

Kenya Refugee Response Under Strain: Funding Cuts, Differentiated Assistance, and the Rising Social Cohesion Crisis

NGO Refugee Group (August 2025)

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1. Executive Summary

The NGO Refugee Group (NRG) conducted a mid-year survey with 10 member organizations and 116 refugees to assess the combined impact of U.S. funding cuts and the rollout of Differentiated Assistance (DA).

The findings reveal a humanitarian system under strain, with declining standards across all core sectors and growing social tensions. Key findings from the report indicated :

- **A Severe funding shortfall**: with a reported funding gap of approximately **USD 20 million** across health, education, protection, WASH, and logistics; the true figure is higher, as key organizations did not submit data.

- **Deteriorating standards**: Standards across sectors are falling behind international standards. For instance, water consumption has fallen below emergency levels (10 L in Dadaab; 14 L in Kakuma); classroom quality is deteriorating with teacher reductions, overcrowding, and suspended safeguarding programs; health outcomes are worsening with declining immunization, maternal health, and TB/HIV adherence; protection services are severely reduced with case workers handling double the amount of since January.

- **Negative domino effects**: Cuts in one sector are destabilizing others; for example reduced WASH capacity has created health risks. Cuts to one organization are also affecting others; for example one health provider is now absorbing costly referrals previously covered by another.

- **Compounding shocks**: The combined effect of U.S. funding cuts and the ongoing rollout of Differentiated Assistance has created additional pressures for refugees and service providers and has led to social tensions and protests. Refugees report declining confidence in their prospects, with many expressing uncertainties about their future and limited livelihood opportunities. These factors, together with reduced service standards, are compounding risks to social cohesion, security, and longer-term durable solutions.

- **Operational constraints**: On top of funding shortfalls and program cuts, operational constraints are compounding the crisis. Fuel allocations have been reduced from 150

to just 50 liters a week, slashing field visits and cutting legal aid in Kakuma from three visits a week to one. In Dadaab, where there is an active Al-Shabaab presence, police escorts are limited to three days a week, and some offices now operate with only five hours of electricity daily. At the same time, flight costs between Nairobi and the camps have nearly doubled, restricting staff mobility and reducing direct engagement with communities. Together, these challenges are delaying urgent interventions, weakening accountability, and further eroding service delivery for refugees.

Note: As only a small subset of NRG members contributed, the actual scale of the impact and funding gap outlined in this report is considerably greater.

Also note that the views reflected in this report are those of survey respondents and do not necessarily represent the collective position of the NRG.

2. Background

The NGO Refugee Group (NRG) is a group of 56 international and national organizations serving over 700,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in Kenya. It provides a platform for unified advocacy and joint dialogue on high-level policy and operational issues across the refugee response.

In early 2024, U.S. Executive Orders triggered significant reductions in humanitarian funding, compounding already tight global aid resources. At the same time, due to reduced funding and resources, the Department of Refugee Services (DRS), UNHCR and World Food Programme (WFP), together with partners, introduced Differentiated Assistance (DA) as a more sustainable alternative to blanket food aid. DA is designed to shift from general food distributions toward tailored assistance packages in health, education, and livelihoods, with the aim of supporting refugee households on their path to greater self-reliance.

At the time of this report's writing, only the most vulnerable refugees were receiving food assistance:

Category 1 (25% of the refugee population, classified as extremely vulnerable) received 40% of the minimum food basket.

Category 2 (46% of the refugee population, classified as highly vulnerable) received 20% of the minimum food basket.

Categories 3 and 4 (15% and 5% of the population respectively) received no food assistance, but were expected to benefit from assistance packages in health, livelihoods, and education to support a gradual move toward self-reliance.

Since then, new adjustments were announced due to additional WFP funding. From October 2025:

Category 1 will receive 55% of the minimum food basket,

Category 2 will receive 35%, and

Category 3 will receive 20%, all in the form of cash-based transfers.

These transitions have heightened pressure on communities and service providers alike. In Kakuma, frustrations over aid reductions and food rationing recently spilled over into violent protests in July, underscoring the urgency of managing these changes carefully and inclusively.

