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# Swerves on the road

Report by International Election Observers on the 2012 local elections in Somaliland

Steve Kibble and Michael Walls

with contributions from Stephanie Butcher, Conrad Heine, Fiona Mangan and Aly Verjee

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**About the authors**

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Steve Kibble works on issues concerning southern Africa and the Horn for Progressio. He has observed several Somaliland elections on behalf of Progressio and as a member of Somaliland Focus (UK), of which he was a co-founder. With Michael Walls he was joint coordinator of the international election observers in June 2010, reprising a similar role from 2005. Steve Kibble holds a doctorate in African politics from the University of Leeds.

Steve and Michael have both written extensively about Somaliland as well as lobbying for greater recognition of its achievements, but also for awareness of the obstacles it faces.

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# Introduction

On 28 November 2012, district and council elections were held in Somaliland. International development agency Progressio, the Development Planning Unit (DPU) at University College London (UCL) and Somaliland Focus (UK) were invited by Somaliland's National Electoral Commission (NEC) to act as coordinators of the international observation mission. The elections saw 2,368 candidates contest 379 positions across the country, and were observed by an international observation mission made up of 50 observers from 17 countries.

This mission follows previous missions to the parliamentary elections in 2005 and the presidential election in 2010. As in 2010, the mission was led by Dr Steve Kibble (of Progressio) and Dr Michael Walls (of UCL). It also follows pre-election assessment visits by Steve Kibble and Michael Walls in February and July 2012 respectively, which focused on Somaliland's readiness to hold the local elections, and how the provision of an international election observation mission could aid the electoral process.

## Progressio, DPU and Somaliland Focus (UK)

Progressio is a UK charity (number 294329) which, as well as undertaking international advocacy, works by placing skilled development workers with national NGO partners. Current projects in Somaliland support work on HIV and AIDS, youth and women's participation, and the environment.

Through a number of different initiatives, Progressio has been instrumental in helping Somaliland along the road to democratisation, including capacity building with partner organisations, election observation (for example for the 2005 parliamentary and 2010 presidential elections), and coordinating, facilitating and helping in accreditation of international observers. It has also worked on preparing and delivering conference and briefing papers, books and periodical articles, especially in collaboration with DPU, and carried out advocacy work, particularly in collaboration with Somaliland Focus (UK) and DPU.

DPU is an inter-disciplinary unit operating within UCL. It offers taught postgraduate courses and research programmes, and undertakes consultancy work in international development. The DPU's mission is to build the capacity of professionals and institutions to design and implement innovative, sustainable and inclusive strategies at the local, national and global levels, that enable those people who are generally excluded from decision making by poverty or by their social



Voters queue outside a polling station in Burao

and cultural identity, to play a full and rewarding role in their own development. In recent years, DPU staff, and most particularly Dr Michael Walls, have maintained a strong involvement in development-related interventions in the Horn of Africa, and most particularly in the Somali areas.

Somaliland Focus (UK) was established in 2005 to raise awareness of the democratic achievements of Somaliland. Its members are individuals with personal and/or professional interests in Somaliland, including those from the Somaliland diaspora in the UK.

Progressio, DPU and Somaliland Focus (UK) do not take a position on the international recognition of Somaliland, as we regard this issue as beyond our mandate. At the same time, we welcome the increased stability, security, and accountability to citizens which has in part been supported by the development of democratic institutions in Somaliland. Democracy is about more than just elections – but elections are still vital.

## Previous election observation

We have observed Somaliland's various local, parliamentary and presidential elections since 2002 (largely funded by the British government) and produced reports on their freeness and fairness. For these missions we liaised closely with a number of local civil society organisations and networks.

For the 2005 parliamentary and 2010 presidential elections Progressio, DPU and Somaliland Focus (UK) were invited by the NEC to facilitate, organise and get credentials for most of the international election observers and to report on what they found in relation to free, fair and peaceful elections.

At the presidential election in 2010 we had 59 observers from four continents and 16 different countries. We covered 33 per cent of the stations in all six regions. We found the elections to be reasonably free and fair, although we noted some problems and made some recommendations to the NEC and others.

Reports on the 2005 and 2010 elections are available from the Progressio website (www.progressio.org.uk).[1]


A woman casts her ballot at a polling station in Burao

## Local council elections 2012

On 28 November 2012 Somaliland held local council elections, with 2,368 candidates contesting 379 positions across the country. This report from the international election observation (IEO) mission to Somaliland covers the pre-electoral period, polling and counting on election day, as well as the immediate and medium-term post-electoral period. The report also reviews the electoral legal framework, and the balance of media coverage over the campaign period. The IEO team prepared an interim report for the National Electoral Commission (NEC) and had immediate post-election discussions with the chair and other commissioners on its findings. Copies of the report were sent to donors, including the UK Department for International Development (DFID).

## Facts and figures

- 379 seats
- 2,368 candidates
- 140 female candidates; 10 were elected
- 7 groups took part: 2 political parties and 5 political associations
- 1,782 polling stations

In its immediate post-election press releases, the IEO team congratulated the people of Somaliland and the NEC for efforts to conduct a credible election. It should be noted that contrary to widely-held notions, the team were unable to declare the election free and fair; it would be reasonable to note that the exercise was largely free but the problems we highlight in this report meant that we could not deem it fair in all aspects. Nevertheless, we do feel that, on balance, the process was credible as an exercise in determining the will of the majority of those living in Somaliland in terms of local government and party selection.

Generally speaking, election campaigning was competitive and pluralistic, with seven different parties and associations fielding candidates. Parties and associations largely respected the requirement to campaign on a specific day of the week, and to desist from large-scale public campaigning in the second and third weeks of the campaign. With the lowering of the age of candidacy to 26 we welcomed the unprecedented numbers of youth, which also manifested as a significant increase in women candidates. While in 2002 only five women contested local elections, 140 did so in 2012, although only 10 were elected.



UCID supporters at a rally in Berbera

## Election observers

- 50 international election observers (IEOs) including 22 women, and 7 from the Somaliland diaspora
- IEOs from 17 countries, and from Africa, Australasia, Europe, and North America
- IEOs covered 18 per cent of all polling stations and 15 of the 21 districts in which elections were held
- Domestic observers: 800 observers placed by the Somaliland Civil Society Election Forum (SCISEF), covering approximately 50 per cent of all polling stations

On election day, most polling station procedures and staff were positively evaluated by observers. Where problems occurred, the NEC usually addressed them quickly and effectively. However, the absence of a voter registry and weaknesses in related safeguards – primarily the inadequacy of the indelible ink – made polling vulnerable to multiple voting. In advance of the next elections, we recommend that Somaliland adopt a robust system for voter/citizen registration, in order to deter fraud and improve confidence in the electoral process.



A member of polling staff dips a voter's finger in ink to show she has voted

Concerns remained throughout the electoral process regarding the level of understanding on the part of both parties/political associations and the electorate regarding implementation of the formula in Law 14, Article 6, by which contesting parties and associations could attain the status of registered parties. Under Somaliland electoral law, the term 'political parties' (or *xisbi*) refers only to those associations which have succeeded in registering to contest presidential and parliamentary elections by securing one of the top three positions in preceding local elections. The total number of political parties is constitutionally limited to three. All political associations established to contest local elections are termed 'political associations' (or *urur*). The 2012 local elections would therefore determine which three associations would be registered as political parties for future presidential and parliamentary elections.

While we welcomed the agreement prior to the election to adopt a Code of Conduct in the interpretation of the law, we also encouraged both the NEC and the Registration and Approval Committee (RAC) to continue to work transparently and with clarity as results were declared and the successful parties determined.

Ballot boxes at Burao regional NEC counting centre the day after the elections

Initial localised results were announced as they became available, with the final announcement of the three successful parties made on 26 December. The successful trio were Waddani (Somaliland National Party), Kulmiye (Peace, Unity and Development Party) and (New) UCID (Justice and Welfare Party).

In the event, the calculation behind that decision did seem to be widely accepted, but in spite of that, there was significant dissatisfaction with the outcome. Several political associations were vocal in their criticism of the election itself, and specifically the conduct of the NEC and the ruling Kulmiye party. Umadda and Xaqsoor were particularly vociferous in their initial complaints, although it was the Xaqsoor association which continued to express its dissatisfaction in the weeks following the 26 December declaration of results. This dissatisfaction centred around the decision to cancel the poll in several areas in Sool and Sanag regions, and (along with the results) the campaigning approach of the government in western Awdal region. Xaqsoor supporters took to the streets in protest, with demonstrations in Hargeisa turning violent. Regrettably, fatalities resulted, with at least one occurring in Hargeisa when police opened fire on the protestors.

While the situation was calmed through the intervention of clan elders and government figures, assisted by calls for peaceful protest from the Xaqsoor leadership, the fundamental dispute persists. This is particularly the case in Awdal, where what was originally a political dispute has taken on overtly clan dimensions. Councillors from the Isse clan continue to dispute the election results, and for a period, clan militia groups were mobilised.

Since the declaration of results, there has also been a round of mergers in which unsuccessful political associations have joined with registered parties. Waddani has agreed to absorb Umadda, in return offering party positions to Umadda officials. Kulmiye has agreed similar terms with the Rays and Dalsan officials, as well as coming to an arrangement with some erstwhile members of the moribund United Democratic People's Party (UDUB). Perhaps surprisingly, given the level of its dissatisfaction with the government's role in the election, Xaqsoor has been linked with Kulmiye, though no formal merger had been agreed at the time of writing, and Xaqsoor's legal challenges stand.

# The international election observation mission

At the invitation of the NEC, and with support from DFID, the mission deployed 50 observers, including 22 women, to 15 of the 21 districts of Somaliland that held elections, and was led by Drs Steve Kibble and Michael Walls. The mission follows previous observations of elections in Somaliland in 2002, 2005 and 2010, and was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Principles of International Election Observation, adopted in 2005 at the United Nations.

Observer delegates came from 17 countries – Australia, Canada, Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, Serbia, South Africa, Sweden, Uganda, the United Kingdom and the United States of America – with seven representatives being from Somaliland's diaspora.

