

THEMATIC SERIES  
**No matter of choice:  
Displacement in a changing climate**

This thematic series explores the scale, patterns, drivers and impacts of internal displacement associated with slow-onset environmental change and disasters to inform policies and practices for managing and reducing displacement risk



**'NO LAND, NO WATER, NO PASTURE'**  
The urbanisation of drought displacement in Somalia

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Cover photo: Drought has destroyed harvest for three consecutive seasons in South West state. The humanitarian situation is deteriorating, with thousands of displaced people arriving in towns every month. Credit: NRC/Ingrid Prestetun, September 2019

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# **'NO LAND, NO WATER, NO PASTURE'**

The urbanisation of drought displacement  
in Somalia

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Summary . . . . .	5
Introduction . . . . .	6
Interconnected drivers and triggers . . . . .	8
An urban challenge . . . . .	12
Durable solutions: the need for decentralisation. . . . .	28
Conclusion . . . . .	31



*Somalia has experienced three consecutive episodes of drought since 2017. Photo: NRC/Ingrid Prestetun*

# SUMMARY

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IDMC embarked on a research programme in December 2018 to investigate internal displacement associated with slow-onset disasters and environmental change.<sup>1</sup> This study examines displacement associated with drought in Somalia, and the ways in which the phenomenon has affected urbanisation in the country. It also seeks to contribute to a better understanding of policies and programming for durable solutions. The findings presented are based on more than 210 interviews conducted in October and November 2019 in the cities of Burco, Galkayo and Qardho. The report arrives at the following key findings.

## | Drought leads to protracted urban displacement

In a country with a largely pastoral and agro-pastoral economy, an increase in the frequency and intensity of drought episodes has forced both nomadic and sedentary communities to move to urban and peri-urban settlements that also host people suffering the consequences of conflict and violence. In the absence of opportunities for durable solutions, displacement is becoming protracted. As the population continues to grow, forced evictions have become a major trigger of secondary displacement in urban areas.

## | Host communities' absorption capacity is limited

Informal urban settlements and displacement sites in surrounding districts have become refuges of last resort for many vulnerable internally displaced people (IDPs). Despite growing pressure on infrastructure and services, many say they would prefer to integrate locally. Investment in urban areas is essential to support the displaced population; investing in rural areas could also relieve the growing pressure on urban areas by encouraging sustainable return.

## | Long-term efforts are welcome, but must be decentralised

Those working on durable solutions in Somalia have welcomed what has been a paradigm shift from funding projects to financing consortia. Long-term funding across sectors has the potential to strengthen the capacity of displaced and host communities alike. Such investments also need to be accompanied by efforts to decentralise initiatives and build local capacity. Doing so also means intervening beyond areas such as Baidoa, Kismayo and Mogadishu where the international presence is strong and expanding to secondary cities such as Burco, Galkayo and Qardho.

# INTRODUCTION

*“People should feel free and have an option to move in and out of the region. The only thing that can take their independence is drought.”*

## YOUTH ASSOCIATION MEMBER, GALKAYO

Since the end of the 2011 famine, which caused the death of around 260,000 people –half of them children under five– recurrent drought, food insecurity, subsequent famine risk, floods and conflict have continued to trigger displacement in Somalia.<sup>2</sup> The 2016-2017 drought displaced more than a million people, and flooding later forced more people from their homes. Those affected often travel long distances, many of them making their way to urban areas.

Somalia is one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change. Temperatures are projected to increase by up to 4.3°C by the end of the century.<sup>3</sup> The effects of climate change are already visible in an increase in the frequency and intensity of episodes of drought, which has contributed to desertification, crop failure, livestock death and associated displacement. Precipitation patterns have also become more unpredictable, and flooding, storms and cyclones more common.<sup>4</sup>

Regional, federal and international initiatives on durable solutions are under way, but face challenges in their implementation. This study examines displacement associated with drought in Somalia, and its objectives are:

1. To examine the interplay between different drivers and drought as a trigger of displacement from rural to urban areas
2. To provide a better understanding of conditions and priorities for local integration and returns
3. To support policy and programming for durable solutions

## METHODOLOGY

This study forms part of IDMC’s thematic series on internal displacement associated with slow-onset disasters and environmental change.<sup>5</sup> It is based on a review of existing literature on drought and migration patterns in Somalia, and quantitative and qualitative data collected in the cities of Burco in Togdheer region, Galkayo in Mudug and Qardho in Bari (see map 1). The locations were chosen in cooperation with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and Forcier Consulting.

