

Humanitarian Situation Monitoring: Key Findings From Hard-to-Reach Areas

January 2026 | Somalia

KEY MESSAGES

- Displacement from hard-to-reach settlements is being driven primarily by climate-related shocks. **In 88% of assessed settlements, key informants (KIs) reported that households had moved elsewhere in the 30 days preceding data collection.** Lack of rainfall, resulting in insufficient food and water, was consistently identified as the main driver.
- **Food insecurity appears severe in hard-to-reach districts. In 75%* of assessed settlements, KIs reported that a large proportion of households lacked sufficient food.** To cope, families resorted to emergency measures such as selling livestock or productive assets, selling belongings, and sending children to work, highlighting the erosion of resilience and the harmful trade-offs households face to survive.
- **Access to healthcare is significantly constrained in hard-to-reach districts.** In 68% of assessed locations, residents must travel outside their settlement to access healthcare services, and in 66% of settlements, the journey to the nearest facility exceeds 30 minutes using the most common mode of transport.

ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

This brief presents the key findings from 3458 key informant interviews in 1063 assessed hard-to-reach settlements across 41 districts. For the January 2026 round, hard-to-reach settlements were defined as settlements with Very Heavy Restrictions by the Access Working Group (AWG), due to physical access constraints (i.e., lack of roads, flooding) or security concerns (i.e., clan conflict, presence of armed actors). **Data collection took place between 11 and 21 January 2026.** It is important to note that findings are indicative and are not statistically generalizable. For more detailed information on the methodology, please refer to [page 7](#).

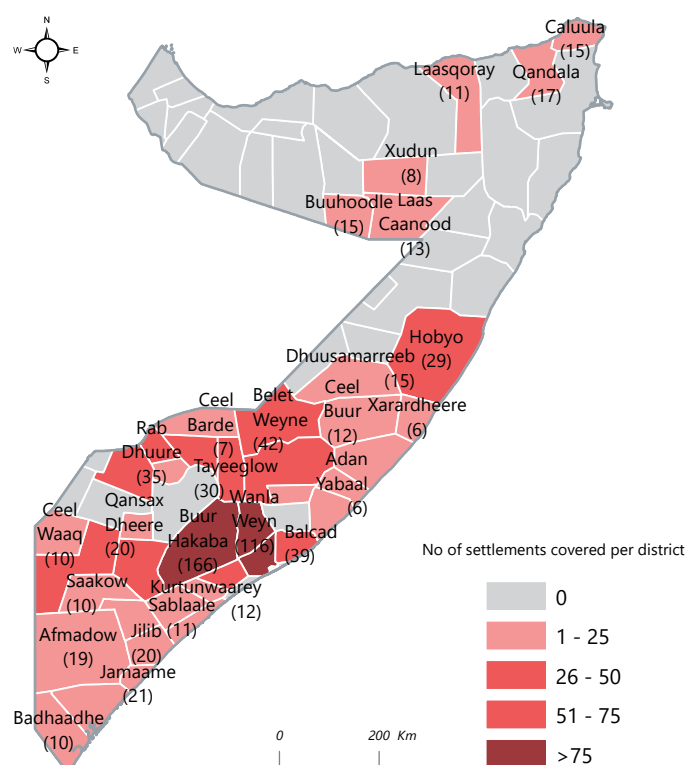
CONTEXT & RATIONALE

Somalia continues to grapple with a severe and protracted humanitarian crisis, driven by ongoing conflict and intensifying climate shocks, particularly recurrent droughts. The 2026 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan reported that an estimated 4.8 million people will require humanitarian assistance.¹ Between October and December 2025, 4.4 million people, representing 23 percent of the population, experienced acute food insecurity at IPC Phase 3 or above, including 921,000 in Emergency (IPC Phase 4).² Poor sanitation facilities, compounded by political instability and climate-induced droughts, continue to fuel Somalia's recurrent cholera crisis. The epidemic disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, particularly children under five years.³ These challenges have forced many people to flee their homes, while insecurity continues to block access to vital services and aid. Humanitarian access remains limited, highlighting the urgent need for coordinated action to support vulnerable populations, especially those in hard-to-reach areas.

