Addressing Gender Inequality through Awareness Raising:

Ending Women and Youths' Political Marginalization in Somalia

Project supported by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives

By Shukria Dini
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Somali women need to know their power and must stop waiting for men to give them power and positions. Otherwise, they risk being elephants who do not know of their power and strengths –

Sharifo Cadow, an activist in Mogadishu

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Introduction:

Situating Somali women and youth

First, this short report captures the project called '**Addressing Gender Inequality through Awareness Raising: Ending Women and Youths' Political Marginalization in Somalia** – a project supported by the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives implemented by our centre - SWSC. The activities of this project include three workshops, one time event commemorating international women's day on 8th March 2014, and four radio forums. These activities were organized and implemented together with the participants / beneficiaries by Somali Women's Studies Centre (SWSC) in Mogadishu, Somalia starting March 4th to March 15th 2014. Second, it discusses the impacts of these activities on the beneficiaries / participants. The purpose of this project was to provide Somali women and youth with a platform through workshops and radio forums where they could discuss key issues, challenges facing them and come up their own solutions.

Women and youth in Somalia own less, control less and remain marginalized from the corridors of power despite constituting the majority of Somalia's population. They have been adversely affected by the prolonged conflict and the absence of a state for over two decades. Somali youths were exploited by different groups and used to carry up arms and actively participate in the militarized violence on behalf of individuals and ghost clans to kill and those who they labeled as enemies. Youth in Somalia were left without access to education, health care and employment due to the social, political and economic disintegration. They were born in a volatile period of Somalia's history and grew up in a stateless environment. Most of these youths have no understanding about what state is and have never experienced life in a fully functioning state where there is rule of law, order and existing opportunities. There is a Somali saying '*ma liibaanayaashii lagu liibaaney*' referring to how young Somali men were assets whom warlords exploited for their own deadly violence and these young men who were recruited into clan-based armed militias did not prosper and perished in the violence waged by warlords.

Similarly, the conflict and state disintegration have had a profound effect on women. They lost loved ones including their providers and protectors, lost protection of state, lost access to basic social services leading to vulnerabilities and deprivation. In addition, due to their gender, Somali women experienced and were subjected to gender-based violence. Despite all of these dangers and risks encountered by Somali women, they have been the primary income providers for their families. Somali mothers have been raising their children in a very hostile and violent environment. They continue to finance the education of their children with limited resources and institutions. Women have also entered in the NGO space to respond to the effects of state collapse, militarized violence and deprivations on their people. Through such space, some women in Somalia have been contributing to peace-building and the delivery of basic services to vulnerable population in their respective communities. More research is needed to really capture women's agency and activism in Somalia.

Efforts have been made to rebuild a state and peace in Somalia through local and international support. A series of transitional governments were established between 2001 and 2012 through different reconciliation conferences

held outside of Somalia. The leadership structure of these transitional governments and transitional parliaments were built through a selection process based on clan representation. Women and youth were not well represented in those previous transitional political institutions in Somalia. Currently, women and youths' representation in emerging federal institutions still remains low. For example, out of the 275 members of the Federal Parliament, only 39 are women. The representation of youth in the current Parliament is even lower in number than that of women; the cabinet has only two female Ministers and two deputy ministries - youth are not represented in the current cabinet. The underlying causes of the marginalization of women and youth from politics include the discriminatory nature of the clan system, the lack of resources and societal beliefs that women and youth lack the leadership skills and experience needed to hold public office. The clan system perpetuates gender equality - older men are the de facto holders of leadership position in the system; they are the primary decision-makers, spokespersons and unwavering negotiators on behalf of all clan members. This inevitably promotes the interests of older men. Women do not hold an equal membership as men within the clan system. Due to their gender, women are seen as minors and temporary guests of their clans particularly if they are going to marry outside of their clans. One of the participants of the workshops eloquently noted that women in cross-clan marriages are trapped between two clans, where each of these clans question that particular woman's loyalty – her biological and her marital clans will not support her to represent either clan in the political arena.

