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NO RAIN, NO FOOD, NO ANIMALS:

THE HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT OF DROUGHT AND
DISPLACEMENT IN SOMALIA

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Cover photo: Houses of refugees in Dadaab Refugee camp, Northern Kenya. Picture taken on 19 September 2024. © Amnesty International

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GLOSSARY

WORD	DESCRIPTION
CLIMATE FINANCE	Local, national or transnational financing – drawn from public, private and alternative sources of financing – that seeks to support mitigation and adaptation actions that will address climate change. ¹
CROSS-BORDER DISPLACEMENT	The involuntary or forced movement, evacuation or relocation of persons or groups across internationally recognized state borders.
FORCED EVICTIONS	The permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals, families and/or communities from the homes and/or land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection.
INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT	The involuntary or forced movement, evacuation or relocation of persons or groups within internationally recognized state borders. ²
INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPS)	Persons or groups who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to, avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border. ³
LOSS AND DAMAGE	The manifestation of climate crisis impacts that have not been avoided through failure to mitigate global heating by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and/or cannot be avoided by adapting to the challenges posed by the rising temperatures through adaptation efforts. ⁴

¹ UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, “Introduction to climate finance”, <https://unfccc.int/topics/introduction-to-climate-finance>

² Amnesty International, *Madagascar: That suffering haunts me even here: The struggle for human rights of the Antandroy people displaced by climate change from southern Madagascar* (Index AFR 35/0075/2025), 30 July 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr35/0075/2025/en/>, p. 5.

³ Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, 1998, UN Doc. E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2.

⁴ The Loss and Damage Collaboration, *What is Loss and Damage?*, <https://www.lossanddamagecollaboration.org/whatislossanddamage#2>

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research focuses on displacement in southern and central Somalia between 2020 and 2023, when the country experienced a four-year-long drought. It examines how pre-existing exposure to risk, conflict and lack of adequate social protection worsened the conditions of people affected and shows how floods and drought mutually disrupt their livelihoods and cause displacement.

The report highlights Somalia's political and economic context, showing how protracted civil war and economic challenges have led to poverty and exposed people to climate shocks. The research methodology involved interviewing people displaced across borders, humanitarian actors in Dadaab camp, humanitarian and government officials in Kenya and Somalia and climate change experts. The researchers also reviewed government reports and documents, and reports by organizations working on climate displacement in Somalia and the wider region.

This methodology allowed the research to tap into the lived experiences of people displaced by climate change, to assess duty bearers' and protection systems' capacity to adequately respond to the challenges of climate displacement, and to determine related human rights violations. Using attribution science, the report explains how climate change affected the long and short rains and worsened the drought, resulting in drought, drying of rivers and displacement. Failure by the government of Somalia to protect affected people in turn resulted in the violations of human rights, particularly the right to food, water, health and life.

As a signatory to several regional and international legal instruments, and in line with its constitution and other relevant laws, Somalia is obligated to respect, fulfil and protect the human rights of people affected by climate change. These include the right to food, water, social security, life and health, as well as the prevention of displacement and the protection of people who are already displaced. However, this report shows that Somalia's failure to protect these rights has forced people to flee, firstly into camps within Somalia and subsequently across the border into Dadaab camp in Kenya.

PATTERNS OF CLIMATE-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT

This report examines how rivers drying up in the riverine areas (between the Jubba and Shabelle rivers), as well as livestock dying and crops drying, have rendered southern and central Somalia uninhabitable, thereby forcing people to move into already overcrowded camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Somalia. Only limited support is provided by a few NGOs operating there, and the threat posed by Al-Shabaab further worsens the situation. At the same time, many displaced people move on to peri-urban areas, mainly Baidoa, Buale, Bardhere, Jilib and Mogadishu. However, a lack of adequate government and humanitarian social support means people are often forced to move again to the Dadaab camp in Kenya.

Most families reach Dadaab by walking or donkey cart, although some donkeys die on the way due to drought. Most families rely on "well-wishers" to transport them across the border. As many cannot afford to pay for all their relatives to move to Dadaab, the elderly and some children, particularly boys, are often left behind. This family separation undermines children's and the elderly's rights and leaves them more exposed to drought-related malnutrition, disease and famine.

IMPACT OF DROUGHT ON THE RIGHT TO FOOD, WATER AND HEALTH

THE RIGHT TO FOOD

Drought has disrupted people's livelihoods – including pastoralism, farming and trade – and destroyed food sources, thereby undermining people's right to food. As agriculture is destroyed, businesses lose their customers and are forced to close. This has resulted in increased poverty and eventually displacement. Floods destroying the traditional storage method of *bakar* further expose farmers to famine during drought. Drought has also destroyed supply systems and community-based social security, in which neighbours and relatives rely on each other for food. As food prices have risen sharply, food has become unaffordable for many. Coupled with general food scarcity, this has left a balanced diet inaccessible to many people who were already starving, leading to malnutrition and deaths.

THE RIGHT TO WATER

The long drought has resulted in surface water drying up in dams, the river Shabelle and other seasonal rivers, and a rapid reduction of water levels in the river Jubba, where reports say only pools of water mostly remain. Satellite imagery from Amnesty International supports these findings. This has left many families walking up to 12 hours to find water. Most underground water sources, like wells and boreholes, are also dry, with a few remaining ones too polluted to use. High salinity in groundwater sources, beyond the WHO-recommended levels, has also undermined the quality and usefulness of water. Water scarcity has led to a sharp rise in costs, further inhibiting access to food. Intersectional gender discrimination has additionally negatively affected women's access to water. This is because women from clans that did not have access to or control over water sources, such as wells and dams, ended up being excluded from accessing water as well.

THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

Water contamination during drought has resulted in outbreaks of diseases such as cholera. This has been compounded by rampant malnutrition, especially among children. Limited access to health facilities and high treatment costs have made it impossible for many people to access healthcare, making an already dire situation worse. This not only violates their right to health, but also their right to life since the result too often is death.

CHARCOAL BURNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

The Government of Somalia has failed to adequately undertake its environmental protection obligations. Despite the UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution banning international trade in Somalia's charcoal, the country has not reduced its charcoal burning. The result is massive deforestation, further drought and threats to ecosystem sustainability. Illegal "taxes" imposed by Al-Shabaab on charcoal and firewood traders, water and food vendors and sources, further jeopardize people's access to food and water, resulting in displacement into camps within Somalia and Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya.

LOSS AND DAMAGE AND CLIMATE FINANCE

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) obligates parties to cooperate on climate adaptation. It notes that both the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement confer financing obligations on high-income countries that have contributed the most to the climate crisis.

Under international human rights law, all countries in a position to do so must provide resources to countries in need of support for the progressive realization of economic, social and cultural rights, including in the context of human-induced climate change. By failing to do so, especially in the context of the negotiations on

a new climate finance target at COP29, and the lack of adequate contributions to the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, high-income, high-emitting countries have failed to fulfil their obligations to displaced people in Somalia, resulting in their displacement into Kenya.

Such an influx also puts strain on people already in Dadaab, by causing food and water scarcity and resulting in environmental destruction. Paris Agreement obligations require states to enhance the resilience of communities, livelihoods and ecosystems, as well as early warning systems, emergency preparedness and comprehensive climate change risk assessment. These are lacking in Somalia's drought context, denoting a national dereliction of duty exacerbated by a lack of adequate international assistance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The report concludes with recommendations to the Government of Somalia, Somalia's development partners, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the East African Community (EAC), the African Union (AU) and high-income, historically high-emitting countries, and high-income fossil fuel-producing countries. These recommendations include urging Somalia to fulfil its international and domestic legal obligations to people affected by drought and displacement, particularly the fulfilment, protection and respect of their rights to food and livelihood, health, water and life. They also encourage its development partners and high-income, historically high-emitting countries and high-income fossil fuel-producing countries to provide adequate humanitarian assistance and climate finance to enable the country to fulfil its obligations to people affected by climate change. Specific recommendations apply to increased contributions towards the fund for loss and damage.

2. METHODOLOGY

This report analyses the cross-border displacement of people from Somalia to Kenya caused by climate-related drought between 2020 and 2023. Amnesty International has focused on the experiences of people who arrived in Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp during this time.

Amnesty International visited Dadaab refugee camp from 17 to 27 September 2024 and interviewed 94 women and 31 men. Due to the interlink between drought and floods, and the government's corresponding failure to fulfil its obligations to people affected, Amnesty International also interviewed 34 women and 18 men displaced from Somalia by flooding. They had moved into the three camps inside Dadaab complex – Dagahaley, Hagadera and IFO. The interviewees had fled from Jubaland, Hirshabelle and South West state in Somalia. The interviews were conducted in Dadaab town, Dagahaley and Hagadera refugee camps, in Somali with interpretation. Due to logistical and security challenges, the interviews with participants from IFO were held in Dadaab town.

In addition to those forced to leave Somalia, Amnesty International interviewed 20 stakeholders, including government officials, humanitarian workers and climate experts through a combination of in-person and online interviews. These included officials from the state governments of Hirshabelle, South West and Jubaland, as well as Kenyan government officials, including the Deputy County Commissioner for Dadaab and the Settlement Officer in Dadaab. Eight humanitarian actors operating in southern Somalia and seven in Dadaab Refugee Complex were also interviewed, along with a scientist from World Weather Attribution⁵ and a Somalia-Kenya cross-border livestock trader.

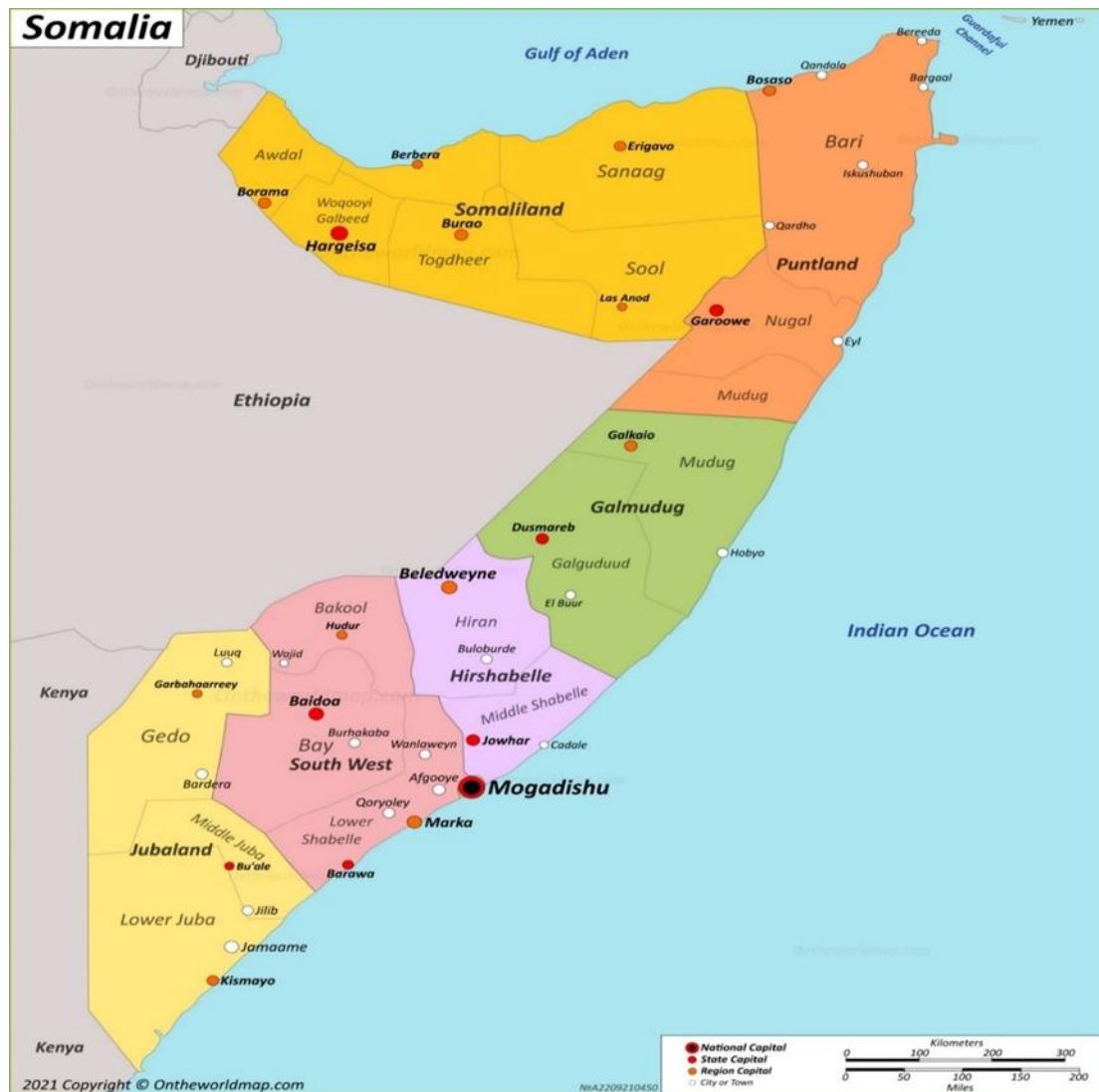
Interviewees were identified through prior networks and referrals. Amnesty International's investigators informed interviewees about the research's nature and purpose, the possible consequences of the interview, and how their information would be used. All participants gave informed verbal consent before their interview and were invited to stop if they wished at any time during the interview. To protect people's identities, some names have been anonymized and other identifying information omitted. All interviews were conducted to ensure their privacy and security. Survivors were selected through trusted community leaders. Where interviewees had to travel to meet the investigators, Amnesty International reimbursed their transport expenses.

Amnesty International also reviewed academic studies on the history of displacement from Somalia to Kenya, climate attribution studies, drought-related reports from the Somali government, UN and humanitarian agencies in Somalia, as well as Somalia's Nationally Determined Contribution and National Transformation Plans.

The researchers used satellite imagery to corroborate the severity of drought, the drying up of rivers and encampments by displaced people in peri-urban areas. These were analysed by Amnesty International's Crisis Evidence Lab.

Amnesty International shared its findings in writing with the Somali government on 16 October 2025 and requested their response. At the time of publication, no response had been received.

⁵ World Weather Attribution is an international organization that researches extreme weather events with a focus on climate attribution science. It includes members from the Centre for Environmental Policy, Imperial College London, The Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute and the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre.



Map of Somalia indicating federal states

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 SOMALIA'S SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Following the collapse of Somalia's government in 1991, various warlords took charge of different parts of the country, imposing their rule and undermining both human rights and state governance.⁶ The African Union (AU), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the United Nations (UN) made numerous attempts to stabilize the country, but the entrenched conflict, inter-clan dynamics and climate change-related factors worsened the disintegration. The situation was further exacerbated by the emergence of Al-Shabaab, an armed group that controls a significant part of southern and central Somalia and has carried out attacks both in Somalia and Kenya.⁷

Following sustained efforts by regional and international actors, including the UN, IGAD and AU, a functional government has been established. However, clan militia, warlords and armed groups such as ISIS and Al-Shabaab still control large parts of the country. Al-Shabaab in particular continues to pose a significant security threat to the government.⁸ This limits the state's power and authority.⁹ In 2012, the country adopted a draft constitution designed to re-establish governance institutions and steer the country towards prosperity and peace. However, the challenges outlined above, continuous infighting between the federal government and member states, and limited resources still undermine the constitution's full realization.¹⁰ Somalia joined the East African Community (EAC) in 2024, thereby strengthening its regional engagements¹¹ and potentially enhancing other member countries' interests in Somalia's stability, including dealing with drought and displacement.

⁶ Conciliation Resources, *Whose peace is it anyway? connecting Somali and international peace-making*, 2010, <https://www.c-r.org/so/learning-hub/whose-peace-is-it-anyway-connecting-somali-and-international-peace-making-somali#:~:text=Edited%20by%20Mark%20Bradbury%20and%20Sally%20Healy%20it,academics%2C%20involved%20parties%2C%20civil%20society%20and%20women%E2%80%99s%20organisations>.

⁷ Council for Foreign Relations, "Conflict with Al-Shabaab in Somalia", <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/al-shabab-somalia> (accessed on 22 February 2024).

⁸ Council for Foreign Relations, "Conflict With Al-Shabaab in Somalia", <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/al-shabab-somalia>; Reuters, "Al-Shabaab attacks strategic Somalia town as it presses offensive", <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/al-shabaab-attacks-strategic-somalia-town-it-presses-offensive-2025-04-16/>.

⁹ Crisis Group, *The Islamic State in Somalia: Responding to an Evolving Threat*, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-of-africa/somalia/islamic-state-somalia-responding-evolving-threat> (accessed on 22 February 2024).

¹⁰ Mohammad Osman Jawari, *On the Finalization of the Constitutional Review Process in Somalia*, *Constitution Net*, International IDEA, 29 September 2023, <https://constitutionnet.org/news/finalization-constitutional-review-process-somalia>.

¹¹ Sylvanus Wekesa, "Risks And Prospects of Somalia's East African Community (EAC) Membership", March 2025, Policy Brief, Volume 1, Issue 2, https://www.soas.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-04/IPSS-SOAS_vol.1_issue-2.pdf.

With a gross domestic product (GDP) of US\$10.9 billion,¹² Somalia is one of the lowest-income countries in the world. It has a significant underfunding of health,¹³ education, infrastructure, water,¹⁴ frequent disease outbreaks, high maternal and child mortality,¹⁵ as well as corruption and a low revenue base.¹⁶

The 2024 Somalia Multidimensional Poverty Report, which integrates access to basic services within its conception of poverty, indicates that 67% of Somalia's population lives below the poverty line.¹⁷ Multidimensional poverty is highest in rural and pastoralist areas at 74% and 81%, respectively. Urban areas have a multidimensional poverty rate of 61%.¹⁸ According to the report, the states that this research focuses on recorded multidimensional poverty levels of 78% (South West State) and 87% (Hirshabelle State), while two regions in the Jubaland state, Lower Jubba and Gedo regions, recorded poverty levels of 89% and 86%, respectively, all indicating multidimensional poverty even higher than the national average.¹⁹

In this context, human-induced climate change has aggravated poverty, especially in southern Somalia, forcing people to migrate to IDP camps in Somalia and across the border into Kenya.

3.2 THE SOUTHERN SOMALIA DROUGHT (2020-2023)

3.2.1 DROUGHT TRAJECTORY AND DYNAMICS

Somalia is on the front line of climate change, mainly caused by humans producing and burning fossil fuels (see section 3.2.2). Assessed as the seventh most climate-vulnerable country in the world,²⁰ it has experienced more than 30 climate-related extreme weather events since 1990, including 12 droughts and 19 floods.²¹ Although the whole of Somalia is generally susceptible to drought, southern Somalia is acutely impacted, including Jubaland, Hirshabelle and South West states.

Somalia historically has two main rainy seasons every year: the *Gu* season (April to June), characterized by long and more intense rains and the *Deyr* (October to December) period with limited and short rains.²² However, since 2010, human-induced climate change has amplified and made more frequent the existing oceanic drivers of climate change. This has led to rains becoming more erratic, with non-existent or below-average rainfall. The result is persistent drought interspersed by intense floods.²³

Somalia has two main rivers: Jubba, which originates in the Ethiopian highlands and passes through Jubaland into the Indian Ocean, and Shabelle, which originates in Ethiopia, flows through Hirshabelle and South West State and merges with Jubba just before it enters the Indian Ocean.

Between 2010 and 2023, Somalia experienced eight failed rainy seasons and five average seasons, resulting in an intense drought in 2011-2012. Although some rains returned in the intervening period, it was generally erratic and below average.²⁴ The situation worsened from 2020 onwards, causing famine, which displaced people into urban areas, IDP camps, and across international borders.²⁵ The intense drought forced humanitarian actors, led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), to launch a

¹² World Bank, GDP (Current US\$), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD>

¹³ Amnesty International, *Somalia: "We just watched COVID-19 patients die": COVID-19 exposed Somalia's weak healthcare system but debt relief can transform it* (Index: AFR 52/4602/2021), 18 August 2021.

¹⁴ World Bank Group, *Toward Building Somalia's Social Contract: State affordability, revenue mobilization, and service delivery in a nascent federal state*, 2024,

<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099111424062026744/pdf/P1719741f0d3390fc1bb9515d17a216325d.pdf>

¹⁵ Amnesty International, "Reduction of Somali health budget after 2023 debt relief a betrayal", 2 July 2024,

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2024/07/reduction-of-somalia-health-budget-a-betrayal/>

¹⁶ Amnesty International, *Reduction of Somali health budget* (previously cited).

¹⁷ Federal Republic of Somalia, *Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) For Somalia Report*, 2024, <https://nbs.gov.so/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Multidimensional-Poverty-Index-MPI-2024.pdf>, p. 12.

¹⁸ Federal Republic of Somalia, *Multidimensional Poverty Index*, p. 13.

¹⁹ Federal Republic of Somalia, *Multidimensional Poverty Index*, p. 14.

²⁰ Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, *Vulnerability: Country Ranking*, 2023, <https://gain-new.crc.nd.edu/ranking/vulnerability>

²¹ UNSOM and Federal Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, "Statement on Worsening Drought",

<https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/somalia/somalia-joint-statement-worsening-drought-enso>

²² SWALIM, *Climate of Somalia*, 2007, https://faoswalim.org/resources/site_files/W-01%20Climate%20of%20Somalia_0.pdf

²³ UNDRR, Horn of Africa floods and drought, 2020-2023 Forensic analysis, <https://www.undrr.org/resource/horn-africa-floods-and-drought-2020-2023-forensic-analysis>

²⁴ UNDRR, Horn of Africa floods and drought (previously cited).

²⁵ Jutta Bakonyu, "The Political Economy of Displacement: Rent Seeking, Dispossession and Precarious Mobility in Somali Cities", 15 October 2020, *Global Policy*, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/17585899.12849?msocid=0d0b6a4d0d97624c1b077eb60c776378>

special appeal for humanitarian drought response in Somalia in 2020.²⁶ The below-average *Gu* rainfall in 2019 led to a 70% reduction in grain production,²⁷ exposing 2.1 million people to severe hunger. These challenges were compounded by the 2019 locust invasion²⁸ and the 2020-2021 Covid-19 pandemic, which strained resources and undermined both state and humanitarian responses.²⁹ By mid-2022, 7.7 million people in Somalia required humanitarian support, while 2.9 million had been displaced by both drought and conflict. Pointedly, 66% of those displaced by drought came from southern and central Somalia, highlighting the devastating impact of climate change in this region.³⁰

By 2023, the number of people needing humanitarian support had risen to 8.2 million, almost half the total population of Somalia³¹ with many requiring food, water and healthcare.

