



**Institute for Research  
Analysis & Dialogue**

## **Citizen Forum For Huddur Community and Local Administration**

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### **1. Acronyms & Abbreviations**

- CSO: Civil Society Organizations
- KM: Kilometer
- IRAD: Institute for Research Analysis and Dialogue
- DC: District Commissioner



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### 2. Introduction & Context

Huddur is the administrative capital of the Bakool region in Somalia's Southwest State, located approximately 420 km southwest of Mogadishu and 130 km north of Baidoa. The district is composed of five urban villages—Buulow, Moorogaabey, Sheikh-aweys, Horseed, and Shiidla—each led by a village leader and committee members. The current district administration, consisting of 27 councilors, was elected in August 2022 as part of broader government efforts toward democratization and decentralization. For over a decade, Huddur has been under siege, severely restricting access to the city and internal movement, reducing the flow of food and goods to donkey carts and airlifted humanitarian aid.

The Institute for Research, Analysis, and Dialogue (IRAD) held its fifth *Teledhaang* citizen forum in Huddur that facilitated open and frank dialogue between the Huddur community and local administration. Participants representing women, youth, traditional elders, religious leaders, health professionals, educators, civil society organizations, and the general public posed open and candid questions to the mayor. The event was also attended by officials from the Bakool regional administration, who delivered closing remarks, commending IRAD's role in facilitating such an important forum.

Before the forum began, members of IRAD's board of directors, including the deputy chair, delivered opening and introductory remarks, setting the stage for the discussion. The mayor also gave brief opening remarks, emphasizing the significance of citizen forums in holding local leaders accountable to their constituents. He further recognized IRAD's pivotal role in organizing such forums and conducting research.

In his address, Dr. Abbas, a member of IRAD's board, outlined the institute's mission to promote interdisciplinary research and inclusive dialogue, rooted in the history and heritage of the Southwest community. "IRAD is committed to sharing the narratives of the Southwest people," he stated. "This forum provides a platform for residents to ask questions related to



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their community's needs, while looking at the bigger picture of progress." Dr. Abbas also highlighted Huddur's unique history and culture, which are characterized by resilience and openness despite the multifaceted challenges, including conflict and environmental stressors. He concluded by expressing gratitude to the community for their warm welcome and participation, praising the strength and resilience of the people of Huddur in the face of decades-long hardships.

Additionally, Dr. Aden, the deputy chair of IRAD's board, shared the institute's successes since its establishment and underscored the significance of holding the first citizen forum outside Baidoa in Huddur. He emphasized the need for local leaders to seek community-driven advice and to focus on developments that align with social needs and priorities.

### **3. Purpose and Objectives**

The primary aim of the *Teledhaang* forum was to create a space for open dialogue between local citizens and their leaders, fostering accountability. By encouraging interaction, the forum aimed to generate ideas and solutions that could shape responsive policies and programs tailored to community needs.

### **4. Approach and Methodology**

The forum followed a roundtable discussion format. After introductory remarks by IRAD board members and the mayor, participants were invited to ask questions and raise concerns regarding district administration and development. The mayor addressed all queries, and the event concluded with remarks from the Deputy Governor of Bakool, who commended IRAD for its efforts in promoting accountability.

### **5. Summary of discussions**

#### ***Huddur District Administration Achievements and Challenges***

Since the election of the current district administration, comprising 27 councilors in August 2022, significant achievements have been made, alongside challenges. Huddur



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Administration led by Mayor Omar, has made significant strides in economic development by generating domestic revenue and regularly publishing the district's budget online to enhance accountability and transparency. They have also established the first independent district development committee, separate from the administration, to raise funds through community contributions for development projects. To date, the committee has successfully raised over \$100,000.

### *Nepotism in Recruitment Process*

When questioned about nepotism in the district's recruitment process, the mayor acknowledged that clan-based hiring still occurs but expressed a commitment to promoting merit-based recruitment through open and competitive process.

### *Rehabilitation of Critical Infrastructure*

In response to a question about the rehabilitation of the Elberde road, which connects farmers to the market, the Mayor explained that the road is already undergoing expansion and is a top priority for the district administration. He also noted that a flood mitigation plan is part of the ongoing rehabilitation efforts. Additionally, the Mayor highlighted that the administration is planning to extend pipelines before constructing tarmac roads, including Huddur's main road, which will feature a drainage system.

### *Access to Electricity, Water and Flight Availability*

The Mayor stated that Huddur residents currently rely on household-level solar power for electricity, but the district administration is advocating for a large-scale solar power system, which will be managed by the local government. He added that significant efforts are being made to drill boreholes to improve access to clean, potable water, with the necessary equipment expected to arrive in town soon. In response to a question from a women's representative about flight availability, the Mayor mentioned that flights depend on having a sufficient number of passengers traveling to and from Huddur.



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### *Humanitarian Relief Intervention*

A community elder inquired about the reduction in humanitarian relief interventions in the district. The Mayor responded by explaining that the country's overall funding has decreased due to issues such as emerging aid diversion and donor fatigue.

### *Opening a Local University*

A participant asked the Mayor about the possibility and plans for establishing a local university in Huddur, which could significantly contribute to the district's academic and research development. Despite the growing number of secondary school graduates each year, Huddur still lacks a university, forcing students to leave the district for higher education. A local university would allow students to pursue their education while staying in their hometown and remaining connected to their community. The Mayor noted that several attempts have been made to open a university in Huddur, and efforts will continue toward achieving this goal.

### *Oversight Role of the District and Inclusivity*

In response to a question from a youth member about the district's role in supervising health facilities, the Mayor explained that he has conducted two supervisory visits during his two-year tenure and is committed to continuing regular oversight to ensure that health centers deliver services in line with the essential package of health services. He also emphasized that the district administration is dedicated to promoting inclusivity, ensuring that all community members, including marginalized groups, are involved in decision-making processes, with an increased role for community elders. Finally, the Mayor highlighted the administration's ongoing efforts to improve household waste collection, aiming to maintain a clean and safe environment while fostering prosperity for all residents.

## **6. Key Takeaways**

- Strengthening community resilience is essential for transitioning from emergency response to sustainable development.



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- Participatory approaches are crucial for aligning development initiatives with community needs.
- Increased access to financial and budgetary information enhances public trust, transparency, and accountability.

### **7. Recommendations**

Based on the discussions, the following recommendations were proposed:

- ⇒ Maintain the practice of publishing district revenue and expenditure for public scrutiny.
- ⇒ Encourage competence-based recruitment through fair and open competition and discourage clan-based hiring.
- ⇒ Mobilize resources to improve basic services such as electricity and potable water.
- ⇒ Prioritize developmental infrastructure projects over emergency relief to foster community resilience.
- ⇒ Enhance the capacity of the district administration in areas like waste management, revenue collection, and governance.

### **8. Annexes**

- List of participants
- Pictures

## 9. Pictorial Evidence



Figure 1 Citizen Forum Participants



Figure 2 Citizen Forum Participants



Figure 3 Dr. Abbas Opening Remarks



Figure 6 Dr. Adan Opening Remarks



Figure 4 Mr. Omar Atuu - DC and Mayor of Huddur



Figure 5 Female Participant Asking Questions