Operationalizing the IASC framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs in the East and Horn of Africa: an adaptive and participatory approach to inform durable solutions processes

The IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for IDPs is providing a foundation upon which displacement actors can build to promote and facilitate durable solutions in the East and Horn of Africa.

The IASC Framework is groundbreaking work that provides clarity on the concept of durable solutions for IDPs, and general guidance on how to support such processes. **The Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS)**, a consortium of 13 NGOs[i] in the East and Horn of Africa, has operationalized the IASC Framework to inform the development of durable solutions strategies, policies and programs. This article provides an overview of these efforts and the learning that has been generated from them.

ReDSS was created in March 2015, with the aim of stimulating forward thinking and policy development on durable solutions for displacement-affected communities in East Africa. ReDSS acts as a coordination and information hub, and supports solutions-focused programming, learning and policy development.

THE REDSS DURABLE SOLUTIONS FRAMEWORK: A RAPID ANALYTICAL AND ADAPTIVE TOOL
The search for durable solutions to protracted displacement in the East and Horn of Africa is a regional and cross-border issue, with a strong political dimension. It demands a multi-sectoral response that goes beyond the existing humanitarian agenda. A consistent problem in the response to protracted displacement is the lack of a common framework and outcomes indicators relevant to solutions and a joint understanding of the drivers (and the construct) of solutions. This challenge makes it difficult to generate relevant data and analysis to identify displacement-specific protection and assistance needs to inform decision-making in collective responses.

One of ReDSS' first initiatives in 2015 aimed to address this problem. Inspired and informed by the IASC Framework, member agencies developed the **ReDSS Durable Solutions Framework[ii] and its theory of change[iii]**. The ReDSS Framework is a practical, easy-to-use rapid analysis tool with a very simple visual. It is used as part of a solutions analysis process, which enables users to answer the following questions:
- What are the barriers/opportunities for durable solutions?
- To what extent have durable solutions been achieved?
- What changes to policy and practice are required to advance progress towards durable solutions?
- Where to focus and prioritize investments based on gaps and challenges identified?

The ReDSS framework can be used by practitioners and policy-makers to tailor programming and policies according to a common logical framework around solutions and based on a collective

analysis. It represents a unique way of informing joint planning at the granular level in a holistic and comprehensive manner across sectors and actors.

The ReDSS Framework is comprised of 28 outcomes indicators arranged into the 8 IASC criteria and divided into three different types of safety:

- **Physical Safety** – security, protection and social cohesion
- **Material Safety** – adequate standards of living, access to job creation/economic opportunities, restoration of housing land and property
- **Legal Safety** – access to documentation, family reunification, participation in public affairs, access to effective remedies and justice

These indicators are used to identify displacement-specific needs and vulnerabilities by comparing the situation of the displaced population with that of the host population. A simple traffic-light rating system is used to rate each indicator, providing a visually accessible snapshot of the current situation that can be updated over time.

The ReDSS framework is a tool that can be used for different purposes: as a simple overview of the 'status' of the elements of solutions (a baseline) or as a rapid analytical and accountability tool to improve coordination and identify gaps.

It has been used in IDP and refugee contexts, as well as situations of return for both IDPs and refugees and in camp, out-of-camp and urban contexts in Uganda, Somalia, Tanzania and Ethiopia[iv].

A strong emphasis has been placed on a collaborative and consensus building approach, engaging humanitarian, development and governmental actors, as well as displacement-affected communities to develop a common analysis. The participatory process in which the tool is used is key to ensuring its relevance and appropriateness, including learning from challenges and managing different opinions and perspectives to reach a joint analysis.

The application of the ReDSS Framework has generally followed a 3-step process:

- Firstly, it is used to establish a common vision of durable solutions and their component parts among key stakeholders
- Secondly, it is used to inform the decision-making on policy and practice through conducting solutions analyses
- Thirdly, it is increasingly being used as a tool to inform the design, monitoring, evaluation and adaptation of the solutions-focused strategies and programs

This rapid analytical tool has helped to move durable solutions higher up the agenda in the East and Horn of Africa. It has helped to synthesize and systematize data on displacement-affected communities, and has informed the design of solutions-oriented strategies and programming by various humanitarian and development actors, comprising operational agencies and donors.

It is a live tool that evolves constantly to adapt to practitioners' needs and use. In 2017, ReDSS revised its indicators as per the work of JIPS and developed a guidance manual and programming guide[v].

