

RAPE: A RISING CRISIS AND REALITY FOR THE WOMEN IN SOMALIA

KEY POLICY MESSAGES

1. Sexual violence against women and girls in Somalia, an abominable crime less prevalent in Somalia pre-civil war history and completely against Islam, is emerging as a common occurrence in Somalia and Somali society has lived with its horrors for decades. Recent figures show 76% of all recorded cases happen among the IDPs whereas 14% occur in the hosting communities
2. Somali women and girls are reluctant to come forward, report rape due to the cultural taboo and stigma attached to it, and the shame and the loss of family honor associated with it. From the data gathered, only 2 out of 10 women feel the courage to report spousal or intimate partner violence
3. Rape in Somalia spiked during the civil war in 1991 and was used as a weapon of war by some of the opposing militias after the collapse of Somalia's central government. The civil war has produced militia groups who took their hate-filled revenge on the bodies of women to avenge their enemy while others used rape as an opportunistic activity with impunity
4. Violent rape by multiple perpetrators (gang rape) is a new phenomenon to the Somali culture and has been a cause of concern for the traditionally conservative Somali people who for decades grappled with rape behind closed doors due to the perceived shamefulfulness
5. Drug abuse (including the local Qat addiction), alcohol and access and availability of pornographic material has been inextricably believed to have a link with the onset and rise of sexual violence and rape in Somalia
6. Authorities allow families and traditional elders to settle rape cases out of court through customary laws (Called Xeer) that don't accord due justice for the victims. This practice has a devastating effect on the justice outcomes of the victims and contributed to the prevalence of rape and sexual violence in Somalia
7. There is no awareness, community outreach and trainings on prevention of rape and other types of sexual offenses. Similarly, women and girls do not have adequate awareness and education on how to report rape and preserve the evidence in the event of rape or other sexual crimes. Due to these profusions of difficulties, there is insufficient evidence in many rape cases to prosecute and convict perpetrators



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A Taboo:

Somali women and girls are reluctant to come forward, report rape due to the cultural taboo and stigma attached to it, and the shame and the loss of family honor associated with it.

Last Policy Brief:

The National Security Council Meeting in Mogadishu: The Sisyphean Search for Political Agreement in Somalia

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BACKGROUND

Violence:

The fear of violence can prevent women from pursuing education, working or exercising their political rights and voice.

New Phenomenon:

The frequent reports of spiraling sexual assault and rape incidents reveal Somalia wide phenomenon that cuts across boundaries of age, socioeconomic status, education and region.

Vulnerabilities:

Somali women's cultural and social vulnerabilities hamper their progress and empowerment in Somalia.

Somali women are the economic backbone in Somali society and in recent years have assumed more prevailing position as breadwinners of many families. They are the bond that holds families together. They are, however, marginalized and underrepresented in many economic, communal, political and leadership positions. While the barrier to empowerment for women in all areas such as employment, economic opportunities, education, health and participation in politics sturdily exist, the increased levels of violence against women in Somalia and their exclusion from important arenas where public policy is shaped and enacted to impact society as whole betoken both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality.

The fear of violence can prevent women from pursuing education, working or exercising their political rights and voice. Violence against women in Somalia does not only stem from gender inequality; it is a consequence of it. In many places, gender-based violence (GBV) is reinforced by exclusionary prejudicial social norms that undermine women and girl's opportunities for education, stable income and to be a voice on the decision making table. Girls are often subject to parental restrictions including keeping them out of educational opportunities. Therefore, gender inequalities, compounded by the breakdown of social norms and State fragility due to the civil war, are attributed to be the root cause and enabling context of violence against women in Somalia.

