

Policy Brief: Livelihood Components of Durable Solutions for IDPs: Assessment of three cases in Somali Region, Ethiopia

A FEINSTEIN INTERNATIONAL CENTER BRIEF

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Farburu IDP site, Adadle woreda, Shabelle zone. Photo by Abdirahman Ahmed Muhumed

This policy brief accompanies an [assessment report](#) on livelihoods as part of durable solutions for internal displacement in the Somali Region of Ethiopia. The assessment, funded by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), took place in April and May 2021 in three sites selected to represent different options for durable solutions. The sites and the corresponding durable solution options are as follows: a) Goljano woreda, Fafan zone, relocation; b) Tuliguled woreda, Fafan zone, return; and c) Adadle woreda, Shabelle zone, local integration. The set of outputs also includes a [literature review](#) on select relevant topics on internal displacement, livelihoods, and durable solution interventions in Ethiopia and Somali Region more specifically. This policy brief highlights some of the gaps to achieving durable solutions that became apparent in the data collection and discusses some possible policy solutions and related programmatic interventions.

Challenges to achieving durable solutions from a policy perspective

Achieving sustainable durable solutions for the large number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Somali Region specifically and Ethiopia more broadly is complex and multifaceted. The federal, regional and local governments have made various advances in realizing this end, with support from international donors, organizations, and agencies. While these efforts have advanced both the policy debate and the implementation of durable solutions

to a certain degree, meaningful progress will not be achieved without a major scaling up of resources and better alignment of policies. Below, we briefly touch on the three case studies and durable solution options reviewed in this assessment and then discuss some of the avenues for policy solutions. We end with a review of gaps in the information and knowledge base.

Relocation: Goljano woreda, Fafan zone

The absence of land access threatens the durability of relocation.

The IDPs currently residing in Goljano woreda were beneficiaries of a government relocation effort. Initially displaced from Oromia Region due to conflict, they lived in Qoloji IDP camp for two to three years before being relocated. The government constructed 200 houses at Goljano for displaced families who had clan ties to the host community; however, in addition to the targeted beneficiaries, more than 200 other households moved spontaneously from Qoloji to Goljano.¹ As a result, each two-room one-family house is hosting two families. Few economic opportunities are available for IDPs.

In its May 2020 guidelines, the Durable Solutions Working Group (DSWG) describes relocation as “a planned process in which IDPs are assisted to voluntarily move away from their present location, are settled in a new location with safety and dignity, and provided with the conditions, including protection, for rebuilding their lives in a sustainable way.”² Relocations are meant to adhere to a range of central principles, including (among others): information, consultation and participation; choice; and comprehensiveness of recovery (including support to livelihoods, social cohesion, and support to host communities). In the case of Goljano, it appears that the main consideration for relocation was the willingness of the host community to provide space for the construction of the houses for the IDPs. The 200 official beneficiary households do not appear to have had much input into their move or to have received much information as to where they were going; the host community also lacked information and participation in the planning, at least initially. Furthermore, the spontaneous movement of the additional 200-plus IDP households appears to indicate a shortfall somewhere in the relocation process—either in the planning, communication, or implementation of the plan.

Perhaps most importantly, major gaps remain in regard to the “comprehensiveness of recovery” as envisioned by the DSWG. Central to this is that the relocated IDPs do not have access to land for productive purposes. At the time of the assessment, the host community had still refused to provide land beyond plots for the constructed houses. The IDPs originally came from an agrarian area of Oromia Region and are skilled in crop farming. IDP respondents allege that the land around Goljano is arable but underutilized by the host population. Host community representatives have suggested that the authorities purchase the farmland to provide it to the IDPs, but financial resources are lacking. Without access to land, the relocated IDPs are living off humanitarian food aid, produce from kitchen gardens, the collection and sale of firewood, and petty trade. The data suggest that this relocation took place without a thorough or actionable plan for the longer-term livelihood sustainability for the IDP community.