MAP 1: RESEARCH LOCATIONS



Forcier Consulting and its team of local researchers coordinated and oversaw a household survey in October 2019. Somali-speaking local enumerators conducted 210 interviews and recorded the data on mobile phones using KoBoToolbox, a suite of tools developed by the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative for research in challenging environments.<sup>6</sup>

## BOX 1. MONITORING DROUGHT DISPLACEMENT IN SOMALIA

IDMC has been trying to account for displacement associated with drought in Somalia for several years, and published its first estimates in its 2018 Global Report on Internal Displacement.<sup>7</sup> There were, however, several caveats attached to the figures, one of the most significant being the different approaches our partners took to collecting and analysing their data. Despite understanding these differences, they still made it difficult to distinguish between displacements triggered by drought and those driven by general poverty and lack of livelihoods.

Given such limitations, we engaged more closely with partners in Somalia to see how we could improve our drought displacement estimates. We held data workshops in Mogadishu in June 2019 and January 2020, focused on displacement, food security, weather and livelihoods to develop a common understanding of how drought displacement comes about.

Participants included officials from the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management, the Banadir Regional Administration and the National Commission for Refugees and IDPs, and representatives from OCHA, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the Food and Agriculture Organization

(FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP), IOM, the food security cluster, REACH and NRC.

The workshops helped to establish a better understanding of the displacement data ecosystem in Somalia, and to validate a shared drought displacement monitoring strategy for the coming years. IDMC is currently moving to the second stage of the project to validate the model with empirical data.

Respondents were identified through a convenience sample combining non-probability sampling techniques. The findings, as such, are not representative, and the survey results cannot be extrapolated to apply to all people displaced by drought in Somalia. They do, however, offer valuable insight into the experiences and aspirations of affected communities.

Research participants included previously nomadic and sedentary households displaced to urban areas, return displaced households and host community members (see figure 1). Efforts were made to maximise diversity in terms of participants' age, gender, location and socio-economic background. More than half of the research participants were female.

The survey enumerators were also asked to record short summaries of the stories participants shared, supplementing the quantitative findings with qualitative narratives. Additional qualitative data was collected through key informant interviews with internally displaced people (IDPs), host community members, local and regional officials and representatives of international NGOs and UN agencies.

FIGURE 1: RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
IDPs - Nomadic	72
IDPs - Sedentary	69
Host community members	69

# INTERCONNECTED DRIVERS AND TRIGGERS

More than 2.6 million people were living in internal displacement in Somalia as of the end of 2018, forced from their homes by a complex array of interconnected triggers and drivers. More than 578,000 new displacements associated with conflict and violence were recorded in 2018, the highest figure in a decade. Evictions from urban centres, mainly of IDPs, accounted for about 44 per cent of the figure.<sup>8</sup>

Disasters triggered around 547,000 new displacements, of which 249,000 were associated with drought. Above-average rainfall also caused flooding in southern and central areas of the country during the rainy season in April and May, triggering around 289,000 new displacements.<sup>9</sup>

*"The intensity of the hydrological cycle has increased in Somalia. This is the only country where OCHA responds simultaneously to a drought emergency and a flood emergency in the same year."*

**STAFF MEMBER, INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION**

Displacement triggers are often interconnected. Drought and floods may aggravate conflict by increasing competition for scarce resources in rural areas. "There is a linkage between insecurity and drought," a regional official in Qardho said. "Most incidents occur during droughts. In rural areas incidents occur at water points, grazing areas and other sources."

Underlying such triggers is poverty, which is a significant structural driver of displacement in Somalia. More than half the population between the ages of 15 to 64 are unemployed, and youth unemployment is among the highest in the world.<sup>10</sup> Unemployment disproportionately impacts IDPs, around half of whom are under the age of 15.<sup>11</sup> Today, nine out of ten IDPs in camps live in poverty.<sup>12</sup>

**MAP 2:** Displacements to Burco, Galkayo and Qardho



## SIMA: A DEVASTATING DROUGHT FOR ALL

Somalia is currently in the throes of a prolonged drought, the onset of which came while the country was still recovering from the previous episode. The 2016-17 drought was called *Sima*, which translates as "equal", because it was so extreme that everyone was affected. It displaced almost a million people, the majority of them to urban centres.<sup>13</sup>

The governments of Somaliland and Puntland declared a drought in February 2016, and a year later the country's president extended the declaration countrywide and called the situation a national disaster. The number of food-insecure people increased to nearly 4.7 million, or 38 per cent of the population.<sup>14</sup> By October 2017,

another million people had been displaced and as many as 6.7 million, more than half of the population, were in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>15</sup>

