PEACE, PROSPERITY AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Towards a Common Regional Mechanism for Refugee Management (CRMRM)

Context

The Horn of Africa is a region of mixed migration and is home to over 5 million refugees and 13 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) . According to global displacement trends, forced displacement across the region has increased in volume over the last five years, fueled by conflicts, violence, socio-economic challenges and environmental factors. Most of the displacement in the region is protracted as is the case with Eritrean, Somali, Sudan, and South Sudan refugees. Although most of the push factors for forced displacement in the region come from within the States, their effects are not only on the countries of origin but also have spill over effects and impacts are felt across the region. Yet too often the policy and programmatic responses are confined to individual localities.

With refugee hosting communities in pre-existing precarious socio-economic situations plagued by food insecurity, limited access to basic social services and economic infrastructure, poor livelihood opportunities, and a degraded natural resource base, refugees further exacerbate their situation with competition over scarce social services and economic infrastructures, livelihood opportunities and environmental and natural resources and lead to growing incidence of conflicts and clashes.

For disadvantaged groups (women, children and persons with specific needs) displacement has further been seen to aggravate pre-existing inequalities and result in loss of support networks, and often shatter both formal and informal protection mechanisms. Cramped living conditions, poor lighting, lack of security at water and sanitation facilities and absent or weak reporting channels for violence, sexual exploitation and cases of early marriage leave women and girls at high risk of abuse. Despite these challenges, refugee assistance programs often overlook or fail to address sticky gendered norms that prevent communities from strengthening their overall resilience. Therefore gender-sensitive approaches need to be adopted, and attention to women's needs and women's meaningful participation in policy development process is key to resilient and sustainable development in the region.

Enhancing the productive capacities and coping mechanisms of the host populations is equally an important step to safeguard a very much needed asylum space for refugees in the host countries in the Horn of Africa. A shrinkage in the asylum space will likely leave refugees stuck in a legal and humanitarian limbo, leading to deeper poverty and greater vulnerability for them.

Project Name	Towards a Common Regional Mechanism for Refugee Management
Donor	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida)
Duration	January 2020 – March 2024 (including NCE period)
Ultimate Beneficiaries	Refugee and asylum seeker-women, children and men across the IGAD region.
Secondary Beneficiaries	Ministries and/or departments responsible for managing refugee and refugee related policies including Interior, Immigration, Labour, Health, Foreign Affairs, Justice and Education, Social Affairs among other.
Other Beneficiaries	Academic institutions, border officials, health & social services (private/public) providers, local communities, and civil society organizations.
Geographical Focus	IGAD Region (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda)



Delegates at IGAD Regional Scientific Conference on Migration and Displacement, 2022



Uganda National Dialogue on Forced Displacement



Regional Learning and Knowledge Exchange visit at the border entry point in Kisoro, Uganda

