

Fleeing terror, fighting terror

The truth about refugees and violent extremism

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Refugees are increasingly subjected to harsh policies that violate the spirit of refugee laws, and that are often justified by claiming the refugees pose security risks. This study examines the effects of violent extremism among South Sudanese and Somalian refugees in Ethiopia. The risks of violent extremism in both populations are low and refugees play a key role in fighting extremist threats. However, the harsh conditions they are subjected to over long periods pose several humanitarian, development and security concerns. Urgent efforts to improve living conditions for refugees are needed.

Key points

- ▶ Refugees are subjected to harsh policies that violate the spirit of refugee laws. These are often justified by using leading language suggesting they pose security risks.
- ▶ Refugees often possess a genuine disdain for extremists who exposed them to brutal violence and caused their displacement. Their knowledge and participation play a key role in fighting extremist threats.
- ▶ South Sudan and Somalia create the third and fourth most refugees in the world yet are the two most underfunded refugee situations in the world.
- ▶ Large flows of disenfranchised people living for long periods in under-resourced camps pose many concerns.
- ▶ The international community must increase support for refugees in Ethiopia. Grossly underfunded camps result in poor conditions and exposure to an assortment of risks, including violent extremism.
- ▶ Properly implemented preventing and countering violent extremism programmes can achieve humanitarian, development and security objectives.
- ▶ Ethiopia's policy developments towards refugee integration put the country in a position to become a world leader. Ethiopia must continue to implement them in a sensitive manner.

Introduction

In both public and political discourse, refugees are often treated as security risks, specifically as posing violent extremist threats.¹ Refugees are increasingly subjected to harsh policies including reinforced borders, border externalisation, reduced quotas, prolonged or indefinite stays in camps and even refused entries and forced returns.² According to Donald Kerwin in the *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 'these pinched interpretations violate the spirit, intent and, often, the letter of international law' and are most often justified by intentionally using language including 'security', 'crisis' or 'risk'.³

Despite this narrative and associated policies, no credible evidence exists that refugees pose elevated security risks. While anecdotal evidence exists and one cannot categorically rule out any population for extremist risks, the disproportionate focus on refugees compared to other populations – immigrant or non-immigrant – belies effective, balanced responses. Instead, focusing on migration control as a means to control violent extremism hurts legitimate migrants and refugees and does very little to deter violent extremism.⁴

'Fear of attacks has driven a growing link between anti-terror measures and immigration policy that is analytically and statistically unfounded and must change.'

Ben Emmerson, Special Rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights, United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), 2016

Meanwhile, global and African refugee flows continue to grow. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Global Trends 2016 report indicated a staggering 65.6 million people were displaced from their homes by conflict and persecution in 2016.⁵ At the end of 2016, sub-Saharan Africa (all regions except North Africa) had created 5 135 100 out of a worldwide 17 187 500 total refugees.⁶

Less than 1% of refugees are resettled in third countries.⁷ A global total of 189 300 refugees were admitted for resettlement in 2016.⁸ In sub-Saharan Africa, the vast majority of refugees remain in immediately neighbouring countries.⁹

With many 'destination' countries increasingly restricting their protection offerings and reducing refugee quotas, the burden of the global refugee crisis falls disproportionately on poor countries even more than ever. Importantly, eight of the top 10 countries hosting the most refugees relative to the size of their national economies are in Africa,¹⁰ with the world providing dismal support and chronically underfunding refugee appeals.¹¹

South Sudan and Somalia are the third and fourth biggest source countries for refugees in the world respectively.¹² Ethiopia currently hosts the sixth largest refugee population in the world¹³ despite ranking among the world's poorest countries. Furthermore, the Horn of Africa is one of the most conflict-affected regions in the world, largely due to the presence of al-Shabaab.¹⁴ Furthermore, Ethiopia shares a 1 600 km border with Somalia, is home to 4.6 million Somalis and has forces in

Somalia, yet has managed to minimise al-Shabaab's attacks.¹⁵ This is particularly compared to other countries within the region that the terrorist group has attacked.¹⁶ As such, this combination of factors provides a rich opportunity to examine the links between these different phenomena.

This study seeks to examine the impacts of violent extremism on South Sudanese and Somalian¹⁷ refugees in Ethiopia. Beyond answering whether refugees are prone to violent extremism, it seeks to identify the indicators of violent extremism and examine the comprehensive effects on these populations. This includes the role violent extremism played in causing displacement, refugee perceptions of violent extremism, relationships with local communities, perceptions on safety, and what violent extremism risks exist, if any.

Methodology

Secondary research exploring literature on existing evidence about migration and violent extremism to identify risk factors and develop a framework for analysis was conducted. Primary data was gathered through focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Focus group discussions were conducted with South Sudanese and Somalian refugees living in camps in Gambella and Jijiga respectively.

Key informant interviews were conducted with practitioners selected for their ability to provide informed commentary or insights into violent extremism in the target regions. Key informants included camp administrators, council members, local authorities, civil society workers, journalists and academics with related expertise. Some of the key informants were refugees, whereas others were not, but had expertise on the topics.¹⁸

The focus group discussions with refugees and key informant interviews occurred as follows:

Table 1: Focus group discussions and key informant interviews in the Gambella region (South Sudanese perspectives)

Category of respondents	Number of respondents
Jewi women	6
Jewi elders	6
Tierkedi	6
Tierkedi youth	6
Key informant interviews	13

Table 2: Focus group discussions and key informant interviews in Jijiga and surrounds (Somalian perspectives)

Category of respondents	Number of respondents
Aw Barre	7
Sheder elders	7
Kebri Beyah women	8
Sheder youth	8
Key informant interviews	12

Limitations

This study should be understood as an examination of the perceptions among South Sudanese and Somalian refugees living within their specific camp contexts within Gambella or Jijiga. The perspectives included in this study should not be understood to reflect South Sudanese or Somalian refugees from other source or destination regions. In particular, all South Sudanese participants were Nuer and reflect a strong Nuer bias. It is important to note that the responses would probably differ substantially if different populations were included, specifically Dinka.

This study does not provide a comprehensive overview of violent extremism or migration in South Sudan, Somalia or Ethiopia. Similarly, it does not provide analysis of the conflicts in any of the countries or regions.

South Sudan and Somalia are the third and fourth biggest source countries for refugees in the world respectively

The Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) is responsible for managing and coordinating all aspects of the refugee programme in Ethiopia.¹⁹ ARRA authorised access to the camps and facilitated the focus group process. Researchers provided focus group participants with background information and informed consent forms that described the independent nature of the research and guaranteed anonymity. However, the presence of outside researchers in the camps is rare. As such, focus group participants may have presumed links to ARRA and potentially limited some of their responses accordingly.

Language presented limitations as all field studies were conducted in Somali and Nuer using translators. Translators were trained on the research tools, but translations inevitably result in some details or nuances being missed.

Key terms

Refugees

The terminology involved with migration is complex, whereby the distinctions between refugees and other categories of migrants are often conflated. Refugees are a highly specific category of people with guaranteed rights to legal protection as defined by international conventions.

The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol define a refugee as someone who:

‘... owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons 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, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it’.²⁰

The 1969 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa expands on the 1951 definition to apply a wider definition to a broader category of people:

‘... 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’.²¹

This study originally planned to focus on a broader category of forced displaced persons that would include people whose refugee status could include undocumented, stateless, asylum seeker, rejected asylum seeker, internally displaced person (IDP) or refugee. These distinctions can be important in determining vulnerability for risky behaviour. However, the ‘open door’ nature of Ethiopia’s refugee policies rendered these distinctions insignificant in the camp contexts included in the study. Forced displaced people in the areas studied are treated as refugees on arrival while they undergo refugee status determination.

Importantly, the very definition of refugee includes only people fleeing from violence or persecution and not perpetrating it. Perpetrators are excluded from the definition and from receiving refugee designation. As such, associating violent extremism with refugees must be done mindfully given the effects it could have on people who need protection.

Violent extremism

The debate around terminology related to terrorism and violent extremism is substantial. Many definitions exist without any consensus. Defining and operationalising these terms are very important at an institutional level, but less important in terms of individual perceptions and behaviours. Violent extremism does not translate directly into either Somali or Nuer languages and was interpreted as ‘terrorism’ and ‘extreme forms of violence’ respectively.



THE MOST COMMON
INTERSECTION BETWEEN
REFUGEES AND VIOLENT
EXTREMISM IS THAT
REFUGEES ARE FLEEING
FROM IT

In some cases, this paper applies findings on terrorism, radicalisation and violent extremism interchangeably. This is because substantially more literature on the links between terrorism and refugees has been written than violent extremism, where the findings are applicable to violent extremism.

While no consensus exists, we have applied the terms as follows:

- **Violent extremism** – advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic or political objectives.²²
- **Terrorism** – premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine state agents.²³
- **Radicalisation** – ‘the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and extremist ideologies associated with terrorist groups’.²⁴
- **Counter-terrorism** – military or police activities and operations that are undertaken ‘to neutralize terrorists [and extremists], their organizations, and networks in order to render them incapable of using violence to instil fear and coerce governments or societies to achieve their goals’.²⁵
- **Preventing or countering violent extremism** – ‘the use of non-coercive means to dissuade [or prevent] individuals or groups from mobilizing toward violence and to mitigate recruitment, support, facilitation, and engagement in ideologically motivated terrorism by non-state actors in furtherance of political objectives ... [Countering violent extremism] recognizes a wide range of motives – such as political or economic grievances, feelings of marginalization, money, kinship, coercion, and radicalisation’.²⁶

Framework for analysis

Refugees and violent extremism

It has been established that the most common intersection between refugees and violent extremism is that refugees are fleeing from it.²⁷ Furthermore, refugees undergo more rigorous screenings than other migrant classes.²⁸

However, we cannot rule out threats entirely. Extremists have been known to exploit any available channel,

including refugee flows.²⁹ Also, while statistically insignificant against total refugee flows, historical cases have occurred where extremists have targeted refugee camps for radicalisation, recruitment and attacks.³⁰ It is important to examine the contexts refugees operate in to gain a full understanding and respond appropriately.

