REPORT

SOMALI WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP- EVIDENCE AND OPPORTUNITIES

EAST AFRICA RESEARCH FUND (EARF)

June 2017

Senators belonging to the Upper House cast their votes to determine the Speaker of the Upper House, as well as the two Deputy Speakers, during an election in Mogadishu, Somalia, on January 22, 2017. AMISOM Photo / Tobin Jones

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SUMMARY

This report synthesises findings from an eleven month qualitative research project (August 2016 - June 2017), carried out by Social Development Direct and Forcier Consulting, and funded by the Research and Evidence Division (RED) within the UK government's Department for International Development (DFID). The research aims to provide evidence on the principal enabling and constraining factors for Somali women's participation and leadership in government and political structures, and offers insight on the strategies and circumstances under which Somali women have, and have not, accessed and influenced within these spaces.

Key findings

Drawing on key informant interviews and group workshops with women and men working in government, women leaders in civil society and business, women in the security sector, religious and clan leaders, and university students, this research identified consensus across the following key findings:

1. Political representation and influence

- The majority of research participants discussed the ways in which the introduction of the 2016 **30% parliamentary gender quota** in Somalia marked **a significant and important step towards women's equal political representation**. At the same time, whilst Somaliland's claim to independence remains unrecognised, the political trajectory there has diverged significantly from that in the south and east, with no quota for women in place in spite of a concerted campaign in favour of such a system.

- However, women in the political and civil society space were also emphatic that **gender quotas will not necessarily translate into meaningful influence** and impact for women, emphasising that they must be seen as a starting point rather than an end goal.

- Research participants highlighted the importance of building a pipeline of viable female political candidates by **strengthening education and training opportunities for girls and young women** at a grassroots level (in leadership and civic rights in particular), and providing access to 'hard' resources such as **political finance** for those women less able to access the funds needed to run for office. In addition, there was consensus that women already working in government need to be **better supported to influence and operate effectively**.

- Overall participants strongly agreed that there is a need to **build more inclusive government institutions** by introducing quotas at multiple levels of government (in particular within the civil service and within local level government), as well as supporting merit-based recruitment and promotion.

2. Sociocultural norms and expectations

- The **politicisation of clan identity (clannism)** was perceived to be one of the most significant barriers to women's political participation and leadership across the majority of research participants. Both men and women described that women are seen as unreliable representatives in the political arena, because of their dual affiliation to their father's and husband's clan.

- Women operating in business, politics and civil society commonly described support for a **movement towards a one-person-one-vote electoral system** as a key strategy to counter this issue.

- Women who have successfully entered the political space highlighted the ways in which they have partly overcome problems of clannism, by leveraging supportive **relationships with male clan leaders and other male power-holders within and outside of the political system**, in addition to strengthening and maintaining their **support base within their communities**.

- Men and women broadly agreed that there is significant **'cultural stigma'** attached to women entering government and politics, and in particular adopting positions of leadership. However, the gendered norms and expectations, which delegitimise women in this context, do not necessarily appear to be static.

- The **role of religion in shaping women's experiences of leadership was contested by participants**. Some people linked cultural norms and stigma to certain elements of Islamic jurisprudence, which they interpreted as prohibiting women from taking on presidential roles or positions of senior leadership including as judges or Imams.

- However, a selection of participants, including some religious leaders, emphasised the importance of making a clear distinction between 'culture' and 'religion', underlining that there is no part of Islam, which prohibits women entering politics.

- Male participants were particularly **supportive of women working in certain government sectors**, including education and finance, highlighting women's higher levels of **professional integrity** (as compared to men).

- There was a lack of consensus across participants' views on whether the space for women's political empowerment has broadly increased or decreased. **Women from or connected to the diaspora described their ability to navigate beyond cultural restrictions**, and a selection of women in government described **growing up in gender-positive family environments with supportive role models** (in particular supportive fathers), which they believed to have helped grow their aspirations and confidence to enter politics, in addition to giving them specific exposure to political and professional environments.

3. Activism and collective action

- Women in government commonly described **personal histories of political and social activism**, and highlighted a desire to maintain links with civil society, particularly on shared interests around strengthening women's political rights. These women also emphasised that the learning and exposure they had received through their experiences working in civil society, directly helped them to enter their current positions.

- However, particpants from both civil society and government highlighted that **women's organisations and female politicians are not necessarily working well together towards a common goal** and, at worst, there is a culture of competition between and across these groups.

- Many of the women interviewed called for women and male allies to work more closely together within civil society and political circles, and **strengthen locally-led linkages between politics and civil society** in order to enhance legitimacy and traction around the around women's political empowerment (WPE) agenda.

Implications for policy and programming

In consideration of this research's key findings, and the available global and Somali-specific literature, a series of implications for policy and programming are outlined:

1. Promote more inclusive institutions

- Strengthening **structural and institutional reforms** should help grow more enabling and inclusive institutions. This could involve merit-based recruitment and promotion which, along with greater incentives, would encourage the inclusion of women in positions of legitimate influence across different levels of government.

- Supporting **alternatives to the 4.5 power-sharing formula** may also provide important opportunities for more inclusive power-sharing, and bodies such as the parliamentary Women's Caucus may be well placed as a vehicle to support consultation and advocacy around this agenda.

- Working to **regulate electoral finances** would also be a key way to support the inclusion of women who do not have access to financial resources, but have a desire to run for office.

2. Foster women's political leadership skills and capacities

- Developing **'hard skills' in negotiation, influencing and consensus building**, and growing **technical expertise** could help women work with legitimacy in key sectors and at all levels.

- Supporting **leadership training and mentorship**, linked to positive role models, in addition to creating **regular and safe platforms for public dialogue and debate**, should further support women to hold and employ power safely.

3. Support movement towards more transformative gender norm change

- Shifting discriminatory gender norms, which prohibit women's political empowerment may be well supported through **critical thinking and consensus-based dialogue** in the Somali context, helping individuals and communities to frame the WPE agenda in new and constructive ways.

- This involves, critically, opening up the location of power and decision-making, and **strategic engagement with clan and religious leaders** may be a particularly helpful strategy in this respect.
- **Media campaigns** which promote examples of successful and powerful women, in addition to **scaling up girls' education**, may also help to shape aspirations and expectations around women leaders.

4. Support the coordination of locally-led collective feminist action

- Donors and partners should be encouraged to work with locally anchored organisations and invest in efforts to foster inclusion and diversity within and between women's groups and networks. They are also well placed to **support women to organise around common interests and problems**, and **facilitate connections** among different organisations in support of the WPE agenda.
- This could specifically involve supporting the **coordination of local movements** and a more cohesive feminist agenda, and **promoting grassroots awareness-raising for women on their political and social rights**.

5. Commission further research

This research has identified a number of key areas where conducting further research may provide valuable insights. These efforts could look to consider:

- o **Regional and local variations** across this study's key findings.
- o How **non-diaspora and minority women** navigate political barriers and opportunities, and how support can be more effectively provided to them.
- o How participation, power and influence impact on women operating at **different levels of government**, with a specific focus on unpacking the experiences of women operating at the **local level**, and how this translates upstream to influence at regional and federal levels.
- o The intersections between influence and leadership within **public and private spheres**.
- o The role of **gender-based violence** in relation to women's political participation and leadership.

1. INTRODUCTION

Women globally face a "double hurdle" to power, with "formidable obstacles" restricting their access to decision-making positions and processes, as well as their ability to influence within them (O'Neil and Domingo, 2016: 9). Critics have asserted that the international community has placed an over-emphasis on women's presence in public life and formal elected office as a marker of genuine power (see Combaz, 2016). However, as emerging evidence reveals, women's meaningful political access and influence crucially involves strengthening the inclusivity of structural and institutional environments, in addition to supporting transformative changes in women's capabilities and common beliefs and expectations about women and men (see O'Neil and Domingo, 2016).

Contributing to a key evidence gap in the Somali context, research carried out in 2016/17 by Social Development Direct and Forcier Consulting for the UK Department for International Development's (DFID) Research and Evidence Division (RED), examines the enablers and constraints for Somali women's political participation and leadership within government and political structures. Despite a strong history of activism centred on increasing women's political rights, and valued roles in clan activities and local peacebuilding processes, Somali women have not experienced notable increases in their formal political power or status.

Further, available evidence suggests where women have successfully entered the political sphere, these trajectories have been predominantly forged by women belonging to an urban middle-class, often with diasporic backgrounds and experiences of higher education abroad (Ingiriis and Hoehne, 2013: 328).

Synthesising findings from this new research, and providing insight on the strategies and circumstances under which Somali women have, and have not, been able to access and influence in the political space in Somalia and Somaliland[1], this report provides:

- A summary of the **research approach**, including discussion of the study's methodology and analytical framework **(Section 2)**;

- An overview of **women's political empowerment** at the global level, and women's current levels of political representation in **Somalia and Somaliland (Section 3)**;

- Discussion of the **key findings** from this research, complemented with evidence from the wider literature relating to the enabling and constraining factors for Somali women's political participation and leadership **(Section 4)**;

- A series of **policy and programming implications (Section 5)**.

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[1] In 1991 Somaliland declared independence from the rest of the country and began building up its own state apparatus. However, it is not recognised by the UK or other stakeholders in the international community.