For the first time, under the aegis of the Somaliland Non-State Actors Forum (SONSAF), civil society representatives from south-central Somalia and Puntland were also present. Two representatives from each of the Somalia South-Central Non-State Actors Association (SOSCENSA) and Puntland Non-State Actors Association (PUNSAA) were enthusiastic and committed accompaniers of the international observer mission, studying the technical process of managing and observing an election.

On election day, international observers visited approximately 18 per cent of all polling stations, and observed polling station counts in all six regions. District tabulation processes were observed in Marodi Jeh, Sahil, Sanag and Togdheer regions.



SONSAF domestic observer Yousuf (left) talks to IEOs Cris Bautista and Sarah Howard at a polling station in Burao

Prior to election day, a three-person pre-election coordination team (PET), consisting of Steve Kibble, Michael Walls and Stephanie Butcher, arrived on 3 November, having liaised with Interpeace and diplomatic stakeholders in Nairobi en route. The PET's brief was to examine all aspects of the pre-election campaign, including the fairness of the campaign itself: access by political parties to all areas for campaigning, equal access to the media, and especially the way in which the voting system was being organised. Key concerns were the knock-on effects of the lack of voter registration. We saw that this might be compounded by new political associations and an open list system, whose implications were then untested. The issue of the very lengthy ballot papers deriving from the open list system and highlighted in the 2012 pre-election assessment report[2] remained a key issue, albeit lessened by the reduction in the number of parties/associations who were ultimately permitted to contest the election.

The PET also met stakeholders, including the NEC, their Interpeace advisers, security personnel including the Special Protection Unit (SPU) commanders and the police commissioner, EU and UN representatives, media, women's groups, local and international civil society organisations (including those involved in voter education and domestic observation), and research institutions, in order to establish how the pre-election process was going and hence assess overall progress.

We also had the honour of meeting President Silanyo and three ministers who assured the group of the government's commitment to free, fair and peaceful elections. In addition, we requested meetings with the leadership of all the competing political parties and associations, and met those who responded. PET members met representatives of all parties/associations at some stage prior to the election, although in some instances the leaders themselves were not available.

The PET also sought clarity on the security situation (including but not confined to the safety of IEOs), the nature and identity of electoral monitoring bodies, the degree to which there was evidence of use of state resources by incumbents, the proposed geographical distribution of polling stations, and the preparedness of polling station staff and party agents, as well as of domestic observers. The team recruited a media consultant to track the performance of the press in covering important issues, and to report to us, as had happened in previous elections, on evidence of any political bias. This is covered in greater detail in the section on the media later in this report.

## Initial observations

The PET made a number of initial observations and was apprised of a range of concerns, primarily from the political parties/associations. Some of these were resolved before election day. Firstly the team noted that, as had been the case in prior elections, parties/associations were allocated a specific campaigning day each week, a provision which was largely adhered to in the first week of the campaign. Secondly, unlike in previous elections, parties agreed with the NEC to suspend public campaigning for the second and third weeks of the campaign in an effort to discourage what was seen as the over-exuberance and dangerous behaviour of some campaigners. From our observation, this suspension was not always completely adhered to, though it resulted in a more subdued campaign until the last (fourth) week of campaigning, when there was a marked return to the exuberance of the first week. Political parties and associations generally accepted the need for the ban, with some noting that the suspension helped alleviate funding problems arising from what was a very expensive campaign by Somaliland standards.



Waddani supporters at a rally in Hargeisa

For a time, what appeared to be a more serious threat to the stability of the elections, and to popular participation, arose in western Burao and parts of Sanag. The complaint was that in those areas the number of polling stations had been unfairly reduced from the level of previous elections. Distribution of polling stations had been planned on the basis of voting turnout in the presidential elections of 2010, which had been lower in those areas than had been the case in other elections. This problem was resolved on 16 November when all parties met with the NEC and donors and agreed a solution. Essentially, the affected polling stations were to be equipped with an extra ballot box and two extra polling station staff, thus ensuring that the number of ballots available in each area would be approximately consistent with past elections.

In some areas, the Umadda political association complained of harassment by police, alleging that some candidates were arrested while campaigning, and then released once their campaign day had ended. It appeared that, while some candidates were indeed detained, all were quickly released. In each case, the police offered explanations as to the reason for the arrest. Whether this amounted to political harassment was difficult to determine.

Most of the continuing problems highlighted in this and in a pre-election report relate to the complexity of the process in which a historically high number of parties/associations would compete and where those were to be whittled down to three official parties. Law 14 Article 6, which is the relevant legal instrument for the calculation of successful parties, was not widely understood and had been subject to claims it was badly drafted. In spite of this, the Academy for Peace and Development, a local non-governmental research institute and think tank, spent quite some time with the RAC clarifying the law, and they were able to agree a simple formula to be used in applying the law. In the end, the RAC was able to identify which of the political associations were to be declared political parties, and thus accorded the right to contest parliamentary and presidential elections over the subsequent decade.
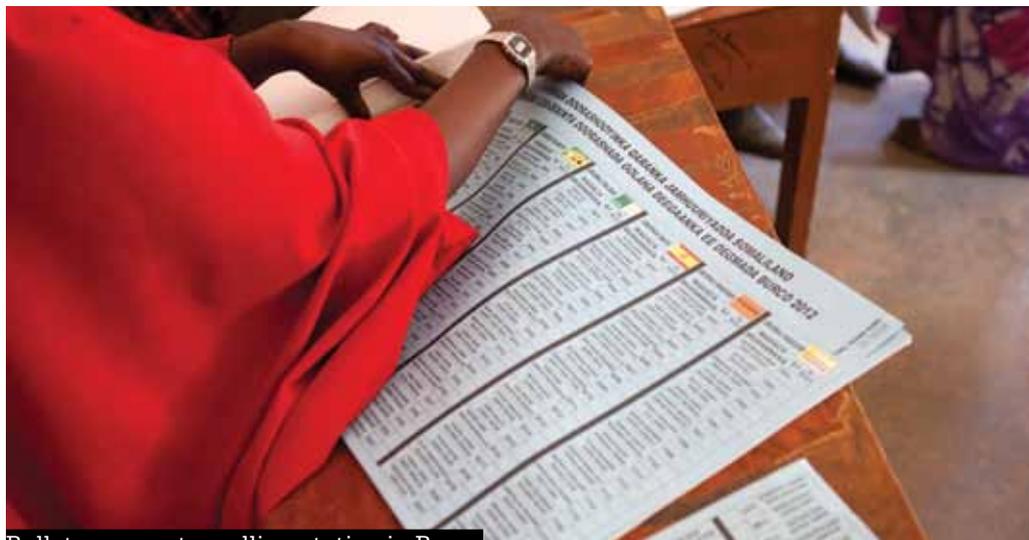

Ballot papers at a polling station in Burao

Numbers rather than symbols were used on ballot papers and some political representatives spoke to us of concerns over how the illiterate would cope. In the end, we did not observe this to be a major concern inside polling stations, perhaps in part for the reason offered by one commentator: most Somalis use mobile phones, so even the illiterate are usually able to recognise numerals. Evidence on the ground showed that in the pre-election campaigning, and indeed on election day, candidate numbers and the cards containing that information were widely used as a central part of candidate and party/association promotion.

With the lowering of the age of candidacy to 26, we welcomed the unprecedented numbers of youth, which had the knock-on effect of increasing women candidates. Although persistent barriers and prejudices remain, the number of women candidates contesting seats signalled a marked positive step towards better representation of the entire population of Somaliland, even if an unfortunately low number of women candidates succeeded in securing election.

## Article 6 of Law 14

As one observer phrased it, this election could be described as 'one election, two outcomes', with a key division of labour lying between the NEC and RAC. The NEC was responsible for all aspects of the election until the announcement of results, at which point the RAC was required to calculate and declare the three successful political parties permitted under the constitution. This process is defined by Article 6 of Law 14. A great deal of debate focused on this mechanism and, as noted, the Academy for Peace and Development spent a lot of time with the RAC clarifying the issue and then suggesting and agreeing with the RAC a simple formula for the final calculation. The RAC had no mandate to interpret the laws; only to apply them.



A young Xaqsoor supporter at a rally in Hargeisa

Simply put, any association/party that received 20 per cent or more in every region was automatically to be deemed one of the three political parties. The winner, had there been several with 20 per cent or more in each region, was to be the one with the highest percentage overall. If no party or association achieved 20 per cent or more in all regions, the three highest ranked parties/associations in each region were to be ranked and accorded scores of 1, 2 or 3 (with 1 for the most popular party/association in that region, and so on). This scoring process would then be repeated through the other five regions. The party/association with the lowest aggregate score was then to be declared the top qualifying party, with those with the next two lowest aggregate scores taking the second and third spots. These were then to be declared by the RAC to be the three political parties permitted to contest parliamentary and presidential elections for the next 10 years.

We remained concerned that problems could arise if parties received unequal support across regions but built up large numbers of votes in total. We also thought it likely that no party/association would achieve 20 per cent or more in every region, thus placing even heavier emphasis on the Academy for Peace and Development formula, which had of course been devised as part of an extra-judicial process. The Supreme Court was on standby to rule on such issues. While

the electoral provisions are reasonably clear, we remained worried that they were not widely understood by the public, or, in some instances, by politicians themselves.

The mission was also concerned that only two of the four staff in each polling station would receive training, with these staff then being required to train the others. We made some early recommendations to address this.

Another concern raised related to the fact that winning candidates from losing associations would not be able to maintain their party/association affiliation or serve as independent councillors. Instead, they would be required to transfer their affiliation to one of the three winning parties. In the event, these transfers took place through mergers of unsuccessful political associations with successful parties – a process that occurred on the whole more smoothly than we had anticipated.

The conflicts possible were obvious and where clan, party and individual preference overlap, we saw this as a possible minefield. However, we trusted that there were a number of factors that might mitigate against such problems. Most importantly, Somalilanders have long demonstrated a strong commitment to resolving problems peacefully, even when the stakes are high.

