Returnees and the Dilemmas of (Un)sustainable Return and Reintegration in Somalia

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Abstract

Voluntary return is identified as one of the durable solutions for refugee protection under the international refugee regime. There is limited research on returnees' experiences and aspirations when they return to a home country with a high level of violent conflicts, and with severe lack of safety and stability. This article draws from semi-structured interviews held with Somali returnees who returned through the voluntary repatriation program from Kenya. The article shows the complexity behind their return experience by advancing the discussion on return based on Jørgen Carling's aspiration and ability model. The findings show that for the majority of the returnees, return is not sustainable as they do not return to their homes and as a result are displaced in camps where they face considerable challenges finding employment, decent housing, secure living environment, and educational opportunities for their children. However, their transnational networks in Kenya boost their return aspirations – the majority of the returnees interviewed possess aspirations to re-migrate, but cannot do so due to financial costs and therefore they remain trapped in immobility.

Keywords: Somalia, return and reintegration, UNHCR, voluntary repatriation, capabilities-aspirations, sustainable return

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INTRODUCTION

The collapse of political and economic institutions in Somalia has led to massive forced displacement, leading to Somali refugees and migrants seeking refuge or better economic opportunities in other countries (Haji-Abdi, 2016). The majority of the refugees remain within the region – primarily in Kenya and Ethiopia – but others have moved to their destinations through resettlement programs, or by navigating their way to other countries in search of asylum or onward migration projects (Shaffer et al., 2017).

In the recent phase, Somalia continues to experience intersecting causes of displacement, due to overlapping episodes of conflict, drought, and erratic weather patterns resulting in the internal displacement of 2.9 million Somalis as at January 2021 (UNHCR, 2021a). Furthermore, there is an increase in return migration of Somalis to their home country, both from the East and the Horn of Africa, as well as from Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula. According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as at August 2021, 133,166 Somali returnees have been recorded and assisted with the majority of the returnees coming from Kenya through the UNHCR-initiated voluntary repatriation program (VRP) (UNHCR, 2021b). The VRP is based on the Tripartite Agreement between the Government of Kenya, the Federal Government of Somalia, and the UNHCR to oversee the phased voluntary repatriation of 435,000 Somali refugees during the period 2013–2019 (UNHCR, 2015).

Return is increasingly happening to urban areas that are not returnees' areas of origin, as returnees choose not to return to rural areas before peace and security are re-established (REF, 2018). The security situation in Mogadishu and the southern and central areas of Somalia remains unstable. The presence of Al Shabab, which still controls large areas in rural Somalia, has resulted in violent clashes with pro-government forces, the imposition of punitive Sharia law, and heavy taxation of citizens (Indermuehle, 2017). Given the reality that large-scale returns to many parts of Somalia may not be possible due to the challenging context as explained above, it follows that the processes of return and reintegration for the returning refugees present significant policy challenges for the government of Somalia and the international community.

Scholars have illustrated that return itself is often not always a straightforward homecoming and neither does it mean the end of the "refugee cycle"; instead, returnees are faced with numerous challenges upon return (Black and Koser, 1999; Hammond, 1999). Similarly, the main focus of many governments and international organizations dealing with migrants and refugees has been on the return of refugees and migrants, but much less attention has been given to the situation and lives of refugees after return (Arowolo, 2000). Whether the return is sustainable and what contributes to the sustainability of return remain contested. Also, there are gaps in understanding how various processes of return and reintegration influence returnees' aspirations. Drawing from the literature on aspiration, return, and reintegration, this

article aims to advance the theoretical discussions around refugee returns and to contribute to the empirical research on Somali refugees.

The next section presents the theoretical discussion – including an exposition of key concepts – with a focus on the literature on refugee returns, reintegration, and aspirations. This is followed by a brief overview of the return situation in Somalia. The article then outlines the data collection strategy, sampling, and methodology adopted for the analysis. The findings are then presented, following the thematic analysis of the data. The final section presents the discussion and conclusion.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Return of refugees as the preferred durable solutions

Traditionally the three main solutions to refugee crises include: voluntary return to the country of origin, local integration in the country of first asylum, and resettlement to a third country. All three are regarded as durable solutions because they promise an end to refugees' plight and their need for international protection and dependence on humanitarian support (Black and Koser, 1999). Despite its categorization as one of three "durable solutions" by the UNHCR, the return of refugees has not always been a high priority internationally and there has been a shift in emphasis depending on the context. Initially, between the World War II period and the 1980s, the main preferred option by the international community was resettlement, which was extended to refugees from communist countries to meet the ideological interests of the West (Chimni, 1999). Since the end of the Cold War, international attention shifted to the emphasis on the return of refugees as the optimal solution. The UNHCR pronounced the 1990s as the decade of repatriation as a result of the growing refugee challenges in Eastern Europe, Central America, Africa, and Asia and therefore reinforced the belief that repatriation was the best option to end refugee situations (Crisp and Long, 2016).