2. RESEARCH APPROACH

The **methodology** for this qualitative research study involved:

1. A **comprehensive literature review**, which drew on systematic review principles and consisted of a review of both academic and grey literature;

2. **A mapping exercise** to identify women operating in government at federal, regional, and local level;

3. **Qualitative research** involving key informant interviews and group workshops, which were conducted from November 2016 to March 2017 in Hargeisa, Garowe, and Mogadishu. A total of 60 interviews and 3 group workshops were carried out with women and men working in government, women leaders in civil society and business, women in the security sector, religious and clan leaders, and university students.

Drawing on a review of global and Somali specific literature, the study's **analytical framework**, was informed by two key pillars:

1. **Individual and collective capabilities** to take on leadership roles, and how these can be enhanced with a consideration of factors, including level of education, role models, relationship with parents, and access to support networks;

2. **Structural and systemic factors (the 'enabling environment')** including an exploration of formal political and institutional factors, civil society structures and sociocultural norms.

As part of the analysis process, **"what works" for policy and programming** in the Somalia and Somaliland case was also interrogated.

The research team specifically introduced a **participatory life course analysis tool** as a mechanism to understand more about participants' subjective experiences and life stories.

As such this study was designed primarily as an in-depth exploration of women's experiences. Using a participatory life course tool helped provide further understanding not only of what people think and do in relation to women's political participation and leadership, but also why they think this. In some cases perceptions may not necessarily reflect an objective reality, but they are nevertheless equally valid and useful. Due to the sensitive nature of this study's content this report has carefully anonymised research findings.

As a small qualitative study there are a number of limitations and gaps across this study. For example, in providing an in-depth exploration of the perceptions and experiences of Somali women, this study did not capture a large enough sample or breadth of data to draw rigorous comparisons between regions and across different levels of government, with a particular lack of data on women operating within local government.

Further, insecurity around the elections in addition to the scale-up of activities associated with the drought response, also meant the research team were unable to reach as many interviewees as planned. Where comparisons have been notable they have been highlighted, and a selection of gaps have been highlighted as areas for further research in this report's concluding section.

Where appropriate this report has drawn on findings from Walls et al's recently completed ESRC/DFID-funded research on the gendered dimensions of Somaliland's political settlement (Walls et al, 2017) in attempt to clearly treat the Somaliland context as distinct from Somalia. With a qualitative study of this kind, additional methodological limitations could include self-selection and self-censorship, and a lack of data at the local level may have contributed to a level of bias across these research findings.

3. FRAMING THIS STUDY: WOMEN'S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT AND THE SOMALI CONTEXT

'Women's political empowerment' (WPE)

i) At the global level

Understanding WPE

Evidence reveals that women have more decision-making power and influence over aspects of their political, social and economic lives than ever before, but progress is uneven across and within regions and countries, and resistance and backlash are common (O'Neil and Domingo, 2016). However, despite having a growing understanding of the number of women operating in public decision-making, trajectories of women's political influence and leadership are "mostly still poorly documented or explained" (Domingo et al, 2015: 2).

As Domingo et al (2015) highlight, the evidence base on women and politics largely considers how participation is achieved in the political space rather than unpacking the political processes by which women influence. Central to a consideration of women's political participation and leadership, the concept of 'women's political empowerment' (WPE) captures women's ability to articulate their concerns and have their interests represented, in addition to being able to critically influence decision-making.

WPE is also about understanding where power and decision-making are located in both formal and informal spaces and how women can be supported to access and influence these processes. In this respect, WPE may extend beyond women's representation and influence in political office to capture women's experiences in areas, including civil society, business and service delivery.[2] Whilst this study has focused on women's participation and leadership within government structures, understanding the broader context of WPE as related to both women's access and influence, in addition to the central consideration of formal and informal power, is key.

Political analysis

Of note, concepts of WPE speak to feminist perspectives on power, which reveal that debates on 'thinking and working politically' (TWP) and political economy analysis (PEA) have "missed one of the most significant systems shaping power relations worldwide: gender" (Koester, 2015: 1). This "at best superficial consideration of gender" means that PEA and the TWP agenda are "blind to key components of the workings of power: the ways in which power and politics in the 'private' sphere shape and are influenced by power relations at all levels of society", and, "the ways in which wider economic, political and social structures rely on and reproduce gender power relations"; (Koester, 2015: 1).

As Hudson and Leftwich emphasise in their discussion of 'political analysis', current political economy approaches "lack the analytical tools needed to grasp the inner politics of development", whereby political economy has come to be seen narrowly as the "economics of politics" and as such misses what is "distinctively political about politics – power, interests, agency, ideas, the subtleties of building and sustaining coalitions" (2014: 5).

In broad terms, the donor and international community continue to build their approaches around over-simplified models of empowerment, and are failing to support approaches that address power and political economy and adapt to specific contexts and inequalities (see Combaz, 2016). In addition, a significant gap exists between the political settlements literature and the mainstream feminist literature on women in politics (see ESID, 2014).

ii) Somalia and Somaliland

The conflict context

WPE in Somalia and Somaliland exists against a backdrop of protracted conflict and crisis. Driven by a fracturing of power, which has been decentralised and divided amongst clans and political elites, the conflict has developed from civil war in the 1980s through the collapse of the state and the regime of Siad Barre, to clan factionalism and the proliferation of warlords in the 1990s, and a new globalised conflict in the 2000s with the rise of Islamist militancy (see Bradbury and Healy, 2010).

There have been notable developments since 2012, particularly the establishment of a post-transitional government committed to reconciliation and peacebuilding based on a provisional constitution. This relative stability is offering opportunities to strengthen the federal government, consolidate control, and enter into an effective power-sharing structure for the central state (UNICEF, 2014). In 1991 Somaliland declared independence from the rest of the country and began building up its own state apparatus.

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[2] Collective thinking expressed by the Women's Participation and Leadership Working Group as part of the Gender and Development Network (GADN).

However, it is not recognised by the UK or other stakeholders in the international community. Since 1998 Puntland has similarly developed a more stable independent governing structure through grassroots initiatives, though that region remains committed to remaining within the Somali federal structure.

An evolving context for women's rights

Whilst there is a growing body of literature examining Somali women's roles in statebuilding and peacebuilding processes, there has been relatively little documented around women's specific engagement within formal government structures and politics. The majority of literature in this space has explored the unconventional and indirect ways in which women have promoted peace, rights, and restored law, largely at the community level.

These findings obscure Somali women's strong history in advocating for their political rights and leadership opportunities dating back at least to the final days of the colonial period, when representative assemblies were being formed by Italian and British administrations in preparation for independence. As Ingiriis (2015) has highlighted, there is a lack of evidence showcasing women's historical engagement prior to the Barre regime, including women's contributions to the nationalist movement (1943-1960), which provide an important foundation for understanding the current context of women's movements in both Somalia and Somaliland.

The Barre regime (1969-1991) has been described by some scholars as a 'golden era' for women (discussed in Ingiriis and Hoehne, 2013; Torunn et al, 2015) with the government's 'scientific socialism' rolled out at a time when all other social organisations and political parties were banned, as reflected in the establishment of the Somali Women's Democratic Organisation (SWDO), the 'women's section' of Barre's Somali Revolutionary Socialist Party in 1977 (Mohamud, 2014). The government also sought to improve healthcare and education for women during this time and several laws were introduced, including the Family Law of 1975, guaranteeing in part, equal rights to inheritance in contradiction to Sharia'h law and the customary (xeer) law, which triggered outrage across the religious community (Mohamud, 2014).

However, these arguably progressive gains are shown to have shifted over the second decade of Barre's regime, where women are said to have been instrumentalised by Barre, and used as a tool to legitimise his authority and consolidate his power (Ingiriis, 2015). Following the overthrow of the regime, the civil war period marked a moment of significant transformation for women and their associated rights and freedoms.

Some critics have argued that the breakdown of the old order gave women new spaces for social, political and economic engagement, however, the evidence base around this is limited and provides mixed insight (see Ingiriis and Hoehne, 2013). Literature reveals the growing role of women's rights organisations and the women's movement during this time, highlighting in particular, opportunities around the parliamentary gender quota and the Sixth Clan political movement led by Asha Haji Elmi, which eventually secured a 12% quota for women in the 2004 Transitional Federal Parliament (TFP).

Despite the quota not being reached, critics have argued that it helped to importantly increase the visibility of advocacy around women's political rights and inspire and motivate women to continue fighting for equal representation. Tripp (2016) has also discussed the ways in which post-conflict transitions in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly since the 2000s, have had a significant and independent influence on women's formal rights and levels of political representation, and in the Somali context from 2000, women became even more engaged in grassroots and national-level peacebuilding initiatives.

Regional variations

In more recent years representative politics has seen a tightening of the formulae used to determine clan representation, and a consequent closing of opportunities for women. This trend has been somewhat mitigated by the increasing wealth, autonomy and education of some women, factors which contributed to a record field of 140 female candidates in the 2012 local council elections in Somaliland (Kibble and Walls, 2013: 16).

Indeed, there has been a steady, but modest, growth in the participation of women in formal politics in Somalia. For example, in Puntland, women have limited representation at regional and federal level, but have secured 17% representation within local councils and have formed the Puntland Women Councillors Network (Koshin, 2016: 11). In the federal parliament of Somalia, the number of women represented has increased significantly, which has been largely attributed to the successful lobbying efforts around the quota, as described above.

