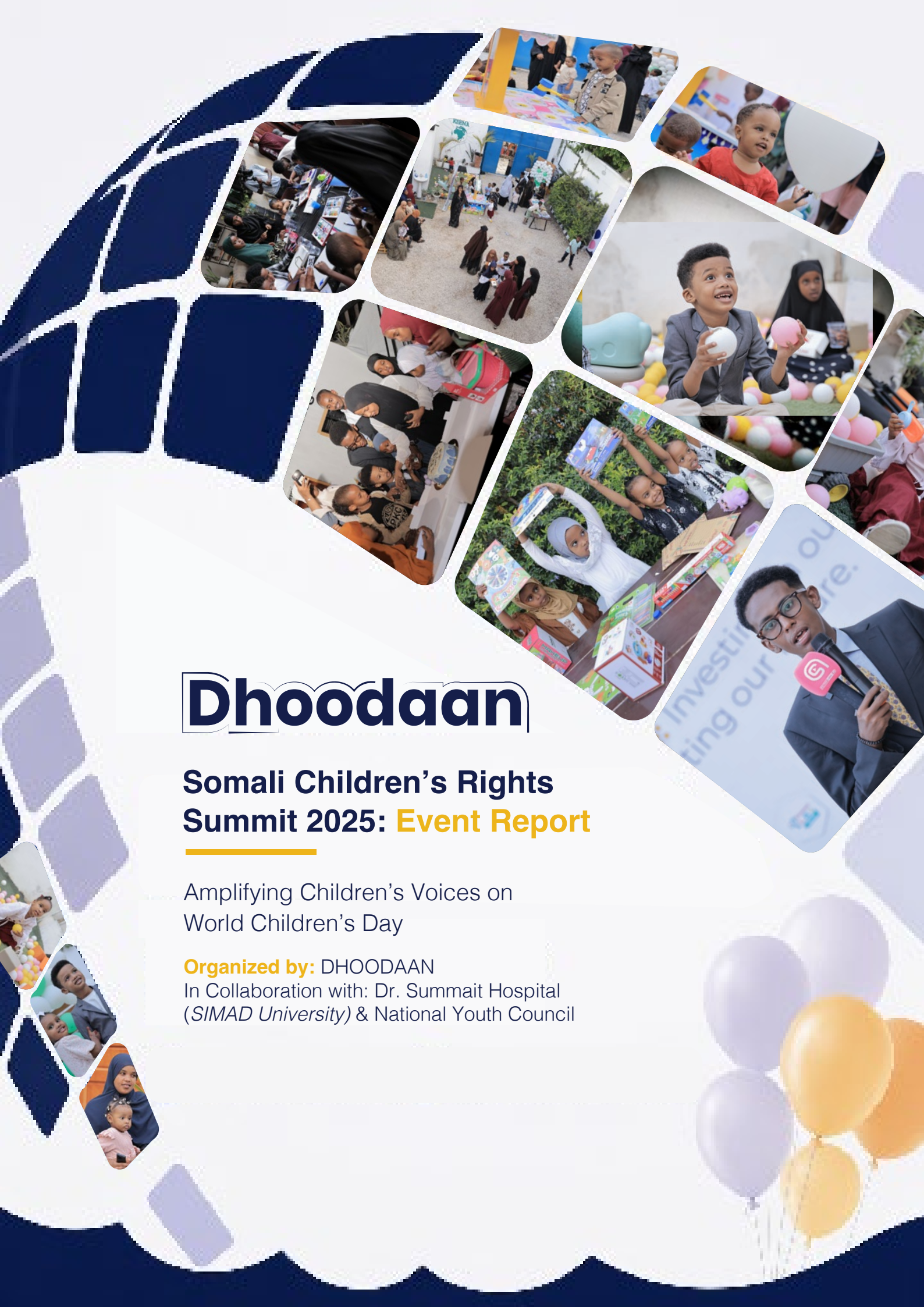




# Dhoodaan

## Somali Children's Rights Summit 2025: **Event Report**

Amplifying Children's Voices on  
World Children's Day

**Organized by:** DHOODAAN

In Collaboration with: Dr. Summaith Hospital  
(SIMAD University) & National Youth Council



