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Encampment of Refugees in Kenya and the Failure of Economic Integration

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Abstract

This article demonstrates how Kenya's refugee encampment practice undermines refugees' potential and fails local, regional, and global economy. It limits refugees' integration and access to opportunities outside the refugee camps, rendering the benefits of globalization irrelevant. This article specifically looks at the impacts of the refugee encampment on participation, health, wellbeing, skills, and education. It also outlines the missed opportunities as a direct result of this practice. Highlighting these adverse impacts is a good start to advocate for more socially cohesive practices to help millions of refugees regain their freedom and achieve their potential – financially, socially, and politically.

Keywords

economic integration – encampment – globalization – job market – refugees

1 Introduction

Increasing natural disasters, diseases, and violent conflicts have historically led to a cycle of complex emergencies around the world, including the refugee burden (Aebischer Perone et al. 2017). By the end of 2020, there were more than 20 million refugees worldwide (UNHCR 2021a). The first refugee influx to Kenya occurred in the 1970s, with Ugandans and Ethiopians escaping from political persecutions, gross violation of human rights, and violent conflicts (Mogire 2009:16). Roughly two decades later in 1991, 7,000 South Sudanese

refugee boys walked into Kenya. At the same time, a large inflow of Somali refugees occurred, leading the Kenyan Government to implement the refugee encampment practice (Alix-Garcia et al. 2018:67). Kakuma refugee camp was initially designed for the maximum capacity of 70,000 residents in 1992. However, by 2015, the camp population had risen to over 180,000 individuals (UNEP 2017). Other refugee camps include Kalobeyei, which is home to about 40,000 refugees (Ibid) and the Dadaab refugee complex consisting of four camps, including Dagahaley, Ifo, Ifo II, and Hagadera, with a total population of 235,269 refugees (UNHCR 2018). To date, Kenya is the second largest refugee-hosting country in Africa after Ethiopia (UNHCR 2021b).

Thousands of children are born into Kenyan refugee camps and become adults there, knowing no other type of life outside those settings (O'Loughlen and McWilliams 2017:22). Therefore, the central question this article asks is, 'Does Kenya's encampment practice promote refugees' wellbeing and integration into the economy?' This is asked because it is important to broaden our understanding of the legacies of the encampment practice for refugees' integration in the local and global markets. Through the current literature, we know that long-term residents in the Kenyan refugee camps are the least likely to ever return to their home countries. They are permanently rooted in exile with limited options to break the cycle. Long stays in the refugee camps are particularly concerning because they are often associated with some degree of hopelessness (Ikanda 2018:581). But could there be any other alternatives to the refugees' encampment? It is claimed that the Kenyan Government and the society are not ready to face security threats and potential erosion of goods and services caused by the refugees' local integration. For example, it is largely anticipated that Somali refugees are supporters of terrorist groups. Therefore, insecurities resulting from sporadic attacks by Al-Shabaab give the Kenyan Government a good ground to justify the refugee encampment and containment strategies (Addaney 2015:73).

The methodology used in this study was designed to critically evaluate the link between Kenya's refugee encampment practice and refugees' poor social-economic performances during their stay in the camps and in the aftermath of their refugee journey, for example, upon arrival in Australia as permanent residents. Addaney (2015:73) submits that refugees' containment impedes their freedom of movement, preventing them from engaging in economic activities outside the refugee camps. Such restrictions make it impossible for refugees to contribute to the local, regional, and global economy. Rather, they become perpetual burden to the international community and, particularly, the Kenyan society (Ibid). This article further argues that refugees in Kenya cannot benefit from the contemporary globalized and inter-connected world because, as Dreher (2006:1091) puts it, globalization covers three main dimensions,

including social, economic, and political integration, all of which are absent in the refugee context, as demonstrated through the following literature review.

2 A Literature Review

This literature review critically demonstrates the correlation between Kenya's refugee encampment practice and refugees' underperformances in all aspects of life. We know that globalization has generally intensified economic, social, and cultural activities across political borders, enhancing connectedness between societies (Thaa 2001:503). However, the same cannot be said about the refugee communities in Kenya. Kerubo (2013) writes that the Kenyan Government requires all refugees and asylum seekers on Kenyan soil to reside in refugee camps, including Dadaab and Kakuma. Refugees are essentially forced to sign up for a new social contract whereby they must give up their autonomy in exchange for material assistance and protection (Chkam 2016:80). The management of large refugee camps, Chkam (2016) suggests, is left at the hands of aid agencies as governments invoke the refugee burden to justify exclusionary practices (Ibid).

