



Mashruuca Dowlad-Wanaag

Ufeyn District Authority

Capacity Assessment Report

January-June 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This capacity assessment report presents an analysis of the administrative and institutional strengths and weaknesses of the Ufeyn District Council and District Authority. The assessment was conducted in February 2025 under the Dowlag Wanaag project, implemented by PUNSAA as part of the broader Somali Stability Fund (SSF) initiative. This evaluation serves as a baseline to guide support to the district and is also intended to inform a potential re-categorization of Ufeyn's administrative status.

Ufeyn, located in the Bari region of Puntland, is currently categorized as a “C” grade district. It is home to an estimated 87,120 residents, with pastoralism and small-scale trade serving as the main economic activities. Geographically, the district borders Iskushuban, Qandala, Bosaso, and Sanaag regions. Its location is strategic for livestock and trade routes, yet basic service delivery remains underdeveloped due to weak institutional capacity, limited resources, and poor infrastructure.

The assessment used a participatory methodology that included document reviews, consultations with local government officials, community representatives, and a scoring system based on seven thematic areas. The overall score was 66 out of 336, reflecting a performance of 19.6%, which is relatively low.

Summary of Key Challenges:

- Absence of formal policy frameworks, strategic plans, and operational procedures.
- Informal recruitment of staff and lack of regular performance monitoring.
- Severe under-resourcing in core services like education, health, and sanitation.
- Weak financial accountability, with no external audits or revenue-tracking systems in place.
- Poor infrastructure and minimal support from higher levels of government.
- Marginal involvement of citizens—especially youth, women, and vulnerable groups—in decision-making.
- Absence of a disaster preparedness plan, despite known climate-related risks.

Key Opportunities:

- District officials and council members have demonstrated a strong willingness to engage in reform.
- Community members are eager to participate in planning and service oversight when given the opportunity.
- Presence of some local partnerships with humanitarian actors that could be scaled or formalized.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Short-Term:

- Develop a basic operations manual for governance and administrative procedures.
- Initiate merit-based recruitment and training programs.
- Conduct a basic needs assessment for infrastructure and services.
- Set up community forums and suggestion boxes to enhance participation.

Mid-Term:

- Establish a district development plan and M&E framework.
- Create a local revenue generation strategy, particularly around livestock markets and small businesses.
- Develop partnerships with NGOs for co-delivery of services.

Long-Term:

- Institutionalize a human resource management system including job descriptions and evaluations.
- Invest in digital tools for financial reporting and citizen feedback.
- Mainstream disaster risk reduction planning into all development projects.

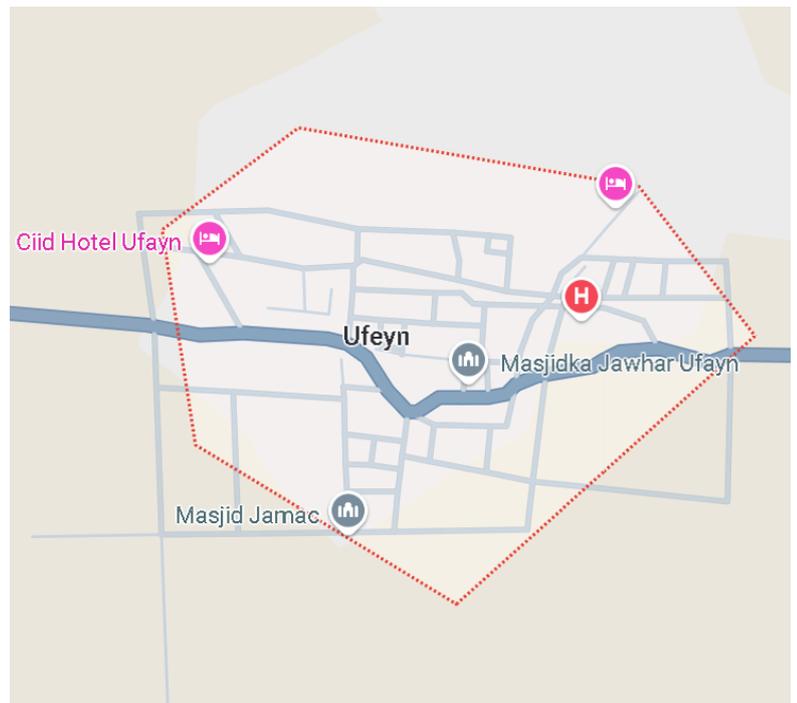
This assessment provides a critical foundation for government, donors, and civil society stakeholders to design targeted interventions that strengthen governance, service delivery, and inclusive development in Ufeyn District.



