UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

EDUCATION STRATEGY

TOWARDS INCLUSION

2025-2029

UNHCR Somalia

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Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected People
AGD	Age, Gender and Diversity
CFS/GFS	Child-Friendly Spaces / Girl-Friendly Spaces
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
DAFI	Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative
ECD	Early Childhood Education
ECW	Education Cannot Wait
FGS	Federal Government of Somalia
FMS	Federal Member States
GCR	Global Compact on Refugees
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons (or Populations)
IGAD	Inter-Governmental Authority on Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MoECHE	Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MoIFAD	Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Democratization
MoRHA	Ministry of Resettlement and Humanitarian Affairs
NCRI	National Commission for Refugees and IDPs
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NTP	National Transformation Plan
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SMC	School Management Committees
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework

Background and Rationale

OBJECTIVES OF THE UNHCR GLOBAL REFUGEE EDUCATION STRATEGY 2030

Promote equitable and sustainable inclusion in national education systems for refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, stateless and internally displaced persons.

Foster safe, enabling environments that support learning for all students, regardless of legal status, gender or disability.

Enable learners to use their education toward sustainable futures.

The UNHCR Education Strategy for Somalia focuses on the emergency nature of the situation while attempting to transition to longer-term solutions. The overall aim is to enable the rights holders, mainly children and youth, to enjoy their education-related rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, and other instruments. In continued partnership with the Government of Somalia, UNHCR will further strengthen its advocacy and support for refugees' and other forcibly displaced persons' access to decent education and their inclusion within the national education system, regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or disability.

This strategy adopts approaches that support an inclusive and equitable quality of education for the above-mentioned forcibly displaced persons and their host communities to enable them to realize their full potential, build their resilience, and contribute to their communities. The Education Strategy for UNHCR Somalia supports the implementation of UNHCR Somalia's overarching Multi-Year Multi-Partner Protection and Solutions Strategy for 2023-2026, updated in March 2025.

In 2017, the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) signed the Djibouti Declaration of the Inter-governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to facilitate the inclusion of refugees and returnees into the national education system. Its operationalization is challenging as access to education is generally limited in Somalia, as outlined below; nonetheless, the Declaration will continue to be used for advocacy purposes, in line with the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and its Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).

The UNHCR Education Strategy for Somalia is informed by the Agency's (global) "UNHCR Refugee Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion" and aims to support the Government of Somalia in creating the most favorable social environment for continued protection of forcibly displaced persons while strongly encouraging sister UN agencies, development partners, civil society and academics to also advocate for and include forcibly displaced persons in their ongoing humanitarian and development programs.

UNHCR has strongly advocated for the inclusion of all forcibly displaced persons in the Federal Government of Somalia's (FGS) National Transformation Plan (2025-2029) and the UN Common Country Analysis and UN Cooperation Framework, which mirror the thematic and strategic priorities of the NTP.

Methodology

This UNHCR Education Strategy for Somalia (2025-2029) is an update of the 2022-2024 strategy which was based on a desk review of secondary qualitative and quantitative data, including UNHCR Somalia's Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) Participatory Assessments, as well as primary data from focus group discussions and key informant interviews conducted with the refugees (including girls and boys, youth, parents, teachers, community elders and leaders in the refugee hosting areas for Yemeni and Ethiopian communities). Internal consultations were held with UNHCR staff in the Education, Protection and Programme Units, the three Sub-Offices, and with the senior management. In addition, the National Commission for Refugees and IDPs (NCRI), the Ministry of Interior Federal Affairs and Democratization (MoIFAD) in Puntland, and the Ministry of Resettlement and Humanitarian Affairs (MoRHA) in Somaliland were consulted.

The updated draft was shared externally with the UN and development partners, UNHCR, INGOs, and implementing partners, the Federal Ministry of Education, and other ministries of education in the respective Federal Member States (FMS) and local education departments for their comments and review. Technical inputs were provided by the Education Section in the UNHCR Regional Bureau for East and Southern Africa.

Scope and Target Populations

This strategy covers all forcibly displaced persons, namely:

- Refugees and asylum-seekers
- Stateless persons and those at risk of statelessness
- Refugee returnees
- Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Returnees and IDPs comprise the largest group of forcibly displaced persons in Somalia. In parallel, implementing the approach of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)/ Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), including commitments to the "whole of society", has helped to bring the refugee response back into focus, resulting the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education (MoECHE) to develop a comprehensive IDP education policy and framework in 2019.

