

THE EXODUS OF ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES IN SUDAN: A STUDY OF THE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF HOST COUNTRIES

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Abstract

The Government of Sudan hastened to handle refugees when a mass influx of Tigrayan refugees swarmed the Ethiopian-Sudanese border in late 2020. Political rivalry between the TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front) and the coalition led by Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed's newly formed political coalition Prosperity Party/*Paartii Badhaadhiina* reached an all-time high when Federal Government decided to halt the financial aid planned for Tigray and formally reject regional election results held by Tigray earlier in September 2020; PM Abiy Ahmed condemned it as an illegal election carried out without Federal Government's approval. In countermeasure, TPLF stormed the Ethiopian Defense Force regional base headquartered in Tigray capital, Mekelle, an action that provoked PM Abiy Ahmed's intentions to crush the TPLF once and for all. The military coalition consisted of Ethiopian Defense Force, Amhara Milita the Liyu Hayl, and Eritrean forces attacked Tigray from two consecutive fronts, forcing the civilians to flee their homes west into the Ethiopian-Sudanese border, begging for asylum from the Sudanese Government. This study aims to answer the roles and responsibilities carried out by the Sudanese Government in handling the Ethiopian refugees sheltered in the states of Kassala, Gedaref, and Blue Nile during the Tigray crisis. Using Kayongo-Male's *African Refugee Migration* research model, the authors find the eagerness shown by the Sudanese Government to handle the Ethiopian refugees, the difficulties of rehabilitating the infrastructure, and the passive role of the African Union in mediating the conflict between the TPLF and Federal Ethiopian Government.

Keywords: Tigray War, Ethiopian Refugees, Refugees in Sudan, African Refugee Migration

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The end of 2020 saw a massive departure of the Tigrayan people of the northern Ethiopia region amongst the pronged civil war between TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front) and the Federal Government of Ethiopia and their long-time enemy now turned allies, Eritrea. Thousands of Ethiopian asylum seekers now find themselves housed as refugees in separated territories inside Sudan (Pragilaksono 2022, 18). The problem of refugees started to become global attention and it is considered a problem that needs serious solutions can be seen from the aftermath of the Second World War (Syahrin 2017, 58). As of 2020 itself, displaced people, whether internally or cross-border, affected by conflict, violence, human rights violations, natural disaster, and political persecution reached 82.4 million lives, and 87% of them occurred in developing countries. Which also becomes a strain problem for host countries regarding funding and resources (European Commission 2020).

Regions like the Middle East, North Africa, Horn of Africa, West Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia have become the epicenter of mass flowing of the refugee influx, at least in the 21st century. The Governments of host countries, accompanied by international organizations that precisely handled refugees and asylum seekers, worked together to establish a proper refugee camp and fulfill their basic needs until other conditions improved for refugees to repatriate or transfer to third countries (European Commission 2020). In the Middle East and North Africa, a renewed refugee problem struck Sudan, a country that had just been relieved from decades-long of disintegration between Sudan and newly-founded South Sudan had to accept a condition where their neighboring country of Ethiopia plunged into another civil war. The reformed federal government under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Alli of Ethiopia took presidential office in 2018, where he promised a more democratic Ethiopia and ended a 27-year of civil war in Ethiopia since 1991. The newly formed cabinet under PM Abiy Ahmed saw a balance of power taking place under the dynamic condition of Ethiopia's domestic political constellation (Niculescu 2020).

The conflict started when PM Abiy Ahmed dissolved the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), a political coalition of Ethiopian natives of Tigray, Amhara, Oromo, and Southern People. PM Abiy Ahmed constituently merged the latter three native groups into Prosperity Party, excluding the Tigray people with their majority Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Tensions roses as the world entered the Covid-19 Pandemic Era in 2020, when PM Abiy Ahmed postponed the regional elections that were set to take place in August 2020 due to pandemic reasons. The Tigrayan believed that postponing the elections was an instrument for PM Abiy Ahmed to extend his presidential terms, forcing the Tigray region to proclaim their self-declared election on November 2020. The result of their self-declared election forced the Ethiopian federal government to take action, and PM Abiy Ahmed decided to ban the result of the regional election (Mules 2020).

