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3.12.1. Violence against children

COMMON ANALYSIS
Last update: October 2025

This section covers certain child-specific circumstances of increased vulnerability and risks that children in Somalia may be exposed to.

The analysis below is based on the following EUAA COI reports and query: Country Focus 2025, 1.1.2., 1.2.1., 1.2.2., 1.4.; Security 2025, 1.4.3., 1.5., 2.2.3., 2.4.1., 2.5.1., 2.5.2., 2.6.2., 2.7.2.; Targeting 2021, 2.3., 2.4.; COI Query FGM/C 2023, 1.; Country Guidance should not be referred to as a source of COI.

Children in Somalia have been exposed to various forms of violence by various actors.

On GBV, FGM/C, and child marriage practices against girls, see more under sub-profiles: 3.11.1. Gender-based violence (GBV), 3.11.2., Female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C), 3.11.4. Child marriage and forced marriage.

On child recruitment practices by Al-Shabaab, see more under sub-profile 3.12.2. Child recruitment by Al-Shabaab.

Step 1: Do the reported acts amount to persecution?

Some acts to which children could be exposed are of such severe nature that they would amount to persecution. More specifically, during the reference period grave violations against children were reported by various actors all over Somalia, including abductions as well as attacks on schools.

In the first half of 2024, there were more than 500 reported cases of sexual violence against children, including boys. Child labour incidents were also reported with children forced into labour in agriculture, domestic work, livestock herding, and selling khat internally and abroad. Incidents of child recruitment by multiple actors in Somalia have been reported, involving SNA, government-aligned clan-based militias, federal armed forces, security services, regional forces, and the police.

The severity and/or repetitiveness of other acts that children could be subjected to and whether they occur as an accumulation of various measures, should be also considered. More

specifically, stigmatisation resulting in limited school enrolment and a relatively low literacy rate of minority group children has been reported. Children born out of wedlock were also reported to face stigma, abandonment, and potential destitution. In terms of acute malnutrition, more than 1.7 million children, aged between 6 and 59 months were reported to be in need of treatment, either for severe or moderate acute malnutrition, notably in South-Central Somalia, while the destruction of schools and the displacement of teachers due to conflict has left children without access to education in conflict affected areas.

Being a child is to be taken into account in the assessment on whether an act reaches the threshold of persecution.

Step 2: What is the level of risk of persecution?

The individual assessment of whether there is a reasonable degree of likelihood for a child to face persecution **in the whole of Somalia, including South-Central Somalia, Puntland and Somaliland**, should take into account **risk-impacting circumstances**, such as:

- **Gender**: Boys can also be subjected to child marriage, however at a lower rate compared to girls, and increasing concerns about sexual violence against boys were also reported. Child recruitment for combatant roles would be more relevant for boys.

- **Age**: Children aged between 11 and 17 years were identified as being most at risk of forced recruitment.

- **Home area and the control or influence of Al-Shabaab**: Individuals from areas where conflict is active may face increased risk of being abducted and forcibly recruited by security forces and clan militias. The destruction of schools and the displacement of teachers due to conflict has left children without access to education in conflict affected areas. Regarding forced labour particularly vulnerable are children living in Al-Shabaab's territory.

- **Displacement situation**: Regarding forced labour, particularly vulnerable are IDPs children.

- **Ethnic/minority background**: Children belonging to marginalised ethnic minorities are less often enrolled in school and more exposed to forced labour.

- **Family status**: Children born out of wedlock were reported to face stigma, abandonment, and potential destitution.

Step 3: Is there a ground for persecution?

Where well-founded fear of persecution is substantiated, the assessment should take into account the individual circumstances of the child. For example, children born out of wedlock may be subjected to persecution for reasons of **membership of a particular social group**,

based on their common background which cannot be changed (born out of wedlock) and distinct identity in Somalia (in relation to stigmatisation by society).

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