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Working towards durable solutions for displacement-affected communities in Togdheer region, Somaliland

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List of Acronyms

BREACH	Boosting Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change
DAN	Diversity Action Network Somaliland
EU	European Union
IDP	Internally displaced person
I/NGO	(International) nongovernmental organisation
NDP	National Development Plan III
NDRA	National Displacement and Refugees Agency
Y-Peer	Youth Peer Education Network
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SOYDAVO	Somaliland Youth Development and Voluntary Organisation
WAAPO	Women Action for Advocacy and Progress Organisation
NAGAAD	Voluntary network of women's organisations in Somaliland

Executive Summary

Internal displacement is a key economic and social development concern in Somaliland. The increased frequency of severe droughts culminated in the third food emergency in a decade in 2023. In addition, the outbreak of armed conflict in eastern Somaliland, as well as more localised and smaller-scale communal violence in 2023, have led to fresh displacement to central Togdheer region, which has already been hosting displaced citizens for many years. Most displacement has been from rural areas to cities and towns. Living precariously in temporary settlements without adequate access to basic services and livelihood opportunities, internally displaced persons (IDPs) run a high risk of remaining in a state of limbo indefinitely without adequate support to achieve one of the three recognised durable solutions – return to their areas of origin, long-term and sustainable settlement in the areas that they have moved to, or relocation to a new and sustainable location. Somaliland’s ability to respond to new displacement, and to work towards securing durable solutions for those who have already been displaced or returned from refugee camps, is limited given competing priorities for scarce public funding, the challenges of identifying land for long-term settlement, and a policy environment that is only starting to address durable solutions comprehensively.

This study considers the prospects for the facilitation of durable solutions for IDPs living in Togdheer region, particularly in and around Somaliland’s second largest city, Burco. It considers the context of two important recent changes. First, an improved policy environment is being introduced, in the form of the new National Policy on Refugees and IDPs to guide efforts to achieve durable solutions. Second, a new structure for addressing the needs of IDPs – led by the National Displacement and Refugees Agency (NDRA) is being implemented at central and regional level.

Information provided in this report was obtained from 1 to 30 August 2023 in Togdheer region, as well as in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland. Interviews were held with government officials at central, regional and municipal level, as well as with nongovernmental staff and IDPs living in and around Burco. This followed preliminary fieldwork undertaken by a member of the team.

Lessons learned from this study are aimed at advising the EU’s investments in durable solutions in Somaliland and at responding to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation throughout the region, as well as at supporting an inclusive approach to development and governance. Specifically, the study seeks to inform the implementation of the EU’s Boosting Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change (BREACH) programme, which is being carried out in Togdheer.

The report finds that there is still a high level of centralisation involved in support efforts for IDPs. Planning, allocation of resources and project design are carried out centrally by NDRA and other responsible staff. At the regional level, staff are expected to carry out activities having had little or no say over how these are developed or, crucially, over targeting and assessment procedures. These efforts are complicated by the fact that there has not been a census or registration of IDPs in Togdheer region, making it difficult to carry out needs assessments. The result is that assistance cannot be efficiently targeted at the neediest and there are opportunities for aid resources to be mismanaged.

The report makes the following recommendations:

1. Greater involvement of regional and municipal officials is needed in the design and targeting of support for IDPs. This should involve NDRA staff as well as municipal officials and relevant line department staff.

2. A system of registration of IDPs, with provision of identity cards showing an individual's and/or household's entitlement to assistance, is needed to improve targeting of aid resources.
3. Rather than the current significant focus on individual monthly cash payments, more focus on community-based assistance to all those living in displacement-affected communities, on the basis of need, is required. While some vulnerable individuals may continue to require cash support, preference should be given to supporting efforts towards self-sufficiency, in both urban and rural settings, for all who are in need, regardless of their displacement status.
4. In the longer term, it will be important for regional officials to be able to make allocations of land ownership, and also to include upskilling for agropastoralists who have been displaced, so that they can establish sustainable livelihoods in their new locations.
5. Where returns to agropastoral or pastoral areas may be feasible, regional authorities must work with the Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Planning and other relevant departments to help rehabilitate land affected by drought, deforestation and degradation to be able to support such returns.
6. For those who have been displaced by conflict, return will depend on resolution of the present hostilities both in Togdheer and in the eastern Sool region. The needs of IDPs should be taken into consideration when negotiating a cessation of hostilities and a return to peaceful relations between communities.

