FORCED DISPLACEMENT AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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FORCED DISPLACEMENT AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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Abstract

A global commitment to better the lives of the most vulnerable in the world population is the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, whose commitment to leave no one behind in the development process. Forced displacement remains a major global problem with an increase in the number of displaced persons rising every day. Forced displacement is one of the major challenges of human security hence becoming a barrier to the attainment of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). The research was guided by objectives which were study factors leading to forced displacement and their effects on human security, effects of forced displacement on the human security of Congolese refugee women and the refugee protection policy gaps and its effects on human security. Two theories, Kunz's Kinetic refugee theory and Rogge's typology theory formed the basis of the research. The literature review examined secondary literature by other authors on forced displacement while the empirical review of the theories delved deeper into the theoretical perspective of forced displacement. The research design was based on ex post facto design. The target population was Congolese refugee women seeking services at an outreach center for one of the refugee agencies. The research sampled 60 Congolese refugee women who were randomly picked at the outreach center using simple random sampling. 10 key informants comprising of Agency staff from who did outreach programs in Mwiki ward in Kasarani were interviewed. Other key informants included refugee community leaders from. 2 focus group discussions sampled through purposive sampling were also interviewed. Qualitative data was collected through questionnaires, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Data analysis for quantitative data was analyzed through SPSS version 20.0 while qualitative data was coded into

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themes and later interpreted based on the questions and objectives. The findings indicated that there was a statistically significant relationship between forced displacement and human security of the women refugees. The findings also indicated that forced displacement affected the physical security of the women by exposing them to continuous police harassment, extortion and arrests, lack of access to essential services such as healthcare subjection to physical abuse, torture and sexual violence through rape and sexual harassment. The findings showed that forced displacement affected the mental health of the refugees leading to worsening of the mental health conditions where many of the women refugees still had mental disorders such PSTD, stress, depression, Schizophrenia, suicidal tendencies, Insomnia, and helplessness. Recommendations from the study include the need for government and international actors to work together to eliminate armed groups and introduce programs for reintegration of ex-combatants. Other recommendations include the needs to revise asylum policies for a conducive environment for asylum seekers. The study recommends that law enforcement officers be trained on asylum processes to create a conducive environment for refugees.

Introduction

Forced migration is described by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as a migratory movement where an element of coercion is involved. This involves life threats, livelihoods resulting from natural or man-made causes (IOM, Glossary on Migration, 2011). The 1951 United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees describes a refugee as a person who is outside the country of his nationality because of a well-founded fear of persecution on grounds of ethnicity, religion, nationality, membership of a specific social group or political opinion and is unable or unwilling to avail himself in that country because of such fear. The 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees broadened the policy to include the people in the rest of the world.

Forced displacement and refugee migration date back to the 18th Century. However, the period after the 2nd World War produced many refugees. The refugee crisis dates to World War II during which millions of people were displaced. Many of the displaced persons during World War II-era were political refugees fleeing persecution mostly in Eastern European countries. Before that, the Balkan wars of 1912-1913 and World War I (1914-1918) led to the displacement of millions of people from Eastern Europe. During the cold war, the displacement of people from communist nations continued until the end of the late 90s (Dragostinova, 2016).

At least 20.3 million forcibly displaced people live in Africa, consisting of 6.3 million refugees and 14 million internally displaced people (Abebe, 2019). Over the past 50 years, forced migration has risen, propelled primarily by conflict. Current displacements are more linked to disputes within states than between states, as was the case when the OAU Convention on the aspects of African refugee relations came into being.

Conflict and political instability have been the major contributing factors to the refugee crisis in Africa. This dates to the 60s after the decolonization of most African countries. The period after the colonial masters left saw an increase in conflict in nations such as Rwanda and Burundi and

this led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands. In the late 80s and early 90s, instability, apartheid, and civil war in Central African and South African nations led to the displacement of millions of people. Countries such as DRC, Central African Republic, Angola, Chad, Namibia, Mozambique, and South Africa all experienced some form of conflict and instability that led to massive displacement of people (Aall, 2015).

