



SOMALIA | Jowhar District Protection Analysis Update | September 2024

BRIEF

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The displacement crisis in Somalia is complex and multifaceted, driven by conflict and climatic shocks. The displacement is often characterized by protection risks¹ facing the displaced populations. With particular focus on Jowhar district, the main drivers of displacement include floods and conflict according to the Protection and Solutions Monitoring Network (PSMN)² in Somalia, July 2024. The most prevalent protection risks currently being faced by the populations in Jowhar district are:

1. **Theft, extortion, forced eviction or destruction of personal property**
2. **Attacks on civilians and other unlawful killings, and attacks on civilian objects**
3. **Forced recruitment and association of children in armed forces and groups**
4. **Psychological/emotional abuse or inflicted distress**

The Protection Analysis Update for Jowhar focuses on the Humanitarian Country Team's (HCT) priority districts and as part of the Area Based Coordination (ABC) for 2024. The PAU aims to understand the existing protection risks observed within the district, and to inform humanitarian actors in developing measures that can help to mitigate identified risks. Jowhar district hosts a large population of minorities and marginalized groups who often face heightened protection risks, creating a need for tailored response. Therefore, this joint protection analysis conducted by the Protection Cluster and its partners aims to define the protection response strategy and priorities in the district.

¹ [Protection Risks: Explanatory Note](#)

² *Protection and Solutions Monitoring Network (PSMN)* is a project implemented by UNHCR, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and partners. It is a platform for identifying and reporting on displacements (including returns) of populations in Somalia as well as protection incidents and risks underlying such movements. PSMN as a tool has been adopted at the interagency and inter-cluster level as a source of both displacement and protection data in Somalia.

