

The Challenges and Opportunities of Good Governance in Somaliland

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ABSTRACT

The concept of good governance has attracted public attention for the past decades and is regarded as a significant pillar in any state to meet universally accepted standards. It is essential for effective, stable, and accountable governments. It provides its citizens at all levels to acknowledge the best alternatives for promoting good governance, while poor governments instigate corruption and bad management in all public institutions. Ineffective leadership leads all institutions to fail. This study examines the challenges and opportunities of good governance in Somaliland with special emphasis on accountability, transparency, rule of law, and the participation of the citizens in the decision-making process. The study employed a qualitative method of data collection and analyzed it. The data emerged from both secondary and primary sources. The major findings of the study show that implementation of good governance principles is the crucial issue to be taken towards the prevention of poor leadership, corruption, nepotism, and unfair job recruitment systems happen in Somaliland which are current factors paralyzing the governance systems.

INTRODUCTION

Since the end of 1980, the issue of good government is dominating the interactional discussion about development and international assistance to Africa. How to improve the Africa governance system and what the international community can do promote good governance, thereby improving the overall development conditions in Africa. Good governance can contribute to a revival of African economies and a renewal of African states.¹

Normally, there is no good governance without a functioning system of public administration, it is known that good governance is an approach to any government committed to creating a system instituted in justice and peace for protecting the human right of the citizens and individuals. The system of public administration is the link between political decisions and the people governed. According to the United Nations, good governance is measured by the eight factors: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus-oriented, equity and inclusiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, and accountability. However, this issue has been one of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and an agenda for poverty mitigation and sustainable development. It is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development throughout world countries if a political commitment is obtained.²

Fortunately, good governance represents one of the most important requirements to achieve development in all societies, especially in developing countries. These countries are now in a dire need of making some serious reforms in their political, economic, social, and administrative

¹ Wohlmuth, Karl (1999). *Good Governance and Economic Development*. Germany: Lit Verlag.

² Anwar Muktar (2007). *Meeting the Challenges of Good Governance: Democratic Transition and Consolidation in the Harari people National Regional State*. Addis Ababa: Unpublished MA Thesis Addis Ababa University.

structures in order to be able to provide the necessary services for their citizens and help them fulfill their aspirations.³ Furthermore, it is clearly understood that governance is a system for managing the affairs of the state and society transparently. It is about power relationship, and accountability that allows the citizens and other stakeholders to have their say, and how decision-makers are held accountable.⁴ The concept of governance combines ideas about political authority and the management of economic and social resources, as well as the capacity of governments to formulate sound policies to perform their functions in an effective, efficient, and equitable manner.⁵ In this regard, achieving economic and social development, good governance is assumed to play a key role especially in mobilizing human and capital resources.

Since 1991, Somaliland has had a functioning government that made effort to stabilization of its people and built with government institutions and conducted several elections that revived its integrity for peace and state-building process. Notably, Somaliland performed key benchmarks of good governance namely, rule of law, government effectiveness, political stability, public participation, accountability, transparency, and control of corruption. But there are still challenges to fully implement the good governance principles. However, Somaliland has committed itself to draft the first good governance policy. As part of the second national development plan, the government planned and has been striving to realize and strengthen the implementation of good governance and to address the bottlenecks in its implementation processes among other measures. However, the government is still facing many challenges in the effort to put the principles of good governance into practice. Hence, reinforcing good governance and a democratic system is crucial and paves the way to economic and social development.⁶

The establishment document for Somaliland Good Governance Commission in 2010 stated that there has been an increasing recognition throughout the public and private sector that corruption and bad governance are serious impediments to operative government, economic growth and stability, and urgently good governance system led by policies are required at all levels of the public and private sector. Poor governance exists in the public sector and most of the public institutions are very weak to deliver effective services. There is a gap of policies as stated in the GGC studies in good governance declaring that most of the public institutions don't have clear terms of references about their mandate and functional structure. Weaknesses in public service policy and management are one of the hindering factors of public institutions' development.⁷

This study aims to bring the attention of the people and the government to the challenges and opportunities of a good governance system. The government does not meet the requirement of society because of bad administration and corruption. The study indicated that the status of good governance in Somaliland is poor. Because of this reason, citizens are dissatisfied with the service

³ Afolabi, Oluwaseun O. (2013). The Rate of Youth Unemployment and Its Effects on National Security, *Cultural and Religious Studies*, Vol. 1 (1), pp. 8–20.

