Protecting Rights, Building Communities: Biannual Review of CP, GBV, and CBP in **Somalia**

Executive Summary

Somalia's protection environment remains shaped by the combined effects of conflict, climate shocks, and large-scale displacement. Limited access to justice, heightened risks for women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, and minority clans, and ongoing funding constraints continue to challenge service delivery. These dynamics require flexible, community-driven approaches to sustain support for the most at-risk populations.

In the first half of 2025, UNHCR Somalia and its partners delivered targeted protection services through rights-based, area-specific interventions and strengthened coordination with local authorities and community structures. Over 54,000 individuals benefited from services across four thematic areas. GBV prevention and response reached 7,424 individuals, with 80% of survivors and beneficiaries being women and girls. CBP initiatives engaged 10,480 people in safety dialogues, empowerment activities, and referrals. Legal assistance supported 35,836 individuals on civil documentation, land disputes, detention monitoring, and eviction prevention. Child Protection programming reached 368 children and caregivers, prioritizing early risk identification and best interest procedures (case management).

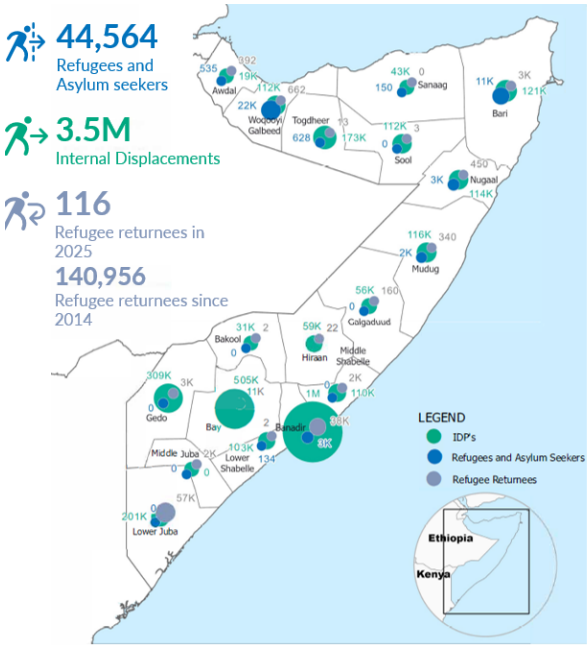
Key challenges include gaps in access to justice, limited specialized services, underfunding, and inadequate inclusion of vulnerable groups. This report recommends scaling up case management, strengthening legal aid and dispute resolution, enhancing community engagement, improving data systems, diversifying funding sources, and sustaining the Protection and Solutions Monitoring Network to enable real-time, evidence-based responses.

Background and Context

Somalia faces a complex humanitarian crisis due to ongoing conflict, climate shocks, and widespread displacement. An estimated 3.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) live in protracted or secondary displacement, many in overcrowded informal settlements lacking adequate shelter, civil documentation, and access to basic services. Needs are particularly acute in protection, where gaps remain in case management, legal assistance, and safe spaces for survivors of violence. The country ranks among the highest globally in internal displacement, with recurrent shocks eroding coping capacities and deepening vulnerabilities.

The protection environment remains characterized by heightened vulnerabilities, particularly for women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, and minority clans. In line with the UNHCR Somalia Multi-Year, Multi-Partner Protection and Solutions Strategy (MYMPPSS) 2023-2025 objectives and indicators, priority concerns include gender-based violence (GBV), child protection risks, forced evictions, and the exclusion of

marginalized groups from services. The MYMPSS provided a national framework to measure progress against agreed protection targets, while ensuring alignment with regional commitments under IGAD declarations and global frameworks such as the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).



Context

1. **Fragile protection environment:** Persistent climate-related impacts (drought and floods) and security risks (inter-clan conflict, armed conflict, political instability) and prolonged & new displacements
2. **Access challenges** (hard-to-reach) coupled with the closure of AUSSOM bases in some locations (e.g. Afmadow).
3. **Reduced capacity for emergency preparedness and response:** Reduction of partners owing to funding constraints; delayed provision of assistance to newly displaced populations.
4. Ongoing **constitutional review processes** and 2026 electoral planning. Regional rifts (Jubaland, Puntland) reopening ground for political fragmentation.

