

The Challenges of Inclusion of the Refugees in Development Plans and National Policy in Kenya: A Case of Urban Refugees in Nairobi

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Abstract

There is increasing global interest in promoting either stable or permanent solutions to the refugee problem in the host countries. While the Government of Kenya with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has implemented inclusive initiatives targeting both the refugees and the local host communities since 2021, questions have emerged whether these initiatives are bearing fruits and whether refugees' access to crucial government services such as health, education and economic opportunities has increased. This study examines the extent of refugee integration and explores the opportunities and challenges of the inclusion of refugees into the host country's development processes. The study adopted an explorative research design and applied a qualitative research methodology within Nairobi city to study the inclusion of urban Sudanese refugees. From a list of 200 Sudanese refugee households residing in Nairobi, a systematic sample of 20 households was selected and interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule. The qualitative data was processed and analysed thematically. This article reveals that, while there are some opportunities towards inclusion, urban refugees have not been fully integrated with development plans. Its findings call for long-term multi-stakeholder partnerships at various levels of governance to empower actors to contribute to the integration process.

Keywords

Refugee Inclusion, Refugee Integration, Development Plans, Host Country

1. Introduction

There is increasing global interest in promoting either stable or permanent solutions to the refugee problem particularly, in the host countries. A refugee is a person who has crossed international borders as a result of a well-founded fear of being persecuted on account of his/her religious, political, sexual, or other social identity, and whose country will not or cannot protect him/her or may in fact, be the body that is persecuting him/her (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 1951). Integration of refugees into the host communities has been broadly defined as inclusion and participation in both economic and social activities (Hynie, 2018). For host communities to achieve successful integration of the refugees, there is a need to create a social context that supports inclusion and participation through policies of settlement that create opportunities for economic and social participation and shape host community attitudes (UNHCR, 2018a; UNHCR 2021).

Despite the wide variations from year to year in the number of forcibly displaced people, the number of refugees has generally increased every decade since the establishment of UNHCR in 1951 (UNHCR, 2024). The UNHCR is concerned that the current numbers of refugees are greater than ever previously recorded (Ibid). In 2023, there were 110 million forcibly displaced people worldwide, 36.4 million refugees, 62.5 million internally displaced people, 6.1 million asylum seekers and, 5.3 million people in need of international protection (UNHCR, 2024a).

Kenya is an important case study on forcibly displaced people because it has hosted more than 750,000 refugees from Somalia, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi for over 30 years. According to the UNHCR, Kenya is the fifth largest refugee-hosting country in Africa and the thirteenth largest asylum country in the world. Kenya has over 650,000 registered refugees and asylum-seekers, The majority of the refugees reside in the two refugee camps with more than 275,000 people residing in Dadaab (Garissa County) while more than 280,000 people residing in Kakuma (Turkana County). The number of refugees residing in Nairobi and other urban areas is about 95,000 (UNHCR, 2023b). Recent data report about 150,000 refugees living in urban areas (Halakhe, Mukuki & Kitenge 2024).

The refugees in Kenya have been restricted in the camps by the encampment policy which limits their freedom of movement and prevents them from participating in the country's development processes. However, the Kenyan government has enacted a new refugee law, the Refugee Act 2021 upon acknowledging the protracted refugee situation in the Eastern Africa Region. This Act supports government initiatives which include a 15-year, multi-agency plan, the Kalobeyi Integrated Socio-Economic Programme (KISEPD). The plan is a hallmark for refugee economic inclusion by integrating refugee programs into the Local County Integrated Development Planning. It is also expected to advance access to protection for refugees, improve access to socio-economic integration, and support local solutions, especially regarding opportunities for expanding investment in education and health, and access to the labour markets and other livelihood opportunities. Examples of other livelihood opportunities which are expected to increase the integration process and refugee private sector participation and self-reliance included the Kakuma Kolobeyi Challenge Fund (KKCF) and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework adopted during the IGAD Special Summit in 2017 (UNHCR, 2017) While the Act and subsequent initiatives are expected to enhance refugee settlement with adequate social and physical infrastructure, diverse economic opportunities, and expand refugee rights and possibilities for greater financial inclusion, the urban refugees have not been explicitly targeted by the current initiatives and are unlikely to benefit.

