

Transforming Lives: Empowering IDPS in Puntland with Technical Skills for Employment

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Abstract

Garowe hosts an estimated 8,500 households with 55,675 individuals of internally displaced persons (IDPs). War, armed conflict, insecurity and droughts, floods, and other natural disasters forced many of these IDPs to leave their places of origin, mainly pastoral areas and rural villages, and move to major urban towns and cities such as Garowe. It is estimated that around 77 percent of IDPs live in extreme poverty conditions, 10 percentage points higher than their non-displaced counterparts. Life in urban settings poses real challenges to IDPs from pastoral and rural areas, as they find it difficult to adapt their livelihood, skills, and experiences to new unfamiliar environments. The majority of IDPs rely on humanitarian assistance from the UN and International NGOs for their livelihood.

This study investigated the challenges faced by IDPs in Garowe city, Puntland State of Somalia, in improving their livelihood, particularly in gaining entry to and maintaining employment. This study adopted a qualitative research design to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying dynamic and complex factors that affect the livelihood, skills, and employability of IDPs and the multilevel barriers that they face in accessing the Garowe city job market. Key informant interviews were conducted with IDPs, mainstream public service officials, representatives of the private sector, and experts on protracted displacement. Secondary data were reviewed and analyzed to synthesize existing knowledge about employment opportunities and the demand for skills in the city.

The study identified recurring themes of high unemployment, skill gaps, limited access to social networks and employers, and inadequate information and knowledge about available jobs and services among IDPs. The findings show that these significant barriers to improving IDP's livelihood are related to lack of access to all the jobs in the labor market due to their identity and status, disparities in education and skills, and lack of resources for skills training programs to empower IDPs to acquire or develop their social and economic capital. The unequivocal importance of education, skills, and social networks appears to have practical implications for IDPs' labor market integration. The findings underscore the need for clear government policy priority and improved access to education for IDPs and targeted skill-building initiatives as essential strategies and interventions for integrating IDPs into the labor market, thus finding durable solutions for IDPs in this protracted displacement context.

Keywords: Employment, Skills, IDPs, Puntland

1. Introduction

According to the latest report by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), internally displaced persons (IDPs) represent a significant portion of the world population. As of the end of the year 2023, a staggering number of 75.9 million people across 148 countries and territories are globally being internally displaced by major causes and push factors ranging from wars, violent conflicts, terror, and persecution to natural disasters such as droughts, floods, storms, and earthquakes (IDMC 2024; UNHCR, 2023).

In Somalia, the rate and magnitude of displacement crises are alarming. An estimated 3.9 million internally displaced persons, which is close to 19 percent of the total population, live across the country, mostly in informal and overcrowded temporary settlements with a daily threat of evictions and further displacement (IDMC, 2024; NRC, 2024; Jelle, et al, 2021).

Garowe hosts an estimated 8,500 IDP households or 55,675 individuals (CCCM Cluster, 2023; UNHCR, 2024). Multifaceted causes and reasons such as war, violent conflict, insecurity, droughts, floods, and other natural disasters have forced many of these IDPs to leave their place of origin, mainly pastoral areas and rural villages, and move to major towns and cities such as Garowe (Skjelderup et al. 2020; Mohamoud et al. 2017; Oh, et al., 2024). The abrupt, and often chaotic and destructive nature of wars,

violence, and natural disasters give rise to a host of precarious conditions, such as the destruction of infrastructure and essential services, loss of livelihoods, and widespread hunger and diseases.

Based on analysis of the poverty data from the Somalia Integrated Household Budget Survey (SIHBS) in 2022 by the Somalia National Bureau of Statistics (SNBS), more than half of the Somali population (54.4 percent) live below the poverty line, as they have a daily consumption of less than \$2.06 (SNBS, 2022). According to the World Bank (2021), poverty among internally displaced persons is estimated to be 77 percent, 10 percentage points higher than their non-displaced counterparts, which is 66 percent (Hanmer, et al. 2021; Jacobs, et al. 2020). The majority of IDPs rely on humanitarian assistance from the UN and International NGOs for their livelihoods.

The Somali Labour Force Survey conducted by SNBS revealed that around 37.4% of the youth in Somalia are unemployed (SNBS, 2019). The unemployment rate was particularly higher for young females (40.8%) than for young males (35.2%). The survey found that the overall unemployment rate for Somalia was 21.4%, with respective rates of 18.4 percent for all males and 27.4 percent for all females. Data on unemployment among IDPs are scarce, despite IDPs being a highly vulnerable group and facing more profound employment challenges than non-displaced persons.

