



# Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat

## External Evaluation

*November 2020*



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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

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<b>CRRF</b>	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
<b>DRC</b>	Danish Refugee Council
<b>HR</b>	Human Resources
<b>IGAD</b>	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
<b>IRC</b>	International Rescue Committee
<b>M&amp;E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MSC</b>	Most Significant Change
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental Organisation
<b>NRC</b>	Norwegian Refugee Council
<b>ReDSS</b>	Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat
<b>SOP</b>	Standard Operating Procedure
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

# Executive Summary

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ReDSS has had an **impressive strategic trajectory**. In just five short years, it has transformed thinking and practice of durable solutions across East and Horn of Africa.

Operating with limited funding and an evolving mandate, ReDSS has consistently punched above its weight. Its small, passionate team are highly skilled in stakeholder engagement and policy dialogue. Across all the interviews and surveys conducted for this evaluation, the high regard stakeholders hold for ReDSS was palpable.

The central finding of this evaluation is that ReDSS is a real success and as issues are faced there is no doubt that they will be addressed. Recommendations are not remedial, but rather ideas and suggestions to help ReDSS' members and its secretariat to develop its next strategy and assure its continued success into the future. Here are the main directions:

## **Policy dialogue needs to remain the core of ReDSS' strategy**

**R** Policy dialogue is ReDSS' central strength and the area where it achieves its most significant impact. Members expect ReDSS to continue to “speak on behalf of a coalition” to promote policy change. This should remain the core of ReDSS new strategy.

Without changing the pillars and ReDSS' foundational concepts, ReDSS can reaffirm policy as its core objective. ReDSS' ways of working and the other pillars enable the policy work to progress. However, these links should be drawn more clearly.

## **Transition from “what” to “how” while remaining member-centric**

**R** ReDSS has well defined its approach and culture. For the next strategy, it needs to take a step further into linking activities to its successful approach by making the strategy the assumed choice of priorities and by managing it with a reliable Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system.

**R** ReDSS needs to make it a priority to focus on the “how”, i.e. how the members can use ReDSS' contribution to create change on the ground.

**R** ReDSS should prioritise curation and utilisation of the existing body of research, rather than continuing to expand it. In revisiting the wealth of knowledge ReDSS has generated, it should aim at translating it into operationally relevant tools for members.

**R** ReDSS needs to reduce the thematic focus to one regional theme and two country-level themes to ensure that these themes are translated through the four pillars in each country and the regional strategy and work plans. Fewer themes will provide a good platform for targeted commitments from members.

## **ReDSS' successful move to the country level needs to be translated into its governance**

**R** There is unanimous support to expand the membership locally by the inclusion of 3-4 international and local NGOs particularly active on durable solutions, specific to each country. A 75% (existing members with a regional scope)/25% (country specific) ratio is suggested. Each country will thus have different “core group” members. This ratio would strike the right balance between achieving county relevance and preserving ReDSS' overarching identity.

# 1 Context and Scope

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## 1.1 ReDSS' story

The Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) was established in 2015 with the aim of maintaining focused momentum and stakeholder engagement for displacement-affected communities in East and Horn of Africa. Its creation pre-dates the New York Declaration and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF); in 2015, *durable solutions* was not widely understood and rarely implemented in practice.

In its first year, ReDSS' focus was to create a common agenda on durable solutions. It worked to understand the landscape, engage key stakeholders, and craft common policy messages. During this time, it also forged its identity as a membership body, distinct from DRC. Members quickly came to feel a sense of ownership and connection for ReDSS.

In its second year, ReDSS focused its energies on expanding the body of evidence and research to support its agenda. Over the years, ReDSS has continued to publish and disseminate a prolific quantity of papers and reports. The quality and relevance of its research base is widely respected and valued, by the membership and beyond.

In its third year, ReDSS intensified its efforts to leverage its knowledge base to influence the thinking of donors and other international bodies. Meanwhile, the New York Declaration and CRRF put an international spotlight on durable solutions. ReDSS was quick to exploit this opportunity, using its existing relationships and knowledge base to maximise the benefit of this global attention for displacement-affected communities across the region.

In 2017, ReDSS moved to the country level (Somalia 2017, Ethiopia 2018 and Kenya 2019), thereby increasing its relevance to local stakeholders and its understanding of local contexts. It now has country units in Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya. This shift has enabled ReDSS to temper its strong regional perspective with a more nuanced understanding of local differences in displacement-related challenges and policy environments.

A key principle of ReDSS' adaptive management approach is to drive continuous improvement through an iterative process of testing and learning. Five years into its operations, this is an opportune time for a large-scale external evaluation of the organisation's operations and achievements. It is timely to look back and assess the perceived effectiveness of ReDSS' phased expansion and country led processes; and to look forward to what the next evolution of ReDSS will be.

## 1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this evaluation is to review ReDSS' strategy, governance structure and membership to inform its next strategy development process.

## 1.3 Approach

### 1.3.1 Principles and scope

This evaluation is evidence-based, participatory, includes lessons learned, and focuses on understanding the success factors.

It covers two key areas: (1) governance and membership and (2) strategy and achievements, and provides lessons learned and recommendations.

### 1.3.2 Methodology

This evaluation was conducted by Karene Melloul and her team and used a structured and adaptive mixed methods inquiry, with three key inputs:

- Desk review of internal M&E and other key documents
- Online survey of members, partners and staff
- Key informant interviews using an adaptive questionnaire.

It has ascertained progress against ReDSS' results framework and through the development of a series of questions to collect additional and targeted data.

To complement this conventional approach, this evaluation has also applied a version of the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology, which is a narrative capture technique. Stakeholders have been asked to provide specific stories about the most significant change they have experienced or witnessed as a result of ReDSS' work.

The MSC methodology is strongly aligned to ReDSS' context, culture and ways of working. It is participatory and bottom-up: members, partners and staff decide what is important. They tell the evaluator, not the other way around. It is goal-free: MSC captures the real outcomes, regardless of what was intended. It works well for complex situations where goals have evolved over time, and it captures unintended achievements, which other methodologies might miss. It is inclusive: people don't need to understand technical concepts like indicators. Everyone can tell stories about events they think were important. It delivers a rich picture of what is happening, rather than an overly simplified picture where organisational, social and economic developments are reduced to numbers. And it helps uncover the shared values that prevail at all levels, enabling the organisation to focus its work towards explicitly valued directions and away from less valued directions. As ReDSS gears up to develop its new strategy, such benefits will be essential to provide a clearer view of ReDSS' impact and value.

MSC is focused on impact, not on indicators or recommendations. It is therefore best used alongside more traditional methodologies, as is the case in this evaluation.

### 1.3.3 Timeline and deliverables

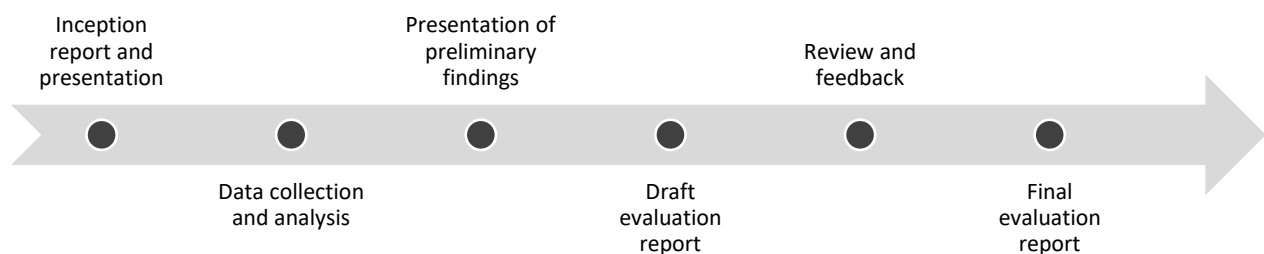


Figure 1: Timeline and deliverables

### 1.3.4 Framework

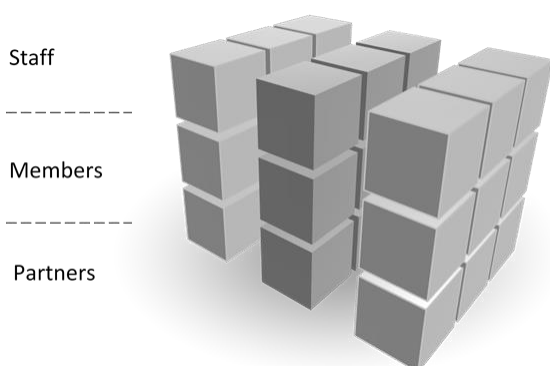


Figure 2: Evaluation questions derived

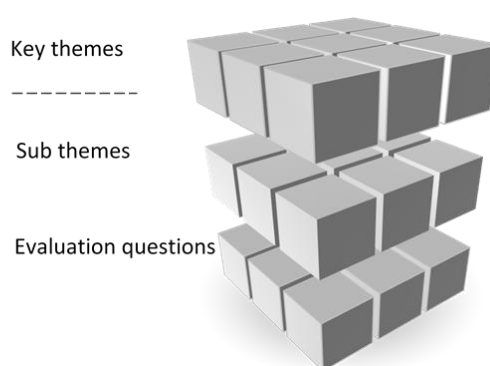


Figure 3: Evaluation questions tailored

A comprehensive framework was developed, identifying evaluation themes, sub-themes and questions. This framework is provided as an attachment to this report (Annex 1).

### 1.3.5 Data inputs and analysis

This evaluation relied on inputs from members, partners and staff in the form of:

- 37 Key Informant Interviews
- 67 online survey responses
- 22 stories of significant change (MSC).

This input covered at least 10 member organisations, at least 23 partner organisations, and at least 11 key staff members.<sup>1</sup> It was complemented by an extensive literature review of key documentation, especially internal M&E data and reports.

Partner and staff engagement was high; member engagement was more uneven. Some key informants from member organisations cancelled their scheduled interviews, and the response rate to the members' survey was quite low. Survey response rates for all respondent categories are provided in the table below. 40% is a very acceptable response rate, however 23% of members is more of a concern.

Thematic analysis against the evaluation framework was used to organise findings and develop recommendations.

Table 1: Survey response rates

Respondent category	Response rate	Number of respondents
Members – survey also interviewed	45%	14
Partners – survey also interviewed	30%	7
Members – survey only	<b>23%</b>	11
Partners – survey only	<b>65%</b>	25
Staff (not included in average response rate)	100%	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>41%<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>67</b>

<sup>1</sup> Note that some survey responses were anonymous, and are therefore not included in these estimates.

<sup>2</sup> Not including staff.



## 2 Key Findings: Strengths and Achievements

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ReDSS has had an **impressive strategic trajectory**. In just five short years, it has transformed thinking and practice of durable solutions across East and Horn of Africa. Durable solutions was once a poorly understood concept, rarely applied in practice. Now, it is an integral part of many humanitarian and development actors' programming.

Operating with limited funding and an evolving mandate, ReDSS has consistently punched above its weight. Its small, passionate team are highly skilled in stakeholder engagement and policy dialogue. Their energy and focus have engaged diverse actors across a vast region, and sustained momentum on the durable solutions agenda. Across all the interviews and surveys conducted for this evaluation, the high regard stakeholders hold for ReDSS was palpable.

The timing of ReDSS' creation was fortuitous. In 2016, not long after ReDSS was founded, the New York Declaration brought global attention to durable solutions. ReDSS capitalised on this attention effectively, leveraging it to maximise influence and impact in East and Horn of Africa.

### *Summary of achievements*

Through various capacity building activities such as training and learning workshops, ReDSS has created a shared understanding and language for discussing durable solutions. This has built connections between NGOs, UN agencies, academia, donors, governments, and other coordinating bodies like the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), enabling them to have meaningful discourse.

Displacement is a politically sensitive issue, which can sometimes be a barrier to engagement for government actors. ReDSS has managed to navigate this complexity effectively, supporting government leadership and capacity on durable solutions. It has become recognised as a safe and trusted forum for productive and impactful government dialogue.

ReDSS has produced and disseminated a vast quantity of research. This evidence-base has continually progressed and informed the concept of durable solutions. Furthermore, ReDSS has translated its research into practical tools and frameworks which support the day to day work of implementing agencies.

ReDSS occupies a unique position, bridging the gap between organisations working in the field, those who provide funding and those who establish policy. It speaks on behalf of a coalition of actors, amplifying voices from the field in a coherent, collective way. ReDSS has the trust of its members and is able to represent them effectively in a range of forums. More recently, ReDSS has successfully moved from a regional to a country level, increasing its relevance and contribution.

ReDSS has created a brand that is inclusive, collaborative, dynamic, service-oriented, helpful and sympathetic.

### *Impact*

It would be difficult to overstate ReDSS' impact on durable solutions policy across East and Horn of Africa. Its work will have a profound effect on the lives and wellbeing of displaced people and the communities that host them.

As part of this evaluation, stakeholders (staff, members and partners) provided 22 **stories of change** (Annex 2).

These stories represent the impact ReDSS has created over the years, which stakeholders believe to be of particular importance. 60% focused on **actual change at the policy level**. Looking at the nature of the

stories presented, other ReDSS' engagements come directly as support to this higher-level objective. The **multi-stakeholder** approach is not only presented as a success but most importantly as one of the necessary factors to progress policy change.

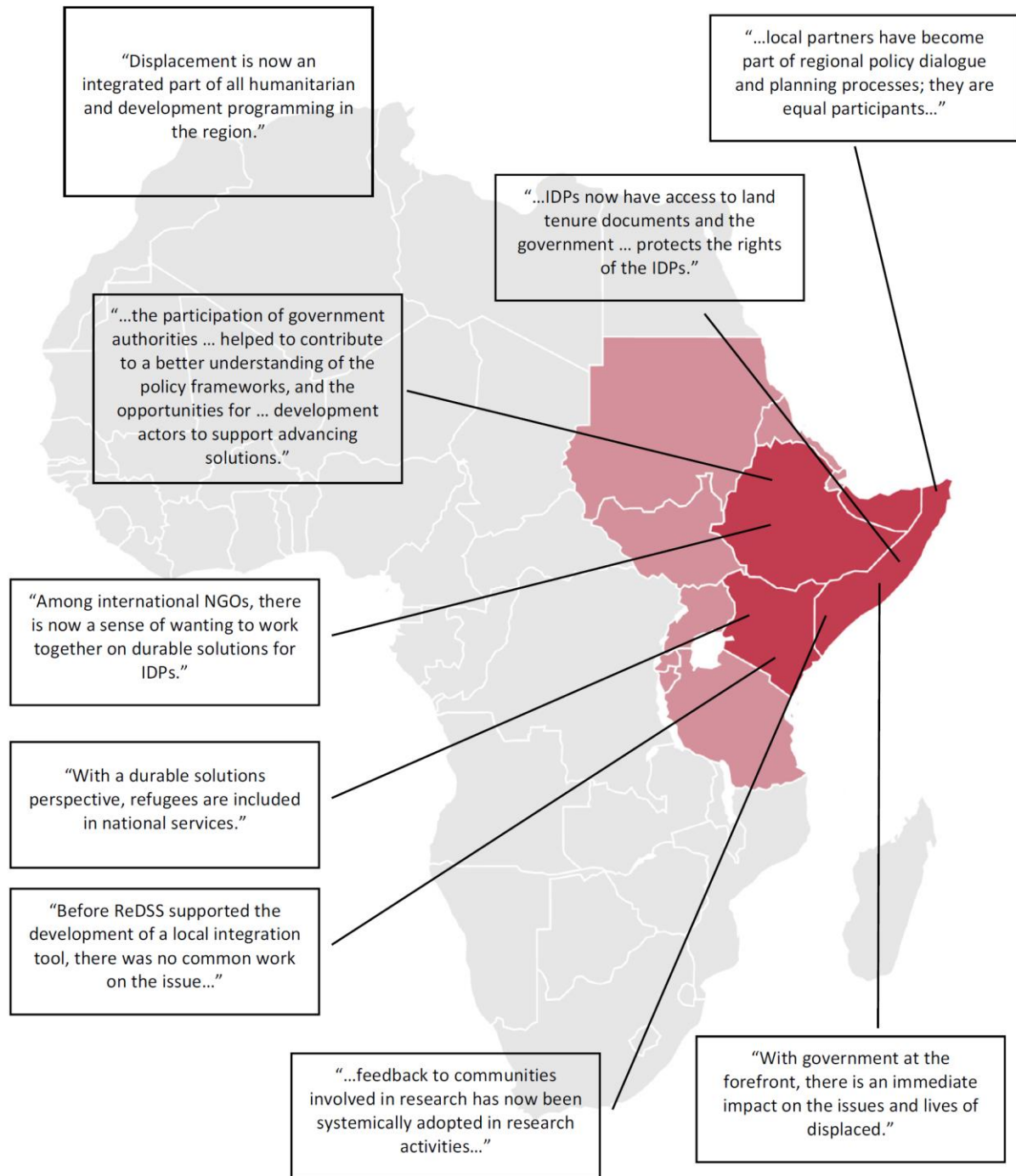


Figure 4: Extracts from stories of change

### Overall efficiency and effectiveness

Partners, staff and members all hold ReDSS' efficiency and effectiveness in high regard.

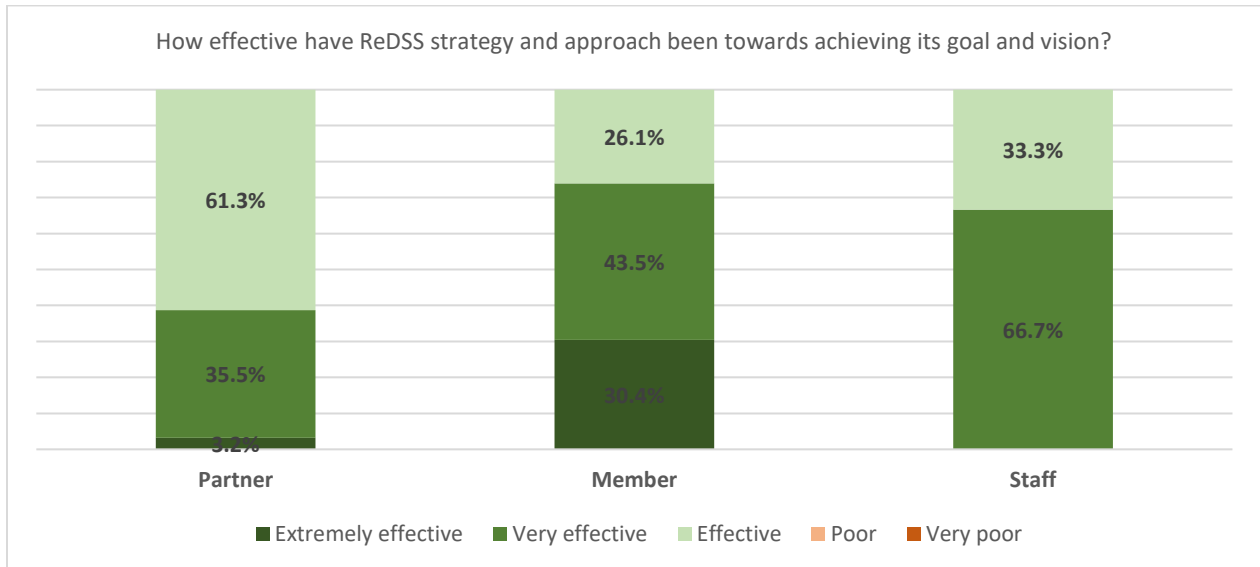


Figure 5: Survey responses to the question "How effective have ReDSS strategy and approach been towards achieving its goal and vision?"

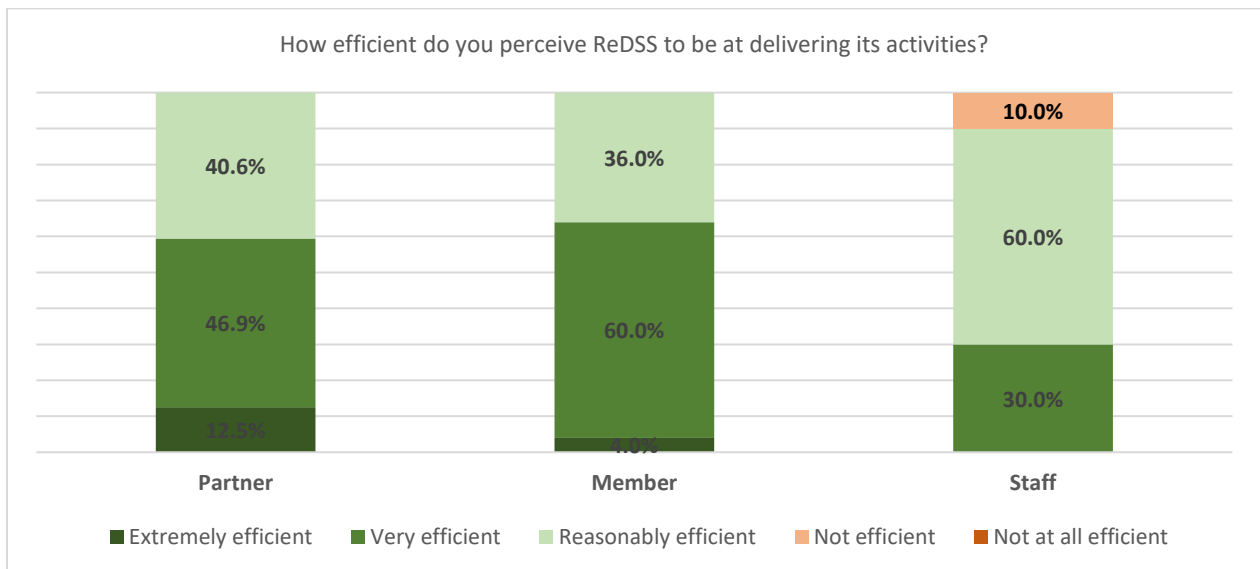


Figure 6: Survey responses to the question "How efficient do you perceive ReDSS to be at delivering its activities?"

