

Ethiopia. Abebech was able to return home after being displaced by conflict.  
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## Ethiopia

# The Durable Solutions Initiative

## 1. Context

Ethiopia has seen parts of the country chronically affected by internal displacement related to drought and flooding. The country has also seen a steep rise in conflict-related internal displacement since 2018 – with these displacements taking place against the backdrop of significant political change and the eruption of localized conflicts and social tensions throughout the country. The Government of Ethiopia recognized and documented conflict-related internal displacement in late 2017. At that time, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) began utilizing the Displacement Tracking Matrix to provide tracking of the displaced to inform national and international humanitarian response efforts.<sup>1</sup>

Internally displaced persons, especially those in collective sites of temporary nature, live in difficult conditions – with many having limited access to basic services and livelihood opportunities, facing protection risks, and not receiving sufficient humanitarian assistance. In 2019, and again in 2020, many IDPs were

returned or relocated to their areas of origin, in some cases with limited planning and consultations. The Mid-Year Review of the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Ethiopia in August 2020 noted that there were some 1.8 million IDPs in the country, and 1.4 million returnees.<sup>2</sup> These numbers reflect an urgent need to support durable solutions sooner rather than later.

## 2. Description of the practice

Officially launched in December 2019, the Durable Solutions Initiative (DSI) is a national platform jointly developed by the Government of Ethiopia and the international community to establish an operational framework to find durable solutions for both conflict and disaster-related internal displacements. The initiative emerged from a need for focused conversations on internal displacement in Ethiopia. It brings together representatives from different government ministries as well as humanitarian, development, and peace/

state-building actors, donors, civil society and researchers. The DSI also responds to the international community's commitment to support States in their efforts to significantly reduce internal displacement by working in concert across "institutional divides, mandates and in multi-year frameworks."<sup>3</sup>

Led by the Ministry of Peace, the DSI covers five areas at national, regional and local level to support a whole-of-government response to internal displacement:

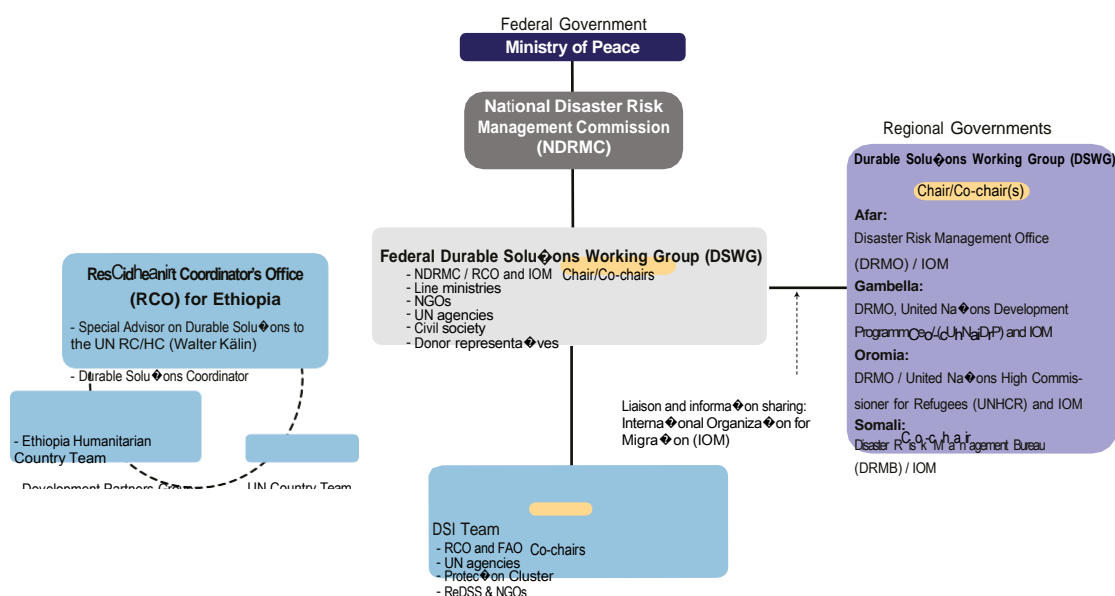
1. **Policy** - Mainstreaming displacement issues in key policy/strategy documents, most crucially the national development plans;
2. **Legislative** - Supporting ratification of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) and the development of implementing legislation or policy;
3. **Institutional** - Strengthening the coordination and operations of federal and regional level working groups on durable solutions;
4. **Planning** - Mainstreaming displacement issues in regional spatial plans, city-wide structures, and neighbourhood development plans;
5. **Operational** - Implementing area-based, comprehensive, government-led and community driven programmes in areas of voluntary return, relocation and local integration. Supporting internally displaced households in

finding individual solutions (e.g. through microfinancing or the portability of social protection entitlements). Mainstreaming solutions into development programmes and humanitarian action.<sup>4</sup>

Durable solution interventions under the DSI are guided by eight key principles, originally developed by the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) and UN Somalia (Federal Republic) in 2019:<sup>5</sup>

1. Rights and needs-based;
2. Government led;
3. Participatory and community based;
4. Area based;
5. Recognize unmet humanitarian needs;
6. Collective and comprehensive;
7. Sensitive to social inequalities linked to sex, age, disability and marginalization; and
8. Sustainable.

