

ABOUT THIS REPORT

Aim

The report aims to provide a detailed analysis of the causes, dynamics, and humanitarian impacts of clan-based conflicts in Somalia, with a focus on the recently most affected areas. It explores the historical, sociopolitical, and economic roots of the phenomenon, seeking to inform humanitarian responders, policy makers, and development practitioners about the complexities of interclan clashes and their effects on communities. Besides explaining the latest developments, it also highlights the current and anticipated humanitarian needs of the populations affected by the clashes over the next six months, with an aim to inform humanitarian decision-making, programming, and early action.

Scope

The report covers interclan clashes across Somalia, with a particular focus on regions that experienced heightened clan violence in 2024, such as Galgaduud, Gedo, Lower Juba, Mudug, Lower and Middle Shabelle, and the collective Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn regions (SSC). The topic was based on contextual knowledge and a close monitoring of the humanitarian situation. The drivers and outlook sections in this report are not listed by order of importance or probability.

Methodology:

This report is based on a secondary data review of public data and information, complemented by four key informant interviews with a researcher and analysts. For this crisis, ACAPS collected existing information, mapped out key drivers, highlighted recent developments, and assessed the probable evolution and potential humanitarian impact in the coming months.

Limitations: the outlook sections of this report explore potential escalations and developments in interclan clashes, grounded in data available up to January 2025. The analysis considers the dynamic nature of Somalia's political and security environment, which can evolve rapidly, potentially rendering some outlooks outdated. It prioritises regions with the most reported incidents from January 2024 to February 2025, offering detailed insights into key conflict zones while acknowledging that it does not capture all areas experiencing humanitarian needs across the country.

Information gaps

A key gap in the report is the lack of granular sectoral information on the impact of clan-related violence. This limitation also means that specific sections on shelter, WASH, health, and nutrition are not included, reducing the depth of sector-specific analysis. The number of clan conflicts is likely higher than that reported. In areas under Al Shabaab control, cases of clan conflicts often go unreported owing to restricted access and limited data collection capabilities (KII 24/01/2025). Interclan clashes predominantly occur in remote rural areas, making it difficult to obtain accurate information, with many incidents going unreported (KII 06/02/2025). This is also another reason why many incidents of interclan violence remain undocumented, leaving gaps in understanding the full scale and impact of the conflicts.

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KEY MESSAGES

- Clan conflicts in Somalia are escalating as a result of disputes over land, water, and political power, displacing over 250,000 people and killing more than 600 between January 2024 and February 2025. In 2024, the number of reported interclan clashes increased from 90 in 2023 to 168 in 2024, particularly in Gedo, Lower Juba, and Shabelle regions, where deep-rooted historical grievances, resource competition, and political rivalries fuel violence.
- The humanitarian impact of clan conflicts is severe, leading to large-scale displacement, food insecurity, and limited access to essential services. Many IDPs lack adequate shelter, healthcare, and livelihood opportunities.
- The instrumentalisation of humanitarian aid is a persistent challenge, with some individuals leveraging clan loyalty to determine access to aid, services, and employment opportunities. While humanitarian organisations operate under principles of neutrality, gatekeepers and community affiliations can sometimes affect distribution, leading to unequal access and the exclusion of marginalised groups.
- Clan conflicts are expected to persist into 2025, driven by unresolved land disputes, political rivalries, and climate-induced resource scarcity. Rising tensions ahead of the 2026 elections, increased militarisation, and worsening humanitarian conditions will likely escalate violence, displacement, and access challenges for affected communities.
- Clan clashes have affected access to essential services, disrupting healthcare, education, and WASH services. Thousands are without medical care as a result of attacks on health facilities, while school closures and teacher displacement have deprived children of education. At the same time, WASH infrastructure damage has heightened the risk of waterborne diseases, including cholera, worsening the humanitarian crisis.
- In 2023, interclan violence was primarily concentrated in central regions, such as Galgaduud, Hiran, and Mudug, with some incidents reported in Lower Shabelle and northern areas, such as Sanaag and Bari. In 2024, however, violence both intensified and expanded, with a notable rise in the south, particularly in Bay, Lower Juba, and Lower Shabelle regions, alongside increasing clashes in northern regions such as Sanaag, Sool, and Togdheer. The frequency and intensity of these conflicts also escalated. Data from the graph shows a sustained rise in incidents throughout 2024, with peaks occurring more frequently and consistently than in 2023. The upward trendline suggests that interclan violence is worsening, further destabilising affected regions. This widening scope and growing frequency of clan-based violence indicate a deteriorating security environment, with new flashpoints emerging in both southern and northern Somalia.

OVERVIEW

Latest clan conflict developments and trends

Clan violence in Somalia has escalated over the years, with 2024 recording the highest number of incidents. Data from previous years highlights persistent intercommunal tensions, particularly in regions such as Galgaduud, Hiran, and Mudug, where recurrent clashes reflect longstanding disputes that continue to fuel social and political instability (KII 24/01/2025).

