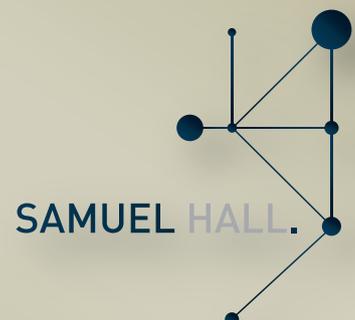




RETURN CONSORTIUM | Somalia

Towards Durable Solutions

Achievements and challenges in supporting voluntary returns of IDPs in Somalia



On a Path towards Solutions

For many of the 1.1 million Somalis today living in displacement in their own country, and often under miserable conditions, every day starts with questions: how will I get by this day? How will I feed myself, my children? Will they and will I be safe? And for many of these destitute people living in displacement, the question also arises: When will we – if ever – be able to go home?

Supporting internally displaced families to pursue their decision and fulfil a wish to find a solution and for some, to return home, is a noble and important priority on the humanitarian agenda. I am proud that UNHCR is able to tread the path of pursuing innovative solutions to end displacement and honoured that we do so in collaboration with committed and experienced partners in Somalia.

The Somalia Return Consortium is an example of how we as aid agencies, donors, stakeholders, and humanitarian can stand united and offer assistance to people who wish to end their displacement and to start rebuilding homes, livelihoods and lives in the areas from where they origin. Pursuing solutions programming in Somalia through the alliance of the Government of Somalia, UN agencies, and international NGOs, must remain our commitment and priority. And learning from our experiences is an integral part of this commitment.

By looking at the achievements and challenges faced by the Consortium and partners, and not least by the returnees, we remain true to the commitment to pursue durable solutions to displacement. The lessons learned should be the backbone of our dialogue on how we can improve and continue to pursue solutions to displacement. The report now launched will be vital to shape and improve future assistance – and it will enable us to better support efforts which still only spearhead the immense and urgent need for solutions to displacement.

More than 1.1 million people in Somalia remain displaced, forced away from their home, and every day children are born into displacement. How do we help answering the questions posed by the Somali families living in displacement, struggling to get by? How do we better assist and support those who wish to return home? By asking these questions upon the launch this report, UNHCR would like to initiate new dialogue and debate on future solutions to end the displacement in and around Somalia.

Alessandra Morelli
UNHCR Somalia Representative

'Any assistance provided by UNHCR for return to Somalia aims at supporting individuals who, being fully informed of the situation in their places of origin, choose voluntarily to return. Any future role of UNHCR in the facilitation of organized voluntary repatriation movements to Somalia and any future involvement by UNHCR in efforts aimed at sustainable reintegration for returnees and IDPs in Somalia should not be construed as implying an assessment on the part of UNHCR that Somalia is safe for every individual, regardless of personal profile or personal circumstances'

UNHCR Position Paper, June 2014

UNHCR's advisory on returns mentioned above, highlights the challenge of a humanitarian organisation in facilitating **voluntary returns** in a context like Somalia, where insecurity can replace security extremely rapidly and droughts, famines and floods often batter its populations and force them to leave their places of origin and residence. This begs the question – what does it mean to be informed about return in Somalia? What does it mean to return voluntarily after being informed of prevailing conditions in the places of origin?

Within this context, the Somalia Return Consortium is implementing an IDP Voluntary Return Programme since August 2012. Composed of DRC, FAO, INTERSOS, Islamic Relief, IOM, Mercy Corps, NRC, UNHCR and WFP, the SRC has so far assisted 10,909 households (approx. 40,000 individuals) to return from IDP settlements to their places of origin in the regions of Bay, Middle and Lower Shabelle, Hiraan and Bakool. The SRC, having conducted 2 rounds of monitoring assessments on the assisted beneficiaries in 1.5 years of programming, commissioned Samuel Hall Consulting, to analyse the data of these monitoring surveys (post distribution and post return) and determine if and to what extent, durable solutions were being achieved by the assisted beneficiaries and to assess the impact of the Somalia Return Consortium.

Methodology and Scope of the Study

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed for this study. Secondary desk review and stakeholder interviews comprised the qualitative aspect of the methodology. Within the quantitative side, databases of the intention surveys conducted pre-return in IDP settlements, post distribution monitoring surveys and post return assessment surveys were cleaned and analysed. Stakeholder interviews were conducted with Consortium members, donors and other organizations providing humanitarian assistance in Somalia. Additionally semi-structured interviews were conducted with IDP leaders in Somalia.

