TOWARDS A COMMON RESEARCH AGENDA

A SYNTHESIS PAPER TO INFORM IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL REFUGEE COMPACT - 2019

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UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

ReDSS
Unlocking Protracted Displacement

CONTENTS

REGIONAL DURABLE SOLUTIONS SECRETARIAT (ReDSS)

The search for durable solutions to the protracted displacement situation in East Africa and the Horn of Africa is a key humanitarian and development concern. This is a regional and cross-border issue, with a strong political dimension, which demands a multi-sector response that goes beyond the existing humanitarian agenda.

The Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) was created in 2015 with the aim of maintaining focused momentum and stakeholder engagement towards durable solutions for displacement-affected communities in East Africa and the Horn of Africa. ReDSS is comprised of 14 NGOs: ACF, ACTED, CARE International, Concern Worldwide, DRC, IRC, INTERSOS, Mercy Corps, NRC, Oxfam, RCK, Save the Children, World Vision, and LWF. The DRC, IRC, and NRC form the ReDSS steering committee.

ReDSS is a coordination and information hub that acts as a catalyst and agent provocateur to stimulate forward thinking and policy development on durable solutions for displacement. ReDSS seeks to improve joint learning and programming, inform policy processes, enhance capacity development, and facilitate coordination in the collective search for durable solutions.

For more information, see: http://regionaldss.org

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Picture of landscape, Somali Regional State
Credit: Tina Hiller- Oxfam

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
ARRA	Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs
BSRP	Building Self-Reliance for Refugees and Vulnerable Host Communities by Improved Sustainable Basic Social Service Delivery Programme
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
DAI	Development Alternatives Incorporated
DICAC	Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission
DFID	Department for International Development
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
DRDIP	Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project
EMIS	Education Management of Information System
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GCR	Global Compact for Refugees
GoE	Government of Ethiopia
HERE-Geneva	Humanitarian Exchange and Research Centre-Geneva
HPG	Humanitarian Policy Group
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IGAD	The Intergovernmental Authority on Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISS	Institute of Security Studies
JAM	Joint Assessment Mission
K4D	Knowledge, Evidence and Learning for Development
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MSME	Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises
NCO	National Coordination Office
NCRRS	National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
QEP	Qualification and Employment Perspectives
RCK	Refugee Consortium of Kenya
RDPP	Regional Development and Protection Programme
ReDSS	Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat
RRP	Refugee Response Plan
RSC	Refugee Studies Centre
RSRI	Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative
SHARPE	Strengthening Host and Refugee Population Economies
SNV	*Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers* (Foundation of Netherlands Volunteers)
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
woreda	Sub-regional administrative unit, roughly analogous to a district

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ethiopia's refugee population is not only one of the largest in Africa, but also one of the most complex, divided between very different groups of refugees living in very different parts of the country.

The challenge of reforming the refugee programme that the Government of Ethiopia has set itself since 2016 is therefore uniquely challenging. This synthesis report, organised against the four objectives of the Government's draft National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy (NCRRS), assesses the state of evidence and knowledge across more than 60 studies and policy documents. It makes recommendations focussed on the development of a common research agenda and a common narrative for future implementation.

The varying contexts of the refugee operation across Ethiopia informs a key point that cuts across all four of the NCRRS objectives: the need for granular analysis and understanding that takes local factors into consideration. Although tempting from a policy perspective, Ethiopia's refugee programme will not allow for one size fits all answers.

Although tempting from a policy perspective, Ethiopia's refugee programme will not allow for one size fits all answers. Overall, there is an identified need for a more bottom-up policy development process and, in particular, one that seeks to foreground more prominently the perspectives, wishes and interests of refugees and Ethiopian citizens in refugee hosting regions. There has been an unfortunate lack of consultation and engagement with those actors who will be most impacted by the proposed changes, who are therefore unable to shape how the new instruments being shaped by the CRRF are formulated at national level.

There has been a focus on the "what" of the reform process, with a particular focus on areas such as livelihoods programming and education that are attracting the greatest levels of new investment, and less on the "how".

A number of transitions are implied by the proposed changes, but these transitions have not been clearly elaborated. This risks creating an environment where large numbers of new actors initiate new programming approaches without clarity over accountability and coordination, creating confusion and uncertainty at local levels.

Seeking to explore options for these transitions should therefore be an area of future focus, with the first objective of the NCRSS (focused on capacities across the system) providing a useful anchor

Work in this area should look at both existing and required capacities for management, oversight and coordination of different kinds of programmes. It should assess how the traditional activities of the refugee programme in particular regions fit into the wider context of service delivery and livelihoods to understand what appropriate governance arrangements could look like. It will also need to focus on options for managing an increasingly complex portfolio of humanitarian and development financing, and how these funds can best be brought together.

Another key issue highlight for future research is engaging more with informal realities in different parts of the country, rather than theoretical models

There is a high degree of variation in how refugees live in different locations, and the informal options available to them to support their daily lives. These variations can be obscured if research does not explicitly seek to move beyond the traditional assumptions of refugee programming, and find ways to encourage refugees to openly discuss how they navigate existing restrictions.

Geographically, the paper has found high levels of variation across the country. The greatest concentration of research in recent years has been on the camps in Somali Region (both to the north and south) and Shire, with far less on those in Afar and Benishangul-Gumuz.

While the refugee populations in those regions are lower than elsewhere, there may be important lessons and experiences from these locations that are being missed. There is also a significant risk of research fatigue and frustration from those camps who have been the subject of the most research, such as Kebrebeyah in Somali Regional State.

At the heart of any process to take forwards a common research agenda should be an effort to contextualise key concepts that underpin the reform.

Understanding what terms like self-reliance and local integration mean in the Ethiopian context, in a way that responds to local realities and is informed by local perspectives, would help address some of the identified challenges. Such a process would need to take place under the leadership of ARRA, with a clear structure in place to coordinate and maximise the available resources. A minimum standard, or set of standard protocols, for refugee-related research might be of value, as would be building on existing efforts to develop centralised research resources.
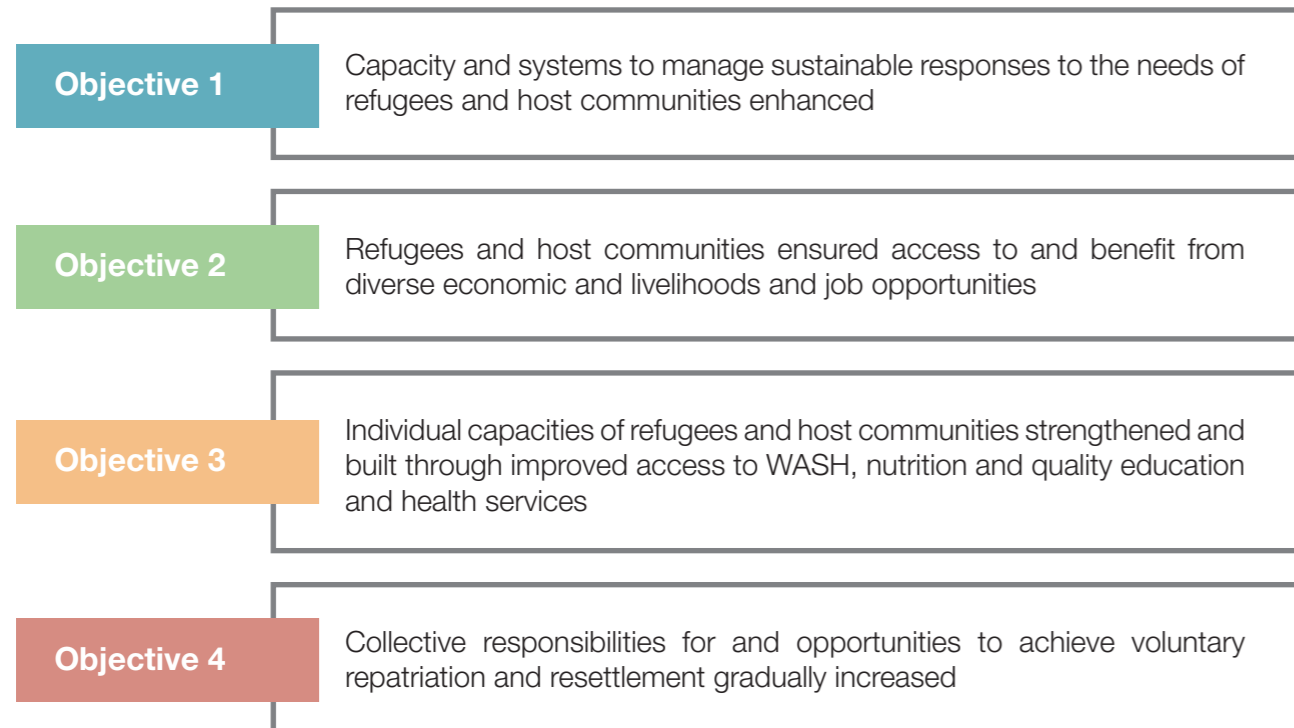

South Sudanese refugees walk through Jewi refugee camp in Ethiopia
Credit: UNHCR

INTRODUCTION

This synthesis paper is designed to inform future policymaking and programming in relation to Ethiopian government and international support to refugees. Specifically, it aspires to enable the development of a common narrative among the key refugee stakeholders in Ethiopia about how best to support displacement and durable solutions processes in the country, informed by evidence drawn from existing literature. The synthesis paper is set out in line with the Government of Ethiopia draft ten-year National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy (NCRRS), at a time of transition for the Ethiopian refugee operation. The new legal framework passed by the Ethiopian parliament in February 2019 creates significant opportunities for developing a more sustainable and effective response that meets the needs of refugees and the local populations living in proximity to them.

It is hoped that this synthesis paper provides those developing these new approaches with easier access to the relevant research that has already been undertaken and helps identify key gaps in need of further exploration. For ease of navigation, the synthesis paper is structured around the four objectives laid out in the NCRRS.

Objective 1	Capacity and systems to manage sustainable responses to the needs of refugees and host communities enhanced
Objective 2	Refugees and host communities ensured access to and benefit from diverse economic and livelihoods and job opportunities
Objective 3	Individual capacities of refugees and host communities strengthened and built through improved access to WASH, nutrition and quality education and health services
Objective 4	Collective responsibilities for and opportunities to achieve voluntary repatriation and resettlement gradually increased

This synthesis paper is also intended to act as an entry point to the significant body of work upon which it draws, analyses, and references. Key documents are noted throughout the text, particularly those that are relevant to the NCRRS. Links for online access to these documents are also provided. The focus of this paper is on current publicly available work, although upcoming studies of particular value are also referenced. All these studies, and more, are included in the Ethiopian government Knowledge Management Database (available here), which has been developed with ReDSS support.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The primary aim of this synthesis paper is to support the development of a common research agenda for the CRRF and Global Refugee Compact (GRC) process as well as inform the implementation of NCRSS in Ethiopia, with an emphasis on better linking evidence from the ground with policymaking processes.[1]

The synthesis paper is organised as follows. The next section provides a short overview of the current refugee situation in Ethiopia. Following that, section three highlights key themes, identifies critical research gaps, and makes recommendations for the development of a common research agenda. The remainder of the synthesis paper is the main body of this study, analysing relevant literature across the four objectives of the NCRRS. Finally, a methodology section explaining the process followed to produce this paper is annexed.

South Sudanese refugee children prepare a meal at Jewi refugee camp in Ethiopia
Credit: UNHCR

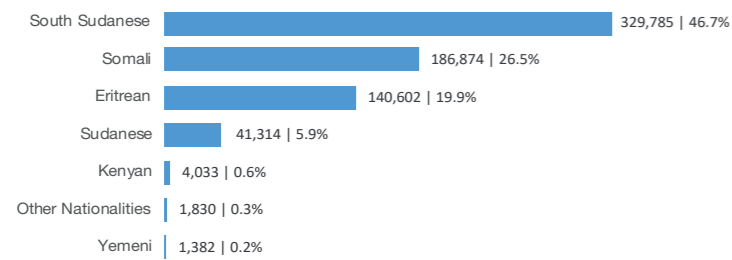1   This is in line with the research, analysis, and knowledge management pillar that defines ReDSS work: to increase the availability, accessibility, and utilisation of relevant and timely analysis and information on durable solutions. The core objective is also formulated based on feedback from key stakeholders to the Ethiopian refugee response, and is fully aligned with their needs and interests.
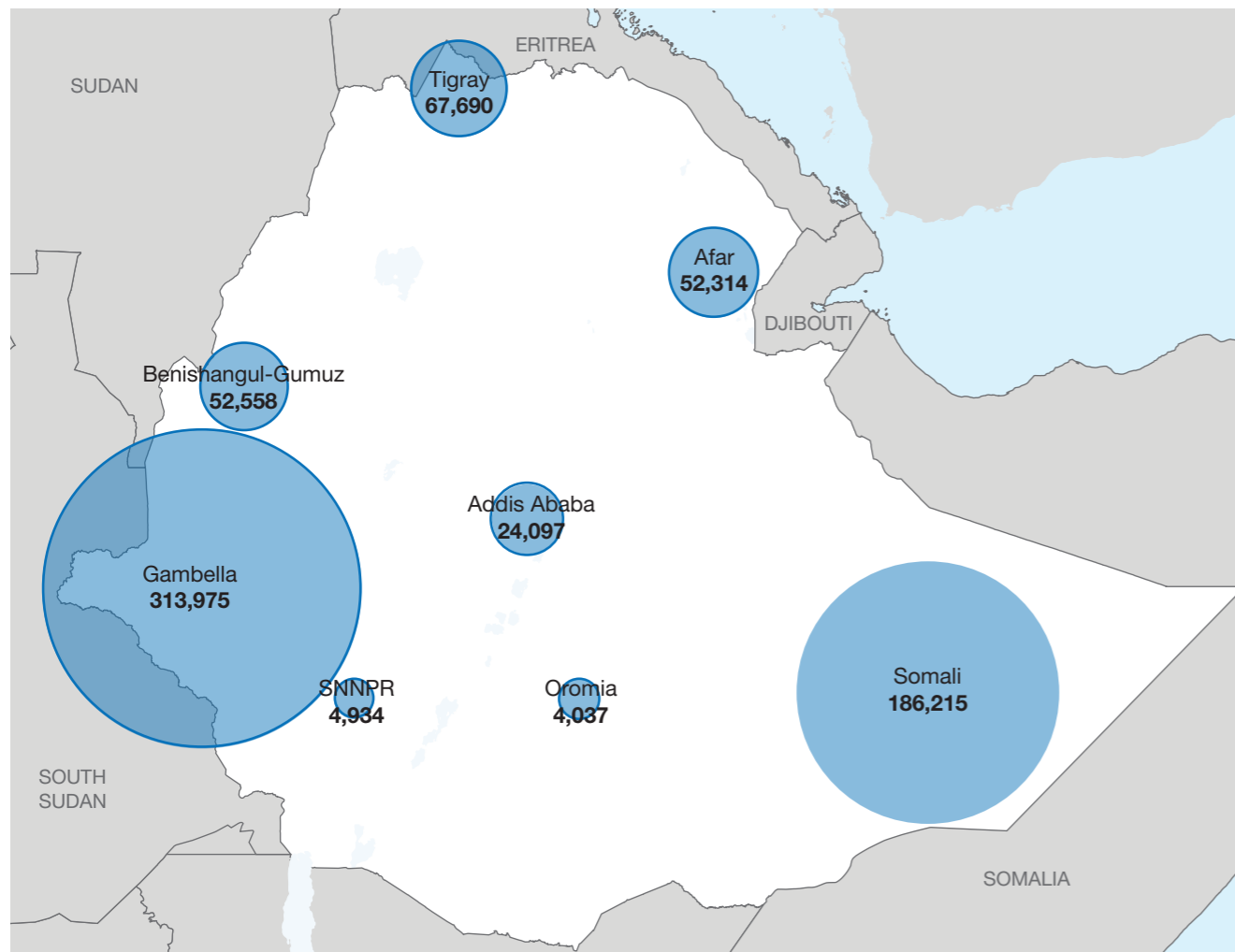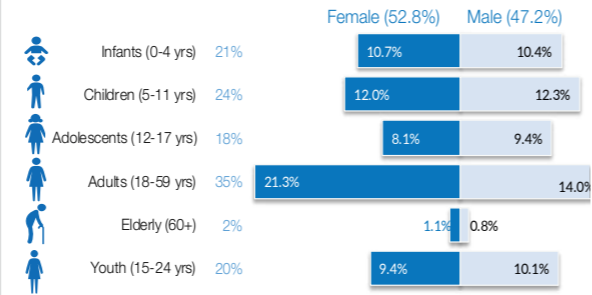
REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN ETHIOPIA

ETHIOPIA
Refugees and Asylum-seekers
November 2019

Total Refugees and Asylum-seekers
705,820

Countries of Origin

South Sudanese	329,785 | 46.7%
Somali	186,874 | 26.5%
Eritrean	140,602 | 19.9%
Sudanese	41,314 | 5.9%
Kenyan	4,033 | 0.6%
Other Nationalities	1,830 | 0.3%
Yemeni	1,382 | 0.2%

Age/Gender breakdown

		Female (52.8%)	Male (47.2%)
Infants (0-4 yrs)	21%	10.7%	10.4%
Children (5-11 yrs)	24%	12.0%	12.3%
Adolescents (12-17 yrs)	18%	8.1%	9.4%
Adults (18-59 yrs)	35%	21.3%	14.0%
Elderly (60+)	2%	1.1%	0.8%
Youth (15-24 yrs)	20%	9.4%	10.1%

ERITREA
SUDAN

Tigray
67,690

Afar
52,314

DJIBOUTI

Benishangul-Gumuz
52,558

Addis Ababa
24,097

Gambella
313,975

Somali
186,215

SNNPR
4,934

Oromia
4,037

SOUTH
SUDAN

SOMALIA

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

Source: UNHCR Portal https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/eth

REFUGEES IN ETHIOPIA: AN OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

As of November 2019, there were 705,820 refugees in Ethiopia, distributed around the country as illustrated in the map.[2]

This makes Ethiopia one of the largest refugee hosting countries in Africa, as it has been for many years as a result of conflicts and droughts in the region. Indeed Ethiopia prides itself on its hospitality to outsiders, citing a history that spans centuries of hosting those in need of shelter and support.[3] Most refugees in Ethiopia live in the peripheral areas of the country where they share ethnicity, language, and kinship ties with those across the border from their countries of origin. Since the 1960s and 1970s, in recognition of the burden that large numbers of refugees would place on already poor populations, the Ethiopian government has pursued an encampment policy, mandating the Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) to work with UNHCR to provide humanitarian support to meet the basic needs of the refugees in these camps.[4] There have also been restrictions on the right of refugees to move across the country or find employment, although in practice the experience of refugees has been varied. In 2010, an exception was made to this when the government introduced an out-of-camp policy. To date, this has almost exclusively been made available to Eritrean refugees, providing that particular cohort with greater freedom of movement, although not the right to work.

