

Breaking Barriers: Women's Struggles & strength in parliamentary politics in Somaliland.



2025

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I. Introduction

A. Brief Overview of the Event

On the 22nd of July, 2025, a dynamic panel discussion titled “Breaking Barriers: Women's Strength in Parliamentary Politics in Somaliland” was held at Assod Hotel, Hargeisa, from 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM. The event brought together experienced and emerging women leaders, activists, and community members to examine the ongoing challenges and progress of women's political participation in Somaliland. Through open dialogue and powerful testimonies, the panel highlighted both barriers and opportunities facing women in parliamentary politics today.

B. Introduction to the Siraad Initiative

1. Siraad Initiative: The Siraad Initiative stands as a beacon of hope within Somaliland, championing the cause of women empowerment and youth development. Founded on the principles of education and entrepreneurship, this non-profit organization endeavors to bridge the gender gap by providing training and resources to women and youth across Somaliland. Through its tireless efforts, the Siraad Initiative envisions a society where women and youth actively engage in economic, social, and political spheres, thus fostering a more inclusive and equitable community.

2. Gole Watch: Gole watch is a parliament monitoring initiative in Somaliland that bridges the gap between the parliament and citizens by providing accurate and visualized information.

C. Purpose and Objectives of the Event

The panel, themed “Breaking Barriers: Women’s Strength in Parliamentary Politics in Somaliland,” aimed to spotlight the challenges and progress of women in political leadership. It provided a space for intergenerational dialogue to inspire and connect current and future women leaders. The event objectives include:

- 1. Recognizing Women’s political contributions:** To spotlight the impact and achievements of pioneering women in Somaliland’s parliamentary history, while emphasizing the need for stronger female representation.
- 2. Addressing structural & cultural barriers:** To unpack the deep-rooted obstacles—social, cultural, and institutional—that hinder women’s access to political leadership.
- 3. Amplifying Women’s Voices in Governance:** To promote women’s agency in decision-making spaces and encourage a more inclusive, gender-sensitive political future.

II. Background

A. Context of Women’s political participation in Somaliland

Since Somaliland’s declaration of independence in 1991, its democratic journey has been marked by local peacebuilding and electoral milestones.

Yet, women have remained largely excluded from formal political leadership, despite playing key roles in reconciliation and social stability. Socio-cultural norms, clan politics, and institutional barriers have made it difficult for women to access parliamentary seats or leadership roles, leaving their voices underrepresented at decision making tables.

However, despite efforts to advance women’s political participation, significant challenges remain. Women continue to face systemic exclusion from decision-making spaces, including parliamentary leadership, due to entrenched social norms, limited access to resources, and lack of political support. This underrepresentation persists even though women have played vital roles in community resilience, advocacy, and informal governance across Somaliland.

B. Importance of Women’s Participation in Decision-making

Women’s inclusion in parliamentary politics is vital for inclusive governance and sustainable development. Female leaders bring distinct perspectives that reflect broader community needs and priorities. Their presence in political spaces strengthens democratic legitimacy, enhances social equity, and helps bridge the gap between policy and lived experience especially for women and youth across Somaliland. Moreover, increasing women’s inclusion in political leadership strengthens democratic governance, fosters greater social trust, and ensures that policymaking reflects the needs of all citizens.

Empowering women as political leaders not only advances gender equality but also contributes to more responsive and inclusive institutions, ultimately building a more just and resilient society.

C. Overview of Siraad Initiative and Its Focus on Empowering Women and Youth in Somaliland

Siraad Initiative stands at the forefront of efforts to empower women and youth in Somaliland, driven by a commitment to fostering inclusive development and social justice. Through a range of programs and initiatives, Siraad Initiative seeks to address the systemic barriers that limit women and youth's access to education, economic opportunities, and political participation.

Central to the Siraad Initiative's approach is the recognition of women and youth as catalysts for change and progress within their communities. By providing training, resources, and mentorship, the organization equips women and youth with the skills and knowledge they need to actively engage in the economic, social, and political spheres. Moreover, Siraad Initiative advocates for policy reforms and systemic changes to create an enabling environment for women and youth to thrive and contribute meaningfully to Somaliland's development.