The study was defined in scope by the following limitations:

The Samuel Hall research team was composed of two data analysts and a lead researcher based in Nairobi. All the data collected by the Somalia Return Consortium since it started its programme was consolidated, cleaned and analysed. Additionally, interviews were conducted in Nairobi and over the phone with field staff based in Somalia.

- Samuel Hall did not conduct any primary data collection for this study and all graphs and statistical information in this report are based on the data collected by Axiom (Somalia Return Consortium's third party monitoring agency) and individual Consortium members.
- Samuel Hall has provided additional observations on the implementation of the program, based on the findings of the interviews and secondary desk review.
- This is however, not a comprehensive evaluation of the Somalia Return Consortium itself, as the research team was unable to go to Somalia to conduct observation visits focus group discussions or other blended methodology combining secondary and primary data.
- Findings in this study pertain to the Consortium as a whole, rather than individual partners.

As such, it should be noted that this study presents the findings of the M&E of the SRC, in light of the context in Somalia, for concerned organisations to question, discuss, decide and act on how programming must adapt to the changing context.

MAIN FINDINGS OF THE DATA ANALYSIS

Durability of staying in Villages of Origin

The return programme highlights two trends – the inter-household movements where one or more members leave the VoO and not the entire family and the inter-group displacement, where whole households move back away from the VoOs.

- **Inter Group Displacement.** Data suggests few instances of families moving back to IDP settlements completely, with low rates of absenteeism during the PDM and PRA. In most cases no absenteeism of names on the beneficiary list was reported. Exceptions to these include 26% in caseload 3 which reduced to 11% in the second round of monitoring – due to misreporting in round 1. On average absenteeism rates in the caseloads have remained between 2-4%, with 96-98% of the families assisted by the Somalia Return Consortium still residing at the villages of origin since their return happened in late 2012 or in 2013.
- **Inter Household Movements** suggest a different trend. Although only 5% of IS respondents reported plans to leave at least one family member at the site of displacement, 20% of Round 1 PRA respondents reported that at least one family member was not living with them at the site of return which then increased to 60% in Group 2. Return movements by some family members are explained as due to insecurity, configuring in this case renewed displacement; but also due to better livelihood opportunities and other reasons not linked to forced displacements, which led some family members to move elsewhere.

Profiles of IDPs

- **Regions of Displacement.** Majority respondents within the Intention Survey were displaced from Lower and Middle Shabelle, Bay, Hiraan or Banadir. The findings affirm what other research studies have found – 60% of IDPs at least in

Mogadishu were from the two Shabelles, Bay and Bakool given that Lower Shabelle and Bakool were the hardest hit by the 2011 famine¹.

- **Reasons for Displacement.** Majority of the respondents indicated that drought was their main reason of displacement whilst 18% cited insecurity as the reason why they left their places of origin. Work opportunities and humanitarian assistance formed a small percentage of people's reasons to have moved.
- **Duration of Displacement.** Almost all the respondents had spent between one and three years in displacement, mostly motivated by drought, with a strong plurality motivated by insecurity at their place of origin.
- **Reasons for Return.** The largest group of respondents reported increased security at the place of origin as a motivation for return, *though significant groups expressed a desire to return temporarily for seasonal agricultural work*, and a similarly sized group considered that they had amassed the savings necessary to start anew. On the other end of the spectrum, significant minorities of respondents were compelled to leave the site of displacement due to insecurity or eviction. No respondent expressed a motivation to return due to unemployment or lack of aid at the site of displacement.
- **Conditions of Return.** Many respondents indicated that their decision to return was conditional on a number of factors. Chief among these was the provision of transport, followed by the provision of agricultural aid and an improvement in security. One respondent in four indicated a willingness to return under any condition. Only 5% of respondents indicated the intention to leave family members behind at the site of displacement.
- **Livelihood Conditions.** Most of the respondents before displacement were either farmers, traders or involved in some form of agro-pastoral activity. While in displacement these activities shifted sharply toward casual labour and porter or domestic work. Expectations regarding activities post return followed similar trends to those expressed pre-displacement, perhaps indicating a general desire to resume a pre-displacement lifestyle, or simply the skills and experience IDPs already possessed. Two thirds of respondents expected to be able to sustain their families upon return through their chosen activity, with half of the remainder undetermined
- **Expected Challenges upon Return.** About two in five respondents feared their main challenge upon return would be a shortage of food, while less than half that number feared unemployment, with small minorities concerned about access to healthcare and schools, and agriculture-related challenges. Only two percent of respondents reported a concern over insecurity.

