OVERVIEW

UNHCR, in partnership with its partner, OSSHD, conducted Protection Monitoring and Solutions (PMS) Assessment. The assessment aimed to evaluate the situation of IDP returnees, the majority of whom were returned from Mekelle and Northwestern town and their protection concerns following their return to their places of origin. It also sought to examine the services provided to returnees, the integration process between returnees and host communities, and the reactions of host communities toward the returnees.

The PMS Assessment was conducted during 18 to 20 November 2025 in Sheraro Woreda, Northwestern Zone of Tigray region.

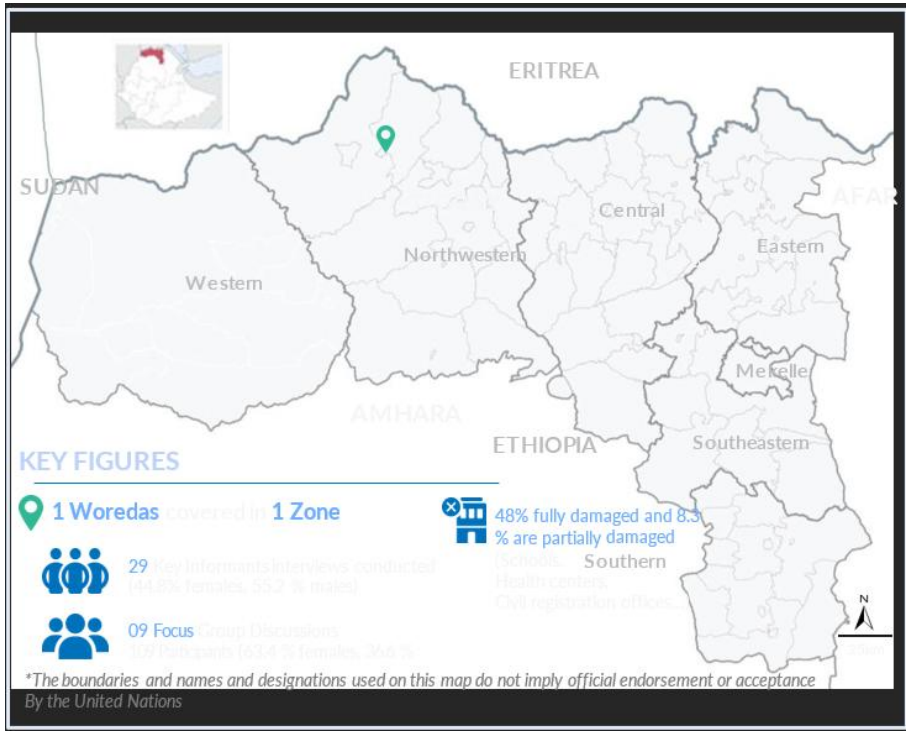

*Figure 1: Locations of PMS Assessment

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This PMS Assessment report is based on the harmonized PMS Tools. The assessment employed four distinct tools to capture a comprehensive overview and gather detailed information about IDP returnee's situations. These tools included focus group discussions (FGDs) with returnees and host community members, key informant interviews (KIIs) with community leaders and service providers, facility mapping to collect data on service infrastructures and direct observation to assess living conditions and service accessibility.

According to the PMS Assessment methodology, data and information for this typical report Were collected through:

- **29 Key Informants Interviews (KIIs) conducted**: 16 (55.2%) Male and 13 (44.8%) female. Of those interviewed, 44% were IDP returnees, 37% were from host community/affected population and 19% were IDPs.
- **09 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** organized for 109 participants of which 40 males (36.6%) and 69 females (63.4%). Among these, 109(44%) were IDP returnees and (37%) were host community/affected population.
- **Basic facilities** (schools, health centers, markets, civil registration offices, etc.) recorded in the visited woredas, of which 16.7 % are fully damaged and 8.3 % are partially damaged.
- **Direct observation in each location:** documentation of visual and auditory observation to help shape the understanding of the situation.

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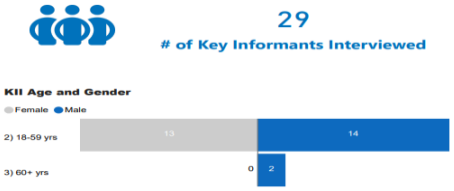
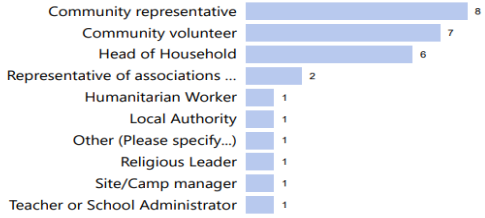
FINDINGS OF THE KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Key Informants (KIs) Information

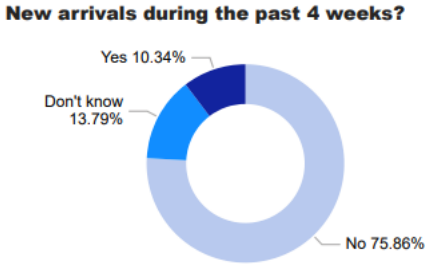
The majority of key informants were community representatives (8) and community volunteers (7), reflecting strong community-level engagement. This was followed by heads of household (6), who provided household-level perspectives. A smaller number of informants included representatives of associations (2). Other roles—such as humanitarian workers, local authorities, religious leaders, site/camp managers, teachers or school administrators, and other specified roles—were each represented by 1 informant, ensuring diverse but limited institutional perspectives of the assessment.