However, in Somaliland progress has been notably much slower due to legal obstacles, the entrenched role of elders and more conservative ideologies. It is in this context that successive proposals for the introduction of a quota in Somaliland have stalled. Serious proposals have been debated prior to each of the elections in Somaliland, from the first 2002 local council vote, through the 2003 (presidential), 2005 (parliamentary), 2010 (2nd presidential) and 2012 (2nd local council) votes, without success.

In 2012, the presidential committee nevertheless recommended that a 15% level be introduced for women in local councils, 10% in the House of Representatives, and 7% in the Guurti[3] (once elections were held). The Bill on Reserved Seats for Women & Excluded Minority Groups was introduced in the lower house in July 2012, but a substantial majority of MPs simply refused to include it on the legislative agenda, effectively side-lining the initiative once again. New evidence has found that a number of MPs were frank in acknowledging their fear that the introduction of a quota would reduce the number of available seats for men, making it harder for incumbents to retain their own seats (Walls et al, 2017: 46).

2016/2017 elections

TABLE: HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE, 2016[4]

Region	Re-elected women MPs	Newly elected women MPs	Total elected women MPs
Somaliland	8	7	15
Somalia:			
South West State	4	10	14
Jubaland	4	6	10
Galmadug	4	5	9
Benadir	2	2	4
Hirshabelle	4	4	8
Puntland	1	5	6

In May 2016 the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and National Leadership Forum (the NLF - a body of regional and national political leaders) agreed on a hybrid electoral college model predicated on a 4.5 clan-based power-sharing formula[5] despite plans for a one-person-one-vote national poll. Elders from 135 clans and sub-clans selected 14,025 members from across the country to vote for 275 MPs in the Lower House (51 members per seat). The Upper House was designed to represent the six federal states although the Somaliland government made clear that it did not accept the seats or those elected to fill them to be provide legitimate representation of Somaliland. In addition, the introduction of a 30% quota of seats legally reserved for women in both houses of the federal parliament was formally approved, driven in part through the efforts of a contingent of female advisers and young diaspora represented within the NLF.

Parliamentary elections were held in Somalia in October and November 2016, resulting in 66 women being elected to the House of the People out of 275 and 13 women being elected out of 54 seats in the Upper House. Despite both Houses falling short of the 30% quota, the proportion of women elected in demonstrates a 47% increase from 2012-16.

In the recently appointed cabinet, 6 women were selected out of 27 positions, and women have now taken charge of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Ports and Marine Transport, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry (the first time this has been allocated to a woman), the Ministry of Women and Human Rights, the Ministry of Health and Social Care, and the Ministry of Humanitarian and Disaster Management (a newly created post). After a number of delays and postponements, the Somali presidential election was held in February 2017 resulting in the election of former Prime Minister Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed for a four year term.

Whilst observers have noted an expansion in participation, coverage, oversight and scrutiny (in the press and on social media) of the 2016–17 elections (Soliman, 2016), commentators have highlighted that the NLF failed to address "a number of other egregious cases of abuse of the electoral process, including seats reserved for women candidates only that were ultimately taken by male candidates".[6]

Further, notwithstanding increases in women's representation largely at the parliamentary level, the extent to which this has translated into meaningful influence and power is contested. For example, not only is there a notable absence of women in positions of influence, such as Director Generals within ministries, there have been the appointments of candidates with less political experience with key figures losing out on seats.

[3] Traditional Somali elderates (Guurti) was incorporated into the governance structure and formed the Upper House.
[4] Data provided by Wakiil, Transparency Solutions (2017) - a new initiative promoting democracy and open government, https://www.wakiil.org
[5] Power is divided among the four major clan groups plus an alliance of minorities.
[6] Relief Web (2016) 'International Community gravely concerned over decisions of National Leadership Forum on electoral process',http://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/international-community-gravely-concerned-over-decisions-national-leadership-forum

4. KEY FINDINGS: ENABLING AND CONSTRAINING FACTORS FOR SOMALI WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP IN GOVERNMENT AND POLITICAL STRUCTURES

The main enabling and constraining factors for Somali women's participation and leadership in government and political structures are outlined below, drawing on findings from Social Development Direct and Forcier Consulting's primary data. Where appropriate, findings have been contextualised with a brief synthesis of existing relevant evidence and literature.

4.1 Political representation and influence

In summary, the majority of research participants discussed the ways in which the 2016 30% parliamentary gender quota in Somalia has marked a significant and important step towards women's equal political representation. However, participants were also emphatic that the quota will not necessarily translate into meaningful influence and impact for women, and as such should be seen as a starting point rather than an end goal, emphasising the importance of building a pipeline of viable female candidates to enter politics, and critically supporting women to influence and operate once in post.

This speaks to the crucial distinction between women's political representation and political influence, which is underpinned by a need for more inclusive government institutions and shifts in discriminatory organisational cultures. These findings are discussed in more detail below:

> " *The quota has been effective in getting women into politics if that is the end game. If the purpose is for women to have an impact in politics then the 30% isn't effective as of yet. Quotas for the sake of quotas don't mean much.*"
>
> FEMALE, BUSINESS LEADER, MOGADISHU

The 30% quota represents a significant achievement, but is seen by many as a starting point, which does not guarantee women's political influence.

There is a relatively established evidence base highlighting that countries with mandatory reserved seats for women at parliamentary and local levels has translated into the highest levels of women's representation globally (discussed in O'Neil and Domingo, 2016).

However, if poorly designed, gender quotas are unlikely to lead to meaningful change or influence (Krook, 2014 in O'Neil and Domingo, 2016). Somali civil society observers largely agree that the 30% gender quota has led to greater gendered political awareness among Somali women, however, as highlighted by one research participant, *'the 30% quota is a very good initiative but we cannot assess its effectiveness at this point. As women we are happy with what we have achieved although more work is needed'* (female, MP, Mogadishu).

The view that achievements around the quota should be seen as a 'starting point' was broadly echoed across research participants. In many cases participants emphasised that the quota should be both increased to a minimum of 50%, and extended to ensure representation across different levels of government.

In some cases discussions with participants highlighted that the quota had led to the election of female 'placeholders' whereby male counterparts (whether this be husbands or clan leaders) had selected women deliberately unable to yield any legitimate power once elected, including women with *'no political ambitions'* who were seen to be *'tea girls'* (Female, MP, Mogadishu). A selection of participants emphasised that *'younger women are taking the positions of older women as a strategy'* (Female, security sector, Mogadishu) because they were perceived to be more malleable or open to manipulation and direction from the clan.

In addition, there were concerns across a number of participants that the quota was seen as an external and western agenda, whereby, *'[the quota] is not something that is embedded into our constitution therefore there is no guarantee of its durability'* (Female, human rights activist, Mogadishu). A selection of participants also highlighted that the international community had a role to play in terms of raising expectations, and potentially de-legitimising the ownership of the policy, with communities and representatives within government not seeing the quota as *'genuinely pushed for by the women'* and in contradictory terms, *'the international community is pushing for this when they don't even abide by it in their own elections'* (Female, consultant, Mogadishu).

Wider literature reveals a strong narrative among political elites that the quota is seen to be an 'outside' rather than a 'Somali' agenda even though many Somali women activists refute this. For example, whilst Somaliland has a stronger history of women's political participation, the perception that the quota and interventions designed to support women's rights generally are a western agenda is strong and seems to be growing (Walls et al, 2017). This issue seems to be two-fold: people perceive a concern for women's participation as 'western' anyway, but even those who support the intent of such interventions tend to complain that they are poorly tailored to Somali needs (ibid).

> " *The main problem is not about women getting this 30% but actually it's more about getting women prepared for this. Most of them don't get what is like to be in leadership so this will get us back to where we started."*
>
> FEMALE, CIVIL SERVANT, GAROWE

Women's capacity to influence and lead in the political space requires political skills and finance.

As outlined, the global evidence tells us little of how women navigate the intersection of formal institutions (quota systems, political party systems, regime types) and the informal rules and networks of political decision-making to meaningfully influence in politics (see Domingo et al, 2015). O'Neil and Domingo (2016) further underline that women with political influence often rely significantly on "political skills" acquired through experiences outside of formal politics (see also Cornwall and Goetz, 2005; Tadros, 2014).

A large section of research participants described that initiatives such as the quota are of limited use if women are not adequately skilled on how to operate the multiple 'informal' processes and politicking at play once they are in post. For example, as one male civil servant suggested *'it's like asking someone to drive a car but the reality is they have never driven one before'* (Male, civil servant, Garowe). In some specific cases this was linked to a lack of viable role models for young women, whereby, *'women are not coached enough when younger to take leadership positions'* and *'young women also lack role models to emulate in this field'* (Female, political specialist, Mogadishu).

Many of the politically active women interviewed as part of this study also described being influenced by, and learning from, older female role models as young women. In many cases these 'role models' were either a relative, woman from their community, or a well-known female leader in politics or civil society (such as activist Asha Gelle Dirie). In other cases, research participants linked the accumulation of 'political skills' to the exposure they received through experiences overseas. In many cases these women were from, or closely connected to the diaspora.

Research that specifically looks at the influence of women diaspora in successfully affecting change and opening up domestic political space for women in conservative, patriarchal systems has been minimal. In the Somali case, a large body of literature has emphasised the lack of educated and viable female candidates as significantly hindering the recruitment of women into positions of political power (see for example Timmons 2004). Yet, even the capacity of women diaspora to both seek political positions and affect the discourse is constrained by the prominence of exclusive, male-dominated political networks (The EU Somalia Unit and DFID, 2012; Menkhaus, 2011).