* The 75% in the second key message is the total of the following categories

- Many HHs do not have enough food to eat (34%)
- Some HHs do not have enough food to eat (27%)
- All or almost all HHs do not have enough food to eat (14%)

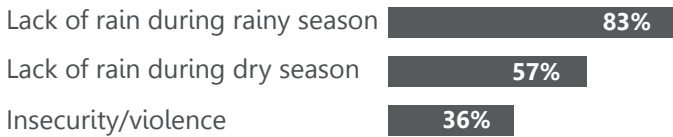
Coverage Map, January 2026.



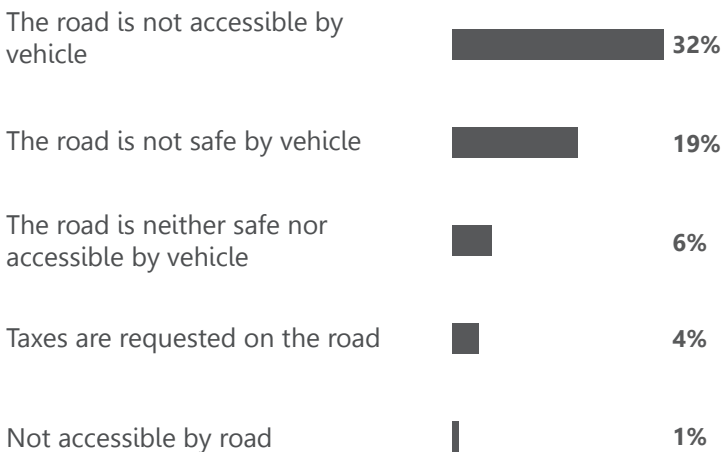
SHOCKS AND ACCESS

A prolonged lack of rainfall and insecurity were reported as primary drivers of humanitarian needs, particularly for food, safe drinking water, and healthcare. **Prolonged lack of rain during the Gu and Deyr rainy seasons was the most commonly reported shock in the year prior to data collection (83%),** followed by prolonged lack of rain during the dry season (57%) and insecurity (36%). These findings are consistent with data from SWALIM indicating that intensified drought has led to widespread water scarcity, crop failure, and livestock losses.⁴ **Key informants (KIs) in 61% of the assessed settlements reported that roads were either unsafe or inaccessible by vehicle.** This highlights the logistical challenges of delivering humanitarian assistance in hard-to-reach areas, where insecurity and poor infrastructure may further isolate the vulnerable communities.

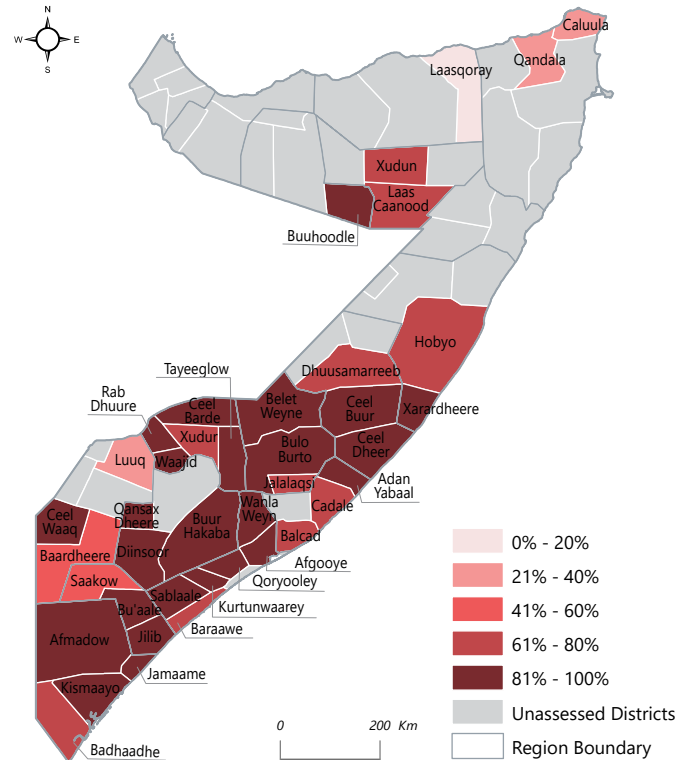
Three most commonly reported shocks by KIs regarding the assessed settlements in the year prior to data collection.*



% of assessed settlements where KIs reported roads were either inaccessible or unsafe by vehicle at the time of data collection.



