



# UNIVERSITY OF HARGEISA

Division of Research, Innovation and Partnerships

# POLICY BRIEFS





# UNIVERSITY OF HARGEISA

Division of Research, Innovation and Partnerships

## POLICY BRIEF

### **From Evidence to Action:**

Strengthening Somaliland's Health & Social Systems for Sustainable Well-being



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## Executive Summary

Somaliland continues to make strides in improving population health and social well-being; however, significant challenges remain. The 1<sup>st</sup> National Research Conference, 2025 at the University of Hargeisa provided critical evidence-based insights into the state of health and social systems, revealing persistent gaps in maternal and child health, nutrition, mental health, and non-communicable diseases (NCDs). These challenges are compounded by economic hardship, displacement, limited access to care, and entrenched gender and social inequities. Vulnerable populations including rural, nomadic, and displaced communities, women, and children bear a disproportionate share of the burden.

The findings underscore the urgent need for coordinated, multisectoral action to strengthen health systems and social protection frameworks. The Ministry of Health Development, together with the Ministry of Employment, Social and Family Affairs, has an opportunity to build on this evidence to drive policies that link health, social protection, and economic empowerment. Such integration will help reduce inequities, enhance service delivery, and accelerate progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This policy brief synthesizes the key evidence presented at the 2025 National Research Conference and outlines priority actions for government and development partners. It calls for scaling up equitable maternal and child health services, integrating mental health within primary care, improving nutrition interventions, advancing women's autonomy, and strengthening laboratory and information systems. The brief also emphasizes the importance of risk communication and institutionalized collaboration across ministries. Together, these actions can foster a more resilient and equitable health system, ensuring sustainable well-being for all Somalilanders.

## Key Points

- **The University of Hargeisa's 1<sup>st</sup> National Research Conference, 2025** provided critical, evidence-based insights into Somaliland's health and social sectors, highlighting persistent challenges in maternal and child health, nutrition, mental health, and non-communicable diseases (NCDs).
- **The Ministry of Health Development (MoHD)**, in collaboration with the Ministry of Employment, Social and Family Affairs, is positioned to lead a comprehensive approach that links health systems strengthening with social protection and community resilience.
- **Maternal and child health outcomes** remain constrained by financial, geographic, and sociocultural barriers, underscoring the need for equitable access to antenatal, delivery, and emergency obstetric services.
- **Non-communicable diseases and nutritional deficiencies** continue to pose dual public health burdens, calling for targeted interventions that combine preventive care, education, and community-based action.
- **Mental health challenges among internally displaced persons (IDPs)** are rising, necessitating integration of psychosocial support within primary healthcare and broader social protection mechanisms.
- **Limited women's autonomy** in health decision-making continues to undermine progress; promoting women's empowerment and community engagement is essential for sustainable change.
- **Multisectoral collaboration** is key to improving service delivery, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) related to health, equity, and social well-being.

## Introduction

Somaliland's health and social development agenda has gained considerable momentum in recent years, particularly through efforts to strengthen health systems, promote social protection, and advance population well-being. Before the institutionalization of health systems strengthening as a national priority, most sectoral efforts focused narrowly on service delivery within the health sector, with limited attention to the broader social and economic determinants of health. However, recent national policy frameworks and academic dialogues have increasingly recognized that population health and social well-being are deeply interlinked and must be addressed through integrated, multisectoral approaches.

The 1<sup>st</sup> National Research Conference, 2025 at the University of Hargeisa marked a pivotal moment in this shift. Bringing together researchers, policymakers, and development partners, the conference generated robust evidence on the complex challenges facing Somaliland's health and social systems. The deliberations underscored the persistent burden of maternal and child health challenges, widespread malnutrition, rising non-communicable diseases (NCDs), and growing mental health needs particularly among displaced and vulnerable populations. These issues are further compounded by systemic barriers such as inadequate financing, limited health infrastructure, workforce shortages, and sociocultural constraints that impede access to care.

Importantly, the conference emphasized that progress in improving health outcomes cannot be achieved without corresponding advances in social protection, gender equality, and economic empowerment. As such, the integration of health and social welfare policies has become a key national priority. The Ministry of Health Development (MoHD) and the Ministry of Employment, Social and Family Affairs are increasingly collaborating to align their mandates and programs with the objectives of equitable access, financial risk protection, and community resilience.

These efforts resonate strongly with Somaliland's national development agenda and its commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). The lessons emerging from ongoing policy and research engagements highlight both the achievements and the challenges that remain in ensuring equitable, quality, and sustainable health and social services for all Somalilanders.

In light of these findings, this policy brief distills the key evidence presented at the 1<sup>st</sup> National Research Conference, 2025 at the University of Hargeisa and translates it into practical policy directions. It aims to guide national ministries, local governments, and development partners in designing and implementing coordinated interventions that advance population health and social well-being through stronger systems, integrated data, and inclusive governance.

## Key Takeaways

### *1. Maternal and Child Health*

- Antenatal care (ANC) use is constrained by cost, distance, and system inefficiencies.
- Sociocultural barriers delay consent for cesarean sections, heightening maternal and neonatal risks.
- Family planning uptake is low, largely influenced by education and household wealth.
- Anaemia affects over half of pregnant women; iron supplementation and dietary diversity remain inadequate.
- Young children's consumption of iron-rich foods is lowest in nomadic and marginalized communities.

### *2. Non Communicable Diseases and Nutrition*

- High proportion of adults exhibit metabolic syndrome, with obesity and sedentary lifestyles as key drivers.
- Childhood malnutrition persists, particularly among children of uneducated mothers and those without ANC exposure.

