

**Dowlad Gobeledka Punt land
Ee Soomaliya**



**Punt land State of
Somalia**

Ministry of Women Development and Family Affairs

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16 Days Activism Regarding Gender based violence

Presentation of Hon. Asha Gelle Dirie

Minister of the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs (MOWDAFA)

His Excellency President of the Puntland State of Somalia, the Puntland Ministries, Speaker of House the Parliament, Deputy Speaker, members of the parliament, executive members, members of local government, the Governor, UN agencies, the International and local NGOs, women's groups, elders, youth, media and all civil society members, attending today in this important campaign concerning 16 days of activism against gender based violence started from 25 Nov 2006 and end 10th of December 2006 accept our gratitude and welcome to MOWDAFA.

Ladies and Gentleman

On behalf of the Ministry of Women Development and Family affairs, and Puntland women in general, I would like to welcome you to this great and important day. I would also like to thank you for the respect that you have shown us by spending your precious time with us and by paying attention to the 16 Days of Activism held here at the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs' conference hall.

On this occasion of the Launching of 16 Days of Activism, I would like to briefly highlight Gender Based Violence which is a globally recognized human rights violation. This important event has been organized collectively by the Ministry of Women Development and Family Affairs, and co-supported by UNDP, UNIFEM and UNFPA. This collective partnership has cooperated with the Ministries and local NGOs in the launching of 16 Days of Activism which started from 25 Nov- to the 10 Dec 2006.

Mr. President

For the last two weeks the Ministry of Women Development and Family Affairs organized meetings, workshops, rallies and focus group discussions concerning issues on gender and violence against women. Over 100 women from all over the State of Puntland have participated leading to the 16 Days of Activism. Today is the last day of these workshops before the launching of our collective work to end gender based violence in Puntland. We have invite the President to address this issue of violence against women.

After the Ministers' speech, please join us for a look at a short drama documentary organized by the Ministry of Women Development and Family Affairs. This documentary will demonstrate the vital role played by the women of Puntland (either in the State or living abroad).

The Ministry of Women Development and Family Affairs (MOWDAFA) distributed some documents during the meeting to launch the 16 Days of Activism documents. These documents have been translated and concern the role of women and the violence against them. The Minister gave an example of the gender disparities in Puntland. What I would like to draw your attention to is the concerns and issues effecting Somali women both those living outside the country and those remain in the home country.

Women and the Struggle for independence: The Somali women have been an active in the struggle for independence with both their lives and properties.

Every time, anywhere they stay: The women are mothers, bread winners, and they look after children/husbands. They do all this while taking part in the development of the country and healing the wounds. They help elderly family members and the disabled, pay taxes in the country and many other countries abroad. In addition, these women are tutors/trainers for their children, while at the same time happily host relatives and friends in need.

In War Time: During the fighting, women offered first aid to those injured, assist after the healing, take part in the burial process, support orphaned children, assist the poor and at the same time fight against rape.

In Peace Time: The women are peace makers, without legitimacy, they come together to used as different forms of leverage and mechanism in order to clam down or to stop the fierce fighting between the factions.

In a situation of no Government and no job opportunities: Women must, in very brave manner, face in the best way possible two responsibilities; they must shoulder all the family's livelihood and raise their children.

The role of women immigrants and those remained at home: Somali women make valuable social and economic contributions to within both sending and receiving countries. They can help lift families and communities out of poverty; take a big role in ensuring the safety of all during conflicts. Abroad Women work in very labor intensive jobs, which include: domestic work such as house cleaner, baby sitters, nursery works, caring for the elderly, working in restaurants. They do these jobs and use many other different skills in order to feed their families. In addition, they go to school and up grade their skills as to benefit them in the future when they return to their origin country. They contribute to their new communities by paying taxes.

The challenges faced by the immigrant Women: They face discrimination, abuse, rape, are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, helplessness, racism; lack of citizenship documents, no equity rights like the nationals, low salaries and sometimes denial of their earnings and other non ethical treatments.

The challenges that women face in their country include: No abundant opportunities, no equal job opportunities, no part in the decision making process, polygamy, divorce without recompense or face humiliation or be forced to give rights in order to get a divorce certificate, no proper women diagnostic clinics or proper health care. The Minister has given some examples of the gender disparities in Puntland: the number of Puntland government employees is 2471 persons of which only 425 of them are women. This works out to about 5.8% of the total Government work force which represents over 55% of Puntland community. The annual budget of Puntland only allocates 1% to women's program, therefore MOWDAFA has requested from the President an increase in the Ministry's budget and an increase in the number of women workers in the government.

A baby born as a girl: In the pre-Islamic era baby girls were buried alive, the best most merciful father who didn't want to kill preferred that the child be a boy. Although, the brutal conditions which existed during the pre-Islamic era are no longer a reality, Somalia and the government still have a long way to go before we realize a woman's God-given right as guaranteed in the Qur'an and by International Laws.

Women will never give-up: Women will be out-spoken in lobbying and informing others every time, every day, and every minute. Everywhere that women are present they benefit their families and their communities. Women will speak out about the heavy burdens that they face. Women want to be treated in a fair manner, they want all their equal rights to be restored and to reach the goal of gender balanced agendas. Women want to be a part of the decision making process. Women will never give-up on their pursuit of equal rights.

Asha Ghelle Dirie
Minister of Women Development and Family Affairs