

Unpacking the Multifaceted Drivers of Displacement in Somalia and Somaliland

Learning Brief





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List of Acronyms

CAP	Community Action Plans
CAF	Community Action Forums
CBP	Community Based Planning
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GCVCA	Gendered Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment
GDDA	Gendered Displacement Drivers Assessment
GSCA	Gender Sensitive Conflict Analysis
HDPN	Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization for Migration

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This learning brief examines the drivers of internal displacement across five districts in Somalia and Somaliland, Afgoye, Las'anod, Erigavo, Beledweyne, and Bardheere, and shows that displacement is not caused by a single shock but emerges through a cumulative process shaped by climate stress, insecurity, livelihood erosion, and governance failures.

Somalia and Somaliland continue to experience chronic displacement driven by recurring droughts and floods, fragile livelihoods, localized conflict, and weak or exclusionary governance. While displacement figures are well documented through tools such as the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix and humanitarian needs assessments, far less is understood about how pressures accumulate at household and community levels, when coping

mechanisms fail, and how decisions to move are negotiated under stress. This gap limits the effectiveness of anticipatory and prevention-oriented responses.

The analysis draws on evidence from the Nagaasho Programme, a multi-partner initiative funded by the Royal Danish Embassy to Somalia and led by CARE International with partners Saferworld, WFP, iRise Hub, WARDI, and WAAPO. Under the programme, the Gendered Displacement Drivers Assessment (GDDA) was developed as a participatory, gender-responsive, and conflict-sensitive framework to understand displacement before it occurs, identifying who is affected first, which thresholds trigger movement, and how power relations, gender norms, and access to resources shape household decisions.

Key Findings

Across all districts, displacement followed consistent patterns despite differing local contexts. It was driven by reinforcing stressors, not isolated events. Recurrent droughts and environmental degradation caused water scarcity, pasture loss, and livestock mortality, while floods damaged farmland and infrastructure in riverine areas. These shocks quickly led to an economic collapse, driven by crop failures, rising debt, distressed asset sales, and income losses. In Erigavo, water system failure led to price spikes, withdrawal of trader credit, and rapid erosion of coping capacity.

Displacement pressures were intensified by insecurity and governance failures. Clan tensions, checkpoints, armed actors, and restricted mobility limited access to markets, grazing, and services, particularly in Las'anod, Beledweyne, and Afgoye. Competition over scarce resources weakened social networks, while exclusionary governance, especially the systematic exclusion of minority clans in Beledweyne, accelerated coping erosion and early displacement.

Livelihood systems strongly shaped displacement pathways. Pastoralists reached displacement thresholds quickly when mobility routes were blocked or livestock losses became critical, shifting adaptive movement into forced displacement. Agro-pastoralists faced compounded risks as drought undermined both crops and livestock,

accelerating food gaps and income loss and pushing households toward displacement earlier than those with more diversified livelihoods.

Across districts, displacement occurred once clear tipping points were crossed. Risk increased sharply when water prices exceeded 50 per cent of daily casual labour wages, when agro-pastoral households consumed seeds reserved for planting, and most decisively, when trader credit was withdrawn, often triggering movement within 72 hours.

Displacement thresholds were highly gendered and socially differentiated. Women and girls, particularly in female-headed households, were driven toward displacement by concerns over water, food, and child safety, while facing constrained decision-making power, heavy caregiving burdens, and heightened protection risks. Male youth often migrated pre-emptively for work or safety, while minority clans consistently reached thresholds earlier due to systemic exclusion. Adult men and elders frequently delayed movement to protect land, livestock, and social status, leaving older persons and poorer households as vulnerable stay-behinds.

Institutions played a decisive role in shaping outcomes. Biased authorities, exclusionary clan governance, exploitative landlords, aid gatekeepers, and armed actors accelerated displacement by restricting access to resources. In contrast, inclusive water

committees, elders' councils, informal credit systems, and effective dispute-resolution mechanisms helped preserve coping capacity and delay displacement.

