

# Using Meritocracy to Reform Somalia's Public Service: Challenges and Opportunities



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# List of acronyms

AfDB:	African Development Bank
CFA:	Certified financial analyst
CSC:	Civil Service Commission
EU:	European Union
FMS:	Federal Member States
FGS:	Federal Government of Somalia
FRS:	Federal Republic of Somalia
IDP:	Internally displaced people
IEG:	Independent Evaluation Group
ILO:	International Labor Organization
IOM:	International Organization for Migration
KSAO:	Knowledge, skills, abilities and other competencies
MAD:	Ministries, agencies and departments
MoLSA:	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
NCSC:	National Civil Service Commission
NTP:	National Transformation Plan
OECD:	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPM:	Office of Personnel Management
PSC:	Public Service Commission
PSEA:	Public Service Employment Act
SIDA:	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SoMC:	Statement of Merit Criteria
TFG:	Transitional Federal Government
ToR:	Terms of Reference
UN:	United Nations
UNDP:	United Nations Development Program
USOPM:	United States Office of Personnel Management
WBG:	World Bank Group
WFP:	World Food Program

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## Executive Summary

This report analyzes the challenges and opportunities in Somalia's public service and contends that implementing a merit-based recruitment and selection system is essential for attracting a competent and highly skilled workforce. Examining the country's historical misgovernance, political instability, widespread nepotism and cronyism, the study explores shortcomings of the current recruitment and selection practices. It emphasizes the need for merit-based staffing principles to establish a competent and ethical public administration. The key findings of the study include:

- The public service workforce is disproportionately male and young. However, employee perceptions revealed mixed feelings about fairness and transparency in recruitment, with significant percentages expressing dissatisfaction concerning favoritism, nepotism, and overall hiring practices.
- Reports of nepotism, clannism, and discrimination indicate systemic malpractices that influence employees' morale and institutional credibility. While a majority of respondents claimed that they did not frequently experience injustice, a notable minority reported significant concerns.
- Approximately 73% of employees reported encountering challenges during the recruitment and selection process. This evidence calls for urgent reform and an overhaul in the recruitment system to improve fairness and efficiency in the public sector.
- The existing civil service management practices exhibited weaknesses in HR processes, transparency, and inclusivity.

Despite these challenges, there exists an opportunity to leverage Somalia's human capital and vibrant youth population to build a resilient and competent civil service. Embracing meritocracy will not only combat corruption and nepotism but also pave the way for sustainable economic development and stability in Somalia. The commitment to implement these reforms, backed by political will and international support, is essential for a brighter future for the country's public service.

Recommendations to tackle the challenges identified in the report include:

- Develop a robust legal framework supporting merit-based staffing principles.
- Form an independent commission dedicated to driving the public service reform agenda and ensuring implementation of meritocratic principles.
- Engage with international partners to provide guidance and resources for establishing a reliable merit-based system.
- Require all public service institutions to have integrated business and HR plans to streamline operations and ensure effective talent management.
- Establish clear job descriptions and appropriate classification systems to ensure positions are filled on the basis of merit and qualifications.
- Transition temporary employees into permanent roles where applicable, based on merit assessments.
- Conduct a comprehensive audit of the existing capacity-enhancing programs to ensure they align with the strategic goals of the public service reform, national priorities and the human capital development strategy of the country, as well as lead to sustainable capacity development.

The report concludes that transforming Somalia's public service through meritocracy is essential for enhancing governance, restoring public trust, and fostering effective service delivery. The urgency of implementing meritocratic reforms cannot be overstated, as they are vital for establishing a more accountable and capable public administration dedicated to serving the interests of all citizens.

# 1. Introduction

- Declaring that knowledge is prioritized to reach the pinnacles of prosperity.
- And imbued by this, people embarked on a process of acquiring scientific knowledge.
- But those who strived in gaining higher forms of education were depicted as marauders.
- And how come that the unlettered were appointed to positions of authority?<sup>1</sup>

Somalia has a young and vibrant population. A federal parliamentary political system was established to serve the country and its population and, through that system, public service institutions were created. But, because of political instability, Somalia is struggling to create a functional and effective public service. Recruitment and selection processes are beleaguered by constant and excessive political interference undermining fairness, professionalism and competency of the public service.<sup>2</sup> This makes it absolutely essential for the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), and by extension all Federal Member States (FMS), to adopt merit-based and competency-driven mechanisms to combat political influence and interference, nepotism, cronyism and the rampant unfair practices. The ongoing challenges have long compromised the effectiveness of the public service, eroded public trust and obstructed the development of competent administrators and efficient civil service agencies. The report focuses on how Somalia can establish and implement a meritocratic employment system and eliminate patronage.

## 1.1 Background and context

Somalia gained its independence from Britain in the North and Italy in the South in mid-1960 and formed the Republic of Somalia. The new republic required the unification of two distinct colonial systems, and the creation of an integrated administration, unified civil service structure, one public service employee roster and a harmonized salary scale.<sup>3</sup> However, this was not an easy task because of the uniquely dissimilar legacies of the colonial public administration systems.

Right after independence, a new constitution was drafted in Mogadishu and sent to Hargeisa. The draft constitution was endorsed by politicians in the North with only two articles regarding civil service added and no other articles or clauses removed.<sup>4</sup> That Hargeisa saw it necessary to add new articles about civil service, and did not fret about amending, removing or adding to any other topic signifies the challenges Somalia was to face within its sphere of public service.

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1. The legendary poet Abdullahi Dhodan's timeless piece, Saqiir Dubad, was composed in the 1980s. It is a scorching critique of how the Siad Barre regime appointed and promoted government leaders, managers and public service employees, which in retrospect advocated for a meritocracy. Here are the lines in their original Somali language:

- Markuu yidhi sareediyo cilmigaa saami kore yeelan
- Dadkii faraxu saaqee is lahaa sayniskaad barani
- Inta kii siyaadsaday tacliin saaqid lagu sheegay
- Muxuu uga sarraysiin mid aan xaashi qalin saarin?

2. Herring, E., Ismail, L., McCullough, A., & Saed, M. (2020). Somalia, fragmented hybrid governance and inclusive development. In *Limited statehood and informal governance in the Middle East and Africa* (pp. 186-204). Routledge.

3. Barber, L. L. (1966). The Revision of the Somali Civil Service. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 32(2), 134-144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002085236603200205>.

4. Samatar, Abdi Ismail (2016) "Somalis as Africa's First Democrats: Somalia's Aden A. Osman and Abdirazak H. Hussein. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

Although Somalia has been peaceful for a quarter of a century, from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s the country was plagued by a tsunami of violence, conflict among warring factions with different affiliations and intentions, and a catastrophic failure of public service institutions. As a result, for many years Somalia existed without a properly functioning central government, existing only as a shadow of its former self. The once “shining city upon a hill” in Africa and its first democrats<sup>5</sup> were reduced to a failed state characterized by lack of capacity to provide basic services, insecurity, weak governance, widespread corruption and a ruined economy. This caused an exodus of refugees, a great number of internally displaced people (IDPs), an influx of humanitarian aid, capacity strengthening initiatives and demands from the international community to reform and rebuild government institutions. Despite these challenges, the collective efforts of successive federal governments, supported by the international community, have laid the foundation for the resuscitation of government agencies and institutions.

The federal provisional constitution stipulates that economic growth and good governance cannot be achieved, and the people cannot be adequately served without an efficient, effective and fair civil service. Articles 115 – 119 of chapter 11 of the provisional constitution refer to the civil service and pledge to safeguard the principles of equality, fairness and best practices, even though they are silent on merit-based staffing and equity.<sup>6</sup>

It is worth noting that the public service in almost every jurisdiction across the world is the largest and the most complex institution.<sup>7</sup> Diverse definitions of public service exist across different countries and contexts; however, the fundamental characteristics remain consistent. Many scholars have articulated the concept of public service differently, but they commonly highlight similar fundamental principles such as “permanent administrative arm of government”<sup>8</sup>; “a legal construction”<sup>9</sup>; “an incredible institution with integrity, honesty, impartiality and objectivity”<sup>10</sup>; “an essential part of governance”<sup>11</sup>; and a “neutral instrument of government”.<sup>12</sup> According to Rai & Singh (1979), the public service is a group of skilled administrative professionals committed to serving impartially, free from personal interest, party and political affiliations or class interest.<sup>13</sup>

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5. Samatar, Abdi Ismail (2016) “Somalis as Africa’s First Democrats: Somalia’s Aden A. Osman and Abdirazak H. Hussein. Bloomington, Indiana University Press.

6. Federal Republic of Somalia, Provisional Constitution (2012), Articles 115 – 119, pp. 42 - 43. Mogadishu.

7. Abdi, A. (2013). Retention and the Impact of Employee Turnover on Organizational Effectiveness and Employee Development. (Unpublished Master of Science in Global Human Resources Management dissertation). The University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK.

8. Rao, S. (2013). Civil Service Reform: Topic Guide. Birmingham, UK: GSDRC, University of Birmingham.

9. Cardona, F. (2002). Scope of Civil Services in European Countries, OECD, Paris, <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/44/33, 1, 850438>.

10. Dugher, M. (2014). Michael Dugher Speech on the Civil Service, The Institute for Government. <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk>. (Accessed: 21 May 2024).

11. Jahan M. (2012). Recruitment and Selection Process in Bangladesh Civil Service: A Critical Overview. Public Policy and Administrative Research, 2(5), 29-36.