Young people's leadership is not encouraged and they are not considered 'wise and experienced' to be part of the formal decision-making processes

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Similarly, young people are not encouraged to be leaders as they not considered 'wise and experienced' enough to be part of the formal decision-making processes. Such marginalization caused by either cultural beliefs and social institution such as the clan, leaves women and youth locked out of the corridors of power and thus denying them their fundamental political rights.

Insecurity, unemployment, poverty and lack of opportunities continue to affect women and youth in Somalia. It is critical that they are empowered and given a space to fully participate in decision-making. It is also important to support and sustain positive changes in gender roles and relations in Somalia. The rebuilding efforts for Somalia must not only empower women and youth but also enable them to make their valuable contributions in such endeavors. Women and youth are important actors who can play crucial roles in the transformation of war-torn Somalia; their marginalization will be a costly mistake!

Somali Women's Studies Centre (SWSC)

Somali Women's Studies Centre is a research centre that was formed in July 2011 to research on the lives of Somali women residing inside and outside Somalia. Research is an important tool that can address women's invisibility and marginalization. Through research on women, SWSC wants to affect policy changes that positively influence policies favorable to women. The centre is based in Mogadishu, Somalia; it accounts and documents the contributions of Somali women to peace, recovery and provides insights on the challenges (economic, social and political) facing them.

The SWSC's vision is to be a research body that will be a catalyst for positive change in Somali women's lives through research, advocacy, advice, educating the public on gender issues, and most of all providing women (female parliamentarian, activists, rural and urban women) with a platform to tell their own stories, articulate their specific needs, and exert their agency through calling for solutions that will effectively address the root causes of their marginalization and discrimination faced in post-conflict Somalia.

The SWSC facilitates linkages between different kinds of Somali women (grass roots, academia, political and diaspora) and encourages, facilitates dialogues, debates on gender issues, exchange of salient information, and the collective development of research and generation of publications that will empower women and girls in Somalia.

Furthermore, the SWSC carries out advocacy initiatives together with other members of civil society including organisations led by women to push for gender equality in war-torn and post-conflict Somalia. In 2012, our SWSC worked in conjunction with other women organizations and campaigned for the minimum 30 percent of women's quota; though we did not realize the minimum 30 percent women's quota, our advocacy work ensured 39 women got seats in the current Federal parliament. In addition, the Centre facilitates awareness through public education and debates on gender issues in Somalia and the importance of gender equality and equity in post-conflict Somalia.

This country has been alive because of Somali women. It would have been buried down, but the women of this country remained firm despite all odds

Mohamed Farah

The Project Activities Summary

Aims and Objectives

The funding received from the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives from the government of Canada supported the implementation of three workshops, one time event commemorating International Women's Day of March 8th 2014 and four radio forums that touched different topics with different participants and this short report.

The objectives of these workshops and radio forums were to raise awareness on salient issues such as marginalization, gender-based violence, the roles of women and youth in democracy and good governance, and most of all amplify the voices of women and youth who were the primary beneficiaries of these activities funded by the government of Canada. Radio remains a very influential medium on which majority of Somalis rely on for information and news. The radio forums provided space and opportunities for men, women and youth from different districts of Mogadishu to participate as a panel and discuss issues affecting them and their community at large, and propose possible solutions. Some of these individuals have never participated in open forums; it was a quite experience for them to not only hear their own voices, but to also voice their concerns directly to the public and government officials. A united voice for women and youth in this war-ravaged country will help them assert their power to influence decision-making through activism and representation. Through their assertiveness and voice, they can place their demands on policy-makers and find a space where they gain representation in Somalia's political arena .

