

April 2019

Somalia (2002-2004)

Name of process

Somalia National Reconciliation Conference (Eldoret/Mbagathi)

Type of process

Peace-making

Modalities of women's inclusion

- Direct representation at the negotiation table
- Observer status
- Consultations
- Problem-solving workshops
- Mass action

Women's influence

Intermediate influence due to:

- International support structures and coalition-building among women's CSOs and other parts of civil society helping women to put pressure on the conflict parties;
- Traditional role of women as peacemakers, past experience, and creative communication strategies enabling women's CSO leaders to play the role of a broker;
- Domination of faction and clan leaders in selection and decision-making processes reducing women's participation and influence.

Outcome of the process

- Adoption of Transitional Federal Charter and establishment of new government and parliament;
- Failure to reduce tensions between clans and factions, and to provide security across south-central Somalia.

Women had an intermediate influence over the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference, held in the Kenyan cities of Eldoret and Mbagathi between October 2002 and October 2004. Some women activists participated as delegates in the powerful Leaders' Committee and the six Reconciliation Committees, and others were official observers to the conference. They consulted with conflict parties and mediators and organized public protests in Mogadishu. Women's crucial role as brokers between the conflict parties prevented the negotiations from collapsing. Women's group leaders were well prepared throughout the process and strategically leveraged both national and international support networks. By forging coalitions with each other and with other civil society actors, women's Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) formulated common positions and lobbied conflict parties and mediators. Nonetheless women activists' influence on the outcome of the conference was significantly constrained by exclusive selection and decision-making processes related to the persistence of patriarchal gender norms in Somali society, which do not see women as suitable or appropriate political representatives. Both the ceasefire agreement and the Transitional Federal Charter were drafted by a small group of faction and political leaders, without much consideration for the recommendations made by other conference delegates. Despite intense lobbying, the charter only provided for a 12 percent women's quota for

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parliament, instead of a requested 25 percent quota. Women's CSOs protested this quota but prioritized the successful conclusion of the conference and stopping the violence. Ultimately, only half of the allocated parliamentary seats were held by women and shrank further over time as several women who left their seats were replaced by men.

I. Background

Somalia became an independent state after the unification of British and Italian Somaliland in 1960. Nine years later, army commander Mohamed Siyad Barre staged a coup and established a socialist authoritarian regime that, particularly in its later years, was characterized by violent persecution and imprisonment of political opponents and dissidents. The Government pursued a strategy of nation-building and abolishment of traditional clan divisions through various measures such as public work, restructuring of the administrative geography and the replacement of the practice of blood compensation (diya) by the death penalty.¹

It was not until 2000 that women began to publicly challenge men at various levels of the political system

The time under Siyad Barre was also marked by increased gender equality in terms of citizenship, voting rights, access to social services and jobs, as well as paid maternity leave.² Nevertheless, Somalia overall remained a strongly patriarchal society in which men dominated political, social and economic decision-making.³ It was not until 2000 that women began to publicly challenge men at various levels of the political system, including local councils, regional and national parliaments and the national cabinet.⁴

The Somali population is socially organized around six main clan families: the Dir, Isaq, Darod, Hawiye, and the Digil and Mirifle clans that are part of the larger group of the Rahanweyn, as well as a number of minority groups.⁵ Minority groups include the Bantu and Banaderi. Although these groups may be a minority at the national level, they constitute a majority at local levels in some parts of south-central Somalia.⁶ In some instances, a sub-clan of a majority clan may constitute a minority at a particular level of governance. The capital Mogadishu hosts a variety of clans and is historically cosmopolitan, with inhabitants from across East Africa.⁷

Clan membership is an important determinant of social exclusion and inclusion

Clan membership is an important determinant of social exclusion and inclusion.⁸ The clan system is strongly gendered, with clan decision-making structures and bodies a men-only domain that women influence from the sidelines, through their husbands and male family members.⁹ While Somali men are more strongly tied to their clan affiliation, Somali women have multiple clan identities.¹⁰ Women traditionally possess significant social capital and serve as community mobilizers, peace-makers, and mediators within and between families and clans as a result of their ties to both their father's and their husband's clans.¹¹

In 1991, after a long period of increasing discontent, Barre was overthrown, and the national government collapsed. Violence quickly escalated as armed clan factions

