

Orphans Report

Introduction

The Somali Region is one of the 11 regional states that make up the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. It is estimated to be home to about eight million people, the majority of whom are pastoralists and agro-pastoralists.

This region has been a conflict zone for the past seventy years. It has seen clashes between opposing forces—some fighting for secession, and the government opposing the disintegration of the region from the federal state.

The conflict has passed through several phases, beginning in 1964 up to 2018. During this period, there were various liberation movements fighting for independence, while successive Ethiopian governments opposed this aspiration for freedom.

The longest and most intense conflict was between the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and the federal government led by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), which lasted for 24 years. This conflict eventually ended in 2018 following peace negotiations between the newly reformed Ethiopian government and the ONLF.

This prolonged war had a severe and widespread negative impact on the community and its development. There was loss of life, destruction of property, and large-scale displacement.

Moreover, the region lost access to essential development services such as quality healthcare, education, economic infrastructure, and social progress.

One of the major consequences of this conflict was the immeasurable loss of life on both sides, which brought immense pain and burden to the families of the deceased and the wider community.

Children who lost their parents in this war, along with others orphaned by different causes, have suffered greatly—both psychologically and due to a lack of proper care. The orphans referred to in this report are mostly underage children who lost their parents at a very young age.

This report presents their general situation, focusing on the harm they have suffered, their current living conditions, those responsible for their suffering, and the urgent needs that require immediate attention and intervention.

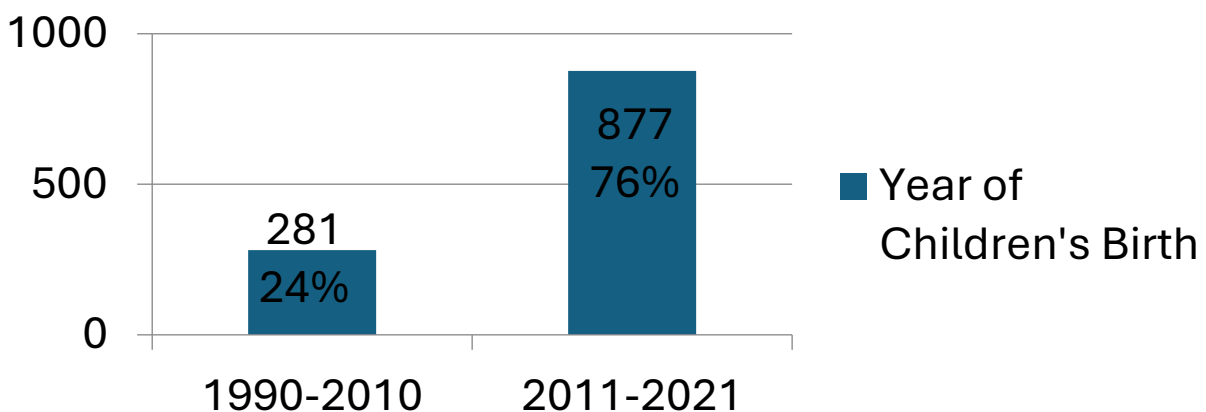
Are you semi-orphaned or fully orphaned?



The children whose parents passed away and who were interviewed include both those who lost one parent and those who lost both. When asked the question, “Are you semi-orphaned or fully orphaned?” 884 children responded that they had lost one parent. This figure represents 88 percent of the total. Meanwhile, 177 children had lost both parents, accounting for 12 percent.

This data indicates that a large number of these children are either semi-orphaned or fully orphaned and are currently under the care of guardians who are not their biological parents. These children are in urgent need of substantial support.

