



# Improving Service Delivery in Somalia Through Citizen Engagement:

## Lessons from Daadihiye Citizen Engagement

### Executive Summary

It is highly recognized that active and engaged citizens play a critical role in shaping sustainable and good governments. Involving citizens in policymaking and considering their needs and priorities is crucial for designing and implementing effective public policies and services. Citizen engagement has been documented to positively impact service delivery, with evidence showing that involving citizens in decision-making processes can lead to improved service delivery outcomes.

Governments around the world have adopted different ways of engaging citizens including an e-governance platform utilizing information and technology systems, thereby enhancing their operations, and improving the provision of services to citizens. This shift has led to substantial advantages, such as increased efficiency, effectiveness, and enhanced opportunities for citizen engagement.

Despite global advancements, citizen engagement in Somalia has been historically limited due to decades of conflict and instability, weak governance structures, and a lack of basic services and infrastructure. However, in recent years, some positive developments have helped increase citizen engagement and participation in the country. Despite these developments, engagement remains deeply fragmented, with hard-to-reach areas and marginalized communities excluded from the decision-making processes.

This policy brief provides an overview of how citizen engagement can improve service delivery in Somalia based on the lessons learned documented from the Daadihiye Citizen Engagement program. Daadihiye adopts an inclusive approach to bring the voice of local citizens to the table of decision-making by providing channels to harness diverse views and ideas from communities, aggregate them and engage with stakeholders to discuss challenges identified and forge a way forward for communities.

It provides a pathway to move from a Somali narrative built by and for the few elites who are often the only people engaged in the discussions to inform public decisions. The brief presents recommendations for implementing and supporting effective citizen engagement strategies in the country. In collaboration with its international partners, the Federal Government of Somalia and member states must support and invest in initiatives promoting citizen engagement and participation.

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## Introduction

Citizen engagement is a crucial aspect of good governance. The World Bank defines citizen engagement as a two-way interaction between citizens and governments or the private sector in policy dialogue and programs that give citizens a stake in decision-making. Involving citizens and communities in development can increase openness, accountability, and social inclusion (World Bank, 2015). Citizen engagement is crucial in promoting accountability, transparency, and trust in the public sector. According to the UN report "People Matter" (2008), effective citizen engagement is essential to good governance. It provides authorities with better information to support their decision-making, program development, and service delivery.

Engaging citizens in designing and implementing service delivery programs ensures that services are more responsive and tailored to the community's specific needs, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery while increasing accountability and transparency (Bhargava, 2015). By involving citizens in decision-making, governments can be held responsible for their services and choices, leading to better quality and more responsive public services and increasing citizens' confidence in their government. Moreover, citizen engagement strengthens the social contract between citizens and their governments by demonstrating that the government listens to and addresses citizens' needs and concerns.

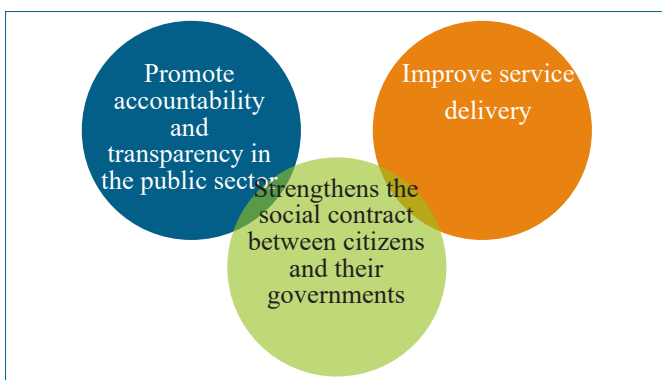


Figure 1: Importance of citizen engagement

*Involving citizens in the policy-making process can improve service delivery by ensuring that public policies and services are designed to meet the needs and priorities of the public. Participatory processes like community meetings and consultations can provide valuable citizen input and feedback, resulting in better outcomes.*

Governments worldwide have embraced e-governance to leverage information and technology systems to enhance their operations and improve service delivery to their citizens. This transformation has brought about significant benefits, including greater efficiency, effectiveness, and opportunities for citizen participation, ultimately leading to improved governance. Several examples worldwide show how citizen engagement has been used to engage citizens in various content to improve service delivery.

