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Somalia

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Policy Document

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Abbreviations

| | |
|----------------|---|
| ACQF | African Continental Qualifications Framework |
| ALP | Accelerated Learning Programme |
| AU | African Union |
| CATS | Credit Accumulation and Transfer System |
| DG TVET | Directorate General for TVET |
| ECOWAS | Economic Community of West African States |
| ETF | European Training Foundation |
| EC | European Commission |
| EQF | Education Quality Framework |
| EU | European Union |
| GIZ | German Development Cooperation |
| HEI | Higher Education Institution |
| IQS | Integrated Quranic Schools |
| LLL | Lifelong learning |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| MoECHE | Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education |
| NQF | National Qualifications Framework |
| QA | Quality assurance |
| RPL | Recognition of Prior Learning |
| TVET | Technical and vocational education and training |
| VET | Vocational Education and Training |
| WB | World Bank |
| WBL | Work-based learning |

1. Preamble

The Government of Somalia and the country relevant stakeholders are committed to developing a contextualised, relevant, comprehensive and inclusive National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for all levels and types of qualifications, complemented by two important related policies: Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS). This policy document focuses on the former.

These two initiatives aim to provide a structured approach to recognising the diverse learning experiences of individuals, thereby facilitating their integration into formal education and training systems and into the labour market, as employees or self-employed.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Higher Education (MoECHE) coordinates and leads the activities concerning the development of the NQF and related policies, and works with ministries, and national and international partners to stimulate a collaborative, holistic and synergistic approach. In July 2024, the MoECHE presented its roadmap for the development, consultation, and implementation of the NQF, RPL, CATS, and catalogue of qualifications.

The Somalia Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy builds on its National Qualifications Framework, and therefore also on its Credit Accumulation and Transfer System (CATS). Somalia RPL Policy will enhance the coherence and cohesion of practices supporting all learners able to demonstrate learning outcomes, however and wherever acquired, in their achieving of a qualification. This chapter sets the scene regarding the content of this policy document.

1.1. General Aim of this Policy Document

This document contains the policy for the RPL system to be elaborated and implemented in Somalia. It defines the scope, objectives, principles, main phases, and key technical orientations for the harmonised RPL system in Somalia, consistent with the NQF and friendly to other related national policies such as the CATS. RPL concerns the identification, documentation, assessment, and certification of peoples' acquired learning outcomes, independently of the context in which they were acquired (i.e., formal, non-formal, informal).

Somalia has a large informal economy, and access to formal education and training is sometimes difficult for children, young people and adults, especially in the regions and for female learners. Yet, skills and competences are present in Somalia, but few people own a document for these skills and competences to be visible. In this context, recognition of prior learning is an option for bringing parity of esteem among all the learners and workers, for building a more inclusive lifelong learning system, and for keeping social peace.

1.2. Purpose of the Policy

RPL is not a second chance of education or training. The purpose of the RPL policy is rather to provide opportunities for a second chance for achieving a qualification to all individuals in Somalia that have acquired learning outcomes that are not yet documented in a document such as a qualification, a part qualification or credits toward a qualification. RPL aims to:

- Recognise that all forms of learning – whether taking place in a formal, non-formal, or informal context – have value to the extent that the corresponding learning outcomes meet existing standards (qualification standards, or occupational standards adapted to an assessment procedure).
- Recognise that all learning outcomes meeting these standards should be given currency for individuals to reap the corresponding benefits, first and foremost in the labour market, and also in the society at large.

- Enhance learner's progression into and among NQF qualifications even for those who could not achieve a qualification in the initial education and training system.
- Stipulate broad guidelines regarding RPL implementation in Somalia, for effective policy implementation, including initial piloting.
- Provide a solid basis to pave the way for future improvements of the RPL system in Somalia in the context of the NQF and the ACQF.

1.3. Scope of the Policy: RPL, giving currency to all learning outcomes, especially those acquired in non-formal and informal contexts

This policy covers all education and training sectors that issue NQF qualifications, and labour market occupations that use these qualifications for recruitment, promotion in employment, and/or occupational mobility. This includes self-employment, as a qualification is evidence for the skills and competences possessed by self-employed workers looking for customers just as well as a qualification is evidence for skills and competences of a potential recruit when employers look for workers/employees.

RPL is a promising link to connect the world of education and the world of work. Therefore, the terminology used in the RPL policy is meant to be broad and applicable to both these two worlds. The vision is that the different stakeholders in Somalia should agree on the concepts – e.g., on their breadth and scope – rather than on the words. To that extent, the RPL policy benefits from the work on the NQF that introduced a common language for all stakeholders in the worlds of work and education. The glossary that has currency in the context of the ACQF work is provided in an appendix to this policy document.

1.4. Users of the Policy

This policy document explicitly targets all the stakeholders operating in any field related to RPL, either at a conceptual level or at a practical one. This includes organisations registered for awarding qualifications – typically education and training providers, including higher education institutions –, learners and public bodies interested in qualifications – e.g., sectoral ministries –, employers, industry sectors stakeholders, quality assurance authorities and other regulatory bodies who may use this policy as a guide to the best way to mobilise RPL for helping individuals accessing the formal education and training system, resuming studies and/or (re)entering the labour market. In a nutshell, this policy targets all individuals and bodies interested in giving value and currency to all learning outcomes, however and wherever acquired.

2. Context and Recent Reforms in the Qualifications Domain in Somalia

This chapter presents the context for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to be situated in the context of the work on the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) and of Somalia National Qualifications Framework.

2.1. General Context

RPL is at the top of the policy and research agendas in many African countries, and beyond. The foundational elements related to RPL have already been presented in the ACQF context (AU, 2022; ACQF, 2022). They all put forward the consistency that exists between RPL, NQF and CATS, and with key policy dimensions such as labour market needs, lifelong learning, equity, and social inclusion.

This policy document uses these foundational ACQF documents to provide a contextualised policy document for the purpose of envisioning the forthcoming RPL system in Somalia. It provides rules, guidelines, principles, and procedures adapted to the context of Somalia for setting in motion a sustainable, efficient, and effective RPL system.

2.2. Recent reforms in the qualification domain in Somalia

In the recent years, Somalia has supported and implemented activities related to the reform of the education and training system, aimed at strengthening the quality and adaptability of the country's human resources, contributing to socio-economic development, employability, equity, social inclusion, and digital and green transformations.

The MoECHE established a cross-sectoral working group to contribute to the development of the NQF. This working group reflects the aspirations, needs and specificities of the different sub-sectors, while aiming to achieve key objectives, such as:

- An integrated and flexible ecosystem conducive to lifelong learning;
- Mobility and recognition of skills and qualifications for inclusion and social justice, access to decent work and the realisation of people's aspirations;
- Adaptation to national and global trends in the labour markets, and innovation for the adaptation of skills and qualifications to major changes and the green and digital transition; and
- Quality, transparency and comparability with other qualifications frameworks in Africa and other global regions.

2.2.1. Somalia Forthcoming National Qualifications Framework

The planned new qualifications framework is a comprehensive qualifications framework. It will span all levels and types of qualifications. It seeks to link TVET qualifications with those from general education and higher education.

Somalia's NQF should be an organising system and a unifying force in the country's education and training system and labour market. Essentially, the forthcoming NQF is intended to facilitate the integration of the different education and training sub-sectors and build pathways between them. In doing so, it will facilitate the establishment of an RPL system and the work of the promoters of RPL because the possible options for potential RPL applicants will be fully transparent.

