

# SOUTHWEST STATE'S JOURNEY TO ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE

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Southwest State of Somalia was officially formed in 2014 following negotiations and agreements between various clans and political stakeholders in the region. The state-building process has involved the drafting and establishment of state and regional constitutions and the election of regional representatives. Additionally, efforts have been made to extend the reach of government services, improve security, and promote local governance.

Overall, Southwest State represents a significant component of the country's federalization efforts, striving to achieve stability, governance, and prosperity within a federal framework. While progress has been made in the state-building journey, Southwest State has faced obstacles such as political tensions, resource constraints, and long-standing disputes between various communities.

Ensuring transparency, curbing corruption, enhancing citizen engagement and upholding the rule of law, will all contribute towards the region's political stability, economic development, and overall progress. Southwest State is now on a pathway to accountable governance by building its institutions, fostering public trust, and promoting social cohesion.

To show its commitment to accountable local governance, Southwest State's Ministry of Interior, Local Governments and Reconciliation (MoILGR) conducted 'Accountability Forums' in Baidoa (August, 2024), Barawe (September, 2024) and Hudur (February, 2025), funded by the Somalia Stability Fund III (SSF III).

The positive feedback garnered led to a state-level forum, held in Baidoa in June 2025. The forum allowed for broader discussions on state-level governance processes, security, infrastructure, public service delivery, and social development.

**Objectives:** The initiatives aimed to improve citizen engagement and build public trust in government institutions. The forums were convened in response to growing public demand for more inclusive, transparent, and accountable governance. Across Somalia, and particularly in the Federal Member States, citizens have increasingly called for direct engagement with government officials to address service delivery challenges and ensure their voices are heard in shaping public policy.

The events intended to increase awareness and enhance understanding of the fundamental principles of government accountability and transparency. This includes educating government officials, civil society organizations, and the general public about the importance of these principles in governance.



## WORKSTREAM 3: DEMOCRATISATION & LOCAL GOVERNANCE

### AT A GLANCE

#### PARTNER

- Southwest State's Ministry of Interior, Local Governments and Reconciliation (MoILGR)

#### ACTIVITY DETAILS

- Government Accountability Forums

#### LOCATION

- Baidoa, Barawe and Hudur, Southwest State



### ISAAK HASSAN MOHAMED

Director of Baidoa Youth Committee

"The community had the opportunity to meet face-to-face with local government officials - to hold them accountable and to learn about the duties they carry out.."

We “were taught about government procedures... the process of governance. It helped people understand what each Ministry is responsible for. People understand more, including women and youth,” Maxamud Mohamed, a clan elder from Baidoa.



Maxamud Mohamed, second from left, sits with community members and government representatives to discuss the outcomes of the forum.

Through the forums, the local government sought to **establish a platform for constructive dialogue** between various stakeholders, including government representatives, parliamentary oversight committees, and citizens. The aim of which was to encourage collaboration and the exchange of information, fostering a more transparent and accountable government.

“The community had the opportunity to meet face-to-face with local government officials - to hold them accountable and to learn about the duties they carry out. They [community members] presented the challenges they face, while also discussing how to overcome them. From the highest ranking officials to those in local government - every official could be questioned. This led to the youth feeling a strong sense of trust and confidence,” Isaac, Director of Baidoa Youth Committee.

The events aimed to **showcase the efforts made by the Southwest State government in promoting transparency, efficiency, and inclusivity** in public administration. It served as an opportunity to highlight the government’s commitment to good governance practices.

The forums welcomed a diverse group of stakeholders, including ministers, regional and district officials, traditional elders, women leaders, youth representatives, civil society actors, religious figures, and displaced persons. This wide-ranging participation added legitimacy and depth to the dialogue, enabling broader perspectives on Southwest State’s governance landscape. Each group contributed unique insights and played a role in holding public officials accountable.

Daud Aweis Adan, Officer at MOLLGR, said: “The main goal of these forums was to establish an interactive relationship between the local government and the community and to raise public awareness about government. A segment of the community did not believe that it was possible to hold a Minister, City Mayor, District Commissioner, even a [Southwest State] Presidential Advisor, accountable.”

Lastly, the event was designed to encourage citizen engagement and active participation in decision-making processes at both the local and state levels. By involving citizens in governance, it sought to empower them and ensure that their voices are heard in shaping government policies and actions.

