THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, KENYA

(DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY)

STUDY TOPIC:

THE REFUGEE TRAUMA AND ITS EFFECTS ON FUTURE HOPES:
A STUDY OF SUDANESE REFUGEE WOMEN AND CHILDREN AT
KAKUMA CAMP, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

The civil war in the Sudan which started in 1983 and ended with the signing of the peace agreement on 9th January 2005, forced a great number of Sudanese population to flee to the neighboring countries to seek refuge. Since 1992, majority of the Sudanese refugees have been taking refuge at Kakuma camp in Northern Kenya, about 1000 kilometers away from Nairobi. As civilians – largely women and children already form 90% causalities of contemporary wars, it is presumed that the Sudanese refugee women and children have suffered the agony of refugee life the most. Hence this study aimed at finding out the trauma of being a refugee among the women and children who are the majority. Secondly, the study aimed at recording their hopes for the future.

To find out the real issues affecting the lives of the Sudanese refugee women and children at the camp, the study sought to answer three broad questions relating to the socio-economic needs, security concerns, and hope for a better life in view of the signed peace agreement. Three hypotheses were formulated which the study sought to test.

The study focused exclusively on the Sudanese refugee women and children at Kakuma camp taking into account the main Sudanese regional groups/communities, namely, Dinka Bor, Dinka Bahr-el-Ghazal, Equatoria, and Nuer communities respectively. Samples were purposively drawn from among the refugee women in each of the main Sudanese regional groups/communities. The over all sample size was 100. Various types of data collection methods, were administered to gather both quantitative and qualitative data.

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The findings of the study revealed that the Sudanese refugee women and children did not have access to adequate socio-economic opportunities. This tended to act as a factor pushing them to resettle overseas in order to escape the traumatic experiences in the camp. The study also revealed that though the Sudanese refugee women and children suffered various types of abuse in the camp, the magnitude and frequency of such incidents were in most cases exaggerated, and, in some cases, fabricated to facilitate resettlement process. The underlying motive remained the attempt by the women and children to resettle overseas to escape the harsh socio-economic environment in the camp.

The study furthermore revealed that the Sudanese refugee women and children did not fully believe that the signed peace agreement was genuine. As such they did not have a full desire to return home at the moment since there seemed to be no prospect in sight for an end to the situation that had forced them to flee the country.
Based on the findings, several recommendations were made. The first one requested the International Community to ensure that the government of Sudan adheres to the terms of the peace agreement so that a conducive environment could be created in the Sudanese to hasten the return of the refugees to rebuild their lives.