

GUIDANCE NOTE:

**ENTRY POINTS FOR STRENGTHENING
GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
WITHIN SUB-NATIONAL
DEMOCRATISATION**

ENTRY POINTS FOR STRENGTHENING GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

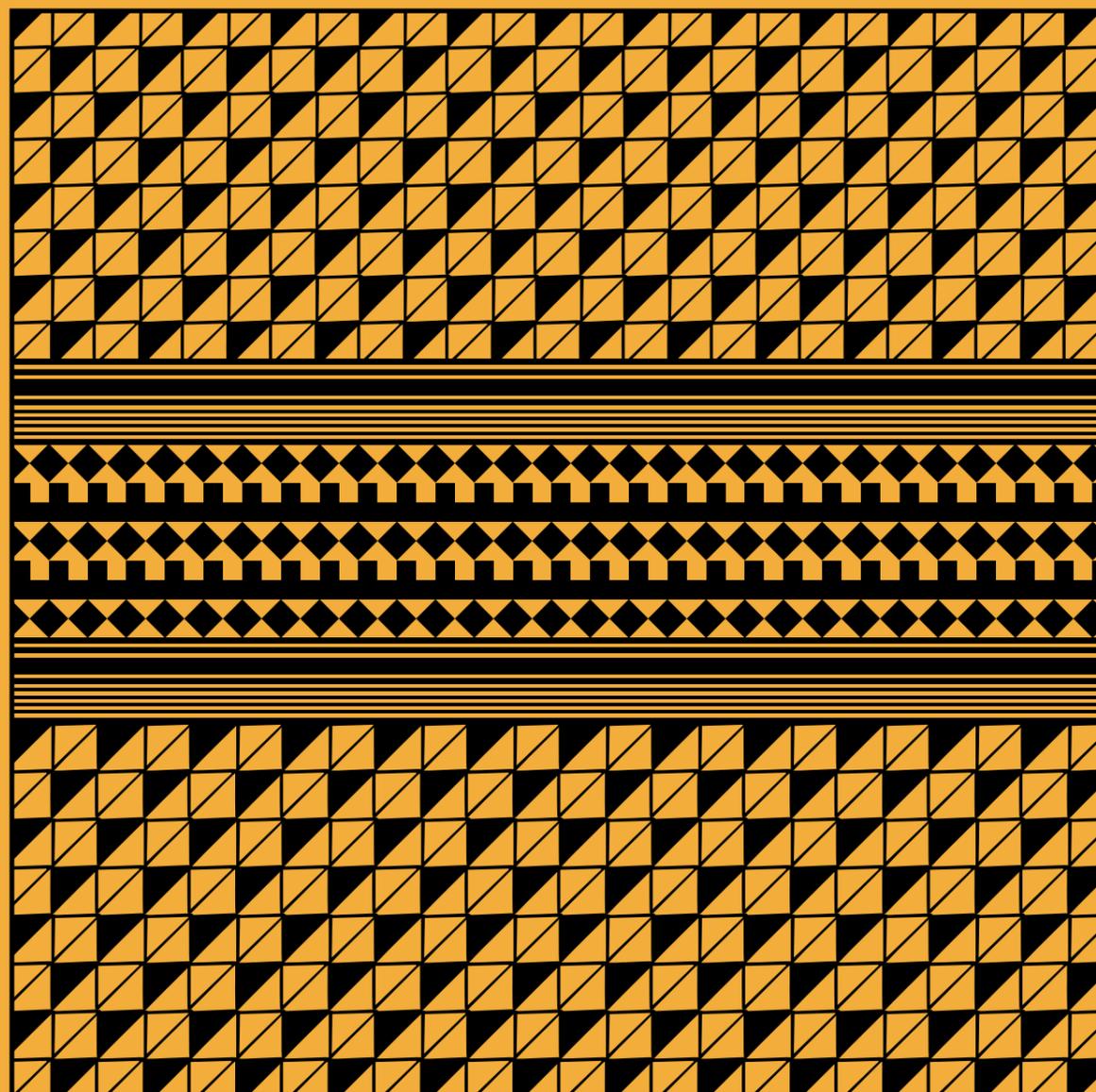
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'WE WOMEN IN SOMALIA
ARE TRYING TO BE LEADERS
IN OUR COMMUNITY'

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INTRODUCTION



Over the years, Somalia Stability Fund has worked to advance one-person, one-vote democratisation at the sub-national level. Notably, this has provided technical support to the Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission, legal and policy reviews, support to civil society, and conflict risk assessments, all of which aim to strengthen the foundation upon which one-person, one-vote elections can take place in a participatory, inclusive, and, moreover, non-violent way. Furthermore, together with other FMS administrations, the Fund has begun exploring the potential for sub-national democratisation elsewhere and the foundational steps required for this to emerge. Throughout our work, there has been a commitment to advance gender and social inclusion (GESI) — this has been no different within the democratisation arena.

