



## MODULE 9

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# African Movements: From the Continent, within the Continent, within Countries

by Monika Lengauer



### MODULE AIMS

- To comprehend African movements of migrants and refugees from Africa (cross-continental), within Africa (regional) and within countries (internal).
- To understand the complexities of African migration and forced displacement in country contexts.
- To tell the “African story” of migrants and refugees.



### LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this module, participants should be able:

- To tell their African story of migrants and refugees. → **Affective LO: Responding**
- To use knowledge and sources to prepare a short country profile and a short profile on migration and forced displacement. → **Cognitive LO: Applying**
- To relate the different movements from the continent, within the continent and within countries (internal). → **Cognitive LO: Applying**
- To be proficient in contextualizing the movements from the continent, within the continent and within countries from the perspective of a case study country. → **Cognitive LO: Analysing**

## Outline

“While most of the discourse on African migration<sup>1</sup> focuses on the Mediterranean, it is important to stress that general intra-African migration accounts for 70 % [of all African migration]. This percentage rises to 80 % for sub-Saharan Africa”, said the African Development Bank’s (AfDB) Senior Vice-President Charles Boamah at the Africa Resilience Forum (AfDB, 2019). Mr. Boamah recalls that Africans accounted for around 10% of international migration in 2017 (AfDB, 2019). Along this way of thinking, the AU, in its first-ever African Migration Report, and its co-publisher IOM want to tell the “story of African migration from the perspective of Africa” (Adepoju et al., 2020, p. xiv). This ambition is also an important part of this handbook (see Introduction; Module 1), its case studies (Modules 6, 7) and this Module 9. It intends to contextualize the two institutional statements by the AfDB and the AU/IOM, and has invited three distinguished authors – William Tayeebwa from Uganda, Levi Manda from Malawi and Levi Obonyo from Kenya – to tell African stories of migrants, refugees and host communities. It is hoped that journalism educators using this handbook will encourage their classes to write their own African stories of African migrants and African refugees as well as host communities based on knowledge, both academic and experiential, and upload these to the project portal [www.mediaandmigration.com](http://www.mediaandmigration.com).

1 Note the definitions of migration and international migrants as laid out in Module 2 and as summarized in the glossaries recommended in Module 2 (EMN, 2018; IOM, 2019a; UNHCR, n.d.).

The numbers that institutions, think tanks, the media and the public use should be treated with caution (see Module 2). Measuring migration and forced displacement from and within Africa is no easy endeavour, because the data remain scarce. The 2020 Africa Migration Report points to the fact that the continent has not updated the total number of international migrants since the year 2000-round of population censuses (Adepoju et al., 2020, p. 15-16). Many African countries also “lack the capacity to collect high-quality data disaggregated by sex and age” (Adepoju et al., 2020, p. 15), and the insufficient “official statistics do not capture the full migration picture in Africa because much migration is irregular” (Adepoju et al., 2020, p. 20). The dearth of data on migrants and refugees has been a recurrent concern in almost all modules of this handbook, addressed mainly in Module 2 but also in the sections on gender (see Module 3, Module 7). In addition, as pointed out earlier, the question of definitions is crucial – who is referred to when Mr. Boamah mentions international migration? Migrants? Refugees? A reminder on data and definitions in this respect: The following statistics operate with the statistical UN definition of a long-term international migrant as “[a] person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months)” (UNDESA, 1998, p. 10, Box 10). This definition excludes movements that are due to “recreation, holiday, visits to friends and relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimages” (UNDESA, 1998, p. 10, para 37) but it does include all other people on the move or on the run, and for this handbook particularly important, it includes forcibly displaced persons like refugees (EMN, 2018; IOM, 2019a; UNHCR, n.d.).

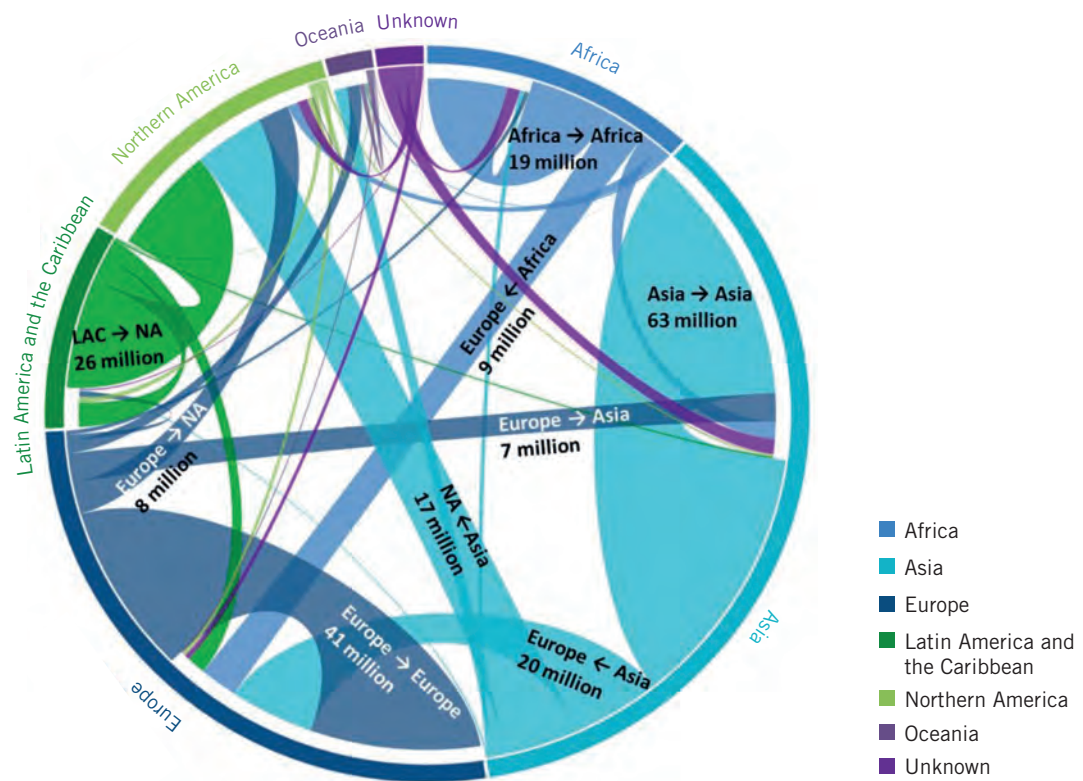
### **International African movements, from the continent**

Most international migrants in sub-Saharan Africa (89%; UNDESA, 2019) originate from another country in the same region<sup>2</sup>. Migrating to neighbouring countries is a standard (first) move in international migration. Moving across countries within the home region feels effortless to many migrants as well as, often, to the host communities. In Africa, crossing an international border, for instance from Guinea-Bissau to The Gambia, may feel like moving within the traditional ethnic home turf (Knörr & Kohl, 2016). Figure 26 visualizes these standard international movements. But the trend in Africa has changed: For migrants born in Africa, the “proportion of those living in a country outside of their region of birth increased” (UNDESA, 2017, p. 12). By contrast, the share of international migrants who moved within their region of birth has increased in Asia, Europe, Latin America and elsewhere between 2000 and 2017 (UNDESA, 2017, pp. 11-12, Figure 5).