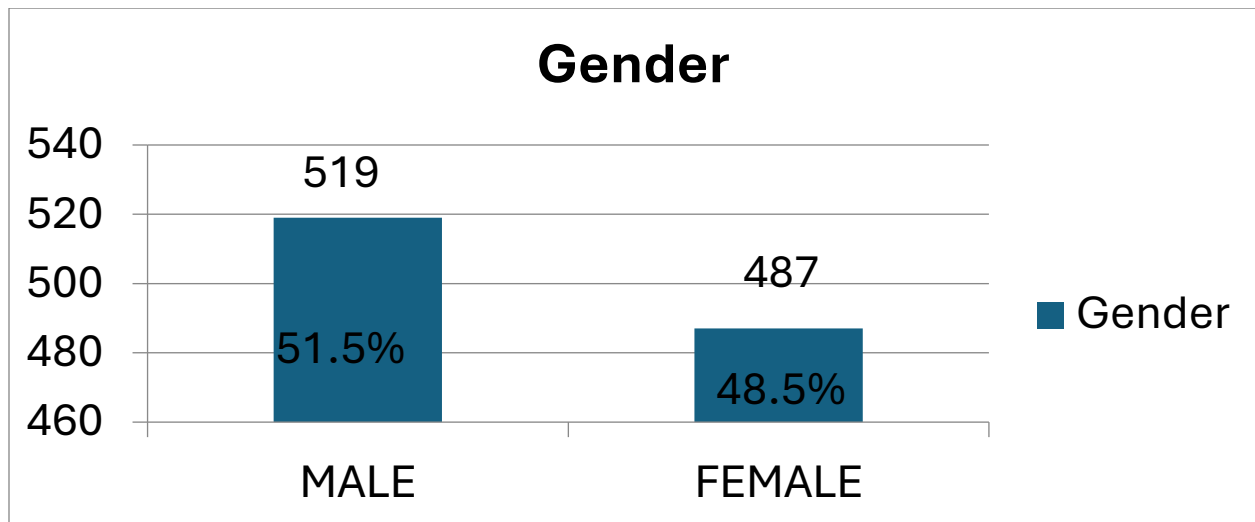
Year of Children's Birth



These orphaned children are of various ages, ranging from 2 years old to 32 years old. However, the majority are underage children below 15 years of age.

A total of 76 percent were born after 2010, while 24 percent were born between 1990 and 2010. This clearly shows that most of the children are minors.

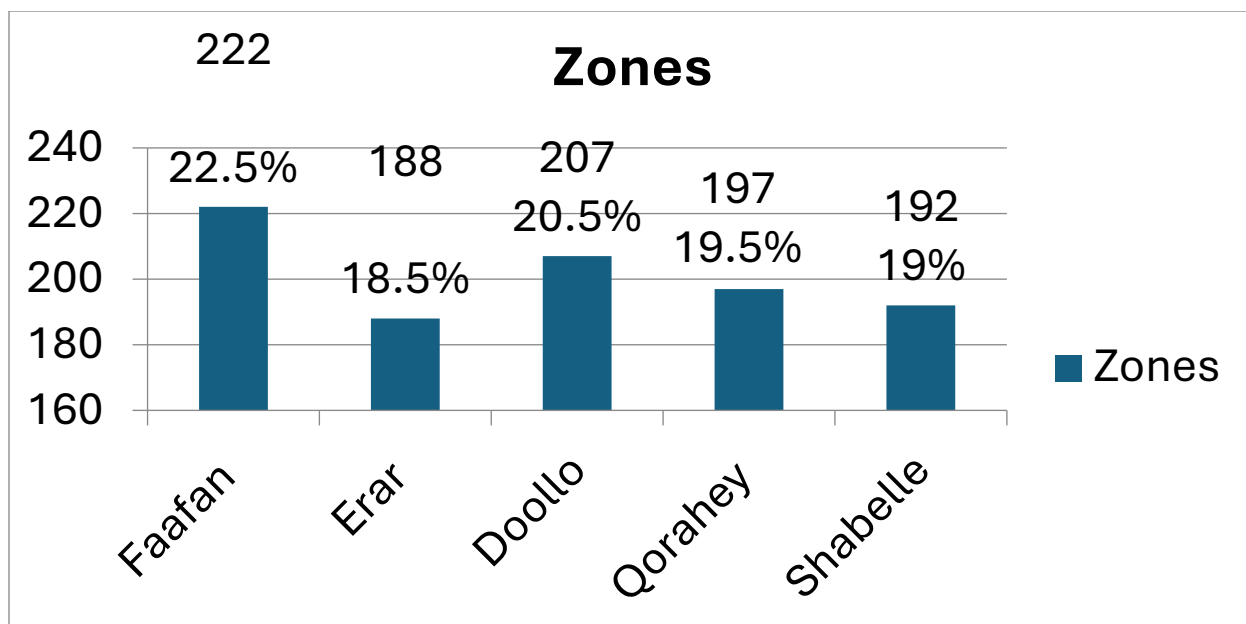
The age distribution of the orphans indicates that the majority are far from reaching a stage of self-sufficiency and therefore require significant support and responsible care to help them reach a level of independence.



These orphaned children include both boys and girls. According to the study results, the number of males and females is nearly equal, with no significant difference between them.

Out of the total, 519 children are male, representing 51.5 percent, while 487 are female, accounting for 48.5 percent. This data shows that the orphan population is fairly balanced in terms of gender.