Somali women's cultural and social vulnerabilities hamper their progress and empowerment in Somalia. Their participation and contribution in important policy issues and decision-making processes is missing due to internalized and actual marginalization. Traditional elders play a huge role in having a say on women's participation in many spheres of social life including politics. Although traditional elders harbor centuries old cultural ideology that had confined Somali women in the house and deprived them of opportunities in leadership roles and power spaces, yet society have placed so much power in the hands of the traditional

elders who have become the de facto decision makers in all areas of politics. The lack of gender of equality, particularly the unacceptable marginalization of women and obstacles to their empowerment in Somalia, is at a critical juncture and should be an area of great consideration for policy makers, especially as the rape crises in the country has increased to staggering levels in recent months and years. The World Health Organization (WHO) indicates that about 1 in 3 (35%) of women and girls worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. Although the numbers are not Somalia specific, the worldwide figures astoundingly correspond to the worrying trend of sexual violence in Somalia.

The frequent reports of spiraling sexual assault and rape incidents reveal Somalia wide phenomenon that cuts across boundaries of age, socioeconomic status, education and region. Considering the cultural taboo of sexual violence in Somalia, women are reluctant to come forward and report sexual abuse in all forms. It is extremely difficult to collect sensitive information on violence against women when the victims are in fear of coming forward and there is an element of shame associated with a culture that reveres family honor and family name, which is often carried on the backs of women. This crisis which has been on the rise in recent years is taking its toll on women and girls, has an impact on the lives of many women beyond the direct victims of rape and sexual violence and creates a climate of fear, vulnerability and despair.

This policy paper will examine rape culture in the context of traditional norms, historic nature of rape, rape as a weapon of war and the manner in which rape has climaxed in recent years. The aim is to analyze and dissect how powerlessness, inequality, entrenched cultural perception of gender and women's place in society and the breakdown of social norms due to the Somali state failure are contributing to the increase in the incidences of sexual violence against Somali women, leading to horrific cases of rape on Somali women and girls. The policy brief will inform the impact of intersectionality of patriarchy, objectification, gender stereotypes, and normalized rape culture all precipitating the onset of rape and subsequent lack of reporting and criminalization.

THE HISTORY OF RAPE IN SOMALIA

Subjugated:

Somali females were always subjugated, but although rape was not condoned outright, it was not treated as a serious crime and social ill as well.

Historically in Somali pastoral society, rape was uncommon partly because of strong social and moral norms and the close protection of tribesmen of their womenfolk. However, Somali women encountered rape in the countryside, villages and occasionally in major cities although it was less frequent and gruesome than the forms of sexual violence women experience today. In the normal societal attitude, rape was perceived as a sinful aberrant behavior but one that women have to deal with as part of life. It was not something people wanted to discuss or prolong in community affairs longer than necessary. It was viewed as a horrific act that occurred and remedy was always sought quickly to cease any further discourse of it. In other words, Somali females were always subjugated, but although rape was not condoned outright, it was not treated as a serious crime and social ill as well.

Sexual violence was expounded as an act committed by young men who could not help themselves under the influence of Qat, some other forms of stress or even an uncontrollable male passion or sexual arousal that could not be averted. The victim was either married off to the rapist to save face or the families exchanged compensation (money or camels) leaving the victim to endure the suffering in silence. The raped woman or girl would carry the stigma and indignity of rape with her, blaming herself for what had happened. It is an utter affront to the family honor to deal with the disgrace of a girl that was raped among them, forcing the family to sweep the matter under the carpet. When the perpetrator refused to marry the girl, then the victimized girl would remain unmarried and ostracized for being impure, on the bases that she partook in a sexual act with a man whom she was not married to. In most cases the girl was sent away to live with relatives in other parts of the country. When the rape resulted in pregnancy, every attempt was made to cover it up and the resulting child would be given a new identity. In every case, the victims withstand the worst of the condemnation and the scars and trauma of the sexual violence.

In the 1980's there has been a surge of sexual violence against women in Somalia some of them allegedly perpetrated by gangs mostly the sons of the some renowned , rich and powerful men, bringing the first instances of gang rape with multiple perpetrators into the limelight. It was reported that this form of sexual violence was committed with intent and impunity. These young men horrified Mogadishu residents with their recklessness and detestable crime of raping girls randomly and with complete disregard for the law. Some of the perpetrators were never brought to justice, which reinforced the sense of dejection and injustice felt by many people.

