PRE ELECTION ASSESSMENT

MAY, 2021
REPORT

CDG
Center for Democracy & Governance
"Holding Power Accountable"

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Cover Page: Picture showing 3 billboards from KULMIYE, UCID and WADDANI respectively

Acronyms

CDG	Centre for Democracy and Governance
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
KII	Key Informant Interview
NEC	National Electoral Commission of Somaliland
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PLWD	People Living with Disabilities
TOR	Terms of Reference
WHO	World Health Organization

Acknowledgement

The Centre for Democracy and Governance (CDG) would like to extend its appreciation to the Somaliland people who willingly contributed and partook in this assessment. Many thanks to the people who offered their time and assistance to share their ideas and suggestions with us.

CDG also extends its gratitude to the Somaliland Government, NEC and all the stakeholders that contributed and participated in this assessment which was conducted within a very tight timeframe and schedule. CDG also appreciates all the stakeholders for the continuous support and who made this assessment possible through CGD's mandate.

CDG also appreciates the effort and commitment of the staff, data collectors and the team leaders who made this assessment possible.

Finally, CDG would like to extend its appreciation and gratitude to our donors who made this assessment possible for the prosperity and development of Somaliland.

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1. Executive Summary

This report summarizes the recently completed pre-election conducted by CDG during the month of May, 2021. The main objectives of the assessment were to assess the pre-conditions for a free and fair credible local and parliamentary election process, to engage in dialogue with key stakeholders on the process – the NEC, the EU, political parties, civil society – as part of an assessment of progress towards the elections, to assess women's likely participation in the electoral and democratic process and the possibility of establishing a baseline to measure changing participation rates in successive campaigns and elections, to assess capacity building already being undertaken with local civil society organizations/NGOs/ umbrella groups in order for them to observe the elections, including public awareness and voter education programs, Assess the voters' registration process and how it would affect the electoral and democratization processes, to assess opportunities for CDG in association with others such as International and domestic observers, if funds permit, to assess the current media situation and freedom of speech and to assess security situation in the areas where there is likelihood of security tension such as the Somaliland border areas and to raise issues in order to contribute to peacebuilding and democratic change, especially in the light of the heightened sense of Democracy in Somaliland.

The survey was be carried out from the geographical areas of Marodi Jeex, Saxil, Awdal, Togdheer and Sool regions. The actual target locations visited was Hargeisa, Berbera, Borama, Laasanod and Burao. The survey used a mixed-methods, and consist of the qualitative data collection method, quantitative data collection method and desk review of the secondary data which was already available.

The key findings are discussed in detail beginning with the demographics, political environment, voter registration, voter expectation, security, NEC, gender aspect, social media, political parties and the tensions in the border areas. This is followed by conclusions and recommendations.

Recommendations

Voter Education
NEC to continuously conduct voter education to the public and citizens of Somaliland so that they can keep improving the awareness of the citizens on their rights to vote. Many citizens are still not aware of the democratic system.

Capacity Building

NEC to keep building the capacities of the staff especially the field staff who will in turn support the citizens understand the process of election.

Women Participation

This is recommendation for all stakeholders. To lobby and campaign for enactment of legislation supporting women's participation in politics. Women participation to be improved and increased at all levels. This includes the candidates, the mobilizers, the speakers, the representatives and the staff at all levels.

Freedom of Speech

The issue of freedom of speech might still be an issue in Somaliland. Therefore, the government should allow the freedom of speech especially in TV, radios and the social media. It was learnt from past experience that government sometimes might take harsh actions or impose huge fines for medias that express against the government.

Party Campaigns and polling stations

Give the parties ample time to do the campaigns much earlier to the election date. This will give the citizens enough time to think of the right candidate and prepare for the election. As mentioned earlier, it is expected for each citizen to vote from where they registered from. So, if a person registered in Borama, it is expected for him/her to travel to Borama to vote during the election day. So, this should be changed and a person to be given a choice to vote from any polling station.

2. Background

2.1. Introduction

The Centre for Democracy and Governance (CDG) is an independent, Somaliland based nonprofit center of excellence that promotes the advancement of democracy and good governance. The CDG works to deep democracy and contributes peace and security in Horn of Africa, the African continent and beyond through dialogue, the pursuit of knowledge and rigorous analysis of critical issues and developments. In exercising this responsibility, CDG focuses on the challenges of institution building, democratic governance and the rule of law, as well as opportunities for peace, security, cooperation and integration.

Centre for Democracy and Governance has been working to build more effective, transparent, accountable, and government institutions around the Somaliland for more than 6 years. The center advocates community police dialogue, civil society participation in decision making and strong security providers where communities are able to collaborate their security providers.

The Center has the expertise and capacity of young professionals who has strong relations to most of the regions of Somaliland; currently the center has closely worked the Ministry of Interior, Maroodi Jeex regional office, Ministry of Culture and tourism currently and has supported governance programs in more than five international institutions in Somaliland.

The last election in Somaliland was held in 2017. The next election is expected to be in May, 2021. Prior to the election, CDG is planning to conduct an assessment to assess the fairness, process and participation of the election. This will be done in liaison with National Electoral Commission of Somaliland.

2.2. Somaliland at a Glance

Somaliland has been a self-governing region of Somalia for more than two decades, but its claim of independence is not recognized by Mogadishu or any foreign government. While this has limited Somaliland's access to international markets, it has not prevented the breakaway state from making steady democratic gains and attracting foreign investment. Some analysts say Somaliland, which has a distinct history and remains more stable than the rest of Somalia, has a strong case for independence. Others fear that international recognition would encourage other secessionist movements in Africa.

Where is Somaliland?

Somaliland is an independent state but not part of Somalia and has a larger Horn of Africa region. It has hundreds of miles of coastline along the Gulf of Aden to the north, and it borders Ethiopia to the south and west and Djibouti to the northwest. Somalia, a semiautonomous state of Somalia that lies due east, disputes some of Somaliland's territorial claims.

What is its political status?

Somaliland has sought international recognition as an independent state since 1991. No foreign government recognizes its sovereignty, but many effectively acknowledge the region as separate from Somalia. Some, such as France, the United Kingdom, and United States, as well as the European Union, sent a delegation to observe Somaliland's 2017 presidential election.

The state effectively broke ties with Somalia's government in Mogadishu after declaring independence. It has held its own democratic elections since 2003, and in 2010 it saw a largely peaceful transfer of power to the opposition Peace, Unity, and Development Party.[1]

Somaliland occupies an ambiguous position on the international stage. For the past 30 years it has been a self-declared independent nation replete with effective governing structures yet

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[1] https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/somaliland-horn-africas-breakaway-state

has not received recognition from any other nation.1 This lack of international recognition complicates many aspects of its political and security situation, most notably its relationship with the internationally recognized Somali Federal Government (SFG) in Mogadishu, which still lays claim to the territory. Somaliland's history has engendered a unique political system incorporating traditional leadership aspects with modern constructs. Parliament consists of two houses – a Lower House (House of Representatives) of 82 elected parliamentarians, and an Upper House or Guurti of 82 clan elders, originally appointed during clan conferences in 1993 and 1997. The Guurti institutionalizes traditional governance dynamics and the clan system in the Somaliland arena, giving rise to its hybrid nature. The Guurti, discussed in more detail below, has played an important role in Somaliland's history, settling disputes on the basis of consensus and serving as a neutral arbiter.
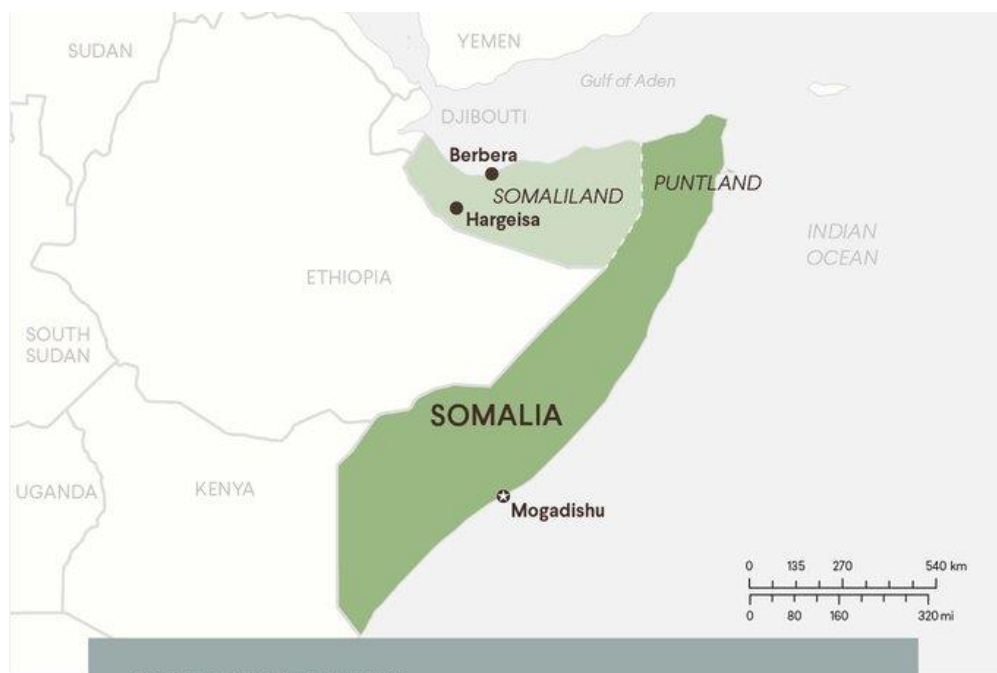
SOMALILAND AT A GLANCE

Area
68,000 square miles
(about the size of Uruguay)

Population
4 million (estimated)

Major Languages
Somali, Arabic, English

Primary Religion
Islam

Form of Government
Elected president and legislature;
appointed judiciary

GDP
$2 billion

GDP Per Capita
$500 (estimated)

Sources: World Bank; Somaliland Ministry of National Planning and Development.

COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS

2.3. Objective

The main objectives of the survey are: -

❖ Assess the pre-conditions for a free and fair credible local and parliamentary election process

❖ Engage in dialogue with key stakeholders on the process – the NEC, the EU, political parties, civil society – as part of an assessment of progress towards the elections

❖ Assess women's likely participation in the electoral and democratic process and the possibility of establishing a baseline to measure changing participation rates in successive campaigns and elections

❖ Assess capacity building already being undertaken with local civil society organizations/NGOs/ umbrella groups in order for them to observe the elections, including public awareness and voter education programs

❖ Assess the voters' registration process and how it would affect the electoral and democratization processes

❖ Assess opportunities for CDG in association with others such as International and domestic observers, if funds permit

❖ Assess the current media situation and freedom of speech

❖ Assess security situation in the areas where there is likelihood of security tension such as the Somaliland border areas

❖ Raise issues in order to contribute to peacebuilding and democratic change, especially in the light of the heightened sense of Democracy in Somaliland

2.4. Approach and Methodology

The survey was be carried out from the geographical areas of Marodi Jeex, Saxil, Awdal, Togdheer and Sool regions. The actual target locations visited was Hargeisa, Borama, Berbera, Laasanod and Burao. The survey used a mixed-methods, and consist of the following: -

Quantitative data collection through interviews survey covering sample of households or individuals (see sample size table) who are citizens of Somaliland and have right to vote. Field data collection was conducted using KOBO which allows for data capturing through handsets to minimize errors during data collection.

Qualitative primary data collection through focus group discussions (FGDs), supervision and interviews with key project stakeholders (KII). Separated FGD session was held at community level with youth, women and men with maximum 7 participants respectively while keeping the Covid19 directives and protocols as per the WHO and Somaliland Government directives.

2.5. Sampling Size

The following table shows the villages and the sample sizes.

S/N	Locations	Sample	Achieved	KII	Achieved	Separate FGD	Achieved
1	Borama	60	**61**	5	**5**	3	**3**
2	Laasanod	50	**50**	5	**5**	3	**3**
3	Berbera	50	**49**	5	**5**	3	**3**
4	Burao	70	**70**	5	**5**	3	**3**
5	Hargeisa	100	**100**	8	**8**	5	**5**
		330	**330**	28	**28**	17	**17**

Table 1 – Sample size

2.6. Work Plan

The workplan was as follows

	April		May	
Key Activities	WK4	WK1	WK2	WK3
Development ToR & Tools comments				
Drafting KII and FGD guideline and training data collectors & Final tools				
Developing other logistics				
Authoring the tool into KOBO				
Field data collection				
Cleaning and Analysis of collected data				
Final Reporting				

Table 2 – Work Plan

3. Key Findings

The key findings are discussed in detail below beginning with the demographics, political environment, voter registration, voter expectation, security, NEC, gender aspect, social media, political parties and the tensions in the border areas. This is followed by conclusions and recommendations.

3.1. Demographics

Location of interview
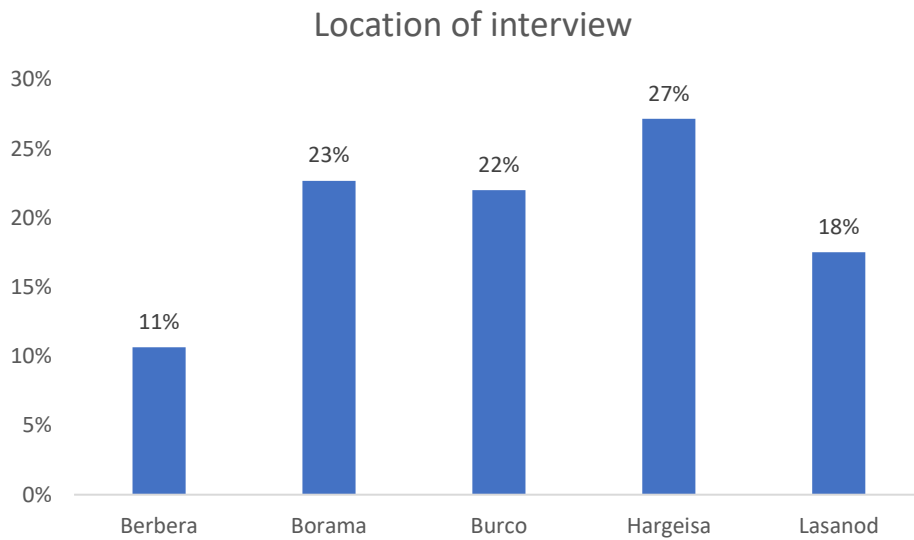
Figure 1 - Locations

To understand the information well, we have to understand the demographics of the respondents. The data was collected from 5 regions of Somaliland which include Sahil, Awdal, Togdheer, Marodijeex and Sool.

Figure 2 – Gender of Respondents

The respondents consisted of 52% male and 48% female respectively. The respondents were approached randomly and the ones who gave consent were interviewed.

Figure 3 – A woman from the diaspora and supporter of UCID praying for peaceful election

Age of Respoendent

Figure 4 – Age of respondent

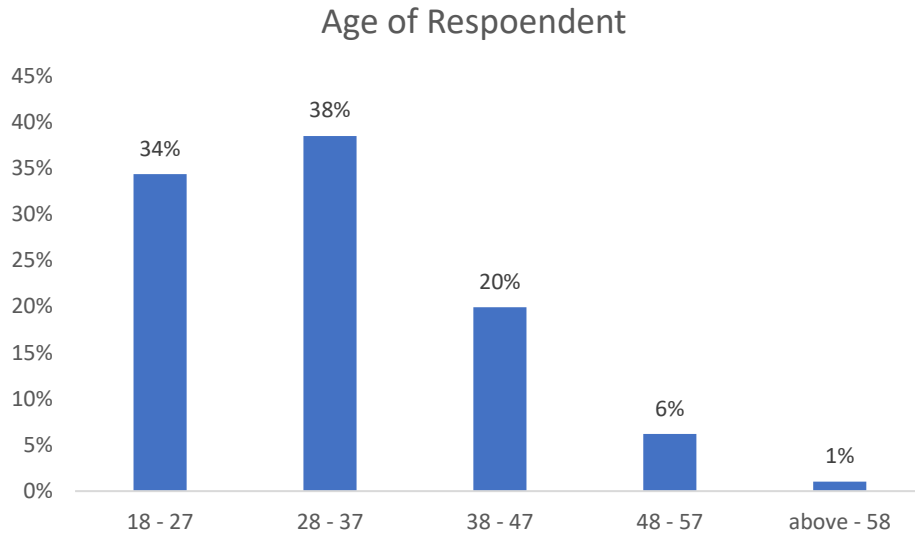In terms of age, most of the respondents were under the age bracket of 28 – 37 years and 18 – 27 years; 38% and 34% respectively. 20% were 38 – 47 years and only 1% over 58 and above.