Associating violent extremism with refugees must be done mindfully given the effects it could have on people who need protection

Importantly, the conditions refugees are subjected to raise many concerns, including some related to extremism. Experts have expressed concerns that refugee camps may become fertile recruitment grounds for violent extremism³¹ – specifically, if large populations of refugees are subjected to poor conditions and uncertainty over long periods of time.³²

‘You don’t want to have a situation where people are just stagnating in camps year in and year out because you’re creating essentially a hospitable environment for people to recruit extremists and criminals... Where you do have war and you do have flight, you need to have a robust system for housing people, continuing to educate them, and processing them in a secure but reasonable timeframe.’

Michael Chertoff, former US homeland security secretary in a June 2016 interview

Alex Schmid establishes that ‘the arrival of large refugee populations, when not properly handled, increases the risk of attacks in recipient countries’.³³ The risk of radicalisation is further exacerbated where education is poor, work is absent, and freedom of movement restricted.³⁴ As such, warnings about large, overcrowded and underfunded refugee camps in dire conditions extend beyond humanitarian concerns and raise worries related to violent extremism.³⁵ These risks are exacerbated in the current context whereby poor countries in close proximity to conflicts host the overwhelming majority of refugees.³⁶ Absorbing large flows of politically and economically dispossessed people is often contentious, particularly in poor communities. Inflows of disadvantaged refugees often

strains already sparse resources.³⁷ Many countries and communities in recent years are resisting refugees, claiming they pose terrorist threats and strain already-scarce resources.³⁸ Xenophobic sentiments from host communities can in turn lead to increased restrictions and integration problems that in turn may ripen conditions for recruitment.³⁹

Refugees subjected to protracted situations – defined by UNHCR as one in which 25 000 or more refugees from the same nationality have been in exile for five or more years in a given asylum country⁴⁰ – raise further concerns. According to Khalid Koser, ‘the risk of radicalisation is especially heightened where IDPs and refugees find themselves in protracted situations: marginalized, disenfranchised, and excluded’.⁴¹ These refugees do not have access to repatriation, integration into host communities, or third-country resettlement and are kept in camp or ‘temporary’ situations for multiple years or even generations. Notably, the UNHCR Global Trends 2016 report claims 11.6 million refugees – two thirds of all refugees – were in protracted situations with the average protracted situation lasting 26 years.⁴²

A 2015 RAND Corporation study examined historical global incidents where refugee populations were radicalised. The study identified the six factors below as relevant in predicting conditions that lead to radicalisation among refugee populations.⁴³

1. Host country’s administrative and legal policies –

Whether refugees have the rights to live, work and register life events influences all other risks, including how refugee groups are received by host populations.

2. Political and militant organising – The presence of political wings or militant groups within the camps or whether refugees are supporting factions conducting operations in the home countries increase the risk of radicalisation. Militant groups can also potentially infiltrate refugee groups without host-country acquiescence if they are receptive.

3. Security – The risk of radicalisation increases if the host country does not police the camps and surrounding areas. Risk worsens if people are able to cross at will into the country of origin for armed activities.

4. Shelter – The conditions that refugees are housed in – including shelter, food, water and sanitation – contribute to the risk of radicalisation. Risks increase if

camps are in isolated locations and/or are close to the border of origin.

5. Local economic conditions and resilience – If the local population feels disadvantaged by the resources provided to refugees, tensions can increase and communities might retaliate and prey on refugees. Local resentment can lead to more restrictive policies and in turn a higher risk of radicalisation.

6. Conditions for youth – Militant groups often focus on recruiting refugee youth and youth can become politically active in their own right. Risks increase if young people lack education beyond the primary level, access to employment opportunities or if they perceive discrimination.

These factors informed focus group discussion guides and key informant interview questionnaires. Respondents were asked for their direct input and experiences on violent extremism, as they understand it. They were further asked for their perspectives on the above indicators as nascent factors that could potentially lead to violent extremism.

Preventing and countering violent extremism in refugee communities

Preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE) has emerged in recent years as a development within the counter-terrorism field.⁴⁴ It reflects the realisation within the counter-terrorism community that efforts tended to be overly militarised and discounted local contexts and driving factors of violent extremism.⁴⁵ Intelligence, military and law enforcement were largely ineffective at combating issues related to violent extremism and in some cases even made them worse.⁴⁶

P/CVE emerged as a practice focused on a more inclusive approach that engages a wider range of community-based actors to address the ‘root causes’ of violent extremism including, but not limited to, economic opportunities, educational initiatives, youth and woman empowerment, community policing, countering extremist narratives and protecting the rule of law.⁴⁷ P/CVE interventions seek to reduce support for or participation in extremist violence through non-coercive means, increasing social resilience and empowering local communities.⁴⁸ It should be understood as a subset of the counter-terrorism field that was previously overlooked.⁴⁹

P/CVE programmes are vital in refugee populations where extremist threats exist. Importantly, if designed and implemented well, P/CVE programmes can help achieve humanitarian, development and security objectives simultaneously.⁵⁰

Holistic P/CVE programmes must engage development and humanitarian actors to ensure that refugees are offered solutions that address the root causes of violent extremism.⁵¹ Support for community-development initiatives for refugees should be prioritised as a P/CVE measure.⁵² According to Kerwin: 'The success of P/CVE programmes depends, in part, on their responsiveness to the diverse contexts and motivations of terrorist recruits, and on engagement of these programmes with family, school, law enforcement, and other community institutions.'⁵³ Engaging refugees in the design of P/CVE programmes is another important factor. Refugees are uniquely positioned to offer insights on the relevant factors within their communities. Efforts to consult with refugees to offer alternatives are crucial.⁵⁴

The South Sudanese civil war has involved gross violations of human rights on both sides that could constitute either war crimes or crimes against humanity

Focus group participants and key informants were asked about the presence of P/CVE programming within refugee and local communities, as well as and their roles in developing and implementing them.

Geographic contexts

South Sudan

After achieving independence in 2011, South Sudan collapsed into a civil war marked by deep-rooted ethnic tensions in 2013.⁵⁵ The Dinka-led government was accused of consolidating political power and marginalising other ethnic groups⁵⁶ culminating in the removal of Riek Machar, a Nuer, as deputy president by President Salva Kiir Mayardit, a Dinka, after accusing him of trying to orchestrate a coup.⁵⁷ Civil war erupted in earnest in December 2013 when Kiir-aligned soldiers descended upon the capital city, and reportedly targeted and killed Nuer civilians, causing mass exodus.⁵⁸ Rebel forces composed predominantly of Nuer soldiers have similarly been accused of targeting Dinka civilians.⁵⁹ The subsequent civil war has involved gross violations of human rights on both sides that could constitute either war crimes or crimes against humanity.⁶⁰ The African Union (AU) Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan found 'the conflict having a seeming nature of ethnic violence' and further stated that 'both sides to the conflict have violated human rights. Alleged perpetrators include soldiers, militia, rebels and civilians'.⁶¹

Disturbing reports of grotesque violence have emerged including murder, sexual and gender-based violence, abduction and conscription of children, looting, pillaging, disappearances, torture and targeting humanitarian workers.⁶² Reports indicate instances of mass rapes, dismemberment of limbs, people being forced to eat human flesh or drink human blood, almost always against civilian targets taking no part in the hostilities.⁶³

SOUTH SUDAN WAS THE FASTEST-GROWING REFUGEE POPULATION IN 2016 INCREASING FROM

854 100

to

1.4 million

IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE YEAR ACCORDING TO THE UNHCR

While there is no evidence of violent extremism in South Sudan, an analysis of violent extremism in the Horn of Africa by the Global Center on Cooperative Security highlighted that ‘conditions of fragility may provide opportunities for violent extremist groups to operate or gather support and recruits’.⁶⁴ The same report states that ‘the underlying drivers of terrorist violence do not appear to be significantly different than other forms of political violence’ and further warned that state-building efforts in South Sudan must be mindful of conditions that could lead to violent extremism.⁶⁵ Additionally, the Horn of Africa as a sub-region is highly prone to terrorism.⁶⁶ As such, while violent extremism is not a well-acknowledged threat in South Sudan, the potential for such threats do exist.

According to the UNHCR Global Trends 2016 report, South Sudan was the fastest-growing refugee population in 2016 – increasing from 854 100 to 1.4 million (64%) in the second half of the year and constituting a total of 3.3 million total displaced (including IDPs) at the end of 2016.⁶⁷ By January 2018, the number of South Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers had climbed to 2 432 495.⁶⁸ About one out of every four South Sudanese has been displaced, including a disproportionate number of women and children.⁶⁹ Of these, 421 453 asylum seekers and

refugees are in Ethiopia⁷⁰ where they made up the fastest-growing refugee population, including 66% of new arrivals (66 000) in 2017. South Sudanese refugees are concentrated heavily (96%) in the Gambella region of Ethiopia.⁷¹