The aim of commemorating international women's day this year – March 8th 2014 in Mogadishu, the capital city of Somalia, was to raise awareness about women's important contributions to the nation, advocate for the advancement of the rights of women and make a call to the current Federal government to address women's social, economic and political marginalization and under-representation. It was an achievement in fact, to hold such an event in the capital city where women and youth celebrated this special day. Participants in the event took time to reflect on the important contributions that women have made in Somalia. This year's theme is '*inspiring change*'. The event attracted diverse groups including current members of the Federal Parliament and former member of the Transitional Federal Parliament, members of civil society, university students, youth groups, artists and the media. Poems inspired by the event's theme were read; speeches given by all of the speakers focused on women's rights, gender equality, the important roles that Somali women play in their society, women's empowerment and leadership, promotion of women's participation and representation in all arenas (social, economic and political). In the subject of women's rights of Somalia, the speakers talked about ways in which women's rights have been violated and called for their protection and promotion of justice. The role of state and its institutions in protecting women from all kinds of gender-based violence was also emphasized. Gender equality based on Islam or within the perspective of Islam was noted as critical to rebuilding a prosperous society. Islam is said to be a religion that promotes the rights of women and yet these rights are violated by patriarchal and traditional society. One of the speakers called for women to know more about their rights including their God given rights in Islam. With such knowledge about their rights, women will be in a better position to demand for change and inclusion.

Somali women were described as the saviors of the nation who have been playing critical roles in the survival of their families in particular and the nation in general.

Millions of households in Somalia depend on the work of Somali women who have been doing all income-generating activities including selling petrol, gas, tea, vegetables and other retail goods in the streets and the remittances sent by women living in abroad supporting their other family members left behind Somalia

Hawa Ali

Women are yet to be given credit for their important roles and continue to be sidelined and denied from participating in formal decision-making processes. It was stated that patriarchal Somali society often locks women out of the corridors of power and argue that women have no place in politics and formal decision-making.

Somali women are agents of change and failure to include them in decision-making will make it very difficult for the nation to recover from poverty and ruin. One of the male participants in this event voiced his optimism and was hopeful that Somali women's movements will succeed in the fight for women's rights and that young men would support their endeavours.

The overall objective of the project activities was to promote citizen's active involvement (women and youth) in national politics and in the formal decision-making process. Despite women and youth heightened agency in their respective communities, they continue to be absent from the corridors of power and they are profoundly affected by the lack of representation. We hold the belief that marginalized women and youth can adequately respond to current political and socio-economic challenges in Somalia, actively engage in political debates from an informed point of view, and demand accountability from their political and traditional leaders. It is our hope that through these workshops and radio forums (that touched on issues pertinent to the empowerment of women and youth), they will be empowered to form a unified voice of their own to overcome their marginalization and under-representation in the current political, social and economic structures in Somalia.

The Context in which this Project was implemented

Somalia has been a nation plagued by protracted militarized violence, lawlessness and without a functioning state and institutions, thus, leaving the people of Somalia including women and youth with multiple and chronic vulnerabilities such as insecurity, material deprivation and the absence of basic services for decades. Despite their vulnerabilities, women and youth are important actors whose contributions to the rebuilding of Somalia will be crucial. This project was implemented in a post-conflict context where significant gains were made in the areas of improved security, removing illegal checkpoints and establishment of more permanent and federally based state institutions set up in September 2012 ending over two decades of political transitions. It is a context where a lot of work needs to be carried out to contribute to both the empowerment of women and youth and the transformation of the country.

The Beneficiaries and Participants of the Activities

The project was designed to bring diverse women and youth residing in Mogadishu together and debate and discuss salient issues, identify their own solutions and most of all increase both their voices and agency in transforming their own communities. Consultations prior to the implementation of the project with the beneficiaries provided them the opportunity to select the topics of the workshops and the radio forums. Other beneficiaries of the project activities supported by the Fund for Local Initiatives provided by government of Canada included current and former MPs, members of CSOs1, media (particularly radios operating in Mogadishu) and government officials from specific Ministries such as the Ministry of Interior and Fishery in Mogadishu, Somalia. By targeting such diverse individuals through these activities, we hope that beneficiaries of this project got the opportunity to network and collectively work together to advance the interests and rights of women and youth.

A total of 163 individuals benefitted from the project activities including the three workshops (87 persons), the International Women's Day Event (53 persons), and the four radio forums (23 persons). It is our hope that these beneficiaries will transmit the information and knowledge gained from these workshops and forums back to their communities, and thus increasing the number of indirect beneficiaries from this project.

