



URBAN REFUGEES AND IDPs IN SECONDARY CITIES: A SUMMARY

Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda each have a long history of hosting refugees and asylum seekers. Uganda, one of the top ten refugee-hosting countries worldwide, currently hosts 1.3 million, according to the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC). The INGOs, national and local governments in each country presently face unique and dire challenges, including civil war, climate crisis, and Covid-19.

The Cities Alliance Cities and Migration Programme

This summary highlights the key findings of a research report prepared for the Cities Alliance Cities and Migration Programme in cooperation with the Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, with funding from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

The research is also based on two companion publications: *Improving Local Governance in Forced Migration: Case Studies and Considerations from East Africa and Climate-induced Displacement to Secondary Cities in Eastern and the Horn of Africa: What Do We Know?*




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At the same time, good practices exist in a variety of areas, such as local leadership, social integration, employment and labour market integration, education, and refugee participation. Case studies from Arua (Uganda), Adama (Ethiopia), and Kakuma and Lodwar Town (Kenya) show that the growing urbanisation of forcibly displaced people has fostered increasing engagement and partnerships for assistance with local urban actors, such as municipal governments and local civil society organisations. At the same time, they highlight the challenges that many municipalities face in terms of funding and a lack of recognition of urban needs.

There is a crucial gap in research on forcibly displaced people: their often-unacknowledged presence in so-called secondary (non-capital) cities and towns, which often lack the resources to adequately receive them. More comprehensive data and evidence are needed on forcibly displaced people residing outside of national capitals, which in many cases is also relevant to the poor and vulnerable nationals living alongside them.





SUPPORTING IDPs IN ADAMA, ETHIOPIA

In 2018, about 1,340 registered households as well as many unregistered Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) fled ethnic conflict in the Somali region of Ethiopia to seek safety in Adama, in the Oromia region. The IDPs, mainly ethnic Oromo, arrived in Adama over the course of several months. The sudden and huge influx of IDPs put immense pressure on the city's capacity to provide the necessary support.

While most of the focus on internal displacement in Ethiopia remains on the Somali region (which hosts the majority of the country's IDPs), significant lessons can be learned from Adama's response. In the absence of large-scale international assistance, a little-known campaign to address the needs of IDPs led to a multi-level response from federal, regional, and local urban actors.

Adama issued a broad call for action to support the IDPs, and in response,

local community associations and many private sector actors contributed to the construction of houses to settle IDPs in three new settlements, with a fourth settlement constructed before the IDPs arrived. Every registered IDP household in Adama received a private resettlement house with documents confirming their tenancy. In addition to free housing, Adama city has provided free healthcare and education for IDPs. It has constructed a school, Sena Seba, within the resettlement area to educate IDPs from kindergarten to fourth grade. The school is free for every IDP and aims to provide education for younger IDPs (between the ages of 4 and 13) within close distance of their homes.

However, many unregistered IDPs also arrived in Adama, and they did not have access to housing or food rations. This experience highlights the importance of registering all forced migrants upon arrival in cities. If cities know how many migrants are coming and their needs, they can better facilitate the assistance that is offered to the migrants.



"IT WAS VERY PAINFUL TO WITNESS A PERSON BEING FORCEFULLY DISPLACED FROM WHERE HE/SHE USED TO LIVE JUST BECAUSE HE/SHE IS OROMO. ADAMA CITY RESIDENTS ALSO FELT THE PAIN. WE, THEREFORE, SENT OUT A CALL FOR ACTION ...WITH A MOTTO 'PEOPLE FOR PEOPLE/WEGEN LE WEGEN' EVERYONE, FROM BIG TO SMALL, HAD PLACED THEIR FINGERPRINT IN RESPONSE TO THE CALL."

– Coordinator at the Adama mayor's office.

URBAN REFUGEES IN ARUA, UGANDA

Arua city in western Uganda sits in between three refugee settlements – Adjumani, Bidi, and Imvepi – which are some of the largest in the country. In Arua, there is a lack of tailored programmes to meet refugees' needs; refugees in Uganda only receive services if they are in a refugee settlement or Kampala, where they are registered.

Urban refugees in Arua face myriad challenges. The rising cost of rent, food, and transport were cited as the biggest challenges, along with the limited freedom of movement and the closure of schools. At the same time, the large number of urban refugees in Arua has a significant impact on the city itself, particularly in sectors such as education and health. Classrooms are overcrowded, and there is a lack of specialised programmes for refugee children who need social, emotional, and educational support. Arua's health centres do not have the funding to accommodate the influx of refugees seeking medical services.