Refugees

As of September 2025, Somalia is hosting a total of 45,782 registered refugees and asylum-seekers. The majority originate from Ethiopia (65%), followed by Yemen (29%) and Syria (4%), with the remaining 2% from other countries. Approximately 65% of this population are women and children, and 28% are school-aged children (6-17 years). 77% of the population reside in urban and peri-urban areas, primarily across Woqooyi Galbeed and Bari regions in northern Somalia. Without adequate access to quality public (primary and secondary) education and health services, there is a high dependency of children and youth on humanitarian assistance. While the protection environment for Yemenis remains more favorable due to religious, cultural, and historical ties with the host community, Ethiopian and Eritrean forcibly displaced persons face greater challenges in terms of access to work, freedom of movement, and socio-economic integration.

UNHCR Somalia uses the Refugee Coordination Model and the CRRF to shift from a "care-and-maintenance approach" to strategic priorities centered on building self-reliance, finding solutions, and advocating for inclusion into the national education system.

Stateless Persons

Given the lack of mapping to date, the figure of stateless people or those at risk of statelessness are unknown in Somalia. Notwithstanding, the risk of statelessness is high due to gaps in nationality/citizenship legislation and challenges in terms of accessing documentation. Informed by the 2021 UNHCR study on Statelessness and Citizenship in the Horn of Africa, which identified several risk-factors in Somalia contributing to risks of statelessness, including gaps in the nationality law, the Federal Government of Somalia in June 2021, developed and launched a National Action Plan to End Statelessness in Somalia (2021-2024). The Plan includes commitments to accede to the 1954 Convention, the 1961 Convention Relating to the Reduction of Statelessness, and to publish a qualitative study to understand the situation of stateless groups and individuals at risk of statelessness living within its territory and to find solutions.

UNHCR will continue to work closely with the FGS and FMS for implementation of the Government's action plan for the fulfilment of its commitment towards its pledges made during the High-Level Segment on Statelessness at ExCom in 2019. UNHCR's efforts on the legal front will be accompanied by widening partnerships with actors engaged in related sectors, one priority of which will be to reinvigorate the collaboration with UNICEF on access to universal birth registration. UNHCR will also work towards incorporation of the Statelessness action plan into the education strategy with an emphasis on inclusion of registered stateless children and youth into the education systems and programmes.

Refugee Returnees

As of September 2025, more than 761,000 Somalis live in protracted displacement outside Somalia, most of them in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Yemen. In 2014, UNHCR in collaboration with hosting countries launched programmes to assist the voluntary return and reintegration of Somali refugees. Nearly 140,994 persons have repatriated to Somalia, (96,633 persons receiving UNHCR support to return and 44,361 returning spontaneously) between 2014 and September 2025. Of these, 85,904 and 52,846 returned from Kenya and Yemen, respectively.

According to the 2022 UNHCR Post-Return Monitoring Snapshot,[1] the vast majority of returnees are overall satisfied with their decision to return (90%), and 95% have not experienced violence since their return. However, this not to say that returnees do not encounter significant challenges, including limited livelihoods frequently cited as the reason among those not satisfied with the decision to return, followed by Housing, Land and Property (HLP) issues upon return. 18% of returnees currently live in "IDP sites", mainly in Banaadir and Kismayo (Jubaland region). Nearly 67% of refugee returnees indicated that not all children in the household attend school regularly, with the inability to pay school fees cited as the most common reason. This strategy will explore approaches to expand re-integration of returnees into schools and cross-border mechanisms to strengthen this approach.

Internally Displaced Persons

Somalia has one of the largest IDP populations in the world, with an estimated 3.5 million, among whom 2.2 million live in highly congested urban and semi-urban settlements across Somalia (mainly in Mogadishu, Baidoa, Galkayo, Bossaso, Kismayo and Burao). Internal displacement remains largely driven by conflict, worsened by floods, drought, periodic cyclones (Puntland and Somaliland) and desert locust affecting north-eastern Somalia. UNHCR Somalia is firmly committed to robust engagement on internal displacement guided by global "Policy on UNHCR's Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement" and the "IDP Footprint". UNHCR Somalia leads the Protection and co-leads the Shelter/CCCM Cluster with IOM. With a light education footprint in the IDP situation, engagement with the Protection cluster to ensure that safe learning environments are provided for IDPs.

