Report

Refugee and host communities in Ethiopia

2018–2019 integrated national study

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ODI

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About this paper

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Acronyms

ARRA	Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs
BSRP	Building Self-Reliance Programme
CRRF	Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DRC	Danish Refugee Council
DRS	Developing Regional States
EOP	Economic Opportunities Programme
EU	European Union
FGD	focus group discussion
GCR	Global Compact for Refugees
GEQIP	General Education Quality Improvement Programme
ICARA	International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa
IDI	in-depth interview
IDP	internally displaced person
KII	key informant interview
MOF	Ministry of Finance
NCRRS	National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NCO	National Coordination Office
NISS	National Intelligence and Security Service
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
SRS	Somali Regional State
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WASH	water, sanitation and hygiene

Executive summary

This report provides an overview of findings from a set of regional studies on the policy and operational context in which reforms to Ethiopia's refugee operation are taking place, with particular attention to service delivery systems for both refugees and 'host communities'. The five regions studied are Gambella, Somali Regional State (SRS), Tigray, Afar and Benishangul-Gumuz. The research involved interviewing more than 1,000 people across the country, focused on nine refugee camps across five regions. This paper only provides an overview of key issues; five regional studies, one for each of the regions hosting refugees, provide further detail.

Ethiopia has a long history of hosting refugees, and is currently the second-largest host country in Africa. The current refugee population comprises three large cohorts from Somalia, South Sudan and Eritrea, as well as a number of smaller groups, spread across five of the country's nine regions. This presents a complex set of challenges for actors working with refugees and host communities, and demands a highly context-driven approach. This will be critical to informing implementation of the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR) and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). The Ethiopian government has been a leading actor in both of these initiatives, and in January 2019 passed a new Refugee Proclamation designed to pave the way for their implementation.

Central to the CRRF is a set of ambitions around 'integration': enabling refugees to integrate better into their areas of residence, thereby making them less reliant on humanitarian assistance never designed for medium- to long-term support, and ensuring a higher degree of integration between service delivery and social support systems, improving efficiencies and strengthening local connections.

Key findings

There is a strong starting point for implementation of the CRRF in Ethiopia. The majority of refugees and local residents expressed a desire for stronger connections and interactions with each other; if these opportunities can be provided through mechanisms that simultaneously meet their wider needs this should be welcomed. Officials from the Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), and local woreda [district] and regional authorities, are also committed to closer cooperation, in particular on complementary problem-solving that benefits all local populations. The recent political transition in Ethiopia provides significant opportunities for undertaking reforms.

There are also a number of challenges, key among them the lack of clarity about what 'integration' should look like in different locations, and which aspects should move at what pace. This uncertainty has been exacerbated by the growth of a range of different programming modalities in recent years, with relatively little consideration given either to the wider implications for the refugee operation, or how the programming modalities should be adapted to different environments around the country. The research found a wide range of critical factors influencing integration, including the physical location of refugee camps, and how the land they are on was used in the past; local kinship systems and ideas around ethnic identity; local economies and livelihoods; the institutional capacity of the various service delivery actors in the area; and wider historical and political issues.

Another area highlighted is the clear need to develop an architecture that can deliver on the Ethiopian government's vision for the CRRF. The existing parallel systems for administering and providing services to refugee camps and the areas in which they are located are being adapted, but

to be most effective and efficient there will need to be a more fundamental redesign. Central to this will be greater clarity on overall resourcing requirements, and aligning these more closely with mainstream development programming in Ethiopia. Lines of accountability will also have to be established. This issue was raised most often by stakeholders at various levels, and there is significant concern over who is to be accountable for the various policy objectives of the federal, regional and woreda governments, and how these accountability lines should intersect. There is a concern that blurring accountability will lead to poorer outcomes for all. There is also inadequate focus from all actors on upward accountability from the populations at the heart of this effort.

Finally, the report identifies a range of trade-offs that will need to be closely monitored in the implementation phase to allow dilemmas to be appropriately handled. These include the need to balance the desire to promote refugee self-reliance with the need to meet key protection obligations, particularly to the most vulnerable; the wider challenges of social protection in Ethiopia; the need to enable strong cooperation between federal and regional actors while retaining a degree of insulation from local politics; ensuring equity in the approach to refugees and Ethiopian citizens; recognising the need for an approach that meets chronic challenges while recognising the risks of sudden crises in a fluid environment; and, finally, ensuring that the appropriate development instruments are in place before humanitarian funds are withdrawn.

Recommendations

Given the significant policy challenges and complexities that the CRRF faces, the report suggests a dual focus to implementation. On the one hand, there is a need to confront more directly key policy questions that have yet to be answered, and to ensure that a wide range of national and local actors are brought into this discussion; on the other, the right answers are only likely to emerge from trying different things and learning through doing. Rather than blueprint solutions, an approach that places testing and piloting at its heart seems appropriate, given the need for contextual nuance. The report also proposes a new model for understanding the challenges of service delivery integration based on the research.

Five recommendations are highlighted:

- Strengthening the CRRF architecture at national and local level, enabling it to address key policy challenges more effectively, and improving the coordination of resources.
- Continuing to build more detailed understanding of the specific issues that affect integration in each camp context, drawing on the findings of the research thus far.
- Focusing on identifying priority local issues within each region that can act as a starting point for constructive discussions of reform.
- Strengthening downward accountability of the refugee operation to both refugees and local residents, learning from such work elsewhere in Ethiopia.
- Building in a strong emphasis on risk management, with a particular focus on the need for clearer communication.

1   Introduction

1.1   Background to the refugee situation and the CRRF in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has a long history of hosting refugees fleeing chronic conflict in neighbouring countries in the Horn of Africa. Figure 1 provides the official data from the period since 1980, a period that, on two occasions, saw Ethiopia hosting the world's single largest refugee camp: Hartisheikh for Somali refugees, and Itang for Sudanese refugees, both in the late 1980s. It illustrates the significant resurgence in the refugee population over the last decade, with Ethiopia hosting the second-largest refugee population of any African country. Today's refugee operation is made up of three large cohorts of refugees (Somali, South Sudanese and Eritrean) across five of the country's nine regions.[1]

This context presents a significant challenge, both to the government of Ethiopia (and in particular its lead agency for managing the refugee operation, ARRA) and to the international community, which is primarily responsible for providing the funds. This challenge is exacerbated by increasing global competition for refugee funds at a time of large refugee operations across the Middle East and Asia (e.g. Crisp, 2018). It is further complicated by recent political shifts in Ethiopia and the wider Horn, which have led to unpredictable changes in the movement of refugees and significant changes in the structure and functioning of the Ethiopian government.

The context analysis also comes at a time when the overarching global policy framework for refugees is being rethought, particularly

