

**^ WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S COPING STRATEGIES AT KAKUMA REFUGEE  
CAMP, 1992-2010)**

**BY**

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**DECLARATION**

**THIS IS MY ORIGINAL WORK AND HAS NOT BEEN PRESENTED FOR A  
DEGREE IN ANY OTHER UNIVERSITY.**

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**PROF VINCEN ^ G. SIMIYU**

**DATE**



## **DEDICATION**

To my beloved parents Mzee, Japheth Wekhuyi Masinde and Mama Lornah Wekhuyi, my most cherished family, and to all those organizations that may find this research useful.

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## ABSTRACT

The conflicts in Africa have been a major problem causing displacement of millions of people looking for relatively safer destinations. Most of them end up in refugee camps for years. These refugee situations, especially in Africa, become forgotten emergencies as those in camps struggle to cope with the realities of their new situations. The majority of refugees in most camps are women and children. The researcher chose to focus on women because women are the custodians of the society's norms and values, and the procreators of the same cultural values through generations. When conflicts come they are destabilised together with the children, and this affects the fabric that holds society together. These two groups have been portrayed as helpless in situations of conflict. This study sought to test the validity of this opinion by carrying out a case study of Kakuma Refugee Camp and interviewing 80 refugees comprising 40 women, 20 children and 20 men. The fieldwork was carried out within the camp in the month of August 2005 with the permission of the Government through the Ministry of Education Science and Technology with consultation with the UNHCR offices at the site.

It is within Arnold "Toynbee's challenge and response" theory that this study was carried out. Arnold posits that both the human and physical environment influences a people's way of life. The natural environment at Kakuma is harsh and the host community is hostile to the refugees because of the perception that they have better facilities than them. According to this theory, adaptability grows in proportion to the difficulties faced.

This research attempts to develop an understanding of the methods used by women and children to cope and adapt to the new environment far way from their mother countries. It

examines the livelihood means they employ as a means of coping, and ensuring their security.

The study used both primary and secondary' methods to collect data. The findings show the resourcefulness displayed by the refugees as they employ various strategies to cope, both on a short and long term basis. The study also revealed that women assume new roles both at the family and community level. Whilst Refugee camps that are meant to be temporary settlement areas for refugees on flight, Kakuma Camp is a permanent home to many who have lived there since it was established.

The study established that women and children are vulnerable, and they suffer because of the patriarchal structures in most African communities, but they do not lack initiative.

The women started a wide range of economic activities, and developed social networks both locally and abroad, which gave them hope in such adverse situations. They demonstrated remarkable resilience and resourcefulness in dealing with an otherwise difficult situation. Children not only depended on their parents, relatives and organizations working at the camp, but also had their own ways of coping especially at school where they took part in sporting and religious activities, drama and choir. Some ran small businesses around the camp besides to help their parents.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AU	African Union
AIDS	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IOM	International Organization of Migration
IRC	International Rescue Committee
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Services
KRC	Kakuma Refugee Camp
KRCS	Kenya Red Cross Society
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
NCCK	National Council of Churches of Kenya
NGOs	Non Governmental Organizations
OLS	Operation Lifeline Sudan
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorders
SDA	Seventh Day Adventist
SPLM	Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
UAM	Unaccompanied Minor
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
IJNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Treatment Centre
WFP	World Food Program
WVK	World Vision Kenya
WTK	Windle Trust Kenya

## WORKING DEFINITIONS

**Asylum:** A state of granting legal stay to refugees as provided by international refugee law.

**Conflict:** A situation in which two or more party's desire goals that they perceive as being obtainable by only one of them. Each party thereby mobilizes energy to attain the goal and perceives the other as a barrier or threat.<sup>1</sup>

**Coping:** Efforts to master problems or conditions of challenge, threat or harm where a routine or automatic response is not readily available

**Host nation:** The receiving country that host refugees after they have crossed their country's borders.

**Refugees:** Defined by United Nations Organization (UNO) as persons forced out of their country of nationality on account of a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of race, nationality, religion or membership of a particular social group or political opinion.'

The 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention expanded this definition to include people who, owing to external aggression, foreign domination or occupation or because of events seriously disturbing internal peace, are forced to leave their country of nationality and seek asylum in another.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. Stagner, *Psychological Aspects of International Conflict*, (Belmont: Calif & Brooks, 1967) p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>The 1951 *UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, p.3.

<sup>3</sup>The 1969 *OAU Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugees in Africa*, p.3.

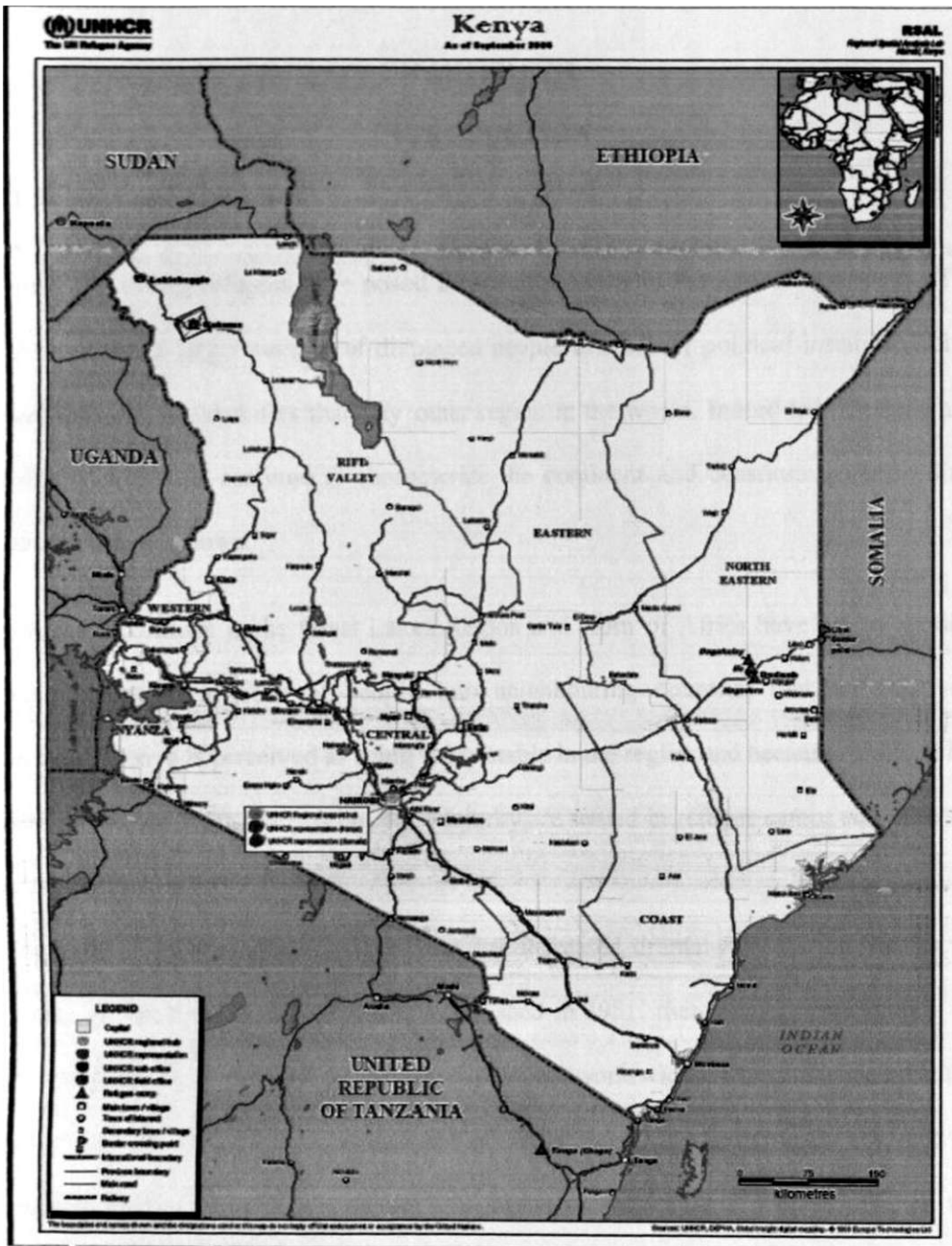


Figure 1: Map showing Kakuma Refugee Camp and the Refugee Producing Countries in the region. Source: UNHCR Kenya Country Report: 2004. Stz (7)

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background to the study

Since the 1970s, refugees have posed a serious problem in the African continent. The continent has a larger number of displaced people because of political instability, civil wars and natural calamities than any other region in the world. Indeed tribal, ethnic and political upheavals continue to characterize the continent and constitute an immediate cause of refugee flows.<sup>4</sup>

Protracted conflicts in the Great Lakes Region and Horn of Africa have led to massive displacement of millions of people into neighbouring countries that are relatively peaceful. Kenya is perceived as being fairly stable in the region and because of this, it has been a destination for many refugees. Majority are settled in refugee camps and others in urban centres.

The number of immigrants and refugees has increased dramatically during the last 50 years. At the time the UNHCR was established in 1951, there were approximately 1.8 million people classified as refugees or immigrants worldwide. The challenges that this group face are enormous. In the absence of war, women have traditionally assumed the multiple roles of caregiver, nurturer, and protector within their families. When war breaks out it is even worse. Women must continue to carry out these duties and also be their family breadwinner. This study examines the life of women and children at the

\*M. J. Ghelib, *The Cost of Dictatorship: The Somali Experience*. (New York: Lillian Barber press, 1995).

Kakuma Refugee Camp- the largest refugee settlement in Kenya, to establish how these two vulnerable groups cope with conditions at the camp.

The Camp was established in July 1992 after the arrival of 16,000 Sudanese, who were a group of children, who together with their caretakers undertook a five-year odyssey fleeing the civil war in Sudan through Ethiopia. The persistence of the Sudanese civil war displaced a large numbers of people in Sudan making the country one of the ten major refugee producing countries in the world.<sup>5</sup> The displaced from Sudan were estimated at 374,000 people in 1998. Out of these, over 48,000 sought refuge in Kenya.<sup>6</sup> Most of those fleeing from southern Sudan were settled at the Kakuma Refugee Camp because of its proximity to the border point of entry. The Sudanese refugees are not the only ones at the camp; others are from Zaire, parts of Southern Africa including Mozambique and Angola, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, and the Sahel region.'

The Camp is located close to the equator and is one of the hottest areas in Kenya. All year round, the average daytime temperature is 40°C, dropping only slightly at night. The terrain is flat, barren and dry. Dust storms are an almost daily occurrence. Water is scarce, and rain is occasional and frequently leads to flooding.

The Kakuma Refugee Camp is expansive lying on an approximate land area of 80 kilometres square. It is divided into four large camps namely I, II, III and IV. They are further sub-divided into zones according to their nationalities and further according to their tribes. Sudanese make up the majority and are settled into zone five known as Multi-

<sup>5</sup> K. Fakui, and J. Markakis, *Ethnicity and Conflict in the Horn of Africa*. (London: James Currey, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR, *Information Bulletin*, November. 1998.

<sup>7</sup> F. Dennis, "Refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa: From Cause to Solution" *Africa Insight*, Vol. 26, No.1.

national zone which is the largest zone at the camp. The local Kenyan community comprises of nomadic pastoralists from Turkana community. The camp falls under the jurisdiction of the Kenya government and the department of the Refugee affairs. It is administered by the UNHCR, which is assisted in its duties by a wide range of organizations, including World Food Programme, International Organization of Migration, Lutheran World Federation, International Rescue Committee, Jesuit Refugee Services, National Council of Churches Kenya, Windle Trust Kenya, Film Aid International, and Silesians of Don Bosco in Kenya. These organizations provide a wide range of services including water provision, health and education among others.