1 Background

Although no stranger to drought and food insecurity, Somaliland has been suffering particularly erratic weather patterns in recent years, including four consecutively poor or completely failed rainy seasons between 2020 and 2022, and exceptionally and devastatingly heavy rains which caused flooding in 2023. In 2024, there have been signs of recovery, although it is too soon to predict whether full recovery will be realised, and the area around Burco city is still classified as Phase 3, 'Crisis', by the Integrated Phase Classification system (see <https://fews.net/east-africa/somalia>). All this has led to crop failure and degradation in the health and quality of livestock, which are the backbone of Somaliland's economy and food security. These factors have had severe impacts in the region. In 2020, there was also a massive invasion of locusts, which devastated agricultural and agropastoral areas. In 2022, the Togdheer, Sool, Sanaag and Salal regions of the country faced water-resource and chronic food shortages, leading to agricultural and livestock failures and losses. Families were not able to afford to buy food and water and thus were driven in their thousands to IDP camps, most located in and around urban areas. The significant migration of people to more urbanised areas has led to an increased burden on local resources, including water, food, medical care and educational facilities. Many of the IDPs who have moved into these camps are in no position to return to their former homes in rural areas as a result of loss of their herds and farms. Yet the IDPs are also likely to have only limited livelihood opportunities in the camps, and with further droughts likely to occur in the region, conditions can be expected to become even tougher.

In 2023 there was a recovery in rainfall, with strong performance of both rainy seasons in all regions of Somaliland. This has helped to slow the movement of people into camps and cities. However, those who were already living in camps have not been able to return to their rural areas, and there have been movements of people within and between camps. In addition, several new camps have been opened to provide more long-term accommodation for those who arrived during previous droughts. In consultation with the EU's delegation working on Somaliland, Togdheer region was selected as the area of focus for this study. In this region the EU is funding the Boosting Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Change (BREACH) programme, which will provide multi-sectoral and area-based approaches to addressing both the drivers of displacement and the needs of displacement-affected communities as they seek to achieve durable solutions.

Togdheer region forms a sort of crossroads between east and west Somaliland and is a major thoroughfare for trade and communication between the country and southern Somalia, although routes have been severely affected and effectively closed for much of 2023 as a result of conflict. The region is also the centre of the livestock sector for Somali–Ethiopia nomads; Burco, Somaliland's second largest city, is the site of one of the most important livestock markets in the country.

1.1 Objectives of the study

This study is intended to inform the EU's ongoing work to support the promotion of durable solutions at all levels within Somaliland. The primary objectives are to:

1. consider the priorities and experiences of DACs with regard to their intentions, concerns, experiences, and ambitions;
2. assess durable solutions work being undertaken in Somaliland in terms of the policy environment and its implementation at regional and local levels;

3. assess the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on durable solutions work;
4. identify and describe the involvement of NGOs, donors and private sector actors in durable solutions activities and their interaction with government structures.

1.2 Methodology

Fieldwork for this report was obtained between 1 and 30 August 2023 in Togdheer region as well as in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland. One-to-one interviews and focus group interviews were conducted with the local authorities and NGOs (local and international) working within the region and within Burco municipality. The local conditions and capacities of the administration in Burco were analysed. Interviews were also conducted in one of the IDP settlements near the city.

To be able to fulfil the objectives above, the following key questions were investigated:

1. What is the level of understanding among the relevant institutions around IDP policy and about their responsibilities for implementing it?
2. What are the challenges in implementing the recent policy changes at the local level, and how are the local ministries dealing with these issues and with responsibility and workloads?
3. What are the coordination mechanisms in place, and their frequency?
4. What are the priorities for the local authorities in providing services and working towards durable solutions for displaced persons?
5. What is the likelihood of finding permanent solutions to displacement with regard to secure access to housing, land and property rights in the areas to which people have been displaced?
6. What are the obstacles to returning IDPs to their areas of origin – is such an outcome realistic in the short to medium term?
7. What facilities and services are available in the IDP camps and who runs them; what are the respective responsibilities of local authorities to provide services in IDP settlements and how are they funded?
8. How have local clan conflicts in the East and Lasanood been affecting displacement dynamics in the Togdheer region in terms of security in the IDP camps and the services available to them?

Ethical considerations

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the data collection. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw at any time. All data collected was kept confidential and anonymous to protect the participants' security and privacy. Additionally, sensitive information was handled with care and in accordance with established ethical guidelines.

1.3 Demographic trends within the IDP population

In 2021 (the latest period for which there are statistics), there were a reported 92,888 displaced households (557,328 persons) (NDRA, 2021). A significant proportion (37,578 households) of these

IDPs are based in Togdheer region (see Table 1).¹

Table 1: IDP population per region in Somaliland, 2021

Region (main city)	Households	% of HHs	Individuals
Awdal (Borama)	9,761	10%	58,566
Maroodi-jeh (Hargeisa)	21,442	23%	128,652
Sahil (Berbera)	5,365	6%	32,190
Togdheer (Burao)	37,578	40%	225,468
Sool (Lasanod)	9,877	11%	59,262
Sanaag (Erigavo)	8,865	10%	53,190
Total	92,888	100%	557,328

Source: NDRA (2021).