2.1 *Encampment Practice, a Response to the Refugee Burden*

It is claimed that the huge refugee presence in Kenya is a burden to the country and its systems. Mogire (2009:16) says that Kenya has hosted an overwhelming number of refugees since 1970s, with Ugandans and Ethiopians escaping from political persecutions, gross violation of human rights, and violent conflicts. The situation worsened in the 1990s, with the South Sudanese and Somali civil wars producing hundreds of thousands of refugees and asylum seekers (Alix-Garcia et al. 2018:67). Consequently, Kenya is the second largest refugee-hosting country in Africa after Ethiopia (UNHCR 2021b).

While refugees' local integration might be a suitable long-term policy solution, its suggestion has generally faced political and societal backlash. A study by Omata (2019:139) found that some locals do not welcome refugees because they see them as potential competitors in the labor market. They also reject any suggestion that refugees can contribute to the local economy. Such sentiments are the strongest in the Kenyan manual workers, hawkers, security guards, and factory workers because they do not have special skills and therefore, they fear anyone, including refugees, can take their jobs (Ibid). Omata's findings align with Addaney's (2015:73) suggestion that Kenyans fear that refugees' integration might lead to erosion of local goods and services. But establishing refugee camps has not prevented such erosions from occurring. *The Guardian* (2011) reports that Kenyan refugee camps have put significant

strain on natural resources and vegetation, reducing vast areas of land outside camps like Dadaab to scrubs. The constant harvesting of trees has damaged biodiversity and the ecosystem, affecting pastoralist activities for over 10,000 square kilometers, and destroying the ecological balance of plants, birds, insect species, and animals.

On the other hand, deadly attacks by Somali-based terrorists are historically a great threat to Kenya's security. The 1998 bombing of the US Embassy in Nairobi by Somali-based militants, for example, caused more than 200 deaths and around 5,000 injuries (Cooke 2018). The blasts ripped apart the American Embassy, demolishing the nearby Ufundi Cooperative Building and breaking windows of nearly every downtown high building in a radius of 1 km (Kasfir 2005:68). Similarly, the UN reports (as cited in Wallis 2003) indicate that an Al-Qaeda cell was responsible for the 2002 bombing of a tourist hotel at the Kenyan coast, killing 15 people and using Somalia as a base for training, supply, and cover. Addaney (2015:73) makes a point that refugees, specifically those of Somali background, are suspected of being potential adherents or supporters of terrorist groups and therefore, insecurities resulting from sporadic attacks by Al-Shabaab undermine social cohesion between residents of Somali backgrounds and the rest of Kenyan society, further giving officials a pretext to enforce the encampment strategy.

But evidence suggests that the encampment of refugees has not provided the anticipated solutions to alleviate the most pressing security issues. It has, in fact, made the situation worse. Mogire (2009:18) makes a point that refugees are generally linked with several crimes such as proliferation of illicit arms. They are also accused of supporting armed rebellion, using the camps for armed activities, including launching cross-border attacks and recruiting fighters. As such, Mogire argues, the camps have increasingly become a security threat to both Kenya and refugees' countries of origin. Somali refugee camps, for example, have become breeding grounds for Al-Shabaab's militants, supporting terrorist activities in Kenya and Somalia (Oluoch 2017). While there is no convincing evidence to suggest that the refugee encampment strategy has produced the intended outcomes, it is evident that its directives, such as the restrictions of movement imposed on refugees, undermine their socio-economic, environmental and, most importantly, health outcomes (Addaney 2015:73).

2.2 *The Impact of Encampment Practice on Refugees' Health, Wellbeing, and Participation*

How do refugee camps' experiences affect residents' health, wellbeing, and their ability to achieve economic self-sufficiency? Kenya's refugee management

and containment strategies include overt and physical as well as covert, ideological, and psychological mechanisms that continue to compromise refugees' health and wellbeing (Jaji 2012:221). Evidence also suggests that refugees in low- and middle-income countries are at the highest risk of mental health disorders, including psychological distress, major depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, just to name a few (Kane et al. 2014:228). In addition to what they must endure throughout their journeys, refugees lose the freedom to make decisions about their own lives, everyday functions, and their future, developing a general sense of despair, insecurity, and vulnerability (Pinehas et al. 2016:139).

