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# **Return and (Re)Integration after Displacement – Executive Summary**

## **Belonging, Labelling and Livelihoods in Three Somali Cities**



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## Executive summary

Somalia is experiencing a complex situation of protracted and new internal displacement, organised and spontaneous repatriation of refugees, people returning from the diaspora, and arrival of deported asylum seekers and migrants from other countries. The enormous scale of these movements towards major cities has led to overcrowding and added pressure on infrastructure, housing and services. Poor living standards, insecurity, protection issues and restricted livelihoods are the norm for many displaced and returning people.

This research aims to provide a contextualised and evidence-based analysis of the different factors that shape displacement, return and (re)integration in Somalia by investigating the following questions:

1. What are the underlying issues that influence processes of displacement, return and (re)integration?
2. What factors shape people's decisions concerning displacement, return and (re)integration in Somalia?
3. What is the impact of displacement, return and (re)integration on the wider community?
4. What role do state and donor interventions play in promoting sustainable return and (re)integration?

Field research was conducted between January and May 2018 in Baidoa, Kismayo and Mogadishu, Somalia, and in Nairobi, Kenya. The research teams carried out qualitative primary data collection through semi-structured interviews and key informant interviews. In total, 439 interviews were conducted with internally displaced people (IDPs), returnees, refugees, diaspora, deportees, host communities, and key informants from government, international community and civil society.

## Key findings

The key findings of the research are outlined below. They are grouped according to the different sections of the report, which covers migration decisions and experiences, as well as a number of key themes that emerged during the field work, and which have a strong bearing on processes of displacement, return and (re)integration. Given their relevance to the issues at hand, suggested recommendations for policy and programmes have been tied to each of these key themes.

### **Migration decisions and the factors that shape them**

1. Most people attributed their movement not to a single cause, but to a variety of factors. While insecurity and climate constraints were cited as the main drivers, the search for a 'better life' was also a contributing factor. This layering of motivations for

movement complicates conventional concepts of forced and voluntary movements which seek to explain and categorise people on the move in terms of single drivers.

2. Returns are shaped by the interplay between negative pressures in places of displacement and optimism about the potential benefits in places of return. The balance between these factors depends on who is returning and where they are returning from.
3. While most IDPs expected to remain in cities, just under half (and particularly those living in Mogadishu) expressed a desire to return to their place of origin (outside the cities) at some point and under the right conditions.
4. A move to the nearest, safest location combines with clan dynamics to determine where people move to, with implications for the socio-political makeup of places of destination.
5. High expectations of support available in cities may encourage the displaced to move to urban settings. However, levels of assistance on arrival are generally very limited leading to high levels of disappointment among those who move there.

#### **Experiences of migration and the factors that influence them**

6. How and why people have moved greatly influences their experiences and the extent to which they are vulnerable to different forms of hazards, including impoverishment, eviction, hunger, violence and insecurity. In general terms, IDPs are exposed to the highest levels of vulnerability, followed by refugees, returnees, deportees and diaspora.
7. Security and protection are key issues for all respondents, but especially for male IDPs, high-profile diaspora returnees, and women and girls in IDP/returnee settlements.
8. Basic living conditions are extremely poor for those lacking the social and financial resources to rebuild their lives in the city. While remittances can be an important safety net, most do not receive them and must rely instead on multiple sources of income.
9. Livelihood and employment opportunities are limited for all groups and especially for those with low skills and education, although new opportunities do emerge for some women.
10. Hosts typically associate in-migration with negative outcomes, but not all migrants are viewed in the same way. Some hosts do recognise the economic and investment benefits for themselves and their community.

### **Building a sense of belonging to promote integration**

11. A combination of factors, including geography, time, living standards, livelihoods, housing and social ties help to build a sense of belonging among displaced groups.
12. Those identified as IDPs feel more excluded than other groups, particularly those living in Mogadishu. This is a result of their difficult experiences, and the emotional, social and physical estrangement associated with their displacement. Discrimination and their weak economic and political position (especially where they are members of minority clans) also contributes to IDPs' sense of exclusion.
13. While some displaced people may feel alienated from the physical place they have moved to, they do express a sense of belonging to each other through a redefined sense of community and identity in displacement based on shared experiences. The fact that belonging can be associated with people (rather than connection to a physical place) explains why successful integration does not necessarily entail the end of mobility.