Tensions rose, and TPLF decided to attack the Northern Army base of the Ethiopian National Defense Force in Mekelle, Tigray capital. Federal government allied with former Ethiopia's enemy Eritrea responded by mobilizing ENDF to contain Tigray TPLF forces, which resulted in armed conflict in the Tigray region until today (BBC News, 2021). The war between Tigrayan and the Ethiopian federal government brought a disastrous effect on the civilian of Ethiopia, especially Tigrayan. Fear of future atrocities

from all conflicting sides, civilians fled their homes and began moving west towards the border of Ethiopia and Sudan. November of 2020 saw the mass influx of civilians entering Sudan from Ethiopia's Tigray region to Al-Qadarif/Gedaref, In the coming weeks, the fleeing civilians numbered almost 40.000 and spread into two other states in Sudan, Kassala and Blue Nile (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2020).

In 2022, Sudan hosts nearly 1.1 million refugees and asylum seekers (recent data updated April 2022) spread in Kassala, Kordofan, Gedaref, Blue Nile, White Nile, Darfur, Khartoum, Gezira, Red Sea, and Northern Territory. Ethiopian refugees itself numbered 73.216 and made up 6% of total refugees and asylum seekers in Sudan, with the highest percentage number coming from the internally displaced persons (IDPs) from South Sudan, with 803.000 lives or 71% of total number of refugees and asylum seekers in Sudan (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2022). With those numbers, Sudan rose as a country that hosted the most significant number of refugees and asylum seekers in Africa. Sudan has a long tradition of refugees and has since operated numerous refugee camps throughout its entire state (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2022).

1.2 Research Question

What is the Sudanese government's role in handling the Ethiopian refugees stranded in Sudan?

2. Literature Review

It has been thoroughly understood that migration problems have occurred in Africa for decades, ranging from sectarian conflict, civil war, drought, long famine, and land-related conflicts. Problems have contributed mass exodus of civilians leaving their homeland to another region inside their country or far beyond the border. One example of a migration researcher who dedicated their work to understanding the state's role in handling the refugee and asylum-seeker was the work of Kayongo-Male titled *African Refugee Migration: A Model and Research Agenda*. Kayongo-Male emphasized the analytical framework for refugee researchers to *identify and understand the causes of forced migration, the action on behalf of host countries, and their impact on the country that granted them asylum* (Kayongo-Male 1988, 134-152).

First of all, according to Kayongo-Male, identifying the causes of migration that forced asylum-seekers to flee their country, whether affected by *political, economic, or ecological reasons*. Kayongo-Male described political, economic political, and ecological factors as three primary sources of the problem that brought refugee and migration problems in African countries. After analyzing the primary reasons why the refugee leaves their homeland firsthand, the rational choice for the refugee to do was to flee to a safer location, whether internally or crossing the border. From there, the granting of asylum status provided by host countries to refugees is considered an essential aspect to study.

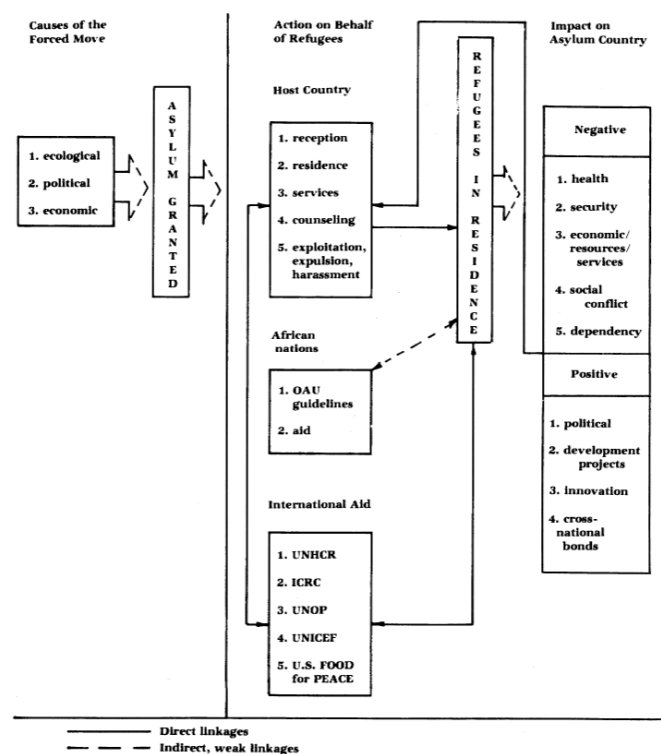
After accepting the refugees, countries tend to handle the stranded refugees according to their refugee law which might be based on global refugee consensus directed by UNHCR or regional regimes. Thus, when it comes to sheltering refugees in African countries, Kayongo-Male categorized the actions on behalf of the host countries into three phases. First, is *the action done by the host countries*, including reception, residence, services, counseling, or even exploiting, expulsing, and harassment received by refugees.