Through its holistic approach to empowerment, Siraad Initiative embodies the principle that sustainable peace and prosperity can only be achieved when all members of society, including women and youth, are empowered to participate fully and equitably in decision-making processes.



This background section provides a comprehensive understanding of the context in which the event takes place, underscoring the significance of women's participation in Political and decisionmaking and introducing the pivotal role of the Siraad Initiative in empowering women and youth in Somaliland.

III. Event Details and Logistics

A. Date, Time, and Venue of the Event

The event organized by the Siraad Initiative in collaboration with GOLE Watch took place on the 22nd of July, 2025, at Assod Hotel, located in Hargeisa, the capital city of Somaliland. The event commenced at 9:30 am and concluded at 12:30 pm, providing participants with an engaging and insightful platform for discussion and dialogue.

The choice of venue at Assod Hotel, known for its modern facilities and conducive environment for gatherings and conferences, facilitated a conducive atmosphere for meaningful exchanges and networking opportunities among participants.

B. Theme: “Breaking barriers: Women’s Struggles & strength in parliamentary politics in Somaliland”

The overarching theme of the event, “Breaking Barriers: Women’s Struggles & Strength in Parliamentary Politics in Somaliland,” emphasized the critical role of women in shaping political life and fostering inclusive governance. It aimed to highlight both the resilience of women leaders and the importance of their full participation in parliamentary processes, policy-making, and national development.

By focusing on women’s role in parliamentary politics, the event aimed to raise awareness of their vital contributions to democratic governance and to explore practical strategies for increasing their participation and influence in political decision-making at all levels.

C. Overview of the Agenda

The event featured a thoughtfully curated panel designed to facilitate insightful discussions and presentations on various aspects of women’s roles in political participation. The agenda encompassed the following key components:

- 1. Welcome Address:** The event commenced with a welcome address by representatives from Siraad Initiative, setting the tone for the discussions and highlighting the significance of the theme.
- 2. Panel Discussion:** A panel discussion, featuring esteemed speakers composing of former MP, former MP Candidates and current candidates of the 2026 parliamentary elections. The panelists shared their expertise and

The panelists shared their expertise and experiences, addressing strategies for promoting women’s participation in decision-making processes, legal measures to promote gender equality, and effective solutions to overcome barriers hindering women’s involvement in Political participation.

- 3. Participant Engagement:** The event concluded with participant discussions, where attendees had the opportunity to share their perspectives, insights, and recommendations on breaking barriers to women’s political involvement. This interactive session fostered dialogue and collaboration among participants, reinforcing the importance of collective action in advancing gender-inclusive governance.

Overall, the agenda provided a meaningful platform to explore the challenges and progress of women in parliamentary politics, offering participants valuable insights, shared experiences, and opportunities for dialogue and collaboration. This overview of the event’s theme, venue, and objectives sets the stage for a deeper analysis of the discussions and outcomes in the following sections of the report.

This detailed overview of the event’s date, venue, theme, and agenda sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the discussions and outcomes in subsequent sections of the report.

IV. Objectives of the Event

A. Recognizing the Crucial Role of Women in Parliamentary Politics

A central objective of the event was to highlight the essential role women play in Somaliland's parliamentary politics. Despite systemic challenges, women have demonstrated resilience and leadership, often representing broader community interests. The discussion aimed to acknowledge these contributions and emphasize the importance of increasing women's visibility and representation in legislative spaces.

However, their contributions to formal political processes have often been overlooked or marginalized. By highlighting the critical role of women in parliamentary leadership, the event aimed to amplify their visibility and advocate for their meaningful inclusion in legislative decisionmaking and political structures that shape Somaliland's future.

B. Addressing Barriers to Women's Political Representation

Another key focus was examining the structural and cultural barriers that continue to limit women's political participation. From restrictive social norms to the absence of legal quotas, women face significant obstacles in accessing and retaining parliamentary seats. The panel called for targeted reforms, greater public awareness, and sustained advocacy to dismantle these barriers and promote inclusive governance.