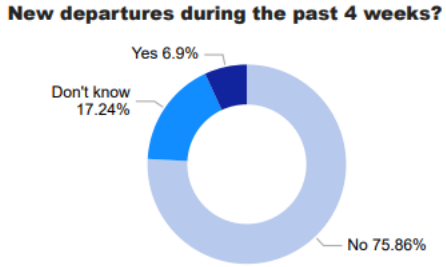




Population Movement

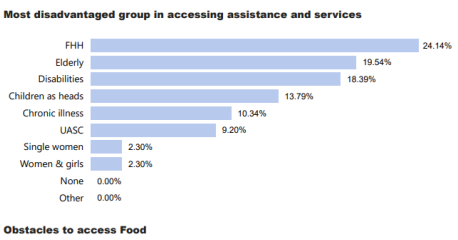
Population movement remains low, with no significant new arrivals (78.57%) and similarly no notable departures (78.57%) reported in the past four weeks. A small proportion noted some arrivals (10.71%) or departures (3.57%), while others were unsure, indicating overall stability with only minor, localized movement.

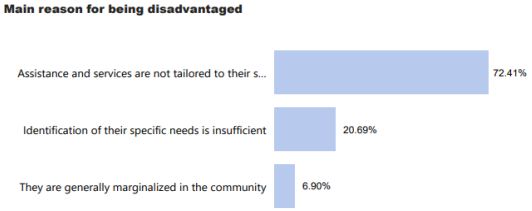




Access to Fundamental Rights and Basic Needs

The main reported reason for being disadvantaged in accessing assistance and services is that assistance and services are not tailored to their specific needs **(**72.41% of responses). Other reasons, such as insufficient identification of specific needs and general marginalization in the community account for significantly smaller percentages at 20.69% and 6.90%, respectively.





Obstacles to access Food

Obstacles to access basic needs

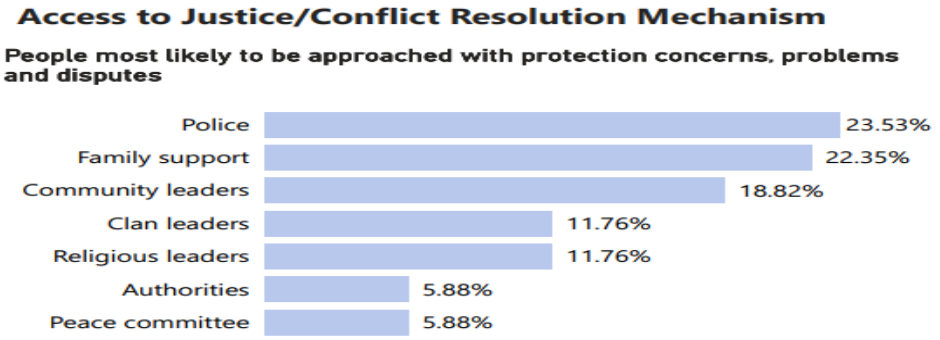
Sector	Analytical Insight (from infographic data)
Food Security	The most significant barrier to access food is shortage of food (reported by 24.71% of respondents). This is followed by cash shortage and high prices (20% each). The other significant obstacle for food security is irregular food access (17.65%). Other reported obstacles are occupied farmland (5.88%), transport issues (3.53%),and other factors such as discrimination, lack of documents, crops burned and drought, each accounting for less then 3% of the responses.
Health Services	Shortage of medicine is reported as the most prevalent barrier to health services (33.77%) followed by destroyed facilities(23.38%) and high medical fees (20.78%). Other reported obstacles, such as lack of documents, transport issues, discrimination, and armed presence constitute much smaller percentages.
Education	Shortage of school material is reported as the most significant barrier to access education (33.73% of the responses). This is followed by unaffordable materials (28.92%) and damaged school (24.10%). Less common reported barriers include schools being closed (4.82%), safety concerns, schools being occupied, risks of attack, language issues and long distance, all of which fall below 3% each.
WASH	Lack of WASH services is reported by quarter of the respondents (25)% as the most significant barrier to accessing WASH services. Other significant barriers reported include the unavailability of sanitary pads (21.25%) and limited storage capacity (18.75%). Less common, but still relevant, obstacles are high soap price (7.50%), insufficient WASH facilities (6.25%), lack of hygiene items (6.25%), low hygiene awareness (5%), unsafe latrines (5%), and the high cost or unsafe nature of water both 2.5%.

Coping strategies to meet basic needs

Coping Mechanism	Always (%)	Sometimes (%)	Never (%)	Don't know (%)
Buying food on credit / borrowing	53.57%	46.43%	–	–
Changing place of residence to reduce expenses	35.71%	60.71%	3.57%	–
Child labour	48.43%	50.00%	3.57%	–
Illegal activities (e.g., theft)	10.71%	82.14%	7.14%	–
Withdrawing children from school	14.29%	75.00%	7.14%	3.57%
Begging	10.71%	89.29%	–	–
Early marriage for girls	? (Only Sometimes/ Never reported — No 'Always')	67.88%	32.14%	–
Sex in exchange for assistance/cash	7.14%	89.29%	3.57%	3.57%
Selling house and/or land	0% (Always not reported)	67.86%	32.14%	–
Selling humanitarian assistance received	0% (Always not reported)	71.43%	28.57%	

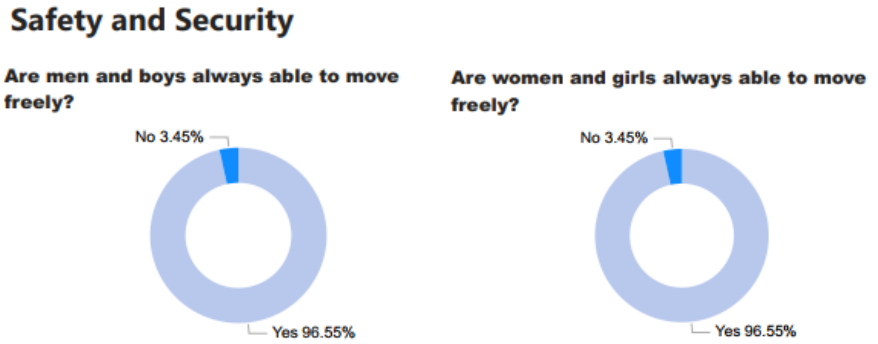
Access to Justice, Assistance and Conflict resolution

The findings shows that individuals are most likely to seek help from the police (23.53%) or their immediate family support network (22.35%) when facing protection concerns, problems, or disputes. Significant reliance is also placed on informal community leaders (18.82%), with both clan leaders and religious leaders being approached equally (11.76% each). Formal authorities and the local peace committee are the least likely points of contact, each accounting for 5.88% of approaches, indicating a balanced reliance on both formal and informal mechanisms.