Many refugee-hosting countries around the world are beginning to show good efforts in including and integrating refugees into their national policies and development plans (UNDP, 2023). However, effective inclusion and integration remain a challenge. In Kenya, the refugee inclusion and integration process has been slow, winding and protracted (Barasa, 2023; UNHCR, 2017). Despite Kenya hosting one of the largest refugee populations for decades and enacting a new refugee law, refugees in Kenya still face long-standing barriers to socio-economic inclusion, limited refugees' right to work, the right to move freely, and the freedom to access financial services (Graham & Miller, 2021; UNHCR, 2018b).

The recent initiative by the Government of Kenya, supported by the UNHCR, targeting both the refugees and the host local communities has yet to yield significant benefits for both target groups (UNHCR, 2018a; UNHCR, 2017). Refugees have continued to have limited access to crucial government services such as health, education and economic opportunities. The participation of the host communities in the development plans and national policy initiatives that include and integrate the refugees into the society; and the involvement of the refugees in

the implementation of the initiatives remain limited (UNHCR, 2021; Barasa, 2023). This constrains the effective inclusion and integration process. This article explores the extent as well as the opportunities and challenges of refugee inclusion from the perspective of refugees. Specifically, it analyses the involvement of the refugees in the innovative national development plans and policy services. The rest of this paper is organized in the following order, the next three sections review the relevant literature on refugee inclusion and the study's theoretical framework. The fifth covers the methodology and the sixth, discusses the findings. The last draws conclusions based on the findings and the discussion.

2. Institutional Framework for Refugee Protection

The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol are the foundations and legal documents that protect the refugees (UNHCR, 1951). These documents provide the basis of the UNHCR's work, and set a framework for governments in translating these documents into national laws and policies geared at the protection and exercise of refugees' rights. Apart from providing the internationally accepted definition of a refugee, the Convention and Protocol also provide the legal protection, rights and assistance a refugee is entitled to have. The core principle of the Convention is non-refoulement, that is, "a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom" (Ibid). In addition to the principles, the Convention stipulates the basic minimum standards for dealing with the refugees to afford them a dignified and independent life. These standards include the right to housing, work and education. The Convention also defines a refugee's obligations to host countries, specifies categories of people who do not qualify to be refugees and details the legal obligations of States.

Kenya is a signatory to the Refugee Convention and its Protocol and recently, Kenya joined the international community in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and Global Refugee Forum (GRF) to commit to a sustainable search for the refugee solution. In the 90s, Kenya enacted the Refugee Act which was replaced by the Refugee Act 2006. This Act was also repealed by the Refugee Act 2021 which signalled a breakup with the past as Kenya sought to embrace the spirit of the GCR (Barasa, 2023). Supported by the regional instruments, the Refugee Act 2021 is expected to promote refugee livelihoods and self-reliance through three pillars namely, enhancing the protection space for asylum seekers and refugees; supporting immediate and ongoing needs for asylum seekers, refugees and host communities; and promoting regional cooperation and international responsibility sharing in the realization of durable solutions for refugees. The Act fosters refugee self-reliance per the commitments made under the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). It seeks to streamline the issuance of documents that are crucial in enabling the refugees to participate in livelihood activities and access financial and other services from both government and public institutions. Most importantly, the Act gives refugees a voice in the formulation of development plans (Republic of Kenya, 2021).

As the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) marked the fifth anniversary of the affirmation of GCR in December 2023, and the fourth anniversary of GRF, little is still known about the results, challenges, and opportunities of GCR implementation. The GCR "represents the political will and ambition of the international community as a whole for strengthened cooperation and solidarity with refugees and affected host countries." (UNHCR, 2018a). The GRF brought the international community together to demonstrate solidarity with the world's refugees and the countries and communities that host them, to announce pledges and contributions that support them, and to commit to a continued search for solutions (UNHCR, 2019).

These global initiatives i.e. GCR and GRF, seek to accelerate the inclusion and integration process of refugees (UNHCR, 2023a). Recent literature and practices in refugee services rarely miss the concepts, “inclusion” and or “integration” which aim at translating national policies and development plans into solutions for refugees such as appropriate housing, access to documentation and social and economic inclusion. In addition, some novel approaches such as the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa by the European Union (EU) and the Government of Kenya have proved to be useful in resolving conflicts over resources between the refugee communities and the host communities; promoting integration and peace within the two communities; and promoting the host communities’ understanding of the refugee condition and how they can support them (Joyce, 2020).

