



Puntland
Development &
Research Center



Women Activists including Asha Abdalla (fmr Federal MP) who were denied demonstration in front of Parliament do it inside PDRC

Women's Political Participation: Case of Puntland 2019 Elections

July 2019



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1. PDRC's role in promoting women's political participation

Since its establishment, PDRC has been involved in supporting women's political participation in Puntland through advocacy, research, capacity building and trainings. Moreover, the key role PDRC played was the provision of a platform where women can present their political ideas, can debate their challenges and can seek support from CSOs, NGOs and IOs. PDRC has opened a window for these women to showcase their talents and reasons behind their ambitions to the citizens and government; PDRC has made the voices of all women heard until town outside the tarmac road. These efforts were continued until the recent 2019 Puntland Elections.

Indeed, since early 2018, PDRC started an initiative to advocate for women's participation in 2019 Puntland elections. PDRC put emphasis was on the legality and implementation of the 30% women quota, women's inclusion in Conflict Resolution and Rectification Committee (CRRC) and having a political support from the sitting president. The advocacy began with small conversation and internal discussions but later on involved a wider group of people including PUNSAA and female lawyers, whereby the Ministry of Women Development and Family Affairs has led the process as line minister.

The steps taken by PDRC towards promoting women's political participation in 2019 Puntland elections included:

1. PDRC mapped out potential individuals and institutions that can contribute to women's inclusion and has organized several consultative meetings lead by MoWDFAFA.
2. Wrote a position paper to the president, Abdiwali Ali Gaas. The paper provides a profound background of the problem as well as the urgent need for increased number of women in the next Parliament.
3. Met the president twice to request a presidential decree for the implementation of 30% quota of women in the next elections, and had provided him with substantial evidence of both legal advises and procedural guidance to support the argument and the implementation of the new proposal. Suggested strategy for president includes, but not limited to; decreeing the 30% women quota, followed by an immediate public notice through press conference, a meeting with titled elders and inclusion of female members in the Conflict Resolution and Rectification Committee (CRRC). The president accepted to do all of the proposed steps including the issuance of 30% quota decree and the inclusion of 2 or 3 female members into CRRC.
4. The President issued a degree No. 11, on 29/Oct/2018; to support and strength the ongoing efforts established by CSOs including PDRC. Subsequently on 6th November PDRC and PUNSAA organized a large forum which launched of the presidential degree and opened a dialogue between the elders and women contenders.

2. Background

2.1 Puntland State of Somalia

Puntland State of Somalia was established in August 1998 by a Constitutional Conference (CC) as a voluntary union between communities inhabiting the regions of North Mudug, Nugal, Bari, Sanaag, Sool and Ayn (Buhodle District).

Two decades later, most of the democratic milestones are yet to be achieved. Women are marginalised and excluded from most leadership and decision-making areas, including politics. The current clan-based system used the patriarchal ways and beliefs in politics, which leads to automatic disqualification of women.

Since the establishment of Puntland in 1998, women representation in parliament and other government organs has been debated. The establishment of Puntland itself saw 5 women in Parliament, however each administration that followed reduced that number to a point where there is only 1 female out of the 66 members in the parliament today.

Women's political participation in Puntland has been one of the key areas of interest of Puntland Development & Research Center. Politics play a core role in influencing policy-making process, and the exclusion of women in positions denies them a chance to influence decision and impact change in society. Although the population of women and men at all levels is equally matched (table 1), political representation is in favour of men. Women make up 1.5% of the members the current Parliament 2019-2023; this compares poorly with a global average of 18.8% and agreed quota of 30%.

Table 1: 2014 Puntland Population by age group and sex

Age-class	Male		Female		Total
	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	
0-4	7.12	308626	6.74	292154	600780.1
5--9	8.10	351105	7.55	327265	678370.1
10--14	7.44	322497	6.47	280451	602947.5
15-19	6.33	274382	5.60	242739	517121.7
20-24	4.90	212397	5.20	225401	437797.9
25-29	3.90	169051	4.47	193758	362808.8
30-34	3.38	146511	3.48	150845	297355.8
35-39	1.95	84525	2.39	103598	188123.1
40-44	2.64	114434	2.46	106632	221066.3
45-49	1.41	61118	1.15	49848	110966.6
50-54	1.52	65886	0.88	38145	104031.2
55-59	0.58	25141	0.86	37278	62418.7
60-64	0.76	32943	0.58	25141	58084.1
65-69	0.19	8236	0.28	12137	20372.8
70-74	0.30	13004	0.39	16905	29909.0
75-79	0.16	6935	0.45	19506	26441.3
80-84	0.10	4335	0.18	7802	12137.0
85+	0.01	433	0.08	3468	3901.2
total	50.79	2201560	49.21	2133073	4334633

