Mashruuca Dowlad-Wanaag

Baargaal District Authority

Capacity Assessment Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This capacity assessment report of Baargaal District Council, conducted under the Dawlad-Wadaag Consortium in February 2025, identifies systemic governance weaknesses, institutional limitations, and emerging opportunities to improve local governance, public accountability, and service delivery. The district, despite recent democratic progress marked by the 2023 municipal elections, remains hindered by limited staffing, underqualified personnel, severe resource constraints, and geographic isolation.

Enablers for change include strong political commitment to decentralization, growing community demand for participatory governance, and support from development partners. Conversely, the district's ability to implement reforms is threatened by a lack of budgetary support, weak enforcement of emerging policies, and broader sociopolitical instability.

The assessment employed a mixed-methods approach, incorporating key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and comparative benchmarking against Garowe District. It evaluated Baargaal's performance across eight critical capacity domains. Recommendations span short-, medium-, and long-term interventions, targeting HR systems, M&E frameworks, financial management, community participation, and institutional resilience

RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

Short-Term (0–6 months):
- Develop district HR policy, job descriptions, and an induction program
- Design and implement a basic M&E framework
- Establish community feedback mechanisms and communication platforms
- Digitize financial management processes using basic tools
- Conduct a skills audit and design targeted training plans
- Launch a DRM sensitization campaign and risk mapping exercise

Mid-Term (6–18 months):
- Develop a participatory District Development Plan
- Establish a procurement function and policy
- Implement stakeholder mapping and communication planning
- Pilot TPM and formalize data collection systems

Long-Term (18+ months):
- Institutionalize a MEAL unit and PCM training
- Integrate ABCD, LEDS, and cash-based programming
- Diversify local revenue sources
- Institutionalize external audits and financial oversight mechanisms

INTRODUCTION

Baargaal District is a coastal district in northeastern Puntland, bordered by the Indian Ocean and characterized by a mix of coastal plains, semi-arid zones, and mountainous terrain. The district's economy is centered around pastoralism, small-scale agriculture, and fishing, with camels, goats, and marine resources forming the foundation of local livelihoods.

Despite its rich resource base, Baargaal remains one of the most geographically isolated districts in Puntland. It lies about 700 kilometers from Garowe, the administrative capital, and approximately 350 kilometers from Bosaso, the region's primary commercial hub. This distance has contributed to severe infrastructure deficits, weak service delivery systems, and limited access to government resources.

OVERVIEW OF BARGAAL DISTRICT:

In 2023, Baargaal achieved a milestone in democratic governance by conducting municipal elections that replaced the traditional clan-based nomination system. A total of 153 candidates from six political associations competed, and 27 councilors were elected from four associations. This shift signaled a transformation in local governance, ushering in greater political inclusivity and public participation.

The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate Baargaal's institutional and operational capacity to fulfill its governance mandate within Puntland's decentralization framework. It assesses gaps and opportunities across governance, human resources, service delivery, financial management, community engagement, and disaster preparedness.