Connor (2018; Figure 27) also shows this – in international comparison unusual – African trend. By comparing data from 1990 and 2017, he reveals that the proportion of intra-African migrants has decreased by seven percentage points between 1990 and 2017 (from 75% to 68%), and the proportion of Africans who exited the continent has increased – migration to Europe has increased by six percentage points from 11% to 17%, and to the USA by four percentage points from 2% to 6%.

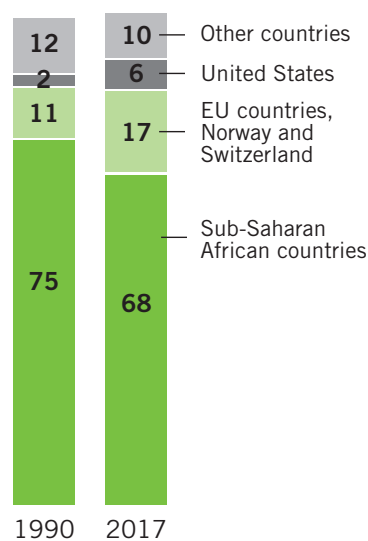
<sup>2</sup> Numbers and decimals are rounded in this text, keeping a good balance between accuracy and readability.

**Figure 26: Number of international migrants classified by region of origin and destination, 2017**



Notes: NA refers to Northern America, LAC refers to Latin America and the Caribbean. This figure visualizes that people routinely move within their own region of birth – but this standard flow has changed for Africa: For migrants born in Africa, the proportion of those living in a country outside of their region of birth has increased (UNDESA, 2017, pp. 11-12). Source: UNDESA (2017, p. 11, Figure 5).

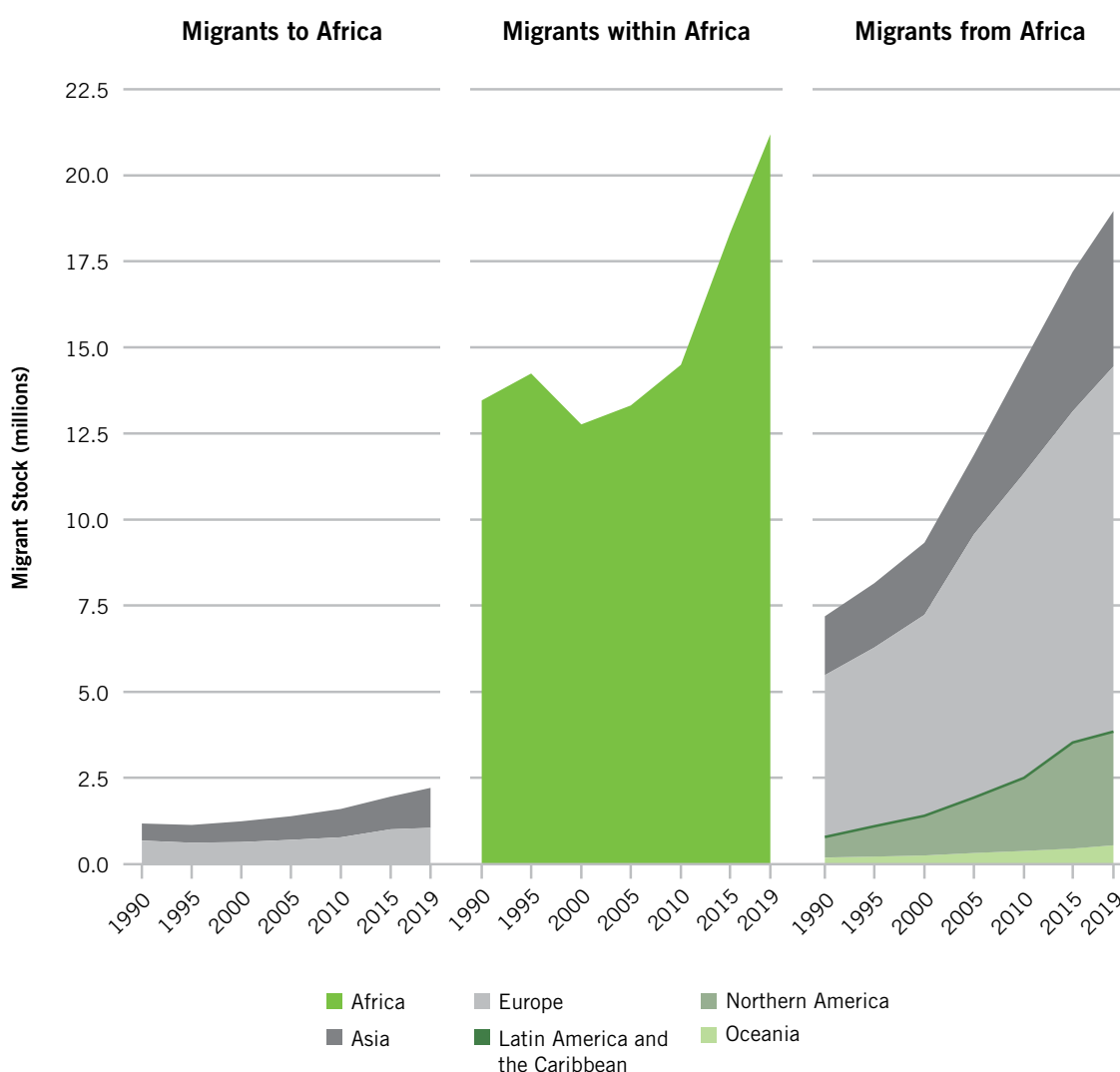
**Figure 27: Destinations of emigrants from sub-Saharan Africa are changing (people born in sub-Saharan Africa and living in other countries, by country/region of residence, %)**



In 1990, 75% of emigrants from countries in sub-Saharan Africa lived in other sub-Saharan countries, a share that dropped to 68% by 2017. Over the same period, the share of people from sub-Saharan African who live in Europe and in the USA has increased (Connor, 2018). Source: Connor (2018). Own illustration.

