Youth Perspectives on Governance, Statebuilding and Conflict Prevention in the Banaadir Region

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I N S T I T U T E

Lead author

Fouzia Warsame is an educationalist with more than 10 years in the field of education. She has academic as well as practical experiences that incorporates instruction, research, curriculum development, administrative and leadership roles.

Contributors

Yusuf Sheikh Omar (PhD) is the director for the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies' Talo Wadaag Phase II Program.

Ahmed Barre is a research assistant for the Talo Wadaag Phase II Program, Heritage Institute for Policy Studies

Ramla Habbad is a research assistant for the Talo Wadaag Phase II Program, Heritage Institute for Policy Studies

Saida Mohamed Hassan is a research assistant for the Talo Wadaag Phase II Program, Heritage Institute for Policy Studies

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1. Executive summary

Somali youth, like other social groups, have been disillusioned and have fallen victim to warlords and extremist groups, which have exploited and recruited them to serve their own agendas

The decades-long civil war severely undermined Somalia's social fabric and destroyed the national institutions that should have provided social services for its citizens. The failure to address the root causes of the conflict has resulted in ongoing chaos and violence, overshadowing efforts toward peace and social harmony. Somali youth, like other social groups, have been disillusioned and have fallen victim to warlords and extremist groups, which have exploited and recruited them to serve their own agendas. Despite the establishment of the third Somali republic more than 20 years ago in 2000, subsequent governments have made little effort to serve the needs of Somalis including youth who are the future custodians of the nation.

Notably, youth often used the terms "leadership" and "governance" interchangeably, indicating the interconnectedness of the two

This study explored the experiences and perceptions of 32 young people from the Banaadir Regional Administration (BRA) regarding governance and state-building processes in Somalia, a nation grappling with multifaceted conflicts including violence and profound political crises. Contrary to the common perception that young people lack the experience and insight to contribute meaningfully to state-building and conflict resolution, our findings revealed a wealth of nuanced and interconnected perspectives from youth that can hugely contribute to state-building. The young people emphasized the importance of governance and state-building, highlighting the critical role of visionary leadership and effective public institutions. Notably, youth often used the terms "leadership" and "governance" interchangeably, indicating the interconnectedness of the two.

Young participants also articulated complex social issues that if addressed well could contribute to state-building such as security, education, employment, health, justice, and the needs of marginalized social groups such as internally displaced persons (IDPs). They said these challenges could not be effectively solved without a robust governance framework and well-functioning institutions. They suggested that the process of state-building should be a holistic, bottom-up approach and that they long for responsible and effective government institutions. This invalidates the myth that a generation born during the civil war cannot conceive or imagine the principles and shape of good governance as they have never experienced it.

The findings also demonstrated that young people are actively seeking social change and a better quality of life and have a profound understanding of the country's security challenges and ideas for addressing them. It is clear that their distinctive understanding of Somalia's protracted challenges can provide a unique perspective on how to govern and address challenges and conflicts.

Other key findings included:

- Young people defined governance as an effective system with law and order, the protection of common interest, and fair distribution of resources; and state-building as a process of formation of competent institutions including the parliament, constitution, the executive branch, and law enforcement agencies.

- In young people's view, good leadership should enable citizens to achieve their goals and create an environment conducive to peace and prosperity.

- They believed that state-building in post-conflict zones is a consensus-based social contract that empowers citizens, enhances a better life, and protects citizens' values, culture, and common good.

- Young women said they faced unique challenges, particularly when it comes to securing positions of power or influence in public institutions, which included discrimination, misogynistic comments, harassment, abuse, and sexual exploitation.

- Factors limiting young people's contribution to conflict prevention included: lack of proper training opportunities; lack of intergenerational knowledge transmission; youth underemployment; and cultural misconceptions that assume that young people cannot be trusted to solve conflicts due to their age and lack of experience.

2. Introduction

With the exception of the first nine years of the democratic era, the Somali population has largely been marginalized in the governance processes that directly impact their livelihoods

Governance and state-building problems have been ongoing challenges in Somalia's political landscape since its independence in 1960. The country has undergone tumultuous political stages through various forms of governance, shifting from a democratically elected leadership to a communist military regime, followed by the warlord era, and currently, the 4.5 clan formula. This unstable governance process has been worsened by a prolonged civil war, which has deepened social divisions and political fragmentation along clan lines. With the exception of the first nine years of the democratic era, the Somali population has largely been marginalized in the governance processes that directly impact their livelihoods. Additionally, traditional mechanisms for resolving violent conflicts have been severely weakened, and effective modern conflict resolution strategies have yet to be developed. This study explores the perspectives of youth in the Banaadir region on governance, state-building, and conflict prevention and resolution in the post-conflict context of Somalia, and in particular, Banaadir.

Governance and state-building processes are generally perceived as the processes through which a government establishes mechanisms of managing country affairs, public service delivery, rule, and law enforcement. Participants in youth focus groups defined governance and state-building as heterogeneous and multi-functional concepts, with a particular emphasis on leadership and the achievement of societal goals. When discussing violent conflicts in Banaadir, the youth highlighted the negative aspects related to governance and state-building alongside context-specific problems such as local gang activities and violence caused by social challenges, including unemployment, lack of educational opportunities, and insecurity. This paper elaborates on these themes from both youth perspectives and literature.

In defining the term "youth," young participants described it as a transitional period in life. The definition of who is considered "youth" varies across cultures and is influenced by several factors. Somali culture considers youth to include those aged 15 to 40 years.

Understanding how shifting social, cultural, environmental, and political processes affect young people's transition into adulthood is crucial for defining their role in post-conflict contexts, particularly in peacebuilding processes.[1] In Somalia context, the experiences of Banaadir youth are profoundly influenced by the ongoing multi-dimensional conflict, which has led to widespread insecurity, instability, and political crises.[2] Young people occupy a unique position in Somali society; they draw from personal experiences, have access to local communities, and possess insights into the conditions faced by the country's most vulnerable social groups, particularly youth.[3]

Research Objectives: The main objective of this paper is to understand the experiences and perceptions of Banaadir youth regarding governance, state-building processes, and conflict prevention and resolution in the Banaadir Region.

The study, specifically, attempts to achieve the following objectives which are to:

1. Explore young people's perceptions and experiences related to governance and state-building processes in Banaadir;

2. Investigate the views and experiences of young people in preventing and resolving violent conflicts in the Banaadir region;

3. Identify the challenges that limit young people's participation in governance, state-building, and conflict prevention/resolution, and propose suitable strategies to address these challenges.

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1. Smith, & Smith, Youth, Education
2. Deria, et al, Addressing the Gap
3. Ibid

Research Questions: Research questions serve an essential role in guiding and shaping the research process, the design, data collection, analysis, and the development of key themes. This study aims to address the following key research questions concerning young people's experiences and perceptions of governance, state-building, and conflict prevention and resolution in Banaadir:

1. What do governance and state-building mean to young people in Banaadir?

2. How do young people understand conflict prevention/resolution in Banaadir and Somalia in general?

3. What are young people's experiences and perspectives on their roles in governance, state-building, and conflict resolution in Banaadir?

4. What obstacles limit young people's contributions to, and participation in governance, state-building, and conflict resolution in Banaadir?