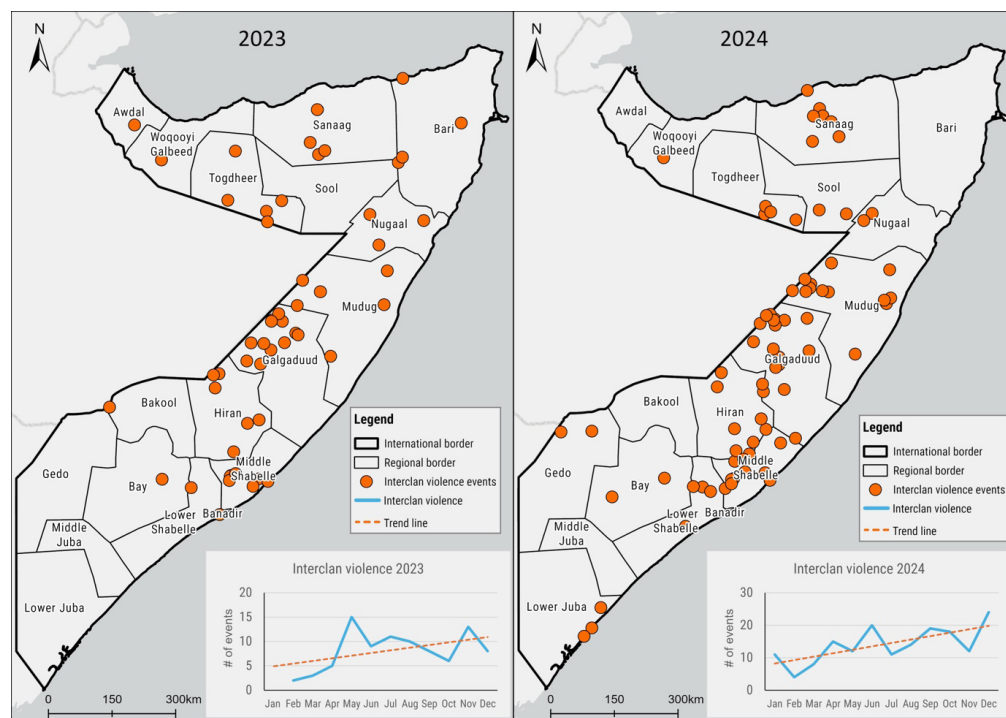
Between January–September 2024, there were more incidents of interclan clashes than in the same period in 2023, particularly in Gedo, Lower Juba, and Lower and Middle Shabelle regions. This increase is the result of a complex interplay of resource competition, historical grievances, political grievances, clan armament, and the influence of militant groups such as Al Shabaab (VOA 10/06/2024; OCHA 23/10/2024 and 22/01/2025 a; ACLED 31/07/2024; ACLED 31/07/2024).

In Mudug, clashes between the Habar Gedir Saad subclan of the Hawiye clan and the Leelkayse subclan of the Darod clan took place from 25–29 June 2024. Until that month, clashes between the subclans had been sporadic. The conflict is a result of disputes over land ownership and the construction of water dams, which have escalated tensions between the two subclans (UNHCR 08/07/2024; UNHCR 25/06/2024; ACLED 31/07/2024). Similar clashes erupted on 8 June between the Dir and Marihan clans in rural areas between Abudwaq and Herale towns, centred around disputes over grazing land and access to watering points. The conflict killed nearly 50 people and injured more than 150 others. Despite the two clans having previously fought together in a paramilitary group to expel Al Shabaab from Galmudug region, tensions between them have resurfaced because of longstanding competition over scarce pastoral resources such as land and water wells. These recurring disputes over vital resources continue to destabilise the affected regions, leading to further violence and loss of life (Reuters 10/06/2024; VOA 10/06/2024; Mustaqbal Media 09/06/2024).

In June 2024, clashes in the Galgaduud region of Galmudug state erupted between the Marehan subclan of the Darod clan and the Sure subclan of the Dir clan after a Marehan militia killed a prominent Sure elder in Laanqeylo village. In response, the Sure clan mobilised forces to launch a retaliatory attack, intensifying the violence (ACLED 31/07/2024; VOA 10/06/2024).

On 18 January 2025, militias from the Hawadle and Abgaal clans clashed over grazing land near the border of Hiran and Middle Shabelle regions in Hirshabelle state. The number of casualties and any resulting displacements remains unclear (Hiiraan 18/01/2025). By January 2025, clan clashes in Luuq district had affected approximately 70,000 people and led to nearly 30,000 needing assistance (OCHA 23/10/2024).

Map 1. Clan violence hotspots in 2023 vs. 2024



Source: ACAPS using data from KII (24/01/2024)

Background on clan-based violence in Somalia

Clan conflicts are part of the social, political, and economic dynamics of Somalia, rooted in a complex web of historical territorial and resource-based competition. Traditional Somali society is organised around clans and subclans, each with its own internal dynamics and rivalries. Major clans, such as the Darod, Hawiye, Isaaq, Dir, Digil, and Mirifle clans, have historically vied for control over territory and access to vital resources, such as water and grazing land, which are particularly scarce in the arid Horn of Africa. In the Somali context, a clan is a kinship-based social structure that forms the foundation of identity, political affiliations, and resource access. Unlike ethnic groups, which are typically defined by shared language, culture, and ancestry at a broader level, Somali clans exist within a single ethnic identity of the Somali people yet function as deeply ingrained social and political units. Clans are further divided into subclans and smaller lineage groups, which play a crucial role in

governance, conflict resolution, and resource control. While conflicts often occur between different clans, tensions also rise within the same clan, particularly between subclans or even smaller sublineages (WB 01/2005; EUAA accessed 21/11/2024; BTI accessed 28/01/2025).

Following the end of Siad Barre's regime in 1991, Somalia entered a power vacuum. This led to a breakdown of centralised governance and the rise of clan-based militias, each vying for control over different regions and their resources (BBC 02/01/2024; TWN accessed 21/11/2024).

