



Democracy in Puntland: *The People's Choice*

Key Policy Messages

1. The Majority of respondents surveyed believe that current clan based power sharing system in Puntland provides a basis for state building but fails to set the stage for the transformative development of the state and society.
2. Significant number of respondents believes in democracy yet contends the manner Puntland democratic moment in 2013 was instigated and managed.
3. The resumption of inclusive multiparty democracy in Puntland is noted as the key instrument which can establish a framework for ensuring good governance.
4. Respondents demand institutionalization of voter registration and strengthening security and judiciary apparatuses before re-launch of political parties to guarantee smooth democratic transformation.
5. High number of respondents rates the role of civil society in the process of democratizing Puntland exceedingly weak and recommends strengthening civil society in consolidating democracy.



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Attribute to:
Somali Institute
for Development
& Research
Analysis 2016.

2008

The year when the process of constitutionalizing democratic elections in Puntland began

98%

The level of acceptance of the draft constitution when it was voted for in 2012, receiving 472 votes from 480 delegates that voted.

1. Background Information

Puntland state of Somalia was established in August 1998 as an autonomous regional government and part of the future federal state of Somalia. The consultative formation process was comprehensive with traditional elders and local leaders laying the foundation of the state. A clan based political structure emerged with the administrative body of the government consisting of the legislature, judiciary and executive arms.

Since then, five Presidential Elections have been held - 1998, 2001, 2005, 2009 and 2014, all characterized by relatively peaceful transfer of power and continuity of state functions. However, these elections have been conducted through clan based system where traditional elders "Isimo" select sixty six (66) members of parliament who later elect the President, vice president and speaker of the parliament. This is not only undemocratic but also a complex power sharing arrangement among the clans.

The process of constitutionalizing democratic elections in Puntland began in 2008 under President Adde Muse's through a draft constitution which was later adopted following a constituent assembly vote during President Farole's administration. The draft constitution received an overwhelming acceptance in 2012 with 472 votes from 480 delegates. This resulted in the introduction of a multi-party system for the first time in Puntland's history.

The government enacted the new electoral law that culminated in the establishment of a nine member Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission. The commission conducted public awareness campaigns from September 2012, and later registered only four political parties – Horcad, Midnimo, Udad and Horseed. The first democratic local council elections were then slated for July 2013 but just a day before the polls, there was violence in Qardho and Galkayo towns leaving at least three people dead and resulting in the indefinite postponement of the elections, which were to be the first democratic election in Puntland since 1969. Consequently, clan elders stepped in and resorted back to clan based system in selecting members of parliament who then elected the current President, Vice President and Speaker of the Parliament.

It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to explore the perception and expectations of the citizens in Puntland towards this democratization process. Further, it seeks to identify the fundamental issues that need to be addressed prior to the commencement of this process and to provide a basis for public dialogue, which will ensure an evidence based policy making process.

2. Study Methods

The study used both quantitative and qualitative methods. A total of 384 respondents were surveyed in Badhan, Garowe, Bossaso and Galkayo through a Probability Proportionate to Population Sizes (PPPS) framework. The respondents involved in the study reflected the diverse nature of the population as follows:

- 53% male and 47% female with 44% of the respondents being ages 19-25 years,

- 85% urban dwellers and 15% either rural or nomadic, and
- 48% university and diploma graduates, 23% high school, 10% vocational training, and 15% primary and Koranic School.

Qualitative data was collected through focus group discussions of ten to twenty persons in each city comprising of youth, leaders, intellectuals, civil society, religious scholars and government representatives with equal number of male and female representatives.

3. Findings

In terms of people's expectations, 26% of the respondents were of the view that democracy will result in better social services and accountability, 25% expected a wider and larger participation by the people in decision making, 24% expected an improvement in security and social cohesion while 24% believe democracy will result in more international support and funding for development.

Majority of the participants in Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) in the four target areas were enthusiastic about the reintroduction of democracy in Puntland. Participants of the FGDs expressed expectations for better economic opportunities, improved security, accountability, reduction in corruption, better use of power with government's responsibility being service delivery and not individual gains and transformation of the political system from clan based governance to representative governance structure. They felt that this will give room for competent and talented leaders whose desire is to serve and develop the country, attract more investment opportunities and support from international community and a wider and broader public participation in the decision making process.

3.1 - People's perception and expectation towards democracy

Majority of the respondents were positive about democracy and had almost similar understanding of democracy. 35% of those interviewed understood it as a means of ensuring better life, 32% viewed it as a means of establishing a more stable political system and 31% consider it as a means of giving everyone an opportunity to participate in decision making on matters affecting them. Only 2% had no idea what democracy was.