Safety and Security

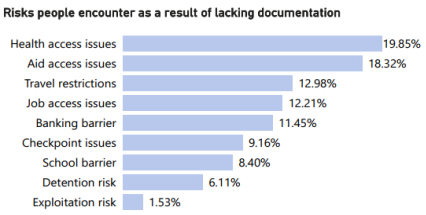
The vast majority of both men and women feel they are always able to move freely, with 96.55% answering "Yes" and 3.45% answering "No", showing identical responses across genders. This specific data likely originates from a localized survey within a context where freedom of movement is universally high, as global reports typically indicate significant differences in mobility and safety perceptions between genders, with women often facing more restrictions

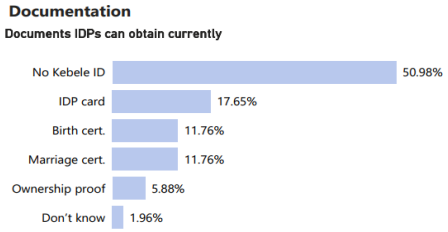


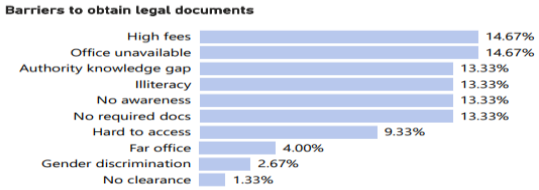
Documentation

Over half of the informants (50.98%) reported that they currently have no Kebele ID which is a local identification document in Ethiopia that typically confers legal identity and access to services. The next most obtainable document is an IDP card (17.65%) followed equally by birth certificates and marriage certificates (each 11.76%), and a small percentage have ownership proof (5.88%). This highlights a significant documentation gap among displaced populations, creating barriers to essential services.

The most common risks people face due to lack of documentation are barriers to health services (19.85%) and humanitarian aid access (18.32%). This is followed by travel restrictions (12.98%), limited job opportunities (12.21%), and banking barriers (11.45%). Other notable risks include checkpoint-related challenges (9.16%) and difficulties accessing education (8.40%), while detention (6.11%) and exploitation risks (1.53%) are reported less frequently.

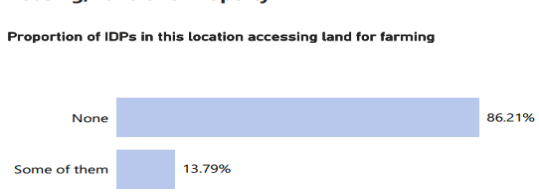






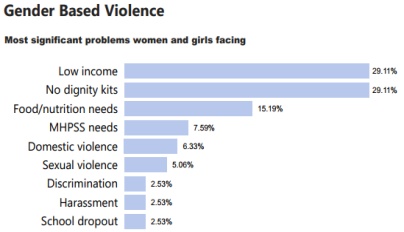
Housing, Land and Property (HLP)

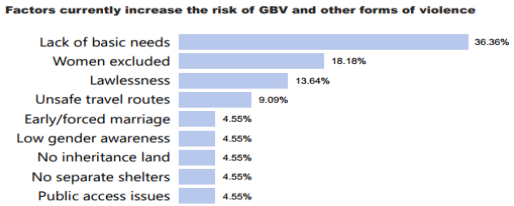
The finding show that most of the IDPs (89.29%) have no access to land for farming, with only a small number (10.71%) are able to access some land. This indicates extremely limited livelihood opportunities tied to land, reinforcing high dependence on aid and reducing prospects for self-reliance.



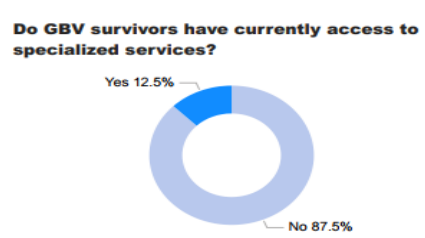
Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

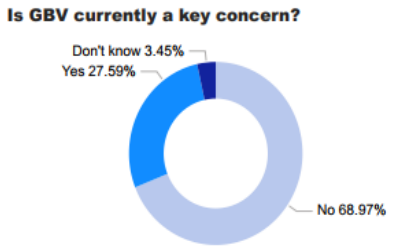
Most significant problems facing women and girls are low income and lack of dignity kits, each accounting for 29.11% of responses. These are followed by food and nutrition needs (15.19%) and MHPSS needs (7.59%). Protection-related concerns such as domestic violence (6.33%) and sexual violence (5.06%) are also reported, while discrimination, harassment, and school dropout are less frequently cited, each at 2.53%.





The majority of respondents (69%) reported that GBV is not currently a key concern, while 27.4 % identified it as a key concern. A smaller proportion (3.6%) indicated that they were unsure.