12. Obaidullah, A. (1999). Bangladesh Public Administration: Study of Major Reforms, Constrains and Strategies. Academic Publishers (BD).

13. Rai, H. & Singh, S. P. (1979) Current Idea and Issues in Indian Administration – A Development Perspective. New Delhi. Uppal Publishing House.



The public service is also the backbone of governance, providing essential services to the citizenry. It represents the primary governance agency that determines national administrative capabilities and fosters a culture of accountability. The public service is crucial for policy formulation, oversees recruitment and is expected to guide both professionals and citizens in different sectors. According to the Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) of the World Bank Group, one of the major tenets of development and delivery of effective public services is an efficient civil service administration.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the success of public service hinges on its ability to attract and retain a competent and professional workforce. It must position itself as the employer of choice and be perceived as such by both current and prospective employees.

Merit and competency-based approaches can make it possible for the public service of Somalia to attract the best and the brightest<sup>15</sup>, and to brand itself as the employer of choice. This “best and the brightest” professional cadre lays the foundation for effective governance defined by transparency and accountability in both federal and FMS administrations. The public sector must develop a value proposition to both attract and retain top talent, as individuals - not organizations - create value and are the ultimate source of sustainable competitive advantages.<sup>16</sup> To ensure efficient and responsible use of limited resources, the public service must be managed in a professional and ethical manner. Nevertheless, establishing this value proposition is contingent upon the successful implementation of meritocracy.

## 1.2 Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this research is to examine the recruitment practices of the public service in Somalia. The study explores how public sector leaders and employees perceive the systemic issues and gaps that hinder the meritocratic selection of employees. The report further evaluates how effectively the current regulatory and policy frameworks facilitate or impede talent acquisition and management to drive the country’s development and transformational goals, economic growth and effective public service management. By identifying and addressing these systemic issues and deficiencies, the report aims to pave the way for a transformation that enhances efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.

It is also designed to inform decision makers in Somalia’s executive branches at both the federal and the member state levels about the utility of merit-based and competency-driven staffing.

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14. Independent Evaluation Group. (2008). Public Sector Reform: What Works and Why? An IEG Evaluation of World Bank Support. Washington, DC: World Bank.

15. Oliveira, E., Abner, G., Lee, S., Suzuki, K., Hur, H., & Perry, J. L. (2023). What Does the Evidence Tell us about Merit Principles and Government Performance? Public Administration.

16. Charan, R., Barton, D., & Carey, D. (2015). People Before Strategy: A New Role for the CHRO. Harvard Business Review, 93(7/8), 62-71.

The report identifies crucial components of merit and competency-driven approaches that foster the attraction, retention, and motivation of the best and the brightest by focusing on education, experience, knowledge, abilities, and skills of candidates to build a high performing, agile and excellent public service capable of succeeding in today's hyper-competitive labor market. Finally, the study presents strategic recommendations to assist decision makers in effectively implementing meritocratic principles.

## 2. Historical perspectives on Somalia's public service

To truly appreciate the enormity of the mission to reform the public service in Somalia and to support the case for the implementation of a merit-based staffing system, one must understand the trajectory of the public service as well as the laws, policies and practices that have impacted the country's employment environment. The following is a brief delineation of Somalia's public service history though it may have gaps due to the scattered and limited availability of information:

1. Pre-independence (before 1960): Colonial powers established their individual civil service administrations and implemented labor laws to serve colonial interest and institute economic exploitation and political marginalization of the local population.
2. From 1960 to 1969: During the civilian governments era, Somalia, despite many obstacles, endeavored to develop its own government structure, labor or employment laws, and an independent public service commission. For example:
  - a. In 1962, an Establishment Commission endorsed by the UN was created with the objective of aligning the two civil service administrations and developing an efficient personnel management system.<sup>17</sup> This was the first time the concepts of merit-based recruitment and placing the right person in the right position were introduced into Somalia's new public service. The four pay grades – which are still in use today and base basic pay solely on educational qualifications – were established by this commission. Even in the early 1960s, the commission lamented the impact of political interference and overstaffing on the public service.
  - b. In June 1962, Law 14, Organization of the Government, was enacted. Article 10 of this law established 11 ministries.<sup>18</sup>
  - c. In February 1965, Article 8 of Law 14 replaced Article 10 and added one more ministry, bringing the total number to 12.<sup>19</sup>
  - d. In 1966, the Public Service Commission was established.

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17. Samatar, Abdi Ismail (2022) Framing Somalia: Beyond Africa's Merchants of Misery. The Red Sea Press.

18. Foreign; Interior; Defense; Grace and Justice; Information; Finance; Health, Veterinary and Labor; Education; Public Works and Communication; Industry and Commerce; and Agriculture and Animal Husbandry.

19. Foreign; Interior; Defense; Justice and Religious Affairs; Information; Finance; Health and Labor; Education; Public Works; Communication and Transportation; Industry and Commerce; and Agriculture and Animal Husbandry.

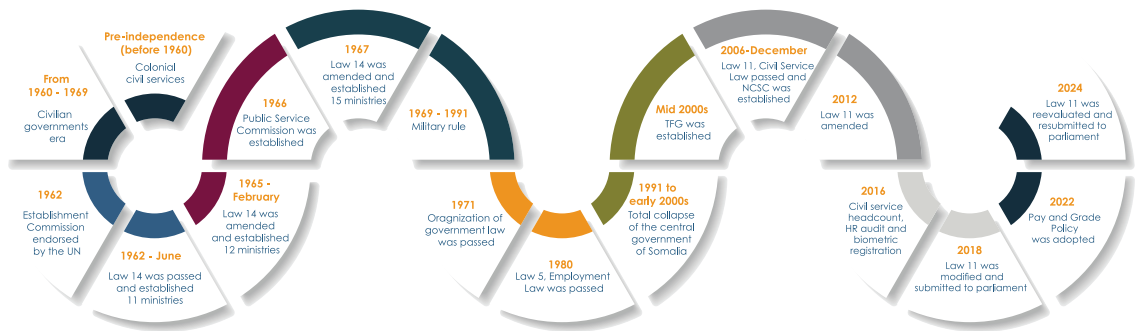
- e. In September 1967, Article 1 of Law 14 replaced Article 8 and added three new ministries, bringing the total number to 15.<sup>20</sup>
3. From 1969 to 1991: During the military rule, public service institutions and appointments were heavily politicized and influenced more by loyalty and political orientation than merit. Employment laws with socialist and authoritarian tendencies aimed at improving workers' rights and working conditions were enacted. For example:
  - a. In 1971, the Organization of Government Law was amended.
  - b. In 1980, Law 5, the Employment Law, was passed. It focused on establishing a transparent and fair selection system to ensure competent and qualified candidates were hired.
4. From 1991 to the early 2000s: The central government of Somalia and all its institutions collapsed, leading to a complete breakdown of all services the government provided including security and public services. Like many other laws, employment laws, policies and regulations were largely ignored during this chaos, and workers became vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.
5. Mid 2000s: The Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was established.
  - a. In December 2006, Law 11, the Civil Service Law, which authorized the creation of the current National Civil Service Commission (NCSC) was passed by Parliament.
  - b. In 2012, Law 11 was amended.
6. In 2018, a civil servants' headcount and HR audit, which involved implementing digitization and biometrics was completed.
7. 2018: The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) submitted a modified version of Law 11 to Parliament, but it was put in abeyance by the legislative body without being brought up for deliberation.
8. 2022: The Public Service Pay and Grade Structure Policy was adopted. For the first time since 1962, this policy recommended increasing the number of pay grades in the civil service from four to eight. The policy rightly introduced responsibility, accountability, effort, and working conditions as compensable factors, in addition to education, which had been the sole deciding factor for basic salary for over six decades.<sup>21</sup>
9. 2024: Law 11 is currently being reevaluated by MoLSA. Provisions that did not receive parliament's approval are being discussed and scrutinized by a technical committee for resubmission.

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20. Justice and Religious Affairs; Foreign; Interior; Defense; Information; Public Instruction; Public Health and Labor; Planning and Coordination; Finance; Public Works; Communication and Transportation; Industry and Commerce; Agriculture; Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Mineral Resources; and Rural Development and Self-help Schemes.

21. Public Service Pay and Grade Structure Policy (2022). Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Federal Government of Somalia.

## A timeline of some of the key developments in the Somali Civil Service



### 2.1 The current civil service

In the Federal Republic of Somalia, there are currently 25 ministries and approximately 35 agencies and departments, collectively known as Ministries, Agencies, and Departments (MADs), which also include commissions and boards. Among these government entities is MoLSA, whose primary objective is to modernize labor legislation in order to stimulate job growth. MoLSA seeks to establish a fair labor market that safeguards workers' rights and addresses employers' needs concurrently.<sup>22</sup> In addition to its legislative goals, MoLSA is responsible for the enforcement of all employment laws, policies, and guidelines, and represents the civil service in the Council of Ministers at policy level.

The federal public service of Somalia employs around 12,500 individuals classified as either permanent or temporary employees, who are almost evenly divided between the two categories.<sup>23</sup> Ministers, state ministers, and deputy ministers are, of course, politicians and political appointees. An overwhelming majority are members of parliament. Chairpersons, commissioners, permanent secretaries, directors general, and their equivalents are also political appointees. The rest - the most senior of which are departmental directors - are considered to be public servants in the existing system.