Drawing upon our growing body of experience in this field, together with expertise from technical electoral specialists who have worked on electoral processes in both Somaliland and Puntland, this paper shares technical guidance on the spaces and opportunities for advancing GESI within sub-national democratisation programming.

It considers the different arenas where women and marginal groups can and should be represented, whether as voters, political candidates, political party members, or members of electoral bodies and relevant institutions. This guidance note will highlight specific points in democratisation initiatives where clear actions can be taken and tangible outcomes achieved.

The aim is to share ideas, approaches, and tools that may be of practical benefit to peer agencies, policymakers, and civil society working in this space who share the commitment to GESI and seek ways to make the aspiration a reality. In tandem, we continue to listen and learn, recognising that more can always be done as new ideas and approaches develop from the community around us. We hope that through this guidance note, the Fund and the wider community of agencies operating in this field are more able to deliver on its commitment to enhancing the political inclusion of women and marginalised groups.



TOWARDS GREATER INCLUSION IN SOMALI DEMOCRATISATION PROCESSES



BACKGROUND

Inclusion, participation, and representation in democratisation processes have been shown to have a significant impact on the success of peacebuilding and democratisation. As the democratisation process moves forward in Somalia, a central challenge has been the promotion of greater participation of women, youth, and other marginalised groups. Discussions on inclusion have mainly tended to focus on the adoption and implementation of quotas for women and minorities for seats in legislative bodies. While a legislative quota can have an important impact and ensure that marginalised groups have a seat at the table, it neglects many of the important areas where stakeholders can enhance the participation of women in all facets of the democratisation process, from electoral system design to civic and voter education.

At the federal level, Somalia has endorsed a 30% quota for women in its selection process, though ultimately, women won 24% of the seats in parliament. In Somaliland, however, a quota was rejected in 2005 and again in 2021 in advance of the recent parliamentary and local council elections, in which only 3 women (out of 15 female candidates) were elected to local councils, and no women (out of 13 female candidates) were elected to parliament. Puntland also does not have a legislative quota,

though the Puntland Law on Local Council Elections does stipulate that the first five candidates in any party list cannot be exclusively of one gender, and a further electoral policy has stipulated that there be one female candidate in every three candidates on the list. While quotas have formed the principal focus, stakeholders in both Somaliland and Puntland have explored other means of increasing women's participation, including codes of conduct, financial support to female candidates, and promoting women's participation through the party list system.

While these efforts have had varying degrees of success, Somaliland and Puntland do offer important lessons learned in seeking greater inclusion in Somali democratisation processes. In order to inform stakeholders—including Somali policymakers and international partners—on potential mechanisms to increase participation and representation, this paper will draw from the lessons of Somaliland and Puntland and set out the gender considerations at each step in the process, including electoral system design, establishment of institutions, outreach and capacity building of parties and candidates, and some of the key policy decisions that will present themselves along the way.



ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The design of the electoral system and the foundational legal framework can have an important impact on women's participation in the democratisation process, but this requires significant political will and stakeholder consensus in the early stages. Some of the key considerations are as follows:

PARTY LIST SYSTEM

Both Somaliland and Puntland have a proportional representation system in which seats are awarded to parties based on the percentage of votes won. This system promotes inclusion overall and reduces wasted votes, which makes it a good fit for the Somali context in which power sharing plays an important role. They differ, however, in the way that they implement the party list system.

OPEN LIST

Somaliland uses an open list system in which voters directly elect their chosen candidate. This system can increase the diversity of candidates, can increase accountability, and allows voters greater influence over their representatives. This system can also favour candidates with a clear, issues-based political platform. This was seen in the 2021 Somaliland elections in which minority candidate Barkhad Batuun, a candidate from a minority clan who consistently communicated his position on political issues, won a seat in parliament with a record-setting 20,000 votes, indicating strong cross-clan support and a potential shift from clan-based politics toward issues-based politics. Equally, Abdikerim Mooge, who also had a strong political platform, won a record-setting 26,000 votes at the local council level, and was successful in his bid to become mayor of Hargeisa.

While the open list system seemed to benefit minority candidates in Somaliland, women candidates did not do as well, with only three

women being elected to local councils and no women elected to parliament. It is unclear whether this was due to the women candidates not having developed and/or communicated similarly strong political platforms, or whether the open list system in this case also disadvantaged women by enabling voting along clan lines. Research is underway that should give a greater understanding of how the electoral system impacted candidates from different demographics (see below).

