

Dadaab solutions paper

This paper aims at providing discussion points and recommendations in support of long-term solutions for displacement affected communities in Dadaab (refugees and host communities). It is based on lessons learnt and evidence from Kenya and Somalia to support collective efforts and accountability towards durable solutions for displacement affected communities in Dadaab and return areas in Somalia.

Key facts and figures about Dadaab

(Source: UNHCR Dadaab February 2019 and UNHCR Dadaab strategic operational planning figures, March 2019)

- As of February 2019, Dadaab complex hosts 210,038 refugees
- Dadaab was established in 1991, in Garissa County and was originally intended to house 90,000 refugees. There are currently 3 camps in Dadaab, namely Hagadera, Dagahaley and Ifo
- Since December 2014, 79,113 Somali refugees have been returned back home. Of these, 2,673 have come back to Dadaab
- There are currently 13,281 unregistered refugees in Dadaab, of which 12,834 are from Somalia
- **58 % of Dadaab population are children** making up a total of 121,822 children
- **44% of the overall population in Dadaab (91,415) were born in Kenya**
- 46% of the population have no future return intentions and a further 36% would only consider return if there was a substantial change in the situation in Somalia (access to services, humanitarian situation and security context).

Context

In November 2013, the Kenyan government signed, together with the Somali government and UNHCR, [a tripartite agreement](#) to repatriate Somali refugees in Kenya to Somalia. Since December 2014, UNHCR has supported a voluntary repatriation programme for Somali refugees under this framework. The Tripartite Agreement lapsed at the end of 2016 but voluntary repatriation of Somali refugees has continued since then.

The majority of Somali refugees in Kenya reside in the Dadaab refugee camp complex in the Garissa county of North East Kenya. 210,038 refugees live there, the majority are of Somali origin and many have been there for years and decades.

The living conditions in the camp is appalling and illustrate the limitations of the camp model. In spite of humanitarian assistance being provided for decades, most refugees live on the edge of extreme poverty with no or extremely restricted opportunities to access education, work, and eventually become self-reliant.

Tensions with local communities are present, fueled by a perception of unfair treatment and neglect, although somewhat mitigated by shared cultural identity. Early in 2018, the distorting impact of the camp on host communities became apparent with a flare-up of tensions amongst the host community concerned about the reduction of humanitarian operations and the potential deprivation, which may follow once they are bereft of the camp economy.

Encampment, coupled with the protracted refugee situation in Dadaab leave thousands of men, women, and children [living in limbo](#), resulting in wasted human capacity and deprivations of human dignity. Research found that refugees are dismayed by their dependency on inadequate aid, and express diminished self-worth due to their inability to better their situation or to escape from the conditions of camp life.

More than a quarter century since it was first established, Dadaab has morphed into a permanent home for many people locked in a cycle of waiting and waiting. Security and livelihood conditions in Somalia have remained poor, so voluntary repatriation has not been attractive. [Recent assessments](#) conducted by NRC with Impact Initiatives in Dadaab has revealed that 46% of the population have no future return intentions and a further 36% would only consider return if there was a substantial change in the situation in Somalia (access to services, humanitarian situation and security context).

The majority of refugees who arrived to Dadaab from 2011 and onwards have already opted to return as they have stronger networks that can help them on return. Therefore, one of the reason for refugees still in Dadaab not to return is in part due to their lack of familial and wider support. This needs to be taken into account in any planning, integrating host community relations and social integration as a core part of (re) integration strategies. It is critical to ensure that persons with specific protection needs receive adequate support.

Furthermore, these are currently 13,281 unregistered asylum seekers in Dadaab, dependent on the support of family/networks and, without recourse to any authorities, at risk of exploitation. Any returns process must consider them. Similarly, there are a significant number of Kenyan Somalis who are receiving assistance in Dadaab whose futures must be explored.

Regional progress on durable solutions for Somali refugees – role of IGAD

On 25th March 2017, the IGAD Heads of States signed the [Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action](#) on durable solutions for Somali Refugees. This was followed by specific ministerial meetings on:

- the [Djibouti Declaration](#) in December 2018 and action plan on quality refugee education and the subsequent call for action on IGAD regional technical and vocational education training (TVET) strategy
- the [Kampala Declaration](#) in March 2019 on Jobs, Livelihoods and Self-Reliance for Refugees, Returnees and Host Communities in the IGAD Region

Building on these commitments, and based on [existing evidence](#), the government of Kenya with support from the international community, donors, UNHCR and other stakeholders can explore viable alternatives to encampment which support greater socio-economic inclusion and integration within hosting communities with favorable outcomes for both displaced and host.