This study is grounded in two strands of literature: first, is the literature on the concepts of "sustainable return" and "reintegration", and second are the theoretical studies on the aspirations/ability model (Carling, 2002). In academic literature, the concepts of "sustainable return" and "reintegration" are employed to conceptualize the successful return of refugees and failed asylum seekers (Lietaert and Van Gorp, 2019). In outlining the sustainable return, Black and Gent (2006) distinguish between the reintegration of individual returnees into their home societies and the wider impact of return on the community. Within a narrow conceptualization focusing on individual returnees, sustainable return refers to returnees' physical return and stay in their country of origin and thus not re-migrating. In the first seminal study commissioned by the United Kingdom (UK) Home Office on sustainable return, individual sustainability of return is achieved if the "returnees' socio-economic status and fear of violence or persecution is no worse, relative to the population in the place of origin, one year after their return" (Black et al., 2004: 29) The absence of re-

migration is considered by policymakers as removing the international dimension of displacement and thus ending host states' obligations toward a particular group of refugees (Long, 2010).

Various researchers have questioned the validity of using the duration of return migration as an indicator of sustainable return. Based on Carling's aspiration/ability model, which forms the main theoretical framework for this paper, the absence of re-migration could be a result of involuntary immobility where a migrant has the aspiration but not the ability to migrate (Carling, 2002). According to Carling's (2002) aspiration/ability model, migration first involves a wish to migrate, and second, the realization of this wish. The model proposed three mobility categories: mobility (when there is both aspiration and ability to migrate), involuntary immobility (when there is the aspiration but not the ability to migrate), and voluntary immobility (having the ability but not the aspiration to migrate). In addition, Schewel (2015, 2019) added the concept of "acquiescent immobility" to highlight a category of people who prefer to stay but lack the ability to migrate, signaling an acceptance of one's inability to realize initial plans to emigrate.

In other cases, re-migration can be continued mobility that provides essential livelihood opportunities for families (Iaria, 2013; Ochan et al., 2019; Manji, 2020). In his now seminal paper on reconceptualizing return migration, Cassarino (2004) theorizes return migration as a process that requires resource mobilization and preparedness to have a successful return outcome. When forced migration involves protracted situations in refugee camps, refugees' mobilization and preparedness for their return – a key precondition for a successful return – is often hindered.

Alternatively, within the broader conceptualization, successful return and reintegration is considered as a long-term and multidimensional process, often complicated by multiple factors such as time, the context of return, and so on (Lietaert and Kuschminder, 2021). Building on the work of Black et al. (2004), Koser and Kuschminder (2015: 8) define sustainable return as occurring when "the individual has reintegrated into the economic, social and cultural processes of the country of origin and feels that they are in an environment of safety and security upon return." Van Houte (2016) adopts the concept of multidimensional embeddedness as a holistic approach to the post-return experience of migrants beyond "reintegration" or "going home" and highlights the interplay between social, cultural, economic and institutional dimensions. Most importantly, the UNHCR definition of reintegration is "equated with the achievement of a sustainable return – in other words, the ability of returning refugees to secure the political, economic, [legal] and social conditions needed to maintain life, livelihood and dignity" (UNHCR, 2004: 4). In general, five domains of reintegration are included in various studies on reintegration processes: political, economic, legal, social, and cultural (Cassarino, 2008; Kuschminder, 2017; Mohammadi et al., 2018). For purposes of this study, the emphasis is on the social, economic, and psychosocial domains.

Context of migration and return in Somalia

Protracted conflict in Somalia has pushed over 1.5 million Somalis into the diaspora (Shandy, 2016). The majority of the refugees are housed in neighboring countries, mainly Kenya. The economic survey released in July 2021 notes that Somalis accounted for over 54% (272,490) of registered refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya – the majority of whom live in the Dadaab refugee complex (KNBS, 2021). Most of the returnees come from Kenya through the 2013 Tripartite Agreement between the UNHCR and the governments of Kenya and Somalia (UNHCR, 2021b).

