



# Youth Situation: *Challenges and opportunities.*

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# Brief Background

- The definition of youth in Somaliland is set by the National Youth Policy. It sets the age bracket of youth as the range between **15—35 years**.
- **70% of Somaliland's population** are below **the age of 30 years**. Out of this proportion, **40%** are between the ages of **15 to 29**, hence, Somaliland experiences a **“Youth Bulge”** – a *situation that if not attended early could undermine any gains in peace and stability made over the last two day*.
- Regarding youth development initiatives, **priorities** and the **targets** benchmarked by the PSGs of the SSA: ***employment and civic engagement; sports and recreations; participation in governance; gender mainstreaming; creativity and innovation***, etc.

# PROGRESS: Initiatives embarked upon Youth Empowerment and Engagement

- Looking the situation from the perspectives of the **National Youth Policy**, **NDP** and most importantly of the **SSA**—a unique development trajectory that Somaliland and its international partners embarked upon, there are progresses that are scaling up.

## a) PSG1. Promoting Inclusive Politics:

- A progress was made on youth participation in politics as **Law #20/2001** was amended and thereby youth were allowed to run for the last local election. A fair number of youth were elected as **local councilors including mayors and deputy mayors**.

## Cont...PROGRESS: Initiatives embarked upon Youth Empowerment and Engagement

- Youth CSOs actively take part in the advancement of Country's democratic governance and thereby are part and parcel of the Civil Society actors that significantly support the electoral governance. For example, youth work as **managers, supervisors and observers** of any elections since 2001.

### **b) PSG.2 Security:**

- Vast awareness campaigns were conducted to consolidate the fight against “Tahriib” and human trafficking.
- The “**Promoting Security through Youth Engagement**” Project in Buroa has supported more than 1000 youth-at-risk and street children. As a result, cases of petty thefts and youth gang-inflicted violence reduced in Buroa.

# Cont...PROGRESS: Initiatives embarked upon Youth Empowerment and Engagement

## c) PSG3: Promoting Justice:

- A large number of young lawyers including women lawyers regularly join the **judiciary sector** and are now certified **lawyers and attorneys** at the courts. A **youth representative** is currently a member of the National Justice Committee.
- There are **ongoing campaigns and critical lobbying** led by women activists and other Civil Society actors on enacting specific laws against Gender-based Violence and violations of women rights.
- The Findings of the **“Youth Violence Baseline Survey”** is expected to lead the key **“Youth Empowerment”** Stakeholders to the adoption of effective strategies of promoting justice for protecting the rights of women and marginalized groups.

# Cont...PROGRESS: Initiatives embarked upon Youth Empowerment and Engagement

## d) PSG 4: Economic Empowerment for Youth (Employment):

- Entrepreneurship was identified as a viable intervention alternative for youth employment by a number of results of forums, conferences and surveys. In this regard, a number of interventions including **SBF**, Projects funded by USAID, etc. were conducted. For example, in the last 8 months, **SONYO created employment for 60 young entrepreneurs across the country by establishing small businesses for them.**
- Establishment of **“Youth Development Fund”** was officially launched by the President of Somaliland while the Bill for governing the Fund was drafted and submitted by the Ministry of Youth in collaborations with **SONYO Umbrella.**

## Cont...PROGRESS: Initiatives embarked upon Youth Empowerment and Engagement

### d) PSG 4: Economic Empowerment for Youth (Employment):

- The Public Sector has absorbed a fair number of young graduates in the last couple of years. Within the last three years, for example, around **4,000** youth were employed at the public sector.

- The Ministry of Labor established **the first Job Center in Hargeisa**.

### e) PSG 5: Revenue and Services:

- The National Curriculum is currently under review for promoting quality and relevance of education to create match between orientation of education institutions and demands of labor market. Initiatives of **promoting TVET sector** are also going on.
- The GoSL has substantially increased its budget for promoting youth. For example, Ministry of Finance will donate **USD100,000** building a Youth Resource Center including SONYO's Headquarter. In addition, Ministry of Youth will support the Sports Sector in 2015.

# CHALLENGES facing the youth

- In spite of the “Progress” made, there are multiple and complex factors—raising alarming concerns—that still challenge the youth:
  - a) **High Unemployment** and limited career opportunities,
  - b) **Limited funding** for youth empowerment,
  - c) **Inadequate productive engagement**, for example, limited facilities and spaces for sports and recreation,
  - d) **Cultural Barriers** leading to Poor Political Participation and Representation,
  - e) **Legal barriers** limiting youth democratic participation
  - f) **Illegal Emigration (Tahriib)**, and
  - g) **Substance Abuse (addiction to chewing Khat)**.

## Cont... CHALLENGES facing the youth

- Around 75% of the youth are unemployed as indicated by the findings of the ‘Youth Status Survey” conducted in 2010.
- There is only one Job Center stationed in Hargeisa, and yet the access to information by both the employers and the job seekers is very limited, which adds up to the malfunction of the Labor Market.
- The Sports and Recreational Centers available are very limited. Only around 10 playgrounds exist in Hargeisa—a city in which around 1 million people live.
- There are still legal barriers and a low awareness of youth communities on their rights of political participation.
- Funding availability for youth promotion is quite inadequate.

# **Way Forward:**

*including the Interventions in the pipeline*

- The **Budgetary Allocation** of Somaliland's Government for youth development is going to be increased in the **coming year, 2015**.
- A National Youth Forum and Stakeholders' Conference will be held late in November by SONYO and Ministry of Youth with the support of Interpeace. The aim is to draw a **Comprehensive Youth Empowerment Roadmap** in consistence with the targets and milestones of the SSA, NDP and NYP.
- **TVET Institutes and schools** are planned to be soon established.
- A **comprehensive qualification and certification framework** for TVET will be soon finalized by the MoE in collaboration with the EU so that the Career and Skill Development of our youth can be promoted.
- A number of **youth centers** including playgrounds will be built in the regions.

## **Way Forward: including the Interventions in the pipeline**

- There will be SDF projects for generating **employment for the youth** through multiple approaches.
- The recently-launched **Youth Development Fund** will be put into operation by building on the results of the previous interventions.
- The **legal and policy framework** regarding economic growth will be improved on through reviews, amendments and alignment for ensuring better investment climate and economic environment.
- Most stakeholders from state and non-state actors are starting **to critically emphasize on youth and gender issues**.
- Youth CSOs will tend to launch critical advocacy for engaging elected local councils in creating credible spaces for youth engagement and entertainment.

# Recommendations: What we need to consider

- The future of this Country as well as that of the broader Horn of Africa region lie in the investment in our youth—who are the countrymen and women of today and also tomorrow.
- Substantial Increase of funding and technical resources for “Youth Empowerment” is critically needed,
- The esteemed donors supporting the SSA need to critically consider Somaliland’s “Youth Agenda” if the peace, development process and the democracy of Somaliland is to be sustained.
- The Youth Sector of Somaliland needs to be better coordinated so that synergy and the multiplier effect of all of our initiatives are assured!

**END...**

**Thank you very much**

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