### Central finding

The central finding of this evaluation is that ReDSS is a real success and as issues are faced there is no doubt that they will be addressed. ReDSS has demonstrated its ability to learn and adapt by involving multiple stakeholders and exploring innovative solutions.

The following sections of this report contain many recommendations for ReDSS to consider. It is important to note that these recommendations are not remedial, nor should they be interpreted as criticism. Rather, they are ideas and suggestions to help ReDSS develop its next strategy and assure its continued success into the future.

### 3 Key Findings: Governance and Membership

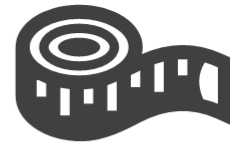
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It's time to formalise and document key systems, processes and aspects of ReDSS' culture.



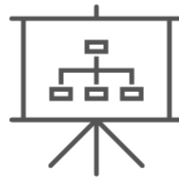
As ReDSS moves to country-level engagement, **membership must localise further.**



A simplified, centralised, adapted M&E tool will help inform organisational learning.



ReDSS staff are **leading global experts** in durable solutions.



The governance structure is effective and adaptable.



Personal relationships maximise member contribution.

Figure 7: Summary of key findings on governance and membership

## 3.1 Governance structure

### 3.1.1 Effectiveness of the governance structure

*The governance structures are overall effective*

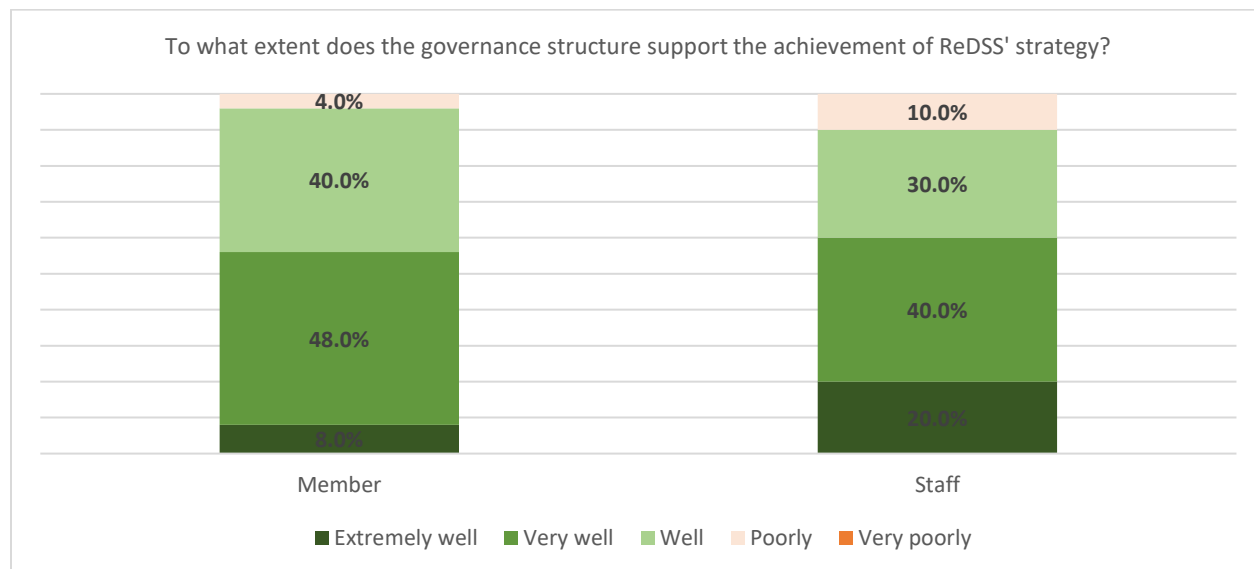


Figure 8: Survey responses to the question “To what extent does the governance structure (i.e.: regional secretariat, steering committee, membership structure, etc.) support the achievement of ReDSS’ strategy?”

To date, ReDSS’ governance structure has served it well, enabling it to achieve an extraordinary amount over its first five years. The steering committee, the role and size of the secretariat, membership composition, and the policy working group have all been highly effective. ReDSS has maintained consistently high accountability to its membership base.

The good relationship between the leadership at IRC, NRC and DRC makes the steering committee stronger. Ideally, it might be better for the steering committee to meet more frequently and take a more active role. However, this aspiration must be balanced against the reality that ReDSS is not their only priority and commitment.

The steering committee currently provides invaluable oversight and input into ReDSS’ strategy but does not involve itself so closely in specific directions and activities. This does leave a gap, where staff would sometimes appreciate more involvement. The idea of a “sounding board” was discussed – a forum where staff and members could brainstorm and test ideas. However, creating additional structures may create more confusion. Applying the same flexible approach that characterises ReDSS’ “ways of working”, staff could engage members on an informal and unofficial basis to provide such guidance and input into future plans.

Many members acknowledged that the steering committee is comprised of organisations that have refugees at the core of their mission and purpose, making ReDSS’ engagement essential to their work. In addition, continuity of membership increases the impact and efficiency of the steering committee. Consequently, and for the majority, rotation was not seen as an adapted requirement.

Finally, members are not always aware of the actual names and functions of the structures and the terminology does not seem to adequately reflect the reality. The common use of “ReDSS’ secretariat” (though secretariat is already in Regional Durable Solutions “Secretariat”) to emphasise the difference

between the secretariat and the members translates a perceived confusion between ReDSS the network and ReDSS the secretariat. However, such terminology issues are not significant nor seem to be an impediment to members' involvement.

### *DRC has had a foundational but discreet role that has enabled ReDSS' development*

DRC's role and support were essential to create a small but dedicated team, with small but predictable financing. This very flexible support allowed ReDSS to be agile and demand driven but also it protected the nascent structure from falling into a survival fundraising strategy. Such independence and support for a small secretariat has allowed ReDSS to seize opportunities, explore areas where gaps were hindering stakeholder engagement and experiment with different types of engagement. ReDSS' work and impact would not have been possible without this funding and hosting arrangement.

The relationship between ReDSS and DRC remains strong and mutually beneficial. While essential to ReDSS' creation, independence and agile strategy, DRC has managed not to appear as prominent nor prevalent.

**R** As ReDSS grows, the agreement with DRC should be revisited to address organisational management issues.

For example, the hosting arrangement may benefit from a 5 year review and discussions. As ReDSS grows with a mission essentially different from DRC's core mandate, ReDSS organisation chart and job descriptions may not necessarily fit into standard DRC staff salary scales, which has resulted in some challenges to recruit at the correct level and to sustain national staff. The hosting agreement would benefit from clarifying ReDSS' connection to the DRC HR structure, and increasing support from central functions such as finance and procurement. It's important to make these decisions strategically, engaging DRC headquarters as they address more structural issues or exceptions, with consideration for ReDSS' identity and how things might be perceived by other members.

### *With their strengthened governance, consortia structures increase ReDSS' impact and perceived usefulness*

The consortium structure in Somalia – where ReDSS and some members are committed through a contractual arrangement under the same funding and project – increased the effectiveness of ReDSS' contributions. ReDSS' role as a learning partner reaches its full potential in this context because partners under a common project share similar objectives and exchange information on a regular basis as they are “bound” to work together.

The October 2019 evaluation of that consortium<sup>3</sup> concluded that ReDSS' contribution as a learning partner added “significant value in terms of generating learning, building capacity, and creating the space for dialogue on durable solutions.” (p27)

“The inclusion of ReDSS as a learning partner added value in terms of the following: helping partners to identify lessons learned and promising practices; connecting the consortia partners to other critical durable solutions actors through their networks; building capacity among key programme stakeholders; providing guidance on durable solutions programming principles and approaches; and helping to move forward on durable solutions agenda in programme locations. Evidence generated through ReDSS research and analyses is also informing policy and practice in the programme locations.” (p14)

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<sup>3</sup> *Lessons Learned From The EU RE-INTEG Durable Solutions Consortia 2017-2020.*

With consortia, results achieved are different: quality, scale, practicality, usability and usage of ReDSS outputs by the members. These differences are largely driven by the degree of commitment derived from a contract linking the partners.

**R** Based on a successful model and where appropriate, ReDSS should use its knowledge and experience to explore opportunities to support consortia where different actors adopt a similar framework and indicators to collectively monitor and learn from each other.

Whether a consortium approach is appropriate depends on the programming landscape. To adopt the approach in Ethiopia, ReDSS would have to influence donors to accept and support it.

### 3.1.2 Adaptability of the governance structure

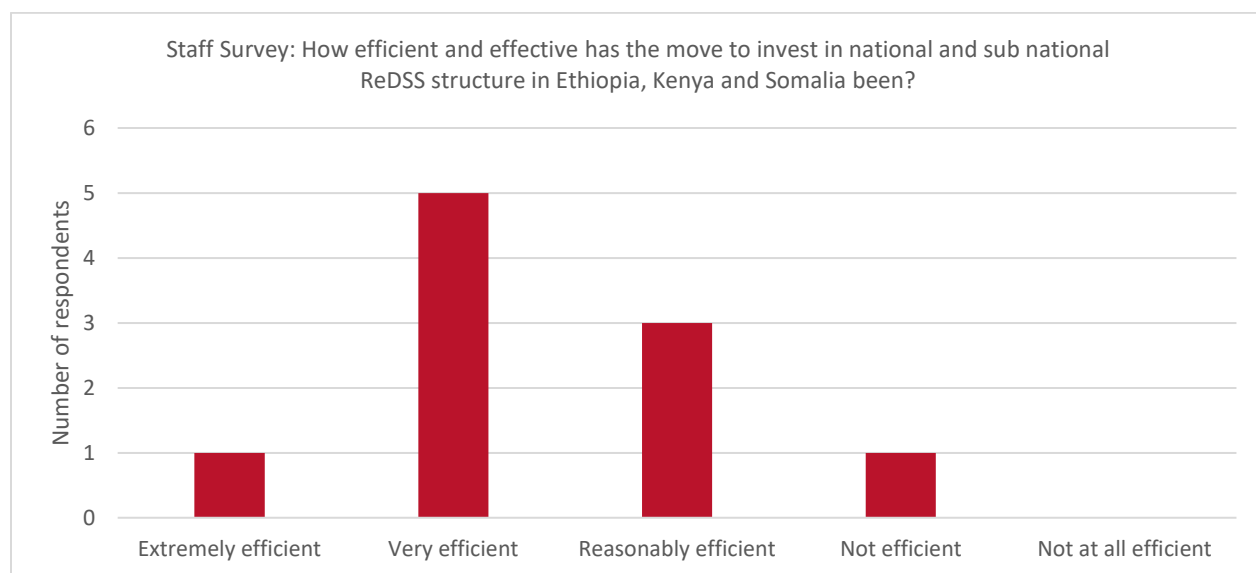


Figure 9: Staff survey responses to the question “How efficient and effective has the move to invest in national and sub national ReDSS structure in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia been?”

#### *ReDSS “country units” has responded to the demand of its members successfully and raises new questions*

ReDSS started out with a strong regional focus. Over the years, it has adapted to balance this regional outlook with local insights to respond more effectively to different situations. Expanding to have a consistent local presence through country units has enabled ReDSS to draw on the dual strengths of regional and local perspectives. The expansion and transformation towards the country-level work and structure has been welcomed and perceived as extremely relevant by all members and partners interviewed.

The shared rationale for expansion at the country level is as follows: displacement situations are different, policy environments are different, durable solutions understanding among the stakeholders are different, donor’s interests and funding are different. These differences result in a different role and fit for ReDSS in each country. In addition, in the case of Ethiopia, such expansion went further with a definite engagement at the region/county level.

Additional benefits from investing in national and subnational structures include:

- Increased visibility and appreciation for ReDSS among national and subnational actors
- The opportunity to develop more context-specific expertise and resources
- More focused and contextualised support for members and partners

- Increased engagement with local actors to leverage their local expertise and perspectives in ReDSS work.

*It is important to acknowledge that at the country level, shape drives content*

At the country level, ReDSS' role has to some extent been defined by the way it was initially set up and funded, which differs from country to country. Each country office is broadly aligned to ReDSS overarching vision and purpose, but the specifics of its activities and focus vary. The initial funding agreements and engagements create natural opportunities and constraints that influence ReDSS initial footprint and therefore reputation in each country.

For example, ReDSS' entry point into Ethiopia was with the government and UNHCR, whose focus is on policy and research. As a result, the perception of ReDSS' role is as a resource and knowledge management agency for the government and UNHCR. Local members refer to it as the "google for CRRF". This is very different from its role and reputation in Somalia, where its initial engagement emerged from the NGOs and evolved towards including support to the durable solutions government authorities.

As the creation of each ReDSS country is linked to a project description, it also defines the first degree of accountability to the project objectives and the direct project stakeholders.

These differences have created a challenge in maintaining a consistent approach between ReDSS regional and ReDSS at the country level.

**R** ReDSS should acknowledge that local relevance and agility goes hand in hand with creating different types of ReDSS in different countries. In order to maintain its identity and impact, ReDSS should continue to focus on the "how" and the "ways of working" rather than the "what" and agree to keep common to all countries only what is strictly relevant to all.

*Country level governance structures are not yet well established*

As ReDSS growth was fast and demand-driven, the governance structures at the country-level are not yet fully established. Questions remain around:

- What governance structures make sense at the country level?
- What is the best division of roles, responsibilities and decision-making between the regional and country levels?
- To what extent should governance structures be aligned, and to what extent should they be nuanced to the local context?
- How to strike the right balance between adaptation of the local context and keeping ReDSS' identity.

At the regional level, the main contribution of the steering committee is accountability rather than strategic direction. This raises further questions around whether such a structure would be valuable at the country level, or whether the country units need something more focused on engagement and the content of their work.

It is not always clear whether the regional layer is gap-filling in case of absence of clarity or structure at the country level. These issues are addressed under ReDSS management.

ReDSS staff report that country units are perceived to be "in the field", which results in vastly different expectations of what ReDSS can do and how it can support, compared to the regional office. Expectations are more intricately linked to operations. However, this view does not seem to be shared by the members and partners, who continue to see ReDSS' core role as policy and advocacy, including at the country level.



- R** As the country offices become more established, ReDSS should consider how governance arrangements can be cascaded effectively. It may seem like an obvious step to create a steering committee in each country, but this evaluation recommends not rushing to this conclusion. Rely on ReDSS’ “ways of working”; invite members to contribute and define what is optimal and feasible.
- R** As a first step, ReDSS could adopt at the country level the yearly members’ review, to discuss and agree on the workplan at the country level. This would harness further and clearer commitments from members and a build a stronger identity of the country “core group”.

## 3.2 Membership and partnerships

### 3.2.1 Membership composition

*Membership composition and size are fit-for-purpose*

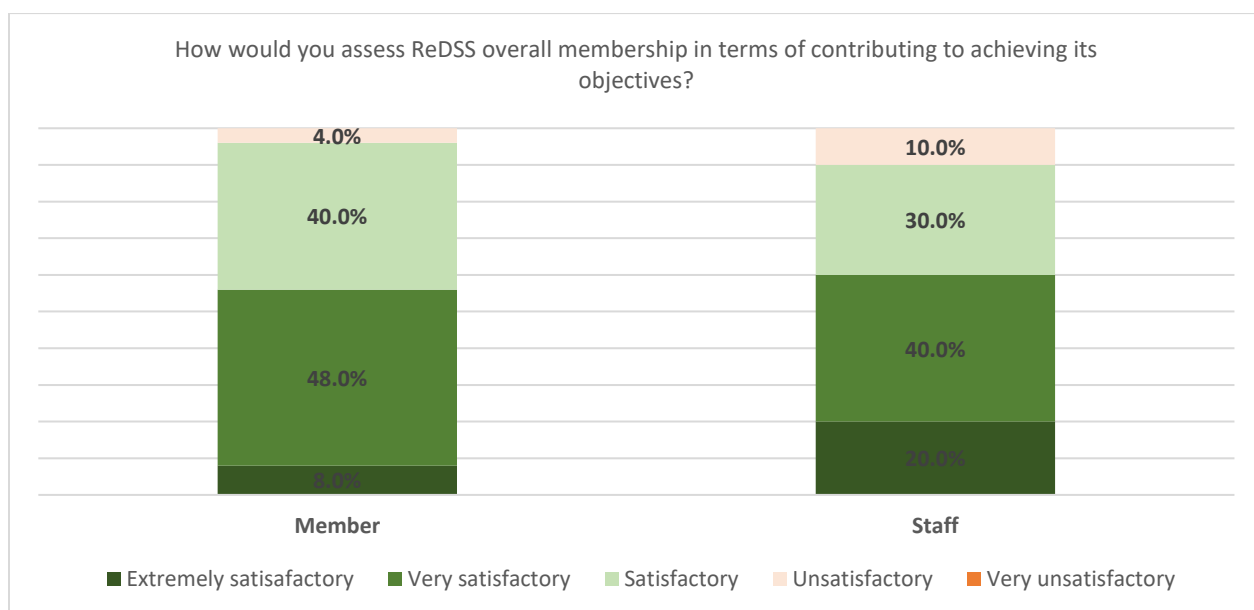


Figure 10: Survey responses to the question “How would you assess ReDSS overall membership (i.e.: number, type, complementarity of member organisations) in terms of contributing to achieving its objectives?”

At the regional level, ReDSS’ membership composition is optimised for the mission at hand. The number is large enough to offer a solid range of expertise but not so large as to preclude regular engagement and a strong sense of identity. Some members are only present in one country, and/or only engaged on one theme, but the majority have a regional presence and their interests and expertise are relevant to multiple ReDSS’ activities, pillars and thematic focus areas. This confirms that the membership is adapted to ReDSS’ vision and scope.

Table 2: Members mapped by region and country

Organisations	ReDSS Regional	ReDSS Somalia	ReDSS Ethiopia	ReDSS Kenya
DRC	Red	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Light Grey
IRC	Red	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Light Grey
NRC	Red	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Light Grey
Save the Children	Red	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Light Grey
Care	Red	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Light Grey
World Vision	Red	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Light Grey
Concern World Wide	Red	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Light Grey
Lutheran World Federation	Red	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Light Grey
INTERMOS	Red	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Light Grey
Mercy Corps	Red	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Light Grey
Oxfarm	Red	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Light Grey
ACTED	Red	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Light Grey
RCK	Red	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Light Grey
ACF	Red	Dark Grey	Dark Grey	Light Grey
ADESO		Dark Grey		
AFSC		Dark Grey		
BRCIS		Dark Grey		
CESVI		Dark Grey		
Centre for Peace and Democracy		Dark Grey		
EIDACS		Dark Grey		
DSP		Dark Grey		
DDG		Dark Grey		
GREDO		Dark Grey		
Juba Foundation		Dark Grey		
Mercy-USA		Dark Grey		
REACH		Dark Grey		Light Grey
Saferworld		Dark Grey		
Safe Somali Women and Children		Dark Grey		
Somali NGO Consortium		Dark Grey		
SHADCO		Dark Grey		
TASCO		Dark Grey		
Tralac Tech/WYG		Dark Grey		
JSC		Dark Grey		
GOAL			Dark Grey	
ZOA			Dark Grey	
Taakulo (Jijiga)			Dark Grey	
DCA			Dark Grey	
NCA			Dark Grey	
MSF			Dark Grey	Light Grey
Danish Red Cross			Dark Grey	
International Federation of Red Cross			Dark Grey	
ICRC			Dark Grey	
CVT			Dark Grey	Light Grey
Christian Children's Fund of Canada			Dark Grey	
Islamic Relief Ethiopia			Dark Grey	
Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Associations			Dark Grey	
Ethiopian Red Cross Society			Dark Grey	
RADO			Dark Grey	
OWDA			Dark Grey	
FH Ethiopia			Dark Grey	
Impact Initiatives			Dark Grey	
ICVA			Dark Grey	
CRS			Dark Grey	
Amnesty International				Light Grey
TDH				Light Grey
Forced Migration				Light Grey
Humanity and Inclusion				Light Grey
Village Enterprise				Light Grey

There are divided views on the need to open the membership to different types of organisations.

A small number of interviewees proposed opening the membership to UN agencies and donors. Multi-stakeholder engagement is widely acknowledged as one of ReDSS' core strengths. However, the majority of people heard did not see how membership would further improve this multi-stakeholder discussion. They raised the risk of diluting the identity and making consensus much harder to reach because of diverging expectations. There would also be considerable risk in having donors and funded organisations at the same table for all discussions. It opens the door to competitiveness, which would bias conversations that need to be remained focused on substance.

Similarly, a small number of interviewees proposed opening the membership to more development-focused actors, as currently the balance leans heavily towards a humanitarian focus. This suggestion has merit, however it might prove detrimental to ReDSS' overall effectiveness as again, and expectations vary considerably. The viewpoints of ReDSS' members who are already engaged in development activities is quite clear and aligned: the work is different and requires different types of support. For instance, from their perspective, the "lessons" on durable solutions are less relevant than the policy impact, whereas members with a stronger humanitarian focus see more value in the operational guidance.

### *As ReDSS moves to country-level engagement, membership must localise further*

The introduction of "ReDSS+" at the country level has provided the flexibility to work with all NGOs engaged in durable solutions. Such a comprehensive network has become key for ReDSS to leverage from and share information. Innovations like ReDSS+ have precisely responded to the rapid expansion and have worked relatively well in the transition.

