



Briefing on the UN-Women Operational Response in Somalia

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Summary:

UN-Women's operational response in Somalia may be of interest to the Board because of the specific context in which the UN-Women's support is provided in a country with significant security deficits which is undergoing state and peace building processes after more than twenty years of conflict, and at the same time is striving to address gender disparities that are among the most pronounced in the world. This note aims to: (i) provide information on the key directions of UN-Women's country level operational response in Somalia, and on the ways, it attempts to make maximum impact by choosing strategic areas for engagement; (ii) provide examples of results UN-Women is contributing to; and (iii) highlight new approaches employed with success.

UN-Women's country level operational response in Somalia

Following more than two decades of conflict and civil war Somalia continues to be affected by instability caused by the influence of the militant Al-Shabaab over parts of the country, clan-related tensions and lack of stable institutions guaranteeing security for everyone. This makes operational environment in Somalia particularly volatile and defines the UN-Women's engagement. Given that financial management, procurement, implementation of activities and monitoring of programming are significantly more challenging in Somalia than elsewhere. UN-Women's comparative advantage lies in overall coordination of gender issues, in leading advocacy at the political level, and in providing technical advice to the UN, the Federal Government and civil society. UN-Women views the address of gender issues as a key driver towards achieving broader peace-building and state-building goals. This is also reflected in the report from the recently concluded Strategic Assessment exercise of the UN mandate in Somalia. Together with the opportunities presented by the positive results of the 2016 elections in terms of significant increase of women's representation in the new parliament, and by the adoption of the National Development Plan which will guide the engagement of all development partners in the next three years, these advances provide UN-Women Somalia with excellent opportunities to further women's empowerment in the country. All the programmatic engagements of UN-Women will be implemented through the joint programme modality that is driving the UN coherence with the aim of reducing transaction costs, and increasing national participation in programme design and implementation. Operational support of UN-Women is thus implemented through three joint programmes focusing on: strategic coordination and technical advice to promote gender equality, rule of law, and women's political empowerment. UN-Women Somalia is currently in the process of developing a new Joint Programme on Human Rights, Women, Peace and Security with UNDP, UNICEF, and UNSOM. UN-Women is expected to be the administrative agency for this new JP.

Strategic coordination and technical advice to promote gender equality

The importance of addressing gender issues across thematic areas, by all parts of the UN Mission and in interaction with all local counterparts, makes it necessary to find an implementation modality that is open, flexible and not confined to a specific subject or thematic area. In Somalia, UN-Women found such modality through the Joint Programme on Enabling Services that brings together the UN partners to provide the support relevant across the whole mission such as security, risk management, or coordination. The UN-Women component in the programme allows it to play a strategic role in relation to the UN and the Government by bringing attention to, and increasing coordination and accountability on gender issues, and by providing needed technical advice, data and analysis. This work is done to enable all development stakeholders to increase their impact on gender issues through their respective mandates and networks and thus bring the UN-Women expertise beyond the reach of its direct interactions in Mogadishu.

This approach has already brought important results and recognition of the UN-Women's role in providing key support on gender issues to the larger UN and other partners. The first National Development Plan after more than 30 years adopted by the Government in 2016 includes a specific section outlining primary gender-relevant objectives for the next three years. At the request of the Resident Coordinator's Office managing the Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Somalia, selected gender indicators were included as a mandatory part of regular reporting for all joint programmes implemented in Somalia. In the effort to bring coherence and increase accountability of the UN on gender issues, the UN Gender Accountability Framework was developed and agreed with the Gender Theme Group, waiting for the finalization of the Women Peace and Security joint programme development document, Gender Strategy, workplan and endorsement by the UN Integrated Mission leadership. Significant analytical work has been produced on the issues such as gender and political economy/accountability, women's access to justice, women and violent extremism, or analysis of the impacts of women quota applied in a clan-based electoral system. Given sore lack of reliable data and analysis specifically on gender issues, a baseline survey on the State of Women and Men in Somalia in cooperation with the World Bank will support the government in assessing the availability, location and capacity gaps in data collection efforts and serve as the foundation for quality statistical data on gender issues in Somalia. UN-Women Somalia will now focus on using the existing findings of the analytic studies to inform its programming and policy guidance.

Special appreciation for supporting the idea of testing the approach to mainstream gender issues through the Enabling Services Joint Programme and funding this work in the last two years goes to the Governments of Sweden and Denmark.