In addition, the forthcoming national qualifications framework has the potential to provide a reference point for quality assurance, to improve the quality of qualifications and the quality of education and training more broadly, promote competence-based learning and assessment, and, especially, support lifelong learning by aiding access, participation and progression and making the qualification system transparent.

The vision of an effective qualifications framework contributing to improving the qualifications system and promoting lifelong learning is extremely relevant in the context of the work carried out and the ideas developed in the context of the ACQF II. This vision is at the heart of the RPL system.

Finally, establishing an operational NQF while designing an RPL system offers the possibility to elaborate RPL friendly qualifications, typically focusing on learning outcomes, rather than on input.

2.3. Idiosyncrasies of the Somali System

There are several features of the Somali system that are conducive to the success of an RPL system.

First and foremost, Somalia has a large informal economy, and many Somali workers, especially in the informal economy, have significant skills and competences that are not recognised yet. RPL will allow these individuals to validate all their learning outcomes, however and wherever acquired. The qualification successful RPL applicants will receive will make them more employable, for being hired in an enterprise, and more competitive for those who will opt for self employment.

Somalia also witnesses skill gaps. In sectors such as construction, healthcare, and information and communication technology, it is believed that skills and competences are missing. In this context, an RPL

system will be able to quickly identify existing skills and competences and, if a proper guidance system is in place, the newly qualified individuals could be channelled to jobs that are in demand for formally recognised skills and competences through a qualification.

Somalia has a large population of displaced individuals (Internally Displaced Persons, IDPs) who possess valuable skills and competences but lack formal documentation. RPL provides a mechanism to recognise these skills and competences, enabling their integration into the education and training system and/or the labour market. By the same token, providing recognition for their skills and competences, and offering opportunities to displaced populations, RPL can contribute to social cohesion and stability in communities.

3. Policy Issues – Rationale for RPL in Somalia

This chapter presents a diagnosis (policy issues) of the general situation in Somalia in relation to education, training, and the labour market in order to provide a rationale for developing an RPL system, broad in scope and inclusive in nature.

3.1. RPL as Part of the Eco-system NQF and CATS

In Somalia, there is a clear vision that the CATS and the RPL system are meant to feed into the development of the NQF. There is deep understanding that the three constructs will reinforce one another, therefore improving the readability of the National Qualifications System, and the transparency of the education and training system. In the particular case of RPL, an operational national qualifications framework will help all potential applicants to more easily choose a qualification to achieve through RPL.

There is also a high degree of awareness in Somalia that:

- A NQF has a crucial role to structure the education and training system (and the qualifications system).
- The value of qualifications is high, and a qualification oftentimes corresponds to a right to practice a trade.
- A qualification is the mirror of skills and competences and will help develop industry sectors and self-employment, considering the existence of a bloated informal economy.

All the recent orientations taken by Somalia – for the TVET system, for the establishment of a NQF, of which the CATS is a component – are conducive to establishing a convincing RPL system. The value of RPL is well understood since it will give currency to existing individuals' skills and competences that are not yet substantiated in a qualification, or any form of credential or document.

The Learning outcomes principle underpinning the Somali NQF, and its qualifications, is an indispensable pillar for the conceptualisation and application of RPL.

3.2. Qualifications vs. Skills

Skills and competences refer to what people know or can do and how they mobilise their knowledge, skills and competences to achievement a result, especially in an occupational context, at the workplace as it were. A qualification is a document describing these abilities. Qualifications populate the qualifications framework, which is a classification device. In Somalia, the mismatch between what individuals know and can do and the qualification they hold is an issue, especially in the labour market, because many learning outcomes from non-formal and informal learning are not validated and recognised yet, leading to skills mismatch and non-decent jobs/wages.

This happens for self-learners who have invested in skills and competences, most of the time through practice, but have no document to substantiate them. There is strong evidence that self-learning – a.k.a. non-formal and informal learning (NFIL) – is massive in Somalia and that skills/competences are plenty, which means that individuals (workers in particular) have skills and competences but cannot reap the full

benefits from them because their skills and competences are not made visible in a qualification. Conversely, this is an issue for employers than may not be able to bid for international or high-level contracts and markets because they cannot substantiate the skills/competence level of their workforce.

Overall, this is an issue for Somalia as a whole since individual productivity/employability and economic growth are hindered due to lack of visibility of skills and competences.

3.3. Lack of Access to Formal Education and Training Opportunities

In Somalia, there is a large proportion of children and young people who do not attend school: the Gross Enrolment Rate in primary education in 2021 is 8.4%¹. In addition, formal TVET is chosen by only a very small fraction of the young learners. TVET centres are ill equipped, whether in terms of heavy-duty machinery, tool, and even raw material.

Several groups of the population undergo severe disadvantages in relation to education and training: women, internally displaced persons, refugees, and rural communities. They are excluded from formal education and training systems.

The existing TVET system lacks adequate programmes and resources to prepare young people for the labour market, which remains fragmented with limited coordination mechanisms. A shortage of qualified TVET personnel and overly theoretical curricula further hinder the effectiveness of the TVET system. Insufficient participation of employers in training exacerbates the challenges of the TVET system, particularly as the private sector is primarily composed of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (GIZ, 2024²).

All these results place RPL in a position to be a credible option for individuals to achieve a qualification that would have currency in the labour market, because based on a real learning process at the workplace, with machinery, tools, and raw material, as well as with a competent – even if not necessary holding a qualification – informal sector worker.

3.4. RPL for Informal Sector Workers

Not holding a qualification faithfully describing the skills one possesses, especially among workers, is a critical issue in Somalia. As a matter of fact, not only young people learning for an occupation and benefiting from informal apprenticeship in the informal economy to learn the skills necessary to a trade, are concerned. Oftentimes, the informal sector workers that take apprentices do not possess a qualification either.

This is somewhat hindering the RPL system to develop as needed because informal sector workers – by far the largest group among workers – are not satisfied with a process by which only their apprentices would be awarded a qualification based on their learning during their period with the informal sector worker. It is a matter a social status and informal sector worker taking apprentices cannot accept that the learners they welcome eventually achieve a higher qualification than them. It is also a matter of business, because informal sector workers may be worried that an unfair competition takes place when the learners they have trained become independent once they are awarded a qualification.

3.5. RPL for Early Dropouts from the Formal Initial Education and Training System

It is therefore advisable to consider RPL as a suitable approach provide new opportunities for individuals who dropped out from initial education and training [too] early in their life, i.e., before achieving the first level of the national qualifications framework typically. These individuals may not have all the learning outcomes that are necessary to achieve a qualification, but they certainly possess some of the necessary learning outcomes that have currency in the labour market.

¹ <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/Dynamic+TVET+Country+Profiles/country=SOM>

² <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/143158.html>

The opportunity that exists here is to use the RPL tool for identifying these learning outcomes and there evaluate whether there is an opportunity to award some credits or even a part qualification to young people who dropped out of initial education and training and do not have a long enough working experience to have acquired all the learning outcomes to achieve a full-fledged qualification. In other word, RPL may be seen here as a tool for helping early dropouts to go back on tracks and restart a learning career, either in the formal system or in the non-formal and informal one. It is a sizeable group in Somalia and the RPL tool would help these young people to position themselves in relation to a qualification.

3.6. Lack of Awareness of Alternative Routes to Qualifications

In the Somali context where a qualification would, at the same time, mean new opportunities in the lifelong learning system and be a visa for work, for a better work and/or for opportunities of promotion, it is critical that there is perfect awareness of the existence of RPL in the broad public.