Marital Status of Respondent
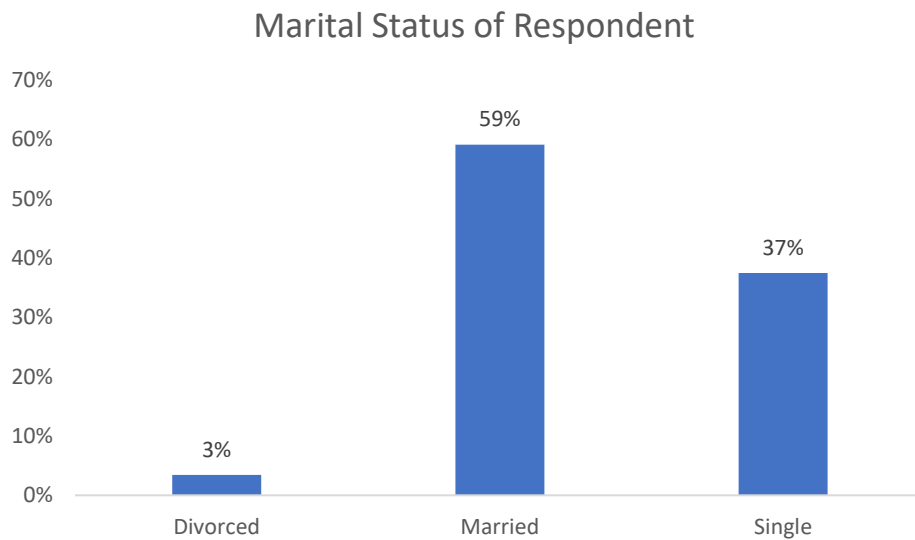
Figure 5 – Marital status

59% represented the married respondents while 37% were single and 3% were divorced as illustrated in the graph above.
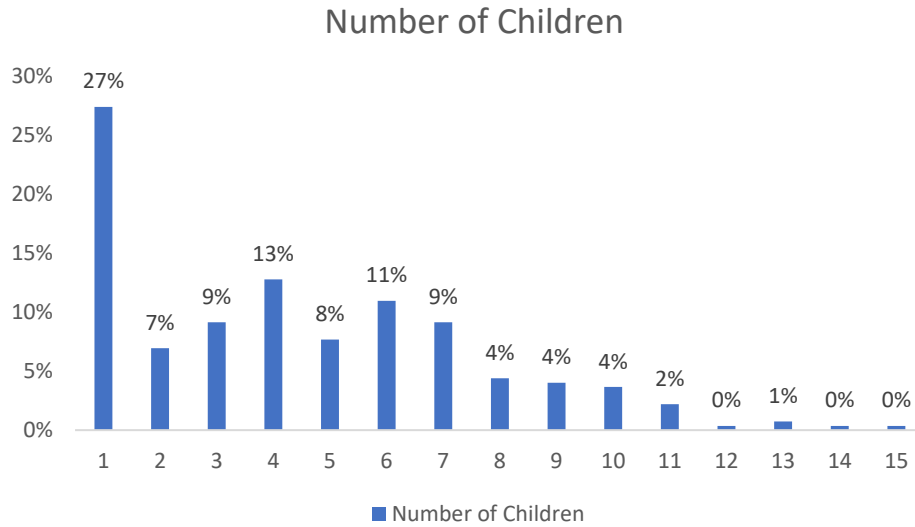
Number of Children

Figure 6 – Number of Children

The majority of the respondents had 1 child which was represented by 27% of the respondents. The others had between 2 and 14 children. On average the number of children were 6 for each HH.
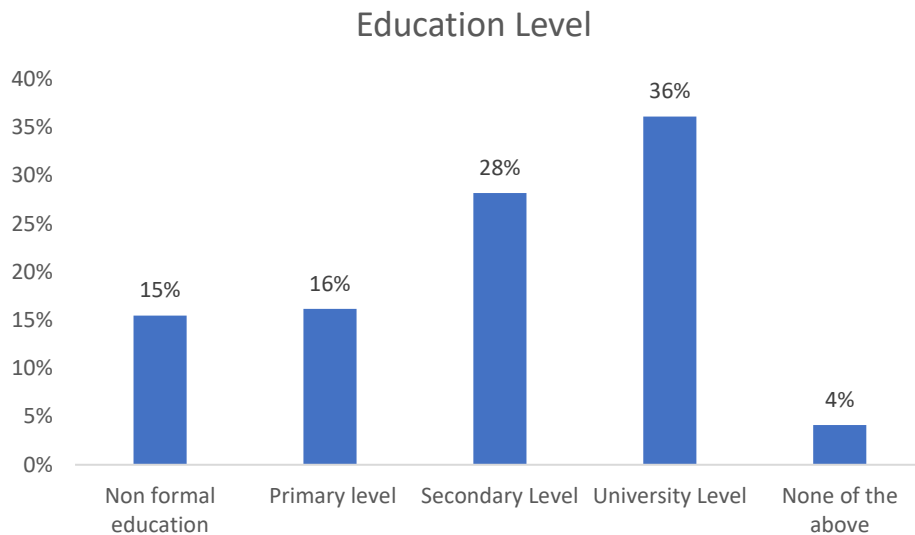
Education Level

Figure 7 – Education Level

At least 36% of the respondents had reached university level and 28% reached the secondary level. This was followed by 16% who completed the primary level and 15% who did the NFE (Quran schools, traditional schools etc.). Only 4% did not attend any form of education.

Employment status

44%

56%

- Employed   - Not employed

Figure 8 – Employment Status

Of all the respondents, 56% confirmed that they were employed or had their own businesses while 44% were not employed.

Status of Respondent

11%

89%

- Host Community   - IDP

Figure 9 – Civil Status

The status of the respondents was represented by 89% who were the host community while 11% represented the IDP communities who were eligible to vote or take part in the forth coming election.

3.2. Political Environment

Aware of elections in Somaliland

9%

91%

■ No ■ Yes

Figure 10 – Awareness of the election

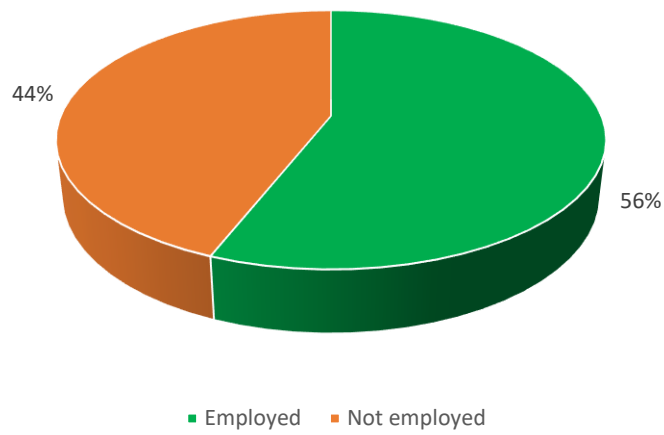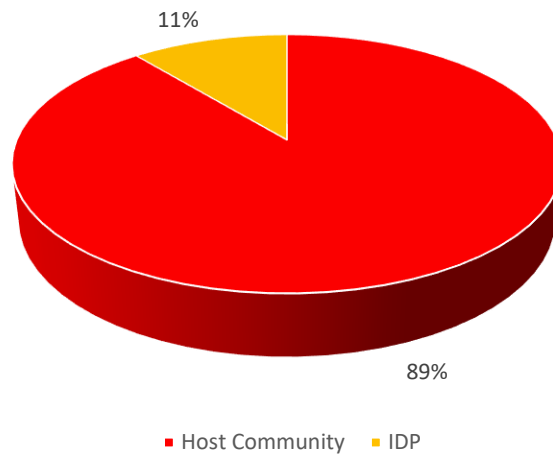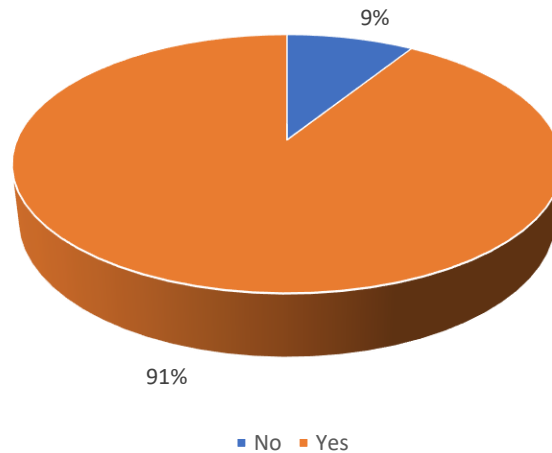Somaliland was a region of the former Somali Republic between 1960 and 1990. It declared its independence from Somalia in 1991 and has since been seeking to attain international independence. Somaliland has undergone relatively successful stages of nation and state-building since 1991. It has a functioning government, an army, a currency of its own, and an infrastructural presence in most of its territories. Following the Civil War that overthrew the military regime of Siad Barre in 1991 and the declaration of Somaliland as an independent state from the rest of Somalia, the Somali National Movement (hereon, SNM) militia forces, who defeated Siad Barre's forces and declared Somaliland's withdrawal from the union of 1960, initiated a two-year transitional government led by its then chairperson, Abdirahman Ahmed Ali. This was followed by a peaceful transfer of power between five presidents in less than three decades. Besides Somaliland's successful endeavor in peacebuilding, the process of constitution-making was also taking shape. In 1993, the clans of Somaliland gathered in the Grand Borama Conference and signed a national charter. This was followed by the 1997 conference in Hargeisa, where indirectly elected representatives approved a more detailed interim constitution. These representatives finalized a draft constitution, which was voted in a public referendum in 2001. Before the first legislative elections were held in 2005, the 2001 constitution laid the framework for Somaliland's transition from a clan-based political system to a multiparty system. Somaliland passed through a less anarchic path among political actors in contrast to the rest of Somalia during the introduction of the multiparty system.11 The first elections contested in independent Somaliland were those for LC (2002 and 2012), followed by three election cycles for the presidency (2003, 2010, and 2017) and one term for the bicameral legislature (2005). In 2010, Somaliland made remarkable achievement through a

