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**COLLEGE OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE STUDIES SCHOOL
OF LAW POSTGRADUATE STUDIES
LL. M Human Rights Law Stream (Regular Program)**

**CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF ETHIOPIA'S PLEDGES UNDER
THE COMPREHENSIVE REFUGEE RESPONSE FRAMEWORK**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF LAWS IN HUMAN RIGHTS LAW**

BY

BIRTUKAN ALEMU

**UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF:
WONDEMAGEGN TADESSE (PH. D, ASSISTANT PROF.)**

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Approval Sheet

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BIRTUKAN ALEMU

Approved By:

1. Wondemagegn Tadesse (PhD, Assistant Prof.)

Advisor

Signature

2. Yonas Birmeta (PhD, Assistant Prof.)

Examiner

Signature

3. Tsehai Wada (Assistant Prof.)

Examiner

Signature

Declaration

I, Birtukan Alemu, hereby declare that the contents of this thesis are my own original works except those which are duly cited and quoted. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any degree in any other institution or university.

Signature:

Date: January 30, 2025

Confirmed by Wondemagegn Tadesse (PhD, Assistant Prof.)

Signature:

Date: January 30, 2025

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Acronyms

BIMS.....	Biometric Information Management System
CRRF.....	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
EMIS.....	Management Information System
EU.....	European Union
FDRE.....	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
GCR.....	The Global Compact on Refugees
GER.....	Gross Enrollment Ratios
ICCPR.....	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR.....	International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights
NCRRS.....	National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy
NYD.....	New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants
OAU.....	Organization of African Unity
ODI.....	The Overseas Development Institute
RHISN.....	Refugee and Host Integration through Safety Net
RRS.....	Refugees and Returnees Service
RSD.....	Refugee status determination
TVET.....	Technical and vocational education and training
UDHR.....	The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNHCR.....	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Abstract

Ethiopia's commitment to supporting refugees and host communities is demonstrated by its 2016 pledges under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and subsequent pledges made in 2019 and 2023. The pledges made in 2016 was followed by legal reforms, including the 2019 Refugee Proclamation, which enshrined essential rights such as freedom of movement, access to work, education, and healthcare and other important rights. Despite these advancements, the implementation of the pledges faces significant challenges, including economic challenges, policy inconsistencies, and social tensions among refugees and local populations. This research assesses the legal and institutional frameworks governing these pledges, highlighting both opportunities for sustainable development and integration, as well as challenges that impede progress. Lastly, recommendations are provided to improve the implementation of the pledges made under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and subsequent pledges. Enhancing economic opportunities and access both for refugees and local communities, strengthening coordination mechanisms between national and subnational actors and other stakeholders, strengthening the normative and institutional frameworks for refugee protection, creating trust among the refugees and local communities and taking other supportive measures are some of the recommendations made by this paper. Ultimately, fostering self-reliance among refugees and enhancing their contributions to the local economy are crucial for achieving long-term stability and resilience in Ethiopia.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1967 Refugee Protocol, and the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention have all been adopted within the international framework to safeguard refugees everywhere, including Africa.

As far back as the seventh century, Ethiopia has been taking in refugees who are Muslim and have fled their home countries out of fear of religious persecution.¹ Protecting refugees and securing their rights, however, has not always been simple. Since Ethiopia enforced a rigorous encampment policy and limited service provision until 2016, most refugees were forced to dwell in camps with little access to education and jobs for decades.² The repealed Refugee Proclamation No. 409/2004 was primarily concerned with the procedures for determining status and did not fully articulate or expand certain rights that refugees are entitled to under the Refugee Conventions.³ The Proclamation primarily focuses on providing basic security and care services for refugees residing in designated camps, and it only occasionally applied the "Out-of-Camp policy" to Eritrean refugees.

However, starting in 2016 Ethiopia's policy started to change from the strict encampment policy to a more progressive and rights-centered one, following Ethiopia's pledges in New York.⁴ The major change in the policy is the "out-of-camp" strategy, which focuses on increasing the socioeconomic opportunities for refugees through local integration, the establishment of employment opportunities, and the protection of other fundamental rights. As a response to the policy change, Ethiopia has adopted Proclamation No. 1110/2019, which includes most of the pledges made by Ethiopia.

Nonetheless, some claim that Ethiopia has received international recognition and admiration for its open border policy in relation to refugees even before making pledges under the

¹ Abdulmalik A. Ahmed, the 7th Century Unwritten Ethiopian Laws on the Protection of refugees, in Yonas birameta (ed), Refugee protection in Ethiopia, 2017. P 23.

² Tadesse Kassa, Fasil Mulatu and Jaxxu Iddossa, 'Ethiopia's Refugee Policy Overhaul: Implications on the Out of Camp Policy Regime and Rights to Residence, Movement and Engagement in Gainful Employment' [October 2019] IV (1) Ethiopian Journal of Human Rights 124-161, [hereinafter Tadesse et al], p.124.

³ Refugee Proclamation 409/2004, Federal Negarit Gazeta Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 10th Year, No.54 19th July 2004.

⁴ Tadesse et al (n 2), p.127.

Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in 2016.⁵ It is argued that the country maintained an open-door policy for newcomers and provides humanitarian access and protection to individuals seeking asylum on its territory.⁶ In addition, in 2010, an out-of-camp scheme was established to allow Eritrean refugees to live outside of camps.

In September 2016, at the Leaders' Summit on Refugees and Migrants in New York, the international community made a new commitment to refugees and migrants by adopting a New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (NYD).⁷ The NYD was adopted by all 193 Member States of the United Nations. It comprises significant and all-encompassing provisions that reaffirm Member States' commitment to upholding the human rights of refugees and migrants and assisting host nations. It aims to "provide a framework for a comprehensive and people-centered refugee response" by involving multiple stakeholders from all fields in the process.⁸ Signatory states made commitments to improve the situation of refugees and to increase support to communities that host them under this framework.

The New York Declaration, moreover, aims to create an international strategy based on solidarity with nations and refugees that works with a variety of stakeholders.⁹ In addition to promoting "a more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees," the Declaration aims to protect the right to apply for asylum and provide more regular, safe pathways for cross-border movement of refugees and, in theory, others on the move.¹⁰

The Declaration introduced the CRRF, which later informed the adoption of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR).¹¹ CRRF is Annex I of the Declaration and forms an integral part of the GCR.

⁵ Fasil Mulatu Gessesse, Recommendations for Reform of Ethiopia's Refugee Legislative and Policy Framework in Light of International and Regional Standards, April 2017, p.6
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/fr/209671544781078732/pdf/EFO-P162987-ICM-Ethiopia-Refugee-Law-Reform.pdf>

⁶ Ibid

⁷ UN General Assembly, New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 3 October 2016, A/RES/71/1, accessed from
https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_71_1.pdf

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Penelope Mathew, killing asylum softly or leaving no one behind? The New York declaration and global compacts in a divided world, Globalizations, 2021, DOI: 10.1080/14747731.2021.1974207, pp. 6

¹⁰ ibid

¹¹ UNHCR, Global Compact on Refugees, Supplement No. 12, A/73/12, 2018, Part II, Para. 10, accessed from
<https://globalcompactrefugees.org/about-digital-platform/global-compact-refugees>

The GCR, another important instrument adopted by the UN General Assembly, in 2018, provides a new framework, recognizing that a sustainable long-term solution to refugee situations can only be achieved through international cooperation involving, among others, governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector. It aims to ease the pressure on host countries through more equitable sharing of burden and responsibility and enhanced refugee self-reliance.¹² The core motivation of the GCR is a “more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world’s refugees”.¹³

The CRRF is, on the other hand, an implementing tool of the GCR. It was previously included in the NYD and later it was adopted under the GCR. It aims to increase safe migration pathways for refugees, including resettlement, and resources for humanitarian needs and development in host states. Host states are to provide “legal stay” to refugees and asylum seekers and access to basic human rights. Additionally, it aims to improve the circumstances for refugees’ ultimate repatriation, especially through development.¹⁴

The CRRF was implemented in a wide range of refugee situations in more than a dozen countries in 2017 and 2018. It has been tested, primarily in Africa and Latin America, and the results have revealed both current and future opportunities for improvements for both refugees and their hosts.¹⁵

Under this Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, Ethiopia made nine pledges. The pledges include providing work permits to qualifying refugees, facilitating local integration for those who stayed protracted years (over 20 years), assigning a percentage of jobs in industrial parks (30%), giving refugees access to irrigable land (10,000 hectares), access to education, enhance the provision of basic and essential social services, and to provide other benefits, such as issuance of birth certificates to refugee children born in Ethiopia, and the possibility of opening bank accounts and obtaining driving licenses.¹⁶

Since the pledges were made in 2016, the government has progressively looked for a more long-term solution that goes beyond providing for the care and maintenance of refugees to encourage their independence. This approach combines a broader commitment to promoting harmonious cohabitation, broader assistance for host communities, and increased

¹² Eva Binkert, Merlin Flaig, Lukas Frucht, Jörn Grävingholt, Jannis König, Jana Kuhnt, Philipp Lendle, Abdirahman A. Muhumad, Katharina Potinius, (2021) Local Governments and the Sustainable Integration of Refugees in Ethiopia, Discussion Paper, German Development Institute, p.5. https://www.idos-research.de/uploads/media/DP_21.2021.pdf (accessed 24 Jan, 2023)

¹³ GCR (n. 11) para. 2

¹⁴ Penelope Mathew (n. 9) p. 7

¹⁵ Ibid p. 8

¹⁶ Tadesse et al (n 2) p. 125

participation of refugees in long-term development plans.¹⁷ In general, the nine pledges are primarily focused on fostering productive and self-reliant global citizens (both refugees and host communities).¹⁸

The CRRF was launched in Ethiopia in November 2017. In April and May 2018, regional launches were also held in the five regions hosting refugees, including Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Tigray, Afar, and Somali. To implement the CRRF, the government enacted a new refugee proclamation in 2019.¹⁹ In addition, the government has developed a 10 year National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy (NCRRS) and national/regional action plans and guidelines.²⁰

Most of the pledges are covered under Proclamation No. 1110/2019 from articles 22-42 consisting of a comprehensive set of rights and obligations. The proclamation extends the rights of refugees in aspects related to the right to work, and right to association in non-profit making and non-political, right to acquire and transfer property, the right to acquire a driver's license, access to health and freedom of movement.²¹ Refugees are also given the right to acquire identity paper and travel documents; to access banking and financial services; to access telecommunication services and to legally register life events such as births and marriages; and rationing.²²

As a result the proclamation is considered as a progressive one which grants the country's massive refugee population access to local integration, a wide range of services and improved socio-economic integration.²³ Besides, while the freedom of movement and minimum right to access services accorded to asylum seekers or refugees will be equal to that of foreigners residing in the country, some privileges such as access to health, justice, banking, telecommunications, vital events registration, certification services will be of the same level

¹⁷ Briefing note on Applying the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), CRRF Ethiopia, (July 2018)<https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/briefing-note-comprehensive-refugee-response-framework-crrf-ethiopia-july-2018> accessed September 18, 2022.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Refugee Proclamation 1110/2019, Federal Negarit Gazeta of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 25th Year, No.38, 27th February 2019.

²⁰ UNHCR, Ethiopia Country Refugee Response Plan: 'the integrated response plan for refugees from Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia, January 2019 December 2020 p.7 available at <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/67744> accessed September 22, 2022.

²¹ Refugee Proclamation (n. 19) Art. 25-36.

²² Ibid

²³ Mehari Taddele Maru (Dr.) (2019), IN DEPTH: Unpacking Ethiopia's revised refugee law, Africa Portal, <https://www.africaportal.org/features/depth-unpacking-ethiopias-revised-refugee-law/> accessed February 23, 2023.

to that of Ethiopian nationals.²⁴ Other rights like right to work, association, and acquire and transfer property are equal to the most favoured treatments accorded to foreign nationals in Ethiopia.²⁵

However, there are arguments that some rights granted under the Proclamation like that of the right to work is unrealistic aspiration due to fact that refugees can be employed in the private sector upon obtaining work permits from relevant authorities.²⁶ To do so, refugees have to pass through restrictive procedures and could only get permit in fields of work that cannot be covered by Ethiopian nationals. This, on the other hand, would exclude the majority of refugees from accessing the labor market.²⁷

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that Ethiopia made commitments in 2016, which were followed by a change in policy from a rigid encampment policy to one that is more progressive and rights-focused, both the refugee population and the host communities continue to experience economic, social, cultural, and other challenges.

Pledges are state commitments, hence by themselves, they do not constitute legally binding responsibilities. However, the promises are currently included in a comprehensive Proclamation, which is conducive to the actual implementation of the CRRF. The current Refugee Proclamation gives refugees access to more rights-centered benefits. As a result, the pledges made by Ethiopia have implications on the country's politics, laws, society, and economy. This is particularly true because the performance and ability of the government to uphold its pledges are directly impacted by the political, economic, and social conditions in the country. The considerable shift in the government's dedication to protecting refugees calls for major modifications to the legal and regulatory framework of the country as well as the allocation of resources for their implementation. Additionally, collaboration and working with other partners are required for their execution.

Ethiopia, on the other hand, has a limited economy and a high unemployment rate; as a result, allowing refugees to work has an effect on the host community. Additionally, the rights and experiences of refugees in Ethiopia continue to be constrained by regulatory gaps and uncertainty in many areas, including residency, freedom of travel, and engagement in gainful

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Refugee Proclamation (n.19), Art. 26, 27 & 29.

²⁶ Minilik Assefa (2020), Refugees' Right to Work in Ethiopia: Prospects and Challenges, Addis Ababa University, School of Law, p.48

²⁷ Ibid

employment.²⁸ Such problems necessitate a thorough examination of the implications of Ethiopia's pledges under the CRRF.

1.3 Literature Review

Many scholars have remarked on the international and local refugee protection frameworks. This section of the research discusses some related literature in connection with those legal frameworks, particularly, the CRRF.

Sergio and Filippo in their article claim that creating the conditions for refugees to access the labor market and enacting laws that recognize their right to work is necessary to foster local responsibility sharing and integration.²⁹ They held that the CRRF and GCR support the incorporation of refugees in host communities to promote their self-reliance and to build livelihoods.³⁰ Furthermore, they highlight that whereas voluntary return and third-country solutions have a minor influence on reducing the global population of displaced persons, local solutions can mitigate the negative effects of protracted displacement.³¹

Khan and Sackeyfio also agree that the implementation of the CRRF can provide opportunities for economic and institutional sustainability, as well as promoting refugee livelihoods and self-reliance through multisector aid.³²

A literature by Betts and Collier's is also essential in this context. According to Betts and Collier, exclusion from the labor market has a negative socio-economic impact on the livelihoods of refugees, whereas the promotion of the right to work and the removal of boundaries to refugees' economic participation can foster self-reliance, autonomy, and integration.³³

However, some scholars have criticized the NYD, GCR, and CRRF for being nonbinding and only intended to serve as a starting point for regional dialogues, meetings, and conferences.³⁴

One commentator has expressed concern that the GCR's principles and CRRF activities will

²⁸ Tadesse et al (n 2), p.125.

²⁹ Sergio Carciotto and Filippo Ferraro, 2020, Building Blocks and Challenges for the Implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees in Africa *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 8:1, 83-95, p. 84

³⁰ Ibid, P. 83

³¹ Ibid, p. 87

³² Khan, Fatima, and Cecile Sackeyfio. 2018. "What Promise Does the Global Compact on Refugees Hold for African Refugees?" *International Journal of Refugee Law* 30, no. 4:696–8.

