

Somalia Consolidated Report, January – March 2025

SUMMARY – KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- The Somalia Wellness and Economic Recovery Consortium (SWERC), led by **the Horn of Africa Peace Network (HAPEN)**, **concluded** in February 2025. The close-out process is underway. The Ministry of Health in Kismayo and Beled Hawo have played an important role in supporting the sustainability of the programme's results, particularly engagement between trained mental health paraprofessionals and community members.
- GCERF grantees from Somalia convened **the first in-person Community of Practice (CoP)** of our partner civil society organisations (CSOs) in Mogadishu from 26–27 February to exchange lessons learnt and good practices from their prevention and countering violent extremism (PCVE) programming experiences. Representatives from the Federal Government of Somalia's Tubsan National Centre for PCVE also attended the event.
- During the quarter, the **new Somalia Investment Strategy** was under consultation with several stakeholders.
- The **deterioration of the security situation**, especially in Hirshabelle, posed a major challenge to implementing the programmes. As a result, it was not possible for activities to be implemented in Adan Yabaal this quarter.
- Elman Peace Centre was identified as the 2025 **Carol Bellamy Leadership Award (CBLA) Torchbearer**. The CBLA supports women's grassroots organisations at the intersection of women's empowerment and prevention and countering of violent extremism (PCVE). The Award was granted to Youth Engagement and Empowerment Program (YEPP)–Somalia.

CHALLENGES AND KEY LESSONS

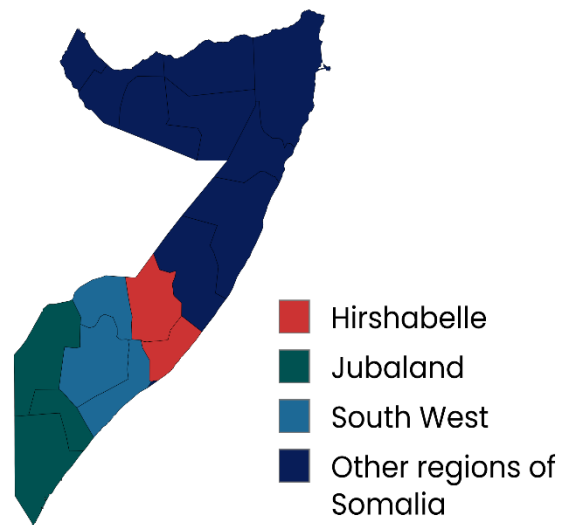
The implementation of the HAPEN-led Somali Wellness and Economic Recovery Consortium (SWERC) has produced valuable lessons:

- Trained paraprofessionals, teachers and healthcare workers in mental health first aid and psychosocial support have significantly improved access to care. By **embedding knowledge within communities**, these interventions ensure long-term support.
- Moreover, equipping community members with **mental health and conflict resolution skills has strengthened local capacities** for ongoing support beyond the programme's duration. However, a broad, community-wide trauma intervention may not be as effective as targeted, individualised trauma care within existing support systems. Future efforts should **focus on more tailored mental health** interventions.

- Establishing safe, youth-friendly spaces and economic empowerment initiatives has **provided alternative avenues for social engagement and personal development**, reducing susceptibility to violent extremism.
- However, the predominant job creation model requires significant adaptation to be more effective. Future approaches should move **beyond training to structured employment pathways**, including apprenticeships, job placement partnerships and start-up incubation programs to ensure real employment opportunities.

CONTEXT UPDATE

The political environment in Somalia in the first quarter of 2025 remained fluid, with tensions continuing between the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and the Federal Member States (FMS) of Puntland and Jubaland. There has been an improvement in the relationship with Ethiopia after the two countries agreed to end the political tension that erupted when Ethiopia announced plans to lease a stretch of coastline in Somalia’s breakaway Somaliland region. Ethiopia’s Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed visited Somalia’s capital, Mogadishu, in February and held discussions with Somalia’s President. The two countries agreed to resolve the dispute at talks mediated by Ankara in December, pledging to find commercial arrangements to allow landlocked Ethiopia reliable, secure and sustainable access to and from the sea.