Importance and Scope of the Research: This study attempts to address the gap in the existing literature regarding young Somalis, particularly in Banaadir, as there are very few investigations into their circumstances related to governance, statebuilding, and conflict prevention. Specifically, the authors found a lack of research focusing on the perceptions and experiences of Banaadir youth in relation to governance, state-building processes, and conflict prevention. The main aim of this study is to present the insights and experiences of 32 young men and women from the Banaadir Region concerning these critical issues highlighted above. Conducted in 2023, this research explains the unique perspectives of the participants, although the findings are not intended to be generalized to all Banaadir youth or to Somali youth as a whole.

As detailed in the following section, this study utilized a participatory approach, incorporating focus group discussions as a key method. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the data and address the research questions effectively.

Research Organization: The study is organized as follows: it begins with an executive summary, followed by an introduction, a detailed methodology section, and a literature review. This is followed by an exploration of how Banaadir youth define governance, as well as sections on governance, state-building, and conflict prevention from youth perspectives. The study includes a discussion of the findings concluding with recommendations for policymakers.

3. Methodology

This study employed participatory action research (PAR), a method that involves researchers and participants in the research processes in order to understand the conditions and challenges facing the target communities and to make a positive change. PAR is a context-specific approach delivered in ways that help promote citizens' participation and involvement in governance and public life. PAR also aims to have a greater awareness of the communities in their situation in order to take relevant action. PAR employs qualitative and quantitative methods.

The participatory action research activities in the Banaadir region spanned over a year, from early January 2023 to May 2024. Throughout this period, we collaborated with two youth organizations and two women's organizations, all based in Banaadir. Each organization nominated 15 members to participate in our activities, as HIPS did not want to influence the nomination process.

"Talo Wadaaag aims to enable marginalized groups, including young people, to effectively participate in the process of governance, state and peacebuilding

Once the organizations selected their participants, we held an introductory meeting to explain the HIPS Talo Wadaag II program and its objectives. Talo Wadaaag aims to enable marginalized groups, including young people, to effectively participate in the process of governance, state and peacebuilding. By partnering with youth groups in Banaadir and conducting interactive and participatory action research, the program seeks to provide overall understanding of the topic at hand in order to develop context-specific solutions. During this meeting, youth and women participants elected six representatives from each group to serve as a consultative body to meet and liaise with Talo Wadaag so they could inform their respective groups about the meeting outcomes.

The Talo Wadaag team engaged with the youth and women's groups separately. During discussions, some participants suggested creating a WhatsApp group for effective communication and for sharing relevant information such as educational materials, articles, videos, and any security issues in Mogadishu that arose, especially during physical meetings.

At our first general participatory activity, we discussed the participants' training interests and distributed evaluation forms to suggest useful training topics. We then prioritized the themes most frequently mentioned, which aligned with Talo Wadaag's objectives: Islamic perspectives on governance, state-building, peacebuilding, and the rights of marginalized groups—such as youth and women—as well as their political participation. Other recommended topics were reconciliation and conflict resolution, the role of education in social change, and dialogue sessions.

During the first general participatory meeting, we asked the participants to suggest well-informed local trainers. Three women and three men were then chosen to facilitate the sessions through interactive discussions and presentations. Activities included group drawings, where participants expressed their views on good/poor governance, the 4.5 power-sharing formula, peace, development, conflict resolution, social cohesion, hope, and common aspirations.

One unexpected outcome was that some participants were curious about HIPS forums and requested invitations, which further enriched their learning experiences, networking opportunities, and social engagement skills.

The study's findings were mainly drawn from three focus group discussions (FGDs) with the young people, which took place during participatory activities.

Before organizing these FGDs, the researchers visited the offices of two youth organizations, the Somali Youth Development Network (SOYDEN) and the Somali Youth Civic Organization (SYCO), which assisted in participant recruitment and provided input in developing semi-structured questions.

Participants were given a consent form translated into Somali, in which all research information was detailed. The researchers also explained the contents of the consent form to the participants. All FGDs were held in a well-protected hotel.

Participants' responses were transcribed, except for the parts that did not relate to the questions. However, any indirect responses that might contribute to the research findings were transcribed.

FGDs were conducted in the Somali language. As structural and grammatical systems of languages are different, word-for-word translation/transcription might distort participants' intended meaning or produce a less accurate translation. Therefore, the FGDs were translated/transcribed according to the English language system. However, we attempted to provide the exact translation as accurately as possible. The FGDs were conducted on 26 February 2023 and we used that date when saving the transcripts. However, the FGDs were transcribed/translated throughout March 2023. We used numbers as pseudonyms. When some participants offered multiple answers to a question, their number and responses appeared in different places under that particular question.

Two of the FGDs consisted of 11 participants, and the third had 10, making it 32 participants. Each FGD was conducted twice. The first part (around 1.5 hours) focused on governance and state-building, while the second (around 30 minutes) focused on conflict prevention and management. All discussions were recorded. Each recorded FGD was saved as part 1 and part 2.

As is usual in FGDs, some participants preferred not to respond to all questions. Additionally, some participants left for different reasons. Three researchers conducted the FGDs, and each transcript was reviewed by another researcher. All data, including recorded discussions and transcripts, will be kept and protected for five years in a well-secured HIPS computer.

Coding examples: YM1M23= Young Man1 March 2023; YW5M23= Young Woman5 March 2023.

Researchers collected data on participants' demographics, such as age, education, and employment. Twenty-one out of the 32 were 18-35, and five were 26-30. Only three participants were 30-40 years old. The remaining three participants did not state their age. Twenty-five were university graduates, and two were high school graduates. The rest did not state their level of education. The vast majority, 24 participants, were unemployed. Six participants who were university graduates had jobs. Some participants did not complete the evaluation form.

4. Literature review

4.1 Role of youth in post-conflict governance and state-building in Africa

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In the context of post-conflict governance and state-building, youth have played a critical role in strengthening social cohesion and addressing socioeconomic vulnerabilities in the absence of state care.[4] Categorized as either official organizations created to support young people or as informal youth initiatives, examples of youth structures involved in governance and state-building include civil society organizations, religious youth centers, and regional youth networks.[5]

Recognized by the African Union's Constitutive Act as important stakeholders within state-building processes, there has been an overall shift within formal governance and academic institutions to recognize the contributions of youth to peace-building processes.[6] Youth have been identified as important constituents and actors behind fostering resilience, security, and peace on the basis of diverse social, political, and cultural capital.[7] The involvement of youth organizations in state-building processes is also associated with structural change facilitating political, social, and economic inclusion.[8] The establishment of formal programs, funding streams, and the commitment of states and international organizations, are key factors in the meaningful inclusion of youth.[9]

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4. Berents, and Mollica, Youth and Peace
5. Kasherwa, The Role of Youth ; Smith, and Smith, Youth, Education; Ruppel,and Steinbach, Hopes and Dreams
6. Yingi, Youth Bulge as Peacebuilding.
7. Berents, and Mollica, Youth and Peacebuilding; Yingi, Youth Bulge as Peacebuilding; Tainturier, Youth Inclusion
8. Ibid
9. Berents, Mollica, Youth and Peacebuilding.