Nevertheless, perceptions that the diaspora have strengthened capacity (or perceived strengthened capacity) to operate within senior levels was noted across this research, with a selection of participants underlining the ways in which having been educated and working professionally in 'the West' was seen to have more weight and value across peers and people of influence within government structures. One male participant working in government suggested of MP recruitment that *'some prefer diaspora because they are better educated'* (Male, civil servant, Garowe). Further, the insular nature of the diaspora and their networks was highlighted by a number of individuals, as one participant stated, *'at the management (in Ministries) level you're taken more seriously as a woman, but that's because you mainly deal with other diaspora.'* (Female, consultant, Mogadishu).

Beyond the accumulation of skills, access to 'hard' resources – specifically finances - may be an important factor influencing women's access and negotiation power once in post, and elite women are more likely to have access to such financial resource. In sum, women's political power is strongly associated with their economic power (O'Neil and Domingo, 2016). In the Somali context politicians are frequently business people and vice versa, and lucrative government contracts are also awarded to business friends (Saferworld, 2012, discussed in Browne and Fisher, 2013: 14).

De Waal (2015) emphasises that the political marketplace is hegemonically masculine, but suggests that this may provide new opportunities for the equalisation of women in the transaction of political loyalties that transcend legal frameworks (as has occurred in Somalia during the parliamentary and presidential elections). Many participants from this research emphasised that access to money was an important factor relating to women's access to positions in government, and that women are often unable to compete with men on these grounds. In one unique case a female candidate emphasised that *'I have a big name, I have not paid for that, I've worked hard [...] I can compete with the men without paying anything'* (Female, MP, Mogadishu). But even in this case, she had also been a powerful business woman.

There are opportunities to strengthen the inclusivity and transparency of political institutions and address discriminatory organisational culture.

Platforms such as the NLF in theory provide opportunities to help strengthen the inclusivity of government structures and women's political representation, but the legitimacy of this body has been questioned. For example, Koshin (2016) has highlighted shortcomings within the Somali electoral model, including the absence of a legislative framework for the electoral process, and the fact that the NLF is not recognised by the Constitution.

This was echoed through a large proportion of participants from this research who felt that *'women's participation has not been a priority for the NLF'* (Female, security sector, Mogadishu), and that *'the NLF is limiting women's participation'* (Female, political specialist, Mogadishu). Participants felt that *'even though the system is somehow modernised the people who are working there are still the same people'* (student group workshop, Garowe).
Several research participants also described occasions where the Federal Electoral Implementation Team (FEIT) and State-Levels Electoral Implementation Teams (SEIT) had not fulfilled their mandate, whereby *'the SEIT has to inform you that the election will be on, but no one called me. I did not show up because no one told me the election was occurring; this is the way they were able to exclude people from the electoral process'* (Female, contesting MP seat, Mogadishu).

Walls et al highlight that there are "mixed results from institutional reforms in development contexts", which has led to an acceptance that it is not simply a case of 'getting the institutions right', but very much about a "political and politically-dependent process" (2017: 14). Further, as Waylen (2014) states, institutions are specifically gendered, which happens both "nominally" through gender capture (more men occupying positions of power than women) and "substantively", which means that "even increasing the numbers of women may not necessarily make a substantial difference as institutions are gendered through numerous mechanisms that result in gender bias" (discussed in Walls et al, 2017: 14).

This speaks to O'Neil and Domingo's finding that "[i]n the short to medium term, women's presence in decision-making forums does not appear to change the gendered culture of public institutions and behaviour of public officials" (2016:29), and draws attention to the fact that whilst the formalised frameworks of institutions are important, it is the organisational culture that sits within this, which may be as important in affecting women's political participation and resultant leadership.

These findings were critically represented in this research, which found agreement across participants that beyond the operations of platforms such as the NLF, FEIT and SEIT, cases of sexism and harassment are notable. As one activist highlighted, *'there are so many challenges in government positions and one of them is sexual harassment [...] I heard so many stories from my female colleagues from different departments and I made the decision to leave the job. Most of the females hide it and continue working and other just leave the jobs'* (Female, activist, Garowe). In contrast, one female participant described the ways in which her manager had treated her fairly and operated on a merit-based system of recruitment and promotion, suggesting that these practices are not endemic.

4.2 Sociocultural norms and expectations

In summary, a significant portion of research participants saw the politicisation of clan identity - clannism - to be one of the most significant barriers to women's political participation and leadership. This research found that women who had successfully entered the political space were partly able to overcome this challenge, by leveraging supportive relationships with progressive male clan leaders and other male power-holders within and outside of the political system in support of their candidacies, in addition to strengthening their status within their communities through regular engagement.

This research also found that participants commonly described significant 'cultural stigma' attached to women entering government, and in particular taking on positions of leadership, but norms and expectations do not appear to be static.

Women operating in the political space described growing up in gender-positive family, which they saw to have helped grow their aspirations and confidence to enter politics, in addition to giving them specific exposure to political and professional environments. These findings are discussed in more detail below:

" The one and the only challenge is clan leaders' perceptions about women representing them in politics."

FEMALE, SENIOR CIVIL SERVANT, GAROWE

Clannism is seen to represent one of the most significant barriers to women's political participation and leadership.

Clans in Somalia and Somaliland are culturally consensual identities inherited from patriarchal ancestors, within which power is differentiated along gender and age lines with women subjugated to men, and young to old (see for example, Gardner and Warsame, 2004; Torunn et al, 2015). The status of women within the Somali clan structure is widely understood to have "remained in place, despite the social, political, and economic changes brought on by colonialism, post-independence state-building, and civil war" (Rayale et al, 2015).

Tripp highlights that one of the biggest "stumbling blocks" to women's advancement in politics has been clan politics, and the fact that clan continues to underpin distributive politics and remains "the main vehicle through which one can access political power in Somalia" (2016: 100). Women are formally excluded from clan discussion and decision-making structures.

In a political system predicated on balancing power between clan and sub-clan groups, as Somalia's is, women are therefore disadvantaged because the exclusion they experience in clan structures is directly mirrored in formal politics.

The space for women to participate actively in politics – indeed, in most leadership positions – has diminished as the clan has come increasingly to determine the right of individuals to gain candidacy for office, including a shift within federal Somali structures towards a voting system of fixed proportional representation by clan as a means of reducing disagreements over representation and clan hegemony (Browne and Fisher, 2013). Despite a period from 2006 to 2011 when Islamist movements and other interests "partially eroded clan as the main organising principle in Somalia", clannism has "made a vigorous return and today is the most powerful driver of political

calculations and group behaviour" (Browne and Fisher, 2013: 2), and the proportional representation system is felt to institutionalise and reinforce clannism (Menkhaus, 2011).

Indeed, Somali tradition favours consensus-based politics, which is physically "close" to the local community. The Somaliland experience highlights some of the pitfalls for women in this transition. As highlighted by Walls et al (2017) in Somaliland, although electoral democracy was intended to eliminate tribalism and serve as an alternative to the clan, *'it has turned into an effective tool for spreading tribalism [...] Political parties, elections and democracy have all been misunderstood and misused to the point that they have heightened tribalism to new heights we have never seen before'* (male 61–70, private sector, Sanaag: 59). Walls et al (2017) also find that clannism or tribalism is seen not so much as an 'ideology', but as a 'corruption' of clan, which is increasingly prevalent and undesirable.

This research found strong support across participants that clannism represents one of the most significant barriers to women's political participation and leadership, whereby *'this [political power] goes through clans and as long as that happens, they are the biggest challenge'* (Male, civil servant, Garowe), and as one female MP candidate suggested, *'[clan leaders] do not want women represented at all, if they could, they would remove all the women, they only agreed through pressure from the international community'* (Female, MP candidate, Mogadishu). Many participants positioned these views primarily in relation to clan leaders' perceptions of women's inability to reliably and legitimately 'represent' clan interests. For example, as one civil servant asserted, *'the one and the only challenge is clan leaders' perceptions about women in representing them in politics'* (Female, civil servant, Garowe).

Clan elders yield significant power, and may be involved in processes of political and elite bargaining. Several participants suggested that elders are open to *'whoever pays them most'* (anonymised). In more extreme cases, working against the clan system may pose significant threats to women's safety and protection. For example, in one case a participant emphasised that *'I was competing against a very powerful man as well as a few young women. It was very tough and I faced a lot of intimidation via text message and phone calls telling me that I should step down my candidacy or face the consequences'* (Female, MP, Mogadishu). Participants emphasised a need to more towards politics *'with no clan links'* (Female, MP, Mogadishu) and merit-based systems of appointment and promotion, whereby the *'clan thing needs to be stopped, people need to be selected based on their education and experience'* (Female, political activist, Hargeisa).

" Clan leaders think women can't represent them because eventually she will go to her husband's house and won't benefit them in the future."

Women may indirectly influence the clan and cross-clan lines (through marriage), but their perceived political legitimacy is often only thought of in these terms.