According to Hale et al. (2006:589–590), health services in the refugee camps in Africa are minimal. There is little forward planning and poor infrastructure. Most of the refugee camps are in remote areas, with minimal water supply and shelter. While local health professionals are trained to diagnose and treat common acute conditions such as malaria, they have more difficulty with the management of chronic illnesses such as diabetes and asthma. Medications vary in quality, quantity, and availability (Ibid). Besides, the choice of refugees' food is based on calorific value rather than the quality because, it is generally claimed, the consumption of luxuries and comfort food items is unreasonable (Oka 2014:23). On the other hand, traditional roles in the refugee camps are under siege. Men lose power and property as women take over core duties in the family, including keeping the ration cards, to ensure their children are fed. Women's attention and priority are redirected to themselves and children's survival, overlooking their traditional role in caring for men's needs (Ngendakurio 2017:2). That's why gender-based violence is identified by Wirtz et al. (2013:13) as a continuing challenge for women when they arrive in the refugee camps, putting nearly every female refugee at risk (Ibid).

Ho and Pavlish (2011:88–89) argue that promoting gender equality in refugee camps cannot be achieved unless women are empowered. Such advocacy requires an empowering environment that provides a formal process to hold perpetrators to account. The main barrier to effectively combatting gender-based violence in camps is the refugee women's fear that leads to secrecy. They typically prefer to solve the conflicts at the family or community levels as they do not want family matters to be known by agencies. Women often take their concerns to the traditional gathering where, ironically, they do not have a voice (Ibid). Compromised physical and mental health shapes refugees' overall performances and competitiveness in the labor market during and after their refugee journeys – they progressively become the most disadvantaged (Ngendakurio 2017:45).

2.3 *The Impact of Encampment Practice on Refugees' Skills, Education, and Participation*

Skills and education in adult refugees are, according to O'Loughlen and McWilliams (2017), variables because refugee camps are expected to be temporary. But that is not the case in Sub-Saharan Africa where these camps' designs and the length of stay have adverse outcomes on refugees' skills, education, and their prospects for employment. For example, Dadaab, the world's largest refugee camp, was built in 1992 to initially host Somali refugees temporarily. However, this camp was home to three generations of Somali refugees in 2016. This protracted situation has created problems mainly because thousands of children are being born and become adults in refugee camps, never knowing any other type of life (p. 22). Besides, Kenya's refugee camps are established in the remotest locations (Aukot 2003:74). Therefore, the notion that globalization has enhanced connectedness and interrelatedness in the political, economic, social, cultural, technological, and environmental domain (Figge and Martens 2014:875) is irrelevant in the Kenyan refugee context.

Life in Kenyan camps implies that refugees' business and other skills are put on hold indefinitely. Addo (2016:437) demonstrates that, although several refugees are offered skills training programs throughout their stays in the camps, it is difficult to secure even menial jobs, which progressively plunge them into a cycle of poverty. Furthermore, the right to live in the city is reserved to citizens in most of the African countries (O'Loughlen and McWilliams 2017:28). Similarly, Oka's (2014:23–37) study analyzed refugee commercial consumption in Kakuma refugee camp and found that Kenyan authorities block refugees' economies because they lead to black markets. Therefore, most adult refugees in Kakuma have nothing to do for an extended period. More alarmingly, the childhood is often stolen from refugee children due to the conditions life in the camps creates, with many children dropping out of school for self-survival reasons (Kirk 2016). From this literature, this study is asking the question as to, 'how does the lack of quality education and the extended period of unemployment affect refugees' participation in the local, regional, and global markets?' The answer to this question demonstrates how the encampment strategy refuses residents a space in the development process and the opportunity to become contributing members of the society.

2.4 *Missed Opportunities*

Refugees can be an important asset if they are given a space in the development process. Failing to do so has dire consequences for them even after they have left the refugee camps through repatriation or resettlement to a third

country such as Australia (Ngendakurio 2017:45). The UNHCR's report (1997) indicates that refugees bring new opportunities, knowledge, skills, and business ideas that can be beneficial for the locals. The findings in this report align with Gengo et al.'s (2018:3) submission that refugees enhance economic activities and help to alleviate poverty in Kenya. The Turkana people near Kakuma refugee camp, Gengo et al. point out, engage in the camp's informal business activities, selling firewood, charcoal, and wooden building material to refugees. Additionally, almost all the meat sold in Kakuma refugee camp is purchased from the locals. The host community members also successfully run motorbike taxi business with refugees as their only customers. Such unique opportunities have positively changed the lives of the Turkana people in an exceptional way (Ibid:2).

