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Florian Scharpf,  
Bielefeld University, Germany

## \*CORRESPONDENCE

Md. Mahmudur Rahman Bhuiyan  
✉ md.bhuiyan@umanitoba.ca

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# The demand for welfare institutions in refugee camps

Md. Mahmudur Rahman Bhuiyan\*

Department of Sociology and Criminology, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB, Canada

Long-term encampment has become a reality for a large portion of the forcibly displaced population of the contemporary world, given the inadequacies and limitations of the conventional durable solutions to forced displacement. However, encampment is principally a temporary arrangement that prevents long-term programming in camps, making long-term encampment contradictory and an arena of uncertainty, misery, and despair for the camp dwellers. It is rather more rational to admit long-term encampment as a reality and act on it as it involves unjustifiable humanitarian costs. The paper calls for thinking beyond the conventional practices and focusing on the wellbeing of the encamped population from a life-course perspective. It proposes a framework for building welfare institutions in refugee camps.

## KEYWORDS

protracted refugee camp, welfare institutions, forced displacement, the welfare state, social protection

## Introduction

The welfare state is a modern phenomenon that exists in all nations in the world in different forms and levels of development. It is understood as the state's more active social involvement to promote the wellbeing of the citizens of a nation, which is manifested through the presence of a variety of state-supported legal measures, income assistance, and service provisions to protect citizens from different contingencies ensuring a decent living for them (Olsen, 2002). Welfare state institutions are now accepted as part of modern life, particularly in developed nations.

Despite originating in the liberal economic milieu (often argued to humanize capitalism), the welfare state embraces a normative commitment to cover all citizens instead of a segment of them through social safety nets (Briggs, 1961; Peterson, 1985). However, such an inclusive approach to welfare state programming does not apply to the forcibly displaced populations living in refugee camps in different national territories. Even though welfare state programming, a marker of advanced industrial economies, is expanding to developing nations<sup>1</sup> where the encamped populations are mostly located, it does not make any difference in these people's lives.

Refugee camps are normally designed as temporary shelters for forcibly displaced people who leave their countries of origin to flee war or conflict or to escape persecution (Mconnachie, 2016). Humanitarian aid and assistance that are provided to the encamped people by international organizations are short-term based, immediate responses to support the

<sup>1</sup> For details about the types and nature of welfare state institutions and programs in developing nations see Bhuiyan (2014, 2017) and Dorlach (2020).

displaced population. Encampment is thus understood as an interim measure until a durable solution is devised for the forcibly displaced people by the concerned actors and stakeholders in the form of repatriation, local integration, or resettlement (Hyndman, 2000). It is a state of statelessness as the citizenship status of the camp dwellers, particularly those in exile, remains unrecognized.

Due to insufficiencies and diverse limitations of the conventional durable solutions to forced displacement, long-term encampment has emerged as the *de facto* solution. As a result, many people spend a significant period of their lives, even their entire lives, in uncertainties, despair, misery, and vulnerabilities in camps (Mcconnachie, 2016; Parekh, 2016). It is, therefore, imperative to develop an approach of social provisioning for the protracted population to ensure their decent and dignified life, capturing a life-course approach. This article proposes some ideas of social safety nets for encamped populations in light of the welfare state framework.

The paper is divided into three major sections. The first section accounts for the limitations of the existing refugee responses in ensuring a decent and worthwhile living for forcibly displaced encamped people and elaborates on the need for a more inclusive and whole-life approach to social programming in refugee camps. The second section presents a framework of social protection for the encamped population in light of the welfare state approach and accounts for the justification of the proposed approach in camp contexts. The third section accounts for the potential welfare matrix to support camp social provisions. The paper ends with a conclusion.

## Contextualizing the need for welfare state institutions for protracted populations

In the modern world, state and citizenship are the most fundamental bases of individual protection and wellbeing. The legal status of full membership that the state confers to its citizens guarantees their fundamental rights to life, permanent residence, vote, own property, liberty, and prosperity (Handler, 2004). The modern concepts of social citizenship and social citizenship rights expounded by Marshall (1950) in the middle of the last century have further consolidated the state-citizen relationship through incorporating a moral obligation for the state to ensure three forms of citizenship rights—civil, political, and social—to citizens. Together, these rights guarantee citizens' liberty, freedom of speech and movement, right to exercise political power (either through voting or running for political offices), and “a whole range of rights from a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society” (Marshall, 1950, 11). Thus, a normative relationship between the state and the individual is grounded in modern state theories.

