

STRATEGIC NOTE

Somalia

2026-2030



 **UN WOMEN** 

 **FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS**

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UN Women

Mogadishu, April 2026



Gender Equality Snapshot



Somalia continues to face profound gender inequalities that shape women's and girls' access to rights, opportunities, and protection across all areas of life. Despite women's central role in sustaining households, communities, and local economies, disparities persist in governance, education, health, safety, and economic participation, reinforcing cycles of vulnerability and exclusion.

Women's representation in governance structures



Women hold less than **20%** of parliamentary seats.¹

Labour force participation by sex

Women's labour force participation compared to men.²



Maternal mortality

Maternal mortality is among the highest globally



621 per 100,00 live births

20% of births in facilities

31.9% attended by skilled personnel³

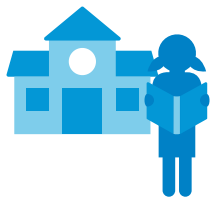
¹ | Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). Women in National Parliaments: Somalia Country Data 2024. Geneva: IPU, 2024. Available at: <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking>

² | ILO. ILOSTAT Database: Labour Force Participation (Somalia). Geneva: ILO, 2023. Available at: <https://ilostat.ilo.org>

³ | Somalia Common Country Analysis Mogadishu/Nairobi: United Nations Somalia, January 2024.

Enrollment

Primary net enrolment



Girls

17%

Boys

21%dropping to **9%** for girls at secondary level.⁴**Female literacy**Comparison with men.⁵

Women

36-44%

Men

64-65%**Physical and intimate partner violence**

Nearly all women aged 15–49 have undergone Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

92.2%**15%**

report lifetime intimate partner violence

**35.5%**are married before 18⁶**3 MILLION**

people are estimated to be in need of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) services

74% of them women and girls⁷

The 2024 National Strategy to End Violence Against Women and Girls (2024–2029) is a milestone, but comprehensive GBV legislation, including the Sexual Offences Bill, remains pending. Less than one in five health facilities provide case management or referral pathways.

Country Development Context, Progress and Persistent Challenges

Somalia stands at a critical juncture, marked by ongoing political and economic reforms alongside persistent fragility driven by insecurity, displacement, climate shocks, and humanitarian pressures. While institutional reforms and national development frameworks signal progress toward stability and inclusive growth, these gains remain deeply constrained by structural gender inequalities that limit women's participation, leadership, and access to protection and economic opportunities.

Advancing gender equality is therefore not only a social imperative but a strategic necessity for sustainable peace, resilient institutions, and inclusive development in Somalia. Placing women and girls at the center of governance, peacebuilding, humanitarian action, and economic recovery is essential to breaking cycles of vulnerability and realizing the country's long-term transformation.

⁴ | Somalia Common Country Analysis Mogadishu/Nairobi: United Nations Somalia, January 2024

⁵ | UN Women UNCT-SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard – Somalia Country Report. Nairobi/Mogadishu: UN Women & UNCT Somalia, 2024.

⁶ | African Development Bank, UN Women, & Federal Government of Somalia. Somalia Country Gender Profile. Abidjan/Nairobi, 2023

⁷ | United Nations Somalia. UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2026–2030), draft. Mogadishu: UN Somalia, 2025

Over the past decade, Somalia has made important strides in strengthening governance frameworks and advancing women's participation in public and political life. Institutional reforms, commitments to the 30 per cent women's quota, the development of Women, Peace and Security National and Local Action Plans, and the adoption of national strategies to end violence against women and girls reflect growing recognition of gender equality as central to peace and state-building. Somali women continue to act as peacebuilders, political leaders, entrepreneurs, and first responders in humanitarian crises, driving change even in highly constrained environments.

At the same time, progress remains uneven and fragile. Protracted insecurity, displacement, climate shocks, and humanitarian pressures continue to disproportionately affect women and girls, limiting access to services, justice, and economic opportunities. Deep-rooted social norms, weak enforcement of protective legislation, underfunded GBV services, and limited access to education, skills, finance, and markets constrain women's full participation in governance and economic life. These intersecting challenges, exacerbated by climate vulnerability and economic volatility, underscore the scale and complexity of gender inequality in Somalia today.

Why Is Gender Equality Critical for Somalia's Future?

In this context, advancing gender equality is not only a social imperative but a strategic necessity for Somalia's peace, resilience, and inclusive development. Women's leadership and agency are critical to effective governance, conflict prevention, humanitarian response, and economic recovery. Without addressing structural gender inequalities, progress on state-building, stability, and sustainable growth will remain limited and reversible.

It's against this backdrop that the UN Women Strategic Note (SN) 2026–2030 sets out the Office's multi-year roadmap for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in Somalia. Informed by extensive consultations with government institutions, women-led organizations, civil society, UN partners, and development actors, the Strategic Note aligns



with the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2026–2030), UN Women's Strategic Plan (2026–2029), and Somalia's national transformative plan and gender equality priorities. It articulates the strategic direction, results focus, and partnerships through which UN Women will contribute to improving the lived realities of women and girls over the SN period.

Concrete Results Achieved during the previous Strategic Note implementation

30% women's quota adopted in Somalia's Electoral Law (2025), marking a historic advancement for women's political participation.

Women's parliamentary representation increased to **19%** (52 of 274 MPs), demonstrating measurable progress toward gender-balanced governance.

8 Women's Parliamentary Caucuses established, strengthening gender-responsive legislation and women's leadership in peacebuilding.

First-ever legal bans on FGM enacted

in Jubaland, Galmudug, and Southwest State, significantly improving protection for women and girls.

FGM Prohibition Act (2025)

passed in Jubaland, reinforcing national momentum to eliminate harmful practices.

22 articles amended in Somaliland's Sexual Offences Bill, strengthening survivor protection and alignment with international human rights standards.

Nearly **1,500** people provided with free legal aid, over 70% women and children, enhancing access to justice for vulnerable groups.

Survivor-centred legal awareness reached 200 people

195 women

increasing confidence in reporting GBV cases

Justice services made accessible for women and girls with disabilities

through upgraded One-Stop Centres and trained paralegals.

38 community leaders

108 women religious scholars and engaged to promote positive social norms and gender-responsive justice.

Survivor protection clauses strengthened

in revised FGM and sexual offences legislation through coordinated UN-led technical support.

Increased political commitment secured

with parliamentarians publicly endorsing gender-responsive bills and advancing legislative reviews.

Two gender-responsive outcomes

embedded in UNSDCF 2026–2030, institutionalizing gender equality as a shared UN accountability area.

Women-led organizations institutionalized in humanitarian coordination, ensuring women's priorities inform preparedness and response planning.

What's New in the 2026–2030 Strategic Note

Building on past results, the 2026–2030 Strategic Note introduces a sharper, more integrated and evidence-driven approach to advancing gender equality in Somalia. Key shifts include:



Integrated programming across the humanitarian–peace–development nexus, deliberately linking governance, peacebuilding, protection, humanitarian action, and climate-resilient economic empowerment.



Area-based delivery models that localize national frameworks through district- and state-level platforms, strengthening local ownership and sustainability.



Stronger evidence-based planning and data disaggregation, with greater focus on women facing intersecting discrimination, including displaced women, minority clans, women with disabilities, and those in rural and nomadic contexts.



Deeper alignment with national systems, including gender-responsive budgeting, planning, and monitoring within government institutions.



Enhanced adaptability and flexibility, enabling faster programmatic shifts in response to insecurity, displacement, and climate shocks.



Clearer results, focus and accountability, with strengthened use of UN Women's corporate RBM architecture and learning systems.

Lessons learned

Lessons from the previous Strategic Note (2022-2025), as well as consultations with partners and programme evaluations, have informed the design of the new Strategic Note.

1. Integrated approaches are essential

Experiences showed that addressing gender equality requires stronger linkages between governance, peacebuilding, humanitarian action, and economic empowerment. Therefore, the new Strategic Note adopts a deliberately integrated programming that connects these areas and strengthens synergies.

2. Sustained institutional capacity strengthens impact

Evaluations highlighted the importance of maintaining strong institutional presence, knowledge management, and monitoring systems to ensure programmes can be scaled, sustained, and extended beyond Somali urban centers.

3. Inclusive partnerships drive transformative change

Collaboration with government institutions, civil society, women-led organizations, and community leaders is essential for advancing gender equality and women's participation in peacebuilding and governance. This new Strategic Note will prioritize inclusive engagement, especially with women facing intersectional discrimination, and through capacity support for civil society. Additionally, partnerships across the UN system and humanitarian coordination structures will allow for reinforced advocacy and integrated programming.

UN Women Somalia's Strategy for 2026-2030

The UN Women Somalia Strategic Note 2026–2030 marks an important evolution from previous programming cycles. While continuing core commitments to women's leadership, protection, and economic empowerment, the new Strategic Note introduces a deliberately integrated, area-based, and evidence-driven approach. It places stronger emphasis on linking humanitarian action with long-term governance and economic recovery, localizing national policies through district-level delivery, and strengthening data systems to ensure that interventions reach women and girls facing intersecting and compounded forms of exclusion. Together, these shifts position the Strategic Note as a more adaptive, targeted, and impactful framework for advancing gender equality in Somalia's complex and volatile context

Outcome Result 1

Somali people actively engage, participate in and benefit from inclusive and accountable governance, a decentralized federal system that upholds the rule of law, ensures safety and peace, delivers services effectively and transparently, and safeguards gender equality and human rights

UN Women Somalia's priority under this outcome is to strengthen women's leadership, protection, and meaningful participation in governance, peacebuilding, and humanitarian decision-making. The Office will apply an integrated approach across Women, Peace and Security (WPS), Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG), and Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection (LEAP), linking peace, justice, protection, and humanitarian systems. Results will be delivered through partnerships with government institutions, justice actors, women-led organizations, civil society, and the UN system at national and sub-national levels.

Key result areas

Under this outcome, UN Women Somalia will advance gender-responsive laws, policies, and institutional reforms that safeguard women's rights and leadership, including electoral and constitutional processes, WPS commitments, and legislation addressing sexual violence and harmful practices. Women's leadership and participation will be strengthened across political, peace, security, and humanitarian spaces, while survivor-centered, rights-based services will be enhanced to improve access to protection, justice, and accountability in line with national EVAWG priorities.

Delivery platforms and partnerships

Implementation will be anchored in national and local institutions through Local Action Plans on UNSCR 1325, strengthened women's peace networks, and engagement with justice, security, and humanitarian coordination structures. Women-led organizations and community actors will play a central role in conflict prevention, mediation, and local governance, ensuring that protection, participation, and leadership are reinforced simultaneously, including for displaced, crisis-affected, and marginalized women and girls.



Outcome Result 2

By 2030, Somalia's economy is transformed through increased productivity and climate resilience in green and blue economy sectors such as agriculture, livestock, and fisheries; enhanced SDG-aligned investments in MSMEs and infrastructure; and equitable access to employment, decent work, entrepreneurship, and future-ready skills for women, youth, and marginalized groups—contributing to inclusive and sustainable agrifood systems, economic growth, food security, and livelihoods.

UN Women Somalia's priority under this outcome is to advance women's economic empowerment as a driver of inclusive growth, climate resilience, and recovery from protracted crisis. The Office will address gender inequality, climate vulnerability, and displacement in an integrated manner by expanding women's access to decent work, entrepreneurship, finance, skills, and markets, particularly in green and blue economy sectors. This approach links humanitarian response with long-term economic recovery, enabling crisis-affected and displaced women to transition from aid dependency to sustainable livelihoods.

Key result areas

Under this outcome, UN Women Somalia will promote gender-responsive economic and climate policies; strengthen women's participation in productive sectors such as agriculture, livestock, fisheries, and renewable energy; and expand access to skills development, vocational training, and second-chance education for women and girls excluded from formal systems. Support to women entrepreneurs, cooperatives, and producer groups will improve access to finance, digital tools, and markets, while initiatives to recognize and redistribute unpaid care work will enable greater participation in paid work. These efforts will also strengthen women's leadership in climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and economic governance.

Delivery platforms and partnerships

Implementation will be delivered through partnerships with government institutions, UN agencies, the private sector, financial institutions, and civil society, with women-led organizations playing a central role in reaching rural, displaced, and marginalized women. Programming will be anchored in national development and climate frameworks and implemented through area-based approaches that integrate economic empowerment with protection and resilience-building. Through these partnerships, UN Women will support inclusive investments, scalable livelihood solutions, and policy reforms that position women as key actors in Somalia's economic transformation.



UN Women's Comparative and Collaborative Advantages

Normative leadership and policy influence

UN Women brings a unique normative mandate to advance Somalia's alignment with global and regional gender equality commitments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Through targeted policy support and advocacy, the Office contributes to the development, adoption, and implementation of gender-responsive laws, strategies, and reforms that safeguard women's rights, leadership, and participation.

UN system coordination and operational reach

As the lead entity for gender equality coordination, UN Women ensures coherent and mutually reinforcing action across humanitarian, peace, and development actors. By bridging policy dialogue with on-the-ground implementation, the Office translates commitments into tangible results through programmes delivered with government institutions, women-led organizations, and community partners at national and sub-national levels.

Positioning across the humanitarian–peace–development nexus

UN Women's integrated presence across the nexus enables adaptive programming that responds to immediate humanitarian needs while addressing structural gender inequalities. By linking grassroots service delivery with national reform processes, the Office supports scalable, sustainable solutions that position women as leaders, peacebuilders, and economic actors in fragile and crisis-affected contexts.

Programme Approaches: Adaptive, localized delivery across the nexus

UN Women Somalia will deliver the Strategic Note through an integrated, area-based approach that connects governance, peacebuilding, protection, humanitarian response, and climate-resilient economic empowerment. Programming will be localized through district-level and state-level platforms, enabling national frameworks to be translated into action that reflects women's and girls' priorities at community level. By working across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, the Office will remain adaptive to Somalia's volatile context while strengthening coherence, sustainability, and local ownership.



Partnerships for Change

Collaboration with government, UN agencies, women-led organizations, regional bodies, private sector, and research institutions ensures sustainable, localized progress while re-enforcing cross-border learning and resilience.

Area-Based Coordination to localize governance and humanitarian action

UN Women Somalia will scale up inclusive engagement strategies through the localization of national frameworks via district level action plans. By engaging Women-Led Organizations and justice actors locally, the Office will ensure localized governance reforms and protection services reflect women's and girls' priorities and enhance accountability at community level.



Sustainability

Programme sustainability will be pursued through close alignment with Somalia's National Transformation Plan (2025–2029), the UNSDCF, and national frameworks such as the WPS 1325 NAP and the National Strategy to End Violence Against Women and Girls.

By anchoring interventions in government priorities and institutions, UN Women Somalia will strengthen national ownership and reduce dependency on external actors. In addition, the Office will support the government through technical expertise on priorities such as gender-responsive budgeting, gender data in national planning and monitoring, and the 30% quota for women's political participation. The Office will also put an emphasis on building durable partnerships with women's rights organizations, feminist movements, and youth networks to strengthen their work. Capacity development will be designed for continuity, with national partners receiving training and mentoring.

Evidence-Based Planning

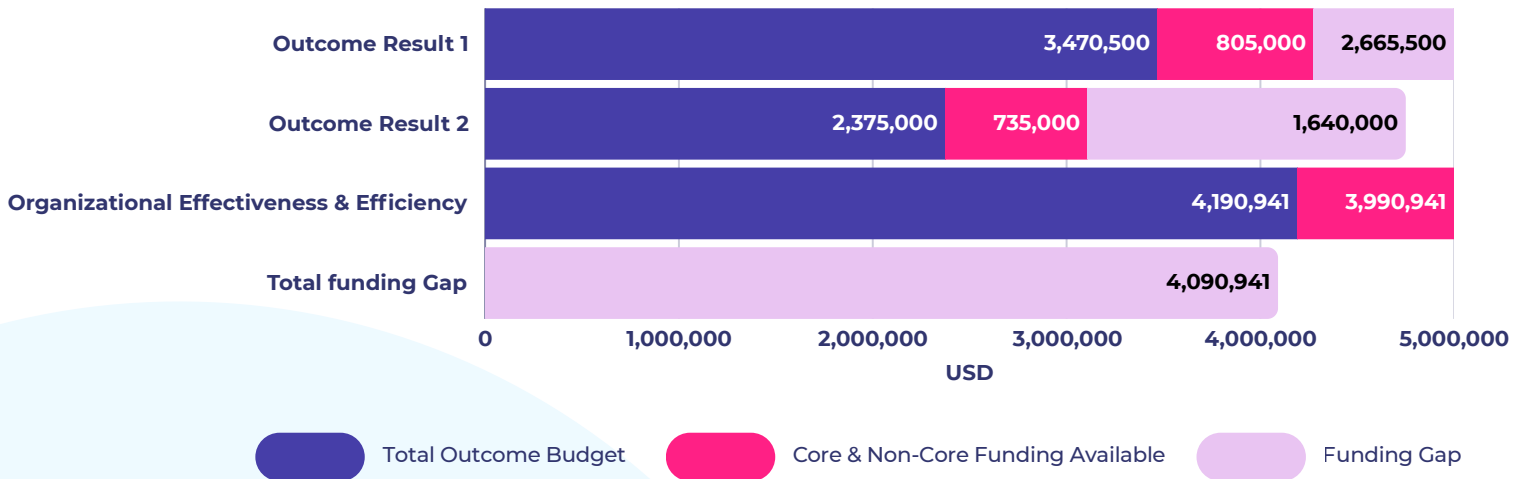
UN Women Somalia leverages its strength in evidence-based planning to tackle the challenges faced by women and girls from minority clans, displaced populations, persons with disabilities, and those in rural and nomadic areas. These groups often face intersecting discrimination that limits their access to services and decision-making.

Programme Effectiveness and Results-Based Management (RBM)

The Office will use Results-Based Management (RBM) to enhance effectiveness and organizational learning. All projects will align with UN Women's corporate results architecture, quarterly and annual reviews will ensure data quality and adaptive management, and lessons learned will inform programme design. Organizational learning will be promoted through sharing evaluation findings, case studies, and good practices with partners and within the UN system.

Financing

Total resources required: **USD 9.9 million** to advance gender equality outcomes across governance, peace, and economic empowerment.



Donors

UN Women Somalia's work is made possible through the support of our partners, including the Multi-Donor Trust Fund Office, the Somali Joint Fund, the Peacebuilding Fund, the Government of Japan, the African Development Bank (AfDB), the European Union, Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland.

How to Become a Partner

When Somali women thrive, Somalia thrives. UN Women's Strategic Note 2026–2030 places women and girls at the center of Somalia's peace, governance, humanitarian, and economic transformation.



How can funding partners engage with UN Women's SN?

Partners may provide SN direct funding, which is softly earmarked by geography (regional or country SN). These funds are flexible and catalytic; they enable UN Women to choose the highest-impact use of the funds in the country in which it operates. SN funding is also predictable, as commitments are often made for the full SN time span, better enabling transformative results for women and girls.

Importantly, SN direct funds strengthen UN Women's ability to respond to emerging needs in response to unforeseen contextual changes, including humanitarian needs (e.g., to prioritize the safety of women and girls in a crisis or in response to the adverse effects of natural disasters). These funds can also be reallocated when evidence suggests a new approach is needed to produce the desired result more efficiently or effectively. They can be used for diverse types of costs and can therefore draw funds to areas that are often unfunded—yet crucial—such as advocacy for behavioural change, UN Coordination, etc., supporting the organization's effectiveness.

Funding partners may also provide project funding, which is tightly earmarked for a specific project or initiative in the SN. These funds are not flexible. Reporting on the use of such funds is done against the specific project but not against the full SN.

SN funding represents an ambitious, targeted, and smart investment in gender equality and women's empowerment.



UN WOMEN EXISTS TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.

As the lead UN entity on gender equality and secretariat of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, we shift laws, institutions, social behaviours and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls. Our partnerships with governments, women's movements and the private sector coupled with our coordination of the broader United Nations translate progress into lasting changes. We make strides forward for women and girls in four areas: leadership, economic empowerment, freedom from violence, and women, peace and security as well as humanitarian action.

UN Women keeps the rights of women and girls at the centre of global progress – always, everywhere. Because gender equality is not just what we do. It is who we are.



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