INTRODUCTION

Ufeyn District is a vital point for travel and trade, facilitating the movement of goods and people within the region.

OVERVIEW OF UFEYN DISTRICT:



The population of the district is estimated between 20,000 to 30,000 and, as with the general population pyramid, youth compose at least 60% who were active in the recent elections.

Despite these advances, Ufeyn has faced persistent challenges, including inter-clan conflicts, political instability, and a manifestation of, the struggle to maintain social cohesion. These factors have occasionally hindered the district's development, but local leadership has worked towards fostering reconciliation and creating a more stable governance structure (Abdullahi, 2020).

The district's institutional framework is primarily based on essential services such as schools, clinics, and basic infrastructure. Institutions like the Ufeyn Primary School and Ufeyn Health Centre are critical in providing services but are often under-resourced (World Bank, 2021). Education has seen some improvements, with primary and secondary schools offering basic education. Health services, although present, are minimal and having to deal with the perennial issues based on environmental illnesses with water-borne diseases prevalent).

Ufeyn's economy is primarily based on subsistence agriculture, livestock, and fishing. Pastoralism is the dominant economic activity with the scarcity of water being the major inhibitor. The majority of Ufeyn's residents rely on well water and informal sources for their daily needs. Efforts are underway to improve water access through local and international partnerships, but substantial challenges remain. The infrastructure in Ufeyn remains underdeveloped with poor road networks that hinder mobility and access to markets. Mobile telephony coverage remains limited and further reflects the rural-urban divide in the district.

The local government in Ufeyn has made notable efforts to enhance governance through capacity-building programmes and the establishment of district-level institutions with the next level of challenges related to limited financial resources, lack of skilled personnel, and political instability hindering effective governance. Leadership in Ufeyn has been instrumental in fostering local development through partnerships with international organisations, but more support is needed for sustainable governance.

Ufeyn's current development priorities include improving infrastructure, enhancing educational services, and addressing health challenges. There is an emphasis on rural development, with projects aimed at improving agricultural practices and creating more sustainable livelihoods for the district's population.

