



# Migration and development dynamics in Baidoa, Somalia

Out-migration is decreasing in Baidoa, a fast-growing city host to many internally displaced people. Amid better security, livelihood expansion and humanitarian assistance, many feel hope for the future.

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Few surveyed young adults (11%) have seriously considered migrating internationally in the past year.

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In-migration from surrounding rural areas – largely due to conflict or drought – is now a defining feature of the area.

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Humanitarian assistance has been a key source of support: 74% of young adults know of interventions, and most think these make a big (37%) or bit (61%) of a difference to Baidoa.



Camille Kasavan  
Fatuma Ahmed  
Jessica Hagen-Zanker  
Hannah Murray



Photo: Camille Kasavan for MIGNEX.

Baidoa is a rapidly growing city in the South West State of Somalia.

Historically an area of conflict and high levels of violence during the Somali Civil War, the region has stabilised in the past five years. However, the rural areas at Baidoa's municipal limits remain insecure and are held by Al Shabaab, making mobility beyond the city difficult.

Over the past five years, internal displacement from surrounding rural areas – largely due to conflict or drought – has been a defining feature of Baidoa. Large migration in-

flows have had a significant impact, supporting the economy, the development of the city and livelihood expansion. This has attracted international humanitarian assistance as well.

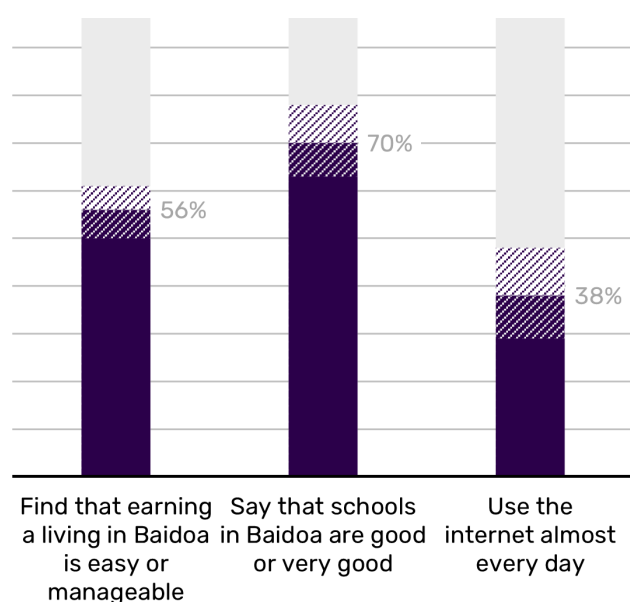
The municipality has also been active in supporting internally displaced people (IDPs) by providing land and by establishing positive relationships with international and national actors. An (ongoing) emphasis on 'durable solutions' by the local government and international actors has been recognised as a model for municipal-humanitarian partnerships.<sup>1</sup>

This case study brief is based on fieldwork and survey data. The MIGNEX team also conducted research in Erigavo and carried out a review of migration-relevant policies in Somalia.<sup>2</sup>