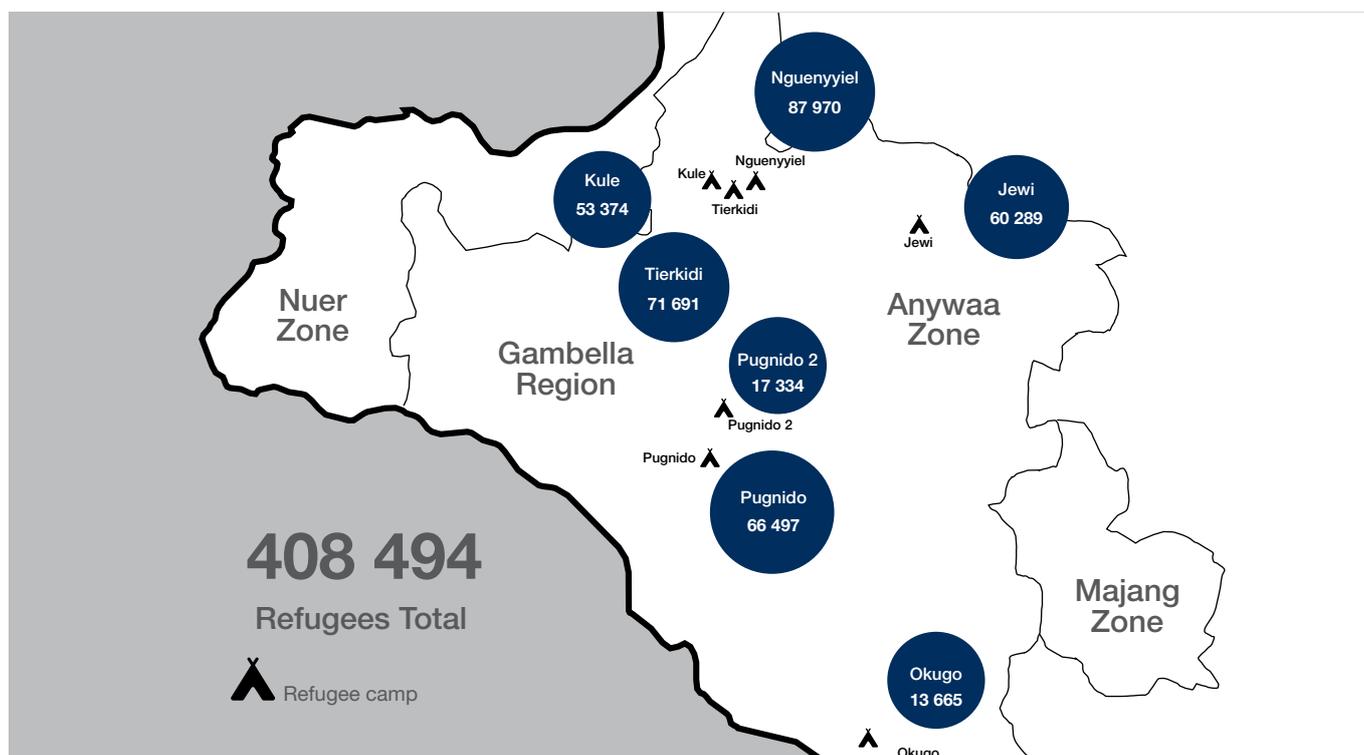
‘No refugee crisis today worries me more than South Sudan. That refugee children are becoming the defining face of this emergency is incredibly troubling. We, all in the humanitarian community, need most urgent, committed and sustainable support to be able to save their lives.’

Valentin Tapsoba, UNHCR’s Africa bureau director, 2017

Somalia

Somalia features prominently in discourse on violent extremism in Africa. According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), al-Shabaab was the deadliest terror group on the continent in 2016 and killed more people than any other terror group.⁷² Al-Shabaab has relentlessly attacked government institutions, civilians, international organisations and the

Map 1: South Sudanese refugees in the Gambella region – Ethiopia (as of 31 January 2018)



Source: UNHCR

African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in its efforts to overthrow the Somali government.⁷³

In addition to direct attacks, the group enforces a harsh taxation system on households and has been highly successful at recruiting and training youth into its ranks.⁷⁴ While al-Shabaab is based in Somalia, it has established an ability to export violence and has conducted attacks in Kenya and Uganda.⁷⁵

While Somalia remains one of the world's biggest refugee populations, the number of Somali refugees is in fact falling

Displacement in and from Somalia is particularly complex and often multi-causal.⁷⁶ In addition to al-Shabaab, government security forces, AU troops and allied militias have also been responsible for indiscriminate attacks, sexual violence, arbitrary arrests and detention.⁷⁷ Clan conflicts over political power and economic resources have also contributed to violence and displacement.⁷⁸

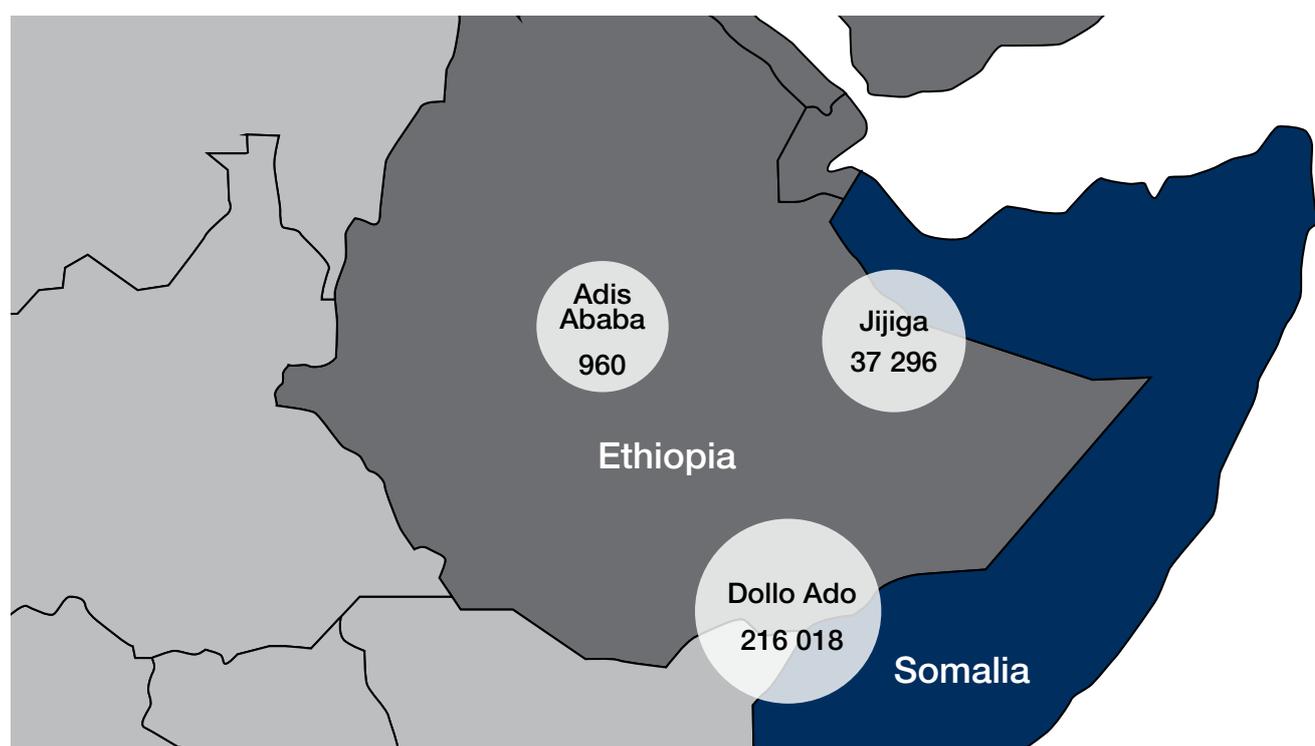
The country is further subject to an extremely weak state, slow and sudden environmental hazards, low socio-economic development and food and livelihood

insecurity.⁷⁹ Together, these forces have caused substantial displacement and one of the most complex and biggest protracted refugee situations in the world. Somalia has featured in the top 10 refugee-producing countries 29 times in the past 30 years.⁸⁰ In 2016, Somalia had 1 012 323 refugees and 1 562 554 IDPs for a total of 2.6 million displaced persons.⁸¹ Almost 24% of Somalis are displaced⁸² and many have been displaced multiple times.⁸³ Most recently, two consecutive years of severe drought and severe food insecurity have led to famine warnings in 2017.

While Somalia remains one of the world's biggest refugee populations, the number of Somali refugees is in fact falling, with up to 100 000 returns in 2016. Most of these returns have resulted from reverification exercises out of Kenya and some returns from Yemen.⁸⁴

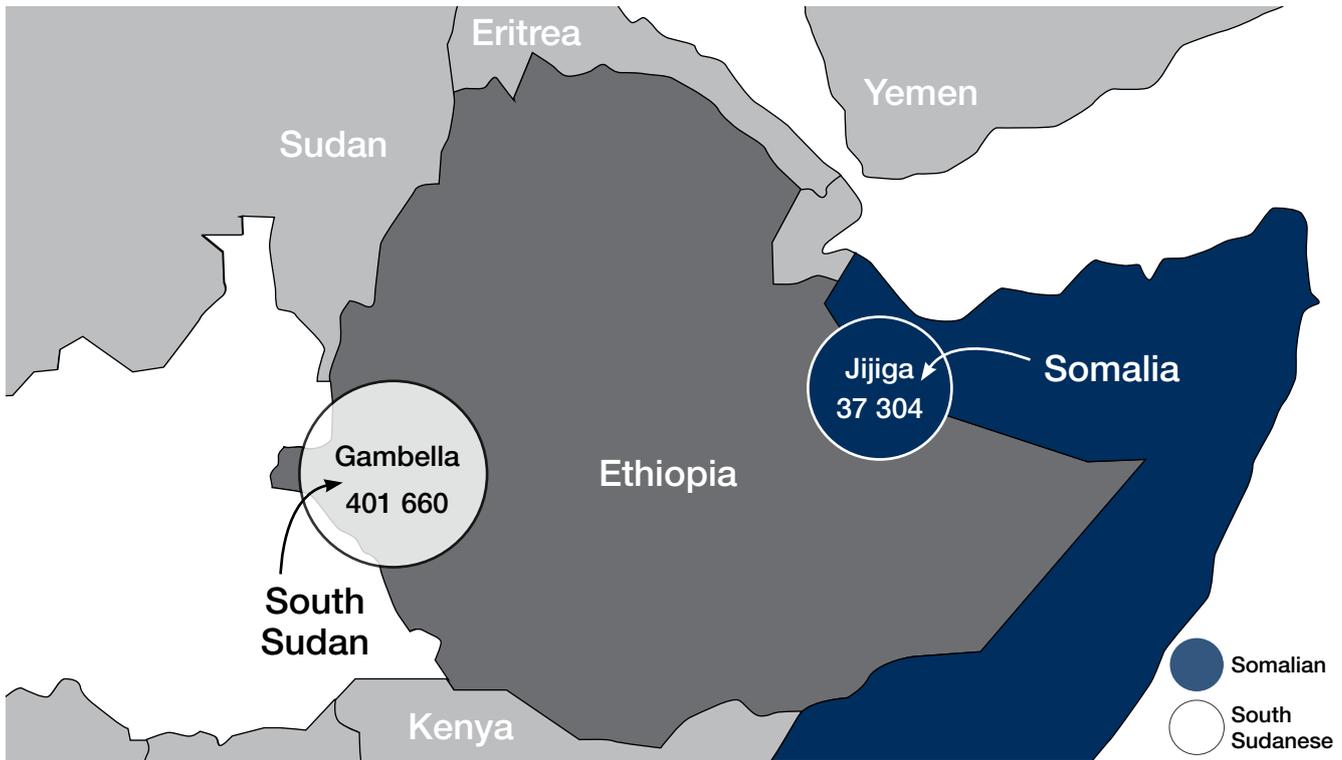
Ethiopia hosts 249 903 Somali refugees,⁸⁵ and 36 998 of these are in Jijiga.⁸⁶ Jijiga has a stable and slightly declining number of Somali refugees, many of whom have been in the region for many years. Jijiga is within the Somali region of Ethiopia, which is made up predominantly of an ethnic Somali population of Ethiopian nationals. Most newly displaced Somali arrivals to Ethiopia are to the Dollo Ado region.⁸⁷