FINDINGS

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

Grade B

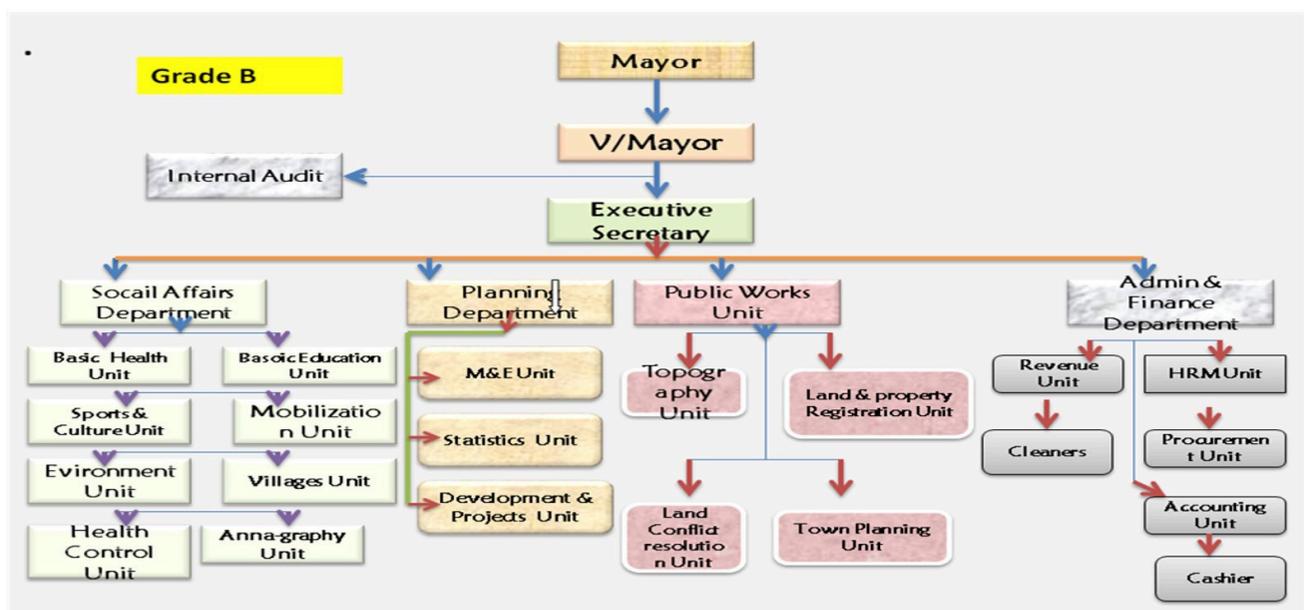


Diagram : MoFAD District B Structure

Ufeyn District's administrative structure presents both compliance gaps and adaptive innovations relative to the MoIFD's standards for Grade B districts with 4 departments and 21 units for the management of local service delivery. Ufeyn operates 5 departments, the addition of a Security Department and 12 functional units. The security addition, while potentially creating jurisdictional overlaps with Puntland State security agencies, reflects an attempt to respond to local concerns.

DISTRICT CAPACITY ANALYSIS

The overall capacity of Ufeyn District, as indicated by the analysis of collected data, reveals both notable strengths to build on and critical gaps requiring attention. With a total score of 115 out of a 336 (34%), the district demonstrates certain aspects of governance and service delivery are functioning with significant room for improvement.