### Migration from Baidoa

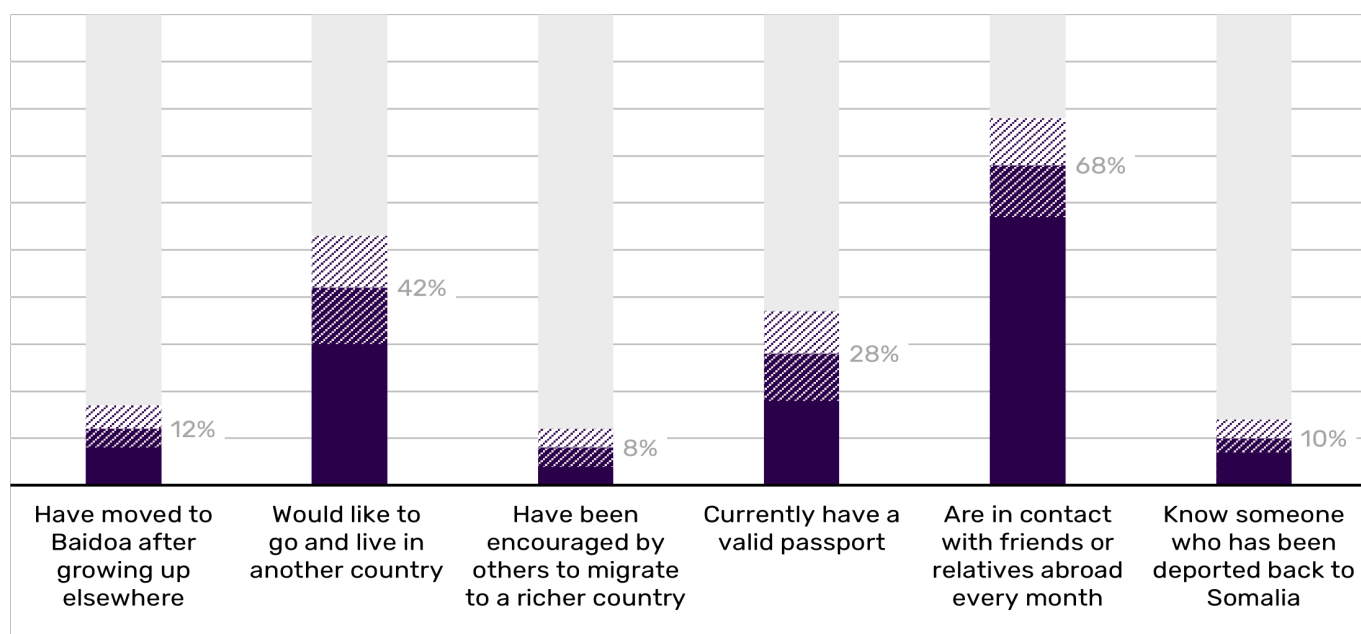
Overall, migration from Baidoa is not widespread – 86% of young adults surveyed expect to stay in Baidoa in the next five years.

In the 1990s through to the 2010s, out-migration to the United States, Europe, Australia and Canada was more common, both in the form of formal refugee resettlement through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and irregular movement.



**Figure 1. Indicators of development**

Source: MIGNEX Survey. Hatched area: confidence interval.



**Figure 2. Indicators of migration dynamics**

Source: MIGNEX survey. Hatched area: confidence interval.

Out-migration from Baidoa was largely a result of forced displacement, due to the civil war. Many moved – primarily to Kenya or Ethiopia – where established camps such as Dadaab (in Kenya) and Kebrebeyah (in the Somali region of Ethiopia) have established refugee populations from all over Somalia, including large numbers from Baidoa and the Bay region.

One-third (33%) of surveyed young adults have family and friends living abroad, predominantly in Kenya (35%), Sweden (21%) and the United States (16%). However, there are fewer regular routes nowadays and these countries are no longer common migration destinations.

Today, international migration still occurs – most often to Kenya or Gulf countries based on work contracts – though it is not widespread. Few young adults (11%) have seriously considered migrating internationally in the past year.

Instead, migration from Baidoa is mostly internal, to larger cities such as Mogadishu or Bosaso where internal migrants can pursue education or business opportunities. Nearly half (49%) of young adults know of someone from Baidoa who has migrated internally in the past five years.

### Migration aspirations

Overall, perceptions of migration are mixed among young adults. Many feel a sense of hope for the future in Baidoa, often attributed to the improving security situation, plus infrastructural and educational expansion.

