

# **Refugee Management In East Africa: A Critical Analysis, 1991-2012**

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## **Abstract:**

Refugee problem has persisted in Africa right from the pre-colonial, colonial and the post colonial period. The East African sub region has played host to millions of refugees. The refugees are hosted in camps and settlements that have been spread across the region mainly near their borders with the refugee producing countries. Refugees have sought refuge in these countries for decades now mainly due to the relative peace and calm that have prevailed in them since after their independence in the 1960s. Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have borne the brunt of hosting thousands of refugees fleeing their countries for various reasons ranging from wars, internal conflicts, drought famine, disease and poor governance among a host of other reasons that lead large numbers of people to flee from their homelands. The overall objective of the study is to critically analyze refugee management practices in the East Africa sub region. The study found out that for many years, these countries left the management of refugees to UNHCR who were mandated to receive, register and provide protection mechanisms to the refugees. But after the adoption of their various national Refugee legislations, these governments have actively taken over the management of refugees by establishing various offices to directly handle refugee matters although with some help of UNHCR as the lead agency. Although the Refugee Acts in the three countries have strengthened the pillars established by their individual Immigration Acts and other migration laws; these three governments still practices the encampment policy in relation to management of refugees hence by law all refugees are expected to stay in the camps and settlements which are currently over crowded with all the basic facilities over stretched. These camps and settlements have not spared the environment either with massive deforestation and other forms of environmental degradation experienced in the already fragile environment due to the activities of the refugees. This in turn has led to conflict between the refugees and the host communities. This research project has looked at the effort that the three governments with the help of the international community have played to assist thousands of refugees in their countries albeit with some shortcomings and other options available to them.