Map 2: Somali refugees in Ethiopia (as of 31 January 2018)



Source: UNHCR

Map 3: Ethiopia – refugees and asylum seekers (as of 31 December 2017)



Source: UNHCR

Ethiopia

According to the UNHCR Global Trends 2016 report, Ethiopia hosted the sixth largest number of refugees in the world (791 600) in that year, second in Africa only to Uganda. As of 31 December 2017, this total had grown to 892 555.⁸⁸

Table 3: Number of refugees in Ethiopia according to nationality as of 31 December 2017⁸⁹

South Sudanese	421 867
Somalis	253 889
Eritreans	164 668
Sudanese	44 386
Yemenis	1 771
Other	5 974

Ethiopia’s legal refugee framework is a combination of international and domestic instruments. It is a party to both the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. Ethiopia did, however, make reservations to the 1951 Refugee Convention relating to the right to employment.⁹⁰

Domestically, the Refugee Proclamation of 2004 is the primary legal refugee instrument. It allows for the

recognition of ‘prima facie’ refugee status to be granted to groups in mass flow situations without subjecting individuals to the rigorous Refugee Status Determination process in situations of conflict.⁹¹ The 2004 proclamation further restricts refugees’ freedom of movement and requires that all refugees should live in designated areas and are not allowed to leave camps without authorisation.⁹² Camps are administered by ARRA whose key mandate is to support and maintain the safety of refugees until durable solutions are found.⁹³

Ethiopia’s offerings to refugees have grown in recent years, including a December 2017 promise to close all 27 refugee camps and integrate all refugees into communities within 10 years.⁹⁴ The country’s open-door policy and demonstrated commitment to nationalising international refugee law have enabled hundreds of thousands of people to seek refuge⁹⁵ and led to increasing international attention for its progressive approaches.⁹⁶

The 2016 UN Summit for Refugees and Migrants brought 193 countries together to respond to the large movements of refugees and migrants ‘with the aim of bringing countries together behind a more humane and coordinated approach’.⁹⁷ One of the key outcomes

of the summit was the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. The declaration involved 193 states committing to ‘more equitably share responsibility for the world’s refugees’.⁹⁸ The declaration further set out the key elements of a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) to be applied to large-scale movements of refugees and protracted refugee situations.⁹⁹

The four key objectives of the CRRF are to:¹⁰⁰

1. Ease pressure on host countries.
2. Enhance refugee self-reliance.
3. Expand third-country solutions.
4. Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.

In February 2017, Ethiopia accepted to be considered a CRRF focus country and officially launched the programme on 28 November 2017.¹⁰¹ The CRRF paves the way for the Nine Pledges Ethiopia made at the New York summit to improve the status of refugees.¹⁰²

Nine Pledges:¹⁰³

1. To expand the ‘out-of-camp’ policy to benefit 10% of the current total refugee population.
2. To provide work permits to refugees and those with permanent residence ID.
3. To provide work permits to refugees in the areas permitted for foreign workers.
4. To increase enrolment of refugee children in preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary education, without discrimination and within available resources.
5. To make 10 000 hectares of irrigable land available to enable 20 000 refugees and host community households (100 000 people) to grow crops.
6. To allow local integration for refugees who have lived in Ethiopia for over 20 years.
7. To work with industrial partners to build industrial parks to employ up to 100 000 individuals, with 30% of the jobs reserved for refugees.
8. To expand and enhance basic and essential social services for refugees.
9. To provide other benefits, such as issuance of birth certificates to refugee children born in Ethiopia, and the possibility of opening bank accounts and obtaining driving licences.

On 27 October 2017 civil registration was officially launched for refugees, allowing them the right to register life events including birth, death, marriage and divorce.¹⁰⁴ Additional progress has been made in access to justice, education and job creation. As of June 2017, 20 000 additional children were included in primary schools and plans towards employment in newly built industrial parks are under way.¹⁰⁵



THE ETHIOPIAN
GOVERNMENT HAS MADE
9 PLEDGES TO IMPROVE
THE STATUS OF REFUGEES

The Ethiopian government's commitment to refugees is explained in part by its aspirations to reach lower-middle-income status:

'There is an opportunity for Ethiopia to showcase its leadership in achieving a set of collective outcomes and creating best practices. If evidence can be shown over several years of programming in Ethiopia that a more integrated approach gradually reduces humanitarian spending, including from domestic resources, it will assist Ethiopia on its path to become a Middle-Income Country by 2025, and to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.'¹⁰⁶

Despite these developments and Ethiopia's demonstrated commitment to refugees and their role in development, many issues remain. The majority of refugees within Ethiopia are located in camps within the least developed regions of the country characterised by harsh weather conditions, poor infrastructure, high levels of poverty and poor development indicators.¹⁰⁷

The majority of refugees within Ethiopia are located in camps within the least developed regions of the country

Challenges with education, access and rights to work and freedom of movement have further been documented, with some humanitarian organisations urging Ethiopia to look more broadly at these issues and the prospect of long-term integration for refugees.¹⁰⁸

Primary research findings

South Sudanese refugee perceptions

Conceptualising 'violent extremism'

There is no direct translation for violent extremism in the Nuer language. This study used 'Ciang Kör mi diit elong' – which translates loosely to 'violence in the extreme sense'. Responses in the focus groups further referenced Ji Kör or Lätjäkni when speaking of 'regular' violence that is not 'extreme'.

Experiences of violent extremism in South Sudan

When asked about their experiences with 'extreme violence', focus group participants and key informants narrated experiences in South Sudan.

Participants commonly referenced political conflict that 'turned' ethnic or 'extreme' as it evolved. Multiple focus group participants and key informants claimed they were targeted because of their ethnicity specifically and repeatedly blamed Salva Kiir directly and his Dinka supporters for targeted violence toward the Nuer. Some responses further claimed an intentional effort to ethnically cleanse the Nuer people.

'I am sure the hatred for Nuer was growing by day and night starting from the day of our independence but we were not aware of what was going on until the day it happened that Nuer should be killed as a plan from the president with his tribe called Dinka.'¹⁰⁹

All focus group participants narrated personal stories of grotesque violence leading to their displacement. These included witnessing family members killed, mass graves, rape, burning down homes and even forced cannibalism. Responses indicated officials and soldiers perpetrated most of the violence with some civilian participation.

'The soldiers of Dinka tribe were going door to door taking every Nuer out and murdering them because they were Nuer. They burn them in their house if they refuse to come out. They forced them to eat their relatives, having sex with their relative and then die after.'¹¹⁰

Despite South Sudan's history of multiple civil wars, many focus group participants indicated that they did not anticipate the surge in violence that had occurred since December 2013. Others indicated that it was the worst violence to date as compared to previous wars and outbreaks of violence.

'When we got independent in 2011, South Sudan was very fine place to live. But at a time when the war broke out, it became so hard for Nuer to live in a Dinka majority city. In 2014 people were taken out from their house and were murdered.'¹¹¹

Migration as a method of resilience

Focus group participants repeatedly indicated that fleeing to Ethiopia was their only option to survive.

'Our father told us not to look back, to just run but not to kneel down and killed by government soldiers. I did not see any means that I will live there because we have no food to eat, no place to sleep, that's why cross the border to Ethiopia seeking asylum.'¹¹²

Descriptions of the journey to Ethiopia included similar violent experiences to those that precipitated their departures.

'I walked through the bushes not knowing where I am going and many others people were dying from attacks by government soldiers, from hunger, starving, and disease. Also, many were missing in the bush.'¹¹³

Experience of violent extremism in Ethiopia

Focus group participants and key informants reported no experiences of violent extremism in Ethiopia.

'I was so traumatised in South Sudan but after I have come to Ethiopia I got so well. Ethiopia is a good place to live because we are enjoying human rights here and that is it.'¹¹⁴

While most respondents indicated no presence of violent extremism, they did cite a presence of violence including theft, fighting or kidnapping within the refugee and local community. They further indicated a prevalence of gender-based violence including rape, domestic violence and 'eloping girls', referring to marriages without dowry payments. The majority of respondents qualified these incidents as 'normal' crime or included a direct comparison to violence experienced in South Sudan. These responses indicate a significantly different nature of crimes, whereby local crimes are not systemic and are substantially scaled down from those experienced in the context of war.