The African cultural structures always put women as depended on their male counterparts. This depiction does not, however, consider the roles women play in conflict situations, through their contribution to maintaining family and community life and bringing solutions to refugee situations. They leave their homes under great duress; most of them have lost their husbands, homes, as well as children. When they arrive in the host countries, they are confronted with multiple challenges especially those settled in refugee camps. The study seeks to explore how the women and children cope with life in this complex situation and the challenges they encounter.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Despite the harsh environmental conditions and scarcity of aid for the refugees at Kakuma Refugee Camp, refugees have survived since 1992 when the camp was established to date. Immigration requirements and government legal restrictions do not

allow refugees outside the camp and per the encampment policy on refugees. The puzzling question remains as to how they cope with such harsh conditions, especially women and children who are the majority.

Whereas refugee issues have been extensively studied and analyzed, the aspect of women and children in refugee camps has not received much academic attention. Generally, most of the available literature on refugees, present women as helpless victims in times of conflict. There has not been any specific study on the coping mechanisms by women and children in refugee camps in Kenya let alone in Kakuma Refugee Camp. Despite the encampment policy that restricts refugees from engaging in income generating activities, and operating outside the camp, women and children at the Kakuma camp still manage to live on.

In view of the above, the study seeks to ascertain the livelihood means of the refugees, especially women and children; the challenges they go through and their response to the harsh conditions at the Camp.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study were:

- i. To examine the living conditions and challenges of women and children refugees at the Kakuma Refugee Camp.
- ii. To examine the coping strategies adopted by women and children at the Kakuma Refugee Camp.



## **1.4 Hypotheses**

The study probed the following two hypotheses

- i. Women and children experience multiple challenges at the Kakuma Refugee Camp.
- ii. Women and children apply different coping strategies at the Kakuma Refugee Camp with varying degree of success.

## **1.5 Justification of the Study-**

While studies have looked into the refugee phenomenon in Africa and more so in Kenya, there is a gap in knowledge over the livelihood means by women and children who form the bulk of refugees in camps in particular, the Kakuma Refugee Camp. There is a need for scholarly research with a historical perspective to examine how women and children cope in the gated and isolated Kakuma Refugee Camp.

Secondly, there is need to understand the plight of children who arrive at the camp sometimes unaccompanied by any relatives and those that are accompanied by their mothers only. Most of these women came in with children who grew up to be teenagers and some even adults. This study will therefore fill a major gap in understanding the experiences of women and children refugees in refugee camps.

## **1.6 Scope and limitations of the study**

This study is focused on the Kakuma Refugee Camp from the year 1992 when the camp was established to date. The study aims to capture the experience of the women and children at the camp and the progressive methods they have used to cope up with their hardship situations. Kakuma Refugee Camp was chosen for study because it is the largest camp in Kenya with a multi-cultural composition which makes it unique from the other smaller camps. The study captures the present date as the camp is still in existence and the organizations working for the refugees have streamlined their operations in terms of management and provision of services. The women are still building on the structures and policies established by the pioneer refugees and the organizations working at the Camp.

## **1.7 Theoretical Framework**

The study is anchored on Arnold Toynbee's challenge and response theory.<sup>8</sup> This theory is well summarized by the English dictum "necessity is the mother of invention" or "creation is the outcome of an encounter." Toynbee divides the environment into two, the physical and the human. Physical environment consists of the climate, topographical and hydrographical conditions. The human environment consists of other societies with which any society interacts. People's way of life is conditioned by both the human and physical environment.

<sup>8</sup> A. J. Toynbee, *A Study of History, Vol.2*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1951).

Toynbee argues that self-determining civilizations are born out of more primitive societies not due to racial factors but as a response to challenges such as hard country, new ground and pressures from other civilizations.

Toynbee posits that for civilizations to be born there must be some challenge and they grow when they meet more challenges. He went on to argue that civilizations develop in different ways due to their different environments and the approaches to the challenges they face. He says growth is driven by creative minorities, to find solutions to the challenges, which others then follow by example.

Since human beings are adaptive creatures, the stimulus towards civilization grows stronger in proportion as the environment grows more difficult. Conversely, civilizations that were once strong lose the stimulus to survive and prosper once they become used to 'easy living,' hence their collapse. The theory informs the study on the adaptive and coping strategies of the Kakuma women and children to the hostile circumstances both natural and human at the camp. The harsh conditions pose challenges that unlock previously untapped sources of creativity and energy. This has been shown by the many activities the women engage in to survive. It is within the framework of this theory that this study was carried out. The following section highlights some previous studies on women and children refugees in various parts of the world and their relevance to the current study.

## 1.8 Literature Review

The study of the refugee crisis has attracted attention of very many scholars. For this study, the literature review will be divided into four categories namely; literature with global focus; literature on impact of refugees on third world countries, country specific studies and comparative studies between two or more refugee camps.

Krishna Kumar while reviewing a collection of essays on refugees found out that the conflicts may have some positive aspects on refugees when they are over. Reviewing on Rwandese women refugees in Tanzania and their eventual resettlement back home Krishna revealed that women take up culturally perceived such as head of households and devise survival mechanisms to enable them face the challenges that they encounter.<sup>9</sup> For instance, women become breadwinners and heads of families. They had to do that in order to feed their children and elderly relatives. Some husbands had been killed in the war while others were still back home fighting. However, this study does not examine some of the social dynamics and challenges that the women face as they evolve into their new roles and how they cope with them. Is it to be assumed that this transformation is a smooth process? Are there no social stigmas associated with this process, more so in patriarchal settings that characterize African societies. The researcher also looked at women who were integrated into the Tanzanian communities and not settled in refugee Camps. This was part of the women's coping strategy in Tanzania. Unfortunately the government of Kenya policy on refugees did not allow that. This particular research

<sup>9</sup> K. Kumar (ed), *Women and Civil War: Impact, Organizations and Action*. (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2001).

focused on Kakuma, a gated camp and also included children who together with the women formed the largest population at the camp.

Rachel Van DerMeeren examines the early problems Rwandan refugees faced when they settled in Tanzania where integration was more successful. She compares them with the refugees in Uganda and the DRC who became involved in the ethnic conflicts of those countries.<sup>10</sup> The Rwandan women saw their lives, their families and their economic security disrupted by the genocide which forced them to seek refuge in Tanzania. Individual women were at risk because they were women, while certain categories of women were targeted because of their actual or presumed membership to particular ethnic groups. According to her research, there were those who were successfully integrated into the host community whom they lived alongside in the village's .This made it possible for them to have some amount of control over their lives as well as dignity, self reliance and freedom.

Atle Gral-Madsen studied legal issues concerning refugee rights, protection and problems." When refugees land in host countries, there are no guarantees for their safety. In conflict situations, unaccompanied women and children are at the greatest risk, as they are subjected to sexual violence and abuse. This is mainly by persons in authority who take advantage of their vulnerability especially when seeking registration and other

<sup>10</sup> R. Van Der Meeren, *"Three Decades in Exile. Rwandan Refugees 1960-1990"* Journal of Refugee Studies. Vol. 9(1996) pp.21-40.

"A. Grahl-Madsen, *Refugees and Refugee Law in a World in Transition*, (New York: Clark Board, 1982).

services.<sup>12</sup> Madsen deals with the refugee law in general and does not examine in any detail how the same refugees were being abused and how they coped with such situation.

Johnson, D., points out that in exile, women often become detached from their families or community appointed protectors, in addition to being foreigners in an alien environment.<sup>13</sup> Rape, abduction, sexual harassment, physical violence the frequent obligation to grant 'sexual favours' in return for documentation and/or relief goods remain a distressing reality for many women refugees along escape routes and in border areas, camp settlements and urban centres. He points out that sexual exploitation occurs in large numbers of refugee situations and involves primarily single refugee women or girls, those that are unaccompanied by males and female heads of households. Johnson (1989) focuses only on the problems faced by women, and not much on how they cope. This particular research will further look at children too and their survival mechanisms in times of adversity.

Nasreen Mahmud observes that the process of flight has profound gender implications. She maintains that while some Asian communities preferentially allocate scarce resources to women,<sup>14</sup> men command superior moral resources, in that is, they can travel without protection of kinsmen without being harassed. On the other hand, women are more liable to be victims of sexual violence, kidnappings, robbery, enslavement or death. Furthermore, the agents of states or humanitarian agencies are mostly male. As such, gender relations are a critical dimension of refugee flight. The cultural norms place on

<sup>12</sup>H. Adelman, *Ethnicity and Refugees: World Refugee Survey US Committee for Refugee*, (Washington D.C. 1996/

"D.Johnson, *"The International Protection of Women Refugees"* Journal of Refugee Law, Vol. 1 No. 2,(1989), pp. 221-232.

Mahmud, *"Crimes against Honour: Women in International Refugee Law"* Journal of Refugee Studies Vol. 9 No. 4, (1990). pp. 367-382.

men as the family spokesmen, and the brokers between refugees and camp functionaries who are also men. She concludes that relief distribution systems can become highly discriminative on the basis of gender. These observations are commendable but they do not give an insight into how women cope when faced with such overwhelming limitations.

Harrell-Bond.<sup>15</sup> in a study of resettlement schemes for Sudanese refugees, found out that women are engaged in income generating activities such as basketry, sewing and brewing of alcohol. While this work proves that women are not passive actors, the setting for the present study is different. The Kakuma Refugee Camp is a gated and the refugees are restricted by the camp policy to engage in any activities outside of the camp. The fact that the refugees are strangers in a foreign land further aggravates their problems.

A study by Martha Tureti writing on the impact of refugees at the Kakuma Refugee Camp on the host community concluded that the impact was both negative and positive. Their presence led to improvements in the provision of services in the town and the NGOs and government opened up offices, schools, clinics and boreholes inside the camp where the host community was allowed to access the services. The NGOs working at the camp created jobs for the local people. On the negative side the presence of the refugees in the region led to clashes with the local community over pasture and water. These occasionally led to deaths.<sup>16</sup> Turet's work provides valuable information on the origin and composition of the refugees in the camp, and more importantly, on the interaction of the refugees with the local community.

<sup>15</sup> B.E. Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid Emergency Assistance to Refugees*, (New York: Oxford University Press, (1986,) pp. 266-267.

<sup>16</sup>T. Martha, "The Impact of Refugees on the Host Communities: The case of Kakuma Refugee Camp" (M.A, Project paper, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nairobi, 2005).

Abdiwahab A, in a study on urban refugees' reintegration: A case study of Nairobi's Eastleigh Somali refugees, found out that urban refugees face challenges but they are free to engage in economic activities that make their survival more bearable. Most of these refugees have difficulties finding formal employment because they have no proper identification and are not issued with work permits. Because of these impediments, it is difficult for them to open bank accounts and even own property. They are perceived as a threat to security of the country and they are periodically victims of police sweeps as illegal aliens. He observed that intra- clan conflicts is still a challenge and occasionally leads to fights over business rivalry. Abdi looks at refugees outside camps, most integrated into the local urban communities and engaged in all kinds of businesses for survival.<sup>17</sup>

## **1.9 Conclusion**

Among existing literature on women refugees are those which have a global focus on the hardships they face in refugee camps .There is an obvious need for work to analyse specific refugee camps and how refugees cope, especially women and children. No such work has been done in Kenya. This research will endeavour to comprehensively study Kakuma Refugee Camp to find out the mechanisms women and children use to cope since the camp was established.

<sup>1</sup> A. Abdiwahab," Study of Urban Refugees Reintegration: A case study of Nairobi's Eastleigh Somali:" (M.A, Project Paper, Department of History and Archaeology, University of Nairobi, 2010).



