

IDPs in secondary cities

Good practices and ongoing challenges from Ethiopia



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Key points

- The case study of Adama, Ethiopia, demonstrates how local government can successfully respond to urban IDPs. Adama's city government showed generosity and regional cooperation by receiving over 1,300 IDP families at very short notice and facilitating the building of houses, a school and crucial infrastructure for them.
- Documenting and registering forced migrants is crucial for both emergency and long-term planning.
- The location and administration of IDP and refugee settlements impacts development efforts and long-term integration.
- IDPs need support to integrate and overcome social challenges such as religious difference and competition for employment.
- IDPs have created their own indigenous voluntary associations known as Equb and Iddir and other informal support systems that provide regular assistance. These may be mechanisms to support social integration with local hosts as well, who have the same types of associations.
- The dire state of undocumented IDPs in Adama, who are often homeless, demonstrates the need for housing to be provided to all forced migrants regardless of registration status.

Recommendations

- Encourage a whole-of-society response to forced migration arrivals by creating and sharing an appeal for support at all levels of society.
- Create a registration system for migrants entering the host city through the local city government.
- Ensure that forced migrants are provided with free housing, which is a crucial first step in helping people stabilise their lives.
- Facilitate the integration of IDPs through mixed social and cultural gatherings and initiatives such as Iddirs, Equb and coffee gatherings.
- Utilise community influencers and media outlets to provide learning and awareness-raising about IDPs that promotes social integration.



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Introduction: Internal displacement in Ethiopia

In 2018, more people were displaced as a result of conflict, violence and disaster than ever before. The number of internally displaced people (IDPs) across the world escalated from 28 million to an estimated 41.3 million IDPs, and sub-Saharan Africa was the region most affected globally, with over 10 million people displaced.

Ethiopia experienced a huge increase in its IDP population in 2018 – almost double that experienced by Syria, and more than any other country across the world. A total of over 3 million people were internally displaced following violence and conflicts between ethnic Somalis and Oromos. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), ‘Conflict over resources and ethnic violence triggered 2.9 million new displacements in Ethiopia in 2018, more than in any other country worldwide and four times the figure for 2017.’ Climate change also played a role, as almost 300,000 people were internally displaced in Ethiopia in 2018 as a result of climate-related events, particularly flood and drought in the Somali region.¹

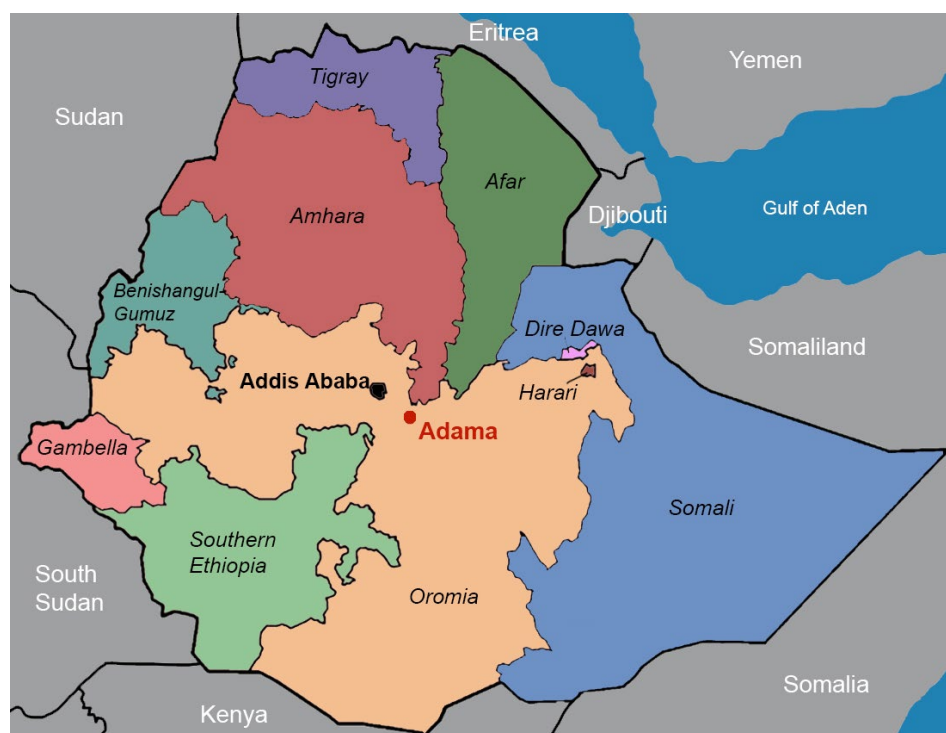
The two largest regions of Ethiopia – Oromia and Somali – have experienced ongoing territorial disputes along a shared border that stretches over 1,400 km: ‘Historically, their relationship has been characterized by territorial competition which often leads to disputes and conflicts over resources, including wells and grazing land.’² These conflicts continue to occur to the present

