CONCEPT NOTE

SOMALI WOMEN IN RESEARCH & ACADEMIA CONFERENCE

An Annual Knowledge Exchange

28-29 November 2021 via Zoom

#womeninresearch #womeninacademia

May 2021

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Somalia Gender Hub – Inform. Build. Advance

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The Somalia Gender Hub (SGH) in partnership with the Mawazo Institute is organizing a 2-day knowledge exchange conference on Somali Women in Academia. The upcoming virtual knowledge exchange conference will take place from Sunday the 28th of November to Monday the 29th of November 2021 via Zoom. The conference will be a place for women to converse, connect, collaborate and commune in exchanging knowledge, resources and tools on the role of Somali women in academia, in higher education and in research.

1.2 Background

Research in Somalia is characterized not only by a lack of coordination between research producers and knowledge users, but also a dire lack of women's voices. Much of the knowledge being produced is not gendered and women's inputs are rare. There is very little written about Somali women as producers of knowledge and as subjects of study even though women and girls make up about 50%, if not more, of the Somali population. The exclusion of women from knowledge production results in institutions and policies that do not address gender inequalities and are not responsive to women's needs. There are also few initiatives that provide space for discussion and analysis of these important matters. Gender-sensitive research helps reveal both the often-unequal distribution of power between men and women and how perceptions of gender influence hierarchies in research and society. It therefore contributes to equal opportunity by realizing the effective participation of both women and men in the production of knowledge and by making the research output reflect positions and interests of both men and women.

Ultimately, this project through this conference aims to promote dialogue on the need to engender the research discourse in Somalia. A starting point is understanding what know about gender in research in Somali studies and who is working on gender in research in Somalia. This conference is both timely and significant, as it will help contribute to the sparse knowledge which exists in this area. The outcomes and will be beneficial to policy makers and practitioners. In addition, the suggestions and recommendations from this conference will help reinforce the role of Somali women as valuable producers of knowledge in Somalia. Finally, the research collected and discussed at this conference will be useful to scholars who wish to carry out further research on gender and research in the context of Somalia.

2. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND DELIVERABLES

2.1 Specific Objectives

The overall objective of this conference is to explore and address the gender issues and gaps affecting research in the Somali regions and to develop support for women researchers. The conference aims to bring together scholars, policymakers and practitioners to discuss and explore the role of women in higher education and how engendered knowledge can benefit Somalia.

The specific objectives of the conference are the following;

1. To explore, understand and gain greater insights about who is working on gender in research in Somalia and how they are carrying out their work. What do we know about gender in research in Somali studies?
2. To strengthen collaboration and networking among gender researchers within and outside of Somalia.
3. To strengthen participants' basic knowledge of gender issues in research in Somalia to promote gender equality in research, and to integrate perspectives and fundamental knowledge about gender.

2.2 Conference deliverables

The following deliverables are expected to be delivered by the project;

- A collection of full papers presented at the conference
- A report of the conference
- An infographic of the event detailing social media campaign discussion outcomes and statistics

3. CONFERENCE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

3.1 Conference dates, audience and themes

Dates and audience

The Somali women in research & in academia conference is an annual knowledge exchange space which will take place online via Zoom and last 3 days. The conference is tentatively planned to take place between Sunday the 28th of November and end on Monday the 29th of November 2021. In terms of audience, the online conference is targeting an audience of between 200 to 300 participants from all over the world who will join the online live conference from different parts of the world. The conference will also have keynote and panels speakers who will tackles the different conference themes each day.

Themes

All papers should address what is holding back the agency of women in academia. What are the forces erasing or hampering women's full participation in research? By fleshing out a diverse terrain of thoughts and opinions, some of the most pressing concerns faced by women at large, and the status of being invisible, and becoming visible, come to light.

- Policy, practice and the engendered: the political economy of research in Somalia.
- Women in research and knowledge production in Somalia: challenges, gaps and opportunities.
- Women in higher education and academia, learning and teaching.
- Mentorship and support to female researchers and academic; challenges, gaps and opportunities.

Other topics are welcome but abstracts must be submitted for approval.

3.2 Call for papers

The conference will start with a call abstracts and papers. Experts on the topic will be invited to submit an abstract on one of the conference topics. Over the past months the Gender Hub team have worked together on finalizing both the conference concept note and the call for papers. Please see Annex 1 for the call for papers which is scheduled to be disseminated in the week of 7th June. The call will be online for three weeks, that is until the 25th of June 2021, after which 9-12 selected paper submitters will be informed of their paper acceptance and to confirm their participation.