## 1.10 Methodology

I used both primary and secondary sources. The secondary sources included books, journals and articles.

In addition to secondary sources, the research also used primary sources.

Data collection started with the visit to the UNHCR office at the Kakuma town who gave me the picture of the camp, the organizations working there and the general composition of the occupants there. Oral interviews included personal narratives of women, children and even men refugees at the Kakuma Refugee Camp. I interviewed community leaders, and government officials including chiefs and policemen. These were key informants on the operations at the camp and their input was crucial to the success of the study. I conducted more interviews in two schools at the camp; namely Don Bosco secondary and Kakuma primary schools with the permission of the head teachers. The headmasters organized interviews with the teachers. A total of twelve teachers both male and female were interviewed in a group. Ten Students were chosen at random from standard six to eight for a group interview which I facilitated with the assistance of their teachers.

To interview women, I sought the help of the camp chief who introduced me to two women group leaders. They in turn mobilised their group members for an interview at the chiefs offices. I interviewed individual women and also women in groups filling in both unstructured and structured questionnaires. The whole exercise provided insights and enriching details relevant to the study. When the research assistants came across children who were operating taxis popularly called "*boda bodas*" they also interviewed them. This research has defined a child to be that under eighteen years of age. During the interviews, curious individuals who approached interview sessions were also interviewed.

I also went around the camp observing the activities in schools, churches, health centres, and police posts amongst others. In addition, I attended some workshops organised by Lutheran World Federation and the International Rescue Committee where I gathered a lot of information especially on the services offered by the organizations working at the camp.

Other primary sources included the UNHCR monthly and annual reports. Other reports were by the other organizations working at the camp. These included The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), International Rescue Committee (IRC), German Development Co-operation (GTZ), World Vision Kenya, Don Bosco, Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), Windle Trust Kenya, National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) and the Kenya Red Cross Society (KRCS). UNHCR is a United Nations Commission that deals with the welfare of Refugees worldwide. The Camp's monthly newspaper, 'The Reflector' provided first hand information that was very useful for this study. I revisited the interview in 2008 through the research assistant and kept abreast with the latest UNHCR reports on the Camp.

When the data collection was over, analysis was mainly by qualitative methods. Qualitative data analysis varied from simple descriptions, summaries and also explanations. This was then presented in thematic form where related aspects of the research were put together. In total, I interviewed 80 respondents aged between 17 to about 75 years from nine countries comprising 40 women, 20 men and 20 children. Most of them requested to remain anonymous.

## CHAPTER TWO

### BACKGROUND TO THE REFUGEE CRISIS IN KENYA

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the various wars and conflicts in the Great Lakes Region, and The Horn of Africa that have led to the refugee crisis in Kenya. It mainly examines three wars namely: The Sudanese Civil war, The Somali Civil war, The Civil war in and The Rwandan genocide and how all these has led to the displacement of large populations creating an influx of Refugees into the neighbouring countries in the region and beyond. The war in the Democratic Republic of Congo and The Ethiopian -Eritrean wars are briefly mentioned as they led to displacement of refugees even though very few were settled at the Kakuma Refugee Camp.

For some decades now, the "Great Lakes region" and the Horn of Africa have been a scenes of armed conflicts. Most of these conflicts had connections to colonialism or neo-colonialism from powerful countries like Belgium, United Kingdom, USA, and France.

The majority of refugees arrived in the country in the early 90s in the wake of war, famine and the collapse of governments in neighbouring Somalia and Ethiopia. The civil war in south Sudan similarly provoked large scale movements of refugees from South Sudan most of them entering Kenya through Lokichoggio and settling at the Kakuma Refugee Camp.

From 1999 onwards an estimated eight hundred refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia were received monthly and were registered at the UNHCR-Eligibility and screening centre in Nairobi<sup>18</sup>. In addition, by 2005, 12,000 refugees had been granted refugee status by the

<sup>18</sup> UNHCR, Africa Fact Sheet, (1999).

government of Kenya and had been allowed to live and work in urban centres throughout the country. The Somali refugees are the majority and are concentrated in the Eastleigh area where they do many types of business from running huge shopping malls to hawking.

Below is an examination of various wars and conflicts in the region that have led to influx of refugees into the Kakuma Refugee Camp.

## **2.2 The Sudanese Civil Wars.**

Influx of Sudanese refugees in Kenya dates as far back as the 1955 mutiny which marked the beginning of civil war between the Islamic north and the south. Until 1946, the British government, in collaboration with the Egyptian government administered south Sudan and north Sudan as separate regions. At this time, the two areas were merged into a single administrative region as part of British strategy in the Middle East.<sup>19</sup>

This act was taken without consultation with southerners, who feared being subsumed by the political power of the larger north. Southern Sudan is inhabited primarily by Christians and animists who are culturally sub-Saharan, while most of the north is inhabited by Muslims who consider themselves culturally Arabic.<sup>20</sup>

In February 1953 an agreement was signed by the United Kingdom and Egypt to grant independence to Sudan. In August 1955, members of the British-administered Sudan defence force and Equatorial Corps, together with local police, mutinied in Torit and other southern towns. The mutinies were suppressed, though survivors fled the towns and

<sup>19</sup>Ayiemba and Oucho, *The Refugee Crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa, African Population and Environmental Institute*. (Nairobi: 1995).

<sup>20</sup>ibid

began an uncoordinated insurgency in rural areas. Poorly armed and ill-organized, they were little threat to the outgoing colonial power or the newly formed Sudanese government.

However, the insurgents gradually developed into a secessionist movement composed of the 1955 mutineers and southern students. The internal tensions over the nature of the relationship of north to south were heightened. By 1956 it appeared that northern leaders were backing away from commitments to create a unitary federal government that would give the south substantial autonomy.

These groups formed the Anyanya I guerrilla army which was southern Sudanese separatist rebel group against the government. Anyanya means "snake venom" in the madi language. A separate movement that rose during the second Sudanese civil war was called Anyanya II. Between 1963 and 1969 Anyanya spread throughout the other two southern provinces of Upper Nile and the Bahr -al Ghazal. However, the separatist movement was crippled by internal ethnic divisions.<sup>22</sup>

The government was unable to take advantage of rebel weaknesses because of their own factionalism and instability. The first independent government of Sudan, led by Prime Minister Ismail - al Azhari, was quickly replaced by a stalemated coalition of various conservative forces, which was in turn overthrown in a coup d'etat by Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Ibrahim Abboud in 1958. Resentment at the military government led to a wave of popular protests that led to the creation of an interim government in October 1964. These protests saw the first appearance of Islamist Hassan al-Turabi who was then a student

<sup>21</sup>W.R. Symser, *Refugees: Extended Exile*, (New York: Praeger publishers, (1987).

<sup>22</sup>F. Denis, "*Refugees in Sub-Saharan Africa* ", *From Cause to Solution*. Africa Insight Vol. 26, No.1. (1996).

leader. Between 1966 and 1969, a series of Islamist-dominated administrations proved unable to deal with the variety of ethnic, economic and conflict problems afflicting the country. After a second military coup on 25 May 1969, Col. Gaafar Numeiry became Prime Minister and promptly outlawed opposition political parties.<sup>23</sup>

In-fighting between Marxist and non-Marxist factions in the ruling military class led to another coup in July 1971 and a short-lived administration by the Sudanese Communist party. In 1971, former army lieutenant Joseph Lagu gathered all the guerrilla bands under his Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM). This was the first time in the history of the war that the southern separatist movements had a unified command structure to fulfil the objectives of secession and the formation of an independent state in South Sudan in 1971. It was also the first organization that could claim to speak for, and negotiate on behalf of, the entire south. Mediation between the world council of churches and the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), both of which spent years building up trust with the two combatants, eventually led to the Addis- Ababa Agreement of March 1972 to end the conflict.<sup>24</sup> In exchange for ending their armed uprising, southerners were granted a single southern administrative region with various defined powers. Five hundred thousand people, most of them combatants were killed in the seventeen-year war and hundreds of thousands more were displaced from their homes. But the Addis Ababa Agreement proved to be only a temporary respite. Perceived infringements by the north led to increased unrest in the south starting in the mid-1970s, leading to the 1983 army mutiny that sparked the Second Sudanese Civil War.

<sup>23</sup>A. Zolberg, A. Suhrke, and S. Aguayo, (eds.), *Escape from Violence: Conflict and Refugee Crisis in the Developing World*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

<sup>24</sup>R. F. Gorman, *Coping with Africa's Refugee Burden. A time for Solutions*. (Dorbrenh: Martnus Nijhoff Publishers, 1987).

The Second Sudanese Civil War started in 1983, although it was largely a continuation of the First Sudanese Civil War of 1955 to 1972. This is because no peace agreement was signed by the warring parties to end the war. It took place, for the most part, in Southern Sudan making it one of the longest lasting and severe wars in the region. An estimated 1.9 million civilians were killed in southern Sudan and more than 4 million others were forced to flee their homes, crossing over to neighbouring countries as refugees.<sup>26</sup> The persistence of this war continued to displace large numbers of people in Sudan making the country one of the ten major refugee producing countries in the world. The displaced were estimated at 380,000 in 1998. Out of this over 48,000 sought refuge in Kenya. In February 2000, Kenya was hosting 64,254 refugees from southern Sudan. The majority of them settled at Kakuma Refugee Camp and a few were distributed among the Dadaab camps.<sup>26</sup> The conflict officially ended with the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in January 2005 in Nairobi.<sup>27</sup> CPA passed the following terms: The south would have autonomy for six years, followed by a referendum on secession; both sides of the conflict would merge their armed forces into a 39,000-strong force after six years. They further agreed that if the secession referendum would turn out negative, income from oilfields is to be shared 50 to 50, Jobs were to be split according to varying ratios and Islamic law would remain in the north, while continued use of the Sharia law

<sup>26</sup>G. Kibreab, *Reflections in the African Refugee Problem* (Treveton: Africa World Press, 1985).

<sup>26</sup>UNHCR, Kenya Country Report. (2002).

<sup>27</sup> F. G. Ferris, *Beyond Borders: Refugees. Migrants and Human Rights in the post Cold War Era*. (Geneva: NCC publications, 1993).

in the south was to be decided by the elected assembly. Sudan experienced some relative peace as they awaited the referendum which took place in July **2011**

### **2.3 The Somali Civil War**

The Somali Civil war is another protracted war in the region that has caused massive human displacement. The first phase of the civil war stemmed from an insurrection against the repressive regime of Siad Barre. After his ouster from power on January **26, 1991**, there followed factional fighting between The Somali National Movement (SNM) who gained control of the north, while the United Somali Congress mainly from southern Somalia took control of Mogadishu. Subsequent fighting among rival faction leaders resulted in killings, starvation and displacement of thousands of Somalis. This led to the UN military intervention in **1992**. The increasingly violent and chaotic situation evolved into a humanitarian crisis and to a state of anomie. This pushed thousands of Somali refugees into Kenya and other neighbouring countries. Other factors that led to the Somali influx into Kenya are the frequent droughts in Somalia and the war between Somalia and Ethiopia over Ogaden in **1979**. The subsequent disintegration of the Somali state and the emergence of the warlords led to a bitter struggle of various Somali clans. This conflict destabilized the country and the Somali government lost substantial control of the state to rebels. Later in **1991**, to insulate itself from the more violent fighting in the south, the Somaliland region of Somalia declared itself independent, though its sovereignty is not recognized by any nation or international organization. It comprises the

**R. O, Collins, *A history of modern Sudan*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2008).**



**north**-western section of the country, between Djibouti and the north-eastern area known as Puntland.

The war continued and in March 1995, the UN withdrew from Somali.<sup>29</sup> Somalia's government declared a state of emergency in June 2009, requesting immediate international support, and the military intervention of neighbouring East African states. From there on there was relative peace in Somalia but had already led to massive **movement** of refugees to neighbouring countries most of them into Kenya.<sup>30</sup>

#### **2.4 The Rwandan Genocide, 1994.**

Rwanda is one of the smallest countries in Central Africa, with just 7 million people, and is comprised of two main ethnic groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi. Although the Hutus account for 90 percent of the population, in the past, the Tutsi minority was considered the aristocracy of Rwanda and dominating Hutu peasants for decades, especially while Rwanda was under Belgian colonial rule.<sup>31</sup>

The Rwandan genocide broke out in 1994 as a culmination of the divide and rule policy by the Belgium colonial masters and the authoritative regimes that followed.<sup>32</sup>

Following independence from Belgium in 1962, the Hutu majority seized power and reversed the roles, oppressing the Tutsi through systematic discrimination and acts of violence. As a result, over 200,000 Tutsi fled to neighbouring countries and formed a rebel guerrilla army, the Rwandan Patriotic Front.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> K. Fukui, and J. Markakis, *Ethnicity and Conflict in the Horn of Africa*, (London: James Currey, 1994).