In addition, as of 31 October 2021 there were estimated to be 15,248 refugees and asylum seekers in Somaliland, of whom 7,078 individuals were asylum seekers and 8,170 individuals were refugees (NDRA, 2022a).

There are a total of 103 IDP camps in Somaliland. Sixty-three of these have basic education and health facilities, while 18 camps rely on the health facilities existing in the cities where the camps are located (NDRA, 2022a, p 16). The number of IDPs with special needs living in all camps is estimated at 1,132 persons, although no formal assessment system exists for identifying such individuals (NDRA, 2022a). Togdheer region hosts the largest population of IDPs in Somaliland.

1.4 Impact of local conflicts on displacement dynamics and local economic conditions

The clan system is strongly established within Burco, and thus conflicts within clans and sub-clans have the potential to generate new displacement and to adversely affect the existing IDP communities, which are also run according to clan politics. Recent fighting in the west of Burco between clans and sub-clans has had a severe negative impact on the economy and development in Burco generally. Food prices have significantly increased and the living conditions in Burco have declined since the start of the conflict. This has had a significant effect on both IDPs' and local hosts' incomes. Whereas a monthly payment of US\$80 used to be sufficient to support an IDP family, now it buys far less food. Also as a result of the conflict, some IDP support operations have been placed on hold, with Somali NGO staff members instead working from home.

As an example, the clash between clans in Cali Saahid, which is situated 51 km from Burco, had a direct impact on the city. The local community from one clan did not want to have a camp created by another clan situated within the territory they regarded as their own. However, the clan that had been displaced argued that the land they had moved on to was their traditional land, and that they therefore had the right to move there. When the tensions between two clans started to increase in Cali Saahid, this exacerbated further tensions in Burco, since both clans also reside together there. However, the clan tensions were defused thanks to mediation efforts carried out by the government and clan leaders. On the other hand, conflict in Gacan Libaax and Lasanood, had a less severe impact because of its political nature and because the affected clans do not have a large presence in Burco. However, they place enormous strain on local government resources because of the economic impact and constraints on public institutions, particularly in the health sector.

¹ Note that the NDRA Strategic Plan 2022–26 gives a total IDP population of 601,850 persons, but a regional breakdown is not provided.

Aside from the impact of these conflicts, local officials are concerned that security conditions in the IDP camps are often inadequate. The camps are located in remote areas distant from police stations. Under the cover of darkness and obscurity, it is commonly reported that city adolescents travel to the more vulnerable camps at night to commit a variety of crimes, even including rape and robbery. Local officials interviewed complained that anyone with 'evil intentions' might enter the camps, and that these camps must be disbanded to prevent them from becoming lawless ghettos. Such action, however, would require development of alternatives to camp settlement which at the present time are not available.

2 Overview of government structure and policy supporting forced migrants

The promotion of durable solutions for displacement is a priority outlined in Somaliland's *National Development Plan III, 2023–27* (NDP) (Republic of Somaliland, 2023). While the Ministry of Planning and National Development has overall coordination authority for implementation of the entire NDP, support for displacement-affected communities is coordinated and overseen by the NDRA. The NDRA is a governmental agency that was founded in January 2018 (replacing the former Ministry of Reconstruction, Returnees, and Rehabilitation) by presidential decree to provide protection and durable solutions for refugees and asylum seekers, IDPs, returnees and migrants in Somaliland. The roles and responsibilities of the agency are to:

- develop laws, policies, plans and projects for the IDPs, refugees, returnees, and migrants in collaboration with government institutions and other concerned agencies;
- initiate and implement durable solutions projects for the IDPs and returnees from countries abroad;
- implement all basic social services projects for IDPs, refugees and returnees, such as security, water, health, education, etc;
- coordinate aid and donations for IDPs from government agencies, the local community and international aid organisations;
- evaluate and monitor the resettlement projects for returnees in line with agreements and with Somaliland's laws;
- help IDPs get the assistance and support they require;
- support the sustainable resettlement of returnees and IDPs;
- register refugees and asylum seekers in the country in collaboration with the Somaliland immigration and border control agency and other concerned institutions, in line with national policies and laws;
- apply other national laws in line with the agency's roles and responsibilities.

2.1 The Somaliland Internal Displacement Policy

The development of a coordinated approach to durable solutions for IDPs is still in its early stages, with discussions about how to prioritise and coordinate assistance ongoing between affected communities, host communities, regional authorities and traditional clan leadership.

