Improving Delivery of Public Services to Citizens through Decentralization Legislation - in Somaliland

In 2014, the Government of Somaliland approved legislation passed by both the Parliament and President endorsing a Decentralization Policy. This provides the political, administrative and financial scope to decentralize service delivery, to districts with sufficient capacity, in prioritized sectors which are health, education, water/sanitation and roads. It also gives District Councils the authority to make local decisions on planning, finance and human resources.

The Decentralization Policy outlines the direct election of District Councils based on open, competitive, and non-discriminatory selection and campaigning for local council offices with elections scheduled in Somaliland in 2017.

Support to the evolving process of decentralization in Somaliland has been provided through the UN Joint Programme on Local Governance and Decentralized Services (known as “JPLG”). In 2015, JPLG continues to focus on strengthening local governance and decentralization across Somalia.

Decentralized service delivery allows District Administrations’ to play a stronger role in their own development. It makes optimum use of local knowledge on service needs and reduces administrative congestion within line ministries. It promotes the active involvement of citizens in the planning and policy formulation process, through district community forums, giving citizens more influence and control over their lives. It brings representation closer to the people increasing accountability and legitimacy.

1 Somaliland Decentralization Policy 2013-2020
JPLG/UNDP has been supporting Somaliland to build district capacity since 2008, working through the Ministry of Interior in Hargeisa. This early groundwork enabled the piloting of decentralized service delivery in districts in 2014. It also educated District Councils’ and their communities on the functions of local government which resulted in a broad range of stakeholder interest in subsequent decentralization policy consultations. These were held between 2010 and 2013, supported by JPLG/UNDP, where devolution was chosen as the preferred method for decentralized service delivery.

In 2010, the legal framework was reviewed, supported by JPLG/UNDP, to ensure that the development of a Decentralization Policy was in line with the Federal Republic of Somalia’s 2012 Provisional Constitution, Transitional Federal Charter (TFC), and Somaliland Constitutions and existing laws. JPLG/UNDP also provided technical support to the development of a Decentralization Policy Paper which included stakeholder input from decentralization policy consultations (2010-2013).

JPLG/UNDP continued to provide input to the policy formulation and institutional environment in 2011/2012. This led to the Vice President of Somaliland being appointed as Decentralization Champion, by the President of Somaliland – and they played a critical role in getting the Decentralization Policy approved. It also led to the establishment of Inter-Ministerial Committee on Local Government in 2013. The Inter-Ministerial Committee consists of Ministers for all sector Ministries as well as Ministry of Interior, ensuring government ownership of the decentralization process – and leading to the roll out of Decentralization Roadmaps.

In 2014, piloting commenced in priority sectors and districts. In Somaliland, education is being piloted in Berbera, Borama, and Burao.

With the generous support of the European Commission, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and UK Aid, JPLG works closely with local counterparts in promoting improvements in the ability of local governments to provide equitable services to communities. In 2015, JPLG/UNDP continues to strengthen district capacity in support of improved public service delivery to citizens in eight districts of Somaliland – Hargeisa, Gabiley, Borama, Berbera, Sheikh, Burao, Odweine and Zaylac. JPLG/UNDP support to the Somaliland government through the creation of polices, manuals, guidelines and regulations is enabling District Administrations’ to play a stronger role in their own development.