It was also encouraging that all the parties/associations signed up to a Code of Conduct detailing the process by which Article 6 was to be applied. Worryingly, though, some parties subsequently threatened to contest the results regardless of the fact that they had signed the Code of Conduct. In one case, a political leader even threatened to promote insurrection regardless of the outcome with respect to his own party.

Two political associations were unable to stand candidates in every district. In one case (Rays) they did not contest six of the districts. This did not automatically disqualify them from the possibility of securing one of the three party spaces, but it did made the task more difficult, given the agreed formula.

## Other concerns

The local independent press (*The Republican*, Vol 13 Issue 708) carried a story in November 2012 regarding public servants using state resources for campaigning purposes and the NEC's reaction to this. Previously President Silanyo had called for public servants to desist from such campaigning and from the use of national resources for party purposes (we obtained a copy of the decree to that effect from the President himself, although we originally had difficulty tracking it down). The President, ministers and leaders of the governing Kulmiye party vigorously denied allegations of use of state funds when we met them, although a number of allegations had been made by opposition parties and associations. Some of this dispute revolved around the definition of a civil servant. Ministers and political appointees are generally allowed to campaign, whereas civil servants are not.

The most significant controversy surrounded the head of the Somaliland National AIDS Commission, who was campaigning for the governing party. Government members mounted a strong defence on the basis that he was a political appointee, whereas others counter-charged with the apparently reasonable argument that such a position should more properly be seen as a non-political appointment. In our opinion, greater clarity on the position of those in parastatals and commissions is needed. We also raised the question of candidates from parties not aligned with the government being arrested, although the government line was that much of this was due to intra-clan battles and that arrests were due to violations of the Code of Conduct, including campaigning on unauthorised days. As a political agreement rather than a statutory instrument, the Code of Conduct did not appear to invite arrest or criminal prosecution, a situation that we also felt requires greater clarity.

The leadership of two parties (including one of the political associations which had already been unable to stand candidates in all districts) alleged that some of their candidates had been offered government jobs or other incentives to resign from their parties. In a number of instances, we were able to corroborate that the candidates involved had indeed resigned. These allegations are of corruption/bribery only, not intimidation or other threats. Again we put this to the President and a number of ministers, and their reply was that it would be beyond their financial capacity to try to suborn opposition candidates, that they had no interest in doing so, and that crossing the political floor is very common in Somaliland. After the election this issue appeared to have died down, but it may be that further investigation would still be helpful. Later, some of the candidates who had stood down announced in press conferences that support from their own parties/associations had not been forthcoming, and therefore they were unable to contest the election due to a lack of resources.

## Civil society and youth

Civil society had a number of election-related initiatives, although some seemed fitful. Some were sectoral, such as SONYO's (Somaliland National Youth Organisation) programme on youth engagement in the political process. The chief programme was the Somaliland Civil Society Election Forum (SCISEF) run by SONSAF, an NGO coalition of non-state actors. A major problem they identified was the large number of parties, pointing out that most candidates were going to lose.

SCISEF was present in all six regions through coordination committees, and sought to monitor party adherence to the Code of Conduct. In order to avoid aggravating tensions, they pointed out explicitly that many candidates would simply be unsuccessful, but that they should respect the outcome nonetheless. They expressed concerns over women and youth candidates, which are outlined in the next section, and noted the absence of a voter registration system. They also pointed to a number of deficient areas and confusing issues: the use of numbers rather than symbols; the lack of an effective voter education programme; poor electoral facilities; the possibility of multiple voting; clannism; candidate inexperience; and porous regional borders and hence security dangers and room for dispute over whether all voters were legitimate.

Ultimately, SCISEF placed 800 observers across all six regions, giving approximately 50 per cent coverage of the 1,782 polling stations – a 15 per cent increase on the coverage achieved in 2010. It should be noted that most domestic election observers, unlike IEOs, remained in the polling station from opening to closing, although there were also a small number of mobile domestic teams.



Waddani supporters at a rally in Hargeisa

On election day, SCISEF monitored compliance of parties with the electoral law, including whether unauthorised people were present in polling stations/centres, and whether there was any violence or political campaigning. IEOs and domestic observers cooperated with a view to complementing rather than overlapping each other where possible. Most local observers remained in their posts inside polling stations throughout the day. For future elections, it may be advisable for domestic observers to include observation of the external environs of polling stations in their role, as irregularities are just as likely to occur in the station surrounds, as international observers noted in, for example, Hargeisa, Borama and Erigavo.

According to SCISEF, youth were well represented as candidates, especially in the east, where lower population density and diminished levels of interest in the electoral process amongst older generations allowed greater space for youth involvement. SCISEF were aware of the problems for youth in finding money to stand or campaign, and saw the consequent dependence on others for funding as a possible problem. They thought that women and youth were the two most exploited groups, used by politicians for clan purposes and then marginalised.

The Academy for Peace and Development and International Republican Institute trained 5,500 agents covering about half of the proposed polling stations. Given donor refusal to pay agents we were concerned as to whether they would be deployed widely and whether they would be effective, but again this fear was largely allayed on polling day. We noted that there was no longer a legal requirement for party agents to sign off on the polling station tally, although we believe that step remained useful where it was practised, as a further form of checking (along with finger marking) the vigilance of polling station staff.


Party agents watch the voting at a polling station in Burao

There were also a number of apparent problems associated with voter education. Firstly, it seemed there was no overarching national voter education process, apart from NEC advertising on TV, radio and mobile phones. There were some individual NGO and donor initiatives, including what seemed to be separate projects promoting voter education for women, which could surely have formed a key part of the general voter education programme. SONSAF was expected to 'fill the gaps' in voter education, and we were concerned that this might prove a more difficult challenge if the more coordinated voter education programmes concentrated too heavily on technical aspects of the election, as seemed to be planned.

## Women

The issue of women's political participation has been hotly debated for some years, and remains a difficult one. Female candidates have struggled to gain the support of their clans to stand in the first place, and where they have pressed ahead, few have been elected.[3] During campaigning for the 2010 election, the leadership of Kulmiye, who ultimately won, promised a quota of 25 per cent for female candidates in forthcoming elections. Campaigners lobbied hard for implementation of this quota, and the new President Silanyo convened a Presidential Consultative Council to look into the matter. After much consultation, and promising noises, a much lower quota of 15 per cent was proposed. The overwhelmingly male House of Representatives, including many from the governing party, voted against the proposed bill.[4] Activists remain passionate about improving the representation of women and were dismayed that male parliamentarians refused to vote for the President's proposal.



Women supporters of Xaqsoor at a rally in Hargeisa

Despite this legal setback, there was evidence of a high level of political activity undertaken by women. Importantly, an earlier stage of campaigning saw the establishment of a political association headed by a woman. While this association subsequently failed to qualify to stand as one of the seven parties/associations eligible to contest the local elections, it arguably marked an important space for the organisation and mobilisation of women activists. (The same woman who attempted to establish that political association had attempted to run for the Somaliland presidency in 2003, and was also unsuccessful in standing then. She has since declared herself disillusioned with the Somaliland political process, and has taken a senior political position in Mogadishu instead, so progress is qualified at best.)

Nevertheless, the number of female candidates – 140 out of 2,368 – did represent a vast improvement on the five who stood in the 2002 council elections. Many of these 140 candidates were highly visible in campaign posters and paraphernalia, and party leaders were quick to reference the role of women in their association, suggesting a clear recognition, at least rhetorically, of the importance of women's political participation. NAGAAD, the umbrella organisation working to support women's empowerment, played a significant and important role in working to train and support these candidates, collaborating in the civic education programme, lobbying for the quota system, and documenting campaign promises in support of increased political participation for women.

Women were likewise present in other parts of the electoral process. They formed a majority presence on campaign days and at rallies, and turned out in high numbers for polling day. The IEO team observed the fair and equal treatment of both sexes in polling stations, and a relatively good gender balance amongst polling station staff.

However, while recognising these successes, it is important to note that only 10 women secured seats in local councils, underlining the importance of continued campaigning for measures to support women's political participation. While women were highly visible throughout the electoral process, the continued mobilisation along kinship lines may generate barriers to participation in political institutions, particularly if other institutional safeguards, such as quotas, are not established.[5] NAGAAD has identified a number of social barriers to women's political participation, noting the continued reluctance of many community elders to accept female candidates, as well as the financial burden of running for a seat. Similarly, though there was a significant increase in female candidates, they did not generally rank amongst senior party/association leadership.

NAGAAD has been involved in training, campaigning and advocacy for all women candidates as well as a wider, DFID-funded programme of voter education designed to reach 216,000 people, which has the promotion of women's participation as a key objective. While these measures are important, and the 2012 elections did demonstrate a gradually increasing space for women's participation, stronger formal and informal institutional commitments are also needed if women are to play a greater role in future elections.

## Security

The PET held a number of security-related meetings, including with the Commander of the SPU, the counter-terrorism officer, the Commissioner of Police, and the NEC security consultant, and raised security issues with many others. Repeatedly, we were informed that intelligence reports indicated no significant or new threat in relation to the safety of voters, election officials or observers. For most parts of Somaliland, the vigilance of the local population, as in the past, including during the 2005 and 2010 elections, constituted in our opinion the best defence against deliberate attempts to disrupt the election.

However, while we feel this view was borne out across most of Somaliland, areas in which sovereignty is disputed must be excepted at least to some degree. In the days preceding the election, Puntland authorities declared that any attempt to place polling stations in areas claimed



UCID supporters at a rally in Berbera

by Puntland would be seen as an infringement of their sovereignty. In the event, Puntland militia moved to prevent the NEC from siting polling stations in specific locations close to the border in Sanag – specifically the towns of Dhahar and Badhan. Khatuumo forces also moved to prevent voting from taking place in towns under their control, and most particularly their self-declared capital of Taleex. Also, in the run-up to the election, Khatuumo-affiliated individuals ambushed the convoy of a member of the Xaqsoor political association, briefly holding him, before releasing him after intervention from elders.

Local concerns also led to tensions in Erigavo, with protests on the eve of election day delaying the distribution of ballot boxes to areas in and surrounding the town, and a consequent delay in the start of voting in a number of locations in Sanag.