In absolute numbers – published by the UN and the IOM – African migrants living outside the continent “has more than doubled [since 1990] with the growth to Europe most pronounced” (IOM, 2019b, p. 54). In 2019, most African-born migrants living outside the region were residing in Europe (11 million), Asia (5 million) and Northern America (3 million; IOM, 2019b, p. 54). Figure 28 visualizes how rapidly international movements by African citizens have grown between 1990 and 2019, both from their continent and within it. The number of Africans leaving their home countries is very high in all perspectives – record numbers of people move to a country within the African continent, record numbers of people leave the African continent altogether. By contrast, the number of people migrating from other continents to Africa is very low (IOM, 2019b, p. 55, Figure 1).

**Figure 28: Movements to, within and from Africa, 1990-2019**



International movements within Africa have increased sharply after 2010, as shown in the middle column. International movements from Africa to other world regions have increased significantly since the 2000s (column to the right). By contrast, movement to Africa is very low (left column).  
 Note: “Migrants to Africa” (left column) refers to migrants residing in Africa who were born in another world region (e.g. Europe). “Migrants within Africa” (middle column) refers to migrants born in the region (Africa) and residing outside their country of birth, but still within the African region. “Migrants from Africa” (right column) refers to people born in Africa residing outside the region (e.g. in Europe). Source: IOM (2019b, p. 55, Figure 1). Own illustration.



**SUGGESTION FOR AN EXERCISE TO ADDRESS THE COGNITIVE SKILLS OF APPLYING AND ANALYSING AND THE AFFECTIVE SKILLS OF RESPONDING:**

Allow the class to acquire some knowledge of Uganda as a country of migration and forced displacement before studying the country perspective by William Tayeebwa. Invite participants to prepare a short *country profile* and a short *profile on migration and forced displacement* of Uganda.

- To compose these two profiles, participants select their data from the sources shown in Module 2.
- To bring the data to life, participants explore media reports from or about Uganda that they consider enlightening and telling.
- Present the two profiles in plenary and conclude with five highlights to identify the top characteristics for Uganda.

**Perspectives from Uganda**

*by William Tayeebwa, PhD, Senior Lecturer, Department of Journalism and Communication, Makerere University, Uganda:*

The importance of using the concepts of migrant, refugee, asylum seeker and related terms in academic or journalistic writing as differentiated by the UNHCR and IOM (EMN, 2018; IOM, 2019a; UNHCR, n.d., UNHCR, 2018) is belaboured by White (2015, p. 15). In reality, migrants and refugees often employ the same routes, modes of transport, and networks. Cross-border movements involving both migrants and refugees are referred to as mixed movements.<sup>3</sup> Ugandans who have been displaced from their home areas for whichever reason – including the thousands internally displaced due to the 1986-2006 civil war between government forces with the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) – but remain within the borders are not considered part of the migration narrative (Hovil & Okello, 2006). More so, the Ugandan media is clear in differentiating between IDPs and refugees. What is less clear in media reporting as well as other policy reports is the differentiation between a refugee and an immigrant.



Source: Private.

Both the UNHCR and the IOM noted that Uganda – with 1.4 million refugees in 2020 – still hosts the largest number of refugees in the context of other African host countries. The majority of refugees were from DRC, Rwanda and South Sudan (Migration Data Portal,

3 For a definition of mixed movements, see the glossaries recommended in Module 2 (IOM, 2019a; EMN, 2018).

2020c). According to the UNHCR's "Uganda Comprehensive Refugee Response Portal" (UNHCR, 2020d), around 80,000 refugees live in the capital city of Kampala where most engage in private business enterprises; all other refugees in the country are hosted in the country's 12 districts (Coggio, 2018). The UNHCR shows the countries of origin with South Sudan accounting for 62% or 888,000 people followed by the DRC at 29% or 420,000 people. Others in order of numbers are Burundi, Somalia, Rwanda, Eritrea, Sudan, Ethiopia and others (UNHCR, 2020d).

Parallel to the above scenario, South Africa hosts the biggest number of economic migrants on the continent, many of them being Ugandan. This rendered the country susceptible to xenophobic attacks as citizens protest against foreigners whom they accuse of grabbing their jobs (Bekker, 2015; Worby et al., 2008).

As many countries grapple with such a huge issue of human displacement by adopting tough entry and settlement policies, Uganda has by contrast for years exhibited an open-door policy to migrants and refugees. Uganda welcomes thousands of refugees from several African countries by providing them with amenities such as farming land, access to business opportunities and freedom of movement to social amenities such as schools and hospitals that are ordinarily meant for citizens. Such an open policy has for years endeared the country to humanitarian agencies who have often referenced the good practices of the Ugandan model (Goldstein, 2018; Patton, 2016; Strohlic & Lorec, 2019). For instance, the International Refugee Rights Initiative (IRRI) in a 2018 report states:

"While Europe and the US try ever more creative ways to create barriers to refugees reaching their territories, Uganda's open borders approach puts many other states to shame. Furthermore, the government has taken significant steps to allow for greater freedom of movement and access to work for refugees, again going against the global grain. The positive aspects of Uganda's approach, therefore, should unequivocally be applauded" (Hovil, 2018a, p. 3).

With regard to institutionalised policy, Hovil (2018a) traces the various developments from colonial times starting with the "1955 Control of Refugees from the Sudan Ordinance", to the post-independence "Control of Alien Refugees Act (CARA) of 1960" that fed into the 1999 "Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS)" and the 2003 "Development Assistance for Refugee-Hosting Areas (DAR) policy" (Hovil, 2018a, p. 6). Hovil notes that in all past and present policy frameworks, the legal status of those refugees who opt to live in urban areas remains ambiguous since they remain with hardly any assistance and "largely outside the scope of Uganda's formal refugee policies" (Hovil, 2018a, p. 7). While a comprehensive policy framework was put in place in the Refugee Act of 2006 that took into consideration the 1951 UN Refugee Con-

vention (UNHCR, 2010) and the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention (OAU, 1969), analysts have noted that implementation was initially slow until 2013 when a new conflict broke out in South Sudan forcing thousands to flee into Uganda thus bringing renewed interest and vigour in implementing the Act (Bernstein et al., 2005; Hovil, 2018a; Watera et al., 2017).

Shortcomings in implementation of the set refugee policies notwithstanding, the positive allure of the Ugandan model was shaken when in 2016 local and international media reported how Ugandan government officials who are charged with refugees' management had been involved in corrupt practices that included inflating the number of asylum seekers and refugees in some camps so as to benefit from international funding (Okiror, 2018; Patton, 2016). With such exposure, several donor countries and agencies halted funding, a situation that exposed refugees to tougher conditions and less commitment by the Ugandan government to welcome more into the country (Green, 2018; Matengo, 2019). While the UNHCR's and the IOM's projections show that more refugees will continue to come into Uganda from the troubled DRC and South Sudan, it is a certainty that the Ugandan model will continue to receive much more national and international scrutiny. Yet on a more sombre note, Lucy Hovil of the IRRI, an avid critic of the Ugandan model, wrote in 'Refugees Deeply' that without the international community delivering on its promise of significant financial support as well as resettlement in wealthier countries across the globe, the Ugandan model will "collapse like a house of cards" (Hovil, 2018b).