Second, understanding *the role of the African Union* in handling the refugees, and third the relief brought by *international organizations*. The last phase they are to analyze was the impacts received by the asylum country during sheltering the refugees, categorized into two aspects, *negative* and *positive*. Negative impacts include; *health, security, economic & services, social conflict, and dependency*. While positive impacts are spelled into; *political gain, state developments, and cross-national bonds aspect*.

3. Research Methods

The authors used a qualitative approach to write this research; from this approach, authors seek the answers to the problems by analyzing, writing, and describing the events chronologically from the prologue of the Tigray War, the mass influx of Tigrayan refugees, the actions carried out by the Sudan government and international partners, and the impacts brought to the local communities. From the literature review described in the previous part, the authors used a model drawn out from Kayongo-Male's *African Refugee Migration* research model (shown below), which the data obtained from literature studies (journal article, electronic media, article in a periodical, and books), annual or mid-year reports published by international organizations (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, International Committee for the Red Cross, and *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH*), and formal documents published by related governments.

Figure. 1 Kayongo-Male's African Refugee Migration Model



Source: African Refugee Migration (in Kayongo-Male 1988)

4. Results and Discussions

Understanding the causal factors of the fleeing refugees from their home countries in the African continent, according to Kayongo-Male, did not go far from the factors like the domestic political upheaval, ecological reasons, and economic factors. Political factors could be spelled out to phenomena such as; independence movements, civil wars, human rights violations, and interference of significant powers in domestic affairs. While ecological factors could be categorized into prolonged droughts, scarce grazing-area for cattle, deteriorated land conditions, and famine. Furthermore, economic factors could be depicted as extreme poverties, lack of basic human needs and commodities, and lack of jobs and educational opportunities. This category of refugees is sometimes not considered a priority for African countries to host them under domestic refugee law. Thus, most refugees under this category are classified as illegal refugees.

Given the context of fleeing Tigrayan refugees from Ethiopia to eastern Sudan, those refugees should be categorized under political factors according to the category defined by Kayongo-Male. At the end of 2020, the Ethiopian federal forces under PM Abiy Ahmed stormed the Tigray region as an immediate response to a one-sided regional vote initiated by the Tigray region. The long-standing escalated conflict since 2020 created internal political turmoil as the skirmished conflict carried by the federal government and Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) is not showing signs of ending. They were forcing thousands of Tigrayan civilians to flee west to the eastern frontier of Gedaref's Sudan.

According to the category emphasized by Kayongo-Male, the conflict between the Ethiopian federal government and TPLF could be a civil war, given that the conflict occurred inside Ethiopia's border. Thus, the fleeing Tigrayan refugees into eastern Sudan could be characterized by political factors defined by Kayongo-Male. The second phase of identifying the host country's role in handling refugees would focus on whether the host countries granted asylum to refugees on their frontier. In this case, the author decided to trace back the situation on November 2020 in the south-eastern frontier of Sudan bordering Ethiopia. Data obtained from World Food Programme started on November 30th, 2020, showed the Sudanese government established 2 refugee reception points in the two states of Kassala and Gedaref. Hamdayet and Al-Lugdi reception areas, near the Amhara and Tigray border in Ethiopia's (Kinzi 2020).