The key policy instrument which guides Somaliland's approach to durable solutions is contained within the 2015 Somaliland Internal Displacement Policy. A subsequent Strategic Plan for 2022-2026 was finalised and approved in 2022. The policy (see NDRA, 2015) draws from applicable rules of international law and is based on the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The Policy Framework is further governed by national laws, including the Constitution of Somaliland, Shari'a law, customary law and other applicable policies. The policy's purpose is to guide the NDRA in allocating resources, safeguarding the legal rights of displaced persons, defining the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders, and providing a basis for coordinating services to displacement-affected communities.

The policy uses as a reference point applicable rules of international law and is based on the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, including commitments to Do No Harm, to assist all displacement-affected populations without discrimination based on age, gender, health status, social background, clan, religious or any other status (p. 7). It acknowledges the specific vulnerabilities of marginalised groups such as children at risk, women at risk, persons with disabilities and medical conditions and older persons at risk among others (p. 7). Those affected by displacement are guaranteed the right to participate fully in decision-making in issues that affect them (p. 7) and to be assisted according to the humanitarian principles of impartiality, humanity, independence and neutrality (p. 8).

The policy identifies the NDRA as the lead government agency responsible for coordinating assistance and protection to displacement-affected populations. Line ministries also have sectoral responsibilities; they include the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, National Environmental Research and Disaster Preparedness Authority, Ministry of Interior and other relevant institutions. The policy calls on these sectoral bodies to incorporate and mainstream IDP-related prevention and response activities into their action plans and policies (Section 3.2.2, p. 9).

The policy also makes clear that governors and municipal officials have a key role to play with respect to durable solutions and calls on them to work with the NDRA to coordinate activities at the field level. The NDRA commits to facilitating the establishment of an IDP Committee at the local level to work with its Protection Cluster, and with subcommittees for child protection and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). These committees will include displacement-affected community members.

In keeping with international standards, the policy states that:

A durable solution is achieved when IDPs no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs which are linked to their displacement and are able to enjoy their rights without discrimination (Section 6, p. 21).

Durable solutions may take the form of “(1) return and reintegration, (2) settlement and integration elsewhere in Somaliland, or (3) local integration in the place IDPs settle” (Section 6, b, p. 22).

The policy takes the pragmatic view that “achievement of durable solutions is a gradual, long term process and requires collaboration between government and other stakeholders, especially *development organisations*, in order to develop a long-term plan” (Section 6, p. 22, emphasis in the original).

Implementation of the IDP policy is envisioned through a number of strategies and action plans. The NDRA Strategic Plan (2022–26) presents the overall framework for implementation. It provides a blueprint for protection, support and the enabling of durable solutions for displacement-affected populations in Somaliland. It is based on the Somaliland National Development Plan, Somaliland IDP Policy, Somaliland and international human rights instruments, and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

A key commitment of the policy is to include displacement-specific elements in development plans, poverty alleviation initiatives, urban planning processes and other relevant plans and programmes, and to bring areas affected by internal displacement and areas of return “up to the development average, including through affirmative action where appropriate” (2015, p. 25). This commitment to inclusion is notable – if realised it would constitute an important step in including displacement-affected communities within mainstream development plans. Previously (and in most other parts of

Africa) displacement has been treated as a separate development or humanitarian problem, to be solved through special measures, rather than as a feature of overall development.

2.2 Analysis of implementation capacities and resources

The 2022-26 NDRA Strategic Plan has not yet had a chance to be fully implemented at the local level. In this analysis we consider the levels of awareness that actors at the local level have about the Strategy and its means of implementation. We also identify priority actions to be taken towards securing durable solutions in Togdheer region, an area that the EU may focus on in its BREACH programme.

Local awareness, roles and responsibilities

Focus group discussions with NGOs (local and international) and governmental staff from different ministries working in Burco and its surrounding areas revealed that, while NDRA staff have been given awareness-raising training regarding the new IDP policies and their implementation, no other training or sensitisation activities have been held. It was reported that policy decisions, project selection and design are generally decided in Hargeisa by the central government (ie the NDRA) and communicated to the local level. The central NDRA is the point of contact for NGOs implementing projects. Municipal officials, including line ministries, and national and international humanitarian organisations report that they are only informed about agreed projects at the point of implementation. Even in terms of project design, the relevant agencies say they have limited ability to provide input regarding the needs of IDPs and project requirements before implementation decisions are made.

The lack of training and support for policy implementation is a matter of concern among local officials. During the group discussions with NGOs (local and international) and governmental staff from different ministries, it became clear that there was a lack of local participation in the policy implementation process and that the result of this is an inability to carry out effective targeting of aid resources. One speaker reported:

until we have [a] policy with a timeline with [a] clear structure [about] how long one can stay in the IDP [settlements] and when they should leave...[when] individuals [will be] able to support themselves, this is highly required. Because currently, we have [for example] women well off and financially stable living and using the services for the needy. The government needs to stand by its people.

The difficulties of targeting assistance are discussed in more detail below.