Sub-Saharan Africa experienced a significant increase in refugees in 1993 and 1994, resulting from political turmoil in Africa's Great Lakes region. In the late 2000s, the number increased further following the Arab Spring Movement in North Africa. In Africa, the number of refugees rose from approximately 2.7 million in 2008 to approximately 3.7 million in 2013, with the bulk coming from Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Algeria (Maystadt, 2015).

Problem Statement

The UN Member States have committed themselves to building peaceful, just, and inclusive societies free from fear and violence through the 2030 Agenda; to eradicate poverty and hunger; to fight inequality; and to protect and respect human rights. In terms of peace, the Agenda states that "there can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development." (UNDP, 2019)

The nature of conflict has changed in recent decades. Second, contemporary conflict, which includes vast networks of foreign actors, is increasingly trans-nationalized. This has specific consequences for displacement: neighboring countries are the most frequent hosts of cross-border refugee flows, and regional conflicts are restricting security-seeking options and putting more pressure on already vulnerable structures. This adds to a complexity that puts more people at risk, hampers humanitarian access and undermines political and diplomatic attempts to achieve lasting peace (Aall, 2015).

In many of the most serious humanitarian crises in the world, war is becoming more protracted, with repeated cycles of violence producing a 'conflict trap' from which countries are trying to escape. Many communities are consequently condemned to repetitive cycles of displacement, migration, return and re-displacement (Worldwide, 2018)Several disastrous effects have been the inability to distinguish armed elements from civilians in camps. Camps have specific security and humanitarian effects for residents and surrounding communities, besides their implications for peace. Camps can be susceptible to cross-border attacks, especially where they are viewed as revived combat launch pads. Women and children are especially vulnerable to serious violations of human rights, such as trafficking, forced recruitment, rape, and other types of sexual and physical violence (Atim, 2013). The growing numbers of economic migrants and forcibly displaced have created a lucrative market for human smuggling estimated to be worth $765 million annually along the Trans-Sahara route. A significant share of this flows to violent extremist and criminal groups, who use the funds to undermine and destabilize governments (Williams, 2019).

At the same time, the economic, environmental, and social strain put on host communities by a massive influx of displaced people generates tremendous pressure on governments and entire regions to cope with it. People leave with little or none of their possessions during war. Their loss disrupts the connections between these communities and regional economies, worsening economic

downturn and preventing recovery. Large numbers of people displaced by protracted conflicts inside and across borders which often become targets or training grounds for rebel groups, gangs, or other criminal actors (Williams, 2019).

It is estimated that women make up 50% of the refugee population (CFR, 2017). Gender plays an important role in the decision to leave, as well as in the decisions and interactions related to seeking alternatives in the displacement process (Ratha, 2016). Further, the vulnerability of an individual to human rights violations and access to services and economic livelihoods is predicted by gender (Martin S. , 2011).

A research conducted among urban refugee women living in Mwiki sub-county of Kasarani indicated that forced displacement has adverse effects on the human security of the refugee women. The research focused on three pillars of human security: economic, personal security, and mental health. These three pillars of human security contribute to the realization of the three Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). These goals include SDG 1 which focuses on ending poverty in all its forms, SDG 3 on good health and wellbeing for all and SDG 8 which focuses on decent work and economic growth.

Methodology
The study adopted an ex post facto research design. The adoption of this research design was informed by its exploratory and explores the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The researcher took on the dependent variable in this design and retrospectively analyses the information to ascertain triggers, relationships, or associations and their meanings (Collin Robson, 2016). In this study, the researcher examined the dependent variables which are personal security, economic security, mental health security, and policies for the protection of displaced persons and examined them retrospectively to examine how they were affected by the independent variable which was forced displacement.

Summary of Findings
The research findings indicated that forced displacement influenced human security aspects of the women refugees namely their personal security, economic security, and mental health security.

Forced displacement and Personal security: On average, more than half of the respondents faced security threats while in asylum. The threats included continuous police harassment, extortion, and arrests, their access to essential services such as healthcare was constrained, and the women became vulnerable to and were subjected to physical abuse, torture and sexual violence through rape and sexual harassment.

Forced displacement and Economic Security: 72.9% of the respondents reported the inability to meet their needs sufficiently due to inability to work in the country of asylum. This limited the women's self-reliance capacity, the sustainability of their incomes as well as their ability to provide or support their families. The refugees had a limited capacity to get jobs and even to work and could majorly get casual jobs with limited pay and with no sustained incomes.