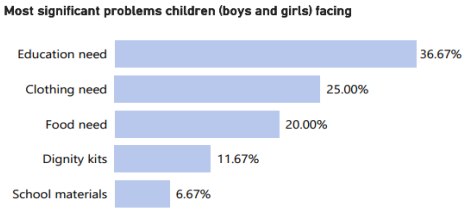


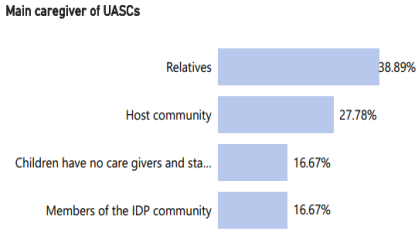


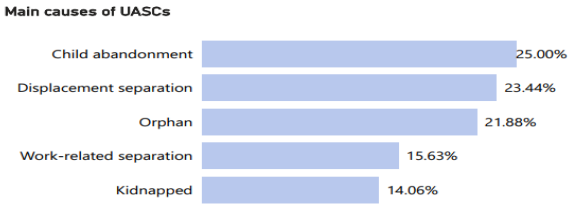
Child Protection

The most significant problems children, boys and girls, are facing are basic resource needs and access to education. The top need identified is education need (36.67%), followed by clothing need (25%), and food need (20%). Lesser but still significant needs include dignity kits (11.67%) which typically contain hygiene supplies for women and girls, and school materials (6.67%). This data suggests that while fundamental educational access is the greatest challenge, basic survival and hygiene items are also critical concerns for children.

The main causes of UASCs (Unaccompanied and Separated Children) is child abandonment (25%), followed by displacement separation (23.44%) and orphanage (21.88%). The remaining causes listed are work-related separation (15.63%) and kidnapping (14.06%).

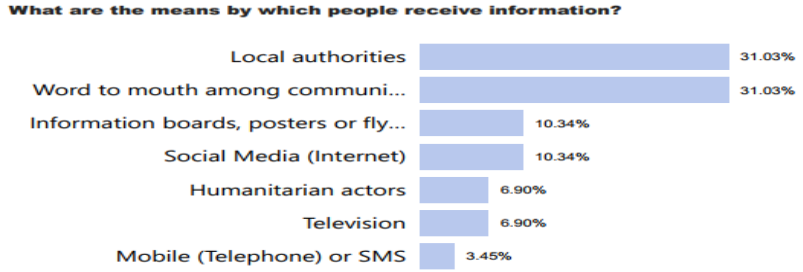






Information and Feedback Mechanism

The most used means by which people receive information are word of mouth and from local authorities (31.03% of responses each). Information boards and social media share the third position (10.34% each). Less common methods include humanitarian actors (6.9%), television (6.9%) and cell phone/SMS (3.45%).

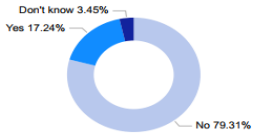


Landmines and UXOs

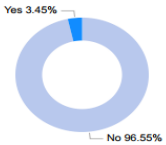
79.31% of the respondents indicated that there are no landmines or ERW present in their area, while 17.24% indicated presence, and 3.45% didn't know. Further, most of the informants indicated their lack of awareness of any incidents related to such ordnance (96.56%), with only 3.45% confirming awareness of incidents. This, however, highlights the need for continued mine risk education and monitoring.

Land Mines/Explosive Ordinance

Are there any landmines, unexploded ordnances or other explosive remnants of war?



Are you aware of any incidents related to landmines, unexploded ordnances or other explosive remnants of war?

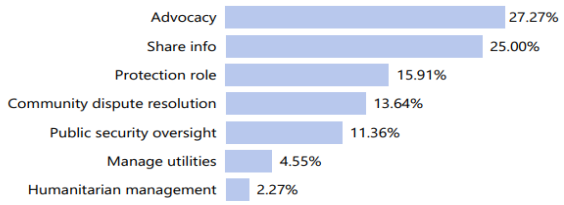


Community Representation

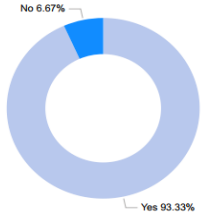
The responses on whether there is an IDP community structure, organization, or group of leaders are nearly evenly split, with 51.72% of respondents indicating that such a structure does exist, and 48.28% reporting that it does not.

The most reported purposes of the community structure are advocacy (27.27%) and info sharing (25%). Other significant roles include protection role (15.91%) and community dispute resolution (13.64%). Less common purposes are public security oversight (11.36%), manage utilities (4.55%) and humanitarian management (2.27%).

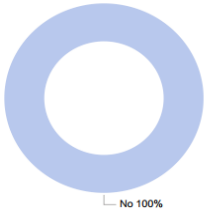
What is/are the purpose (s) of the community structure?



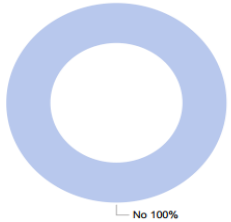
Does the community feel the work of the structure is useful?



Does the community feel the structure is representative?



Does the IDP community feel the structure is legitimate?

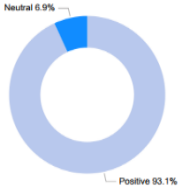


Social Cohesion

Relationships between host community members and IDPs are described as overwhelmingly positive (93.1%), with only neutral interactions reported by smaller number of informants (6.9%). No negative perceptions were reported, indicating strong social cohesion and harmonious coexistence between the two groups.

Social Cohesion/Peaceful Coexistence

How would you describe the relationship between host community members and IDPs?

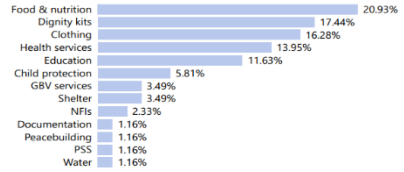


Priority Needs

The top priority needs in this specific location are food and nutrition (20.93%), dignity kits (17.44%), clothing (16.28%) and health services (13.95%). Education (11.63%) and child protection (5.81%) represent the next tier of needs, while other necessities such as GBV services, shelter, NFIs, documentation, peacebuilding, PSS, and water all account for less than 5%.

Priority Needs

hat are the priority needs in your location?