Conceptually, youth efforts can be considered in relation to empowerment and emancipation, where the former refers to the development of individual capacity to act within a given system, and the latter to challenging existing structures and perceived embedded inequalities.[10] Operating on both these grounds, the tools of youth work broadly include education, networking, organization, and political activism .[11] Youth capacity for governance and state-building are marked by strong examples of leadership, mentorship, and capacity-building initiatives.[12] Additionally, in post-conflict settings, youth are important actors in the reconstruction process, actively pursuing ways to participate in peacebuilding, and can mobilize their peers and other community members based on their unique positions to understand local dynamics and priorities.[13]

However, the efficacy and longevity of these initiatives are impacted by challenges inherent to post-conflict settings and typical of post-independence African governance structures, limiting the scale and capacity of youth organizations.[14] Barriers to youth involvement include societal marginalization, stigmatization, discrimination, and a lack of economic, social, or institutional resources.[15] Youth political exclusion undermines the social contract, with young people describing exclusion as a form of structural and psychological violence that is inseparable from political, social, cultural, and economic disempowerment, and driving youth distrust in governance and the state.[16] Furthermore, historical neglect and marginalization of youth threatens state-building due to the potential for social upheaval and violence the longer youth grievances and needs are ignored by a state.[17]

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> *While youth political participation is linked to the economic freedom of young people, Somali youth continue to be disfranchised and lack any meaningful engagement in the political landscape*

In the Somali context, youth face similar challenges and marginalization. They lack opportunities for involvement in governance and state-building, further limiting their contribution to peace, stability, and development of their country. While youth political participation is linked to the economic freedom of young people, Somali youth continue to be disfranchised and lack any meaningful engagement in the political landscape. As the future of leadership and governance, youth involvement is a tool through which national development is secured and protected with respect to traditional values and the needs of the population post-conflict.[18] Somali youth, like their counterparts elsewhere in Africa, broadly fulfill this role through advocacy for peace, human rights, non-violence, and social well-being at the local and national levels.

10. Tainturier, Youth Inclusion
11. Kasherwa, The Role of Youth Organizations
12. Berents, Mollica, Youth and Peacebuilding; Peace and Security Council of the African Union, A Study on the Roles.
13. Berents, Mollica, Youth and Peacebuilding; Peace and Security Council of the African Union, A Study on the Roles.
14. Kasherwa, The Role of Youth Organization; Berents, and Mollica, Youth and Peacebuilding; Smith, and Smith, Youth, Education.
15. Yingi, Youth Bulge as Peacebuilding; Peace and Security Council of the African Union, A Study on the Roles.
16. Smith, and Smith, Youth, Education; Simpson, the Missing Peace.
17. Bangura, We Can't Eat Peace.
18. Amupanda, Who is in the "We".

4.2 Youth's participation in peacebuilding in Somalia and the challenges of inclusion

The role of youth in peacebuilding in Somalia is shaped by factors of the ongoing multidimensional conflict.[19] Research and evidence detailing young people's perceptions of the role of Somali youth reflect a great but overlooked potential for participation, as well as the desire on the part of young people to exercise their rights to representation and influence their futures.[20] Youth make up around 70% of the population in Somalia, making the demographic an underappreciated resource based on numerical strength alone.[21]

There has been an increase in youth candidacy in recent elections. They were motivated to create change and challenge dominant power relations with campaigns rooted in the needs and interests of local communities and marginalized groups.[22] In this vein, framing Somalia's future and peace-building processes as contingent on youth involvement and action is accurate and necessary.[23]

> *Framing Somalia's future and peace-building processes as contingent on youth involvement and action is accurate and necessary*

Youth face several interconnected and systemic challenges stemming primarily from the crisis of governance facing Somalia.[24] An extreme example of state collapse, this crisis of governance is characterized by policy failure, mismanagement of resources, clan-identity politics and tribalism, and corruption.[25]

These factors threaten and undermine state-society relations, disenfranchising significant portions of the population and perpetuating drivers of conflict at the local and national levels.[26] There are distinct deficiencies in the constitution and its implementation, contributing to systemic inequalities that influence fragmentary political participation that is in turn compounded by a lack of representation of the interests of youth as stakeholders in peacebuilding.[27] Youth are also among populations vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and conflict due to a lack of social cohesion, government infrastructure, and economic burdens.[28]

Barriers to youth involvement in peace-building processes are associated with these factors, including a lack of communal and governmental support, political exclusion, stigmatization, lack of funding for youth initiatives, discrimination based on clan identity and/or gender, and security concerns.[29] Despite efforts to promote youth in peace and reconciliation processes through sports, federal policy strategies, and INGO programs, there is a marked lack of state action to address unemployment and income inequality as factors of youth disenfranchisement and crime.[30]

19. Deria, et all, Addressing the Gap.
20. United Nations in Somalia, Somali Youth Converge; Deria, et al, Promoting Youth Inclusion; Bincof, The Role of Youth.
21. United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, Shaping Peace Together.
22. Abtidon, Somalia: Long-Awaited.
23. United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia, Somali Youth: The Voices.
24. Odowa, State-Society Relations; Deria, et al, Promoting Youth Inclusion.
25. Odowa, State-Society Relations; Deria, et al, Promoting Youth Inclusion.
26. Odowa, State-Society Relations.
27. Stremlau, Consstitution-Making; Deria, et all, Addressing the Gap; Bincof, The Role of Youth.
28. Lwanga-Ntale, Understanding Vulnerability.
29. Deria, et all, Addressing the Gap; Bincof, The Role of Youth.
30. Deria, The Role of Youth ; Ali, Modelling the Determinants; Mercy Corps, Examining the Links; Altai Consulting, Youth, Employment and Migration; Yusuf, et al, Development of the Democratic System In Somalia.
United Nations Population Fund Activities in Somalia (UNPFA), The National Youth Policy.

Youth in Somalia struggle with a lack of opportunities.[31] Interrelated factors including social pressures, underemployment, perceptions of education as low quality, insecurity, and difficulties related to Somali citizenship have led youth to migrate for opportunities outside the country.[32] A study on determinants of graduate unemployment found gender, experience, degree type, and age to increase chances of employment within the sample, suggesting that discrimination and availability of opportunities within a field are key to youth employment.[33]

This reality for youth in Somalia underscores the need for commitments and action towards inclusion by state and non-state actors.[34] In recent years there has been a push to achieve this through initiatives involving youth civil society organizations, INGOs and NGOs, and the Somalia government such as the collaboration between UNFPA Somalia and the Somali Lifeline Organization which was aimed at capacity building for youth in Dobley.[35] Partnerships between youth and other actors have also facilitated dialogue surrounding developing youth involvement across sectors and solutions for challenges of inclusion within governance systems.[36] Overall, the willingness and resilience to tackle and participate in peacebuilding processes exists within the youth population of Somalia, and it is the responsibility of the state and other actors to recognize, promote, and encourage the efforts of formal and informal youth engagement.[37]

5. Defining governance in the Banaadir region

Focus group participants were asked to describe what governance meant to them. The most frequent definition that emerged related to leadership within the community and also of the state. Respondents focused on the characteristics and obligations of elected leaders as well as the potential for individuals to act as leaders within their communities.

A participant in focus group one defined governance as "how a society selects a ruler"[38] Another respondent described governance as "when people come together and choose a leader that guides and teaches … like a country has a president."[39] A third participant defined governance as "[entailing] being an active community leader."[40] A young woman in focus group 1 said she "[distinguishes] governance as two types, private governance, and public governance", the former referring to how individuals conduct themselves as a member of society and the latter denoting administration of a community.[41] These responses indicated that youth feel that both individual and political leadership are necessary for governance within communities and the state as a whole.

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31. Deria, et all, Addressing the Gap; Bincof, The Role of Youth.
32. Ali., Going on Tahriib.
33. Ali, Modelling the Determinants.
34. Ibid.
35. Abdullahi, Somali Youth Shaping.
36. United Nations in Somalia. The National Youth Policy.
37. Deria, et all, Addressing the Gap; Bincof, The Role of Youth; AMISOM News, Youth from Banaadir.
38. Focus group 1, YW 8.
39. Focus group 3, YW 11.
40. Focus group 1, YM 1.
41. Focus group 1, YW 2.

