

The permanent few or the temporary many? Evaluating refugee integration obstructors through implementation of the Ethiopia and Jordan Job Compacts

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Abstract

Following the global re-emergence of refugee self-reliance narratives in the wake of the Syria refugee displacement, development aid took on new and experimental meanings in some displacement contexts. Jordan and the EU entered into a ten-year agreement known as the Jordan Compact, an aid agreement that supports trade and job creation for refugees and host communities, in 2016. Later that year, the Ethiopia Jobs Compact was agreed with the EU and other development actors. While inspired by the Jordan Compact, policymaking to support the compact implementation in Ethiopia vastly differed from that of Jordan. More specifically, Jordan immediately implemented policy changes to support the legalization of Syrian refugee employment, while this process was delayed in Ethiopia. In 2019, the Government of Ethiopia passed a progressive Refugee Proclamation, constituting a significant legal change and commitment—a change far more sustainable, from a legal standpoint, than any of those pursued in Jordan. Accordingly, this paper explores the differences in Jobs Compact implementation, the causes behind them, and the impacts these have had on outcomes. Relying on a comparative approach of the refugee governance frameworks in each of these respective contexts, this paper argues that the difference in compact implementation, from the perspective of governance, is rooted in policy and political strategies undertaken to mitigate local integration in Jordan and Ethiopia.

Keywords: jobs compact; refugees; Jordan; Ethiopia; labor; inclusion.

1. Introduction

Refugee hosting is largely asymmetrical between Global North and South states. Developing countries host 83 per cent of refugees globally ([ActionAid 2022](#))¹ while facing challenges of resource constraints, high unemployment—especially among youth—and weak economic growth. While labor inclusion is largely understood to be a key means by which refugees may successfully integrate into host societies, host countries often maintain restrictive policies on labor market integration ([Konle-Seidl 2016](#); [Zetter and Ruaudel 2016](#)). The optics of refugee labor inclusion remain sensitive and more inclusive policy

framings are resisted (see [Hartnett 2019](#)) as in hosting contexts, refugees are widely described as competitors against host country nationals and migrant workers.

Despite the North-South disparity, comparatively little academic research has been conducted on integration and citizenship outside of high-income countries, such as in Europe and North America ([Adamson and Tsourapas 2020](#)). While citizenship for refugees and migrants is perceived by some as the “capstone” of the integration process ([Ager and Strang 2008](#)), the lack of accessible, streamlined, and formal citizenship pathways for refugees in the Global South largely leaves this outside of debates on refugee labor. Integration processes often discuss barriers to integration including language and religion; this is not always applicable in Global South countries where refugees from neighboring states often share these qualities with host communities and instead becomes an aspect with which they relate to local populations ([Arar 2023](#)). Accordingly, integration in the Global South vastly differs across all dimensions, including labor.

In this context, hopes for broad support for refugee labor inclusion from host communities require strong incentives for economic growth and employment of host country nationals. From this need for compromise, the Jordan Compact and the less publicized Ethiopia Jobs Compact were branded as mutually beneficial for refugees and host communities alike, rooted in the creation of economic opportunities and in reaping benefits of refugee labor. Notably however, while very similarly designed, their implementations and outcomes differed significantly—why might this have been the case?

The Jobs Compacts in Jordan and Ethiopia were agreements struck between host countries and European donor counterparts. These sought to support job creation in host countries—more specifically, initial countries of asylum—to eventually support refugee self-reliance. This took place in the form of support to industry and incentivization of job creation by linking aid and the potential of exports with refugee employment ([Barbelet et al., 2019](#)). Such plans sought to halt flows to Europe by way of supporting the conditions of refugees beyond care and maintenance, and host countries sought to benefit from this through job creation for host communities, stimulation of private sector, activity, and aid inflows. Jordan’s Jobs Compact was signed in February 2016. Its linked trade agreement runs until 2030, and its World Bank financing, which details the specific outcomes needed to be met, has run until January 2023 ([AlDaja 2018](#); [World Bank 2021](#)). Ethiopia’s jobs compact was agreed later the same year, in September 2016² ([European Investment Bank 2016](#)). However, implementation and project disbursement was agreed and conceptualized by the end of the following year. The linked World Bank program runs until June 2025 ([World Bank 2022](#)).

The existence of Jobs Compacts and other similar approaches to refugee management is reliant on a “grand compromise” between donor states and host states: wealthy donor states, often in the Global North, support refugee maintenance in poorer states in the Global South (Cuellar 2006). This dynamic is motivated by a desire to retain refugees in their first countries of asylum and disincentivize onward movement. More recently conceived as “migration as foreign policy,” this describes the process by which states extract diplomatic favor through the instrumentalization of refugee displacement.

Refugee rentierism pushes this concept further. Conceived by [Tsourapas \(2019\)](#), refugee rentierist strategies take place when refugee hosts employ their position as host states of forcibly displaced populations to extract revenue, or refugee rent, from other state or non-state actors in order to maintain these populations within their borders ([Tsourapas 2019](#)). Rentierist strategies use reconceptualized forms of refugee commodification strategies to instrumentalize refugees; [Tsourapas \(2019\)](#) particularly identified these strategies vis-à-vis host states in the MENA region during the Syrian refugee movements toward Jordan, Lebanon and Türkiye. These were characterized as either blackmailing or backscratching strategies; the former would rely on threats to trigger compromises and negotiation, the latter would instead offer concessions ([Tsourapas 2019](#)).

These strategies have clearly diffused across other contexts. Freier et al. (2021) conceive that policy diffusion of refugee commodification in the Global South takes place through the simultaneous occurrence of three processes: learning, cooperation, and emulation. This was clearly demonstrated in the design of the respective Jordan and Ethiopia Jobs Compacts. The latter was inspired by the former—in fact, this was openly stated in World Bank documents detailing “the positive experience of the Economic Opportunities for Jordanians and Syrian Refugees Project (on which the [Ethiopian] Jobs Compact is modeled) in using the PforR (Program for Results) instrument to manage the complexity of the refugee and jobs agenda . . .” (Fanuel 2017 in Freier et al., 2021). The modality adopted in Ethiopia clearly emulated the zonal development approach that was initially the basis for the Jordan Compact. Moreover, the principle of aid-for-labor also clearly defines the execution and design of both programs.

While the Compacts were indeed similar and triggered a number of responses centering lessons learned from Jordan, there were differences in what was negotiated. Both compacts focused on expanding employment at the lower end of global supply chains. However, in recognition of the critique of working conditions and informality in Jordan, the Ethiopia Jobs Compact recognized concerns about working conditions and identified to address them, including the passage of revised labor legislation and the establishment of a National Minimum Wage Board (Gordon 2019). In fact, this shift points to a clear difference in the positioning of the Jordanian and Ethiopian governments vis-à-vis donor states: where the former had prior experience and high geopolitical relevance, the latter aimed to improve its position as a refugee hosting state through this form of migration diplomacy.