With country-level engagements becoming the priority, membership lacks the local perspective. This has been successfully addressed through "ReDSS+" but needs to be translated into specific country membership. Formal membership would be specifically beneficial in terms of advocacy, which is an area where the role of local NGOs is critical.

**R** Supported unanimously, ReDSS should expand the membership locally by the inclusion of 3-4 international and local NGOs particularly active on durable solutions, specific to each country. A 75% (existing members with a regional scope)/25% (country specific) ratio is suggested. Each country will thus have different "core group" members. This ratio would strike the right balance between achieving county relevance and preserving ReDSS' overarching identity.

### *Use of logo and sign off practices reflect ReDSS' ability to assess member sensitivity effectively*

Originally, thoughts were that the sign off procedures and use of ReDSS logo vs. ReDSS member logos needed to be clarified. However, throughout discussions, members see the flexibility and lack of prescriptive procedures as a real asset for ReDSS to strike the right balance between a "common voice on behalf" and a "catalyst" to progress durable solutions.

### 3.2.2 Membership contribution

*Though members' contribution is uneven, this can be turned into an advantage*

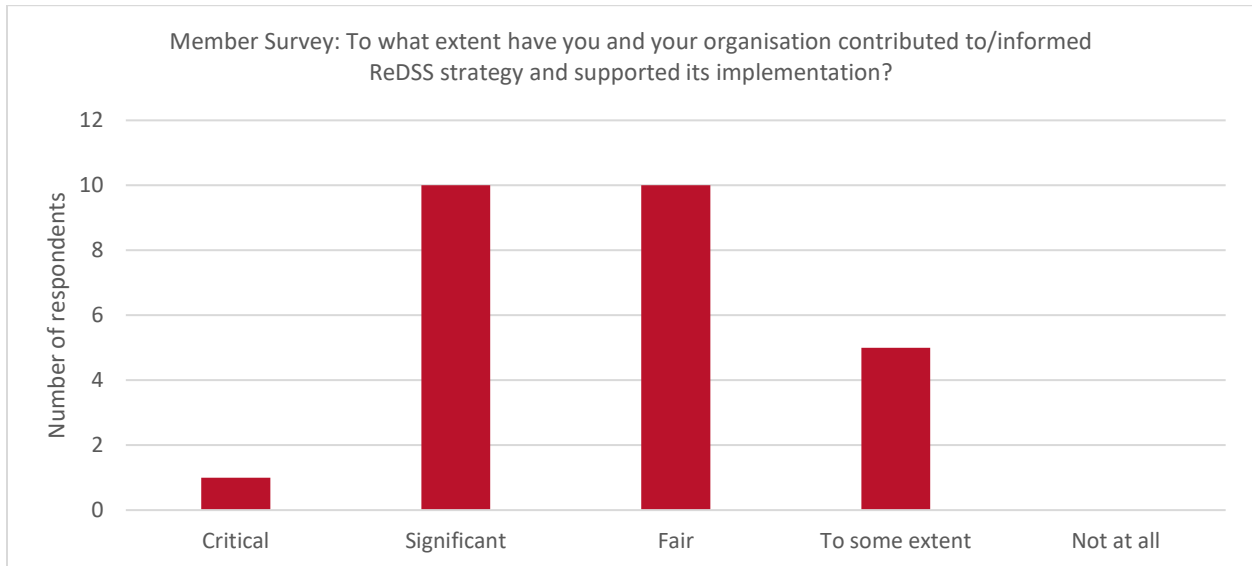


Figure 11: ReDSS member survey responses to the question "To what extent have you and your organisation contributed to/informed ReDSS strategy and supported its implementation?"

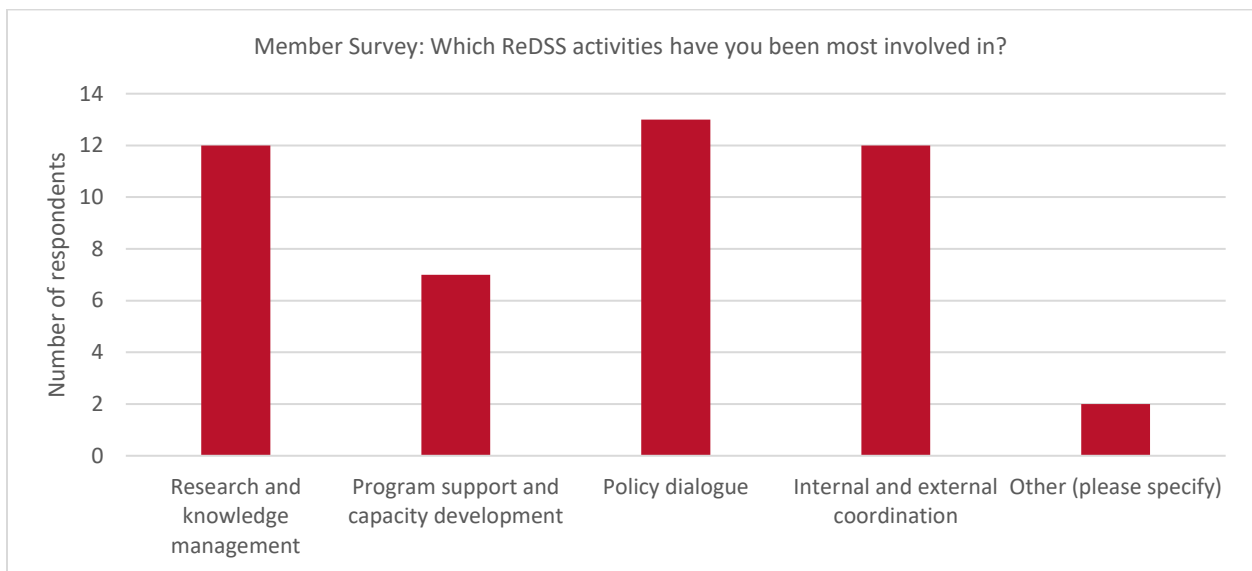


Figure 12: ReDSS member survey responses to the question "Which ReDSS activities have you been most involved in? (Select all that apply)"

There is a natural ebb and flow to member engagement. Depending on their resources and priorities at the time, members might choose to engage more or less in different areas of ReDSS work at different times. This ebb and flow has sometimes been raised as a cause for concern, but it shouldn't necessarily be viewed as such.

Most members interviewed wanted to dedicate more time and resources to ReDSS' work but could not. It is inevitable that staff turnover and competing priorities will sometimes draw members' attention away.

However, one of ReDSS' key strengths is its ability to engage members and leverage their expertise. It has a remarkably connected and committed membership base; and it represents all its members equally, regardless of their size. One of the benefits of ReDSS' inclusive approach to coordination is that there is always space for members to step back into the conversation when they are ready and able.

ReDSS' focus allows the conversation about durable solutions to progress, even as individual members step in and out of it. Without ReDSS, it would not be possible for members to build consistent progress in this space.

### *Members' contribution is essential and can be further showcased*

Members have sometimes felt their contribution is not sufficiently recognised and promoted by ReDSS; or that ReDSS is too critical of them.

When it comes to public recognition, ReDSS has to maintain a delicate balance, as members are sometimes in competition with one another for funding. ReDSS has been successful at not being seen to favour or promote one member over another. This is why ReDSS has made the very sensible decision not to have a formal system for promoting member expertise in a particular space. Such a system would be too rigid, and potentially stoke rivalries.

As an alternative, ReDSS could further increase informal endorsement of members' expertise and contributions. For example, by inviting members to speak at relevant conferences, as has been done on occasion in the past. This type of approach is flexible enough for ReDSS to pivot depending which members currently have the expertise and resources to contribute.



ReDSS should proactively identify ways to publicly, but informally, endorse and promote members.

### *Member expertise could be leveraged further*

At the country level, country units use a matrix to document members' expertise and focus. This helps staff understand and share information about members, to identify further opportunities for involvement and advice. A similar matrix could be implemented at the regional level on a voluntary basis. ReDSS should make this a systematic practice however, while pursuing with the same approach. When fundraising, members are de facto in competition and a document clearly stating which organisation has a comparative advantage over the others may create more tensions than benefits.



Member expertise should be further leveraged and promoted with a focus on the process rather than locked in a document which would raise sensitivities.

## 3.2.3 Membership accountability

### *Membership accountability is uneven but not an impediment*

One of ReDSS' strengths is that it *inspires* people to be involved, instead of *mandating* their involvement. ReDSS truly is a coalition of the willing.

For many reasons, some members are committed and very active and others less so. It varies across members, time, countries and themes. It can be due to the presence of regional offices, high turn-over in some agencies, and competing priorities.

A number of stakeholders suggested that ReDSS should start requiring a certain level of member involvement, with an implication of consequences for members who do not comply. This might take the form of a contractual agreement. There are a number of disadvantages to this suggestion. First, it will take considerable resources to implement, for questionable benefit. For such a system to be fair and effective

it would need to have detailed criteria, monitoring, and consistent consequences. Second, it will undermine the excellent relationships ReDSS currently holds with its members. A step from a relational approach to a transactional approach is a step backwards. Third, not all members are created equal. Different members can contribute different things at different times. An equal system will necessarily be unfair.

Conversely, there would be benefit in documenting the *principles* of how ReDSS creates and maintains its relationship with members. For example, the importance of inclusiveness and impartiality. It's critical that such a document not be prescriptive. Maintain flexibility.

### *Members do require more Individualised commitments*


Currently, ReDSS member criteria are in fact commitments, rather than criteria. While both seem to be required, members would like to see more one-on-one engagement.

This request has a context and a purpose. First, without further tailoring of such engagement, there is a risk of meeting fatigue. All members do not have the same level, range and degree of needs and expectations. Second, individualised commitments would increase member engagement and help them focus their level of effort to contribute to ReDSS' work more effectively. For ReDSS, a more nuanced approach would also help the secretariat better understand member expectations, priorities and what they want to gain from their involvement.

For most members interviewed, ReDSS' engagement is a resource dilemma: to make ReDSS more relevant and efficient for them, they need to dedicate more resources to work with ReDSS. ReDSS can help resolve this dilemma by making the definition of each member's engagement more efficient and tailored to their needs and capacity. ReDSS already applies this practice to an extent, but it could be improved.

An individualised approach also allows members to come forward with their expertise to showcase their lessons and continue to invest their resources according to their priorities.

By being more specific, communication channels can also be made more effective. Instead of large mailing lists, targeted communications can better engage the concerned officers and increase accountability.

 Where there is an appropriate alignment of priorities, engage each member separately to develop a personalised accountability framework on a bilateral basis, confirmed at the work plan annual meeting. This approach would allow more comprehensive WP where activities are co-led by the members.

### 3.2.4 Partnerships

#### *Partnerships deliver significant mutual benefits*

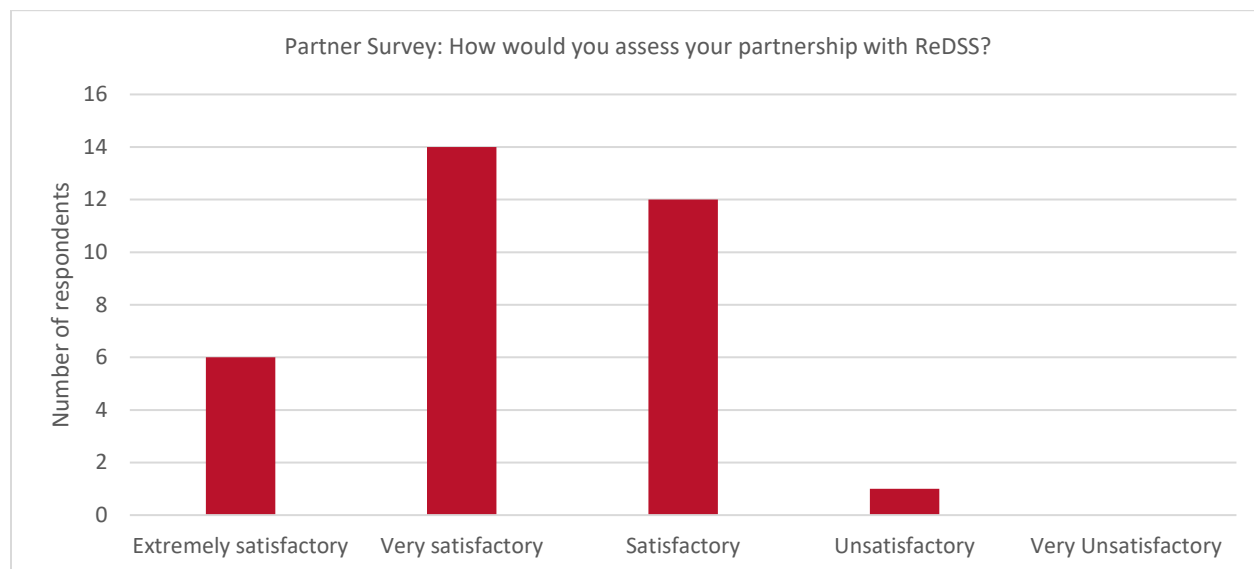


Figure 13: ReDSS partner survey responses to the question "How would you assess your partnership with ReDSS?"

For partners, ReDSS provides a single point of entry for civil society engagement. Donors, UN Agencies and regional organisations recognise the benefit of broad consultation with multiple actors, but the reality can be costly and cumbersome to implement. Working with ReDSS simplifies and expedites this process, because ReDSS speaks as a representative of its broad membership base. As a result, ReDSS often has a “seat at the table” in meetings and situations that would not be open to a single NGO.

Furthermore, this process is constructive and creates a real space for dialogue. There are very few fora where donors, research institutions, UN bodies, and NGOs come together. ReDSS therefore provides a unique opportunity for partners to listen but also disseminate their strategies.

For ReDSS, its direct access to donors and other partners is a clear benefit it can deliver to its members. Via ReDSS, members can have a voice in meetings and situations they might not otherwise be able to influence. ReDSS work with partners has also generated funding, attention, joint studies and many other externalities.

ReDSS has skilfully leveraged this advantage to improve outcomes for displacement-affected communities. It has sensitised donors to the benefits of durable solutions, and kept them abreast of developments in the region. In many contexts, ReDSS has ensured that policy dialogue with donors is not one individual NGO lobbying for funding, but rather a collective working towards common goals.

#### *Sometimes the focus on partners has been at the expense of members*

From a government or a donor perspective, ReDSS is the ideal partner to manage the civil society engagement. They describe ReDSS as “best at outreach” because it brings a unified voice, deep insight, and many learnings from the civil society and implementation level.

It has also taken a lot of resources and attention from ReDSS and there is an emerging view that partnerships have been too prominent at the expenses of member engagement. Some members have also referred to the decrease in showcasing their successes.

### 3.3 ReDSS' management

#### 3.3.1 Organisational management

##### *ReDSS is highly efficient*

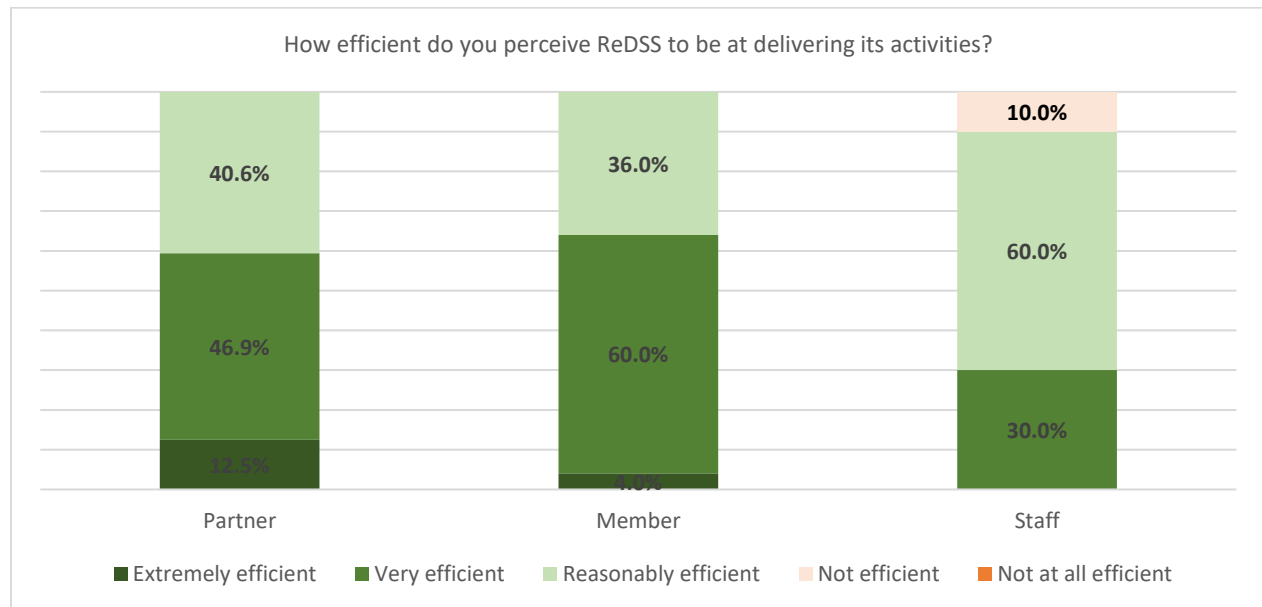


Figure 14: Survey responses to the question "How efficient do you perceive ReDSS to be at delivering its activities?"

ReDSS' small, passionate team is a powerhouse of productivity. Staff's willingness to step in and support each other across units is one of the key success factors that has enabled the organisation to sustain its momentum. Cost are kept low. Synergies and co-funding are always a component of ReDSS' projects, which allows ReDSS to deliver a lot under a small budget.

ReDSS engages in research through joint studies, joint learning events or training, and convinces different donors to support a single effort. Joint donor funding ensures value of money and joint ownership of the outcomes. Through rigorous accountabilities, ReDSS manages to increase the level of quality assurances and therefore improve the quality of the products.

One occasion, ReDSS does have a tendency to overpromise, which can lead to a perception that it is "slow". In the strategy section, the evaluation covers the need to further focus in details.

##### *ReDSS has a mild version of "founder syndrome"*

Founder syndrome is the difficulty faced by organisations where one or more founders' footprint and dependence is still significant following the effective initial establishment of the organisation, leading to growth management issues. The passion and charisma of the founder(s), sources of the initial creativity, productivity and reputation of the organisation, becomes a limiting factor as the organisation grows.

In the case of ReDSS, the personality of the second and longest lasting regional coordinator is reflected in the "ways of working", the network and partnerships ReDSS has built. The steering committee and staff are aware of this risk and have begun to address it. For example, through the evolution of the roles of the country unit manager.

The following sections describes how to further inoculate against founder syndrome by formalising and documenting some of ReDSS key principles, systems and processes. While these efforts are necessary and



will translate the early successes in institutional strength, one also need to accept that each coordinator will bring his or her own leadership which will affect ReDSS direction.

### *The “ways of working” are widely embraced, but not explicit enough*

ReDSS’ culture of collaboration and commitment is fostered by senior management at the regional and country levels and is a substantial factor of its success.

Its “ways of working” define ReDSS:

- **Agile and responsive:** Staff are open to suggestions and new ideas and able to follow up on joint initiatives, funding, research and events, even if not part of the workplan. This has been one of the primary drivers for ReDSS’ work program and was a key contribution to its success.
- **Participatory:** ReDSS is committed to keeping its door open, not only in theory but in practice. ReDSS proactively ensures all participants have a voice.
- **Inclusive:** It is a mark of ReDSS’ success that it has managed to turn a somewhat abstract principle into action. It brings a wide range of stakeholders to the same table, event, training, etc. and has never been seen to favour one member over another.
- **Eager to share:** ReDSS is the exact opposite of “information is power”. All ReDSS products are online, which by extension invites members and partners to contribute rather than compete. ReDSS is a beacon of knowledge sharing.
- **Collaborative:** ReDSS has managed to implement this principle systematically and now does not engage in a learning initiative unless it has multiple partners and funding.
- **Positive:** ReDSS is solutions-oriented and its agility is an extension of its staff’s eagerness to find solutions, adapt and focus on making things happen.

The “ways of working” are enthusiastically embraced and embedded in ReDSS’ culture, but not clearly defined nor sufficiently documented. Without more formal reinforcement, there is a real risk these principles might become diluted as the organisation continues to grow. There is a need for more practical guidance and formal communication around what ReDSS “ways of working” means in different contexts. ReDSS needs to exemplify these principles, anchoring them in what it means when designing and running activities.



ReDSS should articulate and document the “ways of working”. Creatively, ReDSS could make induction into the “ways of working”, with practical examples from each of ReDSS pillars, part of the onboarding process for new partners, members and staff.

### *As ReDSS expands, it needs to formalise and streamline more of its systems and processes*

The informal, ad hoc approach that served to make ReDSS nimble in its early years will become an impediment as it grows. Processes need to adjust to serve a larger organisation, which is now effectively comprised of four small teams who are not co-located.

Division of responsibility between managers, regional and country staff; who owns different decisions; and reporting lines are all poorly defined. The salary bands do not fit DRC structures. This breeds confusion and inefficiency. Sometimes staff do not feel they have the autonomy to do their jobs effectively, or decisions are delayed because there is a lack of clarity about who is authorised to make them.

Communication and internal knowledge sharing is another area that needs attention. People openly collaborate and willingly share information across the organisation, but formal lines of communication are not always strong, resulting in overwhelming inboxes and some inefficiencies. An overreliance on email is cumbersome and causes email fatigue. At the same time, staff have started to feel the

compartmentalisation between country units, and are not always able to identify and act on optimal linkages. Several improvements have recently been implemented, including:

- SharePoint as a knowledge sharing hub
- New norms about what and when information should be shared via email, with some things being combined into a weekly update email, or moved to other platforms like WhatsApp
- Weekly coordination meetings.

