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DISPLACEMENT

Ethiopia: Expanding legal identity and advancing local integration

Qoloji, Somali Regional State, Ethiopia

Qoloji is being approached as a settlement requiring coordinated public systems, not only as a location for aid delivery. A national ID helps establish identity for easier access to government services and inclusion in public systems.

Case study



At a glance

Country and location	Ethiopia: Qoloji, in Somali Regional State, near the boundary with Oromia.
Displacement context	Protracted displacement following violence. Regional planning refers to approximately 100,000 displaced residents in Qoloji.
Government partners	Somali Regional President's Office; Somali Regional Disaster Risk Management Bureau; planning, finance, land and service bureaus; local authorities; and the national digital identity programme.
Solution pathway	Primarily local integration, enabling people to remain safely and permanently in the area. Voluntary relocation is a complementary option with 1,743 HHs successfully relocated to different locations within Somali region (with an additional 326 HHs planned)
Main challenge	Connecting a crowded displacement site to secure land arrangements, identity documentation, livelihoods and adequately funded public services. Moving from short-term humanitarian support to sustained, multi-year investment, amid connectivity and infrastructure gaps and limited access to finance and private-sector capital.
United Nations contribution	Institutional capacity strengthening for government-led coordination, integrated spatial planning, legal inclusion through access to national identity documentation, government-led coordination and expanded banking services, including the establishment of a Shabelle Bank branch within Qoloji. Building on the catalytic support provided through IDSF, additional resources were mobilized to expand access to finance, including Islamic finance, entrepreneurial opportunities and livelihood support for displacement and host communities.
Headline results	12,967 people reported to have received Fayda national digital identity documents (IDs), from 30,679 registrations. Settlement options and local integration priorities advanced through government-led planning and review. Qoloji is as a catalytic pilot, leveraging IDSF support to expand livelihoods and financial inclusion while attracting new private-sector investment in green energy and housing.
Remaining gaps	Widespread lack of documentation; unresolved land arrangements; limited livelihoods and services; and investment and public-budget commitments still needed for lasting integration.



Qoloji displacement context

Qoloji hosts IDPs that fled East and West Hararghe, Oromia region following insecurity and ethnic violence in 2016-2017. Years later, rebuilding their lives require access to a place where they could live securely, earn an income and access services.

The IDP settlement developed in two phases. Qoloji 1 opened in 2016, following by Qoloji II in 2017, with a reported densities of 5,230 and 7,742 shelters per square kilometer, respectively. By comparison, the surrounding host community area has a reported density of approximately 1,000 shelters per square kilometer. These differences illustrate the severe overcrowding facing IDPs. The settlement presented different challenges for different households. A July 2025 planning workshop distinguished predominantly agricultural based livelihoods in Qoloji I from more urban and trading livelihoods in Qoloji II. Therefore, a single relocation solutions model could separate people from the land, customers, services or social networks on which recovery depended.

Local integration offers a way to build on relationships and economic connections developed during displacement. But remaining in Qoloji can become a lasting solution only if settlement planning, public administration, services and livelihoods develop together.

Making integration a development priority

The Somali Regional Durable Solutions Strategy, implemented since 2022, provided a shared framework for government, humanitarian and development partners. The regional government made Qoloji's transition towards a permanent settlement a strategic priority. Oversight by the Somali Regional President's Office and coordination through the Somali Disaster Risk Management Bureau (DRMB) gave the process a government-led basis.

The commitment also had a regional financing dimension. The Somali DRMB reports that more than 1Billion Ethiopian birr (~\$10m USD) has been invested by the Regional Government in durable solutions across Somali Region. This was reported regional investment, not a dedicated Qoloji allocation.

The Regional President's Office provides political oversight, while the Disaster Risk Management Bureau coordinate the regional Durable Solutions Working Group, improving alignment and effectiveness of interventions. Planning, finance and other sector bureaus brought responsibilities that extend beyond emergency assistance. The national Fayda programme provided the identity system.- Local authorities and traditional leaders helped lead consultations and address concerns about land, belonging and relations between communities.



Making integration a development priority

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The Consultative Workshop on the Decongestion of Qoloji IDP Site, held in Addis Ababa on 22 July 2025, organized by UN-Habitat, in collaboration with the Somali Regional President's Office and the Somali DRMB coincided with the annual government planning and budgeting cycle. The workshop brought government and partners together to examine options for reducing overcrowding and supporting integration. Participants called for integration priorities to enter sector plans, budgets and routine service delivery, and for a social registry linked to the Fayda National ID programme to improve planning and monitoring.

UN-Habitat is working with the regional government on multi-sectoral decongestion and local integration plans, guiding how land, housing, roads, services and economic activities fit together. The integration plan assess a 75-kilometer radius planning area around Qoloji, equivalent to a one-hour commuting distance, to evaluate infrastructure, services, and resources to identify the site's carrying capacity, existing assets, and critical gaps, providing an evidence base for local integration planning and for improving access to employment opportunities and essential services.