### 2.2 Permanent public servants

There are roughly 6,500<sup>24</sup> permanent civil servants in the federal public service. Permanent employees can be recruited into the public service through three main methods.<sup>25</sup>

In the first, former civil servants from the last central government are grandfathered into the system. Individuals who were permanent employees during President Siad Barre's government have the option to rejoin the civil service by providing evidence of their employment tenure, which is subject to verification. Once rehired, these employees can be deployed to various agencies and may be assigned to different roles as needed. However, the number of individuals falling under this category is typically small, as most are either approaching retirement age or have already retired.

22. Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA). (2024). The Federal Government of Somalia. [www.molgov.so](http://www.molgov.so) (Accessed: 5 May 2024).

23. HIPS interview with officials from the National Civil Service Commission, May 2024.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

The second method of recruiting permanent civil servants was introduced in 2005 during the administration of President Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed.<sup>26</sup> The two subsequent governments continued using the same method. In the mid-2000s, there was a paucity of individuals willing to work for the federal government due to various concerns such as security risks, lack of competitive compensation, substandard workplace facilities, and limited accessibility. Consequently, the applicant pool was limited.

In response to the shortage of qualified applicants who were able and willing to work for the federal government, the administrations urged government agencies to hire all willing Somalis, regardless of qualifications. Subsequently, officials with hiring authority recruited many individuals who did not meet the minimum qualification requirements, often favoring those from their own clans and close circles. This recruitment practice continues today and has had adverse consequences for the public service as it is rife with abuse and misuse, in addition to being devoid of meritocracy.

The third and final method involves recruiting individuals through formal advertised appointment processes. Job opportunities are advertised, applications are received, screened, and assessed, then appointments are made. The National Civil Service Commission oversees these competitive processes, managing them until the pre-employment checks and job offer phases.

It is important to note that some hiring managers with integrity and good intentions felt compelled to limit their recruitment to individuals they personally knew or trusted. The volatile security conditions in Mogadishu made conducting open competitions and hiring based solely on qualifications a risky venture due to the lack of comprehensive security and criminal background checks. In some cases, newly-hired individuals posed security threats including violence to government officials. Consequently, the emphasis on trust and safety superseded considerations of merit and competence. However, the security situation in Mogadishu has improved, and more robust mechanisms for conducting pre-employment criminal checks are now in place.

Permanent civil service employees are compensated based on four pay grades, which are determined by their educational achievements, regardless of their specific job designation, such as director or driver. According to Law 11, the four pay grades are classified as follows:

- a. University degree or its equivalent
- b. Ordinary secondary school certificate or its equivalent
- c. Primary education certificate or its equivalent
- d. Unskilled worker with little or no education

The highest pay grade requires a bachelor's degree because when pay grades were introduced in the early 1960s, there were no post-graduate diploma or degree granting universities in the country and not many Somalis with a post-graduate education.

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26. Abdullahi Yusuf Ahmed was elected as President of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) on October 10, 2004 by the Transitional Federal Parliament.

## 2.3 Temporary public servants

There are approximately 6,500<sup>27</sup> temporary employees in the civil service. They are recruited through two different methods.

The first approach involves open competition, in which job vacancies are publicly advertised, allowing potential applicants the opportunity to submit their applications. Similar to the third method of recruiting permanent employees, a comprehensive staffing process is conducted, including assessments. Personnel files are created for successful candidates, along with appropriate employment contracts. Institutions such as the Upper House, the Immigration and Citizenship Agency, and the Election Commission have reported utilizing this method.

The second method is more arbitrary and susceptible to abuse, as it does not utilize either externally or internally advertised appointment processes, thereby denying potential applicants the opportunity to express interest and compete. There are no systematic pay grades, assessments, personnel files, or contracts. Instead, a senior official within an institution may secure funding and hire their preferred individuals. This practice often fosters nepotism, cronyism, and reliance on political or social connections. Employees hired through this approach are classified as either regular temporary employees who assume typical duties or as “advisors.” Numerous federal institutions continue to use this method.

Those hired as temporary employees through the first method are compensated according to the current pay grade system, while compensation for individuals hired through the second method does not adhere to these pay scales. Currently, the National Civil Service Commission does not participate in or exert influence over the recruitment processes for temporary employees.

It is important to note that the Farmajo-Kheyre government implemented a hiring freeze for all federal government entities, a policy that the current administration has upheld. As a result, the hiring of both permanent and temporary employees in the federal public service is officially suspended until further notice.

Arguably there is little practical difference between permanent and temporary employees in Somalia’s current public service context, except that temporary employees are often hired outside of formal processes, without the involvement of the NCSC and align more closely with the whims of the senior management. They do so because they have been brought in directly by senior government officials or key decision makers and demonstrate loyalty or obligation in order to earn permanent employment.

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27. HIPS interview with officials from the National Civil Service Commission, May 2024.

### 3. Merit-based staffing (door soocasho)<sup>28</sup>

Recruitment and selection are key functions of human resource management, as organizations must attract and retain top talent to maintain competitiveness.<sup>29</sup> Recruitment involves searching for and attracting qualified job applicants, while selection refers to the process of choosing among candidates who have been recruited to fill vacant positions.<sup>30</sup> Together, recruitment and selection are referred to as staffing. The staffing process begins when a vacant position with budget allocation is identified and concludes once pre-employment checks and successful onboarding have been completed. However, the effectiveness of this process hinges on its meritocratic nature.

The merit-based staffing system is built on qualifications, competencies, and performance without any consideration for race, clan, national origin, ancestry, color, religion, gender, marital status, family status, age, or disability.<sup>31</sup> The process of selecting candidates for employment on the basis of their qualifications, experience, skills and abilities rather than nepotism, favoritism or connections is generally regarded as meritocratic. A meritocracy is built on the principles of open competition, careful quality assessment and a set of qualification standards rather than arbitrary appointment decisions.<sup>32</sup> McCourt (2007) defines merit as “the appointment of the best person for any given job.”<sup>33</sup> Two of the famous principles of the Weberian Bureaucratic Model are impersonality and merit-based selection.<sup>34</sup> The model contends that decisions within a bureaucracy must be based on objective criteria rather than biases or personal preferences, and selection and promotion also should be based on merit and performance rather than favoritism and nepotism.<sup>35</sup>

However, this report suggests defining merit as the appointment of the right person, rather than the best person.<sup>36</sup> The distinction between the best person and the right person involves respecting merit while also allowing the hiring manager some flexibility in its application.

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28. Door soocasho is a Somali word or eraybixin for the term “merit-based recruitment”. It can also be written as door-soocasho.

29. Chungyalpa, W. & Karishma, T. (2016). Best Practices and Emerging Trends in Recruitment and Selection. *Journal of Entrepreneurship & Organization Management*, 5(2), 1-5. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4172/2169-026X.1000173>.

30. Noe, R. A., Hollenbeck, J. R. Gehart, B., and Wright, P. M. (2019) *Fundamentals of Human Resource Management*. 8th Edition. McGraw Hill.

31. Aprilzoni, I. & Trimurni, F. (2022). The Effectiveness of the Merit System in Position Mutations in Human Resource and Employment Agency in Padang Panjang City, West Sumatera. *Konfrontasi: Jurnal Kultural, Ekonomi dan Perubahan Sosial*, 9(3), 504-511.

32. Prijanto, E., & Juwono, V. (2022). The Recruitment and Selection of Indonesian National Police Aviators from Bakomsus Through Merit System. *Management Technology and Security International Journal*. P: 719 – 738.

33. McCourt, W. (2007). The Merit System and Integrity in the Public Service. *Public Integrity and Anti-corruption in the Public Service Conference*, Bucharest (Vol. 29, p. 30).

34. Max Weber's bureaucracy theory principles: 1) Hierarchical Structure; 2) Management by Rules; 3) Organization by Functional Specialty; 4) Purposely Impersonal; and 5) Employment Based on Technical Qualification.

35. Evans, P. & Rauch, J. E. (1999). Bureaucracy and Growth: A Cross-national Analysis of the Effects of “Weberian” State Structures on Economic Growth. *American sociological review*, 64(5), 748-765.; Kettl, D. F. (2022). Weberian Bureaucracy and Contemporary Governance. *Perspectives on Public Management and Governance*, 5(2), 111-120.; and TarminAkter, R. I. (2021). An Analysis of Bureaucratic Theory by Max Weber. *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR)*. e-ISSN:2378-703X Volume-5, Issue-1, pp-374-381. [www.ajhssr.com](http://www.ajhssr.com).

36. According to Canada's PSEA, when the person appointed meets the essential qualifications, any current or future additional asset qualifications and operational requirements, the appointment is based on merit. The right person definition is driven from this background.

For an appointment to be based on merit, three important elements must be present. First, predetermined criteria relevant to the job must be established before the recruitment process begins. Second, objective evaluation tools aligned with the predetermined criteria must be developed and applied consistently.<sup>37</sup> Third, a trained and preferably diverse selection board capable of conducting the assessment professionally, ethically, competently, and objectively must be in place.

Even with well-defined criteria and objective evaluation tools, if the assessment is not administered properly, consistently, and fairly, the process cannot be considered meritocratic. Therefore, the quality, competence, ethics, and knowledge of the selection board are all essential for enhancing the effectiveness of the merit-based recruitment system, which, in turn, promotes non-corrupt and good governance.<sup>38</sup> The three elements of the recruitment process - the predetermined criteria, objective evaluation tools, and the selection board - have a multiplicative relationship; if one is missing or compromised, all will be affected or compromised.