The Tripartite Commission adopted a Joint Strategy and Operational Plan, which envisaged a phased voluntary repatriation of "215,000 Somali refugees from Kenya and their reintegration in Somalia over the period July 2015 to December 2019" (UNHCR, 2015: 11). Refugees who are supported to return through the voluntary repatriation process are provided with core relief items and cash travel grants to cover the travel cost by air or road depending on the area of return. Once the refugees arrive in Somalia, they are provided with return and reintegration assistance by the UNHCR together with international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in specified areas of return (UNHCR, 2015). Since 2014, 85,171 Somalis have been assisted to return to Somalia from Kenya through a VRP with women and children representing 80% of returnees (UNHCR, 2021b).

Efforts to address refugee issues in Somalia are closely linked to the challenges of responding to internal displacement. Armed conflict and violence, drought, floods, and forced evictions have also resulted in the internal displacement of 2.9 million Somalis as at January 2021 (UNHCR, 2021a). Even though the conflict continues in Somalia, scholars document an alarming trend advocating for return, even forced or involuntary. Garre's (2017) study highlights the experiences of returning refugees from Dadaab camp who reported that even though they were not physically forced to leave, their return to Somalia was involuntary due to factors such as reduction of food rations and mistreatment by Kenya's armed forces. On the other hand, the Research and Evidence Facility (REF, 2018) study found that a substantial number of returnees faced displacement upon arrival in Somalia, hence transitioning from being returning refugees to internally displaced persons (IDPs). The high costs of rent and land in Mogadishu have led some returnees to settle in IDP settlements and around family and clan members who provide support and safety (Menkaus, 2017).

To support the refugees and returning migrants, the Federal Government of Somalia and the international organizations are supporting return and reintegration activities that assist returning migrants in trying to overcome the challenges they face upon return to Somalia. The need for sustainable return and reintegration efforts is articulated in the National Development Plan (NDP), which is intended to guide the application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Forum (CRRF) in Somalia (Federal Government of Somalia, 2020b). The implementation of the CRRF in Somalia is entrenched in the regional process led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions adopted

in 2017 (Federal Government of Somalia, 2020a). One of the CRRF objectives is to support the creation of conditions in countries of origin for safe and dignified return. Other goals include easing pressures on host countries, enhancing refugee self-reliance, and expanding access to third-country solutions (UNHCR, 2018: 4).

METHODOLOGY

The data was collected between 2018 and 2020 as part of the researcher's doctoral research conducted in Mogadishu, Somalia and Nairobi, Kenya. Relying on snowball sampling methods through professional and personal networks, the researcher conducted semi-structured, qualitative interviews with 22 returnees. The sensitive subject of return and the security challenges made random sampling difficult to achieve. Returnees were therefore contacted through as many entry points as possible. To achieve this, the research team adopted two strategies: first was the "top-down" approach where the researcher obtained a list of names through the local organizations implementing activities in various research sites; second was through the "bottom-up" approach through the use of research assistants' social networks and with the aid of the camp leaders who also acted as gatekeepers (Frisina, 2018: 189).

The requirements for eligibility included: first, the participant had to have returned a minimum of six months prior to the interview; and second, the participant had to have returned from Kenya through the UNHCR's voluntary repatriation program. The study involved collecting data in the Somali language to allow the returnees to express themselves freely in a language that they could understand (Flick et al., 2017). To overcome the language barrier and take into consideration the power relations around the lines of gender and ethnicity, the researcher recruited two community researchers – one male and one female, to facilitate trust and access. The research team was trained on the interview guide and did a one-day pre-test of the tool.

The age range of participants was between 18 and 53, and 16 participants were women. A third of the participants indicated not having formal education, while others had been educated to a secondary level or underwent religious or vocational training. Half of the participants were married while 10 women participants were divorced or widowed. A broad, open-ended interview guide was used to allow individual perspectives to emerge and for key lines of inquiry to be pursued.

The university Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the research design for this study. The research team explained the principles of research ethics to the gatekeepers to prevent them from inadvertently making returnees feel coerced into participating. All the participants were verbally informed about the research and were made aware that their answers would be confidential, that their participation in the research was voluntary, and that they had the right to stop the interview at any time. The researchers audio-recorded the discussions where this was agreed, and took detailed notes. The research assistants organized and conducted the interviews with the participants and transcribed the data. Given their experience working on

migration issues for several NGOs in Somalia and Kenya, the research assistants had the competence required to conduct the transcription in the Somali language. To ensure the accuracy of transcription, a translator was recruited, who also randomly verified some of the original interview recordings and transcripts.

