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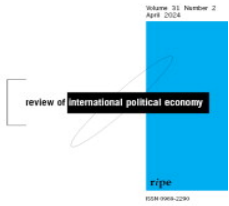
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Dispossession, social reproduction and the feminization of refugee survival: Ethiopian refugees in Nairobi, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This paper theorizes the gendered consequences of refugee dispossession for social reproduction, focusing on Ethiopian refugees in Nairobi, Kenya. We analyze the Kenyan refugee regime as structured by colonial legacies of racialization and by neo-colonial global political economy strategies of managing 'surplus' populations. We demonstrate that refugees' ongoing experiences of interpersonal and structural violence constitutes an attack on their capacity for social reproduction and argue the 'feminization of refugee survival' is an important gendered consequence. We identify two transnational displacements that produce a new form of racialized enclosure and the alienation of refugees from the means of social reproduction. The first transnational displacement occurs due to their dispossession from support infrastructure for social reproduction in their origin country, and in the host country. A second, invisible but racialized transnational displacement is the refusal of global North countries to take on the anticipated welfare costs of refugee social reproduction. Transformative and re-generative approaches to refugee social reproduction would need to address both forms of displacement. The paper thus urges IPE scholarship to recognize that the crisis of refugee social reproduction is not only produced by global capitalist regimes, but also deeply structured by gendered, racialized, and colonial hierarchies of inequality.

KEYWORDS

Refugee; social reproduction; Ethiopia; Kenya; dispossession; gender

Introduction

The global refugee regime treats refugees as unwanted and abject people who are consigned to precarious existence in often hostile contexts of protracted displacement. Despite this, many refugees *do* survive and (re-)make life in the margins of their dispossession. Drawing on empirical research in Nairobi, this paper analyzes how the refugee regime in Kenya produces an ongoing and gendered state of precarity for Ethiopian refugees that deepens the original dispossession they faced

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when they fled Ethiopia. Foregrounding the implications of this precarity for refugees' capacity for social reproduction, we analyze how they care for themselves and their families and sustain relationships as a community under violent and hostile conditions of displacement. Our empirical focus on Ethiopian refugees in Kenya enables us to investigate the social reproduction of people who have been in protracted displacement for a decade or more in Kenya, as well as of more recent arrivals. We offer a feminist analysis that illuminates the conditions of refugee survival and theorizes the implications of refugee social reproduction for the political economy of the global refugee regime.

The significance of our analysis for international political economy (IPE) more broadly is to theorize the crisis in refugee social reproduction as not only produced by global capitalist regimes, but also as deeply structured by gendered, racialized, and colonial hierarchies of inequality. Our analysis also seeks to fortify the conversations between IPE and refugee/forced migration studies. We make our contributions at the interstices of three key IPE concerns: First, through our focus on refugee social reproduction, we address a 'blind spot' (LeBaron et al., 2021) in IPE scholarship on refugees, which largely theorizes refugees as racialized 'disposable' or 'surplus' populations whose productive labor is expropriated by global capitalist regimes (Rajaram, 2018; Tyner, 2013). Joining recent analyses that focus on refugees' social reproductive labor as an essential complement to their productive labor and an invisibilized subsidy to capitalist regimes (Bhagat, 2023; Frydenlund, 2020), this paper extends the IPE refugee scholarship beyond the focus on disposable surplus populations. Second, while we situate our work within the resurgent feminist IPE interest in social reproduction (Bhattacharya, 2017; LeBaron et al., 2021; Mezzadri et al., 2022; Steans & Tepe, 2010), we note there is limited feminist analysis of refugee dispossession and social reproduction (Canefe, 2018; Frydenlund, 2020; Hyndman & Giles, 2011). Aiming to address this gap, our contribution argues that ongoing violent dispossession structures the social reproduction of refugees and produces what we call the 'feminization of refugee survival'. Third, our analysis addresses Bhambra's (2021) call for an IPE that acknowledges how colonial/neocolonial processes of forcible dispossession, enslavement, extraction and exploitation were/are formative of contemporary capitalism. Aligning with Bhambra in this standpoint allows us to foreground 'border imperialism' as the 'the mass displacement of impoverished and colonized communities resulting from asymmetrical relations of global power' (Walia, 2013, p. 20), and to analyze the racialized dimensions of refugee dispossession and social reproduction. As such, an investigation of Ethiopian refugees in Kenya is particularly generative, as we can trace how the refugee regime in Kenya is structured by colonial legacies of conflict, border regimes, racialization and categorization that are intimately entangled with neo-colonial strategies of managing 'surplus' populations.

The paper proceeds in the following stages: The next section sets out the theoretical, empirical, and methodological contexts of the research. In our synoptic review of the theoretical context, we outline the inter-connections between the feminist IPE literatures on refugee dispossession and social reproduction and identify the frameworks we use. Next, we provide an historically situated analysis of the Kenyan refugee regime and argue that there are important continuities between the colonial and postcolonial strategies of managing refugee populations. We then outline the research context, methodology and methods. In the third, fourth and fifth

sections, we use Elias and Rai's (2019) space, time and violence framework of social reproduction as a lens through which we analyze the everyday social reproduction of Ethiopian refugees in Nairobi. The sixth section concludes with reflections on the implications of our analysis for a feminist IPE of refugee social reproduction.

Setting the contexts

Theoretical contexts: social reproduction, dispossession and refugees

Within Marxist frameworks, the concepts of social reproduction and dispossession are each intrinsically tied to capitalist accumulation. Social reproduction is the daily and generational renewal of human life that is the essential but invisible subsidy to capitalist accumulation (Bakker, 2007; Edholm et al., 1978; Federici, 2004), while dispossession entails violent acts of expulsion, extra-economic coercion and displacement through which productive resources are captured for primitive accumulation (Bush et al., 2011; Harvey, 2003). Through a synoptic review in this section, we argue that while both these concepts are crucial to an IPE understanding of refugees, they are too infrequently considered in such analyses, either singly or together.

Social reproduction is a relatively marginalized (LeBaron et al., 2021) but nevertheless 'compelling prism in IPE studies' (Mezzadri et al., 2022), with scholars undertaking research in diverse domains at both micro and macro scales. Defined across three intersecting domains, social reproduction is commonly understood as biological reproduction, the reproduction of the labor force and the daily provisioning of care needs (Bakker, 2007, p. 541). The original core feminist insight recognizes how the sphere of social reproduction (largely women's unpaid/under-paid labor) provides an invisibilized subsidy to capitalist production, generating and maintaining gender inequalities (Bakker, 2007; Edholm et al., 1978; Federici, 2004). IPE scholarship on social reproduction since the 1990s has examined how capitalist globalization led to the restructuring of the state and market contributions to social reproduction and the concomitant 'crisis of care' this generated in the post-industrial economies of Europe and North America (Bakker & Gill, 2003, 2019; Fraser, 2017; Steans & Tepe, 2010), but also in the global South (Mezzadri et al., 2022).

