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CONFLICTS AND VIOLENCE: THE CHALLENGES OF PROTECTING REFUGEES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

This paper examines the challenges of protecting refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa. Reviewing available and relevant literature on refugees and their displacement, it argues that people are compelled to flee their homes and seek refuge across international borders due to poverty, instability, conflict, and climate-related emergencies. They are then placed in overcrowded camps, frequently for extended periods. In theory, African refugees can access one of the most progressive protection schemes in the world. In practice, they confront insurmountable obstacles to their human rights, including coerced return, prejudice, arbitrary detention and arrest, limitations on their freedoms of speech and movement, and violations of their social and economic rights. Refugee law, which was created in the language of human rights and applies to people who are already highly vulnerable, disappears from view amid the poor human rights records of many African countries. From an in-depth argument and reflection on the literature, considering the differing voices and arguments, this paper communicates how, given the rise in extremism and political instability in Sub-Saharan Africa, regional security is at risk if the inadequate protection given to refugee camps is not addressed.

Keywords: conflicts, violence, insecurity, refugees, Sub-Saharan Africa.

1. INTRODUCTION

Conflict, political unrest, food insecurity, and climate change are combining in many parts of Africa to uproot more Africans than ever before. Complicating already complex situations include high rates of inflation, growing energy costs, COVID-19 repercussions, and the Russia-Ukraine war (Mbiyozo, 2023). In May 2022, there were more than 100 million people who had been forcibly displaced worldwide, including refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and asylum seekers. While the Ukrainian crisis dominated geospatial headlines, African refugees now have fewer options and less support than before.

Africa had about 7.3 million refugees and asylum seekers at the end of 2017 (Mbiyozo, 2023). When the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa was adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1969, there were ten times as many refugees as there are now (Institute for Security Studies, 2019). The 1951

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Geneva Convention's narrow description of refugees as “persons fleeing a well-founded fear of persecution” was inadequate in light of the various issues faced by African refugees (Okello, 2014). As a result, the OAU Convention included a second paragraph in Article One that broadens the definition of “refugee” to include circumstances such as external aggression, occupation, foreign dominance, or events that significantly disrupt public order. The number of displaced people in Sub-Saharan Africa has increased to 44 million from 38.3 million at the end of 2021, according to planning figures released by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) for 2023. IDPs make up the majority (60%) of them. Three-quarters of all recent internal displacements occur in Africa. The protracted duration of specific conflicts in Africa is a primary obstacle to breaking the “refugee cycle”. When hostilities persist for an extended period, the future of refugees becomes highly uncertain.

They might be compelled to spend up to a generation in their new nation (Masuku, 2019). Refugees frequently lose their ability to become self-sufficient in these circumstances. Numerous populations are now forced to rely on aid and frequently live in hazardous and impoverished conditions as refugees as a result of the continuation of old conflicts and the emergence of new ones (Masuku, 2019). However, Wacker, Becker, and Crepaz (2019) contend that although many of the region's nations welcome refugees, they encounter numerous difficulties that make it challenging to guarantee their safety and protection sufficiently. Due to this, host nations cannot accommodate all of the refugees, which has caused a refugee crisis in the SSA. Africa hosts a sizable population of internally displaced persons, many of whom are considered refugees under the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol or the 1969 Organization for African Unity Convention on Refugees, even though some African nations serve as transit countries. However, even though many African nations have accepted these international standards, their protection is insufficient (European Parliament, 2017). The rights granted to refugees by the Geneva Convention are severely curtailed in many African countries, many of which lack any legal framework for granting asylum (European Parliament, 2017).