In defining leadership, participants across the focus groups identified specific qualities of leadership conducive to good governance such as strength, decisiveness, efficiency, accountability, and transparency. One participant stated governance implies determined leadership, and that determination is necessary for the best outcomes within a community.[42] Other participants outlined the aforementioned qualities to elaborate on the responsibilities and obligations of leadership within their definitions of governance.

A young woman in focus group 2 stated that the role of authorities is to prioritize the well-being of their constituents and foster an environment conducive to peace and prosperity.[43] Another participant articulated this obligation to the public as a comprehensive duty to oversee all aspects of society, "much like a mother cares about every aspect of the home."[44] Other participants touched on the role of leadership in providing political guidance and aiding society in achieving certain goals.[45] One young man added that this responsibility entails implementing effective systems and management practices to sustain the population.[46] Finally, a participant specified that the government's role is to ensure all citizens are treated equitably and impartially.[47]

Further concepts discussed by participants include social order and common interests as the primary focus of governance. A young man in focus group 1 stated that a willingness to take orders and active listening are conditions that produce functioning governance.[48] Another participant's definition of governance included a "fundamental connection to the promotion of societal harmony."[49]

The common interests of citizens of a state as identified by participants included peace, prosperity, security, public services, a judicial system, and the provision of legal rights.[50] The substructures that support these functions of governance rest on the principles upon which a government is formed. A participant in focus group 2 stated a government is established upon consensus among the people, while another agreed that leadership should be ratified and held to a shared code of conduct that is agreed upon by the people.[51] A third participant from focus group 2 stated that governance requires individuals to establish regulations and adhere to these terms as they have consented to them.[52] The common idea amongst these participants was the promotion of individual and mutual accountability as well as transparency within governance.[53]

Other definitions of governance in participants' responses alluded to justice and equality as societal goals as well as interdependence within communities.

42. Focus group 1, YM 4.
43. Focus group 2, YW 6.
44. Focus group 1, YW 6.
45. Focus group 1, YW 10.
46. Focus group 2, YM 9.
47. Focus group 2, YM 3.
48. Focus group 1, YM 3.
49. Focus group 2, YW 6.
50. Focus group 2, YW 6 & YM 3; Focus group 3, YW 6, YW 5, YW 4, & YM 7.
51. Focus group 2, YM 3 & YW1.
52. Focus group 2, YM 2.
53. Focus group 2, YW 1; Focus group 3, YM 7.

Two participants in focus group 3 stated that in their view governance is contingent on the law binding everyone within a state including government leaders, specifying that "no one is above the law."[54] Furthermore, participants across focus groups linked governance with equity in the distribution of resources, the provision of public services, and the recognition of rights.[55] A young woman in focus group 3 stated that alongside justice, education is a priority of governance "especially for displaced people", touching upon the societal obligations to the most vulnerable in a population.[56] Finally, several participants discussed interdependence within communities in their responses as it relates to individual and mutual responsibilities as well as cooperation to achieve common good.[57]

5.1 Youth's participation in peacebuilding in Somalia and

When asked to define the role of youth in governance in Banaadir two major themes emerged: their role as actors in the economy and as drivers of collective action. Across the focus groups, participants highlighted how youth are driving the expansion of business sectors in the region, specifically as entrepreneurs in the hospitality industry.[58] One young woman mentioned the Taleex intersection in Banaadir as the site of an expanding business district under youth ownership that has contributed to the aesthetic appeal of the area.[59] Another participant highlighted that youth make up 70% of the population in the region, and are therefore a major resource for labor, knowledge production, leadership, and governance.[60]

Several participants described youth in Banaadir as drivers of collective action, with one young man in focus group one pointing out how youth are the first to respond to a crisis, organizing and providing the manpower for disaster relief as well as acting as first responders and caring for victims during tragedies such as terrorist attacks.[61]

Additionally, participants detailed the prevalence of youth self-employment, volunteer work, and grassroots initiatives aimed at aiding communities and improving socioeconomic outcomes for the region's population.[62] One participant in focus group 3 highlighted how youth are involved in resolving urban issues such as traffic, contributing financially within the community, and raising public awareness of issues in the community.[63] Another participant described youth as being at the forefront of movements for societal change, a legacy one respondent in focus group 3 connected to the historical example of the Somali Youth League which was credited for transforming society.[64]

> "
> *Another participant highlighted that youth make up 70% of the population in the region, and are therefore a major resource for labor, knowledge production, leadership, and governance*

54. Focus group 3, YW 1 & YM 8.
55. Focus group 3, YW 6; Focus group 2, YM 4.
56. Focus group 3, YW 5.
57. Focus group 3, YM 9.
58. Focus group 1, YW 8; Focus group 3, YW 1.
59. Focus group 1, YW 8.
60. Focus group 1, YM 3.
61. Focus group 1, YMNOM26; Focus group 3, YW 3.
62. Focus group 1, YW 2; Focus group 3, YM 6.
63. Focus group 3, YW 3.
64. Focus group 2, YW 5; Focus group 3, YM 7.

Participants emphasized the unique position youth hold as actors and stakeholders in Banaadir's governance due to their place-based and experiential knowledge of the region. Participants specifically credited youth for their advocacy work, roles in education, reconstruction efforts, and spokesmanship for human rights.[65] In terms of security, one participant stated that the youth's role in governance should be elevated to account for their distinctive understanding of conflict drivers and factors.[66] Participants described the role youth occupy in driving public recreational initiatives through sports and educational outreach to younger generations.[67] Finally, a few participants focused on the formal positions within governance that youth already hold, such as regional administration, employment with the municipality, work rebuilding the city, and teaching.[68] Participants also highlighted the potential for greater opportunities for youth involvement and decision-making as a result of this work.[69]

5.2 Challenges limiting youth participation in governance in Banaadir

Focus group participants were also asked to identify challenges and obstacles to youth participation in governance. The first theme frequently mentioned was clan identity politics and/or tribalism. Participants across focus groups specified tribalism or clannism as a primary obstacle facing youth involvement in government, due to the tendency to hire and offer opportunities within one's clan by those in positions of authority.[70] This has perpetuated a system that does not reward or recognize merit but rather connections, which is in turn reinforced by the older generation's unwillingness to involve youth or hire people outside their professional circles.[71] Other participants mentioned the 4.5 system that generates political exclusion and marginalization as well as corruption and weak leadership as undermining youth involvement in governance.[72]

In addition to impeding youth employment, participants cited tribalism and clan identity politics as also perpetuating injustice and corruption within governance. One participant stated that governance is weakened by the tendency of authorities to appoint individuals based solely on support for the administration and shun certain individuals without legitimate reasoning.[73] These patterns relate to a lack of accountability within state institutions and bodies, noted by participants, which they attributed as creating vulnerabilities and insecurities in employment and security for youth in governance.[74]

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65. Focus group 3, YM 2; Focus group 2, YM 8 & YW 7.
66. Focus group 2, YW 2 & YM 9
67. Focus group 3, YM 2 & YM 9.
68. Focus group 3, YW 4, YM 2 & YM 8.
69. Focus group 2, YM 3; Focus group 1, YM 3.
70. Focus group 1, YW 6; Focus group 3, YM 8.
71. Focus group 1, YW 10, YM 4. & YM 11; Focus group 2, YM 8, YW 10, YM 3.
72. Focus group 2, YW 10, & YM 9; Focus group 3, YW 1.
73. Focus group 2, YM 8 & YM 2.
74. Focus group 2, YM 8 & YM 2.

