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The UN Refugee Agency

SOMALIA



UNHCR team conducts focus group discussions with displaced women and girls in north Galkayo, Puntland State.

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SOMALIA – PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT

SUMMARY REPORT – SEPTEMBER 2023

EXTERNAL

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A Call for Action to Improve the Well-being of People Affected by Displacement

The Somalia Participatory Assessment was conducted in July 2023 to identify the challenges and opportunities for improving the well-being of people affected by displacement in Somalia. The assessment utilized participatory methods and multi-functional teams to engage with communities and identify needs and priorities.

The assessment revealed that people affected by displacement in Somalia face significant challenges, including limited access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and water and sanitation. Protection risks were also identified, including gender-based violence, child protection concerns, and forced displacement.

Despite these challenges, the exercise identified opportunities for improvement, including the potential for greater community engagement and ownership of programs, the availability of local resources and capacities, and the potential for partnerships with humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors.

Based on these findings, a set of recommendations for improving the well-being of people affected by displacement in Somalia has been proposed. These recommendations include improving access to basic services, strengthening protection mechanisms, promoting community engagement and ownership, and building partnerships with humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors.

Overview of Participatory Assessment

The participatory assessment approach aims to collect information on specific protection risks encountered by displaced groups, analyze hazards with them, learn their capacities, and hear their proposed solutions through structured discourse. The process is guided by the concepts of age, gender, and diversity, as well as a rights-based and community-based approach. Through participatory evaluations, UNHCR ensures that displaced communities are at the core of decisions about their protection and well-being. Listening directly to the concerns of displaced communities upholds their right to participate in choices that affect their life and offers a

greater awareness of the protection issues they confront, allowing for a more effective response. The process encourages meaningful engagement through distinct dialogues with women, men, girls,

and boys of all ages and backgrounds. It aids in mobilizing communities to take collective action to improve their own protection and serves as the foundation for the implementation of a rights-based and community-based strategy.

Acknowledgment

UNHCR Somalia operation appreciates all partners, Government Officials and UNHCR staff for their support and commitment towards the facilitation of the annual 2023 participatory assessment exercise. The completion of this exercise would not have been possible without the participation and support of key stakeholders including refugees and asylum seekers, returnees, and internally displaced persons (IDPs), who took part in various focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) across the country.

A special thank you to the Multi-functional teams across UNHCR's offices in Somalia that led in the planning, designing, and implementation of the assessment in line with the [UNHCR's Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity](#) (AGD) to ensure Accountability to Affected Population (AAP). This helped to gather accurate information on specific protection risks, challenges, and priorities identified by Affected populations, including the mapping of communities' capacities, assets/resources, and proposed recommendations and solutions.

Mindful of [the centrality of protection in humanitarian response and action](#), the outcome of this exercise is instrumental in facilitating the planning, designing, and implementation of protection, assistance, and solutions programmes under UNHCR's multi-year strategy for 2024-2026, which aims to improve the well-being of various communities in Somalia.

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Executive summary

UNHCR's vision is to remain agile and action-oriented, able to deliver quality people-centered solutions to address protection needs and concerns for all its affected populations in Somalia.

The annual 2023 Participatory Assessment was carried out with four key objectives:

- (i) To identify protection risks and challenges that affected communities face when accessing basic services and understand their capacities, and recommendations to address these risks and challenges.
- (ii) To understand the views and perceptions of the affected communities about the ongoing protection response including durable solutions.
- (iii) To understand affected communities' knowledge and perspectives about existing complaint and feedback mechanisms (CFM) and other tools for accountability to the affected population (AAP).
- (iv) To inform UNHCR and partners' of 2023 programs and beyond

This report provides a description of the methodology, and key assessment findings, organized in the following sections:

- Demographics of the surveyed population, including a description of the population (age, gender, nationality, disability).
- Key findings, communities' capacities, and recommendations on thematic areas such as displacement, child protection, livelihoods, shelter and non-food items, housing land and property and durable solutions.
- Community Participation and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP), including the following subsections: community structures as resources, perception and participation of the current response, and knowledge of Complaint and Feedback Mechanisms (CFM).
- Communities understanding of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and fraud and integrity.

The assessment was conducted between June and July 2023 by UNHCR staff and partners, with support from local authorities, in locations across the country covered by Sub-Office (SO) Galkayo, SO Hargeisa and SO Mogadishu. There were **221** focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted with women, men, girls and boys of different nationalities and backgrounds, including persons with

specific needs (PSNs) with

an average of **10 participants per discussion**. In addition, **319** key informant interviews (KIIs) took place with community leaders, Government officials and partner staff among others.