peaceful transfer of power as opposition party KULMIYE's candidate Ahmed Silanyo replaced the incumbent Dahir Rayale of the now-defunct UDUB party, both of whom elected democratically. Somaliland has yet to hold a timely election since then. The MPs (members of parliament) of the HoR (House of Representatives), for instance, were elected in 2005 and continue to hold seats for 15 years without reelection. This time elections are taking place when both houses of the bicameral legislature passed laws that have seen harmonization of electoral laws and arrangements of two elections at once for the first time. Elections for Guurti, the upper house, also known as the council of elders, are scheduled to be held a year later. This will be an uphill task for the unrecognized young nation in the Horn of Africa.[2]

3.3. Voter Registration
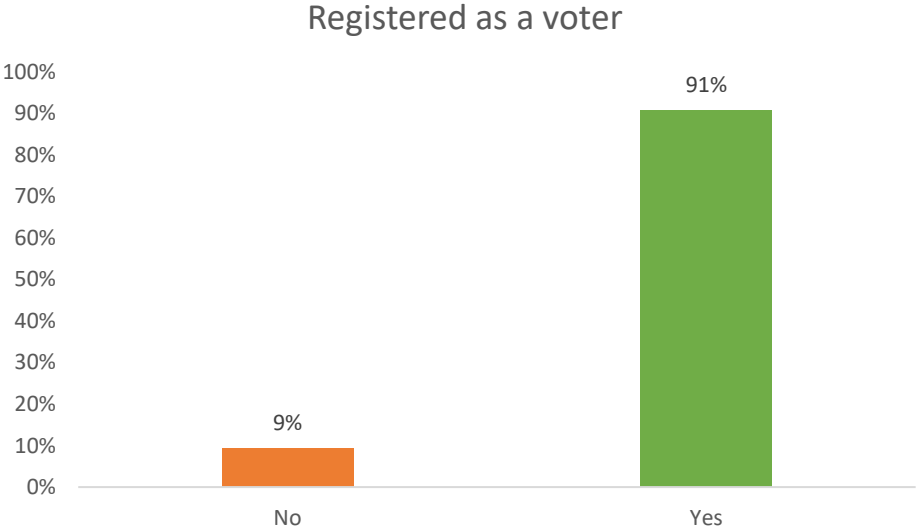
Figure 11 – Registered voters

91% of the respondents represented those who were registered as voters and 9% represented those were not registered as voters. This included those who are newly registered or those who were registered during the 2017 presidential elections. All the registration was done by NEC of Somaliland as confirmed by 91% of the respondents. 3% of the respondents were not sure who registered them while 5% said the registration was done by the local government as illustrated in the graph below.

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[2] *Adopted from ISIR desk review*

Figure 12 – Voter showing their new cards

Who registered you as a voter
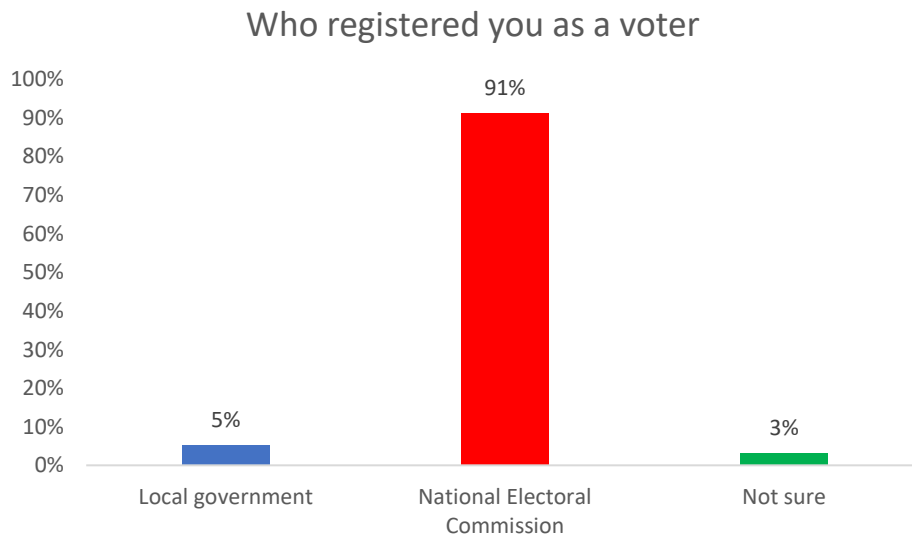
Figure 13 – Registered voters

3.4. Political Parties

There are 3 main political parties in Somaliland which are KULMIYE, UCID and WADDANI.

KULMIYE

This is undoubtedly the most successful political party in Somaliland politics. Since it was formed in 2002, it immediately rose to prominence and scored second highest marks in the

2003 presidential elections, narrowly missing out the top spot by mere 80 votes. It came to power in 2010 with Ahmed Silanyo becoming the first elected president to replace a sitting president in Somaliland before he retired from politics in 2017. KULMIYE controls the HoR and mayors in key cities, including the capital Hargeisa. In the2017 presidential elections, KULMIYE, led by Muse Bihi Abdi, the incumbent president, was reelected. KULMIYE, led by former SNM fighters, credits itself for its role in the revolt against the former military regime and enjoys considerable popularity. Having just concluded its general assembly meeting, it has reelected President Muse Bihi to lead it in the upcoming 5 years.

UCID

Formed in 2001 by Faisal Ali Warabe, who returned from the diaspora, UCID is the oldest party in Somaliland and has not won a single election. Settled in third place, the party hopes to overcome its worst election defeat in 2017, garnering just 4% of the total votes cast. Its leader stood as a candidate for all three presidential elections and remained to be the chairperson since its formation in 2001. In 2005, UCID and KULMIYE (at the time main opposition party) formed a coalition that challenged then incumbent UDUB and managed to jointly lead the parliament where both the speaker and two deputies went to the opposition.

WADDANI

Formed in 2012 by then Parliament Speaker Abdirahman Abdillahi, it has quickly gained broad support and become the second party with the highest votes in 2012 and 2017. Being the main opposition party, WADDANI expects to get the majority in the parliament for opposition parties to take the speaker and major cities' mayors by convincing the UCID party to join them in an alliance.

Figure 14 – Waddani supporters

3.5. Exploitation in the voter registration

Did you pay to be registered as a voter
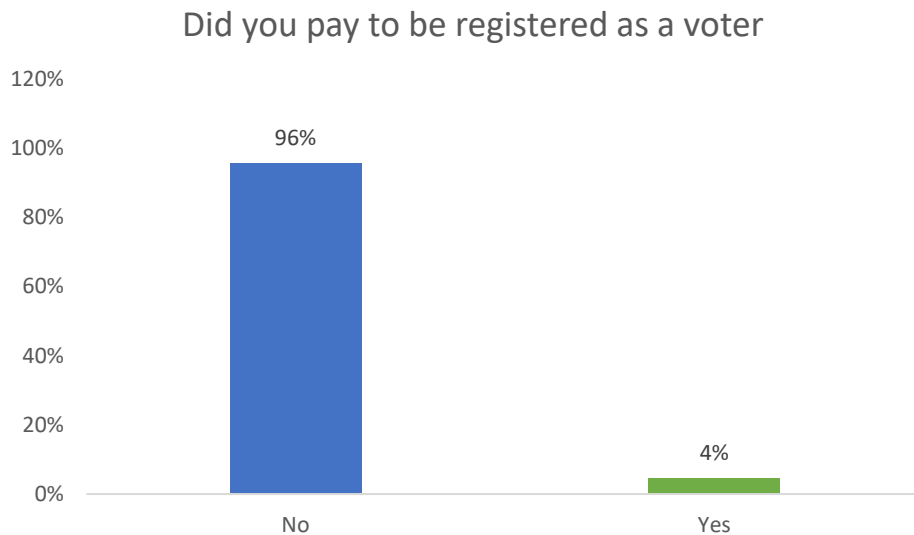
Figure 15 – Did you pay for registration

In terms of bribery and fraud, this was the finding. 96% of the respondents said they did not pay to be registered while 4% said they had to pay some fee to be registered. The fee was taken from some people who were not aware how or who is registering the citizens as voters. Some confirmed that the village chairman or leaders were among the few who would extort the community members of a fee to get registered. These were very minor cases.