Al Shabaab intensified its operations across south central Somalia, launching bold attacks and briefly taking control of several towns and villages, including Bal’ad, located just 30 kilometres north of Mogadishu. The group seized government vehicles and kidnapped soldiers and officials. Somali security forces have continued their counter-offensives against the militant group.

Somalia’s Puntland authorities increased security operations targeting Islamic State (IS) bases in the Cal-Miskaad mountains, with the support of the United States. The IS cell in Somalia is reportedly comprised mostly of foreign fighters.

PORTFOLIO STRATEGY / ToC

<p>WHAT: Grantees will build activities to address the drivers of violent extremism in line with GCERF’s four priority leverage points for PVE (community resilience; community agency; equal access to opportunities; and sense of purpose)</p>	
<p>WHO:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Youth (in and out of school) who are at risk of becoming violent extremists and criminals. Youth support networks (peers, families especially parents; primary, secondary, and religious schoolteachers and management committees). Clan leaders/traditional and religious leaders who are connected to the youth and can generate a positive impact on youth as role models. Non-traditional actors (private sector and traders) who are the most resilient and can ensure the sustainability and scale of P/CVE 	<p>WHERE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban areas across Somalia in Gedo, Lower Juba, Bay, Lower and Middle Shabelle, and Hiraaan Rural areas that are under the control of national authorities and identified as a place for recruitment for non-state armed groups in Hirshabelle, Jubaland and Southwest
<p>HOW: GCERF grantees will focus on building community resilience to violent extremism by engaging with different members of the communities in context-specific P/CVE activities to address the drivers of violent extremism (VE)</p>	

GRANTEE PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOMES

Somali Wellness and Economic Recovery Consortium (SWERC)

Principal recipient: *Horn of Africa Peace Network (HAPEN)*
 Sub-recipients: *Iftiin Foundation, Integrated Development Foundation (IDF), Message 2 the Audience (M2A)*
 Areas of implementation: *Kismayo and Beled Hawo, Jubaland*

During the reporting period, the programme made progress toward the following outcomes:

- Improved knowledge of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) by mental health paraprofessional trainees
- Improved knowledge of mental health and emotional regulation strategies among youth
- Knowledge about mental health and socio-economic strategies to integrate youth increased among community members

Improved knowledge of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) by mental health paraprofessional trainees

As the programme ended, the paraprofessionals have developed expertise in their roles, demonstrating confidence and independence in managing their responsibilities effectively.

Key activity details

- During the quarter, the 10 paraprofessionals in Kismayo (five male and five female) continued to share the mental health knowledge they gained from the SWERC programme as part of sustainability arrangements. After a meeting with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of

Education, it was agreed that all the mental health paraprofessionals would be placed at various Maternal and Child Health (MCH) centres and schools to provide free psychosocial services to both learners and patients.

- In Kismayo and Beled Hawo, health workers and paraprofessionals collaborated to offer counselling services to patients in need, ensuring that mental health support is integrated into the broader health care system. In Beled Hawo, 76 patients (29 male and 47 female) benefited, while in Kismayo, 180 patients (50 male and 130 female) were counselled.
- In Beled Hawo, a graduation ceremony for the nine mental health paraprofessionals marked a step in strengthening community-based mental health services. The Ministry of Health, which presided over the event, not only formally acknowledged their training but also enhanced their credibility before the community. This official recognition is crucial in building public trust and encouraging more people to seek mental health services locally.

Improved knowledge of mental health and emotional regulation strategies among youth

There has been a notable increase in the number of community members attending community meetings, reflecting growing interest and trust in community-based support mechanisms. Open dialogues continue to foster a sense of solidarity and mutual understanding, creating a supportive environment for members to express themselves freely.

