Mixed Migration Centre

"We left after losing everything"

The impact of drought on climate-related displacement in Ethiopia and Somalia

MMC Research Report, August 2023

Mixed Migration Centre | DRC DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL | IOM UN MIGRATION | MRP Regional Migrant Response Plan Horn of Africa and Yemen

Front cover photo credit:
© DRC (2022), Somalia

Acknowledgements

Research team: Jim van Moorsel, Derese Dagnew Abebil and Francesco Teo Ficcarelli

Analysed and written by: Jim van Moorsel, Rawiyah Aboud Salim and Dr. Ayla Bonfiglio

Reviewed by: Laura Nistri (IOM), Eliza Clark (IOM), Tessa Richardson (IOM), Zineb Homman Loudiye (IOM), Daniel Ibáñez Campos (IOM), Jane Linekar (MMC) and Jennifer Vallentine (MMC)

Special thanks to: The DRC Ethiopia Protection team in Jijiga and 4Mi enumerators Abdikani Ahmed Aadan and Abidfatah Mohamed Yousuf in Hargeisa for live interpretation during the interviews, and DRC Ethiopia and Somalia teams for their support during the data collection activities.

Layout and design: Simon Pegler

Suggested citation: MMC and IOM (2023). *"We left after losing everything." The impact of drought on climate mobility in Ethiopia and Somalia.* Available at: https://mixedmigration.org/resource/drought-climate-displacement-ethiopia-somalia/

About MMC

The Mixed Migration Centre (MMC) is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration, with regional hubs hosted in the Danish Refugee Council's (DRC) regional offices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America, and a global team based across Copenhagen, Geneva and Brussels. MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise. MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

For more information visit: www.mixedmigration.org and follow us at @Mixed_Migration

About IOM

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration, advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

Disclaimer: The information, views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of MMC and do not necessarily reflect the position of IOM or DRC.

Contents

Summary and key findings 6

1. Introduction 7

2. Background 9

3. Methodology 9
- 3.1 Site selection 9
- 3.2 Data and sampling strategy 11
- 3.3 Data collection and analysis 11
- 3.4 Limitations 12

4. Drought-related displacement: how decisions around movement are made 13
- 4.1 Drought as a primary driver of internal movements 13
- 4.2 Interactions between drought and conflict in Ethiopia 14
- 4.3 Access to assistance and the decision to move 14
- 4.4 Family dynamics in drought-related movement decisions 14
- 4.5 Pastoralists and farmers in search of alternative urban livelihoods 15
- 4.6 The impact of age, health and clan on mobility 16

5. Mapping displacement journeys linked to drought 17
- 5.1 Access to assistance and support shaping movements and destination choice 17
- 5.2 Education as a factor shaping destination choice 18
- 5.3 Mapping movement patterns 18

6. Assistance and future migration decision-making 20
- 6.1 Assistance in locations around Jijiga 20
- 6.2 Assistance in locations around Hargeisa 20
- 6.3 Impact of assistance on future migration decision-making 21
- 6.4 Drivers of return intentions 21

Conclusions and recommendations for programming 22

Maps, tables and figures

Table 1. Locations of interview, number of interviews and number of interviews by sex 11
Table 2. Number of interviews by sex and age brackets 11
Map 1. Research sites: Villages and settlements around Jijiga and Hargeisa 10
Map 2. Three main types of movement 19

Acronyms

DRC	Danish Refugee Council
DTM	Displacement Tracking Matrix
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MMC	Mixed Migration Centre
MRP	Migrant Response Plan
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WFP	World Food Programme

Summary and key findings

This study focuses on the experiences of drought-affected Ethiopians and Somalis who have moved internally within the borders of their country of origin. It examines their profiles, drivers and triggers of movement, access to assistance and considerations around return or onward movement. The report complements two 4Mi snapshots,[1] which examine the drought-related international migration of Ethiopians to Djibouti and Somalia along the Eastern Route. Together, these research pieces aim to present the full range of drought-impacted mobility patterns in the Horn of Africa. The study presents an in-depth analysis of primary qualitative data, of which the key findings are:

- **Loss of livestock and crop failures were the main triggers of internal movements linked to the drought.** In Ethiopia, some respondents moved suddenly to flee conflict linked to resource depletion and disputes over dam ownership.

- **All respondents reported a lack of international assistance prior to their displacement, which was linked to their reasons for departure** from origin communities. Few were receiving formal assistance after their internal movements and in the locations of interview. **In Somalia, many received support from kin and relatives**.

- **Respondents moved with household members, including younger children**, except when drought-related factors intersected with conflict, which prompted the movement of individuals independently from their family members.

- **The choice of destination was based on where respondents had family and support networks, perceived employment opportunities and access to aid**.

- **Most respondents viewed their movements as long-term, rather than temporary and often as a permanent shift away from traditional livelihood strategies.**

- **Three different patterns of long-term movement emerged linked to the drought crisis**: 1) families migrating nearby to areas with better access to assistance and resources, 2) individuals moving longer distances internally to places of safety driven by drought and conflict and 3) individuals (often youth) sponsored by their families to migrate longer distances internally or cross-border, mostly to the nearest big city. All movement patterns were from remote, rural areas to peri-urban and urban areas.

- Despite attempts to improve their livelihoods by moving away from drought-affected locations of origin, **most respondents continued to rely on relatives owing to limited employment opportunities in destination communities and to their lack of skills** in sectors other than pastoralism and farming.

- **Respondents in both countries intended to stay in their current locations and neither engage in onward movement nor return for the foreseeable future**. This was driven by expectations of assistance in their current locations, a lack of capacity to pursue onward movement and/or persistent hardships and insecurity in origin communities.

- However, insufficient opportunities and unmet expectations of assistance in the locations of interview over the longer-term, may eventually **trigger onward, international migration along the Eastern Route**.

- Some respondents aspired for their adult children to engage in international migration along the Eastern Route as a strategy to increase future livelihood opportunities.

1 MMC (2023). 4Mi Snapshot: The impact of the drought on migration from Ethiopia to Djibouti: Migration triggers & household decision-making; MMC (2023). 4Mi Snapshot: The impact of the drought on migration from Ethiopia to Somalia: Migration triggers & household decision-making.

