

FROM DISPLACEMENT TO DIALOGUE: CARMO'S JOURNEY TOWARD COMMUNITY- LED PEACE

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Following Puntland's security operations in the Calmiskaad region of Puntland, communities across the northeast faced a dual shock: the after-effects of the ISIS offensive, including widespread displacement, and intensifying drought. The Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Democratisation (MoIFAD) estimated that over 200,000 people were displaced from the Calmiskaad mountains during the offensive, alongside those fleeing drought.

Carmo District—close to the epicentre of security operations and placed along seasonal migration routes—absorbed large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Host communities who share clan ties with the IDPs, faced mounting pressures from resource scarcity—dry wells, dying livestock, rising food and water prices—sparking tensions over resource access and security threats, like youth clashes.

In response, MoIFAD, with funding from the Somalia Stability Fund III (SSF III), launched an initiative that combined inclusive governance, community-led dispute resolution, and structured links between Peace Committees and the police. The three-month project (April-June, 2025) aimed to build resilience through inclusive governance.

The project has empowered six Peace Committees to coordinate dialogues and resolve disputes. Displaced communities have been linked with district authorities, turning displacement chaos into collaborative stability. The approach centred on regular, open forums, practical coordination mechanisms, and targeted awareness on radicalisation prevention, ensuring that IDPs, women, and youth were not only protected but actively involved in shaping local security and service responses.

The success of the project in the four primary districts of Iskushuban, Balidhidin, Carmo, and Ufeyn, led to MoIFAD requesting support to extend the activities in two additional districts in February 2026 – Bosaso and Qandala.



WORKSTREAM: CROSS-CUTTING

AT A GLANCE

PARTNER NAME

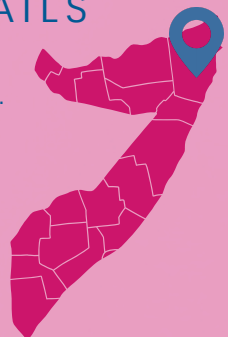
- Puntland State's Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Democratization (MoIFAD)

ACTIVITY DETAILS

- Working in post-ISIS offensive stabilisation contexts.

LOCATION

- Six districts across Bari region of Puntland



MOHAMED JAMA

Project Coordinator, Puntland MoIFAD

"We connected displaced communities with the police, the courts and the district administration. Now they know what services are available... and how to resolve conflict peacefully."

Objective 1: Strengthen local governance and community engagement through enhanced dialogue mechanisms

District officials started to convene monthly public forums, chaired by the Peace Committee. These forums created a consistent and inclusive space for residents and IDPs to surface grievances, co-design solutions, and reinforce accountability. These meetings have continued beyond the initial implementation window, embedding a monthly platform.

Scheduled town halls rotate by neighbourhood to ensure that all community members have the opportunity to be heard. After which, Peace Committee members compile issue reports and channel cases to the appropriate formal body - the district administration, courts or police. Fatima, a Peace Committee member, said: “We summon disputants from the community and then resolve the problems amicably.” Feedback loops were embedded to ensure that community members were aware of the actions taken and any outcomes.

Mohamed Jama, MoIFAD Project Coordinator, stated: “We connect displaced communities with the police, the courts and the district administration. Now they know what services are available... and how to resolve conflict peacefully.”

Result in Carmo District: An inclusive and routinized dialogue mechanism helped to convert early warnings into practical action, with IDPs present and heard, and authorities responsive and visible.

Objective 2: Administer conflict resolution and peacebuilding training; establish a sustainable resolution mechanism

Peace Committee members received training on conflict resolution, negotiation, and mediation, then applied these skills to diffuse resource disputes and prevent youth confrontation. A 20-member Peace Committee has a scheduled monthly meeting and also convenes whenever a conflict is identified.

For example, Carmo's Peace Committee received information on a water-sharing dispute, with claims of unequal access to a shared well during drought. The Committee conducted a rapid assessment and convened joint dialogues with the disputing individuals, alongside the Mayor of Carmo, elders, the District Council and the police. The group was able to intervene early and reach a peaceful agreement on shared well use during drought—with a monitoring plan agreed upon and implemented by the Peace Committee, with support from the District Council and the police.

On another occasion, Carmo's Peace Committee diffused youth clashes between Bossaso migrants and locals. Carmo receives many IDPs from Bossaso during the summer months due to extreme heat. Displaced male youth from Bossaso were moving in groups at night and intimidating locals. Carmo's Peace Committee conducted early dialogues with youth leaders from the host and IDP communities. The dialogues helped to create a relationship between the two communities who no longer see each other as a threat.