## Global Perspectives on Citizen Engagement in shaping public service delivery

Citizen engagement has emerged as a fundamental mechanism used by countries across the globe to promote good governance and improve the delivery of public services. This innovative approach places the power to shape policy decisions and influence service delivery directly in the hands of the people, thereby creating a more responsive and accountable government apparatus. Below are some case studies globally on how citizen engagement has been utilized to enhance service delivery and build social contract with citizens.



01

### Rahvaalgatus.ee, ("People's Initiative"): Estonia

Estonia has developed a digital e-governance platform, Rahvaalgatus.ee ("People's Initiative"), that delivers efficient government services in a secure and user-friendly manner. The platform empowers citizens to actively shape policies and legislation by proposing, discussing, and collaboratively refining new laws. The Estonian Parliament has demonstrated a strong commitment to taking the proposals on the platform seriously, incorporating feedback into the platform into the legislative process, thereby reinforcing the democratic framework in the country.

## 02 My Gov: India

Another citizen engagement framework is the MyGov, launched in India in 2014. The platform fosters citizen engagement by allowing people to provide feedback, suggestions, and opinions on government policies through tools like polls, surveys, and blogs; MyGov encourages citizens to participate in national projects and share their views on governance issues. With over 16 million registered users, it has received 678,000 submissions across 885 tasks and about 4 million comments in 822 discussion forums<sup>3</sup> MyGov's success highlights the importance of citizen engagement in enhancing government service delivery and promoting good governance.

## 03 Porto Alegre Model: Brazil

The Porto Alegre Approach, initiated in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre in the early 1990s, entails a participatory budgeting method where citizens are encouraged to actively allocate public funds.<sup>4</sup> Within this framework, citizens can put forth suggestions regarding the utilization of public finances. These suggestions subsequently undergo deliberation and are subject to voting by the citizenry. This approach has proven highly effective in elevating citizen involvement in governance and contributed to a fairer allocation of public resources.

## 04 Seoul Innovation Bureau: South Korea

In South Korea, the "e-People" platform has revolutionized citizen-government interaction by enabling citizens to submit grievances and provide feedback directly to government agencies, resulting in heightened government responsiveness and more effective problem-solving.<sup>5</sup> What distinguishes the Seoul Innovation Bureau is its commitment to involving

citizens right from the inception of projects and creating an environment where citizens actively engage in the administrative process, from decision-making to implementation. This approach streamlines bureaucratic processes and encourages citizens to contribute alternative solutions, fostering a more collaborative and efficient governance model.

## 05 Ethiopia Social Accountability Program (ESAP)

Within the African context, the Ethiopia Social Accountability Program (ESAP) uses citizen engagement to improve public services in Ethiopia. It focuses on creating structures and mechanisms that allow citizens and government to engage in constructive dialogue about the priority sectors and sector-specific problems that citizens identified at the lowest administrative level where planning and budgeting take place. The program is dedicated to providing a platform for citizens and local governments to connect and dialogue regarding citizen concerns and priorities to improve service delivery and accountability through citizen engagement and information sharing.<sup>6</sup>

Citizen engagement can be a critical tool for promoting accountability and transparency in Somalia as it is in the early stages of rebuilding its governance structures and developing policies and programs. Despite significant political and economic challenges, Somali citizens have actively participated in various initiatives to improve service delivery by providing crucial services, particularly education, water and healthcare. Community-based organizations, developmental partners and international organizations have played a vital role in providing essential services in remote and conflict-affected areas with limited government presence. Additionally, the well-engaged civil society groups in Somalia have played a key role in rebuilding the government and advocating for improved governance, mobilization of resources for development



3. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339664718\\_Platform\\_for\\_Citizen\\_Engagement\\_for\\_Good\\_Governance\\_in\\_India\\_A\\_Case\\_Study\\_of\\_MyGovin](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339664718_Platform_for_Citizen_Engagement_for_Good_Governance_in_India_A_Case_Study_of_MyGovin)  
4. <https://www.wri.org/research/porto-alegre-participatory-budgeting-and-challenge-sustaining-transfor-mative-change>  
5. GovInsider: <https://govinsider.asia/intl-en/article/inside-seouls-innovation-unit>

6. Ethiopia Social Accountability Program: <https://www.vng-esap.org/whatwedo>

projects, and holding authorities accountable for their actions. Citizen engagement initiatives must draw lessons from these efforts to expand the engagement of communities in decision-making processes. However, Somalia's ongoing instability and political fragmentation have limited the scope and effectiveness of citizen engagement initiatives. The lack of a functional legal and institutional framework has made it difficult for citizens to participate in decision-making processes fully. Furthermore, insecurity and violence have constrained civic activities, particularly in areas controlled by armed groups. Despite these challenges, citizen engagement remains crucial in improving service delivery to citizens in Somalia.