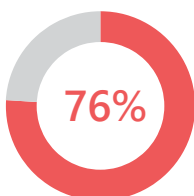
% of assessed settlements where KIs reported prolonged lack of rain during the rainy season as a shock in the 12 months prior to data collection.



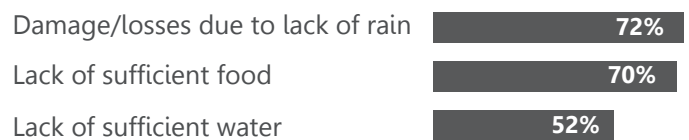
DISPLACEMENT

A lack of rain, coupled with a lack of sufficient food and water, reportedly drove displacement from hard-to-reach districts in the 30 days prior to data collection. **KIs in most of the assessed settlements reported that people had moved elsewhere within the 30 days prior to data collection (88%).** This finding aligns with the IOM projection report, which estimates that more than 200,000 individuals will be displaced between December 2025 and March 2026, with the majority of these displacements expected to be driven by drought conditions.⁵ Lack of rain (72%), insufficient food (70%) and insufficient water (52%), were reported as the drivers behind these displacements. Findings further indicate that there were individuals who wanted to leave but could not do so, primarily due to physical disabilities and age in most assessed settlements (76%).

% of assessed settlements where KIs reported there are people who wanted to leave the settlement but cannot do so.



Three most reported reasons why people moved out of their settlements within the 30 days prior to data collection, by % of assessed settlements.*



*KIs could select multiple answers, thus findings might exceed 100%.

FOOD SECURITY

Food insecurity appears severe in hard-to-reach districts. KIs in a majority of assessed settlements (75%) reported that a large proportion of households do not have enough food to eat. This finding is consistent with the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis, which estimates that nearly 6.5 million people in Somalia are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) between February and March 2026.⁶ KIs in most of the assessed settlements (86%) reported that households had to resort to emergency coping strategies just to obtain small amounts of food. The most commonly reported coping strategies include selling livestock or productive assets (55%), selling belongings (36%), and making children to work (27%). The remoteness of the hard-to-reach settlements, drought conditions, and rising food prices may further exacerbate food insecurity in these areas.

% of assessed settlements where a large proportion of households reportedly did not have enough food to eat at the time of data collection.

All or almost all HHs do not have enough food to eat (76-100%) **14%**

Many HHs do not have enough food to eat (51-75%) **34%**

Some HHs do not have enough food to eat (26-50%) **27%**

% of assessed settlements where KIs reported that some households in the settlement resorted to using the below strategies to cope with lack of food or money to buy food at the time of data collection.*

Selling livestock or productive assets **55%**

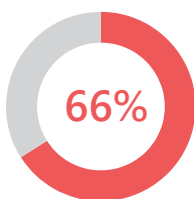
Selling belongings **36%**

Making children work **27%**

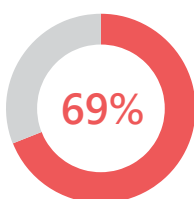
LIVELIHOODS

Adverse climate conditions, including insufficient rainfall and elevated temperatures, are negatively impacting the predominant livelihoods in hard-to-reach settlements and could be contributing to less access to food. **Key findings indicate that the main sources of livelihood in these areas are farming (37%), a combination of farming and livestock herding (26%), and livestock herding alone (21%). KIs in 77% of assessed settlements reported crop losses during the recent harvest.** The most commonly reported reasons for crop loss were lack of rain (90%), high temperatures (68%) and lack of water for irrigation (63%). These findings are consistent with the SWALIM early warning report, which documents widespread depletion of water sources, livelihood collapse due to failed harvests and livestock losses.⁷ The dry Jilal season (January–March 2026) may exacerbate these impacts.

% of assessed settlements where most households in the settlement planted crops in the most recent planting season.



% of assessed settlements where a decrease in the number of livestock owned among the households was reported in the three months prior to data collection.