A study by Wright and Plasterer (2010) in Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps aimed at understanding the opportunities of higher education within these refugee camps and if these opportunities are socially beneficial beyond the refugee communities. They found that there were several ways refugees' higher education could improve their wellbeing and help them become greater assets for the host country. Unfortunately, they argue, the Kenyan Government's policies are designed to impede the social-economic benefit of global education, a hindrance to refugees' local integration and their ability to maximize the outcomes upon repatriation (Ibid). Similarly, a study by Ngendakurio (2017:63) suggests that refugees who were resettled from Kenyan refugee camps to Australia are some of the most disadvantaged in the labor market due to their limited skills and education.

3 Methodology

Data collection for this study occurred both in Kenya and Australia. It involved current and former refugees, service providers, and other actors in the civil society in Kakuma, Dadaab and Nairobi (Kenya) as well as Logan (South East Queensland, Australia). A qualitative research methodology involving semi-structured interviews was the most appropriate method to collect original accounts from the sample. Participants were asked to reflect on life in the refugee camps, and their insights have been triangulated with the material from primary and secondary sources to critically assess the link between the refugee encampment and refugees' poor social-economic performances at different levels. Qualitative research methodology was particularly important for this study partially carried out in a foreign country. It enables the researcher

to study cases in their real-life context by applying diverse sources of data collection in a way that makes it easier to understand cultural and political sensitivities (Kabranian-Melkonian 2015:717).

Knowing that people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can be hard to reach (Mutch et al. 2017), the researcher relied on the snowballing technique to access refugees in Kenya and Australia. The technique involves creating a small network of participants with a sound level of knowledge in the areas being investigated and subsequently ask them to further connect the researcher with other community links who are anticipated to have relevant knowledge and experiences (Molla Imeny et al. 2021).

The results presented in this article also derives from two sets of data collection, including the researcher's master thesis, which looked at the legacies of the refugee journey for work market readiness in Australia (2017) and his PhD project that studied the impact of foreign aid on human security in Kenya (2021). Both projects attracted a diverse group of over 80 adult participants. Their insights and discussions presented in the following section enable this study to evaluate the impact of the encampment practice on refugees' integration and participation in the development process.

4 Results and Discussions

The following discussions contain the most relevant results of qualitative interviews with participants who express their perspectives on the refugee burden and the implications of the refugee encampment practice for refugees' health, wellbeing, skills, participation, and education.

4.1 *Encampment Practice, a Response to the Refugee Burden*

The following findings submit that the high number of refugees in Kenya is problematic. But whose burden is this? Mogire (2009:16) suggests that Kenya has been burdened by an overwhelming number of refugees since 1970s, with Ugandans and Ethiopians escaping from political persecutions, gross violation of human rights, and violent conflicts. But, with the increasing numbers of refugees in the 1990s, Alix-Garcia et al. (2018:67) argue, Kenya initiated and implemented the refugee encampment strategy, handing most of its responsibilities over to the UNHCR. Evidence from my sample suggests that this literature is correct.

Interviewee (48) is originally from one of the Scandinavian countries and he believes that the number of refugees in Kenya is comparatively overwhelming, as he puts it,

For us, it is a big problem if you are going to get 10,000. ‘What the hell to do?’ And poor countries are actually taking the burden, taking most of the refugees.

Interviewee 48, Male, Diplomat, 20 Jan 2019

However, while Interviewee (13) does not reject the suggestion that the number of refugees in Kenya is high, she does not believe it translates into a burden because the Kenyan Government does not provide basic needs to these refugees.

Honestly, what do they give to those people [refugees]? Nothing!.

Interviewee (13), Female, NGO Expat, 17 Dec 2018

The point made by Interviewee (13) is supported by Interviewee (18) who suggests that the refugee presence in Kenya does not come with a cost to the Government.

... I don't think there is a cost to the Kenyan Government ... the Government has to provide security services ... All other needs of the refugees are met by international organisations, including the UNHCR and its partners.

Interviewee (18), Male, Senior NGO staff, 18 Dec 2018

Despite the negligible direct cost to the Government, the refugee presence in Kenya remains controversial, with Omata (2019:139) suggesting that locals do not welcome refugees because they see them as competitors in the labor market. My sample agrees. Interviewee (34) is a senior diplomat working at one of the embassies in Nairobi, and she attests that such sentiments well and truly exist in the Kenyan society.

