

Broadening the contextual understanding of housing, land and property rights in Afgooye District, Somalia



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Cover photo: *A woman and her children laugh outside their new rental home, which they were given access to through the support of the Integrated Rental Solutions Pilot Project in Afgooye District.*



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Mothers celebrate after receiving their land titles. Photo: Abbas Aden/NRC

Executive summary

This study on housing, land and property (HLP) rights in the Afgooye district of Somalia was commissioned by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and conducted by Roots Development Initiative (RDI). It was undertaken to better understand the complex, persistent challenges surrounding HLP rights in Somalia including land ownership, tenure security and property rights issues that historical conflicts, socio-political instability and the lack of a cohesive legal framework have exacerbated. The findings from the study are intended to inform HLP programming, inspire practical policy solutions and support advocacy to enhance the protection and promotion of HLP rights. Ultimately, addressing these issues is critical to achieve durable solutions for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and other vulnerable groups and to foster stability in the region.

From 2015 to October 2024, NRC systematically documented the forced evictions of 1.8 million people across Somalia. Of this total, 23,023 eviction incidents were recorded in Afgooye over a span of four years, reflecting the period during which eviction monitoring capacity was operationalised.

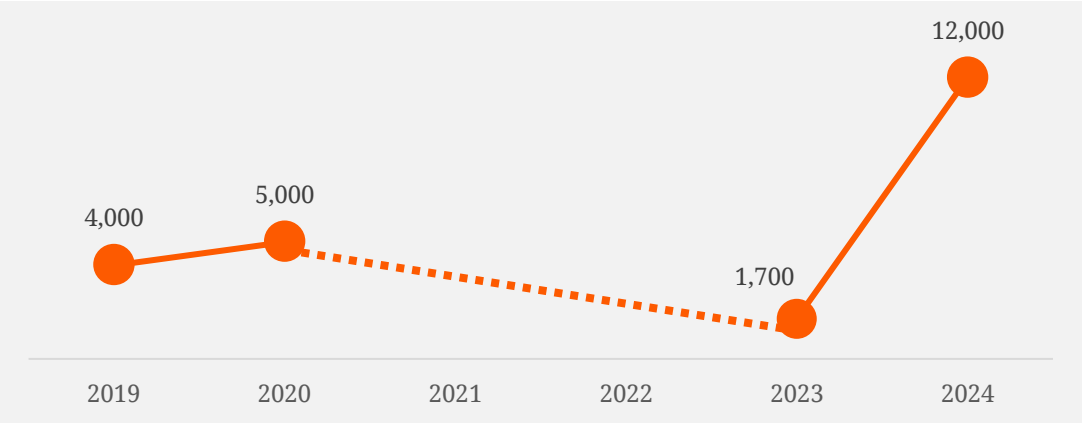


Figure 1. NRC's annual eviction data in Afgooye District.

Methods

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. A comprehensive desk review investigating the legal and socio-political HLP landscape provided the foundation for the rest of the assessment. Qualitative data was collected through key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with stakeholders including local authorities, landowners, IDP community leaders and humanitarian organisations. Additionally, a 28% survey – administered to a representative sample of the population in Afgooye – provided a quantitative look at key aspects of HLP rights such as land ownership, housing conditions and the incidence of forced evictions. Data analysis integrated statistical methods for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative insights.

Findings

The study examined the legal and policy frameworks governing HLP rights in Afgooye District. It identified significant gaps and inconsistencies in the current legal and policy environment, particularly the lack of harmonisation between customary, Islamic and statutory land laws. These discrepancies create confusion and often lead to land ownership and use conflicts. The findings emphasised the need for legal reforms that integrate these various systems into a cohesive framework, ensuring clarity and fairness in the adjudication of land disputes and the protection of property rights.

Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms – which have historically played a vital role in managing land disputes – **are increasingly undermined** by the lack of formal recognition and support from legal and governmental institutions. This calls for a more integrated approach that combines traditional practices with formal legal frameworks to enhance the effectiveness of conflict resolution in HLP matters.

The study also found that insecure land tenure and property rights significantly hinder economic development in the region. Without secure land rights, individuals are less likely to invest in land improvements or long-term agricultural planning, reducing productivity and causing economic stagnation. The study suggests that improving HLP rights could transform the local economy, enabling more sustainable development and poverty reduction. Unresolved land disputes and inequitable access to property rights contribute to social tensions and conflict. These issues are often exacerbated by ethnic and clan divisions, which are deeply entrenched in the region's social fabric. More inclusive and transparent land management practices that respect the rights of all community members – regardless of their ethnic or clan affiliations – can help foster social cohesion.

Findings from the primary data collection reveal vulnerabilities for displaced communities, with heightened risks for women, people with disabilities and minority groups with limited educational and economic opportunities. A significant 84% of survey respondents were IDPs, and 89% had no formal education.



Community member during a longer-term lease agreement facilitation. Photo: Abbas Aden Ahmed /NRC

Most respondents perceived their HLP rights as ‘poor’ or ‘fair.’ While 42% noted some improvements over the past five years, 33% reported no changes during this time. Many highlighted ongoing challenges with forced evictions (49%), lack of affordable housing (46%) and discrimination (44%). A notable 13% reported having observed discrimination against minority groups, and there was a significant lack of awareness of targeted programmes addressing minorities’ HLP rights.

Study participants also cited a lack of documentation (39%) and conflicts with other communities (37%) as significant concerns. Common issues for those involved in HLP rights-related legal disputes included grazing rights, farming rights, land use conflicts and disputes over customary law. Forced evictions, land grabbing and the destruction of property were frequently mentioned, reflecting the complex and often violent nature of land disputes in the region.

Respondents agreed that recurrent droughts and floods have devastated land use and property rights, particularly in rural and agricultural communities. FGD participants and key informants highlighted that these environmental challenges have exacerbated existing vulnerabilities, leading to increased displacement, loss of livelihoods and further strain on already scarce resources. Integrating climate resilience into HLP programming is critical to ensure sustainable land management and housing solutions in changing environmental conditions. Indeed, there are serious environmental concerns related to HLP rights. In particular, in Afgooye, land degradation, driven by unsustainable agricultural practices and deforestation, is reducing the amount of arable land, exacerbating competition for resources. This report calls for integrating environmental sustainability into HLP policies and programmes, thereby promoting practices that conserve and restore land while supporting the livelihoods of local communities.

Many respondents face significant obstacles when seeking legal redress for HLP-related grievances. These barriers include high costs, limited access to legal services and a lack of awareness about available legal options. Many study participants perceive the judicial system in the region as being corrupt or biased, which discourages them from pursuing legal action. Strengthening the legal aid system and ensuring the impartiality of the judiciary are critical steps recommended to improve access to justice for all, particularly marginalised and vulnerable groups.

People in Afgooye have mixed perceptions about the effectiveness of local authorities in protecting HLP rights, particularly for minority groups. One-third of respondents said that they were not informed about the role of local authorities in this regard. Of those who had an opinion, another third-rated local authorities as ‘not effective.’ Only 10% believed they were ‘very effective’ in safeguarding HLP rights.

Only 9% of respondents were aware of any HLP rights programmes in Afgooye District. This lack of awareness underscores the gap between existing programmes and the communities they are meant to serve and highlights the need for improved outreach and community engagement. Among the small percentage of respondents who were aware of HLP programmes, perceptions varied significantly. A considerable portion expressed scepticism about the programmes’ effectiveness and highlighted critical barriers to programme implementation: 68% reported that the programmes lacked adequate community engagement, 43% reported a lack of funding, 39% highlighted security issues, and 20% noted political interference. In addition, 19% shared that the programmes lack technical expertise, pointing to the need for capacity-building initiatives.

While **non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international agencies** have been instrumental in supporting and advocating for HLP rights, the study revealed that their **efforts are often fragmented and lack coordination.** This report calls for a more collaborative approach, with NGOs, international agencies and local authorities working together to create a unified strategy that addresses the root causes of HLP issues and provides sustainable solutions.

A lack of formal resettlement plans and the ad-hoc nature of many displacement responses have led to prolonged uncertainty and insecurity for displaced people in Afgooye. Many have been forced to move multiple times, and each displacement further erodes their abilities to secure stable housing or land. This study recommends developing comprehensive resettlement plans that are inclusive, rights-based and that consider the long-term needs of displaced populations.

Recommendations

This report concludes with several recommendations to guide stakeholders including NRC, other development partners, national government agencies and state and local authorities in addressing the HLP rights challenges in Afgooye District.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and context of HLP rights in Somalia

HLP rights in Somalia are deeply embedded in the nation's complex history of conflict, displacement and political instability. This is particularly true for IDPs. The collapse of the country's central government in 1991 created a vacuum in governance and legal oversight, leading to widespread land grabbing, forced evictions and overlapping claims on land. These issues have been particularly acute in areas like Afgooye, a town in the Lower Shabelle region that has become a focal point for IDPs due to its strategic location and relative stability compared to other parts of Somalia.

Somalia's legal landscape concerning land rights is marked by a pluralistic system that includes *Xeer* (customary law), Islamic Sharia law and remnants of statutory law from the pre-1991 period. The Agricultural Land Law of 1975 was a significant legislative attempt to regulate land tenure post-independence, transferring control of all Somali land from traditional authorities to the state. However, the collapse of the central government in 1991 effectively nullified the enforcement of such laws, leading to a reassertion of customary and Islamic laws, particularly in rural areas and regions like Somaliland and Puntland. This legal pluralism has often been exploited by powerful individuals and groups, exacerbating the vulnerability of IDPs and complicating efforts to secure their HLP rights.¹

Urban areas, particularly Mogadishu and those in surrounding regions like Afgooye, face severe land rights-related challenges. Rapid urbanisation driven by conflict-induced displacement has resulted in the proliferation of informal settlements where many IDPs reside without secure tenure. These settlements are often located on the urban periphery and lack basic services. Furthermore, their residents frequently become subject to forced evictions when improving security conditions lead land values to rise. The absence of formal land registration systems and widespread use of forged ownership documents further complicates the situation, making it difficult for IDPs to assert their rights or seek redress through formal legal channels.²

¹ UN-Habitat, 2013; Displacement Solutions, 2008.

² UN-Habitat, 2013; NRC, 2019.



Children and youth continue to study local Madarasa under a tree after being displaced from their homes by conflicts. Photo: Abbas Aden Ahmed/NRC

Afgooye town presents a complex landscape of HLP rights issues. The town is historically an important and lucrative agricultural centre thanks to its location on the fertile land along the Shabelle River. However, the collapse of the Siad Barre regime in 1991 led to widespread land grabbing and the breakdown of formal land administration systems, leaving a legacy of unresolved land disputes. Since then, there has been an influx of IDPs into Afgooye, particularly during periods of drought and conflict, adding another layer of complexity to the land rights issues in the region. Many IDPs have settled on unoccupied land or in informal settlements without clear legal status or protection against eviction, making them particularly vulnerable to exploitation and further displacement.³

As the Lower Shabelle region continues to be liberated from Al-Shabaab control, the displacement crisis in Afgooye District is expected to worsen, as even more people from neighbouring districts seek safety and stability there. However, local Afgooye host communities are also struggling to cope with the significant pressures exerted by Al-Shabaab, as they face choices of whether to pay heavy taxation and risk forced conscription or to flee themselves. Any new influx of IDPs will likely intensify the competition for land in Afgooye, adding to the already complex and contentious land rights issues. The existing informal settlements may expand, further straining local resources and increasing the risk of forced evictions.⁴

³ UN-Habitat, 2008; Displacement Solutions, 2008.

⁴ UN-Habitat, 2013; Displacement Solutions, 2008.

The weakness of Somalia's formal institutions complicates the land dispute resolution process. While courts and local committees exist for this purpose, many Somalis lack faith in these institutions, perceiving them to be influenced by powerful interests. As a result, people often prefer traditional dispute-resolution mechanisms like elder councils, but these customary systems can also perpetuate discrimination against women and minority groups. Furthermore, in some areas, Islamic militant groups like Al-Shabaab have gained influence in land dispute resolution processes, capitalising on the perceived fairness of Sharia law in protecting land and property rights. The growing interest in oil and gas exploration in Somalia also raises concerns about potential new land conflicts.⁵

Significant progress has been made by the Somali government and the international community towards finding durable solutions⁶ for the displaced populations. The National Durable Solutions Strategy addresses displacement by creating sustainable conditions for return, reintegration and local integration of IDPs, refugees and returnees, emphasising improving HLP rights. The Ninth National Development Plan (2020-2024) further underscores the importance of durable solutions in Somalia's recovery and development agenda by integrating solutions for displacement into national priorities including governance, economic recovery and social protection.

The Somali Recovery and Resilience Framework has supported coordination between the government and international organisations to rebuild infrastructure, enhance land administration and strengthen legal protections for vulnerable populations. Collaborative efforts from international partners like the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), NRC and Displacement Solutions have contributed to land registration projects, dispute resolution mechanisms and capacity building at the local government level to address land tenure issues, particularly for women and IDPs. Despite these advancements, challenges remain due to ongoing instability and the need for further institutional reforms and resource mobilisation to support these initiatives effectively.⁷

⁵ UN-Habitat, 2020.

⁶ NRC defines a durable solution as being achieved when IDPs no longer have specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and such persons can enjoy their human rights without discrimination resulting from their displacement.

⁷ UN-Habitat, 2013; NRC, 2016.

1.2 Objectives and scope of the assessment

NRC commissioned this study to deepen its understanding of these complex and evolving HLP rights and legal identity issues in Afgooye and the surrounding areas. NRC aimed to gather comprehensive insights into how contextual dynamics such as ongoing conflict, displacement and legal plurality affect IDPs. The resulting evidence will inform HLP programming, support advocacy efforts and lead to practical policy solutions to address the complex challenges faced by displaced populations. This effort is crucial for tailoring interventions to address the specific needs of IDPs and advocating for more robust and contextually relevant policy frameworks to ensure that vulnerable populations can access their HLP rights securely and sustainably.

1.3 Specific objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. **Broaden contextual understanding of the HLP rights context** in Afgooye District. This involved exploring the historical, socio-economic and political factors that shape HLP dynamics in the area.
2. **Generate evidence-based insights to inform HLP programming.** This included identifying best practices, successful interventions and innovative approaches that can be scaled or adapted to enhance HLP outcomes for displaced populations.
3. **Propose practical policy solutions** to address the myriad challenges that displaced populations face in Afgooye District.
4. **Support advocacy** through robust data and compelling narratives highlighting the plight of displaced populations and the urgent need for policy reforms.



Before and after Integrated Rental Subsidy beneficiary collects tattered clothes after being evicted in Afgooye. Photo: Abbas Aden Ahmed /NRC

2 Methodological approach

2.1 Overview

To effectively address the HLP study objectives in Afgooye, RDI adopted a multi-faceted and participatory approach integrating both qualitative and quantitative research methods. RDI set the foundation for the assessment with an inception phase, which involved establishing clear research objectives, developing a detailed work plan and engaging with stakeholders to ensure alignment on the project's goals and methodology. The inception phase also included a preliminary desk review to identify existing knowledge gaps and to inform the design of subsequent research activities.

2.2 Desk review

RDI then dove deeper, compiling a comprehensive desk review, which involved meticulously analysing a wide array of existing literature, policy documents and legal frameworks relevant to HLP issues in Somalia, and Afgooye District specifically. The review included essential documents such as the National Durable Solutions Strategy, the Ninth National Development Plan, the Somali Recovery and Resilience Framework, and key legislative texts like the Agricultural Land Law of 1975 and the Somali Constitution of 2012. Additionally, RDI examined research reports and assessments from international bodies including UN-Habitat, NRC and Displacement Solutions to understand historical and ongoing HLP challenges.

