

SOMALIA NEWSLETTER

VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION

Rebuilding lives of Somali refugees returning from Kenya

Somali refugee returnees have re-established their lives after benefiting from the UNHCR voluntary repatriation programme



Hawa in her store which enabled her to generate income and support her eight-member family after she returned to Somalia with her family. © UNHCR / June, 2017

In the first six months of 2017, UNHCR supported the return of 28,757 Somali refugees from Kenya and provided them an **enhanced return package** to restore their lives in Somalia.

One of them was Hawa (*not her real name*), a mother of six children, who decided to return to Somalia in January with the assistance of UNHCR under the **voluntary repatriation programme** and rebuild life of her family in Somalia after she benefited from a livelihood programme.

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After 11 years in Kenya as a refugee, Hawa and her family decided to return home.

In order to succeed in her reintegration and become self-reliant Hawa was enrolled in a small-business program. She received training on business and entrepreneurial skills and a start-up grant. Hawa successfully completed the programme, invested her knowledge and grant in a small business and opened a grocery store which generated an income for her family.

Five months later Hawa said with smile on her face: "Life could have been too difficult for us without UNHCR support, normally the first interaction between a mother and her baby is breastfeeding, therefore, I regard UNHCR the mother of all refugees."

Hawa is one of the 2,523 beneficiaries who benefited from various **livelihood programs** aimed to support returnees to meet their basic needs and improve their living conditions.

Out of 2,523 beneficiaries, 1,010 were enrolled in technical and vocational trainings, 918 were part of cash-for-work projects, 463 were provided with guidance on self-employment, 110 were enrolled in small-business program and 22 attended peaceful coexistence forums.

Out of 1,010 beneficiaries of **technical and vocational trainings** 110 have graduated. They obtained skills on fish preservation, construction, fabric dying, information technology, baking, tailoring, and air conditioner and refrigerator repair.



Somali returnees in tailoring class in Lower Juba region. © UNHCR / May, 2017

Another 918 beneficiaries were engaged in **rehabilitation of public infrastructure** through a cash-for-work programme and 110 beneficiaries who were part of **small-business program** have already established their businesses through **microfinance** support. These included: retail shops, transport services, vegetable shops, restaurants, kiosks, and grocery and butcher shops.

Assistance to Somali refugee returnees from Kenya to Somalia

From January to June 2017, 28,757 Somali refugees from Kenya were voluntarily repatriated by UNHCR as part of its programme and benefited from an enhanced return package.

The enhanced return package consists of unconditional core relief item kits (one to three, depending on the family size), an unconditional one time reinstallation grant in amount of US\$ 200 per person, unconditional monthly subsistence allowance in the amount of US\$ 200 per households for six months, an unconditional monthly grant for food rations for six months (provided by WFP), a conditional education grant up to US\$ 25 per school-going child, a conditional grant in of up to US\$ 1,000 for shelter per household and conditional enrolment in self-reliance and livelihood projects.

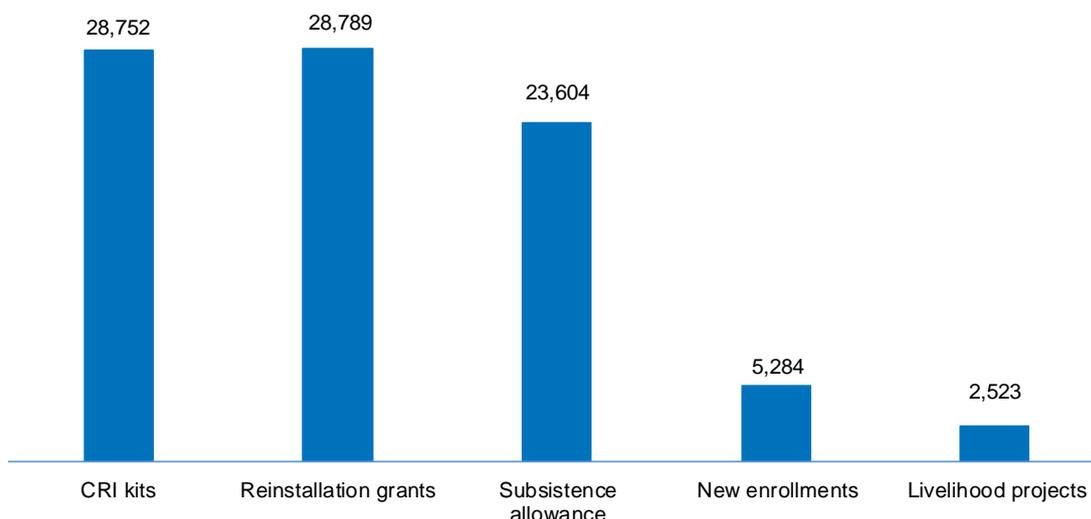
From January to June 2017, UNHCR provided an initial assistance to 28,625 Somali refugees from Kenya; 80 per cent (23,109 returnees) choose as their final destination of return Lower Juba region, 10 per cent (2,930 returnees) Banadir region, eight per cent (2,340 returnees) Bay and less than one per cent (246 returnees) Gedo region.