For Kenyans, it is frustrating because they think they [refugees] may steal jobs from them ...

Interviewee (34), Female, Diplomat, 08 Jan 2019

Interviewee (36), a priest and NGO executive in Nairobi, has made similar observations, and he claims,

There is still fear because there is an imagination of, ‘they’ and ‘we’, ‘they are coming for our jobs’, ‘the other’.

Interviewee 36, Priest, NGO Senior staff, 08 Jan 2019

Addaney's (2015:73) came to the same conclusions, adding that citizens fear for potential erosion of local goods and services by refugees. According to Interviewee (7) such fears are founded, as she explains,

... when we had an influx of Somali[ans] in Kenya, that is when the inflation went up [and] everything started changing around that time. So, economically, things became a little bit difficult and it has been difficult ever since, to my recollection ... the cost of things went up. Housing went up. Fuel prices also went up and of course, in Kenya, when fuel price goes up, everything else goes up.

Interviewee (7), Female, NGO Executive, 10 Dec 2018

The Guardian (2011) reports that the Kenyan refugee camps' environment had put significant strain on natural resources and vegetation, reducing vast areas of land outside camps like Dadaab to scrubs. But my sample disagrees because there is barely anything to lose in Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps, at least environmentally, as Interviewee (41) stipulates.

When you look at where the camps are situated [inaudible], they are marginalised parts of the country. So, Turkana, Dadaab [laughter].... Dadaab, you are talking about a semi-desert, and Kakuma.

Interviewee 41, Senior priest and Academic, 12 Jan 2019

The point made by Interviewee (41) is supported by Interviewee (18) who argues that

in Kenya, they have less than a million refugees. Many of these refugees are living in like hardship areas ... There was nothing there before.

Interviewee (18), Male, Senior NGO staff, 18 Dec 2018

Addaney (2015:73) makes a point that there is a growing assumption that refugees, particularly those of Somali background, are potential supporters of terrorist groups such as Al-Shabaab. The literature also demonstrates that Kenya has become a target for deadly terrorist attacks, using Somalia as a base for training, supply, and cover (Wallis 2003). As such, my sample suggests, refugees from Somalia are the least welcome in Kenya, and containing them in the refugee camps is the only feasible solution available. Interviewee (41) explains,

... the Government says, 'we don't want refugees anywhere because it [they] is [are] a source of insecurity, Al-Shabaab or whatever, and we

want them in a controlled place and that is encampment where we can monitor them ...’

Interviewee 41, Senior priest and Academic, 12 Jan 2019

Some Kenyans believe that the number of Somali refugees in the Nairobi suburb of Eastleigh, for example, is so high that the place has become a source of national insecurity. Interviewee (30), a frustrated taxi driver, explains,

... Like if you go to Eastleigh ... It is like Somalia ... Whenever something happens here and investigations are carried out, they always reveal the threat was planned, and has the roots in Eastleigh-meetings ...

Interviewee (30), Male, Taxi driver, 05 Jan 2019

Interviewee (43) makes a similar point as Interviewee (30), but he is less diplomatic when assessing the risk involved in hosting Somali refugees.

... you cannot distinguish, by looking at the faces of Somalians, who is or not Al-Shabaab. Therefore, the big number of Somalians seeking refuge here can be an entry point for terrorists because of the family connections there.

Interviewee (43), Male, Expat, 14 Jan 2019

The refugee encampment has not provided the anticipated solutions to alleviate the serious security issues facing the Kenyan society. Mogire (2009:18) makes a point that refugees support armed rebellion, using the camps for armed activities, including launching cross-border attacks and recruiting fighters. Evidence from my sample indicates that Mogire was right, as Interviewee (25), a Kakuma refugee camp’s resident, attests,

You know we have a significant number of Somali refugees here ... You sometimes hear that Al-Shabaab members have entered, and the police carries out searches. The suspects are sometimes arrested. They arrest them from the camp.

Interviewee (25), Male, refugee, 20 Dec 2018

Interviewee (39), a senior Kenyan Government official, confirms Interviewee’s (25) frustrations, arguing that not everyone who seeks asylum in Kenya is a genuine refugee.

... when we have the camp, I am saying that not all genuine people come. So, even Al-Shabaab takes advantage and sneak into those particular camps.

Interviewee (39), Male, Senior Government Official, 10 Jan 2019

These findings do not convincingly establish the need or the significance of the encampment strategy in reducing the refugee burden. What is evinced below, however, is that its directives have dire consequences on a range of social-economic outcomes, including poor health.

