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MITIGATION EFFORTS ON REFUGEES' CHALLENGES ON LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES IN ELDORET CITY

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Abstract

Refugees are increasing worldwide and according to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), their hosting is the preserve of the destination countries and the international community. Support to refugees is sometimes challenging because refugee agencies and host governments lack adequate resources to take care of their welfare. Most of the refugees are left to fend for themselves. The main objective of this study was to assess the mitigation efforts on refugees' challenges on livelihood strategies in Eldoret City. The study incorporated both the individualist theory and the model developed by Harris and Todaro. The study adopted a descriptive research design and utilized mixed methods approach. The target population comprised of all adult South Sudanese living in Eldoret City, Kenya. The population size was 1396 adults. The sample size of the study as determined by Krejcie and Morgan formulae was 301. The respondents were picked from their households using systematic sampling technique in which every 5th household was selected until the desired sample (n=301) was reached. The study instruments included a questionnaire and interview guide. Three hundred and one questionnaires were disseminated to refugees while seven (7) interviews were conducted for government officers. Data was coded, entered and cleaned with the aid of SPSS software. Quantitative analysis was done using descriptive statistics while qualitative data was thematically analyzed and interpreted. The quantitative findings of the study were presented using tables and charts while the qualitative data was presented using themes, narrative descriptions and use of participant quotes. The study findings indicated that most (55.1%) of the Sudanese refugees were engaged in business as a livelihood strategy, while 15.0% were employed. However, the leading livelihood strategy was skill trading in which service is offered for money so as to sustain individuals and/or families. Majority (40.2%) of the refugees depended fully on monetary assistance from their relatives while 34.9% depended on this assistance partly and 19.9% did not depend on it. The Monetary assistance was provided by family/relatives and friends at a rate of 65.3%. 49.8% of the refugees had transnational networks for accessing remittances while 45.2% had local contacts. 30.2% of the refugees believed that provision of job opportunities could be

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a way out to solve the challenges they have on livelihoods. Data from qualitative interviews indicated that sometimes refugees lack money to use, and in such situations the religious members assist them. In addition, other challenges experienced include discrimination by landlords and security enforcement officers. The challenges experienced on refugee livelihoods was exacerbated by inadequate refugee funding. The study concluded that there was a myriad of challenges which refugees face in their day-to-day life and engagement in business is not able to solve most of these challenges. The study recommends provision of jobs and funds to help urban refugees mitigate on challenges.

Keywords: *Mitigation, Refugees and Livelihoods.*

1.0 Introduction

In the international refugee regime, the issue of how to understand and support the livelihoods of refugees began to emerge as a pressing agenda around the beginning of this century. Its emergence is largely due to the failure of the international refugee regime to provide any effective solutions for the numerous protracted refugee situations. Currently, over two-thirds of refugees in the world are trapped in prolonged exile in poor developing regions where host states and communities often have scarce resources (Milner & Loescher, 2011). With the declining financial commitment of the international donor society, it has become clear that UNHCR is unable to ensure essential needs for all prolonged refugee populations (Jamal, 2000).

One of the mitigation strategies is to support institutions and non-state actors. In such cases, support to institutions may not be effective - it may be more important to support non-state actors in order to reduce vulnerability and improve access to refugees. USAID (2005) asserts, state regimes and powerful individuals working within those regimes may actively block access to essential assets, just as they may facilitate access to others. When the state deliberately marginalizes particular groups, livelihoods are constrained and the likelihood of conflict increases. In additions, when policies and institutions of such states are positive, but weak, providing support to strengthen state institutions and the policy environment can be an effective approach. In addition to this, conflict management and resolution is important to match mitigation. Conflict damages livelihoods, helps restore access to resources, and can build a foundation for peace and reconciliation. Livelihood support should not be seen as a substitute for the important tasks of conflict resolution and peace-building, but it may resolve some of the tension and urgency surrounding the conflict. Therefore, it can be an important tool for ending hostilities.