This extensive desk review provided a thorough understanding of the complex legal pluralism that governs land rights in Somalia and the specific vulnerabilities faced by IDPs in Afgooye. The insights drawn from these documents informed the design of the subsequent qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and ensured that the study was deeply rooted in the most relevant and current knowledge on HLP issues in Somalia. This rigorous approach also facilitated data triangulation across different sources, enhancing the reliability and depth of the research findings.

2.3 Qualitative data collection

The qualitative aspect of the study was designed to gain in-depth insights into the lived experiences of individuals affected by HLP issues in Afgooye. This approach involved collecting rich, detailed data through KIIs and FGDs, listed in **Error! Reference source not found.**, which allowed participants to share their perspectives and experiences in their own words. The qualitative data provided a holistic, nuanced understanding of HLP challenges – particularly those related to legal pluralism, displacement and social dynamics.

- a. **KIIs** consisted of in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including government officials, land administration experts, representatives from international organisations and community leaders. Participant selection was strategic and purposive, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives were included in the analysis. The KIIs offered insights into the current HLP challenges, the effectiveness of existing interventions and the potential for sustainable solutions.
- b. **FGDs** were organised with various community groups, including male and female IDPs, host communities and other vulnerable populations. These discussions provided qualitative data on the lived experiences of those affected by HLP issues, particularly regarding land tenure security, access to legal redress and the impact of displacement. The participatory nature of FGDs ensured that the voices of marginalised groups were heard and incorporated into the analysis.

S No	Role	KIIs	FGDs
1	Local authorities – Afgooye, Lafoole, Mareerey, etc.	3	0
2	HLP focal points	1	0
4	Land surveyors	1	0
5	University institutions	1	0
6	Landowners & landlords	2	2
7	IDP & host community leaders	2	6
8	Local civil society organisations	0	4
9	Local business owners	0	4
10	Youth representatives (male and female)	0	4
11	HLP partners, i.e. NRC, IOM, etc.	4	0
	Total	14	20

2.4 Quantitative data collection

For the quantitative component of the study, RDI administered a semi-structured survey focused on topics such as land ownership, housing conditions, incidents of forced eviction and access to legal and administrative remedies. The survey design was informed by the desk review and qualitative research findings, ensuring that the study collected quantitative data on the most pressing issues.

The target sample of 391 respondents was calculated to be statistically representative of the Afgooye population, with a 4% margin of error to account for any potential area-specific variances.⁸ This approach ensured that the results would provide a statistically robust representation of the HLP dynamics in the region.

To ensure efficient and accurate data collection, the questionnaires were digitised and uploaded into Kobo, a digital platform that facilitates real-time data entry, validation and management via smartphones. This method allowed for precise data capture and analysis.

2.5 Data management and quality assurance

Enumerator training: RDI conducted a thorough enumerator training, focused on ensuring high-quality and effective data collection. In addition to covering the objectives of the HLP study, ethical considerations and detailed protocols for conducting interviews and recording data, the training emphasised the importance of obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality and engaging with respondents respectfully and with cultural sensitivity. The training also included a rigorous pre-test to ensure that the enumerators were fully prepared to collect accurate, reliable and ethically sound data.

Pre-testing: Before starting data collection, RDI thoroughly pre-tested both the qualitative and quantitative instruments to ensure they were clear, relevant and effective and that each question directly contributed to the assessment objectives. This process involved testing the survey and interview questions with a small sample of participants to identify and address any potential issues related to question comprehension, response accuracy and data collection procedures. Based on the results from the pre-test, the field research team collaborated with RDI headquarters to refine the data collection tools, particularly the quantitative survey.

⁸ The survey sample was calculated using the Taro Yamane formula and based on a target population of 14,159 households: $n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2} = \frac{14,159}{1+14,159*0.05^2} \cong 391$. Yamane, T, *Statistics: An Introductory Analysis*, 2nd Ed., Harper and Row, 1967.

2.6 Data cleaning and analysis

After data collection, all responses were compiled and cleaned to ensure accuracy and consistency. The final survey sample – on which the statistics in this report were calculated – was 305.

RDI used statistical software to calculate descriptive and inferential analyses. Descriptive statistics offered insights into the distribution of responses and highlighted key trends within the data, particularly for key variables such as land ownership patterns, housing conditions and the prevalence of forced evictions. Inferential statistical methods were then employed to examine relationships between variables, such as the correlation between land tenure security and access to legal remedies, and the impact of displacement on housing stability. Cross-tabulations, chi-square tests and regression analyses were used to identify significant patterns and predictors within the data, allowing RDI to draw evidence-based conclusions about the HLP issues in Afgooye.

The qualitative data collected through KIIs and FGDs was explored using thematic analysis. The information was first transcribed to create a comprehensive text dataset and then coded, or categorised, to identify recurring themes, patterns and key issues related to regional HLP rights. RDI researchers coded based on predefined themes such as land tenure security, legal and administrative challenges and the impact of displacement on property rights as well as inductive coding to capture emerging themes that were not initially anticipated. All of the themes were then analysed in depth to better understand underlying causes, contextual factors and implications for policy and practice.

The findings from the qualitative analysis were triangulated with the quantitative results to provide a holistic and nuanced understanding of the HLP landscape in Afgooye. This mixed-methods approach ensured that the analysis captured both the breadth and depth of the issues, providing a comprehensive view of the challenges faced by the community and informing actionable recommendations for improving HLP rights and conditions.

2.7 Field challenges and mitigation measures

Despite strong planning, the field teams encountered several difficulties during data collection. RDI employed strategic adaptations, including using local enumerators and adopting flexible scheduling, to ensure the successful completion of the assessment. Notable obstacles and mitigation measures included:

- Security risks and a lack of reliable transport made reaching some of the more remote locations on the outskirts of Afgooye challenging. To safely access these locations and ensure that even hard-to-reach communities were included in the study, RDI relied on local enumerators who were familiar with the area and its dynamics and who had local connections there.
- Many of the targeted respondents, especially IDPs, were in informal settlements that were difficult to reach due to security checkpoints. Additionally, fears of eviction and mistrust of outsiders made some people hesitant to participate. RDI addressed these challenges by using trusted local enumerators who could effectively navigate these barriers, build trust and ensure successful data collection.
- Accessing key informants and obtaining detailed information was sometimes challenging, as some respondents hesitated to discuss HLP issues due to their sensitive nature. RDI managed this by emphasising confidentiality, reassuring respondents of the non-threatening nature of the research, and relying on trusted local enumerators to build rapport, which helped secure more open and detailed discussions.
- Due to the busy schedules of some key informants, several interviews were delayed or had to be rescheduled to odd hours, extending the data collection period. RDI adapted by remaining flexible and maintaining communication to ensure the interviews were ultimately completed.



Asha was evicted while pregnant and gave birth within a week without support. Photo: Abbas Aden Ahmed /NRC

3 Findings

This chapter presents the key findings of the HLP assessment in Afgooye, structured around several core themes. The chapter begins with an overview of the socio-economic and legal context in the district. It then introduces the survey sample and shares the extent to which the respondents are aware of current and historical changes to the HLP rights systems, laws and mechanisms in Afgooye. The section goes on to explore the respondents' perceptions of the HLP rights situation before detailing the extent of their actual experience with HLP rights-related legal disputes. It then outlines IDP- and gender-specific HLP challenges. Finally, the chapter explores respondents' awareness and perceptions of existing HLP rights programmes in Afgooye and shares their recommendations for local authorities and international organisations.

3.1 Socio-economic and legal context

Urbanisation and population growth

Rapid urbanisation is one of the most significant socio-economic factors influencing HLP rights in Afgooye and the rest of Somalia. Indeed, a World Bank study from 2020⁹ highlighted the increasing pressure of urbanisation on land resources, particularly in the Mogadishu-Afgooye corridor stretching from Mogadishu to Afgooye town. This area has experienced significant population growth largely due to internal migration driven by a combination of economic opportunities, conflict in other parts of the country and environmental pressures on rural livelihoods.

In Afgooye, this has resulted in a patchwork of formal and informal land holdings, complicating efforts to establish clear and enforceable property rights. The demand for housing and land in peri-urban areas has also driven up property values, making access to land increasingly difficult for poor and marginalised groups.

⁹ The UNHCR and The World Bank Group, Forced Displacement and Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa, June 2015. Available at <https://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/837351468189856365/pdf/ACS14361-ESW-P152459-Box391494B-PUBLIC-FINAL-HOA-Displacement-Report.pdf>.

The Afgooye corridor, once primarily agricultural land, has seen rapid development of informal settlements where residents – often people who have fled conflict or drought in other parts of the country – lack formal property rights. The speed of this urban expansion has far outpaced the capacity of local institutions to manage land allocation and services provision, leading to a host of HLP rights challenges.



Aerial view of an IDP site in Lafoole, Afgooye District. Photo: Abdulkadir Mohamed/NRC

Agricultural importance and land competition

Located along the Shabelle River, Afgooye District is part of Somalia's agricultural heartland and is often referred to as the country's breadbasket. This agricultural importance has attracted small-scale farmers and large commercial interests, leading to land use and ownership conflicts. Indeed, a Food and Agriculture Organisation report emphasised that competition for fertile agricultural land has been a key driver of land disputes.¹⁰

The situation is further complicated by the legacy of the 1975 Land Law, which undermined traditional land management systems that had previously governed agricultural land use. In the vacuum created by the erosion of these traditional systems and the weakness of formal state institutions, powerful actors – including wealthy individuals, corporations and even armed groups – have been able to acquire large tracts of agricultural land, often through questionable means.

¹⁰ International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, *Rebuilding Resilient and Sustainable Agriculture in Somalia*, 2018. Available at <https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b8ca2cbe-bc03-4f77-8880-77109d72456e/content>.

Displacement and return

Somalia has experienced massive internal displacement due to a combination of conflict, drought, and other natural disasters. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre has documented extensive population movements, with many Somalis who have been forced to flee their homes settling in and around urban areas like Afgooye.¹¹ This displacement has created complex scenarios of land needs and occupation, which have driven up land values and increased land grabbing, squatting, encroachments, and fake or disputed sales and ownership. In Afgooye, the influx of IDPs has put additional pressure on already strained land resources.

The challenges of displacement and return are particularly acute in Afgooye due to its proximity to Mogadishu and its relative stability compared to some other parts of Somalia. Many people who have been displaced from other districts see Afgooye as a temporary safe haven, and this has led to the establishment of large IDP camps and informal settlements. However, as displacement becomes protracted, many of these ‘temporary’ residents begin to put down roots, further complicating land rights.

Another significant challenge is the return of people who were previously displaced from Afgooye. Many returnees find that their lands have been occupied by others during their absences, leading to complex disputes that can rarely be easily resolved through either formal or traditional mechanisms. The situation is further complicated by the fact that many young returnees have never actually lived in Afgooye before but are claiming ancestral land rights based on their clan affiliations.



Portrait of displaced children in Afgooye. Photo: Abbas Aden Ahmed/NRC

¹¹ International Organisation for Migration, Displacement Tracking Matrix: Somalia. Available at <https://dtm.iom.int/somalia>.

Legal and policy framework

The Provisional Constitution of Somalia, adopted in 2012, provides a framework for protecting property rights,¹² with Article 26 recognising the right to own property and prohibiting unlawful expropriation. However, the implementation of these constitutional provisions remains challenging due to weak institutional capacity and competing systems of law. The constitution also recognises the role of customary law and Sharia law, creating a complex legal pluralism that has significant implications for HLP rights. While this recognition of multiple legal systems can provide flexibility, it also creates potential for conflict and confusion, particularly in areas like Afgooye where different systems of law may have overlapping jurisdictions.

Despite the constitutional recognition of property rights, Somalia lacks a comprehensive national land policy and an updated land law. A report by UN-Habitat emphasised the need to harmonise the various legal systems to provide clear and consistent protection of HLP rights.¹³ The absence of a clear policy framework has particular implications in Afgooye. Without guidelines on issues such as the formalisation of informal settlements, the resolution of historical land grievances or the management of agricultural lands, local authorities and communities are left to navigate complex HLP issues with minimal direction or support.

Importantly, efforts are underway to address these policy gaps. The Federal Government of Somalia, with support from international partners, has been working to develop a national land policy based, in part, on consultations with stakeholders such as traditional leaders, civil society organisations and representatives from different regions of the country. One of the key challenges in developing this policy is finding ways to reconcile formal state systems with customary and religious laws. In areas like Afgooye District, with its mix of urban and rural land uses and diverse population, any new land policy must be flexible enough to accommodate local realities while providing a clear and consistent framework for protecting HLP rights.

3.2 Introduction to the survey respondents

The demographics of the study's survey sample (Table 2), reveal a predominantly female population that is largely uneducated and heavily impacted by displacement. They also point to an urgent need for targeted HLP rights-related interventions that address the specific vulnerabilities of women, IDPs and economically disadvantaged groups, ensuring that these populations have the knowledge, resources and legal support necessary to navigate HLP challenges effectively.

¹² The Federal Republic of Somalia, 1 August 2012. Available at: <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu/research/Somalia-Constitution2012.pdf>.

¹³ NRC, UN-Habitat, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Land, Property, and Housing in Somalia. Available at <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Land%2C%20Property%2C%20and%20Housing%20in%20Somalia.pdf>.

Category	Subcategory	Percentage
Age	18 - 35 years	51%
	36 - 50 years	33%
	Over 50 years	14%
	Less than 18 years	3%
Gender	Female	89%
	Male	11%
Marital status	Married	65%
	Widowed	15%
	Divorced	11%
	Single	5%
	Separated	3%
	Not specified	1%
Current location	Afgooye	53%
	Lafoole	40%
	Mareerey	8%
Settlement status	IDP	84%
	Host community	16%
Education level	No formal education	89%
	Primary/elementary level	6%
	Secondary level	3%
	Tertiary level	2%
	Other	<1%
Primary occupation	Unskilled labourer	46%
	Farming	28%
	Other	16%
	Skilled labourer	6%
	Trading	2%
	Fishing	<1%

Table 2. Key demographics of the respondents

Over half of the respondents (53%) were from Afgooye, 40% were from Lafaole and 7% were from Mareerey.

Most (89%) were female. This suggests that while men are considered to be the heads of households, many were unable to respond to the survey, likely because they were out seeking income opportunities. Comparatively, women – usually responsible for managing household chores and addressing daily challenges related to HLP – were home and available to participate in the study.

Education levels were notably low, with 89% of respondents lacking any formal education. Only a small fraction had completed primary (6%), secondary (3%) or tertiary (2%) education. Beyond underscoring extremely poor access to education within these communities, this lack of education likely limits respondents' understanding of their legal rights and impedes their abilities to navigate the complexities of HLP issues.

The majority of respondents (84%) were IDPs, with a minority (16%) from the host community. Only 1.6% of the respondents identified themselves as belonging to a minority group.

The bulk of the respondents worked as unskilled labourers (46%) or in farming (28%). Other primary occupations included skilled labour (6%), trading (2%) and fishing (1%). A total of 16% of respondents reported various other occupations, and 1% did not specify theirs.



When women are relocated to remote sites, limited protection and long walks for water increase their risk of experiencing gender-based violence. Photo: Abbas Aden Ahmed /NRC.