Key details of activities

- In Belet Hawa, four sessions of community support networks were conducted to provide a supportive platform for community support groups to share experiences, discuss coping strategies and strengthen their networks for mutual assistance. The sessions were attended by 60 participants (38 male and 22 female), comprising members of various community support groups, including representatives from marginalised and minority communities, mental health advocates and other key stakeholders.

Knowledge about mental health and socio-economic strategies to integrate youth increased among community members.

The focus this quarter was to make arrangements to enhance the sustainability of mental health support in the community beyond the project period.

Key details of activities

- In February 2025, Iftiin Foundation completed the construction of a soccer field at Gulwade Primary and Secondary School. This was a community co-creation initiative. The field is a sports ground that will continue to bring youth together for recreation and create a platform for mental health awareness and support.

Promoting Sustainable Peace, Reconciliation and Community Resilience in Somalia

Principal recipient: *African Network for Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect-Somalia (ANPPCAN-SOM)*

Sub-recipients: *Somali Youth Vision (SYV) and Scaling-Up Humanitarian Assistance Development (SUHAD)*

Areas of implementation: *Baidoa and Xudur, South West*

During the reporting period, the programme made progress toward the following outcomes:

- Strengthened peacebuilding infrastructure and improved relationships within and between liberated communities, leading to reconciliation and integration.
- Improved socio-economic conditions and increased inclusion of vulnerable individuals, reducing the appeal of extremist groups and ideologies as viable alternatives.
- Increased awareness and capacity in the local government to support communities with reconciliation and reintegration processes.

Strengthened peacebuilding infrastructure and improved relationships within and between liberated communities, leading to reconciliation and integration

Several initiatives strengthened peacebuilding infrastructures in Baidoa and Xudur (South West) during the first quarter of 2025. On the one hand, nearly 170 young people, community peace committees and artists were trained in conflict resolution and community-based reintegration. On the other hand, over 45 members of Local Peace Committees (LPC) participated in capacity-strengthening sessions that contributed to improved understanding of committee roles and responsibilities. Moreover, dialogue sessions brought together almost 90 participants to address inter-community tensions, land disputes, youth unemployment, and competition over limited resources to improve relationships within and between liberated communities.

Key details of activities

- Two targeted refresher training workshops were undertaken for community peace committees in Xudur (24 participants, 14 male and 10 female) and Baidoa (24 participants, 13 male and 11 female), covering diverse social groups. The workshops covered thematic areas such as grassroots conflict resolution strategies and early warning systems to detect signs of radicalisation and emerging violence.
- Two sessions with 46 LPC members (30 males and 16 females) in Baidoa and Xudur supported LPCs' functionality in managing local conflict, enhancing coordination and promoting community-led reconciliation.
- Three dialogue and mediation sessions were held in Baidoa (60 participants, 32 men and 28 women) and Xudur (28 participants, 10 men and 18 women), contributing to trust-building, reducing tensions, and enhancing community mediation skills.
- 60 artists (46 men and 14 women) participated in the two capacity-building workshops in Xudur. The sessions focused on enhancing participants' skills in conflict-sensitive artistic storytelling, collaborative peace messaging, and cultural expression rooted in Somali traditional artistic forms. An Art and Music for Reconciliation and Integration event, followed by

discussions and informal reflections, was held from 23rd to 24th February in Xudur-Faraq with 120 artists and performers (63 men and 57 women) and 150 local residents.

- Two sessions of blogger training for youth took place in Baidoa and engaged 60 youth (30 males and 30 females). The main objective of the sessions was to equip young bloggers with critical skills to counter Al Shabaab's online narratives, promote community resilience, and facilitate digital peace engagement. A key achievement was the formation of a "Youth Digital Peace Network" composed of the 60 trained bloggers. These bloggers are committed to posting monthly peace messages, collaborating on content, and countering online misinformation and hate speech. In parallel, targeted peace messaging campaigns were implemented across FM radio stations, reaching hundreds of thousands across South West State.

