

What are the sources of social capital?

A pilot study in Banadir, Somalia

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Key Points

Approximately two-thirds of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) surveyed reported no-one at all provided support when they recently experienced a shock, and among those who did receive support, neighbours were the most common source.

Neighbours, which qualitative accounts suggest are primarily fellow IDPs, were particularly important when coping with short, sudden shocks such as food shortages, illness, and childcare needs. While family and clan are important, many respondents explained that relatives live far away or are struggling themselves. As a result, neighbours were most often identified as the people who can actually help in practice. This shows both how important neighbours are, but also how limited this kind of support can be.

IDPs in Banadir have uneven participation in organised groups and report relatively limited voice and influence in decision-making.

Participation in groups such as cooperatives, livelihoods or women's associations was relatively low, with three-quarters of respondents citing they are not involved in any group of this kind. Even among those who were active, very few reported feeling confident about their voice being influential in these spaces. Women's qualitative accounts highlight an additional challenge: even when women are deeply involved in community activities, their voices are often sidelined.

Bridging social capital between IDPs and hosts in Banadir remains weak, transactional, and poorly institutionalised, with religious leaders and clan elders providing uneven, intermediary support.

In many parts of Banadir, IDPs and hosts live close to one another. However, qualitative accounts among research participants showed that living near each other does not automatically result in strong social ties. Relationships between IDPs and hosts were often presented as functional and transactional (such as host community members hiring IDPs for casual labour) rather than relational. They tend to centre on work or coexistence, rather than joint decision-making or a sense of shared future.

Longer duration of displacement in Banadir does not automatically translate into broader or stronger social capital beyond immediate neighbour-based bonding ties.

Many IDPs in Banadir have lived in the same place for years. However, both qualitative and quantitative data indicate that time alone does not lead to wider networks (bridging social capital) nor better access to institutions (linking social capital). Bonding social capital among IDPs appears to deepen locally but rarely expand outwards beyond this. Respondents also point out that host populations have dense, well-developed networks that displaced people may not acquire, even after many years. A possible explanation is that IDPs facing so much scarcity do not have the time to invest nor reciprocity to offer to build this type of capital.

Introduction and Background

The Role of Social Capital in Urban Fragile and Conflict-Affected Contexts (SoCap) project is a three-year Irish Aid-funded research project analysing the interactions between social capital, resilience, the urban environment, and conflict and fragility among marginalised urban populations in Haiti, Somalia and Somaliland.

It aims to understand how social capital translates into resilience among marginalised urban groups, to identify practical leverage points for operational and policy actors. In Somalia, the research project specifically asks how various subgroups of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Banadir build resilience towards shocks and stresses through differential access to social capital.

Social capital refers to the networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation.^[1] Research has demonstrated the value of social capital for resilience at various levels and stages of the disaster cycle, from preparedness through recovery.^[2] However, understanding social capital's role in fragile and conflict-affected contexts is challenging. Stressors and shocks in these contexts can be protracted, cyclical and severe. In addition, insecurity and conflict-related divisions can entrench, transform or undermine social bonds and networks, while insular forms of social capital can reinforce distrust and undermine long-term resilience.

Understanding the sources of social capital, and the roles different actors can play in supporting community social capital, is a necessary first step in better understanding how, and under what conditions, social capital supports resilience. This research brief summarises the approach and key findings of the SoCap project pilot phase in Daynile and Kaxda districts of Banadir, Somalia. Based on these initial findings, it presents several recommendations for different stakeholders, and concludes with a summary of next steps and future research.

1. Putnam, R. (1995) 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital,' *Journal of Democracy*, 6, 65-78, p. 67.

2. See discussion in Rhude, K., et al. (2025) *A Review of Evidence of the Impact of Social Capital on Resilience*, SoCap Research Brief, No. 1.

Approach

The SoCap project pilot phase in Somalia adopted a mixed methods approach combining both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Three primary data collection strategies were employed: primarily closed-ended telephone surveys; semi-structured focus group discussions (FGDs); and semi-structured Key Informant Interviews (KIs). Between September and November 2025, the team conducted 5 FGDs with community members across both IDP and host groups; 4 KIs involving clan elders, religious leaders and women's group representatives; and 4 KIs with NGO representatives working in displacement, resilience and social cohesion across Somalia and Somaliland, amounting to a total of 48 interview or discussion participants, in addition to 157 survey responses. 142 respondents were displaced; while 15 were from non-displaced / host communities.