Although the international refugee regime exists to address the refugee issue, legal treatment is likely to be very much extra-legal as the refugee issue is fundamentally political. For instance, Yan Chao (2020) notes that moral and economic issues related to refugees have tangible political implications on whether states adopt pro-refugee policies and act consistently with the international refugee regime or anti-refugee policies which are not consistent with the international refugee regime. Sometimes governments fear integrating refugees on the claim that they would not return to their home countries (Chege, 2020). However, recent initiatives by the Government of Kenya to integrate refugees are highly commendable. For instance, the Shirika Plan, which is a multi-year initiative, has the aim of promoting the socio-economic inclusion of refugees in Kenya by transforming camps into integrated settlements for both refugees and asylum seekers. This Plan seeks to alleviate pressure on hosting communities and enhance self-reliance for both refugees and host communities (Republic of Kenya, 2023).

3. Refugee Integration Discourses

Discourses on refugee integration primarily focus on the benefits or defects of integration and/or approaches to effective integration. Dobson et al. (2021) see refugee inclusion in terms of promoting refugees’ belonging and well-being. Authentic inclusion of refugees means to belong well or have a sense of well-being (OECD, 2013). This can be conceptualized, in societal terms, as the level of economic capital possessed by refugees such as the level of man-made assets. It also can be understood as natural capital such as the use of the natural environment for recreation; human capital such as skills; and social capital such as collaboration (Slee, 2019; Adler and Fleurbaey, 2016; Diener, 2018).

Refugee integration particularly, local integration is one of the three durable solutions for refugees. The other two are local voluntary repatriation and resettlement to a third country. According to Ager and Strang (2008) integration of refugees into the host community has four dimensions. These include markers and means that constitute an employment, education, housing and health; social connections which constitute social bridges, social bonds, and social links; facilitators which constitute safety and stability, language and cultural knowledge; and the legal foundation that supports the rights and citizenship of the refugees. Integration of refugees is therefore a multidimensional process that has social, economic, and legal dimensions. The socio dimension enables the refugees to access social services such as education and health as well as participate in social activities at the community level. The economic dimension enables refugees to achieve a sustainable livelihood through financial independence, self-reliance, and employment. The legal dimension enables the refugees to enjoy rights and freedoms as well as permanent residency and citizenship.

Research has shown that refugee camps have negatively impacted the environment and the poorly planned conditions of previous camps have significantly strained scarce water

resources, forest, and vegetation cover and that this environmental damage is acting as a catalyst for conflict between host and refugee communities (Halakhe, Mukuki & Kitenge, 2024). In this regard, it may be considered economically and environmentally beneficial to integrate refugees rather than keeping them in camps. There are many positive benefits that the integration of refugees may bring to the host country. These include knowledge and experience of value; a dedication to learning new skills; and a positive force for economic as well as human development (Beste, 2015). The benefits of inclusion and integration of refugees bring a wealth of skills, experience and a willingness to contribute to their new communities. For instance, studies show that investing in the education of highly talented and driven migrants and refugees can boost development and economic growth not only in host countries but also in countries of origin (UNESCO, 2018; Agrusti, 2018). These solutions work best when refugees are fully included in the design and implementation of development policies and plans.

Furthermore, studies have revealed that if refugees are allowed to access legal employment, they get the opportunity to fulfil personal aspirations, achieve financial independence, and build social networks, they can contribute to the economy and the host community in empowering ways (Beste, 2015). Employment of refugees in the host country can benefit host societies in several ways, including utilising the knowledge, skills and training that refugees bring with them to fill gaps in the labour market; contributing to social security and paying taxes; bringing new perspectives to workplaces; and acting as mediators in intercultural exchanges (Ibid). Also, refugee participation in decision-making helps to build confidence in exercising basic rights and fostering a sense of belonging and trust in host communities. Utilizing participatory approaches for refugees' sake led to smarter policies and more impactful programmes for both refugees and host communities (UNHCR n, d.; Hynie, 2018).

However, managing the effective participation of diverse constituencies that include refugees and asylum seekers is not without challenges. Some studies have even questioned the benefits of refugee integration and warned of the danger that refugee integration can pose to host country. For instance, Laurent and Ndumbaro (2023) reveal how poorly managed refugee integration can threaten the national security of the host state. Other studies claim refugee integration can undermine the host community's social fabric, intensify competition on socio-economic opportunities and jeopardise the economy (Danish Refugee Council, 2017; Klein, 2021).