Established inter-agency workforce between COR (Commissioner for Refugees) and UNHCR stated that in 2021 onward Sudanese government already opened the third reception point in the Blue Nile state bordering with Benishangul-Gumuz in Ethiopia. The latest revised number of refugees and asylum seekers recorded by COR and UNHCR stated that as of August 2022, from 59,501 Ethiopian asylum seekers handled by the Sudanese government, 52,829 of them already registered as refugees, with 88% of refugees registered as individual applicants and 12% as household applicants (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2022). Identifying the numerous actors' actions on behalf of the refugees could be divided into three categories: actions carried out by host countries, neighboring African countries or the African Union (formerly Organization of African Unity), and other international organizations' assistance. Following the first influx of Tigray people into eastern Sudan on November 20th, 2020, the *Government of Sudan*, chaired by COR (Commissioner for Refugees), hosted an inter-ministerial meeting to address the incoming refugee influx from Ethiopian's state of Tigray. The meeting was also attended by UNHCR, UN Partners, and NGO representatives.

The meeting coined *Ministerial Resolution N. 102 of 2020*, which coordinates the inter-agency roles in handling the Tigrayan refugees in Sudan; the ministerial meeting stated that COR and UNHCR would become the leading coordinator for the upcoming missions. COR, as the Sudanese government's formal body, also headed the primary refugees' Protection tasks, which included registering asylum-seekers, issuing ID cards, identifying asylum-seekers with special needs, family tracing, reunification, and providing a safe environment for the child, providing protection desks, supporting SGBV survivors, formulating solutions domestically; such as voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and relocations within Sudan's territory, protecting the community where there are refugees present, informing the availability of gender-based violence services hotlines, conducting peaceful environment between refugees and host community, and lastly providing special concerns for Eritrean refugees of among the Tigrayan refugees (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2020).

Among the neighboring countries and the specific role carried out by *African Union*, there have been accounts by some researchers and authors regarding the topic. Authors like (Selassie 2020) and (Miller et al. 2021) are concerned about the passive role of the African Union in handling Ethiopian refugees in Sudan and the lack of effort to mediate between the Ethiopian government and TPLF. In the beginning months of the conflict, African Union lost its credibility as a neutral arbiter between the Ethiopian federal government and the TPLF. (Selassie 2020) revealed that the loss of credibility occurred because Ethiopia is where the African Union is based and is seen as having a significant influence within the African Union itself. A progressed attempt to address the ongoing conflict was mediated by IGAD¹ (Intergovernmental Authority on Development) at the end of November 2020 as Sudan requested an urgent meeting between the head of governments of IGAD (Singh 2021).

IGAD then opened the 38th Summits in Djibouti; one specific topic during the talk was to address the Ethiopian internal conflict between government and TPLF. During the summit, headed by PM Abiy Ahmed himself justified that the involvement of Ethiopian Defense Forces in the ongoing conflict with TPLF was just a simple military operation, defying the involvement of Eritrean forces in the conflict. Thus, PM Abiy Ahmed urged the summit representatives not to treat the TPLF as a state-like entity but as a rebel group that wreak havoc (Singh 2021). Despite the justification put forward by the Ethiopian Prime Minister, IGAD representatives decided to put the Ethiopian crisis as a primary agenda for the upcoming summits and to bring humanitarian assistance into Ethiopian refugee camps in Sudan as soon as possible. IGAD collaborates with German's *Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung* (BMZ) Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development as the main agency to lead humanitarian assistance inside Sudan and Ethiopia (GIZ 2021). The joint agency of IGAD and BMZ estimated a total of 5 Million US dollars as a committed budget to handle humanitarian assistance in Sudan and Ethiopia during the conflict (IGAD 2020).

¹ IGAD, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, is a trade bloc formed by the 8 countries in the Horn of Africa, Nile Valley, and the Great Lakes, where Sudan and Ethiopia are members of the bloc. During the Ethiopian crisis in 2020, IGAD offered talks solution for the Ethiopian government to allow humanitarian aid to enter the Tigray state and also mediated foreign financial aid to help Sudan handle the Ethiopian refugees sheltered in refugee camps during the ongoing conflict.

