

VOTER REGISTRATION FIELD STUDY



FIELD REPORT

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1 BACKGROUND:

In 2015, Somaliland plans for the first time to hold the first combined presidential and parliamentary elections. However, new laws require Somaliland to complete a new, more reliable voter registration before elections can be held¹. A report on voter registration options by Creative Associates, recommended that one way to ensure the reliability of the new voter registry system is by conducting a field study of the adopted technologies before the commencement of the voter registry to provide guidance to the stakeholders and the organizations entrusted with the voter registration, so that potential challenges are known and strategies introduced to build a reliable and sustainable biometric voter register². In fulfillment of these preconditions, the National Electoral Commission (NEC) conducted a field study, with two main objectives; one, to use the study to inform voters of the technologies being used and the other to prove the efficacy of the new technology to identify voters who register more than once. The study was conducted by NEC on the 21 – 25th of June 2014, in two districts; one in an urban setting of Hargeisa in the district of Maroodi-jeex region, and the other in a rural setting, Baki in the district of Awdal region. It was envisioned that 300 people from each locality would participate in the field study.

APD was invited a week before the field study to participate in the field study in the area of awareness raising as well as to conduct a survey to gauge people's perception of the registration process. Shortly after this rushed invitation APD met with NEC consultant to get further details of what kind of support was sought. After a brief discussion, APD was tasked with two main roles - the first was to produce simple messages for the Somaliland public inviting them to participate in the voter registration field study. The other was to inform the public that they should use their mobile phones to register to participate in the study so as to get ahead in the queue. Some side information that APD was also asked to include was to request special care and attention to be given to people with special needs. What was also agreed was that APD would conduct a survey at the end of the registration to gauge participant's perception of the process. As such this report will focus on APDs findings from people's responses to their questionnaire.³

¹ Terms of Reference Somaliland Voter Registration Field Study, p 1

² Terms of Reference Somaliland Voter Registration Field Study, p 1

³ A copy can be found in the appendix.

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2 OVERALL REGISTRATION PROCESS



Figure 1 Security personnel assisting participant's identify their names on the list

The registration process overall in the two districts went exceptionally well. The general environment was quiet and peaceful, with the exception of a short disruption on the first day by young students in Baki. The NEC team and the police at each station worked very well together. The participants were assisted and moved along the queue in a controlled and orderly manner. There was continuous supervision from NEC both in Hargeisa and in Baki. The NEC teams that were put in place, to organize the people and to conduct the registration process were timely and diligent making the whole process run smoothly. The police assisted the participants by answering questions and in the case of Baki assisting participant's identify their names on the list.

In cases where there was an inappropriate actions by the staff, namely police officers, the NEC supervisors who were continuously at the centers quickly corrected this. On the first day of the registration in Hargeisa one of the police officers spoke very harshly to one of the participants in the queue resulting in an argument between the participant and the police officer. One of the NEC supervisors observing this quietly called the police officer aside and calmly reminded him that their role was to facilitate the process for participants and to be accommodating to them. Generally there was someone available to answer participants queries and concerns. Also the NEC office in Hargeisa made careful preparations to ensure that the APD research team in Hargeisa were placed in a strategic location within the center to interview every individual who registered. The police were also very helpful and kept an eye on all participants to ensure that everyone who completed their registration process would pass by APD to answer their questionnaire.

3 METHODOLOGY:

APD decided to use a structured questionnaire in their survey. The aim was to briefly interview people as they completed their registration. As such APD had hoped to collect a response from every individual,

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however, in the case of Hargeisa the first day of the registration began four hours late resulting in APD only interviewing 50 people as opposed to the estimated 100 people. Nevertheless attempts were made to 'catch-up' in the following two days. A sample of 250 people were interviewed in Hargeisa and due to logistical challenges in Baki only 150 people were interviewed⁴.

3.1 TEAM

The Hargeisa team was composed of four people: a Researcher, three assistants and a camera person. The Baki team was composed of three persons: research assistant, and two assistants who were also acting as camera-men. Due to lack of hotels for accommodation, the Baki team came early in the morning to Baki and went back to Borama in the evening.