Voluntary repatriation in first part of the year

From 1 January to 30 June 2017, 28,757 Somali refugees were repatriated from Kenya. Upon arrival in Somalia, at their final destination, returnees were provided with the **enhanced return package**.

From January to June 2017, UNHCR provided 8,682 core relief item (CRI) kits to 6,257

households (28,752 returnees), reinstallation grants to 28,789 returnees (6,231 households), subsistence allowance to 4,916 households (23,604 returnees), 5,284 students were newly enrolled in school (4,888 in primary and 396 in secondary education), 575 shelters and 265 latrines were build, and 2,523 beneficiaries were enrolled in livelihood projects.



UNHCR Somalia uses **cash based interventions** to provide assistance to returnees, especially reinstallation grants and subsistence allowance. From 1 January to 30 June 2017 the cash assistance amounted to a total of US \$ 8,281,600.

To facilitate the sustainable reintegration of refugees returning to Somalia, UNHCR implements a range of targeted interventions to support improved livelihoods and access to economic markets, including access to microfinance, business skills training, small-scale agriculture assistance, job placement and trainee mentorship schemes and vocational skills training. These initiatives complement UNHCR's short-term enhanced assistance package for returnees, improving their capacity

for self-reliance and supporting progress towards **durable solutions** in the long term.

One of the key pillars of **voluntary repatriation** is the voluntariness of return. The decision by refugees to return has to be taken freely and voluntarily, and should be made based on sufficient information on conditions in Somalia. UNHCR shares the **Country of Origin Information** with the Help Desk in Camps in Kenya, where Somali refugees are provided with the information and guidance on voluntary repatriation to help them to make **an informed decision** about their return.

Launch of a project aimed to integrate people who have left their homes

The Benadir Regional Administration (BRA) officially started implementation of a €13.3 million project funded by the European Union **to assist displaced people to integrate into communities**, which will be carried out in partnership with UN agencies and NGOs ([link](#)).

This EU-funded project, directly aligned with the National Development Plan of Somalia, will benefit displaced people and host communities alike, through the provision of **employment opportunities** and greater **access to basic services** such as affordable housing, protection, GBV prevention, legal assistance and improved livelihood opportunities. In total, it is expected that more than **84,000 people will benefit** from this project.

“With this project, the EU shows the importance that it attaches to affording opportunities to people who have been forced to leave their homes because of conflict or drought. I would like to commend the solidarity and generosity of the Benadir Regional Administration. We fully support its belief of the economic and social benefits that displaced people can bring to the communities hosting them” - Pilar Palmero, Head of Cooperation, EU Delegation to Somalia.

The project is implemented by a UN-Habitat-led consortium that includes UNDP, UNHCR, CESVI and local organisations SWDC and SIDO.

The enhanced return package improved the living conditions of returnees



Fatima's family established a kiosk in Lower Juba region after they returned to Somalia © UNHCR / June, 2017

Fatima (*not her real name*), a mother of nine received an enhanced return package after she returned to Somalia in January 2017 and established a kiosk.

Fatima's family said that the enhanced return package helped them to re-establish their lives in Somalia.

They chose Lower Juba region as their final destination of return, where her family received a **reinstallation grant** that helped them to reintegrate.

Fatima's family decided to use their reinstallation grant to purchase goods and opened a kiosk that now generates an income for her family.

“We are really grateful for UNHCR support and assistance which helped us to rebuild our livelihood,” said Fatima who returned home after two decades of living in Kenya.

Returnees continue their education in Somalia



Returnee students at the school in Lower Juba region. © UNHCR / June, 2017

In the beginning of the year Ahmed and Aisha (*not their real names*), now both students of the Khalid-bin Walid school in Lower Juba, benefited from the **education grants** component of the enhanced return package.

“What worried me most before I returned was not security but the education system and standard” said Aisha. Once she received education support from the UNHCR, including **scholastic materials** and **uniforms**, her concerns vanished.

In the 2016-2017 school year 10,815 students were newly enrolled by UNHCR. This figure consisted of 10,227 in primary and 588 in secondary education.

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