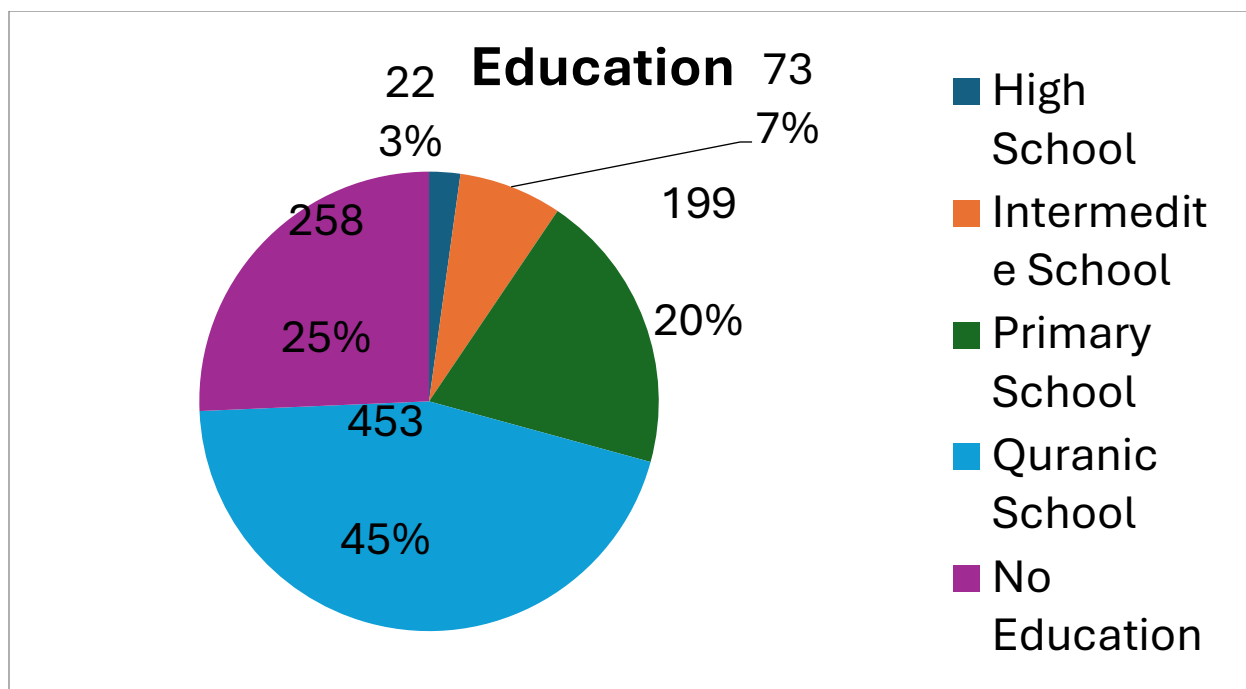
For any individual or organization interested in providing support, this information highlights the importance of addressing the needs of both boys and girls, as both groups are equally represented and in need.



The orphans are distributed across five zones within the Somali Region. The number of orphans in each of these five zones is relatively close in proportion.

The highest number of orphans, totaling 222 children or 22.5 percent, reside in the Fafan Zone. The second highest is the Doollo Zone, where 207 orphaned children (20.5 percent) live. The remaining zones—Qoraxey, Shabelle, and Erer—host similarly close figures, accounting for 19.5 percent, 19 percent, and 18.5 percent respectively.

The specific districts where these orphans are located include Jigjiga, Galaalshe/Goljano, Mula, Tuli, Awbare, Gursum, Dhagaxbuur, Fiiq, Yaxoob, Xamaro, Qabridahar, Kudunbuur, Dhoobaweyn, Shilaabo, Godey, Wardheer, Danood, Daraatoole, and Lehel-Yucub.



Education is essential for children and is a fundamental right that every child should have, at the very least at the primary level.

The study assessed the educational status of these children and found the following results:

25 percent of the orphans have not received any form of education, whether formal schooling or religious education.

45 percent have only attended Quranic schools. This means that 70 percent of these children have not accessed primary school education.

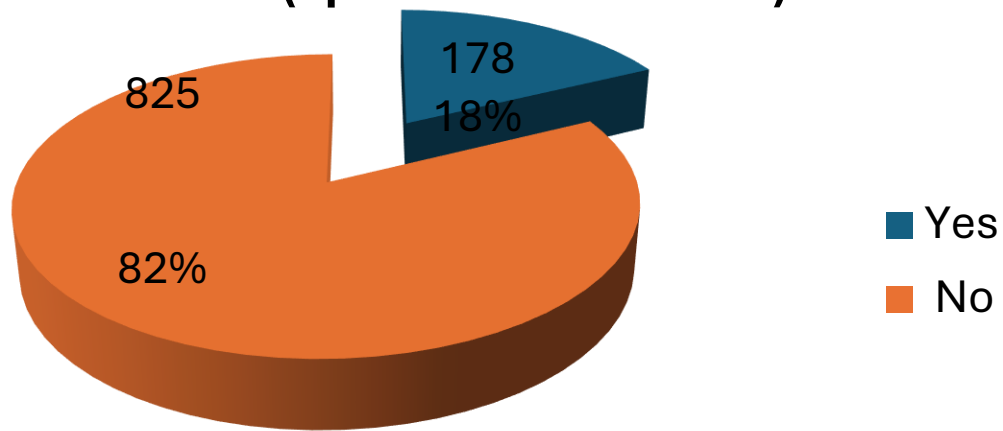
Only 20 percent have reached the primary school level, 7 percent have made it to middle school, and just 3 percent have reached secondary school. This clearly demonstrates the severe educational gap affecting these orphans.