Displacement decisions were negotiated within households, not automatic responses to shocks. Men and elders often controlled timing, delaying movement, while households adopted splitting strategies in which women and children moved to IDP sites, and men remained behind, shifting food insecurity and protection risks onto women.



Implications

The findings show that displacement in Somalia and Somaliland is largely predictable and preventable when interventions are timed before critical thresholds are crossed. Preventive action should prioritize early protection of water access, livestock, and market connectivity; target groups that reach thresholds first, including female-headed households, minority clans, and agro-pastoralists; strengthen inclusive local governance mechanisms; monitor behavioural early-warning signals such as water affordability and trader credit withdrawal; and align interventions with gendered coping thresholds.

Overall, the learning brief reframes displacement as a cumulative, differentiated, and predictable process, offering practical guidance on where, when, and for whom anticipatory action can most effectively reduce displacement risks before irreversible harm occurs.

1.0 INTRODUCTION



Somalia and Somaliland are among the most displacement-affected contexts in the world. Recurrent droughts, floods, conflict, economic fragility, and weak governance have produced repeated waves of internal displacement, with many households forced to move multiple times. For large parts of the population, displacement has become cyclical rather than exceptional, shaping livelihoods social relations, and long-term vulnerability.

Existing displacement monitoring systems, including IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) and humanitarian needs assessments, provide essential data on displacement numbers, locations, and immediate needs.

However, they offer limited insight into how displacement unfolds as a process at household and community level: how pressures accumulate, which stressors matters most, when coping mechanisms fail, and how decisions to move are negotiated within families under stress.

This gap has critical implications. Without understanding the drivers, tipping points, and decision-making dynamics that produce displacement, programming remains largely reactive. Assistance often arrives after households have already lost assets, social networks, and safety, rather than supporting earlier, preventive action that could reduce or delay forced movement.

1.1 Purpose of the Learning Brief

This learning brief synthesizes findings from GDDA pilots conducted across five districts in Somalia and Somaliland. It is intended for government institutions; humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding practitioners; displacement and resilience actors; and donors working on displacement prevention, anticipatory action, and resilience programming.

The brief has three core purposes:



To consolidate cross-district evidence on displacement drivers, tipping points, and household decision-making dynamics, drawing on community-level analysis across diverse livelihood and conflict contexts.



To demonstrate the analytical value of the GDDA as a prevention-oriented assessment framework, highlighting what it adds beyond existing displacement monitoring and vulnerability assessments.



To translate community-level findings into strategic insights that can inform anticipatory action, displacement-sensitive programming, and policy engagement.

As such, the brief does not aim to describe operational implementation in detail. Instead, it serves as synthesis learning product, building on five more detailed district-level GDDA assessments undertaken during the Nagaasho inception phase. It highlights how and why displacement occurs, which groups reach displacement thresholds first, and where preventive action can most effectively be applied, with relevance for actors beyond the Nagaasho Programme.

1.2 What Is GDDA and Why It Matters

The Gendered Displacement Drivers Assessment (GDDA) was developed under the Nagaasho Programme, a multi-partner resilience and displacement-prevention initiative implemented across Somalia and Somaliland. Nagaasho works at the intersection of climate resilience, livelihoods, governance, social cohesion, and protection, with a specific focus on preventing forced displacement before it occurs.

The GDDA was designed as a participatory, gender-responsive, and conflict-sensitive analytical framework that shifts focus upstream from describing displacement after it happens to understanding why it happens, when coping collapses, and how decisions to move are made within households and communities.

Drawing on CARE's Gendered Climate Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (GCVCA) and Saferworld's Gender-Sensitive Conflict Analysis (GSCA), the GDDA integrates climate, livelihood, conflict, governance, and gender dynamics into a single analytical pathway. It was piloted across multiple districts representing diverse livelihood systems, conflict dynamics, and displacement typologies.

This learning brief distils cross-district findings from the GDDA pilot phase to inform displacement prevention, anticipatory action, and displacement-sensitive policy and practice, and to demonstrate the framework's relevance for wider application beyond the Nagaasho Programme.