These incidents were clearly serious, though in line with and slightly less extensive than had been the case in recent past elections. The period after the election was also beset by tensions, which flared at times into violence. Those incidents and the underlying causes are reviewed later in this report.

## An election observer's experience: a personal reflection

My first time in Somalia was two months after my birth in Djibouti, but my memory from that time doesn't serve me well. As an Italo-Somali child, growing up in Italy and moving to different countries with my family, I have always taken an interest in discovering my roots, but fragments of my parents' memories and the news on TV were all I really had to feed my imagination about Somalia.

Participating in the election observation mission has been one of the most memorable adventures of my 23 years. As excited as I was weeks before my departure, the days before I left were marked by concern about the unknown. I realised that I had no idea what to expect. To my surprise, life in an internationally unrecognised state is as mundane as it gets. For the first time I was recognised as a 'Somali baby', as I often heard people whispering. I was deeply impressed by the warmth of the Somalis and even amongst the foreigners at the Maansoor Hotel it was an absolute pleasure meeting people from all walks of life with interesting stories to share.

Towards election day, there was an air of growing excitement. I went to rallies and witnessed a sort of celebration with women, men and children dancing and performing. At first they were shy of our camera but then couldn't get enough of posing.

I suppose life isn't really too different: the equivalent of street markets in London was the livestock market, where the most expensive camels looked the part in all their grace, perfectly groomed, moving in synchronised motion. I was also pleasantly surprised to see familiar faces, from my aunt who invited us to a lovely traditional lunch and taught us the table manners used when eating with your hands, to a long-lost school friend who happened to be the pilot of our flight back to Nairobi. I loved wearing the 'direh', the traditional clothes, and learning new ways of tying my headscarf, so much so that I was taken aback by the amount of skin exposed upon landing back in Nairobi.

For days after, I couldn't shake the New Zealand accent that rubbed off on me from some of my fellow observers, but I certainly left with much more than just a new accent. I think back to my time there very fondly and look forward to returning one day.

*Saba Di Roberto*

# The media

As in 2010, the IEO coordinators commissioned a local consultant to evaluate the performance of the Somaliland media in covering the election. This section is based upon his report.[6]

The purpose of the exercise was to evaluate the media's performance in terms of professionalism and depth of coverage, and to assess whether the material provided assisted Somalilanders in terms of making informed political choices, and whether media displayed signs of political bias, bearing in mind some history of governmental harassment of Somaliland media.

The 2010 election coverage had seen improvements in terms of quality in comparison to 2005, so there was hope that this improvement would continue. Civil society organisations nevertheless expressed concern about media coverage in advance of the election, taking the time to emphasise to the media the significance of their role in contributing to a free, fair and peaceful process. On behalf of most of the media groups and practitioners, SOLJA (Somaliland Journalists Association) pledged that the media would remain impartial and objective, and would abide by the Code of Conduct.

Over the duration of the campaign, the election campaign naturally figured prominently in the Somaliland media, with coverage increasing as polling day approached. The IEO media monitoring exercise focused particularly on a period in which President Silanyo made visits to the east and west of Somaliland, and in which accusations from opposition parties and political associations that government officials were using state funds for Kulmiye party campaigning were a hot issue. Meanwhile, complaints from elders in Berbera and Burao about numbers of polling stations were causing disquiet, and *Jamhuuriya* newspaper was subject to complaints from the UCID party that its tone was pro-government in reporting comments by UCID's leadership.

The IEO media monitor chose 15 November for a day of comprehensive media review. On that day, electoral coverage of a number of leading newspapers was monitored: *Dawan, Jamhuuriya, Geeska Afrika, Saxansaxo, Haatuf, Waaheen* and *Ogaal*. These newspapers were selected on the basis that they offered the greatest breadth of readership and geographical coverage. Apart from the government-owned *Dawan* (which has a comparatively lower readership than the others), all are privately owned.



A young Waddani supporter at a rally in Hargeisa

*Saxansaxo, Geeska Afrika, Dawan* and *Haatuf* devoted extensive space to election issues on this enhanced monitoring day. The tone of coverage varied depending on the subject of the item, with UCID receiving generally negative coverage from the publicly-funded *Dawan* and Kulmiye receiving very positive coverage. On the other hand, the second leading newspaper, *Geeska Afrika*, was quite negative in its coverage of Kulmiye, while Waddani received positive coverage from both papers. Other parties were not covered on the day in question: the result of the nature of campaigning allocations.

In general, the volume of coverage was not balanced on the day. Waddani received wider coverage than the other parties and associations in terms of front-page articles and photographs, with coverage of Kulmiye and UCID also wide in terms of photos, articles and references. Coverage as a rule was biased towards covering the president and ministers, which could be expected to benefit the ruling party, at least in terms of volume of coverage if not tone.

While it can be expected that, in normal times, coverage will tend to focus on government issues, it should be that editors make efforts during an election campaign to strike a balance in terms of prominence. In particular, this might be expected to apply to the publicly-funded *Dawan*, but on the monitoring day its coverage of issues concerning the government and ruling party far outstripped other issues and parties/political associations. In general, the monitor noted significant differences in volume of coverage to the benefit of the ruling party across all the print media, and a dearth of coverage of female candidates especially (the monitor noted that some female candidates employed digital media, especially Facebook, in an effort to counter bias in more traditional media).

Monitoring of broadcast media, which took place over four days, revealed a similar bias. The monitoring focused on the publicly-funded Radio Hargeisa, which was supposed to devote equitable time to political parties and associations on their respective campaign days. Yet, even with the campaign at its peak, Radio Hargeisa devoted more time to non-election related news, with UCID and Umadda suffering in particular on the days monitored. In contrast, Kulmiye and Waddani were well covered on their campaign days.

Overall, the media monitoring exercise, while subject to some limitations, revealed that Somaliland's media has much to do in terms of achieving balanced coverage of elections, and, while politicians might generally be expected to complain about media coverage during an election campaign, the leaders of both UCID and Umadda were particularly vigorous in voicing their objections. Bearing in mind the context of a general climate of harassment of journalists both before the 2012 election and since – including the killing of a journalist in Las Anod in October 2012, reports of an attempt on the life of a local journalist on 24 April 2013, and ongoing concerns about media freedom and freedom of expression from SOLJA, the Committee to Protect Journalists and others – it is hoped that much can be improved for future campaigns.

# Assessment of election day

Election day was mostly peaceful, and was marked by high and enthusiastic turnout from voters across the country, many of whom queued for hours to cast their ballots. The process was generally conducted with a high degree of transparency and accuracy. Polling station staff, mostly comprised of young people, worked with dedication and commitment to complete the necessary technical and logistical steps required by electoral regulations, and our interim report to the NEC commended them for their efforts, often under difficult circumstances.

However, despite the generally positive environment in which the election took place, there were problems that weakened the process. Chief amongst these was the failure of safeguards designed to prevent multiple voting, which appears to have been widespread. While the NEC is not responsible for the political decision in advance of these elections to abandon the voter register used in 2010, the technical election day safeguards put in place – primarily the indelible ink applied to voters' fingers – proved insufficient. The ease with which indelible ink was removed may have permitted a substantial number of voters to cast multiple ballots, potentially reducing the integrity of results. However, observers did note numerous instances in which polling station staff rejected apparent attempts by individuals to vote more than once. Regrettably, though, the ability of voters to vote at any polling station also complicated this aspect of scrutiny, meaning that, while the efforts of polling station staff were commended by IEOs in many locations, they are unlikely to have been sufficient to address multiple voting on the scale observed.

A member of polling staff checks a voter's fingers for ink to see if he has already voted

Even discounting apparent multiple voting, real turnout appears to have been higher than in past elections. This did cause a number of complications, including the exhaustion of ballot papers before the close of polling in some areas, as well as very full ballot boxes that could not always hold all ballots cast. While efforts were made to replenish papers, these did not always arrive in time to permit voting to resume. Similarly, while IEOs observed efforts by staff to maintain the integrity of ballots where boxes were too full to accommodate any more, the need to use alternative storage options (envelopes, plastic bags, separate piles, breaking seals to pack ballot papers down, etc) also inevitably held the potential to compromise the process. IEOs did not observe instances in which this led to deliberate tampering with votes, but the situation was nevertheless less than ideal.

Inside a polling station in Burao


Inside a polling station in Burao


Polling staff register voters' names


Voters cast their ballots


Helping a voter find her candidate on the ballot paper
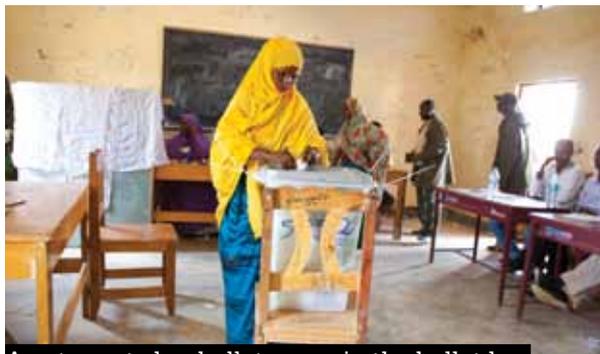

A voter puts her ballot paper in the ballot box


Dipping a voter's finger in ink


A voter shows her hands with inked finger after voting

## Opening of voting

Observers positively evaluated opening procedures in more than two thirds of polling stations visited, demonstrating that most polling station staff had a good understanding of what was needed to begin voting. In almost all cases ballot boxes were correctly sealed after being shown as empty to party agents and observers present. However, at almost half of stations visited, voting was not ready to begin at 7am, either due to polling station staff taking longer than anticipated to complete opening procedures or, in the case of some stations in Sanag, due to the late arrival of ballot papers and other electoral materials. In most cases, substantial queues of voters had already formed at polling stations by 7am, and for the most part, people waited patiently for voting to begin.

Given the number of polling stations in Hargeisa particularly, and the thousands of staff involved, a degree of disorganisation was not surprising in that city. As the day progressed, though, IEOs observed a general improvement in the process. There were, however, apparently isolated irregularities: for example, observers noted in one instance a ballot box being removed from a polling station by unidentified men who loaded the box into a private, unmarked car and sped off. While we suspect that this was a good faith attempt by the NEC to distribute ballot papers better geographically in the city, it did not appear to follow due procedure.