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fought for control over land and resources. This period was the most violent of Somalia's civil war—25,000 people were killed in Mogadishu alone, 1.5 million people fled the country, and 2 million were internally displaced.¹² Society became increasingly defined along clan lines, as Somalis relied on their clan for security and governance, including adjudication.¹³ It became dangerous for anyone, and particularly for men, to live outside their clan's territory. Gendered clan identities separated men and women family members, as women sought safety in their father's clan territory.¹⁴

Those targeted most by sexual violence were unarmed women from traditionally marginalized clans and other unarmed minority groups

Like elsewhere, experiences of the war in Somalia are significantly gendered. Men and boys made up the majority of people killed by armed violence. Militias have used sexual violence against women as a psychological weapon to humiliate their opponents. Those targeted most by sexual violence were unarmed women from traditionally marginalized clans and other unarmed minority groups.¹⁵ The refugee crisis was also gendered; with women often having to take over leadership of the household when men were fighting or looking for work elsewhere; and women and children were most vulnerable to abuse during displacement.¹⁶

Armed conflict did shift traditional gender roles, with many women replacing men as family breadwinners

Few Somali women physically participated in combat during the civil war, although a large number engaged in information gathering and fundraising or provided critical services like cooking or washing for the fighters.¹⁷ Both women and men encouraged their clans to fight by engaging in the traditional practice of praising their clans through spoken and chanted poetry.¹⁸ Armed conflict did shift traditional gender roles, with many women replacing men as family breadwinners.¹⁹ For example, by 2001, an estimated 70–80 percent of households in the region of Lower Shabelle in southern Somalia were dependent on the woman's earnings to sustain the family's livelihood.²⁰ Women also played the more traditional role of peace-makers. Throughout the 1990s, hundreds of new women's Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) were actively engaged in local stabilization efforts and peace processes.²¹

Women also played the more traditional role of peace-makers

The conference did not bring peace. Factions opposed to the TNG formed a loose politico-military alliance in 2001 called the Somali Restoration and Reconciliation Council (SRRC)

After a series of failed peace talks and international interventions, Djibouti sponsored the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference in Arta in the year 2000, which resulted in the establishment of an interim charter, a Transitional National Parliament and Government (TNG). It helped develop the role of civil society, and specifically women activists, in Somali politics and the peace process (see the IPTI case summary of the Arta Conference).²² However, the conference did not bring peace. Factions opposed to the TNG formed a loose politico-military alliance in 2001 called the Somali Restoration and Reconciliation Council (SRRC). Their goal was to establish a federalist state, and they were supported by Ethiopia, which sought to counter the re-emergence of a strong Somali state and the rise of Islamism in Somalia. Djibouti, on the other hand, supported the TNG and favored a central state structure. In December 2001, Kenyan President Moi attempted to broker a deal between the TNG and the SRRC in Nakuru, Kenya (the Nakuru Accords), while the Ethiopian government hosted consultations with parts of the SRRC in Gode, Ethiopia. Neither process achieved any substantial results.²³

The Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) - a regional economic

and political organization in which Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Kenya all tried to promote their respective vision for Somalia's future – restarted the peace process, holding another National Reconciliation Conference in Kenya. On 15 October 2002, Phase I began, with more than 300 faction leaders (who had been excluded from the Arta peace process), traditional and religious leaders, politicians, and civil society representatives invited to Eldoret. Together, they formed the conference plenary, which convened repeatedly between October 2002 and February 2004 to discuss and vote on outcome documents of various committees.

The political and faction leaders, and one civil society representative,²⁴ signed a ceasefire on 27 October 2002: the Eldoret Declaration. Through the signing of the declaration, the faction and political leaders agreed on two core principles shaping the remainder of the peace conference: the cessation of hostilities and a federal state structure of the state. IGAD then established the Leaders' Committee, comprised of the signatories of the declaration.

The Leaders' Committee oversaw Phase II, launched on 29 November. Six Reconciliation Committees, whose members initially amounted to 135 delegates from the plenary, carried out issue-specific deliberations. The committees convened until May 2003 and covered the constitution and federal system; economic recovery; land and property disputes; demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR); conflict resolution; and regional and international relations. Drawing on expert advice where appropriate, the committees were tasked with developing proposals for discussion by the conference plenary.²⁵

On 18 January 2003, the newly elected Kenyan Government appointed Bethuel Kiplagat as mediator. He shifted the venue of the peace conference from Eldoret to the Nairobi suburb of Mbagathi, in order to bring the cost under control.²⁶