Distribution of the Standard Minimum Package²

- **Nature of Distribution.** The distribution programs were similar among all returnees with particular regional variations. However, most were distributed non-food items, items related to creating or maintaining shelter, items relating to livelihood maintenance, cash for food distributions, and direct food distribution. Almost none reported receiving vouchers of any kind, or cash for shelter, livelihood, or non-food items. This is because at present, no sending organisation or SRC member is using this methodology to provide the SMP.
- **Gaps in Package Content.** The most requested item was a mosquito net, with two in five respondents putting it at the top of their list, and two in three including it. Intuitively this is congruent with the observation that 60% of PRA respondents have recently reported a bout of malaria. In addition two thirds of respondents would have preferred to have been provided a plastic sheet, more than half a kettle, a third with blankets and an eighth or less with a mattress, shoes, a jerry can, and sundry others.
- **Usefulness and quality of the SMP:** Answers to questions of usefulness and quality of items received were difficult to analyse as the items differed from respondent to respondent. However, the team conducted a case study analysis on the latest round of PDM of one caseload. For items like plastic sheet, ropes, bags, jerry cans, mats, tarpaulins, shawl, cooking pots, frying pan and bowl, it was determined that without fail both quality and usefulness of the items provided was judged as "average" or "good" by over 95% of respondents. On whether items have been sold and their actual use, no responses of selling were discerned. Theft too does not seem to have been a problem for this caseload, as the columns relating to it were all filled with "No". However, the results of these questions are indicative only and would require significant cleaning of tools and monitoring during data collection to be assessed rigorously.
- **Quality of Distribution.** 93% of the respondents said no when asked whether they had been paid to be put on the distribution list. None reported as having been paid to be put on the distribution list. 94% reported that they had not been told what items they would receive before distribution whilst an equally high number – 93% reported that were not told what items they would receive during distribution. It should be noted that no respondent reported yes to the above two questions. In terms of payment of taxes or fees for the goods, 93% respondents reported and only one respondent

¹ ICRC, Mogadishu IDP Survey, 2012

² (2650 respondents)

responded that they had paid taxes or fees for the goods. In terms of security, majority – 93% reported no security problems during or after the distribution.

Durability of Returnee Living Conditions over Time

- **Type of Shelter.** While only a third of respondents expected to live in a temporary shelter in the intention survey, about three quarters report living in a temporary shelter post-return.
- **Quality of Shelter.** While more than half of respondents in group one reported that their dwellings were in good condition during round one, by round two three respondents in four reported their housing in poor condition, with a tendency to leak. If group two follows the same trend, the two thirds that reported housing in good condition will be greatly reduced by the next round of PRAs.
- **Insecurity.** While only 2% of respondents in the intention survey expected to face insecurity as a main challenge upon return, 40% of respondents perceived insecurity and violence as the main threat to their returnee livelihood.
- **Violence.** More than four out of five respondents reported a physical assault within the previous three months, in addition to less frequent reports of restriction of movement, forced marriage and sexual assault. Geographically, proportions of respondents reporting recent physical assaults are universally dismal, though, among the most represented sites, Baidoa (Bay) and Sigale (Lower Shabelle) lead the pack at close to 90% in each case.
- **Health.** The two main concerns reported were access to healthcare facilities and treatment received at those facilities. Two respondents out of five reported poor road conditions as a primary obstacle to receiving healthcare, a fifth complained of high transportation taxes and one in five did not find transport available. More than 12% of women found insecurity to be an obstacle to receiving medical treatment.
- **Food Insecurity.** Reports of food insufficiency were alarmingly frequent, with two in five respondents reporting not having had enough to eat at least once in the previous week.
- **Livelihoods.** While more than two thirds of IS respondents expected agricultural, pastoral or trading activities to account for their main source of income upon return, 57% of PRA respondents reported their main source of sustenance to be either the reception of food aid or the sale thereof.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF THE PROGRAMME

Programming

Insecurity: Regions in South Central Somalia, where returns are being supported to, continue to show a precarious and volatile security situation, not helped by the recent AMISOM offensive questioning returns themselves and having serious implications for those who have already returned.