## Polling environment and conduct of voting procedures

Overall, observers reported that polling procedures were well conducted in most polling stations visited. Polling station staff and party agents were mostly diligent in their tasks, and made impressive efforts to adhere to the spirit and direction of electoral procedure. In more than 99 per cent of polling stations observed, IEOs confirmed that all apparently eligible voters were permitted to vote, confirming Somaliland's strong commitment to universal suffrage.

**Table 1: Overall impressions of the quality of the polling process at polling stations observed by IEOs (per cent)**

| Overall impression | Very good, no incidents or irregularities | Good, minor incidents or irregularities | Poor, irregularities may affect integrity | Very poor, integrity in doubt |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 25.1 | 45.8 | 26.2 | 2.9 |
| **Total good/poor** | 70.9 | | 29.1 | |

*Not all polling stations visited could be evaluated. This is due to the short duration of some IEO visits, limited polling activity taking place during a visit, or stations where polling was already completed. Statistics have been adjusted to account for stations which could not be evaluated. This convention is followed for other figures given.*

Illiterate and disabled voters were appropriately assisted in 95 per cent of cases observed, which represents an improvement on the 2005 parliamentary election, when deficiencies in assistance were observed in 19 per cent of polling stations. The 2012 level was similar to the 97 per cent observed in the 2010 presidential election.[7] For all voters, respect for confidentiality remains limited, but this is mostly due to the actions of voters themselves who frequently display no reticence in divulging their choice to all those in the polling station. This, rather than any malicious attempt to compromise secrecy, meant that voting could hardly be described as 'secret'; a situation that has also been observed in past elections. IEOs noted that most voters understood the electoral procedures and were able to complete the process without difficulty. However, gaps in voter education remain. While the voting process was impressively speedy in many cases, other voters took up to 10 minutes to cast their ballots.

Voters queue outside a polling station in Burao

In a number of stations, particularly though not exclusively in Hargeisa, maintaining order in the crowds outside polling stations challenged the capacity of the security forces, who on several occasions resorted to firing in the air to disperse people. In one observed incident in Borama, police recklessly drove their vehicle into a sitting crowd, narrowly avoiding causing injury. Also outside Hargeisa, observers noted on a number of occasions that while situations remained calm, insufficient police were deployed in comparison to the size of crowds. In Erigavo, IEOs noted several instances in which crowds, impatient with waiting towards the end of the day, grew agitated, in two cases throwing stones onto the roof of the polling station in an effort to draw attention to their dissatisfaction. The more heated instances arose when ballot papers had been exhausted, followed by a long wait for new papers. However, even where there were disturbances, the situation inside polling stations remained mostly calm.

**Table 2: Summary of selected polling day observations by IEOs (per cent)**

|  | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Does the polling station appear to be managed in an orderly fashion? | 79.6 | 20.4 |
| Are all apparently eligible voters permitted to vote? | 99.3 | 0.7 |
| Is the polling process free of interference by any party (including security forces)? | 90 | 10 |

Security forces' understanding of their position in election security remains variable, and it was often observed that police officers were present inside polling stations even if the polling station chair had not apparently requested their presence, although they did not otherwise interfere in the process.

As already noted, the most common problem observed on election day pertained to voter safeguards to prevent multiple voting. While indelible ink was usually applied to voters' fingers in accordance with procedure, many voters had no difficulty in quickly removing the ink. In some areas, the level of organisation involved in removing ink was concerning, with bleach and other

materials used in close proximity to polling stations. Some polling stations ran low on ink. Some well-intentioned polling station staff diluted the remaining ink, unfortunately further decreasing its effectiveness. In one polling station in Erigavo, staff were observed confusing ink intended for stamp pads with that supplied for inking fingers, applying a significant quantity of scarce finger ink to a stamp pad.

A further and worryingly frequent observation was that tissues provided with polling station supplies for voters to wipe their fingers prior to inking were in fact used after inking in order to remove ink.



A member of polling staff gives instructions to a voter at a polling station in Burao

Without a register of voters, the indelible ink was the primary safeguard against multiple voting, and the ease with which it was overcome appeared to allow multiple voting to take place in many areas. Where ink was detected on voters' fingers, polling station staff usually prevented such individuals from voting again, although this was not always consistent. In a number of instances, polling station staff were observed smelling voters' fingers for bleach, and excluding those whose fingers were so tainted. IEOs noted that these efforts were often impressive, though they were not apparently sufficient given the scale of observed attempts at voting more than once.

Other efforts to improve electoral integrity were more successful. The swapping of polling station staff from region to region was implemented in most areas, and seems to have improved the professionalism with which the election was administered. While most polling station staff worked hard, most polling station chairs and secretaries, having received more training, were more effective than their scrutineer counterparts, some of whom underperformed in their specific areas of responsibility.

The size of the ballot paper and sometimes poor folding of ballots meant that ballot boxes were in many cases very full, even quite early in the day. A variety of solutions was employed to address the problem: some stations received additional ballot boxes, while in others a stick was used to compress papers already in the box. In a small number of cases non-approved containers (eg plastic bags) were used to hold additional ballots, or ballots were placed on top of the full ballot box. In a few instances, polling station staff were observed breaking the seals on ballot boxes in order to compress the ballot papers inside.

In some polling stations, staff failed to retain the ballot counterfoil, detaching the entire page from the ballot book. This may have weakened ballot reconciliation, as well as potentially compromising the secrecy of the vote. At least in some cases, this appeared to be due to poorly perforated ballot papers.

Thousands of party agents were deployed on election day. Most parties had representation at polling stations visited. However, many did not seem to be fully engaged with the voting process and were often passive, failing to challenge possibly contentious occurrences during voting and counting. Some did not fully understand their roles and became directly involved in election administration. Due to the number of parties involved in this election, large numbers of party representatives contributed to already cramped election stations becoming overly crowded.

Despite a ban on vehicle movement on election day, observers noted that many apparently unauthorised vehicles were moving on the roads, with at least some clearly transporting voters to polling stations. This may have facilitated further attempts at multiple voting, although it may also have been a benign (though still illegal) means of transporting voters in more remote areas to polling stations (to vote once).

In the most serious incident observed, in Hargeisa, in mid-afternoon two ballot boxes were removed from a polling station and moved to another, unknown location, despite being filled with ballots and having been used for most of election day. Fortunately, this appears to have been an isolated incident.

## Closing and counting

Observers watched closing and counting procedures in 12 of the 15 districts observed, although security considerations precluded full observation of the count in some areas. Counting procedures were positively evaluated in most cases, although the complications of conducting two stages of counting (first for party/association, then for candidate) made the process quite slow, if largely transparent. Conducted at the end of an extremely tiring day, in generally poor light conditions, counting was made even more challenging.



Party agents examine ballot papers at Hargeisa NEC centre

**Table 3: Overall impressions of the quality of the counting process at polling stations observed by IEOs (per cent)**

| Overall impression | Very good, no incidents or irregularities | Good, minor incidents or irregularities | Poor, irregularities may affect integrity | Very poor, integrity is in doubt |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 20 | 65 | 10 | 5 |
| Total good/poor | 85 | | 15 | |

Not all party agents and polling station staff were able to continue with counting until the process was completed, given the levels of exhaustion, although it was not mandatory for party agents to be present. With all staff fatigued, the accuracy of some polling station counts may have been reduced, causing possible complications in the district tabulation process. Still, most staff at most counts were observed working collaboratively with party agents and domestic observers to maintain an orderly count, and to clarify decisions and resolve concerns where raised.

Standards for judging voter intent and determining the validity of ballots were consistently applied, and ballots were in most cases correctly sorted by party or association and then by candidate.

One IEO team was denied access to the count in a polling station in Burao. Domestic observers were also not permitted to remain in that station. While regrettable, this was only a single incident, with most polling station staff doing nothing to impede observation of the count.

## Puntland and South-Central Somali involvement

While tensions between Puntland and Somaliland prevented voting from taking place in some localities in Sool and Sanag, and the Mogadishu government remains sceptical of Somaliland's electoral aspirations, the 2012 election marked the first formal engagement from civil society groups from Garowe and Mogadishu on election day.

The Garowe-based Puntland Non-State Actors Association (PUNSAA) and Mogadishu-based Somalia South-Central Non-State Actors group (SOSCENSA) each sent a two-person delegation to observe the technical process of running an election. PUNSAA and SOSCENSA delegates were accredited by the NEC, and accompanied teams of international observers to visit polling stations in the Marodi Jeh region. PUNSAA subsequently prepared a report, focusing on the implications of the Somaliland experience for Puntland's own scheduled local council elections (Abdirisak Said Nur, 2013).

Notwithstanding tensions between Somaliland and other governments in the Somali Horn, it is surely self-evident that electoral systems and experiences in Somaliland must be of interest in precisely those areas. Puntland, in particular, have consciously adopted many elements of the Somaliland electoral system, and are currently advancing their own electoral cycle on that basis. The IEO mission welcomes this nascent dialogue.

# Post-election period

The period following the 28 November election has been marked by high levels of tension in some areas of Somaliland, as well as by an impressive, largely peaceful, renegotiation of political space as political associations who were unsuccessful in securing one of the top three positions agreed, in most instances, to merge with successful parties. There were also violent demonstrations, however, resulting in the deaths of several people, and the Xaqsoor political association continued to protest against the election process and result long after the other unsuccessful associations.

## Declaration of results

The first major announcement of results from the election took place on 1 December, at which stage preliminary results from nine areas in five of the six regions were declared (Yusuf M Hasan, 2012b). With no results yet in for the most populous region, Marodi Jeh, it was too early at that stage to calculate final winners, although early dissatisfaction with the outcome in northern Awdal region (specifically Lughaya) offered a hint of the enduring dispute that was to come.