This mid-year survey was conducted to support effective planning, advocacy for resources, and to capture community and organizational perspectives on the evolving situation. It builds on an initial assessment carried out in early 2024.

Note: It is important to note that DRS, UNHCR and WFP have undertaken multiple consultations with refugee communities, donors, and the NGO Refugee Group, and has emphasized that DA remains the only feasible option in the face of ongoing funding gaps. A recourse mechanism is in place to address refugees' grievances and to ensure accountability.

3. Methodology

- **Survey participants**: The survey was shared with all 56 NRG member organizations; 10 submitted responses. A separate survey was administered to 116 refugees.

- **Survey focus**:

    - The NGO survey aimed to assess organizational impacts, staffing, standards, and beneficiary reach.

    - The Refugee survey sought to capture effects on social cohesion, security, and morale.

Geographic scope: Refugee respondents were overwhelmingly from Kakuma (99 percent), with only 1 percent from urban areas and none from Dadaab. NGO respondents work across Dadaab, Kakuma and urban areas such as Nairobi and Mombasa.

Exclusions: Host communities were not included; the survey targeted direct aid recipients and service providers. While host perspectives remain vital for understanding cohesion, this exercise focused on immediate impacts of funding cuts and DA.

Limitations: Findings are indicative rather than comprehensive due to respondent concentration in Kakuma and limited organizational participation.

4. Impact by Sector

Protection

- **Beneficiaries affected**: Over 12,000 across Nairobi, Mombasa, Kakuma, and Dadaab.
- **Impact**:
    - 52 percent rise in admission to protection safe havens in Kakuma (57 percent male; 50 percent female).
    - Protection services scaled down by 72 percent for one organization, including cash assistance, GBV response, MHPSS, legal protection, and resettlement case processing.
    - GBV cases more than doubled since January; 51 percent of survivors are adolescents, 83 percent of whom are pregnant.
    - Legal aid, GBV response, child protection, and resettlement case processing scaled back or discontinued for a respondent organization.
    - One organization reported increased protection cases due to partner exits.
    - Security interviews for resettlement cases for an organization that is serving about 10 refugees per month in Mombasa was stopped.
    - One organization lost half of its protection monitors in Dadaab.
    - Reported incidents include:
        - Dadaab: physical assaults (18–20 percent), theft, GBV risks, IPV (16–19 percent), child marriage (13–15 percent).

- Kakuma: physical violence and theft (24–26 percent) driven by resource conflicts; May protests worsened insecurity and disrupted services.
- Kalobeyei: elevated psychosocial and family risks with IPV (17–19 percent), psychological abuse (21 percent), forced marriage (21 percent), school dropouts (13–27 percent), and early pregnancies.

- **Incentive staff affected**: 319
- **National staff affected**: 148
- **Services at risk in 3–6 months**: Child protection; in-school counselling; MHPSS; legal protection; translation for courts.
- **Long-term outcomes**: School dropouts; early marriage; child labor; recruitment into unsafe groups; entrenched poverty; reduced opportunities for durable solutions; labor exploitation; overburdened health systems; reduced access to justice; increased vulnerability.

WASH, Shelter, and Logistics

- **Beneficiaries affected**: Entire refugee populations in Kakuma and Dadaab.
- **Impact**:
  - Water consumption reduced to 10 L in Dadaab and 14 L in Kakuma, below emergency standards.
  - 60 WASH incentive workers laid off, reducing monitoring and triggering violent incidents at boreholes.
  - Relocation of new arrivals suspended in IFO 2.
  - Suspension of fleet services and major decline in vehicle maintenance garage operations.
- **Incentive staff affected**: 60 (WASH).
- **National staff affected**: 38 (logistics); 11 (WASH); 9 (shelter); 4 (admin).

- **Services at risk in 3–6 months**: Shelter support; sanitation; hygiene activities and water supply (especially as the dry season approaches)

- **Long-term outcome**: Waterborne diseases and reduced public health; malnutrition; GBV risks at water points; increased host-refugee tensions.