1. Introduction

In the past 10 years, the Horn of Africa has faced three severe periods of drought: 2010–2011, 2016–2017 and the current extended period which began at the end of 2020. After five consecutive failed rainy seasons followed by a period of torrential rains and flash flooding[2] in large parts of Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti, millions of people in the region are facing acute food insecurity and starvation.[3] Pastoralist and agricultural livelihoods in the Horn of Africa have become unsustainable, spurring a need for emergency humanitarian response in the short term and, resilience and development programming, in the longer term. Populations in this region have experienced accumulated periods of drought over the past decades, spurred by slow-onset environmental change making already dry regions even drier, and therefore further increasing the risk of (prolonged) drought.[4] Combined with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and localised conflict and violence, people's resilience has eroded. During the current extended period of drought, more than 2.5 million people were forced to move from their homes, including 1.3 million in Somalia, and over 516,000 in Ethiopia.[5]

While data are available on the numbers displaced by drought and more recent flooding in Somalia and Ethiopia, the decision-making process around mobility in response to environmental impacts is less clear, including how climate-related drivers may intersect or interact with conflict and violence, as well as decisions around return or onward movement. A more advanced understanding of household strategies and movement dynamics will better inform the response.

This report is the product of a collaboration between MMC and IOM focusing on the impacts of drought on mobility in the Horn of Africa, with an emphasis on researching mobility patterns.[6] It is based on qualitative in-depth interviews conducted in February and March 2023 with Ethiopians and Somalis who undertook internal movements driven by drought, among other factors.[7] The data collection took place prior to flooding in some parts of the region;[8] this study, therefore, focuses solely on the impacts of drought. However, it is assumed that the floods have only further increased movements and exacerbated the vulnerabilities highlighted in this report. The study sets out the following **research questions**:

- What are the different profiles of those engaging in different drought-related movement?
- What types of internal movements (e.g., exits from pastoralism, rural-to-rural, urban migration) are linked to the Horn of Africa drought crisis? Which factors triggered such movements as well as immobility?
- What determines the destination choice of people impacted by the drought crisis who are moving internally (i.e., family ties, aid distribution, availability of resources, community leaders'/peers' influence, etc.)?
- What forms of assistance did people receive prior to their departure? What forms of assistance do they still require?
- What are the onward movement intentions of drought-affected populations who have moved internally, what would be the triggers for moving further and/or internationally, and how are they organizing their journeys?

This report aims to contribute to **Strategic Objective 4 of the Migrant Response Plan (MRP) for the Horn of Africa 2021-2024**: building evidence, partnerships, and coordination to enhance the humanitarian response and migration management throughout the migration route. The overarching **objective** of this study is to provide MRP partners and stakeholders with an in-depth evidence-base on the full range of mobility patterns undertaken by drought-affected populations. It is **envisioned** that findings from this report will be used to design and deliver contextually relevant programs and advocate for policies which are responsive to the impacts of climate change and support safe, humane, and orderly migration.

2 The Guardian (2023, 19 May) 'No one saw this level of devastation coming': climate crisis worsens in Somalia.
3 WFP (2023, 24 May). Hunger emergency far from over in crisis hit Horn of Africa.
4 WHO (2023). Health Topics - Drought.
5 IOM (2023, April). East and Horn of Africa Drought Response. Situation Report 1-28 February 2023.
6 The study follows two 4Mi snapshots published in February 2023 based on quantitative 4Mi surveys conducted with drought-affected Ethiopians moving internationally along the Eastern Route in Djibouti and Somalia.
7 All 31 respondents except for one had not crossed an international border while moving away from their drought-impacted locations of origin. One Ethiopian respondent who lived on the Ethiopian side of the Ethiopian-Somali border was interviewed on the other side of the border in Baligubadle, in the Somaliland region.
8 Save the Children (2023). Horn of Africa: Flash flooding destroys homes, livestock for families facing the world's worst hunger crisis.

After this introduction to the study, Section 2 and 3 shall provide a short background on internal movements linked to the drought crisis in Ethiopia and Somalia as well as this study's research methodology, respectively. Section 4 outlines the drivers of people moving internally owing to drought in Ethiopia and Somalia. Section 5 examines movement trajectories linked to drought, while Section 6 analyses respondents' access to assistance and continued needs. Finally, Section 7 explores the future migration intentions and outlook of interviewed internal migrants. Where possible, this report draws comparisons with the data from the aforementioned 4Mi snapshots to understand how different drought-impacted movements are shaped, and how profiles may differ or align between those who took shorter internal movements versus those who decided to move internationally across borders in search of relief, assistance and more tenable livelihood opportunities.

Photo credit: © DRC (2022), Somalia

2. Background

After data collection for this research took place in February–March 2023, drought has been replaced by flooding in some areas of the region. This section provides a concise overview of the impacts of both drought and flooding on displacement in Somalia and Ethiopia up to and until June 2023.

After five seasons producing insufficient rains spanning 2022–2023 in the Horn of Africa, drought has given way to rains and flash floods, forcing more people to leave their homes. The extremely dry and hardened land formed by drought and increasingly high temperatures has created a predisposition for flooding during rains.[9] Moreover, while rainy seasons have become shorter, when not altogether absent, they have been marked by more extreme rainfall when rains do occur, as a result of climate change.[10] Taken together, climate change is intensifying drought in the Horn of Africa.[11]

In Somalia, a mix of drought and conflict followed by floods has led to almost 1 million people leaving their homes from January to May 2023. This brings the total numbers of Somalis displaced by climate and conflict to over 3.8 million.[12] When looking at the impact of drought on displacement before the recent floods, IOM reported 1.7 million displaced Somalis in March 2023.[13] In Ethiopia, flooding during the March–June 2023 rainy season has also generated new displacement in the same regions which were first hit by the drought, with thousands of households forced to leave their homes. This includes 35,350 households in the Somali Region and 5,803 households in Oromia, as of May 2023.[14] These numbers follow IOM's latest drought reporting, which identified that 406,676 Ethiopians had become displaced because of the drought and an additional 35,765 had become displaced due to other climate factors in the period December 2022–January 2023.[15]

3. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design to examine internal movements linked to the drought crisis in Ethiopia and Somalia and thinking around onward movement. The data were triangulated with existing MMC 4Mi data on drought-related mobility and secondary literature. MMC initially sought to identify respondents who had family members who had engaged in international migration along the Eastern Route, to compare with quantitative data from MMC's 4Mi survey in Djibouti and Somalia. In practice, it proved difficult to find respondents with a household or family member who had migrated longer distances across international borders, which may underscore how exceptional international movements are among all movements linked to the Horn of Africa drought crisis, owing to the greater resources and aspirations required. A number of respondents did describe their intentions to support other household members to undertake onward movement. Yet, such intentions were not being actively planned and executed.

