

ASSESSMENT REPORT

WADAAG 'CONTENT SHARING' PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTED BY SOMA

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Lastly, heartfelt thanks are extended to listeners and community members who continue to engage with Wadaag as a trusted voice of peace, understanding, and national dialogue. Their continued support and feedback remain the truest measure of the programme's success.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Full Meaning
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
SWJO	Somali Women Journalists Organization
IMS	International Media Support
KII	Key Informant Interview
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SOMA	Somali Media Association
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WG	Working Group
WADAAG	“Sharing” (Somali term and name of the radio content-sharing programme)

Abstract

This report presents a comprehensive review of the Wadaag programme: a nationwide collaborative media production initiative implemented by Somali Media Association (SOMA) in partnership with International Media Support (IMS). Conducted in October and November 2025, the assessment interrogated Wadaag’s performance and outcomes over its nine years of implementation (2016–2025), focusing specifically on the most recent implementation cycle (2024–2025), including editorial performance, audience perceptions, coordination, impact, and sustainability.

The study combined quantitative data from a listener survey involving 152 respondents (85 male and 67 female) with qualitative evidence from focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs), content analysis and field observation. Six FGDs and 18 KIIs were conducted in Baidoa, Galkayo, and Mogadishu, complemented by the evaluator’s observation and review of eight randomly selected radio programmes from 78 episodes produced during 2024-5.

Findings reveal that Wadaag has become a leading platform for ethical journalism and civic dialogue in Somalia. Wadaag achieved exceptionally high audience awareness (96.7%) and trust ratings (93%), with listeners describing it as a “reliable and unifying voice” across regions. The content was found to reduce hate speech and misinformation (82.9%), foster public discussions on peace and coexistence (88%), and strengthen inter-community understanding.

The study confirms that Wadaag has made substantial progress in gender equality and inclusion, both in newsroom participation and on-air representation. Approximately 40% of contributors are women, and female perspectives are increasingly featured as central components of peace and governance narratives. Wadaag’s deliberate effort to portray women as decision-makers and mediators has contributed to shifting social perceptions toward equality and empowerment.

Institutionally, the SOMA and IMS–Radio Ergo partnership has provided a robust coordination and quality assurance framework that ensures editorial consistency, transparency, and professionalism. Regular mentorship, joint editorial reviews, and capacity building have established Wadaag as a model of networked media governance in fragile contexts.

The assessment also highlights critical challenges, including financial dependency, limited digital integration, staff turnover, and sustainability issues.

The study concludes that Wadaag’s unique model combining national collaboration, peace journalism, gender inclusion, and audience participation has redefined the role of media in Somali society. To ensure continuity and growth, the study recommends the adoption of a sustainability strategy involving enhanced digital engagement, institutionalization of gender-transformative leadership, and local resource mobilization by SOMA.

In sum, Wadaag stands as a national asset and global model for peace-oriented communication. It has demonstrated that when media is guided by ethics, inclusivity, and community trust, it can not only inform citizens but also heal divisions, inspire dialogue, and strengthen social cohesion in post-conflict societies.

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1. Background and Context

1.1 Overview of the Wadaag Programme

Wadaag is a collaborative national radio initiative implemented by the Somali Media Association (SOMA), with strategic and financial support from the International Media Support (IMS), and editorial mentorship from Radio Ergo. Established in 2016, Wadaag was designed to promote social development, reconciliation, and social cohesion by sharing credible, solutions-oriented stories across Somalia's diverse regions and communities.

The programme is a content-sharing model, producing and syndicating weekly radio episodes that are simultaneously aired across more than 40 member radio stations.¹ Each episode highlights community-driven stories focusing on health, education, governance, livelihoods, youth participation, women's empowerment, and irregular migration.

Over time, Wadaag has grown into one of Somalia's more established collaborative journalism initiatives, recognized by partner stations for its consistent editorial approach and commitment to balanced, ethical reporting. It amplifies local voices, connects communities from conflict-divided regions, and contributes to improved public awareness, informed dialogue, and citizen participation in social issues.

Evidence from the 2024–2025 qualitative assessment confirms that 26 thematic episodes and 78 field reports were produced and broadcast during the reporting period, reaching tens of thousands of listeners through both traditional and digital channels. Listener feedback gathered through surveys and call-ins consistently portrays Wadaag as a trusted source of information, with 96.7% awareness, 93% satisfaction, and 97.4% recommendation among respondents (see Results section).

1.2 Programme Rationale

The inception of Wadaag in 2016 coincided with Somalia's gradual transition from conflict to recovery, at a time when media fragmentation, misinformation, and limited civic dialogue impeded national reconciliation. The rationale behind Wadaag was to bridge regional and clan divides by fostering cooperation among independent radio stations and journalists under the SOMA network.

Initially envisaged as a content exchange project among local radios, the programme developed into a platform of collaborative content production and broadcast, seeking to unify narratives and strengthen professional standards in local journalism. This evolution reflects a shift from event-based reporting toward solution-oriented and impact-driven journalism, where stories are not limited to describing problems but also explore actionable solutions. Producer interviews confirm that editorial teams now prioritize relevance, public value, and behavioral impact when selecting weekly topics.

1.3 Institutional Framework

¹ SOMA has 47 members, 41 being active and operating in Wadaag, as confirmed by SOMA Secretary-General.

Wadaag is anchored within a tripartite framework:

- **SOMA:** Implementing body and network of over 40 member radio stations.
- **IMS:** Provides financial and technical support to SOMA as a long-term partner.
- **Radio Ergo:** Editorial team provides mentoring and guidance on ethics, story framing, and conflict-sensitive journalism.

The collaboration emphasizes editorial independence, with content decisions made locally. Initially, Radio Ergo staff provided training and helped develop editorial tools such as pitching templates and guidelines. Since 2024, IMS enhanced this support by assigning an experienced Ergo producer as a full-time mentor. Radio Ergo's Editor also delivered remote coaching on gender inclusion, story selection, and scripting, as a specialized editorial support component to improve capacity and quality of the locally led initiative.

1.4 Socio-Political and Media Context

Somalia's media environment remains dynamic yet fragile. The country's political landscape is characterized by ongoing federalization efforts, inter-clan reconciliation, and decentralization of governance, which influence the flow of information and the role of media. Despite notable progress since 2012, journalists continue to operate amid security risks, limited resources, and a weak regulatory environment.

Within this context, radio remains the most accessible and trusted medium nationwide, especially in rural and peri-urban areas. Radio stations are often the primary source of information for citizens, enabling dialogue and early warning in times of crisis. However, disparities in professional standards and resource capacity have historically resulted in inconsistent quality and occasional bias.

Wadaag responds directly to these challenges by standardizing production quality, fostering collaboration, and elevating ethical standards across Somalia's media ecosystem. By linking radios in Mogadishu, Baidoa, Galkayo, and other towns, Wadaag not only strengthens inter-regional communication but also contributes to national integration and the reduction of mis/dis-information.

This mainly qualitative assessment identified Wadaag as "a pillar of responsible journalism and civic education" that has redefined local reporting practices. It has also empowered journalists especially young and female reporters to engage in peace-oriented, locally relevant, gender-sensitive storytelling. Amid ongoing humanitarian challenges such as drought, displacement, and economic hardship, Wadaag is positioned as an essential vehicle for social resilience and informed citizenship through its focus on human-interest stories and locally-led solutions.

2. Approach and Methodology

2.1 Why this study?

The purpose of this study is to assess the overall performance, impact, and sustainability of Wadaag during the implementation period 2024-5, within the broader context of its operational lifespan from 2016. It examines how effectively the programme has advanced its mission to promote peacebuilding, social cohesion, civic engagement, and responsible journalism through an inclusive, collaborative media network coordinated by SOMA.

The study also serves as a strategic learning tool for SOMA and IMS, and other partners engaged in media and civic engagement. It identifies strengths, weaknesses, and contextual factors influencing programme success; it documents what worked well, what required adaptation, and how future media interventions can improve impact.

