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**Crisis in Context: Exploring the Regional
Dynamics of the Refugee Displacement in
the Horn of Africa**

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RIASSUNTO

Il Corno d'Africa, il quale comprende paesi come Gibuti, Eritrea, Etiopia e Somalia, è una regione afflitta da una delle più gravi crisi umanitarie. Questa crisi è causata da un'intersezione viziosa tra fattori politici, sociali e ambientali. Tutte queste eredità coloniali, conflitti prolungati e fattori socio-economici hanno portato a un ciclo di instabilità all'interno di questa zona del mondo. Milioni di rifugiati sono presenti nella regione, la quale sperimenta continua violenza nel suo nucleo. In questo contesto, la tesi mira a inquadrare la crisi all'interno di una più ampia comprensione delle sue cause scatenanti, dell'impatto causato sia sulle popolazioni sfollate e che su quelle ospitanti e dell'efficacia della risposta internazionale.

L'obiettivo primario di questa ricerca è determinare i fattori delle migrazioni di massa nel Corno d'Africa. Si esaminerà anche l'impatto sociale ed economico dello sfollamento sulle popolazioni ospitanti e rifugiate, nonché l'adeguatezza delle attuali risposte internazionali e dei quadri giuridici in materia. Inoltre, si vuole offrire lo sviluppo di nuove misure integrate per affrontare le cause alla radice dello spostamento e migliorare l'efficacia dell'assistenza internazionale.

Prima di questo studio, una ricerca approfondita letteratura è stata condotta per fornire un preciso contesto della situazione di partenza. La revisione della letteratura comprendeva diverse fonti, tra cui riviste accademiche, rapporti di organizzazioni internazionali, testi storici e analisi delle politiche. I temi trattati nei molteplici testi includono eredità di una precedente colonizzazione, conflitti e turbolenze politiche, degrado ambientale, tensioni socio-economiche e riquadri legali e politici. La letteratura presentata rimane contestuale e suggerisce l'esperienza dei confini coloniali stabiliti arbitrariamente dall'Occidente e le conseguenti configurazioni politiche ed etniche instabili che questi hanno introdotto, consentendo lo spostamento e i conflitti sperimentati più e più volte nella regione.

Questa tesi si tratta di un progetto interdisciplinare che combina intuizioni derivanti sia da osservazioni qualitative che quantitative, per fornire una prospettiva molto ampia e dettagliata sulla crisi. La ricerca comprendeva studi di casi completi di particolari nazioni nel Corno d'Africa, nonché delle loro difficoltà specifiche e delle soluzioni generate in risposta alla crisi. L'analisi politica ha esaminato il quadro giuridico a livello sia internazionale che regionale, tra cui la Convenzione di Ginevra del 1951 e la Convenzione

dell'Organizzazione dell'Unione Africana del 1969, per valutarne l'effettiva attuazione e l'efficienza. Le informazioni sono state raccolte dalle Nazioni Unite e da altri rapporti, dalle pubblicazioni delle ONG e dai dati governativi per delineare spostamenti e assistenza in questo periodo.

Una panoramica storica dettagliata evidenzia il ruolo significativo svolto dalle eredità coloniali nel plasmare le attuali dinamiche politiche ed etniche della regione. Queste divisioni imposte dai confini dell'era coloniale incoraggiano la separazione tra i gruppi, guidando conflitti, spostamenti e tensioni etniche.

Inoltre, l'area ha un passato difficile, composto da sistemi di governance inadeguati e disordini politici. La maggioranza dei governi del Corno d'Africa sono corrotti, autoritari e mancano di istituzioni centrali efficaci. A sua volta, l'incapacità degli Stati africani di garantire i servizi più elementari e di dare vita a un sistema politico stabile, causa un vero e proprio scontento, rendendo più facile condurre al dissenso. Ciò è ulteriormente complicato da conflitti prolungati come la guerra Eritreo-Etiope, il recente conflitto nella regione del Tigrè in Etiopia e la guerra civile decennale in Somalia, le quali causano danni e spostamenti diffusi oltre all'indebolimento delle strutture statali.

La diversità etnica e religiosa nel Corno d'Africa contribuisce spesso alla fonte del conflitto. L'area è in gran parte popolata da diversi gruppi etnici con antiche rivalità rivendicazioni concorrenti sulle risorse e sul potere politico. Le tensioni etniche sono spesso esacerbate da politiche governative che favoriscono alcuni gruppi invece di altri, spingendoli verso una povertà più profonda e portando all'emarginazione e alla violenza.

Il degrado ambientale e il cambiamento climatico contribuiscono ad approfondire ulteriormente questa crisi. La regione vive eventi meteorologici estremi, come siccità prolungate e gravi inondazioni, che devastano la produzione agricola e portano a costanti carenze di cibo e acqua. Il cambiamento climatico aggrava queste sfide con la crescente frequenza e gravità degli eventi meteorologici estremi, mettendo sotto pressione le risorse già limitate della regione. Questo, combinato con l'alta velocità di crescita della popolazione e l'erosione della natura, provoca una forte competizione per le scarse risorse, e quindi ulteriori conflitti e sfollamento in massa di gruppi di persone.

La povertà diffusa e le sfide economiche sono altri fattori significativi dello spostamento di massa all'interno della regione. Un mix di opportunità economiche limitate, alti tassi di disoccupazione e infrastrutture che hanno un serio bisogno di riparazione contribuiscono ad aggravare l'instabilità regionale. Molte persone nella regione dipendono dalla pastorizia e dall'agricoltura di sussistenza e sono quindi più vulnerabili agli estremi

eventi climatici e agli shock economici. La povertà di lunga data, aggravata dall'assenza di sviluppo economico e dalla mancanza di investimenti, ha portato a una situazione umanitaria ancora peggiore.

Le conseguenze sociali di questo intreccio di fattori sono complesse e danneggiano sia i residenti locali che i nuovi arrivati dagli stati confinanti. In molte parti della regione, l'arrivo dei rifugiati causa ancora più stress finanziario, disordini sociali nelle comunità ospitanti e gravi conseguenze psicologiche tra le popolazioni sfollate.

La comunità internazionale ha sviluppato diversi quadri giuridici internazionali chiave per la protezione dei rifugiati e degli sfollati interni (IDP) nel Corno d'Africa. Tuttavia, studiando le risposte internazionali agli spostamenti, possiamo comprendere i limiti di questi quadri giuridici, come la Convenzione di Ginevra del 1951 che, sebbene costituisca un pilastro del diritto internazionale, fornisce soluzioni inadeguate. Questo fondamentale documento, seppure troppo generale, delinea i diritti dei rifugiati e gli obblighi degli Stati a proteggerli. Iniziative regionali poi, come la Convenzione dell'Organizzazione dell'Unità Africana (OUA) del 1969 che disciplina gli aspetti specifici dei problemi dei rifugiati in Africa e la Convenzione di Kampala del 2009 sono anch'esse importanti, ma la loro applicazione e l'assegnazione delle risorse imposte sono problematiche e inattuabili. Nonostante ciò, rappresentano una testimonianza del tipo di solidarietà richiesta dagli Stati africani per offrire asilo e proteggere i loro rifugiati. Essi impegnano gli Stati africani a prevenire gli sfollati, a proteggere e assistere gli sfollati interni e ad incrementare positivamente la loro situazione.

Le Organizzazioni Internazionali (IO) e le ONG sono essenziali in questo contesto per gli aiuti e l'innovazione che apportano. Gli esempi in Somalia e in Eritrea mostrano come le ONG siano state in grado di raccogliere una sfida di una tale complessità attuando approcci localizzati e basati sulla comunità, attingendo alle conoscenze locali e trovando nuove strategie per aumentare la loro azione positiva.

La tesi suggerisce che, sebbene le basi giuridiche e le risposte internazionali siano ora in atto, c'è un estremo bisogno di strategie future più coerenti e creative che affrontano le cause alla radice dello spostamento nel Corno d'Africa. La promozione della stabilità e la protezione delle popolazioni vulnerabili richiedono una maggiore cooperazione internazionale e l'approfondimento e l'ampliamento degli approcci attuati a livello regionale. Lo studio sottolinea l'importanza di integrare l'aiuto umanitario immediato con iniziative di sviluppo a lungo termine, come l'adattamento al clima e gli sforzi per la risoluzione dei conflitti.

Raccomandazioni contenute nella relazione si concentrano anche sulla necessità di rafforzare la cooperazione internazionale per facilitare una maggiore partnership tra le organizzazioni internazionali, gli enti regionali e le autorità locali. Inoltre si sollecita un aumento negli investimenti finalizzati alla costruzione della pace e un maggiore sforzo per la risoluzione dei conflitti in modo da ottenere una soluzione politica alla discordia sociale ed etnica che sono alla base di questo spostamento forzato.

Questa ricerca vuole contribuire alla letteratura accademica consolidando le conoscenze esistenti sui fattori storici e in corso che contribuiscono all'instabilità e allo spostamento nel Corno d'Africa. Essa fornisce informazioni preziose per i responsabili delle politiche e tutti coloro che lavorano per soluzioni sostenibili a una delle più grandi situazioni umanitarie del XXI secolo. Lo studio mira a contribuire alla politica e alla pratica future, richiedendo un approccio globale che affronti le molteplici dimensioni della crisi.

ABSTRACT

The Horn of Africa, including countries such as Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia, is a region plagued by one of the most severe humanitarian crises. It is caused by a vicious intersection of political, social and environmental factors. All of these colonial legacies, protracted conflicts, and socio-economic factors have led to a cycle of instability in this area of the world. Millions of refugees have been pushed out as the region remains violent at its core. Against this background, the dissertation aims at framing the crisis within a broader understanding of its underlying causes, its impacts on both the displaced and host populations, and the efficacy of the international response.

The primary goal of this research is to determine the factors of mass migrations in the Horn of Africa. It will also look at the social and economic impact of displacement on host and refugee populations as well as the adequacy of current international responses and legal frameworks on this issue. Moreover, it wants to offer the development of new and integrated measures to address the root causes of displacement as well as enhancing the effectiveness of international assistance.

Prior to this study, a thorough literature search was conducted to provide some context. The review included different sources, including academic journals, reports of international organizations, historical texts and policy analysis. The themes discussed in the literature include legacies of colonization, conflict and political turmoil, environmental degradation, socio-economic strains, and legal and policy pathways. The literature presented remains contextual and suggests the experience of colonial boundaries set overly by the West and the resulting unstable political and ethnic configurations they introduced, allowing for the displacement and conflicts experienced time and again in the region.

It is an interdisciplinary project which combines insights from both qualitative and quantitative observations to provide a very wide perspective on the crisis. It included comprehensive case studies of particular nations in the Horn of Africa as well as of its specific difficulties and the solutions generated in reaction to the crisis. The policy analysis examined the legal framework at both international and regional levels, including the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1969 Organization of African Union Convention, to assess their implementation and efficiency. Information was gathered and consolidated from UN and

other reports, NGO publications, and governmental data to outline displacements and assistance throughout this time period.

A detailed historical overview highlights the significant role played by colonial legacies in shaping the current political and ethnic dynamics of the region. These divisions imposed by colonial era demarcations encourage separation among groups, driving conflict, displacement and ethnic tensions.

Moreover, the area has a troubled record of poor governance systems and political unrest. The majority of the governments in the Horn of Africa are corrupt, authoritarian, and lack effective institutions. In turn, the inability of African States to guarantee the most elementary services and to give birth to a stable political system, causes a real discontent, making it easier to lead dissent. This is further complicated by protracted conflicts such as the Eritrean-Ethiopian War, the recent Tigray conflict in Ethiopia and the decades-long civil war in Somalia which cause widespread damage and displacement in addition to the weakening of state structures.

Ethnic and religious diversity in the Horn of Africa often contribute to the source of conflict. The area is largely populated by different ethnic groups with ancient rivalries competing claims over resources and political power. Ethnic tensions are frequently exacerbated by government policies which favour certain groups instead of others, driving them into deeper poverty and leading to marginalization and violence.

Environmental degradation and climate change contribute to further deepening this crisis. The region experiences extreme weather events, such as prolonged droughts and severe floods, which devastate agricultural production and lead to food and water shortages. Climate change exacerbates these challenges with increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events, putting pressure on the region's already limited resources. This, combined with the high speed of population growth and the erosion of nature, provokes a hard competition for scarce resources, and thus wars and masses of displaced populations.

Widespread poverty and economic challenges are other significant drivers of mass displacement within the region. A mix of limited economic opportunities, high unemployment rates and infrastructure that is in serious need of repair all conspire to aggravate the regional instability. Many people in the region depend on pastoralism and subsistence farming and are therefore most vulnerable to climate extremes and economic shocks. Long-standing poverty, compounded by the absence of economic development and the lack of investments and this only led to an even worse humanitarian situation.

The social consequences of these intersecting factors are complex and injure both local residents and newcomers alike. In many parts of the region, the arrival of refugees causes more financial stress, social unrest in host communities and grave psychological tolls among displaced populations.

Several key international legal frameworks aimed at protection of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Horn of Africa have been developed by the international community. However, by studying international responses to displacement, we can gain insights into the limitations of legal frameworks like the Geneva Convention of 1951, which although it constitutes a foundation, provides inadequate solutions. This foundational document outlines the rights of refugees and the obligations of states to protect them. Regional initiatives such as the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and the 2009 Kampala Convention are also important, but enforcement and resource allocation are problematic. Despite this, they represent a testimony to the type of solidarity required by the African States to offer asylum and protect their refugees. They commit African states to prevent displacement, to protect and assist the internally displaced, and to address their plight.

International Organizations (IOs) and NGOs are essential in this context for aid and innovation. The examples in Somalia and Eritrea show how NGOs have been able to rise to the challenge of the greatest complexity by implementing localized and community-based approaches, drawing upon local knowledge and finding new strategies to increase their positive action.

The thesis suggests that although legal foundations and international responses are now in place, future, more coherent and creative strategies that address the root causes of displacement in the Horn of Africa, are critical. Promoting stability and protecting vulnerable populations require increasing international cooperation and both deepening and broadening regional approaches. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating immediate humanitarian aid with long-term development initiatives, climate adaptation, and conflict resolution efforts.

Recommendations in the report also focus on the need to strengthen international cooperation to facilitate greater partnership among international organizations, regional bodies and local authorities. Moreover, it insists on the need of further investments in peace building and proven efforts for conflict resolution to uphold a political solution to the social and ethnic discord that is at the root of this forced displacement.

This research wants to contribute to academic literature by consolidating existing knowledge on the historical and ongoing factors contributing to instability and displacement in the Horn of Africa. It provides valuable insights for policy makers and implementers working towards sustainable solutions to one of the greatest humanitarian situations of the 21st century. The study aims to contribute to future policy and practice by calling for a holistic approach which addresses the multiple dimensions of the crisis.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The Horn of Africa has long been characterized by complex and protracted refugee crises, with millions of individuals displaced by conflicts, political instability, environmental factors, and other drivers. The intra - and interstate instability and subsequent population redistributions call for comprehensive understanding and elaborate academic investigation and further exploration of these phenomena through writing this paper. The refugee movements are closely tied to issues of security, humanitarian disaster, and policy implication; therefore, their thorough examination remains crucial.

This study seeks to understand the conditions of displacement, contributing to a better comprehension of the humanitarian landscape. The movements of refugees can aggravate conflicts and lead to new security challenges. They may also drain resources, increase ethnic or political conflicts, and create instability. Therefore, this study aims at focusing on the intersection of the refugee crises and the security theories, and as a result, its findings would be applicable in the discussion of the existing and potential regional and international security problems. Thus, the knowledge obtained in the procurement of this thesis could be used for discussions relevant to maintaining stability and peace in the region and worldwide.

The complexity of issues associated with refugee flows underlines the critical need for strong policy frameworks that will ensure their effective management. The current policies and frameworks at regional and international levels will be reviewed to determine whether they are effective in dealing with the challenges of displacement. These include analysis of relevant legal statutes, such as the 1951 Geneva Convention, and regional agreements like the 1969 Organization of African Union Convention and the 2009 Kampala Convention.

Finally, in addition to these broader implications, this thesis wants to give a contribution to the academic discourse by consolidating existing knowledge on the historical and ongoing factors contributing to instability and displacement in the Horn of Africa.

1.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1.2.1. What are the causes of this humanitarian crisis?

The humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa is a multifaceted issue driven by a complex interplay of political, social, and environmental factors. This dissertation wants to explore the different drivers of migration and displacement within the region.

First of all, the colonial history of the region provoked a lasting impact on political and social dynamics. These artificial borders led to fragmented political entities, therefore causing enduring ethnic tensions. Prolonged conflicts such as the one between Eritrea and Ethiopia or the Tigray conflict are an example of this. Moreover, the absence of strong central governments and political institutions further contributes to widespread dissatisfaction and unrest.

Other causes of displacement have been associated with environmental factors. The presence of extreme weather events, such as prolonged droughts and severe floods often lead to food and water shortages, intensifying the competition for scarce resources.

1.2.2. How is the international community responding to this crisis?

The international community has been actively involved in responding to the humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa through multiple means and interventions. These initiatives encompass a number of legal, humanitarian and development policy interventions to respond to the immediate needs of the displaced populations and the root causes for the instability.

The international community has established several key legal frameworks to protect refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the region. Moreover, international organizations and non-governmental organizations play a crucial role in providing aid and development initiatives. While these interventions have addressed some of the immediate needs, challenges remain in ensuring effective implementation and long-term solutions.

1.3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE HORN OF AFRICA

1.3.1. Historical factors contributing to instability in the region

The Horn of Africa, it proves to be one of the most geostrategically significant regions worldwide, given its combination of political, economic and environmental factors that have determined its past and continue to predetermine its future. Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia serve all together as one of the most salient examples of ethnic diversity, political conflict and critical humanitarian issues. From a historical perspective, the Horn has been among the most critical regions for commerce and cultural exchange, fuelled by closeness to the Arabian Peninsula and its vicinity to crucial maritime routes. Given its significance, the region has become the centre of regional competition and external intervention, which complicated its internal dynamics and caused a continuous state of instability.¹

The Horn of Africa exhibits a rich tapestry of ethnic and cultural diversity that has shaped its historical and social development, serving as both a pillar of regional identity and on the other hand, as frequent catalyst for conflicts. This diversity has at times, been undermined by the marginalization of certain ethnic groups and the disparate allocation of state resources, fuelling ongoing internal conflicts. Such dynamics are often exacerbated by governance practices that disproportionately favour specific groups, thereby intensifying ethnic tensions and perpetuating cycles of civil strife and instability.²

This complex interplay of ethnic diversity and political inequality underscores the region's enduring challenges and highlights the need for inclusive governance solutions to foster stability and peace. The political instability of the Horn of Africa is inherently related to its environmental difficulties, forming a vicious cycle that escalates regional conflict and hampers governance. The region's perceived susceptibility to environmental catastrophes, such as drought and resources exhaustion, strained state structures from the global north, triggers violent disputes over scarce resources, including water and fertile land. Many of the

¹ Telci, I. N. "The Horn of Africa as Venue for Regional Competition: Motivations, Instruments and Relationship Patterns." *Insight on Africa*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2022, p. 7.

² Olike, Tafesse. "Conflicts and Conflict Resolution in the Horn of Africa: Toward the Study of Regional Peace and Security." *Ethiopian Journal of the Social Sciences and Humanities* 6.1-2 (2008): p. 20

environmental pressures faced by the region have been exacerbated by climate change. In turn, these areas of environmental stress often result in migration and land-use debates, which deepen community-to-community and intra-national tensions like Eritrea and Ethiopia. The state has a hard time responding to environmental problems and combating environmental occurrences.³

Poor governance and continual instability that characterize the Horn of Africa contribute to an inability to pass long-term environmental policies or achieve cooperation over transboundary resources, rendering the exposed populations at the whims of nature and power. Ultimately, bad environments combine with poor political responses to create poverty loops, and violence dampening future development and regional stability. As previously noted, the entanglement of environmental degradation and political instability ultimately destroys the region's ability to solve ecological problems and creates a perpetual humanitarian catastrophe. These environmental stressors, heightened by climate change, often precipitate migration and disputes over land use, leading to deep tensions between communities and within nations effectively.⁴ Adding to the complexity, the Horn of Africa continues to experience the implications of extensive foreign military presence and interventions of the past. The political landscape of the Horn of Africa is profoundly influenced by its colonial legacy, which imposed a patchwork of arbitrarily drawn borders.

These borders frequently fail to reflect the ethnic and social complexities of the region, often cutting across ethnic lines and creating states that encompass diverse groups with little historical ties. To one another. This colonial imposition has fostered numerous interstate and intrastate conflicts, as various groups fight for control and autonomy within the confines of state structures that fail to represent their interests adequately.⁵ The effects of these artificially created borders are still evident today, contributing to ongoing tensions and conflicts across the region. Therefore, this land is home to a mosaic of ethnic groups with longstanding rivalries. The dominant ethnic conflict is between the "lowland" Islamic pastoralists, such as the Somali and Oromo, and the "upland" orthodox Christian farmers, primarily the Amharic and Tigrayan ethnic groups in Ethiopia.⁶ These tensions are often

³ Alemu, Sintayehu Kassaye. "The Horn of Africa: Some explanations for poverty and conflicts." *Ethiopian Renaissance Journal of Social Sciences and the Humanities* 1.1 (2014): p. 166

⁴ *ibidem*, Alemu (2014), p. 166

⁵ Ylönen, Aleks. "A scramble of external powers and local agency in the Horn of Africa." *Notes internacionales CIDOB* 280 (2022): p. 3.

⁶ Burgess, Stephen F. "Stabilization, Peacebuilding, and Sustainability in the Horn of Africa." *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2009, p. 101. *JSTOR*

exacerbated by government policies that favour one group over others, leading to marginalization and periodic violence.

Furthermore, external powers often prioritize their regional security interests, sometimes at the expense of local stability. External interventions have had both mitigating and exacerbating effects on the situation in the Horn. On the one hand, the peacekeeping missions and humanitarian help are aimed at pacifying the region. However, they are met with a high level of resistance and can be contributing to the already tense local situation. On the other hand, there are regional actors such as Ethiopia and Eritrea, with a longstanding rivalry. Both of them have been supporting participants in different conflicts in the region to gain a better strategic position.⁷ This focus can exacerbate local tensions and prolong conflicts, as external interventions do not always align the needs of the local populations. The sustained presence of foreign military bases and ongoing military interventions by global powers underscores the geopolitical importance of the region but also highlights the challenges of achieving genuine autonomy and self-determination for its nations.⁸ The strategic interests of external actors have historically influenced the political dynamics within the Horn, often supporting regimes that align with their strategic goals regardless of the authoritarian tendencies of these governments. This external support can undermine local democratic movements and perpetuate governance practices that fuel further discontent and resistance among the local populations.⁹

The interplay of historical legacies, external influences and environmental challenges creates a complex and dynamic political landscape in the Horn of Africa. Addressing the root causes of conflict and instability in this region requires a nuanced understanding of these factors and a concerted effort to align international interventions with the genuine needs and aspirations of its diverse populations.¹⁰

⁷ Mengisteab, Kidane. 2014. *The Horn of Africa*. Cambridge: Polity Press. p. 54.