In Mogadishu, the long absence of factional and clan leaders who were at the peace talks left a power vacuum, which led to increased insecurity.²⁷ Women's civil society groups successfully led efforts to introduce neighborhood watches in the capital in order to disarm factions and stop roadblocks.²⁸ In April, May and June 2003, civil society took to the city's streets calling for peace, and the accountability of faction leaders for the violence.²⁹

When the conference plenary adopted a draft federal charter on 15 September 2003, Djibouti, the TNG and several faction leaders rejected the document as "flawed".³⁰ To avoid perceptions of a biased Technical Committee, IGAD expanded membership from the three neighboring "Frontline States" to all IGAD member states, to form the so-called Facilitation Committee. To save the conference from collapsing, Ugandan and Kenyan mediators invited the faction leaders for consultations in January 2004 in Nairobi. Only eight of the 38 participants in these consultations – five faction leaders, former TNG President Abdiqasim (who was included by the mediators in the agreement in his official capacity despite the expiry of the TNG), and two civil society figures – were called by the mediation to sign the Safari Park Declaration,

which entailed amendments to the charter of September 2003.³¹ The amended charter provided for a federal state structure, but increased the term of government from four to five years, decreased the number of parliamentarians from 351 to 275, and provided for a 12 percent quota for women parliamentarians.³² Clan leaders were to select members of parliament (in the previous draft, it had been the Leaders' Committee that was effectively in control of MP selection). This amended draft was opposed by the SRRC.

Despite strong opposition from the SRRC, the IGAD mediators decided to proceed. On 23 February 2004, the plenary approved the draft by acclamation.³³

On 22 May 2004, IGAD foreign ministers launched Phase III: the selection of members of the new parliament. They invited Somali traditional leaders to Nairobi in June, to oversee the selection of 275 MPs according to the "4.5 formula," which provided for equal representation of each of the four largest clans and minority representation of all the minor clans. The clan leaders formed the Somali Arbitration Committee to mediate disputes.

The first parliamentarians were sworn in on 22 August 2004, and on 10 October parliament elected Abdullahi Yusuf as President of the new Transitional Federal Government (TFG). Notably, resistance by faction and political leaders meant that women only succeeded in taking up half of the 12 percent of parliamentary seats designated for them – and their number shrank further over time as several women who left their seats were replaced by men.³⁴ Only one woman was appointed as a minister, responsible for "Gender and Family Affairs". The TFG re-located from Kenya to Somalia in June 2005, operating first from the city of Jowhar and then Baidoa.³⁵

The tensions between political and faction leaders, especially with regard to the questions of federalism and the selection mechanism for members of parliament, were not solved through the 2002-04 National Reconciliation Conference. Several major clans did not sign the key outcome document – the amended Transitional Federal Charter of 29 January 2004 – including the powerful Dir, Habar Gidir (a sub-clan of the Hawiye), Marehan, and Ogaden (both sub-clans of the Darod) clans.³⁶

The new TFG had no significant security forces at its disposal to control areas outside the interim capital.³⁷ The TFG was divided over the call for an international peacekeeping force, so President Yusuf built up militia and appointed members of his own constituency to the security apparatus. Ethiopia trained and equipped the TFG militia, while the US supported a group of faction leaders to further its counter-terrorism agenda.³⁸ This effectively undermined the development of representative national security forces.³⁹ Many people in south-central Somalia began to support the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) which brought some stability to the country but transformed into a new violent force – al-Shabaab – after the Ethiopian occupation of 2006-2009.⁴⁰ Violence between 2005 and 2012 escalated to levels unprecedented since 1991.⁴¹

Actors involved in the process

The IGAD Technical Committee represented Kenya, Djibouti and Ethiopia. It was later renamed and extended to include the other IGAD member states, but was dominated by Ethiopia and Kenya. The leading mediators Elijah Mwangale and Bethuel Kiplagat were sent by the Kenyan government.