Most commonly reported reasons for crop loss, by % of assessed settlements where crop loss was experienced during the most recent harvest season (77%).*

Lack of rain **90%**

High temperatures **68%**

Lack of water for irrigation **63%**

Most commonly reported reasons for livestock decrease, by % of assessed settlements where livestock decrease was experienced during the three months prior to data collection (69%).*

Sale or slaughter **75%**

Lost during migration **27%**

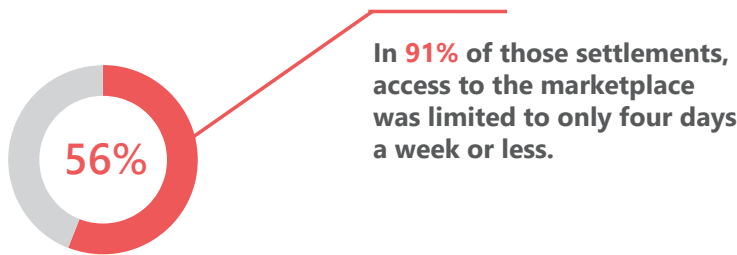
*KIs could select multiple answers, thus findings might exceed 100%.

**Note: Crop loss estimates from KIs for most households during the recent harvest season are included in this finding, regardless of the reported level of crop loss.

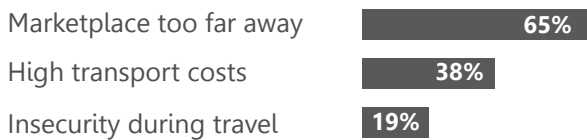
ACCESS TO MARKETS

Populations in hard-to-reach settlements face challenges in accessing markets, limiting households' ability to obtain essential goods and services and contributing to food insecurity. **KIs in more than half of the assessed settlements (56%) reported that markets were only accessible on some days, and in 91% of these cases, access was limited to just 1 to 4 days per week.** The most commonly reported barriers included distant markets (65%), high transport costs (38%), and insecurity during travel (22%). Furthermore, KIs in most of the assessed settlements reported sharp increases in the cost of food (82%) and water (75%) during the three months prior to data collection. These findings suggest that market barriers not only reduce the frequency of market access but also restrict the supply of essential goods and services, driving price hikes and worsening household vulnerabilities.

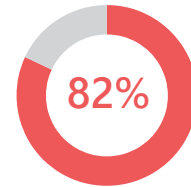
% of assessed settlements where KIs reported there was a functioning marketplace.



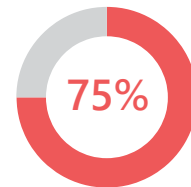
Top three reported barriers to accessing marketplaces, by % of settlements.*



% of assessed settlements where KIs reported increased food prices in the three months prior to data collection.



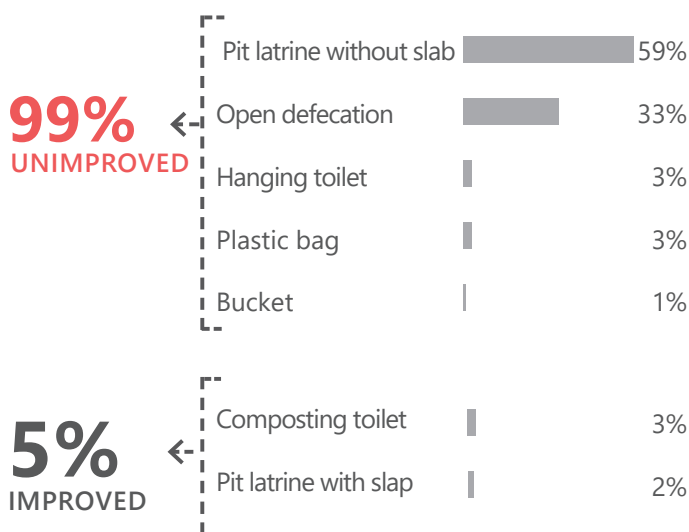
% of assessed settlements where KIs reported increased water prices in the three months prior to data collection.



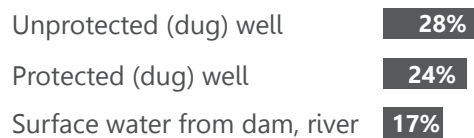
ACCESS TO WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE (WASH)

Access to safe water and improved sanitation facilities remains inadequate in hard-to-reach districts, with KIs in a majority of the assessed settlements (66%) reporting that some households occasionally relied on surface water sources for drinking. Similarly, in almost all of the assessed settlements (99%) households reportedly rely on unimproved sanitation facilities, including 33% of settlements where open defecation is practiced, which may reflect a lack of access to sanitation facilities and increase exposure to infectious diseases. The most commonly reported barriers to accessing water included distant water points (72%), inaccessibility for people with a disability (44%) and long waiting times at water points (20%). These conditions may increase the risk of waterborne disease outbreaks,⁸ particularly in hard-to-reach districts where healthcare services are already limited.

