Al-Shabaab

Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups

Community Development Committees

**Civil Society Organizations** 

Disengagement, Disassociation, Reintegration and Reconciliation

Defector Rehabilitation Programme

In fragile contexts such as Somalia, the experiences of women, girls, men and boys can be quite different. The project directly or indirectly mainstreamed cross-cutting issues of gender, protection, disaster risk reduction, conflict, and capacity building. The project design also emphasizes the inclusion of women in project activities, because prevailing gender disparities in Somalia requires a focus on women as a vulnerable population.

gender-focused approach, focused on supporting both male and female within the target communities, has proven to be an effective strategy for promoting social development among vulnerable populations in the project areas. A commitment to promoting gender equality was integral to the project, and rigorous steps were taken to integrate inclusive practices that acknowledged and responded to the diverse roles and experiences of individuals based on their gender. This approach not only contributed to the project s effectiveness, but also fostered more equitable and inclusive impact within the targeted communities. Women and girls were primary beneficiaries particularly for activities traditionally associated with women and girls, such as tailoring and henna. Moreover, given that a large number of female participants had defected and continue to defect from AS, the project s deliberate focus on addressing gender-specific needs and challenges resulted in concrete contributions to fostering equality and enhancing the empowerment of girls.

However, this evaluation also identified contextual constraints arising from the ways in which women and girls experience conflict and peacebuilding differently to men and boys, and the

- 8. Stakeholders learned about the potential for refining future initiatives in youth reintegration, emphasizing tailored skill development, incentivized learning, and community awareness as integral components of successful interventions.
- 9. Mentorship and religious counselling can have a positive influence on YFAWAS.
- 10. Skills offered in safe spaces create useful opportunities for social interaction among YFAWAS, marginalized community youth and other community members.
- 1. Increase coverage and targeting as there is a huge gap between the number of beneficiaries visa-vis the need. There are an increasing number of men, women and children that are in need of DDRR services.
- 2. Develop a post-reintegration economic assistance and follow-up plan for those who graduate from the DDRR programs. While the project offered vocational skills trainings, there is still a need to support the graduates with startup capital and grants to cover rental expenses and other incentives for a period of six months to avoid early drop out. Incorporating incentives during the learning period is crucial asit plays a pivotal role in ensuring learners prioritize their classes over casual job opportunities.
- 3. Train communities and mentors on ways to track, monitor, and treat YFAWAS and CAAFAG to ensure a more sustainable social cohesion for graduates of reintegration programs. This can be achieved through inclusive and participatory DDRR community planning.

Somalia has lacked a strong central government for nearly 32 years. The long-standing political instability and the absence of an effective government has had severe negative effects on human development, particularly in South and Central Somalia. Somalia is one of the poorest countries in the world with a per capita GDP of US\$ 425 and an estimated 43 per cent of the population living on less than US\$ 1 a day.<sup>2</sup> Poverty is more prevalent in the rural areas, where intractable conflicts, persistent droughts, lack of economic resources, and paucity of infrastructure have rendered many people helpless.<sup>3</sup> The 2022

notes that poverty is particularly widespread in rural households and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) settlements, with nearly 70 per cent of Somalis living below the poverty line and 90 per cent in great need of education, improved access to water, improved sanitation, and access to electricity.<sup>4</sup> This increase in poverty levels can be attributed to recurrent external shocks and natural disasters, which have created widespread displacement and considerable demographic shifts.<sup>5</sup>

## Longstanding and persistent

economic structures. In addition, over three decades of conflict and violent extremism has fragmented communities and hindered development in Somalia. Youth (under the age of 35), who represent 75 per cent of the Somali population,<sup>6</sup> have limited employment opportunities and prospects for fulfilling their potential, which increases their risk of being recruited by armed groups. The unemployment rate in Somalia is among the highest in the world. It is estimated that over 67 per cent of Somali youth in general and 74 per cent of Somali women are unemployed, with limited opportunities to earn livelihoods.<sup>7</sup> Poverty and unemployment compel children and youth to opt for negative coping strategies such as joining armed groups while some may be forcibly recruited. Poverty and unemployment compel youth to opt for negative coping strategies such as joining armed groups while some may be forcibly recruited. Poverty and unemployment compel youth to opt for negative coping strategies such as joining armed groups. Complex clan loyalties between Somalis and the scarcity of resources have further aggravated an already volatile security context. The abundance of weapons in the hands of youth who grew up in a culture of violence escalates the dangerous situation. Armed youth play an instrumental role in inter-clan skirmishes that develop, sometimes, into wider inter-clan conflicts. It is against this backdrop that DDRR remains one of the most urgent priorities for peacebuilding in Somalia.