The number of new drought displacements in the first half of 2019 was less than half the figure for the same period the previous year, but many of the million-plus people who fled the impacts of *Sima* have been unable to achieve durable solutions and are still living in displacement.<sup>16</sup> The current drought is largely the result of erratic and abnormal precipitation during the main *gu* rainy season between April and June 2019, which followed an unusually arid *jilaal*, or dry season, between January and March and a poor *deyr*, a lesser rainy season between October and December 2018.<sup>17</sup> More than half of the country's displaced households are food insecure as a result.<sup>18</sup>

*"In the spring, rains were supposed to start in March and last until May, but it only rained in May."*

**LOCAL AUTHORITY, FAARAH OMAAR DISTRICT, BURCO**

Research participants felt the temperature in the last 12 months had been hotter or much hotter than before, and 73 per cent that the climate had changed in recent years. "There have been big changes and the rainy seasons have been reduced. The situation has become more difficult," said a local authority in south Galkayo.<sup>19</sup>

*"Burco used to be cold but now it's very hot and there has been very little rain."*

**MALE HOST COMMUNITY MEMBER, HODAN DISTRICT, BURCO**

## RURAL LIVELIHOODS UNDER STRESS

Somalia has a largely pastoral and agropastoral economy. Agriculture accounts for about 75 per cent of the country's GDP.<sup>20</sup> Around 60 per cent of Somalis are largely dependent on livestock and 23 per cent are subsistence farmers.<sup>21</sup> Seventy per cent of the country is agricultural land, of which about two per cent is arable and 68 per cent permanent pasture.<sup>22</sup>

*"The primary means of subsistence in this region is livestock. For centuries these communities were pastoralists. But people in rural areas migrated to Burco when they lost their livestock and the number of rural households moving to the city increased."*

**LOCAL OFFICIAL, FAARAH OMAAR DISTRICT, BURCO**

As a result of the most recent dry seasons, crop yields have declined by up to 60 per cent in some parts of the country. The 2019 cereal harvest was the worst since 2011.<sup>23</sup> Many pastoralists lost up to 75 per cent of their livestock in previous episodes of drought, and some of the surviving animals are in poor shape.<sup>24</sup> If the rains continue to be poor, more livestock deaths can be expected.<sup>25</sup> Another drought could increase rural poverty levels by nine percentage points, from 65 to 76 per cent.<sup>26</sup>

*"Climatic and agricultural seasons have changed. The region has been affected by drought caused by climate change. This led to emergency displacement and loss of livestock and other natural resources which are vital to our pastoralist communities."*

**WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION MEMBER, GALKAYO**



Puntland and other regions in northern Somalia have a very harsh climate. Photo: NRC/Ingrid Prestetun



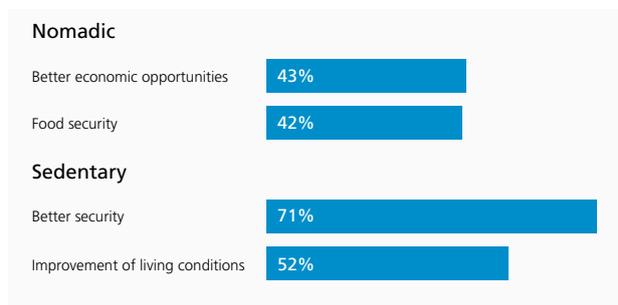
*"Living a nomadic life has never been easy, but with recurring drought in recent years it has become even harder. Last year was the toughest ever. I don't want my children to have to live in these conditions." Photo: NRC/ Ingrid Prestetun, September 2019*

Drought also affects food and water prices, which doubled in some cases in Burco, Galkayo and Qardho during *Sima*. In Puntland, which includes Qardho, the price of 200 litres of water rose by 150 per cent from \$4 to \$10.<sup>27</sup> "If prices skyrocket, families have no choice but to think of anywhere they can get cheaper and affordable food," said the leader of a women's association in Galkayo.

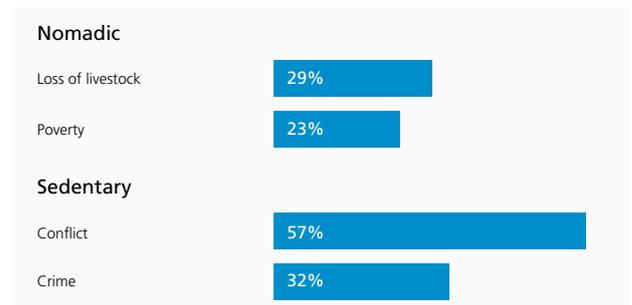
When nomadic IDPs were asked about the pull factors which guided their choice of destination, many cited seeking better economic opportunities and food security. Their sedentary counterparts tended to focus more on improving their safety and physical security. This ties in with the reasons the two groups gave for their displacement. Many of the former cited livestock loss and poverty as a push factor, while the latter focused mostly on conflict (see figure 2).