## State of service delivery and citizen engagement in Somalia

After nearly three decades of civil war in Somalia, the country is slowly moving into a unique post-conflict situation. Years of civil war have left Somalia almost destroyed with massive displacement of people and destruction of basic infrastructure. Other shocks such as severe drought, floods, epidemic outbreaks, and the presence of militia and Al-Shabaab pose challenges in the post-war recovery.

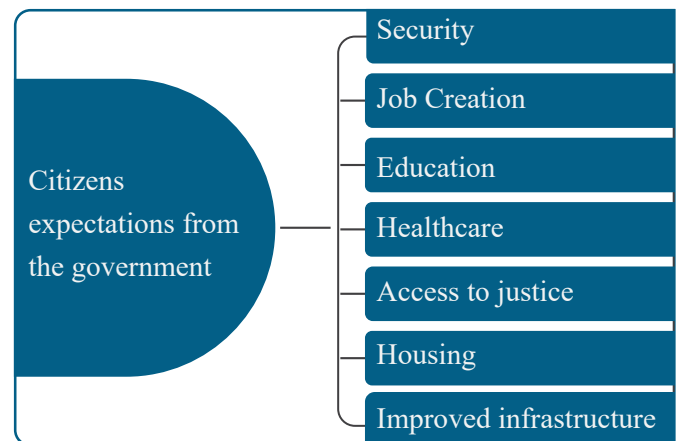
However, in recent years, Somalia has made considerable progress in rebuilding its public sector to improve service delivery for the public. However, despite these advancements, substantial challenges persist in delivering effective and efficient services to the Somali population. Somalia's political and security landscape remains highly volatile. Furthermore, although there have been positive developments in Somalia's political transition, the country's political environment remains precarious, with unresolved issues regarding the relationship between the Federal Government and the Federal Member States posing significant challenges.

There have been ongoing efforts by the Federal Government of Somalia and the Member States to establish government structures to improve the delivery of essential services such as healthcare, education, and water supply. However, the progress has been slow due to the Federal Government of Somalia's inability to allocate resources from the national budget, security challenges and weak government structures and infrastructure, leaving international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide critical services such as healthcare, education, and water supply to communities in need. Improving service delivery in Somalia requires a multifaceted approach to addressing the challenges and obstacles providers face.

It requires sustained investment, strengthened social contract, improved governance, and stability to ensure essential services are accessible to all Somalis.

## Daadihiye Citizen Engagement Program

The Daadihiye platform reached 2609 people in Mogadishu through the pilot field research specifically, with 1340 men and 1269 women. The research provided insights into the social, economic and environmental challenges faced by communities within Mogadishu. We also explored how communities interact with the local government and documented opinions regarding how taxes should be utilized in delivery of public services. We also explored to understand what citizens expected from the government and policymakers. This was to document how citizens can better engage in development initiatives and service delivery and help to foster a more positive relationship between the government and its citizens.



Raagsan launched a citizen engagement program called "Daadihiye" to bridge the gap between policy-makers and local Somali citizens. Through Daadihiye, citizens' voices are amplified, and they are given a platform to participate in decision-making processes, thus bridging the gap between elites and ordinary citizens. *Daadihiye* firmly believes in reimagining the potential of "Everyday Politics" by bridging the ever-widening gap between citizens and elites in the public sector. Its goal is to provide an inclusive and large-scale approach to governance and oversight of public service delivery by placing citizens at the forefront of policymaker's considerations.

This approach is crucial in ensuring that citizens are empowered to contribute meaningfully to the policy-making process and are adequately represented in the decision-making process.