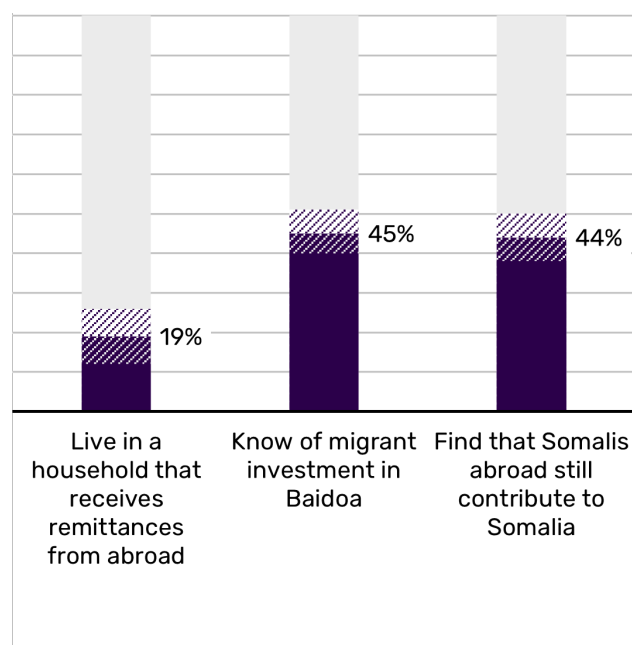
However, some young adults perceive migration as a last resort if no opportunities can be found at home. Over one-tenth (12%) of young adults know someone who has died on their journey to another country, while 15% know someone detained in another country.

Even in the case of regular migration and successful resettlement, young adults cite the challenges of integrating into a new culture, finding employment and of being away from home. Yet they also recognise the potential for migration to improve individual, family and community lives.

*People rely on those who left in the early years, as they send money back. So, migration is a good opportunity to support one's life, though nowadays the youth are not migrating.*

Focus group participant





**Figure 3. Migration–development interactions**

Source: MIGNEX Survey. Hatched area: confidence interval.

Overall, 42% of young adults surveyed would prefer to leave Somalia in the next five years. For those who prefer to stay, few (7%) would prefer to leave Baidoa and migrate internally.

### In- and return migration

Displacement due to conflict and climate-related reasons – over the last five years in particular – has had a major impact in Baidoa. Baidoa is now a key settlement for IDPs from surrounding rural areas in the Bay region. The population quickly doubled, leading to rapid urbanisation and development, mainly supported by humanitarian assistance. In addition, humanitarian assistance in Baidoa has increased in-migration due to the availability of jobs in the sector. Yet some residents are critical of recruitment of non-Baidoa residents.

Baidoa is also home to a smaller number of Syrian and Yemeni refugees, who stay for short stretches of time before moving on.

The majority (88%) of surveyed young adults grew up in Baidoa, while the remaining 12% are internal migrants. Nearly one-fifth (18%) of young adults in Baidoa have returnee migrant family or friends.

### Links between migration and development

Ties remain strong with the Baidoa diaspora. Of those young adults with migrant family, relatives or friends abroad, most (85%) have been in contact in the past year. The diaspora closely follow development in the town and are often the first to respond and mobilise. For instance, in emergency situations, they provide financial aid for affected families. Nearly half (45%) of young adults know of migrant investment in the town.

Foreign development interventions are also prominent, many (74%) young adults are aware of them in the town – the majority of whom perceive them to make a big (37%) or bit (61%) of a difference. Critically, a move towards a ‘durable solutions’ agenda has sought to shift in interventions from emergency support for displaced populations to wider structural development. This approach aims to support those who have moved to Baidoa, as well as the host community.

### Notes

1. *Durable solutions for Somali refugee returnees and IDPs in Baidoa through promoting immediate and sustainable livelihoods – final evaluation*. International Labour Organization (2016)
2. Fieldwork consisting of key informant interviews, focus group discussions and observations was carried out by Camille Kasavan and Fatuma Ahmed in March–April 2021. A face-to-face survey of 500 randomly selected residents (aged 18–39 years) was conducted by Samuel Hall in July 2021.

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MIGNEX – Aligning Migration Management and the Migration–Development Nexus – is a five-year research project (2018–2023) with the core ambition of creating new knowledge on migration, development and policy. It is carried out by a consortium of nine partners: The Peace Research Institute Oslo (coordinator), Danube University Krems, the University of Ghana, Koç University, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Maastricht University, ODI, the University of Oxford and Samuel Hall.

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