



Community Perception Survey Analysis 2024

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Executive Summary

The Community Perception Survey Analysis was conducted to gain the community's perspectives on how effectively the humanitarian community is addressing three critical protection risk areas: **Exclusion and Denial of Access to Assistance, Risks Associated with Displacement, and Attacks on Civilians and Civilian Objects**. By exploring community perceptions, the survey aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of current humanitarian responses and identify gaps in protection efforts. Conducted between June and August 2024, the survey captured insights from 17 regions, including key areas such as Lower Juba, Banadir, and Bay, to assess how well humanitarian interventions are meeting the needs of the most vulnerable populations.

The findings indicate varied perceptions of the effectiveness of aid delivery, with marginalized groups such as women, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and minority clans frequently highlighting concerns around exclusion and inequitable access to services. The analysis also reveals significant protection risks linked to forced displacement and the adverse impact of armed conflict on civilians and their communities. These insights are enriched by focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs), providing a deeper understanding of local dynamics and the barriers that hinder effective humanitarian support.

This report seeks to inform humanitarian actors and policymakers about community perceptions regarding the effectiveness of ongoing humanitarian efforts. By focusing on how well the humanitarian community is addressing these key risk areas, the analysis complements the **Centrality of Protection Monitoring Update**, published by OCHA on 15 June 2025, offering actionable recommendations for enhancing inclusivity, strengthening protection mechanisms, and ensuring that humanitarian interventions adequately reach those who are most at risk.

Survey Methodology

The Community Perception Survey was conducted across prioritized districts to inform these efforts, sampling a representative percentage of the population. A mixed-method approach was employed using a combination of comprehensive surveys, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews to gather insights into the community's perception of humanitarian efforts to reduce the identified protection risks contained in the Somalia Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Centrality of Protection Strategy. The Somalia HCT prioritized three multi-faceted protection risks that can only be effectively reduced through the collective contributions of multiple humanitarian and non-humanitarian actors. These are **1) the risk of exclusion and denial of access to assistance; 2) risks associated with forced displacement and 3) the risk of indiscriminate attacks on civilian and civilian objects.** The three risks also formed part of the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) 2024 Objectives and the HCT and Inter-Cluster

Coordination Group (ICCG) 2024-2025 Centrality of Protection Action Plan.

By engaging directly with affected communities, the survey sought to gather communities' perceptions of humanitarian interventions, programmes and strategies and whether they were informed by the needs and priorities of those intended to be supported.

Overall, this comprehensive approach, using the Age, Gender, and Diversity lens, aimed at enhancing collective risk reduction efforts by partners while offering deeper insights into the community's perspectives on mitigating protection risks. The progress made in reducing threats and community vulnerabilities while tracking advancements in strengthening community capacities will help assess the results achieved and identify any adjustments for the effective implementation of targeted risk reduction interventions.

Sampling Methodology

Targeted Population: The survey targeted communities in ten prioritized districts in Somalia, ensuring representation from diverse regions for a wide range of experiences and perceptions.

Sample Size Determination:

- Confidence Level: 95%
- Margin of Error: 5%
- Assumed Population Proportion: 50%

Sampling Technique: A stratified random sampling method was employed to ensure that different segments of the population (e.g. different age groups, genders, ethnicities) are adequately represented. Each district was divided into strata based on demographics and geographic characteristics.

| District | Total Population | Sample Size | | | | | | |
|--------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------|--------------|
| | | Girls 15-17 (27%) | Boys 15-17 (27%) | Women 18-59 (19%) | Men 18-59 (21%) | Elderly 60+ (6%) | Total | |
| Afmadow | 78,180 | 103 | 103 | 73 | 80 | 23 | 383 | |
| Bardheere | 83,160 | 103 | 103 | 73 | 80 | 23 | 383 | |
| Banadir | 1,475,981 | 104 | 104 | 73 | 81 | 23 | 385 | |
| Baydhaba | 425,467 | 104 | 104 | 73 | 81 | 23 | 384 | |
| Beletweyne | 67,250 | 103 | 103 | 73 | 80 | 23 | 382 | |
| Galkacyo | 83,304 | 103 | 103 | 73 | 80 | 23 | 383 | |
| Garoowe | 109,141 | 103 | 103 | 73 | 80 | 23 | 383 | |
| Jamaame | 2,148 | 54 | 54 | 38 | 42 | 12 | 200 | |
| Kismaayo | 145,225 | 104 | 104 | 73 | 81 | 23 | 384 | |
| Luuq | 55,768 | 103 | 103 | 73 | 80 | 23 | 382 | |
| Total | 10 Districts | 2,525,624 | 1,020 | 1,020 | 717 | 793 | 227 | 3,776 |

Data Collection Methods

a. Comprehensive Survey

Tool: Structured questionnaire.

Format: Face-to-face interviews with the use of Kobo.

Content: The questionnaire covered areas such as access to humanitarian aid, experiences of displacement, security concerns, and coping mechanisms.

Administration: Trained enumerators conducted the surveys to ensure consistency and reliability of the data collected.

b. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Participants: Community members representing different demographics (e.g. men, women, youth, elders, various minority groups).

Facilitation: Experienced facilitators led discussions using a semi-structured guide.

Content: FGDs explored in-depth issues such as community perceptions of exclusion, impacts of displacement, and protection concerns. This qualitative data complements the survey findings.

c. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Participants: Local leaders, government officials, and other key stakeholders.

Format: One-on-one interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire.

Content: KIIs provided expert insights and contextual understanding of the protection risks and community dynamics.