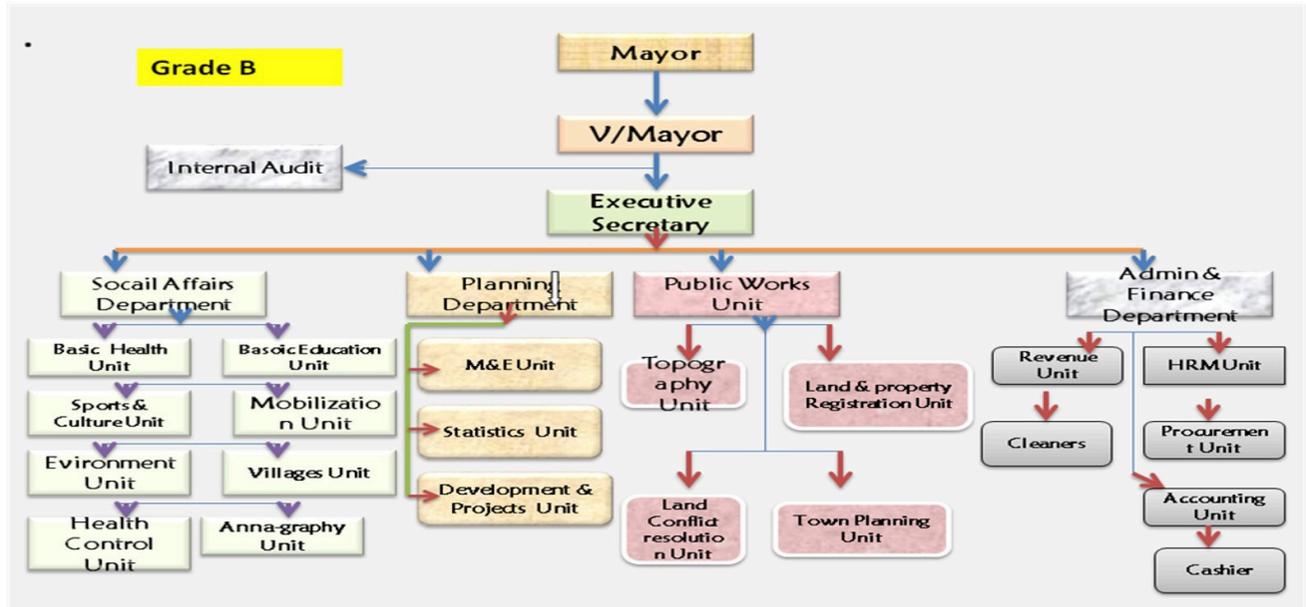# FINDINGS

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Grade B

Diagram : MoIFAD District B Structure

Baargaal's current administrative setup consists of five departments, exceeding the four recommended by the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs, and Democratization (MoIFD) for a Grade B district. Out of the expected 21 sub-units, only eight are functional. Two departments have no sub-units at all. An unsanctioned "Security Department" operates due to localized security needs but lacks formal recognition, causing potential jurisdictional conflicts.

The Executive Secretary, appointed by the MoIFD in accordance with Article 36 of Law No. 7, manages district operations under the supervision of the mayor. However, weak role clarity between legislative and executive arms continues to hamper effective governance.

DISTRICT CAPACITY ANALYSIS

a) Governance and Leadership

The governance structure in Baargaal District is undergoing a transformation following the 2023 elections. However, gaps remain in the understanding and application of governance principles, institutional mandates, and administrative workflows. The absence of formalized structures and procedures has led to a governance environment that is largely informal, inconsistent, and reliant on precedent rather than policy.

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Key Gaps:

- Ambiguity between the roles of the legislative and executive branches
- Limited induction and orientation for new officials
- Absence of documented SOPs to guide operations
- Irregular coordination with state-level institutions

Recommendations:

- Develop and implement SOPs across all departments
- Conduct structured induction training for councilors and staff
- Define and communicate institutional roles and mandates
- Establish regular coordination mechanisms with MoIFAD and other central ministries

b) Human Resource Capacity

Baargaal's human resource framework is underdeveloped. Less than half of the district workforce (43%) hold post-secondary qualifications, and job placements are often misaligned with educational backgrounds. There is no HR development policy, performance appraisal system, or structured career progression pathway.

Key Gaps:

- Low qualifications and skill mismatch among staff
- No HR development strategy or policies
- Lack of performance monitoring and accountability systems

Recommendations:

- Conduct a comprehensive staff skills audit
- Develop a district HR policy with training and capacity-building provisions
- Introduce regular performance appraisals and professional development plans

c) Staffing Capacity

Most departments in Baargaal are understaffed and poorly structured. Job descriptions are either missing or not enforced, leading to unclear roles and low productivity. Staff deployment does not follow any strategic staffing model.

Key Gaps:

- Inadequate number of qualified staff
- Undefined job roles and responsibilities
- Absence of recruitment strategy

Recommendations:

- Develop staffing norms aligned with departmental needs
- Create clear job descriptions and terms of reference
- Establish a transparent, merit-based recruitment system

d) Service Delivery and Infrastructure

Service delivery in Baargaal is constrained by inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and weak development planning. Basic services such as health, education, and water remain underfunded and inconsistently provided.

Key Gaps:

- Poor access to essential services
- No formal service delivery plans or performance benchmarks
- Lack of infrastructure for public administration and service provision

Recommendations:

- Develop participatory service delivery plans tied to district development goals
- Mobilize resources for critical infrastructure investments
- Establish service benchmarks and monitoring mechanisms

e) Financial Management

Financial systems in Baargaal remain fully manual, unstructured, and vulnerable to mismanagement. There is no digital record-keeping, no external audits have been conducted, and internal financial controls are minimal or absent. The district also lacks a procurement unit or policy.

Key Gaps:

- Manual financial systems and poor documentation
- No audit history or internal controls
- Lack of procurement processes and oversight

Recommendations:

- Introduce basic digital finance tools (e.g., Excel-based tracking)
- Develop procurement policy and establish a procurement unit
- Train finance staff in public financial management and audit compliance

f) Community Engagement and Participation

Community engagement structures in Baargaal are informal and heavily influenced by traditional elders. Women and youth are underrepresented, and there are no systematic feedback channels to ensure inclusive governance.