Deepening the conceptual tools of social reproduction in new directions that provide a useful framework for our study, Elias and Rai (2019) propose a tri-partite theorization of space, time and gendered structural violence as co-constitutive of everyday social reproduction, and importantly, as inseparably entangled. They articulate 'space' as the emplacement of social reproduction in a gendered terrain 'whose boundaries are fluid and relational', cutting across public and private domains (2019, p. 207). Analysis of 'space' entails consideration of the household, community and public spaces, as well as the gendering of mobilities through, and agency within, these spaces. 'Time' engages the temporal rhythms of social reproduction. They draw on Bryson's concept of the 'gendered politics of time' noting "who gets what when and how" involves access to disposable time as well as other scarce resources' (Bryson, 2007, cited in Elias & Rai, p. 212). They also point to an area of future exploration pertinent to our study: The 'imposition of "dead time"—the queues, waits, and spells in immigration detention that mark the fate of those

fleeing war and structural violence' (Elias & Rai, 2019, p. 214). In the third axis of 'structural violence' Elias and Rai attend to gender-based violence during wars and in peacetime, but importantly also 'examine the structural violence of non-recognition and its consequent harms' (ibid, p. 216). The harms produced by the gendered violence of everyday life is brought into further focus through the concept of 'depletion of social reproduction' (DSR), that is, 'the devaluation or nonrecognition of social reproduction, including unpaid care labor, [which] leads to the depletion of the wellbeing of individual women, households, and communities' (Rai et al., 2019, p. 564).

Turning now to dispossession, we note that Marx's original conceptualization of dispossession as violent acts of expulsion that facilitate primitive accumulation has been extended by contemporary Marxist scholars to incorporate the multiple new methods of extra-economic coercion and displacement through which productive resources continue to be captured under capitalism (Bush et al., 2011; Glassman, 2006; Harvey, 2003). Feminist scholars critique Marx and Marxists for failing to recognize the centrality of social reproduction to accounts of dispossession and have drawn attention to how dispossession and primitive accumulation '*is not gender neutral but is built on the backs of women*' (Hartsock, 2006, p. 187; see also Federici, 2004). Maria Mies (1986) offered an early, powerful analysis of how the expropriation of women's social reproductive labor is an ongoing form of primitive accumulation foundational to capitalism. In a similar vein, radical Marxist feminist Silvia Federici asserts that primitive accumulation was historically contingent on the violent disciplining of women through witch hunts and the expropriation of their reproductive labor (Federici, 2004). Empirical gendered analyses of the consequences of dispossession observe that women often experience a loss of access to the commons which affects their subsistence and survival, experience an increase in gender-based violence, and an increase in unpaid, reproductive labor (Levien, 2015; White & White, 2012).

The well-developed feminist and gendered analyses of social reproduction and dispossession briefly discussed above have, however, largely excluded analyses of refugees, with a few notable exceptions. An early and excellent gendered analysis of refugee social reproduction is Daley's in-depth study of Burundian refugees in Tanzania in the 1980s (Daley, 1991). She identified how, although Burundian refugee women were relatively marginalized, both men and women were integrated as rural peasantry and subjected to the same crises of social reproduction facing the Tanzanian peasantry. Key to this integration was that Burundian families moved together in wider kinship networks, were allocated land by the Tanzanian government and given seeds and tools to cultivate. However, since violent dispossession is almost axiomatically a condition of 'becoming a refugee' in most parts of the world today and the treatment of refugees in host countries is often more hostile, the implications of violence for contemporary refugee social reproduction merit closer consideration.

Recent empirical studies recognize how the liminal status of 'non-citizen' refugees and asylum in hostile contexts is fundamental to their unprotected, ongoing exposure to violence, their marginalized position in labor markets, and their relative lack of entitlements to social provisioning. Focusing on labor marginalization, Canefe's (2018) study of Syrian women refugees in Turkey observes how their precarious status at the bottom of the labor market traps them into unpaid or poorly paid forced labor and

sexual servitude. Similarly, Bhagat's (2020) illuminating study of refugees in Kenya situates refugee 'disposability' within the context of Kenyan neoliberal responses to urban poverty and argues that their marginalized status prevents them from effectively translating their body power into valorized, productive labor. Not only are refugees in Kenya a pauperized population that provides a source of cheap, exploitable labor, importantly, they lack political influence or public voice to change their subjugated status. Bhagat's understanding of refugee 'disposability' in Kenya is foundational to our own analysis, but we argue that it is vital to complement the analysis of productive labor with an analysis of social reproduction—i.e. an examination of how refugees *do* survive despite their 'disposability'.

Centering the analysis more squarely on social reproduction, Bhagat's (2023) recent study offers valuable insights into how queer refugees' survival in Nairobi, South Africa and Paris is impacted by intense homophobic and transphobic violence and 'organised abandonment' as they attempt to access shelter, welfare and employment upon relocation. Other studies focused explicitly on refugee social reproduction show how the precarious conditions refugee women are forced into significantly impacts their capacity to care for their children (Cochrane, 2020; Frydenlund, 2020).

Drawing from the preceding discussion, we identify two primary theoretical frames for our paper. First, we use Elias and Rai (2019) conceptualization of space/time/violence (STV) to structure our analysis of the everyday social reproduction of refugees. Importantly, this allows us to offer an analysis of refugee social reproduction that centers the multiple forms of violence refugees experience. Second, we offer a transnational framing of refugee social reproduction within a racialized global capitalist system that not only regulates national policies on the differential mobility and welfare of citizens/non-citizens, but also drives worldwide accumulation and dispossession. In doing so, we avoid the methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2003) that largely persists in extant analyses of refugee social reproduction and follow scholars who point to the importance of considering the imprint of racism, colonialism, and neo-imperialism in IPE (Bhambra, 2021;; Danewid 2022; Walia, 2013).

Empirical context: the refugee regime in Kenya and Ethiopian refugees

Kenya's history as a refugee-hosting country can be traced to the colonial period, when the forced displacement of African populations was an inevitable corollary of colonial incursions in the region. Ethiopians fleeing the Italian invasion in 1936 were amongst the earliest refugees in Kenya; they were reluctantly allowed to camp at Isiolo by the British colonial state (Sequeira, 1939; Shadle, 2019). Forced displacement was also central to the extractive strategies of settler-colonial states such as Kenya, where valuable land was commandeered for white settlers, and the dispossessed were managed through ethno-racialized classifications of people as more or less 'desirable' categories of labor, as people fled forced labor regimes in the region or moved voluntarily between colonial states to seek work (Brankamp & Daley, 2020, p. 116–8).

In postcolonial Africa, the imposition of state borders across populations that shared ethnic and kinship ties was also a crucial legacy of the colonial period

(Asiwaju, 1985). Since the postcolonial state had limited surveillance capacity, borders did not prevent the everyday mobilities of people across them, but identities such as gender, age, class, ethnicity, nationality, and citizenship status produce a differential permeability of African borders (Mechlinski, 2010). Postcolonial African states such as Kenya not only accepted the borders carved out by colonial powers and the ambiguous identification of the populations within these borders as citizens 'belonging' to the newly constituted nation-state, they also largely continued to enforce ethno-racialized categories of mobility and colonial modes of managing and ordering non-citizens hierarchically (Brankamp & Daley, 2020, p. 114).

We discuss later how these colonial legacies later became entrenched in the Kenyan state's approach to refugees, however it is worth noting that in the initial decade post-independence, Kenya favored local integration, and refugees exercised freedoms almost on par with Kenyan citizens. For instance, Ugandans who sought refuge in Kenya in the 1970s were able to work, settle and move freely throughout the country and had access to educational opportunities since Kenya viewed them as an investment in the country's economy (Abuya, 2007; Campbell et al., 2011; O'Callaghan et al., 2019).