The 4.5 power-sharing system, introduced in 2000 during Somalia's transitional period, allocates political representation based on a fixed formula: four major clans share equal representation (Darod, Hawiye, Dir, and Rahanweyn), while smaller clans collectively receive half a share. At the parliamentary level, the 4.5 formula determines the distribution of seats in the federal parliament, influencing the selection of presidential candidates and government appointments. At the executive level, it affects the allocation of ministerial positions and other key government roles to ensure clan-based inclusivity. At the regional and local levels, however, clan influence often depends more on territorial control and domestic clan agreements rather than the rigid application of the 4.5 formula. This system institutionalises clan-based representation but often aggravates tensions by prioritising clan interests (RVI 22/05/2023; DW 02/09/2021). Clan allegiances instead of actual needs frequently drive political decisions, causing inefficiencies in governance, service delivery, and, as a consequence, broader political institutions. This system erodes public trust in institutions, as citizens perceive the Government as serving clan interests over national development. It also heightens interclan tensions, particularly when marginalised communities feel excluded from political and economic opportunities (African Legal Studies 25/06/2021).

Political and economic elites often exploit clan divisions to consolidate power or undermine rivals, particularly during election periods, when competition for political representation intensifies. Somali elections do not follow a fixed, universally applied electoral cycle owing to the country's complex political landscape, security challenges, and evolving governance structures; the last was held in 2022. The disarray is especially evident in regions such as Mudug and Galgaduud, where such manipulation by political and economic elites regularly fuels violence among clans. Outside election cycles, clan rivalries are sometimes leveraged to maintain political control or influence resource distribution, including land and water sources and trade routes, contributing to recurring instability. The violence in these regions takes multiple forms, including clan-based conflicts over land and resources, including water; politically motivated attacks aimed at securing power; attacks on civilians; and broader militia clashes driven by economic and governance interests (ICG 25/09/2023; BBC 14/04/2022; ACLED 31/07/2024; AP 09/2024; Govt. UK 15/06/2018).

The dynamics of clan conflicts intersect differently by region. In Galmudug, competition for political representation intersects with resource-driven clashes, such as land, resulting in frequent disputes that stall development projects. Conversely, in Jubaland, economic pressures heighten tensions between pastoralist clans over access to cross-border grazing routes into Kenya, escalating violence and displacement. As pasture and water resources become increasingly scarce because of climate change and land degradation, clans are forced into direct competition. Livestock traders and commercial interests such as ports and markets further worsen these tensions as different parties seek control over these key trade routes for economic gain (EUAA accessed 20/11/2024; UN-Habitat 2021; ICG 25/09/2023; AP 09/2024). Galmudug and Hirshabelle regions have seen clashes between Hawiye subclans, often sparked by disputes over grazing land and water. Sanaag, Sool, and Togdheer regions in northern Somalia, particularly contested by Somaliland and Puntland, experience frequent clashes between the Dhulbahante and Warsangeli subclans of the Darod clan. Confrontations over boundaries, resources, and political allegiance to Somaliland or Puntland are key sources of tension. The Digil and Mirifle (Rahanweyn) clans control Baidoa in Southwest state, but the area has also seen conflicts with the neighbouring Hawiye and Darod clans over control of farming land and political influence in Southwest state's administration (UK Home Office 03/2015).

Clan militias in Somalia are often structured along clan lines, with many being directly linked to specific clans or subclans. While not every clan has a formal militia, most major clans and subclans have armed groups that serve as defence forces, power brokers, or tools of political and economic influence. These militias vary in structure, ranging from loosely organised clan fighters mobilised during conflicts to well-established armed groups with political and economic backing. Some militias operate independently, while others are aligned with political elites, federal or regional forces, or armed groups such as Al Shabaab. In contested areas, rival clans frequently engage in violent clashes, using their militias to secure territorial control, access to resources, or political leverage (Hiraal Institute accessed 17/03/2024; Govt. UK 15/06/2018; EUAA accessed 10/03/2024).

Clan-based militias, often heavily armed, have historically played a central role in both defending their communities and engaging in violent competition with rival clans. The widespread availability of weapons, fuelled by years of civil war and illicit arms trafficking, has significantly contributed to the intensification of interclan conflicts (Reuters 16/07/2024; MFA 16/07/2024; VOA 10/06/2024).

CLAN CONFLICT DRIVERS

Competition over resources

Competition for natural resources, especially among pastoralist communities, significantly influences conflicts in Somalia. Limited pastureland, rising livestock numbers, the effects of climate change and climate events on the environment, population growth, poorly defined land rights, and perceptions that some clans are expanding their territorial control as resources diminish have intensified disputes over grazing areas and water (ICG 25/09/2023; Sheikh et al. 01/12/2019; SIPRI 03/05/2024; KII 06/02/2025). In Somalia, where land tenure is commonly based on customary or clan-based systems, the absence of formal land rights creates uncertainty about who has legal access or control over land and resources, affecting agriculture (BICC 30/04/2009; SSF 12/2021; TWN 2011). In 2018, pastoralism was central to Somalia's economy and sustenance, making up roughly 50% of the GDP, with around 55% of people working in agriculture. This means access to land and water is critical for many communities and the country's overall economy (IGAD accessed 17/03/2025; WB accessed 17/03/2025; Concern 22/10/2024). Competition for resources often fuels tensions between clans, as each group vies for access to diminishing pastures and water sources necessary for livestock, their main source of livelihood (IOM accessed 17/03/2025; UN-Habitat 2021).

Access to services and assistance

Clan loyalty often dictates access to humanitarian aid, services that include education, and employment, leaving marginalised clans such as the Bajuni, Bantu, and Mushunguli excluded from state development initiatives or international assistance and hampering their ability to sustain their livelihoods. Clan-based power structures, regional gatekeepers, and community affiliations can shape aid distribution. A recent assessment in Laas Caanood (Khartoum state) and Garbahaarrey (Gedo region) highlighted clan-based discrimination as a significant barrier, preventing some communities from accessing essential health services (REACH 20/02/2025 a; REACH 20/02/2025 b). This perpetuates poverty and inequality, fostering resentment and deepening social fractures (OHCHR 11/11/2019; OCHA 01/08/2002; EUAA accessed 03/12/2024; Wardheer News 28/10/2024; GSDRC 05/06/2013; SASMO accessed 04/02/2025; MRG 25/09/2015; Humanitarian Outcomes 31/10/2023). Economic marginalisation, coupled with limited access to essential services, has intensified these tensions (EUAA accessed 21/11/2024).