That dispute deepened as more results were released over subsequent days, and when the results for Hargeisa were announced on Thursday 6 December, riots broke out in Hargeisa. Protestors blocked roads in the Ahmed Dhagax area of Hargeisa and burned tyres. Protestors clashed with police, who opened fire with live rounds. Three people were reported by the BBC Somali Service to have been killed, and seven injured (Garowe Online, 2012b). Many of the protestors were supporters of the political association Xaqsoor, incensed at their poor showing in the preliminary results announced by the NEC. The Chair of Xaqsoor, Hassan Isse Jama, quickly addressed supporters through the BBC, criticising the election and vote counting, but urging his supporters to "safeguard the peace, a peace we all cherish so much" (Goth M Goth, 2012). His calls for calm helped to ease immediate passions, though the dispute continued.

On Saturday 8 December, the NEC announced that they would recount the 230,000 votes cast in Hargeisa, but four political associations were insistent that the recount be nationwide (Sabahi, 2012d). Xaqsoor issued an 'Open letter to international observers and other representatives' the following day, condemning "vote rigging committed by the ruling party", and calling on international observers to note that "Somaliland's future hangs by a thread" (Xaqsoor, numerous signatories, 2012).

Over the subsequent days, the four disgruntled political associations remained locked in negotiation with the NEC over this issue. Then, on 10 December, the NEC announced that they had been unable to reach agreement with the political associations, and that, rather than recounting in Hargeisa, all disputed results should be adjudicated by the courts (Yusuf M Hasan, 2012a). The NEC Chair's explanation was that they had discovered that 27 ballot boxes from the Faroweyne district of Hargeisa had been counted twice. The tallying error had been rectified, but he stated that, seeing that other parties would not agree on other elements of the recount, the NEC had referred all Hargeisa results to the Marodi Jeh court, corrected for the Faroweyne discrepancy, but otherwise without any recount (Sabahi, 2012c).

This decision not to proceed with a recount incensed several of the political associations, with Umadda leader, Mohamed Abdi Gaboose, accusing the NEC of manipulating the results and calling for them to resign, while decrying Kulmiye for "killing the democratic state of Somaliland … which now should be buried" (Garowe Online, 2012a). Xaqsoor's Hasan Isse Jama called on his supporters to rally once again in protest, insisting that he had video evidence of electoral fraud by the ruling Kulmiye party (Ayaanle, 2012; Qalinle Hussein, 2012a). Calling for support from other political associations to mount "massive demonstrations" on Wednesday 12 December, he maintained that he had evidence of discarded valid ballots, uncounted votes, video of Kulmiye supporters "stamping ballot papers", and also burnt ballot papers. The Umadda leader joined this

call, declaring that he would hold a press conference to present his evidence of fraud "within 24 hours" (Qaran News, 2012d; Sabahi, 2012a).

In the event, on 14 December the NEC published the results they had adjusted to correct the Faroweyne error, and the Marodi Jeh court confirmed the results for Hargeisa, Salaxley, Gabiley and Balligubadle two days later (Egge, 2012; Sabahi, 2012c). Although there had not been a full recount of the Hargeisa results, adjustments arising from the Faroweyne correction saw two councillors from the Rays and Dalsan political associations lose their seats, to be replaced by others from the same associations. Although this did not change the overall association share, the two newly-unsuccessful candidates both represented the Ida'ada area of June 26th District in Hargeisa. This prompted renewed rioting, though on this occasion, no casualties were reported (Qalinle Hussein, 2012b; Sabahi, 2012c).



Ballot boxes at Hargeisa NEC centre

Finally, on 26 December at a formal ceremony attended by the leaders of six of the seven political parties/associations (Xaqsoor did not attend), the RAC declared that Kulmiye, Waddani and UCID had topped the poll, and had therefore each qualified to take up one of the three positions as a political party registered to contest elections over the coming decade (Sabahi, 2012b; Yusuf M Hasan, 2012c).

This closed the chapter on the process of announcing final results, although Xaqsoor continued to vigorously dispute the outcome.

## Why the post-election dispute?

The intractability of the dispute over the election results is a clear indication of the depth of underlying tensions. Unsurprisingly, as in many contexts, tensions originating from much deeper and more long-standing socio-cultural traditions tend to find expression in politics. In the Somaliland case, those tensions are rooted in clan affiliation. Perhaps more unexpected is that, in spite of the focus on the Hargeisa result, the most significant disagreements actually relate to areas outside Hargeisa, and most particularly in Sool region, and in Erigavo in Sanag, and Seylac and Lughaya in Awdal.

The issue in Erigavo erupted before the election as an argument between the incumbent mayor, Ismail Haji Nur, and his party Waddani, who felt the party of government, Kulmiye, were colluding

with the NEC in hampering Ismail Haji's efforts to secure a renewed electoral mandate. Protests on the afternoon before election day saw tyres set alight outside the NEC offices, and the road blocked (Khalid Yusuf, 2012). These protests delayed the distribution of ballot boxes, with the result that voting the following day was delayed in Erigavo and in the surrounding areas.

The root of this dispute lay in the long-term and fractious relations between the locally more numerous Habar Yoonis sub-clan, who predominantly support Waddani, and their Isaaq rivals, the Habar Je'lo, who have long tended to support Kulmiye. In the event, Waddani was successful in Erigavo, and the incumbent, Ismail Haji Nur, was re-elected to the council and re-elected mayor by the councillors. The government stepped in to annul the mayoral election, calling for a new election to be held on 23 December (Qaran News, 2012a). However, Ismail Haji won that new contest as well, so has been confirmed in his position as Mayor of Erigavo (Qaran News, 2012b), which he has occupied since 2002 (previously for the UDUB party). Having negotiated his return to the mayoralty, he was quick to call on Erigavo's residents to set aside their differences and "resume the paused nation-building" process (Geeska, 2012).

Elsewhere in Sanag and Sool, a different set of relationships were promoting conflict. In their open letter to 'international observers and other representatives', Xaqsoor made explicit reference to their attempts to build an alliance amongst some of the non-Isaaq clan groupings. They noted their decision to appoint a First Deputy leader from the Dhulbahante clan of Sool, and a Second Deputy leader from the Isse clan of Awdal, where most parties had tended to opt for a combination of Isaaq leadership with a Gadabuursi deputy (Xaqsoor, numerous signatories, 2012). Naturally, this selection was intended to build support amongst precisely those communities in Sool and Awdal. This added considerably to Xaqsoor's sense of grievance over the conduct and outcome of the election. They note in their letter that ballot boxes destined for the Warsangeli town of Dhahar were "deliberately held in Erigavo and later placed in the military barracks ... where ballot-stuffing took place" (Xaqsoor, numerous signatories, 2012). In reality, Puntland forces moved into Dhahar town (over which both Puntland and Somaliland lay claim) the night prior to election day, resulting in a decision by the NEC to abandon voting in that locality (Sabahi, 2012e). However, as the observation mission understands it, the election was then decided on a similar basis to past elections, rather than through 'ballot stuffing'. That this outcome disadvantaged Xaqsoor, though, is unquestionable: as a new political association, they could not benefit from the outcome, effectively losing the votes that would have been cast for them in Dhahar. A similar situation occurred in Xudun town in Sool, when Khatuumo forces clashed with those from Somaliland, again forcing an abandonment of voting in a Xaqsoor stronghold (Khalid Yusuf, 2012).

While events in Sanag and Sool provide an illustration of the politicisation of clan, events in Awdal have proven even more difficult to resolve, and arguably show a shift from the usual mix of politics and kinship towards a situation that is increasingly taking the form of a primarily inter-clan stand-off. Where Xaqsoor had set out to build a constituency amongst Isse voters, who dominate many localities in western Awdal, Kulmiye were seeking to win the votes of Gadabuursi voters, who predominate in other parts of Awdal. They had previously strongly supported the government of Gadabuursi President Rayaale and his UDUB party, but between the 2010 presidential election and the 2012 local council elections, UDUB collapsed, opening the way for Kulmiye to try to win support from that clan.

Over the years, the Gadabuursi have tended to build strength in Awdal, at times at the expense of their Isse neighbours. In the 2012 election, Kulmiye candidates were so successful in mobilising Awdal supporters that they swept the seats that had been held by UDUB councillors, including in previously Isse-dominated villages in western Awdal. This was felt nowhere more keenly than the ancient coastal town of Seylac, where Kulmiye's Gadabuursi candidates secured a majority on the

council. They consequently elected a Gadabuursi mayor, incensing the Isse population who have long held a large majority there (Qaran News, 2012c). The argument started prior to the election, with accusations of unfair campaigning by Kulmiye, and extended through election day, when Xaqsoor accused the government's Gadabuursi Vice President of "igniting tribal tensions" and arriving in Lughaya town replete with pre-filled ballot boxes (Qalinle Hussein, 2012a; Xaqsoor, numerous signatories, 2012). After the election, the situation seemed set for violence, as Isse militia groups were mobilised. Although the militia were encouraged to stand down, and tensions eased somewhat, at the time of writing the situation remains unresolved, with Isse councillors refusing to attend council meetings, and eventually resigning en masse on 25 February 2013 (Mahdi Dayax, 2013).

## Political mergers

Clan plays an important but far from inflexible role in Somali politics. That observation should be no more contentious than parallel observations about the role of class or other socio-cultural institutions in any other territory, though the issue of clan tends to invoke emotional responses from all sides. The reality is that clan remains a vitally important foundation for Somali social and political interaction, and as such, it is little surprise that many political contests and disputes take on a clan dimension. In parallel with the long-running disputes in Sool, Sanag and Awdal, there has been a great deal of work on rebuilding some of the alliances damaged by those disputes.

Somaliland's electoral system makes no allowance for local councillors who are independent of one of the three constitutionally-mandated political parties. This has the advantage of promoting a post-election period of negotiation in which unsuccessful political associations seek attractive terms under which to merge with one of the three parties.