The welfare institutions defining the modern welfare state that have developed throughout the world for over a century are based on the concept of social citizenship rights. The welfare state is commonly understood as the state's more active social role with an institutionalized commitment to ensure that those vulnerable to the free functioning of the market are somehow protected. Welfare state institutions include a whole range of income transfers, services, and legal provisions to support those who fail to engage in the market effectively and manage their living (Bhuiyan, 2015). Common income transfer provisions include child

benefits, family allowances, old age allowances, disability allowances, lone mother allowances, housing allowances/subsidized housing, unemployment assistance, medical allowances, and tax credits. Common service provisions include healthcare, disability services, personal care for seniors, childcare, public housing, education, and employment training. Finally, common legal provisions include labor rights legislation relating to minimum wages, maximum daily work hours, weekly holidays, paid vacations, paid maternity and parental leaves, workplace injury, and sickness and legal measures protecting citizens from different forms of ‘diswelfare’ including child labor, child marriage, child abuse, corporal punishment, and elder abuse (Olsen, 2021). While the presence of the provisions and their features in terms of coverage, benefit levels, duration, eligibility criteria, financing, and wait time vary across national economic, political, and cultural contexts, they, in general, represent the state's normative commitment to protect its citizens.

This political spirit is reflected in popular definitions of the welfare state. Peterson (1985, 602) defines it as “the use of governmental power to protect people from income losses inherent in industrial society and to provide for a minimum standard of economic wellbeing for all citizens.” Kaufmann (2001, 817) suggests that we can speak of a welfare state “only if social services are linked to normative orientations so that political actors assume a collective responsibility for the wellbeing of the entire population.” With a similar purview, Leisering (2003, 179) states, “A welfare state emerges when a society or its decision-makers become convinced that the welfare of the individual is too important to be left to customs or informal arrangements and private understanding and is therefore a concern of government.” Although more developed in high-income countries, welfare institutions are consistently expanding in the world's developing areas, with the practical implications that more people are being covered by the state's normative commitment to protect citizens' rights and ensure decent living. It is generally taken for granted that every individual in the modern world is a citizen of a state which guarantees them such rights and protection (Toft, 2007). Unfortunately, this is not the fact.

A large portion of the global population lives outside the conventional state system. Of the over 110 million people (one in every 74 people globally) who are forcibly displaced (as of the end of 2022), nearly one-fourth (over 23 million as of the end of 2022) are in protracted situations<sup>2</sup> in 57 camps in 37 countries located in the Global South (UNHCR, 2023).<sup>3</sup> The average length of stay of the protracted people in camps has exceeded twenty-five years, and it is consistently increasing (Betts et al., 2017). Many people are born and lead their entire lives; others spend significant portions of their lives in camps. According to a calculation by Hathaway (2018), over 13 million refugees lived in camps for over two decades in 2018. Due

<sup>2</sup> Protracted situations are defined as “those where more than 25,000 refugees from the same country of origin have been in exile in a given low- or middle-income host country for at least five consecutive years” (UNHCR, 2023, 22).

<sup>3</sup> Among some old protracted refugee camps include Cooper's Camp in West Bengal, India, established in 1947, which houses 7,000 refugees from the then East Bengal; Palestinian refugee camps in West Bank established in the late 1940s where over 750,000 refugees registered by UNWRA live; Nakivale Settlement in Uganda established in 1959 where about 150,000 refugees live; and Dadaab Camp in Kenya established in 1991 where about 500,000 refugee live (Finch, 2015; Betts et al., 2017; UNHCR, 2022).

to the lengthy duration of protracted situations, the encampment is now more popularly referred to as the *de facto* fourth solution to forced displacement or refugee crisis (Parekh, 2016). However, the encamped people, as long as they remain in protracted situations or do not receive a durable solution, remain uncovered and unprotected by the welfare institutions developed under the state system.