³³ Betts, Alexander, and Paul Collier. 2017. *Refuge: Transforming a Broken Refugee System*. London: Penguin. p. 166.

³⁴ Sergio Carciotto and Filippo Ferraro (n. 29) p. 93

“serve only as guideposts for a never-ending series of discussions”.³⁵ Additionally, Hathaway argue that such a nonbinding and thin agreement will give rise to a bureaucratic process that does not come even close to dependably addressing the operational deficits of the refugee regime.³⁶

Besides, there are arguments that despite those efforts refugees are still facing varying problems. For instance, Zetter, Roger, and He´loi’sse Ruaudel states in their article, that refugees face, in addition to legal and policy constraints, a wide variety of challenges that prevent them from accessing the labor market. The challenges mentioned by the authors include: the attitudes of employers; conditions of employment; lack of information for refugees about legal entitlements and access to legal advice and justice with respect to the right to work and employment conditions; the differential employment opportunities offered by camps, rural settlements, and urban centers; the availability of educational opportunities to develop language proficiency and professional skills; and recognition of qualifications from countries of origin.³⁷

In like manner, Carciotto and d’Orsi state that asylum seekers and refugees also encounter numerous legal and procedural challenges that prevent them from accessing formal employment, forcing them into precarious and exploitative jobs in informal economies.³⁸

A report conducted by Crawford, and O’Callaghan states, "easing pressure" is correlated with compensation for housing refugees (i.e., "you host, we fund"); that voluntary GCR/CRRF commitments have not resulted in increased funding; and the presumption that integrating refugees into national systems will be more suitable, cost-efficient, and sustainable has not yet been proven to exist.³⁹ In addition, they contend that the goal of self-reliance is also based on false presumptions, such as the viability and feasibility of private sector assistance in underdeveloped border regions, the ability of refugees to exercise their rights to mobility and

³⁵ Hathaway, James C. 2019. “The Global Cop-Out on Refugees.” *International Journal of Refugee Law* 30(4):591–604. p.593

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 594

³⁷ Zetter, Roger, and He´loi’sse Ruaudel. 2016. “Refugees’ Right to Work and Access to Labor Markets: An Assessment.” World Bank Global Program on Forced Displacement (GPDF) and the Global Knowledge Partnership on Migration and Development (KNOMAD) Thematic Working Group on Forced Migration. KNO-MAD Working Paper. Washington, DC: World Bank Group.

³⁸ Carciotto, Sergio, and Cristiano d’Orsi. 2017. “Access to Socio-Economic Rights for Refugees: A Comparison across Six African Countries.” Cape Town: Scalabrini Institute for Human Mobility in Africa. http://sihma.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Final_report.pdf.

³⁹ Crawford, N., and O’Callaghan, S. (2019, September). The comprehensive refugee response framework: Responsibility-sharing and self-reliance in East Africa (HPG Working Paper, ODI) p. 3.

employment, and the disregard for the vulnerabilities of many refugees.⁴⁰ They also observe a limited allocation from donors.⁴¹

Similarly, opinions among participating African states on whether the CRRF primarily aims to help host countries or coerce them in order to halt migration are divided.⁴² On one hand, it is claimed that the CRRF's ideal objectives for "host states" could greatly enhance protection and that adequate and reliable finance for humanitarian and development efforts would be valuable assistance. On the other hand, although these pledges technically apply to all countries, they actually do so primarily for low- and middle-income states. This suggests that in exchange for financial aid, poor countries must uphold better levels of protection while hosting the majority of refugees, and that wealthier states may treat their own hosting of refugees as development assistance.⁴³ In support of this, Penelope Mathew contends that "leaving no one behind" appears to be a strategy to maintain the status quo rather than an effort to promote equality or parity of development.⁴⁴

On the contrary, some writers claim that despite many challenges linked to the preparation of the project, the majority of CRRF projects in Africa had a positive impact, yielding benefits for refugees and host communities.⁴⁵

Following the policy change on refugees in Ethiopia, since 2016, both negative and positive implications have been pointed out by a variety of authors and academicians. Tsion in her literature summarizes that as the CRRF is expected to expand socio-economic opportunities for refugees including wage-earning employment, local integration for those in protracted situations, and better access to education and life outside of refugee camps, the CRRF is for one posed with a serious coordination challenge between and among stakeholders.⁴⁶

She further claims that although Ethiopia's implementation of the CRRF is crucial to improving the socioeconomic opportunities for refugees and necessitates a significant change in policy, host community consultations were not conducted to the expected level prior to the

⁴⁰ Ibid p.3

⁴¹ Ibid p.4

⁴² Hammond, L., Sturridge, C., Stebba, K. R., Owiso, M., Mahdi, M., Manji, F., & Osman, A. A. (2019, December). Comprehensive refugee responses in the Horn of Africa: Regional leadership in education, livelihoods and durable solutions: Summary of findings. Research & Evidence Facility, EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa pp. 4.

⁴³ Penelope Mathew (n. 9), p.10

⁴⁴ Ibid

⁴⁵ Sergio Carciotto and Filippo Ferraro (n. 29) p. 93

⁴⁶ Tsion Tadesse, Promises and challenges of Ethiopia's refugee reform, 26 October 2018. https://www.africaportal.org/documents/18538/Promises_and_challenges_of_Ethiopia_refugee_policy_reform.pdf accessed on 23 October 2022 p. 2.

implementation of the CRRF.⁴⁷ She also argues that industrial parks may not significantly contribute to making refugees and host communities self-sufficient, unless other measures are taken.⁴⁸

This paper by Tsion identified challenges associated with the implementation of the CRRF which includes insufficient and unreliable funding, conflicts between host communities and refugees in some of the refugee hosting regions, particularly, Gambella and Somali.⁴⁹

Another literature relevant to this study is a paper by Ephrem and Haileselassie, which claims that the large scale movement and complexity of the refugee situation are beyond the capacity of refugee hosting countries, and that global responsibility sharing and solidarity is needed now more than ever in the history of human displacement.⁵⁰ The paper attempted to provide an overview of the context, process, and structure of the CRRF and the activities undertaken to implement it in Ethiopia up to 2017. It concludes that, with the ever-increasing size and protracted predicament of refugees in Ethiopia, which has little chance of ending in the near future, there is high optimism and anticipation that the CRRF will improve refugee protection and self-sufficiency, easing the burden on the government.⁵¹

Finally, a thesis paper on ‘the Role of CRRF on the Protection of Refugee Rights in Ethiopia’ by Naol Abera is relevant in this area. This study analyses the relevance of the CRRF in refugee protection in Ethiopia, as well as the significance of Ethiopia's commitments to improve refugee protection in Ethiopia.⁵² The research highlighted the importance of cooperation and implementation of CRRF in general, and particularly in Ethiopia, in order to provide refugees with a chance to live in harmony and dignity, and it demonstrates how CRRF play an important role in protecting refugee rights and benefiting refugees and host communities.

Even though there are other literatures written on the protection of refugees in Ethiopia, most of them are related with the discussion of the refugee protection and some are even limited to the right of employment and livelihood opportunity of refugees. As a result, a thorough and

⁴⁷ *ibid*

⁴⁸ *ibid*

⁴⁹ *Ibid*

⁵⁰ Ephrem Tadesse and Haileselassie Gebremariam (2017), 'Towards a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF): Recent Developments on Refugee Protection in Ethiopia' (Refugee Protection in Ethiopia) International Law Series, Addis Ababa University - School of Law 149-164, p. 151

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 164

⁵² Naol Abera, *The Role of Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework on the Protection of Refugee Rights in Ethiopia*, Addis Ababa University School of Law, (2019).

in-depth analysis of the CRRF, as well as the challenges and opportunities for Ethiopia, is still required.

1.4 Objectives of the Research

1.4.1 General Objective

By examining the opportunities and challenges related to the commitments made by Ethiopia under the CRRF, this research examines the economic, policy, and social implications of the pledges. The study also looks at the legislative and practical barriers and tried to come up with feasible alternatives for the implementation of the pledges.

1.4.2 Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the research include:

- ❖ Analyzing the legal and institutional frameworks for the implementation of Ethiopia's pledges under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.
- ❖ Highlighting the obstacles that the host communities, refugees, and other groups have in implementing the pledges on economic, social, cultural, and other levels.
- ❖ Assessing the opportunities and advantages for both host communities and refugees in connection to the pledges.

1.5 Methodology and Methods

1.5.1 Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

The research employs both doctrinal and non-doctrinal approaches. The aim of this paper is to study the legal and practical aspects of Ethiopia's pledges under the CRRF. Hence, a critical analysis of Ethiopian law and practice was carried out. In addition, the researcher used a qualitative approach to collect and interpret the data. It is appropriate to employ this methodology because the study's main objective is to carefully explore the fate and sustainability of Ethiopia's pledges and assess the available institutional and legal frameworks to implement them, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. In addition, a comparative study of some countries' experiences in relation with the implementation of the CRRF is carried out.

1.5.2 Sources of Data

In making the critical analysis the researcher resorted to primary sources like pertinent legal and policy documents. A survey of the literature, including scholarly articles, policy briefs, stakeholder reports, news items, and other publications relating to the legal and policy framework Ethiopia's pledges under the CRRF, was used to gather secondary data for the study. Internet sites were also used for the study. As the research also consists of a study of the implementation of the pledges and challenges faced by the refugees and host communities, the practice on the ground was exhaustively assessed through interviews.

1.5.3 Data Collection Tools

Interview was the primary method of gathering data for the study. Key informants from the Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), as well as selected non-governmental groups working on various areas of refugees' problems, were interviewed using semi-standardized interviews. Further, interviews were held with key respondents from refugee communities such as leaders and spokespersons and selected refugees residing in Addis Ababa that came from different countries. The respondents are selected using purposive sampling.

1.6 Significance of the Study

One of a state's difficult tasks, including Ethiopia, is to protect the rights of refugees. It is crucial to provide a better institutional and legal framework to safeguard refugee rights in Ethiopia. The research could be useful for identifying the successes and failures in Ethiopia's implementation of its commitment under the CRRF and its refugee policies. The study also sheds light on the benefits and opportunities associated with the pledges, which is beneficial to refugees in Ethiopia as well as host communities. Moreover, the study will be helpful to the legislative and executive branches in formulating and carrying out pertinent laws.

1.7 Scope

The study is limited to assessing the prospects and challenges of Ethiopia's pledges under the CRRF. The research addresses the rights and opportunities provided under the pledges. Interviews with refugees and host communities are limited to those residing in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Therefore, the geographic scope of the study is limited to government organs/officials, international organizations, NGOs and individuals in Addis Ababa.

1.8 Limitations

One of the limitations is a geographic limitation. Since the research is limited to Addis Ababa information from refugees and host communities residing in the main refugee-hosting regions of Ethiopia like Afar, Tigray, Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz and Somalia was not gathered.

1.9 Ethical considerations

The research is carried out based on the informed consent of the respondents. Informing the respondents of the study's goal and what is expected of them was crucial since the researcher used many interviews with officials working in various companies and government departments. Additionally, the refugees who participated in the research were informed about the study and obtained their permission before conducting interviews with them. The study also took the confidentiality of respondents' identities into account.

1.10 Organization of the Study

The research has five chapters in total. The first chapter highlights the background of the study. Chapter two deals with a conceptual analysis of refugees' rights under international and regional laws. Chapter three examines Refugee Protection in Ethiopia and pledges made under the CRRF. Chapter four analyzes the prospects and challenges of Ethiopia's pledges under the CRRF in line with refugees residing in Ethiopia and host communities. Lastly, Chapter five provides a conclusion and recommendations.

Chapter Two

Refugees Protection Legal Frameworks and States' Pledge under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework

2.1 Refugees' Rights under International Level

The issue of refugee protection in international law is a complex and multifaceted one. Refugees are individuals who have been forced to flee their home countries due to persecution, conflict, or other forms of violence. As a result, they frequently require protection in the country where they stay and in other states.

International law establishes a framework for protecting refugees and upholding their rights. While the norm of non-refoulement is manifestly a component of customary international law.⁵³ The protection of refugees has grown and been enhanced as a result of advances in the general field of human rights. Nowadays, the fundamental principles of international human rights law and the Refugee Convention itself serve as the foundation for the universal rights of refugees.⁵⁴ Although general human rights standards do not specifically address many refugee-related issues, they do add a substantial number of rights to the list enumerated in the Refugee Convention. Supervisory bodies are regularly able to interpret and apply these norms in ways that better reflect modern realities.⁵⁵ This has greatly strengthened the legal entitlements and safeguards available to refugees globally; even as new challenges arise. The continued interplay and mutual reinforcement of these two branches of international law is essential for the continued protection of refugees worldwide.

However, the creation of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the entry into force of the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees in the years following World War II formed the foundation of the contemporary international system of refugee protection. It has since developed into a sophisticated framework that provides millions of people who have been forcibly displaced with essential protection.⁵⁶

Refugee rights in general are protected by numerous national laws as well as regional and international human rights instruments. The 1951 UN Refugee Convention, its 1967 Protocol,

⁵³ Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, *International Refugee Law – Yesterday, Today, but Tomorrow?*, Emeritus Fellow, All Souls College, Oxford, 2017 P.6

⁵⁴ Hathaway, James C., *the Structure of Entitlement under the Refugee Convention: In the Rights of Refugees Under International Law*, Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed., 173–311, 2021 p.173.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p. 173.

⁵⁶ UNHCR's *Global Consultations on International Protection*, edited by Erika Feller Volker Turk and Frances Nicholson, 'Refugee Protection in International Law', Cambridge university press, 2003, p. 17.

the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), and the 2016 New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants are the main international legal instruments that protect refugees.

Aside from binding instruments, several non-binding/soft standards on refugee protection are evolving over time. Examples include the NYD and its implementation tool, the CRRF. The NYD affirmed that all refugees and migrants, whatever of their status, should have their human rights protected, and it recognized the beneficial impact that migrants have on society.⁵⁷ The NYD set in motion the process of developing two major global compacts - the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. These were adopted in 2018 to strengthen international cooperation and responsibility-sharing. The CRRF on the other hand, was a key component of the GCR that was adopted in 2018. The CRRF provided a more comprehensive, predictable and equitable approach to responding to large refugee movements and protracted refugee situations.

Together, the NYD and the GCR work to protect the right to seek asylum, provide more frequent and secure cross-border travel for refugees and, in principle, all people on the move, and promote a more equitable distribution of the costs and responsibilities associated with hosting and assisting all refugees around the world.

2.1.1 UN Refugee Convention

The 1951 UN Refugee Convention (hereinafter ‘the Refugee Convention’) was the first and only legally enforceable instrument of universal nature for the protection of refugees. However, the convention had a fairly narrow focus. It was primarily concerned with the determination of refugee status and the rights and responsibilities associated with that status. It did not comprehensively address the root causes of refugee displacement or durable solutions.

The 1951 Refugee Convention established a comprehensive definition of a refugee, describing them as individuals who flee their country due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.⁵⁸ This definition was groundbreaking in its universalist approach, providing a common framework for identifying and protecting refugees globally. However,

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951, United Nations, Art. 2 (1)

the original Convention text included geographical and temporal limitations, restricting its applicability to events occurring in Europe prior to 1951. This significantly narrowed the scope and reach of the refugee protection regime. In 1967, the introduction of the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees addressed this shortcoming by entirely removing the geographical and time-based constraints.