CLOSED LIST

Puntland, on the other hand, uses a closed list system. In this system, voters will vote for their preferred political party/association, and seats will be allocated proportionally according to the order of candidates' names on the party list. This system, like the legal quota, can facilitate women's participation by ensuring women candidates are included at the top of the list. This can be approached in different ways, such as ensuring that the top of the list includes a certain percentage of women candidates, or by including a woman candidate in each block of candidates. The latter is the approach taken by Puntland, supported both by legislation and internal regulation. Puntland legislation states that a block of five candidates in a party list may not be exclusively of one gender. This is further expanded by TPEC internal regulations which require one woman candidate in each block of three candidates. This same system could also be used to strengthen participation of youth and minority candidates. That being said, where the open list empowers individual voters, the closed list system can also empower political associations/parties who will ultimately decide the order of candidate names on party lists.

Regardless of the party list system that is selected, other tools must also be used to enhance political participation of women and other marginalised groups before, during, and following the election.

INCLUSION OF FEMALE AND MARGINAL GROUP CANDIDATES

LEGAL QUOTAS

As stated above, a legal quota is the strongest way to ensure women's political participation at all levels, including local councils and upper and lower houses of parliament. Somalia has—in theory—a 30% quota at the federal level, but fell slightly short of this after the 2016 selection with women making up 24% of the federal parliament. In Somaliland, the electoral legislation was amended and consolidated into one bill in advance of the 2021 combined elections. At that time, parliament considered a quota for women and minorities, but ultimately rejected it as unconstitutional and unfairly benefiting one group of candidates over another. Puntland also does not have a quota for women or minorities. It is important to note that even legal quotas may not be met without sufficient political consensus and engagement with stakeholders, as seen in the federal Somali parliament. Political facilitation, stakeholder engagement, and grassroots outreach must accompany any legislative quota.



INFORMAL MECHANISMS

In the absence of—or in addition to—legal quotas, there are several informal mechanisms, including political agreements, codes of conduct, and internal regulations, that can be applied to reach a certain level of representation for women and other marginalised groups. While a legal quota was rejected by the Somaliland parliament as unconstitutional in 2021, the three political parties made a public statement committing to one third of their parliamentary candidates being women. This agreement was then annexed to the political parties' code of conduct for the election. In the end, the parties fell far short of their commitment, with only 13 women candidates (5.3%) running for parliament out of a total of 246 candidates, and no women elected to parliament. The lack of political will and need for greater stakeholder engagement, especially with clan elders, resulted in the Somaliland electoral commission having limited ability to enforce the code of conduct.

Despite the limited success in ensuring women's participation, the discussion of the quota, the public commitment of political parties, and the code of conduct have all played important roles in raising awareness of women's participation. The fact that not a single woman was elected to parliament despite all of these measures has provoked a dialogue within Somaliland, with stakeholders asking what went wrong. These informal mechanisms have therefore played an important role in promoting incremental change and shifting the subject of the participation of women and other marginalised groups, which has largely been perceived as an externally-driven 'project', to a Somaliland-driven reflection about what was unsuccessful and what should be done next.

As described earlier, Puntland is also using internal electoral commission regulations, with the support of political associations, to strengthen existing legislation and ensure that party lists include a woman candidate in every block of three candidates. It remains to be seen whether the political consensus will hold and if there is sufficient buy-in from clan elders and other traditional stakeholders that will allow TPEC to enforce this

regulation when party lists are submitted. As with the efforts in Somaliland, however, it is an important additional intervention that will also help to inform the approach to women's participation in the general local government elections scheduled for 2022.

Both legal quotas and informal mechanisms require political will and stakeholder consensus to implement, but, even if efforts fall short, both are still important tools to incrementally enhance women's participation. It is also important to recognise and shine a light on hidden successes. Women candidates in Somaliland actually did very well at the polls in the 2021 local council and parliamentary elections. They received historically high numbers of votes and, in many cases, were only a couple of hundred votes shy of winning a seat. Furthermore, some women candidates received noteworthy endorsements from their clans and won high numbers of votes, while others also won high numbers of votes despite not having the endorsement of their clan. While the actions described in this paper are still required, the incremental shifts that are taking place are not unimportant.

CANDIDATE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

The electoral legislation should also set out the eligibility requirements for candidates, which generally include several of the following:

- Candidate nomination fees
- Minimum age
- Minimum education level
- Minimum assets and property held by the candidate
- Evidence of good standing in the community

In developing these criteria, it is important to consider how they may affect women and youth candidates, and to ensure that they are attainable by aspirants from marginalised groups. In Somaliland, for example, the NEC developed an internal regulation that allowed exemptions for women candidates regarding education and minimum asset requirements, which allowed more women to run as candidates. Nomination fees can also often be prohibitive, and this will be further explored below.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE LEGISLATION

There is no campaign finance legislation in place in Somaliland or in Puntland, leading to what are generally seen as high campaign costs. These costs are a significant financial burden, particularly on female candidates who have less access to traditional fundraising networks, and tend to benefit wealthy candidates and those connected to business and other well-funded interests. Campaign finance regulations can enhance the participation of women and other marginalised groups in two ways:

- By limiting campaign spending and donations from businesses and other lobby groups to level the playing field between candidates
- By earmarking funds for women, youth, and other marginalised candidates. This has been discussed in Somaliland, however there is some concern that it could be seen as the government giving preferential treatment to some candidates. Significant outreach and awareness efforts would be required to ensure that there is no public perception of bias or abuse of state resources

SUPPORT TO CANDIDATES

After quotas, support to women candidates is the area that gets the most focus in terms of women's participation, with efforts to remove barriers to women seeking to become candidates, and to create a more level playing field between male and female candidates.

CANDIDATE FEES

The greatest area of intervention for women candidates has been financial support to cover candidate fees. The newly-passed consolidated electoral legislation in Somaliland raised candidate fees to approximately 1,000 USD for local council candidates and 4,000 USD for parliamentary candidates. This was seen as too high for many candidates, but especially for women, who have not had access to traditional fundraising spaces like mosques, tea houses, clan networks, and other cultural spaces. The Somaliland government therefore agreed to cover the candidate fees for all women candidates, eliminating what was widely seen as one of the greatest barriers to women's political participation.

Despite these interventions, however, women's participation was still very low. At the local council level, only 15 candidates were women out of 522 (2.9%), compared with 7.6% in the 2012 local council elections¹. At the parliamentary level, there were modest increases over the 2005 parliamentary election, with 13 women candidates out of 246 (5.3%) standing in the House of Representatives election planned for May 2021, compared with the 2005 election in which 7 (2.8%) candidates were women. While it is clear that candidate fees are a barrier, the low levels of female candidate nomination demonstrate that financial support is important but not sufficient on its own to promote greater women's participation in politics. A greater understanding of the challenges and opportunities that women face when considering entering politics is required to inform stakeholder efforts.

POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

Once women have successfully been endorsed as candidates, they face another financial challenge in the form of political campaign costs. As with candidate fees, women often do not have access to the same fundraising networks that are available to male candidates. A 2015 Rift Valley Institute (RVI) study found that campaign costs for candidates ranged between 16,000-120,000 USD, and that all female candidates in 2012 found the campaign unduly difficult due to the financial burdens placed on them and their families. The financial burden was even more severe for younger female candidates. Women generally resorted to selling property or gold jewellery or approaching wealthy family members to cover campaign costs².

As stated above, one part of the solution to the uneven access to resources between male and female candidates may be to establish campaign finance legislation that puts limits on campaign spending. In the absence of tighter campaign finance controls, stakeholder efforts have focused on providing financial support to the campaigns of women candidates. In Somaliland, financial support to women candidates for campaign costs such as media coverage, printed materials, and transportation has been provided by civil society organisations (CSOs) that should traditionally occupy a neutral and impartial space. As with earmarking, Somaliland stakeholders have raised concerns that material support to women candidates could be perceived as CSOs having a bias for certain candidates or political parties. It is therefore

important to ensure that there is adequate outreach and awareness-raising to accompany this support and ensure the continued public trust in non-governmental actors.

TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

In addition to material support, local and international NGOs and agencies have also provided training and capacity building to women candidates to improve their campaign skills. This includes developing public speaking skills and communication plans, development of social media, and community outreach strategies. The development of these skills is also an important tool in the promotion of greater inclusivity, however, political parties, clan networks, and other traditional structures still play an important role in determining how citizens will vote. It is therefore also only one tool of many required to increase women's political participation.

RESEARCH

As shared above, while these interventions are important tools in promoting greater inclusivity, there is a need for greater understanding of the challenges and opportunities to enhance women's participation in the democratisation process, and how those challenges and opportunities differ for different demographics, including urban and rural candidates, candidates in different districts or regions, candidates in different age groups, etc.

At the time of writing, Participatory Action Research (PAR) was underway in both Somaliland and Puntland³ with the objective of providing a detailed understanding of women's roles in democratisation process, including challenges and opportunities for greater participation in all facets of the process. The research will also provide recommendations to stakeholders on future interventions.

The timing of each piece of research will allow unique insights; in Somaliland it is in the immediate post-election period and will allow timely interviews with aspirants, candidates, voters, and other stakeholders. In Puntland, the research is taking place around the early local government elections which will take place in the three districts. This will allow the findings and recommendations to be at least partly implemented in advance of the general elections scheduled in Puntland early next year.

Both pieces of research will be invaluable resources for policymakers and stakeholders looking to launch sub-national democratisation processes, though it is also important to note that each context has its own unique circumstances and, if resources allow, it would be advisable to carry out similar FMS-level research to establish contextually relevant understanding and recommendations.