Law 11, the Law for Somali Civil Servants, mentions the concept of merit three times and all in relation to employee promotion. The law is silent on merit-based staffing. For example, article 61 states:

*The person who shows capability, loyalty and extra efficiency in his work performance and has taken a significant role in the country's development can be given a promotion of special merit.*<sup>39</sup>

Public service employees should not be promoted solely based on performance in their current roles or their demonstration of competency, capability, loyalty, and efficiency, unless the employee is part of a structured developmental program. Such programs typically include clearly defined structures and criteria for promotion, which require the completion of specific courses, training, and exposure to relevant areas of specialization. Public service employees are hired based on their potential to excel and exceed expectations. When organizations engage in equitable and transparent hiring practices, employees are more likely to be motivated to become high achievers.<sup>40</sup> However, exceeding expectations should not justify promotion. Employees who aspire to advance within the organization must compete for higher positions that become available, ensuring that all interested individuals have an equal opportunity to pursue these roles.

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37. Public Service Employment Act (PSEA) (2014). Published by Canada's Minister of Justice at the following address: <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca> (Accessed: 12 May 2024).

38. Meyer-Sahling, J. H., Mikkelsen, K. S., Schuster, C., Musikic, R. B., Pastrovic, G., Toth, E., ... & Vljakovic, V. (2020). Making Merit Recruitment Work: Lessons from and for the Western Balkans. RESPA and University of Nottingham.; Egeberg, M., Gornitzka, Å., & Trondal, J. (2019). Merit-based Recruitment Boosts Good Governance: How Do European Union Agencies Recruit their Personnel? *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 85(2), 247-263. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852317691342>.

39. The Law for Somali Civil Servants, No 11. (2006): 22.

40. McCord, P. (2014). How Netflix Reinvented HR. *Harvard Business Review*, 92(1), 71-76.



Everest-Phillips (2015, as cited in Dwiputrianti, 2018)<sup>41</sup> argued that meritocracy enhances social mobility and delivers benefits to both individuals and society as a whole. A merit-based staffing system can help address gender disparities and support equity initiatives that promote employment not only for women in non-traditional professions but also for people with disabilities and minority communities.

Women hold 24% of positions overall in the civil service, with 80% on the lowest pay grade, which is designated for unskilled workers such as janitors and servers. Only 20% of women in the public service occupy higher pay grades,<sup>42</sup> such as grade A.<sup>43</sup> The government must address this disparity not only due to external pressures from Western donors advocating for gender equity but also because there is a significant pool of qualified human capital among women that should be actively engaged and utilized. Regarding individuals with disabilities and minority communities, there is currently no reliable data available to inform meaningful analysis or guide decisions.

### 3.1 Key components of merit-based staffing

As argued by Meyer-Sahling, et.al. (2015)<sup>44</sup>, and is common knowledge in many jurisdictions that have developed solid merit-based systems, proper human resources plans or integrated business and human resources plans, well-developed job descriptions, classification of jobs, qualification standards, official language(s) requirements, job specifications or statements of merit criteria are crucial for the effective implementation of a merit-based staffing system. The following paragraphs briefly explain what these terms mean and/or how they are utilized.

**Integrated business and human resources plan:** An integrated business and human resources plan enables an organization to establish its business priorities while identifying the human, financial, and other resources necessary to achieve desired outcomes. This plan includes an analysis of gaps between HR capacity and business needs, along with strategies to address these gaps. In today's workplace, it is essential that human resources planning is incorporated into the overall business and financial planning cycle to maintain relevance and competitiveness.<sup>45</sup> This plan addresses employment equity gaps and promotes initiatives to achieve related goals.

**Job/work description:** A job description is a document that outlines the tasks, duties, and responsibilities associated with a specific job.<sup>46</sup> It details the key activities, working conditions, and efforts required for the job.

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41. Dwiputrianti, S. (2018). Challenges with implementation of the merit system in the open recruitment of government high positions: The case in Indonesia. Annual Conference of Asian Association for Public Administration: "Reinventing Public Administration in a Globalized World: A Non-Western Perspective" (AAPA 2018) (pp. 70-80). Atlantis Press.

42. These figures align with the findings of the primary research conducted for this report which revealed a 76.3% male and 23.7% female distribution.

43. Public Service Pay and Grade Structure Policy (2022). Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Federal Government of Somalia.

44. Meyer-Sahling, J. H., Mikkelsen, K. S., Ahmetovic, D., Ivanova, M., Qeriqi, H., Radevic, R., ... & Vljajkovic, V. (2015). Improving the Implementation of Merit Recruitment Procedures in the Western Balkans: Analysis and Recommendations. Roskilde University.

45. Noe, R. A., Hollenbeck, J. R. Gehart, B., and Wright, P. M. (2019) Fundamentals of Human Resource Management. 8th Edition. McGraw Hill.

46. Noe, R. A., Hollenbeck, J. R. Gehart, B., and Wright, P. M. (2019) Fundamentals of Human Resource Management. 8th Edition. McGraw Hill.

The job description focuses on the role itself rather than the competencies or qualifications expected from the employee. The job specification, the group and level, and the pay grade are derived from the job description.

Classification of jobs: Often referred to as the corner stone of human resources, classification is the formal process of reviewing and evaluating tasks and responsibilities assigned by management to determine the appropriate occupational group and level. To achieve this, job descriptions must be thoroughly evaluated, and positions classified accordingly. The classification system uses precise grouping, careful rank-ordering and clear level discrimination and adheres to the principle of significant difference.<sup>47</sup>

Qualification standards: Before initiating any staffing process, it is essential to establish the minimum requirements for education, occupational certification, and language proficiency for all jobs in the public service. These minimum standards must be directly relevant to the successful execution of the tasks associated with the position. For instance, a minimum educational requirement for a financial analyst may include a four-year bachelor's degree in finance from an accredited university or its equivalent, along with a Certified Financial Analyst (CFA) designation. A hiring manager, in consultation with HR, may request a higher educational requirement such as a Master's degree in finance as an asset or preferred qualification. It is important to note that hiring managers cannot accept candidates who do not meet the established minimum educational requirements outlined in the qualification standards.

Official language(s): Language proficiency requirements and profiles must be established for all positions within the public service. These requirements may include the following:

- Somali essential
- Somali-English bilingual imperative
- Somali-Arabic bilingual imperative
- Somali-English bilingual non-imperative
- Somali-Arabic bilingual non-imperative

One of the most concerning competency gaps identified during the study was the inability of many public service employees to communicate effectively in written Somali. Effective communication in the official language and, depending on the role in English or Arabic, must be one of the core competencies required from all employees. It is not right to have a professional Somali employee in the public service who is not able to effectively communicate, both orally and in writing, in the mother tongue.

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47. Principles and Concepts of Organization. (n.d.). (Accessed: 13 May 2024).

Job specification: This document is known as the Statement of Qualifications in some jurisdictions, and in Somalia's current civil service it is erroneously referred to as Terms of Reference (ToR). In Canada's federal public service, for instance, it is widely known as Statement of Merit Criteria (SoMC). The job specification lists essential and asset qualifications, conditions of employment, official language proficiency and operational requirements required to perform the duties listed in the job description. It also lists the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other competencies (KSAOs) that a person must have in addition to education and experience to successfully discharge the duties and responsibilities of a job.<sup>48</sup> The epicenter of any merit-based system is the statement of merit criteria.

## 4. Methodology

Employing a mixed-methods approach and analyzing both primary and secondary data, this report delves into the recruitment and selection practices of Somalia's public service.

Academic literature was reviewed and critically evaluated to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing research and scholarly work on merit-based and competency-driven recruitment and selection systems. To build a strong foundation and demonstrate the significance and relevance for the report, findings from these academic work were analyzed and synthesized. Key points, methodologies, and findings in the field of merit-based recruitment were identified to inform the research design and contribute to a deeper understanding of the topic. Case studies from Europe, Asia, North America and several African countries along with government circulars and United Nations (UN) agencies reports were reviewed as well.

Primary data was collected using four different techniques: online surveys, focus groups, face-to-face interviews, and observations. The online surveys targeted regular employees and applicants - those who applied for jobs but were not successful - within the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and its Federal Member States (FMS). Participants completed anonymous and confidential questionnaires consisting of 22 closed and open-ended questions. This survey was conducted via SurveyMonkey from November 2023 to April 2024 and was promoted through email communications to employees and various social media platforms. A total of 93 responses were collected, with most respondents willing to disclose the institution they currently work for or the one they applied to, while a minority opted not to provide this information. Ultimately, 22 institutions within the FGS and FMS were identified.<sup>49</sup>

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48. Noe, R. A., Hollenbeck, J. R. Gehart, B., and Wright, P. M. (2019) Fundamentals of Human Resource Management. 8th Edition. McGraw Hill.

49. HIPS Survey, Revamping the Civil Service in Somalia, November 2023 to April 2024, [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com).

Researchers conducted focus groups and face-to-face interviews with senior government officials at both federal and member state levels in south-central Somalia. The research team engaged with leaders from four civil service commissions in Mogadishu before traveling to Garowe (Puntland), Baidoa (Southwest), and Kismayo (Jubaland) for more in-depth interviews and focus group sessions. A Zoom meeting was also held with senior officials from Galmudug.<sup>50</sup> Hirshabelle was not included in these interviews, as its public service is still in its infancy, and essential policies, regulatory frameworks, and guidelines are not yet fully developed, although some groundwork is underway.

