

Annex II – Excerpt from *Discussion Report: IAAAP Key Informant Interviews* (September 2017)

10. Identification of ‘Champions’ and ‘Whistleblowers’

The position in 2015 was that respondents were either unaware of ‘champions’ of accountability and ‘whistleblowers’ or identified a limited range of individuals and organizations. There “are only a few individuals and what sets them apart is that they are passionate about what they do and they want to do it right.”

The two most cited examples in a league of their own at the time were Abdirazak Jama Fartaag, former head of PFM in the TFG Prime Minister’s Office, and Yusur Abrar, the former FGS Governor of the Central Bank. Their actions increased awareness about accountability in Somalia. The view of respondents between 2015 and 2016 did not change in terms of identifying these two individuals as the face of accountability action in Somalia. However, corruption and the lack of accountability is so deep-rooted and endemic that it is going to take much more than one or two ‘whistleblowers’ to effect change.

Meanwhile, by 2016 the pool of accountability actors was growing through IAAAP partnerships. Respondents could discern a broadening of activities, but partners only exceptionally projected any visibility. The obvious reason for this related to risk, but there were other reasons as well, including the experimental nature of IAAAP-related activities and prioritizing participation and ownership over branding. Indeed, branding of accountability activities can have limited advantages, unless the branding itself is part of communicating about accountability rather than an implementer.

10.1 Fartaag

Respondents regarded Fartaag as a kind of accountability pioneer, being the first to question government expenditures and expose a number of culprits. He is regarded as a champion of accountability and transparency amidst a culture of corruption. He alone continuously issues detailed and comprehensive reports that the Somali Government denies but never challenges, and which the international community cites as accurate and specific (a reference to World Bank validation in 2012). He is in a class of his own, respondents said. He not only exposed mismanagement of government funds but created an environment for Somalis to openly talk about corruption. While his actions have gained widespread media attention, they have not yielded a change in government behaviour. Cases of corruption get attention for a while and then the issues quickly die down. Nevertheless, he planted a seed, awakened Somalis to openly oppose wrongdoing in government, and continues to open doors about the lack of accountability, especially in government. His case demonstrates how poor the Somali leadership is; they should have embraced his findings and worked with him to address the lack of accountability. Instead he became public enemy number one. He has had to sacrifice considerably and work on his own. As one respondent concluded, “If he had come from a culture of accountability he would be a hero in the eyes of Somalis.”

10.2 Yusur Abrar

The case of Yusur Abrar was seen by respondents as a demonstration of accountability. It has become a kind of standard. Unless someone does what she did, then there is not accountability. The case reflects an appetite amongst Somalis to see demonstrable acts as

evidence of accountability, while endless support to systems is somehow invisible. The case led to a number of positive responses and Yusr Abrar was widely praised for her actions and integrity. It could be argued, according to one respondent, that her professional background and well-connected network helped her in a tough predicament, and that the outcome may not have been the same for an average individual without the same status.

Other respondents argued that Abrar's resignation was a loss of opportunity for the international community, more concerned with its relationship with the Somali regime in power and the New Deal Compact than with any kind of accountability agenda. The resignation created unprecedented space in and around the Somali Government for far reaching accountability action, and respondents noted that instead of introducing meaningful initiatives (notably an international-Somali Joint Financial Management Board) the international community 'parked' the issue of accountability in a powerless Financial Governance Committee (FGC), which respondents considered as hopelessly irrelevant to fostering accountability. The only action respondents could see in terms of the considerable political capital that the international community was afforded at the time was overriding the Government's candidate for replacing Abrar (an individual already identified for diverting donor funds ironically intended for public financial management) and ensuring the appointment of Bashir Issa Ali as the new Central Bank Governor.

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By 2016, the landscape was beginning to change and a new list of actors was emerging on the accountability scene, climbing the learning curve of undertaking accountability work and deep political economy analysis. While known to IAAAP, respondents could identify examples of what were in fact new activities without appreciating the scale of new actors being fostered. Most notably, the accountability organization Marqaati, which had been operating as a clandestine cluster of separate cells under the direction of a single individual, gained between 2015 and 2016 the confidence to label some of its work and actually appear in press conferences because of the support it was receiving from other Somalis. These supporters had an interest in accountability and an impulse to act, but had no concrete vehicle or means for action, until Marqaati offered a nascent outlet.

Furthermore, respondents identified some of the qualities of 'champions' and 'whistleblowers' to explain how they avoided capture by the tendencies of the status quo. Clearly, the incentive for acting was not financial. Therefore personal qualities were identified, such as conviction, patriotism and a sense of citizenship, insistence on principles of transparency and accountability, force of personality, strength of character and an ethical set of beliefs, practicing what is preached, and an ability to navigate the clan environment so as to push on accountability but ensure clout, support and know-how. Individuals needed to have the will to resist bribes or other incentives for silence and to have a conscience that is not for sale. Individual gravitas, including Somali social standing, can make a difference in terms of credible communication. In addition, individuals may have maintained connections to the 'outside world' as a source of inspiration and support.