In parallel, community mapping is being undertaken to identify priority intervention areas and guide sequencing and decongestion efforts. UN-Habitat is also undertaking community housing co-design exercises and the exploration of locally sourced construction materials in collaboration with communities and regional government sectoral offices. This work complements the *Financing Ethiopia's Housing Agenda (FETHA)* initiative, which identifies Qoloji as a priority investment portfolio. The initiative aims to deliver 2,000 dwellings by 2029 and eventually expand to accommodate 5,000 IDP households, while also stimulating local markets, creating service-sector jobs, and strengthening economic opportunities for both displaced and host communities.

UNHCR partnered with the Disaster Risk Management Bureau in 2025 to expand access to Fayda national digital IDs, aiming for 100,000 IDPs and 30% of the host community to be issued with IDs. This connected displaced people and surrounding communities to a national public system. The proposed expansion also includes better-equipped local offices, staff training and referrals for documentation and land-related problems.

On 18 June 2026, the Somali DRMB, IOM and the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) convened a strategy review in Jijiga. Consultations in Qoloji, Awbarre and Kebribeyah informed the discussion, bringing displaced people, returnees, relocated households and host communities into the review process.



Making integration a development priority

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IOM provided technical support to the regional Working Group and supported the government-led strategy review with ReDSS. Its contribution helped bring planning, community feedback and coordination into the same process. Displaced people, host communities and customary leaders were essential to discussions about acceptable settlement options and access to land. At the June 2026 review, a displaced-community representative described shared services, farming and business activity, and generally positive relations with host communities, while stressing shortages of jobs, productive land, water and other services. Civil-society partners added practical experience and accountability tools. The Danish Refugee Council presented community-based monitoring approaches; the Lutheran World Federation shared experience on livelihoods, protection and access to justice; ReDSS supported coordination and policy dialogue; and Jijiga University contributed preliminary findings from its strategy review.

Through IDSF support, UNDP, in collaboration with the Somali Region DRMB and Durable Solutions Co-Chairs and RCO, convened an Experience-Sharing Mission and Regional Dialogue on Durable Solutions from 3–5 September 2026. The initiative brought together federal government institutions and regional government bureaus from Afar, Amhara and Tigray regions, UN agencies, academia, ReDSS, and the Ethiopia Human Rights Commission, to exchange practical learnings from Qoloji and strengthen collective understanding of area-based solutions and local integration. The mission demonstrated the value of IDSF catalytic support in enabling joint UN action while fostering government-to-government learning.

Building on this catalytic support, UNDP mobilized additional resources to support livelihoods and financial inclusion for IDPs and the host community in Qoloji. The initiative will provide 140 IDPs with livelihoods grants, business skills training and access to loans, with women comprising 60% of beneficiaries. Additionally, 10 community saving groups have been established to strengthen savings, financial inclusion, and economic collective resilience. UNDP also supported the establishment of a Shabelle Bank branch within the Qoloji IDP site, scheduled for inauguration in October 2026. Further, UNDP has attracted the interested from Finish private-sector partners in energy and green housing infrastructure, with Qoloji identified as one of the proposed locations.

Together, these initiatives are creating a direct link between economic recovery, formal financial services and private-sector engagement. Combined with advances in access to legal identify, integrated spatial planning and housing, and strengthened government-led coordination, they position Qoloji as a promising example of an integrated approach to durable solutions. The experience demonstrates how catalytic IDSF support can help connect and scale these efforts through additional resources, partnerships and investment.



Qoloji shows an emerging connection between government planning, national documentation and future service investment. The clearest quantified improvement is actual receipt of identity documentation.

Milestone	Evidence
Access to identity	April 2026 reports confirm 30,679 registrations and 12,967 people who had received Fayda IDs.
Government planning	The July 2025 workshop developed and discussed settlement options. The June 2026 review connected integration priorities to sector planning and the budget cycle.
Financial inclusion	The 2026 implementation update records UNDP-supported preparations for a Shabelle Bank branch, following a preliminary market assessment.

Complete documentation and resolve land arrangements

The broader Qoloji survey conducted in the April 2026 validation material estimated that 83% of displaced residents remained undocumented. Completing issuance of the National ID and reaching excluded households remain priorities. Secure tenure, confidence that people can lawfully occupy and use their homes or land, also requires separate agreements and documentation, backed by community consultation. Long-term integration requires infrastructure investment and continuing budgets for staffing, operation and maintenance. The June 2026 review called for stronger links to government budgets, development finance and private investment. More work is needed on jobs, market access and services for displaced and host communities, alongside climate resilience and careful management of land and natural resources.

Financing for Solutions

The Qoloji experience demonstrates the importance of sustained accompaniment by development partners. While strong government leadership is essential, it is not sufficient on its own to deliver local integration at scale. Durable solutions require investments that exceed available domestic resources. Without predictable development financing, Qoloji risks remaining a well-planned local integration model without the investment needed to translate plans into lasting durable solutions outcomes for displaced and host communities.