<sup>31</sup> G. Prunier., *The Rwandan Crisis: History of Genocide*, (Kampala: Fountain Publishers .1994)

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

In 1990, this rebel army invaded Rwanda and forced Hutu President Juvenal Habyarimana into signing an accord which mandated that the Hutus and Tutsis would share power.<sup>31</sup> A United Nations peacekeeping force of 2,500 multinational soldiers was then dispatched to Rwanda to preserve the fragile cease-fire between the Hutu government and the Tutsi rebels. Peace was threatened by Hutu extremists who were violently opposed to sharing any power with the Tutsi. Among these extremists were those who desired nothing less than the actual extermination of the Tutsi.<sup>34</sup>

Through the use of propaganda and constant political manoeuvring, Habyarimana and his group had increased divisions between Hutu and Tutsi by the end of 1992. Ethnic tensions in Rwanda were significantly heightened in October 1993 upon the assassination of Melchior Ndadaye, the first popularly elected Hutu president of neighbouring Burundi.<sup>35</sup> The Hutu remembered past years of oppressive Tutsi rule, and many of them not only resented but also feared the minority Tutsi. Beginning on April 6, 1994, and for the next hundred days, up to 800,000 Tutsi were killed by Hutu militia using clubs and machetes, with as many as 10,000 killed each day.<sup>36</sup>

Amid ever-increasing prospects of violence, Rwandan President Habyarimana and Burundi's new President, Cyprien Ntaryamira, held several peace meetings with Tutsi rebels. On April 6, while returning from a meeting in Tanzania, a small jet carrying the two presidents was shot down by ground-fired missiles as it approached Rwanda's airport at Kigali. Immediately after their deaths, Rwanda plunged into political violence as Hutu

<sup>33</sup> D. Forsythe, *Humanitarian Politics*. (Baltimore John Hopkins University Press, 1997).

<sup>34</sup> M. Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

<sup>35</sup> G. Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).  
"Ibid.

extremists began targeting prominent opposition figures who were on their death-lists, including moderate Hutu politicians and Tutsi leaders. The killings then spread throughout the countryside as Hutu militia, armed with machetes, clubs, guns and grenades, began indiscriminately killing Tutsi civilians.

The killings only ended after armed Tutsi rebels, invading from neighbouring countries, managed to defeat the Hutus and halt the genocide in July 1994 and President Paul Kagame of RPF took control. By then, over one-tenth of the population, an estimated 800,000 persons, had been killed.<sup>37</sup> Hundreds had crossed over to neighbouring countries looking for safety. Those who entered Tanzania were settled in the Rwandan refugee Camps of Kibindo and Mtabila in Kasulu and others were integrated into the host communities. A few moved into Kenya, Uganda, Burundi and Zaire. The refugee camps in the Great Lakes region of Zaire became home to over one million Rwandan refugees. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), with the help of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), set up the camps.

Another protracted conflict that has led to the displacement of hundreds of refugees into neighbouring countries is the war in the DRC Congo. This war in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, formerly called Zaire under President Mobutu Sese Seko is the widest interstate war in modern African history. The DRC became an environment in which numerous foreign players were involved, some within the immediate sub-region and some in proxy wars with neighbouring countries. This complicated the situation and made peaceful resolution of the conflict much more complex. The war was fought mainly

**"Ibid.**

in eastern Congo, involved nine African nations and directly affected the lives of 50 million Congolese.<sup>38</sup> Over 4 million people died from violence, starvation and disease, 1.3 million refugees decamped to neighbouring countries and 4 million internally displaced people, including 1.4 million children, were driven from their homes. Many tens of thousands of women and girls have been raped and sexually assaulted over the course of the brutal conflict adding to the refugee crisis in the region.<sup>39</sup> Most refugees from DRC entered Kenya through Tanzania. Most were settled in the Kagira Camp and others integrated into the host communities. Very few refugees from DRC Congo found their way into Kakuma Refugee Camp. Most of them live in urban centres doing all sorts of businesses for their survival.

Another conflict that led to the displacement of refugees in the region is The Eritrean-Ethiopian War of May 1998 to June 2000. The two countries spent hundreds of millions of dollars on the war, and suffered tens of thousands of casualties as a direct consequence of the conflict, which resulted in minor border changes. Very few of the displaced fled into Kenya as refugees.<sup>40</sup> The number of Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees at Kakuma is very low. Most of them have been resettled elsewhere.

By November, 2009, Kenya was host to 200, 000 refugees living both in refugee camps and scattered all over the country in urban and village settings.<sup>41</sup> The four main camps, firstly, the Kakuma Refugee Camp in the north-Eastern part of Kenya hosting close to 90,000 refugees mainly from War-torn South Sudan, secondly is the Dadaab Camps

<sup>38</sup>J. Baker, *"Refugee and Labor Movements in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Review."* *Studies on Emergencies and Disaster Relief*. No. 2. (1995).

<sup>39</sup>A. Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (London: Macmillan, 1998).

<sup>40</sup>G. Kibreab, *Eritrean and Ethiopian Refugees in Khartoum: What the Eye refuses to see.* *African Studies Review* 39. (1996).

<sup>41</sup>UNHCR, *Monthly Refugee Population Statistics by Camp (2009-2010)*.

complex which consist of three camps of Ifo, Dagahaley and Hagadera camps all located nearly **100** kilometres North-East of Garissa and hosting nearly **120, 000** refugees mainly from Somali . Averages of **800** refugees arrive every month and are screened and settled at the Dadaab camp.

The Kakuma camp refugee population has been decreasing steadily. In **2002** the Camp population was led by Somalis who numbered **141,088**, **64,254** Sudanese, and **8,191** Ethiopians. Other nationalities constituted **23,648** bringing the total refugee population to **247,281**.<sup>42</sup> Most of them have since moved back home because of relative peace and stability. Others sought asylum in other countries especially the USA and Canada .Most Sudanese refugees went back in **2010** after the countries referendum and eventual independence of the Republic of southern Sudan. According to UNHCR reports at the end of September **2010**, the camp was host to a population of **89, 000** refugees.<sup>43</sup>

## **2.5 Conclusion**

The refugee crisis in the African continent will continue as long as the reasons that lead to this crisis still exist. Refugee Camps that were built as temporary solution to the refugee flow have been in existence for over three decades now.

Durable solutions may be achieved if the reasons that lead to the flight of people from their countries to seek asylum in exile no longer exist, and are not likely to recur. These solutions require that root causes of conflicts and intolerances are addressed genuinely both by the countries in the region together with the UN and the international community as a whole.

<sup>42</sup>UNHCR, Kenya Country Report (2002).

<sup>49</sup> UNHCR, Kenya Country Report, (2007).

## CHAPTER THREE

### CONDITIONS AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AT THE KAKUMA

#### REFUGEE CAMP

##### 3.1 Introduction: Establishment of the Camp

This chapter examines the conditions at the Kakuma Refugee Camp and the challenges refugees face. It also discusses the institutional support offered to the refugees by the organizations that work at the Camp.

Kakuma Refugee Camp was established in 1992 to serve Sudanese refugees, and has since expanded to serve refugees from Somalia, Ethiopia, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Uganda, and Rwanda. According to current UNHCR statistics, the camp population stands at just 89,000 refugees. The first groups of Sudanese refugees to arrive in Kenya were the "unaccompanied minors" who are commonly referred to as the lost boys of Sudan.<sup>4n1</sup> It was for these unaccompanied minors that the refugee camp was built in Kenya to provide protection and assistance to some 16, 000 Sudanese teenagers who had trekked long distance in dry dusty land and bushes to reach the border town of Kakuma. Kenya is a signatory to the international legal instruments, governing refugees, but for security reasons Kenya demanded that refugees reside in confined camps to qualify for assistance and any refugee living outside the camp are classified as illegal aliens.<sup>45</sup> It was on this understanding with the UNHCR that Kakuma Refugee Camp was established.

\*\*}. A. Mayote, *Disposable people? The Plight of Refugees*. (New York: Obis Books, 1992).

<sup>45</sup> Montclos and Kagwanja, *Refugee camps or Cities?, The Socio-economic Dynamics of the Dadaad and Kakuma Camps in Northern Kenya*. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Vol.13N0 2 200.

The camp covers a total area of approximately 80 km square .As the home to refugees of nine different nationalities and 20 ethnic groups it is the most cosmopolitan refugee camp in Africa.<sup>46</sup> The different nationalities have distinctive living arrangements. They have settled in zones or villages according to their ethnicity.

Kakuma Refugee Camp is administered by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It was formed as an ad hoc subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly in 1951 to tackle the post-World War II refugee crisis in Europe. The UNHCR became, over time, a permanent and highly prominent organ within the UN system. It set itself several broad tasks namely , providing protection for refugees, promoting international actions aimed at finding permanent solutions, the problem of refugees, voluntary repatriation, emigration to a third country and integration in the country of residence.<sup>47</sup> More recently, the search for durable solutions entailed UNHCR encouraging peaceful conflict resolution with the aim of reducing situations of forced displacement.<sup>48</sup>

The UNHCR is assisted in its duties by a wide range of organizations offering a wide range of services to the refugees. The camp falls under the jurisdiction of the government of Kenya and the department of refugee affairs. Since the adoption of the Kenya Refugee Act in 2007, a Camp Manager was appointed to oversee camp affairs in liaison with humanitarian agencies.<sup>49</sup> The UNHCR and the partnering agencies work hand in hand to respond to the conditions and challenges by providing the most needed services to the refugees.

\*UNHCR, Kenya Country Report, (2002).

<sup>47</sup>M.Tureti, "*The Impact of Refugees on Host Communities : The case of Kakuma Refugee Camp*" (M. A Project paper, Department of History and Archeology, University of Nairobi, 2005).

<sup>48</sup>G. D. Loescher, *The Global Refugee Crisis*. (California: ABC Cliolne, 1994).

<sup>49</sup>UNHCR, Kenya Country report, (2007).

### **3.2 Climate and Geography**

Kakuma Refugee Camp is located close to the equator and is one of the hottest areas in the country. All year round the average daytime temperature is 40°C, dropping only slightly at night. The terrain is flat, barren and dry. Dust storms are an almost daily occurrence, water is scarce, and rain is occasional and frequently leads to flooding. When floods occur during the infrequent rain, the red dusty earth turns to mud and as it dries forms a hard crust. Vegetation is sparse and in many parts of the camp non-existent. Cultivation of crops is almost impossible due to poor soil quality and the lack of water. Life in the semi-arid desert environment is a big challenge to the livelihood means of the residents.