[1] UNHCR Somalia, Post-Return Monitoring Snapshot (PRM) Round 8 | September 2022

Education Context in Somalia

Somalia has approximately 4.5 million children (56 per cent of the school-aged population) who are not accessing any form of learning (MSNA 2024).[2] This is up 4 per cent from the previous year (MSNA 2023). Of the children in school, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) is estimated to be 0.8 at the primary level and 0.72 at the secondary level. Displaced children and children with disabilities are also disproportionately excluded from education. School-aged children are significantly and regularly impacted by recurring conflict, drought and floods, with approximately 159,000 school-aged children displaced by at least one of these shocks in 2024. Of the 2.6 million children aged 5-17 in need of humanitarian assistance to begin, resume, or continue their education, 1.65 million are from the host community, 965,000 are internally displaced, 256,000 are children with disabilities, and 214,000 are young children (aged 6-17 years).

According to the National Transformation Plan (NTP) report,[3] access to education remains the most significant concern, with 3,610,354 school-aged children (6-17 years) not enjoying the opportunity to be in school. Overcrowding in schools situated within urban areas, and the lack of schools in rural, especially conflict-prone areas, have led to disparities in the distribution of resources and education outcomes. The inadequate education infrastructure has resulted in higher numbers of mixed facilities in most of the Federal Member States. The education challenges include lack of sustainable incomes for parents to cover school fees and scholastic materials to ensure continued education of their children, lack of proper education facilities, and harmful practices including child labour and early marriage impacting enrolment and retention rates especially amongst girls.

Educational inequities are closely tied to drivers of fragility, capacities of communities and individuals to cope with and recover from shocks when they occur and consolidating peacebuilding and state-building goals underpinning Somalia's National Transformation Plan.

At the tertiary level, refugee youth in Somalia access higher education under similar conditions as host community students, primarily through private institutions. However, overall participation remains low. Globally, only 9 per cent of refugees in hosting countries are enrolled in higher education—compared to 8 per cent in low-income countries and 10 per cent in fragile or conflict-affected contexts. In 2024, only 3.1 per cent of refugees in Somalia were enrolled in tertiary and higher education institutions. Refugee youth continue to face compounded barriers, including restrictions linked to legal status, language barriers, limited recognition of prior learning, and financial constraints, all of which limit equitable access and participation.

To address some of these challenges, a limited number of young refugees in Somalia can access scholarships through the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI).[4] Established in Somalia in 2019, the DAFI programme also seeks to include vulnerable IDPs where appropriate. Since its inception in Somalia, the programme has grown from 75 refugee learners in 2019 to 255 refugee, asylum-seeker, and refugee returnee students in 2024 (including 104 females). In 2024 alone, DAFI supported 202 students across Somalia, with 47 graduates and six dropouts recorded since the programme began. As of September 2025, 133 students (40 female and 84 male) remain actively enrolled under the DAFI scholarship programme.

UNHCR has been providing access to primary and secondary education primarily to Yemeni and Ethiopian refugees for the past two decades. It is important to implement the transition of the children to host country public schools that will enable UNHCR and its partners to optimize the use of resources towards improved education opportunities and services for registered refugees and their host communities. This will be attained through close alignment with the Government's educational development policies and provincial education sector plans and priorities. By collectively investing in Government and UNHCR education programs, humanitarian and development donors

[2] 2025 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP).
[3] National Transformation Plan (NTP) 2025-2029 Report - Ministry of Planning
[4] DAFI Tertiary Scholarship Programme | UNHCR

will greatly improve the quality and inclusiveness of Somalia's national education system without discrimination.

Advocacy with the Ministry of Education of the Federal Government and with the Ministries of Education in respective field locations has been undertaken for inclusion of refugees in the education sector plans. In Puntland and Somaliland for instance, refugees and asylum-seekers have been included in the education strategic sector plan. Efforts are underway to ensure that refugee and asylum-seekers in Banadir and South-Central locations in Somalia are also captured in relevant planning and budgeting processes of the Federal Government, allowing for a coordinated response and mobilization of additional resources.

Somaliland – Under the education transition plan, refugee and asylum-seeker primary students were transitioned from private to public schools, allowing them to progress from primary to secondary education within the same education system as nationals, with greater access to accredited national-level examinations and certification. This eases students' access to tertiary education without the need to undergo additional procedures for recognition of education obtained in non-public schools. As part of the process, the UNHCR is also in the process of transitioning the education component from the implementing partner to the Somaliland Ministry of Education and Science. Refugee teachers were provided training on the Somali curriculum through a customized government program facilitated by the provincial institutes for teacher education training centers in Hargeisa.