Both states arguably enacted backscratching strategies but urgency and geopolitical relevance shifted bargaining power significantly, requiring different compromises on the part of the host states. This is elucidated when comparing the triggering contexts: Jordan hosted Syrian refugees, a large, politically contentious and broadly recognized refugee group that had arrived in large numbers to Europe. This event effected ongoing and increasing politicization of refugee groups. Ethiopia however at the time was not at the heart of a refugee crisis that triggered a political crisis in Europe, in fact it had volunteered itself as a CRRF pilot country. Such decisions constituted forms of strategic calculations with the aim of improving its global relevance as a refugee hosting state. Not only were Jordan and Ethiopia in different positions at the time of negotiation; their refugee governance, integration management and political regimes vastly differ. While refugee rentierism frameworks explain the positionality of the host state and the subsequent bargains reached, we seek to uncover how the implementation of these bargains may then be impacted by refugee governance of the host state.

This paper argues that the difference in Compact implementation, from the perspective of refugee governance, is rooted in policy and political strategies undertaken to simultaneously implement, mitigate the impacts of, or outright obstruct local integration.³ This is done so through local integration obstructors, defined here as strategies embedded in law and policy to mitigate the long-term and large-scale integration of refugee populations. In Jordan, long-term and large-scale local integration was obstructed through an ad hoc policy framework, that is, through temporary policymaking. On the other hand, Ethiopia managed local integration through established regulative framework, that is, through the management of refugee affairs and regulated encampment. In other words, while the Jobs Compact in Jordan was supported by a series of short-term policy changes to support temporary labor inclusion, in Ethiopia labor policy changes were codified, albeit with resistance.

Such analysis speaks to a small but growing literature on refugee integration in the Global South and complements this with an analysis on the interaction of labor and labor migration with refugee inclusion. It investigates the capacity of refugee rentierism to illustrate refugee integration policy development and in doing so, explores how differentiation in positionality and negotiating power impacts how integration is understood and

manifested in policy. By doing so, this comparative analysis aims to close a clear gap in academic literature: on the nature of integration outlooks in the Global South. While significant research has been conducted on refugee integration and is in fact a key facet of both refugee and migration studies, very little has aimed to contextualize such processes in the Global South with the aim of understanding constraints (beyond parochial and highly localized analyses).

This article begins with establishing the comparative grounds and methodological approach adopted in this study, followed by establishing the conceptual framework, drawing from [Mencütek \(2019\)](#), where it places this framework in a broader discussion on the politics of integration. This is followed by an introduction to the Compacts and related contexts. Following this, the paper explores the unfolding of Compact policies in Jordan and Ethiopia, proceeding to compare key similarities and differences in the policies and their approaches. It then analyzes these changes in a broader discussion on policy approaches, integration, and the implications (and hesitations) associated with long-term and permanent policy shifts, particularly given constraints and integration processes unique to regions of the Global South.

2. Comparing outcomes of refugee rentierism strategies across geographies

Ethiopia follows an ethnic-based federal political system, where internal administrative territories are carved along ethnic lines and power is shared between central/federal and local governments. Jordan follows a unitary state and a monarchical form of government, where there is usually competition between the Jordanians of Palestinian origin and the Jordanians of the Bedouin members for political power and support/resistance to the monarchical government ([Bacik 2008](#)). While the Prime Minister and his small circle (usually from the same ethnic group) are decision makers in Ethiopia, but with significant local resistance, it is the King that is the most powerful person in Jordan ([Vaughan 2003](#); [Csicsmann 2025](#)).

Issues of sluggish economy, unemployment and inflation were observed in both Jordan and Ethiopia, which in turn led these countries to look for external economic support. Ethiopia's economy is less advanced, it relies on an agricultural economy albeit with a growing industry and service sectors. Jordan was able to register impressive economic progress (in 1999–2009) compared to Ethiopia, although the latter was able to witness a double-digit growth during the previous EPRDF government (mainly in 2000–15). However external shocks (the 2009 global financial crisis, further complicated by the Arab Spring uprisings and the COVID-19 pandemic) caused a struggling economy in Jordan since 2009, triggering a dependency on IMF loans and IMF-oriented structural adjustments ([IMF n.d.](#)).

Jordan and Ethiopia have both relied on external support and developed close relationships with western powers, albeit with fluctuations over time. Both countries have been hosting massive numbers of refugees from the neighboring countries/territories and followed open-door policy to accommodate them, while facing the burden of hosting them. These structural factors and contexts came to shape the agreement and the implementation of the Jobs Compacts. Ultimately, despite striking differences in their political systems, forms of government, economies and demographic and societal composition, the two countries reached similar conclusions about the facilitation of refugee labor, with key similarities in priorities concerning (1) mitigation of refugee impact and (2) economic growth and unemployment (see [Table 1](#) below for a summary of these characteristics).

Table 1. Refugee rentier policy environment.

	Ethiopia	Jordan
Refugee management	- Regulative, organized by 2019 refugee proclamation and accompanying regulations - Long-term integration possible in principle but restricted by broad encampment policy	- Ad hoc, organized by MoUs with UNHCR (non-Palestinian) and delegation to UNRWA (Palestinian) - Long-term integration restricted with little to no prospects for formalization of permanent residency
Donor leverage	- Relatively low: interest in industrialization supported mainly through volunteer pilot for CRRF	- Relatively high: onward movement of Syrians to Europe increased interest
Policy delegation	- Decentralized government with the exception of high centralization of refugee affairs	- Highly centralized decision-making - Delegated but controlled implementation of refugee affairs across relevant ministries

2.1 Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative comparative research design to better understand the similarities and differences in integration policymaking in Jobs Compact implementation in Jordan and Ethiopia. These two countries were selected mainly on the basis of their agreement to implement Jobs Compacts. Beyond this, they are also major refugee hosting states in Africa and Middle East, representing two distinct geographies. Yet, these two countries have revealed differences and similarities in terms of the regime type, refugee policy history, and other fundamental structural factors including political system and stability, economic status, demography, and socio-cultural composition of the society. The paper compares refugee integration governance and policy frameworks in both contexts to understand the enactment and operationalization of policy related to the Jobs Compacts at the national level. This makes use of two modes of analysis and their interaction: firstly, it refers to a conceptual framework of multi-pattern refugee governance to determine policy patterns in Jordan and Ethiopia to make sense of their respective approaches to reaching Compact labor goals. Second, it analyzes how these policy patterns and associated Compact approaches link to refugee integration policy. This case study specifically reflects on the change in conditions between the negotiation of the deal in mid-2016 to early 2020, when the COVID pandemic hit and, in the case of Ethiopia, the change of government and outbreak of a war largely redirected the efforts and interests of policymakers. As such, the comparison is structured and based on the multi-pattern refugee governance theoretical framework developed by [Mencütek \(2019\)](#), where comparison is made along the nature of the policy pattern adopted by each country and also the timeline and rollout/delegation witnessed during the implementation process, and finally by examining the implications of the implementation in terms of the permanency of the labor frameworks.

To this end, the study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data, including literature, officials’ statements, research and policy documents by the Governments of Jordan and Ethiopia, project documents and reports from the World Bank and the European Union, and also various academics and non-governmental organizations. These sources in turn are supplemented by eight key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted with researchers, former government officials, and members of civil society, all of which are involved in implementation and research around the Ethiopia Jobs Compact and the refugee response in general. These interviews were conducted between April and June 2022. These are further supplemented by data collected previously in Jordan, between June and August 2019, also drawn from interviews with similar stakeholders. Questions were focused on the origins of the Compacts, the context, related policy changes, and the variation in

implementation at the regional and national levels. Responses were then triangulated to supplement lacking secondary data, particularly as is linked to the context in which the Compacts were drafted. This is further complemented by the authors' personal experiences as a development practitioner in Jordan's humanitarian response to the Syria refugee crisis and a consultant to international organizations that support developmental interventions in the refugee space in Ethiopia. The data analysis adopted a qualitative thematic analysis, where emerging themes were grouped together and discussed based on the structured comparison stated above.