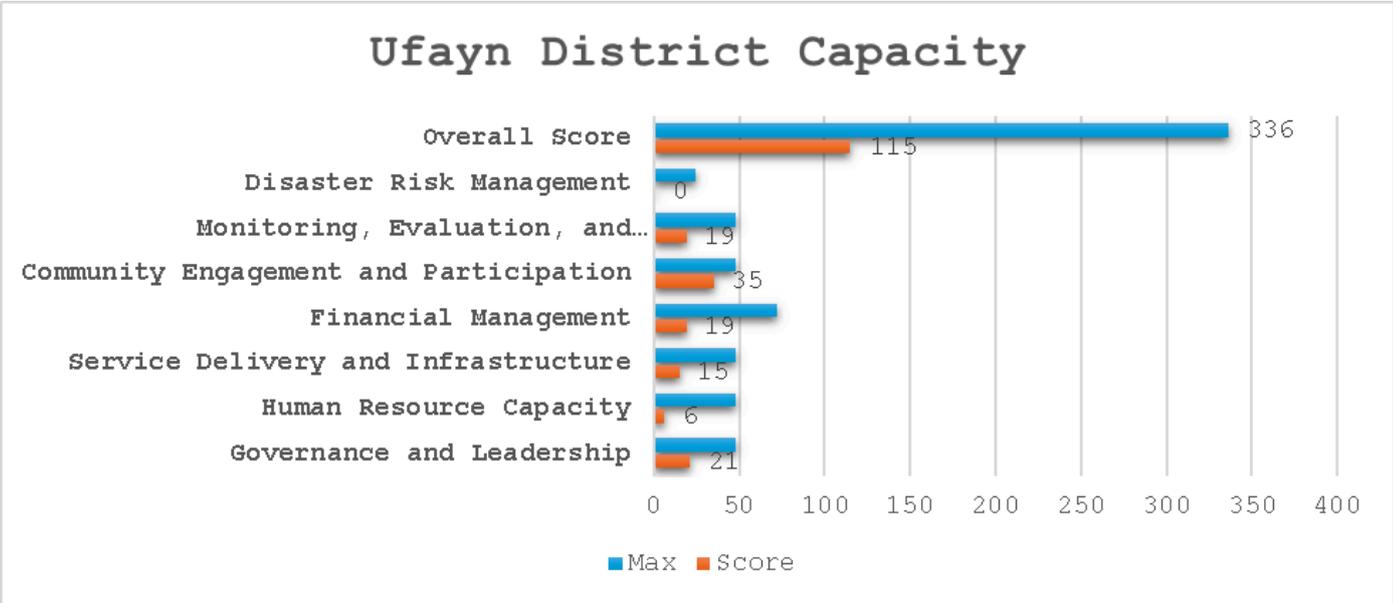


Chart : Ufeyn District Capacity Performance Scores Across Key Areas

a) Governance and Leadership

Ufeyn District shows the basis for further progress in governance as people are expecting with decentralisation and devolution under Law Number 7. In the audit, scoring 17/48 (35.4%), with notable strengths in development planning but with the perennial operational challenges facing all local government in Puntland.

The district successfully aligns its strategic plans with community priorities and state policies through established public consultation mechanisms; critical gaps remain in institutionalizing systematic review processes for mid-term adjustments.

Key Gaps:

- No formal system for periodic, at least annually, reviews of district plan with interactive, real time, engagement to support monitoring on an ongoing basis.
- Weak participatory frameworks beyond basic consultation forums.
- Strategic plans exist but lack implementation frameworks and performance tracking.

Recommendations:

- Institutionalise annual district development plan review frameworks with open accountability mechanisms.
- Drawing learning from social contract, accountability and inclusion frameworks, establish the policy, protocols and practice of structured participation and engagement schedules.
- Research for most effective (generating engaging and answering calls to action) approaches, establish public dashboards reporting on priority development indicators.
- Reinforce open government with public forums throughout the district linking councillors to constituents continuing civic education on roles, responsibilities for means to deliver on district development and stability.

b) Human Resource Capacity

Ufeyn District's human resource systems show critical deficiencies, scoring 8/48 (16.7%) in institutional capacity assessments. The participative audit reveals three fundamental weaknesses: unaccountable recruitment practices, severe skills gaps in essential operational areas, and the absence of people management and development frameworks. These systematic failures directly limit service delivery, development project management effectiveness and administrative efficiency.

Key Gaps:

- No merit-based HR policy from Puntland State to set standards and build professionalism. This highlighted in paucity of terms of reference/job descriptions and related assessment/evaluation.
- Significant mismatch between qualifications, roles and capacity to meet responsibilities of positions.
- Where personnel are motivated and have the right aptitude and attitude, no structured testing to define this and support them in their career path development with specific skills development.

Recommendations:

- Drawing on Puntland State approaches and peer to peer support, introduce a district HR framework with ToRs, defined roles and responsibilities, with mentoring and coaching fitting into a blended learning approach for a career path mapping.
- Establish a plan of action to prioritize and develop core skills required to have systems work in support of delivering the district development plans – ICT, finance, procurement and PCM, including MEA work, as basis for people’s participation and professional management.
- Formalise career progression systems to reduce staff attrition and build retention.

c) Service Delivery and Infrastructure

Ufeyn District's service delivery performance remains critically weak, scoring 9/48 (18.8%), with particularly deficiencies in infrastructure quality and equitable access. There is no definitive baseline of basic services meaning, despite anecdotal reporting, no systematic way to address shortfalls measured against standards (Sphere?). Geographic remoteness reinforces marginalisation of people.

Community consultations consistently identified three priority concerns: unreliable water access, hazardous road conditions, and inadequate healthcare facilities. The district's underinvestment in maintenance further exacerbates these challenges, creating a cycle of infrastructure deterioration and service decline.