Survey Demographics and Regional Representation

Through an Age, Gender, and Diversity (AGD) lens, this survey reveals compelling insights into the complex demographic and social fabric of Somali communities, uncovering critical patterns that must shape inclusive and targeted humanitarian responses. The collected data offers valuable insights into respondents' demographic, household, and regional composition, revealing important trends for humanitarian assistance.

Most respondents were adults aged 18 to 59 (66.52%), with children aged 15 to 17 comprising 25.31% and older persons aged 60+ making up 8.18%. Women were disproportionately represented, making up 64.7% of participants, while men accounted for 35.18%, with 0.11% preferring not to disclose their gender.

Household compositions showed that 57.31% of respondents were married, while single-headed households comprised 28.84%, followed by

widowed (8.12%) and divorced/separated individuals (5.56%).

Clan affiliations reflected significant diversity, with 34.15% of respondents from the Rahanweyn clan, 20.58% from the Bantu community, 14.63% from the Hawiye clan, and 30.64% representing twelve other clans.

Additionally, the survey conducted thirteen key informant interviews (KIIs) in Baidoa and Jowhar, interviewing government officials, community leaders, landowners, and other key individuals in the communities. Among those interviewed for the KIIs, 76.92% were male and 23.08% were female.

Overall, the survey covered 17 regions across Somalia, with Lower Juba (27.95%), Banadir (18.41%), and Bay (15.74%) having the highest representation. Other regions like Lower Shabelle (13.24%), Middle Shabelle (10.43%), and Hiraan

(8.20%) also featured prominently, while Mudug (2.92%), Nugaal (1.95%), and nine other regions each made up less than one percent of the total respondents.

These findings suggest that humanitarian efforts should prioritize assistance to women, single-

headed households, and regions such as Lower Juba and Banadir, while addressing the needs of smaller but still vulnerable groups, such as older persons and less represented regions. Additionally, clan diversity highlights the importance of ensuring inclusivity and equity in delivering aid.

Scaling Methodology

To assess community perceptions of humanitarian effectiveness to describe their measurement of levels of success or impact, the survey utilized a four-point scale: Not Effective, Somewhat Effective, Effective, and Very Effective. Each category was defined by a specific range of percentages and qualitative interpretations:

1. Not Effective (0-19%): This rating indicates that interventions had little to no impact on the desired outcomes. There was either no observable change, or the results/feedback were negative. In the context of data analysis, this classification suggests that interventions failed to produce the intended results or had a negligible effect on the community, warranting a critical review of the strategies employed.



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2. Somewhat Effective (20-49%): This category represents a moderate impact where interventions showed some positive effect but did not fully achieve the desired impact. Although there were some improvements, the results were limited or inconsistent. For data interpretation, this rating implies that while there was some progress, the interventions were not strong enough to be considered fully successful and might require adjustments or enhancements to meet the objectives.
3. Effective (50-79%): A rating in this range indicates that the intervention significantly achieved the desired outcome. The majority of goals were met, and the impact was clear and measurable. In terms of data analysis, a score of "Effective" reflects strong positive feedback, showing that the intervention is working as intended, with most indicators met and consistent results across the community.
4. Very Effective (80-100%): This highest rating means that the intervention exceeded expectations in achieving its goals, with almost all objectives met or surpassed. From a data analysis perspective, this classification demonstrates a high level of impact, indicating that the strategy is not only successful but could serve as a model for best practices in similar contexts.

By applying these definitions, the survey quantified community perceptions and translated qualitative feedback into measurable outcomes, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of humanitarian efforts.

Community Perceptions Survey Findings

Risk 1: Exclusion and Denial of Access to Assistance

Analysis of Vulnerable Groups

The survey findings provide a window into community perspectives on who they perceive as the most vulnerable and the barriers these groups face in accessing critical aid, shedding light on local perceptions of risk, inclusion, and support gaps.

According to communities, **the elderly emerged as the most frequently identified vulnerable group**, with 55.26% of respondents recognizing their heightened needs. This aligns with findings from the focus group discussions (FGDs) that indicate elderly individuals often face significant physical and mobility barriers, making access to aid distribution points or community services challenging. **Persons with disabilities** were the second most commonly identified vulnerable group (46.4%), which also echoes insights from FGDs about their struggles with mobility and lack of accessible distribution services. The data suggests that accessibility issues for both groups are further compounded by communication gaps, limited outreach, and logistical challenges, leaving them doubly disadvantaged in navigating the humanitarian assistance process.

Newly displaced individuals, identified by 46.80% of respondents, also stand out as a high-risk group, a finding that mirrors FGDs where newly displaced persons were noted to face immediate integration challenges, language barriers, and heightened risks of exclusion due to a lack of familiarity with existing aid services. Similarly, **persons from minority clans** (35.01%) face unique vulnerabilities tied to both social exclusion and language difficulties, contributing to their marginalization. The identification of **women-at-risk** (29.06%), particularly pregnant women (74.93%), single-female-headed households (66.79%), and lactating women (64.50%), highlights specific protection concerns linked to **social stigma, lack of targeted support, and inadequate childcare** facilities that were reiterated in the FGDs.

Moreover, the survey findings indicate that a significant proportion of the population perceives these vulnerable groups as at high risk of exclusion from assistance. For instance, 51.70% of respondents felt that the elderly are the most likely to be excluded from aid, followed closely by persons with disabilities (40.99%) and newly displaced individuals (40.52%). These perceptions are consistent with qualitative data from FGDs, which pointed out that the elderly and persons with disabilities often face logistical and mobility constraints, while newly displaced persons struggle with both administrative and informational barriers that can isolate them from aid systems. Persons from minority clans (34.9%) and child-headed households (26.25%) also emerged as at-risk groups for exclusion, which can be attributed to both their



marginalized status and the lack of inclusive communication and outreach by aid organizations.