Verification of intention to return and stay is still a challenge: Verifying who genuinely wants to return and will make an effort to become sustainable as opposed to those who want to go back for the aid and then come back to IDP settlements for more assistance remains a challenge. The longer the duration of stay in VoOs, the larger the number of households reporting that at least 1-2 members were no longer living with them in the VoO.

Fitness to Travel tests not implemented consistently: Fitness to Travel Tests before departure, to identify households in need of specific medical attention is not being conducted consistently amongst all the beneficiaries that have been assisted by the Consortium.

Lack of links with other organisations in VoO: While mission reports to villages of return highlight and identify the need to coordinate with other agencies like UNICEF to see if the villages of return are in the programming areas of these organisations, the focus of the Consortium as a whole remains very much on the return. Once the return has been completed, access to education, health and other services seem to be addressed in an ad-hoc manner by NGOs and the UN independently. Though this is technically outside the mandate of the Consortium, it does have an impact on the capacity of the returnees to achieve durable solutions, bringing the long-term sustainability and impact of the return process into jeopardy.

Gaps in Services in VoO: Service mapping conducted by sending organisations, identified relevant gaps in access to Health, Education, Water and Sanitation, Protection, and Livelihoods³.

Different understanding of the impact of the project: Interviews with stakeholders showed difference amongst the members in the impact they perceived that the Consortium was having. Most felt that returnees were in a better position in

³ Multi Agency Mission Report to Baidoa, March 2013

their VoO rather than in IDP settlements, but were not able to attest to the durability of a) services in the VoO being sufficient and sustainable and b) intention of the returnees to continue in the VoOs after the SMP had dried out.

Challenging to follow the calendar of returns: The livelihoods package is designed such that it allows beneficiaries to plant seeds just in time for the rainy season. However, often transportation gets delayed and throws the return off-schedule. In practice, most households are not able to make it in time. The process is restrained by lack of funds, challenges with local authorities and local leaders, lack of transport and other challenges.

Donor Fatigue to fund long-term programmes: After two years of support to the return process with about 25 M USD inclusive of cash support and significant in-kind contributions, a donor fatigue has been noted in funding long term humanitarian programmes, especially on themes like protection to complement post return activities after return has been initiated. This is especially true for funding of longer-term projects that do not yield immediate short-term gains.

Data Collection, Analysis and M&E

Lack of resources affecting data collection during PRM: Axiom – the third party monitoring agency has signed a MoU with the Somalia Return Consortium. However, for ease of administration, it is contracted out by each individual sending organisation – DRC, Mercy Corps and INTERSOS – so far, to conduct the PDM and PRAs. From a data collection point of view, this serves to complicate matters as Axiom caters to different requests by every organisation. Due to lack of enough funding, PDMs and PRAs are often conducted together, creating a) a bias in the responses and b) preventing trend tracking from taking place.

Few resources for Data Management & Oversight: There is one Data Management Focal Point who manages all the data that is generated by the Consortium and monitors the F&C mechanism. At the time of the interview with the Data Management Focal Point, a number of tasks pertaining to data entry and management were behind schedule.

Information not captured by the IS, or other M&E tools: There are key pieces of information that are presently not being captured by the tools but are relevant to a durable solutions analysis. These are:

1. Control group of host communities in the VoO of returnee beneficiaries
2. Majority/minority clan dynamics of returnees
3. Conditions of 15% beneficiary host population
4. Protection concerns: forced marriages, child protection issues, GBV etc.
5. Challenges faced during transit from IDP camp to VoO
6. Living conditions in IDP settlements
7. Living conditions before displacement

Lack of a consolidated information channel of the Somalia Return Consortium: Given the different sources of information that the SRC members collect – PRM, PRA, PDM, IS, GSV reports and others – what is lacking at present, is a system that brings together all these pieces of information on a regular basis to analyse them at a strategic level.

Communications and Coordination

Identification and Implementation: It is to be noted that over the course of the SRC's programming, the need to provide support and attention to issues like regular monitoring of the security situation, strengthening existing community structures, advocating towards community driven development initiatives, trainings on GBV and Child Protection and follow up assistance has been highlighted. However, in terms of implementation, this remains a question mark.