2.2 Historical and Current Trends of Women's Political Participation

It's widely believed that equal participation of women and men in national politics is a vital ingredient for inclusive and democratic governance. Yet, in many parts of the world, gender inequality is highly visible in the areas of power and decision-making, which typically remains men, dominated positions. In Puntland and Somalia in general, women remain to be severely underrepresented in national politics. Furthermore, they are also largely excluded from the executive, legislatives and judiciary arms of the government. The very few who get cabinet appointments are not often given core ministerial position, such as interior, security, justice and other comparable designations within the state's governance structure.

Despite women's key role in Puntland's establishment twenty years ago, women's representation in positions of power and decision-making in public office has been a challenge over decades.

Table 2: 2019 Puntland Election Female Aspirants

2019 Puntland Election: Female Aspirants for MPs				
No	Name	Position run	Region	Accomplishment
1.	Saynab Ismail Mohamed (Timbiye)	MP	Sanaag	Not
2.	Barni Esse Ahmed	MP	Nugaal	Not
3.	Maryam Osman Ahmed	MP	Bari	Not
4.	Fartuun Ali Liig	MP	Nugaal	Not
5.	MP. Niamo Abdi Caarshe	MP	Sool	Yes
6.	Fadumo Abdi Hirsi	MP	Nugaal	Not
7.	Lul Mohamed Warsame	MP	Nugaal	Not
8.	Ismahan Khalif Farah	MP	Karkaar	Not
9.	Ijabo Xoosh Gaashaan	MP	Nugaal	Not
10.	Hayad Mohamed Omar	MP	Sool	Not
11.	Halimo Mohamoud Artan	MP	Haylaan	Not
12.	Amina Ahmed Abdi	MP	Nugaal	Not
13.	Asli Ahmed Mohamoud	MP	Bari	Not
14.	Johro Musa Elmi	MP	Karkaar	Not
15.	Yasmin Salah H. Omar	MP	Gardafu	Not
16.	Hamdi Hassan Daafaadoow	MP	Mudug	Not

Table 2: shows the number of female candidates aspiring for the position of Member of Parliament in 2019 elections in Puntland. Following the conclusion of the process, the results showed that only one woman succeeded and was nominated as MP from Sool.

Table 3: Women in leadership positions, Puntland 2019

<i>Positions</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Female</i>
Parliament	66	1
Cabinet	50	4 (1 Minister and 3 Deputies)
Director Generals	40	0
Departmental Directors	217	21
Governors	9	0

As showed in table 3, the current women in leadership positions in Puntland are 1 MP mentioned above, 1 Minister and 3 deputies, 0 director general, 0 governors and 21 departmental directors. Two of the ministerial positions (Minister and Deputy Minister) that women have been appointed to are 'classical' positions for women: Ministry of Women Development and Family Affairs (MoWDF).

It is worth noticing that the challenges faced does not seem to lower the expectations of women and their wanting to be more and more politically engaged, even though their political representation lowers throughout every administration. Moreover, women organize themselves within movements and forums to debate their role in politics and how to achieve it. Their education and access to other politicians is also increasing. However, the challenges they faced historically are still the same as the current ones: culture, finance, social and institutional.

2.3 Existing Structures Supporting Women Participation in Politics

Many international instruments affirm gender equality and equitable participation in governance and development agendas globally. These documents include: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) the Political Rights of Women (1952); Economic, Social and Cultural rights (1966); Civic and Political Rights (1966); CEDAW (1976); Beijing Platform of Action(1995); Security Council Resolution 1325(2000) and Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa(2005).

Political participation is the fundamental right of Puntland and Somali citizens as stated by national/state legal frameworks. A few of these frameworks include:

1. Women Quota

The aim of this quota was to reverse discrimination in law and practice and to concretely work on women's political participation. In 2007, a presidential decree allocated 30% of seats in leadership and governance for women. The implementation of this quota is yet to be achieved 10 years and three administrations later.

2. Gender Policy

Puntland also took lead in Somalia in the drafting of a gender policy. While this policy took into consideration Somali norms, values and religion, it however met with resistance from religious elders, which stalled the process. As result, the draft awaits to be passed by parliament and rectified in to the Puntland Constitution.