The research finds that refugee-hosting municipalities in Uganda face a dilemma: according to the government of Uganda, so-called 'self-settled refugees' in urban areas beyond Kampala are not considered refugees, who are defined as those living in a formal refugee settlement and Kampala. This position in turn leads to a lack of data on urban refugees that settled regardless of policy. Because they are not formally counted as urban inhabitants, no additional funding is allocated to yearly budgets to account for the increased demand on services created by this significant number of people.

If urban refugees were properly accounted for in censuses, the municipalities in which they reside would in theory receive

more resources from the central government to support their populations, including refugees.

The case of urban refugees in Arua demonstrates a clear need to include urban refugees in censuses and government planning, including development and city plans, and in some cases direct more international programming and support to forcibly displaced persons seeking refuge and shelter in urban areas. Adequate data would allow adequate urban planning.

"THE CIVIL WAR IN SOUTH SUDAN FORCED ME TO COME TO UGANDA. I SETTLED IN RHINO REFUGEE SETTLEMENT, BUT WHEN MY BABY GOT VERY SICK, I WAS FORCED TO MOVE TO ARUA TO ACCESS BETTER HEALTH FACILITY FOR MY CHILD."

– Refugee in Arua.



CRISIS MIGRATION IN TURKANA COUNTY, KENYA

As of the end of June 2021, Kenya is home to more than 521,000 registered refugees and asylum seekers; 44 per cent and 40 per cent reside in Dadaab and Kakuma camps, respectively (UNHCR 2021). The Kakuma camp and the nearby Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement are located in Turkana County, which illustrates many of the challenges of forced displacement, urbanisation, and climate change.

Refugees, migrating pastoralists, and other rural-urban migration for economic survival makes up the so-called 'crisis migration' in Turkana County. The influx of refugees, and the humanitarian and development interventions that have accompanied it – such as the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan (KISEDPP) in Turkana West – have brought Turkana County both economic growth and development. At the same time, ongoing underinvestment in the region and growing climate change-related challenges place pressure on hosts and refugees alike, contributing to tension and challenges in integration.

Some practices from Turkana suggest the value of further focusing on developing integrated policies and interventions for refugees and host communities that enhance spatial-economic integration and connectivity in the region. Such a focus could be either hindered or made all the more necessary by the planned closure of Kakuma camp, which the Kenyan government announced in 2021.

Maintaining this focus is imperative, however, for both Kakuma camp and the towns surrounding it that suffer from underdeveloped infrastructure and poor provision of basic services, including (in urban areas) inadequate and unaffordable housing, exacerbated by urban poverty and high unemployment. More attention paid to addressing these areas has the potential to assist both refugees and local hosts. The experience of Turkana also illustrates that deeper involvement of local county officials and other local actors is needed to actually develop the local governance promoted by many of the plans related to refugee response in the region.





THE IMPACT OF KAKUMA-KALOBEYEI ON TURKANA COUNTY, AS WELL AS THE EXPECTED IMPACT OF THE CAMP CLOSING ON URBAN AREAS IN THE COUNTY, ILLUSTRATE THE NUANCED RELATIONSHIP OF HOSTING REFUGEES ON COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES, WITH REFUGEES REPRESENTING SOURCES OF TENSION AS WELL AS POSITIVE ATTENTION AND INVESTMENT.

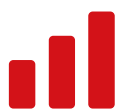


RECOMMENDATIONS



Engage and invest in municipal authorities

Donor governments and international actors should increase the engagement of, and investment to, municipal authorities hosting urban displaced people. Strengthening the municipalities' ability to respond to forcibly displaced persons can improve assistance in terms of quality and time of response and create tailored integration efforts with better results for both the forcibly displaced and host communities.



Increase data on urban forcibly displaced people

Governments, the United Nations, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), and research institutions should help increase data and evidence on the numbers, needs, and characteristics of urban forcibly displaced persons and use this information to inform advocacy and practice.



Embed the urban forcibly displaced in city planning

Support for urban forcibly displaced persons should be embedded within wider city strategies or plans for the urban poor. This can increase the level of assistance displaced persons receive, as well as manage social tension, promote their integration into local economies, and increase their access to public services.