Related to specific thematic areas, findings of the assessment indicate overarching concerns of the affected populations related to:

- Limited access to basic services (food, health, shelter, education, and core relief items (CRIs)
- Limited access to livelihood and socio-economic empowerment opportunities
- Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) concerns (evictions and insecure tenure arrangements)
- Limited participation of displaced communities in UNHCR's operations management cycle
- Addressing protection concerns peculiar to women, children, elderly and persons with disabilities.
- Addressing discrimination and exclusion of marginalized and minority groups

Key Recommendations

The following are the key recommendations deduced from the exercise:

1. Enhance communities' ability to become self-sufficient, this includes access to learning opportunities and income generating activities/programs.
2. Increase access to provision of basic services and create awareness on referral pathways.
3. Involve civil society organizations and strengthen their capacities to provide localized HLP support.
4. Active and deliberate intention for displaced communities to participate in the operations management cycle.
5. Improve timely delivery of services to PSNs including children, elderly and persons with disabilities or a medical condition.
6. Mitigate and respond to child protection challenges through the establishment of socio-economic activities to support families, thereby increasing school attendance and retention.
7. Continue with deliberate commitment to ensure inclusion of marginalized and minority groups in protection interventions

Introduction

As of 31 August 2023, there are 36, 903 refugees and asylum seekers (47% Refugees, 53% Asylum Seekers), 137,509 returnees for the period 2014 - 2023 out of which 7,583 returned between 2020 - 2023 and 3.86 million IDPs in Somalia.

Refugees and asylum-seekers are mainly from Ethiopia (66%), Yemen (29%) and Syria (4%) and for the Zanzibaris (0.4%). Most reside in urban or peri-urban settings across Woqooyi Galbeed (50%) and Bari (40%) regions in the northern part of the country. Most Somali refugee returnees come from Kenya (63%) and Yemen (35%).

In the East and Horn of Africa Region, around 743,958 Somali refugees are hosted mostly in Kenya (43%), Ethiopia (40%), and Uganda (9%). High numbers of Somali refugees are also hosted in Yemen (6%).

The causes of displacement are multifaceted, embedded in a protracted humanitarian crisis characterized by ongoing conflict, climate-related shocks, and underdeveloped social protection mechanisms. The adverse consequences of the crises affect protection responses and understanding and analyzing the impact of intersecting protection risks on lived experience in forced displacement is necessary for an effective response.

UNHCR's annual participatory assessments promote meaningful participation and inclusion¹ of affected populations in shaping UNHCR and partners' interventions. This ensures programs are informed by perspectives of affected populations and that communities' capacities are mobilized in pursuing solutions to the issues faced.

Participatory assessments use participatory methods to promote the role of women, men, girls, and boys of all ages and backgrounds as agents of change in their families and communities. Gender inclusion and capturing diverse views in UNHCR's multiyear programmatic planning is critical to attain protection and solutions for its affected populations. The recommendations of this assessment were made to UNHCR in collaboration with partners and the Federal Government of Somalia and its Member States.

This report contributes to the Situational Analysis of the Multi-Year Strategy covering 2023-2025.

¹ <https://www.unhcr.org/media/unhcr-tool-participatory-assessment-operations-part-i-introduction>