Note: while WASH, shelter and logistics are three different sectors, data for these three areas came from one organization. Presenting them separately might overstate the breadth of coverage, while grouping them provides a more accurate reflection of the survey's scope.

Education

- **Beneficiaries affected**: At least 112,615 learners.

- **Impact**:

    - Secondary education: teacher numbers and learning materials reduced by 23 percent.

    - School infrastructure improvements suspended.

    - Mentorship and safeguarding suspended.

    - Overcrowded classrooms

    - Declining attendance.

- **Incentive staff affected**: 55

- **National staff affected**: 48

- **Services at risk in 3–6 months**: Child safeguarding; in-school counseling; secondary education support.

- **Long-term outcome**: Rising dropouts; early pregnancies; child labor; radicalization of youth; weakened socio-economic integration.

Health & Nutrition

- **Beneficiaries affected**: Over 300,000 clients.
- **Impact**:
    - 67% of hospitals in Kakuma and Hagadera at risk of closure.
    - Declining immunization, maternal health, and TB/HIV adherence.
    - Increased referrals to Nairobi; one agency expanded coverage and SHIF enrolment support due to partner exits; referral challenges are now prolonged.
    - Health cases surging in Dagahaley.
    - Lower ANC, fewer skilled deliveries; maternal and neonatal mortality risks rising.
    - Sharp reduction in GBV, FGM, and child protection health services.
    - Suspension of community protection information services since USG Executive Order.
- **Incentive staff affected**: about 300–400
- **National staff affected**: 30
- **Services at risk in 3–6 months**: All primary health care; GBV medical support; nutrition management (compounded by DA rollout).
- **Long-term outcome**: Maternal and child mortality; malnutrition; preventable outbreaks; weakened public health; heightened protection risks.

Livelihoods

- **Impact:**
    - 50 youth trained in livelihood skills have not received start-up kits.
    - One organization's livelihoods program stopped entirely.

- **National staff affected:** 3

- **Long term outcome:** The suspension of livelihood programs and lack of start-up support for trained youth risk entrenching aid dependency and limiting opportunities for self-reliance. Young people without viable income options are increasingly vulnerable to harmful coping strategies such as early marriage, survival sex, petty crime, or irregular onward movement.

  These gaps also undermine the objectives of DA and the Shirika Plan, as households cannot realistically sustain themselves without practical avenues to earn. Over time, the absence of livelihoods programming may weaken social cohesion within refugee communities and between refugees and hosts, as competition for limited informal work intensifies.

Communication & Community Engagement and Accountability to Affected Populations

DRS, UNHCR and WFP have undertaken several consultations with communities, NGOs, and donors to support the DA rollout. However, cuts to communication budgets for supporting organizations, together with reduced mobilizer networks, escorts, power, and airtime, have thinned out feedback loops.

This has, at times, led to the intermittent closure of helpdesks or hotlines and limited rumor management around DA and related service changes.

Immediate needs include: reactivating community mobilizer networks, translation services, structured dialogues, and restoring basic transport and airtime for field teams.

5. Funding Gaps (reported by 10 organizations)

- Health: USD 8M

- Education: USD 6.4M (USD 3.4M for Kakuma secondary)

- Protection: USD 4M

- WASH : USD 1.5M

- Logistics: USD 300,000

- **Total reported gap: ~USD 20M; true gap higher as some organizations did not report.**

6. Impact on Staff and Organizations

- **Incentive staff layoffs**: Over 800 (teachers; protection monitors; health workers; hygiene promoters).

- **National staff layoffs**: Over 200 across sectors.

- **Reduced service standards across sectors:**
  Delayed case response, doubled class sizes, hygiene promotion ceased, caseloads per staff have risen; psychosocial support, safety planning, and documentation have been compromised, intake delays have been witnessed, early warning systems weakened, referral pathways compromised, unauthorized water sales increased, delays in vehicle repair noted.

- **Staff wellbeing:** Staff targeted during DA protests; for instance, some teachers were mugged by students during protests, emotional strain is high for staff; burnout is widespread; field access has been limited during protests in the camps. Staff is also facing hostility e.g. WASH staff threatened by host leaders over borehole operator pay changes.