Data collection in the pilot phase took place in Daynile and Kaxda districts in Banadir region. Daynile and Kaxda are neighbouring districts in the north-west of Banadir region, in Somalia. Banadir is the administrative region that encompasses the city of Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia. With a population of about 2.8 million inhabitants,^[3] the region is the primary economic hub attracting real estate, telecom and bank investments. Armed non-state actors continue to pose a significant security threat in the region, with several incidents reported in the area.

Still, Banadir became a refuge for a significant portion of Somalia's IDPs (1 million IDPs, about 31% of the IDP population in Somalia as of January 2024), mainly concentrated in the districts of Daynile and Kaxda. Banadir mainly hosts IDPs from Lower Shabelle, Bay, Bakool and Middle Shabelle. The region hosts IDPs displaced by internal conflict and, more recently, by an historic drought followed by heavy rain that mainly affected the regions of Gedo, Mudug and Bay.

According to a survey study by the Federal Government of Somalia, most IDPs are driven to Banadir because of livelihoods opportunities (44% of respondents in Daynile) and the availability of basic services (39% of respondents in Daynile). IDPs face precarious living conditions compared to the host communities, reflected in stark differences in the spheres of "adequate standard of living" and "access to livelihoods" as defined by the aforementioned study.^[4]

3. ACAPS (2023) 'Impact of Drought: Banadir and Bay Regions,' *Somalia Thematic Report*, 27 January.

4. Federal Gov't of Somalia (2024) *MoPIED Durable Solutions Progress (DSP) Survey Key Findings Factsheet for Banadir (Daynile and Kahda)*, pp. 1, 17.

Key Findings

The pilot phase of this research project set out to understand the sources of social capital among the IDP population in Daynile and Kaxda.

This brief presents findings from the pilot phase, intended to describe how social capital currently functions in practice, rather than to make causal claims. As preliminary findings, these should be treated as indicative and exploratory, designed to inform learning, adaptation, and next steps in the multi-year research project.

Finding 1: Approximately two-thirds of IDPs surveyed reported no-one at all provided support when they recently experienced a shock, and among those who did receive support, neighbours were the most common source

Across Daynile and Kaxda districts, 68% of IDPs surveyed reported that no-one at all provided support to them during an impactful shock experienced in the preceding 12 months (see Figure 1). Among those who did receive support, IDPs surveyed described immediate neighbours as the most common source of help (12%).

Qualitative accounts suggest neighbours primarily refer to fellow IDPs, revealed in references to support from those nearby **“if your fellow IDP is your neighbour,”** or support **“among us as IDPs [...] the first source of social capital comes from my neighbours.”**

Neighbours were a more common source than immediate or extended family (4%), NGOs (4%), or wider community members and groups (2%). This shows both how important neighbours are, and how limited this kind of support can be. Importantly, this reliance on neighbours does not fade over time, with respondents reporting a relatively consistent pattern of reliance across categories regardless of duration of displacement.

The kind of support provided is usually informal, small-scale, and short-term – intended to help recipients overcome immediate needs or navigate sudden small shocks rather than support transformation or long-term recovery. Examples shared included sharing food, helping during sickness, watching children, or accompanying someone to a health facility. Support is often framed as a moral obligation: several respondents described norms that make it unacceptable to eat while a neighbour has nothing.

Women, in particular, emphasised how important neighbour-to-neighbour help is for daily life. A female IDP who took part in an FGD in Daynile recounted, **“My neighbours help me when I face severe hunger. I don’t have many**