### **Strengthening rural-urban linkages to promote local integration and sustainable returns**

14. In the context of drought and urbanisation, the focus of policy and programmes is shifting from rural development to urban resilience. How one interprets internal movements (as either rural-urban migration or internal displacement) has also influenced this shift.
15. Many displaced households stay connected across rural and urban settings in order to diversify livelihoods, access resources and maintain land and other assets. The socioeconomic support that these rural-urban linkages provide can promote sustainable return and (re)integration in places of origin and destination.

### **Challenging conventional categories and labels associated with migration and displacement**

16. There is little to distinguish those recognised as IDPs from those seen as rural-urban migrants when it comes to their reasons for moving and their humanitarian needs.
17. The term IDP is skewed towards the poorest members of society, and excludes those who, despite moving for the same reasons, are not identified as an IDP (either by themselves or others) due to greater social and financial resources.
18. Those labelled as IDPs face discrimination as a result of perceived social, cultural or language differences, and reduced access to rights and freedoms.

## **Addressing housing, land and property concerns and forced evictions**

19. Forced evictions undermine local integration by eroding living standards, livelihoods and a sense of belonging among IDPs and others living in informal settlements.
20. The ability to reclaim assets left behind during displacement is a key determinant of returns for IDPs, although sustainable returns will ultimately depend on improvements to rural security and livelihoods.

## **Improving consensus and coordination on displacement issues**

21. The lack of clarity over government mandates with respect to assistance and protection of the displaced undermines potential progress on normative frameworks associated with migration and displacement.
22. Despite efforts by the international community to promote better harmonisation, policy and programmes continue to be duplicated and run in parallel to existing structures.
23. There is a lack of alignment between donors and district-level government, especially when it comes to policy, programming and durable solutions for IDPs.

## **Recommendations for policy and programmes**

### **To build a sense of belonging to promote integration, policy and programmes should:**

1. Increase investments in a range of basic services, livelihoods, housing, security and protection in cities so that displaced people (in particular IDPs and returnees) can not only feel they belong to the city, but also enjoy better living standards, which are currently very poor for many displaced and returning people.
2. Promote better social cohesion and understanding between the displaced and the local community. Migrants and their hosts face many similar challenges, and initiatives that highlight shared experience and the potential for mutual benefit could be the first (in a long line of) steps in bringing people together around a shared sense of belonging. The provision of assistance according to need rather than migrant status can help to ensure that vulnerable host communities are included in support mechanisms, thereby reducing the potential for tensions. Likewise, participation of hosts and migrants in project planning, implementation and monitoring through dedicated committees and forums can ensure that grievances of different parts of the community are adequately taken into account.
3. Build awareness into project design and planning of the mobile lifestyles and livelihoods of many Somali communities. This will require greater flexibility in policy and programming to provide for a range of workable options that are sensitive to

different needs and contexts, and changes over time. To achieve this, the provision of aid and assistance should move beyond sedentary structures that depend on people either staying put in cities or returning to rural areas, and cater for those who move between settings. For example, facilitating urban aid recipients to share assistance with relatives in rural areas, which represents an efficient way of providing assistance to less accessible areas, which are often out of reach of conventional service providers.