The collected data was subsequently analyzed to identify trends and understand key decision points in the recruitment and selection processes. Specific questions in the survey focused on the perceptions and experiences of employees and candidates regarding issues such as favoritism, nepotism, clannism, fairness, accessibility, transparency, and inclusivity. The responses yielded valuable insights that will inform decision makers about the importance and urgency of implementing merit and competency-based recruitment practices. Furthermore, the qualitative data from interviews provided significant empirical information regarding common practices and perceptions of merit-based staffing, which has been thoroughly analyzed and is presented in the results and findings section.

## 5. Results and findings

The section provides findings and insights on the following themes: characteristics, demographics, perceptions and awareness of the employees. It will further elaborate on communication and feedback, workplace injustices, challenges employees face, the quality and inclusivity of HR practices as well as perceptions of injustice and fairness. It offers a comprehensive overview of the current state of the public service and challenges it faces in terms of meritocracy. All numerical values, data and figures presented in this section are derived from the primary research conducted utilizing SurveyMonkey as a data collection platform.

### 5.1 Demographics and characteristics<sup>51</sup>

As illustrated in Figure 5.1, the study highlighted a significant gender imbalance in the public sector workforce. Specifically, 76.3% of the public service workforce is male, while only 23.7% is female.

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50. This interview was conducted online because of conflicting schedules between Galmudug government officials and the researchers.

51. HIPS Survey. 2024. "Revamping the Civil Service in Somalia." November 2023 to April 2024. SurveyMonkey. [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com).

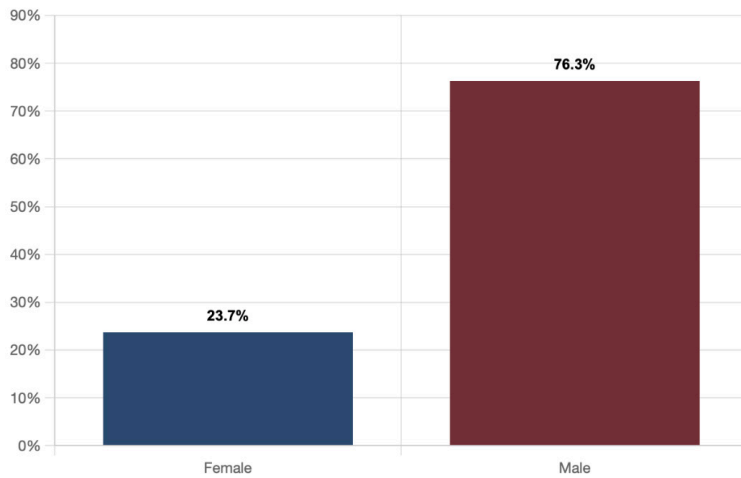


Figure 5.1: Gender distribution among respondents.

Further demographic analysis, as depicted in Figure 5.2, revealed that public service employees are predominantly young. The largest age cohort within this workforce comprised individuals aged between 25 and 34, accounting for 53.8% of the total employees. Those in the 35-44 cohort represented 24.7% of the workforce. This indicated that the federal public service sector is largely staffed by individuals in their prime working years, suggesting a relatively young workforce overall.

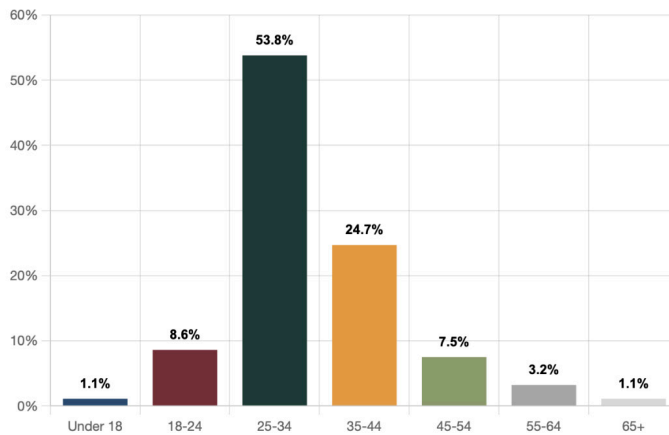
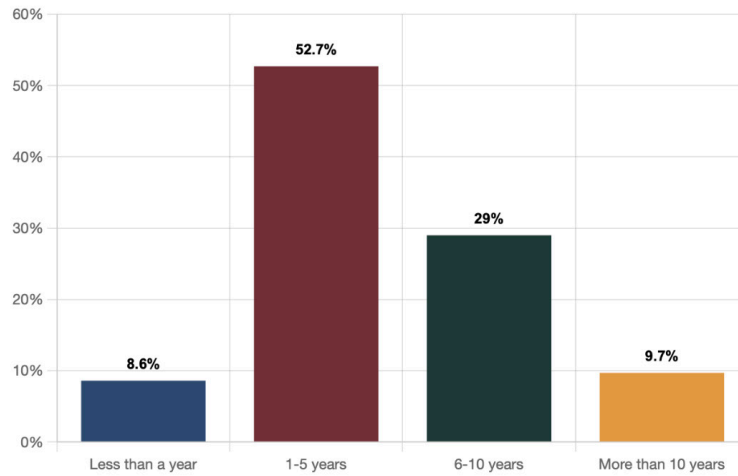


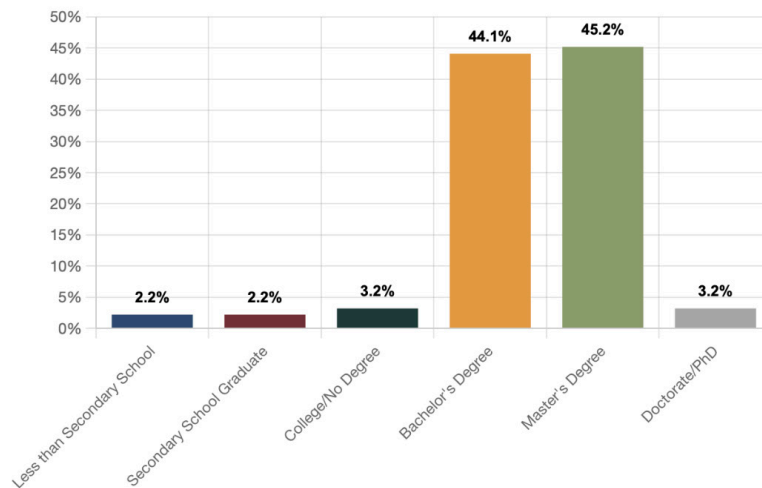
Figure 5.2: Percentage distribution of employees by age.

Further analysis of the workforce indicated that a substantial portion of public service employees had relatively recent experience in their current positions. More specifically, approximately half had worked in their current jobs for one to five years. Additionally, 29% of the employees had worked from six to 10 years, as illustrated in Figure 5.3. This suggested a significant proportion of the workforce had accumulated moderate levels of experience within their roles.



*Figure 5.3: Percentage of employees by years of experience in their current job.*

Regarding educational qualifications, nearly all respondents had attained a university education. As depicted in Figure 5.4, 45.1% reported having achieved a master's degree, while 44.1% held a bachelor's degree. In total, a remarkable 89.2% of the respondents reported obtaining either a master's or bachelor's degree. In contrast, only 2.2% of the workforce possessed less than a secondary education level. This high level of educational attainment among public service employees underscored the sector's emphasis on formal education and qualifications in relation to basic salary, highlighting the need for a re-evaluation of the higher education system in the country.



*Figure 5.4: Percentage of employees by the highest level of education attained.*

Comparing the situation in Somalia with Canada, which has led G7 countries in the percentage of post-secondary education graduates within the working-age group (ages 25 to 64) since 2006, can help to contextualize the discussion. According to Statistics Canada (2021),<sup>52</sup> 57.5% of Canada's overall labor market has completed a college or university education, including certificates and diplomas, while one in three individuals in the working-age population holds a bachelor's degree or higher. This data indicates a strong level of educational attainment among the Canadian labor force, and raises important questions about the education levels within Somalia's public service sector.

While it may be misleading to suggest that Somalia's public service is more educated than that of Canada, the high levels of educational attainment among public service employees are certainly beneficial. However, it is essential to balance academic qualifications with practical experience. Policymakers should develop strategies that facilitate internships, mentorships, and on-the-job training opportunities for public service employees, ensuring that theoretical knowledge translates effectively into practice. Such initiatives will enhance the quality and effectiveness of public service delivery.

In addition, a well-educated workforce may bring strong critical thinking and innovation skills, potentially leading to better decision making and service delivery. However, it is crucial to authenticate academic credentials. It is also important to ensure diversity and inclusion in staffing practices by considering not only education but also experience, knowledge, skills and abilities to create a balanced and effective workforce.

## 5.2 Employee perceptions<sup>53</sup>

This sub-section discusses employees' views and perceptions regarding the recruitment and selection processes, as well as the existing communication and feedback mechanisms.

### Awareness of recruitment and selection process

The majority (86.5%) of the respondents reported being aware of the civil service recruitment and selection process, as shown in Table 5.1. This indicated a high level of familiarity with the procedures governing entry into the public service

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52. Statistics Canada (2021). Canada Leads the G7 for the Most Educated Workforce. Available from <https://statisticscanada.ca> (Accessed: 15 June 2024).

53. HIPS Survey, 2024. "Revamping the Civil Service in Somalia." November 2023 to April 2024. SurveyMonkey. [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com).

Table 5.1: Familiarity with civil service recruitment and selection processes

Civil service recruitment and selection system	%
Familiar with the civil service recruitment and selection system	86.5
Applied for a position within the civil service	75.7

The data further revealed that 75.7% of the respondents had applied for their current positions through the formal recruitment process. In contrast, 24.3% of the employees indicated that they did not apply for their current positions. This means nearly one quarter of the workforce occupies positions they had not formally applied for, a situation that raises concerns about the accessibility, transparency and fairness of the hiring practices within the public service sector.