Addressing their educational needs is a critical task that lies ahead for all concerned stakeholders.

The reasons given for this lack of access to education include:

- Living in remote pastoral areas
- Financial constraints
- Health conditions, including physical and mental disabilities
- And a number of children who have not yet reached school-going age

Are you living with a specific health condition (special health need)?



These orphaned children were also asked whether they have any special health needs. The majority reported that they are in good health.

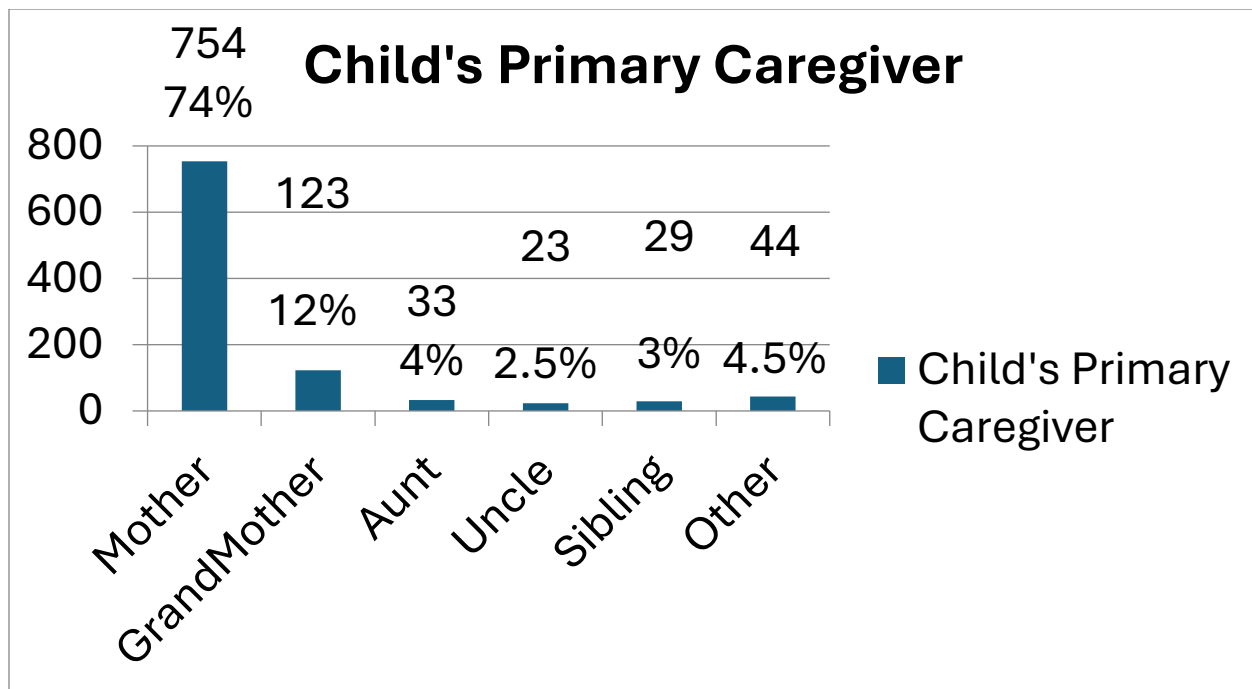
Specifically, 178 children, or 18 percent, indicated that they have special health needs, while 825 children, representing 82 percent, reported being in good health.

This indicates that while most of the children primarily require support in terms of basic living conditions and education, 18 percent of them also need specialized medical care.