- **Operational constraints**: Fuel support withdrawn and fuel allocations cut from 150 L to 50 L weekly, limiting movement to the camps; legal aid visits dropped from three to one per week; police escorts in Dadaab limited to three times weekly; electricity in some Dadaab offices restricted to five hours daily.

  Note: Flight Costs and Restricted Mobility - while the survey did not capture this, member organizations have highlighted that flight prices between Nairobi and the field have nearly doubled in recent months. This sharp increase has significantly limited staff mobility to and from the camps. The result is reduced field presence, fewer in-person engagements with beneficiaries, and diminished opportunities for monitoring, coordination, and advocacy at both field and national levels. The increased cost burden also places additional strain on already stretched budgets, further constraining organizations' ability to deliver services effectively.

- **Mitigation measures**: Carpooling; office co-sharing; solarization; reducing trips; clustering activities; prioritizing emergencies; contingency budgets for referrals; staff counselling; merged roles; volunteer/community worker use; strategic fundraising;

pre-positioning of supplies; leveraging MoH oversight; remote outreach via radio, SMS, phone.

8. Impact According to Refugees

While the first half of this report draws on the experiences and data shared by NRG member organizations, the second half highlights the voices and perspectives of refugees themselves. To complement the organizational survey, a separate questionnaire was administered to refugees, with 116 responses received. Of these, 99% were from Kakuma and 1% from urban settings.

This section provides an overview of how refugees perceive the impact of funding cuts and the rollout of Differentiated Assistance (DA) on their daily lives. Their responses highlight not only declining service standards across food, health, education, protection, and WASH, but also the compounding social and security pressures within the camps. Refugees further articulated their concerns about the coping strategies they are being forced to adopt, and the rise in negative social outcomes such as child marriage, domestic violence, and theft.

By presenting refugee voices alongside NGO data, the report aims to provide a more comprehensive picture of the evolving humanitarian landscape. These insights are essential for shaping donor, UN, and government responses that are not only evidence-based but also grounded in the lived realities of the communities most affected.

8.1 Impact of funding cuts to Beneficiaries

Refugees reported significant reductions across core services:

- 83.6% of respondents said food assistance had reduced or stopped.
- 69.8% of respondents said cash transfers had reduced or stopped.
- 46.6% of respondents said health care had reduced or stopped.
- 61.2% of respondents said protection services had reduced or stopped.
- 57.8% of respondents said WASH services had reduced or stopped.
- 35.3% of respondents said education services had reduced or stopped.
- 50% of respondents said livelihoods support had reduced or stopped.

When asked about overall service standards:

- 76.7% of respondents said standards had become much worse.
- 9.5% of respondents said slightly worse.
- 12.1% of respondents said they had stayed the same.

Refugee voices:

- *"In the last six months, the number of teachers reduced from 70 percent to 20 percent; food rations went to zero for many; and water shortages lasted for months without change."*

- *"The security situation is out of hand. People are robbed in daylight near distribution centers. On 14 August 2025, two people were killed with panga cuts in Kakuma 1."*

- *"Unqualified staff are replacing trained teachers, especially in special education."*

- *"There are fewer teachers, fewer doctors, fewer caseworkers, less police support, and extremely limited food for vulnerable families. There are no dignity pads for girls, no support for persons with disabilities, water is scarce, and the camp feels like an open prison. Desperation has increased, and with it lawlessness, suicide attempts, and families fleeing back to unsafe home countries."*

Livelihoods impact:

- 69.8% of respondents said it has become much more difficult to earn a livelihood.
- 22.4% of respondents said no change.
- 6% of respondents said slightly more difficult.

From 95 responses, the reasons included:

- Lack of jobs or business opportunities (12 respondents).
- DA and the end of Bamba Chakula (9 respondents).
- Inflation (5 respondents).

