OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

Afar Region is among the areas most affected by both natural and man-made disasters, resulting in widespread protection risks and concerns within affected communities. Prior to November 2020, the region was already experiencing significant internal displacement due to the longstanding Afar–Issa conflict along the Afar–Somali border. The subsequent expansion of the Tigray conflict into Afar further displaced large numbers of people, particularly pastoralist communities.

While most displacements linked to the northern conflict have since subsided, new and evolving dynamics continue to exacerbate vulnerabilities in Zone One (Awsi Zone). Afar–Issa clashes and spillover insecurity from neighbouring regions, including the Amhara conflict, have triggered renewed displacement in Chifra Woreda. In Afambo Woreda, displacement remains protracted, with communities unable to return for over six years due to recurrent flooding and the destruction of livelihoods.

**The boundaries, names, and designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations*

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This Protection Monitoring and Solutions (PMS) Report was produced in partnership with UNHCR's protection partner, **EOTC-DICAC** (Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission), as part of the **EU IM3 Project** under the **protection monitoring and solutions** component. It provides a detailed analysis of protection needs in Zone One (Awsi Zone), identifying individuals and groups with specific vulnerabilities, and offering actionable recommendations for humanitarian assistance based on both qualitative and quantitative data. The assessment combined Key Informant Interviews and direct field observation.

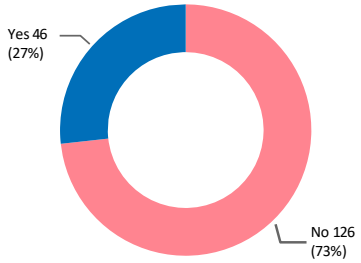
- **183 Key Informants Interviews (KIs) were conducted** 100 male (55%) and 83 female (45%). Of those interviewed, 63% were IDP returnees, 1% were from host community/affected population and 36% were IDPs).
- Most respondents were Heads of IDPs and IDP returnee households (35%), humanitarian workers (31%) and with smaller shares from community volunteers (12%), religious leaders (6%), and others including healthcare staff, community representatives, and local authorities.
- The assessment was conducted by DICAC from July 16-September 24, 2025, and covered **2 Woredas**: Afambo and Chifra in Hari Zone (Zone 6) of Afar region.

Picture: Key informant interview in Chifra

FINDINGS KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

Have you observed signs of distress among the different populations in this location?

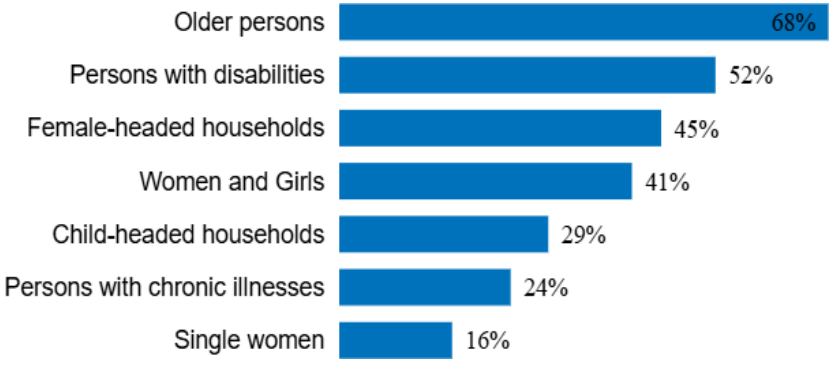


3 out of 10 key informants reported to have observed signs of distress among different populations in their locations.

Women amongst IDP returnees have been reported as the group showing more signs of distress

Access to Fundamental Rights and Basic Needs

Older persons and persons with disabilities facing the greatest challenges or particularly disadvantaged in accessing assistance and services.



Obstacles to access basic needs

Sector	Top 3 obstacles *Percentages are out of the total of 183 Key informants*
Food*	▪ Lack of food (79%) ▪ Drought (62%) ▪ Shortage of cash (41%)
Health	▪ Lack of medicine / medical supplies (71%) ▪ Cannot afford medical fees (52%) ▪ Lack of documents (31%)
Education	▪ Not enough learning material (77%) ▪ Cannot afford scholastic materials (68%) ▪ Long distance to school (48%)
WASH	▪ Lack of available water/wash facilities (47%) ▪ Water contaminated (45%) ▪ **Lack of female hygiene products (dignity kits) (29%)**

Unavailability of learning materials and their high cost at markets have been reported by IDPs and IDP returnees in Awsi zone (Zone-1) as a main obstacle to Education of children.