The health conditions reported vary but are mostly treatable and include:

- Thyroid issues
- Tuberculosis (TB)
- Heart conditions
- Stomach-related illnesses
- Fever, among others

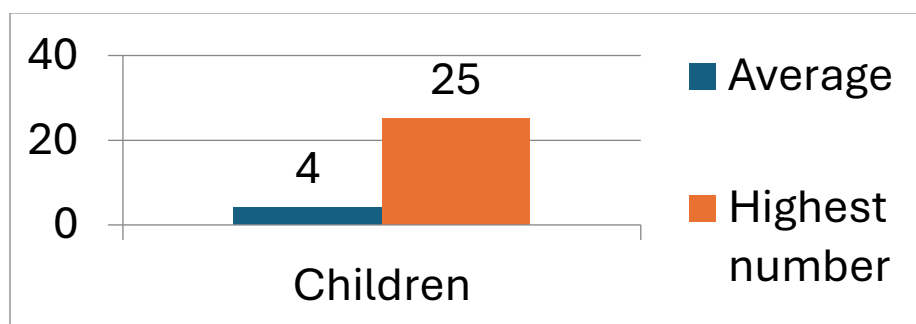
Additionally, some of the children are living with disabilities and require special care and support.



These children reported that they are being cared for by various close family members. The majority—74 percent—are under the care of their mothers, which indicates that most of the caregiving burden falls on women, particularly mothers.

Additionally, 12 percent of the children are being cared for by their grandmothers, making them the second most common caregivers after mothers. This clearly shows that women serve as the backbone in raising orphaned children.

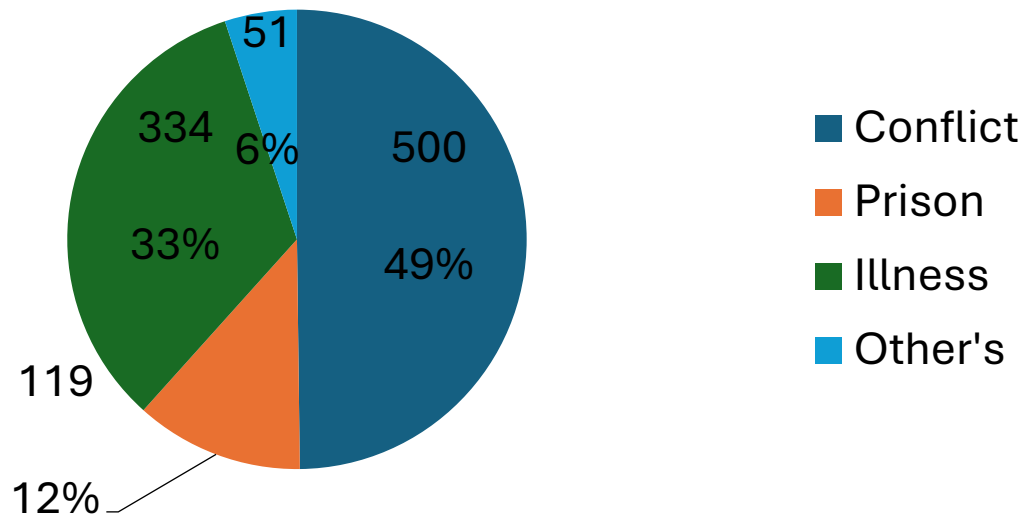
There are also a smaller number of children being cared for by aunts, uncles, and siblings.



The highest number of orphans cared for by a single guardian is 25 children, while the smallest number is one child under the care of a single person.

On average, each household is raising 4 orphaned children. This number represents a significant burden, especially for women caregivers who are themselves vulnerable and often raising children without the support of a father figure.

What caused the parent's death?



Understanding the cause of death of these children's parents is a matter of significant importance. According to the data, the three main causes of parental death are conflict, illness, and imprisonment. A smaller number of parents died from other causes outside these three categories.

Nearly half—49 percent, or 500 parents—died due to various forms of armed conflict. Another 33 percent, or 334 parents, passed away due to different illnesses. Meanwhile, 12 percent—equivalent to 119 parents—died while in prison, which highlights the level of human rights violations that occurred in the region.

An additional 6 percent of the children's parents died from other causes, which also led to their orphanhood.

