



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

**Key Stakeholder Workshop, Hargeysa 2015**



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## Political Settlement in Somaliland: A Gendered Perspective

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and

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## Political Settlement in Somaliland: A Gendered Perspective

### Opening Remarks and the first session

Dr. Michael Walls, Principal Investigator of the research project and Senior Lecturer at University College London (UCL), welcomed the participants to the workshop and briefly mentioned the main objectives of the workshop followed by a brief introduction of the 18 month long research funded by UK agencies ESCR and DFID on the gendered perspective of political settlement in Somaliland. Dr. Walls also mentioned that the research project is jointly conducted and led by UCL, Development Planning Unit, and Progressio. In addition, Dr. Walls emphasised that the research team welcomed inputs from workshop participants but also on the objectives, questions and methods of the research.

Ms Malou Schueller, Co-Investigator and Governance Policy and Advocacy Officer at Progressio UK introduced the workshop agenda and general housekeeping. Ms Schueller then chaired the workshop.

Following that Ms Suad Abdi, Country Representative for Progressio Somaliland gave an overview of the research project including objectives, questions and methodology. Ms Abdi especially pointed out the objectives of the study as:

- To find out the relationship between gender in Somaliland and different roles and responsibilities of men and women.
- To find out the role of women in decision-making.
- To understand the challenges facing women to take part the political process of Somaliland.
- To analyse how the gendered political settlement is being converted into local policy and practice and how such policy's and practices address women's rights.



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Succeeding Ms Abdi's presentation, Mrs Amina-Bahja Ekman from UCL gave a presentation of key concepts and words to be used in the research, both Somali and English.

Mrs Ekman explained that defining key concepts and words from English and translating them into a local understanding is important for the research as the research seeks to understand local gender identities in conjunction with analysing how local policies and practices can better address gender inequality. Mrs Ekman mentioned the challenges of translating key concepts and key words from English to Somali. It was held that the fact that there is no "one understanding or definition" of the concepts 'Settlement' and 'Gender' in Somali creates an ambiguity that opens up room for misinterpretations of the words and in which contexts to apply them in.

Mrs Ekman however, as a first step, suggested the following Somali translation of key phrases in English:

- **Political Settlement – Dejinta Habka iyo Maamulka Siyaasada**
- **Gender – Lamaanaha**
- **Violence against Women and girls – Tacadiyaada Loo Geeysto Haweenka**
- **Political Settlement in Somaliland: A Gendered Perspective**  
- **Dejinta Habka iyo Maamulka Siyasaada iyo Lamaanaha ee Somaliland.**

Mrs Ekman welcomed feedback and discussion from the workshop participants on the usage of the concepts and words translated and defined into Somali. Ms Aamina Milgo-Warsame, member of the research team and chair of Network against FGM in Somaliland (NAFIS) agreed with Mrs Ekman on the challenges of redefining English concepts into Somali as both concepts and words are often misunderstood and taken for western ideas that do not have Somali equivalents. Ms Milgo- Warsame also welcomed feedback and discussion.



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Mr Mohamed Barwani from Somaliland Non-State Actors Forum (SONSAF) stated that it was locally understood in Somaliland that the word ‘Gender’ means ‘Women’. Mr Barwani said that here is a need to clarify the real meaning of the word to the people that are supposed to benefit from this specific research and other valuable studies related to the different parts of the society.

Some of the other participants in the workshop highlighted that local people mostly dislike to hear the word ‘Gender’ as the word is understood as a tool for advocating for women’s rights, especially women’s political participation in the decision making process.

Ms Raqiya Yusuf from Somaliland Women’s Lawyers Association (SWLA) agreed with Mr Barwani and said that local people in Somaliland already have an understanding of the word Gender, i.e. Gender means Women’s Rights. Ms Yusuf exemplified this by saying “if you talk to a local women about ‘gender’, she will ask you back; do you mean ‘Gender-Balance’?”

Ms Yusuf followed on by saying that the word ‘Gender’ has been used by international organisations/institutions and NGOs in Somaliland for over 20 years to advocate for Gender Equality but that there is still tension about the usage of the word. Perhaps this is because it is a foreign word. Ms Yusuf said that, as local development practitioners and professionals, we should stop using the word ‘Gender’ and just focus on using the suggested Somali word ‘Lamaanaha’, but broaden that meaning so it’s not only related to women’s issues. Possibly then can the usage of the word be translated into local actions and interventions that are more effective for both local men and women.

The majority of the participants agreed with Ms Yusuf and it was affirmed by Ms Nafisa Yusuf, Director for NAGAAD, that one of the challenges ahead for this research is the ways in which the research can broaden the usage of the word ‘Gender’. Broadening meaning inscribing men’s roles and experience’s into the usage and understanding of the word.



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It was also discussed whether the Somali word ‘Dejinta’ was the best word to use when defining and translating a local understanding of ‘Settlement’ into the research. Although most of the participant seemed to have a clear understanding of the meaning of ‘Political Settlement’, however some of the participants said that the Somali word ‘Dejinta’ is used locally when talking about settlement in regards to people settling in various locations.