One participant cited a tendency for projects and initiatives presented to youth to never come to fruition due to a lack of follow-through stemming from this lack of accountability and corruption within the state.[75] Another highlighted how the misuse of resources, lack of coordination across sectors, and inadequate leadership have resulted in the misplacement of youth in positions they are not skilled or trained in, wasting potential and knowledge that would have been better suited in other fields.[76]

Participants cited a lack of opportunities to develop skills and gain experience in employment relevant to governance.[77] One young woman in focus group 1 stated that "a youth who studied in the country with little experience may be told that youth are unemployable" describing the lack of acknowledgment from employers and authorities of the gaps in education and opportunities for youth.[78] Another participant attributed the lack of quality education and opportunities as limiting the mindsets and innovation of youth, weakening their contribution to governance and state-building in the long term.[79] A young woman said as a result of these failures, youth have been driven to migrate in search of employment, education, and opportunities in other countries.[80]

Participants also identified a lack of security, societal pressures and discrimination as challenges to youth involvement in governance. As one respondent stated, "young women often face unique challenges, particularly when it comes to securing positions of power or influence," as well as discriminatory and sexual abuses driven by power imbalances leading to the exploitation of young women.[81] Another participant highlighted how regardless of their level of education or experience, women are barred from positions due to sexism and clan politics, and said that the 30% female quota for representation in parliament has been inadequately implemented.[82] Participants also identified prejudices and pressures from parental figures and elders as dissuading youth involvement in governance.[83] Finally, participants detailed how these societal pressures are exacerbated by insecurity and violence, especially by threats to those in positions of governance by terrorists and local gangs.[84]

5.3 Solutions to challenges facing youth participation in governance in Banaadir

In describing solutions to the challenges limiting youth involvement in governance, two major themes emerged: accountability and support for youth. Participants advocated for the adoption of a merit-based hiring system alongside the elimination of clan identity politics and hiring practices. [85]

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75. Focus group 2, YW 5.
76. Focus group 2, YM 9.
77. Focus group 2, YM 10; Focus group 1, YW 10.
78. Focus group 1, YW 10.
79. Focus group 3, YM 7.
80. Focus group 2, YW 6.
81. Focus group 2, YW 7.
82. Focus group 1, YW 10.
83. Focus group 2, YM 9 &YM 4.
84. Focus group 2, YM 9, YM 2 & YM 8; Focus group 3, YW 6, YM 7 & YW 5.
85. Focus group 1, YW 6; Focus group 3, YW 3, YW 5 & YW 1.

To bridge the gaps in state efforts, one participant suggested the development of state policies and strategies for youth involvement in governance to ensure follow-through in projects aimed at empowering youth.[86] A participant in focus group two called for the election of leadership that is qualified and committed to improving society, to foster an environment in which youth involvement in governance is prioritized.[87]

Other responses from participants focused on the creation of opportunities for youth and the improvement of community relationships that will contribute to solving social problems in the region of Banaadir. One participant envisioned the improvement of communal relations as an increased sense of mutual responsibility based on "a sense of piety and [upholding] ethical principles while fulfilling their civic responsibilities."[88] Complementing this would be the involvement of young people in decision making to inform and shape youth involvement in governance.[89] Finally, participants advocated for the creation of opportunities for youth in education and employment, as well as the provision of adequate support by the state that prioritizes young people's well-being and futures.[90]

6. Defining state-building in Banaadir

In terms of nationhood, participants outlined its role in state-building as symbolizing identity and belonging for groups with common interests and ethnic and/or racial backgrounds.[91] One participant stated "if there was no state, there would be no people … like not knowing who you are", signifying the importance of state-building to national identity.[92] Other participants highlighted the importance of international recognition and relations to the concept of nationhood. A young man in focus group one linked the development of national identity and recognition from other countries, while another positioned competition within the global economy as a determinant in state-building.[93]

In defining the state, participants outlined principles of state formation including self-reliance, constitutions, consensus among the population, impartiality, equity, and communal welfare.[94] One participant detailed competent institutions as essential to state formation, specifically the parliament, the executive branch, and associated political leaders.[95] Participants across focus groups identified governance as essential to the functioning of the state, with one young man stating it is "crucial in fostering a stable and prosperous society." [96]

> " In defining the state, participants outlined principles of state formation including self-reliance, constitutions, consensus among the population, impartiality, equity, and communal welfare

86. Focus group 2, YW 5.
87. Focus group 2, YW 10.
88. Focus group 2, YW 6.
89. Focus group 2, YW 10 & YM 4.
90. Focus group 2, YW 6; Focus group 3, YW 3; Focus group 1, YW 5.
91. Focus group 1, YW 10, YW 5, YW 11.
92. Focus group 1, YW 5.
93. Focus group 1, YM 1 & YM 4.
94. Focus group 2, YW 5 & YM 4; Focus group 1, YW 10.
95. Focus group 2, YM 2.
96. Focus group 2, YM 8, YM 1, YW 6 & YM 9; Focus group 1, YM 4.

In terms of the implementation of state-building, participants highlighted policy, strong and honest leadership, competent institutions, and the rule of law. Participants specified national development, protection of national resources, socioeconomic and infrastructural advancements as well as the maintenance of social order as primary objectives within their definitions of state-building. [97] One participant specified societal harmony and the establishment of international affiliations as key achievements for a country. [98]

Several participants defined state-building through the empowerment of citizens and the enhancement of civil life. A number of participants focused on collective action towards improving society and living standards by state and non-state actors.[99] Others highlighted the significance of representing all the members of a population in politics, which in turn facilitates the state's provision of services such as education, security, and economic measures to meet public needs.[100]

One participant stated that state-building means "providing graduate students with job opportunities."[101] Another remarked that a state should create economic growth, maintain security, facilitate education, and provide basic needs such as food.[102] A young man in focus group one stated that the protection of religion and culture should be the focus of state-building, specifically by safeguarding familial structures.[103] Others touched on the protection of citizens' rights and freedoms, with one young woman stating that "the protection of citizens' property is what state-building means to me." [104]

6.1 Role of youth in state-building

All responses identified young people as a resource in the workforce as youth make up 70% of the population.[105] One participant stated that "[youth] are the backbone of society … their roles include rebuilding the city, roads and enhancing the environment."[106] Another participant added that youth are a visible presence in their communities, occupying roles in the military, police, and government.[107] Another respondent stated that as the main demographic, youth make up the majority in many critical infrastructure fields including the health sector and education.[108]

6.2 Challenges limiting youth participation in state-building processes in Banaadir and solutions

Participants' primary concern was the lack of security in the region when asked to list the challenges to youth participation.[109]

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97. Focus group 1, YW 6, YM 2, YW 10, YW 5.
98. Focus group 2, YM 4; Focus group 1, YW 1.
99. Focus group 1, YW 5, YM 3 & YW 6.
100. Focus group 2, YW 6 & YM 1; Focus group 1, YM W.
101. Focus group 1, YW .
102. Focus group 1, YM 1.
103. Focus group 1, YM 3.
104. Focus group 2, YW 6; Focus group 1, YW 6.
105. Focus group 3, YW 1 & YW 5.
106. Focus group 3, YW 1.
107. Focus group 3, YM 2.
108. Focus group 3, YW 5.
109. Focus group 3, YM 7 & YM 2.