1.3. Methodology

The GDDA applies a four-module analytical pathway that traces displacement as a process rather than a single event:

-  Mapping climate, livelihood, economic, and conflict-related stressors and vulnerabilities.
-  Analyzing gender, power, and social exclusion dynamics.
-  Identifying displacement triggers, tipping points, and coping erosion.
-  Examining household decision-making on staying or moving.

The assessment was implemented using participatory tools in separate, safe discussion spaces for adult women, adolescent girls, adult men, and adolescent boys. This structure ensured that gendered, age-differentiated, and socially marginalized perspectives were systematically captured.

While this brief draws on evidence generated in specific districts, its purpose is not to present district case studies. Instead, it synthesizes cross-cutting displacement dynamics, thresholds, and decision-making patterns that hold relevance for displacement prevention programming more broadly.

2.0 How Displacement Unfolds: Cross-district Dynamics, Thresholds, and Decisions



This section synthesizes evidence across all assessed districts to identify dominant displacement dynamics, the thresholds at which coping collapses, and the social and institutional factors that shape who moves, when, and why.

Across Somalia and Somaliland, displacement is not an abrupt reaction to isolated shocks, but the terminal phase of a structured, predictable, and time-bound deterioration process. Evidence from all five districts indicates that households follow a Sequential Attrition Model, in which coping capacity is progressively eroded by repeated, interacting stressors until remaining options are exhausted and movement becomes unavoidable.

2.1 Displacement as a Predictable Process: Sequential Attrition Across Contexts

Across all assessed districts, displacement followed a recognizable deterioration pathway rather than a sudden response to crisis. Households experienced a progressive erosion of coping capacity, moving from stress absorption to asset erosion to the breakdown of social support systems and, finally, forced movement.

This sequence was consistently identified through stress-impact pathway mapping, seasonal calendars, and displacement timelines. While the pace, intensity, and immediate triggers varied by livelihood system and conflict context, the underlying structure of the

pathway remained remarkably stable across regions.

Crucially, households did not displace simply because conditions worsened. Movement occurred only once viability thresholds were crossed, when recovery was no longer perceived as possible and the costs of staying outweighed the risks and uncertainties of moving. This finding underpins the GDDA's relevance for anticipatory action, as it highlights displacement as a predictable outcome of cumulative failure, rather than an unforeseeable shock as depicted in the blow sequential diagram model.

2.2 Core Displacement Stressors: How Climate, Livelihoods, Conflict, and Governance Interact

Across all assessed districts, displacement was never attributable to a single shock. Instead, it emerged from the interaction of four mutually reinforcing stressor clusters: climate and environmental stress, livelihood collapse, insecurity and conflict, and governance failures and exclusion.

Climate stress acted as the primary accelerator of vulnerability, particularly through recurrent and prolonged droughts that depleted water sources, degraded pasture, and undermined rain-fed agriculture. These shocks did not displace people directly. Rather, they progressively eroded the material

foundations of rural livelihoods. In pastoral and agro-pastoral areas, extended dry spells reduced livestock body condition and productivity, forcing distress sales at collapsing market prices. In riverine and agro-pastoral zones, delayed or failed rains caused repeated crop losses, eliminating both food stocks and income within a single season.

However, climate stress alone did not explain displacement trajectories. Its impact on displacement depended on its interactions with markets, conflict dynamics, and governance conditions.



Livelihood collapse translated environmental stress into displacement pressure. As water and pasture declined and crops failed, households experienced a rapid contraction of income and food access. This triggered a familiar downward spiral: rising debt, distress sales of livestock or tools, reduced meal frequency, and children's withdrawal from school. Once productive assets were sold and credit exhausted, households lost not only immediate consumption capacity but also the potential to recover. In agro-pastoral areas, the moment households began consuming seed stocks marked a decisive turning point, signalling both acute food stress and the abandonment of the next agricultural cycle.