Coping strategies to meet basic needs

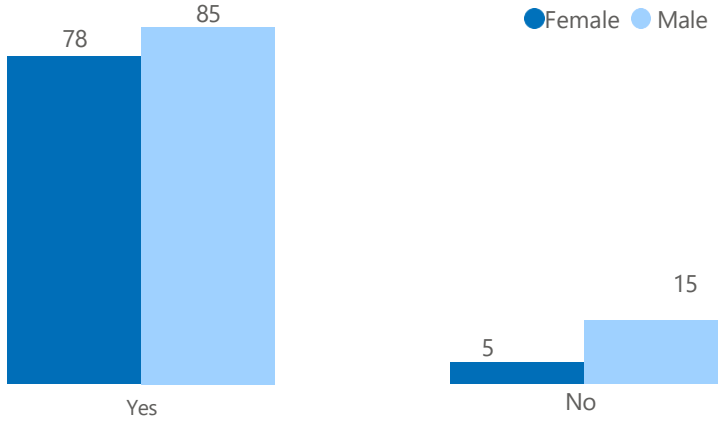
Coping Mechanism	Always	Don't know	Never	Sometimes
Begging	2%	3%	74%	21%
Buying food on credit or through borrowed money from relatives and friends	16%	3%	25%	56%
Changing place of residence and accommodation to reduce expenses	1%	3%	68%	28%
Child labor	1%	1%	74%	24%
Early Marriage for girls	2%	1%	49%	49%
Illegal activities (such as theft)	2%	5%	55%	39%
Selling humanitarian assistance received	2%	3%	52%	43%
Sold house and/or land		4%	72%	24%
Transactional sex		3%	91%	5%
Withdrew children from school	5%	2%	52%	41%

- Buying food on credit (16 % of respondents) and withdrawing children from school (5%) appear as the most common coping strategies (highest rate of Always').
- In Awsi Zone, buying food on credit and early marriage for girls was reported as Sometimes by 58% and 49% of respondents respectively.

Analysis The assessment shows that parents are resorting to early marriage for girls to meeting the most urgent life-saving needs including food, and cash for paying hospital bills or medicine etc. It is also known through observation and assessments that people are engaged in different negative coping mechanisms like begging (21%, on sometimes), and illegal activities such as theft (21%, on sometimes).

Safety and Security

Are women and girls, men and boys always able to move freely in your community



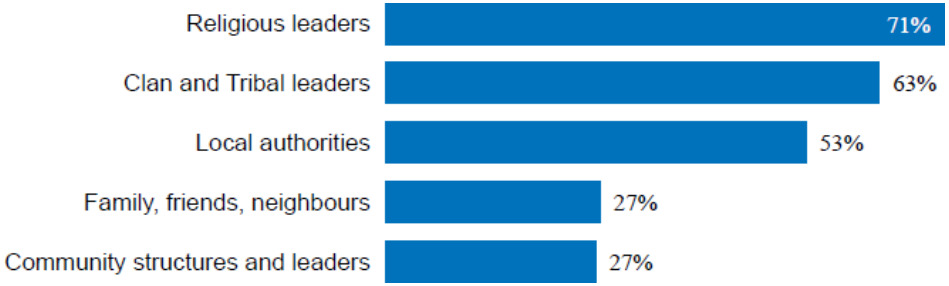
20 (11%) respondents out of 16 3 reported that men, boys, women and girls are not able to move freely in their communities.

The main reasons limiting freedom of movement are:

- Fear of rape and harassment: reported by 27% of total respondents
- Insecurity in the area: reported by 20% of the respondents
- Family or cultural restrictions: reported by 19% of the respondents

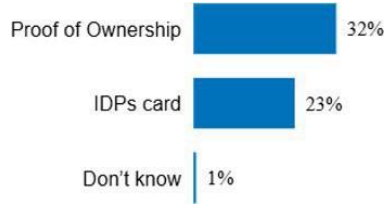
Access to justice and conflict resolution assistance

Who is the most likely person or authority that people would approach with protection concerns problems and disputes in your location?



