Ethical Dilemma Trust and Distrust Among Refugee Host Community in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores that complex ethical issues that arise from the coexistence between the refugees and the host communities in Kakuma refugees camp situated in the Northern-Western Kenya and home to about 400,000 asylum seekers drawn from ten countries among them Sudan and Ethiopia. Established in 1992 under the auspices of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the camp hosts the "The Lost Boys" of Sudan, a group of over 30,000 Sudanese children who fled their homes following the civil war in the 1980s undertaking a perilous 1000 miles journey on foot without adult support to Kakuma. Many succumbed to starvation, violence, and natural hazards through the journey. Only half of the original numbers made it to Kakuma where they remain stranded. Of these, 3,600 were later move to the United States of America in 2001. Data from from twelve document drawn from the google search engine reveal chronic displacement, disparity in access to social amenities and community services leading to trauma, and uncertainty, cumulative stress response among refugees settling and adapting to new environments. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as Elias' Theory of Established-Outsiders and the Refugee Aid and Development (RAD) model, the study analyses examine the issues of equity, justice, dignity, autonomy, and inclusion arising from trust and distrust among displaced refugees settling in a new cultural context under humanitarian. The study then argues that the current segregation status of refugees in Kakuma inadvertently reinforce inequality, isolation of the local community and empowers the refugees hence fueling trust and distrust with the host community. This justifies the ethical need for trauma-sensitive, supportive research approaches. Therefore, an inclusive and equitable intervention in refugee host com minty projects would give a win solution promoting human dignity and rights among both populations.

Keywords. Autonomy, Isolation, Refugees, Resources, Ethical Dilemma

Background

Kakuma refugees camp lies in northern western Turkana County Kenya. It is the home to about 400,000 people drawn from asylum seekers from Sudan and Ethiopia. The camp was established in 1992 by under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It has been under the control of Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA) since 2006 when the Kenya Refugee Act was adopted. The cosmopolitan refugee camp has the following features:

The Lost Boys of Sudan was a group of over 30,000 Sudanese children who fled their homes due to the civil war in the 1980. They initially fled to Ethiopia but had to return to Sudan following the resignation the head of state, Mengistu Haile Mariam who then fled to exile (Ali, J. and Ocha, W., 2018). as they wandered over the arid areas, the United Nations was aware of them and provided food for them. In 1992, Kakuma refugee camp was established by the collaboration between Kenya Government and United Nation High Commission for Refugees working with a number of relief organizations. Among these were; World Food Programme (WFP) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) which are responsible for providing relief food and facilitate its distribution; the International Rescue Committee (IRC) which provides health services; the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK) which provide housing solutions for the refugees, and lastly, the International Organization for Migration responsible for settlement of refugees; Jesuit Refugees Services which provide education services to the refugees (Oka, 2014).

The Lost Boys of Sudan settled in Kakuma after walking for over 1000 miles over 3 months without support from any adults (Aukot, 2003; UNHCR, 2016). Many of these boys (along with a few girls) died as a result of drowning, hunger, attacks from soldiers, and the wild. But by the time these children reached Kakuma, only less than half managed to survived. 3,600 Lost Boys of Sudan were allowed in the US in 2001. As the boys walked to Kenya, David David Kumciengone of the boys expressed their experience and said:

> "We wanted to run, but we had to walk because we were tired and so hot and hungry. In my picture, the people are wearing clothes, but of course, we didn't have any clothes. we saw people dying, it was always the young ones, the hungry ones, and the old ones."