A “discretionary quota” ensured the participation of civil society and other groups

The Technical Committee invited 300 Somali delegates to the conference plenary in October 2002. However, the number soon grew to over 1,000 and there was a high fluctuation among delegates.⁴² In November 2002, the mediator (unsuccessfully) limited the number of delegates to 362.⁴³ Delegates came from the TNG, the SRRC, the Rahanweyn Resistance Army (RRA), Somaliland, Puntland, and the signatories to the Nakuru Accords.⁴⁴ While the TNG and SRRC each drew from a broad base of delegates from all clans, delegates from the Nakuru Accords, RRA, Puntland and Somaliland delegates were less diverse in their clan representation (however, only a small number of Unionist Somalilanders were at the conference as their government boycotted, for the most part, these and other talks due to their independence claims).⁴⁵ A “discretionary quota” ensured the participation of civil society and other groups.⁴⁶ Islamist groups, who had been prominent at the Djibouti Process in 2000, were noticeably absent.⁴⁷

Some were respected figures with a proven record of community leadership either at home or abroad, while others based their legitimacy

The size of the six Reconciliation Committees also soon exceeded the initial 135 delegates.⁴⁸ One mediator participating in the Reconciliation Committee working on the issue of federalism recalled: “The leadership committee appointed Reconciliation Committees of 40 people but that didn’t stop me from having more than 150 people in there. So, people that I never saw before just came in and said: ‘Listen I just read this document that you distributed last week, and I think this, this and this’.”⁴⁹ CSO representatives in the plenary and the Reconciliation Committees had varying legitimacy and credibility.⁵⁰ Some were respected figures with a proven record of community leadership either at home or abroad, while others based their legitimacy “on a custom-made business card or the funds to buy a return ticket to Eldoret.”⁵¹

The Technical Committee had agreed to include four more civil society representatives in the Leaders’ Committee

The Leaders’ Committee comprised the 22 signatories of the Eldoret Declaration: Political and faction leaders from the TNG, National Assembly, Puntland Administration, Jowhar Administration, the various factions, and a single civil society representative.⁵² By December, the Technical Committee had agreed to include four more civil society representatives in the Leaders’ Committee.⁵³ The 38-strong Leaders’ Consultation of January 2004 was composed of the members of the Leaders’ Committee, including its five CSO representatives, and additional delegates from the National Salvation Council (NSC) faction.⁵⁴

The public demonstrations against continued violence in Mogadishu were organized by a wide range of civil society actors. These included school and university organizations such as the Formal Private Education Network in Somalia, doctors’ unions such as the Somali Medical Association, as well as Koranic schools, Islamic

charities, women's CSOs, and other human rights groups.

At the sidelines of the conference in Kenya, Somali civil society groups, such as the Civil Society Core Group and the Center for Research and Dialogue (CRD) organized training for women activists or facilitated inclusive forums on security topics. International actors, including UNIFEM, Oxfam Novib, and Amnesty International also played an important role in material and financial support for Somali women's CSOs, and workshops and trainings on human rights, negotiation strategies, and gender.⁵⁵

The National Reconciliation Conference was also attended by a small group of international observers: the IGAD Partners Forum (IPF), comprising the African Union, Denmark, Egypt, the European Union, Italy, the League of Arab States, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the UN Political Office for Somalia.⁵⁶

Women Involved in the Process

A total of 55 women participated in the National Reconciliation Conference in Kenya.⁵⁷ The mediator selected 21 women as observers.⁵⁸ Another 34 women were officially registered as voting delegates (out of 362 delegates overall).⁵⁹ Of these, 26 women represented faction groups or the TNG.⁶⁰ As of December 2003, women accounted for 32 percent of all civil society delegates.⁶¹ Each of the six Reconciliation Committees featured at least two women voting delegates.⁶² Most women participated in the committee dealing with conflict resolution and reconciliation, where they accounted for 20 percent of the members.⁶³ Several of them were elected to chair a Reconciliation Committee, such as the one on regional and international relations.⁶⁴ Two women were represented in the Leaders' Committee. Zahra Ugaas Farah of the CSO Family Empowerment and Relief Organization (FERO) was nominated by the conflict parties to chair their meetings.⁶⁵ Asha Haji Elmi, leader of Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC) and co-founder of the Sixth Clan movement during the Arta process, also served on the Leaders' Committee. She signed the amended Transitional Federal Charter (the first woman in Somali history to sign a peace agreement)⁶⁶ and was designated co-chair of the final phase of the peace conference.⁶⁷

They advocated not only for the valorization of women's contributions to Somali society, but also for a broad agenda of social change in Somalia. The women focused on general principles such as human rights in such a way that they could push for increased representation via these principles

In the first half of 2003, as a reaction to the paralyzed political situation and renewed insecurity in Mogadishu during the conference in Kenya, women's CSOs took part in demonstrations pressuring the faction and political leaders to come to an agreement.