**FIGURE 2:** Push and pull factors of displacement

**Pull factors**



**Push factors**



## FROM DROUGHT TO FLOODS

The 2015-2016 El Niño, one of the strongest on record, caused severe drought across eastern Africa, which lasted until 2017 and was followed by extreme floods in 2018.<sup>28</sup> Severe drought set in again at the beginning of 2019 and the rainy season between May and June all but failed.<sup>29</sup> This was followed by the strongest Indian Ocean dipole in more than a decade in October, which caused more record-breaking floods.<sup>30</sup>

Alternating severe droughts and floods affect many of the same communities. The drought conditions brought on by the 2015-2016 El Niño affected the whole country, but were most severely felt in the regions of Bakool, Bari, Bay, Galgaduud, Gedo, Hiraan, Lower Shabelle, Mudug, Sanaag, Sool and Togdheer, where more than a million people were displaced for reasons attributable to drought between 2015 and 2019. More than 550,000 people were displaced by floods in the same regions and over the same time period.<sup>31</sup>

This study focuses on regions that have been harder hit by drought than floods, but some cases of secondary displacement associated with flooding were still identified. The regions worst hit by both drought and floods have been Lower Shabelle and Bay, which also suffer severe insecurity and are largely controlled by al-Shabaab. Their inhabitants are affected by several crises at the same time and are almost inaccessible to humanitarian organisations, leading many to make their way to Mogadishu in search of assistance.

Even those who have not been displaced by drought have had their coping mechanisms eroded. Lack of pasture and water in early 2019 caused a deterioration in livestock condition and undermined both agricultural and pastoral livelihoods, leaving those affected less able to cope with the severe flooding that followed.<sup>32</sup> Floodwaters inundated large areas of crops and farmland in May 2018 and again in October 2019, reducing people's food stocks and leaving them more vulnerable to the next drought.<sup>33</sup> Many animals also perished in the floods, eroding people's livelihoods and further heightening their vulnerability to future shocks.<sup>34</sup>



*Pastoralists across Somalia have suffered huge livestock losses during three consecutive seasons of drought. Photo: NRC/Ingrid Prestetun, September 2019*

# AN URBAN CHALLENGE

Internal displacement has been one of the main drivers of rapid and unplanned urbanisation in Somalia. Eighty per cent of IDPs live in urban areas and urgently require new skills to adopt urban livelihoods.<sup>35</sup> The pace of urbanisation is among the fastest in the world, and around 6.45 million people, or 45 per cent of the population, live in cities.<sup>36</sup> Somalia's urban population is expected to overtake its rural population by 2026.<sup>37</sup>

*“Urbanisation in Somalia fuelled by displacement will not be reversed.”*  
UN-HABITAT<sup>38</sup>

## LIMITED ABSORPTION CAPACITY

Around 2.2 million IDPs live in settlements in urban and peri-urban areas.<sup>39</sup> Rather than fleeing to intermediary towns, most tend to travel long distances to major towns and cities. Around 408,000 people displaced by drought moved to Baidoa, Kismayo and Mogadishu between November 2016 and September 2017.<sup>40</sup>

Informal settlements and displacement sites in urban districts have become a refuge of last resort for many IDPs, unable to afford the cost of rent in central urban areas.<sup>41</sup> Such places are severely overcrowded, and there is little if any access to safe drinking water and sanitation.<sup>42</sup> Absorption capacity is limited, and local infrastructure struggles to provide basic services to the growing population.

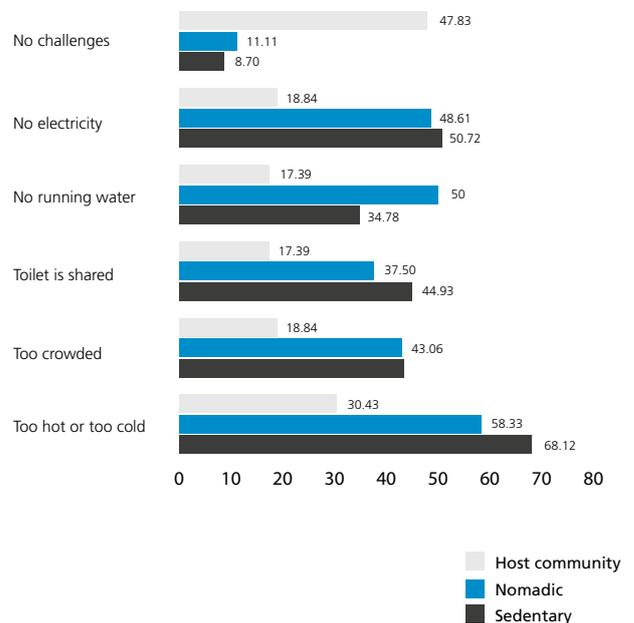
*“It is problematic for IDPs who come to cities and they are marginalised rather than integrated quickly. Some marginalised groups have been there for years and they haven't found the opportunity to grow economically.”*