But there are a number of challenges to be considered:

- The indicators aim to achieve minimum standards: this raises questions of the 'quality' of durable solutions available in contexts experiencing chronic crises, specifically in comparison to areas where local standards are already low.
- Most data sources, measurements and ratings of the indicators reflect a context of humanitarian service provision that is determined by displacement status rather than an equal legal status to the national population. This can confuse discussions around minimum standards where the local / host population may be worse off than displaced hosted in their area.
- The lack of comparative data and analysis within and across displacement affected populations, and in comparison to local populations and national standard, is a key challenge.
- The framework is to be used as a rapid analytical tool not as an in dept. assessment and this needs to be carefully managed.
- The analysis relies on secondary data review but availability of quantitative data for most indicators is really challenging and can bring important subsequent issues to support the analysis.

It is critical to improve the generation and availability of relevant data in the search for durable solutions. But data alone is not useful. It needs to be used to inform collective analysis and joint humanitarian and development planning and programing. The findings of all solutions analyses are publicly available on the ReDSS online solutions dashboard which allows users to filter information to inform their own analyses[vi].

APPLICATION OF THE REDSS FRAMEWORK IN SOMALIA: MEASURE CONTRIBUTION NOT ATTRIBUTION TOWARDS COLLECTIVE OUTCOMES

The ReDSS Framework has been used to conduct solutions analyses in the Lower Juba, Bay and Benadir regions of Somalia. Initial analyses were undertaken in late 2016/early 2017, and these will be updated in 2018 to see the extent to which the analyses have informed durable solutions planning, programming and policies. The initial analyses took place while a humanitarian crisis was unfolding in Somalia, amid severe drought and warnings of famine, which had led to significant levels of new displacement[vii].

The solutions analyses were conducted by ReDSS in close collaboration the UN Resident Coordinator's office and other humanitarian and development actors. The objective was to inform area-based planning in the 3 regions with a focus on the (re)integration of IDPs and returnees. The analyses relied primarily on secondary data review, complemented by key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The process aimed to be highly collaborative and a validation phase was included with the aim of reaching a consensus on the findings and recommendations.

The analyses reports made specific recommendations to shift the response towards area-based responses, where assistance is provided on the basis of needs and vulnerabilities in a specific geographic area, rather than focusing on a specific sector or target group. The need for joint analysis and strategies with collective outcomes and indicators was highlighted. Additionally, the analyses recommended that a greater focus should be placed on "early solutions", highlighting the need to build self-reliance and resilience from the outset of displacement in close collaboration with the resilience agenda and architecture in Somalia.

The Somalia solutions analyses have informed strategic planning and programming. A joint area-based durable solutions action plan has been developed for Kismayo under the leadership of the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, together with local authorities. This plan has helped to shape programmatic responses in Jubaland, including a durable solutions program implemented by IOM and UN-Habitat. ReDSS has also collaborated with key resilience consortia in Somalia to incorporate analysis findings and increase the displacement focus of their work.

A major challenge encountered during the solutions analyses was the lack of quality, systematized and disaggregated data on displacement-affected communities as mentioned previously. The analyses reports therefore highlighted the need to improve and harmonize data collection and disaggregation.

Solutions-focused programming and collective outcomes
Momentum at the political and policy levels on durable solutions has been matched by an expansion of the range and scale of durable solutions programming in the region. This has prompted ReDSS to place an increased focus on providing programmatic support to its members. An excellent entry point for this support has been the European Union-funded REINTEG Programme (EU-REINTEG) in Somalia, which is a multi-year programme focused on the sustainable (re)integration of IDPs and returnees. ReDSS is the knowledge management and learning partner for 3 EU-REINTEG consortia that started implementing in 2017: The Enhancing Integration of Displacement Affected Communities in Somalia Consortium (EIDACS) led by Concern World Wide, the Jubaland Solutions Consortium (JSC) led by Norwegian Refugee Council and the Somaliland Durable Solutions Consortium (SDSC) led by World Vision.

ReDSS and its partners have adopted a harmonized, solutions-oriented approach across the three consortia. Four common outcomes have been adopted focusing on: local governance, access to basic services, livelihoods, and research and learning-. Progress towards these collective outcomes is measured by 10 outcome-level indicators, which are taken directly from either the IASC Framework or the ReDSS Framework.

The adoption of these outcomes indicators has presented some challenges for partners, including the lack of common definitions; the need to contextualize; the lack of guidance on measurement; and the lack of agreement on disaggregation and frequency of data collection. ReDSS have supported consortia partners to overcome these challenges through the development of an outcomes monitoring framework in 2018, which clearly defines the 10 common outcome indicators used by the consortia and provides tools and survey questions for measuring the indicators.