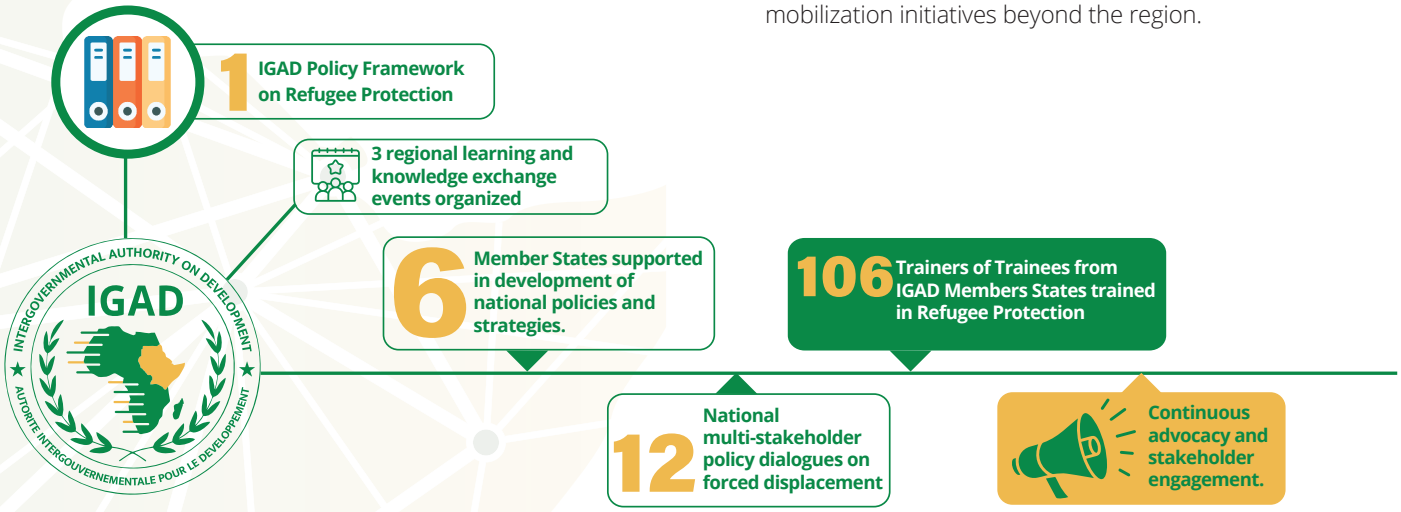
Our Approach

Securing protection space for refugees in IGAD countries requires a regional perspective especially as the majority of refugees originate from within the region. This emanates from the fact that effective protection is often beyond the reach of a single State and a successful regional framework permits responsibility for refugee protection to be distributed equitably across States, based on principles of equity, respect for sovereignty, reciprocity and solidarity. Regional arrangements complement individual state responsibilities by enabling joint efforts in seeking solutions and allow for concerted action to improve conditions in countries of asylum, which may in turn reduce the need for refugees to travel onward to other, more distant host countries to look for even minimal standards of protection.

Through this initiative, IGAD is promoting predictable, fair and gender responsive approach to management of refugees and asylum protection in the region by harnessing the collective will and determination of its Member States to sustainably respond to forced displaced and foster stability within host communities. The CRMRM Project, through multiple initiatives, is supporting Member States towards the harmonisation of refugee protection and management policies, legislation and practices in the region based on a full and inclusive application of the international refugee protection principles enshrined in the international instruments on refugees including the principles of asylum, non-discrimination, non-refoulement, protection, solutions, responsibility sharing, respect for human rights and the humanitarian law principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality.

Achievements

1. Developed the IGAD Policy Framework on Refugee Protection based on findings of national consultations and assessments of asylum and refugee management legislation, policies, and practices in each of the Member States.
2. Supported Somalia in development of a Protection Policy, Uganda in development of a National Refugee Policy and South Sudan in development of a five-year Strategic Plan 2023 – 2027 for the Commission of Refugee Affairs.
3. Supported Sudan and South Sudan in development of National Comprehensive Durable Solutions Strategies for the over 7 million forcibly displaced populations in and from the two countries.
4. A Regional Durable Solutions Strategy for the Sudan and South Sudan Situation.
5. Convened multi-stakeholder policy dialogues and coordination platforms at national, regional and inter-regional levels for coherence in forced displacement responses and enhanced cooperation between Member States and Stakeholders.
6. Reinforced the link between research, policy, and practical implementation, effectively addressing gaps in implementation and normative aspects of refugee protection.
7. National and regional training of trainers for the Member States' refugee management agencies towards strengthening technical capacities, harmonization of practices and enhancing knowledge transfer in their operations.
8. Learning and knowledge exchange events on refugee protection and management for the Member States to allow sharing of good practices, co-creation of practical solutions, and disseminate the lessons from these processes to the attention of policymakers for effective policy formulation.
9. Supported high-level advocacy engagements and resource mobilization initiatives beyond the region.



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