Internally displaced people are not a homogenous group of people but share specific characteristics and vulnerabilities and face similar political, social, and economic challenges. The IDPs in Garowe city hail from different ethnic and tribal backgrounds that shape not only their decisions about where to settle (which IDP camp) and the extent of local integration, but also have significant implications for their access to basic social services and interactions with the local residents. IDPs can benefit from and contribute to the social, political, and economic lives of urban centers and host communities, but the majority of them are unemployed and, when they are, perform informal casual work, particularly in construction and domestic services. A review of the literature indicates that IDPs experience worse labor inequality and outcomes than local residents due to multi-level constraints to access labor markets, such as the impact of forced displacement on their physical and mental health and lack of social networks, support resources, and skills required in the host labor market (Schuettler and Caron, 2020; Torosyan, et al. 2018).

A study by Mohamoud et al. (2017) in Mogadishu revealed that 83.9% of IDPs were unemployed. Life in urban settings poses real challenges to IDPs from pastoral and rural areas, as they find it difficult to adapt their livelihoods, skills, and experiences to new unfamiliar environments. A considerable proportion of IDPs do not have opportunities to acquire or develop the appropriate skills to secure and maintain employment or initiate entrepreneurial endeavors.

In their study on productive labor and employment creation in Somalia, Abdulahi et al. (2020) found an incompatibility between the demand for skills in the job market and the current skill sets of the population. IDPs are particularly affected by their low level of skills, which represents a formidable challenge to efforts to improve their livelihood. This can partly be ascribed to the lack of formal education and training, which is a common occurrence among IDPs and poor communities, but also to their limited access to social networks, support resources, and information about available jobs and services that could potentially help improve their livelihoods (Halakhe & Miller, 2023). It is worth noting that the reduced access of IDPs to their rights as citizens is influenced by institutional, policy, and administrative barriers (Kelly, 2021).

The findings from the GCRF protracted displacement research project on "improving healthcare at the intersection of gender and protracted displacement amongst Somali and Congolese refugees and IDPs" by the SIDRA Institute and colleagues from the University of Edinburgh, and other partners in South Africa, DRC, and Kenya highlighted the invariable intersectionality of livelihoods, housing, and gender to health care, social wellbeing, and justice for IDPs and the importance of social structures, networks, resources, policies, and systems that contribute to building social support and resilience to adversity and promote local integration (Clayton, et al. 2021; Bile, et al. 2024).

As a result, this study was conducted in Garowe City, Puntland State, one of the GCRF protracted displacement sites, to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying dynamic and complex factors that affect the livelihood, skills, and employability of IDPs and the multilevel barriers that they face in accessing the Garowe city job market.

2. Methods and materials of the study

This study adopted a qualitative research design to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying dynamic and complex factors that affect the livelihood, skills, and employability of IDPs and the multilevel barriers they face in accessing the Garowe city job market. Key informant interviews were conducted with IDPs, mainstream public service officials, representatives of the private sector, and experts on protracted displacement. This approach allows researchers to explore the complexities and nuances of the challenges faced by internally displaced persons (IDPs) in securing employment opportunities and livelihoods in Puntland Somalia. Secondary data were reviewed and analyzed to synthesize existing knowledge about employment opportunities and the demand for skills in the city.

a. Data Collection Methods

- **Desk Review:** A comprehensive desk review and analysis were conducted to synthesize the existing knowledge and evidence about the topic. Existing literature and reports related to IDP livelihoods

and unemployment, demand for skills in the job market, and skill acquisition and training programs in Puntland State were thoroughly reviewed.

- **Key Informant Interviews (KII):** In-depth interviews with 33 IDP participants who possessed significant information, knowledge, and interest in the topic were conducted. IDP participants aged 18 years and above residing in IDP camps/settlements in Garowe were purposively chosen to provide insights and share their lived experiences and perspectives into the challenges IDPs face about employment and skill development. In addition to the IDP participants, the study interviewed 20 KII from different stakeholders to understand their perspectives on IDP employment and skills. These stakeholders included representatives from the Puntland Ministry of Education and Higher Education, the Ministry of Labour, Youth and Sports, and the Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Democratization, private sector companies (with a focus on construction companies, hospitalities, and service providers), and education providers such as Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions in Garowe.

b. Data Analysis

The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed in the Somali language, and translated into English.

Somali and English bilingual speakers carried out the translations to maintain the integrity of the participants' responses and the original meaning as much as possible. The transcribed data underwent thematic coding to identify themes and patterns related to IDPs' livelihoods, skills and employment, challenges, and potential solutions. The qualitative data analysis (QDA) application TAGUETTE was used to facilitate coding, efficient organization, content, and thematic analysis of qualitative data.

c. Incorporation into Larger Research Project

This study is an off-shoot of a broader research project that investigates displacement and health at the intersection of the genders of displaced Congolese and Somalia in multiple locations, including the DRC, Somalia, Kenya, and South Africa. The findings of this study contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by IDPs in securing employment and accessing livelihood opportunities in Puntland, Somalia.

3. Research Findings and Discussions

a. Skills and employment opportunities for IDP Communities

A diverse range of skills in construction, plumbing, carpentry, and farming. The diagrams below summarize the types of employment that IDP engage in in Garowe City.