This convergence of findings from both quantitative and qualitative data underscores that, while a wide range of vulnerabilities exist, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and newly displaced individuals are particularly susceptible to both general risks and exclusion from humanitarian support. Addressing these dual vulnerabilities requires targeted interventions that go beyond merely providing aid – efforts must focus on **improving communication,**

physical accessibility, and inclusive targeting to ensure that these groups are adequately reached and supported. With women-at-risk, particularly pregnant and lactating women, and single-female-headed households, the need for specialized support structures is essential to address their compounded risks of social exclusion and physical inaccessibility. Similarly, specific attention is needed for child-headed households and children associated **with harmful practices,** who face both protection risks and exclusion from educational and psychosocial support services.

Barriers and Challenges to Accessing Assistance

On understanding communities' preference on prioritization, it was gathered that in general, there are several barriers and challenges in accessing aid, despite recognizing the need for prioritization based on risk and vulnerability to ensure an effective humanitarian response. The community highlights that **identifying the most vulnerable individuals should be central to determining the prioritization of humanitarian assistance.** They emphasized that responses based on the level of risk faced by individuals would be more effective in addressing needs and achieving desired outcomes. In contrast, they view prioritization solely based on a general categorization of vulnerability as less impactful, with only limited positive outcomes.

However, **the communities perceive a critical gap in humanitarian assistance delivery,** with 46.7% of respondents indicating that vulnerable groups have not yet received adequate support. Only 26.7% noted partial assistance, and 23.11% believed the aid they received was adequate. The most commonly received forms of assistance included support through the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster (46.70%), food assistance (40.35%), health support (32.13%), child protection services (31.76%), and education (29.64%), with key informants also indicating the availability of shelter and non-food item (NFI) assistance. However, communities noted that this aid was often facilitated by third parties, which includes community elders, community leaders, camp authorities, and gatekeepers, with 45.06% of respondents citing third-party involvement as the primary means of distribution. This reliance on intermediaries has contributed to significant challenges in accessing aid, with 39.85% of respondents stating they were not adequately

informed about the available assistance. Additionally, 24.64% identified corruption, 16.35% cited discrimination, and 16.10% reported aid diversion as a major barrier to receiving support.

The focus group discussions provided additional insight into the issues raised in the survey by emphasizing the **frequent exclusion of minority communities in aid distribution processes.** Many participants expressed that aid distribution often overlooks minority groups due to a lack of coordination with minority-led organizations, which possess a deeper understanding of local needs. They suggested a more inclusive approach to planning and execution to ensure a fairer and more effective distribution. This concern over exclusion was echoed in the survey findings, where 33.34% of respondents acknowledged that humanitarian organizations were effective in reducing the risk of exclusion for minority groups, while 30.48% indicated they were only somewhat effective, and 21.4% felt that exclusion mitigation efforts were not effective at all.

The FGDs also highlighted issues of **fairness versus effectiveness in aid delivery.** While some participants felt that the aid distribution was fair in theory, they pointed out disparities in practice due to logistical issues and favoritism, resulting in certain regions or communities receiving disproportionate amounts of assistance. This sentiment aligns with the survey data showing that 39.85% of respondents reported being inadequately informed about available aid, suggesting that aid is not reaching those who need it most. Additionally, key informants reinforced this view, with 53.85% rating the current aid distribution process as only “somewhat effective” and 23.08% rating it as “not effective at all” for marginalized groups.

Mismanagement and delays in aid delivery were another major concern raised in the FGDs, which is consistent with the 24.64% of survey respondents who identified corruption and 16.10% who reported aid diversion as a key barrier. Participants in the FGDs pointed out that delays in delivery and inefficiencies in aid management often lead to the wastage or diversion of resources, reducing the impact of aid programs. Further compounding these challenges, respondents in the community perception survey identified camp authorities, gatekeepers, and community leaders as the most common perpetrators of abuse, exploitation, and aid diversion. While a smaller portion (7.47%) reported abuse from representatives of humanitarian organizations themselves, indicating a need for stronger oversight and accountability mechanisms.

Aid diversion, reported by 38.46% of respondents, represents another critical issue, where resources intended for vulnerable populations are misappropriated or redirected, often due to power imbalances or manipulation by local actors. This diversion reduces the overall availability of aid for those in need, limiting the impact of humanitarian interventions and leaving some groups without essential support.

While alarming corruption, aid diversion, and fraud reports were documented, only 31.12% of respondents reported knowing about the availability of reporting mechanisms. Of those aware, 31.01% of respondents perceived these reporting mechanisms for cases of exclusion, aid diversion, corruption, and fraud to be only somewhat effective, with 26.81% stating they are ineffective and a significant 21.66% uncertain of their effectiveness. Similarly, 31.95% rated reporting mechanisms for harassment, intimidation, abuse, and exploitation as only somewhat effective to not effective (with 24.75% noting little or no impact), highlighting a concerning trend in limited confidence across different types of accountability measures. In addition, efforts to train third parties and gatekeepers on Protection and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) yielded similarly mixed perceptions, with 30.37% of respondents finding these initiatives to be somewhat effective and 28.07% perceiving them as having little or no impact on the desired outcomes. This suggests an urgent need to review and enhance these mechanisms to ensure that they serve their intended purpose effectively.