3. Somali Constitutions of 1960, 1979, 1990 and 2012

All those constitution defined that all citizens regardless of gender, religion, socio-economic status, political opinion, nationality or language are equal to the rights and duties. While there is no specific article in regards to women in politics, the on-going revision of Somalia's constitution and electoral laws provide a chance for women challenges to be addressed and their political participation to be empowered. This opportunity should be taken to secure progressive constitutional gender equality provisions by amending electoral and political party laws to fully promote gender equity and equality of women's meaningful participation.

4. 1998 Puntland Charter

This Charter stated that women should have five (5) specific seats in the parliament, while this might have been the case in one administration; the seats allocated in Parliament were reduced to 1 in 2019.

These documents were important milestones when they were drafted even though implementation is still an issue.

5. Women Leadership in Islam

With the coming of Islam, circumstances improved for woman. Not only was their dignity and humanity restored, they were also given rights and responsibilities in every aspect of life. They were allowed to protect and serve; they were given freedom and fairness.

Women are valued in Islam and they took critical leadership roles during the Prophet Mohamed (PSBU) time and before. Some specific parts (Surah An- Nisa, Surah Al- Imran, Surah An – Nuur) of the Quran mention the value and dignity bestowed upon women.

These documents were important milestones when they were drafted even though implementation is still an issue.

3. Rationale

Despite many attempts to enhance gender equality, women's participation in politics, especially candidates in elective or appointive offices, is quite negligible.

Within this context, this study is based on key informant interviews of the 2019 elections female aspirants as well as a 2-days consultative forum held by PDRC in collaboration with SAHAN on 19-20 June 2019. The forum intended to determine the current situation of Puntland women's political participation by addressing the challenges they faced, the opportunities present and way forward. The aim is also to promote women's representation in public offices through the consultative forum.

4. Objectives

- To bring together political aspirants, politically active women, Ministry of Women Development and Family affairs and members from the public to share knowledge and experience on political participation.
- To reflect on 2019 Puntland elections in regards to women's participation and addresses the looming challenges/opportunities and set forth a blue print for the way forward.
- Women aspirants to share their experiences and lessons learnt from 2019 election.
- To develop future plan for women politicians.

5. Methods

The research methodology was developed through participatory discussion between PDRC and Interpeace through the identification of key research questions and target respondents. Participatory Action Research (PAR) was used for the ‘promotion of women’s political participation in Puntland’ consultative forum. Indeed, the forum was based on interactive exercises that enabled participants to discover the information they need through conversations, group works and video messages from women political aspirants sharing their experiences and discussions through Q&A from participants were also used.

5.1 Key Informant Interviews

Key informants included 7 female aspirants from Puntland 2019 Elections, which were interviewed through film documentary one hour each in March 2019. The participants were the following:

1. Zaynab Ismail Timbiye
2. Yasmeen Maxamuud
3. Barni Issa Ahmed
4. Edil Abdikarim Hassan
5. Naima Abdi Carshe (MP)
6. Sucaad Salah (Deputy Minister)
7. Fartuun Ali Liig

These female aspirants attempted parliamentary or ministerial positions, some of them succeed, most of them failed. The interview’s aim was to discover their experience, recommendations and way forward.

5.2 Questionnaire

Why did you choose to be a politician? When and How?

Which position have you attempted and how long were you campaigning?

In general, what were the challenges that hindered women’s full political participation in 2019 Puntland elections? Provide practical examples (Lessons learnt)

Why do you think you failed or succeeded in the 2019 elections?

What other plans do you have in the future? Do you see democratization as an opportunity for women’s political participation? If so, how?

How do you see the future of Somali women in politics?

What would you recommend to improve women’s political?

5.3 Consultative Forum

Puntland Development & Research Center (PDRC) in collaboration with SAHAN held this consultative forum in Garowe, Puntland State of Somalia.

As a consultative forum, the debate engaged 40 participants among; women activists, members from the Ministry of Women Development and Family Affairs, Puntland MPs, Women Politicians, Civil Society (Women and Youth Organizations), Lawyers, UNSOM, and Academia.

Key contributors to this agenda and particularly to the consultative forum were: Saida Ahmed Ali (Qacle), lawyer and senior advisor to the president; Yasmeen Maxamuud, political aspirant and senior advisor to the president; Shamsa Sheikh Hassan, lawyer; Saynab Mohamed, political aspirant; Barni Isse Ahmed, Head of Department Ministry of Youth, Labour and Sports (MoYLS); Luul Jamac, Head of Gender Department MoWDAFA; and Yacqub Mohamed Abdalle, journalist and civil rights' activist.