The monitoring data gathered by EU-REINTEG consortia will be used for multiple purposes, including generating lessons and documenting emerging good practices to inform future solutions-oriented programs in Somalia and beyond; measuring how interventions are contributing to solutions; identifying vulnerabilities specific to IDPs and returnees; and informing ReDSS' policy influencing efforts at local, national and regional level. The main aim is to measure contribution not attribution towards collective outcomes.

Significantly, and recognizing the complex and fluid implementing environment and the multi-year nature of EU-REINTEG, outcomes monitoring will inform adaptations and course corrections to programme activities and approaches.

LESSONS LEARNED ON THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE IASC FRAMEWORK IN THE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA AND WAY FORWARD

The IASC Framework has provided a solid foundation on which durable solutions efforts in the East and Horn of Africa have been built. It has inspired and informed the development of the ReDSS Durable Solutions Framework, with which a coalition of NGOs has helped to move durable solutions further up the regional agenda. The ReDSS Framework has informed solutions analyses, the design of solutions-oriented strategies and programs, training and capacity building, and policy influencing. The key learning generated from these efforts is detailed below.

- **The IASC Framework can be used to develop collective outcome indicators to measure the extent to which solutions have been achieved.** These indicators need to be contextualized and clearly defined with input from local stakeholders and authorities.

- **The IASC Framework can, and should, provide a foundation for solutions analyses processes.** Solutions analyses processes should be undertaken from the onset of displacement onwards and should be ideally timed so that they can inform strategic planning processes (e.g. humanitarian response plans). An initial solutions analysis will provide a baseline against which progress should be measured periodically. As demonstrated through the work of ReDSS, the principles and the criteria set out in the IASC Framework can be adapted for use in refugee and returnee contexts.

- **The solutions analysis process always needs to be tailored to each displacement context.** There is no "one-size fits all" approach. Localized analyses (focusing on specific sub-national regions or districts) provide the most granular-level detail and therefore the most potential to inform area-based planning that addresses the specific geographical gaps and needs of both displaced and host populations.

- **The solutions analysis process must be collaborative, meaningfully engaging a wide range of stakeholders.** Local and/or national governmental authorities should ideally play a central role and take ownership of the solutions analysis process[viii]. The process should involve both humanitarian and development actors, with multi-sectoral expertise. Crucially, the process should engage and place the displacement-affected community at the center. Without the engagement of these stakeholders, securing buy-in will be difficult and it is unlikely that solutions analyses will significantly inform decision-making.

- **The solutions analysis process does not need to be expensive.** Solutions analyses using the ReDSS Framework have relied predominantly on a review of secondary data. The focus has been on synthesizing and systematizing existing data on displacement-affected communities, rather than conducting extensive primary data collection.

- **The IASC Framework should also be operationalized to inform solutions-oriented programming and strategies.** Building on its support to the EU-REINTEG programme, ReDSS will provide technical support, guidance and tools to its members to support the incorporation of a solutions lens into assessments, program design, monitoring and evaluation, as well mid-term course corrections and adaptations.

Moving forward, there is a clear need to institutionalize the solutions analysis process, encouraging governments to take leadership in collaboration with a wide range of actors from beyond the humanitarian community, as well seeking to clearly link solutions analysis to the development of area-based response strategies in displacement-affected communities and collective outcomes.

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[i] ACTED, Care, Concern Worldwide, Danish Refugee Council, International Rescue Committee, INTERSOS, Lutheran World Relief, Mercy Corps, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam, Refugee Consortium of Kenya, Save the Children, World Vision - http://regionaldss.org/

[ii] The ReDSS Solutions Framework can be accessed at http://regionaldss.org/index.php/research-and-knowledge-management/solutions-framework/

[iii] ReDSS Framework Theory of Change: http://regionaldss.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Theory-of-Change-ReDSS-Solutions-Framework-tool.pdf

[iv] http://regionaldss.org/index.php/research-and-knowledge-management/redss-solution-analyses/somalia-solutions-analyses/

[v] ReDSS (2018), *ReDSS Solutions Framework guidance manual and programming guide*. Access at, http://regionaldss.org/index.php/capacity-development/solutions-framework-tools/

[vi] The ReDSS online dashboard can be accessed at redss.onalabs.org. A guide to using the Dashboard be access at http://redss-helpsite.onalabs.org

[vii] Humanitarian Country Team (2017). *Operational Plan for Pre-Famine Scale up of Humanitarian Assistance. Access at https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/somalia/document/somalia-operational-plan-pre-famine-scale*

[viii] In October 2011 the UN Secretary-General adopted a Decision on Durable Solutions and an accompanying Preliminary Framework on Ending Displacement in the Aftermath of Conflict.