⁸ Telci, I. N. "The Horn of Africa as Venue for Regional Competition: Motivations, Instruments and Relationship Patterns." *Insight on Africa*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2022, p. 81.

⁹ *ibidem*, Olike (2008). p. 20.

¹⁰ Melvin, Neil. "The New External Security Politics of the Horn of Africa Region." *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, 2019. *JSTOR*. p. 13.

1.3.2. Major refugee crises in the region

The Horn of Africa has long been a region plagued by forced displacement, resulting in one of the world's most prolonged and complex refugee situations. The backdrop of persistent conflict, political instability, environmental catastrophes, and socio-economic challenges has led to immense population displacement both across and within borders. By the end of 2022, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that the Horn of Africa hosted over 4,7 million refugees and asylum seekers and more than 10 million internally displaced persons (IDPs). This significant number underscores the severe and ongoing humanitarian crisis in the region.¹¹

The region's strategic location at the crossroads of Africa and the Middle East has made it a significant area for both internal and external migration. Migration flows within and from the Horn of Africa follow well-established routes.

The Eastern route, including along the Gulf of Aden, is one of the most important migratory routes for populations from the Horn. With the Horn being the main source of migrants, the route often follows the path from Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea to the Gulf countries and further north. Somalia to Yemen is one of the most challenging paths due to the countries' proximity. The journey from Somalia, Ethiopia and Eritrea to Yemen can be very risky as people are exposed to unsafe boat trips or transported by human traffickers who might abandon them on the way stealing their money.¹² Many Somalis continue to make Yemen their preferred jumping off point, undeterred by the unfolding chaos, particularly given their desire for better paid jobs in Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. The danger of the trek is amplified by severe risks to health, such as physical violence and exploitation, experienced frequently in refugee camps along migration routes. The Eastern route reveals a story of how desperate and determined people who are forced to leave from their own motherland in pursue for safety and higher possibilities of survival.¹³ In this regard, the

¹¹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2022. UNHCR 2023.*

¹² African Union (AU). *Report on Migration Trends in the Horn of Africa.* 2018. p. 12.

¹³ Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS). *Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen.* 2013, p.32

severe Somali drought and possible food insufficiency are explained as critical migration reasons.¹⁴

Another migration route taking place in the region is the Northern route, which entails displacement from the Horn of Africa to Europe. It typically travels through Sudan, Libya, and the Mediterranean Sea. It has led to the most hardship and suffering and is characterized by numerous human fatalities. The Northern route is predominantly travelled by Eritreans as a last resort. Eritreans fleeing severe political persecution and mandatory, indefinite military conscription in their homeland believe the route offers the only chance of freedom and a decent life. That trek starts with a perilous passage through Sudan, where migrants are exposed to countless dangers including being preyed on by human traffickers in servitude-like conditions, as well as physical abuse and arbitrary detention. In Libya, conditions worsen as migrants face a chaotic situation of lawlessness and severe human rights violations. In Libya, widespread systemic violations include forced labor, sexual exploitation and torture by traffickers as well as local militias. Despite the risks of falling into these traps, desperation in Eritrea also forces many to follow this route anyway. They continue to be lured by the slim promise that they may one day reach Europe and build a life where there is no oppression or threat of arrest. These complex migratory flows and the acute humanitarian needs they create are something that the international community still struggles with.¹⁵

Despite international attempts to reduce these perils, many Eritreans continue to take the route due to the appalling situation in their homeland. Somalians and Ethiopians are also using the Northern route to reach Europe passing through Sudan and Libya. The Saharan passage, lack of water and food, and abuse of human rights are a few of the numerous dangers encountered by migrants on the route. Nonetheless, the journey poses numerous dangers, and most people die on the way.

In addition to eastward and northern migration, a third pattern of migration: intra-regional migration, also exists. The influx is mainly due to conflict, environmental difficulties, and business elements. Due to continuing wars and unrest, many Somalis relocate to the Western region of neighbouring Kenya and Ethiopia to find freedom. In Kenya, refugees are largely hosted at the Dadaab and Kakuma camps. These camps, some of the

¹⁴ Regional Mixed Migration Secretariat (RMMS). *Mixed Migration in the Horn of Africa and Yemen*. 2013). p. 33.

¹⁵ Jacob Kurtzer, Hareem Fatima Abdullah, Sierra Ballard, “*Concurrent Crises in the Horn of Africa*”, Center for Strategic and International Studies, (2022). p. 18.

largest in the world, have become temporary homes for hundreds of thousands of Somalis over the past few decades.¹⁶ International Organizations and the Kenyan government continue to work towards improving conditions and providing support, but the high influx of refugees places a continuous strain on the available resources. The same happens in Ethiopia, where refugees are accommodated in several camps.¹⁷ These camps are somewhat safe and offer access to humanitarian facilities. However, camp conditions vary significantly with some having restricted resources, overcrowding and serious security risks.¹⁸ The internal conflicts and environmental challenges within the state draws Ethiopians to Sudan and South Sudan. The movements are sometimes short-term characterized by seasonal work and immediate life threat.¹⁹

The intertwined nature of the crises in the region means that there must be a comprehensive international response not merely to satisfy the current and pressing needs of the population, yet to address the systemic factors contributing to displacement, particularly inadequate governance, economic instability, and environmental degradation. Additionally, it should involve efforts that support the development of resilience, infrastructure, and economic diversification to reduce the underlying causes of forced migration.²⁰

¹⁶ International Organization for Migration (IOM). *Migration Trends and Patterns in the Horn of Africa*. International Organization for Migration, 2021.

¹⁷ Jacob Kurtzer, Hareem Fatima Abdullah, Sierra Ballard, “*Concurrent Crises in the Horn of Africa*”, Center for Strategic and International Studies, (2022). p. 20.

¹⁸ UNHCR. *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018*. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2018.

¹⁹ African Union (AU). *Report on Migration Trends in the Horn of Africa*. African Union, 2018.

²⁰ *ibidem*, Kurtzer (2022), p. 20.

1.3.3. Primary Countries Affected

a. Djibouti

Djibouti, a small country in the Horn of Africa, serves as a key transit point for refugees and migrants escaping conflict-prone countries to the north and south.²¹ As important as this location is to the global commerce and security interests of so many nations, it also strains limited resources within Djibouti.²²

Located on the strategically important Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, which links the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea, Djibouti hosts US, Chinese and French naval bases.²³ Several foreign military bases are located in the country, several United States military bases and China and France strategically stationed to stay out on terrorism and piracy. These military bases are a testament to Djibouti's place in the broader architecture of global security. However, despite its strategic relevance, the humanitarian needs of civilian population, refugees and migrants living in it remain far more urgent considerations. The sizable military thrust in Djibouti was in this respect also contributive to failing to address significant and related humanitarian needs of the local and refugee populations, at times.²⁴ Although these bases have resulted in significant economic benefits, because of the job creation and infrastructure, not all population segments receive spillover advantages from them.

While the presence of foreign military personnel and associated businesses has stimulated economic growth, that prosperity is frequently skewed towards particular sectors and geographies at the expense of broader development outcomes achieved by local or refugee communities. It is not just the issues of national health and security but placing priority in matters pertaining to food insecurity, poor or increased population pressure on

²¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM). *Djibouti*

²² Androff, David K. *Refugee solutions in the age of global crisis: Human rights, integration, and sustainable development*. Oxford University Press, 2022.

²³ Calabrese, John. "The Bab el-Mandeb Strait: Regional and great power rivalries on the shores of the Red Sea." *Middle East Institute* 29 (2020).

²⁴ Onor, Kester C. "Human Security Implications of Foreign Military Bases in Djibouti." *JPPUMA: Jurnal Ilmu Pemerintahan dan Sosial Politik UMA (Journal of Governance and Political Social UMA)* 11.2 (2023): 119-120.

healthcare requirements, and insufficient shelter committed at redirection of resources. However, the international community's support to Djibouti mainly focuses on military cooperation and combatting terrorism leaving little room for badly needed comprehensive humanitarian assistance.

Chronic food insecurity, high levels of debt and widespread poverty plague Djibouti, further fuelled by the arrival of refugees and migrants. With limited resources in the country, let alone for its own citizens, it is hard to maintain support and welcome displaced populations as well. A report by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has stressed that the problem is exacerbated by the nation's harsh climate and limited agricultural potential, which renders it overwhelmingly dependent on food imports and foreign aid.²⁵ In addition, high levels of debt due to economic instability limit the capacity of governments to deal effectively with these issues. A third of Djibouti's population is food insecure, with high reports rated alarming malnutrition among children according to the World Food Programme (WFP).²⁶ Adding refugees to the mix, further depletes what little resources there are, so leaving barely enough food for local people who will struggle and fight even harder than before.

Effectively, Djibouti has seen an influx of refugees and migrants from Somalia, Eritrea and Yemen. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Djibouti hosts thousands of refugees and asylum seekers, with numbers increasing due to ongoing conflicts and instability in the region. Migrants and refugees in Djibouti often face severe protection issues, including physical abuse, gender-based violence, detention, and human trafficking. These challenges are compounded by the harsh living conditions in refugee camps; striking examples to cite are the refugee camps of Ali Addeh and Holl Holl.²⁷ There, refugees have to face long waits for asylum processing and limited opportunities for employment or education.

The country's legal framework for refugees is still developing, and many refugees find themselves in prolonged states of limbo without clear legal status.²⁸ This further adds up to their vulnerabilities and restricts them from availing the rights and entitlements.

²⁵ Green, Shannon N., and Julie N. Snyder. "Stuck in Limbo: Refugees, Migrants, and the Food Insecure in Djibouti." *Gates Open Res* 3.265 (2019).

²⁶ Bureau, WFP Regional, and W. F. P. Headquarters. "WFP Djibouti." (2011).

²⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Djibouti: Joint Assessment Mission. Ali Addeh and Holl Holl Camps, Djibouti, 18 to 24th November 2013*. UNHCR, 2013.

²⁸ *ibidem*, Green (2019), p. 3

International organizations are helping the Djiboutian government to strengthen its legislative framework and enhance procedures regarding asylum, but many challenges persist. The slow pace of legal processing can lead to frustration and hopelessness among refugees, further complicating their ability to build stable lives in Djibouti or plan for future resettlement or repatriation.²⁹

To further worsen the situation is, as stated before, a challenge posed by health and sanitation. The health and safety situation is abysmal in the refugee camps of Djibouti. Access to clean water and sanitation facilities is limited, which causes the distribution of many diseases. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the increased risk of communicable diseases in refugee settings is significant, especially where overcrowding and poor sanitation are prevalent. Refugees in Djibouti generally have to live in tents or makeshift shelters, with little protection from overwhelmingly harsh conditions, further compounding health concerns particularly for children and the elderly and these conditions can also result in infectious disease outbreaks, including cholera and other waterborne diseases.³⁰ Malnutrition is another significant health concern in Djibouti's refugee camps. The limited availability of nutritious food, combined with the stress and trauma experienced by refugees, leads to high rates of malnutrition and related health problems. International organizations, including the World Food Programme (WFP), are working to address these issues, but the scale of the need often outstrips the resources available.³¹ The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reports that despite efforts to improve living conditions, the overcrowded and under-resourced nature of the camps continues to pose severe challenges to the health and well-being of refugees.³² By addressing these critical health and sanitation issues, international aid organizations aim to mitigate the adverse effects on refugee populations and improve their overall living conditions. However, substantial gaps remain, necessitating continued and enhanced support from the global community.

Finally, another important issue to cite for this case regards education. Refugee children have critical education needs but these are still grossly underfunded and deprioritised in Djibouti. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that many refugee

²⁹ Jacob Kurtzer, Hareem Fatima Abdullah, Sierra Ballard, “*Concurrent Crises in the Horn of Africa*”, Center for Strategic and International Studies, (2022), p. 21

³⁰ World Health Organization. *Summary report on the twenty-first meeting of the Eastern Mediterranean Regional working group on gavi, the vaccine alliance, Djibouti, Djibouti 2022*. No. WHO-EM/EPI/346/E. World Health Organization. Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, 2022.

³¹ World Food Programme. *World Report 2022*. 2022.

³² International Organization for Migration. *Living Conditions in Refugee Camps: Challenges and Efforts*. 2023.

children do not have access to formal education due to a lack of schools, teachers, and educational materials. This educational gap not only has far reaching implications for the immediate well-being of children, but also long-term effects that reverberate through their future prospects and the refugee community at large. For the majority, where these do not exist at all or are insufficient to cater to an adequate number of children, informal educational programs run by NGOs become the only resort. The lack of education opportunities continues and becomes a cycle of poverty that leads refugees to an unsurmountable fact where they are unable and available to get along the host community.³³

b. Eritrea

For the longest time, Eritrea has been one of the top countries generating refugees, which should have come as no surprise given that severe internal repression and ongoing wars in some parts of the country continue to force thousands to flee. Yet chronic poverty and displacement in the country can be traced back to a history of colonization, conflict, and authoritarian rule, leaving it tangled in a series of broad-reaching humanitarian crises.³⁴

According to UNHCR, thousands of Eritreans flee their country annually, seeking refuge from forced conscription, arbitrary detention, and lack of basic freedoms. The authoritarian regime's policies, including indefinite military service, have driven many to undertake perilous journeys to neighboring countries and beyond.³⁵ Additionally, the economic stagnation and limited opportunities within Eritrea exacerbate the plight of its citizens, contributing to the persistent outflow of refugees. The country's tumultuous history of colonization, conflict, and authoritarian governance has given rise to a complex humanitarian crisis marked by large-scale displacement, human rights abuses, and chronic poverty.³⁶

³³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Education for Refugee Children: Addressing Barriers to Access*. 2023.

³⁴ Hepner, Tricia Redeker. "Religion, Repression, and Human Rights in Eritrea and the Diaspora." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2014, pp. 151–88. *JSTOR*

³⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Education for Refugee Children: Addressing Barriers to Access*. 2023, p. 15

³⁶ Connell, Dan. "Refugees, migration, and gated nations: The Eritrean experience." *African Studies Review* 59.3 (2016): 217-218.

Following its colonization by Italy in the late 19th century, Eritrea was subsequently administered by Britain after World War II. Federated with Ethiopia in 1952, it enjoyed a measure of political autonomy prior to 1961.³⁷ That year Haile Selassie I annexed the territory by force, precipitating a political struggle for independence that continued until final victory was achieved in 1991. The Eritrean People's Liberation Front, which led the fight for independence, took control in 1991 and following a United Nations supervised referendum of Eritrea, de facto sovereign status was universally recognized in 1993.³⁸ The anticipated peace was short-lived. In 1998, Eritrea and Ethiopia engaged in a brutal border war, allegedly originating from a border dispute, which resulted in significant loss of life and displacement. The conflict formally ended in 2000 with the signing of the Algiers Agreement, but the situation between the two countries remained tense, characterized by a state of no-war-no-peace that persists to this day.³⁹ A continuation of this unresolved conflict has had overwhelming consequences for Eritrea's internal and external politics that have offered the government means to continue its militarized and authoritarian forms.⁴⁰

The Eritrean government, led by President Isaias Afwerki, has implemented a system of pervasive control over the population. In this respect, one of the leading causes of this mass exodus is the indefinite national service program, essentially forced labour at both home and in-state owned businesses.⁴¹ This policy has long attracted the ire of human rights organizations for its abusive nature and its impact on the youth, many of whom flee the country to avoid conscription.⁴² The extended conscription, the government argues, is justified by the need for national security against Ethiopia as its northern neighbour remains at risk of war over land.⁴³

Human rights abuses in Eritrea are rampant, including arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances, and indefinite detention without trial. Religious minorities, political

³⁷ Iyob, Ruth. "The Eritrean Struggle for Independence: Domination, Resistance, Nationalism 1941-1993." *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, vol. 31, no. 4, 1993, pp. 659-660

³⁸ "Eritrean People's Liberation Front." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., www.britannica.com/topic/Eritrean-Peoples-Liberation-Front.

³⁹ Tronvoll, Kjetil. "Borders of Violence – Boundaries of Identity: Demarcating the Eritrean Nation-State." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2009, p. 1053

⁴⁰ Bozzini, David. "The Fines and the Spies: Fears of State Surveillance in Eritrea and in the Diaspora." *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2011, pp. 32-34

⁴¹ Kibreab, Gaim. "The National Service/Warsai-Yikealo Development Campaign and Forced Migration in Post-Independence Eritrea." *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, vol. 13, no. 4, 2019, pp. 630-632

⁴² Human Rights Watch. *Service for Life: State Repression and Indefinite Conscription in Eritrea*. Human Rights Watch, 2009

⁴³ Connell, Dan. "Refugees, Ransoms, and Revolt: An Update on Eritrea." *Middle East Report*, n.264, 2012, p. 3

dissidents, and anyone perceived as opposing the government face severe persecution.⁴⁴ The United Nations and various human rights organizations have repeatedly highlighted these systemic abuses, yet international efforts to address these issues have had limited impact.⁴⁵

Economically, the little Horn of Africa nation is in dire straits as a result of government's policies and drawn-out conflict with Ethiopia. The economy is also heavily reliant on remittances sent by the gulf of its diaspora, which forms a big part of the country's overall GDP. This has further worsened the economic plight of Eritreans since opportunities for legal migration are few and far between.⁴⁶

In Eritrea's case, the government operates with very tight control on the economy which has drawn back development and major economic stagnation. State-owned enterprises and companies owned by the ruling party, People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), control most of the mining and construction which are other major sectors.⁴⁷ This centralized control has stymied the development of the private sector and weakened foreign investment. Furthermore, restrictive government policies and lack of transparency also contribute to a negative business climate which put off prospective investors in the country.⁴⁸

In addition, within the country itself there is little infrastructure and no basic services such as water or electricity, leading to rampant poverty and starvation. The World Bank and other international organizations have reported weak infrastructure in Eritrea, including poor transportation networks, unreliable electricity supply, inadequate access to clean water and sanitation facilities.⁴⁹ They are not merely impoverishing the lives of all Eritreans, but also holding back economic progress and development. The ongoing tension with Ethiopia has also contributed to this, since it has led to the militarization of the society and economy, with substantial resources allocated to defence and security at the expense of development.⁵⁰ Food security is a continuous problem in Eritrea which results mostly from the constant droughts and poor farming habits. Moreover, the country's agricultural sector is underdeveloped with a

⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch. *Eritrea: Events of 2020*. Human Rights Watch, 2021, p. 90

⁴⁵ United Nations Human Rights Council. *Detailed Findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea*. United Nations, 2016, p. 3-5

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch. (2024). World Report 2024: Eritrea.

⁴⁷ Campbell, John R. *Nationalism, law and statelessness: Grand illusions in the Horn of Africa*. Routledge, 2013, p. 13

⁴⁸ idem, Human Rights Watch. (2024)

⁴⁹ Campbell, John R. *Nationalism, law and statelessness: Grand illusions in the Horn of Africa*. Routledge, 2013, p. 5

⁵⁰ Belloni, Milena. "Refugees and citizens: Understanding Eritrean refugees' ambivalence towards homeland politics." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 60.1-2 (2019): p. 61

large part of the population depending on subsistence farming. Due to harsh climatic conditions, lack of modern farming techniques as well as inadequate reach to agricultural inputs results in low productivity and intermittent food shortage.⁵¹

Eritrea's economic problems are varied and have their roots in the government's policies and long-standing conflict with Ethiopia. The reliance of remittances (compulsory payments to the government), lack of infrastructure, food insecurity and indefinite national services are some other reasons for such devastating economic condition. That suggests major policy reforms as well as international support are needed in order to address the issues facing the African country and help stimulate economic growth and development for its people.

c. Ethiopia

Ethiopia has been grappling with a severe humanitarian crisis for years, driven by a combination of internal conflicts, economic challenges, and natural disasters. The country is composed of numerous ethnic groups, with the Oromo, Amhara, and Tigray being the largest. Historical marginalization and competition for resources have fuelled tensions among these groups.⁵² The Tigray conflict, which erupted in November 2020, is one of the most significant recent conflicts. It resulted in widespread atrocities, displacement, and a humanitarian emergency that drew international condemnation.⁵³ Human Rights Watch has documented military operations by the Ethiopian government characterized by attacks on civilians, which include destruction of property as well as extensive use of rape and other forms of sexual violence on a massive scale as weapons of war in the troubled region. The abuses have been overwhelmingly denounced internationally, however, accountability and justice for the victims have up to now gone largely unheeded by Ethiopian authorities. Many have fled their homes in a bid of violence. Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers were accused of raping, sexually enslaving, killing unlawfully and abducting women and girls in Tigray,

⁵¹ Connell, Dan. "Refugees, migration, and gated nations: The Eritrean experience." *African Studies Review* 59.3 (2016): p. 220

⁵² Abbink, Jon. "Ethnic-based Federalism and Ethnicity in Ethiopia: Reassessing the Experiment after 20 Years." *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, vol. 5, no. 4, 2011, pp. 602-603

⁵³ Plaut, Martin. "Understanding Ethiopia's Tigray War." *African Affairs*, vol. 120, no. 479, 2021, pp. 1-2

deepening ongoing violent crisis in the region which resulted to more severe humanitarian consequences.⁵⁴

Ratings for the international response are mixed. There have been appeals for ceasefires and peace talks, but at times these measures are thwarted by the geopolitical interests of the different parties involved. The United Nations and other organizations have engaged in humanitarian relief efforts, but the ongoing conflict has made it difficult to deliver aid to those affected by the crisis due both to security concerns and bureaucratic impediments.⁵⁵

Ethiopia's economy is a paradox of comprising fast growth accompanied by extreme poverty alongside inequality. Furthermore, the policies of the government pertaining to modernization and infrastructural development have largely overlooked rural and marginalized communities as a result of increasing further disparities. Economic policies have further exacerbated the humanitarian emergency, at times resulting in land confiscation and forced evictions of locals. The Tigray conflict has further hampered these economic difficulties by affecting agricultural harvests and trade, causing excessive food shortages and leaving livelihoods at risk.⁵⁶

The already precarious humanitarian situation has been further worsened by the blockade of aid to Tigray, where famine-like conditions have been reported.⁵⁷ Both the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) temporarily suspended aid amid reports food was being diverted to local markets. After an investigation unveiled a large, organized conspiracy among federal and regional government officials to misappropriate food assistance, the suspension was extended throughout Ethiopia.⁵⁸

Natural disasters like droughts and floods that are often accompanied by lots of rainwater in a short period time, are common in Ethiopia, with devastating effects on agriculture.⁵⁹ As the backbone of the Ethiopian economy and a primary source of livelihood

⁵⁴ United Nations Human Rights Council. *Detailed Findings of the Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in Eritrea*. United Nations, 2016, pp. 3-5

⁵⁵ Loewenberg, Samuel. "Humanitarian response inadequate in Horn of Africa crisis." *The Lancet* 378:9791 (2011): 555-558

⁵⁶ World Bank. "Ethiopia Economic Update: Navigating a Challenging Landscape." *World Bank Reports*, 2021, pp. 12-14

⁵⁷ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. *Ethiopia - Tigray Region Humanitarian Update*. 2023

⁵⁸ World Food Programme. *WFP Suspends Food Aid to Ethiopia Amidst Diversion Concerns*. 2023, p. 2

⁵⁹ Conway, Declan, and Edward L. F. Schipper. "Adaptation to Climate Change in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities Identified from Ethiopia." *Global Environmental Change*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2011, p. 229

for most of its population, millions are forced into food insecurity due to these environmental challenges. Recurrent droughts are a major issue in Ethiopia, leading to crop failures and livestock deaths, which exacerbate food insecurity. Human Right Watch, for instance, detected a migration of 10 million people in 2015, due to a persistent drought. That event also resulted in large-scale crop and livestock loss, with malnutrition and displacement across the nation.⁶⁰ With the cyclical nature of droughts in Ethiopia, communities have little time to recover before they face another natural disaster.⁶¹

Furthermore, floods are also high on the danger list when it comes to lowland areas. Incurring into flash floods that can destroy crops, they also pollute water supplies, and spread diseases. Droughts are followed by floods, the very events contributing to the destruction and recovery process that poses a long-term threat on food productivity and security.

