# Empowering Youth through Information

TRENDS IN INFORMATION CONSUMPTION AMONG URBAN YOUTH IN FIVE IDP CAMPS IN SOMALIA

The Somali information sector has been expanding rapidly in recent years. Yet, not much is known about how this progress has benefitted vulnerable populations, such as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and how humanitarian organizations could best harness this trend. To address this knowledge gap, this study analyzed the information consumption patterns of **IDP youth aged between 15–24 years**. Using a mixed-method approach, this research consisted of a field survey with **~ 900 respondents** and **20+ qualitative interviews** with study participants, which were carried out in early 2019, covering **five IDP settlements in Somalia**, including camps in Baidoa, Beledweyne, Hobyo, Mogadishu, and South Galkayo.

This brief is a condensed version of a longer report and is structured into five principal areas, covering information access, communication channels, gender, early warning and information barriers. The main recommendations emerging from the study are summarized at the end along with suggestions on how to facilitate and monitor the uptake of study insights.

Study sites included in this research:

Beledwenye

Galkaayo

Hobyo

Daynile

Baidoa
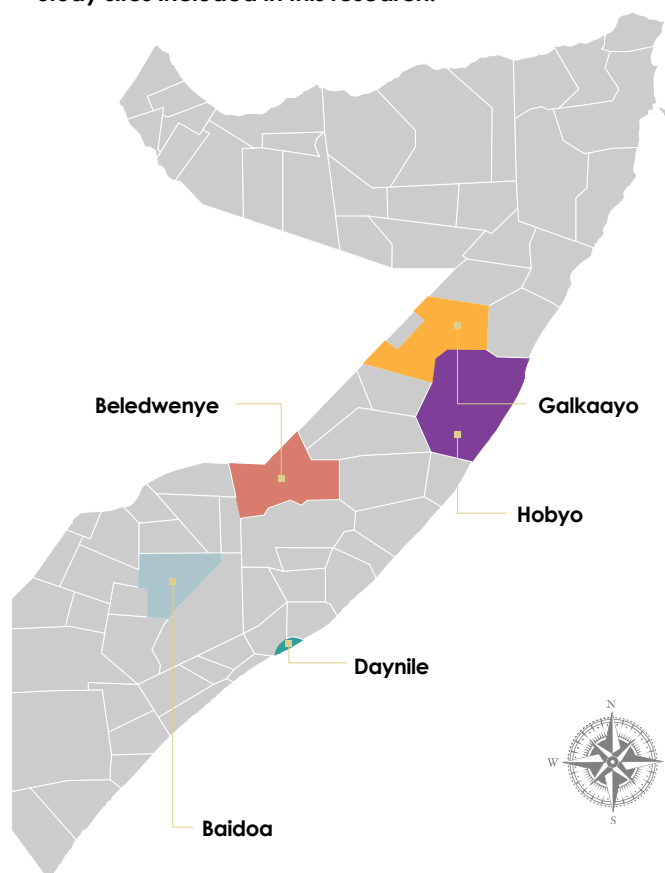
1.0
Information Access:
Stark differences across locations

☐ As a summary of the data revealed, there is marked variation in access to information, measured as whether respondents believed they are sufficiently informed about certain topics relating to resilience.

