



Somalia. Displaced community members engage in discussions to devise durable solutions to their displacement through the Mindimo Project.
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Somalia

The Mindimo Project's Experiment in Integrated Humanitarian, Development and Peacebuilding Programming on Durable Solutions

1. Context

Between 2016 and 2019, the number of IDPs fleeing drought and conflict in Somalia more than doubled from 1.1 million to 2.6 million.¹ As a result of stabilization efforts and significant investments in urban areas over recent years,² the vast majority of IDPs have sought safety in urban and peri-urban areas that were previously insecure. This

improved access has enabled humanitarian agencies to provide IDPs with assistance and avert famine. However, because 80 per cent of IDPs prefer local integration over return or relocation as a durable solution,³ displacement in Somalia is increasingly viewed as a critical urbanization challenge.⁴ Urban areas lack sufficient institutions, finances, and physical infrastructure to meet the needs of ever-growing populations.⁵ Poverty analysis indicates that IDPs are

“The CAP is from the community not from the implementing agency. All the people listed their needs, harmonized them and produced a strong and representative book that explains the needs of all parts of the communities... Anybody from Dollow district who wants to do something can pick from the desired projects as it is relevant to the community’s needs. ”

disproportionately impacted, both in terms of monetary poverty and exclusion.⁶ As IDPs move to unplanned urban areas, Somalia’s demographics are also shifting from primarily rural clan-based to an urban cosmopolitan population, creating the potential to reignite historical conflicts and exacerbate competition over scarce resources.

In 2016, the Government of Somalia and the UN Somalia Country Team launched the Durable Solutions Initiative (DSI) to develop innovative approaches to finding durable solutions for IDPs and refugee returnees. The Initiative was supported by the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG/RC/HC) and the Deputy Prime Minister, and it is now transitioning to a fully owned national movement led by the National Durable Solutions Secretariat. Although additional steps are still required to ensure a whole of government approach,⁷ the DSI has proven crucial for establishing an inclusive, dedicated forum for the Government and the international community to develop a shared understanding of the challenges of finding durable solutions that span humanitarian, development and peace/state-building responses. The Office of the Resident Coordinator (RCO) ability to oversee UN capacity across the country has also greatly facilitated the development of joint-UN programming under the DSI. The Somali National Development Plan 2020-2024,⁸ the Somalia Recovery and Resilience Framework,⁹ and the UN Strategic Framework Somalia 2017-2020¹⁰ all include durable solutions as a strategic priority. In late 2019, the Federal Government adopted the National Policy on Refugee-Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons,¹¹ issued the Interim Protocol on Land Distribution for Housing to Eligible

Refugee-Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons, 2019,¹² and ratified the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention). As of October 2020, the Federal Government was developing national IDP legislation, with the support of an international IDP expert,¹³ and was also finalizing a national Durable Solutions Strategy.

2. Description of the practice

The first of its kind in Somalia, the *Midnimo* (Unity) project began in December 2016 as a joint project between the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UN-Habitat to strengthen local governance, find durable solutions for IDPs and refugee returnees, and improve social cohesion through integrated humanitarian, development and peacebuilding programming. The UN Peacebuilding Fund and the UN Trust Fund for Human Security supported the project’s diverse set of district-level activities in urban areas for displacement affected communities in Jubaland and South West States (*Midnimo*).¹⁴ After this positive initial phase, *Midnimo* expanded to Hirshabelle and Galmudug States in 2018 (*Midnimo II*), with UN Development Programme (UNDP) as an additional partner and a greater emphasis on gender considerations across the project as a whole.¹⁵

Midnimo comprises three pillars of activities:

1. Community empowerment and social cohesion, led by IOM

As a foundation, the *Midnimo* project sought to restore the legitimacy of and people’s confidence in government

at the district level. With a few exceptions, districts were managed by weak, politically appointed “caretaker administrations” pending the formal election of district councils. *Midnimo* trained district authorities and local stakeholders to lead inclusive planning processes to develop Community Action Plans (CAPs) with the participation of IDPs, returnees, and other members of the community. Local government authorities, working in collaboration with *Midnimo* partners, then lead implementation of prioritized CAP projects, be it building a new school, revitalizing a sports field, or rehabilitating health facilities. The Community Monitoring Groups also assessed and reported on implementation of the CAPs.

