



BRIEFING PAPER

Recommendations for addressing drought displacement in Somalia

INTRODUCTION

Somalia is one of the countries most heavily affected by internal displacement, with more than 2.6 million internally displaced people (IDPs) at the end of 2019.¹ Many of these IDPs were displaced as a result of conflict and violence, but many more were displaced during disasters, including floods and drought. In addition to human suffering and insecurity, internal displacement was estimated to have cost the country 21.5 per cent of its GDP, or \$1 billion in 2019.² It is not only a humanitarian priority but also a challenge for socioeconomic development.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) embarked on a research programme in December 2018 to investigate internal displacement associated with slow-onset disasters and environmental change.³ As part of that programme, Somali-speaking local enumerators collected quantitative and qualitative data in October 2019 in the cities of Burco in Togdheer region, Galkayo in Mudug and Qardho in Bari to examine displacement associated with drought.⁴ The objectives of the study were to investigate the interplay between different drivers and drought in triggering displacement from rural to urban areas, as well as to provide a better understanding of conditions and priorities for local integration and returns. The overall goal was to support policy and programming for durable solutions.

Amid growing needs and the risk of future displacement resulting from drought, IDMC engaged with key humanitarian actors in Somalia to identify recommendations for addressing the issue more efficiently. Building on the study conducted in July 2019, a workshop was organized in November 2020.

This paper presents the key recommendations resulting from that workshop. Participants identified areas for different types of interventions, illustrated in the map below. These include climate-sensitive agriculture and innovative, climate-related solutions for seeds and production. They also include nature-based solutions, such as permaculture and greening, in areas outside of urban centres that receive less attention (in blue); the provision of safety nets, skills training, drought insurance schemes, small business grants and unconditional cash transfers in urban areas with high numbers of IDPs (in yellow); and assessments to determine levels of tenure security, the generation of title deeds for land and the provision of specialized legal aid services in informal settlements and urban IDP sites (in orange).

Four challenges were discussed during the workshop and are analysed in the following sections:

1. Drought forces many farmers and pastoralists to relocate to urban areas in search of alternative livelihoods;
2. Most IDPs live in precarious conditions in urban and peri-urban settlements and camps;

MAP 1: Intervention areas



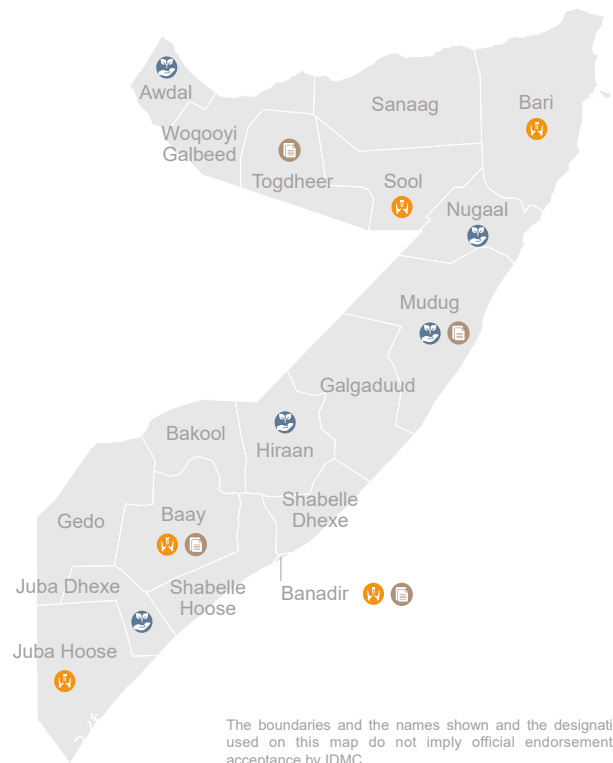
Climate-sensitive agriculture and innovative, climate-related solutions to seeds and production as well as nature-based solutions, such as permaculture and greening, in areas outside of urban centres that receive less attention.



Provision of safety nets, skills training, drought insurance schemes, small business grants and unconditional cash transfers in urban areas with high numbers of IDPs.



Assessment to determine levels of tenure security, the generation of title deeds for land and the provision of specialized legal aid services in informal settlements and urban IDP sites.



3. Evictions are one of the main triggers of secondary displacement in cities and a major obstacle to durable solutions;
4. IDPs' desire to integrate locally conflicts with host communities' limited absorption capacity.

