

GENDER PROFILE FOR SOMALIA – AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY¹

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¹ In addition to this Executive Summary a full Gender Profile document has been prepared complete with Tables and Bibliography.

1. Introduction

The EC Somalia Operations Unit in collaboration with Member States and Norway commissioned a comprehensive Country Gender Profile (CGP) as part of the preparation of its Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for Somalia in order to ensure that issues and challenges associated with gender are taken into account and mainstreamed in the programmes. The full CGP document, of which this is a brief summary, forms one of the CSP supporting documents.

The CGP provides the EC Somalia Operations Office information on the following areas of concern:-

- a) Whether there are specific issues for Somaliland, Puntland and Somalia South Central that need to be taken into account and the implications of this for gender programming;
- b) Different roles for the different groups of women – urban, peri urban, pastoralists, agriculturists etc. the challenges and opportunities that can be identified;
- c) Clan organisation and lines of conflict in a gender perspective;
- d) Conflict prevention, security, protection, reconciliation, reconstruction & peacebuilding: Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security;
- e) Female combatants or former combatants and women who are other ways affiliated with combatant groups;
- f) Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) from gender perspective;
- g) Gender-based violence and sexual abuse, addressing ways to enhance protection from such violence;
- h) Review of the traditional role/ position of women in Somali society and the actual/ possible impact of different levels/ types of Islamic authority, including the current trend of Islamisation in parts of Somalia;
- i) Rights issues (CEDAW convention)– taking particular account of the different legal systems applied, transitional justice systems, rule of law initiatives and the barriers/opportunities they represent to women;
- j) FGM/C and women's sexual and reproductive rights and health; spread and variation of practices, impact on women's position, particulars of the practice that may help identify strategies for its eradication;
- k) Barriers to equal and non-discriminatory access to services and strategies to address these – education, health, water, information, family planning, business/credit, employment;
- l) Formal and informal barriers and opportunities to political representation and participation (power and decision making) at various levels;
- m) A bibliography on gender in the Islamic world;

2 Impact of the war on Gender Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Women's gender roles have been stretched beyond traditional limits to meet the new domestic, social and economic needs of the family and local community. Many women are now taking the main role in domestic decision-making and working in whatever way they can to provide an income for their families, even where men are present in the household. Women have been at the forefront of emergency care and social recovery efforts at community level, often playing active public roles to influence and mobilise

support. Women's organisations and women-lead organisations women have mushroomed since 1991 (as have non-state actor organisations of all kinds). Individually and collectively women have, with some notable successes, fulfilled their customary peace-building role, using their multiple relationships within the clan system of social organisation to influence the traditional power structures, militia and course of certain conflicts in the war.

2.2 Men's gender roles have tended to contract since the war along with their responsibility for the family upkeep. Overall men remain in control of the political domain and women remain excluded but men have reduced economic and decision-making power in the home. Many men are no longer the family breadwinner instead they are now financially dependent on their kinswomen, a situation that would normally be shameful in Somali society. Often men, who have been the main target of killings throughout the war, have failed to be able to fulfil their traditional responsibilities as their family's protector. Unknown numbers have had to flee their families and or been forced to watch loved ones endure rape and other horrendous sexual violations carried out in the name of war.

3 Gender-based Violence – A feature of the war, and its consequences

3.1 Gender-based violence has been a significant feature of the war in which customary conventions to protect women and children and preserve human dignity have been violated. Women and girls have been targeted for rape, abduction and sexual slavery as well as more recently, clan-related revenge killings².

3.2 Men and boys have been the target of systematic and extensive clan-related killings, threatened with death and torture, coerced to participate in militia groups, forced at gunpoint to perpetrate and to witness rape and other sexual violations against women and girls.

3.3 Boy children have been co-opted or coerced into taking up arms as part of the various armed factions that have operated throughout the course of the war.