OCHA indicates that children were the most affected, with an estimated 1.8 million facing malnutrition. Under these circumstances, IDP camps in Somalia could not cope with increased arrivals due to limited supplies. This caused secondary displacements into the Dadaab camp in Kenya.³² The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that drought and conflict pushed over 80,000 people into the Dadaab camp in 2021 and 2022.³³ By February 2023, following subsequent failed rains, this figure had risen to 110,000.³⁴ The increase in cross-border displaced people threatened humanitarian actors' capacity to provide sufficient support.

In late 2023, the drought was replaced by floods following above-average rainfall during the *Deyr* season (October to December).³⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Somalia Disaster Management Authority reports indicate that the failed *Deyr* rainfalls in 2024 and lower than average rainfalls predicted for the 2025 *Gu* season could lead to renewed drought and famine by late 2025.³⁶ Such erratic rainfall patterns have undermined agricultural productivity, worsened food insecurity and displaced thousands of people.

3.2.2 ATTRIBUTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The Government of Somalia,³⁷ UNHCR, FAO and numerous humanitarian actors all attribute Somalia's recurrent drought and flood situations to human-induced climate change. This is caused mainly by greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels across the world since the Industrial Revolution, and mostly in historically high-emitting countries.³⁸

This position is backed by scientific evidence on climate attribution. The greater Horn of Africa region, which includes southern Somalia, experiences two main rainy seasons as detailed above.³⁹ Joyce Kimutai is a climatologist at World Weather Attribution, an initiative that uses weather observation and climate models to understand how human-induced climate change impacts the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. She links climate change directly to southern Somalia's high levels of warming and resultant evapotranspiration, both factors which contributed to the drought.⁴⁰ A recent study by Kimutai and others

²⁶ UNSOM, *Somalia's 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan needs US\$1 billion to help 3 million people*,

<https://unsom.unmissions.org/somalia%E2%80%99s-2020-humanitarian-response-plan-needs-1-billion-help-3-million-people>

²⁷ OCHA, *2020 Somalia Humanitarian Needs Overview*, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/2020-somalia-humanitarian-needs-overview>

²⁸ UNSOM, *Somalia gears up for a long fight against desert locust*, <https://somalia.un.org/en/33942-somalia-gears-long-fight-against-desert-locust>

²⁹ OCHA, *2022 Somalia Humanitarian Needs Overview*, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/2022-somalia-humanitarian-needs-overview>

³⁰ UNHCR, *Somalia: Internal Displacement*, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/1?sv=1&geo=192>

³¹ OCHA, *Somalia Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023*, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-humanitarian-needs-overview-2023-february-2023>

³² WFP, *Hit by multiple crises, tens of thousands of Somalis flock to refugee camps in Kenya*, <https://www.wfp.org/stories/hit-multiple-crises-tens-thousands-somalis-flock-refugee-camps-kenya>

³³ UNHCR, *Somalis flee drought and conflict to Kenya's Dadaab camps*, 13 December 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/somalis-flee-drought-and-conflict-kenyas-dadaab-camps>

³⁴ UNHCR, *Kenya's Dadaab camp swells with Somalis fleeing drought, conflict*, 28 February 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/kenyas-dadaab-camp-swells-somalis-fleeing-drought-conflict>

³⁵ OCHA Somalia: 2023 Deyr Season Floods Situation Report 4, 10 December 2023,

<https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/somalia/somalia-2023-deyr-season-floods-situation-report-no-4-10-december-2023>

³⁶ FAO-SWALIM, *SODMA and FAO Call for Immediate Preparedness Measures as Somalia Faces Severe Climate Challenges*, <https://www.faoswalim.org/article/sodma-and-fao-call-immediate-preparedness-measures-somalia-faces-severe-climate-challenges>

³⁷ Federal Republic of Somalia, Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), 19 June 2025, *Somalia's NDC 3.0* | UNFCCC.

³⁸ For instance, see UNHCR, *One million people displaced by drought in Somalia*, 11 August 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/news/news-releases/one-million-people-displaced-drought-somalia>. See also FAO, *Somalia: New data show how drought in the Horn of Africa is driving up acute hunger*, 12 April 2022, <https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/somalia-new-data-show-how-drought-in-the-horn-of-africa-is-driving-up-acute-hunger/en#:~:text=The%20latest%20Integrated%20Food%20Security%20Phase%20Classification%2028IPC%29,a%20staggering%208%20percent%20of%20the%20country%E2%80%99s%20population>

³⁹ Geert Jan van Oldenborgh, and others, *Rapid analysis of drought in Somalia, 2016*, <https://www.worldweatherattribution.org/somalia-drought-2016-2017/>

⁴⁰ Joyce Kimutai, interviewed online, 18 February 2024.

indicates that the 2020-2023 five consecutive failed rains are unprecedented in recorded Horn of Africa drought history.⁴¹ Using weather pattern analysis and evapotranspiration simulations, the study highlights how human-induced climate change most likely caused the March-May and October-December rainfall failures in the Horn of Africa in 2022.⁴² These observations mirror the findings of World Weather Attribution research, which attributes the 2020-2023 drought to human-induced climate change and notes that it is the worst drought in 40 years.⁴³ The World Weather Attribution study also points out that climate change has generally made drought about 100 times more likely in the Horn of Africa region.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Kimutai Joyce and others, *Human-induced climate change increased 2021–2022 drought severity in the Horn of Africa*, *Weather and Climate Extremes*, Vol 47 March 2025, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212094725000039>

⁴² Kimutai Joyce and others, Human-induced climate change (previously cited).

⁴³ World Weather Attribution, *Human-induced climate change increased drought severity in the Horn of Africa*, 27 April 2023, <https://www.worldweatherattribution.org/human-induced-climate-change-increased-drought-severity-in-southern-horn-of-africa/>

⁴⁴ World Weather Attribution, Human-induced climate change (previously cited).

4. SOMALIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS RELATED TO DROUGHT

4.1 RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS RELATED TO WATER

Although the right to water is not expressly listed within the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in General Comment 15 of 2003, has clarified that this right is implied under Articles 11 and 12 of the ICESCR which protect the rights to adequate standards of living and health respectively.⁴⁵ This position was affirmed by Human Rights Council (HRC) Resolution 16/2, which protects the right to safe drinking water and sanitation, as well as HRC resolutions 7/22 of 28 March 2008, 12/8 of 1 October 2009 and 15/9 of 30 September 2010, as well as UN General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 64/292, which recognize the right to water.⁴⁶ Access to adequate water and sanitation is also one of the substantive elements⁴⁷ of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2022.⁴⁸ In Somalia, the right to water is protected under Article 27 of its constitution, which entitles every person to “clean potable water”.⁴⁹

The right to water is conceptualized both as a right to access water and sanitation, as well as the right to clean and safe drinking water. The CESCR has linked this right directly to the right to health. Since water is important for agriculture, the CESCR has also linked the right to water to the right to food. Key parameters for determining this right include availability, adequacy, quality and accessibility.

⁴⁵ Somalia has not ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which equally emphasizes the right to water. This right, though not explicitly mentioned in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), has been interpreted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) as being implicit in the Covenant's protections of adequate living standards and health. This interpretation has been reinforced by successive Human Rights Council and UN General Assembly resolutions recognizing the right to safe drinking water and sanitation, and more recently by recognition of access to water and sanitation as part of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. In Somalia, this right is expressly guaranteed under Article 27 of the Constitution, which entitles every person to clean, potable water.

⁴⁶ CESCR, General Comment 15: The Right to Water (Articles 11 and 12 of the ICESCR), 20 January 2003, UN Doc. E/C.12/2002/11; UN Human Rights Council (HRC), Resolution 7/22, 28 March 2008; Resolution 12/8, 1 October 2009; Resolution 15/9, 30 September 2010; Resolution 16/2, 24 March 2011; UN General Assembly (UNGA), Resolution 64/292: The Human Right to Water and Sanitation, 28 July 2010; UNGA, Resolution 76/300: The Human Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment, 28 July 2022; Federal Republic of Somalia, Provisional Constitution, 1 August 2012, Article 27.

⁴⁷ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Environment Programme and United Nations Development Programme, “What is the Right to a Healthy Environment?”, 5 January 2023, <https://www.unodp.org/publications/what-right-healthy-environment>

⁴⁸ UN General Assembly Resolution 76/300: *The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment*, 1 August 2022, UN Doc. A/RES/76/300, https://documents.un.org/api/symbol/access?s=A/RES/76/300&l=en&i=A/RES/76/300_2321221

⁴⁹ Constitution of Somalia, 2012, https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Somalia_2012

The World Health Organization (WHO)'s guidelines on Drinking Water Quality evaluates the right to water in relation to microbial, chemical, radiological and acceptability aspects (taste, odour and colour). The Somali state is thus obligated to protect water sources from contamination that may undermine quality. This report details how Somalia has failed to fulfil this obligation. Based on the above considerations, Somalia has the duty to fulfil, respect and protect the right to water.⁵⁰ As regards protection, Somalia should prevent third parties such as Al-Shabaab from interfering with people's access to water sources. "Fulfilment" requires Somalia to guarantee accessible and affordable water and develop and implement appropriate water policies. "Respect" requires Somalia to avoid interfering with the right to water. Although Somalia has developed water regulation policies, implementation remains a challenge, leaving most people with inadequate and poor-quality water.

According to the ESCR General Comment 15, Somalia's duty to guarantee the availability of water extends to IDPs and populations at risk of human rights violations, including nomadic and traveller communities at designated stopping places,⁵¹ as well as refugees, asylum seekers, IDPs and returnees.⁵² This obligates Somalia, through international assistance, to provide communities displaced by climate change with water as they move to camps in Somalia or towards Kenya, as well as those already living in its IDP camps and peri-urban areas.

4.2 RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS RELATED TO ADEQUATE FOOD

The right to adequate food is guaranteed by Article 11 of the ICESCR. Paragraph (2) obligates states to protect people from hunger and improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food, including knowledge about nutrition. The level of drought-induced hunger and malnutrition causing displacement of people in Somalia indicates that the country has violated its obligations under the ICESCR.

The CESCR, in its General Comment 12, considered the right to adequate food to include:

"the availability of food in a quantity and quality sufficient to satisfy the dietary needs of individuals, free from adverse substances, and acceptable within a given culture; the accessibility of such food in ways that are sustainable and that do not interfere with the enjoyment of other human rights."⁵³

Healthy and sustainable food is also a substantive element of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.⁵⁴ In this regard, the right to food encompasses access and availability of food with appropriate nutritional content and sustainably available, including to future generations. Climate change undermines food sustainability because it destroys the agricultural and ecological environment needed to produce food. At the same time, the food must be free from contamination, available, culturally acceptable and accessible.

Food accessibility, according to the CESCR, includes food being affordable and physically accessible. The CESCR further notes that:

"victims of natural disasters, people living in disaster-prone areas and other specially disadvantaged groups may need special attention and sometimes priority consideration with respect to accessibility of food."⁵⁵

In this regard, Somalia has obligations to guarantee access to food to people affected by drought at home, on the move or in IDP camps.

CESCR emphasizes that state parties, as part of their ICESCR obligations and through international cooperation, should provide disaster relief and humanitarian assistance in times of emergency, including assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons.⁵⁶ This obligation applies to people affected by drought in Somalia. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights establishes minimum core obligations on the right to food, including that states must: (a) Take the necessary action to guarantee the

⁵⁰ CESCR (previously cited), para. 20.

⁵¹ CESCR (previously cited), para. 16(e).

⁵² CESCR (previously cited), para. 16 (f).

⁵³ CESCR, General Comment 12: The Right to Adequate Food (Article 11), 12 May 1999, UN Doc. E/C.12/1999/5, para. 8.

⁵⁴ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, United Nations Environment Programme and United Nations Development Programme, "What is the Right to a Healthy Environment?", (previously cited).

⁵⁵ CESCR, General Comment 12 (previously cited), para. 13.

⁵⁶ CESCR, General Comment 12 (previously cited), para. 38.

right of everyone to be free from hunger and to mitigate and alleviate hunger even in times of natural or other disasters; (b) Refrain from and protect against destruction and/or contamination of food sources.⁵⁷

Somalia's failure to prevent illegal "taxes" imposed on farmers by Al-Shabaab, or the armed group's use of food as an instrument of recruitment, violates this obligation. State parties, including Somalia, must also work with humanitarian actors to fast-track renovation of irrigation systems, provide tax incentives on food items to ensure affordability and provide food directly to at-risk populations, including drought-afflicted people. Somalia, therefore, needs to establish a social security system for delivering direct food assistance during disasters like drought. Regardless of resource limitations and recent global development assistance cuts,⁵⁸ the Government of Somalia still has an obligation to request international support as envisaged under Article 2 of the ICESCR. Additionally, under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)⁵⁹ and the Paris Agreement,⁶⁰ Somalia can seek climate finance for mitigation and adaptation and funding to address loss and damage.⁶¹

Regarding state obligations, the CESCR notes states' obligation to fulfil, respect and protect the right to adequate food.⁶² The duty to fulfil requires state parties like Somalia to provide and facilitate the acquisition of food to those who lack it, including in cases of drought. The obligation to protect requires Somalia to prevent third parties from interfering with people's right to access food. Somalia has failed this responsibility by not preventing Al-Shabaab from destroying people's livelihoods for not paying illegal "taxes" and forcing them to leave their homes.

Recognizing that economic capacity may impact a country's ability to realize people's right to food, the CESCR emphasizes that:

"Even where a State faces severe resource constraints, whether caused by a process of economic adjustment, economic recession, climatic conditions or other factors, measures should be undertaken to ensure that the right to adequate food is especially fulfilled for vulnerable population groups and individuals."⁶³

Somalia is thus obligated to provide at least a basic core minimum⁶⁴ level of the right to adequate food for people affected by drought. This obligation could be fulfilled by seeking international cooperation and assistance in line with the ICESCR, the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC.

4.3 RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS RELATED TO HEALTH

4.3.1 THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

Somalia has both constitutional and international human rights obligations to protect displaced people's right to the highest attainable quality of health. This obligation arises from Article 12 of ICESCR and Article 27 of Somalia's constitution. Under Article 12 of the ICESCR, Somalia must prevent, treat and control epidemic, endemic, occupational and other diseases and create conditions which would guarantee medical treatment in the event of sickness.⁶⁵ To achieve this, Somalia should increase the current health allocation from 4.8%⁶⁶ of its overall budget to 15% as recommended in the Abuja Declaration.⁶⁷

⁵⁷ African Commission on Human and People's Rights, Principles and Guidelines on the Implementation of Economic, Social And Cultural Rights in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR Principles and Guidelines), adopted on 24 October 2011, para. 86.

⁵⁸ World Bank, "Somalia's Economic Prospects are Positive, but Foreign Aid Cuts are Downsizing Growth", <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2025/06/30/somalia-afe-economic-prospects-are-positive-but-foreign-aid-cuts-are-downsizing-growth#:~:text=The%202025%20Somalia%20Economic%20Update%2C%20Edition%2010%2C%20issued,recently%2C%20given%20Somalia%27s%20heavy%20reliance%20on%20external%20assistance,> accessed on 14 August 2025.

⁵⁹ UNFCCC, Article 4(3).

⁶⁰ Paris Agreement, Article 9.

⁶¹ Paris Agreement, Article 8.

⁶² CESCR, General Comment 12 (previously cited), para. 15.

⁶³ CESCR, General Comment 12 (previously cited), para. 28.

⁶⁴ CESCR, General Comment 3, The Nature of States Parties' Obligations (Article 2 of the Covenant) 14 December 1990, UN Doc E/1991/23, para. 10.

⁶⁵ UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), General Comment 14: The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health (Article 12), 11 August 2000, UN Doc. E/C.12/2000/4, para. 2.

⁶⁶ David Ngira, "Reduction of Somali health budget after 2023 debt relief a betrayal", 2 July 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2024/07/reduction-of-somalia-health-budget-a-betrayal/>

⁶⁷ African Summit on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases, Abuja, Nigeria, 24-27 April 2001 Declaration OAU/SPS/Abuja/3, <https://au.int/sites/default/files/pages/32894-file-2001-abuja-declaration.pdf>

According to CESCR General Comment 14, minimum core obligations as regards the right to health require states to:

“(a) promote equality in access to health facilities, goods and services; (b) ensure access to the minimum and essential adequate food; (c) ensure access to basic shelter, housing and sanitation, and adequate water; (d) provide essential drugs; (e) ensure equitable distribution of all health facilities, goods and services; and (f) adopt and implement a scientifically informed national public health strategy and plan of action.”

In this regard, minimum core obligations require states to not only guarantee healthcare services but also provide other social services relevant to fulfilling the right to health, including the right to food and the right to dignity.⁶⁸ Somalia’s failure to guarantee these minimum obligations, as outlined in the section below, is therefore a dereliction of duty. Of particular concern is that this failure has resulted in death or displacement as people move in search of health services, food and livelihoods and social services.

The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) has emphasized that minimum core obligations on the right to health require states to:

“(a) ensure the right of access to health facilities, goods and services on a non-discriminatory basis, especially for vulnerable or marginalised groups; (b) ensure the provision of essential drugs to all those who need them, as periodically defined under the WHO Action Programme on Essential Drugs, and particularly anti-retroviral drugs; (c) ensure universal immunisation against major infectious diseases; (d) take measures to prevent, treat and control epidemic and endemic diseases; and (e) provide education and access to information concerning the main health problems in the community, including methods of preventing and controlling them.”⁶⁹

Implicit in the right to health is the right to life. Both the ICCPR⁷⁰ and the ACHPR⁷¹ emphasize the right to life. The UN Human Rights Committee (HRC), in its General Comment 36, has emphasized that the right to life involves protecting individuals from acts and omissions that may cause premature deaths as well as those that inhibit the enjoyment of life with dignity.⁷² Recognizing the threat that extreme deprivations such as famine, lack of healthcare and water, malnutrition and extreme poverty pose to the right to life, the Committee emphasizes that the obligation to protect the right to life includes the duty to respond to socio-economic challenges that may cause premature death.⁷³ Accordingly, Somalia is under an obligation to protect people affected by drought by guaranteeing access to food, water, and health services as part of its fulfilment of their right to health.

4.3.2 THE RIGHT TO A CLEAN, HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT

The right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (right to a healthy environment) is a precondition for the enjoyment of all other human rights, including the rights to life, health, food, water and sanitation. The HRC has recognized the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on the right to life, noting that:

“Implementation of the obligation to respect and ensure the right to life, and in particular life with dignity, depends, inter alia, on measures taken by States parties to preserve the environment and protect it against harm, pollution and climate change caused by public and private actors. States parties should therefore ensure sustainable use of natural resources, develop and implement substantive environmental standards, conduct environmental impact assessments and consult with relevant States about activities likely to have a significant impact on the environment (...).”⁷⁴

The UN General Assembly recognized this right as a stand-alone right in 2022 and emphasized that environmental degradation, climate change, biodiversity loss, desertification and unsustainable development were not only a threat to the right to health but a danger to both current and future generations to realize all

⁶⁸ CESCR, General Comment 14 (previously cited), para. 3.

⁶⁹ ACHPR Principles and Guidelines (previously cited), para. 67.

⁷⁰ ICCPR, Article 6.

⁷¹ ACHPR, Article 4.

⁷² Human Rights Committee (HRC), General Comment 36: The Right to Life (Article 6), 3 September 2019, UN Doc. CCPR/C/GC/36, para. 3.

⁷³ HRC General Comment 36 (previously cited), para. 26.

⁷⁴ HRC General Comment 36 (previously cited), para. 62.

other rights.⁷⁵ The International Court of Justice, in its Advisory Opinion of July 2025, confirmed that a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is essential for the enjoyment of other rights.⁷⁶

Prior to that, the right had been recognized at the regional level through Article 24 of the ACHPR, which provides for the right to a satisfactory environment favourable for people's development. This has been interpreted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, which monitors implementation of the charter, alongside Article 16, to:

“recognize the importance of a clean and safe environment that is closely linked to economic and social rights in so far as the environment affects the quality of life and safety of the individual.”⁷⁷

The Commission also highlights states' obligations to prevent pollution and ecological degradation, promote conservation and guarantee sustainable development.⁷⁸

The right to a healthy environment includes substantive elements such as clean air; a safe and stable climate; access to safe water and adequate sanitation; healthy and sustainably produced food; non-toxic environments in which to live, work, study and play; and healthy biodiversity and ecosystems.⁷⁹ It also includes access to information, the right to participate in decision-making, and access to justice and effective remedies. Realizing the right to a healthy environment requires international cooperation, including resource mobilization, as well as recognition of extraterritorial jurisdiction over human rights harms caused by environmental degradation.⁸⁰

The CESCR, in its General Comment 27, has highlighted that states have obligations to increase food systems' resilience to climate change, and to design, build and maintain water and sanitation infrastructure “to be resilient to the impacts of extreme weather and natural disasters”⁸¹ as a way of guaranteeing that the environment and ecosystems are able to support people's livelihoods and related rights.

The above obligations require Somalia to guarantee a clean, safe and healthy environment to the people of southern Somalia and to help them adapt to climate-related extreme weather events such as drought. By failing to adequately protect people from the extreme impacts of climate change, and therefore exposing them to human rights violations linked to drought – such as malnutrition, famine, internal displacement, and inadequate health services – Somalia has failed to discharge its obligations under the ICCPR, ICESCR and the ACHPR.

These issues have, in turn, led to cross-border displacement into Dadaab. Furthermore, given the outbreak of diarrhoea during drought, Somalia has failed to strengthen preventive and disease surveillance mechanisms during the drought, resulting in deprivation of the right to health, deaths and displacement. Failure to protect water sources from contamination, as well as limited physical access to health facilities for affected populations, further demonstrates Somalia's failure to fulfil its obligations. The high cost of medical services inhibited many of those who fell sick during the drought from accessing medical services, further denoting a failure to fulfil obligations under Somalia's constitution, the ACHPR and the ICESCR.

This report demonstrates rampant malnutrition during the drought. Malnourished children arriving in Dadaab reflected the extent of the state's failure to fulfil its duty to ensure access to adequate healthcare. The absence of a functional public health and efficient health surveillance system at the federal and state levels has negatively impacted the monitoring of malnutrition and diseases, as the NGO-run health services do not cover all parts of southern Somalia. This has, in turn, led to deaths and displacement as people seek better health and social services during drought-induced disease outbreaks.

4.4 RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS RELATED TO SOCIAL PROTECTION PROVISION

Strengthening the protection of IDPs can include respect and fulfilment of the right to social security, anchored in international instruments including Article 9 of the ICESCR and Article 28 of the Convention on

⁷⁵ UNGA, The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, 26 July 2022, UN Doc A/76/L.75

⁷⁶ International Court of Justice, Advisory Opinion, Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change, 23 July 2025, <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/187/187-20250723-adv-01-00-en.pdf>

⁷⁷ African Court of Human and Peoples Rights, *SERAC v. Nigeria*, Decision, Comm. 155/96, 27 October 2001, para. 51

⁷⁸ African Court of Human and Peoples Rights, *SERAC v. Nigeria* (previously cited), para. 52

⁷⁹ Human Rights Council, The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, 18 October 2021, UN Doc, A/HRC/RES/48/13

⁸⁰ Human Rights Council, The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment (previously cited).