With the consequences of climate change, food insecurity in Ethiopia has only become worse. More than one-third of the population in Ethiopia is food insecure, while malnutrition rates are high particularly among children according to Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). Compounding this is an absence of the infrastructure and services necessary to respond effectively to these emergencies. In a majority of rural areas, there is no provision for irrigation or management which only make their livelihood more susceptible, as farmers can't keep up with the system support, they once needed to avoid effects caused by leading drought and excessive flow.⁶²

With climate change set to increase the frequency and severity of such natural hazards, by doing nothing or very little, the country is increasingly exposed to long-term risks for food security and livelihoods. Increased temperatures, lead to floods and droughts. The World Bank points out that the change in temperature with progressively erratic precipitation patterns will probably have more frequent and intense consequences as droughts or floods. A great degree of variability poses a serious threat to agricultural productivity, since many traditional farming practices will no longer be viable in new climatic conditions.⁶³

Current agriculture is also already experiencing the effects of climate change. Alterations in rainfall regimes have interfered with planting and harvesting cycles; warm

⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch. (2016). *World Report 2016: Ethiopia*, p. 273

⁶¹ World Bank. (2024). *Climate Change and Agriculture in Ethiopia*, pp. 19-21

⁶² Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). (2024). *Ethiopia: Food Security Report*, pp.15-16

⁶³ Conway, Declan, and Edward L. F. Schipper. "Adaptation to Climate Change in Africa: Challenges and Opportunities Identified from Ethiopia." *Global Environmental Change*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2011, p. 229

temperatures have increased rates of evapotranspiration which lowers water availability for crops. Crops are produced in smaller and shorter growing seasons, threatening food security for pastoralist people who rely on grazing lands.⁶⁴

Humanitarian groups are already helping by providing emergency food aid and funding agricultural development projects. Still, the demand is huge and can easily outrun the financial resources at their disposal, leaving them with needs not met. The WFP says longer-lasting conflicts, along with restricted access to the affected areas, make it hard to provide quick and full support.⁶⁵

The interplay between natural disasters and agricultural productivity in Ethiopia underscores the critical need for comprehensive strategies to enhance resilience against climate change. Strengthening infrastructure, adopting climate-smart agricultural practices, and improving emergency response mechanisms are essential steps to mitigate the impacts of recurrent droughts and floods.⁶⁶ Addressing these challenges is crucial for ensuring sustainable food security and livelihoods for millions of Ethiopians.

d. Somalia

As the other countries of the region, the humanitarian crisis in Somalia is deeply rooted in the country's history. Since the fall of President Siad Barre's regime in 1991, Somalia has been embroiled in ongoing violence and political instability, leading to significant displacement both within and outside the country. The collapse of Barre's government marked the end of centralized authority, plunging Somalia into a protracted civil war characterized by factional fighting among various clan-based militias and warlords.⁶⁷ This period of chaos resulted in the mass displacement of civilians as they fled the violence and destruction experiencing.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ International Crisis Group. "Ogaden: Ethiopia's Most Contested Territory." *Ethiopia: Prospects for Peace in Ogaden*, International Crisis Group, 2013, pp. 2-4. *JSTOR*

⁶⁵ World Food Programme. *Annual Country Report 2023*. Ethiopia. 2023

⁶⁶ World Bank. *Building Resilience to Climate Change in Ethiopia*. World Bank, 2017, p. 23

⁶⁷ Lewis, I. M. "Visible and Invisible Differences: The Somali Paradox." *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 74, no. 4, 2004, p. 489-515

⁶⁸ Menkhaus, Ken. "State Collapse in Somalia: Second Thoughts." *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 30, no. 97, 2003, p. 405-407

The initial phase of Somali refugee displacement began in the late 1980s, with significant escalations following the collapse of the Barre regime. Siad Barre's authoritarian rule, which began in 1969 following a military coup, initially brought some stability and development. However, his regime became increasingly repressive, and the economic situation deteriorated in the 1980s. By the late 1980s, resistance movements, particularly from clan-based militias, intensified, leading to widespread conflict.⁶⁹ In January 1991, Barre was ousted by a coalition of opposition groups, leading to the disintegration of the central government. The power vacuum left behind sparked a vicious civil war as various factions vied for control. The civil war that ensued in the early 1990s led to widespread violence, causing hundreds of thousands of Somalis to flee their homes. The early 1990s marked one of the most intense periods of displacement, with large numbers of Somalis fleeing the widespread violence and instability.⁷⁰

By the mid-1990s, Somalia had some of the highest numbers of refugees in the world, with many Somalis moving to neighbouring countries, particularly Kenya, Ethiopia Djibouti and Yemen to seek asylum.⁷¹ During this time, Somalia transitioned from being a refugee-hosting nation, having previously accommodated Ethiopian refugees from the 1977-1978 border conflict, to one of the world's largest sources of refugees. The situation was exacerbated by the 1992 famine, which further displaced people as they sought food and safety. It was a result of both drought and an ongoing three decades of conflict which severely prevented agricultural production as well as food distribution networks. Aid convoys were frequently attacked by militias and security constraints significantly limited humanitarian aid. An estimated 300,000 people died and many others were displaced in search of food and refuge as a result.⁷²

The international response was to embark on a bold new scheme of peaceful intervention, spearheaded by the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM). But the intervention was plagued by violent local militias resisting assistance and limited ability to deliver help.⁷³ From 1996 to 2006, a period of relative calm prevailed in Somalia. The

⁶⁹ Lewis, I. M. "The Somali Tragedy: Failure of the State." *Horn of Africa*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1991, pp. 14-15

⁷⁰ Hammond, L. (2014). *Somali Refugee Displacements in the Near Region: Analysis and Recommendations*. Paper for the UNHCR Global Initiative on Somali Refugees, pp. 5-7

⁷¹ *ibidem*, Menkhaus (2007), p. 405-407

⁷² Clark, Jeffrey. "Debacle in Somalia." *Foreign Aff.* 72 (1992): p. 109

⁷³ Clarke, Walter, and Jeffrey Herbst. "Somalia and the Future of Humanitarian Intervention." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 75, no. 2, 1996, p. 74

number of new arrivals to refugee camps in other countries slowed as people tried to resume their agricultural or agro-pastoral activities or to take their chances in the larger Somali cities and towns. Many of those displaced from Somaliland were encouraged to return by the establishment of the Government of Somaliland and an end to the civil war there. In the southern and central regions, pockets of stability developed where effective local administrative structures were established by communities themselves. The relative calm that had prevailed for a decade was shattered in the latter half of 2006, when the Union of Islamic Courts set up an administration in Mogadishu, supported by Ethiopian troops. The violence began to escalate dramatically, with indiscriminate violence particularly in and around Mogadishu prompting many people who had managed to survive in the city for years despite the insecurity to flee, making this the most violent period in Mogadishu since the collapse of the state.⁷⁴ Despite these efforts, the famine and preexisting conflict meant vast numbers of people continued to leave home sparking a large-scale refugee emergency which remains today. Nowadays, Somalia is perennially in a state of insecurity, due to ongoing competition among warring factions and militias fighting for power, such as al-Shabab, the Islamist militant group. Its insurgency has led to widespread violence that is driving displacement and worsening the humanitarian crisis. Al-Shabaab's operations are always assembled using home-made improvised explosives products, simultaneous explosions of bombing with suicide attack capabilities and some targeted killings which have increased the sensation chaos and fear among civilians.⁷⁵

Al-Shabaab has often prevented aid convoys from operating, and its fighters now are accused of looting supplies and threatening or abducting humanitarian workers. The group at times has tampered with food and medical supplies in ways to enhance its own authority and worsen the crisis by denying aid to those who do not support it.⁷⁶ Al-Shabaab uses all violent at its disposal to maintain any semblance of control by undermining peace and stability. The insurgent group has carried out attacks using IEDs and suicide bomb raids on public spaces, government buildings as well as humanitarian aid convoys with regularity. These attacks have almost immediate impact in loss of life and injuries, but also in terror that creates a

⁷⁴ Lindley, Anna. 2010. 'Leaving Mogadishu: towards a Sociology of Conflict-Related Mobility,' *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(1), pp. 2-22

⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch. "World Report 2024: Somalia." Human Rights Watch, 2024.

⁷⁶ Docking, Tim. *Terrorism in the Horn of Africa*. US Institute of Peace, 2004, pp. 15-18 *JSTOR*

climate to disrupt day-to-day activities and economic transactions.⁷⁷ For instance, a notable attack in Mogadishu in 2017 involved a truck bomb that killed over 500 people, making it one of the deadliest incidents in Somalia's history.⁷⁸

Al-Shabaab also carries out targeted killings that intimidate the population or eliminate individuals it believes are in its way. The killings have targeted government officials, security personnel and those working with international organisations.⁷⁹ The manoeuvre does undermine the efforts of the Somali government and international bodies to stabilize the region, assisting aid.⁸⁰

In addition to conflict, Somalia is highly susceptible to natural disasters, including recurrent droughts and occasional floods. These environmental challenges have devastating impacts on the already vulnerable population.⁸¹ The country's arid climate and lack of resilient agricultural infrastructure make it particularly prone to these natural calamities, which disrupt livelihoods and exacerbate food insecurity. The 2011 famine in Somalia, caused by a prolonged drought can be seen as one of the most severe humanitarian crises witnessed during that period. The United Nations has said that the famine killed an estimated 260,000 people, more than half of them young children.

The drought dried up crops and killed off livestock, raising malnutrition and causes to soar. Severe drought affected crops and water resources, exacerbating already scarce resources available to the people. It also displaced hundreds of thousands, leading them to flee starving and thirsty from rural areas. Hundreds of thousands of Somalis were displaced, fled their homes and moved into refugee camps/urban areas both within Somalia and abroad. In these refugee camps, food, clean water, and healthcare services were severely limited for these displaced populations because of overcrowding.⁸² Natural disasters push Somalis into refugee camps and urban centres where resources are already stretched thin. The influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) into these areas exacerbates existing challenges, such as

⁷⁷ Brown, Boyd P. "Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)." *The Handbook of Homeland Security*. CRC Press 559-568.

⁷⁸ UN Security Council. *Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2385 (2017): Somalia*. United Nations, 2018

⁷⁹ Botha, Anneli, and Mahdi Abdile. "Radicalisation and Al-Shabaab Recruitment in Somalia." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, vol. 32, no. 3, 2014, p. 519

⁸⁰ Williams, Paul D. "Stabilising Somalia: The African Union Mission and the Challenge of Effective Peacekeeping." *International Affairs*, vol. 89, no. 4, 2013, pp. 52-60

⁸¹ Maxwell, Daniel, et al. "Facing Famine: Somali Experiences in the Famine of 2011." *Food Policy*, vol. 65, 2016, p. 63

⁸² United Nations. "Somalia: 2011 Famine and the Need for Long-Term Solutions." *United Nations News*, 2013.

inadequate shelter, insufficient food and water supplies, and limited access to healthcare and education. The high concentration of displaced people in camps and urban areas often leads to overcrowding, poor sanitation and the spread of infectious diseases.⁸³

International humanitarian organizations, including the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), continue to provide critical support to those affected by natural disasters in Somalia. However, the scale of the needs often outstrips the resources available, leaving significant gaps in aid delivery and protection.⁸⁴

⁸³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Somalia: Fact Sheet." *UNHCR Report*, 2019

⁸⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "UNHCR Global Appeal 2023 Update - Somalia." *UNHCR*, 2023, p. 8

2. CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF REFUGEE DISPLACEMENT WITHIN THE REGION

Refugee displacement within the Horn of Africa is a multifaceted crisis driven by various factors, including internal conflicts, economic challenges, and natural disasters. The region, comprising countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, and Eritrea, has experienced prolonged instability that has led to significant population movements both within and across national borders. This chapter delves into the underlying causes of this displacement and explores the far-reaching consequences for the affected populations and host countries.

One of the primary drivers of refugee displacement in the Horn of Africa is internal conflict. Political instability and constant conflicts in the region push people to seek refuge in the neighbouring countries, where the situation however is not so different. Conflicts and disputes are often exacerbated by the presence of different ethnic and religious groups living in the region. The ethnic and religious tensions in the Horn of Africa are deeply rooted in historical, political, and socio-economic factors. The arbitrary borders drawn by colonial powers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries laid the foundation for many of the ethnic conflicts in the Horn of Africa. The colonial legacy of ethnic segmentation and the creation of hierarchical ethnic systems have exacerbated tensions, making ethnic identity a defining characteristic of political power struggles in the region. These tensions have not only fuelled internal conflicts but have also created complex humanitarian crises characterized by large-scale displacement and human suffering.

Adding to these issues there is also climate change and its consequences. The Horn of Africa experiences some of the most extreme climate variability in the world. Access to clean water is a significant challenge in the Horn of Africa, along with the prolonged drought conditions. This scarcity of water has far-reaching effects, leading to competition over limited resources, which can ignite or exacerbate conflicts. The intersection of climate change and access to primary resources in the Horn of Africa creates a complex web of challenges that worsen existing socio-economic and political issues.

These factors, as previously noted, have had a significant impact on large-scale movements of refugees. These movements have profound social impacts on both the host communities and the refugees themselves. This chapter, therefore, in the second part will deal

with the complex social dynamics that arise from mass displacement of people, examining the challenges and adaptations experienced.

Host communities in the Horn of Africa often face substantial pressures due to the influx of refugees. Despite the challenges, host communities have also developed various strategies to adapt to the presence of refugees. Organized settlements have been established to help refugees become self-supporting through farming and other income-generating activities. Moreover, some host countries have implemented policies to facilitate the integration of refugees into their societies.

But, if on the one hand societies are adapting to the situation, there are still individual aspects to analyse. For refugees, the social impact of displacement is profound and multifaceted. Displacement often results in the loss of traditional support systems, leading to psychological stress and a sense of dislocation. Refugees must navigate new and unfamiliar environments, which can be challenging and overwhelming. The trauma of displacement is compounded by the uncertainty and insecurity that many people face in their host countries.

Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts from host governments, international organizations, and the refugees themselves to create sustainable solutions that benefit both host communities and refugees.

2.1. KEY FACTORS EXACERBATING THE CRISIS

2.1.1. *Political Instability and Conflict*

The Horn of Africa has long been a region plagued by political instability and conflict. These issues are deeply rooted in the region's colonial past, which laid the groundwork for many of its current conflicts. Arbitrary borders drawn by colonial powers disrupted ethnic and clan boundaries, leading to longstanding tensions and disputes. This chapter examines how these factors contribute to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the region, highlighting the historical context, key conflicts, and their socio-political implications.

The colonial history of the Horn of Africa has had a profound impact on the region's political landscape. During the colonial era, European powers established arbitrary borders that often ignored the ethnic and cultural boundaries of local populations. This legacy has left a lasting imprint on the region, resulting in fragmented political structures and ethnic tensions.⁸⁵

The boundaries drawn by colonial powers such as Britain, Italy, and France often placed ethnic groups with longstanding rivalries within the same political entities or split cohesive communities across different countries. These boundaries were introduced without any prior consultation, overriding traditional governance structures, and creating new power dynamics, which have been a source of conflict in the post-colonial era. The colonial powers often did not promote nationhood in the colonies they created; on the contrary, they implemented centralized state structures that many ethnic groups had not previously known and could not adjust to unifying the fragments of societies into a single entity imposed by force.⁸⁶

Upon gaining independence, the Horn of Africa's newly formed states inherited the fragmented political architecture and ethnic tensions. Since independence, the post-colonial

⁸⁵ Degu, Wondem Asres. *The state, the crisis of state institutions and refugee migration in the Horn of Africa: the cases of Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia*. Diss. Thela Thesis, 2002, p. 24

⁸⁶ Degu, Wondem Asres. *The state, the crisis of state institutions and refugee migration in the Horn of Africa: the cases of Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia*. Diss. Thela Thesis, 2002, p. 72

period has seen battles for control between competing interests, many of them divided along ethnic lines. The complete absence of inclusive governance and equitable distribution of resources has resulted in continual unrest, war and rebellion. If the successful independence struggle of Eritrea in 1993 from Ethiopia is anything to go by, it was followed by a brutal border war between 1998 and 2000. This war produced a massive death toll and statelessness, and entrenched a state of no-war-no-peace that still prevails and contributed to further instability and insecurity.⁸⁷ So too did the Ogaden War between Ethiopia and Somalia in 1977-1978, where irredentist claims and colonial legacies redrew a new political map on the Eastern Horn of Africa, leading to large-scale displacement and animosities that endure up to today. The political dynamics of the region are still impacted by the legacy of colonialism. One of the sources of friction in the Horn of Africa is not having closed the cycle left open by the colonial period, with border disputes and issues with ethnicity for many of the countries involved. Additionally, centralizing power and representation to a very small group of people has routinely resulted in excluded marginalized groups, and increased tensions and conflict along ethnic lines.⁸⁸

Ethiopia, which has never been a colonial possession, has always been the prime mover of the region balance of forces in the region. The nation has undergone years of civil and foreign turmoil which had great effects on the nation's political realm. The Ogaden War between Ethiopia and Somalia was a major conflict of the late 1970s that altered the political map. The war started when Somalia under Siad Barre attempted to annex the Somali-inhabited Ogaden region border-side. After an initial successful campaign both sides quickly turned to protracted brutal conflicts until the Ethiopian government of Marxist-Leninist Mengistu Haile Mariam was eventually overthrown in 1991, which in turn allowed the new Somali state to engage in similar internal turbulence. Among other forms of support, this included troops and weaponry, and logistical assistance, which enabled Ethiopia to defeat the Somali forces, and reprise control of the Ogaden region.⁸⁹

The consequences of the war were disastrous for the Ogaden region, with Addis Ababa overseeing a harsh and efficient reconquest that saw the territory turned into a gigantic

⁸⁷ Hepner, Tricia Redeker. "Religion, Repression, and Human Rights in Eritrea and the Diaspora." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2014, p. 164. *JSTOR*

⁸⁸ Degu, Wondem Asres. *The state, the crisis of state institutions and refugee migration in the Horn of Africa: the cases of Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia*. Diss. Thela Thesis, 2002, p. 58

⁸⁹ Nkaisserry, Joseph K. *The Ogaden War: An analysis of its causes and its impact on regional peace on the Horn of Africa*. Carlisle: US Army War College, 1997, p. 13

military camp and the inhabitants savagely repressed.⁹⁰ This period also resulted in demographic makeovers and the transfer of citizens to planned territories and regions, ultimately institutionalizing ethnic and political cleavages.

Then there is the Tigray conflict, which demonstrated more signs of internal division in Ethiopia. This conflict, also known as the Tigray war, is an ongoing armed conflict that began in November 2020 in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia, between Tigray Regional Paramilitary Police and local militia, allied with Oromo Liberation Army on the one hand and the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) with Eritrean Defence Forces. The conflict erupted when Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed ordered a military offensive against TPLF forces in the northern Tigray region, citing attacks on federal military bases by TPLF fighters.⁹¹ The war has caused total devastation, severe humanitarian disasters, and accusations of war crimes and human rights abuses by both sides.⁹² Thousands have lost their lives, and millions more have been driven from their homes, thousands of whom have sought refuge in the neighbouring Sudan.⁹³ The conflict has also drawn in Eritrean forces, making the situation even worse and hampering peace efforts. Following a peace agreement signed in November 2022, the region remains desperately troubled and faces dire humanitarian challenges, with deep-seated ethnic tensions and political disputes likely to keep Ethiopia on precarious footing in the coming months.⁹⁴

This violence has also resulted in other serious human rights abuses, such as summary executions and sexual violence, leading to mass displacement. The military campaign by the

Ethiopian government in the Tigray region has been well documented by Human Rights Watch, which reveals extensive attacks on civilians, looting, and the systematic use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. But successive uprisings have left it marred by widespread human rights abuses that have drawn international condemnation, but little accountability, fueling an unending cycle of violence and displacement.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ International Crisis Group. "Ogaden: Ethiopia's Most Contested Territory." *Ethiopia: Prospects for Peace in Ogaden*, International Crisis Group, 2013, pp. 2-4. *JSTOR*

⁹¹ Gesesew, Hailay, et al. "The impact of war on the health system of the Tigray region in Ethiopia: an assessment." *BMJ Global Health* 6.11 (2021): e007328, p. 1

⁹² Human Rights Watch. "Ethiopia: Tigray Conflict Abuses." 2021, p. 11

⁹³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). "Ethiopia Tigray Emergency." 2021.