It is "known, accepted, and expected" across Somali sociocultural structures (and its leadership i.e. clan leaders and community elders) that women have an important role to play in their capacity to "exert political influence indirectly through their husbands and their kinsmen" (The Academy for Peace and Development Hargeisa, 2002: 19). Women have also played pivotal roles as intermediaries between their clan of birth and their clan of marriage, and structural roles as peacebuilders (Warasame, 2001; Gundel and Dharbaxo, 2006; Jama, 2010), with their ability to "cross clan lines" through intermarriage, cited as an important factor in organising Somaliland's clan-based conferences that consolidated the rules for building and maintaining peace (see Philips, 2013). This may pose an important distinction in terms of women's political influence, which "may or may not coincide with formal positions of authority" (O'Neil and Domingo, 2016: 4).

Despite opportunities to influence political processes and structures (albeit indirectly), participants across this research almost universally agreed that women's 'dual' clan identity was a barrier to women entering politics, as opposed to an opportunity to be leveraged.

As one male civil servant emphasised, women's transitions across clan lines may conversely leave them in a state of political 'limbo', rather than strengthening their capacity to speak to both their familiar ties, 'once she gets married she will not be counted by her husband's family. This leaves women in the middle with no rights in their own clans' (Male, civil servant, Garowe).

A smaller selection of participants suggested that women from minority clans may be doubly disadvantaged because of their lack of positioning within the current power-sharing model. One participant described her experience of a contested seat, emphasising that 'I should have known that as I was from a minority sub-clan I would never get the seat' (Female, contesting MP seat, Mogadishu).

Women have circumvented clan barriers by leveraging relationships with male power holders and building status in their communities.

O'Neil and Domingo have emphasised that "women's political influence" may be tied to "their ability to make strategic alliances with the men who are often the gatekeepers" (2016: 11). This research found that in some cases women have utilised business influence and wealth, clan connections, or relationships with male power holders in the community to help support their candidacies. In some cases these connections may be familial; in one unique case a candidate whose father was a Malak/Ugaas (King), and whose male siblings were killed, was able to become the clan representative and run for MP as the oldest remaining child. However, this research also found that in some cases where women have successfully used male relationships and connections, this may compromise their perceived legitimacy to represent their communities' interests.

Women working in politics emphasised the importance of securing community support in order to enhance their political legitimacy, as one participant emphasised, 'my community still considers me very young [...] they gave me a chance, but they have reservations and doubts [...] There is still work for me to convince them. Because of this, during my campaign, I went back to my community to campaign at the grassroots level' (Female, MP, Mogadishu). Where women have not secured the support of their communities, this is shown to directly impact on their legitimacy and safety, as one participant described, 'I am unable to go home for any substantial period or move freely because of politics and the perception people have of me' (Female, MP, Mogadishu).

" The number one challenge women are facing in politics is the cultural stigma behind women in power."

Discriminatory gender norms prohibit women's political engagement but evidence suggests they are not static.

Traditional Somali culture is predominately patriarchal, blending nomadic pastoral traditions and norms with Islamic teaching, which interact to form the "shape of culture" in Somalia (UNICEF, 2002). Walls (2013) emphasises that women's roles in customary Somali society have been significantly constrained by the gendered division of labour contained within and enforced through heer (customary) contract.

As outlined in the framing section of this report (section 3.), there is mixed evidence around the extent to which the Barre regime and civil war may have opened or diminished more progressive spaces for women and their associated gender norms and expectations. For example, El-Bushra and Gardner (2016) highlight that the increased economic role played of women since the war has "added to the burden of their responsibilities", which "has not led to any significant increase in their political power or status" (2016: 453). However, whilst their research does not "challenge the basic, structural, and cultural inequality between men and women in Somalia or the profoundly patriarchal nature of Somali society" the authors find that "patriarchy works differently for different groups of men" (El-Bushra and Gardner, 2016: 454). This suggests that gendered norms in this context are not static.

This research found a mix of views (in some cases contradictory) in relation to whether there is a growing or shrinking space for women's legitimacy as political actors or leaders. However in broad terms, there is some agreement that the civil war has impacted women's freedoms negatively. For example, some research participants emphasised that *most of the women fighting for our rights now are women who grew up during the Siad Barre regime, and during this time the system supported them and the confidence they have now came from that era* (Female, MP, Mogadishu). In addition, civil society leaders also made reference to the fact that *it's only my generation and older who believe that yes you are woman and you can do whatever you want. This is what we need to teach young girls, this is not the Somalia we know* (Female, civil society leader, Mogadishu).

This was further echoed by civil servants interviewed in Mogadishu, for example *before the civil war women used to hold all sorts of positions in the government – after the civil war, then men dominated the political world, it became a political cultural whereby women are not at the decision-making table* (Female, civil servant, Mogadishu). However, one clan elder emphasised that *nowadays women have more opportunities in education, jobs and others*, but this was not seen to translate into empowerment within the political space, *for the community, the idea of women getting elected for some positions is still not there* (Male, clan elder, Hargeisa).

There was consensus across research participants that both women and men saw 'cultural' norms as preventing women from accessing positions of power and influence within formal government structures. As summarised by one participant, *it is culturally inappropriate to have women holding high-ranking positions* (Female, security sector, Mogadishu).

A large number of participants linked this to processes of gender socialisation in the household and community more widely, which were seen to inhibit girls' confidence, aspiration, and access to education specifically. This was described by many as the *'root problem'*, which *'starts at home'*, whereby, *'people expect you (as a girl) to be at home on Fridays washing clothes or helping out'* (female, MP, Mogadishu), and *when women are little girls they serve their brothers and once she gets married she still serves her husband so it's something they [men] have always seen, and they ask, why now females wants to lead men? (Men says)?* (Female, civil servant, Hargeisa). This viewpoint was also couched in practical terms for some participants who felt that women currently in government positions had to *'balance home responsibilities and work'* (Female, security sector, Hargeisa), and *women cannot be in two sides - being in politics and being a mother* (university student, Garowe).

Several participants emphasised the ways in which diaspora women are seen to be less vulnerable to cultural restrictions. For example, *local women suffer a lot more than diaspora women and fear repercussions more than we do [there are] different expectations for local girls* (Female, consultant, Mogadishu). One diaspora participant emphasised that *I had to fight to be acknowledged and taken seriously. It helped that I was diaspora as that meant that I was seen to have different cultural references so the strict restrictions didn't apply to us* (Female, political specialist, Mogadishu). However, this was seen to be shifting to some extent, as one participant described, *'locals'* as well as diaspora are beginning to *'push the boundaries'* (Female, consultant, Mogadishu).

A selection of male participants highlighted that women's contributions as leaders should be acknowledged. For example, one male participant suggested that women could in fact be *'great leaders'*, and *let us not forget women's role as mother. They are the base of this nation, they are able to lead nations and bring the best of it* (Male, civil servant, Garowe). However, these participants also commonly identified political power with that which they saw to be inherently 'masculine'.

For example, as one male civil servant emphasised, *women are very emotional so it is wise to keep them away from high roles in government [...] Women can't handle roles like, ministry, directors, president and so on.*

I see women as secretaries and anything below that position, like reception - women are good on welcoming people so these jobs are well suited to them' (Male, civil servant, Hargeisa).

A selection of women in government specifically described their tactics in adopting (perceived) 'male' behaviours in order to help them successfully navigate and influence decision-making once in post. In many cases whilst these strategies appeared to have resulted in some degree of increased influence, they were also associated with backlash, as one participant stated, *'I'm not scared, and that's why they don't want me. They call me dictator'* (Female, MP candidate, Mogadishu). One participant highlighted that, *'what I find often is that women are afraid of being labelled weak and change their character to fit in. Women should remain women and not try to be masculine, their femininity is their asset and could be a great strength'* (Male, political adviser, Mogadishu).

This suggests that 'male' characteristics are not implicitly associated with a capacity to have greater influence, and that strategies which speak to women's distinct (gendered) characteristics may be harnessed to positive effect. This was supported through a selection of participants who felt that women exhibited certain characteristics that made them more desirable colleagues and counter-parts in government roles.

For example, one male civil servant emphasised that *'I have 14 workers 6 of them are female [...] I can tell you that I prefer women's performances on every task'* (Male, civil servant, Garowe). A significant number of participants also emphasised that women were more *'trustworthy'*, and *'honest and not greedy like men. I support them fully'* (Male, clan elder, Somaliland). Further, *'[women] participate in politics in a fair way because they are not corrupted like the men'* (Female, civil servant, Garowe), and *'the more women we have in leadership, the better for our country.*
Our experience has been that men in leadership think only of themselves and will build themselves palatial homes whereas women in any capacity help their community' (Female, MP, Mogadishu).

Several participants also emphasised that women were best suited to particular sectors and civil service positions, whereby *'roles like minister and MPs are not well suited to women. I would like to see women mostly in health section'* (Male, religious leader, Hargeisa), and *'women are better suited in education, health, business and economic growth'* (Male, civil servant, Garowe).

> *" I agree that all women can participate in politics, but they cannot hold big positions like president and so on."*
>
> MALE, CLAN LEADER, GAROWE)

Islamic revival may offer opportunities as well as challenges for women.

Somalia and Somaliland have experienced a "modern Islamic revival" in the decades since independence, with a particular growth in political Islamic movements following the collapse of the Barre regime in 1991. Whilst women are traditionally "not part of the religious enterprise, and their involvement in Islamic education and Islamic activities have long been peripheral" (Abdullahi, 2007), in practice, reformist Islam has served as a foundation for calls to 'modernise' and build cross-clan unity (Walls, 2013).

