



# PROPOSING EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN **SOMALIA**

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**ORGANIZER:** MINBAR INITIATIVE

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## About The Author

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## INTRODUCTION:

On September 4, 2023, Minbar Initiative convened a town hall meeting with key stakeholders to address – and discuss – the challenges and opportunities in the education sector.

The aim of this town-hall meeting was, among other topics, to reflect and debate the recent directive issued by the Minister of Higher Education which extends the term for university tenure into five years. Termed as the "Foundation Year," this extension aimed to equip students with essential skills, including proficiency in Somali, Arabic, and English languages, critical thinking, Islamic studies, and other fundamental competencies, before embarking on specialized university studies.

The panel for this event featured a distinguished speakers comprising leaders from university association, lawmakers and other high-ranking officials from the Ministry of Education, and representatives from university and school union associations. This report sums up the key points discussed including challenges, opportunities, and recommendations that emerged during the deliberations.

## BACKGROUND OF THE DEBATE::

The context of this town hall meeting revolved around the broader education reform in Somalia and the imperative to enhance the education system. Somalia faces severe educational challenges, with only 28% of children attending primary school and a mere 10% of girls participating in secondary education. These issues are compounded by inadequate infrastructure, underqualified teachers, and insufficient funding.

In a concerted effort to address these shortcomings, the Minister of Education in Somalia issued a directive on August 16, 2023, announcing the introduction of a foundation year within the university education framework. This decision laid the groundwork for a robust debate among education experts and stakeholders. Some endorsed the idea, contending that it would substantially elevate the quality of education in Somalia. Others expressed reservations, arguing that it could prove to be a futile expenditure of time and resources.

## ❖ KEY ISSUES DISCUSSED:

**1. The Lack of Basic Education in Somalia:** Somalia grapples with one of the most deficient education systems globally, characterized by low primary and secondary school attendance rates, subpar infrastructure, unqualified educators, and financial constraints. The ramifications of inadequate basic education encompass poverty, unemployment, social instability, and limited personal and professional prospects.

**2. Introduction of the Foundation Year:** The proposed foundation year garnered mixed reactions. Advocates contended that it could bolster the quality of education by furnishing students with the requisite foundational skills for university success. Opponents, on the other hand, raised concerns about its potential to delay students' progression to substantive university studies and its feasibility due to a shortage of qualified educators in Somalia.

**3. The Way Forward for Education Reform in Somalia:** Attendees explored several avenues for overhauling the education system in Somalia. These strategies encompassed the formulation of a national education plan, investments in teacher training, infrastructure improvements, scholarships for economically disadvantaged students, enhanced access to education for girls and women, private sector involvement in reform initiatives, and the cultivation of political support for education reform.

## ❖ KEY CHALLENGES HIGHLIGHTED:

**1. Effects of the Civil War:** The enduring repercussions of the civil war have wrought havoc upon Somalia's educational institutions, severely impairing access to quality education and diminishing infrastructure.

**2. Poor Educational Infrastructure:** The dire state of educational infrastructure was identified as a formidable impediment to system enhancement.

**3. Shortage of Qualified Teachers:** The scarcity of qualified educators in Somalia poses a considerable challenge to educational reform.

**4. Lack of Funding for Education:** Inadequate financial resources allocated to education have stymied progress in improving the system.

**5. Lack of Political Will for Reform:** The absence of sustained political commitment to education reform further exacerbates the challenges faced by Somalia's education system.

## ❖ KEY OPPORTUNITIES HIGHLIGHTED:

- 1. Economic Growth through Education:** Education was identified as a potent catalyst for potential economic growth within Somalia.
- 2. Enhancing Lives through Education:** Education offers the opportunity to uplift the lives of Somali citizens by expanding their horizons and socio-economic prospects.
- 3. Peace and Prosperity through Education:** Education can be a cornerstone in the construction of a more peaceful and prosperous Somalia.
- 4. International Support:** The international community exhibited a willingness to support education reform efforts in Somalia, presenting an invaluable opportunity for collaborative initiatives.

## ❖ KEY RECOMMENDATIONS MADE:

- 1. Development of a National Education Plan:** A comprehensive national education plan should be developed to systematically address the challenges and opportunities within the education system.
- 2. Investment in Teacher Training:** Substantial investments in teacher training programs are imperative to ensure a qualified and capable teaching workforce.
- 3. Infrastructure Improvement:** Infrastructure enhancements for schools and universities should be prioritized to create conducive learning environments.
- 4. Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students:** Scholarships should be made available to economically disadvantaged students to broaden access to education.
- 5. Building Political Will:** Efforts should be directed toward cultivating unwavering political support for education reform within Somalia.

The town hall meeting served as a productive forum for deliberating the challenges and opportunities facing education in Somalia. The panelists offered a range of critical recommendations for reform, contributing to heightened awareness of the necessity for decisive action.

The subsequent steps entail the formulation of a comprehensive national education plan and the diligent implementation of the recommendations articulated by the panelists. These endeavors demand unwavering commitment from the government, private sector, and civil society. However, successful execution promises substantial progress in enhancing Somalia's education system and forging a brighter future for its citizens.

## ATTENDANCE:

Total Attendees: **400** (Comprising Students, Parents, And Stakeholders)

Gender Distribution:



## PANELISTS:



**MP Abdilahi Farah Mire**  
Chairman of the Board of  
Education Committee



**Dr. Hassan Mohamed  
Hassan Kaafi**  
Vice Chancellor of the Somali  
Universities Union (ASU)



**Abdiqaadir Mohamed**  
Chairman of the Banadir  
Regional Schools Union



**Dr Abdullaahi Cabdi**  
Senior Policy Advisor,  
Ministry of Education

# Minbar

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*A Civic Space for Participation*

