

Terms of Reference (ToR)

Study on Referral Practices and Utilization of the Referral Management System (RMS) in Somalia

Background

The Referral Management System (RMS) is a multi-agency digital platform supporting humanitarian organizations in Somalia to register, manage, coordinate, track, and report referrals across humanitarian sectors. The system aims to strengthen safe, timely, accountable, and coordinated service delivery while improving inter-agency coordination, referral visibility, reporting, and operational decision-making.

The RMS was launched in OCT 2025 and as the RMS expands across Somalia, there is a need to better understand referral practices, organizational use of the RMS, factors affecting adoption, and opportunities to increase operational utility and scale. Particular attention is required to understand how different stakeholder groups — including Local NGOs, INGOs, and UN Agencies — experience, perceive, and engage with the system.

Purpose of the Study

The study seeks to assess the effectiveness, utilization, barriers, enablers, and growth opportunities of referrals and the RMS within the Somalia humanitarian response ecosystem.

Objectives

The study will:

- Assess current referral practices, workflows, and coordination mechanisms among humanitarian actors;
- Evaluate RMS utilization patterns, adoption levels, and user experience across organizations, sectors, and geographic locations;
- Identify operational, technical, governance, institutional, and coordination barriers affecting RMS uptake and utility;
- Identify key enablers supporting successful implementation and sustained use;
- Examine differences influencing adoption among Local NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies;
- Assess opportunities to strengthen utility, reporting, governance, interoperability, and long-term sustainability.

Scope and Coverage

The study will cover participating humanitarian organizations using or targeted for RMS implementation across Somalia, including Local NGOs, INGOs, UN Agencies, coordination structures, and technical focal points. Geographic coverage should include operational and expansion areas where the RMS is active or planned, including Banadir/Mogadishu, Bay/Baidoa,

Hiraan/Beledweyne, and other relevant locations where feasible. The assessment should cover multiple humanitarian sectors including Protection, Health, Nutrition, WASH, Shelter/NFI, MPCA, and other participating service areas.

The study should engage a broad range of stakeholders involved in referrals, coordination, governance, and use of the RMS ecosystem.

Stakeholders and Consultation Coverage

The study should engage a broad range of stakeholders involved in referrals, coordination, governance, accountability, and use of the RMS ecosystem. The study should prioritize consultation with the following key stakeholders within the RMS ecosystem:

- **Participating RMS Agencies** – Local NGOs, INGOs, UN agencies, and other humanitarian partners using or targeted for onboarding onto the RMS.
- **RMS Governance and System Management Actors** – RMS administrators, system owners, governance bodies, and technical/Information Management focal points responsible for oversight, configuration, onboarding, reporting, and data governance.
- **Operational RMS Users** – Data Enumerators, Sector Supervisors, and Sector Officers responsible for referral registration, review, service delivery, monitoring, and closure.
- **Coordination Structures** – Area-Based Coordination Structures (ABCs), sector coordinators, clusters, and district/regional coordination mechanisms supporting referral pathways, service mapping, and operational alignment.
- **MEAL, CFM, and Accountability Actors** – Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning teams, Complaints and Feedback Mechanism focal points, and community engagement actors supporting feedback loops, accountability, learning, and beneficiary experience.
- **Institutional Support and Compliance Actors** – Operational leadership, legal, compliance, data protection, and information-sharing focal persons from participating organizations.
- **Beneficiaries / Community Representatives (where feasible)** – To assess accessibility, responsiveness, user experience, trust, and effectiveness of referral and feedback mechanisms.

Key Areas of Assessment

The study should be examined:

- **Referral Practices and Ecosystem Dynamics**
How referrals are initiated, managed, monitored, escalated, and closed across sectors and organizations.
- **RMS Utilization and User Experience**
Patterns of use, feature utilization, reporting practices, workflow integration, mobile/offline use, and perceptions of system effectiveness.