Forced Displacement and Health Security: More than half of the respondents had received mental health and psychosocial support. Forced displacement was attributed to the worsening of the mental health conditions where many of the women refugees still had mental disorders such as Post-traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD), stress, depression, Schizophrenia, suicidal tendencies, Insomnia, and helplessness.

Forced Displacement and SDG 1

Threats to refugees' personal security started with being forced to flee from conflict areas and other human rights violations. Flight and asylum presented a myriad of challenges that increased the threats to personal security. The findings indicated that 35.4 % of the respondents had undergone torture during flight while 25% of the respondents indicated have been victims of sexual violence during flight. Abduction by warring factions, rebel groups, sexual exploitation, imprisonment, arbitrary arrests, and slavery were some of the threats that the refugee women reported having faced during flight and in asylum.

In the country of asylum, 35.4% of the refugee women interviewed reported that harassment at work was the biggest threat to their personal security. The harassments ranged from threats of being fired, being exploited, and abused and threats of being reported to the police. 29.2% of the respondents indicated that they encountered multiple problems with the police, including harassment, demands for bribes, arbitrary arrests, and illegal detention (Tippens, 2016). 12.5% of the refugee women interviewed reported that they had been survivors of rape and sexual violence while at work, while in transit to and from work and in their communities.
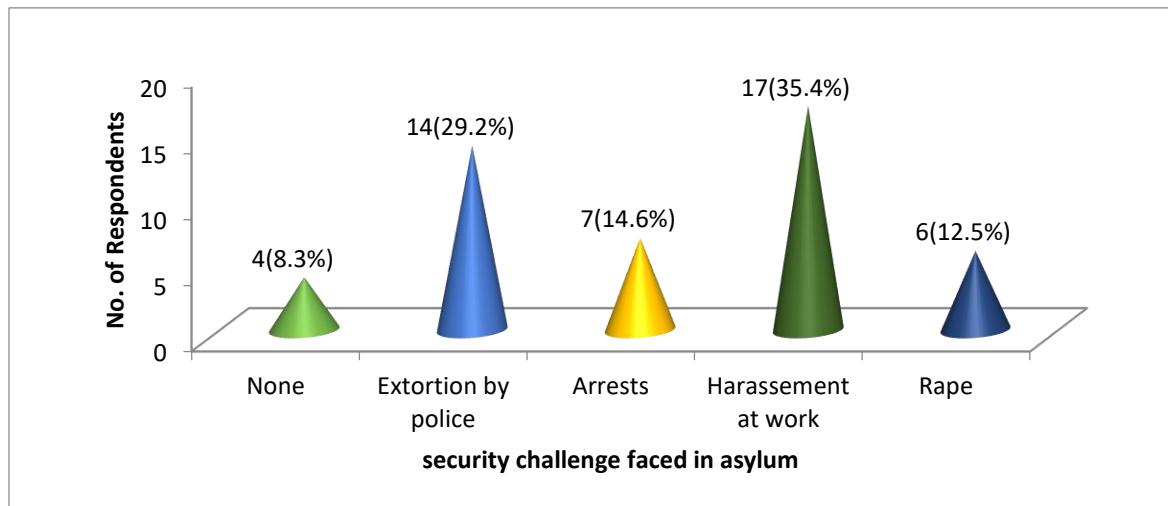

Figure 1: Security challenges faced in asylum.
Source: Field data (2018)

The refugee women reported that after the incidents, most were afraid of leaving their homes. This was collaborated by the response where 43.8% of the respondents indicated that they faced the most threats in public spaces. While many people in Kenya for example experience challenges with the police, the refugee women indicated that they were especially vulnerable if they lacked