As an example of relocation, the case of Goljano has been partially successful. On the positive side, 200 households have settled in newly built houses and are living peacefully with their host community neighbors. Living conditions are much improved from Qoloji camp, although the doubling of the numbers of households due to the arrival of the additional IDPs means that living quarters are cramped. Services—including schools, health facilities, and water points—have not been expanded to accommodate the relocated population, causing a drain on the local services and potentially fueling resentment with the local population in the longer term. Most importantly, land access remains out of reach for the displaced, which is a major hurdle to livelihood sustainability. The inability to secure land in advance of the relocation may indicate that the planning, cooperation, governance capacity and/or financial resources that would be required to undertake larger and more widespread relocations in the Somali Region are unattainable.

¹ Durable Solutions Working Group (2020), “Site level Report- Assessment on IDPs Relocation Sites in Siti, Fafa, Jarar, Korahey, Nogob & Shabele zones,” Durable Solution Working Group, Somali Region, 26 Dec-4 Jan 2020.

² National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC), Guidelines for Sustainable Planned Relocation of Internally Displaced Persons, 2020.

Return: Tuliguled woreda, Fafan zone

Peace between clans remains tenuous, hindering longer-term sustainability.

The woreda of Tuliguled is home to returnees, IDPs, and host communities. Fighting between the Jarso and Gari clans resulted in the displacement of approximately 24,000 local households in 2017. They began to return home in 2019 and 2020 in both facilitated and spontaneous returns, with more than 16,000 households expected to eventually return to their places of origin. Tuliguled is known as a fertile farming area, but the conflict and displacement led to widespread loss of productive assets, including agricultural tools and inputs. In addition to crop farming, traditional livelihood activities in the area include livestock fattening for resale and petty trade. People would often invest some of their proceeds from crops into either livestock fattening or petty trade to achieve a diverse portfolio of economic activities. The absence of income from crop farming for returnees made it difficult to restart these activities following their return home, thereby hampering resiliency and recovery.

Respondents reported that the most important missing component to longer-term livelihood sustainability is a peaceful resolution to the simmering conflict between local clans. While the situation has stabilized enough for some to return home, others remain displaced, and the threat of continuing conflict is an obstacle to full recovery. Returnees interviewed for this assessment reported that they were able to access land for farming or grazing and to reclaim their house plots, although many structures had been burnt down and their contents destroyed during the fighting. Although the situation continues to be challenging, respondents felt that resuming their previous livelihoods in Tuliguled was their only available economic option.

While the primary population of interest in this assessment were the returnees in Tuliguled, the woreda is also host to a large number of IDPs from Oromia Region who are interspersed with the returnees. This group experiences many of the same constraints as the returnees in addition to being unable to secure access to land for productive use. Many IDPs living in Sariir Garad kebele of Tuliguled report that they had reared cattle prior to displacement but that this is not possible in their current location due to the mountainous terrain. Any policy and programmatic responses for durable solutions in the Somali Region need to take into account the often overlapping and dynamic layers of displacement and the presence of different affected populations with potentially unique and specific needs.

As an example of return, the situation in Tuliguled has been largely successful. People have been able to return home, to access their housing sites and land, and to re-integrate into their communities. The most substantial problems are around continuing uncertainty over security and unmet expectations for support, especially in regard to inputs for crop farming. The Desert Locust infestation in 2020 compounded vulnerabilities and illustrates the limited resiliency of a recently returned population. Overall, the stability of the peace between the clans remains a hurdle to the success of this case of return as a durable solution. Policies to bolster local conflict mitigation and resolution mechanisms might help to address this problem.

Local integration: Adadle woreda, Shabelle zone

Limited economic opportunities and heavy reliance on the host community are potential barriers to success.