3.3 Awareness of HLP rights systems, laws and mechanisms

Awareness of current HLP rights laws

As shown in Table 3, nearly two-thirds of respondents (60%) were not familiar with the current HLP rights laws in Afgooye District, suggesting a major gap in legal knowledge that could hinder their abilities to protect their HLP rights effectively. While 29% of respondents reported being somewhat familiar with the laws, further education and information dissemination would ensure they are fully informed. Only 11% of respondents indicated that they were very familiar with the current laws, highlighting that there is a small group that feels confident in their knowledge of HLP regulations.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Not familiar	184	60
Somewhat familiar	88	29
Very familiar	33	11
Total	305	100

Table 3. Are you familiar with current HLP rights laws in this area?

Confirming findings from the literature review, key informants emphasised that there is often a gap between the main legal frameworks governing HLP rights (national land laws, local customary practices and the Provisional Constitution of Somalia) and their practical implementation.

One engineer from the local municipality, a land surveyor, emphasised: “Customary systems often grant land use rights based on long-term occupancy or cultivation, recognised within the community but not formally documented.”

Use of traditional land management systems

Opinions about the use of traditional land management systems varied widely (Table 4). Nearly one-third (30%) said that they are not used, 28% did not know, 26% reported limited use and 16% said that they are widely used. This diversity suggests a complex landscape where traditional systems may coexist with modern approaches, varying in relevance across the community or different land management issues.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Do not know	85	28%
No	92	30%
Yes, but limited use	80	26%
Yes, widely used	48	16%
Total	305	100%

Table 4. Are traditional land management systems still used in this area?

These traditional land management systems – which have long formed the foundation of land use in Afgooye District and the broader context of Somalia – were discussed extensively in the focus groups. These traditional systems are deeply rooted in the cultural and social fabric of the communities and are often governed by clan elders and community leaders who mediate land use and ownership issues based on customary laws and practices and resolve disputes. FGD participants noted that traditional agricultural practices involved communal farming, where land was collectively managed and used for growing crops. Similarly, pastoralists' grazing lands were managed by community agreements to ensure sustainable use. Land hire for settlements allowed temporary land use and was often regulated through verbal agreements witnessed by elders.

However, participants expressed that decades of conflict and insecurity have severely disrupted these traditional systems. In particular, Al-Shabab's control over certain areas has added a layer of complexity to land management, as they exert control over land and property, impose their own rules – often by force, and exploit land disputes to strengthen their influence. The resulting breakdown in traditional land management systems has led to increased disputes and inefficient land use. Elders, who once played a pivotal role in managing land-related issues, find their authority undermined by continuous conflict and the presence of non-state actors who tend to resolve land disputes through intimidation rather than negotiation.

One elder shared: "The traditional ways worked well when there was peace. [Now,] everything is uncertain, and the old ways don't hold as much weight." He continued, "While the traditional elders try their best to mediate, sometimes the process takes too long, and not everyone gets a fair hearing." Similarly, an internally displaced elder shared, "I appreciate that there is a system in place, but I feel like we, as displaced people, don't always get the same level of attention or fairness as the locals."

A youth representative explained: "The elders are losing trust because they can't shield us from Al-Shabab or the government. They are caught between two fires [they are stuck between a rock and a hard place], and we are the ones who suffer."

A community leader noted: "Al-Shabab's presence makes it even harder. They have rules, and people are caught in the middle."

While there were many benefits to the traditional land management systems, there were also drawbacks. In particular, women FGD participants highlighted that while these traditional systems were designed to be inclusive, in practice, they often failed to address women's needs equitably, often overlooking or undermining women's rights to land and property. One female participant remarked: "Women always had to rely on male relatives to assert their rights. With the elders losing their influence, it has become even harder for us."



Participant in HLP for displaced people, settlement leaders, and landlords. Photo: Abbas Aden Ahmed /NRC

FGD participants indicated that while the formal justice system is changing the dynamics of land management, it is not without flaws. For instance, although it aims to provide a more structured approach to land disputes, its integration has been problematic. Indeed, many participants expressed concerns about corruption and inefficiency within the formal system, leading to a lack of trust.

The erosion of traditional land management systems, combined with the ongoing influence of extremist groups and weak governance, underscores the need for a comprehensive approach to land management. This must include strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing the capacity of traditional leaders and addressing the security challenges posed by non-state actors. There is also a pressing need to reform the formal justice system to ensure it is fair, efficient and free from corruption.

Awareness of local mechanisms for resolving HLP disputes

Figure 2 shows that the majority of the survey respondents were not aware of local mechanisms for resolving HLP disputes, indicating a gap in communication or access to information about existing mechanisms, which may hinder respondents' abilities to effectively resolve HLP disputes that arise. While awareness of such dispute-resolution mechanisms was poor among the host community (17%), it was even worse among IDPs (7%). According to key informants and FGD participants, this may be because IDPs' are more transient, have achieved limited integration into local systems, lack access to communication devices or experience a general disconnect from information channels that might be more accessible to the host community.

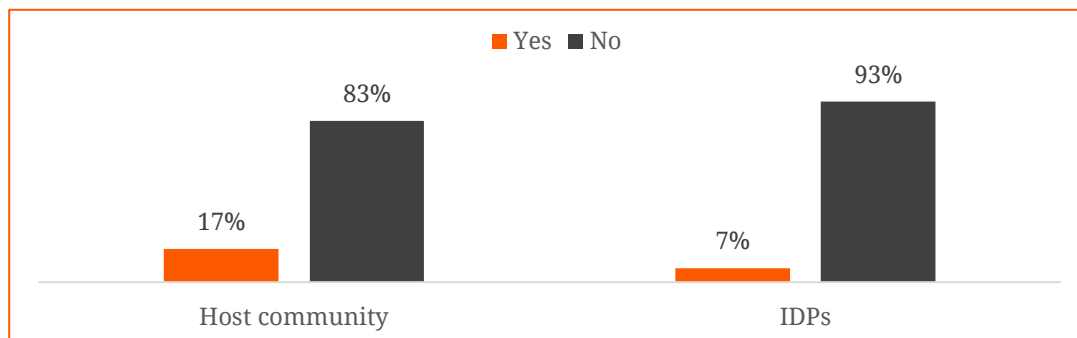


Figure 2. Are you aware of local mechanisms for resolving HLP disputes?



A member of a traditional collaborative dispute resolution committee. Photo: Abbas Aden Ahmed/NRC

Informal and customary systems for managing HLP rights

This study sought to establish whether there are any informal or customary systems for managing HLP rights in Afgooye District. The results in Table 5 show that most respondents reported that such systems do not exist (60%) or that they do not know (39%). Only 1% indicated that these systems do exist. These findings suggest that if such systems exist, they are either not widely recognised, not commonly used or operate in a way that is not visible to most community members.

Response	Percentage
I do not know	39%
No	60%
Yes	1%
Total	100%

Table 5. Are there informal or customary systems for managing HLP rights in your area?

Knowledge of historical events shaping HLP rights and land use

As shown in Table 6, only a small minority of 3% (10 respondents) indicated they were aware of any significant historical events that shaped the current land ownership and property rights context in Afgooye District. This suggests a significant gap in historical knowledge and understanding of how current, local land ownership and property rights have evolved. This extensive lack of awareness may reflect a disconnect between current residents and the area's history, possibly due to recent migration and displacement or to a lack of intergenerational knowledge transfer. Alternatively, it could suggest that education about local history and its impact on current land rights is limited or ineffective. Regardless, this almost complete lack of historical knowledge may affect how residents understand and engage with current HLP rights issues and could hinder their abilities to fully comprehend or assert their rights now and into the future.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
No	295	97%
Yes	10	3%
Total	305	100%

Table 6. Are you aware of significant historical events that have shaped land ownership and property rights in this area?

As shown in Table 7, respondents were also largely unaware or uncertain of historical changes in land use in Afgooye. As many as 43% reported that they did not know how land use has changed in the past decades. Another 24% of respondents reported that there has not been much change, suggesting perceived stability in land use. Conversely, 33% of respondents indicated that land use has changed, with 19% reporting some changes and 14% indicating significant ones.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I do not know	131	43%
Not much change	74	24%
Significantly changed	42	14%
Somewhat changed	58	19%
Total	305	100%

Table 7. How has land use in this area changed over the past decades?

3.4 Participants’ perceptions of the HLP rights situation

The respondents' overarching views on the HLP rights situation in Afgooye District, illustrated in Figure 3, reflect a cautiously hopeful community still facing significant challenges. Over half (54%) described the HLP situation as ‘fair,’ suggesting that they acknowledge existing difficulties but have a sense that conditions are manageable, or at least not as dire as they could be. This implies that there may be some parts of the district where HLP rights are being adequately managed or at least where they are not severely compromised. However, 29% of respondents rated the local HLP rights situation as ‘poor,’ and 8% described it as ‘very poor.’ This highlights that a significant portion of the community still faces struggles like dealing with unresolved disputes, insecure tenure and inadequate support in navigating their HLP rights. These views point to deficiencies in the current management of HLP rights and possibly to severe systemic failures in protecting and promoting these rights. On a more positive note, a small group of 9% perceived the HLP rights situation as being ‘good.’ This may indicate that they believe HLP rights are being effectively managed, have seen recent improvements or have benefitted from successful interventions that have positively impacted their lives.

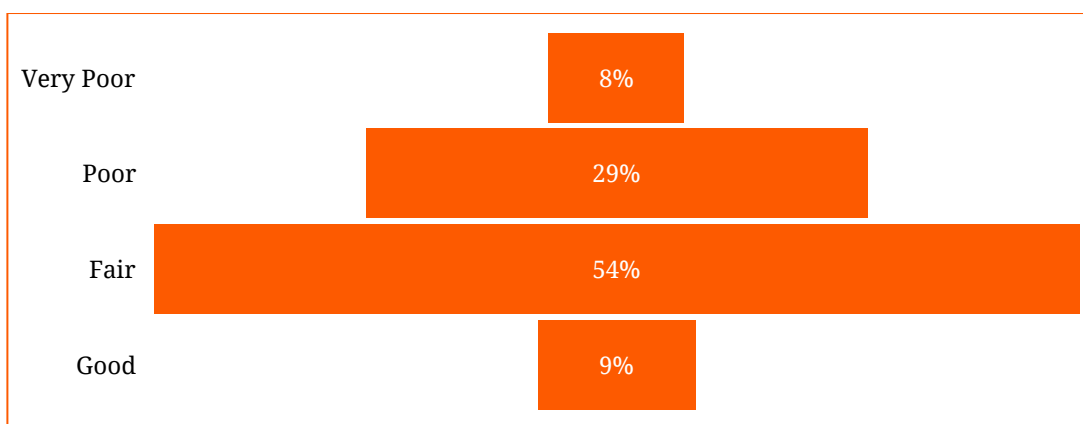


Figure 3. How would you rate the overall HLP rights situation in Afgooye?

Figure 4 illustrates respondents' perceptions of how these HLP rights have changed over the past five years. As many as 42% indicated that they have noticed some improvements, and another 13% reported significant improvements. This suggests that there have been positive developments – and even notable advancements – in securing or enhancing HLP rights for some people. However, 33% of respondents reported no change, indicating that a substantial portion of the population have not benefitted from recent efforts and initiatives. This stagnancy may reflect persistent challenges or barriers hindering progress. Eleven per cent of respondents observed some deterioration, and a minority of 3% reported significant deterioration, highlighting that specific contexts or communities may have seen severe setbacks.

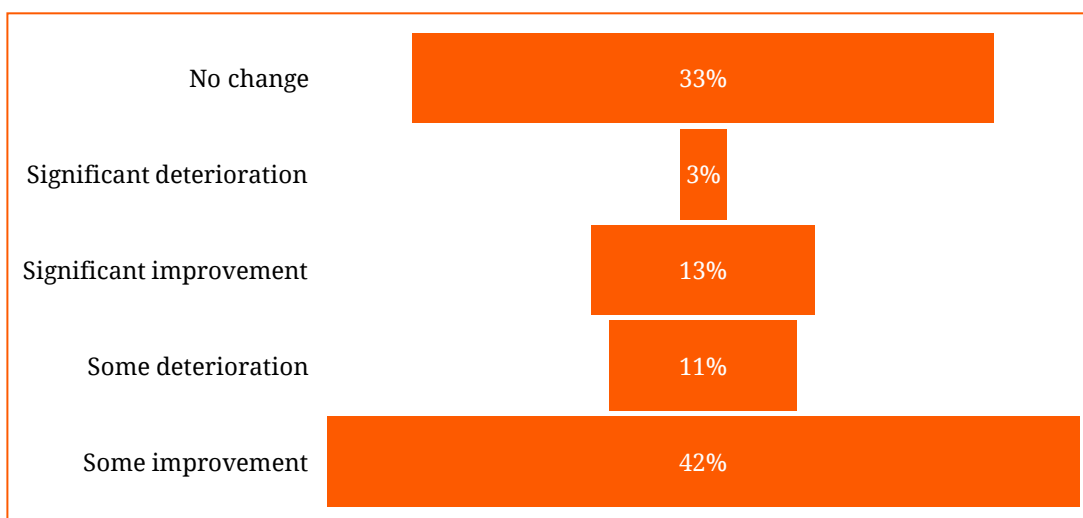


Figure 4. Have you noticed any improvements in HLP rights over the past five years?

The KIIs and FGDs provided deeper insights into respondents' perceptions and experiences of how HLP rights have changed over the past five years. Many FGD participants noted that while there have been some improvements, advancements have often been localised and have not benefitted all communities equally. KIIs

highlighted similar sentiments, with several key informants pointing out that while there have been efforts to strengthen HLP rights, these efforts have often been undermined by a lack of political will, limited focus and inconsistent implementation and enforcement. Moreover, both FGD participants and key informants expressed concerns that improvements have often been overshadowed by ongoing issues such as political interference and insecurity, which continue to challenge the realisation of meaningful and sustained progress in HLP rights.

For instance, in one FGD, a community leader remarked: "Even with some improvements, the fear of land grabbing and forced evictions remains, making it hard to feel secure about any progress."

Challenges to HLP rights

Participants were asked to identify the biggest HLP rights-related issues facing their communities. As shown in Figure 5, the most significant challenge they perceived was the risk of forced eviction, reported by 49% of respondents. Information from the FGDs and KIIs confirmed this sentiment. One participant shared: "We live in constant fear of being uprooted from our homes without any warning."

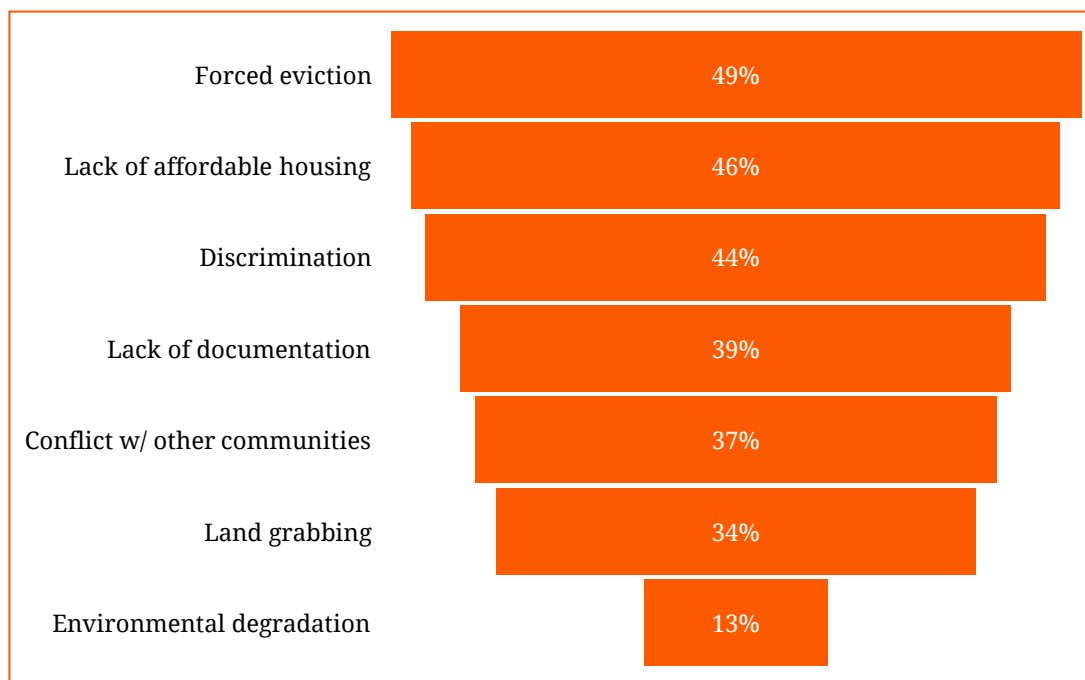


Figure 5. Challenges facing respondents regarding HLP rights

The lack of affordable housing is another major concern, cited by 46% of respondents. Key informants highlighted that rising costs and an inadequate supply of housing are exacerbating this problem, particularly for vulnerable groups.