Project activities also facilitated inter-generational dialogue. Through feedback, young women and men attending local universities as well as youth activists got the opportunity to interact with older men and women including current and former parliamentarians and some officials from different Ministries of the Federal Government of Somalia. Interactions and inter-generational dialogue of this nature are absent in Somalia, yet they are pertinent to the inclusion of women and youth in decision-making processes. One young woman who participated in one of the workshops supported by this projected stated, '*often times, young people who were born during the upheavals do not know what government is really about, and they are marginalized by either culture or older men, are usually denied a voice and representation in the decision-making processes in Somalia. By attending this workshop, it gave me the opportunity to not only meet with other young people, older men and women and members of the Federal Parliament but also to examine issues that are critical to the empowerment and representation of women and youth in this country*".

There is a need to build on impacts this project has had on the beneficiaries – particularly building the agency of women, men and youth in Somalia to remove barriers that deny them a voice in leadership, active participation in the decision-making and overall contribution to the Somalia's transformation. We thank the government of Canada for giving us the opportunity to implement such activities and we hope that you will enable us again to carry out future activities for women and youth in Somalia.

Women are our mothers. They helped us when were in need of them. They need us now and we need to support their struggles now. Not all Somali men oppose the empowerment of women and girls. There are many of us (men) who recognize the roles and rights of women in Somali society

Abdiqani Hussein Aden, a youth in Mogadishu

1 They included the Coalition for Grassroots Women's Organizations – an umbrella women's organization with over 45 member organizations, SAACID, Somali National Women's Organization (SNWO) and many others. In addition, local radios such as Kulmiye radio, Goobjoog radio and Star FM were used to air radio forums where different individuals representing women, youth with various backgrounds discussed topics ranging from youth empowerment (March 4th 2014), marginalization of women and youth in Somalia's politics (March 12th 2014), education (March 14th 2014), the roles of women and youth in peace and security (March 15th 2014).

The Impacts of the Project Activities

The activities of this project had positive impacts on the beneficiaries. First, this project established a safe space where women, men and youth come together as individuals and representatives of different institutions to speak openly and constructively about their experiences, concerns and needs without feeling threatened by anyone. In such safe space, women and youths from different organizations were able to share their experiences and critically examine issues that concern them. One of the women activists whom participated in the workshop described the environment in which the workshops were delivered as '*a comfortable and respectful environment that enabled participants to voice their own concerns and generate very important discussions*'. The participants also highlighted about this space and its importance for their work. The activities of this project facilitated a much needed dialogue and debate among various groups. According to a female activist '*there is a need to build alliance among women and youth organizations, and we need to hold serious debates and forums that can help us take action and bring positive change in the lives of women and youth'*. The participants were from different institutions and backgrounds were able to share one platform together where they collectively debated issues that affect them on daily basis including marginalization, under-representation, gender-based violence, and their roles in democratization efforts and good governance. One of the participants stated that '*as activists we are busy and attend several events but we did not have such a space where we critically examined problems facing women and youth. In this workshop, youth activists got the opportunity to interact and engage with MPs and other activists including women activists and other government institutions*' (Fatuma Osman, youth activist). Women and youth who benefitted from these activities saw each other as allies and partners rather than as competitors and enemies. They noted that together they could succeed in rebuilding Somalia as a prosperous and safe nation where all citizens' rights are respected and protected.

Through these workshops and radio forums, women and youth were able to voice their concerns and views through local radios. These activities have amplified women and youths voices and placed them in a position where they could speak as experts and concerned citizens on salient issues affecting them. It is worth noting that media in Somalia is privately owned and free access does not exist. Whoever wants to utilize such medium must purchase airtime. This project purchased airtime on four radio forums[2] with three different radios operating in Mogadishu including Radio Kulmiye, Radio Goobjoog and Star FM radio.

