



ANALYSIS OF SOLUTIONS PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING IN URBAN CONTEXTS

Case studies from Nairobi-Kenya and Mogadishu and Baidoa-Somalia



Cover Photo by: ©Axel Fassio - IDP Woman in Digale IDP settlement, Hargeisa, Somaliland

Photo by: ©Axel Fassio - Local market in Garowe, Puntland, Somalia.

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

This study, conducted between November 2017 and January 2018, explores progress made in ‘solutions-oriented’ responses to urban displacement in the Horn of Africa, building on ReDSS previous Solutions analyses¹ and Early Solutions studies² that recommended to further investigate solutions in urban context. The cases studied included refugees in Nairobi, Kenya and IDPs and refugee-returnees in Mogadishu & Baidoa in Somalia. The study was commissioned to gain insight into how to better understand and address displaced people’s vulnerabilities and aspirations in urban centres and challenge practitioners’ current assumptions, and rethink support for displaced people in urban centres. Framed in relation to a series of well-established principles for effective urban response, combined with recommendations for what constitutes good solutions-oriented programming in displacement crises, the study explored three lines of questioning: what is the current situation for these displacement affected populations, what is being done about this and what could be improved. Comparing and contrasting the actual response to both the realities of the affected population and the theoretical principles of ‘good practice’, recommendations for adaptations are made with the aim of continuing to improve solutions-oriented results in urban displacement crises in the Horn of Africa. A perceptions-based, micro-level analytic lens was adopted in order to position the affected populations at the centre of the analysis. Thus, much of the findings and analysis is presented from perspective of those living the experience of displacement.

A steering committee composed of IRC, NRC, OXFAM, World Vision, INTERSOS and Samuel Hall provided overall strategic direction, oversight and technical guidance to the research process. A literature review was conducted during the inception period, in which some of the core principles and best-practices of urban response and some of the latest analyses of ‘solutions-oriented’ programming was extracted. This informed the basis for the empirical data collection process, which adopted a micro-level lens. Kenya and Somalia were selected as case-studies. 130 interviews were conducted with more than 250 individuals. Participants included: global and regional based urban, durable solutions, contextual, and programming experts, especially micro-level operational actors, formal authorities, private sector actors, civil society, research experts, and displacement affected communities. The latter comprised refugee and host populations in Nairobi and refugee-returnees, new and old Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and host populations in Somalia. The preliminary findings and recommendations were reviewed through two validation workshops, one in Baidoa and one in Nairobi.

KEY FINDINGS

The study considered current responses in relation to issues raised by displacement affected populations and the principles and best practices that have emerged over the recent years in relation to both urban responses and solutions-oriented programming. The broad finding is that the current response framework is positive and still holds significant untapped potential. As such, rather than needing to adapt the response framework, there is a need for more intensified and more strategic operationalisation of these principles and best practices.

This should be especially concentrated at the local level, where the frontline operational actors are engaging directly with displacement affected populations in urban contexts that, due to their density and complexities, pose both unique challenges and opportunities for effective response. It is apparent that the challenge of translating the idea of these principles in operational activities has been under-estimated. While increasingly complex responsibilities are transferred to this local level, the technical support and skills development provided has failed to keep pace.

At the heart of solutions-oriented urban programming is the call to shift away from ‘care and maintenance’ towards self-reliance and resilience programming that seeks to empower and promote the dignity of displacement affected populations. The two cases studied illustrate that this is more feasible in a more developed and stable context. In Nairobi, the operational actors have been quite successful in terms of facilitating refugee access

to existing services, with investments made to support the mutual benefit of both the refugees and the host population. This has proven far more difficult in Somalia where, due to a lack of infrastructure and limited state capacity, state-provided services are lacking. This combined with frequently recurring acute incidents, has pushed many of the responding actors to focus much of their energy on addressing essential needs. Thus, while the Nairobi context has enabled responders to focus on promoting self-reliance, such efforts remain relatively secondary in Somalia. Moreover, both government officials and the populations themselves call on NGOs to maintain this focus on emergency response.

Many responders described self-reliance as a 'mind-set'. Operational actors in Nairobi argue that the refugee population has made an important shift away from 'dependency' and 'expectations of hand-outs' towards the mind-set of self-reliance. Indeed, the vast majority of refugees interviewed called for self-reliance support, whether in terms of skills training, business management, or micro-enterprise grants. Alternatively, although intended to be the priority of the effort in Somalia, it seems that this attitude shift has not been achieved. Finally, substantive self-reliance activities are reaching few.