The research team analyzed the transcripts of interviews with returnees through a combination of inductive and deductive analysis with the aid of MAXQDA software. A codebook was developed with deductive or "theory-driven" codes (Saldaña, 2016). The codebook was further updated with inductive or "data-driven" codes derived from the data. To promote inter-subjectivity, two researchers coded each of the transcripts based on the codebook and compared the codes they assigned to specific segments in the transcripts. In the case of conflicting views, a consensus was reached through discussion and the codes were mutually defined. The qualitative data collection was supplemented with secondary data on the return of refugees to Somalia.

FINDINGS

The findings showed that returning migrants to Somalia faced a challenging context characterized by insecurity, violence, drought, lack of livelihood opportunities and widespread humanitarian needs, which are elaborated below.

Social conditions and insecurity

Few returnees are able to return to the homes they originally left. The majority of those interviewed felt they were abandoned upon return to Somalia and ended up being displaced in camps and left to fend for themselves. Apart from their poor living situations, the participants' main concerns at the time of the interviews were the high cost of rent and land-related issues. The accommodation was inadequate, with some of them housed in temporary shelters in IDP settlements, as reported by these participants:

> It has become hard to cope. First, I was in the settlement but now I can't afford to pay rent; and now I live in a camp [on the] outskirts of Mogadishu. I don't have a house and I live in a plastic sheet house (female returnee_17; 33 years).

> Since I returned, I have been living in a temporary settlement reserved for internally displaced people. My former residence was grabbed by other people and I cannot claim it back. I normally get intimidation from those who grabbed my land (male returnee_3; 53 years).

Women and girls face a high risk of sexual and gender-based violence, especially in camps when moving around using latrines, fetching water or working outside the home. For the respondents, the risk of rape was always lurking, and this hindered

their freedom of movement. The volatile insecure situation in Mogadishu had also led to traumatic experiences for many of the returnees. One female participant lamented:

> I don't feel safe in Somalia; there is always a bomb, gunshots everywhere. I don't move a lot; most of the time I stay in the house with my husband and children and sometimes when I get the opportunities to go and do some housework, I go get my small salary for the day then I come back to my husband … the security is very bad; there are rape cases every time (female returnee_3; 30 years).

Kinship and family play an important role in Somali society and many returnees view their clans as key to their reintegration. When returnees need financial, social, and psychological support, they rely on their kinship and social networks. Some of the participants mentioned leaving some of their family members behind in Dadaab as part of their household strategies to allow them access to opportunities offered in the host country, as related by this returnee:

> I came back with my wife and some of the children. I left my sister behind and some of my children. The reason being is that I wanted them to continue with their schooling as education is more superior in Kenya (male returnee_21; 47 years).

Economic situation

The economic and political deterioration in Somalia has not provided an enabling environment for the reintegration of the refugees repatriated from Kenya. Low investment caused by insecurity has led to high unemployment in Somalia, particularly among returnees with no clan connections. Most returnees cited a lack of job opportunities as a challenge to their reintegration. Food insecurity, lack of access to education for their children, and lack of decent housing are all directly related to economic difficulties. One female returnee recounted her experience:

> My situation is worse. We cannot eat even two meals in a day. I struggle a lot and now I am just a vulnerable mother who cannot afford to send kids to school due to my financial status (female returnee_16; 32 years).

Many interviewed returnees worked in the informal sector doing menial jobs like cleaning, hairdressing, domestic work, street vending, and working in construction sites. Some had applied the skills and training they learned while living in Kenya to find opportunities to earn a living.

Furthermore, some participants pointed out that they had better opportunities for building networks and gaining social capital during their stay in the Dadaab

camp in Kenya than in Somalia. They had access to better education, health systems and other social services in Kenya. However, returnees without a strong clan protection who possess an education and vocational skills were unable to find work and livelihood opportunities to utilize their acquired skills. Access to livelihoods and employment is mediated through connections and clan networks, leaving returnees from the minority groups at a significant disadvantage, as explained by the following respondents:

> I did not find any job at all. Everything is nepotism and connections. I don't think I can even get any work. If you don't know anyone in the office, you would not get any opportunity (male returnee_18; 32 years).