Key Gaps:

- Inadequate roads, unreliable water systems, and unmaintained health posts.
- Absence of inclusive service planning, particularly for remote and marginalized communities.
- No defined maintenance or infrastructure investment strategy.

Recommendations:

Develop a district-wide infrastructure investment plan as the basis for economic development emphasizing local enterprise for service delivery. This, separate but integrally linked into, the district development plan and the DRM elements within this to facilitate EIPP/cash for work approaches as part of the social safety net.

Alongside, complementary to, the capital investment approach, supported by PPP and local enterprise, participatory budgeting to qualify and quantify maintenance budgets and how these are to be resourced.

Embed participatory service planning into annual development cycles noting the possibilities for the development of PPPs with an emphasis on social and solidarity enterprise development.

d) Financial Management

Ufeyn District's financial management requires investment in structures, systems and the people to implement, scoring 6/72 (8.3%), there critical weaknesses across all financial operations. While participatory budgeting processes exist, they lack the institutional support, knowledge among all stakeholders and necessary feedback loops to be of further benefit in reinforcing good governance. The district's revenue base remains very narrow, characterised by poor tax compliance and an over-reliance on external funding controlled by aid agencies.

Key Gaps:

- No functioning accounting or procurement system meaning compliance to PFM is non-functional.
- Budgeting occurs but lacks the participatory approaches to refine the budgets and develop local accountability, audit, or community review.
- Very limited local revenue collection capacity and limited further thinking as to how to build financial flows for recurring costs, capital investment or as means to develop district asset-based approaches and further capital investment.

Recommendations:

- Drawing on Puntland central and core knowledge, install digital basic budgeting and accounting systems using free/open-source tools meeting security and compliance criteria.
- Train finance personnel on budgeting linked to participatory development planning and reporting. Ensure this builds Puntland PFM audit compliance.
- Explore what is required for a form of equitable land tax. How market fees and related revenues for services could be built and tied to performance.
- Develop thinking to explore district asset-based development fitting with stimulating the district economy, building diaspora engagement and linking Ufeyn more intrinsically to its neighbouring urban centres and the wider rural hinterlands.

e) Community Engagement and Participation

Ufeyn District demonstrates weak community engagement with a score of 6/48 (12.5%), bringing forward the opportunity to build governance, noting the power and influence of key stakeholders who are the default people involved with initial consultations are fully representative of the district and do not reflect a full citizens engagement approach. Current mechanisms like public consultations and social media platforms, while establishing basic communication channels, fail to ensure meaningful inclusion – particularly for marginalised populations who face persistent barriers to participation.

Key Gaps:

- No institutional framework for citizen feedback or complaints.
- Informal community forums lack feedback loops or documentation for reference to build knowledge and support the changing of behaviour supporting stability and democratisation.
- Marginalised groups are not fully defined and there it is not known if they are underrepresented

Recommendations:

- Undertake a full stakeholder analysis as a baseline and use as means to develop a barometer to assess engagement and satisfaction of involvement in district governance.
- Establish and promote to all citizens, a citizen engagement charter accompanied by further feedback mechanisms to assess performance in prioritized areas of work at district and community levels.
- Pilot mobile-based feedback and involvement platforms (SMS, WhatsApp, USSD) and how these fit to other forms of media use. This part of developing a full communications approach underpinning participatory planning, including budgeting, and citizen approaches for monitoring and evaluating priority works..

f) Monitoring, Evaluation, and Accountability

The district is missing opportunities to learn from past projects and optimise resource allocation for future initiatives as while some monitoring efforts exist, they remain incoherent, require further skills and management input to establish a comprehensive framework systematically monitoring, supporting management of priority projects and evaluating programme effectiveness and impact.

Key Gaps:

- No coherent M&E framework or staff with M&E responsibilities.
- No fit of PCM to accountability to M&E to MEA and MEL formats to support good, inclusive, governance.
- Performance indicators are undefined, therefore not tracked systematically and not reported to stakeholders.
- Grievance redress mechanisms are not formalised or visible.