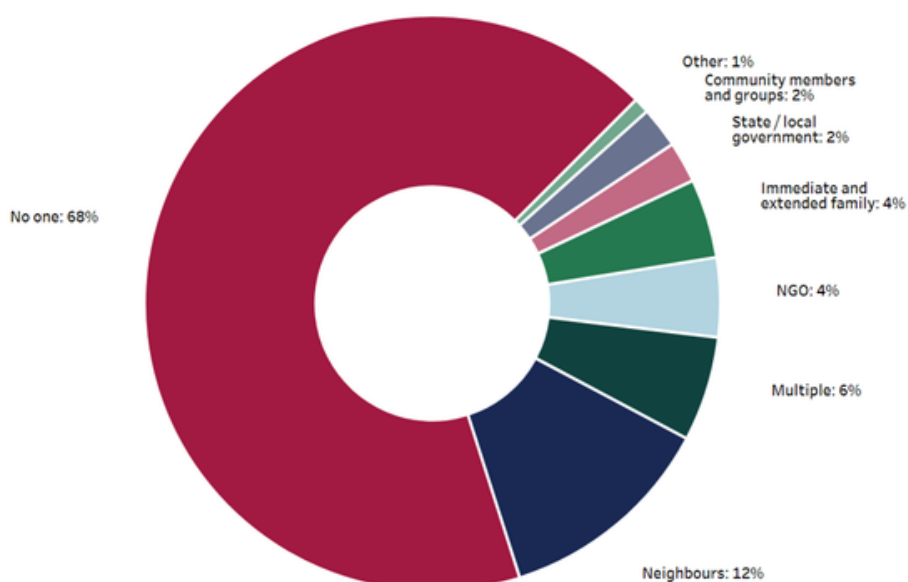


Figure 1. IDP responses to who provided support during or after the most impactful shock experienced in their household over the last 12 months (Banadir, $n=142$).

connections; the only people close to me are my neighbours.” However, respondents emphasised that there are limits to the assistance that can be provided among IDPs because of mutual material hardship: as one male IDP remarked in relation to the **“small things”** fellow IDPs provide one another, **“They can’t help beyond that, because they have so little themselves.”**

While family and clan were also considered important, respondents shared barriers to family providing support. Some respondents attributed lack of support to distance, as one participant explained: **“If I need support, I would not ask my clan because I moved away from the place where my clan lives.”** (FGD Daynile). In another set of explanations, respondents characterised family as struggling themselves, as one female participant in Daynile advised: **“The only people we can rely on are our neighbours. If we wanted to rely on relatives, they are also poor. My family and relatives are in the same situation. We are all poor.”** (FGD Daynile).

What is new about this finding?

Much existing research emphasises the importance of family and clan ties as the main sources of support for displaced people, especially in conflict-affected settings.^[5] Our findings add a more specific insight: in urban Banadir, many respondents reported no-one supporting them at all, while neighbours were often more important as a source of support than family or clan in practice.

Why does this matter for resilience?

Neighbour support among IDPs helps households cope in the short term. However, even where it is provided, because this support is informal, small-scale and usually short-term, it offers little protection against repeated shocks or longer-term crises.

5. Boateng, A. (2009) ‘A Mixed Methods Analysis of Social Capital of Liberian Refugee Women in Ghana,’ *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, 36(3), 59–82.; Spaaij, R. (2012) ‘Beyond the Playing Field: Experiences of Sport, Social Capital, and Integration among Somalis in Australia’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 35(9), 1519–1538; Feinstein, S. and Poleacovschi, C. (2023) ‘Making Democracy Work in a Refugee Camp: Social Capital and the Emergence of Empowerment’, *Development in Practice*, 33(3), 267–279.

Finding 2: IDPs in Banadir have uneven participation in organised groups and report relatively limited voice and influence in decision-making

Linking social capital among IDPs (that is, connections between community members and external institutions or authorities) is relatively low. In survey responses, three-quarters of IDPs surveyed report no participation in organised groups such as local cooperatives, livelihood or savings groups, local development committees, women's associations, political or sports groups. Bearing in mind that low levels of participation in groups affect the reliability of such data, it is worth noting that just over one-third of respondents in households active in such groups reported that they were somewhat or very confident that their opinion will be taken into consideration in group decision-making. In other words, even when IDPs are involved in organised groups, two out of three perceive themselves as having very little if any real influence.^[6]

Access to authorities is also limited, with participants reflecting on the difficulties IDPs face in connecting with government. 66% of IDPs reported no connection to government at all, and only 6% reported a direct connection.^[7] Where connections exist, they are usually indirect, relying on someone else to pass on concerns or requests, meaning voice is mediated rather than direct. In this context, respondents highlighted that religious leaders and clan elders play an important, but uneven role, connecting IDPs to service providers, sources of charitable support, or dispute resolution mechanisms. However, access to these figures depends to a great degree on personal relationships. Their support therefore cannot be accessed by everyone.

