



Center for Policy Analysis  
Peace, Democracy, Human rights

# **SOMALILAND: A DEMOCRACY WITHOUT WOMEN REPRESENTATION:**

*A Comparative Analysis of Women's Political Participation in the Horn of African Nations, including Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, and Somaliland.*

**CENTER FOR POLICY ANALYSIS**

**Hargeisa, July 2020**

**About us:**

The Center for Policy Analysis (CPA) think tank, was established in December 2014 to help the countries of Horn of Africa region to build peace, democracy, human rights, and effective governance systems where all citizens are equal. CPA which is the first think tank in Somaliland is working for the advancement of social, political and economic analysis as a fundamental approach to the understanding and explanation of social phenomena and as a necessary prerequisite for the decision-making processes through research, debates, conferences, dialogues, workshops, and trainings.

For more information please visit our website:

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## 1.1 Introduction

An inclusive democracy means that all citizens should feel represented and be heard. However, many political systems sometimes exclude women and minority from the decision-making platforms, while other countries elect women to be their head of states or head of governments. As of June 2020, 19 out of 193 countries have female head of states. Ethiopia is the only country in Africa that has a female Head of State.<sup>1</sup>

On the global Parliaments, 25% of 39,202 of Lower House members of 190 countries were women<sup>2</sup>. Rwanda has the highest number of women in parliament<sup>3</sup>. 27 out of the 193 countries have less than 10% female representation in their Lower House<sup>4</sup>

In Horn of Africa, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia has more than 24% female representation in their parliament, while Somaliland has the lowest representation when it comes to the women's political participation in both appointive positions and elected offices.

Quota systems and commitments from the leaders have increased that more women are elected in the parliaments of Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia. The three countries have adopted different quota systems and policies to empower women and increase their political participation.

In this comparative analysis report, CPA will assess how Somaliland Democracy is failing to represent the women.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/article/womens-power-index>

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=6&year=2020>

<sup>3</sup> Women filled 61.3% of the 80 members of the Lower House and 38% of the 26 members of the Upper House.

<sup>4</sup> Since Somaliland is not officially recognized, it is not listed on the countries gathered the data. But Somaliland is the only state in Horn of Africa that has less than 10% of female representation in Lower House.

## 2. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ABOUT ROLE OF WOMEN IN DECISION MAKING OF THE HORN OF AFRICAN COUNTRIES.

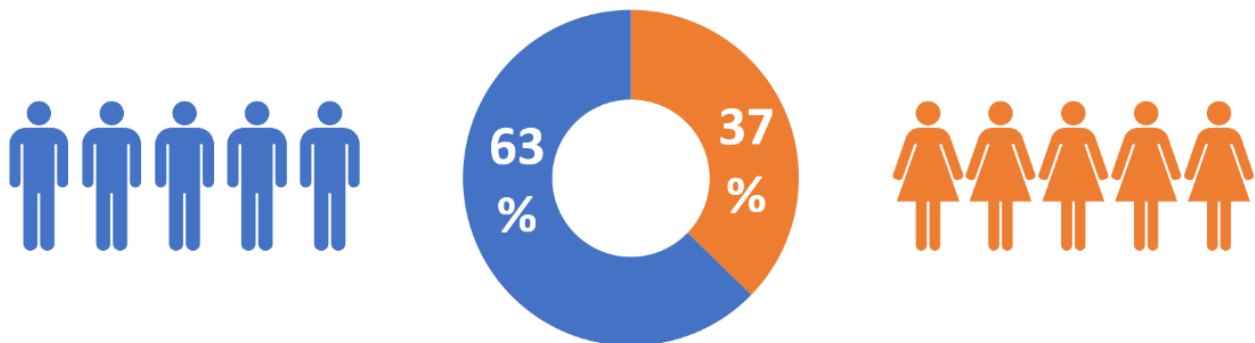
### 2.1 Ethiopia:

Ethiopia, the largest and the most diverse nation in the Horn, is the most populated country in the region with more than 110 Million People. Ethiopia is the leading role model of the women empowering in Horn, both the head of state of Ethiopia and the President of the supreme court are women. Ethiopia has the only Female President in Africa<sup>5</sup> and what's more, Ethiopia women secured 50% of the cabinet ministers.

Comparing to the other countries of the Horn, Ethiopian women obtained the most seats in parliament, 38% of the 547 members of the House of People's Representatives are women, while 49 of the 153 members of the House of Federation are women. Also, women lead the secretariat of the House of the People's Representatives.<sup>6</sup>

### ETHIOPIA'S BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

HOUSE OF PEOPLE'S REPRESENTATIVES AND HOUSE OF FEDERATION



#### HOUSE OF PEOPLE'S REPRESENTATIVES

ETHIOPIA'S lower house consists of 547 elected powerful members, including 212 female MPs. The women has a visible role in the House. Mesrak Mekonnen Yetneberk (Female) is the secretary general of the House.