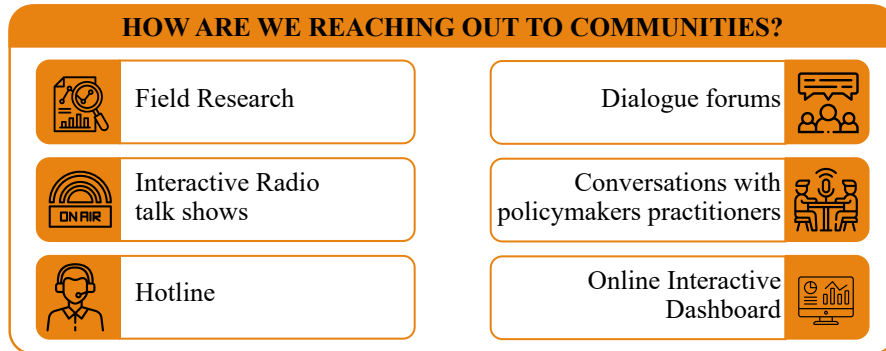


Figure 2: Daadihiye engagement channels

*Daadihiye adopts an all-inclusive approach by providing a channel to harness diverse views and ideas from communities, aggregate them and engage with stakeholders to discuss challenges identified and forge a way forward for communities. process.*

## Daadihiye Change Model

Daadihiye's Change model centres on four main components: Co-Design, Analyze, Engage, and Feedback. The Co-Design element emphasizes a collaborative approach involving Somali citizens in customizing platforms and identifying knowledge gaps and concerns that can be addressed through their input. The Engage component focuses on engaging with citizens via diverse channels, including local radio, podcasts, newsletters, and social media, fostering dialogue and creating opportunities for meaningful participation. Finally, the Feedback element is essential for closing the feedback loop, using hotlines and community forums to promote effective communication and ensure that citizens' voices are heard and acted upon. With these components working together, the Daadihiye model provides a comprehensive and effective means of empowering Somali citizens to drive positive change in their communities.

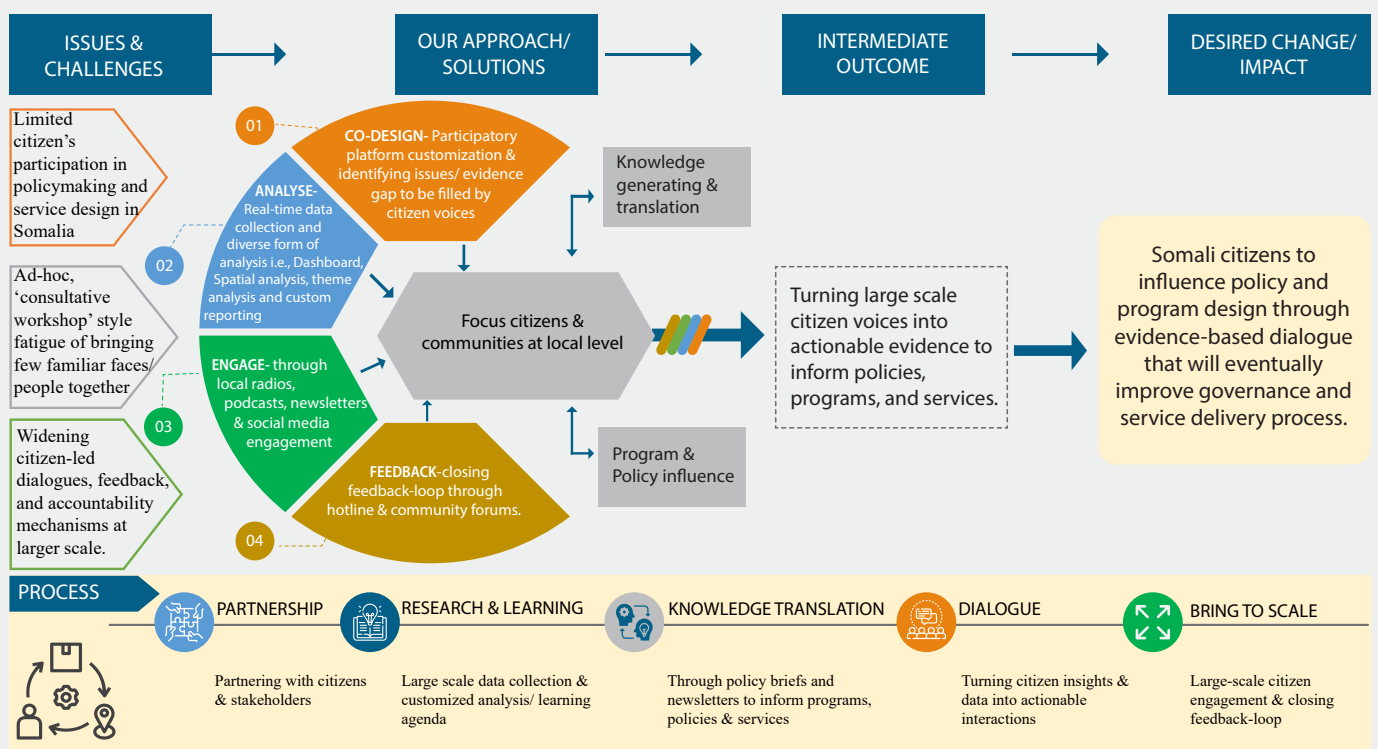
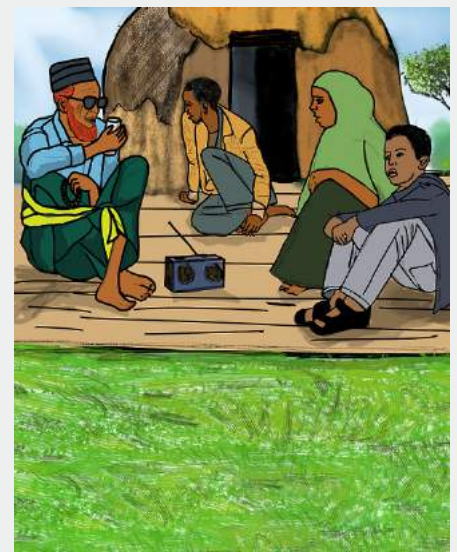