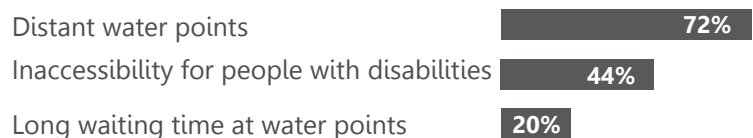
% of households found to be using "improved" and "unimproved" sanitation facilities.*



Top three main water sources used by most households in the settlement for drinking, by % of settlements.



Top three main problems reported when accessing water, by % of settlements.*

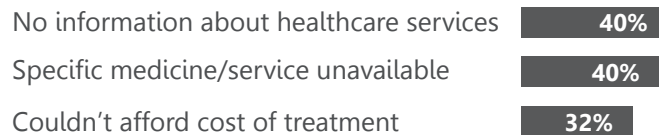


*KIs could select multiple answers, thus findings might exceed 100%.

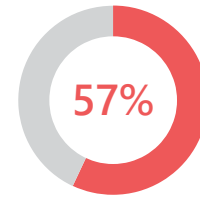
ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Communities in hard-to-reach settlements face major barriers to accessing healthcare. In the majority of assessed settlements (68%), KIs reported that residents had to travel outside their settlement to access healthcare. This challenge is reflected in majority of assessed settlements (66%), where households had to travel more than 30 minutes using the most common mode of transportation to reach the nearest health facility. Moreover, **KIs in most of the assessed locations (77%) indicated that neither healthcare nor nutrition services had been provided in the month prior to data collection**, highlighting the limited availability of essential services. These conditions may heighten the risk of severe acute malnutrition among children and may increase vulnerability to diseases such as measles, diphtheria, and acute watery diarrhea (AWD).⁹

Top three most reported main barriers to accessing healthcare services for households in the settlement, by % of settlements.*



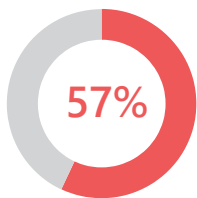
% of assessed settlements where KIs reported that healthcare workers did not come to the settlement or provide basic health services at the time of data collection.



ACCESS TO EDUCATION

A lack of learning facilities was evident in hard-to-reach areas, with most of the assessed settlements (71%) reportedly having no educational facilities within the settlement. This gap was reflected in school attendance patterns, as in the six months prior to data collection, KIs in a majority of the assessed settlements reported that many school-aged children had not been attending regularly (at least four days per week), with 70% of boys and girls aged 13–17 not attending school consistently. These findings roughly align with the Geneva Global Hub for Education in Emergencies report, which noted that in Somalia, approximately 3.4 million children (58%) of school aged children were out of school in 2025.¹⁰ The most commonly reported barriers include the absence of learning facilities, high school fees and children helping at home or on the farm.

% of assessed settlements where KIs reported the nearest education facility was more than 30 minutes away using the most common mode of transportation at the time of data collection.



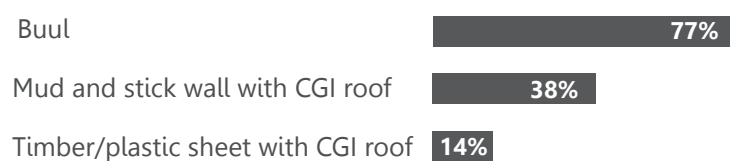
Barriers to accessing education for primary and secondary school-aged children (5-17 years), by % of assessed settlements.*

	Boys	Girls
No school in the settlement	72%	71%
High school fees	35%	30%
Helping at home or farm	27%	30%

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE SHELTER

Shelter conditions in hard-to-reach districts remain a significant challenge, with many households in the assessed settlements relying on inadequate shelter types such as Buul (77%), mud and stick wall with corrugated galvanized iron roof (CGI) (38%), and CGI sheet wall and roof (14%).** Additionally, vulnerable groups such as persons with disabilities, the elderly, and women were reported to have unequal access to the same shelter types as other groups, highlighting their increased vulnerability to environmental hazards in hard-to-reach settlements.