4.2 *The Impact of Encampment Practice on Refugees' Health, Wellbeing, and Participation*

The findings that follow postulate that the compromised physical and mental health of refugees adversely shapes their performances and competitiveness in the labor market, making them the most disadvantaged. Jaji (2012:221) suggests that Kenya's refugee containment strategies include physical, ideological, and psychological mechanisms that continue to undermine refugees' health and wellbeing. Similarly, Kane et al. (2014:228) suggest that residents in African refugee camps are at the highest risk of mental health disorders, while Pinehas et al. (2016:139) argue that refugees lose freedom to make decisions about their own lives, everyday functions, and their future, developing a general sense of despair.

Evidence from my sample indicates that Jaji and Kane et al. as well as Pinehas, et al. were correct. Interviewee (36) has been working with refugees for many years, and he claims,

People have experienced despicable situations. People are raped, girls are raped. The HIV. But people are not losing hope.

Interviewee 36, Priest, NGO Senior staff, 08 Jan 2019

The point made by Interviewee (36) are confirmed by Interviewee (2) who has personally experienced traumatic events that continue to have adverse outcomes on her work market readiness post-migration.

I try to secure a job, but this is not an easy task for me. When we were still in the camp, I got mentally sick due to trauma. This was my hindrance to gain work experience ... I am not also mentally ready to work due to my history of trauma.

Interviewee (2), Female refugee, 18 January 2017

Hale et al. (2006:589–590) submit that health services in the refugee camps in Africa are minimal mainly because there is little forward planning and poor infrastructure. On the other hand, Oka (2014:23) suggests that the choice of refugee nutritional necessities is calculated based on calorific value rather than the food quality.

Accounts from my sample indicate that Hale et al. as well as Oka were right to suggest that the health and wellbeing of refugees are generally poor. Interviewee (7) is a Congolese woman who came to Australia via Uganda and Kenya. Even if she wants to work to sustain her family financially, she is not physically fit to carry out the anticipated tasks.

Whenever you think about your family, you try your best to find a job. I tried to find a job. The first time I got the job, I quickly found out my physical health does not allow me to work [...]. It was in a chicken factory. It was too cold while my arm is not physically fit. It hurts inside. I even attended some physiotherapy sessions. So due to the coldness, I had to give up [...].

Interview (7), Female, 05 February 2017

A few interviewees also highlighted issues with high health demands, as Interviewee (8), a former Kakuma refugee camp's resident, puts it,

UNHCR was just doing its best. When people got sick, they received their medication, but that medication was sometimes not enough. It was not enough due to high demand as a lot of people fell sick. Even when someone was obviously sick, they wouldn't be given enough medicine .

Interviewee (8), Male, 10 February 2017

Ngendakurio (2017:2) establishes that refugee journeys involve alienation, violence, torture, and imprisonments, all of which generate fear, tragedies, and constant family conflicts. Besides, gender-based violence is identified by Wirtz et al. (2013:13) as a continuing challenge for women when they arrive in the refugee camps, putting nearly every female refugee at risk. This literature aligns with accounts from my sample, with Interviewee (21), a Spanish expatriate working in Kakuma refugee camp, affirming that gender-based violence is a sad reality in the camp.

There are many SGBV (Sexual and Gender-Based Violence) survivors ... threatened in the main camp ... So, we have six centres, and we have

protection centres for women and children that have been suffered [suffering] of [from] sexual and gender-based violence

Interviewee (21), Female, NGO expat, 19 Dec 2018

Asked by the researcher why female refugees are particularly vulnerable, Interviewee (25), a Burundian community leader residing in Kakuma refugee camp, gives an example,

A lot of Burundian children are raped here by the host community's members or by other nationals such as Sudan. Parents report incidences to the police, with great details. Medical tests are being done and results come positive [...].

Interviewee (25), Male refugee, 20 Dec 2018

The allegations made by Interviewee (25) and the statement by Interviewee (21) align with Interviewee's (2) own experiences. She was raped on her way to the refugee camp, as she recounts,

Those who were hunting us took us and raped most of the women and this continue to affect us until today [...]. I am not sure who raped me because it was a group of people. They raped and disappeared in a way that it was impossible to recognise the offender.

Interviewee (2), Female refugee, 18 January 2017

Interviewee (7) has experiences of rape and things beyond our comprehension and this continues to have negative impact on her integration in the broader Australian community.