After launching its National Strategy on Internal Displacement, in early 2019 the Ethiopian Government requested support from the UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO) to develop a solutions-oriented approach to internal displacement. The RCO engaged a Special Advisor on Durable Solutions<sup>6</sup> to provide senior-level advice to the RC/HC and UN Country Team. The RCO also recruited a dedicated Durable Solutions Coordinator to provide technical support in designing the DSI with all partners, drawing upon international good practices.



### 3. Results for internally displaced persons and others

At the legislative level, a milestone was reached on 14 February 2020, when the Ethiopian Government ratified the Kampala Convention<sup>7</sup>, formalizing its commitment to ensuring responses to internal displacement are conducted in line with international standards.<sup>8</sup> Technical support for legislative reform is ongoing, with the support of UNHCR and ICRC. A senior expert on internal displacement was also invited by the Ministry of Peace to share his expertise on the development of a national IDP law to domesticate the Kampala Convention.<sup>9</sup>

With respect to coordination, IOM has supported the establishment of Durable Solutions Working Groups at the regional level to strengthen collaboration between Government bureaus and with humanitarian, development and peace actors. The DSWGs are chaired by the Government and co-chaired by IOM and other UN agencies (UNHCR in Oromia region and UNDP in Gambella region). In addition, a Federal-level Durable Solutions Working Group (DSWG) was established, and is currently chaired by NDRMC, and co-chaired by IOM and the RCO. To coordinate the contributions to the process, the UNCT established a technical team on durable solutions, chaired by the RCO and co-chaired by FAO, which included the Protection Cluster as well. The Team has recently expanded to include the participation of the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS), which represents NGOs committed to working on durable solutions.

At policy level, a specific output for durable solutions has been integrated into the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2020-2025), which was signed by the Ministry of Finance and UN

Resident Coordinator on 9 September 2020. Conversations are currently underway with support from UNDP on how the National Planning Commission can best incorporate durable solutions within Ethiopia's national development plans.

Durable solutions for IDPs are also being addressed from an urban planning perspective. For example, the Dire Dawa City Administration is engaged in their Structure Plan Revision Process, with UN-Habitat providing support to address issues of displacement and solutions. UN-Habitat is also assisting the Urban Bureau in the Somali region to carry out a feasibility assessment to determine whether the Qoloji IDP camp can be converted into a permanent settlement. Rural settlements are being upgraded to city administrations due to natural population growth, and in some cases displacement patterns. UN-Habitat is working with the Ministry of Urban Development and Construction to mainstream solutions issues in the regional spatial planning of all ten regions of the country.

At an operational level, there has been limited progress to date to support IDPs to find solutions. Recognizing this challenge, the Federal-level DSWG is pursuing the idea of establishing a Durable Solutions Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), with support from the UN MPTF Office in New York. This new financial instrument, if established, could help support at an operational level the search for solutions. It could achieve impact by funding interventions that respond to the priority needs identified by displacement affected communities. In designing the terms of reference of this fund, it will be important to meet minimum requirements, as elaborated in the DSI's toolbox, including the need for intention surveys, voluntariness of movement, conflict analysis and protection risk analysis to determine the suitability and focus of the investments.

## 4. IDP participation

IDP participation features strongly in the DSI's overarching principles, emphasizing that interventions should be participatory and community-based, and aim to enable the full implementation of IDPs' rights.<sup>10</sup> For the moment, IDPs' perspectives in the DSI coordination mechanisms are included by way of NGOs and UN agencies that work directly with displacement affected communities. As durable solutions interventions are designed, IDPs as well as host and receiving communities will need to be directly engaged in the planning of durable solutions interventions, implementation and evaluation of the impact achieved. One idea envisaged is to include IDP and displacement-affected community representatives in the governance structure of the durable solutions multi-partner trust fund.

## 5. Challenges

Implementation of the DSI at the operational level remains a challenge, in large part due to the resource mobilization constraints that have impeded the implementation of durable solutions interventions in the country. The momentum generated by the DSI launch in December 2019 was subsequently impacted by COVID-19 and other pressing humanitarian issues, including increased insecurity and localized conflict in certain parts of the country as well as a severe locust infestation affecting large swaths of territory. While recognizing this set back, the Government and its partners would now like to generate new energy around the DSI with the creation of a durable solutions MPTF.