2. Urban resilience, led by UN-Habitat

Some 85 per cent of IDP settlement sites are on private land based on informal agreements, exposing IDPs to land disputes and eviction.¹⁶ Thus, *Midnimo* supports the development of land legislation on the basis of participatory land and urban planning processes. It also seeks to establish regional Land Dispute Resolution Committees and Community Dispute Resolution Committees to offer mediation and provide advice about other legal options for resolving disputes. Finally, it includes pilot projects to upgrade settlements where many IDPs and returnees live by formally including informal settlements in official planning and linking them to basic services. Baidoa, now home to over 300,000 IDPs, received a significant influx of displaced persons between November 2016 and September 2017 who found shelter in spontaneous settlements. UN-Habitat supported strategic decision making for spatial development of the city in order to integrate affordable housing and basic services for IDPs through a planning workshop with local and state government.

3. Livelihoods and employment, led by UNDP

The project also seeks to bolster the private sector’s capacity to generate non-extractive employment opportunities, recognizing that self-sufficiency is a key element of durable solutions.¹⁷ In addition to traditional cash for work projects, *Midnimo* uses market systems assessments and sector analysis to identify projects that diversify income-generating opportunities for both IDPs and host communities. Promising IDP youth were also trained and received start-up grants for business innovation.

Applying the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) UN Joint Programming modality, the *Midnimo* project is overseen by a Joint Steering Committee, which includes representatives from the federal-level Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation as well as the Ministries of Interior, Planning, and Commerce in the target Federal Member States. The Committee meets twice a year to ensure cross-ministerial coordination in relation to developing the *Midnimo* project workplan, budget allocations, and monitoring implementation. Local government authorities also lead the delivery of certain project activities, such as facilitating the development of CAP consultations and conducting preparatory surveys for CAPs.

3. Results for internally displaced persons and others

The development of CAPs was more than a prioritization tool for programme delivery. The planning process itself improved social cohesion and trust as diverse groups of people come together to agree upon community priorities. IDP and returnees were able to voice their opinions alongside other community members, creating a positive environment for resolving potential disputes that might emerge in the future.¹⁸



Somalia. Internally displaced woman setting fruit and vegetables in the market shed in via Afmadow. © IOM Rikka Tupaz | 2019

Government authorities' leadership over project implementation also helped restore confidence in local institutions.

With regard to IDPs in Baidoa, IOM is currently constructing housing for IDPs, while efforts are underway to explore how IDPs can be further integrated within a mixed-use development approach. For example, when the government allocated a new site for a large-scale voluntary relocation of IDPs, the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, led by IOM, assisted with site planning, while UN-Habitat drafted guidelines to ensure the development of the area between the town and the new site were seamlessly linked and provided adequate services and facilities for both IDPs and host community. UN-Habitat is also working with local authorities to explore how to capture financial revenue from the increased land value generated by the city expansion plans so that additional houses and basic services can be provided at scale.

4. IDP participation

At the heart of *Midnimo's* implementation at local level is an intensive five-day workshop, led by trained local government authorities, during which displacement affected communities develop CAPs to prioritize their needs based on context analysis. The workshop includes a "resource envelope disclosure" session, in which partner agencies announce the funding levels they are able to contribute so that community members can prioritize projects accordingly.

The CAPs, in hard copy, are used as a centralized planning tool for the district. The Ministry of Interior, through the mayor's office, is in charge of finance coordination and monitoring implementation of the CAPs. However, community members also monitor and publicly report on the implementation of the CAPs through Community Monitoring Groups, which in turn facilitate community members' ability to reprioritize projects as needed.

5. Challenges

Facilitating the community planning activities is not simple. It means establishing and training Core Facilitation Teams, Community Action Groups, Community Based Monitoring and Evaluation Committees, Community Dispute Resolution Committees, and local authorities.¹⁹ The success and level of engagement of each group relies heavily on individual leadership and initiative, since *Midnimo* does not pay community participants, unlike some NGOs in Somalia. Despite efforts to ensure the active participation of IDPs, women, youth, and older persons in the CAPs, targets for female engagement were not reached in all districts.²⁰