Indeed, discrimination, identified by 44% of respondents as a challenge, can be a significant barrier inhibiting IDPs' and vulnerable host community members' access to housing and land. The FGDs confirmed that marginalised communities often face

biases that limit their abilities to secure land and property. As one IDP expressed: "We are often overlooked when it comes to land distribution. It's as if we don't exist." Key informants indicated that discrimination is both social and institutional and that local officials sometimes prioritise more influential or wealthier individuals when allocating land or resolving disputes. Furthermore, although laws may exist to protect HLP rights, enforcement is weak in Somalia, and legal protections are often ignored. Finally, the dominating role that clan affiliations play in most Somali cities complicates the integration and acceptance of IDPs into host communities, making it difficult for them to secure land or housing. Discrimination against minority groups in particular is discussed further below.

Another critical concern is the lack of documentation, affecting 39% of respondents. KIIs with local authorities pointed out the difficulties of obtaining proper land ownership documentation, which increases the risk of land grabbing and disputes.

When asked what HLP rights-related challenges their communities face, 37% of respondents raised conflict with other communities as an issue. When the survey asked respondents directly about the impact of recent conflicts, numbers were slightly higher, with 46% reporting that recent conflicts have had some impact on HLP rights (see details in Table 8).¹⁴ FGDs revealed that these conflicts often stem from disputes over land boundaries and are sometimes fuelled by historical grievances that remain unresolved or by competition for resources. Land grabbing – an issue that occurs when powerful individuals or groups unlawfully seize land, often without consequence – was noted as a challenge by 34% of respondents. Focus group participants also identified this as a growing problem, particularly in areas with weak governance. For instance, one FGD participant noted: "Powerful individuals take what they want, and there's little we can do to stop them."

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I have no idea	102	33%
Moderately affected	52	17%
Not affected	62	20%
Severely affected	74	24%
Slightly affected	15	5%
Total	305	100%

Table 8. How have recent conflicts affected HLP rights in Afgooye District?

¹⁴ These numbers likely vary slightly due to how each question was asked.

Environmental degradation was the least commonly reported challenge, mentioned by 13% of respondents. Key informants indicated that while this issue is recognised, it is often overshadowed by more immediate concerns such as eviction and land disputes.

As shown in Table 9, respondents' views on the link between their economic situations and their access to and ability to exercise their HLP rights were mixed. More than half (58%) said they believe that their economic status has affected their HLP rights, with 36% reporting a significant impact and 22% indicating a moderate impact. This suggests a strong correlation between economic circumstances and the ability to secure and maintain HLP rights. In contrast, 30% of respondents stated that their economic situation has not affected their HLP rights, signifying that a notable minority has been able to maintain these rights regardless of economic challenges. Fourteen per cent of respondents were unsure, which could point to a lack of awareness or uncertainty about the connection between economic factors and property rights.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I do not know	44	14%
Not affected	85	28%
Significantly affected	110	36%
Somewhat affected	66	22%
Total	305	100%

Table 9. How has your economic situation affected your ability to secure housing or land rights?

Key informants and FGD participants confirmed and expanded on many of these contextual and compounding barriers that IDPs and vulnerable host communities in Afgooye face in accessing their HLP rights. They highlighted that these groups are at a significant disadvantage due to their precarious socio-economic status, lack of formal recognition within existing legal frameworks and the pervasive insecurity in the region – including in many of the IDPs' home areas, which delays or prevents their return and inhibits their abilities to easily own land.



A woman holds the title to her land. Photo: Abbas Aden Ahmed/NRC

In particular, IDPs who have been displaced multiple times due to conflict or natural disasters struggle to secure stable housing. One internally displaced FGD participant expressed their frustration, stating: "We have been moved from place to place with no place to call home. Every time we try to settle, we are pushed out again. How do you squat on a piece of land for 30 years, and then the government ends up giving it to someone else? This has morally affected us, and we think we are not wanted in this country. I believe the problem is that we are IDPs."

IDPs' vulnerability is exacerbated by their lack of funds to purchase land, leaving them dependent on temporary or informal arrangements. KIIs with local authorities indicated that while there are efforts to provide some form of tenure security for IDPs, these efforts are often hampered by bureaucratic inefficiencies, a lack of political will and the commercialisation of IDPs' HLP rights by state-linked businessmen. Likewise, vulnerable host communities face increasing competition for resources, particularly land, as more IDPs settle in the district. This influx – combined with a lack of integration – has led to tensions and conflicts over land use. FGDs highlighted that host communities can end up feeling marginalised and often perceive the arrival of IDPs as a threat to their already limited resources.

Discrimination against minority groups

Only 13% of all respondents indicated that they knew of minority groups that exist in Afgooye District, which they identified as including: Jeer, May, Maxatiri and Somali Bantu. While nearly half of respondents reported that discrimination affects the HLP rights of various groups (as noted above), reported rates of discrimination

against minority groups specifically were much lower. Indeed, only 6% of respondents indicated that minority groups face challenges (detailed in Table 10) in exercising their HLP rights. The vast majority of respondents (63%) said that minority groups do not face unique challenges in this regard, and the remaining 30% said they did not know.

Challenge	Percentage
Limited access to dispute resolution mechanisms	71%
Discrimination in land allocation	65%
Cultural barriers to land ownership	59%
Lack of representation in decision-making processes	59%
Difficulty accessing formal land titles	53%
Forced displacement from traditional lands	12%

Table 10. Of the 6% of respondents indicating that minority groups face challenges in exercising their HLP rights, challenges reported

When respondents were asked directly whether minority groups face discrimination, specifically, in accessing their HLP rights, they expressed varied experiences and levels of awareness about the issue. A majority (64%) reported that they had not witnessed discrimination face-to-face but that it is general with IDPs. However, 13% reported having observed discrimination, with 4% seeing it frequently and 8% occasionally. One quarter (23%) responded ‘I do not know’.

The survey further explored perceptions of local authorities' effectiveness in protecting the HLP rights of minority groups. Many respondents (34%) lacked knowledge on this issue, indicating a considerable information gap. Among those with an opinion, views were predominantly negative. One-third of all respondents (33%) rated local authorities as ‘not effective’, and 24% rated them as ‘somewhat effective’. Only 10% considered the authorities ‘very effective’ in protecting minority groups' HLP rights.

When asked to select the top three actions that could improve HLP rights for minority groups, respondents collectively chose: increasing minority representation in land management institutions (52%), providing legal aid for minority groups in HLP disputes (51%), and conducting awareness campaigns on minority rights (38%). Implementing anti-discrimination policies was a close fourth (36%), followed by preserving traditional land use practices of minority groups (20%). Twelve per cent recommended other measures. These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to address the specific HLP rights-related challenges faced by minority groups.



NRC partnered with Olad Law Firm to offer free legal aid outreach sessions in Afgooye. Photo: Abdulkadir Mohamed/NRC

3.5 Experience with HLP rights-related legal disputes

Table 11 shows that the vast majority of respondents (93%) reported that they had not been involved in any HLP rights-related legal disputes. This low incidence is likely a result of respondents' lack of awareness about their legal HLP rights and related processes, discussed above. Alternatively, it could suggest that formal legal mechanisms are not frequently used to resolve HLP issues in Afgooye, possibly due to a lack of access to legal systems, a preference for informal dispute resolution methods or a general absence of major conflicts over HLP rights.

Following this thinking, the 7% of respondents who have experienced legal disputes may have had more complex or severe cases that could not be resolved through other means. According to the respondents, most of these disputes involved grazing rights, land use and challenges related to customary law. Other significant issues included enforcing verbal agreements, land grabbing/forcible seizure of farmlands, forced evictions from camps/displacement without consent, and destruction of property, such as tents. Problems specific to IDPs included being told to move, a lack of shelter and food access especially during rainy seasons, and demands for their own land and better shelter. This range of reported disputes underscores the complex and varied nature of legal challenges related to HLP rights in the affected communities.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
No	283	93%
Yes	22	7%
Total	305	100%

Table 11. Have you ever been involved in a legal dispute related to HLP rights?

Experience using local mechanisms to resolve HLP disputes

As shown in Figure 6, most respondents who have used local mechanisms for resolving HLP disputes expressed that doing so had been a positive experience. Indeed, 55% of those who have used these mechanisms described their experience as ‘somewhat positive,’ indicating that while the system may not be perfect, it is seen as functional by the majority of users. A smaller but still notable group of 20% rated their experience as ‘very positive,’ reflecting a high level of satisfaction with the fairness and effectiveness of the dispute resolution process. On the other hand, 10% had somewhat negative experiences, while 15% remained neutral.

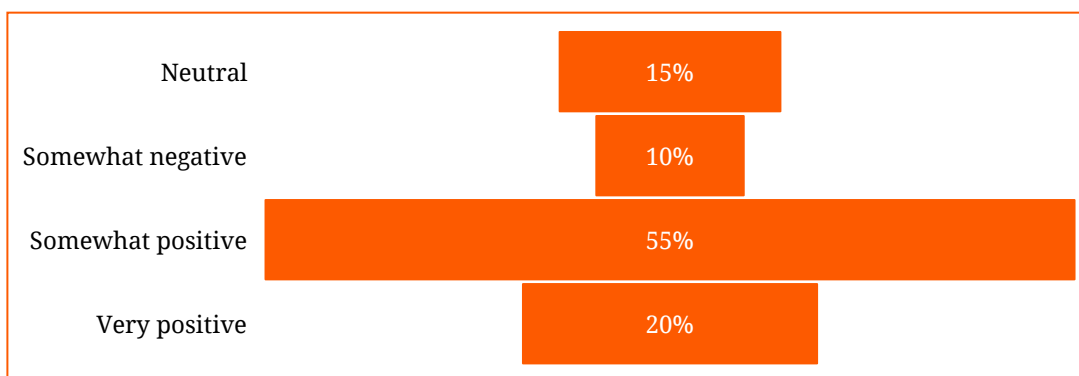


Figure 6. For respondents who have used local mechanisms, how would you rate your experience?

Effectiveness of local authorities in managing HLP rights

Respondents had mixed views on the effectiveness of local authorities in managing HLP issues, as detailed in Table 12. About one-third (29%) reported that they did not know about this topic, suggesting a significant lack of awareness or engagement with local authorities. Another 29% said the local authorities were ‘not effective’ in managing HLP issues, indicating dissatisfaction. A further 28% considered local authorities to be ‘somewhat effective,’ suggesting some competence in HLP management. Only 13% of respondents rated the local authorities as being ‘very effective’ in handling HLP matters, indicating substantial room for improvement.

These findings suggest that local authorities face challenges in effectively managing HLP issues and communicating their efforts to the community.

Response	Frequency	Percentage
I do not know	89	29%
Not effective	89	29%
Somewhat effective	86	28%
Very effective	41	23%
Total	305	100%

Table 12: How would you rate the effectiveness of local authorities in managing HLP issues?

Although local authorities are seen as critical players in managing HLP issues, according to a local court representative, their efforts are often hampered by significant challenges, including limited resources and political interference, that result in inconsistent enforcement and biased decisions. A member of a local authority likewise acknowledged that while local authorities play a crucial role in overseeing HLP issues, resource constraints can limit their effectiveness.

3.6 HLP rights issues specific to IDPs

HLP rights issues facing internally displaced Somalis living in Afgooye District seem to be complex. While the results reported in this section cover both IDP and resident respondents, the bulk of the sample (84%) were IDPs.

IDPs' connections to their places of origin

A majority of respondents (80%) reported having no access to their original land or property, suggesting that the vast majority of IDPs have been completely cut off from their former homes and assets and painting a worrying picture. In contrast, only a small fraction of respondents (8%) stated they still have access to their original land or property. The remaining 12% were unsure, indicating that they did not know.

As shown in Figure 7, a significant majority of respondents (72%) said they do not plan to return to their place of origin, suggesting that they have decided to settle in their current location or seek opportunities elsewhere. Seventeen per cent are undecided about returning, indicating uncertainty about their future or possibly that they are waiting for conditions to change before deciding. Only 11% expressed a plan to return to their place of origin, indicating that returning home is not a viable or desirable option for most of the displaced population in this sample.

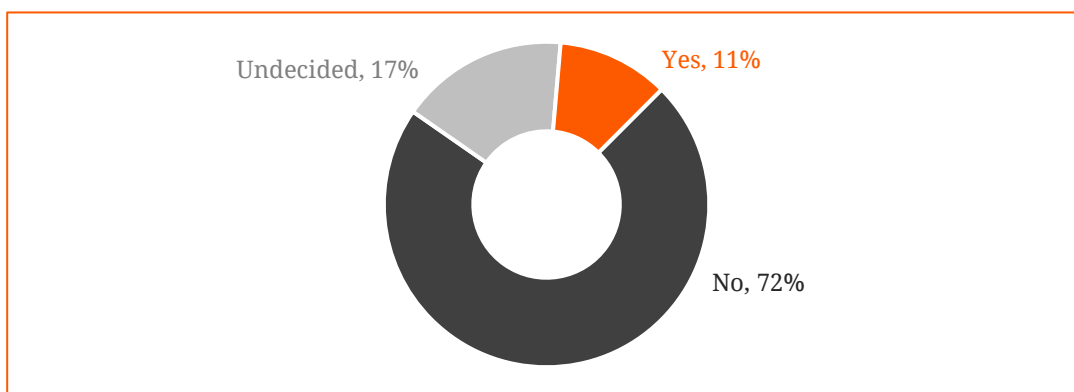


Figure 7. Do you plan to return to your place of origin?

Of the 11% of IDPs planning to return to their place of origin, 38% hold the cautiously optimistic view that they will be able to reclaim their original property. However, another 35% do not expect to regain access to their former lands or properties, and the remaining 27% expressed uncertainty about their abilities to do so. This fairly even distribution underscores the complex nature of property rights and access in post-displacement scenarios which have the potential to impact IDPs' reintegration experiences if do return.

IDPs' rights to use land and engage in land-based livelihood and other activities in Afgooye

As shown in Figure 8, 40% of the survey respondents said they believe that IDPs are not allowed to use land in the district, indicating a significant perception of exclusion for this vulnerable group. However, 50% indicated that IDPs do have at least some land use rights: 28% believed IDPs have full rights to use land and 22% stated that IDPs have limited rights. Ten per cent of respondents did not know. This split paints a picture of a district in which the land rights of IDPs are contentious and not uniformly recognised or understood.