3.1 Site selection

Data collection was carried out in villages and settlements around Jijiga, Ethiopia, and Hargeisa, in the Somaliland region. Sites were chosen in collaboration with DRC country teams in Ethiopia and Somalia, based on their knowledge of newly arriving internal migrants, through interactions with local authorities and community members, and based on feasibility of access. Sites were also determined based on where drought-affected Ethiopian and Somali international migrants surveyed by MMC in Djibouti and Somalia between October and December 2023 said they had family members who had engaged in internal movements linked to drought.

9 Earth.org (2023, 24 May). Why Floods Are Threatening the Drought-Stricken Horn of Africa.
10 World Weather Attribution (2023, 27 April). Human-induced climate change increased drought severity in Horn of Africa.
11 World Meteorological Organization (2023, 5 May). Climate change made Horn of Africa drought and Mediterranean heat "100 times more likely".
12 NRC and UNHCR (2023, 24 May). Somalia: over 1 million people internally displaced in Somalia in record time.
13 IOM (2023). IOM East and Horn of Africa Drought Response – Situation Report (1-31 March 2023).
14 OCHA (2023). Ethiopia: Floods Flash Update (12 May 2023).
15 IOM (2023). Ethiopia – National Displacement Report 15 (November 2022 – January 2023).

Map 1. Research sites: Villages and settlements around Jijiga and Hargeisa

Disclaimer: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown, and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by MMC and IOM.

Jijiga is the capital of Fafan Zone as well as the Somali Region in Ethiopia, while Hargeisa is the capital of Maroodi Jeex administrative region in the Somaliland region, as well as the Somaliland region's capital. The two cities vary considerably in size, status[16] and availability of basic services. Ethiopia's 2007 census estimated Jijiga's population to be 276,816[17] and, in 2019, Hargeisa's population was estimated to be 1,756,000.[18] Data collection was carried out in peri-urban areas surrounding these cities, in small villages and towns with populations of up to 20,000 inhabitants. Peri-urban areas, which constitute "zones of transition between rural and urban status",[19] receive a large proportion of those displaced by drought, given that movement to larger urban areas often requires more resources, and such areas are often near respondents' drought-affected rural areas of origin (see Map 1).[20] For some, movement to peri-urban areas represents an initial step in drought-related displacement before engaging in longer-distance movements. Peri-urban areas have fewer resources and services and, therefore, increasing our understanding of displacement in these locations is paramount to an effective response.

16 While Ethiopia and Somalia are both federal republics divided up into administrative regions, Somalia also has two bigger autonomous regions, including the Somaliland and Puntland regions. Also see: The World Factbook (2023). Ethiopia and Somalia.
17 Ethiopian Statistics Service (2019). Population and Housing Census 2007 – Somali.
18 The Brenthurst Foundation (2019). Hargeisa, Somaliland – Invisible city.
19 On the definition of peri-urban versus urban areas, also see: Simon, D. (2021). Peri-urbanization. *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Urban and Regional Futures*, p. 1-5.
20 Available data indicated the town of Harshin had a population of 8,226 in 2007, according to the Ethiopian Central Statistical Agency. In the Somaliland region, Baligubadle's population was cited to be around 18,000 in 2021. No population figures are known for the towns of Haroreys (Ethiopia), and Colgaday, Sallahley and Toon (in the Somaliland region).

3.2 Data and sampling strategy

MMC conducted 31 in-depth qualitative interviews with Ethiopians and Somalis who had moved internally within their countries for reasons linked to the drought crisis. 15 interviews were carried out in Ethiopia and 16 in Somalia. Respondents were identified through snowball sampling, and purposively sampled based on the following criteria:

- 18 years old and older;
- Migrated internally from their location of origin not longer than approximately one year prior to date of interview;
- Experienced drought in their location of origin;
- Balance between men and women.

The sample size was determined based on when the research theme reached a point of saturation with the themes and issues highlighted during the interviews. In this case, approximately 15 interviews in each location.[21] Tables 1 and 2 provide a breakdown of the sample by sex and age in each location.

Table 1. Locations of interview, number of interviews and number of interviews by sex

Ethiopia				Somalia			
Location around Jijiga	# of interviews	# of interviews by sex		Location around Hargeisa	# of interviews	# of interviews by sex	
		F	M			F	M
Haroreys	5	2	3	Sallahley	5	3	2
Harshin	10	5	5	Colgaday	4	2	2
				Toon	3	3	0
				Baligubadle	4	1	3

Table 2. Number of interviews by sex and age brackets[22]

Ethiopia			Somalia		
Age bracket	Sex		Age bracket	Sex	
	F	M		F	M
18-25	-	-	18-25	3	-
26-40	4	4	26-40	3	3
41-55	1	3	41-55	3	4
56+	2	1	56+	-	-

3.3 Data collection and analysis

MMC interviewed drought-affected respondents with a semi-structured tool covering themes of profile, movement drivers, intentions and aspirations, received assistance and assistance needs. Interviews were conducted with support from interpreters who delivered live translation from Somali to English. All respondents gave consent to be recorded,[23] and recordings were later transcribed and translated into English. MMC analysed the data using thematic analysis and an inductive coding scheme (arising from the data itself), within the broad themes of the research objectives. Thematic analysis refers to a method that involves the reviewing of interview transcripts, identifying

21 One additional interview was carried out in Somalia to correspond to 15 respondents fully meeting the sampling criteria, as it was discovered mid-interview that the 16th respondent had crossed an international border from Ethiopia into Somalia.
22 On some occasions, respondents did not know their exact age and gave their approximate age. To accommodate this, the table presents wide age brackets.
23 For any further inquiry on MMC's research ethics, kindly connect with us at info@mixedmigration.org.

patterns in meaning, and abstracting from such patterns common themes from which to derive potential theories and explanations of observed dynamics. Where possible the research team analysed various themes arising from the data across locations (comparing data from Ethiopia vs. Somalia) and gender. To query the data and internally validate it, the research team cross-referenced findings with available secondary literature.