The displaced in Adadle who live alongside fellow clan members in Adadle town appear to have resigned themselves to not returning to their place of origin. However, like many of the drought-induced IDPs in Somali Region,³ they remain heavily dependent upon humanitarian aid even three years after their displacement. The displaced households receive substantial and on-going support from the host community; host respondents and key informants pointed out that the continuous outflow of support was gradually draining the hosts' resiliency. Despite humanitarian and local assistance, the IDPs report experiencing substantial food insecurity. An IDMC report found that many drought-displaced populations in Somali Region are coping by consuming cheap and less preferred food, reducing consumption, borrowing food, and relying on help from friends.⁴ Data from our assessment confirm that the displaced in Adadle are still far from self-reliance and economic independence.

The main obstacle to secure and sustainable livelihoods for the displaced in Adadle is lack of economic activities outside of pastoral production. The town is small, demand for unskilled labor is minimal, and the displaced have limited skills in

alternative livelihoods or entrepreneurship. However, a large proportion of children from displaced households are attending school, many for the first time; all IDP respondents spoke positively about this change in their lives. Improved access to and engagement in education may indicate promise for the next generation, but the current situation is characterized by dependency on relief aid and local generosity and hence lacks durability.

As an example of local integration, the case of Adadle is a partial success. The IDPs have received support from the local community, have been accepted into the hosts' homes, schools, and lives, and are living together peacefully. Tensions appear to be minimal to non-existent. This ease of integration is largely possible because of pre-existing close ties between the hosts and the displaced. These ties are based on linguistic, livelihood, cultural and familial similarities. While conflict is minimal, members of the host community do describe economic pressures as they continue to support their displaced neighbors. This situation is not sustainable as eventually the hosts' resources (and perhaps generosity) will be exhausted.

³ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) (2021), "From basic needs to the recovery of livelihoods: local integration of people displaced by drought in Ethiopia," Thematic Series *No matter of choice: Displacement in a changing climate*, 2020. Available at: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/from-basic-needs-to-the-recovery-of-livelihoods-local-integration-of-people-displaced>

⁴ Ibid.

Policy environment

Overall, policies focusing on internal displacement in the Somali Region are moving in a positive direction due largely to the national and regional commitment to resolving the issue. However, substantial challenges remain. From a policy perspective, these fall into two main areas. The first is in regard to translating policies into action at the local level, especially around negotiating resource access, expanding service delivery, and jump-starting independent livelihoods through provision of start-up capital. The second main area in need of improved policy focus is around addressing the root causes of displacement. Without policies to promote security, resolve and prevent conflict, and implement drought management and support to pastoralism, the cycle of displacement is likely to continue to occur. These two areas of policy concern are covered below. Both will require increased financial, planning, coordination and technical inputs to ensure interventions are *durable* and at *scale*.

Translating Policies into Action

- Respondents want to be financially independent and free from reliance upon humanitarian relief and support from hosts populations. This desire is firmly in line with the vision for durable solutions by national and international actors. For this goal to be achieved, policy makers will need to ensure and insist upon a coordinated and timely approach to **policies creating appropriate conditions, programs promoting self-reliance, and durable solution interventions**. Such policy and programmatic support will need to be **evidenced-based, prioritize local participation, and be tailored to the local economic and ecological context** in each instance. For example, displaced persons should be relocated with not only adequate policies in place to ensure local support and buy-in from the host community (including policy support to resource sharing and peace building) but also with sufficient programmatic interventions to ensure basic needs in the short term and appropriate and tailored livelihood support in the longer term.
- Political **efforts to ensure adequate land access for local populations need to be increased and improved** if livelihood sustainability is to be realized. The clan-based land ownership system in Somali Region appears to pose a particular challenge to securing land as part of the implementation of durable solutions. This is obstacle needs to be addressed at both the regional and local level if solutions are to indeed be durable.
- In addition to ensuring adequate land access, IDPs should be **supported with or linked to opportunities for financial capital to establish new livelihoods or rebuild previous livelihood systems**. IDP respondents interviewed for this assessment had ideas for businesses—including donkey carts and petty trade in Adadle and beehives, cafeterias, barbershops and other services in Goljano—but many lacked the start-up capital required to turn these ideas into realities. In choosing which enterprises to support, it is imperative to consider market saturation in these small towns which serve relatively small catchment areas and can only support a limited number of actors in each sector. To be successful, **thorough market assessments** are required prior to any interventions around skills trainings, vocational support, provision of start-up capital, etc. Entities such as cooperatives need to include systems to connect them to larger markets outside of the immediate area.
- While local involvement is envisioned as part of durable solutions, in practice, **greater involvement of both host and displaced populations is needed**. Within our limited sample, some respondents felt that the decision-making process was not adequately transparent. This was raised, for instance, by both host community and IDP respondents in Goljano. Had there been more thorough consultation, it is possible that the lack of access to land at the relocation site could have been successfully negotiated in advance. Moving forward, interventions are likely to be