Recognise the rights of urban refugees and IDPs

States must uphold the rights of urban refugees and IDPs by revising restrictive policies towards urban settlement. Upholding and advocating for policies to recognise and support the rights of urban refugees and IDPs is crucial to improving their safety, well-being, and the amount and quality of assistance they are given. This also provides important pathways for municipal authorities and other actors to raise funding and increase assistance for local responses to forced displacement.

LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND FORCED MIGRATION

Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda each sit on a different part of the spectrum of responses to refugees and IDPs.

Uganda has a more open-door and unrestrictive policy towards refugees, although this becomes more nebulous in regard to urban areas. Ethiopia also has an open-door policy, and the country has been shifting to an unrestrictive approach and expanding the 'out-of-camp' policy, albeit with mixed implementation. In contrast, Kenya has a restrictive (encampment) approach towards refugees, with the government denying refugees the right to work and limiting their movements outside of camps. All three countries have a decentralised system and power is devolved; however, they all follow different government structures.

When examining these contexts of local governance and responses to forced displacement, several key findings emerge:



Reliable data on urban refugees is lacking

All three countries lack reliable data on the number of refugees living in urban areas. Most data available shows refugees living in rural areas and settlement camps. Resources and information on urban refugees are very limited, which impedes the ability of local municipalities to support forcibly displaced people and ensure adequate resources for all their inhabitants. In each country, there is tension between municipal or regional governments and the federal governments, which hold the majority of funds from taxes and is often the main recipient of donor funds.



Inter-sectoral collaboration is necessary

Local governance does not remain 'local', but instead often necessitates discussion and collaboration with national ministries and other government departments as well as regional bodies such as IGAD and civil society organisations at local, regional, national, and international levels. Examples of inter-sectoral information sharing include the emergency IDP committee established in Adama and Arua's Community Development Forum.



**Localisation plays a key role
within refugee governance as
cities seek to gain the resources
and tools that they need to host
the displaced people who,
formally acknowledged or not,
continue to arrive.**

Source: Improving Local Governance in Forced Migration: Case Studies and Considerations from East Africa by Evan Easton-Calabria, Delina Abadi, and Jennifer Wood.

CLIMATE-INDUCED FORCED MIGRATION

The effects of climate change are already apparent in many regions of Eastern and the Horn of Africa and are projected to continue. Although much climate-induced forced displacement occurs from rural-urban areas, cities and towns will also experience increasing numbers and severity of natural hazards.

Municipal authorities and national and international actors seeking to assist cities and/or urban forcibly displaced people need to take the following into account:



Climate-driven changes will exacerbate existing gaps and inequities in access to water.



Climate change will continue to drive increased conflict and displacement related to water.



Human health is directly affected by climate-induced extreme weather (droughts or floods) and indirectly (impacts on drinking water supply, vector-borne diseases, food insecurity, and increased mental health stressors).



Longer heatwaves and more frequent hot days will lead to a significant increase in health complications and heat-related deaths, especially among the elderly and very young.



In addition to trauma stemming from extreme weather events, indirect impacts of climate change (i.e., poverty, discrimination, and poor nutrition) will increase psychosocial stressors.



Climate change will further burden already over-stretched health care systems in both urban and rural areas, many of which were already weak or poorly resourced.

A variety of recommendations emerge from the literature reviewed and the experiences of cities in Eastern and the Horn of Africa. They focus on programmatic areas of focus or adaptation that municipalities can undertake, or those which international donors and agencies can either offer or help support municipalities to provide. In some cases, these recommendations may help displacement be avoided in the first place through offering more support to rural inhabitants.

They are:



Engage local governments and other municipal actors in planning and decision-making around addressing climate-induced forced migration.



Make planned urban expansion a priority.



Improve climate awareness in programming.



Use data and evidence based on forecasting and existing knowledge of climate projections to inform programming at local and national levels.



Utilise early action responses. Integrate Early Warning Early Action (EWEA) techniques into existing urban programming and consider Forecast-based Financing (also known as Forecast-based Action) and weather-index based insurance.



Undertake household-level and broader interventions to improve urban resource access, including water and improved food security.

Source: *Climate-induced Displacement to Secondary Cities in Eastern and the Horn of Africa: What Do We Know?* By Evan Easton-Calabria, Delina Abadi, and Judy Park.