3.4 Limitations

This study does not aim to provide a representative picture of all internal movements linked to the drought crisis, but instead seeks to shed light on drought-related decision-making, aspirations and household dynamics. While the research team was able to collect data in peri-urban locations around Jijiga and Hargeisa, they still may not have been able to sample the most in need and hard-to-access communities, further away from these urban centres and with access constraints at the time of data collection. In addition, MMC had to limit its field presence to locations with ongoing DRC operations and in line with conditions put in place by local authorities for research authorization. As a result, MMC did not conduct data collection in official IDP (internally displaced person) camps. Furthermore, owing to a restricted timeframe for data collection, this report does not include data on the impacts of the recent floods in April–May 2023.

During data collection it proved more challenging – particularly in Somalia – to find men respondents aligning with the sampling criteria. An often-heard explanation was that men, particularly those who continued to practice pastoralism after moving away from their locations of origin, would be working and moving around during daytime hours. This explains a relatively older sample of interviewed men in Somalia, as well as unequal sampling across the different locations of interview.

Photo credit: © DRC (2022), Somalia

4. Drought-related displacement: how decisions around movement are made

This section examines different drivers of respondents and their potential impact on decision-making around movement, and experiences of displacement. In so doing, it seeks to better contextualise their decision-making in relation to a slow-onset disaster[24] and delve deeper into the interaction effects between the drought and other movement drivers.

4.1 Drought as a primary driver of internal movements

All respondents in Somalia and some in Ethiopia said that prolonged drought had led to dire economic situations in their locations of origin. As mentioned above, during the data collection for this study from February–March 2023, the Horn of Africa was expecting a sixth failed rainy season to take place.[25] They explained that protracted drought had ultimately compelled them to migrate and was the primary driver of their internal movements. In other words, this group of respondents did not have any pre-existing aspirations to migrate. As most were pastoralists or farmers, their decision to move was linked to the assessment that their livelihoods were no longer viable and they needed to find alternative ways of living, as mentioned in Section 4.2.

In their origin communities, respondents' primary sources of income had been significantly reduced or had disappeared entirely. A majority of the respondents in both Somalia and Ethiopia had witnessed the loss of all their livestock and crops. These were reported as direct triggers of movement. A 40-year-old man in Baligubadle in the Somaliland region said:

> *"I had more than 100 animals, but the drought took them all and all my crops died. I had no source of income, so I started selling charcoal. However, I had to leave. There were no more trees left and no jobs because of the drought."*

The drought-related triggers of movement within the qualitative data align with 4Mi data on the triggers of international movements. Among surveyed Ethiopians in Somalia and Djibouti, 65% and 57%, respectively, said their movement was triggered by livestock loss and 72% and 57% by crop loss.[26]

While most respondents spoke of changing their livelihoods through internal movements, some respondents in Ethiopia described migrating to maintain their livelihoods. This involved migrating to locations with improved water accessibility with the intention to restart farming activities or migrating to locations with sufficient grazing lands for their remaining livestock. Such herds, however small, would serve as a partial source of income in locations of destination. These experiences reveal the drought affecting both the decision to move and the choice of destination.

Movement drivers and triggers linked to drought interact with other drivers and are shaped by respondents' own resources and social networks to yield different outcomes. Of course, it must be emphasised that many people may still lack the resources to move away from their drought-affected home communities, though they may have the desire to move. The same 40-year-old man interviewed in Baligubadle stated:

> *"Some of my family members remained behind because they did not get the assistance they require to migrate."*

24 Also see: WHO (2023). Health Topics – Drought.
25 UNHCR (2023, 28 February). As the Horn of Africa drought enters a sixth failed rainy season, UNHCR calls for urgent assistance.
26 MMC (2023).

4.2 Interactions between drought and conflict in Ethiopia

Among a subset of four respondents in Ethiopia, displacement occurred suddenly and was driven by conflict and insecurity in places of origin, which had been exacerbated by the impacts of drought. Respondents hailed from Degehabur woreda (Jarar Zone) and Raaso woreda (Afder Zone). One was initially displaced from Degehabur to Raaso, where they also encountered conflict, before arriving in the location of interview, whereas the others hailed from one of these two locations and were displaced directly to the location of interview. Specifically, clashes within the community were triggered by the depletion of resources and disputes over dam ownership, brought on by water scarcity. These clashes resulted in sudden displacement, inhibiting the ability of these Ethiopian respondents to plan their movements, and preventing them from exploring alternative coping strategies before their departure. As a result, this group of respondents exhibited compounded vulnerabilities.

To provide a basis of comparison, Ethiopian and Somali respondents not affected by conflict made decisions about their departure based on slow-onset environmental change, having suffered the cumulative effects of drought over years, which gradually constrained their livelihoods, making them untenable. As mentioned in the previous section, the deaths of their livestock and crop failure served as the key triggers for movement. Some resorted to selling charcoal, before eventually moving when all options to remain were exhausted and as they became increasingly in need of assistance. In situations of slow-onset change, the data demonstrate that respondents had more time to find alternatives to their departure (if desired), plan their movement (increasing their chances of safety along the journey and success in reaching the destination) or engage in strategic movement strategies such as supporting certain family members to move farther away to spread risk. At the same time, most respondents cited they only moved when all other options were depleted, also indicating their movement was not planned much ahead of time.

4.3 Access to assistance and the decision to move

Some respondents in both countries said they would have preferred not to migrate away from their communities of origin. They explained that had they received assistance, they would not have moved. When asked about what kinds of support would have enabled them to remain, respondents mentioned new livestock, *berkads* (cisterns to collect rainwater)[27] and donkey carts to fetch water for crops and animals. Carts were perceived as increasingly necessary as drought conditions required respondents to travel longer distances to gain access to enough water to maintain animals and crop production. The majority of respondents argued that these inputs would have enabled them to sustain their livelihoods and strengthened their resilience to slow-onset environmental change. If such assistance was received, the focus would have been on maintaining existing practices through additional investment. Yet, from the moment of departure, this focus shifted to a realization of having to invest in alternative livelihood strategies and obtaining new skills.