I witnessed a lot, especially the rape of women. On top being raped, they [offenders] pushed wooden sticks into the victim's sexual organs. An example is my brother – his wife was being raped and he attempted to fight to stop the rape. They shot him multiple times and he died on spot. They also killed his wife and we buried two bodies [...].

Interviewee (7), Female refugee, 05 February 2017

These findings point to the legacies of the refugee camps for participation in the development process, including job market readiness. Here, this study seeks to demonstrate how the compromised health and wellbeing of refugees undermine their level of local, regional, and global participation even with the existing forces of globalization. This is not only putting emphasis on the significance of health, but also the importance of skills and education.

4.3 *The Impact of Encampment Practice on Refugees' Skills, Education and Participation*

It has been established that Kenya's refugee encampment practice has adverse outcomes on refugees' skills, education, and overall participation. According to O'Loughlen and McWilliams (2017:22), refugees' education and skills are variables because refugee camps are expected to be temporary. But the reality on the field tells a completely different story. For example, Dadaab, the world's largest refugee camp, was established in 1992 to host Somali refugees temporarily. However, the camp still contained a population of over 263,000 people in 2016 (Ibid). Addo (2016:437) also demonstrates that, although several refugees are offered skills-training programs throughout their stays in the camps, it is difficult for them to secure even menial jobs.

Accounts from my sample affirm this literature, with Interviewee (36) suggesting that children born in camps in Kenya do not know anything other than living in hostile environments, with minimal access to good and services and limited freedom of movement.

The question of Kakuma [refugee camp] for example. It was established almost 26 years ago [...]. The children are born there. They don't know anything, just except that environment and the environment is hostile. Difficult to live because the climatic situation. It is not friendly. It's a desert. They have no access. Many things are not accessible. People are not moving freely.

Interviewee 36, Priest, NGO Senior staff, 08 Jan 2019

The point made by Interviewee (36) challenges the notion that globalization has enhanced connectedness and interrelatedness in the political, economic, social, cultural, technological, and environmental domain (Figge and Martens 2014:875). Obviously, camps in Kenya are disconnected from the rest of the world. Such environments are particularly detrimental for children who are born and grow up in the camps such as Interviewee (26) who arrived in Kakuma with her parents when she was three months old. She was sixteen at the time of the interview in December 2018.

I came here in Kenya in 2002 and I directly went to Kakuma [refugee camp] and stayed there [...]. I was about three months old. Now, I am sixteen years.

Interviewee 026, Female refugee, 20 Dec 2018

Interviewee (48), a Scandinavian expat and diplomat, argues that because refugees have been in the camps and unintegrated for a long time, they do not belong anywhere, not in Kenya, not in their home countries.

They have been living, as we said, over 30 years in the refugee camp. So, where do they belong actually? [...] They don't feel like they have a home or home country [...].

Interviewee 48, Male, Diplomat, 20 Jan 2019

Interviewee (13) makes a similar point as Interviewee (48), adding that the length of time in the refugee camps has long-term implication from nation-building perspectives, as she explains,

You find that children were born here from refugee parents, but they are still refugees, and I just think this is really against human dignity. And when we speak of human security, how do you expect people to feel secure or even to engage themselves for the security of a country or a place where they are if they don't feel full members of that society?

Interviewee (13), Female, NGO executive, 17 Dec 2018

Interviewee (24) supports the point made by Interviewee (48) and (13), arguing that the Government has failed to elaborate an adequate exit strategy.

When the Government set up the camps 25 years ago, they didn't look at it like, 'Yes, we have put this camp, but how long are we going to have this here?' Like, an exit strategy

Interviewee 24, Male, NGO social worker, 20 Dec 2018

The refugee encampment puts refugees' business and other skills on hold indefinitely. Oka (2014:23–37) concluded that Kenyan authorities block refugees' economies because they lead to black markets. Consequently, most adult refugees in Kakuma refugee camp have nothing to do for an extended period, making them the most disadvantaged in the job market post-migration, as Interviewee (3), a former refugee currently living in Australia, stipulates,

When you complete your education, it does not matter in what, it is hard to get a job without experience [...]. Well, you lived in the camp without working. When you mention how long you have been in the camp, unemployed, they wonder what you were doing all that time. Some might even think you are trying to hide something.

Interviewee (3), Male, Former refugee, 31 January 2017

According to Interviewee (8), while he was physically and mentally work-ready upon arrival in Australia, his linguistic skills held him back. He missed the opportunity to pursue education when he was in the refugee camp because his priority was to feed his young family.

