* **Population Sex Disaggregation: 50% male to 50% female[[1]](#endnote-1)**
* **Population Age Disaggregation: 0-14yrs 44%;   
  15-24yrs 19%; 25-54yrs 31%; 55-64yrs 4% >65yrs 2%[[2]](#endnote-2)**
* **Average household size: 6[[3]](#endnote-3)**
* **Infant Mortality rates: 100 per 1000 live births** [[4]](#endnote-4)

# Gender in Brief

Somalia is a country deeply affected by two decades of conflict and natural hazards (especially droughts and floods). This has exacerbated extreme poverty and vulnerability, primarily affecting women and children. It is also a society where gender inequality is by cultural beliefs and traditions. The Somalia Human Development Report quotes that ‘*Gender Inequality in Somalia remains alarmingly high at 0.776 out of a value of 1 (1 being complete inequality), with Somalia at the fourth lowest position globally on the Gender Inequality Index (GII) on internationally comparable indices*’[[5]](#endnote-5).

**Culture**

Somali culture strictly prescribes that women and girls are responsible for dealing with the domestic affairs of their families, such as cooking, cleaning and child rearing. In the previous years however, roles and responsibilities have been changing, bringing about increased responsibilities for women outside the house, beyond their nurturing and caring role. Women have become bread winners. This is due to a rise in female headed households, as well as a consequence of men’s withdrawal from their traditional roles. Men are less responsible than before in taking care of their family: not enough money is brought home to cater for the family needs, but rather spent on Khat consumption[[6]](#endnote-6). Youths also suffer from culture bias. Poverty and lack of employment opportunities for young men increases their risk to recruitment by armed groups and involvement in illegal activities. Clan dynamics force youths to take up arms in case of need. Across the country, young males and females decide to opt for the so called ‘tahriib’ (illegal migration), hoping to reach the West via Ethiopia, Sudan and Libya, but end up facing violence and hazards, such as kidnapping, rape, forced labour, ill treatment and torture. Children too, are not exempted from such impacts. Enrolment of girls still remain significantly below that of boys at primary and secondary levels. Girls typically enrol late, around the age of 8, and tend to drop out of school from the age of 14. While economic reasons is cited as a critical barrier for enrolment, traditional attitudes and practices related to gender, such as early marriage, play a key role in keeping girls out of school. Gender-related issues also play an important role in attendance. Menstruation emerges as a strong barrier for regular attendance, particularly in the absence of adequate toilets with water[[7]](#endnote-7).

**Representation & Participation**

The relatively low social status of women, lack of access to political power, poor quality education, and limited control of capital; severely constrains their economic opportunities and productivity. Women are often discriminated against in formal employment and access to credit; consequently, they mostly work in the informal sector as it requires little start-up capital. Some, mainly diaspora who can access bigger capital, are running medium-sized businesses. Inequalities are perceived even within the household and/or community, where women are often left aside in the management of the resources and in decision making.

Lack of participation is common not only within the community, but also in politics. The constitutions of all three Somali administrations (Federal Government, Puntland and Somaliland) provide for equality between men and women. However, despite a few female representatives at ministerial level, gender and age discrimination is the common standard and quotas are not fulfilled. The exclusion of young men from politics is equally common. In Somaliland, young men are excluded from standing for political office until they reach at least 35 years old; in Federal Government and Puntland, the age threshold is only 25 years, but in practice, older men are favoured and the young men are discriminated against[[8]](#endnote-8).

**Gender-Based Violence**

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is widespread in Somalia. Despite uncertain statistics and data about the scope of the violence, Somali administrations and the international community all agree that GBV exists at unacceptable levels and must be curbed. The predominant perpetrators of sexual violence and exploitation vary by region. Given the conflict in South Central Somalia, violence and exploitation perpetrated by “men in uniform” are more prevalent than in Puntland and Somaliland where such acts are, more often than not, perpetrated by “men in civilian clothes”. Commonalities exist in all three regions when it comes to other forms of GBV, such as domestic violence and early marriages. Incidences are dealt with using Sharia Law or Xeer (customary law). This involves an agreement between the perpetrator and the victim’s male heads of household. Outcomes of the agreement often turns out to be an additional violation of the survivor’s rights, such as having the victims of rape marry their perpetrators[[9]](#endnote-9).

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is banned under Provincial Constitution of the Federal Republic of Somalia (FRS), and by decree in Puntland, but practice remains widespread (98% of women and girls in Somalia[[10]](#endnote-10)). In relation to other security and protection concerns, Islamic militia use cruel, inhuman, and degrading forms of punishment to exert control in the areas they hold; women and girls have been stoned to death for alleged adultery and forced into marriages[[11]](#endnote-11).

**Judicial Systems**

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| CARE Programs: **Rural Women Program:**  aims to help women and their households improve their economic status, reduce their vulnerability to drought, and have more sustainable access to key services like water and education.  **Urban Youth Program:** aims to support job creation and other livelihood opportunities for poor urban youths.  **Emergency Program:**  aims to support IDPs and vulnerable host populations in food security, water and sanitation and nutrition. In addition we provide them with protection support to secure their safety and improve their relationships with the communities hosting them. |

The three co-existing systems of justice (Xeer, Shari’a law, and secular law) tend to operate to preserve and enhance the collective and individual interests of adult males. The interests of women, children, minority groups, and to some extent youths, tend to be considered secondary, expendable or contiguous with men’s interests[[12]](#endnote-12). Women, for example, face major challenges in accessing land and property. In fact, although women’s rights to inherit, own and pass on property are enshrined within the various constitutions (like in Shari’a law), in practice, many women experience major legal and familial challenges when it comes to asserting their rights with regards to property and land, due to gender-biased customary laws.

The New Deal for Somalia proposes 5 key peacebuilding and state building goals:

1) Inclusive politics 2) Security 3) Justice  
4) Economic foundations 5) Revenue.

The commitment to mainstream gender across the 5 goals should really be considered a great opportunity to bring about a transformation in gender norms and relations in Somalia.

1. http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/DataQuery/ [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. http://www.indexmundi.com/somalia/demographics\_profile.html [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. UNDP/ -World Bank, *Socio-Economic Survey 2002 – Report No. 1: Somalia Watching Brief*, 2003 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. http://www.indexmundi.com/somalia/demographics\_profile.html [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. UNDP, *Somalia Human Development Report 2012: Empowering Youth for Peace and Development, 2012* [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. CARE Somalia, *Gender in Emergencies in the Horn of Africa: Somalia Country Report*, 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. CARE Somalia, *Somalia Girls Education Promotion Project Base-line Report*, 2015 [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Fouzia Musse and Judith Gardner, *A Gender profile for Somalia*, EU Somalia Mission, 2013 [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Somalia Gender Based Violence Working Group, *Somalia GBVWG Strategy*, 2014-2016 [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. UNICEF, *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A statistical overview and exploration of the dynamics of change*, New York, 2013. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Fouzia Musse and Judith Gardner, *A Gender profile for Somalia*, EU Somalia Mission, 2013 [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. UNDP Somalia*, Gender in Somalia Brief II*, 2014 [↑](#endnote-ref-12)