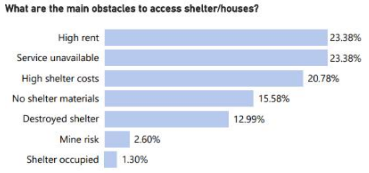


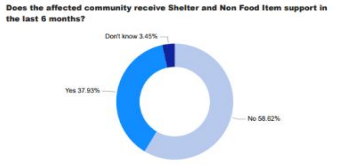
Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items (ESNFI)

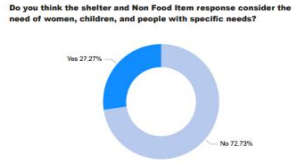
The main obstacles to accessing shelter/houses, according to respondents, are high rent and service unavailability (23.38% each) followed by high shelter costs (20.78%). Other significant factors include absence of shelter materials (15.58%) and destroyed shelters (12.99%). Less common obstacles mentioned were mine risk (2.6%) and shelter occupied (1.3%).

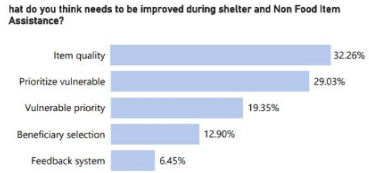
Kitchen set is identified as the top urgent shelter and NFI needs of the community (27.4%), followed by blankets (26.03%). These two items constitute over half of the reported needs. Other significant items include clothing and shoes (15.07%) and solar lamps (12.33%) while essential shelter components including emergency shelter (8.22%), dignity kits (6.85%) and plastic sheets (4.11%) represent smaller portions of the overall reported urgent needs.

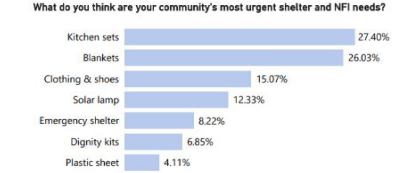
The top concern needing improvement in ESNFI assistance is quality of items (32.26% of respondents), followed by prioritizing vulnerable populations (29.35%). The remaining suggestions for improvement include enhancing beneficiary selection (12.9%) and establishing a better feedback system (6.45%).





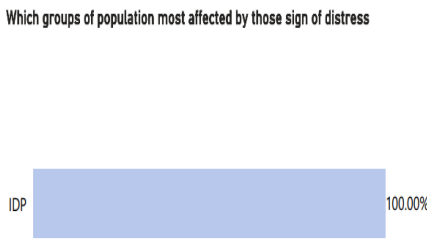


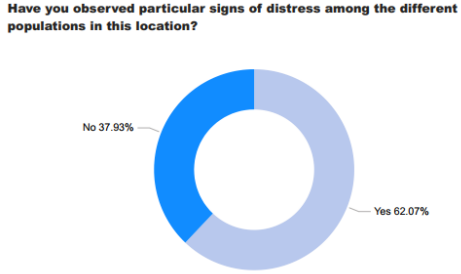




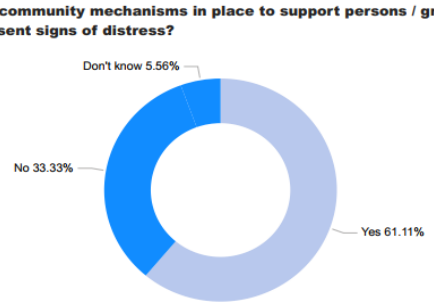
Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

The majority of respondents (62.07%) mentioned that they have observed signs of distress among the community while the remaining (37.93%) reported that they have not observed such signs. IDPs are identified by 100% of the respondents as the group most affected by signs of distress.





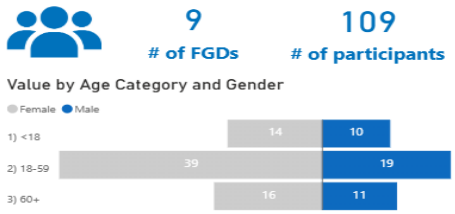
Most of the respondents (61.11%) expressed that mechanisms to support persons or groups showing signs of distress do exist. A significant portion (33.33%) responded that no such support systems are available, while a small minority (5.56%) reported that they did not know highlighting the need to strengthen MHPSS interventions.



FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

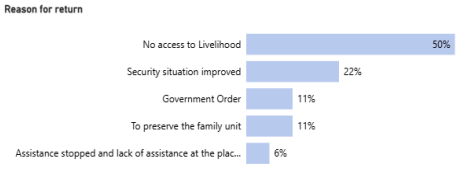
Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

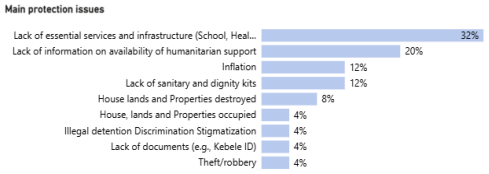
A total of 109 participants participated in 9 FGDs. The majority are within the 18–59 age group (58 participants: 39 females and 19 males). Children under 18 accounted for 24 participants (14 females, 10 males), while older persons (60+) made up 27 participants (16 females, 11 males). This reflects balanced gender representation and strong participation across all age categories.

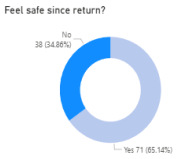


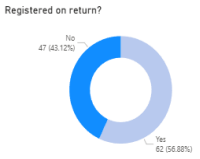
Reason of Return and Protection Concerns

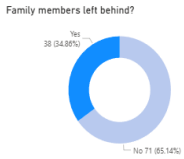
Most households returned primarily because they had no access to livelihoods (50%), while others cited improved security (22%), government direction (11%), or the need to preserve the family unit (11%). After return, communities faced major protection challenges, including lack of essential services (32%), insufficient information about humanitarian support (20%), inflation (12%) and lack of dignity kits (12%). Despite these gaps, 65% feel safe, though 43% were not registered on return, and one-third (35%) still have family members left behind. Transportation for return was mostly self-arranged, with only a few supported by humanitarian actors.