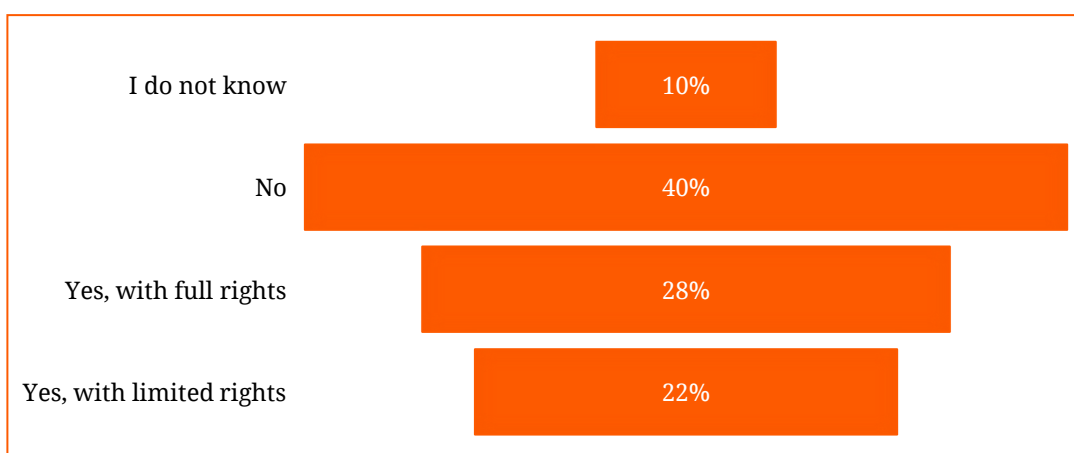


Figure 8. Are IDPs allowed to use land in Afgooye District?

The survey findings revealed that populations in Afgooye have diverse land use intentions. Building shelter was the most common plan, with 50% of respondents aiming to construct housing. Farming followed closely at 43%, indicating a strong interest in agricultural activities. Animal grazing was also popular, with 42% intending to use the land for livestock. Interestingly, 30% had other plans for the land, suggesting a range of additional needs or opportunities.

The survey revealed varied perceptions on the extent to which IDPs are able to engage in livelihood activities and integrate into host communities (Figure 9). Just under half of respondents (46%) indicated that IDPs can build permanent structures, 37% said they can farm and 33% reported that they can graze animals, suggesting that some IDPs have access to land-based livelihood opportunities. However, only 22% of respondents believed that IDPs can each: access communal resources and engage in local trade, indicating limited opportunities for economic integration. Nearly one-third (29%) said that IDPs are allowed to engage in unspecified ‘other’ activities. Overall, there was limited consensus on which activities IDPs are allowed to do, possibly suggesting inconsistent rules and regulations, a lack of knowledge and awareness about what is permitted, or restricted integration opportunities.

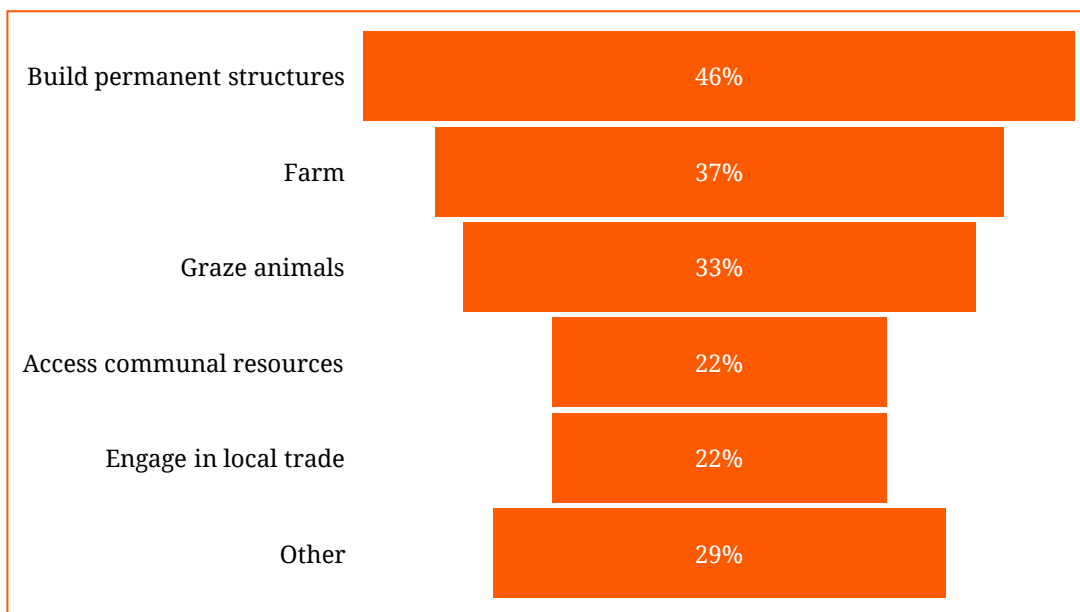


Figure 9. Activities that IDPs are allowed to do

IDPs' housing situations

At the time of the survey, 47% of respondents reported living in temporary accommodations (Figure 10). Permanent structures were the next most prevalent, housing 25% of all respondents, followed by tents, at 21%. A small portion (8%) reported living in other types of shelter. These findings underscore the impermanent and precarious living conditions of many IDPs and highlight ongoing challenges in providing stable and adequate shelter for displaced populations.

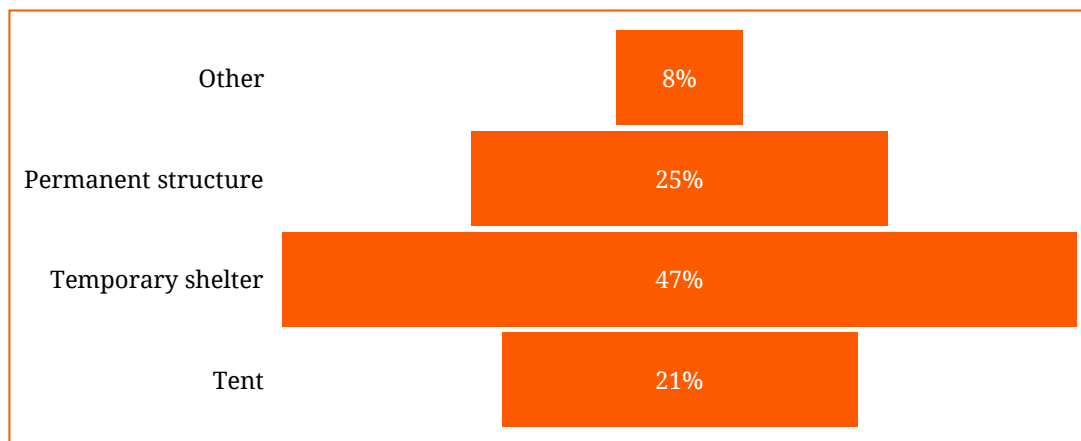


Figure 10. What kind of shelter do you currently live in?

Figure 11 shows that about half of the respondents said that they pay rent in their current living situation. The other half said that they do not, indicating an imbalance in financial responsibilities and burdens.

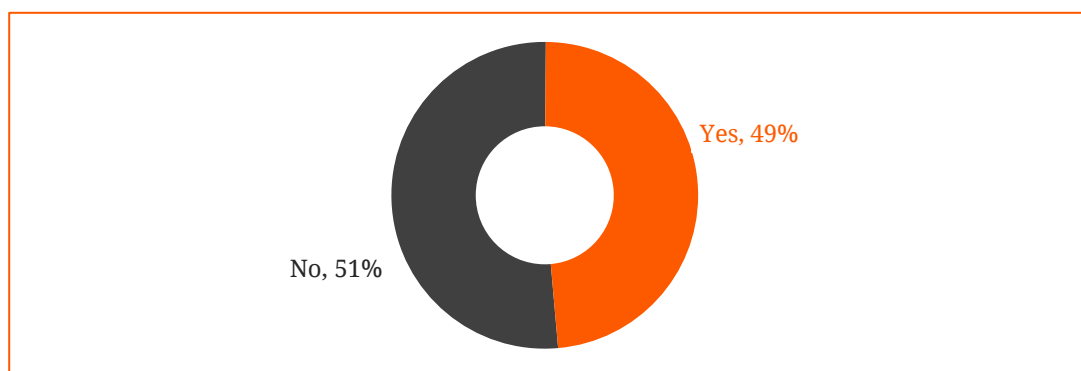


Figure 11. Do you pay rent for your current living arrangement?

Although most respondents (60%) reported having no experience with eviction, 20% indicated that they or other IDPs they know have experienced frequent evictions, and 8% knew of or had experienced at least one (Figure 12). The remaining 12% said they did not know about eviction experiences. These figures indicate that while the majority of respondents have maintained relatively stable living arrangements, ongoing housing insecurity affects a substantial portion of the internally displaced population in Afgooye District.

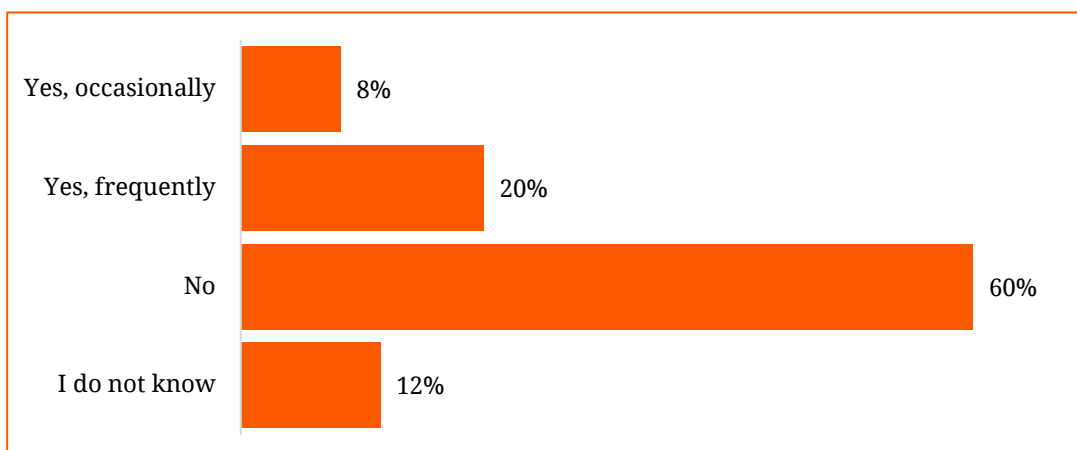


Figure 12. Have you or other IDPs you know experienced eviction from your living place?

IDPs are currently settled on land owned by one of three main groups, as detailed in Figure 13. A total of 39% of respondents indicated that displaced populations live on land owned by private individuals or companies, highlighting the significant role of private property in accommodating displaced populations. Government-owned land follows closely, reported by 32% of respondents and indicating substantial state involvement in providing space for IDPs. One-quarter of the respondents (25%) shared that IDPs live on community-owned land, demonstrating considerable local community participation in hosting displaced persons. A small fraction of respondents (5%) were unaware of who owns the land that IDPs occupy.

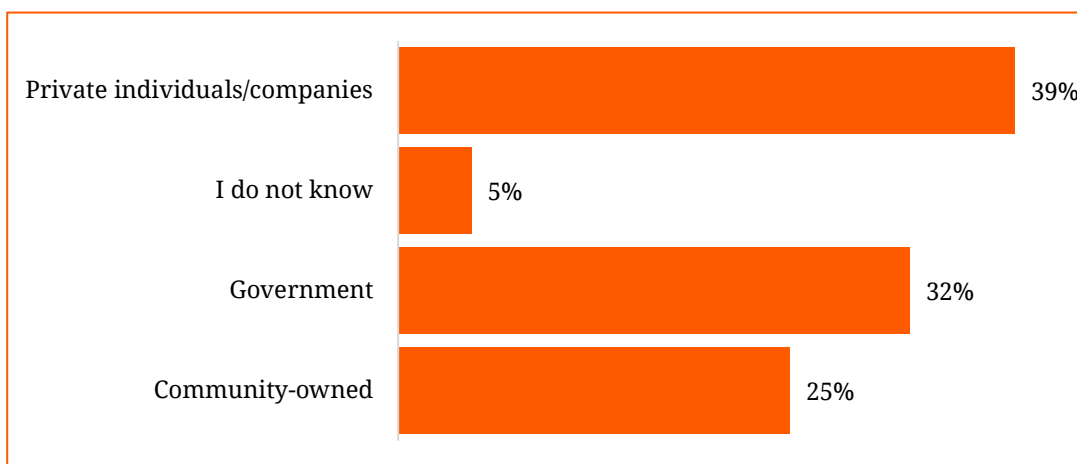


Figure 13. Who owns the land used for the settlement of displaced populations?

KIIs revealed that IDP settlements in Afgooye District are managed – through complex and multifaceted, yet coordinated efforts by local authorities, NGOs and community leaders – to ensure proper land use and rights management. Key informants from one of the local authorities emphasised the importance of formal agreements and contracts in managing IDP settlements, preventing land disputes

and ensuring long-term stability for resettled families. These agreements clearly outline the terms of land use, including the duration of stay, rights and responsibilities of both IDPs and landowners. For example, one local authority representative noted: "These contracts help avoid conflicts by providing clear guidelines and expectations for all parties involved."

However, Figure 14 reveals a concerning trend in that 62% of respondents indicated that there was no community agreement for IDPs to settle in their current location. Only a small fraction (5%) said there was a community agreement in place for such settlements. The remaining 33% did not know whether such an agreement existed. The absence of community agreements for the majority of settlements is worrying, as this could lead to tensions between IDPs and host communities and may impact the integration of displaced populations in Afgooye District.

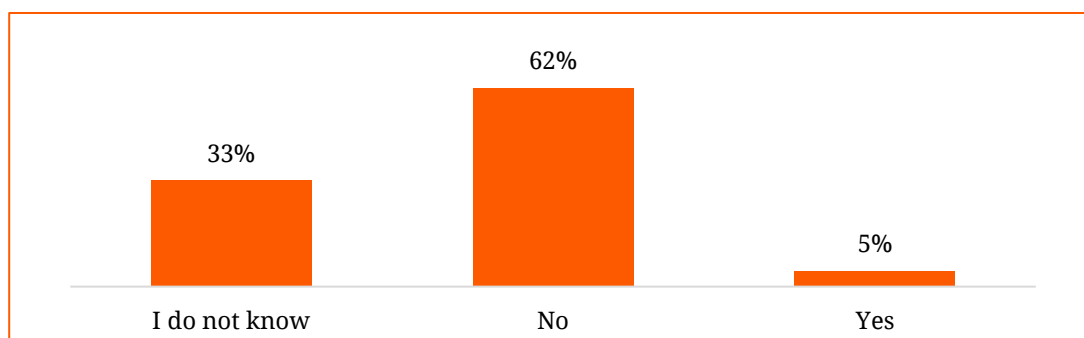


Figure 14. Was there a community agreement for IDPs to settle here?

The survey results suggest that the demarcation of boundaries between IDP settlements and host communities varies significantly across Afgooye District (Figure 15). Over one-third of respondents (39%) reported that there are no clear boundaries, suggesting considerable integration or unclear delineation between IDPs and host communities. Conversely, a similar proportion (36%) indicated clearly marked boundaries, pointing to a distinct separation in some areas. A smaller portion (17%) noted that boundaries exist but are not clearly marked, indicating some level of distinction without formal demarcation. Notably, 12% were unsure about boundary status, suggesting a lack of clarity for some residents.