The assessment generates actionable evidence to:

- Determine the extent of achievement against planned outcomes and indicators;
- Assess the relevance and responsiveness of Wadaag’s themes to community needs and peacebuilding priorities;
- Measure the impact and reach of the programme among Somali audiences across diverse regions;
- Evaluate the efficiency and strength of the SOMA & IMS–Radio Ergo partnership;
- Identify best practices, challenges, and lessons to guide future programming and sustainability strategies.

The assessment followed the OECD-DAC evaluation framework,² focusing on criteria of *Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability*, supplemented by gender and inclusion considerations. The following guiding questions shaped the inquiry process:

Relevance by analyzing

- To what extent are Wadaag’s themes and editorial content aligned with Somalia’s peacebuilding and civic information needs?
- How well does the programme respond to audience expectations and regional realities across different states?

² Set of 6 benchmarks used to evaluate the merit, worth, & significance of development & humanitarian aid interventions

Effectiveness by answering

- To what degree has Wadaag enhanced ethical reporting, professional collaboration, and gender representation within Somali media?
- How effectively has it influenced public attitudes, awareness, or behavior regarding peace, tolerance, and misinformation?

Efficiency by looking at

- How effectively have SOMA and IMS-Radio Ergo coordinated to deliver outputs in a timely and resource-efficient manner?
- How adequate are the existing institutional and human resources to achieve the intended results?

Impact by assessing

- What measurable changes in community dialogue, mutual understanding, local-level behaviour, and perception of media credibility can be attributed to Wadaag?
- How has the programme contributed to reducing hate speech, countering misinformation, and improving inter-clan relations?

Sustainability by answering

- What mechanisms are in place to ensure continuity of Wadaag beyond the donor-funded phase?
- To what extent are local stations and journalists demonstrating ownership and institutional learning to sustain collaboration?

2.2 Scope, Coverage and Utility

The study focused on three major geographic clusters:

Baidoa (South West State): Representing rural, displacement-affected communities with high listener engagement³.

Galkayo (Puntland and Galmudug): Representing a conflict-prone, cross-administrative context with active peacebuilding narratives, being a city where two FMS operate.⁴

³ Baidoa was selected for its strong history of *community peacebuilding initiatives* and its central role in the South West media network. The city hosts active radio stations affiliated with SOMA that have consistently produced high-quality Wadaag episodes. Baidoa's complex social fabric marked by recurrent displacement, clan reconciliation efforts, and humanitarian presence makes it a critical area for evaluating how Wadaag contributes to peace dialogue, recovery communication, and inclusion of internally displaced persons.

⁴ Galkayo is one of Somalia's most socially and politically divided environments, shared between Puntland and Galmudug administrations. It has historically been a hotspot for inter-clan conflict and misinformation, making it a strategic site for assessing Wadaag's peace journalism and conflict-sensitive reporting. The programme's focus on unity, coexistence, and accurate information flow in Galkayo offers valuable insights into how media can function as a bridge across divided communities. The presence of multiple independent radio stations and active civil society organizations makes Galkayo ideal for observing grassroots collaboration and content co-production.

Mogadishu (Banadir Region): Representing national-level editorial management, production oversight, and coordination among stations.⁵

The study offers clear, data-driven evidence for donor and institutional reporting, illustrating how Wadaag’s interventions translated into practical outcomes at community level. The findings demonstrate programme contributions to improved public health awareness, enhanced local accountability, gender-responsive storytelling, and increased civic participation.

By highlighting Wadaag’s operational model, editorial framework, and audience engagement strategies, the study contributes to national policy discussions on media regulation, freedom of expression, and civic engagement. The lessons drawn will also inform regional and donor strategies supporting media as a social cohesion instrument. Ultimately, this study is expected to strengthen programmatic learning and strategic foresight within the Somali media ecosystem, ensuring that Wadaag continues to serve as a credible, inclusive, and sustainable platform for inclusive journalism and community empowerment.

2.3 Data Collection

The assessment began with an extensive **desk review** to build a foundational understanding of Wadaag’s history, operational mechanisms, and evolution since 2016. This included: SOMA progress reports, editorial schedules, IMS-Ergo mentoring notes, internal monitoring, and a review of 26 broadcast episodes and 78 field reports produced between August 2024 and July 2025⁶. The episodes were analyzed for thematic coherence, gender representation, and geographic diversity. These documents provided background for designing interview guides and survey tools.

A total of 18 **KIIs** were conducted with editors, reporters, programme managers from partner stations⁷ in Mogadishu, Baidoa, and Galkayo, and with SOMA and IMS-Ergo staff. KII informants were purposively selected based on their direct engagement in programme implementation or oversight.

A total of six **FGDs** were held in the three local sites, involving a balanced mix of men, women, and youth participants representing listeners, journalists, and community leaders. Participants were recruited through community networks, ensuring representation across gender, age, and

⁵ Mogadishu is the coordination hub for Wadaag, as SOMA’s headquarters. Assessing activities in Mogadishu enabled capture of strategic coordination, capacity-building, and editorial mechanisms. As a media-saturated city with diverse audiences, Mogadishu also provides a comparative baseline for measuring *national reach, professional standards, and urban audience engagement*.

⁶ The content reflected a mix of peacebuilding, governance, human rights, youth empowerment, and gender equality themes, highlighting local perspectives and inclusive storytelling. These programmes were based on field reports capturing authentic community voices and grassroots initiatives.

⁷ 13 KIIs were conducted on the ground in Baidoa, Galkayo, and Mogadishu, and 5 KIIs with other participants, all purposively selected from SOMA, IMS-Ergo team, station managers, journalists involved in coordination and content production. The KIIs allowed for open discussion on editorial quality, gender inclusion, coordination, and audience feedback. Each interview held between 15-28 October 2025 lasted 45-60 minutes, conducted mainly in Somali with notes verified in English.

professional backgrounds. These 60-90 minute discussions followed a semi-structured guide covering access to information, gender portrayal, conflict-sensitive reporting, and public trust in media.

A **quantitative listener perception survey** was conducted in October 2025 among 152 respondents (85 men and 67 women) in Baidoa, Galkayo, and Mogadishu, to assess audience awareness, trust, engagement, and behavioral influence of Wadaag broadcasts. A structured questionnaire was administered in Somali and English, capturing demographic data, frequency of listening, thematic preferences, and perceptions of credibility and social cohesion.

Finally, the assessor conducted **field observations** including visiting radio stations in the three locals, as well as holding **informal consultations** during those visits.

2.4 Data Analysis

Although the sample was not statistically random at the national level, it provided sufficient representational diversity to reflect consistent trends across locations and demographic categories. All data collected was systematically analyzed to ensure triangulation, consistency, and credibility of the findings. Qualitative data was thematically coded according to *editorial quality, peacebuilding impact, gender and inclusion, audience engagement, and coordination and sustainability*. Additionally, recurring patterns, common themes, and divergent opinions were identified to provide depth and context to the quantitative results. Draft findings were reviewed through internal reflection sessions with SOMA and IMS to validate interpretations and strengthen accuracy.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

Informed consent (verbally or in writing) was obtained from all participants prior to each KII, FGD, and Listener Survey. Participants were fully briefed on the purpose of the study and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty. All discussions were conducted in Somali to ensure understanding and comfort. Sensitive topics related to gender and community conflict were handled with discretion and empathy. The assessment followed IMS safeguarding principles, SOMA's Code of Conduct, and the Do No Harm approach, ensuring that the entire process upheld respect, confidentiality, and participant dignity.