From the 1990s, there was a drastic shift in the Kenyan refugee regime towards the encampment of refugees and restrictions on their mobility and entitlements. This shift was in response to the massive influx of refugees fleeing conflict and insecurity in neighboring Somalia, Sudan, Ethiopia, and the Great Lakes region (Abuya, 2007; Veney, 2007). During this period, the brutally repressive Derg regime led thousands to flee Ethiopia between 1974–1990s, and by 1992 Ethiopian refugees numbered almost 70,000 in Kenya (Abuya, 2007). Although there was a steady outflow in subsequent decades, the numbers declined, and by 2022, Ethiopians were a relatively small percentage of registered refugees (4.3% or 21,066 people) and asylum seekers (16.4% or 10,433 people) in Kenya (UNHCR, 2022). The recent and ongoing escalation of conflict in Ethiopia since late 2020 has led more than 68,500 Ethiopians to flee the country and seek asylum in neighboring countries (UNHCR, 2022). Most refugees from Ethiopia are hosted primarily in Kakuma camp, in the north-west of Kenya close to the border with southern Sudan.

Note, though, that what is usually occluded from analyses of the refugee encampment regime is the neo-colonial 'competition between foreign powers for influence and local actors' exploitation of such rivalries [that] have favored the persistence of endemic political instability in the Horn of Africa' (Ylönen, 2023), which resulted in such large flows of refugees to Kenya, and within the region. These flows continue, and as of June 2022, there were 555,183 people registered as refugees or asylum seekers in Kenya, 84% housed in camps (UNHCR, 2022).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) took on the primary role in the management of the welfare of the encamped refugee population as a 'surrogate state', since the Kenyan government largely abdicated responsibility for the refugee population while simultaneously using them to seek greater donor aid (Deardorff-Miller, 2018). In part, this abdication by the Kenyan government was due to structural adjustment policies imposed on Kenya in the 1990s that constrained the economic resources it had available for public expenditure, in addition to the concurrent democratization processes that politicized ethnic identity, citizenship and nationality, heightening hostility towards refugees (Veney, 2007, p. 64).

The next major shift in the Kenyan refugee regime towards increased securitization and restrictions occurred in the aftermath of the Al-Shabab attacks at a mall in Nairobi in 2013, and at Garissa University in 2015. Somali refugees faced a surge in anti-refugee sentiment from the wider Kenyan population. The Kenyan government announced the dismantling of the Dadaab camp, and an ongoing program of ‘voluntary’ repatriation of Somalis commenced, which significantly reduced the numbers in that camp.

Since 2016 the Kenyan refugee regime engaged with an experimental new initiative towards ‘local integration’ through the establishment of a settlement at Kalobeyei, designed along less restrictive principles than the camps, and offering refugees opportunities for ‘self-reliance’ (Betts et al., 2020; Easton-Calabria, 2022). Defined loosely as ‘the ability to live independently from humanitarian assistance’ (Easton-Calabria, 2022, p. 6), refugee ‘self-reliance’ is presented as a way for refugees to regain dignity through livelihoods and entrepreneurship. The entitlements are nevertheless limited and can be viewed as a technocratic, neoliberal governmental discourse that ‘responsibilizes’ marginalized people for their own self-improvement. While those in camps are now being ‘made self-reliant’, we note that refugees outside camps—usually in Nairobi—are already forced to be ‘self-reliant’. As Bhagat (2020) argues, they are adversely incorporated into the urban economy, providing urban Kenyans with cheap labor and opportunities for extraction of rents.

Kenya’s recently enacted Refugee Act (2021) appeared to signal a return to the policy of refugee integration by allowing refugees in camps and in urban areas to engage in gainful employment or practice a trade. However, closer scrutiny reveals that the policy provisions are applicable only to refugees from East African Community nations, and excludes refugees from Somalia, South Sudan and Ethiopia—or 60% of refugees in Kenya (Leghtas & Kitege, 2022).

Notwithstanding the recent shifts to refugee self-reliance and economic integration, the enduring infrastructure of the refugee regime in Kenya continues to be constituted through the trace legacies of the colonial period and must also be situated within a global capitalist political economy; we turn now to discuss four defining features of this regime. First, despite the initiatives towards ‘local integration’ (both recently and in the 1970s), there are no pathways available for refugees to secure Kenyan citizenship. Although the 2010 Kenyan constitution has no restrictions on refugee access to citizenship, this is practically impossible for most refugees in Kenya (Campbell et al., 2011; Lindley, 2011). The Kenyan refugee regime naturalizes an exclusionary, ethno-racialized and sedentary understanding of ‘citizens’ in opposition to ‘non-citizens’ (who may be refugees, asylum seekers, authorized or unauthorized migrants). Of course, this understanding is a normative assumption of the international states system, but it reflects a ‘border imperialism’ (Walia, 2013) that is at odds with African notions of belonging that are founded on shared kinship, ethnicity, language, and mobility across state borders. For instance, many Ethiopian refugees in Kenya are Borena Oromo of the Cushitic peoples who straddle the colonially imposed borders across southern Ethiopia and north Kenya; similarly, the Somali people share culture, identity, and language across the borders of Kenya, Somalia, and Ethiopia. However, Oromo and Somali refugees are excluded from the body politic of the postcolonial Kenyan nation-state.

Second, the colonial legacy of hierarchies of classification is evident in the elaborate system of registration and documentation of refugees in Kenya. In alignment with UNHCR frameworks, Kenya enacted the Refugee Act (2006) which recognizes two categories of refugees: *Prima facie* and statutory refugees. *Prima facie* refugees are those who belong to specific groups nominated as needing protection, whereas statutory refugees need to go through individual refugee status determination (RSD), a process undertaken by the government of Kenya's Refugee Affairs Secretariat, with the support of UNHCR. Further sub-categories of documentation include Proof of Registration, Asylum seekers pass, Refugee Minors pass, waiting slip, and finally, a Refugee identity card.¹ The Refugee identity card (commonly called a refugee mandate) indicates that the holder is deemed 'worthy' of UN protection and support and is awaiting resettlement in a third country. Those in possession of one of the other types of documentation are less valued, more precariously situated, and vulnerable to harassment. Outside this system are those who have no registration documents at all (including those whose applications for asylum were rejected in the RSD process), and they are therefore considered 'undesirable' unauthorized migrants. Further documentary requirements constrain refugee mobility, as they must apply for special permits to live or even travel outside of camps. These permits are issued only for limited reasons such as medical treatment, higher education, resettlement interviews or to escape major security threats in the camp (Campbell, 2006).

Fourth, a consequence of the encampment regime in Kenya is that refugees in urban areas have largely fallen through the cracks of the humanitarian aid system, notwithstanding the UNHCR *Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas* of 2009 which acknowledges the necessity of responding to the needs of this population. According to UNHCR data in June 2022, 15.8% (87,730) of registered refugees and asylum seekers live in urban areas (UNHCR, 2022), however, this figure excludes people who have not registered with UNHCR or whose applications have been rejected, but who continue to live in Kenya as 'unauthorized' migrants. The number of such people is uncertain because they are scattered and rarely come forward due to fear of getting caught by the police and fear of being expelled. Urban refugees in Kenya are a 'largely "invisible" population, despite their significant need for protection and other support mechanisms' (Pavanello et al., 2010, p. 7). They tend to bypass or leave camps in Kenya for various reasons including security issues, limited livelihood opportunities in camps, lack of access to education and medical facilities as well as their own urban upbringing in their country of origin (Campbell, 2006). However, they are often in a vulnerable position, encounter discrimination and harassment, live in conditions of poverty in overcrowded, inadequate housing, and face difficulties in access to employment, health, and education (Campbell et al., 2011).