Reporting of inner-African migration in the Ugandan media follows the same trajectory as in other African countries as ably discussed by White (2015), Fengler et al. (2020) as well as Pierigh (2017). A more specific discussion about the issue is summarised by Nakitare (2018) who captures outcomes of a debate among journalists at the 2018 Media Challenge Expo in Kampala that brought together "356 journalism students from various universities in Uganda, 45 media houses, 22 refugee organisations, 9 media development organizations and several governmental representatives" to discuss and share during three-days on the theme of "reframing media coverage of refugees in Uganda".

Nakitare (2018) recounts that during the event, the Ethical Journalism Network (EJN) presented two workshops geared towards providing practical skills to young journalists using guidelines they have developed on 'migration reporting' as well as on avoiding 'hate speech' (EJN, n.d.). She observes that in the presentations and discussions, researchers and media practitioners noted how the framing of refugees as "people who wander aimlessly without direction" helps structure the public narrative on refugees. It was obvious from the three-day event that interest in how the media is reporting (and ought to report) about refugees and migrants is growing in the country (Turpin, 2018).



## International African movements, within the continent

In regard to intra-continental movements, the largest number of African migrants and refugees are in North Africa, e.g. in the Arab speaking countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea, particularly Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria and Libya (commonly known as part of the Maghreb) and Egypt. Protection risks in some of these countries are considerable (UNHCR, 2020c). The Maghreb and Egypt have either become destination countries in their own right or transit countries to Europe for migrants and refugees from the continent. But North Africa is not only receiving migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa, its own people are also migrating and/or fleeing, mainly aiming for Europe and the Arab Gulf states – North Africans do not usually migrate or flee within Africa (IOM, 2019b, p. 66). North Africa’s characteristics as countries of origin, transit and destination for migrants and refugees simultaneously showcase the complex patterns in this part of the world (IOM, 2019b, pp. 66-68; Migration Data Portal, 2020b). Knoll & Teevan (2020) analyse these patterns through the lens of the 2020 European Pact on migration and asylum (European Commission, 2020) and with an eye on Covid-19. They conclude: “It is clear that COVID-19, by accentuating socio-economic difficulties across the region, will further complicate the process of reforming asylum and migration systems” (Knoll & Teevan, 2020, p. 2). In sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa remains the most significant destination (Migration Data Portal, 2020a). In Eastern and Southern Africa, high numbers of irregular migrants are on the move, often in mixed flows<sup>4</sup>, and uprooted by multiple context factors. Migrant smuggling is particularly virulent (IOM, 2019b, pp. 61-64). In West Africa, people mostly move within the sub-region (IOM, 2019b, p. 64), whereas Afrobarometer found that people from Central and West Africa are “considerably more likely to be thinking about emigration than Southern and East Africans” (Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny & Rocca, 2018, p. 10). Regional migration in West Africa is enabled by many ethnic groups spread out across national borders, their networks are strong, and commutes are visa-free as a policy matter for the regional community ECOWAS.<sup>5</sup> People move mainly as migrant workers in low-skilled sectors including informal trade, agriculture and for domestic work. In Central Africa, labour migration is frequent into Gabon, while conflict and instability play a larger role in displacements (IOM, 2019b, pp. 61-68).

Among the top 20 sub-Saharan African countries receiving migrants are also South Africa, Ivory Coast and Uganda (IOM, 2019b, p. 57, Figure 3). William Tayeebwa reveals in his country perspective from Uganda (see above), how the country has been praised internationally as a model migrants and refugees receiving country due to its open door policy, and how it has subsequently also been criticized for its involvement in defrauding substantial amounts in aid money for its policy.

4 For definition of “mixed flows”, see the glossaries recommended in Module 2 (EMN, 2018; IOM, 2019a).

5 Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) with these member states: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo (ECOWAS, 2016).

Intra-continental migration is a policy matter, facilitated by regional communities such as the East African Community (EAC) and ECOWAS. In 2019, ECOWAS celebrated the 40th anniversary of the West African Free Movement Protocol of 1979 that relates to the right of residence, and intends to foster regional integration and development (ECOWAS, 2019). The AU, too, strongly promotes intra-continental migration. In its Agenda 2063, one of 15 flagship projects anticipates “The African Passport and Free Movement of People”<sup>6</sup> (AU, 2013; AU, n.d.). The AU, it is said, concedes that its own policies are out of date, which has allowed “external influence to skew the response” (Chutel, 2019). Hence, in its first-ever Africa Migration Report (Adepoju et al., 2020), the AU together with the IOM intend to “challenge the narrative”, as the subtitle to the report alerts. The publishers summarize in their abstract three counters to the

“distortions that characterize the current narrative on African migration: (a) most African migrants are not crossing oceans, but rather crossing land borders within Africa; (b) 94 per cent of African migration across oceans takes on a regular form; and (c) most global migrants are not African. Africa accounts for 14 per cent of the global migrant population, compared, for example, to 41 per cent from Asia and 24 per cent from Europe. These fortify the need to retell the story that is largely about intra-African migration, contrary to the horrific sensationalized impression of irregular migration from Africa through the Mediterranean” (Adepoju et al., 2020, p. 1).

The publishers offer different interpretations of data, for instance of the widely shared survey by Afrobarometer (Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny & Rocca, 2018; Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny et al., 2019). It is based on 34 African countries and 45,000 African respondents who were asked how they see and think about migration. The authors conclude:

“On average, more than one in three Africans (37 %) have considered emigrating, including nearly one in five (18 %) who have given it ‘a lot’ of thought. Far fewer are actually making plans to leave, of course. But even at just 3 % of the population, the number of Africans who say they are seriously engaged in planning and making preparations to leave, such as getting a visa, is overwhelming. Another 11 % of the population say they plan to move in the next year or two, though they are not currently making preparations.” (Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny & Rocca, 2018, p. 2)

In “challenging the narrative”, the publishers of the AU’s first Africa Migration Report offer their alternative interpretation of the numbers, in that “only a relatively small percentage of people are actively planning and preparing to migrate [...]. In West Africa, 10.3 million people reported in 2015 that they were making plans to migrate in the next 12 months but only 2.7 million had made any preparations for such a move” (Adepoju et al., 2020, pp. 19-20).