There has also been a rise in 'modernist' or 'reformist' Islamic movements which "distinguish between religious observation (ibadat) in Islamic law and social relations or regulations (muamalat), which were historically and socially conditioned and thus capable of reinterpretation... resulting in a transformation of their meaning to accommodate and legitimate change" (APD / UNICEF, 2002: 16).

The available literature emphasises that there are regional variances in the interpretations and application of both the Hadith and the Qur'an. Walls et al (2017) find in Somaliland that for some, interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence position women as inherently inferior *'[I]n the Islamic Sharia it is men who have the higher status or worth'* (female, 51-60, pastoralist, no formal education, Sool) (2017: 38).

However, the rise of Somali political Islamic movements may present opportunities for women's public and political participation, rights and influence as in contrast to a more clan-based political and social identity, as the Academy for Peace and Development and UNICEF highlight, "there is no single Islamic text that prevents women from holding a high level political position" (2002: 17).

Critically "political Islam is not monolithic, and doctrinal differences and competition exist between the various Islamist movements" (Abdullahi, 2011), and this has given rise to quite varied positions, with several prominent religious scholars coming out in support of policies such as the gender quota, including Sheikh Aynte, Chairman of the Somali Religious Scholars Council, who has emphasised that "Islam does not block anyone's rights.

No one can take away your right. When it comes to women's quota (representation in parliament), be it 30, 20 or whatever percentage, God does not have any position on it."[7]

This research found that religious leaders interviewed at the federal level Islamic jurisprudence should not be misinterpreted to further political agendas. In addition, a selection of female participants highlighted the ways in which 'religion' was commonly used as a way to describe what they saw to be 'cultural' restrictions on women's participation and political engagement, where *'the community is the biggest challenge because people hide underneath religion'* (Female, civil society leader, Hargeisa), and *'much conflict'* comes from *'people trying to convince you of ideology they claim comes from Islam when it does not'* (Female, civil society leader, Hargeisa).

However, this research identified a small selection of participants who felt that certain tenets of Islamic jurisprudence prevented women from taking on presidential and senior level roles, some of whom located this to a specific Hadith. For example, as one participant emphasised, *'I agree that all women can participate in politics, but they cannot hold big positions like president and so on'* (Male, clan leader, Garowe), and *'women cannot be in president position because in religion it is forbidden'* (Male, religious actor, Hargeisa). These findings have also been similarly highlighted by Walls et al (2017), who found widespread agreement across their participants that women cannot be a judge, imam or president.

" *My family members have really influenced me. My dad was in the military and I had strong women in the family [...] this gave me strength.*"

FEMALE, MP, MOGADISHU

Progressive and supportive family environments (particularly supportive fathers, aunts and husbands) have helped women access and influence in political spaces.

As O'Neil and Domingo emphasise, "family attitudes and environment are key to women's leadership, from childhood through to adolescence and adulthood", and further, "in many settings, women who are politically active and who take on responsibilities outside the home

transgress ideas about what women should do" (2016: 10). This research found that a significant portion of women within government, civil society and business leadership positions emphasised that they had been supported by their families (particularly their fathers) to get an education, and have confidence and self-belief.

For example, *'I still remember my father's motivational words about how women can be great leaders'* (Female, senior civil servant, Hargeisa), and *'my father's role as an Ugaas was very beneficial in my political life, I was able to learn how to lead and be fair to all people'* (Female, MP, Mogadishu). This research also identified a number of references to the influence of aunts, for example, *'my [aunt] was a very active person in politics though it was very rare to see women participation in politics at that time'* (Female, business leader, Garowe), and further *'my aunts were professional people, one of my aunts was a diplomat, the rest graduated from elite universities'* (Female, MP, Mogadishu).

Conversely, mothers were positioned by several participants as more likely to reinforce less progressive norms relating to their daughters, for example, *'my mother was quite different to my father in the way she thought of our future. My mother did not support the idea of going to school or believe in women's abilities'* (Female, civil society leader, Hargeisa).

A number of participants did not reveal their marital status. For those that did, there were noted examples of supportive husbands being seen to support women's political careers through their connections, knowledge and access to resources.

For example, *'my husband who is extremely supportive and provides me with a social safety net [...] I have access to my own and my husband's networks, again allowing me to manoeuvre more'* (Female, business owner, Mogadishu), and *'my husband introduced me to a whole new world, public transportation, new clothing, allowed me to integrate properly'* (Female, legal consultant, Mogadishu).

There were no noted cases of husbands restricting or opposing women's political careers, though a selection of participants described being divorced, widowed or separated, and this seemed to have provided a platform for them to enter politics or civic activism in a more pronounced way. One business leader also described her initial interest in entering the world of politics (having been inspired by her aunt), but concluded that *'unfortunately I got married and gave birth to my children so I did not think about it again'* (Female, business leader, Garowe).

[7] Relief Web (2016) 'Somali religious scholars defend 30 percent quota for women', http://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somali-religious-scholars-defend-30-percent-quota-women; http://so.one.un.org/content/unct/somalia/en/home/presscenter/news/somali-religious-scholars-defend-30-percent-quota-for-women.html

Almost all participants in this research emphasised the importance of girls' education as the primary enabler in growing girls' confidence and skills to pursue political careers. The majority of women occupying roles in government structures interviewed as part of this research had an undergraduate degree at a minimum (several held postgraduate degrees). However, in one case, an MP candidate had not been educated past grade 8.

4.3 Activism and collective action

In summary, women in government interviewed as part of this research commonly described personal histories of political and social activism, and highlighted a desire to maintain links with civil society, particularly on shared interests such as women's political rights. These women also emphasised that the learning and exposure they had received through their working experiences in civil society, directly helped them to enter and stay within their current positions. However, participants in both civil society an government highlighted that women's organisations and female politicians are not working well together towards a common goal, and at worst, there is a culture of competition between them. These findings are discussed in more detail opposite:

Many women working in politics have engaged in, and continue to engage in, civil society activity.

The global evidence is "unequivocal" that women organising with other women is "instrumental to their politicisation and solidarity, as well as for their ability to exert collective power and influence" (Domingo et al, 2015: 93). However, there remains less visibility and evidence around the extent to which this directly translates into women's access to, and influence within, formal government structures. As outlined (section 3.), Somalia and Somaliland have a strong history of women organising around, and advocating for their social and political rights.

This research found that most women working in politics and government had a history of, or continued engagement in some form, of political or civic activism, involving working for, or in some cases setting up their own organisations. In many cases women described specific experience in public debates on themes related to women's empowerment, women's rights and women's political participation. As one female MP described, *'I have always been a political and social activist'* (Female, MP, Mogadishu). Critically, women described the ways in which there experiences in civil society helped them develop skills, connections and exposure to politics, which

they attributed as helping them to access but also operate in their current roles.

" There is no commonly agreed women's agenda – this means getting more women into politics won't have a noticeable impact for women in society."

FEMALE, BUSINESS LEADER, MOGADISHU

There may be opportunities to advance women's political representation and influence if collaboration and collective action is strengthened between women.

SIDRA highlight that despite relatively large scale activity there is a lack of continuity, coordination and sharing of learning and knowledge across women's movements and periods of inactivity, which harms the potential for unity (Koshin, 2016). This research supported this finding, identifying clear consensus among women in both civil society and politics that women's rights organisations (WROs) and activists, as well as women working in government, are seen to ne not working well together towards a common goal, and at worst, there is a culture of competition between them.

For example, one participant described that *'having worked in this field, there is a lot of infighting between different groups of women – all have different alignments […] not united behind anything, even a female cause'* (Female, legal consultant, Mogadishu).

Several participants suggested that if women within government and civil society could come together to form a commonly agreed agenda around enhancing women's' political rights, as demonstrated through the case of advocacy and lobbying around the quota, then this would potentially lead to meaningful impact, whereby *'women tend to be challenging between themselves, I believe if there is unity amongst women, the policies can really work'* (Female, security sector, Mogadishu)..

Some participants further described the ways in which *'women who are in government perpetuate a negative cycle by aligning with broader agendas or worse, male/clan agendas in result placing women no better off for having so many women in politics'* (Female, business leader, Mogadishu). Of note, "not all women leaders advance other women's interests" (O'Neil and Domingo, 2016: 12), and there is not necessarily a direct correlation between women in power and the development of more gender equitable outcomes.

This research also identified that challenges around collaboration may be connected to the extent to which women in government are seen to be 'representative'. As one participant emphasised, there is an important distinction between women in government structures being merely 'present' in contrast to being meaningfully 'represented', whereby *the matter of representation is an interesting one, women are present in politics to a sufficient degree in my view, however, I'm less confident that women are represented as there is no obvious connection between women and their 'representatives''* (Female, business leader, Mogadishu).

This may have specific implications for women from the diaspora, who are more acutely seen to be 'outside' their communities. The diaspora has certainly mobilised critical debates around gender empowerment (the strongest proponents of the 30% quota), interviews with aspiring candidates suggest that the more localised Sixth Clan political movement proved more effective in changing elders' attitudes and practices toward women than the quota movement. These individuals raise concerns that the pressure on the 30% may have actually hindered progress towards long-term acceptance of women in politics – citing an escalation in targeted attacks against women candidates and exclusion from formal processes during the 2016 election period.

A selection of participants from the diaspora further highlighted that *'there are some tensions when dealing with local women in government [...] they harp on the fact that they've sacrificed a lot, "we've been doing this for years"'* (Female, consultant, Mogadishu).

