

Addressing core problems

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Somalia is a country where problems seem to outnumber solutions. At least half the country is experiencing a food and livelihoods crisis, blurring the distinction between needy settlements of IDPs and the flourishing city where they are located. There are multiple causes of displacements, not only war. State and economic collapse and environmental degradation are some of the main drivers of displacement, as well as floods and droughts, and these causes of displacements must all be addressed.

A lesson learned over the years is that it is unhelpful to provide continuous humanitarian aid to hundreds of thousands of IDPs without assisting them to be productive and have livelihoods. One step would be to relocate IDPs to a third location in the same country where they can be economically productive and their children can be secure, for example by relocating some of the displaced farmers in Mogadishu to a relatively peaceful location elsewhere in the country. Some of these IDPs were Somalia's best farmers before the civil war and their absence from the agricultural sector has been felt ever since their displacement in the 1990s. Any host community would benefit from the presence of these food-producing communities.

Interventions neglecting the roots of the crises are nothing more than temporary band-aids. This calls for a revisit to the rationale of intervention and justifies the need to develop much more integrated support to the affected people through a systemic understanding of the crisis. For example, aid agencies providing support to Somali people should have a dual strategy – to help with immediate needs but also to tackle recovery needs, addressing core problems effectively over time. Any single intervention will not help in Somalia and indeed is a waste of resources in one way or the other. This response should not rest only in the hands of international aid workers but should also involve diaspora and community aid, which can help identify needs and mediate issues around accountability of the response and local perceptions about it.

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