Problem statement

Tension between the Refugee-Host communities arise mainly due to trust and distrust between the refugees and the host community. There is competition for limited resources and lack of common Refugee-Host Community projects (Berry, M., Garcia-Blanco, I. & Moore, K. 2016). The host community view the refugees as a threat to their limited resources namely land, wood, jobs and water and especially as refugee population increases (Ali, J. and Ocha, W., 2018). In Kenya, the host community felt that refugees receive special treatment and had access to essential services such as education, health, water and more importantly getting food which is readily available to refugees in Kakuma Camp yet they did not have enough (Ali, J. and Ocha, W., 2018; Freedman, J., 2015). Further, the host community was not comfortable with the large numbers of refugees which stands at 400,000 mainly from Somalia, South Sudan (then Sudan), Ethiopia and Democratic Republic of Congo (Berry, M., Garcia-Blanco, I. & Moore, K. 2016; Freedman, J. 2015). The tensions and conflicts between the refugees and the host community was not only fueled by competition for limited resources and social amenities but also cultural and religious differences (Freedman, J., 2015). The refugees have lived in Kenya for over 3 decades and there is limited information about the key causes of conflicts and the potential measures put in place to solve these conflicts. The question therefore is, how are tensions and conflicts resolved and by who? Therefore, this paper found it crucial to find how trust and distrust fueled tensions and conflicts between refugees and the host community (Berry, M., Garcia-Blanco, I. & Moore, K., 2016). The paper also presents current solutions put in place and recommendations to improve the situation

Goal and Objectives

The main goal of this paper was to establish how disregard for ethical consideration leads to trust and distrust between the refugees and host communities globally fueling tensions and conflicts and to identify possible solutions to these ethical issues for a harmonious community.

Scope of the study

The study was limited itself to Kakuma refugee camp located in Turkana County although refugees in Kenya live in three refugee camps namely; Dadaab, Alinjugur, Kakuma and some live in Kenya's urban centres such as Nairobi, Eldoret and Ruiru.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a combination of qualitative and document method to unearth trust and distrust issues when tensions and conflicts arise between between refugees-host community around Kakuma. In addition to this, snowball sampling was used to identify refugees who had integrated within the communities in Kenya, and the local host community. Documents review was the main source of information and where possible, a number of KII were called for reviews. The approach is grounded on the pragmatisms of daily survival, Jorgensen (1989). Individual interviews were also done where information was not clear. This was facilitated by local contact persons who served as intermediaries and lined the research team with with individuals who were actively involved or interested in the initiative. By leveraging existing relationships and community ties, this approach ensured that participants were representative of the diverse perspectives and backgrounds within the community, fostering inclusivity and ownership of the process (GIZ, 2024).

Sampling and sample size determination

To start of with, the study reviewed documents that covered social amenities provided in the camp and community resources around them, their availability and views of the host and refugee about their benefits.

The following questions helped us select articles and briefings in this issue, although the authors raise additional levels of complexity and challenges that mount with the growing crises.

1. Are refugees welcomed (Harden et al. Citation2015), tolerated, or openly discriminated against (Baumeister & Vohs Citation2007; Brief et al. Citation2005; Esses et al. Citation1998)?

2. Are host communities expected to shoulder added burdens placed upon their resources (OECD Citation2012), or are the refugees portrayed as labour and cultural dividends (Ahmed et al. Citation2016)?

3. What are refugees' rights (Goodwin-Gill & McAdam Citation2007) and how can they rebuild their agency from positions of isolation or vulnerability (Freedman Citation2015)?

4. Should the international community intervene, and, if they do so, how (Dowty & Loescher Citation1996; Hammerstad Citation2014)?

5. What policies and practices — past, present, or being debated — offer viable routes for addressing migration and refugee crises in ways that support sustained peace and inclusive development on the one hand, and help prevent these crises in the future, on the other?

6. What lessons can we draw about the appropriate timelines, approaches, and models for offering protection and integration to displaced populations, bearing in mind associated implications such as psychological, legal, human rights, political, and economic, for different stakeholders?

7. How do vulnerable populations from positions of displacement/emplacement work to build peace at community and sub-national levels and how are they having an impact at national and international levels?

8. What are the issues, challenges, obstacles, and opportunities related to the inclusion of displaced populations in peace building processes?

Data collection and analysis

The study collected data on tension between the two communities, effects of climate and geography on the camp, camp layout, housing in refugee camps, security and justice in the camp, food and health facilities in the camp and finally the education system in the camp. Data analysis followed the flisted set of questions and their themes.

Ethical Considereation

The study promised reveal all sources of data and indicate where verbatim information is shared and the source. Consent was sought from the participants who were consulted with assurances on provided on individual confidentiality, how the value of the research, the respondents autonomy to participate and justice in case redress is required**.** Referenced articles well cross-referenced and availed. Participants were selected through a process of mobilization facilitated by contact persons, often identified through previous engagements and established networks.