6 Flagship project 4 comprises the African passport and free movement of people: “Remove restrictions on Africans’ ability to travel, work and live within their own continent. The initiative aims at transforming Africa’s laws, which remain generally restrictive on movement of people despite political commitments to bring down borders with the view to promoting the issuance of visas by Member States to enhance free movement of all African citizens in all African countries” (AU, 2013; AU, n.d.).

Afrobarometer also reports that most of their respondents would in fact prefer to stay closer to home: 29 % favour another country within their region and 7 % another country on the continent, compared to 27 % of the respondents who expressed their preference for Europe and 22 % for North America. Accordingly, the majority of sub-Saharan African migrants moved across countries on the continent – which they found “difficult” or “very difficult” at times, lamenting visa requirements, a lack of recognition and comparability of skills and qualifications across borders. The main reasons for Africans to leave their home country were to find a job (44 %) and to escape poverty (29%), according to Afrobarometer who observed this consistently across all surveyed countries. Only 6 % of their respondents want to pursue an education abroad. “In other words”, the authors summarize, people look for the “opportunity that they can’t find at home” (Appiah-Nyamekye Sanny & Rocca, 2018, p. 7).

UNDP’s Scaling Fences (2019b) found that for two-thirds of their surveyed respondents, working and earning competitive wages in their home countries did not hold them back from migrating, and extrapolated to suggest that furthermore, over 90 % of African migrants would make the perilous Europe journey again, despite the risks.



**SUGGESTION FOR AN EXERCISE TO ADDRESS THE COGNITIVE SKILLS OF APPLYING AND ANALYSING AND THE AFFECTIVE SKILLS OF RESPONDING:**

Allow participants to acquire some knowledge of Malawi as a country of migration and forced displacement before studying the country perspective provided by Prof. Levi Manda.

Invite participants to prepare a short country profile and a short profile on migration and forced displacement of Malawi.

- To compose these two profiles, participants select their data from the sources shown in Module 2.
- To bring the data to life, participants explore media reports from or on Malawi that they consider enlightening and telling.
- Present the two profiles in plenary and conclude with five highlights to identify the top characteristics for Malawi.

### Perspectives from Malawi

*by Levi Manda, PhD, Mentor at the Graduate School of Media and Communication, Aga Khan University, Malawi:*

Malawi is a geographically small but densely populated country in South-Eastern Africa with a population of 18 million inhabitants and a surface area of 118,000 sq km, making Malawi one of the ten most densely populated countries in Africa. 30% of the area are taken up by Lake Malawi, mountains, swamps and rivers (Migration Data Portal, 2019; UNdata, 2019).



Source: Private.

In Malawi, people identify themselves by their districts/regions and ethnic origins. Typically, Malawians will identify themselves as: Chewa/Nyanja who mostly occupy the central region and parts of the southern region of Malawi; as Tumbuka who are mostly found in the western parts of the northern region, as Tonga who mostly occupy the eastern part of northern and central Malawi; Yao who dominate the central and southern lakeshore of Malawi. Other major tribes include the Ngonde who are dominant in the North East of Malawi, and the Lhomwe who are dominant in the Southeast of the country (for ethnic composition see Ingham et al., 2020). In the Chitipa district, there are over five ethnic groupings, each with its language, customs and culture (Centre for Language Studies [CLS], 2006). Ethnic affiliation is manifested during funerals when a person is buried in one's home although the person may have been born, may have grown up and worked all their life in a city far away from their ethnic home. Ethnicity is even displayed on the vehicle registration number plates. Currently, Malawi's cultural policy encourages formation of cultural associations and celebration of culture and traditions (Government of Malawi, 2011).

Ethnicity is not at odds with the fact that Malawian society is always on the move. A lot of internal migration takes place. This can be intra-district, intra-region, but also inter-regional and international. The main reasons for internal migration include the search for jobs, camp fishing (ugoŵi), and translocation due to marriage, that is, when a man or woman moves out of his/her ethnic home to start a new life with his/her spouse (Beegle & Poulin, 2013). Since the Malawian society is either matrilineal (inheritance passes through the mother) or patrilineal (inheritance through the father), migration for marital reasons manifests itself in two forms. In matrilineal families, traditional marriage is matrilocal, that is, the husband moves to stay with his wife in her maternal village while in patrilineal families, marriage is mostly patrilocal with the wife moving to live with her husband in his village (Anglewicz, 2012). Migration for economic reasons is also responsible for the large numbers of Malawians in the neighbouring countries of Tanzania, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa. The IOM estimates that about 79% of all Malawian economic migrants emigrate to South Africa (IOM, 2015, p. 1).

The World Bank estimates that Malawians in the diaspora remit substantial amounts of money to their families in Malawi, which, in 2020 (data from October 2020), amounted to \$189 million or 2.3% share of the country's GDP – a considerable increase compared to 2010 (\$22 million; World Bank, 2020b). Due to the paucity of reliable and current data, economic migrants in foreign countries are often underreported as the IOM (2015) concedes.

Callamard (1994) and Makhema (2009) observe that while Malawi started welcoming and hosting refugees and asylum seekers in the 1970s, its biggest test as a refugee host country was between 1986 and 1993 when some 1.2 million Mozambicans flocked to Malawi. The numbers were so large that the government was forced to accommodate them without systematically following of vetting procedures and to the point that even combatants were suspected to have been hosted in the 12 refugee camps (Callamard, 1994). Prior to this period, Mozambicans came as small families seeking refuge with relations in Malawi or as individuals seeking protection. Overwhelmed by the flow of refugees, Malawi had to enlist UNHCR assistance and camps were established in all the twelve districts bordering Mozambique (Dzimhiri, 1993).

Writing about the social and economic impact of the Mozambican refugees, Dzimhiri (1993) noted that although the Malawian population benefitted from hosting the refugees in terms of jobs and businesses, the refugees proved to be a drain on Malawi's finances and they negatively affected the natural environment. Gomez & Christensen (2010), citing a 1990 joint Malawi Government, World Bank, UNDP and UNHCR report, note that due to the influx of Mozambican refugees, Malawi diverted funds from the infrastructure, development and social services budget \$9.4 million and \$8.4 million in 1988 and 1989 respectively to spend on refugee support. Dzimhiri (1993, p. 6) cites a 1992 Malawi Government assessment that indicated that "although partially financed by the UNHCR, a sector expenditure sheet on displaced persons for 1990 alone showed a net total additional cost to the Malawi Government of \$25.1 million." This sharp rise in expenditure is indicative of the number of refugees on Malawian territory at the time and the commitment of the Malawi Government. Documents reveal that during the Mozambican refugee crisis, attention was mostly on asylum, livelihood and health rather than on quality refugee education provision. Shortly after the Mozambican refugees were successfully repatriated following the end of the civil war there in 1993 (Callamard, 1994), the refugee camps were mostly closed down. Subsequently, Malawi started receiving asylum seekers from the African Great Lakes Region, from Burundi, Rwanda, and the DRC. Some of these refugees have lived, had children and even grandchildren, died and have been buried in Malawi. Compared to the Mozambican refugee crisis, the post-1993 refugee situation in Malawi pales. The current refugees are in one camp where once 2852 Mozambican refugees were housed and whom had been voluntarily repatriated (Chitsulo, 2018).