Conflict and insecurity profoundly shaped how climate and livelihood stress translated into displacement. In all districts affected by violence or insecurity, conflict acted as a force multiplier. Armed checkpoints, inter-clan clashes, land disputes, and criminal violence restricted safe access to water points, markets, grazing routes, and services, sharply reducing households' ability to adapt in situ. In several districts, competition over dwindling natural resources intensified inter-communal tensions, transforming environmental stress into violent exclusion—particularly where customary dispute-resolution mechanisms were weak or politicised. Minority clans, pastoral drop-outs, and IDPs often lost access to water, land, and protection earlier than majority groups, accelerating displacement thresholds.

Governance failures and systemic exclusion consistently accelerated displacement. Weak, biased, or predatory local authorities failed to mediate disputes, regulate markets, or ensure equitable access to resources. In some areas, aid gatekeeping, land grabbing, and informal taxation by armed actors further eroded coping capacity. These governance failures were not peripheral; they were central to the climate and livelihood stress that led to forced movement rather than adaptation.

Across districts, displacement was driven less by absolute resource scarcity than by the progressive loss of safe and socially accessible space. Climate stress reduced availability, but insecurity, checkpoints, landmines, and exclusionary enforcement often determined who could safely reach water points, markets, grazing routes, and assistance. As access narrowed, households experienced “resource scarcity” earlier, not because resources disappeared entirely, but because they became inaccessible, unsafe, or socially denied.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that displacement risk emerges not from climate or conflict alone, but from their convergence with livelihood fragility and exclusionary governance. Where markets, institutions, and social protection fail to buffer against climate stress, households are rapidly pushed toward irreversible coping erosion, explaining why similar shocks produce very different displacement outcomes across districts.

2.3 Understanding Conflict, Power, and Insecurity as Displacement Drivers

Conflict and insecurity were not peripheral to displacement dynamics; they fundamentally shaped how climate and livelihood stress translated into forced movement. Rather than acting as isolated shocks, conflict functioned as a structural condition that constrained access, deepened exclusion, and weakened households' capacity to adapt in place.

Across districts, insecurity amplified climate and economic pressures by restricting safe access to water, markets, grazing routes, and services through checkpoints, landmines, inter-clan violence, and criminal activity. These barriers narrowed households' coping space, transforming manageable stress into displacement pressure. Conflict also altered mobility itself: traditional pastoral movement became increasingly dangerous, blocking adaptive strategies and accelerating losses, as seen in Las'anod where contested rangelands and landmines forced households toward urban displacement or immobility.

Power and governance dynamics further mediated these pathways. Clan-based control over land, resources, and aid frequently excluded minority clans, IDPs, and women-headed households, converting stress into displacement by removing protection, negotiation options, and access to resources. Conflict also shaped household decision-making, influencing youth migration, household splitting, and delayed movement driven by fear, asset protection, and social norms.

Overall, displacement in Somalia and Somaliland emerges as a conflict- and power-mediated process, not solely a climate or livelihood outcome. Preventive responses, therefore, require conflict-sensitive programming that addresses access, inclusion, and governance alongside climate resilience and livelihood support, in line with the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus.



2.4 Displacement Tipping Points and Thresholds

Across districts, displacement was not triggered by hazards alone but by the crossing of specific thresholds, moments when the cost of staying outweighed the risks of moving. Communities consistently identified three tipping points that signaled the point of no return.



First, water affordability emerged as a key early-warning indicator. When the price of a 20-litre jerrycan exceeded roughly half of a household's daily labour income, basic survival became untenable, forcing trade-offs between water, food, and debt and prompting households to prepare for displacement.

Second, final livelihood divestment marked the collapse of recovery potential, as evidenced by agro-pastoralists consuming planting seeds or pastoralists losing livestock beyond viable herd recovery. These moments signalled the structural end of rural livelihoods, not just temporary hardship.