Protracted encampment contradicts the concept of the camp itself. A camp is meant to provide emergency accommodation and assistance during a crisis, such as when people are forced to flee their homes due to war, persecution, or violence. UNHCR also does not consider camps to be a long-term arrangement (Martin, 2017). When a camp becomes protracted, it does not get the mandate for long-term planning, arrangement, and programming. Therefore, the camp becomes inadequate in addressing the residents' life course issues and needs or promoting their material and social conditions under its current mandate and settings.

As a camp moves from an emergency crisis response to the long-term care and maintenance phase,<sup>4</sup> it becomes a condition of life (Schiltz et al., 2018). Humanitarian assistance consistently decreases over time with the expectation that camp residents become self-reliant. Stranded people are left with austerity and little or no right to work, freedom of movement, education, employment, and entrepreneurial or market participation opportunities. This situation is like asking someone to swim while keeping their hand and legs knotted. The people are not allowed to renovate homes, own assets, have bank accounts, get loans, or buy land. All these constraining conditions and deprivations are based on the assumptions that their presence in camps is temporary, and they may leave it anytime, whereas the reality is that they do not go anywhere; instead, they continue to remain stranded and protracted in camps with misery and loss (Betts et al., 2017). Mconnachie (2016, 406) rightly claims that "They [contemporary refugee camps] are spatially bounded, biopolitical space of containment and segregation, but are not temporary. These are detention centers with a continuing existence, not linked to political reforms or the opening of a durable solution."

With such a contradiction between the mandate of short-term provisions and long-term existence, protracted camps become arenas of uncertainty, vulnerability, and deprivation for the encamped population. Camps fail to ensure their dignified living without valid and durable sources of income for them but means-tested, residual assistance in the form of charity. Children's education is interrupted. Short-term vocational training provisions are often unsuitable, inadequate, or irrelevant for youth without a functional labor market where the skills could be sold (Androff, 2022). The absence of banking facilities and provisions of asset ownership prevents entrepreneurial potential. Different forms of diswelfare, such as child marriage, early motherhood, and domestic violence, become rampant due to family financial hardship and stress (DeJong et al., 2017). Elderly populations, persons with disabilities, and lone mothers are often particularly vulnerable and neglected as they do not fit in the self-reliance model, and their family members and relatives are unable to support them (Bhuiyan, 2024). Thus, people of different age categories face different forms of adverse contingencies in protracted camps. Without state protection and with limited humanitarian support and individual opportunities, protracted camps thus offer a condition of

life, which is practically a condition of abandonment for the protracted population where life is largely wasted and neglected.

Many scholars point at the dysfunctionality and inadequacies of the conventional three durable solutions to forced displacement (repatriation, local integration/permanent settlement, and third-country resettlement) as reasons for protracted encampment (Androff, 2022). Other scholars, such as Bhuiyan (2024), argue that long-term encampment is a result of the political will of the countries of origin, host nations, and resettling countries who do not want to share the costs for terminating protracted situations through the available durable solutions. Irrespective of who and what is responsible for this situation, long-term encampment is a reality, and it is reasonable to accept it. As in many situations, they are practically permanent, and there is no reason to assume or treat them as temporary. Therefore, actions and measures should be followed to make long-term arrangements for the protracted people to lead decent and dignified lives in camps. Here lies the justification for the demand for welfare institutions in protracted refugee camps.

Welfare state institutions are integral and fundamental features of modern, humane life (Garland, 2016). Regardless of political systems, they exist in different forms, reflecting state intervention to protect citizens. The most agreed argument is that welfare state institutions are responses to necessities, and they defuse because human's basic and social needs are similar (Wilensky and Lebaux, 1958). There is no question about human needs for food, education, housing, and the protection of dignity. Issues of social welfare such as old age, disability, illness, and income loss due to unemployment and parenthood, although different from basic needs, become pertinent and pressing depending on the level of social and economic circumstances (such as family structures, community ties, and the nature of the economy and labor market). If the provisions for basic and social welfare needs that define welfare state institutions are deemed necessary under the state system, it is pertinent that they are expanded to protracted camps.