Coordination in Nairobi rather than in Somalia: Multiple stakeholders interviewed for this study expressed concern that the focus of major discussions on the project had shifted to Nairobi with most of the meetings taking place in the Kenyan capital rather than in Mogadishu. This in turn affected a) coordination at the field level and b) links between other programs being implemented in the areas of return⁴.

Lack of Existing coordination with other long-term projects being implemented in the areas of return: The SRC currently does not have strong coordination with long term humanitarian and/or development projects being implemented either in the IDP settlements or in the VoOs. This greatly affects the SRC's ability to do advocacy for continued sustenance of the returnees in their VoOs to prevent them from returning to the IDP settlements again.

⁴ It should be noted that the RC SG agreed to recruit a RC Operation Manager since Mid-2013 and this position has never come into effect due to different constraints.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PROGRAMME

Coordination amongst member organisations: Since the present program of the Consortium remains restricted to assisting IDP voluntary returns, coordination too remains effective. Most member organisations understand and share the same objectives. Regular Steering Group meetings and TWGs are held complemented by circulation of analytical papers and monitoring data as it is generated.

Feedback and Complaints Mechanism: By distributing mobile phones and opening a dedicated toll free line for beneficiaries to leave their feedback and lodge complaints, the Somalia Return Consortium has set up a channel of direct communication with the beneficiaries in the VoOs. Even though majority of the calls and SMSs that come through this system are presently invalid, it is a useful way of monitoring feedback.

Accountability through the M&E Framework: Accountability mechanisms to ensure the use of funds provided are accounted for, are considered key to encourage donors to continue their support. This is presently being done by the Consortium and with a few changes, can become a strong tool for advocacy and donor information on the programme and the plight of returnees.

15% of beneficiaries as most vulnerable amongst host communities: In order to ensure that host communities do not feel alienated when returnees receive their assistance packages, all sending organisations are required to provide the same assistance to the most vulnerable households within host communities.

Return Consortium urban package for urban returnees: Recently implemented by NRC, a caseload of urban returnees has been assisted with a special urban package on pilot basis rather than the regular rural livelihood package designed by FAO. This should ensure that those who come from urban areas of origin get a package that is conducive to their reintegration. The urban package will be soon included in the SRC standards for assistance.

IOM's TVET & Skills Training Project in Baidoa: IOM in collaboration with INTERSOS has been implementing a project in Baidoa that goes beyond the SMP. Following a community based approach; the project aims at providing women and youth with opportunities to alternate livelihoods like business start-ups⁵. Though insecurity in the VoO prevented the beneficiaries of this project from being able to start up their own businesses, it is projects like these that should be explored by the Somalia Return Consortium for their IDP returnees.

Mobile Surveys: While it is not possible to use and implement mobile surveys in Al-Shabaab controlled areas, these have been successfully used to collect data in the Intention Surveys in IDP settlements in Mogadishu. Mobile surveys are less time consuming and as the data is automatically entered into a database, reduces the risk of mistakes during data entry.

Information Sharing: The reports generated by the Third Party Monitoring Agency and the Consortium members are circulated around the Consortium's mailing list. Stakeholders have expressed the usefulness of these reports in providing information in areas where they would otherwise not have any access.

RECOMMENDATIONS | A 15-POINT PLAN

The report lays out a 15-point recommendation plan based on its findings, aggregated on the basis of programming, coordination and data management/M&E.

1. Recommendations on Programming

1. **Revisions of SOPs** should be done when the need arises to ensure that they reflect the latest prevailing context of Somalia and incorporate considerations of some of the challenges faced by Sending Organizations in the field.
2. GSVs should be used as an opportunity to conduct **service mappings** by the sending organisations in places of return.
3. The Consortium should focus on **developing links** between humanitarian and development actors in IDP settlements and return areas to develop the resilience of displaced communities
4. **Community involvement** is crucial to maintaining any interventions and to sustain reintegration of returnees.