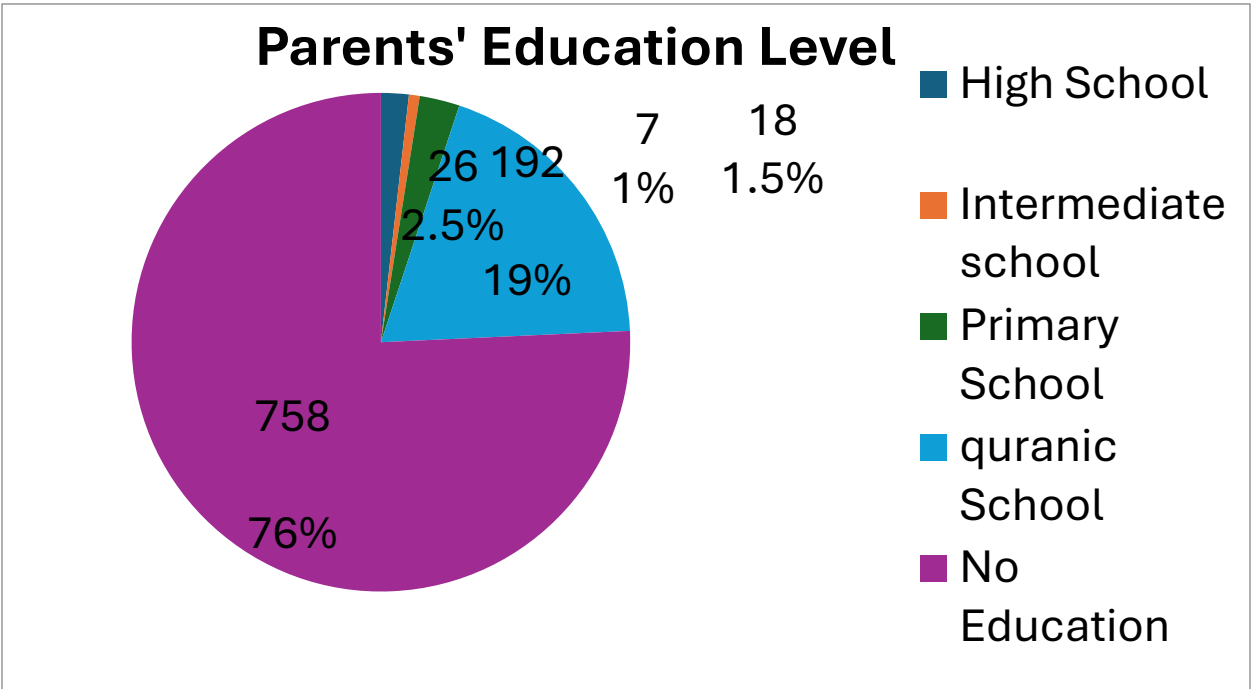
Who killed the parent?



Most of the parents of these orphans died as a result of conflict and imprisonment. When combined, 619 parents lost their lives due to either war or incarceration. The majority of these deaths occurred at the hands of various government institutions.

Only 12 individuals reported that their parents were killed by the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF). In contrast, 607 parents died at the hands of different government agencies.

This indicates that the highest number of human rights violations and abuses were committed by state actors.



The educational level of the guardians caring for these orphans is extremely low, according to the study data. The largest proportion—76 percent—of the guardians reported having no formal education at all.

The second most common educational background is Quranic schooling, with 19 percent of the guardians having only attended Quranic schools.

Those who have reached primary, middle, or secondary school levels make up no more than 5 percent combined.

This clearly shows that the majority of orphans are being raised by caregivers who lack formal education, which may limit their capacity to support the children’s learning and development effectively.

Parental Employment



Most of the guardians caring for these children are unemployed, and most of them are stay-at-home women. According to the data, only 12 percent of the guardians are engaged in some form of work. This is a very low figure compared to the 88 percent who are not employed.

Among those who are working, most are daily laborers or involved in small-scale businesses.

These caregivers urgently need livelihood support and job creation opportunities to sustain their families, which include the orphaned children under their care.

Have you experienced abuse?



Abuses were a common occurrence in the Somali Region and across Ethiopia in general. According to the data, 457 individuals—representing 45 percent—reported experiencing various forms of abuse, while the remaining 55 percent indicated that they were not subjected to such violations.

The types of abuse reported include:

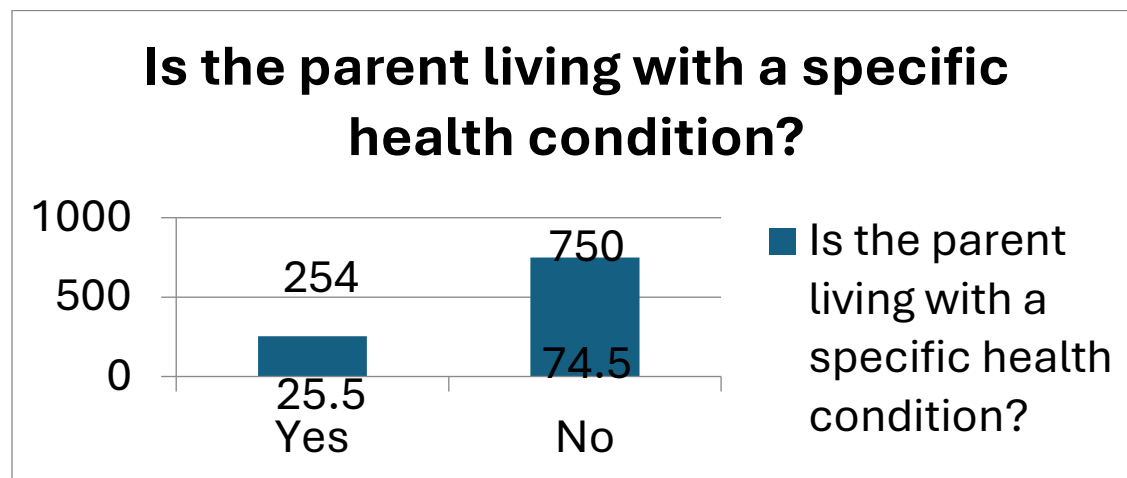
- Killing of family members
- Physical assault