Interviewees reported that the NDRA decides where international organisations should implement their projects, and that projects are often set with short-term objectives. There is, local officials said, not much support for implementation of long-term policies – whether because of a shortage of resources or an unwillingness to engage with the longer-term challenges of supporting displacement-affected communities was unclear. Furthermore, they said, because the NDRA has only recently been established, it has not yet been able to build public trust and confidence.

Local officials reported that there is a conflict of roles throughout the IDP support system. The local authority has the responsibility of allocating land to the displaced, and of providing them with water, education and health centres. But because so much decision-making power rests with central government, the local authority is limited in its ability to plan where the projects are implemented. A local authority representative reported that the NDRA “serve as the central coordinators for all

projects in Somaliland". The local authority also reported that NDRA "data on the specific needs of the IDPs might not always be entirely accurate. On the other hand, our local government possess comprehensive knowledge of the requirements across all 20 IDP [settlements] in Burco." The inability to use this local knowledge to influence project implementation or design processes is an evident source of frustration for local officials.

The level of services available in a particular camp varies widely. Some camps have been running for a very long time, while some have not yet been fully established and lack basic necessities like water. Many of the IDP camps do not have facilities such as schools, health centres, water, food, shelters or roads.

Implementing NGOs each have their own area of focus. Save the Children, for instance, supports school projects. World Vision has a project regarding safety, reduction in violence and safeguarding. World Vision and UN HABITAT are each implementing partners under the EU's BREACH programme. These programmes provide an important resource for the local municipality, which is chronically underfunded where support for IDP programmes is concerned.

2.3 Challenges in implementation of the new policy at the local level

Registration and assessment

At this early stage, it is difficult to gauge what level of commitment there is to ensuring that the new IDP policy is fully implemented. Some local authority representatives agreed that they had been informed about the IDP policy. However, they felt that they had not been provided with the necessary instruments or resources to enable them to implement programmes effectively according to the policy. A key obstacle for them has been the lack of resources to conduct proper registration of the IDP population and thereby determine the number of IDPs, their ethnic identity or area of origin, demographic profiles and specific needs. IDPs are not given identification documentation certifying their status. Current needs assessments rely on the committees tasked with listing IDPs living in their area, and there is no permanent central register.

The IDPs are settled according to their clan, and the clan system is a strong traditional system within Somaliland. This makes it difficult for the local authorities to manage the establishment of IDP settlements or camps, with some set up by the sub-clan's self-appointed representatives who purchase or allocate privately owned land from their clan to distribute to IDPs. Once the camps are established, community leaders seek assistance from the government and I/NGOs to provide them with services. This makes it even more difficult for the local authority to understand the situation, respond to IDPs' needs and control and support the new unplanned camps.

Without accurate population registration and needs assessment procedures, there is a high risk of error or bias being introduced into the distribution system. There is concern that not all support provided to the IDPs is reaching those who need it the most; rather, those with the most connections to local committee members, their families or friends may be receiving priority. Such misdirection is made possible through the reliance on middlemen who sit on the committees. The latter are responsible for distributing large sums of cash on a monthly basis. In a city with very limited income-earning opportunities, this presents a real risk that local, non-displaced or middle-class residents may be coming to the IDP assistance distribution points and camps to benefit from the funding and donations provided.

Upon being asked why there is no ID system or a verifiable registration process, government officials

and NGO representatives interviewed said that resources were too limited to allow for registration. ID cards are given only to those who have been selected to receive cash payments, but each scheme has its own target group and the distribution of this cash payment system involves many different organisations: government institutions, clan institutions (such as clan chiefs – Caqil and Suldaans) and religious scholars. In addition, the delivery of supplies involves trucks, water tankers, storage centres, drivers and distribution agents. The delivery of assistance becomes an all-encompassing task involving the entirety of all systems and structures in Burco and creates an economic ecosystem that is larger than other projects or initiatives being implemented there. There is, therefore, a shared reluctance across the board to change it in any way or even to improve it, as it is felt that this may create a risk of somehow jeopardising the work.

Coordination of NGO activities

Somaliland's IDP population is ever increasing, and the government is unable to reach the entire displaced community. The local authorities' order of priority for IDPs focuses on providing access to clean water and reliable energy sources, and on empowering them to cultivate their own sustenance by developing their agricultural skills. Several NGOs supplement the government's efforts and assist in providing services to the community. In Burco the municipality has also established a disaster risk management office to work in conjunction with the NDRA and to establish correct, professional and accurate data on IDPs. However, coordination between NDRA and local authorities – and with NGOs – remains a problem, according to interviewees.

