

# Strengthening Stabilization in Somalia: Insights from the Baidoa Intergovernmental Conference (ILEIS).

## Policy brief: October 2023



Contact Us.

Kenya:

Transitional Plaza, 3rd Floor.  
Opposite Supreme Court,  
P.O. Box 4544-00506  
Phone: +254790536225

Ethiopia: Bole Sub-city, Addis Ababa

Phone: +251915463222

Somalia: Mogadishu: Behind Jazeera Hotel, Wadajir District

Phone: +252 615518320

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

- ❖ We extend our sincere gratitude to the government institutions that attended the meeting for their collaboration, interactions, and active engagement with a broad range of stakeholders, playing instrumental roles in the success of the conference. Special acknowledgment is reserved for the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs, and Reconciliation (FGS) for initiating this valuable endeavor and fostering an environment of open discourse and constructive engagement.
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ILEIS session in Baidoa, held from October 7th to 11th, 2023, marked the third in a series of crucial meetings initiated by the Ministry of Interior Federal Affairs and Reconciliation (MOFAR) and funded by UK ERI. These gatherings serve as platforms for stakeholders to engage in substantive conversations, reflecting on lessons learned from diverse contexts in early recovery and immediate stabilization efforts. The Baidoa conference expanded its scope, including broader governmental representation and emphasizing the interdependence of functions in stabilization. Key lessons learned include the importance of coordinated joint planning, a unified government-led strategy, and effective stakeholder communication and coordination. These insights contribute to addressing the complex challenges confronting Somalia's stabilization efforts, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange among stakeholders.

## Introduction

The Inter-Governmental Learning on Early Recovery and Immediate Stabilization (ILEIS) session held in Baidoa in October 2023 was the third in a series of crucial meetings initiated by the Ministry of Interior Federal Affairs and Reconciliation (MOFAR) and funded by UK ERI. Building upon previous gatherings in Kismayo and Dhuusamareeb, this conference provided a platform for stakeholders to engage in substantive discussions on early recovery and stabilization efforts in Somalia. With expanded governmental representation, interactive sessions, and participant contributions, the conference fostered a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding stabilization

efforts. Attended by dignitaries from the Federal Government of Somalia, Federal Member States, international partners, and the Somali National Army, the event served as a pivotal milestone in addressing challenges and fostering intergovernmental collaboration. Over the past three decades, Somalia has endured conflict, insecurity, climatic shocks, and economic pressures, resulting in significant humanitarian challenges. Currently, half of the population, around 8.25 million people, require urgent assistance, with children making up 60 percent of this group. The number of internally and externally displaced Somalis has surpassed 3.8 million, and approximately 3.7 million people face high levels of acute food insecurity. Despite clan-based tensions fueling armed clashes, traditional clan elders have historically mediated conflicts using customary law.

Since 2012, various international initiatives, including those by USAID, UK, EU, and UN, have supported stabilization efforts in Somalia alongside military operations aimed at liberating areas from Islamist group control. These initiatives focused on extending state authority, strengthening reconciliation, engaging communities to deter extremist recruitment, and providing technical and financial support to government stakeholders. Building on this, the Ministry of Interior Federal Affairs and Reconciliation (MOIFAR) organized an intergovernmental learning meeting in Baidoa from October 8th to 10th, 2023. This meeting aimed to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange among Somali institutions to address multifaceted challenges. It follows previous meetings held in Kismayo and Dhuusamareeb.

This policy brief assesses the stabilization landscapes in Somalia emphasizing the Baidoa conference proceedings and drawing actionable recommendations.

# THE BAIDOA CONFERENCE

## An overview



The Intergovernmental Learning on Early Recovery and Immediate Stabilization (ILEIS) conference convened in Somalia aimed to address the multifaceted challenges facing the country due to decades of conflict, insecurity, and economic pressure. With a focus on reviewing progress and sharing experiences, the meeting brought together various stakeholders, including government ministries, federal member states, the military, and international partners. The overarching objective was to devise strategies for overcoming security operation challenges and assessing recovery and stabilization programs in newly liberated areas. Specific goals included enhancing coordination among government entities, streamlining communication, reevaluating recovery strategies, exploring domestic resource mobilization, facilitating civil-military joint planning, strengthening partnerships, and evaluating local community involvement. With over 50 attendees from government and international organizations, the conference provided a valuable platform for collaborative discussions and knowledge exchange, contributing to efforts aimed at stabilizing Somalia and fostering sustainable development.