The central argument for welfare state institutions is to make things better by safeguarding vulnerable people from a range of contingencies such as health, social security, housing, education, employment support, and social care with the spirit of collective responsibility (Spicker, 2017). More common provisions include income transfer (social assistance or social insurance)<sup>5</sup> for low income, temporary loss of income for unemployment and illness, old age and disability as well as education for children and often adults and healthcare services. These provisions can be residual or comprehensive depending on the perceptions of deservingness and the relative priorities between poverty and equality or social justice (Esping-Andersen, 1990). However, as they are provided under the state system, camp dwellers remain outside their coverages. As protracted camps become permanent, it may become necessary to cover protracted people with similar provisions as a means to safeguard them from evolving social contingencies in camp.

When camp moves from the emergency to the maintenance and care stage and camp residents are expected to self-help, there are groups of people who need mutual support, such as persons with disability, elderly people, lone parents, and those who experience temporary job loss due to illness or unemployment, and those with

4 There are three stages in the camp life cycle: Camp Set-up/Improvement, Camp Care and Maintenance, and Camp Closure (USA for UNHCR, 2021).

5 Social assistance refers to means-tested, targeted cash transfer or in-kind service benefits, and social insurance refers to contribution-based programs targeting mainly the working class (Olsen, 2002).

low income. As the camp economy and labor market grow along with the growth of the workforce, regulatory measures to protect them from exploitation and oppression become necessary. Children need support for education and protection from malnutrition in cases their families do not have sufficient income to provide them with balanced food. All these new and evolving needs contextualize the need to establish welfare state institutions in camps.

## A framework of the welfare state institutions for refugees in camps

There are instances of developmental initiatives to promote refugees' material condition and wellbeing. During the period between 1960s and the early 2000s, several initiatives such as the International Conference on Refugees in Africa 1981 (ICARA I), The International Conference on Refugees in Africa 1984 (ICARA II), The International Conference Refugees in Central America 1987 (CIREFCA that ran between 1987 and 1994), and The UNHCR Convention Plus of the early 2000s were undertaken under the idea of from aid to self-reliance (or from relief to development) with the aim to reduce refugees' dependence on aid and make them self-reliant. These initiatives were largely state-centric and merged with the durable solution of local integration. It was assumed that the host nations would work with international organizations and donor nations with a commitment to local integration of the displaced refugees. The primary concern of this approach has been to support public policy to make refugee economic activities more market-based, so their economic outcomes are more sustainable. However, these initiatives largely failed due to host nations' reluctance to integrate refugees into their territories (Betts et al., 2017). The result has been the permanency of refugee camps in the absence of the functionality of alternative durable solutions. It has become imperative that long-term, sustainable measures be initiated within camps, considering the reality that camps are permanent.

The paper does not aim to prescribe a particular set of welfare institutions for protracted camps. Such an objective would be impractical, given that welfare institutions are developed in response to necessity (Wilensky, 1975). They are introduced to address new and evolving social problems. Therefore, the institutions initiated in a camp would depend on its social needs and context. This section provides an overview of possible welfare institutions that can be considered for protracted camp situations.

There are some common issues across the protracted situations in the Global South. For example, while education is considered a fundamental right and a basic need to realize human potential under conventional state systems, there is a scarcity of educational opportunities for children and youth in camps. While there are some opportunities for primary education, secondary education is rare and tertiary education is almost absent.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, expanding education to the tertiary level in camps should be considered, and enough

educational institutions and facilities should be established to ensure that access to educational opportunities is facilitated to the camp-dwelling people and they can materialize their human, material, and intellectual potential. The provisions of stipends, scholarships, and student loans should be introduced so that children and youth do not drop out due to material constraints.

Along with the educational expansion, measures should be taken for youth's smooth transition from school to the labor market in the form of active labor market provision. While with the age of camps, camp economies tend to become more vibrant, creating more employment opportunities for camp dwellers, measures should be taken to integrate the camp economy with the host economy and the international economy to adequately absorb educated refugee youth, particularly those complete secondary and tertiary education, into broader the labor market to make these opportunities sustainable and meaningful for them.