4.4 Family dynamics in drought-related movement decisions

Most respondents did not move alone from their home communities to internal locations within Ethiopia and Somalia, but with other household members, and sometimes with other relatives or neighbours. Respondents moving with their households often reported doing so with their younger children. Children were an important consideration in the decision to move, as movements were linked to improving children's prospects as much as respondents' own. In a few cases, Ethiopian respondents reported not having the resources to continue to support their young children's basic needs and education in the place they had moved to (the location of interview), owing to the lasting effects of the drought on their livelihoods. These respondents described sending their children onward to live with relatives in Jijiga, who had more secure livelihoods and could facilitate access to schooling.

27 See Medair (2011). Each drop is precious.

An exception to moving as a household or group arose when respondents had left areas in which drought had interacted with pre-existing ethnic tensions or conflict dynamics, or had spurred conflict over a scarcity of resources, as mentioned in the previous section, leading some families to become separated during their displacement. Another exception arose among Somali and Ethiopian respondents with children over the age of 18. These respondents reported supporting their adult children to migrate longer distances to find employment and/or assistance. A 35-year-old woman interviewed in Harshin, Ethiopia stated:

> *"My 2 children left to Somaliland, specifically to Hargeisa. We were a big family so my 2 children decided to get a better life and take out the burden from the family."*

Other respondents with adult children who had stayed with their households in the location of interview, owing to a lack of resources, also expressed the aspiration for their children to migrate farther afield. This included internal migration to larger towns and cities within Ethiopia and Somalia, as well as international migration along the Eastern Route to the Arabian Peninsula, although respondents were unable to afford such journeys at present. Interviewed parents' aspirations for their adult children to engage in international migration aligns with MMC 4Mi data on international movements linked to the drought, which depicts younger age cohorts (18–24 and 25–34) citing they were migrating alone on risky journeys through key transit locations in Djibouti and Somalia with the intention to reach Saudi Arabia, while they had family engaging in internal movements in their origin countries.[28] This finding also supports existing research on how most climate-affected displacement takes place internally and within short distances, with affected populations moving from rural to (peri-) urban locations in search of relief and assistance, and with households often remaining together.[29] Only a select group of climate-affected migrants may engage in international movements in search of alternative livelihoods.

Overall, the qualitative data highlight that households affected by the drought are making a range of different decisions around movement, which are linked to the drought. Moving away from origin communities is perceived as a livelihood-enhancing strategy and future investment, with some respondents citing the need for better access to education for their children as key in their planning for the future. Those with fewer resources engaged in fostering arrangements so that younger children could access education and those with greater resources supported the movements of older children to seek out employment opportunities further afield.

4.5 Pastoralists and farmers in search of alternative urban livelihoods

Prior to their displacement, a majority of respondents in Ethiopia and Somalia self-identified as pastoralists[30] or farmers, who relied on their animals and crops for sustenance and income. Pastoralism is considered to be the backbone of agricultural economies in (semi-)arid regions like the Horn of Africa.[31] The region is home to an estimated pastoral population of 12–22 million.[32] Respondents noted their lives have been drastically changed by the drought crisis, forcing them to seek alternative ways of living and, in turn, prompting their displacement to peri-urban and urban settings. These shifting livelihoods align with existing studies on the challenges to pastoralists and farmers in the Horn of Africa and reflect what some actors term 'pastoralist drop-out'.[33]

28 MMC (2023).
29 Kaenzig, R. & Piguet, E. (2021). Towards a Typology of Displacements in the Context of Slow-Onset Environmental Degradation. An Analysis of Hazards, Policies, and Mobility Patterns. *Sustainability* 13, 102035.
30 Pastoralism is defined as a component of agriculture and pertains to the rearing and management of domesticated animals such as goats, chickens, yaks, camels, sheep, and cattle. Also see: Gibson, M. (2020). Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. In: Gibson. M. (Ed.), *Food and Society*. London, UK: Academic Press.
31 Behnke, R. (2008). The Economic Contribution of Pastoralism: Case Studies from the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa.
32 IOM (2022). A Region on the Move 2021: East and Horn of Africa.
33 See, for example: IOM & IGAD (2022). Equipped to adapt? A review of climate hazards and pastoralists' responses in the IGAD region. On 'drop-out' see: Save the Children (2013). Shifting Livelihoods: Trends of Pastoralist Drop-Out and Rural to Urban Migration in Mongolia.

In and around towns and cities, respondents engaged in casual labour, working as carriers, coffee and tea sellers or selling charcoal. New forms of 'urban' work were accompanied by a new set of vulnerabilities. Respondents framed their employment situations as precarious and uncertain. A 45-year-old man interviewed in Harshin, Ethiopia, explained:

> *"Before I moved, I depended on my livestock and that's how I was supporting my family. Here, I have no stable source of income. From time to time, I make firewood and sell charcoal to lorries going to Jijiga. I also receive food aid from WFP and the local administration."*

Respondents perceived their own low educational attainment and lack of skills and practical training outside of pastoralist and agricultural activities as being a driver of their urban precarity and described the challenges to adapt to new income-generating activities. This finding demonstrated respondents often did not consider themselves well-prepared for alternative employment.

4.6 The impact of age, health and clan on mobility

MMC 4Mi data on Ethiopians and Somalis engaging in international movement linked to drought along the Eastern Route show that older people and those in poor health conditions are often among those remaining in communities of origin.[34] However, qualitative data reveal that older people, people who are sick or have disabilities, and those struggling with mental health challenges are also engaging in drought-related movements and are not confined to those 'left behind' in drought-affected communities of origin, as respondents reported traveling with such vulnerable family members. Respondents, particularly in Somalia, reported that due to poor health and mental health conditions, but also due to advanced age, and poor access to health facilities,[35] they were unable to engage in income-generating activities and provide for their families in the locations of interview. As a result, they were forced to rely on assistance to cover their basic needs, mostly from their communities and clans.

The qualitative data nuance the quantitative data by revealing that these more vulnerable profiles do engage in internal movement, but respondents indicated they would only do so when they are able to move with their family and kin or to locations where their communities and clan members are also present. This indicates movement is not restricted to those who can make money or improve their future opportunities. The data highlight how important households and social networks can be in movement decision-making and for social protection and support in destination, a topic that will be further analysed in Section 5.