# Executive Summary

The Somali Children's Rights Summit, held on November 20, 2025, at the Eco Hub in Mogadishu, marked a pivotal moment for child advocacy in Somalia. Organized by **DHOODAAN** in strategic collaboration with **Dr. Sumait Hospital (SIMAD University)** and the National Youth Council, this one-day event successfully transformed World Children's Day from a ceremonial observance into a dynamic platform for engagement. The summit brought together a diverse group of 100 participants, comprising approximately 50 children and their parents, to create a safe, inclusive space where young voices could be amplified and heard.

A distinguishing feature of this summit was its intentional focus on inclusivity, particularly regarding children with disabilities. Reflecting DHOODAAN's core mission, the event prioritized the participation of children with autism and speech delays, ensuring that the dialogue on rights and future aspirations was truly representative. Through a carefully curated series of interactive sessions—ranging from artistic expression and music to environmental stewardship—the summit facilitated meaningful parent-child interaction and fostered a deeper community understanding of children's rights.

The logo for DHOODAAN, featuring a stylized blue "d" followed by the word "hodaan" in blue lowercase letters.

dhoodaan

Somalia Children's Rights Summit

**Theme:** Investing in our children  
is investing our future.



The outcomes of the summit extended beyond the event itself, resulting in strengthened family bonds, increased confidence among the participating children, and a renewed commitment from local institutions to support child welfare. By documenting these interactions and broadcasting the vibrancy of the day through professional media partners, the summit succeeded in projecting a powerful narrative: that every Somali child, regardless of ability, deserves to be listened to and supported in shaping their future.



# Background and Context

Somalia possesses a strikingly young demographic profile, with over 40% of the population aged under 15 years. This "youth bulge" presents both a significant opportunity and a critical challenge for the nation's development. While the country has made strides in establishing legal frameworks for child protection—most notably the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2015 and the ongoing development of the Child Rights Bill—there remains a palpable gap between legislative intent and the lived reality of many children. Traditional cultural norms often exclude children from decision-making processes that directly affect their lives, creating a silence where dialogue is most needed.



The context for this summit is further defined by the National Transformation Plan 2025–2029, which emphasizes human capital development. However, genuine development cannot occur without the active participation of the country's youngest citizens. World Children's Day serves as a global reminder of these obligations, yet in Somalia, it has frequently passed with limited direct engagement from children themselves. Recognizing this disconnect, DHOODAAN identified an urgent need to create a platform that moved beyond rhetoric. The Somali Children's Rights Summit was conceived not merely as a celebration, but as a necessary intervention to operationalize the principles of participation and protection. It was designed to demonstrate that when children are provided with the right tools and environment, they are capable of articulating their needs and contributing meaningfully to the social fabric of their communities.





# Event Overview

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The summit was convened under the global theme, "**Listen to the Future:** Stand Up for Children's Rights," adapting this message to the local Somali context. Hosted at the Eco Hub in Mogadishu, the venue provided a serene and conducive environment for creativity and dialogue, away from the formalities of traditional conference settings. The event was executed as a high-impact, one-day gathering on November 20, ensuring focused energy and maximum engagement from all attendees.

The organizational structure was built on a strong partnership model. DHOODAAN served as the lead organizer, leveraging its expertise in early childhood development and communication. They were supported by Dr. Summait Hospital, affiliated with SIMAD University, which brought medical and developmental expertise, and the National Youth Council, which provided institutional backing and youth advocacy networks.

Participants were selected through a community-based approach designed to ensure diversity. The cohort of 100 attendees was split evenly between children and their parents or guardians. This demographic mix was intentional, aiming to facilitate intergenerational dialogue directly within family units. The atmosphere was designed to be festive yet purposeful, ensuring that while the children played and created, the underlying message of rights and dignity remained central to the day's proceedings.