The refugee situation in Kenya can be described as protracted as the majority of refugees have resided in the camps for over 30 years with periodical new influxes from mainly Somalia and South Sudan. UNHCR has worked closely with the Government of Kenya and numerous national and international partners in providing protection and assistance to refugees and asylum seekers from across the East, Horn and Great Lakes Region (UNHCR, 2022). UNHCR has also supported returnees, who are former Kenyan refugees abroad coming back to Kenya, with humanitarian assistance (Ibid.). Upon the recognition of the refugee status, refugees should have access to rights and protections set out by the Refugee Convention. This rarely happens as they are interpreted differently by different governments at different times and as the refugee system was designed to support short-term solutions until permanent solutions to forced displacement can be found (Hynie, 2018). To facilitate faster inclusion and integration of refugees in Kenya, Graham & Miller (2021) have argued that the government, donors, NGOs and private sector can work together to address the refugee challenges. The government can expedite and clarify its refugee status determination processes; clarify and expand the provision of movement passes; simplify the procedures for work permits for refugees; and facilitate the process of business license provision. The donors, international

organizations, and NGOs can tie funding to concrete policy progress; sponsor refugees as employees; focus on livelihood support for women; increase assistance to host communities; elevate the role of refugee-led organizations in planning and coordination; expand support to private-sector investors; and launch an information campaign on registration, movement passes, work permits and business licensing. The private sector can invest in host areas; hire refugees; support refugee-owned businesses; and advocate for policy progress.

Graham and Miller's argument is supported by UNHCR (n.d.) view that integration services can include targeted measures that respond to the specific needs of the refugees that support long-term settlement and social mobility including access to language courses on higher levels, skills assessment, recognition and upskilling, and tertiary education support. These measures can be coordinated and adapted across all relevant policy areas to respond to the challenges refugees face in host countries. The services created can be long-term and ensure opportunities for the socio-economic inclusion of refugees. Faster inclusion will be realised when actors collectively focus on refugee sensitization, especially on their rights, freedoms, and expectations from the host country.

4. Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by international ethics theory which focuses on the nature of transboundary duties and responsibilities, and in particular how members of political communities mostly nation-states ought to treat those beyond their borders (Shapcott, 2017). The two main questions international ethics theory explains are: whether outsiders should be treated according to the same principles as insiders, as moral equals; and what treating outsiders as equals might mean in substantive terms. International ethics examines a series of related moral quandaries including, should we be prepared to go without to help outsiders, and if so, how much? Do we owe substantive duties of wealth redistribution or merely charity? (Ibid). International ethics theory draws from analytical philosophy particularly, deontological (Kantianism) and consequentialist (utilitarianism) approaches to ethics. While the deontological approaches articulate rules that are always right for everyone to follow because they are right in themselves, consequentialism judge actions by the desirability of their outcomes. For instance, utilitarianism judges action by its greatest good to the greatest number.

A dimension of international ethics theory that is becoming increasingly significant is the cosmopolitanism theory advanced by Martha Nussbaum, Thomas Pogge, Andrew Linklater, and David Miller (Nussbaum, 1996; Pogge, 1994; Linklater, 2002; & Miller, 2002). Cosmopolitanism holds that morality is universal and that a truly moral code will apply to everyone because what defines us morally is our humanity. This is different from communitarianism which argues that morality is derived from the values of particular communities and is therefore necessarily particular, not universal. The more contested dimension of cosmopolitan thought concerns attempts to define exactly what obligations and rules ought to govern such a universal community and guide the policies of states and other actors. The advent of globalization prompts us to ask whether human beings ought to be considered as a single moral community with rules that apply to all (cosmopolitanism) or as a collection of separate communities, each with its ethical standards and with no common morality among communities. The main arguments of cosmopolitanism can be summed up as follows:

1. We should recognize humanity whenever it occurs, and give its fundamental ingredients, reason and moral capacity, our first allegiance (Nussbaum, 1996).
2. Individualism: ultimate units are human beings or persons (Pogge, 1994).

3. **Universality:** the status of the ultimate unit of concern attaches to every living human being equally, not merely to some subset (Pogge, 1994).
4. **Generality:** persons are the ultimate unit of concern for everyone, not only for their compatriots, fellow religionists, or such likes (Pogge, 1994).
5. The key point is that it is wrong to promote the interest of our own society or personal advantage by exporting suffering to others, colluding in their suffering, or benefiting from how others exploit the weakness of the vulnerable (Linklater, 2002).
6. A world of diversity in which the variety of national cultures finds expression in different sets of citizenship rights, and different schemes of social justice in each community (Miller, 2002).