Many individuals may not be aware of the RPL process. For instance, if the RPL develop mainly the capital city or in large cities, individuals in remote areas may not receive proper information.

By the same token, individuals aiming for a tertiary education qualification may not be made aware of this opportunity in higher education institutions.

A communication strategy is a necessary condition for raising awareness. It would be an opportunity to also communicate about the benefits RPL.

There is no point having a comprehensive high quality RPL system for individuals with learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally if there is no perfect information regarding this opportunity.

3.7. Recognition by Employers and Institutions

Despite the quality assurance that is always associated with the RPL process, even if individuals obtain recognition through the awarding of a qualification (or similar outcomes) at the end of the RPL process, they may still face challenges in having this newly acquired qualification accepted as a proof of skills/competences by key stakeholders, and employers or education and training institution in particular (i.e., societal recognition).

There is a need to explore strategies to enhance the recognition of qualification awarded at the end of an RPL process in the labour market and the education and training system.

3.8. Alignment with Industry Needs

RPL processes using qualification standards inherited from the formal education and training system, they may not necessarily align with the evolving needs of industry sectors, leading to mismatches between recognised learning outcomes and actual labour market expectations.

There is a need for the RPL stakeholders to work hands in hands with the stakeholders of the formal education and training system so that qualification standards are updated on a regular basis to improve the alignment between qualification content and industry needs to enhance the relevance and value of qualification awarded at the end of an RPL process.

RPL is an unprecedented opportunity for Somalia to feed back into the formal lifelong learning in order to improve it because RPL is, by construction, uniting the world of education and the world of work and therefore using the best of the two worlds.

3.9. Professional Development for RPL Guidance Officers and Assessors

A high-quality workforce is a key condition for RPL to develop harmoniously. In Somalia, there may be a lack of trained guidance officers and RPL assessors that would have the necessary expertise. Guidance officers provide guidance before, during and after the RPL process. Assessors conduct RPL assessments.

A final problem statement could therefore focus on the elaboration of professional development programmes or resources for RPL professionals to enhance their skills in assessing prior learning outcomes.

4. Benefits of RPL for Individuals, Employers and for Somalia

This chapter presents the main benefits of the RPL policy development intervention in Somalia. The benefits of RPL exist at several levels (individual, employer, education and training provider, country) and the main ones are presented here. They are organised by stakeholders, but most benefits are in fact relevant for several stakeholders at the same time.

4.1. Benefits for Individuals

RPL can facilitate recognition of learning outcomes because they become documented in relation to qualification standards. If individuals have the desire to become occupationally and/or geographically mobile, RPL makes it easier. This is particularly important in occupations where skills and competences are transferable and recognised globally, for Internally Displaced Persons and across borders in particular.

RPL provides an opportunity to successful applicants to achieve a qualification, without having to go through the traditional education and training formal system, whether initial or continuous. RPL is another route to qualification for those who already have acquired learning outcomes. It is beneficial for individuals because it is an opportunity to make their learning outcomes visible in a rather effective (focus on acquired learning outcomes toward a specific qualification) and efficient way (shorter duration).

Achieving a qualification and making their learning outcomes visible is twice useful for individuals, for finding a job or a better job (promotion, decent work) and/or for resuming formal learning. RPL also allows self-workers to demonstrate their skills and competences to potential customers, therefore allowing them to develop their business, and contribute as well to the economy of Somalia. Therefore, RPL has double currency for individuals, in the labour market and as a stepping stone back in the lifelong learning system.

It is particularly relevant for individuals because Somalia has a large informal economy in which individuals acquire learning outcomes without them being necessarily recognised through a qualification. The informal economy is composed of the informal sector of the economy, and also of the group of individuals that work in the formal sector of the economy without a formal contract. In addition, the typical target group – individuals with learning outcomes but no documents to substantiate them – does not have the time to enrol into the formal learning system. RPL is therefore particularly beneficial for individuals because it is an opportunity for them to shorten the necessary time to achieve a qualification. It is also useful for those who already have a qualification but want to change occupation and can validate transversal learning outcomes.

In addition, the motivation for individuals to resume formal studies is generally low, especially for those with a poor track history in the initial education and training system, and because they have to learn skills they may already possess. RPL is therefore attractive to those with poor motivation to resume formal learning because it consists of assessing learning outcomes without any additional formal learning in the first place. Top-up learning may prove necessary if individuals do not meet the qualifications standards after the assessment, but it is not generally considered as a requirement.

RPL being a positive approach, whereby what is being put forward is what individual applicants know and can do, it also provides self-esteem, which is a predictor of increased motivation for further learning or for finding a [better] job.

RPL is relevant for certain groups of the population that may have suffered from discrimination of, or lack of inclusiveness in, the formal education and training system. In Somalia, the low enrolment of girls in the education system maybe partly addressed by RPL, which can be seen as a tool for redressing initial discrimination. RPL being a second chance of qualification, it provides an opportunity to all the groups of the population that have suffered exclusion of the formal initial education and training system in their youth, and still have acquired learning outcomes.

RPL helps remove barriers to access to qualifications, making them more accessible for adults, working professionals, and those with learning experiences that are not associated with the formal learning system.

4.2. Benefits for Employers

RPL allows to shortcut education and training formal programmes, therefore allowing employers to save time and cost when they need to upgrade the level of qualification of their workforce, for example to bid for public contracts, large(r) contracts and/or to satisfy industry licensing arrangement to operate on a given market. Harmonisation with partner countries (e.g., from ECOWAS, AU) will also be facilitated.

RPL acknowledges and accommodates different learning styles, recognising that individuals acquire learning outcomes through various means beyond traditional classroom settings. It will therefore facilitate the task of employers to best identify and use the skills and competences of their employees, for example for a better job matching within their enterprise. RPL provides a way of effectively and efficiently utilising skills already in the enterprise's workforce.

RPL enables skill gaps to be identified, providing a sound basis for learning needs analysis and career planning. It fosters a learning culture within the enterprise since it builds confidence to undertake further learning activities. It also motivates employees.

4.3. Benefits for Somalia

Because it is beneficial for individuals and employers, RPL is necessary beneficial for Somalia, as a country. RPL indeed brings about a greater social inclusion and social equity by acknowledging and valuing the diverse learning experiences of individuals, irrespective of their socio-economic background, and by providing currency to the corresponding learning outcomes.

It increases the employability of the population and helps boost the economy. It creates the opportunity for more people to be employed in the formal sector. It reduces qualification shortages. It increases labour mobility. It allows redress and transformation. It is of great value for Internally Displaced Persons, because they achieve a qualification and may work where they reside.

RPL allows for a more dynamic and responsive education and training system by aligning qualifications with the evolving needs of industry sectors and occupations.

RPL promotes inclusivity by recognising the diverse range of learning experiences and learning pathways individuals may have followed. It acknowledges the value of self-learning and experiential learning regardless of where or how the corresponding learning outcomes were acquired, thus promoting diversity in education and training systems. RPL acknowledges the learning outcomes of individuals from various backgrounds, cultures, and life experiences.

It ensures that individuals are equipped with the most relevant and up-to-date skills and competences, so that it prepares the future of the labour market in Somalia (e.g., innovation, skills and competences, twin transition (digital and green)).

4.4. Benefits for Specific Target Groups – The Value of RPL for Early School Leavers and Women

Somalia has a very young population. In 2024, the median age in Somalia is 15.5 years, i.e., 50% of the population is below 15.5³.