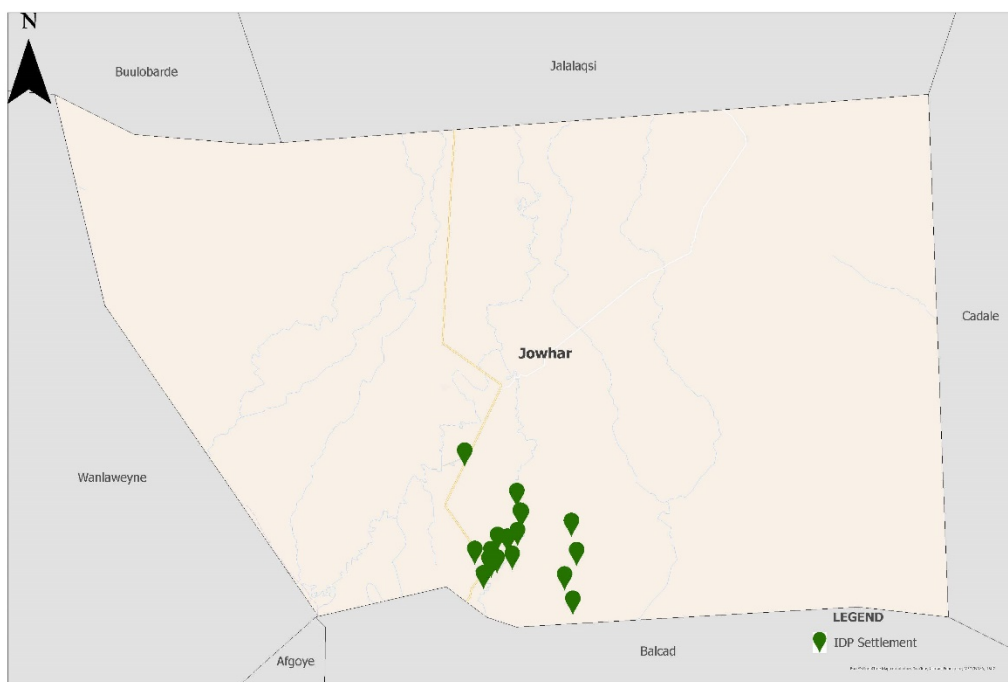
URGENT ACTIONS NEEDED

- Strengthen the enforcement of laws related to property rights and amend land laws particularly in providing legal protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs) against forced evictions in addition to fast tracking the implementation of the 2019 Eviction Guidelines³ achieving an effective conflict resolution on the land ownership disputes.
- HLP AoR, CCCM and Shelter clusters to develop tenure options by exploring and mapping all secure and non-secure land as well as facilitate issuance of tenure documents to reduce forced evictions often associated with expansion of informal settlements.
- Protection actors to carry out Conflict Sensitivity Analysis ahead of any Durable Solutions programming for ensuring that strategic decisions on land ownership and allocation strategic do not trigger a scale up of the Abgaal/Hawiye – Somali Bantu conflict.
- Donors and humanitarian actors to prioritize MHPSS programming following IASC MHPSS Minimum Service Package⁴

CONTEXT ⁵	NO OF VERIFIED SITES	INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE (EST.)	MAIN TRIGGER OF DISPLACEMENT	LEVEL OF HUMANITARIAN ACCESS
432,455	14	35,752	CONFLICT & CLIMATE SHOCKS	MODERATE ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

Jowhar district in Hirshabelle State of Somalia is home to 432,455 individuals both displaced and non-displaced. The internally displaced population are estimated to be 35,752 across 14 IDP sites, the majority of whom are minority clans such as the Somali Bantus.

Other minority groups within the district include Shidle, Kaboolo, Reer Shabelle, Saddax Cumarow, Carab Saalax, Eylo, Reer Maadle, Reer Aw Hassan, Yahaar, Tumaal and Axmad Farax among others.



³ <https://www.refworld.org/legal/decrees/natlegbod/2014/en/121391>

⁴ IASC MHPSS Minimum Service Package

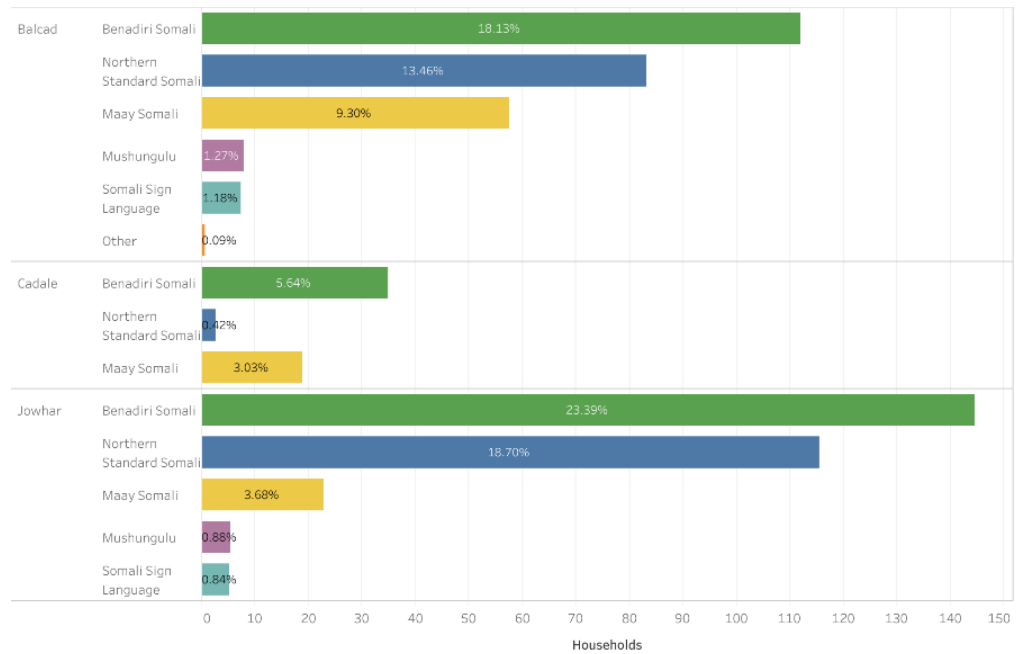
⁵ Revised Population methodology: 2024 UNFPA Adoption.