The relationships between IDPs and NGOs, representing a form of linking social capital with aid institutions, are also often indirectly mediated through gatekeepers in specific areas. Key informants also highlighted that this mediation can become exploitative in some cases, citing an example of gatekeepers using their role to redirect a portion of assistance intended for programme participants. Furthermore, those persons, even IDPs, with privileged connections to NGOs tend to strengthen that relationship to produce greater dividends over time. As a result, NGO connections often remain narrowly held, which can in turn result in uneven translation of this access into wellbeing outcomes.

Women's qualitative accounts highlight an additional challenge. Even when women are deeply involved in community activities, their voices are often sidelined. While some respondents highlighted opportunities to be heard in local forums, several female participants reported no, or very few, opportunities to influence decision-making. As one female IDP taking part in an FGD noted, **"So far, I haven't seen spaces where I felt my voice is heard or where I can share my opinion [...] I haven't seen a place where I have influence and where my voice is heard."**

**"So far, I haven't seen spaces where I felt my voice is heard or where I can share my opinion [...] I haven't seen a place where I have influence and where my voice is heard."
(female FGD participant)**

6. The sub-sample of non-IDP respondents active in such groups was so low as to preclude meaningful comparison with regards to perception of voice and influence.

7. While a much smaller sample, responses were similar among non-IDPs, with no statistically significant difference between groups.

A female interviewee involved in a women's community group noted that male-dominance of decision-making was a structural barrier to women's influence, and one sometimes inadvertently reinforced by NGO engagement: **"The challenges we are facing include the male dominance in participation at the decision tables [...] The NGOs have mainly communicated and interacted with men, while we have done all the jobs in the community."** Participants also frequently listed members of the community who were poor, in ill health or living with a disability as particularly marginalised: **"There is no place or person to convey their voice [...] her voice does not reach far."**

What is new about this finding?

Humanitarian research and policy frequently focus on participation, often measured by whether community members attend meetings or consultations.^[8] This finding adds an important distinction: being present does not equate to having influence, as IDPs report feeling their voices are usually filtered through intermediaries, and rarely connected to decisions that directly affect services, aid, or protection.

Why does this matter for resilience?

Without a meaningful voice, IDPs struggle to influence decisions that affect their lives in a range of ways. At present, IDPs remain dependent on intermediaries rather than being able to avail of durable connections that could directly support integration and resilience over time. This can reinforce dependence and make it harder to move from coping to resilience.

8. Ireland et al. (2025) 'Social Capital and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Fiji: A Scoping Review of Humanitarian Preparedness and Response Planning and Guidance Documents,' *BMC Health Services Research*, 25(1), 704; Gonzaga, G. L., & Pratama, A. B. (2025) 'Social Capital and Prospects for Collaborative Governance: An Ethnographic Case Study of Sama-Bajaus' Post-Disaster Experiences,' *Public Administration and Development*, epub ahead of print.

Finding 3: Bridging social capital between IDPs and hosts in Banadir remains weak, transactional, and poorly institutionalised

In many parts of Banadir, IDPs and hosts live relatively close to one another. However, qualitative accounts from research participants in Kaxda and Daynile showed that living near each other does not automatically result in strong social ties. Relationships between IDPs and hosts were often presented as practical, functional and transactional, rather than based on relationships of trust and cooperation. Interactions between the communities tend to centre on work or coexistence, rather than collective action, trust, or joint decision-making.

Host respondents frequently described their relationship with IDPs in terms of labour, giving examples of **“small jobs, such as digging pits and building houses.”** As one female FGD participant from among the host community in Kaxda described, **“We have a good relationship with the people who have had to move. These people work for us [...] They help us.”** While host populations generally described these relationships as positive, incidents of insecurity and theft were also alluded to as linked to the movement of displaced people, and a small number of respondents reported a lack of trust and potential for conflict between host and displaced populations.