Puntland – The State has its own education strategy that was developed through a consultative process, which involved a wide array of education stakeholders identifying four key priorities for the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2023-2027. These include increasing access and equity of education opportunities, improving the quality of education and learning outcomes, enhancing the efficiency of the education system, and strengthening systems and administration. Various Technical Thematic Working Groups consisting of education officials from the central, regional, and district levels, NGOs and civil society, and international education partners were consulted before developing strategic activities and indicators for each priority area. The outcomes of this process were further developed and are reflected in the multi-year action plan. Learning across the education work of the different sub-offices will be encouraged in the life of this strategy to strengthen UNHCR education response to forcibly displaced persons.

Inclusion and Policy Alignment

This Education Strategy is aligned with the Government of Somalia's education priorities outlined in the National Education Sector Strategic Plan 2022-2026 and the National Transformation Plan (NTP), and seeks linkages with objectives sets out in the Somalia UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2026-2030).[5] It takes its direction from the Global Compact on Refugees, and UNHCR's Global Refugee Education Strategy 2030,[6] which acknowledges the need for burden sharing and supporting governments hosting refugees. In that regard, partnerships with all stakeholders, including government, are paramount.

Beyond basic education, the Strategy recognizes the urgent need to strengthen pathways for refugee youth transitioning from secondary education to higher education, skills development, and labor market entry. The policy environment supporting higher education and vocational training

[5] UNSDCF Somalia: By 2030, an increasing number of school-aged children and adolescents, particularly those from marginalized and underserved groups, have equitable access to and complete quality, inclusive education pathways that lead to improved learning outcomes and acquisition of relevant life and livelihood skills.
[6] Education 2030: A Strategy for Refugee Education | UNHCR

must be expanded to enable access to Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), tertiary education, and employment opportunities for refugees and host community youth, fostering self-reliance and durable solutions. This approach aligns with Somalia's national frameworks supporting accelerated learning, adult education, and skills development embedded in the Education Sector Strategic Plan (Ministry of Education, 2022). Moreover, it reflects commitments under the African Union's Continental TVET Strategy 2025–2034, which emphasizes skills empowerment, employability, and sustainable livelihoods across the continent. The Strategy also upholds principles of the Djibouti Declaration, reinforcing regional cooperation and support for displaced populations. By integrating these frameworks, Somalia aims to bridge education-to-work transitions, reduce youth unemployment, and promote socioeconomic stability for both refugees and host communities.

Guided by the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular SDG 4 which calls for inclusive and equitable education for all, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, the Child Protection Framework and the Alternatives to Camps Policy, this Strategy also takes into account the principles of non-discrimination, adherence to the best interests of the child, the right to life and development, and the right to participate.

Linkages have been developed in this Education Strategy with the UNHCR Somalia strategies concerning Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion, as well as Protection and Solutions. This will help ensure that not only do children go to school and acquire the knowledge and skills to lead productive lives, but the benefits of education extend well beyond learning to include meaningful employment, better health, self-reliance, and civic participation. It will also better equip refugees should they voluntarily repatriate to their countries of origin. In order to create a quality learning environment, linkages with WASH and Nutrition will also be pursued, so that safe learning spaces include appropriate water, hygiene and other facilities. Stronger linkages with livelihoods programmes and a focus on alternative learning pathways will be essential in order to ensure that the large number of out-of-school children can be brought into the education fold and given opportunities to acquire livelihoods, knowledge, and skills. This will entail focus on Vocational Skills training programs and Accelerated Education for over-age out of school children.

UNHCR, through the inter-agency Cluster coordination system, will continue to advocate for the protection and expansion of access to education for IDP children, adolescents, and youth, especially those from marginalized and impoverished communities.

Advocacy with Educational Planning and Management for inclusion of refugee data in the Federal and Member State Education Management Information System (EMIS) will provide a basis for evidence-based advocacy, resource mobilization and targeted interventions.

Strategic Objectives and Priorities

UNHCR advocates for the inclusion of refugees and other forcibly displaced children in national education systems and calls for strengthening these systems through education sector plans and strategies supported by legislation, budgets, and policy frameworks. In pursuit of this vision, efforts should be made to ensure children do not forfeit their inalienable right to education in the short and medium-term transition to the national system, particularly girls and those with special needs.