Refugee voices:

- *"I don't have any capital or cash to start a business."*

- *"Due to limited business opportunities, instability, and reduced aid, the situation has become worse, especially for those who cannot earn an income."*

- *"There are fewer job opportunities now, and competition for work is high. Some businesses closed, and support programs reduced. At the same time, the cost of living has gone up, so even occasional income does not cover needs."*

- *"The little money I get does not match market prices. Things are expensive but my income is the same. Bamba Chakula used to help us buy what we needed."*

Note: Bamba Chakula is a WFP initiative in Kenya that delivers food assistance through digital cash transfers. The support is sent directly to refugees via mobile phones and can only be redeemed in designated local shops, while also channeling resources into surrounding markets and small businesses; but these have also been stopped under DA at the time of writing this report.
Bamba Chakula was widely cited as a critical loss by families that relied on it for both for food purchases and as start-up capital for small businesses. Refugees also pointed to harsh weather conditions in Kakuma, which limit farming opportunities and prevent households from supplementing their income through cultivation. Combined with a shortage of jobs and reduced support programs, these factors have left many with few options to generate income or build resilience.

8.2 Increasing Conflict in the Camps

Conflict and insecurity were reported as widespread:

- 94.8% of respondents said they or someone they knew had experienced attacks in the last six months.
- Of these, 64.7% of respondents said attacks were carried out by police or security personnel.
- 54.1% of respondents said attacks were carried out by other refugees.
- 19.8% of respondents said attacks were carried out by members of the host community.

When asked why these incidents occurred (96 responses):

- 20 said because of DA and food shortages.
- Others cited reduced service standards, lack of consultation on the Shirika Plan, water shortages, lack of jobs, and discrimination based on gender or sexuality.

Compared to last year, 79.3% of respondents said the situation had become much worse.

8.3 Differentiated Assistance (DA)

8.3.1. Personal Impacts of DA

Out of 108 responses, reported personal impacts of DA included malnourishment, anxiety and psychological stress, perceived mis categorization, and pressure to consider voluntary repatriation.

Respondents also linked DA rollout to increased crime, conflict between categories, and targeted robberies.

Refugee voices:

- *"It's been difficult. Where do I go to get food? Work? There are no job opportunities. Be self-employed? Where do I get funding?"*
- *"I have faced reduced rations and limited livelihood opportunities, which forced me to rely on credit and fall into debt. At the same time, I benefited from business training, which helped with self-reliance."*
- *"When I see people sleeping without eating, it gives me fear. It is not their fault."*
- *"Life has become stressful. I am caring for my nephews who were placed in Category 3 and do not get food. This has also led to more crime in our community."*
- *"I was depending on Bamba Chakula for school fees and food. Now I have dropped out of school, I am starving, and I feel desperate."*

8.3.2. Main concerns with DA:

The most cited concerns with DA included safety; targeting of households with different entitlements; and lack of transparency in categorization.

8.4 Coping Mechanisms

Refugees reported resorting to different coping strategies due to the funding cuts and Differentiated Assistance:

- 50% of respondents said they were coping by relocating to other areas.
- 17.5% of respondents said they are reducing meal intakes.
- 11.4% of respondents said they are sharing limited resources.
- 10.5% of respondents said they are withdrawing children from school.

8.5 Increasing Social Issues

Refugees also reported a sharp increase in social problems in their communities due to the funding cuts and Differentiated assistance:

- 59% of respondents witnessed more cases of child marriage.
- 81.9% of respondents witnessed more theft.

- 40.5% of respondents witnessed more recruitment into extremist groups.
- 56.9% of respondents witnessed more domestic violence.
- 50% of respondents witnessed more cases of survival sex.