This implementation gap is probably one of the primary causes of irregular migration to Europe and contributes to prolonged refugee suffering. In Africa, refugees are kept in isolated camps for extended periods, with little to no access to formal employment opportunities and severe restrictions on their freedom of movement. For their survival, they depend on foreign humanitarian aid, and if that aid decreases, they risk being returned home, where they might face serious hazards. Thus, the difficulties in protecting refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are examined in this paper. The paper systematically reviews the literature to understand the difficulties in protecting refugees in SSA. Current literature contends that inadequate governance and conflicts are at the core of this crisis, highlighting the lack of focus on addressing the issues that give rise to these conflicts and inadequate governance. While there have been concerns about the political will of African leaders to address the crisis, this paper also notes that most countries in SSA lack the means and ability to adequately guarantee the safety of refugees, which results in violations of their fundamental rights in camps, starvation, insufficient protection, inadequate nutrition, and prolonged suffering.

2. METHODOLOGY

A systematic literature review was deemed a suitable research methodological approach for this paper. Necessary steps were taken to ensure the review was accurate, precise and reliable. Considering the research question for this paper, a semi-systematic review was

adopted to understand the challenges of protecting refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa. A semi-systematic review, also known as the narrative review approach, partially follows the guidelines of a systematic review in literature survey and selection. The approach, furthermore, includes steps of framing a written discourse about literature that can be used as part of the research process (Zunder, 2021). This type of review is designed for topics conceptualized differently and studied by various groups of researchers within diverse disciplines (Snyder, 2019). While the paper would have preferred to use primary data, secondary data as a methodological approach was driven by an array of factors that the author felt would contribute to the paper's arguments. Moreover, secondary sources are crucial in examining, interpreting, and depicting historical or scientific occurrences encompassing extensive geographical regions. Secondary research can help discover new knowledge, challenge assumptions, and uncover hidden connections. By engaging in secondary research, researchers can gain insights from the experiences and expertise of others, as well as consider previous arguments and debates about a specific subject matter. This process facilitates the exploration of novel research directions. This paper comprehensively analysed the literature to identify deficiencies in protecting refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa. Afterwards, the data supporting the paper's argument was organised into themes and examined to identify existing literature gaps. The paper's arguments and conclusions have been derived from the identified gaps in the existing literature. Therefore, the author acknowledged the significance of conducting a systematic literature review using secondary data to arrive at a meaningful conclusion for this paper.

2.1. Information sources and data collection process

A search strategy for identifying relevant literature was developed and conducted between March 2022 and April 2023 under five electronic databases: Google Scholar, Sabinet, SAGE journals, Social Science Citation Index (Web of Science), and EBSCOhost. Table 1 below presents the total results for each database during the preliminary literature search. The selected search terms included were “Conflicts, Violence, Insecurity, Refugee, Migration and Sub-Saharan Africa.

Table 1. Results of the preliminary literature search using databases

Databases	Total number of results	Peer-reviewed papers	Included for review
Google Scholar	200	112	28
Sabinet	160	89	30
SAGE journals	30	12	3
Social Science Citation Index (Web of Science)	22	10	5
EBSCOhost	19	5	2

Source: Authors own compilation.

2.2. Article selection

As shown in Table 1, the search yielded 431 articles, after which duplicates and studies irrelevant to the challenges of protecting refugees in the Sub-Saharan Africa era were removed, leaving 228 articles. After a further rigorous review process and considering all the inclusion criteria, only 68 articles were selected for analysis. Data extraction was in the

form of reading abstracts first and making selections, followed by reading full-text articles later before making the final selection. Once this step was completed and the initial articles had been collected, the texts were screened in full to ensure they met the inclusion criteria. As an additional strategy, references in the selected articles were scanned to identify other potentially relevant articles. Findings were synthesised through thematic analysis, a method commonly used to identify, analyse, and report patterns in text themes (Snyder, 2019).

2.3. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Regarding research quality, deciding on inclusion and exclusion criteria is one of the most critical steps when conducting a review (Snyder, 2019). The inclusion criteria were the year of publication (between 1997 and 2023), language (strictly English), conceptual and empirical papers, and media sources and reports from institutional organizations. Studies considered were qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. The sources that did not discuss the challenges of protecting refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa were excluded.

3. THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Developing nations, primarily in Africa, are hosting a disproportionate number of refugees, accounting for 80% of all refugees worldwide, according to the UN. The water and healthcare systems in host countries are severely strained by the presence of refugees in developing nations (Momodu, 2016–2017). According to the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Africa has the second-highest displaced people worldwide (UNECA). As states balance the needs of host communities against the financial cost of protecting refugees, burden and responsibility sharing have also emerged as a political issue (Owino, 2023). Three factors make managing refugees in Africa more difficult. Firstly, most African nations do not have the financial or technological capacity to accommodate a high influx of refugees. Many governments struggle to offer social services, including health care and education, to refugee communities. The standard of living for refugees is further decreased by more extensive restrictions on housing, sanitary conditions, and transportation infrastructure (Parshotam, 2019).

Furthermore, social tensions have the potential to provoke violence against refugees and to impede or prevent their integration. This occurred, for instance, in South Africa when local politicians used migrants and refugees as scapegoats for inadequate job opportunities and poor service delivery. More generally, many African states do not take a human-rights approach toward refugee management within their borders and often maintain an encampment system for refugees (Parshotam, 2019). Lack of funding and personnel in many African nations can cause protracted delays in the processing of asylum claims. As a result, they may become stateless for an indefinite period and raise their children in camps for refugees, like the Dadaab camp in Kenya. Furthermore, these communities are kept in a protracted state of uncertainty without rights or protection since few African nations have made provisions for the naturalization of long-term refugees (Parshotam, 2019).

4. CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

This paper applies the concept of state fragility to comprehend the current state of governance in many refugee-sending countries. State fragility is premised on the notion that without institutions anchored on good governance and the rule of law, a country is

bound to witness conflict and violence (Bertocchi, Guerzoni, 2011). The lack of such institutions means leaders can act with impunity and never be held accountable, giving rise to power abuse by politicians. Together, these issues impede development and give rise to instability. For Osaghae (2007), fragile states are extremely impoverished countries with weak institutions. They have an insufficient capacity to fulfil the essential functions of a state, are poorly governed, and often experience political instability, including armed conflict. The concept has been applied to explain conflict patterns in Somalia, Sudan, Mozambique, Nigeria, Mali, DR Congo and the Central African Republic. Armed civil conflict is both a cause and consequence of state fragility.

A considerable number of examples of failed states (even though the classification of countries as failed states is debatable) can be found in Africa. In many refugee-sending countries, governance and political processes are fragmented, broken and politically compromised (Bolt et al., 2022). Hence, this fragmentation breeds ground for conflict and violence, resulting in population displacement and refugee flows. The World Bank Group and UNHCR (2015) contend that the key to addressing the African refugee crises is to address the governance and political fragmentation. The entrenchment of ethical, accountable and transparent leadership will likely result in stability, thus consolidating peace and cohesion. Many African countries are still underdeveloped today, decades after gaining political independence. Countries are struggling with issues such as poverty, disease, inadequate communication, illiteracy, tribal hostility, economic hardships, and injustices that have an impact on all facets of African life (Kagema, 2018).

Despite abundant resources, Africa lacks responsible leaders, especially in politics. There are many leaders in Africa, but very few care about the well-being of the people they oversee. Most leaders are eager to keep their positions of authority and amass wealth at the expense of the people they are supposed to represent. People in Africa are struggling to access mismanaged resources, which has resulted in a terrible situation (Kagema, 2018). No sustainable development can be achieved when leaders are not accountable to the people they lead. The sustainable development of emerging African economies can only be successfully guided by appointing capable, compassionate, fair, and visionary leaders. Due to poverty, bad governance, ongoing internal instability, mismanaged economies, and conflicts, there have been a lot of “economic migrants” and refugees, which has seriously hampered recent progress in development (Adepoju, 2023).