It was instead suggested that the word ‘Xal u helida’, meaning resolution, was more fitting when talking about settlement in regards to politics. From this discussion it was then agreed by the majority of the workshop participant that the research team should use the word ‘Xal-u-helida’ instead of ‘Dejinta’ for ‘Settlement’ in local interviews and focus group discussions.

When it came to the definitions of the other key words it was agreed, after long and intense discussions, to keep “Lamaanaha” for ‘Gender’ as the word is already in use. It was also noted that coming up with new words in Somali for ‘Gender’ would just add to the misunderstanding and confusions that already exist around the word and its meaning. The same conclusion was given around the usage of the word ‘Tacadi’ for violence.

It was then recommended by the workshop participants that the full title for the research project in Somali should be:

**Xal-u-helida Siyaasada Somaliland iyo Doorka Lamaanaha**



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### The Second Session of the Workshop

During the second session of the workshop the participants were divided into four groups and given a series of questions to answer. Each group was also given a specific topic with specific questions relating to the discussions from the morning session.

The four different groups and topics included:

1. Political Settlement and clan,
2. Violence
3. Women's participation in politics
4. The Somaliland Constitution

Following are the questions the research team asked each group:

#### Political Settlement and Clan:

- What is your view of the current Political Settlement in Somaliland?
- What do you think are the most important challenges?
- How does the current Political Settlement shape the promotion and policies around gender equity?
- How does clan affect the Somaliland Political Settlement?
- What has changed since 1997?
- Who are the losers and who are the winners?
- How can this research be useful to you?



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### Women's participation in politics:

- Do you think that a quota is the best way to increase women's political involvement?
- What other methods do you think would work?
- How can this research be useful to you?

### Constitution, International Human Rights Law and implementation:

The Somaliland Constitution guarantees rights to women and commits the country to meet the standards set by international agreements.

- Are these commitments being met? Why not?
- How could they be implemented?
- How can this research be useful to you?

### Violence:

- How would you define violence in the Somaliland Political Settlement?
- What are the causes and who is affected the most?
- How can it be overcome?
- How can this research be useful to you?

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Following are some of the main responses and points from the questions that were asked during the group discussions:

### **Political Settlement and Clan:**

- There are two major events that have defined the Political Settlement in Somaliland: The Conference in Burco in 1991 and the Borama Grand Conference in 1993. During both conferences women were systematically excluded.
- The most affected people of exclusion from political participation and thus political settlement are: women, minority groups, the poor and pastoralist.
- Political parties are taken hostage by the clans. Clan and political parties power sharing is the root cause for the exclusion of women and other minority groups from taking part of the political settlement.
- The Guurti is against the constitution – Most of the elders elected in the Guurti in 1991 have passed away and the elder's family and clan have inherited their positions in the Guurti. This process of inheritance is not written in the constitution.

### **Women's participation:**

- Quota is key in overcoming the exclusion of women and minority groups in politics.
- Not all women are interested in participating in politics. Quota means loosing power of the household.
- Women themselves are barrier for entry into politics – not all women are interested in politics or see that women have a role in Somaliland politics.
- Women still do not see themselves as leaders, what real community woman will tell you is that men should be providing for them.



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### Constitution, International Human Rights Law and implementation:

- Whoever was involved in writing the constitution were clearly thinking that a woman's place is in the home.
- Parliament is not ready for another election. The reason is that they put their agenda on their periodic agenda law (, i.e. law nr. 20, House of Representatives Electoral Law) but they never discuss it.
- The House of Representatives (lower house of parliament) never give considerations to social benefiting laws. There are a number of laws that are with parliament for a long time and some of these laws are waiting for amendment such as Citizenship law, the Rape bill and the Women Quota.
- The elders/leaders will not make change happen. It is a system that works for them- it is what they know so they are unlikely to change it.
- Government/President should actively get all chiefs/constitution or sub constitution to agree on certain bills that promote equality; all clans need to be included, should sign and agree certain bills.

### Violence:

- There are two types of violence present in Somaliland; Visible and direct violence and invisible and structural/cultural violence. People affected by violence are not sure where to claim justice or complain.



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When asked in what ways the research could be useful to the participants of the workshop some of the answers included:

- We can get information about the roles and relationships of gender.
- This research will only be useful if the findings of the research are disseminated to all concerned actors. Important that the recommendations for change and implementation do not end up on a shelf.
- The research can be used as a tool to raise awareness and change the mind-set of the society.
- There is no way out unless if we look at culture. It is critical for this research to look at culture.

Before the workshop ended there was a forward looking discussion on possible next steps that could help overcome discussed challenges. The majority of the workshop participants agreed that clanship had more space within the Somaliland constitution than equality. It was also agreed that this fact makes it harder to overcome issues of gender inequality. From this it was also said that it is impossible to ignore the two systems that are fighting for power in Somaliland: the “traditional system” at one side, in this case a mix of clan and religion, and “western democracy” on the other.

Instead, participants agreed, that realising and admitting that the country is “sick” is a huge step forward and a step in finding alternative ways that allows for the countries different systems of governance to co-exist in a manner that promotes gender equality.