3.2 FIELD STUDY: ACTIVITY PROCESS

The field activity was divided into two phases:

1. *Phase 1*: 300 persons were registered from each locality from 21 – 23 June 2014
2. *Phase 2*: 200 persons were re-selected among the registered 300; to re-register in order to test that the equipment could capture those people who register more than once.

3.3 SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE:

The initial survey questionnaire was composed of 21 questions.

The questionnaire was set up to as indicator of the following aspects of the field study:

1. Interviewee's basic information (i.e. Age, gender and residence)
2. Satisfaction levels with duration of registration
3. Technical aspects (i.e. Iris scan)
4. Mobile usage for queue reservation
5. Perception of the participants about the field study

However, APD realized on the day of the registration that NEC had decided to not have participants use mobile phones to register. As a result APD was forced to discard those questions dealing with people's

⁴The Baki team was only able to collect 150 questions as opposed to the Hargeisa team of 271. Due to a last minute confirmation from NEC on departure times, APD did not have enough time to make sufficient preparations.

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experience of the use of the mobile in the registration. Instead mobile phones were only used to send participants money for participating in the study. Some participants told us that the biggest benefit they gained from the field study was the opportunity this offered them of getting a mobile number so as to open a ZAAD account⁵.

3.4 CHALLENGES:

An important issue to raise here is the absence of disabled or people with special needs in the registration. Outside of one man in Hargeisa with a walking disability there were no other people with disabilities or special needs that were identified. There was also an absence of elderly people. This lack of representation of different segments of society makes it difficult to give a holistic assessment of the registration process and its implications on different people. As such one of the greatest limitations that APD identified in this registration process was the absence of people with special needs. The following sections will now turn to looking more closely at findings from the field study.

4 ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS

1. Satisfaction levels with duration of registration
2. Technical aspects (i.e. Iris scan)
3. Mobile usage for queue reservation

⁵ZAAD SERVICE is a technology service that offers mobile banking, deposits, withdrawals, transfers, and many other services which is widely used in Somaliland.

INTERVIEWEE BASIC INFORMATION

GENDER OF THE PARTICIPANTS

During the field study, APD was able to interview 350 participants, with 200 from Hargeisa and 150 from Baki. What is most noticeable in this study is the disparity between genders. In the whole study there were 63% males and 37% females. This disproportionality was most visible though in Baki with 72% of the participants being male and only 27% female. While it is difficult to give one particular reason for this due to the absence of concrete information, one reason for this lopsided gender representation could in part be as a result of the pre-selection approach to selecting participants which it appears did not have a gender strategy. The disparity between genders can be seen in the picture below. As is well known in Somaliland, many of the voters are women as will be seen later in Table 4.

Table 1 Gender of participants

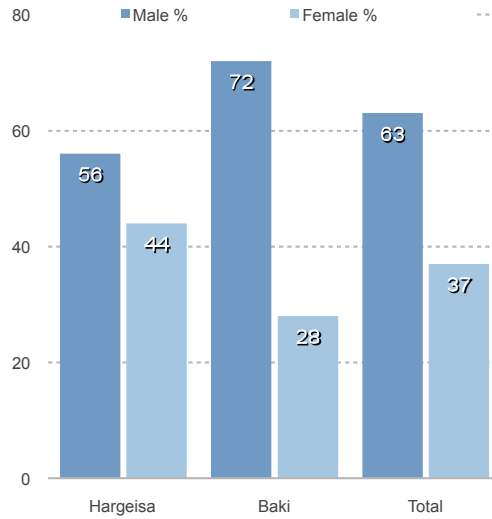




Figure 2 Participants queuing in front of the Baki field study center the first day of the field study. One left is the queue for males and the right for women.