⁵ Interview with IOM, conducted in IOM Somalia office in Nairobi in April 2014

5. **Mainstream support to IDP returns into government initiatives** and national programmes to allow for a proper exit and handover strategy and **support national policy development** to set up a framework for recognizing and securing IDPs' rights (developing an implementation plan based on lessons learned from SRC's experience).
6. This should be accompanied by **build the capacity of government counterparts** both at the national but more importantly at the local – displacement *and* return location – level).
7. **Strengthen protection mainstreaming and protection training** of SRC members, ensure adequate presence of protection officers in the field, linking them up with the RC data unit. This protection monitoring should be supported by evidence-based support in the form of an IDP protection profiling, and with the final objective of strengthening protection mechanisms.
8. **Referral Mechanisms** for cases of protection and insecurity that do not directly fall under the mandate of the SRC but are observed in the field should be clearly set up, either with the relevant cluster, with contacts and action times established at the field level or with the main organisation assisting in providing that protection and assistance in the field.

2. Recommendations on Coordination of Activities

9. **More advocacies** for mainstreaming returnees and highlighting longer-term challenges faced by them in achieving durable solutions in VoO is strongly recommended for the Consortium.
10. **Involvement in the Reintegration Process** of the SRC will allow for some of the linkages made in this chapter be formed and tie the process of IDP return to the reintegration process.
11. **Explore partnerships and links with civil society organisations** like Zamzam, ORDO, Hijra, Feero and International Relief, Swiss Kaalmo and others that are active organisations currently implementing Health, Education, WASH and Livelihood projects.
12. Using the data available **organise SRC-member workshops for a continuous SWOT analysis** and improvement/accountability of the work done. Moreover, to the extent possible, coordination meetings should be **conducted in the field in Somalia** rather than in Nairobi.
13. **Further research areas:** An in-depth case study of returnee households, evaluation of sending organisations meeting SOP standards and guidelines, Mapping of services in IDP settlements and VoO of returnees as part of a resilience building study are only some of the areas where there is a need to conduct evidence and field based research, in order to inform the SRC's present and future programming better.

3. Recommendations on Data Collection, Management and Analysis

14. The following steps are recommended for **data collection** as part of the M&E framework:
 - a. **Electronic data collection** using mobile surveys should be used to reduce the risk of errors and allow for live uploading and analysis of the data. **GPS coordinates** should be noted for every entry in the M&E and IS where possible. Additionally **a standard data collection platform should be set up**, including a survey creation engine, paper survey generator, and common data entry interface and report generator. This should be complemented by **a common data entry and reporting format** with strict data validation implemented at the entry point.
 - b. **Standardized definitions and spellings** for the IS, PDM and PRA (codes for clan, sub-clans, regions, districts, villages, education level, age classes etc.) to be agreed upon. Moreover **a unique list of beneficiaries** should be compiled by the data management unit at the Consortium, to allow for tracking and clear sampling. This should include those who have been assisted to return and those who have been provided with the SMP.
 - c. **Longitudinal PRA** is required to capture information in stages –to map the progression of living conditions of returnees in certain key sectors like livelihood, shelter, health and income. As such, based on availability of resources, the SRC should determine a systematic timetable for the PRA, which should be adhered to the extent that it is possible in the field. The sample should reflect changes and comparisons between host communities, returnees between various time periods and clearly substantiated with FGDs. Additionally, the database should **distinguish clearly between target groups** –
 - Specific round and group of PRA respondents
 - Host communities that have been assisted by the SMP
 - Non returning IDPs to serve as a control group
15. In terms of **Data Management**, the following recommendations have come out of the study:
 - a. **The online data management system** should be user friendly for the data manager as well as visitors to the website. It should provide comprehensive up-to-date information on the Consortium's activities in an easily

accessible manner. Similarly all reports of the Consortium should be available to download from the online platform.

- b. **Quality control mechanisms** should be set at every stage to ensure that the data that is being entered and changing hands is accurate and clean.
- c. **A single streamlined information channel** managed by the SRC centrally, that collects and collates information, reports and collects data that are being generated through the return programme. This is not just limited to the online platform, but human resources dedicated to collecting all the data observed and recorded by the Consortium members in the field, and their timely analysis. Given the wealth of data collected by the Consortium, this requires a team of 3-4 people, including monitoring officers.
- d. **Setting up of an analysis plan:** important for data analysis is to know what answers you want and when do you want them. Once this has been established, the SRC can set up automatic mechanisms and schedules to produce weekly, monthly or quarterly analysis on a few key indicators, complimented by qualitative data analysis.
- e. **Trend mapping** will help the Consortium understand the changes in living conditions of the Consortium if analysed after regular times to see what change has taken place over time as well as identify vulnerabilities related specifically to displacement (comparisons with a control group).