WOMEN IN THE WIDER DEMOCRATISATION PROCESS

Support to social inclusion in the democratisation process is typically focused on increasing political participation and supporting candidates from marginalised groups. However, it is also important to consider other roles that women can—and do—play in the democratisation process in the Somali context.

ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODIES

Both Somaliland and Puntland election management bodies (EMBs) include women at the Commissioner level (1 Commissioner of 7 in Somaliland, and 2 Commissioners of 9 in Puntland) that also bring with them linkages with civil society and women's advocacy groups. Both EMBs also count women among their secretariat staff, though predominantly in the admin, finance, and voter education departments. Both commissions have recently undergone a gender assessment and are putting in place institutional gender policies to improve gender mainstreaming across the institutions. Policymakers should consider how to establish a gender-balanced EMB that provides equal opportunities for women in all departments, including areas such as operations and ICT.

It is also important to consider the field staff required by the EMB to carry out voter registration and election processes. In the 2016/2017 voter registration process, Somaliland commissioners observed that voter registration centres that were managed by women ran very smoothly. A gender focal point that was recruited by the NEC in 2021 took this observation and fed it into the 2021 recruitment process which led to a high number of young women being recruited to manage both voter registration centres and polling stations, both of which are critical roles in the process. In assessing women's participation successes, shortcomings, and needs, stakeholders need to take a comprehensive look that goes beyond political candidates to all levels of the process.

POLITICAL ASSOCIATIONS/PARTIES

Women's participation in political parties is also an important metric to consider in terms of women's wider participation in the democratisation process. Political parties in both Somaliland and Puntland have made limited efforts to develop and communicate political platforms or manifestos and have instead focused their outreach on informal networks such as clans. A move towards

issue-based politics could have a balancing effect by shifting assessment of candidates to a review of their platform rather than their access to clan networks.

Internal party democracy can also help to improve participation of women and other marginalised groups by opening up opportunities to those with less access to informal networks.

ELECTION OBSERVATION AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

In order for election observation reports and dispute resolution mechanisms to be credible and trusted by stakeholders, it is important that they be seen as inclusive and representative of the broader population. Stakeholders should therefore strive to ensure that local and international observer missions and dispute resolution bodies include women, youth, and minority groups as much as possible. In addition to credibility, stronger participation of marginalised groups can help bring to light additional insights that may help to inform future electoral processes. For instance, a Women's Situation Room that monitored the 2021 Somaliland elections took reports of violence against women and harassment of women candidates that might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

INCLUSION IN NON-ELECTED ROLES

In addition to elected positions, civil society and other actors should also consider ways to increase women's participation in politically-appointed positions. In Somaliland, there is an internship programme for young women in which participants are placed in ministries or other government departments at the director level following their internships. Similarly, many civil society organisations are lobbying for the inclusion of women in non-elected roles. These efforts are also important as they bring important skills and knowledge to the relevant ministries, but also because they incrementally change the face of government and allow young women to more easily consider themselves taking on similar roles. In Puntland, there have been similar advocacy efforts, both from civil society and from individual activists, to increase the number of women in politically appointed roles.



VOTERS AND VOTER PERCEPTIONS

In addition to participation in democratic institutions, women and other marginalised groups participate in the democratisation process as citizens and voters; this role should not be diminished, but rather highlighted as both a success and a possible entry point to increase participation in other areas. In Somaliland, women have historically made up 47% of registered voters, and more than 50% of voters on election day. Women also play an important role in outreach and mobilisation. It is therefore important to have a greater understanding of voter perception and behaviour to understand why or why not female (and male) voters do not vote for women candidates. Equally, youth make up more than 50% of registered voters in Somaliland and were strongly represented as candidates in the 2021 elections. In Puntland, women made up 48% of registrants in the three early election districts. Furthermore, in both places, youth make up more than 50% of voters – an important success when compared to the lower numbers of youth turnout in so many other countries.

As with the research taking place to better understand the challenges and opportunities to women's participation, voter perception surveys would help us to understand what motivates voters. While it should not be assumed that women will or should vote for women, and that voters have many reasons for selecting a given candidate, perception surveys would help to shed light on these reasons and to determine what might motivate all voters—not just women, youth, and minority voters—to select candidates from historically marginalised groups. As seen in Somaliland, minority candidates with strong political platforms were very successful at the polls, while women did not do as well. Without comprehensive voter perception surveys, it is impossible to determine whether there is a decided shift towards issue-based politics, or whether decisions were based on identity. These insights can help to inform future interventions and to develop outreach and voter awareness messages that target the high numbers of women and youth participating in the process as voters.

