EMERGING GOOD PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED IN EU-REINTEG PROGRAMMING

June 2018 – review of year 1

Introduction

ReDSS is supporting the knowledge management and learning component for three EU RE-INTEG NGO consortiums (EIDACS, JSC and SDSC)\(^1\) while coordinating with the UNHabitat and DSIRS’s\(^2\) consortia. In order to facilitate cross-learning and document REINTEG work, ReDSS is beginning a process to capture and document emerging lessons learned so as to inform and adapt existing RE-INTEG programs, as well as to inform new solutions-focused programs.

This is the starting point of a continuous process over the next three years. Once or twice a year, ReDSS and its EU-REINTEG partners will undertake a similar review to update the lessons learned document, which is meant to inform real time learning and adaptation. The primary audience for this document is the 3 EU-REINTEG consortia for which ReDSS is the learning partner- JSC, EIDACS and SDSC. The document is also relevant to other EU-REINTEG partners. A separate version of this document will also be produced for an external audience, where it is hoped that learning from EU-REINTEG will inform other ongoing or upcoming durable solutions programming.

Methodology and limitations

Key informant interviews were conducted in June 2018 with individuals involved in the implementation of the EU-REINTEG program, specifically representatives of the Juba Foundation, TASCO, World Vision, NRC, Concern, the UN RCO’s office (and former UN-Habitat staff), ReDSS and the EU. These interviews were complemented with a review of key project documents, most significantly project proposals, year 1 reports and baseline study reports. Based on EU REINTEG members suggestions, the key questions that this exercise sought to answer were:

- What has worked well and not so well in RE-INTEG programming?
- What improvements to the program have already been made or could be made?

The key thematic areas that were explored in relation to the above questions were:

- Use of collective outcomes/ indicators
- Implementation of area-based approaches
- Engagement with displacement-affected communities (DAC)
- Engagement with government and local authorities
- Research, learning, and adaptive management (and within this the role of ReDSS as a learning partner)
- Localization
- The harmonization of project approaches/processes.

This was a fairly light assessment. It should not be seen as a project evaluation, and the emerging lessons presented below are based on anecdotal evidence provided by those directly involved in the implementation of the project. The exercise did not focus on individual sectors- more in-depth lessons learned on individual sectors will be gathered the next time this exercise is conducted.

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\(^1\) EIDACS: Enhancing Integration of Displacement Affected Communities in Somalia; JSC: Jubaland Solutions Consortium and SDSC: Somaliland Durable Solutions Consortium

\(^2\) Durable Solutions for IDPs and Returnees in Somalia (DSIRS)
EMERGING LESSONS LEARNED

1. Collective outcomes and indicators

_The ReDSS Framework (operationalization of the IASC) can be used to design solutions-focused programs._ The JSC, EIDACS and SDSC have adopted a harmonized, solutions-oriented approach across the three consortia. Four common outcomes have been adopted, focused on local governance, access to basic services, livelihoods, and research and learning. In order to measure progress towards these collective outcomes, consortia partners have adopted 10 outcome-level indicators that were taken directly from either the IASC Framework or the ReDSS Framework. As highlighted below, this process has not been without its challenges.

_When indicators from the ReDSS Framework are used in programming, they should be contextualized and clearly defined._ The adoption of these outcome indicators has presented some challenges for EU-REINTEG partners, including the lack of common definitions; the need to contextualize; the lack of guidance on measurement; and the lack of agreement on disaggregation and frequency of data collection. Many of these challenges were due to shortcomings in coordination during the design phase. ReDSS have supported consortia partners to start to address these challenges through the development of an outcomes monitoring framework in 2018, which defines the 10 common outcome indicators used by the consortia and provides tools and survey questions for measuring the indicators, but ideally this work should have been done during the design stage with greater coordination between implementing agencies, and input from DACs and key government representatives. A greater engagement of Somali national NGO partners in project design would have also helped. The outcomes monitoring framework will need to be tested, and further adaptations may be required in the future. ReDSS may also need to provide ongoing support to partners in applying the outcomes monitoring framework.