Third, social credit exhaustion was the strongest immediate trigger of movement. The withdrawal of trader credit typically preceded displacement by days, with households moving within 48–72 hours once loans were denied. This reflected a wider breakdown in social capital as kin support and reciprocal systems weakened under widespread stress. Because these thresholds are locally recognized, socially mediated, and closely tied to movement, they provide practical entry points for anticipatory action and early intervention. The table below summarizes the pattern

Table 1: Displacement Tipping Points and Thresholds

Threshold Type	Indicative Signal
Water viability/affordability	Water cost >50% daily wage
Livelihood viability	Seed consumption/herd collapse
Social viability	Withdrawal of trader credit

2.5 District Typologies: How Displacement Pathways Differ by Context

While the GDDA findings point to common cross-cutting drivers and thresholds, the assessment also identified distinct district “pathway typologies” shaped by livelihood systems, insecurity dynamics, and governance conditions. These differences matter for programming because they influence whether prevention should prioritise safe mobility, market stabilisation, governance and inclusion, or flood/drought recovery sequencing.

Figure 1: Climate insecurity Displacement Pathway in Afgoye District



In Afgoye, displacement reflected a security-mediated economic pathway in which climate shocks and livelihood stress were amplified by insecurity, checkpoints, and risks of profiling or recruitment, shaping early youth out-migration and household fragmentation.

Figure 2: Governance Exclusion Pathway in Beledweyne District



In Beledweyne, displacement followed a governance-exclusion pathway where control over land, water, and aid access, often mediated through clan-based power structures, accelerated early displacement for minority groups and female-headed households.

Figure 3: Dual Shocks Pathway in Bardhere District:



In Bardhere exhibited a dual-shock pathway, in which successive drought and flood cycles undermined seasonal recovery and progressively depleted savings, assets, and mutual support systems.

Figure 4: Market Collapse Pathway in Erigavo District



In Erigavo, a market-collapse pathway was evident, in which water-system failure and rising prices intersected with the breakdown of social credit, rapidly eroding coping space as trader support networks withdrew.

Figure 5: Pathway to displacement in Las'anod District



In Las'anod, displacement reflected a mobility-restriction pathway, where insecurity and landmine risks constrained traditional pastoral mobility routes, transforming adaptive movement into distress-driven displacement or forced immobility.

These pathway typologies underscore that displacement risk is geographically patterned and that prevention strategies must be calibrated to context, particularly the interaction between climate stress and the local “enablers” or “blockers” of coping (security, market access, and governance inclusion).

2.6 Gendered Displacement Pathways: Power, Care, and Risk

Gender strongly shaped how displacement pressures were experienced and acted upon. Across districts, women and men occupied different roles in decision-making, resource access, and mobility, resulting in distinct displacement pathways rather than uniform responses to shocks.

Women often acted as early detectors of crisis through child hunger, water scarcity, and daily provisioning failures, yet formal displacement decisions remained largely with men and elders. This gap led to delayed movement, prolonged deprivation for women, and more dangerous displacement once movement occurred. For women, especially female-headed households, displacement was driven by care responsibilities and child safety rather than asset loss, often occurring later and under worse conditions with heightened protection risks.



Men's pathways were shaped by asset protection and social status: elders delayed migration to safeguard land and livestock, whereas young men migrated early to avoid recruitment or economic exclusion. These strategies redistributed risk within households, shifting the burden of protection and nutrition to women and children. Overall, displacement is a socially mediated process shaped by power and norms, underscoring the need for prevention efforts that address these dynamics to avoid delayed or inequitable interventions.

2.7 Who Reaches the Tipping Point First – and why

Displacement risk varied sharply across livelihood systems, social statuses, and access to protection and social capital. Across districts, those who reached tipping points first were not the most exposed to hazards; rather, they had the least capacity to absorb losses due to limited assets, restricted access to land and water, constrained mobility, weak support networks, and minimal institutional or dominant-clan protection.

