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Employability of the Refugees/IDP and their Resettlement among Local Communities in East Africa

**Annstellah Gakii, Boniface Mutwiri, Gertrude Gatwiri &
Romano Njeru**

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¹Annstellah Gakii, ²Boniface Mutwiri, ³Gertrude Gatwiri & ⁴Romano Njeru

¹Kenyatta University, Kenya

^{2,3}University of Nairobi

⁴Lord Ashcroft International Business School, Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom

*Email of the corresponding author: stellahgakii@gmail.com

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Abstract

There are currently 70 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, with 41 million being internally displaced, 25 million being refugees and 3 million seeking asylum and their numbers are growing, with the majority of these people living in Africa and Asia. The Nairobi Declaration on Long-Term Solutions for Somali Refugees and Reintegration of Returnees in Somalia was adopted by East African communities on issues pertaining to refugees/IDPs. These enabled countries dealing with similar issues to collaborate in order to protect and find employability solutions for refugees/IDPs among the local community. This study thus investigated the job placement experiences of displaced people in their new communities. Triangulated reviews of qualitative results from countries across East Africa, including high-income countries peer-reviewed research on the employability rate of refugees/IDPs among local communities in East Africa were summarized. The findings revealed both commonalities in the employability experiences of refugees/IDPs within the local communities across East Africa. There are limited job opportunities for the refugees/IDPs. As occurred in Kenya, South Africa and Tanzania, deliberate intervention is required to increase the employability and resettlement of refugees/IDPs among members of the local community for menial and limited available jobs. Governments should capitalize on the people's shared identity and develop employable programs to help the region's economy recover. Local institutions should also develop intervention programs and strategies for dealing with refugees/IDPs' employability issues, as evidenced by the education collaboration (Ashesi university) initiative in Ghana, which has collaborated with more African universities to focus on the employability pillar, among others.

Keywords: *Refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), Forced displacement, Employability, Resettlement, local communities, East Africa*

1.0 Introduction

Since most African countries' independence, independence movements have emerged to challenge state sovereignty and advocate for nationhood ^[1]. In western Africa, a terrorist organization known as Boko Haram has drawn widespread condemnation for the devastation caused by its activities in the Lake Chad region, which is shared by four countries: Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria ^[1]. Currently, there are 70 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, with 41 million being internally displaced, 25 million being refugees and 3 million seeking asylum and their numbers are growing, with the majority of these people living in Africa and Asia ^[2,3,4]. Refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people are all involuntary migrants who have often experienced distress when forced to leave their homes, while traveling, and while settling in a host country or new environment ^[5]. There is another category of forced displacement called undocumented migrants. Undocumented migrants are vulnerable because their legal status restricts their access to social services [6]. They can only babysit, clean, tend the garden, and perform other tasks as assigned by their private entrepreneurs [7].

Refugees/IDPs face a disproportionate number of problems around the world, including malnutrition, sickness, insecurity in camps, unemployment, lack of access to education, lack of acceptance amongst the local community, and idleness, among others. Most African governments rely on donations and the international community to help refugees. Due to a lack of funds, governments may be unable to provide food and other services to refugees/IDPs, causing them to feel patronized [1]. For example, in Tanzania the year 2014, the increasing influx of refugees from Burundi and Congo had sparked tensions with locals. As a result, the government enacted restrictive economic policies, such as prohibiting refugees from working outside of their camps and allocating money to refugees who choose to return home ^[8,9,10].

However, when thousands of refugees/IDPs returned to South Sudan in preparation for independence, tensions arose between those who had lived as IDPs in Khartoum, refugees in East Africa, and those who had remained in southern Sudan during the war. Hostility between these groups manifested itself in job competition and land disputes. ^[11]. Contrary to popular belief, globalization has resulted in more unstable and turbulent conflict situations, unhealthy power politics, destructive ethnic insurgencies, national rivalries, religious bigotry, government deceit, and endemic poverty. Whilst also ethnic groups have been dispersed across several countries as a result of political influence, little is known about efforts to integrate refugees/IDPs into new neighborhoods.