Between January and June 2025, protection monitoring under the Protection and Solutions Monitoring Network recorded 183,513 newly displaced individuals, with conflict (51%), floods (25%), drought (15%), and other causes (9%), such as fire, access to humanitarian resources, among others, as the main drivers. These figures feed directly into MYMPSS monitoring processes, supporting evidence-based planning and tracking progress against strategic objectives.

Operational adaptations, driven by funding realignments, necessitated prioritization of activities. Protection actors responded by reinforcing localized engagement, maximizing resources, and adopting community-led and area-based approaches to ensure the continuity of services targeting at-risk populations. Enhanced coordination with local authorities and protection actors facilitated effective service delivery, with efforts focused on strengthening case management, expanding community outreach, and enhancing referral mechanisms.

All interventions were implemented in line with key policy frameworks, including UNHCR's Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) commitments, the Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) approach, Best Interest Procedures Guidelines, and Policy on the prevention of, risk mitigation, and response to gender-based violence. As well as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines on protection. This report consolidates both quantitative and qualitative data collected by UNHCR and its partners in the field, outlining the progress of protection interventions from January to June 2025. It identifies emerging trends,

opportunities, and areas requiring reinforcement as the operation transitions into the second half of the year. Throughout the reporting period, UNHCR and partners continued to provide integrated protection services across displacement-affected areas, including in Banadir, Baidoa, Kismayo, Dollow, Beletweyne, Galkayo, Garowe, Bossaso, Hargeisa, and Burco. This included scaled-up protection monitoring, legal support, community-based protection, and GBV response, with a focus on reaching the most at-risk individuals. Interventions were adapted to evolving needs and local contexts to maximize impact and improve access to protection in both camp-based and out-of-camp settings. The findings aim to support internal planning, external engagement with stakeholders, and evidence-driven protection programming.

Progress Update

Between January and June 2025, UNHCR Somalia and its partners delivered protection services across multiple regions, reaching over 54,000 individuals across four thematic areas: Child Protection (CP), Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention and Response, Legal Assistance, and Community-Based Protection (CBP). Of those reached, 66% were women and girls (35,924 individuals) and 34% were men and boys (18,184 individuals). This reflects UNHCR's targeted efforts to address specific vulnerabilities of women and girls, while also ensuring meaningful engagement of men and boys in community-led protection initiatives.

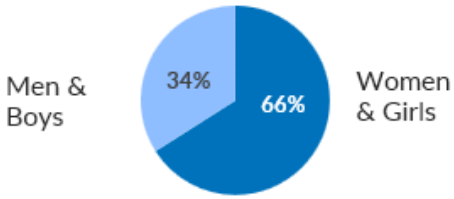
These interventions focused on at-risk groups, including women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, and marginalized communities, and were guided by inclusive, area-based, and rights-based approaches. Age and sex-disaggregated data further highlighted significant engagement with youth and older persons, consistent with UNHCR's Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) framework.

During the same period, protection monitoring recorded 183,513 newly displaced individuals, and mobile/static protection desks facilitated 2,139 individual protection assistance (IPA) cases and 1,069 referrals to multisectoral services, including GBV, CP, legal aid, and health support.

Child Protection	Legal Assitance	Gender-Based Violence	Community-Based Protection
• Early risk identification • Caregiver support • Community awarness	• Legal counseling • Access to documentation • Court representation	• Legal & psychosocial support • Awarness campaigns • Risk mitigation	• Localized protection networks • Empowerment initiatives • Inclusion of marginilized groups

54,000
individuals reached across four thematic areas: Child Protection (CP), Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention and Response, Legal Assistance, and Community-Based Protection (CBP)

Gender Distribution of Beneficiaries



368 children and caregivers (308 refugees/asylum-seekers and 60 IDPs) benefitted **Child Protection (CP)** services, prioritizing early risk identification and structured Best Interest Procedure (BIP) case management.