Research context: methodology and methods

Positioned at the intersection of feminist IPE approaches to social reproduction and dispossession, and the understanding of the Kenyan refugee regime as a modality to contain 'surplus' populations, this paper focuses on the care needs and social reproduction of Ethiopian refugees living in Nairobi, Kenya. While this focus

on urban refugees responds to the observation noted above that they are an ‘invisible’ population, a methodological caveat, of course, is that the analysis would necessarily be different compared to Ethiopian refugees encamped at Kakuma. The study is a component of a larger, multi-country research project investigating the care needs and social reproduction of Ethiopian refugees and migrants. Methodologically, the analysis of social reproduction focusses on Ethiopian refugees’ needs for, and access to, support services in health care, childbirth, childcare and education, while recognizing the limitation that other aspects of social reproduction are not considered.

The first author conducted 32 in-depth semi-structured qualitative interviews, 28 with Ethiopians living in Nairobi, Kenya in 2017 (see Table 1 for participant summary). The group included 12 women and 16 men. Five of the respondents had no children, the others all had between one to 18 children. The majority of those interviewed were Oromo, while the others were a mix of Amhara, Wolayt and Konso ethnicities. Sixteen respondents did not have a refugee mandate from the UNHCR, while 12 had mandates. An additional four interviews were conducted with representatives of international and Kenyan NGOs working to support refugees in Nairobi; these interviews along with a review of extant research and reports served as triangulation for the study. To protect the confidentiality of respondents, the names of Ethiopian participants are pseudonyms, and the NGO representatives are referred to by number (NGO informant 1, 2, 3, 4).

Table 1. Summary of Ethiopian participants.

Pseudonym	Status (with UNHCR mandate)	Gender	Age range	Number of years in Kenya	Marital status	Number of Children	Ethnicity (Oromo, Amhara, Tigray, Other)
Halima	No	Female	40–49	14	Married	2	Oromo
Abadan	No	Female	17	1.5	Unmarried	1	Oromo
Abdii	No	Male	40–49	3	Unmarried	1	Oromo
Booni	Yes	Female	20–29	5	Married	0	Oromo
Dansitu	Yes	Female	30–39	9	Widow	3	Oromo
Feenet	No	Female	30–39	15	Married	4	Oromo
Hawwani	Yes	Female	70–79	18	Married	11	Oromo
Beekan	No	Male	40–49	12	Married	3	Oromo
Daga	No	Male	60–69	5	Married	11	Oromo
Munira	No	Female	40–49	10	Widow	5	Amhara
Jaalatani	No	Female	20–29	6	Unmarried	0	Oromo
Tolessa	Yes	Male	30–39	8	Unmarried	0	Oromo
Dhugaa	Yes	Male	30–39	9	Married	2	Oromo
Elemo	Yes	Male	40–49	16	Married	4	Oromo
Faayame	No	Male	30–39	3 months	Married	1	Oromo
Getachew	Yes	Male	50–59	19	Married	1	Amhara
Berhane	No	Female	30–39	6	Married	1	Amhara
Tigist	No	Female	20–29	4	Unmarried	2	Wolayta
Jeyna	No	Male	30–39	1 month	Married	2	Oromo
Henock	No	Male	30–39	2	Married	0	Wolayta
Sifile	No	Female	30–39	1	Married	2	Oromo
Hamilan	Yes	Male	30–39	17	Married	1	Oromo
Naadura	Yes	Female	30–39	17	Married	2	Oromo
Kassahun	No	Male	50–59	15	Married	2	Amhara
Leenca	Yes	Male	30–39	12	Unmarried	0	Oromo
Mebratu	No	Male	40–49	2	Married	5	Ethiopian Konso
Melbaa	Yes	Male	40–49	17	Married	7	Oromo
Negasu	Yes	Male	50–59	24	Divorced	1	Oromo

Research Ethics clearance was obtained from the University of Melbourne Human Research Ethics Committee. The first author conducted semi-structured interviews, with the assistance of an interpreter in the Ethiopian languages of Oromiffa and Amharic. The author's positionality vis-à-vis participants was as an 'outsider' in that she is not Ethiopian nor Kenyan. Her prior research in Ethiopian contexts and familiarity with Amharic was, however, helpful in reaching out to potential participants. She recruited a purposive sample of respondents willing to participate in interviews from the Eastleigh neighborhood of Nairobi with the help of an Ethiopian research assistant and community leaders. The sample took into consideration gender, age, ethnicity, disability, refugee status and duration in Kenya. Interviews were held either in the participant's home or at a public place. Prior to interviews, participants were oriented to the study, provided with a plain language statement in their language, and requested to confirm their consent, either verbally or in writing. Interviews were audio recorded with consent and lasted between 45–90 min. Interviews inquired into respondents' experiences of becoming and being a refugee, their livelihoods, their care needs, and access to formal and informal care support. The privileged positionality of the first author vis-à-vis the interviewees is important to acknowledge here, particularly as the interviews often narrate violent and painful accounts of their experiences. Our use of refugee narratives of trauma runs the risk of mobilizing the trope of the 'suffering stranger' (Butt, 2002) to validate larger theoretical claims, we hope to avoid this by following Butt's carefully nuanced suggestion that critical humanitarian scholarship must steer clear of claims to provide a 'voice' for interlocutors, but must also avoid indifference and/or silent complicity with the repressive logics of existing humanitarian interventions.

Spaces of everyday social reproduction for Ethiopian refugees

Our empirical focus is on the experiences of Ethiopian refugees in the urban space of Nairobi, which is distinctly different from the space of refugee camps such as Kakuma. Following Elias and Rai (2019) articulation of 'space' as a complex of gendered relationships across public and private spaces, here we analyze the overlapping spaces inhabited by Ethiopian refugees: First, we describe their experiences of the space of the Kenyan refugee regime (collectively shaped by the UNHCR, the Kenyan state, and NGOs and private providers of care services to refugees) in Nairobi; second, we outline support refugees receive within community spaces.

Spaces of the Kenyan refugee regime

Fragmented support for refugee social reproduction was available through the Kenyan refugee regime, however, refugees usually had to rely on market-based services. We outline below refugee experiences in meeting needs for health care, childbirth and care, and access to education.

In principle, access to free or subsidized health care services at Kenyan government hospitals is available to refugee mandate holders. Although the health care card allowed a few respondents to access basic health care, since government clinics and hospitals are over-crowded and offer what may be considered sub-standard

services, a few mandate holders with health cards preferred to pay for private treatment if they could afford it. Others reported difficulties: As Kassahun observed, not all government health centers accepted the health card, and as Dhugaa recounted, his card did not have credit:

At least three times I went to the hospital with my children with this card, but they told me that there is nothing in my account, so I had to borrow money and pay. What is the use of having a card if it cannot be used? (Dhugaa)

Access to even this limited public health care was not an option for those who did not have mandates, as they usually did not have the money to pay for private treatment. Another man, Beekan, observed the futility of even approaching a local health NGO when his wife was ill, as they asked him to produce a medical diagnostic report. He could not afford to get the report from the hospital, as it cost around KES 2,000, so they were unable to access any help from the NGO.

The struggle to access health care in the absence of a mandate was most acute for those who had disabilities or chronic illnesses. Abdii, who had been blinded by the torture he experienced, needed a walking cane, but even after three years in Nairobi, he had been unable to get support from any NGO for a cane. Similarly, Berhane who had a chronic and severe gynecological problem was unable to work and unable to get the medical help she needed, as she said:

One thing is that I don't have the strength; I didn't get good medication till now and I have been struggling. I tried to work in one house for three months [as a domestic worker] but I couldn't proceed because of my health... I became dependent on other people (Berhane).