Figure 1 The common types of employment that IDPs are engaged

However, the study found that the types of jobs that IDPs have access to in the Garowe city labor market are limited. Employees perform informal casual work in the construction and domestic sectors. IDP women often work as housemaids, performing tasks such as cooking, washing garments, and cleaning. In response to a question about the skills and job opportunities for IDPs, an IDP participant said: *“Most of our men do manual labour, carrying loads or working in construction. Our women clean houses, wash clothes and cook. Very few of us attempt to start small businesses such as selling stuff in wheelbarrows on the streets because we do not have the money”. Another participant stated that “some jobs are off-limits to IDPs such as government jobs. The real reason is about our identity and status as IDPs but some people may justify it as lack of education and skills among IDPs but at the same time, we have not received any support to get education and skills”.*

b. Skills demand for the job market

The construction industry and medium- and small-scale businesses offer employment opportunities for the local community and IDPs with the right skills to drive the productivity and growth of the local economy. However, skills in other sectors, such as energy, technology, extractive, manufacturing, and other productive industries, are also in high demand. Particularly, affordable renewable energy will be the engine that will drive progress and innovation in the productive sectors and promote and sustain economic development and growth. The majority of IDPs do not have the right managerial, engineering, and technical skills and expertise required in these sectors. The desk review revealed that the skills and competencies listed in the table below are in high demand in the construction and productive sectors, as well as in small- and medium-scale businesses.

Table 1: Skills and competencies required for specific sectors.

Sector	Opportunities		
	Skills	Functions	Enterprises
Construction	Interior Designs	Plan and design the interior spaces of the construction, select appropriate materials and oversee installs of interior fittings and fixtures	Supply of construction inputs as well as production and extraction of construction materials such as soil, gravel, and stones
	Project Managers	Responsible for overseeing the construction projects, and managing teams, budgets, and timelines.	
	Site managers	Supervise onsite operations of the construction projects, coordinate subcontractors, and ensure safety compliance	
	Technicians	Work in the installation, maintenance, and repair of construction equipment, and systems.	
Productive	Animal husbandry	Manage livestock, and ensure proper feeding, breeding and healthcare.	Production and retailing of livestock products.
	Mechanics	Repair and maintain agricultural machinery and equipment.	
	Agriculture	Manage crop production, soil and land preparation and farm management.	Production and retailing of agricultural commodities.
Medium and Small-Scale Business	Manufacturing skills	Operate machinery, manage production processes, and ensure production quality.	SME enterprises and business startups including food processing enterprises, and digital startups.
	Digital Skills	Use technology to enhance marketing, operations management and digital communications.	
	Entrepreneurship skill	Develop business ideas, manage startups, and innovate for growth.	
	Life Skills	Improve personal effectiveness, communication, and problem-solving skills.	

Sources: Market Needs Assessment in Garowe by GIZ with Puntland MoEHE 2021 (GIZ report, 2021)

There is a shortage of skilled labor force to meet the growing labor demands in various sectors in the current job market in Garowe City. Although data on skill gaps in the Garowe city job market are limited, there is a growing trend of the private sector bringing in skilled foreign workers for different job specialties and levels. A KII respondent from the private sector said *"The high unemployment as commonly mentioned and understood, may not be entirely accurate. It may well be that the IDPs as well as the host [local] community do not possess the necessary skills for many jobs. It could also mean a lack of awareness and information regarding the types of available job opportunities and the skills required in the job market. It is not uncommon to see companies recruiting skilled foreign nationals for positions in the construction and hospitality sectors from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Yemen, and Kenya."*

The study revealed that the most demanded skills are those related to technical trades such as plastering, plumbing, and electrical work, which play critical roles in supporting industries such as construction, critical infrastructure development, and facility maintenance of many service providers, such as hotels, restaurants, offices, schools, health facilities, sports centers, airports, and mosques. The demand for specialized skills in road works and interior and exterior services for buildings is high because of the construction boom of high-rise buildings and transport networks such as roads and bridges, and presents numerous and

exciting employment opportunities for those with the required level of skills and expertise.

Many IDPs did not have formal education or skills training; however, they gained knowledge and skills in construction, plumbing, and carpentry through years of practice and experience from their families and other members of their communities of origin. One IDP respondent working in the construction sector stated that formal education was not the only means of acquiring skills in the community. Rather, parents played a critical role in imparting knowledge and skills through mentorship to their children, while other members could obtain opportunities to volunteer with construction workers to learn and master their skills.