# Objectives

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## Amplifying Children's Voices in an Inclusive Environment

The primary objective was to create a sanctuary where children felt safe to express their thoughts, fears, and dreams. In a society where adultcentric views often dominate, this summit aimed to reverse the dynamic, placing children at the center of the conversation. Special attention was paid to ensuring that this amplification was inclusive, providing nonverbal and creative channels for children with speech delays or autism to express themselves just as loudly as their peers.

## Promoting Awareness of Children's Rights Through Creative Activities

Understanding that abstract legal concepts can be difficult for children to grasp, the summit sought to translate "rights" into "actions." The objective was to use art, music, and play as universal languages to teach children about their right to expression, their right to a clean environment, and their right to play. This approach ensured that awareness was built through experience rather than instruction.

## Strengthening Parent–Child Communication

Recognizing the family as the fundamental unit of protection, the event aimed to bridge the communication gap between generations. The objective was to model positive interaction styles, demonstrating to parents how to listen actively and engage deeply with their children. By participating jointly in activities, parents were encouraged to see their children not just as dependents, but as individuals with unique perspectives and valuable insights.



Fostering Collaboration Between Children, Families, and Institutions Finally, the summit aimed to weave a tighter social fabric by connecting families with support systems. The presence of educational, medical, and civil society partners was intended to show parents that they are not alone in the journey of child-rearing. The objective was to build a network of solidarity where institutions listen to families, and families advocate for their children, creating a holistic ecosystem of support.

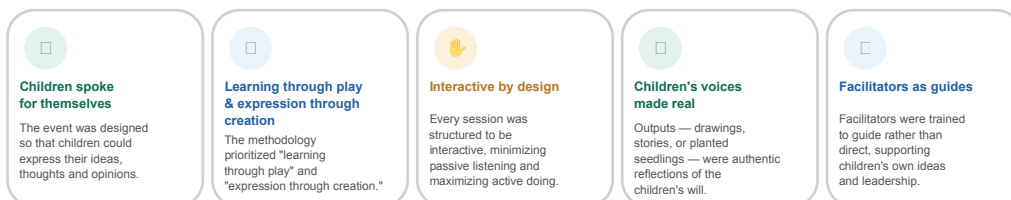




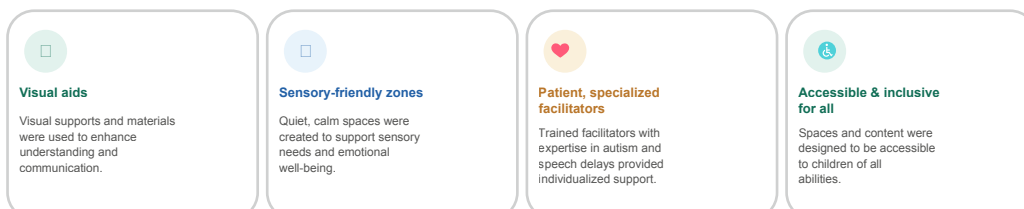
# Methodology and Approach

The summit employed a child-centered, rights-based participatory approach. Unlike traditional conferences where experts speak at an audience, this event was designed so that children spoke for themselves. The methodology prioritized "learning through play" and "expression through creation." Every session was structured to be interactive, minimizing passive listening and maximizing active doing. Facilitators were trained to guide rather than direct, ensuring that the outputs—whether drawings, stories, or planted seedlings—were authentic reflections of the children's will.

Crucially, the event design was underpinned by a philosophy of radical inclusion. Recognizing the barriers often faced by children with disabilities, DHOODAAN ensured that the physical space and the programmatic content were accessible. Visual aids, sensory-friendly zones, and patient, specialized facilitators were utilized to accommodate children with autism and speech delays. This approach moved beyond simple accommodation to genuine integration, validating the presence and participation of every child as a fundamental right.