### STAFF MEMBER, INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION

Among research participants, sixty-five per cent of host community members live in a cement house or apart-

ment, compared with 12 per cent of IDPs, the majority of whom live in makeshift shelters, metal-sheet houses or tents. Sixty-three per cent of IDPs said they were not adequately protected against the elements and that their housing was either too hot or too cold (see figure 3).

FIGURE 3: Housing challenges



Floods in Mogadishu, where many IDPs have sought refuge from drought, destroyed almost all of the shelters and latrines in one displacement settlement in May 2018.<sup>43</sup> This forced many into secondary displacement, heightening their vulnerabilities and further eroding their coping mechanisms. To reduce this source of displacement risk in the future, there is a need to “move beyond a humanitarian shelter approach to a housing approach”.<sup>44</sup>

## POVERTY IN DISPLACEMENT

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Participants in displacement sites expressed despair at the impossibility of finding stable income. Fifty-eight per cent said they found it difficult or impossible to survive on their current earnings. Many depend on support from NGOs and family members to make ends meet, but nearly half had still been forced to reduce the number of meals they ate a day in the month preceding the study.

*“The main means of subsistence for the communities in this region are remittances from the relatives abroad, foreign aid from local organisations and international organisations, and livestock.”*

LOCAL AUTHORITY, GALKAYO

In the absence of opportunities for employment, poverty may also increase risk of theft and recruitment by armed groups or criminal gangs, increasing instability in a country already affected by conflict. “When people are in dire need, they will fight for resources or support,” said a local official in Burco.

*“I don’t have permanent work. I’m unemployed and I have few ways to get by. I rely on a family member’s help. Climate changes our lives. I used to have animals, but drought killed them all. Drought has a great impact on us because now it’s very hot and rains have become fewer and fewer.”*

HOST COMMUNITY MEMBER, HODAN DISTRICT,  
BURCO

## GROWING RISK OF EVICTION

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High levels of poverty and limited opportunities for income generation leave many IDPs exposed to eviction. Evictions have become one of the main triggers of secondary displacement in cities and a major obstacle to durable solutions. Nearly 148,000 people were evicted in Mogadishu in 2017. The vast majority had already been previously displaced.<sup>45</sup>

High population density and investment by the humanitarian and private sectors in basic infrastructure raise the value of land, which in turn increases the risk of IDPs in informal settlements being evicted by landlords eager to make a profit by selling their land.<sup>46</sup>

*“Eviction has been identified as one of the most pressing protection issues that impact and undermine durable solutions.”*

STAFF MEMBER, PROTECTION CLUSTER

The current approach to evictions is essentially reactive. There are few relevant legal and policy frameworks, though national eviction guidelines are understood to be under discussion. In the meantime, prevention activities in partnership with regional and municipal administrations and engagement with landowners are necessary to avoid further evictions.

## APPETITE FOR LOCAL INTEGRATION

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“I plan to live here in the future even if things get better in my hometown,” said Abdi of his displacement site.<sup>47</sup> “Our life is much better compared with my original home in Qallafe. We are happy to be here.”

Despite challenges in displacement, Abdi’s intention to remain in his place of refuge is indicative of the widespread desire among the IDPs surveyed to integrate locally. Eighty per cent said doing so would be their preferred durable solution, for reasons ranging from security considerations and social networks to better living conditions, economic opportunities and access to public services.

“I would like to stay here because there are plans and actions from international organisations”, said an IDP in Gurmud displacement site. Stakeholders interviewed also explained the concentration of international humanitarian operations in some cities acted as a pull factor, in particular in Baidoa, Kismayo and Mogadishu.