⁹⁴ International Crisis Group. *Toward an End to Ethiopia's Federal-Tigray Feud*. International Crisis Group, 2020. *JSTOR*

⁹⁵ Hepner, Tricia Redeker. "Religion, Repression, and Human Rights in Eritrea and the Diaspora." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2014, p. 172

Although ethnically homogenous, Somalia is sharply divided along clan lines. After the fall of dictator Mohamed Siad Barre in 1991, civil war broke out and the Shabaab emerged as a power. Al-Shabaab's insurgency has greatly increased suffering due to violence across the country, leading to untold displacement and humanitarian disaster. The group's dominance over large swaths of southern and central Somalia makes it almost impossible for aid organizations to deliver assistance, as its tactics, including the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), suicide bombings, inhuman targeted attacks to civilians, and its terrifying presence had led to severe loss of civilian lives and disrupted the day-to-day lives and economic activities of the Somali people. The living terror has further impeded the already oppressed work of aid organizations rendering the humanitarian crisis even more dire.⁹⁶

Decades of violence in Eritrea during its struggle to break free of Ethiopia fundamentally altered the country's demographic and religious landscape. It was fought by a myriad of groups, from Muslims to Christians, originally joined in a single cause against Ethiopian dominion, but which eventually succumbed to internal divisions. The Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF) and the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) spearheaded the fight for independence; the divergence of their goals and ideologies was however fairly analogous to the ethnic and religious schisms that outwardly bestrewed the country.⁹⁷ After independence in 1991, Eritrea pursued militaristic and authoritarian internal governance, making the atmosphere in the region even more volatile. The 1998-2000 Eritrea-Ethiopia border war caused serious loss of life and displacement, and established a no-war-no-peace system that lingers to this day, feeding into a pattern of instability and insecurity.⁹⁸

Interstate conflicts have played a crucial role in the humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa. The Ethiopia-Eritrea war, when thousands of Ethiopians and Eritreans were displaced from their homes, is illustrative of how territorial disputes result in huge numbers of people being moved to appease state borders. Tens of thousands died in the fight and hundreds of thousands more were driven out, furthering a stability deficit in the area. Ongoing tensions

⁹⁶ Hepner, Tricia Redeker. "Religion, Repression, and Human Rights in Eritrea and the Diaspora." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2014, p. 181

⁹⁷ Hepner, Tricia Redeker. "Religion, Repression, and Human Rights in Eritrea and the Diaspora." *Journal of Religion in Africa*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2014, p. 183

⁹⁸ Belloni, Milena. "Refugees and citizens: Understanding Eritrean refugees' ambivalence towards homeland politics." *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 60.1-2 (2019): p. 61

between Ethiopia and Sudan over border disputes and resources also threaten to prevent longer-term peace and stability in the region.⁹⁹

The involvement of external actors has also significantly influenced the conflicts in the Horn of Africa, often exacerbating local tensions. International interventions, driven by strategic interests, have sometimes led to unintended consequences. For instance, U.S. counterterrorism measures targeting Al-Shabaab in Somalia have had mixed results. While efforts such as airstrikes and support for local forces have weakened the group temporarily, they have also caused collateral damage, sometimes destabilizing the region further and complicating the humanitarian situation.¹⁰⁰

Moreover, the global geopolitical competition, particularly the interests of powerful nations, has shaped local power dynamics. This external influence makes achieving sustainable peace challenging, as local factions often become proxies in broader strategic contests. The complex interplay of local and international interests continues to perpetuate instability in the region.¹⁰¹

The colonial past of the Horn of Africa has, in brief, led to a highly intricate and highly political fragile region. European arbitrary boundaries and centralized state structures have led to fragmented political entities and rivalries. These historical oppressions as well as power struggles after the colonialism era have contributed enormously to the region's state of affairs today by producing an instability and humanitarian crisis of the highest order. These structural problems can only be tackled through broad and inclusive governance measures, which take into account the historical and ethnic complexities of the region; that is, more than anything else, the only way rediscovered and lasting peace can come to the Horn of Africa.

⁹⁹ idem, International Crisis Group (2013), p. 2-4

¹⁰⁰ Bradbury, Mark, and M. Kleinman. "State-building, Counterterrorism, and Licensing Humanitarianism in Somalia." Medford/Mass: Feinstein International Center, 2010, p. 8

¹⁰¹ Klarevas, Louis J. "Trends: The United States Peace Operation in Somalia." *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 64, no. 4, 2000, pp. 523–40. JSTOR

2.1.2. Ethnic and religious tensions

Some historical background to religious animosities in the Horn of Africa is needed in order to make sense of the present dilemmas. With Islam and Christianity and the main religions, the region has a rich history of religious diversity. Christianity was introduced to the region in the 4th century when the Axumite Empire adopted it as the state religion, creating a deep-rooted Christian tradition that persists in modern-day Eritrea and Ethiopia.¹⁰² Islamic influence arrived in the form of Arab traders and settlers, beginning in the 7th century; within a few decades it was received peacefully in the coastal towns of what is now Somalia and Djibouti and spread quickly to dominate the region.¹⁰³ The long history of religious coexistence, punctuated by periods of conflict and cooperation, is therefore an inherent part of the cultural and social landscape of the Horn.¹⁰⁴

Before colonization, different kingdoms and sultanates managed the delicate balance of power between Christian and Muslim communities. But starting in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, colonialism shattered that normality. Colonial powers also encouraged specific religious groups over others to bestow their rule, deepening sectarian distrusts which have always existed.¹⁰⁵ For instance, Italian colonial rule in Eritrea and parts of Somalia promoted Catholicism and marginalized Islamic practices, while British and French colonial administrations in other parts of the region adopted different policies, sometimes favoring Muslim communities to counterbalance local Christian influences.¹⁰⁶

The end of colonial rule did not bring an end to religious tensions. Instead, these tensions were further inflamed by political and economic crises, competition for resources, and the intervention of external powers during the Cold War.¹⁰⁷ Today, the Horn of Africa remains a region where religious identity plays a critical role in shaping political and social

¹⁰² Kirwan, Laurence Patrick. "The Christian Topography and the Kingdom of Axum." *Geographical Journal*, vol. 138, no. 2, 1972, pp. 166-177

¹⁰³ Bagheri, Ensieh, and Maniraj Sukdaven. "Spreading of Islam without Any Violence in Central, East and West Africa as a Case Study." *HTS Theological Studies*, vol. 74, no. 3, 2018, pp. 1-4

¹⁰⁴ Ahmed, Ali. "Religious Tensions in the Horn of Africa: A Historical Perspective." *African Historical Review*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2021, pp. 105-106

¹⁰⁵ Ahmed, Ali. "Religious Tensions in the Horn of Africa: A Historical Perspective." *African Historical Review*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2021, pp. 110-112

¹⁰⁶ Ahmed, Ali. "Religious Tensions in the Horn of Africa: A Historical Perspective." *African Historical Review*, vol. 40, no. 1, 2021, p. 115

¹⁰⁷ *ibidem*, Ali (2021), pp.110-120

dynamics. The historical interplay of Christianity and Islam, compounded by the legacy of colonial rule and ongoing geopolitical interests, continues to influence the region's complex and often volatile religious landscape. Djibouti, while relatively stable compared to its neighbors, faces its own unique challenges in balancing secular governance with the demands of a predominantly Muslim population. The country's constitution establishes Islam as the state religion, yet it also mandates the government to respect all faiths and guarantees equality before the law, regardless of religious affiliation. This dual commitment to secularism and Islam creates a delicate balance that the Djiboutian government must navigate to maintain social harmony. Djibouti is a melting pot of cultures and religions due to its strategic location at the crossroads of Africa and the Middle East throughout history. Most of its inhabitants practice Sunni Islam, which dominates both its society and culture. Yet the government has taken a strongly secular approach to governance, emphasizing that religion should not interfere with state affairs as a way to build national unity and avoid the sectarian conflicts that have raged in its neighbors. Despite these efforts, the tension between secular policies and religious practices occasionally surfaces. Djiboutian government's approach to maintaining secularism involves careful management of religious institutions and frequent engagement with community leaders to ensure that religious practices align with national laws and policies. This proactive stance is crucial in a country where religious identity is a significant part of daily life and cultural expression.¹⁰⁸

Complicating the religious make-up of the population, Djibouti is also a host to refugees coming from the neighboring countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia, and even Yemen. They bring with them various religious customs and diverse religious practices; in doing so, they carry with them the potential for inter-religious tension. This is something that the government must also manage in addition to its own domestic religious considerations.¹⁰⁹ Eritrea is marked by its ethnic and religious diversity, with significant Christian and Muslim populations, predominantly Orthodox and Sunni. The country's colonial history under Italian and British rule, followed by its struggle for independence from Ethiopia, has deeply influenced its religious and political landscape. Despite the Eritrean Constitution, ratified in 1997, which guarantees freedom of religion and explicitly states:

¹⁰⁸ *Constitution of the Republic of Djibouti*. Article 1. 1992. Government of Djibouti.

¹⁰⁹ Green, Shannon N., and Julie N. Snyder. "Stuck in Limbo: Refugees, Migrants, and the Food Insecure in Djibouti." *Gates Open Res* 3.265 (2019): 265, p. 12

"Every person shall have the freedom of thought, conscience and belief",

the government has yet to implement this constitution effectively.¹¹⁰ Instead, it recognizes only four religious groups: the Eritrean Orthodox Church, Sunni Islam, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Eritrea.¹¹¹ All other religious groups face stringent registration requirements and bureaucratic obstacles.¹¹²

The Eritrean government, under the leadership of President Isaias Afwerki, has implemented repressive measures under the pretext of maintaining national unity and secularism.¹¹³ This approach, however, has often led to severe human rights abuses against those perceived as threats to state control. Such violations include enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, torture and detention. The Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostal Christians have been subjected to especially harsh restrictions on their religious practices under the government's policies.¹¹⁴ They have been stripped of their citizenship rights, barred from government employment, and denied access to government services due to their refusal to participate in national military service, which conflicts with their religious beliefs. Pentecostal Christians, seen as proponents of foreign-influenced religious movements, have also faced harsh crackdowns. Their gatherings are often raided, and members are detained without due process.¹¹⁵ This repression contributes to a climate of fear and mistrust, undermining social cohesion and exacerbating ethnic and religious tensions.¹¹⁶ The government's repressive policies have also led to significant emigration, with many Eritreans fleeing to avoid persecution, contributing to the regional refugee crisis.¹¹⁷ International human rights organizations and foreign governments have condemned Eritrea's religious repression. Numerous reports by the United Nations, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch detail widespread violations of human rights and recommend immediate

¹¹⁰ *The Constitution of Eritrea*. Article 19. Government of Eritrea, 1997.

¹¹¹ United Nations Human Rights Council. *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Eritrea*. 2022, p. 7

¹¹² Office of International Religious Freedom. "2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Eritrea." *U.S. Department of State*, 2022, p. 1

¹¹³ Human Rights Watch. *World Report 2022: Eritrea*. 2022, p. 21

¹¹⁴ Office of International Religious Freedom. "2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Eritrea." *U.S. Department of State*, 2022, p. 6

¹¹⁵ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. *Annual Report on Religious Freedom: Eritrea*. 2023, p. 23

¹¹⁶ Human Rights Watch. *World Report 2022: Eritrea*. 2022, p. 10

¹¹⁷ Kibreab, Gaim. *The Eritrean National Service: Servitude for 'the Common Good' and the Youth Exodus*. James Currey, 2017, p. 182

remedies. The Eritrean government is so notorious for their grave violations of religious freedom that they have earned "Countries of Particular Concern" status by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF).¹¹⁸

Ethiopia's cultural division has created a complex reality between ethnicity and religion. A federal system of government designed to defuse ethnic discontents, has since been responsible for deepening ethnic fault lines and religious divides. It has often opened the door to violent religious conflicts, particularly between the dominant Christians and a minority of Muslims as the scramble for political power and resources dominating the politics of the country.¹¹⁹

The ethnic landscape of the country has been a huge factor of conflict. Ethiopia is a diversified nation with more than 80 ethnic groups, the majority of whom are Oromo, Amhara, Somali and Tigray, with 34.5%, 26.9%, 6.2% and 6.1% respectively. These groups have been historically marginalized and there is fierce competition for resources, creating interpersonal tensions. Ethiopia's Tigray conflict that broke out in November 2020 shows how such bickering can spiral out of control into large-scale violence.¹²⁰ Following the fall of the Derg regime in 1991, a federal system of governance was introduced by the new transitional government in Ethiopia which was on ethno-linguistic lines. This transition charter recognized Eritrea secession and gave nationalities the right to self-administration, including the right to secede. The 1994 constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) pinpointed ethnicity as the central problem of Ethiopian politics and made ethnic federalism stronger by granting all regional states the right to self-administration and the right to secede.¹²¹

As stated in the article 39 (2) of the 1994 EPRDF Constitution,

*"Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture; and to preserve its history".*¹²²

¹¹⁸ United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. *Annual Report on Religious Freedom: Eritrea*. 2023, p. 21

¹¹⁹ Degu, Wondem Asres. *The state, the crisis of state institutions and refugee migration in the Horn of Africa: the cases of Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia*. Diss. Thela Thesis, 2002, p. 172-175

¹²⁰ Temesgen, Siraw Megibaru. "Weaknesses of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 4.11 (2015), p. 49

¹²¹ Temesgen, Siraw Megibaru. "Weaknesses of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 4.11 (2015), p. 50

¹²² Ethiopia. "Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia." 1994, Article 39.2.

Despite its Constitution, the federal structure of the state has contributed to ethnic tensions, often favouring dominant ethnic groups in regional administrations, while marginalizing minorities. This has led to significant disputes over resources and political power. The competition over resources and political representation, which are especially contentious issues in multi-ethnic parts of China, has been especially fierce. The incumbent administration, which is dominated by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), has frequently been accused of leveraging ethnicity to cling to power using a "divide-and-rule" style that has significantly divided the country along social fault lines.¹²³

There have been violent conflicts along regional borders, with for example ongoing disputes over the boundaries between the Somali and Oromia regions. The system has also led to mass movements, with intermeshed ethnic groups flushed out from the lands earmarked for them and often discriminated against. The ruling party has further inflamed ethnic confrontations by instrumentalizing social identities to isolate political opponents, potentially exacerbating political volatility even further.

Comprehensive institutional reforms and inclusive governance strategies are needed in Ethiopia to solve these problems, and that requires strengthening political institutions that protect minority rights, the rule of law and a sense of common citizenship, promote cooperation and coexistence among different ethnic groups and mitigate ethnic conflicts. Consociational democracy can reduce ethnic antagonism and foster trust among different groups.¹²⁴

Somalia is a more complicated example considering the deep intertwining of ethnic and religious divisions in the country, with this factor heavily influencing the socio-political reality. These divisions have been further destabilized by the ascendant Islamist militant group Al-Shabaab, adversely affecting Somalian stability and security. Clan affiliation is central to the functioning of social and political life in Somalia. Clan affiliations have served as both means of support and breeding grounds for enmity in a society laid out, historically, according to an intricate clan system. Al-Shabaab capitalizing on these clan divisions morphed into a recruitment and consolidated a power machine of sorts. The group plays on

¹²³ Temesgen, Siraw Megibaru. "Weaknesses of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia." *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention* 4.11 (2015), p. 51

¹²⁴ Jinadu, L.A. "Explaining and Managing Ethnic Conflict in Africa: Towards A Cultural Theory of Democracy." *Claude Ake Memorial Papers* No. 1, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, Nordic Africa Institute, 2007, p. 22

real socio-economic inequalities and grudges between clans, acting as the savior of some and a common enemy towards others, to consolidate and leverage power.¹²⁵

The way in which Al-Shabaab strictly interprets the law of Sharia and its subsequent impositions, has further increased religious tensions in Somalia. The areas governed by the Islamist group are marked by a literal enactment of the Islamist principles, creating therefore an alienating environment for religious minorities. The ideology of Al-Shabaab does not accept diversity of religion, which is one of the reasons behind persecution of Christians and the non-Muslim communities in general. This repression is a piece of a larger strategy to alter the religious terrain in accordance to promote radical vision. The persecution of religious minorities did not just cause immense human suffering but also ripped apart the social fabric, where until recently various communities lived together and now they are scarred and bogged down.¹²⁶

Al-Shabaab's socio-political destabilization does not just stop at religious persecution. The group's activities have caused massive displacement of the population which in turn exacerbates the already precarious humanitarian situation in Somalia. In Somalia, mass displacement by violence has produced a multiplication of the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), who face very uncertain living conditions as their access to basic services is limited. As documented by the UNHCR, Somalia has one of the highest numbers of IDPs in the world, indicating severity of the crisis.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Hansen, Stig Jarle. *Al-Shabaab in Somalia: The History and Ideology of a Militant Islamist Group*. Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 98-101.

¹²⁶ Marchal, Roland. "A Tentative Assessment of the Somali Harakat Al-Shabaab." *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2009, pp. 392-394

¹²⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Somalia Situation*. UNHCR, 2020, p. 4

2.1.3. *Climate Change and Access to Primary Resources*

Climate change is one of the biggest threats faced by populations in vulnerable regions such as the Horn of Africa, where climate pressures are making population's access to primary resources more difficult, resulting in migration, and food insecurity. Indeed, this is not only an environmental issue, but it also has socio-economic and political implications on millions of lives. A region affected by extreme arid and semi-arid conditions, the Horn of Africa is particularly susceptible to the impacts of climate change, such as more frequent droughts, erratic rainfall patterns and soaring temperatures. These climatic disasters have negative consequences on agricultural activity, reducing water availability and causing therefore the degradation of the soil, which ultimately makes it more and more difficult for communities to cope with life. This has led to a near-capillary distribution of food insecurity wherein most families are either unable to produce or purchase enough food. Moreover, such matters are complicated further by high rates of population growth in the region and political instability and long-standing conflicts which place current low resources under menace and limelight efforts at effective climate adaptation. According to the World Bank, droughts and floods that have occurred in recent years will be worsened by climate change with direct and indirect implications on agricultural productivity and aggregate food security across the region. These shifts, which are likely to erode the most of development benefits by decades, further will deepen poverty landscape in the country.¹²⁸ The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) goes on by saying water scarcity will account for two-thirds of the world's population by 2025 due to the competition between sectors and communities required of water, due to the impacts of climate change. According to UNEP, droughts are more frequent and more severe and, if coincident with poor water management, are presenting serious threats to water resources in vulnerable areas such as those in the Horn of Africa. It will not only affect agriculture and food security but will also exacerbate water resources conflicts, creating even further challenges for already displaced populations and host communities.¹²⁹ Given the limited means in a country that has already more than enough to deal with, these environmental stresses only have added to the burdens of refugees and

¹²⁸ The World Bank. *Climate Change and Food Security*. 2021

¹²⁹ Global Water Shortages Are Looming. Here Is What Can Be Done About Them." *UNEP*, 21 Mar. 2024

migrants in Djibouti. Water and arable land being in more and more scarce supply only exacerbates competition amongst local and refugee populations and the insecurity that ensues only is resulting in more displacement. The tiny nation is a global hub for migrants and refugees from some of the planet's most climate-vulnerable regions, primarily Somalia. Resources are limited and the refugee inflow only aggravates the situation.¹³⁰ Most of Djibouti's thousands of refugees are hosted in camps which are unequipped to bear the brunt of the worsening environmental crisis. More often than not these camps lack basic necessities like water, toilet and food supplies which go from bad to worse during bad climate conditions. The fight for the few livelihoods and social services that are left to go around can cause tensions between refugees and residents and, in some cases, outright disputes over access to everyday essentials. The degradation of the environment in Djibouti has also disrupted traditional livelihoods. For some refugees, especially those with agrarian and pastoralist backgrounds, earning a living in a totally different context from their home country, where traditional farming and herding is not possible, is difficult to imagine. This not only affects their food security, but their ability to soberly integrate and eventually self-rely in a host country.¹³¹

Somali refugees being displaced are another great example of how closely linked climate change is to migration. The long-standing experiences of the Somali refugees indicate the importance of environmental factors, specifically drought, in forcing the refugees out of their homeland. The pervasiveness of conflict overlaid with environmental degradation has resulted in a long-term refugee situation, leading many Somalis to flee to neighbouring countries.¹³² A report by the Norwegian Refugee Council says that climate change-fuelled drought has made Somalis more vulnerable to displacement, particularly to those rural Somalis whose livelihood depend on the rain. Droughts have obliterated the livestock and agriculture that provide sustenance and income, forcing the communities into degrading migrations.¹³³ As water sources become increasingly scarce and arable land is more and more diminishing, communities have no other options than moving to areas where there is still access to primary resources.

¹³⁰ Green, Shannon N., and Julie N. Snyder. "Stuck in Limbo: Refugees, Migrants, and the Food Insecure in Djibouti." *Gates Open Res* 3.265 (2019), p. 2

¹³¹ Green, Shannon N., and Julie N. Snyder. "Stuck in Limbo: Refugees, Migrants, and the Food Insecure in Djibouti." *Gates Open Res* 3.265 (2019), p. 17

¹³² Hammond, Laura. "Somali refugee displacements in the near region: Analysis and Recommendations." *Paper for the UNHCR Global Initiative on Somali Refugees* (2014), p. 1-22

¹³³ Bafo, Sagal. "In Somalia, the Climate Crisis Is Happening Now." *NRC*, 17 Nov. 2022.