Three most commonly reported inadequate shelter types, by % of assessed settlements.*,**



% of assessed settlements by the most reported population groups who did not have equal access to the same shelter types.*



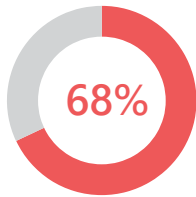
*KIs could select multiple answers, thus findings may exceed 100%.

**Buul (timber structure with plastic sheet).

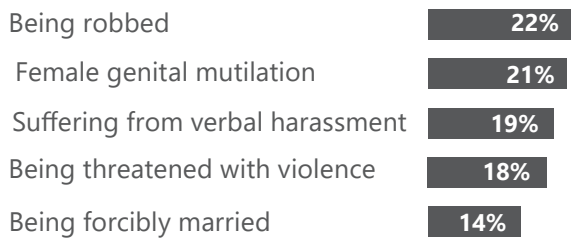
PROTECTION

Protection concerns are widespread in hard-to-reach districts, with 68% of KIs in assessed settlements reporting at least one protection risk at the time of data collection. The most commonly reported risks included robbery (22%), female genital mutilation (22%), and verbal harassment (20%). The groups most affected were girls under 18, adult women (18–59 years), and boys under 18, indicating that women and youth are reportedly the most vulnerable to protection risks in these settlements. These findings correspond with the UNHCR Biannual Protection Progress Report, which highlights that conflicts, climate shocks, displacement, and limited access to justice are shaping protection risks in Somalia, factors that particularly heighten vulnerabilities for women, children, and persons with disabilities.¹¹

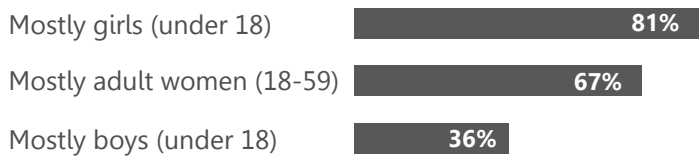
% of assessed settlements where at least one protection risk was reported at the time of data collection.



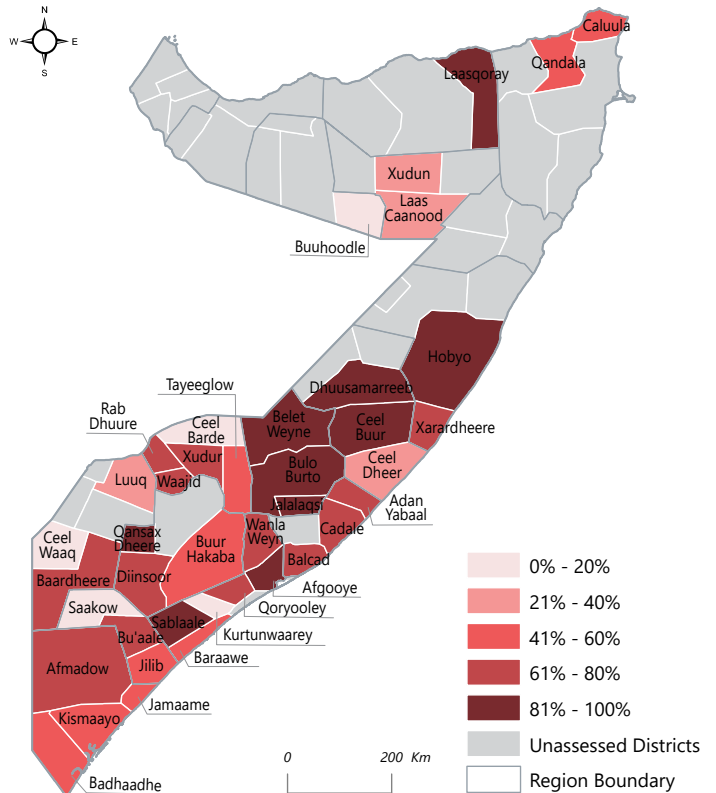
The five most commonly reported protection risks in the assessed settlements at the time of data collection.*



% of groups of people that reportedly face the most protection risks.*



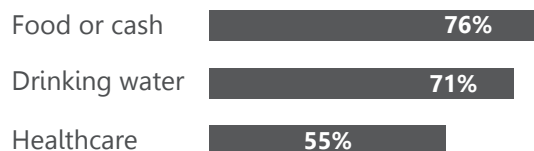
% of assessed settlements reporting protection risks at the time of data collection, per district.