day, one notable recent example being the mass displacement in 2018 of many Oromos living in the Somali region and on the border of the two regions.

The significance of secondary cities in managing internal displacement

In this Research in Brief we present some of the major successful humanitarian and development responses, as well as the long-term development challenges that IDPs face, based on research in Adama, Ethiopia, a growing city in the Oromia region close to Addis Ababa. We present good practices and recommendations, and highlight key areas for further action.

While most research on forced migrants in Ethiopia focuses on refugees, or on internal displacement within the Somali region, this brief presents findings from a little-known case of IDP relocation and resettlement to Adama city, one of 11 cities that received and settled IDPs from camps in 2018. This case study is significant because increasing numbers of forced migrants move not to capital cities, but instead to secondary cities such as Adama, which often lack the resources to attend to them. Secondary cities are defined as having a population of 10-50% of the country’s largest city, which generally equates to between 100,000 and 5 million residents.³ Urbanisation is projected to be the fastest in secondary cities in both Africa and Asia, making them an important site for development and socio-economic growth – and thus destinations of increasing interest to forced migrants unwilling or unable to move to settlements or camps.



Location of Adama city in Ethiopia.

National assignment of IDPs to urban areas and Adama city’s response

Adama, the capital of Oromia region, is an upcoming secondary city with a population that is expected to triple by 2040, from 253,000 currently to over 954,000 inhabitants, and with a more than fivefold growth in area.⁴ Known as a popular city for weekend breaks from Addis Ababa and a common choice for conferences and work events, in 2018 it became the home of 2,000 IDP households, which it was allocated through a regional lottery scheme, as well as many more undocumented IDPs.

¹ IDMC (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre) (2020) Ethiopia. Available at: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/ethiopia>

² BBC (2017) What is behind clashes in Ethiopia’s Oromia and Somali regions?, 18 September. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-41278618>

³ Roberts, B. and Hohmann, R. (2014) The systems of secondary cities: the neglected drivers of urbanising economies. *CIVIS Sharing Knowledge and Learning from Cities*, 7: 1-12.

⁴ Lamson-Hall, P., Angel, S., DeGroot, D., Martin, R., and Tafesse, T. (2018) A new plan for African cities: The Ethiopia Urban Expansion Initiative. *Urban Studies* 56 (6): 1234-1249.

Immediately after displacement, IDPs resided in various camps in the Oromia region, where they officially registered and received international humanitarian assistance. Subsequently, a regional lottery system was created to settle many IDPs long-term, with 11 cities in the Oromia region selected, based on their capacity to host IDPs. To determine the city in which they would be resettled, IDP households drew a ticket in a lottery system using a registration code they had been assigned. This anonymous, random lottery was created to avoid competition and conflicts of interest, and IDPs reported that they considered the system to be fair and transparent.

While everyone in the camps was registered, Adama received an influx of IDPs beyond those 'assigned' to Adama – as many IDPs who were either assigned to a different city or not assigned to one at all also arrived. This has resulted in an unknown number of undocumented IDPs in the city, and a variety of challenges, as there is no existing registration system in the city itself.

Of the 11 cities selected, Adama city accommodated more IDPs than any other city in Oromia. This was a huge responsibility, as the city had to facilitate and provide for these households with limited federal government support. The city administration therefore requested significant help from different sectors and stakeholders. Rapidly, the city administration and regional government called society to action through social media and TV outlets, emphasising the need to build housing and advertise the emergency fund that had been established. Additionally, the city organised a committee to deal directly with the crisis.