7,424 individuals (2,518 refugees/asylum-seekers and 4,906 IDPs) reached by GBV programming, with approximately 80% of survivors and beneficiaries being women and girls.

2,139 individual protection assistance (IPA) cases facilitated at the mobile/static protection desks

10,480 individuals supported through **Community-Based Protection (CBP)** initiatives

1,069 referrals to multisectoral services, including GBV, CP, legal aid, and health support

35,836 individuals benefited **legal Assistance and Protection Services** addressing forced evictions, civil documentation challenges, land and housing disputes, and detention monitoring

46,050 people engaged with Complaints and Feedback Mechanisms (CFMs) across Somalia in Q1 2025

183,513 newly displaced individuals recorded under the Protection and Solutions Monitoring Network (PSMN)

Key Protection Activities

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention and Response interventions under specialized GBV programming reached 7,424 individuals (2,518 refugees/asylum-seekers and 4,906 IDPs), with approximately 80% of survivors and beneficiaries being women and girls. Services included case management, psychosocial support, legal aid, and referral to health services. Adolescents and youth participated in GBV awareness and life-skills sessions, while older persons received tailored support in both urban and IDP contexts.

Community-Based Protection (CBP) initiatives supported 10,480 individuals (1,429 refugees/asylum-seekers; 389 returnees; 8,662 IDPs) through structured community dialogues on safety and rights, establishment of Protection Desks for referrals and guidance, and targeted women's empowerment initiatives. Notably, 55% of those reached were male, with engagement including 280 adolescents and 320 older persons.

Legal Assistance and Protection Services benefited 35,836 individuals (33,186 through protection services and 2,650 through direct legal aid), addressing forced evictions, civil documentation challenges, land and housing disputes, and detention monitoring. Of these, 70% were women, reflecting heightened vulnerabilities among female-headed households and GBV survivors. Mobile legal clinics and awareness forums expanded access in remote areas.

Child Protection (CP) reached 368 children and caregivers (308 refugees/asylum-seekers and 60 IDPs), prioritizing early risk identification and structured Best Interest Procedure (BIP) case management. This included individualized assessments, safety planning, and referrals to psychosocial, health, and legal services. Twenty-six adolescents and youth received direct case management support, while 20 caregivers participated in focused parenting and protection guidance sessions.

Evidence-based Protection Planning

UNHCR maintained a data-informed approach to monitor progress and support decision-making. Implementing partners systematically collected disaggregated data by sex, age, population type (e.g., IDPs, returnees, refugees, host community), and vulnerability criteria (e.g., disability, elderly, single female-headed households). The consolidated dataset for January–June 2025 serves as a baseline for the year, supports comparison with 2024, and informs planning for future responses. It also ensures consistency in UNHCR's protection reports and facilitates the identification of implementation gaps and emerging needs in real-time.

Between January and June 2025, protection monitoring under the Protection and Solutions Monitoring Network (PSMN) recorded 183,513 newly displaced individuals. The

main drivers were conflict (51% / 95,592 people), floods (25% / 45,878 people), drought (15% / 27,527 people), and other causes (9% / 16,516 people), including lack of access to humanitarian assistance, fire, inability to afford staying in previous locations, and agriculture-related pressures. These figures feed directly into the Monitoring Your Multi-Year Protection and Solutions Strategy (MYMPSS) processes, supporting evidence-based planning and tracking progress against strategic objectives.

In addition, UNHCR drew on evidence from its Complaint and Feedback Mechanisms (CFM) and CEA Taskforce's Aggregator Model. In Q1 2025, 46,050 people engaged with CFMs across Somalia. Most feedback focused on priority sectors such as health, food security, and shelter, yet protection issues consistently emerged as a cross-cutting concern. Reports included barriers to safe access to assistance, exclusion from aid, and exposure to gender-based violence and child protection risks, demonstrating how sectoral complaints often reflect deeper protection challenges.