The UNHCR Somalia Education Strategy aligns to the UNHCR Global Refugee Education Strategy objectives as follows:

Strategic Objective 1: Promote Equitable and Sustainable Inclusion in National Education Systems for Refugees, Asylum-Seekers, Returnees, Stateless and Internally Displaced Children in Somalia

Area of Focus: Include Refugees and Asylum-Seekers within Public Education Programmes and Systems

i) Advocate for the inclusion of displaced children into the national/sub-national education sector plans, and multi-lateral donor plans including the Global Partnerships for Education and "Education Cannot Wait" funds.

ii) Transition of children who are currently in private schools to public schools (see Somaliland Education Transition Strategy, above).

iii) Sign Letters of Understanding with key development partners to include refugees, asylum-seekers and refugee returnees in their ongoing education programmes.

iv) Provide English/Somali language support to new students to assist with the curriculum transition (language barriers refugees are facing have been identified as obstacles in terms of access to formal/ informal justice and to the labour market).

v) Ensure enrollment of refugee, asylum-seekers and refugee returnee children in the public as opposed to private schools or community schools for the purpose of continuity and sustainability.

vi) Use the existing resources to up-grade and increase the absorption capacity of public schools through the construction of additional classrooms, toilets and washroom facilities, science and computer labs, and facilitating training for teachers, education administrators and school management committees.

vii) Strengthen the capacity of refugee teachers through formal training, certification, and ongoing quality monitoring in coordination with the Ministry of Education.

viii) Advocate for and explore public-private partnerships to enhance digital education for displaced populations, including collaboration with organizations such as the Tencent Foundation, to improve learning outcomes for refugees, IDPs, and returnees.

Strategic Objective 2: Foster Safe Enabling Environments That Support Learning for All Students Regardless of Legal Status, Gender or Disability

Area of Focus: Forcibly Displaced Persons have improved access to Early Childhood Development and *quality* Primary and Secondary Education

i) Ensure access to public schools for refugees, asylum-seekers, refugee-returnees and IDPs through advocacy with national, provincial and district education authorities (including school heads and administrators) and other government departments.

ii) Standardize School Management Committees (SMCs) terms of reference and provide capacity-building training to SMCs in schools hosting refugees, asylum-seekers, refugee-returnees and IDPs.

iii) Where applicable, register refugee hosting schools with the Federal Government and Federal Member State governments for Education Management Information Systems Codes and inclusion of the monitoring / supervisory by Ministry of Education authorities.

iv) Use public-private partnerships[7] appropriately to support education delivery and further enhance school enrollment and student learning outcomes.

v) Prioritize children with specific needs and support upgrading facilities to meet their specific needs (e.g., disability-friendly access).

vi) Facilitate acquisition of equivalency certificates for secondary education in coordination with the Yemeni and Ethiopian Embassies in Somalia, UNHCR operations in Yemen and Ethiopia, as well as the Ministry of Education.

vii) Advocate for the inclusion of refugees in the Annual Education Statistics Yearbook and other learning assessment survey conducted by Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education at Federal and State-level.

viii) Provide remedial classes to children that need it. Particular focus will be on those at high risk of dropping out, namely girls, students transiting from primary to secondary school, and refugee returnees.

ix) Introduce low-cost, local educational technological solutions to improve quality and strengthen the capacity of teachers in public schools, including through provision of formalized training and on-going support in partnership with UNESCO and UNICEF.

x) Advocate for the expansion of School Feeding Programmes (SFP) to refugees, asylum-seekers, returnees, IDPs and vulnerable host community children. This programme will be done in partnership with WFP and other actors, providing hot meals to students in need on a periodic basis.

xi) Explore the opportunities for and implement programs targeting pre-primary school children and out of school youth (e.g. remedial/catch up classes and accelerated learning programmes).

xii) Explore and pursue opportunities to train and hire refugee teachers with the aim to improve quality of education.