Abdirahman Khalif, the former Deputy Minister of Puntland's MoIFAD, speaks at the launch of the project in Carmo District, which was attended by state and district authorities, the police and community members.

Result in Carmo: A functioning and trained Peace Committee that turned training into practical problem solving, reducing the risk of escalation during periods of conflict and instability.

Objective 3: Improve coordination between the Peace Committees and the police to foster trust and joint action

An inception meeting, followed by monthly coordination meetings between Peace Committees and the police, created shared situational awareness and the clear division of roles. The Peace Committee is now in direct communication with the police commissioner for rapid incident reporting and responding to security-related incidents. Each member of the Peace Committee is assigned to a community group – youth, women, elders, or IDPs – and is responsible for reporting to the police on incidents specific to that group.

Peace Committee member, Hussein, stated: “We [the Peace Committee] met with the district police chief. When we see a problem... we contact the person concerned... police director or his deputy and they take the necessary action.”

Result in Carmo: Clear, working relationships between Peace Committees and police improved responsiveness and legitimacy. This improved relationship enabled effective de-escalation, proper referral of cases, and a more legitimate security presence in the eyes of residents and IDPs.

Objective 4: Increase community awareness on radicalisation prevention and peacebuilding

MoIFAD ran targeted media campaigns with peace messages through radio, TV, and social media (Facebook and X). The messages promoted non-violent dispute resolution and discouraged youth from joining armed groups.

Amina, a member of Carmo’s youth and Peace Committee, stated: “The programme had a part dedicated to youth through the Ministry’s press department – to raise their awareness about not joining terrorist groups. This programme consisted of peace messaging through social media... combating youth joining terrorist movements and how the youth must work to confront tribal conflicts.”

Result in Carmo: Locally resonant messaging, tailored to the youth, supported community-led prevention efforts and reduced the appeal of extremist narratives, particularly among youth affected by displacement.



Amina, a member of Carmo’s youth and a Peace Committee member.

Objective 5: Support displaced and conflict-affected communities to participate in local governance.

IDPs were integrated into decision-making with the Peace Committee mandated to include at least one IDP representative. Monthly forums served as platforms for IDPs to surface grievances on security, service access, and resource sharing. As drought worsened, these forums coordinated collective action (e.g., water-sharing) and linked IDPs to basic services and protection channels.

Fatima, an IDP and participant at community forums, stated: “They helped us, brought us food, and opened homes for us... working on community cohesion—including us displaced in community forums and connecting us to the district administration and police in case of any problems.”

Result in Carmo: Social cohesion strengthened under pressure: IDPs, host communities, the Peace Committee, district authorities, and the police coordinated responses to drought and displacement, lowering tensions around scarce resources and normalising the inclusion of displaced communities in local governance.

Why is this important?

The example of Carmo shows how to turn displacement pressures into a platform for cooperation rather than conflict. By having routine and inclusive dialogues, training local mediators, and institutionalising ties with the police, the project transformed early warning into early action. Practical solutions—like water-sharing agreements and youth de-escalation—reduced triggers for violence at precisely the moment when scarcity and population flows could have spiralled into broader insecurity.

The Carmo experience highlights that there is an opportunity to strengthen the social contract in places most at risk of fragmentation. When IDPs have a seat at the table, when women and youth help shape responses, and when the police are accessible and responsive, governance gains legitimacy. That legitimacy undercuts the space for extremist narratives, reduces communal grievances, and stabilises markets and services under stress. In the longer run, these are the foundations for peaceful dispute resolution, accountable local governance, and resilient communities.

Effective local governance is increasingly essential as communities in Somalia face more frequent climate shocks and resource scarcity. When governance systems are inclusive, coordinated, and trusted, they help communities manage shared resources, negotiate competing needs, and act early to prevent tensions from escalating—turning climate pressure into collective problem-solving rather than conflict. Strong, community-anchored governance is therefore not only a development outcome—it is a frontline safeguard against the growing risks as climate change intensifies.

Although the initiative is rooted in governance, it operates within a humanitarian reality where displacement, drought, and shrinking aid flows have left many IDP communities with limited access to basic services and protection. Embedding IDPs directly into dialogue platforms and linking them to authorities and security forces, helped to fill critical humanitarian gaps. The outcomes in Carmo highlight how effective local governance can protect vulnerable populations and uphold basic needs, even as traditional humanitarian support declines.