Making this shift also requires a shift in analytic approach. While traditional humanitarian assessment prioritises vulnerability-based needs assessment, self-reliance programming requires insight into the capabilities and aspirations of the target population. Indeed, many argue that displaced populations have important skills and capabilities. It is upon these that self-reliance programming should be constructed. However, they are poorly captured and largely under-utilised.

Some of the capabilities that NGOs are aware of include both remittances and important social safety nets mechanisms that nearly all displaced populations discussed. While remittances are especially important among those populations who have been resettled to third countries, the social safety-nets function within the given communities. These are social-based efforts that kick into action when individuals within a given community face extremely dire circumstances, such as sudden expenses they are unable to meet, e.g. urgent medical issues, funerals, etc. In such cases, the community collectively contributes. While these are not to be repaid per se, people participate because they are all too aware that the next time it may well be them in urgent need. Thus, while a distinct sense of community is observed among the displaced populations, their relationships with host populations vary from one context to the next. While the urban displaced tend to be dispersed, they are typically located among the poorest of the hosts. Indeed, some of the host individual are often worse-off than some of the displaced. Given the density of urban contexts, these populations are forced into close proximity, and it is common that they end up competing over what are often scarce resources, services and economic opportunities. As such, competition, jealousies and tensions often emerge between them. This underlines the importance for operational actors to incorporate social cohesion activities into their programming. However, in most cases, while such efforts are recognised as relevant they are seldom in the foreground of NGO's programming.

While most displaced flee in search of improved security, their urban places of refuge inevitably also pose certain threats. For example, in Nairobi, one of the main issues cited by countless refugees, was persistent harassment by the police, allegedly due to lack of formal refugee documentation. However, refugees also claim that this occurs even with proper documents. In most cases the person 'caught' is required to pay a bribe, leading refugees to conclude that that is the point of the harassment. In Somalia, the police are reportedly 'functioning', although they do not necessarily serve as a deterrent. Thus, especially IDPs are vulnerable to sexual violence, as well as forced evictions from their IDP sites, with little response by the authorities.

In Nairobi, it is suggested that ad hoc and locally-generated solutions might be found to such challenges through collaboration with the municipal-level authorities. However, these relationships are not yet functioning in a strategic manner. Alternatively, NGOs are in the process of developing a central-level network of technical training and quality control institutes and related actors to ensure refugees can gain access to skills training, and are being connected to a diversity of actors who are positioned to potentially open opportunities for them. The reach and scope of the operational response in Nairobi is quite limited, with a number of refugees being relatively unaware of what NGOs do in Nairobi. The actual numbers of individuals directly reached in a year

is limited in relation to the 65,000 refugees hosted in Nairobi. Thus, those who have received no support are quite critical of NGOs, suggesting they foster false hope, making promises and failing to follow through. Alternatively, those who have received, are very appreciative, indicating that the support provided is very much in line with their self-reliance priorities.

The main complaint concerns the scale (e.g.: in terms of the numbers of people reached) and the magnitude of support (especially cash grants) they provide. People report that what is currently provided does not achieve 'meaningful change', thus repeated calls were made for NGOs to scale up in both senses. Alternatively, the response in Somalia, being larger-scale, is reaching far more individuals. Most people are well aware of what NGOs do, and are appreciative, although again calling for more.

These programmes have also seen some evolution in terms of 'adaptive' programming, which entails programming that is designed to have adequate flexibility over time to adapt to the changing circumstances of the displacement affected population. Underpinning this, especially evident in Somalia, are evolving funding mechanisms that engage with multi-year commitments. One of the most important resultant opportunity is the prolonged inception period, which creates the space, time, and resources needed to lay a far more substantial foundation to solutions-oriented programming in these urban contexts. It ensures a better understanding the context, including the affected population in building the programme, and merging humanitarian and development logic at the outset of the programme. While this was especially appreciated in Somalia, this trend is far less evident in Nairobi.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAY FORWARD TO DURABLE SOLUTIONS PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING IN URBAN CONTEXTS

- **Correlate in-house skills & capacities with growing demands**

Operational demands in urban displacement settings are increasingly complex, with often highly specialised expectations being placed on the front-line actors. The technical support and training of these individuals must keep pace with the demands placed upon them. This requires that assessment skills are adapted, shifting from vulnerability-based needs assessment to capacity-based opportunity assessments, with qualitative skills being increasingly key. Operational personnel also require training in social change processes. Further, operational teams need far greater technical support to think through how the context-specific challenges they face can be tackled through the application of the principles and good practices discussed throughout this document. Equally, such processes need to be prioritised within the operational effort, and supported with the space, resources, time and level of prioritisation required to achieve them. Similarly, disconnects between the macro and micro institutional levels must be avoided, and the ability for micro-level analysis and recommendations to influence macro processes and decision-making must be better facilitated.