In 2016, the government made a series of pledges to reform these policies, in recognition of the potential advantages to all of finding alternative mechanisms to promote refugee self-reliance and support host community populations. These pledges drew both on in-country experiences, for example the IKEA Foundation funded activity in the Somali Regional State, and on the global policy discussions that led to the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR). Since then, the government has issued a roadmap document (2017) formalising the pledges agreed in 2016, drafted the NCRRS (2018), and passed new refugee legislation (2019). During 2018 and 2019, ARRA also underwent major restructuring, both internally and in terms of its place in government as it came under the oversight of the newly created Ministry of Peace. In December 2019, the Government of Ethiopia was one of five co-hosts of the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva, and made a further series of pledges.

Key policy documents are highlighted in the text box. Implementing these will involve significant changes in the working of the Ethiopian refugee operation and, as ARRA leadership has said, this will require a significant emphasis on research and knowledge development to ensure that an evidence-based approach can be taken. To this end, as part of ARRA restructuring, a new team focused on research was created to strengthen this component of their work.

Key policy documents related to the CRRF, nationally and globally

- Refugees Proclamation No. 1110/2019, GoE, 2019 https://www.refworld.org/docid/44e04ed14.html
- Roadmap for the implementation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Government Pledges and the practical application of the CRRF in Ethiopia, GoE/ARRA, 2017 https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/62655
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy (Draft document), GoE, 2019
- Ethiopia Country Refugee Response Plan: The integrated response plan for refugees from Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia, January 2019–December 2020, UNHCR, 2019a https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/73571.pdf
- Global Compact on Refugees (A/73/12, Part II), UN General Assembly, 2018 https://www.unhcr.org/the-global-compact-on-refugees.html
- New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants (A/RES/71/1), UN General Assembly, 2016 https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/declaration
- Government of Ethiopia regional action plans, under development

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2   See: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/eth
3   GoE/ARRA (2017). Roadmap for the implementation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Government Pledges and the practical application of the CRRF in Ethiopia. See: https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/62655
4   See ARRA website: http://arra.et

Somali refugees / Female students at the first day of school in Awbare Refugee Camp in Somali region of Ethiopia
Credit: UNHCR

COMMON THEMES, RESEARCH GAPS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

COMMON THEMES

A number of common themes have emerged from this synthesis, across all four objectives of the NCRRS.

1 There are often **significant gaps between the formal policies and systems of the refugee operation and the actual realities** of how these policies have been implemented in different parts of the country. This is partly a result of officials adapting to the practical and political realities of delivering support to refugees in often challenging environments. It is also partly the inevitable consequence of large numbers of people finding the best ways to support themselves and their families in difficult circumstances, whether these fall within the current rules of the system. This presents a significant challenge to the implementation of policy reform, as it risks being based on theoretical assumptions rather than practical realities: an obvious example is the common assumption that refugees are wholly reliant on aid because they have not been allowed to work, when in fact many refugees do find ways to earn income for themselves. It can also be challenging to unearth these realities if refugees and hosts fear that exposing them may risk the benefits they currently receive. Research therefore needs to be carefully designed to flesh out such complex realities and bring the differences within and across different groups to the fore. A mix of qualitative and quantitative approaches allows for these nuances to emerge.

2 This informality is also highly contextual, with an **enormous degree of variety between different parts of the country, between different refugee groups,** and even within camps of the same refugee group. While commonalities do exist, the challenge for policymakers is to avoid making any assumptions about how regulatory changes or individual interventions might impact on a specific group of refugees. The factors involved are multiple and include: location, ethnicity and clan; length of stay; cultural influences; livelihood background; and politics. This also applies to host communities, with even the term "host communities" unlikely to be helpful in understanding local complexities. Where the burden (and opportunity) of refugee hosting falls alters from location to location—again for a wide range of reasons—and all actors should keep an open mind in terms of understanding these dynamics. Certainly, definitions of refugee hosting based on geographical proximity should be challenged. This should also never be the only factor considered. The key distinctions to understand are the ways that being a refugee or an Ethiopian citizen in refugee hosting areas shape the opportunities and constraints available to individuals and their communities. Given the concerns that have rightly been raised about the risks of raising tensions and provoking conflict in remote parts of the country, getting this right is particularly important.

3 The **views of refugees and the Ethiopian communities that host them are inadequately represented in the available research, with many policies and approaches being rolled out from Addis Ababa** and outside the country by national and international policymakers that, at best, have spent limited amounts of time in the key locations. While these groups are very mixed, with a range of interests and perspectives, the sense of frustration with a process that they hear about but cannot understand or see any tangible outcomes from is growing. Bringing those people who are at the heart of the CRRF more fully into the centre of decision-making and design would likely ensure that local complexities are better understood and catered for. This also applies to the design and implementation of research programmes, which is rarely carried out with the participation of those on the ground.

4 Research tends to fall into one of two categories: those studies that seek to provide an overview of the CRRF as a whole but at a fairly high level; or those that are tied to very specific programmes or policy areas. This risks failing to address **critical linkages between different policy areas at an adequately granular level**. For example, research focused on self-reliance tends to emphasise livelihood and economic issues but without considering socio-political dynamics at different levels, the relationship with access to different kind of services, or other forms of rights and protections. There is a need for all involved in research in this sector to reflect on where these linkages matter most and to ensure that work is being done to understand key interdependencies. The greater emphasis on area-based planning envisaged by the NCRRS suggests that work that considers these linkages more fully will be increasingly important.

5 There is **much more emphasis to date on the what of transforming the refugee operation, and less on the *how***. The government ambition, stated in the 2017 roadmap, of ending camp-based assistance within a decade implies a large number of legal, financial, and practical transitions for refugees, for host populations, and for policymakers at all levels. Yet there is a lack of clarity over the nature of these transitions: of how roles and responsibilities will change; of where accountability will lie; and of precisely how the entitlements and obligations of refugees may shift. There is a particular gap in understanding the financial implications, with the nexus narrative sometimes being taken to mean that there should be a transition away from humanitarian to development funds. None of these transitions are straightforward, however. In the case of funding, for example, the key question is not of a shift from one to another but of how they can be blended to best meet needs in the new landscape created by the policy reform. Serious work is therefore required on the part of all actors to help define what these transitions could and should look like and agreeing on their roles. Such an effort should also assist with clarifying how key contested terms such as "self-reliance" and "local integration" are to be understood in the Ethiopian context.

6 Across the board, **inadequate coordination**, particularly at the policy and implementation levels, is a key theme. Given the entrance of a number of new actors in the refugee policy space, this is perhaps unsurprising. Nonetheless, inadequate coordination needs to be addressed quickly to ensure the best use of limited resources. The transitioning of the current refugee coordination model to a functional CRRF coordination mechanism remains a challenge. The delays in approving the NCRSS and agreeing a clear accountability structure for implementation that brings all the key actors together has slowed progress on discussion of critical detail in each of the relevant sectors.

7 The number of **similar or potentially complementary pieces of research and analysis that are being undertaken without adequate reference to one another** is striking. This is partly a function of the differing starting points this body of research takes, with some being tied to specific projects, others to particular policy issues, and yet others of a more purely academic nature. A related challenge is that much research is not made fully accessible in the public domain by those who commission it. Data is also inconsistently gathered; for example, in terms of disaggregation across key categories. While full coordination of this effort may be unachievable given the range of stakeholders involved, it would be of benefit to all actors to find ways to better link up this work.

KEY RESEARCH GAPS AND RECOMMENDED FOCUS AREAS

A number of thematic and geographical gaps emerge as a result of the literature review upon which this synthesis paper is based. These gaps point to areas where future research efforts might be best prioritised across the four objectives of the NCRSS. There is also a clear hierarchy among the four objectives in terms of the breadth of research already undertaken. There is also a clear hierarchy among the four objectives in terms of the breadth of research already undertaken. Moving from the most researched area to the least, this section highlights **key thematic gaps and recommended priorities** in relation to each objective.

Objective 2

The activities that relate to **Objective 2** (access to livelihoods and job opportunities) have been the focus of most studies, particularly in the last two to three years. This is unsurprising, given that this area has been the focus of the majority of new programming related to the CRRF. The work to date has been little coordinated, leading to anomalies such as multiple labour market assessments being conducted in Jigjiga over a very short period of time. As the livelihood and self-reliance sector develops, it will be important to have a stronger framework for organising work in this area. Government leadership will be critical to making this happen. As it becomes clearer how the new Refugee Proclamation will be implemented, this should also become more coherent as roles and responsibilities are clarified at different levels. Such vision should then assist in the determination of priority research areas and employment sectors across the country. It will undoubtedly be critical to focus more on **potential ways to engage the private sector**, exploring how lessons from elsewhere in East Africa where there has been more progress can be applied to the very particular Ethiopian context. For example, there may be lessons to learn from the increasing involvement of Equity Bank Kenya Limited in providing financial services to refugees in Kenya and Uganda. It also will be important to ensure **a good balance between research focused on the formal and informal sector**, given the importance of the latter to refugees across the country.

Objective 3

Objective 3 (strengthening individual capacities through improved public services) has also been subject to a considerable amount of research and analysis, given that it is an area of significant external involvement through projects and programmes. Much of this research is, however, tied to specific interventions. It is noted that there has been a particular focus on education, with less research conducted on other service delivery sub-sectors such as health, child protection, nutrition, and WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene)—despite the considerable investments being made in these areas. In relation to existing practice, the key requirement is for **more research related to appropriate governance models for more integrated service delivery systems**, both from within Ethiopia and from other countries. Research is also needed on **the impact of such integrated models on access and quality**. As new approaches are tested in future, it will be important to build robust research components into them to ensure that their impacts are fully understood. There is also a critical need to **undertake more research into effective pathways to transitions out of humanitarian assistance programming in both Ethiopia and the region**, to inform design of the new approaches envisaged around more targeted humanitarian assistance and public workfare programmes. The challenge of providing sustainable and effective safety nets that meet the needs of both refugees and Ethiopian host communities will be considerable, and the best possible evidence must be made available.

Objective 4

Objective 4 (voluntary repatriation and resettlement) has had less dedicated research, particularly with a focus on resettlement and voluntary repatriation, although a wider durable solutions lens indicates that there has been a larger amount of work focused on local integration. Much of the research that has been done in reference to refugee intentions also risks being skewed by the dominance of particular policy agendas, notably the strong emphasis of European donors on reducing informal migration flows out of the Horn of Africa. There is therefore scope for a new research agenda to be developed in this area **that works with refugees to understand in more depth the complex choices and trade-offs they make when considering whether, how, and when to move, and their aspirations for the future, and how appropriate policy responses can be determined to best engage with these choices**. This will be particularly important in those parts of the country where the focus of many refugees remains international resettlement. Such work should hopefully allow for more informed policies to be developed around socio-economic integration. The Ethiopian government may also wish to identify different channels to promote advocacy with developed countries over increasing resettlement numbers.

Objective 1

Objective 1 (capacity and systems to manage sustainable responses) has undoubtedly had the least focus in terms of research, which reinforces the point made above about the need for more of a focus on the **how** of NCRRS implementation. A particular requirement under this objective, as policy evolves, will be **capacity assessments for the various stakeholders to ensure they can take on new roles and responsibilities under the agreed model for implementation of the NCRRS**. Research could also be undertaken to determine **appropriate accountability and governance models**, including those that provide a strong voice to refugees themselves. Finally, critical to this objective is **a fuller understanding on the financial implications of likely future financing trends**, for both humanitarian and development funds, to allow for the design of an appropriate and sustainable displacement financing architecture that makes best use of the different funding streams.

From a **geographical perspective**, there are also clear research imbalances. For example, **Afar** is particularly under-researched, which seems like a missed opportunity given the potentially promising practices reported there by the limited research that has been done. **Benishangul-Gumuz** and **Gambella** have also had less focus than other regions. The **Somali Region** has been most saturated with research, followed by work with the Eritrean refugees in the **Tigray** region, particularly with reference to livelihoods and economic issues. The considerable policy focus on irregular migration among Eritrean refugees also has a somewhat skewing effect on the nature of research relating to Shire and Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING A COMMON RESEARCH AGENDA

This synthesis paper confirms the need for a common research agenda to underpin implementation of the new government refugee strategy, with such an initiative having the potential to lead to more coordinated and coherent implementation in line with a shared narrative. Of the existing research, much was conducted before the introduction of the CRRF framework, or addresses very specific agendas or issues in line with the priorities of the commissioning entity. Lack of coherence is a contributing factor in the confusion and uncertainty that has been expressed by many actors about what is intended in the coming years. A more common research agenda in Ethiopia should not only lead to more evidence-based decision making but also provide a better platform for Ethiopia to share its lessons with the rest of the world.

A good starting point for this work would be a **collective effort, led by government, to develop a more contextually driven understanding of key concepts** at the heart of the reform process. Standard definitions are likely to be of limited use in driving good decision-making, and it is for this reason that this report does not have a glossary of such terms. At the same time, this synthesis paper reveals key terms in particular need of more work, and research should be undertaken to improve both collective understanding and future implementation. These include:

Self-reliance — While the broad outlines of this concept can be framed by standard definitions, the detail of how it should be understood in the context of refugees living in parts of Ethiopia where formal employment is extremely hard to find is difficult to pin down. Underlying the push for self-reliance is an assumption that refugees cannot be self-reliant in the current environment. Evidence shows, however, that many are indeed finding ways to look after themselves and their families, and this existing self-reliance needs to be understood before new initiatives are developed. There is also inadequate consideration given as to how self-reliance should be understood for Ethiopian citizens in these regions, particularly in the eastern regions of the country where the caseload figures for humanitarian assistance and safety net programmes are very high. While additional right to work provisions are clearly a critical component of self-reliance, these must be placed in the specific context of what kind of work and livelihoods are feasible across Ethiopian regions. Also, there needs to be a greater recognition of the complementary components of self-reliance, such as freedom of movement, access to basic services, and the ability to interact positively with local host populations. There is a clear need to hear from refugees themselves about how these different factors influence their thinking.

Local integration — This has long been a contested concept at the international level, with most definitions now framing it as a process with multiple components, rather than a one-off event that shifts people from one status to another. These broad definitions do not help refugees or host populations gain clarity on what local integration means for them. They also risk creating considerable uncertainty and confusion. The 2019 Refugees Proclamation helpfully provides a definition for the Ethiopian context but also raises further questions about the extent to which the government understands local integration as a long-term durable solution. While work is underway to explore these issues in more depth, at the request of ARRA, it will be important for this dialogue to be as transparent as possible, with both refugees and local populations involved at all stages.

Sustainability — Much of the impetus for the Global Compact for Refugees has come from a desire to make refugee operations more sustainable, partly stemming from a wish on the part of donors to reduce the overall humanitarian burden. The evidence reviewed for this synthesis paper demonstrates that sustainability is far from being a straightforward objective. As indicated above, development interventions cannot take the place of humanitarian programmes in protecting basic human needs and rights, particularly in the short term. The places where refugees currently live in Ethiopia face considerable wider development challenges, and any new approaches to working with refugees need to be placed in the wider context of seeking to tackle these, recognising that there will be no quick fixes. There also must be consideration of the sustainability implications of the different durable solutions and how they are understood by Ethiopian stakeholders. All actors must therefore challenge themselves on what they really mean by pushing for greater sustainability in programming approaches, and what is realistic over what timeframes.

The previous section provides suggestions as to **what** the focus of a common research agenda should be. Here, recommendations are made as to **how** it should be developed.

Leadership for the development of a common research agenda should come from the government, with ARRA at the forefront. Hopefully this report can be a useful starting point for this process, with ARRA bringing on board both its partners across government and international partners to identify priorities, existing resources, and needs. It is important to consider what **capacities** will be required across the system to make this happen. The role of key initiatives, such as the work being supported by ReDSS and the new UNHCR initiative to develop an Ethiopian academic network on refugee studies, should be determined within a **single overarching system**. More work is also required to determine entry points across the wider government research agenda.

Work could usefully be undertaken to develop a **minimum standard for undertaking refugee-related research in Ethiopia**, covering all stages of design, implementation, and development, and issues such as consultation, research ethics, transparency, and dissemination. Such an output would help provide guidance to donors, implementing partners, researchers themselves, government actors, and local populations (host and refugee communities alike) on what their obligations and expectations in relation to research activity should be. It would also help set standards for defining what good data is; for example, around disaggregation. In addition to creating a more consistent and coherent body of data, greater standardisation should also enable better longitudinal studies that can track trends over time.

Within this wider effort, there should be particular emphasis on doing more **to foreground the perspectives and participation of local populations** in research initiatives. More work is required to determine the most effective mechanisms to do this that do not exacerbate research fatigue. A starting point may be to share and discuss the findings of this synthesis paper or other pieces of research in different parts of the country to create more of a feedback loop between research processes and local perspectives and, hopefully, spark an ongoing discussion.

Recognising that written reports are only one limited form of research dissemination, more emphasis should be given to other types of dissemination. One element could be a greater emphasis on **research seminars and workshops**, both in Addis and in different parts of the country, to promote dialogue and discussion. Another could be an **online portal** for refugee-related research, designed to make it easy to access and navigate all the research that exists. Thought would need to be given as to how to embed this appropriately in Ethiopian institutions to increase the chances of this being a sustainable initiative.