Demographic2 distribution of affected populations in Somalia



36,903

Refugees and asylum seekers as of August 2023



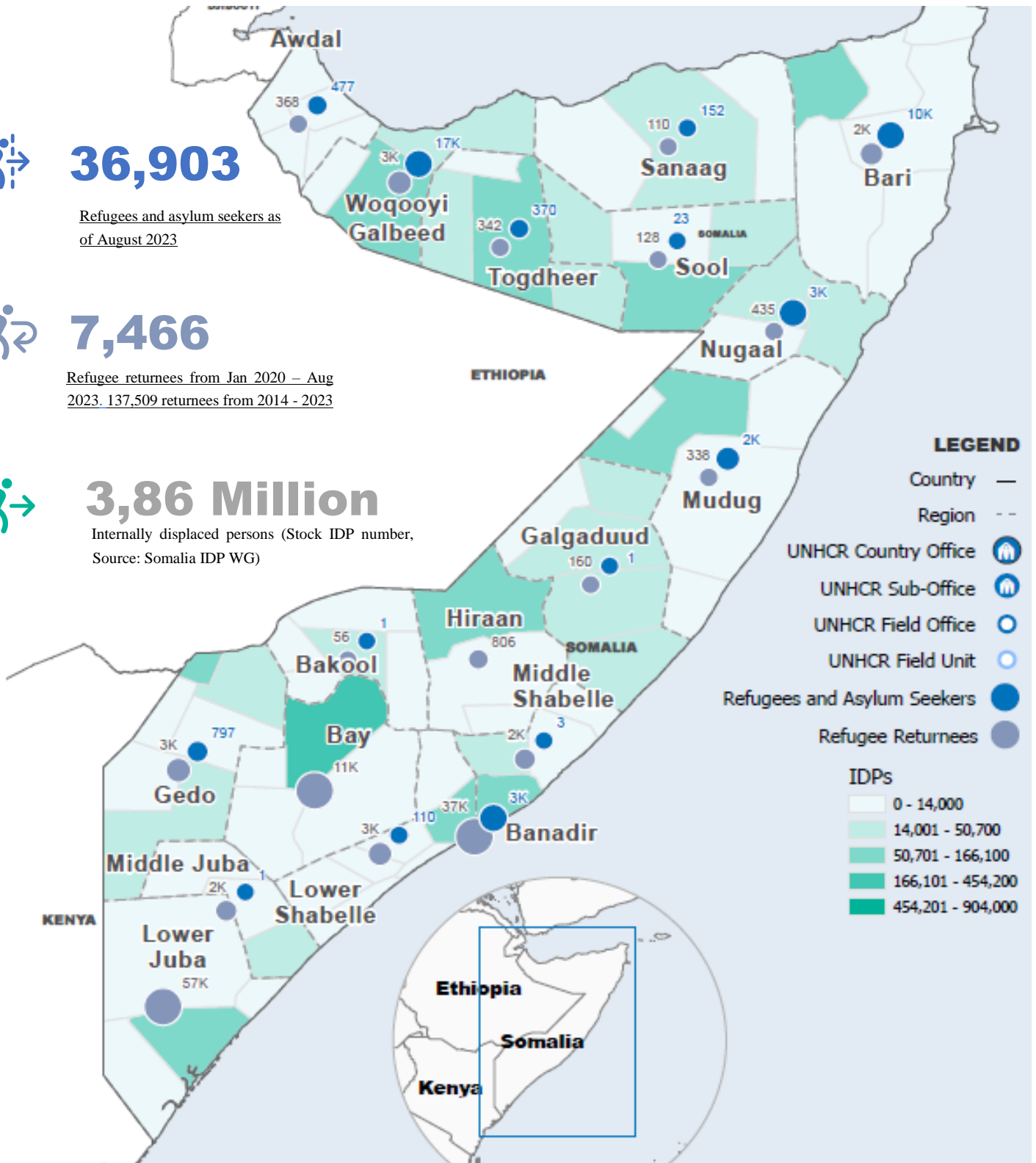
7,466

Refugee returnees from Jan 2020 – Aug 2023. 137,509 returnees from 2014 - 2023



3,86 Million

Internally displaced persons (Stock IDP number, Source: Somalia IDP WG)



² Population figures as of 30 April 2022

Methodology and Key Data

Three methodologies were used in the collection of data both qualitative and quantitative. Data collection took place between June and July 2023 with refugees and asylum seekers, returnees and IDPs as the targeted population. The Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) approach was mainstreamed in the methodology by consulting adolescents (10-19), youths (18 – 25 years), adults (26-40 years) and (41 – 59 years), and older persons (60+ years) of all genders.

UNHCR conducted 221 focus group discussions (FGDs) with an average of 10 participants per discussion as well as 319 key informant interviews (KIIs). Where appropriate and safe, UNHCR, partners and Government's local authorities, conducted FGDs and KIIs either in person with refugee, returnees and IDP communities. The assessment was conducted following a qualitative methodology including a desk review of existing documents and assessments.

KoBo toolbox, a web-based and mobile platform for data collection, was the main tool used by all offices. Prior to data collection, UNHCR conducted training for partners under SO Galkayo, SO Hargeisa and SO Mogadishu on the use of the KoBo toolbox for data collection and Protection, Code of Conduct, community engagement, including on ethical standards, confidentiality, and consent. Data collectors were also briefed on common protection concerns. FGD and KII guidelines with instructions regarding the selection of participants and composition of FGDs was developed and shared with partners to guide the process.

Sampling

Purposive sampling and representative group composition were used to select participants for both FGDs and KIIs to ensure adequate representation in terms of age, gender, nationality, religious/ethnic background, and involvement of persons with specific needs (PSNs).