Cosmopolitanism thus argues for fundamental moral claims that stem from one's status as a human being; that we have at least some moral duties to all humans everywhere; that there are no good reasons for exempting any person from ethical consideration a priori; that no human should be treated as less than human; that one's national identity should not come at the expense of outsiders; and that obligations to friends, neighbours, and fellow citizens must be balanced with obligations to strangers and humanity (Shapcott, 2017). Cosmopolitan theory is generally expressed in terms of a commitment to human rights with a view that all humans have equal standing. The universal human rights are applied to all human beings regardless of morally irrelevant features such as race, gender, beliefs, and citizenship. Cosmopolitanism thus recognises refugees and all forcibly displaced persons as human beings who have equal moral standing as the host community.

Given that the refugee issue is dominated by political considerations and decisions which have both moral and economic dimensions, central to the refugee issue is the importance of the nation-state paradigm which even globalization finds it difficult to erode. Given the critical role individual states play in the functioning of the international refugee regime, the politics of the state is bound to affect the way refugees are dealt with (Yan Chao, 2020). Political discourses about refugees seem to fall into two opposing ideological positions: nationalism and cosmopolitanism. The nationalist political discourse emphasises cultural identity and the fortification of national borders. Cosmopolitanism, however, is quite the opposite as it anchors on Kantian ideas of world citizenship and universal hospitality towards foreigners, crossing the geo-political borders of nation-states. Building on John Rawls' ideas of the "original position" and "veil of ignorance", Yan Chao (2020) calls for states to have the same moral duties towards non-citizens as they have towards their citizens. This is also supported by a utilitarian moral philosopher, Peter Singer's extreme position that morality requires everyone to work full-time to relieve the suffering that takes place across the world. Countries, including Kenya, may consider embracing cosmopolitanism fully in addition to nationalism. This seems to be the only viable way to successfully deal with the refugee challenge of inclusion and integration.

5. Methods

To address its objectives, the study adopted a qualitative research methodology within an explorative research design. The research was conducted in Nairobi, Kenya on urban refugees of Sudanese origin. From a list of 200 Sudanese refugees residing in Nairobi based on the area of their residences (zones), 20 households were determined through systematic sampling and at least two adults from each household were then interviewed using a semi-structured

interview schedule. The identified persons were contacted through phone and requested whether they were willing to participate in this research. For those who accepted to participate in the study, meetings were arranged and the researchers visited them in their homes for interviews. The interviews were conducted in October 2023.

The members of the households who participated in this study included both men and women and were all adults with ages ranging between 20 and 50 years. Most of the participants interviewed did not go through the refugee camp in Kakuma when they first came to Kenya but instead, came and settled in an estate like an ordinary Kenyan either in Nairobi or in another town then moved to Nairobi. Those who first settled in the camp managed to find their way out of the camp and settled in Nairobi in various estates. A few of the participants live in the affluent estates of Karen and Runda while the majority live in the middle-income estates and the larger Eastlands. Most of the participants have been living in Kenya for more than ten years while a few have been living in Kenya for less than two years. For ethical reasons, the names of the participants have been concealed and the participants assigned numbers and a letter "P" e.g. P1, P2, e.t.c.

Analysis of the findings was done thematically. In this regard, a thematic and content analysis of the views and perceptions of the participants was used to highlight insights and draw conclusions which formed the basis of the recommendations. The major themes arising from the analysis include awareness of government policies and plans; access to public services specifically education and health and economic inclusion. The following section discusses these themes in detail.

6. Results and Discussion

6.1. *Public Policy Inclusion Awareness*

Despite the Government of Kenya introducing initial policies and plans that aimed at involving refugees in the national development agenda, access to relevant information particularly from the government regarding how the refugees can be assisted is lacking. Majority of the participants shared that they do not get any information on opportunities available to them and how they can access government services. One of the participants insisted that "*[Refugee] need to be informed about the government programs and the services available. I need help to know how to get the UNHCR and Government of Kenya identification cards* (P 13). All interviewed participants except two said were not aware of any government policies or plans on the inclusion of refugees into development plans. The participants asserted that, "*We have never received any information on the national development plans and policies of the Government of Kenya that targets refugees.. I am not even aware of these plans and policies*" (P 5). Most of the participants were only aware of the UNHCR which helps the refugees and not any other humanitarian organization, "*I am not aware of any NGO that is supporting the refugees*" (P 4). They also emphasized that they have never been consulted by the UNHCR or the Government of Kenya about any government plans and policies that target them as refugees.

. Rarely do the government and related agencies organize consultation activities with refugees to obtain their input on various policies or programmes. This suggests a lack of appropriate communication mechanisms for tracking urban refugees' opinions to feed into government programmes. Programmes such as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the related programs of the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan (KISED) in Turkana County; and the Garissa Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan (GISED) in Garissa County have not targeted urban refugees. They may also

signal limited coordination and cooperation between relevant stakeholders and actors to ensure support for the refugee policy implementation.