Due to the legal restrictions that do not allow the refugees to venture outside the camp, it is difficult for them to sustain themselves. The semi-arid climate of Kakuma is ill-suited for agriculture, while restrictions on employment deter refugee from job-seeking. Those who work with NGOs receive some compensation which does not sustain their livelihood.<sup>50</sup> Once admitted, they are confined to the camp area as per the Government/UNHCR Policy.

GTZ, a German environmental organization has recently made some positive improvements to the camp environment. After extensive research they have identified some trees, which can survive in these conditions and have developed a tree nursery and planting project. They have also had some success in establishing small kitchen gardens in some parts of the camp. GTZ have also supported the establishment of some limited

<sup>50</sup> UNHCR, *Information Bulletin*, (2004).



cultivation projects outside the camp along the river lands in order to provide some assistance to the native Turkana people. Even with all these initiatives and effort, life in the desert town is extremely difficult.

### **3.3 Reception and Security Services**

When the Camp was established in 1992, for instance, the Kenya government did not have an established system to support refugees and was primarily concerned with national security especially the proliferation of small arms that refugees carried even within the camp.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, Kenya was having its first multi-party elections which had been preceded with tribal clashes and international pressure to allow multi-party democracy. At the same time, the international community grossly underestimated the magnitude of the refugee problem and provided half-hearted support to the refugees. To aggravate the refugee situation, the host community was hostile to the refugees whom they perceived to be competitors on the scarce natural resources. At one time in 1993 there were fights between the refugees and Turkana community over water and pasture. Forty two people were killed from the two communities.<sup>52</sup>

The UNHCR and the other agencies did not make any effort to integrate the host community in their response to the refugees or to raise awareness of the obligations of the host community to the refugees.<sup>^</sup> Refugee accommodation was not available so those who arrived were listed and allocated an open space by the UNHCR so that they could put up temporary structures for shelter. In 1994 the Kakuma reception centre was established to accommodate new arrivals until such time as they have constructed their

<sup>51</sup> UNHCR, Kenya Country Report (2005).

<sup>^</sup> UNHCR, Brief on the Refugee assistance programme , Sub-Office Kakuma, (2003).

<sup>49</sup> UNHCR, Kenya Country Report, (2007).

accommodation. This was an open space with officers who received and registered those who arrived at the camp. This also acted as sleeping ground on mats and open floors. Many remained at this place for more than one month, some for as long as one year pending verification of their refugee status. The UNHCR worked to streamline refugee registration and documentation and by 1995 most had been duly registered as refugees at the Kakuma Refugee Camp and had been given an identification card. This is an on-going process and it had been streamlined and as now refugees are registered as they arrive at the Camp.

Security of refugees in general, and women and children in particular, was a challenge to UNHCR and local authorities throughout the period of study. Insecurity manifested in two forms namely: violence among refugees and conflict violence with the host community. Refugees fought amongst themselves over the scarce resources especially water and occasionally had fights with the local host community over water and pasture when they illegally sought them outside of the camp. This disproportionately affected women and children refugees. In general, crime levels at Kakuma Refugee Camp have been fluctuating.<sup>54</sup>

The commonly reported cases are those of rape, assault, theft and robbery. For instance, in 1995, 12 cases of rape were reported at the camp. By 1999, there were 41 cases of rape that were reported by the UNHCR mainly occurring when women and girls went out in search of water and firewood. This triggered the refugee communities to create vigilante groups to patrol the camp. At the same time, two police stations were built by the government. Police patrols mostly at night increased thus deterring those with intentions

<sup>M</sup> UNHCR, *Brief on the Refugee Assistance Programme, Sub-Office Kakuma, (2003)*.

to commit crime. These measures drastically reduced the number of reported cases of rape.

Security for the refugees was further enhanced by the construction of three additional police posts and five watch towers. Police patrols were intensified and security committees comprising representatives from the host community and refugees were formed.<sup>55</sup> Their presence deterred those with intentions to engage in criminal activities. They also mediated between the warring parties when disputes arose.

Other measures included security training workshops including convoy discipline, and staff security awareness. The measures impacted positively to improve security for women and children within the camp and in the neighbourhood.

The relationship between the Turkana ethnic group, who were the host community, and the refugees was often strained and often erupted into violence. The root of this violence was three fold namely, lack of resources available to the host community, especially productive land, causing resentment of refugees among the Turkana. The other problem which caused hostility was the perception that refugees were enjoying better facilities in the camp compared to the host community and lastly bad blood between the Sudanese refugees and the Turkana based on historical clashes between the two groups<sup>56</sup>. A case is given for 1998 when there was a clash between the Turkana and the refugees. The Turkana demanded access to boreholes in the camp for their animal's .They forced their

<sup>55</sup> UNHCR, *Kenya Country Report, (1997)*.

\*UNHCR *Kenya Country Report, (1996)*.

way into the camp and were repulsed by the refugees. The fight which ensued led to the death of two refugee boys.<sup>57</sup>

Despite strenuous efforts by the UNHCR, the Government of Kenya, and the police to improve security in and around the camp, the security situation in Kakuma Refugee Camp deteriorated in the first six months of 2001. This was triggered by local politicians who incited segments of the Turkana community against the refugees to intimidate the UNHCR to give them contracts to supply firewood to the camp.<sup>58</sup>

In one of the protests, a Turkana woman was accidentally killed by the police. This incident interfered with the routine firewood collection by the women refugees and there was severe shortage of firewood throughout the last half of the year<sup>59</sup>. Since then firewood has been provided by the UNHCR and also refugees buy from the Turkana.

In 2002, a conflict between Turkana community and the refugees over water resulted in the deaths of 41 refugees and 11 Turkana.<sup>60</sup> The UNHCR resolved the conflict, by sinking boreholes in various parts of Turkana District and allowed the host community to access health facilities in the camp at a small fee. Kakuma Refugee Camp increased in size as the camp population expanded with the continued influx of refugees from warring countries in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa. Indeed the UNHCR in June 2005 was discussing a 10 year plan for the camp.<sup>61</sup>

In 1999, the Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), an umbrella organization for all the agencies working in Sudan, established a large and well resourced camp in Lokichoggio a

<sup>5</sup> *Oral Interview with Nimeiri Anai at Kakuma Camp, (August 7<sup>th</sup> (2005).*

<sup>51</sup> *Oral Interview with camp security officer at Kakuma Camp, (August 8<sup>th</sup> 2005).*

<sup>59</sup> UNHCR, Kenya Country Report, (2000).

<sup>60</sup> UNHCR, Kenya country Report, (2004).

<sup>41</sup> UNHCR, Monthly Refugee Population Statistics by Camp. (1996-2000).

distance of about 200km from Kakuma to support the security and logistical needs of the agencies and their personnel and resources. At the same time, the international community was applying diplomatic pressure on both the Sudanese government and the rebel organizations to stop hostilities. This reduced the flow of new refugees into Kakuma.<sup>62</sup>

### **3.4 Shelter, Water and Sanitation Services**

Shelter remains a big challenge at the Kakuma Refugee Camp. The most common accommodation was Tukul (small igloo-shaped structure) built out of tree branches and scraps of cloth and plastic. These were not favourable and they did not provide privacy to the occupants. They compromised the dignity of women and exposed children to diseases arising from dust and cold.

New shelters were put up as refugees came in, and old and vacated ones were rehabilitated. Sometimes heavy rains flooded the camp and families had to be relocated to higher grounds in Kakuma 4. From 1995-1997, UNHCR constructed and repaired 3,000 shelters which provided relief to nearly 4,000 refugees previously living in dilapidated dwellings. From 1998, UNHCR in partnership with CARE constructed another 1,500 improved shelters. These shelters were made with timber and were roofed with corrugated iron sheets. In the same year, World Vision built another 6,000 improved shelters using iron sheets and hard wood. This improvement program continued and at the end of year 2000, another 2,524 shelters were constructed. They have continued

**"UNHCR, Information Bulletin November, (1996).**

erecting houses as refugees come even though most of them remain crowded. This shelter improvement program contributed significantly towards improving the conditions of women and children refugees by safeguarding their dignity, privacy and providing protection. Most refugees now occupy fairly decent and durable shelters with reasonable sanitation facilities.<sup>63</sup>

Access to clean and reliable drinking water remains a problem at Kakuma Refugee Camp. Kakuma being a semi-arid area is dry most of the year round. According to Lutheran World Federation, the organization responsible for the provision of water in the camp, the minimum international standard in emergency situations is 18 litres per person per day. In Kakuma the daily water allowance was only 14 litres per person per day. The LWF further revealed that this allowance was not sufficient to meet even the basic requirements for cooking, drinking and washing and therefore was a serious limit to opportunities for the cultivation of kitchen gardens or the rearing of chickens or livestock. The first refugees in Kakuma Refugee Camp in 1992 used to fetch water from seasonal rivers which always dried up during the dry season. At that time there were only few boreholes around Kakuma and competition for water often led to conflicts among the refugees and between the refugees and the host community. The camp inhabitants were required to queue for many hours at water taps and then walk long distances to their huts carrying their daily water supply.

The LWF, (Lutheran, World Federation) efforts to provide clean water did not match the demand. For instance, in 1998, it was estimated that every water tap in Kakuma was

**"UNHCR, Kenya Country Report, (2008).**

servicing about 2,000 refugees who had to walk about five kilometres and more to reach the water source. The agency expanded the water project and by December 2002, the number of taps had increased such that, each could serve between 50 and 100 refugees.<sup>64</sup>

Water from rivers was contaminated and was thus the cause of infections among the refugees. In 1998, they started treating the water by putting purifiers in the boreholes. At the same time, the two UN agencies financed the digging of more boreholes, rehabilitated and installed water pumps which effectively increased water supply to the camp. The LWF hired team comprising of plumbers, mechanics, and electricians to guard and maintain the water system.<sup>65</sup> These measures significantly improved the quality of life of the refugees by improving the quality and quantity of the water supply. However, during the dry season, the boreholes dried up and the refugees had to walk long distances looking for water which they had to buy from vendors at the nearby shopping centres. Currently the camp has six boreholes, 18 water storage tanks; three booster stations and a piping system which supplied water through tap stands. In total there were 473 taps in the camp.<sup>66</sup> The water level fluctuates especially during the dry season there isn't enough for their use.

Another challenge refugees face at the camp is lack of proper sanitation facilities. Initially there were no latrines and refugees used bushes for their needs. As a result, human waste was left in the open and during the rainy season it contaminated the water sources thus escalating disease infections. As a result, children often contracted diarrhoea

<sup>64</sup>UNHCR, *Kenya Country Report*, (2003).

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> UNHCR, *Kenya Country Report*, (2007).

and even dysentery that claimed lives.<sup>67</sup> Women were also exposed to risk of being raped when answering the call of nature in the bushes within the camp. These conditions not only compromised the dignity of the women refugees but also exposed them to the risk of contracting diseases and sexual abuse.<sup>68</sup>

By 1994, many refugees in the camp were still using bushes for waste disposal while some had started digging shallow latrines which often filled within a short time. The International Rescue Committee, working in collaboration with the UNHCR took the responsibility of improving sanitation and managing toilets within the camp. At the end of 1999, the available latrines in the camp were all filled up. At the beginning of 2001, IRC dug about 5,669 new latrines and rehabilitated another 1,574. On their part, IOM built 600 new latrines for Somali Bantus. Refuse collection was done more regularly and residual spraying against malaria was done twice a year from 1999.<sup>69</sup>

Before 1999, UNHCR estimated that each latrine within the camp served about 14 people. After the construction of new toilets in 2001, the distribution improved to 10 refugees per latrine. Sanitation was further improved in 2006 through construction of latrines in schools and provision of sanitary facilities for girls. Currently sanitation has greatly been improved and the ratio of toilets is 1: 5.