IDPs, in turn, described a relationship shaped by practical necessity rather than by a sense of belonging to the same community. One respondent described a gulf between displaced and host populations: **“We live in the same district, but not in the same neighbourhoods.”** Another respondent in the same discussion suggested a form of social stigma associated with displacement, **“Displaced people and those who have lived here all their lives are not close to each other [...] displaced people cannot easily mix with locals because they are known as IDPs.”** This suggests that geographic closeness does not necessarily translate into social ties that connect different groups in meaningful and sustained ways (otherwise known as ‘bridging’ social capital). The factors that support or impede the forging of social ties will be the focus of further investigation in subsequent project phases.

“No, I would say that displaced people and local people do not join the same groups. [...] They do not share the same social status.”
(participant in mixed FGD)

More relational accounts of social capital were relatively rare. Some male IDPs noted that cross-community host-IDP support might take the form of **“small forms of assistance,”** such as information on accessing healthcare. Non-displaced community members gave examples of assisting IDPs in need by providing food, clothing, or sleeping materials if they are in severe need. Considering organised forms of social capital, some non-displaced respondents reported that displaced and host populations join the same community groups, though discussions offered few concrete examples of this in practice.

Moreover, others were more sceptical of this claim, with one non-displaced participant concluding: **“No, I would say that displaced people and local people do not join the same groups. The reason is that the displaced are refugees, while the local people have lived here for a long time. They do not share the same social status [...] The reason displaced people cannot join is because they are people who fled their homes and are in a difficult situation.”**

The efforts by some NGOs to actively include IDPs and marginalised groups within organised structures are an entry to bridging and linking social capital but key informants pointed to the project cycle time-limited nature of their involvement as a problem. Additionally, without continued external guidance or internalised changes in social norms, pre-existing dynamics tend to reassert themselves and IDPs, along with women and other marginalised groups can be sidelined in these well-intentioned and nominally integrated organisations. Host participants also described dissatisfaction with some NGOs catering only to IDPs in some spaces, noting the animosity this generates between communities.

What is new about this finding?

Global evidence often suggests that living close together creates opportunities for stronger relationships and social integration between displaced and host communities over time.^[9] This study shows that proximity alone does not automatically translate into meaningful integration in Banadir: relationships between IDPs and hosts appear largely practical and transactional. Programming capable of building bridging social capital by NGOs can be undermined without strategies to protect gains.

Why does this matter for resilience?

If borne out by further research, weak and transactional relationships may limit access to livelihood opportunities, durable sources of support, collective problem-solving, and protection. Resilience focused programming aiming to leverage social capital must be well-designed and invested in changing entrenched dynamics.

9. Deuchar, R. (2011) ‘People Look at Us, The Way We Dress, and They Think We’re Gangsters’: Bonds, Bridges, Gangs and Refugees: A Qualitative Study of Inter-Cultural Social Capital in Glasgow,’ *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 24(4), 672-689; Gurung, S. and Shean, A. (2017) *Social Capital and Good Governance: A Governance in Action Research Brief*. Mercy Corps; Feinstein and Poleacovschi (2023) ‘Making Democracy Work in a Refugee Camp.’

Finding 4: Longer duration of displacement in Banadir does not automatically translate into broader or stronger social capital beyond immediate neighbour-based bonding ties

Many IDPs in Banadir have lived in the same place for years. However, both qualitative and quantitative data indicate that time alone does not lead to stronger, wider social networks (bridging social capital) nor better access to institutions (linking social capital).

For example, survey data show no clear increase in participation in organised groups (such as cooperatives, livelihood associations or women's groups) over the period of time displaced. Around 30% of recent arrivals report any household participation in organised groups compared to 15% of those displaced for 3–5 years and 26% of those displaced for 5 years or more. In fact, the percentage of respondents reporting they hold leadership roles actually decreases the longer people have been displaced, falling to less than 3% among those displaced for five years or more. Institutional access also declines in a similar way. Nearly three-quarters (74%) of long-settled IDPs report having no connection to government. By contrast, respondents in both displaced and non-displaced communities point out that non-displaced populations have dense, well-developed networks that displaced people do not necessarily acquire, even after many years.

