

# Multi-stakeholder approach to urban displacement in Somalia

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**Somalia's cities are struggling to cope with the immediate and longer-term demands posed by their fast-growing populations and the arrival of people fleeing crises in rural areas. A multi-stakeholder, locally led response can help to sustainably address the challenges that arise.**

Displacement is shaping Somalia's urban landscape and contributing to the country's rapid urbanisation. Many internally displaced people (IDPs) have moved from rural areas to the main cities in search of shelter, protection and humanitarian assistance. For instance, in Baidoa – the capital of the southwestern Bay region of Somalia – the number of IDP sites has increased from 70 prior to the 2017 drought to 435 in 2019.<sup>1</sup> The city's estimated

overall population has doubled in two years. Weak urban systems, however, are unable to cope with the demands of the ever-growing population, and both host and displaced populations risk being excluded from access to basic infrastructure and services.

The government in Somalia has faced a major transition over the recent past, with the formation of Federal Member States and the associated increase in coordination

requirements. Prior to this, those coordination mechanisms that existed were mainly related to the humanitarian architecture. Multiple studies and evaluations have demonstrated the need to invest and support locally led coordination and planning processes in order to address the impacts of displacement and to help Somali cities cope with these impacts.

The success of joint planning and coordination, however, depends on the capacity of municipalities to lead and to coordinate multiple stakeholders, as opposed to being solely led by the international aid system. In order to build capacity, and to support local authorities in developing their urban strategies and plans, the UN and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have worked together to help government establish technical durable solutions working groups in Baidoa and Kismayo and a durable solutions unit in Mogadishu. Most recently the Federal Government of Somalia established a Durable Solutions Secretariat in October 2019. This is the first time in Somalia that sustainable coordination forums have been established at district/municipal levels; in addition, with these forums supported by multi-year consortia funded by DFID, EU and Danida, it is encouraging that different donors and actors have agreed on the same coordination needs and structures (rather than each actor/donor creating their own coordination structure).

These local coordination mechanisms aim to play a significant role in shifting urban responses – complementing humanitarian clusters with a coordinated multi-stakeholder approach which brings together urban planners, humanitarian agencies, and other actors working on building durable solutions, resilience and State capacity, under the leadership of local authorities. This approach requires investment not only in local authorities' capacities but also in the capacities of humanitarian actors to navigate a development and political environment while at the same time maintaining a principled humanitarian response.

The durable solutions working groups provide a space for discussion and debate, essential for identifying synergies and

supporting government leadership. The different actors have different interests and objectives but the aim is that, through undertaking joint analysis exercises<sup>2</sup>, they are able to reach a common understanding and an agreement on where and how to invest. Such collaboration on the production and use of evidence is a critical success factor in developing a common narrative and subsequently a coherent planning approach with authorities, while building accountability.

Despite progress made, numerous challenges remain. Achieving durable solutions is dependent on different levels of government having adequate capacity, willingness and resources – difficult in a context where the State is still developing. Actors need to develop capacity development plans that: are realistic, localised and collectively endorsed; span several years at the very least; include specific indicators and milestones for monitoring purposes; and engage with local authorities from the design stage of any new programming.

### **Integrated responses through area-based planning**

With the majority of people who are displaced into urban contexts facing similar challenges to those confronting the urban poor, traditional sector-based programmes targeting individuals based on their displacement 'status' are no longer appropriate. At the end of 2017, the UN and NGOs in Somalia developed a set of programming principles in order to make the transition to integrated area-based programming to address the needs of both host and displaced communities. The Federal Government of Somalia endorsed these principles as good practices for use throughout the country.<sup>3</sup>

These principles aim to ensure an approach to addressing displacement that is coordinated across humanitarian, development and peace actors (the 'triple nexus'). A number of multi-year, multi-sector consortia were created (such as the EU RE-INTEG projects, the DFID Danwadaag Solutions Consortium and the Danida

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Durable Solutions Programme<sup>4</sup>), putting the programming principles into practice and fostering increased collaboration.

An interesting case is that of a coordinated approach established by the World Bank, RE-INTEG and Danwadaag to support the Banadir Regional Administration where communities face land-related challenges such as forced evictions, increases in the price of land (as a result of improved infrastructure and services), and municipal-level gaps in capacity to address such issues. The World Bank, for example, intends to map all IDP settlements in the project's target areas, identify any available public land for resettlement, and look into rental subsidy options. This is the start of an area-based plan looking at five core dimensions involved in helping cities to function better: spatial (urban planning), physical (infrastructure and services), economic (job creation and access to employment), social (social cohesion and inclusion) and institutional (capacity and accountability) dimensions.