CHALLENGE 1: PASTORALISTS AND FARMERS DISPLACED TO URBAN AREAS

| SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOOD OPPORTUNITIES

The most recent drought in 2017 was called Sima, which translates as "equal", because it was so extreme that everyone was affected. It displaced around 858,000 people, most of them to urban areas.⁵ Drought forces many farmers and pastoralists in Somalia to relocate to urban areas in search of alternative livelihoods.⁶ When they arrive in cities, however, they often struggle to find stable sources of income. Many find it difficult or impossible to survive on their earnings and depend on support from NGOs and family members to make ends meet. In the month preceding the start of IDMC's study in October 2019, many interviewed IDPs had been forced to reduce the number of meals they ate each day.⁷

Supporting alternative livelihood opportunities for displaced pastoralists in urban areas is a priority for ensuring durable solutions. Some organizations and agencies are investing in

innovation in climate-related areas, including climate-sensitive agricultural production and the development of seeds, as well as permaculture and greening opportunities. These longer-term activities could be complemented with medium-term measures, including the creation of economic safety nets, drought insurance schemes, unconditional cash transfers and small business grants. Governments, NGOs and UN agencies participating in durable solutions consortia are prioritizing these types of initiatives.

Better access to data produced by the UN and other organisations involved in durable solutions initiatives would help local governments understand the profiles, vulnerabilities and needs of different groups of IDPs, including pastoralists, agro-pastoralists and riverine communities. It would also allow for better preparedness and targeted responses. This kind of information, such as that collected, analysed and disseminated by the International Organisation for Migration's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), supports decision-makers and responders in providing more context-specific assistance.⁸

CHALLENGE 2: PRECARIOUS CONDITIONS IN URBAN IDP SETTLEMENTS

| FOOD, SHELTER AND WATER SUPPORT

Around 80 per cent of Somalia's 2.6 million IDPs live in precarious conditions in urban and peri-urban settlements and camps.⁹ Such places are severely overcrowded, and there

is little if any access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Absorption capacity is limited, and local infrastructure is inadequate to the task of delivering basic services to the growing population.

Providing IDPs with food, shelter and access to drinking water is essential. So is being able to plan ahead. Pre-identifying the areas likely to soon become refuges for people displaced by drought would help ensure they are adequately supported.

Information on the preferred destination of IDPs can be used to plan for better deliveries of aid as close to the rural population as possible. This should be based on the monitoring of the availability and access to basic services, including the provision of water and food.

When internally displaced nomads were asked about the pull factors which guided their choice of destination, many cited better economic opportunities and food security. Their sedentary counterparts tended to focus more on improving their safety and physical security. These differences are related to 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.

CHALLENGE 3: EVICTIONS, A MAIN TRIGGER OF SECONDARY DISPLACEMENT

ASSESSING TENURE INSECURITY

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. More than 578,000 new displacements associated with conflict and violence were recorded in Somalia in 2019. Evictions from urban centres, mainly of IDPs, accounted for about 44 per cent of that figure.¹⁰ Driven by a lack of adequate housing and informal tenure agreements in increasingly crowded areas, the number of evictions reached a record high.

Assessing the levels of tenure security in IDP settlements is a priority for developing a dedicated national plan. High population density in the areas where IDPs find refuge, and investment by the humanitarian and private sectors in basic infrastructure to support them, raise the value of land. This, in turn, increases the risk that landlords will sell their land and evict IDPs in the process.

The current approach to evictions is essentially reactive. There are few relevant legal and policy frameworks, though national eviction guidelines are under discussion. In the meantime, prevention initiatives are required to avoid further evictions. Such initiatives, in partnership with regional and municipal

administrations and through engagement with landowners, can make a significant difference.

Close coordination with local municipalities to generate title deeds for land where IDPs find refuge and provide them with specialized legal aid services is also crucial. Local authorities must be supported in building their institutional capacity, with both material and technical assistance for the development of a database on land tenure. Such assistance should also help improve the procedures by which people acquire official documents to justify their use of land.

CHALLENGE 4: HOST COMMUNITIES' LIMITED ABSORPTION CAPACITY

LAND AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

"I plan to live here in the future even if things get better in my hometown," said Abdi of his displacement site. "Our life is much better than that in my original home in Qallafe. We are happy to be here."¹¹

Despite the challenges he faced 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.¹²

"I would like to stay here because of international organisations' actions and plans," said an IDP in the Gurmud displacement site. The concentration of international humanitarian operations in some cities acts as a pull factor, particularly in Baidoa, Kismayo and Mogadishu.