⁴ Adejumobi, Said (2007). *Africa and the Challenges of Democracy and Good Governance in the 21st Century*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

⁵ Smith, B. C. (2007). *Good Governance and Development*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

⁶ GGACC (2021). Development of the National Good governance Strategy (2021–2023) for the Somaliland Good Governance Commission. Hargeisa: Somaliland.

⁷ GGACC (2010). The Establishment Document of Good Governance Commission of Somaliland. Hargeisa: Somaliland.

delivered by the government. Furthermore, the study found some opportunities including; democracy, peaceful elections, as well as the existence of a constitution on the ground. Thus this study recommended that the government should involve the citizens during different phases of the development projects and the government should have to deliver the demand-driven service for the citizens. Moreover, recommendations include that citizens should be prepared for a platform that they could directly participate in decision making in the country and in particular in every organization, also to adopt rule of law, such as complete application of the constitution and human right protection through building and delegating some authorities to the human right institutions.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GOOD GOVERNANCE

The United Nations Development Programs (UNDP)⁸ highlighted good governance as the good exercise of a nation's affairs at all levels. There are eight characteristics of good governance including participatory, the rule of law, accountable, transparent, responsive, consensus-oriented, effective and efficient, equitable, and inclusive. It assures that corruption is diminished, the views of minorities are taken into account, and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making.⁹

GOOD GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP IN SOMALILAND

Leadership and good governance are two concepts that are closely connected and are critical for the achievement of results. It is often said that no country can develop beyond the level of its leadership. Leadership does not have a universal definition because it is applied to every facet of life. Leadership and leading activity are obtainable in the home, at work, religious settings, and invariably where there are groups of people in all life situations. Thus, it could be a process of social influence, which maximizes the efforts of others, towards the achievement of a goal.¹⁰

Currently, governance is a concept that greatly discussed, is now attracted greater attention within and amongst countries, and as the number of democratic administrations is continuously increasing, good governance has become a key standard to judge a nation's credibility as well as respect on international scales.¹¹ It was noted that good governance is an essential prerequisite for any country's development and to make the state and the political system workable and suitable for the people.¹² Generally, a good governance system can be implemented if there is sound and

⁸ UNDP (1997). *Governance for Sustainable Human Development: An Integrated Paper on the Highlights of Four Regional Consultation Workshops on Governance for Sustainable Human Development*. Makati City, The Philippines: United Nations Development Programme.

⁹ UNESCAP (n.d.). *What is Good Governance?* Bangkok: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). Available at <https://pdf4pro.com/view/what-is-good-governance-un-escap-2788d3.html>. Accessed June 2021.

¹⁰ Sharon, Nicholas, O. O. (2016). Good Governance and Leadership: Pathway to Sustainable National Development in Nigeria, *Journal of Public Administration and Governance*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 35–49.

¹¹ Charles T. Iruonagbe, Daniel E. Gbrevbie, Francis O. Iyoha, & Matthew E. Egharevba (2015). Cost of Governance in Nigeria: In Whose Interest? *International Journal of Social, Education, Economics and Management Engineering*, Vol: 9 No: 1, pp. 245–252.

¹² Abrham Daniel (2014). *The Challenges and Opportunities of Good Governance in Ghana*. Available at <http://213.55.95.56/bitstream/handle/123456789/241/Abrham%20Daniel.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>. Accessed June 2021.

clean leadership in any country around the world. If there is a corrupt leadership, governance practice would be poor and the citizens are not allowed to choose their leaders in transparent and participatory manners.