Figure 1   Refugees in Ethiopia by country of origin, 1980–2017
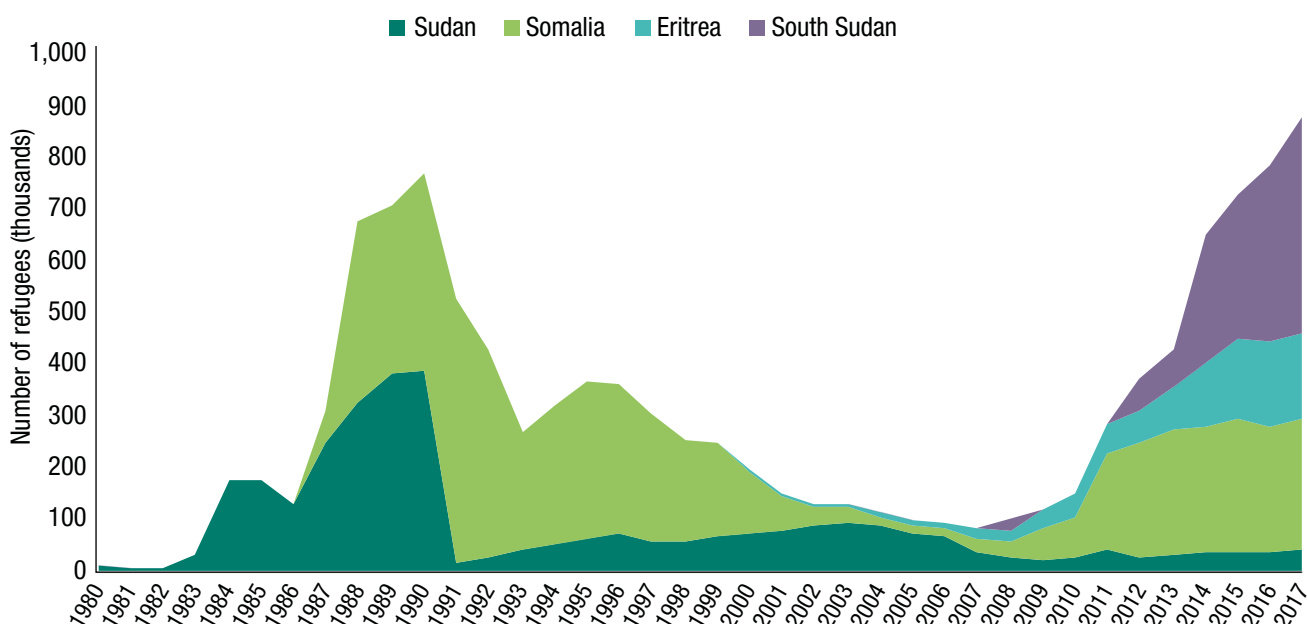
Source: UNHCR Population Statistics Reference Database

through the CRRF process and the GCR.

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1   The term 'refugee operation' is used throughout the report to refer to the entire system of actors working to support refugees in the country, with ARRA and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at the heart of this effort, but including a wide range of national and international NGOs and other UN agencies.

This process is seeking to tackle longstanding concerns about the unsustainability of much refugee spending and the challenges refugees face in achieving so-called 'durable solutions', with resettlement places declining, chronic conflicts and poverty undermining the viability of voluntary repatriation, and local integration proving politically challenging for host governments. While none of these concerns is new, the CRRF and GCR represent the latest major attempt to find new solutions, and donor countries have invested significant political and financial capital in them in response to the domestic political challenges they face in relation to immigration.

The Ethiopian government has been at the forefront of this process as one of the CRRF pilot countries, and as one of the co-hosts of the New York Leaders' Summit on Refugees in New York in 2016. The government's Nine Refugee Pledges, announced at this event, were later formally launched domestically through the 2017 Roadmap document. The pledges cover a range of reforms designed to give more rights and services to refugees, with commitments by international donors to provide additional funding that bridges traditional humanitarian/ development divides (BBC, 2016). In January 2019, the government passed a new law significantly increasing refugees' right to work in the country (Bhalla, 2019).

Since the launch of the Roadmap, progress has been made in establishing an architecture to oversee the process, and to work through the detailed implications. A CRRF Steering Committee has been formed, co-chaired by the Ministry of Finance (MOF), ARRA and UNHCR. A National Coordination Office (NCO) acts as the secretariat. ARRA has drafted a new strategy (the National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy, or NCRRS) to provide guidance, and has facilitated technical discussions around the pledges. On the ground, a suite of new programming interventions is gathering considerable experience of what does and does not work. However, the wider transition that Ethiopia has been going through

in the last year has understandably slowed progress. It is hoped that this paper provides a set of emerging findings that can help inform the future direction of this critical policy and reform process.

1.2 The challenge of 'integration'

At the core of the CRRF process in Ethiopia is a set of ambitions around integration. The concept of 'local integration' (i.e. some form of permanent settlement within the place of displacement) is firmly established within the international refugee framework as one of the durable solutions that should be made available to refugees, although it lacks any formally established legal definition. It is often described as a process comprising legal, economic and social components, but how different countries have approached it has varied (Crisp, 2004).

One of the Ethiopian government's nine pledges makes specific reference to 'local integration', indicating that at least 13,000 refugees who have been in the country for over 20 years will be entitled to it – although what this means in practice is yet to be defined. All of the pledges speak to different aspects of the broader 'local integration' process, seeking to increase refugees' self-reliance through enhancing employment opportunities or freedom of movement and improving their access to documentation and services. Indeed, the overall ambition described in the roadmap document, to move away from encampment as the primary model for supporting refugees, aligns well with this broad definition of 'local integration'.[2]

The emphasis on increasing access to services, particularly education but also other social services such as health and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), speaks to another key element of 'integration': bringing more closely together what are currently largely parallel service delivery systems. This is considered desirable not only because it should contribute to the broader 'local integration' process (i.e. bringing refugees and local residents more closely together through sharing the same services), but also because it

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2   The roadmap describes as its ambition 'the creation of village-style development-oriented settlements and other alternatives to camps' (GoE, 2017).

could improve overall efficiency. Rather than refugee services being funded through short-term humanitarian funding cycles, they should instead be considered as part of standard national systems, and supported through long-term development funding. Although the government's pledges focus more on improving access and outcomes, rather than describing precisely how these improvements are to be achieved, a considerable donor-led effort has been under way in recent years to promote this aspect of the 'integration' agenda. Much of the research undertaken for this study focused on this work.

One further note on terminology. The standard language used to describe the populations of the areas where refugees have settled is 'host communities', but the researchers have tried wherever possible to avoid using this phrase, for a number of reasons. First, it defines the local population through the lens of the refugees rather than in their own right, foregrounding the former and distorting understanding of the local context. Second, it over-simplifies the reality of the refugee presence – even when refugees are in camps, these are fluid contexts where people are mobile, and the impacts of refugees are often felt in multiple locations for multiple reasons. Rarely is there a clearly defined set of 'communities' that bear the total impact. Third, it is metaphorically problematic: generally, when someone is described as 'hosting' someone or something else, there is an implied assumption that either the host chose that role, or that an alien presence or parasite has forced its way into an unwilling body. When it comes to refugees the former is often not the case, and the latter is a highly problematic comparison from an ethical perspective. 'Host community' is therefore not felt to be a useful term in the context of the complex integration challenges under consideration. The researchers instead refer to 'residents' or 'local residents' to describe Ethiopian citizens that live in close proximity to the camps, and 'local populations' when referring to both them and the refugees.

1.3 Background to the studies

UNICEF commissioned this context analysis to support implementation of the Building Self-Reliance Programme (BSRP), a four-year undertaking funded by the UK government designed to improve service delivery to refugees and 'host communities' across Ethiopia. Specifically, the joint Danish Refugee Council (DRC)/ODI team conducted a series of studies to better understand the implications of the programme's operating context. The focus of the studies is therefore the service delivery sectors that UNICEF focuses on under the BSRP: health, education, WASH, nutrition and child protection. They were commissioned to inform implementation of the GCR and the CRRF in Ethiopia.

This paper synthesises the detailed findings from all the research conducted under this project. It should be read in conjunction with the five companion studies on each of the refugee-hosting regions, which provide a greater level and specificity of detail on Gambella, Somali Regional State (SRS), Tigray, Afar and Benishangul-Gumuz. The studies were qualitative, relying on a review of both academic and grey literature collected during the research, and a combination of focus group discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews (IDIs) and key informant interviews (KIIs) at national, regional, woreda and camp level. The research teams interviewed more than 1,000 people across the country, including more than 700 refugees and local residents through a combination of individual interviews and 82 FGDs, along with more than 280 KIIs with local, national and international officials and other important stakeholders.

As a synthesis paper, this report seeks to draw out overall themes and messages, rather than replicate the detail of the regional studies. It is structured in two sections, one summarising the key findings, and a second drawing out conclusions and providing policy recommendations.

