

What are the sources of social capital?

A pilot study in Borama, Somaliland

SoCap Research Brief

No. 4, July 2026

Key Points

Over two-thirds of both Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and non-IDP respondents reported no-one at all provided support when they recently experienced a shock, and among those who did receive support, immediate family were the most common source.

Several respondents described moving to areas where family was already present, as one potential explanation for the relative importance of family ties. Nevertheless, the high share of respondents reporting they received no support at all during a recent shock points to limits of social capital and support even where systems appear relatively formalised.

Organised social capital in Borama is relatively strong, but access is uneven and shaped by poverty, contribution requirements, and social position.

Borama has a dense ecosystem of organised social structures, such as savings groups, IDP committees, and religious organisations. However, even these numerous structures do not reach everyone, as access to and leveraging support from organised groups is uneven. Women's savings groups emerged as widely trusted, and generally cross-community (IDP and non-IDP) associations, but ones for which financial barriers served a key basis of exclusion, meaning their benefits are less likely to reach the most vulnerable.

Residents in Borama participate in community structures, but report limited and mediated influence over decisions.

Respondents in Borama report relatively high levels of participation in organised groups, such as cooperatives, livelihood or women's groups. However, of those actively involved in groups, fewer than half reported being confident that their opinion will be taken into consideration in group decision-making. Interviews with key stakeholders reinforce this observation, suggesting that while observationally, IDPs, women and other minorities may be intentionally included in formal structures or committees, their voices do not always carry in meetings.

Land insecurity and the risk of eviction remain major shocks that undermine the durability of social capital among IDPs in Borama.

Survey data indicate that over 60% of respondents have been displaced for five years or longer. Nevertheless, land insecurity persists despite this extended duration, and continues to represent a major, disruptive shock that undermines the durability and utility of social capital to overcome adversity. Interviewees note that initial displacement can allow IDPs to plan for relocation to areas where they have existing social bonds, such as family. However, subsequent intra-urban displacements can disrupt the secondary process of building new bonding and bridging capital and forcing a move to a less desirable location. Evictions therefore play a major part in undermining social capital that might otherwise be formed over time.

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 Somaliland, the research project specifically asks how various subgroups of internally displaced persons in Borama 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 Borama district. 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 Somaliland 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; 3 KIs involving a clan elder, religious leader and women's group representative in addition to 4 KIs with NGO representatives working in displacement, resilience and social cohesion across Somaliland, amounting to a total of 43 participants in the region; and recorded 149 survey responses. 92 respondents were displaced; while 57 were from non-displaced / host communities.

Data collection in the pilot phase took place in Borama, a district in Awdal region, with an estimated population of 445,000.^[3] Borama is the largest city in Somaliland's Awdal region, located near the Ethiopian border.

Borama is an urban setting affected by displacement, climatic shocks, economic stress, and governance constraints. The humanitarian situation is primarily shaped by environmental and socio-economic vulnerabilities, rather than large-scale insecurity.

As of September 2024, an estimated 18,600 individuals were internally displaced in Borama, among a total of 29,310 in the Awdal region.^[4] This makes Borama the largest site of internal displacement in the region. This figure is subject to considerable fluctuation. The region's proximity to Ethiopia also makes it a strategic entry point for refugees fleeing climate shocks and conflict, though most only pass through on their way to Hargeisa or Gulf countries. Other economic challenges faced by the city are the high cost of electricity, water supply and transportation infrastructure gaps.

3. UNOCHA (2025) *Somalia - Subnational Population Statistics*, 8 May 2025.

4. International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2024) *Displacement Tracking Matrix*.

Key Findings

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

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: Over two-thirds of both IDP and non-IDP respondents reported no-one at all provided support when they recently experienced a shock, and among those who did receive support, immediate family were the most common source

When asked who supported them during a recent impactful shock,^[5] over two-thirds of respondents in Borama reported that no-one at all supported them (see Figure 1). Among those who did receive support, immediate family members were the most commonly cited source (10%). This was followed by neighbours (4%), extended family members / clan (3%), and NGOs (3%). This shows both how important family connections are and how limited this kind of support can be. While the number of respondents varied across groups,^[6] there was no statistically significant difference between IDPs and non-IDP respondents in relation to any category of support.

The support received was typically informal, small-scale and short-term, oriented towards meeting immediate needs rather than longer-term recovery. One male IDP participant in an FGD recounted, **“We know the situations of each of us, such as hungry and sick ones. We bring [care] to the sick, while we provide food to the hungry. It is not possible for a family among us to stay hungry while others have [food].”** Similar observations were shared by non-IDP respondents, who gave examples of receiving advice, finances or food from social connections.

