City Diplomacy and Human Mobility in Africa

Protecting Refugees and Migrants along the Central Mediterranean Route from the East and the Horn of Africa

Jim VAN MOORSEL

▶ **Key Takeaways**

- Cities face constraints to work on migration and refugee issues, often due to a lack of decentralisation and resource constraints. Adopting an inclusive city approach can safeguard local authorities' commitment towards providing protection to residents regardless of status, while not overstepping legal mandates.

- In contrast, when afforded more space to work on these issues, local authorities and other actors are able to more directly target refugees and migrants by developing specific programming or engaging in city diplomacy to advocate for their protection.

- Cities of transit along mixed movement routes may not be well connected to existing initiatives, while they fulfil a key mandate. Actors should focus on improving access to these cities through mitigating constraints.

- Urban migration stakeholders can enhance partnerships by connecting cities along routes with common needs, or with relevant experience, to help and share capacity building strategies or good practices.

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Introduction

Over the last 20 years, Africa has seen an annual urban growth rate of around 3.5%, driving global urbanization to a new height. By 2050, it is estimated that African cities will host an additional 950 million inhabitants.[1] In such an increasingly urbanized context, African cities are also at the forefront of mobility and population displacement. This applies whether people on the move (refugees and migrants) transit cities or settle in them for short or long periods of time. Urban centers in East and the Horn of Africa, and in West and North Africa, form key nodes on the Central Mediterranean Route (CMR),[2] which attract and have become habitual stop-off points for people in mixed movements. However, while cities can be centers of support or provide attractive opportunities for refugees and migrants, for example in employment and education, they are also locations where protection risks linked to safety and security, xenophobia, discrimination and human rights violations can be at their highest.[3]

Governments, research institutions and international policy-making processes are increasingly recognizing the importance of working with cities in taking forward their agendas on protection and solutions for refugees and migrants. The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM),[4] the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR)[5] and the Joint Valletta Action Plan (JVAP)[6] all reference the importance of including city actors in multi-level governance and cooperation at the local, regional, and national levels to ensure effective protection, asylum and migration governance. Furthermore, existing regional migration dialogues have started incorporating cities in their (current) strategic frameworks and plans.

1. OECD and the Sahel and West Africa Club (SWAC/OECD), *Africa's Urbanisation Dynamics 2020: Africapolis, Mapping a New Urban Geography*, Paris, Editions OECD, 2020, available at: www.oecd-ilibrary.org.

2. R. Forin and B. Frouws, "What's New? Analysing the Latest Trends on the Central Mediterranean Mixed Migration Route to Italy", Mixed Migration Centre, February 9, 2022.

3. C. Horwood, B. Frouws and B. R. Forin, *Mixed Migration Review 2020: Mixed Migration and Cities, Urban Frontlines for Displacement and Mobility*, Mixed Migration Centre, 2020, available at: www.mixedmigration.org.

4. The GCM is a non-binding intergovernmentally negotiated agreement prepared under the auspices of the United Nations. It covers all aspects and dimensions of international migration in a comprehensive and holistic manner. It was adopted on 10 December 2018 in Marrakesh.

5. The GCR is a non-binding, intergovernmentally negotiated agreement prepared under the auspices of the United Nations. It provides a framework to improve the global response to refugees' needs, focusing on more predictable and equitable burden-sharing between countries and recognizing that sustainable refugee solutions cannot be achieved without international cooperation. It was adopted on December 17, in New York.

6. The JVAP is the regional Europe-Africa framework for migration policy. It was adopted during the Europe-Africa Summit (the 'Valletta Summit'), which took place in Valletta from November 11 to November 12, 2015.

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> **Box 1: The Central Mediterranean Route**
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> The Central Mediterranean Route (CMR) stretches from locations of origin and transit in the East and the Horn of Africa, as well as West Africa and the Sahel to North Africa towards the Mediterranean and Southern Europe. From an East African perspective, trajectories from Ethiopia through Sudan towards Egypt and Libya are sometimes described as the Northern Route. Sudan is a key country of transit for all East African refugees and migrants who are moving along the Central Mediterranean Route. Journeys along the CMR can be long and perilous through the Sahara desert, with refugees and migrants vulnerable to risks and abuse.