3. Results and Main Findings

3.1 Editorial Quality and Thematic Relevance

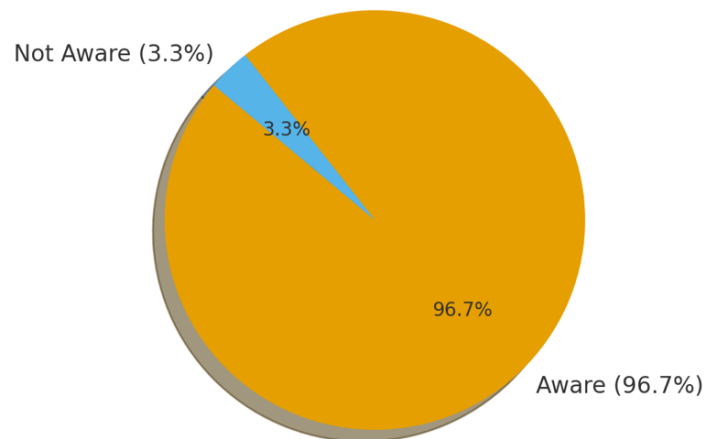
The assessment confirms that Wadaag has matured into a model of responsible, inclusive, and peace-oriented journalism in Somalia. Over nine years (2016–2025), it evolved from a content-sharing initiative into a structured editorial system characterized by neutrality, consistency, and thematic depth.⁸ During the 2024–2025 cycle, story quality and narrative coherence improved markedly, with reports shifting from event-based to solution-oriented storytelling that explored causes, community responses, and long-term outcomes.

FGDs and KIIs across Baidoa, Galkayo, and Mogadishu confirmed that Wadaag episodes often generate significant listener engagement, with stations receiving SMS messages and calls immediately after broadcast. Audiences showed high interest in stories related to livelihoods, displacement, drought recovery, local governance, employment, migration, health services (including vaccination campaigns), and women’s participation in community leadership. These topics reflect daily life and therefore tend to attract broad community engagement across regions.

FGDs described Wadaag as impartial, relatable, and linguistically inclusive.

The Listener Survey revealed that **over 96% of respondents had heard of Wadaag, 93% were satisfied or highly satisfied, and 82.9% believed the programme contributed to reducing hate speech and misinformation.** This equates to strong evidence of reach and positive social influence.

Awareness of Wadaag



Content analysis shows that gender and youth representation in Wadaag has improved significantly, though it is not yet equal. Women’s

⁸ A total of 26 Wadaag episodes and 78 feature reports were reviewed through secondary analysis. In addition, the assessor conducted a content review of eight randomly selected radio programmes aired between October 2024 and May 2025. These programmes were chosen to reflect thematic diversity covering areas such as drought recovery, women’s participation in peace dialogues, health awareness, youth employment, governance accountability, and social inclusion. Each of the 8 episodes was listened to in full and cross-checked against written scripts, broadcast logs, and station feedback forms.

airtime has increased compared to earlier years and exceeds the typical levels found in Somali radio, reflecting progress toward SOMA's gender inclusion goals. Youth voices also appear regularly, especially in stories on peacebuilding and entrepreneurship.

Story selection and review processes are now more participatory, with greater involvement from reporters and editors across partner stations. Radio Ergo's mentorship further strengthened ethical standards, story balance, and conflict-sensitive reporting.

Some journalists called for a faster cycle of giving and receiving editorial feedback and advanced training in data and investigative reporting.

Overall, Wadaag consistently delivers ethical, relevant, and community-driven journalism. Its blend of national coherence and local authenticity has positioned it as Somalia's most trusted radio platform - a space, as one male FGD participant from Galkayo described, "*where Somalia listens to itself.*"

3.2 Peacebuilding and Social Cohesion Impact

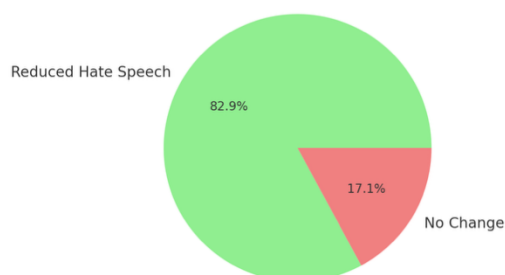
Wadaag has emerged as one of Somalia's most credible and unifying media platforms for advancing peacebuilding, dialogue, and social cohesion. Aired on SOMA's 40 plus partner radio stations, Wadaag connects communities divided by geography, politics, or conflict, enabling them to hear each other's voices and experiences through a shared national broadcast. Evidence from this evaluation confirms that Wadaag's model of collaborative journalism has become a cornerstone for countering misinformation, reducing hate speech, and promoting empathy among diverse Somali audiences.

From its inception, Wadaag was designed as a counter-narrative to divisive media content. Its editorial guidelines prohibit the use of clan labels, sensationalism, or unverified claims. The evaluator's independent review of eight randomly selected episodes found no instances of bias or inflammatory framing. Instead, every story reflected balance and compassion. For example, the Galkayo episode "*Youth as Peace Ambassadors*" intentionally featured young people from both Puntland and Galmudug, illustrating cooperation rather than rivalry.

FGDs in Baidoa and Galkayo repeatedly described Wadaag as "a programme of truth and calmness." Participants credited it with reducing political tensions and encouraging solution-based conversations in public spaces. In Baidoa, women's groups said the broadcasts "helped people stop arguing and start talking about solutions." Youths in Galkayo reported that hearing peace messages from both sides of the divided city "gave us hope that cooperation is possible."

These impressions were reinforced by the Listener Survey. **82.9% agreed that Wadaag reduced hate speech and misinformation, 88% said its messages were discussed within their communities, and 96% regarded the programme as trustworthy.**

Perception: Wadaag Helps Reduce Hate Speech and Misinformation



In a media environment often marred by bias and rumour, such high trust levels represent a major peace dividend.

KIIs with journalists and station managers showed a similar transformation in newsroom culture. Reporters explained that participation in Wadaag changed how they view their professional role.

As one journalist in Baidoa put it, *“Before, I reported what happened between groups; now I report what brings them together.”* A Mogadishu editor added, *“Wadaag taught us to check, balance, and think about peace before broadcast.”*

This shift from reactive to reflective journalism demonstrates that Wadaag has not only influenced audiences but also reshaped ethics in Somali media practice.

Another major social cohesion impact lies in linking local experiences to national narratives. Each weekly theme such as *“Rebuilding Trust after Conflict”* or *“Inclusive Governance for Peace”* is locally adapted by reporters who gather testimonies from elders, women, youth, and displaced people. The evaluator’s listening review confirmed that stories consistently center on ordinary citizens as peacebuilders. In one Baidoa segment, a mother displaced by conflict described how joint market cooperatives restored trust. In another from Galkayo, youth volunteers explained how sports tournaments reduced hostility between rival neighborhoods. By portraying peace as a community-driven process, Wadaag turned abstract ideals into tangible actions.

KIIs in Mogadishu emphasized Wadaag’s national broadcast structure as a “mirror of unity.” When audiences across regions hear parallel struggles of farmers in Baidoa, teachers in Galkayo, youth in Mogadishu, it reinforces a sense of shared identity. This “echo effect” helps dismantle stereotypes and generates mediated empathy among fragmented populations.

While Wadaag does not operate as a formal early-warning mechanism, KIIs and FGDs provide examples of how its calm, factual reporting helps diffuse confusion and reduce community tensions. In Mogadishu, Radio Ergo’s editorial advisor noted that audiences often ‘wait for Wadaag to explain things clearly’ when rumours circulate. In Galkayo, FGD participants recalled that a Wadaag story on vaccination fears helped dispel misinformation, reducing arguments among parents. Similarly, women in Baidoa described that stories on displacement reduced host-IDP misunderstandings by providing balanced, empathetic explanations. These examples illustrate how timely reporting can indirectly contribute to a more informed and less reactive public atmosphere.

Beyond its content, Wadaag has cultivated a culture of dialogue and tolerance. Its calm tone and empathetic framing encourage reflection rather than outrage. FGD participants said the programme “makes us think before reacting.” Women listeners in Baidoa noted that even

distressing news is delivered “in a way that doesn’t make people angry.” Youth in Galkayo called it “a school of communication,” crediting it for teaching respectful debate. Journalists, too, now collaborate across regional lines, building intra-professional trust that strengthens media institutions as agents of peace.