Refugee voices:

- *"Young girls are being sent for marriage so families can survive."*
- *"Some girls are forced into survival sex to support their siblings who are in Category 3."*
- *"Due to financial pressure, families are marrying off daughters younger. Theft has increased in markets and crowded areas. Domestic violence has also gone up due to stress and lack of income."*
- *"Crime is rampant in the camp. Wholesale shops are broken into. Youths attack people on roads with pangas, threatening lives just to get food or sell phones and electronics."*

9. Support Needed from Government, UNHCR, and Donors

9.1 Support Requests from NGOs

NGOs stressed the need for urgent and sustained action to address immediate gaps while also reinforcing long-term resilience and coordination. Key priorities include:

- **Funding and flexibility**:
    - Immediate financial support to cover operational gaps across health, protection, education, WASH, and livelihoods.
    - Flexible funding to support operational running costs, logistics, staffing, and essential supplies such as water pipes and spare parts.
    - Short-term contingency funding to maintain service continuity while longer-term solutions are secured.
- **Health and protection**:

- Rapid funding for MHPSS, child protection, GBV prevention, and legal protection to avoid suspension of case management and community prevention activities in
  the next 3–6 months.
- Fast-tracking the operationalization of the Level 4 hospital in Dadaab to reduce pressure on existing facilities and cut referral costs to Garissa and Nairobi.
- Advocacy to ensure enrolment in the Social Health Authority (SHA) to secure health insurance for chronically ill and vulnerable groups.

- **Coordination and efficiency**:

  - UNHCR to strengthen coordination among actors delivering services, ensuring more transparency in funding availability and allocation.
  - Enhanced leadership by the Government of Kenya and relevant ministries in service coordination and planning.
  - Joint resource mobilization among partners.

- **Basic assistance and resilience**:

  - Prioritization of funding for basic assistance, especially health and nutrition.
  - Ensuring that development financing is directed to priority service delivery pillars that benefit both refugees and host populations.
  - Support for the Shirika Plan to enable socio-economic inclusion, which can mitigate the effects of DA and funding cuts.

- **Operational support**:

  - Additional vehicles to strengthen mobility and logistics.
  - Increased staffing in field offices to manage rising caseloads.

NGO voices:

- *"Rapid injection of funds is needed to prevent suspension of protection case management and psychosocial support."*

- *"Strengthening education opportunities, especially for girls, remains essential as families face growing socio-economic pressure."*

9.2 Support Requests from Refugees

Refugees directed their final messages to UNHCR, government, and donors, highlighting basic needs and urgent protection concerns. From 112 responses, priorities included:

- **Food assistance**: 17 respondents explicitly requested increases in food support to address widespread hunger.
- **Resettlement opportunities**: 6 respondents called for expanded pathways to third-country resettlement.
- **Livelihoods and jobs**: Many emphasized the importance of creating sustainable livelihood opportunities to reduce dependency and restore dignity.
- **Water supply**: Several respondents urged investment in water systems to allow families to meet basic needs and pursue agricultural activities for self-reliance.
- **Protection and security**: Refugees appealed for stronger action against police discrimination and abuse within the camps.

Refugee voices:

- *"Increase food distribution; many of us are starving."*
- *"If there is water in the camp, we can depend on ourselves through farming or fishing. Water would change our lives more than anything else."*
- *"Please expand resettlement. We need opportunities for a safe and dignified life."*
- *"We need jobs and livelihoods, not just aid. Without them, people turn to theft and survival sex."*
- *"Stop police discrimination. Refugees deserve safety, not violence."*

10. Outlook on the Future

10.1 Refugee Outlook

When asked about their future, refugees expressed uncertainty but also clear preferences for durable solutions:

- 68.1% of respondents said they hope to resettle in a third country.
- 17.2% of respondents said they see themselves returning home.
- 11.2% of respondents said they were not sure.

Refugee voices:

- *"Due to the threats against me and my family, the way back to my country is certain death, and staying in the refugee community is not possible. I hope in the future I could find a place for my family to live away from fear and loss."*

- *"My home country provides food and forests with wild fruits, but insecurity is the only challenge. I prefer this to dying of hunger here."*

- *"I cannot return to my country because of political persecution and ongoing war. Here, we have lost hope as things worsen day by day."*

- *"I have been here for more than twenty years with no job opportunities and no food in Category 3. I have nowhere else to go."*

- *"My parents left Burundi in 1972, and I was born in DRC. I have never been to my homeland and do not even know where to return."*

- *"I chose resettlement because I see no long-term opportunities here. Education, healthcare, and employment are limited, and conditions are difficult. Starting over in another country would give my family a better chance at a dignified life."*

10.2 NGO Outlook

NGOs stressed that without urgent action, prospects for durable solutions will weaken further. Specifically:

- Declining service standards, coupled with rising insecurity, make it harder to build trust and stability necessary for integration.
- If refugees lose confidence in the promise of local inclusion, they may increasingly turn to irregular migration, return to unsafe countries, or pressure already overstretched resettlement pathways.
- NGOs emphasized that without reinforced investment in livelihoods, education, and protection, the long-term goal of shifting from aid dependence to self-reliance under Shirika will remain out of reach.