The Refugee Convention established the fundamental principles upon which the international protection of refugees was to be based, laying the groundwork for its continuing success. The following principles were stated: the principle of nonrefoulement, which states that refugees should not be returned to situations where they will face persecution or the threat of persecution; universal protection for all refugees without discrimination; the social and humanitarian nature of the refugee problem; the possibility that the granting of asylum could place an undue burden on some nations; and the possibility that a satisfactory solution to the problems of refugees can only be found through international cooperation.⁵⁹

The convention also recognized that people fleeing persecution cannot be expected to leave their country and enter another country in a regular manner and as a result, they should not be punished for entering or remaining illegally in the country where they seek asylum; given the extremely serious repercussions that expelling refugees may have, such a measure should only be adopted in exceptional circumstances directly affecting national security or public order.⁶⁰

2.1.2. The New York Declaration

The refugee crisis that erupted in 2015 posed a significant global challenge, marked by the mass movement of people from the Middle East and North Africa seeking safety and security amid escalating conflicts. The war in Syria alone resulted in approximately 12 million individuals fleeing their homes, contributing to the largest displacement of people since World War II.⁶¹ By the end of 2015, the UNHCR reported that over 67.75 million people worldwide had been forced to leave their homes, placing immense strain on the international

⁵⁹ Ibid, Art. 3, 33, 35

⁶⁰ Ibid, Art. 31 and 32

⁶¹ Afaq, Ahmar, and Nishant Sirohi. "The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants: Consensus to address the Forcibly Displaced Humanity?" *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2018, pp. 80–97. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48520050>. Accessed 19 Apr. 2023. P. 84

refugee protection system and the host countries tasked with supporting these vulnerable populations.⁶²

In response to this unprecedented situation, the United Nations convened a summit in September 2016, which culminated in the unanimous adoption of the NYD for Refugees and Migrants by all 193 Member States. This declaration marked a critical step in defining responsibilities and establishing funding structures to better regulate refugee protection, aiming to prevent the disproportionate burden from falling on developing nations.⁶³ Recognizing the urgent need for a coordinated global response, the declaration emphasized the shared responsibility to address the root causes of forced displacement and provide adequate support to refugees and host communities.

The NYD represents a significant advancement in the protection of refugees, offering a framework that differs from existing mechanisms by emphasizing the rights of all refugees and migrants, regardless of their legal status. It calls for a comprehensive approach to address the root causes of displacement, such as poverty, conflict, and climate change, while reaffirming core international human rights principles.⁶⁴ By focusing on the need for collaboration among nations, the declaration seeks to ensure that large movements of refugees and migrants are managed effectively and that no single country bears the burden alone.⁶⁵

A key aspect of the declaration is its holistic approach to refugee protection, which includes providing humanitarian assistance, access to education and employment, and promoting integration into host communities.⁶⁶ This collaborative approach acknowledges the disproportionate impact that refugee flows have on developing countries and emphasizes the necessity for greater international cooperation. The declaration also stipulates that refugee camps should be temporary solutions, advocating for refugees to coexist with host communities to foster self-reliance and reduce dependency on humanitarian aid.⁶⁷

Since its adoption, the NYD has laid the groundwork for further actions, including the 2018 General Assembly's adoption of the GCR, which builds upon its commitments. This compact is the first global agreement specifically focused on refugee protection and outlines a series of

⁶² Adrian Edwards, UNHCR: Global Forced Displacement Hits Record High, 20 June 2016, online at <http://www.unhcr.org>

⁶³ NYD, (n. 7) para. 68

⁶⁴ Ibid, para. 1, 5, 12, 37, 43, 50, 64

⁶⁵ Ibid, para. 7, & 68

⁶⁶ Ibid, para. 7, 11 & 69

⁶⁷ Ibid, para. 4, 11, 38, 71, 73, 77, 80

commitments aimed at ensuring the safety and dignity of refugees. The declaration includes two annexes: one detailing a comprehensive refugee response framework and the other focusing on safe and orderly migration.

Despite its ambitious goals, the NYD has faced criticism for its non-binding nature and lack of concrete commitments.⁶⁸ Observers have raised concerns that the absence of legally binding obligations may hinder meaningful action on the ground, reflecting a broader hesitation within the international community to undertake necessary reforms in the global refugee protection regime.⁶⁹ While the declaration garnered high-level political support, its implementations and addressing the pressing challenges of refugee have been subject of controversies.

Nevertheless, the NYD is important framework on the protection of refugees in many ways and has come up with different approaches than the existing mechanisms to strengthen the international response to large movements of refugees and migrants. For one, though the Declaration is a non-binding instrument, it shows the political commitment of states on the protection of refugees. It provides a platform for states to create a sense of solidarity and support on refugee issue. It can also be used to create norms in the long term and a sense of responsibility and burden sharing.

2.1.3 The Global Compact on Refugees

The GCR, as contained in the NYD, was adopted by the General Assembly on 17 December 2018.⁷⁰ The GCR is the result of a two-year process of consultation and negotiation between the UNHCR and a wide range of stakeholders, including governments, civil society, and the private sector. The process was launched in September 2016, when the UN General Assembly adopted the NYD.

The GCR seeks to address the root causes of displacement, improve the lives of refugees and their host communities, and promote international cooperation and responsibility-sharing.⁷¹ It is based on four key objectives: (1) Strengthen the protection of refugees and other persons in need of international protection; (2) Enhance the self-reliance of refugees and their host

⁶⁸ Tara John, “World Leaders meet at UN to Craft Response to Migrant Crisis”, Time, 19 September 2016, <http://time.com>

⁶⁹ Afaq Ahmar and Nishant Sirohi (n. 63) p. 94

⁷⁰ Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 17 December 2018 A/RES/73/151

⁷¹ GCR, (n.11) para 5, 8 & 9

communities; (3) Expand access to third-country solutions; and (4) Support conditions in countries of origin for the safe return and reintegration of refugees.⁷²

It aims to achieve these four interconnected and interdependent goals through the mobilization of political will, an expanded base of support, and arrangements that allow for more equal, sustained, and predictable contributions from states and other key stakeholders.⁷³

The Compact provides a new framework, recognizing that a sustainable long-term solution to refugee situations can only be achieved through international cooperation involving, among others, governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector.⁷⁴ It also aims to ease the pressure on host countries through more equitable sharing of burden and responsibility and organize the international community as a whole, and catalyze action for a better response to refugee crises.⁷⁵

In addition, it provides voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration, as well as other local solutions and complementary pathways for admission to third countries, as durable solutions for protracted refugee situations and preventing new crises from emerging.⁷⁶

It urges the international community, including states and other key stakeholders, to put the GCR into action through tangible actions, pledges, and contributions, including during the first Global Refugee Forum.⁷⁷ It also encourages states and other stakeholders who have yet to contribute to burden- and responsibility-sharing to do so in order to extend the support base in a spirit of international solidarity and collaboration.⁷⁸

The GCR lists ways through which resources will be made available to countries faced with large-scale refugee situations relative to their capacity, both new and protracted, including through humanitarian assistance, development cooperation, and maximizing private sector contributions, through both bilateral and multilateral channels, with direct benefits to host countries and communities, as well as to refugees.⁷⁹ Similarly, the private sector, together with states and other relevant stakeholders, could contribute in various means including policy measures and de-risking arrangements; opportunities for private sector investment, infrastructure strengthening and job creation in contexts where the business climate is

⁷² Ibid, para 7

⁷³ Ibid

⁷⁴ Ibid, para 3.

⁷⁵ Ibid, para. 5, 14-16

⁷⁶ Ibid, para. 85

⁷⁷ Ibid, para. 20

⁷⁸ Ibid, para. 33

⁷⁹ Ibid, para. 32

enabling; development of innovative technology, including renewable energy; and greater access to financial products and information services for refugees and host communities.⁸⁰

The GCR lays out a "plan of action" which aims to facilitate the application of a comprehensive response in support of refugees and countries particularly affected by a large refugee movement, or a protracted refugee situation, through effective arrangements for burden- and responsibility-sharing.⁸¹ The plan of Action also includes arrangements for responsibility sharing, primarily through a Global Refugee Forum held every four years, as well as support for specific situations and arrangements for review through the Global Refugee Forum and other channels.⁸²

The GCR includes the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, which was previously adopted in the New York Declaration.

2.1.4 The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework

The CRRF, developed by UNHCR in 2016, aims to address the pressing needs of refugees and host communities through a coordinated and comprehensive approach. In response to the unprecedented number of refugees globally, the CRRF emphasizes long-term solutions that integrate humanitarian aid with development assistance. This framework encourages collaboration among a diverse array of stakeholders, including national and local governments, international organizations, civil society, and the affected communities themselves.⁸³ Unlike the NYD, which encompasses commitments for both migrants and refugees, the CRRF specifically targets the needs of refugees, promoting a principle of responsibility-sharing among all involved parties.

The CRRF serves as a roadmap for welcoming new arrivals, addressing ongoing needs, supporting host nations, and pursuing durable solutions for refugees. It aims to alleviate pressure on host countries, enhance refugee self-reliance, and expand access to third-country solutions while improving conditions in countries of origin for safe and dignified return. By advocating for the immediate integration of refugees into host communities, the framework supports the development of refugees' skills through access to education and labor markets, thereby fostering local economic growth and benefiting host communities.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Ibid, para 11

⁸² Ibid, para 17-19.

⁸³ UNHCR, Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: From the New York Declaration to a Global Compact on Refugees, 2016, available at <http://www.unhcr.org>) accessed Jan. 4 2023.

⁸⁴ Ibid

Additionally, the CRRF seeks to increase safe migration pathways, including resettlement, and to provide resources for humanitarian needs in host states. It mandates that host countries offer legal residency to refugees and asylum seekers, ensuring their access to fundamental human rights. While the ultimate goal remains the voluntary return to their countries of origin, the framework emphasizes fostering self-reliance during refugees' interim stay in host nations.

The implementation of the CRRF has been tested in various contexts, primarily in Africa and Latin America, yielding insights into both current and future opportunities for enhancing outcomes for refugees and their hosts. Some observers express optimism about the framework's potential, highlighting the importance of local ownership and sustainable financial streams. However, critiques have emerged, particularly from reports like those from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), which highlight shortcomings in funding and the effectiveness of integrating refugees into national systems.⁸⁵ These critiques underscore those voluntary commitments have not translated into increased financial support, raising concerns about the assumptions underpinning the CRRF's approach.

Critics have also pointed out significant issues, including the exclusion of key stakeholders such as local communities, insufficient international financial assistance, and limited engagement from the private sector.⁸⁶ Furthermore, commentators note the absence of a robust monitoring mechanism for the CRRF, a feature that was expected in the GCR.⁸⁷ These concerns suggest that while the CRRF represents a progressive step in refugee response, its effectiveness may be compromised without addressing these fundamental challenges.

2.2 Refugee Protection at Regional Level

The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, and the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa are some regional instruments that protect refugees in Africa.

The African Union has taken a number of steps to address the refugee crisis, including the adoption of the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa in 1969. The Convention provides a comprehensive framework for the protection of refugees,

⁸⁵ O'Callaghan et al (n. 39) p. 3

⁸⁶ Montemurro, M. and Wendt, K., *Whose responsibility? Accountability for refugee protection and solutions in a whole-of-society approach*, Geneva: HERE-Geneva and Danish Refugee Council, 2017.

⁸⁷ Huang, C., Charles, S., Post, L. and Gough, K, *Tackling the realities of protracted displacement: case studies on what's working and where we can do better*, Washington DC: CGD and IRC, 2018

(www.cgdev.org/publication/tackling-realities-protracted-displacement-case-studies-whats-working)

including the right to life, liberty, and security; the right to access to basic services; and the right to access to justice. The Convention retained the 1951 Convention definition of a refugee but added a paragraph stating that the term "refugee" shall also apply to any person forced to flee his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another location outside his country of origin due to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination, or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality.⁸⁸ It was also a significant improvement over the 1951 Convention because it acknowledged the security implications of refugee flows, focused more specifically on solutions, especially voluntary repatriation, as opposed to the 1951 Convention's integration bias, and encouraged a burden-sharing strategy for refugee assistance and protection.⁸⁹

The African Union has also adopted the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention) in 2009, which is the first legally binding instrument on the protection and assistance of internally displaced persons in Africa. The Convention provides a comprehensive framework for the protection of internally displaced persons, including multiple rights.

2.3 Countries' Pledges under the CRRF and Progresses

At the New York Declaration Summit, a diverse group of 52 leaders and senior officials, including 32 heads of state or government, committed to enhancing multilateral humanitarian assistance. They pledged to increase contributions to UN humanitarian agencies, respond to appeals, and support other international humanitarian organizations.⁹⁰ States also committed to admitting refugees through UNHCR-facilitated resettlement schemes, granting humanitarian and family reunion visas, and providing educational scholarships.⁹¹ Furthermore, 17 Member States with significant refugee populations have committed to enacting legislation that will allow one million more refugee children to attend school and one million more refugees to work and earn a living legally.⁹² Following the Summit, several states also made additional pledges.

The pledges made by American and European countries primarily focus on enhancing financial contributions and annual refugee admissions, with a significant emphasis on the

⁸⁸ Organization of African Unity (OAU), *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*, 10 September 1969, 1001 U.N.T.S. 45, Article 1(2)

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, Article 2(4), 5

⁹⁰ UNHCR Africa, Overview Leaders' Summit on Refugees, Summary Overview Document Leaders' Summit on Refugees, <https://www.unhcr.org/58526bb24>, p. 1

⁹¹ *Ibid*

⁹² *Ibid*

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme. In contrast, African nations concentrate on fostering resilience and self-reliance for refugees by promoting local integration, relaxing encampment policies, and improving access to work, education, and essential legal documents. These differing approaches highlight the varied strategies employed by countries to address the challenges faced by refugees, reflecting their unique contexts and priorities.

The pledges made under the CRRF have critical implications for both refugees and host communities. By improving access to education, healthcare, and basic services, these pledges help ensure that refugees can exercise their rights and live with dignity. Enhancing integration and self-reliance allows refugees to support themselves and their families, while facilitating voluntary return contributes to their safe and dignified repatriation. Such measures aim to create a more supportive environment for refugees and host communities alike.

Significant progress has been reported regarding the pledges made by various international organizations, including the World Bank, EU, and UNHCR, since September 2016.⁹³ The World Bank committed USD 175 million for refugee and local community projects in Djibouti, Uganda, and Ethiopia, with an additional USD 100 million allocated to support Kenya and the Horn of Africa.⁹⁴ These funds aim to enhance access to basic services and economic opportunities for refugee-hosting communities, demonstrating a concerted effort to address the needs of both refugees and locals.

However, the implementation of the CRRF faces numerous challenges, notably a lack of political will among UN Member States. Many countries are hesitant to commit to the NYD or fully implement the CRRF due to concerns about the economic and social costs involved.⁹⁵ Additionally, the lack of consensus on addressing the root causes of migration—such as poverty, conflict, and climate change—complicates efforts. Many African nations, already economically strained, struggle to support both their citizens and refugees, lacking the necessary resources and capacity for effective implementation.

Structural barriers further hinder the effective integration of refugees under the CRRF. A critical gap exists between donor intentions and actionable support, with unpredictable

⁹³ UNHCR, Two Year Progress Assessment of the CRRF Approach: September 2016 - September 2018, Evaluation Report, December 2018, P.25

⁹⁴ World Bank, Kenya receives 100 million World Bank Financing to Mitigate Effects of Forced Displacement, press release, 2017. Available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2017/04/26/kenya-receives-100-million-world-bank-financing-to-mitigate-effects-of-forced-displacement> [accessed 18 Jan 2023].

