

Forced Displacement Issues in Africa.

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I would like to thank the Senate's Standing Committee for this opportunity to share my insights on displacement issues in Africa. I hope the little I share will be a valuable contribution to the ongoing Committee's Study.

1. Major refugee and migration flows affecting this region.

- In Africa, the Great Lakes Region, the Horn of Africa, and, to a great extent West and Central Africa have continued to be at the centre stage regarding refugees and migration flows in the continent, having over 5.2 million refugees and over 18 million internally displaced people.
- The conflicts in South Sudan, Congo DRC, Central Africa Republic, Sudan and Somalia are the major causes of the displacement in the region. Drought and other climate-related causes have also affected the region, especially the Horn of Africa.
- 37% of refugees are children under 11 Children, while 53% are under 18 years and 82% are women, children and elderly.
- Over 75% of displaced people live in their countries as internally displaced people, with little or no support from the international community.

2. Realities of most refugees in Africa

- a. Most refugees are in protracted situations. Tanzania, for example, has people who have lived as refugees for over 50 years since 1972.
- b. Most refugees in Africa live in refugee camps and depend on humanitarian aid. They lack opportunities to rebuild their lives, become self-reliant and attain self-fulfilment due to restrictions on their freedom of movement and right to work. Humanitarian support is not always enough. Currently, the food ration for refugees in camps in Tanzania is cut to 50% hence subjected to undignified life.
- c. Refugee women, especially those in camps, have continued to face Gender Based Violence (GBV) and other security risks, as they struggle to complement the food and obtain other non-food items, such as firewood that are not provided by humanitarian organizations in the camp. They also face abuse from their male partners who try to establish authority that has been taken away by humanitarian organizations.

- d. For the children, access to and quality of education is compromised. In Tanzania, for example, where the country of origin curriculum is being used for refugee children, children went for three years without doing their final exams. This was due to disagreements between the host and country of origin (Burundi) on the modality to conduct those exams.
- e. Due to the legal and practical restrictions, refugee status has tended to provide less protection, leading to many refugees choosing to live under the radar as undocumented migrants, which creates another layer of risks, including human trafficking and statelessness
- f. Poverty is a cross-cutting issue in African displacement, and it is also central in finding solutions. Whether people flee political instabilities or climate-induced factors, most people who flee in Africa lived in poverty before fleeing. They have to live alongside the host communities languishing in poverty as well; this to a larger extent, defines the quality of protection they are able to access. But, they are also the hardest to achieve durable solutions, especially if they were subjected to a life of dependency in the host countries.

3. Positive practices worth sharing:

- a. Granting of citizenship through naturalization in Tanzania – In trying to find durable solutions for refugees, Tanzania has, on three different occasions, granted citizenship to refugees, the largest group to be granted refugee status consisted of over 162,000 Burundian refugees. Other groups were the Rwandans and Somali Bantus.
 - b. Refugee inclusion (with its limitations)
 - i. In Tanzania there are about 40,000 refugees living in villages benefitting from the structures and systems benefiting the host communities. They are not receiving any assistance from the international community; Tanzania has made work permit for refugees free
 - ii. We have in Ethiopia and Uganda progressive policies allowing refugees inclusion by allowing them freedom of movement and opportunities for self-reliance
 - c. Admission (with its limitations) – Despite the challenges, countries in Africa have not totally turned their backs of forced displaced people, they continue to admit them to safety.
4. To achieve solutions, some key shifts need to be made:
- i. Invest in local advocacy with host governments, Supporting local actors, including refugees, to work with the governments and host populations to:

- a. Understand their deep concerns and work with them towards finding workable solutions,
- b. To promote human rights and people-centred approaches as a win-win way of dealing with forced displacement,
- c. To reshape the refugee narrative and break existing myths about refugees and migrants.

Local actors are well positioned to do this if proper and long-term investment is made.

- ii. Rework responsibility sharing and make it more predictable. Acknowledging the real contribution of host governments in Africa and their real struggles to offer what they offer and attempt to match it.
- iii. Encourage and support the AU and the Regional Economic Communities e.g. the East African Community and ECOWAS, to take an active role in responding to forced displacement including addressing the root causes to reduce forced displacement incidences and the length of time refugees stay in asylum.
- iv. The Global North should lead by example and end the double standard regarding their response to migration. They should walk the talk.
- v. Continue to invest in promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms in general, and addressing poverty in the region.