### *3. Mental Health and Social Determinants*

- IDPs experience elevated rates of mental health disorders linked to displacement and social instability.
- Teenage pregnancy and rising divorce rates reflect deeper social vulnerabilities.
- Women's autonomy in healthcare decisions remains limited, affected by education, wealth, and residence.

### *4. Health Systems and Governance*

- Laboratory and blood safety standards require improvement.
- Health information systems lack socioeconomic and geographic data, limiting evidence-based policy design.
- Community mistrust such as fears around telecommunication towers signals a need for stronger risk communication.

## Conclusion

Somaliland has made significant strides toward improving population health and social well-being, particularly through investments in primary healthcare, education, and community resilience. However, structural and contextual challenges — including socioeconomic inequalities, limited access to quality healthcare, and gaps in health system governance — continue to hinder sustainable progress. Strengthening the linkages between health, social protection, and development policies is therefore essential for achieving equitable and resilient population health outcomes.

The progress achieved thus far underscores the potential of coordinated national and local actions grounded in evidence-based planning and inclusive governance. As Somaliland continues to align its health and social development priorities with global and regional frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Health Strategy, there is an urgent need to invest in data systems, human resources for health, and social safety nets that protect the most vulnerable. Moving forward, a holistic approach that integrates public health, social welfare, and community empowerment will be critical. Such an approach must place people particularly women, youth, and marginalized groups at the center of policy and practice, ensuring that improvements in health translate into enhanced well-being and social cohesion across Somaliland.



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## Recommendations

### 1. Scale Up Equitable Maternal and Child Health Services

- » Remove financial and geographic barriers to ANC and emergency obstetric care.
- » Train healthcare providers in respectful, culturally sensitive maternal care.
- » Promote community-based awareness on ANC and family planning.

### 2. Integrate Mental Health into Primary Care

- » Train frontline workers in mental health screening and psychosocial support.
- » Establish referral and community support systems for IDPs and vulnerable groups.

### 3. Strengthen Nutrition and NCD Prevention

- » Implement universal iron supplementation for pregnant women.
- » Promote iron-rich diets for children through targeted community programs.
- » Encourage active lifestyles and preventive NCD interventions.

### 4. Advance Gender Equity and Women's Autonomy

- » Empower women's decision-making in healthcare and family matters.
- » Engage men and community leaders to challenge restrictive norms.

### 5. Enhance Health System Capacity and Safety

- » Upgrade laboratories and blood safety systems to meet international standards.
- » Strengthen readiness for emergency obstetric and neonatal care.

### 6. Develop Integrated Health Information Systems

- » Incorporate socioeconomic and geographic indicators into health data.
- » Use spatial analytics to identify underserved areas for targeted interventions.

### 7. Promote Transparent Risk Communication

- » Address misinformation and build public trust through community engagement.

### 8. Institutionalize Multisectoral Collaboration

- » Strengthen coordination mechanisms linking health, social affairs, education, and other ministries.
- » Align policies and programs for cohesive service delivery.

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# UNIVERSITY OF HARGEISA

Division of Research, Innovation and Partnerships

## POLICY BRIEF

### **From Evidence to Action:**

Building Resilient Livelihoods Through Climate  
Adaptation and Sustainable Agriculture in Somaliland



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## Executive Summary

Somaliland is increasingly exposed to severe climate variability and environmental stresses, which threaten water availability, ecosystem integrity, and the livelihoods of both rural and urban communities. Over the past decade, some districts have recorded temperature increases of up to  $+2.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ , while rainfall patterns have become more erratic and unpredictable. These changes have intensified the frequency and severity of droughts, undermining agricultural productivity, livestock health, and food security, particularly among the most vulnerable populations, including pastoralists, smallholder farmers, and women-headed households.

Agriculture and livestock, which are cornerstones of Somaliland's economy, face persistent structural and systemic constraints. Rain-fed crop systems dominate, with only a small proportion of irrigated land, while seed quality, pest and disease management, and irrigation infrastructure remain limited. Livestock production is increasingly threatened by reduced grazing areas, scarce water resources, higher disease incidence, and low adoption of modern husbandry practices. In addition, market limitations, insufficient extension services, and weak institutional support further reduce the adaptive capacity of communities. Existing coping strategies, including herd migration, water harvesting, and income diversification, are proving insufficient under the intensifying pressures of climate variability.

Evidence presented at the 1st National Research Conference, 2025 at the University of Hargeisa highlights the urgent need for integrated, multi-sectoral approaches to enhance resilience, secure livelihoods, and promote sustainable development. Strengthening water resource management, adopting climate-smart agricultural practices, improving livestock health and husbandry, and diversifying livelihoods are essential to reduce vulnerability and sustain productivity. Concurrently, institutional capacity building and inter-sectoral coordination are needed to support adaptive governance, while investments in research, innovation, and resilient infrastructure will facilitate evidence-based policymaking and long-term sustainability.

Coordinated implementation of these interventions can strengthen community resilience, secure livelihoods, foster economic stability, and enable Somaliland to navigate the challenges of climate variability while promoting social equity and sustainable development. The policy measures outlined in this brief provide a pathway for holistic action that integrates environmental stewardship, agricultural productivity, and climate adaptation to ensure a resilient and prosperous future for Somaliland.