documents to prove their identity and/or status, or if police officers did not recognize the validity of their documents (Maina, 2016).
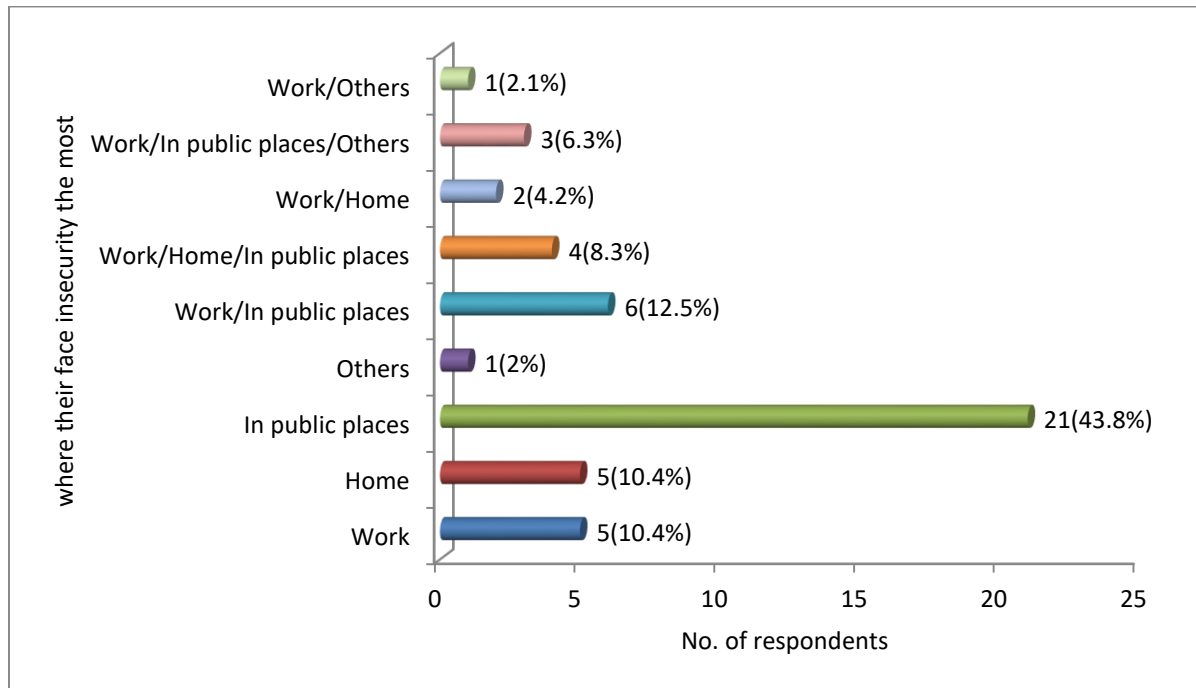
Figure 2: Where they face the most insecurity.
Source: Field data (2018)

Other personal threats in the country of asylum included xenophobic threats to the displaced persons. In Kenya, refugees reported having experienced xenophobic attacks from among the host community members. This increased after the wave of terror attacks in Nairobi and other parts of the country and the government made declarations that the refugees had to leave the country. Refugees reported that their landlords would often evict them without notice while others were fired from their jobs for no cause (Sara Pavanello, 2010).

Poverty goes beyond mere total lack of or inadequate income and resources to ensure a sustainable livelihood. Hunger and malnutrition, inadequate access to education and other public facilities, social discrimination, and exclusion, as well as lack of involvement in decision-making are all elements of poverty (UNDP, 2019). The indicators under this goal include eliminating threats because of conflict and natural disasters. Threats to the achievement of SGD 1 are multiple and for displaced persons, they are often compounded threats to their personal security. Among the refugees who were interviewed in Kasarani, these threats are intensified by the refugee's lack of material resources, documentation, and lack of protection from their government. Breakdown of family, community, and other social structures that offer some form of protection often exposed the refugee women to vulnerabilities.

> *(There are many cases of arbitrary arrests, extortion and illegal detention*
> *and some women cannot move freely. They cannot access essential services*
> *like education and health. (Female refugee, Nairobi 2018)*

Living in displacement for most refugee children means that they have to start new systems of education which is often expensive and inaccessible while some are forced to join their parents in working to fend for their families. The result is that children often must drop out of school in order to fend for the family hence leading to a cycle of poverty where the children especially girls may end up becoming teen mothers or facing child abuse, sexual exploitation and abuse and forced labor. In severe cases, the children may get trafficked as they succumb to the pressures of having to meet the needs of the family. Young boys and men often take on roles of providers at a tender age and may eventually have families of their own at such tender ages creating a cyclic vicious cycle.