The assessment targeted persons aged 10 years and above. Sub-Offices were given the option to increase the number of FGDs and KIIs based on available resources, diversity of the population, and number of settlements covered by the office.

Data Analysis

An analytical framework was developed to show the links between the sectors, themes, assessment questions, indicators, and questions. The main tool used for analysis of the data is Microsoft Excel pivot tables, SQL Server database, SPSS.

Limitations

Geographical limitations were tacitly imposed by security challenges. This restricted movements for enumerators, affected populations, and UNHCR staff. Restricted movement of UNHCR staff resulted in significant reliance on partners for data collection. The views expressed by the participants in the FGDs and KII may not be statistically representative as they may not represent the views of the entire affected populations.

Multi-Functional Teams

UNHCR instituted a multi-functional team, composed of staff with various professional skills and functions to strengthen the age, gender and diversity mainstreaming. Each area-based MFT included UNHCR staff from community-based protection, registration, programme, and protection units, along with partner staff.

Sub Office Mogadishu:

National Commission for Refugees and IDPs (NCRI), South-West State Commission for Refugees and IDPs (SWSCRI), Hirshabelle Commission for Refugees and IDPs (HCRI), Jubaland Commission for Refugees and IDPs (JUCRI), and International and National Partners including Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI), Mercy Corps and Hanano, Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and African Volunteers for Relief and Development (AVORD)

Sub Office Galkayo:

Galmudug Commissionaire for Refugee and IDPs (GCRI), Ministry of Interior and Federalization and Democratization (MOIFAD), Galkayo Education Center for Peace and Development (GECPD), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Tadamun Social Society (TASS), KAALO Aid and Development Organization, Puntland Youth and Social Association (PSA), Northern Frontier Youth League (NoFYL), Save the Children International (SCI)

Sub Office Hargeisa:

National Displacement and Refugee Agency (NDRA), ACTED, Development Action Network (DAN), Women's Action Advocacy Progress Organization (WAAPO), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Legal Clinic, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).



Key findings

The findings are summarized by thematic area and encompass protection challenges faced by consulted groups as well as current coping methods that can be leveraged to decrease protection risks. Unless otherwise noted, these apply to all population groups consulted during the exercise. Please refer to more extensive participatory assessment reports from UNHCR Sub Offices in Hargeisa, Mogadishu, and Galkayo for more data on the findings by site in Somalia as well as population group.

Displacement

Communities have been displaced due to inter and intra clan-based conflicts, lack of livelihood opportunities, followed by ramifications brought about by drought (lack of food, water, loss of livestock). Some communities were displaced at least more than four times in the last year. Marginalized and minority groups are known to reside among the displaced communities and to some extent, do receive equal access to services and are treated equally by community members.

While displacement affects all members of the community, there remains peculiarities in the manner certain ages, gender and diversity face with such stresses. The most prevalent protection risks facing women and girls is female genital mutilation, followed by suffering from verbal, physical and sexual harassment. Protection risks particular to boys and men, threats of being killed by armed groups, robbed and verbal harassment. Persons with disabilities, marginalized and minority groups, face protection risks pertaining verbal abuse, discrimination and are threatened by violence.

Child protection

Children face challenges to accessing services, this is due to distances between where they live and where services are provided, lack of transportation and at times they have to assist families with household chores. Furthermore, children with disabilities, unaccompanied and separated children, and other children are reportedly at an even greater loss without services to cater for their protection needs. Children receive counselling support from families when in distressed, there are safe and accessible spaces where they can play to improve their wellbeing and referral services are operational. The presence of child protection community-based structures, supports families and individual children to receive necessary support, including documentation, tracing and reunification of unaccompanied and separated children. Some households are unaware of child protection services in their areas and some areas do not have such services available within reach.

Outreach and Communication

Services provided by UNHCR, and partners are largely known by the displaced communities, through community leaders, refugee representatives and through posters. Some groups, those with specific needs were reported to not be aware of services provided UNHCR partners, this includes people with disabilities, elderly, marginalized and minority groups.

Access to Services

Communities have received assistance from UNHCR, and its partners, such as, non-food items, cash assistance, shelter, and education. Nonetheless challenges remain, such as lack of information on available services, lack of transportation/ cannot afford transportation and lack for services for people with disabilities. Particular to HECA refugees, there are challenges when adding newborn babies to families, as they have to commute to Hargeisa at times being exposed to harassment from the government officials. The slow-paced refugee status determination procedures put mental stress on various individuals, for fear of arbitrary arrests by local authorities.