During the height of the civil war, young rag tag militia took their revenge and anger on the bodies of women to avenge their warring enemy. Women were raped randomly including in sacred places such as Mosques, equally by people they knew like their neighbors and strangers. It was maniacally deliberate stratagem to humiliate the enemy through their women. This dark recent history has not been discussed openly as the matter of rape is still a taboo, an issue of discomfort and shrouded in silence. Somali women have suffered from sexual violence in refugee camps and even other parts of the world as refugees. Discussing the mounting rape pestilence openly, giving the high-level attention it deserves and resolving it through behavioral change and dispensation of justice remain difficult. It is always the victim and her family who endure the most blame. Until today, there were no ways to unveil the silence and ignominy around rape to give the due remedy for the victims.

Rich and Powerful:

Since the 1980's there has been a surge of sexual violence against women in Somalia some of them allegedly perpetrated by mostly the sons of the some renowned , rich and powerful.

THE PANDEMIC RISE OF RAPE

Heinous Crime:
Recently not only are multiple men raping one girl as young as 7 years, they are also resorting to heinous homicide like murdering the child.

The social fabric of Somali culture (values) seems to be shifting when it comes to rape culture. In recent months high profile sexual violence incidents has hit the headlines, ranging from unwanted sexual comments, advances to rape and murder. Women in Somalia have been exposed to rape and sexual violence for decades, but the way this Gender Based Violence (GBV) against Somali females is shaping itself lately has brought fear and terror to women. Women feel helpless, unheard and see the rise of rape as a direct consequence of the normalization of rape in Somalia. In its newest form, rape against women and girls has been inhumane, gruesome and done in organized criminal manner with multiple perpetrators. Alarm bells have been sounding currently of social media where the traditionally conservative Somali people, who for decades handled this shameful act behind closed doors, are forced to bring it to the public arena due to its daring potency.

Recently not only are multiple men raping one girl as young as 7 years, they are also resorting to heinous homicide like murdering the child. Rape usually occurs after a sexual assault or harassment such as groping. The most vulnerable recipients of sexual assault and rape in Somalia today are children and young girls, persons who are mentally disabled and elderly women who are forced to keep their terrible experience quiet and hidden.

Most often, the heinous act of rape comes from relative males. The perpetrators of rape may continue the act for years since they are sure the girl will not speak of the rape. This practice has been going on for decades in Somali households where due to poverty families may take in close and distance relatives to educate or extend care for reasons that have to do with their inability to afford daily life.

Drugs, alcohol, and pornographic material are also believed to be inextricably linked with the onset of sexual violence and rape in Somalia. Rape cases are exacerbated by the globalization and readily available pornography for Somali young men who at the time of rape may be under the influence of Qat or other drugs. In addition, since the onset of social media, the availability of sexualized

music videos and pornography at all hours of the day has had serious impact on young men to commit sexual violence and rape. While researching this report, SIDRA conducted interviews to gauge with the different segments of the public, including elders, youth, women and girls about the spike of rape incidents. The respondents overwhelmingly categorized three reasons for the rise of the sexual violence and rape; 1) The lack of severe punishments of the perpetrators 2) Access and availability of pornographic material and 3) the use of drugs that includes the local Qat and other drugs.

DNA evidence analysis was used for the first time in Somalia to convict three suspects who were accused of raping, maiming, and killing their victim, a 12-year-old girl in February 2019. The forensic lab in Garowe, Puntland, Somalia tested the DNA of the accused and according to a press release by the Bureau of Forensic Science in Garowe, their findings was the reason these three men were identified, where their DNA was found on the scene of the crime. This is a step forward for reporting and using DNA as a means to convict perpetrators. But there remains a misperception between the new DNA evidence test and the old rational manner in which rape was resolved through clan and customary process. The clash between this new frontier of forensic science and the bold way things are being done with the use DNA evidence will need awareness campaigns and elaborate discussions with religious figures as well as traditional leaders and scientists to lift the veil and bring DNA evidence in a manner that is understandable and is accepted by the community.