This has reduced email traffic and associated fatigue, and enabled everyone to stay in the loop of each other's work and priorities and identify opportunities for synergies.

- R** ReDSS should invest in developing and implementing:
  - A clear responsibility matrix
  - More structured internal coordination
  - Templates and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the most frequent activities (training, workshops, meetings)
  - HR structures such as position descriptions with clearly defined reporting lines.

### 3.3.2 Interaction between regional and country levels

#### *Internal coordination and cross-country learning need to be better structured*

ReDSS has expanded, seizing opportunities, leveraging different funding and responding to the needs of different situations. The organisation's structure evolved organically as the country units were created.

At times, it became difficult for staff to feel part of the same team and identify the linkages between their work programs. This has been especially difficult for staff based at sub-national level, for whom the ways of working, requests for ReDSS, etc. are extremely different than at the regional level.

Working relationships between regional and country levels are steadily improving. This has been achieved through regular coordination calls; identifying unofficial technical leads in particular areas amongst the team; and by supporting each unit with its specific issues.

When relevant in two countries, ReDSS needs to identify synergies between its country programs. Twin country units could identify and develop activities jointly and exchange on their level of implementation. Many sub-themes of the area-based model could be worked in parallel between Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia, especially as in both cases, staff are working closely to local government. In addition to the weekly management meeting, ReDSS could consider a more strategic monthly discussion on issues arising, specifically and explicitly looking at linkages between the country programs. As this work progresses, regional funding may be accessible to further support this cross-learning and comparative work.

There is also an opportunity to strengthen and formalise learning between the country units. Staff would appreciate channels for communicating what has worked and what hasn't, success factors and achievements. Importantly, this should focus on the "how" rather than the "what".

- R** The working relationship between regional and country level could be improved through having common agendas and co-funded initiatives that cut across the three countries. In addition to the weekly management meeting, ReDSS could consider a monthly strategic meeting focused on the linkages between the country programs.

- R** With its unique vantage point, ReDSS' regional should make it a learning priority to identify what lessons from one country can be relevant for the other two.

### 3.3.3 Organisation skillset

#### *ReDSS' staff are respected experts in durable solutions*

ReDSS' staff are leading global experts in durable solutions, with deep knowledge in how to combine policy dialogue and research to promote durable solutions. Stakeholders appreciate ReDSS' skills and capability in:

- Unifying diverse actors behind a single concept or perspective
- Amplifying members' voices to influence donors and government policy
- Providing relevant and useful research to inform directions and decisions
- Training and capacity development.

These strengths are the foundation of ReDSS' enduring impact on durable solutions.

Whether ReDSS has the right skills and capacity to achieve its future strategy is a more complex question, because it depends how ReDSS sees its role evolving into the future. Internal staff and external stakeholders are not aligned on this.

Some staff believe ReDSS should take a step towards increasing its focus on program support. This view is not always shared by members and partners, who see it as outside of ReDSS' remit and beyond the scope where it can deliver significant benefit. The terminology – program support – would need to be clearly defined as it is understood differently within ReDSS.

If ReDSS were to decide to move further into the program support space, it would need to recruit people with the right expertise and experience. This would need to be well targeted, as it is comprised of multiple, highly specialised sub-sectors. Some people spend their whole career focusing in just one sub-sector.

A number of members and partners raised the need for ReDSS to do more in the area of quantitative data for displacement-affected populations. If it decides to meet this request, ReDSS will have to expand its skillset on M&E and quantitative data analysis.

**R** ReDSS should retain its guiding role and maximise on the expertise of its members whose strengths cuts across indicators, policy, and program support to enable technical expertise to be shared across the membership and between countries.

#### *Outsourcing technical expertise is the right strategy*

By outsourcing activities requiring more technical expertise, ReDSS protects its agility. This structure enables the organisation to pivot its attention in response to emerging situations and member needs.



### 3.3.4 Monitoring and evaluation

#### *The monitoring and evaluation system is not fit for purpose*

ReDSS' M&E appears to have been developed largely in response to its funders. Different funders have different requirements, and the system has evolved and adapted to meet those requirements. The result is something quite cumbersome, which is serving external reporting requirements but not delivering value to ReDSS internally. Staff report that they input their data because they want to “do the right thing”, not because they see any value in M&E outputs.

The current system lacks coherence and clarity. It is often unclear what to report on and why. There is no standard definition for indicators, so different country units will report on different things. The nature of the work in Ethiopia means ReDSS Ethiopia doesn't use some of the indicators at all, as they are not

relevant. There is an overemphasis on reporting the training indicator, and insufficient attention on other key indicators that could provide valuable insights into ReDSS' critical success factors and impact. As we now know that ReDSS has a tremendous impact policy and leverages the interaction between the pillars, it is going to be essential to measure, document and understand such impact and synergies. There is no master framework linking the objective of each pillar to outcomes and then to outputs. Many indicators lack targets, so it is difficult to tell whether the organisation is achieving its objectives as the numbers have no context.

-  ReDSS should develop a simplified, centralised, adapted M&E tool that provides useful outputs in the form of a dashboard and monthly reports which help inform internal management and organisational learning (i.e. macro logframe). This should be explicitly linked to the strategy and include clearly defined indicators with targets.
-  As ReDSS impact on policy is now evidenced, it is essential for ReDSS to reflect and put in place a system to document, measure and understand its impact - a simplified, centralised, adapted M&E tool.


### 3.3.5 Communication

#### *Communication needs to be more strategic*

ReDSS communicates prolifically but does not always make strategic choices about the best communication channel and style for different audiences and different types of information. In interviews, internal staff and members both reported an over reliance on emails and meetings, which creates fatigue and can contribute to disengagement.


In response to this challenge, ReDSS recently commissioned a comprehensive communications review<sup>4</sup>, the output of which was a lengthy and convoluted report containing 25 very detailed recommendations on an ambitious timeline. While the communications review contained some useful observations and suggestions, implementation in its current form does not seem feasible, nor would the predicted benefits justify such a significant investment of time and resources.

To be useful, the communications review findings need to be simplified and the recommendations prioritised. Ideally, ReDSS would be able to identify 3 to 5 straightforward actions it could take to increase the impact of its communications and/or streamline processes to reduce the time burden of communications on staff.

-  Based on the communication evaluation, ReDSS should focus on a small number of simple, actionable recommendations.

#### *M&E of communications should be integrated*

The comprehensive communications review recommends establishing a separate communications M&E framework. However, M&E for communications should not be considered in isolation from the broader M&E framework. One of the key challenges with ReDSS' overarching approach to M&E is the disjointed and organic way it was developed. Addressing communications M&E separately risks exacerbating this challenge. The framework should be re-designed holistically, not piecemeal.

-  Communications indicators and targets should be incorporated into the overarching M&E framework when it is developed.

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<sup>4</sup> *Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat Communications Audit (Carolina Kern, August 2020).*

*The website provides value, but it's difficult to know how much*

The 2019 ReDSS Analytics Report shows that in 2019, 6,331 users accessed the website. On average, each user remained on the site for almost three minutes, and visited 2.1 pages. Most came from direct channel or organic search. In key informant interviews for this evaluation, members reported that they value the tools and frameworks published on the website. This implies that the website provides value, but without benchmarks and targets, it is difficult to know how much.

Similarly, MailChimp data shows that about a quarter of people *often* open and click on e-alerts, and a further 17% *sometimes* do. This implies that ReDSS' contacts see value in the emails, but without benchmarks and targets, it is difficult to know how much.

Although the comprehensive communications review did not provide detailed insights into these analytics, moving forward, it would be useful to have specific targets for the level and type of website and email engagement ReDSS should be aiming for.



The website and MailChimp analytics should directly feed into the M&E framework, with documented benchmarks for engagement, email campaigns, etc. to help inform targets and strategy.

### 3.4 Role of ReDSS

#### Stakeholders understand ReDSS' role

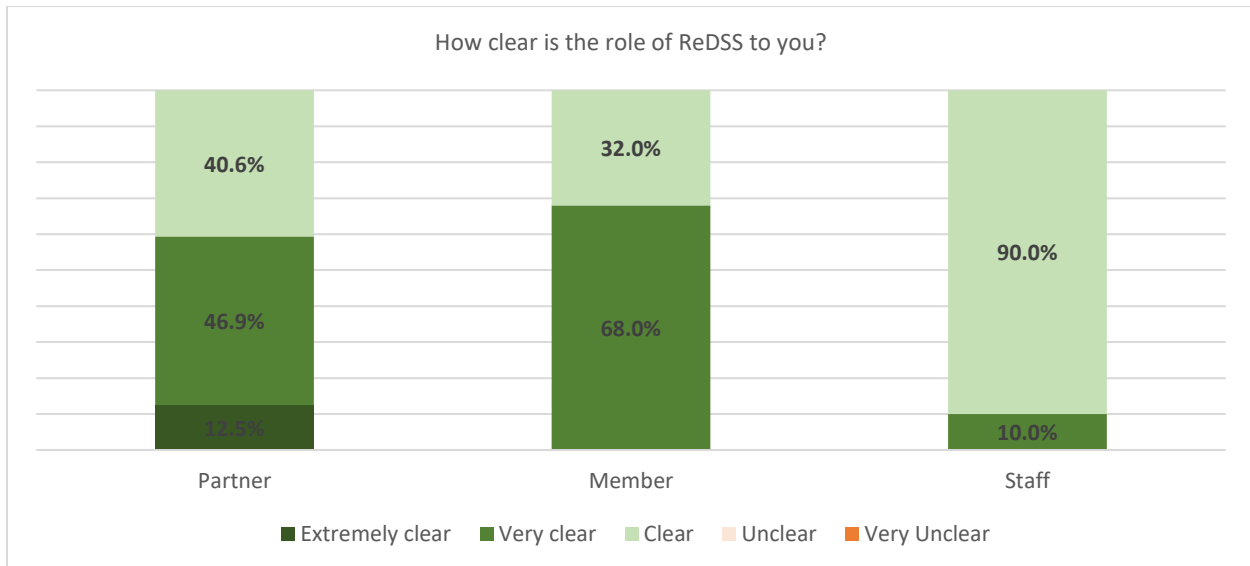


Figure 15: Partner, member and staff responses to the question "How clear is the role of ReDSS to you?"

Most stakeholders – members and partners – have sufficient clarity about who ReDSS is and what it does. Depending on the level and type of engagement, this understanding might vary, but usually not to the detriment of ReDSS' work and relationships. There is a broadly shared understanding of ReDSS as a convening, research and policy body that progresses the durable solutions agenda. To some extent, it is natural that different stakeholders will have different perceptions of ReDSS work, depending on their own agenda and priorities. However, there are some confusions. The word "ReDSS" is understood as the network though it contains the word "secretariat" and the word "secretariat" is understood as the staff. Similarly, "core group" is used to define the members. Also, members often don't know the role and responsibilities of different bodies, and simply refer to "meetings". This is not a major issue, but the reality and perceptions have diverted from the initial choice of words.



ReDSS needs to make choices. Stakeholders' understanding of ReDSS' role could be further improved by adopting more consistent use of language. For example, the term "secretariat" is sometimes used to mean "ReDSS staff", while "core group" is used to mean "members".

#### ReDSS' role has evolved and expanded over time

ReDSS was initially created as a coordination and information hub; a body to motivate sustained attention and momentum on durable solutions for displacement-affected communities. This remains core to its purpose and identity.

Over the years, ReDSS' role has adapted in response to changing circumstances. The organisation's focus has progressed, continually building on its past successes to continue driving the organisation forward. When ReDSS was first established, durable solutions was neither widely recognised nor embraced. At best, it was seen as an "add on" to NGOs' core work. Now, it is an integrated component of humanitarian and development programming in the region.

The scope of ReDSS' influence has steadily increased. It has broadened its engagement beyond NGOs to include UN agencies, donors (both humanitarian and development), and other entities such as IGAD.

The range of ReDSS activities has also expanded, starting as a coordination and training platform, it has evolved into credible research producer, developed frameworks to assess durable solutions and impact, became part of operational projects and continued to progress the policy dialogue in East and Horn of Africa. Though not unclear, the role has definitely expanded.

*ReDSS maintains a delicate balance between a “facilitator” and a “catalyst”*

There are a number of paradoxes inherent to ReDSS’ role and objectives. ReDSS skilfully manages these contradictions, with the result that it is widely respected and supported.

As a membership body, ReDSS has a responsibility to represent its members and to a large extent its identity is intrinsically interlinked with theirs. But to engage in policy dialogue effectively, especially in such a politically sensitive area, ReDSS must be perceived as neutral and credible. ReDSS deftly straddles this apparent contradiction, relying on the integrity of its evidence base and the strength of its relationships.

*ReDSS can continue to define what it is and what it is not*

As the organisation grows, it is increasingly pulled in all directions. More stakeholders means more diverging demands and expectations. It is becoming ever more important for ReDSS to clearly define what it is and what it is not.

As a small, co-located team it was relatively straightforward to maintain a shared sense of identity. As a larger team, spread over multiple offices, that identity is at risk of fragmenting. Without role clarity, it is difficult for ReDSS to make strategic decisions about which activities and opportunities to pursue, and there is a temptation to try and be all things to all people. The table below is intended to act as a catalyst for this conversation and for ReDSS and its members to challenge and agree upon their final version. Note that more clearly defining its role shouldn’t prevent ReDSS from continuing to evolve and adapt. At each strategic review, this definition should be tabled for consideration and revision.

Table 3: What ReDSS is and is not

What ReDSS is	What ReDSS is not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A network of NGOs who want to focus on durable solutions and a secretariat to support the work of the network</li> <li>• A convener</li> <li>• A small team, regional and at country level in 3 countries</li> <li>• Commissions targeted research</li> <li>• Curates the knowledge on durable solutions</li> <li>• Facilitates and engages in policy dialogue</li> <li>• But is also the “catalyst” for new discussions</li> <li>• Is a safe space for difficult conversations</li> <li>• Focused on durable solutions</li> <li>• Open to any stakeholder involved in durable solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An implementing agency</li> <li>• Involved in operations on the ground</li> <li>• Global</li> <li>• A consulting company selling services on durable solutions</li> <li>• A research think-tank with dedicated research programs</li> <li>• Able nor mandated to cover all areas related to forced displacement</li> <li>• Doing what its members can do</li> <li>• A restricted club of selected members</li> <li>• Favouring any member in particular</li> <li>• An easily defined organisation, that fits a clear box</li> </ul>

**R** As a starting point for developing its next strategy, ReDSS should continue to define what it is and what it is not.

## 4 Key Findings: Strategy and achievements

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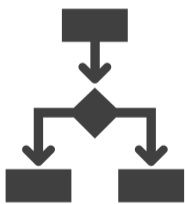
Policy dialogue is ReDSS' central strength and the area where it achieves its most significant impact.



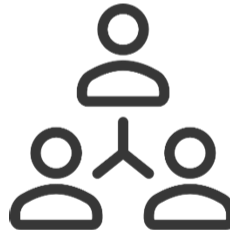
The quality of its **learning events** and artefacts has made ReDSS an increasingly respected and credible voice.



The high level strategy is strong. It needs to be operationalised, to become the guide for day-to-day activities and prioritisation.



**Themes** have expanded to the point where they are not focused. Fewer themes will be more effective.



ReDSS is unusually skilled at **bringing people together**.



ReDSS has become a trusted and reliable source of **research** on durable solutions.

Figure 16: Summary of key findings on strategy and achievements



## 4.1 ReDSS Strategy

### 4.1.1 High-level document

*ReDSS' strategy is conceptually sound, relevant and realistic*

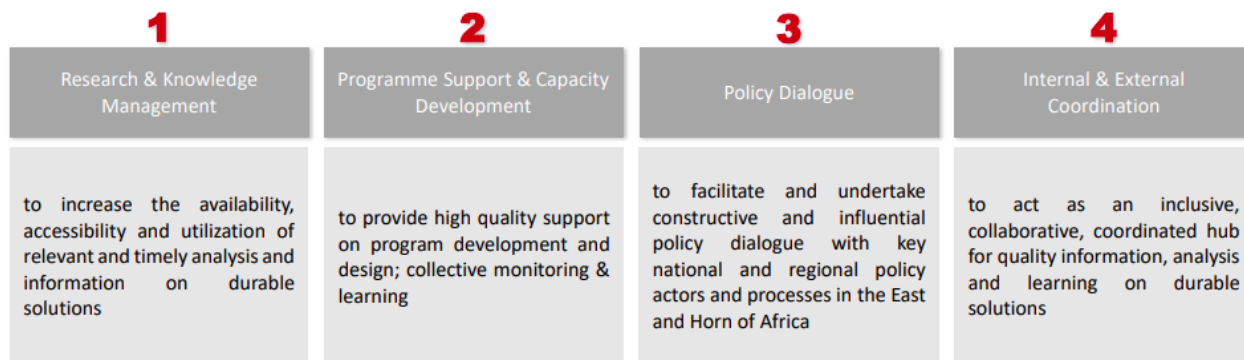


Figure 17: ReDSS strategic pillars, as defined in ReDSS' 2020 Strategy

The overarching strategy document clearly articulates ReDSS' identity, role and purpose. It is written in concise and accessible but conceptual language, making it a document many stakeholders can easily understand.

This strategy has served ReDSS well, as demonstrated by the outstanding outcomes ReDSS has achieved. It has been flexible enough for ReDSS to adapt and operate effectively in a broad, complex, fast-moving area; and consistent enough that ReDSS has made steady progress.

*Unfortunately, it is not widely utilised and is perceived as the secretariat strategy*

The strategy is a useful document, but it is very broad and high level. Linkages between the strategy and ReDSS' day to day activities are unclear, particularly at the country level. ReDSS also has regional and country-specific research and policy strategies; and is currently working on a capacity development strategy. However, the linkages between these sub-strategies and the overarching strategy are also unclear.

Staff rarely use the strategy as a reference or guiding factor to help structure activities or priorities. This is partly because it is not sufficiently nuanced to the local differences in each country unit. Setting clear priorities and focused activities has been an ongoing challenge for ReDSS. The strategy is not designed to be easily implemented. It contains objectives but is not detailed in terms of outcomes and outputs and does not mainstream the priorities into the pillars. This makes it complicated to translate into a strategic yearly workplan with clear linkages to the overall strategy. A macro logframe or similar tool would fill the gap between the high-level strategy and the activities.

Furthermore, most members do not feel a strong sense of ownership or responsibility for the strategy. They see it belonging to the secretariat.

**R** ReDSS has well defined its approach and culture. For the next strategy, it needs to take a step further into linking activities to its successful approach by making the strategy the assumed choice of priorities and by managing it with a reliable Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system.

## 4.1.2 Main objective and focus

### *Its main objective and focus needs to expand agenda setting to practical guidance on “what works”*

If ReDSS wants to not only be a forum for learning but more, it needs to adopt a stronger operational focus while maintaining its clear “no implementing agency” identity. While ReDSS has accumulated unprecedented knowledge about durable solutions, this has not permeated to all members equally. Some have a partial view of such knowledge, some have only a basic awareness and some perceive it as too conceptual, at the “agenda setting level”. While all members see the value of ReDSS’ work by its impact on policy, they are ready for more, though from different perspectives:

- Some members need a faster, shorter path to knowledge
- Some members require a more practical translation of the knowledge
- Some members want to know what they should stop doing
- Some members are ready to change their program if provided evidence on what works.

**R** While ReDSS needs to continue its good work on policy dialogue, it also needs to better define how the strategy can serve the members’ operational needs and be co-owned by them.

### *Stop and think to transition from “what” to “how”*

ReDSS has sustained an impressive strategic trajectory by being agile, adaptable and quick to seize opportunities. A key success factor, and impressive achievement, is the consistency with which ReDSS has applied its “ways of working” to all activities. ReDSS has played a catalyst role. It has challenged barriers and obstacles to durable solutions and inspired creative thinking around programming.

The time has come to stop, review, think, and refocus. The objective of the initial strategy was to bring people together and this objective has been achieved. Now, it is time to reevaluate and set a new direction.

ReDSS increasingly navigates the tension between responding to divergent member interests and keeping focused. With limited resources, expanding the “what” (scope) has sometimes been to the detriment of deepening the “how” (how it can be assimilated and applied by the membership). ReDSS has demonstrated its value on producing content and influencing the agenda; now it needs to refocus on consolidating and capitalising on its achievements.

There is a strong demand for translating knowledge into practice, research into training and genuinely capitalising on the existing gains. “Less is more”, “More is not better”, “ReDSS should avoid doing too much with little”, “ReDSS needs to learn to say no” are some of the comments key informants provided.

ReDSS’ next strategy should prioritise the question of: “how can members use ReDSS’ contribution to create change on the ground?”. This is the next step for ReDSS to continue its momentum.

**R** ReDSS needs to make it a priority to focus on the “how”, i.e. how the members can use ReDSS’ contribution to create change on the ground.

### *Displacement affected communities have a voice in ReDSS’ research, and this needs to be extended across all four pillars*

ReDSS has successfully integrated the requirement to directly engage displacement-affected communities in its research, not only as “object” of the research but also as “subject”. This means involving displacement affected communities in research design, and in discussing and interpreting findings. To do this well is inevitably resource-intensive and requires a genuine strategy, otherwise it runs the risk of becoming tokenistic.

There is potentially an opportunity to further empower displacement-affected communities to take a seat at the table of durable solutions. Understanding non-formal institutions, how decisions are made, how communication flows both in the displaced and host communities has become a prerequisite to effective engagement.

**R** By making it a priority, ReDSS could develop a strategy to empower displacement affected communities to be more active in policy dialogue, coordination, and design of the assistance; and to be more critical, reflective and influential on defining protracted refugee solutions.