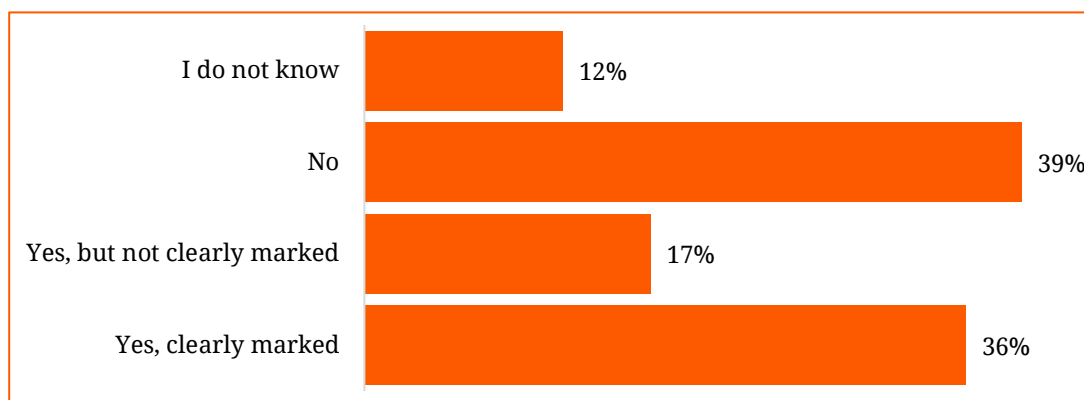


Figure 15. Are there clear boundaries between IDP settlements and host community areas?

Relationships between IDPs and host communities

As Figure 16 shows, while the majority of IDPs and host communities in Afgooye District maintain harmonious relationships, about a quarter have encountered challenges in their interactions. Indeed, 66% of respondents reported not experiencing any conflicts, but a significant minority of 25% revealed some level of discord: 13% claimed frequent disputes, and 12% noted occasional conflicts. The remaining 10% were unaware of any disputes.

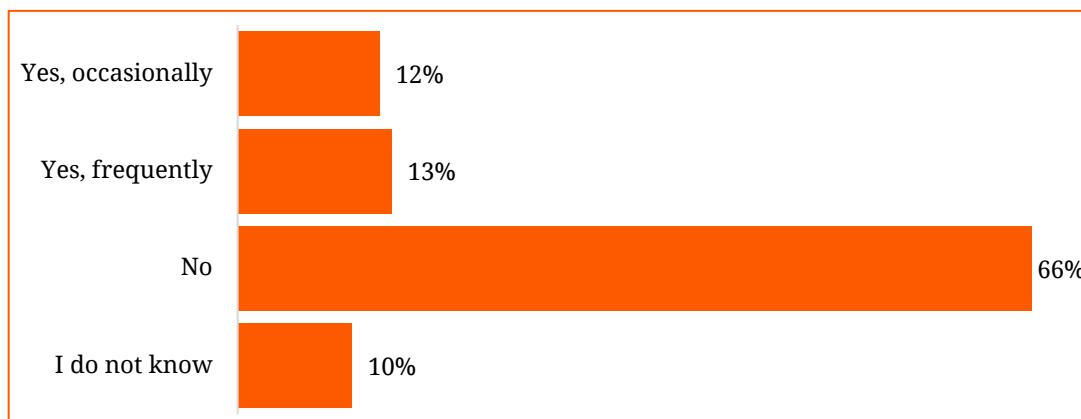


Figure 16. Have there been disputes between IDPs and the host community?

According to 86% of respondents, disputes between IDPs and host community members are primarily resolved through community leaders. This highlights the crucial role that local leadership plays in maintaining social harmony and addressing issues between displaced populations and host communities. Less common dispute resolution methods noted by respondents included: the formal legal system (7%) and NGO mediation (5%). A small segment (2%) stated that disputes are not resolved at all. These findings underscore the importance of traditional or community-based conflict resolution mechanisms in IDP settings. They further suggest that community leaders have significant influence and are trusted by both IDPs and host community members to address and resolve disputes fairly.

3.7 Gender issues in HLP rights

This section reports statistics for all survey respondents – both men and women, with women making up the vast majority of the sample (89%).

Intriguingly, the majority of all respondents (57%) believe that women do not face distinct HLP rights challenges, perhaps suggesting that they perceive gender equality in HLP matters. However, as shown in Figure 17, this view is not universally held. One-quarter of respondents (27%) expressed uncertainty about whether women encounter specific difficulties, possibly pointing to a lack of awareness or open discussion of gender-specific issues in the community. Only a small fraction of respondents (16%) affirmed that women do indeed face unique challenges concerning their HLP rights. This minority viewpoint acknowledges the existence of gender-based disparities, contrasting sharply with the majority opinion.

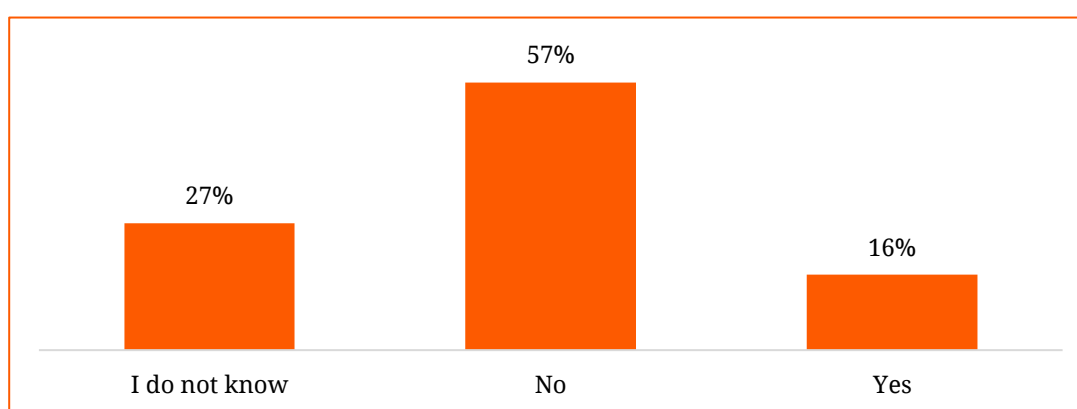


Figure 17. Do you believe women face unique challenges regarding HLP rights in this area?

The unique challenges that women face include cultural norms restricting land ownership (reported by 55% of respondents), difficulties accessing formal land titles (53%) and limited inheritance rights (43%). While less prevalent, lack of representation in decision-making processes was still reported by 27% of respondents. The remaining 9% indicated ‘other’ challenges but did not specify further.

Women’s rights to land and inheritance

The survey revealed significant disparities in perceptions of women's land rights, which encompass the legal and customary entitlements women have to own, use, access, control, transfer or inherit land. These rights are crucial for women's economic independence, social status and empowerment. However, as depicted in Figure 18, 36% of respondents believe women have no land rights, and 29% believe they have limited rights. Only 25% view women as having equal rights to men, and 10% admitted to lacking knowledge on the subject.

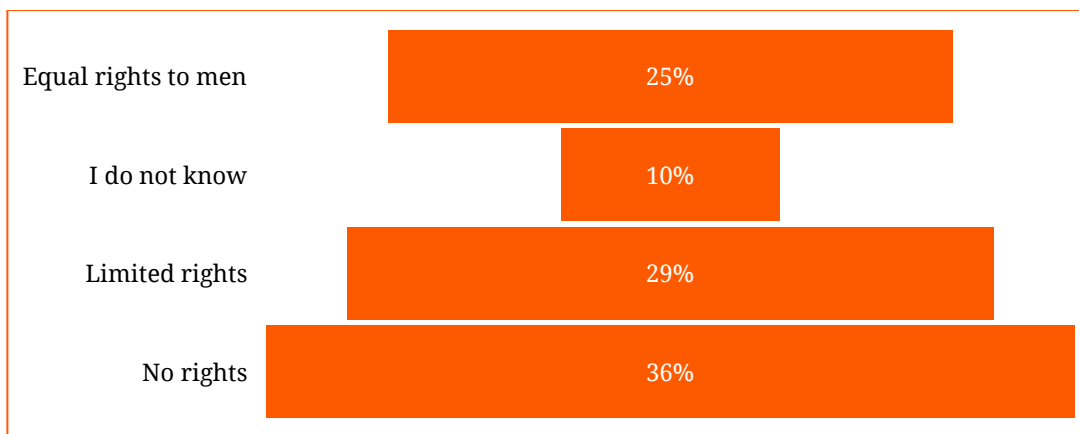


Figure 18. What kind of land rights do women have in this area?

As depicted in Figure 19, respondents' perceptions about whether women can own land independently were starkly divided. Half (50%) believe that women cannot own land by themselves without a male family member, highlighting a major barrier to women's economic independence. However, 37% of those surveyed affirmed that women can indeed own land independently, suggesting some progress in recognising women's property rights. Another 8% indicated that women can own land only under certain circumstances, pointing to conditional rights. Notably, 5% of respondents admitted to lacking knowledge about women's land ownership rights, underscoring the need for greater awareness and education on this issue.

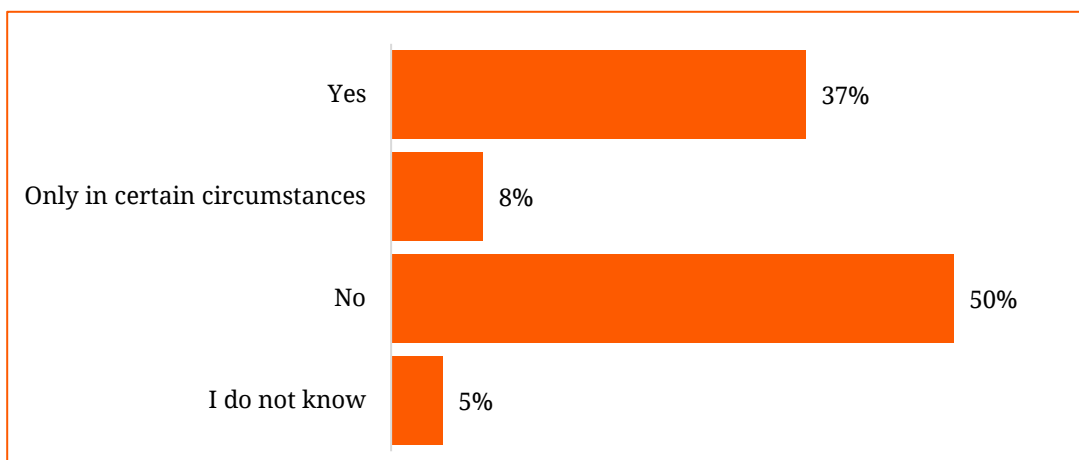


Figure 19. Can a woman own land by herself without a male family member?

Perceptions of women's rights to inherit land also diverged significantly. As shown in Figure 20, 40% of the respondents believe that women cannot inherit land, and 29% think that women could inherit – but less than men. Only 26% believe that women and men have equal inheritance rights, and 5% are unsure.

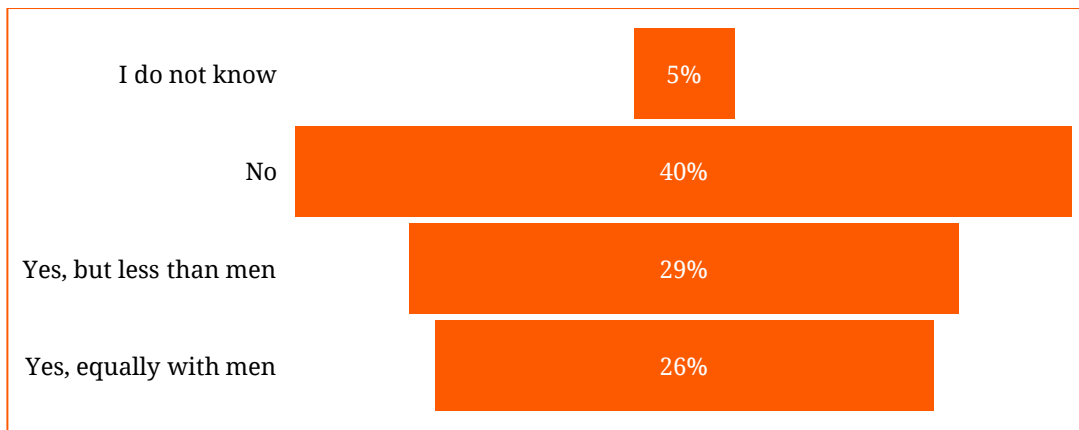


Figure 20. Can women inherit land in this community?

Figure 21 shows that local inheritance customs may disadvantage widows: nearly half of respondents (47%) believe that if a woman’s husband dies and she does not have any male family members, her husband’s land or property is inherited by the deceased husband’s family. In contrast, 39% indicated that the widow keeps the land or property, pointing to some recognition of women’s inheritance rights. About 10% of those surveyed said the outcome depends on specific circumstances, highlighting the complexity of inheritance practices. A small portion (5%) said that they do not know what happens in such situations, indicating some uncertainty or lack of awareness about these practices.

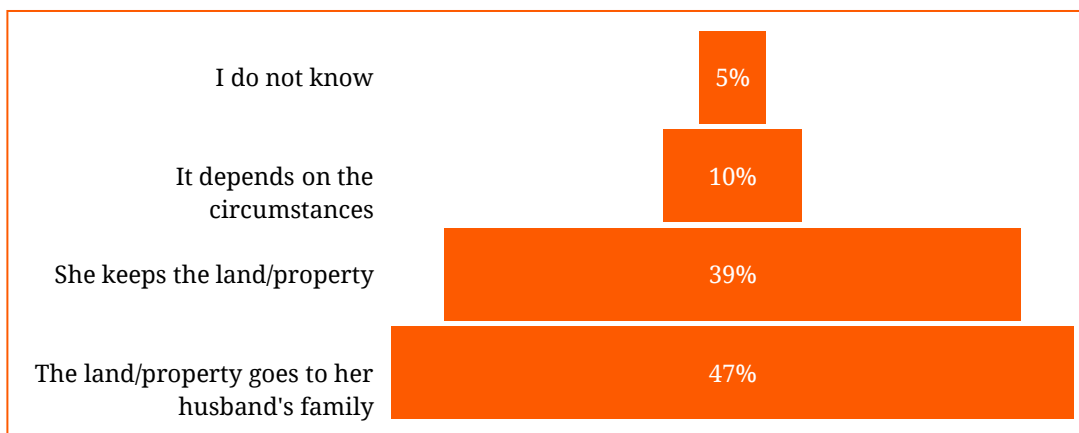


Figure 21. What happens if a woman's husband dies, and she doesn't have any male family members?

Women's roles in HLP dispute resolution

When asked about women's involvement in land dispute resolution, a significant majority of respondents (64%) reported that no women are involved (Figure 22), highlighting a substantial gender disparity in land governance. Another 20% indicated that while women are involved, their numbers are few, suggesting limited female representation. Only 9% believe that many women participate in resolving land disputes, suggesting that there may be a small minority of communities with substantial female involvement in this important decision-making process. Notably, 7% of respondents admitted to not knowing about women's role in land dispute resolution, pointing to a lack of awareness among some community members.