An additional mitigation revolves around promoting economic development strategies. Roger and Héloïse (2014), point out that, the challenge for humanitarian and development actors is to stabilize the precarious economic situation, forge a transition from assistance to development, promote economic development strategies that support host and refugee communities equitably, and reduce the potential for negative economic impacts to exacerbate domestic and regional tensions. At the same time it is imperative to ensure and enhance a 'protective environment' for the refugees to do business. An activity within the promoting economic development strategies is initiating income generation activities. Income generation initiatives boost incomes for those who are already working, without having a significant impact on those without any employment. Many of the other livelihood's interventions have chosen to focus on non-monetary gains, such as providing food and skills, because refugee restrictions and guiding regulations prevent them from adequately earning an income (Mendoza 2011).

Another mitigation to livelihood has to do with empowerment, and in this regard NGOs and governments should work as facilitators for the process (Action Aid 2004). The range of vocational trainings and agricultural initiatives available to people expands their preparation for a vast array of livelihood strategies. Empowerment may involve interventions such as organic farming, cooking, hairdressing, motorcycle repair, income generation through pig-raising and micro-credit for small shops, soap making and handicraft-making. Building on people's own efforts to protect and strengthen their livelihoods can complement conflict resolution efforts. For example, in Bosnia in the mid-1990s, the first people who were able to contemplate reconciliation were traders who formed economic linkages with others on the opposite side of the conflict. These "patterns of pragmatic cooperation" typically start on a very modest scale. Traders are often the first to venture across front lines, selling goods or trading with the perceived enemies. People also negotiate across battle lines to get access to basic services. With shared economic interest comes an increased confidence between actors and greater willingness to take investment risks or to build up savings. In South Africa and Sri Lanka, business communities have progressed beyond these first steps to mobilize for peace at the national level (International Alert 2002). On the other hand, empowerment can be through skill acquisition. In the most recently conducted NGO survey on employment, more than 50 percent of refugees in seven camps listed their current occupation as 'housework' and more than 55 percent reported having no income (ZOA Refugee Care, 2011).

Other mitigation strategies include offering psychosocial health of refugees by giving them productive activities to engage in. For instance, the COERR's programs for vulnerable groups strived to provide emotional support, which is an extremely beneficial by-product that has the potential to alleviate social problems stemming from boredom and frustration (Purnell 2011). While livelihood strategies change in response to shifts in a household's access to assets, their effectiveness depends on many external factors.

In summary, mitigations may involve; developing a more secure evidence base on which to build better targeted interventions, tackling the costs and impacts and the livelihood needs of the refugees and the host populations, tackling national-level impacts and the fiscal stress on public services, safeguarding and enhancing the rights of refugees and embed a rights-based orientation within the governance structures of the countries, Stronger legal benchmarks and better coverage of protection gaps in the national legal frameworks, and need to promote respect for refugees' rights, prevent violations and abuses towards refugees and reduce vulnerability. Policies and institutions, both formal and informal,

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are powerful forces that either help or hinder access to assets. These include systems of governance, gender roles, ownership systems, religious doctrine, and cultural mores (Lautze 1997). Policies and institutions are very vital for livelihood mitigations and more especially it points to the work of stakeholders (government or non-state actors).