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 problematic because it limits the opportunity for return or seasonal movement between rural and urban areas. Such returns or seasonal movements could occur more easily if intermediary towns, closer to the locations of displacement, were better able to absorb populations of IDPs.¹³

Regreening and the regeneration of biodiverse areas through green business development is an innovative way to improve conditions in certain urban, peri-urban and semi-rural settlements. In this sense, better coordination with development partners and local authorities is needed to complement ongoing humanitarian and durable solutions programming. However, the desire of IDPs to integrate locally conflicts with host communities' limited absorption capacity.

At the present rate of population growth, small and medium-sized cities are unable to handle the flow of displacement. 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. Secondary cities have fewer resources and services but receive a high number of displaced people. They also tend to receive lower levels of international support than larger cities.

There must be funding for rural development to prevent displacement to urban areas and encourage returns. Greater investments must be made in supporting hard-to-reach rural areas, delivering services to minority and excluded groups and promoting community-led solutions in rural areas.

Infrastructure development is a priority for ensuring that there is water, food and shelter in urban, peri-urban and semi-rural settlements and that they have significant absorption capacity. Humanitarian and development partners should support authorities prior to the arrival of IDPs to ensure a government-led, area-based and cross-sectoral approach. This should be rooted in collaborative programming. It should take into account the specific needs of both IDPs and host communities and use participatory processes to engage and empower them.

Strengthening resilience and reducing risk and vulnerability, however, have to move beyond an emphasis on livelihoods to one focusing on economic inclusion.¹⁴ 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. These include training in entrepreneurship for female heads of households to prepare them to set up small and medium-sized businesses. They also include the supplying of start-up grants, the establishment of communal farms where agro-pastoralists can plant cash crops, the re-establishment of pastoralist livelihoods through the provision of goats and other livestock, and vocational skills workshops.

CONCLUSION

The impacts of climate change, including erratic rainfall patterns, rising temperatures and prolonged dry spells and droughts stress existing vulnerabilities and put an additional strain on livelihoods in Somalia. Building the evidence base on the link between climate change's slow-onset effects and displacement will help identify solutions to both phenomena.

The increased frequency and intensity of drought episodes has aggravated acute structural poverty and triggered cyclical displacement patterns, often to urban and peri-urban areas. Strengthening resilience is vital in areas where people's coping strategies can be weak.

Somalia has one of Africa's widest ranges of policies and initiatives on durable solutions to displacement. There is, however, a need for decentralisation. Bringing efforts to achieve durable solutions from the national to the municipal level also means intervening not only in large cities, such as Baidoa, Kismayo and Mogadishu where the international presence is strong, but also in secondary cities and rural areas. This more localised approach should also involve greater participation by communities affected by displacement in decision making.

Achieving the socio-economic stabilization of people displaced by drought is a priority for the government and for humanitarian actors. Many IDPs have, until now, lived in rural areas and do not have the skills required to find work in cities. They have, however, demonstrated a capacity to adapt and may do so even more when conditions in their host areas improve.

Stakeholders in Somalia welcome a shift from funding emergency projects to financing durable solutions. Multi-year and multi-sectoral funding in rural areas will help reduce displacement resulting from future shocks. It will also help strengthen the resilience of displaced communities and the capacity of the municipalities that host them.

NOTES

- 1 IDMC, [Country page : Somalia](#), 2020
- 2 IDMC, [Unveiling the cost of internal displacement : 2020 report](#), January 2021
- 3 IDMC, [No matter of choice: displacement in a changing climate](#), 2018
- 4 IDMC, [No land, no water, no pasture. The urbanisation of drought displacement in Somalia](#), 2020
- 5 IDMC, [Global Report on Internal Displacement](#), 2018
- 6 IDMC, [No land, no water, no pasture. The urbanisation of drought displacement in Somalia](#), 2020
- 7 IDMC, [No land, no water, no pasture. The urbanisation of drought displacement in Somalia](#), 2020
- 8 IOM, [Displacement Tracking Matrix \(DTM\)](#)
- 9 OCHA, [Somalia Humanitarian Needs Overview](#), 2019
- 10 IDMC, [Global Report on Internal Displacement](#), 2019
- 11 IDMC, [No land, no water, no pasture. The urbanisation of drought displacement in Somalia](#), 2020
- 12 IDMC, [No land, no water, no pasture. The urbanisation of drought displacement in Somalia](#), 2020
- 13 IOM, [Early solutions: enhancing the enabling environment for durable solutions in Somalia](#), 2018; UN Habitat, [Towards Sustainable Urban Development in Somalia and IDP Durable Solutions at Scale](#), 2019
- 14 ReDSS, [Solutions Analysis Update](#), 2019