## Key Points

- **Rising Climate Risks:** Increasing temperatures, shifting rainfall patterns, and recurrent droughts threaten ecosystems, water resources, and livelihoods.
- **Water Scarcity:** Surface and groundwater depletion, increased evaporation, and reduced reservoir levels intensify pressure on agricultural and pastoral systems.
- **Agricultural Vulnerabilities:** Predominantly rain-fed crop farming (90%) faces declining yields, pest pressures, soil degradation, and weak market linkages.
- **Livestock Challenges:** Water and grazing shortages reduce productivity, increase disease incidence, and heighten livestock mortality.
- **Adaptation Gaps:** Limited access to climate information, weak institutional coordination, and socio-economic constraints reduce resilience.
- **Community Coping Mechanisms:** Herd migration, income diversification, supplementary feeding, and water harvesting are

- widely practiced but insufficient for long-term resilience.
- **Institutional Barriers:** Weak inter-sectoral coordination, limited extension services, and inadequate market infrastructure hinder sustainable adaptation.

## Introduction

Somaliland's environmental and climatic landscape is increasingly stressed by rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and recurrent droughts, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions. Over the past decade, some districts have experienced a temperature increase of up to +2.8°C, coupled with shifting rainfall patterns that undermine crop and pasture production. Water scarcity has intensified, with surface and groundwater sources depleting rapidly, limiting access to drinking water and irrigation for both farming and pastoralist communities.

Agriculture and livestock are central to Somaliland's economy and food security, supporting roughly one-quarter of the population. Yet, crop production remains predominantly rain-fed (90%), with only a fraction under irrigation. Major crops such as maize, sorghum, cowpeas, mung beans, vegetables, and fruits are exposed to frequent climate shocks, while livestock face reduced grazing areas, limited water access, and increased susceptibility to disease. Current coping mechanisms—herd migration, water harvesting, income diversification, and supplementary feeding—are increasingly insufficient to buffer communities from climate stressors.

Communities also face systemic constraints including weak agricultural extension services, limited market access, inadequate infrastructure, and poor integration of climate information into decision-making. The absence of robust inter-sectoral coordination across agriculture, livestock, water, and environmental management further reduces adaptive capacity. Evidence presented at the National Research Conference, 2025 at the University of Hargeisa highlights the urgency of multi-sectoral and inclusive strategies that integrate climate adaptation, sustainable agriculture, and livelihood resilience. Addressing these intersecting challenges is not only essential to safeguard food security and economic growth, but also to reduce vulnerability among the most marginalized communities, including pastoralists, smallholder farmers, and women-headed households.

A coordinated approach combining climate-smart agriculture, improved water governance, livestock resilience, livelihood diversification, and investment in research and infrastructure can transform Somaliland's response to climate risks. By doing so, the country can build long-term resilience, strengthen livelihoods, and promote sustainable development aligned with regional and global frameworks on climate adaptation and food security.

## Key Takeaways

### *1. Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) is Critical*

- Basin-wide water planning, community participation in water governance, and investment in water harvesting infrastructure are essential to ensure sustainable water access for agriculture and livestock.
- Small dams, boreholes, and recharge schemes tailored to arid conditions can buffer communities against drought shocks.

### *2. Climate-Smart Agriculture and Livestock Practices Enhance Productivity*

- Expansion of climate-smart agriculture practices—including drought-tolerant crops, soil conservation, pest management, and crop diversification—can increase yield resilience.
- Livestock vaccination, improved husbandry, and veterinary services reduce mortality and enhance productivity, particularly for vulnerable young stock.

### *3. Strengthened Early Warning Systems and Disaster Preparedness*

- Climate and drought early warning systems linked to local response mechanisms improve community preparedness.
- Contingency planning for vulnerable regions, coordinated across government, NGOs, and communities, is critical for reducing disaster impacts.

### *4. Institutional Coordination and Capacity Building Must be Enhanced*

- Inter-ministerial coordination across agriculture, livestock, water, environment, and disaster management sectors ensures coherent implementation of adaptation strategies.
- Capacity building at national, regional, and local levels strengthens planning, implementation, and monitoring of climate adaptation initiatives.

### *5. Livelihood Diversification and Market Integration Reduce Vulnerabilities*

- Supporting alternative income-generating opportunities reduces pressure on natural resources and builds economic resilience.
- Improved rural market infrastructure, storage facilities, transport, and access to regional and export markets strengthen income security and incentivize adoption of sustainable agricultural practices.

## Conclusion

The climate and agricultural challenges confronting Somaliland are multifaceted, interconnected, and escalating in severity. Rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and recurrent droughts are straining water resources, reducing agricultural productivity, and threatening livestock health, thereby undermining livelihoods and food security. These pressures are particularly acute for rural and pastoralist communities, women, and other vulnerable populations who rely heavily on fragile natural resources.

Evidence from the National Research Conference, 2025 at the University of Hargeisa underscores that piecemeal or sector-specific interventions are insufficient. Instead, a holistic, multi-sectoral approach is required one that integrates water resource management, climate-smart agriculture, livestock health, disaster preparedness, market development, livelihood diversification, and institutional capacity building.

By strengthening institutional coordination, investing in climate-resilient infrastructure, enhancing access to knowledge and technologies, and empowering communities through participatory governance, Somaliland can reduce vulnerability to climate shocks and ensure sustainable livelihoods. Integrating research, innovation, and evidence-based policy into these interventions will further enhance resilience and adaptive capacity.

Ultimately, the path to sustainable development in Somaliland requires embracing climate resilience as a central component of national planning, ensuring that vulnerable populations are supported, economic growth is safeguarded, and natural resources are managed sustainably. The recommendations outlined in this brief provide a clear roadmap for government, development partners, and communities to collectively build a more resilient, equitable, and sustainable Somaliland.



