Women in Somalia have nearly half the opportunities afforded to men - a gender gap index of 0.56. Women are disadvantaged in all of the four assessed domains, ranging from fewer economic opportunities to non-representation in political decision-making processes to lower educational attainments. This report examines the relative gender equality in South-Central Somalia and Puntland composed of four sub-components: 1) economic participation, 2) economic opportunity, 3) political empowerment, and 4) educational attainment. The quantitative index is a relative assessment of the gap between women/girls and men/boys in these four areas, where a score of 0 represents absolute inequality and 1 represents absolute equality. Methods of analysis include a nationally representative household survey, key informant interviews, a desk review of existing databases, and focus group discussions.

Male respondents are seven times more likely to be employed on a full-time basis compared to female respondents (21% vs 3%). There are limited opportunities for formal employment within Somalia's current economic system, particularly for women. 37.5% of the surveyed female labour force were unemployed, despite looking for work. Although women are actively looking for a job but are more likely to be unemployed because they are hindered by pervasive socio-cultural norms that place women in the domestic work.

Access to higher education remains unattainable to many young women due to high costs and limited mobility. The gap was more apparent in the higher the education level education, with only 10.1% of female respondents having attended secondary school and 7.53% of female respondents having a university degree. No females had received advanced university degrees such as master's degrees compared to 3 men.

Executive Summary
Study indicates that Women with little to no formal education are particularly prone to vulnerable forms of employment since a woman's educational background decides the type of employment accessible to her. Study finds that 66.7% of females who are in full-time employment and 50% in part-time employment are having university education as the higher education increases the likelihood of labour market participation.

Even in employment, women are disadvantaged as they do not have as many opportunities to rise to positions of leadership. Men are almost twice as likely to rise to positions of leadership in their job as women. The percentage of survey respondents who indicated that they supervise the work of other employees stands at 44.1% for men and 25.0% for women.

Legislation sets a 30% quota for women in the lower house of parliament, but currently, women’s representation is 24%. A gender quota system for female representation in parliament exists, however, it does not go far enough to increase women's political decision-making power – in fact half of the research participants feel that 24% representation is not enough. 75.8% of survey respondents felt that the quota system is a good idea for increasing the number of female representatives.

Women's lack social capital in a society where influence on decision-making is strongly liked to one's family background and clan affiliation, their lower educational attainment compared to men and socio-cultural norms that relegate women's influence largely to the domestic sphere are the key barriers to accessing the political arena. However, 81.8% agreed that women are capable of participating in government, while only 12% disagreed. The findings suggest, in general, there is a acceptance for the political representation of women.

**Recommendations**

Based on findings in this report, there are general recommendations for Government of Somalia and local NGOs and international partners of Somalia to consider in future programming and advocacy work for the advancement of women as listed below:

- **Strengthening women’s participation in the labour market is strongly linked to increasing girls' educational attainments.** In order to increase girls’ retention rates, advocacy efforts should focus on countering the prevailing narrative that women’s roles are within the household.
- **Establish scholarship funds for girls.** Considering that girls are more likely to drop out of school and less likely to undertake secondary education, scholarship funds should be established to retain girls in school.
- **Equal access to TVET programmes.** Advocacy efforts should focus on breaking down the notion of gender-specific training programmes, countering the narrative that women’s vocational training can only exist of cooking and tailoring.
- **Explore alternative forms of childcare.** Considering that the existing legal framework on four months of paid maternity leave is only accessible to the small number of formally employed women in addition to weak enforcement members could be further encouraged to coordinate childcare among themselves, for instance by allocating funds towards access to available nurseries or rotating childcare duties among members.
- **Strengthen the political participation and the impact of the quota system.** The quota system is a significant step forwards in the political participation and representation of women and the majority of survey respondents were in favour of the political quota for women.
- **Advocate for the protection of women in the workplace.** The risk and fear of gender-based violence such as sexual harassment and rape outside the household, at work or when applying for employment adds to the narrative that keeps women within the household and prevents them from searching for employment.