Were you paid to be registered
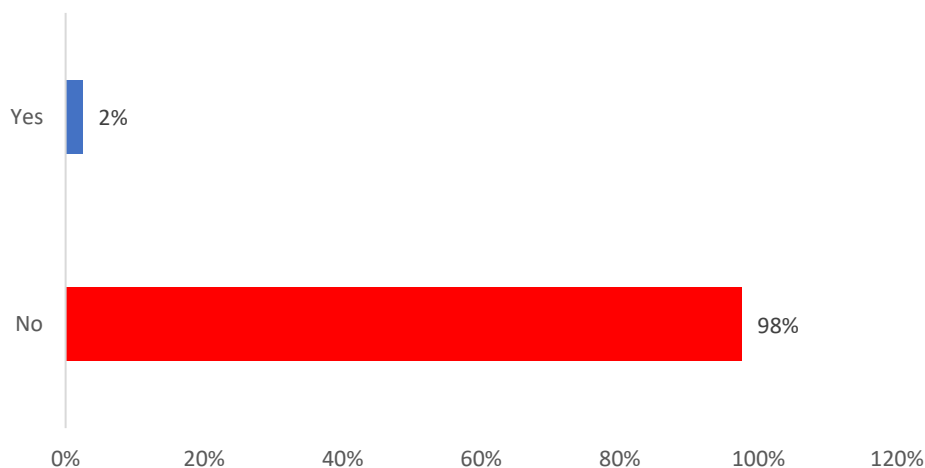
Figure 16 – Were you paid to register

On the other hand, 2% said they were paid to be registered while 98% said they were not paid to be registered. The 2% said the party candidates paid their transportation to the registration center, covered their accommodations and got incentives from the candidates so that in return they can vote for them when they get their cards.

Are you aware if the vulnerable (minorities, old, PLWD etc.) were registered
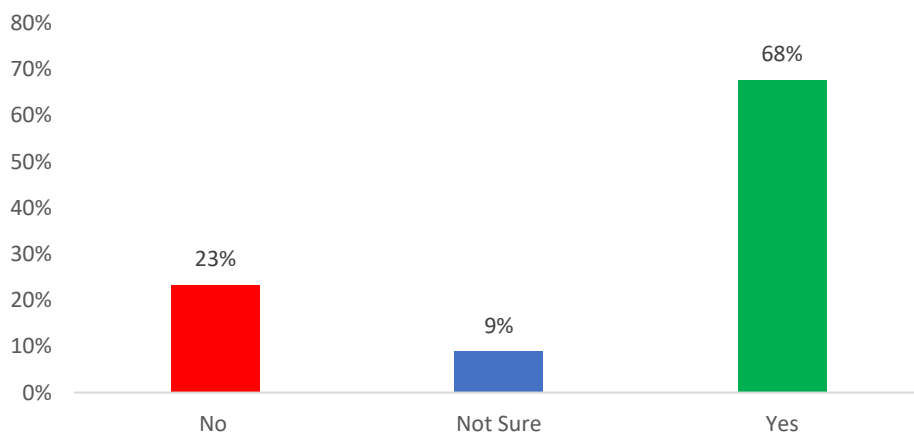
Figure 17 – Are you aware of the registered

68% represented the respondents who said the vulnerable were registered, 23% said the vulnerable were not registered while 9% said they were not sure. This was further confirmed

during the FGDs that the respondents said the vulnerable sometime could not come to the registration centers and the registering team could not go from house to house; and so they were not registered or did not receive voters cards.

3.6.   Gender Aspect in the 2021 Elections

Are you aware of women and girls (over 16) being registered in your community
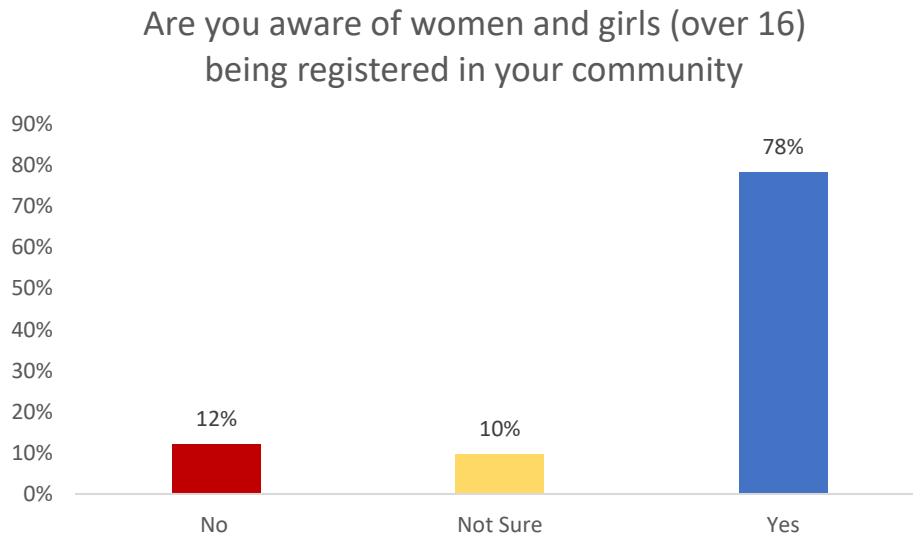
Figure 18 – Are you aware of the women registration

78% represented those who said women and girls who are eligible to vote were registered. 12% said women and girls were not registered while 10% said they were not sure. Most of the FGDs discussion confirmed that there were no specific people who were registered but rather all that came to the registration centers during the registration days were registered.

Figure 19 – Women candidates as seen on the social media

And for the question, are women eligible to participate in the forth coming elections, 87% represented those who said yes while 7% said they were not sure and another 7% said no respectively as illustrated in the pie-chart below. In fact there are also women candidates in the forthcoming election; an example is Suad who is running for a sit in Hargeisa.

Are women eligible and free to participate in the forth coming elections

7%   7%

87%

■ No   ■ Not Sure   ■ Yes
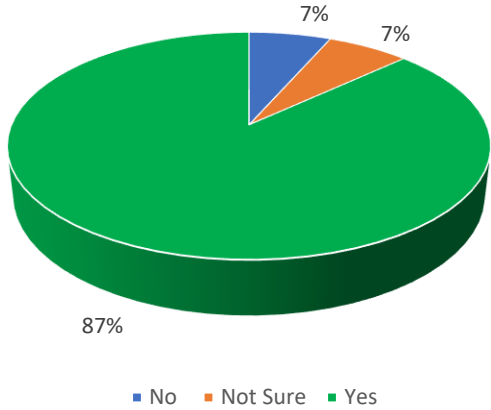
Figure 20 – Are women eligible to participate

3.7.   Voter Expectations

Are you planning to vote in the forth coming election

100%	
90%	89%

11%

No   Yes
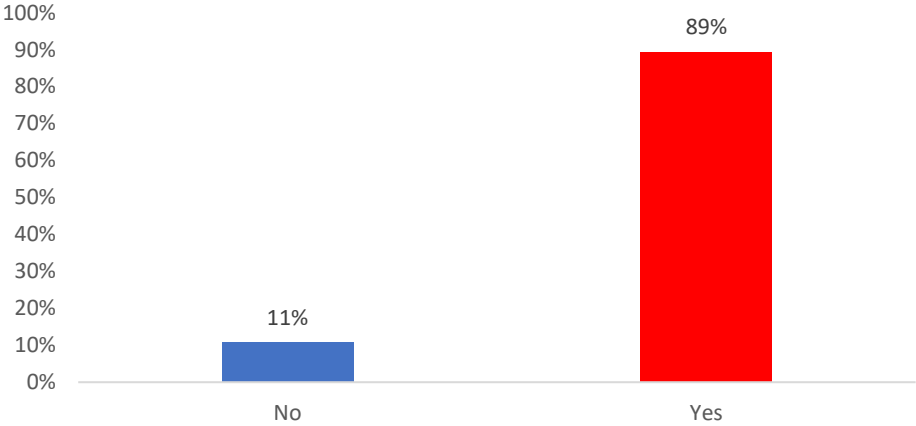
Figure 21 – Are you planning to vote

Most of the respondents plan to vote in the forth coming elections. This was represented by 89% of the population and the other 11% said they had no plans of voting. Of these, 91% of the respondents represented those who were registered as voters and 9% represented those were not registered as voters. This included those who are newly registered or those who

were registered during the 2017 presidential elections. All the registration was done by NEC of Somaliland as confirmed by 91% of the respondents.