## Recommendations

### 1. Integrated Water Resource and Climate Management

- » Develop basin-wide water management plans that include surface and groundwater systems.
- » Invest in water harvesting infrastructure, small dams, boreholes, and recharge schemes.
- » Engage communities in participatory water governance for equitable and sustainable resource use.

### 2. Climate-Smart Agriculture and Livestock Management

- » Expand extension services on climate-smart agriculture, soil and water conservation, pest management, and improved seed technologies.
- » Promote drought-tolerant crops, crop diversification, and sustainable livestock husbandry practices.
- » Implement livestock vaccination programs, provide veterinary services, and develop livestock insurance mechanisms.

### 3. Drought Early Warning and Disaster Risk Reduction

- » Strengthen early warning systems and link them to community-based response mechanisms.
- » Develop regional contingency plans with clearly defined roles for government, NGOs, and communities.
- » Improve climate data collection and monitoring for evidence-based decision-making.

### 4. Livelihood Diversification and Social Protection

- » Support alternative income opportunities that reduce pressure on natural resources.
- » Implement social protection schemes to buffer communities against climate and livelihood shocks.

### 5. Institutional Coordination and Capacity Building

- » Strengthen inter-ministerial coordination and build capacity for integrated climate adaptation strategies.
- » Promote awareness campaigns on climate risks, sustainable resource use, and adaptation practices.

### 6. Research, Technology, and Market Development

- » Prioritize climate adaptation research and development of resilient crops and livestock management practices.
- » Expand irrigation infrastructure and water-efficient technologies such as drip irrigation.
- » Improve market access through rural infrastructure, storage, transport, and linkage to regional and export markets.
- » Facilitate partnerships with private sector and donors to fund resilient livelihoods initiatives.

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# UNIVERSITY OF HARGEISA

Division of Research, Innovation and Partnerships

## POLICY BRIEF

### **From Evidence to Action:**

Strengthening Governance, Security, and Diplomatic  
Engagement to Foster Stability and Statehood in Somaliland



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## Executive Summary

Effective governance, robust security systems, and strategic diplomacy are critical foundations for Somaliland's socio-political stability, peacebuilding, and aspirations for international recognition. While the 2024 local elections demonstrated strong voter engagement, they revealed some challenges in electoral management, including limited staff capacity, logistical constraints, and uneven access to voter education.

Evidence from the 1st National Research Conference, 2025 at the University of Hargeisa underscores ongoing challenges in tax administration, public procurement, and institutional transparency, all of which constrain government revenue generation and reduce public trust. Internal stability is challenged by local disputes, cross-border dynamics, and broader security vulnerabilities. The proposed Somaliland Interior Security Agency (SISA) represents a critical step toward a centralized, accountable security framework with robust oversight mechanisms.

Non-traditional diplomatic relations, particularly with Taiwan, present both opportunities for global visibility and economic engagement as well as challenges for regional stability. Leadership effectiveness in Somaliland depends not only on

technical and legal expertise but also on culturally attuned decision-making and emotional intelligence, adapted to the complex clan and social dynamics that shape governance.

This policy brief synthesizes key evidence and lessons from the 1st National Research Conference, 2025 highlighting the urgent need for integrated, evidence-based approaches to strengthen governance, peacebuilding, internal security, and diplomatic engagement. It outlines actionable recommendations for government, security agencies, civil society, and development partners to advance state stability, enhance service delivery, and promote Somaliland's aspirations for recognition and sustainable development

## Key Points

- **Electoral Management and Civic Participation:** High voter turnout demonstrates strong civic commitment but logistical challenges, limited training for electoral staff, and uneven access to voter education threaten the credibility of elections. Community engagement remains essential for smooth electoral processes.
- **Tax and Procurement Reform:** Inefficient tax collection, limited administrative capacity, and non-transparent procurement practices weaken revenue mobilization and reduce public trust, affecting the ability of government to deliver essential services.
- **Security Coordination and SISA:** Somaliland's security environment is shaped by security threats, local conflicts, and border disputes. SISA is designed to centralize functions, improve coordination, and enhance accountability across all internal security institutions.
- **Diplomacy and International Engagement:** Non-traditional partnerships, including relations with Taiwan, have the potential to boost economic ties and international visibility but must be strategically managed to mitigate regional frictions and advance overarching peacebuilding goals.
- **Culturally Informed Leadership:** Governance effectiveness in Somaliland is influenced by emotional and cultural intelligence, with leaders required to navigate clan dynamics, social norms, and consultative decision-making processes.
- **Evidence-Based Policy:** Findings presented at the 2025 National Research Conference provide critical, locally grounded insights to guide strategic planning, institutional reform, and policy interventions.

## Introduction

Somaliland's stability and development depend on strong governance, effective security systems, and well-managed diplomatic engagement. While the 2024 local elections demonstrated high voter enthusiasm, they highlighted persistent operational challenges, including insufficient electoral staff training, inadequate materials, and uneven voter education. These gaps threaten the credibility and inclusiveness of democratic processes.

Tax administration and public procurement remain major governance bottlenecks, with administrative inefficiencies and limited transparency undermining revenue collection, public trust, and the delivery of essential services. Fragmented internal security institutions struggle to manage terrorism, clan disputes, and border conflicts, pointing to the need for an integrated and accountable security framework.