A significant point of divergence between IDP and non-IDP respondents in qualitative accounts related to access to NGO support. Although only a small number of survey respondents reported receiving support from NGOs at all, and these levels were not statistically different across IDP and non-IDP populations, qualitative accounts revealed a perception among non-IDPs that NGO support is structured and flows disproportionately towards displaced communities. As one female FGD participant remarked, **“As the host community, we are poor like the displaced people, and no one has included us in the support programs, such as housing that was made for the displaced people. No one knows about us.”**

5. Respondents self-identified the nature of the shock which had the biggest impact on their household over the last 12 months.

6. 92 IDP respondents were surveyed, and 57 non-IDP respondents

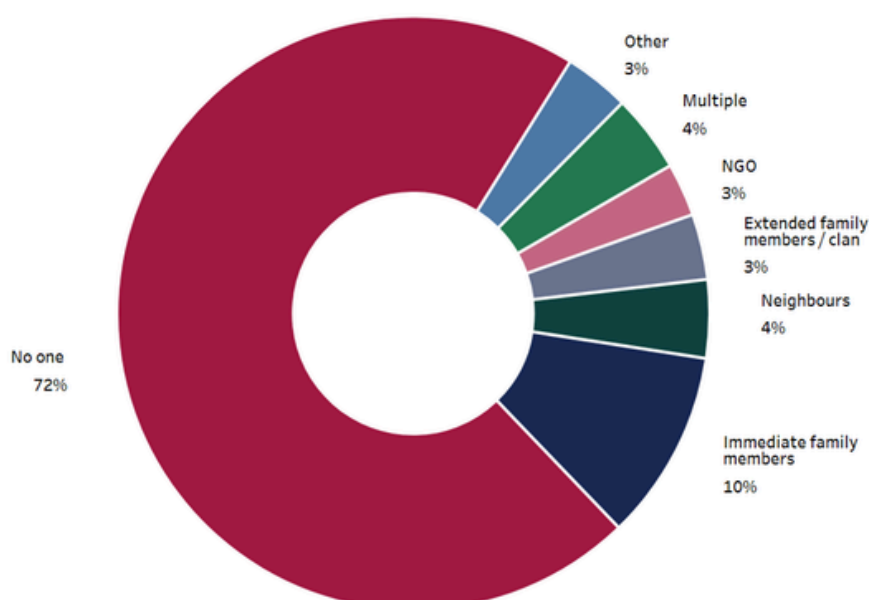


Figure 1. Responses to who provided support during or after the most impactful shock experienced in their household over the last 12 months (Borama, $n=145$; 4 non-responses).

Another observed, **“Our problem is that there are no NGOs that support us.”**

Importantly, displaced populations did not report that they had either sufficient nor particularly targeted support from NGOs. Critically, for more recently arrived or more socially marginal IDPs, connections may be restricted or of limited value in this regard. As one male participant described: **“I have become old and sick and can no longer maintain working [...] There is no one who supports me. The connections I have do not help me because those I know are at my same level.”** However, only respondents in FGDs for non-displaced community members reported a perception that support from NGOs is disproportionately available for IDPs. This reflects a potential point of tension between displaced and non-displaced populations that social connections within and between the groups have not countered.

What is new about this finding?

Existing research frequently identifies family and clan as the primary sources of support for displaced populations, particularly in Somali contexts.^[7] Our findings from Borama add a further insight: even where family ties are the most common source of support, the majority of respondents still report receiving no support at all during a recent shock. This underscores that the presence of family networks in general does not translate into consistent access to support among individuals.

Why does this matter for resilience?

Family ties, and to a lesser extent, neighbour-based support among poor urban households helps them cope in the short term. However, even where it is provided, because this support is uneven, informal, small-scale and usually short-term, it offers little protection against repeated shocks or longer-term crises.

