



Youth Empowerment

CONTEXT

Despite Somalia's having one of the youngest populations in the world, Somali youth have been unable to fully enjoy their rights and achieve their potential as transformative agents due to the continuing conflict, and socio-economic and political exclusion. Avenues for young people to obtain an education, gainful employment as well as opportunities to engage politically, economically or socially remain limited. The space is even further restricted for girls and young women. Young people's right to participation in decision-making is hampered by stigmas based on stereotypes and gender, illiteracy, poverty and traditional norms, including the prominence of elders in the political system. Young people are also disproportionately affected by different forms of violence.

Despite these challenges, young Somali women and men are already contributing to peace, development and resilience in their communities, finding innovative solutions and driving social progress, in urban as well as rural contexts. Improving young people's lives and supporting their initiatives is crucial for building lasting peace and stability in Somalia.

INTEGRATED APPROACH

The United Nations recognizes young people's rights and agency as a core part of its mandate, globally through the adoption of the "UN Youth Strategy – Youth 2030", and in Somalia through the "UN Somalia Youth Strategy." The Youth, Peace and Security agenda, guided by UN Security Council Resolutions 2250, 2419 and 2535, commits the UN to support the crucial roles young Somalis play in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, reconciliation and governance. Failure to respond to the aspirations and needs of the country's youth undermines the prospect for lasting peace and sustainable development in Somalia. In this regard, the UN Youth Strategy for Somalia offers an integrated framework to guide and coordinate the UN's interventions for and with young people, contributing to the achievement of the strategic objectives of the United Nations in Somalia in line with the National Development Plan.

The UN Somalia Youth Strategy views young people and their organizations as partners in all UN efforts, and places empowerment as a vital prerequisite for lasting transformation in Somalia. The multidimensional concept of empowerment – social, economic and political – provides ample scope for harmonizing approaches to youth policies and programming, while harnessing the full potential of youth to become recognized social and economic actors as well as peacebuilders. Currently, the UN youth portfolio in Somalia has invested in programming across six thematic priority areas: Employment & Entrepreneurship, Protection of Rights & Civic Engagement, Political Inclusion, Education & Skills Development, Health and Peacebuilding.

To coordinate the UN's strategic efforts on youth, ensure meaningful youth participation in policy and programming, and provide technical advice to UN leadership and the Federal Government of Somalia, a Youth Advisor and a Youth, Peace and Security Advisor supported by the Folke Bernadotte Academy of Sweden (FBA) are based in the UN Integrated Office of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia. Similarly, youth focal points from all UN entities constitute the Inter-Agency Working Group on Youth to support coordination and mainstreaming of youth matters across the UN family. Furthermore, an 18-member UN Somalia Youth Advisory Board was established as a mechanism to improve the relevance, mobilization and outreach of different United Nations initiatives among young people in Somalia and to help the United Nations to improve its response to the needs of the youth.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