- Imprisonment
- Theft (of livestock, money, or business assets)
- Humiliation
- Intimidation

Perpetrators of the Abuse

All those who reported being abused stated that the violations were committed by the former government authorities, both at the federal and regional levels.

The most frequently cited perpetrators were the Federal Military, the Liyu Police, and local administrative officials at various levels. Only two individuals reported that the abuse they suffered was carried out by the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF).



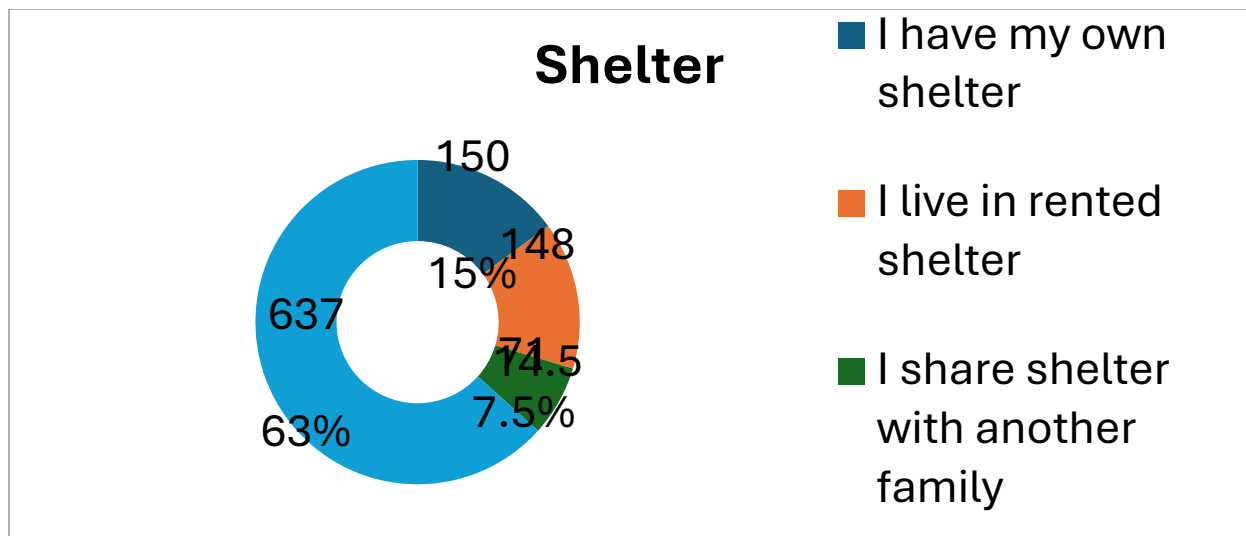
The health status of the guardians caring for the orphans was also assessed to determine whether they have any special medical needs. The results show that 254 guardians—representing 25.5 percent—have specific health conditions. This is a significant proportion, especially considering the burden that accessing healthcare can pose.

The remaining 74.5 percent of guardians reported not having any particular health issues.

The most common health conditions identified include:

- Physical illnesses such as eye problems, back pain, stomach-related issues, thyroid problems, disabilities, head and leg injuries, hepatitis, and kidney problems.

Most of these conditions are treatable if proper medical care and attention are made available.