Four solutions to pursue

For some years now, the Government of Kenya has been seeking an alternative to Dadaab, particularly motivated by addressing the prevailing security concerns. It is imperative to support the GoK in finding solutions for the people of Dadaab and the area, both refugees and host communities.

Solution 1: Return and (re) integration in Somalia – invest in sustainable reintegration based on lessons learnt from 2016/2017

Return is often a complex, multi-staged process. It is not an event neither a solution in itself; reintegration is. As a fundamental principle, return and repatriation should be founded on safety, dignity and voluntariness. The principle of non-refoulement, firmly enshrined in international law, guarantees international protection of refugees. Therefore, it is important while looking at solutions for displacement-affected communities in Dadaab that GoK maintain an open door asylum policy on humanitarian ground and not hinder future asylum claims from Somalia.

Since 2014, returns in Somalia have been mainly in Kismayo (87.7%), followed by Mogadishu (6.7%) and Baidoa (4.7%), all regions drastically affected by severe drought. The majority of returnees are heading back to urban areas, putting huge pressure on already overstretched urban infrastructures and services. While security is a determining factor in the decision to return, the lack of access to services such as health education and the lack of access to housing, land and property are key main barriers to (re)integration.

Security and protection concerns in these areas of return remain prevalent. Recruitment of children and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) cases are reported in Kismayo, Baidoa and Mogadishu. These critical protection issues are not unique to returnees but are faced by all groups (returnees, IDPs and host communities).

Better understanding of social inclusion and cohesion is essential to support urban integration. It is essential to involve and benefit from the analysis of state/ peace and conflict management actors in the durable solutions planning and programming. Building on a number of durable solutions initiatives, it is critical to be able to collectively monitor progress towards (re)integration, including for returnees that should not be lost in a broader displacement agenda. Accountability will be reinforced when all actors will be able to plan and coordinate on the basis of a common approach and monitor contributions to collective outcomes under government coordination.

Recommendation to support sustainable (re)integration

- 1. Ensure that repatriation of Somalis from Dadaab is voluntary, informed, safe and dignified.** Returns of refugees to Somalia must be truly voluntary (including choice of destination) and the current repatriation process must respect the principle of *non-refoulement*, firmly enshrined in international law, to guarantee international protection of refugees.
- 2. Improve return and cross border coordination mechanisms between Kenya and Somalia actors:** through the Country of Origin meetings and the Cross Border Working Group. Issues to address include access to relevant and accurate information on return process and harmonization of returns and reintegration packages, share protection monitoring data and analysis in both Dadaab and Somalia
- 3. Work with the Government of Somalia to identify the consequences for urban areas in Somalia, identifying risk and potential mitigation measures and ways to ensure their social and economic (re)integration:** donors should prioritize support to federal member states and municipalities on urban planning and expansion of infrastructure. It is critical to complement existing durable solutions programming while setting up referral mechanism to connect returnees to durable solutions programs and ensuring that returnees are being part of displacement-affected communities planning. This should entail the adoption of a shared model for community engagement and inclusion of returnees in community action plans as well as standardize disaggregation of data inclusive or returnees.
- 4. Invest in (re)integration programming and increase cross-border livelihoods and matching programs** so that returnees are able to integrate more successfully
- 5. Work with IGAD to take forward with the Government of Somalia the application of the Nairobi Declaration, the Djibouti Declaration in December 2018 and the Kampala Declaration in March 2019** on Jobs, Livelihoods and Self-Reliance for Refugees, Returnees and Host Communities

Solution 2: Explore viable alternatives to encampment to support greater socio-economic inclusion with favorable outcomes for both refugees and host communities

The Government has started exploring models for development-oriented response to forced displacement such as Kalobeyi settlement in Turkana. However, in Dadaab, the situation is different. The Government has maintained a strict encampment policy with a strong focus on encampment although Dadaab has grown into an important commercial hub with many urban features such as high population density, economic activity.

A recent [World Bank study on Self-reliance](#) revealed that the socio-economic lives of refugees and host community in Dadaab are interdependent. Although some tensions with local communities exist due to perceptions of preferable treatment towards refugees, these are somewhat mitigated by shared cultural

identity. The study show that refugees can therefore make more positive contribution to host economies, if the conditions are right and positive interactions between hosts and refugees are facilitated. Despite this evidence, majority of refugees and hosts in Dadaab continue to face difficult conditions due to policy restrictions on their right to work and freedom of movement.

There is a strong correlation between the quality of asylum and the quality of (re-)integration but this is an issue that is overlooked in policy and practice. Feedback from returnees, show those with higher financial, human and social capital often fare better on return. The type of skills and experience gained in asylum also influences opportunities back home. For instance, Somali returnees from Kenya, where many were educated or conducted business in English, are often better placed to secure much-coveted roles with international aid organisations, government or teaching jobs.

