



## Pre-famine conditions, return and displacement in Somalia

Drought turning into famine means a massive displacement crisis in the making with influx of refugees and IDPs on the top of an already dire situation with more than a 1 million IDPs and almost 1 million refugees. And contrary to 2011, Dadaab refugee camp will not be an option for affected populations to seek refuge.

### Did you know?

-At this point in Somalia, actors **need to work on the worst-case scenario** given that even if the Gu rains are better than foreseen, the crisis is already at a point where much of the damage has been done.

- **IDPs are highly vulnerable to shocks such as drought** due to their lack of connectedness and so difficulty to borrow and to access markets, little social cohesion and connection to host communities, part of minority clans, etc.

-Although there is a common assumption that **'drought-displaced' refugees and IDPs will go back home right after the drought, this is usually not the case as other factors such as security, access to services and education, were part of displaced' decision to stay or return.** In June 2012, despite improved rainfall, only 14% of refugees [surveyed in Dadaab](#) said they would consider returning, and by mid-2013 voluntary returns were still very limited.

-**Drought does not always turn into famine.** [Famine is linked to weak governance](#), political struggle, weak infrastructure, conflict and difficult access and lack of capacities for actors on the ground.

### 1. Facts and figures

- **Pre famine conditions in Somalia:** [Over 6.2 million people](#) across Somalia (50 per cent of the total population) are facing acute food insecurity as a result of drought in parts of southern and northern Somalia and pre-famine warning has been issued by the [Food and Security Nutrition Early Unit on February 3, 2017](#).
- **Population movement:** due to the [worsening situation across Somalia](#), even [surpassing the 2011 famine](#) that led to the deaths of nearly 260,000 people, including 133,000 children; there is a significant [increase in the number of departures of Somalis](#) crossing into Ethiopia through Doolow. And the ongoing withdrawal of foreign troops from parts of south-central Somalia may increase insecurity and further impede humanitarian access.
- **Closure of Dadaab:** In 2011, [more than 130,000 Somali seek refuge in Dadaab Camp](#) which is not an option in 2017 as the camp is planned to close in May. Kenyan authorities will not postpone the closing of the camp citing that while in 2011, limited humanitarian access to affected populations and insecurity in South central Somalia led them to open their borders, this is not the case in 2017 and so Somali should return to their country while drought-displaced populations should be cared for in Somalia.

Kenya's decision announced in May 2016 to shut down the Dadaab camp has recently been [blocked by a high court ruling](#) which has challenged the constitutionality of the government's directive to shut Dadaab camp. The ruling offers Somali refugees some hope however, the reprieve does not offer a permanent solution as the [Kenyan government aims to appeal this decision](#).

- **Return process:** So far [44,365 Somali refugees had returned home since 8th December 2014](#) out of which [33,725 in 2016 alone](#). But since the announcement of the closure of Dadaab, the ongoing repatriation process is fraught with challenges and several human right organizations and NGOs have described the process as coercive and contrary to international law. According to the [UNHCR-led refugee population fixing exercise](#), 74 per cent of Somali refugees in Dadaab are unwilling to return home, largely as a result of insecurity in Somalia. Due to the existing dire conditions in areas or return, [the lack of absorption capacities](#) and the lack of reintegration support beyond the return package, there is a high likelihood that most of the returnees will head to the already overstretched and under-resourced IDP camps.
- **IDPs extreme vulnerability to pre-famine conditions:** IDPs are highly vulnerable due to their lack of connectedness and so difficulty to borrow/ little social cohesion and connection to host communities/ part of minority clans, etc.

## 2. Recommendations

- **Halt the return process:** Given the impending humanitarian crisis, UNHCR and the Governments of Kenya and Somalia need to take into account the consequences that **sustained repatriation may create**. Contingency measures, including further deferring repatriations, must be considered as areas of return are impacted by drought and pre famine conditions.
- **Urgent need to better understand the profile/ vulnerabilities/ needs and movement** of different groups such as pastoralists, agro pastoralist, riverine, and IDPs to inform better preparedness and targeted response.
- **Monitor population movements within and outside Somalia** to better prepare and respond and to ensure **protection of affected populations:** existing data mechanisms (PRMN and DTM) should work closely with FSNAU to inform joint analysis beyond food and nutrition data only.
- **Monitor cross border trends and regional dynamics** – movement of refugees/ pastoralists/ but also supplies – and any other cross border essential information to inform and connect country planning and response.
- **Joint cross sectoral analysis and early actions needed between Durable Solution and Resilience Working Groups:** support the monitoring of food and water availability and prices, establishment of local area action plans, discuss with donors how to reallocate part of durable solutions funding such as EU REINTEG to support immediate needs of IDPs and prevent further displacement, etc.
- **Invest to prevent displacement when still possible and into identified hotspots to ensure adequate preparedness and enhance response capacity:** based on ReDSS 2016 solutions [analysis in Lower Juba](#) , the following should take place:
  - **Preparedness and early response in [February and March](#) in larger hubs to increase absorption capacity of IDPs** across Somalia: for instance programmes in areas where affected southern agro-pastoralist will arrive (i.e Bay and Bakool), need to pivot already existing funding to absorbing IDPs in district centres as arrivals intensify in the coming weeks
  - **Minimize displacement and when feasible deliver aid as close to the rural population as possible** based on monitoring of access and availability of water and food
  - **Scale up cash response** to be used as safety net programmes
  - **Involve and coordinate with local and federal authorities**

### For additional resources:

- NRC & IDMC Report, Assessing drought displacement risk for Kenyan, Ethiopian and Somali pastoralists, April 2014 | <http://www.internal-displacement.org/assets/publications/2014/201405-horn-of-africa-technical-report-en.pdf>
- NRC September 2014, Exploring the links between displacement, vulnerability and resilience | <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212567114010107>
- Horn of Africa Resilience innovation lab, May 2015, Rapid Appraisal of Resilience to Internal displacement in Benadir Region, Somalia | [http://www.ranlab.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/RAN\\_Somalia-Report\\_8-July-2015.pdf](http://www.ranlab.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/RAN_Somalia-Report_8-July-2015.pdf)
- ODI December 2013, Talking to the other side: Humanitarian negotiations with Al-Shabaab in Somalia <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/8744.pdf>