The FGDs also emphasized the need for more tailored aid packages to address the specific needs of vulnerable groups such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, and minority communities. This aligns with the key informants' recommendations for comprehensive vulnerability assessments to accurately identify and target marginalized groups, ensuring that aid reaches those most in need. Such tailored approaches would address the barriers to access identified in the survey, where 46.15% of key informants noted that physical inaccessibility and limited mobility hindered effective aid delivery.

Another major barrier identified in both the FGDs and surveys was information gaps. The FGDs revealed that participants felt excluded from aid planning and decision-making due to poor communication from aid providers. This aligns with the 38.48% of survey respondents who cited information gaps as a critical challenge. In the FGDs, participants called for greater transparency and involvement in the aid planning process to ensure that aid reaches the most vulnerable. They also suggested enhancing communication strategies to address language barriers and low literacy rates, which prevent minority and marginalized groups from aid understanding and engaging with aid providers. This would address the issue raised by 39.85% of survey respondents who felt inadequately informed about available assistance.

Discrimination and exclusion were also highlighted as major challenges across all data sources. FGDs participants cited favoritism and social biases within aid distribution systems, leading to the deliberate or unintentional exclusion of certain groups, particularly ethnic minorities and those lacking local community support. This aligns with the survey finding that 16.35% of respondents cited discrimination as a barrier to accessing aid. The key informants further emphasized that corruption and clan-based favoritism disrupt equitable access, with 30.77% highlighting corruption as a significant barrier.

When key informants were asked if current efforts by humanitarian partners were effective in addressing exclusion and denial of assistance from marginalized or underrepresented groups, 38.46% of the informants suggested that efforts were very effective, while 30.77% suggested they were only somewhat effective and 30.77% said they were not effective at all. When further asked how fair and effective the current aid distribution process for marginalized groups was, 53.85% said that it was

somewhat effective and 23.08% say it was not effective at all. Only 23.08% said such efforts were very effective indicating a need to further strengthen access and inclusion for marginalized groups in aid distribution.

Given these challenges, participants suggested increasing funding and strengthening local partnerships to improve both the fairness and

Community Engagement and Participation

Reports from the Community Engagement and Accountability (CEA) Taskforce indicate that while communities show a clear preference for in-person reporting and engagement, there are varied perceptions regarding the effectiveness of humanitarian organizations' engagement with communities. Although 31.18% of respondents believe such engagement is somewhat effective, only 26.42% rate it as very effective, indicating that current efforts are falling short of delivering substantial impact. More concerning is the 21.80% of respondents who perceive these engagement efforts as not effective at all, suggesting significant room for improvement.

When it comes to disseminating key messages on issues such as abuse and exploitation, the response is similarly divided. While 33.56% of community members view these messages as somewhat effective, only 21.20% consider them effective, and 23.71% find them ineffective. While messages related to inclusion, fraud, aid diversion and corruption were viewed at 33.99% "somewhat effective" to not effective at 22.51%, expressing a moderate to little impact. This indicates that despite attempts to raise awareness, these messages are not achieving their intended outcomes and may require a re-evaluation of communication strategies.

Community involvement in program design appears to be a critical challenge. A substantial 35.65% of respondents reported that the community is only sometimes engaged in the design or distribution of programs, and just 27.67% feel they are always involved. Meanwhile, 13.01% say they are rarely consulted, and another 7.51% say they are never consulted at all. This lack of consistent engagement suggests that many interventions may not be fully aligned with community needs or priorities, potentially diminishing their effectiveness.

effectiveness of aid distribution. They called for more inclusive aid programs that incorporate local voices and a greater focus on transparency to prevent the diversion and mismanagement of resources. This was reinforced by survey data showing that only 22.86% of respondents felt that training on protection, inclusivity, and equality was "very effective," pointing to a need for enhanced capacity-building initiatives.

The community further emphasized that when they are adequately engaged and informed about beneficiary entitlements, the outcomes are seen as moderately positive, with 33.87% describing this approach as somewhat effective and 24.72% as very effective. However, a notable 22.20% believe it is not effective, and 19.21% are unsure. This suggests that clear and consistent communication about entitlements could enhance the perceived success of such initiatives.

Similarly, when asked about their participation in the beneficiary selection process, 32.95% indicated it is somewhat effective in ensuring that those most in need are prioritized, while 27.05% feel it is very effective. Nevertheless, a significant 21% perceive the selection process as ineffective, pointing to a



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potential misalignment between selection criteria and actual needs on the ground.

As a result, only 25.51% of respondents reported that aid is always distributed fairly, with an additional 12.79% indicating it is often distributed fairly. However, a significant proportion – 36.15% – stated that aid is only sometimes distributed fairly, 13.01% said it is rarely fair, and 6.87% reported that aid is never distributed fairly. These perceptions are likely influenced by a lack of transparency and consistent engagement, underscoring the importance of strengthening accountability mechanisms within aid distribution processes.

Further complicating the situation is the issue of unmet expectations concerning aid delivery. Only 31.79% of respondents stated they always receive their aid packages or resources as expected, with 13.15% saying they receive it often. Meanwhile,

28.87% said they receive aid as expected only sometimes, while 14.57% rarely receive it as anticipated, and 6.59% stated they never receive the expected assistance. These findings highlight a critical gap between what is promised and what is delivered, potentially undermining community trust and satisfaction with humanitarian programs.