*“The great number of NGOs and aid distribution are pull factors for people coming to urban areas. Obviously, this helps give them hope for at least few months.”*

STAFF MEMBER,  
DURABLE SOLUTIONS CONSORTIUM

The increasing urbanisation of displacement in Somalia and the appetite for local integration could be considered a potential crisis. The fact that IDPs tend to move long distances to major towns and cities is also an issue since this “has limited the opportunity of return

or seasonal movement between rural and urban areas, that may have been afforded if intermediary towns, closer to locations of displacement, were better able to absorb IDP populations".<sup>48</sup>

IDPs' desire to integrate locally clashes, however, with host communities' limited absorption capacity, which has left many destitute and marginalised. Returns could relieve growing pressure on urban areas such as Burco, Galkayo and Qardho, and to a greater extent Baidoa, Kismayo and Mogadishu, but insecurity and the lack of opportunities in areas of origin mean few IDPs are willing to go back.

*"They don't want to return because they have nothing to go back to. They lost everything, and if they return they have no future. No land, no water, no pasture."*

**STAFF MEMBER, SHELTER CLUSTER**

Despite the enormous difficulties in enabling returns, the federal and state governments are investing in efforts to improve capacities in rural areas and so reduce the pressure on urban centres. If returns are to be sustainable, however, the "severe developmental deficits confronting Somalia's rural population" will have to be addressed.<sup>49</sup> Improved access to services and livelihoods will be essential to avoid repeated displacement.<sup>50</sup> Durable solutions consortia and programmes are investing in efforts to improve capacities in rural areas through basic livelihood projects and support for the Protection and Return Monitoring Network (PRMN).<sup>51</sup>

*"We need to have a much better and much earlier understanding of what support people need to return and then to engage in return areas to make sure their return will be sustainable. If not, people will need to come back to urban areas next year or in two years' time when drought or flooding happens again."*

**STAFF MEMBER, INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION**





*Thousands of displaced people arrive in Baidoa and other towns every month to escape both conflict and drought. The ongoing threat of armed conflict limits the capacity of humanitarian organisations to deliver assistance in many rural areas, leaving people severely affected by insecurity and drought to relocate to urban areas where they are present.  
Photo: NRC/Ingrid Prestetun, September 2019*

# 'WE HAD NO OPTION BUT TO MOVE TO A CAMP'

*Dahabo, 90, lives with her daughter and granddaughter in Jilab 4 camp in the Garowe area of Puntland. She used to live in a rural area near Garowe with her livestock. Three years ago, her family lost most of their animals in the drought. To be able to feed the few goats they had left, Dahabo gathered grass from the mountains. One day she fell and broke both her hand and her leg, and spent a long time in hospital. Her family had to sell the remaining goats to pay her medical bills. Dahabo felt she had no option but to move to a camp where humanitarian organisations assist IDPs with shelter, healthcare and education. She is particularly keen to ensure her granddaughter goes to school.*

*Source: Ingrid Prestetun / NRC*









## 'THE DROUGHT SINCE 2017 IS THE WORST I HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED'

*Ganun, 84, fled from Duba Gass to Baidoa with his five young children because of drought and conflict. His wife died a few years ago. "The drought since 2017 is the worst I have ever experienced, even worse than in 2011," he says. Ganun used to grow sorghum, but his harvest failed for consecutive seasons. He had no livestock, and without crops for several years he had no means of feeding his children. It became ever harder to access food and drinking water until the family was eventually forced to move.*

*Source: Ingrid Prestetun / NRC*

# 'WE HAVE MANY PROBLEMS AND NO FAMILY TO SUPPORT US'

*Faduma has struggled to provide enough food for her children, particularly since the death of her husband. The large number of IDPs arriving in Baidoa each week has placed immense pressure on limited humanitarian resources, and many families struggle to meet their basic needs. "We have many problems and no family to support us," Faduma says. "Last night we got some food from someone else who lives in the camp, but today my children haven't eaten anything. I had nothing to cook with."*

*Despite the immense challenges that her displacement and life in a camp have brought, Faduma does not regret having fled her home and village. "In Somalia we have an expression that says 'a snake looks like the environment it lives in'," she says. "I want my children to go to school and have the opportunity for a different life than the one I've had. That's why we fled here."*

*Source: Ingrid Prestetun / NRC*









## 'THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE HAVE BEEN DISPLACED WITH OUR CHILDREN. THERE WAS NO WATER OR FOOD'

*Abdu, 54, fled from Tuwarey in Lower Juba three months ago. The severe impact of drought left him unable to sustain his family, prompting them to relocate to an urban area in search of an alternative livelihood. Abdu went ahead of his family to Baidoa, where he built a small shelter before their arrival the following day. "We have lost our livestock. Before, we used to have some cereal stocks in the grain store [but] ... this is the worst drought," he says. "This is the first time we have been displaced with our children. There was no water or food. That is why we are displaced."*