As such, the current state of play among development actors and policy makers in countries along the CMR shows a strong appetite for city-to-city dialogues and international, national and subnational city-level stakeholder initiatives and partnerships, making migration a key area of city diplomacy activities. Some city dialogues, initiatives and partnerships are longstanding, have gained traction and have made a positive impact on the protection of people on the move, while this may be less the case for others. Some focus on migration and displacement-specific themes, such as the Mediterranean City-to-City Migration (MC2CM) Initiative and the Mayors Migration Council, while others, including United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and C40 Cities, have a much wider thematic mandate. While the ambition to link cities along the same mixed movement routes in collective efforts to protect refugees and migrants in mixed movement might appear to be a logical proposition, this *Memo* demonstrates that city initiatives are actually not often connected through a route-based approach.

> City initiatives are actually not often connected through a route-based approach

It should be acknowledged that cities along the CMR on the African continent oftentimes continue experiencing constraints in their endeavors to work on migration and refugee issues. Despite increased attention to the role of cities within national and international dialogues and fora, the adoption of appropriate legal frameworks might be lagging behind, in best cases, or simply not a topic on the current policy agenda for national governments. Furthermore, migration is often a politically sensitive issue, on which national governments would like to keep the prerogative. This *Memo* discusses the constraints cities might face while working (or endeavoring to work) on the protection of people on the move, while it also proposes certain ways to work around red tape.

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Box 2: Definitions

Mixed movements, or **mixed migration**, refer to cross-border movements of people, including refugees fleeing persecution and conflict, victims of trafficking, and people seeking better lives and opportunities. Motivated to move by a multiplicity of factors, people engaged in mixed migration have a range of legal statuses as well as a variety of vulnerabilities. People on the move are traveling along similar routes, often irregularly, and are wholly or partially assisted by smugglers (MMC).[7]

A **route-based approach** supports humanitarian programming and research along mixed movement routes which traverse migration countries of origin, transit and destination. People on the move face risks and abuse along the way, which result in increased vulnerability, trauma or loss of life. A route-based approach can more effectively support the response towards the challenges of mixed movements to ensure international protection and dignified conditions for people on the move along key mixed movement routes (UNHCR).[8]

Protection refers to "upholding the basic human rights of uprooted or stateless people in their countries of asylum or habitual residence", ensuring they will not be forcefully returned to their country of origin (or another country) where they could face persecution (UNHCR).[9] Social protection aims to prevent or protect all people against "poverty, vulnerability and social exclusion throughout their life-course, with emphasis on vulnerable groups" through a set of policies and programs (UNHCR).[10] The term **urban protection** is utilized in this *Memo* to refer to these notions of protection in an urban context, emphasizing the key stakeholder role for local authorities, ensuring protection for all residents through efforts of multi-stakeholder governance and partnerships, and city diplomacy.

The findings presented in this *Memo* are based on research carried out in 2021-2022 in the context of a research partnership between the Mixed Migration Centre (MMC)[11] and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).[12,13] The study included a desk research of mapping existing initiatives and grey literature, 21 key informant interviews in English, French and Arabic with key stakeholders, including city-to-city initiatives' representatives such as UCLG and UCLG Africa, the MC2CM Initiative and Cities Alliance Uganda, migration and city diplomacy experts, and local authorities and civil society in Tunisia, Morocco, The Gambia and Mauritania, a feedback survey carried out by UNHCR among regional and country operations to assess UNHCR's engagement with cities and local authorities, and a total of five validation and consultation meetings

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7. Mixed Migration Centre, available at: www.mixedmigration.org.

8. "Strengthening Protection and Solutions in the Context of Mixed Movements of Refugees and Migrant", UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), June 2024, available at: www.refworld.org.

9. "Protection", UNHCR, available at: www.unhcr.org.