7. 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: Organised social capital in Borama is relatively strong, but access is uneven and shaped by poverty, contribution requirements, and social position

Borama has a dense ecosystem of organised social capital, such as savings groups, IDP committees, and mosques. Survey data show that across both IDP and non-IDP groups, one-in-four respondents reported someone in their household participates in an organised group. This number was slightly higher among non-IDP respondents (where it rose to one-in-three) than IDP counterparts. These structures play an important role in mobilising resources, sharing information, and coordinating responses to crises. As one female FGD participant described, **“I am a member of the community committee in our neighbourhood [...] We help people in need by collecting support from other community members in the camp or by requesting assistance from NGOs. We also help solve conflicts that happen among IDPs.”**

Women’s groups were widely described as effective and trusted, providing emergency support, loans, and collective responses to crises. As one female Key Informant in Borama noted, **“As women, we support and help each other. For example, mothers who face challenges in life, such as sickness and the death of their family members, we support each other and provide transport and take them to the hospitals. We contact the organisations, and if their phones are busy, we, as women’s groups, take the responsibility for the hospital finances. In the case of the death of family members, we share in their mourning.”**

Women’s savings groups were also specifically highlighted by multiple non-IDP respondents as an example of a group that both displaced and non-displaced community members alike join. However, even these structures do not reach everyone, as access to and leveraging support from organised groups is uneven. Qualitative accounts pointed to financial barriers as a key reason for exclusion. Many savings groups require regular contributions, which the poorest households cannot afford. As one participant in an IDP FGD noted, **“When we say the community is connected, it’s only about 50 percent. There are people with special needs who cannot afford to join the mothers’ networks or make contributions.”** Respondents highlight that very poor households, and some minority groups are less able to participate. Organised social capital is therefore strong, but selective. Non-IDP respondents also reflected on this as a barrier, noting that **“there are many times when displaced people can’t afford to participate in saving networks, because they have very little money.”**

Similar conversations with male IDPs revealed an economic filter on participation in any groups or activities that may build connections and serve as bases of support. One male IDP reported that

“The main challenge to forming strong connections is that IDPs are focused on their daily struggles – every morning they think about how to provide for their children and have no time to think about building stronger connections.”
(male FGD participant)

“neediness” among IDPs was a barrier to building relationships, while another explained more fully: **“The main challenge to forming strong connections is that IDPs are focused on their daily struggles – every morning they think about how to provide for their children and have no time to think about building stronger connections.”**

Survey data are illustrative of this pattern, though should be interpreted with caution given the small sample size at pilot phase, and relatively small differences in absolute terms. Across several measures, respondents who reported someone in their household was involved in a formal group of any kind also reported higher mean income. For example, IDP respondents who did not have a household member involved in an organised group reported eating meat on average 0.28 times in the previous week; compared to 0.63 times among those involved in a formal group. Meanwhile, non-IDP respondents without a household member involved in a formal group reported a monthly income 31 points lower than those with household membership.

What is new about this finding?

Many studies associate organised groups, and especially, micro-finance and savings groups, with improved resilience and collective action.^[8] In Borama, these also appear to be widely trusted and respected. Our findings suggest an important nuance: strong organisation, even of financial supports, can coexist with systematic exclusion, as contribution requirements limit access for the poorest households.

Why does this matter for resilience?

Organised support allows households to pool resources and respond more predictably to shocks. However, even where these structures are relatively established and widely respected, their reach and impact can be uneven, leaving those outside these systems with few coping options.

8. See discussion in Rhude et al. (2025) *A Review of Evidence of the Impact of Social Capital on Resilience*.

Finding 3: Despite active participation in community groups, respondents report limited and mediated influence over decisions

Despite active household participation in community groups among one-in-four respondents, evidence that membership and participation equates to voice and influence in these groups is very limited. Given the relatively small sample size, interpretation of responses within this subgroup should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, of these, only two-in-five (40%) of respondents overall reported either being very or somewhat confident that their opinion will be taken into consideration in group decision-making, with little difference across IDP and non-displaced community responses in this regard. Qualitative insights suggested that women's groups offer the potential for stronger internal voice, but influence beyond the group appears to be limited.

Key informant interviews with local NGO stakeholders reinforce this observation, suggesting that while observationally, IDPs, women and other minorities may be intentionally included by NGOs or government in formal structures or committees, without external oversight or coaching, their voices do not carry in meetings. A key informant from the national government offering reasons included both prevalent norms that marginalise their input as well as internalised subordination in such structures by women and minorities themselves.

Access to official authorities is also uneven. When asked about a hypothetical situation in which the respondent needed help from someone in the government, only 3% of respondents across both IDP and non-IDP communities reported they knew someone directly who could help them; 27% reported an indirect connection (such as through a family or community member); while two-thirds (66%) reported no connection whatsoever.

^[9] As a result, voice and influence across both communities appears strongly mediated rather than direct.

When asked about a hypothetical situation in which the respondent needed help from someone in the government, two-thirds of those surveyed reported having no connection to government whatsoever.