From 2006 onwards, the UNHCR provided non-food items such as kitchen sets and blankets only to new arrivals and the refugees that were most vulnerable. While these items would have been adequate if the refugees only transited through the camp, many

<sup>61</sup> *Oral interview with a Clinical Officer of Don Bosco Health Centre at Kakuma, (August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005).*

<sup>62</sup> *Oral interview with a Project Manager of LWF at Kakuma, (August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2005).*

<sup>49</sup> UNHCR, Kenya Country Report, (2007).



women refugees had stayed for at least eight years and many of the items that they had been issued were worn out. As a result, in November 2007, UNHCR distributed to the refugees in the camp items comprising of 42,864 blankets, 50,000 jerry cans and 21,500 kitchen sets. In addition, each refugee received 250gms of soap every two months. These resources significantly improved the hygiene and sanitation needs of women and children and created a sense of dignity and well-being among the refugees.<sup>70</sup> UNHCR in collaboration with various partners has proposed a plan for the Introduction of a pump station and a pipe system to supply water to the refugees at a small fee.

### **3.5 Health, Food and Education**

Refugees at Kakuma Camp do not have enough food. In the initial stages of their settlement, they relied on food rations from the UNHCR which were never enough. As the plight of the refugees received international attention, many aid agencies came in but with limited experience on how to organize food logistics for food distribution. For instance, they could not deliver food in the rainy season because the roads were impassable and had to resort to moving small volumes using expensive air freights. As a result, children suffered from malnutrition while adult refugee population experienced severe hunger. During the early days of the camp, many children died as a result of disease and malnutrition.<sup>71</sup>

In 1993, the World Food Programme in response to these problems, constructed food stores at the camp that could hold food rations for the refugees for up to three months.

<sup>70</sup>UNHCR, Kenya Country Report. (2004).

<sup>71</sup>UNHCR, Information Bulletin November, P 3, (1994).

From 1994 onwards, more aid agencies moved into the camp and this significantly improved the food supply and nutrition status for women and children. For instance, refugees were provided with a regular food ration, which was increased from three bags of maize and beans in 1999 to five bags in 2000 for a family of ten. Other services such as education facilities were established in the camp and porridge was served for breakfast and at 10 o'clock within the schools for school going children.<sup>72</sup>

Food shortage has been a persistent problem at the Kakuma Refugee Camp. According to World Food Program standards the Food Basket necessary for minimal survival must include vitamins, carbohydrates and protein and must provide a minimum daily kilocalorie intake of 2100Kc daily. In 2006 the daily food basket distributed provided only 1300Kc per day and was composed only of maize, salt and oil.

It was expected that in the coming weeks due to further reductions in donor support the basket would reduce to only 900Kc. The supplementary feeding program, which was available to pregnant women and young children, was also under threat. Currently, the refugees own initiatives supplement the efforts of the Partnering organization working at the Camp in the sourcing and provision of food for their livelihood. They have kitchen gardens on which they grow vegetables. Subsequently, the level of malnutrition among children has significantly reduced.

Health care provision has been one of the most unreliable areas on the camp. Initially, the UNHCR was responsible for the provision of healthcare from 1994 until 2000 where they mainly offered basic health needs. They were overwhelmed with the large refugee population which forced them to consult private clinics located outside the camp. These

<sup>72</sup>UNHCR, *Brief on the Refugees Assistance Programme, Sub-Office Kakuma, (2003).*

clinics lacked trained medical personnel and drugs. Some local Turkana residents treated sick patients in unregistered home clinics. Some pharmacies opened around the camp making basic medicines available to the refugees.<sup>73</sup>

The absence of water in the sweltering heat of Kakuma Refugee Camp lessened the control of skin diseases.<sup>74</sup> The UNHCR and The Lutheran World Federation worked to ensure that refugees received adequate health care. For instance, the number of doctors at the camp was increased from one doctor for 30,000 refugees in 1992 to each doctor for 20,000 in 1995. By the end of 2007, the ration was one doctor to 10,000 refugees. More doctors were recruited by the IRC and the UNICEF. By the end of 2008, the number of doctors within the camp had increased to one doctor for 5,000 refugees. This ensured that there was improved quality of healthcare provision for refugees.<sup>75</sup>

In 1998, HIV/AIDS awareness was initiated among the refugee population. Some of the measures taken included VCT services, home based care for the infected and screening of donated blood. At the end of 2002, UNHCR and its partner agencies trained 54 peer educators and 32 trainers among the refugee population for community based rehabilitation. In mid-2002, UNHCR, WHO and UNICEF launched a mass vaccination campaign against the yellow fever outbreak within the camp and the district at large. This was done as a prevention measure. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) provided impregnated mosquito nets to 3000 expectant mothers.<sup>76</sup> These preventive health care efforts significantly reduced the incidence of malaria and yellow fever within the refugee

**"UNHCR, Information Bulletin, (1996).**

**"UNHCR, Kenya Country Report, (2004).**

**"UNHCR, Kenya Country Report, (2008).**

***"Oral interview with a Social worker at the Kakuma Refugee Camp. (August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2005).***

population. By 2010, the IRC had put up many clinics. Most of them had a doctor and nurse. LWF medical assistants had been posted to the camp and trained some refugees on first aid services and provided an ambulance for out of camp emergencies and referrals. These measures collectively improved the health conditions of women and children at the Camp.

In 1992, the refugees who arrived complained of frequent headaches, loss of memory and other related conditions. At that time counselling services were not available and the camp personnel were mainly concerned with the most basic needs of food, shelter and water. In 1995, UNHCR took up the responsibility to offer counselling services to the refugees. The UNHCR worked with the Kenya Government and had to deal with a large number of psychologically and physically injured patients from the war zones. The unaccompanied minors placed with foster families of the same or different ethnicities suffered cultural bereavement. Most acculturative struggles unfolded at school and high rates of PTSD, anxiety, and depression symptoms were evident. Teachers described and reported specific behaviours that were linked to prior traumatic events.<sup>77</sup>

They described other in-school behaviours indicative of adjustment issues, such as delinquent behaviours, attention problems, aggressive behaviour, and withdrawal. The International Red Cross Committee which was responsible for health services at the camp found it very difficult to meet all the health care needs of the refugees.<sup>78</sup> For instance, between 1992 and 1995, many women and children were dealing with trauma resulting from rape, defilement of children, abductions, and kidnapping. In addition, children narrated suffering as a result of losing their parents to diseases especially HIV/AIDS, war

<sup>1</sup> *Oral interview with Head teacher of Bor secondary school, Kakuma Refugee Camp, (August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005).*

*" Oral interview with a Project Officer of the IRC Kakuma Refugee Camp, (August 5<sup>th</sup> 2005).*

and parental separation. Many girls were also reported to have been forced into early marriages. Stress, the harsh climate, lack of access to various facilities, over-population and unemployment added to the trauma of women and child refugees at Kakuma.<sup>7</sup> As a result, health care providers reported many cases of severe depression and other forms of mental illnesses which the facilities available were unable to cope with.<sup>80</sup>

The International Red Cross (IRC) in collaboration with the UNHCR started an orientation program where Peer Counsellors and HIV/AIDS Counsellors were trained to educate their peers or age mates in matters such as the use of contraceptive, safe sex and breast feeding. They were to serve as a link in the hope of encouraging the refugees to talk about experiences and go into the process of healing. Unfortunately this department was not been as vibrant as the situation demanded. Since January 1996, The IRC, sought services of a Social Welfare Officer to deal with cases of depression.

In 1992, the first and only education facility was one big hall that acted both as a classroom and a dormitory. In 2003, UNHCR initiated an education survey throughout the camp. This was to gather information on households, children and young people of school going age in order to plan on how to run the various programmes. To ensure quality education, the refugee community under the leadership of the LWF set up The Refugee Education Board which worked in concert with the UNHCR in addressing the education needs of the refugees.

<sup>7</sup>UNHCR, Kenya Country Report, (2000).

<sup>80</sup> UNHCR. Kenya Country Report, (1999).

By 2004 the camp had 24 primary schools, five secondary schools, two colleges, seven nursery schools and five adult education classes<sup>81</sup>. They followed the Kenyan 8-4-4 system. Upon completion, students are awarded certificates to enable them join colleges at the camp and others are allowed move to other schools and colleges across the country. The LWF which manages all the schools at the camp is responsible for the recruitment of teachers. It has facilitated the training of 75 teachers as well as 15 pre-school teachers in the camp.<sup>82</sup> They started the in-service teacher programme in 2000 which trained teachers from those who had completed secondary education at the camp. Scholarships were available for those who passed well to study in colleges and Universities in Kenya and other countries including Canada, Australia, South Africa and Britain. Two females went to South Africa and three to Canada.<sup>83</sup>

The Kakuma Refugee Camp had two colleges; Gido Teachers Training College which trained teachers and Don Bosco Technical Training Institute, which offered courses in tailoring, typewriting, motor vehicle mechanics, plumbing, agriculture, livestock rearing and computer operations. On completion of these courses, graduates were encouraged to start income-generating projects relevant to the trained trade areas.<sup>84</sup>

The total enrolment in schools increased from 51% in 2002 to 55.5% in 2006. Classroom to learner ratio remained at 1:70 and 1:40 in primary and secondary schools respectively. Teacher to learner ratio was at 1:50 in primary schools and 1:40 in the secondary

<sup>81</sup> *Oral interview with a Project Officer of LWF at Kakuma. (August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005).*

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *UNHCR, Kenya Country Report, (2004).*

<sup>84</sup> *"Oral Interview with George I. emu at Kakuma camp, (August 5, 2005).*

schools.<sup>85</sup> LWF issued the girls with free school uniforms, text and exercise books to encourage them to attend school.

Schools at the Camp organized extra-curriculum activities such as football, athletics and scouting. Competitions were held between local schools and the schools at the camp. Some refugee students competed in the annual Rift Valley Provincial Ball Games in 2004 and emerged fourth overall.<sup>86</sup> These activities strengthened their links with the host community. There were five secondary schools in the camp namely: Kakuma Refugee secondary, Bor Town Secondary, Don Bosco, Somali-Bantu School and Unity school.

Commenting on the high drop-out rate among the youth especially girls, the headmaster of Bor Primary school cited financial constraints as the main cause as most refugees left school to engage in some income generating activities such as selling of firewood , carrying water at a fee to earn money for their subsistence.<sup>87</sup> Acknowledging the need for adequate schools to effectively address the educational concerns of the refugees, the LWF commissioned the building of more schools and additional playgrounds in the camp. The UNHCR and other partnering educational foundations continued to give scholarships to students who performed well in order to encourage them to continue attending school.

Without a doubt, all these efforts are commendable and definitely in the right direction. The reality however is the challenge of getting the refugee children and even adults into schools and colleges and getting them to stay there. This requires addressing other

**"UNHCR, Kenya Country Report, (2003).**

**' Oral interview with a teacher at Bor Town Secondary, (August 1, 2005).**

**\* Oral Interview with the Headmaster. Bor Primary School at Kakuma camp. (August 2, 2005).**

pertinent root causes of their absence rather than just the provision and upgrading of existing structures, even though these are in themselves important.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

In the preceding sections, the research endeavoured to present the conditions at the Kakuma Refugee Camp and how the various organizations involved in the lives of the refugees are helping them manage their protracted situation.

Most of these institutions act with the aim of addressing welfare concerns of the refugees. They could however be more proactive in supporting them to improve their means of livelihood. In spite of the conditions in which they find themselves, the refugees have demonstrated remarkable resilience. This resourcefulness demonstrated by the refugees in coping with their situation will be further explored in the proceeding chapter.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### WOMEN AND CHILDREN COPING STRATEGIES

#### 4.1 Introduction

Refugee women and children at the Kakuma Refugee Camp have not resigned to fate.