In the two woredas, religious leaders (71%), clan and tribal leaders (63%), and local authorities (53%) are the predominant avenues through which community members seek to address protection concerns and resolve disputes. There is little to no reliance on formal mechanisms or support provided by the humanitarian community.

Documentation



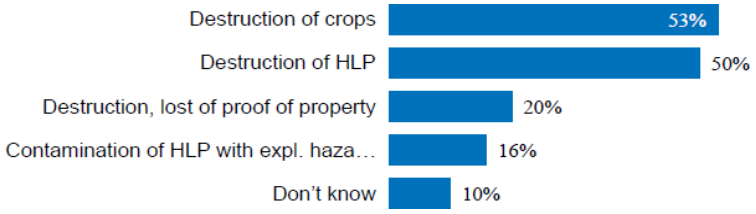
Only 23% of respondents reported access to IDP cards and 32% to proof of ownership documents, highlighting significant gaps in civil documentation. In Afambo, access to birth certificates is just 9%, marriage certificates 6%, and proof of ownership a mere 1%. Barriers to obtaining documentation differ by location. In Chifra, the main obstacles are lack of awareness of civil registration offices and unaffordable fees (both 51%), distance to registration offices (54%), and illiteracy (29%). While in Afambo, the predominant barrier is lack of awareness (68%), followed by challenges in securing supporting documents (35%), knowledge gaps among local authorities (34%), and the non-availability of civil registration offices (40%).

Top 5 protection risks community members encounter because of lacking documentation

- In Awsi Zone (Zone 1), the lack of civil documentation mainly leads to difficulties in accessing humanitarian assistance and basic services such as health and banking, as well as restrictions on movement and challenges in securing employment.

Housing Land and Property (HLP)

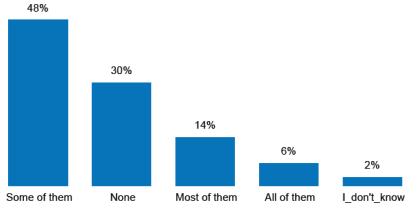
Top 5 issues faced by IDP returnees regarding housing land and properties



Destruction of crops, housing and property, destructions of proof of properties and contamination of HLP with explosive ordinances have been reported as the four main HLP issues faced by IDP returnees.

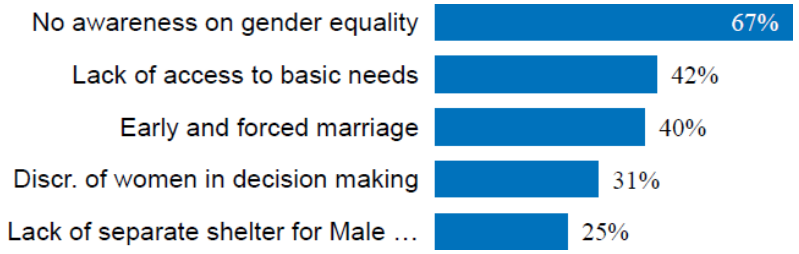
Proportion of IDPs and returnees in Awsi zone accessing land for farming

The majority of respondents said that IDPs don't have access to land for farming. Where 48% of respondents reported to know only some IDPs having access to farmland.



Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

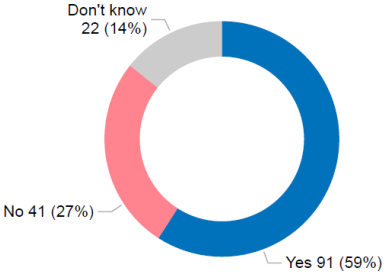
Top 5 factors currently increasing the risk of GBV and other forms of violence



Limited awareness of gender equality, poor access to basic needs, and early and forced marriage were the main factors increasing GBV risks across all three zones, followed by women's exclusion from decision-making and the lack of gender-segregated shelters.