Community Empowerment and Self-resilience

Communities both refugees and IDPs rely on casual labour, especially in the construction industry and paid domestic work, followed by running a small business, receiving remittances, livestock keeping, and beauty salon as a way of generating income and to meet their daily expenses.

This situation is cumbersome for persons with disabilities as access to livelihood opportunities is limited due to discrimination, lack of mobility, and lack of skills training. Household finances are mostly managed by the male head of the household, who also determines its expenditure.

In general, obstacles to finding employment for both men and women, are caused by lack of education, employer biases, insufficient skill set, and lack of documentation, this perpetuates their inability to access financial markets and capital to start a business. Women face increased obstacles to finding livelihood opportunities as they also have household responsibilities to attend to.

Housing, land and property (HLP)/ Shelter and NFI

Shelter remains to be ranked low in its appreciation by the displaced communities, many citing, unfit for purpose. In terms of tenure, the majority of displaced communities are renting their current homes, a few reside with host community members who are often extended family members, and thus live at no rent costs. In whichever tenure they hold, most do not have any written rental or ownership agreement,

thereby amenable to arbitrary eviction. Land disputes often involve boundary issues, failure to pay rent on time, and illegal occupation.

There are gaps however in terms of 'fit for purpose', including the functioning of the shelters. Many community members live in emergency shelters. The current shelters have damaged roofs, some have collapsed while others have damaged windows and or doors. Furthermore, these types of shelters are not conducive to hot weather, water leaks in when it rains, and easily blown off by strong winds.

In terms of shelters' function, at least one member of the household sleeps outside or on the floor due to insufficient space, insufficient sleeping mats/mattress; families are unable to cook and/or store food properly and are unable to store water properly owing to insufficient water containers.

Livelihoods

Livelihoods remain a challenge across all populations. Communities experience economic hardship due to climate changes and conflict, often, the price of goods rises, loss of livestock and communities are unable to tend to their farms.

Respondents reported markets being too far from settlement areas, inability to meet transport costs due to inflation and prices of goods are unaffordable – a financial barrier. Many of them, earn a living by performing casual labour, either in domestic work or construction industry, others run small business. To start micro-enterprise, one needs more than \$1200, funds they do not currently possess. Members who are not engaged in any type of employment resort to relying on remittances from family members, and assistance from community members.

Accountability to Affected Population

Accountability to affected people is an active commitment to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people humanitarian organizations seek to assist. Ensuring that communities are meaningfully and continuously involved in decisions that directly impact their lives. UNHCR Somalia has a number of channels, generic email addresses, toll free hotlines and suggestion boxes that are open for all community members to utilize.

Overall, communities participate in the operations management cycle, to one degree or another. Respondents reported humanitarians' workers behaviour is satisfactory, the difference, is pegged on reasons such as their unavailability in certain areas and feelings of discrimination by some of them. Despite UNHCR's approach to AGD in its interventions, some groups of displaced persons for instance, the elderly, persons with disability, minority and marginalized groups feel they do not have equal access to assistance.

In order of priority, the types of assistance communities prefer to receive are food, cash-based initiatives, non-food items, and services such as healthcare and education.

In terms of trust in governance structures, over half of the respondents believe that the current structures represent their views and interests, such that can influence or change community-level decisions. This information is disseminated during community meetings, marketplace, and in mosques, this is primarily due to limited network coverage in certain areas.

From the assessment and in a manner of priority, displaced communities are interested in receiving information about, access to humanitarian assistance and mechanisms available to share feedback through SMS/ Mobile, use of radio, word of mouth from aid workers and community leaders.

Overall, communities are interested to share any complaint or feedback with UNHCR as the feedback provided ensured confidentiality, provided in a language that is understandable and the feedback content and time was reasonable.



Prevention from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)

From key informants' interviews, communities are aware of what sexual exploitation and abuse are and are aware of victims of SEA. However, much as they are aware of alleged victims of SEA, reporting was not done by most, for reasons of repercussions and not trusting that the complaint will be taken seriously. Reporting of matters pertaining sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud, and corruption, communities utilize the UNHCR helpline and/or inform UNHCR staff.



Fraud and Corruption

Communities are aware of fraud and corruption constitutes, and information about it is received through community leaders, posters, and SMSs. Misconduct is reported through UNHCR suggestion boxes, UNHCR helpline, and UNHCR staff. Respondents affirmed that information provided by UNHCR, and partners is easily understood. Language barriers and literacy levels restrict understanding of some information for some members. Overall, respondents confirmed and are aware that all services provided by UNHCR are free of charge.