Female-headed households and socially excluded groups, including minority clans and those without strong clan protection, consistently reached displacement thresholds earlier because the usual buffers that delay movement (credit, remittances, land access, negotiated resource sharing, and clan-based protection) were weak or absent. As a result, a single shock quickly escalated into a multi-sector collapse, leaving households with few options to negotiate access, defer obligations, or secure support.

Livelihood systems further shaped these trajectories. Agro-pastoralists

often reached tipping points sooner as drought simultaneously undermined crops and livestock water access, forcing the consumption of seed reserves and signalling the loss of future recovery. Pastoralists typically sustained their coping capacity longer through mobility and herd management but faced sudden collapse once livestock losses or distress sales exceeded recovery thresholds, particularly when insecurity and restricted migration routes turned mobility into risk rather than protection.

Across districts, some groups remained behind despite worsening conditions, including older persons, people with chronic illness or disabilities, and households lacking transport or social support. These “vulnerable stay-behinds” were not less affected but less able to move, leading to prolonged hardship and heightened protection risks. Overall, these differentiated pathways highlight the need for group- and livelihood-specific displacement prevention that safeguards the social and economic buffers that delay movement, especially for those whose protection systems fail first.

2.8 Institutional Dynamics: Who Reduces or Accelerates Displacement

Institutions played a decisive role in determining whether households could cope or were displaced. They were not neutral intermediaries, but active determinants of who retained access to resources and who was excluded.

Institutions that accelerated displacement included biased authorities, exclusionary clan governance, exploitative landlords, aid gatekeepers, and armed actors. These actors restricted access to water, land, markets, and assistance, often along clan or gender lines, thereby narrowing coping space and accelerating threshold crossings.

Conversely, inclusive water committees, trusted elders' councils, functioning informal credit networks, and effective local mediation mechanisms consistently reduced displacement pressure. Where such institutions were present, households were able to negotiate access, delay movement, and recover assets aftershocks.

These findings underline that displacement is not only a humanitarian outcome, but also a governance and power outcome. Strengthening inclusive institutional capacity is therefore central to displacement prevention.

2.9 Household Decision-Making on Staying or Moving

Displacement consistently emerged as a negotiated household process rather than a sudden collective flight. Across districts, movement decisions unfolded through a sequence of constrained choices shaped by assets, safety, social status, and care responsibilities, not by a single triggering event.

Decision-making was largely governed by patriarchal asset-protection logic, with adult men and elders controlling the timing of movement and often delaying relocation to safeguard land, livestock, and social standing. Although intended to preserve future recovery, these delays frequently intensified displacement as households exhausted their coping options. To manage this tension, many adopted household-splitting strategies: men stayed behind to protect assets,

while women and children moved to IDP sites or urban areas to access safety and services, shifting protection, nutrition, and exploitation risks onto women and children and prolonging family separation.

Youth males often migrated early to avoid insecurity, recruitment, or economic exclusion, sometimes contributing remittances but reducing household labour and accelerating later displacement for those left behind. Overall, households weighed assets, dignity, and clan ties against hunger, insecurity, debt, and service collapse. These patterns show displacement as an unequal, power-mediated decision, underscoring the need for prevention approaches that reduce the trade-offs between survival and asset protection.

3.0 Reframing How Displacement Is Understood



The cross-district findings point to several overarching insights that challenge prevailing understandings of and approaches to displacement in Somalia and similar fragile contexts. Rather than introducing new empirical results, this section synthesizes the evidence on how displacement should be analysed, anticipated, and prevented.

3.1 Displacement as System Failure, Not Shock Response

The evidence shows that displacement is neither a direct nor inevitable response to drought, flooding, or insecurity. Rather, it reflects the breakdown of interconnected systems, livelihoods, markets, social protection, governance, and conflict management that normally absorb stress. Shocks translate into displacement only when these buffers fail, explaining why similar crises produce markedly different outcomes across districts and groups.