The proposed Somaliland Interior Security Agency (SISA) seeks to unify security functions, establish clear legal mandates, and improve oversight mechanisms to mitigate threats and enhance national stability.

Diplomatic engagement, especially with non-traditional partners such as Taiwan, presents dual effects: while offering economic and recognition benefits, it requires careful strategic management to maintain regional balance and prevent geopolitical friction.

Leadership effectiveness in Somaliland is closely tied to culturally informed decision-making. Leaders must employ emotional intelligence, consensus-building, and negotiation skills to navigate complex clan, political, and social networks.

Research presented at the 1st National Research Conference, 2025 at the University of Hargeisa reinforces the importance of these interventions, providing robust, evidence-based guidance for government, civil society, and development partners seeking to strengthen governance, peacebuilding, and Somaliland's international profile.

## Key Takeaways

### *1. Electoral Systems Require Strategic Strengthening*

- Elections are critical for legitimacy and citizen trust. Evidence shows that high voter engagement can be compromised by insufficiently trained staff, logistical bottlenecks, and uneven voter outreach. Investing in training, civic education, and resource allocation is essential to safeguard electoral credibility.

### *2. Modernization of Tax and Procurement Systems is Urgent*

- Inefficiencies in revenue collection and non-transparent procurement limit government effectiveness. Institutional reforms, adoption of international standards, and capacity building are necessary to enhance accountability, improve service delivery, and strengthen public trust.

### *3. Centralized Security Coordination through SISA is Critical*

- Internal security threats are multi-faceted, ranging from terrorism and clan conflicts to border disputes. SISA provides a platform for unified command, enhanced coordination, and robust oversight to ensure a professional, accountable, and responsive security apparatus.

### *4. Strategic Diplomacy Balances Recognition and Regional Stability*

- Non-traditional partnerships, particularly with Taiwan, offer economic and visibility benefits but must be carefully managed to avoid regional tensions and ensure alignment with broader peacebuilding objectives.

### *5. Leadership Must be Culturally and Emotionally Attuned*

- Leaders require skills in emotional intelligence, negotiation, and inclusive decision-making that reflect Somaliland's socio-cultural realities, especially its clan-based political landscape. Leadership development programs should focus on practical applications for governance and conflict resolution.

### *6. Research-Driven Policy Formulation is Essential*

- Evidence from the National Research Conference, 2025 underscores the need for research-informed policymaking. Policies and reforms grounded in local realities enhance sustainability, effectiveness, and public confidence.

## Conclusion

Somaliland's pursuit of stability and recognition relies on strong governance, effective institutions, and inclusive leadership. Discussions at the 1st National Research Conference, 2025, University of Hargeisa, emphasized that despite notable political resilience, institutional gaps in fiscal management, accountability, and electoral systems continue to hinder progress. The establishment of the Somaliland Interior Security Agency marks a step toward coordinated and transparent internal security, though sustained oversight remains crucial.

Diplomatic engagement such as with Taiwan reflects Somaliland's growing international visibility, but must be strategically managed to maintain regional balance. Strengthening education, leadership integrity, and citizen participation emerged as key priorities for long-term governance reform.

Overall, the conference highlighted the importance of evidence-based policymaking and collaboration between government, academia, and civil society. Continued investment in institutional capacity and accountable leadership will be vital to advancing Somaliland's stability, diplomacy, and development goals.



## Recommendations

### 1. Strengthen Electoral Systems and Civic Education:

- » Allocate resources for training, essential election materials, and community-based voter education to ensure transparency, inclusion, and credibility of electoral processes.

### 2. Modernize Tax and Procurement Practices:

- » Establish a unified Revenue Authority, adopt international procurement standards, and enhance administrative capacity to increase revenue, accountability, and public trust.

### 3. Operationalize Somaliland Interior Security Agency:

- » Finalize legal frameworks, allocate adequate resources, and improve coordination among security institutions to effectively address terrorism, clan disputes, and border challenges.

### 4. Refine Diplomatic Strategy:

- » Build diplomatic capacity to navigate non-traditional partnerships strategically, while ensuring regional balance, fostering economic opportunities, and enhancing Somaliland's international visibility.

### 5. Develop Leadership Capacities:

- » Implement leadership training programs focused on emotional intelligence, cultural negotiation, and consultative decision-making tailored to Somaliland's unique socio-political context.

### 6. Leverage Evidence for Policy and Governance:

- » Utilize findings from the 2025 National Research Conference to inform governance reforms, peacebuilding strategies, and security initiatives, ensuring evidence-based, contextually relevant decision-making.

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# UNIVERSITY OF HARGEISA

Division of Research, Innovation and Partnerships

## POLICY BRIEF

### **From Evidence to Action:**

Accelerating Rural Development and Economic Diversification for Poverty Reduction in Somaliland



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## Executive Summary

Sustainable rural development and economic diversification have become defining priorities in Somaliland’s national development discourse. Within the context of the National Research Conference, scholars, policymakers, and development practitioners have highlighted the urgent need to address persistent rural poverty, limited livelihood opportunities, and heavy dependence on livestock and informal trade. Rural areas, such as Sheikh District in the Sahil Region, continue to exhibit some of the highest poverty rates in the country, reflecting broader structural constraints that hinder inclusive growth.

Encouragingly, evidence generated by national researchers and academic institutions has begun to shape policy discussions and inform development planning. Studies have shown that investments in education, livestock productivity, digital financial services, and clean energy can jointly drive poverty reduction and economic transformation. Complementary analyses on tax systems, public procurement, and governance reforms emphasize the need to strengthen institutional capacity and transparency to finance sustainable development effectively.