Despite its impressive economic growth over the past ten years, African employment has not increased significantly. Africa's unemployment rate is rising, which suggests that more unemployed Africans are being driven into risky, irregular migration routes to wealthy nations, with all the negative consequences that go along with it (Adepoju, 2023). Indeed, one of the biggest obstacles to African governments' and societies' current development is access to gainful employment. Worryingly, however, there has been a reduction in funding for refugees. For instance, there is now less money available in Uganda for refugees, which prevents many of them from receiving necessities like healthcare and education (Kyeyune, 2023). Only 13% of the necessary amount has been received, according to Matthew Crentsil, the UN refugee agency UNHCR representative for Uganda, who was speaking in Kampala, the capital, at the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the East African Community (EAC) conference on durable solutions for refugees. Only \$113 million had been received by the end of the first quarter (Q1) of 2023, leaving \$732 million short of the \$846 million needed (Kyeyune, 2023). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) claims that many refugees

lack access to necessities such as proper healthcare, education, and welfare due to the funding gap.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

5.1. Conflict, Refugees and Forced Migration in Sub-Saharan Africa

Refugees have been and continue to be a by-product of conflict driven by a breakdown in governance. Addaney (2017) argues that when looking at the plight of refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa, one can immediately understand that macro factors are more dominant than Meso ones. Salehyan (2008) states that an in-depth understanding and analysis of refuge patterns throughout the region point to one primary cause: conflict. Similarly, Boswell (2003) reveals that with the increase in conflict within a particular country, there is likely to be an increase in population displacement and the flow of refugees. This is the case with Sub-Saharan Africa. Even though the displacement of people has regional ramifications, Boswell (2003) argued that it is problematic for international actors to intervene and try to address these proximate causes of conflict and displacement while conflict is ongoing. One needs to acknowledge that causes of conflict cannot be confined to one specific area. They have the potential to spread beyond borders, resulting in millions of displacements and refugee flows. Some causes beyond states' control will inevitably cause population displacement and refugee flows for decades, especially in developing countries. For example, changes in the climate have increased droughts, floods, famine and food shortages, and with the climate becoming more unpredictable, Africa can expect increasing climatic change-driven refugee flows. Apart from this, many states in SSA are financially challenged and are already finding it difficult to ensure effective and efficient service delivery, meaning limited services can be afforded to refugees.

For example, 2.9 million new displacements were observed in Ethiopia in 2018 due to ethnic and tribal violence. Frequent clashes between pro-government forces and al-Shabaab have forcefully evicted thousands and given way to the highest number of displacements in over a decade in Somalia (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2019). In Nigeria, the confrontation between farmers and cattle herders has resulted in the deaths of more than 1300 people. An estimated 300,000 have been forced to flee their homes (Mewanu, 2018). Likewise, in northern Nigeria, the Boko haram insurgency has displaced more than 2.7 million people, including some 210,000 Nigerians, while an estimated 30,000 have died (Kindzeka, 2021). Violence and conflict in Cameroon's Anglophone region have seen more than 3000 people perish while 800,000 civilians have been displaced, and 600,000 children do not have full access to education (Reuters, 2023). Abbebe (2019) states that fifty years ago, as African liberation movements were involved in the struggle to free Africa from the shackles of colonialism, conflicts gave way to intracontinental refugee flows. This mass displacement led to the development and adoption of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. The protocol aimed to ensure that refugees and their rights are protected. Boulby & Christie (2018) expounded that apart from conflict, undocumented migration and the refugee crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa is compounded by factors such as the abuse of their rights, little protection in host states due to lack of resources, repressive government regimes and unfavourable economic conditions.

