



Policy Brief

Democratization and Local Governance in Jubaland State

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Executive Summary

The Center for Research and Professional Studies (CRPS) presents this policy brief to inform development partners, United Nations agencies, and government stakeholders on the status, challenges, and opportunities of democratization and local governance in Jubaland State. Effective, inclusive, and accountable local governance is a cornerstone of Somalia's peacebuilding, state-building, and decentralization agenda. In Jubaland, progress in security stabilization and administrative formation has not yet translated into robust democratic local governance.

Local administrations remain largely appointed, civic participation is limited, and institutional capacity at district and municipal levels is weak. These gaps undermine service delivery, public trust, and state legitimacy. This brief aligns with the **UN Joint Programme on Local Governance and Decentralized Service Delivery**, **UNTMIS governance and human rights priorities**, and the **Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) decentralization and democratization frameworks**. It provides concise, actionable recommendations to support donor programming and policy engagement over the medium term.

Background and Context

Jubaland State holds strategic political, economic, and geostrategic importance within Somalia and the wider Horn of Africa. Bordering Kenya and Ethiopia and overlooking critical land and maritime trade corridors, Jubaland occupies a pivotal position in regional security, cross-border



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commerce, and stabilization dynamics. Control over fertile agricultural areas, key transport routes, and proximity to the Indian Ocean enhances its geopolitical relevance within Somalia's federal system.

From a geostrategic perspective, effective local governance in Jubaland is not only a governance priority but also a security and state legitimacy imperative. Weak district-level administration creates governance vacuums that can be exploited by non-state actors, undermining stabilization gains. Conversely, democratic and accountable local governments strengthen state presence, social cohesion, and resilience against conflict.

Within Somalia's national development architecture, the **National Development Plan (NDP)** and the **Jubaland Development Plan** emphasize decentralization, inclusive governance, and service delivery as foundations for sustainable development. However, while progress has been made in security stabilization and state formation, democratization at the local level remains uneven. The absence of elected district councils and limited fiscal decentralization continue to constrain citizen participation and development outcomes.

Strengthening local governance in Jubaland is therefore central to advancing federalism, consolidating peace, and achieving both national and state-level development objectives.

Current State of Local Governance and Democratization

Political Representation and Local Elections

- District and municipal administrations are predominantly appointed, limiting democratic legitimacy
- Clan-based power-sharing arrangements continue to shape political participation
- Women, youth, and minority groups remain underrepresented in decision-making structures
- Positive precedents exist, notably the **Afmadow local elections**, which demonstrated the feasibility of community-based electoral processes under improved security conditions

Institutional and Service Delivery Capacity

- Limited administrative and technical capacity at local government level
- Weak local revenue generation and fiscal autonomy
- Inconsistent delivery of basic services, particularly in rural districts, despite alignment with Jubaland Development Plan priorities

Civic Participation and Accountability

- Low public awareness of governance roles and citizen rights
- Weak accountability mechanisms and limited community oversight
- Limited structured engagement between citizens, civil society, and local authorities

Policy and Legal Framework



- Partial implementation of FGS-led decentralization policies
- Unclear division of mandates between federal, state, and district levels
- Gaps in harmonized local governance legislation at state level

Key Challenges

- Delayed rollout of district and municipal elections across Jubaland
- Clan dynamics and elite capture limiting inclusive and merit-based governance
- Capacity and resource constraints affecting implementation of Jubaland Development Plan priorities
- Security challenges in some districts restricting civic engagement
- Weak coordination between FGS institutions, Jubaland authorities, and local councils

Alignment with National and UN Frameworks

This policy brief is aligned with Somalia’s national and international governance frameworks, while remaining context-specific to Jubaland’s political and geostrategic realities:

- **FGS National Development Plan (NDP):** Prioritizes decentralization, inclusive governance, and accountable institutions as drivers of development and state legitimacy.
- **Jubaland Development Plan:** Emphasizes district-level service delivery, local economic development, and citizen participation as foundations for stability and growth.
- **UN Joint Programme on Local Governance and Decentralized Service Delivery:** Focuses on strengthening local institutions, inclusive participation, and improved service delivery.
- **UNTMIS Governance and Human Rights Pillars:** Support democratic governance, protection of civic space, participation, accountability, and human rights-based approaches.

CRPS frames democratization and local governance in Jubaland as a strategic convergence point between development, peacebuilding, and geostrategy, contributing to both national cohesion and regional stability.

Policy Recommendations

1. Accelerate Democratic Local Elections

- Build on lessons learned from the **Afmadow local elections** to expand district-level electoral processes
- Develop a phased, security-sensitive roadmap for municipal and district elections
- Strengthen civic education and voter awareness, particularly for women and youth

2. Strengthen Decentralization and Local Authority

- Clarify and operationalize federal–state–district roles in line with NDP and Jubaland Development Plan



- Expand fiscal decentralization and support sustainable local revenue systems
- Invest in administrative and planning capacity of district councils

3. Promote Inclusive and Representative Governance

- Enforce gender, youth, and minority inclusion targets in local councils
- Support community dialogue platforms to mitigate clan-based exclusion
- Strengthen civil society participation in local decision-making

4. Enhance Accountability and Transparency

- Institutionalize community oversight committees and social accountability tools
- Promote transparent budgeting and public expenditure tracking at district level
- Strengthen grievance redress mechanisms aligned with UNTMIS governance standards

5. Integrate Governance, Peacebuilding, and Geostrategy

- Align local governance reforms with stabilization and territorial administration priorities
- Engage traditional and religious leaders as partners in formal governance systems
- Ensure governance interventions are conflict-sensitive and reinforce state legitimacy

Implementation Considerations for Donors

- Adopt a phased and context-sensitive approach tailored to district realities
- Prioritize coordination with FGS, Jubaland authorities, UN agencies, and CSOs
- Align funding with national decentralization and electoral timelines
- Invest in long-term institutional capacity rather than short-term projects

Conclusion

Democratization and effective local governance in Jubaland are central to sustainable peace, state legitimacy, and development outcomes. While structural and political challenges persist, targeted investments in inclusive local governance, civic participation, and institutional capacity can yield transformative results. CRPS encourages donors and partners to prioritize local governance reform as a strategic pillar of Somalia's broader state-building and peacebuilding agenda.

About CRPS

The Center for Research and Professional Studies (CRPS) is an independent Somali think tank and policy research institution dedicated to advancing evidence-based policy, democratic governance, human rights, and sustainable development through research, analysis, and stakeholder engagement.





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