



ReDSS brief and talking points

Implementation of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework in East Africa Opportunities and challenges

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Background on displacement and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) in East Africa

Displacement in Eastern Africa is predominantly of a protracted nature. At the end of October 2017, there were almost 13 million people displaced in the region- with the majority of displaced coming from or inside South Sudan and Somalia, and at least half are children. Uganda is currently hosting 1.3 million refugees making it the largest refugee-hosting country in Africa, with more than 62% being children.

Although most have been displaced for long periods, few have durable solutions prospects - returning to their home, being integrated into their host communities or settling elsewhere. These three durable solutions options are processes, they are not solutions in and of themselves. The ultimate goal for all is sustainable (re)integration.

While encampment is still the reality for the majority of refugees in the East African region there have substantial shift in approaches to forced displacement. The engagement of development actors has become more systematic and the progressive approach shown by Uganda has been an example to follow not just in the region but globally. There have been positive developments on local integration and self-reliance policies. Within this backdrop the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) is a **significant opportunity to further build this momentum towards a paradigm shift** in refugee hosting.

The CRRF has been rolled out in East Africa since the New York Declaration in October 2016. Currently five countries: **Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and most recently Kenya** have committed to the process. In addition the IGAD Plan of Action for Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees is the operationalisation of the CRRF for the **Somali situation**.

Key milestones include a significant commitment by IGAD and member states in East Africa to **the Nairobi Declaration** with supporting a Plan of Action and Results Framework for **Durable Solutions for the Somali situation**, the Uganda Solidarity Summit, nine pledges from the Ethiopia government, and the new Djibouti refugee law.

The regional intergovernmental approach led by IGAD has shifted the dynamics of refugee policies in East Africa, creating a space for open dialogue around local integration and transitional solutions, moving away from only return processes. Progressive commitments have been made by member states to transition from a care and maintenance approach to one that supports self-reliance. Furthermore, regional approaches allow for peer to peer learning between countries and can address cross border issues. The IGAD approach has been critical to bring all partners around the table in order to **work collectively on capacity development and research** towards greater **local integration and durable solutions**.

The national CRRF structures have been created - steering groups and secretariats (the 'engine' room) at national levels in Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania. The inclusion of NGO voices in all steering groups has been a significant result and to note is the NGO secondment to the Uganda CRRF secretariat that has been collectively funded by NGOs in Uganda, providing a coordinated collective approach. Displacement affected communities are also represented in the Uganda steering group.

Donors have shown **considerable commitment to the CRRF process** and there has been real investment to coherently link **humanitarian – development funding strategies** and make more multi-year funding available. Thanks to our collective effort, there is significant multi-year multi-sector funding for durable solutions in Kenya, Somalia, Ethiopia and Uganda from several donors, including the EU, Danida, Sida, and DfID. This is a major achievement and more investments like this should be encouraged.

Challenges:

There have been some challenges around the slow pace of the establishment of the CRRF mechanisms and the lack of clarity of its objectives at country level. This includes the limited dialogue around the **road map of implementation below national level** mechanism and the connections with refugee and internally displaced people (IDP) hosting areas and local authorities.

The lack of engagement and consultation with the displacement affected communities themselves has been an important concern which NGOs are trying to address – locally led solutions are vital for sustainability and ownership for the framework in action. For that reason ReDSS and its members carried out consultations with refugees, returnees, displaced people and host communities in Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia and Kenya.

While there has been positive engagement of development actors at national level into the CRRF processes, this clarity and engagement has not yet been seen at a sub-national level in Uganda and Tanzania. **New approaches are needed for effective humanitarian-development coordination** to find solutions at the sub-national level and specifically within areas hosting refugee and internally displaced people. **The process must be viewed as a collective action rather than mandate driven** based on an inclusive, participatory and consensus building approach - our common goal being to give the millions of displaced persons a chance of a better life with dignity and self-reliance

Relevant data (and consequently analysis and planning based on evidence) is a key challenge. There are available data and needs' assessments in the region but most lack a displacement perspective. Different types of data and analysis are required, building on what exists, to have better understanding of displaced affected communities including skills assessments, economic and market analysis, absorption capacity of different sectors and forecasting for better preparedness. It is **critical to improve the generation and availability of relevant data and analysis** to better understand and operationalize complementary humanitarian and developmental approaches in the search for durable solutions and to mitigate against secondary displacements.

Lastly another critical question is the **level of support for member states** committing to the roll out process. How much are they being strategically supported with capacity strengthening, change management process and analysis to enable informed planning and leadership that capitalizes on the 'whole of society' approach? We need to adapt existing structures and policies to bring in new voices in a structured, coordinated way. To note private sector, academia and think tanks have been largely missing from the process and dialogue to date.