RESULTS

Tension between the Local and the Refugees

The camp is situated in the second most poor region of Kenya that is prone to violence between the local population and asylum seeker. The nomadic pastoralists stick to their traditions and do not cooperate with

refugees who by law are not allowed to keep animals of their own. This limits their ability to source income from livestock assets (Barasa, 2020). The ASAL area is also characterized with high temperatures which sometimes can go upto 40^{o} C due to humidity making agriculture is difficult. These conditions offer refugees different livelihood means and as such, conflicts between the two communities abound (GIZ, 2024). When the refugees settled, the host community would have expected the refugees to adapt to their ways of life which the latter did not do. This caused conflicts with the outsiders (refugees) being isolated (Hanlon, R.J. & Christie, K., 2016; Tollebrandt & Sophia, 2013). Refugees did not adapt to the host community ways of life and if they attempted, they would pose a treat to the limited resources in the dry lands. They were therefore restricted within the camps. This behaviour underpins Elias' Theory and highlights how refugees are treated when they find themselves in the host nation (Ali, J. and Ocha, W., 2018). What is clear is that the host community is not in the focus of aid agencies and host country especially in providing aid assistance (Hanlon, R.J. & Christie, K. 2016) . Further, the concepts of Elias Theory represent the old ideology of focusing help to refugees and leaving out the host community from it which in itself is a source of conflict and tension. Inclusion of the host community in conflict management and development practitioners intervening to work with migrant and refugee populations have long term benefits (Khalid Arar, Deniz Örücü & Sedat Gümüş, 2024). This was established among migrant youth in the border region of Ecuador. Although at times host communities are overlooked Pugh's examination of two different programmes working with hows that while conflict resolution training courses helped reduce violence in the border community, the programme that consciously engaged with local networks and institutions had a longer-term impact (Kirui, P., & Mwaruvie, J.,2012)..

An alternative theory , Refugee Aid and Development (RAD) Theory, considers the needs of the two communities and explains their complex interrelationship (Betts, 2004; Morfor, 2012; Ahmed, S.A., Go, D.S. & Willenbockel, D. 2016). The theory claims that the incoming refugees are considered as a burden to the host nation and the community meaning they are not considered as an opportunity (Ali, J. and Ocha, W., 2018). In order to develop peaceful and good relations between the refugees and the host community, both parties need to be involved in various projects and operations (Kuhlman, 1990). RAD approaches tries to remove the impression that refugees are a burden since it transforms refugees from the so called ''a burden'' to a self-sufficient status.

In summary there is need for aid agencies and the host government to allow both refugees and host community to share resources equally and indiscriminately since in most cases the host communities feel left behind especially in provision of amenities only to the refugees. In addition, there are differences in the amenities availed to the refugees and the development partners facilities. The Kenyan Government and UNHC staff live outside the camp in with better housing faciities with modern social amenities, including a swimming pool, bars, shops, recreational centers, and exercise rooms. The UNHCR has fully air-conditioned, self-contained rooms, and all compounds have electricity and water (Kirui, P., & Mwaruvie, J.,2012). Each ethnic community has occupied a separate and discrete area for itself Each neighborhood built its market stands, coffee shops, library, and places of worship. I terms of housing, the refugees lived in 4×5 meters houses built using plastics materials and insulated against temperature variations using grass materials. The structures are held together by long pieces of wood that are provided. Some of the house are made of mud bricks, wood, or cane extracted from the surrounding.

Security and the Justice system in the Camp

The camps are secured by the Kenya police who however cannot intervene on issues within the camp unless asked by UNHCR. The refugees are allowed to establish their own 'court' system normally presided over by community leaders. Punishments, are done through fines, flogging and detention. The refugees have no access to legal services and therefore usually have no mechanisms for appeal

The camps have a 90 bed facility modeled along the Kenya hospitals alongside five satellite clinics with a total capacity of 520. Other than access to food from the shops, refugees depend on food rations supplied for survival. The World Food Program (WFP) provides refugees with rations twice a month based on the nutritional value required. Since 201,refugees access their food trough digital cash that gives them freedom of the choice and variety of food options; which is also good for the local economy. The social services are skewed according to the host community. Considering that eh county has an area of 77,000km2 with a

population of 855,399 as per 2009 census and means that the population is sparsely populated. The local communities have to walk over long distances to get health facilities unlike refugees who get these services in their camps.