2   Key findings

2.1   A strong foundation

The research found that there is a strong starting point for CRRF implementation in Ethiopia, including around service delivery. Three particular issues stand out:

1. The desire of refugees and local populations for deeper and richer interaction
It is clearly impossible to generalise about the views of such a large and diverse group of people. Even so, it is true to say that the majority of refugees and residents across the country expressed a desire for greater opportunities to interact meaningfully with each other. Common ethnic identities, while more complex than sometimes assumed, undoubtedly contribute to this: where people share languages, worldviews and, sometimes, kinship structures, this represents a strong starting point for discussing integration.

This was perhaps most obvious in Afar, where a common refrain from respondents was 'Afar Afari', translated as 'an Afar is an Afar no matter where they are from'. The extent of ethnic identification in Afar, in particular, strongly supported by local authorities, provides a firm base for CRRF implementation. Even in Gambella, where there is far greater tension around ethnic identities and the refugee presence, refugees expressed a strong desire to build stronger relationships with residents from a similar ethnic background: indeed, such relationships were framed as being a critical component of a more self-reliant life. In some locations there was also a strong understanding of the potential economic benefits that the presence of refugees can bring to an area (for example, around Sheder camp in Somali region). Thus, while no simplistic assumptions should be made, and the complexity of these relationships must be explored at the most granular level,

tapping into this general willingness should provide a strong foundation for the CRRF.

2. The willingness of committed officials to be creative and pragmatic
Although the policies and programmes that will underpin the CRRF remain unclear, at all levels the research teams found individuals within the government committed to focusing on achieving the best outcomes for refugees and residents. Despite the formally parallel service delivery systems, there is a wealth of practice to draw on where pragmatic solutions have been found to shared problems. The health sector is in some ways the best example of this, based on the recognition that diseases have no respect for different categories of people. There is therefore strong existing cooperation on disease surveillance and the management of disease outbreaks, and beyond this many examples of health staff from ARRA and local governments helping each other to respond to short-term problems, such as medicine shortages. In the education sector, there has also been significant growth in cooperation in recent years, leading to the development of a single Education Management Information System and a regime of inspections for refugee schools by qualified local education officials.

What marks out these examples of positive cooperation is a spirit of complementary problem-solving, with clear and obvious benefits to all stakeholders, made easier by the availability of additional resources. As discussed in section 2.3 below, cooperation is more challenging where there is competition over resources. Further development of the CRRF process must build on this positive spirit of cooperation where it exists, and learn specific lessons from local initiatives that have worked in the past.

3. Opportunity out of transition

While the political changes of 2018 and 2019 have slowed CRRF implementation, significant opportunities now present themselves. Since his arrival in office, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed has spoken extensively of the concept of 'medemer' – addition or synergy – as central to his political vision for Ethiopia. This is linked to the notion of bringing Ethiopia's multiple ethnic identities more fully together, with less emphasis on ethnic divisions. While fierce debates around the implications of this will continue, particularly for the ethnic federalist model established so strongly in the country over the last 25 years, this could in principle be a strong basis on which to argue for the CRRF to proceed. Recognition that a number of ethnicities straddle Ethiopia's international boundaries could provide a strong starting point for promoting acceptance of 'local integration' under the right circumstances.

The new Prime Minister has also spoken about opening up aspects of the Ethiopian state which have for many years operated in a closed way, increasing transparency and encouraging new ways of working. This has included the security sector, which has seen major changes in both structure and personnel. ARRA is now a separate agency under the Ministry of Peace and no longer reports directly to the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS). While such a change is challenging in the short term, it may offer important opportunities for ARRA to align its work more effectively with that of line ministries, and explore new openings for integration.

As with any major political upheaval, there will be winners and losers from these processes, multiple interpretations of different actors' motivations and – as has been seen in the last year with significant outbreaks of conflict in parts of the country – change will not proceed smoothly. But there are undoubtedly opportunities to do things differently for all those involved in working with refugees and residents.

2.2   Integration at local levels

A key theme emerging from the regional studies, and one that risks undermining progress in CRRF implementation, is the significant confusion about what the 'integration' agenda actually means in practice. Contributing to this confusion is a misalignment between government policy – which to date has focused on intended outcomes rather than modalities, and has moved relatively slowly towards detailed implementation – and high levels of donor interest in seeing progress, which has led to new activities at local levels. The uncertainty this confusion is causing can be seen in a number of ways:

- For local populations, both refugees and residents, the most pressing questions are around the potential provision of additional rights and entitlements, but these require greater policy clarity before they can be answered. With increasing numbers of international missions asking them questions about their views on integration, the lack of answers to their own is a source of considerable frustration. This was particularly clear in Kebrebeyah, one of the potential pilots for the local integration pledge. Where relations between refugees and residents are most tense – notably in Gambella – the lack of clarity over practicalities allows actors to promote competing narratives around the intent and direction of the process.

- The gradual growth in CRRF-related activity, without greater clarity over the policy framework, is also leading to widespread confusion among officials about whether the CRRF is a project or an approach. Indeed, in all of the regions surveyed here, respondents expressed frustration that the CRRF project – with specific budgets and resources attached – had not started. If this perception is allowed to persist, the opportunity to reframe the overall approach may be fatally undermined.

- Perhaps most worrying, the study found evidence that the space for the informal cooperation processes that have developed in recent years is shrinking due to growing uncertainty about the direction of travel. In particular, there was evidence that the public commitment to end the encampment model within a decade had raised serious concerns among ARRA staff across the country, both about how refugees' rights would be protected in future, and how ARRA is expected to evolve.

There is a critical need to start explaining more clearly the vision for integration, and ensuring that it is informed by the realities of local environments. A common view heard in discussions of the refugee presence in Ethiopia is that, because of levels of ethnic solidarity between groups that straddle borders, integration is relatively straightforward. While the research did indeed find examples of this, perhaps the single most striking finding across all the studies was the variation in the views of refugees and residents about different forms of integration between different locations. This was found within regions, as well as across them: indeed, in each of the four regions where the research teams spent time in and around two different camps, the findings in each were starkly different, for a range of complex reasons. This complexity must be embraced and better understood if implementation is to move forward effectively.

The research team identified a wide range of factors shaping interactions between refugees and residents, factors that do not always form part of the assessments conducted by organisations working with refugees. They can be grouped under the following five areas:

1. Factors related to the physical location of the camp
Most obviously, this includes issues such as access to productive or grazing land, water and fuel sources: this last issue was consistently flagged as a prime driver of tension between refugees and local residents. But there is also an important set of more complex questions about the history of the land itself: who owned and used it, what for, and what promises were made to them (and by whom) at the time the camp was established. These historical processes, often not transparent to local populations, caused particular tensions in Benishangul-Gumuz and Somali region.

2. Factors related to local kinship systems and ethnic identity
Most refugees in Ethiopia live at the margins of the state, geographically, politically and socially. Indeed, the relative marginalisation of peripheral regions has been formally recognised by the state through the establishment of the four Developing

Regional States (which contain the great majority of refugees in the country), a framework for providing additional support from the centre to help these regions 'catch up'. In these environments, the central state is more remote and there is more space for local identities to shape local politics, independently of national narratives. This is of particular significance for refugee populations that might share an ethnic identity but not a nationality. Nuer-speaking communities from Gambella are likely to have more connections to people of the same ethnicity from over the border in South Sudan than they do with citizens of Addis Ababa or Tigray.

Porous borders and mobility create complex relationships and blurred identities, and are central to populations' survival strategies. This is particularly significant when social structures are deeply rooted in notions of kinship and mutual support, as they are for the largely pastoralist or transhumant populations living around Ethiopia's borders. Where national identities are particularly blurred, this significantly increases the options available for refugees to move and settle in different locations, making it far harder for them to be identified as not being Ethiopian citizens. In all locations, it is considered normal that some refugees live outside of the established refugee framework, and that residents take advantage of opportunities presented by the refugee operation.