10. Social Protection, UNHCR, available at: www.unhcr.org.

11. The Mixed Migration Centre (MMC), a part of the Danish Refugee Council, is a global network engaged in data collection, research, analysis and policy and programmatic development on mixed migration. MMC's overarching focus is on human rights and protection for all people on the move.

12. While some of the particular examples and contexts cited in this briefing might have become out of date since 2021-22, the overall key messages and findings of this study remain highly relevant.

13. Additional examples have been drawn from three empirical city-level studies conducted in 2021-22 by MMC in partnership with the Mayors Migration Council, focusing on the cities of Arua and Kampala (Uganda) and Nairobi (Kenya).

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to gather feedback on the study's main findings. Two of these meetings were focus group discussions (FGDs) with refugee and migrant associations in Sudan and Tunisia. Following the publication of this study,[14] two successful courses on urban migration and protection were organized in 2022 and 2023 by MMC in collaboration with Columbia University's Global Centres, its City Diplomacy Lab and UNHCR.

How do city-to-city and city-level initiatives contribute to the protection of people on the move?

What does it mean for a local authority to advance the protection of people on the move? How can local-level actors who have neither the competencies to determine asylum claims or residence rights nor the "protection mandate", which is often a national government prerogative, nevertheless further the protection of refugees and migrants? This research found that this occurred in four main ways: "inclusive city" approaches; refugee- and migrant-specific programming at the city level; migration drivers and returnee programming at the city level and engaging in and promoting national and international goals through city diplomacy for the protection of people on the move.

Given that local authorities are the main governing actors interfacing with the public, they can best assess how cross-cutting issues might affect groups of (vulnerable) populations differently. Rather than work with categories of people, for example through focusing on refugees and asylum seekers only, local authorities may strive and promote to deliver basic services to all residents. In this way, local authorities further the protection of people on the move by adopting an "inclusive city" approach. Such an approach can be defined as working towards valuing all residents, regardless of legal status, and addressing their needs equally, without discrimination. By targeting all residents within a locality, local authorities are not exceeding their legal and practical mandates and do not risk potential conflict with national authorities by being identified as protection stakeholders providing assistance to refugees and migrants. In Uganda, the global network Cities Alliance has implemented the Community Upgrading Fund, which finances the infrastructure of small communities to improve the access of host communities and urban refugees to basic services within a city.[15]

> Local authorities further the protection of people on the move by adopting an "inclusive city" approach

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14. The full research report including the mapping of existing initiatives in Annex I is available on MMC's website: Mixed Migration Centre, *Going to Town: A Mapping of City-to-City and Urban Initiatives Focusing on the Protection of People on the Move along the Central and Western Mediterranean Routes*, available at: www.mixedmigration.org.

15. S. Mabala, "Municipal Development Fora and Community Upgrading Fund – Best Practices to Enhance Social and Economic Transformation in Secondary Cities", Cities Alliance UN House, 2023, available at: www.citiesalliance.org.

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Perhaps the most direct example of local authorities working towards the protection of people on the move within their constituencies takes the form of urban programming targeted specifically to refugees and migrants. The Mayors Migration Council and MMC have conducted surveys specifically with refugees and migrants on their experiences, protection concerns and access to basic services in three urban areas in East Africa,[16] as part of MMC's 4Mi Cities project with the objective of creating an evidence base on refugee and migrant experiences to inform local authorities and other stakeholders while delivering services and assistance to urban mixed populations.

City-level programming may include elements of mixed movement drivers and/or returnee programming in cities, which are at the same time places of origin, transit, destination and potential return. Drivers refer to the variety of reasons that prompt departure, including economic and educational opportunities, social and political dynamics, conflict and climate change, amongst others. Programming interventions can target potential migrants – those who might embark on precarious irregular movements along the CMR if they believe they have no livelihood opportunities in their home communities or countries – and returnees, who may experience re-displacement or remigration if the initial drivers of their movement have not changed since their initial departure. MMC and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) are working in communities of return in Burundi, conducting research on the reintegration experiences of Burundian returnees.[17]

> **In some countries, national policies and legislation do not adequately provide protection to people on the move**

In a number of countries along the CMR, national policies and legislation do not adequately provide protection to people on the move, especially in countries that lack legislation and/or are not signatories to relevant international conventions. For example, while East African countries, including Uganda and Kenya, have refugee-oriented laws and policies, countries in North Africa, such as Libya and Tunisia, do not have a domestic asylum and refugee framework. Through city diplomacy focusing on joint strategies and advocacy, local authorities might engage in and further advance refugee and migrant protection goals, both on a national level as well as locally. While national policy and legal frameworks may not be easy to change, the UN 2030 Agenda and other international frameworks do provide support to local authorities to engage in international dialogues.

