

A Brief Comparison of the 2011 and 2017 Drought Displacement in Somalia



Introduction

The current drought situation in Somalia has been reminiscent of the conditions preceding the 2010 – 2011 famine crisis. In that period lack of rainfall, failed harvests, political conflict and poor accountability of the government to the population all led to severe food insecurity. It is estimated that the deaths of between 242,300 and 272,690 people were directly attributable to the resulting famine in 2011 (Checchi and Robinson 2013). As a result the humanitarian community has acted with speed in 2016 to prevent a repeat event of this scale.

There is currently little substantive data to assess trends in crude mortality in Somalia throughout 2017. However, sources suggest that mortality has not increased at the same rate as in 2011. In contrast, the current figures indicate a greater number and percentage of the population have been displaced by the current drought than in 2011. If the severity of crises were to be measured by total displacement, the current crisis would appear more severe.

We have explored four discussion points that we believe are notable for practitioners and policy makers that are seeking to learn from the nature of this current crisis and response.

Key Findings:

- The numbers of people displaced in 2017 exceeds the total number displaced in the 2011 crisis by nearly 60%.
- Displaced Somalis are remaining in Somalia, by choice...or by lack of choice?
- Displacement patterns are highly localized - and majority of displacement comes from only a few districts.
- Will there be significant additional displacement from Gedo, Middle and Lower Juba this year?

Methodology

This brief utilized publically available data sets, as well as focus group discussions with Somali humanitarian actors and researchers, and a number of key informant interviews. The 2011 famine displacement primarily occurred between January – October 2011. The current drought crisis has been accompanied by extraordinary population movements from November 2016 to present. These time periods are used for comparative analysisⁱ.

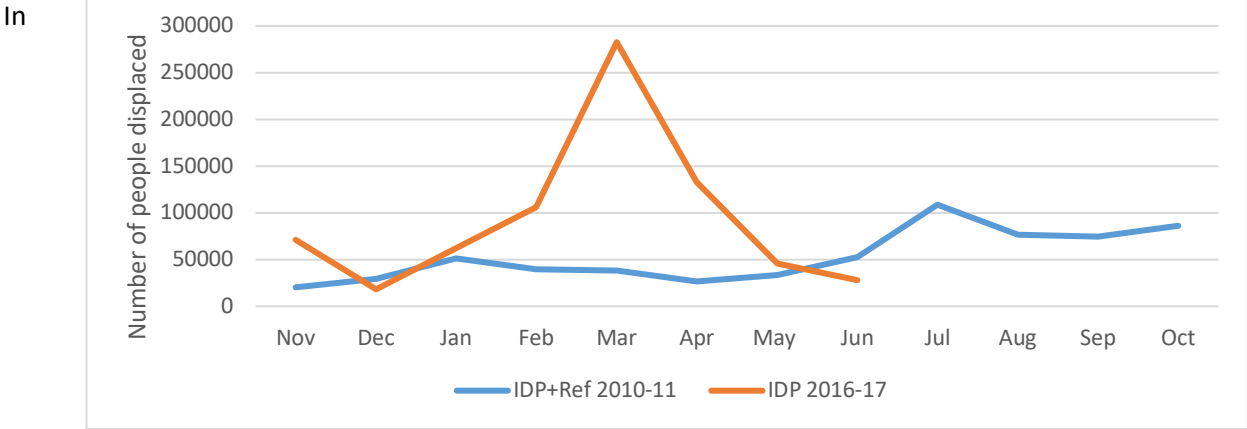


Figure 1: Total number of people displaced

2011, the total number of *drought-related* displaced (IDP and refugee combined) was 456,169 (Robinson and Zimmerman 2014). The current crisis has displaced a total of 776,467 (UNHCR 2017). The size of the current displacement is largely attributable to the geographic scale of the drought crisis: there is simply more of Somalia (and Somaliland) affected by severe drought, compared to 2011. For example, in 2011 much of Somaliland and Puntland were spared the worst of the conditions that caused the famine in the south, and as a result there was very little displacement within Somaliland, but currently there is severe drought related displacement across both the north and south. It is worth noting that there are still more than 300,000 refugees in Ethiopia and Kenya refugee complexes the vast majority from the 2011 crisis and originating from Gedo, Lower and Middle Juba (UNFPA 2014). This indicates that presently there are (at least in the South/Central parts of Somalia) generally less people that likely would have been vulnerable to displacement, and yet the scale of displacement has still been extraordinary (Robinson and Zimmerman, 2014).