The radio forum which focused on *Youth and Women Empowerment: What Needs to be Done?*, the panelists highlighted how women and youth were specifically affected by the conflict and statelessness and the importance of empowering this particular group. They can be empowered through building their capacities, enabling them to have access to education, other essential basic services, employment and access to decision-making process. Women and youth were stated to be the main forces that liberated this country from colonialism. There were 13 young men who formed the Somali Youth League (SYL) who were the forefathers of this nation and who took the leadership to liberate their motherland. Women were also critical to the national liberation as they sold their jewelry and directly participated in the national struggle. National heroines such as Hawa Taako were highlighted to illustrate the roles that women played in that struggle. At the present time, women and youth who constitute the majority of Somalia's population remain marginalized and continue to face numerous hardships such as poverty, unemployment, insecurity and marginalization. Somali society does not recognize the important roles that youth can play in rebuilding the country. Young men who participated in this panel highlighted the important roles that

2 Each of the radio forums was aired live for one hour and was re-aired again in the following week.

Through these workshops and radio forums, women and youth were able to voice their concerns and views through local radios

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Unleashing the potentials of women and youth in this country and enabling them adequate representation in the decision-making will lead to political inclusivity, peace and security in Somalia

their mothers and their aunts played in their lives and testified that without having such female role models that their lives would have been different. According to a young male panelist '*it is my mother who raised me and educated me. She struggled all of these years to ensure that I get a good education. There are millions of mothers in Somalia whom raised children on their own and invested in their education and overall well-being, yet, they are discriminated and told that they lack the skills and capacities needed in politics. These women have proven time and time again that they are capable of not only raising educated and confident young men and women in this difficult country, thus, they are as capable as men, perhaps more capable than men to run this country well. Thus, the time is right to give women their space to lead this country to the right direction*'. They called for women and youth to unite, organize and collectively advocate for their inclusion. In addition, they called for removal of barriers to women and youth empowerment and investment in their potential so as to harness their essential contributions to the country.

The panelists highlighted that women advocated for their quota (the minimum 30 percent) but only got 14 percent in the parliament and thus, youth need to advocate for their own quota. The Federal government needs to come up strategies to empower women and youth. One of these strategies highlighted include strategy for either creating employment or small-scale businesses for idle youth in the urban and rural areas of the country.

On the radio forum on *Ways to Address the Marginalization and Under-representation of Women and Youth in Somalia's Politics,* the panelists noted that as long as women and youth remained under-represented and marginalized from the corridors of power in this country, that Somalia would be undeveloped, undemocratic and rebuilding efforts would go to waste. Removing the marginalization and under-representation of women and youth needs to be considered as part of the efforts of transforming the country at the post-conflict stage. Unleashing the potentials of women and youth in Somalia and enabling them adequate representation in the decision-making will lead to political inclusivity, peace and security.

The radio forum on *Education and Existing Challenges,* participants noted the education system disintegrated due to the collapse of the Somali state following the civil war in the 1990s. Prior to its collapse and the ensuing civil war, primary, secondary and tertiary education in Somalia was state-run free for all. Majority of primary, secondary and universities institutions functioning in Somalia emerged after the collapse of the Somali state and conflict time in early 1990s, and are privately owned and are not free and accessible to all. Education quality in Somalia is described as poor, a situation brought about by practicing of different curriculums and failure to channel resources to this sector to rebuild and deliver quality education. This has huge ramifications on students' education and was an issue extensively discussed by the panelists. Some of the existing challenges in this system highlighted by the panelists include, lack of unified curriculum, lack of access, lack of state control, low salaries for teachers, few female teachers, and lack of resources. For instance, poor parents may not be able to pay the tuition fees

for their children. The other challenge raised was the lack of safe learning environments particularly for girls. Girls' education got impacted and continues to suffer due to lack of free and accessible schools in Somalia. Often times, poor parents are unable to send all their children to school; girls' education have suffered drastically due to this. Societal belief about girls' education affects girls' access to education and parents' roles in investing in their girls' education. For example, there is saying that says, *girls' education has no value because an educated girl will eventually end up in the kitchen*. One of the major challenges that affect girls' education is the lack of female teachers in schools and this directly affects girls learning. The panelists called for the government to plays its role in the rebuilding this sector and making education free and affordable for all. A common curriculum also needs to be developed and non-accredited universities and schools need to be accredited. In addition, parents are urged to play a more active role in the children's education. They need to volunteer and work with schools teachers and principles to improve the quality of the education that their children access from these schools. Government regulation of private schools and universities was also proposed by the panelists. The issue of scholarships was also raised by the panelists, highlighting as a way of promoting the education of both boys and girls. In Sum, significant and continuous investment in this sector was proposed as well by the panelists.