Displaced populations in Baidoa appear to have the greatest, those in Hobyo the least overall access to information
The information I receive on [topic] is sufficient (n=883)
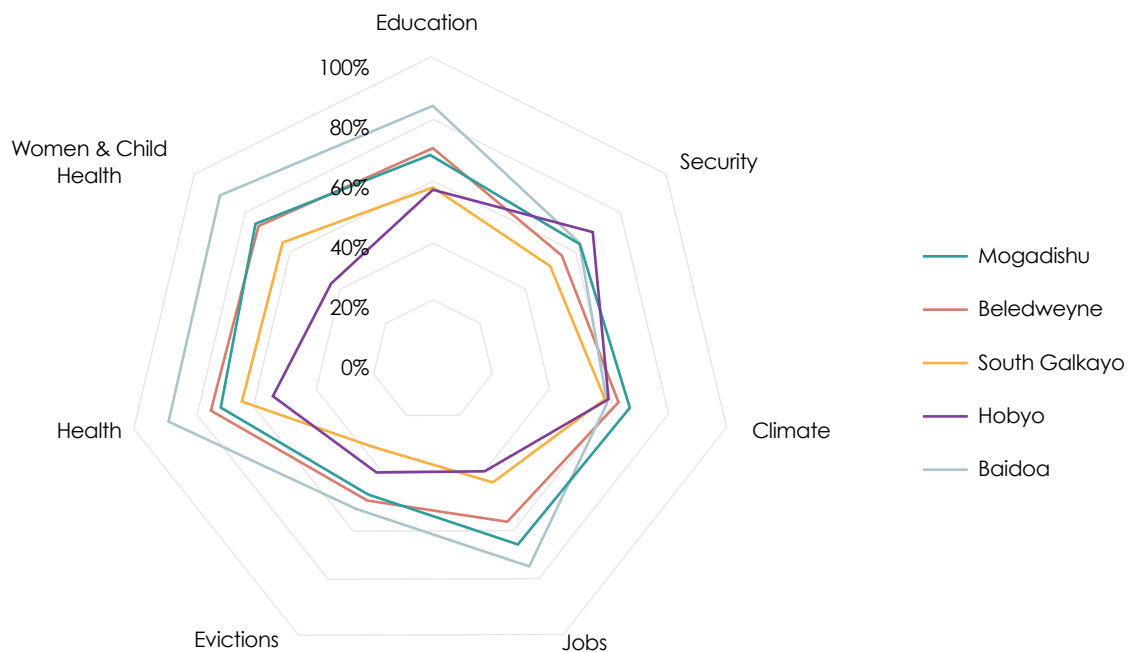
☐ Generally, health and education were areas that were deemed relatively adequately covered across the camps studied, while messages on employment and eviction were rather rare.

☐ Looking at the geographical disparities, displaced populations in Baidoa appeared to have the highest levels of information access. In this context, close to four in five respondents indicated receiving sufficient information on employment. Displaced communities in this area also appear to stay longer, have better access to sturdy shelter (metal sheets).

☐ In Hobyo, by contrast, only 42% reported receiving relevant messages on jobs.

☐ There could be several factors explaining the higher information access observed in Baidoa. Chief among them is the greater observed cohesion between displaced and host communities both clan-wise and linguistically, as well as a more sedentary lifestyle and a greater concentration of NGO service providers alongside more job opportunities.

☐ Conversely, displaced communities in Hobyo lament a lack of electricity, connectivity to radio or mobile networks, and little access to local labour markets.

☐ All of this suggests that humanitarian NGOs would do well if they assessed the informational environment of their operational areas distinctly to account for potential variations.

A Somali woman participating in BRCiS-supported livelihood activities in an IDP camp in Baidoa.

2.1
Information Channels:
Radios

☐ Radio messages are important tools for humanitarian organizations during emergencies, but their effectiveness and limitations are not always clearly understood.

☐ In line with previous findings, the survey confirmed that radios along with social networks, such as family and friends, are the leading information channels among IDP youth covered by the study.

☐ Broken down by themes, general topics such as health, climate or education were mostly consumed through the radio, while information on employment and eviction was typically accessed and disseminated through informal networks.

☐ Besides, while radio was identified as by far the most popular information channel, it must be highlighted that not all of the areas examined had adequate radio coverage. For instance, there are currently no local radio stations serving the area where IDPs live in Hobyo, as noted earlier.