This community-driven evidence was complemented by findings from the 2024 Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV), which underscored Somalia as one of the contexts where CRSV remains a critical protection concern. CRSV refers to acts such as rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, and other forms of sexual violence directly or indirectly linked to conflict. These findings justified continued prioritization of GBV prevention and response in Somalia in 2025, including case management, psychosocial support, medical referrals, and legal assistance.

Together, these data sources provide a robust evidence base that informs UNHCR's protection programming and ensures that planning, advocacy, and response remain grounded in the realities faced by displaced and conflict-affected populations in Somalia.

Protection Gaps and Challenges

Persistent challenges continue to undermine protection outcomes across Somalia, even as UNHCR and partners work to sustain critical interventions. The humanitarian reset deprioritized the Protection Cluster, shifting emphasis toward maintaining specialized protection services and mainstreaming protection across prioritized clusters such as CCCM, shelter, WASH, and health. While this approach aimed to ensure continuity of protection-sensitive programming, it reduced the visibility and dedicated resources available for specialized protection interventions. Nevertheless, UNHCR maintained its leadership role in delivering essential protection services and ensuring protection principles remained integrated across the humanitarian response.

Survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) and internally displaced persons (IDPs) facing forced evictions, arbitrary detention, and housing disputes often lacked access to justice and effective redress, as both formal and community-based justice mechanisms remained weak. Specialized services, including case management, psychosocial support, and safe accommodation for survivors, were insufficient and unevenly available, particularly for

children at risk and persons with disabilities. This limited the capacity of partners to deliver timely, survivor-centered support and increased risks of exploitation and re-victimization.

Underfunding exacerbated these gaps, forcing protection partners to scale back outreach, referral systems, and safe spaces, which reduced coverage in high-risk areas. Many referral pathways and localized community protection structures that had proven effective in past years were weakened or left under-resourced. The inadequate inclusion of marginalized groups, such as minority clans, older persons, and persons with disabilities, further deepened existing inequalities and left their specific protection needs unaddressed.

At the same time, weak intersectoral linkages and persistent data quality gaps constrained early identification of risks and hindered evidence-based programming. While UNHCR and partners leveraged tools such as the Protection and Solutions Monitoring Network (PSMN), GBVIMS+, and community feedback mechanisms, reporting inconsistencies and fragmented information flows limited their full potential for informing rapid response. These challenges highlight the need to reinforce protection monitoring systems, strengthen inter-agency collaboration, and ensure that protection is systematically prioritized and resourced in Somalia's evolving humanitarian response.

Strategic Directions, Recommendations, and Conclusion

Strategic Approach

In line with UNHCR Somalia's Protection and Solutions Strategy (2023–2025), the reporting period focused on ensuring displaced and at-risk populations had access to quality protection services, strong community support systems, and sustainable pathways toward durable solutions. This was pursued through a multi-faceted approach that emphasized people-centered delivery and strengthened local capacities.

A. Rights-Based and Survivor-Centered Programming

- Applied across GBV and Child Protection interventions.
- Services included case management, psychosocial support, and legal counseling.
- Guided by principles of Do No Harm, non-discrimination, participation, and accountability.
- Inclusive of persons with disabilities, minorities, and marginalized groups.

B. Area-Based and Community-Driven Programming

- Region-specific interventions designed with communities, leaders, youth, and women's groups.
- Activities reflected community priorities and systemic risks through participatory assessments.

- Strengthened referral mechanisms and local ownership, with emphasis on youth, minorities, and persons with disabilities.

C. Strengthening Local Capacities and Institutions

- Capacity-building for legal aid clinics, community-based structures, and service providers.
- Trainings delivered on case management, protection monitoring, referrals, and confidentiality.
- Reinforced collaboration with government institutions to promote national ownership.
- Support to grassroots actors enhanced dispute resolution, referral pathways, and informal justice mechanisms.