Adama city is now home to 1,340 registered IDP households and 506 registered unaccompanied IDP minors, as well as likely hundreds of undocumented IDPs. It represents an important site for understanding how local government and other local actors can effectively assist IDPs settling both formally and informally in urban areas, particularly through a collective response strategy in which the local community and private sector are engaged in a range of assistance responses.

Overview of good practices

1. Whole-of-society coordinated emergency response

There are increasing calls for humanitarian and development responses to be based on a whole-of-society approach involving the private sector, civil society, communities and individuals alongside governments and international institutions. The regional and local response to IDPs in Adama provides a positive case study of how this can take place, with a particular emphasis on the involvement of the private sector and local individuals. Notably, these responses were enabled by the national government, which recognised the urgency of the issue and provided both policy and practical support to disperse and settle IDPs, including allowing them the right to work.

Cascading communication

Successful communication to disseminate the appeal for support was achieved by 'cascading' a single message through federal, regional and local government. Media coverage of the IDPs' arrival, as well as social media circulation of the appeal, were crucial factors in raising awareness of the need to help.

The call to action was promoted regionally, but it was at the local level in Adama – through action taken by city and local authorities, the private sector, community associations, local NGOs and individuals – that the response was strongest.

It was very painful to witness a person being forcefully displaced from where he/she used to live just because he/she is Oromo. Adama city residents also felt the pain. We, therefore, sent out a call for action ... with a motto 'people for people/Wegen le Wegen'. Everyone, from big to small, had placed their fingerprint in response to the call.

– Coordinator at the Mayor's Office

Many of our informants felt a positive obligation to offer support, based in part on the widely disseminated appeal; once a critical mass was reached, offering support became a kind of actionable norm, even for those not directly called upon. The focus on both in-kind and cash donations meant that actors could contribute in various ways, involving contributors with and without funds, both groups and individuals, and those motivated by both altruism and self-interest. As a result, over \$1 million was raised in the span of just a few months, without international assistance.

Private sector support

Ethiopian owners of private sector companies are known for being very willing to offer support when humanitarian crises occur, including in response to forced displacement and climate disasters such as drought and flooding. The majority of the financial support for the IDPs collected by the local government came from the private sector. The bureau officer explained, 'Most of the private sectors were competing against each other to get media coverage because whenever someone donates, we provide media coverage on roundabout screens for free ... therefore, the private sectors and investors donated a large amount of money.'

Private sector actors supported IDPs when they arrived in Adama in a variety of ways, including providing in-kind support of basic necessities such as food, clothes, mattresses, and blankets. They also built houses and other buildings for the IDPs. For instance, a private car assembly firm built 64 houses worth about 3.5 million birr (about US \$116,000). Another food complex company built 112 houses at a cost of around 7 million birr, which was three times the amount requested by the city administration. The company also provided materials to the IDPs which helped to furnish 'Mushema' (a specific type of plastic carpet common in the Harari Region where the IDPs came from) in each house. In addition, the private sector actors constructed churches and mosques for the IDPs in their compounds.

Notably, they also offered wage subsidies and employment opportunities for IDPs. Several private companies employed IDPs following an official request by the sub-city administration. Registered IDPs were preferred, yet in numerous instances IDPs were only employed for a short time, as they either resigned or were fired due to a combination of factors that seem rooted in a lack of social understanding and integration.

Despite sizeable contributions, some company owners complained that their donation was not tax deductible and that the government was not sufficiently transparent regarding the money collected for the support of IDPs. Consequently, the

owners were not encouraged to contribute more. However, many did benefit from media coverage of donations made, and thus used their donations as a marketing strategy. Ultimately, competition for free media coverage in exchange for donations played a huge role in successfully mobilising funds.

With the help of major community associations and the private sector, Adama city was able to construct 2,000 resettlement houses. Local communities and individuals provided hot meals and material support such as clothing, blankets and mattresses, while local NGOs provided free healthcare and supported the children of IDPs. Additionally, the city has and continues to provide food rations for registered IDPs, over two years after the IDPs' arrival. Based on family size, registered IDPs receive 15 kgs of rice or flour and about half a litre of cooking oil per person/month. Crucially, however, undocumented IDPs in Adama have not received housing or access to basic support, meaning an unknown number of vulnerable people remain left out of this assistance effort.