Overall, this feedback emphasizes the need for improved and more consistent community engagement throughout the project cycle – ranging from program design to beneficiary selection and communication on key issues such as abuse and exploitation. By enhancing collaboration and transparency, humanitarian organizations can increase the perceived fairness and effectiveness of their interventions, ensuring that aid reaches those most in need and is delivered in a timely and reliable manner.

Community Recommendations on Risk Reduction 1

1. **Timely dissemination of information on organizational procedures:** Ensure that communities are promptly informed about procedures for accessing assistance and services.
2. **Clear beneficiary selection criteria:** Develop transparent selection criteria, registration processes, and maintain open communication with the community to build trust.
3. **Rapid delivery of aid:** Implement efficient distribution mechanisms to ensure that assistance reaches those in need swiftly.
4. **Community involvement in beneficiary selection:** Foster community participation in selecting beneficiaries to enhance transparency and inclusivity.
5. **Equitable distribution of resources:** Ensure aid distribution is conducted fairly and without discrimination, respecting the dignity of all recipients.
6. **Strengthen direct engagement:** Facilitate regular interactions between partners and the community to build mutual understanding and trust.
7. **Meeting basic needs:** Design assistance programs that prioritize addressing basic needs such as food, shelter, and security.
8. **Enhancing access to reporting mechanisms:** Expand channels for reporting issues like corruption, exclusion, and aid diversion, ensuring they are accessible and responsive.
9. **Promoting collaboration:** Enhance cooperation between communities and humanitarian organizations to effectively address vulnerabilities.
10. **Strengthening anti-corruption oversight:** Improve monitoring of third-party facilitators to mitigate risks of corruption and ensure accountability.

Risk 2: Risks Associate with Forced Displacement

Coping Mechanisms and Protection Strategies

Overall findings indicate that addressing risks associated with forced displacement involves navigating a complex interplay of resilience, solidarity, and desperation that shapes the daily lives of displaced and marginalized communities. However, despite facing formidable challenges, these populations have developed a range of strategies to navigate their precarious situations, drawing on both individual and collective efforts. The coping mechanisms they employ – whether positive or negative – reveal their determination and the stark gaps in existing available support systems.

For many displaced individuals, maintaining a sense of normalcy through work is central to their survival. Engaging in daily labor, whether through formal employment or informal jobs such as construction work, firewood collection, or washing clothes, is more than just a source of income. It provides a sense of stability and purpose amid the chaos of displacement. This sentiment echoes through the experiences of both survey respondents and key informants, with 42.36% of respondents in the community survey citing engaging in daily work as a primary way to cope. For these communities, work is a lifeline that keeps them grounded, offering a semblance of routine and normality amidst instability.

However, these coping strategies are frequently **strained by serious protection risks** that threaten the fabric of the community and individual well-being. **Child marriage**, affecting 44.88% of respondents, emerges as a prevalent risk, often seen as a survival strategy or a response to economic hardship. This practice not only jeopardizes the future of young girls but also perpetuates cycles of poverty and limited opportunities. Similarly, family separation, reported by 36.37%, even if temporarily, disrupts social structures and places additional stress on already vulnerable households, particularly when caregivers are missing or absent.

Gender-based violence (GBV) is another alarming concern, with 32.62% of respondents identifying it as a significant risk. Women and girls, already disadvantaged by displacement, often face heightened risks of sexual and domestic violence, both within and outside their communities. This issue is compounded by the lack of safe spaces,

inadequate reporting mechanisms, and a scarcity of support services. Likewise, **abductions, kidnapping, and enforced disappearances**, which affect 24.94% of respondents, add a layer of fear and uncertainty, hindering mobility and access to resources. This type of violence further erodes the social fabric and undermines any attempts at community cohesion.

In response to these risks, **the role of community becomes paramount.** Faced with similar struggles, people come together, forming community structures and committees that act as a buffer against isolation and helplessness. 38.92% of survey respondents emphasized community support and cooperation as critical strategies for maintaining social cohesion. Volunteering is not just a way to pass time – it is a means of actively shaping their environment. They track water supplies, organize collective stress management activities, and provide a helping hand to those in need. This spirit of volunteerism strengthens social bonds and promotes a culture of cooperation, where shared problems are solved collectively rather than in isolation.

Religion also emerges as a potent source of resilience. With 54.59% of the surveyed community members highlighting religious counseling as an effective means of coping, it's clear that faith provides not only solace but also a framework for understanding and overcoming adversity. For many, the teachings of Islam offer a pathway to navigate their hardships, reinforcing their resolve and providing moral guidance in times of uncertainty. This spiritual support is a cornerstone for numerous families, anchoring them when other support systems are absent and helping them cope with stress through prayer and meditation.

Some groups have managed through vocational training and skill development. For those who have access to such opportunities, vocational training is a powerful tool, transforming their capabilities and enabling them to support themselves and their families. While not highlighted in the community survey, key informants spoke about vocational training as a pathway to self-sufficiency and empowerment, especially when combined with microfinance initiatives that enable individuals to start small businesses. This form of

entrepreneurship is not just about earning money; it is about regaining a sense of agency and control over their lives.

Agriculture is another avenue of resilience, especially for those living in rural areas. Community gardens and modern farming techniques ensure food security and supplement incomes, reducing dependence on external assistance. While not universally adopted, these agricultural initiatives reflect the resourcefulness and adaptability of individuals striving to create stability in an otherwise volatile environment. Such efforts to cultivate self-sufficiency are often a testament to the resilience of these communities, who continue to seek ways to thrive even when external support is limited.