Women participating in the conference in Kenya advocated not only for a 25 percent women's quota in parliament, but also for "a package for women's inclusion in this [peace] process, and women's inclusion in every document of this process."⁶⁸ However, the agenda of women activists in Eldoret and Mbagathi was much broader than during the Arta Conference two years earlier. As one women's civil society leader put it, they represented the social agenda of the "silent majority."⁶⁹ They

advocated not only for the valorization of women's contributions to Somali society, but also for a broad agenda of social change in Somalia.⁷⁰ The women focused on general principles such as human rights in such a way that they could push for increased representation via these principles.⁷¹

Modalities of Inclusion of Women's Groups

Women's CSOs pressured faction leaders to engage in constructive talks in Kenya and to increase security in Mogadishu through persistent lobbying

Women played various roles in the Somali National Reconciliation Conference. They directly participated in the official negotiations both as civil society and faction delegates. This included individual women's CSO leaders taking part in the negotiations as chair and co-chair of both the Leaders' Committee and the extended Leaders' Committee that finalized the Transitional Federal Charter. Women's inclusion in this capacity ensured that the final version of the charter specifically referred to men and women candidates and incumbents of high public office. Women also served as official observers in the Reconciliation Committees, and pushed the participating men to acknowledge the roles of women in society. Women's CSOs pressured faction leaders to engage in constructive talks in Kenya and to increase security in Mogadishu through persistent lobbying. Finally, women's groups co-organized mass demonstrations against continued violence in Mogadishu.⁷²

1 | Consultations

Before and parallel to the official negotiations, women activists frequently consulted with various actors, including IGAD representatives, faction leaders, and mediators. These consultations and pressure on mediators facilitated the inclusion of women as civil society representatives in the Leaders' Committee and official observers into the conference.⁷³ Women also frequently met with mediator Kiplagat to discuss the quota for women and, towards the end of the conference, to work on a solution to prevent the process from collapsing.⁷⁴ The women usually initiated these meetings.⁷⁵

2 | Direct Representation at the Negotiation Table

Women activists successfully pressured faction and political leaders to prevent the talks from collapsing

The two women's civil society leaders who were members of the Leaders' Committee, Asha Haji Elmi and Zahra Ugaas Farah, helped ensure the inclusion into the Transitional Charter of a 12 percent quota for women in parliament and referral to both men and women candidates and incumbents of high public office.⁷⁶ Also in the context of the Leaders' Committee, women activists successfully pressured faction and political leaders to prevent the talks from collapsing.⁷⁷ As one of the eight signatories of the amended Transitional Federal Charter in January 2004, Elmi was the first woman in Somalia's history to sign a peace agreement.

In the Reconciliation Committees, women mostly acted according to the preferences of their respective clan or faction.⁷⁸ In the committee on the constitution and federalism, women often stressed the importance of respect for human rights, later focusing on the human rights situation for women in Somali society.⁷⁹ Women delegates were particularly concerned about the limitations on women's rights by

what later became the Islamic Courts.⁸⁰

3 | Observer Status

After intense lobbying by women activists, mediator Mwangale agreed to grant 21 women official observer status. They were selected according to their affiliation to specific women's CSOs.⁸¹ One of the observers, Hawo Ugas Farah, claimed that their "lobbying and consulting," helped push delegates to sign the Eldoret Declaration in late 2002.⁸²

4 | Problem-solving workshops

In collaboration with other civil society groups and international organizations, women's CSOs conducted workshops for the conference delegates in Eldoret and Mbagathi, as well as for civil society and political and faction leaders in Mogadishu. For instance, when the talks were on the brink of collapse, FERO organized a workshop in Kenya for delegates from civil society and factions.⁸³ It is, however, unclear how these workshops translated into tangible outcomes for women at the negotiation table.

5 | Mass Action

Women activists took to the streets in Mogadishu to put pressure on the delegates in Kenya. In March 2003, on International Women's Day, thousands of Somali women demonstrated in the city, demanding that the factions comply with the ceasefire agreement signed in the autumn of 2002.⁸⁴ The activists, representing 20 women's NGOs, also demanded that leaders include women in any future political administration.⁸⁵

On 29 June 2003, women activists marched alongside thousands of other Somalis, calling for peace and the accountability of faction leaders for the violence in Mogadishu.⁸⁶ The 46 civil society organizations that organized the demonstration included Islamists, and women's rights and human rights groups. The demonstrators also demanded that both the Somalis and the international community ensure the emergence of a legitimate and honest government from the peace talks.