However, the perception of a lack of connection differed in qualitative accounts among IDP and non-IDP groups. IDPs were more likely to report feeling isolated or cut-off from official structures, with one female IDP in an FGD noting, **"I don't have any relationship with the local government. Maybe the community members of the IDP meet and tell our needs,"** while another observed: **"I have no direct relationship with the local government, but our committees do [...] The committee can connect me to the local government if I need."** By contrast, multiple non-displaced respondents reflected on the quality of connections between their community and local authorities, with one respondent drawing a contrast between non-displaced populations'

9. The pattern was similar for scenarios involving different levels of government.

access to NGO support, and their connection to government: **“there are no NGOs that the host community has a relationship with or that support us. But we are connected with the local government, police stations, and the district commissioner. We have a good relationship with the government.”** Others shared similar accounts, noting **“As local people, we have good connections with the government,”** and **“Without hesitation, we visit [government] offices to complete our needs.”** Consequently, while levels and pathways of reported connections were similar in survey responses, the lived experience of connectivity to government structures appears meaningfully different across IDP and non-IDP communities.

This difference is compounded by reported IDP exclusion from full legal integration. Their non-resident status and lack of land ownership restrict their ability to meaningfully participate as members of the community. As one woman in Qoorgab described, **“IDPs can’t even own land. I remember an IDP who was born here, and when he was 40 years old, he tried to build a small house but was arrested and told that he did not belong to this land. For that reason, the people are not the same.”** This exclusion reinforces their marginalised status, particularly in Borama.

What is new about this finding?

Humanitarian and development frameworks often implicitly or explicitly associate opportunities for participation with voice and influence, using output-level measures such as attendance or membership as indicators of inclusion.^[10] Our preliminary findings highlight a gap between participation and influence, showing that even in contexts with relatively well-established and well-organised institutions, community members’ voice is usually channelled through intermediaries and respondents report rarely feeling that their input shapes final decisions.

Why does this matter for resilience?

Participation without influence limits people’s ability to address structural risks. Mediated voice can help manage immediate problems, but it rarely changes the conditions that produce repeated shocks.

10. 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.

Finding 4: Land insecurity and the risk of eviction remain major shocks that undermine the durability of social capital among IDPs in Borama

Many displaced respondents in Borama have lived in the same location for long periods. Survey data indicate that over 60% have been displaced for five years or longer. Nevertheless, land insecurity persists despite this extended duration, and continues to represent a major, disruptive shock that undermines the durability and utility of social capital to overcome adversity.

Qualitative accounts among IDPs consistently identified eviction and insecure tenure as major sources of stress. Respondents described repeated displacement, fear of losing their homes, and disruption to livelihoods and schooling. These shocks undermine social capital by breaking up groups, forcing households to relocate, and discouraging long-term investment in housing or businesses. As one female FGD participant remarked, **“Awareness and some investment in the existing [savings] networks can improve the resilience of this community. However, we are missing basic services like schools, health centres, and police stations. Even if we request support, we cannot implement these services because the community does not own the land – it could be taken by the local community after any eviction.”**^[11]

Our pilot findings indicate that, despite strong organisation, social capital cannot compensate for the absence of secure land. Households remain vulnerable to sudden shocks that reset social and economic progress. As another female IDP participant described: “A person can only compete or share something with others when he or she owns land. The IDPs are people who were forced to displace here, and they are always asked to evacuate the land they reside on.” Another remarked on the limited utility of supports and services in the face of such uncertainty:

“If a person can get their own land, other supports can be essential, but someone who regularly faces eviction can't benefit from other things.”

A longer duration of displacement in an urban environment for IDPs should confer a time advantage to building social capital. Interviews shed some light on why this does not appear to occur, noting that initial displacement allows IDPs to plan for relocation to areas with some degree of bonding social capital. However, subsequent intra-urban displacements can disrupt the secondary process of building new bonding and bridging capital and force a move to a less desirable location. Evictions play a major part in driving this disruption such that the duration of displacement in the urban space is not as advantageous if it is not stable. In addition to the



“We are missing basic services like schools, health centres, and police stations [...] we cannot implement these services because the community does not own the land – it could be taken.”
(female FGD participant)