### Perception of the recruitment and selection process

Further analysis, depicted in Figure 5.5, examined employees’ perceptions of various aspects of the recruitment and selection process, including satisfaction, efficiency, fairness, transparency, accessibility, and representativeness.

Overall, inquiries about the satisfaction with the recruitment and selection process received mixed responses. A significant portion of employees, 40.5%, rated their satisfaction as “strongly agree,” indicating a positive perception. However, this was closely followed by 37.5% who rated their satisfaction as “strongly disagree,” suggesting a substantial level of dissatisfaction. An additional 8.1% of employees remained neutral. Furthermore, 37.8% of respondents stated that the recruitment and selection process was not transparent, while 43.2% indicated an overall dissatisfaction with the process.

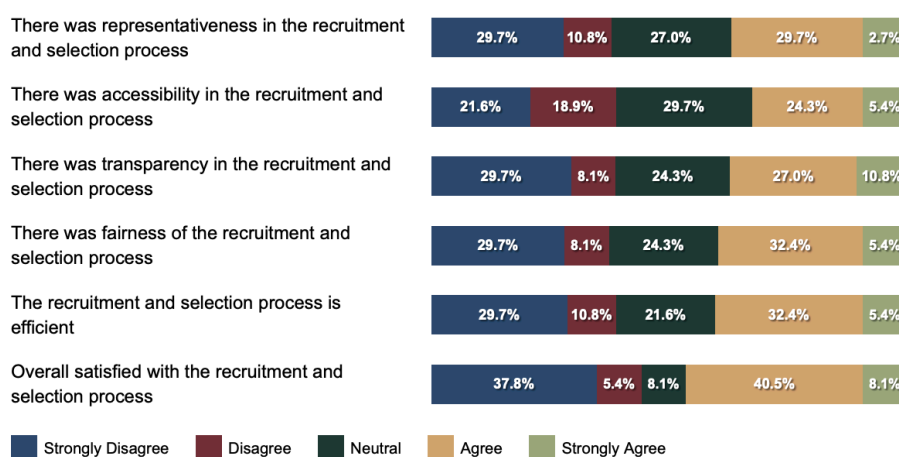


Figure 5.5: Employee perceptions of the recruitment and selection process.



Regarding the efficiency of the recruitment and selection process, opinions were similarly divided. A good proportion of respondents, 32.4%, strongly agreed that the process was efficient, yet 29.7% strongly disagreed, highlighting a considerable divide in perceptions of efficiency.

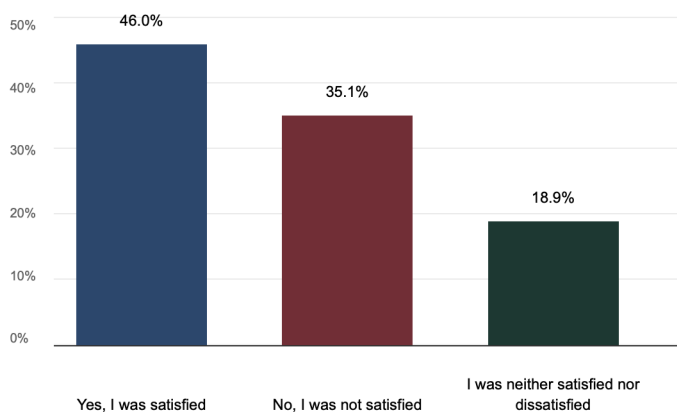
The fairness of the recruitment and selection process also received differentiated feedback. An equal proportion of employees, 32.4%, strongly agreed that the process was fair, while 29.7% strongly disagreed, pointing to a significant disparity in views on fairness.

Other aspects of the recruitment and selection process, such as transparency, accessibility, and representativeness, also showed a divided opinion. Nearly a third of the employees strongly agreed with the positive statements regarding these attributes, whereas another third strongly disagreed.

This disparity in employee perceptions indicated that although a considerable portion of the workforce maintained favorable attitudes toward the recruitment and selection process, a similarly notable segment had considerable concerns. These mixed perceptions highlighted the need for reform to address areas of dissatisfaction and improve overall employee confidence in the recruitment and selection processes.

## Communication and feedback<sup>54</sup>

Employees can be effectively managed through clear and honest communication and sound judgment.<sup>55</sup> Nearly half of the respondents expressed satisfaction with the communication and feedback they received during and after the recruitment and selection process (Figure 5.6). This indicated that many employees felt adequately informed and supported throughout the various stages of hiring.



*Figure 5.6: Communication and feedback during and after the recruitment and selection process.*

54. HIPS Survey. 2024. "Revamping the Civil Service in Somalia." November 2023 to April 2024. SurveyMonkey. [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com).

55. McCord, P. (2014). How Netflix Reinvented HR. *Harvard Business Review*, 92(1), 71-76.

However, the data also revealed that 35.1% of employees reported dissatisfaction with the communication and feedback mechanisms in place. This substantial portion of the workforce perceived a lack of effective communication or adequate feedback, which could impact their overall experience and confidence in the recruitment process.

Furthermore, 18.9% of employees remained neutral, indicating they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the communication and feedback. This neutral stance suggested that while they may not have experienced significant issues, they also did not find the communication and feedback particularly noteworthy or satisfactory.

Overall, these insights underlined the importance of robust communication strategies and consistent feedback mechanisms in the recruitment processes. Enhancing these areas could lead to higher satisfaction and motivation levels and a more positive perception of the recruitment and selection process among employees and applicants.

### **5.3 Employee experiences in the workplace<sup>56</sup>**

This sub-section explores employees' experience in the workplace, examining the occurrence of workplace injustices and the difficulties encountered during the recruitment and selection process. These occurrences and encounters illustrate the complex relationship between the workforce and public service institutions and reveal the factors that influence their interactions. By analysing this important aspect, the study aims to offer a thorough understanding of the challenges faced by employees and promote a fairer and more inclusive recruitment and selection system.

#### **Workplace injustices**

About a quarter (24.3%) of respondents reported that nepotism at the workplace occurred rarely, while 21.6% indicated it happened frequently, and 18.9% stated it never occurred (Figure 5.7). This distribution highlighted that a significant portion of employees perceived nepotism as a concern, though its frequency varied.

Regarding clannism, employees' responses were equally split between never and often, each at 24.3%. Additionally, 16.2% reported experiencing or witnessing clannism occasionally. 56.7% of the respondents frequently, often or occasionally experienced or witnessed clannism or nepotism. These findings suggested that clannism and nepotism were noticeable issues for a substantial segment of the workforce.

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56. HIPS Survey, 2024. "Revamping the Civil Service in Somalia." November 2023 to April 2024. SurveyMonkey. [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com).

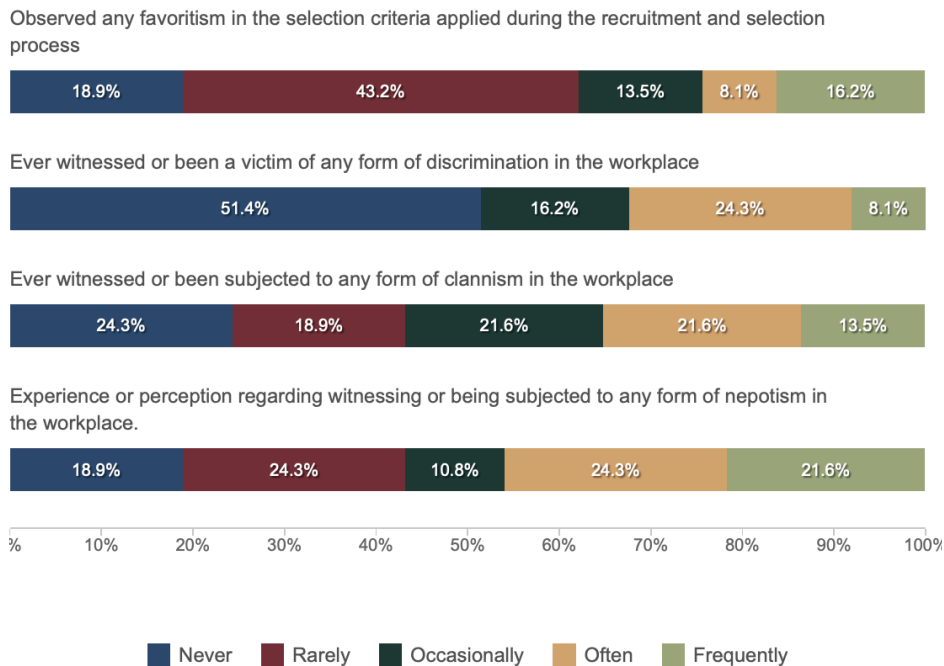


Figure 5.7: Observed nepotism, clannism, discrimination and favoritism in the workplace.

When asked about witnessing or experiencing discrimination, 51.4% of employees responded never, indicating that over half of the workforce did not perceive discrimination as a prevalent issue. However, 21.6% of employees reported encountering discrimination often, and 18.9% said it occurred rarely. This suggested that while a majority did not observe discrimination, a significant minority had experienced it to one degree or another. Even a single verified instance of discrimination is unacceptable and warrants management’s attention, especially given that over 40% of respondents reported experiencing it often and occasionally.