On 24 February 2022, IOM and UNICEF, with the support of UNPBF, launched a pilot project titled: Strengthening Community-Based Reintegration Mechanisms A IOM/UNICEF Partnership for Community Youth and YFAWAS. The project piloted a youth- and

IOM/UNICEF Partnership for Community Youth and YFAWAS. The project piloted a youth- and community-led joint reintegration and development program for YFAWAS and marginalized community youth in Baidoa (Southwest), Kismayo (Jubaland), and Jowhar and Beletweyne (Hirshabelle). IOM implemented the project in Kismayo and Baidoa districts through Southern Aid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Somali Poverty and Vulnerability Assessment: Findings from Wave 2 of the Somali High Frequency Survey, World Bank 2019

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Looking Towards a Brighter Tomorrow: Educational Characteristics of the Somalia People, UNFPA 2016

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Somalia Economic Update: Investing in Social Protection to Boost Resilience for Economic Growth, World Bank 2022

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Somalia National Bureau of Statistics Voluntary National Review Report, 2022

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> UNFPA based on PESS 2014, The Somali Youth in Figures

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Socio-Economic Reintegration of Ex-Combatants and At-Risk Youth (SRECYAR) Project Completion Report (PCR), Africa Development Bank, September 2020

and Sustainable Development and Reintegration Solutions (SDRS) respectively, while UNICEF<sup>8</sup> in partnership with Intersom implemented the project in Beledweyne and Jowhar. The community-based reintegration modality tackles youth engagement in AS and is thus a strong entry point for catalytic results and future funding opportunities as donors shift towards non-residential

1.	YFAWASare socially accepted into the community.	<ol> <li>YFAWAS have improved mental health and resilience to support reintegration at the individual level.</li> <li>Community members are more accepting of YFAWAS reintegrating into their communities.</li> </ol>
2.	Marginalized community youth have increased access to opportunities to	

meaningfully contribute to

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IPs	3
IOM/UNICEF staff	2

This section presents findings and discusses the results of seven key outcome indicators as reflected in the project results framework. These specifically relate to the project relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability and cross-cutting gender issues. This evaluation also discusses challenges and remaining gaps, lessons learned during implementation of the program, and concrete recommendations for similar future projects.

This criterion assesses the extent to which the objectives of the project were relevant and aligned with the beneficiary needs and the priorities of the Federal Government of Somalia, as well as whether the intervention was in line with IOM/ UNICEF policies and thematic priorities.

Overall, the evaluation finds that the portfolios of the UNPBF project have been broadly relevant to the needs of the direct beneficiaries, local communities and overall peacebuilding efforts of the project locations. A key objective of the project was to address one of the most pernicious

## IP (INTERSOM) staff in Jowhar

The project was firmly aligned with and supportive of national strategies as well as UNPBF, IOM and UNICEF guidelines, strategies, and frameworks related to reintegration of youth and children in postconflict settings, showcasing a clear understanding of and responsiveness to the priorities set forth by the Somali government. The objectives and activities of the project seamlessly integrated with the The findings of this evaluation indicate that the intervention has been highly effective in achieving its objectives. The community initiatives led to successful reintegration of YFAWAS, fostering a sense of ownership and making them integral members embraced by the community. Providing skills development in various areas, literacy programs, and involving them in infrastructure improvements has significantly contributed to the empowerment and successful reintegration of beneficiaries.

This activity involved the creation of physical and emotional safe environments for YFAWASwho feel stigmatized and rejected by the community. The project provided informal recreation activities in these spaces to help YFAWAS and marginalized community youth relax and feel comfortable. Within the safe spaces, unstructured activities and indoor games such as card games, watching TV programs, and internet services were offered so that beneficiaries could rest and have fun. In addition, within the safe spaces, six-member committees comprising three YFAWAS and three marginalized community youth were formed to conduct monthly meetings. In these meetings,

At project implementation level, the choice of working through experienced local CSOs and line ministries as IPs was seen as an efficient way of project delivery in a context where security concerns are common in the project operational areas. While this approach was based on the community-based implementation approach with a view to promoting ownership by local communities and the government, the evaluation saw it as an efficient and contextually relevant modality. Project stakeholders actually argued that if the project adopted a residential reintegration method, more resources would have been spent on boarding facilities they provided examples of successful efforts -based approach

was an efficient and less costly intervention. Furthermore, the structure of administering such sensitive project through local CSOs saved security and other related costs. Other factors that also contributed to the project efficiency include deployment of qualified staff who delivered project activities on time.