The two-day forum addressed the issues mentioned above through keynote speeches, presentations, and plenary discussions and group action plans.

6. Challenges Faced by Women in 2019 Puntland Elections

6.1 Male dominated political system

Since its establishment, Puntland State of Somalia has used a clan system whereby traditional elders select members of Parliament, which in turn select the President and Vice-President. A clan power-sharing mechanism known as 4.5 is also used for equilibrium and 'inclusion' of all. This system has been an impediment to women's participation in politics and other positions of leadership. Traditional elders feel confident in selecting male members of the tribes they represent and rarely allow women to fill the seat.

Religious elders and men in politics have not given women their support either. All in all, Somali culture promotes men in power and reinforces the segregation of women in power. Women thus lack the support needed from their male counterparts, which seriously undermines their getting fair representation.

In the view of majority of the women interviewed and those who participated in the consultative forum: "Until real democracy with one-man one-vote as a mechanism of electing people in power is implemented, there is little hope for women's participation in politics to increase". Luul Feerayare, an aspiring politician, believes that democratization is the only way for women to demonstrate they are fit for office.

Advocacy for democracy, and more so for one-man one-vote is the way, according to most of the women interviewed. Women need to push for this agenda for the up-coming 2020 federal elections and the next Puntland elections.

6.2 Cultural Stereotyping

Being a woman in Puntland is accepting the cultural norms that go with it. In regards to politics, women are not considered as potential candidates as this a role of a man. Women are always reminded of their inferiority as some say, “How can a *Naag* represent our tribe”. *Naag* here not only means ‘Woman’ but also brings about the disdain towards such idea, that women should stay in their line.

This idea is particularly reinforces when women are married into another clan, then there is a belief that she is no longer ‘ours’ so her birth tribe does not select her, less so her married tribe.

The Somali culture also limited any relationship and connection between women and paramount chiefs (signatories) since they do not sit under the tree. There are no middle grounds where women can converse and have as strong of a relation as men have with the chiefs.

In order for women to take their rightful position, not only do they need linkages but also a strong legal framework that surpasses cultural barriers. Puntland government, CSOs and academia should advocate for the implementation of the policies that favour women’s inclusion in all leadership positions, governmental or not.

6.3 Financial Capacity

Candidates need to have resources to go to community events, organize their own events and volunteer with local programs to increase their profile with voters, however Somali women have less financial capacity than their male counterparts.

While women are considered breadwinners in most Somali societies, there are still limited because the businesses they own are mostly small and they are not employed in both public and private sectors. They do not have savings to support political campaigns and they do not have a support system that fund raises for them.

Male candidates are different because they supporting each other through all the process. They receive funds, are given loans and tribe/family affiliations gather everything they have for them. This shows than men that do not have the financial capacity to run still have strong networks they can use to fund raise and to advocate for them.

Saida Qacle, a lawyer calls for women to establish a fund raising committee in order to “help our talented women succeed”. Luul Feerayare believes that women are not risk takers; they do not borrow money for elections because of fear of failure.

6.4 Women Support

Another challenge mentioned by many is the lack of women to women support. Fardowsa Jama, one of the participants of the consultative forum mentioned how do no help each other in general, they do not advocate for each other nor do they support each other financially.

There is limited relationship between women aspirants, women business owners and the women of the community. One suggested that instead of establishing new organizations, there is a need for empowering existing ones financially and professionally.

Women should start campaigning with the help of other women early; if they do so they can have ample time for creating linkages and fundraising.

They should also work on advocating for the implementation of women quota as well as empowerment of women in leadership positions. Trainings on personal productivity skills, especially leadership skills are necessary for all female aspirants.

Women Groups and LNGOs particularly need to push women's political participation's agenda within the new administration. Early advocacy can help with the next elections whether it's one-man one-vote or the traditional clan system.

7. Conclusion

This study based on key informant interviews and a consultative forum engaging women in government, women aspirants for the 2019 Puntland elections, business women, academia and students focuses on tackling the issues surrounding the status of women in Puntland politics. It was a reflection of women in Puntland Elections 2019, why they failed to have representation in the current administration, the challenges, and finally the intent was to prepare for future elections by having a way forward to change the challenges into success stories.

It is obvious the clan dynamics with patriarchy as well as the current 4.5 political system has only favoured male aspirants; indeed traditional elders prefer that the positions allocated to their tribe are filled by men who really represent them instead of a women who is considered to be part of the clan of the husband or not someone who can represent their interests.

