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The legal and institutional framework of addressing female displaced persons' needs in Eastern Africa

(Abstract)

The African Union is currently facilitating a negotiation over a draft text of the first ever binding international instrument for the protection and assistance of IDPs. The Great lakes region has also adopted a separate protocol on internal displacement in 2006. Such initiatives come at a time when, owing partly to changes at the international level and to the humanitarian reform within the UN, an internationalisation of the issues of forced displacement is now a reality and organisations such as the UNHCR are operationally involved in assisting IDPs. Whilst reaction to this trend is often mixed, it has become clear that the process has failed to take into account the resilience and utility of regional approaches. The literature and policy guidelines on forced migration may well be faulted for ignoring the role of regional organisations in meeting the protection and assistance needs of IDPs. In Africa where a disproportionate number of IDPs are present, often in precarious conditions, strengthening these regional and sub-regional mechanisms is imperative. This paper traces the normative and institutional evolution of regional response to forced displacement in Africa, and see how they are taking into account the peculiar needs and entitlements of women displaced persons.