The research team then thanked the participants for their feedback and concluded the workshop by stating that the participant’s inputs will be useful for the research.

Notes taken by: Omer Eid Qalonbi, Kinzi Hussein Kowden and Amina-Bahja Ekman.

## Political Settlement in Somaliland: A Gendered Perspective

### ANNEX A:

The workshop on ‘Political Settlement in Somaliland: A Gendered Perspective’ was attended by members of the Somaliland civil society, government agencies and ministries and local and international organisations.

### List of Workshop Participants:

| Name                          | Title                                  | Institution                          |
|-------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Omer Eid Qalonbi</b>       | Research Assistant (Somaliland)        | UCL-DPU                              |
| <b>Nafisa Yusuf</b>           | Director                               | NAGAAD                               |
| <b>Sadia Abdi</b>             | -                                      | Actionaid                            |
| <b>Khadan Ismail</b>          | -                                      | SWLA                                 |
| <b>Raqiya Yusuf</b>           | -                                      | SWLA                                 |
| <b>Lesley Carver</b>          | Funding Director                       | Progressio UK                        |
| <b>Malou Schueller</b>        | Governance Policy and Advocacy Officer | Progressio UK                        |
| <b>Suad Abdi</b>              | Country Director                       | Progressio Somaliland                |
| <b>Aamina M. Warsame</b>      | Chair                                  | NAFIS                                |
| <b>Dr. Aden Y. Abokar</b>     | -                                      | Rift Valley Institution              |
| <b>Haroon Yusuf</b>           | Researcher                             | NAGAAD                               |
| <b>Ubah M. Mohamed</b>        | -                                      | Ministry of Planning and Development |
| <b>Hodan Mohamed Ali</b>      |  | SUNHRC                               |
| <b>Asmahan Abdelsalan</b>     |  | SOWRAG                               |
| <b>Mohamed Ahmed Barwani</b>  |  | SONSAF                               |
| <b>Oliver Chevreau</b>        | Country Director                       | Saferworld                           |
| <b>Abdisamad Omar Sheikh</b>  | -                                      | VOSOMO Org                           |
| <b>Fathia Hussein Jama</b>    | Gender Mainstreaming Officer           | SONYO                                |
| <b>Mohamed Abdi Sh. Ahmed</b> |  | IPCS                                 |
| <b>Abdijalil Dahir</b>        |  | Saferworld                           |



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|                           |                        |                                       |
|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Saynab Maxmud Abdi</b> | -                      | SOLJA                                 |
| <b>Khadra Omar Hassan</b> | -                      | B.V.O                                 |
| <b>Kinzi H. Kowden</b>    | Research Manager       |                                       |
| <b>Rahma M. Diri</b>      | -                      | Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs |
| <b>Sara Haji</b>          | Shop Owner             | Cup of Art                            |
| <b>Dr. Michael Walls</b>  | Principal Investigator | UCL - DPU                             |
| <b>Amina-Bahja Ekman</b>  | Research Assistant,    | UCL - DPU                             |
|                           |                        |                                       |



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## Political Settlement in Somaliland: A Gendered Perspective

### ANNEX B:

Workshop Invite

4<sup>th</sup> of August 2015, Hargeysa

### **Political Settlement in Somaliland: A Gender perspective**

We would like to invite you to join us for a workshop on ***Political Settlement in Somaliland: A Gender perspective***. During the workshop the research team will present a short overview of the 18-month, ESRC/DFID funded research project and seek inputs from workshop participants to refine research objectives, questions and methods. Participants in the workshop will include government officials, donors, CSO representatives and community leaders.

The workshop will also discuss the extent to which more gender-balanced participation in Somaliland's political settlement can facilitate much needed policies for more effective and equitable development.

Your input and feedback is critical to the success of both the workshop and the research project to ensure it is relevant, useful and reflective of the Somaliland context and its people. We would greatly appreciate your participation.

**Date and time:** Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> of August between 8.00 am – 3.00 pm  
at Gulaid Park Hotel, Hargeysa.

**Please respond by the 6<sup>th</sup> of August** to [aminabahja.ekman@gmail.com](mailto:aminabahja.ekman@gmail.com)

This is the first of two workshop sessions in Hargeysa on ***Political Settlement in Somaliland: A gendered perspective***, organised by the Development Planning Unit (University College London) and Progressio. The second will be held towards the conclusion of the project – likely in late 2016.

For more information on the project please visit:

<http://gtr.rcuk.ac.uk/project/375E5AD3-888D-44CE-A20E-366037EB16>



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### ANNEX C:

#### Workshop Agenda

- 8:00-9:00 Registration of participants / Agenda / Housekeeping
- 9:00-9:30 Introduction to research project by Dr. Michael Walls
- 9.30-10.00 Research overview by Ms Suad Abdi
- 10:00-10:30 Presentation of definitions by Mrs Amina-Bahja Ekman
- 10.30-11.00 Tea break**
- 11:00-12:15 Group Work
- 12.15-12:20 Group photo
- 12.20-13.30 Prayer & lunch**
- 13.30-14.30 Group presentations
- 14.30-15.00 Plenary