A key limitation of the analysis is this article's focus on Compact-related policies and implementation, strictly on the conditions linked to the policies made and their impacts. More specifically, it investigates the broader policy environment governing integration as a whole and analyzes this through the lens of the Compacts. As such, it is a comparison of the Compact-related labor policy changes solely at the *national* level, thus excluding analysis of Compact implementation at the regional level and of integration projects and programs supported by non-governmental organizations, since these do not constitute policy changes. Comparative analysis would not sufficiently cover the granular differences in the dynamics of the aid sector in each context and especially at the regional or governorate level.⁴

3. Multi-pattern refugee governance: a comparison of Jordan and Ethiopia

The Jobs Compacts were agreements centering refugee labor integration—both of which included indicators on issuance of refugee jobs or “economic opportunities.”⁵ This placed at its core a humanitarian-development nexus approach, merging discussions on reception and protection with those on integration with the intention of supporting refugee self-reliance (Arar 2017). To understand the varying levels and the differentiated approach to refugee reception and integration within states, this paper relies on a multi-pattern refugee governance model proposed by Mencütek (2019), where trends as they relate to different “sub-policies” are explained by four general patterns. These sub-policies include border control, reception and protection, and integration. According to Mencütek, states may take on different strategies along the lines of varying policy assemblage patterns categorized as (1) inaction, (2) ad hoc measures, (3) regulatory, and (4) preventive. Ad hoc governance patterns are policy solutions that are immediate and are often temporary—policy solutions may thus be “partial, temporal and provisional” (Mencütek 2019: 52). Ad hoc governance often emerges in crises with mass displacement and is characterized by emergency temporariness, strategic border openings, and either no or partial integration policy. This contrasts preventive policy, for instance, where borders are closed entirely and thus are not followed by any integration or protection policies. Policy inaction is placed in between, where borders may be opened but are accompanied with “institutional ambiguity” and weak or non-existing policies for protection or integration (Mencütek 2019; Nassar and Stel 2019; Kikano *et al.*, 2021). Regulatory policies, on the other hand, are ones that are accompanied by the setting up of normative and institutional frameworks to regulate the flow of refugees into one's territorial jurisdiction. Unlike ad hoc policy, the regulative patterns have an element of clear legal and institutional structure and permanency.

3.1 Jordan

Examination of the policy patterns of the two countries reveals that Jordan and Ethiopia not only follow different policies toward the reception, protection and integration of refugees, but also these policies were dynamic and ended up being restrictive in nature. For instance, preventive policy patterns could be observed in Jordan's border closure with Iraq in 2006, and refugees currently registered with the UNHCR do not have facilitated access to government services (*ibid.*, Kelberer 2016). Yet Syrian refugees have temporarily received

facilitated access to work permits, subsidized health services and schooling, suggesting *ad hoc* patterns particularly for integration. Alternatively, while much of the initial response to the Syrian refugee influx could be described as *inaction* by host governments, especially Lebanon, some parts of the initial regional government responses also included *ad hoc* policies on education, integration and work permit policy to support Syrian refugee access to formal work—albeit with strict limitations and on a temporary basis (see [Norman 2020](#); [Abdelaaty 2021](#)).

Jordan has long been a host of refugees, starting in the 1920s when Armenians, Chechens and Circassians took refuge in Jordan and have since largely integrated. Not long after, in the 1940s and 1960s, there were large waves of Palestinian refugees, many of whom have been nationalized, although 412,000 continue to live in camps ([Anera n.d.](#)). Those that arrived as part of the 1967 and 1973 waves do not enjoy citizenship benefits and instead receive temporary two-year Jordanian passports for travel. As per UNHCR registration data in 2022, Jordan hosts more than 760,000 registered refugees ([UNICEF 2022](#)), 88 per cent of which are Syrian, 20 per cent of which are in camps. The remaining are 9 per cent Iraqi, 2 per cent Yemeni, and the rest encompasses fifty-four other nationalities including Sudanese and Somali refugees ([UNHCR 2021b](#)).⁶ In combination with Palestinian refugees registered with UNRWA (2.2 million), Jordan hosts an estimated 3 million refugees ([World Bank 2020](#)).

While Jordan has historically been a recipient of refugees, it is not a party to the 1951 Convention nor to its 1967 Protocol. Jordan is rather bound to national laws and regional agreements including the 2004 Arab Charter of Human Rights, which protects freedom of belief and freedom of movement. Article 21(1) of the Jordanian Constitution stipulates that “political refugees shall not be extradited on account of their political beliefs or for their defense of liberty,” however law or policy to operationalize this have not been enacted. Regulation of the presence of foreigners is embedded in Law no. 24 of 1973 on Residence and Foreigners’ Affairs. Article 10 of the aforementioned law allows the Ministry of Interior to issue regulations on issuance of travel documents for refugees within Jordanian borders, however regulations on the entry and determination of refugees have not been enacted ([Library of Congress 2016](#)). Jordan also supported the Casablanca Protocol (the 1965 Protocol for the Treatment of Palestinians in Arab States) without reservation ([League of Arab States 1965](#)).⁷ The recognition of political refugees, in tandem with the aforementioned Arab Charter, thus restricts Jordanian participation in *refoulement* ([Alshoubaki 2018](#)).

National legislation beyond the above is limited, largely leaving the management of protection, integration and inclusion on a relatively *ad hoc* basis. This is the case particularly when linked to integration, as reception and inclusion policies differ considerably between Jordan’s major influxes including Palestinian, Iraqi and Syrian refugees, especially regarding local residence. Border policies however may instead sometimes be *preventive*, as previous open borders with Iraq and Syria were mostly closed from 2016 onwards ([Ahmad 2016](#)).⁸

Reception conditions have varied: Iraqi refugees were integrated into urban settings completely while a partial encampment strategy was undertaken for Syrian refugees (see [El-Abed 2014](#); [Kelberer 2016](#)). Jordan has an MoU with the UNHCR regarding the agency’s role in managing refugee populations, signed in 1998. In 2014, it was updated to accommodate the influx of Syrian refugees ([Alshoubaki 2018](#)). In 2016, local actors began a series of temporary policy amendments to allow for Syrian workforce integration ([Almasri 2021](#)). Given the strategic closing of borders and partially and temporary integration policies in place, we classify Jordan as one that predominantly adopts *ad hoc* refugee policy patterns.

3.2 Ethiopia

Ethiopia, on the other hand, appears to take on a *regulative* policy approach to refugee governance. Regulative policies refer to those that draw on previous policies in the state or those that make reference to existing law. This is made evident by Ethiopian national legislation

and the regional and international treaties it has signed. Ethiopia is a State Party to the 1951 Refugee Convention, its 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (also known as the African Refugee Convention). In principle, according to the Ethiopian constitution, international agreements are akin to national law, albeit implementation often strays from convention standards.