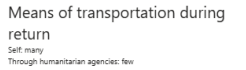






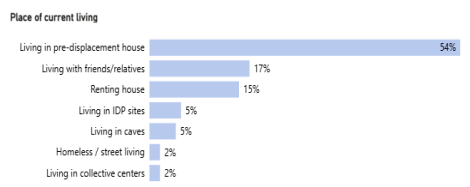


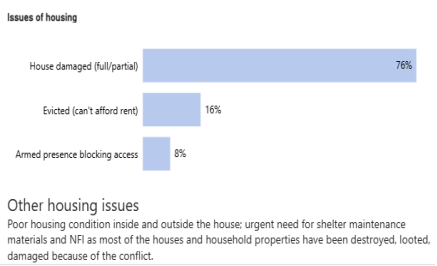


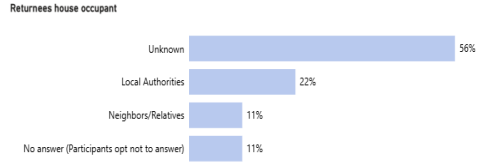


Housing, Land and Property (HLP)

Most returnees are currently living in their pre-displacement houses (54%), while others stay with relatives (17%) or rent homes (15%). Housing conditions remain critical, with 76% reporting their homes are fully or partially damaged, and some experiencing eviction due to unaffordable rent (16%) or armed presence blocking access (8%). Over half of respondents (56%) are unsure who occupies their property when not in use, highlighting widespread destruction, displacement-related occupation, and an urgent need for shelter repair and NFI support.

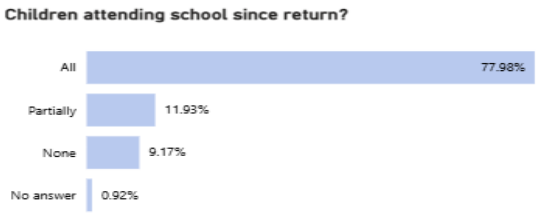






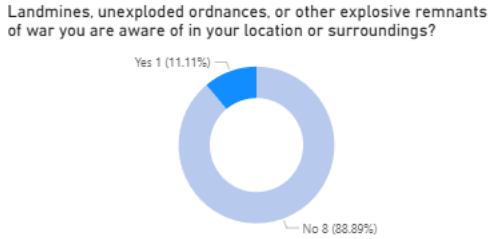
Child Protection

Most households report that all their children are attending school since return (77.98%), while a smaller share indicate partial attendance (11.93%) or no attendance (9.17%). Overall, the data suggests a generally strong resumption of schooling after return, though gaps remain for more vulnerable families.



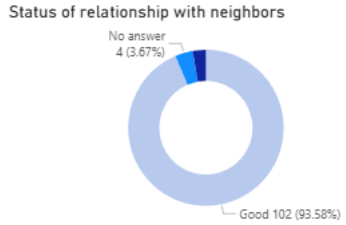
Mine Action

Most respondents (88.89%) reported no landmines or unexploded ordnance in their area, while a small portion (11.11%) indicated possible presence. Although no incidents were reported, this small level of awareness suggests the need for continued mine-risk education and monitoring to ensure community safety.



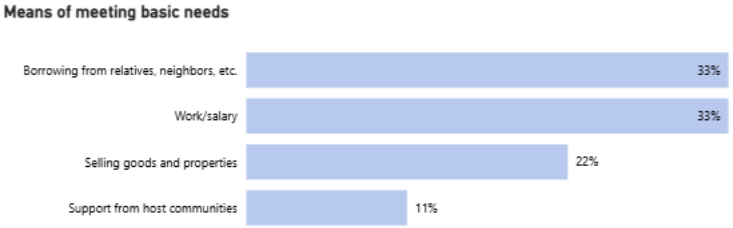
Peaceful Coexistence

The vast majority of respondents (93.58%) report having good relationships with their neighbors, reflecting strong social cohesion and positive community interactions. Only a very small share provided no answer (3.67%), and none reported poor relations, suggesting an overall harmonious environment.



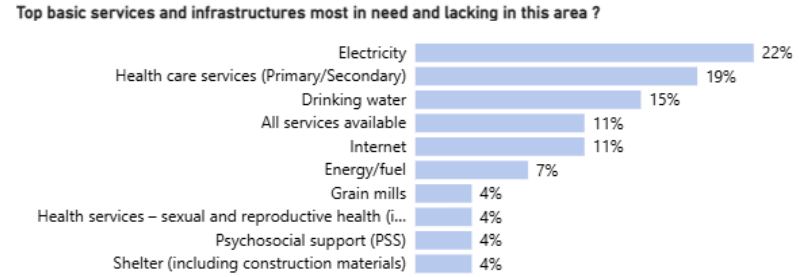
Means of Subsistence/Meating Basic Needs

Most households rely on borrowing from family, friends, and neighbors as their primary way of meeting basic needs (33%) and work/salary (33%), followed by selling goods or property (22%) and support from the host community (11%). More stable income sources such as work, remittances, and savings make up a much smaller share, while government and humanitarian assistance contribute least, highlighting continued dependence on informal coping rather than reliable livelihoods or formal support mechanisms.