These are highly complex, dynamic systems, subject to constant change and renegotiation. No easy assumptions can be made that one group of people living in close proximity to another will necessarily be welcome because of shared language or ethnic identity. In the Jijiga area of Somali region, refugees may be Somali like the local residents, but come from different clans and have different backgrounds: the research found that subtle differences in clan hierarchies might contribute to very different relations between refugees and residents in Sheder and Kebrebeyah, just a few hours' drive from each other.

Proximity to shared kin can also make a significant difference to refugees' lives: in Tigray, Kunama refugees, who have been settled some distance from existing communities of Ethiopian Kunama, expressed a strong desire to integrate there rather than where they were; similarly,

Nuer refugees from South Sudan have resisted attempts to move them to Benishangul-Gumuz because they do not want to be away from social structures with which they are familiar.

If these issues of ethnicity, identity and social structure are not understood in a highly granular fashion, and such analyses are not updated regularly to track changes over time, there is a risk of creating new vulnerabilities, or enabling exploitative relationships. In assessments in Kebrebeyah in the 2000s, for example, significant issues of child labour exploitation were found, with poor children from the camp having to find work in the local town; it is possible that these are linked to local clan and sub-clan dynamics. Resettlement programmes over the last 10 years in Somali region have also made a significant difference to refugees' aspirations, with refugee status prized as a potential pathway to international resettlement, discouraging more formal integration with local residents.

3. Factors related to local economies and livelihoods

While refugees have no formal right to work, in most camps they play an active role in local economies. This includes sharecropping arrangements with local communities (Afar, Tigray); employment with local businesses (Gambella, Afar); opening businesses within and outside camps (Somali region); and establishing mutually beneficial trading arrangements with local communities (Somali and Benishangul-Gumuz). Where refugees bring specific skills or experiences – for example gold miners in Benishangul, or greater experience of wage labour in Afar – these can be particularly valuable to employers. They can also create new markets, particularly if their place of origin is markedly more, or less, urban than their new location.

An obvious factor shaping these opportunities is access to local markets: where camps are close to thriving urban centres in Tigray and Benishangul-Gumuz, the research teams found greater levels of interaction. Where freedom of movement is generally easier, interactions can extend well beyond the immediate environs of the camps.

Another key question is the relative affluence of refugees and residents: while it is sometimes assumed that refugees are poorer than citizens of the country where they reside, this is far from necessarily the case, particularly when camps are located in some of the poorest parts of the country. For example, in Sheder refugees had strong connections to transnational networks among the Somali diaspora, giving them far greater access to capital through remittances.

These dynamics change over time. As Kebrebeyah has grown in size and importance, refugees in the town, who have been there for almost 30 years, have become an increasingly marginalised minority community, whereas Sheder camp has been a key driver of economic growth in what was a relatively underdeveloped location before the camp was established.

4. Factors related to institutional capacity and experiences of service delivery

The refugee operation is run directly by the federal government through a centralised agency, ARRA, in recognition of the federal responsibility to meet international obligations in relation to refugees. However, this is in direct contrast to the highly decentralised service delivery structures that are standard in Ethiopia, with responsibility for planning and budgeting pushed down to woreda level. ARRA therefore has to negotiate multiple relationships with kebele [ward], woreda and regional governments, and the extent of the capacity and resources of these bodies has a significant impact on the strength of the partnerships and the nature of local cooperation. Where local authorities are relatively well-resourced, for example in parts of Tigray, something approaching a partnership of equals can emerge, but this can be more challenging where there are large disparities between ARRA and its partners in terms of the resources available to them.

The capacity of local actors also affects local populations' experiences and perceptions of service delivery, in turn influencing how they view the refugee operation. This can challenge the assumption that sharing services will necessarily bring communities together: in Benishangul-Gumuz, it became clear that local residents resented the relatively well-resourced

health facilities available in the camps even though they were able to access them freely, framing them as part of their own narrative of their communities' marginalisation by the state. In all of the regions under study, concerns were expressed by local residents that, even though they were able to access refugee services, they often felt that they were treated as lower priority, or even as 'second-class citizens'.

5. Historical and political factors

Finally, factors relating to wider historical and political dynamics shape how different refugee groups understand their place within Ethiopia, and how they are understood. For refugees themselves, key questions include when they arrived in Ethiopia, where they fled from and why and how they reached their location of ultimate settlement. What were the political conditions at the time of their initial settlement, and how have these changed over time? What kind of political actors were they understood to be, and what were the implications for how both local residents and local authorities perceived and engaged with them? In Gambella in the 1980s, the refugee camps were clearly politicised, and for some time were even effectively administered by the South Sudanese rebel army (Bayissa, 2010; Feyissa, 2011). While this degree of politicisation is no longer in evidence, its legacy is still felt in Gambella today in the way that the refugee presence interacts with ongoing tensions between Nuer and Anuak communities.

More broadly, it is important to understand the nature of the political relationship between the regions and the Ethiopian state, and how these have evolved over the lifetime of the refugee presence. What issues have dominated the relationships of the regional government with Addis Ababa and the rest of the country, and to what extent – if any – does the presence of refugees play into these? For example, in Afar the research team found that concerns around migrant workers from other parts of Ethiopia coming to the region for daily wage labour has created an environment where ethnically Afar refugees have been preferred for such work by the local authorities, despite the constraints of the legal framework.

2.3 Building a delivery architecture: institutions, resources and accountability

Parallel service delivery systems have been intentionally established to ensure that refugees' protection rights are met by the Ethiopian state from the centre, including in times of crisis. With funding primarily from the international community, and ARRA run as part of the Ethiopian government's security architecture (albeit with a significant shift in 2018 to oversight from the newly established Ministry of Peace), this parallel structure has been largely isolated from those parts of the Ethiopian government most involved in 'standard' service delivery. ARRA receives funding through different channels, works to UNHCR's rather than the government's financial year and funding cycles and is not subject to the same regulations in terms of procurement and staffing policies. Salary structures are also entirely different, partly as a result of the short-term funding cycles forced on it by UNHCR's procedures. ARRA is also primarily an operational delivery organisation, with a focus on establishing very strong vertical accountability structures with both staff and partners (for example, an accountability matrix determines which organisations are responsible for delivering which inputs in every camp in the country). It is far less suited to or experienced in policy dialogue at the centre, technical discussions of possible reform or working in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders.

Achieving clarity on how integration will be approached therefore presents some challenges, particularly as ARRA's organisational structure does not align with local authorities at regional or woreda level. In Tigray, ARRA's capacity is primarily at camp and zone level, headquartered in Shire town, but other service delivery actors are primarily at woreda and regional level; the refugee operation in Afar is also overseen from Shire, due to the additional capacity there. While these are far from insurmountable obstacles, such misalignments do make day-to-day communication more difficult.

There are particular policy challenges to consider as well. ARRA's service delivery arrangements work primarily to international

norms and standards rather than Ethiopian ones, meaning, for example, that health clinics in close proximity will use different definitions of severe malnutrition.[3] ARRA also has a particular approach to staffing health and education centres, using a combination of national staff (receiving, in general, higher monthly salaries than those working in the national system) and 'incentive workers', refugees who are recruited on the basis of minimal qualifications to work as teachers or nurses at 700–800 Birr a month (the maximum seen as legally acceptable under the previous refugee law). This creates a range of challenges: on the one hand, local authorities are concerned at the prospect of losing their staff to the more lucrative work available through the refugee operation; on the other, both local authorities and refugees are concerned at the quality of the services being provided by people perceived to be underqualified. Overcoming these structural and policy differences will require considerable discussion at multiple levels.