Key Recommendations:

Foster localized approaches and better engage local actors and communities in the search for durable solutions to ensure ownership, local relevance and social cohesion: National and local authorities have the primary responsibility and they need to be supported to be able to play a leadership and coordinating role. Partners must collectively invest in capacities to sustain solutions locally and nationally. Such investments will strengthen local and national institutions and partnerships helping to sustain locally owned solutions.

Community engagement is a requirement to ensure locally led and relevant solutions: Displacement affected communities should be represented at all levels of the CRRF architecture, they should be consulted and their priorities reflected in planning processes with two way feedback mechanisms to ensure relevance and accountability.

- We heard directly from refugees and host communities that there is a need for **consistent inclusion of displacement-affected populations as real partners in the process**. Further attention needs to be given to the **quality and methodologies** of inclusion to ensure **authenticity** in our engagement - this is something that we as NGOs need to take to heart. Programming should be based on local community defined problems, solutions and participation and add value to their communities
- Understanding and investing in the capacities and engagement of **youth and children** is critical. Our approaches need to be cognisant of the fact that they are the majority of the displaced populations in the East Africa region - 62% of refugees in Uganda are children. Programming should consider the risks to **Children on the Move** and ensure they have appropriate care either from their own families or community-based alternatives.

Self-Reliance & Resilience: CRRF planning should focus on measures to increase self-reliance and integrated programming, factoring in appropriate economic, environmental and social considerations. The CRRF is an opportunity to address policies that can facilitate self-reliance (access to asylum, freedom of movement, right to work, land access etc) and build resilience (access to financial services, access to basic services, preparedness). In order to strengthen self-reliance refugees from all countries of origin need greater **freedom of movement** and possibilities for formal work and wage earning activities – as part of integrated programming for both displaced and host communities. This is already being recognized in Ethiopia's pledges, the new refugee law in Djibouti and the IGAD Plan of Action – they all go a long way in acknowledging the need and desirability of self-reliance and the importance of the ability to work but further progress is needed.

To be successful, **development actors and private sector** need to be involved throughout. A strong understanding of the **market and economic systems** needed to build **sustainable self-reliance and resilience approaches while maintaining the centrality of protection and rights based approach** is crucial. Refugees and host communities are already doing a **huge amount for themselves**, our efforts need to build on local initiatives and **enable them to play their part** and make a contribution to their hosting communities.

The international community should provide adequate long-term and predictable political and financial support to countries and communities that host displaced populations, in ways that improve **inclusive access to services and economic opportunities**, including on housing, employment, education, access to health care and other vital public services and infrastructure. The CRRF provides an opportunity for the international community to demonstrate solidarity with IGAD member states through responsibility sharing and increased resettlement quotas for refugees.

Regional level initiatives like the IGAD Nairobi Declaration should be supported to build the comparative advantages of regional leadership within the CRRF. Regional bodies such as IGAD have a strong mandate with member states for the adoption and institutionalization of comprehensive frameworks for managing the movement of people. Where refugee outflows are the direct result of state action or state failure, regional bodies can apply additional pressure to responsible states, such as exclusion from the association and other sanctions. Under the guidance of a regional structure, neighbouring states – many of whom are shouldering the burden for the refugee outflows – have the chance to be involved in diplomatic and political negotiation framed around the rights of refugees to return in safety and dignity. Accountability for success or failure for the IGAD process must be seen as a **shared responsibility**.

Collective outcomes and Area based Planning: The approach should involve displacement affected communities, alongside development actors in **joint planning, collective outcomes and delivery of services towards durable solutions**. An example is the **area based response plan** that was developed for Kismayo, Somalia under the leadership of local authorities and the UN, in support of the National Development Plan. **Creating durable solutions requires a multi- stakeholder and sectoral, rights and needs based programming approach**. Addressing physical, material and legal safety of displaced people as a whole is critical in the search for durable solutions and requires contributions from all sectors.

Invest in **early solutions:** Given the unlikelihood of return in the near future, an early solutions approach is critical. **Early solutions planning and response** encompasses steps – including better forecasting and profiling of displaced, preparedness, area based assessments, joint outcomes, surge capacity, and deployment of development specialists from the outset - to foster **self-reliance and resilience** of displaced people and host communities in the early stages of displacement and to lay the foundation for future durable solutions.

Engagement of new actors: While there is a recognition that new actors (think tanks, private sector, and academia) should and must play a larger role in the CRRF. Private sector engagement has been limited at best and they are not represented in a meaningful way in CRRF steering groups and processes. If we are to change our way of working humanitarian actors must be willing to let go of some power in order to facilitate new actors. We need to invest in adapting existing structures and processes, **in co-creating programmes and creating shared value** to engage private sector in a meaningful collaborative approach.

Improve knowledge and solutions programming in urban context: the majority of returnees are moving to urban centres and many IDPs living in urban areas will not return to their rural areas of origin. This highlights the increased need to seek solutions in urban environments and to better understand urban dynamics to ensure sustainable (re)integration.