'There is no violence in Ethiopia like what we have faced in South Sudan because the government of Ethiopia protects us. The only violence I see is people are missing now in the bush when they go to collect firewood and we don't know what happened to them or never got their body at all.'¹¹⁵

'There is no violence we are facing here in Ethiopia as it was the case in South Sudan and we all appreciate this. But raping and burglaries are also sometimes happening in the camp but the community tries to control them as much as possible.'¹¹⁶

Some key informants indicated that some humanitarian agencies had been forced to relocate their warehouses outside the camps due to ongoing theft by camp inhabitants. Some key informants further indicated that some humanitarian actors and non-camp populations feel unsafe in the camps.

Perceptions of camp security

Many focus group participants and key informants credit a strong security apparatus within the camps and Ethiopia as a whole for keeping them safe, including strict access control. Focus group participants repeatedly attributed their safety to vigilant and pre-emptive efforts by camp authorities to ensure security for all.

'I have no experience whether in violent extremism, terrorism or ethnic violence in Ethiopia. This is mainly as we are under the full protection of the Ethiopian government and no other force can come here and attack them if it so desired.'¹¹⁷



When asked about whether refugees had encountered abuse of authority, respondents indicated very few issues. Focus group participants credited camp zoning and a concerted effort by authorities to treat all ethnicities or clans equally in terms of participation in refugee committees or any other refugee-centred activities. In cases where participants expressed a desire for more freedoms, including the freedom of movement outside the camps or conducting political activities within the camps, they indicated that they understood why these rules were necessary and that they followed them even if they did not like them.

Gambella is one of the most conflict-ridden regions in Ethiopia, driven in part by tensions between the Anywaa and Nuer populations

Some key informants reported an overall feeling of unease among refugees and workers and expressed that refugees could be prone to over-report their safety. Key informants further indicated that despite claims of very strict access control, camp entry and exit could in fact be porous at times. The large geographic size of the camps and the demographic similarities with the local populations make access control difficult. Local community members have been known to pose as refugees to gain camp benefits such as ration cards and then return to the community with supplies.

Refugee involvement in security and governance

Focus group participants and key informants emphasised refugee participation in security and governing structures within the camp as a key feature in maintaining peace and stability. Refugee Central Committees (RCCs) and other governance structures within the camps comprise elected refugees who fill various posts and work closely with authorities on security issues.

Some key informants indicated that this was a wilful method of empowering refugees to participate in self-governance and to avoid too much outside participation in security and administration as well as to avoid the abuse of power.

‘We resolve issues together – that is how we work and the society is free from these activities. Access control is also important, as prevention is better than cure,

so we focus on prevention. We conduct consultation with the refugee communities when we come across information or intelligence about a potential incident.’¹¹⁸

Key informants indicated some issues with volunteer roles, including lack of incentives and accountability. Some key informants indicated partiality to clan or family members, or a propensity to take up issues that relate to them personally and not the community, and that refugee committees are out of their depth, undertrained and don’t have the jurisdiction to handle some of the issues before them.

Host community relations

Focus group participants indicated positive relations with Ethiopian host communities and an overall lack of tension. Multiple focus group participants cited shared Nuer ethnicity as a key reason for good relations.

‘There is no violence that we are encountered here in Ethiopia. Non-violence is mostly a life of Ethiopian government and its people.’¹¹⁹

While focus group participants indicated strong host community relationships, some contradictions emerged, including violent incidents.

‘I was beaten by unknown people on my way back to camp from town. They beat me till I became unconscious.’¹²⁰

‘We have a good relationship with the local people but I do not know why our people are missing from the bush. But we don’t want to point our finger to when these incidents happen.’¹²¹

Key informants shared different perspectives on local relations, including grievances over land, inflation, changing economies, access to resources and demographic anxieties. Multiple key informants warned against pressure created on local populations by the continued growth of refugee flows and warned that these issues would worsen as the refugee populations outstripped local populations.

‘If the Ethiopian community did not need the refugee community, we would have a danger in the camps.’¹²²

Some informants further indicated that local populations in the region often felt that refugees received access to more services than local populations. For example, camps provide refugees with the international standard of 20 litres of water a day per person, whereas many community members are still looking for basic access.¹²³

Media reports further indicate tensions with host communities, including some incidents that escalated dramatically. Multiple focus group participants and key informants mentioned one specific incident in the Jewi camp where a car – owned by an international NGO – hit and killed two refugee children in a tragic accident. Refugees retaliated with mob violence, killing 10 Ethiopians with sticks and shovels, including two women.¹²⁴ The incident sparked unrest in Gambella and resulted in a statement from regional President Gatluak Tut Khot claiming: ‘The government of Ethiopia is providing all needed humanitarian assistance to those refugees... in return, they targeted innocents that have no linkage with the incident at all, despite the fact that car accidents can happen anytime, anywhere.’ The incident resulted in 30 refugee arrests.¹²⁵

Unrest in Gambella

Gambella is one of the most conflict-ridden regions in Ethiopia, driven in part by tensions between the Anywaa¹²⁶ and Nuer populations. Until 1980, Anywaa composed the majority population in the region.¹²⁷ The onset of the Second Sudanese Civil War in 1983 began changing the Anywaa’s position due to an influx of Nuer refugees,¹²⁸ some of whom have successfully claimed Ethiopian citizenship.¹²⁹ By 1994, the Nuer had overtaken the Anywaa to make up 40% of Gambella’s population¹³⁰ and the Anywaa are now a minority in a region they consider as their own.¹³¹

Within the context of the Gambella region’s political dynamics, power is allocated in direct proportion to ethnic population. A greater population translates directly into more allocated positions. Accusations have arisen that Nuer actors have allegedly facilitated arrivals across the border as a means to boost their own political position. Anywaa political organisations have called for a halt to the refugee influx, claiming ethnic cleansing for political gain and claiming the government’s offer to bring in refugees is politically motivated, not humanitarian.¹³²

Notably, focus group participants made almost no mentions of Anywaa. In contrast, key informants mentioned Anywaa 39 times across 13 interviews. This gap could indicate that refugees themselves have low interaction with or awareness of this portion of the local population compared to key informants who, as experts in the region, have greater exposure to broader issues. This contrast is made increasingly apparent when compared with the number of Nuer and Dinka mentions, where refugees expressed a clear identity and hostility respectively.

Table 4: Key word mentions among focus group discussions and key informant interviews

Word mentions	Women 6 people	Elders 6 people	Mixed 6 people	Youth 6 people	Key informants 13 people
Dinka	3	2	6	12	7
Nuer	13	27	17	31	118
Anywaa	0	0	0	1	39

Relations within the camps

Focus group participants indicated that relationships among refugees within the camps were strong, largely crediting shared Nuer ethnicity for



RELATIONSHIPS AMONG REFUGEES WITHIN THE CAMPS ARE STRONG

this harmony. Focus group participants further indicated that their common experiences of violence in South Sudan and shared identity as refugees united people over and above any elements or sub-clan divisions that might otherwise divide them.

‘Everything between us is going well because we have been killed together, slaughtered together, we were pushed out by Salva Kiir together and there is no reason to have differences. The war in South Sudan has united us as it has never seen before.’¹³³

While focus group participants and key informants indicated an overall peaceful environment, some accounts of violence and criminal activities were mentioned, including theft, rape and elopement among refugees. Respondents again qualified these crimes as ‘normal’. Reports of sub-clan tensions also emerged, including mentions of expected loyalty to one’s own clan or sub-clan in the event of conflict. Additional political divisions between supporters of Riek Machar and Taban Deng Gai, both Nuer, were mentioned.

Political activity

The issue of politics and political engagement emerged multiple times throughout the field study. Focus group participants indicated that political activities were strictly prohibited as a safety and security measure in the camps and that this rule was applied vigilantly.

Despite this, political mentions emerged repeatedly within the focus groups, always with reference to South Sudanese politics. Despite political activities being strictly forbidden, refugees clearly hold strong political opinions and allegiances.

Focus group participants regularly reference Salva Kiir, the government or Dinka with heavily negative references. Notably, focus group participants rarely mentioned Riek Machar, whereas key informants – specifically among South Sudanese refugee respondents – mentioned Machar multiple times, including references as outright as ‘we are the people of Riek Machar’. These same informants further made repeated calls for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) to improve the South Sudanese peace processes.

Table 5: Word mentions among focus group participants and key informant interviews

Word mentions	Women 6 people	Elders 6 people	Mixed 6 people	Youth 6 people	Informants 13 people
Salva Kiir/ President	6	7	9	18	7
Riek Machar	0	2	0	0	11
IGAD	0	0	0	1	10

‘I think my community including me we see those of Salva Kiir as a terrible people, killers, murders, and also the activities, which will never allow Nuer tribe to live peacefully in South Sudan. I don’t want Salva Kiir and his government.’¹³⁴



THERE IS NO DIRECT
TRANSLATION FOR
VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN
THE NUER LANGUAGE

Key informants revealed that political opinions and allegiances remained strong and that refugees stayed clandestinely involved despite these activities being banned.

‘As a rule, political activities are prohibited in the camp. Notwithstanding, most of the refugees follow the politics of South Sudan very actively. When people tried to collect money to support Riek Machar, anyone who refused to do so was considered as aligned with [Salva] Kiir. So, they surrounded about eight men who refused to contribute so they had to be moved camps. Also, there was confrontation in one of the camps among those refugees supporting Taban Deng and Machar respectively.’¹³⁵

In all of the focus groups, questions about the presence of recruiters were answered with respect to political recruiters. Participants made a clear effort to distance themselves from any political activity, repeatedly indicating that such affiliations and activities were strictly forbidden and political recruitment did not happen in the camps.

‘Who will recruit us here? No one because our leader has no money to do that. Second, we are now in another country – how do they permit that? They will not because there are rules and regulations that a refugee should respect and that is one of them.’¹³⁶

Despite this, however, focus group participants and key informants both mentioned incidents where people left the camp, ostensibly to join the conflict in South Sudan. While respondents mentioned defectors or possible recruiters, they provided no details of recruitment pipelines and distanced themselves from any activities, attributing departures instead to individual choices that occurred without any knowledge of other community members or camp officials.