Ethiopia maintains an open-door policy for refugees and humanitarian crises, and usually grants refugee status based on *prima facie* model to the major refugee groups in the country. Ethiopia also hosts a large and diverse population of refugees. According to UNHCR, Ethiopia hosts more than one million refugees and asylum seekers of various nationalities as of the end of September 2024 (UNHCR 2024). The vast majority are from South Sudan (40 per cent), Somalia (33 per cent), Eritrea (17 per cent), and Sudan (8 per cent). The majority of refugees live in twenty camps across the country, with nearly half of the refugee population located in the western region of Gambella. There are more than 78,000 urban refugees living in Addis Ababa, the majority of whom are Eritrean and a minority from Syria and Yemen (Adugna 2021). Importantly, the vast majority of displaced people in Ethiopia are now internally displaced people, with close to 4.5 million IDPs as of June 2024 (OCHA 2024).

Ethiopia enacts a broad camp policy with rare, case-by-case exceptions. This reliance on encampment actively seeks to minimize the presence of refugees in urban areas, as has been the strategy for decades, further cemented in the Refugee Protection and Camp Law of 2004. At present around 77 per cent of refugees in Ethiopia reside in twenty camps constructed across the six regional states, while 8 per cent are urban refugees who reside in urban locations (mainly in Addis Ababa and Mekele) and the remaining 15 per cent are located in sites and settlements like Alem Wach (UNHCR 2024).

Beyond reception, refugees and their presence in Ethiopia has been regulated in the past by the 2004 Refugee Proclamation and presently by the revised Refugee Proclamation of 2019, which legally establishes the regulation of residence, employment and service access for refugees into national law, albeit with conditions and on a restricted basis (ReDSS 2020; UNHCR 2021a). While the 2004 Refugee Proclamation was considerably more focused on protection and camp regulations, the 2019 Proclamation has effectively legalized the CRRF process.

Against the backdrop of massive refugee influx since the 1960s, Ethiopia has also established an institution that exclusively deals with refugee issues, but in an uneven manner. Just like the refugee law, the refugee institution has also changed over time. In this case, the refugee response transformed from a decentralized response (1963–89) to centralized response since 1989, which saw the emergence of Administration for Refugees Affairs (ARA) in 1989, followed by Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) in 1992, Agency for Refugees and Returnees Affairs (ARRA) in 2018, and as of 2022, Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS). RRS, and its predecessor ARRA, has been a highly hierarchical and centralized organization. It has been structured along tri-level vertical arrangement: a national Head Office in Addis Ababa, a regional Coordination Offices in the refugee-hosting regions, and an Office in the refugee camps.⁹ Thus, regarding integration, Ethiopia appears to take a *regulatory restrictive* approach, for which there are rights awarded for accessing work, education and local residence, but regulated and restricted by the existing 2019 refugee law and RRS.

4. The unfolding of jobs compacts

The Job Compacts linked job creation for refugees with loan and grant distribution from the World Bank and European donors. The Jordan Compact pledged support to the labor inclusion of Syrian refugees in exchange for preferential trade terms in the form of simplified rules of origin (RoO).¹⁰ Simplified RoO would apply to factories in any of eighteen

special economic zones¹¹ that employ a specified percentage of Syrians in the production of goods for export to the European Union. This goal was initially set at 15 per cent for the first two years of implementation, to be raised to 25 per cent afterward. These were linked with a goal of creating 200,000 economic opportunities for Syrian refugees *in any sector*, after which the simplified RoO would be accessible to factories outside of the special economic zones.¹² The Jordan Compact was subsequently linked to the World Bank's Program for Results, which provided USD 300 million in financing to support labor formalization. This was extended for two years in 2020 with additional financing of USD 100 million to support flexible work permits for Syrians (Slimane et al., 2020).

The Ethiopia Jobs Compact instead focused on industrial stimulation by way of investment in the construction of industrial parks and creation of jobs. Ethiopia's Jobs Compact was a multi-donor project, where around 500 million USD was pledged (in the form of grants and loans) by a consortium of donors such as the World Bank, European Investment Bank (EIB), EU, and UK's DFID (now FCDO) (European Investment Bank 2016). Unlike in Jordan, special economic zones and industrial parks did not already exist at scale. In Ethiopia, the Jobs Compact aimed at building industrial parks and creating 100,000 jobs for both refugees and hosts, where 30 per cent of the jobs would be committed to refugees. Like the Jordan Compact, the disbursement of concessional financing was conditional upon meeting development targets for "disbursement-linked indicators" (DLI). It was also supported through investment project financing set by the World Bank (Center for Mediterranean Integration 2018) within its Economic Opportunities Program (EOP) (2018–25) for Ethiopia. This incentivized by the opportunity to increase foreign currency reserves to maintain a peg, where Ethiopia often faces reserve shortages (Maasho 2018; Binkert et al., 2021).¹³ Furthermore the government was interested in correcting the widening gap between the rural and urban investments, income inequality, and development needs of the "emerging" regions of the country such as Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz, Somali, and Afar regions, which host the majority of refugees in the country.¹⁴

Both Jordan and Ethiopia, prior to signing Compact agreements, had considerably restrictive policy environments for refugee labor. Yet both Jordan and Ethiopia have been and continue to be key hosts of refugees globally, placing self-reliance and aid in a broader context of local and foreign politics. Declining job creation, alongside high youth unemployment, motivated host states in finding job creation solutions. Jordan thus looked to benefit from European reluctance to resettle and receive more refugees following migration in 2015, while simultaneously improving job creation and export-led industrialization efforts (Seeberg and Shteivi 2017; Tsourapas 2019; Almasri 2021).

5. Evolution and changes to the jobs compacts

5.1 Implementing the jobs compacts in Jordan and Ethiopia

Jordan effected the necessary policy changes almost instantly after agreeing on the Compact terms. Just a few months after the "London Donor Conference," where the Jordan Compact was signed, Law no. 77 of 2016 Organizing non-Jordanian Investments was passed to support foreign investment and industrialization in Jordan (see Al Nabih and Habaybeh 2017). The crux of the Jordan Compact and its aims of labor inclusion, however, is perhaps better seen in the Syrian work permit program. In its first few years of implementation, the program provided subsidized permits for Syrian refugees in five sectors, two of which could be accessed on a "freelance basis." These were key changes to the dominant *kafala* (sponsorship) system that governs labor policy for all foreign citizens in Jordan (Almasri 2021). At the end of 2018, the Jordan Compact and the associated rules of origin agreement were renegotiated with the EU and extended for four additional years, now valid until 2030. The work permit target under this agreement was also renegotiated accordingly (Aldaja 2018). In 2020, the permit program was further liberalized to allow

flexible access to work permits for Syrian refugees across all occupations, except for those restricted to Jordanians (Government of Jordan 2021). Critically, all of the aforementioned changes passed in the form of temporary, renewable circulars, instructions and policy amendments—in other words, none of these constituted new laws, only restricted policy amendments under the same legal framework. The work permit program, for instance, is now¹⁵ in its tenth extension and is valid until the end of 2022.

