

# FROM LEARNERS TO LEADERS: SOMALI YOUTH STEP INTO GOVERNANCE AND CLIMATE ACTION

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Galmudug and Hirshabelle states have experienced increasingly severe weather events in recent years, including prolonged drought since 2020 and record floods in late 2023. The climate crisis in Somalia has significant implications for the country's social, political, and economic fabric, with many people migrating in search of relief. Climate shocks exacerbate existing intercommunal, resource-based conflicts that revolve around control over limited resources, and make districts like Jowhar, Warsheikh, Galkayo, and Abudwaq more unstable.

Youth, women, and other marginalised groups, are disproportionately affected by climate change (UN Women, 2024), and often excluded from governance and civic engagement (World Bank, 2022). This leaves them without the tools to address environmental challenges and to advocate for the rights of their communities.

The term 'youth' is defined as everyone between the ages of 15 to 35 years, a definition in line with Somalia's National Development Plan.

With around 81.5% of Somalia's population aged under 35 years old (Somalia National Youth Policy, 2023), youth are significant stakeholders in all social, political and economic issues, and particularly in matters of stability and conflict. However, traditional elders and a long-serving generation of officials continue to dominate local decision-making, resulting in the systematic exclusion of youth from decision-making processes at all levels.

Somalia Stability Fund III (SSF III) has been working in Galmudug and Hirshabelle to equip youth with knowledge of local governance structures, and their rights and responsibilities within those structures, as well as fostering climate awareness and promoting practical environmental action. This initiative, funded by SSF III and implemented by a consortium led by Finn Church Aid (FCA), alongside Galmudug's Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation (MoIFAR) and Hirshabelle's Ministry of Interior & Local Government (MoILG), integrates civic education with hands-on activities, such as tree planting and waste management, to enhance community resilience, adaptation and preparedness, and build trust between youth and district administrations.

"I never knew that I had a constitutional right to participate in public affairs. Now I do and I intend to use it," said participant, Abdikadir Adan, after reading Somalia's Constitution for the first time.

The real change happened after the sessions—when trained youth took part in a district consultation meeting with the Deputy Mayor and local officials. They presented ideas, shared frustrations around exclusion, and



## WORKSTREAM 3: DEMOCRATISATION & LOCAL GOVERNANCE

### AT A GLANCE

#### PARTNER

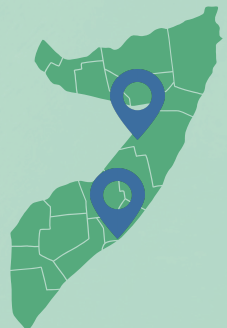
Finn Church Aid (FCA)

#### ACTIVITY DETAILS

Youth environmental  
stewardship

#### LOCATION

- Jowhar and Warsheikh Districts, Hirshabelle
- Galkayo and Abudwaq Districts, Galmudug



### MOHAMED HASSAN MATAN

Mayor of Warsheikh

"These programmes didn't just build capacity—they built trust. Our youth are now part of our governance landscape."





"We urge the government to build on the knowledge we've gained through this training by meaningfully including youth in local development and decision-making processes."

**Ifrah, a training participant in Abudwaq**

advocated for inclusion in local governance.

District Commissioner of Warsheikh, Mr. Mohamed Hassan Matan, announced plans to establish a Youth-Government Liaison Committee and pledged that youth-led initiatives would be included in the district's future planning. "These programmes didn't just build capacity—they built trust. Our youth are now part of our governance landscape."

The trainings culminated in cleaning and tree-planting exercises. The hands-on campaigns were the vehicle through which youth translated theory into leadership, and built a relationship and credibility with local officials. Youth, once marginalized, are now visible contributors to environmental management. "This is not just about cleaning," said Farah, a youth leader. "We're saying: We are here. We care. We want to be part of the solution."

Mayor of Abudwaq, Mr. Muhyidin Adan, acknowledged the youth's role: "We deeply appreciate the efforts of the youth. Their leadership in these actions sends a strong message that Abudwaq's future is in capable hands. Our gates are open to any young person ready to contribute."

This is what transformation looks like: young people are becoming active agents of change. District officials are beginning to see youth not as liabilities, but as partners. Communities are cleaner. Conversations are richer. And a sense of shared ownership is beginning to take root.

## Why is this work important?

The meaningful inclusion of youth in local governance emerges as a vital driver of stability and resilience in Somalia (World Bank, UN-Habitat, UN Somalia, 2018). By addressing root causes of instability—such as marginalization, exclusion, and lack of opportunity—this approach empowers young people to become agents of change and peacebuilding. Empowering youth fosters a sense of agency, purpose, and hope, while community integration builds essential support networks that reduce their vulnerability to recruitment by armed groups (World Bank, 2022).

Moreover, involving youth in environmental stewardship helps tackle resource scarcity and other conflict triggers, strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities. Given that the majority of Somalia's population is under 35, engaging youth today prepares the next generation to govern and manage resources sustainably, thereby laying a foundation for lasting peace and development.