The role and influence of Somali diaspora has been the subject of considerable research – particularly their critical role in funding and driving peace processes through 'social remittances' including Somaliland's Borama conference in 1993 and the wider Somali event in Djibouti in 2001. (Hoehne et al., 2011).

Yet, less studied, has been the impact of larger numbers of diaspora that have secured political positions in Somaliland and the FGS. (The EU Somalia Unit and DFID, 2012: 50). Scholars' uncertainty globally over the actual impact of diaspora certainly applies to the Somali context. While diaspora members are expected to promote democratic values, there is little evidence that they have had tangible impact on Somalia's political and civic democracy as of 2010 (Ibrahim, 2010). As the Somali case suggests, it is a difficult balancing act to both harness the skills of the transnational community without alienating local people by taking away jobs, opportunities or by reshaping the political landscape (Hammond, 2013).

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PROGRAMMING

Evidence shows us that there are multiple pathways towards women's political empowerment in different countries (see Krook, 2010) and that the "political economy of women's decision-making power means that there can be no set recipe for women's empowerment; it is peculiar to time and place" (O'Neil and Domingo, 2016: 32). However, research and experience reveal that a selection of "key ingredients" may prove impactful across settings, such as working with families and communities to challenge discriminatory norms, expanding women's access to education, increasing women's ownership and control over assets, and supporting women's political apprenticeship and collective strength in feminist and mainstream organisations (discussed in O'Neil and Domingo, 2016: 32).

Considering these "ingredients" in the Somali specific context, and drawing on the key findings from this research a selection of key implications for policy and programming are outlined below. It is suggested that these implications are situated within a broader framing of women's political participation and leadership agenda in terms of 'women's political empowerment' (WPE) and public leadership, which situates this work within a rights-based approach, and resonates with broader global frameworks, including the Sustainable Development Goals (see Global Goals 5 and 16), the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda (see UNSCR 1325), and mainstreamed women's empowerment goals and language.

5.1 Promote more inclusive institutions

Women's meaningful participation and leadership in public life requires structural and institutional reform, and as O'Neil and Domingo highlight, "changes in formal rules and addressing gender imbalances in public institutions are important conditions for women to have decision-making power" (2016: 32). Creating more enabling institutions, processes and working cultures, involves building civil and political rights, reforming discriminatory laws, electoral and party reform, shifting sexist attitudes and practices towards women in public life, as well as developing formal platforms and mechanisms, such as quotas and opportunities to participate in constitutional reform.[8]

Implications

✓ **Support alternatives to the 4.5 power-sharing formula in Somalia.**

Movement towards one-person-one-vote elections should not be seen as a 'magic bullet' and will critically require a number of different policy platforms, in addition to civic education programmes. While discussions are already occurring on moving towards a broader representative system for 2020 that would in theory support a quota, further dialogue is needed regarding regulations and criteria surrounding how these seats would be awarded. Bilateral discussions should be ongoing between donor governments and the FGS, and with multi-donor forums such as Somalia Donor Group sub-groups focused on governance and democratisation issues.

The UK funded UN Joint Programme on Local Governance (JPLG) also provides a platform for the UK to work with other donors (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, European Commission), the FGS and civil society on what alternatives could look like and how they would be developed and implemented. Discussions of this nature should begin as soon as possible (and are likely already happening) to allow plenty of time for consultation and development prior to 2020.

✓ **Support efforts in Somaliland to establish a quota system for all elected bodies, at a meaningful level.**

There is meaningful support for the introduction of electoral quotas in Somaliland, built up over many years, albeit thus far unsuccessful. While the number of groups associated with efforts to establish quotas in different levels of government are numerous, there is a core of established and a growing number of younger activists who need assistance in forging stronger links and in developing realistic and detailed models for quota implementation given differing electoral systems.

Recent efforts to institute quotas have foundered in part on the adoption of electoral mechanisms, most notably the open list employed in 2012, that have been seen to make the implementation of such quotas difficult. Assistance in developing the capacity to quickly address such technical issues would help get around the resistance of reluctant politicians.

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8 Collective thinking expressed by the Women's Participation and Leadership Working Group as part of the Gender and Development Network (GADN).

✓ **Help to strengthen the parliamentary Women's Caucus in Somalia and establish an equivalent forum in Somaliland.**

Reviving the Women's Caucus may also provide a key vehicle for advocacy and consultation on more inclusive power-sharing, and could be taken forward with WROs who previously worked on this initiative. Specific engagement with UNDP's Rule of Law programme may present an opportunity to take forward work on this issue, in addition to engaging with the Somali Women Parliamentarian's Association (SOWPA). In a recent conference (April 2017) actors met to discuss ways to strengthen the agenda of women members of parliament and to address the challenges they face, during which the Chair of the Somalia Women Parliamentary Caucus, Hon. Bibi Khalif Mohamed, "welcomed the conference as an indication that the country's democracy is maturing".[9]

Similar efforts to establish something equivalent to a Women's Caucus in Somaliland have periodically gained traction through the efforts of organisations such as the Nagaad Network, but have also failed to achieve a durable result. Somaliland-specific work to promote the formation of such a forum would be beneficial in promoting more coherent action around issues such as the introduction of electoral quotas, as mentioned above.

✓ **Support merit-based recruitment and promotion and incentives.**

Understanding that institutions are gendered, which may result in gendered biases, efforts focused on supporting inclusive and gender-sensitive promotion and recruitment of women into government positions to help shift negative and discriminatory working cultures are critical. The parliamentary gender quota in Somalia is an important first step in this regard, but importantly needs to be accompanied with meaningful incentives, which encourage the inclusion of women in positions of genuine influence across different levels of government.

Donors and partners could specifically look to engage with the UNDP-led Capacity Development Programme, Strengthening Institutional Performance (SIP) to this end.

✓ **Work to regulate electoral finances.**

Working towards regulating electoral finances could help to alleviate challenges associated with women who may have less access to financial resources being disadvantaged in pursuing political ventures and candidacy. For example, workshops carried out by the Puntland Development Research Centre (PDRC) found that participants were very supportive of setting up a 'Sanduuq dhaqaale', which literally means the establishment of a "fund raising account" to support women who have political ambition or vision, as well as funds to run local civil society movements (see PDRC, 2014). Support to an initiative of this nature would need to be ideally channelled through local civil society groups so as not to undermine the legitimacy of a candidate's campaign.

5.2 Foster women's political leadership skills and capacity

Central to the long-term development of skills and capacities that women need to access, hold and employ power safely, are 'hard skills' in negotiation, influencing and consensus building and in the technical expertise to enable them to work with legitimacy in key sectors and at all levels. In addition, there is a need for safe spaces to enable women to meet and learn from each other's experiences.[10] Women acquire political skills and networks through a variety of experiences, including informally through early socialisation as part of politically engaged families, student politics, professional and voluntary experiences, as well as more formal leadership training and engagement in party politics and exposure to mentorship (Tadros, 2014 – discussed in O'Neil and Domingo, 2016). As such, the different potential pathways that women take into politics, and the variety of political training grounds these entail, should be recognised and tapped into in order to particularly reach women who do not sit within the diaspora or elite groups.

Implications

✓ **Support leadership training and mentorship.**

Building networks and political currency, including strengthening skills in negotiation and influencing could comprise investing in collective as well as individual leadership, and involve long-term support and engagement with organisations, student groups, trade unions, and professional associations.

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[9] https://unsom.unmissions.org/first-conference-somali-women-legislators-opens-mogadishu
[10] Collective thinking expressed by the Women's Participation and Leadership Working Group as part of the Gender and Development Network (GADN).

Organisations like the Somali Women Parliamentarian's Association (SOWPA) have worked on similar issues and as such would be a key partner to link with and learn from on this agenda.[11] There may also be particular opportunities to develop internship programmes, which specifically link girls and young women with female politicians.

✓ **Create regular and safe platforms for public dialogue and debate for women.**

Efforts could focus on supporting public dialogues through targeted interventions in the media, as well as broader discussion around the progress and setbacks attached to women's political engagement throughout the 2016/2017 electoral process. Critically there should be an emphasis on creating regular platforms for such dialogue, rather than isolated one-off events.

5.3 Support movement towards more transformative gender norm change

Evidence shows gender norms worldwide "assign women domestic and caring duties and in some cases can proscribe or discourage women from taking on public responsibilities and, in particular, leadership positions" (O'Neil and Domingo, 2016: 22). In the most severe cases, where women are able to access positions of political power, they may be subject to violence and threats to their personal safety and security. Therefore, "changes in family relations and in attitudes to women's roles and responsibilities are therefore important to women's ability to take on public responsibilities" (ibid.).

Shifting discriminatory gender norms, which prohibit women's political empowerment in Somalia and Somaliland may be well supported through critical thinking and consensus-based dialogue, which help individuals and communities to frame the WPE agenda in new and constructive ways. Engagement with clan leaders and religious leaders may be a particularly helpful strategy in these activities. Media campaigns, which also promote examples of successful and powerful women, in addition to scaling up girls' education may also help to shape aspirations and expectations around women leaders.