Despite these efforts, the significant protection risks of child marriage, family separation, GBV, and abductions cast a long shadow over community resilience. Addressing these challenges requires not only reinforcing local coping mechanisms but also

providing holistic and sustainable support systems that prioritize safety and dignity for displacement-affected individuals.



Negative Coping Mechanisms

Economic hardship and a lack of formal support systems often push displaced and marginalized individuals toward harmful coping strategies. For some, begging is a painful but necessary recourse – a last resort that speaks to the depth of their vulnerability. Survey data reveals that 18.76% of respondents identified begging as a means of survival, often in public markets and busy streets, underscoring the absence of viable alternatives for those who have exhausted all other options.

Tragically, children are often caught in the crossfire of these economic pressures. 22.14% of respondents admitted to their communities engaging in child labor, while 17.83% reported early marriage as a strategy to manage household needs. Parents struggling to make ends meet may send

their children to work or marry them off to secure their futures or reduce the mouths they must feed. These decisions, made under duress, expose young people to long-term protection risks and limit their opportunities for a better future, reinforcing cycles of poverty and vulnerability.

Even more troubling is the widespread practice of reducing meals. A significant 30.47% of households reported cutting down on the number of meals as a coping mechanism, indicating widespread food insecurity. This strategy, driven by necessity, poses serious health risks and compounds the vulnerability of already fragile households. The frequency of meal reduction highlights the inadequacy of current food assistance programs, which are often insufficient to meet the needs of displaced populations.

Are These Coping Strategies Sustainable?

Insights from key informants suggest mixed views on the sustainability of these coping strategies. While skills-based mechanisms like vocational training and technical skills acquisition are seen as more sustainable, equipping individuals with the tools to earn an income and support their families, the overall consensus is that many of the current strategies – especially those driven by economic necessity – are far from sustainable.

Casual labor and begging, frequently employed to meet immediate needs, were noted as unsustainable due to their limited earning potential and lack of long-term stability. Similarly, child labor and early marriage, which are often viewed as temporary solutions to economic pressure, pose serious long-term protection risks and have lasting negative impacts on children's development and opportunities. One respondent emphasized that survival alone is not enough – humans need

communication, connection, and opportunities for holistic well-being beyond basic survival skills. This underscores that while some strategies might temporarily alleviate immediate hardships, they fail to provide the foundation needed for lasting self-sufficiency and dignity.

Humanitarian agencies play a crucial role in mitigating some of these challenges by offering essential services, yet the support is limited and often does not address the long-term needs of the community. The reality is that without sustained investment in skill-building and comprehensive support systems, the coping mechanisms currently in use risk perpetuating cycles of poverty and dependency, rather than breaking them.

Despite the creativity and resilience displayed by these communities, a striking pattern of uncertainty emerges when discussing coping strategies. Nearly 15% of respondents expressed confusion or were simply unaware of what coping mechanisms are available to them, revealing a profound gap in knowledge and access to resources. This lack of awareness is mirrored in the key informants' observations that formal support mechanisms are either missing or poorly communicated, leaving individuals to rely on whatever limited strategies they can devise on their own.

Alarmingly, when asked if there were any programs in place to address these negative coping mechanisms, an overwhelming 90.18% of survey respondents said no. This glaring absence of support services compounds the challenges faced by these

communities, forcing them to navigate complex and often dangerous situations with little external help. The result is a **community that, while resilient, is also at high risk of resorting to harmful strategies in the face of extreme economic and social pressures.**

Overall, the coping mechanisms employed by displaced and marginalized populations are a testament to their resilience and resourcefulness. From engaging in daily work and community support to drawing strength from religious faith and leveraging vocational skills, these communities have found ways to maintain their dignity and hope in the face of adversity. However, the prevalence of negative strategies such as begging, child labor, early marriage, and meal reduction speaks to the severe economic constraints they face and the urgent need for targeted interventions.

What emerges from this analysis is not just a story of resilience but the identification of key actions. There is a critical need for increased awareness, education, and formal support systems that can empower these communities to shift away from negative coping mechanisms and toward strategies that promote long-term stability and well-being. Addressing these gaps will require coordinated efforts from humanitarian organizations, governments, and the communities themselves. Only by filling these voids can we truly support displaced and marginalized populations in building a future defined by opportunity, safety, and hope rather than mere survival.

Community Recommendations on Risk Reduction 2

1. **Enhanced support for livelihood initiatives:** Promote livelihood programs to enhance self-reliance and reduce long-term dependence on humanitarian assistance.
2. **Educational empowerment:** Implement educational programs on protection, hygiene, and self-care to strengthen community resilience and capacity.
3. **Addressing urgent needs:** Increase food rations, improve shelter, and ensure access to clean water and adequate sanitation to alleviate immediate hardships.

Risk 3: Indiscriminate Attacks on Civilians and Civilian Objects

Impact of Armed Conflict on Humanitarian Assistance

In the previous section examining communities' perception on risks associated with forced displacement, the analysis highlighted how communities employed various coping mechanisms to endure the hardships and challenges brought on by conflict and displacement. Despite these efforts, findings from both surveys and focus group discussions indicate that while the majority of respondents reported relative stability, a portion continues to experience the severe impacts of violence. The data underscores the profound toll on infrastructure, safety, and well-being in conflict-affected areas, revealing destruction of homes, critical services, and the absence of adequate support mechanisms to protect the most vulnerable.

Of those interviewed, 81.28% reported not experiencing armed conflict within the last six months, while 18.72% had encountered violent confrontations. Most focus group participants echoed this sentiment, stating that their communities have not experienced any recent attacks on civilians or civilian objects, describing their areas as generally peaceful, secure, and stable.