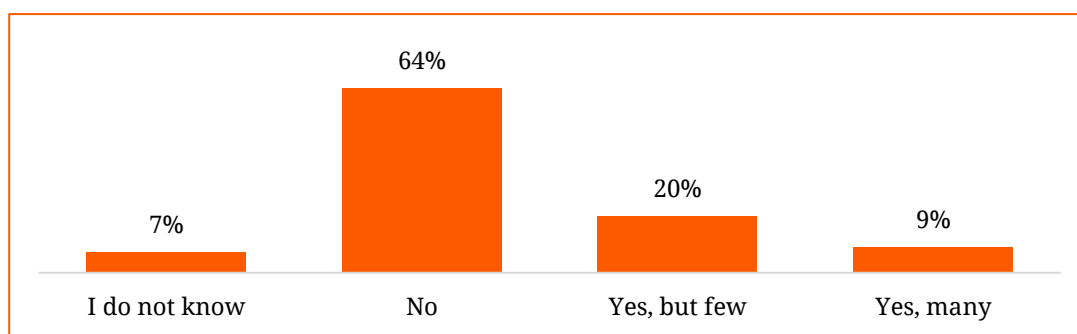


Figure 22. Are there any women involved in deciding how to resolve land disputes in your community?

Gender-based discrimination

The survey also asked respondents – both male and female – whether they had personally experienced any gender-based discrimination when accessing their HLP rights in Afgooye District. Figure 23 shows that a significant majority (77%) had never experienced this, suggesting that gender has not been a perceived barrier in property-related matters for the surveyed individuals. However, 11% of respondents reported experiencing such discrimination frequently, and 9% said they encountered it occasionally. This means that approximately one-fifth of the surveyed population has faced gender-based obstacles in accessing their HLP rights in the district. Three per cent of the respondents preferred not to answer the question.

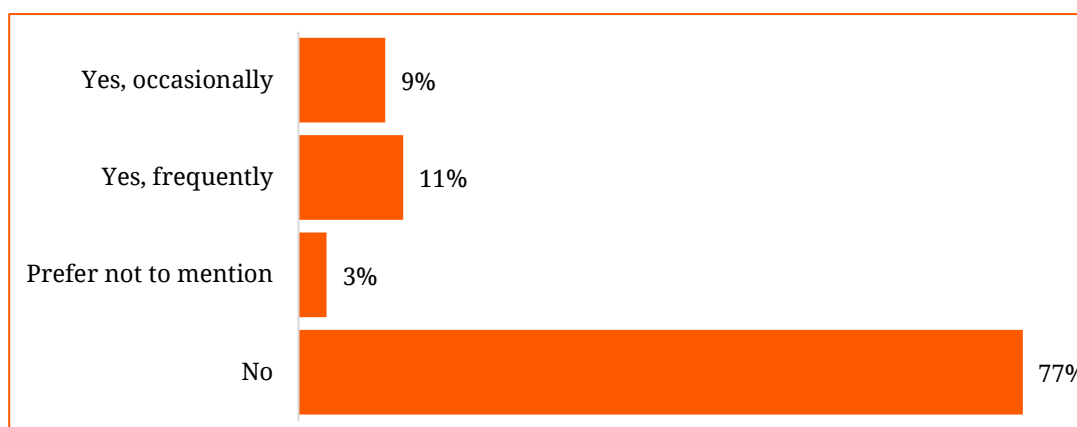


Figure 23. Have you experienced discrimination in accessing your HLP rights because of your gender?

3.8 Participants' awareness of HLP rights programmes, recommendations and expected challenges



Strategically placed billboards to enhance access to HLP information. Photo: Abdulkadir Mohamed/NRC

As shown in Figure 24, the vast majority of respondents (91%) were unaware of HLP programmes operating in the district. This indicates a clear need for improved outreach and education regarding these programmes. An overwhelming 99% of respondents were not aware of any HLP programmes in Afgooye District specifically targeting women. This near-unanimous response suggests either a significant absence of targeted programmes or a severe lack of visibility if any do exist.

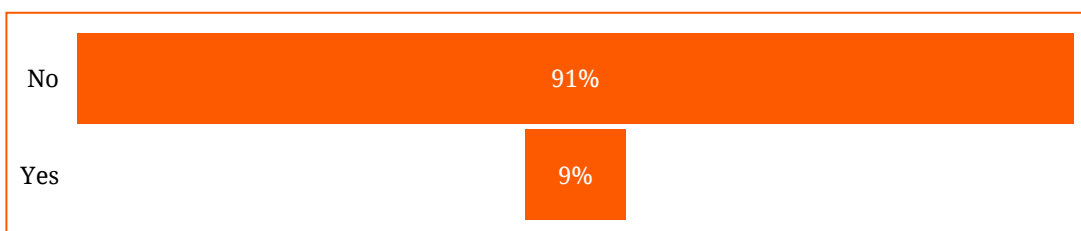


Figure 24. Are you aware of any HLP rights programmes in Afgooye District?

Of the 9% of respondents who were aware of HLP rights programmes in the district, 68% identified inadequate community engagement as a significant challenge affecting the programmes' implementation (Figure 25). This suggests that existing HLP programmes fail to reach or resonate with the local population. Additionally, 43% of those aware of the programmes pointed to a lack of funding, indicating that financial constraints may limit the scope and visibility of HLP rights initiatives. Security issues were a notable concern for 39%, highlighting how instability in the region can hinder programme promotion and implementation. Political interference, mentioned by 20%, suggests that local political dynamics may further complicate the dissemination of information about HLP rights. Finally, a lack of technical expertise, identified by 19%, serves as another challenge in effectively managing and executing these programmes, which may contribute to their limited presence and impact in the community.

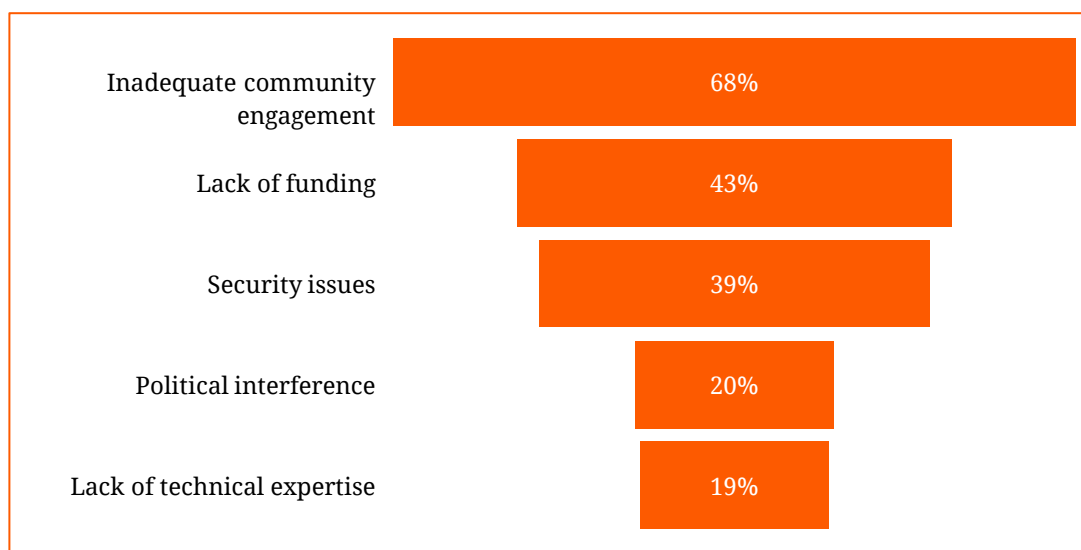


Figure 25. Of those who were aware of HLP rights programmes, challenges in implementing such initiatives

3.8.1 Actions local authorities should prioritise to improve HLP rights

Figure 26 depicts key actions that respondents suggested that local authorities should prioritise to improve HLP rights. The most frequently cited priority (58%) was increasing awareness of HLP rights. This suggests that community members feel uninformed about their rights and see increasing their education on this matter as a fundamental step toward better protecting and asserting their rights.

Other commonly suggested actions included improving land registration systems (42%), enforcing existing HLP laws more effectively (41%), strengthening dispute resolution mechanisms (39%) and developing new policies to address current challenges (37%). These indicate a strong desire for a more organised and accessible system to manage land ownership and disputes as well as the need for fairer and more accessible processes to resolve conflicts over land and property. Finally, 21% of the respondents emphasised the importance of increasing community participation in decision-making processes related to HLP rights.

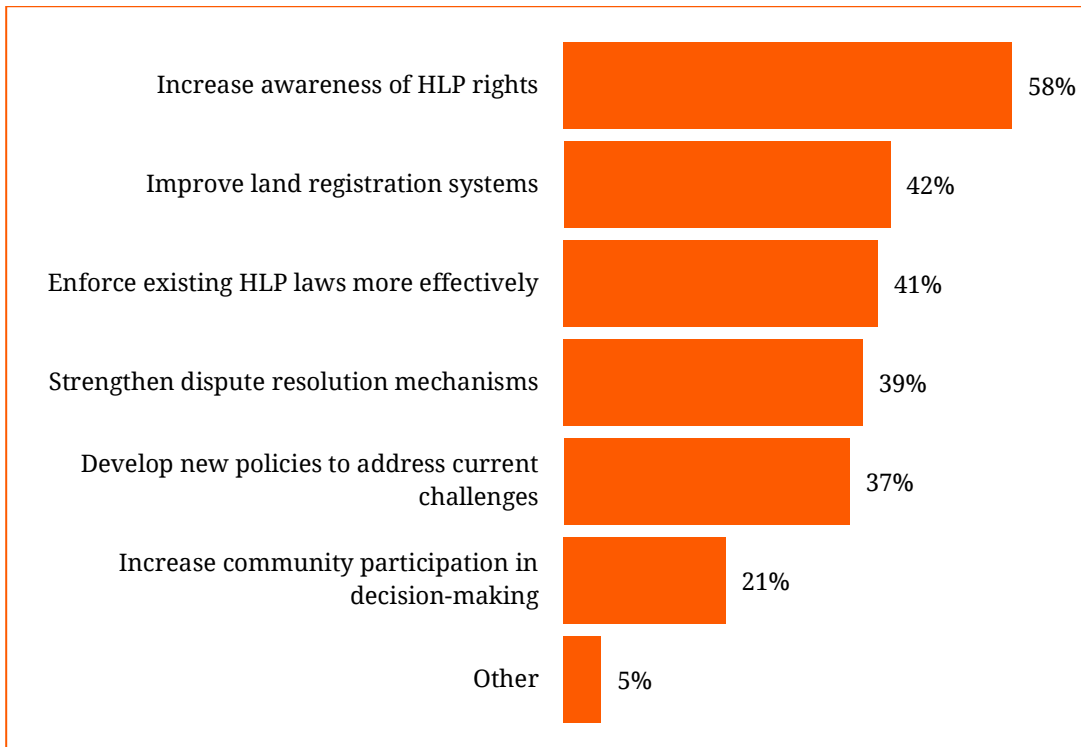


Figure 26. What actions should local authorities prioritise to improve HLP rights?



Participant during HLP advocacy forum in Afgooye. Photo: Abdi Mahad Sheikh Ibrahim/NRC

The role of international organisations in addressing HLP challenges

The survey respondents identified several roles that international organisations can play in tackling HLP issues, illustrated in Figure 27. Most (61%) emphasised their part in supporting capacity-building of local institutions, half (50%) highlighted their role in funding local initiatives and many (43%) suggested that they could leverage their expertise through technical assistance. One-quarter suggested that they could contribute through: advocacy for policy changes (27%) and research and assessments (26%). A small portion (6%) offered other suggestions.

The key informants and focus group participants highlighted several additional roles for NGOs, donors and international organisations in the fight for HLP rights in Somalia. For example, they emphasised the need for these entities to support the local justice system in handling land disputes fairly and to help combat land grabbing through legal aid, stronger legislation and accountability measures. There was also a strong call for assistance in building a modern land management system with a comprehensive land registry to bring order to land administration. Moreover, most of the key informants and FGD participants emphasised the importance of empowering community activism, pressuring the government to allocate land for IDPs and finding lasting solutions for the internal displacement crisis. A few shared their belief that politicians have made internal displacement one of the most commercialised issues in the country. They expressed concerns that the plight of IDPs is often exploited for political gain, with minimal genuine efforts to address root causes or implement lasting solutions.

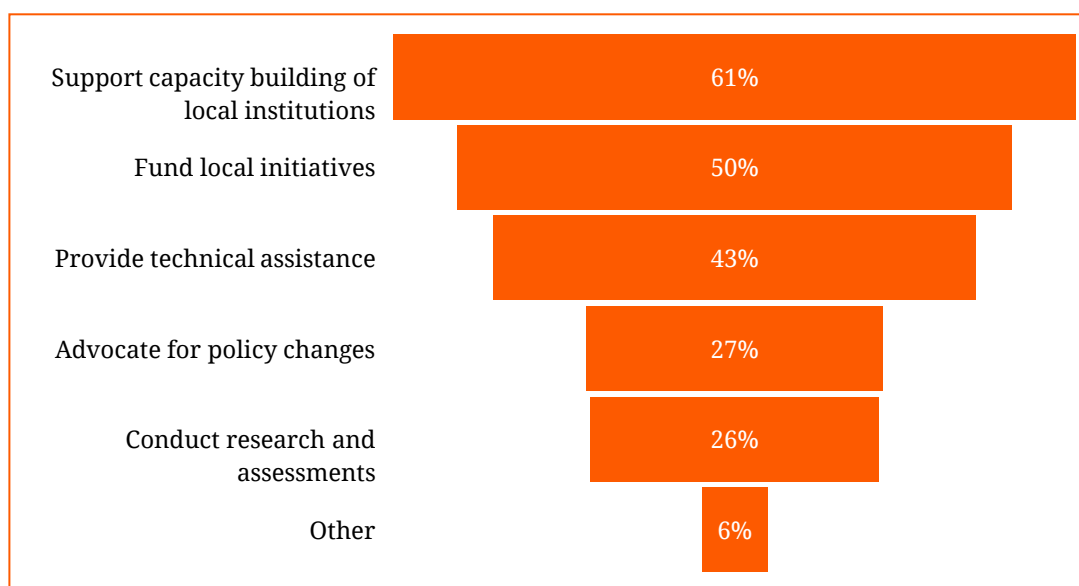


Figure 27. The role of international organisations in addressing HLP challenges

Perceived future challenges for HLP rights in Afgooye District

The survey respondents highlighted several challenges that they expect to inhibit their HLP rights in the future (Figure 28). As many as (65%) identified climate change as a pressing concern. The increasing frequency of extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, poses severe risks to land security and could exacerbate existing land disputes and displacement issues. Over half (55%) cited economic pressures as a major concern, fearing that worsening economic conditions may lead to increased vulnerability, making communities more susceptible to land grabbing and evictions. A total of 42% of respondents pointed to increased urbanisation as a challenge, reflecting a rising fear that rapid urban growth and an influx of more IDPs might heighten competition for land, leading to the expansion of informal settlements and further displacement. Additionally, 40% of respondents expressed concerns about continued conflict or instability, particularly as the ongoing fight against Al-Shabab continues and the country keeps struggling politically.

Key informants and FGD participants emphasised that within Somalia's current political and security context, priorities are shifting away from HLP issues. With the government and international community increasingly focusing on state-building, counter-terrorism and stabilisation, many IDPs feel that their plight is becoming less of a priority and believe that their rights will continue to be neglected. They expressed a growing sense of frustration and abandonment, feeling that other national agendas are overshadowing their urgent need for secure land and housing. This perception was particularly strong among those displaced for extended periods who see little progress in the search for lasting solutions.

While reported by fewer respondents, technological changes (27%) and changes to traditional social structures (18%) were also cited as concerns. Indeed, introducing new technologies in land management could create new risks, especially for those without access to or understanding of these systems, and evolving societal norms could lead to further conflicts over land ownership and inheritance.

