

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT MECHANISMS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICTS IN SOMALIA, 2013–2024

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study analysed the contribution of Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) mechanisms to the management of conflict in Somalia between 2013 and 2024, evaluating the key aspects of these mechanisms, examining their effectiveness and assessing their implications for conflict management.

Problem statement: Somalia has experienced protracted conflict driven by clan competition, political fragmentation, violent extremism and weak institutional structures. IGAD has intervened repeatedly through mediation, governance support, peacekeeping coordination and early warning, yet evaluations have reported limited coordination, insufficient local involvement and constrained implementation capacity. Existing scholarship is concentrated on the transitional period preceding 2013 and relies predominantly on documentary reconstruction, leaving the more recent decade and the perspectives of practitioners and beneficiaries under documented.

Methodology: A descriptive qualitative design was adopted. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 89 purposively selected respondents comprising IGAD officials, Somali government representatives, diplomats and civil society actors, supplemented by analysis of IGAD reports, policy documents and institutional records. Data were analysed thematically and were guided by Conflict Transformation Theory and Regional Security Complex Theory. Validity was addressed through triangulation across respondent categories and documentary sources.

Results of the study: IGAD deploys a multi-layered repertoire of mechanisms encompassing diplomatic engagement and mediation, governance and institutional support, coordination with regional and international partners, community dialogue, technical assistance and early warning. Diplomatic engagement and mediation were identified by all respondents as the principal mechanism. Effectiveness followed a gradient from mechanisms drawing on political authority to those requiring sustained field implementation: diplomatic mediation was rated highly effective by 55 per cent of respondents and international coordination by 52 per cent,

while early warning was rated highly effective by only 21 per cent. The mechanisms were associated with reduced conflict intensity, strengthened governance and improved regional stability, but were constrained by political interference, financial and logistical limitations, insecurity, weak monitoring systems and inadequate public communication.

Conclusion and policy recommendation: The performance of IGAD mechanisms is explained less by programme design than by the structural position the organisation occupies, since the strongest-performing mechanisms required resources IGAD possesses while the weakest required predictable financing, secure field access and rapid decision-making authority that it does not control. The study recommends strengthening monitoring and evaluation frameworks, deepening collaboration with Somali authorities and regional partners, diversifying the financing base, expanding public communication, institutionalising security contingency planning, and establishing a formal channel for incorporating community-level perspectives into programme review.

Keywords: *IGAD, conflict management, Somalia, regional peacebuilding, mediation, early warning*

1. INTRODUCTION

Peacebuilding strategies have assumed growing prominence in international relations as states and organisations seek to address the underlying causes of conflict and establish durable peace (Oluwole, 2023). This development has been accompanied by a marked devolution of peace operations from global to regional and sub-regional bodies. Under Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter, regional arrangements are recognised as legitimate instruments for the maintenance of international peace and security, and the past two decades have witnessed the progressive transfer of operational responsibility to regional organisations (De Coning, 2020). The shift reflects both pragmatic and normative considerations. Pragmatically, regional bodies enjoy geographical proximity, cultural familiarity and a direct stake in containing conflict spillover, which enables faster deployment and more contextually attuned mediation. Normatively, the African Union principle of African solutions to African problems has recast regional intervention as an expression of continental agency rather than a residual function performed when global institutions decline to act (Dersso, 2021).

The devolution of peace responsibilities has not, however, been matched by a commensurate devolution of resources. Scholars have characterised this asymmetry as a burden-shifting rather than a burden-sharing arrangement, in which African regional bodies assume the operational risks of intervention while remaining structurally dependent on external financing for execution (Williams, 2021). The predicament is illustrated by the recurring financing crises accompanying African Union missions in Somalia, where the transition from the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia to the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia in January 2025 proceeded against an unresolved funding shortfall that threatened the viability of the successor mission (Institute for Security Studies, 2025).

Somalia represents one of the most protracted instances of state fragility and armed conflict in Africa and has consequently been a principal focus of IGAD peacebuilding effort (Menkhaus, 2020). The country has experienced cycles of violence, extremism and humanitarian crisis since the collapse of central government in 1991. The institutional trajectory of IGAD helps to

explain both its comparative advantages and its persistent constraints in this theatre. Established in 1986 as the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development with a narrow environmental and food security mandate, the organisation was revitalised in 1996 with an expanded remit encompassing conflict prevention, management and resolution. This broadening was consolidated through the establishment of the Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism in 2002, which created a structured architecture for the collection, analysis and dissemination of conflict indicators across member states (Apuuli, 2020).