3.3 Keynote and panel speakers

At least 1-2 keynote speakers will speak each day to focus and present on the main topic of the day. A total of 4-5 keynote speakers will be invited. The bios & photos of both the keynote speakers and the panelists will be collected and displayed on social media about 3 weeks before the conference stats, that is the 2nd week of July 2021. A list of possible speakers is being finalized. There will be 2-3 panel sessions each day and each panel will consist of 3-4 speakers.

3.4 A special focus on Somali women researchers

The Somalia Gender Hub regularly conducts capacity building programs which target female students, graduates and scholars. However, the experience is that women are almost always absent from conference as speakers and/or as panelist who present their own work. Women also don't take part in calls for papers.

To ensure that Somali women do submit abstracts and papers to this conference call and that they do take part in this conference proceedings, the Somalia Gender Hub is offering a special training program to Somali women students. The training program is currently ongoing and has targeted 20 Somali students and scholars and consists of topics such as introduction to research, literature review, research methodologies, data collection, data analyses and report writing. The training started in April 2021 and last 12 weeks and is thus expected to end in June 2021. The purpose is to provide opportunity to these 20 female students to present their initial research findings as panelists during the conference. For more information on this training program, kindly check here https://somaliagenderhub.org/training/

3.5 Panel sessions

There will be four panel sessions and each panel session will focus on a specific theme. Below are the four panel sessions and their themes as well as the main questions that will lead discussion.

Panel 1: Policy, practice and the engendered: the political economy of research in Somalia

Panel 2: Women in research and knowledge production in Somalia
What is the percentage of women in research in Somalia? What are the ways to increase women researchers in Somalia?

Panel 3: Women in higher education and academia, learning and teaching.
How can women be motivated to join higher education in Somalia? What is the percentage of women in academia in Somalia? What are the barriers to girls' and women's access to higher education in Somalia?

Panel 4: Mentorship and support to female researchers and academic
How can we mentor female researchers in Somalia? Which is the best way to offer support to female researchers?

3.6 Social media campaign
Social media will play an important part of the using of a variety of multimedia tools such as placing event banners and posters on social media team.

4. ACTION PLAN AND TIMELINE
Below are a number of activities that are to be carried out from the period March to November 2021. The activities are categorized into 3 main section for simplicity; activates to be done before, during and after the conference.

4.1 Before the conference

- Publicize the event beforehand (Mawazo).
- Update the budget and Concept Note, then come up with Terms of Reference (Mawazo).
- Sign the Terms of Reference (Both Mawazo and SGH)
- Call for Papers from women (SGH)
- Come up with a detailed budget that separates the Conference costs and overhead expenses of the Hub (SGH).
- Review the papers (SGH).
- Announce conference participants (SGH)
- Come up with potential speakers (SGH).

4.2 During the Conference

- Manage transition between sessions (SGH)
- Live tweeting the proceedings as they go on (SGH)
- Give opening remarks during the Conference (Rose, Mawazo)
- Manage the event (SGH)
- Present social media conference proceedings, quote speeches and presentations, announce speakers and share their names, titles and pictures (SGH).

4.3 After the Conference

- Publishing Conference reports and full reports (SGH).
- Infographic of event (SGH)

Overview of main tasks, timeline and status

SN	ACTIVITY	TIMELINE	STATUS
1.	Submission of final Concept Note	April	Done
2.	Signing of the Terms of Reference	April	Done
3.	Announce fellowship and conference dates	June	Pending
4.	Publicize the event on social media through banners, posters and tweets	June	Pending
5.	Call for abstracts	June	Pending
6.	Identify and secure speakers	June	Ongoing
7.	Review the papers/abstracts	July	Pending
8.	Announce conference participants	July	Pending
9.	Confirmation of participation	July	Pending
10.	Conference days	28-29 November	Pending

5. TENTATIVE CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

DAY 1: SUNDAY 28 TH NOVEMBER

TIME	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBLE
9am	Registration	All Participants
Before break	Welcome, opening remarks, introductions and objectives of conference + 3-day program	SGH Mawazo
	Keynote speaker 1	Keynote speaker 1
12.30pm	Panel session 2	Panelists for panel session 2
After break	Closing Remarks	SGH

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DAY 2: FRIDAY 29ᵀᴴ NOVEMBER

TIME	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBLE
9am - before break	Registration	All Participants
	Welcome, opening remarks, introductions and objectives of conference + 3-day program	SGH Mawazo
	Keynote speaker 2	Keynote speaker 2
After break - 12.30pm	Panel sessions 2 and 3	Panelists