2.0 Research Design and Methodology

A research design, as outlined by Kombo and Tromp (2006), serves as a specific framework that guides a researcher in conducting a study. They describe it as the foundational structure of research, acting as the cohesive force that integrates various components of a research project. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) characterize a research design as a comprehensive plan devised for investigating a particular problem, encompassing elements such as literature review, discussion of the design itself, methodologies, and data analysis techniques. They emphasize that a well-thought-out research design is crucial as it compels researchers to consider all facets of the study, aids in its evaluation, and ensures methodological rigor, ultimately leading to higher quality research. Similarly, Kothari (2008) views a research design as a blueprint essential for data collection, measurement, and analysis, outlining the overall strategy for a study. The study adopted a descriptive design. This design is deemed appropriate because it provides information as it is on a practical perspective. While adopting mixed methods, explanatory approach (Almeida, 2018) was used, in which the questionnaire was utilized as the main tool to collect quantitative data and interview schedule as a supplementary tool. Mixed methods approach was used because it served to help validate and corroborate the findings (Mertens, 2015), and at the same time it provides flexibility in addressing multiple types of research questions (Greene, 2007). The qualitative data from the questionnaires was used to supplement quantitative data from the questionnaires and hence mixed methods, explanatory approach. Therefore, quantitative data was given more weight (high) because the research goal was to quantify refugees' transition livelihood strategies, challenges and mitigation efforts on refugees' challenges.

3.0 Study Findings, Interpretation and Discussion

The study findings revealed a number of mitigation strategies that the south Sudanese refugees proposed to help them in mitigating challenges in their livelihood strategies.

3.1 Providing Job Opportunities

A significant majority 91(30.2%) indicated that they should be provided with Job opportunities (Table 3.1). The provision of job opportunities to refugees can play a critical role in their livelihood strategies, as it provides a pathway to self-sufficiency and financial independence. Employment opportunities can enable refugees to support themselves and their families financially, reducing their dependence on humanitarian aid. Job opportunities can also provide refugees with a sense of dignity and self-esteem, as they become active contributors to society. Through employment, refugees can acquire new skills, gain work experience, and improve their employability, which can enhance their long-term economic prospects. *In an interview with Refugee coded 9, she said 'it will be good if the government can provide employment to refugees so that they can support themselves and their families'* (Interview notes pg 5 line 12). Additionally, employment can facilitate the social integration of refugees into their host communities, as they interact with locals in a work setting and become part of the local economy.

Research has shown that access to job opportunities can have a positive impact on the livelihoods of refugees. A report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) highlights the importance of economic empowerment for refugees, noting that employment can improve their overall well-being and help them build resilience in the face of adversity (ILO, 2018). Another study published in the IZA World of Labor found that employment opportunities can improve the economic outcomes of refugees, particularly in terms of their income and social integration (Naudé, 2018). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has also emphasized the importance of economic inclusion of refugees in the labor market, noting that it can help refugees achieve self-reliance and contribute to the development of their host communities United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); (2018).

3.2 Provision of Land for Homesteads and Food Production

Out of these, 15(5.0%) indicated that other than the opportunities, they should be given land to put up homes. This was followed by 45(15.0%) of the refugees, who indicated that they should be allowed to farm, that is, to do farming (Table 3.1). The provision of farming land to refugees can be a crucial component of their livelihood strategies, providing them with a means to grow their own food, generate income, and rebuild their lives; In particular, farmland can assist refugees in becoming food secure. With access to farming land, refugees can grow their own food, reducing their reliance on aid agencies or the host community. *In an interview with refugee coded 10, provision of land can be the best solution to most of refugee problems but land cannot be available within the town and Kenyans don't easily accept'* (Interview notes pg 6 line 7).

This can help ensure food security and provide a sustainable source of nutrition (FAO, 2018). Secondly, refugees can generate income. Farming can also provide refugees with a source of income, allowing them to become self-sufficient and reducing their dependence on aid. Refugees can sell their produce in local markets or to the host community, generating income that can be used to support their families and invest in their future. Farming can also improve the well-being of the refugees (Maystadt & Verwimp, 2014). The ability to grow their own food and generate income can have a positive impact on the mental health and well-being of refugees. It can provide a sense of purpose, self-worth, and hope for the future. Lastly farming build communities such that it is a way to bring refugees together and foster a sense of community. Working together on a farm can create a shared sense of purpose and provide a platform for social interaction United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); (2019).