In practice the operational reach of these instruments has been circumscribed by the political composition of the organisation itself. IGAD is an intergovernmental body whose decisions require consensus among member states that are themselves parties to, or interested in the outcome of, the conflicts under consideration. Kenya and Ethiopia in particular maintain substantial security interests in Somalia arising from cross-border insurgent activity, refugee movements and contested frontier arrangements, and both have deployed forces into Somali territory under regional and continental mandates. This dual identity, as mediator and as interested party, has repeatedly complicated perceptions of impartiality among Somali constituencies (Bereketeab, 2020). The period examined in this article, spanning 2013 to 2024, is of particular analytical interest because it encompasses both the consolidation of the Federal Government of Somalia and a succession of regional crises, including the tensions arising from the Ethiopia–Somaliland memorandum of understanding of January 2024, which tested the organisation's capacity to manage disputes among its own membership.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Somali conflict has persisted for over three decades, sustained by clan competition, political rivalry, terrorism and weak institutional structures. These conflicts have degraded governance, disrupted livelihoods and impeded social and economic progress. IGAD has intervened repeatedly, yet its own reports and evaluations have identified insufficient coordination between regional and national actors, inadequate local involvement in peace processes, and limited operational means for implementing peace agreements (IGAD, 2018, 2023).

A further dimension of the problem concerns the temporal scope of existing scholarship. A substantial proportion of the literature on IGAD involvement in Somalia is anchored in the transitional period between 2000 and 2012, when the organisation convened the Somali National Reconciliation Conference and facilitated the formation of the Transitional Federal Government. Studies from that period describe an operating environment fundamentally different from the one prevailing since 2013, in which a permanent federal government exercises contested authority over a federated territory, a large multinational force is deployed under continental command, and the principal armed threat has shifted from factional warlordism to a resilient transnational insurgency. The analytical categories developed for the earlier era do not transfer straightforwardly to the later one.

Equally significant is the methodological gap. Much of the available literature adopts a documentary or policy-analytic posture, reconstructing the record of interventions from communiqués, resolutions and secondary reporting. Comparatively few studies have engaged

directly with the practitioners who design, implement and receive these interventions, with the result that the internal logic of programming decisions, the informal constraints under which officials operate and the perceptions of intended beneficiaries remain underdocumented. This absence is consequential because the effectiveness of mediation and capacity-building mechanisms depends heavily on perceptions of legitimacy and ownership, which are not observable from institutional documents alone. This study addresses that gap by grounding its assessment in the accounts of officials, diplomats and civil society actors with direct operational exposure to the mechanisms under examination.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To evaluate the key aspects of IGAD mechanisms in managing conflicts in Somalia.
- ii. To examine the effectiveness of IGAD mechanisms in conflict management in Somalia.
- iii. To assess the implications of IGAD mechanisms for conflict management in Somalia.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. What are the key aspects of IGAD mechanisms in the management of conflicts in Somalia?
- ii. How effective are IGAD mechanisms in managing conflicts in Somalia?
- iii. What are the implications of IGAD mechanisms for conflict management in Somalia?

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

5.1 Conflict Transformation Theory

Conflict Transformation Theory, developed by Johan Galtung, offers a holistic approach to peacebuilding that extends beyond conventional conflict resolution. Whereas conflict resolution focuses on terminating hostilities, conflict transformation addresses the structural, relational and cultural conditions that generate and sustain violence. The theory holds that durable peace requires the reconstruction of relationships between divided groups rather than merely the cessation of armed confrontation. IGAD engagement in Somalia aligns with these premises through its emphasis on dialogue, reconciliation and the restoration of relationships between fragmented constituencies. The theory further insists that cultural and personal dimensions of conflict be incorporated into peacemaking, a consideration of particular salience in Somalia where identity, clan affiliation and historical grievance are constitutive of the conflict dynamic.

The theory carries limitations that bear upon its application. A principal objection is that conflict transformation, by directing attention to deep structural and relational sources of violence, prescribes an intervention horizon that few regional organisations possess the resources or political continuity to sustain. Where a mechanism is financed on annual cycles and staffed by seconded personnel on short rotations, the institutional memory and sustained relational engagement that transformation requires are difficult to maintain. A second objection

concerns measurement: the outcomes the theory identifies as significant, including restored relationships and altered social attitudes, resist the forms of quantification that donor accountability frameworks demand. In this study the theory is therefore employed as an evaluative standard rather than as a descriptive claim.

5.2 Regional Security Complex Theory

Regional Security Complex Theory, formulated by Buzan and Wæver, holds that security dynamics cluster within geographically proximate groupings of states whose national securities are so interlinked that they cannot realistically be considered in isolation. The theory is directly applicable to the Horn of Africa, where cross-border terrorism, piracy, refugee movements and arms proliferation demonstrate how Somali instability propagates across the region. These security externalities constitute a direct challenge to the national security of IGAD member states and account for their sustained engagement. The theory also underscores the necessity of regional ownership of peace processes, holding that deeply rooted conflicts cannot be resolved through external intervention that bypasses proximate states.