11. Recommendations

11.1 Donor-Focused Asks

- Increase food assistance: Urgently scale up funding for food and cash-based assistance to ensure that all vulnerable refugee households can meet minimum dietary needs. Additional resources are required to sustain the recent WFP adjustments and to prevent further deterioration in nutrition, protection, and social cohesion.
- Urgently increase and sustain flexible humanitarian funding to stabilize essential services in health, protection, education, and WASH.
- Support multi-year, predictable financing to give agencies the ability to plan and adapt responsibly.
- Prioritize funding for livelihoods and education, which directly reduce aid dependency and social tensions.
- Ring-fence program budgets for CCE/AAP as an essential enabler of protection, health, education, and WASH outcomes.
- Provide direct support to government and front- line organizations to maximize the efficient use of scarce funds.

11.2 Policy and Operational Asks for UNHCR and the Government

- Strengthen coordination among actors, with more transparent communication on funding allocations.
- Fast-track the Level 4 hospital in Dadaab to reduce referral burdens and costs.
- Ensure Social Health Authority (SHA) enrolment for vulnerable groups, including those with chronic illnesses.
- Continue strengthening DA implementation by building on ongoing self-reliance assessments and refugee consultations. This should include closer collaboration with development and private sector partners to expand livelihood initiatives that complement DA packages. By creating more income-generating opportunities, refugees can better sustain themselves, reduce dependence on aid, and improve social cohesion within communities.
- Support the integration of refugee services into county planning and resource allocation processes under Shirika.
- Develop a joint DA communications plan (clear entitlements, grievance paths, recategorization timelines) and re-open community helpdesks/hotlines with multilingual coverage.
- Enhance security and promote social cohesion in and among refugee and host communities

11.3 NGO and RLO Joint Advocacy Priorities

- Advocate for livelihoods and job creation as a cornerstone of both Shirika and DA, ensuring refugees are not left without means of survival.
- Push for inclusive consultation with refugees and refugee-led organizations in policy design and roll-out of DA and Shirika.
- Advocate for protection of civic and human rights, including an end to police discrimination and abuse within camps.
- Call for donor solidarity to address the compounding shocks of U.S. cuts and DA, ensuring the Kenyan refugee response does not collapse under strain.
- Develop pooled rumor-tracking + community dialogue calendar tied to early-warning triggers; share weekly CCE notes in inter-agency meetings.
- Advocate for design of projects and alignment into county sector plans
- Influence and advocate for refugee needs inclusion into national, county planning and domestic resource allocation processes

12. Conclusion

The findings of this mid-year survey underscore a refugee response in crisis. Funding cuts and the rollout of Differentiated Assistance have compounded pressures on refugees, frontline staff, and organizations alike. Standards across all core sectors are deteriorating; insecurity and crime are rising; and social cohesion is fraying. Refugees themselves describe hunger, despair, and eroding safety, with many resorting to harmful coping mechanisms such as early marriage, survival sex, and migration to urban areas.

Looking ahead, refugees overwhelmingly express a desire for resettlement, reflecting both their loss of hope in camp conditions and the gaps in current integration efforts. NGOs warn that without urgent investment, Shirika's vision of socio-economic inclusion will remain unfulfilled.

To reverse this trajectory, donors, UNHCR, and the Government of Kenya must act decisively: restore funding, strengthen coordination, and ensure DA and Shirika are implemented in ways that build trust, resilience, and dignity. Without this, the humanitarian response risks not only losing lives but also eroding the foundations for durable solutions in Kenya.