### 4.1.3 Alignment between pillars and activities

*The strategic pillars support delivery of the strategy, mission and vision very well*

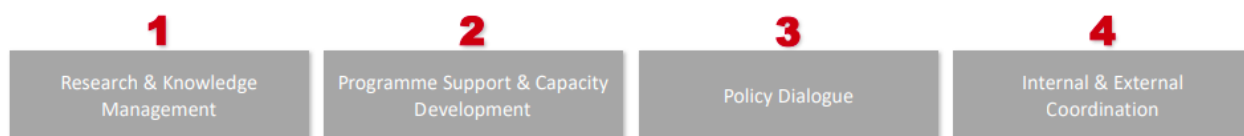


Figure 18: ReDSS Strategic Pillars

Since its creation, ReDSS’ functional areas have been structured around: research, policy, capacity development, and coordination. The pillars are a useful way of organising and conceptualising the mix of activities required to deliver the strategy.

In many ways, these pillars are more than the sum of their parts. Sometimes presented as a “table with four legs”, they are highly interconnected and interdependent, providing balance and stability. Each pillar reinforces the others. A healthy struggle between the pillars creates more value.

To a large extent, ReDSS success has been achieved because of the strong alignment between the pillars, the objectives, and the areas of interest for ReDSS members. Each strategic area contributes to the achievement of ReDSS’ vision and to the broader community of practice vision.

People’s understanding of the relationship, connection and interaction between the pillars varies, even among staff, but this has not been an impediment to ReDSS’ success. Indeed, it might almost be considered a strength. It is a sign of ReDSS flexibility and inclusiveness: the pillars unite people’s varied views rather than excluding any one perspective, while providing sufficient structure to keep things focused on a common direction.

The pillars also fill gaps in the sector in a cost-efficient manner for the members. These areas are usually underfunded for NGOs, and having a dedicated body focused on these functions is highly cost-effective.

*Priorities are not translated into activities under each pillar to leverage their interaction fully*

There is increasing demand internally and externally to develop clearer alignment between ReDSS’ pillars and its activities. This is particularly pronounced at the local level, where staff sometimes struggle to understand and articulate the connection between their work and ReDSS’ achievements in national and regional policy or research.

By not being systematic in questioning how priorities are translated into activities under each pillar, ReDSS sometimes misses opportunities to further capitalise on its achievements. ReDSS needs to “work” issues through the 4 pillars more systematically.

**R** ReDSS should systematically question how priorities are translated into activities under each pillar and how to ensure that priority activities under each pillar are mutually reinforcing.

## 4.2 ReDSS Activities

### 4.2.1 Research & knowledge management

#### *ReDSS has become a credible, trusted and reliable source of research on durable solutions*

ReDSS is a world leader in bringing evidence to the policy dialogue on durable solutions. It conducts and commissions a prolific quantity of research, while maintaining uncompromising standards on relevance and quality. It has achieved tremendous impact through informing the work of its members and influencing policy and donors. The quality and relevance of ReDSS' research is consistently praised.

ReDSS is recognised as a credible knowledge hub. Some interviewees referred to it as the “google of CRRF”, answering all the questions you may have on durable solutions.

As research is often a luxury for NGOs, ReDSS' work brings a knowledge and evidence-base they often cannot afford to produce themselves, creating further externalities.

#### *Research achievements are significant*

ReDSS' online learning tools and tutorials were the first of their kind in the region. Its flagship studies and tools have been instrumental in positioning durable solutions as an area of interest for operational partners, donors and authorities; and deepening the understanding of various actors.

In Ethiopia, ReDSS has increased overall understanding of displacement and identified areas for future collaboration on a common research agenda. It has leveraged its research outputs to engage a range of stakeholders and create forums for evidence-driven conversations. The key success factors for this engagement include: upfront commitment of significant time and resources, clear goals and long-term vision for both the outcomes from the process and the actual research.

In Somalia, ReDSS has developed and efficiently used the solutions framework to create a common agenda. Its later work on land and the political economy analysis informed sensitive issues for the World Bank Urbanisation Review, the national government, and well local authorities.

#### *Several factors contributed to the success of ReDSS' engagement in Somalia*

Four factors underpin ReDSS' research and knowledge management success in Somalia.

First, ReDSS' grassroots connections and inclusive approach mean its research is informed by the experiences and needs of people and organisations working on the ground with displacement-affected communities. ReDSS has managed to ensure the involvement of displacement-affected communities at all stages of the research including giving feedback on the findings.

Second, the participatory process has led to systematic joint analysis. ReDSS' Somalia created true co-ownership for research and analysis across the consortium, and acted as an internal critique to keep all members focused.

Third, ReDSS' skill in engaging a broad range of actors with diverse interests, especially government authorities.

And finally, the commitment and expertise of ReDSS' staff.

#### *Utilisation and uptake of research needs improvement*

Bridging the gap between research and practice is complex and difficult. It could be argued that few organisations do it well. ReDSS has had some success in this area, translating its findings into practical

tools and frameworks that can be used in the field. However, overall utilisation and usability of its research outputs remains low.

This issue was raised by all the members and partners interviewed. Stakeholders want ReDSS' impressive body of research to be made more practical and accessible.

The uptake and dissemination strategy developed last year is a positive step towards supporting greater utilisation of ReDSS' research products. In 2020, Research SOPs were revised to include an influencing and uptake strategy as a key requirement at the onset of research processes. While these opportunities for improvement have been identified in ReDSS' annual reports, more time is required to measure their impact. As per the stakeholders' perceptions, more efforts are required to measure and improve dissemination, uptake, and further translation of existing research findings into operational guidance.

**R** ReDSS should prioritise curation and utilisation of the existing body of research, rather than continuing to expand it. In revisiting the wealth of knowledge ReDSS has generated, it should aim at translating it into operationally relevant tools for members.

### *Research projects and outputs should be designed to maximise relevance for people working in the field*

Many members share the following sentiments: "ReDSS research is not practical enough to be directly used by an implementing organisation" and "I forward to the teams on the ground and so what?". Specifically, members request more emphasis on practical lessons learnt. They want to know what works and what doesn't. Some of the ideas discussed by the staff include a program toolbox as mentioned above on durable solutions, linking the learning and evidence to "what does this mean for durable solutions programming coordination and government engagement".

ReDSS needs to design its research projects and outputs with consideration for how they will be operationalised. An "uptake" strategy should be embedded into the research project from the outset, and although it is part of ReDSS research process, it has not had an impact on uptake yet.

After a piece of research is completed, there should be consideration of *how* it might be useful and *to whom*. In the short term: a dissemination workshop helps users explore research findings and consider their practical implications; and communication summaries make outputs more accessible to busy people. In the longer term: integration into training, policy dialogue and coordination will ensure the research pillar is supporting the other three pillars effectively; and internal and external utilisation should be measured to determine further opportunities for improvement. There are useful examples that should be replicated, for instance on the dissemination of the Contested Land study and the specific with practitioners on how to adapt their programs and develop a joint roadmap. Meanwhile, in Ethiopia, ReDSS has worked with a research team to develop a refugee research synthesis report to promote a common research agenda. It was disseminated and discussed through an online launch event, and has been used as a foundation for a series of thematic, multi-stakeholder discussions with key actors in the Ethiopia refugee response.

**R** ReDSS could develop and implement a user strategy upfront, defining the outputs from the expected users perspective before the research is conducted. By involving end-users, expectations can be clarified and research can be designed with an operational focus.

### *Curation and communication are not optimised for the user experience*

Members reported receiving "emails with 55 links" or complained that the only way to keep abreast of the state of knowledge was to "read eight publications", which they don't have time for. They need research outputs that are digestible.

When deciding how to communicate its research findings, ReDSS needs to consider its users' context. Most are busy and do not have capacity to analyse and absorb lengthy reports. Some are not native English speakers and need simpler language. As the knowledge base expands, it is important to realise that different members – and different people within each member organisation – have different needs and expectations. Systematic translations into local languages of selected short pieces should be considered.

When major findings have been absorbed at the ReDSS level, staff are naturally tempted to move on to the next thing. But it takes time and effort to cascade new knowledge through the network. The job is not done until members have been fully supported to access, understand and apply the findings.

Some options to consider are:

- Write concise research summaries in simple language
- Create a regularly updated “dashboard” or summary of the current durable solutions landscape
- Continue to expand and diversify ReDSS' existing library of more creative knowledge outputs such as the online animations, interactive media, etc.
- Curate the knowledge base into “bundles” based on their likely relevance and interest to different stakeholders
- Target communications, so stakeholders only receive alerts about research findings and tools that are most relevant to them.

Note that this evaluation is not suggesting ReDSS adopt all, or even most, of the above suggestions. Rather, the list is intended as a catalyst for conversations with staff and members about what is feasible and what will bring the most impact.

**R** ReDSS should place the users and utilisation at the center of its research and knowledge strategy. These are issues to be addressed with a similar care than the quality of the research.

#### *Research is not fully integrated to the other pillars*

ReDSS currently leverages its research effectively to support policy dialogue. This increases ReDSS relevance, credibility and impact. It anchors conversations in an evidence-base, making them “safer” and more effective.

However, research does not seem to be sufficiently connected to training and coordination. It appears that most research projects stop at the dissemination stage. While dissemination workshops are valued, they are not the final step. Research should directly and explicitly inform ReDSS' training and coordination.

**R** ReDSS can capitalise more on its research by systematically asking: how does this research translates into training? How does it affect our coordination fora? How does it impact our policy dialogue in more than one setting?

### 4.2.2 Programme support & capacity development

#### *ReDSS has achieved great results in training*

ReDSS' learning events have engaged actors from across the region, including NGOs, UN agencies and government entities. In 2019, these events reached 779 participants from 140 organisations. Such broad participation has created a shared language and conceptual understanding, which has enabled diverse actors to have more productive conversations and find common ground to push the durable solutions agenda forward.

Participatory and consensus building approaches have been ReDSS’ mantra and this has supported greater ownership by members and partners who have participated in training. There is now a deeper and more nuanced appreciation of durable solutions across the region.

The quality of its learning events and other learning artefacts – such as area based training tools and resources for government counterparts – has made ReDSS an increasingly respected and credible voice. In turn, this allows it to influence increasingly effectively. ReDSS has been able to create a trusted space and ways of working for discussing sensitive issues.

### *ReDSS’ has had impressive impact with government counterparts*

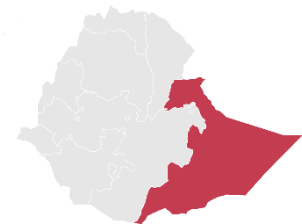
Even before the establishment of the Somalia unit, ReDSS had considerable success in building the capacity of the government on durable solutions.

In Ethiopia, the position based in Jijiga was designed around capacity development for the local government. This allowed ReDSS to bridge the gap between the government and NGOs and to support government counterparts to assume their leadership role on durable solutions.

ReDSS’ tremendous impact is encapsulated in two of the significant changes stories, collected using the MSC methodology.

Extract from story 3:

“In 2019, stakeholders in Jijiga were not aware of ReDSS, including the local representation of the most engaged members regionally. ReDSS presented its role to its members and the government clarifying that by being a coordination and information hub, it is not an implementing agency. Initially there was some pushback on coordination, due to a lack of shared understanding of the process or the value. At the level of Jijiga region and at the woreda level (districts), durable solution data was not collected, centralized or analyzed.

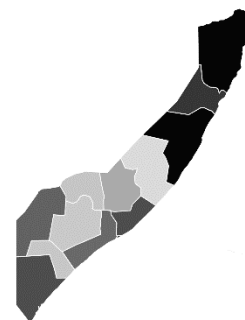


After more than a year of engagement, with the support of ReDSS and UNHCR, the government is centralizing a database (5w), of all durable solutions activities. This has resulted in better use of resources, better targeting of activities, reduced duplication, and all actors being coordinated around the government. “

Extract from story 7:

“In a post-conflict context and the emerging role of the Federal Government, durable solutions were tightly linked to the displacement situation. Expertise and institutions were very weak and overwhelmed by the challenges of displacement. More broadly, there was no joint understanding of durable solutions among all stakeholders.

The Durable Solutions Secretariat under the Ministry of Planning is now instrumental on the overall coordination between the durable solutions actors. The government is now the entry point for durable solutions programming and each federal member state is engaged. With government playing the role of a coordinator, durable solutions actors contribute to the strategy and set the policies in line with the National Development Plan. The government coordinates with the Bureau of Statistics to collect data on research and operations.”





*But ReDSS should not consider the job done; when basics were a success, coming back to basics is not a step backwards*

Training was one of the early building blocks of ReDSS' success. Reports from 2018 and 2019 focus on 3<sup>rd</sup> generation training and training for government counterparts. As presented above, many members value the impact and benefit this focus has created. But they have also raised their own needs. Many have requested for ReDSS to go back to basics with the members, especially for operational teams.

The level of awareness and knowledge of durable solutions across ReDSS membership is variable. In this already diverse and complex landscape, international humanitarian NGOs also suffer from high turnover. The situation calls for a model of training cycles, rather than a maturity model. Basics (initial trainings, workshops, tools) are still perceived as useful by ReDSS members and partners. There is an expectation that ReDSS will continue to address the inevitable learning gap due to high turnover and between members.

More importantly, ReDSS' needs to take its M&E on learning further. There are massive research and findings about adult learning, retention, and scale for evaluating training on which ReDSS can grow its own system.

**R** By developing different levels of training on durable solutions, ReDSS can play a role at all levels of members' engagement, continuing to offer them a co-hosting role depending on interest and expertise. ReDSS should dedicate more resources to measure and understand how its training affects the members operations.

*Within consortia, ReDSS has been able to go further and generate sound knowledge on programming*

In Somalia, ReDSS role as a learning partner across different durable solutions programs has afforded it rapid insight into the consortium member's achievements and challenges. ReDSS skill in facilitation and its "ways of working" enabled members of the consortium to rapidly build trust, share knowledge, and discuss sensitive issues on programming.

As per Lessons learned from the EU RE-INTEG Durable Solutions Consortia (2017-2020):

"The inclusion of a learning partner in consortia can add significant value in terms of generating learning, building capacity, and creating the space for dialogue on durable solutions. Respondents highlighted that ReDSS have added value to programming in terms of helping to identify lessons learned; connecting the consortia to other critical durable solutions actors; building knowledge and capacity; providing guidance on programming principles; and helping to establish a common vision."

However, it is important to note that during the interviews, program support, program design or implementation were not concepts raised when describing ReDSS' strengths and impact. The definition of program support by the staff is also a bit vague and varies.

*Training and program support cater for different needs and contexts; they are different types of activities*

It is sometimes unclear why program support and capacity development have been combined into a single pillar under the same functional area. In many ways, they are quite distinct aspects of ReDSS' work, cover different types of activities and are also reported separately by ReDSS.

It's unclear what role ReDSS wants/should have in program support. There is a lack of understanding in the current team about what's required to do this well, and what would be helpful for the agencies. It is unrealistic to expect a secretariat to have the necessary expertise. Durable solutions can be sub-divided into more than 10 areas, which experts spend their whole careers specialising in. Some of those areas are so technical, even facilitating is a very ambitious aspiration.



*There are discrepancies between the aspirations of staff and member priorities*

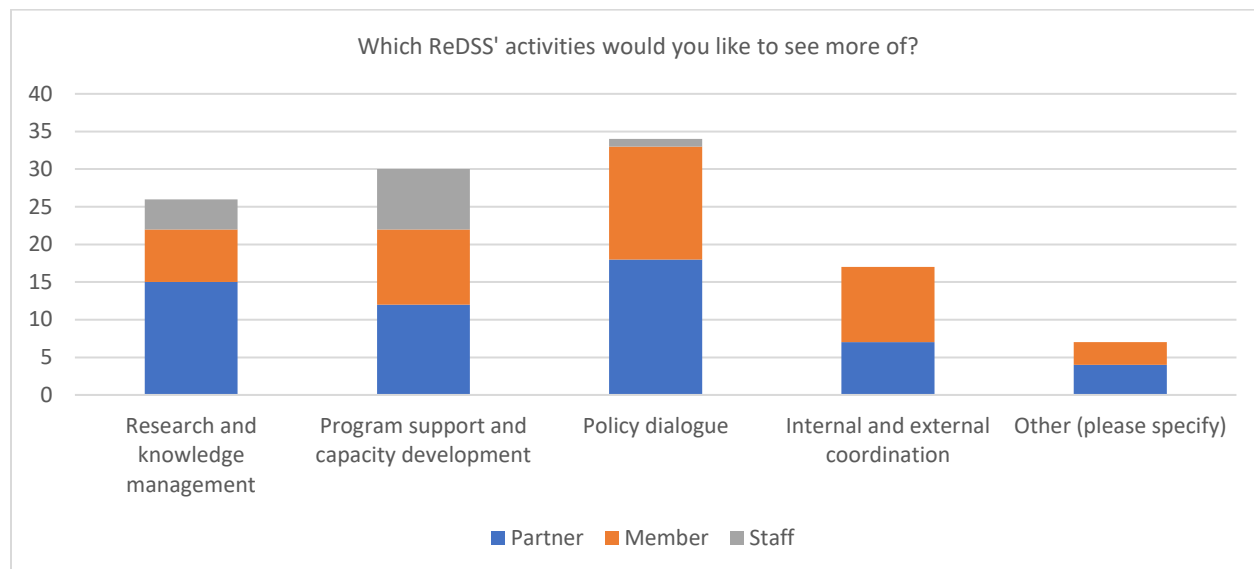


Figure 19: Survey responses to the question "Which ReDSS activities would you like to see more of?"

Program support is seen as a clear priority by ReDSS staff, but view is not shared by the members and partners interviewed. This discrepancy is confirmed by the survey results, as shown in the graph above.

Terminology and the specific perspective of the individuals interviewed are probably factors contributing to this apparent difference, but nonetheless there is a gap. Staff see a shift towards program support as "a natural organic evolution towards impact on the ground", whereas some members would like the focus to remain primarily policy dialogue.

The focus on practical take away does not necessarily translate into more activities under "program support". Program support is a functional area, and is defined by the type of activities. A practical focus means that more of the ReDSS "products" should have practical relevance and therefore to invest in technical support on how to translate knowledge into practice. While these two could be perceived as similar and do overlap, they are very different.

It is understandable for a passionate team to be drawn towards activities with more tangible outcomes, however that doesn't make it the right direction for the organisation. In all interviews, members only referred to capacity development (analogous to training) under this pillar. None referred to program support, programming, program design, or implementation support.



ReDSS should either step back from program support in terms of type of activities and focus on its strengths (policy & research) or select a maximum of 2 areas to focus on and retain experts in those areas. The focus could change every few years, in response to changing needs.

### 4.2.3 Policy dialogue

*ReDSS has had an undeniable and significant impact on the policy of durable solutions in East and Horn of Africa*

ReDSS is uniquely positioned to provide a trusted platform for policy-focused discussions. Its credibility and impartiality make it widely respected among diverse actors. Its staff are highly skilled in advocacy, engagement and facilitation.

The findings from the MSC stories demonstrate impressive impact. More than half of the identified changes are focused on policy. This is an important result that ReDSS should not shy away from and should consider as a priority when developing its new strategy.

Policy engagement is different in every country: displacement situations are different, and governments are not open to the same degree to durable solutions. ReDSS has deftly navigated these nuances, engaging differently depending on the local need and opportunity. In Somalia, ReDSS policy work has largely contributed to the creation and drive of the Durable Solution Secretariat. In Ethiopia, ReDSS provided a platform for policy-focused discussions which would have otherwise not been possible, with clear linkages as to how research/evidence can and should inform policy. In Kenya, the situation is more challenging. There, ReDSS can play a catalyst role.

ReDSS has managed to get a seat and a voice into different policy processes based on its various roles and the evidence it has produced. Its influence has been felt in the IGAD Nairobi Process, National Durable Solutions Strategy formulation, and Regional Administrations Durable Solutions Strategy development process, among others.

At the global level too, ReDSS played a key role in facilitating civil society engagement in the Global Refugee Forum preparation.

### *Members expect ReDSS to continue to “speak on behalf of a coalition” to promote policy change*

There is a wide agreement that one of ReDSS most important contributions is to support and carry a collective voice for the NGOs on durable solutions. In terms of expectations, it clearly reflects the members and partners assessment. ReDSS should remain first and foremost an impactful, influential and effective table for discussion to progress policy change for durable solutions.

Such unanimous assessments and expectations are not common. ReDSS’ team should be proud and take this in when developing the first elements of the next strategy.

### *Advocacy and policy dialogue seem to be interchangeable for members but not for ReDSS team*

There is no shared understanding of the border between advocacy and policy dialogue amongst internal and external stakeholders. Many members describe ReDSS’ policy work as advocacy whereas ReDSS team insists that advocacy is not the type of engagement ReDSS pursues.

Some members acknowledge the distinction but would like ReDSS to be more active on lobbying and advocacy, arguing that ReDSS is stronger and more protected as a coalition than any one agency could be by itself. They understand why ReDSS wants to take a more diplomatic and constructive approach, but nonetheless believe that different strategies are required to deal with reactive/more sudden issues where there is a need for clear positioning.

The inclusion of national NGOs to ReDSS at the country level is also motivated by the need to protect them and their voice as they are usually better placed to develop a more contextualised approach to advocacy.

Given the centrality of policy dialogue, ReDSS should work with its members to further articulate its policy dialogue engagement strategy by:

- clarifying what policy dialogue means to ReDSS,
- revising its current policy dialogue approaches based on learning and evidence of what has worked and where ReDSS can exert most influence/add value to the members and
- ensuring that policy dialogue is better mainstreamed and builds upon other ReDSS pillars.



