



## IAWG/ ReDSS/ Somalia NGO Consortium Contribution to Somali Return Process

The Inter Agency Working Group (IAWG)<sup>1</sup>, the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS)<sup>2</sup> and the Somalia NGO Consortium<sup>3</sup> held a joint meeting with their members on Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2016 to discuss the repatriation process of Somali refugees from Dadaab to Somalia and the UNHCR's Plan of Action<sup>4</sup>. The objective of the meeting was to share analysis, identify challenges and recommendations that NGOs will take forward with UNHCR and other relevant actors. Please find below five core elements that NGOs would like to further discuss and contribute to in order to inform a safe and dignified return and (re)integration plan.

### 1. Clear coordination and steering mechanism is urgently needed

At the moment, there is no coordination mechanism in place for humanitarian and development actors to engage, apart from UNHCR's *ad hoc* bilateral partners' meetings. This continues to create a lot of confusion that needs to be urgently addressed.

#### **Recommendation for humanitarian coordination on UNHCR's plan of action**

- It is urgent that existing humanitarian structures in Somalia (HCT and clusters) and the Kenya Humanitarian Partnership Team (KHPT) are used to further plan, prepare and coordinate.
- Cross border mechanisms will also be key to ensure coordination on both sides. The cross border meeting organized by UNHCR on Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> July 2016 is a first step but it needs to involve all relevant actors and clusters/ sectors beyond UNHCR implementing partners. UNHCR should establish a high-level position for cross border operations between Somalia and Kenya in order to address the existing coordination challenges.

#### **Recommendations for development and humanitarian coordination on a (re)integration plan**

- Resident coordinators' offices in Kenya and Somalia should ensure coordination of humanitarian and development actors to start planning for (re)integration now and develop a joint roadmap beyond the UNHCR's proposed Plan of Action which focusses on the immediate humanitarian needs of the returnees. This is not only relevant for refugees being returned to Somalia but also for planning in Kenya.
- Resident coordinators should bring together the existing mechanisms and initiatives that should play a key role in this process. In the case of Somalia for instance, the IDP Solutions Initiative and the upcoming mapping exercise to identify humanitarian and development programs to build upon, the Somalia National Development Plan (NDP) process, Peace and State Building Goals (PSGs) working groups, the EUTF and REINTEG, etc.
- The process must be viewed as a collective action in the search of durable solutions rather than mandate driven - our common goal being to give the displaced persons a chance of a better life with dignity and self-reliance.

<sup>1</sup> IAWG: <http://iawg-africa.org/>

<sup>2</sup> Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) <http://www.regionaldss.org/about-redss>

<sup>3</sup> Somalia NGO Consortium: <http://www.somaliangoconsortium.org/>

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR Kenya and Somalia Plan of Action: Voluntary Repatriation of Somali Refugees from Kenya and their Reintegration in Somalia, June 2016.

## 2. Develop joint analysis to inform safe and dignified modalities and learn from evaluations of the Somalia Return Consortium and other return processes

Developing joint area based analysis to inform safe and dignified modalities is of paramount due to limited basic services, particularly in the areas of health<sup>56</sup>and education, and persistent security, safety and access issues in large parts of Somalia. Critical prevailing protection concerns, lack of basic services and livelihoods opportunities remain serious obstacles to sustainable returns and reintegration of refugees in areas of return. It is also important that we incorporate lessons learnt from the current return process. It has been established that a key component for sustainable returns is that return packages must only be the first step of a long term/wider (re)integration strategy. It is critical to improve the generation and availability of relevant data and analysis to better understand and operationalize complementary humanitarian and developmental approaches in support of the return and (re)integration plan and to mitigate against secondary displacements which can adversely affect urban centers in Somalia, neighboring countries and lead to further migration flows within and beyond the region.

### **Recommendations**

- **Joint area based analysis:** Returns must take place in safe areas and take into consideration accessibility to basic services as well as relationships with local communities. NGOs are willing to engage and support joint analysis to inform safe and dignified modalities including: 1. Risks and opportunities in the areas of return (presence of actors, existing programs, absorption capacity, existing IDP caseloads, access to basic services, employment, livelihoods, market analysis, education, HLP, protection, access and security, forced evictions, etc.) 2. Conflict analysis in the areas of return to better understand if/how a population influx will influence the local power dynamics and/or if existing conflict dynamics will hinder successful return and reintegration.
- **Lessons learnt:** ReDSS is willing to work with others actors, clusters and initiatives (e.g. IDP Solutions Initiative) to resource the elaboration of an inter-agency briefing paper on lessons learnt. We have rich experience from the Somalia IDP Returns Consortium; from Digale settlement in Somaliland; even from return of rejected asylum seekers to rapidly put together a ‘lessons learnt’ brief and guidance note.