The theory nonetheless carries analytical limitations in the Somali case. It was formulated primarily to explain patterns of security interdependence among states and accords limited weight to sub-state and transnational actors whose significance in the Horn is considerable. Clan formations, armed non-state groups and diaspora networks exert influence not readily accommodated within a state-centric framework. A second limitation concerns extra-regional powers, which the theory characterises as penetrating an otherwise autonomous regional complex. In the Horn of Africa, the involvement of Gulf states, Türkiye, the United States, the European Union and China is sufficiently embedded that it is questionable whether the regional complex can meaningfully be analysed as an autonomous unit into which external influence intrudes. The study accordingly applies the theory to explain why member states are structurally compelled to engage with Somali instability, while drawing on Conflict Transformation Theory to address the sub-state and relational dimensions the security complex framework leaves underspecified.

6. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Apuuli (2020) undertook a qualitative institutional analysis of the IGAD Conflict Early Warning and Response Mechanism, examining the architecture of the mechanism across its national and regional nodes and assessing the degree to which early warning outputs translated into preventive action. Apuuli argued that the technical sophistication of the mechanism had outpaced the political willingness of member states to act upon its findings, producing a structural disjuncture between warning and response. The findings indicated that while the mechanism generated regular situation reports of reasonable analytical quality, the decision-making organs of the organisation lacked both the authority and the resources to convert those outputs into timely intervention. The study concluded that early warning capacity is a necessary but insufficient condition for conflict prevention, and that the binding constraint lies in the response architecture rather than the warning architecture.

De Coning (2020) advanced an adaptive peacebuilding framework grounded in complexity theory, arguing that interventions in protracted conflicts should be designed as iterative and learning-oriented processes rather than linear implementations of predetermined plans. De Coning contended that conflict systems such as Somalia exhibit emergent properties that cannot be fully anticipated at the design stage, and that mechanisms lacking the institutional flexibility to adjust in response to feedback will systematically underperform. The analysis implies that reported weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation are not merely accountability deficiencies but substantive impediments to programme effectiveness.

Bereketeab (2020) conducted a qualitative comparative study of regional mediation in the Horn of Africa, with particular attention to mediator partiality in organisations whose members are themselves parties to the conflicts under mediation. Bereketeab argued that the securitisation of Somalia by neighbouring states has produced a mediation environment in which the convening authority of IGAD is simultaneously its principal vulnerability, since the state's best positioned to compel compliance are those whose motives Somali constituencies are most inclined to question. Mediation outcomes were found to be more durable where the organisation operated in partnership with extra-regional facilitators whose neutrality was less contested.

Williams (2021) examined the financing of African Union peace operations in Somalia through a qualitative policy analysis focused on the relationship between resource predictability and operational performance. Williams argued that effectiveness has been persistently undermined not by deficiencies of mandate or design but by the absence of assessed and predictable financing, which compels planners to operate on short budgetary horizons incompatible with the multi-year timescales of institution building. Funding uncertainty was shown to produce measurable operational consequences including the deferral of training cycles, interruption of stipend payments and inability to commit to sustained engagement with local partners.

Ahmed and Hassan (2022) undertook a qualitative case study of local peace committees in south-central Somalia, examining the interface between externally supported reconciliation structures and customary clan-based dispute resolution. They argued that the effectiveness of community dialogue initiatives depends on the degree to which they articulate with existing customary authority rather than displacing it, and that initiatives perceived as parallel or competing structures attract elite resistance. Committees incorporating traditional elders and religious authorities achieved higher rates of agreement implementation than those constituted primarily from externally selected civil society representatives.

Dersso (2021) analysed the evolution of the African peace and security architecture with attention to the division of labour between the African Union and the regional economic communities and mechanisms. The author argued that this relationship remains insufficiently codified, producing overlapping mandates, duplicated processes and, in some instances, competitive rather than complementary engagement. In the Somali theatre IGAD, the African Union and the United Nations have each maintained distinct political engagement tracks, and the absence of a settled coordination protocol has occasionally permitted parties to the conflict to engage in forum selection.

Mosley (2023) conducted a qualitative political analysis of the Horn of Africa security environment following the Ethiopia–Somaliland memorandum of understanding, arguing that the episode exposed the structural limits of regional mediation when the dispute arises between member states of the mediating organisation itself, since the requirement of consensus renders the body procedurally incapable of adjudicating a disagreement in which its own members hold opposing positions. The eventual de-escalation was achieved through extra-regional facilitation rather than through internal regional mechanisms.

Taken together, the reviewed literature discloses three consistent findings and one persistent gap. First, the convening and mediation functions of IGAD are widely regarded as its most effective instruments, principally because they exploit the organisation's comparative advantage in political proximity and regional legitimacy. Second, implementation-intensive mechanisms, notably early warning, monitoring and community-level programming, perform less consistently, and explanations converge on resource predictability and response authority rather than technical design. Third, member state interests operate as a pervasive conditioning variable, shaping both the substance of mediated outcomes and the perceptions of legitimacy on which their durability depends. The persistent gap concerns evidence: the literature is dominated by documentary and policy-analytic studies, and comparatively few investigations have systematically elicited the assessments of practitioners and beneficiaries.

7. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework of the study relates IGAD mechanisms, treated as the independent variable, to conflict management outcomes in Somalia, treated as the dependent variable. The independent variable comprises six dimensions: diplomatic engagement and mediation; governance and institutional support; coordination with regional and international partners; community dialogue and civil society engagement; technical assistance and capacity-building; and early warning and conflict prevention. The dependent variable is operationalised through indicators of reduced conflict intensity, strengthened governance and institutional capacity, improved social cohesion, and enhanced regional stability. The relationship between the two is moderated by contextual factors identified in the literature and confirmed by the findings of this study, namely political will among stakeholders, the predictability of financing, security conditions governing field access, and the degree of local ownership of interventions.

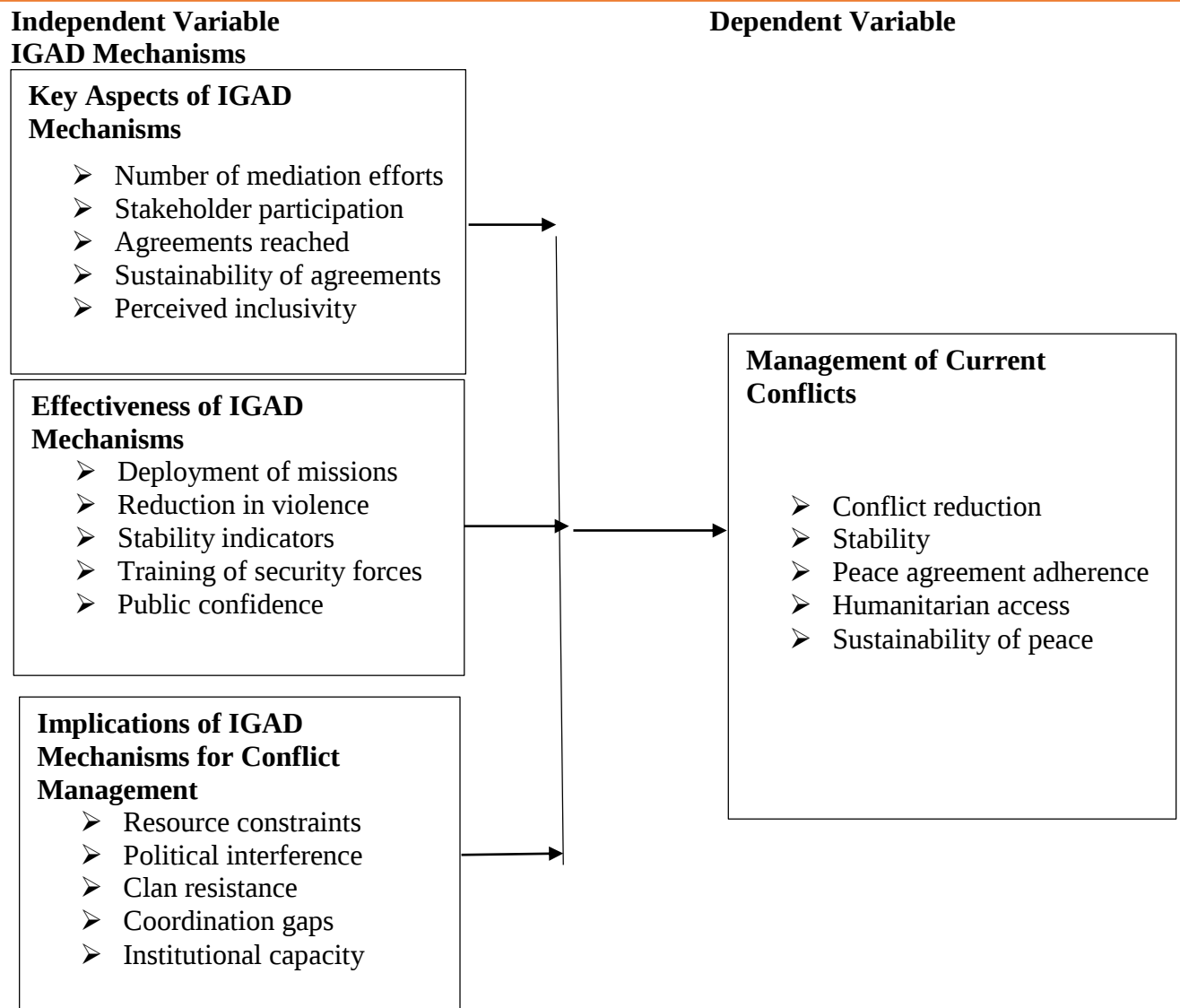


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive qualitative research design, selected on the basis of the nature of the research questions and the character of the phenomenon under investigation. An explanatory or experimental design was considered inappropriate because the study does not seek to establish causal relationships between discrete variables under controlled conditions, and the conflict environment in Somalia does not permit the isolation of intervention effects from the numerous confounding influences operating simultaneously upon conflict outcomes. A purely quantitative survey design was likewise rejected on the ground that the research questions concern the meaning, adequacy and perceived legitimacy of institutional interventions, which are matters of interpretation and judgement rather than measurable frequency.

