

Improving Access to Justice in Somaliland



Somaliland Human Rights Centre, together with Saferworld with the support of the Knowledge Platform Security and Rule of Law co-organised a three-day participatory workshop with the Ministry of Justice and the Office of the Chief Justice, to discuss new approaches for improving access to justice in Somaliland. Framing the workshop under the guise of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs provided a new way of talking about justice issues, which enabled a discussion that included the participation of many outside of those traditionally charged with making decisions on justice provision. With representatives of the judiciary from all regions of Somaliland, together with government ministries covering human rights, planning and policing, as well as civil society representatives and expert academics. The workshop produced recommendations for a series of solutions. To make achievements, the participants recommended the following to happen:

1. **Better data:** Data that can provide accurate costing for potential justice solutions across Somaliland is needed.
2. **Update laws in a serious, concerted way:** Forthcoming parliamentary elections offer an opportunity for a new parliament to take a strong legislative role in updating outdated laws that need modernising.
3. **Invest in the judiciary to ensure effectiveness and impartiality:** The Somaliland government needs to allocate greater resources to train judges and to ensure they have better living conditions and reward packages so as to minimize corruption.
4. **Legal Awareness campaigns for rural communities:** For a Justice vision to make a difference for all of Somaliland's citizens, it will need input from communities outside urban centres.
5. **Mutually reinforcing partnership between international and national actors** Donors need to ensure not just short-term support, but long-term, forward thinking investments that prioritise the delivery of access to justice priorities that are jointly defined by state and non-state actors.

There is a unique opportunity for Somaliland to take advantage of the increased focus on justice in 2019. It offers a context in which those seeking to make the business case for investment in justice can test their hypothesis. It has a relatively small population and a reform-minded judiciary, yet there are many security challenges and development gaps. Therefore, modest investment in access to justice initiatives in Somaliland could have a far-reaching impact. The government of Somaliland should prioritise developing an inclusive, sector-wide 10-year vision for Somaliland, to coincide with the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals, and to connect with the Global Justice movement.