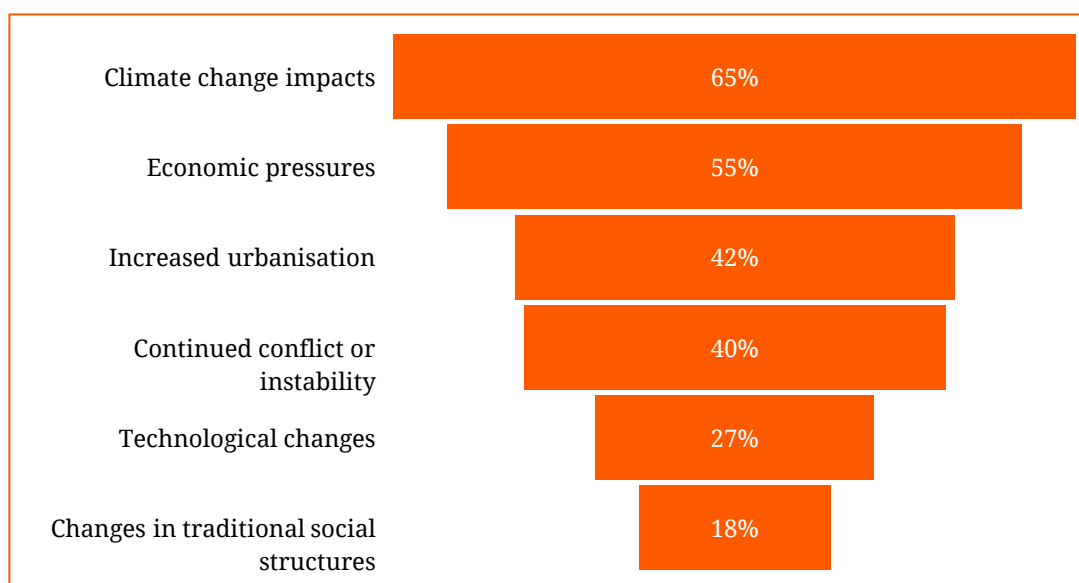


Figure 28. Perceived future challenges for HLP rights in Afgooye District



Legal aid counselling centre in Lafoole, Afgooye. Photo: Abbas Aden Ahmed/NRC

Although some survey respondents were wary, others believed that technological tools could help to improve HLP rights management. As shown in Figure 29, 74% believed that mobile apps could enable effective reporting of HLP violations, highlighting these tools’ accessibility and immediacy. Another 54% favoured a digital land registration system using photos to identify owners’ details. In a context like Afgooye, where land disputes are common, digitising land records could streamline processes and reduce conflicts by providing clear, secure ownership documentation.

Moderate support (34%) existed for online dispute resolution platforms, which, while potentially efficient and cost-effective, may face challenges related to accessibility and trust within the local population. Although less support (21%) was expressed for using satellite imagery for land mapping, this may be due to limited awareness of the technology’s application or its perceived complexity. Satellite imagery could provide crucial data for accurate land mapping, particularly in areas with unclear or contested boundaries.

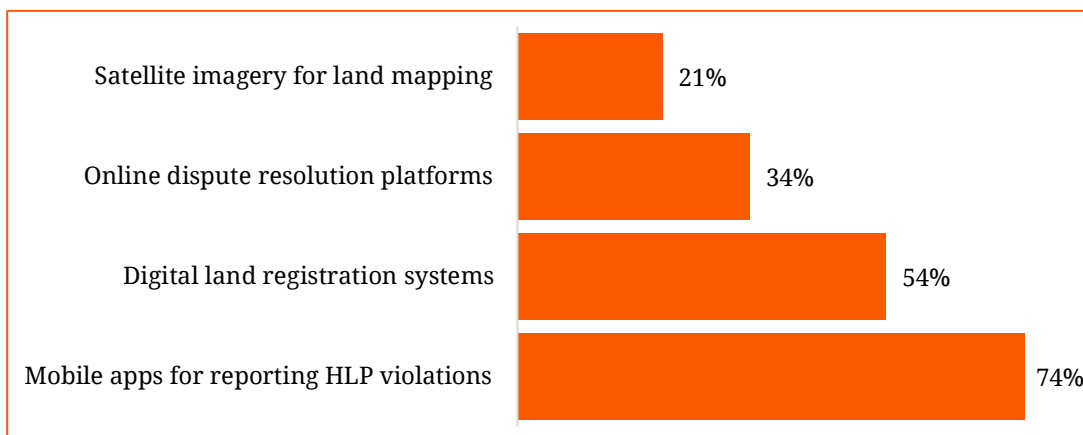


Figure 29. How do you think technology could play a role in improving HLP rights management?

4 Conclusion and recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

This assessment of HLP rights in Afgooye District, Somalia reveals a dynamic and challenging landscape shaped by historical, socio-economic, political and environmental factors. This complicated web of influences has created a situation where the realisation and protection of HLP rights are fraught with difficulties, impacting the lives of the host community, IDPs, and returning populations alike.

The current legal and policy framework governing HLP rights in Somalia, and by extension in Afgooye District, is characterised by legal pluralism. The coexistence of formal state law, customary *Xeer* law and Islamic Sharia law creates a complex environment for resolving land disputes and protecting property rights. While this multiplicity of legal systems offers some flexibility, it often results in confusion and contradictions.

The study's survey results revealed that Afgooye residents suffer a significant lack of awareness about the various laws and mechanisms governing their HLP rights. Most respondents (92%) reported having no awareness of local mechanisms for resolving HLP disputes, and 60% were unfamiliar with current laws regarding HLP rights. This lack of awareness undermines residents' abilities to assert and protect their rights effectively.

Multifaceted socio-economic factors heavily influence the HLP rights context in Afgooye. Rapid urbanisation and population growth have increased pressure on land resources, particularly along the Mogadishu-Afgooye corridor. The demand for housing and land in peri-urban areas has driven up property values, making access to land increasingly difficult for poor and marginalised groups. The speed of urban expansion has outpaced the capacity of local institutions to manage land allocation and service provision, leading to the proliferation of informal settlements where residents often lack formal property rights.



Afgooye is strategic for farming. NRC facilitates displaced peoples' access to farms through longer-term lease agreements. Photo: Abbas Aden Ahmed /NRC

The agricultural importance of Afgooye District, often referred to as Somalia's breadbasket, has attracted small-scale farmers and large commercial interests, intensifying competition for land resources and leading to land use and ownership conflicts. The situation is further complicated by the legacy of the 1975 Land Law, which undermined traditional land management systems that previously governed agricultural land use.

Displacement and return dynamics add another layer of complexity. The massive influx of IDPs from elsewhere in Somalia – comprising 84% of respondents in this survey – has put additional pressure on already strained land resources. When displaced people attempt to return to their original homes, they often find their land occupied by others, leading to protracted disputes and potential conflicts.

The survey revealed a mixed picture of HLP rights in Afgooye. While 54% of respondents rated the overall status as being 'fair,' a significant portion (29%) considered it to be 'poor.' Only a tiny fraction (9%) viewed the situation positively. These findings underscore the need for attention and potential intervention to improve HLP rights in the district.

Gender disparities emerged as a significant issue. While 57% of respondents seemed to perceive gender equality in the exercise of HLP rights, this view was not universally held. Cultural norms restricting land ownership were perceived to be the primary obstacle for women, reported by 55% of respondents. This was closely followed by difficulties accessing formal land titles (53%) and limited inheritance rights (43%). These findings highlight a complex interplay of cultural, legal and systemic barriers that hinder women's full participation and rights in HLP matters.



A woman participates in a lease agreement facilitation session. Photo: Abdulkadir Mohamed/NRC

The HLP rights of IDPs are also particularly concerning. The survey revealed that 40% of respondents believe IDPs are not allowed to use land in the district, indicating a significant perception of exclusion for this vulnerable group. Most IDPs (80%) reported having no access to their original land or property in their place of origin, highlighting the significant loss of property rights and assets experienced by most IDPs. Furthermore, 72% of IDP respondents stated that they do not plan to return to their origin, suggesting that most have decided to settle in their current location or seek opportunities elsewhere.

The management of IDP settlements in Afgooye District involves a complex and multifaceted approach, with coordinated efforts from local authorities, NGOs and community leaders. Formal agreements and contracts play a crucial role in managing these settlements, outlining the terms of land use, including the duration of stay, rights and responsibilities of both IDPs and landowners. However, challenges remain, particularly the lack of formal designation of specific lands for IDPs by the government, which complicates efforts to secure stable and permanent housing for displaced populations. The role of international organisations in addressing HLP challenges is seen as crucial by the surveyed population. Supporting capacity building of local institutions emerged as the top priority, endorsed by 61% of respondents. This was closely followed by funding local initiatives (50%) and providing technical assistance (43%). These findings suggest that IDPs value international support that empowers and strengthens local capacities and initiatives over direct policy intervention or research.

Looking to the future, climate change impacts emerged as the most significant concern for HLP rights, identified by 65% of respondents. This was followed closely by economic pressures (55%), increased urbanisation (42%) and continued conflict or instability (40%). These findings highlight that environmental and economic factors are perceived as the primary threats to future HLP rights, with demographic changes and ongoing instability also playing significant roles.

Technology could be a valuable tool for improving HLP rights management in Afgooye. Mobile apps for reporting HLP violations were endorsed by 74% of respondents. This suggests a strong interest in accessible, user-friendly tools for monitoring and reporting issues. Digital land registration systems were the second most favoured option, with 54% of respondents supporting their implementation.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are provided to guide NRC, development partners and government agencies at the national, state and local levels in addressing the HLP rights challenges in Afgooye District.

Recommendations for NRC and development partners

- a. Strengthen legal and policy advocacy:** Harmonise the customary, Islamic and statutory land laws to create a cohesive legal framework; support legal reforms that protect the HLP rights of marginalised groups, including women and IDPs; and work towards enforcing these laws by providing technical assistance and capacity-building for judicial and legal institutions.
- b. Facilitate multi-level dialogue between IDPs, host communities and government entities:** Support the establishment of regular, structured dialogue platforms that facilitate communication between IDPs, host communities and government entities at the local, state and national levels. This dialogue should build mutual understanding, address grievances and collaboratively develop solutions to HLP challenges. Promoting vertical dialogue will ensure that local issues and concerns are effectively communicated to state and national authorities. Horizontal dialogue will promote cooperation and understanding between IDPs and host communities. These platforms should be inclusive, ensuring representation from all relevant stakeholders, and should include clear communication channels and mechanisms for feedback and accountability.
- c. Strengthen the institutional capacity of local authorities to deliver HLP services:** Invest in tailored capacity-building programmes for local authorities, traditional leaders and community-based organisations. This training should cover HLP rights, land administration and dispute resolution, enhancing the ability of local stakeholders to manage land issues effectively and equitably.
- d. Promote community engagement through awareness campaigns:** Launch public awareness campaigns to provide communities with much-needed education about their HLP rights and the legal mechanisms available to them for dispute resolution. Prioritise inclusive community participation, ensuring that all groups – including women, youth and minorities – actively participate in land-related decision-making processes.

- e. **Advocate for the integration and resettlement of IDPs:** Continue advocating for formalising IDPs' land tenure in their current settlements to prevent forced evictions. Collaborate with national, state and local authorities to develop comprehensive, rights-based resettlement plans that consider the long-term needs of displaced populations and the capacities of host communities.
- f. **Adopt approaches to HLP solutions that integrate tailored livelihood support:** NRC has piloted scalable household and site-level longer-term rental agreements that can empower displaced communities to negotiate their own lease agreement terms and enable them to afford HLP after humanitarian assistance ceases. This is a more sustainable approach to HLP-specific interventions in the long term.
- g. **Implement using conflict-sensitive approaches:** HLP interventions must be sensitive to local clan dynamics and historical grievances. This includes supporting dialogue and reconciliation processes and strengthening traditional and formal dispute resolution mechanisms to address land conflicts effectively.
- h. **Prioritise inclusion in HLP and humanitarian programming:** Design interventions to protect against threats, risks and obstacles faced by vulnerable and disadvantaged groups such as persons with disabilities, women, children, minorities and elderly persons. These groups face unique and specific protection risks, and existing structural and institutional barriers often increase the challenges they face during displacement and hinder their abilities to exercise their rights and attain sustainable solutions.
- i. **Develop and implement comprehensive social protection programmes** tailored to address the specific needs of those most vulnerable to HLP rights violations, such as widows, orphans and the elderly. These programmes should include housing subsidies, provision of legal aid and targeted support for securing land tenure. They must be integrated with broader HLP programming, ensuring the most marginalised individuals have the necessary resources and support to secure and safeguard their HLP rights.



A woman IDP attends an information session in her settlement. Photo: Abbas Aden Ahmed /NRC



A displaced woman searches through the remnants of her family's tattered clothing following a forced eviction. Photo: Abbas Aden Ahmed /NRC

Recommendations for national government agencies

- a. **Reform and harmonise legal systems:** The Federal Government of Somalia should lead efforts to harmonise customary, Islamic and statutory land laws, ensuring they can resolve common HLP challenges and that they are consistent with contextual realities and human rights standards. The Federal Government of Somalia should also ensure effective and fair implementation of all laws and regulations across all government levels.
- b. **Build capacity within judiciary and legal institutions:** Enhance the capacity of judicial and legal institutions to enforce HLP laws impartially. National government agencies should provide training and resources to judges, lawyers and legal professionals to improve their understanding of HLP issues and their abilities to resolve disputes fairly.
- c. **Develop national land information systems:** The Federal Government of Somalia should develop a centralised national digital land information system to facilitate accurate land registration and data management. National government agencies should ensure that this system is accessible to all stakeholders and regularly updated to reflect changes in land ownership and use.
- d. **Establish mobile legal aid clinics and HLP advisory services** to address the widespread lack of access to legal support and information: Send mobile units to remote and underserved areas, providing on-the-spot legal advice, assistance with land registration and support in resolving disputes. The mobile clinics should be staffed with trained legal professionals, paralegals and HLP experts who can offer guidance on navigating the complex legal landscape, help communities understand their rights and facilitate the documentation process. This initiative will be particularly beneficial for internally displaced and other vulnerable populations who often face significant barriers to accessing legal resources. It could help reduce the incidence of land conflicts and ensure that all community members have the support they need to secure their HLP rights.

Recommendations for state and local authorities

- a. **Implement HLP laws and policies:** HLP laws and policies must be effectively implemented at the state and local levels. State and local authorities should ensure that local land administration systems are transparent, accessible and accountable to the communities they serve.
- b. **Support community-based dispute resolution:** State and local authorities should strengthen community-based dispute resolution mechanisms by integrating traditional practices with formal legal frameworks and supporting the role of traditional leaders in resolving land disputes while ensuring alignment with statutory laws and human rights principles.
- c. **Enhance community engagement:** Prioritise community engagement in land-related decision-making processes. State and local authorities should organise regular forums for community members to voice their concerns and participate in the planning and management of land resources.
- d. **Improve relationships with IDPs and vulnerable host communities:** The study found that IDPs and vulnerable host communities generally perceive state and local authorities poorly. State and local authorities must work actively to improve these relationships by engaging in meaningful dialogue, addressing grievances and ensuring that the concerns of these communities are heard and acted upon. This could involve regular consultations, transparent communication of policies and targeted initiatives to build trust and cooperation.
- e. **Develop sustainable resettlement and integration plans for IDPs at the state and local levels:** These plans should be inclusive, rights-based and tailored to the specific needs of displaced populations, thus ensuring their long-term stability and security.



NRC's Legal Aid Team conducts outreach through routine site-to-site mobile legal clinics in Afgooye. Photo: Abdulkadir Mohamed/NRC



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