Consideration should also be given to developing a **centralised repository** for research data, in line with the global initiative being carried out by the World Bank and UNHCR. If such data could be made more available, this should reduce the need for duplication of effort and allow for greater triangulation of research. While privacy and data sharing considerations would need to be carefully considered to protect all parties, this should not be an obstacle to developing an appropriate solution.

Ideally, all of this work should sit within a **common framework** that both enables joint monitoring of effort and progress, and allows for flexibility. Such a framework should also encourage more joint evaluations and studies to reduce overlapping efforts.

There is a need for all involved in research to reflect on the linkages and interdependencies that exist between the specific research work they are conducting and wider research on similar topics and the policy environment. By so doing, it could be possible to understand the specific issues at hand in a more **holistic manner**. The greater emphasis on area-based planning envisaged by the NCRRS suggests work that considers these linkages more fully will be increasingly important.

South Sudanese refugee children play at Jewi refugee camp in Ethiopia
Credit: UNHCR

OBJECTIVE 1: CAPACITY AND SYSTEMS TO MANAGE SUSTAINABLE RESPONSES TO THE NEEDS OF REFUGEES AND HOT COMMUNITIES ENHANCED

Objective 1 is cross-cutting and focused on ensuring that the Ethiopian system has adequate capacity to deliver on the ambition of the new strategy. It describes a range of new systems and capacities that are required, especially to support refugees to move out-of-camp environments and take advantage of the new rights provided to them by the 2019 Refugees Proclamation. There is therefore a strong element of transition management included in this objective, including the transition from humanitarian to development financing.

It is the objective against which there has been the least research and analysis to date, with those commissioning research choosing to focus on the **what** of the strategy rather than the **how**. This is an unfortunate omission. It needs to be addressed in coming years to support delivery of the NCRRS. The reports and papers that this synthesis paper primarily draws upon therefore include key policy documents, and studies that either tend to approach the issue indirectly or are focused at the global or regional levels.

Key research related to Objective 1: Capacity

- The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: the Ethiopian Model (UNHCR, 2018a)
- The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: progress in four East African countries and the Ethiopia case study (Crawford & O'Callaghan, 2019)
- Ethiopia Refugee and Host Community Analysis: Integrated National Study and Regional Studies (ODI / DRC, forthcoming)
- Are integrated services a step towards integration? Uganda Case Study (ReDSS, 2019)
- Whose Responsibility? Accountability for refugee protection and solutions in a whole-of-society approach (HERE-GENEVA / DRC, 2017)
- Forced Displacement and Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa (World Bank / UNHCR, 2015)

POLICY ANALYSIS

The New York Declaration[5] put forth the key ideas of the CRRF, emphasising the adoption of a multi-stakeholder and whole-of-society approach, highlighting the principle of inclusiveness, incorporating humanitarian and development responses, and taking a greater focus on long-term planning and interventions. Researchers argue that the CRRF:

> …whole-of-society approach can potentially address a regulation gap by allowing for actors to collectively solve problems; it can address a participation gap by including hereto un- or under-represented actors; and it can tackle an implementation gap by ensuring the execution of mutually agreed strategic goals.[6]

This last point, emphasising the need for a focus on execution and delivery, is key: the same report argues that one of the major weaknesses of the existing refugee regime has been a lack of accountability to commitments: "The fact that there is no true accountability for refugee protection in the current system is precisely where the most significant opportunity with the CRRF process lies."[7]

This emphasis on both inclusivity and accountability brings the challenges of effectively implementing the CRRF into focus. On the one hand, a range of new approaches and actors need to be brought to bear on the challenges. On the other, there needs to be greater focus on accountability and delivery. This requires both a horizontal broadening of the agenda—to bring in more partners—and a vertical strengthening—to increase accountability. This would be a significant challenge for any sector to achieve simultaneously.

The government roadmap document identifies this capacity challenge and outlines three priority areas: 1) capacity

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5   UN General Assembly (19 September 2016). New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, A/RES/71/1.

6   HERE-Geneva / DRC (2017). Whose Responsibility? Accountability for Refugee Protection and Solutions in a Whole-of-Society Approach, 2.

7   HERE-Geneva / DRC (2017).

building and technical support; 2) the establishment of a new governance structure; and 3) an expansion of partnerships. Most detail is provided on the second of these points, with an expanded governance structure outlined as summarised in Figure 1. An extensive list of stakeholders were also listed as being included within the steering committee for the first time, and the steering committee began to meet on a monthly basis in 2018 (although it has been suspended since the middle of that year). The National Coordination Unit outlined below has also been established in the form of the National Coordination Office (NCO), and the draft NCRRS confirms the NCO role as a key department of ARRA. After the Roadmap was issued, the technical committees began to meet and CRRF launches were held in all of the main refugee hosting regions.
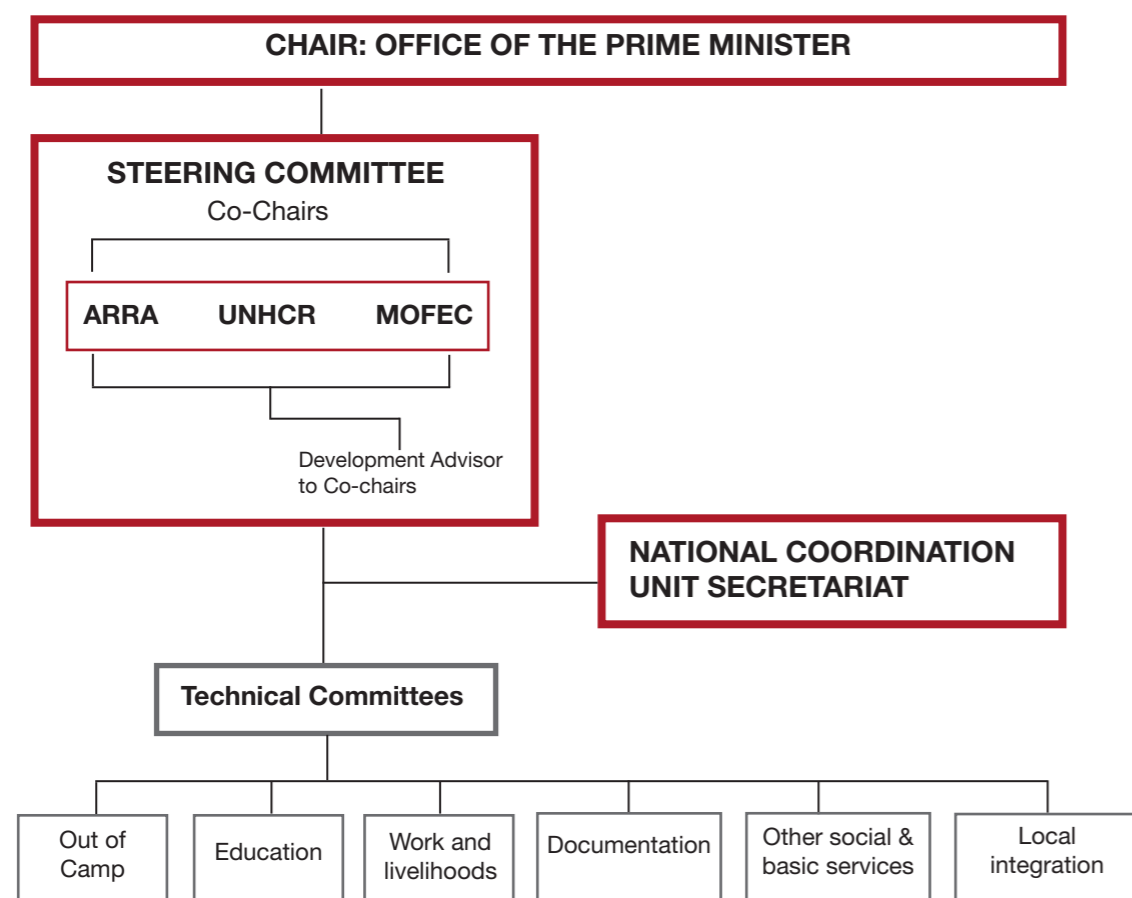

Figure 1. Governance structure for the CRRF in Ethiopia[8]

The draft NCRRS places capacity and systems development as the first pillar of implementation, cutting across all other pillars, and it confirms the importance placed upon this by the roadmap. Institutional and infrastructural capacity development has been targeted for government actors located at different levels, while the systems development segment covers such areas as refugee displacement early warning and communication systems, targeting systems, and refuge–host community socio-economic integration systems. As yet, there has been no detailed capacity assessment conducted by the government at the level of the overall strategy, although it is understood by the research team that such assessments have been conducted in relation to specific areas of implementation. Other key areas that have not yet been developed in depth include financial and sub-national arrangements. With regard to the former, this requires the participation of the ministry of finance and other parts of government to review funding requirements for implementation of the NCRSS, likely funding sources, and the design of an appropriate financing system. On the latter, the key challenge is to determine clear roles and responsibilities for the federal, regional, and woreda (district; third-level administrative unit) governments, and appropriate accountability chains for delivering the strategy both inside and outside refugee camps.

THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND

Beneficiary perspectives

Refugees and host communities the world over express a desire to be more actively involved in the processes of refugee operations than has been the case in the past; not just for the sake of participation but as real actors that can bring improvements. In fact, the real inclusion of these communities in planning and programming activities is found to be "the glue that holds together the whole-of-society response, bridging the objectives of the humanitarian and development actors".[9] Their active participation is argued to have potentially positive implications on aid accountability and effectiveness at local levels, as local populations would make sure that the earmarked money is spent as intended. Initiatives such as the Global Refugee-led Network and the Network for Refugee Voices[10] are leading the way in promoting this agenda at the global level.

In the Ethiopian context, examples from the ODI / DRC context analyses and elsewhere have shown that these groups do not feel as involved as they would wish, instead feeling like passive participants.[11] Concerns have also been raised that existing systems, such as refugee central committees (RCCs), are focused more on downwards delivery of protection through information sharing than on enabling upwards accountability and true representation. While the former is clearly a critical function of camp management, there appears to be considerable scope to improve the latter. The failures of past repatriation attempts that have inadequately involved refugee voices (see discussion of Objective 4 below) demonstrate the potential negative consequences of the lack of inclusion.

It is critical to remember that refugees and hosts are not homogenous groups. Some local hosts view refugees as burdens and have blamed the latter for the poor service delivery offered by local government, or for the increasing scarcity of fuel sources, leading to resource competition and conflict. Hosts and local authorities complain that the principle whereby a specified proportion (generally cited as somewhere between 20%–30%) of humanitarian assistance for refugees is provided to the host community, is not consistently applied. There can also be considerably different views from different segments of the local host populations. The positive reception from local communities and authorities to a programme such as DRDIP (Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project), which works primarily through standard government and community structures, demonstrates the appetite for more direct engagement.[12]

Addressing this challenge requires sustained and substantive engagement with these populations on the delivery of support. While research has a role to play in understanding their perspectives and challenges, it must also be noted that research fatigue among local populations has become a major issue across the country. This stems from the extractive form of most of the research conducted, with researchers visiting, conducting focus groups or interviews, and leaving without any clear benefits to the research participants themselves. Area-based planning exercises, designed on the basis of granular understanding of the local complexities of refugee–host dynamics, tied to mechanisms that create new upwards accountabilities, could be an important opportunity for addressing this gap. Such processes would create a more enabling environment for the kinds of research that will be critical to understanding underlying dynamics; for example, research into issues such as conflict, gender, and power dynamics.

Formal and informal practices

Traditionally, responsibility for coordination and management has been centred around ARRA, with support from UNHCR. Over the last decade, as refugee numbers have risen tenfold, ARRA has invested considerably in establishing systems that enable centrally controlled management of the complex operation working in some of the most challenging parts of the country. Key elements of this include the Refugee Task Force providing overall leadership, and a centrally managed accountability matrix that provides specific details of delivery responsibilities and implementing partners for every camp and region of the country. While not all funding for the refugee operation passes directly through ARRA and UNHCR, existing systems allow the two organisations to have full awareness of all activities underway and the budgets involved, including, for ARRA, through controlling access to the camps for both national and international partners. These systems provide ARRA with confidence that the Ethiopian government is in a position to meet its international commitments on refugee protection.[13]

8   GoE/ARRA (2017)

9   HERE-Geneva / DRC (2017), 12.

10 See: https://www.networkforrefugeevoices.org/

11 ODI / DRC (forthcoming). Ethiopia Refugee and Host Community Analysis: Integrated National Study and Regional Studies.

12 ODI / DRC (forthcoming).

13 UNHCR (2018a). Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: the Ethiopian model; see www.globalcrrf.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/UNHCR-CS-Ethio-pia-screen.pdf

The CRRF calls for a wholly different model of coordination and management, as is clear from Figure 1. It brings new actors to the table from the highest level downwards, including the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance. The steering committee and technical committees are designed to be far more consultative and consensus-based bodies than have existed before, bringing together different perspectives and providing direction, guidance, and recommendations.[14]

New line ministries and government bodies are also centrally involved in some of the newer programmes: for example, DRDIP is implemented with the Ministry of Agriculture as its lead counterpart, and the new Economic Opportunities Project (sometimes referred to as 'the jobs compact') through the Ethiopian Investment Commission. Donors have sought to take up the opportunities presented by the new 2019 Refugees Proclamation to develop new kinds of programmes with new partners, including multilateral organisations (e.g. the ILO, FAO and World Bank), international development companies (e.g. DAI, implementing a major new DFID funded livelihoods programme), more developmentally focused NGOs (e.g. SNV) and private sector companies (e.g. through the Shire Alliance).[15] The emphasis on both refugees and refugee hosting areas also opens up new opportunities for programming outside the camps, reducing the ability of one actor at the centre to monitor activities.

This presents a significantly more chaotic environment for implementation, and the newly envisaged oversight structures are yet to be embedded enough to be able to fully play their role (as demonstrated, for example, by the failure of the steering committee to meet for more than a year). The recent ODI / DRC report notes that it must be remembered that this reform process is taking place at a time of considerable wider changes in the country. It is noted by a number of studies that failures of coordination are an increasing challenge across the country.[16]

Where progress is being made, it tends to be on a more ad hoc basis or in specific areas. Examples include the 2018 launch of an Ethiopian Data Portal to support inter-agency coordination,[17] and the undertaking of more joint missions and design processes by different UN agencies. In Jigjiga, it appears that real progress is being made on coordination at the regional level through the establishment of a multi-stakeholder CRRF coordination group co-chaired by the regional Bureau of Finance and Economic Development (BOFED), ARRA, and UNHCR, which has now been expanded to local levels in Kebrebeyah and Aw Barre.

An explosion in new types of programming has also led to a far more complex financing picture. The recent ODI stocktaking report highlights USD 750 million worth of new development programming focused on refugees and host communities but emphasises that it is very hard to determine the direct effect these initiatives are likely to have in refugee hosting regions in the short term. This is particularly the case for the central government budget support being provided under the USD 550 million economic opportunities project, yet this sum is sometimes referred to as bringing direct benefits to local areas. Better understanding of the overall financing picture is of enormous importance in an environment of decreasing humanitarian funding.[18]

KEY LESSONS

Lack of coordination has real costs

Studies that focus on the past history of the Ethiopian refugee operation highlight how failures of coordination can have real efficiency and effectiveness costs. In Kebrebeyah, an ETB 25 million investment by UNHCR in a water supply system in the early 2000 s failed to adequately involve local government stakeholders and consider long-term maintenance requirements, and has been marred by problems of unsustainability ever since. Finding appropriate governance solutions after the event is far harder than building them in from the start.[19]

Bridging the humanitarian–development gap

Before this, an attempt to bridge the humanitarian–development gap was made in the 1990s in the Somali Region through an initiative referred to at the time as the cross-mandate operation. At a time of complex displacement in the region, this initiative sought to take a whole-of-society approach and focus more on developmental responses, with UNHCR seeking greater involvement for agencies such as UNDP and FAO. Ultimately this initiative failed, primarily due

to lack of willingness and ability on the part of development actors to step in to replace humanitarian programming[20]. This remains a major challenge: humanitarian programmes involve significant inputs of resource – whether cash or in-kind – directly into areas of the country in ways that development programmes rarely do. Accepting that development funds cannot substitute for humanitarian programmes is therefore critical, and requires careful planning for transition based on a detailed analysis of local needs.

OUTSTANDING ISSUES AND GAPS

The primary challenge under Objective 1 (capacity) remains **identifying appropriate and sustainable governance structures at all levels**. It is hoped that the passing of the draft NCRRS, which offers a clearer mandate for cross-government coordination to rest within ARRA, will allow it to start taking on more fully its envisaged role to "monitor, evaluate, and report on progress, document learning and challenges, commission studies and evaluations, and ensure a broad consultative process".[21]

There is also a **critical need to clarify roles and responsibilities for all actors**. The shift from a primarily humanitarian mindset to one that combines elements of humanitarian and developmental delivery is significant and thus requires different roles from all relevant stakeholders: greater involvement from parts of the Ethiopian government not accustomed to thinking about refugees such as line ministries or *woreda* governments; NGOs being asked to develop different kinds of partnerships and approaches; and the UN system being presented with a very different coordination challenge. These stakeholders are, however, found to be "not yet well adapted to the new approach internally, and still need further clarity on what needs to be changed and how, particularly in terms of financial systems, budgeting and planning structures, on how to pursue effective advocacy, and how what should be the entry/exit points of all partners".[22] Also, while the active involvement of refugees and hosts is being supported more now than before, far more work is required to make them active participants in this process.

As part of this clarification, there is also a key question around **the future responsibilities of ARRA** in particular and they are likely to be at the heart of capacity building requirements. Once greater clarity is available on these roles and responsibilities under the new approaches, far more detailed capacity assessments of ARRA itself will be required.