The target population comprised stakeholders directly engaged in peacebuilding and conflict management in Somalia, namely IGAD officials, representatives of the Somali government,

diplomats and representatives of civil society organisations. Purposive sampling was employed to select 96 respondents distributed across these four categories, on the reasoning that the perspective of an implementing official and that of a community-level beneficiary may diverge systematically and that such divergence is itself analytically significant. Inclusion criteria required that participants had held a substantive role in the design, implementation, coordination or receipt of conflict management interventions in Somalia during the period between 2013 and 2024. Sample size was determined by reference to the principle of thematic saturation rather than statistical power calculation, since the study does not seek to generate estimates generalisable to a defined population.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted using an interview guide structured to correspond to the three research objectives. Within each section, questions proceeded from open descriptive prompts to more specific probes, allowing respondents to establish their own framing before being directed towards particular mechanisms. Interviews ran between forty-five and seventy-five minutes and were conducted in English or Somali according to respondent preference. Secondary data were drawn from IGAD reports, African Union Peace and Security Council decisions, United Nations Security Council resolutions and reports of implementing partners.

Content validity was established by submitting the draft interview guide to academic supervisors for review against the research objectives. Construct validity was addressed through a pilot phase administered to three respondents excluded from the principal sample, following which two ambiguous questions were reformulated and one question yielding no substantive variation was removed. Dependability was pursued through the maintenance of an audit trail documenting the interview schedule, coding decisions and the derivation of themes.

Data were analysed thematically following the six-phase approach comprising familiarisation, generation of initial codes, collation of codes into candidate themes, review of themes against coded extracts and the full data set, definition and naming of themes, and production of the analytical account. Coding proceeded on a combined deductive and inductive basis, with deductive codes derived from the research objectives and theoretical framework, and inductive codes generated from the data to capture themes the predetermined framework did not anticipate. Approximately one fifth of transcripts were independently coded by a second reader, with discrepancies resolved through discussion and refinement of code definitions. Negative case analysis was applied throughout.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Kenyatta University Graduate School and relevant Somali authorities. Informed consent was secured from all participants. Identifying information was removed from transcripts at the point of transcription and replaced with category-level descriptors, recordings were stored in encrypted form and destroyed following transcription, and no information capable of identifying an individual respondent appears in any output of the study. Respondents were informed that they were at liberty to decline any question and to withdraw at any point without consequence, and no incentive of any kind was offered for participation.

9. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

9.1 Response Rate

Of the 96 respondents targeted, 89 participated in the study, yielding an overall response rate of 92.7 per cent. The distribution across respondent categories is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Response Rate of Participants

Category of Respondents	Target Sample	Actual Response	Percentage (%)
IGAD Officials	24	22	91.7
Somali Government Representatives	24	23	95.8
Diplomats	16	15	93.8
Civil Society Representatives	32	29	90.6
Total	96	89	92.7

Source: Field Data, 2025

The high response rate strengthened the validity and reliability of the findings and indicated that respondents were familiar with IGAD involvement in conflict management in Somalia and were willing to share relevant information.

9.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Male respondents constituted 65 per cent of the sample and female respondents 35 per cent, a distribution reflecting the wider gender composition of diplomatic, governmental and civil society leadership in Somalia. The largest age cohort, comprising 41 per cent of respondents, fell within the 36 to 45 year bracket, indicating a predominance of mid-career practitioners with substantial exposure to IGAD activities. Bachelor's degree holders and postgraduate degree holders each accounted for 43 per cent of respondents, indicating a high level of professional qualification among participants.

9.3 Key Aspects of IGAD Mechanisms

The study identified six mechanisms through which IGAD engages in conflict management in Somalia. The distribution of respondent identification is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Key Mechanisms of IGAD in Somalia

Mechanism	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Diplomatic engagement and mediation	96	100
Support for governance and institutional development	80	83
Coordination with regional and international partners	75	78
Technical assistance and capacity-building	70	73
Promotion of dialogue through civil society	65	68
Early-warning and conflict prevention	60	63

Source: Field Data, 2025

Diplomatic engagement and mediation was identified by every respondent as a significant mechanism. The unanimity of this finding warrants examination, since concurrence across all categories is unusual in an evaluative study of a contested intervention. Two explanations emerge from the interview material. The first is that diplomatic engagement is the most visible of the mechanisms, generating communiqués, summits and publicised agreements observable to all stakeholder categories, whereas the outputs of technical assistance or early warning are dispersed and largely internal to implementing institutions. The second is that diplomatic engagement is the mechanism most directly derived from the institutional identity of IGAD as an intergovernmental body. A diplomat interviewed for the study observed that the organisation's convening authority derives from the fact that heads of state attend its summits in person, a form of leverage that no technical programme can replicate.