Access to basic services

Focus group participants reported that they had access to basic services including education, healthcare, food and freedom of movement in the camps. Participants routinely expressed gratitude towards Ethiopia for hosting and providing for them.

‘Our life is good here in Ethiopia because our children go to school and when they come back they have food to eat; that is very great and I really appreciate this.’¹³⁷

Key informants complained more openly than focus group participants about conditions, including lack of

higher education spots, employment opportunities, poor healthcare and not enough food rations.

‘Our food was 16 kg which is now reduced to 10 kg and this does not take us through the month and we have to find other ways to complement our income such as going to the bushes and collecting firewood which we can sell... We also request the Ethiopian government to give us access to national jobs; this helps in dealing with our economic challenges and the trauma of the war.’¹³⁸

Some focus group participants and key informants indicated that there were not enough higher education spots allocated to refugees, but there were no notable complaints about access to primary or secondary education. This is particularly interesting given that the Nine Pledges indicate that only 54% of primary and 9% of secondary age refugees are currently enrolled in school.¹³⁹

Some key informants warned that a long-term lack of livelihood opportunities could become problematic. Informants indicated that youth in particular were showing signs of boredom and frustration that could worsen if the situation in South Sudan remained intractable.

Preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE)

All focus group participants and key informants indicated that the Ethiopian government and its various regional and federal institutions managed all components of any P/CVE programming. Focus group participants and key informants referred to security measures, peace awareness trainings and campaigns within the camps and communities. Some focus group participants mentioned slogans such as ‘Unity is Power’ and signs throughout the camps claiming ‘Revenge is not Acceptable’.

Respondents further referenced a series of humanitarian, woman- or youth-centred projects including vocational training, recreation, job training, small-business seed funding, sanitation, trauma counselling and gender-based violence projects provided by NGOs. One informant referenced programmes to break down barriers between host and refugee communities. While these programmes were not recognised by informants as P/CVE programmes, they maintain important P/CVE properties and complement security-based and awareness measures.

Somalian refugee perspectives

Conceptualising ‘violent extremism’

Violent extremism and terrorism are well-understood and established concepts among Somalian refugees. Terrorism is the most commonly understood reference, translated as ‘Argagixiso’ in Somali. Violent extremism as a concept also exists in Somali, translated as ‘rashbado xad dhaafa’ and sometimes as ‘seef la bood’ or ‘Xagjirnimo’. These terms were often used interchangeably among Somalian respondents and some distinctions were lost in translation into English.

Nonetheless, Somalians have a strong grasp of the differences between terrorist-driven violence and other natures of crime or violence. Discussions and responses focused on these activities.

Experiences of violent extremism

When asked about their experiences of violent extremism, focus group participants and key informants all cited experiences or situations in Somalia. Many focus group participants described first-hand experiences and some described second-hand experiences or general threats. Key informants spoke more about generalised violence (including bombings and community attacks) than personalised violence. Violent experiences included bombings, rockets, the deaths of family members described as ‘execution-style’, destruction of property, rape, threats and robbing.

‘I came from Beledweyne town, after they captured the main town. I saw masked, armed, and scary people over the fence and I ran away then never went back home. I left my wife and children there; I have never met them since then.’¹⁴⁰

Male adult focus group participants used vague language that avoided labelling perpetrators of violent extremism. These groups made ambiguous references to ‘they’, ‘situation’ or ‘forces’ to describe violent perpetrators, and avoided using names.

‘When there is migration from one country there are two reasons: one being by a war created by an external force; but ours is very different from those, we migrated because of an internal force. The force in Somalia has distorted 18 of the clans that used to live in harmony within Somalia. The foundation of Somalia has been defaced by these people.’¹⁴¹



FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS DESCRIBED MIGRATION AS A METHOD OF RESILIENCE AGAINST VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Table 6: Word mentions among focus group participants and key informant interviews

Terms used	Men 7 people	Elders 7 people	Women 8 people	Youth 8 people
Terrorist/terrorism	4	8	3	10
Conflict/war	5	7	4	1
Them/their/they/these people re: perpetrators	21	30	0	3
Al-Shabaab	0	3	0	5
Government	4	4	2	4
God/Allah	4	10	1	2

Woman focus group participants in contrast applied a distinctly passive voice when describing violence, almost never mentioning the entity that perpetrated it.

'I lost both my father and mother. There was war and violence everywhere and every possible bad things were happening to us. I myself was raped.'¹⁴²

Youth participants, however, were significantly more deliberate in naming perpetrators and spoke deliberately of al-Shabaab, the Islamic Courts Union and the Somali government for their respective roles in their experiences of violence and displacement.

'My older sister was killed in our home in front of my father who was also injured because she was not wearing veil (Islamic dressing). We went to another district in Somalia and we thought we were safe but again we received a notice letter threatening us in our new home and we had no option but to come here looking for a secure place. Al-Shabaab is terrorist.'¹⁴³

'There is an old proverb which says the battle of two elephants destroy the forest; so yes, we were impacted by the fighting between government and the forces of ICU in Somalia. Our houses were destroyed in this fighting.'¹⁴⁴

Perceptions of violent extremism

When asked about perceptions of violent extremism, focus group participants made an unmistakable effort to distance themselves from any activities or allegiances, most often claiming to not understand the aims or behaviours of any violent extremist or by claiming the ways in which associated people and behaviours were un-Somali or un-Islamic.

'These people are the enemy of the Somali people, their aim is to destroy Somalia and the people, they do not know why they are killing, they are not fighting for their religion either. Muslim religion does not allow you to kill humankind. These people don't have religion. We do not know from where they came.'¹⁴⁵

'Long ago we used to hear of al-Shabaab means "youngsters/under the age of 40" but the meaning has changed to "man-eater Satan youngsters".'¹⁴⁶

Migration as a method of resilience

Focus group participants described migration as a method of resilience against violent extremism, indicating that the only way to avoid forced recruitment or death

was to flee. Descriptions of the journey to Ethiopia included violent experiences similar to those that precipitated their departures.

'My husband and my brother were killed in my country. Children were dying on our way to Ethiopia and I gave birth to a child on the road crossing the border.'¹⁴⁷

Experiences of violent extremism in Ethiopia

Focus group participants and key informants emphatically rebuffed the presence of violent extremism in their communities within Ethiopia. Focus group participants and key informants acknowledged that the proximity to and history with Somalia posed risks for violent extremism and credited Ethiopian counter-terrorism efforts, camp security apparatus, and refugees themselves for working together to prevent violent extremism.

'I have been living here for 10 years and sleep in peace and greet the day in the morning in peace. There is no terrorism in Ethiopia; we live in amity and we exercise our religion in freedom.'¹⁴⁸

While focus group participants and informants agreed that there was no extremist activity in or around the camps, all acknowledged that risks existed and that deliberate efforts to prevent violent extremism were necessary and must be vigilantly applied.

'We believe terrorist groups tried to recruit among the refugees. There is fertile ground to do so given the extent of the movement of the refugees and the latter's similarity in terms of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.'¹⁴⁹

'The refugees are residing in camps, which are very close to the Somalia and Somaliland borders. As such, the threat emanating from this proximity and the potential presence of al-Shabaab cells operating in these areas makes the threat of violent extremism and terrorism a possibility.'¹⁵⁰

Some respondents mentioned historical threats and incidents.

'There are possibilities for anti-peace elements to mingle with the refugees and venture deeper into the hinterlands. In the past, we found suspected individuals who had some connection with al-Shabaab and were engaged with intelligence gathering and trying to foment disturbances within the refugee

camps. While these are some of the indicators, we have not had major incidents of violent extremism or terrorism involving the refugees or targeting them in one way or another.¹⁵¹

‘Recently a man travelled by Hummer vehicle from Hargeisa and walked to the camp on foot. He was a big man, fat and with moustache; migrants of Aw Barre were the ones who brought him here. He said he had an Issaq blood and was hanging around at an Issaq people’s house for about three days. Once they checked his phone and found out that he was a member of al-Shabaab. We were called to the place to speak to him and they had him locked in a room; he was begging for his life he even offered to give his belongings. Once we got to the place we disarmed him took his items and took him to the police. The peace of Ethiopia is also our safety so we are also contributing to the peace as well.’¹⁵²

Perceptions of camp security

Focus group participants and key informants credited the security apparatus both within the camps and in the wider surrounding areas for rooting out extremist threats, including screening processes, access control, zoning and involvement of refugees within the structures.

‘The people who migrated with me, we all know each other from back home as we moved from the same area; there is no member of those Satans who got here with us. Even if they would try to live amongst us, the Ethiopian government will not allow this kind of thing to happen.’¹⁵³

Focus group participants and key informants indicated that a coordinated approach among all stakeholders was the key to successfully securing the camps.

‘First and foremost, it is the ownership of refugees and this makes them as one of the primary stakeholders in the preventive efforts... In some previous cases, being suspected of these activities had adverse impacts on the refugees’ chances of resettlement in third countries, a chance which many of the refugees aspire and look forward in many cases. Beside the creation of awareness, the refugees through their various structures also take charge in ensuring the physical security of their camps and participate in identifying and reporting of suspicious activities and individuals. There is also close coordination among a number of stakeholders

at federal, national, and security administrative levels in terms of gathering and sharing of information.’¹⁵⁴

Refugee involvement in security and governance

Focus group participants and key informants repeatedly expressed the important roles that refugees played in countering threats within the camps, indicating that refugees worked with authorities through official and unofficial channels. Focus group participants strongly indicated that refugees in the camps had a genuine disdain for extremists and extremist activities and were committed to vigilantly keeping any threats out. Most referred to the fact that they left Somalia due to extremist threats and that their safety relied on keeping similar forces away.