The survey data substantiate these qualitative trends:

- 82.9% agreed Wadaag reduced hate speech and misinformation.
- 88% said it stimulated peace discussions at home or in the community.
- 67% learned something new about other regions or groups.
- Over 90% believed it promotes tolerance, empathy, and mutual respect.

Together, these results confirm that Wadaag’s social inclusion influence extends beyond awareness to behavioral change. By connecting communities, modeling responsible journalism, and nurturing a habit of calm, evidence-based dialogue, Wadaag has become a national platform where Somalis listen to understand rather than to divide.

3.3 Gender and Inclusion

Wadaag has achieved notable progress in advancing gender equality, amplifying women’s voices, and embedding inclusivity into Somali media practice. During the 2024–2025 cycle, it strengthened female participation in production, improved gender representation in storytelling, and integrated women’s perspectives across editorial processes. While systemic inequalities persist within Somalia’s media landscape, Wadaag now stands as a model of inclusion that demonstrates measurable commitment to women’s empowerment and gender-sensitive journalism.

At the institutional level, SOMA adopted a gender policy framework requiring every Wadaag partner station to include at least one female journalist in its reporters. Supported by IMS and mentored by Ergo, this requirement is monitored through periodic reporting and performance assessments. KIIs with SOMA managers and station directors in Mogadishu, Baidoa, and Galkayo confirmed that gender inclusion is now an established editorial standard rather than a voluntary effort.

The 2024–2025 Qualitative Assessment Report recorded that 10 female reporters contributed directly to Wadaag episodes during the review period, covering complex themes such as agricultural programs, youth empowerment, advocacy for displacement communities, and governance. A journalist from Radio Codka Nabadda in Galkayo produced a report on women’s leadership in local elections, while another in Baidoa documented female participation in drought resilience committees.

SOMA and IMS also organized specialized trainings on gender-sensitive reporting, workplace harassment prevention, and newsroom inclusion implemented by IMS partner, Somal Women Journalists Organisation (SWJO). Journalists described these sessions as transformative.

One male producer in Baidoa explained, *“Before Wadaag, I was afraid to speak about women’s struggles. Now I frame them as stories of rights and dignity.”* Such initiatives have fostered a

new generation of female reporters confident in addressing social and political issues from an informed perspective.

Content analysis revealed a marked rise in women's representation as sources, experts, and narrators. The evaluator's independent content analysis of eight sampled Wadaag episodes found that women's voices represented approximately 34% of total airtime. Although Wadaag reports shared with IMS by SOMA do not contain airtime breakdowns, this estimate aligns with evaluator observations and KIIs indicating increased inclusion of female voices compared to earlier years where women constituted approximately 18% of story airtime.

While Somalia lacks comprehensive and regularly updated national airtime studies, insights from KIIs across Baidoa, Galkayo, and Mogadishu consistently indicated that female representation in most Somali radio programming remains well below 25%, often dropping into single-digit percentages depending on the topic. This aligns with findings from the Somali Women Journalists Organisation (SWJO) *Gender in Media Content Baseline Study* – produced under the same IMS Sida programme in December 2024 - which documented very low levels of women's visibility as news sources, reporters, or expert voices across mainstream Somali media.

Importantly, this evaluation acknowledges the synergy within the wider IMS media-development ecosystem. Following completion of SWJO's gender baseline study, SWJO conducted targeted gender trainings for SOMA-member stations, helping strengthen journalists' understanding of gender-sensitive reporting. SWJO also developed an initial Gender in Content Tracking Tool, which although still in its early implementation phase provides a systematic framework for monitoring women's representation in broadcast content and has begun informing SOMA's internal gender practices.

Against this national backdrop, Wadaag's performance represents a significant positive deviation: in the eight sampled episodes, women constituted approximately 34% of total airtime a proportion three to four times higher than typical levels recorded in the baseline study. This indicates strong alignment with IMS's broader gender inclusion strategy and demonstrates that Wadaag is making measurable contributions toward shifting media norms around women's visibility and voice.

The evaluated episodes included *"Women in Local Leadership," "Mothers of Resilience,"* and *"The Impact of Early Marriage on Girls' Education,"* which aired on March 2025 on episode 65 of Wadaag, and were produced in Baidoa. Each portrayed women as proactive agents of change rather than victims, highlighting their leadership, innovation, and community service, as well as the challenges and barriers facing them

FGDs in Baidoa and Galkayo affirmed that Wadaag's portrayal "reflects real life" and strengthens women's confidence to participate publicly. Female participants praised its respectful tone, particularly in coverage of gender-based violence, where Wadaag emphasized resilience over sensationalism.

One Baidoa listener said, *"It made us proud, it showed that women build peace in everyday ways."*

Male participants, in separate FGDs, also acknowledged these changes. They noted that Wadaag ‘helps men understand women’s roles beyond the household.’ This behavioral influence is significant in Somalia’s patriarchal context and reflects early shifts toward more equitable social attitudes.

Wadaag’s rotational production model, where thematic responsibility shifts between partner stations, has expanded opportunities for female journalists to contribute at multiple stages of production. KIIs confirm that women now participate in editorial meetings, story planning, and script development roles previously dominated by men. While their involvement in final editing decisions varies across stations, their presence in core editorial processes represents significant progress. The mentorship provided by IMS and Ergo has created safe, encouraging spaces for women to refine their skills and gain professional confidence. Many credited the mentors for improving their ethics, narrative structure, and interview techniques.

Inclusivity also extends beyond gender. Reports increasingly feature youth, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and persons with disabilities.

The evaluator’s review found that stories addressing women’s issues such as early marriage, maternal health, and education were covered with empathy, balance, and anonymity protections for survivors. Women were framed as knowledge bearers, not merely subjects of hardship. In one segment, female entrepreneurs analyzed market inflation and trade challenges roles traditionally assigned to male experts. The 2024–2025 Qualitative Assessment Report credited Wadaag with shifting toward solution-oriented storytelling, linking gender equality to national peace and development.

Listener Survey results (152 respondents: 85 male, 67 female) confirmed broad support for gender inclusivity:

- 74% agreed that Wadaag gives fair and respectful representation to women.
- 68% said the programme changed how they view women’s societal roles.
- 72% of men reported increased respect for women’s leadership after hearing female voices on-air.

FGD testimonies echoed these trends. Male elders in Galkacyo said Wadaag “teaches us that peace cannot happen without women,” while women in Baidoa stated that it “opened a space for us to be heard without fear.” These perceptions indicate that the programme’s gender influence extends from newsroom practice to public mindset. A female respondents from Baidao said “*This programme brings women into conversations we were never part of before. Hearing other women speak about their challenges gives us confidence to raise our own voices.*”

Because most FM stations operate from urban centres, rural and nomadic women are harder to reach. Limited mobility, security risks, and distance make field reporting challenging. Radio Ergo’s rural-focused model shows why these voices are difficult to integrate and why representation gaps persist despite the programme’s progress. Participants also proposed expanding women’s engagement through interactive call-in shows and community listening groups to strengthen dialogue and feedback loops. A female respondent from Galkayo said “*When I listen to Wadaag, I feel represented. The stories show that women contribute to peace and daily life, not just stay in the background.*”

Wadaag's deliberate integration of gender perspectives has yielded substantial results. By diversifying newsroom representation, elevating women's voices, and embedding ethical storytelling, the programme has fostered a gradual cultural shift in Somali journalism. It has redefined women not as subjects of advocacy but as co-creators of peace and knowledge.

As one Baidoa participant summarized: *"Wadaag made us part of the story- it did not speak about women; it spoke with us."*

3.4 Audience Engagement and Responsiveness

Audience engagement and responsiveness are key indicators of a programme's relevance and sustainability. For Wadaag, engagement extends beyond the act of listening, it includes discussion, participation, feedback, and behavioral change resulting from exposure to peace-oriented and educational content. The evaluation found that Wadaag has built one of the most active and loyal radio audiences in Somalia, characterized by high awareness, strong trust, and sustained participation across multiple regions. Through its accessible language, relatable storytelling, and balanced framing, Wadaag has become a platform where citizens, regardless of gender, age, or location, feel seen, heard, and represented.