3.4 The full impact of these experiences is yet to be understood but the immediate impact has included:

- widespread break-up and displacement of families;
- loss of male providers and male labour;
- destruction of homes, loss of household resources;
- collapse of community resources such as health centres and schools rendering women more vulnerable to chronic economic and food insecurity ie increasing feminisation of poverty;
- decreased mobility for women and girls in some areas affecting access to firewood and water, fields for cultivation, livestock, services and support networks, employment opportunities;
- curtailment of male mobility at times in some areas;
- a lucrative business in human trafficking run from Bosasso;

² Reported in Gender Profile of the Conflict in Somalia, UNIFEM

- 4 Key Gender Issues and Challenges
- 4.1 Although some changes to gender roles have occurred, the basic values attached to gender identities remain unchanged. Women and girls continue to be considered legal minors (in customary law) and generally inferior to men and boys.
- 4.2 Outside the household there has been little, if any, transformation in the gendered dimensions of social institutions such as the clan. Despite their increased economic role, their valued peace-building strategies and contributions to clan activities women have not gained membership of community or clan institutions involved in political decision-making.
- 4.3 For some women, but by no means all, the war's impact has resulted in empowerment and new, welcomed opportunities. A question confronting those concerned with gender equity in Somalia is how to consolidate and build on those changes in gender roles that can be identified as positive in order to further empower women and reshape Somali gender ideologies towards a more gender-equitable society? A real fear, based on women's post-war experiences elsewhere, is that the 'acceptable' space for women will contract as men seek to restore the pre-war status quo and once again define women's niche as within the home.
- 4.4 The existing gender ideology remains within which politics and peace-making are exclusively male domains. During internationally sponsored peace processes in which men have asserted women's right to participate women have been nevertheless consistently excluded from key discussions and have had little or no say in what is effectively the creation of a new vision of Somali society.
- 4.5 War and state collapse has stripped women of the considerable legal and political gains made during the years after Independence. Since 1991 the re-emergence of customary law, the extended use of shari'a law and resort to clan-based forms of political representation has meant women have been virtually excluded from the political and judicial structures that have emerged in different parts of the country. Somali customary law recognises the rights of men but limits the rights of women. Shari'a law offers women far greater justice but can only be administered by men; in practice it is reportedly often misapplied in the interests of men. Women are disadvantaged by their lack of education and poor knowledge of the Quran. And as long as male dominated clan politics prevails women will be marginalized due to the gendered nature of the clan system that guarantees the loyalty of its male members but not its female members.
- 4.6 Women's desire to be taken seriously as political players is undermined by the scarcity of women who have the time, resources and forbearance to attempt a career in politics. And, in addition to the clan loyalty dimension, by the social prejudice, held by both women and men, that views women as intellectually inferior to men and thus unsuitable for politics. Where women have been afforded the right to participate equally, as in Somaliland's three-party election process, very few women came forward to stand for election, the male-dominated parties did not prioritise women candidates and the voters, the majority of whom were women, chose not to vote for women candidates.

- 4.7 UNSC Resolution 1325 remains unfulfilled in Somalia's case. The absence of precise objectives in relation to transforming the position of women at the political level suggests international sponsors of Somali politics have yet to demonstrate a serious commitment to Somali women's political rights and aspirations.
- 4.8 Female literacy in Somalia is among the lowest in the world. Improving female literacy is an essential step towards addressing women's political exclusion and their disempowerment by the various male dominated, male controlled judicial systems that operate in different parts of the country. Male literacy is also among the lowest in the world yet significantly more boys than girls are afforded education. Access to education is harder than ever for girls whose mothers are the family breadwinner. Older daughters typically find they are unable to start or continue school because their domestic labour is needed at home to replace their mother's. This tends to hold true even if there is an idle but able adult male in the household.
- 4.9 The impact of the war on the war on the male population has so far received minimal attention. Little is understood about how men and boys' fates and opportunities are circumscribed by their gender identity. There are those whose interests are served by the war (just as it also serves the interests of some women) but many more have lost the means to fulfil their traditional gender roles of provider and protector – the roles that underpin their status and identity in society. Evidence suggests that these men and boys are not stepping into alternative, traditionally female roles so as to help the family and ease the burden on the women and girls.
- 4.10 Those concerned about gender issues in Somalia need to consider the different needs of the male population and how can they be addressed. What are the alternative male role models for Somali boys and male youth emerging from the war? How far are they influenced by globalisation and the war on terror? Is an alternative, new vision of the Somali man being generated or will the traditional man that partly measures his influence through his control over women prevail?