1.1 Objectives of the study

Considering the importance of resettling victims of violence, this qualitative study sought to;

- i. Investigate the employability of the Refugees/IDP and their Resettlement among Local Communities in East Africa.
- ii. Determine the role of stakeholders in addressing refugees/IDPs' Challenges

2.0 Literature Review

Ager and Strang, (2008)^[12] identified four concepts as critical in the effort to integrate victims of violence. These are (1) makers and means, in the form of housing and employment, schooling, and wellbeing, (2) social relationship, as described by the availability of social structures, socialization, and social connections, and (3) facilitators, described by the presence of a common language and

culture, an increase in individual safety, and (4) foundation, which is defined as recognition as equal members of society. In most cases, refugees/IDPs have higher levels of education than even the local community ^[13,14]. However, one major impediment to finding work is the inability to recognize qualifications and prior work experience. Refugees and IDPs are frequently confronted with the loss of assets as a result of conflict and violence or the displacement itself, which can impede their economic activities ^[15,16]. Therefore, many refugees and internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are unable to produce proof of previous qualifications, and even if they can, employers may not recognize them ^[12,15]. Many times, Refugees/IDPs face a mismatch between the skills they possess and those required in the local labor market.

IDPs, unlike refugees, have no special protections under international law, and national governments could be unwilling to allow humanitarian groups to assist IDPs ^[17]. According to Averhed, (2020) ^[18] finding suggests that successful resettlement for refugees/IDPs (1) depends on programs that allow them to find a place in the new society, for example, by converting their skills and qualifications so that they can be used in the new situation. (2) Vocational training as well as education are thus typically regarded as critical aspects of assimilation to the extent that they promote employability in general or through the enhancement of specific language or work skills. A growing number of programs have been developed to improve their access to employment markets and economic outcomes in local communities ^[15]. Contrary to their expectations, the refugee/IDP employability rate in the local community is far too low. However, the majority of attention has thus far been focused on refugees rather than IDPs ^[15].

2.1 State in East Africa

During the 1990s, hundreds of thousands of people were forced to flee Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Sudan, Rwanda, and Burundi into neighboring countries, particularly Kenya and Tanzania ^[19]. The Nairobi Declaration on Long-Term Solutions for Somali Refugees and Reintegration of Returnees in Somalia was adopted by East African communities. This enabled countries dealing with similar issues to collaborate in order to protect and find solutions for refugees/IDPs. The African Union (AU) Commission worked with UNHCR to implement the NYD and CRRF in order to find long-term solutions to forced displacement on the continent ^[14]. Kenya recently announced the closure of the Dadaab IDP Camp, which houses approximately 3 million people, in order to allow them to be integrated into the workforce. Refugees/IDPs in Kalobeyei found work in a variety of fields, including 20% in catering, 15% as teachers, 13% as shopkeepers, 7% for community organizations, 9% as security guards, and 7% as health workers, accounting for 10% of the total Refugee/IDP population ^[20,21].

Uganda, on the other hand, has allowed the 270,000-person Bidi Bidi camp to develop into a town-like setting. As a result, the Palabek settlement in North Uganda integrated South Sudanese refugees into the local community. A complex for youth vocational training was also inaugurated in 2019, hosting tailoring, building, mechanic, agriculture, and hairdressing courses for 163 boys and 254 girls ^[21]. In comparison to the total refugee/IDP population, the number of refugees employed was a very small percentage. Rwanda appears to use a graduated refugee camp model to encourage greater refugee integration into the local community. Allowing 58 thousand refugees to use banking services, as well as issuing national identity cards and Convention travel documents to 160 thousand refugees, in order to improve their employability and freedom of movement ^[21]. As a result, refugees/IDPs in Gihembe can start businesses both inside and outside the camp, as

well as move outside the camp to cultivate rented farmland or look for work ^[22]. However, due to a lack of available land for agricultural programs or settlement projects, as well as a lack of support from development, donor, and private sector partners, this implementation proved difficult.