He said *"It was common for members of our community to acquire their skills from their family members or older siblings, rather than obtaining formal education and skills training from schools or other educational institutions. I myself learned my trade from my father who has been working in this sector for a long time"*

However, the importance of formal education and technical training has not yet been lost. He continued to tell how his father had entered the construction sector. *"My father had the opportunity to complete his technical education in Mogadishu before the collapse of the central government. Since then, there have been many changes in the construction. Nevertheless, my father was proud of his accomplishment and I still follow his skills in the field."*

While IDPs might bring valuable skills from their communities of origin, some skills such as farming and crafting traditional materials do not often match the job profiles in demand in the labor market in Garowe city. However, the construction job market is rapidly changing. IDPs face more competition from foreign workers who are highly skilled, can perform various trades, and operate modern construction equipment and technology. One IDP participant said, *"We cannot compete with these foreign workers who are doing all kinds of specialized construction jobs such as building concrete structures, layering, plastering, ducting, glazing and electrical installations"*.

Another IDP respondent observed that IDPs would soon be forced out of their traditional role in the construction sector. He said *"I am very concerned about this emerging trend of foreign workers with different skills taking up our jobs. We may soon be reduced to work as manual labourers in the construction, just clearing construction areas and portering of heavy loads on our shoulders."*

Key informant interviews with IDPs show that private companies prefer to hire foreign workers solely because of their specialized skills; however, hiring foreign workers is more expensive in terms of wages and other benefits than hiring Somali workers. A manager from a private construction company commented *"In large-scale projects such as the construction of hotels and roads, it is imperative to engage*

the services of highly skilled professionals. While these experts may command a higher rate than their less skilled local counterparts, their work is inherently more reliable. Engaging novice workers may increase the risk of low-quality, unsafe work and damages to such project".

Several barriers to IDP skill acquisition have been noted, particularly the pressure from earning their daily livelihood, the limited polytechnic and TVET courses in Garowe city, the length of training programs, and the distance of the TVET centers to IDP camps, which pose transportation challenges. Many IDPs struggle to meet their daily livelihoods because of dwindling employment prospects and loss of income. They encounter daily stressors and financial constraints that hinder them from making progress or pursuing technical and vocational education and training to improve their skills and increase their chances of better employment. One participant with an IDP expressed a gloomy outlook of high unemployment among IDPs. *"Every day, I wake up early, meet up with colleagues and start for the city. The foreign workers are occupying all the good, better-paid jobs. Many of us compete for the few manual jobs that are left. I do not think this will improve very soon. There are no vocational training programmes to enable us to upgrade our skills or acquire new skills. There are no highly skilled technical mentors in my community to provide us with on-job training"*.

The length of limited skills-training courses has been acknowledged as an important barrier.

Short training programs can take up to nine months, while extended training programs span up to four years. Unfortunately, most IDPs face difficulties enrolling in all courses due to their limited literacy skills and financial capabilities. Those who meet the basic literacy criteria, such as reading, writing, and numeracy skills, often register for shorter training programs, as longer programs typically require a primary school certificate. An education officer commented on the challenges in the acquisition of skills acquisition. *“Access to quality education and training remains limited for displaced populations that reside in informal camps near major metropolitan areas. There are insufficient education and training facilities available to adequately provide basic education services and technical and vocational education training.”*

The following list of training courses are examples of typical vocational education and training courses available in polytechnic and TVET institutions in Garowe City and Puntland State.

Table 2: Skills and competencies required for specific sectors.

Program	Courses	Requirements	Duration	Certification
Long Skill Building Programs (Active ^[1])	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interior Design, Agriculture & Animal Husbandry Renewable Energy Technologies, and Auto Electric and Mechanics, Computer science 	Primary certificate	Up to 4 Years	Diploma
Long Skill Building Programs (in-Active ^[1])	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electrical & Electronics Engineering, Mechanical Engineering Telecommunication & Electronics Engineering, Civil Engineering Water Supply and Resources Management, Technology Transfer Soil and water resources Engineering, Basic Accounting, and bookkeeping 	Primary certificate	Up to 4 Years	Diploma
Short Skill Building Programs (both in-Active ¹ & Active ²)	Electricity, Cooking, Carpentry & Joinery, Tailoring & Garment Making, Computer Studies, Solar Energy, Beauty Salon & Beautification, Civil Construction, plumbing, Mobile Repairing, General Mechanics, Secretarial studies, Entrepreneurship Skills, Marketing Skills, cooling system, Metal fabrication & General Mechanics.	Basic Literacy, Numeracy or/and ICT skills	Up to 9 Months	Certificate

Sources: Interview with Garowe Polytechnical Institute (GPI)

¹ Active programs can be enrolled in 2024 due to the availability of financial support, students will get free technical education.

² In-Active programs cannot be enrolled in 2024 due to the lack or insufficiency of financial support.

Equally worrying is the state of basic education opportunities for children with IDP, where the majority of these children miss school (Save the Children, 2019). With daily income from these low-paid and unreliable jobs being the primary source for meeting their basic needs, many IDP parents cannot afford school fees for their children. Consequently, many school-aged children among IDPs opt to work for immediate survival, instead of attending school. An education officer at the Puntland Ministry of Education stated *“children are forced to choose between work for survival and education. Children carry out jobs that do not require skills, such as shoe polishing and car washing, to support their families. It is the unfortunate but the harsh reality of displacement and poverty.”*

c. Multi-level barriers to employment of IDPs

The employment of internally displaced individuals is affected by many factors, including job market challenges, social structures and norms, competition from local community and foreign workers, and policy and administrative barriers.