> In Kenya, I had more independence than in Somalia … Some people disrespect you because you have nothing. It makes me feel bad and ashamed. The greatest challenge is not being able to find work. I try my best every day to go outside and look for work and I'm still searching (male returnee_006; 38 years).

Psychosocial challenges and gendered stigma

Different returnees mentioned a lack of a supportive social network, which made them feel isolated and uncared for, or insecure because they did not return to their place of origin and therefore did not have social networks to offer them protection. Some participants mentioned they had no support from wider society or the state and felt stranded because they were in unfamiliar surroundings. According to one respondent:

> Nobody respects you if you don't have money. I feel like I'm nothing since I can't raise money to meet my daily needs. I feel like the world is against me. I want to go back to my hometown in Hiraan right now. I don't have money to leave, but if I get any assistance from anyone, I will migrate to my home town (male returnee_022; 53 years).

For the male returnees unable to find work, due to the challenging context, women are forced to take on domestic work to support their families. As a result, men face gendered stigma because they must relinquish the provider role and become dependants, as articulated by this respondent:

> I didn't have any job; hence, my wife was the breadwinner for the family. In fact, she works for other families as a housemaid to earn a living. And you can understand, the problem is that a mother of six children is working as a maid in people's houses so that she can put food on the table for us. That makes me feel guilty for not performing my duties as a father and a husband (male returnee_05; 47 years).

The findings show that returnees are not a homogenous group. Individual characteristics such as gender, age, family migration history, clan, social status, and educational attainment impact on returnees' reintegration experience.

Re-migration plans

The lack of livelihood opportunities, access to basic services and the inability to access education are some of the factors that have contributed to returnees' aspirations for a further migration plan. Returnees who reported aspirations for re-migration also tended to be jobless with little access to income and lacked clan protection. They often reported feelings of shame and unworthiness within their communities.

The interviewees expressed the need to find a longer-term solution to their displacement by seeking opportunities in the previous host country – in Kenya or other destinations. For some, re-migration was an aspiration but not a possibility due to financial constraints. Other reasons included policy constraints, such as not being recognized as a refugee if they should return to Kenya, as they had already relinquished their status upon signing up for the repatriation program. These returnees lamented:

> The situation is worse [in Somalia] in terms of getting access to livelihood. I don't want to migrate because my ration card was canceled and I wouldn't get assistance. Depending on the current circumstances, if I could see anyone requesting to return to Kenya or any other country, I would encourage them to go and find a better life since the situation here remains worse (female returnee_17; 33 years).

> In case the situation worsens, I might go back to Kenya as don't think I am hoping for the best life in my country … I prefer Kenya because of free education for our children and free distribution of food, free medical services; and Kenya is a peaceful country (female returnee_03; 35 years).

Many of the respondents expressed a desire to re-migrate as a fallback plan due to the challenging context. However, due to their financial constraints, they remained unable to realize their migration project:

> I want to go back to Kenya as it is better there, but I currently cannot afford it. I don't have money to go back to that country. When you have the money, you can travel wherever you want (male returnee_09; 33 years).

On the contrary, respondents who were not interested in re-migration had the support of their family and stronger relationships with their communities. A female returnee explained:

I am feeling good since I came back. I am now with my people in Somalia, and I have everything since I returned home to be with my family (female returnee_03; 37 years).

DISCUSSION

Within policy contexts, the end of re-migration is one of the main benchmarks of the effectiveness of repatriation programs; returnees are expected to go back home and re-establish their lives, and this is defined as a sustainable return. This article puts forth the argument that the return to Somalia can be understood as a new form of displacement, as returnees have been resettled to areas they have no familiarity with. Returnees' re-migration aspirations are without doubt shaped by an individual's vulnerabilities faced during reintegration. Drawing from Carling's (2002) aspirations and ability model, the study sheds insights into returnees' experiences of immobility. Immobility could result from a preference to stay or an inability to fulfil migration desires. In this case, the desire to re-migrate would constitute a migration aspiration. However, only those with enough resources, or greater migration capabilities, can act upon this aspiration, resulting in either involuntary immobility or re-migration. The study's findings shed light on the socio-economic outcomes of the returnees who, due to the challenging context, have aspirations to re-migrate but are unable, due to financial constraints.

