

Forum Report on The Role of Women in Social Development in Southwest State of Somalia

Date: July 23rd, 2024

Venue: Horyaal Hotel, Baidoa, Southwest State of Somalia

1. About the Forum

The fourth Telédhaang forum of the Institute for Research Analysis and Dialogue (IRAD) was convened in Baidoa to discuss “The Role of Women in Social Development in the Southwest State of Somalia.” The event brought together over 40 women from diverse backgrounds, representing various women-led civil society organizations and the State Ministry of Women, Family Affairs and Human Rights Development. The primary objective of the forum was to explore the critical role women play in social development and to identify strategies to enhance their contributions.

The event featured a keynote address by Dr. Zaima Abdullahi, IRAD Institute board director and experienced development practitioner. In her opening remarks, she highlighted the distinct challenges faced by women in the Southwest State of Somalia and emphasized the importance of women’s empowerment and their indispensable role in achieving sustainable social development. She further underscored the institute's commitment to fostering gender equality and women’s leadership.

2. Summary of Discussions

a. Major Challenges faced by Women

The most significant challenges include limited access to education, cultural barriers, lack of economic opportunities, and inadequate healthcare services. Many women are also affected by gender-based violence and discriminatory practices that hinder their full participation in socio-economic activities.

b. Women as agents of change

The forum underscored the potential of women as catalysts for positive change in their communities. The speaker cited examples of successful women-led initiatives in various sectors, including education, health, and economic development.

c. Female Participation in Leadership

The participants extensively discussed strategies to increase female participation in leadership. These included enhancing access to education, creating safe and supportive environments, offering specialized mentorship programs and networks, and influencing societal attitudes and negative perceptions towards women.

d. Policy and institutional support

The speaker emphasized the need for supportive policies and institutions to create an enabling environment for women’s participation and leadership. She called for increased investment in women’s education, skills development, and entrepreneurship.

3. Recommendations

Following robust discussions, the forum concluded with a set of recommendations regarding the role of women in social development in the Southwest State of Somalia:

1. **Economic Empowerment:** Increase access to credit and microfinance and provide vocational training and market opportunities to enhance women's economic independence.

2. **Education:** Improve access to education for girls, ensure safe learning environments and enhance female participation in the teaching workforce.
3. **Health:** Address maternal and neonatal health challenges and improve access to quality healthcare services.
4. **Leadership and Governance:** Increase female participation and representation in leadership positions and decision-making bodies at all levels.
5. **Legal Framework:** Develop sound policies and regulations to protect women's human rights.
6. **Awareness Raising:** Conduct regular awareness campaigns and advocate for gender equality across mainstream society.

4. Key Takeaways

The forum served as a valuable platform for discussing the critical role of women in social development in the Southwest State. Key takeaways include:

- ◆ Women are essential drivers of social change, and their contributions must be recognized and supported.
- ◆ Tackling gender-based violence is crucial for women’s empowerment and participation.
- ◆ Economic empowerment of women is vital for sustainable development
- ◆ Women’s participation in peacebuilding is essential for achieving long-lasting peace.
- ◆ Policy and institutional support are necessary to create an enabling environment for women’s leadership.

5. Pictorial Evidences