Are you aware of the date of voting

Yes	74%
Not Sure	16%
No	10%

0% 20% 40% 60% 80%

When is the voting date

| 5/30/2021 | 2% |
| 5/31/2021 | 95% |
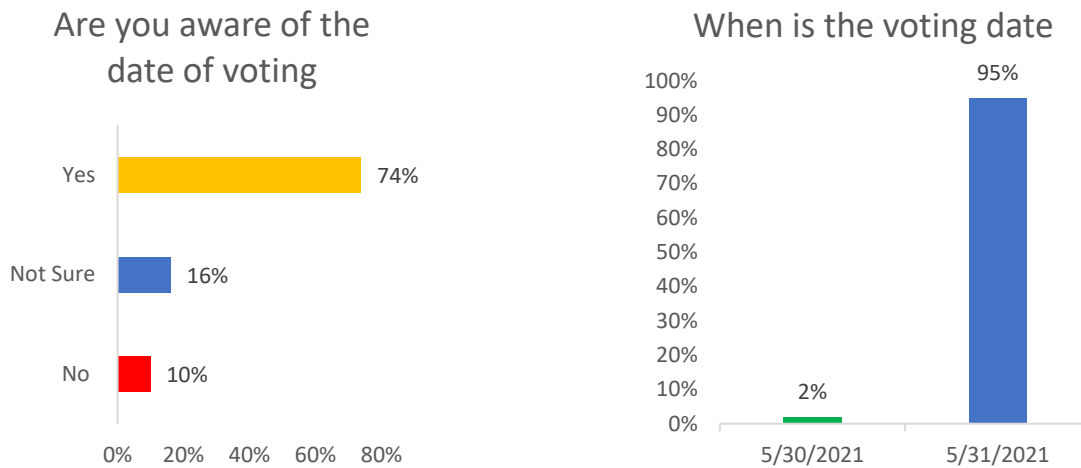
Figure 22 – Voting Date

Only 10% did not know the date of the voting. 74% said they knew the date and 16% were not sure. 95% knew the date as 31st May, 2021 and 2% said 30th May, 2021.

3.8.   Security during the campaigns and elections

Part of the assessment was to find out the security expectations of the Somaliland citizens during the campaigns and during (and after) the election.

What is your expectation of security during the campaigns?

Bad 0%

Fair 4%

Good 46%
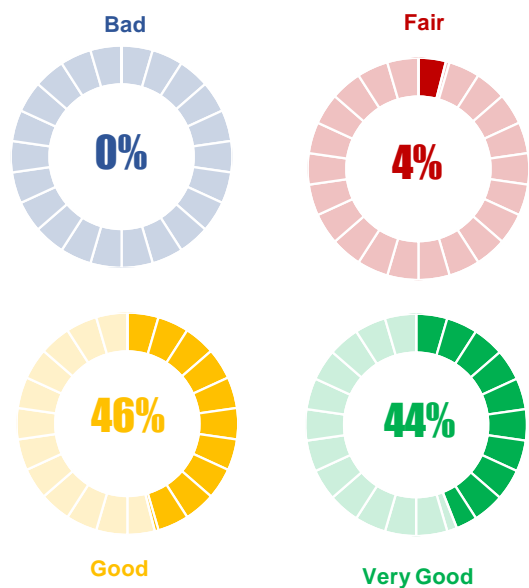
Very Good 44%

Figure 23 – Security Expectation

44% of the respondents represent the population that expect the security to be very good during the campaigns and 46% represent those who think the security will be good. Less than 5% said the security will be fair or bad. The same was the expectation of the security during the election day as illustrated in the figure below.

What is your expectation of security during the election day

Very bad	Bad	Fair	Good	Very good
0%	4%	5%	42%	48%
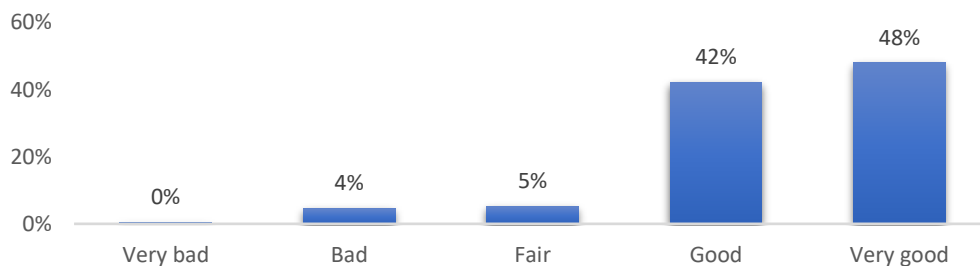
Figure 24 – Security Expectation

Figure 25 – Waddani Billboard

Do you know of any groups or persons that plan to disrupt the election process
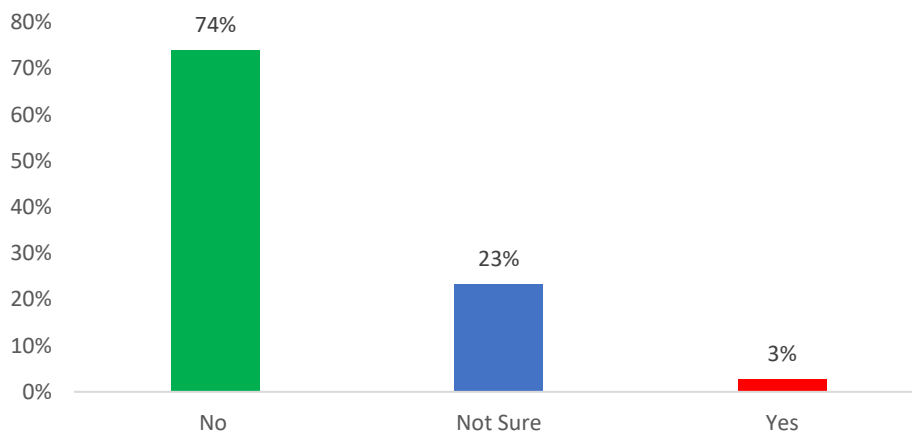
Figure 26 – Aware of disruption

The majority of the respondents' knowledge of persons or groups that will disrupt the election process is that they do not expect any disruption. This was represented by 74% of the respondents. 23% said they are not sure if there will be any disruption during the election process. 3% represented those who said they know disruption will be there. When asked who will bring about the disruption, they said the loosing candidates, the hooligans, jobless youths among others.

3.8.1. Somaliland-Somalia Border Areas

There are several border areas especially the Somaliland-Somalia border areas where there are tensions even before the elections or campaign. The tensions are between the Somaliland government and Somalia government respectively. These areas include Buhodle, Badhan, Talex and Lasanod which are more tense than other locations. The discussion below gives a brief about each location. There are some cases of existence of Military extremists or the so-called Al-Shabaab. As you may notice from the issue from NEC (below), there are many eligible voters in these areas.

Lr	Gobolka	Degmada	Tirada Codbixiyayaasha Doorashada Wakiiladda iyo Deeganka 2021	
		KOMISHANKA DOORASHOOYINKA QARANKA		
1	Awdal	Saylac	23307	
2	Awdal	Lughaya	14963	
3	Awdal	Boorame	89126	
4	Awdal	Baki	18523	
		Wadarta Tirada Codbixiyayaasha Gobolka Awdal	145,919	
5	Maroodi-Jeex	Gabiley	76478	
6	Maroodi-Jeex	Hargeysa	289613	
7	Maroodi-Jeex	Bali Gubadle	17752	
6	Maroodi-Jeex	Salaxley	16536	
		Wadarta Tirada Codbixiyayaasha Gobolka Maroodi-Jeex	400,379	
9	Saaxil	Berbera	83034	
10	Saaxil	Sheekh	15469	
		Wadarta Tirada Codbixiyayaasha Gobolka Saaxil	98,503	
11	Togdheer	Burco	160390	
12	Togdheer	Oodweyne	33044	
14	Togdheer	Buuhoodle	12157	
		Wadarta Tirada Codbixiyayaasha Gobolka Togdheer	205,591	
14	Sool	Caynabo	36446	
15	Sool	Las Caanood	52788	
16	Sool	Xudun	6909	
17	Sool	Taleex	7689	
		Wadarta Tirada Codbixiyayaasha Gobolka Sool	103,832	
18	Sanaag	Gar'adag	14673	
19	Sanaag	Ceel-Afweyn	20517	
20	Sanaag	Ceerigaabo	65962	
21	Sanaag	Badhan	7529	
22	Sanaag	Dahar	2942	
		Wadarta Tirada Codbixiyayaasha Gobolka Sanaag	111,623	
		Wadarta Guud ee Tirada Codbixiyayaasha	1,065,847	

Figure 27 – Registered voters issued by NEC

3.8.2. Buhodhle

Eligible voters – 12,157. The conflict in Buhodle is ongoing and needs a lot of effort to resolve. This might take time and the parties involved have to be all the 4 administrators in the region; Somaliland, Somalia, Somalia and Ethiopia. The local citizens of the community in Buhodle are the real victims of the conflict that goes on around them. Likewise, clannism is also another cause of the conflict. Much awareness sessions, peacetalks, agreements and memorandum of understandings have to be done in order to come up with a peaceful community in Buhodle. The elders of the community and the community members themselves have to be involved in the process at all times. But the community in Buhodle also expect to take part in the forthcoming election of Somaliland.