As noted by the UNHCR (n.d.), the benefits of refugee awareness and inclusion in policy design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation regarding the services provided to them are not only a holistic approach to integration but also ensure refugee interests, perspectives, needs and capacities as primary stakeholders are systematically reflected in the programmes and plans. In addition, awareness of the government's inclusive policy interventions may reinforce good relations with relevant authorities.

Lack of information on available refugee support programmes and lack of psycho-social support among other challenges could also imply that there is not sufficient coordination and cooperation between relevant stakeholders and actors working towards refugee inclusion and integration. Despite the national government collaborating with UNHCR, there is little evidence to show that other relevant policy actors such as the private sector, civil society, researchers, social partners, and county governments are brought on board to foster refugee inclusion and integration. Thus, the involvement and participation of key stakeholders in policy development, implementation and evaluation discourse and action seems to be quite limited.

6.2. Access to public services

The study investigated the public services available to integrated refugees paying particular focus to education and health. Regarding access to education, the results reveal households have children in different levels of education including pre-primary, primary, junior secondary, secondary and university/college. Participants said their children had access to educational services in both public schools and private schools. Those who send their children to public schools hailed the affordability of school fees compared to private schools. They also held that in the public schools, their children are considered the same way as children of Kenyan parents.

However, those who send their children to private schools complained that the fees in private schools are quite high but they are supported in paying fees by their relatives who are working in Sudan and other foreign countries. Some households send their children in primary level education to private primary schools and those in secondary level education to public secondary schools. *"My children study in public schools, where they are treated like ordinary Kenyan children"* (P 5), a participant revealed. Some households prefer to have some children in public schools and others in private schools: *"My children go to both public and private schools"* (P 8); *"Our children go to private and public schools depending on the availability of funds to pay school fees"* (P 6). Also, it was found that some household members have graduated from various public universities while others have students in private universities. For instance, a participant revealed that he/she *"graduated from Egerton University with a Bachelor's degree in Criminology and Security Studies"* (P 9). Another participant said was *"studying Electrical and Electronic Engineering at Mount Kenya University"* (P 5). The views of one of the participants quoted below were very elaborate regarding refugee access to education as she said:

I went to secondary school in Kapenguria girls. I have a diploma in catering, but I have not found a job. I have lived in Kitale, Eldoret, Nakuru but I have now settled in Nairobi since 2018. I have a cousin who has been sponsored by Jesuit Refugee Services to study electrical engineering in Nairobi from Kakuma camp. My children study in Mwiki primary school which is a public school and I pay school fees just like any other Kenyan (P 7).

Some members of the households have benefited from the support of charitable, humanitarian organisations and people of goodwill including the UNHCR. *“My brother who is studying in India through the scholarship support of one NGO is assisting me with paying rent. I graduated from Pan African University and I received support from my pastor to pay my school fees”* (P 8). Yet, another interviewee said was aware that *“the UNHCR pays fees for students who have passed well in their examinations whether they go to public schools and universities or private schools and universities”* (P 6).

These findings demonstrate that refugee integration in Kenya has afforded refugees to access public and private educational services. None of the participants said their children have not been able to access educational services. In Kenya, basic education is universal regardless of the child's background. This makes it possible for all children to have access to basic education. While this is true with lower levels of education, it is not the case for university education. Refugee students studying in universities do not receive government scholarships. *The government of Kenya scholarships are not given to the refugee students studying in the public universities.* (P 6) no matter how good their pass rate is (P 4).

Unlike the education service, access to public health care services has not been easy for integrated refugees. This is because accessing government-provided health services requires a medical insurance cover and this is *available only for Kenyans* (P 3). Moreover, the higher costs of health services was reported as a primary factor limiting access to health services as shown in the quoted interview:

My family members have not accessed any public or private health facilities for medical services. We do not access medical care because we do not have money to pay for the services, whenever we are sick, we just take some painkillers which we buy from the chemists (P 9).

Nevertheless, refugees are not prohibited from accessing health services as long as are willing to pay. Some even reported that they were not overcharged even when they sought services from public health facilities. They are only required to present official papers from UNHCR, in case of in-patient admission (P 11).