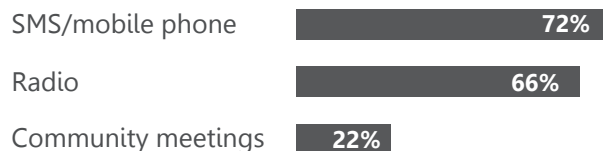
AAP AND COMMUNICATIONS

Settlements in hard-to-reach districts continue to experience a lack of humanitarian assistance, with 94% of assessed settlements reporting no aid received in the six months prior to data collection. Barriers to accessing aid include long distances to distribution points (65%), high transport costs (33%), and dangers encountered during travel (28%). In addition to these challenges, communities face significant difficulties in accessing information due to the absence of electricity, mobile networks, and radio signals. These constraints are largely driven by remoteness and insecurity, which together contribute to the overall inaccessibility of these areas.

Top three reported priority needs for most households in assessed settlements, by % of assessed.*



Top three reported preferred channels of communication for most households in the settlement, by % of assessed settlements.*



*KIs could select multiple answers, thus findings might exceed 100%.

METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

This assessment was based on an Area of Knowledge (AoK) methodology, which relies on key informant (KI) quantitative interviews to provide an indicative overview of hard-to-reach areas in Somalia. When possible, enumerators interviewed KIs who were living in hard-to-reach areas at the time of data collection by mobile phone. Where mobile phone interviews were not possible, then face-to-face interviews were conducted in accessible areas. Accessible areas included Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) sites and markets, among others. The KIs were selected if they were from the target hard-to-reach settlement and were knowledgeable enough to report on the settlement with regards to basic services, markets, livelihoods, and sectoral needs. Data collection took place between 11 January 2026 and 21 January 2026. Respondents were identified via snowball sampling

through the KIs interviewed. Data was collected at the settlement level, i.e., the questionnaire related to site-level humanitarian needs, not individual needs. A total of 3458 key informant interviews were conducted across 1063 settlements in 41 districts categorized as facing Very Heavy Restrictions by the Access Working Group. Three KIs were conducted per settlement. When there was no-consensus among the KIs from the same settlement, the results were not aggregated and thus no consensus is indicated in the response. The analysis and findings in this brief are indicative and not statistically representative of the assessed districts. For more information, please see the [Methodology Note](#).

ENDNOTES

1. Somalia Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HRNP) 2026 Report, retrieved from: <https://somalia.un.org/en/308877-2026-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-hnrp>
2. Somalia: IPC Projection for October to December 2025, retrieved from: <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1159740/>
3. NIH: Cholera Crisis in Somalia, retrieved from: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC12368357/>
4. SWALIM Update: Somalia Gu 2026 climate outlook, retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/swalim-update-somalia-gu-2026-climate-outlook-issued-6-february-2026>
5. IOM: Multi-hazard displacement projections, retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-multi-hazard-displacement-projections-quarter-1-december-2025-march-2026>
6. IPC January 2026 and projections for February to March 2026 Report retrieved from: <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1161024/?iso3=SOM>
7. FSNAU Somalia: Early warning alert on drought in Somalia, retrieved from: https://fsnau.org/downloads/FSNAU_SWALIM_JOINT_ALERT_ON_DROUGHT_IN_SOMALIA_08_Dec_2025.pdf
8. Somalia: WHO Health Emergency Appeal 2026, retrieved from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-who-health-emergency-appeal-2026>
9. MSF: Sharp rise in malnutrition cases, preventable diseases in Somalia, retrieved from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/1/20/sharp-rise-in-malnutrition-cases-preventable-diseases-in-somalia-msf>
10. Geneva Global Hub for education in emergencies: Somalia's education crises, retrieved from: <https://eiehub.org/country-briefs/country-brief-somalias-education-crisis>
11. UNHCR, Biannual Protection Progress Report, retrieved from: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/118179>

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