Figure 3: Daadihiye Theory of Change

The Daadihiye approach seeks to transform the extensive participation of Somali citizens into actionable evidence that can effectively inform the development of policies, programs, and services. The ultimate goal is to empower citizens to play a more active role in shaping policy and program design while fostering an evidence-based dialogue that contributes to Somalia's governance and service delivery process.

The platform adopts a comprehensive process that includes partnering with citizens and stakeholders, conducting large-scale data collection, and customized analysis using a learning agenda to achieve this goal. The approach also involves translating knowledge through policy briefs and bulletins and transforming citizen insights and data into actionable interactions through dialogue. By implementing this approach, the platform provides a powerful means of enabling Somali citizens to play a more significant role in developing their communities, driving positive change that benefits everyone.

## Mogadishu Citizen Engagement Pilot

The community pilot phase collected the voices of 2609 residents in 17 districts of Mogadishu. Raagsan engaged 11 university-level, locally-trained social worker interns for two months with a deeper understanding of the local context and adequate skills to document:

- Citizen challenges in terms of service delivery.
- Services needed by citizens.
- Interactions between residents and the local government.

The findings were showcased through the Daadihiye Dashboard, which provides a snapshot of the findings from the different districts within Mogadishu.



You can access the dashboard through the following link: [Dashboards – Daadihiye Citizen Engagement](#)

Figure 3: Daadihiye Theory of Change

## Key findings from the field

01

### Challenges reported by Mogadishu residents

Several key findings emerged after interacting with a diverse range of residents and communities in Mogadishu. These findings offer valuable insights into the challenges citizens face, the services needed, and how they engage with local authorities in the city. The findings underscore the areas where concerted action is necessary to enhance the quality of life for all residents.

#### Social Challenges

- Robbery
- Access to Justice
- Poverty
- Education
- Healthcare

#### Economic Challenges

- Unemployment
- Inflation
- High cost of food
- Poor Infrastructure

#### Environmental Challenges

- Poor Waste Management
- Plastic Pollution
- Water Pollution
- Poor storm water drainage

Figure 5: Challenges reported by Mogadishu residents

*Robbery/insecurity, unemployment and poor waste management were the top social, economic and environments challenges respectively reported by Mogadishu residents.*

Robbery and insecurity were the most reported social challenges many Mogadishu residents faced. The prevalence of crime and violence in certain areas of the city has profoundly impacted people's daily lives, restricting their ability to move freely and access essential services. The high unemployment rate was also noted as a key economic challenge with limited job opportunities, particularly for young people, resulting in many residents struggling to make ends meet and provide for their families. Poor waste management was also identified as a major environmental challenge in the city. The improper disposal of waste is causing serious health and environmental problems, particularly in low-income areas where access to essential services is limited.