Girls with less education are more vulnerable to becoming child brides. The effects of poor sexual reproductive health among young people go beyond physical health. Trauma associated with harmful practices such as female genital cutting, forced marriages, obstetric fistula often impacts on the mental health of young girls and women (UNFPA, 2017). Early child marriages, gender-based violence, unsafe abortions and sexual exploitation also impacts on the mental health of young girls and women often affecting their ability to be effectively contribute to the economic wellbeing of the society.

Forced Displacement and SDG 3

For sustainable growth, good health, and well-being, aimed at maintaining safe lives and promoting well-being for everyone at all ages, are important. Threats to good health and wellbeing include global infectious diseases, poverty-related threats and conflict, and natural disasters (UNDP, 2019). Conflict is the major cause of health security threats. This is because during conflicts, health systems resources are affected, and basic living conditions and healthcare deteriorates. The health of refugees, including mental health, is compounded by the challenges faced by displaced citizens. This is exacerbated by the fact that the displaced people have already experienced trauma in their countries of origin and their mental health problems increase during flight. 93.8% of the respondents reported that they knew of places where they could get psychosocial care for mental health problems. The study found that 53.8% of the women refugees had received individual counseling, 30.8% had received group counseling while 15.4% of the women had received marital counseling.
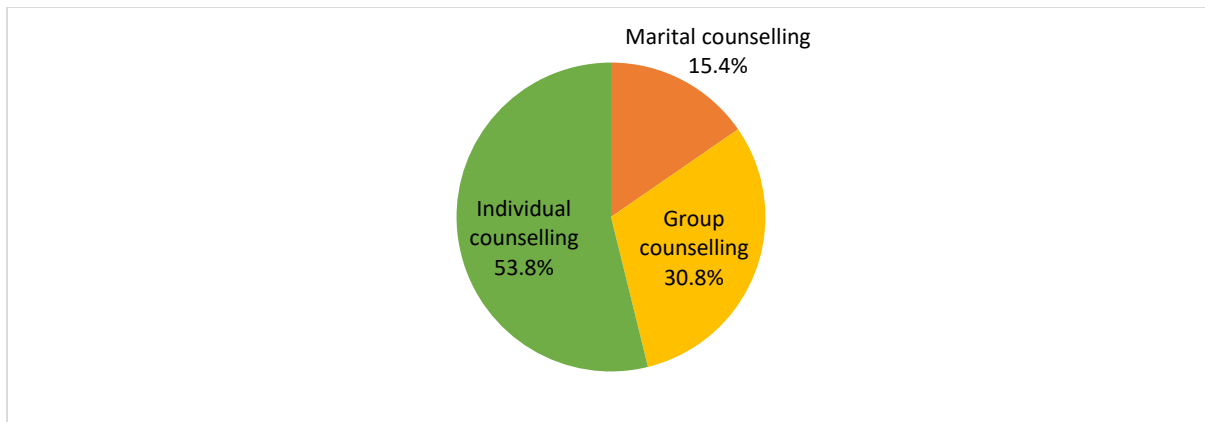
Figure 3: Forms of counselling received.

Source: Field data (2018)

The research findings indicated that many women refugees were still suffering from PSTD, stress, depression, Schizophrenia, suicidal tendencies, Insomnia, and helplessness.

