

HERITAGE

I N S T I T U T E

CALL FOR PAPERS

**Strengthening Civil Society Engagement in
Somalia's State-Building Process**

Conference Date: 18-20 July 2025

Location: Mogadishu, Somalia

Contact: callforpapers@heritageinstitute.org

- **Deadline for Abstract Submission: 25 May 2025**
- **Notification of Abstract Acceptance: 1 June 2025**
- **Deadline for Full Paper Submission: 1 July 2025**
- **Notification of Paper Acceptance: 13 July 2025**



About the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS)

The Heritage Institute for Policy Studies (HIPS) has revolutionized the policy landscape in Somalia and in the process has become the country's pioneering think tank. Since its founding 13 years ago, HIPS has fostered a culture of evidence-based policymaking, earning respect and recognition both locally and internationally. HIPS operates on three main pillars: research action, policy dialogue forums, and capacity-building initiatives which aim to guide Somalia's peace, state-building, and policy agendas.

About the Somalia Development Forum (SDF)

The Somalia Development Forum (SDF) is a high-level platform committed to addressing Somalia's pressing development challenges and priorities. It brings together a wide spectrum of stakeholders—including government officials, policymakers, academics, business leaders, civil society representatives, and youth and women leaders—for national and regional dialogue on critical issues shaping Somalia's future.

The 2025 edition of the forum, themed **“Strengthening Civil Society Engagement in Somalia's State-Building Process,”** will serve as a national civil society conference focused on closing existing gaps in Somalia's state-building efforts. In a context where state-building remains complex and fragile, the forum will emphasize the vital role of inclusive civil society engagement in ensuring durable and accountable governance.

The three-day conference aims to:

- Foster structured and inclusive dialogue among civil society actors;
- Promote meaningful discussions on civil society's contribution to governance and state-building; and
- Strengthen collaboration among civil society organizations for a more unified and effective approach to advocacy and governance monitoring.

The conference will also explore mechanisms for sustained engagement between civil society, government stakeholders, and international partners to promote long-term dialogue, accountability, and inclusive policy-making.

Local and international scholars, researchers, and practitioners are encouraged to submit original research exploring the role of civil society in state building, democratization, governance, accountability, fragile and post-conflict settings, with a particular emphasis on Somalia's unique political and institutional dynamics. A selection committee will review submissions, and 16 scholarly papers will be chosen for presentation during four academic panels at the conference. These presentations will complement civil society discussions by providing evidence-based insights and comparative experiences which will enrich the policy discourse.

Topics of interest

Applicants are advised to carefully review the conference concept note and develop original titles aligned with the core themes and objectives.

Submissions may address, but are not limited to, the following suggested sub-themes; should be grounded in evidence; and offer actionable insights relevant to state building.

1. The role of Somali civil society in democratization and state building: challenges faced, and effective strategies to enhance its impact.
2. How civil society can strengthen transparency in public institutions and help eliminate barriers to effective oversight.
3. New frameworks or mechanisms to enable civil society to play an influential and meaningful role in governance.
4. Civil society's role in governance at federal and state levels such as its influence on policy, service delivery, and institutional development across federal member states or the federal government.
5. Civil society's role as a bridge between citizens, public institutions, and private sector
6. Practical mechanisms to strengthen civil society's contributions to state building and enhance its watchdog role.
7. Evaluating civil society's efforts to foster inclusive political processes and representation of marginalized groups.
8. Improving unity and effectiveness among Somali civil society groups.
9. Exploring relationship dynamics and opportunities for constructive engagement between civil society and government.
10. Identifying obstacles to effective civil society and proposing viable solutions.
11. The impact of political interference on civil society and how it undermines independence and effectiveness.
12. Government attitudes and policies toward civil society
13. Post-conflict challenges facing civil society in peacebuilding and state building
14. Exploring the roles, unique contributions, and structural barriers facing CSOs led by youth, women, and marginalized groups.
15. Identifying innovative strategies to foster resilient and accountable civil society leadership that ensures continuity, inclusivity, and organizational stability.

Conference Structure

The conference will be structured to encourage open dialogue, knowledge sharing, and consensus building. The first day will set the stage by examining the role of civil society in governance. Key speakers will provide insights into Somalia's political and institutional landscape, highlighting existing challenges and opportunities. A dedicated report on the role of civil society on state-building in Somalia, authored by HIPS researchers, will also be presented, offering a foundational analysis to frame and enrich the academic and policy discussions.

The first day will also feature parallel academic paper presentation panels. These papers will offer in-depth policy analysis, empirical data, and comparative perspectives relevant to Somalia's governance landscape. The sessions aim to bridge academic research and grassroots activism, fostering a knowledge-based approach to state building.

On day two, workshops and roundtable discussions will equip CSOs with practical strategies for engaging policymakers, advocating for transparency, and influencing governance reforms. Case studies from other post-conflict contexts will be presented to highlight successful civil society-led initiatives. Participants will collaborate on identifying priority areas for action and discuss ways to enhance the effectiveness of CSO-led governance interventions.

The final day will focus on drafting a civil society action plan, or a roadmap, outlining clear recommendations, responsibilities, and next steps. Structured dialogue sessions will help align different perspectives and ensure broad-based ownership of the proposed strategies. The conference will conclude with a presentation of the action plan and commitments from key stakeholders, including government officials and international partners, to support civil society's role in governance.

Submission Guidelines

Submission Process: Send your abstract to callforpapers@heritageinstitute.org with the subject line "SDF2025 Abstract Submission: [Your Name]".

Abstract: Submit a 200-300 word abstract, encapsulating the main argument, research methodology, and crucial recommendations.

Paper Length: Submissions should range from 3,000 to 5,000 words, references included.

Formatting: Utilize Times New Roman font, size 12, double-spacing, and one-inch margins.

Language: Acceptable submission languages are English, Arabic and Somali.

Originality: Ensure originality in your work with proper citations. Plagiarized submissions will face immediate disqualification. Authors must submit empirical research supported by evidence and data. Please refrain from submitting papers already under consideration by other journals. Previously published papers will not be accepted.

Biography: Include a maximum 150-word biography outlining your academic and professional experience.

Review Process: Each paper will be subjected to a meticulous peer review process, with selections made based on academic merit and alignment with the objectives and themes of SDF2025. Only submissions from researchers holding a Master's or PhD degree and with at least one prior publication in a relevant field will be considered.

Important Dates

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