11. The evidence suggests the service access gap described in this quote reflects a combination of factors operating simultaneously rather than any single cause. Services such as schools and health centres exist in the IDP settlement context but are partial, of poor quality, or conditional on ability to pay – with school fees representing a documented barrier for the poorest IDP households. Water, electricity and sanitation are particularly deficient in IDP settlement areas specifically, with one key informant noting that residents “use water bought from water truckers” with “no electricity or other services.” This contrasts with host community respondents, who describe direct and confident access to local government offices for their own needs, though hosts face their own exclusion from NGO-delivered support programmes

complexity of land rights in Somaliland, multiple failures by government related to capacity, along with alignment with certain interests and gatekeepers, exacerbate this problem. While there is some land allocation in Borama for IDPs on public land, this is often in the periphery. As one woman from Hayabe described, **“Displaced people usually live in places like this, in the corners or on the outside of the town. People settle here because there are organisations that come to support these people.”** But when the value of land that IDPs occupy subsequently increases if privately held, key informants from local NGOs described government’s inability to regulate rent and the same government then helping enforce evictions of IDPs. The focus group discussants emphasised stable land tenure and eventual rights over land as one of the most pressing necessities to build a stable life.

Adding to the difficulty, IDPs in Borama noted a lack of institutionalised, shared public spaces where relationships between different marginalised groups (such as refugees and IDP Somalis) are intentionally fostered, limiting opportunities for organic bridging capital development. As one man in Qoorgab described, **“There are no spaces or events where people meet to exchange opinions. Occasionally, people may converse informally at tea restaurants.”**

What is new about this finding?

Existing research widely recognises land tenure as a constraint on durable solutions, but often treats social capital as a protective buffer against displacement-related shocks.^[12] This finding shows that even established social organisation can be vulnerable to repeated eviction, as land insecurity actively breaks social networks and resets progress.

Why does this matter for resilience?

Strong social networks help households cope with instability, but repeated eviction erodes these gains. Without secure tenure, resilience remains fragile and easily reversed. Beyond land tenure policy, urban planning remains important to community building especially for displaced and marginalised persons to facilitate integration and social capital building.

12. Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) (2020) *No Land, No Water, No Pasture: The Urbanisation of Drought Displacement in Somalia*.

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 data suggests that infrastructure in Borama is extensive and meaningful: clan networks, women's savings groups, mosque-based support, and IDP committees collectively are a significant foundation for mutual support and collective action. However, this infrastructure is uneven: those who are poorest, most recently arrived, or from minority clans are often least able to access it. It also faces persistent structural pressures, particularly land insecurity, that can erode what communities have built. If borne out by further research phases, working to widen access, strengthen inclusion, and protect existing networks from disruption, community residents, organisers and leaders can help build a broader and more durable safety net.

01 Work to actively lower barriers to membership of savings groups.

Our pilot findings suggest that women's savings groups were among the most frequently reported effective and trusted forms of organised support in Borama. Where possible, group leaders and organisers should work to lower or stagger contribution requirements for households that cannot initially afford regular payments, and/or consider dedicated groups with lower-contribution thresholds. This matters not only for inclusion, but for the sustainability of groups themselves: income shocks, eviction, and displacement cause members to drop out, shrinking the pool available to everyone. Contribution flexibility can help groups retain members through difficult periods.

02 Build on collective advocacy for secure land tenure as a precondition for durable investment.

Community leaders and organisers are well-placed to advocate to local government and NGO partners the direct connection between land insecurity and the fragility of community structures. Early-stage research indicates eviction disrupts savings group membership, severs neighbourhood ties, and forces the rebuilding of social networks from scratch. Collective and organised advocacy for tenure security involving both IDP and host community leaders may increase attention to this issue.

03 **Build and protect cross-community ties between IDP and host populations.**

Preliminary analysis points to relationships between displaced and non-displaced residents in Borama being generally positive, but remain vulnerable to tension over perceived differences in NGO support. Community leaders on both sides can play an active role in maintaining dialogue, correcting misinformation, and creating shared spaces and activities, including joint participation in savings groups and similar structures, that reinforce a sense of shared stake in community life.