16. O. Akumu and E. Wachira, *4Mi Cities: Data Collection on Urban Mixed Migration – Kampala City Report*, Mixed Migration Center, Juillet 2022, available at: www.mixedmigration.org; O. Akumu and E. Wachira, *4Mi Cities: Data Collection on Urban Mixed Migration – Arua City Report*, Mixed Migration Centre, 2022, available at: www.mixedmigration.org; O. Akumu, *4Mi Cities: Data Collection on Urban Mixed Migration – Nairobi City Report*, Mixed Migration Centre, 2022, available at: www.mixedmigration.org.
17. "4Mi Snapshot: Reintegration Experiences of Burundian Returnees", Mixed Migration Centre, 2023, available at: https://mixedmigration.org.

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What are the different types of urban protection initiatives and examples?

This *Memo* focuses on six main types of activities that advance the protection of people on the move in urban areas.[18] This list does not claim to be exhaustive, but it highlights the identified different approaches to urban protection programming with local authorities. Within larger initiatives, several types of activities might be connected and/or conducted together, acknowledging the complexity within this field and the different relationships that may exist between cooperating stakeholders. Table 1 defines each, in turn, their objectives and provides some key examples.

Table 1: Types of activities urban protection and mixed migration initiatives engage in

Activity	Working definition	Objectives	Relevant example(s)
Peer-to-peer meetings and exchanges	Activities that bring together different cities and local authorities to share information and learn from one another. Activities are often organized around a specific learning objective, or theme and involve local authorities with similar experiences or priorities related to mixed movement.	Foster coordination and information-sharing within a country, across countries and/or along mixed movement routes. Match local authorities holding expertise in a specific area with local authorities seeking out such expertise.	**Cities Alliance**[19] has convened regional peer-to-peer dialogues involving nine East African cities (in Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia) located on mixed movement routes, in which national offices and ministries are also invited to take part.
Producing data, information, and knowledge resources	Data collection and research exercises undertaken at the local or city-level, following the recognition of a data and information gap. Activities range from research conducted by individual cities with the support of an international urban initiative or actor to coordinated efforts by several local authorities.	Fill an information gap and create an evidence base to inform urban protection responses. Provide local authorities with data to legitimize calls for national authorities and international organizations to support them in servicing all inhabitants, including refugees and migrants.	**UN-Habitat's City Prosperity Initiative (CPI)**[20] develops with cities an integration promotion framework, spatial analysis, and a multi-scale decision-making tool. The aim is to identify opportunities for cities to become sustainably competitive, based on inclusive fundamental human rights principles. In 2020, **MMC** and the **International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD)**, published a set of urban mixed migration case studies with data collected at city- and neighbourhood-level, including Nairobi[21] and Tunis.[22]

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18. The six types of activities were identified based on research carried out by Equal Partnerships for Urban Migration Governance project, as well as data from interviews with key stakeholders working on urban initiatives.
19. Cities Alliance in Eastern Africa, available at: www.citiesalliance.org.
20. City Prosperity Index, Urban Indicators Database, available at: data.unhabitat.org.
21. Mixed Migration Centre, "Urban Mixed Migration, Nairobi Case Study", 2020, available at: www.mixedmigration.org.
22. Ibid.