The social amenities include health, education, sports and transport facilities. With increasing refugee numbers considering new arrivals, there is a scramble for these limited resources (Esses, V.M., Jackson, L.M. & Armstrong, T.L,. 1998). The existing inequality between refugees and host community habitually leads to the increase of social tensions (Kramer, R. M., & Cook, K. S. (Eds.), 2004; Lundy, B.D. & Adebayo, A.G., 2016). Sometimes the host community and the refugees quarrel over who should be served first therefore causing tension and conflicts (Esses, V.M., Jackson, L.M. & Armstrong, T.L., 1998). During interviews with some of the refugees' representative, it was clear the host community violate protocols and go to the camp to get health services (Hammerstad, A. 2014). She said

> "UNHCR should not allow the Turkana community (the host) to come to the camp and gate treated. It is sad some of us we have to wait in long queues as result of allowing the Turkana community to share with us the hospital services.' (Fatumah, Refugee Women Representative, July 2017)."

The education facilities at the camp include 7 pre-schools, 21 primary schools, 4 secondary schools (2 high schools and 2 technical colleges, which teach Kenyan curriculum and Arabic courses), numerous vocational training, and co-curricular". Compared to the larger region, the camp has a higher percentage of children in full-time education. "The education coverage is pre-primary 25%, primary education 65%, secondary education 2%. There are certain cultural/traditional restrictions on girls' education in the Kakuma camp. Only 20% of the school-going children happen to be girls. Exclusive girls boarding schools have been established, which promote studying further at the University of Toronto (Canada) based on their performances.

Refugees' children prefer to enroll at Kenya primary and secondary schools with boarding facilities and this normally makes the host to feel bad since these schools are few and not enough for them. The parents of both the refugees and the host community do quarrel because of the situation in these boarding schools whereby they become congested. Also, the host community youth prefer going to the camp to learn at the vocational colleges such as Don Bosco although it is restricted to the refugees. The host community feel left out from benefiting from the services rendered to the refugees in the camp and this also causes dissatisfaction and conflict sometimes (Esses, V.M., Jackson, L.M. & Armstrong, T.L., 1998; Khalid Arar & Deniz Orucu, 2022). When it comes to sports, youth from both do quarrel or fight when they want to use football fields or indoor grounds. Lastly, both refugees and the host community do use public transportation and sometimes the local community feels that they cannot travel together with the refugees in one car or bus. This is one source of quarrel and conflicts since the host feel they are in their own country and they are entitled to use the transportation service (Esses, V.M., Jackson, L.M. & Armstrong, T.L., 1998; Baumeister, R.F. & Vohs, K.D., 2006).

"Our children do share boarding schools with refugees' children and therefore congesting them. We do not want our children to share schools with refugees since schools look like prison. The refugees' also do not want our big children to join Don Bosco training institute in the camp." (Kirui, P., & Mwaruvie, J. ,2012).

CONCLUSION

This study argued that the current segregation status of refugees in Kakuma inadvertently reinforce inequality, isolation of the local community and empowers the refugees hence fueling trust and distrust with the host community. This justifies the ethical need for trauma-sensitive, supportive research approaches. Therefore, an inclusive and equitable intervention in refugee host com minty projects would give a win win solution promoting human dignity and rights among both populations. 5.

Ethical Recommendations

The following ethical recommendations can enhance trust over distrust among the refugee and host communities at Kakuma camp.

distrust among the two communities.

1. Promoting inclusive development frameworks guided by RAD principles.

2. Ensuring equitable distribution of social amenities and infrastructure to both refugees and host communities.

3. Enabling refugees to access the national justice system and right to legal representation.

4. Enhancing access to shared education and vocational training opportunities in Turkana and Kakuma.

5. Foster social cohesion through joint projects to reduce tensions.

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