more successful if they incorporate input from all sides and are premised on transparency. This might be done through group participation and collaboration that builds on existing local systems of reciprocity and compromise.

- Implementers need to **ensure that policies and programs adequately and appropriately benefit both displaced and host communities.** While this equity already exists as a stated goal of IDP policy, close attention and adherence is required to ensure that this translates into reality at the local level. Benefits to host communities are particularly important given their role in supporting IDPs for extended and open-ended periods. We know that peaceful coexistence is essential to longer-term livelihood success. Ensuring that both hosts and IDPs benefit from policies and programs can help to mitigate tensions and minimize strain on the host populations.
- **Improvements to and expansions of services, including health facilities, schools, and public water sources** are necessary to address service gaps and alleviate the stress placed on them as a result of increased demand. While the host community respondents described a willingness to support their displaced counterparts, the sharing of minimal services is further straining these already impoverished populations.
- **Housing policies need to be transparent and uniform.** While financial resources do not exist to provide all IDPs with housing, the decision-making around the criteria for who does and does not receiving housing needs to be clear and consistent.

Addressing Root Causes

- Conflict is one of the main causes of displacement within the Somali Region. **Long-term solutions to displacement can only be achieved if the root causes of conflict are addressed at the federal and regional levels and if local conflict mitigation and resolution**

mechanisms are effective. This requires sustained political will on the part of the regional and federal governments. In addition, all programs implemented by local and regional actors (including international organizations and agencies) need to be conflict-sensitive in their design and implementation. An equitable approach in addressing the needs of both displaced and host populations, for example, is essential to ensuring a conflict-sensitive approach.

- The other primary cause of displacement in the Somali Region is drought. As a livelihood specialization, pastoralism is very well-adapted to cope with drought, but multi-year droughts and rising temperatures can be much more difficult for pastoralists to manage. **Unless drought management and mitigation activities are in place, drought-induced displacement is likely to both continue and worsen** due to climate change. Multiple peer-reviewed studies conducted on Ethiopian climatic patterns predict that rainfall volatility will increase in the next decade, with concerning consequences for both crop and livestock production.⁵ Policies to address these changes need to be in place at the regional level and implemented locally, with adequate resources and knowledge. As is included under the government's Disaster Risk Management Plan, resources are needed for kebele-level committees to anticipate and plan for future shocks, especially climatic shocks. At the same time as continuing preparation efforts, populations that are already displaced due to drought—such as the IDPs living in Adadle town—need to be assisted to find alternative livelihoods that are sustainable given the current reality.
- Pastoralism is the main livelihood specialization for the majority of inhabitants in the Somali Region. Ethiopia has made significant progress in implementing pro-pastoral policies and guidelines, but much of the public support for rural livelihoods in Ethiopia remains geared

⁵ Moges, D. M. and Bhat, H. G. (2021), "Climate change and its implications for rainfed agriculture in Ethiopia." *Journal of Water and Climate Change*, 12 (4): 1229-1244.

towards cultivation, not animal husbandry. Some of the **key components to successful pastoral production are peace and security, inter-group cooperation and sharing of resources, adequate mobility for herds and people, tailoring of services to pastoral populations (including health, education, and veterinary services), and governance systems to represent pastoral populations and protect the interest of the economically vulnerable.**⁶

These components need to be promoted and facilitated at multiple levels to support the displaced and non-displaced populations that are still able to engage in pastoralism.