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Linking to experts	Connecting local authorities to experts who provide them with technical support. Experts might have a thematic focus (e.g., migration) or technical skills (e.g., grant writing) and may come from a wide array of sectors.	Build the capacity of local authorities and/or support them to scale up existing programming related to protection assistance for refugees and migrants.	A **Mixed Migration and City Diplomacy course**[23] organized by MMC, Columbia's Global Centers (of Tunis, Paris and Nairobi) and Columbia's City Diplomacy Lab provides local authorities with an opportunity to participate in expert training, work together on city action plans, and discuss concepts for their cities with invited experts.
City partnerships	Partnerships between two or more cities or local authorities based in different countries, often formed based on mutual interests and priorities. Historically such partnerships have been referred to as "sister cities". When the partnership is between two cities, it is often called "twinning".	Advance shared policy or programming agendas and priorities (e.g., related to mixed movement). Establish relationships for funding opportunities. Exchange on good practices, particularly on procedures and policy implementation.	The **Africa-Europe Mayors' Dialogue**,[24] a platform of 20 cities, has helped form new partnerships between cities along migration routes, for example between Dakar and Barcelona.
Joint strategies	The adoption of common agendas or action plans to inform local policy agendas and urban programming. Joint strategies can take the form of task forces or agenda-setting and policy development activities.	To promote collective city action and a coordinated approach to mixed movement. To increase the visibility of city actions and policy agendas.	The **Mayors Migration Council** established the **Global Mayors Taskforce on Climate and Migration**, with **C40 Cities** and several mayors. During COP26 in November 2021, the task force launched the Global Mayors Action Agenda on Climate and Migration[25] and presented its joint strategic approach in line with the GCR.
Joint advocacy and shared norms	Cities working together to build support for legal frameworks, norms and policies related to asylum and migration on national and international levels. Norms may range from a shared sense of duty to a legal obligation towards refugees and migrants.[24] Establishing norms may involve signing onto charters or pledges.	Promote global norms and agendas, including the GCR, the GCM and the 2030 Agenda. Raise the profile of city-relevant topics and strengthen the voice of cities within national and international agendas.	**UCLG** and **UCLG Africa** engage in regional and cross-regional advocacy efforts and have developed "Waves of Action"[26], which are dedicated to implementing global agendas such as the GCR and the 2030 Agenda. Additionally, UCLG Africa's Charter of Local and Subnational Governments of Africa on Migration[27] is an example of successful advocacy efforts.

23. "Migration and City Diplomacy: Empowering Cities on the Central Mediterranean Route", Virtual training, City Diplomacy Lab, December 2023, available at: www.citydiplomacylab.net.

24. "The Africa-Europe Mayors' Dialogue", 2024 available at: www.odi.org.

25. "Global Mayors Action Agenda on Climate and Migration", C40November, 2021, available at: www.c40knowledgehub.org.

26. "The Potential of our Global Network: Waves of Action", United Cities and Local Governments, available at: www.old.uclg.org.

27. "Charter of Local and Subnational Governments of Africa on Migration", UCLG Africa, available at: www.uclga.org.

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Why is a route-based approach to mixed movement and protection initiatives important?

Or, in other words, how can we leverage the location of cities when working on urban protection issues? A key aim of the conducted study was to understand how city-to-city and international, national and subnational city stakeholder initiatives, including partnerships and dialogues, situate themselves along the CMR (and connecting migration routes on the African continent) and adopt a route-based approach to programming to address the major protection concerns found along these migration corridors.

The role of cities along mixed movement routes as places of origin, transit and/or destination can be a factor determining their inclusion in broader city initiatives and the types of programming developed. For example, to gain a better understanding of how to enhance protection services, a representative from the municipality of a transit and destination city in North Africa might aspire to have more linkages with cities of origin or transit in East Africa, either directly or through large-scale city-to-city partnerships. Certain cities are often characterized as places of transit[28] for refugees and migrants, such as Agadez (Niger), and Dongola and Kassala (both in Sudan), while at the same time, they tend to be less connected to city diplomacy efforts and city-to-city initiatives. This could be due to their more limited abilities to engage international initiatives and actors and the increased challenges in accessing these locations. That being said, refugees and migrants who must transit these cities to resupply, access accommodation, and other services provide an important source of revenue to places of transit.[29] This suggests that transit cities could benefit from joining city-to-city and stakeholder initiatives and developing protection programs.