## ● A philosophy of radical inclusion





# Implementation: Activities and Sessions

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The day began with an Opening Reflection session, setting a tone of warmth and openness. Facilitators introduced the theme of the day, inviting children and parents to leave their daily stresses at the door and commit to a day of listening and sharing. This grounding exercise helped establish a safe emotional space, crucial for the participation of children who might otherwise feel overwhelmed in social settings.

Following the opening, the Art and Drawing session commenced, facilitated by professional artists from 4C Art Studio. This session was pivotal for non-verbal expression. Children were provided with highquality materials and encouraged to draw their visions of the future. For children with speech delays, this activity served as a powerful communicative tool, allowing them to articulate complex emotions and ideas through color and form, validating art as a legitimate language of rights.

The narrative power of the summit was unlocked during the Storytelling session. Led by the children themselves, this activity reversed the traditional dynamic of adults reading to children. Young participants took the stage to share stories—some fantastical, some reflecting their daily realities. This session was instrumental in building public speaking confidence and demonstrating to the parents the rich inner lives of their children.



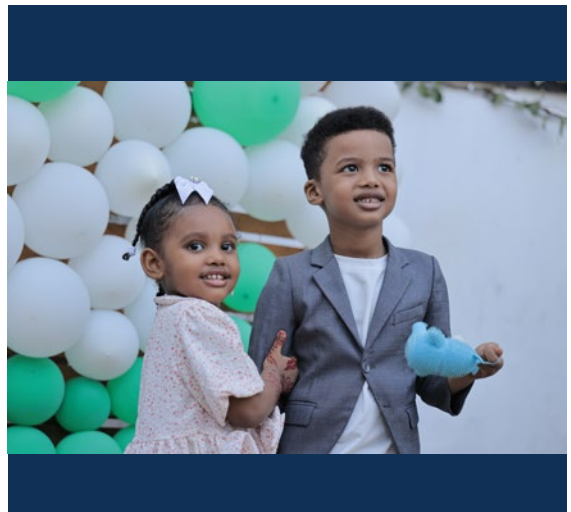
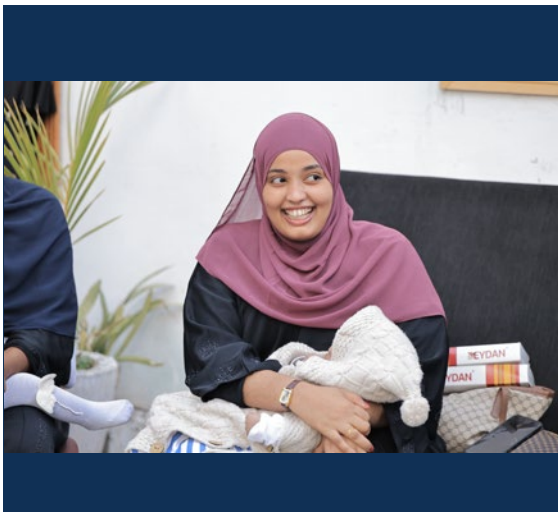
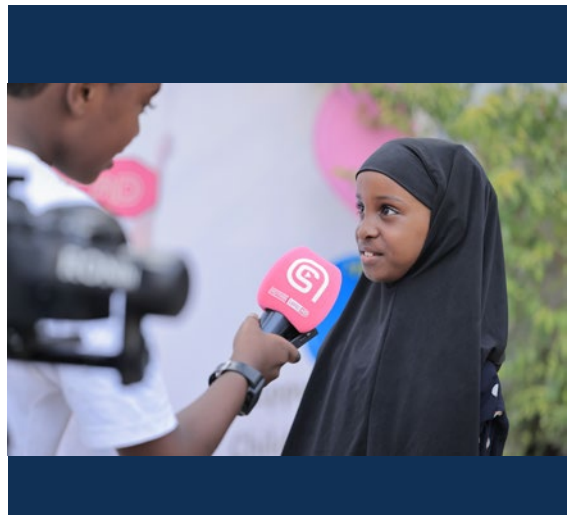
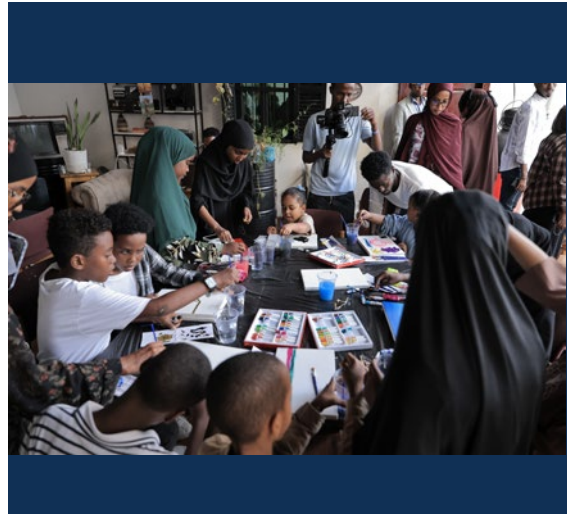
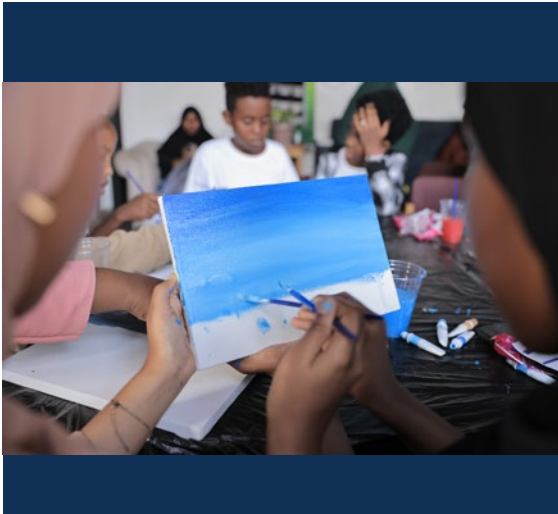
Connecting rights to environmental stewardship, the Kids and Plants activity, organized in partnership with Geed Soor, offered a hands-on lesson in responsibility. Children were taught how to pot seedlings, which they were then allowed to take home. This tangible activity symbolized the need for nurturing and growth, serving as a living metaphor for child development that parents could easily understand and support.