☐ Concerning radio consumption, close to two thirds of survey respondents (65.6%) reported listening to the radio via phones.
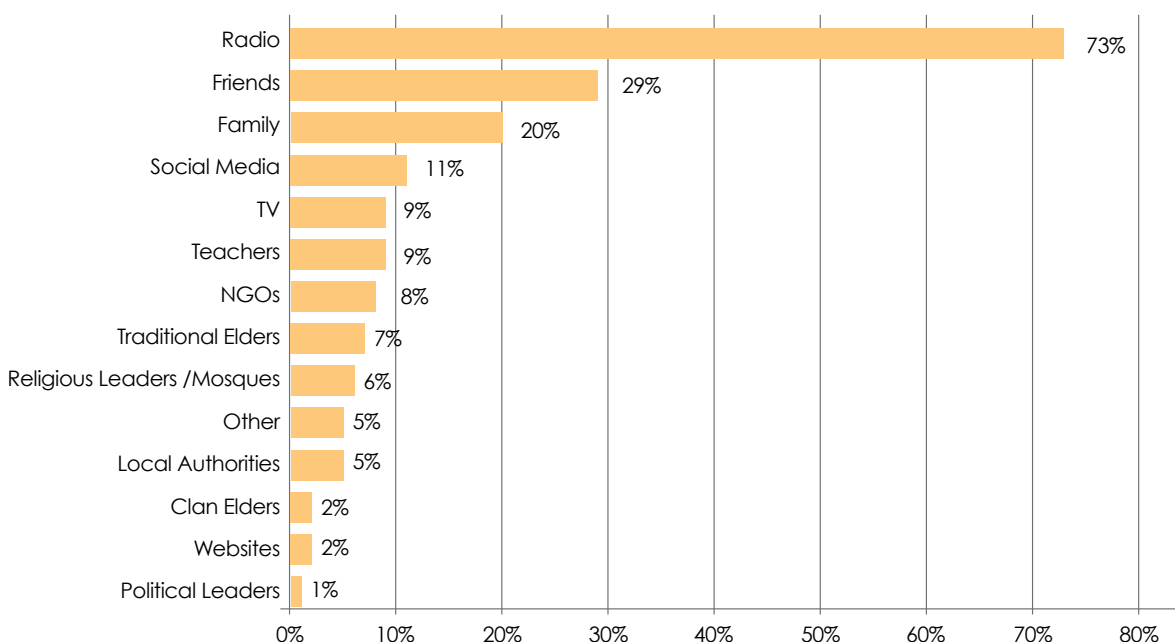
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☐ Further, radio shows are mostly listened to during the morning hours (6–9 am) and in the late evening (8–10pm), indicating that this might be the most suitable time to target households with radio messages.

☐ As far as radio programs are concerned, there is a noticeable dissimilarity in the interest of male and female consumers: while men's interests primarily revolve around politics and sports, women, on the other hand, prefer news on business, employment, and entertainment.

Young people participating in BRCiS-supported livelihood activities in Mogadishu.

☐ Taken together, survey results suggest that radio campaigns might not be effective in all contexts and that NGOs need to conduct prior assessments to estimate the potential reach of their radio campaigns.

☐ Similarly, targeting users in the early hours or in the evening seems most effective.

☐ Relatedly, forging close partnerships with national and local radio stations shall be a key priority for humanitarian NGOs running awareness-raising campaigns.

Other than radio, information appears to be mostly disseminated via social networks, both personal and digital
How do you mostly receive news or information? (n=883)

Source	Percentage
Radio	73%
Friends	29%
Family	20%
Social Media	11%
TV	9%
Teachers	9%
NGOs	8%
Traditional Elders	7%
Religious Leaders /Mosques	6%
Other	5%
Local Authorities	5%
Clan Elders	2%
Websites	2%
Political Leaders	1%

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2.2
Information Channels:
Phones

☐ Phones are crucial for access and dissemination of information. They are both means of connection with social support networks and primary access to radio.

☐ Based on self-reported survey responses, it was brought to light that basic phone ownership was surprisingly high (close to 99%) among the survey respondents included in this research. To add more nuance, 14% of those having basic phones said they share their devices with others.

☐ About preferred times to participate in phone surveys, Focus Group Discussion (FGD) participants asserted that the best timing to interview them is during the morning hours, tentatively between 9am–12pm.

☐ In a similar vein, interview participants frequently requested to limit survey length to 20 minutes at the longest as time-consuming interviews seriously interfered with daily pursuits of obtaining temporary income or access to resources.

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2.3
Information Channels:
Smartphones

☐ Somewhat surprisingly, slightly more than one-fourth of IDP youth (27%) indicated some level of internet access, most commonly accessed through mobile hotspots.

☐ To put this into perspective, this figure is much lower when looking at regular online activities, with only 7% reporting surfing on the web daily.