Recommendations:

- Develop a MEAL framework including KPIs, reporting timelines, and department responsibilities.
- Publish quarterly progress reports to local councils and citizens fitting with open council meetings and the use of different media to assist wider dissemination of meeting proceedings across all communities in the district.
- Provide training for MEAL focal points in data collection and use.
- Explore the use of a district scorecard building this into the process of prioritising by the different communities and how the district is to budget, noting all resources, to support work on priorities.

g) Disaster Risk Management

Ufeyn, Puntland, the wider Somalia and the Horn of Africa region, are increasingly vulnerable to exogenous disasters related to climate. DRM must be placed into this context with quality risk and threat work as basis for prediction and forewarning allowing preparation and informing mitigation work inside the district's development strategy.

Key Gaps:

- No locally owned disaster prediction, preparedness or emergency response strategy for any types of disaster or crises the district suffers.
- Absence of risk mapping, community engagement in looking at mitigation and how to be involved in response work dependent on type and scale of crisis.
- Skills, structures and systems not in-place for the district governance structures to be able to take responsibility for flagging possible humanitarian disasters and being established to take management at the local level.

Recommendations:

- Integrate DRM into the District Development Framework (DDF).
- Establish a DRM lead group taking forward community involvement in threat and risk identification with work to develop mitigation work and how to manage humanitarian response when required.
- People's engagement accompanied with skills development and the establishment of contingency plans using cash for work as means to address infrastructure shortfalls where appropriate.
- Link with Puntland's disaster platforms for forecasting and response coordination linked to PFM and PCM work drawing on technical skills and accountability required when external resources inputted.

h) Staff Capacity

With 23 total staff, Ufeyn District exhibits significant skills mismatches. Nine have tertiary education, two have governance-relevant qualifications. Ten staff have under 5 years of service and when this is placed with poor administrative practices, it reinforces the weaknesses in institutional memory. ICT capacity is critically limited, with just one technically qualified staff; a key area of development given the future lies with digital engagement and accountability development.

Key Gaps:

- Management capacity presents particular concerns with the mismatch of education to functional department, Head of Administration & Finance holding a midwifery qualification, the Planning Department is headed by a person with a pharmacy qualification.
- Experience and knowledge gaps compound these challenges with only one staff member ICT knowledgeable, severely limiting digital governance capabilities.
- 43% of employees have less than five years' public service experience. Two people have over a decade of experience.
- The Public Works Department suffers particularly acute inexperience (75% staff with <2 years tenure).
- There remains the preconcept everything must be done in-house, the district cannot and will not have the capability to house all the technical skills required to address the challenges in the district (and the priorities people are setting).

Recommendations:

- Prioritise recruitment, or the procurement of the relevant skills in ICT and finance.
- Look at peer-to-peer support, pooling finances to have specific skills supporting/mentoring more inexperienced talented people.
- Reassign staff and or support them in how they want to carry forward their careers noting managerial skills and being able to best use their base higher-level knowledge
- Partner with Puntland universities for blended learning schemes plus opportunities for internships and outreach ongoing skills development in the district from the universities present campuses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Short-Term (in the current planning cycle)::