Music and rhythm filled the venue during the performance by [Astaan Ubad](#). This session went beyond entertainment; it was a celebration of Somali culture and childhood joy. The music provided a sensory release and a communal experience that united all participants, regardless of ability or age, in a shared moment of happiness and cultural pride.

Physical activity was incorporated through Games and Interactive Challenges. These movement-based activities were designed to foster teamwork and peer support. The games were adapted to be inclusive, ensuring that children with varying physical and cognitive abilities could participate meaningfully, reinforcing the social model of disability where barriers are removed to allow participation.

A core component of the methodology was realized in the Parent–Child Engagement Activities. These joint creative challenges required parents and children to work together to solve problems or create structures. The facilitators observed a shift in dynamic during these sessions, as parents moved from directive roles to collaborative ones, learning to trust their children's leadership and creativity.

The day concluded with a poignant Closing Commitment Session. In this final assembly, children shared specific messages and requests for the adults in their lives. The session wrapped up with a group photograph and a collective pledge from the parents and organizers to carry the spirit of the summit forward, transforming the day's insights into lasting actions.





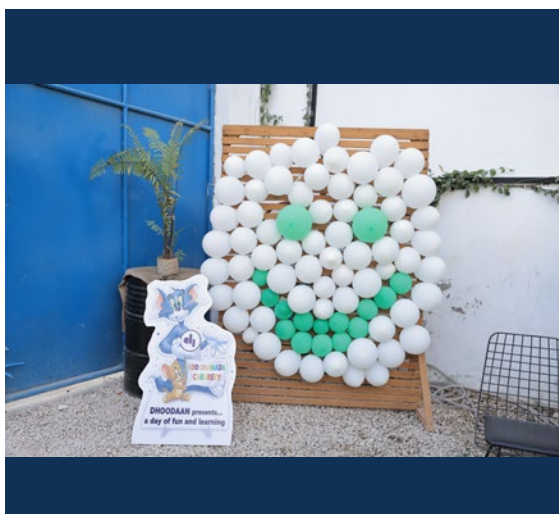
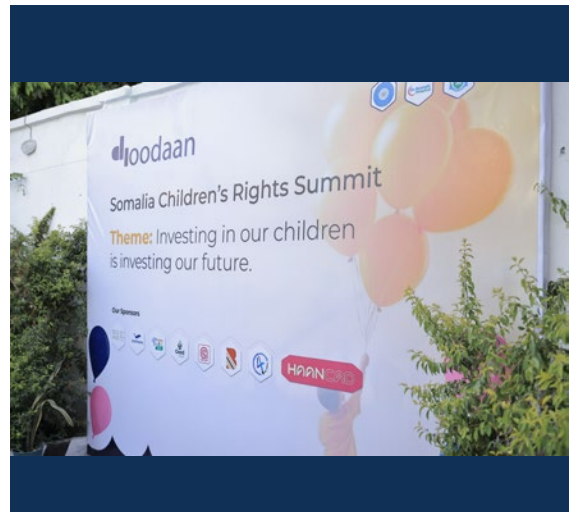
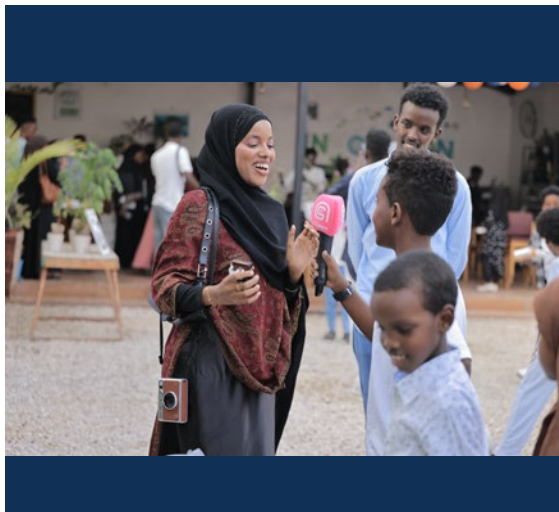
# Participation and Inclusion

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The summit hosted a diverse group of participants, comprised of approximately 50 children and their accompanying parents or guardians. The recruitment strategy was community-focused, ensuring a mix of socio-economic backgrounds to represent a cross-section of Mogadishu's society. However, the most significant aspect of the participation metrics was the deliberate inclusion of children with disabilities.

DHOODAAN, whose organizational mandate heavily focuses on supporting children with developmental challenges, ensured that a significant portion of the attendees were children with autism and speech delays. These children often face systemic exclusion from public events in Somalia due to stigma or lack of accommodation. At this summit, they were not just present; they were central. The environment was tailored to be sensory-aware, and volunteers were trained to provide support without being intrusive. This inclusive approach allowed these children to engage with their neurotypical peers, breaking down social barriers and modeling an inclusive society for the parents and community leaders present.







# Key Outcomes and Results

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## **Enhanced Confidence and Self-Expression**

The most immediate outcome was a visible surge in confidence among the participating children. By providing them with a platform where their voices were respected and their creations celebrated, the summit validated their self-worth. Children who arrived shy or hesitant were observed leading activities and speaking openly by the afternoon, demonstrating the transformative power of a supportive environment.

## **Increased Parental Awareness and Understanding**

Parents reported a significant shift in their perspective regarding their children's capabilities. The structured interactions allowed parents to witness their children's creativity and problem-solving skills firsthand. Feedback indicated that many parents gained a new appreciation for the importance of "listening" rather than just "instructing," marking a critical step toward more democratic family dynamics.