Somaliland has been running its affairs without any external assistance in the past 30 years since it regained independence in 1991 shortly after the war with Somalia ended. The success of development and democratic governance depends on both a robust state and an active, capable and healthy civil society. Only a strong and capable civil society can play a collaborative rather than competitive role, be an interlocutor with governments and other partners, and also play a watchdog role in the development process. Civic engagement is especially key to the work in strengthening responsive, responsible, and more accountable governance institutions and practices.¹³

According to the Somaliland National Corruption Perception Survey in 2013, about 76.6% of the people surveyed believed that corruption is common in public institutions and became customary and accepted as an informal part of everyday life. In this case, winning the people's trust is a challenge for the leaders. Somaliland leaders have severally times addressed the challenges of good governance to restore people's trust and confidence in the system. Building the trust in governance through the people is essential not just for obtaining resources but also for making government work effectively but now the trust between the citizens and the state institutions is waning.¹⁴

Lack of commitment from Somaliland leadership, corruption, and bad governance are found almost everywhere which increased the level of unemployment poverty rate of the local people. Somaliland citizens expect to see a leader once in their life that promotes good governance and combats corruption. The opportunity is that all policies required to promote governance are available but economic funds and the political commitment are still low. If good governance is to be introduced, the country's leadership needs to appoint officials running the government offices with their professional experience even if they are selected on clan-based politics.¹⁵ This will allow Somaliland to build a state and democratize it. Although the institutions and the structures are in place the mentality of the people and the poor implementation of the legal framework in safeguarding against corruption and mal-administration remain a challenge.

According to the Freedom House Report on Somaliland published that there are few institutional safeguards against corruption and nepotism. The report declared that Somaliland took some actions to combat corruption, but the Good Governance Commission (GGC) created in 2010 has been ineffective. This is the reality that there are opportunities in strengthening the implementation of sound good governance principles in Somaliland if the people, government, and all other

¹³ UNDP (2010). A users' guide to civil society assessments. Available at <https://www.undp.org/publications/users-guide-civil-society-assessments>. Accessed June 2021.

¹⁴ GGACC (2013). *National Corruption Perception Survey, 2013 (Round 1)*. Available at <https://ameppa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/corruption-final-report-undp-booklet-final-design.pdf>. Accessed May 2021.

¹⁵ Jeeh, Muse (2017). *Winning the People's Trust: The Challenge for Somaliland Leaders*. Available at <https://hornaffairs.com/2017/12/26/winning-peoples-trust-challenge-somaliland-leaders/>. Accessed May 2021.

stakeholders combine efforts to make the Supreme Audit Institutions work against corruption and bad governance.¹⁶

STATE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN SOMALILAND

Good governance, democracy, and the rule of law are critical to security, stability, and development. Somaliland has succeeded in building democratic institutions and managed to maintain peace and security in a troubled region. The government and the people of Somaliland recognize that good governance is good for the improvement of the social, economic, and political development in the country. While considering the importance of creating good governance and free from all kinds of corruption, it is vital to promote a state with effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable public sectors that guarantee the fairness and inclusiveness of their services.

When building society, a rule of law and the principle of accountability must be maintained by the government. These are the reasons why Somaliland's National Development Plans and objectives are in line with Somaliland's Vision 2030 that is aimed to ensure the development of Somaliland as a prosperous, harmonious, stable, and industrialized state by the year 2030. This can only be achieved if good governance systems are improved and adopted by the public institutions. The Government of the Republic of Somaliland has therefore developed the National Strategy of Good Governance to guarantee public institutions which are accountable, transparent, and participatory.¹⁷

For this purpose, effective, stable, and accountable governments are essential in serving their citizens through the promotion of good governance. The participants in this study acknowledged that the best alternative for enhancing good governance is the political commitment from the top state leadership. However, they have stated that different components of the governance principles do exist in Somaliland as their oversight is mandated by the good governance commission act.¹⁸

According to the interviews, the current situation of Good Governance indicates that the existence of the principles is in place but not implemented yet. They have responded that most of the government ministries and agencies have acted but do not apply. This has made most of the government organizations not to be effective and efficient as needed or expected by the citizens because of bad governance. One of the participants reacted to the implementation of good governance in Somaliland and saying "local community participates in some of the government activities, but the most important thing to participate in the budget preparation which is not shared to the people. Some others assured that accountability has to be promoted by the government. The right thing is that the government officials being accountable for their actions as this is will increase the political commitment for the good governance principles to be carried out in the government offices.