The lack of funds to pay for health care meant that those without a mandate would leave illnesses untreated, or they would self-diagnose and self-medicate or use traditional remedies.

Turning to refugee experiences of child-birth and childcare, the Ethiopian women who did become pregnant and gave birth while in Nairobi all spoke of challenging experiences at the hospitals. One woman, Feenet, said that she was mistreated at a government hospital during childbirth, and her newborn child passed away due to that. After this experience, she chose to deliver her next child at a private hospital even though it was expensive. Another woman, Abadan, was unable to be admitted to a government hospital for her delivery because the doctors were on strike at the time. Since she did not have money to pay the private hospital, she was not allowed to leave. She stayed in the hospital for a week until the couple with whom she lived had collected donations from other Ethiopians to pay the hospital fees of KES² 23,600. Post-natal care was also often out of reach; for instance, Elemo spoke of how his wife had severe pain and illness following the delivery of their twins, but they were unable to afford the private health care required for ongoing treatment.

Those with children often faced additional responsibilities and costs in caring for them, and in some instances were forced into difficult choices. Berhane spoke of having had to leave her 1-year-old son with a neighbor, because she couldn't take him with her when she fled Ethiopia. She was plagued by worry and guilt for having abandoned her child:

I always miss my son; I have been suffering a lot... I think about him very much and am very worried about him. I also heard that my child was not in a good condition. It is difficult to have trust in people and give away a child, but the situation was bad (Berhane).

In a few instances, children were abandoned by parents after they reached Nairobi. Jaalatani had fled Ethiopia with her father as a teenager, but after registering their cases with the UNHCR, he had left to find work and had not returned after that. She had initially found shelter with a family, but when they left Kenya, she went to the local mosque, crying, and seeking help. A man she met there offered to provide her with accommodation and food, and in exchange she cooked and cleaned for him. Tigist was raising a 9-year-old girl left behind by her mother who had travelled to South Africa. The mother asked Tigist to look after her daughter as she did not intend to return.

Responsibility for the care of children seemed to be primarily borne by women or young girls. Informal day care was locally available, for those who could pay. Tigist would leave her one-year-old son with a Kenyan woman who ran a daycare. The cost was KES 50 per day, excluding the cost of baby food and diapers. This allowed Tigist to undertake paid domestic work. Women who could not afford to pay for day care had to carry their infants with them when they went to work as street vendors, domestic workers, or restaurant workers. For instance, Feenet would carry her child strapped to her back when she sold coffee on the streets of Eastleigh. Sometimes older girls were made responsible for the care of infants and toddlers while women went to work. At the time of the interview, Tigist's two and a half-year-old son was looked after by the 9-year-old girl she had informally 'adopted'. Similarly, when Abadan did domestic work for the family she stayed with, her infant was looked after by a young girl who did not attend school. Since they could not afford day care, a few women spoke of leaving young children alone in the house while they went to work, or to attend UNHCR appointments.

Access to education was free for the children of parents with mandates. However, as Melbaa and Elemo observed, although government schools are free, the additional costs for food, security and other services meant that they could not afford to send all their children to school. The UNHCR stipend covered the cost for three of Melbaa's children to attend school, but his other four children attended the local Madrasa because he could not afford to send all of them to school. The higher fees for high school made it even more unaffordable, and many children dropped out at this stage.

Single mothers found it extremely difficult to afford school fees for their children (Halima, Dansitu, Tigist). Halima said that her two daughters had to drop out of school when she faced financial problems. Halima's severe physical disability and lack of mandate meant she could not find work, and she and her daughters were dependent on the support of another Oromo Muslim family. Her daughters did household work for the family, in exchange for shelter and food: 'My children work for that family to fetch water, wash clothes, look after the children, cook food, and take them to school. That family has two children... Last night my children went to fetch water and I have waited for them until 2 am as I am their mother'.

NGO support was limited in scope primarily because they could only provide services to those with mandates, and even then, this assistance was limited by the funds they had. For instance, NGO informant 4 noted that the NGO she worked

for was one of the four refugee support organizations that worked in collaboration with the UNHCR to maximize the allocation of resources and ensure that referrals are not duplicated. However, this NGO could only support the needs of 2,000 people per year, and this support was limited to three months only, since they had limited funding. She noted further that since the Syrian refugee crisis, funding for the Kenyan branch had been reduced by 15%. Another NGO representative noted that although many refugees have experienced violence and trauma, only a very small number of organizations provided limited in-house therapy and psychosocial support services. Since accessing counselling services in Kenya is expensive, there is consequently a large unmet need for psychosocial support amongst refugees.

NGO support for refugee women survivors of gender-based violence was also limited, for two reasons. First, most Kenyan organizations working with survivors of violence (rape, domestic abuse) do not extend services or support to refugees without a mandate. Moreover, as an NGO informant noted, government hospitals will not provide a medical examination and report for undocumented women who are survivors of rape. Second, in a system that one NGO informant called 'pick your label', practices around the assigning of category labels seemed to be mutually exclusive. That is, if a woman was registered as a survivor of 'trafficking', she would not be able to also be registered as a refugee and get support from the UNHCR. At the time of registering their applications, women often do not understand the longer-term implications attached to a categorization label.

Community spaces

A range of supportive practices were strikingly evident in the space of the Ethiopian community, often provided within religious or ethnic groups, most notably among Oromos. The immediate support new arrivals in Nairobi needed was accommodation, which they secured in different ways. Some interviewees (Abdii, Booni, Hawwani, Tigist) secured temporary shelter with relatives or acquaintances from their village until they were able to find work and accommodation. Other respondents were directed on arrival to the mosque in Eastleigh (Dansitu, Booni, Melbaa) or the Ethiopian church (Berhane). Tolessa, a Sheik affiliated with the mosque explained that the Oromo committee based at the mosque was active in raising funds to help new arrivals find shelter and get settled. Several respondents who had no previous contacts in the city recounted how they had been offered shelter by complete strangers (Halima, Abadan, Booni, Feenet, Beekan, Jaalatani, Elemo).

Cash and food contributions were the next important type of support community members provided when they saw a co-ethnic person in need, particularly if the person was perceived as vulnerable. Halima, Abdii and Beekan said they were supported by members of the community who provided them with rations and or money. The community also raised funds to help to pay off police bribes and release people who had been detained, and to help pay major medical bills. For example, Berhane recounted how she had been supported during her severe gynecological illness by a woman from the church and other people who had contributed towards her rent and provided her with some furniture. Similarly, due to his blindness, Abdi was wholly reliant on the assistance of community members for mobility and survival:

I cannot support myself. Oromos are supporting me; some are ignoring me because of my disability and others are supporting me. I cannot go to the NGOs because the UN didn't give me a mandate. They [the NGOs] told me that they can't support me unless I have a mandate (Abdi).

Community members also provided support in crisis situations: Elemo spoke of how he had been hospitalized for 21 days after he had been abducted and tortured by agents of the Ethiopian security forces:

I got a great deal of support from the community at that time. They were looking after me; some didn't even go to their home to sleep when I was in hospital. They took me to the hospital, they also supported my family, they paid house rent for my family (Elemo).