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND VOTER EDUCATION

The results of the voter perception survey should then be taken into account when developing voter education and public awareness-raising campaigns

that also integrate best practices in terms of inclusivity. The broader voter education campaign should include mainstreaming of messaging around the participation of women, youth, and other marginalised groups. This can include messages about allowing pregnant women, the elderly, or people with disabilities to move to the front of the voter registration or voting queues, or any other policies adopted by the election management body to facilitate voting by marginalised groups. Mainstreamed messages should also take care to be inclusive in their depictions of different roles, for example by showing female voter registration operators or polling station workers.

Voter education campaigns should also include targeted messages that are directed towards marginalised groups. In the Somaliland 2017 presidential election, for instance, there was a particular effort to include a sign language interpreter at all major outreach events to ensure key messages reached hearing impaired stakeholders, while in the 2021 combined elections, the EMB worked with civil society to purchase additional wheelchair accessible ramps and deliver public outreach alerting people with disabilities to their closest accessible polling stations.

The tools used to deliver voter education and public awareness campaigns should also be developed with inclusion and participation in mind. In both Somaliland and Puntland, public awareness campaigns are often delivered using vehicle-based announcements to ensure that message reach rural areas and illiterate voters. Community forums are also a common approach, but the timing, location, size, and gender impacts of community forums should also be considered.

POST-ELECTION CONSIDERATIONS

The focus on women's participation in elections and democratisation is often in the lead-up to the election, especially the nomination and campaign periods, election day, and results. While this period is an important barometer of inclusion, there is a lot that can be done in the post-election period that can lay the necessary groundwork for future gains in women's participation.

POST-ELECTION REVIEW

Best practice in elections encourages a post-election review, in which stakeholders including the EMB, government, civil society, academics, and sometimes international partners, come together to assess lessons learned in the electoral process. This is a good opportunity to have a dedicated session that also assesses the level of participation and inclusion of marginalised groups in the process. This part of the review can include analysis of disaggregated statistics of registered voters and voter turnout, reports from local and international election observers, and reports from other ad hoc groups such as the Women's Situation Room that was active in the 2021 Somaliland election. Lessons and recommendations from the post-election review should then be integrated into the planning for the next electoral cycle.

CONTINUOUS ELECTORAL CYCLE SUPPORT

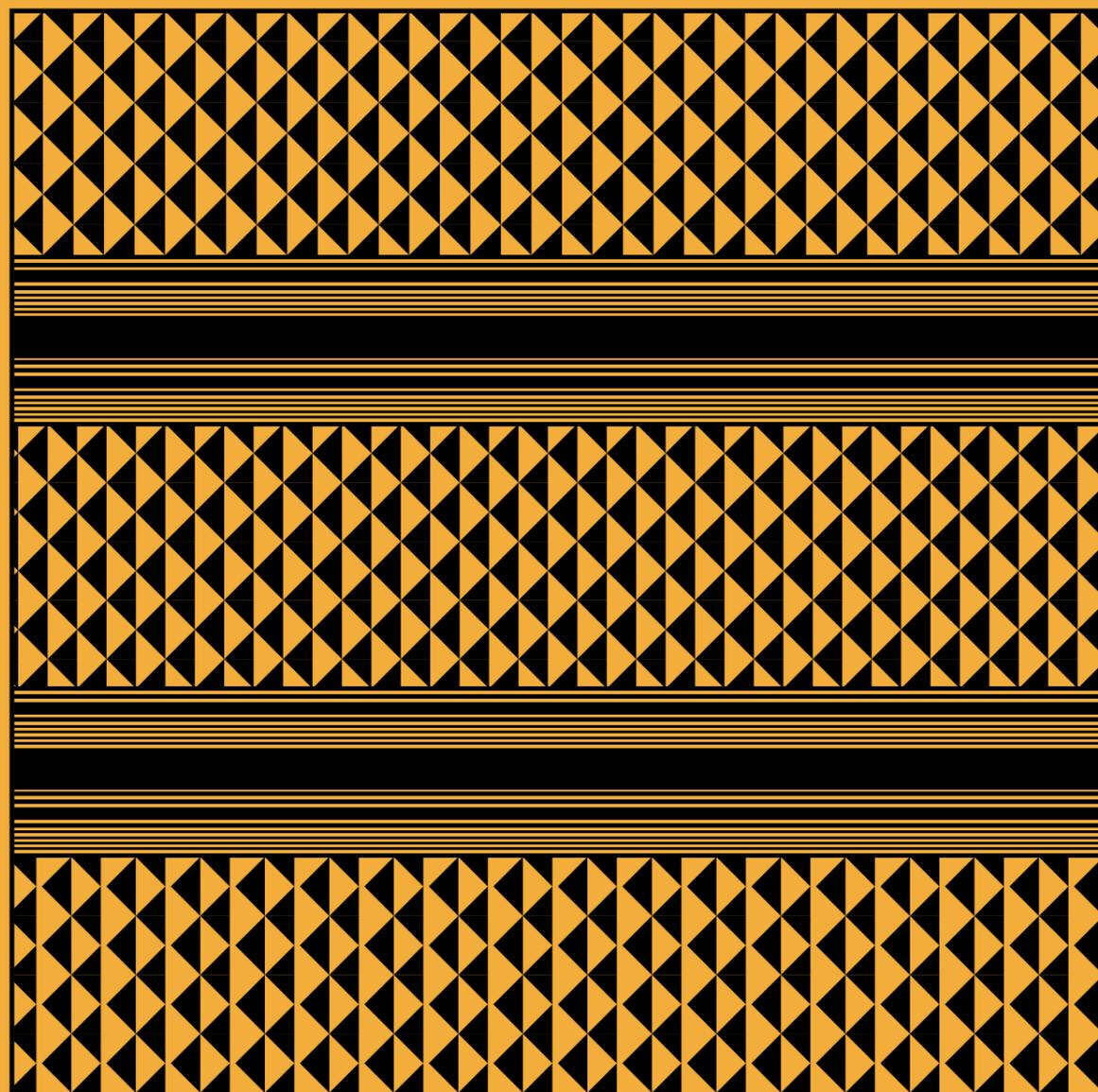
As shared above, actions to support and advocate for greater participation of marginalised groups can often focus on election day, and the few months immediately preceding it, but there is a lot that can be done throughout the electoral cycle that can lead to greater inclusivity in the democratisation process. In particular, providing training to women parliamentarians and local councillors and providing support to help them effectively represent their constituents can help demonstrate to stakeholders the benefits of an inclusive government. Unfortunately, this can sometimes be a challenge due to the low numbers of successful candidates. In Somaliland, for example, many organisations that planned to deliver targeted capacity building to women representatives were rethinking their plans due to the fact that only three of the local councillors elected in 2021 were women, and none of the parliamentarians.