☐ Only 16% asserted that they possessed a smartphone device, mostly typically found among those running profitable small businesses, indicating a strong link between smartphone ownership and economic capacity.

☐ Based on this logic, targeting smartphone users specifically or those with internet access more broadly could exacerbate existing inequalities within displaced communities unless it can be established that such beneficiaries are likely to act as catalysers for their communities.

**Mobile
Survey**
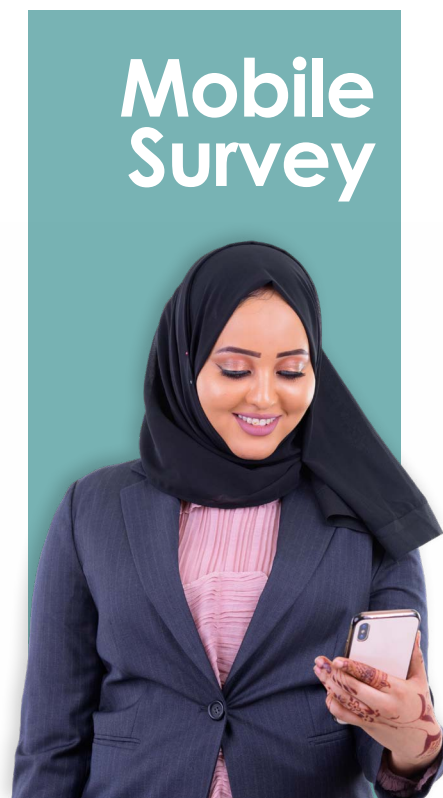
Less than a fifth of displaced youth use a smartphone
What type of phone are you currently using? (n=883)

16%

84%

■ Basic phone   ■ Smartphone

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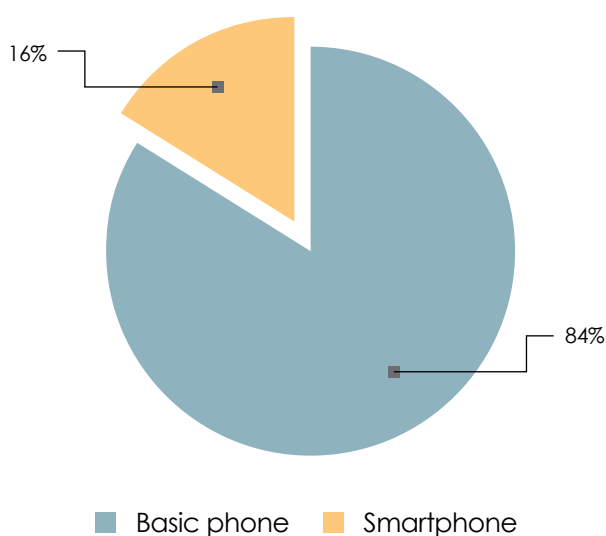
3.0 Information Inequalities by gender

☐ In terms of gendered differences, the analysis identified stark information gaps that were principally manifested through lower access to social networks and digital content.

☐ Female respondents stated almost twice as frequently as men that they access and disseminate information via family members (21% vs 12%). In contrast, men tend to rely more on friendship circles (66% vs 40%), indicating higher levels of social capital among males.

☐ In a similar vein, statistical analysis showed that women are almost half as likely to own a smartphone or go on the internet compared to male groups. Concretely, only 10% of female survey respondents had a smartphone, and only 17% had internet access in some ways.

☐ As a potential consequence, IDP women are less likely to trust digital platforms, including TV, social media, or the web.

☐ Further to this, the study found that there tends to be little direct interaction between IDP women and traditional elders in the locations examined, particularly on matters of conflict and eviction.

☐ In light of this finding, it does not seem advisable to rely on predominantly male community structures to communicate with female groups, which is a still a common practice among many NGOs.

☐ Generally, when designing resilience-building interventions, humanitarian NGOs should carefully consider prevailing information inequalities, which severely hinder communication effectiveness with IDP women.