In general, healthcare services are provided in camps through primary care facilities operated by different NGOs or international organizations. Referral services and tertiary care are absent there. Given that protracted camps are commonly located in remote areas of the host nations, protracted people can hardly access referral and tertiary services when needed. Therefore, referral and tertiary healthcare facilities should be introduced in camps. In addition, mental health is a pressing issue in protracted situations. Due to the absence of a sense of belonging and a feeling of uncertainty, poor mental health, including anxiety and depression, is prevalent among protracted populations (Lustig et al., 2004; Vossoughi et al., 2018). Mental health services, including counseling services, should be introduced or enhanced in camps.

Given that camp dwellers are not allowed to build or renovate houses in camps, housing is another cause of misery and suffering for the protracted populations. They are vulnerable to cold weather, heat, rain, or storms, depending on the climate. Therefore, the existing provision should be revised to allow refugees to build and renovate homes. The possibility of housing loans can be considered based on assessing the prospect for durable solutions (since they are conventionally denied credit facilities considering their theoretical temporary status).

In many old refugee camps, vibrant refugee economies are present where refugees participate as entrepreneurs, employers, or employees (Betts et al., 2017). In such situations, there may be risks of workers' basic rights being violated and workers being exploited and oppressed. In camps where there is a well-developed labor market, basic labor rights protection measures such as provisions of formal job contract, minimum wages, maximum daily work hours, weekly holidays, and paid holidays should be introduced. In addition, active labor market provisions such as vocational and employability training can be introduced or enhanced (depending on the level of development of the camp economy) for job seekers in the camp labor markets. Besides, rehabilitative skill development training, cash transfer and services provisions can be introduced for persons with disabilities, widowed, or elderly population who are unable to participate in the labor market. Finally, social protection measures such as workers' welfare funds, accidental insurance, sickness insurance, and provident funds can be introduced to support workers at times of sickness, temporary job loss or retirement.

Finally, different forms of 'diswelfare' such as child marriage, child labor, and corporal punishment, are common and often rampant in refugee camps (Mondain and Lardoux, 2013; DeJong et al., 2017). These are detrimental to the balanced growth of children and the realization of their human potential. Legislative or regulatory measures

<sup>6</sup> For example, while, as of September 2017, the net average primary school enrollment in all refugee settlements in Uganda (protracted refugee camps in Uganda are called refugee settlements) was 46%, the net average secondary school enrollment was only 8%. There were no tertiary education facilities in those settlements (Windle International Uganda, 2017).

should be introduced in or expanded to camps to protect encamped children from such adverse experiences. Table 1 summarizes the potential areas of welfare interventions in protracted refugee camps.

Thus, ideally different forms of welfare state institutions can be introduced in protracted camps. The primary goal is to protect the encamped populations from different forms of risks and contingencies and promote their wellbeing so they can lead lives similar to citizens under state systems. However, which institutions to introduce, where and when will depend on when it is felt needed in a particular camp context in commensurate with common social goals—ensuring a decent living with human dignity. Nevertheless, a pertinent question is: Who will introduce and maintain welfare state institutions in refugee camps? This question is addressed in the next section.

### The potential welfare matrix of refugee camps

A welfare system refers to the totality of private and public allowances, benefits, programs, services, and legislations within a jurisdiction (Olsen, 2002). While the welfare state is informed by the state's more involvement in social provisioning, the welfare system does not necessarily require it. A welfare system depends more on a welfare matrix or a welfare mix—the combination of sources of wellbeing for a population living under a jurisdiction (Powell and Barrientos, 2011). Although conventionally, the welfare state and the welfare system have worked within the state system, it is not necessarily the state that must be at the center of a welfare system or welfare state institutions. In the early stages of welfare state development, employers, trade unions, and voluntary organizations played critical roles in initiating and formulating social welfare measures. The state came “late to the party” (Spicker, 2017, 5). For example, in Britain and the United States, the presence of strong charitable and philanthropic organizations delayed the state's active involvement in the welfare system (Kuhnle and Sander, 2010). In contemporary developed nations, a nexus of state, market, and family primarily constitutes the national welfare systems, although their relative roles and contributions vary across nations, explaining the variations

among the welfare states in the developed world (Esping-Andersen, 1990). In his examination of welfare state programming in developing nations, Bhuiyan (2015) explored the involvement of 12 different welfare providers that included state, family, market, foreign nations, international development agencies, United Nations organizations, international non-government organizations, domestic non-government organizations, local communities or community-based organizations, civil society/activist organizations, and individual philanthropic initiatives. Thus, the composition of the welfare matrix may vary across contexts, and a welfare system does not have to be state-centric.