There is also a great deal of fragmentation of resources. One example highlighted in Somali region was of the secondary school in Kebrebeyah, which has a significant cohort of refugee students, and consequently has four different funding channels and three different accountability structures to manage. There can be particular challenges with water systems, which by definition involve the management of a shared resource – and in many parts of the country a scarce one. Again in Kebrebeyah, there is a long history of disagreement around how best to manage and oversee a single water supply system for the town and the camp: the initial investment by the refugee operation in the early 2000s has proved unsustainable, presenting a serious challenge to efforts towards shared governance and leading to an unpredictable water supply for everyone in the area. As far back as 2005, a UNHCR Ethiopia senior manager was quoted as saying 'the project should have been a development project involving the local government a lot more. If we would have thought about this we wouldn't have these problems now!' (Da Rugna, 2005: 22).

The current focus on establishing shared water utilities with shared governance suggests that these lessons have been learnt, but there are still challenges in finding appropriate governance models that meet all parties' needs.

Underpinning these challenges are very different resourcing landscapes and approaches. The refugee operation's budgets are almost entirely donor-financed, primarily through a humanitarian modality that requires one-year grants and contracts, making longer-term planning very difficult. International agencies are also often more involved in the emergency phase of establishing refugee infrastructure, and bequeath relatively well-resourced infrastructure to the refugee operation. For their part, local authorities rely on a combination of locally raised revenue and grants from regional or central government, as well as so-called 'off-budget' resourcing from externally funded development programmes. These different funding arrangements can lead to considerable contrasts between the two systems, particularly as authorities in the Developing Regional States (DRS) generally perceive themselves to be under-resourced. In Gambella, for example, woredas across the region were unable to meet even basic running costs over the course of the year. At a time when the refugee operation in the region has had to scale up significantly, and establish infrastructure to meet the needs of over 200,000 refugees, the contrast becomes particularly stark.

This can lead to considerable pressure on the refugee operation to provide support to local authorities. While in principle ARRA provides between 20% and 30% of resources to 'host communities' in the interests of balance, in practice this policy is not formally established or closely monitored, and is likely to be set aside in an environment of constrained resources. The research teams found that this commitment becomes an important point of negotiation between ARRA and local authorities.

The nature of this negotiation partly explains the relative lack of transparency around the level of resources available to refugees, reinforced by ARRA's instinctive resistance to openness

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3   The Ethiopian national standard for malnutrition is a mid-upper arm circumference of less than 11 cm, while the international standard used by refugee camp health facilities is 11.5 cm.

as a security-focused organisation. There are understandable concerns among both ARRA and UNHCR about sharing detailed financial data given that the funding and expenditure structures between the two systems are so different, making sensible comparisons between the two challenging. This lack of transparency can, in turn, be challenging for local authorities: in Tigray, for example, concerns were expressed about the extent to which the refugee presence distorts resourcing in certain woredas, but that local authorities cannot plan for this because they do not know the levels of resources available. Further complicating this picture is a narrative of significantly diminishing resources for the traditional refugee operation in recent years. While hard to confirm using publicly available data, both ARRA and UNHCR staff talk of dwindling resources for the traditional refugee operation in recent years, experienced by refugees in, for example, periodic reductions to rations.

All of this leads to significant concerns in all regions over accountability. The Ethiopian government has inculcated a strong culture of vertical accountability in recent years, particularly through the Business Process Re-engineering policy, and a frequent question raised by respondents was where responsibility and accountability would be located under a more integrated approach. These questions speak precisely to concerns over resourcing and delivery. From the perspective of those running the refugee operation, there are concerns that the systems established in the last 10 years will be diluted, leading to a potential deterioration in the quality of services provided and the levels of protection provided to refugees. From the perspective of local authorities, there are understandable concerns that integration will translate into increased pressure on services without the necessary additional funding. Finding ways to build confidence on both sides around 'feasible integration' is a central challenge for CRRF implementation, and a clearer architecture for both policy and delivery is required to enable this.

Unfortunately, donor efforts to promote this agenda in recent years may be exacerbating these concerns because of failures of coordination and inconsistency in approach. The point is illustrated by three new programmes (with a total budget of $187 million) launched in 2016 by the European Union (EU), the World Bank and the UK Department for International Development (DFID), all intended to support a more comprehensive approach to assisting refugees and residents in refugee-hosting areas.[4] Despite these similar aims, the three programmes could not have been designed more differently, with the EU funding NGO consortia working inside and outside camps, the World Bank providing resources through the Ministry of Agriculture to support Community Driven Development (CDD) programmes in the kebeles outside refugee camps and DFID leveraging UNICEF's existing relationships with line ministries at federal and regional level to strengthen their role in refugee-related service delivery. All three programmes have found it difficult to integrate with ARRA's existing modalities for work in the refugee camps.

More recently, as the CRRF has progressed, there is some evidence that these lessons may have been taken on. In the last year, the World Bank has been designing modalities for new education funding under the International Development Assistance 2018 Refugee Sub-Window, and intends to work primarily through the existing General Education Quality Improvement Programme (GEQIP), the main vehicle for donor support to the education sector. This approach means that key policy and operational questions should be addressed up-front, and that there is greater clarity over how implementation should proceed with support from all stakeholders. This seems like a more promising approach to meeting the CRRF's core objectives, but will need to be monitored closely.

Different approaches are not, in and of themselves, a bad thing, and there could be strong complementarity between these

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4   The EU's Regional Development and Protection Programme (RDPP), the World Bank's Development Responses to Displacement Impacted Populations (DRDIP) and the DFID-funded Building Self-Reliance Programme (BSRP), implemented by UNICEF.

programmes, but there have been limited attempts to consider how such complementarity could be achieved, or to design an overarching coordination framework to operate within. At local levels, the effect appears to have been to reinforce the pre-existing concerns of key stakeholders, confirming that new funding approaches will be poorly coordinated. It seems likely that some of the resistance to promoting integrated service delivery systems in recent years is connected to these concerns.

As the conversation shifts to the policy level, it will be essential to avoid divorcing these discussions from the reality on the ground, particularly regarding resources. One of the reasons for the refugee operation's focus on local delivery is the recognition that it is how delivery is experienced there that matters, particularly for security. There is a risk that announcements of substantial new resources in Addis Ababa may raise expectations that cannot be met, certainly not immediately. There is some evidence that the World Bank's new Economic Opportunities Programme (EOP) could fall into this trap, with a public narrative firmly established that half a billion dollars is being provided to Ethiopia, predominantly for job creation, in return for the government liberalising the right to work and freedom of movement for refugees (Bhalla, 2019).[5] While this has been crucial in securing the government's commitment to pass new refugee legislation, it may also have encouraged the development of expectations in refugee-hosting regions that direct benefits will be coming that may not in fact appear. The EOP is a payment for results programme that will provide centralised budget support to the government in return for reaching certain targets, few of which relate to the immediate priorities of the governments of these regions (World Bank, 2018). If these raised expectations are not met, there is a risk that local actors will become frustrated with the CRRF, and potentially further withdraw their consent for innovative approaches at local levels.

Finally, these concerns around delivery and accountability structures mask a further

challenge which requires more focus: accountability to local populations themselves. Consistently, research teams heard from both refugees and residents that they felt unable to hold to account the agencies responsible for their services. While this is a challenge across Ethiopia, it is notable that some efforts to strengthen accountability in the Ethiopian public sector – for example, increasing budget transparency at local levels through the Social Accountability Programme and Financial Transparency and Accountability initiative – have not been replicated within the refugee context. While the securitised context of the refugee camps makes for a substantially different environment in which to undertake such activities, it should not be impossible. If refugee self-reliance is an ambition of the CRRF, finding ways for refugees to express their concerns and hold service delivery agents to account more regularly would seem a valuable contribution towards this. There may also be opportunities to use joint mechanisms to bring refugees and residents together in discussion about the kind of changes they collectively want to see from the CRRF.