5.2. Challenges of Protecting Refugees in SSA

Soon after the United Nations was formed, conventions and policies were introduced to ensure the protection and well-being of refugees (The UNHCR, 2010; Addaney, 2017). The quest and need to protect refugees can be traced to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Universal Declaration), studied by many scholars and policymakers (Addaney, 2017). D'Orsi (2012) notes that the 1951 Convention, the 1967 Protocol and the 1969 OAU Convention remain the key international human rights instruments for protecting refugee rights in Sub-Saharan Africa. Lomo (2000), as cited by Addaney (2017), argued that these conventions tend to argue for refugees to be given the same rights as ordinary people, that they are protected concerning the right to housing, education and employment, and access to live decent lives. Lui (2001) argues that the above shows that the quest to ensure the protection of refugees has been historically debated and consolidated within the domains of international politics and humanitarian spheres. In such a context, states need to protect the rights of refugees as they apply to all situations. This protection is part of an essential process geared towards ensuring that the needs of refugees are met and consolidating full respect for the rights of refugees under international human rights law. Therefore, it becomes clear that the protection of refugees and their fundamental rights becomes the full responsibility of the host states.

However, Okoth-Obbo (2001) argued that there are two elements that nation-states need to adopt. First, states need to ensure the development and implementation of legislation that complies with international standards to provide a basis for protecting refugees. Secondly, they must incorporate the fundamental elements of international human rights laws into domestic legislation, specifically in critical areas where the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention are silent. Spiro (1997), however, argued that central to ensuring that refugees are protected and catered for in host countries, states must thus comply with international human rights standards and norms. Matlin et al. (2018) argue that as per UN principles, states are urged not to turn back or deny refugees safety, especially in cases where they are fleeing conflict and persecution, despite their pressure on state resources. In 2019, The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees revealed that there were more than 1 million asylum seekers and refugees being hosted by Uganda, mostly whom (800 000) were from South Sudan, and this has exerted tremendous strain on government finances as the country has to cope with increased population. One may argue that despite the presence of protocols and laws such as the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention), The Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention and Declaration on Refugee Protection within Southern Africa amongst others, Murillo (2009) notes that the challenge with protecting refugees is that individual states have their interests and their interests may not coincide with that plight of refugees. Although, in most cases, host nations are supported by international NGOs in sheltering refugees, to a great extent, their security and living conditions are provided by the host nations, which requires a significant chunk of resources. A study undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2017 revealed that providing refugees with services such as education, health, and security costs Uganda's national budget a staggering \$9 million. Additionally, the Government of Uganda used a figure of \$325 million with local communities to ensure the management, protection, and provision of essential services for refugees.

From a global perspective, funding to protect refugees has also been a shortcoming. The UNHCR lamented the decline in funding for the agency. In 2020, the agency had a budget of \$9.131 billion as of August 2020. However, from this figure, funds available to it were \$4.458 billion. This included \$3.804 billion in voluntary contributions, of which 72% was tightly earmarked. Overall, there was a funding gap of 51 percent for the agency. The UNHCR will struggle to carry out its mandate effectively, likely increasing the misery of displaced people (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2018). The agency reported that for 2018, \$8.2 billion was needed to cater for refugees in conflict-ridden countries such as Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, the DRC and Burundi. However, the agency predicted it would only garner 55 percent of this figure. Enrile (2017) argued that the failure to protect refugees adequately had given rise to incidences of human trafficking taking place in refugee camps, which lack security. However, even though the UNHCR supports international law that pleads for countries not to return refugees, Wong (2018) reflects that the large inflows of refugees to countries lacking the required capacity to cater for them create more problems than solutions. The author states that for refugees to be fully protected, there is a need for compressive policies characterised by implementation and support. However, in Africa, often such is not available. As a result, they often become isolated and desperate, thus becoming vulnerable to organised crime and trafficking.

For example, Europol (2016) noted that most Sub-Saharan African states have no apparent response to the challenges of forced migration and displacement due to conflict and violence. Instead, the frustration of citizens and governments related to the prolonged nature of the refugee presence increases. This then leads to societal tensions where refugees become convenient scapegoats for all forms of national problems, thus fueling xenophobia and other acts of hostility (Addaney, 2017). The current international refugee protection system cannot address the prevailing protection challenges (Kelley, Durieux, 2004). Kumin (2001), as cited by Addaney (2017), opined that the UNHCR has admitted that the universal refugee protection system will increasingly become fragmented and weak. It has been further argued that many governments also use national security and public interest to justify their repressive refugee laws.