**To strengthen rural-urban linkages to promote sustainable returns and local integration, policy and programmes should:**

4. Support and strengthen social networks and livelihood strategies that span rural-urban settings. This could be achieved by facilitating circular and seasonal movements, and enabling repeated (rather than one-off) return visits and regular communications so that displaced people can stay informed of the situation in their places of origin. More systematic tracking and monitoring of returns to rural areas could also contribute to a better understanding of how to bring about sustainable returns.
5. Maintain investments in both rural and urban settings, so that people can integrate sustainably in the place of their choosing (whether in cities or rural areas). At the same time, invest in satellite cities and/or regional capitals to reduce pressure on major cities (Baidoa, Kismayo and Mogadishu) and bridge rural-urban divides. Failure to distribute resources and opportunities more widely across multiple settings could inadvertently fuel conflict between competing parties.
6. Identify alternative service providers where conventional actors' (government and NGOs) access in rural areas is constrained by security and cost. Depending on local context, these could include the private sector and even IDPs themselves, many of whom are already making return trips to rural areas. Mobile money and voucher systems of support may also be more cost effective in difficult to access areas.

**To challenge conventional categories and labels associated with migration and displacement, policy and programmes should:**

7. Support all groups rendered vulnerable to destitution and the violation of basic rights by displacement and return, regardless of their label or category (IDP, refugee, returnee, rural-urban migration, host, etc). Area-based approaches which, by defining a geographic area (rather than a sector or target group) as the main entry point, can be a useful way of incorporating the needs of all groups.
8. Pay greater attention to defining vulnerabilities and generating a better understanding of what people are vulnerable to. Instead of defining vulnerability on a predetermined set of categories based on migration status and allocating assistance accordingly, support should be provided according to people's actual needs (food,

health, education, water, housing, livelihoods, security, etc) regardless of whether they are IDPs, refugees, returnees, rural-urban migrants or hosts. It is also important to consider broader qualities that cut across these groups, such as gender, age, origins, income, assets, rights and access to services.

9. Build awareness into project design and planning of the potential for discrimination associated with labelling, and especially the term IDP, so that programmes do not inadvertently restrict people's rights or undermine community cohesion.

**To address housing, land and property concerns and forced evictions, policy and programmes should:**

10. Support negotiations between national authorities and stakeholders to reform land administration and implement improved land policy. Displaced groups and women should be consulted as active stakeholders in reform processes and programme design.
11. Encourage regional administrations to build on tentative progress made in Kismayo to allocate viable land with secure tenure for IDPs and returnees. More needs to be done to integrate land allocations within the wider community, and link these up to service delivery (in particular transport, health, education, WASH) to ensure that people living in peripheral areas are still able to establish livelihoods and access basic services.
12. Prevent forced evictions at all costs by including displaced groups in urban planning processes, and working towards long-term planning for hosting and integrating IDPs and returnees. When evictions are unavoidable, they should adhere to international guidelines, in particular the right to consultation and information, sufficient notice before eviction, and protection from force.<sup>1</sup> National guidelines, such as the 2013 'Compact on the Protection Against Evictions of Internally Displaced Persons in Mogadishu' (which remains unendorsed) should also be drafted and adopted.

**To improve consensus and coordination on displacement issues, policy and programmes should:**

13. Build on existing structural and normative frameworks, adopt a 'whole of government' approach that promotes cross-ministerial representation, and involve displaced people in planning and decision-making. These recommendations are not new, and have been advocated for some time by a range of different stakeholders. Nevertheless, practical implementation is still in short supply, so this report underscores the importance of these recommendations for policy makers in the hope that they are taken up more widely.

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<sup>1</sup> An example of international guidelines is the 'Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-Based Evictions and Displacement' (OHCHR).

14. Integrate and align displacement and return interventions within wider development programming and goals. The upcoming renewal of the National Development Plan could represent a well-timed opportunity for building on this. Better alignment and integration will also require greater clarity on governmental roles and responsibilities, greater coordination between humanitarian and development actors on programming, as well as a move beyond short-term funding envelopes towards longer-term investments by donors.
15. Make local integration of IDPs more attractive for local government counterparts by demonstrating that displaced groups can be an asset to cities, in particular when it comes to contributing to the local economy. To achieve this, interventions should promote education, livelihood and employment opportunities for displaced people while in exile and upon return, whilst also including host communities so that they are not left behind. Government rhetoric on IDP integration has been more conciliatory of late, which could represent a window of opportunity for engaging more proactively with local administrations (and not just central government) on these issues.