There are likely to be a number of additional contributing factors beyond the impact of the drought which are worth exploring to understand the nature and scale of the current displacement.

Compared with 2011, the humanitarian community and Somalis have acted much quicker to provide and seek/receive aid in 2017. The current crisis was forecasted relatively early after two failed rains (*Gu* and *Deyr* 2016) enabling donors and humanitarian actors to begin services much quicker. Somalis, too, may have more quickly anticipated the drought and acted accordingly to “outrun” the impact of the crisis. One key informant that was interviewed noted, in reference to the long overland journey to Dadaab, Kenya in 2011: “people remember so much dying along the way”. Earlier displacement in 2017 is likely to be a mitigating measure or coping strategy.

The surge of humanitarian support within Somalia – including unconditional cash – in late 2011 through 2013 is also well remembered by Somalis, and, according to key informants, the internally displaced gravitated towards those centres of aid. Given the comparative current situation, there was (and remains) high anticipation that similar cash transfer support will be provided through (and beyond) the current crisis, and early registration/participation will have been a high priority for Somalis.

It is thus highly likely that cash transfers are a major factor in Somali decision-making on drought related movements. It is particularly notable that the large upsurge of displacement in March 2017 (nearly 300,000 in one month), particularly to Baidoa and Banadir, corresponds to the start up period of unconditional cash transfersⁱⁱ. The 118,000 IDPs from Lower Shabelle in Banadir for services around Mogadishu came from districts indicated as primarily “Stress” level (Phase 2) on the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) map rather than from areas of severe drought (UNOCHA 2017b), suggesting a possible pull-factor of humanitarian aid from relatively short distances towards the most accessible of centres of assistance.

1.A higher proportion of those displaced are remaining in Somalia .

The current crisis has only produced approximately 10,000 refugees compared with 214,433 in 2011 arriving in Ethiopia and Kenya as a result of the drought and famine^{iii, iv}.

Why is 2017 an IDP crisis and not (also) a refugee crisis?

In an era of improved telecom networks, Somalis are very well informed of locations, types and qualities of support being provided and make decisions on when, where and who to move based on their networks. Displacement choices of Somalis are likely affected by a sophisticated view of service quality (humanitarian services and regular Shelter, Water, Health/Nutrition and Education services), security (on the route and in the place of refuge) and ease of access.

Access to urban centres within Somalia is better when compared with 2011, corresponding to the expansion of government presence via state authorities - and the accompanying humanitarian, resilience, development and governance improvements - notably in Mogadishu, Baidoa (South West State) and Kismayo (Jubaland)^v. This has enabled a more robust humanitarian response within Somalia, in places much less accessible in 2011. At the same time, refugee migration is significantly hindered compared to 2011.

Despite the 2017 Kenyan high court decision that Dadaab refugee camps must remain open, the camp complex has not seen a large influx of registered refugees. There are reports that several thousand refugees have arrived in or near Dadaab, but these have not been registered and may be avoiding registration. The Government of Kenya has advocated an ongoing repatriation program of existing refugees - a significant change from 2011 when Somalis were given *prima facie* refugee status. Key Informants indicate it is well known that Somalis “are not welcomed” there, consider Dadaab *de facto* ‘closed’ to incoming refugees, fear that Somalis may face repatriation, and that they would move to Dadaab as a measure of last resort and may not successfully be registered for services.

Dolo Ado camp may be more accessible for some Somalis, particularly those that live in the border areas of Bakool, Bay, Gedo due to geographic proximity, historical preference and existing kinship ties. However, Dolo Ado is not seen as a desirable location due to the austere conditions and the strictures of the Ethiopian Government on refugees. There are very limited livelihoods opportunities as a refugee in Dolo Ado compared to Dadaab or urban centres of Somalia. Dolo Ado is seen as a location for the most basic services and is currently home to more than 200,000 refugees, many remaining from the 2011 crisis (UNHCR 2017). Further, there is only one access point for Dolo Ado (through Dolo in Gedo Region)

due to security issues and hostile environmental conditions, making refuge there a difficult proposition for many.