In addition, overexploiting finite resources in locations where a number of refugees are hosted can result in additional environmental degradation, establishing a reinforcing chain of resource scarcity and escalating exposure to climate change. This in turn is likely to make more people push their increment labour to save themselves from the deteriorating situations at their locations and this will make the environment to stress further that some can end up migrating. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) stresses that climate-induced displacement is not a transient problem, but rather a protracted crisis that demands holistic, sustainable solutions. A climate response that recognizes the mutual impact of host environment on the displaced and displacement itself by investing in nature based solutions, building resilient infrastructure and adaptive livelihoods are among the interventions that will be considered as potential solutions to a climate smart movement of refugees and host communities.¹³⁴

The IGAD Regional Migration Policy Framework contains comprehensive strategies on migration management within the climate change dimension. In this framework of climate-induced migration, it underscores the importance of regional cooperation and natural resource management, in a sustainable manner, as a long-term solution needed to address the root causes of the problem. The framework is intended to help forge policies that ease the impacts on disadvantaged populations, especially in areas like the Horn of Africa where there is already widespread environmental stress attributable to poverty and climate change.¹³⁵ Furthermore, the African Union's Agenda 2063 stresses the importance of addressing an issue like climate change because of the need for peace and sustainable development in Africa. This ambitious agenda emphasizes the need for a holistic approach combining environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainability. Agenda 2063 is built on the foundation of these interconnected goals, to ensure a resilient and sustainable future for all nations on the African continent.¹³⁶ Finally, the UNHCR's Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy emphasizes the importance of providing sustainable energy solutions to both refugee and host communities. This program aims at reducing the environmental impact of energy use and improve resilience against climate change. By ensuring access to clean and reliable energy

¹³⁴ International Organization for Migration. *Migration, Environment and Climate Change: Assessing the Evidence*. 2019, p. 448

¹³⁵ IGAD. "Regional Migration Policy Framework". IGAD Council of Ministers. 2012

¹³⁶ African Union. *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*. 2015.

sources, the strategy not only addresses immediate needs but also contributes to long-term sustainability and stability in displacement settings.¹³⁷

2.2. IMPACT OF REFUGEE DISPLACEMENT

2.2.1. Social Impact on Host Communities and Refugees

Multiple factors have driven millions to abandon their homes in search of safety and opportunity in neighbouring nations. The consequence of displacement in the Horn of Africa is the intricate relationship between refugees and the host community. In this area, the displacement crisis has shaped the lives of the displaced populations as well as the host communities that absorb them. Given the fluidity of the refugee dynamics in the Horn of Africa, so too must we also make an overall assessment on the social impacts upon both refugees and host populations. A social understanding of the repercussions of these movements on their context are key in order to provide adequate societal arrangements that better support both refugees and host communities alike.

One of the most critical aspects of the displacement impact is how refugees are integrated socially into their host communities. Large refugee populations impose additional demands on local resources, the scarcity of which may lead to competitive claims for services and jobs and on occasion leading to tensions between refugee and host communities. Migration and refugee arrivals indeed, result in large social and cultural changes in host communities, changes which can be either positive or negative. On the one hand, refugees can be seen to bring cultural exchange and diversity that in turn enrich the other society. However, cultural differences can also present social friction or even social conflict. The host community has its limits and may experience tension living in close contact with new refugees. This is especially the case in areas such as the Horn, in which there is limited supply of resources, where the refugees and the local population are deprived of primary

¹³⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy 2019-2025*. UNHCR, 2019

services.¹³⁸ Despite the obstacles that may be encountered, refugees frequently build strong social support networks among themselves that enable them to integrate within their new surroundings.¹³⁹

A remarkable example to cite comes from Ethiopia. The influx of people seeking refuge in Addis Abeba has posed both challenges and opportunities to the local economy. Many refugees participate in the informal economy and small businesses that are vital to the urban economy landscape.¹⁴⁰ This has led to new market dynamics, with refugees contributing to sectors such as retail, service provision, and skilled trades, and has deepened levels of economic interdependence between refugee populations and local communities. But a vibrant economic centre in the local market has indeed sprouted from successful businesses of Somali refugees in the Bole Mikael area. Somali refugees have built sustainable businesses providing goods and services not only to their own community but also for the wider Ethiopian population.¹⁴¹ Another example comes from the Gofa Mebrat Hayil district, in which Eritrean refugees have demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability. The robust markets and crowded streets are examples of the economic contributions of Eritrean refugees in the neighbourhood. Small-scale businesses by Eritreans range from grocery shops and cafés to repair shops. They are family-owned businesses which depend on social networks to support operations and widen their customer base.¹⁴² But the existence of these businesses has facilitated economic interdependence between Eritrean refugees and the host community, resulting in a mutually beneficial relationship that serves the broader community.

But the process of integrating is riddled with challenges. Despite their significant contribution to the local environment, refugees face significant barriers to full economic inclusion. Work permits and business licenses are often limited by legal restrictions that make it very difficult for them to participate in the formal economy. However, this precarity holds back more than just their potential to earn; it also makes them vulnerable to exploitation and

¹³⁸ Betts, Alexander, et al. *Refugee Economies: Forced Displacement and Development*. Oxford University Press, 2017, p. 112

¹³⁹ Salas-Ruiz, Adela, et al. "A novel methodology for supporting integration between refugees and host communities: NAUTIA (need assessment under a technological interdisciplinary approach)." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34.4 (2021): p. 4503

¹⁴⁰ Brown, A., Mackie, P., Dickenson, K., & Gebre-Egziabher, T. (2018). *Urban refugee economies: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*. IIED, London, p. 8

¹⁴¹ Brown, A., Mackie, P., Dickenson, K., & Gebre-Egziabher, T. (2018). *Urban refugee economies: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*. IIED, London, p. 28

¹⁴² Brown, A., Mackie, P., Dickenson, K., & Gebre-Egziabher, T. (2018). *Urban refugee economies: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*. IIED, London, p. 34

workplace discrimination.¹⁴³ This is especially a problem for female refugees who are expected to not only make an income wherever they are but also handle care for children, and more. Their invisibility further compounds their vulnerability, rendering them susceptible to precarious working situations and economic instability.¹⁴⁴ Despite the marked income disparity and other legal and social barriers, the refugee economies of Addis Abeba form an important part of the city's economic character, making substantial contributions to livelihoods and economic well-being.¹⁴⁵

The Ethiopian case, therefore, is a positive example of integration among different cultures in the same economic environment. Integration and inclusion of refugees with host communities can contribute not only to the economic sector, but it can also lead to the creation of social and cultural exchanges. The cultural practices, languages and traditions of refugees contribute to the social fabric of the host community. In return, this will contribute to an improved understanding of each other culture and ultimately a more unified society with a greater cultural diversity.¹⁴⁶ Despite the potential benefits, a full social integration does not always happen in the host country. The degree of integration has been the greatest barrier to successful integration, as refugees commonly experiences racism, xenophobic and exclusion from all social life. In work, housing, and public services, discrimination can deepen already-considerable levels of isolation and economic separation. Tensions may arise especially when host communities perceive refugees as competitors for the scarce resources. This can happen for example when it comes to basic services in a society which is already to the extreme.

An influx of large number of refugees can affect significantly the capacity of the healthcare services in host communities. Health systems in many parts of the Horn of Africa are already overburdened and under-resourced. The entry of refugees to these crisis-burdened nations only adds on to the problem, resulting in packed facilities, medical supply shortages, overworked health professionals. Besides, the growing pressure on healthcare services will

¹⁴³ Brown, A., Mackie, P., Dickenson, K., & Gebre-Egziabher, T. (2018). *Urban refugee economies: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*. IIED, London, p. 3

¹⁴⁴ Brown, A., Mackie, P., Dickenson, K., & Gebre-Egziabher, T. (2018). *Urban refugee economies: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*. IIED, London, p. 32

¹⁴⁵ Betts A, Fryszer L, Omata N, Sterck O. *Refugee Economies in Addis Ababa: Towards Sustainable Opportunities for Urban Communities*. Refugee Economies, 2019, p. 10

¹⁴⁶ Salas-Ruiz, Adela, et al. "A novel methodology for supporting integration between refugees and host communities: NAUTIA (need assessment under a technological interdisciplinary approach)." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 34.4 (2021), p. 4503

affect the quality of healthcare not only for refugees but also for the host population. The result is that both refugees and host community members have to face long waiting times and limited access to specialized medical care.¹⁴⁷ Adding to an already declining health system there is also significant pressure on the availability of clean water. In a large number of areas hosting refugees, it is not easy to have access to pure drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities. These problems are becoming worse due to the refugees which in result causes water scarcity and water wrangles. Outbreaks of waterborne diseases are rampant due to the shortage of clean drinking water, thereby threatening the health of the entire population in the country, consequently creating a vicious circle.¹⁴⁸ The influx of refugees has also majorly affected the educational front. Education quality is also lacking in refugee-hosting areas, as schools in similar regions often operate in severe over-crowding situations. The ratios student-to-teacher per teacher are significantly higher than nationally acceptable standards. Many schools are unable to provide quality education due to the absence of educational resources, textbooks and teaching materials. Moreover, language challenges and educational prerequisites can make the school transition quite tough for refugee children. Yet despite these barriers there are efforts afoot to improve educational access for refugees.¹⁴⁹

Moreover, large refugee populations in the Horn of Africa can represent significant security challenges for host states. While refugees often bring valuable skills and cultural diversity, their influx can also lead to increased crime rates and political instability. Largest refugee populations frequently give rise to escalated crime rates and other security issues in host countries. The arrival of refugees often puts additional pressure on already stretched law enforcement and security agencies. At times this can result in refugees engaging in non-violent petty crimes such as thefts and burglaries as well due to their helpless and dire economic conditions. This is not to say that refugees are never victims of crime and often the exploitation of refugees results in increased crime rates with xenophobic attitudes and even an element of misinformation creating the perception that crime rates are in fact rising.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Tiruneh, Bewket Tadasse, Gayle McLelland, and Virginia Plummer. "National healthcare system development of Ethiopia: a systematic narrative review." *Hospital Topics* 98.2 (2020): pp. 37-44

¹⁴⁸ Bechmann, Ingrid. "Providing Water, Food and Shelter for People Displaced on the Horn of Africa." *UNHCR*, 18 Oct. 2022

¹⁴⁹ UNHCR. *Education Report 2021: 'Staying the Course' - The Challenges Facing Refugee Education*. UNHCR, 2021, p. 31

¹⁵⁰ Møller, Bjørn. "The Greater Horn of Africa: Geopolitical Aspects of the 'Refugee Crisis'." *Refugees and Forced Migration in the Horn and Eastern Africa: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities*, edited by Johannes Dragsbaek Schmidt, Leah Kimathi, and Michael Omondi Owiso, Springer, 2019, pp. 33-62

The presence of refugees can also exacerbate political instability and conflict in host communities. Regions with preexisting ethnic, political, or social tensions can see the tensions intensify through the influx of refugees. In some parts of Somalia, for example, increased competition for primary resources has exacerbated pre-existing conflicts and tensions, contributing to escalated levels of violence and insecurity. The conflict and insecurity in Somalia have caused thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees to seek safety in the neighbouring countries and in urban centres in Somalia. These displaced populations have exacerbated and intensified clan feuds and resource competition.

Scenes from refugee camps and settlements have also become fertile ground for recruitment into the ranks of militant groups like Al-Shabaab which use the existing vulnerabilities due to displacement to attract new members. It has further destabilised the region, triggering security threats not just to Somalia but to its neighbours as well.¹⁵¹

All these challenges need to be dealt with by policymakers and humanitarian actors to ensure that the economic opportunity of refugees is not curtailed and that they can easily be integrated into the host community. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts from international organizations, host governments, and local communities to implement inclusive policies and foster sustainable development. Through overcoming some of the legal and social obstacles that impede the economic participation of refugees, governments can cultivate an environment that enables refugee economies to flourish and prosper over the longer term.¹⁵²

2.2.2. Psychological effects on refugees

The persistent condition of instability in the region has led to widespread displacement, forcing millions to flee their homes to seek safety. The psychological effects that this has on refugees is profound, with many experiencing severe mental health issues as a result of their traumatic experiences.

¹⁵¹ UNHCR. "Somalia Refugee Crisis Explained." *UNHCR USA*, 2023, pp. 1-3

¹⁵² Brown, A., Mackie, P., Dickenson, K., & Gebre-Egziabher, T. (2018). *Urban refugee economies: Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*. IIED, London, p. 19

Trauma, in the form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), is one of the most serious psychological consequences of displacement. Refugees from the Horn of Africa often experience or witness extreme violence, such as armed conflict, torture, and sexual violence; all of which are severe mental health stressors. An alarming example comes from Somali refugees, the prevalence of whom experiences this mental disorder. Many of them have escaped from protracted conflicts and have experienced different traumatic situations.¹⁵³ Somali refugees experience high levels of chronic PTSD from being exposed to interim measures of violence, according to a report by the World Health Organization (WHO). Years of war have made Somalia one of the most dangerous places in the world with frequent violence. Prior to their displacement, Somali refugees often witnessed or experienced multiple traumatic events, including bombings, shootings, and assaults. Further, the loss of family, lost friends, and destroyed communities makes this class even more psychologically vulnerable.¹⁵⁴ The psychological impact of PTSD impose a severe burden that deny Somali refugees the strength and vigour of thought to be part of host communities and make a new start. The continual paranoia and anxiety can make simple daily activities like being employed, going to school, or forming connections difficult. This lack of integration renders refugees more excluded, reinforces mental health problems and entrenches the mental illness-social marginality nexus.¹⁵⁵

Depression and anxiety are other widespread mental illnesses among refugees in the region. These conditions can be worsened by the stress of displacement and the uncertainty of their future. The living conditions among host countries are often poor with lack of access to basic services to sustain both physical and mental health needs of refugees, leading to social isolation as well as other barriers that causes the onset and chronicity of anxiety and depression among global humanitarian crises.¹⁵⁶ High rates of clinical depression and anxiety are reported in people hosted in Ethiopian camps in Gambella and Somali regions, for instance. The report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) sheds light on the fact that not only are these mental health issues quite common in the camps, but there are

¹⁵³ Blackmore, Rebecca, et al. "The prevalence of mental illness in refugees and asylum seekers: A systematic review and meta-analysis." *PLoS Medicine*, vol. 17, no. 9, 2020

¹⁵⁴ World Health Organization (WHO). *Mental Health and Forced Displacement*, WHO, 2021

¹⁵⁵ Ellis, B. Heidi, et al. "Mental health of Somali adolescent refugees: the role of trauma, stress, and perceived discrimination." *Journal of consulting and clinical psychology* 76.2 (2008): p. 184

¹⁵⁶ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2018*. UNHCR, 2019, p. 45

insufficient mental health services and mental health care networks as well. The mental health of refugees is further compromised because they often live in overcrowded conditions with poor access to clean water, sanitation, and healthcare.¹⁵⁷ The much-experienced depression and anxiety results from the camp daily stress, which includes food and economic insecurities, scarce or non-existing employment opportunities, and the absence of educational facilities. Since the refugee number is likely to remain high, for an extended period of time, feelings of hopelessness, and helplessness, too, are not uncommon.¹⁵⁸

Displacement has severe mental health implications for children and adolescents, who are extremely vulnerable. Significant exposure to trauma early in life can lead to lingering detrimental effects in their mental health and wellbeing. UNICEF says refugees in the Horn of Africa have symptoms of trauma including bed-wetting, clingy behaviour and problems with concentration. Trauma effects in children can range from mild to severe and can have a major impact on how they grow. Namely, bedwetting is one common symptom of high levels of stress and insecurity. Attachment needs and an inability to focus are also symptoms of the trauma, highlighting their predisposition to psychological issues.¹⁵⁹ These symptoms can lead to problems with the child's development, resulting in poor performance in school and difficulties in socializing with others. This trauma from the journey is a heavy burden to bear and untreated, it will lead to long term mental health disorders. Moreover, the lack of schooling disruption on adolescents also poses specific psychological strains to adolescents. Their schooling is interrupted thus leading to lack of or no education at all, and limited future opportunities result in a feeling of hopelessness and despair.¹⁶⁰ For the refugees who were teenagers, they often were assigned greater tasks when in a new environment, such as taking care of the younger kids or staying behind while both parents would work. This increased the stress, and many would suffer from depression and anxiety as well. A number of studies have shown that adolescent refugees from Eritrea and Somalia are more likely to develop mental health disorders than their settled peers. This aspect of displacement, in conjunction with loss of family support structures (extended family being a key apparatus in child protection) and

¹⁵⁷ International Organization for Migration (IOM). *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Humanitarian Crises*. IOM, 2018, p. 32

¹⁵⁸ International Organization for Migration (IOM). *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Humanitarian Crises*. IOM, 2018, p. 34

¹⁵⁹ Taylor, Zoe, and Josiah Kaplan. *Mental Health in Displaced Child and Youth Populations: A Developmental and Family Systems Lens*. UNICEF, 2023, p. 10

¹⁶⁰ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Refugee Children in the Horn of Africa*. UNICEF, 2020, p. 26

the trauma of their experiences places displaced children at heightened risk of being trafficked.¹⁶¹

Despite all the significant psychological challenges, many refugees often tend to be resilient. Social support networks, including family and community connections, play a crucial role in mitigating the psychological impact of displacement. It is necessary that child refugees get community-based interventions and psychosocial support programs to help them process and deal with their experiences. For example, Somali refugees find ways to return to their social connections and their cultural roots as a way of managing stress and trauma. This solidarity, in turn, brings the sense of belonging that the immigrants carry with them and maintains some way of continuity amidst their new reality. Cultural practices such as communal gatherings and traditional ceremonies provide emotional support as well as aid in the processing of their journeys among those who have experienced similar tragedies.¹⁶² Access to mental health services and psychosocial support is essential in improving the psychological well-being of refugees. Among many other offerings, thousands of people gain access to counseling programs, therapies, and community resources that help them to process their trauma and cultivate resilience. Services like these are especially critical in refugee camps where the stress of displacement and poor living conditions have been shown to worsen mental health problems. For example, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) runs programs in refugee camps, such as the Dadaab and Kakuma camps in Kenya where operations have been done specifically tailored to reach children and young people with mental health and psychosocial support. Such programs involved provision of psychosocial support by way of counselling, group therapy and recreational programs which would help children and adolescents process their trauma and build resilience.¹⁶³

Another agency improving this aspect, in the Gambella region of Ethiopia, is the International Organization for Migration, which also facilitates psychosocial support programs providing art therapy, sports activities and peer support groups. The programs help refugee children and families to express feelings, make friends, and learn how to cope with

¹⁶¹ United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Refugee Children in the Horn of Africa*. UNICEF, 2020, p. 27

¹⁶² Pieloch, Kerrie A., Mary Beth McCullough, and Amy K. Marks. "Resilience of children with refugee statuses: A research review." *Canadian Psychology/psychologie canadienne* 57.4 (2016): pp. 330-339

¹⁶³ Danish Refugee Council (DRC). *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Refugees in the Horn of Africa*. DRC, 2018, pp. 43-44

their emotions. According to the IOM, people who have been through these programs demonstrate substantial gains in their mental health and life satisfaction.¹⁶⁴

The psychological effects of displacement on refugees in the Horn of Africa are profound and multifaceted, encompassing trauma, PTSD, depression, anxiety, and significant impacts on children and adolescents. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that includes access to mental health services, strengthening social support networks, and implementing community-based interventions. Continued research and targeted interventions are essential to mitigate the psychological impact of displacement and support the mental health and well-being of refugees in this region.

¹⁶⁴ International Organization for Migration (IOM). *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Humanitarian Crises*. IOM, 2018, p. 36

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

3.1. REFUGEE PROTECTION UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

Protection of refugees in international law is the legal reflection of the basic morals of human rights and humanitarianism. Conventions help guarantee this international protection and to provide a safe haven for those forcibly displaced by reasons of persecution, conflict, generalised violence or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order.

There is no single, clear, legal definition of a refugee, and therefore, all those who move across borders in search of security should be considered people in need of protection, or seeking asylum, as humanitarian law defines them. Refugee protection is essentially a matter of human rights law, namely that every individual, irrespective of status, is entitled to basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. These principles are reflected in countless international treaties and declarations, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which at Article 2 states:

“Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.”¹⁶⁵

While the right to seek asylum is enshrined, its implementation and enforcement differ greatly across states, embodying the contradictory willingness of state sovereignty and international law obligations.

¹⁶⁵ Article 2. Universal Declaration of Human Rights." United Nations, General Assembly, 1948.

Refugee crises in different parts of the globe have given birth to the well-developed International System for the Protection of Refugees. The framework is intended to ensure that refugees are provided with adequate protection and assistance, including access to basic services, legal representation and durable solutions such as resettlement or integration. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the lead UN agency responsible for coordinating international action to protect refugees, vigorously defending their rights as well as providing life-saving support.¹⁶⁶

Despite significant progress, challenges remain regarding refugee protection, but in refugee protection, progress has been substantial, though there are still challenges. A number of states still appear hesitant to fully assume their international obligations, which are mostly due to national security concerns and resource constraints. The enforcement mechanisms of international human rights standards have rarely proven sufficient; they leave gaps in protection and different levels of compliance across regions.¹⁶⁷

In sum, the protection of refugees under international law is an ever-changing landscape, seeking for appropriate equilibrium between the rights of seriously affected individuals and the bureaucratic and political factors of states. It underlines both the need for international solidarity and the overall responsibility of the global community to ensure the rights and dignity of refugees in all corners of the world.

3.1.1. 1951 Geneva Convention

The Horn of Africa has been a hotspot for refugee crises for a long time. The region hosts millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, making it crucial to understand international frameworks such as the 1951 Geneva Convention that aims at protecting and assisting refugees.

The 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was a groundbreaking international treaty signed in the aftermath of World War II. It was adopted

¹⁶⁶ UNHCR. Refugee Protection: A Guide to International Refugee Law (Handbook for Parliamentarians)

¹⁶⁷ Oxford Academic. Refugee Survey Quarterly: Time for Reform? Refugees, Asylum-seekers, and Protection Under International Human Rights Law.

on 28th July 1951 by the UN conference convened under General Assembly resolution 429 and entered into force on the 22nd April 1954. Even if it was first designed to address the massive displacement of people across Europe, its principles were implemented to a universal applicability, extending beyond the European context to provide a global standard for refugee protection.¹⁶⁸ It was designed to respond to the large number of people needing to flee conflict (also known as stateless victims) and to put in place a system for the legal protection of refugees. The convention sets out the rights of individuals who fall within the category of asylum seekers and also the responsibilities of nations that provide asylum.¹⁶⁹

In this regard, the Convention clearly states:

“For the purposes of the present Convention, the term “refugee” shall apply to any person who:
(1) Has been considered a refugee under the Arrangements of 12 May 1926 and 30 June 1928 or under the Conventions of 28 October 1933 and 10 February 1938, the Protocol of 14 September 1939 or the Constitution of the International Refugee Organization; Decisions of non-eligibility taken by International Refugee Organization during the period of its activities shall not prevent the status of refugee being accorded to persons who fulfil the conditions of paragraph 2 of this section;”

To continue with:

“(2) As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well- founded fear of being persecuted for reason of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.