Somalia cannot rely on the skills and competences of more than half of its population, the children, and the skills and competences of the adults that are not well identified. This is hindering the development of the population, as full citizens, and of the economy. RPL will be promoted as a tool for identifying the

³ <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/somalia-population/#:~:text=The%20current%20population%20of%20Somalia,of%20the%20total%20world%20population.>

learning outcomes this population has and will be used to promote resumption of learning for those who were not given any second chance until then.

They will be able to build on the learning outcomes non-formally and informally acquired and therefore RPL will help build self-esteem and motivation to learn and invest in skills.

Finally, RPL is of high relevance for women who, oftentimes, acquire a lot of competences in taking care of their family and/or raising children – e.g., maintaining a budget, problem solving, addressing conflicts, autonomy and responsibility – because those are skills highly sought after by employers. Somalia will pay explicit attention to create or renovate qualification standards so that women may enter the RPL system for achieving a qualification that matches their skills and the expectations of employers.

5. Policy Statements

This chapter outlines the main principles, procedures, and guidelines for recognising individuals' prior learning outcomes, regardless of where or how they were acquired. It insists on which should be the typical target group.

5.1. Target Groups of the RPL Policy

The target group of the RPL policy in Somalia is composed of the individuals with learning outcomes – however acquired – but no document to substantiate them, typically a qualification, a part qualification or credits toward a qualification.

Therefore RPL mainly benefits young adults and adult self-learners. It provides an opportunity for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, or those with non-traditional learning experiences, to have their learning outcomes from experience assessed, validated, and recognised.

By definition of what RPL is about, no minimal qualification level is required, and applicants may enrol into the RPL process and aim for any level even if they do not already have a qualification at the level immediately below.

5.2. Targeted Education and Training Sectors

All education and training sectors are open to RPL, from general education to technical vocational education and training and to higher education.

There is no exception provided the aimed qualification is registered in the NQF.

5.3. Fairness and Equity

Somalia recognises and values diverse learning experiences and acknowledges that individuals may acquire learning outcomes in all existing learning environments, whether formal, non-formal, or informal.

Somalia is committed to ensuring fairness and equity in the assessment and recognition of prior learning outcomes process, for all individuals seeking validation and recognition, with no discrimination whatsoever.

5.4. Inclusiveness

Attention will be given in particular to vulnerable groups (e.g., Internally Displaced Persons, migrants, returning migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, people with disabilities) with discrepancies between their actual level of skills and the qualification they actually possess (or not).

RPL will facilitate gender mainstreaming, to the extent that it will allow access to all qualifications and all occupations regardless of gender.

RPL aims at being fully inclusive to the extent that it provides a second chance of qualification for all. RPL is not a second chance of learning in the first place, but it is a convince way to provide individuals that would learn to achieve a qualification, whatever the context in which they learnt.

5.5. Transparent Assessment Procedures

The assessment procedures for validating and recognising all prior learning outcomes will be transparent, accessible, and clearly communicated to all applicants.

Applicants will have access to information regarding the types of evidence accepted, assessment criteria, and the appeals procedure.

5.6. Validation of Learning Outcomes against Standards

Prior learning outcomes are validated against widely agreed pre-defined standards. Ideally, these standards are qualification standards so that they contain will the necessary information (e.g., criteria for assessing, pass rate). For recently appeared occupations, they could be amended occupational standards, so that assessment is made possible, e.g., by adding criteria for evaluation, which are usually not included in occupational standards.

This assessment and validation process will be conducted by assessors, who are experts in the field and may come from the world of education, the world of work and/or the world of RPL. Ideally, there would be a group of three assessors, each one representing one of these worlds.

5.7. Individualised Assessment

Each applicant's prior learning will be assessed on an individual basis, taking into account their unique experiences, contexts, and the relevance of their learning outcomes – however acquired – to the qualification being sought.

Collective assessment may be organised under particular circumstances – e.g., if a written test is foreseen, typically in the higher education – but the RPL process remains first and foremost an individual endeavour, and the assessment should be individualised.

5.8. Recognition of Diverse Learning Experiences

A broad range of learning experiences is accepted for assessment in the context of RPL. This includes work experience, volunteering, self-directed study, military service, work for not-for profit organisation, and activity in the private sphere (e.g., caring for elders and/or young children).

All pieces of evidence will be accepted to substantiate the skills and competences acquired non-formally and informally.

The case of young people who dropped out early from initial education and training is emphasised above. It is of particular relevance for Somalia.

5.9. Quality Assurance

In order to maintain high standards in the assessment, validation and recognition processes, the RPL will be regularly reviewed and monitored to ensure consistency, reliability, and validity.

5.10. Appeals Process

Applicants who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their prior learning assessment and validation will have the right to appeal.

The assessors remain the only decision makers in relation to the final decision of awarding a qualification, a part qualification, exemptions, and/or credits toward a qualification. Therefore, the appeals process may

only concern technical or administrative aspects of the assessment process. It will be clearly outlined, and applicants will have access to support and guidance throughout the process.

5.11. Continued Professional Development of Assessors

Assessors involved in the assessment, validation and recognition of prior learning outcomes will receive appropriate training, professional development, and ongoing support to ensure they have the necessary skills and competences to conduct assessments effectively and fairly, with consistency over time.

5.12. Promotion of RPL – Communication

RPL will be amplified and actively promoted so that all layers of the population are aware, and properly informed, about this opportunity to facilitate access to formal education and training, enhance workforce skills and competences, and to promoting lifelong learning opportunities.

5.13. Collaboration with Stakeholders

All relevant stakeholders, including but not limiting⁴ to employers, industry bodies, community organisations, and education and training providers (whether public or private), will be invited early in the process of designing the RPL system, in order to ensure that the RPL policies and procedures are responsive to the needs of, in particular, learners and of the labour market.

6. RPL Policy – A Comprehensive View

This section presents the broad and operational principles of the Somalia RPL Policy.

6.1. Principles of RPL Policy

6.1.1. Broad Principles of RPL Policy

RPL practices need to be based on agreed principles and values of human development, the NQF, the CATS and lifelong learning. RPL should:

- Be inclusive, equitable and sensitive to the social context of applicants. It should also consider factors such as informal learning backgrounds and historical disadvantages and barriers.
- Be learner-centred and developmental adopting a non-deficit approach to learning outcomes. Applicants must be credited for what they know and can do, and not penalised for what they do not know or cannot do. Although assessment is central, RPL is also a learning process.
- Complement rather than compete with formal education and training. The two systems (education/training and RPL) are co-dependent and need to be addressed simultaneously, e.g., through the development of new qualifications relevant to the labour-market and RPL friendly. The Somalia Policy document should clearly state for example that “RPL is an important partner for the growing provision of quality education and training for all”.
- Protect the integrity of qualifications standards, the qualifications system and education/training institutions.
- Be oriented to qualifications that have currency and value in society, especially in the labour market for employers.
- Enshrine consultation with relevant stakeholders to ensure that practices develop in line with information related to labour market needs...

⁴ See Section 6.3.1 for a comprehensive list of potential stakeholders.

and helps develop a sense of ownership.

- Encourage the development of the TVET and HE systems, whilst evaluating its own impact on society and the economy and its articulation with other parts of the education system and industry.
- Encourage the registration of all qualifications capable of award via RPL in the NQF.
- Be set at the same standard as formal education and training provision.
- Promote qualifications and credit for unit standards issued on the basis of the training and the RPL system to have the same currency and value.