Policy dialogue is ReDSS' central strength and the area where it achieves its most significant impact. Members expect ReDSS to continue to “speak on behalf of a coalition” to promote policy change. This should remain the core of ReDSS new strategy.

Without changing the pillars and ReDSS' foundational concepts, ReDSS can reaffirm policy as its core objective. ReDSS' ways of working and the other pillars enable the policy work to progress. However, these links should be drawn more clearly.

#### 4.2.4 Internal & external coordination

##### *ReDSS is unusually skilled at bringing people together*

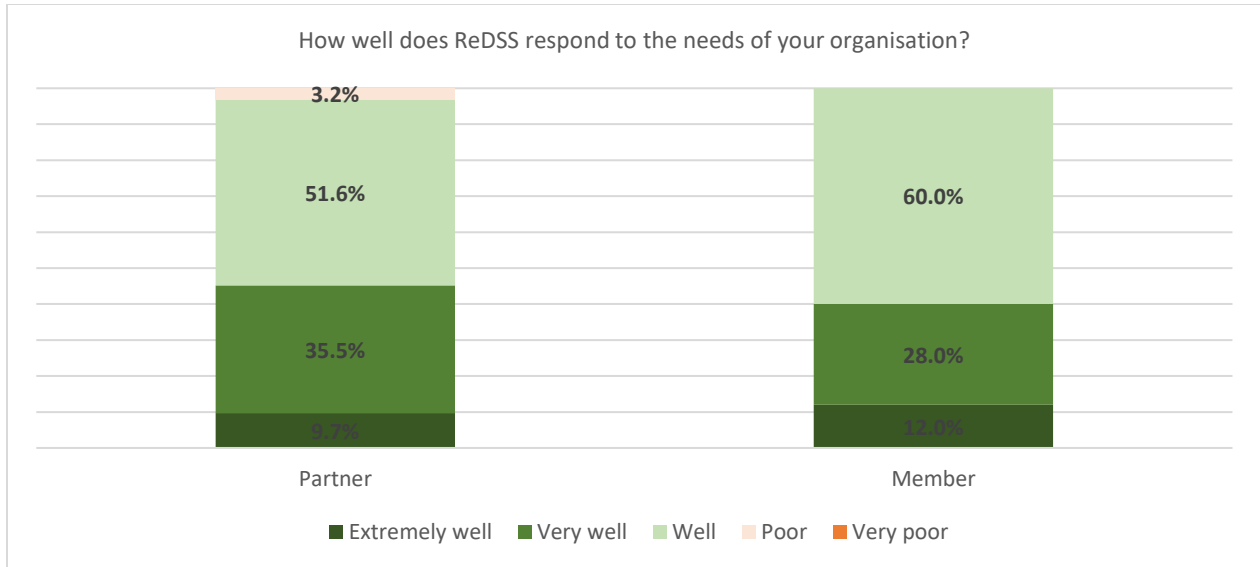


Figure 20: Survey responses to the question "How well does ReDSS respond to the needs of your organisation?"

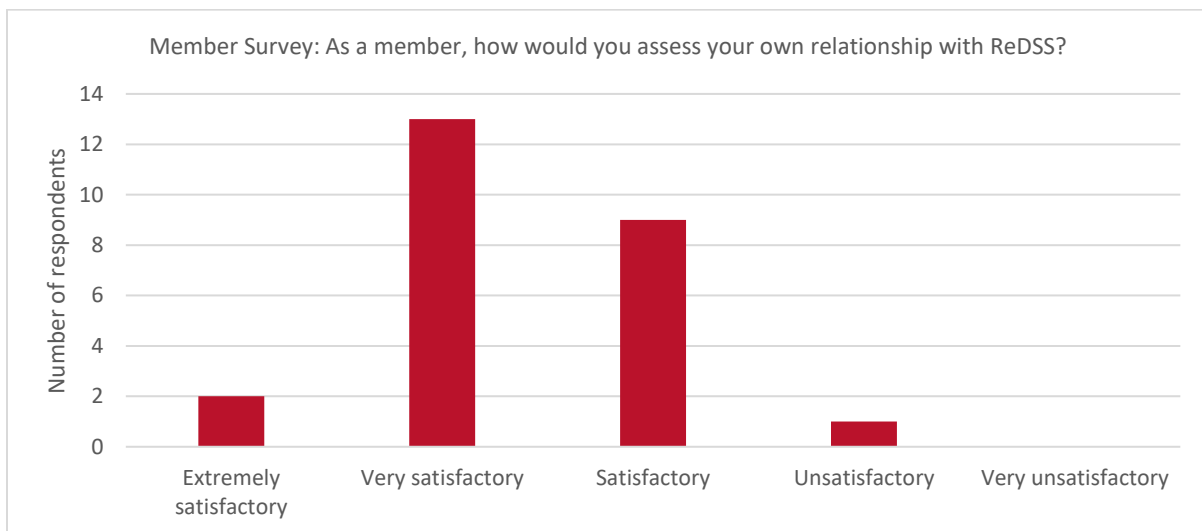


Figure 21: ReDSS member survey responses to the question "As a member, how would you assess your own relationship with ReDSS?"

Many organisations claim to build and maintain relationships, but few come close to ReDSS' skill and effectiveness. This is one of the key differentiators which has enabled ReDSS' outsized impact.

The depth and quality of ReDSS' relationships with its members is one of its core strengths. Over its five years of operation, ReDSS has remained accountable and loyal to its membership base, sustained member engagement, and effectively leveraged member expertise. Two factors underpin this success. First, staff dedicate time and preparation to the process, and carefully consider the full relational implications when planning coordination events. Second, ReDSS genuinely lives its values of flexibility and inclusiveness. It does not have cumbersome sign off procedures or standard engagement practices, which allows it to be responsive to member needs and arising opportunities.

Many members appreciate the benefit of ReDSS coordination: access to a wide and efficient network of organisations working on similar issues, access to knowledge, one-stop shop for durable solutions, inclusive and participatory culture favouring exchange of information.

Beyond its membership, ReDSS has built relationships with governments, donors and other key actors across the region. It has filled an emerging need, as a wide range of actors found themselves in need of coordination at a time when durable solutions became politically feasible. ReDSS is seen as neutral and independent, and as having the competence to take responsibility for expanded coordination activities.

In Somalia, ReDSS created a strong coordination system with the government and the municipalities on durable solutions. ReDSS jointly organised workshops and learning events for the actors to avoid duplication and minimise confusion.

### **4.3 Thematic focus**

#### *Yearly themes are useful and well received*

The thematic focus is a useful framework for capturing and articulating ReDSS' current priorities. While the pillars remain largely static, themes shift depending on changing needs and new directions. They provide a structured way to seize emerging opportunities, set goals and communicate new priorities. They also help stakeholders understand the current challenges and opportunities in durable solutions and displacement. Almost all stakeholders, internal and external, describe the thematic focuses as relevant and useful.

#### *Themes have expanded to the point that they are not focused anymore*

ReDSS is determined to stay relevant in a rapidly changing context. The team is always poised to seize emerging opportunities, whether it be a new partnership, area for research, or commonality ripe for collaboration. The result is that the breadth and scope of the thematic focuses doesn't realistically reflect the available resources.

Furthermore, ReDSS tends to be at the forefront of thinking, which has had the unintended consequence that the themes often cover aspects of the solutions process that are not yet well understood by all members. The themes therefore aren't always unifying or relevant to all members.

A smaller number of themes, linked to stronger member commitments, would enable ReDSS to focus its efforts, concentrate its resources, and leverage its members for greater impact.

#### *Through its participatory process, ReDSS could identify a single theme at the regional level and two country-specific themes*

A mix of country-specific and regional themes with clearly articulated interconnections would enable ReDSS to maintain its current responsiveness to local needs and priorities, while keeping its overall portfolio of work cohesive. Based on the available resources and scope of work, this evaluation would suggest one overarching regional theme, and up to two country-specific themes.

Consultation with members is key to the thematic prioritisation. At the country level, themes were discussed and agreed but will need to be further prioritised. At the regional level, ReDSS will have to be more creative to push its members to agree on one or two themes at most.

It is important that the themes are clearly defined, including the linkages between them. Currently, the themes are not articulated and detailed enough. It's important to define what they mean for ReDSS' work in practice.

### *Themes need to be “worked” through the pillars*

Alignment between thematic focus and pillars is sometimes unclear. This sometimes creates problems in selection and prioritisation of activities and reporting. ReDSS needs to take a step back and consider alignment when deciding on themes.

There are many ways this alignment could be achieved. ReDSS could adopt a top down approach: Select a few overarching themes that cut across all its pillars, then clearly articulate the relationship between each pillar and theme, contextualised to each country. Alternatively, ReDSS could adopt a bottom up approach: invite each country to identify its themes independently, then explore the overlaps and linkages between them.

Whatever process is agreed, it is critical that the outcome is a structured framework that demonstrates how ReDSS' priority themes, work plan and activities connect under the pillars to contribute to the achievement of ReDSS goals, leaving some degree of flexibility for responding to emerging opportunities.

### *Fewer themes provide an opportunity to improve targeted members commitment*

Several interviewees suggested ReDSS' develop a matrix of member expertise and interest areas to identify alignment between the thematic focus areas and member expertise. This process would allow members to commit more seriously, selectively and based on their needs.

Such a matrix might be quite sensitive as members are sometimes in competition for funding and naming one organisation as expert in an area implies other organisations are not. Therefore, such matrix is more a concept to guide members' commitments rather than showcase comparative advantage.



ReDSS needs to reduce the thematic focus to one regional theme and two country-level themes to ensure that these themes are translated through the four pillars in each country and the regional strategy and work plans. Fewer themes will provide a good platform for targeted commitments from members.

## 5 Recommendations and way forward

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The central finding of this evaluation is that ReDSS is a real success and as issues are faced there is no doubt that they will be addressed. Recommendations are not remedial, but ideas and suggestions to help ReDSS' members and its secretariat to develop its next strategy and assure its continued success into the future.

This evaluation has identified three major directions:

- Policy dialogue needs to remain at the core of ReDSS' strategy
- ReDSS needs to transition from “what” to “how” while remaining member-centric
- ReDSS successful move to the country level needs to be translated into its governance.

Beyond these major orientations, the 34 recommendations below form a comprehensive portfolio of improvement initiatives from which ReDSS members and its secretariat must prioritise and sequence implementation.

A color code (red/grey) provides the evaluation team's views on the importance of recommendations.

### Governance and Membership

The governance structures are overall effective. DRC has had a foundational but discreet role that has allowed ReDSS development. With their strengthened governance, consortia structures increase ReDSS impact and perceived usefulness.

ReDSS “country” has responded to the demand of its members successfully and raises new questions. It is important to acknowledge that at the country level, shape drives content and that country level governance structures are not yet well established.

- R** As ReDSS grows, the agreement with DRC should be revisited to address organisational management issues.
- R** Based on a successful model and where appropriate, ReDSS should use its knowledge and experience to explore opportunities to support consortia where different actors adopt a similar framework and indicators to collectively monitor and learn from each other.
- R** ReDSS should acknowledge that local relevance and agility goes hand in hand with creating different types of ReDSS in different countries. In order to maintain its identity and impact, it is ReDSS should continue to focus on the “how” and the “ways of working” rather than the “what” and agree to keep common to all countries only what is strictly relevant to all.
- R** As the country units become more established, ReDSS should consider how governance arrangements can be cascaded effectively. It may seem like an obvious step to create a steering committee in each country, but this evaluation recommends not rushing to this conclusion. Rely on ReDSS' “ways of working”; invite members to contribute and define what is optimal and feasible.
- R** As a first step, ReDSS could adopt at the country level the yearly members' review, to discuss and agree on the workplan at the country level. This would harness further and clearer commitments from members and a build a stronger identity of the country “core group”.

**Membership composition and size are fit-for-purpose. As ReDSS moves to country-level engagement, membership must localise further. Use of logo and sign off practices reflect ReDSS' ability to assess member sensitivity effectively.**

**Though members' contribution is uneven, this can be turned into an advantage. Members' contribution is essential and can be further showcased and member expertise could be leveraged further.**

**Membership accountability is uneven but not an impediment as members do require more individualised commitments. Partnerships deliver significant mutual benefits, but sometimes at the expense of the focus on members.**

- R** Supported unanimously, ReDSS should expand the membership locally by the inclusion of 3-4 international and local NGOs particularly active on durable solutions, specific to each country. A 75% (existing members with a regional scope)/25% (country specific) ratio is suggested. Each country will thus have different "core group" members. This ratio would strike the right balance between achieving county relevance and preserving ReDSS' overarching identity.
- R** ReDSS should proactively identify ways to publicly, but informally, endorse and promote members.
- R** Member expertise should be further leveraged and promoted with a focus on the process rather than locked in a document which would raise sensitivities.
- R** Where there is an appropriate alignment of priorities, ReDSS should engage each member separately to develop a personalised accountability framework on a bilateral basis, confirmed at the WP annual meeting. This approach would allow more comprehensive WP where activities are co-led by the members.

**ReDSS is highly efficient but has a mild version of "founder syndrome". The "ways of working" are widely embraced, but not explicit enough. As ReDSS expands, it needs to formalise and streamline more of its systems and processes.**

- R** ReDSS should articulate and document the "ways of working". Creatively, ReDSS could make induction into the "ways of working", with practical examples from each of ReDSS pillars, part of the onboarding process for new partners, members and staff.
- R** ReDSS should invest in developing and implementing:
  - A clear responsibility matrix
  - More structured internal coordination.
  - Templates and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the most frequent activities (training, workshops, meetings)
  - HR structures such as position descriptions with clearly defined reporting lines.

**Internal coordination and cross-country learning need to be better structured. ReDSS' staff are respected experts in durable solutions and outsourcing technical expertise is the right strategy.**

- R** The working relationship between regional and country level could be improved through having common agendas and co-funded initiatives that cut across the three countries. In addition to the weekly management meeting, ReDSS could consider a monthly strategic meeting focused on the linkages between the country programs.

- R** With its unique vantage point, ReDSS regional should make it a learning priority to identify what lessons from one country can be relevant for the other two.
- R** ReDSS should retain its guiding role and maximise on the expertise of its members whose strengths cuts across indicators, policy, and program support.

**The monitoring and evaluation system is not fit for purpose. Communication needs to be more strategic and M&E of communications should be integrated. The website provides value, but it's difficult to know how much.**

- R** ReDSS should develop a simplified, centralised, adapted M&E tool that provides useful outputs in the form of a dashboard and monthly reports which help inform internal management and organisational learning. This should be explicitly linked to the strategy and include clearly defined indicators with targets.
- R** As ReDSS impact on policy is now evidenced, it is essential for ReDSS to reflect and put in place a system to document, measure and understand its impact.
- R** Based on the communication evaluation, ReDSS should focus on a small number of simple, actionable recommendations.
- R** Communications indicators and targets should be incorporated into the overarching M&E framework when it is developed.
- R** The website and MailChimp analytics should directly feed into the M&E framework, with documented benchmarks for engagement, email campaigns, etc. to help inform targets and strategy.

**Stakeholders understand ReDSS' role as it has evolved and expanded over time. But ReDSS maintains a delicate balance between a "facilitator" and a "catalyst" and can continue to define what it is and what it is not.**

- R** ReDSS needs to make choices. Stakeholders' understanding of ReDSS' role could be further improved by adopting more consistent use of language. For example, the term "secretariat" is sometimes used to mean "ReDSS staff", while "core group" is used to mean "members".
- R** As a starting point for developing its next strategy, ReDSS should continue to define what it is and what it is not.



## Strategy and achievements

ReDSS' strategy is conceptually sound, relevant and realistic. Unfortunately, it is not widely utilised and is perceived as the secretariat strategy. Its main objective and focus needs to expand from agenda setting to include practical guidance on "what works". ReDSS needs to stop and think to transition from "what" to "how".

Displacement affected communities have a voice in ReDSS' research, and this needs to be extended across all four pillars.

The strategic pillars support the delivery of the strategy, mission and vision very well. However, priorities are not translated into activities under each pillar to leverage their interaction fully.

- R** ReDSS has well defined its approach and culture. For the next strategy, it needs to take a step further into linking activities to its successful approach by making the strategy the assumed choice of priorities and by managing it with a reliable Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system.
- R** While ReDSS needs to continue its good work on policy dialogue, it also needs to better define how the strategy can serve the members' operational needs and be co-owned by them.
- R** ReDSS needs to make it a priority to focus on the "how", i.e. how the members can use ReDSS' contribution to create change on the ground.
- R** By making it a priority, ReDSS could develop a strategy to empower displacement affected communities to be more active in policy dialogue, coordination, and design of the assistance; and to be more critical, reflective and influential on defining protracted refugee solutions.
- R** ReDSS should systematically question how priorities are translated into activities under each pillar.

ReDSS has become a credible, trusted and reliable source of research on durable solutions and its achievements are significant. However, utilisation and uptake of research needs improvement. Research projects and outputs should be designed to maximise relevance for people working in the field. Curation and communication are not optimised for the user experience. Research is not fully integrated to the other pillars.

- R** ReDSS should prioritise curation and utilisation of the existing body of research, rather than continuing to expand it. In revisiting the wealth of knowledge ReDSS has generated, it should aim at translating it into operationally relevant tools for members.
- R** ReDSS could develop and implement a users strategy upfront, defining the outputs from the expected users perspective before the research is conducted. By involving end-users, expectations can be clarified and research can be designed with an operational focus..
- R** ReDSS should place the users and utilisation at the center of its research and knowledge strategy. These are issues to be addressed with a similar care than the quality of the research.
- R** ReDSS can capitalise more on its research by systematically asking: how does this research translates into training? How does it affect our coordination fora? How does it impact our policy dialogue in more than one setting?

ReDSS has achieved great results in training and impressive impact with government counterparts. But ReDSS should not consider the job done; when basics were a success, coming back to basics is not a step

backwards. Within consortia, ReDSS has been able to go further and generate sound knowledge on programming. Because training and program support cater for different needs and contexts, they are different types of activities, resulting in discrepancies between the aspiration of the staff and member priorities.

**R** By developing different levels of training on durable solutions, ReDSS can play a role at all levels of members' engagement, continuing to offer them a co-hosting role depending on interest and expertise. ReDSS should dedicate more resources to measure and understand how its training affects the members operations.

**R** ReDSS should either step back from program support and focus on its strengths (policy & research) or select a maximum of 2 areas to focus on and retain experts in those areas. The focus could change every few years, in response to changing needs.

**ReDSS has had an undeniable and significant impact on the policy of durable solutions in East and Horn of Africa. Members expect ReDSS to continue to "speak on behalf of a coalition" to promote policy change.**

**R** Policy dialogue is ReDSS' central strength and the area where it achieves its most significant impact. Members expect ReDSS to continue to "speak on behalf of a coalition" to promote policy change. This should remain the core of ReDSS new strategy.

Without changing the pillars and ReDSS' foundational concepts, ReDSS can reaffirm policy as its core objective. ReDSS' ways of working and the other pillars enable the policy work to progress. However, these links should be drawn more clearly.

**ReDSS is unusually skilled at bringing people together.**

**Yearly themes are useful and well received. However, they have expanded to the point that they are not focused anymore. Through its participatory process, ReDSS could help identify a single theme at the regional level and two country-specific themes. Themes also need to be "worked" through the pillars and fewer themes provide a good opportunity to improve targeted members commitment.**

**R** ReDSS needs to reduce the thematic focus to one regional theme and two country-level themes to ensure that these themes are translated through the four pillars in each country and the regional strategy and work plans. Fewer themes will provide a good platform for targeted commitments from members.