5 Key Gender Benchmarks and Indicators by Sector

5.1 Political & Public Life

5.1.1 Benchmarks

- public elections are held in which women and men can vote
- women have the right to participate in politics on an equal basis with men
- women make up a significant part of government, local and national
- women are represented in the leadership level of political parties
- quotas for women are introduced (as affirmative action) or maintained and improved, or replaced with a system that better ensures women's representation in government
- women are free to form and belong to non-state actor organisations concerned with political and public issues

5.1.2 Indicators

- Affirmative actions are taken to increase women's representation in government eg. removal of all forms of cultural discrimination against women, voter education, higher quotas for women, support for effective campaigning by women and men concerned with gender equity in politics.
- Greater numbers of aspirant women politicians emerge and are visible in national and local government.
- Government finances activities to make equity in politics a reality.
- Political parties develop positive pro-equity policy enabling more women candidates to be nominated.
- At election time women candidates are placed higher up the lists of political parties than to date.
- Women's political and umbrella organisations develop a common analysis and agenda for women's rights in politics and provide successful leadership and advocacy on the issue.
- Pro-women and politics coverage by the in-country media.
- Women continue to be active in the NGO sector.

5.2 Education

5.2.1 Benchmarks

- Education policies and budgets address girls' access to education.
- Free Primary School education for girls and boys.
- Girls and Boys enrolment figures reach parity & continue to rise.
- Affirmative policy and actions taken to increase female literacy levels

5.2.2 Indicators

- Policy documents and implementation reports demonstrate affirmative policies have been made and actions have been taken to increase girls enrolment and retention rates, such as fee reduction, more women teachers, single sex classes, address family income issues, introduce flexible teaching hours and term times, parental advocacy especially with mothers.
- Statistics indicate higher enrolment / lower drop-out figures for girls.
- Teacher training colleges report more women teacher trainees.

- School statistics show more female teachers in schools.
- Parents, pupils, watch-dog organisations and others report reduced complaints by girls of discrimination and other harassment in the classroom and that girls and boys receive an equal level of encouragement and educational opportunity.
- Statistics show the mean /median age of marriage(urban & rural) stays on or near females 20, males 25.

5.3 Health and Family Planning

5.3.1 Benchmarks

- The Maternal Mortality Rate drops - as women have better access to better resourced and staffed health & referral services, family planning methods, and female literacy increases.
- HIV and AIDS prevention work is stepped up with vulnerable groups of women, men, and youth.
- Household income increases making choices around health care less difficult and less likely to discriminate against women and girls.
- FGM rates drop.

5.3.2 Indicators

- More and better health services catering for women's needs are available.
- More midwives & nurses are trained and working.
- The number of gynaecologists increases, including an increase in females.
- Training of Traditional Birth Attendants (TBAs) improves their knowledge & practices related to hygiene and emergency referral.
- TBAs, Mother & Child Health centres and hospitals are linked and operate a referral system for pregnancy-related cases.

5.4 Creating an Enabling Environment for Economic Growth

5.4.1 Benchmarks

- A reversal of the increasing feminisation of rural poverty.
- Rural women participate in consultation & planning processes concerning developments in their areas.
- Developments in rural areas for economic growth are not detrimental to women's relationship with the rural economy, ownership of property, land, produce, or access to markets.
- Loan conditions set out by financial and credit institutions do not advertently or inadvertently discriminate against women.
- More women and men have more secure incomes.

- Any engineering of the remittance economy takes place without jeopardising the benefits ordinary women currently gain through household to household remittances.

5.4.2 Indicators

- Improvements in female literacy & school enrolment for the rural areas.
- Policies demonstrate the needs & interests of rural women have been taken into account and are catered.
- Policies and planned initiatives concerning Natural Resource Management (NRM) eg charcoal & frankincense production take account of women's role in NRM & their dependency on the rural economy.
- Women trained / working in the rural areas as extension workers, health workers, rural development practitioners
- The livelihood options available to poor rural women expand rather than contract.
- Women's organisations, financial and credit institutions report women's access to credit and loans has improved.
- Gender disaggregated statistics show:
 - no decrease in women's property ownership
 - women's control or shared control over expenditure decisions has remained or increased
 - women petty traders report better access to the kind of support (financial and other) they need to break out of the subsistence level poverty they are experiencing.
 - women report continued access to financial support through the remittance economy.
 - money transfer agencies report no decrease in the number of women receivers of household to household remittances.

6 Monitoring Women's Rights in Somalia

- 6.1 Whatever the ideology or provenance of 'government' in Somalia understanding and monitoring women's rights is an essential part of gender-aware programming and will provide a valuable picture of human rights, social, political and economic trends. The full Gender Profile document contains a proposed Women's Rights Monitoring Tool for Somalia. This framework takes articles from the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), describes the normative situation in 2006, suggests possible Benchmarks for target setting and identifies possible Indicators for monitoring purposes.