Recent research has shown that returnees who are well off adopted circular migration back to Kenya to access services such as health services and education, which are considered to be of better quality (Ochan et al., 2019). Manji (2020) also found that returnees are going back to Kenya to escape the insecurity, violence, and lack of basic services in Somalia. The case study sheds light on the problem of involuntary immobility in refugee repatriation programs. As Hammond (1999) pointed out, return is not always a straightforward homecoming or end of the displacement cycle. Returnees who can re-migrate and have the economic means, adopt circular mobility as a key livelihood strategy. In contrast, those who stay behind are rendered involuntary immobile due to financial constraints and other personal circumstances despite having aspirations to leave.

Secondly, this paper argues that sustainable return should be viewed as part of a wider process encompassing several dimensions, rather than simply an individual's aspiration to re-migrate or not. Sustainable return and reintegration are longer-term multidimensional processes, often complicated by several factors, including the migration experiences abroad and structural conditions in the country of origin (Koser and Kuschminder, 2015). The findings show that the return context in Somalia is characterized by economic and security challenges and the returned refugees faced several challenges re-establishing their lives and consequently increasing their vulnerability. The lack of decent shelter, job opportunities, and education remain big challenges. These findings corroborate Majidi's (2019) research on Somali women returnees, whose expectations to be economically active were not realized upon

return, and consequently impacted negatively on their psychosocial wellbeing. Even though the Tripartite Agreement between the Government of the Federal Republic of Somalia, the Government of Kenya and the UNHCR specifies that all returns should be voluntary and take place in safety and dignity, the interviews illuminate a different picture. The majority of the returnees have, instead, been placed in an involuntary immobile situation whereby, respondents have the aspirations to re-migrate due to the challenging context but lack the ability to migrate. Therefore, their experience fundamentally challenges the voluntary repatriation option, which is regarded as a durable solution to end displacement crises. As noted by Crisp and Long (2016), returnees who become internally displaced, who struggle to survive in squatter camps, or who are compelled to move again in another country in pursuit of opportunities, cannot be considered to have found a durable solution to their displacement.

Lastly, in adopting a transnational approach, the return of refugees cannot be viewed as a single linear movement from the host country back home. The findings from Manji's (2020) work show that when faced with economic and security challenges during their return, returnees adopt continued mobility that provides essential livelihood opportunities for their families. This trend reveals that voluntary repatriation "doesn't necessarily mean the end of the displacement, even when accompanied by reintegration" support (Manji, 2020: 7). In addition, the majority of the returnees are not returning to their areas of origin and instead, end up settling in the urban areas. Some of them had previously been living in rural areas, and they do not have land in the urban areas where they now live (Garre, 2017; REF, 2018). Given the gap between the return policy objectives and returnees' experiences, both governments of Kenya and Somalia and the international community should explore pathways to enhance cross-border opportunities for returnees. Return is evidently not a final solution for displacements; instead, it is only a part of migration, within a country and across borders.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATION

This study offers insights into the experiences of Somali refugees recently returned from Kenya through the VRP. It concerns a highly relevant context, as the crisis in Somalia continues to be complex and protracted in the world owing to the armed conflict and insecurity, climate change and environmental degradation, and socio-economic fragility, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and an upsurge in desert locusts leaving many at risk of famine (UNGA, 2021). However, the findings are not representative of all returnees in Somalia and it is based on short-term reintegration experiences that may change over time. There is a need for longitudinal studies on returnees to understand more clearly what influences patterns of reintegration and the broader sustainability of the return process.

CONCLUSION

The literature review in this article identified three core arguments as challenging the return of refugees as a durable solution and contributing to widening the debates on the complexities of sustainable return and reintegration. The article argues that a return to Somalia should be understood as a new form of displacement as returnees have been resettled to areas that are not their places of origin, thus increasing their vulnerability and immobility. From a migration management perspective, a possible definition of sustainability of return is that people remain in their country of origin and do not re-migrate. Drawing from Carling's (2002) aspirations and ability model, the study found that returnees can be "unsustainably returned" and not successfully reintegrated but lack the ability to re-migrate. Therefore, when re-migration aspiration and ability are distinguished, sustainable reintegration cannot be determined by examining whether a returnee re-migrates. Secondly, return to the place of origin – which in many cases has been transformed by war and conflict – without considering the conditions that people have returned to, obscures a whole host of challenges facing people upon their return. This underscores the fact that sustainable return should be seen as a wider process, rather than as simply an individual's aspiration to re-migrate. Lastly, for some returnees, re-migration could be part of continued mobility that provides the essential livelihood opportunities for returning refugees faced with economic and security challenges.

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