While some funding was mobilized in the initial years of the Ethiopia Compact and overall CRRF process, the fostering of a supportive government agreement and policy environment particularly to support the industrial parks lagged; and eventually, the discussion moved away from the construction of industrial parks and the associated job opportunities. Initially, the government of Ethiopia remained highly engaged in global commitments on refugee hosting, and successfully linked the Jobs Compact to the CRRF (Nigusie and Carver 2019). The Jobs Compact project was thus integrated into the Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTPII) and the labor goals under the CRRF, which also expanded to include refugees in several sectors, including agriculture and business.¹⁶ As per the demands of the World Bank's EOP project, Ethiopia introduced such critical refugee-related normative frameworks as the revised refugee law, the environmental standard and guideline, the issuance of residence permits to refugee and host beneficiaries, and Investment Promotion Strategy. The issue of labor inclusion was addressed by the revised refugee law and the associated key directives, which includes freedom of movement and residence out of camps (Directive No. 1/2019) and the right to work (Directive No. 2/2019). Ethiopia's Investment Commission also expressed its support, claiming that the 2019 Refugee Proclamation "helps refugees & supports Ethiopia's #industrialization [sic]" (Bhalla 2019).

Furthermore, to realize the outcomes of the CRRF, steering committees and National Coordination Office (NCO) were established, comprised of representatives from the UNHCR, RRS, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, and a selected development partner specialized in the CRRF's thematic focuses (Adugna 2021). These thematic areas are split into (1) out-of-camp policy, (2) education, (3) work and livelihood, (4) documentation, (5) social and basic services, and (6) local integration. The work and livelihood thematic area strongly overlaps with the Jobs Compact, including the provision of work permits and the building of industrial parks wherein a portion of jobs created will be dedicated to refugees, specified in the Jobs Compact at 30 per cent (Maru 2019; Adugna 2021).

5.2 Key similarities and differences

5.2.1 Time lag

While launching in a relatively similar period to the Jordan Compact, the aims of the Ethiopia Jobs Compact have mostly stalled for nearly three years following its launch and its associated Program-for-Results (PforR) and sector transformation program.¹⁷ Notably, the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) has not paid into the Jobs Compact programs since 2019 and as of end-2021, coinciding with the end of the project, with a budget underspend of nearly 70 per cent (FCDO 2021). The FCDO partially justified this on account of project outcomes, which missed the targets associated with development-linked indicators, the bulk to which its funding was tied.

The unhealthy political transition and the emergence of political instability in the country since PM Abiy Ahmed came to power in April 2018 has also significantly affected the realization of the Jobs Compact as per the initial project plan, particularly the construction of industrial parks. With the change of government, the priority of the government also changed. This was then followed by the withdrawal of the EIB investment from the Jobs Compact consortium due to the change of areas for industrial parks construction¹⁸ and reduced Jobs Compact to just the World Bank's EOP project.

Most importantly, unlike the Jordanian experience, the refugee policy making process witnessed in Ethiopia in the post-2016 period was characterized by a slow and relatively long process as well. This slow process could be related to the changes that were made to initial plan, which was to adopt a regulation to the existing 2004 refugee proclamation to implement the Jobs Compact. But this idea was rejected and the idea of adopting a new refugee proclamation became legally mandatory. In the end, the Government of Ethiopia came to introduce a series of policy and normative frameworks that tried to incorporate these changes, namely, the 2017 CRRF Roadmap, the 2018 National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy (NCRRS), the 2019 Revised Refugee Proclamation, and the complementary 2019 Directives.

Accordingly, apart from the introduction of the legal frameworks that govern the refugee labor inclusion, no significant progress has been registered on Ethiopia's World Bank project tracker¹⁹ in terms of provision of residence permits, although some residential permits linked to joint livelihood projects have been issued (World Bank 2022).²⁰

In Jordan, work permits were slow to be issued at first largely due to problems associated with mandatory sponsorship by a single employer in an informal, daily-wage market (International Labour Organisation 2017; Razzaz 2017). Upon de-linking Syrian work permits from employer sponsorship however, work permit issuance to Syrian refugees took off and has since exceeded a total of 300,000, although the vast majority are in domestically oriented sectors rather than those for export, including agriculture, construction, and services (Gordon 2019; UNHCR 2022).

5.2.2 Roll-out and delegation

Work permit policy changes linked to the Jordan Compact were mostly led by the Ministry of Labor with advisory support from the UNHCR, World Bank, ILO and various development actors, under the management of a "Syrian Employment Unit" at the Ministry of Labor. Trade and foreign investment were under the auspices of the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the related Jordan Investment Commission, which also handled larger-scale foreign investments. Collective responsiveness to adapt to the targets of the Compact was viewed as a necessity in Jordan, where one government official stated that they simply "need the loan."²¹

Much like in Jordan, job creation for refugees and host communities in Ethiopia fit into a larger goal of job creation in the country, dubbed the "20 Million Jobs Gap," referring to the difference between job demand and opportunities in the country (Ethiopian Monitor 2022). Notably, however, the Job Creation Commission does not mention refugee groups or the Jobs Compact initiatives. This reflects the solitary governance of the Compact and the CRRF in Ethiopia—while the aforementioned multi-party thematic committees were set to be established, in reality, ownership of refugee-related policy has been mostly left under the management of the Refugee and Returnee Services (RRS).²² Thematic committees²³ were never fully operationalized and have only been used sporadically, due to bureaucratic shifts and office restructuring linked to the change in government (Adujna 2021).²⁴

In this lies another key distinction in the governance of the Compacts in Ethiopia and Jordan. Through the engagement of the Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, and Ministry of Industry and Trade, the government of Jordan delegated various segments of the refugee response, including work permits, aid receipt and export management. This delegation expanded the management of the refugee population across several ministries, going far beyond the security and documentation functions confined mostly to the Ministry of Interior. This allowed for integrated policy changes, including home-based business approvals for refugees under the Ministry of Industry and Trade, work permit allowances for refugees under Labor, and refugee services project approval and tracking under the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation.

Alternatively, while the government of Ethiopia had made plans to expand the role of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labor and Skills, Ethiopian Investment Commission, and the respective bureaus at regional level to support the strategic implementation and realization of Compact and CRRF goals, issues related to refugees are still largely considered the domain of RRS.²⁵ Service delivery to refugees in Ethiopia such as health, education, and food rations, was maintained by RRS and its large network of officials and bureaus across regions and localities, accordingly maintaining the centralization of RRS and its management of refugees (Nigusie and Carver 2019). For instance, while the execution of the Compact or the CRRF may in theory involve the Bureau of Agriculture or Bureau Labor and Skill, in reality, decision-making is left with RRS and its wide network across localities. Various government entities and local governing bodies were also left unsure about their role in carrying out the CRRF.²⁶ The potential to provide integrated services across regional governments and various government entities is thus largely left untapped (Binkert *et al.*, 2021). This was also related to the lack of regulation of the refugee law. The consolidation of refugee management with RRS, even for the execution of the far-reaching, cross-sectoral Jobs Compact and CRRF, also meant that there was limited mobilization of resources and agencies beyond these entities, slowing down implementation processes.²⁷

5.2.3 Temporality of policy and compact process

Both Jobs Compacts were linked to companion plans and projects with the World Bank and donors including the EU and the UK. However, in Jordan, the Jobs Compact was *supported* by service delivery under the Jordan Response Plan—while keeping job creation and permit issuance distinct from aid projects and programs (see [Government of Jordan 2015](#); [Government of Jordan 2016](#)). However, in Ethiopia, the Jobs Compact was *integrated* into the broader CRRF, which included the broader aforementioned thematic areas with a medium- and long-term view.²⁸ Despite the Jobs Compact making up the largest project under the CRRF at just over half a billion dollars, its actual outcomes have stalled and work permit issuance has been slow. While the Jordan Compact had a clear “expiration date” initially set to 2026, when targets would presumably be reached, this was not the case in Ethiopia, as the CRRF has a considerably longer time horizon than the Jobs Compact might have had on its own (see [UNHCR 2021a](#)). That being stated, World Bank’s EOP project has an expiry date (until 2024, now extended to June 2025).