Revenge killings

Revenge killings play a significant role in perpetuating clan clashes in Somalia, fuelling a cycle of violence. When a member of one clan is killed, cultural expectations of honour and justice often compel the victim's clan to seek retribution, leading to retaliatory attacks. This creates a tit-for-tat dynamic, where further aggression continually meets acts of violence, escalating conflicts that may have initially stemmed from disputes over land, resources, or political power. In certain cases, this escalates to value killings, where an individual of equal status to the original victim is targeted, regardless of direct involvement in the conflict (EASO 09/2021; TWN 2021; AP 09/2024; Berghof Foundation 16/01/2018). Revenge killings have posed a significant and persistent issue in Galmudug over recent years. The widespread impact of these killings includes increased insecurity, displacement, and the disruption of daily life as fear and mistrust grow between clans (AllAfrica 23/06/2024; HO 03/10/2023; ICG 25/09/2023; HIPS 31/03/2024). For instance, in February 2025, an armed clan militia killed an elder in Halfooley village, Hiran region, in a revenge attack linked to clan grievances. The killing was part of a longstanding feud over land ownership and grazing rights between the Hawadle and Abgaal clans, who have a history of territorial disputes in the area (Hiiraan 04/02/2025).

Political influence

Political dynamics in Somalia significantly worsen clan conflicts, intertwining local grievances with broader state-level disputes (SPA 17/02/2021; Berghof Foundation 16/01/2018; KII/06/02/2025). In Galmudug, a complex web of grievances from internal power struggles within subclans to broader tensions between larger clan groups drives the conflict (Berghof Foundation 16/01/2018; ICG 25/09/2023). Power struggles often emerge within Hawiye subclans, particularly between the Sa'ad and Saleebaan subclans of the Habar Gidir, who compete for dominance in state leadership and resource allocation. Tensions between Hawiye and Darod clans also intensify conflicts, particularly over land ownership, grazing rights, and political influence in contested areas such as Gaalkacyo and Hobyo. The presence of federal and regional political interests, as well as armed groups, further complicates the situation, with external parties exploiting these divisions to consolidate power (HIPS accessed 10/03/2024; ICG 25/09/2023). Negotiations during federal state formation and elections have often excluded less dominant clans, deepening mistrust and marginalising some clans. The political and social marginalisation also often fuels resentment and provides fertile ground for conflict. Excluded groups have at times used violence to assert their presence or counter perceived injustices as a result (Berghof Foundation 16/01/2018; ICG 25/09/2023; The Africa Report 13/12/2023; RVI 2023).

The pattern of marginalisation depends on shifting political alliances and local power struggles. That said, historically, dominant clans, particularly those with government representation or strong militia backing, have tended to sideline smaller or less politically connected clans. In regions such as Jubaland, politically dominant clans have leveraged governmental influence to weaken rival clans, heightening tensions and triggering clashes. For instance, the Ogaden clan, which holds significant sway in Jubaland's administration, has often been at odds with the Marehan clan over political representation and resource control. These disputes have led to armed confrontations, particularly in Gedo region, where both clans vie for dominance. The Federal Government's involvement, sometimes perceived as favouring one clan over the other, further intensifies these conflicts (ICG 14/07/2020; RVI 04/2023).

The introduction of federalism in Somalia in 2012, from the previous centralised unitary system, has contributed to intensifying existing clan rivalries, particularly in Galmudug and neighbouring regions, such as Puntland. By formalising political roles, such as district commissioners and councillors, federalism has created opportunities for resource access and influence but also sparked greater competition for these positions at the subnational level (Safer World 06/2020; Berghof Foundation 16/01/2018; HIPS 31/03/2024). In Galmudug, political aspirants often assert competing claims over leadership positions, administrative control, and territorial influence in specific areas, even at the district level, further fuelling tensions among clans (HIPS 31/03/2024).

The conflict in Somaliland's Sool and Sanaag regions highlights how political ambitions can amplify clan-based violence. Since early 2023, Laas Caanood has seen violent clashes between Somaliland forces and the SSC militia, whose members, predominantly from the Dhulbahante subclan of the Darod clan, seek autonomy under Somalia's Federal Government rather than Somaliland's administration (ACLEDD 03/03/2023 and 30/09/2024); New Lines Magazine 07/08/2023. This aspiration reflects the Dhulbahante's aim to secure greater political representation within Somalia, contrasting with their marginalised status within Somaliland.

In August 2024, tensions flared in Sanaag as the SSC accused Somaliland authorities of persecuting opposition supporters, while Somaliland's government blamed SSC forces for destabilising its territory, alleging support from Puntland (Mogadishu24 28/08/2024). These dynamics indicate how political motives, actions towards securing autonomy, and influences over regional governance fuel ongoing violence. Clan pride and political aspirations intersect, transforming local disputes into broader clashes with significant security implications for the region.