In the case of a person who has more than one nationality, the term “the country of his nationality” shall mean each of the countries of which he is a national, and a person shall not be

¹⁶⁸ Gallagher, D. (1989). The Evolution of the International Refugee System. *International Migration Review*, 23(3), p. 580

¹⁶⁹ United Nations. (1951). Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, p. 14

*deemed to be lacking the protection of the country of his nationality if, without any valid reason based on well-founded fear, he has not availed himself of the protection of one of the countries of which he is a national.”*¹⁷⁰

We are talking about the goal of protecting some rights of refugees, we are talking about an attempt to co-operate at an international level, especially with the help of the United Nations and we try to avoid the refugee from becoming a starting point of international conflicts and tensions. It explains who a refugee is (or who should be): a person who has fled his home country and cannot return due to a verifiable fear of persecution based on his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular group and political opinion. In order to better analyze the first and main article of the Convention, it is worth noting that the word persecution is never defined within international law. From this particular and legitimate definition of persecution, that one can infer from the Convention, this term has been extended, thanks to the development of human rights, in order to include abuses and serious offenses even if not in a systematic way. It is claimed that an interrupted and generalized discrimination will represent a persecution legitimizing international protection.¹⁷¹

The main objective of the 1951 Convention is to ensure that refugees are able to live without fear of persecution, in their right to freedom and dignity, and to be able to find a good human shelter, to refrain from discrimination and to be expelled for a long time.

The Convention articulates more aspects regarding refugee protection. The cardinal principle on which it is based is the “non-refoulement”, which is the removal or return of refugees to territories where their lives or freedom would be threatened. At article 33 indeed it states:

“1. No Contracting State shall expel or return (“refouler”) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

¹⁷⁰ Art. 1 of *Geneva Convention relating the Status of Refugees*, 1951.

¹⁷¹ ACNUR, *Interpretación del Artículo 1 de la Convención de 1951 sobre el Estatuto de Refugiados*, Ginebra, 2001, p. 11

2. *The benefit of the present provisions may not, however, be claimed by a refugee whom there are reasonable grounds for regarding as a danger to the security of the country in which he is, or who, having been convicted by a final judgement of a particularly serious crime, constitutes a danger to the community of that country.*”¹⁷²

The obligation of *non-refoulement* applies to people seeking the refugee status as well as those who are granted it, as the status is declaratory, in other words, to be granted the refugee status means to have it recognized that one is a refugee, rather than to be made a refugee.¹⁷³ This prohibition has to be applied to every kind of forced transfer, including deportation, expulsion, extradition, informal transfers and non-admission at borders. It thus prevents States from refoulement of a refugee or asylum seeker or otherwise expelling the person back to territories where his life or freedom would be threatened due to the person's religion, race, nationality, membership in a specific social group or political opinion. The only way that this fundamental principle may be overridden is if the refugee has been determined to be a security threat to the country or to the community.

The convention sets forth several other important rights for refugees, including the right to seek asylum, the right to work, the right to education, and the right to public relief and assistance. It also mandates that refugees should not be penalized for illegal entry into a country if they are coming directly from a territory where their life or freedom was threatened.

States that ratified the 1951 Geneva Convention, in particular, have a stark legal obligation to ensure refugees' rights and provide them with the assistance they need for their welfare and integration. These are a series of requirements of law, behaviour and administration whose purpose is to make the treatment of refugees more humane and equitable. More fundamentally, signatory states must harmonize their national law with the principles and standards of the 1951 Geneva Convention. This includes in the field of legislative reform and the application or modification of laws to guarantee the rights of refugees in conformity with international norms. Procedures for the refugee status determination of the State concerned should be available in each case, and should be fair, transparent, and available to all asylum seekers. Signatory states have a duty to treat refugees with respect for their inherent dignity.

¹⁷² Art. 33 of *Geneva Convention relating the Status of Refugees*, 1951.

¹⁷³ Clayton, Gina. *Textbook on Immigration and Asylum Law*. 7th ed., Oxford University Press, 2016, p. 406

This includes also to respect the human rights of refugees in the global sphere and not to discriminate them or treat them inhumanely. Rather, market-friendly state interventions are needed to address xenophobia and racism and to foster a culture of inclusivity, where diversity is respected. This includes the responsibility that refugees do not become victims of exploitation and abuses, either within centers for reception or in the host communities.¹⁷⁴ Despite the robust legal framework provided by the 1951 Geneva Convention, its complete application within the Horn of Africa continues to face important challenges. Years of political instability and conflicts in the region have created a difficult political climate for enforcing international refugee law. Notwithstanding, the Governments in the region have tried to follow the principles of the convention by providing asylum to refugees.¹⁷⁵ Moreover, the principles of the convention remain essential in guiding efforts to address the needs of refugees and ensure their rights are upheld.

Ethiopia is the country in Africa with the highest refugee population and has welcomed refugees from Somalia and Eritrea amongst others. The Ethiopian government has tried to harmonize its national policies with the standards of some international legal norms such as the 1951 Convention. But with such a large number of refugees and limited funds to provide for them, it is difficult. This solution has shown the commitment of Ethiopia to the principles of the Convention. However, when it comes to the practical implementation, it lacks financial and logistics adequacy.¹⁷⁶ Ethiopia became a party to the 1951 Geneva Convention in 1969 and ratified its 1967 Protocol in 1973. This legal framework obligates Ethiopia to uphold the rights of refugees, including the principle of non-refoulement. The Ethiopian government has taken these principles and incorporated them into its national legislation, showing its dedication to global refugee protection principles.¹⁷⁷ Similar progress has been made in enhancing the legal and policy framework for refugees in recent years. The Ethiopian Refugee Proclamation No. 1110/2019 is a landmark legislation that aligns with the 1951 Convention and expands the rights and protections afforded to refugees. This proclamation provides refugees with access to work, education, and healthcare, and promotes

¹⁷⁴ United Nations. (1951). Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, p. 23

¹⁷⁵ Ben-Nun, Gilad, and Frank Caestecker. "Modern Refugees as Challengers of Nation-State Sovereignty: From the Historical to the Contemporary." *Comparativ* 27.1 (2017), p.14

¹⁷⁶ Ben-Nun, Gilad, and Frank Caestecker. "Modern Refugees as Challengers of Nation-State Sovereignty: From the Historical to the Contemporary." *Comparativ* 27.1 (2017), p.14

¹⁷⁷ idem, Gallagher (1989), p.581

their integration into local communities.¹⁷⁸ Despite all the efforts made however, international support is crucial in bolstering Ethiopia's capacity to implement the 1951 Geneva Convention effectively. Increased funding, technical assistance, and capacity-building initiatives are essential to address the resource and logistical challenges faced by the country. Increased international cooperation and global responsibility-sharing could relieve Ethiopia from the pressure and guarantee refugees the help and protection they so desperately need.

If on the one hand, Ethiopia has managed to adhere to the provisions envisaged, the ongoing violence and lack of a stable government in Somalia make it exceedingly difficult to ensure the protection and rights of refugees as outlined in the 1951 Geneva Convention. The absence of a stable and effective government in Somalia has severely hampered the implementation of the 1951 Geneva Convention. Without a centralized authority to enforce laws and protect citizens, the country struggles to provide even the most basic services to its population, let alone to refugees and IDPs.¹⁷⁹ Ensuring the protection and rights of refugees in such a volatile environment is a formidable challenge. The principle of “non-refoulement” is especially troubling in Somalia, where sending a refugee back to vast areas would effectively be delivering them to be killed or otherwise harmed. Also, in the absence of formal legal infrastructure and governance, there is no process or institution in place for arriving at asylum decisions or granting legal status to refugees, leaving most of them in legal purgatory.¹⁸⁰

3.1.2. UNHCR

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established by the United Nations General Assembly on 14th December 1950, commencing operations on 1st January 1951. Its creation was driven by the urgent need to provide international protection to

¹⁷⁸ Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. "Refugees Proclamation No. 1110/2019." Federal Negarit Gazette, 27 February 2019.

¹⁷⁹ *idem*, Gallagher (1989), p.584

¹⁸⁰ UNHCR. "Advisory Opinion on the Extraterritorial Application of Non-Refoulement Obligations under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol." UNHCR, 2007, p. 5

refugees and to devise lasting solutions for their predicament in the aftermath of World War II, which had caused unprecedented displacement and suffering.¹⁸¹

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, Europe was inundated with a significant refugee crisis. Millions of human beings had left or been uprooted from their homes by the war. These displaced individuals, including survivors of the Holocaust, former prisoners of war, and civilians who had fled combat zones, faced an uncertain future in a continent ravaged by conflicts. The International Refugee Organization (IRO) was established in 1947 in response to this vast displacement. The International Refugee Organization (IRO) was a specialized agency of the United Nations, established in 1947 to deal with the many refugees resulting from World War II. Unlike its predecessor, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), which focused on providing emergency relief and rehabilitation, the IRO's primary focus was on resettlement. The IRO had the goal of establishing long-lasting options for refugees through relocation in countries that would agree to take them in. In its heyday, the IRO cooperated with countless governments and affiliate entities to help in the resettlement of over one million refugees.¹⁸²

The IRO, which had considerable accomplishments to its credit, was always meant to be temporary. It was set up to cater for the immediate post-war refugee emergency and not for ever-changing refugee flows. The need for a durable and universal instrument to alleviate human displacement on a large scale across the globe was felt as early as in 1951 as the existing crises of refugees were becoming protracted and new crises were emerging. The creation of the UNHCR marked a significant shift in the international community's approach to refugee protection. The UNHCR had a more general mandate to provide international protection to refugees and to find durable solutions to their plight, unlike the IRO which dealt specifically with resettlement. According to the UNHCR statute, the work of this organization consists in promoting laws which are targeted to refugees' protection, providing humanitarian help and envisaging durable solutions like voluntary repatriation, integration in a host society or resettlement in the other host society. The agency was set up to provide aid for those fleeing their countries of origin, and to handle any unforeseen refugee crises in any part of the globe, with the aim of delivering a quick and flexible response.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ *ibidem*, Gallagher (1989), p. 580

¹⁸² Gallagher, D. (1989). The Evolution of the International Refugee System. *International Migration Review*, 23(3), p. 579

¹⁸³ *ibidem*, Gallagher (1989), p. 579

Initially, the UNHCR's mandate was constrained both geographically and temporally. Its 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was designed to address the specific refugee situations resulting from events occurring in Europe before 1st January 1951. This temporal and geographical limitation was a reflection of the immediate post-World War II context, where the primary focus was on resolving the refugee crises caused by the war and its aftermath. Subsequent global flows of refugees showed that the original confines of the 1951 Convention could not respond to the needs of contemporary refugee emergencies. A more inclusive and flexible framework was demanded by the international community. As a result, the 1967 Protocol Relating the Status of Refugees emerged. It also extended the application of the Convention to people held to be refugees who had fled events occurring prior April 1951 in Europe, and removed geographical and temporal restrictions from the Convention. The accession to the 1967 Protocol represented a major extension of the UNHCR's mandate, enabling it to work with a broader range of refugees. This extension was crucial in addressing the growing and diverse refugee movements deriving from subsequent conflicts and persecutions worldwide.¹⁸⁴

For most of its history, the Office has also acted as a “teacher” of refugee norms. High Commissioners frequently reminded Western States that, being liberal democracies with open societies, have the duty of adhering to human rights norms in their asylum and admission policies.¹⁸⁵ UNHCR has not only acted as a transmitter of knowledge and monitor of refugee norms, but also socialized new states to accept the promotion of refugee norms domestically in order to be member parties of the international community.¹⁸⁶

In recent decades, the work made by UNHCR has been further complicated by the increase of new forms of cooperation at the bilateral, regional and international levels in the different areas of peacebuilding, labour migration, humanitarianism and security. A “refugee regime complex” has emerged from this, in which these different institutions frequently overlap and influence states’ policies towards migrants. These developments have had a significant impact on refugee protection and for the work of the Committee. The implications of the refugee regime complex has brought both positive and negative consequences. On the

¹⁸⁴ Gallagher, D. (1989). The Evolution of the International Refugee System. *International Migration Review*, 23(3), p. 582

¹⁸⁵ Loescher, Gil. "UNHCR and forced migration." *The Oxford handbook of refugee and forced migration studies* (2014), p. 217

¹⁸⁶ Loescher, Gil. "UNHCR and forced migration." *The Oxford handbook of refugee and forced migration studies* (2014), p. 218

one hand, these new institutions offer states the opportunity to bypass UNHCR provisions regarding the admission of those asking for asylum. On the other hand, the emergence of overlapping institutions has given the Office the opportunity of enlarging its partnerships in order to extend its mandate.¹⁸⁷

The Horn of Africa has always been a site of great strategic significance and humanitarian urgency, since its countries are beset by chronic instability, conflict and natural disasters. This mass displacement of persons leading to the area has made the region being declared a UNHCR priority region.¹⁸⁸

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) plays a vital role in Djibouti. Djibouti hosts refugees primarily from neighbouring countries making use of its relative stability and strategic location at the crossroads of the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. The UNHCR promotes the local integration of refugees in Djibouti society and assists in livelihood activities. Despite the country's limited resources, Djibouti's commitment to maintaining an open-door policy for refugees reflects a significant humanitarian effort, backed by UNHCR advocacy and operational assistance. This coordination is essential now as the region faces displacement crises and fulfils its responsibility to offer safe havens to those fleeing conflict, persecution, and human rights abuses.¹⁸⁹

Ethiopia's progressive Refugee Proclamation No. 1110/2019 aligns with international standards, granting refugees rights to work, education, and healthcare. However, the sheer size of the refugee population and related challenges of scarce resources in the country make the implementation of these policies very difficult and the UNHCR works closely with the Ethiopian government to strengthen the capacity and infrastructure necessary to manage and assist that massive number of refugees. The UNHCR also helps in supporting durable solutions such as voluntary repatriation and local integration. While these efforts are commendable, the sheer size of the refugee population and the financial and logistical limitations hinder Ethiopia's ability to fully meet the needs of its refugees, underscoring the continued importance of international support and cooperation.

¹⁸⁷ Loescher, Gil. "UNHCR and forced migration." *The Oxford handbook of refugee and forced migration studies* (2014), pp. 222-223

¹⁸⁸ UNHCR. "East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes." *UNHCR Global Focus*, 30 Sept. 2022.

¹⁸⁹ Gallagher, D. (1989). The Evolution of the International Refugee System. *International Migration Review*, 23(3), p. 585

Somalia is one of the most challenging operational environments for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). For decades, Somalia has been one of the most chaotic, deadly and lawless environments in the Horn of Africa, characterized by protracted conflict and violent extremism while lacking a functional government. The UNHCR's role in Somalia includes providing emergency relief, protection, and support for voluntary repatriation and resettlement. Security challenges, which limit access and make operating difficult, do not stop the UNHCR from continuing to work with a number of local and international non-governmental organizations on the ground, providing essential services like food, shelter, health care, and education to displaced populations in need. The Committee also undertakes advocacy efforts to promote internationally the cause and mobilize funding for responding to the humanitarian crisis. A flexible and adaptive approach is needed in the complex and changing Somalia environment to ensure that the UNHCR respects the 1951 Geneva Convention and to provide the needed protection and dignity for refugees and internally displaced persons.¹⁹⁰

The Horn of Africa presents a particularly challenging environment for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) due to a confluence of factors that exacerbate the already dire situation of refugees. Security concerns pose another significant obstacle. Ongoing conflicts and high levels of militancy in nations such as Somalia render conditions especially treacherous for refugees and aid workers. In addition to the dangers posed to their lives, these security threats disrupt aid delivery, compromising the ability of aid agencies to provide continuous assistance to victims. Political instability and governance are additional challenges in the region and have hampered the efforts to implement and enforce appropriate refugee protection laws and policies. Stable governance in Somalia is singularly lacking, and the sporadic political tensions in Ethiopia constitute another obstacle to coordinated humanitarian responses and long-term planning.

Due to such complexities, the UNHCR stresses the need for greater international co-operation and support. Among these, one of the main strategies is to increase its relations with local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other international organizations. They are essential to capitalize on regional knowledge, enhance coordination, and deliver locally adapted and sustainable interventions. Working with other organizations,

¹⁹⁰ UNHCR. "East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes." *UNHCR Global Focus*, 30 Sept. 2022.

such as NGOs, enables the UNHCR to reach more people, as these organizations often have established local networks and expertise.

3.1.3. IOM

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) was established on 5th December 1951, originally known as the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME). Mandated to help European governments to identify resettlement countries for the estimated 11 million people uprooted by the war, it arranged transport for nearly a million migrants during the 1950s. A succession of name changes from PICMME to the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) in 1952, to the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM) in 1980 to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in 1989, reflects the organization's transition over half a century from logistics agency to migration agency.¹⁹¹

PICMME was an ad hoc, intergovernmental body to assist these displaced individuals to be resettled. Its mission was to arrange and restrict the chaotic flows of immigrants and displaced persons to countries which had agreed acceptance, like the US, Canada, Australia and some Latin American countries who signed on to help. The organization supplied logistical support such as travel assistance, temporary accommodation, and language classes to assist migrants in transitioning their lives to their planned host country. As the nature of international migration evolved, so too did the nature of PICMME: its activities grew wider, and its scope expanded. This would pave the way for the International Organization for Migration, established in 1989, to be better able to deliver migration management programs on a global scale. The rebranding represented a major turning point, shifting the focus from post-war resettlement to worldwide migration and the global trends and opportunities to the present. During this period, the IOM expanded its mandate beyond its original focus on refugee resettlement to include a broad array of migration management activities. This includes immediate support to migrants in crisis situations such as conflicts and disasters, as well as programs for voluntary return, reintegration, anti-trafficking interventions and the

¹⁹¹ International Organization for Migration. "History of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)." *IOM Office to the United Nations*, 2023.

promotion of migrant health and mental wellbeing. The organization also conducts public policy studies and advocacy to enable effective legislation and migration management, psychologically, physically, and spiritually.¹⁹²

IOM's institutional humanitarian policy is framed around the four core humanitarian principles. The policy guides IOM to determine the most appropriate course of action when confronted with humanitarian dilemmas and helps navigate challenges in complex and volatile environments. Its Principles for Humanitarian Action (PHA) reaffirm IOM's commitment towards the internationally agreed core humanitarian principles in the delivery of its humanitarian response, and the need for all those engaged in humanitarian action to promote and fully respect these principles:

- *Humanity*: The purpose of humanitarian action is to protect life and health and ensure respect for the rights and well-being of human beings. Concern to alleviate human suffering and preserve human dignity is the driving force for humanitarian action. In line with this principle, IOM reaffirms the humanitarian imperative and that its priority is the humanitarian duty to save lives and alleviate suffering.
- *Impartiality*: Humanitarian action must be carried out on the basis of needs alone, prioritizing those most in need, without discrimination on the basis of race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, religious belief, class or political opinion. While IOM recognizes the importance of balancing the needs and interests of different stakeholders, it strives to be strictly non-partisan in its humanitarian action. To do so, and in line with the principle of impartiality, IOM's humanitarian response always gives priority to the most vulnerable.
- *Neutrality*: Humanitarians must not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of an ideological, religious, racial or political nature. IOM assesses the relationship between a policy of neutrality and its advocacy role on a case-by-case basis, without compromising the principle of humanity.
- *Independence*: Humanitarians must remain independent from the political, financial or other objectives that any others may have in areas where humanitarian action is being implemented. IOM is committed to the principle of independence where and

¹⁹² International Organization for Migration. "IOM in the Fifties." *International Organization for Migration*, 2023.

when it is engaged in humanitarian action and in any other situation in which IOM adheres to the principle of humanity.¹⁹³

Nowadays, IOM is dedicated to promoting humane and orderly migration, recognizing that migration, if managed properly, can benefit both migrants and societies. Its mission revolves around different objectives, which guide IOM's operations and strategic planning across different regions of the world. Managing migration in an orderly manner involves creating systems and policies that ensure safe, regular and responsible migration processes.

Managing migration in an orderly manner involves creating systems and policies that ensure safe, regular, and responsible migration processes. IOM works with Governments in formulating coherent policy responses to migration opportunities and challenges. This includes strengthening border management, data for evidence-based decision making and legal frameworks that promote order and humane migration. It also offers on the job training, technical assistance and capacity-building programs to assist countries develop effective migration management competencies. This will not only cover training of border officials, upgrading of infrastructure at border check posts, implementation of effective biometric systems but also strengthens their capacity for security and trade facilitation. IOM seeks to improve the welfare and prospects of migrants through orderly and humane migration in addition to addressing the risks associated with irregular migration-based resettlement. Regulating migration involves addressing the challenges and complexities associated with migration flows, particularly those related to irregular migration, human trafficking, and migrant smuggling. IOM fights human trafficking by providing protection and assistance to victims, law enforcement to identify and bring traffickers to justice, and public awareness aimed at preventing human trafficking and exploitation.¹⁹⁴ The IOM also operates programs to reunify families, assisting migrants in being reunited with family members in other countries. These are important services that help to keep families together and prevent migrants from becoming socially and emotionally isolated. Through proactive migration management, the IOM enables migrants to fulfill their aspirations, while being of value to the communities and countries in which they seek to make a new home.

Finally, IOM also organizes public campaigns to fight xenophobia and discrimination on migrants. The organization strives to improve public practices by encouraging appreciation of

¹⁹³ International Organization for Migration. *IOM's Humanitarian Policy - Principles for Humanitarian Action (PHA)*. IOM, 2018.

¹⁹⁴ International Organization for Migration. "Counter-Trafficking." *International Organization for Migration*, 2023.

the positive impacts that can be brought about by migrant communities, more inclusive and supportive communities. Protection and advancement of migrants' human rights and well-being advocacy is fundamental to the IOM's work. The organization also works to ensure migrants are treated humanely, regardless of their legal status. This means speaking up for their right to access to basic services like healthcare, education, housing etc. and making policies to protect and promote their rights and interests.¹⁹⁵

Throughout its response to crisis, IOM puts people front and center, involving populations and communities in the decisions that affect them. The Organization remains committed to localized approaches and works to ensure the respect and protection of the rights of all individuals. The Organization is present in countries before, during and after crises and leverages its capacities across sectors to build partnerships and implement effective responses across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus (HDPN). IOM's humanitarian assistance ensures the immediate needs of affected populations are met, while its transition, peacebuilding and development-oriented programming help to build resilience and self-reliance; restore peace and security; and enhance the well-being of displaced persons and host communities.¹⁹⁶

One of the regions receiving the most aid from the IOM is the Horn of Africa. By working closely with governments, international organizations, and local communities, the IOM strives to mitigate the adverse effects of forced migration and support sustainable solutions for those affected by these crises. The IOM's efforts are focused on providing humanitarian assistance, enhancing migration management capacities, and addressing the root causes of displacement and irregular migration.