One participant stated that, unlike senior-level officials, the option to hire private security details is not affordable or feasible for young people in government positions which limits their involvement in government work.[110] Another participant specified corruption as a barrier, citing police officers who try to solicit bribes when individuals exercise their rights.[111]

Other participants cited a lack of accountability in governance and the limited capacity of the Banaadir region administration as key challenges to youth participation in state-building. A young man indicated that there were no connections between the community and the administrative system, stating that "there is no tangible governing system [in the Banaadir region] on the district level."[112] Others cited a lack of access to administration for youth. According to one young woman, "The government system does not favor youth. The procurement system of BRA does not include tendering and fair job accessibility."[113]

In terms of solutions, participants primarily advocated for increased accountability, improved security, and youth engagement.[114] In one young man's view, "the solution is to have [a] rule of law and order so that people can be accountable."[115] Another participant stated that security should be strengthened in all districts so that youth in governance feel safe and protected in their roles.[116] With respect to the lack of community associations at the district level, one participant suggested decentralization of governance at district levels.[117] Finally, a young man proposed that youth engagement focus on employment opportunities within the Banaadir regional administration to bolster youth participation in state-building.[118]

7. Defining conflict and how to prevent it in the Banaadir regionr

When asked to define conflict, participants' responses frequently highlighted clan identity politics as fueling violence and disputes. There was a general sense across the focus groups that subfactors of conflict in the region are exacerbated by interclan discord. A participant in focus group two stated that clan conflicts pose the greatest threat to the stability of communities, resulting in violence and displacement within the population.[119] Other participants highlighted clan feuds driven by prejudices and historical disputes over land and resources in their definitions of conflict.[120] In one young man's view, issues arising from clan conflict are difficult to resolve due to disparities and corruption associated with clan representation in governance.[121]

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110. Focus group 3, YM 2.
111. Focus group 3, YM 6.
112. Focus group 3, YM 7.
113. Focus group 3, YW 1.
114. Focus group 3, YW 6, YM 2, & YM 8.
115. Focus group 3, YM 5.
116. Focus group 3, YM 2.
117. Focus group 3, YM 7.
118. Focus group 3, YM 8.
119. Focus group 2, YM 6.
120. Focus group 1, YM 1 & YW 10; Focus group 2, YM 6.
121. Focus group 2, YM 6.

Some participants mentioned the ongoing conflict in the Sool region between the Somaliland National Army and forces representing a clan in Laascaanood, which is driven in part by clan-based disputes over resources.[122]

One young woman in focus group three made an interesting distinction between social and political conflict, characterizing political conflict as arising from corruption that is fueled by power struggles.[123] Another participant claimed that the root causes of conflicts stem from flaws in the federal system and a lack of effective governance at the regional and national levels.[124] A young man in focus group one attributed the conflict to the absence of effective institutions, emphasizing the lack of accountability within the judicial system that leads to a reliance on clan-based mechanisms for resolving disputes within the population.[125] Responses captured a prevailing lack of public trust in governance systems, contextualizing conflict as resulting from the absence of a reliable arbitrating power.

The state's absence extends to public services, infrastructure, and interventions aimed at mitigating resource scarcity and economic burdens, perpetuating conflict. Participants across focus groups highlighted resulting environmental and societal pressures and impacts that create tensions and exacerbate vulnerabilities within the region.

Responses focused primarily on how droughts drive conflicts over water and access to land for farming and animal grazing, disrupting livelihoods in rural areas and compounding existing tensions between groups either based on clan identity or political affiliations.[126] One participant blamed a lack of political representation and inclusion in decision-making processes as leading to these recurrent conflicts, specifying a lack of attempts to address local populations' needs in governance as leading to resource disputes.[127] Other compounding factors within governance discussed included the mismanagement of resources, income inequality, and unemployment.[128]

Other participants' definitions equated national insecurity and conflict as mutually reinforcing, focusing on the means and common enactors of violence within communities. Respondents highlighted two main perpetrators of insecurity: local gangs referred to as ciyaal weero and the terrorist group al-Shabaab, representing different but conflating drivers of conflict on the sub-national and national levels.[129]

One participant stated that the control of arms is a distinct challenge facing the city of Mogadishu, as the possession and use of weapons frequently instigates violent confrontations and is largely unregulated.[130]

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122. Focus group 1, YW 10; Focus group 3, YM 8.
123. Focus group 2, YW 8.
124. Focus group 2, YM 1.
125. Focus group 1, YM 2.
126. Focus group 3, YW 5; Focus group 1, YW 10 & YM 3.
127. Focus group 2, YM 11.
128. Focus group 3, YW 1; Focus group 1, YM 3.
129. Focus group 3, YW 1, YW 3 & YM 8.
130. Focus group 1, YW 9.

Others highlighted how extortion and corruption within policing exacerbate the insecurity felt by locals within the Banaadir region, as students and informal workers such as Bajaj drivers are frequently victimized.[131] Unemployment and income inequality perpetuate corruption in policing and also contribute to high levels of youth crime in the region.[132]

" In terms of conflict prevention, responses most commonly focused on the role of governance and the need for active state interventions

In terms of conflict prevention, responses most commonly focused on the role of governance and the need for active state interventions.[133] This was based on a consensus that conflict undermines national development and compounds socioeconomic and ethnic marginalization.[134] Participants highlighted the need for transparency and accountability within governance, primarily to promote trust in governance systems.[135] The state should be able to assume the role of an impartial and equitable arbitrator in order for a systemic approach to conflict prevention and resolution to be institutionalized.[136] Land and resource disputes could then be resolved through the judicial system and parity could be achieved, reducing reliance on clan-based mechanisms.[137]

Respondents linked decentralization and implementation of inclusive governance structures as key to expanding political participation and decision-making processes around conflict prevention.[138] By involving local stakeholders and encouraging bottom-up development through governance, the state would be able to address the roots of conflict and meet the needs of various communities.[139] Many participants advocated for limiting clan identity politics and tribalism, to support equality within political representation. One young man in focus group two explicitly stated that this requires the eradication of the 4.5 power-sharing system.[140]

Other participants identified education, community engagement, and collective action as avenues for conflict prevention and development. One participant said education was a means for the formation of resolution strategies and communal spaces, where the importance of sharing land and resources as well as tools for de-escalation and unlearning violent tendencies could be disseminated.[141] Youth and community engagement promoting unity and collective action against conflict were also highlighted, as participants emphasized the need for raising awareness.[142] This could be achieved through the encouragement of intergenerational and interclan dialogue addressing the root causes of conflict to develop long-term and place-specific solutions.[143] Additionally, participants mentioned peace negotiations as a strategy for security and concurrently conflict prevention more broadly, with one participant advocating for the use of culturally specific and traditional conflict resolution practices such as "[meeting] under [the] peace tree and negotiating."[144]

131. Focus group 3, YW 5 & YM 6.
132. Focus group 3, YW 6 & YM 1.
133. Focus group 1, YM 2, YM 4, YW 10 & YM 3; Focus group 2, YM 11 & YM 6.
134. Focus group 1, YW 10.
135. Focus group 1, YM 2; Focus group 2, YM 11.
136. Focus group 1, YM 2.
137. Focus group 1, YM 2.
138. Focus group 2, YM 11; Focus group 3, YM 7.
139. Focus group 2, YM 11.
140. Focus group 2, YM 6, YM 11 & YM 1.
141. Focus group 1, YM 3.
142. Focus group 1, YW 10, YM 3 & YM 1.
143. Focus group 1, YM 1.
144. Focus group 3, YW 5 & YM 2.