While local community support was important, a few respondents also mentioned community support received from overseas, diasporic connections. Faayame who had been in Nairobi for three months at the time of the interview said that his friends in Europe were helping him with rent. Similarly, Hawanni was supported by her sister in Canada, and Abdii spoke of how a friend who had left for resettlement in Canada had given him all his household items before leaving. The scale of diasporic support is indicated by a survey of 630 refugee households (24% of which were Ethiopian) in Nairobi that found 30% relied primarily on remittances from the diaspora (Refugee Consortium of Kenya, 2015), considerably larger than the 3% that relied primarily on support from NGOs.

Community support could be gendered in important ways. While single women were viewed sympathetically, this was sometimes conditional. For example, in the case of Abadan and Jaalatani who were given shelter, this was in exchange for their domestic labor for the people they lived with. Support could be conditional in other ways, as evident from the experience of Abadan who was given shelter by another Oromo women, but after five months, when this woman realized that Abadan was pregnant, she turned her out of the house, as she did not want to be associated with someone who had a child out of wedlock, nor was she prepared to support both of them.

To summarize, this discussion of the spaces inhabited by Ethiopian refugees in Nairobi indicates their ongoing struggle for everyday social reproduction, in the aftermath of their dispossession from pre-existing networks of family-based social reproduction in Ethiopia. We note the intensification of women's burden of responsibility for care, which is often shifted on to young girls. In this context, the welfare support from the Kenyan refugee regime is limited, piecemeal and not guaranteed, reflecting what Bhagat (2023) calls the 'organized abandonment' of refugees. While low-income Kenyans also have similar difficulties in accessing welfare to support their social reproduction, we note that the liminal status of refugees in a hostile context—particularly those without a mandate—exacerbates the severity of the toll on refugee physical and mental health, ability to work and to support children or others who were dependent on them. In such a context, the support Ethiopian refugees obtained within co-ethnic and religious community spaces was crucial to their survival, offering them a vital lifeline. However, such support was usually temporary and contingent on the limited resources of community members.

Violence and everyday social reproduction of Ethiopian refugees

We consider violence a traumatic and core aspect of the refugee experience that inescapably diminishes their capacity for social reproduction. Violence begins with dispossession from Ethiopia, but often also follows refugees when they relocate to Kenya. Here, we examine how forms of interpersonal, direct violence, as well as structural violence are gendered and severely constrain the social reproduction of Ethiopian refugees in Nairobi.

Interpersonal, direct violence

Interpersonal, direct violence can take many forms (death, torture, maiming, rape, and abduction), and can be categorized by the perpetrators of the violence. Several respondents experienced one or more types of traumatizing physical violence to themselves and/or their family members. Eight respondents (Halima, Abdii, Dansitu, Hawwani, Beekan, Daga, Leenca, Melbaa) reported imprisonment, beatings, and torture at the hands of security forces in Ethiopia. Abdii was brutally beaten when he was in prison, and he consequently suffered severe injuries to his head and body and permanently lost his vision. He managed to escape from Ethiopia to Kenya with support from the Oromo community.

Hawwani had been tortured in prison and interrogated about her husband, who was accused by Ethiopian security forces of being a supporter of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). She said that one of her sons had also been accused of being an OLF supporter and was killed by the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF). This was the immediate reason why she fled Ethiopia with six of her 11 children to come to Nairobi. She did not know if her husband was dead or alive.

Even after arriving in Kenya, several respondents experienced physical violence from Ethiopian security forces operating in Kenya. Elemo had escaped from prison in Ethiopia and was able to cross into Kenya. He started to make a new life for himself, however, this was disrupted when he was abducted and tortured by the Ethiopian security forces, who threatened to kill him if he did not stop organizing the Oromo people in Kenya. The occurrence of such abductions by Ethiopian security forces was also noted by NGO informant 1.

Violence against refugees in Kenya was also perpetrated by other agents. For instance, Getachew said that he had established a business as a trader when he was in Kakuma camp but had been attacked and robbed of his goods by unknown people; UNHCR organized his transfer to Nairobi, as his life was under threat in the camp. Similarly, Dansitu also recounted how her family was attacked by Turkana (an ethnic group in Kenya) and robbed of their food rations when they were in Kakuma camp, which prompted relocation to Nairobi.

Sexual violence against women was reported in both Ethiopian and Kenyan contexts. In Ethiopia, Feenet had been imprisoned for nine months and had been tortured and raped, as she recounted:

I had a brother who was lost; we still have no information where he is. They [Ethiopian police] were interrogating me to bring him in. I was hurt a lot. I was raped and got pregnant in prison. I was 7 months pregnant when I was released (Feenet).

Daga similarly said that two of his daughters had been raped in prison in Ethiopia and had given birth to two of his grandchildren as a consequence of rape.

Within Kenya, women's experiences of sexual violence were due to their increased vulnerability to men who perceived them as 'lacking protection' from their family or community. Abadan, a young 17-year-old woman, spoke of how she had been separated from her mother and sister while they were in transit, in the pandemonium following a raid by Kenyan police at the border town of Moyale. Seeing her crying, a Kenyan man approached her and promised to help her get to Nairobi, but he forcibly kept her in a house for three days and raped her, before finally putting her in a bus to Nairobi. Tigist, too, had been raped by a broker in Kenya who promised to facilitate her travel to South Africa. She became pregnant due to the rape, and although she managed to escape, the man continued to threaten to kill her and abduct the child. Girl children were also vulnerable to sexual violence, as reported by Feenet and Hawwani, based on their daughters' experiences.

Turning to the outcomes of direct, interpersonal violence, several respondents reported the permanent loss of connection to family members, either through death or enforced separation. Flight from Ethiopia often inevitably meant some family members were left behind and contact with them was severed. As Halima recounted: 'My father died while being beaten and tortured. My brother ran away, and we don't know if he is alive or dead. Only my mother is alive, but I don't know how she is.' She came to Kenya with her brother, but eight months after arriving in Nairobi, he had gone to find a job and never returned; she did not know whether he was alive. Young Abadan was separated from her family in transit, while Daga reported the disappearance of three of his children after they arrived in Kenya.

Severe, and often long-term physical and mental ailments were a debilitating outcome of violence for those who had been tortured. The physical injuries suffered due to torture resulted in blindness and impairment of vision for Abdii and Elemo respectively. Halima had been beaten and tortured in the prison which paralyzed her leg. Although she had a childhood disability, she had been able to walk, and even work. After being tortured in prison, her condition had worsened, and her legs became completely paralyzed; she needed support shoes and a rod to walk. Beekan spoke of how the torture his wife had been subjected to had damaged her kidneys. Violence emotionally traumatized not only those who suffered it, but also the mental health of those who witnessed it. Beekan spoke of how his youngest son's mental health was damaged after witnessing his mother being beaten by the Ethiopian police:

He was shocked when he saw them beating his mother; after that his mental status was never okay. He was a very young child and since then, he was mentally affected and now he cannot learn how to read. I took him to school, but it didn't help (Beekan).

The mental stress of ongoing fear of violence was also a reality for many Ethiopians in Kenya; for instance, Berhane said that she lived with the constant fear of being recognized and killed by Ethiopian security agents in Kenya.

Experiences of structural violence

Structural violence underlies the everyday lives of Ethiopian refugees in Nairobi. Their marginalized status makes it difficult for them to secure decent housing and

employment, even when they have formal status as a refugee or asylum seeker; those without formal status are even more vulnerable. Landlords in urban slum areas charge refugees higher rents than Kenyan citizens, for poorer quality housing (Bhagat, 2020). While some Ethiopian Muslim refugees find employment or business opportunities through their shared religious identity with Somali refugees who dominate Eastleigh's informal economy (Carrier & Kochore, 2019), most interviewees in this study had precarious livelihoods and experienced discrimination securing employment.