In the radio panel on the *Roles of Youth and Women in Peace and Security*, participants noted the important roles women play in building peace in their communities. The prolonged conflict is said to be a conflict waged and supported by elder men where young men were exploited and died. Peace building and security in Somalia is a collective responsibility and not the sole responsibility of the state. Women and youth in this country need to be at the centre of all the efforts of building peace and security. Women and youth do not have access to institutions in the security sector. The government including security sector players need to consult and work closely with women and youth to promote and build peace and security. At the community and district levels, women and youth are members of peace committees and are making significant contributions to stabilizing Somalia. In this radio panel, it was suggested we educate women and youth about their roles in peace and security. According one of the panelists '*women and youth must be invested so that they will effectively contribute to peace and security*'. Employment for idle youths was noted as urgent and linked with peace and security. Recruitment of women and youth in the security sector institutions was proposed as a way of including these groups in the decision-making of peace and security. In addition, involving members of civil society including those led by women and youth in the efforts of building peace and security was highlighted as an important step to building sustainable peace and security. In sum, the panel proposed the establishment of peace committee networks across the country, region, district and village levels as well as the establishment of neighborhood watches to prevent crimes and violence.

Recruitment of women and youth in the security sector institutions was proposed as a way of including these groups in the decision-making of peace and security

Through these radio forums, women and youth representing different entities were given the chances to participate in discussions that

touched the above mentioned various topics. Some of the radio forum participants had experience in participating panels that were aired whereas others were novices and had no experience in participating in discussions aired live on local radios. One of the radio forum participants testified that *'I feel empowered because appearing and participating on the a radio forum with other individuals where we aired our views and opinions on issues that affect us was quite an experience for me, because often times, others speak for us but today, we spoke for ourselves'*. The radio forums which this project supports created an opportunity for youth and women who may not have had a space to speak for themselves and exercise their agency. Another participants of one of the forums supported by this project asserted that '*I received complements from my family members and colleagues and was told that I am such a good speaker; now everyone understands how committed I am to my activism and work which is to empower youth – men and women*'.

Second, the activities that this project supported increased participants' (women & youth) level of awareness on gender inequality, marginalization, discrimination, gender-based violence, the importance of gender equality and inclusion in post-conflict Somalia and the representation of women and youth in politics. Through workshops and forums, the beneficiaries were able to digest the scope of the challenges facing women and youth and most of all understand the root causes of gender inequality and marginalization. Through interactions and deep discussions, the participants succeeded in both reflecting on the status of women & youth and sharing experiences and information relating to gender-based violence, democracy and good governance, and women & youth leadership. Somali experts constituting men, women and youth from CSOs, universities, and media as well as current and former MPs were invited to introduce the topics to the participants and the reality on the ground. Participants did number of group work where they presented their findings of their extensive discussions to the rest of the panel.

Third, it strengthened women and youth's ability to debate on gender issues and promote networking among them. According to the beneficiaries, the workshops and radio forums have intensified their awareness on critical issues ranging from gender-based violence, inequality, marginalization of women and youth from decision-making processes. The beneficiaries have benefitted from the debates and discussions the project facilitated and positively impacted on their abilities to analyze the root causes of their marginalization and the need to built a just and inclusive society.

Finally, the project activities have led to a high level of recognition and acceptance that women and youth constitute the majority of Somali society. They are resourceful actors who can effectively contribute to the rebuilding of the country – socially, economically and politically - and must be at the centre of all of efforts of rebuilding Somalia. In sum, the workshops and radio forums were described as informative and eye-opener to the need for women and youth to debate together on issues concerning them. The participants also highlighted that the project provided them with the opportunity to network and come up with strategies to advocate for their issues including their representation in the emerging state institutions.

the project activities have led to the high level of recognition and acceptance that women and youth constitute the majority of Somali society

Lessons learned from the Project

Our Centre has taken valuable lessons from this project and they include: first, healthy dialogue spaces are non-existent in Somalia and the absence of such strategic spaces have led to the lack of information-sharing, exchanging ideas, sharing knowledge, and devising concrete strategies to effectively respond to the challenges facing women and youth. Creating safe and effective dialogue space for marginalized groups including women and youth is essential for their empowerment.