In line with these emerging priorities, the National Research Conference serves as a key platform for knowledge exchange and evidence-informed policy dialogue. It brings together researchers, government ministries, and development partners to deliberate on practical pathways for accelerating sustainable rural development and economic diversification.

This policy brief draws on recent empirical evidence and policy discussions presented at the conference. It synthesizes key findings, policy implications, and strategic recommendations aimed at guiding national and sub-national actors in fostering inclusive growth, reducing poverty, and promoting economic resilience across Somaliland.

## Key Points

- Poverty in rural Somaliland is driven by limited education, low agricultural productivity, and inadequate diversification of household income sources.
- Strengthening livestock value chains, particularly camel milk production, can unlock economic opportunities, improve food security, and enhance livelihoods for pastoralist communities.
- Digital financial services, including mobile money and expanded internet access, offer pathways to formalize informal economies and support sustainable self-employment.
- Governance reforms in taxation and public procurement are essential to mobilize domestic revenue, improve transparency, and enable investment in development priorities.
- Expanding access to clean energy, including rural electrification and adoption of clean cooking fuels, can improve health outcomes, promote women's welfare, and enhance environmental sustainability.

## Introduction

Efforts to reduce rural poverty and promote economic diversification in Somaliland have gained significant momentum in recent years. Historically, rural development strategies focused primarily on livestock production and basic agricultural activities, with limited attention to broader economic and social determinants of poverty. Research and policy dialogues, however, increasingly recognize that sustainable rural development requires integrated approaches that combine education, productive asset management, financial inclusion, governance reforms, and access to clean energy.

The 1<sup>st</sup> National Research Conference, 2025 at the University of Hargeisa provided a critical platform to examine evidence on the key drivers of rural poverty, opportunities for economic diversification, and barriers to sustainable development. Studies presented highlighted the multi-dimensional nature of rural poverty, including limited household education, low productivity, dependence on livestock assets, and constrained access to diverse income sources. At the same time, traditionally dominant sectors, such as camel milk production, show untapped potential due to fragmented value chains, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of formal market structures.

Digital financial innovations, particularly mobile money and internet-based services, have emerged as powerful tools to support informal livelihoods, facilitate formalization of economic activities, and enhance employment opportunities. Nonetheless, sustainable benefits depend on complementary policies that strengthen governance, improve taxation and procurement systems, and expand energy access. Currently, reliance on solid fuels and limited electricity in rural areas undermines health, productivity, and women's welfare, further perpetuating poverty cycles.

The evidence underscores the urgent need for coordinated, multi-sectoral strategies that address the structural, economic, and social dimensions of rural poverty. Strengthening education, livestock value chains, digital financial inclusion, governance frameworks, and clean energy access represents a holistic approach to accelerate sustainable rural development and economic diversification in Somaliland. This policy brief synthesizes key insights from the 1<sup>st</sup> National Research Conference, 2025 and translates them into actionable recommendations for policymakers, development partners, and other stakeholders.

In light of these findings, this policy brief distills the key evidence presented at the 1<sup>st</sup> National Research Conference, 2025 at the University of Hargeisa and translates it into practical policy directions. It aims to guide national ministries, local governments, and development partners in designing and implementing coordinated interventions that advance population health and social well-being through stronger systems, integrated data, and inclusive governance.

## Key Takeaways

### *1. Rural Poverty Drivers*

- Limited education, low productivity, and dependence on livestock contribute significantly to persistent poverty in rural Somaliland.
- Households with more diversified income sources, including off-farm activities, demonstrate greater resilience.

### *2. Livestock Value Chains*

- Camel milk production, a historically dominant sector, remains underdeveloped due to fragmented value chains, poor infrastructure, and limited access to veterinary and cooperative support.
- Strengthening production, processing, and market linkages can create income opportunities and improve food security for pastoralist communities.

### *3. Digital Financial Inclusion*

- Mobile money and internet access enhance informal economic activity, facilitate self-employment, and support the formalization of rural livelihoods.
- Broader digital inclusion, combined with financial literacy programs, can drive sustainable economic growth.

### *4. Governance and Institutional Capacity*

- Weak tax administration and procurement practices limit domestic revenue mobilization and reduce government capacity to invest in development priorities.
- Improving transparency, accountability, and institutional efficiency is essential to support economic diversification.

### *5. Energy Access and Environmental Sustainability*

- Heavy reliance on solid fuels in rural areas affects health, productivity, and women's welfare.
- Expanding access to clean energy and rural electrification can promote sustainable development, reduce environmental degradation, and improve quality of life.

## Conclusion

Rural poverty in Somaliland remains a persistent challenge, driven by low education levels, limited livestock productivity, and inadequate income diversification. The research presented at the 1<sup>st</sup> National Research Conference, 2025 underscores the need for an integrated, evidence-based approach to accelerate sustainable rural development and economic diversification. Strengthening informal value chains, particularly camel milk production, expanding access to digital financial services, reforming governance systems in taxation and procurement, and promoting clean energy adoption are essential levers to reduce poverty and enhance household resilience.

Coordinated action across ministries, development partners, and communities is critical. Policies and interventions must be context-specific, leverage local knowledge, and prioritize inclusivity, particularly for women, youth, and marginalized populations. By addressing structural barriers and investing in key economic, social, and environmental sectors, Somaliland can achieve sustainable rural development, stimulate economic diversification, and improve livelihoods for vulnerable populations.