Furthermore, while both Jordan and Ethiopia relied on policy changes beyond parliament-approved law, Jordan arguably did so much more often—no significant legal changes concerning Syrians or refugees in general were passed in Jordan. The only change in *law* was the aforementioned Law no. 77 of 2016, regulating foreign investments in general. Ethiopia relied on an update to both Industrial Parks Regulations (no. 417/2017) and, more significantly, the 2019 Refugee Proclamation law, requiring the approval of parliament and thus guaranteeing legal grounds on which refugees could be locally integrated, should the law be operationalized to full capacity.

What these consistent changes and negotiations reveal is the central role that the aid disbursements of the Compacts have played in shaping the refugee labor policy framework. Development-oriented projects, including job-matching, vocational training, internships, and soft-skill training, prevailed in the years following the Jordan Compact ([ILO 2019](#); [Abu Ata 2021](#)). Similarly in Ethiopia, all of the Compact, CRRF and the following Refugee Proclamation were conditional on meeting policy goals ([Adugna 2021](#)). Despite this, the Jobs Compact and its funding opportunities appeared to fall “off the [policymakers’] radar.”²⁹ Observing these differing paths, it becomes apparent that differing contextual restraints and conditions have resulted in vastly different outcomes for Compacts that were modeled similarly, elaborated in the following section.

6. The permanent few or the temporary many? Integration obstructors in policy and law

In comparing the implementation of Compacts in Jordan and Ethiopia, it becomes apparent that the key distinction lies in implications on integration, and thus, integration approaches in each of the contexts. *Ad hoc* approaches more prevalent in Jordan are marked by their temporariness, putting in place legal and policy hurdles preventing permanent integration. However, Ethiopia's more *regulative* approach cements some level of integration rights, ultimately supporting a slower and more gradual labor inclusion process.

6.1 Integration obstructors in refugee labor frameworks

Ethiopia is a party to the International Convention on the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families, along with Migrant Workers Convention No. 143 of 1975 and the Migration for Employment Convention No. 97 of 1949 (Ashine 2017). Internally, Ethiopia's revised Labor Proclamation (No. 1156/2019) does not make specific provisions for refugees, albeit it states that any foreigner who wishes to be employed in any type of work in Ethiopia should possess a work permit issued by Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA, now MoLS).³⁰ However, the ability of a refugee to acquire legal work in Ethiopia remains challenging as different criteria are set in place for wage employment and joint projects. For joint projects, refugees must have been selected to participate in the project and must have already held approved refugee status in Ethiopia for three years prior (Section 8, Directive 02/2019). For waged employment, refugees must have employers apply on their behalf, with a declaration by the RRS that states Ethiopians may not cover the position for which the refugee is applying. Unlike the joint projects, to engage in wage earning avenue, a refugee should also get a work permit from MoLSA (now MoLS) or any other competent government body. These conditions are somewhat relaxed for those who have an Ethiopian spouse or children (Section 17, Section 18, Directive 02/2019). A work permit is also granted to a refugee or asylum seeker to work in a specific organization and in a specified work position in that organization. Employers are also expected to inform RRS of any exchanges or communications made with MoLS about a refugee they hired.

Jordan has not ratified any international agreements specifically pertaining to the rights of foreign workers, and regulates refugee and migrant worker law through the provision of independent Ministerial decisions or temporary instructions and regulations organized just under Section 12 of Jordan Labor Law no. 8 of 1996 (Prime Ministry of Jordan 1996; ILO 2018). A key constraint in refugee labor integration in Jordan is the reliance on sponsorship-based employment, otherwise known as the *kafala* system. This system ascribes the responsibility of employee management onto employers, including work permit application, residence, and entry and exit (Migrant Rights 2015). In the initial phase of the work permit program, permits were still tied to sponsorship. For many refugees already residing in Jordan, this was not necessarily appealing: the function of a work permit in an informal market is normally its link to residency rights. It is a relatively common—albeit illegal—practice to hold a less restricted permit in a sector other than the one in which a migrant is working, and with employers other than the actual sponsor. Due to the present disincentives, employer restrictions were loosened within several months. Agriculture sector permits—normally the easiest to acquire—were the first to be de-linked from sponsorship requirements (Knell 2016), followed by the construction sector (Kanso 2017).

Arguably, this change, the first of many in this direction, reflected a closer engagement with the realities of the labor market. While it is by no means “formalization” as much as it can be simply considered “legalization,” the responsiveness to the realistic needs of the sector ultimately indicated the prioritization of rent-seeking by the government of Jordan. As the work permit program did not ultimately constitute a significant legal change, these policy shifts were made possible—eventually culminating in the issuance of low-cost freelance permits that are neither constrained by sector nor sponsorship. Like migration and

refugee policy in Jordan at large, this is a responsive and ad hoc strategy and most importantly—it is temporary and would have remained as such. According to one staffer involved in the architecture of the Compact, linking Syrian MOI cards to work rights would have meant that Jordan automatically reached the associated job inclusion target—a measure that was refused by the GoJ.³¹ While both the governments of Ethiopia and Jordan showed clear engagement in refugee rentierist behavior strategies, it is evident that their policy trajectories and the scale of extracted rent played a role in the ability or willingness to meet the set targets and DLIs. This is not to say that the Jordanian government was more willing to extract rent, but rather, that its response to Syrian refugee inclusion—and refugee inclusion more broadly—was cushioned by safeguards to prevent long-term integration, an approach that Ethiopia also followed despite adopting a liberal refugee law (see the discussion below).

6.2 Refugee labor: inclusion³² or integration?

As discussed above, both Jordan and Ethiopia maintain refugee camps for the management of refugee populations, to varying degrees. In Jordan, both Za'atari and Azraq camps³³ allowed movement of up to thirty days at a time when applying for and successfully acquiring a work permit. These permits allowed those in camps to pursue employment opportunities, mainly on nearby farms as these permits were more affordable. These permits were arguably a method of working with the largely informal agriculture sector: while the jobs were not necessarily formal,³⁴ engagement in these activities without a work permit is illegal for foreign workers, and this policy shift legalized these activities. Others, although to a lesser extent, also worked in nearby factories, normally at the AlHassan Industrial Zone in Irbid (Almasri 2021).

Refugees in Ethiopia often rely on informal and daily-wage labor opportunities in markets around the camps (Graham and Miller 2021). Rather than resorting to regularizing these opportunities as in Jordan, the Ethiopian government instead diverted attention to job creation in industrial parks and agricultural projects—further from the periphery and border camps in which refugees in Ethiopia mostly reside (Nigusie and Carver 2019). In this sense, there appeared to be less interest in legalizing these work opportunities, and refugees were left to continue operating in parallel to the formal economy, reducing opportunities for formal integration.