⁸¹ CESCR, General Comment 27 (previously cited), para. 63.

the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Such protection may reduce the possibility of displacement due to drought and, where it has already occurred, enhance the realization of fundamental rights, including food and health. Article 27 (3) of Somalia's constitution and the Somalia Social Protection Policy also protect the right to social security.⁸² The ACHPR has highlighted that the right to social security encompasses the provision of:

“a minimum essential level of benefits to all individuals and families that will enable them to acquire at least essential health care, basic shelter and housing, water and sanitation, foodstuffs, and the most basic forms of education consistent with human life, security and dignity.”⁸³

Somalia has failed to implement a functional social security system for the marginalized, particularly those negatively affected by drought. This has led to extreme poverty among those affected, inadequate water, livelihood, food and healthcare, prompting displacement both within IDP camps in Somalia and across the border into Dadaab, Kenya.

4.5 RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER DISPLACEMENT

Climate change displacement in Somalia includes cross-border displacement into Kenya and internal movements of people to camps and peri-urban or informal settlements within Somalia. The section below explains the international protection in place for both cross-border displacement and IDPs.

4.5.1 INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION FOR PEOPLE DISPLACED ACROSS BORDERS DUE TO THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTERS

People displaced across borders due to the adverse effects of climate change and disasters may be entitled to international protection under international law, including refugee instruments and international human rights law.⁸⁴ In July 2025, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) reinforced that:

“Conditions resulting from climate change which are likely to endanger the lives of individuals may lead them to seek safety in another country or prevent them from returning to their own. In the view of the Court, States have obligations under the principle of non-refoulement where there are substantial grounds for believing that there is a real risk of irreparable harm to the right to life in breach of Article 6 of the ICCPR if individuals are returned to their country of origin.”⁸⁵

The international legal principle of non-refoulement protects anyone from being forcibly returned to another country or jurisdiction where they may be at real risk of suffering serious violations of their human rights. This principle is part of customary international law, making it legally binding on all states.⁸⁶ Its application in relation to human rights harm occurring in the context of climate change and disasters has been confirmed, among others, by the HCR (ICCPR),⁸⁷ the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR)⁸⁸ and, as noted above, by the ICJ.

⁸² Federal Republic of Somalia, *Somalia Social Protection Policy*, <https://www.baxnaano.so/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/MoLSA-Somalia-FINAL-min.pdf>, accessed on 2 July 2025.

⁸³ ACHPR Principles and Guidelines (previously cited), para. 82 (a).

⁸⁴ UNHCR, *Climate change impacts and cross-border displacement: International refugee law and UNHCR's mandate*, 12 December 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/202312/UNHCR%20note%20on%20climate%20change%20international%20protection%20UNHCRs%20mandate%20Dec%202023.pdf>

⁸⁵ International Court of Justice, *Advisory Opinion, Obligations of States in respect of Climate Change*, 23 July 2025, para. 378, <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/187/187-20250723-adv-01-00-en.pdf>.

⁸⁶ UNHCR, *The Principle of Non-Refoulement as a Norm of Customary International Law: Response to the Questions Posed to UNHCR by the Federal Constitutional Court of the Federal Republic of Germany in Cases 2 BvR 1938/93, 2 BvR 1953/93, 2 BvR 1954/93*, 31 January 1994.

⁸⁷ CCPR, *Ioane Teitiota v. New Zealand: Views adopted by the Committee under article 5 (4) of the Optional Protocol, concerning communication No. 2728/2016*, 23 September 2020, CCPR/C/127/D/2728/2016.

⁸⁸ Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR), *Advisory Opinion AO-32/25 of May 29, 2025. Series A No. 32 - The Climate Emergency and Human Rights*, para. 433, https://www.corteidh.or.cr/opiniones_consultivas.cfm?lang=en

Besides loss of life, non-refoulement protections extend to situations where the adverse impacts of climate change and disasters negatively impact individuals' enjoyment of their right to a dignified life, their rights to personal integrity (both physical and psychological), or the right to health.⁸⁹

People in need of protection from refoulement should be allowed to register and formalize their regular migration status, to ensure their enjoyment of human rights, including to an adequate standard of living.

Under specific circumstances, people displaced by the adverse impacts of climate change and disasters may also benefit from the more specific forms of international protection offered by the 1951 Refugee Convention,⁹⁰ and by regional refugee instruments, such as the 1969 OAU Convention on Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.⁹¹ In other situations, they may receive other forms of complementary protections.⁹²

Additionally, the adverse impacts of climate change in Somalia are increasingly intertwined with situations of violence, persecution and conflict. This may trigger the application of specific assistance under the 1951 Refugee Convention or the 1969 OAU Convention on Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. For example, people unable to pay illegal "taxes" to Al-Shabaab because their livelihoods were destroyed by droughts could be entitled to this protection.⁹³ Such illegal "taxes" have also pushed people out of central and southern Somalia into Dadaab.⁹⁴ These conditions, coupled with the inability of Somalia's government to protect people, could create a situation of persecution and therefore underpin refugee protection grounds upon crossing the international border into Kenya.

4.5.2 THIRD COUNTRIES' FINANCIAL AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION OBLIGATIONS

The two Global Compacts on Refugees and on Migrants, respectively, encourage the international community to provide financial support to receiving countries to address humanitarian and development needs.⁹⁵ The Compacts also call for collaboration towards sustainable development in countries of origin to address the root causes of displacement. This includes the call for peaceful and inclusive societies based on international human rights and the rule of law, creation of conditions for balanced, sustainable and inclusive economic growth and employment, combating environmental degradation and ensuring effective responses to natural disasters and the adverse impacts of climate change.⁹⁶

Such sentiments are also expressed in the Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees and Reintegration of Returnees in Somalia and by the Nairobi Comprehensive Plan of Action for Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees, which recognize the role of drought and climate change in cross-border displacement.⁹⁷ Specifically, the Nairobi Comprehensive Plan seeks to "maintain high level regional and international attention to the drought situation in order to sustain a significant response within Somalia and the region".⁹⁸ Similar positions are reflected in the Mogadishu Declaration on Regional Cooperation on the Current Drought, which called for regional collaboration in redressing drought as a factor of cross-border displacement within and from Somalia.⁹⁹

However, as detailed below, support for cross-border and internally displaced Somalis remains inadequate. The international community, particularly high-income, historically high-emitting states, should increase financial support for displaced Somalis in Dadaab as well as for IDPs in Somalia, in line with the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance decision at COP29 in November 2024. It urged parties to the

⁸⁹ Amnesty International, *Americas: Amicus curiae submitted by Amnesty International to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on climate emergency and human rights*, (AMR 01/7332/2023), 15 December 2023, paras 74-76.

⁹⁰ UNHCR, Legal considerations regarding claims for international protection made in the context of the adverse effects of climate change and disasters, para. 7, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5f75f2734.html>

⁹¹ UNHCR, *Climate change impacts and cross-border displacement: International refugee law and UNHCR's mandate*, 12 December 2023, <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/202312/UNHCR%20note%20on%20climate%20change%20international%20protection%20UNHCRs%20mandate%20Dec%202023.pdf>, para. 3.

⁹² UNHCR, Legal considerations (previously cited), para. 10.

⁹³ See chapter 7.2, "Livelihood destruction: Food, water and Al-Shabaab nexus".

⁹⁴ See chapter 7.2, "Livelihood destruction: Food, water and Al-Shabaab nexus".

⁹⁵ UNHCR, Part II Global compact on refugees, 13 September 2018, UN Doc A/73/12, p.6.

⁹⁶ UNHCR, Part II Global compact on refugees (previously cited), Part A.

⁹⁷ Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees and Reintegration Of Returnees In Somalia, Adopted 25 March 2017, para. I (5).

⁹⁸ Nairobi Comprehensive Plan of Action for Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees, para. 2.1.14.

⁹⁹ UNSOM, Mogadishu Declaration on regional cooperation on the current drought, 22 February 2017, paras 4 and 5, <https://unsom.unmissions.org/mogadishu-declaration-regional-cooperation-current-drought>

Paris Agreement to “promote the inclusion and extension of benefits to vulnerable communities and groups in climate finance efforts including migrants and refugees”.¹⁰⁰

4.5.3 INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

The Kampala Convention is the continental framework for protecting IDPs and mandates parties to redress causes of internal displacement, including climate change.¹⁰¹ As such, Somalia is obligated to respond to climate change and to provide a mechanism, directly and in collaboration with others, to protect those displaced into IDP camps and peri-urban settlements. Such obligations also accrue from its constitution, specifically Articles 25, 27, 43 and 45. To the extent that IDPs have been forced to relocate from camps within Somalia to Dadaab in Kenya, Somalia has failed to fulfil this obligation. The Peninsula principles clarify that such protection extends to those who face displacement but have not been relocated, emphasizing that states should guarantee their rights to:

“emergency humanitarian services; (ii) evacuation and temporary and effective permanent relocation; (iii) medical assistance and other health services; (iv) shelter; (v) food; (vi) potable water; (vii) sanitation.”¹⁰²

Somalia should strive to adhere to these principles.

Equally important in the context of displacement is the right to housing, protected under ICESCR Article 11. The CESCR emphasizes that this right encompasses, among other things, affordability, cultural adequacy, security of tenure, appropriateness of location, habitability, accessibility and proximity to services and social services and infrastructure.¹⁰³ By failing to protect IDPs from evictions and failing to guarantee their access to health services, Somalia has failed its obligations under the ICESCR. The ACHPR has urged member states to allow displaced persons to freely choose their place of residence, except as limited by law.¹⁰⁴ In this regard, it discourages forced evictions in IDP camps in Somalia. It also obligates states to facilitate the return of people displaced by disasters to their places of residence when normalcy resumes. This obligation requires Somalia to protect people displaced by drought and informal urban dwellers who may be unwilling to return under the current situation. Somalia is also obligated to help them reintegrate as and when they voluntarily return to their usual places of residence. Implementing such strategies may, in turn, reduce cross-border displacement. Somalia has failed to adequately discharge this duty, including providing a means to resolve disputes over property ownership. This is central to forced evictions and conflicts between IDPs and host communities in Somalia, especially in peri-urban areas.

The Somalia National Policy on Returnees and Refugees protects people displaced internally or across borders by the extreme impacts of climate change.¹⁰⁵ Specifically, it obligates Somalia’s government to work with humanitarian actors to provide economic and social rights, including livelihoods, food, education and healthcare and to assist such families to reintegrate.¹⁰⁶ This policy augments the work of the recently established Somalia National Commission for Refugees and IDPs, which is mandated to support people displaced by drought and floods into camps and urban informal settlements in Somalia (primary displacement) as well as those displaced from urban informal settlements or IDP camps to second countries by forced evictions or lack of protection (secondary displacement). The IDP Bill, currently before the Somalia Parliament, is meant to strengthen this framework.

Other policies, such as the Social Protection Policy, the Protocol on Land Distribution for Housing to Eligible Refugee Returnees and IDPs, the Climate Change Policy, National Eviction Guidelines, and National Environmental Policy, are also significant for protecting people displaced in the context of climate change, internally and internationally. The continuation of massive cross-border displacement into Dadaab linked to climate change reflects the inadequate implementation of these policies.

As detailed below, seven returnees to Somalia interviewed during this research opted to return to Dadaab due to inadequate reintegration and protection services in Somalia. The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change has opined that states are obliged

¹⁰⁰ UNFCCC, Decision 1/CMA.6: New collective quantified goal on climate finance, UN Doc. FCCC/PA/CMA/2024/17/Add.1, para. 26.

¹⁰¹ Kampala Convention (previously cited), Article V(4).

¹⁰² The Peninsula Principles on Climate Displacement Within States, 18 August 2013, Principle 14(c).

¹⁰³ CESCR, General Comment 4: The Right to Adequate Housing (Article 11(1) of the Covenant), UN Doc. E/1992/23, 13 December 1991, para. 8. Similar obligations are highlighted in CESCR General Comment 7: The right to adequate housing (Article 11.1 of the Covenant: forced evictions), 20 May 1997.

¹⁰⁴ ACHPR, General Comment 5 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights: The Right to Freedom of Movement and Residence (Article 12(1)), para. 11, <https://achpr.au.int/index.php/en/documents/2020-10-26/general-observation-no-5-right-freedom-movement-and-residence>

¹⁰⁵ National Policy on Refugee, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Chapter 1.

¹⁰⁶ Somalia National Policy on Returnees and Refugees (previously cited), p. 29.

to provide climate change information to their people, including on extreme weather and slow onset events, to help them prepare and adapt and, where necessary, seek remedy for loss and damage.¹⁰⁷ Priority should be given to Indigenous Peoples and communities at risk. By not having a decentralized and accessible early warning system, Somalia has failed to discharge this obligation, resulting in losses to pastoralists (see chapter six of this report). Accordingly, 52 displaced farmers interviewed during this research had their produce swept away by floods or animals die due to recurrent drought. Those who attempted to replant during temporary rainfalls suffered more losses as the state failed to adequately inform farmers about the predicted minimal and erratic rainfall during the drought period.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, Access to information on climate change and human rights, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, 18 July 2024, UN Doc A/79/176, para. 5.

¹⁰⁸ Multiple interviews with displaced farmers in Dadaab, 24 September 2024.

5. DISPLACEMENT PATTERNS AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

5.1 MOVEMENT INTO IDP CAMPS, URBAN INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS AND PERI-URBAN AREAS WITHIN SOMALIA

5.1.1 SOMALIA'S INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATION TO DROUGHT-INDUCED INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Somalia's obligations to people internally displaced by drought and floods are largely anchored in the ICESCR, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the ACHPR. These obligations are interpreted and reinforced by relevant general comments from international and regional human rights monitoring committees. Concomitant to these is the doctrine of progressive realization, which prohibits non-derogation and obligates Somalia to continuously improve the economic and social rights of people on its territory within its maximum available resources. Additionally, the doctrine of minimum core obligation emphasizes that, despite resource limitations, disasters, conflict or emergencies, Somalia is obligated to guarantee at least basic levels of these rights. Protection of groups with specific needs, such as children and displaced persons, is particularly emphasized by the CESCR.

The principle of international cooperation envisaged under the ICESCR also requires that Somalia:

“undertakes to take steps, individually and through international assistance and co-operation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures.”¹⁰⁹

As such, the absence of adequate resources or conflict cannot be a justification for Somalia's failure to respect, protect and fulfil its obligations to people displaced by drought. Somalia's specific obligations underpinning each right are explained below.

Somalia is also obligated under the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (Kampala Convention) as well as the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal

¹⁰⁹ ICESCR, Article 2.

Displacement¹¹⁰ to protect its people against factors that may cause displacement, such as climate change-related drought and resulting nutritional, health and water challenges. According to the Kampala Convention, Somalia has a duty to:

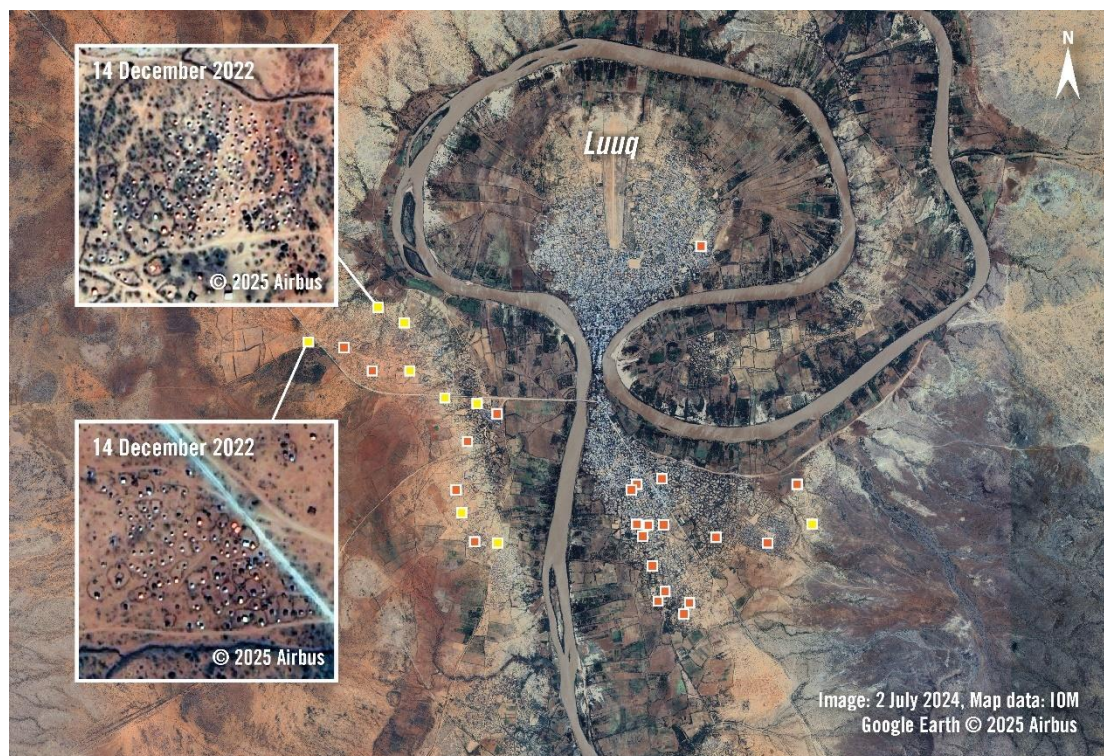
“devise early warning systems, in the context of the continental early warning system, in areas of potential displacement, establish and implement disaster risk reduction strategies, emergency and disaster preparedness and management measures and, where necessary, provide immediate protection and assistance to internally displaced persons.”¹¹¹

This section details how Somalia's government has failed to fulfil these obligations to IDPs on the move internally and across borders, resulting in their cross-border migration to Dadaab refugee camp.

5.1.2 HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND DISPLACEMENT DYNAMICS

During this research, 36 interviewees reported multiple levels of displacement – initially from their homes into one or more IDP camps and/or urban or peri-urban informal settlements in Somalia, before being displaced again across the border into Dadaab.

They reported that while in Somalia, they relocated to towns or cities where government services were better, some NGOs were present, and the government was comparatively more present than in villages largely controlled by Al-Shabaab.¹¹² Accordingly, most cities in Jubaland, Hirshabelle and South West states host IDP camps and informal settlements. Common destinations for people escaping drought in villages included Jowhar, Baidoa, Dinsoor, Kismayo, Buale, Jilib, Bardhere, Luuq, Barawe, Afgooye-South West and Mogadishu.¹¹³ The displaced persons largely established informal camps outside towns and cities, as illustrated below.



↑ Satellite imagery showing IDP camps in Luuq, Somalia. The yellow squares indicate new camps established in 2022. The orange boxes highlight camps established before 2022 according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Two of the new camps on the western side of Luuq are shown in more detail.

¹¹⁰ United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, Principles 5 and 6.

¹¹¹ African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (Kampala Convention), Article 4.

¹¹² Interview with multiple cross-border displaced persons in Dadaab, 17 November 2024, on file with Amnesty International.

¹¹³ Multiple face-to-face interviews in Dadaab 17 November 2024

International Organization of Migration (IOM) data indicates that up to 64% of IDPs in Somalia in 2022 moved because of drought.¹¹⁴ This worsened the humanitarian situations in IDP camps. Fatuma, a 53-year-old mother of eight from Xibaalo Barbar in Baidoa District, recounted how, after years of erratic rainfall and drought, she abandoned her farm and moved to an IDP camp in Mogadishu because she had no food or water. The only available water was dirty and salty from a well 24 hours away on foot or by donkey cart. However, the situation in Mogadishu was also bad, with no proper support from the government or NGOs. Furthermore, she could not find work in Mogadishu. She then decided to move to Dadaab.¹¹⁵

Many displaced persons interviewed lived either in informal settlements¹¹⁶ or the 2,400 IDP camps around cities and towns in Somalia.¹¹⁷ As their numbers increased, opportunities became scarce. This was further complicated by humanitarian actors lacking adequate resources to comprehensively address their needs.¹¹⁸ Consequently, many IDPs migrated to Dadaab hoping for a better situation.

Aisha's case is an example. Following the death of her five cows and the impact of drought on her farm, where she grew sorghum, maize and beans, she used her donkey cart to collect and sell firewood to city dwellers in Kismayo. She would sell one donkey cartload of firewood for US\$40. The entire process of collecting firewood and delivering it to the city took 10 days. However, she had to sell her cart after a hyena killed and ate her donkey. She reported that since the drought began, attacks by hyenas and other wild animals on villages and the eating of domestic animals had increased. This prompted her to move to Dadaab.¹¹⁹

According to Hodan, another interviewee, the drought also affected residents of Dalhiska, an IDP camp near Kismayo and disrupted their businesses, especially after most customers left due to drought.¹²⁰ Destruction of their livelihoods forced them to move, again showing the Government of Somalia's failure to fulfil its obligation to protect them from climate-related displacement as outlined in the Kampala Convention.

Many IDP camps in southern Somalia are in areas with high climate vulnerability. People are therefore often displaced again due to drought or floods. The absent government and limited capacity of humanitarian actors worsen the situation as IDPs have to find alternative livelihoods without support.¹²¹ Hodan's story above reflects the realities of people in peri-urban informal settlements and IDP camps in southern Somalia.

Amnesty International interviewed three women who had moved with their families to Dadaab from Dalhiska. Their testimonies outline how drought destroyed their village farms, and how Dalhiska camp, their first destination, was slightly better but also experienced drought-related challenges, including inadequate food and water. Dalhiska camp appeared to be a meeting point for people escaping two different climate change impacts: IDPs who had survived the four-year drought in their home areas but moved because of devastating floods that followed, and others who had stayed behind despite flooding but subsequently moved due to drought.

Abdullahi, a 65-year-old man originally from Bulagadud, moved to Dadaab with 18 children, two wives and his mother from Dalhiska:

"I was a farmer in Bulagadud. I used to grow maize, potatoes, onions, beans and vegetables. I was also doing business. However, in 2023, river Jubba flooded both our homes, shop and farms. There was no clean water, and we had to drink the flood water. Many people had diarrhoea and left the village. I also had to leave and moved to Dalhiska. At Dalhiska, we used to get some little food from the World Food Programme. But we would mostly make porridge although the situation here was slightly better than Bulagadud. At some point they were only giving food to pregnant women. Clean water was also unavailable in Dalhiska and you had to pay for it or else you had to use salty water. Many people had diarrhoea. That is why we left Dalhiska and moved to Dadaab."¹²²

These trends are corroborated by reports from humanitarian organizations operating in southern Somalia. For instance, according to a 2023 UNHCR report, 28% of IDP camps in Kismayo, including Dalhiska, were in areas that always flooded or were at a high risk of flooding.¹²³ Baidoa was considered to have a flood risk

¹¹⁴ IOM, *Four Challenges Facing Displaced Persons in Somalia*, <https://weblog.iom.int/four-challenges-facing-displaced-persons-somalia>

¹¹⁵ Interview on 26 September 2024 in Dadaab.