¹⁶ Freedom House (2021). *Somaliland: Freedom in the World 2021 Country Report*. Available at <https://freedomhouse.org/country/somaliland/freedom-world/2021>. Accessed June 2021.

¹⁷ Ibid. 6.

¹⁸ UNDP (2012). The establishment act of Somaliland Good Governance Commission. Available at www.unpo.org/article/15101. Accessed May, 2021.

In this situation, both the people and the government don't comprehend good governance which is one of the existing challenges that faced the controlling agencies empowered to enforce a good governance system due to poor funds to conduct mass awareness campaigns for teaching the people on good governance. Additionally, the practice of Good Governance in Somaliland is poor due to the lack of implementation of laws; the supreme audit institutions are not cooperating to implement good governance. What is required is to merge the political accountability and the willingness of the government to combat bad administration and promote the components of good governance.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF SOMALILAND GOOD GOVERNANCE

Challenges against the Good Governance Implementation

Somaliland has had a functioning government in the past 30 years and hence implemented a governance structure but needs to overcome the challenges hindering the implementation of good governance throughout Somaliland. It is generally agreed that good governance is a prerequisite for the country to attain economic growth, social justice, investment, and development. An effective good governance policy, laws, and practices underline social and economic development, equitable social justice provision, and prudent use of development aid to pull the people and the country out of poverty.

For this purpose, the Good Governance Commission (GGC) must be fully mandated to lead the governance sector to build strong and effective institutions capable of policies and initiate a comprehensive response towards fighting corruption. Comprehending such a concept, the interviewees underlined that good governance is a method in which the government is committed to creating a system formed in justice, peace, and harmony that protects individual's human rights and civil liberties. However, they have said that there are still are challenges for its implementation in Somaliland.

The government's willingness is little, although it has established the Good Governance Commission with little power. Mostly lack of financial or limited financial, human resources and legal complication can be underlined as one of the major challenges associated with widespread corruption and lack of meritocracy in official appointments of the government. In addition to that, the respondents in the study highlighted that the largest challenge hindering the implementation of the good governance system is because of the right people are not involved.

According to the interviewees, the challenges also included poor public awareness to combat corruption and improving good governance, tribalism or clan favor, poor salaries of the government staff, inappropriate legal framework (absence), overlap and institutional conflict of the mandate are some of the challenges that do prevent Somaliland to implement good governance. The sound implementation of good governance reform is a primary issue in Somaliland to done unless the governance system would be worsening. The challenges raised include: a) Absence of Clearly Defined Mandates of the Public Institutions, b) Poor decentralizations, c) Corruptions and Misuse of Resources, d) Inadequacy of Systems and Policies in Institutionalizations, e) Inadequacy of Civic Education, and, f) Poor political commitment on reforming the good governance system.

OPPORTUNITIES OF GOOD GOVERNANCE IN SOMALILAND

The political context can give the government to consolidate democratic rule to implement good governance and empower its supreme audit institutions with exciting media and strong public dialogue. As a result of these and other political achievements, there are opportunities that the participants recognized to be a facilitating factor to the implementation of good governance in the country. According to the views of the respondents, a political commitment is one of the most important issues highlighted to enable the Supreme Audit Institutions to implement interventions in the public institutions. The government commitment to creating a culture of good governance and willingness to promote good governance and fight against corruption is the most useful opportunity which the respondents perceived as enabling factor. Some efforts taken by the government is the establishment of the Good Governance Commission (GGC) that can support the institutional building and their structures in order to lead them the governance principles.