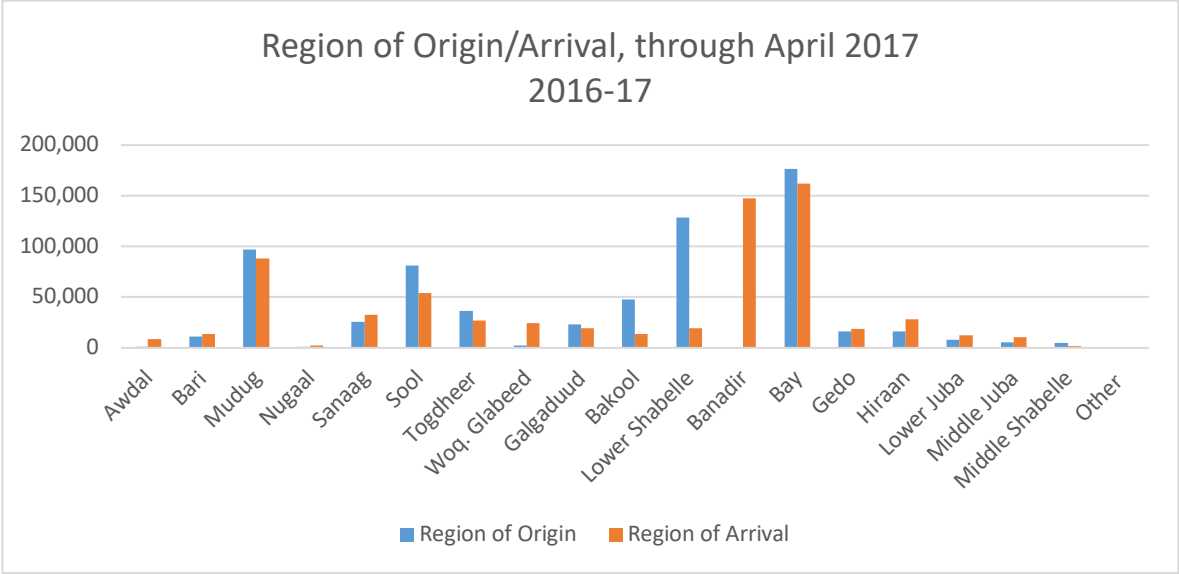
At the same time, a better prepared response within Somalia does not overcome the myriad internal access challenges for Somali's and humanitarians, and many rural IDPs and vulnerable people remain outside of reach and vulnerable to the crisis. There are concerns for Somalis residing in (or displaced to) hard to access or completely inaccessible locations – and a number of these IDPs do not have the option as in 2011 to seek refuge across the border, particularly in Kenya. There have also been relatively significant instances of 'unofficial' cross border movement meaning that some drought displaced are not afforded the protections, rights and services guaranteed to refugees, and likely fall outside formal humanitarian aid structures.

Thus, whilst humanitarian services within Somalia are arguably more effective compared with 2011 due to improved preparedness, funding, and better access, it is highly likely that a significant proportion of vulnerable populations (resident and displaced) are still not able to access humanitarian services, neither as IDPs or refugees.

2. In 2017, the predominant trend has been localized rural to urban/semi-urban displacement and IDPs are primarily remaining within, or very close to, their regions and districts of origin, and approximately two-thirds of all displacement originates from only seven districts^{vi}.

Displacement data shows a link of proximity between place of origin and place of arrival for the vast majority of displaced: 77% of all displaced are *from* five regions: Bay, Lower Shabelle, Mudug, Sool, and Bakool^{vii}. And 71% *arrive* in or near the same regions. The graph below reflects the data showing approximately equal proportions of *displaced and arrivals* within a region, or in very near regions (e.g., Lower Shabelle > Banadir)^{viii}. District data is consistent with trends indicating the majority of movement is occurring within a region, notably to areas surrounding the urban centres of Mogadishu, Baidoa and Galkayo. The majority of displacement comes from only a few districts, including: Baidoa (Bay), Kurtun Warrey (Lower Shabelle), Qoryooley (Lower Shabelle), Qanax Dheere (Bay), Caynabo (Sool), Dinsor (Bay), Ceel Afweyn (Sanaag) (UNOCHA 2017a). A deeper analysis of the relatively small number of districts that have produced the majority of IDPs would be a useful exercise for humanitarians to understand the specific drivers of displacement for future planning, as well as the potential failures of resilience activities^{ix}.