¹¹⁶ Refugees International, *No Going Back: The New Urban Face of Internal Displacement in Somalia*, 25 May 2023, <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports-briefs/no-going-back-the-new-urban-face-of-internal-displacement-in-somalia/>

¹¹⁷ UNHCR, "Situation CCCM Somalia Overview", https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/cccm_somalia, 15 August 2025.

¹¹⁸ Online interview with Head of Office, OCHA Somalia, 30 October 2024.

¹¹⁹ Interviewed on 26 September 2024, Dadaab.

¹²⁰ Interviewed on 26 September 2024, Dadaab.

¹²¹ Online interview with Head of Office, OCHA Somalia, 30 October 2024.

¹²² Interviewed in Dadaab, 26 September 2024.

¹²³ UNHCR, *Somalia: IDP Site Verification Kismaayo June 2023*, 19 July 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/102092>

of 59%,¹²⁴ while Bardhere had a 35% risk.¹²⁵ This was compounded by the risk of forced evictions by landowners or federal state officials. Statistics indicate that of people displaced into peri-urban areas, those in Bardhere faced a 22% risk of being evicted, those in Baidoa had a 13% risk, while those in Kismayo had a 32% risk of being forcibly evicted.¹²⁶ OCHA reports that between January and April 2022, 726 families were evicted from their settlements by private landowners around Kismayo.¹²⁷

The Minister of Humanitarian Services in South West State has observed that the arrival of people from rural to urban spaces has put a strain on social services and undermined the capacity of the South West state government to provide services, including humanitarian support.¹²⁸ This has increasingly pushed people out of urban informal settlements into other IDP camps or to Dadaab.¹²⁹

5.2 SPLITTING UP FAMILIES AND ABANDONING AT-RISK FAMILY MEMBERS

The family is a protected unit under the ICESCR,¹³⁰ the ICCPR¹³¹ and the ACHPR.¹³² The family is protected as a fundamental unit of society because it plays an important role in protecting at-risk members of society, such as older people, people with medical conditions, people with disabilities and children. In Somalia, protecting families plays a central role in people's survival during drought. Somalia is therefore obligated to prevent family separation caused by drought. The Kampala Convention¹³³ and the UN Guiding Principles on Displacement¹³⁴ also oblige states to promote family reunification following separation during displacement by natural disasters. A similar clarification is made in Principle 14 (c) of the Peninsula Principles. However, as illustrated below, Somalia has failed to discharge this obligation, resulting in displaced families being separated and children, older people and people with medical conditions being abandoned following droughts.

5.2.1 SOMALIA'S VIOLATION OF ITS OBLIGATION TO PROTECT CHILDREN AND OLDER PERSONS DURING DROUGHT

As noted above, protracted drought has pushed families out of villages in Somalia into Dadaab urban informal settlements or IDP camps. As villages emptied, older and at-risk people, including children, were left behind. Amina, a 35-year-old mother of nine children from Ufurow in Dinsoor, explained:

“For one year, I relied on relatives for food after my crops and animals died. We could eat one meal a day, mostly sorghum and rice. However, they soon ran out of food too. We then started sleeping hungry. We couldn't take it any more, so we moved together with four other families. One of my relatives in Dagahaley paid the fare directly to the transporters. But it was not enough for all my children. I therefore left my eldest son together with my mother in Dinsoor.”¹³⁵

Similarly, Fatuma from Baidoa, who came to Dadaab in 2023 with her seven children, was initially forced to leave behind one teenage son because she couldn't afford his fare. He later joined them in Dadaab. She lamented that over a year later, he is still not registered and has to share their food and water rations as he is not included in the World Food Programme (WFP) food distribution list.

¹²⁴ UNHCR, *Somalia: CCCM Cluster -IDP site verification Baidoa Feb 2023*, 19 July 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/102076>

¹²⁵ UNHCR, *Somalia: IDP Site Verification Baardheere May 2023*, 19 July 2023 <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/102081>.

¹²⁶ UNHCR, *Somalia: CCCM Cluster -IDP site verification Baidoa Feb 2023*, 19 July 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/102076>

¹²⁷ OCHA, *Somalia: Drought Situation Report No.6 20, April 2022*, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no6-20-april-2022>

¹²⁸ Interviewed in Nairobi on 28 October 2024.

¹²⁹ Interview in person with the Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Nairobi, 29 October 2024.

¹³⁰ ICESCR, Article 10.

¹³¹ ICCPR, Article 23.

¹³² ACHPR, Article 18.

¹³³ Kampala Convention (previously cited), Article 9(2)(h).

¹³⁴ UN Guiding Principles on Displacement (previously cited), Principle 17.

¹³⁵ Interview in Dadaab, 24 September 2024.

Amnesty International noted that all children left behind with relatives in Somalia were boys and mostly teenagers.¹³⁶ Several reasons account for this. First, the gender construction of masculinities in Somalia often sees boys as better able to survive intense climatic conditions and less deserving of protection. Secondly, many girls are married by age 18. According to the Somalia Health and Demographic Survey, 34% of all girls in Somalia are married before age 18, with 16% married before age 15.¹³⁷ In this context, Somalia has failed to protect its children against the adverse impacts of climate change, as emphasized by the CRC¹³⁸ and the HRC.¹³⁹ Recognizing that climate change is linked to violence against children, including child marriage,¹⁴⁰ the CRC emphasizes that states are under an obligation to protect children from climate change-induced violence through child-rights-based adaptation strategies.¹⁴¹

When drought intensified, able-bodied men and women moved to displacement camps in Somalia and to Dadaab with their children. Those who could not move or afford to pay were often left behind. Amina from Bulagadud near Kismayo recalled that although they hired a vehicle and moved with her six children, husband and 20 other people, she left many family members in Bulagadud because they did not have money for their fare.¹⁴²

Drought thus left older persons and those with disabilities with no one to care for them. Mohamed, a 33-year-old father of eight children from Fargarow in Jilib, explained how his parents died after he left them in Jilib and moved to Dadaab:

“Before the drought, we were farmers. But when the drought came, everything dried up. I had eight children, a wife and my parents. They were old and relied on me. When the drought came, the food that we had stored soon ran out. I decided to move with my children and wife in 2023. However, since I was their only provider, [my parents] succumbed to famine after I left them in Jilib.”¹⁴³

Seven interviewees reported sending money received in Dadaab to their at-risk relatives in Somalia.¹⁴⁴

In 73 instances, people reported making the whole or part of their journey on foot over several days, with families staying in several IDP camps before reaching Dadaab. Fifty-seven displaced persons used donkey carts, but these could not carry many people. The extreme heat that characterized the drought, with temperatures up to 40°C during the day, forced families to travel at night or early morning, a situation that was unbearable for most at-risk populations due to the rough terrain and risk of insecurity caused by wild animals and armed groups. In the IDP camps, 29% of people with disabilities faced difficulty in accessing food, including from humanitarian actors, according to IOM.¹⁴⁵

5.3 THE JOURNEY TO DADAAB REFUGEE CAMP IN KENYA

The Dadaab refugee complex was established in 1991, intended to accommodate refugees fleeing Somalia’s civil war. It later became a sanctuary for those fleeing clan conflicts and Al-Shabaab. Since 2011, Dadaab has received large numbers of people fleeing drought and floods. The complex encompasses three camps: Hagadera, Dagahaley and IFO 1 and 2. The camp is managed by Kenya’s Department of Refugee Services while NGOs and INGOs such as UNHCR and World Food Programme provide most services. To date, the camp hosts about 431,216 refugees and asylum seekers, including people displaced by climate from Somalia.¹⁴⁶

Depending on people’s place of origin and means of transport, the journey from southern Somalia to Dadaab takes between two days to six weeks, with pauses and camping on the way. Those with resources can board or hire vehicles to reach Dadaab. In 12 cases, interviewed families pooled their resources and hired a

¹³⁶ 13 interviews in Dadaab with families who had left their children behind in Somalia, on 26 September 2024.

¹³⁷ Federal Government of Somalia, Somalia Demographic and Health Survey-2020, https://somalia.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/shds_report_2020_1.pdf, pp. 73-74.

¹³⁸ UNCRC, General Comment 26: Children’s Rights and the Environment with a Special Focus on Climate Change, 22 August 2023, UN Doc. CRC/C/GC/26 CRC/C/GC/26, paras 68-74.

¹³⁹ UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Analytical study on the relationship between climate change and the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of the child, 4 May 2017, UN Doc. A/HRC/35/13, p. 8.

¹⁴⁰ CRC, General Comment 26 (previously cited), para. 35.

¹⁴¹ CRC, General Comment 26 (Previously cited), para. 103.

¹⁴² Interview in Daadab, 19 September 2024.

¹⁴³ Interview in person on 26 September 2024.

¹⁴⁴ Multiple interviews in Daadab, 19 September 2024.

¹⁴⁵ IOM, Disability Inclusion Study, IDP Sites in Kismayo, Somalia, December 2021, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/90712>

¹⁴⁶ UNHCR, Kenya: Registered Refugees and Asylum Seekers, [Kenya Statistics Package - 30 Apr 2025.xlsx](#)

vehicle, travelling in groups of up to 30 people. Group travel also enhanced security. As Nasra from Nebsoy in Saakow explained:

“We travelled in a large group from Nebsoy using donkey carts up to Dhobely. When we got to Dhobely, ‘well-wishers’ picked 15 women and children and gave them a lift in their vehicle to Dadaab. The journey took five hours. The men were left behind to walk with the donkey carts. We carried sorghum and water for the children, but they were extremely malnourished on arrival because what we had only lasted a few days.”¹⁴⁷

People found resources for travelling in several ways, including through relatives, neighbours and friends, including relatives already in Kenya or another foreign country, or by selling family assets such as land or livestock. Thirty-eight-year-old Farhiya and her husband, farmers from Dooday in Dinsoor, had to sell their land to obtain money to move their nine children to Dadaab.¹⁴⁸ Other families were forced to walk or use donkey carts. Farida from Ufurow in Baidoa first came to Dadaab in 2011, then returned to Somalia and came back to Dadaab in 2023. She explained:

“It took us ten nights to move from Ufurow to Dadaab. The drought dried everything. Food, water, everything. Everyone left Ufurow to other places. We were a total of 28 people in our trip. We had three donkeys to carry our luggage. However, all three died on the way due to lack of water and food. We had to ask ‘well-wishers’ to give us a lift in their vehicles. All the children were hungry and malnourished due to lack of food and water. I feared that they would die the way my child died due to another drought in 2011 when I first came to Dadaab.”¹⁴⁹

Fares for travelling by vehicle were exorbitant and out of reach for many families. Forty-two families reported having to sell household items, livestock, grains or even land to afford fares to Dadaab. Ayaan, a 35-year-old woman from Bardhere, reported paying US\$140 to transport her family 500km from Korey in Bardhere to Dadaab. Those who could afford only part of the trip could travel with a vehicle as far as their money could take them, then do the rest of the journey on foot.¹⁵⁰

One hundred four interviewees set off with little or no food and had to rely on “well-wishers” for food and water on the way. According to 104 interviewees, humanitarian actors and government agencies did not set up support systems along the Somalia-Kenya transport routes except for Dhobely, where some NGOs provided support. Even within Somalia, limited assistance seemed to be centralized around settlements and IDP camps, and not along transport corridors. Both the Ministers of Humanitarian Affairs in South West and Hirshabelle, and the Director of Humanitarian Affairs in Jubaland, attributed this to inadequate resources and humanitarian support being mainly undertaken by NGOs, leaving them with limited roles except for elements of coordination.¹⁵¹ The Jubaland Director of Humanitarian Services explained:

“We do not have the capacity to provide help through the entire route, however whenever the displaced persons arrive at our IDP centres in Dhobely, or Kismayo, we give them some supplies. It is their role to find these places as they move.”¹⁵²

Somalia’s failure to provide relief services, health and food to people on the move violates its obligations under the Kampala Convention. This exposes people to multiple human rights violations, including violation of the rights to health, life, food and water. Working with the international community and regional partners, Somalia has a responsibility to redress these violations.

¹⁴⁷ Interview in Dadaab, 18 November 2024.

¹⁴⁸ Interview in Dadaab, 18 November 2024.

¹⁴⁹ Interview in Dadaab, 21 September 2024.

¹⁵⁰ Multiple interviews in Dadaab, on 19 September 2024.

¹⁵¹ Interviews with the Ministers of Humanitarian Affairs of Hirshabelle and South West and the Director of Humanitarian Services, Jubaland.

¹⁵² Online Interview with the Jubaland Director of Humanitarian Services, 20 February 2025.

6. THE HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT OF 2020-2023 SOUTHERN SOMALIA DROUGHT

6.1 LIVELIHOODS AND THE RIGHT TO FOOD

Although livelihood is not a recognized right under international law, it is central to the realization of the right to food. This is because livelihood provides the context and means through which the right to food is realized. Indeed, the ACHPR emphasizes that state parties must ensure the economic accessibility of food and guarantee that personal or household financial limitations do not undermine the realization of this right.¹⁵³ It also notes that states must take action to “guarantee the right of everyone to be free from hunger and to mitigate and alleviate hunger even in times of natural or other disasters.”¹⁵⁴ Accordingly, Somalia is obliged to work with its development partners to realize the minimum core obligation to livelihood in line with the ICESCR.¹⁵⁵

Southern Somalia has several livelihood systems, including farming, nomadic pastoralism and rural economies centred on small businesses. All are susceptible to drought and floods. Loss of livelihoods affects people’s ability to adapt to drought as it reduces their capacity to purchase necessary food, medicines and water, among other basics. Drought also affects businesses that rely on farmers and pastoralists, due to their loss of purchasing power. Such massive loss of livelihoods, therefore, prompts displacement. UNHCR has highlighted that in 2022 alone, 54% of displacement happened due to food, 15% due to loss of livelihood and 6% due to lack of water, although these three categories are interlinked.¹⁵⁶ Somalia’s failure to protect people’s livelihoods from destruction by drought, and to provide social protection to those whose livelihoods have been destroyed, forcing them to migrate into IDP camps and to Dadaab, violates Somalia’s obligation under its constitution and the ICESCR.

¹⁵³ ACHPR, Guidelines and Principles (previously cited), para. 86 (h).

¹⁵⁴ ACHPR, Guidelines and Principles (previously cited), para. 86 (a).

¹⁵⁵ ICESCR, Article 2.

¹⁵⁶ UNHCR, Somalia: Internal Displacement, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/1?sv=1&geo=192>, accessed 15 August 2025.

6.2 LIVELIHOOD, RIGHT TO FOOD AND THE INTERLINK BETWEEN DROUGHT AND FLOODS

The right to food is guaranteed by the ICESCR.¹⁵⁷ Somalia is therefore under a human rights obligation to protect, fulfil and respect the availability, accessibility and quality of food. Availability obligations require Somalia to protect the financial and environmental ecosystem in which food is produced and consumed and guarantee its continuous supply and distribution.

Accessibility requires Somalia to remove obstacles to access and to undertake steps to make food more affordable by lowering consumption taxes. Quality requires that Somalia guarantees the availability of food of appropriate nutritional status that is free from contamination. As the illustrations below show, Somalia has failed to adequately fulfil these obligations, leading to the displacement of drought-affected populations.

6.2.1 FOOD AVAILABILITY: DESTRUCTION OF FARMS AND FARMING

Farming remains the main mechanism through which people in southern Somalia realize their right to food. It is mainly practised along the riverine areas between the river Jubba and the river Shabelle. Farmers rely on irrigation from the Jubba and Shabelle, while those living far from these rivers rely on rainfall.¹⁵⁸ Although Somalia generally receives limited rainfall, the pattern was historically predictable, and farmers timed their crops with the two main rainfall seasons.¹⁵⁹ Before the drought, farmers grew sesame, maize, beans, bananas, sorghum and vegetables.¹⁶⁰ Most of this food was for household consumption, with any surplus sold to the domestic market.

The sale of food to the rest of Somalia sustained the economies of most villages and towns in southern and central Somalia. However, the drought resulted in crops drying up. The resilience of farmers partly depended on their proximity to the rivers.¹⁶¹ The first farmers to feel the drought's impact were those exclusively reliant on rainfall for their agriculture. Those with water pumps close to rivers survived longer, because as the rivers receded, they could pump water into their farms. Once the crops died, the vulnerability of farmers who relied on rain-fed agriculture, as well as pastoralists, increased significantly, forcing them to seek manual work in farms close to the rivers.¹⁶²

Riverine agriculture provided work and food for 68 people interviewed for this research. As Ibrahim, a 27-year-old pastoralist from Buale, explained:

“I was a goat keeper in Buale. I moved to Dadaab with my wife and two children in April 2023 due to the long drought. I stayed in Somalia for four years after the drought began. [...] However, following the long drought, 100 of my goats died. I sold the rest to buy food. After selling all of them, I relied on relatives and ‘well-wishers’ for food. [...] They mostly gave me sorghum. This was not enough, and I decided to look for a job with farmers who used river Jubba for irrigation. They would give me food as payment. I used this food to feed my family. Soon the river also dried, and the farmers stopped employing people. We went hungry for many days until I eventually decided to move to Dadaab. We borrowed food from neighbours, which we ate on the way until we got here.”

The protracted drought soon drastically reduced the water in the rivers. Twelve eyewitnesses interviewed indicated that the river Shabelle had dried completely, save for patches of water.¹⁶³ The river Jubba had such a reduced flow that it could no longer support irrigated agriculture. Accordingly, farmers ended up losing their crops and eventually animals. The figure below shows the condition of river Shabelle during the drought.

¹⁵⁷ ICESCR, Article 11.

¹⁵⁸ Multiple interviews in Daadab, 19 September 2024.

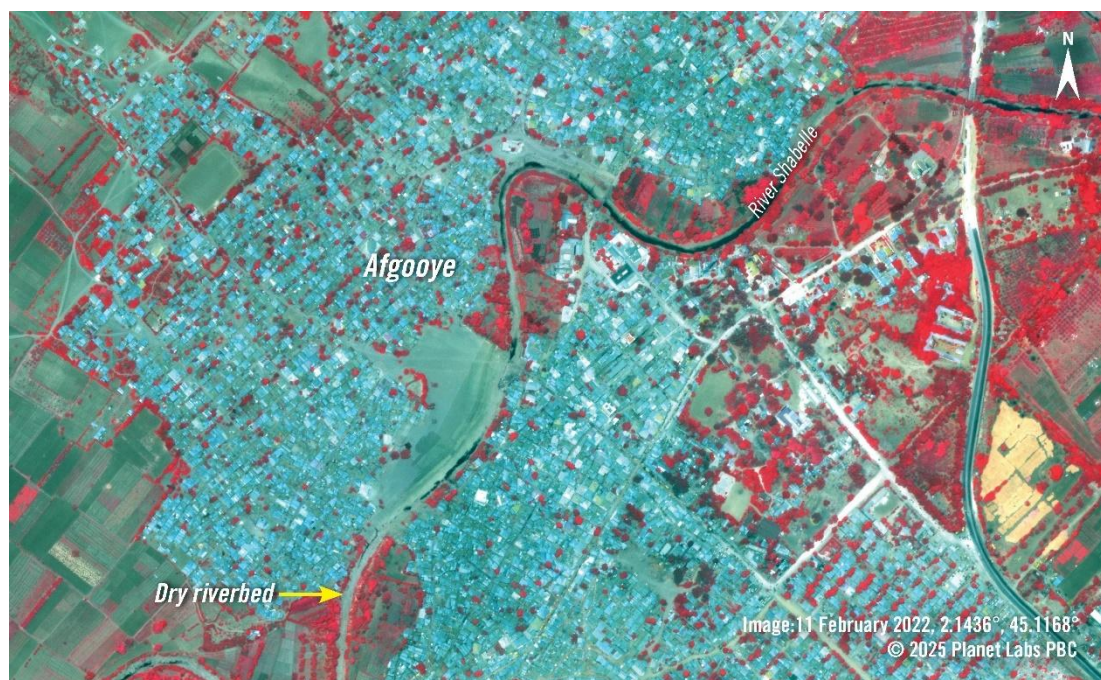
¹⁵⁹ Online interview with SOMPREP Chief of Party, 11 November 2024.

¹⁶⁰ Multiple interviews in person in Daadab, 22 September 2024.

¹⁶¹ Online interview in person with the SOMPREP Chief of Party, 11 November 2024.

¹⁶² Multiple interviews in Daadab, 22 September 2024.

¹⁶³ Multiple interviews in Daadab, 22 September 2024.



False-colour, near-infrared satellite imagery highlights areas of healthy vegetation in shades of red and water in the Shabelle river as dark black hues in Afgooye-South West, Somalia, on 11 February 2022. The dark line along the riverbed is thin and discontinuous, with sections where the riverbed appears to be completely dry.

Those who relied on the riverine farmers for manual labour, like Ibrahim, ended up losing their jobs and could therefore no longer buy food. By destroying farms and crops, the drought undermined the realization of their right to food. The Somali government, directly or through its federal states, has also failed their obligations to guarantee the availability of food by not providing enough relief food for affected families, nor instituting drought resilience programmes to help farmers cope with the impacts of the drought.

6.2.2 FOOD AVAILABILITY: INEFFICIENT FOOD STORAGE METHODS

Proper food storage is a key way for communities to realize their right to food. Somalia is obliged to strengthen climate-resilient storage methods. However, as illustrated below, the country has not adequately discharged this obligation.

In Somalia, food is traditionally stored in underground granaries called *bakar*, or in drums. However, floods, especially flash floods, often destroy food in *bakar*, making farmers less able to adapt and more food insecure during subsequent droughts. People who store food in drums can potentially salvage food during floods, leaving them with something to eat during the drought season. But the Somali government's failure to strengthen its climate early warning system, allowing people to transfer their food from *bakars* before flooding, and its failure to introduce more climate resilient storage methods, and/or to move people at risk to higher ground before flooding, is a dereliction of its duty to guarantee the availability of food. Abdirahman's experience highlights this reality.