## Recommendations

### Education and Human Capital Development

- » Expand adult literacy and vocational training programs tailored to rural livelihoods, focusing on livestock management, entrepreneurship, and income diversification.
- » Promote community awareness programs on financial literacy and sustainable agricultural practices.

### 2. Livestock and Value Chain Development

- » Strengthen camel milk and other livestock value chains through cooperative formation, veterinary services, and disease control initiatives.
- » Invest in infrastructure such as roads, cold chain logistics, and market facilities to stabilize prices and improve access.

### 3. Digital Financial Inclusion

- » Expand mobile money networks and internet connectivity in rural and underserved areas.
- » Pair digital infrastructure with targeted financial literacy programs to support formalization and economic participation.

### 4. Governance and Economic Reform

- » Reform taxation systems by establishing a modernized revenue authority and improving IT systems.
- » Strengthen procurement frameworks to align with international best practices, ensuring transparency, efficiency, and fair competition.

### 5. Energy Access and Environmental Sustainability

- » Increase rural electrification to promote clean cooking and reduce reliance on solid fuels.
- » Implement awareness campaigns and subsidy programs to encourage adoption of renewable and clean energy solutions.

### 6. Integrated Rural Development Approach

- » Promote multi-sectoral collaboration among government ministries, development partners, and local communities to ensure interventions are coordinated and sustainable.
- » Utilize evidence-based planning and monitoring systems to track progress and adapt interventions based on local needs and outcomes.

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# UNIVERSITY OF HARGEISA

Division of Research, Innovation and Partnerships

## POLICY BRIEF

### **From Evidence to Action:**

Empowering Somaliland's Future through  
Inclusive Education and Digital Innovation



Volume 1-3 | September 2025

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## Executive Summary

Education remains the foundation of Somaliland's socio-economic transformation and the linchpin of sustainable human capital development. Over the past two decades, the country has expanded access to primary and secondary education and improved institutional coordination through reforms led by the Ministry of Education and Science. Yet, persistent gaps in access, quality, and relevance continue to challenge the sector's ability to drive inclusive growth.

Evidence presented at the **1st National Research Conference, 2025**, held at the University of Hargeisa, underscored critical disparities affecting gender equity, digital literacy, and STEM education. Despite progress in enrolment, girls and women continue to face socio-cultural, economic, and structural barriers that limit participation and progression, particularly in science and technology fields. Rural-urban inequalities further exacerbate disparities in opportunity, infrastructure, and learning outcomes.

At the same time, the integration of digital technologies and STEM education presents an unprecedented opportunity to modernize Somaliland's education system and align it with emerging economic demands. Schools and institutions that have successfully introduced digital tools report improved learner engagement,

innovative pedagogy, and better employment readiness. However, these successes remain fragmented due to inadequate infrastructure, limited teacher training, and insufficient institutional support mechanisms.

This policy brief synthesizes evidence from the **1st National Research Conference, national consultations, and multi-stakeholder dialogues** to propose actionable pathways for educational reform. It identifies six strategic areas gender equity, digital learning, STEM education, leadership and institutional capacity, community engagement, and multisectoral coordination—that collectively form a comprehensive framework for strengthening education as a driver of national development.

By investing in technology-enabled learning, teacher capacity, and inclusive policy design, Somaliland can accelerate its transition toward an equitable, knowledge-based society. Education reform must therefore be viewed not only as an academic or social priority, but as a cornerstone for economic resilience, innovation, and national stability.

## Key Points

- **Gender Equity in Education:** Women and girls face structural and cultural barriers that limit access to quality education. Policies and community engagement are essential to ensure inclusive learning opportunities.
- **Digital Learning Opportunities:** Integration of technology in schools enhances learning outcomes, engagement, and readiness for future labor markets, especially in digital sectors.
- **STEM Education and Workforce Development:** Strengthening STEM curricula and teacher capacity equips students with critical skills for innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic competitiveness.
- **Leadership and Institutional Support:** Effective school leadership and robust institutional frameworks are key enablers for integrating digital tools, improving teaching, and promoting inclusive education.
- **Community and Media Engagement:** Public awareness campaigns and community involvement can amplify the value of education, particularly for girls, and support sustainable reform efforts.

## Introduction

Over the past decade, Somaliland has made steady progress in rebuilding its education sector amid constrained resources and limited international recognition. The government's efforts to expand school enrolment, rehabilitate infrastructure, and introduce curriculum reforms reflect a growing commitment to strengthening human capital as a basis for national development. However, the education landscape continues to face deep structural challenges. Persistent gender disparities, low transition rates to higher education, underinvestment in STEM fields, and limited teacher training undermine progress toward quality and equitable learning.

The gender gap in education remains a particular concern. Cultural expectations, early marriage, and domestic responsibilities continue to limit girls' participation, especially beyond primary education. These challenges are compounded by economic hardships that push families to prioritize boys' education. Consequently, women remain underrepresented in tertiary education and professional fields, constraining their participation in the labor market and in national leadership.

In parallel, the digital revolution and the global shift toward technology-driven economies present both opportunities and challenges for Somaliland. Digital literacy and STEM education are emerging as crucial enablers for employment, innovation, and competitiveness. Schools that have adopted digital tools demonstrate enhanced teaching efficiency and student engagement; however, progress remains uneven. Infrastructural limitations, high costs of connectivity, outdated curricula, and a shortage of trained teachers hinder widespread adoption of technology-enhanced learning.