_The outcomes monitoring data gathered by EU-REINTEG consortia should be used for multiple purposes,_ including generating lessons to inform future solutions-oriented programs in Somalia and beyond; measuring how interventions are contributing to solutions; identifying vulnerabilities specific to IDPs and returnees; and informing ReDSS’ policy influencing efforts at local, national and regional level. Significantly, and recognizing the complex and fluid implementing environment and the multi-year nature of EU-REINTEG, outcomes monitoring data should contribute significantly to real-time learning to inform adaptations to program activities and approaches. ReDSS should play a key role in periodically bringing partners together to review monitoring data alongside other learning.

2. Area-based approaches

_The geographical area of intervention for a solutions-focused project should be carefully determined and clearly defined._ The “area” in which an area-based approach is implemented should be determined based upon a number of factors, including significantly:

- The mix of populations within this area (displacement status and other diversity factors).
- The level of vulnerability within the DAC as a whole.
- The existence of displacement-specific vulnerabilities.
- The existence of, or potential for, locally-owned area-based planning. Interventions should seek to feed into area-based planning.
All EU-REINTEG projects have adopted an area-based approach. One example is the use of “incubator locations” under the EIDACS project. These locations (in the target districts of Baidoa, Afgoye and Merca) are intended to act as incubators for identifying and testing working solutions and will be the starting point for government- and civil-society-led replication in other areas. The incubator locations were selected on the basis of needs and vulnerability, as well as likelihood for being an area of returns or IDP influx in the future. Each incubator location consists of a cluster of settlements, and is populated by IDPs and returnees, as well as host community. Each DAC forum covers one incubator location and is comprised of representatives from each of the settlements in the incubator location.

There remains a paucity of learning on how to operationalize area-based approaches in DACs. EU-REINTEG offers an excellent opportunity to generate learning on this.

**Targeting should be based predominantly on vulnerability, but a pragmatic approach that avoids doing harm should be adopted.** An area-based approach is characterized by its focus on needs and vulnerabilities within a geographic area, rather than among a specific population group. Having a streamlined approach to targeting is important - partners within the SDSC have adopted a standard criteria for beneficiary selection, which prioritizes vulnerability, but also seeks to ensure refugees, IDPs and host communities all benefit from interventions. Targeting also needs to be based on a sound context analysis, which appreciates and understands clan dynamics and other power dynamics within the DAC. The approach to targeting can vary from individual project intervention to intervention - respondents highlighted that individual beneficiaries can be predominantly found under outcome 3 (livelihoods). Outcomes 1 and 2 are more focused on strengthening services and local governance and less focused on the selection of individual beneficiaries.

**Area-based programming should be aligned to existing locally-owned area-based plans. In the absence of these, area-based programming should contribute to/support their development.** Several respondents felt that their EU-REINTEG project could have done more to understand and feed into locally-owned development plans. Both EIDACS and JSC also acknowledged that the process of developing community-level plans (as part of their projects) should have been more aligned to district/regional level planning.

**An effective area-based approach is dependent on ensuring complementarity with other actors and programs within the defined geographical area.** An individual solutions-focused project does not need to address all the needs and vulnerabilities within an area, indeed this can result in a project being spread rather too thinly. Several respondents highlighted the need to work more effectively with other actors and programs. Solutions-focused projects should seek to understand the planning and interventions that exist, the existing gaps that can be filled, and the opportunities to advance solutions that can be capitalized on. Critical to such an approach is ongoing context analysis, as well as establishing clear ways of working with/collaborating with actors external to the program. This may include establishing clear referral pathways. Given the periodic emergencies experienced in project areas, it will also entail clearly defining roles between the longer-term, solutions-focused EU-REINTEG programming and humanitarian actors/interventions.

### 3. Engaging with government and local authorities

**Early engagement at all levels has proved critical to secure government buy-in.** From the outset, the EU engaged the Federal Government of Somalia and the regional member states in the planning for the program. The government were involved in evaluating project proposals. All three consortia have involved regional and local government in the planning and launch of their
projects. In the EIDACS project for example, South West State, through the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation (MoPIC), was significantly involved in the planning for the project launch and the Baidoa District Commissioner’s office supported the project in identifying land to be used for school development within the incubator locations.