Research on other contexts may have a positive role to play in informing these discussions. Recent research by ODI and ReDSS illustrates key lessons from other parts of the region, particularly Uganda, where the whole-of-society approach has been embedded for longer than in Ethiopia and multi-stakeholder governance has become the norm[23]. Somalia also presents opportunities for learning around such coordination processes, as demonstrated by a forthcoming article co-authored by ReDSS.[24] Any such examples need to be fully contextualised in relation to the variety of different Ethiopian contexts. Nonetheless, there is still a need for a range of inputs to allow for the related processes of capacity assessment and systems design to be undertaken in earnest. This process needs to consider options for more structured financing modalities, as the current ad hoc funding decisions being taken by donors are unlikely to strengthen coherence across the sector. It should also consider options for data management, especially given the need to engage with wider Ethiopian data collection, and management systems and structures. A full mapping of relevant initiatives would be of value.

Finally, there are likely to be **a number of relevant initiatives underway elsewhere in the world** that could support the specific new requirements laid out by the NCRRS. For example, this review identifies relevant work underway that attempts to model and predict refugee flows, particularly that being done by Suleimenova and Groen of Brunel University in London. This has most recently included modelling of South Sudanese refugees in the region, seeking to test predictions against actual recent flows.[25]

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14 UNHCR (2019a). Ethiopia Country Refugee Response Plan: The integrated response plan for refugees from Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia, January 2019–December 2020; see: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/67744.pdf

15 ODI / DRC (forthcoming).

16 ODI / DRC (forthcoming).

17 UNHCR (2019a).

18 Nigusie and Carver, 2019

19 ODI / DRC (forthcoming).

20 Van Brabant, 'Bad Neighbours Make Bad Borders'

21 UNHCR (2018a), 9.

22 UNHCR (2018a), 17.

23 ReDSS (2019). Are Integrated Services a Step towards Integration? Uganda Case Study.

24 Taruri et al. (forthcoming). Multi stakeholder approach to address urban displacement in Somalia.

25 Suleimenova and Groen (2020). How Policy Decisions Affect Refugee Journeys in South Sudan: A Study using Automated Ensemble Simulations. Journal of Artificial Societies and Social Simulation.

Kebribeyah refugee camp in Ethiopia
Credit: UNHCR

OBJECTIVE 2: ACCESS TO DIVERSE ECONOMIC AND LIVELIHOODS AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES

This objective is the component of the new Ethiopian approach to refugees that has received perhaps the most attention since the announcement of the pledges in 2016. The government made significant commitments not only to provide refugees with the right to work but also to work with the international community to create jobs and economic opportunities for both refugees and Ethiopian citizens. These commitments have encouraged significant new interventions from the international community, both at the national level (notably the jobs compact and the economic opportunities project led by the World Bank) and the sub-national level (for example, large new EU and DFID-funded programmes operating in particular refugee hosting regions).

It is therefore unsurprising that Objective 2 is perhaps the most researched of all four objectives. The following analysis draws on a wide range of studies, highlighting some of the most important of these.

Key research related to Objective 2: livelihoods and job creation

- Refugee Economies in Dollo Ado: Development Opportunities in a Border Region of Ethiopia (Refugee Studies Centre, 2019a)

- Refugee Economies in Addis Ababa: Towards Sustainable Opportunities for Urban Communities (Refugee Studies Centre, 2019b)

- Refugee Economies: Rethinking Popular Assumptions (Refugee Studies Centre, 2014)

- New Responses to the Refugee Crisis: Promises and Challenges in Ethiopia. A Case Study of World Bank Financing for Refugee-Hosting Nations (IRC, 2018)

- Ethiopia's Refugee Policy Overhaul: Implications on the Out of Camp Regime and Rights to Residence, Movement and Engagement in Gainful Employment (Woldetsadik et al, 2019)

- The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: Progress in Ethiopia (Nigusie and Carver, 2019)

- Informing Durable Solutions by Micro-Data—A Skills Survey for Refugees in Ethiopia (Wold Bank, 2018)

- Urban Refugee Economies: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Brown et al, 2017)

- Thinking forward about Livelihoods for Refugees in Ethiopia: Learning from NRC's Programming 2013–2016 (Samuel Hall, 2017)

- Study on non-farm livelihoods options for refugees and host communities (World Bank, forthcoming)

- Study on the socio-economic sustainability of refugee-hosting areas in Ethiopia (World Bank / Samuel Hall, forthcoming)

- Jigjiga rapid labour market assessment (ILO / Samuel Hall, forthcoming)

POLICY ANALYSIS

Four of the pledges made by the Ethiopian government in 2016 relate to livelihoods and jobs: 1) the provision of work permits to refugees and those with permanent residence IDs, within the bounds of domestic law; 2) the provision of work permits to refugees in the sectors permitted for foreign workers, by giving priority to qualified refugees; 3) making available irrigable land to allow 100,000 people from both refugees and local host communities to engage in crop production; and 4) building industrial parks, with a percentage of jobs committed to refugees.[26]

In the draft NCRRS, these areas are the particular focus of the Livelihoods and Job Creation Pillar (Pillar 4) but are also relevant to Pillars 2 and 3, which are focused on safety nets and humanitarian provision. The emphasis throughout is strongly on refugee self-reliance and increasing economic and livelihoods opportunities for both refugees and host populations.[27]

26 GoE (2017).
27 GoE (2019). Refugees Proclamation No. 1110 / 2019.

The concept of self-reliance is therefore central to this objective. The term "self-reliance" is mentioned 7 times in the government roadmap document and 14 times in the draft NCRRS. This is in line with the GCR, whereby enhancing refugee self-reliance is stated as one of its four primary objectives. The formal global policy documents do not, however, attempt to define precisely what this means, instead focusing on the need for additional support in the area of livelihoods.[28] UNHCR defines this term as "the social and economic ability of an individual, a household or a community to meet basic needs in a sustainable manner with dignity".[29] The ODI developed a tool designed to support objective assessments of the level of self-reliance in a given context.[30] This is broadly in line with how the term is understood in the Ethiopia-focused literature.[31] Ultimately, refugee hosting countries have the space to define the term for themselves, given the local context.

While the Government of Ethiopia has not specifically elaborated its own definition, to some extent its vision can be inferred from key policy documents. Perhaps the most concrete steps taken so far are Clauses 26 and 28 of the 2019 Refugees Proclamation. For the first time in Ethiopia, these clauses provide for refugees to be able to formally access employment opportunities and to move freely around the country. In terms of the right to work, the basic principle set out is that such provision will be available on the same basis as the most favourable terms currently available to foreign nationals. Only Sub-clause 26(4) provides an exception, which states that for jobs created through projects designed jointly by the Government of Ethiopia and its international partners specifically for this purpose, refugees will be provided with equal treatment to Ethiopian citizens. Clause 28 provides refugees with the "right to movement and freedom to choose his [or her] residence" but also indicates that ARRA "may arrange places or areas within which refugees and asylum seekers may live".[32] Work is currently underway on related and secondary legislation that will provide greater clarity on how this clause will be implemented in practice.

The fullest analysis of the new legal framework to date is that conducted by Woldetsadik et al. (2019). This analysis praises the government for the significant steps it has taken to provide new opportunities to refugees but highlights that, "Refugees' entitlements and experience remain challenged by regulatory gaps and uncertainties in many areas—including in the context of rights to residence, movement and engagement in gainful employment."[33] It highlights that much work is required to determine how these gaps and uncertainties will be resolved, and recommends a phased approach be taken to implementation to allow for learning of what works best in specific contexts.

THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND

Beneficiary perspectives

Two key questions arise from the perspective of those supposed to benefit from these new policies. Do they have the capacities required to take up these opportunities? And do they wish to do so?

On the first question, there is increasingly available research analysis about the skillsets of refugees across the country. The most notable national level analysis is the 2018 World Bank skills survey, but there are also other studies conducted at the regional level, including the recent Refugee Studies Centre reports on Dollo Ado and Addis Ababa, and a number of more specific assessments in Jigjiga. The World Bank skills survey provides a range of findings about the level of education and skill of refugees, as well as their current level of economic engagement and poverty status in Ethiopia (see Table 1). The skills survey highlights both the significant variation in educational attainment among different refugee cohorts and the relatively small percentage of completion of secondary school education. The educational challenges have been clearly recognised by the government to the extent that increasing educational attainment is a key commitment under the 2016 pledges and the draft NCRRS.

- Attendance of refugee children in primary school (79%) and secondary school (13%)

- A majority (82%) of secondary age students who are not in secondary school are attending grades in primary school

- 41% of the refugee working age population are without any education

- 13% and 2% of the refugee population are likely to have secondary and university education, respectively

- A higher percentage of men have some education compared to women across all nationalities

- There are significant differences between the educational attainment of refugees of different nationalities, with Eritreans being the most likely to have some education, followed by South Sudanese; Somali refugees have the lowest educational attainment

Highest educational attainment for working age population

| | Percentage of | | | |
	No education	Primary	Secondary	University
Eritrean	20%	50%	28%	1%
Somali	60%	30%	9%	1%
South Sudanese	38%	47%	12%	2%
Sudanese	40%	54%	2%	1%

Table 1: Key findings of the skills survey in relation to education[34]

While it remains unclear precisely what kinds of livelihood opportunities will be made available to refugees, there is notable commitment by the government in 2016 to provide jobs in industrial parks as part of their wider industrialisation strategy, with potentially up to 30,000 jobs being on offer. Given the findings of the skills study, this presents a particular challenge. Both the authors of the skill survey and the IRC[35] have argued that the skillsets of the refugees may not relate to what the factories in the industrial parks actually demand. Somali and South Sudanese refugees, in particular, are highlighted as having primarily experience and engagement in farming and pastoralism, making industrial park work potentially unsuitable.

In terms of aspirations, some challenges are also highlighted as to whether refugees wish to take up these kinds of jobs. Some have been examined by Tadesse,[36] who points out that the relatively low wages prevalent in the industrial parks struggle to compete with the income refugees can currently obtain from informal work and humanitarian assistance. In fact, as the IRC report notes, "More than half of refugees surveyed in one study said they would refuse a hypothetical factory job at 750 Birr because the salary was too low."[37] In this case, then, refugees might not aspire to work in the industrial parks and the identification of industrial parks as sources of employment appears to be problematic. The problem is even more significant when the geographic location of the refugees and the industrial parks is taken into consideration. Most refugee settlements are far from the existing parks. While there are plans to develop industrial parks closer to where refugees currently live (in October 2018, for example, new parks were announced in Afar, the Somali Region, and Benishangul-Gumuz),[38] this will require significant time and investment to come to fruition. Moving groups of refugees to areas currently not used to hosting them—and where there may be greater ethnic divergence with the host population—may also create challenges, especially given the ethnically based tensions of the last 18 months.

These issues partly explain the de-emphasising of industrial park work in the World Bank project appraisal document for the Economic Opportunities Project, whereby emphasis is instead on the provision of work permits, and suggests

28 UNHCR (2017a). Bringing the New York Declaration to Life Applying the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).

29 UNHCR (2005). Handbook for Self Reliance; see: https://www.unhcr.org/44bf7b012.pdf

30 Available through the ReDSS website; see: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/8k983otoua3xucz/AADPmAkA-twjGyQDmzguMPMwa/Module%205%20Self%20reli-ance?dl=0&preview=Module+5+ODI+checklist.doc

31 Holzaepfel and Tadesse (2015). Evaluation: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Livelihoods Programs for Refugees in Ethiopia; Samuel Hall (2014). Living Out of Camp: Alternative to Camp-Based Assistance for Eritrean Refugees in Ethiopia; Samuel Hall (2018). Local Integration Focus: Refugees in Ethiopia. Gaps and Opportunities for Refugees Who Have Lived in Ethiopia for 20 Years or More.

32 GoE (2019).

33 Woldetsadik et al. (2019). Ethiopia's Refugee Policy Overhaul: Implications on the Out of Camp Regime and Rights to Residence, Movement and Engagement in Gainful Employment. Journal of Ethiopian Human Rights Law; see: http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3406620

34 World Bank (2018). Informing Durable Solutions by Micro-Data: A Skills Survey for Refugees in Ethiopia, 33; see: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/996221531249711200/pdf/128185-WP-PUBLIC-P162987-SkillsReport.pdf

35 IRC (2018). New Responses to the Refugee Crisis: Promises and Challenges in Ethiopia. A Case Study of World Bank Financing for Refugee-Hosting Nations.

36 Tadesse (2018). Policy Brief: Promises and Challenges of Ethiopia's Refugee Policy Reform.

37 IRC (2018), 13

38 See: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-10/05/c_137513478.htm

that the pledges made around the provision of agricultural land may ultimately be more appropriate to the context.[39] There is less publicly available research on these kinds of projects, although the significant body of research into pastoralist livelihoods in Ethiopia is likely to be of relevance.

Formal and informal practices

Apart from relatively minor differences that result from the settlement pattern (e.g. camp or urban) and local environments, the studies reviewed for this synthesis paper exhibit broadly similar livelihood strategies and coping mechanisms among refugees in Ethiopia. In the face of limited or no alternative sources of income generating activities, humanitarian aid (either in the form of cash, food, or non-food support) has become central to the livelihoods of the majority of refugees. Nonetheless, humanitarian assistance has been complemented to some degree by income generated by: incentive work[40] for local and international NGOs; the sale of rations on local markets; engagement in agriculture, livestock, or retail trade; self-employment in informal business activities; remittances; or work through informal agreements with local employers.[41]

The centrality of aid is found to be a consequence of relatively low labour force participation rates among refugees. For instance, the World Bank skills survey finds that only 22% of working age refugees (15–64 years old) are currently employed, and more than 70% of them are found to be inactive (neither employed, nor unemployed, nor actively looking for employment).[42] In terms of nationality, the greatest levels of aid reliance are among South Sudanese and Sudanese refugees, then Somalis and finally Eritreans, who also secure their livelihood from wages and salaries, service and retail, agriculture, and remittances.[43] This finding resonates with the study by Betts et al., which finds that refugee nationality affects the basis of their livelihoods strategies and their relationships with host communities.[44]

It is argued, however, that these findings underestimate the informal economic activities of refugees, perhaps precisely because refugees are hesitant to talk openly about such activities.[45] Examples of such activity are identified across the country by the DRC/ODI context analysis studies and include: sharecropping arrangements with local communities (Afar, Tigray); employment with local businesses (Gambella, Afar); opening businesses inside and outside camps (the Somali Region); and establishing mutually beneficial trading arrangements with local communities (the Somali Region and Benishangul-Gumuz).[46] Where refugees bring specific skills or experiences—for example, gold miners in Benishangul or those from coastal cities with greater experience of wage labour in Afar—these can be particularly valuable to employers. The presence of refugees can also create new markets for goods. Remittances from abroad, where available, also can provide capital to start a small business. Evidence suggests that the stratification of these opportunities is linked to the existing resource bases of refugees, in terms of both financial and social capital.[47]

Somali refugees are also found to follow what have been called "split family strategies",[48] as members of a refugee household engage in both present and future-looking livelihood activities: women, children, and elderly stay in the camp to take advantage of camp assistance and social services, while the male adult makes frequent trips to Somalia to secure alternative income and keep a foothold there for the future. The IKEA Foundation investments in creating and supporting joint livelihood opportunities among refugees and hosts in the Dollo Ado area through irrigation projects have also created different opportunities there from the rest of the country.[49]

In their examination of the urban refugee economies, Brown et al.,[50] Betts et al.,[51] and Kindie[52] also find informal wage employment, informal enterprise, humanitarian assistance (in the form of monthly financial support, business grants, loans, and skills training), remittances, and networks with hosts and fellow refugees to be the major livelihood strategies among refugees in Addis Ababa. Both skills and networks are identified as critical assets to secure employment

opportunities, with Eritreans more likely to be employed than other nationalities, while very few South Sudanese and refugees from the Great Lakes are employed.[53] Networks established with host communities enable refugees to acquire business licenses and guarantors for the out-of-camp scheme, while networks with fellow refugees enable them to establish mutual self-help groups and even pool resources, such as renting a house together.[54]

Interventions and programmes

The livelihoods and jobs creation sector is one with a wide range of interventions and programmes from both the Ethiopian government and its international partners. The Nigusie and Carver report (2019) for ODI is the most extensive recent account of these.[55]

Starting with the official government plans, the Ethiopian 2019 Refugee Response Plans highlight a range of priority areas for intervention in this area, including:
- the creation of both self- and wage-employment opportunities in sectors such as agriculture, livestock, aggregation, SME (small, and medium enterprises) development, and job matching
- the expansion of agricultural opportunities through increasing irrigation works
- the extension of commercial and sustainable community-based animal health services to host community areas
- agricultural product processing and promoting value addition for export
- the promotion of fodder and commercial dairy and beef production
- the consolidation of vocational training programmes based on labour market needs
- the expansion of financial access through village saving and loan associations in host and refugee communities to facilitate business start-ups and expansion
- encouraging greater participation by the private sector[56]

Before the advent of the CRRF, external partners adopted a relatively narrow set of livelihood programmes in the camps, including: vocational training; youth engagement and recreation programmes; and provision of entrepreneurship training, tool kits, and loans to support business opportunities.[57]

Since the introduction of the CRRF, several new projects and approaches have been developed. Most significant is the World Bank Economic Opportunities Project (EOP), with funding from the bank itself, the EU, the European Investment Bank, and the UK government, which will make a contribution of USD 500 million to the Government of Ethiopia for a range of policy reforms related to economic opportunity. A segment of these reforms is focused on refugees. The passing of the new 2019 Refugees Proclamation was a pre-condition for this programme to begin. Over the project's six-year time frame, the government is expected to find mechanisms to provide at least 30,000 refugees with work permits under the new legal framework. Other key projects focused on refugee and host livelihoods include: the EU RDPP and focused support in Jigjiga; the DFID SHARPE (Strengthening Host and Refugee Population Economies) programme, which has prioritised a market systems approach; the German QEP (Qualification and Employment Perspectives for Refugees and Host Communities in Ethiopia) programme, which focuses on TVET (technical and vocational education and training); and a suite of programmes funded by the Netherlands government and working with private sector actors, international NGOs, and multilateral organisations. A notable feature of a number of these programmes is the extent to which they are being implemented by consortia of actors rather than by single agencies. For example, the RDPP is implemented by a number of different consortia of NGOs, made up of national and international agencies, along with those with humanitarian and development expertise. One of the projects funded by the Netherlands is known as "the Dutch partnership", a joint programme being implemented by UNHCR, UNICEF, the ILO, the IFC, and the World Bank.[58]

Nigusie and Carver (2019) argue that a striking feature of these projects is their diversity, both in terms of the range of activities they cover (including wage and self-employment in agriculture, microfinance, livestock and dairy products, job creation, education through TVETs, MSMEs creation and support, internship and entrepreneurship, and direct aid) and the kinds of partners they work through (including government ministries at federal and local levels, UN agencies, NGOs, contractors). While this diversity is not in and of itself necessarily a problem, Nigusie and Carver argue that in the absence of a clear vision for the sector, this risks diluting the impact of programmes, many of which are relatively

39 World Bank (2018)

40 'Incentive work' refers to the salaried employment of refugees in government (ARRA) and NGOs as teachers, nurses, and the like. But, the monthly salary is capped by ARRA at a rate well below the national standard paid to other Ethiopian employees in the same sector and position.