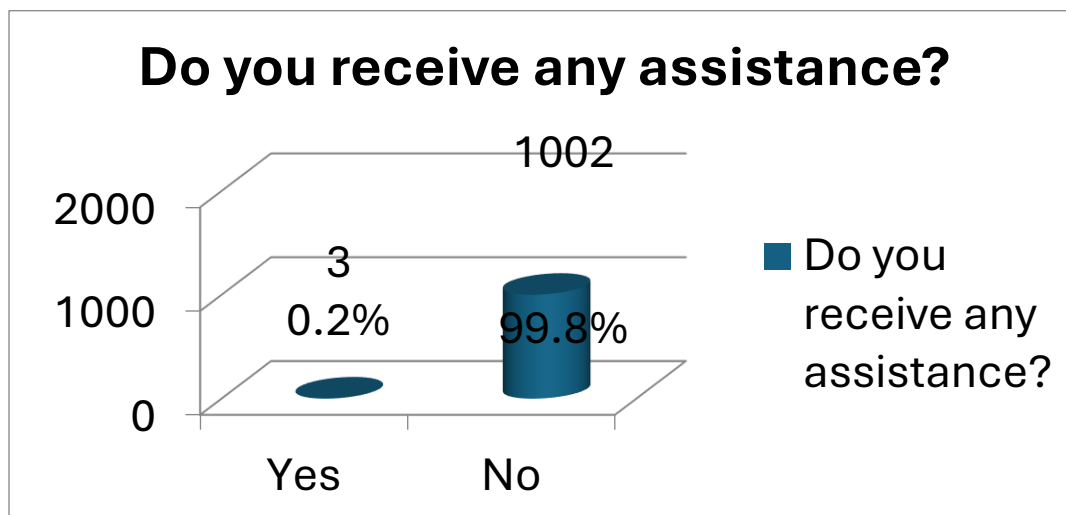


Shelter, as one of the most basic human needs, is significantly lacking among these orphans. When asked whether they have a home of their own, 63 percent reported being without stable housing.

This is an alarmingly high figure, indicating a widespread and urgent housing crisis among the orphans.

Only 15 percent of the orphans live in homes owned by their families. Additionally, 14.5 percent reside in rented houses, while the remaining 7.5 percent live with other families.

This situation clearly highlights the critical need for housing support and intervention, which must be brought to the attention of the government and all relevant stakeholders.



A deeply alarming finding is that these orphans are receiving virtually no assistance—neither financial, educational, nor medical.

Except for 3 children, the remaining 1,002 children—representing 99.8 percent—reported that they have received no support from the government or any partner organizations. This highlights a severe lack of hope and opportunity for these orphans to access the basic rights enjoyed by other children, such as education, healthcare, and a decent standard of living.

It also indicates a total absence of governmental or institutional response to address the suffering of children orphaned by the conflict in the region.

Most Pressing Needs Identified by the Orphans

The orphans face a wide range of urgent needs across several areas of life. Based on their responses, the primary needs can be summarized as follows:

- **Nutrition support** (regular meals or food supply)
- **Economic empowerment** (financial support to sustain the household)
- **Shelter** (adequate housing)
- **Access to education**
- **Healthcare services**

These findings underscore the immediate need for a comprehensive intervention strategy to restore hope and dignity to these children.

Conclusion

The orphans whose data was collected for this report live in five zones of the Somali Region: Fafan, Erer, Qoraxey, Doolo, and Shabelle. Among them, 88 percent have lost both parents, and the majority—76 percent—were born after 2010, indicating that most are still minors.

A striking 70 percent have not reached primary school level. These children are almost equally divided between boys and girls, with no significant gender disparity.

Most of their parents died due to conflict or imprisonment, and in the majority of cases, their deaths occurred at the hands of government forces. The orphans are mainly cared for by mothers and grandmothers. Many of both the children and their guardians live with various health conditions.

Half of the orphans and their guardians have experienced different forms of abuse. Unemployment is extremely high among the guardians, with 88 percent lacking jobs. Even more concerning is that 99.8 percent of the orphans have received no assistance from the government or any supporting organizations.

The most pressing needs identified among these orphans are:

- **Access to healthcare**
- **Education**
- **Shelter and housing**
- **Livelihood support and economic empowerment**

Addressing these needs is essential to improving the well-being of the orphans and the families caring for them. Immediate action is needed from both government and humanitarian actors.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, we respectfully present the following recommendations to the government, relevant institutions, and civil society actors:

- **Develop a comprehensive policy** specifically targeting orphans and victims of the regional conflict, to guide all stakeholders in addressing the urgent needs of the orphans and their families.
- **Provide specialized healthcare services** for orphans and their caregivers who have specific medical needs, through government and relevant health agencies.
- **Ensure access to education** by having the government take full responsibility for the schooling of orphans and by integrating them into existing orphanage-linked schools and educational support programs within the region.
- **Create livelihood opportunities** for families caring for orphans so they can sustain themselves and improve their living standards.
- **Prioritize housing support** by making orphans the first beneficiaries of government shelter and resettlement initiatives.
- **Conduct a comprehensive audio-visual documentation** of the orphans' living conditions and widely share the findings with government bodies, the public, and relevant organizations to raise awareness and mobilize action.

These steps are critical to restoring dignity, stability, and opportunity to the lives of these vulnerable children and their families.