The other opportunity is the public demand on the Good Governance Commission's work in the respondents have underlined as an extreme demand for good governance and tired about the frustrating situation of governance systems and how it affected the socio-economic and psychosocial of Somaliland. Additionally, the public elections taken by Somaliland are opportunities for good governance as far as democratic principles can be matched with good governance principles.

The participants in this study debated about the opportunities of good governance in the country; the majority of them mentioned as the first opportunity as the existence of Good Governance Commission but simply need to be empowered. They also added; dispute resolution mechanisms at the local level, representative local councils. The commitment of national leaders is fatal for this issue while existing laws are implemented for achieving good governance and finally, government institutions should act uniformly. Others have also reaffirmed the need for a political commitment that could ensure the implementation of good governance and capacitate the governmental bodies or agencies entrusted for operation.

Having the existence of the supreme audit institutions, whose work is related to good governance, the opportunity can be the provision of the political commitment for those institutions with finding a solution to the financial challenges. This is increasing the community's participation in local activities. There is also an opportunity to attain a political commitment in the transfer of power. Furthermore, the strength of every component of good governance could be an opportunity for the good governance of the country.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES AND WAYS FORWARD

Notwithstanding the development reached by Somaliland, many challenges are facing the implementation of Good Governance in the country as viewed by the interviewed participants and officials from the concerned institutions. The study exposed that the practice of good governance is very poor except for the election process that Somaliland has been maintaining in the past twenty years. It is essential to note that the existence of the supreme audit institutions mandated to promote good governance. The challenges that need to be tackled are included by poverty and the poor

political commitment of the government to reform the public administration. Democracy should be strengthened and participation should be enhanced. This will give chance for the citizens to be organized for a platform that they could directly participate in the decision-making of the country, as well as encouraging the complete application of the constitution in order to protect human rights through building and delegating some authorities for the human right institutions.

On the other hand, the study has made emphasis that the government has the opportunity to empower the public supreme Audit Institutions; while many have said that the only opportunity is the current existence of the National Good Governance Commission (GGC). Others have also said that the job of the parliament in promoting accountability has to be strengthened as well as obtaining the judicial independence that would instigate the proper accountability and implementing the rule of law and check and balance system in governance structures. The good governance principles, like transparency and accountability, should be extended to civil society in their action and decision, accountability of rules and decision making to the public and that of public sector officials to the society, while the participants also indicated that the government should provide relevant, accurate and timely information to the community and should be responsive in giving feedback to the community. The way forward, participants agreed that a sound political commitment has to be carried to improve conditions of good governance politically, economically, and socially in Somaliland.

CONCLUSION

In Somaliland, succeeding the development and democratic governance depends on capable leadership in the public institutions in collaboration with capable civil society that can play the implementation of the good governance principles. This also increases the participation of decision making in the development projects, where now they only vote and participate in general elections. The last time they participated in government decisions was when they elected leadership, but apart from that, they don't participate in any other activity. Thus the study found out that the execution of good governance is still poor in Somaliland.

The government should set up a national good governance strategy and substantially increase funding for good governance by reforming institutions to increase accountability in the employment market that can be used to develop the institutional building. The government organs and concerned bodies should seek and encourage transparency, accountability, and rule of law in different government institutions to reduce and at least reduce corruption, nepotism, and tribalism to promote a good governance system. The government of Somaliland, civil society, non-state actors, supreme audit institutions, and the other stakeholders' commitment, participation in the challenge of corruption day and night must be in advance to assure good governance in Somaliland.

To implement sound good governance in Somaliland, different government organizations should empower economic, social, and political development in a networked way, by making healthy communication from top to bottom accordingly in a hierarchy of the power distribution. All stakeholders must labor on the challenges of good governance by providing different training, research, advocacy, consulting on opportunities and challenging issues of good governance and giving support in the form of material as well as non-material to diminish challenges and to

exercise opportunities more by ensuring accountability, rule of law, participation and transparency of different government organs.