C. Promoting Women's Voices in Parliamentary Discourse

The event also aimed to elevate women's voices in parliamentary discourse and promote a more inclusive political environment that reflects the diversity of Somaliland's society. Women bring distinct insights and lived experiences that enhance legislative debate and policymaking. By advocating for their full participation in politics, the event sought to challenge entrenched gender norms, break cycles of exclusion, and build momentum toward a more equitable and representative political system.

Overall, the objectives centered on recognizing women's political leadership, addressing systemic barriers, and mobilizing collective action to ensure gender equality and inclusive governance in Somaliland's parliamentary institutions.

V. Key Discussion Points

A. Emphasizing the Essential Role of Women in Parliamentary

The event opened by reaffirming the critical importance of women's participation in Somaliland's parliamentary elections. Panelists highlighted how women's perspectives and leadership contribute to more inclusive governance and responsive policymaking. By showcasing the experiences and resilience of past and present female MPs, the session encouraged participants to challenge political norms and support broader inclusion of women in legislative processes.

B. Addressing Critical Issues Related to Women's Participation in Parliamentary elections

A significant portion of the discussion focused on the persistent challenges limiting women's participation in Somaliland's parliamentary politics. Panelists explored barriers such as restrictive cultural attitudes, the absence of legal frameworks supporting gender inclusion, and the lack of institutional support for aspiring female politicians. By openly examining these challenges and sharing lived experiences, the panel called for systemic reforms, greater public awareness, and targeted support to empower more women to contest and lead in future parliamentary elections.

C. Panel Discussion Highlights

1. Strategies for Ensuring Active Participation of Women in Decision-Making Processes:

Panelists discussed various strategies and approaches for ensuring the active participation of women in decision-making processes, including capacity building, mentorship programs, and advocacy campaigns. By empowering women with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources, participants sought to overcome barriers to women's participation and promote their meaningful engagement in shaping decisionmaking and governance processes.

2. Serious Lack of Women's Participation in Politics:

key highlight of the panel discussion was the stark reality of the limited presence of women in Somaliland's political landscape, particularly within parliamentary representation.

Panelists emphasized the consequences of this underrepresentation, noting how it undermines democratic inclusivity and leaves critical societal issues unaddressed. The discussion called attention to the urgent need for legal frameworks and political will to promote gender balance, not only by encouraging women's participation but also by removing the structural and cultural barriers that continue to sideline them.

3. Effective Solutions to Overcome Barriers Hindering Women's Political Participation:

Panelists and participants engaged in a robust discussion on practical solutions to address the multifaceted barriers limiting women's participation in politics. These included cultural norms, institutional biases, and resource constraints. Particular attention was given to the lack of campaign funding knowledge, limited access to male-dominated social spaces such as teashops, and mobility challenges that restrict women from traveling to remote areas to mobilize voters—opportunities more readily accessible to male candidates. Participants shared best practices and proposed strategies such as targeted training, financial literacy programs, inclusive outreach methods, and support networks to enhance women's presence and competitiveness in political spaces.

These key discussion points highlighted the multifaceted nature of women's roles in parliamentary politics, as well as the persistent challenges and emerging opportunities for strengthening their participation and influence in shaping Somaliland's political landscape.



VI. Contributions of Speakers

A. Baar Siciid: Former MP and currently President's advisor on Women affairs

H.E. Baar Siciid, former Member of Parliament and current Presidential Advisor on Women's Affairs, delivered a thought-provoking speech on the common misconceptions surrounding financial barriers faced by women in politics. Drawing from her extensive experience as a pioneering female politician, Baar emphasized that the real challenge is not the lack of money, but the level of determination and strategic mindset women bring to overcoming obstacles.

She highlighted the importance of being mindful, resilient, and focused in breaking down systemic barriers, encouraging women to channel their efforts toward purposeful action. Baar's insights underscored the critical role of personal resolve and collective will in advancing women's leadership and political participation in Somaliland.

