

## RESULTS SUMMARY

### First municipal elections in Puntland, Somalia since 1969

Author: Danish Embassy to Somalia (2023)

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PROJECT	<b>Title:</b> First Municipal Elections in Puntland, Somalia since 1969
	<b>Partner:</b> Somalia Joint Fund (SJF). Additional initial support through Somalia Stability Fund (SSF) and SAHAN Research Think Tank
	<b>Country:</b> Somalia/Puntland Federal Member State
	<b>Period:</b> 2019-2023

**CHANGE**



Through the project, Denmark played a leading role in supporting the first municipal elections anywhere in Somalia since 1969. Local elections took place across 30 of Puntland's 37 established districts after the pilot elections on 25 October 2021, which tested the technical, security, and political viability. The Puntland local election provides lessons and a model for the rest of Somalia as more areas are stabilised. The election improved stability and inclusion within Puntland. In particular, it was clear that popular demand for participation was high.

**CONTEXT**

For the past three decades, i.e. since the outbreak of the Somali civil war in 1991, Somalia has been marred by conflict and humanitarian crises. Established in 1998 as a semi-autonomous region in the Northeast of Somalia, Puntland has managed to maintain relative peace and stability compared to other regions. Renowned for its oil-rich resources, the region has developed its own constitution. The 25 May 2023 municipal elections in 30 districts elections represent another step forward in Puntland's journey towards democracy.

**CONTRIBUTION**

Denmark was both the largest and most consistent donor. Initial technical support contributed to clarifying technical options, especially for the most costly part of elections, i.e. voter registration. Subsequently, Denmark worked closely with other donors partly to ensure sufficient funding of the overall elections, and partly to constantly monitor and assess political and security viability of the elections. Denmark engaged closely at senior levels with Puntland leaders, while Denmark played a leading role in coordinating efforts in the donor group.

IMAGES	 <p>Election situation room in Garowe. Photo: The Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission</p>	 <p>An elderly woman casting her vote in Bosaso. Photo: Puntland, Horn Observer</p>
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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

### ACTIVITIES

The efforts as well as the increased awareness and engagement of civil society have created the conditions and demand for the successful elections. There was also strong political will from the Puntland leadership, especially from the office of President Said Abdullahi Deni, demonstrating the support from the political elite and recognition of the demand from their people. Denmark's contribution supported the voter registration exercise. More than 387,000 voters were registered for the Puntland elections, the majority aged between 18 and 30. The elections had a total of 3,775 candidates, 28% of them women. The contribution supported the Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission (TPEC) in meeting its mandate to conduct free and fair local elections in Puntland.

### LESSONS

For Somalia: Beyond its historical significance, the municipal elections aimed at informing how parliamentary and presidential elections at state level will be carried out, as well as laying the foundations for potential federal universal suffrage in 2025. The success of Puntland municipal district elections is critical in paving the way for a bottom-up approach to electoral processes. The elections represent positive progress for reaching democratic aspirations in Puntland and other parts of Somalia. For donors: This set of interventions demonstrates that donors can play a game-changing role even in highly complex and political processes. However, it is also clear that success requires a deep understanding and willingness to engage – including in very difficult discussions (high risk appetite needed) over a sustained period of time (three years in this case) and a critical mass of donors.

### EVIDENCE

According to the Somalia Joint Fund Report, voter enthusiasm was on full display from the crack of dawn. As early as 5 a.m., queues were formed at polling stations, reflecting the determination of Puntland citizens to make their voices heard. There was enthusiasm of women and youth in the universal suffrage (UN, June 2023). Similarly, according to the Transitional Puntland Electoral Commission, there has been enthusiasm among voters from the voter registration period that witnessed a total of 387,094 people registered in 37 districts across the seven regions of the Puntland administration. Throughout the intervention, all activities were strongly guided by political economy analysis, expertise on elections, and election systems.

### DOMAINS

<i>Development strategy priorities:</i>	Democracy and Human Rights
<i>Changes in the lives of people facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability</i>	-
<i>Changes in laws, policies and practices that affect people's rights</i>	X
<i>Changes in the capacity of organisations and communities to support rights</i>	X
<i>Changes in partnerships and collaborations that support people's rights</i>	-
<i>Changes in participation of groups facing poverty, marginalisation or vulnerability</i>	-
<i>Changes in local leadership of development and humanitarian work</i>	-