IOM delivers critical aid to many of the displaced populations throughout the region. It includes emergency shelter, food, water, sanitation and healthcare support. In no less than the areas of conflict, such as Somalia, it has been leading life-saving interventions, in conjunction with other humanitarian agencies, for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees. The IOM also sponsors programs for voluntary return, reintegration and sustainable development that provide support to migrants who wish to return home and start rebuilding their lives.

In order to enhance the capacity of governments in the Horn of Africa to manage migration flows more effectively, IOM plays a crucial role in better migration management. It includes offering technical assistance, capacity-building, and fostering the adoption of

¹⁹⁵ International Organization for Migration. "Family Reunification." *IOM*, 2023.

¹⁹⁶ International Organization for Migration. "Address Drivers and Long-Term Impacts of Crises." *International Organization for Migration*, 2023.

coherent migration policies. Moreover, IOM fosters regional cooperation and dialogue on migration to help respond to cross-border migration challenges and promote safe, regular and orderly migration in the region.

IOM is also well engaged in combating human trafficking and human smuggling in the region. This ranges from protection and assistance to trafficking victims, to strengthening the capacities of law enforcement agencies to identify and dismantle trafficking networks, to advocacy efforts both on trafficking and irregular migration. IOM's operations seek to prevent and respond to exploitation and to protect all rights of migrants from the start to the completion of their journey. Identifying and addressing root causes of displacement and irregular migration form a core element of IOM strategy in the Horn of Africa. This includes the implementation of initiatives at the community level to build resilience in conflict- and environmental stress-affected communities. IOM also conducts livelihood development projects, to include education and vocational training programs, which seek to increase some economic opportunities and reduce the temptation to migrate out of desperation. By doing so, the IOM also works to advocate and voice its views on the basis of policy to help foster peace, stability and development in the region.¹⁹⁷

IOM works closely with the government of Ethiopia to manage both internal and cross-border migration in a way that is safe for migrants. It highlights the importance of developing full-scale migration management systems tailored to the complicated realities of displacement and migration in the country. It focuses on policy development, capacity building, and technical assistance that will enable the government to deliver migration governance competently. Ethiopia hosts one of the largest populations of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in Africa. The Organization is providing emergency shelter, food, water, sanitation and healthcare services for these populations. Especially for the IDPs, the efforts of the IOM are aimed at those displaced by internal conflicts like the Tigray crisis and those who are affected by natural resource release events including droughts and floods. With regard to refugees, the IOM supports the Ethiopian government in managing camps and providing basic services to guarantee the necessary protection and assistance for refugees. A significant focus of IOMs work in Ethiopia is responding to the root causes of irregular migration. It means addressing the root factors that force people to use dangerous illegal channels to migrate in the first place. The IOM is working through various programs to

¹⁹⁷ International Organization for Migration. "East and Horn of Africa – Regional Strategy 2020–2024." *IOM Publications Platform*, 2021.

increase economic opportunities, improve education and communities' ability to bounce back. For example, the Organization gives financial and other support for sustainable livelihood projects that offer skills training and micro-loan facilities to enable individuals to become self-employed as a means of improving their economic situation.¹⁹⁸

To respond to the urgent needs of the displaced population, IOM provides life-saving emergency assistance in Somalia. This includes the provision of shelter, food, water and sanitation, and health services for internally displaced persons (IDPs). IOM emergency response teams are frequently deployed to areas, including conflict zones and communities shaken by drought and floods, where the needs are the greatest. Given the rapidity with which conditions can change and deteriorate, the organization's flexible, large reach is vital. Building the resilience of displaced communities is a key aspect of the IOM's work in Somalia. The organization implements various community-based projects aimed at enhancing the self-reliance and resilience of IDPs and host communities. Such projects range from building water and sanitation facilities and opening health clinics to setting up educational programs and vocational training. Through increasing accessibility to basic services, such initiatives will also create more stable and resilient communities better able to absorb future shocks. It closely collaborates with Somali authorities to build their capacity to effectively and humanely manage migration. This includes training and provision support for the relevant government officials, and institutions for the management of migration. The IOM fosters the adoption of policies and legal frameworks that adhere to international norms and best practices and it also promotes the protection of migrants, addressing all migration dimensions that benefit from orderly migration management.¹⁹⁹

One of the major challenges faced by the IOM in the Horn of Africa is limited resources. The demand for assistance often exceeds the available funding, leading to gaps in service provision and support. Solving these challenges will necessitate greater international cooperation and additional financial support from donor countries that already struggle to sustain expensive development projects. Building and maintaining strategic partnerships is essential for the IOM to effectively address migration challenges in the Horn of Africa. Working together with governments, international organizations, and local NGOs provides

¹⁹⁸ International Organization for Migration. *Ethiopia Crisis Response Plan 2024*. 2024.

¹⁹⁹ International Organization for Migration. *Somalia Crisis Response Plan 2024*. 2024.

the organization with a platform to deliver more complete support and enforce lasting solutions.²⁰⁰

3.2. REGIONAL INITIATIVES

3.2.1. 1969 OAU Convention

The Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, commonly referred to as the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention, was a landmark treaty adopted on 10th September 1969, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. This regional convention was developed in response to the unique and multifaceted refugee crises that African countries faced during the post-colonial period.²⁰¹

The decolonization of Africa, which peaked in the mid-20th century, led to numerous conflicts, political upheavals, and social transformations, resulting in significant displacement of populations across the continent. In many territories, such as in Africa, struggles for independence were impaired by violent liberation wars. These conflicts are also very often fueled along ethnic, religious and political lines that were inherited from colonial boundaries, dividing people along their ethnic lines across the continent. Although the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees marked an important benchmark in the development of international protection, it was in essence Eurocentric and framed in terms of post-World War II conditions in Europe. The Convention defined the meaning of a refugee as someone who was escaping persecution because of race, religion, nationality, social group or because of his political opinions, and failed to adequately address the root causes of displacement in Africa, which centered on generalized violence, civil wars and liberation struggles. In addition, the 1951 Convention was originally binding only in respect of events

²⁰⁰ International Organization for Migration. "Migrant Response Plan for the Horn of Africa and Yemen 2023." *Global Crisis Response Platform*, 2023.

²⁰¹ Organization of African Unity (OAU). (1969). Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.

occurring before 1st January 1951, and in relation mainly to those situations which were taking place within Europe, and therefore did not provide an appropriate response to the increasingly serious refugee problems which Africa was experiencing. The 1951 Geneva Convention had its limitations and refugee crises in Africa had their unique circumstances that required a regional approach that was tailored to the challenges that African countries faced. This need was recognized by the OAU which agreed to design an international treaty that would apply to the whole continent. The OAU wanted to make a convention that not only complemented the 1951 Geneva Convention but broadened the protection system to include the wider spectrum of causes of displacement that applied in Africa.²⁰²

The 1969 OAU Refugee Convention aims at providing a legal and humanitarian aid to refugees in Africa, particularly in the context of intra-African refugee scenarios where, unlike in the genealogy leading to the 1951 Convention, refugee situations are in a much greater degree caused by or are the result of concurrent civil wars, internal crises, and violation of human rights, than state persecution per se. This broader understanding of the drivers of displacement mirrors the experiences of African states moving through decolonization, civil wars, and political anarchy. The convention of the OAU targets to commit member states in providing refugees with the necessary protection and assistance, and to foster African solidarity and responsibility sharing.

One of the most notable features of the 1969 OAU Convention is its expanded definition of a refugee. While it incorporates the 1951 Geneva Convention's definition, it goes further to include:

"every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality".

This inclusive definition is crucial for several reasons. First, it recognizes that in Africa, displacement often occurs due to a combination of factors beyond individual persecution by the state. It begs a broader definition of causes for displacement with "external

²⁰² Okello, J. Moses. "The 1969 OAU Convention and the Continuing Challenge for the African Union." *Forced Migration Review*, no. 48, Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford, 2014, pp. 70-73

aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order" stated at Article 1.2 of this Convention, such as civil wars, insurgencies and socio-political upheavals. While family reunification is a cornerstone of the international refugee protection regime, many families are separated by conflicts that are so chaotic and insecure that populations are torn apart by non-state actors, causing widespread displacement not immediately related to state persecution.²⁰³ Its broad scope helps to ensure that people fleeing generalized violence and massive human rights violations and very serious public disorder are protected in the same way as asylum-seekers fleeing from targeted persecution. It accounts for the way African refugees move, with tens of thousands fleeing entire communities on foot to cross borders in the face of widespread conflict or brutal regimes, ensuring no one is left outside the legal protection.

The principle of non-refoulement is a cornerstone of both the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention. At its Article 2, the OAU Convention explicitly states that no person shall be subjected by a Member State to measures such as rejection at the frontier, return, or expulsion which would compel them to return to or remain in a territory where their life, physical integrity, or liberty would be threatened. This principle is fundamental in ensuring that refugees are not forced back into situations of danger. Non-refoulement is a rare example of a universal principle that represents a constraint on state power and a protection against the arbitrary act of the state, shielding refugees from a return to places of persecution, violence, or other types of serious harm. This principle, enshrined within the OAU Convention, is thus consistent with the international spirit and reflects Africa's dedication to human right protection and safeguarding certain individuals. By barring the return of persecuted people to dangerous areas, this guarantees refugees a chance to apply for asylum along with a critical stream of life.²⁰⁴

The OAU Convention was carved with roles for host countries with an emphasis on Africa unity and burden sharing. States Parties are required to provide asylum to refugees and to operate with other states and with the UNHCR to help protect and help refugees. Host countries are urged to provide asylum and protection to refugees, ensuring that their basic needs are met and that they are treated with dignity and respect. This extends beyond simply

²⁰³ Article 1. OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa." *International Human Rights Law Documents*, 1969.

²⁰⁴ Article 2. OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa." *International Human Rights Law Documents*, 1969.

receiving them on their territory but also ensuring that their basic needs (such as food, shelter, healthcare, and education) can be met.²⁰⁵

Cooperation of the masses among the African states is one of the basic motive headlights of the OAU Convention. To this end, the Convention prescribes a regional response to refugee crises, recognizing the constraints many African countries face with limited resources and capacities. Such inclusion shall involve exchange of resources, knowledge and best practices as well as mutual aid in responding to mass displacements. It is in this context that regional organizations and frameworks such as the African Union (AU) and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) come to be instrumental by enabling cooperation and ensuring that an organized and coherent refugee response is provided.²⁰⁶

Although the Convention provides an exhaustive framework, its implementation is encumbered with a number of challenges. The implementation of regulations provided by the Convention is severely hampered in many African countries by inadequate resource base, political instability and on-going conflicts. Likewise, large numbers of refugees can also place a burden on host countries, which may be ill-equipped to meet all of the needs. Both the OAU, and its successor the AU, have essential functions to fulfil regarding the promotion and reporting on the implementation of the OAU Convention. In this domain, the AU partners with the UN Refugee Agency and other international organizations are addressing refugee challenges on the continent, whilst alternately providing the platform for dialogue, coordination and advocacy. These relationships offer large potential for innovation in resource generation, enabling capacity development of member states and upholding standards of protection of refugees. By working with international partners, African states can enhance their capacities to address refugee issues more effectively and sustainably.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ *ibidem*, Gallagher (1989), p. 585

²⁰⁶ The 1969 OAU Convention and the Continuing Challenge for the African Union." *Forced Migration Review*, 2019.

²⁰⁷ Article 7. OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa." *International Human Rights Law Documents*, 1969.

3.2.2. 2009 Kampala Convention

The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, commonly known as Kampala Convention, was adopted in Kampala, Uganda on 23rd October 2009. This treaty represents the first legally binding regional instrument in the world that specifically addresses the protection and assistance needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs). The Kampala Convention reinforces the existing legal framework for the protection of IDPs, adds a new perspective on the causes and solutions for displacement, and sets standards for states and other actors to secure the rights and welfare of displaced persons.²⁰⁸

The need for the Kampala Convention resulted from the serious internal displacement crises of some African countries. Wars, armed conflicts and natural disasters have displaced millions across the continent, leading to humanitarian emergencies for which existing national laws and policies were not well-prepared to address comprehensively. Prior to the Kampala Convention, the principal international mechanism of the world for IDPs was the non-binding Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, issued by the United Nations in 1998. These principles, while influential, lacked the enforceability needed to compel state action. It was with the adoption of the Kampala Convention that there was a critical change in moving towards a more structured and enforceable approach to protecting IDPs.²⁰⁹ Central to this decision was the understanding that Africa required a distinctive instrument with legally binding force capable of addressing the peculiarities of internal displacement on the continent, rooted as it is in protracted conflict, weak national institutional mechanisms and under-resourced national systems.

The Kampala Convention provides a broad and inclusive definition of internally displaced persons. It defines IDPs as:

“persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of

²⁰⁸ African Union. "African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention)." *IDMC*, 23 Oct. 2009.

²⁰⁹ United Nations. "Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement." UN Commission on Human Rights, 22 July 1998, E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2.

armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights, or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized State border”.

And it continues then with the internal displacement, defining it as the:

*“involuntary or forced movement, evacuation or relocation of persons or group of persons within internationally recognized state borders”.*²¹⁰

The Convention outlines comprehensive responsibilities for states to prevent displacement, protect and assist IDPs, and seek durable solutions for their displacement. First of all, states are required to prevent displacement. States are required to stop the arbitrary displacement of people and to avoid and address forced eviction and other determinants of risk of displacement through the adoption, implementation and enforcement of laws.²¹¹

Moreover, the Convention insists on the protection and assistance of IDPs. States are duty-bound to afford accountability for their protection, by making sure that everyone has access to their basic needs like food, water, housing, health care and education.²¹²

Another core principle of this Convention, as it is found in the other treaties cited before, is the research of durable solutions. States must immediately establish the conditions that enable IDPs to return home, or to reintegrate into their local communities or to settle elsewhere in the country. These solutions must be durable and take place in safety and dignity.²¹³

The Kampala Convention also addresses the role of non-state actors, including armed groups and private entities. It obligates these actors to respect the rights of IDPs and refrain from actions that cause displacement. This provision is particularly relevant in conflict-affected areas where non-state actors play a significant role.²¹⁴

²¹⁰ African Union. "African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention)." *IDMC*, 23 Oct. 2009. Article 1

²¹¹ African Union. "African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention)." *IDMC*, 23 Oct. 2009. Article 4

²¹² African Union. "African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention)." *IDMC*, 23 Oct. 2009. Article 5

²¹³ African Union. "African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention)." *IDMC*, 23 Oct. 2009. Article 11

²¹⁴ African Union. "African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention)." *IDMC*, 23 Oct. 2009. Article 7

The Kampala Convention of 2009 is an important step in the African context, in terms of establishing legal protection for IDPs. By establishing a legally binding framework that addresses the specific needs and challenges of IDPs, the Convention provides a robust tool for improving the protection and assistance provided to displaced populations. While the success of its implementation is unproven, the focus of the Convention on state duties, regional collaboration, and a declaration of non-state actors is a good starting point for Africa to deal with internal displacement.

3.2.3. IGAD Policy Framework on Refugee Protection

The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) is a regional organization that encompasses eight member states: Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Uganda. Established in 1986, IGAD was originally focused on addressing issues of drought and desertification that severely affected the Horn of Africa. The severe droughts of the 1970s and 1980s led to devastating famines and highlighted the need for a coordinated regional response to environmental challenges.

Over the years, IGAD's mandate has significantly expanded beyond environmental issues. Recognizing the interconnected nature of development challenges, IGAD has taken on a broader range of responsibilities, including:

- *Agriculture and Environment Division:* the Agriculture and Environment Division (AED) was started in 1986 and has remained central to IGAD's mandate, vision, and mission. The division is in charge of IGAD's work on agriculture, environment protection, natural resource management, blue economy, and land governance. It leads the efforts of the Authority in building resilience and sustainable development.
- *Economic Cooperation and regional Integration:* the mandate of the Economic Cooperation and Regional Integration Division (ECRID) is to promote regional economic cooperation and integration among IGAD Member States. The Division supports this central strategic role of IGAD through working in areas of trade, tourism development, transport and Information and Communication Technologies,

integration and macroeconomic policies, energy development, industry and regional value chains development.

- *Health and Social Development*: the goal of the Health and Social Development Division is to enhance the quality of life in the region towards longer life expectancy. The division is encompassing all the human development issues and upgrading the human capital in the IGAD region with focus on youth, children, women, and other vulnerable population. The mandate of the division is to coordinate, implement and oversee the regional health projects for vulnerable population. It also provides health and basic social services to the most needed population (cross border mobile population, refugee, returnees, IDPs, pastoralist population) in order to enhance development for the people of the IGAD region.
- *Peace and Security Division*: the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has revitalized in 1996 and mandated to deal with peace and security issues. IGAD with the extended mandate to cover political and economic development issues led to the establishment of the ‘Political and Humanitarian Development’ which was later in 2003 renamed Peace and Security Division (PSD).²¹⁵

Given the large and protracted refugee population in the IGAD region, the organization has also developed an extensive policy framework on refugee protection. The conflict, political uncertainty, and environmental changes have led to significant human displacements that would cause in one of the largest refugee populations in the world; the IGAD region is hosting the displaced people, in the number of millions. For example, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda have traditionally been the top three largest refugee hosting countries for refugees from nearby conflict zones such as South Sudan, Somalia, and Sudan. The IGAD Policy Framework on Refugee Protection aims to achieve several key objectives. It is a framework which builds on direct challenges to its member states and leads to the development, adoption and implementation of national laws and policies that are consistent with international standards relating to refugee protection. This includes the domestication of the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol and the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention.

One of the key tenants of the IGAD Policy Framework is the protection of the basic rights of refugees. The framework ensures that refugees enjoy the same rights as nationals to basic services, namely healthcare, education and social services. It underscores the importance of

²¹⁵ Intergovernmental Authority on Development. "Areas of Work." *IGAD*, 2023.

preventing abuse, exploitation and discrimination against refugees, while ensuring they are protected and treated with dignity and respect. The Policy Framework of IGAD maximizes the likelihood that refugees can find a lasting solution, such as voluntary repatriation, local integration, or the resettlement in third countries. It outlines the need for measures to allow people to return safely and with dignity, to empower communities hosting refugees, to ensure they benefit from their presence and to enable refugees to resettle and integrate into new host countries.²¹⁶

IGAD Policy Framework on Refugees further stresses in detail the importance of regional cooperation and burden-sharing for refugee crises. Member states are also urged to collaborate with each other and with international actors, such as the UNHCR, to engage in joint responses, resource sharing, and mutual assistance in managing refugee flows. Such a shared-burden philosophy is critical to a fairer and more balanced distribution of the duties and benefits of refugee hosting across the region.²¹⁷

For the IGAD Policy Framework to work, member states need to mainstream its provisions into their national laws and policies. This involves aligning national legislations with international standards and creating institutional mechanisms for implementation and monitoring. Countries like Kenya and Ethiopia, for example, are making great progress in the policies and programs they are developing that are based on the principles of the IGAD framework.²¹⁸

The IGAD Policy Framework on Refugee Protection is a major improvement in response to the protracted refugee crises in the Horn of Africa, Nile Valley, and Great Lakes region. It is meant to contribute a comprehensive and cooperative response to refugee protection, to ensure that refugees' rights are secured and that they are treated well while also addressing broader trends and fulfilling durable solutions and regional stability. The framework, which prioritizes legal and institutional development, protection of refugee rights, regional cooperation, and addressing the underlying causes of displacement, marks an important step towards enhancing the well-being of refugees and host communities in the IGAD region.

²¹⁶ IGAD. "Regional Migration Policy Framework". IGAD Council of Ministers. 2012, p. 18

²¹⁷ IGAD. "Regional Migration Policy Framework". IGAD Council of Ministers. 2012, p.53

²¹⁸ IGAD. "Regional Migration Policy Framework". IGAD Council of Ministers. 2012, p. 65

Nairobi Declaration on Somali Refugees

The Nairobi Declaration on Somali Refugees is a key framework adopted by the IGAD member states on the 25th March 2017. The Declaration was adopted during a special summit on the protracted Somali refugee situation in the region, held in Nairobi, Kenya. This declaration represents a significant commitment by IGAD member states to find durable solutions for Somali refugees through enhanced regional cooperation and burden sharing, as well as addressing the root causes of displacement and addressing issues of integration of refugees.²¹⁹

Somalia has been in a state of conflict and instability since the collapse of its central government in 1991. The ensuing civil war, coupled with ongoing violence from various militant groups such as Al-Shabaab, has led to significant internal and cross-border displacement. The result has been that millions of Somalis have fled to neighbouring countries, mainly to Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Uganda. The long-term nature of the Somali refugee crisis has placed significant strains on host countries amidst a complex context of resource constraints, security challenges, and social cohesion issues.

The Nairobi Declaration on Somali Refugees outlines a comprehensive framework for addressing the refugee crisis through regional collaboration and commitment to durable solutions. In the part devoted to “On Solutions for Somalia”, the Declaration indeed recalls for:

3. *Provide support to the Federal Government of Somalia through increased and coordinated regional engagement in the development of its security institutions, specifically the Somali National Army and the Somali Police Force, to build its own capacity to deliver security and the rule of law through an effective, representative and accountable national security system and justice sector.*
4. *Support the strengthening of security and stability, by enhancing the discharge of the mandate of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and reinforce its capacity and that of the National Security Forces of Somalia to enable unimpeded*

²¹⁹ Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). "Nairobi Declaration on Somali Refugees." *IGAD*, 25 Mar. 2017.

*humanitarian access and the delivery of assistance to the civilian population, as well as development-based engagements.*²²⁰

In the meantime, in its part about “Solutions for Refugees”, it demands State parties to:

“Mobilize resources and coordinate the efforts of international agencies, host communities and refugees to prevent environmental degradation and rehabilitate degraded ecosystems in refugee hosting areas”

In order to strengthen the protection of refugees and respond effectively to the causes of displacement.²²¹

As it happens with the other policies, many members of the IGAD are resource-constrained and have very limited capacity footprints, making the implementation of the Nairobi Declaration a huge challenge. Over time, the financial, technical, and human resources devoted to effective protection and assistance in refugee situations have grown to overwhelming proportions, though never yet sufficient. These barriers can be overcome with greater international support, capacity-building actions and innovative financial practices. However, while implementation challenges remain, the Nairobi Declaration sets a strong foundation for regional collaboration and international support in addressing one of the most persistent refugee crises in the world.

3.2.4. Draft Of The Arab Convention On The Regulating Status Of Refugees In The Arab Countries

The Arab Convention on Regulating the Status of Refugees in the Arab Countries, commonly referred to as the Arab Convention, was adopted by the League of Arab States in 1994. This convention represents a regional effort to address refugee issues within the Arab world, reflecting the unique socio-political and cultural contexts of the region. The need for

²²⁰ Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). *On Solutions for Somalia, part. III. 3.* "Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees and Reintegration of Returnees in Somalia."