34 MMC (2023).
35 Also see: Harter, F. (2023, 9 June). 'They are overlooked by everybody': elders in Ethiopia bear the brunt of the climate crisis. *The Guardian*.

5. Mapping displacement journeys linked to drought

This section maps the displacement journeys linked to drought, and how factors have shaped respondents' destination choice. It includes a typology on the diverse types of identified movement patterns linked to drought displacement.

5.1 Access to assistance and support shaping movements and destination choice

In the absence of assistance and support in their home communities, respondents sought out destinations that would provide access to relief. Among respondents in Somalia, the choice of destination was shaped by the presence of known clan and/or family ties. Such ties not only afforded respondents a level of safety and acceptance upon arrival, but also were a source of aid and support. A 19-year-old woman interviewed in Toon explained:

> *"My husband and I moved here to depend on his parents. We had little food left and we both lacked jobs. Now, we are still depending on my husband's family."*

In Baligubadle, the municipality directly arranged transportation for some respondents who had relatives in the town and had been trapped in dire situations in nearby communities. A 40-year-old man interviewed in Baligubadle said:

> *"We used a car which was facilitated by the government. We have relatives who live in Baligubadle town that talked to the government to assist us with transportation."*

Among Somali respondents who lacked direct links with kin in destination locations, they mentioned the desire to settle in (peri-)urban areas because they (and their needs) would be more visible to access support from the local community (often of the same clan as the respondent), municipality and assistance organizations. Among such Somali respondents, some moved with the aim to register as an IDP, which, they stated, enhanced their access to aid provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and United Nations (UN) agencies, such as the World Food Programme (WFP).[36] Most Ethiopian respondents described a similar logic of visibility for choosing destinations in (peri-)urban areas. Fewer expressed moving to a specific location to seek out family support. A 30-year-old woman interviewed in Sallahley described how making herself more visible to the community was essential in her movement decision-making:

> *"I had to move because of my children. Otherwise, I would have risked their lives and they could have died. This is why I came here to get a better life and some water. I have good access to water here now. I needed to make my conditions known to the communities here so they could assist me" (emphasis added).*

The strategy of 'becoming visible and accessible' has been seen elsewhere in the Horn of Africa drought response. Instances of pastoralists leaving behind their livelihoods after livestock loss and joining together in informal 'IDP' camps, in the Somaliland region, for example,[37] or of drought-affected households gravitating to humanitarian assistance delivery points in, for example, Baidoa, Somalia, with households moving towards camps to seek relief.[38] The vast and remote nature of many communities impacted by drought impedes their access to existing assistance,

36 Also see, for example: UNICEF (2022, 16 February). Drought forces families to flee their homes to find shelter in camps for the internally displaced.
37 OHCHR (2022, 8 November). Submission to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change. *Climate Refugees*.
38 Dhaysane, M. (2022, 26 August). Drought Forcing New Arrivals in Somali Relief Camps to Eat Animal Skins.

and makes assistance delivery in places of origin challenging and unable to benefit from economies of scale. As is often the case with humanitarian programming, including for populations affected by slow onset climate change, emergency responses affect movement patterns.

5.2 Education as a factor shaping destination choice

When planning their journey, several respondents in Somalia described factoring in the proximity of a school to their choice of destination. They explained that many children were not enrolled in any schooling in their locations of origin owing to a lack of access and the fact that educational attainment was not necessary for their pastoral or agricultural livelihoods. Drought and the need to seek alternative livelihoods resulted in a perceived need for education, more for their children than themselves. Education was seen as being able to provide children with the skills necessary to thrive in their new urban environments and set them up to be better adapted to alternative livelihoods in the future. This demonstrates how displacement drivers, including the depletion of resources and the high risks to remaining in their locations of origin, combine with the prospect of opportunities elsewhere to prompt movement to (peri-)urban areas. This also implies that respondents have little expectations to return to their rural communities of origin. As such, respondents' investment in education or laying the groundwork for educational attainment represented their own efforts to increase the long-term resilience of their families in the face of worsening drought. A 35-year-old woman interviewed in Toon mentioned:

> *"I decided to leave when all my goats died, and I wanted to get a better life for my children. I could only do that if I enrolled them into school to get an education."*