2.4 Acknowledging and managing trade-offs

The findings so far have focused on bringing out the complexity of the refugee operation and understanding the interests of the various actors involved, to help key stakeholders in the CRRF process identify how best to support implementation. But it is also important to reflect on why the refugee operation is structured in the way it is, the trade-offs and compromises involved and why some of the reforms currently being discussed have not been implemented earlier.

Indeed, many of these reforms have been proposed as far back as the 1970s and 1980s. There was a recognition even then that refugee camps were far from ideal as a mechanism to provide support to vulnerable people, being both unsustainable and not reflective of the realities of borderland environments. In one of the most famous works of research on refugees from the

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5 The EOP was previously known as the Ethiopia Job Compact.

1980s, *Imposing aid*, Barbara Harrell-Bond argued that aid should be 'directed towards resolving the economic and social deprivations which result from dramatic demographic changes without distinguishing the recipients', and that 'economic, and perhaps even some social "integration" … could be better achieved' (Harrell-Bond, 1986: 7).

At a policy level, there have been repeated attempts by the international community to put more emphasis on 'local integration', going back to the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA) process of the late 1970s and early 1980s, but these have foundered repeatedly on disagreements between international donors and refugee-hosting countries about resourcing levels and modalities, framed around 'burden sharing' and 'additionality' (Betts, 2004). While the increased funds available through the World Bank's IDA 2018 Refugee Sub-Window are a step forward, there remain concerns that these challenges have not yet been fully addressed in discussions around the GRC and CRRF, with few binding commitments.

Within Ethiopia, there have been previous attempts to promote similar reforms to the CRRF. In Somali region in the early 1990s, the UN and the government established a 'Cross-Mandate Policy' designed to reduce the role of UNHCR and develop more integrated approaches to refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs) and returnees from Somalia. In the UN's words: 'the objective should be to close all the camps in Eastern Hararghe. They are a gross anomaly and form poles of attraction which draw in large numbers of people and divert scarce resources which could otherwise be used to develop the whole region … it is better to try and assist refugees through the host communities … rather than perpetuate the problem by keeping people in artificial camps' (UNEPPG, 1992, quoted in Van Brabant, 1994: 50). This effort also failed, due in large part to a lack of willingness on the part of development actors to engage in any serious way (ibid.). UNHCR was left as the primary actor, and it took another 10 years to close the majority of the camps around Jigjiga.

The purpose of citing these experiences is not to suggest that the CRRF cannot succeed where previous efforts failed, but rather to demonstrate that there are structural reasons why the refugee operation is as it is. There are genuine trade-offs involved, and these need to be taken into account as reform is pursued. The research suggests that six in particular are worth bearing in mind:

1. Balancing the desire to promote refugee self-reliance with the need to meet protection obligations

A key theme throughout the research has been the sheer diversity of experience of refugees in different locations, and within refugee populations. As pointed out in section 2.2, not all refugees are necessarily in a worse economic condition than local residents, and some undoubtedly have a high degree of agency and are able to take advantage of the opportunities presented by refugee programming. If the international community wishes to promote refugee self-reliance, acknowledging and embracing this agency would be an important starting point. However, in doing so it will be important not to lose sight of refugees who are more vulnerable, and for whom the protection and support of ARRA and UNHCR provide a critical safety net. Such individuals and families were found in all of the regions, and there is a risk that promoting refugees as economic actors could leave them behind, or increase their vulnerability. Mitigating such risks will require much deeper socio-economic analysis of local populations, and the development of a range of responses that can be flexibly offered to different groups. Crucially, there needs to be more openness about the extent of local populations' existing strategies for self-reliance, even when they do not align with the norms of the refugee operation or the laws of the Ethiopian state. Proposals within ARRA's NCRRS to explore new approaches to targeting assistance to refugee populations may provide fertile ground for exploring this.

2. The challenge of meeting protection needs in the wider Ethiopian context

Refugee protection activities are governed by international humanitarian norms and frameworks that do not match the current capacity of national protection systems. Social

welfare is under-funded and divided across a range of different government actors and development partners, and there are gaps in addressing the needs of the most vulnerable groups in society. This is a challenge that the government is seeking to tackle with the support of organisations such as UNICEF, but solutions will only come in the medium term. This presents a dilemma for those promoting integrated protection solutions in that it potentially implies accepting lower standards for refugees living outside camps. As targeting approaches are developed, great care will be needed in thinking through priority needs among the most vulnerable, and what kind of medium-term mechanisms can be put in place to supplement national systems.

3. Strengthening local cooperation around the needs of refugees and residents while maintaining a degree of insulation from local politics

As stated above, Ethiopia's borderlands are complex political environments, and the presence of refugees tends to imply the existence of conflict systems that reach across the country's borders. All local actors are likely to be connected to such systems to some degree, both local authorities and local populations, and there is therefore an important role for more 'external' actors, both national, in particular ARRA, and international. While none of these actors is ever truly neutral, the presence of a wider range of stakeholders does dilute the influence of local political agendas. Along the western border of the country, faultlines from ongoing conflict situations in Sudan and South Sudan have extended into Ethiopian territory, and there is a critical role for the federal government in seeking to manage the potential for internal conflict in Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz. It would be a mistake, therefore, to minimise the role of federal actors completely. A nuanced, context-driven approach is required that allows roles and responsibilities to be sensibly allocated, and stronger partnerships developed.

4. Ensuring equity between meeting the needs of refugees and of Ethiopian citizens

There is an understandable desire to emphasise the extent to which ongoing reforms will improve life for refugees in Ethiopia – such a narrative has been central to media coverage since the passage of the new refugee law in January 2019. While this has been well-received internationally, it will have a more nuanced reception domestically. At the national level, Ethiopia's recent political transition has been partly enabled by concerns among young people, in particular, that their aspirations in life are not being met by the current Ethiopian labour market.

If a strong narrative emerges domestically that refugees are being prioritised for jobs over residents this could cause considerable discontent. It could also exacerbate tensions at local levels, particularly in Gambella, where Anuak communities already feel that the refugee operations of the last 30 years have contributed to their perceived marginalisation.[6] The research in Somali region found that, in Sheder camp, there is a productive partnership between refugees and local residents based on the balance of rights and entitlements provided by current arrangements; as this balance shifts, it is possible that relations could worsen if all actors' perspectives and needs are not taken into account. The Ethiopian government clearly understands these risks, and emphasises that reforms are partly about attracting resources that will benefit everyone.[7] However, it will be important to track perceptions of the reform process at all levels to ensure that it does not do damage to an environment which, on the whole, has been largely positive towards refugees for many years.

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6 Indeed, since the passing of the new refugee law Anuak spokespeople have already expressed their public concern, and sought to organise public protests against it.

7 The World Bank and Government of Ethiopia have developed a programme that does indeed focus primarily on economic opportunities for Ethiopian citizens.

5. Promoting reform that recognises the long-term nature of the challenge, while retaining the capacity to respond to crises

The CRRF reforms are partly motivated by a recognition that forced displacement in the Horn of Africa has been a chronic and not a temporary problem, and that humanitarian responses are therefore of limited relevance and utility. This research has confirmed the validity of this concern, particularly when recent population movements are placed in the context of decades of displacement, migration and refugee responses. A more developmental response is therefore a critical step forward, but it will also be important not to lose sight of the potential for short-term crises to emerge. Even over the course of this research, changing relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea led to a new surge in movement across the border and a scaling up of the refugee response in Tigray. With fluid political situations in both Somalia and South Sudan, there is undoubtedly potential for further influxes – or outflows – over coming years. What will be important is to ensure that the framework governing CRRF implementation is flexible enough to be able to undertake both long- and short-term responses in a way that minimises distortion to either. Achieving this will be challenging.