⁹⁵ Altai Consulting for the European Union, CRRF Case Study Lessons learned from the CRRF and EUTF projects involved in refugee programming in the Horn of Africa, July 2021. https://ec.europa.eu/trustfundforafrica/sites/default/files/crrf_case_study_final.pdf

funding cycles undermining long-term strategies for refugee inclusion. Geographic isolation of refugee populations in remote areas exacerbates employment challenges, limiting access to job opportunities in urban centers. To address these issues, collaboration among development partners, donors, and the private sector is essential to devise innovative solutions and invest in sustainable development projects that benefit both refugees and their host communities.

Chapter Three

Refugee Protection in Ethiopia and pledges made under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework

3.1. Refugee Protection under Ethiopia law and Policy Framework

Ethiopia hosts close to one million refugees and asylum seekers mainly from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Sudan, majority of them are hosted in the regional states of Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Somali, Tigray and Addis Ababa.⁹⁶ These calls not only for addressing the emergency situation of refugees but also address their problems from their root cause including by finding durable solutions. The high inflow of refugees to Ethiopia every year also calls to find ways to minimize the burden on host community by mutually benefiting both refugees and host communities through projects and other methods.

The protection of refugees and asylum seekers, in Ethiopia, is governed by both international and domestic legal frameworks. Ethiopia is signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, its 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, and the Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.⁹⁷ Aside from that, Ethiopia is a party to a number of international human rights treaties that are crucial to refugee protection. Plus, it has its own domestic legal machinery that is vital for local integration and protection of refugees and asylum seekers, including the FDRE Constitution, the Refugee Proclamation No.1110/2019, and other laws and regulations.

The Constitution of Ethiopia contains an entire chapter devoted to outlining fundamental human and democratic rights that should apply to all Ethiopians.⁹⁸ These basic human rights are also, through interpretation, applicable to all human beings living within the Ethiopian territory.⁹⁹ In addition, according to article 9 of the Constitution, ‘all international agreements ratified by Ethiopia form part and parcel of the law of the land’.

Besides, in Ethiopia, the protection of refugee rights and the provision of essential services are formalized through various legislative frameworks. The Refugee Proclamation enacted in 2019 serves as a cornerstone in this legal architecture, emphasizing the country's commitment to upholding refugee rights and integrating refugees into national systems. In addition, the

⁹⁶ RRS and UNHCR, Ethiopia GRF Pledge Progress Report, June 2023

file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/Ethiopia%20GRF%20Pledge%20Progress%20Report%20as%20of%20June%202023_0.pdf

⁹⁷ Fasil Mulatu Gessesse (n.5), p.6

⁹⁸ The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Federal Negarit Gazeta, 1st year, No.1, 21st August 1995, Chapter 3

⁹⁹ Fasil Mulatu Gessesse (n. 5), p.8

RRS has issued several directives that provide detailed guidelines on implementing the Refugee Proclamation. These directives focus on practical aspects of refugee integration, including procedures for obtaining work permits, accessing social services, and ensuring that refugees can participate in local economies.

3.1.1 Refugee Proclamation

Following Ethiopia's Pledges under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, a new refugee proclamation, Proclamation No. 1110/2019, was enacted in 2019 by replacing the previous one. With major changes like a potential opening up of the right to work for refugees, a significant liberalization of the right to travel, increased commitments to providing services to refugees, and a liberalization of the asylum application process,¹⁰⁰ the Proclamation is a significant step forward from the previous refugee law of Ethiopia.

It expands refugees' rights in areas such as the right to work, the right to association, the right to non-profit and non-political association, access to health, the ability to acquire and transfer property, and freedom of movement.¹⁰¹ The majority of those rights are granted in the same circumstances as the most advantageous treatment afforded to foreign nationals under applicable laws.

Furthermore, refugees have the right to obtain a driver's qualification certification license, identity papers, and travel documents, as well as the right to access banking and financial services, telecommunication services, and the right to legally register life events such as births and marriages, as well as rationing.¹⁰²

The Ethiopian Nationality Proclamation of 2003 is another significant piece of legislation in the protection of refugees in Ethiopia. The proclamation includes provisions for foreigners to get Ethiopian citizenship. Thus, refugees may get Ethiopian nationality if they meet the criteria outlined in the Proclamation. This right is also indicated in the Refugee Proclamation which states that 'a recognized refugee or asylum seeker may apply to acquire Ethiopian Nationality after fulfilling the necessary requirements provided in the Law.'¹⁰³

Article 5 of the Nationality Proclamation outlines the requirements that a foreigner must meet in order to gain Ethiopian nationality by law. Age of majority and legal capacity, established domicile and residency for four years prior to application, language ability, economic self-sufficiency, good moral character, renunciation of previous nationality, and the oath of

¹⁰⁰ Refugee Proclamation (n. 19) Art. 23-38

¹⁰¹ Ibid, Art. 25-29

¹⁰² Ibid, Art. 30- 36

¹⁰³ Ibid, Art. 42

allegiance are among the requirements. Article 6 deals with the conditions for getting Ethiopian nationality through marriage with an Ethiopian national. This is, particularly, important because allowing refugees to gain nationality in Ethiopia can be an important step in helping them to rebuild their lives and contribute to the economy of the country.

3.1.2 Regulation to Determine the Organization and Powers and Functions of the RRS

The Council of Ministers has issued a Regulation to Determine the Organization and Powers and Functions of the RRS in 2024. The regulation, stipulates powers and duties of the RRS to provides documentation services and evidential service; Negotiates, signs, monitors, evaluates and supports projects implemented by partners; Signs partnership agreements with partners for financial, material and technical support; Provides as much basic and social services; Facilitates the process of obtaining work permits in cooperation with relevant authorities; and other activities.

However, the regulation is aimed at only providing the Organization and Power and Functions of the RRS to the exclusion of other stakeholders. Moreover, the regulation has come up with more restrictive approaches than the rights and privileges provided under the Refugee Proclamation. One instance is including limiting basic and social services to as much as possible.

In 2024, the Council of Ministers issued a regulation to define the organization, powers, and functions of the RRS.¹⁰⁴ This regulation outlines several key responsibilities, including the provision of documentation and evidential services, negotiating and signing agreements with partners, monitoring and evaluating collaborative projects, and facilitating the provision of financial, material, and technical support.¹⁰⁵ Additionally, the RRS is tasked with offering basic and social services and assisting with the process of obtaining work permits in collaboration with relevant authorities.¹⁰⁶

However, the regulation primarily focuses on delineating the RRS's organization and powers, effectively sidelining other stakeholders who play a crucial role in the implementation of refugee rights. This exclusion raises concerns about the collaborative nature required for effective refugee support. Moreover, the regulation adopts a more restrictive framework compared to the rights and privileges outlined in the Refugee Proclamation. For instance, it

¹⁰⁴ Regulation of the Council of Ministers, Issued to Determine the Organization and Powers and Functions of the Refugees and Returnees Service, Regulation No. 546 /2024.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, Art. 5

¹⁰⁶ Ibid

limits the provision of basic and social services to "as much as possible," which undermines the comprehensive support that refugees and asylum seekers are entitled to receive. On the other hand, the Refugee Proclamation guarantees various rights, such as access to healthcare, justice, banking, telecommunications, and education, equal with Ethiopian nationals. When it comes to higher education, vocational training, and adult education their implementation is based on available resources and national education policies.

By imposing limitations on these rights, the regulation not only contradicts the intentions of the Refugee Proclamation but also diminishes the overall protection and support that refugees require. Thus, while the regulation does provide some official authority to the RRS, its restrictive measures may jeopardize the fundamental rights and protections intended for refugees.

3.1.3 Directives Issued by the RRS

A Directive to Determine Conditions for Movement and Residence of Refugees Outside of Camps is issued in 2019 to rid refugees of dependency on aid and transform their lives by taking advantage of various employment opportunities in the country without the need to be confined to camps. This directive consists important rights of refugees including permit for out of camp residency, unity of family, and temporary movement outside refugee camps.

Another important directive of the RRS is a Directive to Determine the Procedure for Refugees Right to Work issued in 2019. This directive provides that any recognized refugee may be allowed to work in a joint project by obtaining a residence permit, without a need for a work permit, if he is selected to participate in the project having met the requirements set by the RRS and the project. A refugee or asylum seeker who is legally married to an Ethiopian national or has one or more child in possession of Ethiopian nationality, and has been provided a letter by the RRS attesting to the facts, does not need a residence permit to participate in a joint project, as provided in sub-article 1 of this Article.¹⁰⁷

3.1.4 National Action Plan and the National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy

Following the 2016 New York summit, Ethiopia launched its Roadmap for Pledge Implementation, dividing initiatives into six thematic areas. These include an "out of camp" policy benefiting 10% of refugees, educational access for refugee children, and creating

¹⁰⁷ Directive to Determine the Procedures for Refugees Right to Work, Directive No. 02/2019, Art. 7

10,000 hectares of irrigable land for agriculture.¹⁰⁸ The Roadmap also aims to enhance basic social services for refugees and promote local integration. While the bureaucratic structure overseeing implementation involves the RRS and the Ministry of Finance, challenges remain in translating national legislation to local governance levels.

The government has also developed a 10-year National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy (NCRRS), formulated in 2018 but not yet formally adopted. This strategy seeks to transition from a camp-based model to development-oriented settlements, fostering self-reliance for both refugees and host communities. It emphasizes sustainable management of resources, access to economic opportunities, and improved services in water, sanitation, health, and education. Despite the establishment of a National Coordination Office to oversee the CRRF, implementation has faced fragmentation due to inadequate local governance translation. Regional action plans were introduced in five refugee-hosting areas, Tigray and Afar, Somali, Gambela and Addis Ababa. However, the fragmentation of implementation on the ground is attributed to the failure to translate national legislation to the lower levels of governance.

Interviews with RRS representatives reveal that initial efforts to implement the CRRF roadmap encountered significant challenges, including political instability and insufficient government commitment. While subsequent pledges in 2019 and 2023 aimed to revitalize support for refugees, the absence of a Strategic National Action Plan has hindered cohesive action. Without a clear framework, efforts risk becoming fragmented, complicating the realization of the CRRF's objectives and undermining progress in addressing refugee issues effectively in Ethiopia.¹⁰⁹

3.2 Ethiopia's Pledges under the CRRF and Progresses Made

Ethiopia has been proactive in implementing the CRRF since its introduction in 2016, making significant pledges aimed at improving the lives of both refugees and host communities. Among the initial nine pledges, the government committed to expanding the "out-of-camp" policy to include 10% of the current refugee population, providing work permits, increasing educational enrollment for refugee children, making land available for agricultural use, allowing local integration for refugees who have lived in Ethiopia over 20 years, building

¹⁰⁸ Refugees and Returnees Service, Roadmap for the implementation of Ethiopia Government Pledges and the practical application of the CRRF, Addis Ababa, 2017.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Mr. Anteneh Mekasha, RRS, Livelihood Job Creation Team Leader, March 14, 2023

industrial park with 30% reserved for refugees, and expanding basic and essential services.¹¹⁰ These commitments were further enhanced at the first Global Refugee Forum in 2019, with additional pledges focusing on economic opportunities and improving the asylum system.

In 2023, Ethiopia introduced six new pledges that reflect a deeper commitment to sustainable solutions for refugees. These include transforming refugee camps into urban settlements with improved infrastructure, enhancing government capacity to integrate refugees into national systems, and promoting climate-smart agriculture.¹¹¹ The government also aims to foster private sector engagement and improve digital infrastructure to facilitate refugee inclusion in the economy. This evolution of pledges demonstrates a clear intent to build upon earlier commitments and enhance the socio-economic conditions for refugees.

The implementation of the CRRF has faced challenges since its inception, with the Ethiopian government striving to create a comprehensive policy framework to support refugees. This includes enacting a Refugees Proclamation that grants legal protections and rights, as well as directives aimed at ensuring freedom of movement and the right to work. While these measures have provided new opportunities for refugees, such as improved access to services and the formal economy, the actual implementation has encountered difficulties.

Despite some progress, the overall implementation of the CRRF remains limited and contentious. Reports highlight advancements in areas like the out-of-camp policy, education, and essential services, often facilitated through partnerships with international organizations. However, ongoing political unrest, severe drought, and a rising influx of refugees have complicated efforts to fulfill the pledges, resulting in a precarious situation for many.

The subsequent sections of this chapter will explore into the specific actions taken by the government and other stakeholders in relation to the CRRF pledges. This analysis will cover various areas, including the Out of Camp Policy, education, work and livelihoods, documentation, social and basic services, and local integration. Understanding the progress made in these sectors will provide insight into the current state of refugee support in Ethiopia and the challenges that lie ahead.

3.2.1 The Out-of-Camp Policy

Ethiopia's first pledge under the CRRF involves expanding the "out-of-camp" policy to benefit 10% of the refugee population, which currently stands at around one million. This

¹¹⁰ Briefing note on Applying the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (n. 17)

¹¹¹ RRS and UNHCR, Global Refugee Forum Preparation Government of Ethiopia's 2023 GRF Pledges, https://rrs.et/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Final_Ethiopia_2023_GRF_Pledges_06.11.23.pdf

translates to approximately 100,000 refugees who may live outside designated camps. The Ethiopian government aims to progressively extend this policy as resources permit. In 2023, the commitment was reinforced with a pledge to transform selected refugee camps into sustainable urban settlements, enhancing infrastructure and public services to better integrate refugees into host communities.

According to a 2019 UNHCR report, the number of refugees benefiting from the Out of Camp Policy increased from 19,633 in 2018 to 35,340 in 2019, representing about 5% of the total refugee population.¹¹² The report also revealed regional disparities in policy implementation, with around 83% of refugees in Addis Ababa benefiting from the policy, compared to approximately 28% in the Afar region. These variations highlight how the effectiveness of the Out of Camp Policy can differ based on local circumstances and available resources.

The 2019 directive allows refugees who have resided in a camp for at least 30 days to apply for a permit for out-of-camp residency. To qualify, they must demonstrate financial independence or have a sponsor to cover their living expenses. Additionally, refugees can apply for work permits to pursue legal employment.¹¹³ The directive also facilitates family reunification, allowing family members of permit-holders to live together outside camps.¹¹⁴ Notably, minors granted out-of-camp permission are not required to return to camps upon reaching adulthood.

The formal introduction of the out-of-camp policy in the 2019 refugee proclamation aimed to promote refugee self-reliance and integration by granting more freedom of movement and access to economic opportunities. However, subsequent legislations and practical challenges have complicated its implementation. The directive has imposed strict conditions that limit refugees' freedom of movement, undermining the basic rights intended to be protected by the proclamation.

For refugees granted permission to live outside camps, financial challenges persist, making it difficult to secure housing and access basic services. Interview with respondent working in the RRS also shows that work and livelihood opportunities of refugees are limited leaving

¹¹² 2019 Summary Pledge Progress Report, UNHCR, <file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/2019%20Ethiopia%20Summary%20Pledge%20Progress%20Report%20V2-1.pdf>, 2019 p.10

¹¹³ Directive to Determine Conditions for Movement and Residence of Refugees Outside of Camps, Directive No. 01/2019, Article 8

¹¹⁴ Ibid, Article 10

refugees to depend on joint projects which provides them some job and to work informally.¹¹⁵ Many lack sufficient resources, leading some to engage in illegal work or activities to survive. This precarious situation exacerbates their vulnerability and undermines their dignity. While some acknowledge improvements in policy regarding freedom of movement, refugees themselves often report ongoing restrictions that hinder their ability to seek better opportunities.