Local NGOs include DAN, Y-Peer, SOYDAYO, Baahi-Koob, WAAPO, the Nafis Network and NAGAAD, to name only a few examples. International NGOs include World Vision, Save the Children, Oxfam, the Norwegian Refugee Council and others. All these organisations work to support IDPs in some way, from food distribution to legal assistance, psychological support, cash payments, health services and a variety of education and awareness-raising projects.

Three different types of coordination meetings take place. One is an internal meeting for the local authority and national governmental institution such as health, social affairs and all others who have responsibilities for IDPs. These meetings are held on a weekly basis (at the Burco mayor's office). The NDRA also attends these meetings, which are an opportunity for stakeholders to inform each other of any updates and news about the IDPs.

Second are local government and NGO meetings, which are held weekly and monthly. The researcher attended one of these meetings on 16 August 2023. Participants included World Vision, Save the Children and WAAPO (an organisation working to safeguard women and children within the region). Agenda items included discussing practical plans and updates regarding the IDP support being provided, such as food voucher distribution, as well as agreeing dates for coordination of activities.

Finally, there are the IDP camp coordination committee meetings, which are designated by the local authority and are made up of residents of the camp who meet as required to compile and provide lists of assistance needed. These lists are submitted to I/NGO representatives who visit the camp in order to include it in the planning of their next cycle of funding or applications for further funding. The IDP camp committees are often clan-based. Distribution plans for cash and other assistance are facilitated by each clan's own representatives. These individuals are also authorised to act as the means of ID verification for individual IDPs.

2.4 Local priorities for assistance and service provision

According to local authorities within Togdheer region, there are 20 camps containing 120,000 people. The services currently provided to the IDPs include various governance resources, such as security, health and education. Multiple cash-support schemes are also in place (see below). However, Burco municipality cannot afford the cost of providing these resources on its own.

There is limited information about the situation within these camps. However, it was reported by a local government official “that approximately 75% of IDP population are survivors/victims of the consecutive years of drought. The remaining IDP population is made up of poor people from the local city of Burco and its areas, who have come here for better living conditions.” In addition, the majority of IDPs lack facilities like schools, health centres, water, food, shelter and roads.

In Burco city there are two water trucks owned by the local authority and another two owned by a local NGO; these provide water to the IDPs daily. Each truck takes two loads of water every day (10,000 litres each). In total they deliver eight times to the different camps. With a total population of just over 225,000, this amounts to less than half a litre per person per day.² However, Burco municipality has very limited resources and, according to one municipal official, is only able to support the IDPs with “\$1.2 million for a whole year for overall programmes for the city” from the central government budget allocated to the city.

Limitations of cash support programmes

In addition to this limited community-based assistance, international NGOs provide unconditional cash support of \$80 dollars per person to 10,000 people in the region. This comes to a total of \$800,000 dollars per month. This is a significant sum of money compared with the contribution from the local authority.

Targeting of cash support is problematic and inexact. In each settlement, camp committees are set up by the local authority. These committees provide lists of eligible people to whom the unconditional cash is then distributed. However, there is a lack of oversight over how the distributed money is truly being spent and what the selection criteria are. There is a risk that some of the unconditional cash may be provided to non-IDPs. One NGO staff member reported that “many people from rural communities trying to escape poverty, due to climate change and hunger, come from the city or the outskirts to the camps and receive food rations. However, we also have business owners and people who are financially stable taking advantage of these services.”

The provision of what was routinely described as “monthly free income” may act as a disincentive for recipients to seek alternative sources of employment. Our research collected reports of people in the city who were not displaced but were economically destitute. They would move into the IDP settlements to obtain access to the limited assistance available there. There was a feeling on the part of some respondents that some of the funds distributed might be better used providing vocational training to IDPs to help them find more sustainable sources of income.

Another hazard of the individual cash payment system is the risk of corruption, with a lack of checks to ensure that all payments reach their intended recipients. One NGO reported that “we tried to evaluate the selection process for our project; however, we have been stopped by the authorities. We

² The actual availability of water may be somewhat higher as some IDPs do not live in camps but have settled in the city and have access to water from other sources. However, the fact remains that water’s availability is critically low.

spoke to a couple of camp managers, and only one was able to tell us [how beneficiaries were selected], everyone else [was] told not to discuss such matters.”

Clearly, individual cash support is unsustainable in the longer term. A more effective and sustainable approach would be to focus on the entire displacement-affected community, improving IDPs' overall living conditions in the same way that improving conditions in other local and city districts is approached. If the NGOs' unconditional cash scheme was instead diverted to longer-term facilities like schools, health centres, water, food, shelter, roads and so on, then the IDPs could potentially become self-serving, self-sufficient and functioning living areas instead of reliant on assistance distributed in camps. Funding should focus on building roads and providing public transport access to the city and vocational training to generate employment. Supporting IDP independence is a long-term project and requires moving away from the unconditional cash policy. This would also limit the likelihood of resources being misallocated.