Based on the findings, 91.7% of the respondents indicated that mental issues had affected the ability of women to support their families and themselves. The mental issues were cited to affect the ability of women to work and increasing the financial burden of getting treatment. As a result, mentally ill persons are left at the mercy of the community and well-wishers. Women, children, and girls are more at risk as they are more prone to sexual abuse due to their mental conditions.
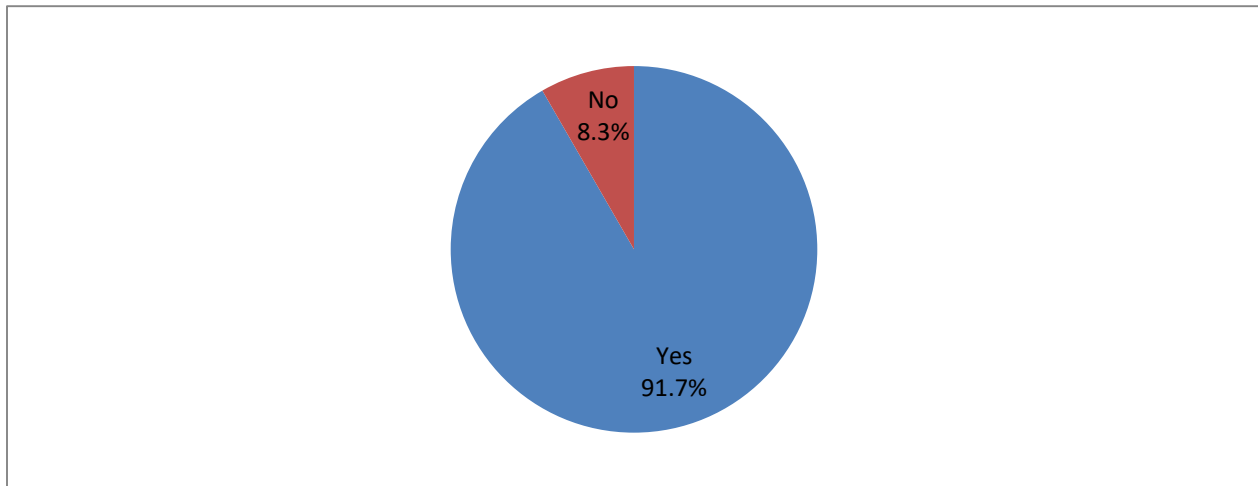
Figure 4: Mental issues and ability to support families.

Source: Field data (2018)

Despite current and adopted international norms, treaties, and resolutions on human rights, including the World Health Assembly Resolution 61.17 on migrant health, many migrants, asylum seekers and refugees still lack fair access to health services and financial security. Refugees are subject to inadequate living and working conditions and threats to occupational health, lack of

access to basic health facilities and funding for mental health treatment. Discrimination, lack of legal registration, economic barriers, and lack of information are some of the barriers that limit access to health services among refugees (WHO, 2016).

Although 84.6% of the women reported that most refugee agencies in Nairobi offered free mental and psychosocial health support, most of them lacked the finances to keep going for counseling sessions, lack of time as many had to work to fend for families and fear of being ostracized by the community. There is evidence that most of those exposed to emergencies suffer some form of psychological distress, evidence shows that the occurrence of common mental disorders such as depression, anxiety, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD), increase from a baseline of 10% to 15-20% among crisis-affected populations while severe mental disorders, such as psychosis or debilitating depression and anxiety can increase from 1-2% to 3-4% (WHO, 2012). In humanitarian environments, such mental health issues have extremely serious effects, undermining the ability of affected people to work and survive. Various studies have shown that rates of PTSD and severe depression in settled refugees vary from 10-40% and 5-15%, respectively. (GBD, 2015).

The cost of taking care of relatives and family members who have mental health conditions weighs heavily on refugee families. Women and girls often carry the burden of primary caregiving. Where women are the sole heads of households, they are often forced to abandon any income generating activities to do caregiving (Mohammed Ayalew, 2019). This further makes them susceptible to exploitation and abuse by other relatives, hosts or even landlords. Eventually the women result to engaging in negative coping mechanisms to meet the needs of the family. In families where there are younger girls, they are often forced to abandon school to take on the roles of caregivers. Such girls are usually at risk of early marriages, child labor and trafficking.

> *(Women with mental illness get raped and abused they cannot work. Most of them do survival sex work and there they get beaten, exploited and at times arrested. They are also rejected by the community (KI, Nairobi 2018)*

The cost of treating mental health conditions also affects the family economically. Without medical insurance, most families are forced to dip into their pockets to buy medication or seek medical services for the sick relative. This in turn affects the family source of income especially where it is in the form of an economic generating activity. In cases where the head of the family is in employment, hours away from work spent in hospitals or seeking mental health support could eventually lead to loss of employment (Mills, 2018). Since most mental health conditions take time to treat and some require complete dependency on medication, the economic hardships will often result in family wrangles, neglect of the sick person and in some instances, violence associated with the prevailing economic struggles and wellbeing of the family members.