‘We keep an eye on every single detail, and if a person amongst us spends more than a single night outside the camp without permission, reports are immediately made. Our co-dependency on safety is stronger than one can imagine, so to pass through this is very difficult.’¹⁵⁵

Refugees are encouraged to report any suspicious activities to authorities and authorities rely heavily on refugees diligently taking on this role. Refugees further participate in volunteer watch units that patrol the camps for extremist threats or criminal elements.

‘To start with the local population as well as the refugees themselves are averse to any form of disturbances and reject any attempts to do so. As a result, they inform the authorities whenever they come across information about the potential of such [incidents] and are willing to cooperate with pertinent security agencies.’¹⁵⁶

Focus group participants and key informants strongly rejected that recruiters operated within or near camp contexts. Most respondents again cited a shared disdain for extremists among the refugees as the key reason this threat remained low.

‘No one has offered me to join the force but if anyone would do so in the future my answer would be I left my country escaping from you why would I join if I’m trying to get away from you. Saving a life even yours is saving humanity is what we say again and again; I have no ears to what the enemy says.’¹⁵⁷

Notably, several focus group participants, in response to questions about the presence of recruiters in the

camps, made unprompted replies that they were not active on social media. The discussions revealed a shared understanding that recruiters operate using these methods. Respondents cited their lack of social media activity or competence as a means of demonstrating that they were not involved or aware of recruitment activities.

'There is no way for me to communicate with terrorist and I am not a regular user of the social media, I don't even know how to properly use it.'¹⁵⁸

Some informants provided additional context for the lack of extremist threats in the camps by elaborating that most of the refugees in Jijiga were from Central and Eastern Somalia, which had less extremism activity than South Central Somalia.

'Here in Ethiopia unlike Somalia there is no bombing or bad news. You don't hear news of al-Shabaab threatening to bomb Ethiopia; we have not seen or heard of this.'¹⁵⁹

Host community relations

Focus group participants and key informants indicated that relationships among refugees and local community members and authorities were harmonious; crediting shared ethnic, clan, religious and even blood backgrounds. The protracted nature of the Somali conflict further emerged, with many claiming that the Somali refugee community had been there for such a long time that the community had accepted them as their own. Many focus group participants and key informants indicated that there were no distinctions between foreigners and locals and several mentions of inter-marriage, friendship and 'brotherly' love arose. In many cases, community members and refugees worshipped together in the same mosques.

'We migrants and the community are now a tree and its skin. For 10 years, even our kids never fought as children do and we were never called to make peace between [them]. With this community we are treated as if we are like children with parents; the local community are like our fathers and mothers.'¹⁶⁰

Further credit was given to local politicians and elders in prioritising relationships with refugees and playing a role in determining camp structure and operations. Some key informants indicated that community consultations held before the camps were built as a significant factor in building good relations. Community leaders also actively promoted peaceful co-existence between host and migrant communities to complement security measures.

Focus group participants and key informants further indicated that express efforts had been made to ensure that community members and refugees in the region benefited from shared resources. In some cases, they share infrastructure and facilities including health centres, schools or water points, including providing community members with access to refugee resources. Some of these efforts resulted from complaints lodged in earlier years that refugees were receiving benefits above community members. Importantly, the ability and willingness to adapt reflects a political will to maintain and promote peace.



SOME KEY INFORMANTS INDICATED THAT COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS HELD BEFORE THE REFUGEE CAMPS WERE BUILT AS A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN BUILDING GOOD RELATIONS

'In the past, some of the local populations were raising issues to be beneficiaries of some of the services and facilities provided for the refugees (mainly water and health). Nowadays, these facilities are being jointly used and there are no major issues about them.'¹⁶¹

Focus group participants and key informants further indicated that host and refugee communities worked together with similar vigilance to identify any extremist threats, including within madrassas or masjids shared by refugees and locals.

'Mash Allah! Brothers have welcomed us with open arms; we live together, play, eat, and share our experiences as well. Alhamdulillah, we have peace because of these people and may almighty bless them with more.'¹⁶²

While key informants expressed that relationships between refugees and host communities were strong, they did indicate some more nuanced issues including petty crime and fights.

'There are also slight differences in terms of respecting the laws and regulations of the country as the latter came from a background where the state did not exist for a very long time. Apart from this, the relations are smooth.'¹⁶³

Relations within the camps

Focus group participants and key informants indicated that relationships among refugees were harmonious. Respondents also said that clan and cultural differences that might exist in other situations were superseded by a shared identity as a refugee. In many cases people who would not be living together in Somalia were living together in the camps, which serves to break down existing barriers.

'Even if we have differences in terms of clan and where we came from, we are all in the same boat, the boat of being refugee.'¹⁶⁴

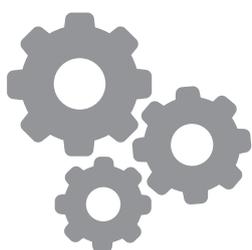
'We are considered as mothers of the refugee and this applies to all the clans in the camps. At the end of the day, we are all refugees regardless of our clan differences.'¹⁶⁵

Some key informants provided additional perspectives on minor issues that had arisen. Key informants indicated that minor divisions and segregation did occur among clan or family lines but that this rarely escalated. They further indicated that long-term refugees also played a role in teaching and enforcing rules and codes to new arrivals.

'The refugees belong to the different Somali clans though they all are Muslims and are culturally similar. In my opinion, I do not think there are any issues arising out of these differences as all are administered equally by governments. Clearly, these differences still prevail and also matter. In the camps, there are also (sub-clans) which are considered a minority as compared to the other clans in Somalia.'¹⁶⁶

Access to basic services

Focus group participants and key informants indicated that they had access to basic services including health, education and freedom of movement. Some



REFUGEE PARTICIPANTS INDICATED A STRONG DESIRE TO WORK AND THAT THE ABILITY TO SECURE GAINFUL EMPLOYMENT WOULD SUBSTANTIALLY IMPROVE THE OVERALL QUALITY OF LIFE

focus group participants and key informants indicated concerns about diminishing food rations and NGO presence compared to the past. In contrast with South Sudanese participants, very few comments were made about political freedoms or ability to have a political voice.

'Security wise, we are safe here, but our food ration was decreased twice.'¹⁶⁷

'Here we get a proper medical treatment, we have well-educated doctors; and even if they can't manage the cases or if it's beyond their capacity they refer us to Jijiga. We have academic education starting from elementary through middle school and when it's time to join the university, students also get to join with no problem. And for jobs we have no work to be done here even in Jijiga we don't do push ourselves into the society work wise. We are mostly jobless. We don't just join the society without a legal permit.'¹⁶⁸

Focus group participants and informants did however reveal a heavy focus on the inability to earn a livelihood. Refugee participants indicated a strong desire to work and that the ability to secure gainful employment would substantially improve the overall quality of life. Focus group participants and key informants indicated that only a small number of highly qualified refugees were able to access work as teachers, social workers or health workers within the camps, for which they were paid a small incentive stipend (700 Ethiopian birr or US\$25 a month).

'More of people in the camps have skills. For example, I am mechanic and driver. So, what we all look for is job, job, job.'¹⁶⁹

'Most of us don't have jobs – there are very few who work; but the rest doesn't have anything to do. Basically, we are refugees and refugees are not allowed to move freely without permission. But that doesn't mean we are subjugated because we are getting basic necessities like health and education and other services for free.'¹⁷⁰

Some focus group participants complained about disparities between themselves and host community members with respect to access to jobs and livelihood and freedom of movement. However, while focus group participants and key informants clearly expressed a strong desire to work, and those who did were sometimes paid less than locals, they did also indicate that the local community was also underemployed.

'Some jobs exist but they are not enough because even the host community has not enough jobs.'¹⁷¹

Some key informants highlighted the lack of work and livelihood opportunities as a potential threat for extremism. Some key informants said the prolonged nature of refugee stays in camps without livelihood opportunities created a higher risk of boredom and frustration. Some key informants further highlighted that youth facing protracted situations without the ability to work could become more prone to illegal migration and the inherent risks of extremism en route.

'Both in the short and longer term, the sustainability of CVE responses are very much dependent on broader issues of creating livelihood opportunities and there is chronic shortage of projects and funds for such initiatives. In the absence of these opportunities, some of the refugees, especially the youth engage in secondary movement to migrate to other places and may fall prey to terrorist recruiters while in transit. Also, the refugees can frustrate through time in the absence of meaningful productive activities and within a context of declining third country resettlement opportunities to Europe and the USA.'¹⁷²

Preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE)

Focus group participants and informants indicated a presence of P/CVE efforts within the camps and community alike that involved participation from every level of the community.

Focus group participants and key informants described awareness campaigns and training for refugees and community members on how to identify and respond to signs of radicalisation. Programmes target all demographics including women and children. Some key informants emphasised the role of elders and religious leaders within Somali communities and that security or terrorism messages are most often disseminated through them.

'We live in our camps, we receive a lot of peace awareness trainings and we participate in security of our camps.'¹⁷³

'Peace awareness, physical security and strong engagement of the refugees themselves are key aspects of the preventive efforts. I would say in the case of the camps around Jijiga, more work was done in tackling terrorism and the refugee structures

are very strong. The host community also supports these efforts and there is closer coordination among various government agencies. Most importantly, elders and religious leaders play an important role not just in resolving disputes among the refugees but also in disseminating messages related to the various preventive measures highlighted.”¹⁷⁴

While key informants and focus group participants agreed that the programmes described were effective in preventing extremism in the region despite the potential threats, some pitfalls were identified. Some key informants indicated a reluctance to report activities of family or clan members in a social structure that typically ranked these relations highly.

Respondents indicated that NGOs did not directly participate in any projects with explicit CVE mandates but did provide other programmes that directly and indirectly supported CVE efforts. These include technical and vocational training, small business financing and training, gender-based violence and counselling programmes, provision of basic goods, access to legal resources and facilitation of intra-camp committee structures. Some respondents indicated a diminishing presence of NGOs within the camps.

Analysis

The threat of violent extremism among Somali and South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia is low.