To what extent do you trust the following information sources? (strongly or mostly trust) *(n=874)*

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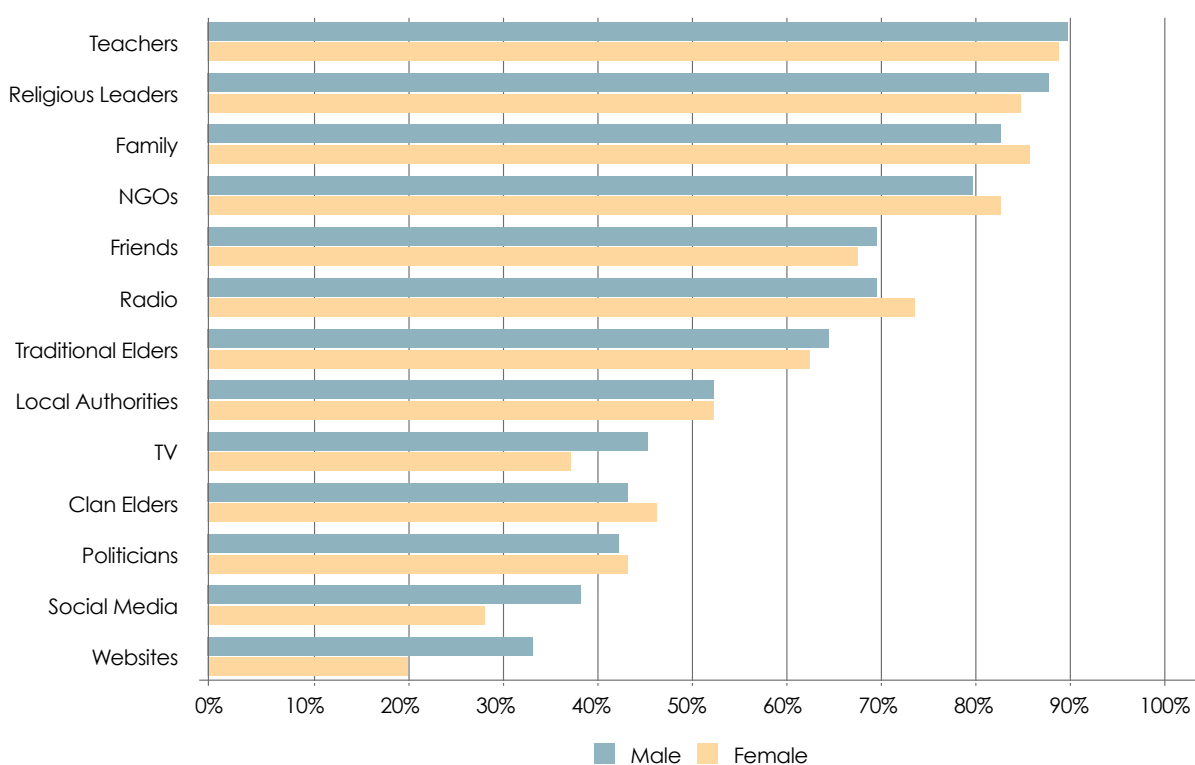
4.0
Early Warning

☐ The study found that early warning mechanisms existed in most camps, but were severely limited.

☐ By and large, they denote Early Warning Committee members having received training, and cooperation among local authorities, NGO-staff, and committee members/camp leaders.

☐ This may have the benefit that it activates social support structures implicitly, but threatens to leave those not so well-connected behind, thereby compounding existing inequalities and vulnerabilities.

☐ For instance, affected by sudden annual floods, focus groups in Beledweyne recalled casualties during floods as not all community members could be contacted in time.

☐ In this light, increasing the information access of vulnerable community members and strengthening their embeddedness in community-level Early Warning Committees remain a key priority for humanitarian NGOs working on resilience-building.

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5.0 Main Information Barriers

☐ High electricity costs, affordability of airtime alongside mobile data, limited network coverage and lack of electricity to charge phones were commonly cited hurdles shared by interview participants.

☐ In an extreme example, phone charging costs went up to 0.10 USD for a full battery charge, as FGD participants in Beledweyne explained.

☐ To cope with this situation, many households reportedly switch off their phones at night to conserve battery, which — in extreme cases — could bear fatal consequences; for instance, when the flooding hits during the night, as it happened in Beledweyne in 2018.