- **Institutional Factors Affecting Adoption**
Differences between Local NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies related to governance requirements, operational capacity, digital maturity, staffing, data protection expectations, and institutional incentives.
- **Barriers to Use**
Technical constraints, connectivity limitations, training gaps, SOP clarity, service mapping gaps, governance concerns, operational pressures, and organizational approval processes.
- **Enablers of Adoption**
Leadership support, coordination structures, training and mentorship, clear governance arrangements, demonstrated operational value, and user-centered design.
- **Utility Growth and Scale-Up Opportunities**
Improvements related to workflow optimization, reporting, analytics, interoperability, integrations, mobile capability, governance strengthening, and sustainability.

Methodology

The study should apply a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods.

Methods may include desk review of RMS documentation, governance materials, SOPs, analytics, training resources, and pilot reports; quantitative analysis of RMS utilization and referral performance data; surveys targeting RMS users and stakeholders; and qualitative methods such as Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), case studies, and user journey mapping exercises.

The consultant/team will be expected to propose a detailed methodology during inception.

Timeline

The study is expected to be completed within approximately seven weeks.

- Week 1 will focus on inception, methodology development, stakeholder mapping, and development of data collection tools.
- Weeks 2-3 will be dedicated to desk review, field engagement, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and primary data collection.
- Weeks 4 will focus on data analysis and development of preliminary findings.
- Week 5 will cover validation of findings with stakeholders.
- Week 6 will focus on final reporting, recommendations, and dissemination outputs.

Deliverables

The selected consultant/team will deliver:

- An inception report outlining methodology, workplan, stakeholder engagement strategy, and data collection tools;
- Data collection instruments including survey tools, interview guides, and discussion guides;
- A draft study report presenting findings, analysis, barriers, enablers, and recommendations;
- A validation session or workshop to review findings;
- A final report incorporating stakeholder feedback;
- An executive summary and presentation deck suitable for leadership and coordination audiences.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

The study will be expected to achieve the following minimum performance indicators:

- Completion of the inception phase and workplan within agreed timelines;
- Coverage of planned geographic locations and stakeholder groups;
- Representation of Local NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies in the assessment sample;
- Completion of an agreed number of interviews, surveys, and consultation sessions;
- Analysis of available RMS utilization and referral datasets;
- Delivery of actionable findings identifying key barriers, enablers, and growth opportunities;
- Development of practical recommendations and an implementation-oriented utility growth roadmap;
- Timely submission of draft and final deliverables.

Expected Outputs

The study is expected to produce:

- A comprehensive understanding of referral practices and RMS use in Somalia;
- Evidence on factors affecting adoption among Local NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies;
- Analysis of operational, governance, coordination, technical, and institutional barriers;
- Identification of successful practices and enabling conditions;
- Practical recommendations to improve utility, adoption, sustainability, and scale-up of the RMS within the Somalia humanitarian response.

Professional Requirements / Qualifications

The consultant or study team should demonstrate the following minimum qualifications and competencies:

- At least a **bachelor's degree in information technology, Computer Science, Information Management, Data Science, Humanitarian Studies, Public Health, Social Sciences, Monitoring & Evaluation, or a related field.**
- Demonstrated background and experience in **Information Technology (IT), digital platforms, information management systems, databases, data governance, or humanitarian information systems.**
- Proven experience conducting **research, assessments, evaluations, studies, or user adoption analysis**, preferably within humanitarian, development, or digital systems contexts.
- Strong understanding of **humanitarian coordination mechanisms, referral systems, case management, accountability, or inter-agency coordination frameworks.**
- Experience working with **multi-agency digital systems, data analysis, surveys, qualitative and quantitative research methodologies.**
- Knowledge of **data protection, data sharing, privacy, governance, and risk management principles** is highly desirable.
- Demonstrated understanding of the **Somalia humanitarian operational context**, including working with **Local NGOs, INGOs, and UN agencies**, will be considered an advantage.
- Excellent analytical, report writing, facilitation, and stakeholder engagement skills.

Language Requirements

- Fluency in **English (written and spoken)** is required.
- Proficiency in **Somali language** is required, including the ability to conduct interviews, stakeholder consultations, and field engagements in Somali.
- Ability to produce professional reports and presentations in English.