#### HOUSE OF FEDERATION

ETHIOPIA'S Upper House consists of 153 indirectly elected members, with 49 women members in the House.

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.cfr.org/article/womens-power-index?gclid=CjwKCAjwr7X4BRA4EiwAUXjbt1ftNwHIXWpRPiqC4\\_bUAjy5A3jMGeJCduoD5ZCguxqm-3QXnVxxRoC1UIQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.cfr.org/article/womens-power-index?gclid=CjwKCAjwr7X4BRA4EiwAUXjbt1ftNwHIXWpRPiqC4_bUAjy5A3jMGeJCduoD5ZCguxqm-3QXnVxxRoC1UIQAvD_BwE)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ipu.org/parliament/ET>

## 2.2 Djibouti:

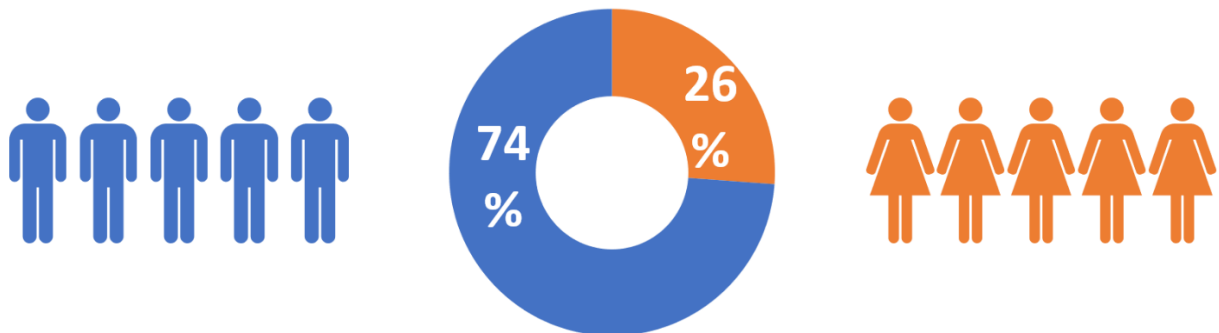
Djibouti, one of the most strategic nations in the Horn, is the least populated comparing to the other countries, it has nearly 1 million people. But Djibouti is very famous for their diversity and service providing.

In 2003, was the first-time women elected in Djibouti Parliament, after the cabinet adopted a 10% quota for women<sup>7</sup> one year earlier. After 17 years, Djibouti became another role model of the region for the women empowerment.

Women filled 26% of Djibouti's 65 members of the National Assembly. Also, Women are very visible in the judiciary sector, for instance, they are leading the Court of Audit and the Court of Appeal and they were leading earlier the supreme court of Djibouti. On the executive branch, women lead three cabinet ministries out of the 21 ministries.

### DJIBOUTI'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY HOUSE

DJIBOUTI HAS ONLY ONE HOUSE CHAMBER



#### NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

DJIBOUTI's parliament consists only one chamber. The National Assembly consists of 65 directly elected members with 17 female MPs in the House.

<sup>7</sup> Schwindt-Bayer, L. (2007). Women, Quotas, and Politics. Edited by Drude Dahlerup. Politics & Gender.

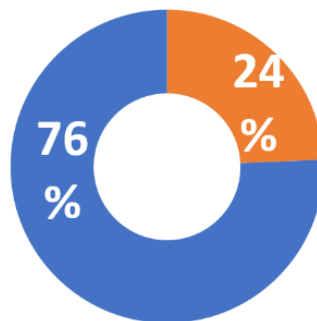
### 2.3 Somalia:

Since 1991, when Somali central government collapsed, there have been more than 14 peace conferences that international partners supported to have a functioning Somali government<sup>8</sup>. The traditional leaders, armed groups and politicians were the leading participants who were deciding the output of those peace conferences. In 2012, for the first time since 1991, a Somali president has been chosen inside the country.<sup>9</sup>

Somalia's federal government failed to host direct elections, but its clan-based selection system seems to give women a more visible representation in the decision-making platforms. For example, the women lead four cabinet ministers out of the 26 ministries, while 67 out of the 275 members of the House of the People are women and 13 female members out of the 54 members of the Upper House. Not only that, but women lead different temporary registered political parties and the National Electoral Commission.<sup>10</sup>

## SOMALIA'S BOTH HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT

HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE AND THE UPPER HOUSE



### NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

DJIBOUTI's parliament consists only one chamber. The National Assembly consists of 65 directly elected members with 17 female MPs in the House.