7.1 Role of youth in conflict prevention in the Banaadir region

Participants commonly answered that one of the most efficient ways for youth to help prevent conflict was by raising awareness. One participant advocated for active involvement in electoral processes and stressed the necessity for knowledgeable youth to unite and confront issues of violence prevention and conflict resolution.[145] Another suggested the creation of youth groups devoted to promoting peace and preventing violence, stressing the value of bolstering current efforts.[146] Social media was commonly suggested to be a vital tool for increasing youth awareness. Participants emphasized how social media platforms could promote peace and increase knowledge about conflict avoidance.[147] One participant advocated for banning TikTok, citing its role in fueling conflicts among youth.[148]

A participant suggested that youth engagement in raising awareness of the link between drug usage and violence was essential, with a focus on teaching young people about the negative consequences of substance abuse.[149] Other participants advocated for outreach and interventions addressing drug use, stating that providing access to better educational and health opportunities could contribute to preventing conflicts among youth. One participant proposed this be achieved through collaboration between youth and law enforcement agencies to address drug-related issues.[150]

Participants highlighted the importance of providing access to employment opportunities as a preventive measure. They emphasized that by acquiring the necessary skills and experience, young people could succeed in their careers, thereby contributing to economic growth, social development, poverty reduction, social inclusion, and overall community well-being.[151]

One participant emphasized the need for education on selecting and promoting capable leaders, and encouraging peaceful cohabitation, especially among those prone to violence.[152] Another addressed the need to rethink the idea that "youth are leaders of tomorrow," advocating for recognition of the youth's role in the present and their inclusion in decision-making processes. They emphasized prioritizing youth education and empowerment to harness their knowledge and potential for positive change.[153]

7.2 Challenges facing youth involvement in conflict prevention and solutions

Participants identified a number of obstacles that stifled young people's agency and engagement in conflict prevention initiatives.

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145. Focus group 2,YM 5.
146. Focus group 2, YM 1.
147. Focus group 1, YM 3.
148. Focus group 3, YW 3.
149. Focus group 1, YW 11.
150. Focus group 3, YW 4.
151. Focus group 1, YW 7.
152. Focus group 1, YW 5.
153. Focus group 2, YM 1.

One participant noted how the government underestimates young people's competence, their voices frequently being ignored, and their potential being disregarded.[154] A participant highlighted that youth marginalization is exacerbated by the lack of outlets available for communicating their thoughts.

The lack of youth engagement in decision-making processes and their under-representation in politics was another important concern. This lack of representation reflects a broader issue of comprehensive understanding, where youth perspectives are not adequately considered. Some organizations fail to include youth, instead primarily focusing on clan affiliations, which further marginalize young people.[155]

One participant highlighted the limited access to quality education and economic opportunities for young people. This lack of access keeps them dependent on people in positions of control and limits their ability to flourish as individuals and as a society.[156] A participant also stated that youth are often unfairly perceived as irresponsible, highlighting a need for tolerance between youth and older generations to ensure that young voices are heard and valued.[157]

Participants also identified several issues that inhibit youth participation in initiatives to prevent conflict. A significant problem mentioned by participants was that young people are insufficiently prepared to resolve conflicts, which they attribute to a lack of training opportunities. They proposed including young people in attempts to resolve conflicts and learn from the elderly, with a focus on knowledge transmission between generations. In order to emphasize intergenerational knowledge transmission, the strategy recommended by participants involved including young people in efforts to resolve conflicts by learning how to resolve conflicts.[158]

Another participant pointed out that one of the main challenges facing Somali youth is the Banaadir Regional Administration's concentration of administrative power. Decentralizing the administrative structure was the suggested solution, with the goal of more power-sharing and encouraging local involvement.[159]

A participant identified a number of barriers that prohibit young people from being involved in conflict prevention such as a lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making processes and a lack of appropriate knowledge and abilities. The participants suggested establishing welcoming environments for young people and equipping them with the skills and information needed to contribute successfully to conflict prevention programs. [160]

"
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"
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154. Focus group 2, YM 11.
155. Focus group 2, YW 8.
156. Focus group 2, YM 9.
157. Focus group 3, YM 2.
158. Focus group 3, YM 5.
159. Focus group 3, YM 7.
160. Focus group 1, YM 2.

Another participant talked about cultural misconceptions that prevent young people from being involved in preventing conflicts. The participant emphasized the idea that only older people have the knowledge and life experience necessary to provide insightful advice. This false belief restricts the involvement of young people in attempts to avert conflict and reinforces ageism. The participant supported acknowledging the importance of young viewpoints and providing platforms for intergenerational communication and cooperation.[161]

8. Discussion

Three key aspects of governance and leadership emerged from the data: the link between governance and leadership, b) the methods and strategies in which leaders are elected or selected, and c) the qualities that define effective leadership.

Firstly, the youth highlighted the interconnection between governance and leadership, emphasizing that they reinforce one another. They argued that the governance style of Banaadir reflects its leadership style and vice versa.

Secondly, participants noted the significance of the methodologies and processes involved in electing or selecting leaders. As one participant put it, governance is "how a society selects a ruler," while another stated that governance is "when people choose their leaders." The term 'how' in the first quote refers to the election process, while 'when' in the second quote denotes the timeframe for elections. This perspective alludes to the fact that leadership is both a process and a product.

Thirdly, good leaders have already been recognized by and known to their constituents for their contributions and services to the community, such as teaching, guiding, caring, and providing essential services, including security, health care, employment, and training opportunities, and also prioritizing the well-being of their constituents and wider society.

Since people were already familiar with their leaders' good services, the election or selection process was perceived to be a mere formality and a validation of their previous service.

Another concept that emerged from the Banaadir youth perspective was the importance of adopting a consensus approach when selecting leaders. This is in line with the Somali term 'wadar-ogol', which means "a collectively agreed process," which was developed during the post-conflict state-building process. The concept of 'wadar-ogol' has gained widespread acceptance among most Somalis and is now promoted as a key principle in governance.

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161. Focus group 1 YW 10.

Young people in Banaadir identified qualities for effective leadership including efficiency and effectiveness, accountability, transparency, a focus on community needs, and a commitment to deliver justice. These qualities enhance a leader's legitimacy in the eyes of the community, strengthen trust between leaders and their constituents, and contribute to effective governance.

The concept of justice was particularly emphasized by almost all participants, who argued that good governance is characterized by its ability to deliver justice, ensure equitable distribution of resources, and fight against corruption. The themes of justice and corruption were consistently reflected in the participants' drawing sessions. Notably, justice emerged as the first theme that youth groups illustrated and imagined in their drawings as a vital component of good governance in Banaadir.

> *Good governance is characterized by its ability to deliver justice, ensure equitable distribution of resources, and fight against corruption*

The Banaadir youth depicted images that symbolized good governance as a mechanism for upholding the rule of law and ensuring that justice is delivered for all. This underscored the expectation that the government must provide a fair and impartial justice system that is accessible to every citizen.

In contrast to their depictions of justice, the participatory drawings vividly illustrated the theme of injustice through both portraits and expressive words. These portrayals symbolized the lack of fairness and respect within the justice governance of Banaadir. The underlying message sent by these images and portraits was a call for significant improvements in Banaadir's justice system.

Similarly, the youth linked the concept of corruption to bad governance. They depicted scenes and tangible images imbued with bribery and greedy politicians plundering properties and money at the expense of community needs. Additionally, their drawings illustrated the abuse of power for personal gain, further symbolizing ineffective governance. In the eyes of the youth, corruption represented a major challenge not only in Banaadir but throughout Somalia, undermining the legitimacy of governmental institutions.