Access to specialized services for GBV survivors

According to the findings, 59% of respondents (91) indicated that GBV survivors currently have access to specialized services in their locations. However, 27% (41) reported that such services are not available, highlighting notable service gaps across several areas. Additionally, 14% (22) of respondents were unsure about the availability of specialized GBV services, indicating limited community awareness of existing support mechanisms.

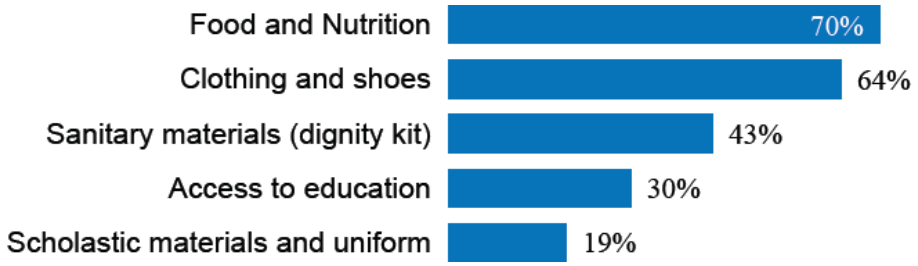


Resources

The framework and the questionnaires of key informant interviews (KIIs) with IDPs and IDP returnees are based on the following global resources on internal displacement: the **UN Secretary's General Action Agenda** on Internal Displacement, the **IASC Framework** on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons and the Interagency Durable Solutions **Indicator Library**

Child Protection

Top 5 protection issues children (boys and girls) encounter

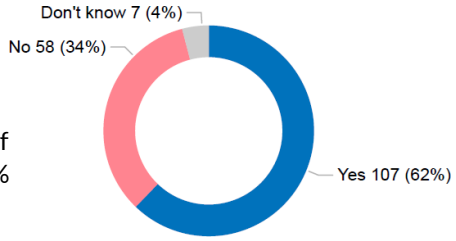


The analysis shows that food and nutrition (70%) and clothing and shoes (64%) are the most pressing protection issues faced by children. Other key challenges include limited access to sanitary materials (43%), education (30%), and scholastic materials and uniforms (19%), highlighting persistent gaps in meeting children's basic needs and wellbeing.

Explosive Ordnance

Are you aware of any incidents related to unexploded ordnance UXO or other e plosive remnants of war during the last 3 months?

62% of respondents (107) reported being aware of incidents related to unexploded ordnance (U O) or other explosive remnants of war in the past three months. Meanwhile, 34% (58) indicated no awareness of such incidents, and 4% (7) were unsure.