2. Local community involvement (including IDPs themselves)

Local individuals were one of the primary responders to the crisis. Before the call for action, local individuals witnessed the emergency first-hand in their local *kebeles* where IDPs were residing, and took action by donating cash and clothing to the IDPs they encountered.

One example of how local citizens in Adama offered support was through the provision of emergency de facto soup kitchens shortly after many IDPs arrived. IDPs were not initially in a position to cook food for themselves as they lacked money, groceries, materials and a place to cook, so local individuals

helped IDPs survive by providing food and taking turns to prepare hot meals for them in *kebele* compounds. According to one of our respondents, 'One neighbourhood would bring breakfast, another would bring lunch and the other would bring dinner. Hot meals were the first response, then the rice donations continued.' No *kebele* meeting was called; instead, information regarding the cooking of hot meals was distributed through word of mouth. Individuals invited their neighbours to support and contribute to the welfare of IDPs, and these neighbours in turn passed the invitation on to their networks.

IDP-led Iddir and Equb

This support system also continues among IDPs themselves through indigenous voluntary associations known as Equb and Iddir. Iddirs are indigenous voluntary associations established among neighbours, primarily to provide mutual aid in relation to burial matters, but they have now evolved to address other community concerns of their members,⁵ such as support for weddings and the provision of micro-credit and finance. Iddirs can have 50–100 members and often meet weekly to discuss both financial and social matters.

In contrast, Equb is a form of informal savings and credit association where individuals come together to save periodically and take turns to disburse the saved amount to members. Unlike modern savings and credit mechanisms, Equb is interest free, has flexible deposit days (depending on the agreement, members can save every day, week or month), and the trust and relationship among members (who are usually friends or family members) serves as a collateral to enter the Equb. Iddir and Equb are unique to Ethiopia (although variations exist in other countries), and the idea has also been adopted by the Ethiopian diaspora abroad.



View of Adama city. Credit: Joe Castleman (CC BY-SA-3.0)



IDP settlement camp in Adama city. Credit: Gezahegn Gebremedhin/Delina Abadi

The need for such funds can be even more urgent in situations of displacement, and the associations also offer important psychological support and community-building. The informality of Iddir and Equb has also benefited IDPs. Iddirs serve IDPs as an insurance and risk-sharing mechanism, with flexibility and less bureaucracy than the formal insurance companies, while Equb enable IDPs who do not have assets or financial collateral to save and borrow money, unlike formal banking systems. The fact that Equb is interest free has also benefited IDPs in two ways: it is religiously appropriate, as almost all IDPs are Muslims and are therefore proscribed from earning interest, and IDPs that are particularly in need of credit do not become burdened by additional interest fees when they borrow money.

Additionally, Iddir and Equb not only help IDPs get to know each other and fellow IDPs in the settlements better, the gatherings also serve as a social support platform for their members. Prior to the Iddir and Equb gatherings, ‘nobody knew which woman was facing domestic violence, nobody knew anything.’ Moreover, women IDPs also discuss and propose solutions to major issues concerning them during these gatherings.

We also discuss current issues. At one point there was a talk about young girls being raped when they take Bajaj [motorcycle transport]. We can't go around and talk to every individual so this Iddir really helped us address [this issue] as a community.

In addition to practising savings, then, these initiatives also help IDPs to integrate among themselves and create strong social groups that help enhance their self-esteem and create a space for them to discuss and tackle their social problems. Iddir and Equb make resettlement much more tolerable by creating this sense of community among IDPs. These groups can be used to resolve conflicts between people in the IDP compounds, offering a forum to address and solve the conflict in a timely manner with the help of elders. Many informants mentioned that social

support is much more beneficial than financial assistance in solving their problems. According to the founder,

[The] social support is more beneficial than the money. We get something new out of it every day.

However, although Iddirs and Equb exist among both IDPs in the settlements and among locals in Adama, we did not identify any of these groups that included both IDPs and locals among their members, meaning that an opportunity for better integration between groups has not yet been capitalised upon.