## APPROACH

The conference adopted a structured approach over three days to facilitate comprehensive discussions and collaborative problem-solving. Each day began with an agenda overview, setting the stage for focused deliberations, followed by presentations by key stakeholders, including government officials and international partners, provided insights into critical interventions and lessons learned. Panel discussions provided valuable insights while role-play sessions encouraged active participation and engagement among participants, allowing for the exploration of diverse perspectives and institutional priorities. Group exercises and open discussions facilitated the sharing of experiences and the identification of best practices. This approach fostered a conducive environment for knowledge exchange, enabling stakeholders to collectively address challenges and formulate actionable recommendations.

## Key issues identified.

The key issues and challenges in the coordination, governance, and communication of stabilization efforts include bureaucratic tendencies, overlapping responsibilities, and inadequate engagement from key ministries and partners, hindering effective execution and communication. Fragmentation in prioritization, lack of clarity, and inclusivity in stabilization efforts, as well as challenges in achieving transitional justice and economic rehabilitation, are observed in the designing, planning, and implementing of early recovery and stabilization initiatives. Additionally, excessive dependence on donor aid, lack of transparency, and inadequate funding for stabilization compared to humanitarian and development sectors pose significant challenges in mobilizing financial resources. Weak rapport, communication, and understanding between military forces and civilian populations hinder effective responses to spillover effects in civil-military joint planning, coordination, and information sharing. Finally, there is a gap in involving international organizations and donors in planning early recovery and stabilization activities, necessitating regular updates and engagement for aligning efforts and setting priorities.





## Conclusions

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- ❖ The conference outlined a series of comprehensive recommendations aimed at addressing the complex challenges facing stabilization efforts in Somalia. These recommendations encompass various aspects, including coordination, governance, financial resource mobilization, civil-military cooperation, countering extremist ideology, and monitoring and evaluation.
- ❖ There is a clear emphasis on the importance of collaboration between the Somali government and international partners in implementing the conference recommendations. The involvement of diverse stakeholders, ranging from government ministries to international organizations, underscores the collective commitment to finding solutions to the stabilization challenges.
- ❖ The report highlights the need for a holistic approach that addresses not only immediate stabilization needs but also lays the groundwork for sustainable development and governance in the recovered areas.
- ❖ Despite the daunting challenges outlined, the conference expressed confidence that the practical insights shared will serve as a catalyst for positive change and progress in Somalia. It emphasizes the importance of ongoing collaboration, knowledge sharing, and government-led initiatives in achieving lasting stability in the region.

## Recommendations

1. **Holistic Government Approach:** The recommendations stress the importance of a collaborative approach among relevant ministries and agencies to ensure cohesive action and consensus in program delivery. Effective communication and coordination, along with alternative fundraising methods beyond reliance on international partners, are highlighted to support early recovery and stabilization efforts.
2. **Military-Civil Planning Alignment:** Synchronization between military liberation and resource planning for stabilization efforts is crucial. The formation of legitimate interim administrations, support for local forces and capacities, and resource mobilization for infrastructure development are recommended to enhance governance and security in liberated areas.
3. **Flexibility in Resource Allocation:** It is recommended to maintain flexibility in resource allocation, establish contingent funds, and develop a local functioning justice system to address emerging needs, uphold the rule of law, and manage grievances effectively.
4. **Countering Militant Recruitment Strategies:** Comprehensive efforts, including promoting ideological counter-narratives, trust-building initiatives, and youth employment programs, are essential to counter extremist propaganda and reduce support for extremist groups. Effective information dissemination channels are identified as vital for maintaining community cohesion and countering militant recruitment strategies.

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# MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, FEDERAL AFFAIRS & RECONCILIATION

**Mohmed Kamil Yusuf**  
Public Financial Management Expert  
Email: [kamilsugal@outlook.com](mailto:kamilsugal@outlook.com)



### Contact Us.

**Kenya:** Transitional Plaza, 3rd Floor.  
Opposite Supreme Court,  
P.O. Box 4544-00506  
Phone: +254790536225

**Ethiopia:** Bole Sub-city, Addis Ababa  
Phone: +251915463222

**Somalia:** Mogadishu: Behind Jazeera Hotel, Wadajir District  
Phone: +252 615513320

**Kismayo:** Farjana sub-district District  
Phone: +252613333993

**Email:** [info@taskbridge.org](mailto:info@taskbridge.org)  
**Website:** [www.taskbridge.org](http://www.taskbridge.org)