3.3 Licenses to Operate Business

Notably other refugees 15(5.0%) proposed that local government must permit them to get licenses to operate businesses like other Kenyans (Table 3.1). The provision of business licenses to refugees can be an essential element in their livelihood strategies, as it provides a pathway to self-employment and financial independence. Business licenses enable refugees to start and operate their own businesses, allowing them to earn income and support themselves and their families. Through entrepreneurship, refugees can also create job opportunities for themselves and others in their communities.

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Research has shown that access to business licenses can have a positive impact on the livelihoods of refugees. For example, a study published in the Journal of Refugee Studies found that self-employment can improve the economic outcomes of refugees, particularly in terms of their income and employment status (De Vries & Bekkers, 2016). Another study published in the International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research found that entrepreneurship can facilitate the social integration of refugees into their host communities, as it enables them to interact with locals in a business setting and become part of the local economy (Kotabe & Murray, 2019). In addition to providing refugees with a means of earning income, business licenses can also help refugees build skills and knowledge related to entrepreneurship. This can include training in business planning, marketing, and financial management, which can enhance their long-term economic prospects.

A similar 15(5.0%) proportion felt that they should be repatriated (taken back to their home countries) or taken to other countries abroad (Table 3.1). Repatriation of refugees can have both positive and negative impacts on their livelihoods. On one hand, returning to their country of origin can provide refugees with a sense of stability and security, allowing them to rebuild their lives in their home communities. Repatriation can also enable refugees to reconnect with family and friends, access their land and property, and participate in the local economy (IOM, 2019).

On the other hand, repatriation can also pose significant challenges to refugees' livelihoods. In some cases, returning refugees may face political instability, social unrest, and economic hardship in their home communities. This can make it difficult for them to find employment, access basic services, and rebuild their lives. Repatriation can also disrupt the social networks and support systems that refugees have established in their host communities, leaving them isolated and vulnerable United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); (2019). To ensure that repatriation supports the livelihoods of refugees, it is critical that it is carried out in a safe and voluntary manner, with the involvement of refugees in the planning and decision-making processes. Repatriation efforts should also be accompanied by measures to support the reintegration of refugees into their home communities, including access to basic services, employment opportunities, and support for small business development. Sustainable reintegration also requires efforts to promote peace building, reconciliation, and social cohesion in communities that have been affected by conflict and displacement United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); (2019).

Table 3.1 Assessing the mitigation efforts on Refugees' Challenges on Livelihood Strategies in Eldoret City

Strategy to overcome challenges	Frequency	Percent
Allow refugees to farm and get employment	15	5.0
Be treated equally like the citizens	15	5.0
Change governance	15	5.0
Educate the refugees	15	5.0
Empowerment of the refugees by the local government	15	5.0
Give jobs and find security	15	5.0
Give refugees land for farming and employment	15	5.0
Help participants to go overseas	15	5.0
Local government must permit participants with licenses	15	5.0
Promotion of good relationship	15	5.0
Provide funds to encourage refugees to return back home	15	5.0
Provision of job opportunities	91	30.2
Provision of job opportunities and land	15	5.0
Recognition of identity cards by Safaricom and issue of certificate of good conduct	15	5.0
Stop corruption	15	5.0
Total	**301**	**100.0**

Source: Research findings, 2021

Others suggested that there was need to change in governance, curbing corruption, provision of education opportunities to the refugees and empowerment of the refugees by the local government each at 15(5.0%). These findings are indicated in Table 3.1:

Overall, the impact of repatriation on refugees' livelihoods depends on the specific context in which it takes place and the measures that are taken to support refugees' reintegration. Therefore, it is essential that repatriation efforts are carefully planned and implemented in a way that prioritizes the well-being and long-term livelihoods of returning refugees.