The majority of respondents who knew about the people who ask for money or favors were, in order of priority community leaders, followed by UNHCR Staff, partners, government staff, and host community members. In principle, communities are aware that it is incorrect to receive assistance in exchange for money or favors, however, a few end up paying their way out of desperation.



Durable solutions

Refugees and asylum seekers who participated in the assessment, reported they need to be assured of safety against violence, persecution, and discrimination and access to basic needs prior to considering voluntary repatriation. Insecurity in their countries of origin was cited to be the main obstacle to return and are reliant on their governments to resolve these issues. Refugees and asylum seekers expect community leaders to provide information on available durable solutions.

On matters pertaining local integration, almost half of refugees and asylum seekers have yet to consider the option, should resettlement not be one of viable durable solutions at this juncture, however some have considered applying for Somali citizenship, though are unaware of requirements. Overall refugees and asylum seekers have a good relationship with the host community. Acquisition of relevant civil documentation remains a challenge for them.

Capacities within the community and proposed solutions / recommendations

Cross cutting to all population groups

- Continue engagement with the Ministry of Women and Human Rights Development to strengthen the protection of all children.
- Improving partners' capacity to fully address the needs of children at risk through initiation of best interests' procedures.
- Provide life skills and vocational training to out of school teenagers to mitigate exposure to negative coping mechanisms due to idleness and diminished capacity for self-resilience.
- Strengthening parents' self-resilience by providing livelihood opportunities to mitigate child labour, increase school attendance and gender-based violence incidences.
- Strengthen the capacity of existing community-based skills for an overall improved community protection.
- Increase access to basic services and create awareness on existing referral pathways.
- Ensure outreach and communication sessions extend to hard-to-reach areas, extending to marginalized and minority groups.
- As displaced communities rely on leadership structures for information and as avenues to report their concerns, UNHCR and partners are encouraged to actively participate in community and townhall meetings.
- Provision of assistive devices to support community members who are disabled and able to generate income independently.
- Support and strengthen community structures to make them inclusive of different groups, including those marginalized.
- Advocacy with the Government for provision of land and land tenure to facilitate integration of IDPs and refugees.
- Through advocacy with Government, humanitarian community, and donors, seek sufficient funding for shelters that are holistically 'fit for purpose' thereby meeting Sphere Standards.
- Provide construction materials, that are durable and affordable.
- Provision for NFIs in form of cash as opposed to in-kind.
- Enhance communities' ability to become self-sufficient, this includes access to learning opportunities and income generating activities/programs.

- Increase awareness of UNHCR and partners livelihood program and ensure inclusion of persons with specific needs are engaged.
- Increase livelihood activities such as micro-financing for small businesses, tailoring, mechanical skills training, and agriculture training programs.
- In collaboration with host community, advocate for inclusion of displaced communities into the existing community structures to strengthen peaceful co-existence.
- Increase awareness of existing Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms in place, and its function to the community to mitigate information gap, create trust and refer, respond and receive feedback in a timely and systematic manner.
- UNHCR and partners to provide regular updates and disseminate appropriate, timely and accessible communication using multiple channels, to include all population groups and their capacities.
- Per community's preference, include use of media to communicate, receive feedback and disseminate information.
- UNHCR and partners will continue to enhance capacity for a variety of stakeholders, on PSEA, fraud, and corruption to improve detection and response to misconduct.
- Strengthen coordination between GBV and PSEA focal points to enhance monitoring, complaints, feedback and reporting systems through helplines, compliant boxes, protection desks, and email address that are accessible to all community members.
- Expedite the rolling-out of the inter-agency complaints and feedback mechanisms (ICFM) to mitigate aid diversion, SEA and GBV incidents.

Refugees and asylum seekers – Durable Solutions

- UNHCR to expedite Refugee Status Determination Procedures, especially for asylum seekers who arrived more than a year ago.
- Create awareness to refugees and asylum seekers on ways to apply for Somali citizenship.
- Advocate with the government, to allow refugees and asylum seekers, to locally integrate within Somalia, particularly for refugees and asylum seekers who may not wish to return due to protection concerns.
- Advocate for, create awareness and support refugees and asylum seekers to access to vital and civil documentation.
- Awareness raising on complementary pathways.
- Capacity building of the police and immigration staff on refugee rights and protection.

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Participatory Assessment Summary Report

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