B. Sadia Muse: former MP Candidate and Country representative of PENHA

Sadia Muse, former parliamentary candidate and country representative of the Pastoral and Environmental Network in the Horn of Africa (PENHA), shared powerful reflections on her journey as a trailblazer for women in Somaliland politics. Drawing from her experience running for parliament, Sadia spoke candidly about "clearing the thorns in the crossing," meaning she helped break down barriers and set a precedent that encouraged more women to bravely pursue political office, despite the challenges and setbacks she faced. Her story highlighted the courage and determination required to challenge entrenched norms and open pathways for future female candidates.

Sadia also acknowledged the ongoing difficulties ahead, reminding participants that the task of achieving meaningful political representation remains arduous.

She emphasized that while progress has been made, the next generation of women leaders must be prepared to confront persistent obstacles with resilience and strategic action. Her insights offered both inspiration and a realistic perspective on the work needed to build a more inclusive and equitable political landscape in Somaliland.



Sadia Muse: former MP Candidate

C. Hon. Amina Fariid: Current MP together with Hamda Egal (Candidate for 2026 Parliamentary elections)

Hamda Egal, a current candidate for the 2026 parliamentary elections, spoke with remarkable clarity and confidence despite being the youngest panelist. She highlighted a harsh reality, stating, "Women are overlooked as members of society." Drawing on her personal experiences, Hamda acknowledged the significant progress made since 2005 in changing attitudes toward outspoken women in politics. However, she was quick to point out that while these advancements are encouraging, there remains much work to be done.

"There has been huge growth between 2005 and the present day," she noted, "but there are many ways for that progress to be accelerated." Her remarks underscored both the strides achieved and the urgent need for continued efforts to create a more inclusive political environment for women in Somaliland.

Hon. Amina Fariid, the current and only female Member of Parliament in the house, shared candid insights about her unique path to office. She explained that her position was not secured through a direct electoral process but rather through party mechanisms, as she was next in line to assume the seat following the passing of a sitting MP. Amina emphasized that this method of accession highlights the ongoing challenges women face in gaining parliamentary seats through regular elections.

She urged the younger generation of women leaders to be bold and proactive, saying, "We count on you to make the strikes and shake things up, and know that we have your backs and shoulders." Her message was a powerful call to action, encouraging women to step forward and challenge the status quo to create lasting change.



Hon. Amina Fariid: Current MP

Overall, the contributions of Sadia Muse, H.E. Baar Siciid, Hamda Egal, and Amina Fariid enriched the panel discussions, providing diverse perspectives and practical strategies to advance women's participation and leadership. Their insights highlighted the critical role of women in Somaliland's political landscape, offering valuable guidance on how to promote inclusion and empower women to shape a more inclusive and equitable future.

VII. Participant Discussions

A. Summary of Participant Discussions

The participant discussions that followed the panel provided an open platform for attendees to share their perspectives, insights, and recommendations on the role of women in Somaliland's political landscape. Participants engaged in vibrant exchanges, reflecting on the challenges and opportunities to increase women's participation and influence in parliamentary decision-making.

The conversations covered key issues such as the need for economic empowerment, overcoming cultural barriers, and recognizing the vital contributions women make to governance and national stability.

B. Highlighting the Need for Economic Empowerment, Addressing Cultural Challenges, and International Recognition of Women's Contributions

A key theme that emerged from the participant discussions was the crucial role of economic empowerment in enhancing women's participation in parliamentary and electoral processes.

Participants underscored the need for initiatives that expand women's access to financial resources, campaign funding, and capacity-building opportunities. These efforts are essential for addressing the financial hurdles that often discourage or prevent women from running for office or participating meaningfully in elections.

Participants also emphasized the need for increased international recognition of women's contributions to electoral participation and parliamentary representation in Somaliland. Despite their growing involvement in political processes, women's efforts often remain underappreciated on the global stage. Gaining international acknowledgment can amplify their voices, attract support for gender-inclusive political reforms, and highlight the importance of women's leadership in governance. Such recognition not only validates their role in democratic development but also strengthens their position in national and international political arenas.

Overall, the participant discussions highlighted the multifaceted challenges and opportunities for enhancing women's participation in parliamentary and overall elections within Somaliland. By addressing issues such as economic empowerment, cultural barriers, and international recognition, participants underscored the importance of creating an enabling environment for women to actively engage in shaping democratic processes within their communities.