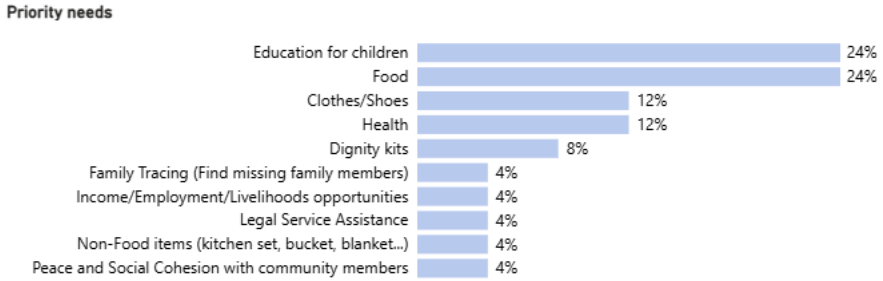
Most Needed Basic Services and Infrastructures

Electricity is identified as the most lacking basic service (22%), followed by primary and secondary healthcare (19%) and drinking water (15%). Other gaps include internet access and general service availability (both 11%), along with smaller but notable deficits in fuel, SRH services, psychosocial support, shelter materials, and grain mills. Overall, communities face broad, multi-sector service shortages, with the most urgent needs centered on energy, health, and water.



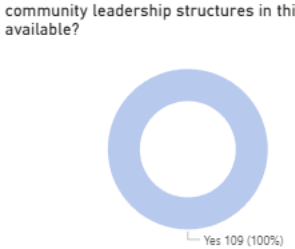
Priority Needs

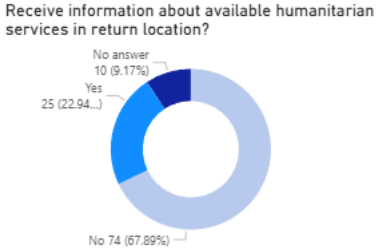
Education for children and food are the top priority needs (both 24%), followed by clothes/shoes and health services (each 12%). Other important needs, each at 4%, include family tracing, livelihood opportunities, legal assistance, non-food items, and peace and social cohesion, indicating a mix of urgent basic needs and longer-term recovery requirements.



Community Structure and Access to Information

Community leadership structures are fully established in the area, with 100% of respondents confirming their presence. However, only 22.94% of people report receiving information about available humanitarian services, while 67.89% do not, revealing a significant communication gap despite the existence of local leadership.





DIRECT OBSERVATIONS

Humanitarian Access & Security

Indicator	Findings
Unusual checkpoints during journey	No (100%)
Recent security or military incidents	Yes (50%), No (50%)
Physical obstructions to site access	No (100%)
Other access impediments	No (100%)
Law enforcement actors present	Local police (100%)

Infrastructure and Housing Damage

Infrastructure Area	Damage Level
Office buildings	Damaged but repairable (100%)
Communal buildings	Damaged but repairable (100%)
School buildings	Totally destroyed (50%), Repairable (50%)
Health centers / posts	Damaged but repairable (100%)
Shops & marketplaces	Damaged but repairable (100%)
Water points	Damaged but repairable (100%)
Roads & bridges	No damage (100%)
Housing	Damaged but repairable (100%)
Camps / camp-like settings	Totally destroyed (50%), Repairable (50%)

Connectivity

Indicator	Findings
Mobile network available	Yes (100%)
Internet available	Yes (100%)
Electricity supply regular	Yes (33%), No (67%)

Electric Power

Indicator	Findings
Internet available	Yes (100%)
Electricity supply regular	Yes (66.67%), No (33.33%)

Access and Availability of Goods & Services

Education

Indicator	Findings
Children out of school during school days	No (100%)
More boys or girls out of school	None (100%)
Complaints about education	No (100%)

Health

Indicator	Findings
Health facilities operating	Yes (33%), No (67%)
Medicine shortages	No (100%)

Agriculture

Indicator	Findings
Damage to crop land	Yes (50%), No (50%)
Poor livestock conditions	No (100%)

WASH

Indicator	Findings
Water supply disrupted	No (100%)
Functioning latrines	Yes (50%), No (50%)
Hygiene practices visible	No (100%)
Safety concerns around latrines	Yes (50%), No (50%)

Markets

Indicator	Findings
Functioning markets	Yes (100%)
Food commodities available	Yes (100%)
Non-food items available	Yes (100%)
Increased food/non-food prices	Yes (100%)