1. Institutionalise annual district development plan review frameworks with open accountability mechanisms.
2. Drawing learning from social contract, accountability and inclusion frameworks, establish the policy, protocols and practice of structured participation and engagement schedules.
3. Reinforce open government with public forums throughout the district linking councillors to constituents continuing civic education on roles, responsibilities for means to deliver on district development and stability.
4. Prioritise recruitment, or the procurement of the relevant skills in ICT and finance.
5. Look at peer-to-peer support, pooling finances to have specific skills supporting/mentoring more inexperienced talented people.
6. Reassign staff and or support them in how they want to carry forward their careers noting managerial skills and being able to best use their base higher-level knowledge
7. Embed participatory service planning into annual development cycles noting the possibilities for the development of PPPs with an emphasis on social and solidarity enterprise development.
8. Undertake a full stakeholder analysis as a baseline and use as means to develop a barometer to assess engagement and satisfaction of involvement in district governance.
9. Establish and promote to all citizens, a citizen engagement charter accompanied by further feedback mechanisms to assess performance in prioritised areas of work at district and community levels.
10. Pilot mobile-based feedback and involvement platforms (SMS, WhatsApp, USSD) and how these fit to other forms of media use. This part of developing a full communications approach underpinning participatory planning, including budgeting, and citizen approaches for monitoring and evaluating priority works.
11. Integrate DRM into the District Development Framework (DDF).
12. Establish a DRM lead group taking forward community involvement in threat and risk identification with work to develop mitigation work and how to manage humanitarian response when required.
13. People's engagement accompanied with skills development and the establishment of contingency plans using cash for work as means to address infrastructure shortfalls where appropriate.

Mid-term (council tenure):

1. Research for most effective (generating engaging and answering calls to action) approaches, establish public dashboards reporting on priority development indicators.
2. Develop a district-wide infrastructure investment plan as the basis for economic development emphasising local enterprise for service delivery. This, separate but integrally linked to the district development plan and the DRM elements within this to facilitate EIP/cash for work approaches as part of the social safety net.
3. Alongside, complementary to, the capital investment approach, supported by PPP and local enterprise, participatory budgeting to qualify and quantify maintenance budgets and how these are to be resourced.
4. Drawing on Puntland State approaches and peer-to-peer support, introduce a district HR framework with ToRs, defined roles and responsibilities, with mentoring and coaching fitting into a blended learning approach for career path mapping.
5. Establish a plan of action to prioritise and develop core skills required to have systems work in support of delivering the district development plans – ICT, finance, procurement and PCM, including MEA work, as basis for people’s participation and professional management.
6. Formalise career progression systems to reduce staff attrition and build retention.
7. Build an MEA framework tied to district priorities.
8. Align training investments with service delivery targets.

Long-Term (aligned to Puntland development strategies):

- 1.-Drawing on Puntland central and core knowledge, install digital basic budgeting and accounting systems using free/open-source tools meeting security and compliance criteria.
- 2.-Train finance personnel on budgeting linked to participatory development planning and reporting. Ensure this builds Puntland PFM audit compliance.
- 3.-Explore what is required for a form of equitable land tax. How market fees and related revenues for services could be built and tied to performance.
4. Develop thinking to explore district asset-based development fitting with stimulating the district economy, building diaspora engagement and linking Ufeyn more intrinsically to its neighbouring urban centres and the wider rural hinterlands.
5. Drawing on Puntland State approaches and peer-to-peer support, introduce a district HR framework with ToRs, defined roles and responsibilities, with mentoring and coaching fitting into a blended learning approach for career path mapping.

- 6.-Establish a plan of action to prioritize and develop core skills required to have systems work in support of delivering the district development plans - ICT, finance, procurement and PCM, including MEA work, as basis for people's participation and professional management.
- 7.-Formalise career progression systems to reduce staff attrition and build retention.
- 8.-Digitise service delivery, tracking, and performance dashboards.
- 9.-Integrate DRM, climate adaptation and renewed resilience approaches fully into district planning
- 10.-Look at peer-to-peer support, pooling finances to have specific skills supporting/mentoring more inexperienced talented people.
- 11.-Reassign staff and or support them in how they want to carry forward their careers noting managerial skills and being able to best use their base higher-level knowledge
- 12.-Partner with Puntland universities for blended learning schemes, plus opportunities for internships and ongoing skills development in the district from the universities' present campuses.

POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

- District Governance and Leadership Code (fitting to the post-election induction pack/training)
- Public Financial Management (PFM) Act
- Inclusive community engagement policy
- DRM integration into DDF fitting Puntland strategic development
- Staff recruitment and career development framework
- Infrastructure maintenance and PPP regulation





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