Qualitative accounts suggest some reasons why we might observe these patterns. One explanation is that social networks deepen locally but rarely expand outwards beyond neighbourhoods. Limited linking social capital, detailed in the preceding sections, present structural barriers to both service access, and improvement in circumstances. As one host community member observed, **“there are situations where it is difficult for [IDPs] and where they are excluded, such as in government offices. When they need to visit these offices, it is challenging. If they need access to government services for education or health matters, it is particularly hard for displaced people. Local people, however, have representatives who remain in the area, while displaced people do not have such representation.”**

Another non-displaced respondent tied this barrier directly to effective advocacy, remarking, **“Displaced people face difficulty when they want to submit complaints. For example, if they want to bring an issue to the administration, it is challenging. The reason is that there are no individuals who speak on behalf of displaced people. Government offices may require someone to represent them.”**

With the scarcity that IDPs face, they lack the time to build trust and develop broader bridging capital or the resources to reciprocate mutual support that underpins these relationships. As one male IDP in Daynile stated, **“If I am in a stable situation, I can make friends. But if I am living in a difficult life where my children are hungry, I cannot build social connections.”**



“If I am in a stable situation, I can make friends. But if I am living in a difficult life where my children are hungry, I cannot build social connections.”
(male FGD participant)

Reflecting on the efficacy of savings groups, which are widely regarded as an effective intervention for social resilience, one female IDP reported: **“We do not create groups to collect money because we have no money.”** An NGO consortium key informant explained further: **“So others can help you but if you have needs and get help, you should be able to also bring back to the table and minorities have fewer connections to bring mutual benefits and so lead to more exclusion.”**

What is new about this finding?

A lot of existing global evidence links long-term displacement to persistent poverty and vulnerability but often assumes that social integration improves with time.^[10] Our findings appear to challenge that assumption by showing that in Kaxda and Daynile, time appears to deepen very local ties but does not expand access to wider groups or institutions. This may therefore coincide with continued or even increasing social isolation over time.

Why does this matter for resilience?

When duration of displacement does not lead to stronger networks or institutional access, households can remain stuck in short-term coping strategies, rather than meaningful recovery and resilience-building. This may help explain why long-settled IDPs continue to experience shocks as highly disruptive, despite years of residence in a location.

10. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) (2020) *No Land, No Water, No Pasture: The Urbanisation of Drought Displacement in Somalia*; Atimniraye Nyelade, R., Zhang, D., Chika Chukwuorji, J., and Kator Iorfa, S. (2025) “It’s Colder On the Outside”: Lived Experiences of Internally Displaced Persons Staying Outside Displacement Camps. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 60(3), 1504-1510.

Recommendations

The findings above are drawn from an initial pilot phase of a multi-year and multi-sited research project. Below, we present reflections and implications for community, practitioner, policy and research stakeholders based on these early insights.

Preliminary implications for community residents, organisers and formal authorities

Our pilot findings indicate that social infrastructure in Banadir is important, but fragile and unevenly distributed. The majority of IDPs in Kaxda and Daynile report receiving no support from anyone during a recent crisis. Where support does exist, it is neighbour-based, immediate, and almost entirely confined within IDP communities themselves. Organised support such as community and women's groups reaches some of the most isolated households, but reciprocity norms come under pressure in conditions of extreme poverty where community members cannot support one another. Connections to government and institutions are also limited and largely inaccessible without intermediaries, and longer duration of displacement has not, on its own, translated into wider networks. By working to widen access, strengthen trust, and build connections that last, community residents, organisers and leaders can help create a broader and more durable support system.

01 Build on neighbour-based solidarity to create more organised, collective responses to shared shocks.

Our pilot points to neighbour-to-neighbour support, such as sharing food or accompanying someone to a health facility, being the primary and often only support system reported by IDPs. Community organisers can help formalise these support practices into more predictable arrangements, for example, through small neighbourhood-level mutual aid initiatives or shared emergency funds. Such initiatives can make informal support more reliable and less dependent on individual goodwill at moments of crisis. Even modest formalisation can reduce the gap between the many who report receiving no support whatsoever during a recent crisis and those with access to a neighbour who is able to offer some support.

02 Invest in sustained relationships, not only transactions, across IDP and host community lines.

Based on our pilot data, bridging connections between displaced and non-displaced residents in Banadir are largely characterised by respondents as functional and transactional, such as occasional employment, or sharing information. These interactions are useful but do not generate the kind of trust and reciprocity that underpin deeper social capital. At the same time,

qualitative accounts were mixed as to whether or not displaced and non-displaced community members have access to and take part in the same social groups, with some suggesting stigma around social status and displacement creates distance. These norms can be slow to change without targeted efforts. Community organisers and leaders can help to address this by focusing on creating or expanding structures where IDP and host community members have a shared stake – such as joint community groups, mixed livelihood cooperatives, or shared savings associations – where there is a shared incentive to maintain and deepen relationships beyond functional transactions alone.