Securing adequate levels of financing for the CAPs also proved challenging, potentially jeopardizing the positive outcomes of community planning processes when not all the prioritized projects were implemented. Intervening circumstances also sometimes forced *Midnimo* to reprioritize interventions to meet lifesaving needs, such as providing water during drought. *Midnimo* did succeed in leveraging multiple funding sources from beyond the projects own resources, including contributions from the World Bank, the private sector and the diaspora, to fund individual projects in the CAPs. Some local officials successfully marketed their CAPs at the Federal State Level and to donors. That said, pick up has not been as high as originally hoped, with the CAPs receiving unequal levels of funding in the different districts.²¹

This points to a larger challenge, which is how to scale-up successful projects like *Midnimo* to reach the 2.6 million IDPs in Somalia. It is hoped that if Somalia receives debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative,²² the Federal Government will have access to new funding streams to address durable solutions within its wider poverty reduction activities, as set out in the National Development Plan. It will also be important to expand partnerships and create

incentives, such as matching grants, that build on *Midnimo*'s positive experience to date, thereby generating alternative funding streams from the Somali diaspora and the private sector for funded elements of the CAPs. Public-private partnerships could also be strategically developed and regulated on the basis of strong, clear policies that ensure taxation and revenue generation for the Government.

6. Lessons learned

Individuals and institutional partnerships matter, particularly in Somalia's volatile environment. Successful project implementation requires adapting to each operational context to identify which institutions and stakeholders are best placed to facilitate discussions on durable solutions, be it a local mayor or officials within the Ministry of Planning. For instance, *Midnimo* relied on national staff to broker relationships and gradually build trust with local authorities, which then participated in five-day training workshops on leading CAPs. Institutional and stakeholder mapping and analysis are critical for identifying effective project leadership. The Joint Steering Committee for project management was also essential for fostering cross-ministerial collaboration.

However, despite the government-led nature of *Midnimo*, it was difficult for the project to assess how it contributed to broader efforts to find durable solutions. Ideally the CAPs should be aligned with the National Development Plan 2020-2024 and integrated into federal state development plans. The establishment of Durable Solutions Working Groups at Federal State and District level, as foreseen in the next stage of the DSI, should help. A Durable Solutions Framework may also facilitate the development of a multi-funding platform that allows for the need to adjust to unforeseen events, and help to forge stronger partnerships, such as with the private sector.

7. Why this is a good example to share

Somalia is an extremely complex and volatile operating environment. Yet, the *Midnimo* example shows that it is possible to implement government-led, area-based responses for durable solutions that bridge the humanitarian-development divide. It also underscores that a lot can be done to support IDPs even when an overall situation is not yet conducive to finding durable solutions.

The fact that local officials facilitated the CAPs with broad community participation contrasted sharply, and positively, with typical needs assessments conducted by NGOs solely with IDPs. *Midnimo* also successfully built government ownership by ensuring its objectives aligned with other government priorities, such as the Wadajir National Framework on Local Governance²³ and the Durable Solutions Initiative, easing the process of integrating the CAPs within Federal Member State and national plans.²⁴

Notably, efforts to improve livelihoods began with inclusive, market-based assessments and social mapping exercises that examined whether the necessary infrastructure was in place to ensure IDPs living in marginal areas could access livelihoods. For example, UN-Habitat built market infrastructure in Hirshabelle that met the needs of both the host community and IDPs.

Midnimo also had a catalytic effect by inspiring the development of other projects in Somalia.²⁵ For example, in the area of Stabilization where the *Midnimo* methodology on community engagement and the focus on land dispute resolutions led to a EUR 7 million project implemented in newly recovered areas by IOM and UN-Habitat. Called *Danwadaag*, the project on durable solutions incorporated community-based planning, peacebuilding and security sector considerations and a crisis component that allows for flexibility to adapt to changing needs in potentially volatile environments. Similarly, the ongoing UN Joint Programme on Local Governance is working to use CAPs as a blueprint for district development plans and public financial management cycles in areas where districts are slowly transitioning to a system of democratically elected councillors.

Midnimo's particular attention on resolving land disputes and using urban planning tools has been further expanded in other programmes in Somalia, such as UN-Habitat's *Dhulka Nabaada* (Land of Peace) land reform project,²⁶ and *Saameynta/IMPACT*, a joint project that hinges on land-value sharing as mechanism to generate sustainable revenues and financing for service delivery to displacement affected communities. The project document is being drafted at this stage, it was approved by the Somalia Development and Reconstruction Facility, and has secured contributions from two interested donors.

Endnotes

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