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1.9.2. Situation and treatment upon return

Many returning refugees, especially those coming from camps in Kenya or Yemen, face displacement upon arrival in Somalia. They transform from returning refugees to internally displaced persons (IDPs). A reason for that are the high costs of rent and land in Mogadishu.792 Others sought shelter with family and clan members back in Mogadishu. Also Crawford et al. (2024) found that 'In many ways, returnees face similar challenges and have similar profiles to the urban poor in Mogadishu.' They added that 'Only few returnees were in full-time employment, compared to 33 % of those who had not been displaced. More than 40 % of returnees were unemployed, compared to only 6% of the non-displaced community.'793 Girls and women retuning into precarious conditions in Somalia face risks of sexual and gender-based violence.794

Important factors for reintegration are kinship and family. Kinship networks help getting financial and other support.795 Those returnees who were previous residents of Mogadishu still have a network on the ground that helps settling in.796 Social capital (personal networks) are necessary for sustaining livelihoods in Mogadishu.797 Clan belonging makes a huge difference for returnees. Those belonging to weak or minority clans face more challenges upon return to Somalia than those belonging to strong clans. Even returnees who have marketable skills have, if they belong to weak groups, a hard time to establish a stable living.798

Returnees from Kenya often maintain ties to the camps where they came from in Kenya. The life and opportunities in the camps is 'part of their household strategies to allow them access to opportunities offered in the host country.'799 Some keep their children back in the camp in Kenya, where they can access schooling; some also consider returning to the businesses they had back in the camps.800

Returnees from Yemen were found to regret not being able to return back to Yemen due to conflict there. In Yemen they had more work opportunities and a higher quality of life. This reflects on the 'the challenging economic situation in Somalia faced by much of its population.' 801 Also in Kismayo and Afgoye, 'voluntary returnees who returned to Somalia expecting improved security and better job opportunities quickly became disillusioned by the realities of injustice and poverty that greeted their return.'802 In general, many returnees had to work in the informal sector, working as cleaners, street venders, or construction workers.803 Due to the economic challenges back in Somalia, sometimes also in combination with political insecurity, many returnees contemplate returning to the countries where they came from (e.g. Kenya or Yemen).804

In contrast to those returnees who had spent many years in camps in Kenya or Yemen, those returnees who had been returned, e.g. with the help of the EU-IOM Joint Initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration, after having been stranded along the way to Europe, were often happy to be back in Somalia. They felt ‘relief to have survived and be back in an environment of safety with one’s family.’805 Others, however felt shame since they had not told their families that they were leaving and also had cost their families dearly, due to the costs of migration. ‘Many families needed to reconcile the financial loss while also helping the returnee cope with trauma.’806 IOM provided some reintegration support, including health and financial support. This helped many returnees from Libya, Ethiopia and Sudan to establish themselves back in Somalia. Many did well after a year, compared to peers who had not migrated in the first place.807

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