Among Somali refugees, this low threat emerges from the genuine disdain expressed by refugees for extremists, who caused their displacement and exposed them to brutal violence. Somali refugees have a strong interest in cooperating against a shared threat and aspire to a sense of security they did not have in their source country. That this desire is shared among the local community, combined with common ethnicity, contributes to the strong bond between host and refugee communities. Ethiopia has managed the security aspect well among refugees, including securing their active participation in camp safety and security efforts. Authorities have demonstrated a will to engage refugees in CVE programming at multiple levels within the community and act proactively against potential extremist threats.

Among South Sudanese refugees, the low threat is perhaps more credited to a lack of violent extremism in the first place, whereby it does not feature in South Sudan or among South Sudanese. Despite this, however, the impacts of violence on South Sudanese refugees are troubling, including warnings of potential future violence. The extreme nature of the violence many of these refugees have been exposed to in their home country is worrying in and of itself.

The strong ethnic and political alignment related to South Sudanese politics that emerged among refugee respondents, within a context where politics is strictly forbidden, is concerning. Tensions felt by some sectors of the host community will be exacerbated with the fast growth of the refugee population and raise additional warnings for future issues.



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While the threat is low, applying the findings against the factors identified in the framework for analysis does reveal some concerns with respect to violent extremism that should be urgently examined and addressed.

1. Host country's administrative and legal policies:

Ethiopia's expressed commitment to implement the Nine Pledges and work towards integrating refugees into society will be a key step in achieving development, humanitarian and security objectives alike. As outlined by Sude et al, refugees' ability to live, work and register life events directly influence all aspects of refugee life, including how host communities perceive and receive them. Recent promises to eliminate all 27 camps within 10 years and integrate refugees into society are promising. Ethiopia is positioned to become a world leader in proving the merits of open-door and integration policies.

2. Political and militant organising:

Security forces, community members and refugees alike have developed an effective collaborative approach to rooting out political or militant organising in Jijiga. While respondents indicated an insignificant number of historical incidents, the persistent potential threat of al-Shabaab must continue to be handled vigilantly.

While South Sudanese respondents in Gambella denied any presence of political organising, indicators emerged that suggest covert activities. Strong political sentiments and affiliations, reported disappearances of young men (ostensibly to return to South Sudan to engage in politically motivated activities), continued high flows of people subjected to grotesque violence, and unmistakable anti-Dinka sentiments raise concerns about the potential for future violence.

The strong ethnic and political alignment related to South Sudanese politics that emerged among refugee respondents, within a context where politics is strictly forbidden, is concerning

Nuer refugees in Gambella are likely to follow political developments and support political groups passively or actively. The proximity of the Gambella camps to the South Sudanese border and the high flows of refugee arrivals raise some concerns about possible infiltration if not managed appropriately. Additionally, Ethiopia and IGAD's role within the South Sudanese conflict should be considered as a factor that could potentially agitate people. Some refugee respondents expressed frustration towards IGAD for their perceived mishandling of the peace process.

Additionally, while it was not mentioned in responses, Ethiopia's official position of neutrality on South Sudan could discourage refugees who clearly perceive gross injustice perpetrated against them. Frustrations



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CAMPS

could increase towards Ethiopia if refugees believe the country is complacent to their perceived plight. Furthermore, current fighting among the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO) (Nuer) leadership in South Sudan could spill over within refugee populations.

3. Security:

Many respondents expressed satisfaction with the security provided to them, but they also indicated that Ethiopia relied heavily on a strong security apparatus within the camps. Given this reliance, questions emerge about how Ethiopia will maintain security once camps are dissolved in 10 years as indicated. Strong asylum procedures that include security screenings can in fact help achieve security objectives while still providing refugees with opportunities to integrate. Investing in robust, fast and widely available asylum procedures will be crucial in maintaining security among integrated refugees.

4. Shelter:

While respondents indicated that they had access to basic necessities including shelter, food, water, health and education for children, concerns about living conditions were high. Given the protracted nature of both sources of conflicts, refugees can go many years – even generations – without work or freedom to move, limited access to education and health, and declining food, water and NGO programmes. Chronic underfunding of refugee appeals in both regions are particularly concerning as they directly impact the quality of life for refugees and, in turn, the risks for extremism. Urgent appeals to improve living conditions for humanitarian and security reasons must be made.

5. Local economic conditions and resilience:

Ethiopia has managed relationships between local and refugee populations in Jijiga well, according to this study. Importantly, local authorities appear to have prioritised these relations and demonstrated a desire and ability to adapt in order to promote such relations. In Jijiga, these relations are likely to remain strong, particularly as the refugee population has been there for a long time and is not growing. Managing this element effectively throughout the integration process, including ensuring locals and refugees are provided with equal opportunities, will be important.

In Gambella, concerns about the refugee population outstripping the local population are high, particularly regarding the impact of Nuer inflows on Anywaa populations, who are already feeling disadvantaged. High refugee flows will add further pressure on already-scarce resources in this poor region. Managing these relations carefully and ensuring peace among different populations will inevitably be challenging.

6. Conditions for youth:

Both refugee contexts included in this study involve high numbers of youth, including some in Jijiga who have been born and raised in camps. While respondents from both regions indicated that the youth had access to basic education, concerns about quality and accessibility beyond primary levels as well as freedom of movement were high. Perhaps most concerning, refugees in both areas, particularly Jijiga, indicated a high frustration about lack of access to jobs or livelihood opportunities. The prospect of bored and frustrated youth subjected to poor conditions for long periods of time is concerning for multiple reasons, including vulnerability to extremism. Respondents further indicated that bored youth were prone to attempt illegal onward migration with inherent safety and extremism risks.

7. Protracted displacement:

Both Somalian and South Sudanese refugees within Ethiopia are unlikely to return safely to their home countries anytime soon. As such, long-term exposure to poor conditions and uncertainty pose several concerns, including risks of extremism. Durable solutions are necessary that are mindful that repatriation or third-country resettlement are highly unlikely for either population.

8. P/CVE programming:

While respondents in both contexts indicated a presence of P/CVE programming, they predominantly referenced security methods, awareness-raising and peace-building programmes among refugees and communities; whereas the actual offering is broader. This limited understanding reflects that refugees do not see other activities as P/CVE even if they have P/CVE properties. Programmes do not need to be labelled as P/CVE to be effective. Successful P/CVE programmes comprehensively address the 'root causes' of extremism as opposed to extremism as a stand-alone feature. Current programmes are reportedly engaging refugee, elder and religious leaders as well

as promoting shared awareness-raising and peace-building efforts among local and refugee communities.

Concerning reports of diminishing NGO programmes that complement P/CVE objectives did, however, emerge due to lack of funding. Coordination between state agencies, host communities, NGOs, the private sector and refugees is critical in developing effective CVE programming. Extremist groups have long demonstrated their ability to recruit or target people based on highly specific and adaptable practices. P/CVE programmes must counter these highly focused tactics and be tailored to specific, localised risk factors.

Conclusion

While there is no notable history of violent extremism in either of the refugee populations studied and the threats are low, warnings did emerge with respect to the conditions refugees are subjected to.

This study helps to establish that Ethiopia's attention to safety and security for refugees is strong and the response to extremist threats is robust. Refugees fleeing to Ethiopia to escape war and conflict in South Sudan and Somalia are provided with basic necessities in a safe space. However, large flows of disenfranchised people living for long periods in under-resourced camp contexts are highly concerning for multiple reasons, including risks related to violent extremism.

An urgent appeal must be made to the international community to provide far greater support to refugee appeals in Ethiopia. In an October 2017 report on the six most underfunded refugee situations in the world, South Sudan and Somalia ranked first and second, with US\$516 million and US\$365 million gaps respectively.¹⁷⁵ These shortages result in an inability to provide core relief, sustainable water supplies, sanitary materials, access to schools or voluntary returns and reintegration programmes as planned.¹⁷⁶ The impacts of these shortages have direct humanitarian, development and security implications as they expose refugees to dire conditions ripe for frustration.

With less than 1% of refugees resettled in third countries and the prospects for safe return to source countries highly unlikely, durable solutions are desperately needed to achieve humanitarian, development and security objectives alike. Access to education, health, livelihood and freedom of movement and, ideally, integration all contain inherent CVE properties.

Ethiopia's policy developments towards full integration are on the right track and the country is well positioned to become an international leader in this respect. Ethiopia must carry forward with the pledges and implement them in a sensitive manner that accounts for the needs and concerns of both local and refugee populations. Critically, the international community must recognise Ethiopia's efforts and the opportunity for the CRRF to be successful by supporting these efforts financially and materially.

'The protection of refugees is not only the responsibility of neighbouring states of a crisis; it is a collective responsibility of the international community.'

António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, 2017

Holistic CVE programmes in refugee populations are necessary. Importantly, programmes do not need to be labelled as CVE to hold CVE properties. Effective efforts must holistically address the root causes of the specific refugee situation and will differ substantially among contexts.

Ensuring programmes evolve to address changing factors and dynamic situations is also crucial. As Ethiopia works towards integration, programmes must continue and evolve to meet changing circumstances. Refugees and community members are often in the best position to identify risks and potential solutions. Harnessing their input is critical.

Finally, discourse linking violent extremism and refugees must be handled carefully. While this study highlights some nascent concerns related to conditions that refugees are subjected to, it does not link refugees to violent extremism. The notion that refugees present a threat to security has dangerous impacts and is unsubstantiated by evidence.

The overwhelming majority of refugees currently spend long periods of time in camps and undergo more rigorous screenings than other immigrant and non-immigrant migrants who pose equal potential threats. Using the guise of security threats to reduce and restrict refugee regimes is a false equivalency that could in fact exacerbate threats.

Strong asylum processes diminish security threats. Implementing robust and widely available asylum processes and legal migration pathways can complement security measures.

We must replace the narrative linking refugees with extremism with discourse linking strong asylum to security.

Notes

An independent consultant contracted by the ISS, Dr Dawit Johannes Wondemagegnehu, conducted the focus group discussions and key informant interviews for this study.

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