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3.2 Why Tipping Points Matter More Than Trends

Conventional early warning systems often track trends such as rainfall deficits, price rises, or conflict incidents. The findings, however, show that displacement is triggered by specific, socially mediated thresholds that mark the collapse of coping capacity, such as unaffordable water, loss of productive assets, or the withdrawal of informal credit. Because these tipping points occur closer to movement decisions, they provide more timely and actionable signals for anticipatory intervention

3.3 Displacement Is Structured by Inequality

Displacement affects households unevenly because vulnerability is shaped by social position, including gender, clan affiliation, livelihood system, and access to authority. As a result, displacement reflects existing inequalities rather than random exposure to shocks. Understanding displacement therefore requires examining who lacks protection and recovery options, not only who is exposed to hazards.

3.4 Governance and Conflict Are Central, Not Contextual

The findings show that displacement is fundamentally a governance and power issue, not only a humanitarian or climate one. Insecure access to land, water, markets, and aid, often shaped by clan authority, armed actors, and weak institutions, limits households' ability to adapt in place, turning climate stress into displacement when governance systems fail to ensure access, resolve disputes, and protect marginalized groups.

3.5 Displacement as a Constrained Decision, Not a Passive Outcome

Displacement ultimately emerges as a negotiated household decision under extreme constraint. Families balance survival, dignity, asset protection, and risk, often redistributing vulnerability, particularly onto women and children. Recognizing displacement as a power- and norm-shaping decision is essential for designing interventions that prevent harm rather than merely responding to it.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING, PREPAREDNESS, AND PREVENTION



The findings have clear implications for how displacement prevention, resilience building, and anticipatory action should be designed and timed in Somalia and similar contexts.

4.1 Moving from Hazard Monitoring to Threshold-Based Early Action

Early warning systems should move beyond hazard tracking to include indicators of coping capacity and social breakdown. Locally observable thresholds, such as water affordability, livestock losses or distress sales, consumption of seed reserves, withdrawal of trader credit, and erosion of informal support, offer more timely and actionable signals, enabling intervention before households reach irreversible collapse.



4.2 Targeting Groups Who Reach Tipping Points First

Displacement prevention cannot rely on average vulnerability. Programmes should prioritise groups that consistently reach thresholds earlier, including female-headed households, minority clans, agro-pastoralists in drought-prone areas, pastoralists with restricted mobility, and women caring for young children. This requires group- and livelihood-specific prevention packages rather than uniform assistance.

4.3 Designing Gender-Responsive Displacement Prevention

Because women often delay movement and displace under worse conditions, prevention must address care- and protection-related tipping points. This includes early food and water support before child hunger escalates, safe access to services along water and market routes, meaningful inclusion of women in resource governance and dispute resolution, and targeted credit or livelihood support for female-headed households.

4.4 Integrating Conflict Sensitivity into Climate and Livelihood Programming

Climate and livelihood interventions can inadvertently accelerate displacement if conflict and governance dynamics are ignored. Prevention efforts must therefore apply conflict-sensitive resource governance, anticipate inter-clan competition linked to aid or infrastructure, strengthen inclusive mediation, and address aid gatekeeping and exclusionary authority structures, aligning displacement prevention with the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus.

4.5 Addressing Household Decision-Making and Asset-Protection Logic

As households often delay movement to protect assets and dignity, interventions should reduce the trade-off between survival and asset protection. Protecting livestock, securing land tenure, supporting safe seasonal mobility, and providing cash or credit before distress thresholds are crossed can prevent displacement without forcing asset liquidation or family fragmentation.

5.0 CONCLUDING REMARKS



This learning brief demonstrates that displacement in Somalia and Somaliland is not an inevitable outcome of drought or conflict, but a predictable result of cumulative stress, unequal power relations, fragile livelihoods, and governance failures that progressively erode coping capacity until critical thresholds are crossed.

By clarifying how displacement pressures build, who reaches tipping points first, which thresholds are most decisive, and how movement decisions are made, the analysis provides a stronger basis for anticipatory, preventive, and equity-focused action. Addressing displacement upstream, before households' exhaust assets, social networks, and safety mechanisms, offers a viable pathway to reducing both the human costs and the systemic impacts of recurrent displacement.



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