Housing & Basic Needs

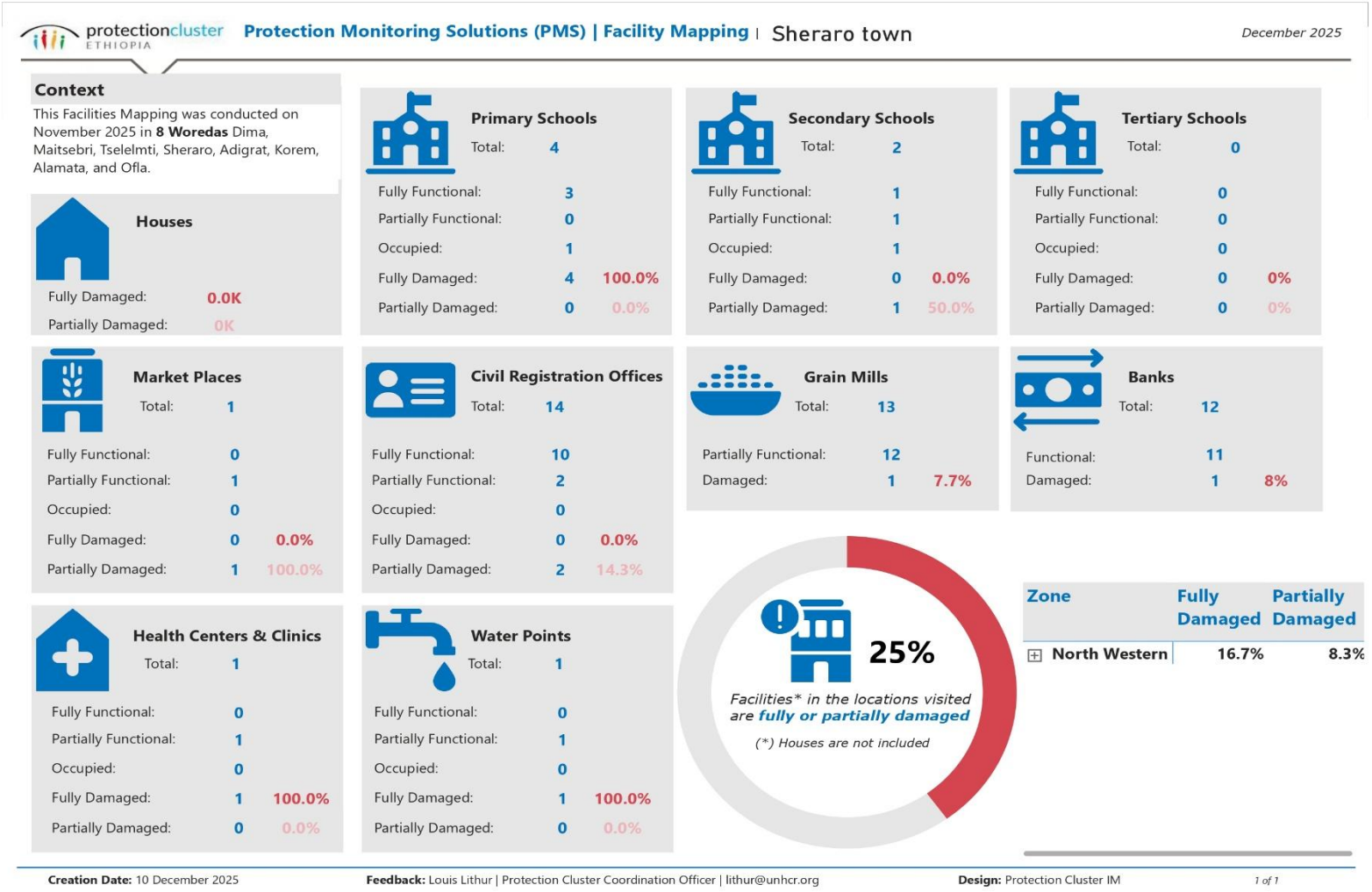
Indicator	Findings
People sleeping on the streets	Yes (100%)
People lacking clothing/blankets	No (100%)

Protection

Indicator	Findings
Humanitarian assistance present	No (100%)
Unusually high military/police presence	No (100%)
Tensions between population groups	No (100%)
Mines or unexploded ordnance	No (100%)
Civilian movement restrictions	Yes (50%), No (50%)

MAPPING OF FACILITIESIN AREAS OF RETURN

Sheraro shows moderate infrastructure damage, with 25% of assessed facilities fully or partially damaged. While primary and secondary schools remain largely functional, health centers and marketplaces are fully damaged, and all water points assessed require repair, limiting access to essential services. Civil registration offices, grain mills, and banks continue operating with minor damage, but the destruction of key public services highlights an urgent need for restoration and maintenance support to enable community recovery.



CRITICAL NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Urgent need for child protection, MHPSS, and GBV services: There is an urgent need to implement child protection services, including Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS), Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) related activities. These interventions should target IDPs and IDP returnees, with a specific focus on children, women, and the elderly, and should include women and girls safe spaces (WGSS), case management, and livelihood support.

- Need for food and nutrition: It is crucial to address the heightened risk of food insecurity and malnutrition in the assessed woredas. Vulnerable populations, including IDPs, children, and the elderly, are facing severe shortages of essential food supplies and nutrients. Immediate interventions are needed to provide adequate food assistance and nutritional support to these groups to prevent further deterioration of their health and well-being.

- Diverse Livelihood, Vocational Training & Support: Provide vocational training and support returnees to engage in multiple livelihood activities such as agriculture, animal farming, small businesses, and skilled trades to reduce dependency on a single income source. Furthermore, facilitate access to microfinance and market to help returnees start or expand their businesses.

- Targeted Cash Support for Immediate and long-term relief: Implement cash transfer programs including conditional cash grants such as cash for rent, housing repair, education, etc., to provide immediate financial relief to returnees. Provide targeted cash assistance for the most vulnerable groups including people with disabilities, vulnerable women and girls. Supporting the formation of community-based savings and loan groups is also necessary to promote financial inclusion and mutual support among returnees.

- Mine clearance and Safety Education: Prioritize and fund comprehensive mine clearance operations in all affected areas to ensure the safety of returnees and the broader community. Implement reporting programs and Explosive Ordnance Risk Education (EORE) to educate communities about the dangers of UXOs and safe practices to avoid accidents.

- Housing, Land and Property Support: Develop targeted housing and infrastructure rehabilitation programs to repair and rebuild damaged houses and key infrastructures, ensuring safe and adequate living conditions for returnees. Provide legal assistance to returnees to help them reclaim their property rights and resolve HLP disputes. Conduct comprehensive HLP assessments in the central zone to identify and address specific HLP

- Need for humanitarian support: It is imperative to improve access to humanitarian assistance, restore livelihoods, and strengthen agricultural production in the assessed woredas to address the challenges of limited aid, disrupted livelihoods, and inadequate agricultural output, which have further exacerbated the crisis. Immediate interventions are necessary to tackle these issues and mitigate the factors driving illegal migration.

- Urgent need for basic infrastructural services: The community is suffering due to extensive damage to essential infrastructure. Addressing gaps in areas such as health, education, water supply, and roads is critical for improving the well-being of the affected population, especially vulnerable groups like IDPs, children, and the elderly.

- Shelter repair: Due to the two-year long conflict, which left many family houses either fully or partially damaged in the assessed woredas, there is a need for the maintenance and reconstruction of family homes, as well as cash assistance for shelter repairs.

Photo Gallery

Figure 2: Focus Group Discussion with communities

Donor Support

UNHCR would like to thank the European Union for its support.

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Partner

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