3. Free housing and services for registered IDPs by the Adama city local government

Long-term settlement

Adama's local government showed generosity and regional cooperation by agreeing to receive over 1,300 IDP families at very short notice. By allowing the settlement of IDPs on a longer-term basis, the local authorities offered IDPs a chance to leave crowded camps and resume a more normal life in peace. Furthermore, they built houses, a school and crucial infrastructure, expanded on below.

According to both IDPs we interviewed and other key respondents, most IDPs were positive about being relocated to Adama. In contrast to some of the other cities designated for relocation, Adama is a major city in Ethiopia, and close to Addis Ababa. Adama city was also preferred by many IDP households as they received free housing, which was not offered in each relocation site.

IDPs have now stayed in Adama city on average for almost two years. Based on interviews, it appears that for many returning to their original home is not an option, as there is an ongoing

⁵ Pankhurst, A. and Haile Mariam, D. (2000) The “Iddir” in Ethiopia: historical development, social function, and potential role in HIV/AIDS prevention and control. *Northeast African Studies* 7 (2): 35-57.



Classroom for IDPs' children in Sena Seba school, Adama. Credit: Gezahegn Gebremedhin/Delina Abadi

fear of violence. Practically, many do not have assets to resettle, or even money to make the trip back, further reinforcing their preference for staying in Adama. As two informants explained:

We went through so much, so we just want to settle here. We want to work here and change our lives. We just want to live like others.

- IDP

Housing

In response to the city's call for action, local community associations and many private sector actors contributed to the construction of houses to settle IDPs in three new settlements, Chekeno 1, 2 and 3. Sekelelo, a fourth settlement, was constructed before the IDPs arrived in Adama. Every registered IDP household in Adama received a private resettlement house with documents confirming their tenancy. The resettlement houses were allocated using a lottery system to be fair and equal to IDPs. However, undocumented IDPs had no recourse to housing support, meaning that they were at higher risk of homelessness, and their situation was often much more dire than those who arrived via the national lottery scheme.

Education

In addition to free housing, Adama city has provided free healthcare and education for IDPs. Adama city has constructed a school, Sena Seba, within the resettlement area to educate IDPs from kindergarten to 4th grade. The school is free for every IDP, and aims to provide education for younger IDPs (between the ages of 4 and 13) within close distance of their homes. To make it accessible for everyone, the school has a multi-shift (morning and afternoon) programme.

Infrastructure

Adama city has also provided central water stations in the resettlement area to give IDPs access to a free water supply. Adama Electric Cooperation has provided street lighting for safety in the resettlement area and is now in the process of installing individual electric counters for 724 households. However, due to budget constraints, there have been delays with the provision of this service.

Policy issues

1. Documenting and registering forced migrants is crucial for both emergency and long-term planning

It is evident that many more IDPs arrived in Adama independently of the registered 1,340 IDP households, yet these undocumented arrivals did not have access to housing or food rations, thereby increasing their vulnerability. This affected not only the IDPs themselves but those mandated to care for them, such as clinics and hospitals that at times had more patients than they could treat. Based on our research, no effort to document and register these IDPs took place, meaning that the city could not adequately support them, nor understand the true extent of the demand they placed on local infrastructure. Enabling the means for documentation, registration and information dissemination is crucial in such situations; this could be delivered either by the municipal government or in collaboration with an established, trusted NGO.

2. The location and administration of IDP and refugee settlements impacts development efforts and long-term integration

Members of government and policymakers must plan for the long term when choosing locations to settle forced migrants. IDPs should be housed in areas where they can easily create or find employment, have access to healthcare and schools, and make contact with local hosts. The failure to do so contributes to the creation of an isolated population unable to support themselves and lacking the social ties to integrate and make use of community social and practical resources. Furthermore, although land is owned by the government in Ethiopia, both IDPs and the local community have the right to know who can utilise the land, based on the government's lease.

3. IDPs need support to integrate and overcome social challenges such as religious difference and competition for employment

Initially, all stakeholders such as host city administrations and local communities showed solidarity to support the IDPs.

However, gradually problems between local communities and IDPs have started to arise, which have in part been traced to issues over land usage and ownership.