> Transit cities could benefit from joining city-to-city and stakeholder initiatives and developing protection programs

The participation of cities along the CMR in urban protection initiatives can be affected by issues of access. Some cities are more accessible than others not solely based on whether a city is a national capital. Here, access refers to how readily cities can find/be reached by partners physically, including from a safety/security perspective, and to the degree to which they receive administrative permission to engage in city diplomacy efforts and participate in dialogues, partnerships and other initiatives. Findings of the research point towards continuous efforts to engage with local authorities in Sudan, Libya and Egypt,

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28. While contextually characterised as locations of transit, some of these cities might also people on the move, such as is the case for Agadez, hosting third-country national refugees returning from Libya, and for Kassala, hosting Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees.

29. A. Hoffmann, J. Meester and H. Manou Nabara, *Migration and Markets in Agadez: Economic Alternatives to the Migration Industry*, Clingandael, 2017, available at: www.clingendael.org.

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as the absence of participating cities in these countries created gaps in initiatives' dialogues on migration and in the protection of refugees and migrants at local levels. Interviewed key informants noted this was primarily due to the high degree of political centralization in these countries, where asylum and migration are considered a national affair and where local authorities generally lack mandates to work on or engage in the topic. In contrast, during the time of research (2021-22), there was a notable representation and participation of Tunisian (and Moroccan) cities in many of the existing initiatives. Since the Tunisian process of decentralization has come to a halt under the new administration of President Kais Saied, the current status of city representation has likely changed.[30]

The study's findings indicate that while route-based approaches are certainly not the norm, several initiatives do link up cities with the aim of connecting mixed movement routes on a city level. However, it also pointed towards a concentration of such efforts around the Mediterranean, covering sections of the CMR between North Africa and Europe, and less connections with cities further south. Interviewed key informants from various initiatives noted that there has been a strong interest among key actors to apply the lessons learned of such dialogues, partnerships and other activities to other regions and farther along routes towards cities of origin and departure, for example, East Africa. A larger route-based dialogue could then potentially include elements in the dialogue on migration root causes, as well as advancing larger international norms around the concept of inclusive cities. At the same time, existing route-based initiatives seem to have largely been predetermined in scope by donor interests, which could indicate a bias towards more route-based initiatives around the Mediterranean.

> **The risks of conflict and violence have significantly increased for people on the move along the CMR from East and the Horn of Africa towards North Africa**

Furthermore, there are several initiatives that encompass cities along the CMR but which do not actively coordinate around mixed movements or the protection of people on the move with these routes in mind. Examples include the Cities Alliance (which has been involved in urban programming in Tunisia, Uganda, and Ethiopia, among others), and the Africa-Europe Mayors' Dialogue (with member cities including Tunis, Kampala and Entebbe, to name a few). Additionally, although some cities appear more connected to networks than others, and while many of these links are also still rather new and developing, the study's analysis does point to a wider interest for less-connected cities to join route-based initiatives that focus on the urban protection of refugees and migrants. In that sense, it is perceived as a key gap that North African cities are not (well) connected within initiatives with cities along different points in mixed movement routes, including in the East and the Horn of Africa. Since the time of conducting the research, it should however be noted that

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30. In 2023, the Tunisian central authorities dissolved local municipal councils. The councils were replaced by delegations with representatives directly falling under the supervision of the governorates.

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the risks of conflict and violence have significantly increased for people on the move along the CMR from East and the Horn of Africa towards North Africa. The currently ongoing civil war in Sudan has largely eroded the functioning of (local) authorities in place, and has caused largescale displacement from key transit cities connecting to the CMR, primarily including Khartoum, making conditions suboptimal for connecting cities through a route-based approach in the absence of peace. The regional consequences of the war are likely to be felt for years to come, with Sudan already having become the largest displacement context globally.[31]

What are the key challenges that cities need to overcome while implementing urban protection activities?