I. Social structures and norms and job market challenges: The study found that IDPs' limited access to employment opportunities is influenced not only by their lack of formal education and skills training but also by their identity, status, and limited access to social networks and support resources in the host community.

IDPs are less likely to obtain employment from government institutions or in some sectors that host communities benefit from, for example, social services (education, health), telecommunication, banking, energy and utilities, and hospitality. One IDP participant commented *“We don't have access to all types of jobs. We are “Barakacyaal”-internally displaced persons and do not have the same status as the local community. There are unwritten rules and social norms of the type of jobs that we can seek. The local community use inherent social structures and norms such as tribal kinship, fraternity and other social affiliations to access all types of employment”.*

Moreover, IDPs experience job market challenges such as limited access to information, social networks, and employers that could build their social capital to find employment IDP said *“It is very difficult for us to get information about all the jobs and skills because we are socially and structurally isolated from the host community. We live in camps on the outskirts of the city. There are no employment and skills programmes and services for us to provide information and advice”.* Another IDP participant noted *“In many cases, even well-educated and highly skilled IDPs cannot find the right employment because their social connections are confined to their IDP communities. This happens due to many factors, including we (IDPs) live outside of Garowe city where there is limited interaction with local employers or access to daily work opportunities as well as the existing social customs as we do not belong to the dominant clans in Puntland State”.*

This indicates that IDPs face complex challenges in finding jobs because of structural inequalities and deep-rooted social hierarchies. To truly improve their employment prospects, it is not sufficient to offer education and training; targeted efforts are needed to break down the social and systemic barriers that keep them excluded from the job market.

II. Technology shifts and skill quality challenge: The employability of IDPs is significantly impacted by the demand for high-quality and seamless work owing to the rapid advances in techniques, tools, and technologies of various jobs. For example, in the construction sector, the complexity of modern house buildings,

such as high-rise buildings, towers, and shopping malls, requires specialized skills and greater control over the supply of materials and labor, delivery times, and quality. IDP construction workers were left behind in terms of adaptation to the technological shift because of a lack of access to opportunities and resources to upgrade their passed-down skills and keep pace with the changing market demands. The washing garments and garbage collection that IDP women used as sources of livelihood have also been affected by the introduction of new technologies for washing and the establishment of local corporations that collect and dispose of garbage more efficiently.

Information Box 1: Technology change:

Internally displaced persons continue to engage in construction work in the old-fashioned way which falls short of the contemporary quality standards. While building houses in the past may not have required specialised skills and experience, today's construction practices prioritize measures in detail and material considerations that are often lacking in the IDP workmanship. Many IDPs have years of experience in the construction sector but fail to improve their skill sets or demonstrate commitment beyond practising mediocrity. We need to enhance their skills through continuous skill development and more importantly, provide support to them to adapt to the current technologies used in the modern construction sector and other based skills.

III. Insufficient job opportunities: The IDPs noted a considerable decline in available employment opportunities compared to previous years. The high rate of unemployment among IDPs and even the local community is attributed to the ripple effects of the global economic downturn, which partly resulted from the decrease in donor-funded humanitarian and development projects in Puntland State. Additionally, the slow economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the limited investment and growth in productive sectors such as livestock, agriculture, and fisheries have played a part in local economic stagnation and the erosion of employment creation (Mumin, et al, 2022).

IV. The foreign workers' challenge: The influx of foreign workers has brought valuable skills and spurred progress across various sectors. However, the lack of regulations around their employment has displaced local workers and IDPs from crucial income opportunities, leading to resentment within these communities. IDP respondents specifically noted that the arrival of Bangladeshi workers displaced them in the construction sector, although foreign workers are also filling roles in other areas. For example, a hotel manager explained, *"I couldn't find a skilled local chef capable of developing unique recipes, creating menus, and managing kitchen staff, so I hired a chef from Bangladesh."* This situation indicates a disconnection between local skills and market demands, highlighting the need for better alignment between the capabilities of the local workforce and the needs of the industry.

V. Lack of skills transfer: There is broad recognition of the benefits of leveraging foreign workers' skills and expertise to enhance local and IDP worker capacity and skills in several sectors, such as construction and hospitality. However, our study findings show that skills transfer has not been identified as a government policy priority, and no appropriate course of action or collaborative programs and plans with skilled workers to train local communities and IDP workers have been developed. A government official said, *"We understand the importance of developing the education and skills of our local workforce and the urgent need to set up training and mentoring programmes in collaboration with skilled workers, be it local or foreign. But we have not got the resources to pursue any initiatives to that end. Interview respondent from a hospitality company in Garowe noted, "We value the training of our local workers including IDPs, but lack of structured programmes and resources could be formidable obstacles to achieving meaningful results".*

Another respondent from the construction sector in Garowe highlighted the significance of language barriers between foreign workers and local workers, including IDPs, which hinders effective skills transfer. He said, *"Many local communities and IDP workers cannot speak any other language apart from Somali language. They have to rely on observations and learn by repeating the tasks".*

There are also noticeable disparities in age groups: younger workers exhibit more enthusiasm for learning new skills from skilled foreign workers, particularly in the context of unpaid skill transfer internships, compared to older workers. Older workers are less likely to engage in unpaid opportunities because of their dependence on daily wages.