Forced Displacement and SDG 8

The study findings revealed that 72.9% of the interviewed refugee women were not working. Of the 27.1% that were working, more than half of them were in casual employment.
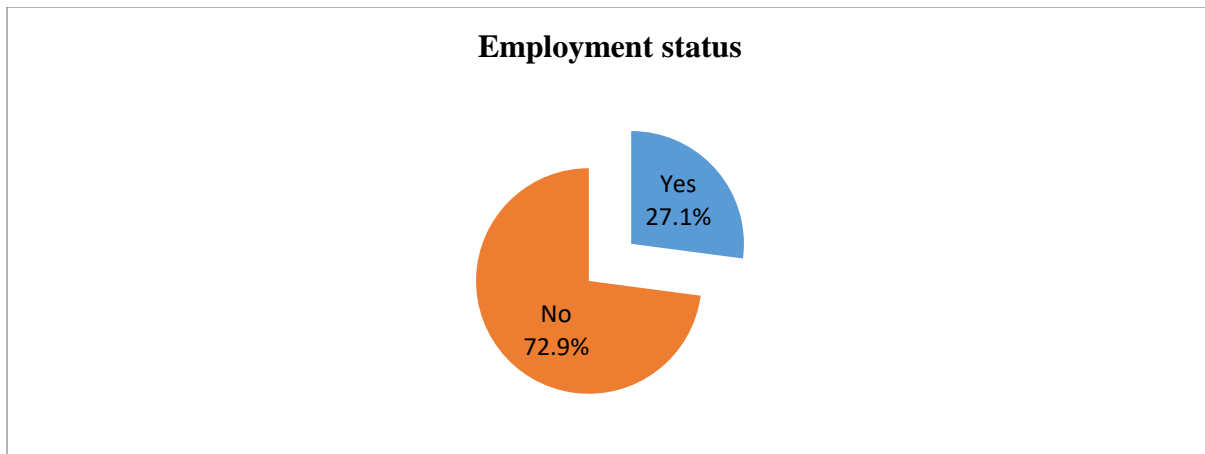
Figure 5: Employment status of the respondents

Source: Field data (2018)

The refugee women indicated that a lack of the necessary work permits was the major barrier in getting permanent employment despite having skills in various fields. The women stressed that there were few regulations in the informal sector and that the risk of exploitation and violence was high particularly for women and girls. Refugees often have limited opportunities to put into meaningful use their talents, skills, academic qualifications, and experience. (WRC, 2011).

> *(Majority of the women cannot work since they do not have proper documents and no employer is willing to take the risk and employ someone with no papers because of the risks involved (KI, Nairobi 2018)*

Economic challenges often force refugee women into negative coping mechanisms including survival sex work to meet their families' needs. Refugee women often took on the roles of breadwinners for their families, roles they did not have to undertake in their countries of origin. Lack of documentation, language barrier, lack of adequate and requisite skills needed to get jobs are some of the challenges that refugee women face while in asylum. This coupled with lack of support forces them into survival sex work. As a result, these women often must grapple with unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, sexual exploitation, gender-based violence, and unsafe abortions.

> *(At times, there is sexual harassment at work. The male employers take advantage of the fact that someone is desperate to work and will do all sorts of things (FGD Participant, Nairobi 2018)*

Women forced to leave their homes are frequently trapped in a toxic cycle of violence, vulnerable during the refugee experience to sexual harassment. Sexual and gender-based abuse varies from assault, domestic violence and rape to female genital mutilation and food or other necessities being refused unless paid for through sex. In the humanitarian community, it is now understood that displacement has unique gender aspects and that the security problems of refugee women and girls

vary in many ways from those of men. Moreover, women do not always have equal access to humanitarian aid and prospects for asylum. Sexual and gender-based violence can occur at any point of the refugee cycle: during travel, during asylum, and during repatriation.

> *They make you work for long hours and pay you poorly since they know you have no permit. They know that you cannot take any legal action against them (FDG Participant, Nairobi 2018).*

Only when societies take steps to build conditions that allow people to have quality jobs that boost the economy while not damaging the environment can sustainable economic growth occur. For the entire working-age population, job opportunities and decent working conditions are also needed.