- **Apply 'Area-based' & 'Whole of Society' Approaches more strategically**

While both of these approaches are central to effective solutions-oriented response to urban displacement crises, they currently exist as rather vague notions on ground. The analytic demands associated with these processes are currently under-estimated. Although they are indeed being operationalised to some extent, much of this is coincidental. Strategic application requires specialised skills, resources, time and prioritisation in order to identify potential collaborative partners, analysing their skills, capacities and interests and using the 'platform' created as a new coordination mechanism. To be most effective, actors working in an urban context should take into account local power dynamics, social networks, existing structures, systems and geography in order to identify suitable entry points and opportunities to leverage the distinct characteristics of the city or townⁱⁱⁱ.

- **Prioritise Localised Operations**

The above recommendation sets the foundation for a deeply localised operational approach. In Nairobi this requires strategic engagement with the Municipal authorities to draw them into the refugee issues. Municipal authorities and urban local service providers should be supported to coordinate responses while leveraging the emergence of national and locally led response networks to ensure that activities and advocacy are well coordinated^{iv}. Relationship-building between refugees and the County Council must be facilitated. This might create a foundation for tackling protection issues with the police, for example through a ‘community-policing’ approach. Such local level processes may also offer different avenues for addressing the refugee documentation issue. In Somalia this effort should focus on drawing humanitarian, development and both traditional and formal authorities together. The ‘Community Action Plan’ could provide the framework around which collaborative could be constructed.

- **Make social cohesion a more strategic objective**

Threats to social cohesion, especially among the host and displaced populations abound. However, there is limited evidence of social cohesion objectives being explicitly sought in operational terms. They should be articulated in project design, with specific indicators and outcomes stated. Such programming requires careful analysis of the points of tension. The operational strategy must be two-fold, seeking to eliminate the points of contention and to generate more positive sentiments. Existing activities should be adapted to more intentionally create social cohesion. Finally, the reframing of displaced populations as a ‘benefit’ as opposed to the ‘burden’ they are typically assumed to be, could strongly influence how they are perceived. Quantifying this ‘benefit’ as a means of shifting perceptions is critical.

- **Continue to evolve ‘Adaptive Programming’**

Adaptive programme management should be more substantively adopted. Donor mechanisms need to be adapted accordingly. Positive progress in this line is evident in Somalia, with funding being availed on a multi-year commitment, which allows for a prolonged inception phase, critical to realising the analytic demands that correspond with collaborative processes, working with existing systems, and building on the capacities of the people of concern. The funding guidelines are allowing for reallocation of resources and reprioritisation of activities as the contextual realities shift over time. Furthermore, Municipal authorities need to see their hosting role as permanent, given that many new arrivals are unable or unwilling to return to their place of origin. The arrival and presence of displaced populations are less likely to be perceived as a threat if these groups are recognised and plans are made to anticipate and respond to the potential pressures on security, services, the economy and community relations. However, changes described above require renewed commitments of time, resources, and prioritization, all of which must be endorsed by donors. While there is a certain receptivity to such elements in the Somali context, there is less in Nairobi. Thus, the impact of this evolution in Somalia should be carefully studied in order to encourage similar changes in Nairobi.

Endnotes

- i. Studies available at <http://regionaldss.org/index.php/research-and-knowledge-management/redss-solution-analyses/somalia-solutions-analyses/#>
- ii. Available at <http://regionaldss.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Early-Solution-Planning-Report-December-2016.pdf>
- iii. IRC report 2018, From response to resilience available at <https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/2424/fromresponsetoresiliencefinalweb.pdf>
- iv. ODI, 2017 Mass displacement and the challenge for urban resilience available at <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/11202.pdf>



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Unlocking Protracted Displacement



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