Three things are important for the formation of a welfare system. These are (a) the identification of the issues or problems to be addressed, (b) the establishment of a system of mutual support, and (3) a complex interaction and interplay among supporting networks. As Spicker (2017, 5) suggests, “a welfare state is not so much a pattern of government provision as a complex set of social arrangements—a welfare system.” Thus, any combination of welfare providers can constitute the welfare matrix in any state or non-state jurisdiction.

Similarly, any combination of welfare providers can form a complex social arrangement to form welfare systems in protracted camps. In situations where the host nation plays an intensive interventionist role in supporting the displaced population, the state can lead in building a camp welfare system in collaboration with international agencies and local/community-based organizations. For example, in Uganda's Kyangwali refugee camp, established in 1989, the host country allows the right to work and conditional freedom of movement for the refugees. Upon their arrival, the state provides them with an agricultural plot, part of which they can use for residence and the rest for cultivation and crop production. The protracted refugees can sell excess crops to meet needs other than food and housing. However, the refugees do not have access to banking services to create saving plans, microfinance, or capital for entrepreneurship. They are also not allowed renovate or change their sheds made of mud and tarpaulins. The primary consideration for such a denial is that the refugees' presence in the camp is temporary, and they can leave it anytime. However, they have been living in camps for over three decades and have not gone anywhere (Betts et al., 2017). Instead, these restrictions create barriers for them to improve their conditions through self-efforts. The state can allow them to open bank accounts, get start-up loans, and construct more comfortable and durable houses made of wood and corrugated tin if not brick, buildings. In addition, the nation-state can collaborate with UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations and agencies active in camps to implement the United Nations Education for All program and establish sufficient primary, secondary, and tertiary educational institutions and introduce social welfare provisions for the elderly and persons with disability who are unable to cultivate lands to produce crops.<sup>7</sup>

In some protracted situations, the host nation is largely reluctant about the protracted population. Particularly, when the host nation is not a signatory of international refugee conventions and treaties or does not have sufficient protection capacity, it tends to restrict refugees

TABLE 1 Areas of welfare intervention in protracted refugee camps.

Intervention area	Proposed social provisions
Children and youth	Primary, secondary, and tertiary education; stipend, scholarships, student loan; active labor market provisions (vocational and employability training) regulatory measures for child marriage, child abuse, child labor
Health	Primary, secondary, and tertiary healthcare; mental health (counseling) facilities
Working people	Regulations for formal job contracts, minimum wage, maximum work hours, weekly holidays, and vacation; accidental insurance; sickness insurance, provident fund, and welfare fund
Low income households	Cash transfer, lone mother allowance, housing loan
Persons with disabilities	Disability allowance, rehabilitation, and caring services
Elderly population	Old age allowance, widow allowance, and regulations for elder care and the prevention of elder abuse

<sup>7</sup> As of 2018, 54% of children went to primary schools, while only 6% went to secondary schools (392 out of 6,427 youth ages 14–17), and only 28 youth were enrolled in the only vocational training center (Kyangwali Youth Community Technology Access, CTA); there was only one secondary school and no tertiary educational institution in the Kyangwali Camp (UNHCR, 2019).

in segregated camps, limit their movement, and leave most of the protection responsibilities on UNHCR and its partners. Kenya, for example, has adopted an 'abdication policy' to render refugees "an international community issue" (Betts et al., 2017, p. 51). In such situations, UNHCR practically replaces the state and exercises sovereign authority in camps for which it is often referred to as a "surrogate state" or the "country of UNHCR" (Betts et al., 2017, p. 51). In such a situation, the UNCHR can play a leading role in creating a welfare system in a camp. The way UNHCR initiates measures to promote values such as gender equality and women empowerment in camps (Olivius, 2016); it can also initiate measures to introduce social welfare programs and provisions for children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, in collaboration with the host nation and its non-state partners.