On peacebuilding, significant challenges remain to bolster federal and regional efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts and provide guarantees of non-reoccurrence to avoid future internal displacements. Premature returns to areas where root causes of initial displacement are not addressed, or where basic services and infrastructure are lacking,

may lead to flare up of violence and/or secondary displacement. Peacebuilding, community acceptance and development support are inseparable prerequisites to attain durability of solutions. This underscores the value of the DSI in addressing peacebuilding as part of attaining durable solutions.

NGO support and expertise will also continue to be required for implementation of durable solutions in the field. For example, the Norwegian Refugee Council's expertise in Housing, Land and Property (HLP) and their leadership of the HLP working group will also help different levels of government gain expertise in tackling the complex land and property issues that often plague durable solutions efforts. The Protection Cluster can continue to provide support to engage IDPs and displacement-affected communities in durable solutions planning and programming.

## 6. Lessons learned

The design of the DSI took many months but during this time, it was possible to build ownership and support for the process. The official launch of the DSI in December 2019 further exemplified the support it had by both the Federal Government, Regional Governments and City Administration. The RC/HC's leadership and commitment to the DSI, and the establishment of the Durable Solutions Coordinator position within the RCO, were critical to facilitating dialogue on durable solutions between the key stakeholders. Notably, the Protection Cluster's early and full participation in the DSI design process, as well as the support of ReDSS, ensured that protection considerations remained central to the initiative and enabled the participation of other NGO partners in the process.

Moreover, the Government of Ethiopia welcomed the opportunity to learn from Somalia's experience of developing a DSI. For example, Ethiopia hosted the October 2019 Intergovernmental Authority on



Development (IGAD) Regional Exchange, organized in collaboration with GP20, providing an opportunity for Ethiopian and Somali officials to share experiences during a formal panel discussion.<sup>11</sup> The senior-level Special Advisor on Displacement, who has served as Special Advisor on IDPs to the Deputy Special Representative to the Secretary General, Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (DSRSG/RC/HC) for Somalia since 2015 and participated in the Regional Exchange meeting, also provides a critical bridge between the two countries. His meetings with ministers, heads of UN agencies, and other senior officials in Ethiopia were important in building political understanding and commitment. The Durable Solutions Coordinator also visited the Somalia RCO to learn from its experience and this has led to ongoing exchanges between the two countries.

## 7. Why this is a good example to share

The DSI in Ethiopia is an example of how a whole-of-government and all-of-society approach to internal displacement can be developed, building upon good practices from other countries. The DSI seeks to facilitate a dialogue between partners to foster coherence and coordination, with commonly agreed approaches, priorities and criteria. The DSI calls for the respect of international standards for durable solutions, including that all interventions uphold and promote safety, dignity and the voluntariness of return, relocation and local integration.

Going forward, the DSI will test the operational realities of working toward collective outcomes on durable solutions, in line with the New Way of Working, in order to avoid protracted displacement. It will do this by identifying regions with relative stability where it is possible to design area-based responses across development, peacebuilding and humanitarian responses, building on the life-saving humanitarian response.



Ethiopia. Internally displaced people - mostly former neighbours - sit in the shelter where 20 of them sleep. "We managed to escape from our area with only our lives" This 28 year old man had to leave his wife behind and flee with his 48 year-old mother.  
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# Endnotes

- 1 IOM, 'Ethiopia' (DTM, October 2019) <<https://displacement.iom.int/ethiopia>> accessed 29 January 2020.
- 2 'Humanitarian Response Plan Ethiopia' (Government of Ethiopia and OCHA 2020) Mid-Year Review.
- 3 'Agenda for Humanity: Annex to the Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit' (United Nations 2016) A/70/709 7 <<http://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/AgendaforHumanity.pdf>>.
- 4 Government of Ethiopia and United Nations Ethiopia, 'Ethiopia Durable Solutions Initiative' 2.
- 5 The principle to "recognize unmet humanitarian needs" was added to the DSI in Ethiopia. UN Somalia Office of the UNDSRSG/HC/RC, 'Durable Solutions Initiative' (March 2018).
- 6 Professor Walter Kälin, the former Representative of the UN Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons, was serving in this position at the time of writing.
- 7 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa 2009.
- 8 Mark Yarnell, 'The Crisis Below the Headlines: Conflict Displacement in Ethiopia' (Refugees International 2018) Field Report.
- 9 This expertise was provided by Professor Chaloka Beyani, the former UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of IDPs.
- 10 Government of Ethiopia and United Nations Ethiopia (n 7) 12–14.
- 11 IGAD Regional Consultative Process and GP20, 'Concept Note: A Regional Exchange on Experiences in Supporting Resilience and Durable Solutions to Internal Displacement in the IGAD Region' (IGAD 2019) <<https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/wp-content/uploads/Final-Concept-Note-for-the-2019-RCP-on-IDPs.pdf>> accessed 7 January 2020.