However, some isolated incidents of violence were noted, including conflict between Al-Shabaab and the Somali National Army (SNA) that led to displacement and economic hardship in one area. Such cases are representative of the 22.04% of survey respondents who cited conflict between state military groups and Al-Shabaab as a contributing factor to the violence.

Among the communities affected by conflict, the consequences have been severe and multifaceted. A substantial 64.34% of respondents reported civilian casualties in conflict-affected areas, while 27.31% mentioned casualties within displacement sites. These clashes resulted not only in fatalities and injuries but also caused widespread destruction of homes and livelihoods, leaving many families in a state of increased vulnerability.

Widespread destruction of infrastructure was a key concern. Data revealed that 54.72% of civilian homes, 36.16% of internally displaced person (IDP) sites, 33.92% of schools, 31.20% of population

settlements, and 25.76% of hospitals had been damaged or destroyed. This damage has undermined the stability of affected areas, rendering essential services inaccessible and forcing many to seek alternative shelters.

Particularly concerning was the devastation of civilian homes, with over half (51.46%) of respondents stating that their homes were completely destroyed and rendered uninhabitable, while 30.99% indicated the possibility of repair. Population settlements also faced similar impacts, with 27.69% of cases reporting permanent uninhabitability. Essential services such as hospitals were significantly affected, with 34.78% destroyed and no longer in use, although 34.18% were deemed repairable. Schools suffered comparable damage, with 36.32% reported as beyond repair, and 28.30% damaged but salvageable. Even aid distribution centers were not spared, with 34.33% damaged or destroyed, severely hampering humanitarian efforts.

During and after these violent episodes, over half (52.53%) of respondents overwhelmingly stated that access to humanitarian organizations and partners was not available, underscoring a significant gap in the provision of services following such attacks.

Key informant interviews provided further insights into the impact of these incidents, emphasizing not just the physical damage but also the long-term psychological and social repercussions. Many affected individuals suffered from physical injuries and trauma, and the emotional distress was compounded by a sense of isolation and stigmatization, particularly for those who were victims of targeted violence or discrimination. Social cohesion within communities has deteriorated, with many reporting increased mistrust, poor communication, and the breakdown of social networks.

Moreover, the KIs highlighted the alarming lack of protection mechanisms for vulnerable groups, especially in severe cases such as rape, where no concrete measures have been put in place to

safeguard or support victims. Despite recommendations from communities on how to mitigate the impacts, such as improving integration and dialogue between local communities and displaced persons, fostering trust, and eliminating hatred and discrimination, there remains a lack of tangible action.

When asked how they protect themselves during armed conflict, the communities described a range of strategies reflecting a mix of immediate physical responses, displacement, and the creation of safe spaces. Many sought refuge by relocating to safer zones or by creating makeshift shelters within schools or community centers. Others resorted to lying on the ground or hiding to avoid immediate harm. Some opted to flee entirely, seeking safety outside of conflict zones. Efforts were also made by some communities to engage in awareness campaigns and preparedness efforts to reduce risks during conflict, though a significant number expressed uncertainty about effective protective measures.

Impact of ATMIS Closure on Security

When asked about their concerns regarding the Forward Operating Base (FOB) closures, particularly in Bay, Hiraan, Bari, Bandair, Lower Juba, and Middle and Lower Shabelle, 44.58% of respondents expressed uncertainty, stating that they were unsure how the closures would impact them in the long term. Meanwhile, 43.13% reported having no concerns, and 13.82% expressed specific worries about the potential consequences of the closures, such as the loss of a sense of security and the risks to road mines and other potential explosions, which may affect communities.

Regarding the increased protection risks following the closures, the community's perception of humanitarian efforts to address these risks was

Feedback gathered from the community underscores communities caught in a cycle of violence and displacement, struggling to protect themselves with limited resources and support. The destruction of essential infrastructure – civilian homes, hospitals, schools – coupled with the long-lasting psychological and social impacts, has left many in a state of heightened vulnerability. The recurring theme of lack of access to humanitarian assistance, highlighted by over half of survey respondents, points to an urgent need for enhanced support mechanisms, better service delivery, and concrete protection measures to safeguard those most at risk.

Despite the recommendations for community dialogue, reconciliation, and the rebuilding of trust, the absence of immediate protective actions, especially for marginalized groups, continues to leave communities exposed to further harm. Addressing these gaps will require coordinated efforts that go beyond physical reconstruction, focusing on psychological recovery, social cohesion, and ensuring that the voices of the most affected are integrated into any response planning.

generally positive. 42.46% of respondents rated these efforts as positive, while 25% viewed them as very positive. However, 26.44% remained neutral, and a smaller percentage (6.45%) expressed negative views about the effectiveness of humanitarian efforts in addressing protection risks.

This analysis highlights that while the majority of the community has not been directly impacted by the FOB closures, a notable minority did rely on the security and humanitarian aid associated with the bases. The mixed levels of concern and uncertainty surrounding the closures reflect the community's need for continued support, particularly in addressing protection risks and ensuring the stability of humanitarian efforts in affected areas.

Community Recommendations on Risk Reduction 3

1. **Enhancing security measures:** Strengthen security protocols to safeguard communities from ongoing conflict and ensure uninterrupted access to humanitarian services.