A refugee representative highlighted that although some refugees can reside in cities like Addis Ababa, they face limitations on traveling beyond designated areas.¹¹⁶ Digital IDs provided to refugees in the city enable access to services but restrict travel outside specific regions, limiting their job prospects and overall mobility. Interviews with refugee representatives further emphasize that whether in camps or urban areas, refugees encounter a range of obstacles, from limited access to essential services to financial constraints.

Refugees with regular out-of-camp residency permits can theoretically move freely throughout the country, except in areas deemed unsafe by the RRS. However, the RRS retains the authority to designate specific areas where refugees may live, which can restrict their freedom of movement. This aspect of the policy raises concerns about the actual realization of refugees' rights in practice.

The out-of-camp policy in Ethiopia features different approaches for various nationalities. Syrian and Yemeni refugees are generally permitted to reside in urban areas like Addis Ababa without being placed in camps, while refugees from other countries must initially stay in camps until granted permission to relocate. Eritrean refugees, however, have long been able to reside in urban areas due to a separate scheme established in 2010.¹¹⁷ According to a respondent from RRS, there are over 80,000 refugees, primarily Eritreans, residing in Addis Ababa.¹¹⁸ However, despite these opportunities, Eritrean refugees currently face pressures of forced repatriation, highlighting ongoing challenges within the broader refugee policy landscape in Ethiopia.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Mr. Anteneh Mekasha (n. 109)

¹¹⁶ Shadya Abduljabbar Saeed Fazea, Yemeni Refugee and President of the Ethio-Yemen Foundation, June 24, 2024.

¹¹⁷ Interview made with Mr. Anteneh Gorfu, Refugees and Returnees Service, Livelihoods Officer, March 16, 2023.

¹¹⁸ Ibid

3.2.2 Education

In 2016, the Ethiopian government committed to increasing the enrollment of refugee children across various educational levels, including preschool, primary, secondary, and tertiary education, without discrimination and within available resources. The specific targets set were to raise pre-primary enrollment to 60%, primary to 75%, secondary to 25%, and increase higher education enrollment from 1,600 to 2,500 students.¹¹⁹ This commitment was further reinforced in 2019 when the government pledged to expand the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system, aiming to provide quality skills training to 20,000 host community members and refugees by 2024. A renewed pledge in 2023 sought to enhance the TVET system further, ensuring inclusive training that aligns with labor market demands for both communities by 2027.

These pledges reflect the government's ongoing efforts to improve educational access and opportunities for refugee children and youth. The refugee proclamation grants refugees the same rights to pre-primary and primary education as Ethiopian citizens and allows access to secondary and tertiary education, subject to available resources and national education policy.¹²⁰ Over the years, significant progress has been made in relation to education access for refugees, with the 2019–2020 Country Refugee Response Plan focusing on integrating refugees into the national educational system, including adult literacy and TVET.

The country has effectively integrated refugee education data into the national Education Management Information System (EMIS), which has started capturing important information related to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), as well as education for children with disabilities.¹²¹ The sixth series of the Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP VI, 2020–2025) further supports the inclusion of refugees in the national education framework, outlining initiatives to establish new school facilities, expand existing ones, and improve the quality of refugee education.¹²²

Despite notable advancements, challenges remain, particularly in secondary education, where enrollment rates stand significantly lower at 13%. Many school-age refugees continue to be out of school due to various reasons, including overcrowded classrooms, shortages of

¹¹⁹ Roadmap for the implementation of the FDRE: Government pledges and practical application of the CRRF in Ethiopia, November 2017, p. 10

¹²⁰ Refugee proclamation (n. 19) Art 24

¹²¹ The sixth series of Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP VI, 2020 – 2025), p. 20

¹²² Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP VI, 2020 – 2025). P. 22

materials, and a lack of qualified teachers.¹²³ According to a 2019 UNHCR report, Gross Enrollment Ratios (GER) for pre-primary, primary, and secondary education have improved, with pre-primary education reaching a GER of 51% and primary education at 67%. However, the secondary education figure highlights ongoing barriers to access.¹²⁴

A more recent report from 2023 indicates that 11,949 individuals received accredited skills training linked to market demands, including over 5,000 refugees.¹²⁵ The expansion of 13 TVET colleges shows a concerted effort to enhance vocational training opportunities for both refugees and local communities.¹²⁶ These findings indicate progress in expanding refugee participation in early and primary education, as well as in vocational training programs, though higher education opportunities remain limited.

While significant progresses have been made at the primary and secondary levels, higher education continues to pose challenges for refugees. Although there are legal rights to basic education, access to university and college remains constrained. Many refugees face barriers that hinder their transition from high school to higher education, with limited financial resources and availability of opportunities at private institutions. The TVET system has emerged as the primary pathway for many refugees seeking post-secondary education, underscoring the need for more comprehensive solutions.

The successful implementation of educational pledges relies heavily on support from donors and partners. Initiatives like the Additional Financing on General Education Quality Improvement Program on Equity (AF-GEQIP-E) by the World Bank and the Qualification and Employment Perspectives (QEP) program funded by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and others are crucial in enhancing refugee inclusion in the national education system.¹²⁷ Additionally, organizations like the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Finnish Refugee Council have provided vocational training linked to employment opportunities.

Despite these efforts, feedback from refugees indicates gaps in attention and resources within the TVET system. Some refugees report difficulties in accessing early education due to a lack of government-provided opportunities, leading to barriers when attempting to enroll in

¹²³ Education Sector Development Programme VI (ESDP VI), 2020/21 – 2024/25 G.C. The Ministry of Education of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, 2021. P. 22

¹²⁴ 2019 Summary Pledge Progress Report (n. 112) p.10

¹²⁵ RRS and UNHCR, Ethiopia GRF Pledge Progress Report, June 2023

file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/Ethiopia%20GRF%20Pledge%20Progress%20Report%20as%20of%20June%202023_0.pdf p. 4

¹²⁶ Ibid

¹²⁷ Ibid, p.7

primary schools. An interview with the Yemeni refugee representative shows that even though refugees are allowed to join TVET trainings they are not given attentions. She also stated that *“since refugees and host communities are not being given similar attentions most refugees taking training at the TVET are not getting enough trainings.”*¹²⁸ In addition, one respondents with three children from Eritrean refugees stated that *“his children were not allowed to join KG because those were not provided by government schools and was not able to cover the cost for private schools and when he tried to take them to primary schools they were not accepted because asked why they did not take KG class and some would say they are full.”*¹²⁹

The government has made progress in basic education for refugees, but a significant gap in access to higher education remains. To support the long-term educational and economic advancement of refugees, the government must address the challenges that prevent enrollment in traditional academic pathways, ensuring equitable access to higher education options.

3.2.3 Work and Livelihood Opportunities

Ethiopia has made several pledges aimed at enhancing the economic integration of refugees and host communities, including commitments to provide work permits and access to irrigable land for agricultural projects. The government aimed to make 10,000 hectares of land available to benefit around 100,000 people, with plans to develop industrial parks that could create jobs for 100,000 individuals, reserving 30% of these positions for refugees. This strategy seeks to foster self-reliance through skills development and private sector participation, recognizing the right to work for refugees under the refugee proclamation.¹³⁰

However, challenges persist, particularly with the bureaucratic processes outlined in the 2019 directive for obtaining residence and work permits.¹³¹ Only the primary refugee selected for a project can work using that permit, which restricts employment opportunities for family members. However, refugees legally married to Ethiopian nationals or with children holding Ethiopian nationality can work without needing a permit.¹³² In addition, employers wishing to hire refugees must obtain a work permit from the Ministry of Labor and Skills, accompanied

¹²⁸ Interview with Shadya Abduljabbar Saeed Fazea (n. 116)

¹²⁹ Interview with a refugee from Eritrea, March 16, 2023

¹³⁰ Refugee Protection (n. 19) Art. 26

¹³¹ Directive No. 02/2019 (n. 107) Art. 8

¹³² Ibid, Art. 16

by a letter of support from the RRS, which complicates the hiring process.¹³³ The requirement for a work permit and RRS support adds an administrative burden for employers, potentially discouraging them from hiring refugees. Furthermore, the limitations on job types that refugees can access, specifically those not covered by Ethiopian nationals, may restrict their employment opportunities even if they possess the necessary qualifications. This subjective interpretation can lead to inconsistent application and barriers to meaningful employment.

Regarding self-employment, recognized refugees can operate businesses after obtaining the appropriate licenses, provided they comply with national laws. They can engage in agricultural and irrigation projects through lease arrangements with regional governments.¹³⁴ In 2019, the government made modest progress in making irrigable land available, particularly in the Dollo Ado area, where 2,000 individuals benefited from such initiatives, largely funded by the IKEA Foundation.¹³⁵

Despite some progress in land availability, the broader goal of benefiting 100,000 individuals has seen limited success, with only 4% of the target achieved for refugees and 3% for host community members.¹³⁶ Similarly, the target of developing 10,000 hectares of land has only been met to 11%. However, smaller-scale initiatives have engaged over 4,000 refugees and host community members in various economic activities, such as income-generating activities, agricultural projects, and vocational training.¹³⁷

In 2019, the Ethiopian government pledged to create 90,000 economic opportunities through agricultural and livestock value chains, aiming to ensure equitable benefits for both refugees and host communities. A progress report in 2023 indicated that economic opportunities had been created for over 129,000 individuals, including 38,621 refugees and 90,828 members of host communities.¹³⁸ Additionally, the introduction of the Refugee and Host Integration through Safety Net (RHISN) program aims to bolster income for vulnerable refugees and promote social cohesion.¹³⁹

Nevertheless, many still rely on informal economic activities and humanitarian aid due to restrictions on their ability to secure jobs or start businesses. The level of participation in the informal economy varies among different refugee groups, with Eritrean refugees generally

¹³³ Ibid, Art. 17

¹³⁴ Ibid, Art. 19

¹³⁵ 2019 Summary Pledge Progress Report (n. 112) p.10

¹³⁶ Ibid

¹³⁷ Ibid

¹³⁸ RRS and UNHCR, Ethiopia GRF Pledge Progress Report, June 2023 (n. 125) p. 4 & 5

¹³⁹ Ibid

enjoying better rights and living standards than South Sudanese refugees, who face higher poverty rates.¹⁴⁰ Urban refugees in cities like Addis Ababa face legal constraints but often have better access to economic opportunities through informal engagements.

The conflict in Tigray has disrupted the economic integration of Eritrean refugees, leading to further displacement and reduced opportunities for self-sufficiency. Besides, bureaucratic hurdles, such as navigating multiple government offices for work permits, pose significant challenges, while mobility restrictions limit refugees' ability to seek better employment.

Interviews with refugees indicate a complex setting of challenges regarding work and livelihood opportunities. According to a representative of Yemeni refugees “job permits are overly restrictive, limiting refugees to specific roles and confining them geographically.” Such mobility restrictions further hinder their ability to seek better employment opportunities. Additionally, there is a lack of awareness about refugee work permits among government institutions, which complicates their access to jobs even after permits are granted.

The high unemployment rate in Ethiopia contributes to the difficulties refugees face in finding jobs. Government institutions often prioritize local citizens for limited job openings, leading to reluctance to hire refugees. This situation exacerbates the challenges refugees encounter in securing meaningful employment, creating a broader context of economic exclusion.

The pledge to develop industrial parks to provide employment for up to 100,000 individuals, with 30% of jobs reserved for refugees, has not been realized due to various challenges, including a lack of consensus between the government and donors.

Overall, the legal framework in Ethiopia creates a tiered system with significant barriers to employment for refugees, despite some initiatives aimed at promoting economic inclusion. Addressing these practical barriers and ensuring that policies translate into meaningful opportunities is crucial for fostering equitable access to employment and supporting refugees in their pursuit of livelihoods. Continued efforts and resources will be essential for realizing the potential for refugee economic integration and self-sufficiency.

3.2.4 Documentation

Ethiopia has made commitment to provide various benefits to refugees, including the issuance of birth certificates for refugee children born in the country, as well as enabling

¹⁴⁰ World Bank (2018) Informing durable solutions by micro-data: a skills survey for refugees in Ethiopia (<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/996221531249711200/pdf/128185-WP-PUBLICP162987-SkillsReport.pdf>) p. 7

them to open bank accounts and obtain driving licenses. The Refugee Proclamation provides essential rights and access to services and documents, facilitating the integration and well-being of refugees. Identity documents are provided to refugees to confirm their identity, and they are entitled to travel documents that allow travel outside Ethiopia.¹⁴¹ Additionally, refugees can open bank accounts, transfer money, and utilize other financial services.¹⁴²

Refugees who have a valid foreign or international driving license recognized by the Ethiopian government can apply for an equivalent driver's license. Those without such a license can still obtain an Ethiopian driving license by passing the required tests.¹⁴³ Moreover, refugees can register vital events like births, deaths, and marriages, receiving the same treatment and rights as Ethiopian nationals in this regard.¹⁴⁴ This includes access to necessary certificates, which is crucial for their legal identity.

According to a UNHCR report from 2019, 79% of refugees in Ethiopia were provided with individual identity documents that year, marking significant progress in ensuring official proof of identity for refugees.¹⁴⁵ The report also noted ongoing implementation of pledges to issue birth certificates, with 8,080 vital events registered, predominantly consisting of 7,150 birth registrations. This access is vital as it grants legal identity and documentation to refugee children.

In addition to identity and birth registration, the UNHCR report highlighted refugees' increasing access to financial services, with 13,960 bank accounts opened in 2019. This access to formal banking is a key component of economic inclusion and self-reliance for refugees, facilitating better financial management. Furthermore, a 2023 joint report by RRS and UNHCR indicated that 632,139 refugees were enrolled in the Biometric Information Management System (BIMS), linking biometric data to individual identity records.¹⁴⁶

The report also highlighted those 890,825 refugees had undergone Level 3 registration, offering a more detailed profile compared to basic registration. To strengthen the asylum system, the Ethiopian government has implemented various measures, including drafting regulations for refugee status determination (RSD) and establishing RSD units. Specific procedures for asylum seekers from Syria, Sudan, and East Congo have also been developed to address case backlogs.

¹⁴¹ Refugee Proclamation (n. 19) Art. 32

¹⁴² Ibid, Art 33

¹⁴³ Ibid, Art 31

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, Art 36

¹⁴⁵ 2019 Summary Pledge Progress Report (n. 112)

¹⁴⁶ RRS and UNHCR, Ethiopia GRF Pledge Progress Report, June 2023 (n. 125)

Since 2019, the government has recognized 124,928 refugees on a prima facie basis and registered 2,200 asylum seekers. Refugees are included in Ethiopia's Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems Improvement Strategy, ensuring access to civil registration services in 21 refugee camps and other locations. A backlog clearance exercise in 2021/2022 benefited 26,020 refugee children, further enhancing vital events registration.

Since launching vital events registration in 2017, significant progress has been made, with 72,286 vital events registered, including 62,816 births. This effort has reduced the backlog of unregistered events within the refugee population. Civil status officers have been dedicated to registration centers to streamline the process, and the digitization of the refugee civil registration system is underway to integrate refugee data into the national system.

The report indicates substantial progress in refugee registration, with 315,260 refugee ID cards and 868,968 proof of registration documents issued. To enhance service provision, one-stop shops (OSS) have been established in 13 refugee camps, offering integrated services for registration and documentation. The government has gradually taken over refugee registration services, expanding coverage over time.