The third actor to identify this topic is the role carried out by *international organizations* specifically operating as humanitarian and refugee agencies in Sudan. The leading agency to address the problem of refugees in the world is UNHCR; in 2022, UNHCR estimates Sudan hosted nearly 4.85 million lives, with 1.15 million categorized as refugees from outward, while 3.7 million rest are internally displaced persons (IDPs). The Ethiopian refugees and asylum seekers affected by Tigray War numbered almost 57.000 lives scattered around Sudan could be outlined in the table below:

Table. 1 Number of Ethiopian Refugees & Asylum Seekers in Sudan as of 2020-22

Location	Number of Refugees & Asylum Seekers	Current Status
Um Rakuba Camp, Gedaref	16.886	Registered as refugee
Babikre, Gedaref	2.604	Registered as refugee
Tunaydbah, Gedaref	22.790	Registered as refugee
Hamdayet, Kassala	2.261	Registered as refugee
Village 8, Kassala	3.183	Registered as refugee
Village 6, Blue Nile	8.819	Asylum seekers

Source: CMI (in Babiker et al. 2021)

The primary role of UNHCR in Sudan is to support the host government with durable solutions for refugees and IDPs, such as providing legal work, establishing voluntary return programs, self-resilience and resettlement. As a leading actor with Sudan’s Commissioner for Refugees (CoR) on handling Ethiopian refugees in Sudan, further works carried out by UNHCR comprises of Protection, which includes expanding reception areas on the border, assessment of new sites, and stockpiling refugees’ basic needs, then Educational support that helps 773 Ethiopian child’s to continue their school with Sudanese curriculum. On the third, UNHCR Health’s program provide the refugees medical needs for the next 3 months, Food Security & Nutrition program were monitored by UNHCR in every refugee camps alongside World Food Programme, Water and Sanitation problem occurred in some refugee camps in Kassala, UNCHR prevented the infestation of mosquitos breeding sites on the water pipeline , UNHCR helped sheltering newly accepted asylum seekers from reception areas in Kassala border into newly constructed shelters and Non-food Items such as (jerrycans, blankets, sleeping mats, mosquito nets, and kitchen sets) were distributed for the refugee families whom shelter washed away during heavy rain in Kassala, And lastly, Community Empowerment and Self-Reliance program deducted by UNHCR with supporting local sports activities such as organizing youth football tournament for refugees (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2022).

Meanwhile, addressing the refugees in residence problem regarding the factor affecting the impacts given by the Sudanese government to Ethiopian refugees in Sudan could be analyzed first by comparing the ratio of refugees to the local population in Kassala, Gedaref, and Blue Nile. The ratio will be presented in the table below:

Table. 2 Ratio of Ethiopian Refugees to Local Population

States	Total Number of Refugees and or Asylum Seekers	Local Populations Total	Ratio of Refugees & Asylum Seekers to Local Population
Kassala	42.280	2.519.100	1:60
Gedaref	5.444	2.208.400	1:406
Blue Nile	8.819	1.108.400	1:126

Source: Authors Archive (in UN High Commissioner 2020, 2021, 2022)

The above table shows that the state with the tightest refugees-to-local population ratio is Kassala, followed by Blue Nile and Gedaref. Furthermore, from the data shown above, Sudan government must concentrate its operation in Kassala first. After piecing the refugee's condition in the host country, the last thing to discuss is how the mass influx of refugees from Tigrayan Ethiopia had negative and or positive impacts on the government of Sudan and society's impressions towards the refugees. The negative impacts may vary from the health conditions of the local population, national security, the scarcity of resources and services, social conflict, and refugees' dependency. While on the positive side, the political impacts from the arrival of refugees might be described as the state of development, innovative approaches, and cross-national bonds.

Prior to the mass arrival of Ethiopian refugees into Sudan during the Tigray War, the local *health priority* was designated to support the government efforts to battle the spreading Covid-19 outbreaks in Sudan. Aside from that, the intra-communal violence, the nationwide flood because of the rising water levels of the Blue Nile that destroyed a hundred thousand homes, and combating malaria was also the priority of the government. The government, supported by the Sudan Red Crescent Society (SRCS) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), distributed medicines throughout the rural hospital in Sudan (ICRC, 2021). The following year, the Ethiopian refugees were amassed in Sudan. The government extended its work from handling the local populations to attending to the stranded Ethiopian refugees, doubling their efforts to distribute medicines, PPE (Pandemic Personal Equipment), and stockpiling rural hospitals in Kassala, Gedaref, and Blue Nile (ICRC 2022).