Respondents nonetheless distinguished between the convening of dialogue and the securing of implementation. Several noted that the record of IGAD in bringing parties to negotiation is markedly stronger than its record in ensuring that negotiated commitments are honoured, attributing this to the absence of any enforcement instrument at the organisation's disposal. This distinction between convening capacity and compliance capacity recurs throughout the findings and constitutes one of the principal analytical themes of the study.

9.4 Effectiveness of IGAD Mechanisms

Respondents rated the effectiveness of each mechanism in contributing to conflict management. Results are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Effectiveness of IGAD Mechanisms (Percentage of Respondents)

Mechanism	Highly Effective	Moderately Effective	Low Effectiveness
Diplomatic mediation	55	29	16
Coordination with international partners	52	33	15
Capacity-building support	33	47	20
Community dialogue initiatives	31	38	31
Technical assistance and training	29	47	24
Early warning and conflict prevention	21	42	37

Source: Field Data, 2025

Diplomatic mediation was rated most favourably, with 55 per cent of respondents assessing it as highly effective. A recurring qualification concerned perceived impartiality. Civil society representatives in particular observed that the participation of neighbouring states in the mediation architecture is regarded by segments of Somali opinion as compromising the neutrality of the process, given that those states maintain forces on Somali territory and hold identifiable security interests in the outcome of Somali political arrangements. Respondents differed in the weight attached to this concern. Institutional respondents characterised the involvement of neighbouring states as a source of leverage and commitment without which mediation would lack consequence, whereas civil society respondents characterised it as a source of suspicion reducing the acceptability of mediated outcomes among affected populations.

The diplomatic events of the study period illustrate both the reach and the limits of the mediation mechanism. Respondents referred to tensions arising from the memorandum of understanding concluded between Ethiopia and Somaliland in January 2024, which produced the most significant intra-regional crisis of the period. Respondents observed that the IGAD response was constrained by the fact that the dispute involved a member state, and that de-escalation was ultimately achieved through facilitation conducted outside the regional framework, culminating in the declaration signed in Ankara in December 2024 which IGAD subsequently welcomed (IGAD, 2024). Respondents drew from this episode the conclusion that IGAD mediation capacity is substantially greater in relation to intra-Somali disputes than in relation to disputes among its own membership, where the requirement of consensus among interested parties operates as a procedural constraint on institutional action.

Capacity-building support was assessed as moderately effective by 47 per cent of respondents. Respondents identified a recurring limitation which may be characterised as the problem of retention. Several described training programmes that had been well designed and competently delivered, but whose benefits dissipated as trained personnel moved to better remunerated positions in international organisations or the private sector, or were displaced through political appointment following changes in administration. A government respondent observed that institutions had at times been trained repeatedly in the same competencies because individuals

trained in earlier cycles were no longer in post. The effectiveness of capacity-building is therefore contingent upon institutional conditions, principally remuneration structures and appointment practices, lying outside the control of the training provider.

Early warning received the lowest rating, with only 21 per cent of respondents assessing it as highly effective. Respondents were generally more favourable in assessing the quality of information generated than the action taken upon it. An official respondent observed that situation reports were produced regularly and were analytically sound, but that the pathway from the production of a warning to the authorisation of a preventive response passed through political organs whose deliberation was slower than the pace at which conflict situations deteriorate. Respondents therefore located the deficiency in the response architecture rather than the warning architecture, a conclusion consistent with Apuuli (2020). A second constraint concerned geographical coverage: the monitoring network is denser in urban and accessible areas than in the rural districts where a significant proportion of inter-clan and resource-related conflict originates, with the consequence that warning coverage is weakest in precisely those areas where preventive intervention would carry the greatest marginal value.

9.5 Implications of IGAD Mechanisms

Respondents assessed the broader implications of IGAD interventions across four domains. Results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Implications of IGAD Mechanisms (Percentage of Respondents)

Domain	Highly Positive Impact	Moderate Impact	Low/No Impact
Peacebuilding	50	35	15
Governance	44	40	16
Regional stability	42	41	17
Social cohesion	38	42	20

Source: Field Data, 2025

IGAD interventions were associated with reduced armed confrontation, improved negotiation among political rivals and the conclusion of peace accords, with 50 per cent of respondents reporting a highly positive impact on peacebuilding. Governance support was reported to have strengthened local governance structures, improved service delivery and enhanced state legitimacy, though respondents noted that full implementation was frequently constrained by resource limitations, political interference and security conditions.

Respondents qualified their generally positive assessment of regional stability implications with the observation that regional stability and Somali stability are not identical objectives and may in certain circumstances diverge. Several noted that measures effective in containing cross-border spillover, including border security cooperation and the deployment of neighbouring state forces into frontier sectors, do not necessarily advance the consolidation of Somali state authority and may complicate it by establishing security arrangements operating

parallel to national institutions. A civil society respondent characterised this as a distinction between containing a conflict and resolving it. Assessments of regional stability implications should therefore be disaggregated according to whose stability is under consideration.