Proximity between place of origin and place of displacement may be seen as a success of the humanitarian community, which has sought to get aid closer to those affected by the drought. The



reduction in distance between the population and the humanitarian service also likely means that more people see displacement as a viable option, compared to 2011 when refugee migration was much higher. It is easier for the total population, including vulnerables, to move short distances to services. At the same time, the significant displacement into urban centres as a result of complex push and pull factors creates its own complexities.

Each crisis in Somalia, including 2011, has created displacement and time has shown that a substantial proportion of the displaced do not return. There are also indications that it is the most vulnerable and marginalized who are not able to return to their pre-crisis homes with important implications for the future of Somalia. There have been and will likely continue to be unique challenges to such dense populations in urban/semi urban centres of humanitarian assistance, notably the rapid spread of cholera as has been witnessed this year. If displacement is protracted, as has been the case for many since 2011, Government, humanitarian and development actors will potentially be faced with a large societal shift towards (semi) urbanization, with attending impacts on livelihoods. Protracted displacement may also lead to land usurpation particularly in riverine areas, setting the stage for future land/resource conflict, and otherwise undermining or permanently inhibiting the agro-pastoralist livelihoods of minority clans.

Will there be significant additional displacement from Gedo, Middle and Lower Juba this year?

There are 87% less displaced from Gedo in 2017 compared to 2011^x and 84% less drought displaced in 2017 from Middle and Lower Juba combined compared with 2011^{xi} suggesting that there are large populations that could yet become vulnerable and be displaced if conditions worsen.

There are a number of explanatory factors for less displacement from these regions in 2017, notably that the food security crisis has not been as severe in these places compared to the severity experienced in 2011, and thus the need to seek aid services is likely not as acute in these areas^{xii}. There have been approximately 20,000 refugees returned (voluntary and assisted) to Lower Juba, which may support the notion that those Somalis have a low concern regarding the drought impact there; though this could

also indicate a pull factor and preference of Somalis for aid services in Kismayo (Lower Juba) where cash assistance is being provided as an alternative to remaining in Dadaab. Further, land and resource encroachment is a concern for pastoralist and riverine communities in Middle and Lower Juba, and many may wish to avoid displacement from their places of origin to ensure against land occupation from competing communities. Minority communities in these areas may also be reticent to migrate to larger towns due where they are likely to be marginalized from aid services. And finally, it is worth noting that there are already an existing 170,000 refugees from Middle and Lower Juba in Dadaab from the 2010/2011 famine caseload^{xiii} thus reducing the overall number of Somalis that could be displaced in 2017.

If the 2017 Gu rains do not allow recovery in these area, there are potentially large populations remaining in Gedo, Lower and Middle Juba that may seek assistance in the humanitarian hubs within these regions – or potentially across the borders. Humanitarian partners should maintain a careful watch on population movement from Lower Juba, including districts of origin and displacement to Dhobley. Historical trend, and clan and family ties, indicate that Dadaab is the likely place of external displacement for this population. Dhobley is the likely way-station, and it has currently been reported (unverified) that more than 40,000 IDPs are in Dhobley.

Conclusions

The current crisis – and its response - will no doubt have significant lasting effects on the lives and livelihood patterns of many Somalis, as did the 2011 famine. Yet, there is significant opportunity for aid practitioners and policy makers to evaluate the trajectory and impact of aid provision in the midst of implementation, to ensure the maximum benefit of aid, and the least potential harm.

Recommendations

1. Enhance efforts and seek innovative approaches towards more rural aid service provision to lessen the future likelihood of overcrowded semi/urban IDP settlements, and their negative consequences. Notwithstanding the expanded access in 2017 vs 2011, to what extent can humanitarian aid reach communities at places of origin to reduce the large semi-urban/urban levels of IDPs? What lessons will be drawn from the 2017 response to enhance the reach of aid services? This is perhaps most critical in the early stages of the response, which in the current case may have been a significant and in many cases irreversible pull factor.
2. Review efforts for cross border monitoring, coordination and service delivery particularly in porous border areas traversed for habitual migration and other areas of informal or formal refugee migration to ensure vulnerable migrants do not become invisible to the aid community.
3. Enhance efforts targeting marginal communities that may lose land rights/access for assistance in places of origin. Without prejudicial treatment at the expense of other drought affected individuals, are there ways to provide service to these communities which may have mitigating affects on future livelihood crises for the most-marginal and additionally inhibit future land conflict?
4. Aid planning for the next year should prioritize efforts to appropriately use the Durable Solutions approach to support the recovery and resilience of displaced population and their hosts.
5. Conduct post-crisis analyses of the relatively few districts that produced the majority of displacement. What might be learned from in depth analysis of these key locations to support future actions, including resilience programming and the nature of drought related crises?