2.5 Efforts to enable durable solutions

The priority for local authorities in preparing for durable solutions is to fully assess and research IDPs' living conditions, and to get an accurate estimate of current numbers to support land-use planning for eventual integration or settlement of IDPs. This lack of data prevents significant progress towards enabling durable solutions to take hold.

An additional problem is that, given the high rates of destitution in Burco and its surrounding areas, many local people are moving into the IDP camps to try to obtain access to the support offered to the displaced. This creates tensions between the displaced and local communities.

To ensure that IDPs are able to access services, and to minimise abuse of the system, one representative of the World Food Programme suggested that cards should be provided for accessing services rather than providing cash support – but this would require registration of all IDPs, which has not so far been possible.

Rather than creating a category of entitlement based solely on an individual's or household's displacement status, it is important to consider the needs of all who live within communities affected by displacement. This will involve support for the poor non-displaced residents in the cities as well. Including hosts as well as the displaced in support schemes will help to resolve tensions between these groups and to promote overall development opportunities.

An example of possible appropriate assistance to displacement-affected communities suggested by the NDRA office in Burco is to consider enrolling IDPs and local students together in two schools in the city, one of which is a technical/soft skills school, the other a farming school. Both schools are crucial to Burco's development and economic growth. It would be of great benefit to the IDP and Burco communities to send students from the IDP camps to attend these schools, so they can learn how to farm and gain other vocational skills. The person suggesting this said that, if scholarships were made available to IDP children to attend the farming school in Beer, this would help ensure a better future for the IDP children and their families. It might enable some people to return to their rural areas of origin, while others would be more able to engage with the labour market in the urban environment. This is important, as the only available IDP population data in Togdheer (from five of the camps) shows that most IDPs have a nomadic or agropastoral background, lifestyles which cannot be practised in the urban setting. In the future, if those affected by displacement were able to support themselves in either the rural or urban setting, they would not need any type of support from NGOs or government. Integration of IDPs into the local society will also necessitate acquiring skills to raise their own local community up, while enabling their integration and mutual benefit within the community can bring

much needed stability to the wider IDP and local communities as a whole.

Housing, land and property (HLP) rights

While much of the assistance needed in displacement-affected communities is based on conditions of impoverishment and the need for the same set of basic services (health, education, water, infrastructure, etc), IDPs often experience challenges specific to their displacement status. This is most notably linked to their insecurity with respect to housing, land and property (HLP) rights. Our Burco study affirms findings from other research in displacement contexts (REF, 2018; Hammond, 2019), including Hargeisa and other Somali cities, that insecurity of HLP rights is a major stumbling block in unlocking other rights.

Currently the land on which the IDP camps are located generally belongs to the government or is privately owned by a member of a sub-clan (for the use of that sub-clan). Some IDPs have communal rights to the land they occupy (as when it is provided by the government to the IDP collective community, with no individual rights.) A few IDPs rent the land they live on but they do not have the right to modify it, which means they cannot build on or improve the land, dig for regular water sources or build improved housing.

Without a secure place to live, people tend not to send their children to school or seek long-term employment. They live in fear that they may be relocated at any time, or that if they invest in improving their temporary homes they may be expected to vacate or pay more for the right to live there. Once people have been assured of their right to stay in a particular place, their ability to settle and to devote their energies to other elements of their wellbeing will increase.

Registration of IDPs, or distribution of national ID cards, can help people become fully integrated into the local systems and claim their rights as Somaliland citizens. IDP camps are not sustainable as they do not enable self-sufficiency. Rather, the goal is to help people move to or establish villages that allow for basic access to facilities, and for IDPs to become fully functioning and self-sufficient members of the community. If they have individual ID cards, this will allow for sustainable relocation or provision of HLP guarantees *in situ*. It would also help IDPs prove their citizenship, thus giving them more access to services and resources.

Providing secure tenure to HLP is a challenge. There is insufficient land in the allocated camps for all IDPs in and around Burco to individually own plots and there is no funding to help relocate them further into the city, as urban land is becoming increasingly expensive. Return to rural areas may be viable for some people, particularly if accompanied by environmental and livelihood rehabilitation support, but is unlikely to be a realistic option for most of the urban displaced. Therefore, it is essential that longer-term solutions are found within the urban and peri-urban spaces.

2.6 Obstacles to return

Obstacles to return include lack of economic and social opportunities as well as insecurity within the areas of origin. The main reason why people within Somaliland have been displaced is a loss of income caused by droughts and conflict, both of which are frequent and/or ongoing. Most, as noted above, are not able to return to their rural livelihoods as the environmental resource base has been depleted and there are no re-stocking programmes, so they do not have anything to go back to. Some displaced families have had the opportunity to send their children to primary school in the camps (although not all camps have schools or are close enough to local schools to facilitate widespread enrolment), which is not something they want to lose.