Table 3: Skills and competencies required for specific sectors.

Attribute	Impact
Skills & Expertise	<p>One significant factor in the influence of foreign workers is the unparalleled level of skills and expertise. E.g., Construction companies require specialized skills in mega projects such as building modern structures, finishing, decorating, plumbing and electrical works. Unfortunately, these skill sets are limited among the local community and IDP workers who find it challenging to keep up with the high demands of the industry due to their limited access to specialized training and exposure to new technology.</p> <p>As a consequence, foreign workers fill the void by undertaking positions that require unique skill sets but also the traditional construction function that local residents and IDPs were engaged in, further reducing employment opportunities for the local labour force.</p>
Knowledge & Qualification	<p>A sufficient knowledge base, recognized qualifications and the skills to use cutting-edge techniques dominant in the marketplace add another dimension to the preference of foreign workers.</p>
Reliability of the Craftsmanship	<p>In the construction sector, there is a perception of the commitment, professionalism and approach of foreign workers, especially their attention to detail and diligence in safeguarding construction plans and adhering strictly to agreed schedules which is reflected positively in the quality of their work and customer’s satisfaction.</p>
Cost Effectiveness & and value for money	<p>Although the wages of foreign workers are higher in comparison to the IDPs, they offer services and produce quality that are considered cost-effective, leading to desired outcomes that meet client expectations. This perception of value for money increases business and profitability among their employers</p>

Sources: KII interview with local companies

d. Employment regulatory and policy environment in Puntland State

Protection of Local Workers' Rights and the Employment of IDPs

The Puntland government has enacted labor laws and regulations aimed at protecting workers' rights, with Law No. 65 (Puntland Parliament, 2011) providing a comprehensive legal framework for addressing employment issues, working conditions, and occupational safety. This law prioritizes local workers by prohibiting employers from hiring foreign workers in positions that can be filled by the local workforce. Such provisions are critical for creating employment opportunities, fostering skill development, and promoting economic growth within a region. By ensuring that jobs remain local, the law facilitates income circulation within the community, supports fair wage practices, and contributes to social stability. Additionally, it enhances the region's self-reliance by reducing dependence on foreign labor and strengthening the local economy.

In addition to these general protections, the Puntland Government's 2012 IDP policy specifically targets the employment rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs). This policy is a strategic measure designed to integrate IDPs into the local economy by affirming their economic rights and implementing safeguards that ensure their equitable participation in the labor market. The policy approach can be divided into several key elements.

1. Recognition of the Right to Work:

The policy explicitly guarantees the right to work for all IDP: women, girls, boys, and men. This recognition is essential for integrating IDPs into the labor force, enabling them to earn a livelihood and support their families. By doing so, the policy contributes to the broader goal of social and economic integration of displaced populations.

2. Right to Social Protection: This policy acknowledges the right of IDPs to social protection, encompassing access to benefits such as unemployment insurance, healthcare, and other social safety nets. These protections are critical in mitigating the economic vulnerabilities faced by IDPs, thereby increasing their likelihood of participating in the labor market.

3. Anti-Discrimination Measures: The policy mandates proactive measures to prevent discrimination against IDPs in the labor market. This ensures that employers treat IDPs fairly, without prejudice, based on their displacement status. Such protections are vital for leveling the playing field, allowing IDPs to compete for jobs on equal terms with other workers.

Information Box 2: Private Sector Law (Labor code No: 65) Adopted by Puntland State.

Article 33 of Law No. 65 outlines the requirements for issuing work permits to foreign workers in Puntland. Firstly, the law mandates that the Ministry must verify the availability of a Somali national with equivalent qualifications and experience before a foreign worker can be employed. Secondly, comprehensive background checks must be conducted by the relevant authorities, including a review of the candidate's criminal history, to confirm that the individual has not committed any serious offenses, such as murder, or has not been subject to court proceedings. If the candidate's background check is clear, they may proceed to apply for a work permit, which is a prerequisite for obtaining a visa for long-term contracts. The duration of the work permit is contingent upon the length of the assignment, with temporary assignments of less than 45 days being subject to specific provisions. Additionally, International Humanitarian Organizations are required to submit the curriculum vitae (C.V.) of every foreign worker to the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation at least three months prior to the anticipated arrival of the foreign worker.