At least two major conflicts erupted between IDPs and local communities within two years of the IDPs' arrival. The majority of the IDPs are Muslims, while the local people living near the resettlement area are predominantly Christian, and religious tensions have been in evidence. Following unfounded rumours that the IDPs had intended to destroy the local church, a mosque was burnt down, killing at least four IDPs. The second dispute between the local community and the IDPs arose over the marketplace that was originally built near the settlement for IDPs, as locals felt that they also deserved to trade in it.

These conflicts demonstrate the importance of finding suitable locations for settlement sites and the need for clear communication by authorities regarding IDP-designated sites both prior to and after resettlement, as well as moderated forums for communication between IDPs and locals.

Recommendations

- Encourage a whole-of-society response to forced migration arrivals by creating and sharing an appeal for support at all levels of society – targeting both private sector actors, civil society and individuals – through television, radio and social media.
- Create a transparent fund for collecting donations as well as specific in-kind support such as clothing or donated time to enable contributions, financial and otherwise, from all members of society. Making donations tax deductible may encourage larger amounts of funding from the private sector in particular.
- Create a registration system for migrants entering the host city through the local city government.

Identifying forced and other migrants once they enter a host city is important for the city infrastructure as a whole, as well as a first step to providing further assistance to those in need. Both city-level research on inhabitants and the provision of concrete resources are necessary for this to be achieved.

- At a minimum, ensure that forced migrants are provided with free housing, which is a crucial first step in helping people stabilise their lives. Guarantee full transparency on sensitive decisions regarding land administration.

In order to mitigate conflicts over land property with the local community, the city administration should be transparent regarding the lease of the resettlement area to IDPs, thereby minimising possible tensions and conflicts between IDPs and the local community. This will help address major security issues caused by misunderstanding of the land proprietorship, which can manifest as religious and economic disputes. The dire state of undocumented IDPs in Adama, who are often homeless, demonstrates the need for housing to be provided to all forced migrants regardless of registration status.

- Facilitate the integration of IDPs through mixed social and cultural gatherings and initiatives such as Iddirs, Equb and coffee gatherings.

Promote social integration between IDPs and locals by encouraging mixed Iddir and Equb associations to minimise cultural gaps, in addition to their function of helping IDPs to better manage their finances. Incentivise local community Iddirs and Equb to invite IDPs to join, and to encourage both groups to jointly participate in regular coffee meetings, where knowledge can be exchanged and ideas and practices shared. Enable a community platform to help IDPs and local communities interact at the *kebele* level.

- Even after the initial influx of forced migrants, work with community influencers and media outlets to provide learning and awareness-raising that promotes social integration.

Actively promote the social integration of IDPs through cultural programmes in mass and social media, including entertainment shows, dramas, music and news segments which involve IDPs and share their cultures. Continue to reflect the voice of IDPs and cover current issues faced by IDPs, such as infrastructural and integration challenges.

Conclusion

With the increasing rates of both forced migration and urbanisation, more and more IDPs and refugees will likely resettle in secondary cities like Adama. Adama city presents a successful case study of municipal provision of extensive humanitarian assistance for registered IDPs. Therefore, lessons drawn from the challenges and good practices of Adama's response to the IDP crisis may prove invaluable to the future planning efforts of secondary cities facing similar migration influxes. For example, a communication and dissemination strategy such as that used in the Adama response could be redeployed to raise awareness of particular skill sets in a displaced population to a local or regional audience.

The case of Adama's IDP response illustrates the breadth and scope of IDP support that can be deployed when a

finite number of documented people enter a city – and also illustrates the stark divide between those forced migrants who did and did not receive assistance, dependent on their documentation status. Given these findings, the registration of all forced migrants upon arrival in host cities could improve the assistance that is available to them by affording a better overview of the scope of the support needed, as well as insights into the demographics and particular needs of all those who have settled. As the number of IDPs and other forced migrants in secondary cities rises, learning from and building on the successes of Adama's local, regional and national coordination can help communication and resources to be effectively delivered. This has the potential to help local government, pre-existing residents and IDPs alike.



St Mary's Church, Adama. Credit: Joe Castleman (CC BY-SA-3.0)

Resources

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Acknowledgements

The authors gratefully acknowledge Cities Alliance and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) for their financial and technical support.

Cover photo: IDP schoolchild at Sena Seba school, Adama. Credit: Gezahegn Gebremedhin/Delina Abadi