Health care and education services are human rights which should be enjoyed by all human beings regardless of the status of their citizenship. The participants appealed to both UNHCR and the Government of Kenya to ensure the refugees also to benefit from these critical services offered by the Government at affordable cost. They even proposed that *“refugees should be allowed to access health care services in public health facilities using the universal health care insurance cover just like other Kenyans* (P 15)”. Another participant stated, *“The UNHCR in collaboration with the Government of Kenya can agree on how much each refugee household can contribute to the cover”* (16).

The results above show Kenya has made a step forward toward refugee inclusion concerning education and health service delivery. Refugees' ease of access to public and private schools like any ordinary Kenyan as well as ease of access to public and health care facilities without discrimination shows that the Kenyan society and the government have accepted the refugee community and are willing to foster the wellbeing of the refugees. Government initiatives may require stakeholder support to ensure the sustainability of refugee inclusion in social services.

6.3. *Economic Inclusion*

Refugee economic integration would entail that refugees have access to economic opportunities including formal employment and self-employment. In this regard, the study investigated whether refugees engaged in business or whether they were employed. There were less than five households that reported engaging in some business activities. Most of those were small businesses as this refugee stated, *"My small business involves making and selling liquid soap, crochet mats and sofa covers"* (P 8). Another household reported that they are practising some farming as well as doing some business. *"We are involved in business and farming"* (P 10). Another participant reported to know some of his friends who *"have integrated with the local host communities and are even succeeding in business"* (P 9). Two households reported they used to engage in some business activities in the past but stopped due to difficulties in securing bank loans. Yet, those who engaged in business usually, encountered police harassment and intimidation as this quote reveals:

Some refugees who are doing business are sometimes intimidated by the police officers who accuse them of selling illegal items when they are not actually illegal. The police officers demand bribes from these refugees and threaten to arrest them if they do not give a bribe. The police officers take advantage of the refugees sometimes (P 7).

Regarding, formal employment, most of the households did not have members who were gainfully employed. The majority thought this was due to a lack of relevant government documentation. The participants revealed: *"We don't have access to employment and we face challenges getting the work permits"* (P 4). *"We are not employed and we are not doing any business as we have faced difficulties due to not having the required documentation"* (P 6). *"I studied Medicine in South Sudan before coming to Kenya... I am not employed and I have no income at the moment"* (P 11). Employment opportunities in Kenya are quite limited given the larger number of qualified graduates. It's even harder for a qualified refugee to get employed in Kenya.

The refugees who engage in business activities are free to do so as long as they get business permits. However, most of the refugees are not engaged in business because they lack capital, skills, knowledge and permits. Also, the ability to successfully engage in business depends on many factors including knowledge of the laws and how to navigate through the systems of the host country. However, the interviewed refugees did not seem to have such knowledge. Generally, the findings imply much has not been done to promote refugee inclusion in economic activities. This is not only for the government but for other stakeholders as well. As such, Graham, J. & Miller, S. (2021) have emphasized the role of the private sector and other stakeholders in fostering the inclusion and integration of refugees in a host country. The private sector could invest in host areas; hire refugees; support refugee-owned businesses; and advocate for policy progress.

6.4. *Access to Essential Documents*

A meaningful refugee inclusion would also entail access to essential documents. The essential documents are basically, the UNHCR identification card and the Government of Kenya refugee card. Refugees who entered the country and not living in refugee camps lacked essential documents to enable them to *"access available services and assistance to the refugees"* (P 2). For instance, registration of a bank account requires a UNHCR identification card and the Government of Kenya refugee identification card. Refugees, *"do not have bank accounts, neither my children nor I have any bank account because we do not have the required UNHCR"*

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and Government of Kenya identity cards (IDs) (P3). The easiest form of financial service they can access is mobile money transactions famously known in Kenya as, M-pesa services. This is because registration of an M-Pesa account can also be done using a Sudanese passport as this participant attests, *“I do not have a bank account. I use M-pesa services as I have an M-pesa account I registered using my South Sudanese passport,” (P3).*

The study uncovered difficulties in accessing essential documentation for most of these refugees:

I have difficulties accessing UNHCR and Kenyan refugee IDs. Whenever I visit the UNHCR office in Nairobi I am always referred to Kakuma camp to register as a refugee and then get the Identity cards. I have not thought of going to the camp, and it's very far (P 1). I do not have an identification card from the UNHCR and the Government of Kenya that would enable me to access available services and assistance to the refugees (P 2).