AGE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The largest group of participants as can be seen in Table 2, were young adults ranging from 16-34 making up 62% of the participating population while those between ages of 35-55 made up 33%. There were few participants from among the elders who made up only 4% of the population. Elderly people were not the only group that was poorly represented in the study but moreover people with special needs were missing. Due to this absence of different segments in society, it makes it difficult to

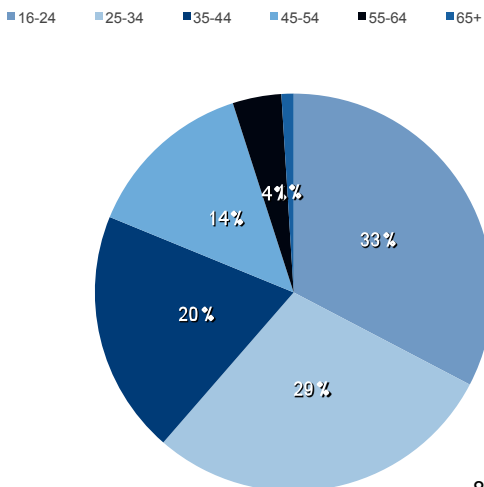


Table 2: Age of the Respondents

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foresee some of the possible challenges that could be faced with the equipment later in the voter registration, especially for those categories that might likely require special care. It might be worth the effort to prepare a day to test the equipment with people with special needs to ensure, first that the staff have the experience to deal with their needs and very importantly to identify any challenges that might arise so that this can be planned for.

POSSESSION OF MOBILE PHONES

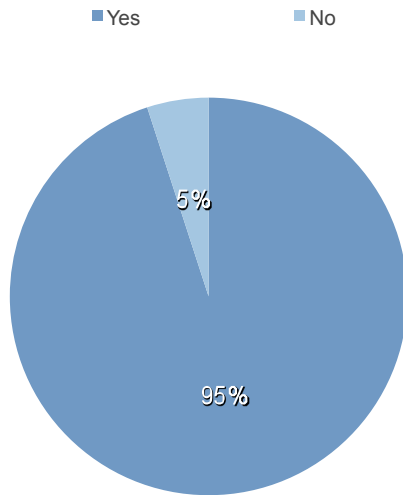


Table 2 Possession of mobile phones

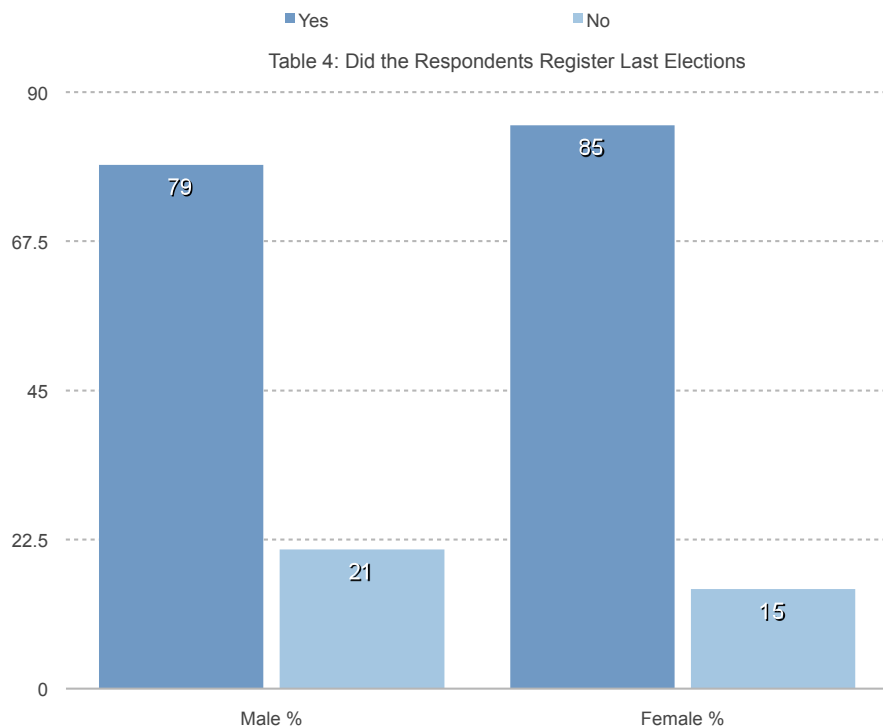
Even though the use of mobile phones was dropped in this field study, there needs to be clarity as to whether mobile phones will be used in the final voter registration. Unfortunately though findings from respondents in this field study concerning their ownership of a phone or not will not be useful in this discussion because while majority of the respondents in both districts and among both males and females irrespective of age, all claimed to have mobile phones it is important to point out though that in the case of Baki the criteria for selecting participants was based on individuals having a mobile phone. Nevertheless

measuring ownership of phones in Somaliland is very tricky. Ownership of a phone for some meant having just a sim card, for others it was sufficient that that had a a phone and not necessarily a sim card and for others having access to a phone, like their parents or friends meant they had a phone. Thus if for the upcoming voter registration the use of mobile phones are going to be considered, there has to be a more in-depth and wider research on mobile accessibility in Somaliland.