6. Carefully monitor Gedo, Middle and Lower Juba as the current crisis expands, recognizing that additional spikes in drought-driven displacement may yet occur. Historical trend, and clan and family ties, indicate that Dadaab is the likely place of external displacement for this population. Dhobley is the likely way-station.

Footnotes

ⁱ Data for 2011 was pulled from the John Hopkins University report, *Internal and External Displacement among Populations of Southern and Central Somalia Affected by Severe Food Insecurity and Famine during 2010-2012*, commissioned by FEWS NET, and 2016/2017 data is being collected through ongoing UNHCR PRMN updates found at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/horn>.

ⁱⁱ A week by week examination of cash transfers and displacement trends is not available at time of writing, but cash transfers began scaling up in the south in Feb 2017.

ⁱⁱⁱ A total of 131,875 refugees officially arrived in Dadaab, Kenya; 95% percent came from five regions, with 61% from Middle and Lower Jubaⁱⁱⁱ. A total of 82,558 refugees entered Dolo Ado during the Jan-Oct 2011 period, 75% from Bay and Gedo.

^{iv} In 2011 from Jan-October, there were in fact a total of 374,736 IDPs but 133,000 were displaced for reasons other than drought (primarily conflict). Thus, for the entirety of the 2011 drought/famine crisis, the actual total of Somalis internally displaced directly or highly attributable to 'drought' was 241,736. It is recognized that PRMN numbers will not have precisely captured all IDP movement in 2011. Nonetheless, these are the data available for comparison.

^v As of March 2017, 266 UN and NGO agencies were implementing activities in Somalia with Mogadishu being the centre of services. Kismayo in Lower Juba, Afgooye in Banadir, Baidoa in Bay, Belet Weyne in Hiraaan and Gaalkacyo in Mudug also serve as major centres for humanitarian support. This is consistent with current IDP arrivals trends with 58% moving into three regions – Bay (23%), Banadir (21%) and Mudug (14%).

^{vi} As of end May 2017, based on UNHCR PRMN disaggregated data through May 2017. The trends indicate that this is unlikely to have changed in the intervening two months.

^{vii} In descending order.

^{viii} Lower Shabelle displacement mirrors the arrivals in nearby Banadir; and displacements from Bay and Bakool combined mirror arrivals in Bay, as Bakool is a nearby region. Mudug and Sool displacement and arrival numbers are also very proportional.

^{ix} It has been reported that many IDPs (particularly from Bay region where many are agro-pastoralists) likely sought to maintain proximity to their fields (or others' fields) for labor opportunity during the *Gu* rain-season agriculture activities. The ability to access services near to home-places likely contributes to protection of vulnerable family members, whilst simultaneously enabling relatively quick access for agricultural opportunity.

^x In the current crisis, there are only 19,749 displaced from Gedo, the majority moving within Gedo to the districts of Dolow, Luuq, and Bardhere, and negligible numbers of refugees to Dolo Ado. In 2010/2011

there were 51,744 refugees from Gedo, 14,605 in Dadaab; 37,139 in Dolo Ado; and an additional 98,014 IDPs, almost all of which left Gedo region.

^{xi}In 2011, 86,243 refugees arrived in Dadaab from Middle and Lower Juba (61% of total arrivals into Dadaab). The current drought has only displaced 13,641 from Middle and Lower Juba combined, primarily to Kismayo.

^{xii} Compare for reference: IPC Maps from August 2011 to the IPC Maps from April-June 2017.

^{xiii} SOMALIA: Areas of origin of registered Somali refugees and asylum-seekers in Dadaab and Alinjogur refugee camps in Kenya UNHCR | 28th February 2017