The UNHCR continuously updates the numbers and other information on refugees and asylum seekers in Malawi, offering a multitude of data via its Operational Portal (UNHCR, 2020b): By December 2020, there were around 77,000 refugees and asylum seekers in Malawi, around 30,000 from DRC; 11,000 from Burundi; 7,000 from Rwanda; and 29,000 from other countries (UNHCR, 2020b). Because repatriation is voluntary, Malawi does not send the refugees back to their countries of origin, particularly the DRC, Rwanda and Burundi where there is relative peace presently. As a result, the numbers of new arrivals and births are growing. From 2010 to 2014, the number of births to refugees in Dzaleka Refugee Camp rose from 341 to 623 (WFP, UNHCR, & Government of Malawi, 2014). These children born on Malawian soil deserve birth registration to avoid rendering them stateless. Internationally, it is against human rights to render anyone, particularly children, stateless (OHCHR, 1990).

Unlike Uganda, whose refugee management laws allows refugees and asylum seekers free movement and access to social services, such as health and education and employment (see article by William Tayeebwa, above), Malawi's refugee management policy is restrictive and does not permit refugees to move around and seek employment for self-reliance although Malawi has committed to implementing the Global Compact for Migrants and the Global Compact on Refugees (UNGA, 2018).

Journalists need to understand that migration and forced displacement are about responses to factors like persecution, conflicts, religious fundamentalism, the economy, climate change, governance and other factors (see Module 3). A deep understanding of these and other elements will help students of journalism to fully understand the factors behind migration and forced displacement. A good story is evidence-based, clearly contextualized and analytical to reveal human condition of refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants.

Perhaps due to a lack of comprehension of migration and forced displacement, mass movements of people are rarely reported by the media in Malawi, unless something big or catastrophic takes places, such as displacement due to cyclones and attendant floods or deportation or evacuation from a foreign country for different reasons including xenophobia. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are virtually absent in the Malawi media except when there is a significantly serious event, such as the plan to relocate them to a different area, region, or district, such as Karonga, on the border with Tanzania, a plan that was vehemently opposed by locals (Kumwenda & Phimbi, 2016). It would appear that covering migration and forced displacement is not a newsroom priority in Malawi since most of the stories on migrants and refugees are written following sponsorship, in one form or another, by international aid and development agencies.

For the story about migration and forced displacement to receive the attention it deserves, journalists should not be afraid to engage their audiences about the factors that drive people to migrate and to challenge traditional news values which appear to often restrict journalists to following the ‘5Ws and H’ of news and the inverted pyramid of news writing.

### Forced displacement due to conflict: refugees and IDPs

“Although forced displacement is a global phenomenon, it is more pronounced in Africa”, wrote the AU’s Commissioner for Political Affairs in the Africa Report of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) (André et al., 2019, p. 7), and highlighted that “Africa hosts over one-third of the global forced displacement population”. By the end of 2018, some 17 million Africans lived in internal displacement (IDPs), 7.4 million were refugees and 712,000 were stateless persons.<sup>7</sup> The numbers keep rising, despite the AU’s declaration of 2019 as “The year of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons: Towards durable solutions to forced displacement” with Uganda as the champion (AU, 2019). Displacements that took place in 2019 due to conflict and disaster<sup>8</sup> are “likely to continue rising”, predicts the IDMC in its Africa Report (André et al., 2019, p. 8). Africa is the most troubled world region by war and conflict (see suggestion for classroom, Module 1). SIPRI, an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament, based in Stockholm, Sweden, reported in its Yearbook 2019:

“Eleven countries had active armed conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa in 2018: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the CAR, the DRC, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. Many of these conflicts overlap across states and regions, notably in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel, as a result of the transnational activities of violent Islamist groups, other armed groups and criminal networks. They are also linked to extreme poverty, poor governance, economic fragility and low levels of resilience. Three cross-cutting issues also shaped the region in 2018: (a) the continuing internationalization of counterterrorism activities in Africa; (b) changes in the scale and frequency of election-related violence; and (c) water scarcity and the growing impact of climate change” (SIPRI, 2019, p. 3).

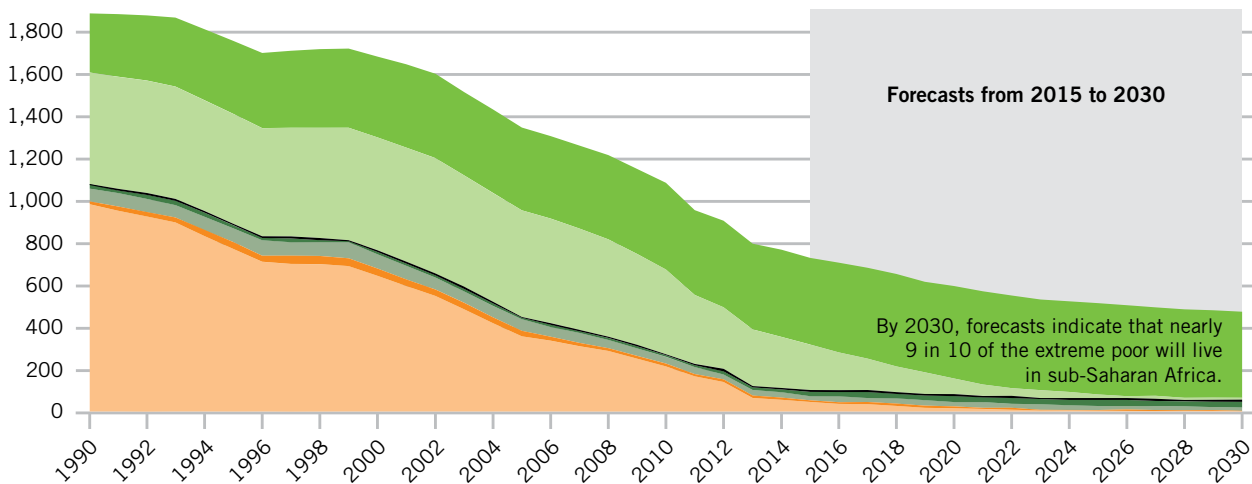
A year later, the number of countries with active armed conflicts had increased from 11 to at least 15 (SIPRI, 2020, p. 8).