Despite the robust legal frameworks in place, this study revealed a significant gap in enforcement. Both professionals and IDPs interviewed expressed concerns about the insufficient implementation of labor laws, particularly those related to the prioritization of local workers. This gap in enforcement undermines intended protection and contributes to the marginalization of local workers and IDPs in the labor market

For instance, an IDP community member noted, *"Our work is being taken over by foreigners who are not better than us, but we could have our rights back if the laws and regulations, such as work permits for certain skills, were enforced."* This statement highlights frustration within IDP communities, highlighting the disconnection between legal provisions and their practical applications.

Government officials interviewed acknowledged the challenges posed by employment competition from foreign workers. One official stated, *"We are working hard to promote decent work and income for IDPs as part of our local integration plans, but we also need to raise awareness about workers' rights and encourage private-sector employers to adhere to the laws and regulations regarding the employment of foreign workers."*

Legal and policy guidelines for Technical and vocational education and training

Several policies and plans describe reforms to improve technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Puntland (MoEHE, 2020; MoPEDIC, 2014; MoPEDIC, 2020).

The policy strategy was designed with input from various stakeholders in the private and public sectors and prioritized the development of a National Vocational Qualification Framework (VQF) and Occupational Standards and the establishment of the Vocational Qualification Authority (VQA) (TVET Policy) (MoEHE, 2020). A MoEHE official said, *“The government has restructured the vocational education and training programmes and established short-term certificate level courses between one month and nine months and more comprehensive qualifications reaching up to four years training to receive a Diploma. This means the new graduates of this level can confidently perform highly skilled and technical works as well as pursue higher education”*.

Another MoEHE commented on the revised framework and the establishment of VQA. He said *“The framework will ensure that there are standard guidelines that set out consistent, measurable and accredited competencies which align with job market skills requirement. The framework will be constantly reviewed and updated”*.

Additionally, Puntland's five-year development plans outlined the government's commitment to active collaboration with education partners to “enhance government efforts in addressing employment and skill development needs through capacity-building initiatives, technical assistance and financial support” (MoPEDIC, 2014; MoPEDIC, 2020). However, evidence of the extent to which these plans and policies have been implemented is scarce.

While there is a potential for a comprehensive and transformative approach to develop the skills of IDPs and local residents to make them more competitive and increase their employment opportunities, the study could not find any evidence of active cooperation between the government, the private sector, and education partners to co-design and implement skills training interventions and programs.

4. Conclusion

Internally displaced persons experience multi-level barriers to gaining entry to and maintaining employment in Garowe City and worse labor market outcomes than local residents. IDPs face significant political, social, and economic exclusion due to their identity and status, lack of networks and support resources, and inadequate information about available jobs. Competition from skilled foreign workers further squeezes IDPs out of jobs, as these foreign workers occupy their traditional roles in construction and domestic services. Education and skills training opportunities for IDPs are limited in Garowe City, and the few existing institutions that offer technical and vocational training are located in the city, creating an additional barrier to IDPs accessing skill development opportunities since they are concentrated in informal camps outside of the city.

While the Puntland government has established comprehensive legal frameworks to protect local workers and promote the employment of IDPs, the effectiveness of these laws is contingent on their enforcement. The gap between policy and practice highlights the need for stronger enforcement mechanisms and greater awareness among employers and workers. By addressing these challenges, Puntland can better realize the potential of its labor market, ensuring that both local workers and IDPs benefit from the economic opportunities available in the region.

The wider research on IDPs in Garowe city highlights that improving the livelihood and housing of IDPs could promote other aspects of their social welfare, such as physical and mental health and justice, and could facilitate local integration. Directing investment in the skills and capacities of internally displaced persons (IDPs), along with marginalized groups, holds immense potential for poverty eradication through sustainable means of income generation while simultaneously fostering growth in the local economy.

5. Recommendations

Puntland government, in collaboration with Somalia international partners, education and training providers, and the private sector, needs to

I. Establish a multi-stakeholder coordination mechanism: The urgency of this issue makes it imperative for the government and its partners, including education and training providers, the private sector, and

II. Address the availability and access to technical and vocational education:

The government and its partners need to prioritize the availability of tailored technical and vocational training for IDPs and deliver it in areas closer to these communities, ensuring easier access to technical training resources. The government, private sector, and international organizations need to collaborate to establish and support educational institutions that offer relevant and market-driven skills training to meet the demands of the labour market and the specific needs of the community, ensuring that selected skills are genuinely valuable and contribute to sustainable livelihood development. Skills development programs must be aligned with emerging market trends to ensure that IDPs are equipped with skills that are in demand. This approach ensures that IDPs remain adaptable to changing job- market dynamics.

III. Support to IDPs overcome financial barriers in education:

Financial barriers such as school fees pose a significant obstacle for IDPs seeking education and skill development, as well as schooling for children with IDP. Recognizing this challenge, efforts should be made to ensure funding for education facilities and technical schools that are accessible to IDPs, with a specific focus on reducing or waiving school fees.