*Abdu intends to return to his land if rainfall allows it. "Our farm is God-given land," he says. "When the rain comes, we are ready to plant. We want to continue our lives there." He says climate change may be the cause of the changing conditions, and understands that his children may prefer to live in the city and access education that is not available in the village.*

*Source: Ingrid Prestetun / NRC*

# 'OVER THE FOUR YEARS OF THIS DROUGHT, WE HAVE PLANTED BUT THE HARVEST HAS FAILED'

*Hassan, 45, is a widower who lived as a farmer until recurrent drought made it impossible to sustain his family. He and his four children now live in a small shelter in the Ceel-ilaan displacement camp outside Baidoa. "Over the four years this drought has lasted, we have planted but the harvest has failed," he says. "For a while we survived by working for others, but then we decided to flee to the city. We couldn't continue living in the village because of the drought. We came to the city to ask for assistance from the humanitarian organisations."*

*Source: Ingrid Prestetun / NRC*









## 'CLEAN DRINKING WATER IS VERY EXPENSIVE AND HARD TO GET'

*Hodan, 60, has 13 children. She moved to Gumays displacement camp in late 2016 after she lost almost all of her livestock to drought. "Living in Gumays, we have no source of income," she says. "We depend on casual jobs that my husband sometimes gets, but that's rare. But water used to be our biggest challenge. Clean drinking water is very expensive and hard to get."*

*Hodan and her family now receive trucked water provided by humanitarian organisations. "The water is good quality and pure," she says. "We have also been provided with items including aqua-tabs, soap and jerry cans to carry and store water. The cans have helped us a lot. It was very hard to fetch water without containers."*

*Source: NRC*

# DURABLE SOLUTIONS: THE NEED TO DECENTRALISE

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Somalia ratified the African Union Convention on the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons, also known as the Kampala Convention, in November 2019. The so-called Nairobi declaration and action plan on durable solutions for Somali refugees and the reintegration of returnees was also adopted at a special summit of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in 2017.<sup>52</sup>

The Somalia Durable Solutions Initiative (DSI) was launched in early 2016, leading to the introduction of 24 new federal and state policies and guidelines over the next two years. To foster greater coherence between the different policies and institutional structures, a durable solutions secretariat was established in 2019 as a coordinating body, and a national policy on returning refugees and IDPs was adopted.<sup>53</sup>

Numerous durable solutions initiatives are under way on the ground. These require not only a great deal of coordination but also decentralisation from the federal level to the places where IDPs live.

## FROM FUNDING PROJECTS TO FINANCING DURABLE SOLUTIONS

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*“With the current number of households in displacement, achieving durable solutions will be a long-term and complex process that demands comprehensive state and social systems to address the human insecurity and marginalisation challenges many IDPs and their hosts face. Success will require the engagement of the international community and the commitment of various national and local stakeholders - over decades.”*

STAFF MEMBER, INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION

Stakeholders in Somalia have welcomed the paradigm shift from funding projects to financing durable solutions consortia. “Donors have made a positive effort in pushing for durable solutions,” said a staff member of one international organisation. “They have begun to pay close attention to the issue, but this has to have real meaning and not just become a new buzzword.” Multi-year and multi-sectoral funding in rural areas will help to reduce displacement during future shocks, and to strengthen the capacity of displaced communities and the municipalities that host them.

Somalia’s DSI is arguably the most recognised and best-coordinated durable solutions initiative in the country, and benefits accordingly from longer-term financing. It is intended to guide collective approaches and programming, and to support the capacity of government at the federal, state and local level to provide durable solutions for IDPs, returning refugees and their host communities.<sup>54</sup>

The initiative is based on six principles, that interventions should be government-led, in keeping with the triple humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus, area-based, comprehensive, participatory, rights-based and needs-based.<sup>55</sup> Given that humanitarian and development support for durable solutions remains linked to specific organisational mandates and priorities, however, ongoing initiatives are disintegrated at the regional and district level with no central coordination at the federal level.<sup>56</sup> In an effort to remedy the situation, the federal government has established a durable solutions unit within the Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development and a durable solutions secretariat including all ministries and federal institutions.

## THE NEED TO DECENTRALISE

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*“Creating a layer of approval between the federal government and the municipalities is going to be highly problematic. Macro-management is going to undermine efforts and delay activities.”*

### STAFF MEMBER, INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION

There is a real need to decentralise efforts to achieve durable solutions in Somalia. Bringing them from the federal to the municipal level also means intervening beyond areas such as Baidoa, Kismayo and Mogadishu, where the international presence is strong.