Spoken Languages:

The minority languages in the **Middle Shabelle region** are **Maay** (16-18%) and **Mushunguli** (2%).

In **Jowhar districts**, **Benadiri** is the main language (**47%**), followed by:

- Northern Standard Somali (Maha) (33%),
- Maay (16%),
- Mushunguli (2%).



Between January and June 2024, the district has received 4,658 new arrivals due to internal displacements from the surrounding district such as Jalalaqsi, in addition to the intra-district displacement observed. Main drivers of the displacements are conflict, mainly inter- and intra- clan conflicts and those related to the presence of Al Shabab, and climate shocks, such as flooding due to the Gu rainy season experienced in the district.

Limited access by the humanitarian actors to the populations within the district has deteriorated the protection landscape i.e., protection needs and response gaps. This is attributed to the insecurity and volatility observed within the district, leading to a weak protection environment.

PROTECTION RISKS

Top 4 Protection risks



Trigger based protection risks

Conflict

- Risk 1: Theft, extortion, forced eviction or destruction of personal property
- Risk 2: Attacks on civilians and other unlawful killings, and attacks on civilian objects
- Risk 3: Forced recruitment and association of children in armed forces and groups
- Risk 4: Gender-based violence

Flood

- Risk 1: Psychological/emotional abuse or inflicted distress
- Risk 2: Theft, extortion, forced eviction or destruction of personal property
- Risk 3: Discrimination and stigmatization, denial of resources, opportunities, services and/or humanitarian access
- Risk 4: Gender-based violence

RISK 1 Theft, extortion, forced eviction or destruction of personal property

Factors that exacerbate this risk in Jowhar are multifaceted and closely linked with the region's socio-economic conditions that result in negative coping mechanisms, such as theft or damage of personal property. Furthermore, the situation is often exacerbated by recurrent climate shocks, such as flooding, which intensify existing tensions over land and property rights. These conditions frequently lead to inter- and intra-clan conflicts and deliberate property damage, often as part of broader community or familial disputes. The frequent flooding in Jowhar has damaged crops and livestock.

Forced eviction is reported to be common in the district. Rising land costs compel landowners to evict tenants to capitalize on higher rental offers or sell the land. The lack of secure housing tenure and formal rental agreements leaves many Jowhar residents vulnerable to displacement without notice contributing to a cycle of risk and insecurity. These challenges disproportionately affect the most vulnerable communities, including the minority and marginalized communities and IDPs. The severity of these issues is further magnified by socio-economic hardships, environmental crises, and the absence of effective law enforcement, compounding the struggles faced by these populations.

In Somalia, the Ministry of Interior developed the 2014 National Policy Framework on Displacement, which paved the way for the creation of Eviction Guidelines. Finalized in 2019, these guidelines are designed to address eviction issues, although they have not yet been enforced. **The most prevalent risk in Jowhar is theft, extortion, forced eviction, and destruction of personal property.**

RISK 2 Attacks on civilians and other unlawful killings, and attacks on civilian objects

The territory of Jowhar district is contested by two different but simultaneous factors:

Al Shabab presence: Al-Shabab still controls part of the territory to the point that in Jowhar, the group is not taking a defensive approach strategy, but an offensive one that pursues the control of the territory. Civilian population are at risk of becoming collateral targets in either complex or IED attacks to public building and other civilian objects. The presence of Al-Shabab also puts the population at risk of extortion and forced and child recruitment as explained in the following risk under this same section.

As part of the protection response to this risk, InterAction⁶ has developed a multi-disciplinary community initiative in Jowhar using the results-based protection (RBP) with the objective identifying and reducing the protection risks linked to conflict-induced food insecurity. As result of this process, InterAction has developed a two-year action plan to reduce the risk of violence by Al Shabab against young men working in restricted areas through a multi-faceted approach. By building channels for negotiation with Al Shabab to reduce punishments while creating opportunities for safer livelihoods, the plan targets both immediate safety and long-term resilience⁷.

