

Joining Forces Alliance Somalia

Advocacy on Combatting Violence Against Women and Girls in Somalia

Joining Forces Alliance (JFA) in Somalia is comprised of four of the largest child-focused agencies, (Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, World Vision International). These organizations have joined forces to harness our collective power to accelerate change to secure Children's Rights and End Violence Against Children by implementing innovative and effective approaches around the world, driven by the voices and needs of children.

Background

Somalia continues to face significant challenges in addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG). According to the Somalia Health and Demographic Survey (SHDS, 2020), gender-based violence (GBV) remains one of the most prevalent human rights violations faced by women and girls in Somalia. The survey shows that over **60%** of women face physical abuse, denial of education, forced marriage, rape and sexual harassment forms of domestic violence.¹

The 2024 Somalia Humanitarian needs and response plan highlights increases in GBV incidents with female-headed households being particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and abuse. Women and girls in Somalia are exposed to various gender-based violations resulting from conflict, gender inequalities, protracted humanitarian crises, persistent clashes among clans as well as the fragile security situation coupled with the lack of a comprehensive legal framework that protects the rights of women and girls in Somalia.²

Somali women and girls deserve to live a life of dignity and protection from GBV. Humanitarian, development actors, Politicians, Donors, and Government need to work together to create an enabling legal and socio-political environment to promote advocacy and action to end violence against women and girls. Somalia still lacks a comprehensive legal framework that addresses violations against women and children. While progress has been made recently, legislation aimed at addressing this gap remains in draft form resulting in perpetrators of violence against women and girls not being held accountable³. For example, 265 cases of sexual violence against underage boys and girls were documented in Mogadishu between January to October 2023 according to records from Madina Hospital in Mogadishu.⁴

Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in Somalia is influenced by multiple interconnected factors, including conflict and instability, displacement, poverty and economic fragility, cultural and traditional norms and practices such as Child, Early, and Forced Marriage (CEFMU) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), gender inequality, weak legal frameworks and justice systems, limited awareness and access to services.

According to UN Women (2022), Somalia is ranked among the highest countries in terms of gender inequality – ranked sixth globally with an index of 0.776, with 1 being totally unequal⁵. UN Women

¹ [The Somali Health and Demographic Survey 2020 - Somalia | ReliefWeb](#)

² <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/overview-gender-based-violence-situation-somalia-advocacy-brief-2022>

³ <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/02/1133792>

⁴ <https://hornobserver.com/articles/2633/Sexual-violence-epidemic-unveiled-in-IDP-camps-in-Mogadishu-sparks-parliamentary-debate>

⁵ <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/11/country-gender-profile-somalia>

notes that the patriarchal nature of Somali society influenced by customs, and traditions, reinforces strict gender roles that disadvantage women and girls with an estimated 45% of girls getting married before the age of 18. Somalia has the tenth highest prevalence of child marriage in the world and has a FGM prevalence rate of 99.2% amongst women ages 15–49⁶. Data from GBVIMS for 2023 as quoted by the 2024 Humanitarian response plan indicates a concerning increase in DV (domestic Violence) ranked at 52 percent and rape at 15 percent, compared to 37 percent and 11 percent, in 2022.

JFA Advocacy Asks

- JFA Somalia acknowledges the prevalence of GBV in Somali society. GBV undermines human rights, perpetuates inequalities, and hampers socio-economic development. As agencies committed to the well-being and protection of children, JFA Somalia recognizes the urgent need to address GBV comprehensively.
- JFA Somalia calls for the prioritization of prevention efforts aimed at addressing the root causes of GBV. This includes promoting gender equality, challenging harmful gender norms, and fostering respectful relationships.
- JFA Somalia advocates for policy and legal reforms that address GBV and promote gender equality at local, regional, and national levels, strengthening rule of law for women and children and calls for the Government of Somalia to enhance legal frameworks and law enforcement mechanisms. This includes the approval and passage of the original sexual offences bill that is aimed at criminalizing all forms of violence against women and girls, and ensuring access to justice, and providing adequate support for survivors.
- JFA Somalia calls for the strengthening of institutional capacities to prevent and respond to GBV. This involves enhancing the capacity of law enforcement agencies, judiciary systems, and service providers to effectively address cases of violence against women and girls.
- JFA Somalia urges the government and stakeholders to commit to achieving sustainable change by prioritizing the prevention and response to GBV. This commitment includes allocating sufficient resources and implementing policies to safeguard the rights of women and girls.

⁶ [Adolescent-led marriage in Somaliland and Puntland: a surprising interaction of agency and social norms - Girls Not Brides](#)