6. Not withdrawing humanitarian funds without ensuring appropriate development mechanisms are in place

Finally, it will be important to actively manage the transition from predominantly humanitarian funding to the intended mix of humanitarian and development funding. As was seen in Somali region in the 1990s, assumptions should not be made about the willingness of long-term development actors to engage in Ethiopia's peripheries: these are challenging environments in which to operate, and with smaller, dispersed populations require different responses and approaches to those used in other parts of the country. The CRRF alone cannot present a comprehensive development framework for these areas, and in the ongoing absence of such a framework, any reduction in humanitarian funding will need to be carefully managed to ensure that poor communities do not end up losing out. This is particularly the case in regions where the refugee operation represents a more proportionally significant financial input, such as in Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz. Ideally, a separate strand of development dialogue around these regions would emerge to drive forward such a discussion separately from the refugee issue, but as yet it is not clear whether this will happen.

3 Conclusions and recommendations

The research conducted under this project brings out the sheer complexity of what the CRRF is trying to achieve in Ethiopia. It is attempting to reform a system that has been operating for decades and which involves a huge diversity of actors from both inside and outside the country. It requires understanding individuals and communities operating both inside and outside the state-led structures that dominate the international system. It involves engaging with sensitive political and security issues in borderland regions at a time of significant political change within Ethiopia. And it requires bringing together national and international resources under common frameworks.

There is undoubted appetite, at all levels, for the kinds of reforms that the CRRF is looking to promote, and the new refugee law passed in early 2019 should create new momentum for the process. That said, the level of appetite is variable across different locations, for a range of reasons. While funding trends – decreases in humanitarian funding to UNHCR, increases in more mixed types of programming in areas where refugees currently live – may be encouraging some changes in the system, there are serious risks to the process if more internal ownership, based on broad consultation and detailed analysis, cannot be built. There are concerns about the potential implications of proceeding; trade-offs need to be managed, and space created to work through them and find appropriate answers. Evidence suggests that the growth in newer types of programming activity in recent years, without adequate work being put in up-front to ensure that this space has been created to everyone's satisfaction, has exacerbated these concerns and created uncertainty over how to proceed.

Finding the right answers to the dilemmas created by these trade-offs will not happen on paper: the only way to work through them will be to test new approaches, monitor progress and adapt as required. This will also be the only way to convince local actors that the shift being discussed is genuine, rather than theoretical. There is therefore a need to move into a new phase in implementation of the CRRF reforms that focuses on piloting and testing, rooted in a strong partnership between federal and regional actors. A new emphasis on practical action will also provide the government with the opportunity to back up current international interest in its refugee reforms with real examples of progress. The Global Refugee Forum at the end of 2019, which will reflect on progress with the GRC, could be an important moment to showcase such examples and mobilise further international support.

This phase will therefore require a dual approach, one that both engages a wider range of actors in a more substantive policy discussion at the national level, while also formally creating the space for testing and learning lessons at local levels so that policy can be informed by realities on the ground.

A first step will be to develop frameworks more suited to the complexity of the challenge. In relation to discussions around integration, service delivery systems are sometimes imagined as set out on the left of Figure 2.

Refugees and 'host communities' are understood as discrete communities receiving services and inputs from separate organisations, with the challenge being finding points of contact and connections between these systems. On the basis of the research conducted, this does not appear to be a helpful starting point. Instead,

Figure 2   Imagined and proposed models for service delivery in refugee-hosting areas
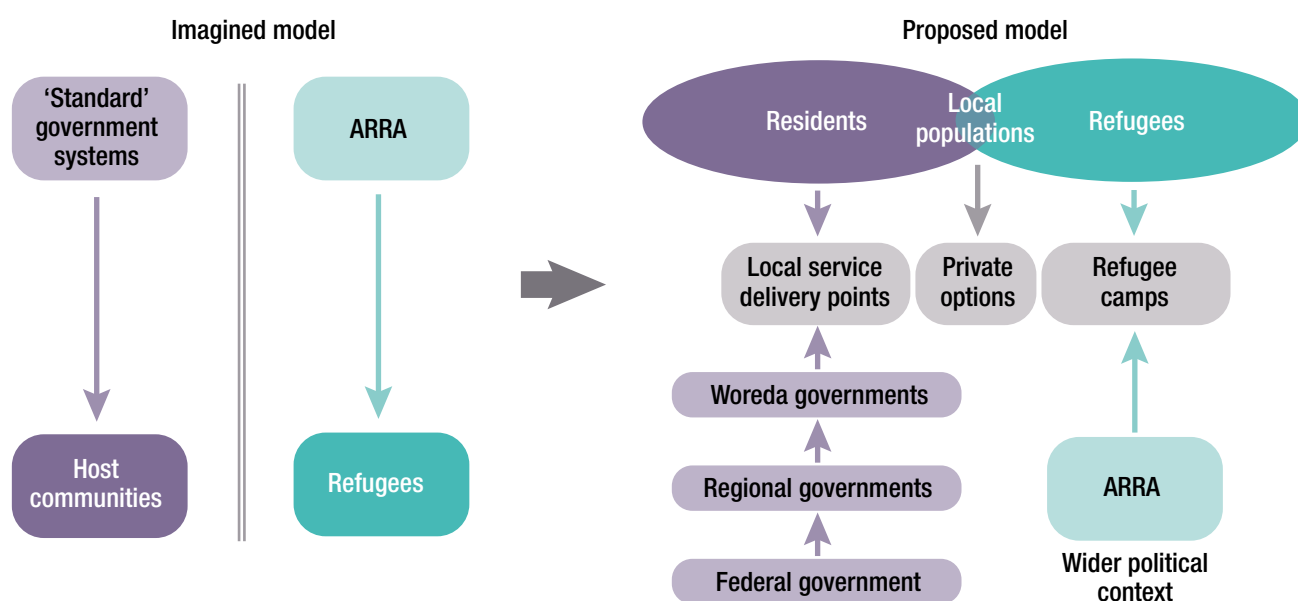
something like the model on the right of Figure 2 might be more useful.

The key implications of such a model include:

- It recognises that refugees and local residents are not neatly distinguishable communities, but instead overlap in complex ways. While uncomfortable for those in the refugee operation needing concrete numbers to work with, acknowledging this will help engage with this complexity.
- 'Host communities' cannot be treated as a discrete category to be addressed by the refugee programme. A shift in emphasis is required, recognising first that the needs of local populations are primarily the responsibility of local authorities, and then seeking to understand how refugee-related resources and interventions fit within that structure – particularly in relation to protracted refugee presences.
- By placing local populations at the top of the diagram, it recognises that they have a considerable degree of agency and choice in accessing services and support. Understanding how they are exercising this agency, and what the key constraints on it are, should be a starting point for analysis.
- It recognises that there are a range of service delivery options available to local populations, and that, while these include

those provided through the camps and local authorities, it also includes those of the private sector. In all regions it was clear that private sector options, for example pharmacies or privately owned water reservoirs in Somali region, are important alternatives, and often preferable for both refugees and residents if cash is available.

- It makes clear the important structural distinction between highly decentralised 'national systems' and the far more centrally managed ARRA operation, flagging that care is required to find appropriate points of contact between the two. If local authorities are to continue taking a more meaningful role in overseeing service delivery, frameworks will be required that provide greater clarity on roles and responsibilities at both regional and woreda level.
- Finally, it recognises the wider political context in which all of these processes are happening, both locally and nationally, and which affect the actions and interests of all actors.

Using such an understanding as a starting point for taking forward reforms related to the CRRF should allow for a more nuanced and considered approach to implementation. It makes clearer which actors need to be involved in different discussions, and the kind of data required to enable more informed programming.

The following recommendations relate to different aspects of this programming.