After mounting such a strong and sustained protest over the manner in which the elections had been conducted, and their outcome, Xaqsoor appear to be moving to distance themselves from the Gadabuursi/Isse conflict in Awdal, and more broadly to make peace with the government. Indeed, their efforts in this direction see them now in talks with Kulmiye about the terms of a merger between the two parties. Initially, they strenuously denied these assertions (Qaran News, 2013b), but more recently they have confessed that talks have been underway, and that a tie-up between the two is likely (Egge, 2013; Somaliland Informer, 2013).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, in the light of the level of their dissatisfaction with the election, Xaqsoor is the last of the unsuccessful political associations to announce a merger with one of the three parties. Umadda leader, Dr Mohamed Abdi Gaboose, negotiated the terms under which his political association would merge with opposition party Waddani in January 2013. Under the terms of that agreement, a number of Umadda officials were to be appointed to positions within Waddani (SomaliNet, 2013). This move is widely seen as consolidating support in a number of regions, and most particularly amongst voters from the Habar Yoonis clan.

Kulmiye has also accepted merger proposals from Rays and Dalsan associations, as well as from the remaining members of UDUB party (Qaran News, 2013a).

These mergers are important in understanding the current balance of power between regions, sub-clans and individuals, and, coupled with the disputes that erupted after the election, establish the environment in which the build-up to the next elections will take place.

# Recommendations

As we highlight in our introduction and outline in our election day review in this report, a critical difference between this and previous elections lay in the lack of a system able to effectively and systematically counter attempts at multiple voting. This means that while the election in all its phases was free, this 'equal opportunity cheating', or to use more prosaic language, widespread multiple voting, prevents us from declaring the election 'fair'. We do not have definitive information or evidence that would enable us to declare who had gained the greatest advantage, but we do believe we have sufficient evidence to state that, in our opinion, successful attempts at multiple voting occurred at very significant levels. Our judgement, however, is that multiple voting occurred on a widespread basis, facilitated by electoral candidates regardless of their affiliation to specific political associations and parties. Our analysis of voting patterns bears out this impression, although that too falls short of a standard that would support a clear and unambiguous declaration that the process was 'fair'. We have instead elected to employ the phrasing that the election was largely 'free', and that the result was, to the best of our ability to judge, a generally 'credible' reflection of the will of Somalilanders. Our recommendations are based on this deliberation and context.

## Non-partisan nature of political appointees

↘ There needs to be greater clarity in deciding who is allowed to campaign for political parties and how far political appointments to parastatal organisations should be seen as political or civil service posts.

## Voter registration

↘ In advance of the next elections, we recommend that Somaliland adopt a robust system for voter/citizen registration. While we acknowledge the difficulties encountered with the previous voter registration in 2008-9, we feel there remains a strong need to find a workable solution in the near future, which is then maintained and improved through forthcoming elections. This would reduce fraud and improve confidence in the electoral process.

↘ A voter register offers greater control over the balloting process and the election authority. It would also ease the role of polling station staff in assessing voter eligibility and administering procedures on election day.

## Voter and civic education

↘ Although progress has been made through successive elections to educate Somalilanders on their role in the democratic process, further attention should be given to voter education. Voter education ought to be conceptualised more broadly to include both practical aspects of voting and a broader civic education programme with an emphasis on the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

↘ Traditional practical voter education programmes should highlight age and eligibility of voters, what to expect from the campaign period, procedures and practicalities for voting day and voters' rights.

↘ A countrywide civic education campaign should emphasise the importance of voter integrity, participation and behaviour. Multiple voting undermines the democratic process, with the potential to significantly damage Somaliland's international reputation for free and fair elections. Civic education campaigns should be inclusive, involving community leaders, elders, religious leaders, women and youth in town hall meetings, dialogue sessions and media outreach. Given Somaliland's very young electorate, social media and mobile communications may also provide a useful and cost-effective messaging tool.

## Polling station staff

↘ The competent polling station staff developed through this election process should be drawn upon and developed for the future. Where polling station staff failed to demonstrate competence in their role, they should not be re-employed. A basic review should be conducted to assess competence of station staff and their suitability.

↘ In future a number of planning issues could be considered. The issue of early identification of polling staff is essential so that comprehensive training can be undertaken.

↘ Electoral authorities need to be more aware of the issues involved in planning for staff to face a long and gruelling election day. Polling station staff should be deployed early enough to ensure that they are not over-tired and have time to orient themselves in advance of polling. Polling station staff should meet in advance of election day to discuss their roles and conduct a trial run in advance of polling.

↘ If breaks are required by station staff for lunch etc, provision should be made in advance and break times, if decided upon, should be made explicit to avoid confusion and impatience amongst voters.

↘ Regional swapping of polling station staff was observed as a key factor in ensuring authority and integrity of staff. It would be useful to further ensure swapping includes all regions and all station staff in future.

## Polling stations

↘ A minimum size, minimum lighting and minimum furniture requirement should be considered when selecting future polling station sites. A number of stations were observed as being too small, too dark or lacking appropriate desks and chairs for staff, party agents and observers. More attention also needs to be paid to layout, for both election day and for the count. Stations should be capable of adequately accommodating all authorised persons, in addition to a smooth flow of voters.

## Queuing

↘ More thought needs to be given to the external environs of polling stations. Election authorities should think about how best to control and manage crowds. Police should be given further training on crowd control techniques and be deployed in sufficient numbers. It may also be useful to consider the use of mediators, additional polling station staff, local volunteers or elders in easing tensions and controlling the environment outside stations.

## Indelible ink

↘ Inking fingers, as a safeguard against multiple voting, was not sufficiently effective. If ink is to be retained as a safeguard of election integrity, then it should be trialled in advance and tested for durability to bleach removal, and for the ease with which it can be distinguished from henna and decorative stains. The sequence in which voters are inked should also be reconsidered.

↘ The polling station staff member assigned to act as scrutineer checking for ink ought to be carefully recruited to ensure they have sufficient presence and authority in making decisions on voter eligibility. Ink application should be thorough and we recommend that tissues be excluded from election materials in future, as they were observed being used to wipe off ink.

### Domestic observers

↘ The increased and consistent presence of domestic observers in almost all parts of the country is to be commended. It is vital that Somaliland continues to develop a cadre of local observers who are capable of asking difficult questions where they observe irregularities, without crossing the line into participating in the process.

↘ It may be advisable that future local observer teams include observation of the external environs of the polling station in their role.

### Party agents

↘ Broad coverage and presence of party agents at polling stations was observed as an important safeguard against irregularities. It provides competing parties with confidence in and observation of the electoral process at a local level. Parties should consider this an important aspect of election day in future, as it is a clear positive in ensuring transparency and oversight.

### Ballot papers/ballot boxes

↘ It was clear that, in this instance, the size of the ballot papers meant that ballot boxes were of insufficient size to contain them. Consideration of ballot paper/ballot box size should be included in future planning.

↘ The importance of attaching all ballot box seals is crucial to ensuring the integrity of ballots cast. The process for sealing and unsealing ballot boxes must be stressed during training of polling station staff.

↘ Additionally, ballot papers and counterfoils should be tested in future to ensure that perforation is easy and ensures retention of counterfoils. Serial numbers on ballots could potentially compromise voter confidentiality and alternative means of ballot security such as random numbers should be investigated.

### Transport ban

↘ If a transport ban on election day is to be effective, it should be consistently enforced by the police and other relevant authorities.

↘ We acknowledge the difficulty of enforcement in rural areas, but our experience in this and previous elections suggests that there was little effective enforcement outside of Hargeisa and perhaps one or two other larger urban areas. More effective enforcement would have the dual effect of improving general security by making attacks on polling stations more difficult, and reducing the ease of multiple voting.

### Counting

↘ Knowledge of and greater familiarity with the recommended polling station layout for counting would help improve the administration of counting procedures.

# Appendix: The IEO's media campaign

The IEO mission conducted its own media campaign to garner coverage of the mission, as it had done in the 2005 and 2010 missions. In 2010, the mission was able to benefit from extensive international coverage, thanks to the strong general interest in the presidential election and the international media presence in Somaliland, with the mission becoming a point of contact for journalists on the ground.

The media effort for 2012 faced a tougher challenge, in that the local elections were not as likely to garner as much international attention. However, the media aspect of the mission remained prominent, and ensured wide local coverage of the international mission, as well as ensuring that the IEO mission has remained an ongoing source of contact for international media covering Somaliland.

As with 2010, one core team member assumed responsibility, with a second being given responsibility for photography. A third member assumed particular responsibility for social media. Once again, the media mission coordinated fully with the Progressio office, meeting several times in advance to establish procedures and protocols for press releases, security concerns and use of photographs. Press releases were signed off by mission coordinators and seen by Progressio before being made public. Material was fed to the media from both Progressio's London office and the team on the ground, which maintained its own mailing list and published press releases on the Somaliland Focus (UK) website also, as well as working closely with local and international media present in Somaliland.

The direct IEO media effort commenced with a press release in late October announcing the mission. Three further press releases were written on the ground, ahead of polling day, directly following polling day and to coincide with the release of the interim report to the NEC as the bulk of the IEOs left Somaliland. A further press release followed the confirmation of results in late December, with an interim statement in mid-December during the period of results dispute. Press releases were published on the Progressio and Somaliland Focus (UK) websites; URLs for the Progressio website are listed at the end of this appendix.

The releases on the ground were accompanied by press conferences in Hargeisa. Throughout the mission, the media coordinator made personal contact with journalists both on the ground, in the region and elsewhere, and coordinated interviews with the IEO team coordinators. The response from local media was enthusiastic, with strong attendance at press conferences and extensive coverage of the mission, including panel discussions on Somali National Television featuring the coordinators, and widespread reproduction and circulation of press releases.

At first, the response from international media was sparse, despite numerous attempts to call on personal media contacts both locally and in the countries and regions of origin of IEO team members. However, on and immediately after polling day, there was a surge of interest from international media, with extensive coverage from Voice of America in particular, and mission coordinators contacted on the ground for interviews on polling day.

After departure from Hargeisa, the media coordinator remained in touch with the one post-poll team member who remained on the ground throughout the results-dispute period. Upon announcement of the official party results a final press release was issued. The timing, just before Christmas, worked against wide international coverage: however, Voice of America featured a report and interview with one of the mission coordinators, and local media again reported widely.