Respondents also situated their assessments in relation to the reconfiguration of continental mission architecture during the study period. The succession from the African Union Mission in Somalia to the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia in 2022, and thereafter to the African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia with effect from January 2025, was described as generating recurrent uncertainty regarding force levels, troop contributions and financing arrangements. The political coordination function performed by IGAD during these transitions, in particular the alignment of troop contributing state positions, was regarded as among its more consequential contributions to regional stability, though the persistent absence of predictable financing for the successor mission remained the principal risk to security gains achieved.

9.6 Challenges Constraining IGAD Mechanisms

Respondents identified five categories of constraint, summarised in Table 5.

Table 5: Challenges in IGAD Conflict Management (Percentage of Respondents)

Challenge	Major Challenge	Moderate Challenge	Minor Challenge
Political interference and lack of commitment	54	31	15
Limited funding and logistical constraints	50	35	15
Weak monitoring and evaluation systems	48	38	14
Security risks	46	40	14
Inadequate communication and public awareness	44	40	16

Source: Field Data, 2025

Political interference emerged as the most significant constraint, identified as a major challenge by 54 per cent of respondents. Respondents reported that local political leaders frequently pursued personal or factional agendas, stalling negotiation and delaying the implementation of agreements concluded at regional level.

Financial constraint was described as operating not merely upon the aggregate quantum of resources available but upon the manner in which resources may be planned and deployed. A programme officer explained that funding received late in a cycle, or committed on a short horizon, cannot be applied to the sustained engagement that institution building requires, with the result that resources are directed towards discrete short duration activities that are administratively straightforward to execute and report. Respondents observed that this dynamic produces a systematic bias in programming towards workshops, training events and conferences and away from the sustained accompaniment of institutions over time,

notwithstanding that the latter is generally understood to be more effective. Resource constraint therefore operates as a determinant of programme design and not only as a limitation on scale.

Respondents further linked financial dependence to programmatic autonomy, noting that substantial reliance on external partners exposes programming to the shifting thematic priorities of those partners, with the consequence that the activity portfolio may reflect donor preference as much as regional assessment of need. Concern was expressed regarding the durability of this arrangement in a period of contraction in international assistance budgets, and several respondents advocated the development of internal financing modalities including assessed member state contributions.

Respondents connected the communication deficit to the broader problem of local ownership. Where communities are unaware of the origin, purpose and intended duration of an intervention, they are unable to hold implementing bodies to account for its delivery, and are correspondingly unlikely to develop the sense of proprietorship upon which sustainability depends. A civil society respondent noted that interventions perceived as externally conceived and externally terminated attract limited community investment, since participants have no expectation of continuity. Communication was therefore characterised not as a supplementary activity to be undertaken once programming is designed, but as a constitutive element of programme legitimacy requiring attention at the design stage.

9.7 Discussion

The findings disclose a consistent pattern expressible as a gradient of effectiveness running from mechanisms that draw upon the political authority of the organisation to mechanisms that require sustained field implementation. Diplomatic mediation and coordination with international partners, which rely principally upon convening capacity and institutional standing, were assessed most favourably. Capacity-building, technical assistance and community dialogue, which require continuous presence, recurrent financing and access to conflict-affected districts, occupied an intermediate position. Early warning and conflict prevention, which require not only field presence but the capacity to convert analysis into rapid authorised action, were assessed least favourably. This gradient corresponds closely to the degree to which each mechanism depends upon resources and authority that IGAD does not itself control, supporting the interpretation that observed variation in effectiveness reflects structural position rather than differential competence in programme delivery.

This interpretation is consistent with the theoretical framework. Regional Security Complex Theory accounts for the strength of the convening and coordination functions by explaining why member states possess a durable incentive to engage with Somali instability: the securitised interdependence of the Horn of Africa ensures that the costs of Somali conflict are borne regionally, and this shared exposure sustains a level of political engagement not dependent upon external financing. The same theory illuminates the constraint identified in relation to the events of 2024, since a security complex in which the mediating organisation's own members hold divergent positions cannot readily generate the consensus that intra-regional adjudication requires. Conflict Transformation Theory accounts for the assessed weakness of implementation-intensive mechanisms by identifying the sustained relational

engagement that transformation requires as precisely the modality that short financing horizons and rotating personnel render difficult to maintain.

The findings confirm the centrality of local ownership as a determinant of outcome durability. The divergence in assessment between institutional and civil society respondents, observed in relation to mediation impartiality, community dialogue reach and communication adequacy, indicates that the mechanisms are experienced differently at the point of delivery than at the point of design. Institutional respondents evaluated the mechanisms substantially by reference to outputs delivered, whereas civil society respondents evaluated them by reference to changes observed in the communities they represent. The persistence of this divergence across several distinct areas of enquiry suggests a structural feature of the intervention architecture rather than isolated disagreement, and constitutes one of the more significant findings of the study.