41 Betts et al. (2019a). Refugee Economies in Dollo Ado: Development Opportunities in a Border Region of Ethiopia; Samuel Hall (2014); Samuel Hall (2018); World Bank (2018).

42 World Bank (2018).

43 World Bank (2018).

44 Betts et al. (2014). Refugee Economies: Rethinking Popular Assumptions.

45 Betts et al (2014), DRC/ODI (forthcoming).

46 ODI/DRC (Forthcoming)

47 ODI/DRC (Forthcoming)

48 Betts et al. (2019a)

49 Betts et al. (2019a)

50 Brown et al. (2017). Urban Refugee Economies: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Brown et al. (2018). Urban Refugee Economies: Addis Ababa. Ethiopia.

51 Betts et al. (2019b). Refugee Economies in Addis Ababa: Towards Sustainable Opportunities for Urban Communities?

52 Kindie (2019). Challenges and Opportunities of Urban Refugee Livelihoods: The Case of Addis Ababa.

53 Brown et al. (2017), 28; Brown et al. (2018). 30

54 Betts et al. (2019b).

55 Nigusie and Carver (2019). The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework: Progress in Ethiopia; see: https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/re-source-documents/12941.pdf

56 UNHCR (2019a).

57 Holzaepfel and Tadesse (2015).

58 Nigusie and Carver (2019).

untested.[59] The pledges developed by the government for the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019 go some way to clarifying this picture, with a strong emphasis on opportunities within the agribusiness sector and other non-industrial park jobs.

KEY LESSONS

The available research highlights a number of areas where lessons can be learnt for the future.

Small-scale piloting

Nigusie and Carver (2019) highlight some instances of potentially constructive attempts to explore the limits of the refugee law in Ethiopia. The Netherlands government intended use of its foreign direct investment in the flower industry in the country to secure jobs for refugees emerges as one approach and the German government works with similar objectives through its TVET-oriented QEP programme. The latter is to be implemented by first proving the concept of developing the labour market at a micro-level in Addis Ababa for their TVET graduates, and then expanding the approach based on the success of this small-scale intervention.

Demand-based programming

The Ethiopian refugee operation is particularly complex, with multiple refugee cohorts spread around diverse parts of the country. As such, an all-encompassing single programming solution may not work for all refugee contexts. As Betts et al. observe, there can be significant diversity of livelihood choices between and within the refugee groups: in Uganda, that study finds around 70 different types of refugee economy. [60]Thus, refugees are characterised by diverse capabilities, experiences, degrees of vulnerability, and ambitions. Livelihood programming has to take the different refugee contexts into consideration while designing and implementing such interventions.

Long-term planning

Supporting sustainable self-reliance, by definition, cannot be a short-term endeavour. It requires multi-year long-term programming backed up by a long-term vision and finance but with the flexibility to evolve and adapt over time based on programme learning and contextual factors. While programmes in Ethiopia are moving in this direction, there is still a reliance on relatively short-term project approaches, which struggle to bring meaningful change of economic status among refugees and hosts. This requires the sustained engagement of a wide range of development actors.

Market-based interventions

Livelihood programming should be based on market system analysis, as well as on analysis of the existing informal economies, which is indicated by a range of studies; for example, Betts et al.,[61] the DFID SHARPE programme,[62] and the ILO commissioned study by Yussuf and Khalif.[63] Such analysis needs to include: existing and potentially future demands for skills, both locally and further afield; the skills and aspirations of refugees and hosts; and existing economic life.

Education and skills training

Providing the pertinent education and skill training is paramount. Usually, a mismatch between the training offered and the actual jobs available is observed (Brown, et al., 2017, 2018). Thus, due attention should be given to (re) evaluation of the local relevance of the education and skills training being offered, as well as the expansion of the range of vocations and types of work in which refugees can participate.[64] This is in line with the new pledge made by the Government of Ethiopia in December 2019 to focus on TVET for refugees.

Conflict sensitive approaches

The adoption of a more conflict sensitive approach in the design and implementation of livelihood programming is emphasised by Tadesse.[65] This entails having thorough knowledge and understanding of the local context, including such factors as refugee–host community relations, gender relations and access to resources, the political economy of aid interventions, and awareness of the intentional or unintentional impact of programming on existing relations; i.e. Do No Harm principles.

Social cohesion through area-based programming focused on self-reliance

Building on the need for conflict sensitivity, it is important to be proactive and support economic activities that integrate wider displacement challenges, and to effectively integrate host communities as a core part of self-reliance programming. Area-based approaches that do not draw arbitrary boundaries around programmes are promoted as likely the most effective way to respond to this challenge.

Representation and community-based approaches

Humanitarian and development actors need to secure the voices of the participants of the programme, including both refugees and host communities, so that they are consulted about the nature of the programme. Engaging the target group(s) should assist with greater ownership, sustainability, conflict prevention, and the resolution of possible issues that might arise from new programming initiatives. These approaches also help clarify the expectations of the participants from the programme and their respective responsibilities thereof.[66]

Government ownership

Comprehensive and sustainable approaches to self-reliance require a government-led process, including at kebele (ward; smallest administrative unit), woreda, regional, and federal government levels. This requires clarity on roles, responsibilities, and resources. It also necessitates the full involvement of government actors from the design stage onwards.

Rethinking and engaging the private sector

The private sector is viewed as a vital actor in providing employment and facilitating the eventual self-reliance of refugees. Questions remain, however, about whether the current level of private sector activity in refugee hosting parts of the Horn of Africa is adequate to meet this aspiration.[67] There is also a need to rethink the notion of who constitutes the private sector. Findings from Betts et al. show that refugees themselves can emerge to be successful investors and employers of other fellow refugees in Uganda. As a result, they can be "conceived as part of that private sector; they are producers, consumers, employees, beneficiaries, lenders, borrowers, and social entrepreneurs".[68]

Recognising the self-reliance that already exists

The informal labour being undertaken by refugees, although poorly understood, is clearly extensive, with research finding examples among every refugee group. This clearly indicates that refugees are already pursuing self-reliance strategies to the extent that they are able to do so, within the constraints of their individual circumstances and the wider regulatory environment. This is unsurprising, given recent cuts to the humanitarian support being provided to refugees in Ethiopia. There is, however, a risk that new self-reliance initiatives will ignore these endeavours precisely because of their informality, thus further reducing the limited agency available to refugees.

59 Nigusie and Carver (2019).

60 Betts et al. (2014).

61 Betts et al. (2014).

62 DFID (2017). Strengthening Host and Refugee Population Economies–SHARPE. ITT Volume 3 Terms of Reference.

63 Yussuf and Khalif (2018). Market System Analysis for Refugee Livelihoods in Jijiga, Ethiopia.

64 Samuel Hall (2018).

65 Tadesse (2018).

66 Brown et al. (2017); Brown et al. (2018); Samuel Hall (2017). Thinking forward about Livelihoods for Refugees in Ethiopia: Learning from NRC's Programming 2013–2016; see: http://samuelhall.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Thinking-forward-about-Livelihoods-for-Refugees-in-Ethiopia-FINAL-REPORT.pdf

67 ODI / DRC (forthcoming).

68 Betts et al. (2014), 40.

OUTSTANDING ISSUES AND GAPS

Government ambitions in relation to NCRRS Objective 2 appear to be clear: to increase the ability of refugees to pursue economic opportunities by increasing their entitlements to move and work, while also providing benefits to refugees and hosts alike. In principle, the changes to the legal framework tackle the key structural constraints identified by a number of studies under the previous arrangement.[69] The growth in new kinds of interventions and programmes also brings potential opportunities. A number of key issues have yet to be resolved, however.

Lack of clarity about the real world implications of the new refugee legislation is a critical issue, as this legislation will determine the actual opportunities made available to refugees to become self-reliant. As a study commissioned by the NRC argues, "The narrowest interpretation [of the law] would not significantly facilitate access to work opportunities for the vast majority of refugees, while the widest interpretation would expand these opportunities to almost all areas of potential employment."[70] Woldetsadik et al. argue for avoiding extremes of interpretation to allow for a more gradual implementation on the ground.[71]

Implementation needs to be informed by more granular analysis of the real economic activity of refugees and host communities, and the interactions between them. Refugees can be unwilling to talk openly about their existing arrangements if they are aware that they involve operating outside of the formal system and feel this may even threaten their refugee status, leading to a significant risk of under-reporting of existing activity. Research also demonstrates a high degree of variance between different regions, and even between different camps.[72] Reflecting this complexity is challenging. This requires a combination of further qualitative and quantitative work to be conducted across the country, in particular to elicit greater understanding of aspirations and intentions, topics on which the available data is thin. Given the significant resource implications of revealing the economic activities of refugees and their relations with the host communities, it is important to be efficient in resource allocation: in recent years this has not been the case; for example, the labour market in Jigjiga has been studied on multiple occasions.

The available research prioritises understanding the economic opportunities for and challenges faced by refugees far more than those of host communities. Different kinds of detailed local analyses need to be designed to rectify this imbalance, with careful mapping of the economic networks that respond to locally appropriate definitions of where the burden of refugee hosting really lies. Generalisations about host communities should be avoided, given the high degree of variance across the country. The new measurement framework currently being developed by the Refugee Self-Reliance Initiative (RSRI) and due to be shared soon may be helpful in this respect.[73]

Given the overall trends towards urbanisation, it is unsurprising that there is a relatively large amount of work on urban livelihoods opportunities. Given the background of refugee cohorts, and the realities of the Ethiopian economy, however, **it is important to put more focus on the potential for more agricultural opportunity**, in line with government pledges from both 2016 and 2019. There is existing practice from which to learn; for example, informal sharecropping arrangements in different parts of the country and the more formalised experiment of the IKEA Foundation project in Dollo Ado. More research to understand how these initiatives have developed would be valuable.

This sector involves a large number of actors, including not only traditional humanitarian and development actors but also non-traditional actors, such as private sector companies. **This makes coordination of activity perhaps even more challenging than normal.** There may be value in conducting research to help determine appropriate structures and systems at both the local and national level to develop more coherent approaches.

While there is much discussion of the key role of the private sector in the future implementation of the GCR, there is relatively little consideration given to the specific challenges of this in Ethiopia. The Ethiopian economy is very different to others in the region, dominated by state intervention and parastatal companies, and traditionally has been a challenging environment for initiatives led by the private sector. The economic strategy of the government appears to be changing and opening up new opportunities **but it is important to do more research to understand the specificities of involving local and international companies in programming in these challenging parts of the country**. Full learning, for example, should be extracted from the IKEA Foundation work in Dollo Ado.

Finally, there is a need for **further work to unpack the protection implications of a shift towards self-reliance and sustainability**. The self-reliance agenda potentially implies a transfer of responsibilities for the protection of the basic needs and rights of refugees—away from the national government and its international partners, and towards the refugees themselves. Under the refugee convention, however, legal responsibility remains with the host government. Therefore, new forms of protection activity must be envisaged that complement, rather than undermine, the push for self-reliance. This is where the safety net programming of the kind envisaged in the NCRRS should come in. As yet, there is little clarity on the mechanisms through which this should take place.

Students leave school at Shedder refugee camp, Somali Region
Credit: UNHCR/Jiro Ose

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69 Brown et al. (2017); Brown et al. (2018); Samuel Hall (2014).

70 NRC (2019). Work and Livelihoods Opportunities for Refugees in Ethiopia: Promoting Access to Durable Solutions for Refugees, 3.

71 Woldetsadik et al. (2019).

72 ODI / DRC (forthcoming).

73 See: https://www.refugeeselfreliance.org/

Health center funded by UNHCR
Credit: UNHCR

OBJECTIVE 3: INDIVIDUAL CAPACITIES OF REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITIES ARE STRENGTHENED

Objective 3 is where the link between traditional humanitarian support to refugees and the more developmental approaches espoused under the CRRF are clearest. The emphasis in the NCRRS is on increasing access to quality services to help refugees better "integrate, access and benefit from socio-economic opportunities"[74], and prepare refugees for durable solutions. In particular, there is an emphasis on education (as in the original pledges) to enable refugees to play a meaningful role in their countries of origin in future. The two newest components of the NCRRS approach—the intent to deliver targeted humanitarian assistance and community-based public workfare—are considered under this objective, given that both relate closely to meeting the basic needs of refugees.

There are numerous studies and reports related to this objective, both in terms of official publications and grey literature, not least because it includes a large number of sectors: education; health and nutrition; water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); access to justice and protection services; and energy. When considering the literature on the delivery of services in the wider Ethiopian context, there is a vast range of potential literature upon which to draw. Therefore, this synthesis paper is reasonably selective, focusing on those studies of most relevance to the refugee context and those that attempt to provide an overview across the sectors. It has not been possible to review all the available literature in each sector.

Key research related to Objective 3: service delivery

- Ethiopia Refugee and Host Community Analysis: Integrated National Study and Regional Studies (ODI / DRC, forthcoming)
- Working Towards Inclusion: Refugees in the National System of Ethiopia (UNHCR, 2017b)
- Promises and challenges of Ethiopia's refugee policy reform (Tadesse, 2018)
- Local Integration Focus: Refugees in Ethiopia. Gaps and Opportunities for Refugees Who Have Lived in Ethiopia for 20 Years or More (Samuel Hall, 2018)
- Evaluation of the UNICEF Ethiopia BSRP: Baseline Study Report (Kimetrica, 2018)
- Are integrated services a step towards integration? Uganda Case Study (ReDSS, 2019)
- Cost-effectiveness in humanitarian work: integration of displaced persons into host community services (Mikulak, 2018)
- Ethiopia: Joint Assessment Mission (JAM) (ARRA / UNHCR / UNWFP, 2016)
- Durable Solutions: Perspectives of Somali Refugees Living in Kenyan and Ethiopian Camps and Selected Communities of Return (DRC / NRC, 2013)

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74 GoE (2018, draft document), 23

POLICY ANALYSIS

Improving the delivery of social services is a top priority in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants of 19 September 2016. Improving service delivery also features prominently in Ethiopian government pledges and the subsequent roadmap (2017). The key pledges in this area are the:

Education pledge	**Social and basic services pledge**	**Documentation pledge**
To increase enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary education to all qualified refugees without discrimination and within the available resources.	To enhance the provision of basic and essential social services, including, health, nutrition, immunisation, reproductive health, HIV and other medical services.	Provision of other benefits such as issuance of birth certificates to refugee children born in Ethiopia, possibility of opening bank accounts and obtaining driving licenses.[75]

As per the education pledge, Ethiopia committed to increase the enrolment of pre-school aged refugee children from 44% to 60%, of primary school aged refugee children from 54% to 75%, of secondary school aged refugees from 9% to 25%, and higher education from the current 1,600 to 2,500 students.[76] The 2019 Refugees Proclamation is much more explicit and expansive about the rights of refugees to accessing education, in particular stating that for pre-primary and primary education refugees should have the same treatment as Ethiopian nationals. For other forms of education, they are to receive the most favourable treatment accorded to foreign nationals, and should have access in available resource envelopes. The education pledge is further reflected in the Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education (December 2017), which commits Ethiopia to allowing access to quality education for all refugees and integrating this work into education sector plans.[77]

A range of other service delivery areas are also included in the 2019 Refugees Proclamation, including: a right to access available health services for all refugees; the same right as nationals to access the court system and legal counselling; access to apply for an Ethiopian driving license; access to identity papers and vital event registration; access to banking and telecommunication services; and the right for vulnerable groups to access special protection. The recent Ethiopian refugee response plans (RRPs) are explicit about their support to these areas, including a range of actions related to all these areas, as well as the provision of water and sanitation and nutrition support. Key commitments or actions outlined in these documents include:

- The mitigation of excess morbidity and mortality by ensuring access to comprehensive primary healthcare services, referral services, and strengthening disease surveillance and response; a fully functional clinical service, along with community-based disease prevention and health promotion activities through outreach workers
- In the WASH sector, the optimisation of water supply infrastructure designs, the use of alternative management models for water schemes supporting both host populations and refugees, the replacement of fuel powered pumping systems with solar powered models, and the scaling up of partnerships with the Regional Water Bureaus and the construction of household latrines
- The provision of protection support to vulnerable groups in line with the Ethiopian National Child Protection Strategy (2017–2019) and National Strategy on Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (2017–2019)
- The improvement of refugee food and nutrition security by reducing the prevalence of undernutrition, particularly among the vulnerable (including women, children, youth, and elders) and people with special needs
- The provision of refugees with sufficient access to energy, while making sure that natural resources and shared environments are better protected
- Guided by the National Safe Access to Fuels and Energy (SAFE) Strategy, the provision of alternative fuels, fuel efficient stoves, street lights, solar home systems, and grid connected electricity for public services and productive use[78]

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75 GoE (2017).
76 GoE (2017).
77 IGAD (2017). Djibouti Declaration: On Regional Conference on Refugee Education in IGAD Member States.
78 UNHCR (2019a).

There are, therefore, a wide range of commitments in relation to access and quality of basic services. **What is yet to be outlined as clearly are the delivery mechanisms that should be used to deliver these commitments**. Service delivery to refugees currently involves a complex mix of parallel and integrated systems as a result of the government encampment policy. Given the roadmap and NCRRS commitment to gradually phase out encampment and camp-based assistance, there is an assumption that the future delivery of services is to be increasingly integrated with local development systems. Global evidence suggests that this approach is more cost effective and sustainable, and fosters social cohesion.[79] The path of this integration is, however, yet to be determined.

THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND[80]

The most comprehensive recent reviews of refugee and host perspectives on the availability of services are the as yet unpublished studies by Kimetrica and ODI / DRC referred to above. In particular, these have informed the overview provided below, alongside a number of other narrower studies.

Across the board, the top priority of refugees and local populations is access to more reliable, predictable, and higher quality basic services. Unsurprisingly, given the resource constraints on all sides, there are complaints in all parts of the country about the current provision of services on all these fronts, although particular sectors and locations stand out. The availability of water in the Somali and Afar regions is clearly a particular challenge, as is ensuring adequate drug availability across the country.[81]

It is notable, however, that the sharpest complaints arise when there is perceived unfairness in service provision, with other communities or groups being seen to be given preferential treatment. Such examples are found in relation to the provision of healthcare in Afar, with host community members complaining that refugees have access to better treatment and are a burden on the hospital. The provision of water in Benishangul-Gumuz is another example: the fact that refugees receive water for free is felt to be highly unfair by local host communities. In all parts of the country, there are tensions about the availability of firewood, with narratives strongly suggesting that refugees are mostly to blame for this problem. Such perceptions need to be considered carefully if greater integration of services is to be pursued.[82]

The literature reveals the distinct characteristics of the service delivery programming across sectors (education, health, food security and nutrition, WASH, protection) and across different refugee hosting areas. In line with the 2004 refugee law and the previous government policy that officially restricted refugees to the camps, traditional service delivery programming is primarily limited to the camps themselves through parallel systems, although with a degree of variety within and across sectors, as outlined below. More recently, external interventions increasingly have sought to deliver services in an integrated manner through the inclusion of refugees in national systems. It must also be noted that as refugees are predominantly hosted in the developing regional states, national service delivery systems in these areas already face considerable challenges. Capacity issues will likely be a key constraint.

Education

Education levels vary considerably between different refugee groups, as brought out by the World Bank skills survey and highlighted under Objective 2. Eritrean refugees generally have the highest levels of education, with South Sudanese and Somalis having far lower levels. A 2013 study of Somali refugees finds very low levels of literacy, with the vast majority (almost 70% of those in Jigjiga and more than 90% of those in Dollo Ado) not having accessed education either before fleeing or once in exile. That study finds severe challenges in the provision of education in the camps, with the result being low enrolment, attendance, and retention of pupils, particularly girls.[83]

Support to education is delivered differently at different levels. Early childhood care and education is provided in the camps primarily through NGO implementing partners, leading to a far higher level of coverage than outside the camps. Primary education is delivered at ARRA-run and administered schools in or in closely proximity to the refugee

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79 Mikulak (2018). Cost-Effectiveness in Humanitarian Work: Integration of Displaced Persons into Host Community Services; World Bank / UNHCR / ILO / IFC (2019). Toward Local Integration: Socio-Economic Integration of Refugees with Host Communities in Ethiopia. Literature review on socio-economic integration of refugees
80 Because of the multiple sectors that are covered under this objective, the various sub-sections outlined under the other objectives have been combined into one. For each sector, the aim is to provide a brief overview of the current situation for refugees and host communities, key approaches being pursued by national and international actors, and formal and informal practices.
81 ODI / DRC (forthcoming).
82 ODI / DRC (forthcoming).
83 DRC / NRC (2013). Durable Solutions: Perspectives of Somali Refugees Living in Kenya and Ethiopian Camps and Selected Communities of Return.

camps, by a combination of ARRA staff and incentive teachers.[84] There has been a significant expansion of places for primary school age children in recent years, in part in response to government commitments to increase access. Secondary education provision is mixed, with government-run schools used where available and with additional support provided through DICAC (Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission), a national NGO that has worked in support of the Ethiopian refugee operation for decades. In practice, this can mean DICAC administers a separate school (with places made available to local host community residents if other secondary school places are not available) or sponsors refugee children to attend national schools (with DICAC providing additional financial or in-kind support). Tertiary education is accessed through the existing Ethiopian system, with a limited number of refugees being able to access a range of sponsorship and support programmes to enable their attendance.[85]

In principle, then, refugee schooling is supported by separate resources provided through the refugee programme, even if they are attending schools or universities run as part of the national system. In practice, there is some evidence of informal mixing of refugee and host community children at both refugee and local schools, depending on a range of local circumstances. Overall, research suggests that while refugee schools may have better infrastructure, the quality of teaching in local schools is generally of a higher standard due to higher levels of teacher training. Only around 35% of teachers are qualified across all the refugee camps.[86] Refugee schools are often faced with severe overcrowding, as well: in 2018, they had an average teacher–pupil ratio of 1:108, as opposed to an average of 1:50 in national schools in refugee hosting regions.[87]

The education sector has seen considerable efforts to strengthen integration in recent years. Since 2016, all refugee schools in the country have adopted the Ethiopian national curriculum and use textbooks and other resources developed by the education ministry. The education ministry and local education bureaus have played an increasing role in refugee school inspections and school improvement plans. Teacher training is increasingly being provided to refugee teachers through regional bureaus. Refugee schools have also been included in the national Education Management of Information System (EMIS) and the annual national EMIS report includes a specific chapter on refugees. This allows, for example, for direct comparisons to be made between access to education for refugees and Ethiopian citizens. In 2019, a formal memorandum of understanding was agreed between ARRA and the ministry of education to provide a basis for closer integration in future.[88]

Health

Administration of the healthcare system also varies, depending on the tier. The primary healthcare system is administered and staffed by ARRA in the refugee camps, with local health centres providing free healthcare to both refugees and local host communities seeking assistance there. Refugees also report accessing healthcare informally through facilities outside the camps. In all cases, there are reports of extensive waiting times, with refugees and host communities indicating that when their resources allow, private pharmacies are preferred points of access due to both the lower waiting times and the greater availability of drugs and medicines.[89]

Referral services are delivered through hospitals run by local governments, with the refugee programme providing compensation for the costs of providing healthcare to refugees. Refugees have also been included in disease prevention and control efforts for such diseases as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis, as well as vaccination programmes for children. In Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz, refugees have been included in the national programme for the elimination of neglected tropical diseases since 2017.[90]

Other challenges health facilities in refugee camps are reported to face are: the recruitment, training and retention of health professionals; drug shortages; lack of ambulances to support referrals; and overcrowding, with health facility coverage below the standard of one facility per 10,000 refugees in some parts of the country.[91] Moreover, acute malnutrition prevalence (above the global emergency threshold of 15%) has been discovered in 10 out of 24 camps examined in the health sector of the study.[92]

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)

Water, as a natural resource, is inevitably shared among refugees and local host populations. The infrastructure used to deliver water to communities, however, is often run in parallel. When a camp is first established, water tends to be primarily delivered through water trucking. Given the costs involved, however, this mode of delivery is considered unsustainable and undesirable over the longer term. More established camps tend to have built a network of pipes and tap stands to provide water to all refugees free of charge. Over time, however, maintenance of this type of water infrastructure has become a challenge, especially in those parts of the country where water is hard to access. Pumps that require fuel to operate are costly and difficult to keep going—they often break down or cannot be run. The Somali and Afar regions face particular issues in accessing water across refugee and host community households. In the Jigjiga area, for example, research findings indicate a high degree of reliance on *birkeds* (small open reservoirs that collect surface and rainwater), with refugees reporting that they have to pay for access to water in many cases.[93]

The camps therefore struggle to meet basic standards: 15 out of 26 refugee camps examined in the WASH sector are said to have achieved the minimum standard of 20 litres per person per day; in 8 camps, refugees receive between 15 and 20 litres per person per day; and in the 3 remaining camps (Nguenyyiel in Gambella; Kebrebeyah in the Somali Region, and Hitsats in Tigray), refugees receive less than 15 litres per person per day.[94] Refugee hosting communities are supposed to receive a proportion of the total daily water output going into the camps, although it is unclear how these totals are tracked. Also, 19 out of the 26 camps are found to have met the minimum standard of "maximum of 20 persons per latrine", while 7 camps are still below the minimum standards.[95]

The management of water infrastructure in the camps is mostly done separately through ARRA, UNHCR, their implementing partners, and community-based structures. This is not exclusively the case, however. In the early 2000s, one example of an attempt to invest in significant water infrastructure to benefit both refugees and host communities can be found in Kebrebeyah camp and town. Having not been designed as a joint project in the first instance, this effort has faced a persistent challenge in finding the right governance and maintenance system. At present, there is a split responsibility between the refugee operation and the town council for managing the Kebrebeyah water system, which has not worked well for many years. More recently, there have been newer initiatives to develop joint infrastructure such as the Itang Water Utility in Gambella, supported by a range of international partners. From the outset, this project was designed as a joint initiative between local authorities and ARRA, with a combined governance arrangement and a sustainability plan based on charging user fees to beneficiaries. The intention is to roll out this model elsewhere, although there are concerns about the risks to such joint systems in contexts with conflict potential.[96]

Disparity among camps is observed in the sanitation and hygiene sub-sector. Household latrines are mostly provided to refugees for free but refugee households in the Tongo Refugee Camp in Benishangul-Gumuz, for example, are responsible for building their own latrines, just as host community households are. There is still wide gap on the coverage of household latrines, which currently stands at an average of 31%, while more than 85% of refugee families have access to shared latrines. There is also a shortage of latrines, and slow intervention by the responsible body to act when latrines needed replacing or maintenance.[97]

Food security and nutrition

The provision of monthly rations to refugees remains at the core of the benefits made available through the camps. This system is administered by the WFP, with the involvement of ARRA staff and refugees themselves in food distribution. There is evidence that this food assistance has been a key source of income for refugees, who can sell it in local markets. In recent years, WFP have sought to move away from in-kind food distribution towards cash assistance, with a mix of cash and in-kind approaches being used in different camps across the country based on local circumstances. In parallel, financial constraints have led to cuts in the food rations (now down to an equivalent of 1,750 kcal per person a day, below the normal standard of 2,100), which has resulted in some refugees criticising the process of converting from in-kind food assistance to cash assistance. The WFP has systems in place to ensure that appropriate levels are being distributed.[98]

84 Incentive teachers are refugees hired to work in schools, and paid a monthly incentive rather than a full salary because of the constraints of the previous refugee legislation.

85 UNHCR (2017b). Working Towards Inclusion: Refugees within the National Systems of Ethiopia; ODI / DRC (forthcoming).

86 GoE/MoE (2018) Education Statistics Annual Abstract 2010 E.C. (2017/18)

87 ODI / DRC (forthcoming); GoE / MoE (2018).

88 ODI / DRC (forthcoming).

89 UNHCR (2017b); ODI / DRC (forthcoming)

90 UNHCR (2017b); UNHCR (2018b). Ethiopia Country Refugee Response Plan: The integrated response plan for refugees from Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia January–December 2018; see: (https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/62986)

91 UNHCR (2018b); Kimetrica (2018). Evaluation of the UNICEF Ethiopia BSRP: Baseline Study Report.

92 UNHCR (2018b).

93 ODI / DRC (forthcoming).

94 UNHCR (2018b)

95 UNHCR (2018b)

96 UNHCR (2017b); ODI / DRC (forthcoming).

97 Kimetrica (2018).

98 UNHCR (2018b); ODI / DRC (forthcoming)

Given that this assistance is tied specifically to the refugee programme, it has not been appropriate to consider integration with national systems. The approach of linking refugees to existing social protection programmes in Ethiopia, as is proposed by the NCRRS—a major component of which is the provision of food to vulnerable households (whether refugee or host) by the WFP—raises the possibility of a more unified food security and nutrition system.

Inadequate dietary intake and disease are found to lead to relatively high levels of malnutrition among refugees, particularly in Gambella and the Somali Regional State. Explicit measures have been taken in the camps to address the acute malnutrition problem, including curative, preventive, and promotional nutrition services such as treatments, awareness raising through outreach programmes, and blanket supplementary feeding for children aged six to twenty-three months, and pregnant and lactating women (in all camps) and infant and young child feeding (IYCF) programmes (fully implemented in only 14 out of 26 camps).[99]

Outside the camps, malnutrition (apart from extreme cases) is primarily treated through the different levels of the healthcare system. This is one sector that illustrates one element of the challenges in creating closer linkages between the refugee system and the Ethiopian national system: that of standards. The refugee operation follows the internationally agreed cut-off of a Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) of less than 11.5cm for eligibility for malnutrition programmes, whereas the Ethiopian national standard is less than 11cm.[100]

Protection and access to justice

The Ethiopian refugee operation per se, and specifically the infrastructure and support provided in the camps, is fundamentally a form of protection support to refugees. Hence the extensive presence of protection officers at both ARRA and its international and national partners. A range of specific activities are also considered to be part of the protection rubric. These include, for example, the provision of identification documents and vital event registration, access to the Ethiopian court system, legal aid, and awareness raising on key vulnerabilities and threats. The right to many of these activities, provided by ARRA and implementing partners in the past, is now established under law in the 2019 Refugees Proclamation.

Specific support is also provided for vulnerable groups, particularly children, with extensive child protection programmes being run by implementing partners in the camps. The large number of children (more than half of the total refugee population), including unaccompanied children, has made this a challenging task. Key concerns are a lack of birth certificates, family separation, child labour, and child marriage. Family separation is acute in the Shire camps, with nearly 27% of all children separated from or unaccompanied by adult family members. It has been possible to include refugee births in the national vital events registration system since the introduction of the revised vital events registration proclamation on July 2017, which has allowed for around 70,000 refugee children without birth certificates in to be registered and receive birth certificates; ARRA is represented in this system at the federal level, which avoids the creation of a parallel structure.[101]

There have been attempts to bridge gaps between the international support provided in this sector to refugees and Ethiopian citizens. For example, UNICEF has sought to expand the support provided through one-stop centres so that they can offer a range of services to all potentially vulnerable groups (from refugees and host communities alike), with oversight for these centres provided by the Ethiopian Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. If the one-stop centres are relatively far away from the camps, however, this presents challenges in terms of refugee access.[102] UNHCR and a number of other implementing partners have also been supporting the provision of legal aid to refugees, with services being provided inside the camps for maximum access. Recent focus on this has led to some concern that these services are now being overly skewed towards refugees.[103]

Overall, the protection and justice sector is challenging in terms of linking services inside and outside the camps, not least because of the plethora of Ethiopian government actors involved in the delivery of such services. The humanitarian protection and justice sector struggles to engage with the multiplicity of stakeholders, policies, and systems that exist within the Ethiopian system.[104]

Energy provision

Access to sufficient energy has been problematic for refugees across the country. Wood fuel remains the dominant source of energy for cooking in most camps. This is resulting in both the degradation of the environment, and competition and conflict over firewood. In terms of the UNHCR RRP, while access to alternative energy sources for individual and collective consumption has been limited, there is more encouraging track record in relation to the provision of home lighting, with 82% of refugees having access. In other areas, access is far lower: access to fuel saving stoves is only 4%; the use of solar energy is available for pumping in 27% of water schemes; 25% of health facilities have access to reliable electricity; 45% of camps have access to street lights; and the provision of alternative domestic fuel stands at 34%. Also, only half of the degraded natural environment has been rehabilitated.[105]

Nonetheless, there are instances of electrification of refugee camps and distribution of solar lights (Tigray and Afar), production and distribution of briquettes (Afar and Asosa), and provision of ethanol (Jigjiga). The Shire Alliance, an EU RDPP funded initiative, is one project designed to improve access to energy for host communities, refugees, and internally displaced persons, as well as to offer a source of income generation among the refugee population in Tigray region. Confirming the status of energy provision in the Gambella refugee camps is more difficult due to lack of data.

In terms of the environment, rehabilitation activities have been funded by UNHCR and undertaken by both the government-affiliated programme, Natural Resources Development and Environment Protection (NRDEP; in Gambella, Asosa, and Shire) and NGOs; for example, the Organization of Sustainable Development (OSD) in Afar and Save the Environment Ethiopia (SEE) in the Somali Region. In the past, such environmental and energy provision activities have been characterised by the lack of a coherent and sustainable approach, with an over-dependence on humanitarian aid, which affects their sustainability and ownership.[106]

KEY LESSONS

Limited capacities and resources

Both capacity and resources are stretched in the Ethiopian refugee operation and in refugee hosting regions. The most obvious manifestation of this is the cuts to rations in the camps in recent years, which has been noted by refugees all across the country. Basic service delivery in the camps is also reliant on unpredictable short-term humanitarian funding, which makes longer-term investments impossible and creates considerable uncertainty.

The fact that refugees are primarily hosted in less developed, more remote parts of Ethiopia means that local capacities to take on additional responsibilities as a result of refugee influxes are limited. The widespread perception among Ethiopian citizens in these areas that refugees receive higher quality services for free (even when this may not be the case) risks creating considerable resentment towards refugees. Where there are wider factors that can contribute to conflict, such as tension between different ethnic groups or particular shortages of crucial natural resources, there are undoubtedly risks of the refugee presence exacerbating these tensions. The reforms that the new approach to the refugee operation are prioritising are therefore likely to be welcome—if they can deliver the expected benefits. It should be understood, however, that this is being done in challenging environments. Efforts to increase support provided outside the camps will be welcomed, but care needs to be taken in defining target groups on the basis of where the real burden of refugee hosting falls on the service delivery system, rather than on the basis of arbitrary definitions of "host communities".

Bureaucratic challenges to integrated systems

It is critical to recognise the real bureaucratic challenges that can get in the way of creating more integrated systems. ARRA has spent many years developing policies and systems to enable consistent delivery of the Ethiopian refugee operation across parts of the country where delivery at scale is a real challenge. As a centralised agency operating in a number of remote areas, this makes ARRA very different from the federal and regional administrations that deliver services outside the camps. It is therefore unsurprising that there are practical challenges to be overcome. For example, a persistent issue raised by local government actors is the different salary scales that within the Ethiopian refugee operation, with teachers and health workers employed by ARRA earning considerably more than their counterparts in local host communities. This not only creates resentments but also presents a challenge for better and more closely linking the two systems. Will ARRA staff be expected to take a pay cut, thereby potentially further

99 UNHCR (2018b).
100 ODI / DRC (forthcoming).
101 UNHCR (2017b), 35-39; UNHCR (2018b); Kimetrica (2018).
102 Kimetrica (2018).
103 This point was raised at a conference on legal aid for refugees held in Addis Ababa in October 2019.
104 ODI / DRC (forthcoming).