Abuse of Drug:
Drugs, alcohol, and pornographic material are also believed to be inextricably linked with the onset of sexual violence and rape in Somalia.

HOW RAPE IS REPORTED

Stigma:

Majority of rape and other sexual offences remain unreported due to the stigma, humiliation, and loss of honor and self-guilty and lack of support.

Given the complexity of rape and its devastating consequence, the perceived sexual entitlement of Somali men and the cultural attitudes of Somali people towards rape, it has been understandably tricky to define sexual violence as a serious offence in Somalia that is reportable as a crime. In Somalia, much of sexual harassment offences fall within the ambit of behavior problems and is never treated as serious human right violation but a set of bad behaviors by men towards women. Within the male segment of Somali society, rape is culturally unacceptable, but it is not a cultural taboo to the extent of criminalization. There are federal and state criminal laws across different parts of Somalia to deal with sexual violence against women and girls, but they are not enforced to the full extent required and often rape cases are settled in out of court through customary laws (Xeer).

Majority of rape and other sexual offences remain unreported due to the stigma, humiliation, and loss of honor and self-guilty and lack of support. There are no specialized referral centers, no safeguarding and reporting processes and procedures in neither place nor standard codes of confidentiality and privacy in handling rape and sexual offences in the health facilities. Health facilities are not properly equipped to provide medical, psychological and emotional support to rape victims and witnesses

The Statistics:

Physical assault as the leading GBV incident, accounting for 68.7%, followed by sexual assault 10.7%, while rape was reported at only 8.6% and others accounted for 12%. 89% of these incidents were reported by adults against 11% reported by children.

There is a lack of capacity, both human, and technological resources to thoroughly investigate rape cases in Somalia. There is also a lack of formal and effective investigation, enforcement, fair trial and adjudication processes for sexual crimes at police stations and judicial institutions that are tasked to ensure due justice for the victims by bringing the perpetrators to justice

There are no official figures available on sexual offenses in Somalia. Educational institutions, workplaces and local and neighborhood leaders are not required or encouraged to report on sexual offenses such as rape. It is ultimately the family of the victim who reports it to seek some sort of remedy. It takes months and is expensive to pursue justice for victims. In the end, the family is forced to drop the case due to pressure from traditional elders and the male members in the family. In most cases, rape victimization is hidden, and very little research has been undertaken to explore these gaps.

There is very little nationally representative data on all types of sexual offense in Somalia, and in some instances, there is no information at all regarding the experiences of particular categories of victims. It is entirely impossible to track the number of rapes being reported annually in different parts of the country due to lack of centralized national statistics and almost impossible to assess the scale of sexual and gender based crimes being committed due to secrecy, weak judicial system, corrupt and weak police and the lack of capacity of the police to handle rape cases of such nature and keep confidentiality intact. In a rare case of bravery, one woman, who was gang-raped in front of her son in Mogadishu in 2016, went and reported the rape despite fearing the stigma attached to it. Many victims suffer in silence.

Data gathered from different State and Non State actors in Puntland on Gender Based Violence (GBV) has shown that a comparison of incidents on rape reported by survivors during the first quarter of 2017 against the first quarter of 2018 has shown that, there were high incidents of GBV cases among the internally displaced people (IDP) which accounted for about 76% of all recorded cases whereas in the hosting community it was 14%. This data further shows that the high incidents of GBV in the IDPs is due to their vulnerability due to the lack of protection from such violent acts from both community and administrative structures coupled with the lack of case reporting, recording and management mechanisms.