<sup>7</sup> A note on data which are not regularly comparable across sources: The UNHCR quotes IDMC data for the number of IDPs (UNHCR, 2020a, p. 3, Footnote 1).

<sup>8</sup> The IDMC disaggregates disaster as geophysical (earthquakes, volcanic eruptions) and weather related (storms; cyclones, hurricanes, typhoons, other storms; floods; extreme temperatures; landslides; droughts; wildfires) (IDMC, 2020, pp. 33-34, Figure A.8).

While the AU’s Agenda 2063 aspires to “Silencing the guns by 2020” (AU, 2013; AU, n.d.), UNHCR concluded in its African Summary of the Global Report 2017 with the assessment that “[f]ew political solutions were in sight” (UNHCR, 2017, Foreword). The guns have not been silenced by the year 2021. A widely quoted study concludes that Africa’s civil wars are due to high levels of poverty,<sup>9</sup> failed political institutions and economic dependence on natural resources following which the best strategy would be democratic reforms and good governance (Elbadawi & Sambanis, 2000). SIPRI, too, posits that the conflicts in Africa are also linked to extreme poverty (see quote above). More than 40% of the “global poor live in economies affected by fragility, conflict and violence, and that number is expected to rise to 67% in the next decade” (World Bank, 2020a). The number of poor people is estimated to further increase at the convergence of conflict, disaster and the Covid-19 pandemic (World Bank, 2020a).

**Figure 29: Number of extremely poor people continues to rise in sub-Saharan Africa, while falling rapidly in all other regions (people in extreme poverty; millions)**



- East Asia and Pacific
- Europe and Central Asia
- Latin America and the Caribbean
- Middle East and North Africa
- Rest of the World
- South Asia
- Sub-Saharan Africa

Estimates suggest that the “share of the poor in Africa fell from 56% in 1990 to 43% in 2012 but because of population growth, in absolute numbers, many more people are poor” (World Bank, 2016), and the trend continues – but just for Africa: Globally, extreme poverty – people living on \$1.90 a day or less – has declined. “Forecasts indicate that by 2030, nearly 9 in 10 extremely poor people will live in sub-Saharan Africa” (Wadhwa, 2018). Source: Wadhwa (2018). Own illustration.

9 This handbook considers two approaches for poverty; for details, see Module 2.



Poverty is pervasive among refugees and IDPs, including extreme poverty. A World Bank (2019) study on internal displacement has revealed that armed conflict, violence and insecurity are the main causes of displacement in Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan; the study comprises refugees, IDPs and their host communities. It shows that almost nine in 10 displaced households in Sudan were uprooted due to conflict (World Bank, 2019, p. 12). Refugees and IDPs are more vulnerable and poorer than the resident populations who are already very poor themselves, especially in the rural populations. More than eight out of 10 IDPs in the four countries live in extreme poverty. Refugees are 38 percentage points poorer than host communities, while IDPs and host communities are nearly equally poor, especially in rural areas (World Bank, 2019, p. vii). In South Sudan, refugees and IDPs are mostly women. They face particular risks: They are more food-insecure than displaced men, they tend to have worse education and labour outcomes than men (World Bank, 2019, p. vii). Children under the age of 15 represent a majority as refugees (over 50%) and also as IDPs (nearly 50%), which indicates large household sizes (World Bank, 2019, p. vi). In general, “the number of extremely poor people continues to rise in sub-Saharan Africa, while falling rapidly in all other regions” (Wadhwa, 2018; see Figure 29).

### **Internally Displaced People (IDPs)**

Internal migration in African countries has traditionally been researched as movements from rural to urban regions and the massive challenges related to urbanization and the creation of mega-cities (Awumbila, 2014; Migration Data Portal, 2020d). Forced displacement exacerbates the challenges of urban areas as IDPs live in marginalized and underserved neighbourhoods or informal settlements, among the urban poor, with limited access to safe water, sanitation, education, and jobs etc., leaving them highly exposed and vulnerable. IDPs increasingly move to urban areas, which often offer them camps but the “rapid, unplanned urbanization in hosting areas puts a strain on jobs, infrastructure, and access to service” for all populations (see article by Levi Manda on Malawi, above; World Bank, 2019, p. 9). “The new poor” will probably reside here, in urban centres, engaged in informal services and those sectors most affected by lockdowns and mobility restrictions due to Covid-19 (World Bank, 2020a).

The AU has been praised for its Convention for the “Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa” – better known as the Kampala Convention – as the world’s first legally binding regional instrument on internal displacement. It represents a landmark effort to promote state responsibility for IDPs’ protection and assistance. A decade after it came into force, however, fewer than half of the 55 AU members have ratified it, and conflict and disaster events in 2019 suggest that the number of displacements is likely to continue rising (André et al., 2019; Dieng, 2017).

Around 17 million Africans lived in internal displacement<sup>10</sup> as a result of conflict by the end of 2018, the highest figure ever recorded for the continent and around 40% of the global total, reports

<sup>10</sup> UNHCR defines those IDPs under the protection or assistance of UNHCR as “people or groups of individuals who have been forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural- or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an international border” (UNHCR, n. d.). The numbers shared hereunder are by the IDMC.

the IDMC (André et al., 2019, p. 11). Disasters, particularly those associated with hydrometeorological hazards such as floods, storms and drought, caused 2.6 million new displacements in 2018.<sup>11</sup>

While globally, much attention is addressed to climate-change induced internal displacement, for instance in Asia-Pacific, in sub-Saharan Africa new displacements took place mainly as a result of conflict in 2018, with some exceptions like Mozambique (cyclones Idai and Kenneth, 2019) or Somalia's droughts<sup>12</sup>. In general, floods account for 83 % of disaster-induced displacement in Africa between 2009 and 2018 (André et al., 2019, p. 19).

### Observations from Kenya

*by Prof. Levi Obonyo, Dean, School of Communication, Daystar University, Nairobi, Kenya:*

Kenya has had a long history of hosting refugees. Many of Kenya's neighbours have had a turbulent history of war, natural disasters, and political instability forcing the citizens to seek refuge elsewhere. In the recent past, however, the majority of refugees in Kenya have predominantly come from South Sudan and Somalia. The refugees from South Sudan have traditionally been housed in the Northwest of the country, in Kakuma in the county of Turkana. Refugees from Somalia have, until recently, been hosted in the mid-eastern part of the country in a series of camps that have come to be known as Daadab. These areas are far away from the heart-land of the country in Nairobi and are traditionally of harsh terrain. Most of the refugees have stayed in these camps for long and raised families there.



Source: Private.