II. Analysis of Women's Influence: Enabling and Constraining Factors

Women's CSO leaders were often successful in pressuring the conflict parties to resume negotiations and to keep the topic of women's parliamentary representation in the Transitional Federal Charter. This was enabled through their traditional role as peacemakers, past experiences in the Somali peace process, coalition-building with civil society, as well as creative communication strategies. International and local actors provided technical facilities, workshops, and training to facilitate women's

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lobbying. At the same time, selection and decision-making processes were biased towards armed factions and men, and patriarchal social norms, and heterogeneous women identities significantly constrained women's influence.

The following section distinguishes between a number of process and context factors that either enabled or constrained the influence of women in the Eldoret/Mbagathi process. These factors explain why women were able and not able to assert influence on the negotiations and on their implementation.

Process Factors

1 | Exclusive Selection Criteria and Procedures

The selection processes were to a large degree controlled by political and faction leaders, constraining women's participation. All faction and clan leaders were men, and women's participation was systematically restricted. Just as at the Arta Conference two years earlier, the clan-based formula used in selection enabled men to dominate, and risked the exclusion of women. This was reinforced by the power accorded to the Leaders' Committee.

The highly gendered workings of the clan system meant that women were excluded from meaningful participation in the conference

Delegates to the conference were selected by clan, faction, and political leaders, based on the 4.5 formula of fixed clan representation. The highly gendered workings of the clan system meant that women were excluded from meaningful participation in the conference. The significant rise in the number of delegates throughout October and November 2002 further disadvantaged women's participation, as most new delegates were men, selected according to clan or political interest.⁸⁷

The decision to establish a Leaders' Committee from the signatories to the ceasefire meant that at first women were entirely excluded from the highest level of decision-making, as the only signatory from civil society was a man.⁸⁸ Asha Haji Elmi, Zahra Ugaas Farah and the other civil society representatives were only granted seats at the table after international pressure, lobbying by women delegates in Eldoret and protests by CSOs in Mogadishu.⁸⁹ The Leaders' Committee oversaw the selection of the Reconciliation Committee, whose members were nominated by the conference, again according to the 4.5 formula.⁹⁰

In Phase III, clan leaders had the power over the selection of parliamentarians, and they failed to honor the 12 percent quota for women MPs that featured in the Transitional Federal Charter.⁹¹ They did not see women as reliable representatives of their clan interests, as in the traditional marriage system women had mixed loyalties to more than one clan.

2 | Exclusive Decision-Making

The Leaders de facto also decided on the content of the outcome document of the peace process; the final draft of the Transitional Federal Charter was not based on the

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recommendations of the Reconciliation Committees.⁹² By entirely disregarding the deliberations of the delegates, the faction leaders essentially deprived civil society, including women delegates, from influencing the outcome. The influence of the two women members on the Leaders' Committee was constrained by the dominance of faction leaders. Asha Haji Elmi, a signatory to the final agreement, wrote an open letter to the UN Secretary-General, criticizing the holding of the final plenary that “endorsed” the Charter: “The delegates were not given the platform, and the plenary was overpowered in that regard.”⁹³ Clan leaders entirely bypassed the conference in their selection of members of parliament.⁹⁴

3 | Effective Coalition-Building

These coalitions were maintained through joint activities such as solution-finding workshops and training

Women's CSOs maintained coalitions with each other, with other Somali civil society actors, and with international organizations. These helped the women delegates in Kenya to present a unified agenda to the conference and helped women activists in Mogadishu to organize protests to put pressure on faction and political leaders. These coalitions were maintained through joint activities such as solution-finding workshops and training. In March 2003, all 34 Somali women delegates to the conference attended a three-day workshop facilitated by UNIFEM.⁹⁵ They presented the resulting recommendations to the Executive Secretary of IGAD and selected five delegates to present their agenda to the conference.⁹⁶ The Women's Development Organizations (IIDA) held a cross-clan workshop with 70 women from south-central Somalia. Participants produced a strategic plan for peace and an agenda for women's priorities, which were distributed to all conflict parties, and regional and international bodies.⁹⁷

While collaboration among those women's civil society groups who already knew each other was strong, the groups were constrained by the power of the faction leaders.⁹⁸ Their pursuit of a broader, more “gender-neutral,” agenda than in Arta also contributed to women not coming together as a block to the same extent as in Arta.⁹⁹ Some women's CSOs accepted, after some protest, that the parliamentary quota for women was not implemented mainly because they did not want to endanger the conference's fragile outcome.¹⁰⁰

4 | Effective Transfer, Communication and Advocacy Strategies

In the initial phase of the conference, several women's CSOs lobbied mediators and IGAD representatives, advocating for increased inclusion of civil society, and specifically women, in the peace talks. Activists wrote letters to regional leaders, such as the Kenyan President and Ugandan Vice-President.¹⁰¹ The women's lobbying likely influenced the decision of the Technical Committee to include two women into the Leaders' Committee and to appoint 21 women's CSO observers.