Regarding Banaadir youth contributions to governance and state-building, they expressed both their practical experiences and their future role in peace and development in Banaadir and Somalia at large. This perspective contrasted sharply with the belief of older generations who often perceive young people's contributions as limited due to perceived inexperience and immaturity.

When discussing their role in governance, peace, and state-building, youth frequently highlighted that they represent approximately 70% to 75% of the Somali population. They argued that this demographic representation not only constitutes the primary human capital of Somalia but also makes them the future custodians of the nation. Furthermore, the youth stated their significant contributions to small businesses and the security sector, as well as their quick and proactive responses as volunteers during natural and man-made disasters.

When explaining their current contributions, the young people referenced the historical role of the Somali Youth League (SYL), which fought for the country's independence. This demonstrated their awareness and understanding of the state-building process from the early days of independence to the present.

While young people in Banaadir are generally well-informed about their potential contributions to the state-building process, some participants felt that their significant demographic representation did not translate into meaningful participation in governance, leadership, and decision-making. Young women, in particular, argued that they were underrepresented compared to young men, who tended to occupy significant leadership positions in the BRA, particularly at district levels.

Seemingly, this issue is influenced by the cultural perception of age in Somali society, where people under 40 are often regarded as youth. The National Youth Policy of the Federal Government of Somalia reinforces this definition, recognizing youth as those aged 15 to 40. [162]/[163] When study participants stated that Banaadir youth hold significant leadership positions, it is important to note that they are referring to this definition.

While discussing their contributions to governance, peace, and the state-building process, the young people identified several obstacles that limit their participation. One of the major challenges highlighted in all focus group discussions and also illustrated in their drawings was the exclusionary, clan-based 4.5 formula, which they viewed as a corrupt and unjust system. They said that the 4.5 formula fails to prioritize or even recognize merit-based selection and instead bases the selection on clan affiliation and nepotism.

Other challenges included a lack of educational opportunities, which, if addressed, could enhance innovation among young people. Some young participants pointed out the negative perceptions held by the older generation, which often view youth as incapable of governance and leadership. To counter this stereotype, young people emphasized the need for ongoing intergenerational dialogue.

> *Among the new conflicts identified were the 'Ciyaal Weero' (local youth gangs), drug-related violence, and conflicts arising from social media platforms such as TikTok*

Regarding gender, some participants confirmed previous research saying that young women face distinct challenges in the state-building process, including harassment, sexual abuse, and misogynistic comments, which further obstruct their involvement.

Issues concerning violent conflicts in Banaadir and beyond included types of conflict, their root causes, consequences, and preventive strategies. Among the new conflicts identified were the 'Ciyaal Weero' (local youth gangs), drug-related violence, and conflicts arising from social media platforms such as TikTok. These types of conflicts were very prominent in Banaadir compared to Galmudug where clan conflicts were considered more of a problem.

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162. The National Youth Policy of the Federal Government of Somalia.
163. Saferworld. Clans, consensus and contention: Federalism.

Both Banaadir and Galmudug youth highlighted the role of unregulated clan militias and al-Shabaab in perpetuating violent conflicts. Banaadir youth in particular emphasized that clan-based political identity is a significant challenge, a sentiment supported by numerous studies on Somalia's political crises. From youth perspectives, historical clan grievances—including vendettas and land disputes—were among the primary root causes of conflict across Somalia. As a living example, Banaadir youth referenced the 'SSC-Khatumo conflict' with Somaliland.

The study participants cited the historical violent conflict between the Isaaq and Dhulbahante clans. This conflict has evolved into a political dimension, with the Isaaq clan supporting Somaliland's secession from Somalia, while the Dhulbahante clan advocates for Somalia's unity and opposes the secessionist approach.

On a national level, Banaadir youth characterized the federal system—which is new to Somalia's political landscape—as a source of violent conflict. As an example, conflicts related to federalism can be linked to border disputes between Puntland and Galmudug, particularly the conflict in the city of Galkayo. Additionally, tensions between the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and Federal Member States (FMS) are often attributed to misunderstandings of federalism.

At a more localized level, Banaadir youth identified internal clan-based political conflicts stemming from the establishment of new districts as part of the state-building process. They also cited the devolution of power from the FGS to FMS, to districts, and to local councils. Youth in Banaadir believed that ineffective governance constitutes a significant source of violent conflict. They argued that when governance fails, communities often resort to clan-based mechanisms to prevent conflicts and resolve disputes. However, this reliance on clan structures can exacerbate tensions between clans rather than resolve them, potentially leading to new outbreaks of clan violence. Despite being raised in the cosmopolitan city of Mogadishu, Banaadir youth were very aware of the conflict drivers prevalent in nomadic life, such as competition over water, livestock, pasture, and rainfall. This is because Somali urban areas and nomads are interconnected and interdependent.

In terms of the ramifications of violent conflict, the FGDs and drawings revealed consistent findings. For instance, Banaadir youth illustrated the human toll of conflict through images depicting property destruction, widespread displacement, environmental crises, erosion of trust, decreased productivity, and the spread of disease. These portraits vividly showcased the profound consequences of violent conflict.

> *"*
> *To prevent violent conflicts, the young people proposed improving governance in Banaadir*

To prevent violent conflicts, the young people proposed improving governance in Banaadir. This is because they firmly believed that poor governance was the main source of violent conflict. Other solutions were to build trust between society and government institutions, deliver justice, and enforce the law fairly, ensuring that both leaders and ordinary citizens are treated equally under the law.

They suggested helping youth acquire traditional mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution by encouraging interactions with the older generation. Such information and experience exchanges would facilitate the transmission of cultural knowledge and experiences from the older generation to the younger generation.

In turn, this interaction would help the older generation gain insight into the perspectives and experiences of youth in today's technologically advanced world.

Purposefully designed conflict resolution training workshops, along with quality education and employment opportunities, would further enhance their skills in preventing and managing conflict. Such initiatives would also help reduce violent conflict, particularly among youth from disadvantaged communities who are often most affected by violence.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, youth experiences and perspectives revealed that, if properly involved, youth can play a critical role in governance, state-building, and conflict prevention in Banaadir and Somalia in general. Therefore, participants in this study emphasized the importance of including youth in these processes while highlighting their significant potential role in the development, growth, and stability of the Banaadir region. More importantly, data indicated that young participants had a good understanding of the concepts of governance, state-building, and conflict prevention in Banaadir and the wider Somalia context. Most young participants were very aware of the challenges limiting their participation in public life, as they provided innovative and insightful responses on how to address these challenges. Overall, the young people showed a keen interest and a desire to promote youth involvement, agency, capacity building, and civil society organizations in the Banaadir region.

10. Policy recommendations

- Foster inclusive political participation and representation through the introduction of universal suffrage and the implementation of proportional representation.

- Prioritize anti-corruption and accountability in governance structures through transparency models and the reduction of clan-based identity politics.

- Adopt merit-based hiring systems within governance.

- Develop programs, administration, policy frameworks, and initiatives targeting youth employment, opportunities in governance and state-building processes, and networking with the aim of promoting political inclusivity.

- Provide state support for youth political participation and state-building initiatives, through investment and funding streams as well as the recognition of formal and informal youth engagement efforts, the creation of environments in public spaces and spheres conducive to youth involvement in decision-making processes and the establishment of youth as key stakeholders in peacebuilding processes.

- Dismantle prejudices fueling discrimination through targeted education and community outreach, fostering intergenerational and intersectional dialogue surrounding collective action and self-determination

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