This chapter examines the livelihood means employed by the refugee women and children to cope not only in the short-term, but also on a long-term basis. Mechanisms employed depend on individual's choices, experiences, knowledge, capabilities and even cultural beliefs. The methods vary from striving to satisfy basic needs of food, clothing and shelter to reaching out for goals like empowerment, respect, dignity and preservation of life at both family, household and community level.

Refugees are vulnerable in various ways during different phases of their experiences, and critical periods of development take place during forced separations from caregivers and other family members. They leave their homelands under great duress and arrive in the host countries after having endured the indignities and horrors of flight and unprepared for what they may encounter there. In addition, they must cope with the trauma associated with the sudden separation from, and loss of family along with the challenges of settling in a foreign country. To comprehend their situation, this study . has endeavoured to present as much of their own narratives as possible, in the light of the objectives that the research seeks to examine, as well as other relevant issues related to these. Given the impediments to local integration, limited prospects for an economically successful repatriation, and limited opportunities for resettlement, UNHCR emphasized

the enhancement of refugee self-reliance and self-management to empower them economically.<sup>88</sup>

Refugee livelihood means encompassed a whole range of issues including basic survival mechanisms, legal, economic, social, educational, security, health, shelter and other concerns. Below are some of the strategies used by the women and children at the Kakuma Refugee Camp to cope with their hardships.

#### **4.1.1 Businesses**

Women started a wide range of self reliance business projects to move away from being dependent on agencies.<sup>89</sup> Many women saved money meant for food soap, and other household items to get the money to invest. The merry-go-round schemes were stated by women groups where they contributed equal amounts of money and gave it to one member at a time and the cycle continued until every member got then the cycle starts again. This helped the women start many types of businesses including retail shops, bars, restaurants, kiosks, tables sales stocked with provisions and all sorts of food and non-food items, on the streets, in front of houses, selling literally anything that can be bought. Others businesses included selling of alcoholic drinks from millet, sorghum, with cassava, sourced from the Turkana and sold within the camp and outside. Some women took advantage of the hot temperatures at Kakuma to set up fruit processing stalls throughout the camp. Juice was processed from fruits like mangos, avocados and oranges. The fruits were sourced through middlemen from the Turkwell Irrigation

<sup>M</sup> J. Poorleg, *How Refugee Women survive in Sub-Saharan Africa*, (Oxford: Oxford University, 1992).

<sup>K</sup>Oral Interview with a Gender Officer at World Vision office at Kakuma Camp, (August 3rd, 2005).

Scheme in Lodwar.\*' At least 500 women took part in this trade which drastically improved their welfare

In doing all these, women displayed ingenuity, industriousness and resourcefulness in managing their vulnerable situations. They managed to turn around what would otherwise be a miserable situation.

#### **4.1.2 Self-Help Initiatives by Women**

In addition to the training by Don Bosco, some women formed a groups and hired services of a tailoring instructor from the Kakuma shopping centre where they learnt stitching. They also learnt basketry, crafting, weaving and embroidery. They sold their wares and reinvested their earnings to expand their businesses. However, the demand for their products at the camp and in Kakuma was minimal. To sustain the business they had to look for marketing outlets outside the camp. By coincidence, in 1999, the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) opened market outlets in Nairobi for selling items made by the refugees. Items sold included weaved baskets, embroidery, crocheted towels among others. As a result, they were able to sell more. This enabled them to diversify and significantly improve their families' welfare. Thus, economic empowerment among the women was a major survival strategy.

#### **4.1.3 Micro-Finance Schemes**

Women formed groups and approached organizations for start-up loans. CARE International financed the women groups through its micro finance scheme .They lent money to a whole- group. Members then borrowed according to their needs and were

*"Oral Interview, Alem Bogole, at Kakuma Camp, (August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005).*

charged a ten percent interest per annum. One of the groups that benefited from this scheme is the Bacongo women group. This group had fifty members who borrowed five hundred thousand shillings from CARE International revolving fund. This was in turn lent to members according to their needs. By 2007, most women had borrowed and invested in many businesses and also bought household items. This greatly improved their welfare. By the end of 2009, the refugees in the camp had over 300 groups benefiting from this revolving fund.<sup>91</sup> This was designed to enhance self-reliance initiatives among the refugees and women in particular. However, it had its challenges, like there were cases where members defaulted loan repayment thus reducing its sustainability.

#### **4.1.4 Remittances**

The women and children at KRC were supported by the UNHCR and other partnering organizations, and remittances from relatives and friends both local and those residing abroad. These organizations worked to settle refugees in third countries of asylum, some in western countries and this have led to an active remittance relationship among refugee populations. It was observed that Aid or handouts as they are popularly known provided by refugees, resettled in and residing abroad to relatives back home have become an important source of support for their daily subsistence.<sup>92</sup> Resettlement made it possible for people to have access to at least a relative or friend in Canada, the US or other western countries sending down remittances. These have helped them start all sorts of businesses from retail shops, cyber mobile phone business, Maize grinding mills, fruit processing units

<sup>91</sup> *Oral Interview, with a Credit Officer with Care International at Kakuma Camp, (August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005).*

<sup>92</sup> *Oral interview with a teacher at Bor primary school, Kakuma Refugee Camp, (August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005).*

among others. While this Aid is there some for some refugees , the actual picture suggests that not many have people abroad on whom to depend directly and also this is occasional support so they can not entirely depend on this without any other means to supplement it.

#### **4.1.5 Religion**

Women were very much involved in religious activities as a means of coping.

They invoked the supernatural and lean upon God to explain their experiences. There are many religious groups at the camp and Christians have joined churches like the Catholic, Lutheran, Church of Christ, Africa Inland Church, SDA, and the Presbyterian. They take part in church activities as choir members, counsellors and offering pastoral care. Others work as deacons and pastors. This has helped them fight stress and also create social networks at the camp. Whereas the initial Sudanese refugees in Kakuma were Christians and traditional believers, the arrival of Somali and Ethiopian refugees in 1995 added Muslims to the refugee community. Currently there are a wide range of churches and mosques in the camp and the host community joins in for prayers.<sup>93</sup> Apart from spiritual nourishment; they also offer prayers for healing, providence and restoration of peace back home. Most UNHCR-implementing partners are also church-related like the Catholic Relief Agency, LWF and IRC also offer assistance in church matters. These help in offering solace and reassurance as they struggle with life in a foreign country confined in a refugee camp.

<sup>93</sup> *Oral Interview with Abok Elma at Kakuma camp, (on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005).*

#### 4.1.6 Voluntary service

Refugees at Kakuma Refugee Camp provide voluntary service as a way of coping. The Kakuma refugee population is heterogeneous with people of varying skills and socio-economic backgrounds. They thus draw on past and present skills to render voluntary services to the UNHCR, government offices, other organizations working at the camp and to fellow refugees either for free or for a little compensation and also to keep busy. This reduces idleness that can be so detrimental in a protracted situation like theirs. It also gives them further skills and an exposure that promotes a sense of usefulness, dignity and satisfaction in being able to help others in need. From these services they build networks and gain recognition as they carry out their duties. This promotes a sense of accomplishment even if it is voluntary.<sup>94</sup> Doubtlessly, it enables them to cope.

#### 4.1.7 Prostitution

Despite of all the efforts, it must be acknowledged that there are formidable challenges faced by the women in struggling to meet basic needs. Prostitution as a means of coping also came up. The women admitted being involved in this trade as a means of survival and most said the situation called for it. A program officer with the International Red Cross (IRC) confirmed that the girls learnt the use of, and were able to access condoms easily. This reduced the risk of contracting STD infections, including HIV/AIDS.<sup>95</sup> They stated activities which involved functional adult literacy education. Awareness campaigns on HIV/Aids, sexual reproduction health education, maternity and child care were given. They learnt basic reading and writing skills. This eased communication amongst

*\*Oral Interview with an official of the UNHCR at Kakuma camp, (On August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005).*

*<sup>95</sup> Oral Interview with Program Officer, with International Red Cross Kakuma Camp, (August 3, 2005).*

themselves and with the aid agencies. From an interview with a source who would like to remain anonymous, as soon as these women have earned some money, they abandoned the trade and ventured into businesses such as saloons, tailoring and food vending.<sup>96</sup> They were able to feed their families, pay school fees and also pay their monthly subscription to the merry-go rounds.

Even though the refugees and the host community occasionally had skirmishes over pasture and water, they tried as much as they could to live in harmony. The refugees established rapport and common understanding with the host population and amongst themselves as a way of coping. They came together for prayers and during peace talks where they deliberated on ways to avoid conflicts and co-exist peacefully<sup>97</sup>

With the signing of the peace treaty and the successful referendum in Sudan, the refugees are being encouraged to return home. However, there are many, who still prefer to remain at the Kakuma Refugee Camp as it has become their home for over two decades now.

#### **4.2 Coping Strategies by Children**

For many reasons, exile is particularly hard on the young. In this study children were those who were eighteen years and below. In addition to the usual emotional, refugees are often confronted with the memories of war that uprooted them from their homes to the unknown. This is worse on the children, especially the orphans and unaccompanied. They suffer from loneliness, bereavement, sexual abuse and the harsh reality of poverty

*<sup>96</sup>Oral Interview with a leader of a woman group at Kakuma camp who asked to remain anonymous. (August 7\*, 2005).*

*<sup>97</sup>Oral interview with a security officer at the chiefs camp, Kakuma Refugee Camp (on August. 10<sup>h</sup> 2005).*

and displacement. As already stated, majority of the children were not able to devise any mitigating mechanisms for themselves. To help them adjust to this new environment Organizations which were directly involved in helping the children intervened.

The ICRC took the responsibility of all unaccompanied children identified at the Kakuma Refugee Camp. These children were systematically registered, their social history forms completed, and the process of tracing their families initiated. Most were placed under foster care to women who had their own children and even those without. Others were put in groups of, five, ten and sometimes fifteen and placed under a social worker appointed by the ICRC. They either lived with the foster parent in the same zone or separately. In 2002, there were 2,407 registered unaccompanied minors at KRC and 1,177 of them were boys.<sup>98</sup> According to the ICRC the high number of unaccompanied minors in the Kakuma Refugee Camp placed a strain both on the availability of foster-care and on monitoring capabilities thus resulting to the group care option.<sup>99</sup>

In November 2004 Seven workshops for community leaders, members of the Child Advisory Committees, teachers and aid workers were held <sup>100</sup> These was to create awareness on the rights of the child. Kenya being a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, had signed the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. It also ratified the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on Involvement in Armed Conflict and ILO Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child

<sup>98</sup> UNHCR, Kenya Country Report, (2003).

<sup>99</sup> Oral Interviews with the Children Officer of ICRC at Kakuma camp, (August 6, 2005).

<sup>100</sup> Oral Interviews with the Program Officer of UNHCR at Kakuma camp, (August 6, 2005).



Labour.<sup>101</sup> In line, with this, training was necessary to sensitize those dealing with children issues to respect the protocol.

It is however important to note that the children at the Kakuma Refugee Camp did all types of work to make something of their lives.

Active involvement in various sporting activities, debating groups and community service provision, choir, and religious activities are but a few of the ways in which they coped. Indeed many are remarkably determined to succeed as can be observed in the various schools and skill training centers on the camp. From all indications then, the

... (P  
youth enjoyed and learnt from being engaged in constructive activities.

This built on their individual strengths and helped them improve their own coping skills whilst helping their parents and relatives where possible.