Nonetheless, humanitarian organisations and Western governments have made considerable efforts to provide durable protection and assistance to displaced persons, including refugees in Africa and elsewhere. However, these efforts have yet to yield significant solutions. A survey undertaken by Asylum Access (2011), as cited by Addaney (2017), exposed that many refugees in no-camped settings in Africa lack legal status due to the fear of being apprehended and sent to the camps. The survey also revealed that the lack of a legal status resulted in other security and protection challenges, such as an increased likelihood of being exploited or abused by law enforcement and difficulty accessing support services. Even though some laws in some SSA states do provide refugees with the option of self-settlement, most countries prefer to house refugees in refugee camps. Regrettably, these camps, at times, are riddled with diseases, limited freedom and privacy and have become a recruitment ground for militia groups, especially since some of them lack an adequate security apparatus (Makhema, 2009). Addaney (2017) argues that the problem is that the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the bedrock of contemporary international human rights law, fails to provide detailed guidance on the scope of the right or the type of protection that asylum seekers and refugees qualify for. Thus, host countries often tend to use their discretion regarding how refugees ought to be catered for.

Another issue in protecting refugees is the economic aspect, more notably the question of who has to foot the bill for their upkeep. Cannon and Fujibayashi (2018) state that this was evident in 2016 when the Kenyan government shut down many refugee camps in the country. When asked what the reasoning behind such action was, considering that these camps held close to 60000 people, Interior Ministry official Karanja Kibicho stated that “the government is shutting down the camps because of »cumbersome« economic, security and environmental burdens”. The official went further and opined that having considered Kenya's national security interests, refugee camps were seen as threatening the country's security. One may argue that this should not be the case because SSA countries (Including Kenya) are signatories to these conventions that ought to protect the rights of refugees. For example, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which are signed by almost all SSA states, guarantee the rights of refugees to just and favourable conditions of work and adequate standards of living (Edwards, 2005). However, in most cases, many states in SSA do not abide by these conventions, putting issues of national interest ahead of refugee protection. At a global level, the 1951 Refugee Convention has remained the core human rights instrument that protects refugees under international law. The convention enables refugees to have a range of civil and socioeconomic rights in the host country, and the host country is obliged to ensure the provision of such rights (Nanima, 2017). This obliges states to adopt measures to ensure that refugees are provided with conditions in the host country without marginalisation. Therefore, one may argue that these conventions/laws acknowledge the socioeconomic risks and the possible exploitation, marginalisation and exploitation of refugees in the host state and thus try to mitigate such from taking place (Hathaway, 2005). At a regional level, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (the African Charter) argues that when unfairly persecuted, individuals have the right to seek protection in countries through international law/conventions (Goodwin-Gill, 2001).

5.3. The Challenges of Protecting Refugee Camps

Maunganidze (2018) argues that despite ensuring the fundamental rights of refugees are protected and upheld in host states, the challenge is that numerous refugee camps in Sub-Saharan Africa are not sufficiently protected and lack the security apparatus needed to ensure their safety. The personal security of refugees is an essential element of international protection. Phuong (2005) noted that even though the quest to protect refugees cannot be pushed to the side, today, it has grown complex to integrate the different security interests and strategies that are involved in the international refugee protection regime as there are many actors in the process. At times, host state bureaucracy and the intertwining of duties hinder the need to ensure the safety of refugees. Simeon (2017) also attributed this to the difficulty in operating in war zones and the inability to ensure the protection of refugees in protracted situations. Additionally, racist sentiments associated with refugees and the fear of asylum seekers in many countries have made refugees seen as perpetrators of insecurity rather than victims.