105 UNHCR (2019a). All the data in this paragraph is derived from this source.
106 Nigusie and Carver (2019).

weakening the capacity of the system (e.g. if these staff were to leave their jobs as a result of pay cuts), or should national or regional pay scales be specially adapted? Further progress on reform requires due care being taken in relation to these complex sensitivities.

Positive steps for new and better approaches

There are many examples from across the country of positive steps that are being taken to find new and better approaches to meeting the needs of refugees and the Ethiopian citizens who live with them. As the ODI integrated study puts it: "What marks out these examples of positive cooperation is a spirit of complementary problem solving, with clear and obvious benefits to all stakeholders, made easier by the availability of additional resources."[107] Examples include the kind of effective joint working seen to tackle disease control, or efforts to integrate refugee schools in national quality assurance and data gathering systems, or developing a community-based water management model in Dollo Ado. Innovative programming approaches such as the use of mobile court systems to support child protection objectives in Dollo Ado, or the promotion of more sustainable fuel sources, also appear to bring progress. The model being developed in Gambella to develop a joint water utility has considerable promise, although its success will need to be monitored over time to confirm the resilience of the governance model. Given the contextual complexity in play, focusing on these kinds of practical local approaches—and monitoring them closely—seems likely to be a more effective approach than that of large-scale national processes.

The promise of area-based planning

Area-based planning and programming is much discussed as a potentially promising approach. Positive examples of multi-stakeholder coordination identified in Jigjiga and Afar suggest that it may well be an appropriate response to the challenges of meeting the needs of all local populations. To date, this tends to be a result of local actors taking the initiative to establish new coordination structures, in some cases supported by projects that have sought to prioritise this area, such as the EU RDPP.[108] The critical issue to get right, however, is ensuring clarity over where responsibility and accountability lie, as the potential dilution of accountability is a concern raised consistently by government officials across the country. This is particularly important in a context in which the Ethiopian government system is facing wider changes and uncertainties due to the major political changes that have been taking place in recent years.

OUTSTANDING ISSUES AND GAPS

Objective 3 covers an enormous amount of programming for both refugees and host communities. The basic ambition is clear: **to improve the quality and accessibility of services to all**. The biggest question that remains is **how this can be achieved, especially in the context of a resource-constrained environment**. It is unlikely that there is a single answer to this question. All stakeholders should work together to enable an iterative approach to policy and programming development that learns as it goes. The strong focus from officials on clarifying accountability chains suggests that more research to help identify alternative governance models may be of particular value, perhaps linked to a review of different approaches to area-based planning and programming.

Any such review would need to take into consideration **the ways that different elements of the service delivery planning process for refugees and Ethiopian citizens can be better linked**: needs analysis; determination of resource availability; allocation of resources; accountability for implementation; and monitoring and evaluation. Each of these areas present different challenges and thus require different solutions. For example, a key challenge is how to determine equitable resource allocation, given the different needs of different populations. The lack of robust comparative analyses of needs and current access for different service delivery areas means that making such decisions is extremely challenging, and requires more integrated approaches to gathering and analysing data across the service delivery areas. The progress made in the education sector, with refugees integrated into the national EMIS, is an excellent model to follow.

A key question also arises about **how the basic protection needs of refugees will continue to be met** if they are increasingly outside the camps and becoming less reliant on humanitarian assistance. Two key approaches have been proposed in the NCRRS to assist: 1) the adoption of a new model for targeted humanitarian assistance that is better able to prioritise those most in need of external assistance; and 2) the development of community-based public workfare programmes, building on existing safety net programmes in Ethiopia, that help individuals and communities transition away from humanitarian assistance. Both of these areas would benefit from additional study to inform their design and implementation, including learning from other locations. The UNHCR global survey of safety net programmes[109] is a helpful starting point, as is the extensive body of existing research on the flagship public safety net programme in Ethiopia. There is also a critical need to undertake more research with refugees themselves to understand better how they would perceive or interpret such a transition.

Linked to the focus on self-reliance, there is a desire for **service delivery to refugees to be more self-sustaining**; for example, user fees being built into the model of the Itang water utility. This is in line with national policy. There would be benefit in better understanding the conditions that have enabled such user-funded approaches to work effectively in Ethiopia and whether refugee hosting areas meet these conditions.

Finally, while the education sector is given particular prominence in Ethiopian government pledges, and is therefore relatively well researched and analysed, **other sectors would also benefit from more focus**; notably, healthcare and WASH, where investments are high.

Sheder refugee camp, Somali region
Credit: UNHCR

107   ODI / DRC (forthcoming).
108   ODI / DRC (forthcoming).
109   UNHCR (2018c). UNHCR Mapping of Safety Nets for Refugees; see, https://www.unhcr.org/5ad5b4084.pdf.

Woman carrying a metal jerry can in Somali Regional State
Credit: Tina Hiller Oxfam

OBJECTIVE 4: OPPORTUNITIES TO ACHIEVE VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION AND RESETTLEMENT

Objective 4 is a critical component of the NCRRS, focused in particular on Pillar 6, durable solutions. Traditionally, the three durable solutions recognised in refugee policy are: 1) voluntary repatriation, based on conditions in the place of origin being suitable for refugees to voluntarily return in safety and dignity; 2) local integration, where refugees are provided with the means to settle in their new locations in a sustainable manner; and 3) third-country resettlement, where refugees are enabled to travel to new locations across the world.

The NCRRS is clear on its approach to these three durable solutions. It emphasises that while the wider strategy is designed to promote the socio-economic integration of refugees in the country, it is equally important to promote voluntary repatriation and resettlement as complementary pathways. This section focuses on all three durable solutions to provide this complementary perspective.

Less research has been conducted in relation to this objective than some of the other objectives. Nonetheless, there are key studies available that have been reviewed for this synthesis paper.

Key research related to Objective 4: durable solutions

- Refugee Integration between a Rock and a Hard Place: Challenges and Possibilities of Local Integration as a Durable Solution for Eritrean and Somali refugees in Ethiopia (Mena, 2018)

- Local Integration Focus: Refugees in Ethiopia. Gaps and Opportunities for Refugees Who Have Lived in Ethiopia for 20 Years or More (Samuel Hall, 2018)

- Nobody came to ask us: South Sudanese refugee perceptions of the peace process (Mahmood, 2019)

- Journeys on Hold: How policy influences the migration decisions of Eritreans in Ethiopia (Mallet et al, 2017)

- Putting Protection at the Heart of the New Global Compact: Refugee Perspectives from Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti (NRC, 2017)

- Living Out of Camp: Alternatives to camp-based assistance for Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia (Samuel Hall, 2014)

- Durable Solutions: Perspectives of Somali Refugees Living in Kenyan and Ethiopian Camps and Selected Communities of Return (DRC / NRC, 2013)

- The local integration and local settlement of refugees: a conceptual and historical analysis (Crisp, 2004)

- Toward Local Integration: Socio-Economic Integration of Refugees with Host Communities in Ethiopia. Literature review on socio-economic integration of refugees (World Bank / UNHCR / ILO / IFC, 2019)

POLICY ANALYSIS

Voluntary repatriation and resettlement

The majority of refugees in Ethiopia find themselves in a protracted situation, having stayed beyond the internationally defined five-year time frame, and in some cases, for decades. This is partly due to the fact that access to voluntary repatriation and resettlement opportunities has been extremely limited. Refugees are unlikely to choose to return home as long as the causes of their displacement have not been addressed; and, as outlined below, resettlement places in developed countries have been under growing pressure.[110] The challenge for a refugee hosting country such as Ethiopia is that addressing these policy challenges are outside of its sole control, requiring action on the part of a wide range of external partners, including countries of origin for refugees.

110   Loescher and Milner (2005). The Long Road Home: Protracted Refugee Situations in Africa. Survival 47(2): 153–174; Dryden-Peterson and Hovil (2004). A Remaining Hope for Durable Solutions: Local Integration of Refugees and Their Hosts in The Case of Uganda. Refuge 22(1): 26–38.

The New York Declaration and the Global Compact for Refugees explicitly intend to increase the availability of these two durable solutions. Among other things, the CRRF is designed "to expand access to third-country solutions, and to support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity".[111] Commitments were also made by signatories to "expand the number and range of legal pathways available for refugees to be admitted to or resettled in third countries" and the Declaration urges "states that have not yet established resettlement programmes to consider doing so at the earliest opportunity. Those which have already done so are encouraged to consider increasing the size of their programmes".[112] This is in line with the commitments made by the Ethiopian government in the NCRRS to work with its partners to "strengthen its efforts to support conditions for safe, dignified voluntary repatriation and to expand third country resettlement opportunities, as well as other complementary pathways".[113]

At the 2016 New York summit, a range of further commitments were made to promote these commitments, including the admission of greater numbers of refugees into resettlement programmes. Making commitments is one thing; delivering on them another. The current policies of many developed countries (in particular the United States, which up until the current administration was by far the largest recipient of resettled refugees worldwide) do not paint an encouraging picture for the rhetoric around global solidarity and burden sharing. Since the New York summit in 2016, in response to political concerns about immigration in developed countries, the numbers of annual refugee resettlement departures globally have dropped by more than half—from 126,291 to 54,102 in 2019—with the United States accounting for almost 75% of this fall.[114] Despite the fact that more than 65,000 refugees in Ethiopia are considered to meet the resettlement criteria, the number actually resettled each year is far smaller.[115] For instance, UNHCR only submitted 2,680 individuals to governments for resettlement consideration in 2017 and 3,240 persons in 2018, with a similar number targeted for 2019.[116]

Due to the "continued instability in countries of origin" the bulk of the refugee population in Ethiopia is also understood to "have no immediate prospect of voluntary return".[117] Despite the assertion of the New York Declaration that "voluntary repatriation should not necessarily be conditioned on the accomplishment of political solutions in the country of origin",[118] in practice this reality is hard to avoid. Here, the Ethiopian government has a greater prospect of direct influence than it has in relation to resettlement numbers. In recent years, the Ethiopian government has been proactive in pursuing greater stability in the region. Since his appointment, Prime Minister Dr Abiy Ahmed of Ethiopia has taken notable steps in this area, most clearly in ending the political stalemate with Eritrea. This example demonstrates, however, that even political progress does not necessarily lead to a sustainable return environment. To the contrary, the opening of the border with Eritrea led to a further refugee influx to Ethiopia (from 50 to 390 individuals crossing the border on average per day throughout 2018)[119] as families sought to reunite with loved ones and those sceptical of the likelihood of change in Eritrea took the opportunity to leave. Despite the theoretical progress towards peace in South Sudan, the challenges there are equally intractable and unlikely to create conditions suitable for mass returns in the near future.

The prospects for significant progress in relation to these two durable solutions therefore look bleak, even in the CRRF era. This, in turn, continues to leave refugees stuck in limbo—unable to return and unable to resettle—while also facing great difficulties and enormous risks if they decide to migrate further.

Local integration

Local integration therefore becomes a critical part of the durable solutions environment for refugees in Ethiopia. The government included local integration in its nine original CRRF pledges, with the final pledge "allowing for local integration for those protracted refugees who have lived for 20 years or more in Ethiopia".[120] Thus, for the first time, "in light of [these] new commitments made by the Government of Ethiopia, local integration of refugees has become a possibility" in the country, with at least 13,000 refugees expected to benefit from this pledge.[121]

Local integration is a problematic concept as there is no universal consensus as to precisely what it means. Research

suggests that it "continues to be controversial and hotly debated".[122] UNHCR understanding of this concept has evolved over the years and it is now officially defined in relation to three dimensions of process. Firstly, it is:

> a legal process, whereby refugees attain a wider range of rights in the host state. Secondly, it is an economic process of establishing sustainable livelihoods and a standard of living comparable to the host community. Thirdly, it is a social and cultural process of adaptation and acceptance that enables the refugees to contribute to the social life of the host country and live without fear of discrimination.[123]

In Ethiopian policy documents, the term "local integration" is defined with varying specificity. In the roadmap document, local integration is understood to have legal, socio-economic, and socio-cultural components. A number of elements and actions are referenced, including: issuing documents to eligible refugees; facilitating and supporting the use of land; skills, entrepreneurial training, and start-up kits; peaceful coexistence with host populations; and providing cultural orientation to eligible refugees.[124] The new 2019 Refugees Proclamation sets out a far more specific definition, defining local integration as:

> "a process by which individual refugees or groups of refugees who have lived in Ethiopia for a protracted period are provided, upon their request, with a permanent residence permit to facilitate their broader integration with Ethiopian nationals until they fully attain durable solutions to their problems".[125]

The draft NCRRS does not focus on local integration per se but rather on socio-economic integration, emphasising the social and economic dimensions of integration rather than the political and legal aspects.

The policy approach to local integration outlined by the government therefore raises some key questions. Crucially, the new legal framework appears to suggest that local integration is not considered as a durable solution but rather as a temporary arrangement (albeit one facilitated by a permanent resident permit) until, presumably, either repatriation or resettlement can be arranged. The current emphasis on socio-economic integration suggests that this is the element of the process with which the Ethiopian government is most comfortable, preferring to hold back, for now, on further elaborating the political and legal elements. The government recognises the need to explore these questions further. For example, the government recently commissioned the World Bank to undertake research (ongoing at the time of writing this synthesis paper) into how this agenda can be progressed.

It is also important to remember the parallel government pledge related to out-of-camp policy, which commits to expanding this to benefit 10% of the current total refugee population.[126] While the out-of-camp policy is quite different from local integration, given that this policy focuses narrowly on the location of refugees rather than considering their wider rights, it may nonetheless be best viewed as part of the wider evolution of policy around local integration.

THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND

Beneficiary perspectives

Some of the reviewed studies seek to identify refugee intentions vis-à-vis the three durable solutions spelled out under Objective 4 of the NCRSS. They offer a mixed picture across the country. The Mena study on the views of Somali and Eritrean refugees on local integration highlights this complexity, with the prospects for integration fundamentally influenced by local dynamics and relations. One critical factor this study emphasises is the extent to which refugees see their stay in Ethiopia as a temporary or a permanent one: those who see Ethiopia as a "temporary place of transit … see no reason to invest socially or economically". This is particularly the case for Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa.[127]

The Nigusie study on Eritrean refugees in Shire finds that the majority of respondents prefer repatriation as the first option, followed by resettlement to a third country, and then local integration; however, these views are conditional upon President Isayas Afeworki being removed from office and peace returning to Eritrea.[128] Mallet et al. find a similar emphasis on the critical need for political change: "Those who have left Eritrea generally express no desire to return, at least not until something as ground-breaking as regime change occurs. To do so would be to hand their fate to the authorities."[129]

111   UN General Assembly (19 September 2016), 20.

112   UN General Assembly (19 September 2016), 14.

113   GoE (2018, draft document). Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy (NCRRS), 23.

114   Data from UNHCR resettlement database; see: https://www.unhcr.org/resettlement-data.html

115   UNHCR (2018b), 19; UNHCR (2019a), 22

116   UNHCR (2018b), 19.; UNHCR (2019a), 22

117   UNHCR (2019a), 22.

118   UN General Assembly (19 September 2016), 14.

119   UNHCR (2019a).

120   GoE (2017).

121   Samuel Hall (2018), 32.

122   Castles et al. (2002), 114; cited in Jaji (2009). Refugee Women and the Experiences of Local Integration in Nairobi, Kenya, 7.

123   Fielden, A (2008), Local integration: an under-reported solution to protracted refugee situations, 1.

124   GoE (2017), 13.

125   GoE (2019).

126   GoE (2017).

127   Mena (2018). Refugee Integration between a Rock and a Hard Place: Challenges and Possibilities of Local Integration as a Durable Solution for Eritrean and Somali Refugees in Ethiopia. African Human Mobility Review, 4(3): 1359–1385; see http://sihma.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Refugee-Integration-be-tween-a-Rock-and-a-Hard-Place.pdf

128   Nigusie (2018). Refugee–host relationship in the Horn of Africa: a case of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia.

129   Mallet et al. (2017). Journeys on Hold: How Policy Influences the Migration Decisions of Eritreans in Ethiopia, 17.

Analysis of the intentions of Somali refugees to return in the 2013 DRC / NRC study also demonstrates that the repatriation of refugees is contingent upon the fulfilment of such factors as political stability, access to education and healthcare, and livelihood opportunities, along with the prospect of a humanitarian package to return.[130] It is important to note, however, that spontaneous returns in the past are observed among Somali refugees, even in the absence of these factors. The Somalis engage in spontaneous returns to look after their land and other assets back in Somalia and keep their family ties.

As a 2017 NRC study finds, for many Somali and Eritrean refugees, in the absence of desired change resettlement to a third country is considered to be the only option available for them to improve their lives in a sustainable way.[131] When asked about their desired durable solution, half the survey respondents from Somalia prefer resettlement, followed by repatriation to Somalia, and then staying in Ethiopia.[132] This perception is based on the belief that the right to work, move, and be self-reliant would most likely be realised through such resettlement. These refugees therefore attach a high value to their refugee status because it provides them with this opportunity, and, as such, they generally do not want to give it up, which can make local integration less desirable. Another unintended consequence of the availability of resettlement is noted by Mallet et al.: "Because of the possibility that this aspiration *may* come to fruition, resettlement programming can shut down the pursuit of alternative livelihood goals and strategies."[133] Such a dynamic is also found in a 2014 Samuel Hall study that reviews out-of-camp policy and identifies the desire to retain the highest likelihood of participating in resettlement programmes as a key driver explaining why many Eritrean refugees decline to take up the opportunity to reside in urban locations.[134]

The forthcoming DRC / ODI context analysis also reveals, in relation to both Somali and Eritrean refugees, the rising incidence of risky irregular migration to Europe among the younger generation to realize their dream of resettlement by themselves.[135] There is a growing body of existing research that seeks to better understand the dynamics around informal migration.