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LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING THAT THIS WAS A FIELD STUDY NOT AN ACTUAL VOTER REGISTRATION

Generally most of the respondents in both districts understood that the registration was only a field test. Also majority of the respondents had also registered in the last elections with 78% of the total males participants having registered for the last elections and 84 % of the total participating women.



PARTICIPANTS SATISFACTION WITH THE REGISTRATION

SATISFACTION WITH THE REGISTRATION PROCESS

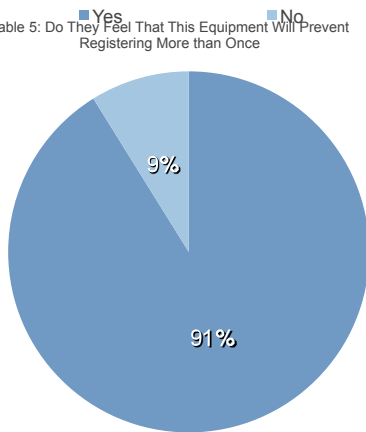
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Most participants were satisfied with the registration process with 91% of the respondent affirming that they were satisfied. Generally it appeared that the time it took participants to complete the process, which for some like on the first day took a very long time, was not dependent on the satisfaction of the participants with the process. Despite how long people estimated it took them, almost all respondents were satisfied with the registration process. What APD observed was that this satisfaction was also largely due to a general nationalistic elation of individuals at participating in a registration field study which for them outweighed any difficulties that they had to withstand. Generally, though the queuing was relatively quick and the registration process short.

When it came to the technical aspects of the registration, however, namely that of the eye scan, most participants found the use of it to be easy and of the respondents 84% felt that the use of the eye scan would be effective in ensuring people would not register more than once.

The most challenging aspect of the registration for respondents was the photo taking process. This however, APD observed can easily be resolved. What APD observed during the photo taking process on

Table 5: Do They Feel That This Equipment Will Prevent Registering More than Once



the registration day was because participants were told to sit in front of the camera without being told that they will not be taking the photo but rather they would first register their details on the computer and when that was complete they would take their picture. Instead participants would be seated in front of the camera and would automatically pose for the picture due to lack of explanation. Participants would then stay posed for the picture while their details were being registered on the system making the participants feel

that the picture taking process took a long time, when in actuality it did not. So maybe it would be helpful if participants are not seated in front of the camera when their details are being put into the computer.

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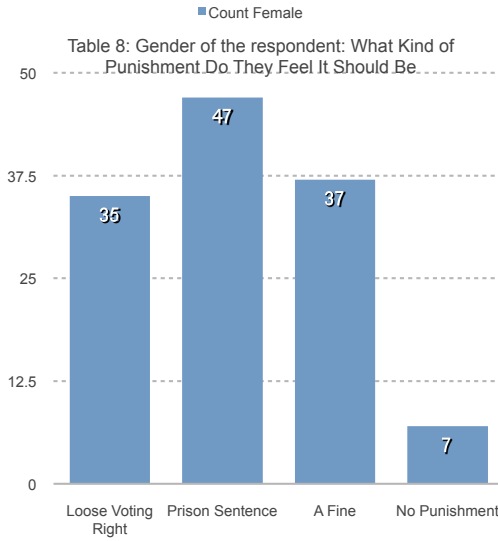
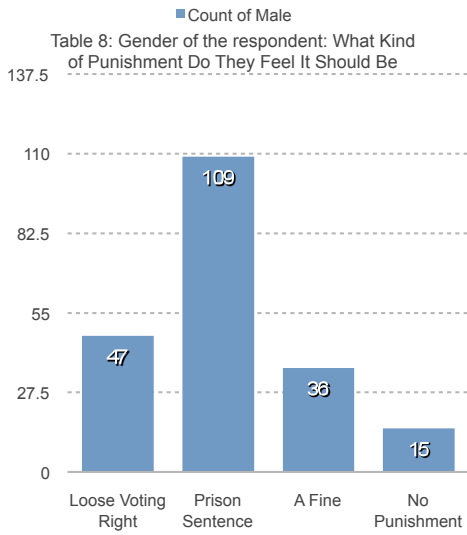
WHICH DOES THE RESPONDENT PREFER TO GET ID CARD OR REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE?