Implications

✓ **Promote critical thinking to challenge discriminatory gender norms.**

Strategies associated with shifting discriminatory gender norms can involve engagement with individuals and their reference groups [12] to re-frame issues and highlight progressive and conducive directions of change. In the case of Somali women's political empowerment this could involve: 1) raising awareness of contradictions with other norms (e.g. religious teaching regarding mutual respect for men and women), 2) re-framing an issue to enable people to see it in a new way (e.g. women in positions of political power may support improved social outcomes for women and men and the community as a whole), 3) highlighting the "direction of change" within a reference group (e.g. increased numbers of clan leaders and Islamic leaders who are coming out in support of women's political participation and leadership).

Strategies focused on promoting critical thinking and creating alternative narratives around women's political empowerment (that have traction at multiple levels and with different individuals and reference groups), offer an important starting point for any interventions in this space.

The UK government funded "Participation in Decision-Making and Challenging Harmful Social Norms in Somalia" programme (SNaP)[13] presents a particular opportunity for learning in relation to challenging and re-framing norms in the Somali context. In the early stages of delivery, this programme aims to use a package of interventions to promote women's voice and influence in public decision making.

✓ **Facilitate consensus-based dialogue on women's political empowerment.**

Building on the above point, evidence suggests that broad consensus-based dialogue, involving a wide range of stakeholders from civil society, government, and the community can be an important and effective strategy for building sustainable support around contentious issues in the Somali context. Whilst decision-making on matters of public interest is traditionally done locally (facilitated by clan leaders), it is increasingly common for stakeholders to come together around issues of shared interest.

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[11] http://www.awepa.org/news/capacity-building-workshop-somali-women-parliamentarians-association-sowpa/

[12] A 'reference group' or 'reference network' is the group of people important to an individual when he or she is making a particular decision (Bicchieri, 2015 in Alexander-Scott, Bell, and Holden, 2016: 8)

[13] DFID's SNaP programme: 'Participation in Decision-Making and Challenging Harmful Social Norms in Somalia', November 2015 - 31st October 2020, UN Women led joint programme, Save the Children led consortium, https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-205110

Working directly with clan leaders to help identify opportunities for women to potentially engage in local clan meetings and other fora, may offer particularly transformational opportunity. The voices of religious leaders who are supportive of women's political empowerment should also be amplified (as key shapers of public opinion), and where possible synergies made between gender equitable outcomes and pro-women's rights Islamic values and ethics through strategic engagement.

Organisations who have successfully worked with religious leaders on gender issues (such as the Somaliland-based annual International Book Fair) do so on the basis of long-term, strategic relationships. Trust and personal relationships carry significant weight in Somali culture, and such relationships will provide a foundation for partners to leverage support from – and provide support to – the voices of leaders and scholars who may be willing to support
a progressive agenda for women in politics.

Specific engagement and facilitation through the multi-donor Somalia Stability Fund[14] may also be a particularly useful platform for engaging with public opinion-shapers. In addition, both UN Women and UNDP have historically facilitated public dialogue and radio events on gender issues, and as such would be key partners to take forward activities of this kind. Local partners could be identified through existing working relationships under these initiatives, in addition to linking up with established civil society networks such as Nagaad[15] (Hargeisa) and Somali Women Development Centre[16] (Mogadishu). University-based debates may also be an effective platform for further engagement and exploration.

✓ Support the development and roll-out of media campaigns showcasing successful powerful women.

Whilst interpersonal activities such as community workshops and group discussions are a common way of providing opportunities for debate and deliberation, 'edutainment' and mass media can also be used to challenge attitudes and expectations at a much greater scale, trigger debate and foreground examples of role models. In this context, radio shows, posters, and social media presence could be used to highlight the

achievements of local female leaders, and profile and acknowledge the powerful role of key women, such as Edna Adan[17] and Asha Gelle Dirie[18].

This could be done in partnership with local civil society and media groups across regions, and UNDP's multi-donor programme, Strengthening Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Somalia (GEWE)[19] has also included specific advocacy and capacity building around gender training for media professionals, exploring the role of the media in protecting human rights, preventing gender-based violence, and promoting women's full participation in politics and in key decision making. This programme has also included, in collaboration with AMISOM gender office, training Somali women MPs on laws and media.

✓ Continue to invest in and prioritise girls' education.

Evidence has shown that education and employment outside of the home can increase women's power and status within their families and communities, and that higher education specifically is commonly a key component of women's capacity to influence in high-level decision making. As discussed in this research, beyond providing opportunities for formal qualifications, education is also critically about building confidence and aspiration for girls and young women, and helping to drive their belief in themselves as future leaders.

To this end, initiatives such as the UK government funded Girls' Education Challenge (GEC)[20] could include specific activities that seek to strengthen girls' self-esteem, peer networking and leadership skills in particular, and could include more specific elements that link adolescent girls to female political leaders or offer them experience in political debate. CARE International's work on developing leadership skills for adolescent girls (see CARE's model, "The Power to Lead"[21]) also offers a good example here.

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[14] http://stabilityfund.so/
[15] http://www.nagaad.org/
[16] http://www.swdcsom.org/
[17] Adan Ismail is the former Foreign Minister of Somaliland (2003 – 2006) and previously worked as Somaliland's Minister of Family Welfare and Social Development.
[18] Asha Gelle Dirie is a Somali politician and civil society activist who worked as the Minister of Women Development and Family Affairs in Puntland from 2005 – 2012.
[19] http://www.so.undp.org/content/somalia/en/home/operations/projects/environment_and_energy/gender-equality-and-women-s-empowerment-project-.html
[20] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/girls-education-challenge
[21] http://www.care.org/power-lead-leadership-model-adolescent-girls

5.4 Support the coordination of locally-led collective feminist action

O'Neil and Domingo emphasise the importance of working with "organic, locally anchored organisations" (2016: 33) in the pursuit of meaningful influence and change as related to shifting gender relations and progressing the agenda of women's political empowerment. Further, in supporting women-led civil society it is important to be intentional in efforts to foster inclusion and diversity within and between women's groups and networks - so that existing power structures of age, class, race and ethnicity in any given context do not undermine, subvert or corrupt the feminist purpose, politics and leadership practice of women in power.[22]

As such, international donors and partners should look to support and work with a variety of women's organisations and networks in order to "help women to organise around common interests and problems, and facilitating connections among different organisations (peer–peer, grassroots–elite), not to determine their agenda" (O'Neil and Domingo, 2016: 12).

Implications

✓ **Support the coordination of local movements and a more cohesive feminist agenda.**

Support to local movements could focus on encouraging networking and coordination as reflected in the work of the coalition of IIDA[23], the Civil Society Coalition, and a network of non-state actors supported by Saferworld (PUNSAA[24], Somalia South-Central Non-State Actors[25], and SONSAF[26]) who led a campaign of civic education for women in the years preceding Somalia's 2016 elections focused on achieving commitments from government for a 30% gender quota and the inclusion of women in constitutional bodies (Ido, 2014), and similar initiatives in Somaliland in the case of SONSAF. This could also be supported through the establishment and roll out of funding mechanisms and platforms that encourage collaboration and joint working in order to strengthen shared agenda working.

✓ **Promote grassroots awareness-raising for women on their political and social rights.**

A number of local CSOs consulted for this study identified the importance of women (and men) understanding their political and social rights as a vital step towards women's political empowerment. This

could also involve a specific focus on minority women, drawing on the work of organisations such as The Voice of Somaliland Minority Women Organization (VOSOMWO)[27] based in Hargeisa - one of the few CSOs identified by this study that specifically aim to support minority women (in the Somaliland context, defined as indigenous groups that are locally known as the "Gaboye, Yibirs and Tumals" which implies a concept of "inferior people"). VOSOMWO focus on advocacy campaigns, civic education, building self-esteem and self-efficacy through skills training and income generation activities, and mass media, and have also worked to encourage minority women to vote in municipal, and other local and national parliamentary elections.

5.5   Commission further research

Donors and partners continue to make important contributions to understanding women's multiple pathways to leadership and to the evidence base on the value and impact of women's leadership across sectors.[28] However, there continues to be a critical need to build the evidence base on WPE to more effectively understand where power and decision-making are located in both formal and informal spaces, and how women can be supported to influence in these processes. In this regard policy and programming focused on WPE requires **solid political analysis, at all levels, performed with a strong gendered lens, using participatory approaches**.[29] As outlined, there are a number of gaps and limitations that this study was not able to fully interrogate. As such further research could look to consider:

o **Regional and local variations** across our key findings.

o How **non-diaspora and minority women** navigate political barriers and opportunities, and how support can be more effectively provided to them.

o How participation, power and influence impact on women operating at **different levels of government**, with a specific focus on unpacking the experiences of women operating at the **local level**, and how this translates upstream to influence at regional and federal levels.

o The intersections between influence and leadership within **public and private spheres**.

o The role of **gender-based violence** in relation to women's political participation and leadership.

22 'Collective thinking expressed by the Women's Participation and Leadership Working Group as part of the Gender and Development Network (GADN).
23 http://www.iida.so/
24 http://www.punsaa.org/
25 http://www.soscensa.org/about/index.php
26 http://www.sonsaf.org/
27 http://awdf.org/voice-of-the-somalilands-minority-women-vosomwo/
28 For example the UK government has funded research projects lead by the Overseas Development Institute (see O'Neil and Domingo, 2016) the Institute of Development Studies (IDS)-lead consortia projects on Pathways of Empowerment, and Action for Empowerment and Accountability.
29 Collective thinking expressed by the Women's Participation and Leadership Working Group as part of the Gender and Development Network (GADN).

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