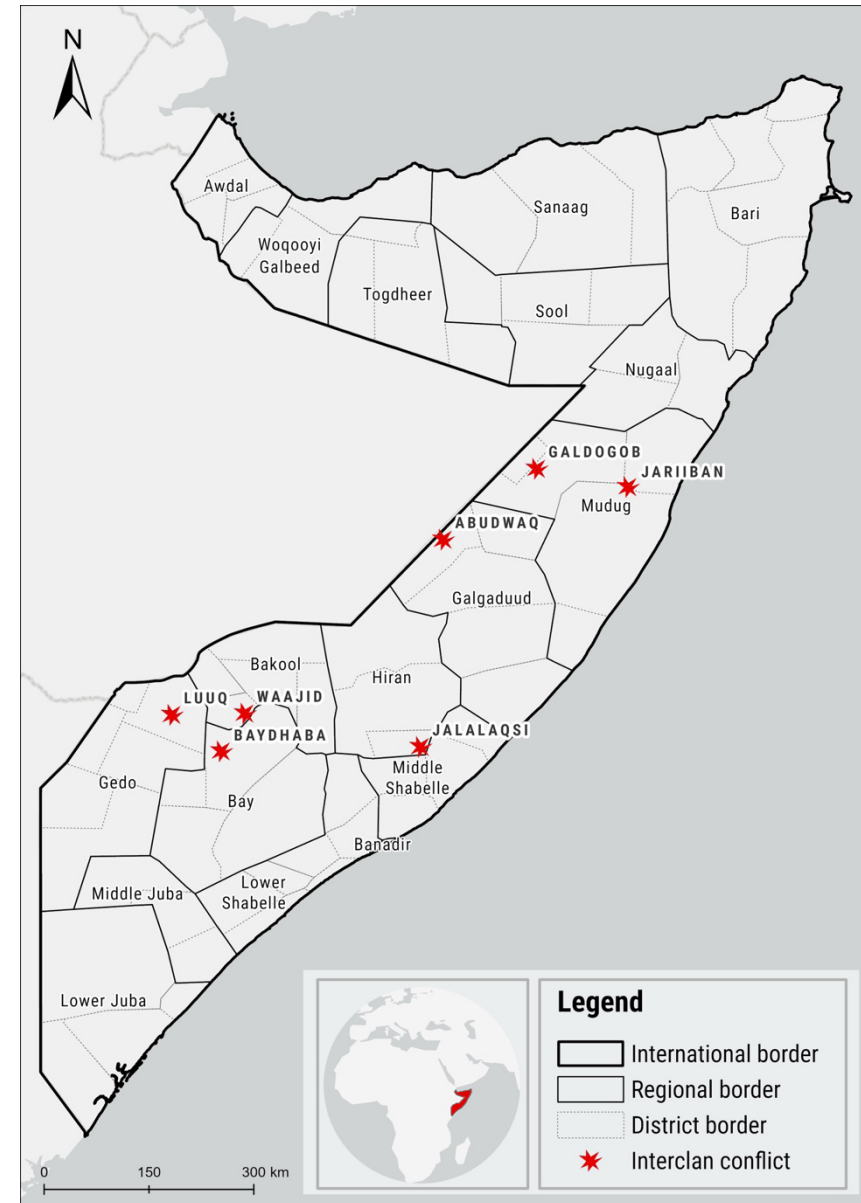
Access to weapons

The proliferation of weapons among Somali clans has significantly fuelled interclan conflicts and instability, even with the longstanding UN arms embargo in place. Decades of civil war, weak state control, and the collapse of national security institutions have allowed the widespread circulation of arms and light weapons through illicit trade and smuggling networks. Many clans have armed themselves for protection, resource competition, and political leverage, further entrenching a cycle of violence and revenge killings (Mogadishu24 05/08/2024; Reuters 16/07/2024; AJ 01/12/2023).

The relationship between clans, the Somali Government, and Al Shabaab remains highly fluid. Throughout both phases of the counterinsurgency, both the Federal Government and Al Shabaab have mobilised clan militias, with some subclans shifting allegiances based on political tensions. The conflict parties actively arm and mobilise clan militias, leveraging shifting alliances to advance their respective agendas, which in turn fuels local conflicts and prolongs instability in central Somalia (ICG 21/03/2023; ME Council 31/10/2024; ACLED 04/09/2024; CTC 02/2024). Arming clans has unintended consequences, fuelling interclan conflicts and prolonging cycles of violence. While meant as a counterinsurgency strategy, the increased access to weapons has escalated land, resource, and political disputes, deepening tensions and triggering retaliatory attacks (ACLED 24/01/2024).

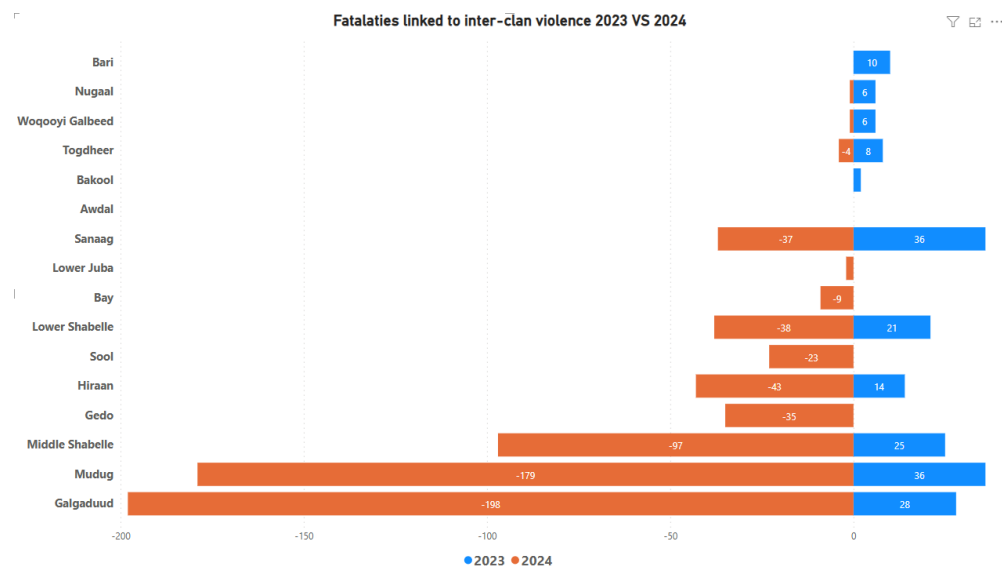
Conflicts between the Abgaal/Hawiye and Somali Bantu clans have persisted for some time, with both groups maintaining active domestic militias. These militias have previously collaborated with the Somali National Army in military operations within the district as auxiliary fighters or regional security forces. Despite this cooperation, these militias also engage in interclan conflicts (GPC 31/08/2024). Their access to arms also heightens the risk of violent confrontations between the two clans, making clashes particularly deadly and further destabilising the region.