Second lesson is, these short project activities have demonstrated that even in an unstable and post-conflict context such as Somalia, it is possible to create such space and encourage face-to-face discussions, debates and interactions through workshops and radio forums as this project did in Mogadishu.

Third lesson, is that small activities such as workshops and forums are effective ways of bringing diverse members of the community such as members of civil society (including those led by women and youth), representatives of state institutions, local media and ordinary citizens together to discuss and debate on salient issues and collectively devise solutions. These small-scale activities have the potentials in rebuilding trust and enhancing cooperation among various groups. In addition, the project has also contributed to rebuilding relationships among beneficiaries particularly members of the public and government officials. Through the workshop and radio forums, the participants representing different entities highlighted the issue of trusting one another and promised to work together to promote gender equity and empowerment in Somalia.

In addition, the project activities enhanced and strengthened analytical skills of the participants. Acquiring such skills can be pertinent to obtaining a much needed voice to interact with state officials and pushing for inclusive institutions that will protect the rights of women and youth in Somalia. While it is too early to assess the long-term effect of acquiring debating and analytical skills, more conscious women and youth aware of the root causes of their marginalization can get organized and place demands on their representatives in politics, that will lead to change in power relations.

The final lesson for our Centre from this project is that Somalia is an oral society; there are over 35 radio stations operating in Mogadishu and most residents own radio sets. The media (in particular, radio) can be an important instrument to facilitate dialogue and interaction among various groups including women and youth. The media can be used to educate the public about the root causes of gender inequality and the importance of transforming unjust societal institutions. Through radio discussions sponsored by this project, members of the public were able to listen to the discussions which their kin (mothers, sisters, brothers, classmates, colleagues) and hear views and opinions aired on the three local radios used to carry out the forums. Through these four radio programs, a wide audience became exposed to issues affecting women and youth in their respective communities. It is our hope that these small initiatives will lead to more sensitization of the public on gender issues including the rights of women and youth and eventually led to positive changes in power relations in Somalia.

Somalia is an oral society, and that there are over 35 radio stations operating in Mogadishu and most of people own radio sets

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Recommendations from the Three Workshops

The following recommendations came out from the group work / discussions of the three workshops that touched on gender-based violence, democracy and good governance, and women and youth leaderships in Somalia.

On ***Gender-based Violence*** in Somalia workshop, the below recommendations were proposed:

1. The Somali government has the responsibility to both prevent and respond to gender-based violence as well as the needs of the victims. It needs to formulate legislations to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. The Federal Parliament is the law-making organ of the state and needs to take initiatives to draft laws that prevent gender based violence including anti-rape, early marriage law, anti-trafficking law;

2. Include specific articles that address gender-based violence in the provisional constitution which is currently being reviewed by the Parliamentary Constitution Committees;

3. Building the capacities of security sector and judiciary system particularly making them gender sensitive and effective in terms of responding to gender-based violence effectively is recommended;

4. Develop a code of conduct for the national army, policy and other security sector institutions to prevent and sanction GBV;

5. Gender issues need to be included in the trainings given to all personnels in the justice system including judges, lawyers, paralegals and other administration staff;

6. There is need to carry out a national campaign against gender-based violence waged against women and children in Somalia and this national campaign will raise awareness on how GBV affects women;

7. Men including young men need to be educated about their roles in eradicating gender-based violence in Somalia;

8. Addressing and preventing gender-based violence is the responsibility of everyone in Somalia. Thus, Somali men and women need to work together to educating the happenings of gender-based violence in Somalia;

9. The local media needs to play important roles in creating awareness on GBV and educating the public. Somalis are in denial that GBV is happening in Somalia and lack of awareness and education have led to poor response and denial. Thus, the role of media is critical to informing the public that GBV is a crime committed against women;

10. The media needs to target policy-makers, academics and activists and promote actions that will address this pandemic.