National security factors sometimes become priority things to consider when it comes to one country accepting massive numbers of refugees into their territory. (Resti 2021) implied that the massive influx of Ethiopian refugees into Sudan territory forced Sudan Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok to mobilize the Sudanese forces to the eastern frontier of Gedaref. In anticipation of Ethiopian forces' movements towards the disputed border of Al-Fashaga, situated just on the border of Gedaref with Ethiopian's Amhara region. The appearance of Sudanese forces in the contested area of Al-Fashaga forced the Amhara farmers in Al-Fashaga to flee the area to the interior region of Amhara (Ethiopia Peace Observatory 2021). Amhara Regional Forces, the Liyu Hayl, then sporadically attacked the Sudanese forces in Al-Fashaga, resulting in 21 soldiers killed and 30 injured (Khalid, 2021). From February to April of 2021, Sudanese and Ethiopian forces skirmishes happened in the Al-Fashaga area. In March 2021, Ethiopian PM Abiy Ahmed expressed the need to de-escalate the border conflict, afraid that the minor skirmishes could erupt into open war between Sudan and Ethiopia.

The scarcity of resources and services of host countries from accepting a massive number of refugees might result in local populace discontent towards the government.

During the first phase of the Ethiopian refugees influx toward Sudan, the population of Kassala and Gedaref welcomed them. It brought the effort to move refugees from the border to permanent camps. However, as the influx comes in the coming months, the already surged basic needs price becomes a problem for the Sudanese population. The Sudanese government appealed to the UN aid efforts; as of 2021, the inflation rate of Sudan peaked at 250% since the nation's rebuilding took process after the ousted president Omar al-Bashir was overthrown from the executive post. The Sudanese government and UN aid agencies then struggled to supply the refugees with food, water, and healthcare (Reuters 2020).

Lastly, on negative impacts on the local population, the *dependency* factors might appear if the refugees are reluctant to be repatriated because of the ongoing conflict in their home countries not showing signs of ending. The longer refugee stays in the host countries, the more dependency arises as the host countries need to stockpile their basic needs every time. In the case of Ethiopian refugees in Sudan, the Sudanese government again appealed to more than 50 international organizations to aid efforts to help the government by financing the livelihoods of refugees and also supporting the government with the humanitarian, migration, health, food, water, sanitation, electricity, woman encouragement, security, children needs, and religious aspects. UNHCR estimates that growing funds of 350 million dollars are needed to fully fund the refugees until the complete repatriation process is finished (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2021).

Meanwhile, the positive impacts of the arrival of refugees inside host country's territory might be considered as political leverage held by host countries towards home countries. The first impact to discuss is the political aspect, given that if the refugees sheltered in host countries' camps could be arranged into productive workers to help boost the host country's economy, the host countries might get political gain. Meanwhile, if the refugees cannot work to establish their primary needs, they become a liability to the host countries.

As stated in the Sudanese *Asylum (Organization) Act, 2014*², The accepted and sheltered refugees in Sudan cannot make their fortune from working freely in Sudan. They are subject to the provisions of labor laws in force, meaning a competent labor office must first permit their work status. Moreover, the sheltered refugees in Sudan are not allowed to work in industries related to securities and the national defense sector. Although it is easy to get a work permit from the labor office, the harsh reality faced by Ethiopian refugees with the fact that it is difficult to find work opportunities in their neighboring areas. The difficulty is presented because of the strict rules applied in most refugee camps (African Centre for Justice and Peace Studies 2022). (Babiker et al. 2021), in their research, found out about the old labor patterns formed by Ethiopian livestock herders and eastern Sudanese farmers in Gedaref. For the past 20 years, they have established a working network between Ethiopian refugees and the local Gedaref population; they offered cheap labor to work in the Sudanese farmer's field. When the Ethiopian refugees arrived in November 2020, the former migrants contacted their network in Gedaref to provide them with stable work and income.