IV. Boost job creation through investment: To address the issue of limited employment opportunities in Puntland State, the government and its partners need to invest in productive sectors, such as agriculture, livestock, and fishery, and put plans in place to build the capacity for industrialization and modernization of the economy.

V. Create enabling environments: Government laws and policies must be in place and effectively enforced to ensure fairer labor market regulations and prevent the excessive import of foreign workers, which may create conditions of resentment and disillusionment among local residents as well as IDPs.

VI. Promote research: Several areas of interest in relation to employment, technology, and training warrant more empirical research and the generation of evidence from experimental and quasi-experimental studies to inform more effective policy and intervention strategies. Areas that require urgent focus include but are not limited to a comprehensive survey of the labor market in Puntland, the employment potential of productive sectors, the impact of digitalization, private sector involvement and contributions to the labor market, the impact and sustainability of employment and skills training interventions, and gender dynamics and intersectionality.

VII. Improve IDP's social networks and foster social cohesion and integration: Promoting better employment and livelihood for IDPs could reduce social exclusion and the marginalization of IDPs,

which is closely linked to fostering social cohesion and integration of IDPs into local communities. The government and its partners need to establish centers that can offer support resources and expand social networks for IDPs, such as bridging the gap between IDPs, skills training providers, and employers. Creating platforms for dialogue, and collaboration can help break down stereotypes and promote mutual understanding. This can mitigate the tensions arising from competition over resources and employment opportunities.

VIII. Conduct regular and effective Evaluation: To ensure long-term success in empowering IDPs, it is crucial to conduct a continuous evaluation of the implementation of government policies and programs and to focus on learning that could enhance the planning and implementation of more comprehensive programs and effective delivery strategies. It is vital to establish a long-term monitoring and evaluation mechanism to track the progress of IDPs who have undergone training and have entered the job market. This data can inform future policy decisions and program improvements.

IX. Establish a dedicated enforcement unit within the Ministry of Labor: The unit should work in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including employers, IDP representatives, and civil society organizations, to ensure that the laws are effectively implemented, focusing on prioritizing local workers and protecting IDP employment rights.

X. Introduce mentorship and apprenticeship programmes and tailored skill matching: The government and its partners need to work with skills training providers and the private sector to develop mentorship and apprenticeship programs using skilled and experienced professionals. These programs can provide IDPs with practical exposure, real-world experience, and guidance in their chosen fields, thereby enhancing their employability and confidence. Social networks such as employment centers, where employers can connect with skilled IDPs seeking employment, are very valuable mechanisms that can facilitate the matching of IDPs' skills with the specific demands of the local job market.

XI. Develop the soft skills of IDPs: Recognize the importance of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving. Incorporating soft skills training into vocational programs is essential for success in any workplace and can greatly enhance the overall employability of IDPs.

XII. Provide entrepreneurial support: The government and its partners can offer support to IDPs interested in starting their own businesses or enterprises, and provide training and access to microfinance and business development resources to enable them to create their sources of income, contributing to economic growth and self-sufficiency.

XIII. Collaborate with private sector associations: It is important to set up partnerships between IDP communities and private sector associations, such as chambers of commerce and industry groups. These collaborations can help identify emerging job trends, provide insights into the skills needed, and facilitate a closer alignment between training programs and industry requirements.

Feedback and Input

Key informants: This study greatly benefited from the valuable inputs of various key informants and stakeholders involved in the employment and skill development of internally displaced persons (IDP). Their insights and expertise have contributed to the depth and accuracy of the research findings as well as the provision of recommendations presented in this study. We also extend our gratitude to the key informants who generously shared their experience perspectives and knowledge during their interviews. Their firsthand insights provided invaluable context and real-world examples that enriched the study's qualitative analysis.

Acknowledging Limitations

Although we have made an effort to incorporate diverse perspectives and engage with various stakeholders, it is important to acknowledge that the findings and recommendations presented in this report are based on the available data and information provided by the participants. We recognize that the field is complex and dynamic, and that our study may not capture all nuances. We deeply appreciate the time insights and expertise provided by the individuals and organizations mentioned above. Their involvement contributed to the robustness and relevance of the findings and recommendations of this study.

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Mohamed B Said has a Master of Science in program evaluation and data analytics from Arizona State University and a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources Management from Jigjiga University. He has built a distinguished career in these fields, with over seven years of experience in program implementation, research development, data analytics, and evaluations.

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Mohamed spearheaded this research study as a Lead Researcher, overseeing all research activities and ensuring compliance with ethical standards.

HOW TO CITE THIS PAPER

SIDRA. (2024). Transforming lives: Empowering IDPs in Puntland with technical skills for employment. SIDRA Institute. <https://sidrainstitute.org/transforming-lives-empowering-idps-in-puntland-with-technical-skills-for-employment/>

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