Information and knowledge gaps

We end with a discussion of the information and knowledge gaps on which more information is needed in order to design effective policies and to implement appropriate programs. Key outstanding questions include:

- What are the livelihood strategies pursued on a day-to-day basis by the displaced and host communities? When interviewed, many IDP respondents report that they are “living off aid.” However, given the quantities of assistance and schedule of distributions, it is not possible for food aid to be fully meeting households’ consumption and income needs. Support from host communities helps to fill this gap, but details are lacking on the extent of this assistance, possible patterns of inclusion and exclusion, and the impacts on the host communities themselves. In order to ensure support to sustainable livelihoods, stakeholders must first have a firm understanding of the existing local livelihood systems, including how these livelihood systems influence and are influenced by local institutions and processes. Critical systems and institutions to better understand include local governance mechanisms (formal and customary), conflict resolution mechanisms, natural resources management systems, market systems, humanitarian and local assistance regimes, land tenure, and gender and generational norms. At present, such information and understanding are not reflected in the planning and policy making that seeks to promote durable solutions to internal displacement in the Somali Region.
- How have intra-household divisions of labor, responsibility and roles changed as a result of displacement, relocation (or return or local integration), and a shifting livelihood environment? Without data disaggregated by age and gender, we do not know who is doing what within the household or how such changes may affect income, decision-making, and risks faced by either households or individuals. Based on patterns observed in other contexts and from global trends, we know that females are often better able than males to diversify their livelihood activities in the face of upheaval and hence are likely taking on a greater economic burden following displacement. In addition, in cases where communities have moved out of pastoral production—such as the displaced in Adadle who are locally integrating—we know that reliance on petty trade and service provision as an economic activity is increasing; such activities are usually dominated by women. We lack detailed and specific information as to what men and women of different ages are doing to support their households and families, how these activities have changed, and how programs and policies should be best designed to take these shifts and realities into consideration.
- Who is migrating beyond the relocation, integration and return locations, where are they going, and what are the repercussions for these individuals and their families? Based on national trends, we can assume that it is predominantly young men who are considering migrating away

⁶ Gebeye, B.A. (2016), “Unsustainable the sustainable: An evaluation of the legal and policy interventions for pastoral development in Ethiopia.” *Pastoralism* 6, 2; Beyene, F. (2010), “Interclan Cooperation in a Risky Pastoral Ecology: Some lessons from Eastern Ethiopia,” *Human Ecology: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 38(4), 555–565; Catley, A. (2017), “Pathways to Resilience in Pastoralist Areas: A Synthesis of Research in the Horn of Africa.” Medford, MA: Feinstein International Center, Tufts University (https://fic.tufts.edu/assets/FIC-Publication-Q1_web_2.26s.pdf).

from displacement sites, either to urban centers within Ethiopia or outside of the country. While successful economic migration may bring benefits to both the individual migrant and his (or her) family, the costs and risks are often extremely high, especially for those who attempt to travel irregularly to Europe or the Gulf States. Additional information on these trends is needed. We recommend that programmers and policy makers have a firm understanding of the differences in migration patterns by gender and generation and design interventions to promote sustainable livelihoods accordingly.

- How durable and sustainable are the livelihoods of host communities, especially in the context of climate change? We do not know if the local mechanisms for managing resources, mitigating drought risk and facilitating drought recovery are adequate to enable longer-term livelihood success in these locations. Without such knowledge, we cannot determine how and if the addition of impoverished and needy populations stands to undermine an already delicate balance between durability and collapse in these areas.