6.1.2. Operating Principles for RPL

The optimal functioning of a labour market requires individuals with skills and competences. Qualifications, registered in the NQF, signal that the owner has demonstrated skills and competences in specific occupational activities. In the context of the NQF, RPL can be used to:

- Obtain full qualifications that have currency in society as a whole and the labour market in particular.
- Obtain partial qualifications in the form of unit standards or credits, which can be augmented to full qualification in an agreed time period.
- Gain access to a learning programme (as an alternative to entry requirements based solely on educational attainment in the formal system).
- Gain exemption from part of a training programme.

The following principles represent *prerequisites* for the effective implementation of RPL and are based on an acceptance that RPL carries implications beyond its own boundaries:

- Qualifications (or similar tools such as credits toward a qualification) and skill/competence-based unit standards form the nexus of RPL.
- Industry involvement and commitment to the development of qualifications and unit standards that truly reflect the human resource development requirements of the Somalia economy.
- Education and training (especially VET, but also higher education) provision will need updating in terms of infrastructure, qualifications, curricula and programmes, teaching quality, relevance to the needs of industry, modes of provision, assessment, and entry and exit points.
- RPL will need to have a clear workplace focus, whilst also encouraging further learning and acquisition of learning outcomes relevant to a qualification.
- Employers will need to plan for workforce development based on RPL and take account of demands for increased remuneration that are likely to result from successful RPL. Employers will need to make all the necessary step that they also increase their profit thanks to the increased level of qualification of their workforce.
- The relationship between skill/competence-based unit standards and existing education and training curricula and delivery needs to be very clearly conceptualised in standards.
- All RPL providers (e.g., employers, colleges, private training organisations) will need to be NQF-accredited and equipped with guidelines, procedures and documentation to manage RPL in accordance with national imperatives, e.g., applications, mentoring and advice, timelines, fees, assessment strategies and methods, recording results, quality assurance, and perhaps appeals.
- Capacity will be needed on different levels – not only in industry, but also in education, training and skills and competences development, guidance system, well-trained accredited assessors drawn from existing bodies in industry and education, and mentors.

- High quality support materials for RPL will be needed, e.g., application processes, guidelines for portfolio preparation, assessment instruments and materials, as well as evidence requirements.
- RPL will need a firm financial base. This will require the Somalia Government to develop funding models and allocate resources for RPL within which providers can develop and implement their own funding strategies.

6.2. The RPL Process – Operationalisation

This section presents the operationalisation of the RPL process for individual applicants.

6.2.1. Overview

Whilst RPL can vary according to purpose – e.g., whether summative or formative, whether for access or credit at different levels and in different sectors – a general process flow should be delineated; from documented learning outcomes, to assessment, to certification, and to the delivery of a qualification (or similar: e.g., credits, exemptions of part of a curriculum/programme).

The RPL process is composed of different phases as follows:

- Preliminary step: Information and guidance
- Identification of learning outcomes
- Documentation of learning outcomes
- Assessment of learning outcomes
- Certification of learning outcomes

The coherence and articulation between phases are essential for the preparation and progress of the candidate. RPL is individual-centred and reliable information is key to guide candidates towards well-grounded perspectives, support their path through assessment and certification and provide advice concerning further learning pathways and outcomes. For most candidates, RPL is a matter of self-esteem and a demonstration of capability to take a new opportunity, which cannot to be missed or failed.

6.2.2. Definition

RPL is a process by which any set of consistent learning outcomes of an individual, however acquired – i.e. formally, non-formally and/or informally – are given currency through the awarding of an officially recognised document clearly stating what the candidate knows and can do (a qualification typically, but not necessarily), and the extent to which they are mastered by the candidate (level of qualification); after a thorough quality assured assessment process against predefined [preferably widely agreed] standards that provide a set of criteria, and a norm, for assessing these learning outcomes.

In short RPL, is a process by which all the learning outcomes of an individual candidate are assessed against predefined standards, and a document is awarded to successful applicants.

RPL is a process to make learning outcomes visible if they are consistent with a clearly identified objective – e.g., a qualification, credits toward a qualification, exemption for access, exemption of part of a curriculum/programme – so that these learning outcomes may be used by the owner.

RPL is therefore first and foremost an assessment process. It aims at identifying, documenting, validating and recognising outcomes from relevant prior learning gained through life (including formal, non-formal and/or informal), for the purpose of recognising life achievements against a given set of standards.

The learning outcomes have to be consistent with each other so that they may be reasonably grouped in order to constitute the building blocks to characterise a learning outcome or a set of learning outcomes, so that the candidate may set a course toward the labour market (occupation) or toward further learning

(another qualification than the qualification awarded in the context of RPL). In an RPL process, the learning outcomes cannot be taken in isolation but are assessed globally. A candidate that would display learning outcomes from several experiences in different, unconnected fields, would probably not succeed and should be screen out during the eligibility phase.

6.2.3. Key Contextual Operationalisation Steps

The different stages an individual candidate goes through when engaging in RPL may be summarised in six steps of unequal duration:

- Initial information and guidance, and decision to apply. The process begins with providing potential applicants with comprehensive information about the RPL process. This includes the benefits, requirements, and potential outcomes of participating in RPL. Guidance is offered to help individuals decide whether to pursue RPL and understand what evidence of prior learning outcomes will be required.
- Administrative registration of the individual applicant by the RPL authority. Once individuals decide to apply, they must undergo an administrative registration process. This involves filling out forms and providing initial documentation. The registration phase ensures that all candidates are formally recognised and that their applications are processed efficiently.
- Pre-screening by the RPL authority (eligibility). After administrative registration, the RPL authority conducts a pre-screening, or short assessment, to determine the eligibility of candidates. This step ensures that only those with relevant prior learning outcomes are allowed to proceed to the final assessment phase. It includes reviewing the candidate's portfolio and conducting interviews if necessary.
- Preparatory work by the applicant for final assessment (including for instance elaborating a portfolio of competences). Eligible candidates are then guided through the process of preparing for the final assessment. This may involve assembling a portfolio of competences, gathering supporting further documentation, or undergoing preparatory training and/or guidance. The goal is to ensure that candidates are fully prepared for the assessment process.
- Assessment as such (or final assessment, including assessors reviewing all the pieces of evidence and the material provided by the applicant)⁵. This is the core of the RPL process, where candidates' prior learning outcomes are assessed against [widely accepted and used] predefined standards. The assessment can include a variety of methods, such as practical tests, observations in the workplace, written exams, or professional interviews. The assessment is designed to be rigorous yet fair, ensuring that candidates meet the required standards.
- Validation and certification. Successful candidates receive formal recognition of their learning outcomes, which can be in the form of a qualification, part qualification, or credits towards a qualification, among others. This certification is crucial as it provides the official documentation that candidates can use to advance their careers or further their education and training.

Some of these stages may be organised in parallel, for example the "preparatory work for final assessment" by the applicant and the "review of the pieces of evidence provided by the applicant". The full RPL process is presented in Tale 1.

⁵ The full process is about assessment, but it is convenient to call this particular stage "assessment" as well, because this is where it all comes together. For the sake of clarity, this document will call this stage "final assessment".

