

Regional Update for East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes

Collective NGO Statement

Dear Chair, Distinguished Guests,

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

The East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region is witnessing raging conflicts, huge and complex displacement along dangerous mixed migration routes, and strained resources in refugee hosting countries which are further compounded by climate shocks.

NGOs wish to highlight the following concerns:

First, on conflict:

The war in **Sudan** has forced [over 3 million](#) refugees into neighbouring countries, including over 1 million children, and has resulted in the largest humanitarian crisis globally.

The conflict in the **DRC** has forced over one million refugees into neighbouring countries. Rapid escalation of conflict in the DRC in recent weeks has led to [massive displacements of populations](#), further exacerbating the existing humanitarian crisis.

- NGOs urge the international community, including the African Union and IGAD, to facilitate an immediate end to these conflicts as an imperative to slow displacement figures, reducing humanitarian needs and relieving pressure on hosting countries.
- NGOs also call for the international community to engage parties to the conflict to address impunity of sexual violence and support the protection and safeguarding of those exposed to this violence, as well as timely and unfettered humanitarian access to meet lifesaving needs.
- To donors, we urgently ask for increased multi-year and flexible funding across the region, including direct funding to refugee led organisations. Media and international attention on these crises must step up.

Second, on refugee hosting countries under pressure, compounded by climate shocks:

Refugee hosting countries including **Somalia, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Chad** and **Burundi** are often themselves navigating internal conflict and related internal displacement, high levels of food insecurity and poor economic opportunities. All compounded by climate shocks including drought. In South Sudan, for example, 95 per cent of the population depend on the land for their livelihoods, but is the [second most climate vulnerable country globally](#). The forecasted drought in Ethiopia is of particular concern, as 80 per cent of the rural population depend on rain-fed agriculture.

Third, on solutions:

Durable solutions for refugees, including opportunities for resettlement, are critical. Some hosting countries offer positive examples and lessons for including refugees into national development planning and implementation.

Enshrined in national law through **Uganda's National Development Plan III**, refugees can freely organize and form civil society organizations and provide essential services, livelihoods, and other essential support to their immediate communities. This model, however, is under severe pressure due to limited funding.

- NGOs urge continued support for such policies, and that their implementation is expanded to ensure registration and freedom of movement for all refugees, and to ensure access to rights.

In **Kenya**, the Refugee Act of 2021 is welcome, promising refugees' freedom of movement, the right to work and access to financial services among other rights. Coupled with plans to move away from encampment, implementation of this Act will improve refugee economic inclusion and the per capita income for the host communities. It allows refugees seeking asylum to live in a dignified way, reducing reliance on aid and improving wellbeing, mental and psychosocial health. We also welcome the ongoing work on the SHIRIKA PLAN.

Challenges remain, particularly in obtaining refugee ID cards and work permits, which are critical for accessing services and employment opportunities – which are essential pathways for resilience, particularly for survivors of gender-based violence.

To conclude, conflict resolution, humanitarian access, and safe pathways for displaced populations is critical to reducing humanitarian needs, and to begin a road to recovery and resilience, and reduce the strain on host country resources.

Global responsibility sharing must be felt beyond the region, with increased international support critical at this time.

Further details are available on icvanetwork.org.

Thank you.