KEY MESSAGES

Rising Insecurity. Recent events like the AMISOM offensive have led to the displacements of a reported 73,000 individuals as of June 2014. The Somalia HCT has already warned of *increased displacement of people from rural areas towards the urban centres in southern and central areas, where access to basic services could be severely overstretched. Programmes supporting durable solutions in volatile and challenging environment require a continuous review of the strategy to ensure adherence with “do not harm” principles and other applicable standards.*

A difficult choice: Facilitating Informed Voluntary Return in Insecure Areas. Rising insecurity in South Central Somalia questions the feasibility of assisting informed and voluntary returns to regions where security is volatile. However, perceptions of security and local information channels feeding into decision-making by IDPs are hard to quantify and assess in light of poor information. The report points to IDPs facing a difficult situation both in IDP settlements and areas of return in regards to security. This despite support is provided to assisted communities in term of “go and see” visits to the areas of return prior the return.

Durable Solutions. The Study highlights the lack of durable solutions in the absence of links before and after return with respect to the IDP Return Programme implemented by the Somalia Return Consortium. Despite facilitating return and distribution of a Standard Minimum Package that includes a livelihood package, living conditions of assisted beneficiaries was found to decline with time after the effect of the return package is over.

Protection Monitoring, Mainstreaming & Training within the Return programme must be strengthened and protection concerns regularly noted and referred to the relevant agencies.

SRC Model of Assistance. The SRC as a model of assistance is a positive mechanism of assisting displaced populations, overcoming challenges of access, coordination and sharing of resources in Somalia. The feedback and complaints mechanism has opened a direct communication channel with beneficiaries. Vetting process of multiple agencies has reduced ghost beneficiary numbers and duplications.

Develop Links & Build Resilience. The study strongly recommends links between humanitarian and development actors for sustainable solutions and to build the resilience of displaced communities before and after return to absorb the challenges of the ever-evolving context of Somalia.

ISSUES AND CONCERNS

Durability of Stay. Data suggests few instances of families moving back to IDP settlements completely, with low rates of absenteeism during the monitoring exercise. On average absenteeism rates in the caseloads have remained between 2-4%, with 96-98% of the families assisted by the SRC still residing at the villages of origin since their return happened in late 2012 or in 2013. **On the contrary** 20% of Round 1 PRA respondents reported that at least one family member was not living with them at the site of return at the time of monitoring, which then increased to 60% in Group 2. Return movements by some family members are explained as due to insecurity, configuring in this case renewed displacement; but also due to better livelihood opportunities and other reasons not linked to forced displacements.

Achievement of Durable Solutions? At present, durable solutions are not being achieved as the conditions of returnees were found to steadily decline after the usage period of the standard minimum package had expired. Two indicators show:

- **Shelter:** While only 1/3 of respondents expected to live in a temporary shelter in displacement, about 3/4 live in a temporary shelter post-return.
- **Food Security:** 40% of IDP respondents feared limited access to food upon return, and a significant number of IDP returnees reported not having had enough to eat in 7 days. The incidence of food insufficiency evolved markedly over time occurring more than twice as frequently after having spent longer in the area of return.

Security & Information. Security is ever evolving and changing in Somalia. The SRC facilitates Go and See Visits (GSVs) taking delegations of returning IDPs to their areas of return beforehand to assess security and services before facilitating return – a key step to inform IDPs about the place of return. However, monitoring show that though only 2% of IDPs feared insecurity (before the GSVs), almost 47% of returnees who had spent approximately a year in the area of return, reported insecurity as a concern.

Sustainable Livelihoods? For the duration of the Standard Minimum Package (SMP), the livelihoods component was utilised by beneficiaries, including fertilizers, seeds and tools, depending on the agricultural conditions of the areas of return. This declined with time as over 50% reported food aid as their main source of sustenance.

RETURN CONSORTIUM | Somalia

Towards durable solutions to end displacement

The UNHCR-led Somalia Return Consortium was established in 2012 with the aim to develop and provide standardized, coordinated and coherent assistance to internally displaced returning to their area of origin in Somalia.

More information about the Somalia Return Consortium can be obtained through UNHCR Somalia.

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Towards Durable Solutions | Achievements and challenges in supporting voluntary returns of IDPs in Somalia