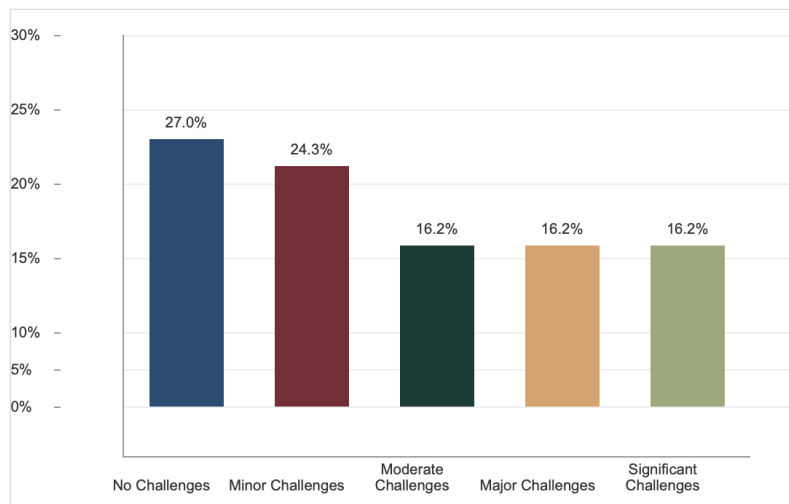
Lastly, regarding favoritism in the selection criteria during the recruitment and selection process, 43.2% of survey participants said it rarely occurred; 18.9% said never; and 16.2% noted it happened frequently. This indicated that while favouritism is not overwhelmingly prevalent, it is still a concern for many employees.

Overall, these findings pointed to mixed perceptions regarding fairness and equity within the workplace. While many respondents claimed that they did not frequently encounter issues such as nepotism, clannism, discrimination, or favoritism, a significant portion of the workforce did perceive these problems to varying extents.

However, since most respondents are employees hired through the very system they are asked to evaluate, their perceptions of fairness, equity, nepotism, clannism, and favoritism may be influenced by their current employment status within the public service, potentially leading to biased or overly favorable assessments. Nonetheless, these insights underscored the necessity for ongoing efforts to improve fairness and equity in the workplace.

## Challenges experienced

Just above a quarter of respondents (27%) reported experiencing no challenges during the recruitment and selection process, while 24.3% indicated they encountered only minor challenges (Figure 5.8). This suggested that over half of the workforce found the recruitment process to be relatively smooth and manageable.



*Figure 5.8: Percentage of employees reporting challenges during the recruitment and selection process.*

However, a significant number of employees reported facing substantial challenges during the recruitment and selection process. Specifically, 16.2% of respondents indicated they encountered major difficulties, while another 16.2% experienced significant challenges. Overall, 73% of participants acknowledged facing obstacles, with 48.6% encountering moderate to severe issues. This data indicated that a considerable segment of the workforce grappled with significant barriers, which may have affected their overall perception of the recruitment system.

These findings highlighted a noticeable disparity in employee experiences. While a majority of the respondents asserted that they did not face significant issues, the high percentage of individuals reporting major challenges pointed to potential areas for improvement in the recruitment and selection process. Effectively addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring that all employees experience a fair and efficient recruitment cycle.

## 5.4 HR management practices<sup>57</sup>

This sub-section examines human resources management practices within the public service, focusing on quality, inclusivity, diversity, skills, competencies, and professional development.

### Quality and inclusivity

The results showed that the civil service was dominated by a well-educated, young workforce with moderate levels of job experience, but it faced challenges related to gender imbalance, fairness, transparency and the need for continuous professional development. Addressing these issues could help enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of the public sector.

In terms of skills and competencies, the high level of educational attainment among public service employees indicated a strong focus on formal education within the hiring process. This underscored the fact that other important compensable factors and competencies were ignored. Although, higher educational attainment contributes to improved quality of public services due to advanced skill levels associated with higher degrees, it also suggests that those without higher education may find it challenging to enter the public workforce, potentially excluding a large segment of the population.<sup>58</sup>

Another logical explanation is that since basic salary is solely based on educational qualifications, employees inflate or exaggerate their educational achievements in order to receive the highest salary level available. Some may resort to diploma mills in order to qualify for grade A compensation. This issue can be addressed by reforming the higher education system and implementing a reliable educational credentials authentication program. The latter will ensure that qualifications are valid and that individuals possess the skills and knowledge they claim to have achieved.

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57. HIPS Survey. 2024. "Revamping the Civil Service in Somalia." November 2023 to April 2024. SurveyMonkey. [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com).

58. International Labor Organization (ILO). (2023). Transparency in Public Sector Recruitment. Available from: <https://www.ilo.org>. (Accessed: 10 June 2024).

In regards to professional development, given the relatively youthful and moderately experienced workforce, there is a clear need for ongoing professional development programs to ensure that employees can continue to grow in their roles and take on more significant responsibilities over time. This could also help in retaining talent and reducing turnover rates.<sup>59</sup> A centralised, or at least coordinated, capacity strengthening program across the public service would be instrumental in instituting professional development programs. The donor community spends a considerable amount of money on capacity improvement, with few tangible and sustainable results. The funds earmarked for capacity strengthening must be properly coordinated and used wisely. The human capital development section of the Office of the Prime Minister should be involved to maximize impact.

It is clear that there are disparities on diversity and inclusivity. The significant gender gap indicated a need for targeted initiatives to encourage and support female participation in the public sector. This could involve female recruitment campaigns, creating more family-friendly workplace policies, flexible work arrangements, offering mentorship programs for women, and actively working to eliminate any barriers that may deter women from entering, remaining or advancing in public service roles. Policymakers must concurrently address the challenges posed by the glass ceiling<sup>60</sup> and the sticky floor<sup>61</sup> metaphors to promote equitable opportunities for women within the workforce.

## HR practices<sup>62</sup>

The majority of public service employees (86.5%) were well aware of the recruitment and selection processes within the civil service, indicating a high level of familiarity with entry procedures. However, 24.3% of respondent did not apply for their current roles through formal channels, raising concerns about patronage, lack of transparency and the absence of fairness in hiring practices. This situation suggested potential flaws in the recruitment system that need to be addressed to ensure a merit-based and transparent selection process.

The number of individuals who are employed without open and transparent processes could even be higher because the majority of the respondents were already public service employees, and their responses could have been influenced by the fact that they had already secured employment. Therefore, it is highly likely that the data on the fairness and transparency of the recruitment systems is skewed towards the positive side.

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59. Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). (2023). Efficiency and Fairness in Public Service Recruitment. Available from: <https://www.oecd.org>. (Accessed: 13 June 2024).

60. The term 'glass ceiling' was first introduced in the American Magazine World/Adweek in March 1984. It refers to the inequalities and barriers to advancement that women face once they reach the upper levels of middle management.

61. Coined in 1992 by Catherine Berheide, the term 'sticky floor' refers to the phenomenon where women are disproportionately appointed at the bottom of the pay scale and are unable to advance, while men in the same pay grade are appointed further up the range.

62. HIPS Survey. 2024. "Revamping the Civil Service in Somalia." November 2023 to April 2024. SurveyMonkey. [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com).

Employee satisfaction with the recruitment and selection process was mixed. While 40.5% of respondents expressed strong satisfaction, a close 37.5% indicated strong dissatisfaction. Similarly, perceptions of efficiency and fairness were polarized, with about one-third of employees strongly agreeing on these positive attributes, while another third strongly disagreed. This divide in opinions again underscored the need for reforms to enhance the level of the recruitment process' transparency, fairness, and overall effectiveness.

Nearly half of the respondents were satisfied with the communication and feedback received during the recruitment process, suggesting that many felt well-informed and supported. However, 35.1% reported dissatisfaction, indicating a need for improved communication strategies. Effective communication and feedback are crucial for maintaining employee confidence in the recruitment process and ensuring a positive candidate experience.<sup>63</sup>

The mixed perceptions highlighted critical areas for improvement. Ensuring transparency and fairness in hiring, enhancing communication and feedback mechanisms, and addressing employee dissatisfaction are vital for effective service delivery in HR practices. These improvements can lead to a more motivated and confident workforce, ultimately enhancing the performance and credibility of the public service.<sup>64</sup>

## Justice and fairness of the workplace environment

The workplace environment within the public service presented a complex picture of perceived fairness and equity issues. Approximately 24.3% of respondents reported that nepotism occurred rarely, while 21.6% believed it happens frequently, and 18.9% said it never occurred. These varied perceptions indicated that nepotism is a notable concern for a significant segment of the workforce.

Clannism appeared to be a divisive issue, with equal proportions of respondents (24.3%) reporting that it either never or often occurs, and 16.2% witnessing it occasionally. Regarding discrimination, while 51.4% of respondents reported that they had never experienced it, a significant minority (21.6%) encountered it often, and 18.9% rarely. This indicated that clannism and discrimination, although not universal according to survey respondents, affected a considerable portion of the workforce.

Favoritism during recruitment and selection was another area of concern. Although 43.2% of employees reported that it occurred rarely, 18.9% believed it never happened, and 16.2% thought it occurred frequently. These findings suggested that while favoritism was not overwhelmingly prevalent, it remained a significant issue for many employees, impacting their perception of the recruitment process.

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63. World Bank. (2023). Effective Communication in HR Practices. Available from: <https://www.worldbank.org>. (Accessed: 13 June 2024).

64. African Development Bank. (2023). Improving HR Systems for Better Service Delivery. Available from : <https://www.afdb.org>. (Accessed: 13 June 2024).