Table 1. Operationalisation of the RPL Process for Candidates

| Stages | Purposes |
|---|---|
| Initial information and guidance (Average duration observed: 1-3 months) | Greeting learners (potential applicants) |
| | Information and guidance to the potential applicant (comprehensive, with information about the benefits, the process and its potential duration) |
| | Identification of the evidence to substantiate claim for application (partly with RPL staff) |
| | Decision of the individual to apply |
| Administrative registration | Provision of the administrative form |
| | Guidance 1 (light) |
| | Handover of the administrative form by the applicant |
| | Waiting time (Decision to accept the application by the RPL staff) (Average waiting time observed: 2-4 weeks) |
| Application screening and eligibility | Guidance 2 (intermediate, including advice about evidence gathering) |
| | Handover of the eligibility portfolio |
| | Eligibility interview |
| | Waiting time (Decision to send the applicant to the assessment by RPL staff) (Average waiting time observed: 2-4 months) |
| Preparation of the final assessment (Average duration observed: 6-18 months) | Understanding what the final assessment is about |
| | Elaborating a portfolio of competences, and/or documenting learning outcomes |
| Assessment (of learning outcomes and competences) | Guidance 3 (comprehensive, especially concerning the preparation to the assessment) |
| | Handover of the portfolio of [self-analysed] competences. |
| | Waiting time (Analysis of the portfolio of competences by assessor(s)) (Average waiting time observed: 2-4 weeks) |
| | Waiting time (Convening notice send to applicants) (Average waiting time observed: 2 weeks) |
| | Supplementary assessment (see Box 11) |
| Certification (of competences) and awarding of the qualification | Interview with the panel of assessors |
| | Waiting time (Validation of the learning outcomes and competences) (Average waiting time observed: 2 days) |
| | Waiting time (Making and stamping of the qualification) – Recording of outcome (Average waiting time observed: 1-6 months) |
| | Awarding of a qualification to successful applicants. |
| | Explaining the reasons for failure to unsuccessful applicants. Suggestions for further practice, or formal education and training (top up learning). |

Note: average durations and waiting time observed are heavily qualification dependent.

6.2.4. The Key Step – Assessment

Assessment is the pivotal component of the RPL process, determining whether an individual's prior learning outcomes meet the standards required for formal recognition, and the awarding of a qualification typically. This section underscores the importance of developing a robust and flexible assessment framework that can accommodate the diverse experiences and learning contexts of RPL candidates. The final assessment is the major phased of RPL and this assessment may rely on several non-mutually exclusive approaches:

- Portfolio of competences.
- Practical test in a simulated working environment.
- Observation in a real working environment.
- Written examinations, including essays.
- Oral Examinations.
- Interview(s).
- Professional conversation or interview with the assessor(s).
- Challenge test.
- Case study, with a narrative.

- A combination of any of the above (typically a practical hand-on test with a conversation with the assessors at the same time).
- Final jury/panel (always advisable regardless of the options chosen from the above).

Not all approaches are suitable for all target groups: illiterate people may not be able to build a portfolio of competences, unless Somalia opts for the modern and suitable approach to allow recording of all kinds (e.g., sounds, photographs, video, drawings). The concept of e-Portfolio is a promising avenue that Somalia will implement in due course.

The goal of the assessment process is to provide a fair and accurate measure of a candidate's learning outcomes, however acquired, and therefore ensuring that those who receive a qualification through RPL are truly qualified and capable. Key elements must therefore be born in mind:

- **Diverse Assessment Methods.** To accurately capture the varied learning experiences of candidates, the assessment process should employ multiple methods. This is why several approaches are proposed above. They can range from practical demonstrations, where candidates showcase their skills in a real or simulated work environment, to portfolio assessments that compile evidence of past learning. Written examinations and professional interviews may also be used, especially for assessing theoretical knowledge.
- **Training and Calibration of Assessors.** Assessors play a crucial role in the RPL process, and it is essential that they are well-trained and equipped to contribute to assess a wide range of learning outcomes. They are not the only decision makers because there is always a panel of assessors (generally three) but they contribute in an important way. Regular training ensures that assessors maintain high standards of fairness and consistency. Calibration exercises, where assessors align their assessment criteria and judgment, help ensure that assessments are uniform across different regions and contexts.
- **Fair and Transparent Process.** Transparency is key to the credibility of the RPL process. Candidates should be fully informed about the assessment criteria, the methods that will be used, and how their results will be determined. This transparency not only builds trust but also helps candidates better prepare for the final assessment.

6.3. Roles and Responsibilities of Main Role-players in relation to RPL

This section identifies broadly and then in detail all the stakeholders in the RPL system and propose their role and responsibilities. The successful implementation of RPL indeed relies on the active participation and collaboration of various stakeholders, each with distinct roles and responsibilities. The main ones are:

- **Government Agencies.** These include ministries related to education, labour, and TVET. Their role is to develop and enforce policies that support RPL, allocate resources, and ensure that the RPL system aligns with national education and employment goals.
- **Educational Institutions.** Training centres – and in the future universities and colleges – are responsible for implementing the RPL processes within their activities. This involves providing guidance to candidates, conducting pre-screening and final assessments, and ensuring that the quality of RPL outcomes matches that of traditional educational and training pathways.
- **Employers and Industry Bodies.** Employers play a key role by recognising and valuing the qualifications obtained through RPL. They should also provide opportunities for employees and workers in general to participate in RPL and may even contribute to the assessment process by offering workplace evaluations or feedback.
- **Community Organizations and non-governmental organisations.** These organisations can help raise awareness about RPL, especially among marginalised groups. They can also provide support services, such as helping candidates prepare their portfolios of competences or navigate the application process.

- RPL Practitioners. This group includes among others guidance officers, assessors, and moderators (see ACQF “Handbook for RPL Practitioners”). They are on the front lines of the RPL process, providing direct support to candidates, conducting pre- and final assessments, and ensuring the overall quality and fairness of the entire process.

The next subsections list the stakeholders in detail and describe their role.

6.3.1. RPL stakeholders

The list of potential stakeholders is composed of the following. They should all be informed about the steps being made in relation to RPL and invited to comment on them.

Government Ministries

- Labour
- Education
- Labour and Vocational Training,
- Tertiary education
- Research
- Immigration
- Social Services
- Defence
- Industry

Employers

- Small Business Owners
- Industries
- Human Resource Departments
- Managers
- Entrepreneurs

Workers

- Employed
- Underemployed
- Unemployed
- Un-certified workers in the workplace
- Certified workers in the workplace

Students/Learners

- Families (parents organisations)
- Persons with Disabilities

Sector [Skills] Council

Unions / Syndicates / Organised Labour

- Shop Stewards
- Union Leaders

Education

- Junior secondary education
- Upper secondary education
- Tertiary
- Polytechnics
- Tertiary education
- Private Education Institutions
- Apprenticeship / Artisans
- On the job training providers

TVET

- Training centres

Associations

- Professional Associations
- Technological Associations

Certification Boards and Regulatory Bodies

RPL Facilitators

- Advisors
- Assessors
- Portfolio Facilitators
- Content Experts
- Providers

Career Counselling

- Guidance Counsellors
- Employment

Traditional Knowledge Keepers

Advocacy Groups/Associations

Interpreters/Associations

Universities

- Deans
- Admissions

Researchers

Consultants

Military

Prisons staff

6.3.2. Key RPL Stakeholders

Among the many stakeholders, only some are key RPL stakeholders, and their role, are:

- Employers – Create an environment that is conducive to RPL.
- RPL Providers – Provide RPL services that comply with statutory requirements.
- RPL Applicants – Participate in the RPL process and provide appropriate evidence to prove learning outcomes.
- RPL guidance officers – Support applicants.
- RPL Assessors – Subject specialists in occupational fields and members of the teaching force.

