



Capital: Mogadishu
Languages: Somali, Arabic, Italian, English
Religion: Muslim
Population: 9,359,000
Refugees: 678,309
Internally displaced person (IDPs): 1,550,000

The East African country of Somalia is a failed state and considered one of the most lawless, dangerous places on Earth. Slightly smaller than Texas, Somalia is bordered by Djibouti, Ethiopia and Kenya. Its extensive coastline

includes the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden. Illiteracy and infant mortality rates are among the highest in the world and life expectancy is among the lowest. Over one third of the population depends on food distribution from foreign aid sources. This humanitarian aid often does not arrive to the neediest segments of the population due to the constant state of lawlessness and piracy along the coastline. This unprecedented crisis has produced one of the largest and most protracted refugee crises in the world.

Somalis and ethnic Somali Bantu have continuously poured into refugee camps primarily in Kenya and Ethiopia for decades. Camps designed to house under 100,000 refugees now contain populations well into the hundreds of thousands. These overcrowded camps lack many basic human needs such as adequate food, shelter, clean water and sanitation and safety from violence. The host countries do not allow assimilation into their already impoverished societies, eliminating this as a solution. Resettlement became the only durable option.

While some education structure exists in the camps, it is not mandatory and often unattainable. Almost all Somali refugee students were born in the camps and have received no formal education. They enter the United States school systems without any prior knowledge of a structured school setting. Survival behaviors that served them well in the refugee camps can be equated to behavioral problems in schools. The students and their families usually speak very little English and are often illiterate in their own languages, posing a challenge for parents in assisting their children with schoolwork. Assistance in acculturation regarding school behavior and expectations will be a priority, as well as ESL.