3.8.3. Badhan

Eligible voters – 7,529. The conflict is in Badhan is like in Tukaraq and Lasanod can easily be resolved. This can be done with agreements and peace talks between Somaliland and Somalia. Since these are the only 2 administrations in these areas. The 2 administrations have operations in the same area and also have military personnel respectively. The 2 administrations are more organized in their operations but need to have peace talks and agreements to end the conflict and come to a resolution. Likewise, the military operating in the area have to be further from the communities to avoid casualties. Main trigger of conflict in this area is not only the 2 administrations (Somalia and Somaliland), but also the revenge of clannism.

3.8.4. Talex

Eligible voters – 7,689. The conflict is Taleh needs a lot of attention from the clan leaders. The military personnel of the 2 administration have to be moved away from within the communities. Peace talks between the clan leaders will be more efficient then followed by the peace agreements between the 2 administrations; Somaliland and Somalia to make the election process smooth.

3.8.5. Lasanod

Eligible voters – 52,788. The community expect to take part in the parliamentary election. The conflict is Lasanod can easily be resolved. This can be done with agreements and peace talks between Somaliland and Somalia. Since these are the only 2 administrations in these areas. The 2 administrations have operations in the same area and also have military personnel

respectively. The 2 administrations are more organized in their operations but need to have peace talks and agreements to end the conflict and come to a resolution.

3.9. The Role of the Social Media

The social media plays a major role in the spreading of news, updates, slogans etc. is shared with the community both in Somaliland and the diaspora. In fact, it is common to find a Somalilander in Europe or abroad who is more versed with the Somaliland politics and current affairs than one who is in Somaliland. The social media commonly used are Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Other platforms are also used. The contesting candidates have already put-up posters and billboards around the major cities in Somaliland as means of the silent campaign. The silent campaigns have been very peaceful so far. During the last presidential elections, the social media was disabled by the Somaliland government during the election day until the winning candidate was announced. It is expected that the same will happen during the forthcoming parliamentary election. This is to minimize chaos, false news and disruption during that transition. It is also expected for over 60 International observers to be in Somaliland to observe the voting and the election process, some of which are already in Somaliland as announced by the NEC.

Figure 28 – Waddani, Kulmiye and UCID billboards (coverpage)

3.10. National Electoral Commission

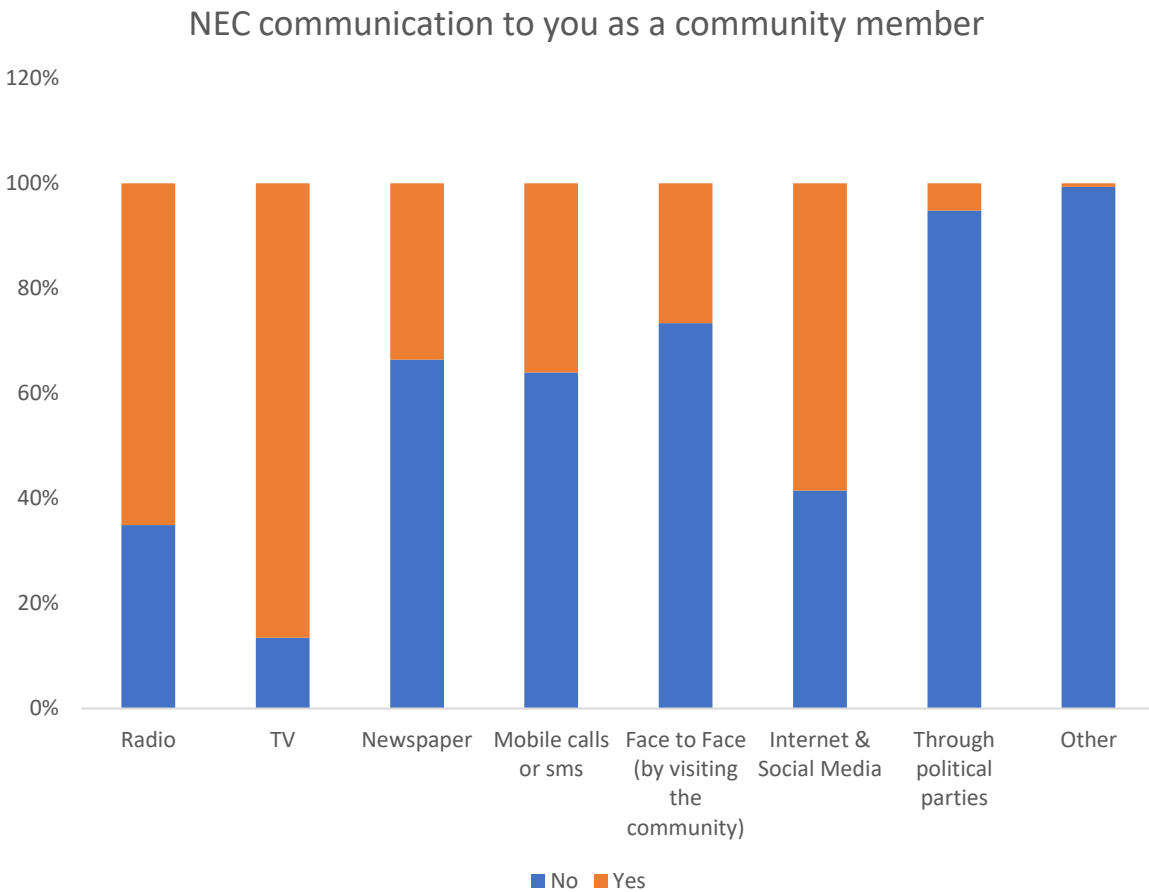### NEC communication to you as a community member

Figure 29 – Communication by NEC

Most of the respondents confirmed to have received communication from NEC through TV, Radio and Social media; this was represented by 87%, 65% and 58% respectively. Other means of communication received from NEC was newspaper, mobile calls, face to face, through political parties.

The Somaliland National Electoral Commission, established in 2001, is the body responsible for organizing all elections under the Elections and Voter Registration Act Law 91/2020. Since its formation, the electoral commission has successfully conducted six different election cycles, a constitutional referendum, and installed the biometrics recognition system for voter registration. It succeeded all of these when Somaliland is not yet internationally recognized, thus demonstrating the capacity to organize elections and has even been lauded by international election observers. The newly appointed commission echoed their commitment as preparations are underway for the next elections and are confident of delivering credible elections. However, in recent years, the electoral management body has drawn a number of

criticisms, most notably in the 2012 LC elections and the subsequent presidential elections in 2017, as some opposition parties accused NEC of mishandling the electoral results and demanded transparency. Incidents of election-related violence ensued while there were no significant improvements in the aftermath of the 2017 presidential elections. In the event that longstanding concerns are not addressed may well present a challenge in the upcoming elections. There are also key gaps to be pointed out, particularly on the issue around the autonomy of the commission, which has been the center of the dispute between the three political parties for the last two years (2018-2020). The institution lacks the necessary legal framework that would have strengthened its independence. The institution does not have its own establishment act with its mandate currently incorporated within the electoral laws, as the law 91/2020. Once NEC is established on a separate act, it would exercise its own independence in terms of financing, legal frameworks, and administration. In addition, the fact that there is no assurance of tenure beyond the five years term for commissioners creates insecurity. Over the last two years, political parties were engaged in a protracted dispute concerning the number of commissioners each party had to nominate. In the current setup, the executive maintains the upper hand, where the opposition parties nominate two out of the seven members and has the sole power to veto members nominated by the opposition parties before it submits the full list to the parliament for approval.