6.3.3. The Role of the Unit Overseeing RPL

The different steps the Unit in charge of RPL should take to establish an RPL system may include:

- Establish a communication policy, inform about objectives and benefits, and reach out to the most in need stakeholders, whether individuals, employers, or organisations.
- Fundraising.
- Organise the social dialogue, promote RPL among the stakeholders and organise a sense of ownership (for further commitment to accept the qualifications awarded to future successful RPL candidates).
- Integrate universities and education stakeholders in the policy framework.
- Design the institutional framework (e.g., identify harbouring institution(s) for the RPL system).
- Identify priority needs.
- Gauge commitment among stakeholders, and promote those who are definitely in.

- Plan for Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).
- Create regulatory tools.
- Decide on eligibility criteria (to have the right to apply for assessment).
- Decide on assessment methods, with quality assurance.
- Decide on final outcomes of the RPL process (exemptions, credits, qualification, part qualification, certificate).
- Consult and decide on pilots (preferably low hanging fruits, to attract investors and more stakeholders).
- Organise pilots, preferably vertical pilot to evaluate the full chain of actions, either sector targeted or holistic according to the priority needs.
- Train staff and RPL practitioners, advisors, and assessors in the first place.
- Identify top up education and training options, for unsuccessful RPL applicants that needs additional learning to meet the qualification standards.
- Elaborate the learning outcomes and standards, following an initial assessment of the adequacy of learning outcomes for an RPL process (many programmes claim they are based on learning outcomes, but they are not learning outcomes – time consuming in the latter case).
- Prepare, create or adapt, tools, resources, materials and processes (e.g., information leaflets, assessor’s manual or guidance procedures, applicants booklets, assessment procedures and tools, assessment standards...).
- Evaluate the impact on formal education and training systems (e.g., modularisation, curriculum).
- Compile results from the Monitoring and Evaluation of the pilots.
- Organising the debate among key stakeholders for improving the RPL system.
- Feedback into the RPL system.
- Decide on a critical mass for implementing in a sector.
- Scale up.
- Learn from further Monitoring and Evaluation and feed back into the RPL system.
- Improve the education and training system so that it complements the RPL system (e.g., modular provision of formal education and training so that unsuccessful applicants may organise their top-up education and training).
- If at all possible, feed back into the formal TVET sector so that all TVET stakeholders benefit from the way the assessment is organised for learning outcomes acquired through experience.

Not all stages are equally important, nor they are all necessary. This list is built as a checklist for policy makers to select from. Some stages are more time consuming than other. Finally some are of paramount importance for the success of RPL. For instance, the preparation of a well-trained RPL workforce is key to success.

These different steps of the public action are not to be confused with the pathway of individual applicants must follow when engaging in RPL. For the sake of simplicity, the former is designated as the “supply” and the latter as the “demand” in this Policy document.

What the government has to do (the supply) and what the individual applicants have to do (the demand) are not to be confused, e.g., “fund raising” or “communication” should appear as key steps in the RPL process, but no individual candidate needs to know about those issues. Rather, they need to have a clear view of what they will have to go through in order to complete their RPL journey (Section 6.2.3).

6.4. Moderation in RPL

The role of moderators (internal and external) is to sample and verify that all aspects of RPL adhere to accepted standards and principles. To instil confidence over time, all RPL activities will need to comply with Somalia quality assurance and accreditation requirements as set out in existing policy documents. However, over-regulation of RPL can stifle creativity and innovation, especially in the early stages of the RPL system. Therefore a light touch will be applied at the outset for notions of quality to be derived from contextual practice, rather than being imposed upon it.

Nevertheless, moderation is essential to maintaining the integrity and consistency of the RPL process. And two sets of moderators can be mobilised, internal and external moderators:

- Internal Moderation. Conducted within institutions, internal moderation ensures that assessments are conducted fairly and consistently across different candidates and programmes. Internal moderators review the assessment process, provide feedback to assessors, and make sure that all assessments adhere to the institution's standards, especially qualification standards.
- External Moderation. External moderators provide an independent review of the RPL process. Their role is to verify that assessments are being conducted in line with national standards and that the outcomes are consistent across different institutions and regions. External moderation helps to build trust in the RPL system by ensuring that all candidates are treated equitably.

Regular training and updates for moderators are essential to keep them informed of best practices and any changes in RPL policies and procedures. This continuous improvement process helps ensure that the RPL system remains fair, credible, and effective over time.

6.5. Implementation Strategy for RPL

Implementing RPL on a national scale requires a well-planned and flexible strategy. This section outlines the key characteristics of the strategy, and the phases involved, first rather broadly and then in detail. The broad expected key characteristics are:

- Pragmatic and Incremental Approach. The strategy should be realistic, focusing on what can be achieved in the short term while laying the groundwork for long-term success. An incremental approach allows for gradual scaling up of the RPL system, starting with pilot programmes that can be rolled out as the system matures.
- Iterative Process. Implementation should be viewed as a continuous learning process. Regular feedback and [concomitant] evaluation are crucial for making adjustments and improvements. This iterative approach ensures that the RPL system can adapt to changing needs and conditions, especially in the regional context (ECOWAS, and also African Union).
- Stakeholder Engagement. Building consensus among stakeholders is essential for the success of RPL. The strategy should include mechanisms for involving all relevant parties, from government agencies and education and training institutions to employers and community organisations. This broad-based support helps ensure that the RPL system is sustainable and widely accepted.

The following sub-sections provide list some desirable traits of the strategy.

6.5.1. Characteristics of the Strategy

Although policy is relatively fixed in time, an implementation strategy evolves. However, the following characteristics should typify the RPL implementation strategy. It should be:

- Pragmatic
- Incremental
- Iterative

- Enabling and consensus building

6.5.2. Principles Governing the Strategy

The principles governing the strategy are:

- Pragmatic – Realistic – Fit-for-purpose – Implementable.
- Iterative – Continuous Learning Informing Forward Movement.
- Enabling and Consensus-Oriented.
- Implications of Growing RPL in Somalia.

6.5.3. Session Road Map – Phased Action Plan

The road map may be designed around the following phases:

- Phase 1: Scoping, model building and Preparing the Environment:
 - o Phase 1a: Scoping Existing Practices.
 - o Phase 1b. Model building and preparing the environment.
- Phase 2. Establishing an institutional framework (a legislative and a regulatory framework) and a governance system.
- Phase 3. Modelling RPL (assessment, quality assurance, standards, introduction of ICT).
- Phase 4. Developing guidelines (especially for practitioners) and monitoring and evaluation system.
- Phase 5. Piloting (vertical pilots).
- Phase 6. Scaling up for the entire country (implementation plan and timelines).

6.6. Risks and opportunities

This section examines the potential challenges and benefits associated with the implementation of RPL. In short:

- Risks. Potential risks include lack of commitment from stakeholders, insufficient resources, and resistance to change. There is also the risk that RPL qualifications might not be fully recognised by employers or educational institutions – or the society at large – which could undermine the system's credibility and limit its expansion.
- Opportunities. On the other hand, RPL presents numerous opportunities, such as enhancing social inclusion by providing pathways to formal qualifications – especially for marginalised groups – improving employability by formally recognising all the skills of workers and promoting lifelong learning. The section encourages stakeholders to proactively address risks while maximising the opportunities that RPL offers.

The following subsections provide a list of potential risks – for which a mitigation strategy should be developed – and opportunities.

6.6.1. Risks

In the case of Somalia, the potential risks are:

- Contradictory intent of agencies (incoherent policy, obstacles to cohesion).
- Lack of commitment of stakeholders.
- Conflicting stakeholders.
- Delay in publishing legal texts (laws, bylaws, regulations).