02

### Services Needed

Providing services that cater to the community's needs is crucial for ensuring effective service delivery by governments. The pilot survey documented social, economic and environmental services that people living in Mogadishu needed the government and private sector to

provide. Quality education, affordable healthcare, improved road infrastructure, and improved waste management and collection were the top services needed by Mogadishu residents.



Figure 6: Services needed by Mogadishu residents

## 02 Interaction with government

Citizen engagement with local government is a critical aspect of participatory governance. Engaging citizens in decision-making ensures that government policies and programs reflect the needs and aspirations of the community. When citizens are actively involved in decision-making, they have a sense of ownership and accountability for the implemented policies and programs. Our research focused on finding out how citizens within Mogadishu interacted with the local government under three major themes:

- Taxes paid by the citizens and their usage
- Interaction with government
- Representation in local government

Although slightly more than half of the respondents reported paying taxes, a majority expressed a lack of awareness regarding the government's utilization of these collected taxes. Furthermore, they indicated that the allocation of tax funds did not align with their priorities. The findings from the field highlighted limited engagement between citizens and their local governments. This was attributed to limited awareness by citizens of the role of government and the services the government ought to provide. Furthermore, the community members lack the willingness and have limited capacity to engage and deliberate with existing government structures actively.

The Daadihiye field research documented a notable lack of community awareness regarding the importance of civic participation, resulting in low levels of engagement. In addition, insecurity was a major hindrance for citizens to

engage safely with local governments. Respondents also highlighted that the widespread lack of trust in government institutions discouraged citizens from engaging with local government structures. Additionally, weak government systems and infrastructure make it difficult for citizens to access information and engage in meaningful dialogue with local officials. Lack of interest in civic participation among citizens was also noted, and this was attributed to various factors, including disappointment with the government, lack of understanding of the benefits of engagement, and competing priorities. Finally, minimal disability mainstreaming further exacerbated the limited engagement, as citizens with disabilities face additional barriers to accessing government services and engaging with local officials.



Figure 7: Why communities don't participate in citizen engagement initiatives

## Lessons Learned

The Daadihiye Mogadishu pilot provided valuable lessons learned to inform the implementation and expansion of effective and sustainable citizen engagement initiatives.

### Context and inclusivity matters

Citizen engagement initiatives must be tailored to address communities' social, cultural, and political contexts. The process must be inclusive, ensuring marginalized and vulnerable groups can participate in civic activities, engage with local governments, and respect different perspectives and experiences.

### Community involvement is critical

Citizen engagement initiatives must adopt tools to actively involve community members and create opportunities for citizens to voice their opinions, provide feedback and input on policies and programs, and participate in decision-making.

### Need to scale the use of diverse channels

To effectively engage citizens, it is crucial to scale the use of diverse and innovative channels. This requires leveraging traditional channels like community meetings and digital channels like social media platforms and mobile phone applications. Using a mix of these channels ensures that information can reach a wider audience and citizens have ample opportunities to access information and engage with their local governments.

### Cultural sensitivity

Citizen engagement initiatives must be culturally sensitive and respect local customs and practices. This includes recognizing the importance of cultural norms in shaping citizens' perceptions of their local governments and ensuring that engagement activities are aligned with local cultural practices.

### Access to information is vital

Providing access to information to citizens about government policies, programs, and decision-making processes is required to ensure citizens effectively engage with their local governments. Open data encourages public participation and engagement in governance. When citizens have access to data, they can actively contribute to discussions, propose solutions, and collaborate with authorities to address challenges in public service delivery.

### Managing citizen expectations is important. Needs vs. available resources/financing

Effective citizen engagement requires managing expectations by balancing the needs and desires of citizens with the available resources and financing. It is crucial to be transparent about limitations and communicate clearly with citizens about what can realistically be achieved.

## Scaleup & Customization of Daadihiye

Daadihiye is a flexible and customizable approach tailored to different partners' and clients' specific needs and themes. Daadihiye seeks to expand its geographical and thematic reach by building stronger partnerships to expand the reach of citizen engagement initiatives and promote a more inclusive representation of diverse perspectives and interests of different communities in Somalia.

Organizations can leverage and use the Daadihiye citizen engagement approach to design and implement effective and sustainable development programs that meet the needs and priorities of their communities.