Data from the Listener Survey of 152 respondents (85 male and 67 female) revealed that 96.7% were aware of Wadaag, demonstrating an exceptionally high level of recognition across Somalia's fragmented media environment. Among these, over 87% reported listening to Wadaag regularly, once per week. Awareness levels were consistent across all surveyed regions Mogadishu, Baidoa, and Galkayo reflecting the programme's strong national reach through SOMA's network of more than 40 partner radio stations.

FGD participants in both Baidoa and Galkayo confirmed that the programme airs at accessible times and that its themes are "widely talked about" across tea shops, family gatherings, and social meetings. A male FGD participants in Baidoa noted that Wadaag is widely listened to in markets and public spaces, describing it as a programme that 'brings people together' and encourages calm, solution-focused discussion. This reflects Wadaag's position as a trusted and anticipated broadcast within the community."

KIIs with radio managers also confirmed that Wadaag episodes consistently attract high listenership rates, with many partner stations reporting an increase in audience retention during the programme's airtime compared to other slots. Although stations commonly use SMS and call-ins for different types of programmes, Wadaag is the **only one with a structured feedback recording process** required by SOMA. Therefore, while listener engagement is high (30-50 messages per episode), it cannot be directly compared to other shows due to lack of documented benchmarks.

Wadaag's interactive communication strategy has been instrumental in fostering two-way engagement between journalists and the public. Listeners are encouraged to respond through SMS, social media, and direct calls to the stations, especially after episodes addressing sensitive or locally relevant issues. Feedback is collected and reviewed by partner stations and shared with

SOMA's coordination team, creating a consistent loop of audience insight that informs editorial planning.

Analysis of these feedback records revealed that the majority of listener messages were appreciative, inquisitive, or reflective rather than critical, highlighting a sense of ownership and trust among the audience. For instance, following an episode titled *"Youth Building Peace Through Sports,"* several young listeners sent messages expressing interest in joining local sports clubs, while others asked for follow-up discussions on youth employment.

FGD participants corroborated these findings, with several stating that they had personally contacted stations to comment on or request topics. FGD participants expressed that stories highlighting women's economic resilience such as those on business engagement or livelihood recovery motivated them to request more coverage on women-led economic initiatives. Such direct interactions show that Wadaag has established a feedback culture, an important marker of participatory media.

Moreover, journalists confirmed that they integrate public input into future programming. A Galkayo producer explained, *"When listeners send feedback, we take it seriously. Sometimes their suggestions become our next story."* This responsiveness demonstrates adaptive communication where citizens influence not only what is broadcast, but also how it evolves over time.

Survey data and FGDs show that Wadaag's audience is diverse across gender and age, though slightly male-dominated in absolute numbers. Among 152 respondents, 85 were male (55.9%) and 67 were female (44.1%), indicating relatively balanced participation compared to national averages in media consumption, which typically show lower female listenership.

Female listeners frequently highlighted that Wadaag's neutral tone and use of clear Somali language made the programme approachable and comfortable to listen to, even for those with limited formal education. Many women said they tune in collectively with family members, particularly during evening broadcasts. In contrast, male respondents were more likely to discuss programme content in public spaces such as tea stalls and community meetings.

Youth engagement was particularly strong. FGDs in both Baidoa and Galkayo revealed that many young people identify with Wadaag's focus on social change, opportunity, and responsibility. They see it as a "platform for learning" and "a source of hope." A 22-year-old youth participant in Galkayo stated, *"Wadaag makes us think differently it's not just news, it's advice."* This underscores the programme's educational value and its success in cultivating informed, socially aware listeners among Somalia's youth population.

Across all data sources, Wadaag was perceived as highly relevant to everyday life. Listener Survey results indicated that 91% of respondents found the programme's topics directly applicable to their community's realities, particularly in areas related to peace, governance, health, and livelihoods. FGDs confirmed that audiences view Wadaag as a "mirror of society," reflecting both challenges and solutions through authentic voices.

For example, Baidoa respondents praised Wadaag for featuring IDPs, small traders, and farmers who "speak like us and face the same problems." In Galkayo, participants emphasized that the

programme's focus on coexistence and local reconciliation "helps heal the city's divisions." Several interviewees also mentioned that they had changed their own attitudes toward other communities after hearing Wadaag stories that highlighted shared struggles. For example, a 54-year-old male FDG participant from Baidao stated:

"When I heard Wadaag interviewing farmers from Mudug who also lost their crops, I realized our suffering is the same. It changed how I see people from other regions, we are all fighting drought together."

FDG participants from Galkayo also said: *"When we hear youth from both sides talking about peace, it gives us hope for cooperation."*

Perhaps the most remarkable finding of this evaluation is the depth of trust and emotional connection between Wadaag and its listeners. Both qualitative and quantitative data show that audiences view the programme not merely as a media product but as a reliable companion in daily life.

Survey results show that 93% of respondents rated Wadaag's credibility as "high" or "very high." FGDs in Baidoa and Galkayo echoed this trust, with participants describing Wadaag as "honest," "calm," and "educational." A Galkayo elder summarized this sentiment: *"When we hear Wadaag, we know it is safe to believe it."*

Listeners demonstrated a high level of cognitive and emotional engagement. For example, in a Mogadishu episode on "Youth Employment and Peace," multiple callers shared their own experiences and suggestions for community projects. In Baidoa, during a segment on "Women in Local Governance," several women listeners called in to express gratitude and share similar success stories. These real-time reactions underscore Wadaag's capacity to inspire dialogue and self-expression, essential features of responsive media in fragile contexts.

As summarized by one listener in Galkayo: *"Wadaag is not just a radio programme it is a conversation that never ends."*

3.5 Coordination and Sustainability

The sustainability and success of Wadaag rest on the strength of its coordination framework, the clarity of its management systems, and the long-term institutional support it receives from SOMA, IMS, and Radio Ergo. The assessment finds that Wadaag is well-integrated and strategically coordinated across SOMA and its partner stations. However, institutional integration does not equate to long-term sustainability; the programme still faces challenges regarding resource predictability, digital modernization, and financial resilience.

Over the nine-year implementation period (2016–2025), Wadaag evolved from a pilot collaborative journalism project into a national media institution - a recognized platform for peace, social dialogue, and ethical reporting. The operational model based on joint editorial planning, networked production, and coordinated dissemination has enabled the programme to maintain consistency and high standards across more than 40 radio partners.

The coordination of Wadaag is anchored within SOMA's institutional framework, where a dedicated programme team oversees daily operations, editorial supervision, and partner communication. This team works in close collaboration with IMS, which provides strategic guidance, technical support, and oversight, while Radio Ergo delivers editorial mentorship, quality assurance, and script review.

KIIs with senior staff from all three institutions confirmed that this tripartite management structure functions effectively and is guided by a shared vision of "peace through responsible media." Regular coordination meetings are held both virtually and in person to review content quality, monitor progress, and resolve operational challenges. A clear chain of communication has been established: from field reporters to editors to the SOMA team, and onward to IMS and Ergo for validation and broadcast scheduling.

The evaluator noted that this coordination mechanism is well-documented and respected by all partners, demonstrating maturity and trust. Journalists in Baidoa and Galkayo described the coordination team as "accessible and fair," emphasizing that feedback from Ergo and IMS is always constructive and helps them improve professionally.

However, KIIs also revealed that the coordination workload has increased substantially as the number of partner stations and stories grew. While the SOMA editorial team performs efficiently, there is a need to strengthen its staffing and resource allocation to maintain responsiveness and quality control. Although this may not be realistic given budgets and levels of commitment from radio stations, several participants recommended the establishment of a regional focal point system with designated editors to streamline communication and reduce dependency on the central team in Mogadishu.