Interviewees in Burco, Galkayo and Qardho said there were not enough projects and activities in their municipalities. “The government and NGOs have no strategies or action plans in place to protect populations from drought,” said a community leader in Burco. “Nor is there an early warning system. The government has not put much effort into safeguarding the community.” The local government in Qardho does have an early warning system in place, but nothing else. “The disaster management office only sends early warning alerts by text message and via local radios.”

The localisation of durable solutions is the most effective way of addressing these challenges. “The places where displaced people are and the places they want to return to are where solutions have to be created,” said the staff member of an international organisation. Localisation should also entail greater participation by communities affected by displacement in decision making on solutions. One study found that 96 per cent of aid recipients do not feel consulted about the assistance they receive, and that only 14 per cent of Somalis feel they have a platform to voice their political concerns.<sup>57</sup>

Community action plans, developed by communities affected by displacement in partnership with local authorities and with the support of IOM, UN-Habitat and NRC, have helped identify gaps, prioritise activities and projects to advance durable solutions and sustainable development, and improve accountability.<sup>58</sup>



*Cubdi received a grant to expand her business to sell vegetables and dry food such as rice. Photo: NRC, May 2019*

## BUILDING THE RESILIENCE OF AUTHORITIES AND COMMUNITIES

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Climate change has put significant strain on livelihoods and contributed to conflict and instability in Somalia. Building the evidence base on links between environmental degradation and displacement will help to identify solutions to both phenomena and inform policies to increase communities’ resilience.<sup>59</sup>

The frequency and intensity of drought episodes has aggravated acute structural poverty, and triggered cyclical displacement patterns following climate shocks, often to urban and peri-urban areas, that heighten the vulnerability of those affected. Strengthening resilience is vital in areas where people’s coping strategies are sometimes very weak. “People in rural areas don’t know any coping strategies,” said a community leader in Burco. “They don’t think of the long-term future.” Early warning and early actions have the potential to strengthen communities’ resilience, mitigate the impacts of shocks on people’s wellbeing and reduce common negative coping strategies such as under-eating.



"We were taught about profit, loss, income, savings, debt and how to manage businesses," says Ayan, who took part in vocational training. Photo: NRC

Strengthening resilience and reducing risk and vulnerability need, however, to go "beyond a livelihoods approach to an economic inclusion approach".<sup>60</sup> Increasing inclusive economic opportunities for the country's growing and increasingly urbanised population would accelerate progress toward stabilisation and the achievement of durable solutions for communities affected by displacement.

A number of activities have already been successful, including training in entrepreneurship for female heads of household to prepare them to set up small and medium-sized businesses, the provision of start-up grants, the establishment of communal farms for agro-pastoralists to plant cash crops, the re-establishment of pastoralist livelihoods by providing goats and other livestock, and vocational skills workshops.

At the same time, local leadership capabilities need to be enhanced to facilitate the sustainable return, recovery, social integration and peaceful coexistence of disparate groups including IDPs, returnees, other migrants and host communities. Programmes such as *Midnimo*, which means unity, and *Danwadaag*, which means love, focus on strengthening government leadership and capacity to enable durable solutions at the state and district levels.

# CONCLUSION

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The *Sima* drought of 2016 and 2017 displaced almost a million people in Somalia. Many of those who fled have been unable to achieve durable solutions and are still living in displacement.

The country continues to suffer prolonged shortages of rainfall. Six out seven rainy seasons since 2016 have been poor.<sup>61</sup> Episodes of drought have been punctuated by severe flooding, and violence and conflict also add to the causes of displacement.

Internal displacement has been a driver of rapid and unplanned urbanisation. Around 80 per cent of Somalia's 2.6 million IDPs live in precarious conditions in urban and peri-urban settlements and camps.<sup>62</sup> Evictions are one of the main triggers of secondary displacement in cities and a major obstacle to durable solutions.

The situation in the secondary cities of Burco, Galkayo and Qardho is indicative of the huge challenge the country faces in achieving durable solutions to displacement. Although sustainable returns would reduce the growing pressure on urban areas, most IDPs would prefer to integrate locally. The national government and the international community have initiated projects focused on livelihoods and resilience building for households affected by drought and vulnerable groups in urban and rural areas.

Somalia has one of the widest ranges of policies and initiatives in Africa on durable solutions, and stakeholders working in this area have welcomed a paradigm shift from funding projects to multi-year and multi-sector financing for consortia. There is, however, a need for decentralisation. Bringing efforts to achieve durable solutions from the national to the municipal level also means intervening beyond areas such as Baidoa, Kismayo and Mogadishu, where the international presence is strong, to secondary cities and rural areas.

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