Throughout the mission, and especially following polling day, the wording of press releases was subject to careful consideration and wide consultation. The need to ensure accuracy, to avoid

reaching premature conclusions and to avoid statements that might compromise security had to be balanced against the need to respond quickly to developments and to allow voice to the range of IEO experiences and observations.

The initial press release announcing the mission outlined the tense background against which the election was taking place, and the logistical challenges faced, but also expressed confidence in the process. Dr Michael Walls, the mission's joint coordinator, said: "These elections are an important next step in the institutionalisation of a system that brings together representative democratic institutions with traditional social organisational structures."

The next press release, written ahead of polling day, reported good progress:

> So far, the team has been pleased to observe lively and largely peaceful campaigning and a noticeable lack of serious tension. Discussions with civil society, local organisations and key players including Somaliland's president have gone smoothly, underlining our sense of Somalilanders' broad commitment to the political process…
>
> This year's poll will determine the shape of Somaliland's future political terrain… With the stakes so high, the potential for post-poll disputes is real.
>
> However, the team is happy to note that Somalilanders' abilities to resolve crises using long-established traditions of discourse and negotiation have been put to the test during the campaign, and proved effective.

The immediate post-poll press release focused on polling day itself:

> With a fuller team assessment to come in early December, preliminary indications suggest that, despite some reports of violence, and no voting taking place in some disputed districts in the country's east, Somaliland's electorate has, once again, turned out with enthusiasm and in large numbers.
>
> Particularly heartening has been wide participation by female voters, a boost in numbers of female candidates and, thanks to the lowering of the qualifying age, youthful candidates standing in significant numbers. However, at this interim stage, a few concerns have emerged, including, once again, apparent attempts at underage and multiple voting.
>
> Observers have also reported excessive use of force by security forces outside polling stations in some areas; some poor organisation surrounding the electoral process, including delayed opening of polling stations; insufficient electoral materials; and technical problems with voter safeguards, such as the ink designed to prevent multiple voting.
>
> The team encourages Somaliland's National Electoral Commission to ensure a transparent and accurate tabulation process and declaration of final results.

The release at the conclusion of the in-country mission underlined that final findings were dependent on the integrity of the final tallying and declaration process:

> With the tabulation of final results still underway, it is not yet appropriate to provide an overall assessment of the election. A small team will remain in Somaliland to observe post-poll processes, including the declaration of results and the work of the RAC in determining which three political parties go forward to contest national elections for the next decade. A further statement will follow the declaration of results.

At this stage, we can cautiously report many positives. Election campaigning appears to have been competitive and pluralistic… Parties and associations generally respected the requirement [restricting campaigning]… As for election day, most polling station procedures and staff were evaluated positively by observers. Where problems occurred, the NEC usually addressed them quickly and effectively.

However, we must also report some concerns. The most serious problems stemmed from the absence of a voter registry and weaknesses in related safeguards [which] made polling vulnerable to multiple voting. In advance of the next elections, we recommend that Somaliland adopt a robust system for voter/citizen registration, in order to deter fraud and improve confidence in the electoral process.

We are also concerned about the understanding of the parties and the electorate of the implementation of the formula in Law 14, Article 6, which will determine which of the contesting parties and associations become registered parties… we encourage both the NEC and the RAC to continue to work transparently in the district and regional tabulation process and declare results in a timely fashion.
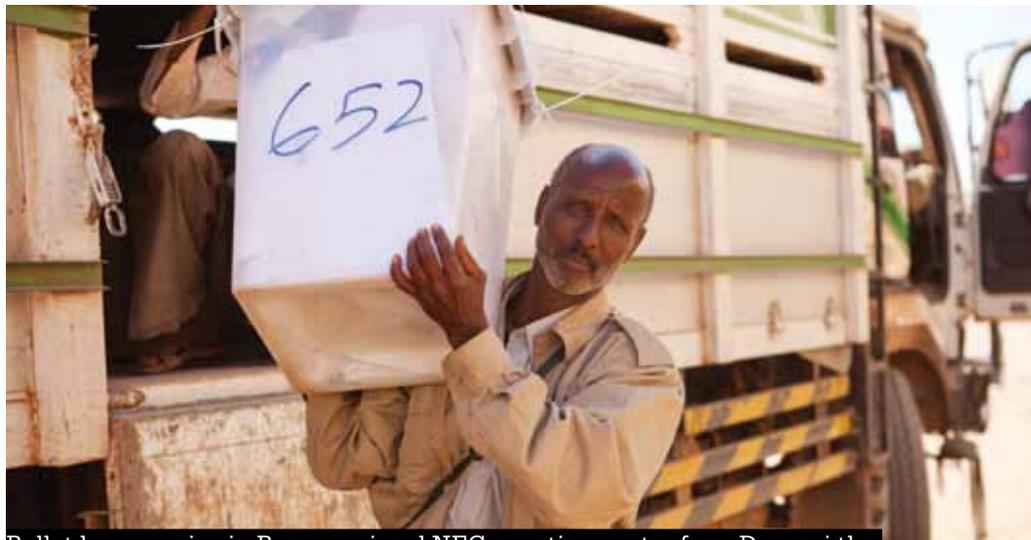


Ballot boxes arrive in Burao regional NEC counting centre from Duruqsi the day after the elections

The release on the declaration of party results emphasised the positive while underlining the mission's concerns and future recommendations, and confirmed that a final report was forthcoming:

> With results finally confirmed in Somaliland's local elections, held on November 28th 2012, the international election observation mission … congratulates the people of Somaliland and the NEC on a lively and enthusiastic election campaign and voting process.

> Our post-poll concerns follow those we expressed immediately following polling day, when we noted that observers reported attempts at multiple and underage voting and what appeared to be attempts to mobilise voters to engage in these attempts. While observers also noted polling station staff attempting to prevent such activity, such reports pose concerns for the integrity of Somaliland's electoral process.

Now, a month on from voting, it is important that disputes around the election outcome are peacefully settled. Without peaceful settlement of disputes, Somaliland's admirable democratic tradition may be damaged. We urge all Somalilanders to respect the electoral laws and procedures, so that future elections can be approached effectively and with confidence.

Specifically, we repeat the recommendation we made immediately following polling day: in advance of the next elections, we call for Somaliland to adopt a robust system for voter/ citizen registration, in order to improve confidence in the electoral process.

In closing, we would like to highlight the many positives around this election: once again, Somalilanders showed how dedicated they are to the unique democratic spirit they have crafted from their challenging history. In particular, we are delighted to note real progress in inclusion of youth and women in the process: the apparent election of 10 female candidates represents a huge step forward, and we look forward to further progress on this front.

Dr Michael Walls, the mission's joint coordinator, said: "Somaliland has made enormous progress in achieving a difficult transition to a form of representative democracy. We have long been impressed with that process, and call on all Somalilanders to maintain their commitment to a peaceful form of democratic and participatory decision making."

While the post-poll environment saw some criticism of the IEO mission by local media and political forces, this criticism tended to be implicit.[8] In this respect, the importance of carefully considered wording in releases cannot be stressed enough: elections and the declaration of results are inevitably times of heightened sensitivity.

Beyond traditional press coverage, the mission received wide coverage through regular blogs from the ground on both the Somaliland Focus (UK) and Progressio websites; personal blogs and articles by IEO team members during and after the mission; circulation of mission releases by other organisations such as the Rift Valley Institute; media coverage of individual observers (including a *Westmoreland Gazette* article about one team member Robin Le Mare); and efforts by individual observers (such as an Italian-language interview on Vatican Radio).

The social media effort was stepped up significantly from past campaigns, especially via Twitter. Mission and general election news and material was widely circulated and frequently retweeted, with numbers of followers growing significantly over the campaign, and wide usage of the dedicated #somalilandelection hashtag (nominated as 'hashtag of the day' by *The Guardian* during the mission). The presence of an official photographer was once again very valuable for ensuring visual media coverage and at press conferences, with images widely circulated via Twitter and photo-sharing site Pinterest, and maintenance of a photographic record for ongoing stock, archive and exhibition purposes.

## Press releases

October 29 2012 – Progressio, DPU and Somaliland Focus to lead international observation mission to Somaliland's district and council elections http://www.progressio.org.uk/blog/poverty-bites/progressio-joins-international-election-observer-mission-somaliland

November 26 2012 – International election observation team reports good progress towards Somaliland's local council elections http://www.progressio.org.uk/blog/ground/good-progress-reported-somaliland

November 29 2012 – First thoughts of the international election observation team http://www.progressio.org.uk/blog/ground/first-reflections-local-elections

December 3 2012 [updated 13 December] – International election observers congratulate Somaliland on a largely peaceful and transparent expression of democratic will in local elections – but concerned at weaknesses in safeguards against multiple voting http://www.progressio.org.uk/blog/ground/somaliland-elections-congratulations-not-without-concerns

December 20 2012 – International election observers applaud commitment to democracy, but say action is required to ensure future election integrity http://www.progressio.org.uk/blog/news/lively-and-enthusiastic-elections-some-lessons-be-learnt

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# Notes

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2   Kibble, S and Walls, M (2012) Preparing for local elections in Somaliland, Progressio, London, http://www.progressio.org.uk/sites/progressio.org.uk/files/Preparing-for-local-elections-Sld-2012.pdf, accessed 20 May 2013.

3   For example, only two women were selected for Parliament in the 2005 elections, with one of those securing her seat as a result of her position on her party list rather than being directly elected.

4   43 of 82 MPs attended the session in September 2012, in which the quota was debated; eight voted in favour of the quota, while 31 voted against, and four abstained.

5   A woman's loyalty is considered to be split between the clan of her father and that of her husband, creating a significant hurdle for any woman trying to win the trust of voters whose decisions are still predicated in many instances on clan interest.

6   The report is available to download from the Progressio website at http://www.progressio.org.uk/sites/progressio.org.uk/files/Somaliland-elections-2012-Media-Monitoring-Report.pdf

7   Walls, M and Kibble, S (2011) Somaliland: change and continuity, Progressio, London, p 30, http://www.progressio.org.uk/sites/default/files/Somaliland-elections-2010-report.pdf, accessed 20 May 2013.

8   See p28 and p30 for information on Xaqsoor's 'open letter to international observers'.