Key Gaps:

- Lack of inclusive engagement platforms
- Minimal participation from women and youth
- No formal feedback or complaint mechanisms

Recommendations:
- Establish inclusive forums for marginalized groups
- Develop structured community feedback tools (e.g., town halls, surveys)
- Map stakeholders and create a district communication strategy

g) Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability

The district does not have a functioning MEAL system. There is no systematic data collection or reporting, and citizen feedback is not integrated into planning or performance reviews.

Key Gaps:

- No MEAL framework or staff
- No data use for planning or decision-making
- Lack of accountability mechanisms

Recommendations:

- Design a basic MEAL framework and tools for departmental use
- Appoint or train MEAL focal persons in each department
- Establish citizen feedback integration into district planning

h) Disaster Risk Management

Disaster preparedness in Baargaal is minimal. There are no DRM policies, plans, or staff with expertise in risk management. The district is vulnerable to climate change impacts such as water scarcity and land degradation.

Key Gaps:

- Absence of DRM plans or units
- No training or risk assessments conducted
- Weak integration of DRM into service planning

Recommendations:

- Conduct a district-level risk mapping and develop a DRM plan
- Sensitize staff and stakeholders on DRM frameworks
- Integrate DRM into district development planning and PCM

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Short-Term (0–6 Months):

1. **Develop HR Policies and Induction Materials**: Draft a comprehensive human resource policy that defines recruitment procedures, job descriptions, and performance evaluation criteria. Initiate an induction program for all newly elected council members and new hires to orient them on institutional mandates and operational expectations.
2. **Roll Out a Basic M&E Framework**: Establish departmental-level monitoring indicators aligned with service delivery goals. Introduce quarterly reporting templates and train staff in basic M&E methods to improve tracking of outputs and outcomes.
3. **Establish Citizen Feedback Mechanisms**: Set up accessible platforms such as town hall meetings, community forums, suggestion boxes, and social media channels to gather feedback from citizens and enhance accountability.
4. **Digitize Financial Management and Training**: Begin using basic digital tools (e.g., Excel) to manage revenue, budgeting, and expenditure records. Provide targeted training for finance staff on budgeting, tracking, and transparent reporting.
5. **Conduct Skills Audit and Training Needs Assessment**: Identify existing staff competencies and gaps across departments. Develop a training plan that addresses priority areas such as public administration, procurement, M&E, financial management, and digital literacy.
6. **Initiate Disaster Risk Management Sensitization**: Conduct community outreach and staff training to raise awareness on DRM. Begin a participatory risk mapping process to identify and prioritize local hazards.

Mid-Term (6–18 Months):

1. **Develop a Participatory District Development Plan**: Engage community stakeholders, civil society, and government staff in drafting a multi-year development plan that prioritizes inclusive service delivery and resource allocation.
2. **Establish Procurement Unit and Procedures**: Create a procurement function within the district with clear roles, guidelines, and accountability mechanisms. Equip relevant staff with training on procurement planning, tendering, and compliance.
3. **Implement Stakeholder Mapping and Communication Planning**: Identify key development actors, their interests, and preferred communication methods. Design a communications plan that improves public information dissemination and supports inclusive governance.

4.**Pilot Third Party Monitoring (TPM)**: Collaborate with development partners to implement TPM on selected projects, using external evaluators to provide unbiased oversight and learning.

5.**Adopt Digital Tools for M&E and Data Management**: Introduce platforms such as Open Data Kit (ODK) for data collection. Train staff in digital survey tools, analysis, and data-driven decision-making.

Long-Term (18+ Months):

1. **Institutionalize a MEAL Unit and PCM Training**: Establish a dedicated Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) unit with defined roles and budget. Train district staff on Project Cycle Management (PCM) including planning, implementation, and adaptive learning.

2. **Implement Resilience-Based Programming**: Introduce development approaches such as Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), Local Economic Development Strategies (LEDS), and cash-based interventions to support sustainable livelihoods and climate resilience.

3. **Diversify Local Revenue Sources**: Explore and formalize alternative revenue channels such as service fees, local taxation, eco-tourism partnerships, and licensing within fisheries and small-scale trade sectors. Develop a revenue mobilization strategy aligned with legal frameworks.

4. **Institutionalize External Audits and Accountability Systems**: Advocate for periodic external audits of district finances and integrate audit findings into performance improvement plans. Promote transparent financial disclosure to stakeholders to build public trust.

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