Strengthening the architecture and improving the coordination of resources

With the new refugee law passed, this is a critical moment for the CRRF implementation process in Ethiopia. The CRRF Steering Committee will need to rapidly reconvene to drive forward the process of taking detailed operational discussions to the regional level, particularly through the planned development of Regional Action Plans. As this process moves forward, it will be critical for key stakeholders in the government and the international community to reflect on the findings of these studies. Answers to the following questions should be agreed to ensure greater clarity going forward:

- If the CRRF is about the best use of all of the resources currently being committed to the refugee operation and the locations in which it is running, what programmes and budgets are in and out of scope? How do these choices relate to local understandings of 'host communities'? Have all of those responsible for overseeing all of these programmes and budgets been brought into the process?
- Who is ultimately responsible for CRRF implementation at different levels? How will they be held accountable, and how will they hold those reporting to them accountable? How does this cut across existing reporting lines?
- What structures are required to enable greater mutual transparency around resourcing levels for programming with local populations? Is the vision ultimately for a single joint budget, and if so how will this be managed?
- What is expected of donors supportive of the CRRF process about how they should commit their funds? What programming modalities are acceptable, and how will they be coordinated at different levels? How will this relate to existing coordination mechanisms? How will existing programmes be better aligned and/or coordinated?
- To what extent can ARRA offices at zonal and camp level be empowered to develop different

approaches based on the specific needs and wishes of actors within their region? How can regional variations be managed?

The answers to these questions should also, ideally, inform ARRA's ongoing internal reform processes, as they should shape the skills and resources it will require. Where it is not yet possible to develop clear agreement on the answers to these questions, it would be helpful to be explicit about this, and initiate processes (potentially to involve piloting in specific locations) that will provide answers over time. Addressing these overarching governance issues should enable more constructive discussions around knotty policy issues such as managing the very different salary scales used by ARRA and regional governments. It is also hoped that it would create an enabling environment for the kind of pragmatic problem-driven approaches to responding to local challenges that have been seen across the country.

Creating this enabling environment will require binding in more fully a wide range of stakeholders at both federal and regional level, and it is likely that there will be a need for greater engagement from the centre of government to do this. Both the Ministry of Finance and the Prime Minister's Office could play an important role in bringing new momentum and energy to the process, particularly with the new Prime Minister's strong emphasis on government delivery. Such leadership could help address key architectural issues and institutional arrangements to enable partnerships between line ministries and ARRA, and the right location for and governance of the NCO. Bringing the NCO more fully under the shared ownership of a range of key stakeholders is also likely to be an important step.

Improving understanding

Second, there is a need to continue to build the understanding of all actors about the complexity of the issues that the CRRF touches on, particularly at local levels. While the research for this study should be a useful baseline, and there is a plethora of research, evaluation and analysis already under way, more thought is required

about how all of this effort can contribute to collectively improving the understanding of all CRRF stakeholders. Greater coordination, collaboration and dissemination will be required to manage this.

There may also be value in developing a more nuanced approach to understanding the dynamics of local areas. The various factors set out in section 2.2 could be drawn together and developed into a form of assessment and analysis tool, perhaps framed around understanding the camp 'ecosystem' rather than just the camp itself. Implementing such an approach would involve more cross-disciplinary teams, comprising individuals with both academic and practitioner experience across fields such as anthropology, political science, economics, conflict and social development. Such a tool may allow for more consistent data-gathering across the various locations where the refugee operation is active.

Priority delivery areas

As set out above, it will be important to identify priority actions that can be taken at local levels to build greater support for the reform process and concretise it through addressing local problems. These priorities should clearly be defined by local actors, but the regional studies suggest a number of areas worth exploring (in the specific locations where research was conducted):

- **Gambella:** Gambella is undoubtedly where the refugee presence has the greatest impact on wider local political dynamics, and therefore requires the greatest care in approach – particularly on service integration, given the tensions between communities in some locations. The emphasis should therefore be on interventions that genuinely improve conditions for all local populations, with a greater focus on the region's medium- to long-term development needs, as set out by the regional government. One example suggested was the need for investment in a new hospital in Itang woreda. The lack of employment opportunities for local populations suggests that livelihoods and labour market interventions should be a high priority. The development of shared

governance for key services, such as the Itang Water Utility Scheme, is an important step forward, but these will face implementation challenges: adequate resources, financial, technical and political, will be required to help address these.

- **Benishangul-Gumuz:** Benishangul-Gumuz provides a strong foundation for CRRF implementation, albeit the complexities of the diversity of both refugees and residents will require ongoing analysis. Gaps in service delivery experienced by local populations mean that, if resources can be mobilised through the CRRF and allocated in ways that bring clear benefits to all, this could have a very positive impact. The education sector was identified as bringing particular opportunities thanks to the points of contact between communities it already provides. The challenges involved in the provision of water across both communities should be addressed as a priority. Another priority issue identified was improving the availability of firewood, or alternative sources of energy, as this was a common source of tension between refugees and residents.

- **Tigray:** The partnership between ARRA and local authorities in Tigray is strong, although the structural misalignment of ARRA's resources (at zonal and camp level) and the sectoral bureaus (at regional and woreda level) presents a significant challenge to translating this partnership into strong, integrated service delivery. Addressing this misalignment is therefore a priority to enable the development of common plans based on information shared more openly between the different systems. In the Tigray context, where local authority planning structures are relatively strong, enabling much more integrated planning and prioritisation was identified as a strong CRRF entry point. The Mai Tsebri water supply project was also identified as a priority project which could generate important lessons.

- **Afar:** Of all the regions, Afar is perhaps the one where integration has gone furthest, with a large proportion of refugees formally living outside camps. Given the relative deprivation experienced by populations in

Afar, this provides concrete opportunities to test the out-of-camp models proposed under the CRRF, and actors such as UNICEF are strongly encouraged to identify new modalities for working in communities with mixed populations. Priorities could also usefully focus on key elements of the common service delivery infrastructure, including Asayita district hospital, the elementary and high schools in Asayita town and addressing water quality issues across the region. Child protection needs were also identified as significant given concerns over undocumented births, female genital mutilation and child marriage.

- **Somali Regional State:** Of the camps around Jijiga, Kebrebeyah was identified as providing a potentially productive location to pilot CRRF approaches. This is partly because it has already been identified as falling within the government's local integration pledge, but also because the standard approaches of the refugee operation do not appear to be functioning well. There is therefore a clear set of problems that need to be addressed, particularly around the availability of clean water. Addressing the challenges faced in securing a sustainable water supply for the town will not be easy, but would send an important message about the potential of CRRF approaches. Somali region also provides important opportunities around innovative livelihoods work given the presence of mechanisms such as the Hello Cash mobile money programme, and the importance of remittances to the area's economy.

Strengthening downward accountability

The issue of downward accountability should also be further explored, both as part of promoting a self-reliance agenda and as a mechanism for bringing local populations and local service delivery organisations together. Social accountability programming is challenging, but there is a wealth of existing lessons from such programmes in Ethiopia that can be drawn on. Engaging refugees and residents in a joint discussion about concerns and grievances with those responsible for delivering services in these locations could send a strong message that the CRRF will usher in different approaches. However, such an initiative will also carry risks, and as with all the recommendations presented here will need to be adapted to different local contexts.

Managing risks

Part of the challenge of implementing the CRRF is increasing the number of actors who need to be involved in making decisions. A by-product of this is that it may become increasingly difficult to have open and transparent discussions about possible challenges and risks, particularly ones that may be sensitive. This challenge must be proactively managed by those running the process, with appropriate structures established to enable open and substantive conversations.

In parallel, there is also a need to focus on clearer public communication of the intent of the CRRF and how it is meant to proceed, at both national and local levels, to ensure that it does not raise unrealistic expectations or feed into problematic political narratives. However, this cannot be used as an excuse to deprioritise the emphasis on local delivery and – crucially – must be informed by clearer answers to the strategic questions posed above to meet the needs of local stakeholders and local populations.

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