Map 2. Areas with reported interclan clashes in 2024



Source ACAPS using data from KII (24/01/2024); OCHA (26/10/2024)

Figure 1. Fatalities related to interclan clashes in 2023 and 2024



Source: ACAPS using data from KII (24/01/2024)

HUMANITARIAN IMPACT

Internal displacement

Clan conflicts have displaced nearly 250,000 people in different parts of Somalia since January 2024 (OCHA 22/01/2025 a). Of these, nearly 42,000 were displaced within Luuq town in Gedo region within July alone, with the majority fleeing to nearby settlements (OCHA 14/07/2024). Recent violent incidents in Luuq district have resulted in individuals fleeing to other areas within the country, such as Waajid town in Southwest region (OCHA 13/08/2024). Displacements often extend beyond immediate conflict zones as people seek safety in neighbouring regions. In western Mudug, interclan clashes displaced over 5,000 people on 25 June, and then later nearly 2,900 people between 30 June and 1 July in Godob Jiraan town in the same state (ECHO 10/07/2024; UNHCR 08/07/2024; IMC 19/07/2024). Recurrent clashes have triggered waves of secondary displacement, forcing previously displaced individuals to flee again. Many have been uprooted from Luuq and relocated to other areas, including Dhanaawe, Horma Liiban, and Yurkut (AllAfrica 21/10/2024; ECHO 16/10/2024).

Displacement caused by clan clashes has forced thousands of people to flee their homes, often under threat of violence or coercion by armed clan militia involved in the conflict. These displaced populations are compelled to seek refuge in overcrowded camps or makeshift shelters typically located in remote or underserved areas where access to basic services such as healthcare, clean water, and sanitation is severely limited or non-existent. The absence of essential services is largely owing to the lack of infrastructure in these areas, compounded by limited humanitarian aid and the challenges of operating in insecure environments (OCHA 13/08/2024; Protection Cluster 19/11/2024; Radio Ergo 11/02/2025). Unlike temporary displacements caused by floods, conflict-driven displacement often becomes prolonged. Many individuals cannot return home immediately out of security concerns, the destruction of homes and infrastructure, and the absence of financial support for rebuilding (OCHA 22/01/2025 a; KII 06/02/2025). In some cases, displaced groups are permanently uprooted as new settlements emerge, territorial boundaries harden, and power dynamics shift, further diminishing the likelihood of return (KII 06/02/2025).

Food insecurity and livelihood

Clan conflicts in Somalia continue to disrupt agricultural production and trade, worsening food insecurity and livelihood conditions, consequently increasing malnutrition rates and compounding the need for humanitarian assistance (FEWS NET accessed 20/11/2024). Southern Somalia is economically important for the country as an agricultural hub but frequently suffers the severe impacts of interclan violence, which disrupts farming and agricultural activities.

Displacement caused by the clashes hampers essential tasks, including land preparation and the planting of crops such as sorghum and maize. The violence also disrupts traditional livestock migration routes, resulting in the significant loss of lives and critical assets, including storage facilities and water points, further heightening food insecurity and economic instability (FEWS NET accessed 20/11/2024; ICG 10/12/2024). Agricultural disruption and decreased food production have led to a further deterioration of food insecurity and malnutrition for the affected population. Between April–June 2025, 4.4 million people are estimated to face IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) or worse levels of food insecurity across the country, including populations in clan conflict-affected areas. In the same period, nearly 1.7 million children ages 6–59 months are projected to be malnourished (IPC 24/02/2025).

Between July–October 2024, recurrent clashes in Adale, Jowhar (Middle Shabelle region), Abudwaq, Adado, Ceel Buur, Ceel Dheer, and Dhuusamareeb districts (Galgaduud region) have significantly disrupted farming, pushing many communities into acute food insecurity (IPC 23/09/2024; FEWS NET/FSNAU 23/07/2024). In July, interclan clashes in Luuq town, Jubaland state, destroyed key markets, with approximately 200 businesses being burnt. This severely affected local livelihoods and access to essential goods for the inhabitants. Market destruction and trade route disruptions from clan violence have broader economic consequences for the country, besides contributing to high levels of food insecurity (OCHA 14/07/2024; Berghof Foundation 16/01/2018; WFP 24/07/2024). For instance, in Galmudug, the prices of essential commodities such as rice, pasta, and sugar increased by 2–4% in June 2024, driven largely by supply shortages. These shortages stemmed from transportation challenges and interclan conflicts, which significantly disrupted distribution networks across Galgaduud and Mudug regions (WFP 24/07/2024; OCHA 13/08/2024; NRC 30/11/2024).

Approximately 30% of those displaced by clan clashes in August 2024 were livestock herders who fled with their animals, underscoring the disruption to pastoralist livelihoods caused by clan clashes. In June, food prices in conflict-affected areas surged by an estimated 15–20%, diminishing access to basic necessities and heightening food insecurity among vulnerable communities. Food prices have remained high through 2025 (OCHA 13/08/2024; IPC 24/02/2025).