Conclusion

Based on the study findings, the study concluded that forced displacement impacts negatively on the human security of refugees hence becoming a threat to peace and security. This in turns impacts the achievement of the Sustainable Development Agenda. Forced displacement exposed the women refugees to personal security threats such as police harassment, exploitation, and arrests, lack of basic services such as healthcare and physical and sexual violence. It also threatens their economic security by limiting their capacity to be self-reliant and to attain economic sustainability. It also contributes to the exploitation of women refugees economically hence they could not adequately cater to their families' needs. The study also concludes that forced displacement continuously threatens the mental health security of the women refugees by making them more susceptible to mental disorders which also made them economically insecure. From a theoretical framework, the human security of displaced persons is greatly affected by displacement. The findings indicate that due to the lack of required legal documents, displaced persons are not able to engage in economically productive activities that enable them to adequately provide for their families. In terms of personal security, displaced persons are exposed to police harassment, extortion, arbitrary arrests, and even exploitation and abuse in public and at their places of work due to lack of work permits and other necessary documents. This in turn affects their ability to get access to essential and quality medical care including mental health services. This makes them susceptible to mental health conditions that rob them of their productivity, social interactions in society, and the ability to engage in economic growth and development of their societies.

Recommendations

International Actors, Regional organizations, parties in conflict mediation and resolution processes should consider the inclusion of refugees in peace negotiations, reconciliation, reconstruction, and recovery processes. Such process is for refugees and displaced communities as they help prepare them for crucial process of repatriation. Refugees need to be viewed more than passive recipients of that are negotiated without their involvement. Refugees are often left out and marginalized in peace processes and peace-building initiatives. Refugees can influence peace and security outcomes such as drafting documents that influence dialogues between warring communities and

factions. Inclusion of refugees in peace process also ensures that they the agreements include legal protection for the refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees displaced by the conflict. While the participation of refugees in peace process is critical, they must not be forced to repatriate for their participation to be considered.

International Organizations, host governments and local authorities should consider implementing peace programs for displaced persons. Peace education programs enhance the participation of refugees in peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes. In fragile post-conflict and reintegration processes, refugees and returning displaced people are best prepared to reconcile with former community members and mediate disputes. Refugees in prolonged circumstances will have an excellent opportunity to learn valuable skills in areas such as leadership, activism, mediation, and dispute resolution while living in asylum, which would again enable them to contribute to the restoration of their communities once repatriation occurs.

Partners, governments, and local actors should make peace programs a priority for refugees in the host country. Incorporating refugees into peace-building activities is critical in providing support to refugee-hosting countries, who might perceive the protracted situation as a burden and a security concern. The peace building activities among refugees and host communities in the country of asylum help foster peaceful coexistence with the host communities, resolve ethnic and xenophobic tensions which might lead to violence between host communities and refugees or different groups within the refugee communities.

UNHCR and other organizations implementing programs in the refugee sector should enhance the participation of refugees in peace programs. These programs will help address trauma and trauma related effects that affect the mental health of refugees and displaced persons. Peace programs help to rebuilt social networks and trust among refugees which is an essential step in healing from trauma. Trauma because of conflict could lead to internal conflicts in the family and community. Peace initiatives are a valuable instrument to help people and societies relieve distress, thereby reducing negative manifestations of the trauma of an individual by interpersonal conflict.

The Global Compact on Refugees attempts to put together and align development and humanitarian strategies with the 2030 Agenda, but does not set clear goals, benchmarks, and objectives to assess progress in the lives and livelihoods of people trapped in crisis. Without clear data on key well-being indicators and a more systematic effort to work through global structures, there is no way for the international community to evaluate the success of these communities, much less target steps to achieve the objectives for oppressed and vulnerable people. While the CRRF calls for enhancing refugee self-reliance, most of the largest refugee-hosting countries are in the third world are already grappling with their local challenges such as high unemployment rates among youth, strained health, and education resources, etc. The implementation of global initiatives such as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) and the Global Compact on Refugees is critical in improving refugees' access to legal status, core rights such as freedom of movement, employment, health, and education. International organizations and other international players are crucial and need to work with host countries, donors, and civil society on the 2030 Agenda and the CRRF including support to host countries to incorporate these outcomes

into their local implementation plans. If implemented, these initiatives will not only improve the rights of refugees but also their human security.

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