68% of the respondents are willing to support the democratization process, 15% are somewhat likely to support the process while 7% were not sure whether to support or not. 9% of the participants were unlikely to support the process.

3.2 - Preconditions for Embarking on Democratization Process

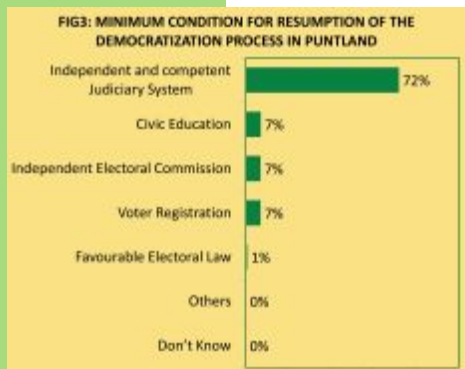
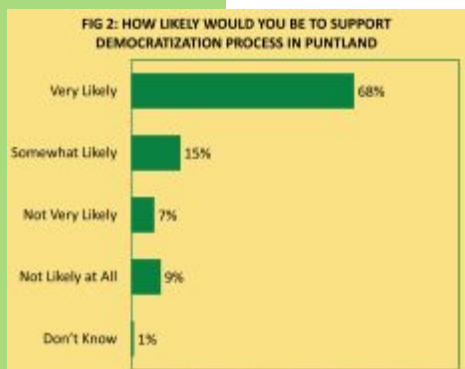
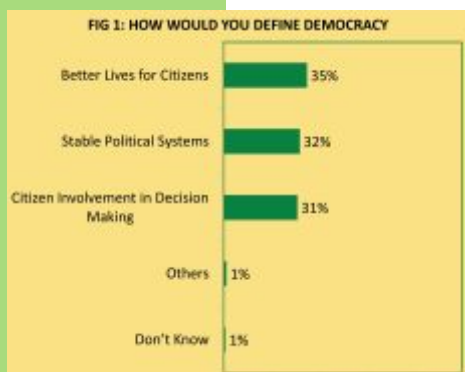
Majority of the respondents in the four areas believe that certain prerequisite conditions need

- electoral commission as the main requirement, 7% said that establishment of a reliable voter register was the minimum prerequisite while another 7% considered that enactment of favorable electoral laws as the minimum requirement.

Additionally, the FGD participants believed that a change in the political system is a sensitive matter that can either bring stability or lead to instability, plunging the country into conflict and violence. However, they believed that these fears can be addressed by ensuring that some basic fundamental requirements are in place before the commencement of the process. Some of these requirements are: (a) establishing competent judicial system including the constitutional court, (b) strengthened security, (c) voter registration, (d) wider civic education, (e) disarmament, (f) establishing a competent and independent auditor general office to provide oversight on the use of public funds to avoid misuse by the ruling party, (g) free media, (h) demarcation of districts and villages borders in Puntland, (i) formation of an independent and competent electoral commission and (j) kick starting the process in good time to foster the growth of political parties and ensure that the public has a clear understanding of the process.

384

Number of respondents engaged in the study in four cities - Badhan, Garowe, Bossaso and Galkayo



72%

Number of study respondents that cited the establishment of an independent and competent judiciary system as the main requirement for the resumption of the democratization process.

to be met before the resumption of the democratization process or elections in Puntland. However, they had varied opinions on these prerequisite conditions.

72% of the participants agreed that the establishment of an independent and competent judiciary system is the main requirement before the resumption of the process, 7% consider civic education as the main condition, 7% refer the formation of an independent and competent -

Many Factors

Respondents cited many factors that can hinder the democratization process including weak civil society, limited civic education and clan based political system among others.

3.3 - People's Concerns towards Democratization Process

In order to understand the challenges the People of Puntland thought may hinder the democratization process, the interviewees were asked what challenge they saw as the key hindrance to the process. 14.7% of the respondents cited weak civil society, 8.2% cited limited civic education, 8.0% cited current clan based political system, 8.0% considered proliferation of weapons, 7.8% considered lack of freedom of the media, 7.8% identified corruption and misuse of public funds, 7.6% identified illiteracy, 7.5% cited poor infrastructure and 7.3% cited insecurity.

The same question was put across in the FGDs. The discussions identified several hindrances to the democratization process:

- A weak Judiciary and ineffective Rule of Law sector;
- Previous bad experience in the democratic election of 1969 known as "wood khasaaro";
- Current clan based political system where some clans may seek to continue their politics domination at all costs. Additionally, some clans may resist change due to their preference of the current clan based political system that ensures they are in power;
- Clan disputes over constituency demarcation may lead to insecurity;
- Looting of public funds;
- Proliferation of weapons in the region could trigger communal clan fighting during elections;
- An unfair distribution of districts leading to some missing (like Las'anod) may lead some clans not supporting the process on perceived limitations in the power sharing arrangements after the elections;
- Some influential traditional leaders may strongly resist the process due the fear that a change in the political process will reduce their influence.
- Government's unwillingness to resume the democratization process in the first two years of its reign;
- An ineffective civic education program that does not reach all the communities especially those in remote urban, rural and nomadic areas leading to unwillingness to support the process.