5.3 Mapping movement patterns

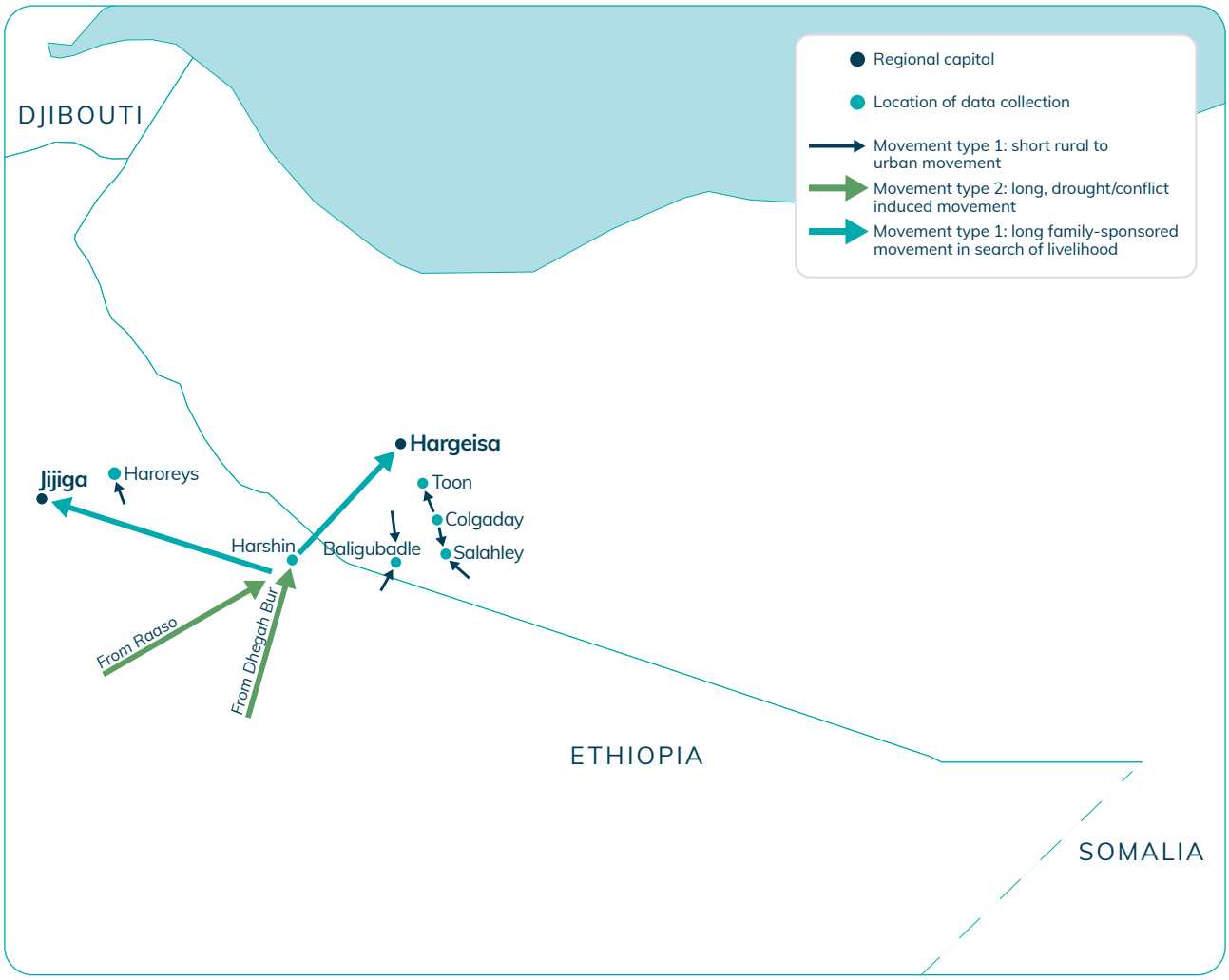
Three distinct movement patterns can be distilled from respondents' accounts of their decision-making, journeys and destination choice. The first and most common type of internal movement among respondents involved that of families and/or households to nearby, often more urbanised, locations to seek assistance and alternative livelihoods, and reunite with extended family who had previously migrated within the vicinity and access greener lands for grazing. Within this first pattern of movements to nearby locations, some Ethiopian and Somali respondents had experienced multiple relocations within the same village or territory. Within Ethiopia, the migratory process ranged from 2 to 10 days, with some traveling by donkey cart and others by foot.

The second type of internal movement was observed when drought interacted with conflict, spurring longer distance internal journeys to locations deemed safe and away from communities involved in the conflict. As mentioned in Section 5.2, such patterns are characterised by a sudden departure and lack of planning and the respondents who engage in them exhibit higher vulnerabilities.

The third type of internal movement pattern consists of a single family member being sponsored by their families to move longer distances in search of livelihood opportunities. Some Somali respondents framed this movement pattern as a coping mechanism and a strategy for spreading risk. Others, primarily in Ethiopia, initially aspired to this movement pattern, but instead opted to move to nearby locations due to their limited resources. A 40-year-old woman interviewed in Colgaday stated:

> *"My husband went to Hargeisa and does some casual work; he then sends us the money he gets as we are his family. This is the income we support ourselves with."*

Map 2. Three main types of movement



Disclaimer: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown, and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by MMC and IOM.

6. Assistance and future migration decision-making

A lack of assistance combined with the perception of enhanced relief elsewhere shaped many respondents' decision to migrate and destination choice as discussed in Section 5. This section explores respondents' access to assistance and needs after moving, and implications for onward movement decision-making.

6.1 Assistance in locations around Jijiga

In their locations of interview, 11 out of 15 respondents in Ethiopia were receiving or had received assistance in some form. In the locality of Harshin in Ethiopia, the governing body extended cereal provision to drought-affected new arrivals. Seven respondents mentioned they had received a form of support from the community or were still receiving it. In some instances, this meant sharing food rations, or being loaned a piece of land for grazing and/or living. Two respondents cited receiving assistance from organizations, one from a local NGO and one from DRC, which has a field presence in the locality of Harshin. Overall, respondents described the available assistance as inadequate and worried about their ability to survive. Many expressed the need for greater food assistance, particularly for their children, and feared malnourishment.

Additionally, despite the presence of educational facilities across the locations of interview, some parents indicated that they could not enroll their children in school because of their inability to pay tuition fees and purchase uniforms and stationery. Two respondents resorted to sending their children to live with relatives residing in Jijiga. Such fostering arrangements arose because respondents could not afford to provide for their children's basic needs and education, prompting them to rely on alternative care arrangements with relatives. A 35-year-old man in Harshin said:

> *"I was not able to support my children with education, so I sent my first-born son to Jijiga to my cousin in order to help me support my child to get an education."*

6.2 Assistance in locations around Hargeisa

Most respondents (13 out of 16) in Somalia received or had received some form of support from their clan communities and/or relatives in the locations of interview, demonstrating the importance of social support networks and kinship ties within the drought response. Aid included the provision of daily basic needs like food and water, land to reside on and educational support for their children. Such support proved vital when respondents' intentions to establish alternative livelihoods in (peri-)urban areas went unfulfilled owing to a lack of appropriate education and skills.

Assistance from NGOs and UN agencies was far more sporadic compared to assistance received from local communities or relatives. 3 out of 16 respondents reported receiving aid from humanitarian actors in locations of interview. Respondents perceived these forms of assistance as one-off instances and implied needing more regular and longer-term support to provide stability in their new locations. A 45-year-old woman in Toon explained:

> *"We received some seeds from FAO, with which were to create small farms through producing some crops. They also gave us cash assistance of 220 USD during 3 months."*

6.3 Impact of assistance on future migration decision-making

Respondents across both countries conveyed a strong inclination to remain in their current location; however, this was based upon not having sufficient resources for moving anywhere else, either onward or back to the place of origin. In addition, most recognised that their current (peri-)urban areas offered greater employment prospects, which shaped their decision not to return, and greater support networks. Those in Ethiopia, demonstrating weaker clan and community ties than respondents in Somalia, also anticipated that aid groups would provide them with more assistance, despite the perceived limited presence of organizations in these locations.