Abdirahman is a 77-year-old man with a disability from Qararey in Lower Jubba. He moved to Dadaab in 2023 with his nine children. In Somalia, he grew sesame, beans, and maize. He had a pump which he used to pump water from the river Jubba onto his farm. This guaranteed him a regular supply of food to eat and sell. During the 2020-2023 drought, he largely survived due to his food stock from previous harvests. Afterwards, floods came and destroyed his food in the *bakar*, including eight sacks of simsim, 11 sacks of maize, and one and a half sacks of beans. He also reported that the floods killed his son, Farah. Once his food was destroyed, he relied on neighbours who had stored food in drums and, therefore, easily carried it to safety during floods. His disability meant that he could not use handcarts like his neighbours. However, he soon stopped relying on neighbours for food, as he only got enough to eat once a day and therefore opted to

move to Dadaab. He now fears going back because he does not have any food to sustain him during the dry season.¹⁶⁴

Abdirahman's fears are being confirmed by the Somali government, FAO¹⁶⁵ and OCHA,¹⁶⁶ who are already reporting¹⁶⁷ drought in 2025.¹⁶⁸ For families like his, the challenge is the inability to survive droughts, which are increasingly interspersed with floods. Abdirahman's experience reflects that of three other families from Qararey interviewed during this research.

Amnesty International observed that 52 interviewees, especially from the riverine regions, had been intermittently affected by both drought and floods.¹⁶⁹ Drought had exposed them to risk during floods, and for those who survived the drought, subsequent floods made them too exposed in the next drought. Protracted drought not only displaces farmers but also destroys seeds, making it difficult for farmers to replant when the rains come. The middle and lower Jubba areas are often susceptible to flooding by the river Jubba and its tributaries, as well as flash floods from heavy rainfall in Ethiopia. Villages along the river Jubba, such as Qararey, bore the brunt of both climate extremes.¹⁷⁰

The South West Minister of Humanitarian Affairs and Somali Resilience Programme (SOMREP) noted in separate interviews that floods along the river Jubba had destroyed irrigation systems that were historically used for food production in the region. This, in turn, had made people more exposed to risk during drought as their food production reduced and stored food diminished. Accordingly, the two climate extremes seemed to feed into each other.¹⁷¹ Failure by wealthy, historically high-polluting countries to work with Somalia on climate adaptation, particularly in rebuilding livelihoods and restoring drought resilience, as envisaged in the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, is a dereliction of their duty under international law.

6.2.3 FOOD AVAILABILITY: DEATH OF PASTORALISM

Food availability is partly dependent on people's livelihoods. In Somalia, millions of people depend on pastoralism for food. According to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), pastoralism accounts for 50% of Somalia's GDP and 80% of its export revenue.¹⁷² Up to 55% of Somalia's people are pastoralists and over 80% keep some livestock.¹⁷³ Most nomadic pastoralists in Somalia keep cattle, goats and camels for milk, meat and sale. Drought led to water sources and vegetation drying up, resulting in animals dying. OCHA estimates that as of November 2021, the drought had killed 60-70% of livestock in Jubaland.¹⁷⁴ Nur, a 46-year-old pastoralist from Galmadege in Dinsoor, told Amnesty International how she lost 200 goats and 100 cows to the drought, forcing her to move her husband and seven children to Dadaab.¹⁷⁵

Their situation had been aggravated by increased charcoal burning and clearing of trees and shrubs for firewood, further lessening vegetation for livestock.¹⁷⁶ Even wild berries were cleared.¹⁷⁷ Jama, a 60-year-old father of six from Farbitow along the river Jubba in Buale, explained:

"There was no proper rain, and my crops dried. The river dried and we had no source of water. My animals died too. I had just a few animals left. Due to hunger, I moved to an IDP camp in Baidoa with my two remaining cattle, one camel and two goats. I sold the cattle there. However, we were not receiving much support there, so I moved to Bardhere with one camel and two goats. Still, we did not get much help. I sold the camel and two goats there. I

¹⁶⁴ Interview in Dadaab, 20 September 2024.

¹⁶⁵ FAO-SWALIM, Call for Immediate preparedness (previously cited).

¹⁶⁶ OCHA, *Somalia Monthly Humanitarian Update*, January 2025, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/somalia/somalia-monthly-humanitarian-update-january-2025#:~:text=Above%20average%20temperatures%20will%20increase,water%20management%2C%20are%20urgently%20required>

¹⁶⁷ OCHA, *Somalia Monthly Humanitarian update*, January 2025.

¹⁶⁸ FAO-SWALIM, Call for Immediate Preparedness, (previously cited).

¹⁶⁹ Online interview with SOMREP Chief of Party, 11 November 2024.

¹⁷⁰ Online interview with SOMREP Chief of Party, 11 November 2024.

¹⁷¹ Online Interview in person with the SOMREP Chief of Party, 11 November 2024, and in-person interview with the South West Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, 24 October 2024, Nairobi.

¹⁷² IGAD, *Land and Governance in IGAD Region: Somalia Country Profile*, <https://land.igad.int/index.php/countries/somalia#:~:text=Livestock%20production%20is%20the%20primary%20economic%20activity%20in,is%20engaged%20in%20livestock%20raising%20of%20some%20kind>, accessed on 4 July 2025.

¹⁷³ IGAD, *Land and Governance* (previously cited).

¹⁷⁴ OCHA, *Somalia: Drought Situation Report No.1*, 23 November 2021, accessed <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no1-23-november-2021>

¹⁷⁵ Interview in Dadaab on 23 September 2024.

¹⁷⁶ Online interview with SOMREP Chief of Party on 24 October 2024, and in-person interview with ASEP Director in Nairobi, 18 October 2024.

¹⁷⁷ Multiple interviews in Daadab on 19 September 2024.

moved to a camp in Mogadishu, where I heard that things were better. From Mogadishu, I moved to Dadaab in 2021.”¹⁷⁸

Amnesty International interviewed 39 pastoralists who had relocated with a few remaining animals or sold them to fund transport to Dadaab. Drought simultaneously increased the number of pastoralists selling livestock, resulting in price depreciation and losses.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, since the animals were emaciated, they fetched less money.¹⁸⁰ OCHA Somalia reported in December 2021 that the prices of a goat in Hirshabelle state had dropped from US\$50 to US\$20 due to the drought.¹⁸¹ The price of cattle also reduced significantly. Bilqiis, who moved to Dadaab from Xabiibayaal in 2023 with her seven children and husband, kept and sold cattle to buy other necessities. However, when the drought came, all her cattle except one died. She sold the last one at US\$50 to fund her move to Dadaab.¹⁸²

Cross-border livestock traders have profited from the cheaper livestock. One trader who buys livestock in Jubaland and sells it in Nairobi observed that during drought, he would buy a mature but malnourished goat in Somalia at US\$10-15, let it recover on his farm in Kenya and resell it at US\$70-90.¹⁸³ Similarly, he would buy a mature bull at US\$60-80, and resell it at US\$450 after fattening it up. He lamented that since the drought subsided, his profit margins had dropped by over 50% due to increased livestock prices in Somalia. During rainy seasons, a cow would cost about US\$300 in Somalia and a goat about US\$50.¹⁸⁴

Philemon Ngasike, a University of Nairobi Dryland Management researcher who has worked extensively on the Somalia-Kenya cross-border livestock trade, noted that during the 2020-2024 drought, cattle sales from Somalia into Kenya’s Garissa livestock market reduced from 5,000 cattle per week to around just 700. The cows on sale also fetched significantly reduced prices, dropping from a peak of US\$500 during the pre-drought seasons to below US\$100 per head during the drought.¹⁸⁵

The drought weakened animals, making them susceptible to disease. This was compounded by the concentration of animals in one pasture area and long distances travelled by pastoralists, worsening the spread of livestock diseases.¹⁸⁶ Accordingly, state governments, such as the Jubaland government, sometimes offered limited vaccination services to pastoralists.¹⁸⁷ Local NGOs offered a similar service, including Resourceful International Organization, which works with pastoralists on animal vaccination in Jubaland.¹⁸⁸ However, such interventions are generally limited in scope.

The livestock trader interviewed reported that the deteriorating health of livestock during drought in Somalia, coupled with diseases, forced him to obtain land in Kenya to keep and treat livestock and increase their prices on the Kenyan market.¹⁸⁹ According to Dr Ngasike, increased numbers of livestock traders seeking ranches for livestock fattening in north-eastern and coastal Kenya not only increases the demand and cost of leasing ranches but also spreads livestock diseases, forcing Kenya’s county governments to invest more in livestock vaccination and treatment. Such veterinary services in Kenya only attract more herders to the region, causing conflict between local and Somalia herders over pasture and water.¹⁹⁰

Under international law, Somalia is obligated to promote and protect pastoralists’ right to adequate food by protecting them from the adverse effects of climate change, such as drought. This can be done by strengthening early warning systems, livestock vaccination, minimizing livestock deaths through providing livestock feeds and water or compensating pastoralists for the death of their livestock. By not undertaking these measures, Somalia has failed its obligation to protect, fulfil and respect its obligation to guarantee the availability of food for pastoralist communities.

¹⁷⁸ Interview in Dadaab on 23 September 2024.

¹⁷⁹ Online interview with Head of Office, OCHA Somalia, 30 October 2024.

¹⁸⁰ Online interview with Head of Office, OCHA Somalia, 30 October 2024.

¹⁸¹ OCHA, *Somalia: Drought Situation Report No.21*, 21 December 2021, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no2-21-december-2021>

¹⁸² Interview in Dadaab, 24 September 2024.

¹⁸³ Interview in Nairobi, 19 February 2025.

¹⁸⁴ Interview in Nairobi, 19 February 2025.

¹⁸⁵ Online interview with Dr Ngasike Philemon, Lecturer in Climate Change and Dryland Management at the University of Nairobi, 7 July 2025.

¹⁸⁶ Interview in person with RIO on 19 February 2025 in Nairobi, and online with Jubaland Director of Humanitarian Services, 19 February 2025.

¹⁸⁷ Online interview with Director of Humanitarian Affairs, Jubaland, 19 February 2025.

¹⁸⁸ Online interview with Director of Humanitarian Affairs, Jubaland, 19 February 2025.

¹⁸⁹ Interview in Nairobi, 19 February 2025.

¹⁹⁰ Online interview with Dr Ngasike Philemon, Lecturer in Climate Change and Dryland Management at the University of Nairobi, 7 July 2025.

6.2.4 FOOD ACCESSIBILITY: COLLAPSE OF RURAL ECONOMIES

To ensure that people's right to access food is realized, Somalia is obligated to protect livelihoods. This may involve protecting local businesses and other economic activities from collapse and protecting food distribution systems from climate shocks while working to sustain food access for vulnerable populations most impacted by drought. By not undertaking such measures, Somalia failed in its duty to guarantee access to food. Somalia is also obliged to undertake fiscal measures to ensure that food prices remain stable and affordable. This may include financial incentives to boost food production, lowering consumption taxes and tax breaks on agricultural inputs and products. However, as detailed below, Somalia has failed to discharge this duty, leading to massive inflation, making food unaffordable for most families affected by drought.

The drought has had a devastating effect on villages. Unemployment has worsened due to a collapse of businesses, which, in turn, has led to a loss of livelihoods.¹⁹¹ The cost of basic commodities has skyrocketed with fewer traders operating and entire communities relying on costly foods imported from Kenya, Ethiopia and via Somalia's ports. Fawzia, a 48-year-old woman from Yaag Barawei near Dinsoor in southern Somalia, explained:

"I came here in 2023 with three children and my husband. I used to run a kiosk in my village. However, when the drought came, most of my customers who were animal keepers moved away with their livestock. I could no longer sell much and therefore I could not buy food for my family. We slept hungry many times. Before the drought, I would get a profit of between 5,000 to 20,000 SOS (US\$9 to US\$36). However, this kept reducing. I eventually closed the shop. Once I closed the shop, my family relied on relatives and 'well-wishers' for maize, beans and sorghum. We only ate once a day. When we could not get any more food from neighbours because they also ran out of enough to share, we opted to leave. We set off for Dadaab. We walked for two months."¹⁹²

Explaining the devastation of the drought on the local economy, Hibaaq, a 32-year-old woman from Xabiibayaal in Dinsoor, explained that when she left Dinsoor for Dadaab in 2022, only two of her village's original 30 shops were functioning. The rest had either closed or the owners had moved to IDP camps or across the border to Dadaab.¹⁹³

The collapse of rural economies has resulted in more vulnerability, poverty and inadequate food as fewer families could afford food. This caused displacement, which further impacts rural economies for those left behind. Amnesty International interviewed 72 people who had migrated from the same villages together. These included Qararey, Goljano, Afgooye-Buale, Sako and many villages around Buale, Dinsoor and Afgooye-South West.

Amnesty International noted a symbiotic relationship between farmers and pastoralists. Farmers sold their crops or exchanged them for livestock products. Similarly, livestock farmers sold livestock and used the money to buy farm produce and other supplies.¹⁹⁴ However, this arrangement was disrupted by drought. Once animals died, pastoralists no longer had money or animals to exchange for farm produce, forcing them to relocate. The drought slowed down or even collapsed trade in some villages in Somalia. Consequently, those who moved to Dadaab were not just farmers, but a variety of people, all driven out directly or indirectly by the drought.

As the drought worsened, the situation for small-scale traders got harder, as more people relied on the *deni* system for survival. Under the *deni* system, a family could obtain goods on credit from a shop on the premise that they would pay during harvest. Sometimes payment was made using grains or goats. However, as most crops dried up, families did not have proper harvests and had to move due to indebtedness. Even in Dadaab, many displaced persons, especially women, still work and save to clear their *deni* in southern Somalia. Sagal, a 30-year-old mother of four from Afgoye village near Buale, moved to Dadaab in 2022. She said she was a farmer growing maize, sesame, tomatoes and sorghum. When the drought came, she survived by borrowing money to buy food from relatives and neighbours. Sometimes she borrowed items from a shop, promising to repay when the rains returned, and she could farm again. But the rain never came. She eventually left for Dadaab with a debt of US\$200. As soon as she arrived, she looked for small jobs and saved money to pay her debt, which she has since cleared.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ Multiple interviews in Dadaab, 19 September 2024.

¹⁹² Interview in Dadaab, 24 September 2024.

¹⁹³ Interview in Dadaab, 24 September 2024.

¹⁹⁴ Multiple interviews in Dadaab, 23 September 2024.

¹⁹⁵ Interview in Dadaab, 25 September 2024.

People's inability to pay their *denis* on time has overstretched social systems and led small businesses to collapse and forcing their owners to move too.

6.2.5 FOOD ACCESSIBILITY: COLLAPSE OF COMMUNITY-BASED SOCIAL PROTECTION

Article 9 of the ICESCR protects the right to social security. The CESCR has also emphasized that the right to social security must be adequate, available and cover a wide variety of social risks.¹⁹⁶ The Committee further emphasizes that:

“states parties should also consider schemes that provide social protection to individuals belonging to disadvantaged and marginalized groups, for example crop or natural disaster insurance for small farmers or livelihood protection for self-employed persons in the informal economy.”¹⁹⁷

The CESCR recognizes community-based non-state social protection systems¹⁹⁸ and urges the state to use legislation to protect them.¹⁹⁹

Although international law requires Somalia to have a social security system for people living in poverty, the country does not have a functional one. This research illustrates that Somalia's Social Protection Policy remains largely unimplemented. Although the policy has a short-term (2024) goal of establishing an inter-agency coordination framework for protecting women, children, the elderly and other marginalized communities, including those affected by drought, challenges persist, leading to cross-border displacement as underscored in this report.²⁰⁰ Accordingly, Somalis living in poverty, such as those affected by drought, largely rely on a customary community-based social protection system. This is increasingly facing pressure from drought.²⁰¹ By not protecting this system, by, for instance, augmenting local or family-led relief initiatives, or anchoring customary social protection systems in law as required by international law, Somalia has failed in its obligation to protect at-risk populations, including IDPs, who are expressly protected under Paragraph 9 of the General Comment 19 of the CESCR. The absence of a functional social protection system is a derogation from the duty imposed by the ICESCR.

In Somalia, hungry families only consider themselves food insecure once their close relatives are also food insecure. Otherwise, they rely on parents, children, aunts, siblings, uncles, and so on, for food, and neighbours. Seventy-seven interviewees whose livelihoods had been destroyed by drought initially had their right to food fulfilled through family, when they had no food of their own.²⁰² Their only other available social protection system was diaspora remittances, limited to those with families abroad. Support from NGOs was generally limited and inadequate.²⁰³ Globally, assumptions about food security and the right to food depend on whether an individual has eaten food. However, in southern Somalia, food security was at least partly dependent on whether the family and clan had food. In this sense, Amnesty International found that famine threatened this traditional social protection system.

The 77 interviewees' decision to move was ultimately made when they ran out of food or water, or when their community and clan-based social system collapsed. Even wealthier relatives or bigger farmers who stored a lot of food eventually exhausted their stock due to increased dependency, prompting whole families or clans to abandon villages and migrate. Faduma, aged 37, spent two years relying on relatives and neighbours for food after the drought. A mother of eight, she said her neighbours also ran out of food. She eventually moved to Dadaab with her mother-in-law, who had given her food until her stores ran out, too.²⁰⁴

6.2.6 FOOD ACCESSIBILITY: HIGH FOOD PRICES

Somalia has an obligation to guarantee its people access to food by protecting, respecting and fulfilling their right to food under the ICESCR.²⁰⁵ The government must therefore facilitate adequate food distribution,

¹⁹⁶ CESCR, General Comment 191: The Right to Social Security (Article 9), 23 November 2007, UN Doc E/C.12/GC/19, para. 9-23.

¹⁹⁷ CESCR, General Comment 191 (previously cited), para. 28.

¹⁹⁸ CESCR, General Comment 191 (previously cited), para. 5.

¹⁹⁹ CESCR, General Comment 191 (previously cited), para. 48.

²⁰⁰ Somalia Social Protection Policy (previously cited), pp. 7-10, p. 28.

²⁰¹ Somalia Social Protection policy (previously cited).

²⁰² Multiple interviews in Dadaab, 23 September 2024.

²⁰³ Interview with OCHA-Somalia Head of Office, 30 October 2024.

²⁰⁴ Interview in Dadaab, 20 September 2024.

²⁰⁵ ICESCR, Article 11.

including instituting necessary agricultural financing, subsidies and tax incentives to ensure affordability. High food prices undermine the right to food by making it difficult for people to afford it. Specifically, the CESCR in General Comment 12 highlights that:

“The obligation to fulfil (facilitate) means the State must pro-actively engage in activities intended to strengthen people’s access to and utilization of resources and means to ensure their livelihood, including food security. Finally, whenever an individual or group is unable, for reasons beyond their control, to enjoy the right to adequate food by the means at their disposal, States have the obligation to fulfil (provide) that right directly. This obligation also applies for persons who are victims of natural or other disasters.”²⁰⁶

According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), a consortium of government, UN and other humanitarian actors operating in crisis areas,²⁰⁷ food prices have increased by between 25% and 160% above pre-drought levels (before 2020) across Somalia. The IPC index classifies food insecurity in terms of Level 1 (food security/minimum insecurity), Level 2 (food stressed), Level 3 (food crisis), Level 4 (emergency) and Level 5 (catastrophe).²⁰⁸ By mid-2022, three years into the drought, 11% of the population in the three states were classified under Level 4, 26% under Level 3 and 25% were considered to be food stressed.²⁰⁹

As the drought has destroyed domestic means of subsistence, most people have relied on the market for food. The IPC estimates that as of 2022, between 76-80% of people in southern Somalia relied on the market for food.²¹⁰ As prices have increased, jobs have become less available, wages have reduced, and fewer people can afford food, worsening their nutritional status. IPC estimates that by June 2022, urban dwellers spent up to 80% of their wages on food.²¹¹ Indeed, OCHA confirmed that by March 2022, the cost of maize in Hirshabelle had doubled from US\$13 to US\$26 per 50 kg.²¹² In Kismayo, the price of a 5kg bag of beans had risen from US\$2.2 to US\$3.7 and maize from US\$16.6 to US\$37, while in Gaarbaharey district in Jubaland state, 500ml of milk cost US\$3 up from US\$0.7.²¹³

This combination of low wages, fewer jobs and loss of livelihoods has undermined people’s capacity to afford food during the drought. Filsan, from Lan Abaar village in Kismayo, noted that with time, food had become increasingly expensive due to the drought. She had stopped eating vegetables, spaghetti, pasta and meat as she could no longer afford them and focused on buying sorghum, although it also increased in price. Her family had gone from spending 3,000 SOS (US\$5.3) on sorghum to 15,000 SOS (US\$27) per day. She could no longer afford this either.²¹⁴

By failing to guarantee adequate food distribution and adequate relief food to people affected by drought, Somalia has contravened its obligations under the ICESCR.

6.2.7 FOOD QUALITY AND ADEQUACY: DROUGHT AND POOR NUTRITION

The CESCR notes that food quality and adequacy require food to meet standard dietary requirements, be free from adverse substances, be of appropriate quantity and acceptable within a given culture.²¹⁵ The state is obligated to facilitate the realization of this right and where such an obligation is impractical, to directly distribute food.²¹⁶ As documented below, Somalia’s government has failed in its obligation to respect, protect and fulfil this right, resulting in displacement.

Before the drought, most people in southern Somalia consumed a balanced diet of grains, meat, vegetables and fruits. However, as the drought worsened, the quality of their diet deteriorated as most food sources

²⁰⁶ CESCR, General Comment 12 (previously cited), para. 15.

²⁰⁷ Food Security and Nutrition analysis Unit, *Somalia faces increased Risk of Famine as acute food insecurity, malnutrition and mortality worsen*, 4 June 2022, <https://fsnau.org/downloads/Somalia-Updated-IPC-and-Famine-Risk-Analysis-Technical-Release-4-Jun-2022.pdf>

²⁰⁸ Food Security and Nutrition analysis Unit, *IPC Overview and Classification System*, <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/ipc-overview-and-classification-system/en/>

²⁰⁹ Food Security and Nutrition analysis Unit, *Somalia faces increased Risk of Famine* (previously cited).

²¹⁰ IPC, *Somalia: Famine Review of the IPC Analysis: Conclusions and Recommendations For Burhakaba And Baidoa Districts (Rural Population) And IDPs In Baidoa - Bay Region, Somalia*, September 2022, https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Famine_Review_Report_Somalia_Sept2022.pdf

²¹¹ Food Security and Nutrition analysis Unit, *Somalia faces increased Risk of Famine* (previously cited).

²¹² OCHA, *Somalia: Drought Situation Report No.5*, 20 March 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no5-20-march-2022#:~:text=Water%20trucking%20activities%20are%20ongoing%20but%20are%20insufficient%20to%20meet%20increasing%20need.s.&text=Schools%20are%20closing%20as%20children.school%20because%20of%20the%20drought>

²¹³ OCHA, *Somalia: Drought Situation Report* (previously cited).

²¹⁴ Interview in Dadaab, 26 September 2024.

²¹⁵ CESCR in General Comment 12 (previously cited), paras 9-11.