In Ethiopia, the CRRF was officially launched in 2017, with the implementation of 9 pledges made by the government regarding refugees. Among the work and livelihoods of refugees, (1) is the provision of work permits to refugees and those with permanent residence, (2) is the provision of ten thousand hectares of irrigable land to enable refugees and local communities' households to grow crops, and (3) is the collaboration with foreign partners to build business parks that will employ 30 percent of the jobs reserved for refugees ^[23,21]. The implementation of the CRRF in Zambia focused on freedom of movement for refugees by making it easier to obtain residency and permission to leave refugee/IDP settlements in search of work. Two refugee groups of 20 people each received two greenhouses to partake in vegetable farming, and the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) provided 50 former refugees with a solar-powered irrigation system to engage in farming ^[24].

Concurrently, the CRRF approach to the Somali situation aimed to address the underlying causes of displacement while also encouraging burden sharing among countries hosting Somali refugees in the region. A total of 80 refugee/IDP households received integrated assistance, which included one-year rental coverage, Income Generating Activities grants, and business skills development. The implementation of the CRRF can help to promote economic opportunities, livelihoods, and self-sufficiency among refugees/IDPs. Most East African communities lack development funds, economic support, and incentives, making CRRF implementation difficult. According to the statistical case representations above, the employability rate of the refugee/IDP in the local community was far too low in comparison to the total population of refugees/IDPs in the camps.

2.2 The Role of Stakeholders in Addressing refugees/IDPs' Challenges

It has been noted that refugees/IDPs have difficulty entering the labor market ^[25,26]. Governments may limit employment to certain jobs, typically blue collar jobs. Similarly, the UNHCR have created exceptional committee to help refugees/IDPs enter the labor market and resettle among the local communities. Individuals, civil society organizations, educational institutions, governments, and international organizations are the key stakeholders here; the stakeholders have roles to play in addressing the challenges facing IDPs by responding to the situation ^[27].

3.0 Method

Scoping review was the methodology used to achieve the paper's goal of summarizing peer-reviewed research on the employability rate of refugees/IDPs among local communities in East Africa. Due to the limited availability of relevant literature, a scoping review was chosen for its ability to identify research gaps, examine emerging evidence, and identify what remains to be investigated, but through an intensive and transparent process' ^[28]. The scoping review was based on the approach developed by ^[29]. Scoping review begun by searching on Google Scholar and respective online libraries for articles about employability, refugees/IDPs resettlement among local communities in Africa, and East Africa. Each item on the list above was individually searched using the specified search terms. The search was conducted in English during the month of July 2022. The data range for all searches for the years 2015-2022. The full text of 98 items that passed the first screening stage was then reviewed to determine whether refugees/IDPs in Africa were the

main or significant focus of the study. This second stage of screening was completed by 52 items. The third stage of screening determined which studies focused on the employability rate of displaced people in East African countries. Twenty-four of the 52 studies used data collected in African countries.

4.0 Conclusion and policy recommendations

The findings revealed both commonalities in the employability experiences of refugees/IDPs within the local communities across East Africa. Makers and means, as identified by ^[12], were empirically confirmed in this study. There were limited job opportunities for the refugees/IDPs. This has policy implications. As occurred in Kenya, South Africa and Tanzania, deliberate intervention is required to increase the employability and resettlement of refugees/IDPs among members of the local community for menial and limited available jobs. Governments should capitalize on the people's shared identity and develop employable programs to help the region's economy recover. People's livelihoods can be improved as a result and insecurity can be reduced in the near future. Local institutions should also develop intervention programs and strategies for dealing with refugees/IDPs' employability issues, as evidenced by the education collaboration (Ashesi university) initiative in Ghana, which has collaborated with more African universities to focus on the employability pillar, among others. Due to some limitations, it is impossible to generalize the findings of this study. The research was limited to East African countries, with refugee/IDP camps. The conducting of a study in countries other than East Africa may have resulted in differing results. Thus, it is recommended that another study be conducted in other African countries other than East African countries and compare the results.

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