- RPL staff (assessors, guidance officers) not convinced nor properly trained, or burden on staff.
- RPL stigma.
- Delay in awarding RPL credentials to successful RPL applicants.
- Strong attachment of the population to formal education and training.
- Lack of awareness regarding RPL in the population, especially the most needy people.

6.6.2. Opportunities

The opportunities for the RPL system are plenty in Somalia, and they relate in particular to:

- Fighting poverty.
- Addressing migration issues, including returning migrations.
- Optimal skills and competences utilisation.
- Increased the size of the formal economy.
- Promote lifelong learning.
- Long term impact (e.g., confidence, self-esteem, as such and as predictors of future employment and economic development).
- Double currency of RPL qualifications, in the formal education and training system and in the labour market (for occupational mobility, geographical mobility, promotion, pay raise, decent work).

6.7. Monitoring and Evaluation

This final section underlines the importance of establishing a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework for RPL. The key points include:

- Objectives and Indicators. The M&E framework should be built around clear objectives and measurable indicators that track the progress and effectiveness of the RPL system. These indicators might include the number of participants, pass rates, candidate satisfaction, and the impact of RPL on employability, self-esteem, well-being and further personal – as opposed to occupational – development.
- Data Collection and Analysis. Consistent and systematic data collection is essential for evaluating the RPL process. There is no evaluation without monitoring, i.e., data collection. This data should be analysed to provide insights into the system's performance and to identify areas for improvement.
- Continuous Improvement. The M&E process should feed into a cycle of continuous improvement, where findings are used to refine the RPL system. This ensures that the system remains effective and responsive to the needs of all stakeholders.

Therefore, a M&E system will be proposed with:

- Objectives and indicators
- Monitoring and evaluation relevant to the RPL system and approach, interoperable with the M&E of the NQF.
- Data for monitoring.
- Monitoring for evaluation.
- Opportunities for statistical/econometric modelling, provided data have been collected.

Main sources and references – National and International

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Appendices

Appendix A. Glossary of Terms (from ACQF)

Source: ACQF. 2021. Thematic Brief 1. Concepts and definitions. <https://acqf.africa/capacity-development-programme/thematic-briefs/acqf-thematic-brief-1-concepts-and-definitions>

Certificate

An official document, issued by an awarding body, which records the achievements of an individual following a standard assessment procedure.

Competence

Competence means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.

Credential

Formal certification issued for successful achievement of a defined set of outcomes – for example, successful completion of a course in recognition of having achieved particular awareness, knowledge, skills or attitude competences; successful completion of an apprenticeship or traineeship.

Credit

‘Credit’ means confirmation that a part of a qualification, consisting of a coherent set of learning outcomes has been assessed and validated by a competent authority, according to an agreed standard; credit is awarded by competent authorities when the individual has achieved the defined learning outcomes, evidenced by appropriate assessments and can be expressed in a quantitative value (e.g. credits or credit points) demonstrating the estimated workload an individual typically needs for achieving related learning outcomes.

‘Credit transfer’ means the process of allowing individuals who have accumulated credit in one context to have it valued and recognised in another context.

Employability

The degree of adaptability an individual demonstrates in finding and keeping a job, and updating occupational skills; relates to portable competences and qualifications that enhance an individual’s capacity to make use of the education and training opportunities available in order to secure and retain decent work.

Evaluation

Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of an ongoing or completed policy, plan or programme, including its design, implementation and results. It aims to assess the relevance and fulfilment of objectives and strategies with the intention of informing decision-making. ‘Formative’ evaluation relates to ongoing activities and helps guide implementation. ‘Summative’ evaluation assesses the results of a particular initiative, after completion.

Formal education and training

Education or training provided in educational institutions, such as schools, universities, colleges, or off-the-job in a workplace, usually involving direction from a teacher or instructor.

Formative assessment

A range of formal, non-formal and informal ongoing assessment procedures used to focus teaching and learning activities to improve student attainment, or which are required for the purpose of a year mark.

Guidance and counselling

A range of activities designed to help individuals make educational, vocational or personal decisions and carry them out before and after they enter the labour market.

Informal learning

Learning resulting from daily activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not organised or structured (in terms of objectives, time or learning support). Informal learning in most cases is unintentional from the learner's perspective. It typically does not lead to certification.

Knowledge

Knowledge is central to any discussion of learning and may be understood as the way in which individuals and societies apply meaning to experience. It can therefore be seen broadly as the information, understanding, skills, values and attitudes acquired through learning. As such, knowledge is linked inextricably to the cultural, social, environmental and institutional contexts in which it is created and reproduced.

Learning outcomes

Statements of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do on completion of a learning process, which are defined in terms of knowledge, skills and competence.

Micro-credential

A micro-credential is a proof the learning outcomes that a learner has acquired following a short learning experience. These learning outcomes have been assessed against transparent standards.

Monitoring

Monitoring is the continuous and systematic collection of data on specific indicators in order to provide the main actors of an ongoing development intervention with indications as to the extent of progress and the achievement of objectives (in relation to allocated resources).

Non-formal learning

Planned learning activities, not explicitly designated as learning, towards the achievement of a qualification or part qualification; often associated with learning that results in improved workplace practice.

Prior learning

The knowledge, know-how and/or competences acquired through previously unrecognised training or experience.

Qualification

Means a formal outcome of an assessment and validation process which is obtained when a competent authority determines that an individual has achieved learning outcomes to given standards.

Qualifications framework

'A policy and instrument for the development and classification of qualifications according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims at integrating and coordinating national qualifications subsystems and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market and civil society.

Qualifications system

This includes all aspects of a country's activity that result in the recognition of learning. These systems include the means of developing and operationalising national or regional policy on qualifications, institutional arrangements, QA processes, assessment and awarding processes, skills recognition and other mechanisms that link education and training to the labour market and civil society. Qualifications systems

may be more or less integrated and coherent. One feature of a qualifications system may be an explicit framework of qualifications.

Recognition

‘Formal recognition of learning outcomes’ means the process of granting official status by a competent authority to acquired learning outcomes for purposes of further studies or employment, through (i) the award of qualifications (certificates, diploma or titles); (ii) the validation of non-formal and informal learning; (iii) the grant of equivalence, credit or waivers.

Recognition of prior learning

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a process through which formal, non-formal and informal learning is measured, mediated for recognition across different contexts and certified against the requirements for credit, access, inclusion or advancement in the formal education and training system or workplace. (Source: National Policy for the Implementation of RPL: par 30).

The aim is to make it possible to obtain formal recognition for knowledge gained throughout life, such as in workplaces and own reading or experiences. The RPL process also entails providing support to a candidate to ensure that knowledge is discovered and displayed in terms of a relevant qualification registered in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Skills

A bundle of knowledge, attributes and capacities that can be learnt and that enable individuals to successfully and consistently perform an activity or task and can be built upon and extended through learning.

Validation of learning outcomes

Confirmation by a competent body that learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and/or competences) acquired by an individual in a formal, non-formal or informal setting have been assessed against pre-defined criteria and are compliant with the requirements of a validation standard. Validation typically leads to certification.

Validation of non-formal and informal learning outcomes

‘Validation of non-formal and informal learning’ means the process of confirmation by a competent authority that an individual has acquired learning outcomes acquired in non-formal and informal learning settings measured against a relevant standard and consists of the following four distinct phases: identification through dialogue of particular experiences of an individual, documentation to make visible the individual’s experiences, a formal assessment of those experiences and certification of the results of the assessment which may lead to a partial or full qualification.

End