The assessment confirmed that Wadaag's editorial management process is systematic and quality driven. Every episode follows a well-structured production chain: idea generation, script drafting, editorial review, technical editing, approval, and broadcast. Ergo provides editorial mentorship throughout this process, ensuring alignment with ethical standards and peace-oriented messaging.

The evaluator's review of eight randomly selected episodes found clear evidence of this structure in action. Scripts were consistent in format which is unusual in the broader Somali media context, recording quality was high, and transitions between segments demonstrated technical polish. Journalists interviewed expressed that "the review process has made us better storytellers."

KIIs confirmed that these trainings have significantly enhanced individual and institutional capacities. Journalists described gaining new skills in interview techniques, narrative structure, and ethical framing. Importantly, the mentorship model extends beyond workshops: Ergo editors provide one-on-one coaching for journalists during the story production cycle. This embedded mentoring system has ensured that learning translates directly into practice.

The assessment found that communication between SOMA, partner stations, and IMS is transparent and regular. Progress reports, monitoring forms, and editorial feedback loops are systematically documented and archived. SOMA submits monthly Wadaag reports to IMS, covering episode production, partner station performance, challenges, and key feedback trends. In addition to this, SOMA also submits quarterly reports on its broader portfolio of activities

under the contract such as journalist safety initiatives, stakeholder dialogues, and capacity-building efforts. These submissions feed into joint review meetings, where IMS and SOMA discuss progress, address constraints, and refine implementation priorities.

KIIs with IMS and SOMA leadership highlighted that this partnership is “more than contractual, it is strategic.” The partners have developed a culture of mutual respect, regular communication, and shared learning. For example, during the evaluator’s review period, IMS facilitated a joint strategic reflection session in Mogadishu, where station managers, editors, and trainers jointly reviewed Wadaag’s editorial priorities for 2025. Such participatory management ensures that decisions are informed by on-the-ground realities rather than top-down directives.

However, stakeholders also noted that dependence on donor funding remains a limiting factor for long-term sustainability. While the partnership has successfully built institutional capacity, financial independence for local stations remains limited. Some partner stations rely on Wadaag as their primary source of professional content and operational support. Without consistent donor backing, the risk of regression in quality and coordination is high.

Despite these challenges, the evaluation identified multiple factors that support Wadaag’s sustainability:

1. **Institutional Anchoring:** The programme is fully integrated within SOMA’s organizational structure and is now viewed as a flagship initiative.
2. **Human Resource Continuity:** The mentoring approach ensures skill retention among journalists and editors.
3. **Community Ownership:** Strong audience trust (as seen in the Listener Survey) provides a social foundation for continued relevance.
4. **Operational Systems:** Standardized templates, reporting formats, and editorial guidelines ensure procedural consistency.
5. **Partnership Network:** Collaboration with IMS and Ergo guarantees technical and strategic stability.

The evaluator recommends establishing a diversified funding model combining donor support, local sponsorships, and service-based income, which could significantly reduce dependency and increase programme resilience.

For example, IMS programme coordinator stated, *“The programme can be strengthened further because many people depend on it... SOMA should seek additional supporters beyond IMS such as civil society, Somali business owners, or even government institutions. The government should also consider mechanisms for media houses to generate income so they can continue serving the public.”*

FGD participants and KII respondents expressed concern that without continued support, “peace journalism could lose its national platform.” This underscores the need for a structured sustainability roadmap with clear milestones, such as the creation of a Wadaag editorial trust fund, long-term donor partnerships, or the introduction of paid content syndication among partner stations.

4. Impact Analysis

Wadaag continues to serve as one of Somalia’s most influential platforms for peace journalism, public awareness, and responsible storytelling. The evaluation drawing on 18 KIIs, 6 FGDs, field observations in Baidoa, Galkayo, and Mogadishu, and a Listener Survey of 152 respondents found strong, multi-dimensional impact across community behavior, media practice, institutional collaboration, and gender inclusion. The testimonies of senior editors such as Rijaal Abdi (Radio Ergo editorial advisor), and regional reporters across South West State, Puntland, and Banadir anchor these findings in lived professional experience and audience realities.

A major area of impact emerged around public health awareness, where Wadaag played a decisive role in shaping community understanding of disease prevention, vaccination, and health-seeking behavior. In Galkayo, reporters highlighted the influence of a Wadaag story about measles vaccination (*talaalka gawracatada*) aired in early 2025. The episode explained the risk of a new measles outbreak in the Halaboqad and Garsoor IDP settlements, and interviewed mothers, health workers, and mobile-clinic teams. According to follow-up discussions with the reporting team, health workers in several sites noted that parents began inquiring more actively about measles vaccination following the episode. While this feedback was informal and not documented in written reports, it was consistently mentioned in KIIs as an example of how health-related broadcasts can trigger community action.

As one Galkayo KII participant noted, *“Once the story aired, parents started asking where the vaccination teams were located. People took it seriously because the programme explained it clearly and calmly.”* The Listener Survey supports this behavioral trend, with 71% of respondents reporting that Wadaag improved their understanding of health issues and 68% saying they had taken some form of action after engaging with Wadaag’s health stories.

The evaluation also confirmed Wadaag’s role in social cohesion and inter-clan understanding, especially in historically divided areas such as Galkayo. Continuous coverage of cooperative peace initiatives joint youth sports events, shared water infrastructure, community mediation committees helped normalize coexistence across the city’s north-south divide. According to one of the interviewees, *“Wadaag tells stories from both sides of Galkayo. Listeners hear each other’s realities, and that reduces suspicion.”* FGDs reinforced this sentiment, with participants in Baidoa, Galkayo, and Mogadishu stating that Wadaag “lowers tension,” “brings people closer,” and “helps people understand others without clan bias.” The Listener Survey confirms broad public recognition of this impact: 82.9% believe the programme reduces hate speech and misinformation, while 67% said it helped them better understand social issues in other regions.

Another significant impact observed relates to civic motivation and community action. Several stories documented through KIIs demonstrate that Wadaag content prompts concrete responses from listeners. In Baidoa, the story “Rebuilding Lives After Drought” which documented the struggles of displaced families in Buundoole and Awdinle camps encouraged residents of Bardaale Road to organize small community support drives. One youth participant in the Baidoa FGD explained that listening to Wadaag *“made us feel responsible for helping our people. It’s not just information it makes you act.”* In Mogadishu, a Wadaag feature on women’s economic resilience inspired calls from listeners asking for more episodes on business and savings groups, indicating a shift from merely listening to seeking solutions and opportunities.

The programme has also had a transformative impact on journalism practice across partner stations. Multiple KII respondents including senior editors and regional reporters emphasized that Wadaag has significantly strengthened verification and sourcing practices.

A radio editor in Baidoa explained that before joining Wadaag, reporters “often rushed stories without full confirmation,” but the programme’s editorial mentoring has led them to “check facts carefully, confirm details with multiple sources, and avoid unverified claims.” Content analysis of eight episodes reviewed by the evaluator confirmed these claims, showing strong patterns of multi-voice storytelling, balanced representation, conflict-sensitive framing, and adherence to ethical neutrality. Listener perceptions align with this improvement: 79% rated Wadaag’s accuracy higher than other programmes, and 93% described the programme as “highly trustworthy.”

In terms of gender inclusion, the evaluation found encouraging progress but also highlighted ongoing limitations. Women accounted an active contributor in mid-2025, according to SOMA programme data shared internally an increase from below 15% in earlier years. In the eight sampled episodes, women accounted for approximately 34% of all airtime, representing a major improvement compared to the national baseline, where women typically appear in single-digit proportions across Somali radio content. This elevated presence demonstrates clear progress in gender inclusion within Wadaag’s editorial output.