During the conference, women delegates repeatedly pressured faction and political leaders to return to the negotiation table when they left for Somalia, and they blocked the doors of the conference room to force them to continue working on a

solution.¹⁰² Women activists also showed delegates pictures of the disastrous events of the civil war in order to make them aware of the consequences of their actions.¹⁰³ Women observers distributed advocacy and information leaflets on issues such as the quota for women and women's political participation to delegates inside and outside committees.¹⁰⁴ Some senior women leaders participating in the conference, such as Asha Haji Elmi, used poetry to illustrate their arguments.¹⁰⁵

According to one activist, women's pressure helped to prevent the conference from collapsing.¹⁰⁶ Elijah Mwangale, the first mediator of the conference, also highlighted the role of women delegates and observers in putting pressure on the conflict parties to come to a solution: "The women who are here have been responsible for pushing this process better than anybody else, because they have taken a stand, and whenever these warlords have tended to be difficult, they have come up with much more force. So, they have balanced the actual military, warlord force by providing the counterbalance that was necessary."¹⁰⁷

5 | Resistant Conflict Parties and Overwhelmed Mediators

Despite lobbying by women activists, the drafts of the two sub-committees on federalism limited women's participation in parliament to 10 percent

Faction and political leaders either were not interested in, or openly opposed, the inclusion of women (and other parts of civil society) in the transitional parliament and in the peace negotiation process. Several prominent individuals among the conflict parties signaled their support for an increase in the quota for women in parliament. Faction leader Hussein Aideed stated that a 20 percent representation in political and judicial institutions should be agreeable to everyone.¹⁰⁸ Puntland's Minister of Justice and Religious Affairs Awad Ahmed Ashara acknowledged the importance of women's representation in parliament but claimed that they still lacked the necessary level of political organization.¹⁰⁹ Overall, however, the proposed 25 percent quota drew opposition from faction and TNG delegates.¹¹⁰ Despite lobbying by women activists, the drafts of the two sub-committees on federalism limited women's participation in parliament to 10 percent.¹¹¹ One committee delegate explained his resistance to women's greater share of parliamentary seats with the "chaotic situation" in Somalia and the traditional role of women in Somali society "to look after the home and the family."¹¹² The quota was later increased to 12 percent in the Transitional Federal Charter.

The mediators were also rapidly overwhelmed by the number of delegates. In terms of women's inclusion, the first mediator, Elijah Mwangale, facilitated women's participation in the Leaders' Committee and granted 21 women observer status. However, this was only after lobbying from women's groups and the international community. When Bethuel Kiplagat took over as mediator, he stressed his support for Somali women and urged them to play a strong part in the peace process.¹¹³ However, his appointment did not change the situation regarding women's representation. In the final phase of the process, he promised to honor the agreed 12 percent quota for women MPs but failed to reject those appointments by the clan leaders that violated the quota.¹¹⁴

6 | Local and International Support Structures for Women

International actors supported women's participation in the peace conference through training, workshops, and provision of materials. UNIFEM was among the most active, establishing the Somali Women's Resource Centre used by women delegates and observers during the conference to print lobbying material.¹¹⁵ For instance, they produced a brochure about their agenda, entitled "Women for Peace and Prosperity for All in Somalia".¹¹⁶ UNIFEM also provided significant support to workshops for Somali women delegates on strategizing and lobbying.¹¹⁷ Lastly, the organization provided a gender expert, who audited the conference and advised the mediation team.¹¹⁸ However, it is unclear to what extent this gender expert's work increased women's influence on the conference.