This can be achieved by leveraging Daadihiye's large-scale citizen engagement approach to engaging with citizens via multiple channels such as local radio, podcasts, newsletters, and social media. This will enable partners to receive feedback and input from citizens on their programs, ensuring that they are aligned with the needs and expectations of citizens. This can be done through consultations, focus group discussions, and other forms of engagement.

## Recommendations

Recommendations for policy-makers and stakeholders on how to promote and strengthen citizen engagement in service delivery.

### 01 Develop and implement comprehensive citizen engagement policies

The Federal government and member states, international organizations/development partners and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and service providers must establish and implement policies and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to guide service delivery and promote citizen engagement at all levels of service delivery. Putting into practice participatory mechanisms, like community meetings and consultations, to gather feedback and input from the public on the creation and execution of governmental policies and services needed. Additionally, involving the public in the planning and decision-making can ensure that services are designed with citizens' needs in mind.

### 02 Establish feedback mechanisms

To enhance citizen engagement and ensure effective feedback mechanisms, it is essential to establish systems for reporting issues and suggesting improvements to strengthen the connection between citizens and local governments. Key elements for success include co-designing these systems with the community to ensure authenticity, providing mechanisms in local languages, utilizing various channels like SMS, phone calls, suggestion boxes, and online platforms, and involving local champions to facilitate feedback collection and encourage participation. Awareness campaigns through local media are vital in educating communities on how and where to provide feedback. The feedback collected is invaluable for pinpointing areas requiring service delivery improvements and adapting to meet the needs of the people better.



### 03 Leveraging technology to enhance citizen engagement

Technology can be a powerful tool for facilitating citizen engagement and improving service delivery. Technology innovations such as mobile apps for feedback, SMS-based surveys, and social media platforms can also facilitate disseminating information to citizens about services and providing access to resources and public consultation.

### 04 Invest in capacity building

Policy-makers and stakeholders should invest in capacity building for citizens and service providers to promote effective and meaningful engagement. This could include training programs for service providers on how to engage with citizens effectively and training for citizens on their rights and responsibilities.

### 05 Foster partnerships

Partnerships between governments, service providers, and civil society organizations can facilitate effective citizen engagement.

By working together, civil society organizations and these stakeholders can leverage their respective strengths and expertise to develop and implement strategies for citizen engagement, which can help facilitate citizen engagement and ensure that the voices of the people are heard. These organizations can help collect feedback from the public, facilitate discussions, and ensure that citizens' views are considered in decision-making.

### 06 Investing resources in citizen engagement programs

The government can provide support and resources for citizen-led initiatives and community-based organizations. This can include funding, training, and technical assistance to develop the skills and capacity to effectively engage with the government and deliver services to their communities. Investing in infrastructure and institutions to support citizen engagement, such as public forums and meetings where citizens can meet and participate in decision-making processes. These mechanisms should be accessible, transparent, and inclusive to ensure that all citizens can participate and have their voices heard.

## Conclusion

Increasingly, citizen engagement is no longer a choice for governments. Citizen engagement is a critical component of effective governance, as it enables citizens to play an active role in shaping policies and decision-making processes. Increasing citizen participation can enhance service delivery in Somalia. Enhanced engagement with citizens results in designing and implementing effective policies responsive to citizens' needs and improved accountability, responsiveness, and openness in the public sector. Governments, development partners, and civil society organizations must be committed to creating an enabling environment for engagement, including providing adequate resources, establishing transparent and inclusive processes, and being willing to incorporate citizen feedback into policy decisions. Moreover, citizen engagement efforts must be tailored to the specific needs and contexts of different communities, taking into account factors that may impact their ability to participate effectively. Daadihiye Citizen Engagement Program represents an important step towards more participatory and inclusive governance in Somalia. Daadihiye provides a glimpse at the realities of local citizens and highlights issues related to service provision and the interaction of communities with the government. This will help shape future engagements between government and citizens by providing evidence-driven solutions, best practices and lessons learned for more direct dialogue and engagement between government and citizens to promote social accountability and create strong, informed, and connected communities.

As Somalia continues its path towards rebuilding and development, citizen engagement must remain at the forefront of policy-making and implementation. Through sustained efforts and a commitment to inclusivity and transparency, Somalia can harness the power of citizen engagement to build a brighter future for all its people.

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## Credits

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