Mohamed Ogas Maalin, Clan Elder of Barawe district, said: “When the Ministry of Interior came to Barawe and began organizing regular forums, women and youth gained opportunities to participate in public discussions and meetings. Marginalized groups who had never participated before were given a platform to express their views. They were always interested but lacked the opportunity. Now, the Ministry gave them that chance. They finally feel part of the process and free to express their opinions.”

## Outcomes

Feedback from the forums highlighted specific governance challenges, including the lack of functional district councils; infrastructure deficits; environmental degradation; and exclusion of youth, women, and minority clans from decision-making processes. Community members voiced frustration with administrative delays, poor service delivery, and opaque accountability mechanisms. In turn, ministers provided real-time responses, acknowledged shortcomings, and committed to a range of reforms. The forum also called for the creation of monitoring and evaluation frameworks and regular civic engagement platforms.

## Baidoa

The District Commissioner was approached regarding the cleanliness of the marketplace, a vital and bustling hub within the community. Inquiries were made about the existing cleaning procedures and the organization of patrols responsible for maintaining sanitation. While such efforts had been implemented previously, several gaps were identified. In the week following the forums, the District Council reinstated daily cleaning and waste collection during the evening when public activity diminishes. Representatives expressed satisfaction with working in a safe and hygienic environment, acknowledging the support provided by the State Government.



A stall-holder at Baidoa market told us that she had seen a marked improvement in the cleanliness of the market since the District Council implemented daily cleaning protocols.

The District Commissioner was questioned regarding the recent demolition of a residential site where community members had been living. The community expressed concern that the demolition was unjustified, as the affected families had no alternative accommodation. The District Commissioner responded promptly, and subsequent actions were undertaken. Discussions were held between tribal elders and officials, with tribal elders appointed to mediate the matter. Affected community members were convened for reconciliation, resulting in a decision to provide compensation to the displaced residents. The community expressed satisfaction with the resolution.



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The youth expressed concerns regarding the security checkpoints, noting that security personnel were conducting inadequate vehicle inspections, often limited to merely shining flashlights into the vehicles. In response, the Minister of Security promptly issued directives to the responsible officers to address the issue. Within two days, noticeable improvements were observed, as security forces began requiring passengers to disembark, verifying national identification cards, and performing comprehensive vehicle inspections. The Youth Committee committed to ongoing monitoring, working hand-in-hand with local authorities to ensure that these rigorous security measures are maintained, thereby enhancing safety and contributing to regional stability.

### Barawe

Previously, there was no way to issue birth or death certificates in Barawe. A registry for birth and death certificates has now been established. By creating a formal registry, local authorities can undertake strategic planning processes based on demographics and improve basic service delivery.

Residents and business owners expressed their willingness to comply with tax obligations, attributing this change to the transparency and openness of local authorities. In response, an official established a Tax Committee, tasked with

overseeing tax collection and ensuring the proper allocation of funds to support municipal projects.

### Hudur

The local authorities fixed existing solar panels and replaced some panels, where necessary, to improve the town's illumination during nighttime hours. This upgrade significantly contributed to public safety by providing more reliable and consistent lighting, thereby reducing the risks associated with poorly lit areas, such as accidents and criminal activity.

Participants expressed concerns regarding displaced families residing on the outskirts of the town, whose children were unable to walk to the city to attend school. In response, officials committed to constructing a school close to the internally displaced population in the near future to ensure access to schooling for all children.

### Why is this work important?

This significant step reflects the state's dedication to upholding the principles of accountable governance and strengthening the rule of law, crucial elements in the ongoing state-building and development efforts in the Southwest State of Somalia.



A large number of participants came together to attend the final Forum session in Baidoa.

Strengthening citizen participation and oversight enables them to provide meaningful input and feedback on policies and public services. When coupled with transparency and access to information, this openness allows the public to monitor government activities effectively, fostering greater trust. Increased trust encourages citizens to uphold the social contract: local governments are relied upon to deliver services efficiently and inclusively, while citizens support governance through taxes, compliance, and active engagement. This strengthened social contract creates a positive cycle of trust and cooperation in Somalia, leading to more stable and resilient communities that serve as a foundation for sustainable peace.