Additionally, refugees and asylum seekers are included in the National Strategy on Violence Against Women and Children, allowing access to holistic support services for gender-based violence survivors. They can utilize one-stop centers, shelters, mobile courts, and free legal aid services across the country.¹⁴⁷ The 2023 report reflects a continued commitment to registering refugees comprehensively and facilitating their access to essential civil registration services.

Despite the improvements in vital events registration, refugees face challenges in accessing important documents, particularly when it comes to replacing lost items. Refugees stated that whenever they lose documents such as proof of registration or refugee ID cards, it is very difficult to obtain a support letter or statement from the police acknowledging the loss of the document. According to interviewed refugees there are two main reasons for this:

Many refugees report difficulties obtaining police support letters for lost documents due to a lack of awareness among law enforcement about refugee documentation and language barriers. These communication issues hinder the process of replacing vital identification documents, highlighting the need for improved training for police personnel and the provision of interpretation services.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ RRS and UNHCR, Ethiopia GRF Pledge Progress Report, June 2023 (n. 125)

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Shadya Abduljabbar Saeed Fazea (n. 116) and two other refugees from Eritrea.

In addition, according to the respondents, there has been better success in the implementation of refugee vital events registration compared to other rights. Even though registration of vital events such as was disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in northern Ethiopia, refugees reported that registering these events was still relatively easier compared to accessing other rights and services. Refugee representatives confirming these states “*vital events registration was more accessible for the refugee population than some other entitlements.*”¹⁴⁹

3.2.5 Social and Basic Services

The Ethiopian government has committed to enhancing basic social services for refugees, including healthcare, financial services, civil registration, and other benefits available to foreigners with legal permanent residence permits. The focus is on improving access to and the quality of these essential services for refugee populations. However, there is a lack of clarity regarding how the refugee service delivery system integrates with national systems, as the pledges do not clearly outline the coordination mechanisms between refugee-specific services and the national health, financial, and civil registration systems.

In 2019, the government also pledged to provide sustainable, affordable, and environmentally friendly renewable energy solutions for 3 million people. Currently, RRS is primarily responsible for overseeing and, in some regions, directly implementing service delivery for refugees, which limits the involvement of regional governments and other institutions in this process.

Despite some advancements in 2019 regarding the inclusion of refugees in basic social services like health, nutrition, and sanitation, overall policy progress has been limited. Refugees can access national referral hospitals and health posts, and vaccination campaigns and reproductive health services are available to both refugees and host communities, laying a foundation for further integration into the national health sector. The 2019–2020 Country Refugee Response Plan provides for the expansion of access to different forms of energy; protection of the environment; improving food and nutrition security by encouraging the use of cash instead of in-kind support; and Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programs. Water provision in several refugee camps is below target levels, and the rate of Severe Acute

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Shadya Abduljabbar Saeed Fazea (n. 116)

Malnutrition (SAM) in Afar region is remarkably high at 6%, significantly above the target maximum of 2%.¹⁵⁰

A joint report by the RRS and UNHCR highlights notable progress in providing alternative and renewable energy solutions for both refugees and host communities. Over 382,000 refugees and 85,000 members of host communities have gained access to clean energy options for cooking, lighting, and powering community infrastructure.¹⁵¹ To guide the implementation of clean energy solutions, the government and stakeholders have developed strategic frameworks such as the Multi-actor Cooking Fuel Strategy and the Sustainable Electrification Strategy.¹⁵² These documents outline a roadmap for sustainable, reliable, and culturally appropriate energy interventions. Additionally, the government has integrated climate action into its refugee response, with initiatives like planting over 2.5 million tree seedlings to restore degraded lands in refugee-hosting areas.

According to an interview with a respondent working at UNHCR, the integration of health services has allowed refugees to access the public health system alongside local communities.¹⁵³ While this marks progress in health service integration, refugees face challenges in accessing private healthcare due to financial constraints, as the current system does not provide coverage for expensive private hospital services. This highlights the need for ongoing improvements in access to a full range of healthcare services for refugees.

In addition, language barriers pose a significant obstacle for refugees in accessing basic services, as many struggle to communicate in the local language, and staff often lack proficiency in English.¹⁵⁴ This issue complicates their ability to utilize services effectively, and it becomes even more problematic in legal proceedings/courts where refugees need to explain their cases without adequate interpretation services. Lack of counseling and legal representation services, previously offered by organizations like the Norwegian Refugee Center, has further limited refugees' options for legal assistance and guidance.

3.2.6 Local Integration of Refugees

The Ethiopian government has pledged to facilitate the local integration of refugees who have resided in the country for over 20 years, as outlined in the 2019-2020 Country Refugee Response Plan. This plan aims to support at least 13,000 long-term refugees, primarily

¹⁵⁰ 2019 Summary Pledge Progress Report (n. 112) p.11

¹⁵¹ RRS and UNHCR, Ethiopia GRF Pledge Progress Report, June 2023 (125) p. 2

¹⁵² Ibid

¹⁵³ Interview with Mr. Ephrem Tadesse, UNHCR, June 19, 2024.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Shadya Abduljabbar Saeed Fazea (n. 116)

located in the Somali Regional State (SRS), particularly in the Jijiga area.¹⁵⁵ The local integration framework includes legal, socio-economic, and cultural components, promoting the integration of refugees into host communities.

On the socio-economic front, initiatives such as skills training and access to land for farming have been implemented, benefiting both refugees and local communities. Culturally, the shared languages, religions, and traditions between refugees and host populations in regions like Afar and Somali provide a strong basis for cultural integration. Despite these efforts, progress has been limited, and the pledge for local integration has largely gone unfulfilled, with minimal evidence of meaningful implementation.

Interviews with respondents from the RRS revealed that some local integration is occurring informally, rather than through a formalized process.¹⁵⁶ This informal integration includes refugees engaging in employment, land access agreements, and community participation, often rooted in a shared Somali identity. However, the legal distinctions between refugees and local populations lead to differential treatment, affecting the integration process.

While the Ethiopian government has made some arrangements to promote local integration, these efforts are still in their infancy and primarily trial-based in specific locations. A respondent from UNHCR noted that these initiatives aim to allow refugees to access public services alongside host communities, but they have not yet been fully realized or implemented nationally.¹⁵⁷ The framework exists, but comprehensive implementation remains lacking.

A refugee representative expressed doubt regarding the effectiveness of local integration policies, stating that many long-term refugees still lack access to residence permits or citizenship. Despite their desire to integrate, these refugees have not seen tangible benefits from the law.¹⁵⁸ This highlights a difference between the stated intentions of the government and the actual experiences of refugees on the ground.

The lack of progress on the local integration pledge raises concerns about the government's commitment to providing durable solutions for long-term refugees. The omission of this pledge from subsequent commitments suggests a potential shift in priorities, questioning the government's long-term plans to support and empower its protracted refugee population through integration opportunities.

¹⁵⁵ 2019 Summary Pledge Progress Report (n. 112)

¹⁵⁶ Interview with anonymous respondent from Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat, June 12, 2024. Interview with anonymous respondent from Norwegian Refugee Center, June 28, 2024

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Ephrem Tadesse (n. 153)

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Shadya Abduljabbar Saeed Fazea (n. 116)

Chapter Four

The challenges and prospects of Ethiopia's pledges under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework

Despite the legislative reforms in Ethiopia aimed at improving the rights and experiences of refugees, there continue to be a number of regulatory gaps and uncertainties that impact refugees' ability to freely travel, work, and fully exercise their rights. In 2016, 2019, and 2023, Ethiopia made various commitments to enhance refugee protection and integration. These included pledges to expand refugees' freedom of movement, access to employment, and other socioeconomic rights. However, the extent to which these commitments have been fully realized within the framework of the latest refugee legislation remains unclear.

There is an inherent tension between states' international legal obligations to protect refugees, and their interests in maintaining orderly and secure migration processes, including combating smuggling and trafficking.¹⁵⁹ This delicate balance is a central challenge, as policies aimed at border control and migration management can sometimes come at the expense of refugee protection principles. States need to clearly distinguish between refugees in need of international protection, and other categories of migrants not requiring such safeguards. This differentiation is crucial, as the primary rules of refugee law emphasize the unique rights and entitlements of those fleeing persecution or conflict.¹⁶⁰

Regarding potential solutions, states' perceptions of their own self-interest will continue to shape policy decisions and their willingness to cooperate on these issues. At the same time, there is a need to balance the provision of durable solutions for refugees, with the needs and demands of host communities, especially in developing countries like Ethiopia. Refugee-hosting states often face difficult tradeoffs in allocating resources and opportunities between refugees and local populations.

4.1 Challenges to the Implementation of the Pledges

Commentators have highlighted numerous challenges associated with the CRRF and GCR. Critical among them are the exclusion of key actors (such as communities and local authorities), insufficient financial support from the international community and the limited engagement of the private sector.¹⁶¹ Commentators have also noted, along with the other

¹⁵⁹ Guy S. (n. 53) p. 6.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 8

¹⁶¹ Montemurro and Wendt (n. 88)

shortcomings, that the CRRF lacks a monitoring framework even though it had been foreseen in the GCR.¹⁶² One of the challenges associated with the implementation of the CRRF is the overlapping of responsibilities between stakeholders, particularly between the UNHCR and States. There has always been a disjuncture in practice, and a certain tension, between the institutional responsibilities of UNHCR, the obligations of States, and their ‘sovereign’ interests.¹⁶³

The implementation of the pledges made by Ethiopia under the CRRF is faced with various political, social, economic, and other challenges. Some of the challenges mentioned by stakeholders like UNHCR are shortage of funds resulting in very limited socio-economic opportunities for both the refugees and host communities, systems not being in place to support refugees, limited basic and social services, and lack of livelihood opportunities both within and outside the camps. Details of the challenges are discussed as follows:

4.1.1 Economic Challenges and Shortage of Funding

The Ethiopian government's pledges to support refugee integration require collaboration with various stakeholders, including international organizations like the World Bank and the European Investment Bank. However, a significant challenge identified by UNHCR and others is the lack of effective systems to respond to complex emergencies and insufficient funding for implementation. Despite receiving substantial support, such as USD 100 million from the World Bank in 2018¹⁶⁴, Ethiopia continues to struggle with refugee integration due to inadequate coordination among involved actors.

The CRRF aims to shift from a camp-based model to a more integrated approach for refugees. However, the coordination structure has not been effective, resulting in many government agencies remaining uninvolved in the CRRF process. This disconnection limits input from refugees, host communities, and the private sector, and there is a lack of strategic vision for executing the CRRF. Additionally, the commitment to construct industrial parks with 30% of jobs reserved for refugees has not been realized, further complicating employment prospects.

Ethiopia's low level of economic development, compounded by sanctions and ongoing internal conflicts, puts immense pressure on infrastructure and social services. Most refugees

¹⁶² Alemu Asfaw Nigusie and Freddie Carver, ‘The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: Progress in Ethiopia’ HPG Working Paper, September 2019, <http://cdn-odi-production.s3-website-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media/documents/12941.pdf> accessed Dec. 28 2022, p.2

¹⁶³ Guy S (n. 53), p. 12

¹⁶⁴ UNHCR, Ethiopia Country Refugee Response Plan (n. 20)

are located in underdeveloped regions such as Tigray, Afar, and Gambella, which face harsh conditions and limited resources. The implementation of the CRRF and related pledges largely occurs at the regional level, necessitating action plans to address the unique challenges faced in each area.

The conflict in Tigray has severely affected both internally displaced persons and Eritrean refugees, many of whom have relocated to urban areas like Addis Ababa. This influx strains the already limited resources and infrastructure in the capital, complicating the government's capacity to respond to the needs of both the displaced and the host communities. Factors such as sanctions and the COVID-19 pandemic have further deteriorated Ethiopia's economic situation, diverting government focus away from refugee support. The United States, previously, had announced a visa restriction and other sanctions on Economic and Security assistance to Ethiopia with the exception of humanitarian aid.¹⁶⁵ This decision was later followed by another decision to remove Ethiopia from the AGOA trade privilege. Besides world economic crisis resulted from the COVID-19 and international conflicts in Ukraine, Palestine and other part of the world have significantly affected the country's economy.

High unemployment rates, especially among youth, create a challenging environment for promoting formal job opportunities for refugees. Although the Refugee Proclamation aims to facilitate employment for refugees, political tensions have raised concerns about prioritizing refugee jobs when many citizens remain unemployed. This has resulted in an ambiguous perception of local integration, with many refugees facing barriers to formal employment due to restricted movement and inadequate work permits.

Informal integration practices have been prevalent in regions where refugees share cultural ties with local communities. However, the absence of formal work opportunities and recognition of refugee qualifications hampers their economic integration. Many refugees rely on financial support from family members abroad, leading the government to assume their needs are being met, which limits attention and resources directed toward addressing their challenges.

The CRRF pledges have encountered significant obstacles, particularly due to limited financial resources and technical capacity. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these challenges, impacting education, livelihoods, and protection services for both refugees and host communities. The promised industrial parks intended to create employment

¹⁶⁵ U.S. imposes Ethiopia, Eritrea restrictions over Tigray crisis, 'Announcing move, secretary of state Antony Blinken says no 'meaningful steps' have been taken to end hostilities, Aljazeera, 24 May 2021.

opportunities for refugees have yet to be realized, indicating a lack of prioritization by the government.

Respondents have identified various barriers to refugee employment, including policy challenges, language barriers, and restrictions on accessing certain professions.¹⁶⁶ Many refugees remain financially dependent on informal support networks, hindering their journey toward self-reliance. Misunderstandings about the financial support refugees receive from abroad can lead to a lack of comprehensive assistance programs, resulting in continued struggles for integration and economic independence. Without addressing these challenges, the integration of refugees remains a complex issue requiring sustained commitment and collaboration from all stakeholders involved.

4.1.2 Political Challenges

The other challenge worth mentioning is the current political situation of the country which is characterized by conflicts and lack of peace and security in different regions of the country. Due to this, a large number of Ethiopians are displaced and in need of humanitarian aid and government response that would weaken the government's ability to perform its commitments to refugees.

Even though a political reform was made in 2018 due to internal political resistance, the post-reform period has now slid into a period of widespread political, ethnic, and religious violence. Since the reform process began, "long standing grievances over access to land and complex questions of identity and demarcation of internal borders on occasion led to abuses, including open conflict between ethnic groups, killings, and large-scale internal displacement."¹⁶⁷ Even before the conflict started, in 2018, Ethiopia recorded the third-highest number of new displacements worldwide, with 3,191,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) identified.¹⁶⁸ And the conflict has added a new dynamic to the violation of human rights in Ethiopia.

In addition, following the war in Tigray, several incidents of human rights, refugee and humanitarian laws violations were reported to be committed by both parties to the conflict. The Joint Investigation Report made by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has found all parties to the conflict,

¹⁶⁶ Interview with anonymous respondent, ReDSS (n. 156). Interview with Ephrem Tadesse (n. 153).

¹⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch, World Report 2020: Events of 2019, p. 207 (Jan. 8, 2020).

¹⁶⁸ The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2019 Ethiopia Situation Report No. 23 (as of June 2019).

along with Ethiopians, refugees mainly from Eritrea were victims of those atrocities. Even some refugees have been forcibly displaced outside of the region due to the conflict.

Similarly, Afar and Somali communities routinely clashed over border demarcations and access to land and resources, claiming civilian lives on both sides resulting in 355, 000 displaced 2020. Moreover, violence by armed groups, and among ethnic-Gumuz, Agew, Amhara, and other communities in the Metekel zone of the Benishangul-Gumuz caused residents to flee, killing, kidnappings, property destruction, and renewed displacement. The ongoing conflict in Amhara region increases the number of displacements in the country.