While women would still receive training with their male colleagues, they would not benefit from targeted capacity building that is meeting their specific needs. Stakeholders therefore need to consider how best to ensure that they are meeting training and capacity building needs of all elected officials and meeting the specific needs of marginalised groups. In addition to ensuring that elected representatives have the skills to ensure they are effective in their new positions, an electoral cycle approach can also allow greater opportunity, often in a less politicised environment to: raise awareness around the participation of minorities; carry out consultations with stakeholders to better understand the barriers and opportunities for greater inclusivity; and develop effective and context-specific fundraising, campaign, and skills development programmes for potential aspirants.

CONCLUSION

At each step in the design and implementation of the democratisation process, policymakers should consider how to promote greater inclusion and participation of women, youth, and other marginalised groups. This paper has described a number of legislative and technical tools that can support incremental change in this direction. It is important to note, however, that each of these tools should be informed by the current political climate and context. The implementation of these tools must also be accompanied by continuous political space management, consensus building, and public awareness-raising to have the best chance of success.

ANNEX I: INCLUSION POLICY CONSIDERATIONS WITHIN DEMOCRATISATION INITIATIVES



Inclusion Policy Considerations		
Phase	Options/Recommendations	Considerations
Electoral Model		
Party List System	Open List System - in which voters select the individual candidate they wish to vote for.	This system can have a negative impact on inclusion of women and minorities overall if there is not significant public support for these candidates. On the other hand, this system does allow for greater representation and accountability, which can privilege women and minorities that campaign with a strong political platform that has public buy-in.
	Closed List System – in which voters only select their preferred political party. Seats are then allocated in the order that candidates appear on the party list.	This system, which has some similarities with a quota (see below) can facilitate participation of women and minorities by ensuring these candidates are included at the top of the closed list.
Legal Framework		
Quotas for Women and Minorities	The electoral legislation includes a quota for women and minorities.	This option is the strongest way to ensure inclusion, representation, and participation in the democratisation process. The legal quota is still not a guarantee, however, and nevertheless requires consultations and consensus building with stakeholders.
	Quotas can also be included in the process through informal mechanisms such as political party agreements or communiqués, codes of conduct, and EMB internal policies and regulations.	In the absence of a legal quota, these informal mechanisms can be an important step towards greater inclusion, but they can be difficult to enforce, especially if there is no support from stakeholders. As with the legal quota, this approach requires considerable consultations and consensus building.
Candidate Eligibility Requirements	Electoral legislation generally includes minimum eligibility requirements for candidates, which can include candidate nomination fees, minimum assets held by the aspirant, and minimum education levels.	Eligibility requirements, especially in terms of minimum education, candidate fees, and minimum assets, should be attainable by all potential candidates, including women and minority groups.
	Allowances can also be made through internal EMB regulations in terms of the financial and educational requirements for women and minority candidates.	Once again, this requires consensus, especially among political parties/ associations, where the EMB recommends lowering minimum requirements to encourage greater inclusion.