Again, in camps where there are well-developed camp economics and labor markets, and refugees are engaged in different formal and informal economic and entrepreneurial activities, the camp economy can play an important role in the wellbeing of the camp residents. For example, there are vibrant economies in Uganda's Nakivale Settlement (one of the oldest refugee camps in Africa) and Kenya's remote Dadaab Camp. In the Nakivale Camp, UNHCR, and its partners currently implement the Self-Reliance Strategy and do not provide food ration or loan. Instead, they provide technical assistance for agricultural and vocational training in areas of phone repair, catering, tailoring, and soap making with minimal coverage. Having limited international assistance, the refugees engage in diverse income-generating economic activities in the camp as part of their survival strategies, which include employment in bars and cafes, international agencies, school teaching, medium or large retail shops, fast-food stands, restaurants, cloth stores, communication and transportation businesses, and agricultural farms. All such economic activities operate mostly informally (Betts et al., 2017). In such protracted situations, market serves as the most important source of wellbeing for the encamped population. The host nation and UNHCR and its partners, in cooperation with local employers, can develop a market-centered welfare system by transforming the informal economy into a more formal economy and introducing basic labor rights related to formal employment contracts, minimum wages, maximum work hours, and weekly holidays to protect employees from exploitation and oppression. They can also introduce workplace health and safety regulations and contextually appropriate workers benefit programs and regulations related to workplace accidents, sickness, parenting, and retirement.

Besides, as a camp becomes old and the refugee community gets settled in their new condition of life, the civil sector can also emerge as an important source of wellbeing for the protracted population. The host nation and the international community can promote philanthropic and charitable organizations and activities in camps. They can also inspire relatively better off refugees and families to engage in philanthropic initiatives.

Thus, depending on contexts, various combinations of actors can form the welfare matrix in protracted refugee camps. If the host nation plays an active role in the establishment of welfare state institutions, UNHCR can continue its care and maintenance role in protracted camps. If, however, the host nation defers the responsibility of the protracted population to the UNHCR and other providers and the camp economy and community are not well developed, the UNHCR may need to play a leading role. Given that most protracted camps are

in the least developed nations, it is likely a reasonable option in many cases. In such a situation, the current refugee regime must be reformed to allow the UNHCR to build and maintain welfare state institutions in protracted refugee camps.

## Conclusion

The key argument that the article intends to put forward is that irrespective of reasons if long-term encampment is inevitable, it is reasonable to accept this reality and work on it. If welfare state institutions constitute integral components of modern life to protect citizens from different forms of vulnerabilities and risks to ensure decent and dignified living, in that case, such an arrangement should be expanded to camps. Protracted camps must not necessarily be a condition of deprivation, uncertainty, and abandonment where life and humanity are wasted. If people are to live in camps for a significant period or generations, there should be social arrangements for their decent and meaningful lives. The types of welfare state institutions, social arrangements or the welfare matrix can differ according to local conditions and needs. The paper only presented some examples of social problems in camps that can be addressed and possible welfare measures and matrix that could be initiated in protracted situations. However, the most important thing is a commitment to appreciate that those destined to live in protracted situations deserve to live decent and worthwhile lives like citizens, and both outside and inside camps deserve equal treatment as humans. If humanizing the state and economy is necessary for citizens within a political system, humanizing protracted conditions is also necessary for the stranded camp dwellers who live outside the state systems. They must not be treated differently, denied, or left out simply because they are displaced and stranded to live in exile conditions. If the world does not find a durable solution for the protracted populations, it should make protracted situations more livable and congenial for meaningful life. It is necessary for humanity and for ensuring human rights for all. If welfare state institutions are necessary to this end, they should exist in protracted camps, too.

## Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

## Author contributions

MB: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Software.

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## Conflict of interest

The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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