²¹⁶ CESCR in General Comment 12 (previously cited), para. 15.

dried up and animals died. Even those who borrowed food still had nutritional deficiencies. Eighty-four interviewees indicated only receiving and consuming grains. Mudan, a 40-year-old mother of seven from Dinsoor, explained:

“I arrived here one year ago from Dinsoor, where I used to grow sorghum and maize and kept goats. However, the drought dried everything. I had to borrow sorghum from my relatives, but they gave me very little. Only enough to eat once a day. I carried the little sorghum that I had and joined families that were moving to Dadaab.”²¹⁷

The drought also impacted businesses, making it expensive or impossible for people to buy nutritious food and reducing the nutritional quality of their diets. This forced them to go hungry or eat the limited cereals in the store. Nomadic pastoralists were acutely impacted, as the loss of livestock meant that they could not eat or sell livestock to buy other food. Accordingly, 13 pastoralists interviewed for this study reported resorting to eating wild berries, tubers and vegetation for survival. Hassan, a 29-year-old father of nine from Abdallah Kakane village in Jilib, had originally farmed pumpkins, mangoes, bananas, beans and maize. He was forced to abandon his farm after his crops died due to persistently absent rainfall. Once he lost his crops and exhausted his stored food, they only ate mangoes until they ran out, too. His wife and children looked for edible tubers and vegetation in the bushes. Eventually, together with four other families, he moved to Dadaab.²¹⁸

Hassan’s case is not isolated, as 13 interviewees reported having relied on wild fruits and berries to survive the drought.²¹⁹ Humanitarian representatives from ASEP,²²⁰ World Vision²²¹ and GREDO²²² confirmed widespread reliance on wild fruits, tubers and berries and highlighted efforts to provide relief despite resource constraints. Similarly, in a 2022 report, World Vision documented families relying on wild fruits for survival in Baidoa.²²³

Southern Somalia traditionally largely relied on subsistence farming of vegetables and livestock. Ninety-two interviewees indicated storing grain, sorghum or maize, which they largely relied on after their livestock and vegetables died. Most families then ate mangoes, which are generally more resilient to drought. Warsame, a 26-year-old father of three from Quarrarey in Buale, said he used to grow maize, beans and mangoes. However, in 2021, all the crops died. Their stored grain was limited, and they could only eat one meal a day. Children were mostly given porridge. Once they ran out of grains, they relied on mangoes. Eventually, the mango season also passed, and they had to leave.²²⁴

As the drought worsened, vegetables and bananas died, mangoes went out of season, and the nutritional status of most families diminished. Stored beans continued to guarantee some protein for families. Once families ran out of beans, sorghum and maize were their main diet. This soon ran out and famine kicked in.

The drought affected both the quantity of food consumed per household and the frequency of consumption. Sixty-two families reported reducing rations to make their reserves last longer. Bishaaro, a woman from Xabiibayaal village in Dinsoor who moved to Dadaab in 2023 with her seven children and husband, explained that she grew maize, beans and sorghum. However, when the four-year drought started, everything dried up. They had to consume all their reserve food, rationing it by reducing what they ate. Once they ran out of food, they relied on neighbours and ‘well-wishers’. However, adults would only eat once every three days. Most donated food was given to children. Their main meal was sorghum. With time, the neighbours and relatives also ran out of food. Thirty families then decided to travel to Dadaab camp.²²⁵

Bishaaro’s story reflects the realities of over 10 families from villages in Dinsoor interviewed by Amnesty International.

Drought and famine have a disproportionate impact on children, with cases of malnutrition in children being very prevalent. Overall, OCHA Somalia estimates that 1.4 million children had acute malnutrition by February 2022.²²⁶ The IPC classifies child malnutrition as being severe acute (SAM) or moderate acute (MAM). It indicates that by mid-2022, 56% of children in the three states faced acute malnutrition,

²¹⁷ Interview in Dadaab, 22 September 2024.

²¹⁸ Interview in Dadaab, 22 September 2024.

²¹⁹ Multiple interviews in Dadaab, 23 September 2024.

²²⁰ In-person interview with Action for Social and Economic Progress (ASEP) in Nairobi, 18 October 2024.

²²¹ World Vision, online interview, 30 October 2024.

²²² Gargaar Relief Development Organization (GREDO) interview, 28 October 2024.

²²³ World Vision Somalia, *Surviving the drought in Somalia: Parents forced to serve their children wild fruits to cope with hunger*, 22 June 2022, <https://www.wvi.org/stories/somalia/surviving-drought-somalia-parents-forced-serve-their-children-wild-fruits-cope>

²²⁴ Interview in Hagadera, 20 September 2024.

²²⁵ Interview on 20 September 2024.

²²⁶ OCHA, *Somalia: Drought Situation Report No.4*, 20 February 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no4-20-february-2022>

significantly higher than the country's 45% average, and indicating the devastating effect of drought on this region. Severe malnutrition exposes children to premature, unnatural deaths and is therefore a threat to the right to life as outlined in the ICCPR²²⁷ and HRC General Comment 36.²²⁸ As an at-risk group, Somalia is under a duty to protect them from the negative implications of the drought. Recognizing the high level of malnutrition among children in South West State during the 2020-2023 drought, Somalia's Minister of Humanitarian Affairs told Amnesty International that:

“Our response has been limited by insecurity because our officers cannot access some parts of the state due to Al-Shabaab and limited resources. This forces us to rely on humanitarian actors to undertake responses. However, in the 2020-2024 drought, even the donors were overwhelmed resulting in a lot of child mortality, malnutrition and displacement.”²²⁹

According to the WFP Head of Office in Dadaab, many new arrivals in Dadaab are accompanied by highly malnourished children due to drought.²³⁰ Accordingly, WFP and UNHCR usually encourage new arrivals to take their children to hospitals for nutritional assessment. Once assessed as having malnutrition, they are put on special nutritional programmes by UNHCR and WFP.²³¹ Those with acute malnutrition receive medical support in addition to nutritional food support.

Twenty-six interviewees confirmed arriving with malnourished children in Dadaab. Saada, aged 49, arrived in Dadaab in 2023 with her eight children from Dinsoor. She explains that they ran out of food and decided to leave home. However, as they carried no food, her son got extremely unwell on the journey. He was malnourished, and the hardship of the trip made it worse. They tried to buy him food on the way, but did not have enough money until they arrived in Dadaab and he was admitted to the hospital for four months. Kulan from Saakow, also interviewed by Amnesty International, indicated that she was admitted to the hospital in Dadaab together with her seven children on their arrival due to malnutrition.²³²

Poor nutrition is a product of the protracted drought, made worse by human-induced climate change. This has decimated different food varieties while preventing replenishment due to no rainfall. OCHA reports that 2021 recorded the poorest cereal harvest in Somalia since 1995.²³³ Under such circumstances, Somalia has a duty to directly, or working with partners, provide adequate food to people impacted by the drought. Failure to fulfil this right is a dereliction of duty under international law.

6.3 RIGHT TO WATER

The CESCR has established the core components of the right to water in its General Recommendation 15, emphasizing that states have a duty to respect, protect and fulfil the right to water. It highlights the need to ensure that women, older persons, people affected by natural disasters and children have access to water.²³⁴ The ACHPR establishes minimum core obligations on access to water. These require states to:

“(a) Ensure access to the minimum essential amount of water, that is sufficient and safe for personal and domestic use, including preventing disease, together with access to adequate sanitation. (b) Ensure safe physical access to water facilities or services that provide sufficient, safe and regular water; that have an adequate number of water outlets to avoid prohibitive waiting times; and that are at a reasonable distance from the household; educational institution, workplace or health institution.”²³⁵

In this sense, Somalia has a duty to enhance the rehabilitation of water sources, protect them from contamination, develop new water sources and ensure that the existing sources meet the WHO water quality standards.²³⁶ Such obligations include actual provision of water where there is none, such as in situations where water sources dry up due to drought.

²²⁷ ICCPR, Article 6.

²²⁸ HRC, General Comment 36 (previously cited), para. 26.

²²⁹ Interview in person with Minister of Humanitarian Affairs South-West, Nairobi, 28 October 2024.

²³⁰ Interview in person with World Food Programme Dadaab Head of Office, 25 September 2024.

²³¹ Interview in person with World Food Programme Dadaab Head of Office, 25 September 2024.

²³² Interview in Dadaab, 22 September 2024.

²³³ OCHA, *Somalia: Drought Situation Report No.3*, 20 January 2022, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no3-20-january-2022>

²³⁴ CESCR, General Comment 15 (previously cited), para. 16.

²³⁵ ACHPR Guidelines (previously cited), para. 92.

²³⁶ WHO, *Guidelines for drinking-water quality*, 4th Edition, <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/352532/9789240045064-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

According to the CESCR, the right to water must be understood within the quality, accessibility, availability and acceptability (QAAA) framework, which confers corresponding duties on the state.²³⁷

6.3.1 AVAILABILITY: DRYING UP OF WATER SOURCES

According to CESCR General Comment 15, the availability of water requires Somalia to ensure that water is sufficient and continuous for personal and domestic use.²³⁸ This should be based on personal and household needs.²³⁹ This right creates an obligation for the Somali government to protect water sources from contamination and misuse, and where they are not available to provide alternative sources through, for instance, water trucking.

There are two main sources of water in Somalia – ground and surface water. Surface water sources include rivers, streams, *balleys* (natural depressions), *berkads* (human-made cisterns) and *waro* (human-made dams). The two rivers, Shabelle and Jubba, and their tributaries are the main sources of surface water. Although other rivers do exist, most are seasonal and dry up during drought. Groundwater sources include dug wells, boreholes and springs.

Amnesty International found that drought and floods have had a devastating impact on Somalia's water systems.²⁴⁰ Due to a weak and underfunded government, most parts of southern Somalia do not have piped water or a functional state-supported water system.²⁴¹ Instead, people rely on private or communal sources, such as wells, earth dams, boreholes, streams or rivers. These are generally far apart, with many families walking long distances to get water, even before the four-year drought.²⁴²

Historically, the rivers Jubba, Hirshabelle and their tributaries were the main water sources for the people of southern Somalia, even when other sources dried up. However, during the four-year drought, some rivers, their tributaries and streams dried up while 16 interviewees reported only patches of water around wetlands.²⁴³ The Somalia Water and Land Information Management Project (SWALIM) reported drying riverbeds along the two rivers by 2022.²⁴⁴ The frequency of drying of rivers, particularly Shabelle, seems to have pushed many families to Dadaab. For instance, three interviewees from Afgooye-South West cited this as their main reason for moving to Dadaab.²⁴⁵ The same applies to the Dawa river, a tributary of the river Jubba. According to 26 interviewees, the water level in the river Jubba had significantly reduced to the point that it hardly supported their livelihood or the water needs of the inhabitants. 48 interviewees from around Buale, Marerey and Jamame indicated that small pools and narrow flows along most parts of the Jubba river passing through their areas were too dirty to be used for domestic purposes, largely due to overuse by people and animals. The satellite imagery below confirms this.

²³⁷ CESCR, General comment 5, The right to water (Articles 11 and 12 of the ICESCR), 20 January 2003, UN Doc E/C.12/2002/11, paras 11-12.

²³⁸ General Comment 15: The Right to Water (previously cited).

²³⁹ CESCR, General Comment 5 (previously cited), para. 12 (a).

²⁴⁰ Online interview with SOMREP Chief of Party, 11 November 2024.

²⁴¹ Online interview with Head of Office, OCHA Somalia, 30 October 2024.

²⁴² Online interview with Head of Office, OCHA Somalia, 30 October 2024.

²⁴³ Multiple interviews in person in Daadab, 22 September 2024.

²⁴⁴ FAO-SWALIM, Somalia Drought Update, 2 March 2022, https://faoswalim.org/resources/site_files/Somalia_Gu_2022_Rainfall_Outlook_and_Drought%20Update-March_2022.pdf

²⁴⁵ Interview in Dadaab, 23 September 2024.



↑ Satellite imagery shows Jamame, Somalia, next to the Jubba river on 14 March 2022. The river water is very sparse, with the sand on the riverbed very apparent.

The drying up of water sources often limited the alternative water sources that people had during normal seasons. Warsan from Buale explained:

“We used to spend six hours fetching water to and from river Jubba [three hours each way]. However, the water kept reducing as the drought went on. By 2023, when we left, there were only patches left. I knew that it would soon dry up completely. There was no other water source nearby and we knew we would die. In fact, we even crossed the river on foot when coming to Dadaab. You could not do this before.”²⁴⁶

The situation was made worse by the fact that since the outbreak of the civil war in 1991, the government had stopped maintaining and protecting most earth dams and water pans, thereby worsening the water crisis.²⁴⁷ However, at the time of research, renewed efforts were being made by humanitarian actors like SOMREP through its partners, GREDO and the Somali government²⁴⁸ to desilt dams and other water sources, dig more boreholes, and repair other water systems.²⁴⁹

According to humanitarian actors, drought pushed too many people to rely on the same pumped boreholes, which were forced to work overtime.²⁵⁰ This often led the pumping system to break down, further worsening the water crisis. Eventually, the distance that people had to walk to get water increased. Although humanitarian actors repaired some of them, the response did not match the demand due to inadequate financing and insecurity.²⁵¹

OCHA estimated that as of February 2022, 80% of water sources in South West State (river Shabelle, shallow wells and dams) were drying up.²⁵² In neighbouring Galmudug, 82% of *berkads* had dried up by November 2021, while in Mudug, 89% had dried up.²⁵³ Water scarcity meant more families and animals relied on the

²⁴⁶ Interview in Dadaab, 26 September 2024.

²⁴⁷ Federal Government of Somalia, *National Water Resource Strategy, 2021-2025*, <https://moewr.gov.so/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/National-Water-Strategy.pdf>

²⁴⁸ Somalia Ministry of Water, Energy and Environment, *Annual Report, 2022-2023*, <https://moewr.gov.so/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/MoEWR-Annual-Report-2022-2023.pdf>

²⁴⁹ Online interview with SOMREP Chief of Party, 11 November 2024 and GREDO, 28 October 2024.

²⁵⁰ Interview with ASEP in Nairobi, 18 October 2024.

²⁵¹ Online interview with Care International and SOMREP Chief of Party, on 11 November 2024; GREDO, on 28 October 2024. Interview with ASEP in Nairobi, on 18 October 2024.

²⁵² OCHA, Somalia: *Drought Situation Report No.5*, 20 March 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no5-20-march-2022#:~:text=Water%20trucking%20activities%20are%20ongoing%20but%20are%20insufficient%20to%20meet%20increasing%20needs.&text=Schools%20are%20closing%20as%20children,school%20because%20of%20the%20drought>

²⁵³ FAO-SWALIM, Somalia Drought Update, 18 November 2021, https://www.faoswalim.org/resources/site_files/drought_update_18_November_2021.pdf

same sources. This caused tension and sometimes even conflict as various clans, warlords and sub-clans competed for control of water resources. According to the Ministers for Humanitarian Services in Hirshabelle and South West States, inter-subclan conflicts over water and pasture have become common in Hirshabelle due to the drought, further displacing more people to peri-urban areas and leading to the loss of lives. The Hirshabelle Minister particularly pointed to the border region between Hiran and lower Shabelle as a flashpoint.²⁵⁴ Media reports state that in 2019, over 1,000 people were displaced from their homes in the border region between Hiraan and middle Shabelle²⁵⁵ when fighting over water and pastures broke out. IOM estimates that disputes over water and pasture account for 35% to 40% of conflicts in Somalia.²⁵⁶ Studies by UN Habitat also illustrate water resource conflicts in Jubaland as various clans and pastoralist groups fight over control of, or access to, watering points.²⁵⁷

6.3.2 WATER QUALITY AND ACCEPTABILITY: COLOUR AND TASTE OF WATER

The CESCRO observes that the right to water implies that the state has an obligation to ensure that the water for domestic and personal use is safe and free from micro-organisms, chemical substances and radiological hazards that could harm human health. It recommends using WHO standards in determining water quality. Acceptability requires the water to be of acceptable colour, odour and taste. However, as detailed below, Somalia failed to fulfil this obligation by failing to provide alternative water during the drought and is failing to protect water sources from pollution.

When Amnesty International asked interviewees about the colour, source and taste of the water to determine the extent of acceptability, 83 said that most groundwater sources were salty, sour or bitter. Once the rivers, *berkads* and *waros* dried up, people had to rely on groundwater despite its salinity. Udgoon, a 26-year-old mother of six from Bulagadud in Kismayo, explained:

“We relied on a shallow well for water. The well was about four hours away. The water was very dirty. Sometimes there were shoes and even clothes inside the well. The water was mostly salty or sour. However, this worsened with the drought. Eventually, you could not even drink it. But we used it because we had no other option. All other sources had dried up.”²⁵⁸

Udgoon’s testimony reflects the World Bank’s technical assessment that up to 70% of Somalia’s groundwater sources have salinity levels above 1,500 µS/cm (microsiemens per centimetre)²⁵⁹ recommended by the WHO. Studies observe that protracted drought contributes significantly to increased salinity.²⁶⁰ Increased salinity of water, characterized by bitterness or saltiness, is one of the main reasons interviewees gave for abandoning their villages during drought.²⁶¹ High levels of salinity are linked to excess levels of minerals that cause health complications, including kidney problems.²⁶² Ninety-four interviewees reported that the remaining patches of wetlands and shallow flows on the river Jubba were dirty, bitter and salty.²⁶³

Ninety-seven interviewees indicated that as the drought worsened, available water was more discoloured. Surface and groundwater were generally described as brown or green.²⁶⁴ This suggests the presence of algae growing on the water or contamination from soil or other impurities. Twelve interviewees reported

²⁵⁴ Interview in person with the Hirshabelle Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, 31 October 2024.

²⁵⁵ Radio Ergo, “Hundreds of families displaced by clashes in Hirshabelle in dire need of help”, 30 January 2019, <https://radioergo.org/en/2019/01/hundreds-of-families-displaced-by-clashes-in-hirshabelle-in-dire-need-of-help/>

²⁵⁶ IOM-Somalia, *Climate Change Complicates Somalia’s Path to Peace*, <https://somalia.iom.int/stories/people-are-fighting-over-trees-climate-change-strains-somalias-path-peace>

²⁵⁷ UN Habitat, *Land And Conflict In Jubaland: Root Cause Analysis And Recommendations* https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/09/20-01079-gltn-land-and-conflict-in-jubaland_final.pdf

²⁵⁸ Interview in Dadaab, 19 September 2024

²⁵⁹ World Bank, *Somalia: Groundwater Assessment*, 2021, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099615012012129914/pdf/P1749940c70d5d09008a3203ad9eeb97d1a.pdfhttps://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099430212022126696/pdf/P1749940f797210840b3e90b40b1359a655.pdf>

²⁶⁰ Dahyann Araya and others, *Groundwater salinity in the Horn of Africa: Spatial prediction modeling and estimated people at risk*, Vol. 176, June 2023, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0160412023001988#bb0130>

²⁶¹ Multiple interviews in Dadaab, 19 September 2024.

²⁶² World Bank, *Somalia: Groundwater Assessment*. See also African Development Bank, *Somalia Water and Sanitation Sector Needs Assessment and Investment Programme*, November 2015, https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/GenericDocuments/Final_Somalia_Water_Sector_Report_Volume_I_FGS_AfDB_November_2015.pdf

²⁶³ Interview in Dadaab, 25 September 2024.

²⁶⁴ Multiple interviews in Dadaab, 17 September 2024.

finding shoes, remains of dead animals or clothes in the water, reflecting how water sources are shared between animals and humans.

The failure by the Somali government to provide water purification systems in the drought-affected areas, forcing people to rely on dirty water, is a dereliction of its constitutional duty to provide clean and portable water and a violation of its duty under international human rights law.

6.3.3 WATER QUALITY: CONTAMINATED WATER, OUTBREAK OF DIARRHOEA AND THE RIGHT TO HEALTH

In 22 instances, interviewees complained of family members getting diarrhoea after drinking the available water. Although Amnesty International could not confirm the causes of diarrhoea, interviews with GREDO, OCHA and Ministers of Humanitarian Affairs in Hirshabelle and South West confirmed outbreaks of diarrhoea linked to the drought.²⁶⁵ OCHA drought situation updates on the three states indicated an outbreak of acute watery diarrhoea (cholera). The table below, drawn from OCHA's November 2021 to March 2022 reports, highlights the cholera outbreak within the research areas.

PERIOD	REPORTED AREAS	STATE	NUMBER OF CHOLERA CASES IN HOSPITAL
NOVEMBER 2021 ²⁶⁶	Afgoye, Baidoa and Qoryoley	South West	272
NOVEMBER 2021	Jowhar	Hirshabelle	22 plus 1 death
DECEMBER 2021 ²⁶⁷	Jowhar	Hirshabelle	79
JANUARY 2022 ²⁶⁸	Marka	South West	7
MARCH 2022 ²⁶⁹	Jowhar	South West	148
JANUARY 2022 ²⁷⁰	Dhobely	Jubaland	100
FEBRUARY 2022 ²⁷¹	Luuq	Jubaland	60 plus 1 death
MARCH-APRIL 2022 ²⁷²	Baidoa, Buur Hakaba, Waajid, Afgoye-SW, Marka	South West	412

Cholera outbreak in southern Somalia during the 2019-2023 drought.

Several factors explain the causative impact of the drought on cases of diarrhoea. As water became scarcer, families relied on unsafe water. At the same time, the destruction of livelihoods often made it impossible for families to buy water treatment supplies such as chlorine.²⁷³ Lack of information also resulted in families not treating their water. For instance, of 125 drought-affected interviewees, only four confirmed that they had

²⁶⁵ Multiple interviews in Dadaab, 17 September 2024.

²⁶⁶ OCHA, *Somalia: Drought Situation Report No.1*, 23 November 2021, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no1-23-november-2021>

²⁶⁷ OCHA, *Somalia: Drought Situation Report No.2*, 21 December 2021, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no2-21-december-2021>

²⁶⁸ OCHA, *Somalia: Drought Situation Report No.3*, 20 January 2022, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no3-20-january-2022>

²⁶⁹ OCHA *Somalia: Drought Situation Report No.5*, 20 March 2022, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no5-20-march-2022>

²⁷⁰ OCHA, *Somalia: Drought Situation Report No.3*, 20 January 2022, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no3-20-january-2022>

²⁷¹ OCHA *Somalia: Drought Situation Report No.4*, 20 February 2022 <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no4-20-february-2022>

²⁷² OCHA, *Somalia: Drought Situation Report No.6*, 20 April 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no6-20-april-2022>

²⁷³ Online interview with World Vision and Care International Somalia, 30 October 2024.

been boiling their water before drinking it in Somalia.²⁷⁴ Reduced water sources left animals and people using the same sources, exposing them to contamination. Anisa, a 32-year-old mother of six from Xabiibayaal in Dinsoor, who sourced water from a shallow well and Aden, aged 51, from Baladu Rahmo in Jamame, recounted that although their families boiled water from the river, they still got diarrhoea.²⁷⁵

Nine people interviewed by Amnesty International indicated that they had lost a neighbour or a relative due to the drought, likely due to waterborne diseases and malnutrition caused by famine. Sihaam, a 45-year-old mother of 11 from Dinsoor, explained:

“Many people died due to the drought. My uncle’s four-year-old daughter, Abeer, died due to diarrhoea. My uncle also died due to the same disease much later. We could not afford to take him to hospital, which was very far away. Before the drought, we would buy water from a dam which was far, because we would leave the house at 4am and come back at 3pm. We used to pay 2,000 SOS (US\$3.5) per 20-litre jerrican. However, due to the drought, the dam dried. People had to use a shallow well, which had very dirty water. The water was bitter. Even goats and sheep would refuse to drink it. This is what made people sick. Those who were not sick left and went to Baidoa, Mogadishu, Ethiopia or Dadaab.”²⁷⁶

Although Amnesty International cannot verify the scale of deaths, a recent report by Somalia’s Ministry of Health, the London School of Tropical Medicine and a consortium of humanitarian organizations links 71,000 deaths to the drought in Somalia between 2022 and 2024, with an estimated 36,200 deaths in 2022 and 38,500 in 2023.²⁷⁷ According to the report, most deaths occurred in southern Somalia. By failing to intervene in time to prevent these deaths, Somalia violated its international obligations to guarantee these people’s right to life.