One of the difficulties encountered by many local authorities is an inadequate or absent legal framework that organizes and authorizes their intervention in, or governance of, mixed movements within their territory. In some countries, national authorities are the sole entity working or the sole entity entitled to work on mixed movements (including refugee and asylum issues). Local actors are not only absent or passive in this decision-making process,[32] but are also restricted in managing their local reality without relying on higher authorities. Although some countries have embarked on and implemented decentralization projects, the power of municipalities and cities often remains limited due to a lack of technical or financial resources or resistance from state structures.

As alluded to earlier, in Tunisia, political decentralization has advanced since the 2011 revolution with the recognition by the 2014 constitution of participatory local democracy and the election of municipal councils in May 2018. However, the mechanism for cooperation between central and local actors remained poorly defined, ultimately giving way to a reversal effect under the current government with the municipal councils being dissolved in 2023.[33] In Uganda, despite progressive refugee policies promoting refugee self-reliance, cities such as Arua are limited in their mandate as the existing framework is aimed at only targeting designated refugee settlements. With a national focus on refugees in refugee settlements only, Arua's capacity remains limited

> The power of municipalities and cities often remains limited due to a lack of technical or financial resources, or due to resistance from state structures

31. *One Year of Conflict in Sudan: Visualizing the World's Largest Displacement Crisis*, International Organization for Migration, April 15, 2024, available at: www.dtm.iom.int.

32. S. Angenendt, N. Biehler and F. Kipp, *Cities and Their Networks in EU-Africa Migration Policy. Are They Real Game Changers?*, *Research Paper* No. 8, German Institute for International and Security Affairs (SWP), 2021, available at: www.swp-berlin.org.

33. "Tunisian President to Dissolve Municipal Councils Months Before Local Elections", Reuters, March 9, 2023, available at: www.reuters.com.

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to work on the protection and inclusion of people on the move, also including asylum seekers and migrants.[34]

In Kenya, an existing encampment policy of refugees and asylum seekers also indicates an overall focus on refugee populations. While those in refugee camps may increasingly decide to leave and settle in urban areas, particularly Nairobi, most who do so automatically lose access to assistance and will have to be self-reliant. Therefore, while Nairobi continues to host a variety of people on the move from across the East Africa region, the existing focus on camp management minimizes the space for local (multi-stakeholder) initiatives to support vulnerable people on the move.[35] In fact, those who require support may be requested to go (back) to the camps. In general, a poorly defined mandate for local authorities or policies focusing on refugee encampments or designated refugee settlements only complicates the work of municipalities, which then lack guidelines to respond to refugee and migration issues.

Political change represents another challenge, especially for external actors working with cities through urban stakeholder initiatives. A key informant from an urban initiative explained that engagement and coordination efforts might vary widely depending on who

> ## Political change represents another challenge

is leading the migration agenda in a given municipality. Furthermore, inaction or a negative attitude towards migration in some parts of the city's municipal administration or population may impede project implementation as it can make decision-makers (who want to be re-elected) more reluctant to engage in urban protection activities. Due to a lack of clear legal mandates, increasing city diplomacy efforts on migration, for example through participating in city-to-city dialogues, often seems to depend on the willingness and interest of individuals at the local level.

A final challenge reported by several interviewed key informants remains a lack of financial and administrative resources. Across Africa, municipal budgets are generally constrained. They are intended to meet the basic needs of the local population, and in these contexts, refugee and migration issues are not always a high priority, with projects serving or including these populations typically relying on external funding streams.[36]

34. O. Akumu and E. Wachira, *4Mi Cities: Data Collection on Urban Mixed Migration – Arua City Report*, op. cit.
35. O. Akumu, *4Mi Cities: Data Collection on Urban Mixed Migration – Nairobi City Report*, op. cit.
36. Key informant interviews with local authority representatives.

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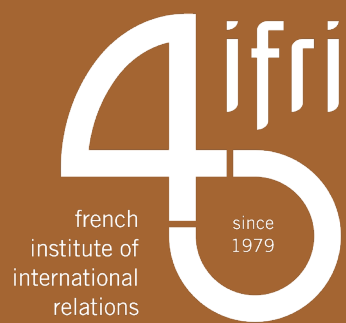
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