This difference in strategy to meet Compact targets reflects the differing implications of labor inclusion in Jordan and Ethiopia. While incentives for focusing on industrial park employment were arguably higher for Jordan through the potential of benefiting from simplified rules of origin, the inability to concentrate employment in these areas eventually meant that the Jordan Compact was renegotiated to apply to factories across the Kingdom (Agulhas 2020). Simultaneously, work permit regulations for Syrian refugees became increasingly liberal, eventually culminating in a freelance self-employment permit scheme that is not tied to a particular employer and may be used for legal employment across occupations and sectors. This effectively unwinds the last of the mobility control regime regarding Syrian labor in Jordan, highlighting the importance of the role of incentives in carrying out these changes. Similarly, working from a context in which most refugees were integrated into urban and peri-urban areas allowed for a gradual increase in labor flexibility through a liberal work permit policy.

In Ethiopia, the Directive to Determine the Conditions for Movement and Residence of Refugees Outside of Camps (Directive No. 01/2019) established the necessary policy to support out-of-camp pledges made in the context of the CRRF. While out-of-camp policies were initially meant to support an estimated 10 per cent of the camp population and have been gradually liberalized, broad integration into urban areas has not yet been made possible. The out-of-camp policy is thus far restricted to Eritrean refugees and limited to those

Table 2. Uneven integration across the Gambella and Somali regions.

In Gambella, the CRRF and the Jobs Compact and its related goals are controversial (Binkert et al., 2021). Gambella hosts 94 per cent of the total number of South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia, where refugees and internally displaced citizens outnumber local populations. Anuak host citizens and refugee Nuer ethnic groups have repeatedly clashed over resource access and unequal service distribution (Hagos 2021). As Ethiopia is an ethnic federalist state, ethnic balance is particularly sensitive and affects levels of government representation. Because of this, there is local hesitation to support full integration of refugees in this area (Binkert et al., 2021). Conversely, in Ethiopia's Somali region, where refugees from Somalia enjoy kinship with the ethnically Somali Ethiopian majority, integration on a social level has already somewhat commenced through shared access to services and schooling, and the regional government appears to be willing to engage further with the CRRF process (Hagos 2021).

who (1) have sponsors, (2) have work permits, or (3) can prove that they can sufficiently cover their own costs (ReDSS 2020).³⁵ As a result, only an estimated 5,000 Eritrean refugees benefitted from an expansion of out-of-camp policy—while 70,000 Eritreans live in urban areas (UNHCR 2020; Adugna 2021). Anecdotal evidence dating to early 2020 from one camp in Northern Ethiopia suggested that, while a number of residents have managed to get ID cards that allow movement in and out of the camps, work permits had yet to be broadly issued (Tufa 2020). Arguably, the legalization of informal work with no spatial restrictions, in the context of Ethiopia, would be tantamount to local labor integration—perhaps explaining the gradual approach and general hesitation with its broad enforcement in line with *regulatory restrictive* policy patterns vis-a-vis local integration (see Table 2). While the Ethiopian government eventually passed a legal framework that contained the potential for refugee inclusion regarding labor, it failed to be operationalized at scale.

The current refugee response model is based on a blend of three policies: encampment, out of camp, and local integration, not just only the latter (ARRA 2017: 3). Despite its progressive elements, the 2019 Refugee Proclamation and the associated directive are considerably more restricted. The right to work directive defined conditions to work legally more narrowly than the expectations set out by the CRRF, the Jobs Compact, and the 2016 pledges. The directive outlined three avenues by which refugees could engage in legal income-generating activities including joint projects, wage-earning employment, and self-employment. The first of these three options awards refugees equal rights and access to work in the same conditions as Ethiopians, while the latter two set restrictions to protect the rights of Ethiopian citizens and constrict refugees' access only to jobs not well-employed by Ethiopians (ReDSS 2020). Self-employment requires an investment permit and license separate from those issued by RRS, and in the case of waged employment, work permits will only be issued if the work cannot be carried out by Ethiopians. However, as above and in addition to the requirement to have resided in Ethiopia for three years, work permits for joint projects must be preceded by the issuance of residence permits that allow movement out of the camps and residency in urban areas—thus adding extra steps for labor inclusion.³⁶ The newness of the approach and the different licenses and permits available to realize these outcomes meant that the policies were considerably disjointed between a number of overlapping frameworks (ReDSS 2020). Given the regulative nature of the Ethiopian policy frameworks on labor, refugee and residency, these would not allow for fast and responsive changes, relative to the Jordan Compact.

The continued enforcement of broad encampment, in tandem with a strong legal framework for refugee integration in Ethiopia, highlights the tension in place and progress made by the Ethiopian government at the national level: while the legal framework for refugee integration is comprehensive and just needs to be made effective, resource limitations and

differentiated local resistance in practice presents a constraint.³⁷ Integration is thus managed through two methods: first, via the use of camps and spatiality to control access to resources and formal economic opportunities, as international commitments to integration instead support longer horizons and durable solutions; and second, by making the implementation of the new refugee law dependent on resources availability and differentiated treatment (see Article 26 of the Refugee Proclamation 2019 [Ethiopia 2019]). Conversely, the Jordanian government does not rely on a comprehensive refugee law, and instead manages inclusion through a number of separate laws that address “foreigners” at large, and a series of circulars that address particular refugee nationalities (Alshoubaki 2018; Almasri 2021). Jordan built upon existing labor law without introducing new legal frameworks for refugee management, while focusing on operationalizing policy to fulfil the outcomes of the Compact. Through this, the government ensured the temporariness of their policies as they apply to refugees, and more importantly, to a particular group: laws that apply to refugees in Jordan do not apply to them as a collective group and usually specify nationalities and/or arrival timeframes.

Both Ethiopia and Jordan had clear integration constraints built into their policy responses. While Ethiopia’s legal framework and international commitments arguably allow for better integration, the realization of the Compact and CRRF goals was managed through the maintenance of camps and delayed responsiveness. In both of these cases, long-term integration of refugees has been resisted but, in the case of Jordan, its enforcement was made possible through putting in place temporal safeguards. While the Jordan Compact was an important subversion of the dominant sponsorship-based employment system, it is temporary by nature and is susceptible to expiration prior to each extension.

7. Conclusions

While the Jobs Compacts in Jordan and Ethiopia were similar in design, contextual factors affected their implementation and outlook. We identified three factors that impact the implementation and outcome of externally funded refugee integration programs similar to the Compacts: (1) governance of refugee residence and integration, (2) (de)centralization of refugee aid, assistance and management, and (3) host-state negotiation power. The distinctions identified in this comparison caveat the realization and implementation of refugee rentierist strategies adopted by host governments—their potential is necessarily varied by contextual differences beyond refugee composition. A deeper understanding of contextual realities reveal that these factors simultaneously impact (1) the outcome and realization of externally funded agreements and (2) the potential for creating an integration pathway for refugees. Indeed, this demonstrates the incongruity at the heart of refugee integration schemes: while state approach may seemingly accommodate increasingly inclusive policy over time, these do not necessarily constitute a pathway to broad refugee integration and may instead increase reliance on integration obstructors embedded in refugee policy. Negotiation power differentiated by the relevance of the respective countries as “refugee contexts” clearly impacted the scale of the aid packages awarded. Externally funded refugee integration schemes are successful insofar as they are temporary, particularly in Global South contexts. Realistically, permanent integration at scale remains hindered by hesitations.