Discussions during the 1st National Research Conference, 2025, at the University of Hargeisa, emphasized the importance of systemic reform anchored in evidence-based policymaking and multi-sector collaboration. Stakeholders from government ministries to development partners and community representatives highlighted the need for policies that promote inclusivity, enhance teacher competence, and bridge the digital divide.

This policy brief builds upon these insights to propose strategic interventions for strengthening Somaliland's education system. It argues that inclusive, technology-enabled education is central to achieving national development goals, enhancing gender equity,

and preparing youth for the demands of a rapidly evolving regional and global economy. Education reform, therefore, must integrate gender-sensitive policies, digital infrastructure development, and institutional capacity-building as part of a cohesive national strategy for sustainable development.

## Key Takeaways

### *1. Gender Equity Remains a Core Challenge*

Girls and women continue to face systemic barriers that limit access to quality education. Socio-economic constraints, cultural norms, and domestic responsibilities hinder educational attainment. Addressing these challenges requires targeted policy interventions, community engagement, and sustained efforts to create inclusive learning environments that empower all learners.

### *2. Digital Learning and Technology Integration Are Transformative*

Evidence shows that integrating digital tools and technology into schools can enhance learning outcomes, student engagement, and preparation for future labor markets. However, large-scale adoption is constrained by limited infrastructure, outdated curricula, and insufficient teacher training. Strategic investments and capacity-building are essential to leverage technology for inclusive and effective education.

### *3. STEM Education Is Critical for Human Capital Development*

Strengthening STEM curricula and teacher capacity is essential to equip students with skills for innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic competitiveness. Schools with supportive leadership and community backing are better positioned to implement STEM and digital initiatives successfully, highlighting the need for systemic and institutional support.

### *4. Leadership and Institutional Support Enable Reform*

School leadership and robust institutional frameworks are key enablers for adopting new teaching approaches and technology integration. Strong leadership ensures that policies are implemented effectively, resources are optimally utilized, and innovative practices are sustained over time.

### *5. Community and Media Engagement Amplify Impact*

Public awareness campaigns, community involvement, and media engagement can help shift societal attitudes toward education, particularly for girls. Active participation of communities supports the adoption of reforms, reinforces the value of education, and strengthens collaboration between schools, families, and policymakers.

## 6. Coordinated Policy Action Is Essential

Effective educational reform requires collaboration across government ministries, schools, development partners, and civil society. Integrated approaches that combine gender equity, digital and STEM skills, teacher training, and infrastructure development can create a resilient and skilled workforce capable of driving Somaliland's socio-economic transformation.

## Conclusion

Education is a cornerstone of Somaliland's socio-economic development and a critical driver of national resilience. Despite notable progress in expanding access to schooling, persistent challenges such as gender disparities, inequitable access to STEM and digital learning, and limited teacher capacity continue to impede the sector's potential to build human capital.

Evidence from national consultations, stakeholder engagements, and 1st National Research Conference, 2025 demonstrates that digital and STEM education can transform learning outcomes and prepare youth for the labor market. However, large-scale adoption requires sustained institutional support, teacher training, infrastructure investments, and inclusive policies that prioritize marginalized groups, particularly girls and women.

Addressing these challenges is not only a matter of education policy but also of broader social and economic development. Coordinated, multisectoral interventions that link education with technology, community engagement, and workforce development can foster a more equitable and resilient system. By strengthening governance, promoting gender equity, and building the digital and STEM capacity of students and teachers, Somaliland can ensure that its youth are equipped to contribute meaningfully to the nation's future.



## Recommendations

### 1. Promote Gender-Responsive Education Policies

- » Develop and implement policies that remove barriers to girls' and women's education, including socio-economic support, scholarship schemes, flexible learning options, and community sensitization programs.

### 2. Expand Digital and STEM Learning Opportunities

- » Invest in digital infrastructure and learning technologies in schools.
- » Update curricula to integrate digital literacy and STEM skills.
- » Provide ongoing teacher training and professional development in technology-enabled learning.

### 3. Strengthen School Leadership and Institutional Capacity

- » Support school leaders in implementing innovative teaching practices and digital integration.
- » Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress and ensure accountability.

### 4. Foster Community Engagement and Awareness

- » Conduct campaigns to promote the value of education, particularly for girls, and encourage parental and community support.
- » Collaborate with local media to amplify messages on the importance of inclusive education.

### 5. Encourage Multisectoral Coordination

- » Align efforts between the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth and Technology, development partners, and civil society to ensure integrated approaches to education reform.
- » Promote partnerships between schools, communities, and private sector actors to support innovation, internships, and career pathways.

### 6. Institutionalize Capacity-Building and Sustainability

- » Develop national frameworks to institutionalize teacher professional development, STEM initiatives, and digital education strategies.
- » Establish mechanisms for scaling successful pilot programs to regional and national levels.
- »

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The University of Hargeisa Policy Brief Series aims to translate cutting-edge research and evidence presented at the National Research Conference and other academic fora into actionable knowledge for policymakers, practitioners, and development partners.

Through concise, evidence-based analysis, the series seeks to bridge the gap between research and policy by highlighting critical issues shaping Somaliland's social, economic, environmental, and governance landscapes. Each brief distills key findings from academic studies and provides practical recommendations to inform decision-making, strengthen institutions, and promote sustainable development.

The policy briefs reflect the University of Hargeisa's commitment to fostering an evidence-driven policy culture that supports national priorities, enhances capacity for innovation, and contributes to Somaliland's progress toward equitable and resilient development.

This publication is produced under the coordination of the University of Hargeisa, with contributions from researchers, scholars, and practitioners across various disciplines.