VIII. Conclusion

A. Recap of Key Points Discussed During the Event

Throughout the event, participants engaged in dynamic discussions and presentations that highlighted the vital role of women in Somaliland's electoral processes and parliamentary representation. Key topics included women's significant yet underrecognized contributions to political life, the systemic and cultural obstacles they face, and actionable strategies for increasing their inclusion and influence.

The event emphasized the urgency of amplifying women's voices in politics, challenging gender norms, and pushing for institutional and policy reforms that promote equal participation. It served as a strong call to advance a more inclusive, representative, and gender-responsive political landscape in Somaliland.

B. Recommendations for Enhancing Women's participation in democratization Processes

Building upon the insights and discussions from the event, several recommendations emerge for enhancing women's participation in democratic processes in Somaliland:

- 1. Enhancing Women's Economic Access:** Develop programs that expand women's access to financial resources, business development opportunities, and targeted funding support, empowering them to overcome economic hurdles and participate confidently in electoral and political activities.

- 2. Challenging Socio-Cultural Constraints:** Tackle harmful gender stereotypes and traditional roles that inhibit women's political engagement by promoting inclusive narratives, advancing gender equity, and fostering environments where women can freely express their political agency.

- 3. Investing in Leadership and Skills Development:** Offer training, mentorship, and leadership development initiatives that equip women with the tools, knowledge, and confidence necessary to run for office, campaign effectively, and contribute meaningfully to decision-making structures.

C. Vision for a More Stable and Progressive Somaliland

Looking ahead, the vision for a more stable and progressive Somaliland hinges upon the active and meaningful participation of women in democratic processes. By recognizing and valuing women's contributions, addressing barriers to their inclusion, and promoting their empowerment, Somaliland can build a more inclusive and equitable society where women play a central role in shaping democratization, governance and statehood. Through collective action, collaboration, and commitment to gender equality, Somaliland can realize its vision of a peaceful and prosperous future for all its citizens.

In closing, the event serves as a catalyst for continued dialogue, advocacy, and action to advance women's participation in election processes and foster sustainable peace and development in Somaliland.

By working together to overcome challenges and seize opportunities, Somaliland can build a brighter and more inclusive future, where women's voices are heard, valued, and integrated into decision-making processes at all levels of society.

IX. Acknowledgments

A. Recognition of Event Organizers, Speakers, Participants, and Supporters

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all those who contributed to the success of the event on “Breaking barriers: women’s struggles and Strength in parliamentary politics in Somaliland.” This event would not have been possible without the dedication, expertise, and support of numerous individuals and organizations.



Firstly, we express our gratitude to the Siraad Initiative and the Gole Watch for their unwavering commitment to advancing women's empowerment and promoting democratic processes in Somaliland. Their leadership, vision, and tireless efforts were instrumental in bringing together stakeholders and facilitating meaningful dialogue on this critical issue.

We extend our deepest thanks to the esteemed speakers, H.E Baar Siciid, Hon. Amina Fariid Ms. Sadia Muse and Ms. Hamda Egal for their invaluable contributions and insights shared during the event. Their expertise, passion, and dedication enriched the discussions and inspired participants to action.

We also acknowledge and appreciate the active participation of all attendees, including representatives from government agencies, civil society organizations, academia, and the private sector. Your engagement, perspectives, and contributions were instrumental in shaping the dialogue and generating actionable recommendations for enhancing women's participation in peace processes.

Furthermore, we extend our appreciation to the event organizers, volunteers, and staff members who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the smooth planning and execution of the event. Your dedication, professionalism, and attention to detail were instrumental in creating a conducive environment for dialogue and collaboration.

Lastly, we express our gratitude to all supporters, sponsors, and donors who generously contributed their resources, expertise, and time to make this event a success.

Your support and commitment to promoting gender equality and inclusive democracy in Somaliland are deeply appreciated and will have a lasting impact on the lives of women and communities in the region. Together, we reaffirm our collective commitment to advancing women's participation in democratic processes and building a more inclusive, equitable, and peaceful Somaliland. Thank you for your unwavering dedication and partnership in this important endeavor.





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