Some IDPs have been living in conditions of displacement for as many as 20 years, and as a result they have become accustomed to living in the camp setting, which provides the sociality of an urban environment even if it lacks many of the basic services that a city might provide. While usually insufficient, there is some security in the camp, with regularity in terms of accessing food, water and a monthly income from the various government and I/NGO initiatives. Among those protractedly displaced households, a generation of children has been born and raised in the camps; they are now young adults and they have only ever known camp life, so the idea of 'return' to a rural environment is foreign and daunting. IDPs interviewed said that they felt there was "too much risk involved in returning to their old community or way of living so they would prefer to remain in their urban and peri-urban settlements". Going back would result in a loss of access to schools, sustenance and any potential health services, however rudimentary these may be.

3 Opportunities for the EU BREACH programme

In 2022, the EU approved a multiyear programme (to be carried out until 2027), BREACH. BREACH's two Specific Objectives (SOs) are: 1) to improve prevention of and preparedness for food crises in communities in vulnerable situations; and 2) to achieve durable solutions to displacement. Sub-objectives within the second SO include:

- 2.1 improving access to basic services;
- 2.2 expanding protection and sustainable livelihood opportunities;
- 2.3 supporting sustainable, disaster-resilient and inclusive urban development.

The research conducted for this report points to several concrete steps that can be taken to fulfil these sub-objectives. A key to this work is taking an approach that considers and addresses the needs of all who have been affected by displacement (a displacement-affected community approach) as much as possible.

The two SOs taken together also provide an opportunity to promote sustainable returns for some IDPs by working to rehabilitate the rural resource and livelihood base within areas of origin or relocation, while at the same time providing support to urban communities where, for various reasons discussed above, the majority of IDPs are expected to remain. This will involve working closely not only with the NDRA but also with the Ministry of Rural Development and other line ministries towards creating development-oriented solutions to displacement.

Our report also highlights the areas in which capacity building is needed to strengthen the ability of local-level officials to more appropriately respond to the short- and long-term needs of displaced persons.

BREACH's overall focus on generating economic opportunity through technical and vocational training and job creation will, if successful, provide an important contribution to the overall ability of Togdheer region, and the city of Burco, to respond to the challenges of displacement. It will also contribute to helping those living in displacement-affected communities to achieve sustainable livelihoods, and to making the pursuit of durable solutions meaningful. This will, however, require strong coordination with government authorities to ensure that the HLP rights discussed above are addressed.

4 Conclusion

In summary, several groups have a vested interest in supporting IDPs to secure durable solutions. However, there is not enough cooperation between the NDRA and national government, local authorities, I/NGOs and other funders. Nor is there sufficient local input on policies, project formulation and implementation, and priority setting.

The local authority has responsibility to settle the community and provide them with basic services such as health, education, water and roads, whereas national government is responsible for developing policies to guide this work and to provide IDPs with food. Although there are some regular coordination meetings, they are used more as information updates, and stakeholders have no role in the shaping and steering of policies.

For the local authority, the arrival of newly displaced persons has a serious impact on those previously displaced and the wider local communities in terms of safety, security and wellbeing. There is a feeling that IDPs may constitute a threat to the local community's way of living, thanks to their ever-increasing numbers and the pressures they place on the fragile urban infrastructure and social services system. The continuation of different conflicts and recurring droughts as external factors, and the increasing destitution of the local poor communities both threaten to exacerbate the situation.

The following recommendations are aimed at helping to facilitate durable solutions:

1. Greater involvement of regional and municipal officials is needed in the design and targeting of support for IDPs. This should involve NDRA staff as well as municipal officials and relevant line department staff.
2. A system of registration of IDPs, with provision of identity cards showing an individual's and/or household's entitlement to assistance, is needed to improve the targeting of aid resources.
3. Rather than the current significant focus on individual monthly cash payments, more focus on community-based assistance to all those living in displacement-affected communities, based on need, is required. While some vulnerable individuals may continue to require cash support, preference should be given to supporting efforts towards self-sufficiency, in both urban and rural settings, for all who are in need, regardless of their displacement status.
4. In the longer term, it will be important for regional officials to be able to make allocations of land ownership, and also to include upskilling for agropastoralists who have been displaced, so that they can establish sustainable livelihoods in their new locations.
5. Where returns to agropastoral or pastoral areas may be feasible, regional authorities must work with the Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Planning and other relevant departments to help rehabilitate land affected by drought, deforestation and degradation to be able to support such returns.
6. For those who have been displaced by conflict, return will depend on resolution of the present hostilities both in Togdheer and in the eastern Sool region. The needs of IDPs should be taken into consideration when negotiating a cessation of hostilities and a return to peaceful relations between communities.

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