

### NGO Statement on Africa

Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This statement is delivered on behalf of a wide range of NGOs.

Forced displacement remains a fundamental challenge across Africa. Populations facing conflict and climate-related shocks have few alternatives but to move – often looking for opportunities in urban centres. The drought in the Horn of Africa, which raises again the prospect of famine, and floods across West and Central Africa are cases in point.

In many cases, new displacements come on top of previous ones. We see too much poverty in camps and informal settlements. These settlements are frequently heavily securitized, limiting freedom of movement and making humanitarian action more difficult. These dynamics are also connected to the far too regular boat tragedies in the Mediterranean and English Channel, as desperate people risk their lives in increasingly dangerous ways.

To address those challenges requires a clear assessment of past policy successes and failures. The CRRF, for example, created real opportunities, most obviously through legislations in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Cameroon adding more rights and freedoms for refugees. Uganda has demonstrated the value of a more enabling environment for refugees' integration, allowing freer movements and exchanges with host communities.

Durable solutions efforts in Somalia focused on providing greater land tenure security for IDPs, helping end the cycle of poverty and displacement. Liberia enacted nationality law reforms to remove gender-discriminatory provisions, meaning Liberian women and men now hold the equal right to confer nationality on their children and spouse: a notable step towards ending statelessness in Africa. Leadership from regional bodies, particularly IGAD, also helped tackle the challenges of displacement. Regional bodies and States should build on this momentum and share concrete plans for the June 2023 High-Level Global Summit on Achieving Gender Equality in Nationality Laws. We also welcome progresses made by governments in Niger, the DRC, Nigeria, and Ethiopia on ratifying and domesticating the Kampala Convention.

But, **fundamental challenges remain**. Funding shortfalls for long-standing humanitarian operations raise concerns about the quality of services, not least the disturbing cuts to rations in times of drought and hunger. Ongoing protection challenges cannot be underestimated, particularly in Ethiopia, where conflict dynamics contributed to the destruction of some refugee camps. In Kenya, concerns remain about the functioning of refugee registration processes and the potential for highly vulnerable people to fall through the gaps. In Nigeria, organized returns and relocations in areas still affected by armed groups exposed communities to harm and compounded access challenges. Nigerian refugees have also been repatriated from Niger to Nigeria without a tripartite agreement providing a protective framework. In Somalia, the nationality law denies Somali women's right to confer nationality on their children, further exacerbating vulnerabilities.

In many countries, **access** to the most vulnerable continues to be a major concern. If aid agencies cannot access vulnerable people freely, then the prospects for policy and programming being driven by communities themselves becomes ever weaker.

Real change requires **addressing resource constraints and donor fatigue**. New resources must be found alongside World Bank IDA efforts, unlocking markets' potential and private sector investments. We must break down silos and better use new funding streams on climate adaptation, urbanisation, and resilience. Donors must show creativity and intentionality to get the right resources to the right actors at the right time to focus on solutions as early as possible. Crisis modifiers allowed funds to be flexibly deployed towards drought response in Somalia: such approaches should be expanded.

We should also be **realistic about the prospects of self-reliance programming** if displaced people are prevented from maximizing the resources to which they have access. Displacement-affected communities rely on networks of mutual support to access needed resources. Yet these informal networks are often invisible to aid actors, or worse, framed as illicit. Policy and programmatic shifts should unlock these networks and enable genuine self-reliance, while protecting those at risk of exploitation.

The **political challenges of increasing freedom of movement** are well understood, particularly where security is a concern. requires continued advocacy. Advocating for freedom of movement must be central to all policy dialogue efforts and needs to ask challenging questions of both donor and host governments: it is not enough just to focus on movement within the continent, as essential as this is.

There needs to be a **greater understanding of the psychological impact on displaced people of recent reductions in resettlement programmes**. While drastically expanding resettlement programmes may not be realistic, resettlement governments have a moral obligation to engage displacement-affected communities about future trends, which can also enable more realistic discussions about prospects for integration and return. For refugees and IDPs, all organised movements that do take place must do so in a voluntary, safe, and dignified manner based on meaningful consultations.

**We need to recognise that every displacement context is different**, as are the aspirations of displacement-affected communities and individuals. While regional and global policy frameworks play a critical role – such as the Kampala Convention or the work of the Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement – local actors will determine whether real progress is made. Communities need to be seen as actors with agency and status in these discussions. We should learn from Southern NGOs in other regions, which have become significant social development actors. Local governments and municipal leaders in towns like Bossaso in Somalia, Lodwar in Kenya, or El Jeneina in Sudan should also receive support to provide integrated leadership.

Finally, we welcome better links between the UN development and humanitarian systems, which should also recognise the important contribution that NGOs are already making. Being close to local communities, NGOs can help governments and the UN to develop better responses that truly leave no one behind.

Further details are available at [icvanetwork.org](http://icvanetwork.org)

Thank you.