☐ Linked to the informational roadblocks highlighted, IDP youth are oftentimes not able to verify the information received and are more vulnerable to the spread of rumours, as interviews disclosed.

☐ In light of the above, a better understanding of the observed market failures is inevitably needed to address the information constraints faced by vulnerable IDP populations.

☐ Crucially, the study found that while NGOs primarily rely on gatekeepers and traditional community leaders to reach youth groups, confidence in these individuals is relatively low in IDP camps.

☐ Only around 7% of respondents reported receiving information from traditional leaders, while around two-third of respondents indicated trusting community leaders in IDP sites.

☐ In comparison, a significantly higher share of study participants asserted that they consider teachers and religious leaders as trustworthy, with 89% and 86%, respectively.

☐ Consequently, humanitarian NGOs working with IDPs would do well in engaging the most trusted community actors for information campaigns.

☐ On a similar note, religious leaders and teachers are relevant influencers for young people living in IDP camps. Building on their networks and connections could potentially enhance resilience-building efforts targeted at IDP youth.

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6.0
From Insights to Action

Area One:
Enhancing information access with a focus on women and other vulnerable groups

Recommendations 👍	Indicators 📈
Engage women in business grant and training activities	Number of female individuals participating in NGO-supported livelihood activities
Work together with private sector actors to address market inefficiencies in the information supply chain	Number of interventions in an NGO's overall activity portfolio that uses a Market System Development (MSD) lens
Incubate innovative pilots (redesigned or new) activities with an explicit goal of increasing information access for vulnerable populations	Number of interventions in an NGO's overall activity portfolio that uses a Market System Development (MSD) lens

Area Two:
Designing Information Campaigns

Dos ✅	Don'ts ❌
Engage trusted sources of information (such as religious leaders and teachers) in NGO-led awareness campaigns	Do not communicate with IDP women solely through male-dominated community governance groups
Place radio messages in the morning hours when most people listen to the radio	Do not target IDP women exclusively through digital content

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Area Three:
Collaboration

Recommendations 👍	Indicators 📈
Foster partnerships with local and national radio stations and other media outlets where relevant	Number of partnerships with local and national radio stations linked to awareness-raising campaigns conducted via radio
Increase collaboration with religious and educational institutions	Number of educational and religious leaders directly involved in the content creation of informational campaigns

Area Four:
Future Assessments

Dos ✅	Don'ts ❌
Conduct information assessments at an area level to account for potential variations in information access across main project locations	Do not conduct phone surveys that are longer than 20 minutes
When preparing your analysis, look beyond the question of information needs and carefully consider sensitive issues such as trust, power allocation and gender dynamics to gain a fuller picture of the information flow within IDP camps	Do not call respondents in the afternoon for a phone interview as users expressed that their preferred time to participate in surveys is during the morning hours, tentatively between 9am–12pm

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Acknowledgements

The European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) coordinates the Commission's international cooperation, development policy, and aid delivery worldwide. To this end, DG DEVCO works closely with other Commission services and the European External Action Services, and supports coordination among European Member States on topics of development cooperation. In Somalia, the European Development Fund (EDF) is financing a comprehensive portfolio focused on state and peace building, food security and resilience, and education.

As of 16 January 2021, the DG International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO) became DG International Partnerships (INTPA).

In 2013, five international NGOs (consisting of the Cooperazione e Sviluppo, Concern Worldwide, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the International Rescue Committee, and Save the Children International) responded to this continuing devastation by founding the humanitarian consortium Building Resilient Communities in Somalia (BRCiS). BRCiS aims to address this long-term exposure to recurrent disasters and destitution amongst the Somali population by increasing the resilience of communities.

Forcier Consulting is a development research firm that operates in challenging post-conflict environments. Established in 2011 in South Sudan, Forcier Consulting has invested in developing methodologies and approaches to research that are contextually appropriate and feasible, whilst adhering to international standards for social science research and utilizing the latest data collection technology available. Our core services include population and social science research, project evaluations, market assessments for livelihoods and vocational trainings, private sector and market research for feasibility studies, strategic planning and representation, and training and capacity building workshops.

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