

## ReDSS RESEARCH TEAM 2020 WORKPLAN

In 2019, the ReDSS Ethiopia research team carried out a number of activities to support the development of a common research agenda for the implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) in the country. This included: the development of a research synthesis paper based on mapping existing literature; organising or contributing to a number of seminars and discussions in Addis Ababa and elsewhere; and strengthening informal coordination of the refugee research community. Over the course of the rest of 2020, the team intends to build on these foundations, focusing on the following activities designed to **increase the reach and accessibility of ongoing research, encourage discussion and debate amongst key stakeholders and stimulate innovation in this challenging period**. This plan has been developed with the inputs of a wide range of actors involved in working with refugees in Ethiopia.

In terms of the **substance of the work**, the team will seek to help refugee stakeholders establish how to retain the most important elements of the work and thinking undertaken under the auspices of the GCR, in the context of an international system reeling from COVID-19. The impacts of the virus on all parts of the system will be enormous, from reducing the mobility of populations under pressure, to straining supply chains and local economies, to shifting political dynamics, and putting pressure on overall funding. The next year is likely to be a challenging period from an operational perspective, and the research team hopes to offer both a space and the tools for implementers and policymakers to think and reflect on key policy questions and challenges. There appears to be demand for this on a wide range of subjects relating to the refugee programme, but the team will seek to focus in particular on the following research questions:

- How to develop a meaningful and relevant self-reliance agenda in Ethiopia, particularly in the face of likely regional and global economic shocks that result from the COVID-19 crisis?
- How should implementation of refugee policy in Ethiopia be organised and arranged to best meet the government's objectives around transitioning towards out of camp support?
- How can the promise of area-based planning and approaches be realised across the country, particularly given the wide variety of contexts in which the refugee response is delivered?
- How can the durable solutions on offer to refugees in Ethiopia be better tailored to their real interests, and how might the COVID-19 pandemic affect the realization of these solutions?
- How can the perspectives and intentions of refugees and hosting populations be made a more meaningful element of policy development and implementation, particularly as the context evolves?

The themes for these research questions have been identified through both the consultation process conducted with key stakeholders in Addis Ababa, and consideration of ReDSS's comparative advantage. Throughout the process, the team will continue to engage

with stakeholders, in particular the Government of Ethiopia, to ensure that we are aligned with their priorities.

The focus of the work will be on the following activities, with the order reflecting the overall balance of effort (i.e. the first activity will involve the most effort, the last the least):

**1. Facilitating a series of discussions designed to allow for both sharing and discussion of key research findings**

The ReDSS team will host a series of seminars on refugee-related research, focused on key elements of the research questions outlined above while also making the most of ongoing research programmes. While some of these events may be designed primarily to present and share research findings, the emphasis throughout will be on discussion and debate. Given the likely inability to host in-person discussions, the primary format will be virtual “round tables” with relatively small groups from across the community to enable views to be shared and discussed. For some discussions the topic may be specific thematic questions or pieces of research, for others a particular region. Plans will be shared widely in advance to allow for expressions of interest in participating to be made. This work will require close collaboration with a range of partners to ensure full diversity of views. Notes of discussions will be written up and shared more widely. It is expected that the series will begin in July, with events roughly every 6 weeks.

**2. Catalysing innovation around engaging refugees and refugee hosting populations**

There is a clear challenge in the ways that refugees and hosting populations are engaged in the policymaking processes that directly or indirectly matter to them. As the supposed beneficiaries of the refugee operation, this is not only morally wrong, but also creates significant operational challenges, particularly for those that seek to consult with them or research their views and conditions. Research fatigue has been widely reported by the refugee research community, and there are real risks of growing hostility, particularly if resources shrink further. Building on the aspirations expressed at the Global Refugee Forum for a far more meaningful role to be taken by the populations at the heart of the refugee operation, the research team will seek to help the community as a whole find new ways of working. They will seek to establish a small working group to take ideas and best practice emerging from elsewhere and seek to pilot or test new approaches in Ethiopia, so that lessons can be shared by the end of 2020. Innovation will be critical given the challenges of travel due to COVID, and the research team will seek to encourage the taking of risks that may not be possible within particular programmes. Work on this activity will begin in June and run until the end of the year.

**3. Producing short synthesis products on key thematic questions**

The research team has the capacity to produce up to three short thematic papers over the course of the year, and will identify topics based on our ongoing discussions with key stakeholders from across the refugee community. If possible, topics will be

aligned with priority issues being addressed in workstreams 1 and 2. The first paper will be produced by the end of August.

#### **4. Making research more accessible online**

In 2019 the ReDSS team carried out mapping of the existing literature and produced an online research spreadsheet that represents an important resource, but which is currently underused, partly because it is not as user friendly as it might be. The research team will develop this resource further to create a tool that can be more readily used by all stakeholders involved in the refugee operation. This activity is expected to be completed by the end of August.

#### **5. Engagement with the Ethiopian Network of Academics on Forced Displacement and other researchers working on refugees in the country**

In 2019 the ReDSS team started working with the Ethiopian Network of Academics on Forced Displacement (ENAFD), a network that is still establishing itself. This year, we plan to build on this and work closely with them to promote Ethiopian research, ownership and sustainability of our activities. We will also continue to work across the community of researchers working on refugee and displacement related issues in Ethiopia, to ensure their full participation in the process. This activity will run throughout the rest of the year.

**Next steps:** The research team will reach out to key partners before the end of June to discuss the details of this plan and agree specific activities, which we hope to design and carry out through collaborative efforts incorporating a wide range of actors.

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