Regarding availability and adequacy of technical and financial resources, the project was efficient in using the available resources to achieve the desired results. The project management, coordination, monitoring, and reporting was all perceived by various stakeholders as efficient and appropriate for the intervention. The project had a clear and effective management and coordination structure, involving IOM, UNICEF, IPs and other partners, and ensured regular and timely communication, consultation, and feedback among them. However, interviews with project staff revealed several predictable and preventable operational challenges in relation to implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation, that could have been mitigated with better planning. For instance, as mentioned, there was some delays experienced at the start of the project implementation as IOM and UNICEF discussed harmonization of monitoring tools and the theory of change. But project staff observed that this is often a normal part of project design, as there was need to ensure all perspectives were taken into consideration and that since UNICEF is a child-focused organization, they have a particular responsibility in ensuring that all safeguards are in place when children are involved.

project, underscoring community.

pivotal role in fostering harmony and acceptance within the

The project facilitated community-based reintegration mechanisms through creating physical and emotional safe spaces, social connections and mentorship, social and emotional skills building, and participatory community

community-based modality has a more buy-in and ownership for both the direct beneficiaries and the local communities. They further added that this modality is less costly and offers value for money for donors as well as the government of Somalia.

Nevertheless, this evaluation notes that while the relevant government authorities exhibit commitment to maintaining project benefits, there is need for additional support. Challenges include financial and technical constraints, necessitating collaborative efforts to overcome obstacles. The relevant government authorities, both at the state and federal levels, currently lack the necessary capacity, both financial and technical. The deficiency in resources and poses significant challenges to the sustainability of the project s outcomes. Additional support and resources are crucially needed to bridge this gap and ensure the continued success and impact of the project. Overcoming these obstacles will require concerted efforts to garner support and commitment from the government, community and relevant organizations to secure the long-term benefits and positive changes brought about by the project.

8. Allow beneficiaries to choose their learning paths. Providing a diverse range of options ensures that individuals can pursue subjects that align with their personal and professional aspirations.

and interventions of the government and the donor	proposals, project	
community?	agreement and IP reports)	
Were the planned outputs and outcomes in the project proposal fully achieved overall? How did IOM and UNICEF contribute to achieving overall outputs and outcomes in line with their geographical focus and technical approaches? If there were any gaps, what were the reasons for them? What internal and external factors/ enablers facilitated full achievement of project outputs/ outcomes? has the quality and quantity of the outputs/ outcomes been satisfactory? Were the target beneficiaries satisfied with the services provided? Were there any factors that prevented beneficiaries from accessing the services and products? What other actions/ interventions should have been considered during the implementation of the project to increase the effectiveness of the achievements?	FGDs with community members and marginalized community youth KII with community leaders (elders, imams, community advocates), YFAWAS, government stakeholders, IPs, IOM/ UNICEF staff and donor representative Review of existing documents (UNICEF, IOM strategies, positions papers, assessments) Review of project documents (joint partner reviews, progress reports, project amendments, donor proposals, project agreement and IP reports)	FGD guide KII guide Quantitative and qualitative analysis from review of literature and project reports
Was the project management, coordination, monitoring, reporting, knowledge management, and learning efficient and appropriate for the intervention?		

g V e	How did the collaboration between IOM and UNICEF contribute to the efficiency of the project, also considering the complementarity of their peographical and thematic/ technical focus? Which positive/ negative and intended/ unintended effects were being produced by the project at large, pecifically with regards to peacebuilding impact	FGDs with marginalized community youth KII with YFAWAS, IPs, IOM/ UNICEF staff	FGD guide KII guide Quantitative and qualitative analysis
	<ul> <li>considered as critical for this evaluation):</li> <li>Outcome 1 Evaluate which peacebuilding impact the project had in terms of increased community acceptance and reintegration of YFAWAS.</li> <li>Outcome 2 Evaluate which peacebuilding impact he project had in terms of increased access to pportunities to meaningfully contribute to their communities for marginalized community youth. To what extent can long-term changes be observed whether intended or unintended, positive, or negative), particularly in relation to the project s objectives?</li> </ul>	Review of project documents (joint partner reviews, progress reports, project amendments, donor proposals, project agreement and IP reports)	from review of literature and project reports
	o what extent can long-term changes be observed whether intended or unintended, positive or		
D c o p b T T	bjectives? Do the relevant government authorities have apacity (financial and technical) and are they committed to maintaining the benefits of the projects? What additional support or resources may be needed and what obstacles exist in this regard? To what extent did the project support and trengthen community-		