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## *Political Settlement in Somaliland: A Gendered Perspective*

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### **Summary of the progress of research:**

This report is a compilation of conducted fieldwork in the towns of Erigavo and Borama. Impressions and summaries of the field work are contributed by Hargeisa based research members Haroon Ahmed Yusuf, Aamina Milgo Warsame and Kinzi Kowden.

Before commencing fieldwork the team divided themselves into 2 groups. The first group was Haroon and Omer Qalonbi. They visited Erigavo from 7<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> of September. The second group consisted of team members Suad, Aamina and Kinzi; they visited Borama from 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> of September.

### **Preparation for interviews and focus group discussions:**

The research team negotiated and agreed with a local NGO called Sanaag Community Solidarity Organization (SCDO) to help facilitate the identification of the participants. The team provided SCDO with the details of the type of participants required for each activity and asked them to help identify and invite them.

The research team met with most of the participants before the meetings to make sure that they fitted the required profiles.

### **Overview of the visit by Haroon Yusuf:**

It was the beginning of the 'Dyr', the short rainy season, and most of the region was still dry, although some locations in the southern plains i.e. 'Ban Cade' and the close environs of Erigavo town did receive some spells of rain, which has prompted the congregation of the pastoral nomads and their stocks in these relatively wet areas.

The construction of the Tarmac road from Burco to Erigavo has made some progress, particularly between Ina-Afmadoobe and Waridaad in the western part and Erigavo and El-

Afwayne towns in the eastern part. Our team travelled through the eastern part and our impression was that the road is making much difference. Both in shortening and smoothing the travel time while also contributing to more economic activities in the region.

However, the Sanaag region still remains the most isolated and least developed region in Somaliland. It is also a border region, which makes it more vulnerable to instability and unpredictability.

The climate in Borama was welcoming and the atmosphere was enjoyable. The local facilitator was also very helpful in identifying and contacting respondents for the interviews.

### **Research achievements:**

- ✓ Research questionnaire was translated from English to Somali.
- ✓ 2 Focus Group Discussions (1 in Borama and 1 in Erigavo) with mixed gender including youth and minorities. The ages of the participants were between 25 years to 60 years.
- ✓ 2 male group interviews
- ✓ 2 female group interviews
- ✓ 11 Key informant interviews with mixed gender and backgrounds (i.e. age, work status, education etc.).
- ✓ One piloted Focus Group Discussion for testing relevance and appropriateness

### **Summary of interviews done in Erigavo:**

The participants welcomed the topic of discussion and gave their honest opinions, perceptions and beliefs about women's position and role in the Somali or their own society. We found the group to be largely conservative as their views regarding women's position in the Somali society were defined by religious edicts.

However, there were both women activists and some elders who thought that Somali men do not respect women's rights; the lack of respect dominates both formal and informal political and

social systems. Though some women agreed that there are men (mostly men working in NGOs) that are supportive of women and their rights, women activists thought that the civil society organisations led by men could do more to advocate for women's rights.

### **Preliminary findings on the interviews conducted in Borama:**

- Most respondents did not distinguish between sex/biological and gender/socially constructed roles, i.e. they viewed gender roles as the work (work in the household for instance) that is assigned to women to be naturally ordained. Women's work was seen as unsuitable for men and men who do work associated with women is seen as lesser men. On the other hand women who do any work associated with men are seen as having "raganimo" /masculinity which has a good connotation.
- One of the things respondents mentioned regarding how the conflict and war has impacted on the way society sees women is how women are appreciated more due to their hard work and economic contribution during the war.
- Islam was a crucial element in all aspects of the respondents thinking, attitude, what they want to say etc.
- The 'good traits' respondents associated with women included, modesty, kindness and keeping /handling money. "Good men" were mostly seen as those who could solve conflicts and take economic responsibilities of their families.
- Some of the political positions/roles that women can not/should not hold include being judges, imams (prayer leaders in mosques) and presidents of nations.
- A lot of conservative ideas could be deducted from the respondent's responses in the way women are viewed.
- Some elderly men recognized the changing roles of women in the Somali society.
- There were contradicting perceptions of men and women; men are against the widening of the economic and social space for women. Instead they claim that the best place for women is at home, taking care of children.
- Women activities and women in government employment said that they were happy with the changing roles of women and insisted that it will improve gradually.

- There were views that men can be less violent when living in a peaceful place, have enough education. Rule of law implemented also reduces the violence

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