# List of Annexes

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- Annex 1** Evaluation framework
- Annex 2** Stories of Change (output of Most Significant Change exercise)

# Annex 1

# Evaluation framework

Evaluation Themes	Evaluation Subthemes	Evaluation Questions	Follow up Questions for Recommendations	Questions for Staff Survey	Questions for Member Survey	Questions for Partner Survey	Questions for Staff Interviews	Questions for Member Interviews	Questions for Partner Interviews	
Governance	Effectiveness of the governance structure of the Secretariat (network)	1a	To what extent does the governance structure (i.e.: regional secretariat, steering committee, membership structure, etc) support the achievement of ReDSS' strategy?	What changes would you recommend?	To what extent does the governance structure (i.e.: regional secretariat, steering committee, membership structure, etc) support the achievement of ReDSS' strategy?	To what extent does the governance structure (i.e.: regional secretariat, steering committee, membership structure, etc) support the achievement of ReDSS' strategy?	How does the governance structure support the achievement of ReDSS' strategy?	How does the governance structure support the achievement of ReDSS' strategy?		
		1b	Has the governance structure developed/adapted over time to address changing context and needs?	What should it look like in the future?			Has the governance structure developed/adapted over time to address changing context and needs?	Has the governance structure developed/adapted over time to address changing context and needs?		
	ReDSS management	2a	How efficient are ReDSS organizational and management arrangements?	What works best and why? What doesn't work as well it should and why? What changes would you recommend so it continues to evolve and adapt?	How efficient are ReDSS organizational and management arrangements?			How could ReDSS become more efficient?	How could ReDSS become more efficient?	
				What changes would you recommend? What do you think ReDSS is most efficient at and why? What do you think ReDSS is least efficient at and why?			How efficient do you perceive ReDSS to be at delivering its activities?	How efficient do you perceive ReDSS to be at delivering its activities?		
	Efficiency		How efficient do you perceive ReDSS to be at delivering its activities?			How efficient do you perceive ReDSS to be at delivering its activities?	How efficient do you perceive ReDSS to be at delivering its activities?			
	Regional and national engagement	2b	Does ReDSS have the right skills and capacity to achieve its strategy?	What skillsets would you add/change to deliver on the strategy into the future?						
		3a	How efficient and effective has been the move to invest in national and sub-national ReDSS structure in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia?	What changes should be considered?				How efficient and effective is the current interaction between regional and country levels, both internally within the Secretariat and in engaging with external partners?	How efficient and effective is the current interaction between regional and country levels, both internally within the Secretariat and in engaging with external partners?	
	Division of work between regional and country teams	3b	How efficient and effective has been the move to invest in national and sub-national ReDSS structure in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia?	How could the working relationship between regional and country levels be improved?	How efficient and effective has been the move to invest in national and sub-national ReDSS structure in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia?			How efficient and effective is the current division of work between regional and country levels?		
			What additional benefits did it bring and why?							
			What doesn't work as well as it should and why?							
			What changes would you recommend so it continues to evolve and adapt?							
Membership composition	4a	How would you assess ReDSS overall membership (i.e.: number, type, complementarity of member organizations) in terms of contributing to achieving its objectives?	Could you help us understand your assessment by developing your views on the membership?	How would you assess ReDSS overall membership (i.e.: number, type, complementarity of member organizations) in terms of contributing to achieving its objectives?	How would you assess ReDSS overall membership (i.e.: number, type, complementarity of member organizations) in terms of contributing to achieving its objectives?		What changes should be considered?	What changes should be considered?		
	4b	To what extent is ReDSS maximizing and leveraging its membership expertise?	What works to ensure members engagement?	To what extent is ReDSS maximizing and leveraging its membership expertise?			What works to ensure members engagement?	What works to ensure members engagement?		
Membership accountability	4c	How can ReDSS ensure mutual accountability for membership?	What else could be done?	How can ReDSS ensure mutual accountability for membership?			What else could be done?	What else could be done?		
	4d	Are the current partnerships with external organisations working?	Could you give 2 examples of good partnerships and explain why you select them?	As a staff, how would you assess ReDSS partnership with external organisations?	As a member, how would you assess your own relationship with ReDSS?	How would you assess your partnership with ReDSS?	Could you give 2 examples of good partnerships and why?	Could you give 2 examples of good partnerships and why?	Could you give 2 examples of good partnerships and why?	
Strategy	Role of ReDSS	5a	How clear is the role of ReDSS to you?	What changes should be considered?	How clear do you think is the role of ReDSS to members and partners?	How clear is the role of ReDSS to you?	How clear is the role of ReDSS to you?	What changes should be considered?	What changes should be considered?	What changes should be considered?
		5c	How effective has ReDSS strategy and approach been towards achieving its goal and vision?	What changes should be considered? Could you help us understand your assessment? What changes would you recommend?	Based on your experience, how effective has ReDSS strategy and approach been towards achieving its goal and vision?	Based on your experience, how effective has ReDSS strategy and approach been towards achieving its goal and vision?	Based on your experience, how effective has ReDSS strategy and approach been towards achieving its goal and vision?	What changes should be considered? Could you help us understand your assessment?	What changes should be considered?	What changes should be considered?
		5d	How has ReDSS strategy evolved?		How well does ReDSS respond to the needs of your organisation?	How well does ReDSS respond to the needs of your organisation?	How well does ReDSS respond to the needs of your organisation?			
	Prioritization	5e	Which ReDSS activities have you been most involved in?	Which of ReDSS activities would you like to see more of?	Which ReDSS activities have you been most involved in?	Which ReDSS activities have you been most involved in?	Which ReDSS activities have you been most involved in?	How has ReDSS strategy evolved?	How has ReDSS strategy evolved?	How has ReDSS strategy evolved?
		5f	How are the pillars supporting/informing one another?	Why such activities?	Which of ReDSS activities would you like to see more of and why?	Which of ReDSS activities would you like to see more of?	Which of ReDSS activities would you like to see more of?			
	Actual Impact	5g	From your point of view, describe the most significant change in your organisation's knowledge or activities that has resulted from being part of ReDSS?					From your point of view, describe the most significant change in your organisation's knowledge or activities that has resulted from being part of ReDSS?	From your point of view, describe the most significant change in your organisation's knowledge or activities that has resulted from being part of ReDSS?	From your point of view, describe the most significant change in your organisation's knowledge or activities that has resulted from being part of ReDSS?
		5h	Are the thematic focus relevant, useful for your work or organisation?	What changes should be considered?	Are the thematic focus relevant, useful for your work or organisation?	Are the thematic focus relevant, useful for your work or organisation?	Are the thematic focus relevant, useful for your work or organisation?	What changes should be considered?	What changes should be considered?	What changes should be considered?
	Members contribution	P1 Research & Knowledge Management	6a	To what extent have you and your organisation contributed to/informed ReDSS strategy and supported its implementation?			To what extent have you and your organisation contributed to/informed ReDSS strategy and supported its implementation?	To what extent have you and your organisation contributed to/informed ReDSS strategy and supported its implementation?		
			7a	What impact has ReDSS had in terms of P1?		What were the benefits of being a ReDSS member for your organisation in terms of P1?	What were the benefits of being a ReDSS member for your organisation in terms of P1?	What were the benefits of being a ReDSS member for your organisation in terms of P1?		
			7b	What outcomes were achieved under P1? What were the contributing factors?		What outcomes were achieved under P1? What were the contributing factors?	What outcomes were achieved under P1? What were the contributing factors?	What outcomes were achieved under P1? What were the contributing factors?	What outcomes were achieved under P1? What were the contributing factors?	What outcomes were achieved under P1? What were the contributing factors?
P2 Programme Support & Capacity Development		8a	What impact has ReDSS had in terms of P2?		What were the benefits of being a ReDSS member for your organisation in terms of P2?	What were the benefits of being a ReDSS member for your organisation in terms of P2?	What were the benefits of being a ReDSS member for your organisation in terms of P2?			
		8b	What outcomes were achieved under P2? What were the contributing factors?		Which outcomes were achieved under P2? What were the contributing factors?	Which outcomes were achieved under P2? What were the contributing factors?	Which outcomes were achieved under P2? What were the contributing factors?	Which outcomes were achieved under P2? What were the contributing factors?	Which outcomes were achieved under P2? What were the contributing factors?	
P3 Policy Dialogue		9a	What impact has ReDSS had in terms of P3?		What were the benefits of being a ReDSS member for your organisation in terms of P3?	What were the benefits of being a ReDSS member for your organisation in terms of P3?	What were the benefits of being a ReDSS member for your organisation in terms of P3?			
		9b	What outcomes were achieved under P3? What were the contributing factors?		What outcomes were achieved under P3? What were the contributing factors?	What outcomes were achieved under P3? What were the contributing factors?	What outcomes were achieved under P3? What were the contributing factors?	What outcomes were achieved under P3? What were the contributing factors?	What outcomes were achieved under P3? What were the contributing factors?	
P4 Internal & External Coordination		10a	What impact has ReDSS had in terms of P4?		What were the benefits of being a ReDSS member for your organisation in terms of P4?	What were the benefits of being a ReDSS member for your organisation in terms of P4?	What were the benefits of being a ReDSS member for your organisation in terms of P4?			
		10b	What outcomes were achieved under P4? What were the contributing factors?		What outcomes were achieved under P4? What were the contributing factors?	What outcomes were achieved under P4? What were the contributing factors?	What outcomes were achieved under P4? What were the contributing factors?	What outcomes were achieved under P4? What were the contributing factors?	What outcomes were achieved under P4? What were the contributing factors?	
Efficiency		Value for money	11	How effectively has ReDSS used its resources to deliver on its strategy and ensure value for money?				How effectively has ReDSS used its resources to deliver on its strategy and ensure value for money?	How effectively has ReDSS used its resources to deliver on its strategy and ensure value for money?	
	12		What lessons can be learned to inform ReDSS 'next strategy'?		What lessons do you think can be learned from ReDSS work and should inform ReDSS 'next strategy'?	What lessons do you think can be learned from ReDSS work and should inform ReDSS 'next strategy'?				
Lessons	Lesson	13	Has ReDSS contributed to creating a common vision for improving durable solutions programming and policy dialogue in East Africa?							
		13a								



External Evaluation of the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat



## Introduction and Main Findings

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As part of the external evaluation of ReDSS in 2020, the evaluation team has collected **stories of change** from stakeholders (staff, members and partners). These stories represent the impact ReDSS has created over the years, which stakeholders believe to be of particular importance.

Each story is structured the following way: the **background** presents the situation “before” the change, the **change** identified is described, the interviewee presents its **rationale why this change is the most important** in her or his opinion, and **factors** that contributed to this change are identified.

This process is part of a narrative capture evaluation methodology called Most Significant Change (MSC), which aims to create a shared understanding of change, why it is important and what was required to achieve it. Through this detailed and resource intensive process, important themes on which ReDSS had a genuine impact have clearly emerged:

### **Multi-stakeholder policy dialogue (13 stories, 60%):**

1. Somalia: Engaging Local NGOs
4. Kenya: Engaging MSF in Durable Solutions
6. Ethiopia: Collective Focus and Advocacy
7. Somalia: Increased Role of Government on Durable Solutions
8. Somalia: Partnerships in Baidoa
9. Regional: Advocacy Letter on COVID-19
10. Ethiopia: Establishing consensus with RINGOs
14. Somalia: Displacement Discourse
16. Ethiopia: NGOs and the Durable Solutions Initiative (DSI)
18. Regional: A Multi-Stakeholder Approach to Navigate a Complex Political Space
20. Somalia: Clarity on the Durable Solutions Context
21. Regional: Mainstreaming Durable Solutions
22. Regional: Level and Quality of Engagement of NGOs and Donors on Durable Solutions

### **Research (3 stories, 14%):**

2. Somalia: Feedback Loop in Research
12. Somalia: Housing Program in Dollow
19. Somalia: Joint Study on IDPs Aspirations

### **Capacity Development (3 stories, 14%):**

11. Somalia: Establish a Durable Solutions Secretariat
13. Kenya: Local Integration Survey Tool
17. Ethiopia: Seminar on the Right to Work

### **Coordination (1 story, 5%):**

3. Ethiopia: Coordination in Jijiga

### **Country level engagement (story, 5%):**

5. Regional: ReDSS' Country Units

### **High-level impact on the lives of the displacement affected communities (1 story, 5%):**

15. Somalia: Access to Land and Property

This process clearly reveals where ReDSS has had the highest impact, **policy dialogue with 60% of the stories focused on actual change at the policy level**. Looking at the nature of the stories presented, other ReDSS engagements come directly as support to this higher-level objective. The **multi-stakeholder** approach is not only presented as a success but most importantly as one of these necessary factors to progress policy change.

It is important to note that one story is about the direct impact on peoples' lives and this is a major achievement for an organization that is not implementing programs directly with the displacement affected communities.

Not aware of the numbers presented above, ReDSS team has reviewed and prioritized the most significant stories, confirming where ReDSS has the most significant impact. While 2 stories in the selection confirm the overall prioritization, the other two present the staff's view that the **localized** approach is a direct contributor to the effective and impactful policy dialogue.

**Multi-stakeholder policy dialogue:**

- 7. Somalia: Increased Role of Government on Durable Solutions
- 18. Regional: A Multi-Stakeholder Approach to Navigate a Complex Political Space

**Country level engagement:**

- 5. Regional: ReDSS' Country Units

**Coordination:**

- 3. Ethiopia: Coordination in Jijiga

If ReDSS wants to build on its actual impact, these three concepts must be placed at the core of its coming strategy: **Policy dialogue, multi-stakeholder and localized**. Such conceptual framework builds on ReDSS 5 years of experience, its accumulated knowledge, its actions and how stakeholders directly exposed and engaged in ReDSS work are perceiving the added value of the network.

# 1. Somalia: Engaging Local NGOs

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## Context

Engagement with local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) has usually been theoretical, appearing as a requirement to comply within documents. It may have happened more genuinely sometimes but only in specific sectors. Local NGOs were not part of coordination efforts or policy dialogue on durable solutions.



## Change

After ReDSS' engagement, local partners have become part of regional policy dialogue and planning processes; they are equal participants to learning events, training and overall conversations on durable solutions. Local NGOs sometimes lead the policy discussion in the field. As a result, local NGOs are systematically included in all policy, planning and learning processes.

## Why it is important

Local NGOs engagement is now visible and tangible, as evidenced by all events records.

Working on durable solutions means providing long-term solutions to displacement, the focus of the work is post emergency, once humanitarian actor exit. Durable solutions are equivalent to a sustainability plan. Because of this perspective, local actors are essential, investing and empowering actors for which the country is their home is the only way to ensure sustainability.

## Factors

Engaging local NGOs in Somalia required consistent and continuous investment in capacity development of the local partners. ReDSS ensured that training on durable solutions was conducted at all levels, not only in the capitals but also in the refugee hosting regions. ReDSS has also recruited strong national staff that could drive the agenda in the field. Finally, for local NGOs engagement, it was necessary to have dedicated resources.



## 2. Somalia: Feedback Loop in Research

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### Context

Several organizations regularly conduct research for socio-economic programs in developing countries, including Somaliland. However, there was not always sufficient coordination between the organizations and thus, most research ended up asking similar questions to the same population over and over again. In addition, once the communities are consulted and research is concluded, organizations do not communicate the findings to the consulted populations. In 2019, ReDSS conducted a study on Somaliland Solutions Analysis.<sup>5</sup>



### Change

In the context of Somaliland Solutions Analysis, ReDSS shared the findings with its members and the government. It went further and provided feedback and communicated the recommendations to the communities involved. Since then, feedback to communities involved in research has been systematically adopted in research activities for ReDSS.

### Why it is important

The practice of ReDSS giving feedback to the community gives the community a voice and an opportunity to say what else could be done and thus take part in informing the next intervention. Based on research findings, communities were able to discuss the service delivery and improvement with the service providers.

### Factors

ReDSS' staff worked closely with the members, regularly engaged them and coordinated the work. Also, interviewees were brought together by ReDSS at different levels and there was continuous feedback on research findings to the interviewees. The solution analysis feedback involved multi stakeholder engagement between World Vision, Concern, ReDSS, the local CBOs and other ReDSS's members working in Somaliland.

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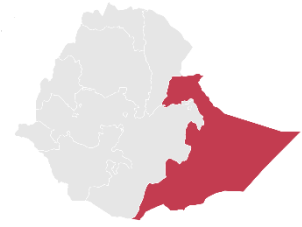
<sup>5</sup> Somaliland Solutions Analysis; Local integration Focus: Somaliland 2018, Durable Solutions Analysis

## 3. Ethiopia: Coordination in Jijiga

*Coordination in Jijiga involving UNCHR, ARRA, and the local government*

### **Context**

In 2019, stakeholders in Jijiga were not aware of ReDSS, including the local representation of the most engaged members regionally. ReDSS presented its role to its members and the government clarifying that by being a coordination and information hub, it is not an implementing agency. Initially there was some pushback on coordination, due to a lack of shared understanding of the process or the value. At the level of Jijiga region and at the woreda level (districts), durable solution data was not collected, centralized or analyzed.



### **Change**

After more than a year of engagement, with the support of ReDSS and UNHCR, the government is centralizing a database (5w), of all durable solutions activities. This has resulted in better use of resources, better targeting of activities, reduced duplication, and all actors being coordinated around the government.

### **Why it is important**

In a context of scarcity of resources, optimal use of resources is essential and duplication has been avoided. The use of 5W template eased the evaluation of projects for local government and NGOs.

### **Factors**

For coordination in Jijiga, it took multi-stakeholder engagement between the government, NGOs, and ReDSS. ReDSS had to develop templates (5W) that actors could use for consistent reporting on activities and against the strategy.

ReDSS had to convince the actors gradually, explaining the value of coordination activities, in their language.

For coordination, it was essential to have dedicated resources.

Finally, through local staff engaged in the community, ReDSS became a trusted actor.

## 4. Kenya: Engaging MSF in Durable Solutions

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### Context

For the last two years, Medicine Sans Frontiers (MSF) Kenya has participated in several ReDSS activities and reviewed various research conducted by ReDSS. MSF also participated in workshops with an interest to further understand durable solutions. However, MSF is a medical humanitarian actor involved in emergencies and was therefore reluctant to see its responsibility extend to durable solutions.



### Change

The joint ReDSS initiatives provided MSF with a platform to network and learn from actors involved in durable solutions. It allowed MSF to better understand the Comprehensive Response Refugee Framework (CRRF) and especially how it translates into concrete actions.

### Why it is important

Exposure and knowledge to durable solutions was lacking for MSF. With a durable solutions perspective, refugees are included in national services and MSF, which focused on emergency health, has a responsibility to be involved. Humanitarian actors play their humanitarian role but there is a responsibility integrated to a bigger picture. It is still hard to articulate durable solutions for humanitarian actors but the work ReDSS is doing is paving the way. MSF's role in protracted refugee situations is still to be fully defined but it is relevant. Though durable solutions have not been institutionalized yet as an objective, the leadership is sensitized and interested. There is need to internalize it further.

### Factors

It took some individual exposure of likeminded staff at MSF to the work that can be done on durable solutions to sensitize them on the need to integrate durable solutions into humanitarian work. The network created by ReDSS provided very relevant resources to MSF. MSF benefited from the knowledge emerging from the networks, members and synthesized by ReDSS. ReDSS knowledge pieces and research (displacement financing architecture, for instance) is extremely valuable to organizations that are new to durable solutions. It is a useful tool to explain what is needed for durable solutions. The localized analysis, such as the one on Garissa, are also extremely relevant. Events such as the Joint Durable Solutions Regional Program Learning Workshop 06/2019 brought together a lot of different stakeholders and is also a useful tool for organizations that are new to durable solutions; offering a rich network and understanding of the actors and what they work on. The regular meetings are also useful ways to exchange information.

## 5. Regional: ReDSS' Country Units

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### Context

For two years, ReDSS' scope was regional until the Somalia unit was established in 2017. Other country units have now been established – Ethiopia and Kenya. Though very relevant for the members, the regional perspective appeared somehow remote from the operational reality and the lives of the displacement affected populations.

### Change

Establishment of Country Units

### Why it is important

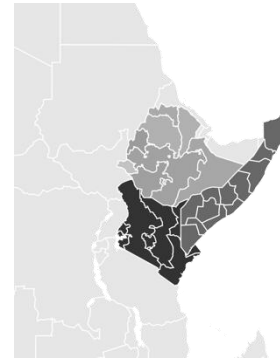
As ReDSS is supporting its members and partners to be more relevant to the local realities, it is essential to “walk the talk” and to be engaged at the local level, especially when working on area-based planning.

### Factors

The idea and request for ReDSS Country Units came from the members, as they needed more localized support.

In the case of Somalia, after the announcement of the closure of Dadaab camp and as all the members were focused on Kenya and Somalia, ReDSS was perceived as a critical interlocutor in this process and had to establish ReDSS Somalia.

While trial and error were required to find what would make the most sense for Somalia, the use of joint analysis from Solutions Analysis conducted at the time helped to identify the key entry points and priorities to invest in.

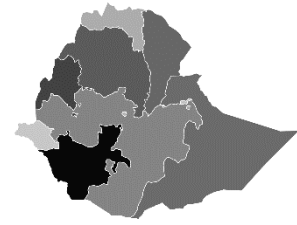


## 6. Ethiopia: Collective Focus and Advocacy

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### Context

The Government of Ethiopia made the policy decision to facilitate the movement of internally displaced people back to their home. Such efforts were initiated without consultations with people themselves and with partners supporting IDPs and host communities. The lack of prior assessment to ensure adequate reintegration and sufficient resources was raising concerns and risks.



### Change

ReDSS was able to engage with the government on a sensitive issue; it was at the forefront of the policy dialogue and helped organize members around similar and prioritized issues. It also expanded the coordination between INGOs to the durable solutions Working Group at the UN and worked towards a dialogue with the government so this policy would not be perpetuated without proper foresight.

### Why it is important

INGOs are all working for the communities, displaced and hosting, and it is essential that people are not returned to insecure places. On such politically sensitive issues, it is harder to have an influence as a single organization.

### Factors

Severity of the situation created a burning platform for change. ReDSS managed to become a vehicle to collect feedback and bring this analysis as collective view to present to and discuss with the government. ReDSS was forceful in ensuring that this agenda was not lost, it was dedicated to this issue, which may have been harder for organization with wider mandate. ReDSS managed to keep the dialogue open, and move the issues to the next level.

## 7. Somalia: Increased Role of Government on Durable Solutions

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### Context

In a post-conflict context and the emerging role of the Federal Government, durable solutions were tightly linked to the displacement situation. Expertise and institutions were very weak and overwhelmed by the challenges of displacement. More broadly, there was no joint understanding of durable solutions among all stakeholders.



### Change

The Durable Solutions Secretariat under the Ministry of Planning is now instrumental on the overall coordination between the durable solutions actors. The government is now the entry point for durable solutions programming and each federal member state is engaged. With government playing the role of a coordinator, durable solutions actors contribute to the strategy and set the policies in line with the National Development Plan. The government coordinates with the Bureau of Statistics to collect data on research and operations.

### Why it is important

The role of government was missing in durable solutions. The NGOs were developing their program separately. For sustainability, it is essential for the government to play a leading role that no other entity can take. With government at the forefront, there is an immediate impact on the issues and lives of displaced.