**The ongoing engagement of government in project implementation provides opportunities to influence government policies on displacement and solutions.** Government representatives participate in project steering committees and the project monitoring of all 3 consortia. The SDSC for example, engages government representatives in quarterly monitoring visits that have helped to influence government planning. Furthermore, respondents highlighted that there have been changes in government attitudes and approaches following project engagement and sensitization. JSC representatives highlighted how local authorities have been more welcoming of IDPs as a result of sensitizations and dialogue on HLP rights, and have been more willing to provide land to IDPs.

There is a need for more training and sensitization among key local actors on durable solutions concepts and related issues. It is critical that government and local authorities having a strong understanding of the often unfamiliar and complex concept of durable solutions, as well as how to promote and facilitate solutions. Several respondents highlighted that a ReDSS durable solutions training in Hargeisa had received positive feedback from local actors, helping to increase understanding and start dialogue. There is a need to redouble these efforts and increase follow up/support to those who have been trained especially at member states level. More specialized sensitizations and dialogues on more specific issues, such as those conducted on HLP rights by the Juba Foundation and NRC, have also proved fruitful.

**Solutions actors should work collaboratively with government actors to identify their capacity enhancement needs.** As well as training and sensitization, supporting governments and local authorities to lead and coordinate solutions processes will require tangible support. Capacity enhancement support should be developed in consultation with those who will benefit from it, and in coordination with other agencies.

An example of this is EIDACS: they have supported a line ministry (the MoP) to establish a 6 person monitoring team, and have also supported the district authorities to hire one HLP Officer.

4. Displacement Affected Community engagement

**Existing community structures, capacities and power dynamics should be mapped at the start of a solutions-focused project, and new community groups should not be formed unless they fill gaps and bring significant value-add.** The SDSC, JSC and EIDACs built time for this into their year one activities. For example, EIDACS conducted stakeholder-mapping exercises in their incubator locations to identify existing community groups and influential leaders and understand community and clan dynamics within different settlements.

**Engaging people together jointly in planning and activity groups can help to increase social cohesion.** Respondents were able to point to increased collaboration between IDPs, returnees and host communities and highlight anecdotal evidence of improved relations between these groups. A SDSC representative pointed to the formation of self-help groups comprised of a mixture of IDPs, host communities and returnees as providing a platform for increased collaborations and planning, as well as creating social cohesion. A JSC representative pointed out that joint information and sensitizations on HLP rights had given the host community a new respect for the rights of IDPs.
Accountability to displacement-affected communities must be established through prioritizing a two-way flow of information. Displacement-affected communities (DACs) must be central to the implementation of solutions-focused programming and learning processes. Both “proactive” (actively soliciting feedback from DACs) and “reactive” (establishing channels for DACs to provide feedback/make complaints when they wish) approaches can be used to engage DACs as key project stakeholders. All three consortia have either developed, or are in the process of developing, community feedback/complaints mechanisms. Several respondents highlighted the need to communicate more effectively with the displacement-affected community as a whole, noting that information often does not reach much further than the community groups with which the project engages. Opportunities to engage displacement-affected communities in project monitoring, as well as reflection and adaptation processes, should also be explored.

Programming should support the displacement-affected community to articulate their needs and collaborate with a wide range of actors, most importantly the local authorities. Solutions-focused programming should aim to support sustainable, inclusive community groups that can meaningfully engage with other local actors in advocacy and joint planning. The SDSC, JSC and EIDACS have made a good start in this through establishing DAC forums\(^3\), and supporting these forums to develop action plans. To date, the DAC forums have primarily interacted with the project implementers. In order to become key players in an area-based approach, the DAC forums must be capacitated and facilitated to engage effectively with local authorities and other key local solutions actors.

5. Research, learning and adaptive management – including capacity development

The learning component, and the role of the learning partner, should have been more clearly defined during the design stage. The fact that the JSC, EIDACS and SDSC projects have a strong focus on learning is a positive step (outcome 4 across the Consortia’s project proposals is on learning). However, closer involvement of ReDSS in project design would have enabled learning to be mainstreamed throughout interventions, as well as for clearer activities, processes and deliverables around adaptive learning and knowledge management. The multiplicity of agencies involved in the monitoring, evaluation and learning of EU-REINTEG has also led to some confusion among partners (LET, Altai’s MLS and REF).