03 Explore pathways for IDPs to access government and institutions that do not depend on individual connections.

Preliminary survey and qualitative data from Banadir suggest that IDPs have limited and largely mediated access to government, with fear and unfamiliarity compounding structural exclusion. Community committees and women's groups already serve as informal intermediaries for some households – helping members access services or raise issues with local authorities. Community leaders can strengthen and systematise this role, ensuring that these pathways are visible, accessible and consistently available to households without existing connections, and that both recently arrived and isolated IDPs are actively linked to them.

Preliminary implications for development and humanitarian organisations

Our preliminary findings suggest that ties within communities, particularly among neighbours, already provide an important, though limited, resource for support among IDPs. However, this support is typically short-term, small-scale and unevenly distributed, and those in protracted displacement can struggle to expand and consolidate networks even after long periods of displacement in close proximity to host populations. Programming approaches have the potential to support and reinforce connections, and can open or expand opportunities to influence institutions and decision-making, in ways that can amplify impact, and help to minimise and avoid harm.

01 Design programmes around meaningful participation and clear demonstration of influence with investments to protect these gains.

Our early-stage findings suggest that while IDPs often participate informally in community spaces, they are only rarely active in organised groups and report feeling they have limited influence over decisions that affect them. Qualitative accounts suggest women, in particular, often contribute to community life but feel their voice is sidelined or goes unheard. Humanitarian actors should prioritise clearer participation mechanisms that are directly linked to select, specific decision points at key stages of the programming cycle. Community participation should be audited to establish whether women and the most marginalised households (such as those in ill health, with disability, or in extreme poverty) have accessible pathways to

influence, not just attendance. Once input is solicited, feedback should be actively provided to communities in messaging such as you said, we did. A simple post-hoc assessment of such efforts is to document explicitly: *if we had not received this input, how would the programme have looked different?* Internally, organisations should review and where necessary improve measurement and monitoring of influence and voice over presence. This approach is consistent with, but makes more tangible, commitments to Accountability to Affected Populations and meaningful participation. Consortium-based or joint programming with multiple partners should be prioritised in efforts to improve meaningful participation, to support wider reach and more sustainable gains, as the phenomenon is ill-suited to a single actor or siloed approach.

02 **Work with neighbour-level support systems as a foundation for resilience across IDP and host communities.**

Our preliminary findings indicate that many IDPs report receiving no support at all, but among those who do, neighbours are the most consistent sources of that support. In many displacement-affected communities, IDPs and hosts find themselves in proximity. Humanitarian programmes should therefore design assistance in ways that complement and strengthen neighbour-based support, rather than assuming that formal groups or institutions are the primary entry point. Design should consider the target community beyond IDPs and include vulnerable host populations to avoid creating divisions and provide entrees to bridging social capital. Efforts should also include integrating measures in assessments of whether households receive or provide support to neighbours. Where social capital networks are active in mutual aid and reciprocity, neighbourhood-focused supplements to household targeting – such as small-scale shared assets or synchronised cash transfers – can support and reinforce coping systems, rather than replacing them. Where support among neighbours is lacking, tailored social capital support activities that include group-level livelihood initiatives or cooperatives can lay foundations for reciprocity and mutual aid.

03 **Avoid assuming that long-settled IDPs are socially or institutionally integrated.**

Our pilot findings suggest that longer duration in displacement does not automatically lead to stronger social networks, greater voice, nor better access to external authorities and institutions. Despite existing frameworks and formal commitments often emphasising transitions in displacement as phase-based and not specifically time-dependent, recent reviews show that recent displacement is often prioritised in humanitarian response, and systems remain poorly placed to deliver on priorities of those in protracted displacement.^[11] Our findings provide further evidence of persistent challenges in protracted displacement, and make a strong case for monitoring and targeting to consider social inclusion, legal integration with

11. Sida et al (2024) *Independent Review of the IASC Response to Internal Displacement*, ODI Global; Miller, S. (2024) *A Global View on Responses to Internal Displacement: Where to Go From Here?* Refugees International.

tenure rights and ID cards along with access indicators over measures of displacement duration. This aligns with growing recognition of protracted displacement as a condition requiring sustained humanitarian engagement.