### 2.4 Somaliland:

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/2009\\_Som\\_Interpeace\\_A\\_History\\_Of\\_Mediation\\_In\\_Somalila\\_Since\\_1988\\_EN.pdf](https://www.interpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/2009_Som_Interpeace_A_History_Of_Mediation_In_Somalila_Since_1988_EN.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/sep/10/somalia-chooses-new-president-elections>

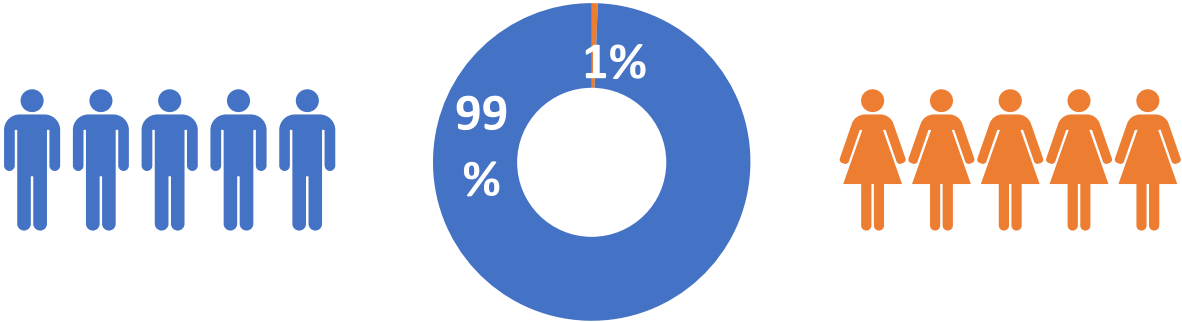
<sup>10</sup> <http://gsh.parliament.gov.so/index.php/xubnaha-golaha-shacabka/tiro-koob>

Somaliland reclaimed its independence on May 1991. After 10 years of having clan-based selection system, finally the people of Somaliland conducted the referendum of the constitution on March 2001. For the last 18 years Somaliland was practicing the democratization system, and the people elected the House of Representatives, the president and the local councils.

Although women are nearly 50% of the voters, Somaliland’s Democratization system failed to empower women and to include the decision-making platforms. Compared to the other countries of the region, Somaliland has the lowest women representation. For Example, the Somaliland’s 82 members of the House of Representatives, women have only 1 member, while there is NO single female member in the House of Elders. On the Executive branch, women hold two cabinet ministers out of the 23 ministries. All three political parties are led by men.

## SOMALILAND’S BOTH HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT

HOUSE OF THE REPRESENTATIVES AND THE HOUSE OF ELDERS



### HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SOMALILAND’s House of Representatives consists of 82 members with only ONE female member in the House.

### HOUSE OF ELDERS

SOMALILAND’s House of Elders consists of 82 members with NO female representation.

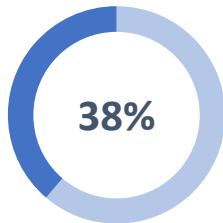


## 2.5 COMPARING THE ROLE OF WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN FOUR COUNTRIES OF THE HORN OF AFRICA.



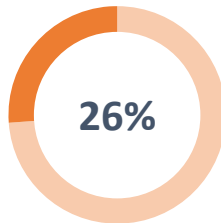
### GENDER IN THE LOWER HOUSES OF THE HORN STATES

ETHIOPIA, DJIBOUTI, SOMALILAND AND SOMALIA



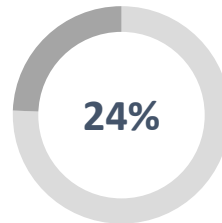
**ETHIOPIA**

Ethiopia's House of People's Representatives consists of 547 members. The elected women in the House are 212 members.



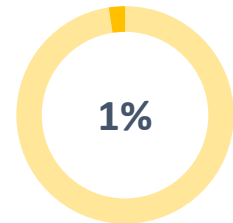
**DJIBOUTI**

Djibouti has only one House of Parliament, the National Assembly, which consists of 65 members. 17 women are elected in the House.



**SOMALIA**

Somalia's House of the People consists of 275 members. 67 of them are women.



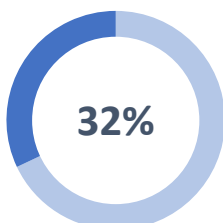
**SOMALILAND**

Somaliland's House of Representatives has 82 member. There is ONLY one female member in the House.



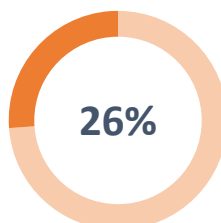
### GENDER IN THE UPPER HOUSES OF THE HORN STATES

ETHIOPIA, DJIBOUTI, SOMALILAND AND SOMALIA



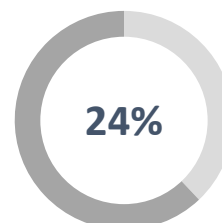
**ETHIOPIA**

Ethiopia's House of Federation consists of 153 members indirectly elected. Nearly 49 female members are in the House.



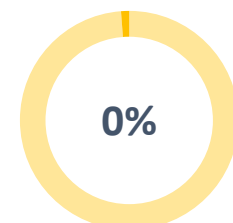
**DJIBOUTI**

Djibouti has only one House of Parliament, the National Assembly, which consists of 65 members. 17 women are elected in the House.



**SOMALIA**

Somalia's Upper House consists of 54 members. 13 of them are women.



**SOMALILAND**

Somaliland's House of Elders consists of 82 members with NO female member.

### **3. WOMEN QUOTA: Alternative Opportunity to Increase Women Political Representation.**

Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia have different quota systems to empower women's political participation. Fortunately, those quota systems and the commitment of the leaders increased women's political participation of those countries.

#### **3.1 Ethiopia:**

In 2004, the ruling party of Ethiopia, EPRDF proposed a voluntary 30% quota for women in parliament. meaning that at least 30 percent of the candidates running for office on a party's ticket must be female. now Women filled 39 percent of the Lower House seats.<sup>11</sup> Sahle-Work Zewde became the country's first female president, while in 2018, the Prime Minister of Ethiopia nominated cabinet ministers that women secured 50% and Aisha Mohammed became the country's first female defense minister, at that time the Speaker of the House of People's Representatives was led by Muferihat Kamil Ahmed another woman.

According to the law, article 54(3) of the constitution requires that *"Members of the House, on the basis of population and special representation of minority Nationalities and Peoples, shall not exceed 550; of these, minority Nationalities and Peoples shall have at least 20 seats. Particulars shall be determined by law."* So, this article did not mention only women but all minorities to have 20 seats. Also, article 35 of Ethiopian constitution states *"The historical legacy of inequality and discrimination suffered by women in Ethiopia taken into account, women, in order to remedy this legacy, are entitled to affirmative measures. The purpose of such measures shall be to provide special attention to women so as to enable them to compete and participate on the basis of equality with men in political, social and economic life as well as in public and private institutions."*<sup>12</sup>

The most important thing that needs to be underlined is, that Ethiopian leaders have willingness and commitment to empower women and get rid of any barriers to actively participate the decision-making table.

#### **3.2 Djibouti:**

For example, before 2002, there was no female representation in Djibouti, but when the cabinet ministers approved a 10% quota system, resulted that the Djiboutian women to gain a more visible representation in the parliament, a year later when the quota system was adopted, the first female members were elected in the National Assembly.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas/country-view/104/35>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/et/et007en.pdf>

After 18 years, when the quota system was adopted, women secured 26% of the National Assembly.

The law the law no. 219/AN/18/7ème L, requires the women quota to be at least 25% for National Assembly as well as for the important decision-making positions.

### **3.3 Somalia:**

In February 2012, Somalia's Federal President, Federal Member States and the International Partners reached an agreement of ending the transition period and completing the draft constitution. According to articles 3(2b, 2c) and 3(3e) of Garowe II agreement<sup>13</sup>, required that women must make up 30% of the parliament by a way of set aside of the 4.5 clan-based power sharing. Now women filled 24% of the 275 members of the House of the People and 24% of the Upper House.

To ensure that women are represented in the parliament and prevent to lose any seats they have now, the Lower House approved a proposal suggesting that only women can contest the current female seats in the House.<sup>14</sup>

### **3.4. Somaliland.**

Somaliland, one of the best democracies in the region, has failed, both to approve a quota system or to have more women representation in the different levels of the government. The 18 years-old democratization process of Somaliland became a male dominated decision-making system. Not only the Executive branch, but all the levels of the government have limited women's representation, including the political parties, parliament, and other sectors of the government.

For nearly two decades, Somaliland women and other Civil Society Organizations were advocating to have a quota system that can increase women's political participation, unfortunately the male dominated political system failed to approve it.