There is a window of opportunity in the current context to rethink and explore viable alternatives to encampment to support greater socio-economic inclusion with favorable outcomes for both refugees and host communities.

Recommendations to explore viable alternatives to encampment to support greater socio-economic opportunities for both refugees and host communities

- 1. Work with the government of Kenya to set up an inclusive inter-ministerial task force** to take the process forward
- 2. Address policy and administrative barriers to self-reliance**, including the right to work and freedom of movement that hinder access to finance, market linkages etc.
- 3. Work with national government on deregistration of Kenyans registered as refugees** as well as registration of refugees born to Kenya parents and refugees married to Kenyans
- 4. Support policy dialogue with Garissa county officials** and donors to support integration of remaining refugees into County integrated development planning
- 5. Advocate with donors to ensure continuous humanitarian assistance while exploring solutions** and with development donors to ensure funding for development programs as part of solution 3

Solution 3: Support host community and local authorities on the impacts that the closure of Dadaab would have for them (economic, social, environmental including on existing infrastructure and services)

Kenya's devolution process offers the space for county governments in refugee-hosting areas to focus efforts on pursuing an integrated approach that include refugees in local development planning and service delivery.

Garissa County hosting Dadaab is among the poorest regions of Kenya. According to the [Kenya National Bureau of Statistics](#), 66% of Garissa' s population is living in poverty. Youth constitute about 39% of the total population and only 14% of the population is self- employed or run a business. The refugee population represents some 24% of the total population of Garissa County.

This marginalised borderland experiences significant challenges in terms of poverty reduction, service delivery, infrastructure, economic opportunities, environmental degradation and insecurity. The refugee presence and its protracted nature, has heavily impacted an already fragile environmental situation. Environmental degradation and natural resources are a key concern for the host communities and government and have been drivers of conflict between refugees and host communities.

Whilst the camp closure process would negatively impact the livelihoods of the host community, there are opportunities to build on already well-established socio-economic interactions, as well as camp assets and infrastructure, towards building the self-reliance of refugees and host communities.

Recommendations to support host community and local authorities on the potential impacts of the closure of Dadaab complex

1. **Work with the County Government in Garissa to assess the potential implications of changes to Dadaab** including the potential economic impact, financing and institutional impact, the transfer of camp infrastructure and ways to ensure that these occur with benefits for host communities.
2. **Ensure an inclusive approach involving key stakeholders** working with the government towards an integrated urban settlement approach as part of Dadaab town
3. **Explore self-reliance opportunities beyond Dadaab complex** and expand the scope to urban areas
4. **Support alternative livelihoods and maintain access to services for host communities**

Solution 4: Call for international responsibility sharing and use of the Global Compact on Refugees

The Global Compact on Refugees (Refugee Compact) addresses one of the most significant gaps in the international refugee regime. The Global Compact aims to secure ‘more predictable burden- and responsibility-sharing’.

The GoK could use the comprehensive response plan to call for the establishment of a ‘Support Platform’, as set out in the Global Compact for Refugees, to mobilizing financial, material and technical assistance, as well as resettlement and complementary pathways for admission, in support of the comprehensive plan. According to the GCR, this platform may be set up in a protracted refugee situation where the host State(s) requires considerable additional support, and/or a major opportunity for a solution arises (e.g. large-scale voluntary repatriation to the country of origin).

UNHCR supports resettlement of refugees from Dadaab based on 7 prioritization categories to identify refugees with more serious or urgent protection needs: legal and/or physical protection needs; survivors of violence and/or torture; medical needs; women and girls at risk; family reunification; children and adolescents at risk; lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions. Refugees cannot pick their country of resettlement and only 2000 refugees are considered for resettlement from Dadaab every year. In a context where 1000 children are born every year, this is clearly insufficient.

Increasing restrictive refugee policies by several governments in developed countries have slowed down resettlement case processing for Somalia refugees, as applicants are not able to meet certain requirements for case processing. At the same time, several countries are returning Somali refugees back to Somalia on the ground that Somalia is safe enough and so they are not in need of international protection anymore. The Somali population that has remained in protracted displacement for decades in Kenya and the region continue to face [‘exclusion’](#) as third-country resettlement countries set priority on certain populations such as Congolese and Syrian refugees.

Recommendations to support international responsibility sharing and use of the GRC

1. **Support the GoK in calling for the establishment of a ‘Support Platform’, as set out in the Global Compact for Refugees**, to mobilize financial, material and technical assistance, as well as resettlement and complementary pathways for admission
2. **Increase advocacy for more resettlement slots/quotas and resettlement countries:** advocacy should be geared towards urging countries to either maintain or increase their resettlement slots/quotas for Somali refugees from Dadaab