Preliminary implications for humanitarian funders

Based on these preliminary findings, in Banadir, the social infrastructure that IDPs rely on could be better captured by standard funding frameworks. These frameworks and requirements shape what kinds of support get resourced, what counts as meaningful participation, and which populations are considered ready to transition out of humanitarian programming. Funders therefore have an important role in ensuring that these frameworks reflect the realities of displacement: recognising relational and social capacity as legitimate programme inputs and avoiding assumptions about integration that may not hold in practice.

01 Consider funding social and relational capacity alongside services and infrastructure.

Our pilot findings indicate that IDPs in Banadir often report receiving no support at all during shocks, and that which they do receive depends heavily on informal social support, while formal institutional links remain weak. Humanitarian funders should therefore consider supporting facilitation, trust-building, and local coordination alongside service delivery. This includes recognising neighbourhood-level and community-based support mechanisms as legitimate resilience-building assets, while supporting these to be more inclusive. This approach aligns with donor commitments to localisation and people-centred aid.^[12]

02 Support investment in, and monitoring of, efforts to ensure meaningful participation translates into influence over decisions.

Our pilot findings point to the fact that participation without influence does not strengthen social capital and may even undermine trust. Donors should therefore facilitate and encourage partners to demonstrate how community input affects programme decisions through meaningful and quality inclusion, rather than focusing on the existence or number of consultation mechanisms. Funding frameworks can support this by prioritising feedback loops and adaptive programming, consistent with donor commitments to accountability and inclusive governance.^[13]

12. EU/DG ECHO (2023) *Guidance Note: Promoting Equitable Partnerships with Local Responders in Humanitarian Setting* Guidance on Equitable Partnerships; Government of Ireland (2024) *Irish Aid Annual Report 2023*.

13. Government of Canada (2024) *Report to Parliament on the Government of Canada's International Assistance 2023-2024*.

03 Preliminary evidence cautions against using duration of displacement as a proxy for readiness to transition.

Our preliminary research suggests that long-settled IDPs in Banadir may be more disconnected from institutions even than newer arrivals. Funders should avoid assuming that duration of displacement translates directly into integration, resilience or reduced humanitarian need. Instead, funding decisions should be informed by evidence of social inclusion, voice, and access, which may vary over time in different ways. This aligns with donor recognition that durable solutions are conditions-based rather than time-based.^[14]

Next Steps

Building on the insights from the pilot phase, in the coming months, the SoCap project team will revise, collaboratively re-design and re-deploy revised data collection tools in Daynile and Kaxda, with the aim of deepening our understanding of how social capital differs within and across key groups.

14. EU/DG ECHO (2022) *Addressing Displacement and Migration Related to Disasters, Climate Change and Environmental Degradation*; Government of Ireland (2019) *A Better World: Ireland's Policy for International Development*.

About the SoCap Project

The Role of Social Capital in Urban Fragile and Conflict-Affected Contexts (SoCap) project is a three-year research project funded by Irish Aid and undertaken in partnership with Concern Worldwide. It systematically analyses the interactions between social capital, resilience, the urban environment, and conflict and fragility among marginalised urban populations in Haiti, Somalia and Somaliland.

This mixed-methods research aims to understand how pathways that translate social capital to resilience among marginalised urban groups are both fostered and thwarted, to identify practical leverage points for operational and policy actors.

The research team includes Jessica Hsu, Haiti Impact Group, and Louino Robillard and Rubson Brumaire, Gwoup Konbit, Haiti; Manar Zaki, Brenton Peterson and Angus Williams, Consilient, Somalia and Somaliland; Dr Kelsey Gleason, University of Vermont; Dr Ronak Patel; and Dr Caitriona Dowd, Jothsaïna Pierre and Abdulkadir Adan, University College Dublin.

The ideas, opinions and comments therein are entirely the responsibility of its authors and do not necessarily represent or reflect Irish Aid policy.

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For more about the SoCap project, please visit

<https://www.concern.net/knowledge-hub/social-capital-and-resilience-fragile-and-conflict-affected-urban-contexts>



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