The role of education in giving a sense of purpose and accomplishment in the life of the youth then cannot be overemphasized. As has rightly been observed from the activities at the Kakuma Refugee Camp, education programmes were designed to help develop skills. Children were encouraged and sometimes forced to go to school.<sup>101</sup> This lessened the incidence of alcohol and drug abuse, teenage pregnancies, prostitution, whilst providing a constructive alternative for young people who might otherwise find fulfilment in participating in other harmful activities.<sup>104</sup>

Play and sporting activities occupied the children and reduced idleness among them. Football, volleyball and athletic tournaments were organized at the camp and at the

<sup>101</sup>UNHCR, Kenya Country Report, (2003).

<sup>102</sup>Oral Interview with the HM Bor Secondary school. KRC August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2005)

<sup>103</sup>Oral interview with the programme officer with LWF In charge of education at Kakuma camp (August 11\*2005).

<sup>104</sup>UNHCR, Kenya Country Report, (2001).

district and provincial levels. These activities provided the children with the opportunities to overcome hopelessness, stress and boredom.<sup>103</sup> Other children helped their mothers run *boda-boda* business, and even sell food stuffs and other items around the camp. The study attributed reliance on these particular strategies to the context of the refugee camp where there are a number of constraints, and few opportunities.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

Refugee women and children at Kakuma Refugee Camp used a wide range of livelihood strategies to cope ranging from small businesses to dependence on remittances from relatives abroad. They demonstrated remarkable resilience and resourcefulness in dealing with an otherwise difficult situation. Most of these, however, were at best short-term in addressing the numerous challenges they faced in a protracted situation. There is thus a need for knowledge and skills that have a long-term effect whilst aiding in reconstructing minds and providing vital tools for the future.

Most women refugees at the Kakuma Refugee Camp had transcended their traumatic past and were on their way to recovery, and trying to pick up their lives even in the face of scarce resources. This was noted by their positive outlook to life. Even under such harsh conditions they still worked and made a living. While there were many who still harboured bitterness and misery from their traumatic experiences, even those had found new strength and hope.<sup>106</sup>

Kakuma Refugee Camp provided opportunities for women to learn and socialize within a comparatively sophisticated social environment. The women picked up new skills that

<sup>103</sup> Oral Interviews with Program Officer of LWF at Kakuma Camp (August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2005).

<sup>106</sup> Oral Interview with a Staff of JRS at Kakuma camp, (August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005).

would be useful upon return to their homes and whenever they may be settled. <sup>107</sup>

Resignation for some is a justifiable course of action but most of them showed admirable strength and resilience.

<sup>TM</sup>Oral interview with a Lutheran World Federation staff at Kakuma. (August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2005).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

The study examined the conflicts in the region that led to massive displacement of refugees into Kenya necessitating the establishment of the Kakuma Refugee Camp. It further looked at the conditions at the Kakuma Refugee Camp and the composition of the refugee population, giving particular emphasis on how the women and children cope. This chapter draws conclusions based on the findings of the study assessed within the theoretical approaches of challenge and response theory.

Focusing on women and children helped highlight some challenges faced by this group in refugee situations. They are apparently in the majority but in many ways marginalized in the situation in which they find themselves. Because of their gender, they felt the double discrimination of being female and being refugees. Women and the children were revealed to be particularly vulnerable to abuses of various kinds. This is especially so when displacement has been protracted as is the case with Sudanese refugees in the Kakuma Refugee Camp. Frustrations so characteristic of this displacement are common to all categories of persons, but it has been established that women and children are most affected.

The research established that women's resourcefulness and ingenuity rather than passivity, best characterize the ways in which they managed their situation. Women faced multiple challenges both during flight and in the unfamiliar cultural landscape, while isolated from their loved ones. Having lost familiar supports they suffered emotional and

material deprivation, however, they devised ways to attend to the needs of themselves and their families. These findings validate the hypotheses on which this research was based. Many refugee women revealed a surprising capacity for resilience.

The study established that the refugee problem had deep roots in historical and contemporary human life. Though the overall numbers are said to be decreasing, the displaced population is still faced with this predicament and its consequences. The women are known to be most vulnerable and limited in their access to various services. From all indications however, the women refugees at Kakuma Refugee Camp showed willingness to engage in the process of rebuilding their lives and assigning it meaning. This was shown from the numerous innovative ways through which many worked to provide a decent livelihood not only for themselves, but for the household and the community as a whole. Women and children faced multiple challenges from the camp and the neighbouring Turkana community but they devised ways to cope with this situation.

The location of the Kakuma Refugee Camp in an isolated, marginalized and semi-arid area posed a security problem and a stir of conflict with the host population. The women at Kakuma Refugee Camp adapted to the harsh environment with hardly any initial resources and through creative and innovative efforts they managed to survive. This fits well with Arnold Toynbee's challenge and response theory, the women and children at KRC adapted to the harsh human and natural environment with lots of tolerance and patience and managed to feed their children and communities as a whole.

The refugee crisis created large numbers of female-headed households, as men were dead, detained, displaced or generally disappeared. Most families at the camp were

headed by women. This could be biological, foster and even group care arrangements. Women had to look for means to feed their dependants. Some traditional protection and support mechanisms had collapsed with the fleeing of family members some to different countries. These meant women were to take over responsibilities and activities traditionally perceived as a male reserve. This also led to development of new skills and confidence by women as they became more involved in rebuilding the lives of their own families as well as their communities. It is evident the Kakuma Refugee Camp provided opportunities for learning and socializing within a fairly sophisticated social environment. Many refugees acquired new skills which they may apply even after returning to their homes. However, such changes are not always permanent and may be reversed in post-war situations especially in most conservative communities.

The conditions of refugee life greatly increased the risk of exposure to HIV and other STDs. The destruction of families, deterioration of social structures and unravelling of social norms, loss of homes and income, overburdened health care resources, crowding, and commercial sex trade within refugee camps were just some of the factors that lead to increased risk-taking behaviour and susceptibility. The AIDS prevention project helped start support groups for these women, who found strength by uniting with others suffering the same fate. They also benefited from special income-generation efforts, such as marketing cooperatives set up by NGOs within the camp and the merry-go-rounds. The short-term coping strategies employed by women often entailed long-term negative consequences. Women sometimes chose to live with men in exchange for protection and food rations but this caused those risks of contracting HIV/AIDS and other STDs. When

they are forced to trade sex for food, water, money or protection, this only increased their vulnerability.

Most children were orphans and unaccompanied and they were prone to abuse and exploitation. They faced the dangers of being engaged in child labour and early marriages. The available humanitarian agencies and NGCTs at the camp worked to provide the necessary services to the refugee children. The services included supply of water, food, medical services, education including adult education. Though these services were provided, they did not adequately meet the required standards because of the large population of refugee's. Due to such high levels of frustration, young people have a deep need for adults to listen to them because this could provide them with an important source of strength, support and empowerment simultaneously.

Schools offered a suitable ground for intervention in children situations. These interventions offered important modalities to explore in the provision of services for refugee children as they offer a number of ways to both overcome barriers to accessing services as well as ways of effectively intervening with refugee children. Despite the challenges of acculturation and often, exposure to traumatic experiences, children and adolescent refugees at Kakuma Refugee Camp made up a resilient population.

Lastly, the role of education in developing self-reliant skills as a mechanism for long term coping was noted. This revealed that with few exceptions, most refugees do recognize the need for some form of education.

This research established that women and children are resilient and adaptable in times of crisis. The notion of categorizing women refugees as powerless victims in times of

conflict is invalidated in this study. The women were able to adapt and take up roles that were previously perceived to be of male domain prior to the conflicts. The coping strategies are embedded in their larger cultural and social ethnic networks that constituted their lives in their home countries prior to displacement and new skills they learnt while at the camp. Thus, Portraying refugee woman in passive dependent roles does not accurately describe the majority of refugee women in camps. Women's coping strategies made them vulnerable.

Life in the camps entailed more pain and suffering for women and children than for men. Rather than pointing to weakness, dependency, and vulnerability, the adaptability of refugee women to adverse circumstances shows their strength to do what was necessary to survive their ordeal. It was their tenacity and will to survive not their vulnerability that caused them to adopt behaviours that jeopardized their human rights, health, and social status. It can, therefore, be inferred that exclusion of women from participating in male dominated activities and enterprises in stable societies is not due to an absence of talent but rather an expression of the patriarchal traditional power structures that dominate our societies.



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5. Alem Bogole	August 7 <sup>th</sup> , 2005	
6. Anonymous	August 14 <sup>th</sup> , 2005	
7. Asnake Bolo	August, 4 <sup>th</sup> 2005	
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9. Deng-Manyok, Jacob	August 4 <sup>th</sup> 2005	
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## QUESTIONNAIRES

### Category 1: (Head of Agencies)

Name of Respondent:

Age:

Sex:

Name of Organization:

Number of years worked in Organization:

Duties/Career:

- 1) How long has your Organization operated in this Camp? .
- 2) What are its objectives?
  
- 3) What specific services does your Organization offer to the refugee community?
  
- 4) Do you offer any particular services to women at the camp? Yes\_\_\_\_\_No
- a) If Yes, which ones?
  
- 5) Do you extend services to the children at the camp? Yes                      No
- a) If Yes, in which ways ?

b) If No, why?

6) What are your views about the services that women and children receive from your organization?

7) Does your organization have any collaborative relationship with the government of Kenya?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No.

If Yes, how?

If No, why?

8) What are your views on Kenya's Refugee Encampment policy?

9) Do you have any other information you wish to share with me on the general life of women and children at the camp?



**Category 2: (Head of Schools /Health Centres at Kakuma Refugee CampJ**

Name of Respondent:

Age: . . . . Between: 20-30                      30-40                      40+

Sex:

Occupation:

Level of Education:

- 1) Year settled in Kakuma:
- 2) How long have you been head of this school?

What is the general enrolment in the school?

What is the ratio of boy to girls in the school?

What problems do the students of your school face?

What practical skills do you impart to your students

- 3) Where do the students go after graduating from your institution?

4) What can you comment about the social amenities (schools, hospitals, water, markets) now a< compared to 1992 when refugees first settled here?

**Category 3: (Health Centers at Kakuma Refugee Camp)**

- 1 How many Health Centers are there at the camp?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2 Who are your regular patients? Men, women or children or both?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3 What are the common complaints by your patients
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4 Do you have a counseling/VCT unit at the health centres?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5 Do you have any other information you would like to share with me?

**Category 4: (Government Workers in Kakuma)**

Name of Respondent:

Age:-

Sex:

No of years worked in Kakuma:

Present Duties/Career:

**1) What services do you offer to the refugee community?**

2) Do you receive complains from the women and children in the camp? Yes\_\_\_\_\_No

a) If Yes which ones?

3) Do you receive any form of assistance from the refugee aid agencies operating in the camp?

Yes          No

**Category 5: (Refugee) - Men, Women and Children**

Name of Respondent:

Age:

Sex:

Level of Education: Primary\_\_\_\_\_Secondary\_\_\_\_\_College.

Occupation:

Year of arrival in this area

1) What is your country of origin?

2) Reasons that forced you to come to Kakuma-Kenya.

1. War
2. Natural disaster
3. Education
4. Others,(Specify)

3) Why did you choose Kakuma Refugee Camp amongst others?

(a) Near (b) Acceptance (c) Others Specify

4) Are you satisfied with the living standards in the camp? Yes\_\_\_\_\_No.

If No, explain

5) What do you think is the feeling of the host community towards refugees?

Friendly/cordial, why do you think so?

**Unfriendly/hostile, why do you think so?**

c) What particular problems do you face as a man, woman or child refugee?

6) Do you have any other information you would like to share with me about your life and experience at the Kakuma Refugee Camp