² Since 2014, Sudan has reformed its domestic refugee law from *The 1974 Asylum Act* to *Asylum (Organization) Act 2014*. The law that originated from the ratified UNHCR's 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol became the primary source for handling the stranded refugees in Sudan since their ratification in 1974. What differs 2014 and 1974 drafts were the priority of Sudan not to refuse asylum seekers from the frontier and accept them into their interior territory.

Host countries might benefit from sheltering refugees through the increased *state development* projects in areas surrounding the refugee camps apart from the emergency relief efforts, which at the exact times benefit the local population. There is a little-known project regarding the state developments around the time refugees arrived from Ethiopia towards Sudan. Thus the only projects that benefited both refugees and local populations were the sanitation projects. The inter-agency efforts in improving sanitation projects include construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance of the sanitation facility. Those were the priority for the inter-agency work; thus, since the project started in early 2021 until June 2022, the local population and refugees in Kassala and Gedaref benefitted from the project and increased the average 20 litres of water per day per person. The inter-agency also trained local contractors for the maintenance of sanitation projects. To further the project, inter-agency also prevents the risk of polluted water by coordinating water treatment work and cleaning the river to avoid transmitted diseases in consumed water (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2022).

The innovative approaches initiated by a group of young Ethiopian refugees in Sudan were to raise awareness among the sheltered refugees about the danger and risks of smuggling and trafficking if the refugees choose to move out from the camps and fled to Europe. Yared, an engineering university student from Tigray with 19 other young, formed a group called *Telling the Real Story* which is also funded by UNHCR to educate the refugees in Um Rakuba camp, Gedaref, where the majority of Ethiopian refugees sheltered in Sudan. They carried out door-to-door visits and discussions to the refugees in camp in hope to counter the smugglers persuasions to the refugees that want to leave for Europe, and raise awareness to the environment. Supported by UNHCR, *Telling the Real Story* also helped local police and border officers with information regarding the activities of the refugee smugglers (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2022).

While on the *cross-national bonds* aspect, Sudan has long welcomed refugees for decades. There was a sense of helping their 'distant families' whose lives were endangered by conflicts in their home countries. For the Sudanese communities who lived in Kassala and Gedaref bordering the Ethiopian state of Tigray, for a long time, they had established a mutual connection from the herders-farmers activities. Despite the religious differences where most Ethiopian refugees are Oriental Orthodox, and the Sudanese population are predominantly Sunni Muslim, there are minimum hostilities shown from the local population to Ethiopian refugees.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The handling of ethnic Tigray refugees from Ethiopia carried out by the Sudanese government has shown that humanitarian efforts to save the lives of asylum seekers from the dangers of conflict in their country of origin remain a priority for the Sudanese government. Since the domestic conflict in Tigray occurred in November 2020, the Sudanese government has opened a border post with Ethiopia to receive refugees at immigration posts on the border with Ethiopia, namely in the states of Kassala & Gedaref. The increasing number of refugees in 2021 forces Sudan to need urgent assistance from humanitarian organizations such as UNHCR, IOM, and ICRC. Resettlement, re-opening of camps, and rehabilitation of refugee facilities are other priorities for the cooperation of Sudan and nearly 50 humanitarian organizations worldwide.

The process of domestic economic and political recovery in Sudan after the fall of President Omar al-Bashir's in 2019 has also become a challenge for the Sudanese government in running the government and dealing with refugees from Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, and Syria. Besides, the floods that occurred on a national scale and the activities of rebel groups in several states are also problems that need to be addressed by the Sudanese government. Efforts to handle refugees by Sudan and humanitarian organizations until 2022 are at the level of providing emergency assistance to refugees.

Efforts to improve infrastructure and facilities as a whole have yet to become a top priority for Sudan which can affect the quality of life of refugees and local populations. The passive role of the African Union during the peak of the arrival of refugees from Ethiopia became an obstacle to the intervention of international organizations above the country to reduce the ongoing internal conflict that occurred in Ethiopia. The African Union, in this case, has yet to carry out its full role as an organization that seeks to create peace in the Horn of Africa itself.

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