On ***Democracy and Good Government Workshop***, the following recommendations came out of the workshop and they include:

1. Many youths in Somalia have no idea what government is let alone what democracy is because they were born in stateless and violent times, thus, there is need to provide civic education to this generation about their civic rights, responsibilities and most of all good governance and democracy practices;

2. One of the major obstacles to establishing good governance and promoting democracy is said to be the clan system particularly the 4.5 clan formula that has been used to share power among clans in Somalia. Both women and youth who participated in this workshop called for the elimination of the 4.5 clan formula tool as well as the clan elders authority in choosing and nominating parliamentarians and replacing it with a system that is inclusive and transparent enabling women and youth to gain representation in the political realm;

3. To overcome non-democratic and non-inclusive political system, it was recommended the establishment of political parties where women and youth have leadership positions and such are said to pave a way where women and youth can steer the country to the right direction – making it democratic and build good governance;

4. As long as old men remain in power and youth and women continue to be marginalized despite constituting 60 to 70 percent of the population, Somalia will not become democratic or experience good governance. To promote democracy and good governance, the youth who participated in this workshop proposed that clan elders retire and pass the torch to younger generation;

5. To overcome corruption, nepotism and promote transparency and accountability, it was proposed that the federal government consult with women and youth, solicits their views, opinions and inputs, and include them in the decision making, so that they contribute to the processes of democratization and efforts to build good governance in Somalia;

6. Women and youth need to be given an ample space where they can provide their inputs and make their recommendations for reviewing the provision of the Federal Constitution;

7. It is recommended to include specific quotas for youth and women in the provisional constitution to secure their representation in the formal decision-making so that youth and women can effectively contribute to the processes of democratization and good governance in Somalia. It was suggested 50 percent quota for both groups;

8. It is also recommended that women and youth need to be knowledgeable about their rights and entitlements and must demand for their full inclusion in the decision-making processes and must not wait for men to give them their fair share;

9. Democracy and good governance will the political ingredients that will enable Somalia to rise above the ashes and it is critical that the emerging state institutions are inclusive and transparent. Women and youth must have adequate representation in all state institutions.

On the workshop on ***Women and Youth Leadership*** in Somalia, the following recommendations came out of the group discussions and they include:

1. Education is highlighted as one of the ways in which women and youth's leadership roles can be increased. If women and youth's education is improved, then they have a great chance to infiltrate in the corridors of power;

2. Civic education is considered as crucially important to raising awareness of women and youth's right to participate in leadership roles and politics;

3. Insecurity is said to be one of the inhibitors that deny women and youth to gain access to leadership positions. Thus, once Somalia becomes a stable country, then women and youth may find a space where they can exert and exercise their leadership;

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4. Another recommendation made from the discussion is that offering training sessions that will bolster women and youth's leadership skills and capabilities. The importance of these training sessions is recognized as they will enable women and youth to play active roles in Somalia's politics and demand full inclusion;

5. It is also recommended that women and youth need to learn the art of politics, their rights, religion and culture so that they can equally compete with men and get their fair share in politics;

6. Unity among women and youth was also recommended to garner collective support for their inclusion in Somalia's politics;

7. Society as well as the public need to debunk the false perceptions towards women and youth leaders. It is stated that the public often do not support the inclusion of women and youth in the leadership. Women and youth do have leadership skills and have unique experiences which will add more value to Somalia's politics;

8. The important roles which the media can play in reversing false perceptions and beliefs towards women and youth were also raised and it is recommended that women and youth in Somalia need to use the media to educate and raise the awareness of the public about their rights including their right to participation in decision-making processes. The media can inform the public that women and youths possess unique leadership skills and experiences that are mostly needed in the country to rise above the ashes, and they can positively contribute to the rebuilding of the country;

9. It is recommended to women and youth to use the media to facilitate and promote public debates and discussions that will advocate for women and youth's roles in politics and leadership positions;

10. It is recommended for women to document pioneer women's lives and find ways to educate the public about the important contributions and roles that such women have played in national liberation, post liberation, during the conflict and post-conflict efforts to rebuild of Somalia. The documentation of the lives of heroic women will be a reminder to the public that Somali women have been the backbone of this society and without their full inclusion in the efforts of nation rebuilding, socially, economically and politically, there will be no genuine and durable rebuilding and peace.

Creating safe and effective dialogue space for marginalized groups including women and youth is essential for their empowerment

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