Beyond the structural violence of discrimination and exclusion, refugees were also subjected to neglect and predatory harassment by the Kenyan police. A few respondents mentioned how the Kenyan police failed to apprehend the perpetrators of crimes against refugees. When Elemo filed a report with the police about being attacked, they did not take any action:

In this country, even if you got beaten and you go to the police and if you don't have money there is no way you will get your complaint solved or get attention' (Elemo).

The Kenyan police were not merely unresponsive, but often also subjected undocumented Ethiopians to the everyday violence of arbitrary arrests and extortion. Several respondents mentioned how their mobility in Nairobi, and their ability to earn a livelihood, was severely constrained by the constant harassment from the Kenyan police. As Kassahun observed:

I am working but I get disturbed by the police every time. I don't have an ID, so I am illegal... I was sick and couldn't manage a decent living as I had problems with the police and was paying them all the money that I was making (Kassahun).

Similarly, Daga spoke of how the police would often arrest his children who were working in Nairobi without papers, extorting between 1,000–5,000 KES each time. Since women's livelihoods often involved vending food and beverages on the street, they were more vulnerable to police extortion and harassment. Munira, a widow with five children, spoke of how the police knew where she lived and had on one occasion come to her house to extort money: 'I cried, and my children cried aloud at them saying we don't have a father. If you take our mother take us and arrest us, too, then they [the police] left'. These accounts of harassment by the Kenyan police were not exceptional, as other studies reveal Ethiopian refugees residing in Nairobi are constantly targeted for extortion by the Kenyan police (Carrier & Kochore, 2019).

Corruption was not restricted to the Kenyan police; several respondents in this study also observed there was corruption within the UNHCR system:

[Corruption] was a major, major issue because resettlement opportunities were being sold, and some of them who came in were not even refugees. Then recently also there was also a major scam in Kakuma involving resettlement. I'm told several people [UNHCR staff] were also fired... there are also rumors that for a refugee to be able to access service provision, they also need to pay some money (NGO informant 1).

To summarize, the refugee experience of violence was a profoundly damaging attack on their physical capacity for social reproduction. Direct violence led to deaths and disappearances that physically broke apart families who were consequently no longer able to function as a social unit. Violence impacted their

physical and mental capacities to take care of themselves, and each other. The violence also appeared to be gendered, as men primarily reported physical violence, while sexual violence was reported primarily by women.³

We see, too, that refugees were also 'legitimate prey' to forms of structural violence in Nairobi, with limited recourse to justice. To some extent, refugees' capacity to negotiate structural violence is contingent on whether they have formal status as either asylum seeker or refugee; the absence of such recognition renders them more vulnerable. The everyday quality of structural violence can be observed not only in the predatory practices of ordinary Kenyans (landlords and employers), but also in corrupt practices (Kenyan police and officials). These practices signal an underlying 'politics of indifference to cruelty' (Bashovski, 2022), and also signal how violent bordering practices are reinforced within urban spaces (Bhagat, 2020; Walia, 2013).

Time and the everyday social reproduction of Ethiopian refugees

Although Elias and Rai (2019) discuss many facets to the analysis of time in relation to social reproduction, here we focus our attention on the 'dead time' of indefinite waiting that refugees are forced to endure in situations of protracted displacement. We describe the inordinate delays that those with and without formal status are subjected to and discuss the implications for social reproduction.

Among the twelve respondents with a refugee mandate, a small minority had obtained refugee status relatively quickly, in less than two years. Booni received her mandate quickly as she had been a minor (under-18) at the time, and Naadura secured a mandate as soon as she arrived at Kakuma camp. The UNHCR process of refugee determination for single women was often quicker, as the system acknowledged their vulnerability. Most of the others who secured refugee mandates had done so after two or more years of waiting (Dansitu, Hawwani, Dhugaa, Elemo, Getachew, Hamilan, Leenca, Melbaa, Negasu). The refugee status determination process can take between one to four years, but while they wait, applicants receive no support from the UNHCR and cannot legally work in Nairobi, so survival becomes challenging. Further, some respondents observed that the lives of a few political activists/leaders could be endangered during the wait, due to the threat of abduction by Ethiopian security forces.

Several respondents spoke of the great difficulties in engaging with the UNHCR refugee status determination process. The shortage of resources at UNHCR, including of staff, was cited as a reason for the inordinate delays in processing refugee cases (NGO informant 4), as existing resources are insufficient for the volume of refugee cases in Kenya. Processing difficulties often start at the gates, as security personnel at the UNHCR office were reported to chase away people who came to process their applications:

They usually say "we are not open now", "take appointment" or they give us other reasons. The security there will chase you away. I have even seen them beating someone (Hawwani).

Leenca spoke of the inhumane treatment of some refugees who, upon first arrival in Nairobi camped in the cold for several days in front of the UNHCR gates, but UNHCR employees stepped over these people, without attempting to help them:

Humanity is not there, I can tell you, when they're right in front of that gate. Security is also badly beating the people in front of the gate, [even though] there is a camera. The UNHCR doesn't care about your rights (Leenca).

Once they made it past the gate, applicants faced the challenges of communication and negotiation with the staff processing their applications. The misinterpretation of statements was cited by some respondents as a reason for the rejection of their application. Others whose applications were declined had received no clear communication about the reasons for rejection.

Importantly, corruption and fraud also caused delays in processing refugee mandates. Getachew recalled experiencing corruption and fraud at two critical points during his application process. First, as he said: 'There was a Kenyan lawyer who was corrupt...UN was corrupt at that time, and they asked me for 3000 dollars though I didn't have money for food at that time' (Getachew). He filed a complaint about corruption, and after a prolonged struggle, eventually secured a mandate. However, Getachew's troubles did not end there, as he was subjected to identity theft when he was screened for resettlement in Canada. A Canadian Ethiopian woman had agreed to sponsor him, but once she got his case number and identity details, she sponsored another man using Getachew's identity details. Consequently, Getachew not only lost his opportunity for resettlement in Canada, but his resettlement case had also been stalled, and he believed he may have been 'blacklisted' by the UNHCR.

Even after obtaining a refugee mandate, resettlement seemed a distant dream. As noted previously, global North countries offering refugee resettlement have extremely limited annual quotas and undertake separate screening interviews of refugees with mandates, based on their own selection criteria. For example, NGO informant-3 noted that Canada has a group of private sponsors for LGBT refugees. Further, although the US did not have any defined priority criteria, ever since the 9/11 attack on the World Trade towers, they take longer to process some cases due to additional security checks.

Consequently, most respondents with mandates had lived in Kenya between 12–24 years. According to Dansitu who had obtained a mandate in 2013, the stress due to the uncertainty about resettlement had led to her husband's premature death. As Dhugaa observed: 'They give you a paper and you must wait for years, for example what do you call waiting for 10 years to get resettlement? It seems things are out of their capacity'. Naadura recounted how it had been six years since her husband's application for resettlement to the US had been rejected by the US embassy without any explanation; they were waiting to see if another country would accept them for resettlement.