Overall Recommendations from the Community

The community, through various participatory methods such as surveys, KIIs, and FGDs, provided several key recommendations aimed at enhancing the quality and impact of humanitarian assistance and protection efforts. The inputs reflected diverse perspectives, ranging from specific interventions to broader strategic priorities. Below is a summary of the primary themes and key recommendations:

1. Enhance Community Collaboration and Engagement

- Strengthen community involvement: Participants emphasized the importance of involving communities, particularly marginalized and underrepresented groups, in all stages of program planning and implementation. They suggested that incorporating local perspectives will ensure aid aligns better with actual needs and fosters community ownership.
- Reinforce feedback mechanisms: The FGDs highlighted the need for more accessible and effective channels for beneficiaries to voice their concerns and suggestions. Regular feedback loops would enhance program responsiveness and transparency. Additionally, need to build confidence in the systems established to enable more reporting.

2. Improve Accessibility and Reach of Aid Services

- Expand access points: Both community surveys and FGDs called for increased distribution points to ease access for beneficiaries in remote and underserved areas.
- Deploy mobile services: Mobile clinics and aid services were recommended to overcome geographic barriers and reach populations not currently served.
- Language accessibility: Providing information and services in local languages and dialects was identified as crucial for overcoming language barriers, particularly for minority groups and those with limited literacy.

3. Address Critical Basic Needs and Consistency of Aid

- Respond to essential needs: Addressing food, water, shelter, and healthcare needs remains a priority. Participants noted that improving the quality and reliability of these services would alleviate immediate hardships.
- Ensure consistency and reliability of aid: Long gaps between support and unpredictable aid delivery make planning difficult for beneficiaries. Regular, reliable assistance would enable them to stabilize their situations.

4. Promote Fair Distribution, Transparency, and Accountability

- Transparent aid distribution: FGDs and survey participants emphasized the need for transparent, fair, and corruption-free distribution processes, with clear criteria to prevent favoritism and misuse.
- Strengthen accountability mechanisms: Establishing third-party monitoring and regular community engagement through feedback and complaint mechanisms would ensure that aid reaches those most in need.

5. Strengthen Protection Measures and Security

- Enhance security at aid distribution points: FGDs, in particular, stressed the importance of safer aid distribution points, especially for women and children. Participants recommended implementing specific security measures, including safe spaces.
- Community-led protection initiatives: Promoting community-led protection efforts, such as hotlines and localized complaint mechanisms, would enable beneficiaries to report incidents safely and access support services.
- Female aid workers and cultural sensitivity: The inclusion of more female aid workers and culturally sensitive training for humanitarian staff would facilitate better communication and support for women and vulnerable groups.

6. Expand Awareness, Education, and Mental Health Support

- Education and vocational training: Both community surveys and FGDs highlighted the need for long-term educational programs and vocational training for children and adults to support recovery and resilience.
- Awareness and capacity-building: Raising awareness about protection, hygiene, and emergency preparedness is essential. Training programs can also enhance local capacities to manage future crises.
- Mental health services: Counselling and psychological support were identified as critical yet often overlooked components of aid. Addressing this gap is necessary to support the overall well-being of affected communities.

7. Support Livelihoods and Promote Economic Empowerment

- Develop livelihood programs: Vocational training, agriculture support, and microfinance initiatives were recommended to promote economic resilience and self-sufficiency among beneficiaries.

8. Enhance Inclusivity and Localize Aid Efforts

- Equal treatment and attention to minority groups: Aid programs must be inclusive and ensure equal treatment regardless of gender, ethnicity, or status. Special attention should be given to minority groups that may be overlooked or face discrimination during aid distribution.
- Involve local leaders and organizations: Involving local leaders and marginalized community representatives in aid planning ensures that their specific needs are considered. This collaboration enhances the relevance and sustainability of aid interventions.

9. Continuation and Expansion of Support

- Expand aid coverage and adapt to emerging needs: While ongoing support should continue, aid must also be expanded to cover new areas and address emerging needs. Regular assessments are crucial for keeping aid programs responsive to changing conditions.

Concluding Analysis and Priority Actions

The findings of the Community Perception Survey underscore the pressing need for more inclusive, equitable, and transparent humanitarian interventions in Somalia. The survey findings call for a balanced approach between immediate relief and long-term resilience, focusing on inclusion, accountability, and collaboration. Vulnerable groups such as the elderly, persons with disabilities, and newly displaced individuals face compounded risks of exclusion from critical aid, demanding targeted, timely assistance. Women-at-risk, including pregnant and single-female-headed households, require specialized interventions to address their unique vulnerabilities.

Persistent gaps in aid delivery, exacerbated by corruption, aid diversion, and inadequate community engagement, pose significant barriers to the equitable distribution of resources. Third-party involvement has not consistently ensured fairness, leaving communities without critical information and essential services.

Community engagement, though present, is insufficient in many areas. A stronger focus on

participatory approaches in program design and beneficiary selection could enhance trust, accountability, and the effectiveness of aid distribution. Furthermore, the report highlights the need to improve communication on abuse, exploitation, and exclusion risks, as current efforts are only moderately effective at best.

Coping strategies employed by displaced populations reflect both resilience and desperation, with a worrying reliance on harmful mechanisms such as begging, child labor, and reducing meals. The absence of community programs to address these negative strategies indicates an urgent need for educational programs, livelihoods support, and better access to essential resources.

The impact of armed conflict continues to devastate infrastructure and civilian lives, while humanitarian responses during conflict remain inadequate. This calls for strengthened conflict-response mechanisms and better access to humanitarian services in affected areas.

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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.
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COVER PHOTO: Adults aged 18–59 participating in a focus group discussion for the Community Perception Survey in Beledweyne. © HCRI