Although this is the biggest challenge, women face other challenges such as little money to finance their campaigns as well as a lack of boldness to fundraise and borrow money from banks.

While men consider and prepare for elections years in advance, women run last minute when the minds and hands of the decision makers (Traditional Elders) are full. They do not have strong political allies to aid them when they run this late.

While women face challenge with finding allies within men, women to women support is also lacking. Women do not advocate for each other nor do they help with fundraising for female political aspirants.

In summary, the participants suggested the way forward required in order to respond to the lack of women in Puntland politics. The recommendations include:

- (i) Implementation of existing laws/instruments.
- (ii) Monitoring system in place to make sure women have their quota before elections end.
- (iii) Increase women's knowledge, capacity and skills for a leadership position.
- (iv) Create strong arrangements for women with political ambitions reach their goal by helping them fundraise as well as connecting them to the decision-makers.
- (v) Create employment opportunities for women so that they can support each other financially.
- (vi) And to make sure ways of employment and women's access to labour market.

Finally the study suggested that the Ministry of Women Development and Family Affairs (MoWDAFA) should lead and guild the process by engaging all stakeholders in achieving real and meaningful engagement of women in Puntland politics

8. Way Forward

PUNTLAND WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION WAY FORWARD WORK PLAN						
GOAL						
An efficient and inclusive system of governance in Puntland catering to the needs of the people without discrimination, in which women's role in politics is enhanced.						
ISSUES	INTERVENTIONS	ACTORS	TIMELINE	CONSTRAINTS	SUPPORT	DESIRED OUTCOME
Xubin Sharafeed Parliament ah 'Seats of Honour'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drafting a document which describes what the 'Xubin sharafeed' are (Seats of honour in the parliament). - Do the list - Look for approval and endorsement 	MOWDAFA and Experts	July 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acceptance and Approval of the government - The right women for those positions - Lack of women commitment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness to change perception 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legislative women seats for this term (2019 – 2023) will be presented. - Agendas and needs of the women will be on the table of legislative
Established Lobby group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusive and influential list - Developing TOR, CODE of conduct and action plan 	MOWDAFA and Experts	July – September 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of capacity - Lack of funding - Lack of flow-up and organized mechanism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training and capacity building - Funding - International and local support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusive committee - A pressure committee will be in place - Comprehensive work plan for advocating Puntland women's political participation will be

						settled
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To establish system for fund raising - Women fund raising committee - Creation of business - Loan provision - Government withdrawing of the elective funds 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DOWDAFA - Women groups/move ments - Business people - Diaspora - Banks 	Long-term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of women trust between other women - Difficult rules and condition of the banks - Un-willing of men to support women politics - Lack of jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Banks - Government - Companies - Women for women fund raising - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding to supporting women political aspirates will be available - Increase number of female in the parliament - Grassroots female contribution
Clan power sharing (System)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inception of democratization system (one- person one-vote, and creation of political parties - Fair election process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government - Policy makers - Civilians - SCOs 	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Un willingness of the government - Current system - Lack of civil education - Public acceptance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding - Wrong perception of the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government for commitment and leading the process - International community for technical and financial support - Local (civilians/public) support for accepting the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusive and representative government to be established - Proper election which is justice and fair
Commitment to female Aspirants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building self-confidence and personal capacity - To have method to create willingness and continuity - Jointly contribution among women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MOWAFA, Female aspirates, women organizations and PDRC 	1 – 4 years (before next election)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less willingness of the women - Clannism /Clan elders - Triples responsibility of the women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clan elders - Family support (spouse) - MOWDAFA/Governmen t 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong female candidates - Increase of female representation in parliament -
Last minute campaign for the female aspirants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Starting early the process - Fund raising - Awareness - Profiling 	Female political aspirates	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clan elders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women to women support - Funding for campaigning (contributions) - MOWDAFA and CS for advocacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Winning in the election process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Female representation in the decision making/leadership to be increased

Political ignorance/less political knowledge and skill for women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building collage for preparing women who have the political ambition 	MOWDAFA	Short/long term	Funding	International and local community support for funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political quality to be reached - Good governance
Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness - Family training for behaviour change - 	MOWDAFA, Media, prominent clan elders, Scholars, SCOs and women groups	Long term	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong culture believes - Social norms - lack of continuity and commitment for the awareness campaigning - Lack of economic support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government support buy-in - Donors for funding - Women organizations (groups), CSOs for doing and actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Change society behaviour - The understanding of women's political role to be increased - Strong family bond

In Collaboration With:

