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Marginalised but Critical: The Impact of Climate Change on Women's Peacebuilding Efforts in Somalia

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Abstract

Climate change has exacerbated gender inequalities in Somalia, particularly in regions like Gedo, Bakool, and Lower Shabelle, where women bear the brunt of prolonged droughts and displacement. Despite their critical role in peacebuilding and conflict management, women are often marginalised from decision-making processes. This paper explores the experiences of women peacebuilders in Somalia, highlighting the consequences of climate change on their work and the challenges they face in promoting sustainable peace. Through proposing interventions that consider the gendered impact of the climate crisis on women's peacebuilding efforts, the paper argues that enhancing women's participation in peacebuilding is critical in achieving sustainable peace, as mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS).

The IGAD Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (2019-2023) emphasises the integration of gender perspectives into peacebuilding, recognizing the importance of addressing the specific needs and priorities of women and girls in conflict situations such as the climate crisis. This paper calls for policymakers and practitioners to prioritise women's inclusion in peace processes and address the gendered impacts of climate change, as emphasised by the UN Secretary-General's Climate Action Plan and the African Union's Climate Change Response Strategy.

The paper seeks to answer the following two main questions.

1. How do women peacebuilders in Somalia perceive the impact of climate change on their work and what strategies do they employ to address the gendered impacts of climate change?
2. What policies and programs can be implemented to enhance women's participation in peacebuilding and conflict management in Somalia, particularly in the context of the ongoing climate crisis?

This paper employs a qualitative methodology, utilising interviews with women peacebuilders to develop detailed case studies exploring their experiences and strategic interventions for peacebuilding. The case studies are then analysed to inform policy recommendations aimed at integrating gendered perspectives of the climate crisis into peacebuilding initiatives. The study aims to highlight the unique experiences and contributions of women in peacebuilding within the context of the climate crisis in Somalia.

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1. Introduction

Somalia's socio-political landscape makes it one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change. This vulnerability is complex and multidimensional, characterised by decades of armed conflict, weak governance, widespread poverty and continued political instability (UN Women, 2022). These factors coupled with recurring droughts and floods, has led to widespread displacement and food insecurity. Climate change can indirectly increase the risk of conflict and insecurity through its influence on existing inequalities. (Smith, 2022, 2).

On 30th April 2024, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported more than 124,150 people had been affected by the Gu rains, with 5,100 people displaced & 7 children killed since 19 April 2024. The Somalia Disaster Management Agency (SoDMA) also issued an advisory for communities living in flood-prone areas of Jowhar, Belet Weyne, Bula Burde in Hirshabelle as well as Luuq and Doolow in Jubaland states to prepare for the impact of potential floods. The agency noted that rising water levels in the Shabelle and Juba rivers could threaten livelihoods in several regions. The Bay, Bakool, Galgaduud, Gedo and Lower Juba regions are on high alert, according to SoDMA. (UNOCHA, 2024)

A review of the literature suggests that in Somalia, climate change, conflict and gender inequalities are closely interlinked. Women play a critical role in peacebuilding by mediating conflicts, providing for their families, and sustaining social cohesion. Yet the climate crisis undermines these efforts, as the increasing frequency and severity of climate events strain resources, disrupt livelihoods, and heightens tensions within communities.

The patriarchal nature of the society excludes women from most decision-making processes in the home and community (UN Women Africa & Jurat, 2023). Therefore, women are unable to participate in socio-economic development efforts further perpetuating gender-based roles and inequalities such as high maternal mortality, rape, female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriages, domestic violence against women and girls. As a result, women's ability to participate in peacebuilding activities is severely constrained by the additional burdens imposed by climate change.

This paper draws from the lived experience and expertise of 4 women peacebuilders from Gedo, Bakool and Lower Shabelle in Somalia as well as desktop literature and insights from my work to highlight the nexus of climate change, displacement and gender focusing on Somalia to illustrate these challenges. The paper seeks to answer two key research questions: (1) How do women peacebuilders in Somalia perceive the impact of climate change on their work, and what strategies do they employ to address the gendered impacts of climate change? (2) What policies and programs can be implemented to enhance women's participation in peacebuilding and conflict management in Somalia, particularly in the context of the ongoing climate crisis?

Answering these questions is critical for understanding the gendered impact of the climate crisis, particularly on women's peacebuilding efforts in Somalia and for identifying effective

interventions that can support their efforts. By highlighting the nexus of climate change, gender, and peacebuilding, this paper aims to contribute to the broader discourse on securing sustainable peace in the Horn of Africa, emphasising the need for gender-sensitive approaches to both climate adaptation and peacebuilding in Somalia.

Women's participation in peacebuilding is not only a matter of gender equality but also a strategic intervention for achieving sustainable peace. As mandated by UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), the inclusion of women in peace processes is essential for the effectiveness and sustainability of peace efforts. Moreover, the IGAD Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security (2019-2023) and the African Union's Climate Change Response Strategy underscore the need to integrate gender perspectives into peacebuilding and climate adaptation initiatives.

2. Theoretical and Policy Frameworks

To understand the multidimensional impact of climate change on women's peacebuilding efforts, this paper deploys both theoretical and policy frameworks. The paper explores the intersectionality and disability justice frameworks, the gender and development framework, and key policy frameworks such as the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), the IGAD Regional Action Plan on WPS, and the African Union (AU) Strategy for Climate Change Response. These frameworks provide a comprehensive lens through which the experiences of women peacebuilders in Somalia have been analysed in this paper.

2.1 Intersectionality and Disability Justice Frameworks

In the context of Somali women peacebuilders, intersectionality is crucial for understanding how the compounded effects of gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and geographical location influence their vulnerability to climate change and conflict. For example, Somali women who rely on agriculture for their livelihood and are already living in the impoverished rural communities in Lower Shabelle, face additional marginalisation due to their intersecting identities that shape access to resources, decision-making power, and resilience in the face of climate-induced conflicts.

Disability justice framework further expands this analysis by emphasising the unique experiences of people with disabilities in discussions about peacebuilding and climate change. Women peacebuilders with disabilities often face additional layers of discrimination and exclusion. For example, during floods, roads become impassable and limit the mobility of women with disabilities leaving them in precarious situations. This paper argues that interventions to address climate change must be inclusive and address the specific needs of all women, including those with disabilities. This framework is particularly relevant in Somalia, where the intersection of disability, gender, and climate change can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities.

2.2 Gender and Development Framework

The paper analyses the challenges women peacebuilders face through the Gender and Development (GAD) framework. It shifts the focus from women's issues in isolation to the broader social structures that perpetuate gender inequality. This approach reveals the systemic barriers that Somali women peacebuilders encounter in addition to the climate crisis. The GAD framework emphasises the need for gender-responsive policies and programs that address the root causes of gender inequality, such as political participation, unequal access to education and resources. By applying this framework, the paper highlights the need to integrate gender considerations into climate change adaptation and peacebuilding strategies in Somalia.

2.3 Policy Frameworks

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) mandates UN Member states to include women in peace processes and the protection of their rights in conflict and post-conflict situations. In Somalia, UNSCR 1325 has been instrumental in advocating for the participation of women in peacebuilding efforts, recognizing their critical role in achieving sustainable peace. However, the implementation of this resolution requires continuous support and monitoring to ensure that Somali women peacebuilders are adequately represented, finances and their contributions to peacebuilding recognised and supported.

The IGAD Regional Action Plan on WPS complements UNSCR 1325 and provides a region-specific framework tailored to the specific challenges faced by women in the Horn of Africa, including climate change. The successful implementation of the IGAD Regional Action Plan relies on its effective integration with local peacebuilding and development frameworks in Somalia to not only ensure alignment with regional goals but also develop tailored strategies to address specific needs of women in Somalia.

While the existence of these frameworks and policies is a significant step forward, their impact is dependent on effective and full implementation. This calls for tangible actions on the ground, political will, sustained and flexible funding, and ongoing capacity-building efforts for women and women-led organisations at all levels. It also requires establishment of multistakeholder accountability mechanisms to track progress, identify gaps, and make improvements to the implementation to transform the lives of women peacebuilders in Somalia and the broader Horn of Africa region

Finally, the African Union (AU) Strategy for Climate Change Response emphasises the importance of addressing climate change as a key factor in peace and security. The AU strategy calls for the inclusion of women in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts, recognizing that women are not only victims of the climate crisis but are key actors and leaders in climate and peacebuilding efforts.

3. The Impact of Climate Change on Women's Peacebuilding Efforts

Gender influences the occurrence and response to climate related security risks, who is affected by these risks and how. (Smith, 2022, 3). In Somalia, climate change impacts men and women

differently, with women often bearing the brunt due to existing social, economic, and cultural inequalities. In Somalia, women's traditional roles in agriculture, water collection, and caregiving mean they are disproportionately affected by extreme weather events. Prolonged droughts have led to the depletion of water sources and agricultural failure, increasing women's workloads and limiting their participation in peacebuilding activities. Additionally, displacement due to climate-related conflicts often exposes women to gender-based violence, further marginalising them from decision-making processes.

Despite playing a critical role in maintaining social cohesion and mediating conflicts, women are often marginalised in formal peace processes. As communities face increasing conflict due to scarcity of resources and disruption of livelihoods, the role of women peacebuilders is both indispensable yet increasingly difficult.

The following case studies are derived from Key Informant Interviews conducted with women peacebuilders from Gedo, Bakool, and Lower Shabelle. They detail the perspectives of the impact of climate change on women's peacebuilding efforts and how these have influenced their approach and strategies for peacebuilding

3.1 Case Study 1: Woman Peacebuilder from Gedo

In the Gedo region, climate change has severely impacted women's ability to lead and participate in peacebuilding efforts. Prolonged droughts and dry periods have displaced families as they migrate in search of food and water, forcing women—who are often the primary caregivers—to focus on survival rather than peacebuilding initiatives. The loss of livestock, their main source of livelihood, has intensified competition for water and grazing land, leading to conflicts that women struggle to mediate when they can't meet their basic needs.

'Due to poor infrastructure which are destroyed by flood led Al-Shabaab use as roadblocks with their violent attacks have made it extremely dangerous and difficult for women to travel to attend meetings, workshops, or other peacebuilding activities.' - Halima Aden, Peacebuilder, Gedo Region

This limited mobility severely constrains their ability to connect with other women across the districts in the region and collaborate on initiatives. As a result, climate change has significantly constrained women's roles as peacebuilders in their communities.

3.2 Case Study 2: Woman Peacebuilder from Bakool

In Bakool, severe droughts and floods have led to the displacement of pastoralist communities and have had profound effects on social networks and community structures essential for peacebuilding. With the loss of livestock and income, pastoralist men were forced into internally displaced person (IDP) camps. These men, once central to their communities' economic and social fabric, find themselves unable to provide for their families and socially

excluded from development efforts, leading to increased violence and unrest within these displaced communities and slums.

Previously, communities relied on regular gatherings and talks led by elders to promote peace. However, the recurrent droughts and the resource scarcity have disrupted these gatherings, reducing opportunities for dialogue and exacerbating conflicts over diminishing resources. The strain on social structures and the heightened competition for resources have further undermined peacebuilding efforts, highlighting the need for strategies to address the impacts of climate-induced displacement on social stability and peace processes.

3.3 Case Studies Analysis on the Perception of Climate Change Impact on Peacebuilding Efforts

Women peacebuilders in Somalia perceive the impact of climate change on their work through a multifaceted lens, recognizing how it exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, disrupts communal structures, and frustrates peacebuilding efforts.

3.3.1 Exacerbation of Existing Gender Inequalities and Vulnerability

As droughts become more frequent and severe, women are faced with increased workload and burden as they are forced to travel longer distances to find water and firewood, leaving them with less time and energy for peacebuilding activities. This increased workload not only hinders their ability to engage in community initiatives but also increases their vulnerability to gender-based violence (GBV) during their commute or engagement in these activities. Women reported feeling vulnerable at water points, livestock grazing areas, areas where they collect firewood, on roads to markets and in their homes due to lack of safe shelter and lighting (Forced Migration Review, n.d.). With most Somalis dependent on livestock agriculture and forestry, climate change is also a major concern that drives humanitarian needs in the country and has a huge impact on women's livelihoods. Women and girls are consistently more vulnerable to drought, as it places a triple burden on them to survive, care for their families and evade sexual violence. (UN Women, 2022)

Although women in Somalia are responsible for managing household resources and building community relations, they are often excluded from decision-making processes. This exclusion is evident in formal peace negotiations and climate policy discussions, where women's voices are frequently overlooked or undervalued. As a result, the specific needs and perspectives of women, who are disproportionately affected by climate change, are not adequately integrated in peacebuilding efforts.

3.3.2 Disruption of Families, Social Networks and Community Structures

Climate change has increased the rates of displacement in Somalia, as communities are forced to migrate in search of livelihoods, food, water and shelter. Pastoralists are pushed to migrate due to the unprecedented drought, and people are now learning to adapt to a potentially difficult future (The New Humanitarian & Anyadike, 2023). Women peacebuilders perceive displacement as a disruption to the social networks and community structures that are critical

in building and maintaining peace. Displaced women and girls face multiple challenges compounded by intersecting identities and gender roles within their host communities. These include discrimination based on gender, language, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and religion, often leading to a lack of access to rights and social services. These inequalities make women and girls at risk of exploitation, trafficking, and violence, further marginalising them from peacebuilding efforts (Global Compact on Refugees, n.d.). The fragmentation of these social networks makes it difficult for women peacebuilders to mobilise collective action, share information, and sustain long-term peace initiatives.

Climate change is perceived as a threat to traditional knowledge systems and practices that have historically supported community cohesion and resilience. For example, in Bakool regions with a predominant pastoralist community, the loss of grazing land and water sources has led to the erosion of traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, which were often facilitated by women leaders. This loss undermines women's roles as custodians of communal knowledge and peacebuilding practices, thereby compromising on the fabric of community resilience.

3.3.3 Increased Conflict and Insecurity due to Scarcity of Resources

Women peacebuilders in Somalia noted the increased competition over scarce resources, particularly water and arable land. In areas like Lower Shabelle, the scarcity of these resources has led to heightened tensions and conflicts in households and between communities. Constrained and lack of control over necessary resources increases risks for women in conflict contexts. For example, in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, where women rarely control necessary resources due to gender norms, risks of Sexual Gender Based Violence (SGBV) and exploitation is heightened. (Smith, 2022, 4). Women, who are often responsible for managing these resources, are often caught in the middle of these conflicts, with their roles as mediators becoming increasingly difficult to execute. The competition for resources widens existing social divisions, posing threats to maintaining peace.

As climate-induced resource scarcity triggers conflicts, women peacebuilders have witnessed an increase in violence and insecurity in their communities that manifests through physical and structural violence. This has led to economic marginalisation, restricted mobility, and limited access to education and healthcare. The rise in insecurity and violent conflict makes women's peacebuilding activities difficult to implement as they have to be cognizant of their personal wellbeing and the security of their families.

3.3.4 Impact on Livelihoods and the Economy

Climate change has disrupted traditional forms of livelihoods in Somalia, particularly regions like Gedo, Bakool, and Lower Shabelle, that depend on agriculture and pastoralism. The loss of livelihoods has shifted many cultural norms in Somali society and are having an impact on gender dynamics. For example, when men who are primarily protectors and providers lose their livestock due to drought and are unable to provide for their families, tension increases in the families. This tension and conflict has been reported to increase domestic violence towards women and children (Forced Migration Review, n.d.).

Women peacebuilders noted that their livelihoods are also affected by change negatively impacting their economic situations, reducing their financial independence and limiting their capacity to participate in peacebuilding efforts. Economic disempowerment also increases women's dependency on male relatives for survival, reinforcing patriarchal structures and further marginalising them from decision-making processes.

3.3.5 Recognition of the Need for Inclusive and Gender-Sensitive Approaches

Despite the impact of climate change on women's peacebuilding efforts, they increasingly recognize the importance of advocating for their inclusion in climate adaptation and peacebuilding processes. Women peacebuilders from Gedo and Bakool understand that sustainable peace cannot be achieved without addressing the gendered impacts of climate change and ensuring that women's voices are included in decision-making. This gendered perspective to the nexus of climate change and peacebuilding informs the efforts by women peacebuilders in Somalia to mobilise and engage in advocacy efforts at the community, national, and global levels.

Women peacebuilders perceive the need for gender sensitive interventions that address both the immediate and long-term impacts of climate change. These interventions should not only focus on mitigating the effects of climate change but also on empowering women as key actors in peacebuilding and community resilience.

4.0 Women's Peacebuilding Efforts in Somalia

Overcoming structural gender inequalities and barriers is fundamental for climate-resilient peacebuilding efforts. Inclusive and gender-responsive social protection, livelihood interventions and agrifood systems can provide access to resources, services, and economic opportunities for women and girls to build their resilience in the face of climate change (UNICEF, 2024).

The following case studies are derived from Key Informant Interviews conducted with women peacebuilders from Bakool, and Lower Shabelle. They detail the strategies that women peacebuilders and women-led organisations more broadly use to address the gendered impacts of climate change particularly on their peacebuilding efforts.

4.1 Case Study 3: Adapting Peacebuilding Strategies Amidst Climate Crisis in Bakool

In response to the challenges posed by climate change, women peacebuilders have implemented several innovative strategies to adapt and continue their work. These peacebuilders have prioritised community education and awareness. They engage community leaders, religious figures, youth, and women to disseminate information about the reality of climate change and its links to recurrent droughts.

To address environmental issues directly, women peacebuilders are implementing initiatives such as tree planting campaigns and efforts to combat deforestation. These actions not only help mitigate the effects of climate change but also serve to enhance community resilience. The women peacebuilders mentioned that in their engagements they promote the use of nonwoven bags and discourage plastic bag use, aligning local practices with broader environmental goals.

4.2 Case Study 4: Innovative Strategies by Women Peacebuilders in Lower Shabelle

In response to the challenges posed by climate change in their peacebuilding efforts, women peacebuilders in Lower Shabelle have adopted a community-based natural resource management model that allows for multi-stakeholder participation in the use of resources, thereby reducing competition, which can otherwise lead to conflict. Women peacebuilders in Lower Shabelle are providing training on climate resilience, focusing on sustainable agriculture, water use, and disaster preparedness. This is critical as the area is highly dependent on agriculture and as such the need to empower communities to address their development needs and better withstand the impacts of climate volatility.

Other innovative strategies include; advocacy for gender inclusive climate policies and incorporating indigenous practices such as traditional water control, agriculture, and disaster management techniques, aligning with local conditions and cultural practices to effectively address climate challenges.

4.3 Strategies by Women Peacebuilders in Somalia

In Somalia, communities have historically relied on their environment for survival whether that is through livestock keeping, or crop growing. This knowledge, embedded in centuries of lived experience, includes practices such as sustainable land management, water conservation, and weather prediction. Women peacebuilders, especially at the grassroots level, are often the primary custodians of this knowledge, using it to sustain their households and mediate conflicts over scarce resources, such as water and grazing land, which are increasingly threatened by climate change.

Women's roles as mediators, network builders, and advocates are anchored on these indigenous practices to foster cooperation and peace within their communities, using traditional conflict resolution methods that have been effective for generations. Women peacebuilders in Somalia advocate for the recognition and integration of local knowledge into broader climate adaptation policies and programs, ensuring that these strategies are culturally appropriate and relevant to their needs.

Women peacebuilders in Somalia employ different strategies to address the gendered impacts of climate change, particularly affecting their peacebuilding efforts. These strategies are often adaptive, community-driven, and rooted in traditional knowledge and cultural practices, yet they also seek to engage with contemporary approaches to conflict resolution and climate adaptation. These organizations engage in a wide range of protection activities, including the establishment of referral systems and counselling services for survivors of rape and sexual

violence. Community members receive training to assist survivors, refer them to medical facilities, and support their pursuit of justice. Additionally, many women led organisations conduct protection awareness-raising initiatives by visiting households to discuss issues such as domestic and sexual violence and advising women on available resources. Local women peacebuilders, with their deep cultural and religious understanding and established relationships within affected communities, are particularly well-suited to carry out these activities compared to international actors. (Forced Migration Review, n.d.). Some of these strategies include:

4.3.1 Community Mobilisation and Engagement

Women peacebuilders in Somalia organise themselves in self-help groups and local peace committees which serve as platforms for community engagement and collective action. These committees allow women to pool resources, share knowledge, and coordinate efforts to address both climate-related challenges and conflict. By collaborating amongst different groups within the community, women are better able to advocate for their needs and influence local decision-making processes.

Women peacebuilders engage in advocacy efforts at the community level, raising awareness about the specific impacts of climate change on women and the importance of including gender perspectives in climate adaptation and peacebuilding efforts. These grassroots advocacy efforts help to shift cultural norms and practices that may marginalise women from key decision-making processes.

4.3.2 Sustainable Livelihood Interventions

As climate change intensifies, livelihood practices such as pastoralism and agriculture are becoming increasingly challenging. Women peacebuilders, through their economic empowerment programs, are engaging women in alternative livelihoods such as small-scale trade, handicrafts, or community-based tourism. Diversifying income sources helps to reduce dependency on climate-sensitive activities like agriculture and pastoralism, thereby enhancing women's economic resilience and ability to participate in peacebuilding efforts.

In regions such as Lower Shabelle, where agriculture is prevalent, women peacebuilders are advocating for the adoption of climate-resilient farming practices. This includes techniques such as water conservation, agroforestry, and the use of drought-resistant crops. Through sustainable agricultural practices, women help to ensure food security and reduce the competition for resources fueled by climate change.

4.3.3 Conflict Resolution and Mediation

Women peacebuilders in Somalia often draw on traditional roles as mediators and conflict resolvers within their communities. They leverage their social networks and cultural knowledge to mediate disputes over resources, particularly in pastoralist regions where competition for grazing land and water can lead to conflict. By doing so, women peacebuilding prevent escalation of conflict and maintain social cohesion.

4.3.4 Capacity Building and Education for Women and Girls

Women peacebuilders organise and participate in training programs on climate adaptation, peacebuilding and disaster risk reduction. These programs equip women with the knowledge and skills needed to adapt to changing environmental conditions, such as how to manage scarce water resources or protect their homes from floods. As a result, women's capacity to respond to climate-related challenges is strengthened.

Women peacebuilders promote education as a means of empowering the next generation to engage in peacebuilding and climate adaptation. Through advocating for increased access to education for women and girls, they are helping to break the cycle of poverty and marginalisation that exacerbates the gendered impacts of climate change.

4.3.5 Advocacy for Gender-Responsive Policies

The adoption of the UNSCR 1325 signified global recognition of the need to address gender-specific risks faced by women and girls in conflict and to promote the participation of women and girls in addressing peace and security issues. (Smith, 2022, 6). Women peacebuilders in Somalia actively engage with local, national, and international policymakers to advocate for the inclusion of gender perspectives in climate adaptation and peacebuilding policies. For example, through advocacy for the full implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, which calls for the inclusion of women in peace processes, women peacebuilders work to ensure that peacebuilding initiatives at all levels are gender-sensitive and that women's voices are heard in negotiations related to climate change and peacebuilding.

4.3.6 Networking and Collaboration

Women peacebuilders collaborate with other women's groups and organisations, both within Somalia and across borders, to share best practices, resources, and strategies for addressing the gendered impacts of climate change. These networks, especially within the Horn of Africa provide women with a broader platform for knowledge exchange, advocacy and amplify their voices in regional and international forums. Women peacebuilders partner with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international organisations such as the UN to gain access to resources, training, and technical support. These partnerships enhance their capacity to implement peacebuilding and climate adaptation initiatives at the grassroots level.

5.0 Policy and Programmatic Recommendations

To enhance women's participation in peacebuilding in Somalia, particularly in the context of the ongoing climate crisis, several targeted policies and programs need to be implemented. There is need to improve the livelihoods of people affected by conflict including those living in IDP sites; integrate climate risks into security planning to prevent potential conflicts; develop a system that collects and reports data on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV); support farmers in adopting climate-smart agriculture; and enhance the use of technology in agriculture. (UN Women, 2022)

Other key recommendations include:

5.1 Strengthening Legal and Policy Frameworks

The Somalia Inter-agency Gender Based Violence Working Group (GBV-WG) has developed a strategy for prevention of gender-based violence and provision of timely and multi-sector support to survivors. The strategy covers four outcomes including prevention, response, access to justice and coordination. Additionally, Somalia has an obligation to implement and enforce international frameworks on climate change, peacebuilding and gender responsive policies (The Somali Institute for Development and Research Analysis (SIDRA), 2016). This calls for full implementation and localisation of frameworks such as UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, and the IGAD Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security to reflect the unique context of Somalia, ensuring that women's rights and participation in peace processes are legally protected and promoted.

Integrate climate change considerations into national gender policies and action plans. This includes revising existing gender policies to explicitly address the impacts of climate change on women's peacebuilding efforts and ensuring that climate adaptation strategies are gender sensitive.

Support the development and implementation of National Action Plans (NAPs) that align with the UNSCR 1325 on WPS and the African Union's Climate Change Response Strategy. These plans should prioritise women's participation in climate adaptation and peacebuilding initiatives and provide clear guidelines for their inclusion in decision-making processes at all levels.

5.2 Enhancing Women's Leadership and Participation

Introduce and enforce quotas for women's participation in all peacebuilding and conflict management processes. This includes determining the minimum representation targets for women in peace negotiations, conflict resolution bodies, and climate adaptation committees at the local, regional, and national levels.

Invest in capacity-building programs for women leaders in peacebuilding in Somalia. These programs should not only focus on developing leadership skills, but also increase the understanding of climate change and its gendered impact, and advocacy strategies. Empowering women peacebuilders with these skills will ensure they take on more active roles in decision-making processes.

Provide institutional support and funding for women's peace networks and organisations. These networks play a crucial role in mobilising women, sharing best practices, and advocating for gender-sensitive policies. Strengthening these networks will enhance women's collective influence on peacebuilding and climate adaptation efforts in Somalia. (UN Women Africa & Jurat, 2023).

5.3 Economic Empowerment and Climate Resilient Livelihood Interventions

Design and scale up climate-resilient livelihood programs that specifically target women. These programs should provide training, resources, and financial support for women to engage in sustainable agricultural practices, small-scale businesses, and other income-generating activities that are less vulnerable to climate change.

Improve women's access to finance and credit by providing microfinance programs that offer low-interest loans, grants, and savings plans that empower women to invest in their livelihoods and support their peacebuilding activities.

Implement social protection programs that provide safety nets for women and families affected by climate change and conflict. Because of gender inequality, women are not able to fully access the benefit of development opportunities such as education, health and employment (The Somali Institute for Development and Research Analysis (SIDRA), 2016). Programs that include cash transfers, food assistance, and access to healthcare will reduce women's economic vulnerabilities and allow them to engage more actively in peacebuilding (UNICEF, 2024)

5.4 Supporting Women's Rights and Protection

Implement programs that address gender-based violence (GBV), which increases during periods of conflict and climate-induced displacement. These programs should include prevention initiatives, legal support for survivors, and psychosocial services, ensuring that women can participate in peacebuilding without fear of violence.

Support legal empowerment programs that educate women about their rights and provide legal assistance to those affected by conflict and climate change. Ensuring that women can access justice and protect their rights is essential for their participation in peacebuilding.

Establish safe spaces and support services for women affected by climate change and conflict. These spaces can provide a platform for women to discuss their experiences, build solidarity, and organise collective actions (Global Compact on Refugees, n.d.).

Supporting women-led organisations and networks, investing in their organisational capacity and providing support for women's advocacy activities that bring together both men and women in social and political engagements. (UN Women, 2022). For example, in Somalia, UN Women partnered with the Somali Women's Development Centre (SWDC) and the Nomadic Assistance for Peace and Development (NAPAD) in September 2022 to implement grassroots advocacy interventions. These efforts aimed to enhance responses to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and promote women's empowerment, peacebuilding and reconciliation (UN Women Africa & Jurat, 2023).

5.5 Strengthening Data Collection and Research

Despite commitment by the government and development partners to mainstream gender and undertake target actions towards gender equality, lack of data and information hinders rigorous assessment of the progress being made towards these efforts (The Somali Institute for Development and Research Analysis (SIDRA), 2016). Therefore, policymakers, practitioners and researchers should invest in the collection and analysis of gender-disaggregated data on the impacts of climate change and conflict in Somalia.

Support research initiatives that explore the intersection of gender, climate change, and peacebuilding in Somalia to generate evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and practitioners and to highlight successful strategies that can be scaled up or replicated in other contexts within Somalia and the Horn of Africa (UNICEF, 2024).

Conclusion

Climate change poses significant challenges to women's peacebuilding efforts in Somalia and in the Horn of Africa, where conflict has ensued for decades. The compounded marginalisation of women and girls in Somalia underscores the critical need for gender-responsive, multifaceted approaches that recognize their agency and resilience to the climate crisis. Through collaboration with women-led initiatives, increasing access to women's rights, and ensuring their meaningful participation in decision-making, we can empower women and girls not only to survive but also to lead peacebuilding interventions in the face of the climate crisis. Governments, civil society, and international organisations must take decisive action to build resilient communities where women and girls in Somalia are actively participating in peacebuilding and decision-making processes.

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