As for participants preference for ID cards or satisfaction with receiving only a registration certificate there was a clear preference, Most preferred to receive ID cards. However in Hargeisa there was a clear majority in participant's preference with 82% preferring to receive an ID card only. However in Baki this preference was not as clear, as that of Hargeisa. So while the majority 49% in Baki preferred having an ID card there was also a significant number, 37% who also said that they would rather just receive a registration certificate only. Nevertheless it is clear that people would rather have ID cards if they have to choose between the two.

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PUNISHMENT FOR THOSE REGISTERING MORE THAN ONCE

It was a strong sentiment among the participants in both districts and across genders that those that register more than once should be punished. When participants were asked to chose one answer, 'yes' or 'no', of interviewees 90% responded positively with 'yes' the individual caught registering more than once should be punished. Nonetheless there were variations as to what kind of punishment should be given to those caught registering more than once. The first choice for both men and women in both districts was prison sentence. However the second strong sentiment among the men was that the person should lose their voting right but women expressed almost equal second strongest preference for a fine and for losing voter rights as a punishment. However what was clearly visible was that people felt strongly that those person's registering more than once have committed a crime and needed to be punished.



CONCLUSION

Overall the field study was a success, and showed peoples interest and delight to partake in the upcoming elections. The NEC team has also shown that they have thought deeply about the elections and have a team that is well trained and organized. Despite the technology being new most people felt open and ready to use it and quite optimistic about its ability to do the job.

However, there is also a need to have a common understanding within NEC on the strategy that is going to be used in the voter registration, issues like the use of mobile phones needs to be resolved as well as a need for a clear strategy and training of staff on how to deal with people with special needs. .In addition, there also needs to be early sensitization that takes place to familiarize people with the new registration process so as to ensure that highest number of people participates.

ANNEX: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT VR FIELD STUDY

Date: _____

- 1. Gender**
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
- 2. Location:**
 - a. Hargeisa
 - b. Baki
- 3. Age:**
 - a. 16 – 24
 - b. 25 – 34
 - c. 35 – 44
 - d. 45 – 54
 - e. 55 – 64
 - f. 65+
- 4. Do you have a mobile phone**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 5. Was it clear for you that this was trial field study and the real voter registration will happen later?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 6. Do you register in the previous voter registration?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 7. How do you feel about the iris scan?**
 - a. Good
 - b. Bad
 - c. Indifferent
 - d. I don't know
- 8. Where you satisfied with the registration process?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 9. Which of the following statements do you agree with?**
 - a. I want a voter ID and a registration certificate
 - b. I want only a voter ID
 - c. I am happy with just a registration certificate
 - d. Indifferent
- 10. How long did it take you to register (not including filling out the forms)**
 - a. Less than 5 minutes
 - b. 5 – 10 minutes

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- c. 10- 15 minutes
- d. More than 15 minutes

11. What was the most difficult aspect of this registration

a. Write down here:

- 1. Queue
- 2. Picture
- 3. Computer
- 4. None
- 5. Other

12. How long did the whole process, from the time you entered to when you exited take you

- a. Less than 10 minutes
- b. More then 10-15 minutes
- c. More than 15 minutes

13. Do you feel comfortable with the time you spent to complete the process?

- a. Yes
- b. No

14. Do you believe that this technology will prevent people from registering more than once?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Not sure
- d. Don't know

15. Should a person caught registering more than once to vote be penalized?

- a. Yes
- b. No

16. What should happen to a person caught registering more than once?

- a. Cannot vote,
- b. Arrest,
- c. fine
- d. No penalty,
- e. Don't know

17. Telephone number