The findings above imply that the south Sudanese refugees do not enjoy the rights enjoyed by the locals (Kenyans) and as such the refugees want to enjoy these rights. Licenses to operate businesses and being allowed to do farming is what was given keen interest. In Gabon, the government, in what is called local integration, the refugees have been proposed to be allowed to carry out livelihood strategies for their livelihood. The two main activities that have been supported by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as its main means of intervention was agriculture and micro-credit support (Machtelt, 2004). Agreement was reached from the outset that refugee livelihoods would be primarily examined through activities relating to agriculture and/or micro-credit. These decisions were taken given that they are the two main subject areas addressed from the outset of the care and maintenance programme co-ordinated by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the government and other agencies in an attempt to provide some livelihood support to refugees.

One of the strategies that were used in Gabon was issuing refugees with protection documents. Despite these documentation, many refugees mentioned direct clashes with the local authorities and security forces over these papers. Outcomes cited included confiscation of the refugee document, destruction of the document – ripping it apart or burning it, torture and/or imprisonment of the holder by security forces, bribery of the holder by the security forces, limitations to freedom of movement and access to markets on at least one occasion, the murder of a refugee by local people without a trial (Machtelt, 2004).

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Although the refugee document implies the right for that individual to engage in income-generating activities in Gabon – similar in all ways to that of a national – refugees encounter considerable difficulties or are not allowed to carry out economic activities due to restrictions imposed by the local authorities and employers. One example was found of a refugee man who obtained work with a local international company, only to be told two days after starting that he no longer had work on account of his status. In most cases, these restrictions seem to relate to the lack of a resident permit which allows foreigners to carry out economic activities in Gabon. Such papers are most often given to economic migrants, and can be purchased. In order to obtain a resident's permit, however, refugees must revoke their refugee status and take on that of an economic migrant. Not wanting to do this – or probably in the majority of cases not being able to afford this – many refugees work illegally at whatever source of employment they can find.

The existence/elaboration of a sound legal framework for refugees is a precondition of any discussion and elaboration of a longer term plan. It would seem timely that refugees are now fully informed about the three durable solutions United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) can offer on their behalf: repatriation, resettlement or local integration. The eligibility criteria, probability, consequences, and the advantages and disadvantages of each of these solutions should be clearly explained to refugees and others, especially at government and the general public levels. Clear statements should be prepared on issues such as nationalization (for those wishing to integrate), the status and rights of children born in Gabon (of refugee and mixed marriages), and the rights of those wishing to retain refugee status. Such statements should be widely transmitted to all concerned authorities, community leaders and others to allow full integration.

4.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

Among the suggestions is that they should be allowed to own lands. However, this is out rightly not possible due to Kenyan Land Policies which are handled by National Land Commission and is very complex even to local population. Working or employment opportunities are also not available either it is also not possible to repatriate them due to non-refoulment policy which Kenya is a signatory to by virtue of conventions and treaties guided by UN policies.

While in the urban settlements, refugees are allowed to freely go back to their country so long as there is peace. The Kenya government through Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government, refugees are allowed to look for third country settlements aided by International Organization of Migration (IoM). The Kenya government has also allowed South Sudanese to do business as is evident in Kapsoya Centre, Eldoret. In these settlement areas, they are co-existing with the host community freely as they run their business errands.

4.1 Recommendation

Considering the periods that refugees spend in the designated camps are subsequent movement to urban is usually very long and tiring. Kenya as a host government should ensure that skillful refugees are allowed to either integrate or move to urban centres without much delay in the camps. This would allow them to settle quickly and start using their professional skills. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) should team up with Kenya government to quickly identify programmes targeting improvement of economic and security challenges. This would make the refugees to take care of themselves and restore their dignity in good time.

From the above conclusion and recommendation, it is clear that there is need for a policy decision to help refugees become productive members of society with constant engagement. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) should continue making support and promotion of refugees' livelihood part of its policy as it continues to work with Kenya government.

What comes out clearly is that United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is committed to assisting refugees as well as Kenya government being the host. It is therefore necessary for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Kenya to look for more funding from other organizations such as European Union (EU). There is also need for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to create the right environment and important role to play at political level for advocacy for protection of refugee rights. This would ensure productive economic rights, resulting into more funds to support urban refugees just as it does for the camp refugees.

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