## 3. Start planning now for early solution/ (re)integration for displacement affected communities<sup>7</sup> and involve development actors from the start

The current UNHCR Plan of Action is a humanitarian response plan and it is important to include it as part of a medium to longer term reintegration strategy. What will be the process to develop this strategy? Return is not a durable solution in itself, sustainable (re)integration is and this requires long-term planning and funding. There is no quick impact and easy fix projects that can lead to a sustainable return. Development actors must be involved in the early stages of the process so as to explore different solutions approaches and resourcing models for the return and (re)integration process. As mentioned above, this is not only about starting new plans, but informing programmatic priorities for future development initiatives and building into existing humanitarian and development ones.

<sup>5</sup> <http://somalianoconsortium.org/docs/key/17/2016/1456081374.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nation.co.ke/oped/Opinion/Sending-refugees-to-Somalia-will-ignite-health-crisis/-/440808/3268984/-/108sq7cz/-/index.html>

<sup>7</sup> It is critical to adopt a ‘displacement affected communities’ approach in developing plan and strategy to ensure adequate involvement of host communities throughout.

## **Recommendations**

- The Resident Coordinator offices to lead the development of comprehensive (re)integration plan involving humanitarian and development actors addressing physical, material and legal rights and needs of displacement affected communities in Kenya and Somalia.
- The six months to one year assistance period provided in the UNHCR return package should allow actors to develop a medium to long term multi sectorial rights and needs based strategy including for host communities (urban infrastructure, provision of basic services – access to education, health, livelihood, social protection...). This process needs to start now.
- This plan should have a set of common ‘solutions’ indicators<sup>8</sup> used by different actors and this should be developed together with the existing initiatives looking at the same issues (the Somalia IDPs Initiatives, Somalia NDP, resilience consortiums...).

## **4. Expand protection monitoring**

At the core of the returns process should be a robust protection monitoring and response mechanism in both Kenya (Dadaab) and Somalia. Monitoring findings would support advocacy for minimum standards that ensure safety, dignity and respect for rights of refugees during the process of camp closure and as they return and settle in Somalia. While the entire Dadaab population is at risk from increasing protection threats, heightened vulnerabilities exist for women and children, who constitute the majority of refugees in Dadaab camp<sup>9</sup>. Protection responses should thus take into consideration their specific vulnerabilities and needs.

## **Recommendations**

- The UNHCR Plan of Action should have a much stronger protection component, including funding for expanded protection monitoring in Dadaab and Somalia.
- The Protection Cluster in Somalia should develop a protection monitoring framework for the returns and reintegration to mitigate potential protection risks.

## **5. Improve dissemination of information to enable refugees make informed decisions**

Refugees in Dadaab should have access to relevant and accurate information to help calm tensions. They deserve to make informed decisions about their lives and to be able to plan and prepare themselves in this critical time. Being well informed is a critical part of the equation. Word spreads quickly in a refugee environment, where rumor and misinformation are rampant and need to be addressed. At the moment, refugees have anxieties due to lack of clarity around the ongoing verification exercise as well as in relation to the conditions of return specifically on the availability of basic services in the areas of return. Two-way communication - talking, interviewing and conversing - is critical to ensuring that refugees get the information they need, listening to what they are saying in order to understand how to inform them best.

## **Recommendations**

- Help desks: it will be useful to maximize the use of the return help desks in Dadaab to provide accurate and consistent information<sup>10</sup> and ensure close coordination with partners managing

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<sup>8</sup> Physical, material and legal safety indicators together with a standard data protocol to support disaggregation of data for better analysis, targeting, coordination and accountability.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. exposure to GBV, family separation, negative coping mechanisms, loss of livelihood, secondary displacement of returnees due to evictions...

<sup>10</sup> Clarify 1) how vulnerability is defined and additional support that will be provided 2) eligibility for registered refugees married to Kenyans, or children born in Kenya.

the Home Way Stations (HWS) in Somalia and with other partners in return areas where there are currently no HWS.

- Involve key sectorial actors (health, education etc.) beyond UNHCR implementing partners to contribute to the development and dissemination of information provided at the Return Help desks and at HWS.
- Increase outreach and information campaign/ communal meetings with refugees in Dadaab and document responses to feedback to UNHCR and Help Desks.
- Create return help desks or information points in areas of return in Somalia that can be managed by partners present in these areas.

**14<sup>th</sup> July 2016**