Findings from KIIs reinforce this shift: female journalists interviewed in Baidoa, Galkacyo, and Mogadishu described becoming “more visible in field reporting, more confident in pitching stories, and more included in editorial conversations.” This contrasts sharply with sector-wide norms reported in the *SWJO Gender in Media Content Baseline Study*, where women’s representation is consistently recorded as below 10% in most broadcast categories. KIIs affirmed these gains: female journalists are now more visible in field reporting, thematic coverage, and editorial discussions. Nonetheless, Abukar from IMS offered a realistic assessment, noting that “women are reporting more, but many still need support to reach higher decision-making levels such as senior editors or lead producers.” FGDs revealed attitudinal shifts, with male participants acknowledging that Wadaag “helps men understand women’s roles beyond the household,” a notable development given Somalia’s deeply patriarchal social norms.

Despite its strong impact, the programme operates within a media environment that faces significant structural challenges across Somalia. Security constraints in Baidoa and Galkayo limit field reporting in remote or high-risk areas, often forcing journalists to rely on phone interviews, which reduces story depth. Limited equipment, weak internet connectivity, and delayed funding disbursements at partner stations slow production and affect timeliness. Staff turnover remains high, with trained reporters frequently leaving for NGOs or international agencies, creating continuity gaps. KIIs also highlighted unequal digital capacity across stations, limiting the potential reach on social media despite evidence that youth engagement is high where clips are posted.

Participants across KIIs offered practical recommendations, such as expanding digital content, investing in essential equipment for partner stations, and developing localized training plans instead of uniform ones. They stressed that enhancing mentorship for young reporters especially women would improve long-term sustainability and strengthen institutional capacity.

Overall, the evidence confirms that Wadaag’s impact is deep, multidimensional, and widely recognized by audiences, journalists, and community stakeholders alike. Across health, journalism quality, gender inclusion, and civic engagement, the programme has established itself as a powerful force for informed, ethical, and socially responsible communication in Somalia.

5. Key Achievements and Good Practices

The evaluation confirms that Wadaag has achieved transformative results across Somalia’s media and social cohesion. Through consistent editorial excellence, inclusive storytelling, and a collaborative management model, Wadaag has demonstrated that journalism can be a catalyst for peace, accountability, and social cohesion. The following synthesis highlights the programme’s most significant achievements and best practices based on triangulated data from KIIs, FGDs, listener surveys (152 respondents), and field observations conducted between 2024 and 2025.

5.1 Strengthening Collaborative Journalism and Editorial Standards

One of Wadaag’s most notable achievements is the institutionalization of collaborative journalism within Somalia’s fragmented media environment. The programme’s network spanning over 40 radio stations under SOMA has united journalists across political and regional divides. KIIs consistently described Wadaag as “the first platform that made Somali journalists work together.”

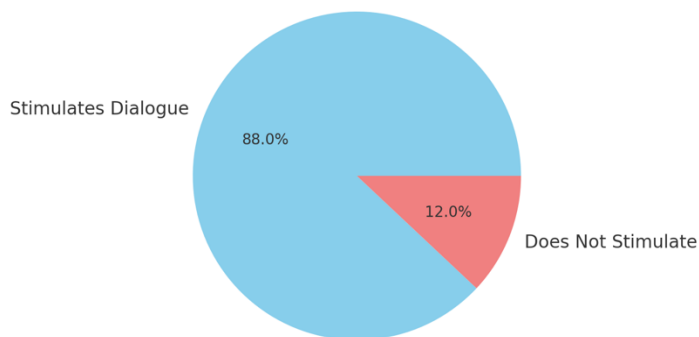
Joint editorial planning, peer review, and shared production processes have replaced competition with cooperation. The evaluator’s review of eight randomly selected episodes confirmed a consistent editorial tone and uniform application of ethical standards across all partner stations, demonstrating that national editorial norms are now practiced locally.

SOMA’s coordination mechanism, supported by IMS and Ergo, ensures each story passes through multi-tier review technical, ethical, and thematic before broadcast. This rigorous process has become a benchmark for professionalism and accountability in Somali media. Many partner stations have adopted this model for their independent productions, signaling sector-wide learning.

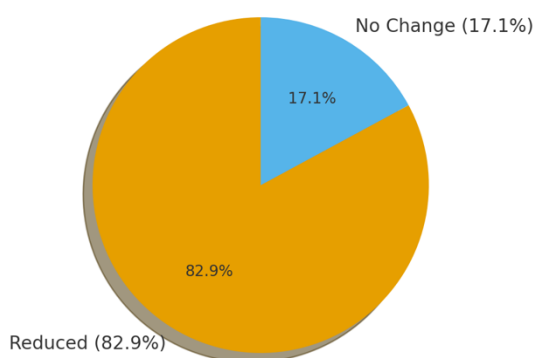
5.2 Advancing Peace Journalism and Responsible Reporting

Wadaag’s most profound contribution lies in its promotion of peace journalism, a shift from conflict-centered to solution-oriented storytelling. The programme content consistently emphasizes empathy, cooperation, and coexistence, rather than hostility or political bias.

Listener Perception: Wadaag Stimulates Peace Dialogue



Perceived Reduction in Hate Speech and Misinformation



Across Baidoa, Galkayo, and Mogadishu, FGD and KII participants credited Wadaag for “telling stories that unite rather than divide.” Listener Survey results substantiate these perceptions: 82.9% of respondents said Wadaag reduced hate speech and misinformation, while 88% reported that it stimulated community dialogue about peace.

In Galkayo, where clan divisions historically fueled violence, Wadaag’s cross-regional broadcasts were cited for helping “people understand that peace is possible.” In Baidoa, stories on drought resilience encouraged cooperation between host and displaced communities.

A strong good practice emerging from this success is Wadaag’s editorial rule requiring multiple perspectives in all peace-related stories including women, youth, elders, and local officials. This inclusive storytelling format has become synonymous with Wadaag’s brand, positioning it as Somalia’s flagship peace journalism platform, recognized for neutrality and trustworthiness.

5.3 Institutionalizing Gender Equality and Inclusion

Gender equality has been institutionalized through deliberate policy and practice. SOMA’s internal gender policy, reinforced by IMS and Ergo mentorship, mandates every partner station to include at least one female journalist in its production or editorial team. The female journalists actively participate in Wadaag production across regions. For example, the August 2024 Wadaag report recorded 13 women out of 59 contributors (22%) participating in story planning, interviews, and feedback sessions. KIIs confirm increased female involvement, but no cumulative programme-wide percentage is reported in available SOMA documents.

Female journalists now regularly produce social related issues, governance, and peace stories, breaking traditional role boundaries. Wadaag has produced several reports highlighting women’s political participation and challenges in public decision-making.

FGDs confirmed that Wadaag “gave women a voice and visibility,” while Listener Survey results showed 74% of respondents believed the programme gives fair and respectful representation to women. This dual impact empowering women in media and reshaping societal perceptions marks one of Wadaag’s defining legacies.

5.4 Building Audience Trust, Engagement, and Public Dialogue

Wadaag has cultivated exceptional public trust and engagement, transforming passive listeners into active participants in civic dialogue. The Listener Survey revealed that 93% of respondents rated its trustworthiness as “high” or “very high.”

FGDs described Wadaag as “a calm and trustworthy voice” amid polarized media. Listeners reported discussing episodes in homes, markets, and community gatherings, confirming that Wadaag inspires meaningful post-broadcast dialogue.

Its two-way communication system via SMS, phone-ins, and social media allows real-time listener feedback, which is integrated into future episodes. The evaluator’s review of eight programmes showed consistent audience reactions, many of which were reflective or action oriented.

5.5 Fostering Institutional Partnerships and Local Ownership

Wadaag’s operational model embodies effective partnership and local ownership. The tripartite collaboration among SOMA, IMS, and Ergo blends local legitimacy, strategic oversight, and editorial mentorship. SOMA anchors coordination, IMS ensures quality and monitoring, and Radio Ergo provides ongoing coaching through a “learning-by-doing” mentorship model.

This partnership not only strengthened Wadaag’s internal systems but also influenced Somalia’s wider media culture. Many partner stations now replicate Wadaag’s editorial review protocols, a sign of horizontal institutional learning. Journalists across regions exchange raw material, co-edit content, and share field experiences building professional solidarity and dismantling the isolation that once characterized Somali media.