Improved socio-economic conditions and increased inclusion of vulnerable individuals, reducing the appeal of extremist groups and ideologies as viable alternatives

Vocational training for 60 youth and vulnerable individuals contributed to improved socio-economic conditions and, consequently, reliance on extremist groups' ideologies in Xudur and Baidoa. Additionally, post-graduation support activities provided increased economic opportunity and enhanced young people's resilience, particularly in areas emerging from conflict and insecurity.

Key details of activities

- In Xudur, a six-month vocational training that concluded in January targeted 30 youth (14 males and 16 females) selected from vulnerable groups, including displaced youth, orphans, and those at risk of being influenced by violent extremist groups. The design was based on an assessment of market needs and gaps in the local service economy. Subsequently, each graduate received a start-up kit tailored to their training area, which enabled them to begin generating income immediately.
- In Baidoa, the vocational training also targeted 30 youth (15 men and 15 women), covering trades selected for their income-generating potential and relevance to the community's infrastructure needs. The training culminated in a graduation and kitting ceremony in February, during which all graduates received certified vocational toolkits aligned with their trades.

Increased awareness and capacity in the local government to support communities with reconciliation and reintegration processes.

The programme made strides toward strengthening the institutional capacities of local government actors in South West State by implementing targeted capacity-building and community engagement activities.

Key details of activities

- SUHAD implemented two workshops in Xudur and Baidoa, engaging 80 local government officials (51 men and 29 women) across four sessions. Participants were drawn from various departments, including reconciliation, social affairs, interior, education, and women's affairs.

The training content focused on reconciliation approaches, early warning and response systems, conflict mediation, and inclusive reintegration strategies for returnees and ex-combatants. One of the key achievements of the Xudur sessions was the formation of a reintegration task force comprised of representatives from local administration, women leaders, and elders.

- In parallel, SYV implemented joint community/local government official dialogue events in two locations in the Baidoa district that created space for structured reflection on the roles of local government, gaps in service delivery, and community priorities in reconciliation and reintegration. The events reached 120 participants (60 men and 60 women), including local authorities, youth representatives, elders, religious leaders, women's group leaders, and civil society actors. The dialogues were held in Ashagow and Reebey, communities that host large IDP populations and have previously experienced inter-clan tensions and governance-related grievances.

Women and Youth as Agents of Change: Building Inclusive Communities in Newly Liberated Territories

Principal recipient: *Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre (EPC)*

Sub-recipients: *Jubba Valley Institute (JVI) and Youth Empowerment Education Lifeline Organisation (YEELO)*

Areas of implementation: *Adan Yabal, Jowhar and Matabaan, Hirshabelle*

During the reporting period, the programme made progress toward the following outcomes:

- Enhanced capacity of women and youth leaders to play more proactive roles in community reconciliation structures and P/CVE activities
- Improved trust and collaboration amongst communities through a set of sustainable, locally-driven community-based reconciliation (CBR) mechanisms, facilitated by youth and women leaders

Enhanced capacity of women and youth leaders to play more proactive roles in community reconciliation structures and P/CVE activities

Targeted training and coaching sessions equipped women and youth leaders to effectively capture and articulate the group and community's needs related to possible PCVE responses. The training reached 132 individuals, equipping them with skills to identify propaganda techniques and understand recruitment strategies. The trained leaders contributed actively to dialogue sessions on conflict resolution, which 128 community members attended.

Key details of activities

- YEELO organised two PCVE leadership coaching sessions in Matabaan, with 61 participants (37 females, 24 males). In Jowhar, EPC held a similar session with 35 participants (20 females, 15 males). The sessions trained participants to identify misinformation and understand propaganda techniques.