# Key Outcomes and Results

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## Strengthened Parent-Child Bonds

The shared activities provided a rare opportunity for uninterrupted bonding. Away from the distractions of work and household chores, parents and children engaged in deep play. This quality time served to strengthen emotional attachments, which are the foundation of a child's psychological security and resilience.

## Community Commitment and Media Advocacy

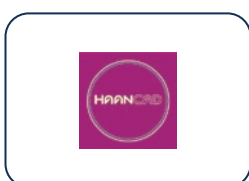
The event successfully galvanized community commitment to children's rights. The involvement of diverse partners created a network of support that extends beyond the single day. Furthermore, extensive media coverage by outlets such as Astaan Media ensured that the messages of the summit reached a national audience, advocating for the rights of children—including those with disabilities—to be prioritized in the national agenda.



# Partnerships and Collaboration

The success of the summit was a testament to the power of collaborative action. DHOODAAN orchestrated a multi-sectoral coalition to bring the event to life. **The National Youth Council and Dr. Sumait Hospital** provided institutional and medical credibility, while Eco Hub offered a venue that aligned with the values of sustainability and growth.

Private sector and creative partners played an equally vital role. **Tamam Playzone and 4C Art Studio** provided the technical expertise for the recreational and artistic sessions, ensuring high-quality engagement. Astaan Media served as the broadcast partner, amplifying the event's reach. Contributions from local businesses like **Beydan Coffee, SOMTAANA, Geed Soor, and HAANCAD** demonstrated a robust private sector interest in social causes. This ecosystem of partners not only shared the resource burden but also demonstrated a unified community front advocating for Somali children.





# Monitoring and Evaluation Findings

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Qualitative feedback collected during and after the event painted a picture of high satisfaction and impact. Interviews with parents revealed that for many, this was the first time they had participated in such a structured, child-centric activity. Parents of children with autism specifically noted the rarity and value of an event where their children were welcomed without judgment, highlighting the scarcity of such inclusive spaces in Mogadishu.

Observations by the organizing team confirmed that the objectives were largely met. The level of engagement in the art and storytelling sessions suggested that the objective of "amplifying voices" was achieved. The enthusiastic participation in the planting and cleaning activities indicated a successful transfer of knowledge regarding environmental rights. However, the evaluation also noted the immense demand for such events, suggesting that a one-day summit, while impactful, is insufficient to meet the broader community need for continuous support and advocacy.





# Recommendations

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Moving forward, it is recommended to scale this initiative from a standalone event into a recurring series. Regular **"Children's Assemblies"** or smaller, community-based creative workshops could sustain the momentum generated by the summit. Establishing a permanent platform for parent support groups, particularly for families of children with disabilities, would also provide much-needed continuity of care.

Additionally, future programming should explicitly integrate policy advocacy components. While the summit successfully engaged families, bridging the gap to policymakers is the next logical step. The insights and "voices" captured during these creative sessions should be collated and presented to the Ministry of Women and Human Rights

Development and other relevant bodies to inform the implementation of the Child Rights Bill and the National Transformation Plan.





# Conclusion

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The Somali Children's Rights Summit 2025 succeeded in reclaiming World Children's Day as a day of meaningful action rather than passive observation. By placing children at the helm and surrounding them with a supportive community of parents, professionals, and creatives, DHOODAAN demonstrated that the future of Somalia lies in the empowerment of its youngest citizens. The summit proved that when barriers are removed and voices are amplified, every child has a valuable contribution to make.

DHOODAAN reaffirms its unwavering commitment to this cause. The organization will continue to champion the rights of all children, with a specific focus on the unseen and unheard—those with disabilities. This report serves not just as a record of a successful day, but as a blueprint for future engagements. The journey to fully realized children's rights in Somalia is long, but as this summit showed, it is a journey that can be walked with joy, creativity, and collective purpose.

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