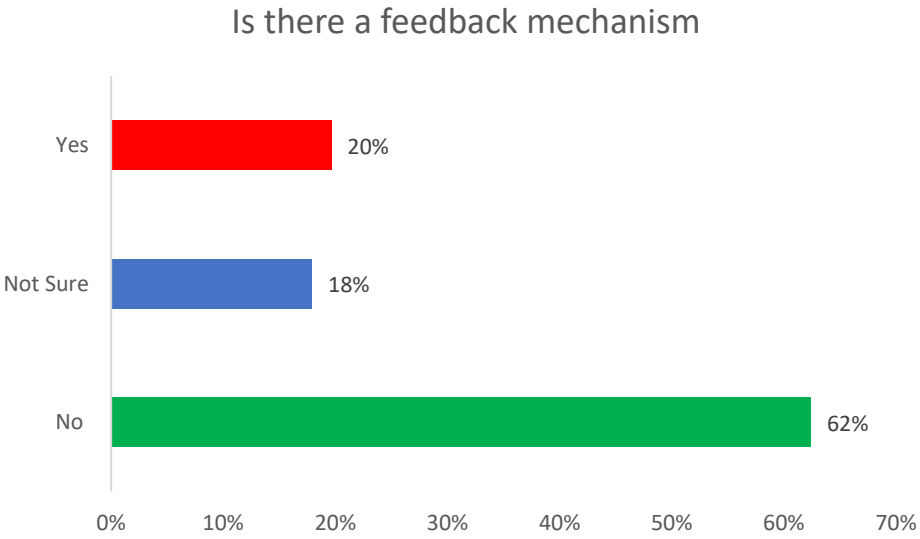## Is there a feedback mechanism

Figure 30 – Is there feedback mechanism

Likewise, the findings indicated that the feedback mechanism was not known to many. Only 20% confirmed that there was a feedback mechanism, 18% were not sure and 62% said there was no feedback mechanism.

3.11. Civil Actors and Stakeholders

Civil society organizations in Somaliland have had a visible role throughout the process of holding elections. Through network organizations for women, youth, media, and other non-state actors, they used to participate during the awareness-raising programs for voter registrations and civic education campaigns, as well as their involvement as local election observers. The NEC encourages those organizations to take an active and constructive role. The Somaliland media also has a working relationship with NEC in an effort to prevent the negative role of the media. Hence, the upcoming elections will also be no different and would need the active role of civil society to educate voters on a number of issues, not least on procedures for voting with two different ballot papers, which is a new exercise to the voters. There is a significantly great number of Somaliland diaspora living abroad and have demonstrated substantial contribution to the past elections in terms of fundraising for the candidates and also returnees running for public offices. In fact, two of the three political parties contesting are led by politicians who returned from overseas. In the upcoming elections, members of the diaspora will be involved mainly as candidates. The only shortcoming will be that there are no legal professions set in place for them to vote in the respective areas they reside. Somaliland's international partners have long supported the process of democratization and, in particular, the election cycles since the beginning. Their contributions range from technical support to financial assistance. The body overseeing the elections receives regular capacity-building assistance from a number of Somaliland's development partners: mainly the EU, the USA, and the UK. The relationship built over the years between Somaliland and its Western partners could be strained by the absence of diverse candidates owing to the concerns they had raised when the parliament refused to pass a bill that would have allocated specific quotas for women and ethnic minority clans.

Figure 31 – UCID female supporters

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1. Conclusion

The assessment was successfully completed in all the targeted regions of Somaliland which were Sahil, Awdal, Marodijeex, Sool, Togdheer and Sanaag. All repsondents gave consent to answering the questions and were enthusiastic on partaking on the assessment. In all the regions of Somaliland, the citizens of Somaliland were already registered and ready to take part in the forthcoming parliamentary elections.

4.2. Recommendations

4.2.1. Long-Term Recommendations

Voter Education and awareness

Empowering local organizations and NEC to continuously conduct voter education to the public and citizens of Somaliland so that they can keep improving the awareness of the citizens on their rights to vote. Many citizens are still not aware of the democratic system.

Capacity Building

Expertise and NEC to keep building the capacities of the staff especially the field staff who will in turn support the citizens understand the process of election. There should also be an umbrella of Governance and Rule of Law to be established and have a strong mandate to guide and protect the Peace and Security interests of the country.

Women Participation

This is recommendation for all stakeholders. To lobby and campaign for enactment of legislation supporting women's participation in politics. Women participation to be improved and increased at all levels. This includes the candidates, the mobilizers, the speakers, the representatives and the staff at all levels.

4.2.2. Mid-Term Recommendations

Freedom of Speech

The issue of freedom of speech might still be an issue in Somaliland. Therefore, the government should allow the freedom of speech especially in TV, radios and the social media. It was learnt from past experience that government sometimes might take harsh actions or impose huge fines for medias that express against the government.

4.2.3. Short-Term Recommendations

Party Campaigns and polling stations.

Give the parties ample time to do the campaigns much earlier to the election date. This will give the citizens enough time to think of the right candidate and prepare for the election. As mentioned earlier, it is expected for each citizen to vote from where they registered from. So, if a person registered in Borama, it is expected for him/her to travel to Borama to vote during the election day. So, this should be changed and a person to be given a choice to vote from any polling station.

5. Annexes

5.1. FGD Tool

CDG
Focus Group Discussion Guide
Pre-Election Assessment/Study in Somaliland

Location of FGD	
Name of Facilitator	
Name of Note Taker	
# of participants	
Participant profiles (men, women, youth)	
Start and end time	Start: _____ End: _____

A. Introduction, confidentiality and informed consent

Informed Consent: My name is……………………………from CDG. We are conducting a Assessment on the **Pre-Election Assessment/Study in Somaliland**. We want to ask you a few questions in terms of the **Pre-Election Assessment/Study in Somaliland**.

Voter Registration	*Answers*
Population of the Community?	
Are you aware of people being registered as voters in your community?	
Did you participate in the registration?	
Were there any conditions for someone to be registered?	
Was the process fair? Did you hear of any bribes or fees being paid during the registration process? Who paid and how much was paid? Feel free to answer.	
Who led the registration process?	
Are there some people who did not participate in the registration process?	
Why did they not participate?	

Were women registered as well?	
What about PLWD (People Living with Disability) or PLWA/HIV? Were they registered?	
Did you hear of any underaged who were registered?	

Pre-Elections	*Answers*
Are you aware of the forth coming elections in Somaliland?	
Do you think the elections will be fair or not?	
Why?	
Do you think the campaigns and elections will be peaceful or not?	
Why?	
What measures should be in place in order to have a peaceful campaign and elections?	
Who are the key stakeholders to a peaceful election process?	
Why do you think so?	
What is the role of each stakeholder? 　1- … 　2- … 　3- … 　4- … 　5- … 　6- … 　7- …	

Who do you think will lead disruption in the campaigns and election process?	
Explain why?	
Are there some locations which are sensitive to security?	
What areas are those?	
How will we overcome the security issues inorder to have a peaceful campaign and election process?	
Is there sufficient government structures like police and security personnel to make sure there is good security who will facilitate for peaceful campaign and election process?	
Are there militia group who are likely to disrupt campaign and election process?	
Are there election stations or polling stations where citizens are not free to conduct there polling?	
If yes, which ones?	

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION
DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO ADD OR ASK?

Figure 32 – FGD Tool

5.2. KII Tool

CDG

Key Informant Interview Guide

Pre-Election Assessment/Study in Somaliland

Location of KII	
Name of Facilitator	
Name of Note Taker	
Participant name and profiles	
Contact	
Start and end time	Start: _____ End: _____

A. Introduction, confidentiality and informed consent

Informed Consent: My name is................................from CDG. We are conducting an Assessment on the **Pre-Election Assessment/Study in Somaliland**. We want to ask you a few questions in terms of the **Pre-Election Assessment/Study in Somaliland**.

Voter Registration	*Answers*
Population of the Community?	
Are you aware of people being registered as voters in your community?	
How many people have been registered so far?	

Were there any conditions for someone to be registered?	
Was the process fair? Did you hear of any bribes or fees being paid during the registration process? Who paid and how much was paid? Feel free to answer.	
Who led the registration process?	
Are there some people who did not participate in the registration process?	
Why did they not participate?	
Were women registered as well?	
What about PLWD or PLWA/HIV? Were they registered?	
Did you hear of any underaged who were registered?	

Pre-Elections	*Answers*
Are you aware of the forth coming elections in Somaliland?	
Do you think the elections will be fair or not?	
Why?	
Do you think the campaigns and elections will be peaceful or not?	
Why?	
What measures should be in place in order to have a peaceful campaign and elections?	
Who are the key stakeholders to a peaceful election process?	

Why do you think so?

What is the role of each stakeholder?

    1-   ...

    2-   ...

    3-   ...

    4-   ...

    5-   ...

    6-   ...

    7-   ...

Who do you think will lead disruption in the campaigns and election process?

Explain why?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO ADD OR ASK?

Figure 33 – KII Tool

5.3. Locations of the data collection

Badda cas Area, off Jigjiga Yar
Hargeisa, Somaliland
+252-63-4791050 or 0634422871
Contact person: Abdikadir Ismail
Position: Country Director
Web: www.cdgsomaliland.org
Email: country-director@cdgsomaliland.org or cdgsomaliland@gmail.com