Context Factors

1 | Limited Impact of Strong and Experienced Women's Groups

Since the early 1990s, Somalia had seen the build-up of a vocal and well-connected women's civil society, mostly based in Mogadishu. There are even examples of Somali women's political activism dating back to the time of the Somali Youth League in the 1940s.¹¹⁹ Through their previous experience in various Somali peace processes, most notably the Arta Conference, women's CSOs had learned how best to articulate their interests and grievances.¹²⁰ Their previous engagement also made them known to political and faction leaders, who listened to prominent women leaders, such as Elmi, during the negotiations in Kenya.¹²¹ This helped them to pressure the conflict parties to negotiate an agreement. However, women's influence on the substance of the Charter seems to have been limited by the power of the faction and political leaders, and they had no control over compliance with the 12 percent women's quota during the selection of parliamentarians.

Women's CSOs had learned how best to articulate their interests and grievances

2 | Patriarchal Gender Norms and Tradition of Women as Peacemakers

Traditional gender norms had an ambiguous effect on women's influence on the peace negotiations in Kenya. On the one hand, they enabled women to act as brokers between faction and political leaders,¹²² in line with Somali women's traditional activity of using their cross-clan identity to promote reconciliation in family and clan disputes.¹²³ Moreover, in some parts of Somalia women past child-bearing age were accepted as elders in matters of settling domestic disputes, although they could not participate in all clan activities.¹²⁴ Elmi and Farah were not only accepted but chosen to *chair* the most important gatherings of Somali leaders. Women also benefited from tradition in their communications, reciting poetry, which is traditionally used by men and women both to incite violence and to foster peace and reconciliation.¹²⁵ Women's CSO leaders participating in the negotiations felt that the faction and political leaders elected them as chairpersons because of tradition and respect for their relative neutrality.¹²⁶

Women were traditionally not seen as legitimate representatives of their clans due to their multiple clan loyalties

On the other hand, patriarchal gender norms confined women's roles to the social and private and men to the political and public. As mentioned above, women were traditionally not seen as legitimate representatives of their clans due to their multiple clan loyalties.¹²⁷ This became a problem when the clan-based 4.5 formula was chosen as selection criteria for delegates to the peace conference and the Transitional Federal Parliament.¹²⁸

The shift in women's roles because of the war, with many becoming families' sole breadwinners, impacted on their ability to participate in the conference. Many women could not afford to leave their families for long periods.¹²⁹

Feelings of social obligation based on clan and community expectations decreased women delegates' willingness and opportunities to openly advocate for a unified pro-women agenda in the committees of the conference.¹³⁰ Upon their return to their communities, all delegates had to justify their voting behavior at the conference.¹³¹

III. Conclusion

The Somali National Reconciliation Conference in Kenya did not increase women's political, social and economic power in Somali society, but the women attending the conference played an important role in securing the overall positive outcome of the conference. Their role as neutral brokers, and their pressure, helped bring parties back to the negotiating table.

2004 was the first time in Somalian history that a woman signed a peace agreement, and women's coalition-building and lobbying strategies brought a slight increase in the formal provision for women's representation in parliament from 10 to 12 percent. However, only 8 percent of seats were finally allocated to women MPs¹³² and subsequent protests of civil society against the women's underrepresentation proved unsuccessful.¹³³

The influence of women activists was significantly constrained by exclusive selection and decision-making processes and resistance of conflict parties

The influence of women activists was significantly constrained by exclusive selection and decision-making processes and resistance of conflict parties. Moreover, women delegates often voted according to their clan and community identities rather than a pro-women agenda. Their traditional cross-clan identity had an ambiguous effect on their influence on the conference, both facilitating their role as broker and delegitimizing them as representatives of their clans.

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Women in Peace and Transition Processes

Case studies in this series are based on findings of the “Broadening Participation in Political Negotiations and Implementation” research project (2011-2017), a multi-year comparative research project led by Dr. Thania Paffenholz at the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva. The Broadening Participation project examined how and under which conditions various actors participated in and influenced peace and political transition processes. The project’s dataset comprises 40 mainly qualitative case studies of negotiation and implementation processes, covering 34 countries, and ranging from 1989 to 2014. These cases are categorized according to a range of groups of included actors and a framework of seven inclusion modalities developed by Thania Paffenholz. Among the case studies under review for this project, 28 included measurable involvement of women. In this context, women were defined as relatively organized groups, including delegations of women, women’s civil society organizations, coalitions or networks, which sought inclusion in peace negotiations and the implementation of agreements. The project did not investigate the role of women as mediators. For more information, see: www.inclusivepeace.org.

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**IPTI, Graduate Institute
Maison de la Paix
Chemin Eugène-Rigot 2
1202 Genève**

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