The continuous mentorship approach where Ergo editors provide iterative feedback during the story production cycle has proven more sustainable than one-off trainings. This model ensures that quality, ethics, and impact are retained even beyond donor-funded cycles.

6. Recommendations

The evaluation identifies a number of practical actions that can strengthen Wadaag, while acknowledging the realities of Somalia’s media environment limited resources, fluctuating operational stability, and the need to avoid overly ambitious or unsustainable expectations. The recommendations focus on continuing what is already working well and introducing modest improvements that can realistically be implemented within existing structures and budgets.

6.1 Sustain and Strengthen Existing Editorial Mentorship

A consistent finding across KIIs, FGDs, listener data, and desk review is that the current editorial mentorship led by Ergo under IMS oversight is one of Wadaag’s strongest assets. Journalists across Baidoa, Galkayo, and Mogadishu repeatedly stated that the weekly pitching, reviewing, and script-editing process significantly improved their professionalism, accuracy, and ethical awareness. This system ensures that every story undergoes a series of checks that reinforce balance, factual verification, and sensitivity to conflict dynamics. Given its proven impact, the programme should continue and protect the existing editorial workflow rather than introducing new training cycles or parallel mechanisms. Maintaining this structure will help preserve Wadaag’s consistency and quality, even amid staff turnover and operational pressure.

6.2 Human Resource Instability and Financial Dependency

A recurring challenge highlighted across KIIs was the programme’s structural dependence on IMS technical and financial support. While this support has ensured editorial quality, partners consistently expressed concern that Wadaag’s sustainability remains vulnerable without broader institutional backing. This dependence is compounded by persistent human-resource instability within many SOMA member stations. Station managers in Baidoa and Galkayo reported high staff turnover, especially among trained reporters who frequently leave for better-paying positions in NGOs, INGOs, or larger media houses. Low stipends and limited career progression were frequently mentioned as contributing factors. SOMA secretary-general Mohamed Abduwahab said in his KII:

“When a reporter becomes skilled through Wadaag, they often move to another job immediately. The stations cannot retain them because the payment is too low.”

This turnover disrupts editorial continuity and places pressure on the mentorship system, as new reporters require constant retraining. Complaints about insufficient remuneration and inconsistent incentives also appeared in multiple KIIs, with several journalists noting that they must juggle multiple roles to compensate for low income. These interconnected financial and staffing issues limit the ability of partner stations to consistently maintain Wadaag’s required production standards and create ongoing strain on programme coordination.

High staff turnover remains a persistent structural challenge across Somali media. While Wadaag cannot control salaries across 41 partner stations, it can strengthen motivation and continuity through targeted, realistic incentives. KIIs revealed that reporters value recognition, training opportunities, and basic tools more than financial rewards alone. As one female journalist in Galkacyo stated, *“Training and recognition keep us committed. It tells us we belong to something bigger.”* The evaluation recommends that SOMA and IMS introduce performance-based incentives, expand professional growth opportunities, and improve access to essential reporting tools. Creating a long-term contributor pathway and maintaining structured onboarding will also help counter turnover. These measures are low-cost, feasible, and aligned with Wadaag’s operational context, enhancing staff loyalty without imposing unrealistic financial expectations.

6.3 Introduce Practical Mobile Journalism (MoJo) for Digital and Financial Sustainability

The evaluation found clear alignment between SOMA leadership’s long-term vision and emerging sector trends: several radio stations in Mogadishu have already reduced broadcasting costs by shifting to digital-only content production. This trend predicts a realistic sustainability pathway for Wadaag. The programme should introduce simple mobile journalism (MoJo) skills for a small group of contributors, on using smartphones for recording, basic editing apps, and producing short versions of Wadaag stories for popular platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube that attract strong engagement among urban youth. MoJo production requires minimal financial investment, so by supporting light digital workflows Wadaag can diversify its reach and create opportunities for monetization through social media.

6.4 Maintain Women’s Participation Through Practical, Incremental Inclusion

Wadaag has made commendable progress in involving women reporters and ensuring gender-sensitive content. However, the evaluation also recognizes that structural change in Somalia’s media sector such as improving gender policies, facilities, or leadership pathways extends beyond Wadaag’s scope and is already part of broader work implemented through SWJO. Therefore, the programme should focus on maintaining meaningful opportunities for women within existing processes, rather than introducing new or resource-intensive initiatives. This includes encouraging women to continue pitching stories, participating in editorial discussions, and co-producing episodes across different themes. Sustaining these opportunities strengthens women’s professional growth and reinforces the positive representation already visible in Wadaag’s content.

6.5 Strengthen Light-Touch Audience Feedback and Monitoring Practices

Audience engagement is one of Wadaag’s most visible achievements, with listener survey results and SMS feedback logs showing strong public interest and trust. However, stations typically record feedback informally, and many lack simple systems to analyze trends. Wadaag should adopt light-touch, easy-to-use approaches for collecting and organizing listener reactions. This can be done through simple WhatsApp folders, Google Sheets, or monthly summaries compiled by station staff. These basic methods align with what stations are already doing and build upon progress achieved in 2025 with support from Ergo and IMS. Strengthening audience documentation will also support evidence-based planning for future themes.

6.6 Explore Modest Community-Based Sustainability Options

Sustainability remains a key challenge for media institutions in Somalia. Expecting Wadaag to secure large sponsorships or institutional donors is not realistic. Instead, the programme should pursue small, community-rooted opportunities, including in-kind support from civil society organizations, occasional backing from local business associations, or collaborative activities with community leaders. Additionally, as digital storytelling capacity grows through MoJo, Wadaag may gradually explore social media monetization for select content. These modest pathways are compatible with Somalia’s media economy and the operational limitations of partner stations.

7. Conclusion

The assessment confirms that Wadaag has delivered strong and meaningful contributions to media professionalism, peace-oriented communication, and community engagement during

2024–2025. The findings demonstrate that Wadaag serves as a trusted and influential public dialogue platform across diverse regions of Somalia.

Wadaag’s core strength lies in the quality and consistency of its editorial process. The integration of story pitching, script reviews, and mentoring ensures a level of accuracy, neutrality, and ethical framing that stands out in Somalia’s media landscape. Journalists repeatedly reported that participation in Wadaag improved their professional discipline, especially in verification and conflict-sensitive framing. With its calm tone, solution-oriented approach, and emphasis on shared challenges, the programme supports constructive discourse at a time when sensational, polarized media narratives are widespread.

The programme also contributes meaningfully to community resilience and social cohesion. Evidence from FGDs revealed that many listeners such as farmers, youth, women, and elders felt the programme helped them better understand other communities and recognize common struggles. Stories on drought response, livelihoods, vaccination awareness, women’s leadership, and youth-led peace efforts were repeatedly cited as examples that fostered empathy and reflection. Wadaag’s impact is not limited to perceptions: some listeners described behavioural changes, such as increased willingness to collaborate with neighbouring communities or seek services after hearing stories from other regions.

Gender inclusion is another notable achievement, as Wadaag has meaningfully increased women’s participation as reporters and as story subjects, presenting women as leaders, innovators, and contributors to local solutions. While structural barriers still persist, Wadaag demonstrates that modest, practical opportunities such as inviting women to pitch stories or contribute to editorial meetings can significantly broaden representation.

The study recognises that Wadaag operates within a challenging media environment shaped by insecurity, high operational costs, irregular income streams, and limited digital capacity. These challenges affect the broader sector, and as such, recommendations emphasize continuity: protecting Wadaag’s strong editorial model, maintaining women’s participation, using simple monitoring tools, and adopting practical digital workflows to support sustainability.

Overall, Wadaag remains a valued and impactful initiative that supports ethical journalism, inclusive public dialogue, and cross-community understanding. With continued mentorship, gradual digital enhancement through MoJo, and modest sustainability measures rooted in local contexts, Wadaag is well-positioned to maintain its effectiveness and relevance in the years ahead.