The media coverage of refugees in the country assumes traditional frames and news processing prisms of Kenyan journalists one of which is ethnic orientation. Kenya has to be understood as a convergence of four races: the Bantu who came into the area that is today Kenya through the Southern route, the Nilo-Hamites who came through the Western part of the country, and the peoples of Somali and Ethiopian stock who are mainly settled in the northern part of the country. One of the factors both differentiating and at the same time uniting these people groups of East Africa is their language besides other cultural practices. The people of Bantu stock – even if they come from different ethnic groups – can understand each other. These different sub-groups also have some features in common.

<sup>11</sup> It is not clear how many people have been displaced by disaster in total by the end of 2018 rendering any comparison of displacement by conflict with displacement by disaster for that year quite difficult. An aggregate of 21.2 million people were displaced by disaster between 2009 and 2018. The lack of year-on-year data may be attributed to the fact that IDMC is restricted to “best estimates of the scale of displacement in Africa, but many data gaps remain” (André et al., 2019, p. 12, p. 19).

<sup>12</sup> Drought is an underreported driver of displacement: IDMC recorded 1.6 million new displacements associated with drought between 2009 and 2018, but these data disaggregated by drought have only been available since 2017 and for a few countries (André et al., 2019, p. 19).

For example, Bantu people tend to look alike, while Nilo Hamites have a rather dark complexion, a feature they share in common. But the practices among these broad groups differ widely. While language is uniting it is also an instrument of othering, setting apart those who, although belonging, are simultaneously seen not to belong. In this sense then the Somali are generally seen to be different from those of other stock, a factor that could influence the media coverage of the refugees in Daadab, for example.

That Kenyan journalism is influenced by – among other reasons – the cultural background of journalists requires little labouring. While the country has some of the best-known professionals in the trade, previous exploration has also demonstrated that Kenyan journalists simultaneously exploit tribe as a tool in news processing. News sources from specific communities prefer to provide stories to journalists from their own ethnic backgrounds, while media houses post bureau chiefs from the local communities with the exceptions of the major cities of Mombasa and Nairobi. Indeed, it is an interesting commentary on Kenyan journalism that while local national media only post correspondents from local communities to cover those communities, international media act differently. In this sense then, the refugees in Daadab may be privileged in news coverage and presentation as the media houses increasingly employ journalists from these communities who are likely to identify with them as they share a common cultural orientation.

There are three major locations of refugees in the country. The camps for refugees and asylum seekers close to the town of Daadab have been one of the largest sites in the world, hosting over half a million refugees until the government recently ordered it closed. Kenya's second largest refugee camp is the Kakuma camp in the north west of the country. It hosts nearly 200,000 people (UNHCR, 2020e). Kakuma is close to South Sudan, but is a fairly long distance from Nairobi and poses challenges of access at the best of times. While the terrain there is harsh, it is not dramatically different from where the refugees themselves came from and there is a comparatively close affinity between the refugees and the local community. However, given the location of the refugee camps, covering refugee stories poses a challenge to Kenyan journalists. Much of the Kenyan media activities take place in the urban centres, or regions that are heavily populated, many of them along Kenya's traditional railway line. Both Kakuma and Daadab lie outside what may be considered as Kenya's news corridor. To start with, be it a refugee story or not, events unfolding in these areas seldom find their way to the mainstream media, and when they do, they are generally stories of famine, starvation and disaster. Due to budgetary limitations, newsrooms hardly post journalists to these parts of the country, and in any case the news space set aside for stories from these parts of the country is fairly small. Kenya's news processing is focused on the major news corridor. Consequently, it has not helped that – be it Kakuma or Daadab – these far flung regions are also difficult to

access due to insecurity associated with the routes to these places. Adding to the complexity of the situation is the fact that the camps have been there for so long robbing them of a sense of “newness” that would thus draw the attention of journalists. These refugee camps host families that have been there for a long time or indeed have been raised there.

But the other reason for the bias against refugee stories is a traditional one that journalists have tended to cover the minority through the prism of otherness. Minorities here are characterised by their lack of power, the distance from the centre of capitalism (and those who traditionally own the media) and representation of an alternative worldview. In this respect, refugees are a minority. Overall, the coverage of refugees in Kenya is episodic. It heightens when there is an influx of refugees following either a rise in conflict in their country of origin, or some natural disaster occurring in their home, e.g. famine due to drought.

Coverage by Kenyan media may also be triggered by some disturbances in the camps. Since the coverage is episodic it tends to assume a parachute approach where journalists descend on the region for the episode then return back to Nairobi. Predominantly the media content relating to refugees tends to assume three categories: opinion pieces are by far the most predominant followed by news and other editorial. In an anecdotal look at Kenya’s two leading newspapers The Daily Nation and the Standard, there is hardly any difference in terms of how the two papers have covered the refugees.

The Daadab camp was ordered closed by the Kenyan government leading to heightened coverage of it. In terms of the framing, the media assumes the predominant frame that emerges is one of a humanitarian angle, followed by exploring government policy and the extent to which it synchronises with the international policies and regulations with respect to the treatment of refugees. This situation has not been helped by the reduction of the budget for the media houses that tends to lead to a rise in armchair journalism. This is characterised by journalists relying on whatever information they can glean from the internet to form the basis of their story. Besides the adoption of policy critiques and the humanitarian dimension, the other frame used for the refugees, particularly from the Daadab camp, is one of national insecurity. Generally, it is a negative frame. Further it is worth noting that journalists give fairly limited space and airtime to the refugees’ story. At its height there is a total of about eight stories a month, given an average of half a page in the inside pages of the newspaper. This means that the stories, which predominantly are opinion pieces are not necessarily telling the story of the refugees but rather represent the opinion of social elites on the subject.

Following the closing down of Daadab, there has not been active coverage of the refugee stories in the media. But in terms of a positive presentation of the Kenyan media of the refugees, the Kakuma camp has been viewed largely as an integrated part of the local economy. In 2020, there were radio stations covering the area, and social services were provided to the community. Residents of Kakuma camp were integrated into the local economy. Refugees who have been associated with the Kakuma camp but who have made their way into the city of Nairobi tend to get harsher media representation than those who remain in Kakuma. This is because they begin to compete for resources with Nairobi's elite. A recent negative coverage was of a wealthy South Sudanese living in Nairobi and flaunting his wealth.

This is an excerpt. Please find the full paper on the project portal [www.mediaandmigration.com](http://www.mediaandmigration.com).



#### RECOMMENDED READING:

##### Academic:

Elbadawi, I., & Sambanis, N. (2000). Why are there so many civil wars in Africa? Understanding and preventing violent conflict. *Journal of African Economies*, 9(3), 244-269. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jae/9.3.244>

##### Journalistic:

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