is quite understandable” (HIPS interview, 2022).





LOCAL GOVERNMENT FORMATION

Key Finding

- Formation of local councils requires significant stabilization efforts.


Quote

- “There is no other way of going about the formation of local councils but to seriously invest in stabilization first” (HIPS interview, 2022).

Challenges

- Convincing communities about the importance of local government.
- Persuasion and consensus among clans.


Analogy

- “The state is like a person who had fallen from a skyscraper whose bones are broken and the whole body is aching” (Mustafe Sheikh Abdullahi).
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COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RECONCILIATION

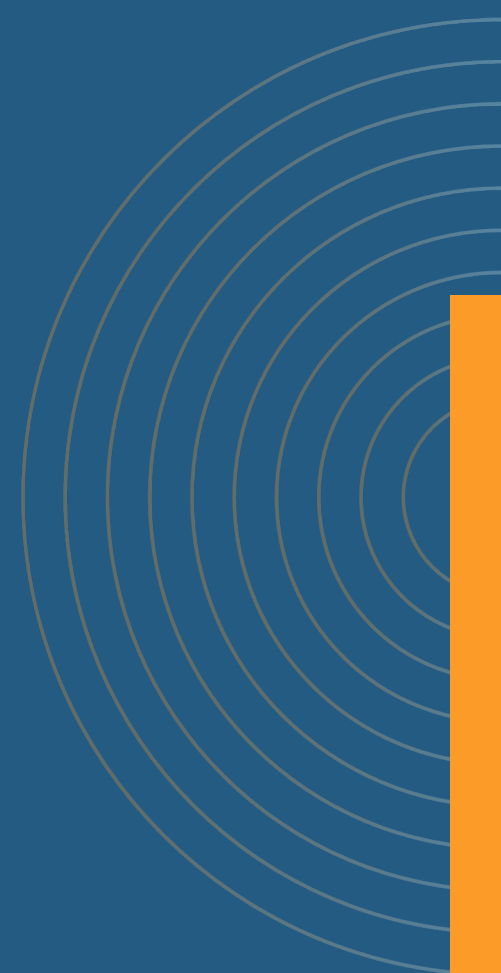
Key Finding

- Indirect elections promote reconciliation and social cohesion.
 - Quote: “Unlike the indirect election at the federal and state level which has been a bedrock for violent confrontation, the formation of the local government in Southwest creates reconciliatory infrastructure” (HIPS interview, 2022).
 - Process:
 - Acknowledgement of majority groups.
 - Bringing respected community personalities on board.
 - Bottom-up process respecting community will.
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INCLUSIVITY APPROACHES



Key Finding

- Innovative local approaches and cultural understanding promote inclusivity.
 - Quote: “Innovative local approaches, as well as cultural and religious knowledge, were more effective in achieving women’s and minority inclusion than constitutional clauses” (HIPS interview, 2022).
 - Strategies:
 - Engaging religious scholars and traditional leaders.
 - Cultural and religious justification for political inclusion.
 - Awareness campaigns rooted in Islamic perspectives.
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TECHNICAL EXPERTISE VS. POLITICAL MANEUVERING



Key Finding

- Technical experts are more effective than politicians in resolving contentious issues.
 - Quote: “Technical expertise outweighs political maneuvers” (HIPS interview, 2022).
 - Challenges with Political Influence:
 - Short-term political patronage.
 - Mistrust and manipulation.
 - Successes:
 - Transparent elections led by technical teams.
 - Community-driven processes and decision-making.
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POST-ELECTION CHALLENGES

Key Finding

- Operationalization of local governments faces significant financial challenges.
 - Quote: “An election should be a gateway to meaningful representation in terms of addressing public needs” (HIPS interview, 2022).
 - Issues:
 - Lack of budget for local councils.
 - Limited financial support and resources.
 - Need for training in budget management and responsibilities.
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RECOMMENDATIONS

Future Steps

- **Indirect Elections:** Continue building democratic district councils.
 - **Transparency:** Avoid imposing candidates to promote reconciliation.
 - **Innovative Inclusion:** Use Mosques and Islamic jurisprudence for democratization.
 - **Empower Experts:** Let technical experts handle election facilitation.
 - **Economic Studies:** Analyze economic lifelines before council formation.
 - **Budget Allocation:** Federal pressure on states for local government budgets.
 - **Publish Budgets:** Ensure public scrutiny of budget expenditures.
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