²²¹ Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). *On Solutions for Refugees, part IV. 2.* "Nairobi Declaration on Somali Refugees." *IGAD*, 25 Mar. 2017.

such a convention arose from the increasing number of refugees and displaced persons in Arab countries, driven by conflicts, political instability, and economic challenges. This paper provides a detailed examination of the Arab Convention, its provisions, and its implications for refugee protection in the Arab region. The Arab Convention was drafted with reference to the frameworks that had been set through the 1951 Geneva Convention and its 1967 Protocol, which established the international norms around the legal position of refugees. But the Arab Convention was the one that was geared to resolving particular regional problems, drawing upon the tenets of Islam and Arab culture to unify Arab states and provide a regional answer to the refugee problem.²²²

One of the most notable aspects of the Arab Convention is its expanded definition of a refugee. Article 1 of the convention defines a refugee as:

“Any person who is outside the country of his nationality or outside his habitual place of residence in case of not having a nationality and owing to well-grounded fear of being persecuted on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, unable or unwilling to avail himself of the protection of or return to such country.

Any person who unwillingly takes refuge in a country other than his country of origin or his habitual place of residence because of sustained aggression against, occupation and foreign domination of such country or because of the occurrence of natural disasters or grave events resulting in major disruption of public order in the whole country or any part thereof.”²²³

This definition takes inspiration from the one given by the 1951 Geneva Convention but is expanded to include individuals fleeing generalized violence and events seriously disturbing public order. It is clear that the Arab Refugee Convention has adopted a broader definition of refugees than the previous conventions, as it introduced natural disasters as a legitimate reason for asylum.

²²² Arab Convention on Regulating Status of Refugees in the Arab Countries: Adopted by the League of Arab States, 1994, *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Volume 27, Issue 2, 2008

²²³ League of Arab States. "Arab Convention on Regulating Status of Refugees in the Arab Countries." 1994, Article 1.

Though it establishes an expansive framework for the protection of refugees, the Arab Convention has proven difficult to implement. Critical in this are inadequate (non-binding) enforcement mechanisms that, in turn, led to variable levels of country commitment and compliance. Contrary to international treaties such as the 1951 Geneva Convention, the latter imposes a degree of implementation and accountability in its wording. In its absence, member states enjoy wide latitude in their interpretation and application of the provisions, creating differences in practice and protection standards amongst states in the region.²²⁴

The socio-political complexities and economic constraints in many Arab countries have also hindered the effective implementation of the convention's provisions. Stable political environments going through changes, along with conflicts that are not resolved, and governance challenges combined can make the protection of refugees especially complex. Such conditions lead to reduced government ability to protect the rights of the refugees and to deliver the services required by them. All of these problems are further compounded by economic realities. In general, few Arab states which already have high rates of poverty and unemployment can afford to provide for refugees properly, so refugees simply drop into low-level support systems and living conditions.²²⁵

In actual fact, the protection of refugees in Arab countries is often dependent on international bodies such as the UNHCR, which plays a leading role in providing humanitarian aid, legal protection and advocating on behalf of refugees in the region. In recognition of the fact that the resources and capabilities of many refugee-hosting countries are insufficient to manage the needs of large refugee populations on their own, such states are thus dependent on the support of international bodies for help and assistance. For example, the establishment of refugee camps, provision of basic services and supporting resettlement and repatriation processes were made possible by the leadership of the UNHCR.²²⁶ While there is a need for Arab-states and international organizations to cooperate on the issue of protecting and upholding the rights of refugees, this also emphasizes the regional limitations of the regional framework in addressing the full spectrum of refugee issues independently. Reliance on external actors can result in fragmented approaches and short-term interventions

²²⁴ Al-Ajaji, Mohammed SM. *The league of Arab States and the promotion and protection of human rights*. Diss. University of British Columbia, 1990, pp. 379-380

²²⁵ Almakky, Rawa Ghazy. *The league of Arab states and the protection of human rights: a legal analysis*. Diss. Brunel University London, 2015, pp. 157-158

²²⁶ Ito, Ayaki. "International Refugee Law and the Arab World." *Al-Raida Journal* (2008): pp. 7-8

rather than sustainable, durable solutions. Geopolitical dynamics as well as divergent national interests among Arab states also mean that coordination is not always easy on a regional level.

The Arab Convention on Regulating the Status of Refugees in the Arab Countries represents a significant regional effort to address the refugee crisis within the Arab world. However, its functioning is complicated by the absence of any mandatory enforcement mechanisms, socio-political intricacies, financial limitations and over-reliance on the international agencies. To serve the goal of the convention, it is crucial to strengthen regional cooperation, develop strong legal and institutional national frameworks and the support of the international community. Meeting these challenges will require an integrated response from all actors, in order to enhance protection and assistance for refugees in the Arab region through a more coherent and efficient system.

3.3. EFFORTS FOR SOLUTIONS

3.3.1. The role of IOs and NGOs in providing aid

International Organizations (IOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a crucial role in addressing challenges in the Horn of Africa region. Their efforts range from immediate emergency relief to long-term development programs aimed at building resilience and stability in affected communities.

International Organizations such as the UNHCR or the IOM are pivotal in managing refugee crises and internal displacement in the Horn of Africa. These organizations provide protection, shelter, food, healthcare, and education to millions of people who have been forced from their homes and who have little prospect or even desire to return home. This involves steps such as training and strengthening local institutions to better manage migration and displacement.

Non-Governmental Organizations, including Save the Children and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) support the work of these international bodies with expert advice and specialized services. Save the Children has a significant program in the Horn of Africa, focusing on education, health, and child protection among the key areas. For a specific case

in Ethiopia, Save the Children has worked successfully even though to get through a challenging work environment like the one in Ogaden. They build schools, offer health services, and back up community-based child protection mechanisms.²²⁷ Recognized for its emergency medical relief, MSF works widely in conflict and disaster regions in the Horn of Africa. They include primary and secondary healthcare, immunization, and outbreak response. Regions that host MSF are probably in desperate need of the type of healthcare infrastructure that MSF offers, if in fact the local health infrastructure in such areas is entirely inadequate or has been obliterated.²²⁸ In some of the most difficult settings and areas of conflict, frontline NGOs are at work delivering urgently needed support. Their work consists of health care, education, food security, safe water and sanitation services and psychosocial support to vulnerable populations.

Other NGOs instead, ensure that refugees and displaced people voices get to the table during policy and humanitarian planning discussions.

IOs and NGOs play a huge part but also struggle with a number of structural challenges in the Horn of Africa. Their limited resources, security threats and logistical challenges can all impact their ability to provide aid to those in need. On top of that, the shifting political mazes and ongoing conflicts of the region only make these puzzles all more challenging. There is a dire necessity for enhanced international cooperation as well as greater funding to combat these challenges. Collaboration among International Organizations, Non-governmental organizations, local governments, and communities is critical to ensuring sustainability. Additionally, there is the need for long-term investment in development and nation-building to tackle the root causes and bring long-term stability to the region. To alleviate suffering, aid recovery, and bolster sustainable development, together, their work is more important in combating one of the toughest humanitarian settings in the world.

²²⁷ Save the Children. "What We Do." *Save the Children International*, 2023.

²²⁸ Médecins Sans Frontières. "MSF stepping up malnutrition interventions in Horn of Africa." 2023.

3.3.2. *The role of AMISOM in responding to Somali crisis*

The African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) is an active, regional peacekeeping mission operated by the African Union with the approval of the United Nations. It was first deployed to Mogadishu in March 2007 with some 1.650 Ugandan troops. Its main reasons for establishment are in pursuance of the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) to improve stabilization to the country, to provide support to the government in combating Al-Shabaab insurgents and to create an enabling environment for the delivery of humanitarian aid and governance structures. By mid-2015 AMISOM had grown in fits and starts to more than 22.000 personnel.²²⁹

The AMISOM was established as a response to the prolonged conflict and political overheard in Somalia following the collapse of Somalia's governing military regime in 1991. This was the rule of anarchy in absence of central controlling authority over those who completely ruled the native lands. The fall of the government was followed by the emergence of warlords, who took over territories by maintaining their private militias. These warlords were often effectively organized along clan lines, using clan loyalties to enhance their authority. This battle for control of resources and strategic territory was fierce and brutal. Without a central authority, these warlords were able to act with impunity and continued these cycles of violence and division amongst the Somali people.

The instability in Somalia was ultimately deemed to be a grave danger to regional stability, and the global community quickly realized that regional instability in Somalia was a threat to global security. It had the additional phenomenon of Al-Shabaab becoming allied with global terrorist networks too, such as Al Qaeda. This situation, coupled with the severe security and humanitarian repercussions, demonstrated the need for a comprehensive regional response to the crisis.²³⁰

In response to these challenges, the African Union, with the approval of the United Nations, established AMISOM in 2007. It operates under a comprehensive mandate authorized by the African Union Peace and Security Council and the United Nations Security Council. This mandate encompasses several key objectives aimed at stabilizing Somalia,

²²⁹ Albrecht, Peter. *REGIONAL INTERESTS DEFINE THE AFRICAN UNION MISSION IN SOMALIA*. Danish Institute for International Studies, 2015, p. 3, JSTOR

²³⁰ Burgess, Stephen F. "Stabilization, Peacebuilding, and Sustainability in the Horn of Africa." *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, vol. 3, no. 1, Spring 2009, Air University Press. p. 89, JSTOR

supporting the Federal Government, combating insurgent groups and facilitating humanitarian efforts. These objectives are critical to creating a secure environment conducive to governance and development in Somalia.

One of the main goals of AMISOM is to help rebuild the government of Somalia and to provide security to the population. This support is essential to the implementation of the National Security and Stabilization Plan which prescribes the roadmap for normalcy and reconstruction of the nation's security infrastructure. AMISOM assists in the Training and Development of Somali Security Forces. It provides extensive training and institutional development programs to the Somali National Army (SNA) and Police forces. It is intended to provide Somali security authorities with the tools they need to improve their operational capabilities in order to combat threats effectively and maintain law and order. AMISOM is also involved in training programs, aimed at enhancing the capacity of the security sector institutions of Somalia. This support includes training, equipment and logistical support to create a professional, responsible security force able to protect the population and ensure the country's stability.²³¹

Secondly, AMISOM plays a pivotal role in the fight against Al-Shabaab. The mission's efforts include military operations and coordination with Somali Forces. AMISOM conducts offensive operations to dismantle Al-Shabaab's strongholds and disrupt their operational capabilities. These operations are crucial for reclaiming territory controlled by the group and reducing their influence over Somali regions. Since 2010, AMISOM and the Somali National Army (SNA) experienced a number of genuine successes by retaking areas captured by al-Shabaab. 2014 was a crucial year for AMISOM. "Operation Eagle" for example, was formally launched in March as a joint military offensive with the SNA recovering 11 districts from al-Shabaab.²³²

Finally, a critical aspect of AMISOM's mandate is to support the implementation of the Somali Transition Plan, which aims to transfer security responsibilities from AMISOM to Somali-led institutions. The mission gradually transfers security responsibilities to Somali security forces in line with practical transition plans developed and implemented with the Somali government. Such planning is essential to successful, effective on-boarding. The mission aims at creating an environment that will ultimately lead to peace and security in the

²³¹ *ibidem*, Albrecht (2014), p. 3

²³² *Ibidem*, Albrecht (2014), p.3

country. This includes anti-insurgency, as well as establishment of governance structures, rule of law and community engagement in security governance.²³³

AMISOM has played a major role in stabilizing Somalia and strengthening the security of the country. This improvement in safety and security enabled a number of IDPs to begin returning to their homes and for economic activity to start up again in re-liberated regions. However, despite its successes, AMISOM faces significant challenges, particularly related to its weak headquarters. This weakness is caused by the fact that the UN Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA), rather than the Joint Support Operations Centre of AMISOM, distributes mission resources. This denies AMISOM one of the main powers of any military headquarters: controlling when and how to support those elements of the mission that are considered most in need.²³⁴

Equally important is the conflicting national interests of neighbouring Kenya and Ethiopia relative to the objectives of AMISOM to stabilize Somalia. For instance, the national objective of Kenya has been to disrupt al-Shabaab's ability to operate across the border to Kenya, rather than defend ground as well as pursue the enemy. On the other side, given the historical animosity between Addis Ababa and Mogadishu, Ethiopia has no wish to see the emergence of a stronger united government in Somalia, let alone a functioning military one. Moreover, Ethiopia is equally interested in enforcing order on its border with Somalia, as well as the Kenyans. While AMISOM would contribute with some political cover and resources, it would be inaccurate to suggest that Ethiopia is in Somalia to serve AMISOM. Rather, contributing to AMISOM it directly serves Ethiopian interests.²³⁵

The success of AMISOM should not be understated in any of the above statements. But let's not forget the mantra must be realism, not idealism, for this mission. AMISOM has had a difficult time negotiating the political landscape in Somalia. It works in a challenging context, which is characterized by clan dynamics, political fractured lines and weak state institutions. Establishing trustworthy relationship and cooperation with local authorities and communities is risky, time-consuming and not always possible. Long-term stability and development in Somalia will be ensured only with sustained international support and a full-spectrum approach to the complex of military, political and humanitarian issues endemic to the region.

²³³ Albrecht, Peter. *REGIONAL INTERESTS DEFINE THE AFRICAN UNION MISSION IN SOMALIA*. Danish Institute for International Studies, 2015, p. 5

²³⁴ Albrecht, Peter. *REGIONAL INTERESTS DEFINE THE AFRICAN UNION MISSION IN SOMALIA*. Danish Institute for International Studies, 2015, p. 4

²³⁵ I bidem, Albrecht (2014), p.5

3.3.3. Innovative approaches in providing aid for Eritrean Refugees

Eritrean refugees face significant challenges as they flee from political oppression, compulsory military service and widespread human rights abuses. Their circumstances are only made worse by the sometimes-hostile conditions in their destination countries, such as Sudan, Ethiopia, and adjacent states. In answer to that, many NGOs and international organizations have created forward-thinking responses in order to offer support to the refugees.

One innovative approach to addressing the healthcare needs of Eritrean refugees involves innovations like mobile clinics and telemedicine. Since many refugee camps are located in remote or hard to access locations, medical teams bearing the needed basic medical supplies come with a mobile clinic to care for the population inside the camp. They are staffed by trained healthcare professionals who can address a variety of medical issues, ranging from health check-ups to specialized care. This service is working in all regions through mobile clinics donated by partners including the German medical association, Archimed, the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA) and the Swiss Support Committee for Eritrea (SUKÉ) among others. They are able to assist the public in a range of health issues such as preventive care including health screening and vaccinations, maternal and child health services as well as chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension management. The impact of mobile clinics on the health of Eritrean refugees is profound.²³⁶ Their role ensures rapid access to healthcare services, which are necessary for the diagnosis and treatment of diseases. This immediate access is part of what stops medical conditions from devolving into worse health crises that are more challenging and expensive to recover from. Mobile clinics also help in educating the targeted population and improve their general conditions as far as refugees are considered.

Another much-needed innovation in the access to healthcare among refugees in Eritrea is telemedicine. Utilizing this digital technology, healthcare practitioners are now able to diagnose and treat intricate medical conditions by connecting with specialists in urban centers or even from across the globe, without ever leaving their hospitals. Various digital tools are used in these telemedicine platforms, allowing healthcare providers in the field to

²³⁶ Eritrea Ministry of Information. "Mobile Clinics Hit the Roads to Ensure Children's Health." *Shabait.com*, 16 Dec. 2017

consult with specialists who are not present but still offer expert advice and diagnosis based on the information shared. This improves the level of medical care available to refugees. It provides access to specialized medical knowledge and expertise not otherwise available in rural areas.²³⁷

The psychological strain due to suffering persecution and living in displacement is a severe condition. Thousands of Eritrean refugees have been left severely traumatized by the violence, the losses and the journey itself to safety. The continuous state of uncertainty, along with the conditions in the refugee camps, damages mental health, leading to the conclusion that their comprehensive needs must be catered for. The International Medical Corps (IMC) has launched a variety of innovative mental health programs to improve the psychological well-being of refugees. Group therapy sessions form the basis of the mental health support for Eritrean refugees. These classes encourage an environment of support where people can discuss their experiences and feelings with others who have experienced what they have. The collective aspect of group therapy brings about some decrease of the isolation often experienced by refugees and a sense of sharing and support. One-on-one counseling offers personalized care to refugees for whom a much more serious disorder is related to more personal problems. Specialized services are delivered through individual sessions by trained counselors and psychologists to address needs such as PTSD, depression, and severe anxiety. Individual counseling safeguards the privacy and confidentiality of the refugees who feel free to share their most intimate thoughts without fear of being judged or punished.²³⁸

Education is an essential element in need to every Eritrean refugee, many of whom are children and young people with interrupted education paths due to displacement and conflict. Solutions that are inclusive and adaptive are a necessary part of the picture if we want to ensure refugees have access to learning, with digital learning platforms providing exactly this. The good news is that UNICEF and others moved quickly to develop online, targeted educational curricula for refugee children. These curricula span across a wide range of both educational topics including fundamental subjects like literacy and numeracy and more advanced subjects such as science and mathematics. The digital platforms used to deliver this content are accessible via tablets and laptops provided to refugee children. These devices are equipped with pre-loaded educational materials, making this access possible

²³⁷ Mars, Maurice. "Telemedicine in sub-Saharan Africa." *Telehealth in the developing world*. CRC Press, 2019, pp. 232-241

²³⁸ International Medical Corps. "Mental Health and Psychosocial Support." 2018

where internet is sporadic or unavailable. Digital learning platforms have had a major influence on Eritrean refugees and their education. First of all, they offer continuity of education, enabling displaced children to return to their level of learning. This continuity is so important to stem the effects of educational disruption, leading to learning loss, lower academic performance. Secondly, digital learning platforms allow for personalized learning. The adaptive learning technologies test each student and then provide content specific to them that is just enough of a challenge to help but not so difficult that it becomes frustrating or off putting.²³⁹

The innovative approaches put into action have been very successful, enhancing preventive and basic health program, education, income generating projects and integration of refugee community to host society. It is a collective effort by NGOs and different International Organizations, which have developed and implemented cost-effective strategies to work on complex needs of this marginalized community, resulting in above mentioned advancements. The effects of these creative techniques are substantial over the long-term. Support for better healthcare, education and livelihoods not only meets immediate needs but paves the way for a more secure and economically independent future for Eritrean refugees. When communities are well integrated in the host states, the possibility of social fragmentation decreases which is by far the most important factor to enhance the protection and resilience of both refugees and host communities. Looking forward, it is essential to build on these successes by scaling up effective programs, investing in new technologies, and fostering deeper collaboration among stakeholders. This will help ensure that the progress made in supporting Eritrean refugees can be maintained, and that new challenges can be met with new, successful approaches.

²³⁹ Blayone, Todd JB, et al. "Democratizing digital learning: theorizing the fully online learning community model." *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education* 14 (2017): pp. 1-16

4. CONCLUSION

Given that the humanitarian crises in the Horn of Africa are protracted and complex, new approaches need to be tried while addressing the underlying causes and improving the response to these crises. This thesis has analyzed the complicated dynamics in the region, specifically the relationship between conflict and displacement through the multiple socio-economic and environmental drivers underlying the crisis. This research, which covers a broad scope incorporating the three disciplines of sociology, history, and international relations, examined the most important causes and effects of refugee displacement.

The historical background has left a colonial legacy characterized by conflict and political instability as driving forces behind insecurity in the region. Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia are dealing with an emergency level that is vividly composed of violent conflict, persecution and environmental degradation, and all of which contribute to one of the largest displacements we have experienced in known history. This case-study shows the overlap of economic strain and social division, alongside the psychological pressure to which displaced populations are subjected, and how all of these issues are context-dependent.

The colonial legacy in the Horn of Africa has been so pervasive that a number of borders were drawn with no regard to linguistic, ethnic and cultural affinities and prompted persistent inter-ethnic and boundary disputes.

These colonial legacies have been compounded by ongoing political instability and governance issues. Weak governance structures, corruption, and authoritarianism have hindered the establishment of stable political environments and the effective delivery of basic services. This dissatisfaction has sparked widespread discontent, accelerated by long-standing conflicts such as the Eritrean-Ethiopian War, the Tigray conflict, and the Somali civil war.

Ethnic and religious tensions are also significant contributors to the crisis. The region's ethnic diversity has frequently served as the site of tension, as groups carry historical grievances and compete over resources and political power. Such dynamics are exacerbated by institutional arrangements shaped by political economies which favour certain groups over others. And where the policies are biased to the extent that life chances for some groups are favoured over others, marginalization and physical violence result. Apart from that, religious distinctions play a part in destabilization, as is exemplified by the opposition of Christian and Muslim communities, particularly in Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The region is also suffering as a result of the environmental degradation induced by climate change. The Horn of Africa is prone to severe weather events such as extended droughts and flash floods, disrupting farm production and causing food and water scarcity. Climate change compounds these problems by making extreme weather events more frequent and damaging, placing additional burdens on already limited resources. The environmental degradation with the highest population growth increases competition for limited resources, which then often results in conflict and displacement.

The economic hardships experienced by the vast majority of the population are equally serious in driving the humanitarian catastrophe. These issues point to very limited economic opportunities, high unemployment, and insufficient infrastructure. The region is largely dependent on subsistence farming and pastoralism, and as such communities are already dealing with environmental changes, they also face malnutrition, food insecurity and further economic disruptions. The absence of economic growth and investment exacerbates poverty and creates worse and worse human conditions.

Despite all the made efforts, there remains a pressing need for more cohesive and innovative strategies to tackle the root causes of displacement. Greater international cooperation and better regional strategies to maintain stability and to provide safeguards for vulnerable entities are an essential need. The study calls for a joined-up of aid response across humanitarian, development, climate adaptation and conflict resolution efforts.

Solving the humanitarian crisis in the Horn of Africa will be a long-term effort that requires cooperation among the international community, regional actors, and local stakeholders. By leveraging the successes of current programmes and complementing them with new technologies and approaches, a far more sustainable model can be created for displaced populations and their host communities. The results of the thesis point to the need of a holistic response that incorporates different dimensions of the crisis, ranging from short-term humanitarian relief to long-term development and conflict resolution interventions. Through enhanced international collaboration and innovative approaches, the global community can take action to alleviate the crisis and contribute towards bringing stability and prosperity in the Horn of Africa.

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