[7] Simultaneous involvement of government and private sector actors in education, with an understanding to share the costs, benefits, risks and rewards.

xiii) Explore mechanisms to increase girl's participation in education. This will be achieved through implementation of the following activities:
   - In partnership with UNICEF and Ministry of Education, scale-up Home-Based Girls' Schools for older, out-of-school girls, introducing certified accelerated education curriculum to allow girls to complete their primary cycle in thirty-two months and enroll in formal secondary schools.
   - Supporting girls' education is a key priority, with focus on transitions from primary to secondary and onward to tertiary levels. Encouraging female applicants to scholarship programs like DAFI is part of a wider effort to improve access. However, this must be seen within the broader higher education landscape, where Somalia aims to strengthen inclusive policies, sustainable education financing, and effective pathways from education to employment for refugee and host community girls alike. The Ministry of Education's strategic vision includes expanding vocational and tertiary access, addressing gender gaps, and supporting girls' retention through culturally sensitive programming. These efforts align with national policies promoting gender equality and aim to empower girls to contribute to Somalia's social and economic development (Federal Government of Somalia, 2022; UN Somalia Gender Equality Strategy, 2021-2025).
   - Use the refugee youth as role models to encourage the participation of girls in schools to help reduce the high drop-out rate at the primary level.
   - Pilot connected learning programmes for refugees, asylum-seekers and returnees that live in remote locations, with a focus on girls who cannot access universities due to prevailing social norms.
   - Provide support and assistance with an Age Gender Diversity approach to ensure girls receive adequate support and there is a reduction of the causes that might lead to drop-out including but not limited to through liaising with relevant UN Agencies and Government actors, ensuring girls have access to female hygiene items.

Post-returning monitoring data indicates that returnee children often drop out of school after the 9-month post return education grant has ended. The primary reason cited for this is inability to pay school fees after this period (PRM 2022 data). Under this objective, UNHCR Somalia will also focus on improving and strengthening access to education for refugee returnees through these interventions: i) Collaboration with communities, Ministries of Education (Federal and State), local education committees, the Education Cluster, UNICEF, development partners, and donors to facilitate referral and integration of refugee returnees into ongoing education programs in Somalia. ii) Advocacy for enrolling refugee returnee children in public or community schools managed by the government or communities to minimize school fees. These schools can be supported through quick-impact projects, such as improving school infrastructure.

Strategic Objective 3: Enable All Learners to Use Their Education Towards Sustainable Futures

Area of Focus: Increasingly Advocate for and Facilitate Technical and Vocational, as well as Tertiary Education Opportunities

i) Advocate with the Higher Education Commission for the same fee concessions in tertiary level institutions for refugees (i.e. foreign nationals) as for citizens.

ii) Ensure adequate implementation of DAFI Scholarship according to rules and guidelines.

iii) Advocate for more DAFI Scholarships for the Somalia Operation.

iv) Explore the possibility of creating a flexible tertiary education program for refugees, asylum and returnees at local universities. Advocate for other scholarship opportunities for asylum-seekers and refugees in addition to DAFI Scholarship and complementary pathway programs (education pathways).

v) Pursue the opportunities for technical and vocational education and training and subsequent transitions to employment through the implementation of different support programs.

Further to this objective, UNHCR Somalia will explore opportunities for and strengthen alternative pathways to education as follows:

i) Provide information to secondary-level refugee students about certified government technical and vocational courses and skills-training centres, paying particular attention to girl's access to skills training opportunities. Work with Ministry of Labor, ILO and Chambers of Commerce on this.

ii) Allocate a specific percentage of refugee, asylum-seeker, and returnee students to benefit from Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) opportunities within Somalia's livelihood projects. These TVET programs should facilitate transitions to employment and the achievement of self-reliance by providing practical skills aligned with local labor market demands.

iii) Establish cross-border linkages with DAFI alumni networks, like in Ethiopia, to broaden employment opportunities. It is important to note that TVET should extend beyond livelihood and early integration initiatives; it must also include higher education-level vocational and professional training linked to labor market gaps both nationally and regionally. This dual-level strategy will enhance the relevance of skills training and improve sustainable employment pathways for both refugees and host communities.

iv) Identification of government-launched programmes to ensure enrolment of school children and advocate for inclusion of refugees in these programmes.

v) Advocate for the inclusion of forcibly displaced population in government-led programs just as the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and Education Cannot Wait (ECW and other initiatives in the National Transformation Plan (2025-2029).

Strategic Approaches

Underpinning this Strategy are the following guiding principles of protection, partnership, capacity development, innovation and evidence-based data to ensure successful implementation of the UNHCR education programme in Somalia. All these principles are mutually inclusive and interconnected.