Preliminary implications for development and humanitarian organisations

Our pilot data indicates that ties within communities, particularly among families, already provide an important, though limited, resource for support among IDPs. However, it is unevenly distributed, those in the most marginalised groups face barriers to social networks, and groups in protracted displacement can struggle to expand and consolidate networks. 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 **Reduce exclusion from existing group-based support, with a particular focus on women's groups.**

Our initial results indicate that women's savings umbrellas in Borama are among the most important forms of organised social capital across IDP and non-IDP communities, providing crisis support and livelihoods investment, while enjoying high levels of trust and perceived effectiveness. Programmes should work through these systems rather than creating parallel mechanisms. However, our results also suggest that access to these groups is uneven, and contribution requirements exclude the poorest and most marginalised households. Humanitarian actors should undertake exclusion analysis to identify characteristics of households who are excluded from, or unable to join, groups. Our evidence suggests the most vulnerable women are systematically absent from, or marginal in, these networks. Programming that works through women's savings groups without actively addressing this, risks bypassing those who stand to benefit the most from this form of social capital. From this analysis, programmes should advocate for and/or directly resource entry-support mechanisms for target households. Entry-support mechanisms to be agreed with group and community leadership might include subsidised entry, staggered contribution schedules or time-limited contribution matching by NGOs. Alternatively, having dedicated groups with lower barriers for membership can increase access to complementary but separate association social funds.^[13]

13. ACTED (2023) 'ACTED Somalia: Boosting the livelihoods of vulnerable households through savings systems in Baidoa,'; UNWomen Africa (2022) 'Village Saving and Loan Associations can be a solution to lost livelihoods,'; CARE International (2025), *Village Savings and Loan Associations Training Manual*.

02 Address land-related shocks as part of resilience programming.

Pilot-phase findings point to the profoundly damaging and lasting effect that eviction has on social capital. Our findings suggest that eviction is not experienced by IDPs in Borama primarily as a shelter crisis – it is experienced as a social capital shock that destroys savings group memberships, severs neighbourhood ties, disrupts education, and forces displacement to less familiar areas where accumulated relationships must be rebuilt from scratch. For programmes investing in community structures, savings networks, or livelihoods, this means that eviction represents a direct risk to programme sustainability. Organisations should therefore integrate eviction risk into contextual analysis and programme risk registers as standard practice, and take steps to ensure programming is 1) not investing in community structure strengthening in high eviction-risk areas without explicit mitigation strategies in place; 2) linking community programming to existing tenure advocacy pathways where these exist; and 3) raising eviction risk explicitly within area-based coordination mechanisms and consortia where these are active.

03 Ensure targeted communication on IDP and non-IDP targeting and assistance in broader communication and accountability mechanisms.

Humanitarian organisations operating in mixed IDP and host community settings in Borama often have established community validation processes, complaint and response mechanisms, and public consultation on targeting criteria. However, our preliminary findings indicate that these mechanisms are not resolving a specific and persistent perception among non-displaced residents that assistance flows disproportionately to IDPs, despite survey data suggesting the actual gap in NGO connection is negligible across groups. This points to a communication gap rather than a targeting gap: existing accountability processes may address programme quality broadly, while not speaking specifically to differences in assistance across displaced and non-displaced populations who live alongside one another. Organisations should consider supplementing existing mechanisms with targeted and explicit communication that explains the rationale for displacement-specific targeting to host communities, where it takes place; acknowledges shared vulnerability; and where appropriate, identifies cross-community programme components that demonstrate recognition of and responsiveness to non-IDP needs. Where cross-community programming is not feasible, the perception of inequity itself warrants direct and explicit management as a social cohesion risk.

Preliminary implications for humanitarian funders

Based on these preliminary pilot findings, the social infrastructure on which displaced and host communities in Borama rely 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 preliminary findings indicate that resilience in Borama depends heavily on informal social support, while formal institutional links remain weak. Aid donors should therefore consider funding organisations that support facilitation, trust-building, and local coordination alongside service delivery. This includes recognising neighbourhood-level and community-based support mechanisms as legitimate resilience-building assets. This approach aligns with donor commitments to localisation and people-centred aid.^[14]

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

Pilot data points 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.^[15]

03 Preliminary evidence supports treating land insecurity as a core resilience constraint.

Initial findings indicate that tenure insecurity undermines long-term outcomes. Eviction is experienced not only as a housing and shelter issue, but as a recurrent social capital shock disrupting social and group ties, forcing IDPs to rebuild relationships in less familiar areas. Funders should therefore support integrated approaches that build social cohesion and livelihoods programming alongside efforts to ensure tenure stability and reduce eviction risk.^[16] Approaches that support IDPs who have experienced multiple displacements, alongside increased advocacy around land tenure should be supported.

14. 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*.

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

16. See examples in Kirubi, S. (2022) 'Pathways to Stability: Best Practices on Securing Land Tenure for Urban Displaced Communities in Somalia,' Danwadaag Consortium.

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 Borama, with the aim of deepening our understanding of how social capital differs within and across key groups.

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.

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