Africa Policy Institute

Illegal migrants sit inside the Ganzour shelter after being transferred from in the airport road due to fighting in the Libyan capital Tripoli on September 5, 2018. The crisis is worsening. PHOTO | MAHMUD TURKIA | AFP

'REGIONAL CITIZENSHIP' MODEL WILL SOLVE REFUGEE CRISIS IN AFRICA

PETER KAGWANJA

On September 18, 2019, regional ministers in charge of the refugee docket gathered in Addis Ababa for the IGAD 2nd Ministerial Stocktaking Meeting, in a bid to take stock of the progress made in actualising the ideals of the Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action. With IGAD Member States hosting 12 million forcibly displaced people 'collectively', about 70 per cent of Africa's refugees, Perhaps, the idea of transforming refugees into "regional citizens" as the solution for refugee crises in the Horn of Africa will help shape the future path of regional response to displacement impacts.

A west African model that allows refugees to become migrants has inspired the idea of "regional citizenship" as the solution for refugee crises in the Horn of Africa. Collectively, the

Member States of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (Igad) – Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda – host 12 million, while one out

of every five of all refugees worldwide will be in the region by 2020. In a search for local durable solutions to a ballooning displacement crisis two years ago, regional leaders adopted the Nairobi Declaration on refugees and returnees, made in March 2017. With the asylum space shrinking as a result of intolerance, closing of borders, forced return of refugees and reduced opportunities for resettlements, Igad has provided a regional model of hospitality to refugees. On September 18, 2019, regional ministers in charge of the refugee docket gathered in Addis Ababa to take stock of the progress made in actualising the ideals of the Nairobi Declaration.

UN SYSTEM

In many ways, Igad's response to displacement epitomises the 'collective governance' or 'collaborative governance', widely popularised by Jonas Moberg and Eddie Rich in their book, Beyond Governments: Making Collective Governance Work - Lessons from the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (2015). This model is solutions-oriented and involves multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) of government, civil society, international agencies, and the private sector working in partnership to address complex challenges. The aim of this model is to complement – not usurp – the role of governments.

Genealogically, three sets of ideas have converged to create a "collective refugee response" model in the Horn of Africa, which is, blissfully, creating "regional citizens".

First is the idea of "mutually beneficial cooperation rather than self-interested competition", which underpins the post-war order. At the heart of this order is the UN system, created 70 years ago in response to, among other problems, the largest refugee influx in modern history in the first half of the 20th century: two world wars; a global depression; fascism, and genocide.

For seven decades this system has secured progress, great-power-peace, economic growth and systematic response to refugees through a global humanitarian system anchored on the United Nations Refugee Agency, UNHCR, and related humanitarian agencies.

COLLECTIVE GOVERNANCE

However, a protracted displacement crisis and ever-increasing numbers of forcibly displaced people worldwide, which exceeded 70.8 million by August 2019, have engendered surgical reform of this system to include development actors such as the World Bank, private companies, civil society and host communities.

Second, Igad's "collective governance" model stems from a new post-Cold War accent on the obligations a government has to protect the rights of its citizens, which if ignored has seen other states intervene even militarily to protect human rights and prevent genocide and crime against humanity.

This gave rise to the doctrine of "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P).

But weaker states in Africa saw this liberal interventionism as a ploy by former colonial powers to recolonise the continent. The answer was the idea of "self-recolonisation", which sparked a fiery debate in the 1990s. In this regard, the third idea of "collective governance" has familiar echoes in the argument of Africa's self-recolonisation. In 1995, Mazrui published a newspaper article entitled "Recolonisation or Self-colonization? Decaying Parts of Africa Need Benign Colonisation" in the Los Angeles Times and the International Herald Tribune, which was quickly translated into many languages.

DEVELOPMENT

The article ignited an intense debate between Mazrui and the South African anthropologist,

Archie Mafeje, regarding the usage of the term recolonisation.

The kernel of Mazrui's argument was that it was time for Africans to exert more pressure on each other to achieve lasting peace based on regional intervention or unification of smaller states.

Citing the case of Zanzibar's annexation by Tanganyika in 1964, Mazrui posited that some countries "may need to be temporarily controlled by others and submit to trusteeship and even tutelage for a while".

He proposed "an African Security Council, which would "oversee the continent" and coordinate with the UN. He said "if Africa does not follow this path, the lack of stability and economic growth will push the entire continent further into the desperate margins of global society".

"Self-colonisation," he concluded, "if we can manage it, is better than colonisation by outsiders".

Mafeje dismissed Mazrui's concept of "self-recolonisation" as outright absurd. Mazrui, he wrote, was an "unconscious agent of Western racism" who used the terms recolonisation and colonisation in a manner that was "intellectually bankrupt" and "analytically superficial".

STRATEGY

Mazrui lost heavily in the court of intellectual opinion. But his idea of Africa's 'self-recolonisation' has shaped the future trends of African diplomacy in an emphatic and irreversible way.It influenced the historic transformation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to the African Union from 1999.

The Protocol Establishing the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) created in 2004 provided a legal and normative framework that has more stable African states to intervene in countries torn by conflict such as Somalia (AMISOM), Sudan (UNMIS) and South Sudan (UNMISS).

Transforming refugees into "regional citizens" requires action on five flanks.

First, creating a strong knowledge platform by publishing an annual report of the State of Migration and Forced Displacement in the Region.

BURDEN SHARING

Second, leveraging the World Bank's $2 billion funding window for refugees and host communities in the region. Third, establishing the Igad Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF).

Fourth, establishing the Refugee Support Platform to sustain the momentum, galvanise and mobilise additional support for the displaced and host communities.

Fifth, using the upcoming Global Refugee Forum in Geneva on December 17-18, 2019 to make a case for increased burden sharing with wealthy nations.

Ultimately, a leaders' Summit in 2020 will help shape the future direction of regional response to displacement impacts.

Prof Peter Kagwanja is Former Government Adviser and currently Chief Executive of Africa Policy Institute. This article is based on ideas shared during the IGAD 2nd Ministerial Stocktaking Meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on September 16-18, 2019.

Africa Policy Instutute