The study participants reported challenges in the recruitment and selection process. While 27% of employees indicated that they faced no challenges and 24.3% experienced only minor issues, a significant portion (32.4%) reported encountering major challenges. This contrast in experiences underscored the need for improvements in the recruitment and selection process to ensure it is equitable and efficient for all employees and applicants.

The mixed perceptions regarding nepotism, clannism, discrimination, and favouritism in the public service highlighted critical areas for reform. Addressing these issues is essential for fostering a fair and equitable workplace. Enhancing transparency in recruitment, implementing fair and equitable policies, and promoting merit-based hiring could help mitigate these concerns. Additionally, providing clear communication and feedback during and after the recruitment process could improve employee satisfaction, engagement and confidence in the system, leading to a more motivated and effective workforce.

## 6. Conclusion

This research calls for a comprehensive re-evaluation of Somalia's public service to break the cycle of poverty, mediocrity, enhance growth and achieve the country's long-term vision. A dynamic, professional, competent, and effective public service anchored on a normalized meritocracy must be established in order to reinvigorate talent and unleash the potential in Somalis.

Somalia's public service is slow to transform and is prone to abuse and inefficiency. Well-functioning public sector institutions and strong governance are major prerequisites for equitable development and for creating a government that is able to respond to specific challenges, changes in the global environment and demands from its citizens.

All appointments in the public service must be made on the basis of merit. Technology, digitization, and e-government will be crucial and will help, but they will not do the job alone. To implement an efficacious merit-based recruitment framework in Somalia's public service, a paradigm shift and a profound cultural change are required.

The efficacy of public service reform within any given nation is primarily determined by government actions.<sup>65</sup> According to UNDP (2013) "excessive caution, reliance on precedents, and following the beaten path have to give way to innovation and inventiveness and to trying out new methods."<sup>66</sup> Executive buy-in as well as a bold leadership are necessary for developing meritocracy.

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65. Independent Evaluation Group. (2008). Public Sector Reform: What Works and Why? An IEG Evaluation of World Bank Support. Washington, DC: World Bank.

66. United Nations Development Program (UNDP) (2013). Discussion Paper, Public Service Reforms: Trends, challenges and opportunities. Available from: <https://www.undp.org/>. (Accessed: 1 April 2024).



The availability of quality educational institutions is essential for adequately preparing the public service workforce. Without a sufficient number of public administration schools, the merit system is unlikely to yield satisfactory results. This underscores the importance of credible and accredited tertiary education for public administration, as well as the establishment of a school of government or center of excellence. The entire education system in Somalia requires a comprehensive overhaul, and it is essential that the school of public service is activated in order to support the implementation and maintenance of a merit-based system.

Somalia's public service cannot be expected to become like that of Canada or Singapore overnight, but there is nothing stopping government leaders from starting the inevitable journey. The environment is appropriate and there is palpable public acceptance and expectation for creating a meritocracy. There is also young and vibrant human capital that the system can draw from. The federal government of Somalia must embrace the opportunity and see the possibilities and benefits of a merit-based and competency-driven public service. It must slam the door shut on political naysayers and chronic cynics. An attitude of *laissez-faire* will prove ineffective.

Somalia faced challenges in implementing and enforcing policies that promote transparent recruitment practices. However, the obstacles, shortcomings, and previous unsuccessful attempts should not serve as deterrents; rather, they should be viewed as motivating factors for continued efforts in this area. The spoils or patronage system must be eliminated. Former Prime Minister Abdirizak Haji Hussein's mantra of "competency and integrity" or "karti iyo hufnaan" must resonate in all the hallways of the country's public institutions.

All new hires must be hired through meritocracy. Some existing employees must be retained, and others retrained and reintegrated back into the system. Some must be removed with a proper recourse mechanism, not because of their clan or lack of political or social connections, but because of their lack of competency.

The Prime Minister and his government must consider feedback from different stakeholders but they must stay motivated in pursuing a professional, competent and apolitical public service. It is only through a commitment to merit and competency that Somalia will build a public service that genuinely meets the needs of its citizens and contributes to its long-term stability and development.

It is long overdue and any leader who embraces the challenge will commit his/her name and administration into the history books. There is no better way to pave the path for a brighter future and economic development for Somalia than meritocracy in the public service. The Somali government must keep in mind that economic development does not happen in isolation. It is intertwined with an effective and efficient public service.

The government must also accept that public service reform is difficult but not impossible, and is worth trying. It should seek consensus from all stakeholders to establish and implement meritocracy. If any party exhibits unwillingness to collaborate, the meritocracy reform must still be imposed because it is the only way a competent and professional public service can be achieved. To professionalize the administration and achieve clear division of politics and public service, cultural and historical tendencies of patronage have to be addressed and a truly merit-based talent acquisition system must be implemented.

In a nutshell, implementing a merit-based staffing system will help in three clear and simple ways. First, it will inject fairness and objectivity and as a result will boost employee morale, public trust and confidence in the system. Second, it will help drive transformation and renewal initiatives. New ideas will pour in and innovation and excellence will flourish. Third, and most importantly, it will ensure positions are filled by qualified individuals with the necessary skills, qualifications and experience, ensuring the right individuals are in the right positions, doing the right duties and responsibilities at the right time. A wrong fit between people and jobs cannot be corrected by training, coaching or mentoring, and certainly should not be ignored.

## 7. Recommendations

The report puts forward the following strategic recommendations for implementing and operationalizing meritocracy and addressing the patronage, nepotism, clannism, favoritism, and unfairness that are wreaking havoc on Somalia's public service at large.

### 1. Establish a regulatory framework for merit-based staffing

A regulatory framework is essential for implementing a merit-based staffing system, as Law 11 for Somali Civil Servants does not address merit-based recruitment and selection. Without legal provisions supporting merit-based staffing, ensuring fair and consistent application will be challenging. A clear regulatory framework is necessary to guide and enforce meritocratic principles while aligning with broader employment equity objectives.

### 2. Create an independent public service transformation commission/committee

Form an independent, technically competent and professional commission tasked with leading public service reforms aimed at implementing meritocratic principles. This commission should be led by a public service reform czar and report directly to the Prime Minister to ensure accountability.

### 3. Seek support from international partners

Engage with international partners to gather expertise and resources for public service reform. Customized approaches should be developed to address Somalia's unique challenges rather than a one-size-fits-all model.

#### 4. Demand integrated business and human resources plans

Require all core public service institutions to create annual integrated business and human resources plans. This will help prioritize recruitment needs, optimize resource allocation, and ensure the sustainability of staffing processes.

#### 5. Develop proper job descriptions

Conduct thorough job analysis to produce accurate job descriptions outlining the duties, responsibilities and other compensable factors of each job. This clarity will enhance the effectiveness of recruitment and ensure alignment with meritocratic principles.

#### 6. Institute an appropriate classification system

Systematically evaluate and classify job descriptions to determine their relative worth. Use qualitative methods of classifying jobs and examine compensable factors such as skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions to create a series of job classes and grades.

#### 7. Establish qualification standards

Establish qualification standards, defining minimum educational requirements, occupational certifications, and language proficiency relevant to each job. Establishing these standards will help eliminate the tendency to prioritize university degrees solely for salary purposes and support the implementation of a competency-based pay structure. Strict adherence to these minimum qualification standards will streamline recruitment and enhance the overall quality of hires, ultimately improving performance.

#### 8. Authentication of educational credentials

Implement a rigorous process for verifying candidates' educational achievements. The authentication process should include verifying the academic institution attended, the program completed, the degree/diploma earned, the duration of study, and most importantly, the accreditation of the degree/diploma granting institution. Informed decisions can be made only through an authentication process based on accurate information, thereby upholding the integrity of academic credentials.

#### 9. Create job specifications

Develop clear merit criteria for jobs, detailing the minimum education, experience, knowledge, skills and abilities required to successfully perform a job. These specifications are predetermined and should be included with job postings to standardize the recruitment process.

#### 10. Require mandatory training

Implement compulsory training for all hiring managers on equitable and transparent recruitment practices. This training should cover bias recognition, conflict of interest management, and best practices for promoting fairness and diversity in recruitment.

#### 11. Rollover temporary employees into indeterminate tenure

Determine if the services provided by temporary employees are needed and subject all incumbents to fair but rigorous assessments against the relevant merit criteria. Those who meet the minimum essential qualifications should be appointed as indeterminate employees with their original temporary employment start date as their continuous service date. Those whose services are no longer needed or who do not meet the minimum essential qualifications should be workforce-adjusted with a fair and transparent recourse mechanism.

#### 12. Establish a whistleblower policy to report unfair practices

Create a whistleblower policy to encourage reporting of any irregularities in recruitment and staffing practices. This will foster transparency and accountability, enabling employees and stakeholders to voice concerns without fear of retaliation. A well-defined whistleblower policy serves to align hiring practices with legal and ethical standards, reinforcing public trust in the efficacy and fairness of the recruitment process.

#### 13. Audit all capacity enhancing initiatives

Conduct a comprehensive audit of capacity-building initiatives across public service institutions to assess their effectiveness and identify redundancies. This audit should evaluate the quantity and nature of initiatives, the number of individuals recruited, the integrity of recruitment processes, participant distribution, required qualifications, and funding sources. The findings will help rectify inefficiencies and optimize program impacts, ensuring alignment with national development priorities. Consider centralizing or harmonizing these programs within the federal public service while respecting donors' requirements. These initiatives should integrate with the country's human capital development strategy to foster sustainable capacity enhancement.

# HERITAGE

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