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From the same data, it was found that 67% of GBV incidents were reported by women and girls who were married, where 12% were single, 8% divorced or separated and only 2.8% widowed. This data further shows that during the second quarter of 2018, there was a slight decrease in the incidents reported by single women compared to the same period in 2017. In the same period, the highest incidents of GBV were recorded among women and girls who were married or cohabiting. Furthermore, spousal or intimate partner violence was found to be the main GBV case reported accounting for 73%, followed by child sexual abuse at only 11%.

MYTHS AND STEREOTYPES

The Myth:

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Exploitation of Women:

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Cultural bias against Women:

The present male dominated establishment, institutions and social practices allow Somali menfolk to exploit women and crimes against women carry little or no consequences.

Complicating the implementation of laws and policies are myths and stereotypes about rape and victims of rape. The first myth propagates that rape is not a big issue in Somalia. The fact is that rape has become a genuine large-scale problem and daily occurrence in Somalia, which needs the attention of political and religious leaders, rule of law institutions, civil society organizations and the society as a whole. The second myth places the blame on the victims of sexual violence, mainly women and young girls, accusing them of attracting or encouraging sexual advances from men. The fact is that sexual violence is a serious criminal act and grave human right violation against women and young girls that cannot be justified. The third myth attempts to justify the action of the perpetrators and to lessen the seriousness of the crime. These myths considerably worsen the plight of the victims of sexual offense, not least because the way rape is trivialized culturally and the manner in which harm of sexual victimization and blame rests with the victim.

The worse myth, circulated in these days, concoct a theory of a covert agenda by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to exaggerate sexual violence in Somalia by encouraging women and young girl to fabricate rape, which did not happen. Centuries old stereotypes of treating women as inferior, sex objects and easy prey for men predators diverts the attention and criminal responsibility from the perpetrators and further victimizes women and young girls. The untrained professionals working in health centers and police departments whether male or female are often unsympathetic, judgmental, and impatient with the process. The victim is humiliated, doubted, and their plight exacerbated. These factors contribute to the low conviction rate of rape in Somalia. Arrests of the offenders result in very few criminal trials and most of these cases do not see a conviction for any crime related to rape.

COMBATING AND PREVENTING RAPE

Despite the need for concerted and coordinated preventive efforts and measures, this impending crisis is debated seriously and it does not seem that the political, traditional, and religious leaders are doing enough to deal with it. Documenting sexual violence is weak or nonexistence. The perpetuation of rape myths to a culture of male sexual entitlement, the normalization and the acceptance of rape as part of women's life coincides with very high levels of rape. Further, it would appear that there is a correlation between the higher the society's level of acceptance of rape myths and weak law and order, the less criminalization of rape and higher incidents of rape and other sexual offences. Overall, there is a cultural bias against women and a high and hostile sexism with old belief system that women are inferior, cold, aggressive and selfish and are now days going away from their traditional norms of staying at home to care for family and children.

The present male dominated establishment, institutions and social practices allow Somali menfolk to exploit women and crimes against women carry little or no consequences. Marginalization of Somali women cuts across class and status as even within the

elite and the educated males, promoting and protecting the rights of women is not given the same importance as other social male privileges.

Women organizations and women activist groups unfortunately have not taken a leading and active role in putting the sexual violence and rape on the forefront, which led this issue to worsen in a way that is detrimental to the future aspiration of young Somali females.

Preventing and combating sexual violence requires informed participatory study and an in-depth research on the root causes and magnitude of the problem, education and awareness campaigns, safeguarding and robust reporting, effective law enforcement and judicial process which can furnish proportionate remedy and penalty. This campaign must address the social, psychological, physical and emotional price of this heinous crime. It must fit into the wider push for economic and social rights for women and deliver specific outcomes such as equal access to health, education and employment as well access to free and fair justice.

If intervention in the form of campaigns and awareness programs are not initiated and strengthened, the rape issues and women's inequality will continue and deteriorate in the Somali fabric.