In December 2024, in Eejiye village, Middle Shabelle region, farms totalling significant hectares, planted with essential crops such as beans, corn, and millet, were burnt, resulting in the loss of both current harvests and future income. Families lost critical assets, including livestock, which either disappeared during the violence or were looted by militias, leaving households without a means of sustenance or economic stability. Many families are now burdened with debt, having borrowed funds for farming inputs with the expectation of repaying after the harvest. With their farms and livestock destroyed, they are unable to meet these financial obligations, aggravating their economic distress and pushing them further into poverty (Radio Ergo 11/02/2025; KII 06/02/2025).

Protection risks

Clan clashes in Somalia have severe protection impacts, particularly for most affected groups such as women, children, and displaced populations who face heightened risks of violence, forced displacement, and limited access to essential services given their social and economic vulnerability. Women and girls, particularly those displaced, are at increased risk of sexual violence, early and forced marriage, and domestic abuse, while boys are more vulnerable to forced recruitment by armed groups. Widespread violence exposes civilians to targeted attacks, sexual violence, forced recruitment by armed groups, and arbitrary killings. Frequent displacements from conflict increase exposure to exploitation, gender-based violence, and lack of access to essential services, including protection services (UNHCR 31/12/2024; OCHA 22/01/2025 a). The destruction of livelihoods has further entrenched gender inequalities as women-headed households struggle to access food, shelter, and income, often resorting to coping mechanisms with potentially negative outcomes. Families have been separated while fleeing, with members scattered across different locations, further fracturing household unity and support networks. The destruction of community support systems has left many without assistance, as those who traditionally provided help have themselves become destitute. This breakdown of social structures has intensified the vulnerability of affected populations, leaving communities fragmented and struggling to cope with the compounded challenges of displacement and loss (Radio Ergo 11/02/2025).

Child protection

Clan violence in Somalia has significant consequences for children, particularly in displacement-affected areas (ACLED 24/01/2024). With children making up over 60% of the displaced population, many are separated from their families because of armed clashes, raids, and forced displacement during periods of intense violence and insecurity, leaving them highly vulnerable to violence, exploitation, abuse, and neglect (OCHA 22/01/2025 a). Violence, displacement, and family separation expose children to heightened risks of psychosocial distress, school dropout, and engagement in child labour as they struggle to survive in unsafe environments. The lack of protection mechanisms and basic services caused by insecurity, weak governance, and limited humanitarian access further aggravates their vulnerability, jeopardising their safety, wellbeing, and prospects (OCHA 22/01/2025 a; UNHCR 31/03/2024; UNHCR 08/07/2024).

Damage to critical infrastructure and service disruptions

The cyclical nature of clan violence in Somalia severely affects basic social services and infrastructure, perpetuating a humanitarian crisis and complicating recovery efforts (Garowe 09/06/2024; The Eastleigh Voice 09/07/2024; OCHA 22/01/2025 a; GPC accessed 17/03/2025). Violence frequently disrupts education, with schools often closed, damaged, or destroyed during clashes. Teachers and students are forced to flee for their safety, leaving schools understaffed or completely non-functional. Similarly, displaced populations face significant barriers to healthcare, including limited access to medical facilities, financial constraints, and disrupted services, resulting in untreated injuries, rising maternal and infant mortality rates, and the increased spread of diseases (REACH 30/01/2025; IMC 19/07/2024; Radio Ergo 11/02/2025). For instance, during the Luuq conflict in July, unconfirmed reports indicated that clashes destroyed latrines, worsening sanitation and hygiene conditions (OCHA 14/07/2024). Despite these impacts, there is a lack of comprehensive assessment of the effects of clan violence on critical infrastructure and services, leaving significant gaps in understanding the actual severity of affected populations' needs for health, education, and WASH services.

The disruption of critical services, including healthcare, nutrition, and WASH, because of interclan conflict has had profound consequences on communities in Somalia. In areas such as Luuq district, persistent violence has not only resulted in attacks on health facilities but also caused widespread disruptions, leaving thousands without access to essential medical care (Trocaire 19/11/2024). Similarly, the destruction of schools and the displacement of teachers have deprived children of their education, which will have long-term effects on community resilience (UNHCR 08/07/2024; OCHA 23/10/2024). Infrastructure damage, including the destruction of homes and WASH facilities, has left communities without safe water and sanitation, increasing the risk of waterborne diseases such as cholera, which remains endemic in Somalia (Trocaire 19/11/2024; OCHA 14/07/2024).

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

In 2024, humanitarian operations faced significant challenges because of military offensives and interclan violence, which severely restricted access to affected populations (OCHA 22/01/2025 b and 22/01/2025 a). In areas such as Galmudug and Jubaland, aid organisations faced challenges reaching conflict-affected communities because of insecurity, delaying the delivery of life-saving assistance (OCHA 23/10/2024; Humanitarian Outcomes 10/2023).

The government-imposed curfew in Luuq town, Jubaland state, from 8–11 June led to movement restrictions for both the population and humanitarians. Even after the curfew was lifted, tensions and the continued presence of militia created unsafe conditions for both aid workers and civilians, further restricting movement and hindering the distribution of aid and humanitarian services (OCHA 14/07/2024). In October 2024, some aid organisations suspended their activities given the inability to move to affected areas (OCHA 23/10/2024). The humanitarian impact of clan conflicts includes significant safety and security risks to aid workers, as highlighted by recent fatalities. In July, three aid workers lost their lives amid escalating violence. In Luuq, clashes that began in a torched IDP settlement killed two, with one caught in the crossfire and another dying during medical evacuation. In Qoryooley, tensions around clan affiliation, not their humanitarian role, killed a third aid worker (INSO 07/2024; OCHA 30/09/2024 and 22/01/2025).