One of the reasons why refugees lacked essential documents is that they did not go through the camp when they arrived in Kenya so have not been registered by UNHCR. They travelled privately and sought their private accommodation: *“I travelled privately from South Sudan to Kenya coming all the way by road through Uganda to Nairobi. I do not receive any assistance from the UNHCR because I have not registered by the UNHCR” (P 1).* These are not beneficiaries of UNHCR services. Those who went through the camps, some left their documents in the camps or the documents have expired and renewing them has become very difficult because they do not want to return to the camps.

Refugee lack of documentation has exposed them to police harassment or even some individuals and organisations taking advantage of them. *“In case we are arrested, we are harassed by the police and we don't have legal aid as hiring a lawyer is very costly beyond our reach. Therefore, some of us have been unfairly treated by the police and unscrupulous Kenyans (P 8).* Similarly, some organisations exploit the refugees by collecting personal information from them and promising them some benefits which they never provide: *“Several organizations are coming around taking our data and promising to support us but they disappear once they have collected enough information from us and vanish, never to be seen again. We feel cheated and used by such organisations (P 9).*

Lack of access to essential documents is hampering most households in accessing opportunities to improve their lives and grow their talents and careers. It also exposes them to human rights abuses. Essential documentation would not only ensure protection of rights but also will enable them to access some of the essential services provided by UNHCR or the government; participate in business, apply for bank loans, and engage in meaningful employment. Lack of access to essential documents may also mean the country does not adequately tap into the potential these people might have. Granting them special resident status may ease the difficulties in obtaining relevant documents.

6.5. Societal Acceptance

The study also looked into the social relations between refugees and host communities. Specifically, the study probed refugee perceptions regarding the way they are treated or perceived by the host community. This is because supportive citizens' attitudes are very important in the course of refugee-targeted public policy that a respective government may wish to implement. The majority of refugees who were interviewed reported to have lived well with the Kenyans and said they were not being discriminated against. Some of such views were worth quoting:

I have not experienced any form of discrimination in Kenya since I came (P2). The ordinary Kenyans are very friendly and good people (P4). I very much appreciate the freedom of movement we enjoy in Nairobi (P7). We relate very well with our host communities (P13). We eat together, farm together, and socialize together (P15). I want to appreciate the Kenyan government for allowing us stay in Kenya, access education and other services” (P17).

However, some households reported tragic experiences. One of the participants reported as that they lost their “*twin babies at Kenyatta hospital because the nurses on duty discriminated against [them] for being South Sudanese*” (P 3). Another said, “*Some landlords do not want refugees in their apartments so, finding a house to rent is sometimes difficult because we are discriminated against* (P7). However, the refusal of landlords to rent houses to refugees may not be discrimination considering that it is not legal to rent to a foreign national who has no proper identification documents. Similarly, the reported incident at the Kenyatta Hospital may not be generalized but interpreted as an isolated incident largely due to negligence among some nurses. This is because such incidents also happen to Kenyan citizens.

This study's findings on refugees' social acceptance in Kenyan society corroborate with other studies. For instance, a Survey by Twaweza in partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) revealed that “A significant majority of Kenyans (88%) think that the Government of Kenya should support refugees in their efforts to achieve livelihoods, and support their right to work (72%)” (IRC, 2018). These findings suggest there is a supportive political environment for the government to implement refugee integration policies.

7. Conclusion

This study has attempted to demonstrate that there is a supportive political environment in Kenya for the government to implement refugee inclusion and integration policies. This environment results from both the government's legal and policy initiatives and frameworks, and the people's positive perceptions about the refugees. Nonetheless, the involvement and participation of key stakeholders in refugee policy development, implementation and evaluation discourse and action remains quite limited. As a result, urban refugees have not sufficiently benefited from government initiatives. This implies such initiatives need to be supported to ensure the sustainability of refugee inclusion in social services. The private sector, one of the key stakeholders, could hire refugees, support refugee-owned businesses, and advocate for policy progress. Limitations notwithstanding, Kenya has made substantive progress towards refugee inclusion concerning education and health service delivery. Urban refugees can easily access public and private schools like any ordinary Kenyan as well as health care services in public and private facilities without discrimination. This could imply that the Kenyan society has accepted the refugee community and is willing to foster the well-being of the refugees. Other policy implications arising from this study include the need for stable and long-term multi-stakeholder partnerships at various levels of governance to empower actors to contribute to the integration process of refugees; integration and diversity management mainstreamed across all relevant fields, services and policy areas; strengthening of coordination between all stakeholders and actors including employment, health, housing and education service providers; and incessant provision of resources and support for the national and county governments researchers, and relevant non-governmental organisations committed to fostering long-term inclusion and integration of refugees.

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