D. Protection Mainstreaming and Risk Mitigation

- Integrated protection into CCCM, shelter, and education programming.
- Mobile outreach and protection desks deployed in Jubaland and Galmudug.
- GBV risk mitigation included in awareness campaigns.
- Early childhood risk identification supported through caregiver sessions and Best Interest Procedures for children at risk.

E. Data-Driven Protection Planning

- Data systematically collected disaggregated by sex, age, population type, and vulnerability.
- Consolidated data for January–June 2025 established a baseline for the year.
- Informed real-time responses, ensured consistency across reporting, and supported evidence-based decision-making.

Strategic Recommendations

Building on these findings, the following strategic directions are proposed to reinforce protection programming in the second half of 2025:

- Scale up case management and specialized services to address rising GBV and child protection caseloads, while applying integrated protection case management where appropriate, to ensure timely and survivor-centered support in both refugee and IDP contexts.
- Prioritize protection, mainstreaming, and inclusion so that persons with disabilities, older persons, and minority clans are systematically considered in all interventions, addressing the current exclusion identified in service delivery.
- Strengthen legal aid and community-based dispute resolution, directly responding to gaps in access to justice for IDPs facing forced evictions, detention, and civil documentation challenges. Enhance community engagement and ownership by

expanding community-based protection structures, which have proven effective in creating localized referral pathways and building trust with at-risk populations.

- Improve data systems and harmonized reporting by strengthening use of Protection and Solution Monitoring Network (PSMN), GBVIMS+, and CPIMS+ to close information gaps and enable early identification of emerging risks.
- Diversify and localize protection funding to ensure continuity of essential services and reduce reliance on short-term, unpredictable funding streams that have already led to reduced coverage.
- Engage men and boys in protection programming, leveraging existing youth participation initiatives to shift harmful gender norms and strengthen community resilience against GBV.
- Sustain and expand PSMN to ensure to provide real-time, disaggregated data that informs early warning systems and evidence-based rapid response.

Conclusion

In the first half of 2025, UNHCR and partners reached more than 54,000 individuals with targeted protection services across child protection, GBV, legal assistance, and community-based protection. Protection monitoring also tracked over 183,000 new displacements, with conflict and climate shocks as leading drivers.

While funding shortfalls, weak access to justice, and limited inclusion of marginalized groups remained persistent challenges, the operation sustained a rights-based, community-focused response that combined service delivery with institution and system strengthening. Feedback collected through complaint and feedback mechanisms further highlighted protection as a cross-cutting concern across all sectors.

Looking ahead, scaling up case management, reinforcing legal aid and dispute resolution, improving data systems, and deepening community ownership will be critical to closing gaps and ensuring inclusive, durable protection outcomes for displaced and at-risk communities across Somalia.

Acknowledgement

UNHCR extends its sincere appreciation to all partners who contributed to this biannual report and who have supported the implementation of protection programming.

We gratefully acknowledge the following for their partnership and dedication to this critical effort: **the Commissions for Refugees and IDPs at the Federal and State levels, Hargeisa Legal Clinic, KAALO, and NRC.**

Above all, UNHCR expresses profound gratitude to the communities across Somalia for their trust and for allowing UNHCR and its partners to work alongside them in identifying solutions to the protection challenges they face. Their openness, resilience, and commitment to engage have made this report possible and ensure it remains a genuine reflection of their voices, needs, and priorities.

For more information

Visit Global Focus, UNHCR's main operational reporting website for donors and other key partners. It provides an overview of the protection risks that forcibly displaced and stateless people face across the world, as well as regularly updated information about the organization's programmes, operations, financial requirements, funding levels and donor contributions.

For further information on protection in Somalia, please contact UNHCR's **Senior Protection Officer, June Munala, munala@unhcr.org**, or **Associate Protection Officer, Raymond Tagle Jr., taglejr@unhcr.org**.

UNHCR's Global Focus Somalia Operation page

UNHCR's Operational Data Portal (ODP) for Somalia

COVER PHOTO: NRC conducting protection desk counselling in Galmudug State. NRC, May 11, 2025 © NRC

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