Campaign Finance Legislation	Campaign finance legislation regulates the amount of money that can be spent on campaigns and the amount of money that individuals, organisations, and corporations can spend. Campaign finance legislation can also earmark funds to support candidates from marginalised groups.	This type of legislation can be an important means of levelling the field, especially for candidates that may not have access to the same fundraising networks. That said, as with the above measures, the ability to enforce this legislation requires significant political buy-in.
Support to Candidates and Campaigns		
Candidate Fees	Ensure candidate nomination fees are inclusive and are not prohibitive to any potential aspirants.	This ensures a level playing field through legislation and can encourage broader participation.
	Provide subsidies to cover the candidate fees of women, minorities, and other candidates from marginalised groups.	This can remove one of the greatest perceived barriers to participation, but as seen in Somaliland, removal of candidate fees is not sufficient on its own to increase women's participation.
Campaign Costs	Campaign costs can also be prohibitive. In the absence of campaign finance legislation, civil society and other actors sometimes provide funds to candidates from marginalised groups. This support can be direct financial support, or support in kind for services such as media access or campaign materials.	This can help women and other minority candidates that do not have access to the same fundraising structures, but it can sometimes leave civil society and other impartial actors open to accusations of political bias in favour of specific candidates.
Training and Capacity Building	Once women and minority candidates overcome the barriers to nomination, civil society and other partners can provide training and capacity building for campaign skills such as development of a campaign strategy, strengthening public speaking skills, and development of social media and community outreach plans.	This is an important tool in the promotion of greater inclusivity, however political parties, clan networks, and other stakeholders still have a strong influence on voter behaviour.
Research	To be truly effective, these tools should be informed by participatory action research that provides further contextual nuance and relevance about the barriers and opportunities for greater inclusivity.	Research will depend on the level of resources and timeline available in advance of the electoral process.
Inclusion in Wider Democratisation Process		
Election Management Bodies	Inclusion should also be considered in democratic institutions. In the EMB, this includes Commissioners, secretariat staff, and field (voter registration and polling station) staff.	In the recruitment of field staff, it is important to consider barriers that women and minorities may face and adjust recruitment plans accordingly.

Political Associations/Parties	Political parties also play an important role in increasing participation, in particular through a commitment to including women candidates in their party lists.	Increased capacity to develop and communicate political platforms, and improved internal democracy will also help open up opportunities to women and candidates from other marginalised groups.
Election Observation and Dispute Resolution	Local and international observer missions, and dispute resolution mechanisms should all include women, youth, and minorities to be broadly representative.	Inclusive observation reports and dispute resolution mechanisms will be more trusted and credible and will help to inform planning more completely for subsequent elections.
Non-elected Roles	The focus of inclusion efforts tends to be on elected representatives, but politically appointed roles are also important. This includes positions such as DGs in ministries and other government agencies.	This is a multi-stakeholder effort, and can include efforts from activists, civil society, universities, private sector, and government, creating a pipeline of young people that can move into the top levels of the civil service.
Voters and Voter Perceptions	Women, minorities, and youth participate actively as voters. Greater understanding is needed in terms of voter perceptions and voter behaviour towards women and minority candidates.	Depending on time and resources available, voter perceptions surveys would give a strong understanding of voter behaviour and how to increase support for women and minority candidates. Results of the voter perception surveys should also be communicated back to the public with inclusive voter education tools.
Post-Election Period		
Post-Election Review	A post-election review allows stakeholders to assess lessons learned from the election process. This should include a session dedicated to the participation of women, youth, and minorities.	Lessons learned should then be incorporated into planning for subsequent electoral processes.
Electoral Cycle Support	Rather than focusing all efforts on the period immediately preceding an election, stakeholders should take an electoral cycle approach. This will allow additional areas of support including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and capacity building for newly-elected women parliamentarians and local councillors • Long term awareness-raising around women's participation and capacity building for political aspirants 	As with the above recommendations, these are dependent upon available resources. Stakeholders should consider how to provide training and professional development for elected women and minority representatives in cases with limited resources and support.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The rates of women's participation between the 2012 and 2021 local council elections cannot be directly compared as there were many more political associations competing in the 2012 elections, and only three political parties competing in the 2021 local council elections.
- 2 Aly Verjee et al, *The Economics of Elections in Somaliland: The Finance of Political Parties and Candidates* (Nairobi, Rift Valley Institute, 2015), p.30
- 3 The research in Somaliland is being carried out by the Academy for Peace and Development (APD), and the research in Puntland is being carried out by the Puntland Development and Research Centre (PDRC).

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'WE WOMEN IN SOMALIA ARE TRYING TO BE LEADERS IN OUR COMMUNITY'

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ENTRY POINTS FOR STRENGTHENING GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

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