While those with mandates had some hope of resettlement in the future, respondents without mandates lived in an even greater temporal limbo of uncertainty. This seemingly intractable state of limbo for refugees has been critiqued for decades, with countries of first asylum described as "waiting rooms" before repatriation' (Verdirame et al., 2005, p. 335). On average, only 3,500 refugees⁴ are resettled annually from Kenya to third countries (UNHCR, 2022), which is miniscule, given the growing numbers of refugees. Thus, refugees are in locked into indefinite protracted displacement in Kenya (Lindley, 2011), and the Kenyan refugee regime functions to 'warehouse' or contain this 'disposable', 'surplus' population (Bhagat, 2020).

Recalling that the ‘struggle for progressive social reproduction is a struggle for both resources and for control over time’ (Bakker, 2007, p. 548), it is important to acknowledge that forcing refugees to endure prolonged periods of waiting for formal recognition of status and resettlement is an exercise of asymmetrical power that can be considered ‘stolen time’ (Khosravi, 2018). This is a less visible *temporal dispossession*, one that produces an indefinite suspension of refugee futurity, as they can neither move forward nor return to their country. We argue that it also reflects a significant erosion of refugees’ capacities for *generational social reproduction*, as this suspension of refugee futurity impacts their ability to have and care for their children, in the present and future.

Towards an IPE of refugee social reproduction

We conclude our analysis of Ethiopian refugee social reproduction in Nairobi by drawing out four inter-connected implications for feminist IPE. The first three are related to refugee social reproduction, while the fourth considers the transnational dimensions of refugee dispossession and social reproduction. First, using the STV framework (Elias & Rai, 2019) allowed us to demonstrate how multiple forms of violence are deeply imbricated in the spaces and temporal dimensions of the refugee experience, and severely undermine refugee capacity for social reproduction. We argued that the consequences of violence—death and disappearance of family members, the disintegration of families and the bodily harm suffered by some individuals due to torture was traumatic, severely damaged their physical and/or mental health and affected their daily survival. The disintegration of families could be considered particularly damaging given that the extended family is the primary locus of social reproduction for Ethiopians (relative to state or market-based social provisioning). A significant aspect of the violence experienced by refugees is that dispossession from home, family, belongings, land, country, and citizenship in Ethiopia stripped them of ‘normal’ social protections and makes them vulnerable to further ongoing forms of violence in Kenya. Rather than read the violence Ethiopian refugees experience as exceptional, it can be analyzed as ‘ambient violence’ that ‘hangs in the air’ (El-Malik 2021, cited in Bashovski 2022, p. 5). We argued that these experiences of violence constitute a significant attack on refugee capacity for social reproduction. We use the term attack intentionally because although the term ‘depletion’ of social reproduction is relevant (Rai et al., 2019), we argue it is insufficient to capture the intensity of the impact of violence on refugee social reproduction.

A second implication of our analysis for a feminist IPE of refugee social reproduction is our identification of the ‘feminization of refugee survival’, which has two dimensions—the first with consequences for women, and the second for the gendering of relations of power. We noted the gender differentiated consequences of violence were that men were primarily subjected to death and disappearance, which often left women disproportionately responsible for the care of children. The severing of connections to, and support from, the extended family also led to an intensification of care-work for women.

Further, we argued that all refugees, not just women, are placed into feminized relations of dependence and supplication in order to survive. We showed how refugees’ access to support from UNHCR, the Kenyan government or NGOs is contingent on having a mandate, and even then, as we have seen, such support may

be very limited or unavailable. Access to work was also contingent on a mandate, and many respondents without a mandate were barely able to survive through casual and poorly paid work in the informal sector, which was further constrained by harassment from the Kenyan police. A few respondents without mandates and with disabilities or chronic health issues were unable to secure even this limited work and reported being destitute, entirely dependent on the charity of others.

The third, and related implication for a feminist IPE of refugee social reproduction is the important recognition that refugee survival and social reproduction was sustained by strong support from the community—both local and diasporic. Community support for social reproduction was particularly significant in a context where the family as the primary locus of social reproduction was often no longer available to many refugees, and welfare support from the refugee regime limited. The efforts of more established refugees to respond to the social reproduction needs of recently arrived refugees are an expression of solidarity that recognizes the challenges faced by newly arrived refugees in navigating a hostile context. Such support is also often a reciprocal gesture of ‘paying it forward’: they, too, had survived being in a similar position because they received help from a stranger. These everyday acts of offering food, shelter, care and resources to Ethiopians in need are forms of conviviality, mutuality and ‘everyday acts of solidarity’ (Daley, 2021:18), and re-generative forms of community social reproduction that are vital to refugee survival.

We argue further that the recognition of refugee agency through such practices of solidarity, care and support offers an important corrective to the dominant representation of refugees as needy ‘victims.’ However, it must also be acknowledged that these forms of support provided by community members are a constrained resource, since community members are also struggling to survive, and they often sacrifice from the little they have out of a sense of compassion for the suffering of co-ethnic people.

Fourth and finally, we argue that a feminist IPE of refugees requires recognition that they experience a double displacement of their capacity for social reproduction, both of which are transnational. The first transnational displacement occurs due to their dispossession from their original countries, as expulsion and exile displaces them from existing family support infrastructure for social reproduction, and their entitlements to social provisioning provided by the Ethiopian state (however limited this may be). This dispossession is further exacerbated by refugees’ limited access to support in the host state, Kenya.

We argue there is also a second, invisible and racialized transnational displacement of refugee capacity for social reproduction which is structured through the international refugee regime. To make this argument, we mobilize Bhabra’s contention that a significant proportion of the wealth of global North countries is attributable to the coerced labor and appropriated resources of formerly colonized subjects, in opposition to the largely uncontroversial view among many liberal and progressive scholars that the welfare states of these countries must be protected against the massive influx of refugees and asylum seekers (Bhabra, 2021, p. 319).

Our analysis of the refugee regime in Kenya showed that dispossessive racialized colonial and neo-imperialist interventions in the Horn of Africa have contributed to the flows of refugees to Kenya, yet these are usually foreclosed out of the frame in most IPE (and refugee studies) analyses of the refugee regime. Bringing a

transnational lens to bear also allows us to consider the consequences for refugee social reproduction of global North countries' refugee externalization strategies to 'warehouse' refugee populations for indefinite periods in countries like Kenya. While we demonstrated that these strategies produce dispossession for refugees, eroding their capacity for generational social reproduction, we emphasize that underlying these 'warehousing' strategies is global North countries' racialized refusal of accountability for the permanent resettlement of larger numbers of refugees from places in the global South, and avoidance of the corresponding anticipated welfare costs of refugee social reproduction. The foreclosure of the resettlement route to the global North implicitly assumes that refugees would eventually either repatriate voluntarily or be re-integrated into the host country of first asylum. Moreover, global North countries' accountability for refugee social reproduction even while they are 'warehoused' has eroded, with a decline in contributions of global North countries to humanitarian funds. We demonstrated how the corresponding contraction of Kenyan refugee regime resources for welfare provisioning was experienced by refugees as 'organised abandonment' (Bhagat, 2023). Recognition of this 'invisible' racialized structuring is crucial to IPE scholarship on the global refugee regime, as these two transnational displacements produce a new form of racialized enclosure and the ongoing dispossession and alienation of refugees from the means of social reproduction. Transformative and re-generative approaches to refugee social reproduction would need to address both forms of displacement.

Notes

1. For details, see UNHCR <https://www.unhcr.org/ke/registration>.
2. In 2017, 1 USD = 100 Kenyan Shillings (KES).
3. Of course, this does not preclude the possibility that some men may have experienced sexual violence, rather, it is likely that they would find it difficult to talk about.
4. Figures were even lower in 2020-21 due to COVID.

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