There is less research on these issues of among South Sudanese refugees, although the ODI / DRC context analysis finds a much reduced focus on resettlement and informal migration among this cohort. In May 2019, UNHCR conducted a survey of intentions among more than 6,500 South Sudanese refugees across the region but the survey findings have not yet been made publicly available.[136] The Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in Pretoria, South Africa conducted research that is focused on understanding South Sudanese refugee views on peace in their home country. These findings reveal that the majority of respondents "expressed a strong desire to go back home" if conditions were to change for the better.[137]

Formal and informal practices

Voluntary repatriation

There are examples of voluntary repatriation among both South Sudanese and Somali refugees from Somaliland who are in Ethiopia. In the case of South Sudanese refugees, the first wave of return was in 1991 after the downfall of the Derg. Ultimately, however, this was a forced repatriation that failed to prove sustainable. Of the 150,000 people who spontaneously left Itang refugee camp to return to Sudan, it is estimated that the majority returned to Ethiopia within weeks or months due to the hardships faced in settling new areas on the Sudan side of the border.[138]

With reference to Somali refugees from Somaliland, around 400,000 are estimated to have returned spontaneously between 1991 and 1994 due to political developments in Somaliland, although cuts in rations in Ethiopia also contributed.[139] This voluntary repatriation also proved short-lived, with the eruption of conflict in 1994 in Somaliland leading to another wave of refugees returning to Ethiopia. A smaller number of people were later returned through planned programmes and the provision of support packages; i.e. approximately 130,000 between 1997 and 2005. Repatriation was complemented by the design and implementation of several quick impact projects in areas of return. These projects covered the water, healthcare, livelihoods, and education sectors. Repatriation was further aided by

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130   DRC / NRC (2013).
131   NRC (2017). Putting Protection at the Heart of the New Global Compact: Refugee Perspectives from Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti; see: https://www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/nrc-refugee-perspectives-report_web.pdf
132   DRC / NRC (2013).
133   Mallet et al. (2017), 25.
134   Samuel Hall (2014).
135   ODI / DRC (forthcoming).
136   UNHCR (2019b). South Sudan Situation: UNHCR Regional Update, May 2019; see: https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-situation-unhcr-regional-update-1-31-may-2019
137   Mahmood (2018). Nobody Came to Ask Us: South Sudanese Refugee Perceptions of the Peace Process, 2; see: https://issafrica.s3.amazonaws.com/site/uploads/ear-20.pdf
138   UNICEF (1991). UNICEF Operation Lifeline Sudan: The Return to Southern Sudan of the Sudanese Refugees from Itang Camp, Gambela, Ethiopia.
139   DRC / NRC (2013).

the support of refugee elders who participated in the go-and-see visits to areas of return that were organised by UNHCR. Through this effort, seven of the eight refugee camps in the Somali Region of Ethiopia were closed in 2005.[140]

There is also some evidence that challenging experiences in the country of asylum, particularly in terms of economic inclusion and local integration, can serve as a driving factor among some refugees to consider voluntary return to their country of origin, even when the political conditions back home have not changed substantially.[141]

Resettlement

Resettlement opportunities have been relatively limited in Ethiopia in the past, and only a fraction of the refugee population in Ethiopia has been able to benefit. According to UNHCR resettlement data, between 2004 and 2019 a total of 35,736 refugees were resettled from Ethiopia.[142] Figure 2 demonstrates the trend over this period, including a nine-year period when more than 2,000 refugees were resettled from Ethiopia per year. Around 90% of the overall caseload is Somali and Eritrean refugees (more than 16,000 people from each group). More than 85% of this resettlement caseload were relocated to the United States, which has now dramatically reduced the number of resettlement cases it accepts.
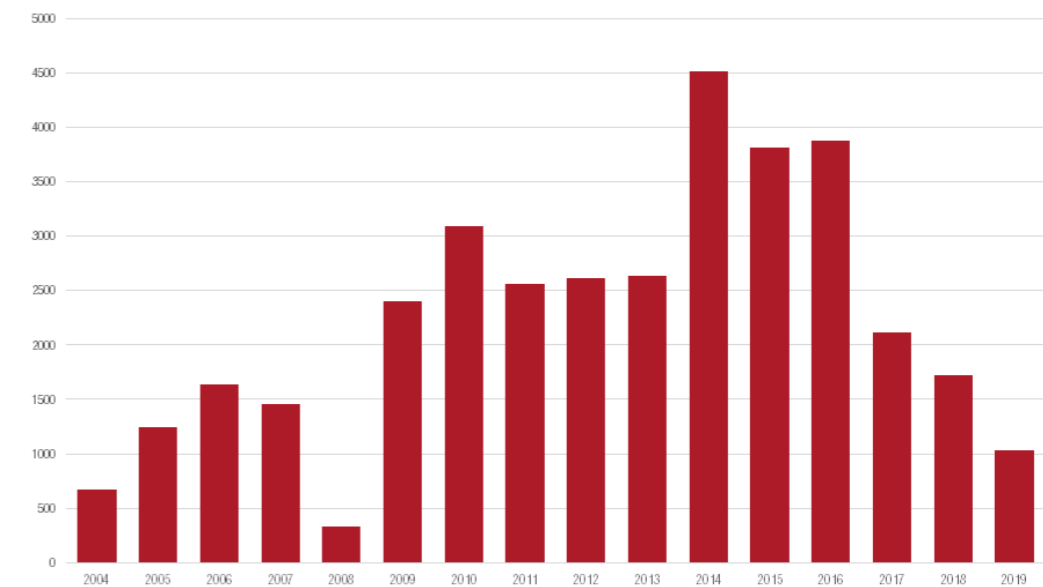

Figure 2. Total number of refugee resettlement departures from Ethiopia, 2004–2019

As highlighted above, irregular migration is a critical phenomenon among both Eritrean and Somali refugees. Estimates from Amnesty International in 2016 indicate that around two thirds of the Eritrean population residing in Ethiopia pursued secondary migration. Research conducted by ODI in 2017 to explore this phenomenon finds that it is rooted in a lack of economic opportunity, combined with high levels of aspiration based on Eritreans that had already migrated to Europe. The ODI research highlights that there is a range of perspectives among the refugee community about the most appropriate response to this situation, with some groups highly focused on onwards migration while others are content to remain in Ethiopia.[143] This emphasises the need for highly granular analysis to inform programming that seeks to tackle this issue. What is appropriate for one group of refugees may not be effective with another.

Local integration

The fact that there has been no legal pathway to local integration in Ethiopia (until the passing of the 2019 Refugees Proclamation) has not deterred refugees in all parts of the country from integrating informally via economic transactions and social provisions, finding ways to live outside the camps as part of local host communities. Again, there is a high degree of variety across the country as to what kinds of informal integration are possible: the ODI / DRC context analyses provide snapshots in each of the main refugee hosting regions as to some of these dynamics.

Perhaps the most comprehensive informal integration is practiced in the Afar region, where a significant proportion

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140   DRC / NRC (2013).
141   NRC (2017).
142   For this dataset, see: https://rsq.unhcr.org/en/#rNr4. Subsequent data in this paragraph is derived from this source.
143   Mallet et al. (2017).

of registered refugees already live outside the refugee camps among rural host communities. In other parts of the country, there are relatively high levels of economic and social interaction among refugees and host communities when specific conditions are fulfilled, including: shared ethnicity, language, and religion; close proximity and the ability to move freely between camps and local communities or towns; and economic incentives for refugees and host community residents to work together. For example, if refugees bring new markets or additional resources into a location via their remittance networks, it clearly makes sense for local host communities to work closely with them. When these factors are not present, there is far less close integration between both communities.[144] In Addis Ababa, the 2014 Samuel Hall study finds similar dynamics in relation to the extent of local integration among the urban Eritrean refugees that come there through the out-of-camp scheme.[145]

KEY LESSONS

Refugee intentions and options vary considerably

No assumptions can be made about what a particular group of refugees may intend in relation to durable solutions, with a wide variety of factors involved. The ODI context analyses propose a potential categorisation of these factors, including those related to: the physical location of the camps; local kinship systems and ethnic identity; local economies and livelihoods; refugee experiences of service delivery in places of settlement; and historical and political factors.[146] Wider analysis suggests that aspirations for the future, and the specific forces that shape them, should also be included in this list. Any programming that seeks to influence refugee views on appropriate durable solutions must be informed by a detailed understanding of these issues.

Voluntary repatriation cannot be rushed

With funding for refugee operations squeezed, there can be a strong desire on the part of policymakers for refugees to return to their countries of origin as soon as circumstances there improve. Lessons from previous repatriations in the 1980s and 1990s show, however, that unless the circumstances back home allow for sustainable livelihoods to be developed, then the refugees will soon return to their place of displacement. The volume and pace of repatriation also matters: large-scale informal repatriations appear to be less sustainable than smaller incremental ones, as was the case with Somali refugees returning to Somaliland in the 1990s. Finally, repatriation should not be viewed as a primarily logistical exercise of returning people to their countries of origin but "as assisting adaptation to a *new* situation".[147] Repatriation is therefore likely to a resource-intensive enterprise.

Resettlement opportunities remain a critical factor for refugees

All evidence suggests that resettlement will remain a top priority for some time, especially for those refugees who have seen many of their number resettled in the last decade. This is despite an awareness that resettlement numbers have dwindled considerably. Nonetheless, the potential benefits of resettlement appear to be significant enough to retain the strong interest of individuals and communities. This will be a major factor in shaping the desire of refugees to take up any offers of greater socio-economic integration. At the global level, addressing resettlement issues requires a greater emphasis on those countries that have pledged to increase resettlement opportunities, combined with continued advocacy and engagement by refugee hosting countries. More locally, there needs to be continued dialogue with refugees themselves to better understand their aspirations and intentions.

There is much to build upon for the promotion of local or socio-economic integration

Any further efforts to promote local or socio-economic integration must start from an understanding of existing informal practices. In principle, those places where informal integration is currently most extensive appear to be obvious places to start, although there must also be consideration of the ways that existing refugee rights and entitlements enable these interactions. As these change in line with the 2019 Refugees Proclamation, it is important to consider the implications for both refugees and Ethiopian citizens.

OUTSTANDING ISSUES AND GAPS

The current dynamics suggest **the need for a more fundamental rethink of durable solutions in the Ethiopian context.** Analysis suggests that all three of the largest cohorts of refugees in Ethiopia are unlikely to be willing to return *en masse* to their countries of origin in the near future, even if there is a degree of political progress in each. Resettlement numbers have dropped sharply and appear unlikely to increase significantly in the near future but the aspiration for onward movement is as great as ever, particularly among Somali and Eritrean refugees. At least among these groups, it is therefore likely that the current situation will persist: with those who feel they can take the risks continuing to prioritise informal migration to Europe; while those who do not feel they can take this risk remaining in the camps with the hope that they get lucky with resettlement programmes.

This is clearly not the aspiration of the Ethiopian government or its international partners. This is also an extremely challenging problem to tackle at the policy level. **While the Ethiopian government must continue its efforts both to advocate with developed countries to increase their resettlement programmes**, and **to promote peace in the region**, in parallel it needs to **consider how to develop its offer to refugees on socio-economic integration**. As is clear from the lessons highlighted above, a one-size-fits-all approach is inadequate. Detailed consultations are required on a community-level basis to determine what kinds of approaches would be most effective in which locations to promote locally sustainable solutions. The research currently being undertaken by the World Bank is an important starting point for this work but it must be understood as a starting point. This is an area in which ongoing action research is of critical importance, testing refugee and local community responses to different approaches in real time. Such initiatives could allow the Ethiopian government to develop a clearer definition of socio-economic integration, and its relationship with local integration.

More work is also required to determine the effectiveness of the alternative solutions that UNHCR has been developing, including the support of spontaneous return and the promotion of complementary legal pathways, such as private sponsorship, family reunification, and the establishment of humanitarian corridors for resettlement. Various methods are being employed to test the viability of voluntary repatriation, as well; namely, tracking spontaneous returns, conducting intention and aspiration surveys, cross-border monitoring, and engagement in regional dialogue. At present, the launch of a programme that would support the spontaneous return of Somali refugees is under review; and the Ethiopian government is also working to facilitate the return of more than 3,000 Kenyan Borena refugees.[148] With regard to alternative resettlement options, a humanitarian corridor programme opened in Italy has enabled the resettlement of 476 refugees since the programme expanded to include refugees from Africa in late 2017.[149] This is a private-public initiative developed in 2015 by local communities in Italy, faith-based organizations, and the Italian government, to facilitate the safe arrival of asylum seekers. It is a community-backed and self-financed sponsorship scheme that enables refugees to enter Italy with a humanitarian visa and apply for asylum.[150]

144   ODI / DRC (forthcoming).
145   Samuel Hall (2014).
146   ODI / DRC (forthcoming).
147   DRC / NRC (2013), 23.

148   UNHCR (2019a), 21.
149   UNHCR (2019c). Ethiopia: Fact Sheet; see: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/70338.pdf
150   International Catholic Migration Commission (2017). Humanitarian corridors are helping change how Europeans see refugees; see, https://www.icmc.net/newsroom/news-and-statements/humanitarian-corridors-are-helping-change-how-europeans-see-refugees

Picture of landscape in Somali Regional State
Credit: Tina Hiller- Oxfam

METHODOLOGY

This study is the primary output from the first year of the ReDSS research team's work in Ethiopia. This work has been organised around two mutually supportive pillars: 1) to map existing and planned future research for compilation in an online knowledge management database, ensuring maximum accessibility and utility; and 2) to provide tailored uptake support to existing policymaking processes in making good use of this research material, with related activities undertaken at both federal and regional levels. Activities have included the development of a research framework, convening of researchers working on these topics in Ethiopia, organising and contributing to research seminars, participating in policy and programming discussions. While all of these activities have contributed to this synthesis paper, the specific process for developing it has been as follows.

RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The research framework informing this synthesis paper is fully aligned with the NCRRS. It serves to organise, assess, and summarise the state of existing knowledge against three core questions asked for each of the four NCRRS objectives:[151]

- What is the NCRRF policy process trying to achieve in Ethiopia under this objective?
- Where does refugee policy and programming for this objective come from in Ethiopia?
- How does refugee policy and programming in Ethiopia need to evolve in order to meet the objective?

These questions formed the basis for the literature review conducted by the research team. Throughout the process this has been tested with key stakeholders via the Advisory Group to ensure that the study outputs are embedded within the Ethiopian policy process and contribute towards the development of a shared narrative.

METHODS OF INQUIRY

The primary method used to inform this paper was an extensive desk study of literature relating to refugees and the refugee operation in Ethiopia. More than 60 documents have been identified through google search, analysis of relevant bibliographies, and use of snowball methods. These include journal articles, both national and international, commissioned studies by think tanks and academic bodies, policy and strategy documents, project documents, and reviews and evaluations. These and others have been organised in the Knowledge Management Database referenced above. It is intended to undertake further work on this resource to make it easier to search and navigate the research according to key fields.

These documents were reviewed by the research team to identify key findings in relation to the main research questions outlined above, with priority given to reports and studies from the last five to ten years, or those that focus on issues of particular relevance today. Context for these findings has been provided through the research team's wider work in the Ethiopian refugee context, referenced here where appropriate. This work, some of which was undertaken in parallel, as well as the separate engagement with key stakeholders through the Advisory Group, has provided opportunities for triangulation and testing of data, as well as participant observation, and avoided the need for separate primary research to be conducted for this study.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The existing volume of refugee-related research on Ethiopia is vast. Given the number of new initiatives recently undertaken in this area, available research is also rapidly expanding. Therefore, this literature review cannot be comprehensive, and is not intended to be. Rather, the scope of this review is limited to a systematic analysis of the most significant pieces of research conducted in recent years, specifically that which is relevant to the NCRRS and its four objectives. More historical papers and those that do not focus specifically on Ethiopia are only referenced if there is particular relevance to current debates and discussions. The focus is also on key findings relevant to the development of a shared narrative, rather than seeking to replicate the detail of all the research that has been conducted. The paper should therefore be read as an entry point into the wider literature, rather than a substitute for it.

This synthesis paper also reveals the limitations of using a uniform nomenclature for key terms in the durable solutions discourse in Ethiopia. There are a number of questions about whether there is adequate clarity and consensus on how some of the terms and concepts that underpin the CRRF should be understood in the Ethiopian context. In particular, the term "host communities" is difficult to define in a standardised manner due to the variable complex situations in which refugees and Ethiopian citizens reside together throughout the country.[152]

As such, the term "host communities" needs to be seen as highly context specific, with geographic proximity alone being a poor metric for determining on its own where the particular burden or benefit of the presence of refugees falls. Key factors include the nature of the relationship between the communities, key historical legacies, the services available in the local area, and the size and scope of the refugee presence.

Hence a range of terms are used in this synthesis paper to reflect this context specificity, including: "host communities", "displacement-affected communities", "Ethiopian citizens", and "residents". Usage of terminology varies depending on each particular situation in which it is being applied.

In some cases, it is more appropriate to emphasize a broader focus on the Ethiopian population, as opposed to highlighting specific Ethiopian settlement that neighbours the refugee camps. "Residents" or "Ethiopian citizens" is generally used in these cases, as these terms refer specifically to people's legal status and right to permanent residency in a given location.

There are also situations that are better described using the term "displacement-affected communities" (to include refugees, host communities, IDPs, etc.), whereas in other cases targeted terms may be more relevant.

While this terminological complexity poses challenges for creating a common narrative among key refugee stakeholders in Ethiopia, these can be overcome by clarifying and adopting shared definitions of key terms to use in specific contexts throughout the country.

Nearby local residents going home by crossing through the Eritrean refugee camp, Adi Harush
Credit: Alemu Asfaw

[152] Other key terms and concepts, such as "self-reliance", "local integration", "socio-economic integration", and "sustainable refugee responses" are equally problematic in terms of clarity and shared understanding in the Ethiopian context.

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REGIONAL DURABLE SOLUTIONS SECRETARIAT