However, when further prompted, respondents mentioned that onward movement might be inevitable if their current situations did not improve or declined, suggesting this is a strategy of last resort. They suggested that this would be dependent upon improved access to assistance in the near future. A 45-year-old man interviewed in Harshin stated:

> *"You cannot always live as a guest. It is not good to depend on assistance from others, I hope things will change for the better. My plan is not to return home without animals so I'm planning to look for an opportunity to work in Hargeisa."*

6.4 Drivers of return intentions

Returns, compared to onward movements, were deemed less likely by respondents. Most cited "there was nothing to return for", since most had migrated with the few resources they had left, and currently had none to invest in a sustainable return. While unlikely, respondents were probed about the conditions under which they would return to their locations of origin. First and foremost, this involved an end to the current drought crisis. Second, they would return if the owners of the current land they occupied in the location of interview forced them to leave and they had no option to move elsewhere. Third, for respondents who planned to continue their agro-pastoral activities, particularly those in Ethiopia, return would require the recovery of their livestock, based on assistance, combined with a more consistent rainy season. This implied that respondents might wait and see how the next cycles of dry and rainy seasons would unfold before making plans to return. Return would be fully conditional upon improved conditions in origin locations. This was considered more important than a sense of belonging or attachment driving their returns.

Photo credit: © DRC (2022), Ethiopia

Conclusions and recommendations for programming

The Horn of Africa drought crisis will have long-lasting impacts on people's livelihoods by virtue of the decisions already made in relation to movements and the shifting of livelihoods. The findings reveal that drought-related movements are not isolated or acute phenomena, but are linked to processes of socioeconomic transformation.[39] As periods of drought and flooding intensify in the Horn of Africa through an increase in more extreme weather patterns linked to climate change, more people will exit from their pastoral or agrarian livelihoods and seek alternatives in nearby towns and cities. This not only affects the households directly involved who must adapt to new lifestyles and livelihoods, but also receiving cities and local and regional economies relying on former pastoral and agricultural production.[40]

An exit from pastoralism and farming accompanied by an intention to adopt alternative livelihoods, either for themselves or their children, also points towards movements being long-term in nature, with drought-affected populations leaving their former lifestyles in locations of origin behind. While there was often an expectation for better access to services or assistance in the first location of destination following internal movements, this was not always the case among respondents. At the same time, most did not believe they could return to locations of origin if the conditions would not improve. Access to support and livelihoods is, therefore, a key factor in building up new lives and/or eventually stimulating return, while limited access to these may result in further movements as an act of last resort.

Finally, this report indicates that the drought is also interacting with conflict, which is corroborated by available data, demonstrating the complexity of displacement patterns and movement decision-making. Of a higher total number across the Horn of Africa affected by drought, an estimated 32 million were believed to be struggling from both drought and conflict to varying extents as of May 2023.[41]

The following are key implications and recommendations for humanitarian and development programming based on this study's findings:

- Given the existence of family and household dynamics within the broad range of movement patterns linked to the drought crisis, especially in relation to internal movements, **child-sensitive and child-targeted interventions are needed as part of the drought response**. This includes educational interventions and considerations around how to support the educational mobility of youth on the move affected by climate.

- Those impacted by the drought are expecting that their movement to peri-urban and urban areas is long-term. **As people are exiting their pastoral or agricultural livelihoods, investment in vocational and skills training is needed to help them avoid precarious work in towns and cities and to support them to provide for their households.**

- Older people, people who are sick or have disabilities**, and those struggling with mental health issues** are among those moving internally because of drought. As such, people facing additional vulnerabilities **need to be targeted for interventions as do the community networks that support them**.

- The interaction between drought and conflict leads to more acute displacement patterns and yields compounded vulnerabilities, requiring **both protection and livelihoods assistance, including shelter and access to basic services, especially as those displaced may not be able to rely on support from the community or relatives.**

- Many respondents stated they would not have moved from their locations of origin had they received adequate assistance, improving their ability to stay. Equally, access to assistance in locations of interview was shaping their decision-making about remaining or moving onward. This demonstrates a **need for both emergency relief and resilience programming in drought-hit locations of origin, transit and destination**.

39 De Haas, H. (1998). Socio-Economic Transformations and Oasis Agriculture in Southern Morocco. In: De Haan, L. & Blaikie, P. (Eds.), *Looking at Maps in the Dark: Directions for Geographical Research in Land Management and Sustainable Development in Rural and Urban Environments of the Third World* (p. 65-78). Utrecht/Amsterdam (The Netherlands): KNAG/FRW University of Amsterdam.

40 Wafula, W.M., Wasonga, O.V., Koech, O.K. & Kibet, S. (2022). Factors influencing migration and settlement of pastoralists in Nairobi City, Kenya. *Pastoralism* 12.

41 OCHA (2023). With 32 million people struggling from drought and conflict, donors at UN-backed event announce US$2.4 billion to support people in the Horn of Africa (Press Release).

- Most respondents cited a continued lack of or inadequate assistance after engaging in internal movement, making a case for **expanded support in (peri-)urban areas surrounding Jijiga and Hargeisa**. This should include skills training for people who have exited pastoral or agricultural livelihoods.

- Based on the importance of social support networks and kinship ties to assistance, UN agencies and NGOs should seek to **strengthen local, non-displaced communities and recognise them as key stakeholders** within the broader drought response. At the same time, international actors should **recognise that minority clans or people without strong social networks may be disproportionately vulnerable** and introduce better ways of targeting them for assistance.

- Many who remain behind do so because they do not have the minimum resources required to move and could be considered as worst-off due to the impact of the drought. **Dedicated efforts to increase assistance in origin locations is needed to target these vulnerable profiles.**

Photo credit: © DRC (2022), Somalia

MMC is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis, and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration, with regional hubs hosted in Danish Refugee Council regional offices in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and Latin America, and a global team based across Copenhagen, Geneva and Brussels.

MMC is a leading source for independent and high-quality data, research, analysis and expertise. MMC aims to increase understanding of mixed migration, to positively impact global and regional migration policies, to inform evidence-based protection responses for people on the move and to stimulate forward thinking in public and policy debates on mixed migration. MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

MMC is part of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

For more information visit:
mixedmigration.org and follow us at @Mixed_Migration

Mixed Migration Centre

DRC DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL

IOM UN MIGRATION