



1.6. Clan connections and access to resources

In general, concerning IDPs integration in Somalia, clan affiliation serves as the foundational, everyday structure determining – or not – local integration, citizenship, and access to rights, depending on the presence of clan affiliation in the areas of displacement.[59](#)

IDPs who originate from agropastoral communities, even those who might have been part of the dominant clans in their places of origin, find themselves lacking the clan connections, social capital, and power base they used to have.[60](#) Similarly, returnees who had been in Mogadishu before being displaced abroad, and who do not belong to the majority clan now dominant in the city, experience similar lack of social capital impacting on their ability to access shelter, basic needs, and jobs.[61](#) However, some long-term IDPs who have been residing in Mogadishu for several generations might have been able to establish their network of support.[62](#)

IDPs coming from regions close to Mogadishu - Bay, Bakool, Lower Shabelle and Middle Shabelle - rely on social relations from their place of origin, when they exist, in order to access resources in Mogadishu. These relations consist of personal or clan bonds and prove to be crucial for accessing information upon arrival on where to settle or on how to access humanitarian assistance.[63](#) As the Somali Public Agenda (SPA) puts it:

‘when people from DACs arrive at IDP camps, they usually contact their relatives or neighbors from their place of origin who already live at the camp and stay with them for days or weeks before they can find an alternative residence. If they do not have relatives or acquaintances at the camp, they struggle to secure housing and are forced to find their own connections to aid themselves. This heightens their vulnerability. Regardless, bonding social capital is insufficient to support these IDPs to attain greater rights in Mogadishu. This will only come through stronger and denser social relations between these minority and marginalized clan groups and the dominant clan groups in Mogadishu since the latter control most of the resources necessary for IDPs to permanently overcome their displacement vulnerabilities.’[64](#)

Similarly, returnees from abroad, who move back to a location where they have strong social connections, negotiate their re-integration through the clan structure. However, those who move back to a location where they are a minority or do not have clan protection are more likely to end up in a camp.[65](#) On this point, a doctoral research article published in 2022 and focusing on returnees from Kenya to Mogadishu - through the UNHCR’s voluntary repatriation program - found that few returnees were able to return to their place of origin. The majority ended up in IDP camps, were left to fend for themselves, and experienced lack of supportive social network.

[66](#) According to Bakonyi, it seems quite common for Somali returnees from Kenyan refugee camps to settle in IDP camps.[67](#)

For those returning from ‘Western countries’, as indicated by Ayaan, access to IDP camps and settlements in Mogadishu is often mediated through informal gatekeepers, clan affiliations, community connections, or local authorities.[68](#) In order to secure shelter and basic support within the camps, returnees generally require social connections, some form of economic means, or referrals from relatives and community members.[69](#) In practice, affiliation through family, clan, or trusted intermediaries can facilitate access to accommodation, protection, and basic livelihood opportunities.[70](#)

However, according to an expert opinion, returnees from these ‘Western countries’, either voluntarily or forcibly repatriated, may find it quite challenging joining an IDP camp.[71](#) As the expert puts it, apart from the clan/social network aspects, first of all, they would need legal documents to identify themselves. Secondly, they would need a security clearance from the local authority or from a guarantor vouching for them: either someone from their clan, a clan representative, or any well respected or businessperson. Finally, they would face strong integration challenges, with the local IDP population quite suspicious about their origin, actual belonging, mental health status, and potential safety risks they might pose.[72](#) Other experts corroborate this last point by indicating that returnees from ‘Western countries’ may be perceived as culturally different or unfamiliar with local coping mechanisms and social norms,[73](#) or, as ‘outsiders’ within established camp communities.[74](#) Challenges can include limited social support, stigma, insecurity, language or accent differences, and difficulties accessing livelihoods and humanitarian assistance.[75](#)

- [59](#)

Ahmed S. Bile, et al., Rethinking (local) integration: domains of integration and their durability in Kismayo and Garowe, Somalia, 8 January 2024, [url](#), pp. 14, 16

- [60](#)

Crawford, N., at al., The lives and livelihoods of forcibly displaced people in Mogadishu, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 12, 20

- [61](#)

Crawford, N., at al., The lives and livelihoods of forcibly displaced people in Mogadishu, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 20-21

- [62](#)

Crawford, N., at al., The lives and livelihoods of forcibly displaced people in Mogadishu, April 2024, [url](#), pp. 15, 17, 21

- [63](#)

SPA, Marginalization and Social Cohesion among Minoritized Clan Groups and Dominant Groups, Aid Actors, and Local Authorities in Mogadishu, 28 August 2023, [url](#); SCC, Role of gatekeepers in Somalia, Final report, May 2024, [url](#), p. 14

- [64](#)

SPA, Marginalization and Social Cohesion among Minoritized Clan Groups and Dominant Groups, Aid Actors, and Local Authorities in Mogadishu, 28 August 2023, [url](#)

- [65](#)

Somalia expert on IDPs reintegration, Email exchange 27, 30 March 2026; see also Dalmar, Email exchange 12 May 2026. Dalmar is a Somali expert on migration and return with focus on Mogadishu

- [66](#)

Owigo, J., Returnees and the Dilemmas of (Un)sustainable Return and Reintegration in Somalia, 31 August 2022, [url](#), pp. 127-130

- [67](#)

Bakonyi, J., Email exchange, 19 March 2026. Jutta Bakonyi is Professor in Development and Conflict in the School of Government and International Affairs at Durham University. She is a Somalia expert with focus, among others, on displacement and urbanisation dynamics in the country.

- [68](#)

Ayaan, Email exchange, 13 May 2025; see also Dalmar, Email exchange 12 May 2026

- [69](#)

Ayaan, Email exchange, 13 May 2025

- [70](#)

Dalmar, Email exchange 12 May 2026

- [71](#)

Expert on Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights, Video interview and email exchange, 17, 19 March 2026

- [72](#)

Expert on Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights, Video interview and email exchange, 17, 19 March 2026; see also Ahmed S. Bile, et al., Rethinking (local) integration: domains of integration and their durability in Kismayo and Garowe, Somalia, 8 January 2024, [url](#), p. 16

- [73](#)

Ayaan, Email exchange, 13 May 2025

- [74](#)

Dalmar, Email exchange 12 May 2026

- [75](#)

Ayaan, Email exchange, 13 May 2025