Integration and associated security and economic constraints are politically sensitive in both contexts, however, the ways in which this is managed allowed for vastly different policy responses to refugee arrivals. In Jordan, this was characterized by limitations and temporariness in the form of short-term, nationality-restricted piecemeal policy changes under the mandate of varying government entities. In Ethiopia, the Jobs Compact was not temporary and instead linked to local integration as a durable solution in general, as such it had facilitated a policy shift in the country’s refugee response.

Different forms of refugee management and temporariness allowed for increased flexibility and restrictions in these contexts. While the Jordan Compact supported the creation of over 200,000 economic opportunities in the form of work permits, these are temporary and renewable. Very soon after implementation, the Jordanian government recognized that permits would need to be issued much beyond the industrial zones in order to meet targets, and thus adapted the Compact implementation accordingly. Ad hoc policymaking in Jordan with a strong central government meant that policy could be passed fairly quickly. The standalone nature of the Compact also meant that these changes were initially somewhat independent of broader developments. In turn, there has not been a substantial legal change in the law for refugee employment, as the work permit program is strictly limited to Syrian refugees on a temporary basis—as of mid-2024 and commensurate with the reduction in aid flows to Jordan, this program has been suspended altogether.

Conversely, Ethiopia's regulative framework meant that implementation and policymaking first needed to go through substantial legal change to replace the earlier law, ruling out the option of smaller, temporary changes. Still, the regulative laws were made conditional on the availability of external resources and differentiated treatment based on nationality of the refugees. Second, regional governments had a key role in implementing and operationalizing the law, but this dependency on their willingness to integrate refugees hampered the country's ability to enact a responsive policy in the initial years of the Jobs Compact (mainly in the Gambella region). Most importantly, the regulative nature of the Ethiopian refugee response stalled the implementation of the Jobs Compact. This was further compounded by the shift away from the construction of and employment in industrial camps and the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

While literature on refugee integration has largely drawn on Eurocentric work heavily focused on language constraints and issuance of citizenship, it is evident that this trajectory is largely inapplicable in the majority of refugee-hosting setting globally. Globally and especially in the Global South, migration and refugee arrivals overlap significantly due to open migration routes such as those in ECOWAS and (temporary) labor migration routes available in the Arabian Gulf states and in Jordan and Lebanon. Given these findings, the authors recommend that integration policies and programs must be contextualized not only in short- and medium-term considerations but in *broader* governance constraints. Labor inclusion of refugees does not exist in a political vacuum and, given its linkages to residency rights, may carry implications on long-term integration of refugees. Therefore, states that are reliant on voluntary return as a durable solution, as Global South states tend to be as significant refugee hosts, will likely hesitate to support unconditional refugee labor market inclusion given that there is little in the way of preventing legal refugee integration once labor is legalized. As the movement for similar programming only appears to be gaining steam—in, for instance, calls for a “Turkey Compact” (Kirişçi and Brandt 2019)—it is evident that development efforts must be considerate of the broad integration framework for refugees in a country, and not simply labor market realities.

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Notes

1. This statistic was generated prior to the displacement of Ukrainians into Europe.
2. It was announced during the Leaders' Summit on 20 September 2016, on the sidelines of the New York Declaration (conducted on 19 September 2016).
3. This paper uses a restricted definition of 'integration' that speaks to availability of protection and livelihood integration policies for refugees at scale, including access to formal work opportunities.
4. For this purpose, country-focused reports cover further details on this including Binkert *et al.* (2021) for more on Ethiopia and Razzaz (2017) for more on Jordan.
5. Economic opportunities in Jordan refer to jobs, issuance of work permits (i.e. *access* to a legal job), and cash-for-work programs run by international and national humanitarian organizations, while it refers to both wage employment and self-employment opportunities in Ethiopia.
6. Based on author's calculations.
7. This Protocol was considerably weakened in the decades after its agreement due to provisions requested by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in 1991 (Janmyr and Stevens 2021).
8. At the time of writing. This has since changed following the deposal of Syria's Assad-led government in December 2024.
9. Interview 10, Government Official, Ethiopia, 15 April 2022.
10. Rules of origin are essential components of trade agreements with the EU. These determine the minimum composition of a product exported from a country to determine import tariffs or prevent product dumping. The terms issued to Jordan were advantageous and akin to those given to least-developed nations and political allies (WTO 2022; see Arrangements List 2025).
11. Derived from the earlier Qualified Industrial Zones negotiated under a tripartite FTA between the USA, Jordan, and Israel, since replaced by a product-specific FTA between Jordan and the USA.
12. This later shifted in 2018, where the compact was renegotiated and simplified RoO expanded to factories outside of the zones and the targets related to the compact slightly shifted (AlDaja 2018). However total permit issuance continued to be important as its relevance to the World Bank financing remained unchanged regardless of compact renegotiation with the EU.
13. Interview 4, academic researcher, Ethiopia, 1 June 2022.
14. Interview 9, Diplomat, Ethiopia, 6 December 2021.
15. At the time of writing, June 2022.
16. Interview 1, civil society, Ethiopia, 27 May 2022.
17. This is in part due to a rapid change in government in 2018. However, the CRRF appeared to keep its relevance through the ratification of the 2019 Refugee Proclamation addressing key elements of the framework (Adugna 2021). The conflict in the Tigray region that broke out in late 2020 has also hampered and redirected significant government resources until the recently brokered ceasefire. For this reason, this paper focuses mostly on policy changes prior to the start of the conflict.
18. Interview 11, UN Agency Staff, Ethiopia, 23 June 2022.
19. This project tracker is an online platform hosted by the World Bank to reflect current status on achievement of disbursement-linked indicators.
20. Interview 7, former government worker, Ethiopia, 10 June 2022.
21. Interview 9, government official, Jordan, August 2019.
22. Interview 3, academic researcher, Ethiopia, 17 June 2022.
23. Also known as technical working groups.
24. Interview 1, civil society, Ethiopia, 27 May 2022.
25. Interview 7, former government worker, Ethiopia, 10 June 2022.
26. Interview 3, academic researcher, Ethiopia, 17 June 2022.
27. Interview 5, government worker, Ethiopia, 21 May 2022.
28. Interview 3, academic researcher, Ethiopia, 17 June 2022.
29. Interview 2, academic researcher, Ethiopia, 5 May 2022.
30. Now, as per the Proclamation No. 1263/2021 Definition of Powers and Duties of the Executive Branch of the Government, MoLSA has been re-structured as Ministry of Labor and Skills (MoLS).
31. Interview 8, former World Bank consultant, 15 August 2019.
32. The term 'inclusion' is used in reference to refugees in Jordan rather than 'integration', as it is perceived to be more temporary.
33. These are the only camps referred to in this analysis since Palestinian refugees in UNRWA-run camps were not eligible for the refugee work permit program, nor were all other non-Syrian refugees.
34. These permits were legal but could be considered informal in that they did not require a written contract or social security.
35. Interview 2, academic researcher, Ethiopia, 5 May 2022.
36. Interview 7, former government worker, Ethiopia, 10 June 2022.
37. Interview 6, UN agency official, 3 June 2022.

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