The picture is aggravated by the gross under-reporting of deaths in Somalia, as most people do not go to the hospital due to distance and costs. The 2020 Somalia Demographic and Health Survey indicates that 65% of women of reproductive age (15-49) in Somalia did not access health services due to a lack of money. At the same time, 62% of all women in Somalia could not access health services due to distance and 47% because they did not want to go alone. Since OCHA’s data was obtained mostly from hospital sources, the data missed unreported deaths, which means deaths caused by drought could be higher than reported.

Indeed, 58 interviewees indicated that they would walk for up to 10 hours to get to hospitals. But even then, treatment was unavailable because the facilities required payment, which they lacked, because their livelihoods had been destroyed.²⁷⁸ Asked if they ever obtained medical help, Safiya, a 20-year-old mother of one from Bidi village near Buale, said she had never seen or been to a hospital since she was born.²⁷⁹ Ladan, a 37-year-old mother of 12, indicated that they largely relied on prayers for sick family members as the closest hospital was in Kismayo, a 12-hour walk from their village, Shaywamo. Others claimed to rely on traditional medicine to deal with diarrhoea.²⁸⁰

Most interviewees indicated that because hospitals were very far away, their families relied on pharmacies where they could obtain medicines on credit and pay later. However, the increased cases of diarrhoea, coupled with diminished livelihoods, which increased the number of creditors and defaulters, soon made the pharmacies close down.²⁸¹ Also, because most hospitals are run by humanitarian actors or the government, they often avoid rural areas, mostly controlled by Al-Shabaab. Only people who lived close to hospitals or in cities and towns could access them. The fact that rural parts of southern Somalia remain the epicentre of Al-Shabaab explains the scarcity of health facilities. Khadra, a 38-year-old mother of 7 from Xabiibayaal in Dinsoor, explained that their only hospital had closed due to frequent Al-Shabaab attacks.²⁸²

Although a few private hospitals exist, they are far away and expensive. For instance, 31 interviewees said they spent between US\$30 and US\$150 at a private hospital in Kismayo.²⁸³ The absence of a functional and efficient health system in Somalia has further worsened the situation.

²⁷⁴ Interview in Dadaab, 17 September 2024.

²⁷⁵ Interview in Dadaab, 24 September 2024.

²⁷⁶ Interview in Dadaab, 24 September 2024.

²⁷⁷ Ministry of Health and Human Services, *From insight to action: An update on mortality patterns in Somalia*, https://www.unicef.org/somalia/media/5166/file/From%20insight%20to%20action,%20an%20update%20on%20mortality%20patterns%20in%20Somalia_January%202025.pdf.pdf

²⁷⁸ Multiple interviews in Dadaab, 26 September 2024.

²⁷⁹ Interview in Dadaab, 26 September 2024.

²⁸⁰ Multiple interviews in Dadaab, 26 September 2024.

²⁸¹ Multiple interviews in Dadaab, 26 September 2024.

²⁸² For instance, in 2013, MSF closed all its programmes in Somalia due to Al-Shabaab attacks. See MSF, *MSF forced to close all medical programmes in Somalia*, 14 August 2013, <https://msf.or.ke/news-and-resources/latest-news/msf-forced-close-all-medical-programmes-somalia>

²⁸³ Interview in Dadaab, 19 September 2024.

By failing to undertake disease prevention and surveillance measures, Somalia has failed in its duty to protect, fulfil and respect people's right to health. Furthermore, by not making health facilities available within a reasonable distance, Somalia has failed in its constitutional and human rights duty to provide healthcare to people whose health had been negatively affected by drought-induced water-borne diseases. The state's failure is further compounded by a lack of measures to ensure the affordability of health services, as obligated by the ICESCR.

6.4 WATER ACCESSIBILITY

The CESCR identifies four dimensions of accessibility that Somalia, as a signatory to the ICESCR, is obligated to guarantee: physical accessibility, economic accessibility, non-discrimination and informational accessibility.²⁸⁴ Physical accessibility is determined by the physical proximity of the water source to the user. As such, water sources must be within the user's vicinity and individuals must feel safe in accessing them. Economic accessibility requires that water must be affordable. Non-discrimination requires that no one, especially the most at-risk or marginalized, should be discriminated against in accessing water. Informational accessibility requires that the public be made aware of all information concerning water and its sources. The illustrations and testimonies below indicate that Somalia has failed to fulfil its obligation to protect, fulfil and respect the right to water access by not guaranteeing all the facets of accessibility.

6.4.1 FAILURE TO GUARANTEE PHYSICAL ACCESSIBILITY

Amnesty International interviewed 116 people who said they had accessed free water from rivers – mainly Jubba and Shabelle – prior to the drought. These were mainly riverine communities. Compared to other groups, these communities survived the longest before experiencing water challenges. However, the quality of the river water diminished as the drought worsened because people crowded the rivers to fetch water and the volumes reduced due to evaporation and ground silage. Although the river Jubba is not considered to have dried up completely, Shabelle did so during the drought, completely denying residents water.²⁸⁵ Fifty-three interviewees reported walking for up to 12 hours to reach Jubba at the peak of the drought. Maimuna, a 42-year-old mother of 6 from Saakow, explained:

“Before the drought, we used to get water from an earth dam five hours away. Although we paid, it was very little. About SOS 200 (US\$0.3) per 20 litres of water. However, when the drought worsened, the dam dried because there was no rain to refill it. We now had to travel for 12 hours to river Jubba to fetch water. The river water was free, but you could not carry a lot because it was very far.”²⁸⁶

Others accessed free water from community-owned dams, boreholes and wells or harvested and stored rainwater before the drought. The dams were used to collect and store water during rainy seasons for use during drought. Both humans and animals shared this resource. However, when most dams and wells dried up, communities had to walk long distances to get water. OCHA²⁸⁷ estimates that water wells were far apart, with some being as far as 1,000km. Even when water sources were close, they were congested with women and girls spending much time queuing before accessing water. Thirty-seven interviewees reported spending long hours at waterpoints, with some reporting return trips taking up to 12 hours.²⁸⁸

Somalia has a duty to truck clean water close to the affected populations. However, this has not been done, thereby exposing families to long queues or long-distance travel, often for unclean water. Limited water trucking done by NGOs has, according to OCHA, been insufficient to meet significant demand, largely caused by insecurity and limited financing.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁴ CESCR, General comment 15 (previously cited), para. 12(c)(iii).

²⁸⁵ Online interview with Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Hirshabelle, 4 November 2024, and online interview with Director of Humanitarian Affairs, Jubaland, on 19 February 2025.

²⁸⁶ Interview in Dadaab, 26 September 2024.

²⁸⁷ OCHA Somalia Drought Situation Report No.2, 21 December 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no2-21-december-2021>

²⁸⁸ Multiple interviews in Daadab, 19 September 2024.

²⁸⁹ Online interview with Head of Office, OCHA Somalia, 30 October 2024.

6.4.2 FAILURE TO GUARANTEE ECONOMIC ACCESSIBILITY: VULNERABILITY AND COST OF WATER

Thirty-six interviewees had accessed water by buying it from water trucks, wells, boreholes or dams. The scarcity of water, however, raised the cost. OCHA reports indicated that by November 2021, the cost of water had increased from US\$2.0 to US\$5.0 for a 200 litre barrel of water in South West State, while the same had increased from US\$2 to US\$8 per 200 litre barrel, a 300% increase, in neighbouring Galmudug.²⁹⁰ Hirshabelle reported an increase from US\$1 to US\$5 for a 200-litre barrel by December 2021.²⁹¹ Amnesty International spoke to 72 interviewees who said costs increased with the intensity of the drought. For many of these families, drought only worsened an already dire situation of having to buy water before the drought, too. The Director of Humanitarian Services in Jubaland observed:

“The drought led to the suffering of both farmers and the IDPs in urban areas. For instance, the average wage for a day’s work in Kismayo is US\$3. But at the peak of the drought, a 20-litre jerrican of clean water in Kismayo would cost US\$1.50. Many families ended up drinking dirty water. The high cost of water also led to poor sanitation. This notwithstanding the fact that Kismayo is a port city.”²⁹²

ICG has indicated that the sale of water for human and animal use during drought was a key source of revenue for Al-Shabaab, with the group charging up to US\$0.5 per camel for drinking.²⁹³ Since the drought had already destroyed livelihoods, most people could not afford to buy water. This left more low-income families having to walk longer distances for free water from NGO trucks or rivers.²⁹⁴

Whereas families with financial means could have water trucked to, or near, their homes, extremely low-income families had to walk the longest to find free sources.²⁹⁵ Such conditions left people with no choice other than to relocate or rapidly reduce their water use. Indeed, a 2021 water assessment report by an OCHA Somalia-supported consortium of NGOs in Hirshabelle indicates that 93% of families in Hirshabelle had reduced their water intake and general use due to the drought.²⁹⁶

Low-income families also lacked water storage. Shukri, a 30-year-old woman from Farbitow-Buale, explained that although the well was 30 minutes away, she had no water storage, meaning that she had to visit the well very frequently.²⁹⁷ Absence of adequate water storage capacity was particularly significant for people who relied on rainwater or trucked water. It was also a frustrating factor for government and humanitarian actors who, although able to truck to some places, may not have been able to provide enough storage facilities to the affected people.²⁹⁸ The 2021 Hirshabelle government assessment report confirmed that only 50% of families in the state had water storage facilities at home.²⁹⁹ Low-income families lacked the necessary drums, barrels, tanks or jerricans to store water, further worsening their vulnerability.

6.4.3 NON-DISCRIMINATION: GENDER DYNAMICS IN WATER ACCESS

Since water wells and dams are mostly controlled by clans, humanitarian actors have reported clan-based discrimination over water access, resulting in conflicts.³⁰⁰ Women in Somalia experience intersectional discrimination in water access due to their gender, as well as membership in excluded and often minority clans. Furthermore, due to their domestic roles, scarcity of water disproportionately impacts women who have to travel longer distances to get water. This takes away time that could otherwise be spent on other

²⁹⁰ OCHA Somalia, Somalia: Drought Situation Report No.1, 23 November 2021, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/somalia/somalia-drought-situation-report-no1-23-november-2021>

²⁹¹ OCHA Somalia Drought Situation Report No.2 (previously cited).

²⁹² Interviewed online on 20 February 2025.

²⁹³ International Crisis Group, *Fighting Climate Change in Somalia’s Conflict Zones*, 10 December 2024, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/somalia/316-fighting-climate-change-somalias-conflict-zones>

²⁹⁴ Interview in person with Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, South West, Nairobi on 24 October 2024.

²⁹⁵ Multiple interviews in Daadab, 19 September 2024.

²⁹⁶ Aid Vision and others, *Hirshabelle Drought Assessment Report*, December 2021, <http://somalangoconsortium.org/silo/files/hirshabelle-drought-assesment-final-reportdec-2021-final.pdf>

²⁹⁷ Interview in Dadaab, 17 September 2024.

²⁹⁸ Interview with Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, South West, in Nairobi on 24 October 2024. Similar views are expressed by the Director of GREDO interviewed online on 28 October 2024.

²⁹⁹ Aid Vision, Hirshabelle Drought Assessment Report, December 2021, https://geelo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Hirshabelle-drought-risk-assessment-final-report_Dec2021.pdf

³⁰⁰ UNHCR Somalia Protection and Solutions Monitoring Network (PSMN) Flash Alert #10, June 2024, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/unhcr-somalia-protection-and-solutions-monitoring-network-psmn-flash-alert-10-june-2024>; <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/acaps-thematic-report-somalia-impact-clan-conflicts-19-march-2025>; https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/2405_burning_ground.pdf

household duties. In extreme situations, drought leaves the same women having to look for wild vegetables, berries and nuts to feed their children³⁰¹ or to work. The right to water consequently competed with the fulfilment of other rights for women and girls. The failure to guarantee them access to water threatens the realization of their other rights.

³⁰¹ Interview in Dadaab, 18 September 2024.

7. SOMALIA'S DERELICTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL OBLIGATIONS DURING DROUGHT

7.1 LIVELIHOOD DESTRUCTION: CHARCOAL BURNING

Charcoal burning is a traditional livelihood in Somalia and a consequence of losing other forms of livelihood. By failing to adequately manage the cutting down of trees, Somalia's government is failing in its obligation to mitigate climate change under the UNFCCC (as indicated in its National Determined Contribution),³⁰² the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and its obligations to protect livelihoods under human rights law.³⁰³ By failing to establish a food security and adequate national food reserve for emergencies like drought, as well as an alternative livelihood system, Somalia has left at-risk people exposed to drought, resulting in increased charcoal burning and desertification. According to the CESCR and based on the precautionary principle, Somalia is obligated to take action to reduce desertification, even if it doubts the scientific connection between increased charcoal burning, rampant cutting down of trees for firewood and increased desertification.³⁰⁴

Although over-cutting trees for charcoal burning has been a perennial problem in Somalia, the problem seems to be aggravated by drought. Intense charcoal burning destroys trees and bushes that would provide food for camels and goats, further worsening their ability to survive. Barwaaqo, who moved to Dadaab from Xabiibayaal in 2023 with her seven children and husband, explained how charcoal became her last resort:

“When our cattle died, we went into charcoal burning. However, as the drought worsened, people stopped buying charcoal because they had nothing to cook. We had to stop the business too. I sold the last remaining cow and decided to move. I used a donkey cart to carry our luggage, but the rest of the family walked first to Buale and then to Dadaab.”³⁰⁵

The drought also aggravated trade in firewood, leading to massive destruction of ecosystems. According to the Programme for Sustainable Charcoal Reduction and Alternative Livelihoods (PROSCAL), a UN and

³⁰² Federal Republic of Somalia, Updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/som209353.pdf>, p. 6.

³⁰³ UNCCD, Articles 5 and 10.

³⁰⁴ CESCR, General Comment 27, Economic, social and cultural rights and the environmental dimension of sustainable development, 26 Sept 2025, UN Doc E/C.12/GC/27, para. 11.

³⁰⁵ Interview in Dadaab, 17 September 2024.

Somali government project, about 4.4 million trees are cut down in the country each year, translating to the deforestation of 75,000 hectares of land annually.³⁰⁶

Destruction of trees and bushes makes land more susceptible to flooding.³⁰⁷ Furthermore, the washing away of topsoil into rivers and dams makes them shallower, leading to flooding. Silting of dams by topsoil also reduces their water-carrying capacity, making them unreliable during drought.³⁰⁸ UNEP indicates that continued charcoal trade threatens the existence of acacia trees, further endangering livelihoods.³⁰⁹ Although the UN Security Council vide Resolution 2036,³¹⁰ banned the export and import of charcoal from Somalia, drought has made charcoal burning a livelihood of last resort. Accordingly, the trade flourishes within Somalia for both domestic and foreign markets.³¹¹ According to the World Bank, the Gulf Cooperation Countries are the main destinations of illicit charcoal from Somalia.³¹²

7.2 LIVELIHOOD DESTRUCTION: FOOD, WATER AND THE AL-SHABAAB NEXUS

International law obligates the state to protect people's right to food. This encompasses the prevention of third parties from interfering with this right.³¹³ Accordingly, Somalia must prevent Al-Shabaab and other non-state actors from destroying people's livelihoods, imposing illegal "taxes" on harvests or confiscating their food.

In regions controlled by Al-Shabaab, trade generally – including in foodstuffs – requires authorization and illegal "taxes".³¹⁴ Those who trade without paying "taxes" or seeking authorization from Al-Shabaab have reported being beaten or having their foodstuffs confiscated.³¹⁵ Anab, aged 46 and from Kismayo, had resorted to the firewood trade after the drought. She said she was beaten and had her firewood confiscated by Al-Shabaab.³¹⁶ This resulted in her displacement to Dadaab.

Seventeen farmers, traders and pastoralists interviewed for this research said that Al-Shabaab imposed illegal "taxes" on them.³¹⁷ This "tax" was based on one's perceived level of income. However, as drought had destroyed their businesses, farms and livestock, people had no capacity to pay. This forced them to relocate for fear of being targeted by the group. Amnesty International recorded six cases where the group confiscated land, food stock or remaining livestock because the owner could no longer pay.³¹⁸ Mahmood, a 27-year-old pastoralist from Buale, explained that he had to flee because his goats died, and because this meant he could no longer pay the illegal "taxes" for goat trading.³¹⁹ Ilhan, a woman from Buale, said frequent disruptions by floods and drought made her close her shop because "people took goods on credit but could no longer pay, and customers generally reduced". Unable to pay the illegal "taxes" imposed by Al-Shabaab, she had to flee to Dadaab. Security analysts say these "taxes" and the use of food to influence communities and get recruits have undermined government efforts to fight the group in southern Somalia.³²⁰

³⁰⁶ World Bank, *Somalia Country Environmental Analysis: Diagnostic study on trends and threats for environmental and natural resources challenges*, 2020, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b116c43f-a230-5e03-b7d5-7d7e188abea0/content>, p. 81.

³⁰⁷ PROSCAL, *Programme for Sustainable Charcoal Reduction and Alternative Livelihoods* <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27700/ProscalFactSheet.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

³⁰⁸ Online interview with SOMREP Chief of Party, 11 November 2024.

³⁰⁹ UNEP, How Somalia's charcoal trade is fuelling the Acacia's demise, 21 March 2018, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/how-somalias-charcoal-trade-fuelling-acacias-demise>

³¹⁰ UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2036 (2012) adopted on 22 February 2012, <https://main.un.org/securitycouncil/en/s/res/2036-%282012%29>

³¹¹ FAO-SWALIM *Update of analysis of very high-resolution satellite images to generate information on the charcoal production and its dynamics in South Somalia from 2011 to 2019*, 22 January 2020, https://www.fao.org/swalim/resources/site_files/Update%20of%20analysis%20of%20very%20high-resolution%20satellite%20images%20-%20Update%202020.pdf

³¹² World Bank, *Somalia Country Environmental Analysis* (previously cited), p. 81.

³¹³ CESC, General Comment 12 (previously cited), para. 15.

³¹⁴ Jay Bahadur, "Terror and taxes: Inside al-Shabaab's revenue-collection machine", December 2022, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/AS-protection-economies-WEB.pdf>

³¹⁵ Multiple interviews in Dadaab, 17 September 2024.

³¹⁶ Interview in Dadaab, 25 September 2024.

³¹⁷ Multiple interviews in Dadaab, 17 September 2024.

³¹⁸ Multiple interviews in Dadaab, 17 September 2024.

³¹⁹ Interview in Dadaab, 19 September 2024.

³²⁰ Jay Bahadur (previously cited).

Administrators noted that Al-Shabaab also stopped families from migrating in large groups from drought-stricken areas.³²¹ Consequently, families had to leave some relatives behind or leave one by one. This had a devastating impact on drought-afflicted families because many humanitarian actors avoid these areas due to the threat from Al-Shabaab, further increasing the vulnerability of those left behind.³²² Failure by Somalia's government to enable humanitarian actors to safely deliver humanitarian services to people affected by drought is therefore a violation of its obligation under the Kampala Convention.³²³

These vulnerabilities often leave young people exposed to Al-Shabaab, causing families to move for fear that their sons may join to obtain food and income. For example, Mohamed, aged 36 and from Bardhere, said he suffered the worst drought of his life in 2022. His maize and sorghum farms dried up, and his nine children and wife went hungry many times and had to rely on "well-wishers". He told Amnesty International that Al-Shabaab tried to lure his sons to join them several times. Knowing they would eventually succeed because he had no food or income, he chose to move the family to Dadaab.³²⁴ Similarly, Jamilah, a woman from Dinsoor, said drought dried her crops, killed livestock and reduced business in the markets. All her children were hungry and jobless, and she could not feed them. Since Al-Shabaab was always recruiting by paying young people and giving them food, she feared that they would recruit her sons, too. Indeed, security observers in Somalia documented instances where Al-Shabaab restricted access to water and pastures to manipulate communities into allowing their young people to join the group.³²⁵

In this sense, Somalia has failed to protect people's livelihoods from destruction by Al-Shabaab, leading to vulnerability and worsening socio-economic rights violations caused by the drought. Although efforts to deal with the group are ongoing, the level of protection is inadequate given the group's ability to interfere with the enjoyment of social and economic rights in southern Somalia. Organizations like SOMPREP and GREDO have highlighted that their resilience projects are designed to sustain local economies and reduce the possibility of young people joining Al-Shabaab. However, these appear limited in scope and insufficient to restore people's rights and livelihoods.

7.3 CURRENT RESILIENCE, FUTURE RISKS: RIVER BREAKAGES

Protecting natural resources, such as rivers, can help protect people from climate disasters and promote sustainable livelihoods – both of which are central to the realization of the rights to food and health. However, the practice of breaking riverbanks for farm irrigation, which increases during drought, increases the risk of flooding when the rains return, as it makes the riverbanks less stable. In turn, flooding – which destroys farms and food storage – makes people less resilient to drought. By not managing river breakages, Somalia has failed its duty under Article 4 of the UNFCCC, which obligates the country to promote sustainable management of water ecosystems, a key component of climate adaptation and mitigation.

This failure disrupts climate change adaptation by making people more susceptible to flooding. Flooding destroys farms and food storage, in turn making families less resilient to drought. Twenty-one interviewees from areas around the Jubba and Shabelle rivers described being involved in river breakages. Along Jubba, farmers broke riverbanks by digging canals to divert the receding water into their farms for irrigation.³²⁶ As the drought intensified, more breakages occurred. Breakages along the Shabelle involved digging canals for irrigation, as well as digging riverbanks and riverbeds for traces of water during drought.³²⁷ This was done to obtain water for domestic use. As the drought worsened, the level of breakages increased. All of this resulted in more exposure to floods. Others cultivated up to the riverbeds to make use of the receding river water.³²⁸ For instance, SWALIM reports that as of February 2022, there were 101 open breakages along Shabelle³²⁹ and 35 along Jubba.³³⁰ Areas identified by SWALIM such as Kismayo, Saakow, Buale and Jilib in Jubaland

³²¹ Online interview with Director of Humanitarian Affairs, Jubaland, 19 February 2025.