The UNHRC noted that the most severe security concern we are facing now is a fear that militarization could occur in refugee camps characterized by poor security (Achvarina, Reich, 2006). Olson (2012) stated that poor security in refugee camps has resulted in children being sold to militia groups. In Chad, between 7000 and 10000 child soldiers were recruited forcefully in 2007 and during that time, more than 250,000 refugees from Darfur were in camps (Gresh, 2011). Conflict has increased people's displacement vulnerability

and refuge flows in the region, increasing the likelihood of them falling into the arms of militias. Dudenhoefer (2016) stated that Africa is home to about 40% – of the global number of child soldiers and that many African states experienced some form of conflict, and armed groups have acknowledged the lack of adequate security in refugee camps allows them to recruit without limitations.

Deng (2016) states that international law assumes that since people are internally displaced, their national governments will care for them and provide for their security needs. However, IDPs flee because their government cannot or will not protect them. In many cases, IDP or refugee camps remain almost unprotected, thus becoming major recruitment grounds infiltrated by fighting forces. In acknowledging the complexity of protecting refugee camps, the UCHNR stated:

Governments normally guarantee the basic human rights and physical security of their citizens. But when people become refugees this safety net disappears. Refugees fleeing war or persecution can be very vulnerable. They have no protection from their own state and it is often their own government that is persecuting them. If other countries do not let them in or protect them, they may be condemned to an intolerable situation where their basic rights, security and even their lives are in danger (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, n.d).

Therefore, one may conclude that the protection of refugees ultimately rests on the host states. In cases where host states tend to put their national interests first, refugees are exposed to tremendous amounts of injustice, such as being forcefully recruited by militias and the issue of hunger and malnutrition.

6. DISCUSSION

The UNHRC notes that despite numerous conventions and international laws that ought to ensure the protection of refugees and provide them with adequate security, one must also note that the political landscape in SSA is not conducive, as many states are involved in some form of conflict, be it, intra-state, sectarian violence or political disagreements.

6.1. Weak governance and new conflict patterns fueling increase refugees

Dudenhoefer (2016) argues that one critical finding of the study is that many states in SSA are going through some form of political turmoil, which has given rise to new conflicts which have engulfed many countries. Du Plessis (2015) states that central to this rise of new conflict patterns is Intra-state conflict-related deaths on the continent have risen since 2010. They are caused chiefly by armed non-state actors who are well-financed and exploit local grievances to undermine democracy and peace. Today's most important driver of violence and conflict in Africa is weak and unconsolidated governance. This increases the internal displacement of people and subsequently increases the number of refugees, as poor governance undermines socio-economic development and drives violence (Du Plessis, 2015).

6.2. Host nations under resourced to deal with huge inflow of refugees

Despite aid organizations providing financial support for host nations in order to help in the protection of refugees, The World Bank (2018) states that the reality is that many states in the region are economically struggling and do not have the resources to ensure the

wellbeing of refugees adequately. Edwards (2005), for example, argues that instead of allocating resources to ensure the protection and wellbeing of refugees, host nations tend to put issues of national interests first rather than ensuring the welfare of refugees. The reluctance of host nations to undertake such means it is left to international NGOs. Dependence on international NGOs can be cumbersome, primarily if international funds for refugee wellbeing are reduced.

6.3. Conventions are present but states use their discretion in protecting refugees

Many conventions are in place to ensure the safety and protection of refugees. However, to a great extent, their implementation is undermined by states that see refugees as a threat to their national security. Wood (2014) also comments that there is limited enforcement of these conventions, and those who do not enforce them are not penalized. Hence, they are free not fully to implement these conventions, placing the safety and protection of refugees at the mercy of the host countries. Furthermore, Addaney (2017) laments that ongoing conflicts in some SSA states have limited the extent to which international actors can intervene to mitigate the negative implications of the conflict on refugees.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the United Nations, developing countries, mainly in Africa, are taking in a disproportionate number of refugees – currently 80% of the world's refugee population. Refugees hosted in developing countries put enormous pressure on water and healthcare systems in host communities (Edmond, 2017). It is with the above discussions that the paper suggests:

7.1. Comprehensive work needed to ensure stable governance regionally

Weak governance leads to conflicts. Conflict leads to the displacement of people, which increases the intra-regional flow of refugees. Therefore, there is a great need to ensure the eradication of conflict; this can be done by strengthening democratic principles and consolidating the rule of law and good governance. In this sense, capacity-building is essential, and the international community needs to help African nations develop their capacity for governance. When it comes to addressing crises and advancing development and reconstruction, governments play a crucial role. Furthermore, increasing capacity in vital sectors like infrastructure, agriculture, health, and education is essential for stability. This will contribute to reducing conflict and increase socio-economic development, ensuring inclusive growth. Di John (2007) notes that conflict in the region is fuelled by the battle to control scarce resources and political patronage; hence, strong government institutions are likely to contribute towards stability.

7.2. Pressure countries to abide by UN and regional convention on protection of refugees

Adopting international, continental and regional conventions is one thing. Abiding by them is another aspect altogether. However, it is observable that using cases of national security as a pretext; many regional states refrain from fully complying with the directives of such conventions; hence, their full applicability becomes problematic. However, apart from this, no international pressure can change the widespread conflicts in Africa. The United Nations Population Fund (2019), citing António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, argued that the best way to protect refugees and internally displaced people

is to stop them from leaving their homes. That means tackling root causes – poverty, conflict, discrimination, and exclusion. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the African Union's Agenda 2063 are essential roadmaps. Both agendas are aligned around a people-centred and planet-sensitive transformation. Eradicating poverty is their overriding priority.

7.3. Increase security protection in camps

Even though the refugee protection system is one of the most well-known aspects of international law, it frequently results in the mass placement of refugees in camps in developing nations, where they constantly face threats to their physical security from violent crime, disorder, and military attacks (Cuéllar, 2005). However, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), advanced industrialised nations, and host states – all significant players in refugee protection – have neglected to prioritise refugee security (Cuéllar, 2005). Militia groups have identified refugee camps as recruitment avenues because they lack sufficient security and protection. Hence, recruitment becomes a viable option as it presents them with easy targets. Irobi (2005) states that increased security is a must in refugee camps, and this should be done in collaboration with international and regional countries; where possible, the African Union must also contribute towards the safety and security of refugee camps. The failure to protect camps means more and more refugees will be recruited, thus prolonging the conflict, which means an increase in the intra-regional flow of refugees.

8. CONCLUSION

The protection of refugees has become an imperative element in today's world, especially in the face of increasing global conflicts. From an SSA perspective, the increasing number of refugees exerts tremendous stress and pressure on state resources. Hence, governments do not adequately provide refugees with protection, security and welfare. National interests have also superseded the need to afford refugees essential services as some states view refugees as a threat to their national security, thus imploring the need for inclusive action in the region's quest to ensure the safety of refugees. In the context of the political domain in SSA, The interconnection between refugee protection and state stability is such that the weakening of one factor hurts the other. Policies aimed at safeguarding refugees, encompassing both physical and legal measures, mitigate potential risks arising from the crisis and enhance the state's security. Typically, the likelihood of conflict is elevated when refugees reside in oppressive environments, face a lack of legal means to generate income, and are deprived of educational opportunities for their young ones. The perils associated with the worldwide refugee crisis intersect with various other hazards arising from civil conflicts and fragile states, including unstable governance, insurgent and terrorist organization operations, and religious or ethnic divisions. Refugee policies must guarantee equitable access to protection, assistance, and resolutions for all refugees. This encompasses providing civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights and guaranteeing individuals' access to fundamental social services and social protection. Additionally, it entails establishing a pathway for individuals to attain effective citizenship in a global context within a moderate timeframe. Furthermore, they must maintain global, national, and local political backing. Sustainable policies must possess the ability to prevent significant political opposition from majoritarian factions. The nature of politics is not static; narratives can be altered through persuasion and

argumentation. However, politics still serves as a limitation. Furthermore, they must be able to operate on a large scale and persist for an extended period. This holds particular significance in light of the ongoing profound structural transformation and the increasing factors contributing to displacement, which are expected to increase the number of refugees gradually.

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