1. Protection Mainstreaming

UNHCR Somalia and partners will pursue a rights- and area-based approach, ensuring that access to services and systems will have an inclusivity lens that aims at putting the target population group at par with the local community. The Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) approach will be mainstreamed in all education programmes, from data gathering and analysis to programme design and implementation. Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) remains at the core of all education activities including access of girls to effective complaint mechanisms. Advocacy in this regard will also be done through UNHCR's country-level PSEA focal point who co-leads the HCT PSEA Task Force. In its interventions, UNHCR Somalia and partners aim to strengthen the accountability of duty bearers and empowerment of rights-holders. This will be done through meaningful participation in all stages of the decision making, implementation and evaluation process.

UNHCR Somalia will foster a strong culture of risk management. Leveraging the revised Somalia Centrality of Protection Strategy (2025-2026), the operation will ensure the system wide commitment of protection as a collective responsibility by the entire Humanitarian Country Team (HCT). This will continue to be advocated with government and other partners through the Protection and Education Clusters, and other coordination forums.

2. Partnerships and Collaboration

Key stakeholders for the successful implementation of this Strategy are the community, teachers, students and parents that will be engaged throughout the process of Strategy implementation through a participatory approach. UNHCR will seek the support of the Government of Somalia, sister UN agencies such as UNICEF, UNESCO, WFP, ILO, IOM, development partners such as FCDO, USAID, GIZ, the European Union and the World Bank. UNHCR will also leverage 'Education Cannot

Wait' (ECW) funds to support education in emergency and crisis settings, while encouraging national ownership of programs and addressing both immediate and long-term needs. UNHCR and its education partners will participate in the SDG 4 development group meetings and continue advocacy efforts to include and expand refugees', asylum-seekers' and returnee children's access to all levels and forms of education through public, private, refugee community self-funded, or UNHCR-funded education facilities.

In addition to local education initiatives, global mechanisms that support education, for example, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), will be leveraged to ensure that support for inclusion of refugees is discussed with the government at the highest level. In addition, the Education Strategy commits to developing partnerships that bridge the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, using clearly defined *theories of change* in the pursuit of projects where impact is most needed.

3. Capacity Development

The support of the national and federal member states governments and civil society partners to implement the education strategy is vital, it is also imperative to focus on building and strengthening their capacities to highlight the specific issues relevant to the education of refugee, asylum-seeker and returnee children and youth and to ensure joint ownership and more collaborative commitment. The inclusion of forcibly displaced persons into the national public education system requires that UNHCR supports the education departments at the FGS, FMS and district levels, particularly the Ministries of Education. Such support must include training on administration and management services to a range of public and private sector partners. Capacity building at the school level, as well as partners who are administering education programs will be supported and pursued.

4. Innovation

In any refugee and displacement situation with barriers to effective education delivery, UNHCR must capitalize on opportunities to support innovative practices at all levels of education. Innovation is necessary to re-imagine how learning should happen for the most marginalized communities who do not have adequate resources to ensure quality learning. The UNHCR Somalia Education Strategy will advocate for enhanced innovative practices across all levels of learning. Innovative practices can range from the introduction of play-based learning activities for ECD and primary levels to developing novel teaching methodologies that incorporate socio-emotional learning and sports into the academic curriculum. Applying lessons learnt from UNHCR supported refugee and asylum-seekers innovative education programing for instance school-based psychosocial counselling, girl and child friendly spaces (CFS, GFS), arts and science clubs will also be explored.

The application of technology and connectivity to teaching and learning offers a range of benefits from improving data collection, building the capacity of teachers to become facilitators of learning, to driving down costs and offering low-cost solutions that can be scaled to reach many more children. In countries such as Somalia. However, there has to be consideration for online as well as off-line materials, which are aligned to the national curriculum to enable teachers to track the progress and impact of learning. Ultimately, innovation and investments in alternative learning pathways like open educational resources (such as open online courses, and blended connected learning programmes for higher education) can be offered as solutions for refugees, asylum-seekers and returnee children/ youth, especially girls and young women that are unable to easily access education or achieve the desired results for lack of available resources, and in Somalia's hard-to-reach areas.