An effective area-based approach depends on complementarity and coordination with other actors and programmes operating within the defined geographical area. Any single programme does not have to address all the needs and vulnerabilities within its area of implementation but it is important to be aware of the planning and interventions that already exist within the same area in order to identify gaps. Therefore it is essential to link programming with district development plans.

### Participatory and inclusive processes

The growing number of IDPs in cities also raises urgent questions of inclusion and citizenship rights. Most of the IDPs are from poor, low-status, southern Somali agricultural communities, such as the Digil-Mirifle and Somali Bantu. Their arrival in considerable numbers in the already crowded IDP settlements in urban areas is changing the demographics of these cities in ways that challenge exclusivist clan claims. The IDPs' presence is generally tolerated

by host communities, in part because they serve as a useful pool of cheap labour, but they are treated as guests with limited rights. This exclusionary discourse is one of the most sensitive issues in Somalia today, especially as these IDPs are likely to become permanent residents in cities dominated by certain clans. A key challenge is how to foster social cohesion between urban displaced and host communities in a politically and ethnically divided context.

Participatory, inclusive and transparent processes are therefore essential. The following two examples of such processes have been piloted in specific locations and then expanded to others, adapted as necessary depending on the displaced communities' differing experiences, vulnerabilities and capacities.

Community Action Plans were developed for Kismayo and Baidoa using the IOM/UN-Habitat Midnimo (meaning 'unity') model, reflecting needs identified by displaced and host communities. Building on these and other such plans, the Danwadaag Solutions Consortium supported Kismayo and Baidoa municipalities in consolidating these community-level plans into integrated district-level plans.

The Common Social Accountability Platform, developed by Africa's Voices Foundation and launched in partnership with ReDSS and the Banadir Regional Administration,<sup>5</sup> used radio to build dialogue and gather public opinion on issues related to durable solutions; they did this by presenting radio debates driven by citizen input via SMS. Although the first example of this radio platform was confined to Mogadishu, it represents a promising approach to increasing accountability to displacement-affected communities. Across the four weeks of the pilot, 3,267 people sent a total of 14,391 SMS contributions, with many participating on multiple occasions. Among those who participated, 51.2% are displaced, indicating that the channel is as accessible for displaced groups as it is for the host population. The project is currently being replicated in Baidoa and Bossaso by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office.

Analysis of examples of emerging good practice to support inclusive, community-led processes at municipal level suggests that:

- A comprehensive mapping of community structures should be conducted at the outset of interventions. Interventions should build on existing groups and plans, linking community groups and plans with other planning processes, including at district and municipal levels (although it should be recognised that engaging district- and municipal-level officials can be challenging). Any lack of representation should be addressed, but new groups should not be formed unless they bring significant added value.
- Opportunities to engage displacement-affected communities in project monitoring should be explored.
- Consideration should also be given to the provision of block grants to displacement-affected community forums and groups to implement their own priorities – allowing them to invest in projects which they themselves have identified. This would promote civic engagement and foster increased accountability of local government to its constituency.
- Social cohesion and inclusion should be key strategic objectives of urban programming.

### Dual focus: early solutions and long-term planning

There is a constant struggle to work on long-term goals and urban planning to address displacement as a development challenge, while at the same time answering massive humanitarian needs. Investing in early solutions and urban preparedness response is key to supporting municipalities in tackling both at the same time. For instance, while humanitarian actors focus on rapid response to support a city's capacity to absorb new residents, development actors complement this by bringing in urban planners. The deployment of urban planners and social, economic and governance experts from the onset is a critical but often overlooked resource.

Durable solutions programming in urban contexts should also work in complementarity with resilience programming in rural areas in order to support both local integration in urban areas and – where the security situation allows – voluntary, safe and dignified return and reintegration in rural areas. Reflecting this need to improve rural–urban linkages has led the Danwadaag Solutions Consortium to include a much stronger component on early solutions planning. Its approach focuses on areas already affected by high levels of displacement (that will inevitably receive more displaced households) while continuing to address longer-term durable solutions needs.

The outcomes from these collaborative, multi-stakeholder responses in Somalia's cities show how different actors can work together to provide a coordinated and comprehensive response to the challenges of urban displacement through inclusive, community-led processes. The next step is to develop multi-stakeholder approaches to measuring durable solutions processes and to promoting greater accountability, in order that all stakeholders contribute to collective outcomes.

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