STRENGTHENING THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROCESS IN SOMALIA

Somalia has ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Convention calls for the elimination of discrimination, sex stereotypes and sexual violence against women and the promotion and protection of women's social and economic rights and equality.

Post-independence Somalia enacted laws against sexual violence. The 1962 Penal Code is still the current law. The law criminalizes rape and other forms of sexual violence as well as forced prostitution. Articles 398-9 provide that 'carnal intercourse' and 'acts of lust committed with violence' are punishable with 5-15 years and 1-5 years imprisonment respectively."

After the collapse of Somalia's central government, notwithstanding the penal code is still cited as the basic criminal law of the country, Somaliland and some of the Federal Member States such as Puntland adapted their state law against rape and sexual violence. Puntland for instance, passed a gender-neutral law on August 2016 criminalizing all sexual offences in Puntland State of Somalia. Thus, the failures to fight and eliminate sexual violence against women does not lie in the absence of shortage of laws, be it under Islam or laws enacted by government jurisdictions but lack of political will and effective enforcement to bring the perpetrators of the sexual violence. There is apparent incapability and apathy in Somali Federal Government and regional state institutions, which are entrusted to uphold these laws against sexual violence, to implement and enforce them.

While researching this policy paper, the researchers interviewed various segments of the society including government officials, law experts, traditional leaders, women and girls. It was evident from the research survey that over 95% of the rape and sexual violence is settled out of court, which often results in monetary compensation for the victim's families and absolution of the perpetrators who escape any enforcement of the law and the appropriate sentencing. The breakdown of the correct process to criminalize and prosecute the perpetrators contributes to the increased prevalence of sexual violence and rape in Somalia.

In 2017, a forensic laboratory, the first of its kind in Somalia dedicated mainly to examine sexual violence evidences, was established in Garowe, Puntland State. The development of human and technological resources to gather and analyse evidence is a move in the right direction. It is worth to mention that, although the laboratory is equipped to carry the necessary analysis, it cannot meet all the needs of the country. There are also few women centers scattered across the country, which provide inadequate medical, psychological, and counseling support services and legal aid centres where victims can receive limited legal information, advice and representation services. There are huge gaps in the information and support services provided to the victim as all these centres are not properly staffed and are constrained by skills shortage, limited capacity and resources.

The Law

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CONCLUSION

Criminal Justice:

Improving the experience of victims of sexual violence in the criminal justice process should be a priority for Somalia.

Long Term Strategies:

The Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member State actors should implement long-term strategies to address sexual violence

Somali women pay the highest price of unjust policies and societal patriarchy and traditional discriminatory gender specific norms against women. Historically, rape issues were resolved under the traditional dispute resolution mechanism of the clan elders, but in recent years, high profile rape cases have illuminated the injustices that the victims face when their cases are swept under the rug and clan elders exchange money and camels as means of compensation on behalf of the victim. Most often, the victim and her family do not benefit from this unfair system, as the proceeds may not even be given to the victim or the family of the victim. Instead not only does the female victim carry the pain of the rape and the mental and emotional effects of its trauma, but she is forced to accept the outcome agreed upon by the elders.

Improving the experience of victims of sexual violence in the criminal justice process should be a priority for Somalia. Victims and survivors of rape have unique needs characterized by their victimization, gender and exposure to the offender. Victims are a homogeneous group with one voice that urges new approaches to improve the handling of the rising crises of rape. There should be detailed standards and sufficient information outlining victims' rights and support services in the criminal code system, national standards that meet all the various needs of rape victims. A range of methodologies and flexibility in justice system responses is required. Above all, the justice system and its processes must be grounded in dignity, courtesy, confidentiality and respect for the victim.

The Federal Government of Somalia and the Federal Member State actors should implement long-term strategies to address sexual violence, recognizing that the impact of victimization is life-long and for many victims, the harrowing experiences of rape are life changing and leave broken souls and negative outlook for the rest of their lives. If the experience of victims in the criminal justice process is to be improved, there must be better understanding of the impact of victimization and of the need to treat victims of rape with courtesy, compassion, dignity, and sensitivity.