Inter-clan conflict: Inter-clan conflict in Jowhar is dormant as of June 2024 however, any spark can trigger again the tensions and scale up the violence. Roots of the **Abgaal/Hawiye – Somali Bantu conflict** started when the central government of Somalia collapsed in 1991, and clan militias and warring factions filled in that vacuum⁸. During that period, pastoralists started to control the banks of the Shabelle River, inhabited by the Somali Bantus. The migration of the pastoralists from the Abgaal/Hawiye sub-clans to the eastern banks of the Shabelle River, is a root cause of the recurring conflicts over land ownership not only in Jowhar, but also in Balcad district.

The Abgaal/Hawiye – Somali Bantu conflict started in November 2013⁹ when militia from the Abgaal/Hawiye sub-clans attacked 20 Somali Bantu villages in Jowhar district and forced over 5,000 civilians to flee their homes. A second phase of the conflict took place in April 2017¹⁰, when the Abgaal/Hawiye militia attacked three villages in Balcad district, forcing a further

⁶ <https://www.interaction.org>

⁷ For more information about Interaction Action Plan for Jowhar, please contact: sommopcc@unhcr.org

⁸ Gundel J. and Dharbaxo A. A., *The Predicament of the 'Oday': The Role of Traditional Structures in Security, Rights, Law and development in Somalia*, Danish Refugee Council, November 2006, p. 36-37.

⁹ *UN Security Council Report, October 2014, p.315*

¹⁰ *War and Peace in Somalia: National Grievances, Local Conflict and Al-Shabaab* Michael Keating, Matt Waldman

estimated 5,000 civilian residents to flee. Both displacement influx took shelter and seeking for protection at Tawfiq IDP camp near Jowhar Airfield. Both, the Abgaal/Hawiye and Somali Bantu have active local militias which have supported operation of the Somalia National Army in the district.

RISK 3 Forced recruitment and association of children in armed forces and groups

This protection risk refers to all situations in which a person is compelled to serve in the forces of a hostile power, by means of coercion, threats or other means. A child associated with an armed force or armed group refers to any person below 18 years of age who is, or who has been, recruited or used by an armed force or armed group in any capacity, including but not limited to those used as fighters, cooks, porters, spies or for sexual purposes¹¹. The recruitment and use of children is considered as one of the worst forms of child labour and is listed as one of the six grave violations of children's rights according to the monitoring and reporting mechanisms established by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1612. Somalia ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in October 2015, and this is a critical step given it is among the countries that record the highest number of grave violations against children including use and recruitment of children by armed forces and groups.

The factors reported to worsen the risk of use and recruitment of children by armed forces and groups in Jowhar include: **(i) weak implementation of the policies and procedures i.e., the draft Somali Constitution, CRC, 2019 road map and the 2012 action plans on ending and preventing the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children, , (ii) climate related shocks causing displacement in turn increasing vulnerabilities, (iii) poverty, (iv) inter-/intra-clan conflicts, (v) family separations and (vi) children not living with primary caregivers or not in any protective environment are at heightened risk to all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect including recruitment and use by armed forces and groups.**

RISK 4 Psychological/emotional abuse or inflicted distress

Psychological and emotional abuse or the infliction of distress can refer to direct acts perpetrated with the intention of causing harm, as well as the indirect results of the infliction of these types of mental or emotional pains or injuries. These include the presence of conditions that generate prolonged mental health and psychological well-being problems not addressed by State authorities, including not ensuring the availability of and accessibility to support systems.

In Somalia, the protracted conflict, social unrest and ensued political instability has left the country in a complex humanitarian situation. The profound impact of political instability, conflict, insecurity, coupled with resultant economic stagnation and poverty, has been a driving force behind the increased rates of mental illness and psychosocial distress across all segments of society, with vulnerable groups such as women and youth most affected. The risk of psychological / emotional abuse or inflicted distress is one of the risks monitored to be prevalent in Jowhar. This is due to the continual conflict and violence, difficult socio-economic conditions, and recurrent climate shocks, such as flooding that often leads to recurrent displacements in the district. The factors have deeply fragmented the social fabric of the society and eroded individual coping mechanisms and community resilience thus contributing to severe psychological distress.