- EPC organised a three-day dialogue, mediation, and facilitation skills training session in Jowhar, attended by 36 participants (19 females, 17 males).
- Trained leaders actively contributed to the dialogue session in Matabaan, facilitated YELO. One session focused on political polarisation, engaging 31 participants (16 females and 15 males), and the other focused on conflict resolution, with 30 participants (15 females, 15 males).
- EPC conducted a dialogue, mediation, and facilitation coaching session in Jowhar, while primarily focused on skill enhancement, it saw 12 members from the programme cohort actively facilitating discussions and sharing their skills with 32 other participants (17 females, 15 males), demonstrating their growing capacity to lead dialogue initiatives

Improved trust and collaboration amongst communities through a set of sustainable, locally-driven community-based reconciliation (CBR) mechanisms, facilitated by youth and women leaders

In-person and radio sessions on community trauma have contributed to addressing the critical issues of stigma associated with trauma, understanding the complexities of grief and loss, and collaboratively developing strategies for enhanced community support.

Key details of activities

- In Jowhar, an in-person community trauma dialogue session engaged 33 participants (17 female, 16 male) from diverse backgrounds, including mental health professionals, individuals affected by trauma, community leaders and religious figures. Additionally, two community trauma dialogue radio sessions reached an estimated audience of 2,500 citizens and a PCVE FMS Level Awareness Campaign via radio spot-messaging, featuring expert insights and community leadership perspectives on conflict resolution and resilience, reached an estimated 1,000 participants across Hirshabelle.
- Two contextualised PCVE educational resources were developed in Matabaan, engaging 61 participants (32 female, 29 male). These resources focused on the principles and practices of "restorative justice" and the understanding of "radicalisation pathways," and were disseminated within the district
- A creative and participatory bag label design activity in Matabaan engaged 30 community members (14 female, 16 male) in generating positive messages promoting peace, tolerance, and resilience, which were then disseminated through these everyday items.
- In Jowhar, a reconciliation session addressed a clan conflict, engaging 32 participants (15 females, 17 males), in which trained youth leaders in PCVE helped mediate discussions. Also, a dialogue, mediation, and facilitation skills training session engaged 36 participants (19 female, 17 male) from diverse community roles, fostering skills for inclusive engagement.

STORY OF CHANGE

Abdirashid Mahamed, 21, had always been active on social media, using his platforms to share music clips and sports content. Living in Awdiinle—a village near Baidoa that has experienced radicalisation attempts by Al-Shabaab—he was aware of how easily youth could be misled by online misinformation

and extremist propaganda. When he heard about SYV’s training on digital peace messaging, he signed up without hesitation. The two-day workshop introduced him to how violent extremist groups target youth online and equipped him with strategies for building positive digital narratives. The sessions included modules on ethical communication, counter-messaging frameworks, and digital content creation. Inspired by the training, Abdirashid launched a blog series called **“Voices of Peace”**, featuring interviews with young change-makers and stories of reconciliation from his community.

“This training opened my eyes. I now use my platform to challenge fake news and share stories of peace from my town,” he shared. His blog posts have reached over 3,000 readers and are regularly reshared on local youth forums and WhatsApp groups. Abdirashid has also begun collaborating with a regional FM radio station to broadcast snippets from his peace stories, bridging the online-offline information gap. His story underscores the critical role of empowering youth to own the digital space, not as passive consumers but as credible, creative influencers of positive change.

PHOTOS



Dialogue, mediation, facilitation, coaching session (Credits: EPC)



Inclusive community dialogue (credits: EPC)



Vocational Training Graduation (credits: ANPPCAN)



Peace Committee participants in Xudur (Credits: ANPPCAN)

THE WAY FORWARD

- The GCERF Governing Board is expected to approve the new Somalia Investment Strategy during Q2 2025. There is a round of investment planned for Q3 and Q4 of 2025.

Principal Grant Recipients:

- *Horn of Africa Peace Network (HAPEN)*, [Home – Horn of Africa Peace Network – HAPEN](#), Core Funding Mechanism, Round 1
- *African Network for Prevention and Protection Against Child Abuse and Neglect–Somalia (ANPPCAN-SOM)*, [ANPPCAN-SOM – Don't turn away, Give today! \(anppcansom.so\)](#), Core Funding Mechanism, Round 2
- *Elman Peace and Human Rights Centre (EPC)*, [Front Page – Elman Peace](#), Core Funding Mechanism, Round 2