The conflicts and internal disturbances in the country have resulted in the destruction of many health institutions, schools, and other critical infrastructure. This has led to a significant proportion of Ethiopians living in different parts of the country suffering from a lack of access to basic services and infrastructure, such as water, education, and other essential amenities. The problems extend beyond the Ethiopian population, as refugees are also victims of these internal crises in the various regions. Due to the ongoing conflicts and instability, refugees have been displaced and relocated to other areas, further exacerbating their challenges. In addition to the lack of basic infrastructure and services, these displaced populations, both Ethiopians and refugees, are also facing difficulties in accessing humanitarian assistance, including food, medical care, and other essential forms of support.

Due to the internal conflicts occurring in different regions of Ethiopia, the government has been preoccupied with providing emergency measures, such as shelter and accommodations. Specifically, many refugees who were previously housed in camps in the Tigray region had to be relocated to other parts of the country. Additionally, the high number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) within Ethiopia has led the government to shift a significant amount of its attention and resources towards addressing the needs of this displaced population. This has had a notable impact on the government's long-term plans, which were aimed at resolving the financial challenges faced by both the refugee and host communities through initiatives like job creation.

The focus on emergency response and supporting IDPs has not only affected the government's efforts, but has also resulted in many international organizations and NGOs diverting their project funds and resources towards immediate humanitarian assistance for the displaced populations affected by the conflicts. Furthermore, the broader international conflicts and wars in other parts of the world, such as the situation in Palestine and Ukraine, have contributed to a shift in donor funding away from Ethiopia. As donors allocate resources to respond to these other crises, it has further complicated the government's and aid

organizations' ability to implement long-term initiatives to support both refugee and host communities in Ethiopia.

Another crucial challenge relates to the inadequate role and commitment of local municipalities in the local integration of refugees. The local governments, or municipalities, have not been the primary focus within the CRRF implementation process. Though originally the CRRF was launched in five regions it never was implemented properly. Without the strong commitment and involvement of local authorities, the integration of refugees at the local level is unlikely to succeed. This suggests that a more concerted effort is needed to engage and empower municipalities to play a more active role in the integration of refugees within their respective communities.

Over all, the implementation of the CRRF in Ethiopia has slowed down considerably since the adoption of the Refugee Proclamation. This slowdown can be largely attributed to Ethiopia's changing political environment. With a wide-ranging political and economic transformation since 2018, accompanied by ethnic tensions and the restructuring of public institutions, the political priorities of the government shifted towards a more domestic agenda. The reduced backing from the top leadership to revamp the refugee policy has made it significantly more difficult to overcome the typical obstacles associated with major structural reforms, including addressing vested interests. Moreover, a lack of leadership and coordination has resulted in an inadequate commitment to pushing the implementation process forward.

4.1.3 Policy Challenges

Despite Ethiopia's pledges and policy reforms, reports show that there are still challenges for the implementing authorities in terms of the mandate, coordination, capacity, and willingness.¹⁶⁹ In December 2019, RRS adopted the Directive to Determine Conditions for Movement and Residence of Refugees Outside of Camps, formally establishing the criteria for granting out of camp permits. However, challenges are being faced on its operationalization especially by non-Eritrean refugees across the country and there are some areas that need clarification.

For instance, the directive says Employment Agencies would facilitate wage employment opportunities for refugees by linking employers and employees, as they do for the local population. But there is a lack of clarity in terms of the role, if any, of these employment

¹⁶⁹ UNHCR, ReDSS Policy Brief the Right to Work Directive and Economic Engagement of Refugees in Ethiopia, No.1, September 2020

agencies in the directive on how to get information about wage employment opportunities; and how this is going to be implemented.¹⁷⁰ Besides, due to some procedural and substantive limitations in the directives, most refugees face challenges in freedom of movement and can only work informally in the limited markets in and around camps. Moreover, unclear regulations inhibit refugees' access to financial services, and the few refugees that live outside camps have trouble accessing government services.¹⁷¹ A range of political forces in Ethiopia like the outbreak of COVID-19, the violence in Tigray, tensions related to a wide range of issues, including ethnic balance, competition over jobs and resources, crime, and perceived inequity in service delivery prevent or slow the removal of policy barriers.

The Council of Ministers' Regulation issued to determine the Organization and Powers and Functions of the RRS faces significant limitations. Firstly, while the Refugee Proclamation emphasizes the involvement of multiple stakeholders in implementing refugee rights, the regulation focuses solely on the functions of the RRS, despite many of these functions requiring cooperation with other entities. Secondly, although the Refugee Proclamation grants generous rights, the regulation adopts a more restrictive approach, particularly by limiting the provision of basic and social services to "as much as possible." For example, while the Proclamation entitles refugees to access health services, justice, banking, and education at the same level as Ethiopian nationals, the regulation falls short. The proclamation only allows for limited implementation for higher education and vocational training, which are contingent upon available resources and national policies. In general, while the regulation provides some formal authority to the RRS, its restrictions on refugee rights undermine the protections intended by the Proclamation.

Besides, the National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy that was adopted in 2019 has not yet been ratified by the Ethiopian Council of Ministers. Without this formal ratification, the strategy lacks the full legal and institutional backing to drive its effective implementation. The issuance of the regulation long after the initial pledges and the enactment of the Refugee Proclamation have led to prolonged uncertainty. Even with its issuance in 2024, the regulation's failure to detail the roles and responsibilities of other stakeholders has resulted in a lack of clarity regarding the functions and accountabilities of various government bodies involved in the refugee response. This ambiguity hinders effective collaboration and coordination, ultimately impacting the support provided to refugees. As

¹⁷⁰ Ibid

¹⁷¹ Jimmy Graham and Sarah Miller, *From Displacement to Development: How Ethiopia Can Create Shared Growth by Facilitating Economic Inclusion for Refugees*, (2021).

highlighted by a respondent from the RRS, “*this lack of comprehensive regulatory framework has limited the ability of all the relevant implementation entities to be fully engaged and take ownership of their responsibilities under the CRRF approach.*”¹⁷²

Additionally, the directives issued by the RRS alone have limitations, as they cannot compel or bind other government agencies and entities beyond the RRS itself. This further constrains the coordinated, multi-stakeholder implementation that is envisioned under the proclamation. The lack of a ratified strategy and regulatory framework has indeed slowed the momentum around implementing the CRRF in Ethiopia. The government's other pressing priorities have understandably diverted attention and resources away from the CRRF implementation in recent years. The RRS has been tasked with driving the implementation of the pledges made by the Ethiopian government, but this has proven challenging without the strong, sustained cross-government leadership that was envisioned in the CRRF Roadmap.

The shortcomings in CRRF implementation can also be attributed to the failure to ensure closer alignment between the policy discussions and decisions made at the federal government level, and the realities on the ground, particularly at the regional level. This disconnect has made it difficult to translate the high-level commitments into effective, coordinated action across different administrative tiers and sectors. Besides, the local governments often lack the necessary capacity and resources to provide the same quality of service delivery as envisioned under the CRRF approach. This, coupled with the lack of coordination among the key national actors and the slow progress in implementation at the national level, has resulted in an unclear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of local authorities within the CRRF process.

4.1.4 Social Challenges

The multifaceted complexity of emergencies in the country like the conflicts in different regions, climatic shocks, and COVID-19's socio-economic impacts have generated displacement and drove exponential growth in humanitarian needs and threatened Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) progress affecting the overall economy of Ethiopia.¹⁷³

Moreover, given the high amount of unemployment in Ethiopia, unless job opportunities and job creation are increased, the pledges of access to jobs and land for refugees will create

¹⁷² Interview with Mr. Anteneh Mekasha (n. 109)

¹⁷³ UNICEF, Country Office Annual Report 2021 Ethiopia, <https://www.unicef.org/media/116996/file/Ethiopia-2021-COAR.pdf>, accessed April 20, 2022

competition with Ethiopian nationals leading to further security threats adding to the existing conflicts in the country.

Competition over land was reported in parts where refugees are located, indicating that the land pledge in the new refugee policy is likely to increase social risk. Refugees commonly report wanting greater access to land despite the risk of aggravating existing tensions. In Gambella, the agro-pastoralist lifestyle of the Nuer is likely to be incompatible with the largely sedentary lifestyle of the Anywaa, and some local residents have already been relocated to make space for the refugee settlements.¹⁷⁴

For instance, the presence of refugees has led to social changes, usually negative, such as the rise of youth gangs. Local residents, in some parts where refugees are located such as Gambella, face local insecurity and opportunistic theft sometimes experiencing more widespread violence.¹⁷⁵ Refugees also come with new cultures, religions, and practices which sometimes lead them to be isolated from the local community.

Though the government made strong commitment to hosting refugees including by making policy changes, the country is facing significant challenges, including generating employment for its large youth population and managing the ethnic tensions and internal displacement. Implementing the CRRF in Ethiopia, further, is caught up by problems like inflation, environmental degradation, competition for low-skilled jobs, and pressures on existing patterns of land use. These situations are most likely to worsen the relationship between refugees and host communities in some regions leading to further violence unless mechanisms are put in place to address them.

According to a report by the RRS and UNHCR, insecurity and instability caused by conflicts and natural disasters in certain parts of the country have led to internal displacement of populations within Ethiopia; humanitarian crises impacting both refugee and host communities; challenges in accessing the affected areas and protection risks and vulnerabilities for both refugees and host populations.¹⁷⁶ The combination of conflicts and natural disasters in specific regions has generated significant internal displacement, humanitarian emergencies, and access issues, creating vulnerabilities and protection concerns for both the refugee communities and the host populations living in those affected areas.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid

¹⁷⁵ Vemuru, Varalakshmi; Sarkar, Aditya; Fitri Woodhouse, Andrea. 2020. Impact of Refugees on Hosting Communities in Ethiopia: A Social Analysis. World Bank, Washington, DC. © World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34267>, accessed April 21, 2022, p. 38

¹⁷⁶ RRS and UNHCR, Ethiopia GRF Pledge Progress Report, June 2023 (n. 125) p.2

Respondents also stated that in refugee-hosting areas like Gambella, the number of refugees has become higher than the host communities. This is not only due to the high influx of refugees, but also because many refugees have been in the area for a long time and have given birth to children.¹⁷⁷ According to the respondents this situation has created a fear among the host community of being dominated by the refugee population. This fear has led to conflicts between the host community and the refugees.

In contrast, a respondent from the RRS noted that in the Somali region, the relationship between refugees and host communities is relatively harmonious, as they share a similar culture. However, in the Gambella region, the relationship between refugees and host communities is more strained, exacerbated by conflicts and the host community's fear of being demographically dominated by the refugee population.¹⁷⁸

4.1.5 Environmental challenges

According to the study conducted by World Bank, environmental degradation associated with the presence of refugees is a commonly reported theme across the study areas.¹⁷⁹ In Gambella and Benishangul, this is associated with refugees' extremely constrained livelihood opportunities; while in the Somali Region, where camps are not connected to the national electricity grid, refugees are associated with deforestation due to their gathering of wood to provide for lighting, cooking, heating, and some- times construction needs.¹⁸⁰ In Gambella and Benishangul, this has created tensions between refugees and hosts. Another challenge is environmental degradation due to the accumulation of waste around refugee settlements, with local residents calling for projects to rehabilitate the local environment.

The issue of environmental degradation is not limmited to just the Gambella region. The growing population of refugees in other refugee-hosting areas of the country has also led to increased demands on natural resources and land, resulting in widespread environmental degradation across these regions. As the number of refugees continues to grow, the pressure on the land and natural resources in the host communities has also been rising.

4.1.6 Other Challenges

Other challenges encompass coordination gaps, global conflicts, the pandemic, as well as the internal administrative changes within the RRS that impact service delivery for the refugee

¹⁷⁷ Interview with anonymous respondent, ReDSS (n. 156).

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Anteneh Mekasha (n. 109)

¹⁷⁹ Vemuru, Varalakshmi; Sarkar, Aditya (n. 175) p. 37

¹⁸⁰ Ibid

population. Refugee representatives noted another challenge - the frequent change of officials and personnel within the RRS. According to the respondent “*each time a new director or expert is appointed, refugees have to explain their situations and needs to the new officials, as the incoming staff need time to get accustomed to the systems and processes. This creates disruptions in refugees' access to services.*”¹⁸¹

Another challenge is the high number of refugees flowing to Ethiopia. The refugee flow to Ethiopia continued during 2020 with 26,417 persons seeking safety and protection within the country's borders. At the start of 2021, Ethiopia hosted 802,821 refugees, who were forced to flee their countries of origin as a result of insecurity, political instability, military conscription, conflict, famine, and other challenges.¹⁸² Now Ethiopia hosts more than a million refugees. The ongoing fragility and conflict in the East and Horn of Africa region is the cause of the mass flow of refugees. This high inflow of refugees added to the number of internal displacements in the country creates multiple challenges.

4.2 The Prospects of Ethiopian Pledges under the CRRF

The Government, after the pledges were made in 2016, has increasingly sought a more sustainable response that goes beyond care and maintenance of refugees to promote their self-reliance. This approach combines wider support to host communities, fostering peaceful coexistence, and greater inclusion of refugees in national development plans.¹⁸³ In general, the 9 pledges are mainly aimed at ultimately creating productive and self-reliant global citizens (both refugees and host communities).¹⁸⁴

Pledges are state commitments and therefore they are not legally binding obligations by themselves. However, the pledges are currently incorporated into a comprehensive Proclamation, conducive to the practical application of the CRRF. As tried to mention above, the current Refugee Proclamation provides more rights-based benefits for refugees.

As a result, the pledges made by Ethiopia have many implications including on the political, legal, social, and economy of the country, because the performance and capability of the government in attaining its pledges are directly related to the political, economic, and social situation of the country. The huge shift in the commitment made by the government towards the protection of refugees requires major changes in the legal/policy of the country and

¹⁸¹ Interview with Shadya Abduljabbar Saeed Fazea (n. 116)

¹⁸² UNHCR, Ethiopia Country Refugee Response Plan (Jan 2020 - Dec. 2021).

¹⁸³ Briefing note on Applying the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (n. 17)

¹⁸⁴ Ibid

allocation of resources for their implementation. In addition, cooperation and working together with other partners is essential for their implementation. The economic, policy and social implications of the pledges is assessed in the following part.

4.2.1 Economic Implication

The local integration of refugees into host communities presents both opportunities and challenges for the local economy. While refugees can drive economic growth, their presence may also lead to competition for resources, jobs, and land, potentially causing insecurity and conflict. The rights granted to refugees vary; some align with those of nationals, while others are similar to privileges typically given to foreigners, depending on resource availability. Basic pledges, such as issuing birth certificates or enabling bank accounts, require minimal investment, whereas others, like providing education and employment access, demand significant financial commitment.

Effective integration of refugees necessitates adequate infrastructure and job opportunities. Without essential services, such as access to land and work permits, competition for resources may escalate, leading to potential conflicts. Many refugees arrive with limited resources and language skills, often relying on government assistance, which can strain the host country's finances. Critics argue this reliance fosters economic competition for jobs, while others believe that refugees can stimulate growth by becoming entrepreneurs and active consumers in local markets.¹⁸⁵

Programs like the Job Compact, a collaboration between the Ethiopian government and international partners (the World Bank, DFID, the European Investment Bank and the EU), aim to create job opportunities for both refugees and host communities through industrialization and employment initiatives.¹⁸⁶ This program has attracted significant funding from organizations such as UNHCR to support social services and temporary job creation. Reports indicate that considerable budgets have been allocated to assist refugees, internally displaced persons, and host communities, highlighting the potential for mutual benefits from this integration.