Humanitarian access challenges have intensified the humanitarian needs of the families displaced by clan violence, which remain unaddressed. For instance, since the attacks in December 2024, no external assistance had reached IDPs in Maraweyn town in Middle Shabelle region until 11 February 2025, leaving them without essential resources and hindering recovery efforts. Families are forced to rely on the limited generosity of neighbours and community members for basic necessities such as food and water, underscoring the absence of formal support systems (Radio Ergo 11/02/2025).

OUTLOOK

Persistent clan rivalries and political alignments

Clan dynamics are likely to persist owing to unsolved issues over land, power-sharing, and resources, particularly in regions such as Galmudug, Gedo, and Jubaland, where they are deeply rooted in historical rivalries, competition for resources, and territorial disputes (OCHA 22/01/2025). These dynamics are compounded by the clans' political alignments, often with different regional or federal administrations, as they seek leverage within political structures or territorial claims (RVI 03/04/2024; Berghof Foundation 16/01/2018). This will likely continue to affect local stability and complicate peace-building efforts in 2025 (SMN 09/02/2025; AIIAfrica 11/02/2025).

Availability of weapons

The widespread availability of heavy armament, including anti-tank weapons, combined with resource scarcity could lead to intensified interclan clashes (VOA 10/06/2024; The EastAfrican 10/06/2024; IMC 19/07/2024; ACLED 31/07/2024). Future confrontations may result in more casualties and further displacement, particularly in regions already strained by environmental and governance challenges. The violence risks spilling over into neighbouring clans or regions, potentially escalating into broader conflicts that draw in additional parties. Areas such as parts of Lower Shabelle and Jubaland are especially vulnerable to extended tensions over disputed resources and overlapping territorial claims. As fighting continues, humanitarian needs are likely to rise sharply, particularly for food, medical care, and shelter for those displaced.

Transition to universal suffrage

The implementation of universal suffrage in Somalia's upcoming elections in 2026 marks a significant shift from the traditional clan-based power-sharing model, which has historically defined the country's political landscape. Universal suffrage refers to a system where every eligible citizen has the right to vote directly for their leaders, replacing the previous indirect electoral system in which clan elders selected representatives, who then elected members of parliament and the president (RVI 2024; AA 08/08/2024; VOA 30/10/2024; Reuters 08/08/2024). While the move towards direct rule aims to promote inclusivity and democratic representation, it has been met with resistance from some states, such as Jubaland and Puntland, and former political figures (ACLED 28/10/2024; KII 06/02/2025). This opposition could intensify

existing clan tensions, as groups may perceive the change as a threat to their political and social standing. In the lead-up to the elections, these tensions could escalate into localised conflicts, particularly in regions where interclan rivalries are already prominent.

Al Shabaab influence

Al Shabaab may exploit clan divisions to destabilise government operations, disrupt counterinsurgency efforts, or undermine ceasefire agreements by spreading propaganda and targeting vulnerable areas, especially in central and southern Somalia (ACLED 31/07/2024).

Dry season

Previous droughts from 2020–2023 significantly reduced arable and grazing lands, fuelling interclan conflicts, particularly in regions dependent on pastoralism (ICG 10/12/2024; OCHA 22/01/2025 a). The below-average Deyr 2024 season has further diminished prospects, while the harsh Jilal season (January–March) is expected to aggravate these tensions (FEWS NET 07/01/2025; ACAPS accessed 23/01/2025; FAO 29/01/2025). The March–May 2025 seasonal forecast predicts below-normal rainfall across much of Somalia, which will likely worsen resource scarcity and heighten the risk of interclan clashes over dwindling water and pasture (ICPAC 21/01/2025; FEWS NET 07/01/2025). The depletion of resources owing to climate change impacts, such as prolonged droughts and desertification, has intensified competition over water points and fertile land, leading to frequent clashes (KII 06/02/2025).

Persisting violence against civilians

Recurrent violence will likely drive further displacement, particularly in Galmudug and Hirshabelle, as well as parts of Jubaland and Southwest states, where clan dynamics and resource-based conflicts remain volatile. Many displaced populations will seek refuge in urban centres such as Baidoa, Kismayo, and Mogadishu, straining already overcrowded IDP settlements offering limited services (Protection Cluster 25/01/2025). Prolonged displacement may increase shelter needs, exposing IDPs, particularly women and children, to heightened protection risks (OCHA 22/01/2025).

Continued clashes will disrupt pastoralist and agricultural activities, particularly in riverine and grazing areas. This is expected to affect food production and market access, leading to reduced food availability and rising prices in conflict-affected areas (Radio Ergo 11/02/2025). Households dependent on seasonal rains for farming may experience income loss and deteriorating food security, particularly in Middle Shabelle and Lower Juba.

Revenge killings, forced recruitment, and targeted violence are likely to rise, worsening protection concerns for civilians. Tensions between clans may fuel cycles of retaliation and undermine local peacebuilding efforts, particularly in areas where clan-based governance structures influence security dynamics.

Continued violence will likely restrict humanitarian access to affected areas, complicating efforts to deliver essential services (Trocaire 19/11/2024; IMC 19/07/2024; OCHA 23/10/2024). Increased insecurity may deter humanitarian workers from operating in conflict zones, leading to a gap in assistance for vulnerable populations, particularly in contested rural areas and along key supply routes in Hiran, Mudug, and Lower Shabelle (Trocaire 19/11/2024). This may delay essential aid delivery, increasing reliance on informal and community-led support mechanisms. Localised violence could also result in targeted attacks on aid convoys, further limiting assistance.