5. Evidence-Based Interventions

UNHCR Somalia and partner's protection delivery will be underpinned by a strengthened evidence-based information on education, using innovative information management system. UNHCR will seek more synergies with inter-agency multi-sectoral assessments and actors such as JIPS, REACH

and OCHA. Schools, colleges, universities and other educational institutions where forcibly displaced persons are enrolled hold large amounts of data related to students and teachers. This data must be analyzed to strengthen knowledge and insights that improve the effectiveness of the educational institutions and UNHCR activities in the education sector. Students' behavior, exam results, and the development of each student as well as the needs based on changing educational requirements will be supported through statistical analysis and strengthening overall collection of disaggregated enrolment data at all levels. UNHCR Somalia will also explore opportunities to extend support to the MoECHE to strengthen the Education Information Management System (EMIS) to ensure they include refugee learners and are able to disaggregate data to provide better analysis.

6. Cross-Border Collaboration

Issues such as ensuring that returnees from Kenya can continue remote learning in Kenyan universities from Somalia, equivalence of Yemeni and Ethiopian certificates in Somalia, recognition of Somalia certificates in Yemen and Ethiopia, job opportunities for educated youth and social inclusion programs require combined solutions and cross-border collaboration. UNHCR Somalia will strengthen this component, building on the existing strong collaboration with other UNHCR operations in the region on the issue of returns. This is done on the premise that the most promising education activities are multilateral and regional, where there is greater potential to strengthen mechanisms for cooperation and coordination. UNHCR will further leverage on IGAD's commitment on development of a regional qualifications framework to support recognition of academic documents and transfer of skills and knowledge amongst the returnees. Interlinkages between livelihoods/ access to employment and education (including TVET) will be sought through synergies with the UNICEF Generation Unlimited project.

7. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

Monitoring and evaluation of the strategy will ensure that priority actions outlined in the strategy are implemented and measured against stated objectives and desired results outlined in established reporting frameworks. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and EMIS data collection conducted by the Ministries of Education at Federal and State level, and other studies carried out by education partners will be integral to monitoring the strategy. Education partners include those outlined in the programmatic approaches under partnerships, refugees and host community at national and sub-national level.

Annual reviews with partners will be critical for assessing achieved progress in terms of output, impact and integration of refugees in the national system. The findings will inform the review of the strategy and an assessment of the risks and opportunities that exist in the context both externally and internally.

The Education Strategy will seek buy-in from other UNHCR core evaluations that will be undertaken during the period, including participatory assessments and those carried out by partners. This includes integrating qualitative data through feedback from community members, schools and students themselves that look at academic and psycho-social assessments to understand the impact of the full range of interventions undertaken for refugee children and youth. This will allow a multi-dimensional approach in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the education strategy at various levels.

Hana and her family sought asylum in Somalia following the conflict in her country. Despite the challenges of displacement, she resumed her interrupted education, completing primary school and later graduating from secondary school in 2020.

Determined to pursue higher education despite financial hardship and limited opportunities, Hana enrolled at Admas University to study social work. When her father could no longer afford tuition, she sought help from UNHCR and successfully secured a DAFI scholarship in 2021. Her perseverance allowed her to continue her studies while actively volunteering with refugee community committees and working as an interpreter to support displaced persons.

Hana graduated in September 2023 with a first-class honors degree in Social Work and earned a Master's scholarship in International Relations and Politics. Recognized for her academic excellence and leadership, she aspires to advocate for girls' rights and empowerment globally. Hana strongly believes that investing in girls' education is key to building a peaceful and transformative society.

Courtesy: Windle International

Wider Framework Indicators

	EDUCATION	Source
1	4.1.1: Proportion of children and young people (a) at the end of primary; and (b) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex.	SDG 4 (Education)
2	4.3.1: Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex	SDG 4 (Education)
3	4.c.1: Proportion of teachers in: (a) pre-primary; (b) primary; (c) lower secondary; and (d) upper secondary education, who have received at least the minimum organized teacher training (e.g. pedagogical training) pre-service or in-service required for teaching at the relevant level in each country	SDG 4 (Education)
4	2.2.1: Proportion of refugee children enrolled in the national education system (primary and secondary).	GCR Objective 2. Outcome 2.2
5	3.1.c: Children/Young people at the end of the primary level of education achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in core subjects	UNSDCF Output 3.1
6	Increase enrolment by 86% at TVET and Higher Education levels	NTP Pillar 3, Objective 2 (Education)

EDUCATION STRATEGY

TOWARDS INCLUSION

2025-2029

UNHCR Somalia

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.

UNHCR Somalia

UNHCR's Operational Data Portal (ODP) for Somalia

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The UN Refugee Agency

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