The factors reported to worsen the risk of psychological / emotional abuse or inflicted distress in Jowhar include: **(i) Trauma of Displacement-experience of being forcibly displaced from one's home, (ii) Inadequate Access to Basic Services-the lack of access to these vital services has led to a sense of hopelessness, helplessness, and a diminished sense of well-being, (iii) Loss of Livelihoods and Livelihood Opportunities leading to increased stress, anxiety, and a sense of powerlessness, (iv) Exclusion from humanitarian access causing distress to affected population especially marginalized and minority groups, (v) Disruption of Social and Community Structures-loss of these social connections and support networks contributing to feelings of isolation, loneliness, and a diminished sense of identity and purpose.** In addition, this risk mainly stems from the local environment: systems and the community in place including armed groups and militia.

¹¹ Oxford University Press, 2019, p. 41-48.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RISK 1

Theft, extortion, forced eviction or destruction of personal property

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF SOMALIA (FGS) & HIRSHABELLE STATE GOVERNMENT

- Strengthen the enforcement of laws related to property rights and amend land laws particularly in providing legal protection of IDPs against forced evictions in addition to fast tracking the implementation of the 2019 Eviction Guidelines.
- Implement community policing initiatives to improve security and reduce theft and extortion.
- Invest in infrastructure improvements to mitigate the impact of natural disasters and reduce the resultant economic and social strains that lead to property destruction.
- Identification of public land for IDPs' settlements to mitigate the risks of recurrent forced evictions, destruction of properties and contribute to finding durable solutions for IDPs.
- Strengthening police force in Jowhar district to protect the civilians from theft, extortion and forced eviction with a focus on patrolling in the risk areas including IDP settlements especially during the nights.

HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES, DONOR & DEVELOPMENT ACTORS

- Engage in community-based programs that foster local dialogue and dispute resolution, aiming to reduce communal tensions and prevent conflicts that can lead to property destruction.
 - Promote legal awareness among residents about their rights and available protection against theft, extortion, and forced eviction.
 - Donors to consider allocating funding to the HLP AoR to carry out key activities geared towards enhancing access to justice and support legal structures right from community to national level as well as maintain presence to enable legal assistance and referrals to PSS, GBV and Child protection services.
 - Enhance the capacity of the law enforcement and the judiciary staffs/district court in Jowhar to ensure access to justice for those affected.
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HOUSING, LAND AND PROPERTY AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (HLP AoR)

- Focus on advocacy and awareness campaigns targeting property rights and legal recourse options to empower communities to protect themselves from eviction and property destruction.
 - In collaboration with CCCM and Shelter clusters develop tenure options by exploring and mapping all secure and non-secure land as well as facilitate issuance of tenure documents to reduce forced evictions often associated with expansion of informal settlements.
 - Develop and implement procedural protective mechanisms for evictees to safeguard their rights in exceptional eviction cases.
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SUB-NATIONAL PROTECTION CLUSTER & STATE ICCG

- Strengthen mechanisms for rapid response to incidents of theft, extortion, and property destruction, ensuring that affected individuals have immediate access to support and legal assistance.
- Coordinate with government and non-governmental organizations to ensure that measures for protecting property rights are integrated into broader humanitarian responses.
- Strengthen measures to address social exclusion of marginalized communities and enhance targeting of support to prevent forced evictions and protect vulnerable groups.
- Support Advocacy efforts and engage with elders, judges and community leaders to increase awareness of the rights and vulnerabilities of displaced population.

RISK 2

Attacks on civilians and other unlawful killings, and attacks on civilian objects

HIRSHABELLE STATE GOVERNMENT:

- Strengthen the judicial system in the district including access to legal representation for achieving an effective conflict resolution on the land ownership disputes.