Partners recognize the value-add of having a learning partner, and there is a lot of future potential to leverage ReDSS’ networks and influence. A number of benefits from ReDSS involvement were highlighted by partners including the peer learning between consortia and regions, the engagement and technical support provided to government and local authorities, the support to the harmonization of collective outcome indicators and the emerging lessons learnt process. Furthermore, it was felt that the involvement of ReDSS has given REINTEG greater visibility and influence among a wide range of governments, humanitarian and development actors at national and regional-level. EU-REINTEG emerging learning is being used by DSP and upcoming DFID program and ReDSS is playing a key role in sharing those between consortia and partners and to ensure that challenges are addressed.

ReDSS has created a space to bring different stakeholders (local authorities, ministries, humanitarian/development/peace and state building actors) together to collectively learn and reflect. Written publications will have limited effect in terms of sharing learning and building

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\(^3\) This term “DAC Forums” is not consistently used across the EIDACS, SDSC and JSC projects, but is used here as a catch-all term for the community groups formed and support under outcome 1.
knowledge unless they are accompanied by other methods that provide a platform for dialogue on solutions and related issues. For example, initiatives under year 1 of EU-REINTEG have included a learning event on durable solutions, resilience and Somali-led processes attended by 63 stakeholders, including international and national humanitarian and development actors, academia, and donors. Another learning event on Urban Solutions in April 2018 was attended by 120 participants. ReDSS has also translated its online tutorial to Somali as requested by partners and local authorities.

**Partners recognize the need to improve real-time learning and adaptive management.** With its focus on the (re)integration of refugees returnees and IDPs, and its multi-year nature, EU-REINTEG provides an excellent opportunity to generate learning on what works and what doesn’t in terms of advancing durable solutions. This learning should be used, together with ongoing analysis of the changing context, to inform any necessary adaptations to project implementation. An opportunity was missed in the project design stage to build in flexibility to test different approaches. Processes for reflection and adaptation based on changes in context (such as periodic emergencies) and/or learning on what works (and what does not) could also have been built into the project design. In April 2018, ReDSS drafted a document outlining a proposed approach to real-time learning and adaptive management in EU-REINTEG programming, which outlined a number of methods that could be adopted, including learning from community engagement; learning from frontline staff; testing/piloting different approaches; the capturing of lessons learned/good practice case studies in real-time; and periodic reflection sessions. This document offers a good starting point for discussions between ReDSS and partners on putting in place appropriate processes and determining respective roles and responsibilities within these.

### 6. Other issues

**Localization:** *Space needs to be created for the meaningful involvement of national/local humanitarian and development organizations in the implementation of solutions-focused programming.* Several respondents highlighted the need for national Somali NGO partners to have a more central role. Ideally, this should have started during the design stage. It was highlighted that national partners do not always get to take part in project/program coordination and events at the regional and national-level. Moving forward, partners should do more to ensure that national NGO partners are meaningfully involved in decision-making. One starting point would be to create the space for them to input into reflection on, and adaptation of, EU-REINTEG programming. Furthermore, the central role that local and national civil society actors can and should play in promoting and facilitating durable solutions needs to be recognized and supported within and beyond EU-REINTEG. ReDSS and its member agencies can play a key role in terms of promoting approaches to localization, capacity building, supporting local actors to lead solutions analysis processes, and increasing the engagement of local/national partners in coordination.

**Project approaches and processes:** *Implementing partners should seek to standardize/harmonize various approaches and processes.* A number of approaches and processes were highlighted by respondents. For example, it is recognized that approaches to engaging with DACs are sometimes inconsistent within and between consortia, with some agencies taking more time than others to mobilize and develop plans with community groups. Different approaches have also been adopted for engaging government and local authorities, and in the targeting of individuals/communities in project interventions. Moving forward, EU-REINTEG partners should seek to streamline processes and approaches. One positive example of this is the

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4 ReDSS organized the learning event in collaboration with the Rift Valley Institute, Centre for Humanitarian Change and the Somalia NGO Consortium.
SDSC’s efforts to create one standardized community feedback mechanism, managed by one agency within the consortium (previously, individual agencies within the consortium had had their own mechanisms). The fact that different approaches and processes have been adopted to date should not necessarily be seen as a negative- it offers an opportunity to reflect on what has already been tested and choose the best way forward based on this.