Finally, the constraints identified are interdependent rather than discrete. Financial unpredictability constrains the maintenance of field presence, which limits both the geographical coverage of early warning and the reach of community dialogue initiatives. Limited field presence reduces the volume and quality of monitoring data, which weakens evaluation capacity, which in turn impairs the evidence base upon which subsequent financing proposals depend. Security constraints compound each of these effects by restricting access to precisely those districts in which the need for intervention is greatest. The implication for policy is that remedial measures addressed to a single constraint in isolation are unlikely to yield proportionate improvement.

10. CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that IGAD has employed a composite repertoire of diplomatic, governance and community-based mechanisms in managing conflict in Somalia, reflecting a multidimensional approach to peacebuilding. Diplomatic engagement and mediation constituted the foundation of this repertoire, providing structured forums through which dialogue between Somali political actors, federal member states and other stakeholders was sustained, and through which the escalation of tensions was contained during periods of heightened political instability. Governance and institutional support enhanced state legitimacy and institutional capability, while coordination with the United Nations, the African Union and neighbouring states amplified the legitimacy, visibility and sustainability of peace efforts. Engagement with civil society and local communities contributed to social cohesion and reconciliation by addressing social fragmentation, marginalisation and local grievance that top-down political strategies do not reach.

The study concludes further that the performance of these mechanisms is best explained not by reference to the quality of programme design but by reference to the structural position IGAD occupies. The mechanisms that performed most strongly were those requiring resources the organisation possesses in abundance, namely political standing, convening authority and regional legitimacy. The mechanisms that performed least strongly were those requiring resources the organisation does not control, namely predictable multi-year financing, secure and sustained field access, and the authority to convert analysis into rapid decision. It follows that improvements in effectiveness depend less upon the refinement of programme design than

upon changes to the resource and authority environment within which the organisation operates, and that this environment is determined substantially by decisions taken by member states and international partners rather than by IGAD itself.

The study concludes finally that the sustainability of the outcomes achieved remains contingent. Reductions in the intensity of violence, improvements in institutional capacity and gains in inter-communal trust were reported across respondent categories, but respondents were consistent in observing that these gains rest upon arrangements whose continuity is not assured. The financing uncertainty attending the successor continental mission, the dependence of IGAD conflict management programming upon external partners whose priorities are subject to revision, and the unresolved political questions concerning the distribution of authority within the Somali federation each represent conditions upon which durability depends. The achievements documented should therefore be understood as provisional rather than consolidated, and their consolidation requires sustained engagement over a horizon considerably longer than the financing cycles upon which present arrangements rest.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

First, IGAD should strengthen its monitoring, evaluation and reporting systems to enable systematic tracking of progress and measurement of intervention impact. Effective monitoring would permit the timely identification of gaps and achievements and the adjustment of strategy accordingly, while providing the accountability and evidence base necessary to inform future programming and to demonstrate long-term effectiveness to financing partners.

Second, IGAD should deepen collaboration with Somali authorities, local communities, civil society organisations and regional partners in order to strengthen local ownership of peacebuilding activity and to reduce political and community-level resistance to implementation. A participatory approach would align interventions with national priorities and enhance the legitimacy of IGAD engagement among affected populations.

Third, IGAD should diversify its financing base in order to reduce dependence upon short-horizon external contributions and the programmatic distortions that arise from them. This entails advocacy for a predictable financing modality for African-led peace operations, including through the operationalisation of arrangements contemplated under United Nations Security Council Resolution 2719, and the progressive development of assessed member state contributions. Even a modest predictable internal resource base would permit the maintenance of core analytical and field capacity between externally financed programme cycles.

Fourth, IGAD should expand public communication and awareness activity, employing local language broadcast media and engaging religious and customary authorities as communication intermediaries. Communication should be treated as a constitutive element of programme design rather than as a supplementary activity undertaken after programming is settled.

Fifth, IGAD should institutionalise security contingency planning to protect personnel and maintain operational continuity in high-risk areas, thereby reducing the interruption of programme implementation occasioned by deteriorating security conditions.

Sixth, IGAD should establish a structured mechanism for incorporating community-level perspectives into programme review. The divergence documented in this study between institutional and civil society assessments indicates that review conducted through institutional channels alone will systematically overstate effectiveness. A review mechanism drawing directly upon the assessments of intended beneficiaries, conducted at intervals independent of the reporting requirements of financing partners, would provide an evidence base better calibrated to the outcomes sought, while establishing a formal channel through which affected communities may influence subsequent programme design.

11.1 Areas for Further Research

Further research should examine the long-term effects of IGAD engagement in Somalia beyond 2024 in order to establish the sustainability of peacebuilding initiatives and their enduring consequences for governance and social cohesion. Comparative study of IGAD conflict management across member states would identify transferable practice and clarify how interventions perform under differing political, social and security conditions. Research into the capacity of civil society and local communities to sustain IGAD-supported peace would address the role of grassroots engagement and local ownership in reconciliation. A further avenue concerns the financing architecture of African-led peace operations and its consequences for programme design: this study has established that resource unpredictability shapes not merely the scale but the character of interventions, and comparative investigation across regional organisations would establish whether this relationship is particular to IGAD or general to regionally led interventions financed on similar terms.

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