Steady progress in raising awareness and expanding the provision of information, advice and counseling, and legal assistance to victims of rape is needed. Somali traditional and social norms and attitudes towards sexual violence against women should be challenged and radically transformed and positive, forward-looking and progressive social policies to prevent and combat rape should be instated, which may mean a push to move away from traditional (xeer) means of solving rape issues. There must be a major shift in how sexual violence is perceived from legislative and policy formulation perspective, the attitudes of law enforcement agencies such as the police and legal profession to healthcare and victim support institutions. The responsibility for addressing the needs of victims of crime within the criminal justice system should be shared by the Somali Federal Government with all Federal Member States, so they could further pass it to local regional administrations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to combat sexual violence such as rape in Somalia, this policy brief makes the following recommendations:

Formal Institutions:

Somalia should establish and strengthen formal institutions and mechanisms for women to report sexual violence such as rape and seek medical and emotional support.

Community Advocacy:

A well-designed community advocacy and awareness program should be established in efforts to address sexual violence in towns and cities.

Implement Laws:

Somali need to implement laws and policies to promote, protect and expand women's social and economic rights such as the right of equal treatment and opportunities in health, education and employment.

1. The Federal government of Somalia and Federal Member States need to set up a Task Force on sexual violence against comprising of different government ministries, justice system and civil society groups to realize the implementation of existing laws on rape and other forms of sexual and gender based violence
2. Somalia needs holistic social policy approaches and mechanism that can address sexual violence occurrences, which could include the establishment of dedicated sexual offense police units and special care referral centers within healthcare facilities and fully funded effective and independent court system that can conduct robust litigation of sexual offenses.
3. Somalia should establish and strengthen formal institutions and mechanisms for women to report sexual violence such as rape and seek medical and emotional support. 24-hour telephone hot line for women to report rape and seek help. Such hot line must be staffed with properly trained social care professionals who can maintain confidentiality and privacy of the victims and witnesses. The social care professional must have support system to provide adequate information, advice, and signpost the victims to the appropriate institutions such as health-care centres and law enforcement agencies.
4. Authorities should not allow families and traditional elders to settle rape cases out of court through customary laws (Called Xeer) that don't accord due justice. This practice has an adverse effect on the prevalence of rape and sexual violence.
5. The police reporting and the quality of the police's crime statistics should be improved. This will help to inform policy makers and society the magnitude of sexual violence crimes, the effectiveness of the criminal justice system and trends in these crimes.
6. A well-designed community advocacy and awareness program should be established in efforts to address sexual violence in towns and cities.
7. Barriers such as secrecy, shame, and trivializing should be reduced to strengthen the criminal justice system's response to rape. Victims should be encouraged to report rape as a crime.
8. Somali need to implement laws and policies to promote, protect and expand women's social and economic rights such as the right of equal treatment and opportunities in health, education and employment.
9. Efforts to dismantle Somalia's inequitable gender order should be addressed by both men and women. All associated awareness programs and campaigns should be scrutinized for the possibly inadvertent perpetuation of stereotypes of gender inequality.
10. The attraction of gangs and Qat, in at-risk communities, must be reduced and quality services such as access to education, particularly vocational schools and employment opportunities must be made available to children and their caregivers to prevent the neglect and abuse of children who may be vulnerable to victimization and rape.

REFERENCES

About SIDRA

SIDRA is a registered independent, **non-profit** Research and Policy Analysis Think Tank based in Garowe, Puntland, Somalia.

Our Vision

Somalia in which social justice prevails and inclusive economic growth benefits all and improves the well being of all people.

Our Mission

A centre of development and research that generates relevant and original knowledge for dynamic policy environment support, institutional capacity development and alliance.

Contacts



www.sidrainstitute.org



info@sidrainstitute.org



SIDRA Institute



The Somali Institute for Development Research and Analysis SIDRA



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