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<sup>13</sup> [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/PDF\\_97.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/PDF_97.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> On June 21, 2020 the House of Representatives approved the Women Quota

<https://horseedmedia.net/2020/06/21/baarlamaanka-federaalka-oo-meel-mariyay-xeerka-goondada-haweenka/>

#### 4. Conclusion:

Somaliland President H.E. Muse Bihi Abdi got more votes than any of the other regional leaders<sup>15</sup>, nearly 50% of the voters who casted their votes of all Somaliland elections were women. But Somaliland has the lowest women representation in the region. In Ethiopia, Djibouti and Somalia, women are the chairperson of a political parties, and are on the decision-making table. For example, in December 2019<sup>16</sup>, the eight political parties who founded the Prosperity Party of Ethiopia<sup>17</sup>, women were leading two of them, and also, they hold the highest position of state including the Head of State, the President of Supreme Court, etc.

In Djibouti, President Ismail Omar Geelle gave the women, more representation in his government, including the highest offices. In Somalia, Women have more influence in decision-making platforms, since they have more representation in the Parliament, leading different registered political parties, the National Electoral Commission, etc.

Somaliland governments and political party leaders promised many times to increase the women representation in both elected offices and nominated positions. Presidential candidates signed commitment letters promising 30% women representation in the government.

The CPA's January 2020 report about women's political participation shows that the President of Somaliland nominated<sup>18</sup> 214 positions, only 6% of them were female, while all other 94% were male. In other words, Somaliland has 613 elected or presidential nominated offices, only 16 of them are women, while the remaining 597 are men. Nearly 323 elected local councilors, only 9 of them are female, while there is no single female mayor or governor in the country. That above data indicates how women are marginalized in Somaliland decision making platforms despite their attempts to be part of the process.

Women have been struggling their rights of political participation since the first election in 2002, and until now no major break-through is made so far. Reasons are many, however two major deterrence factors are the existence of clan-based election system and the dynamics of clan power sharing. Secondly, the Somali culture which

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<sup>15</sup> Both the Prime Minister of Ethiopia and the President of Somalia are elected by their parliaments, while the president of Djibouti is directly elected by his own people, but less voters elected him than the president of Somaliland.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ethiopia-insight.com/2019/12/24/why-prosperity-party-is-needed/>

<sup>17</sup> The main political party, led by Abby Ahmed, the current prime minister of Ethiopia, that has the majority seats of the parliament and leads the country.

<sup>18</sup> From December 2017 to January 2020 (CPA's Male Democracy Report)

believes that women cannot take up positions of leadership. The continued absence of women in the decision making would undermine inclusive governance and the fairness of participation by all concerned citizens.

## **5. Recommendation:**

### **To the Government:**

CPA is:

- ❖ Welcoming the approval of the remaining two National Electoral Commission members, which is a very positive step towards holding the long awaited parliamentary and local council elections. CPA is calling on the government to fully support the new National Electoral Commission from preparing the Election roadmap to implementing it, without any delays, including to facilitate all resources they need.
- ❖ Calling the government to increase the number of women in the Cabinet, and all the other appointive position.
- ❖ Urging the government to respect the Election law amendment submitted to the House of Representatives and support approving women and minority quota.
- ❖ Calling the government to listen to the concerned citizens about seat allocation.

### **To Political Parties:**

CPA is:

- ❖ Welcoming the agreement that the three political parties reached to hold elections this year and gave a full confident to the current National Electoral Commission.
- ❖ Calling the political parties to respect the citizen's rights in the constitution to have an opportunity to elect their representatives, including the young generation who have never elected their parliamentarians for the last 15 years.
- ❖ Urging the political parties to respect the legal system of the country and the agreements they reach to be based on the laws of the state, to get an equal representation of politics for all.
- ❖ Appealing the political parties to support the election law amendment submitted by the President to House of the Representatives.
- ❖ Calling the political parties to allocate a quota for women and minority people in their party's leadership and Support the quota for both in the parliament and local councilors.
- ❖ Since the Political parties are responsible for the selection process of the parliamentary and local council candidates, CPA is calling to have a special arrangement quota system, that allow only female candidates to contest a number of seats in every region.

## **To the Parliament**

CPA is:

- ❖ Calling the parliament to take an active role of holding elections and to approve the election laws that can support elections to happen.
- ❖ Urging the parliament to approve the Election law amendment including the quota for women and minorities.
- ❖ Parliament should ensure to include the electoral law a clear guideline for women seat allocation in all regions

## **The National Electoral Commission:**

- ❖ Should make ensure the full implementation of the women quota once passed by the parliament
- ❖ Election plan should include a clear guideline for women seats contest in all regions

## **To the Civil Society:**

- ❖ Somaliland civil society organizations that advocate women's political participation should collectively support women's quota for pressuring the political parties, the government, and the parliament for the quota approval