The economic dynamics vary across regions; in the Somali Region, refugees have built positive economic relationships that enhance local trade, while in Gambella, resource scarcity has led to tensions and conflict. In contrast, areas like Afar and Tigray see refugees engaging

¹⁸⁵ *Johanna Burke*, Are Refugees Bad or Good for the Economy? (2020), available <https://www.icmc.net/2020/07/14/refugees-good-or-bad-for-economy/> accessed April 19, 2022

¹⁸⁶ International development association program appraisal document, program for result/investment project financing economic opportunities program June 4, 2018 p 22

in sharecropping and local employment, contributing to economic integration. Remittances also play a vital role for refugees, particularly from the Somali and South Sudanese diasporas, providing essential capital for businesses and family support. Ultimately, the economic implications of hosting refugees are complex, requiring a balanced approach to address the needs of both refugees and host communities for sustainable development and social cohesion.

4.2.2 Policy/Legal Implication

The commitment made by the government towards the protection of refugees requires major changes in the legal and policy of the country. The Government has prepared a roadmap detailing the implementation of each pledge, outlining key opportunities and partnerships that must be put in place, and incorporated some of the pledges into a revised Refugee Proclamation no. 1110/2019. Additional legislative reforms to Proclamation 760/2012 permitting civil documentation for refugees were passed in July 2017.¹⁸⁷

The Government has also implemented a governance structure in collaboration with UNHCR, which includes a Steering Committee (SC) composed of Line Ministries, federal agencies, development actors, NGOs, and donors based in Ethiopia in order to drive the practical implementation of the pledges.

The Government further issued its National Strategy for consultation in May 2018. The Strategy includes the Government's vision to see all refugees and hosting communities becoming socio-economically active and self-reliant by 2027 and commits to changing the primary assistance model from refugee camps to development-oriented settlements over a 10-year period. The purpose is to gradually transform the refugee operation from humanitarian aid through the encampment to hosting refugees in village-style and development-oriented settlements.

Incorporating the pledges in the Proclamation No. 1110/2019 and issuing the NCRRS established the legal foundation thereof and this implies much change including the right to legally register life events such as births and marriages, allowing to obtain drivers' licenses, and opening up access to national financial services, such as banking local integration of refugees, naturalization, right to obtain work permits, access to education and other rights.

¹⁸⁷ Vital Events Registration and National Identity Card proclamation (amendment) proclamation no. 1049/2017, Federal Negarit Gazeta of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 23rd Year, No.74, 7th August 2017.

Due to this, various directives to implement the rights in the proclamation and the CRRF were issued by the RRS.

4.2.3 Social Implications

Social impacts, including positive and negative impacts, in relation to the local integration of refugees are also another issue worth mentioning. Refugees and hosts interact most frequently through trade; when accessing services; and during socio-religious activities. Intermarriage is common in Gambella and Somali Regions, with material and cultural implications.¹⁸⁸ The intermingling of refugees with local communities also results in the interchanging of new cultures, values, religions, languages, and practices. As indicated in some studies by the World Bank Groups, while some relations between the local communities and refugees particularly in the Somali regions are characterized by good relations partly due to shared language, religion, and cultures, other Regions like Gambella are, contrarily, characterized by harsh relationships like violence, theft, killings, conflict over land and natural resources, and assault and rapes.¹⁸⁹

Another implication is competition over land associated with the land pledge in the refugee policy which is likely to increase social risk. Tensions around land ownership also have implications for implementing the new refugee policy because one of the pledges relates to making land available to refugees for cultivation. It is unlikely that the pledge can be implemented equally in each of the refugee-hosting areas without causing and/or aggravating local tensions.

¹⁸⁸ Vemuru, Varalakshmi; Sarkar, Aditya (n. 176) p. 40

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, pp. 41

Chapter Five

Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

Ethiopia, which has a long history of hosting refugees, endorsed the CRRF by providing 9 pledges in 2016. The pledges are mainly aimed at ultimately creating productive and self-reliant global citizens consisting of refugees and host communities. The pledges made by Ethiopia have many implications for the political, legal, social, and economy of the country. The pledges are now incorporated into the refugee proclamation enacted in 2019 and this proclamation has included vast kinds of refugees' rights including the right to work, local integration, education, health, and other rights. In addition, the Government has prepared a roadmap, guidelines, and strategies detailing the implementation of each pledge both at the federal and regional levels.

Ethiopia has made significant pledges to support refugees and host communities, building on earlier commitments from 2016 and further pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum in 2019. These include creating jobs in agricultural and livestock value chains, expanding the TVET system, strengthening the asylum system and social protection for vulnerable individuals, and providing clean energy solutions. In 2023, Ethiopia announced six additional pledges: addressing environmental impacts and providing alternative energy sources; transforming refugee camps into sustainable urban settlements; integrating refugees into national data and programs; improving conditions for private sector investment; providing irrigable land for climate-smart agriculture; and enhancing digital infrastructure to facilitate refugee inclusion in the digital economy. These initiatives aim to promote sustainable development and the well-being of both refugees and host communities.

Ethiopia's government pledges to support refugees and host communities present a range of advantages and challenges. On the positive side, these initiatives aim to create economic opportunities through agricultural and livestock value chains, significantly enhancing livelihoods for both refugees and locals. This focus on equitable economic growth can reduce dependency on aid and foster community resilience. Additionally, expanding the TVET system aligns education with labor market demands, improving employment prospects and productivity. Transforming refugee camps into sustainable urban settlements enhances living conditions and access to essential services such as healthcare and education, aligning refugee needs with broader community development goals.

This research has tried to address the legal and institutional frameworks for the implementation of Ethiopia's pledges under the CRRF at the same time by trying to assess the progress, opportunities and advantages for both host communities and refugees in connection to the implementation of the pledges. It further tried to highlight the obstacles that the host communities, refugees, and other groups have in implementing the pledges on economic, social, cultural, and other levels and have come up with the following findings.

Internationally, refugees are protected not only by international and regional refugee conventions but also by various human rights instruments that safeguard their rights and dignity. These frameworks emphasize the fundamental human rights to which all individuals are entitled, regardless of their status. Domestically, Ethiopia provides robust protections for refugees through its constitution, which enshrines human rights principles, as well as the Refugee Proclamation, which outlines the legal status and rights of refugees in the country. Additionally, directives adopted by the RRS further reinforce these protections, ensuring that refugees in Ethiopia are afforded legal safeguards and access to essential services, thereby promoting their integration and well-being within the host community.

The enactment of the Refugee Proclamation represents a significant achievement in integrating the pledges made under the CRRF into national law. This proclamation incorporates essential rights and protections for refugees, ensuring their legal status and access to various services, thereby enhancing their well-being and facilitating their integration into Ethiopian society. However, the limitations on the regulations by the Council of Ministers combined with the limited applicability of these directives to the RRS, hampers the full realization of the Refugee Proclamation. Additionally, the absence of a directive allowing refugees to engage in trade poses significant barriers to their economic empowerment and integration, further complicating their situation within the host community. Even though a National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy was developed in 2018 to carry out the commitments, it hasn't been formally adopted or put into effect yet.

Progress has been noted in several areas of Ethiopia's pledges, including the Out of Camp Policy, Education, Work and Livelihoods, Documentation, and Local Integration. However, the implementation of the CRRF is currently at its lowest point, facing numerous challenges. These include economic hardships, funding shortages, policy inconsistencies, and political unrest in various regions. Additionally, a severe drought and an influx of refugees from neighboring countries further exacerbate the situation.

The current Ethiopia's economic difficulties and internal conflicts here and there are greatly affecting the implementation of the pledges by the government. Besides, competition over land, natural resources, and employment among local communities and refugees leading to a lack of trust among them is also another problem. Violence has been common in some parts of the refugee-hosting regions leading to the suffering of both the hosting communities and refugees. In addition, the lack of political will, insufficient infrastructure and other problems has their own effect the CRRF implementation. The compounding effects of internal conflicts, the need to address the large-scale internal displacement, and the shifting of international attention and funding to other global hotspots have significantly impacted the government's capacity to implement its long-term strategies for resolving the financial challenges faced by refugees and host communities in Ethiopia.

In conclusion, the research has found out that the existing legal framework for the implementation of the pledges under the CRRF are causing limitation on the full implementation of the pledges especially on the out of camp policy and employment by providing strict conditions. Even on the pledges which are well addressed in the law, a mechanism for their implementation is not well established. Both public and private institutions are not well informed about the work permits provided to refugees hindering the job access of refugees.

Besides, there is a gap between the law and the practice. Most refugees who were interviewed for the research have reported they struggle to get to move around the designated areas by government even when they are allowed to leave out of camp. They have also reported that they struggle because of the limited job opportunities, due to the inability to do business in Ethiopia and shortage of sufficient training and education access. They also stated they face challenges to exercise other important rights like to get representation in the court room, to have interpreters at police station and other services, difficulty to form associations on their own.

On countries like Ethiopia, which host a large number refugees, it is vital for the government to help refugees integrate into host communities for those who have stayed long in the country, help them become self-sufficient and economically independent to help themselves and contribute to the country's economy by cooperating with international partners. When refugees can access the labor market, they contribute to local economies and to the development of host communities. The emphasis on self-reliance and the shift toward more sustainable development initiatives are built on the premise that access to a wider range of socioeconomic rights can improve refugees' potential to establish sustainable livelihoods and

become progressively less reliant on state aid or humanitarian assistance. It is also important to allow refugees access basic and social services as provided under domestic laws and international instruments to which Ethiopia is a member.

5.2 Recommendations

By taking the economic, social, political, and other challenges and implications of Ethiopia's pledge in the CRRF, the researcher recommends the following:

- Enhancing economic opportunities and access both for refugees and local communities by giving special emphasis to the refugee-hosting regions. There is a need for enhancing the resilience and preparedness of refugee hosting regions to cope with the shocks and stresses caused by COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, and natural disasters, through humanitarian support and long-term solutions. More importantly refugee hosting regions should be highly involved and consulted in the implementation of the CRRF and the whole process of hosting refugees in Ethiopia.
- Addressing the capacity constraints of local governments, strengthening coordination mechanisms between national and subnational actors, and clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders will be crucial for ensuring the CRRF is implemented coherently and effectively across all administrative levels in Ethiopia.
- Strengthening the coordination and collaboration among all stakeholders, including the government, UN agencies, NGOs, donors, private sector, civil society, refugees, and host communities, to ensure a coherent and comprehensive approach to the refugee response. It is important to mobilize more financial and technical support from the international community to bridge the funding gap and enhance the capacity of national and local actors to implement the GRF pledges.
- Strengthening the normative and institutional frameworks for refugee protection, while aligning these with effective migration governance mechanisms that respect human rights. Navigating this complex landscape will require sustained political will, innovative policymaking, and a firm commitment to upholding the rights and dignity of all people on the move.
- Creating trust among the refugees and locals in areas like Gambella where the situation is worse so that violence can be minimized. Facilitating a platform by participating both Refugees and host communities to work together and discuss mitigating circumstances will help to avoid the tension, conflict, and negative implication caused by the presence of Refugees in general. In addition, creating awareness by the government is also

needed so that the public clearly understands the link between the presence of refugees and the benefits they bring with them. Developing comprehensive, community-based approaches that balance the needs of refugees and host populations, and promote social cohesion and economic inclusion.

- The need for enhanced language support, interpretation services, and accessible legal assistance to ensure that refugees can fully benefit from and participate in the basic, social, and legal systems in the host communities.
- Finally, empowering refugee communities as active partners in designing and implementing durable solutions, rather than viewing them solely as passive beneficiaries would be recommended.

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Interview with anonymous respondent from Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat, June 12, 2024.

Interview with anonymous respondent from Norwegian Refugee Center, June 28, 2024

Interview with a refugee from Eritrea, March 16, 2023.

Annex
Open-ended Research Questions for LLM Thesis
Addis Ababa University

Name: - Birtukan Alemu

Department: - Human Rights Law

Title: - Challenges and Prospects of Ethiopia's Pledge under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)

First, I would like to express my gratitude for your cooperation and support in providing honest and accurate responses. I am currently working on my master's thesis in International Human Rights Law. This interview questionnaire has been prepared for my research titled "Challenges and Prospects of Ethiopia's Pledges under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework." This study aims to examine the economic, policy, and social implications of the pledges and looks at the legislative and practical barriers.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this interview is completely voluntary. You are under no obligation to take part, and choosing not to participate will not have any negative effect on you. This research is conducted for academic purposes.

Confidentiality: I want to assure you that this questionnaire is intended exclusively for academic use. All information you provide will be treated with strict confidentiality. I will not share any details about you or your responses with anyone unless you give me your full consent to do so.

List of questions: -

1. What do you know about the CRRF and its implementation?
2. What is the role of your institution in implementing the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and protecting refugees in general?
 1. How many refugees are there under your institution's protection?
 2. What implementing measures/ progresses were made to implement the CRRF in general?
 - 2.1 Measures taken to expand the out of camp policy? How many refugees have benefited from the out of camp policy?
 - 2.2 Measures taken to enhance job and livelihood opportunities for refugees?

- 2.3 Measures taken to provide work permit for refugees? How many Refugees have get work permit?
- 2.4 What have been done to implement the pledge to make 10,000 hectares of irrigable land available to refugees?
- 2.5 What progresses are there to implement Ethiopia's pledge to work with industrial partners to build industrial parks to employ up to 100,000 individuals with 30% of it reserved for refugees?
- 2.6 What other projects have been made/implemented to enhance refugees' employment opportunities?
- 2.7 What measures are being taken to implement the enrolment of refugee children in preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary education? How many refugee children have benefited from this?
- 2.8 Measures taken to implement refugees' right to documentation? Such as issuance of birth certificate and other Vital Events? How many refugees have benefited for this?
- 2.9 Measures taken to implement the social and basic services for refugees? How many refugees have benefited from social and basic services such as banking, driving license, and the like?
- 2.10 How is the pledge to allow local integration, for refugees who have lived in Ethiopia for protracted period/ over 20 years, being applied?
3. What opportunities are there for the implementation of the CRRF?
4. What are the challenges encountered by your institution in the implementation of the CRRF?
5. Are there particular challenges or opportunities that are limited/observed on certain refugee hosting regions/place?
6. What measures were taken to reduce the challenges?

Research Questions for IOs and NGOs working in refugee issues

1. What do you know about the CRRF and its implementation?
2. What is the role of your institution in implementing the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and protecting refugees in general?
3. How many refugees are there under your institution's protection?
4. What have been done by your institution on the implementation of the CRRF?
5. How do you work with other stakeholders to implement the CRRF?

6. What challenges were faced on the implementation of the CRRF?
7. What opportunities are there for the implementation of the CRRF?

Research Questions for Refugees and Refugee Representatives/Spokespersons

3. What do you know about the CRRF and its implementation?
4. Have you benefited from the rights and protections provided under the CRRF and other laws related with refugees? Such as the right to association, to get work permit, education, to get driving license, issuance of birth certificate, banking service etc.
5. What does the job and livelihood opportunity looks like? Do you believe refugees are being benefited from the CRRF?
6. What challenges are being faced by refugees in relation to the exercise of the rights and protections provided under the CRRF? Which area/rights are mostly challenged?
7. What opportunities are there for the implementation of the CRRF?