Rule of Law

Somalia is one of many countries that is characterized through legal pluralism, with the parallel existence of formal and traditional justice norms and institutions, and interpretations of the Islamic Sharia.¹ However, regardless of the system utilized, women need to navigate male dominated power structures to seek the best possible redress. The UN in Somalia has been addressing justice and security concerns through the Somalia Joint Rule of Law Programme of which UN-Women has been part since 2015 together with eight other UN partners.

UN-Women Somalia aims for a comprehensive approach to women's access to justice with specific focus on addressing SGBV. The UN-Women component of the Rule of Law programme focuses on legislative change, community based protection work, working with the justice chain including police, legal aid, prosecution and courts and a strong advisory role to ensure women's rights are considered in the work of the UN partners implementing the programme.

¹ See, for example, Alejandro Bendana and Tanja Chopra, Women's Rights, State-Centric Rule of Law, and Legal Pluralism in Somaliland, *The Hague Journal on the Rule of Law*, January 2013, Vol.5.1, pp. 44-73.

In a little more than a year of implementation, UN-Women has already contributed to important achievements that pave the way to improving justice and security for women in Somalia. UN-Women supported the establishment of specialized services in response to SGBV, such as the first one-stop center at a police station in Mogadishu or specialized SGBV prosecution services in Puntland and Somaliland. After the Puntland Rape Act was passed in 2016, UN-Women supported the Puntland Ministry of Justice and Religious Affairs to develop a detailed implementation plan including the establishment of a multi-sectoral committee to monitor the implementation and the facilitation of case conferences to ensure referral and coordination. At the federal level, the work is underway with the Ministry of Justice on the first women's access to justice policy. The policy is envisioned to provide guidance to legislature, judiciary, service providers and communities to prevent and respond to SGBV throughout the state building process.

To enhance UN-Women's comprehensive approach to Women's Access to Justice, the office is currently seeking additional donor support to broaden its work including secondary prevention, to engage correction centers to ensure rights for women in conflict with the law, and increase focus on access to justice for women with disabilities.

Women's Political Empowerment

After more than twenty years of conflict, in 2012, Somalia began a period of stabilization and peacebuilding, with some important achievements such as the adoption of a provisional constitution, completing the state formation process and organizing two sets of legislative and presidential elections in 2012 and 2016. Although Somali women continue to be significantly under-represented in public life and decision-making processes, an important progress was achieved in the 2016 elections thanks to sustained and focused effort of many concerned stakeholders including international community, the UN, local governmental partners and civil society.

The 2016 elections brought 67 women MPs in the lower house and 13 women in the upper house of the Federal Parliament constituting 25% representation of women in the respective chambers. This is roughly a 10% increase compared to the previous legislature. UN-Women's support largely focused on the pre-election period when electoral process was being defined by the National Leadership Forum (NLF). We supported a dedicated retreat of Goodwill Ambassadors tasked to support the implementation of women quota to work out a specific formula according to which the 30 per cent reserved seats for women would be distributed in a clan-based electoral system. Advocacy in support of the quota was a large part of the work done by all stakeholders in the lead up to the elections. UN-Women supported a strategically planned large rally held in Mogadishu during the August NLF meeting that brought together over 1000 women, which is no small show of support in a city that is under regular attacks by militant groups.

In the lead up to the 2020 elections, which is expected to be a standard popular "one person one vote" democratic election, UN-Women mobilized partners and donors and is leading a 2016-2020 UN Joint Programme on Women's Political Empowerment. The Programme is funded by MPTF (DFID), implemented with UNDP, UNSOM, and the federal Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development. It aims to increase the voice of women through increased participation in decision-making by enabling formulation of legislation and policies promoting gender equality and women's political participation, increasing voice and recognition of women as leaders and decision-makers and enhancing capacity of Ministries of Women at the federal and states level to coordinate and advocate for increasing women participation and gender equality in political and electoral processes.

UN-Women's Role and Partnerships

Under the umbrella of the UN Integrated Mission, UN-Women positioned itself as a key coordinator and technical advisor on gender equality and women's empowerment. The Gender Theme Group, the UN Strategic Framework, and Joint Programs serve as vehicles for such relations. The aid architecture defined formerly by the New Deal Compact, and as of 2017 by the new National Development Plan, foresees a prescribed system of cooperation between the international community and government partners to ensure national ownership

in delivering the development results as outlined in the Plan. The UN, including UN-Women is part of this architecture. Engagement with civil society continues in the programme implementation and advocacy and will be further supported through increasing national coordination between the federal and state-level on gender issues.

The initial establishment of UN-Women presence in Somalia in 2014-2016 was generously supported by the Government of Sweden. As of 2017, all UN-Women work in Somalia is funded through the Somalia MPTF.