³²² Online interview with Director of Humanitarian Affairs, Jubaland, 19 February 2025.

³²³ Kampala Convention (previously cited), Article 5.

³²⁴ Interview in Dadaab, 19 September 2024.

³²⁵ Interview in Dadaab, 19 September 2024.

³²⁶ Online interview with Director of Humanitarian Affairs, Jubaland, 19 February 2025.

³²⁷ Multiple interviews in Dadaab, 17 September 2024.

³²⁸ SWALIM, <https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-shabelle-riverriver-flood-situation-jowhar-issued-28-april-2025>

³²⁹ FAO-SWALIM, *Somalia: Status of River Breakages River Shabelle, February 2022*, https://www.faoswalim.org/resources/site_files/SOM_WATER_SHABELLE_RIVER_BREAKAGES_SWALIM_27012022_A3_001.pdf

³³⁰ FAO-SWALIM, *Status Of River Breakages River Juba, February 2022*, https://www.faoswalim.org/resources/site_files/SOM_WATER_JUBA_RIVER_BREAKAGES_SWALIM_27012022_A3.pdf

and Jowhar and Beletweyne in Hirshabelle³³¹ roughly correspond to the points of origin of 98 people interviewed for this report.

SWALIM confirms that of the 101 breakages along the Shabelle river, 24 occurred between August 2021 and February 2022, linking them to human activity during drought.³³² At the same time, five new breakages were reported along the Jubba river.³³³ Accordingly, there have been a lot of interventions to restore riverbanks, including rebuilding and reinforcing embankments. The Somalia Ministry of Finance and Planning reports that between 2020 and 2023, it had repaired 11 river breakages along the river Jubba within Jubaland state.³³⁴ This is, however, insufficient to mitigate flooding through the breakages, as most remain open. This means that people's adaptation strategies during drought expose them to further climate risks, particularly flooding, calling for more deliberate community engagement to reduce or repair river breakages. Flooding also causes breakages, as reported in recent SWALIM reports on river breakages along Shabelle and Jubba, however, this is beyond the scope of this report.³³⁵

³³¹ FAO-SWALIM, Somalia: Status of River Breakages River Shabelle (previously cited).

³³² FAO-SWALIM, *Status of river breakages along the Juba and Shabelle rivers in Somalia – February 2022*, <https://www.faoswalim.org/content/status-river-breakages-along-juba-and-shabelle-rivers-somalia-%E2%80%93february-2022>

³³³ FAO-SWALIM, *Status of river breakages along the Juba and Shabelle rivers*.

³³⁴ Federal Ministry of Finance and Planning, *Flood risk management infrastructure (River Embankments) handed over to local authorities to enhance community climate resilience*, 18 January 2023, <https://mop.gov.so/flood-risk-management-infrastructure-river-embankments/#:~:text=18%20January%202023%3A%20The%20Federal%20Government%20of%20Somalia,pastoralist%20communities%20and%20affected%20more%20than%20500%2C000%20people.>

³³⁵ FAO-SWALIM, Juba and Shabelle river Breakages as of August 2024, <https://frrims.faoswalim.org/rivers/breakages>

8. CLIMATE FINANCE AND LOSS AND DAMAGE

High-income, historically high-emitting countries are obliged under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement to provide climate finance for mitigation and adaptation by lower-income countries that need it. However, they have repeatedly failed to fulfil these obligations, which should primarily be non-debt-inducing public finance, most recently by only agreeing to a derisory new climate finance target at COP29 of US\$300 billion annually by 2035.³³⁶

Lower-income countries estimate their adaptation finance needs to amount to US\$387 billion per year up to 2030. Despite the explicit aim under the Paris Agreement to achieve a balance between adaptation and mitigation finance, the gap is particularly acute in relation to adaptation finance, now estimated at US\$215-387 billion per year and rising. Urgent steps to reduce this gap are required to enable states like Somalia to enable affected populations to adapt adequately.³³⁷ The Least Developed Countries Group on Climate Change, which includes Somalia, called in June 2025 for a tripling of adaptation finance by 2030.³³⁸ The recent ICJ Advisory Opinion on state obligations in the context of climate change is therefore a positive step in pushing for the implementation of state obligations. Among other things, it emphasizes the obligations of historically high-emitting countries to provide adequate means of implementation, including finance, technology transfer and capacity building, to assist lower-income countries like Somalia to adapt to human-induced climate change.³³⁹

“Loss and damage” refers to climate crisis impacts that have not been avoided through limiting global heating by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and/or cannot be avoided by minimizing harms caused by the rising temperatures through adaptation efforts.³⁴⁰ The concept of “loss and damage” encompasses both economic and non-economic losses and damages.³⁴¹ Under international human rights law, communities and individuals who have experienced human rights violations as a result of climate change are entitled to effective remedies.³⁴² The UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to Remedy and Reparation define substantive redress as consisting of restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction and guarantees of non-repetition.³⁴³

Restitution can be defined as restoring affected people to their original situation, before the violation of international human rights law occurred. In the context of climate-related loss and damage, this could mean

³³⁶ Amnesty International, “COP29: Finance target is a blueprint for inequalities and violations”, 25 November 2024, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/11/cop29-finance-target-is-a-blueprint-for-inequalities-and-violations/>

³³⁷ Oxfam International, “Rich countries’ continued failure to honor their \$100 billion climate finance promise threatens negotiations and undermines climate action”, <https://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/rich-countries-continued-failure-honor-their-100-billion-climate-finance-promise>, accessed 15 August 2025.

³³⁸ Least Developed Countries Group on Climate Change, “SB62- LDCs Call for Ambitious NDCs, Real Adaptation Progress, and a Credible Climate Finance Roadmap”, 24 June 2025, https://www ldc-climate.org/press_release/sb62-ldcs-call-for-ambitious-ndcs-real-adaptation-progress-and-a-credible-climate-finance-roadmap/

³³⁹ ICJ Advisory Opinion, 23 July 2025, para. 265.

³⁴⁰ The Loss & Damage Collaboration, “What is Loss and Damage”, <https://www.lossanddamagecollaboration.org/whatislossanddamage#2>

³⁴¹ Paris Agreement, Article 8.

³⁴² Amnesty International and Center for International Environmental Law, Climate-related human rights harm and the right to effective remedy, 13 February 2024 (Index: IOR 40/7717/2024), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ior40/7717/2024/en/>

³⁴³ United Nations General Assembly, “Resolution 60/147 - UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law”, <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/N0549642.pdf>

either restoring the actual situation where possible (for example, rebuilding destroyed infrastructure in case of a disaster) or assisting survivors in achieving a situation similar to the previous one (for example, planned relocation during flooding or drought). Compensation is often used when restitution is found to be impossible. Climate justice cannot be achieved without adequate remedy for unavoidable loss and damage. However, over the three decades since the adoption of the UNFCCC, the largest cumulative emitters have sought to evade and dilute their legal obligations under human rights law to respect the right to remedy in the context of climate harm, including under the climate convention.

The Paris Agreement established loss and damage as a third pillar of climate action.³⁴⁴ However, historically high greenhouse gas-emitting states insisted on excluding any additional legal basis for liability in the decision adopting the agreement. While the inclusion of this article may limit the interpretation of the loss and damage clause of the Paris Agreement, it does not limit the application of long-standing state obligations under international law, including the obligations to ensure access to an effective remedy, which includes compensation.³⁴⁵ However, the ICJ's Advisory Opinion of July 2025 found that states' failure to take action to protect the climate system – including through continued fossil fuel production, consumption and provision of exploration licences or of subsidies to fossil fuel companies, may constitute an internationally wrongful act from which legal consequences may arise, including reparations.³⁴⁶

The steps states have taken under the UNFCCC to address loss and damage thus far, including the establishment of a Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), funded by voluntary contributions, are woefully insufficient and fail to meet the obligations of states that are most responsible for the climate crisis to provide a remedy for the human rights harms they have caused. For example, between 2000 and 2019, the world suffered US\$2.8 trillion in losses and damages from extreme climate events.³⁴⁷ However, as of September 2025, the FRLD had only received pledges totalling US\$790.24 million³⁴⁸ which is grossly inadequate.³⁴⁹ Lower-income countries have indicated that the FRLD should disburse around US\$1 billion per year, while their estimated needs up to 2030 are at least US\$400 billion – a number set to quadruple by 2050.³⁵⁰

It is crucial for states to ensure that any future steps taken under the Paris Agreement to address these shortcomings are based on the “polluter pays” principle. Complementary and comprehensive actions should also be considered at the local, national, regional and global levels to realize an effective remedy for the loss and damage suffered, including by people displaced by climate change-related issues in Kenya and within Somalia. These responses should be community-led, informed by the active, meaningful and safe participation of affected persons, and should take into account intersectionality and historical and structural discrimination.

It is in the above context that Somalia and Kenya should tap into the available climate-related funding at the international level. Acquiring more resources for climate change adaptation will enable better responses to loss and damage, including protection of those displaced by drought. At the same time, all states in a position to do so, particularly high-income historically high-emitting countries, other high-income G20 countries and fossil fuel producing states should undertake their obligations under the Paris Agreement,³⁵¹ the UNFCCC³⁵² and under international human rights law to provide financial and other resources for climate change adaptation to Somalia and Kenya.

³⁴⁴ Paris Agreement, Article 8.

³⁴⁵ The decision adopting the Paris Agreement stated that parties “[Agree] that Article 8 of the Agreement does not involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation” (1/CP.21,51).

³⁴⁶ ICJ, Advisory Opinion of 23 July 2025, para. 427.

³⁴⁷ UNEP, “About Loss and Damage”, <https://www.unep.org/topics/climate-action/loss-and-damage/about-loss-and-damage> (accessed on 15 August 2025).

³⁴⁸ Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, *Report by the interim Trustee on the status of FRLD Trust Fund resources*, 4 October 2025, UN Doc. FRLD/B.7/4, https://www.frlld.org/sites/default/files/FRLD_B.7_4%20Report%20by%20the%20interim%20Trustee%20on%20the%20status%20of%20FRLD%20Trust%20Fund%20resources_0.pdf, accessed on 6 October 2025.

³⁴⁹ Amnesty International, “Initial pledges at COP28 to finance the Loss & Damage Fund fall far short of what is needed”, 30 November 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/11/global-initial-pledges-at-cop28-to-finance-the-loss-damage-fund-fall-far-short-of-what-is-needed>

³⁵⁰ Climate Analytics, *Impacts of low-aggregate INDC ambition*, November 2015, <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/582427/rrimpacts-low-aggregate-indcs-ambition-251115-en.pdf;jsessionid=C2BF26E9CF0705630671F3821B7C7AE9?sequence=1>, p. 4.

³⁵¹ Paris Agreement, Article 8.

³⁵² UNFCCC, Article 4.

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

Before the 1991 collapse of the Somali government, Somalia periodically relocated people affected by drought to agricultural lands or coastal areas.³⁵³ Such efforts, however, ceased under subsequent administrations, partly due to resource constraints and lack of access to drought-stricken areas under Al-Shabaab control. This lack of state support has resulted in many deaths through malnutrition and diseases, especially among children and women.

Both drought and floods are manifestations of slow-onset and extreme weather events and occur intermittently in Somalia. However, drought episodes have become more severe as human-induced climate change worsens. Due to their resilience and stored food, communities are generally able to adjust to one or two episodes of drought or failed rains. However, the protracted four-year drought during 2020-2023 exhausted their food reserves, forcing families to rely on neighbours or relatives or to relocate either to IDP camps or cross the border into Dadaab. The drought also destroyed local economies and businesses because the destruction of livelihoods left most people without money to spend. Accordingly, most shops and the rural labour sector that was heavily reliant on farming and livestock collapsed too.

The drought also dried up most waterpoints, including rivers, dams, boreholes and wells. Many families abandoned their villages and relocated because water sources could be up to 100km away. This water was often sold, which meant that most low-income families could not afford it. The lack of affordable, clean water forced families to rely on contaminated water, causing diarrhoea and cholera to increase during the drought.

By destroying livelihoods and jobs and pushing up the cost of food and water, the drought made it impossible for families to access food, thereby causing their displacement. Even those who moved to work in the informal sector in urban and peri-urban areas within Somalia could not sustain their families, because their wages could not cope with increased food costs. This resulted in cross-border displacement into Dadaab.

Dried-up crops and dead livestock left many families starving, causing deaths and high cases of malnutrition. Humanitarian actors in Dadaab and Somalia confirmed responding to numerous cases of malnutrition, especially among children. Nine interviewees reported losing family members or neighbours to the drought.

The drought also destroyed traditional social protection systems that supported at-risk family members and caused family separation. Twenty-six families from Buale reported selling household items to fund their travel to Dadaab. Since their journeys were expensive, they left behind some family members. At the same time, certain family members, especially persons with disabilities, older or sick persons, were often left behind because they could not manage the journey, mostly done using donkey carts and occasionally overcrowded vans or trucks.

³⁵³ Federal Government of Somalia, *National Drought Plan for Somalia*, 2020, https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/country_profile_documents/FINAL%20NATIONAL%20DROUGHT%20PLAN%20FOR%20SOMALIA%28final%29%2016%20Dec%202020%28%20PDF%20version%29.pdf

The absence of any support system in the transport corridors from southern Somalia into Kenya resulted in even more suffering along the way, with respondents reporting cases of malnutrition and sickness among children. Occasionally, they got help from “well-wishers”.

Due to livelihoods being destroyed, many drought-affected families in Somalia resorted to trade in firewood or charcoal burning, further destroying the environment. At the same time, the lack of food exposed young people to recruitment by Al-Shabaab and left low-income families unable to pay illegal trade, livestock or agricultural “taxes” imposed by the group.

Since Somalia relies on livestock for its domestic revenue, the devastation of pastoralism by drought has undermined the country’s capacity to fund humanitarian responses. This explains why most interviewees indicated little to no formal assistance from the government. Government officials interviewed confirmed inadequate budgetary allocation for their drought responses. According to the country’s revised 2025 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), the country needs about US\$630 million annually to adapt to climate change between 2025 and 2035, especially for funding key sectors such as health, agriculture, food security and water. However, the 2025 budget only allocates US\$255 million³⁵⁴ to these sectors, reflecting only 19% of the budget. This denotes a dereliction of duty to adequately finance the fulfilment and protection of people’s rights in the context of climate change. In particular, the Malabo Declaration³⁵⁵ urges African governments to allocate 10% of their budgets to agriculture and food security, while the Abuja Declaration urges 15% spending on health.³⁵⁶ Similar failures are reflected in inadequate water financing, which continues to undermine access to adequate clean water for domestic use. Against a need of US\$132 million as outlined in the NDC, Somalia allocated only US\$92 million to the water sector in its 2025 budget. As highlighted elsewhere, this is inadequate for addressing the country’s acute water needs, especially in the context of climate change.

RECOMMENDATIONS

TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SOMALIA

- Fast-track the passing of the IDP Bill currently in Parliament.
- Ensure meaningful public participation when developing climate policies and plans.
- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to provide a complaint and inquiry mechanism for people affected by the derogation of Somalia’s duty under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).
- Abandon the planned extraction of fossil fuels as indicated in the National Development Plan and strengthen the use of renewable energy.
- Ratify and domesticate the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, to protect people, including women, affected by climate change.
- Work with federal member states to increase investment in early warning systems for disaster response, making use of accessible technology and diverse methods of communication to ensure that all at-risk groups, including older persons, those with disabilities, women and children, are reached.
- Increase the health budget from the current level of 4.8% of the national budget to 15% in line with the Abuja declaration.
- Work with humanitarian actors and development partners to provide relief support, including health care, to communities along transport corridors, to ensure humanitarian support to families on the move and for those who remain at home during climate-induced disasters.

³⁵⁴ Somalia National Budget 2025, on file.

³⁵⁵ Malabo Declaration on Accelerated Agricultural Growth and Transformation for Shared Prosperity and Improved Livelihoods https://www.resakss.org/sites/default/files/Malabo%20Declaration%20on%20Agriculture_2014_11%2026-.pdf

³⁵⁶ Abuja Declaration 2001 (previously cited).

- Fulfil the commitment to utilize fiscal space provided by the significant debt relief in 2023 to strengthen health systems in southern Somalia by building more hospitals and deploying additional medical personnel.
- Strengthen disease surveillance during disasters such as drought and floods.
- In line with the government's human rights obligations, enhance the implementation of the Social Protection Policy; the Protocol on Land Distribution for Housing to Eligible Refugee Returnees and IDPs; the Climate Change Policy; National Eviction Guidelines; Somalia National Policy on Returnees and Refugees; and national environmental policies in southern Somalia.
- Urgently introduce and implement social protection programmes for people affected or displaced by climate change. Where the Somali government is unable to meet the funding and technical requirements, it should request specific international cooperation and assistance as a priority.
- Fast-track the domestication of the Kampala Convention as promised in the National Durable Solution Strategy 2020-2024.
- Reinforce the fight against corruption by enhancing transparency, scrutiny and accountability in financial management, including the management of donor funds, to boost the confidence of development partners.
- Enhance coordination between the federal and member states in drought relief response, especially as regards states in southern and central Somalia.
- Strengthen the capacity of local authorities, cities and the federal government on disaster preparedness, climate resilience and displacement in the context of climate change, in line with Paragraph 28 of the Global Compact for Refugees.
- Conduct emergency public health awareness campaigns on the importance of boiling drinking water.
- Fast-track the fixing of river breakages.
- Encourage riverine farmers to avoid using traditional storage *bakar* and to adopt movable options to avoid floods destroying food stocks.
- Ensure that people in IDP camps have access to adequate shelter, health care, food, clean potable water and sanitation, with accommodation that is appropriate, accessible and safe for women, older persons, persons with disabilities and children.
- Take concrete, time-bound steps towards fulfilling existing commitments in the National Adaptation Plan to adapt Somalia's healthcare system to climate change by strengthening the capacity of healthcare bodies at the federal and state levels.
- Strengthen fiscal policy and measures to provide more resources for climate adaptation and the fulfilment of economic and social rights, including addressing tax abuse by enhancing the capacity of the tax administration to improve revenue collection.
- Consider reducing consumption taxes to make basic goods more affordable for people on low incomes and impacted by climate emergencies.

TO SOMALIA'S DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

- Increase financial resources to help the Somali government manage internal and cross-border displacement in the context of climate change.
- Increase humanitarian support, including assistance to build climate resilience and strengthen health systems in southern and central Somalia.
- Support and work with the Somali government to build capacity and enhance knowledge and awareness on both preventive and responsive healthcare needs arising from climate disasters.
- Support and work with the Somali government to install water purification and desalination plants.
- Increase and enhance international protection and rights-based migration opportunities for people affected by climate change and disasters in Somalia.

- Respond positively to any requests by the Somali government for international cooperation and assistance to meet its international human rights obligations

TO THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY ON DEVELOPMENT (IGAD)

- Work with Somalia to strengthen the decentralization and use of the IGAD drought early warning system through local channels, especially at the federal member state level.
- Advocate for greater integration of climate displacement into broader discussions on displacement and mobilities within and among IGAD member states.

TO THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY (EAC)

- Strengthen regional coordination on responses to climate disasters in the EAC in line with Article 112 of the EAC Treaty.
- Strengthen regional coordination for the protection of people displaced across borders in the context of climate change and disasters, in line with Article 12 of the EAC Treaty.
- Advocate for increased budgetary allocation to address climate displacement in and between member states of the EAC in line with Article 112 of the EAC Treaty.
- Urge member states to implement the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention).
- Work with Somalia to strengthen fiscal policy and tax administration in line with Article 75 of the EAC Treaty, to enhance revenue collection and provide more resources for climate adaptation.

TO THE AFRICAN UNION (AU)

- Strengthen regional coordination and response to climate disasters in the drought-prone Horn of Africa region in line with Article 13(1) of the AU Constitutive Treaty.
- Strengthen regional coordination for the protection of people displaced across borders in the context of climate change and disasters in line with Article 13(1) of the AU Constitutive Treaty.
- Call for and mobilize increased levels of external climate finance from high-income and high-emitting countries to address climate displacement within and between member states, in line with the Declaration of the African Climate Summit II.
- Urge member states to implement the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention).

TO HIGH-INCOME, HISTORICALLY HIGH-EMITTING COUNTRIES AND HIGH-INCOME FOSSIL FUEL-PRODUCING COUNTRIES

- Rapidly and equitably phase out all fossil fuel extraction, production and use, and shift towards renewable energy in a manner consistent with human rights and based on states' capacities and responsibility for emissions.
- Cease all new oil, gas, and coal exploration and development, and stop financing fossil fuel projects domestically and abroad.
- Rapidly provide adequate, new, additional and predictable finance – primarily in the form of grant-equivalent public finance – to support lower-income countries in reducing emissions, adapting to climate change, ensuring just transitions away from fossil fuels in all sectors, and addressing loss and damage.
- Massively scale up funding for adaptation to address the adaptation finance gap.
- Phase out all tax incentives and subsidies for fossil fuel production. In doing so, ensure any changes to taxation and subsidies do not disproportionately impact people with lower incomes by conducting human rights impact assessments and introducing appropriate social protection mechanisms.

- Massively scale up climate finance and work with Somalia to ensure that it receives adequate climate finance for its adaptation plans.
- Significantly increase funding for loss and damage funding arrangements, particularly the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage.

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THE HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT OF DROUGHT AND DISPLACEMENT IN SOMALIA

This report focuses on displacement caused by climate change within and from Somalia. It is based on 177 interviews with displaced persons in the Dadaab camp in Kenya and with humanitarian actors, government officials, and climate change experts. It shows how Somalia's 2020-2023 drought, coupled with conflict, poverty and marginalization, has negatively impacted people's human rights and forced communities in southern Somalia to relocate. In particular, this report demonstrates how long-term drought linked to climate change led to widespread drying up of water sources and farms, the death of livestock and the destruction of rural agro-pastoralist economies.

The report highlights the extent to which limited state protection has exposed Somalis to violations of their right to food, water, family, health and life. It also shows how high-income, historically high-emitting countries and high-income fossil fuel-producing countries have failed to fulfil their climate finance obligations under the Paris Agreement and the UNFCCC. This, in turn, has undermined the ability of lower-income countries like Somalia to protect their people from the extreme impacts of climate change, particularly drought. It concludes by giving recommendations to Somalia, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the East Africa Community and relevant high-income historically high-emitting countries and high-income fossil fuel-producing countries.