HUMANITARIAN LEADERSHIP

- Durable Solutions programming is starting to take place in the district. Any Durable Solutions Strategy in Jowhar would require a Conflict Sensitivity Analysis carried out by Protection actors to draw conflict resolution recommendations and roadmap for ensuring that any decision on Durable Solution in terms of land ownership and allocation is well-accepted by both communities and does not trigger a scale up of the Abgaal/Hawiye – Somali Bantu conflict.

HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES, DONOR AND DEVELOPMENT ACTORS:

- Support the implementation of Interaction’s two-year action plan to reduce the risk of violence by Al Shabab against young men working in restricted areas in Jowhar.

RISK 3

Forced recruitment and association of children in armed forces and groups

Parties to the conflict:

- Respect and adhere to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ratified by Somalia. All parties to the conflict to also respect international laws and to uphold the protection of civilians including children from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect, protected personnel’s and civilian infrastructures.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OF SOMALIA (FGS) & HIRSHABELLE STATE GOVERNMENT:

- Strengthen adherence and implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).
- Implement (i) 2019 road map to expedite the 2012 Action Plans on ending and preventing the recruitment and use and the killing and maiming of children, and (ii) the 2014 SOP for handover of children allegedly associated with armed groups to child protection actors for appropriate care and support, ensuring adherence to the standardized checklist on age assessment.
- National and Federal governments to enhance rule of law, security, and protection of civilians from Al-Shabaab and affiliated armed actors and non-state armed actors’ threats and violence especially on the recruitment and use of children.

HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES, DONOR AND DEVELOPMENT ACTORS:

- Engage the community on their self-protection in fostering protection of children.
- Strengthen awareness creation and capacity building on children’s rights including prevention of child recruitment and respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL).
- The government and humanitarian actors to ensure the provision of mental health and psychosocial support services and safe reintegration of children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG) into the community through Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR).
- Humanitarian actors to support the government in policy development/implementation relevant to the protection of children and strategic planning to respond to shocks that contributes to increasing vulnerabilities.
- Continuous Advocacy on respecting IHL/HL principles and CRC to minimize the recruitment and use of children by the parties to the conflict and strongly sensitize them on the implications of the continued risk.
- Donors to increase funding for release and reintegration programs of children in addition to supporting establishment of centers for family tracing, reunification and social integration.

CHILD PROTECTION AREA OF RESPONSIBILITY (CP AoR):

- Strengthen systems to enhance access to response services for children at risk of or in need of protection services such as service mappings and referral pathways.
- Train protection and non-protection partners on document and reporting mechanisms to enhance the identification and referrals of children associated with armed forces and armed groups (CAAFAG).
- Strengthen, community and family-based care for rehabilitation and reintegration of released children.

COMMUNITIES:

- Support the self-protection initiatives in fostering protection of children within the communities.
- Monitor, document and report incidents related to forced recruitment and use of children.

RISK 4 Psychological/emotional abuse or inflicted distress

HIRSHABELLE STATE GOVERNMENT

- To address the underlying causes, improve safety and security for the local population by conducting regular patrols by the security forces.

HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES, DONORS, AND DEVELOPMENT ACTORS:

- Strengthen and mainstream MHPSS in the services provided by other UN /INGOs/ NGOs.
- Ensure access to basic humanitarian services and livelihood opportunities for displaced persons, minorities and marginalized communities.
- Prioritize MHPSS programming following the IASC MHPSS Minimum Service Package.

COMMUNITIES:

- Engage in community-based protection mechanism to help prevent and address the risk of psychological/emotional abuse or inflicted distress.

Methodology

This is a product of a joint analysis by the Protection Cluster, Areas of Responsibilities, Protection partners, state government (Hirshabelle), on the protection landscape in Jowhar district. The methodology for this analysis also reviewed and analyzed existing secondary data, and primary data. The Protection Cluster carried out risk-based analysis through the Protection and Solutions Monitoring Network (PSMN) as well as following the standard methodologies of the Global Protection Cluster.



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