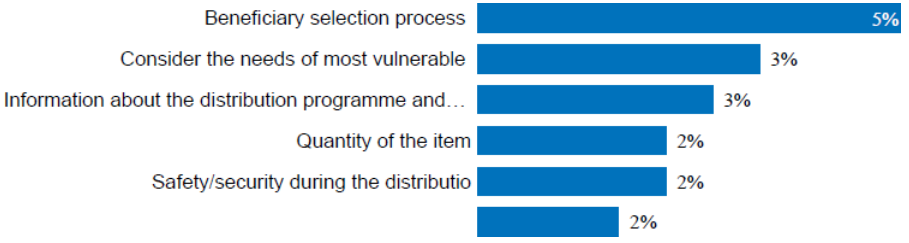


Access to information community representation and relations

Ma or communication channels that people receive information

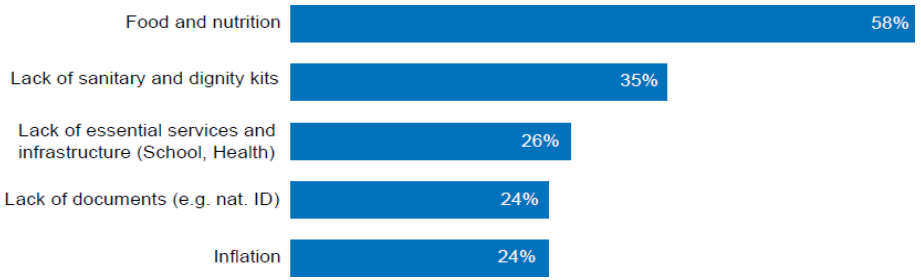
Shelter

Things to improve during shelter and Non-Food Item assistance



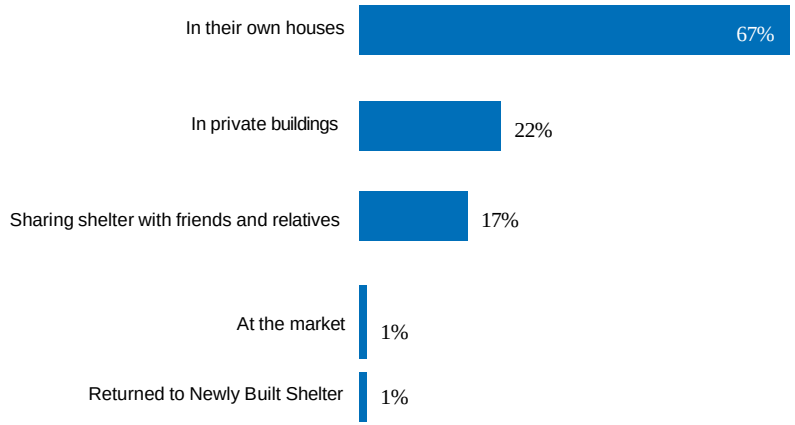
5% of respondents said that beneficiary selection process during shelter and NFI assistance has to be improved, followed by the consideration of the most vulnerable groups (3%) and better information sharing about distribution programmes (3%). Additional concerns include the quantity of items provided (2%) and safety and security during distributions (2%).

Top 5 protection issues IDP returnees are facing (Multiple selects)

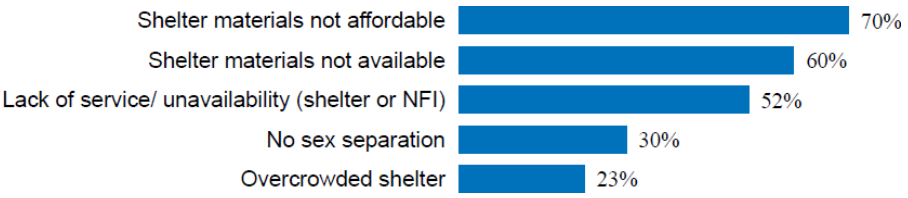


*The analysis shows **food and nutrition** as the most pressing concern (58%), followed by a lack of **sanitary and dignity kits** (35%). Other key challenges include limited **essential services**, **lack of documents**, and **inflation**, each affecting roughly a quarter of respondents.*

Where IDP returnees are currently living



Issues IDP returnees are facing with housing



CRITICAL NEEDS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthen basic services and humanitarian assistance

IDPs and returnees face major shortages of food, water, shelter, and healthcare. Actors should ensure equitable support for older persons, persons with disabilities, and female-headed households with strong protection mainstreaming and age, gender, and diversity tools.

Promote livelihood recovery and self-reliance

Loss of farmland, property, and livestock has reduced self-reliance. Support early recovery through cash-for-work, livestock restocking, and small business grants, alongside actions to rebuild markets and expand financial access.

Expand civil documentation and legal support

Many IDPs lack ID and property documents. Scale up mobile registration and legal aid in Afambo and Chifra for document replacement, ownership verification, and civil rights awareness.

Address GBV and child protection risks

Women and children face risks of early marriage, violence, and school dropout. Expand safe spaces, dignity kits, psychosocial support, and awareness on FGM and child marriage, while supporting child protection systems.

Support housing, land, and property (HLP) recovery

With homes destroyed, shelter reconstruction, ownership verification, and emergency shelter support are essential to support durable recovery and prevent secondary displacement.

Enhance access to justice and governance

Strengthen links between traditional and formal justice systems and involve community leaders and IDP representatives to improve dispute resolution and equitable access to justice.

Advance explosive ordnance risk education and clearance

Unexploded ordnance threatens civilians and farmland. Coordinate with mine action partners for mapping, clearance, and community-based risk education, especially in schools and farming areas.

Improve communication and community participation

Limited information flow reduces access to services. Strengthening two-way communication through SMS, community leaders, and feedback channels will improve awareness and accountability.

Partners

Donor support

UNHCR would like to thank the European Union for its support

European Union