It took me at least one year before I could learn the basics such as “hi” or “How are you?” I had to work hard to get to the basics so that I could be in the position to face interviews. You cannot just come from the camps and start working, it is not possible [...] If you have a family in the camp, you would not go to school and live in harmony with your wife and children. She would ask you if she and the children would eat your stupid pen and paper

Interviewee (8), Male, Former Kakuma resident, 10 February 2017

Given the situation in the refugee camps, Interviewee (18) questions the need to pursue higher education, making a point that

everyone wants to go to university or to study because education is important ... But when it came to think[ing] about what comes after, how does this improve their lives, beyond being educated, how does it improve their day-to-day situation?... If you are talking about jobs, there are no jobs available in Kakuma....

Interviewee (18), Male, Senior NGO staff, 18 Dec 2018

More alarmingly, the childhood is stolen from refugee children due to the conditions life in the camps creates (Kirk 2016), as Interviewee (1) attests,

We did not have proper education. The camp system did not allow anything. When you get here (referring to Australia), it feels like you are born again, you start thinking and progressing [things] as a newborn child.

Interviewee (1), Male refugee, 18 January 2017

The conditions created by the encampment practice refuse refugees a space in the development process – a missed opportunity for the refugees themselves, their hosting country, and the international community.

4.4 *Missed Opportunities*

Refusing refugees to participate in the broader society entails a range of missed opportunities. According to the UNHCR’s (1997) report, refugees bring new knowledge, skills, and business ideas that are beneficial to the locals. Similarly,

Gengo et al. (2018:3) suggest that refugees enhance economic activities and help in alleviating poverty in Kenya.

Evidence from my sample indicates that this literature is correct, with Interviewee (41) arguing that refugees have potentials if they are given the right opportunities.

Refugees bring a lot with them – a lot of gifts, a lot of talents and it depends on whether you give them the opportunity to actualize their potential ... This means they have what it takes to actually stop relying on handouts and, through their own skills and labour, they can ... gradually begin to fend for themselves, and thereby contribute to the economy .

Interviewee 41, Senior Priest and Academic, 12 Jan 2019

Interviewee (24) is of the same views as Interviewee (41) in terms of what refugees can offer.

Generally, refugees, I look at them as a resource, not as a reliability.... Because they come with a lot of potential. A lot. We have those that [who] come as graduates, professionals, which I feel they ... can add value to the country.

Interviewee 24, Male, NGO social worker, 20 Dec 2018

The points made by Interviewee (41) and (24) are supported by Interviewee (18) who argues that agencies would not have to support refugees if they were given the opportunity to become masters of their own destiny.

That [encampment] prevents them from fending for themselves. Most of these refugees have the ability to support themselves if they are given the opportunity. They can start businesses, they can have access to jobs and then support themselves.

Interviewee (18), Male, Senior NGO staff, 18 Dec 2018

Similarly, Interviewee (13) suggests that refugee could be a significant asset for Kenya because most of them are resilient, as she puts it,

I haven't seen a refugee who is not resilient. At least from what I have experienced.

Interviewee (13), Female, NGO executive, 17 Dec 2018

And Interviewee (36) agrees, stating,

People are restless. People are creative. You know, their intelligence will also not allow them to sleep [...]. They want to utilize their brain. If such, people are given a boost, they will succeed, they will make it, and many have made it ... When you see such resilience and determination, I think humanity has a potential.

Interviewee 36, Priest, NGO Senior staff, 08 Jan 2019

As Ogden (2018:566) puts it, work is important to everyone's sense of purpose, values, and survival. Its absence means the lack of all those things.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, Kenya and the international community miss out on a range of opportunities as a direct result of the refugee encampment practice. The treatment of refugees, including the movement restrictions imposed on them, the location of the camps, and the conditions there challenge the notion that globalization has enhanced connectedness and interrelatedness in the political, economic, social, cultural, technological, and environmental domains – refugees are living in their own, isolated world. The encampment undermines refugees' potential and fails local, regional, and global economy because it is designed to adversely impact on the most important aspects of life, including health, wellbeing, skills, and education. All refugees are vulnerable, but females are hit the hardest given their relatively more exposure to sexual- and gender-based violence. Overall, the compromised mental and physical health within the refugee communities make them the weakest competitors in local, regional, and global markets, during and in the aftermath of their refugee journey.

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