3.4 - Enabling Factors for Effective Democratization Process

In terms of enabling factors that support an effective democratization process, 31.5% of the participants said that the political will of the government was of great impact to the process, 26% cited community willingness to support the process as important, 20.8% considered functional government organs and institutions as significant, 9.3% considered security as important and 8% considered the enactment of electoral laws coupled with adequate time as important. Addressing these factors would enable all the stakeholders to be involved in a more vigorous democratization process. The FGDs indicated the following as opportunities that could support the current administration in the democratization process:

- International communities and partners commitment to provide technical and financial support to the democratization process,
- Adequate time to kick start the democratization process and design innovative electoral systems,
- The presence of functional governmental organs and institutions in the key districts of the state,
- Review and reflection on the experiences and lessons learnt from the first attempt at democratization by the previous administration that can encourage the current government to avoid a repeat of the same and approach this process from a knowledgeable point of view, and
- Willingness by the public to participate in democratization process that is all inclusive.

Political will

31.5% of the respondent identified political will of the government as the most important factor for enabling the democratization process.

About SIDRA

SIDRA is a registered independent, not-for-profit Research and Policy Analysis Think Tank based in Garowe, Puntland, Somalia.

Our Vision

Somalia in which social justice prevails and inclusive economic growth benefits all and improves the well being of all people.

Our Mission

A centre of development and research that generates relevant and original knowledge for dynamic policy environment support, institutional capacity development and alliance.

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4. Conclusion

The study shows that a significant majority of the population in Puntland have a strong desire for the resumption of the democratization process, as catalyst for attaining good governance and economic development. The study respondents however indicated that there are certain conditions that need to be put in place before resumption of the process to ensure success. These include voter registration, formation of an independent and competent judiciary, demarcation of district boundaries and effective civic education program.

The respondents were also concerned about other issues that can affect the process, including limited civic education, proliferation of weapons, corruption, ineffective rule of Law, current clan based system of governance and clan disputes and rivalry.

Respondents also identified factors that would bring about the enabling environment to support the democratization process. These factors include security, functional government organs and institutions in the districts, clan homogeneity, people's willingness and desire for change, and international community's technical and financial support. These prerequisite conditions and enabling factors will ensure an effectiveness and successful democratization process in Puntland.

5. Policy Recommendations

5.1 - Recommendations for Government

The government should:

1. Set up a comprehensive democratization Programme with defined time frames as early as possible and begin preparations for the democratic transformation by enacting required laws, regulations, reconstituting an independent electoral commission, strengthening rule of law and setting the foundations and principles for democracy right.
2. Restart political associations and facilitate institutional and operational systems that enhance political representation and competition and democratic accountability.
3. Adopt a bottom up process for democratization process by enhancing the capacity of non-governmental organizations to educate the people on their rights and obligations as citizens and give them the skills and confidence to demand accountability from the government.
4. Ensure that public officials, elected or unelected, have an obligation to explain their decisions and actions to the citizens.
5. Accelerate and consolidate the political, legal or administrative mechanism to fight corruption.
6. Establish minimum conditions for effective democracy including strengthening rule of law, forming a competent and independent electoral commission and conduct effective voter registration.

5.2 - Recommendations for Traditional Elders

The traditional leaders and elders should:

1. Serve as intermediaries between the government and people to ensure that democratic transformation occurs in an orderly and peaceful manner and in such a way that chieftaincy and democratic elections can coexist.

5.3 - Recommendations for Civil Society

The civil society should:

1. Facilitate and conduct wider civic education programs through intensive and diversified activities including convening meetings, workshops and forums.
2. Create education and communication materials such as posters and audio-visuals for TV, using social media platforms such as Twitter, Face book and Google, publishing in mass media and engaging communities through radios, arts and culture.

5.4 - Recommendations for International Community

The international community should:

1. Offer continuous technical and financial assistance to Puntland State to resume the democratization process and transition to direct election both at the municipal and state levels.
2. Offer symbolic act and support to security, rule of law and election-related institutions at all levels of governance in Puntland.

References:

1. Puntland Non State Actors Association and Saferworld, April 2014: Puntland at the Polls
2. Crisis Group Africa, December 2013: Somalia: Puntland's Punted Polls. Briefing No. 97



SIDRA endeavors to undertake high quality research to guide public dialogue and contribute to governance, policy and economic development in Somalia.