### Factors

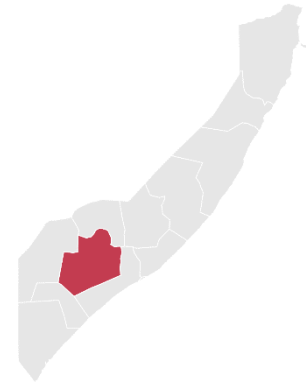
To engage government in a leading role, ReDSS developed capacity building activities. To bring the government on board, ReDSS conducted regular durable solutions training. ReDSS evidence-based research were made very relevant to the programs and became essential in influencing programming. The relevant recommendations from research were practical for the government and other actors to implement. It was essential to have a joint understanding of the context, powers and interests within clans on several issues. For example, understanding the formal and informal systems on land and building the capacity of systems on land issues for the government became a government priority as a results of research and multi-stakeholder conversations on durable solutions.

## 8. Somalia: Partnerships in Baidoa

*Change of mindset of the partners on durable solutions in Baidoa Somalia*

### **Context**

Before ReDSS' engagement, each agency was engaging and working mostly bilaterally. Humanitarian agencies were continuing with parallel service delivery mechanisms while development actors were designing development interventions without adequate considerations on impacts on humanitarian assistance including those for displacement affected populations. Facing this gap, the government could hardly coordinate and ensure coherence across all the development actors' work on durable solutions.



### **Change**

ReDSS has contributed to create a shared understanding of the need for longer term solutions for displacement. By providing a platform for continued engagement among different actors, the barriers between the humanitarian and development partners have come down, which has made it easier for the government to integrate a wide range of agencies' perspectives. Such work was not only done in a coordinated but also a candid way, which now makes difficult conversations possible.

### **Why it is important**

Every agency on either side was aware of the gap but had assumed that such a challenge was impossible to address. ReDSS has proved that it is possible and now substantial solutions are designed and implemented for displacement affected populations in a more coherent manner.

### **Factors**

These changes in mindset do not come from one coordination meeting but rather from long, consistent, continuous, dedicated and educated efforts, such as those supported by ReDSS. These efforts have fostered spontaneous coordination rather than one that is "forced" by facilitating discussions on common interests and providing the space of substantive discussions.

## 9. Regional: Advocacy Letter on COVID-19

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### Context

Advocacy “calls” linked to crisis are rarely united around a group of organizations. Each organization usually finds its own way to raise important issues through its own channels, but it is not developed through a coordinated action. Even if the messages are aligned, relying on the same messages to be repeated by many organizations usually leads to fatigue rather than impact.



### Change

Joint letter of all ReDSS members to call attention on the vulnerability to COVID-19 of the people subjected to forced migration.

### Why is it important?

Joint letters carry more impact, more meaning and more appeal.

Joint advocacy not only helps carry key messages externally with governments and donors but also internally within the staff of the signing organizations.

### Factors

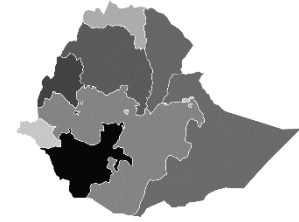
ReDSS coordinated the efforts, drafted the letter and there was no cost involved to the members.



## 10. Ethiopia: Establishing consensus with RINGOs

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*RINGOs (Refugee International NGO network) shared views on the Refugee Proclamation and the CRRF*



### **Context**

ReDSS established itself in Ethiopia as a credible and resourceful actor. It particularly focused on forming its neutral stance, which was well received by the stakeholders engaged on displacement. However, this position also translated into some form of restraint, where ReDSS would refrain from pushing messages, issues or action on the policy agenda by fear of diverting from its neutrality.

### **Change**

ReDSS has used its knowledge to generate a joint view and create an impact on policy through a practical and actionable analysis of major displacement policies.

### **Why it is important**

It allowed ReDSS members and other partners to engage and take action on very important displacement policies in Ethiopia

### **Factors**

ReDSS had the knowledge, established credibility and neutrality and made it known to its members.

The analysis capacity was strong and translated into a short piece that was both accessible and actionable.

# 11. Somalia: Establish a Durable Solutions Secretariat

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## Context

Before, there was no entity involved clearly on displacement. International actors were competing on the roles and no dedicated unit focused on displacement and durable solutions. There was a lot of different and competing actors of the government and low accountability and stalemate in the midst of a displacement crisis.

## Change

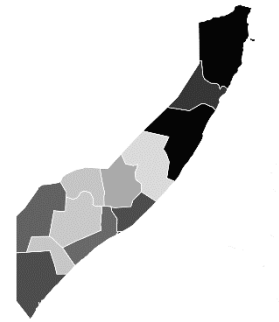
With ReDSS support, there is more accountability and clarity of roles among durable solutions actors. Actors understand their role and how it fits to national development plan. The secretariat is government owned although ReDSS supported its establishment. There is clear and regular sense with government and local NGOs officials in a way that international actors have not been able to achieve.

## Why it is important

ReDSS helped to enhance accountability and clarity of roles. This type of ReDSS capacity development can lead to a significant policy impact. ReDSS helps enhance accountability of members in Somalia.

## Factors

ReDSS consistent efforts, patience, collaboration and building trust were essential in supporting the establishment of the secretariat in Somalia. Actors understand their role because of the way the secretariat was set up.



## 12. Somalia: Housing Program in Dollow

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### **Context**

Housing for IDPs is a very serious challenge in Somalia. In most cases, de facto situations and solutions are not sustainable and often expose IDPs to eviction and homelessness. The tenant patches model, for instance, was a common approach which came at a high price and nonetheless often resulted in eviction.



### **Change**

ReDSS led a research on different types of housing model for IDPs. Some of the models and recommendations included the engagement of the private sector. With the new models, the new types of tenure allowed access to land and are effectively addressing the problem of eviction.

### **Why it is important**

Applying research to program design is essential. It means that programs can more adequately respond to the needs of beneficiaries. The learnings from this research will influence new programs.

### **Factors**

Evidence-based, practical, information that can be used in operations.

## 13. Kenya: Local Integration Survey Tool

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### Context

Before ReDSS supported the development of a local integration tool, there was no common work on the issue and no common use of identical indicators in local integration survey. There were different tools adopted by different actors in perception surveys.

### Change

Currently there is a common tool that members adopt to fit their objectives in surveys.

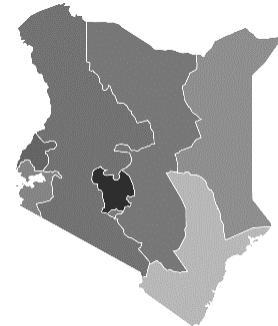
### Why it is important

The adoption of the tool was necessary for this particular study in Kenya. LWF feels that by adopting a common tool, they are developing their ownership as a member. Also, the local integration tool has worked in the ongoing integration perception survey in Somalia.

### Factors

LWF has adopted the ReDSS local integration survey tool to conduct a local integration survey in Kenya. LWF Kenya borrowed the tool that was used in Somalia in a survey to integrate Somali national returnees. The tool has been tried and tested in Somalia. The Somalia survey findings were disseminated to members and thus LWF became aware of the tool. LWF needed a tool to test the locally integrating of refugees in Kenya and the ReDSS local integration survey tool was available and accessible.

For Kenya, the LWF is conducting the survey on locally integrated refugees living in Kenya and thus it had to modify the tool to fit the Kenyan context.

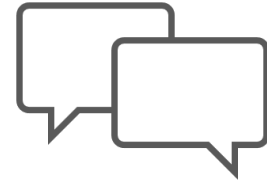


## 14. Somalia: Displacement Discourse

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### Context

In 2016, displacement policy dialogue was dominated by the discussions on the closure of Dadaab and the return of refugees to Somalia. The discussions were mainly focused on how to organize the return of and refugees willing to leave Dadaab and much less attention was given to the plight of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and host communities in Somalia.



### Change

The discourse has now shifted. The issue of returning refugees from Dadaab is no longer high on the agenda, whereas there is increasing awareness about the need to address the needs of the most vulnerable in the displacement-affected communities. From this perspective, the discourse on displacement in Somalia is now encompassing more ideas and initiatives on how to best support the government and the communities in Somalia to respond to these needs. IDPs, refugee returnees, asylum seekers, refugees and host communities are better integrated into the development plans, policies and legal documents. Donors are also increasingly aware of the need to invest and to apply an integrated/inclusive approach to targeting returnees (that include people from different groups). The discourse is also more focused on the need for more investments in development of infrastructure and basic services to ensure that the areas that are affected by displacement and return are apt facilitate integration of displacement-affected communities.

### Why it is important

The change in discourse involving more inclusive approaches and the need for general investments in Somalia are important because it improves social cohesion and makes sure not only refugee returnees are supported but also their host communities, including IDPs. Providing support only to returnees may risk creating more tension or even violence between various groups.

### Factors

Such a drastic change of views took time and efforts at all levels. Such efforts were consistent and continuous.

ReDSS was a major actor at the advocacy level but also on capacity building, creating and using evidence for policy dialogue and capacity building.

Numerous and continuous meetings with government, international actors, at higher level, repeating the same messages have created change.

## 15. Somalia: Access to Land and Property

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### *IDPs Access to Land and Property Titles in Baidoa Municipality*

#### **Context**

In November 2016, a large number of returnees and IDPs arrived in Baidoa. More than 500 IDPs settled on both private and government-owned land. Baidoa city became congested, with the number of IDPs more than doubling in 2019. This put pressure on the city causing an influx in informal settlements, food insecurity, hygiene and sanitation problems, and water shortages. The returnees and refugees put up shelters in both private and public land and those in private land were often evicted.



#### **Change**

Between 2018 and 2019, the municipality gave 15km<sup>2</sup> of land to the IDPs who risked evictions from their previous settlement. The first phase had 1000 households moved to new land. The households were supported by OMRDS, IOMCCCM and UNHABITAT, NRC and Save the Children to build makeshift houses for each family. In June, more 2000 households were moved. Also, 6,500 IDPs who were able to buy land in Baidoa were supported to access land tenure. Currently, IDPs have access to land tenure documents and the government provide those documents to protect the Housing Land and Property (HLP) rights of the IDPs. Now, inevitable eviction notices are only given at a minimum of 60 days.

#### **Why it is important**

IDPs are a global challenge and an issue faced by major cities. Baidoa is an epicenter for IDPs. With the IDP influx in the city, informal settlements were created in the town. Thus, the Baidoa municipality knew that they had to find lasting solutions, otherwise the city would become a slum. There was a need to protect the safety and security of the city to avoid any protection issues against the IDPs.

#### **Factors**

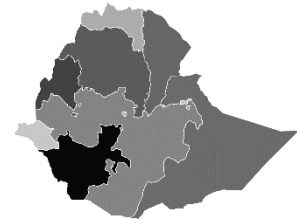
As an immediate response to 2017 massive evictions in Mogandishu, the Baidoa Municipality brought together UN organizations, INGOs, government ministries and Baidoa people on a workshop in January 2018. The workshop discussed how to best mitigate the risk of evictions and seek other sustainable solutions. A multilateral discussion was held on how to avoid any protection issues against the IDPs. The local municipality agreed to provide a public site, and construct humanitarian facilities. The government officially announced the decision to give land to the IDPs. ReDSS played a learning role and brought people together through HLP, Area based planning approaches workshops, Private Sector engagement workshops and developing Intension surveys and the importance of social integration. ReDSS also helped in understanding how the work in Baidoa was taking place at a more global level.

## 16. Ethiopia: NGOs and the Durable Solutions Initiative (DSI)

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### **Context**

The Ethiopia Durable Solutions Initiative (DSI) provides a principled operational framework and platform to design and implement durable solutions in support of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ethiopia and host communities/communities at locations of return, relocation or local integration. It was first discussed at a time when the dialogue with the government was stalled on these issues. During that time UN agencies improved their own coordination and exchange of information, but NGOs felt excluded and did not participate to meetings convened by the UN.



### **Change**

All international NGOs are participating and engaged in the DSI. In a matter of few months, participation became consistent and continuous. Among international NGOs, there is now a sense of wanting to work together on durable solutions for IDPs.

### **Why it is important**

DSI cannot be successful without NGOs. NGOs have the local knowledge and the knowledge of the affected populations, their presence on the ground is essential to understand the context and design relevant responses. They also have the courage to advocate for changes that are required to help these populations more effectively. Their presence is essential to shaping and prioritizing the engagement, where to start, how to start.

### **Factors**

ReDSS' willingness to make it work, Denmark as a donor pushed for NGO participation and engagement. Danish Refugee Council (DRC) was willing to use its roster to help recruit staff.

## 17. Ethiopia: Seminar on the Right to Work

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*ReDSS contribution to a common research, policy, and programme agenda in the refugee response in Ethiopia: ReDSS Seminar on the Right to Work Directives, Addis Ababa, September 8th, 2020*

### **Context**

ReDSS hosted a seminar discussion in September 2020 to discuss a recent policy directive that was issued by the Ethiopian government (known as the right to work directive), which was linked to a broader discussion among actors on the challenges and opportunities in advancing economic opportunities in refugee-hosting areas in Ethiopia. Due to the sensitivity of the context and reluctance of government authorities to speak to a large audience that they are unfamiliar with, ReDSS worked to select a small number of actors that are key within each of their respective spaces (including ReDSS members, UN agencies, development actors and donors, and research/academia) to represent their respective communities and contribute to the discussion. ReDSS' staff and research consultants held bilateral discussions with most of the participants prior to the seminar, to ensure that they clearly understood the objectives of the seminar, and the need to focus on contributing to a constructive dialogue.

### **Change**

There are several areas in which we can identify changes as a result of this event. In particular, the participation of government authorities and their willingness to answer direct questions in a multi-stakeholder forum helped to contribute to a better understanding of the policy frameworks, and the opportunities and entry points for programming, research, and development actors to support advancing solutions. At the same time, the positive nature of the discussion, and willingness of partners to ask practical questions aimed at identifying opportunities for partnerships, helped to build trust with government actors, hopefully supporting their ability and willingness to continue contributing to multi-stakeholder engagements moving forward.

### **Why it is important**

This change clearly illustrates the role that ReDSS can and should aim to play in partnering with a range of stakeholders to promote collaborative dialogue and collective actions. The event, while primarily focused on a policy discussion, touched on all four pillars of ReDSS work: the seminar included presentations from the government on the policy directive, from a research actor carrying out labour market-focused research, as well as programming actors working on economic engagement programmes, all while coordinating a discussion among a broad set of actors cutting across various constituencies.

### **Factors**

A significant amount of time went into the planning for the event, mostly through a series of bilateral discussions with key actors. Three separate meetings were held with government authorities prior to the seminar, and these preparatory meetings certainly helped to steer the event in a direction which helped foster a positive discussion. ReDSS, as a neutral arbiter willing to constructively engage with all sets of stakeholders, helped to ensure the participation of a wide range of actors, each of whom is key to unlocking many of the challenges faced within the refugee response.



## 18. Regional: A Multi-Stakeholder Approach to Navigate a Complex Political Space

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### Context

Displacement is a political issue, it is a development challenge with humanitarian components. Finding durable solutions to displacement therefore requires to engage in complex political spheres, to involve policy-makers, development and humanitarian actors at the same time, while taking into account each of their interests and perspectives to find common ground and make compromises.

Back in 2016/ 2017, NGOs were not comfortable to engage in political discussion or didn't have the required skills/ capacity (including time) and were therefore not invited at the negotiation table as an equal stakeholder while talking about displacement issues. At the same time, the lack of trust and interaction between actors, as well as the lack of data and evidence, didn't allow for stakeholders to interact and create a common agenda in the search of durable solutions in the Horn of Africa.

### Change

In the span of a few years, ReDSS has managed to create space, at local, national and regional levels, to bring different stakeholders together to discuss and debate, agree and disagree, based on trust and compromises to make collective progress. It has initiated and engaged in policy processes and programming solutions This would go from discussing land governance issues in Somalia, to working with national governments and IGAD on key policy processes. The platforms have also engaged with development actors and donors contributing to a shift in addressing protracted displacement in the different displacement contexts

### Why is it important?

Creating opportunities for policy makers and practitioners to meet and discuss, to have continuous dialogue with authorities even in difficult situations, has proven essential to move away from addressing displacement as a humanitarian challenge towards investing in the search for durable solutions. ReDSS has fostered inclusive, trusted and collaborative working approaches, and pursued strategic partnerships, collaboration and relations with UNHCR, World Bank, donors and host governments. ReDSS has acted as a coordination and/or information hub contributing to improve joint learning and programming. The demand for ReDSS' support across countries and across stakeholders, and its recognition as the "go to" organisation on durable solutions in its respective contexts, speaks to its relevance and impact.

### Factors

- While acknowledging that displacement is a developmental and political issue, it has been essential to invest in capacities of NGOs to be able to navigate such complex environments, while at the same time maintaining a principled and rights-based response. This is also to ensure that NGOs operational perspectives and learning are contributing to policy processes bringing different and complementary analyses to those of the UN and other humanitarian and development stakeholders.
- There have been positive changes with a stronger focus on, area based and integrated refugee and/or IDP–host community programming. In Somalia and Ethiopia, new durable solutions coordination structures are also being implemented, in particular at local and municipal levels, allowing for increased area-based multi-stakeholder coordination, whole-of-government involvement, and ownership of processes (i.e. durable solutions working groups at local and

municipal levels in Somalia and Ethiopia). These working groups are playing a critical role in shifting responses from clusters to multi-stakeholder coordination especially in urban context, bringing together development, humanitarian, resilience, and state building actors under the leadership of local authorities and municipalities.

- The NGO nature of the Secretariat allows it to be independent and flexible, while working closely with all relevant stakeholders.

## 19. Somalia: Joint Study on IDPs Aspirations

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### Context

The study started in 2018 and its findings were published in 2020. Before then, there was unstructured, agency-specific, snapshot data on IDPs aspiration. The knowledge on IDPs aspiration was not structured and scattered among the various stakeholders.

### Change

A joint study on IDPs aspirations was conducted bringing together donors, government and members. It was the first longitudinal study on IDP aspirations in Somalia.

### Why it is important

It is a good picture of how ReDSS is working in line with its set principles. It demonstrates how ReDSS focuses on materializing the multi-stakeholder engagement.

### Factors

Holding the budget in a neutral partner (ReDSS) worked out well for the study. ReDSS managed to convince the partners to have a joint study on IDP aspirations, instead of separate agency ones. There was a genuine agreement on how the study would be conducted and how the results would be communicated and shared. The government was engaged and agreed to use the findings of the study. ReDSS was a trusted actor in this difficult context. Its role as a learning partner was important in understanding the context and engaging the authorities. ReDSS held a lot of discussions to ensure the government was onboard for the joint study. It is essential to have dedicated qualified resources to make joint initiatives work. Persistence and resilience made the study a success.

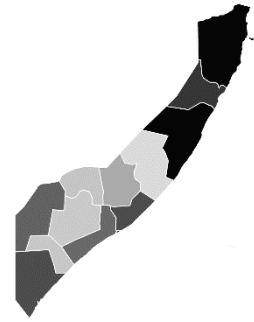


## 20. Somalia: Clarity on the Durable Solutions Context

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### Context

In 2016, the durable solutions context was nebulous, with a very high number of initiatives and active stakeholders (17), making it challenging to engage. There was little coordination and it was difficult to achieve a good understanding of what the work on durable solutions required. The UN Working Group (UNWG) was coordinating some effort within the UN but was little engaged outside.



### Change

Clarification of the durable solutions governance, its body of knowledge and the good practices that are happening in the community.

### Why it is important

In Somalia, there is now a shared view that assistance is being provided but sustainability is not sufficiently considered. The idea of supporting Somalis to be more resilient and investing in longer-term solutions pervades into most engagements. This is why it is critical to make more strides in this area and contribute to a lasting change.

### Factors

ReDSS was critical in making this change happen, slowly and methodically. ReDSS has been dedicated to the durable solutions agenda in Somalia. ReDSS' efforts were also deployed to work more closely with the UNWG. ReDSS was very active in sharing knowledge. ReDSS has improved relationships between stakeholders and has provided clarity about "who is doing what".

## 21. Regional: Mainstreaming Durable Solutions

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### **Context**

Five years ago, humanitarian development actors in East Africa perceived displacement as an add-on to their central work of providing humanitarian aid. They might have included displacement statistics in their reports, but they saw primary responsibility for responses and solutions as belonging to UNHCR.

### **Change**

Displacement is now an integrated component of all humanitarian and development programming in the region.

ReDSS' has influenced people to absorb and internalize that displacement is one of the most critical issues facing people and communities in East Africa. This has shifted the priorities of donors and agencies, and influenced policy. Mainstream development actors like USAID and the World Bank now have a strong focus on displacement.

### **Why is it important?**

Of all ReDSS many achievements, this is the most pervasive. It has impacted so many actors across the sector, shifting the way they think, work and collaborate. Displacement and durable solutions are now on everyone's agenda, and everyone sees themselves as having a role to play.

### **Factors**

The timing of ReDSS establishment was a critical success factor. ReDSS was able to build momentum, so that as more actors came on board, there was a multiplier effect. This was further strengthened by increasing global focus and recognition of displacement as an enduring issue of importance.

## 22. Regional: Level and Quality of Engagement of NGOs and Donors on Durable Solutions

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### **Context**

Before ReDSS engagement, very few NGOs and donors were engaged in the Durable Solution discussions and events. The quality of discussion and outputs was generally limited.

### **Change**

In the context of durable solutions, ReDSS inspired quality and high level of knowledge, of presentation and of engagement of NGOs and donors. Currently, the number and the depth of engagement has significantly increased.

### **Why is it important?**

ReDSS is a coalition and this change reflects that ReDSS had done their most fundamental role to convene and engage NGOs and donors to share, learn, and grow organically.

### **Factors**

ReDSS was critical in inspiring the confidence of other NGOs to come on board. ReDSS has convinced donors and academics to engage on durable solutions. Passion, focus, openness and commitment was essential in inspiring NGO and donor engagement.