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FOSTERING SOCIAL CAPITAL AS A SURVIVAL STRATEGY FOR THE BANYAMULENGE URBAN REFUGEES IN EMBAKASI CENTRAL SUB-COUNTY, NAIROBI-KENYA

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Abstract: *The purpose of this study was to investigate social capital and survival strategies among Banyamulenge urban refugees in Embakasi central sub-county, Nairobi, Kenya. The specific objectives were; to assess the role of community networking as a survival strategy among Banyamulenge urban refugees in Embakasi central sub-county and examine the influence of social welfare programs on the survival strategies among Banyamulenge urban refugees in Embakasi central sub-county. The study used the social capital theory that was advanced by Putnam (1995). With reference to the research methodology, a case study design and a mixed-method approach were used to get responses from the sampled population on socio-economic status and survival strategies among Banyamulenge urban refugees in Embakasi central sub-county. Data was collected using key informants who facilitated the exchange of information between NGO staff and the urban refugees' community leaders- who knew more about the target population. Data was collected using focused group discussions and questionnaires. Both primary and secondary data were used in this study. From the findings, Majority of the respondents were found to be members of chamaa youth group and self-help groups. The majority of the respondent knew of the existence of social welfare organizations operating within their community. The majority of the respondents, 40 per cent, got food support from social welfare. Majority of respondents confessed that they were getting welfare support once in three month, followed by 13 per cent of the respondents who got welfare support once in a month. The study recommended that Kenyan government, in partnership with a humanitarian organization, should provide work permits to these urban refugees, that the safety policy from Embakasi authority should protect Banyamulenge urban refugees from social harassment, and lastly, the study recommended for a further area of studies on urban refugees in Nairobi Kenya.*

Key Words: *Survival Strategies, Urban refugees, Banyamulenge, Conflict, Social capital*

1.1 Introduction

In today's highly interconnected society, international migration of refugees has been on the rise. Globally, the increase of refugees is fueled largely by persecution, civil war, armed conflict, inequality, and human rights violations. According to UNHCR, 2017 25.4 million refugees and 3.1 million asylum-seekers were forcibly displaced either by persecution, conflict or generalized violence. A huge number, 85 per cent, of the world's refugees are hosted in foreign countries and regions. One-third of this total refugee population is found in the world's least developed countries.

Lebanon has been an important destination country for Palestine refugees since 1948. This was as a direct result of the Syrian crisis. Since 2011 an increasing number of Palestine refugees from Syria have sought safety in Lebanon. Despite their longstanding presence in the country as refugees, they remain excluded from key aspects of social, political and economic life in Lebanon. They are denied the right to own property and face restrictive employment measures such as a ban from some liberal and syndicate professions (Shabaan, Gattas, Habib, Hanifi & Sayhoun, 2016). As a result, Palestine refugees in Lebanon face one of the harshest socioeconomic situations in the country. The discriminatory laws against them hinder their ability to improve their livelihoods. They are left to struggle with high levels of unemployment. Most of those lucky enough to secure jobs suffer from underemployment. They work in low-paying, semi-skilled jobs and are mostly subjected to unfavorable working conditions. This only serves to further increase the levels of poverty among them.

Ecuador hosts a large population of Colombian urban refugees. These refugees were as a result of a harsh socioeconomic environment that left them marginalized and grappling with high unemployment rates. They were excluded from the mainstream labor markets which pushed them into informal economic activities as the only way of sustaining their livelihoods in this new country. According to Dorothy, 2012 urban refugees enter into self-employment which often has serious limitations. This is mainly because they lack the required skill levels and qualifications to effectively compete in the highly regulated markets. The situation is made worse by their inability to access work permits which forces them to engage into informal employment. Most of their economic activities are mainly for day to day survival. They are forced into a hand-to-mouth way of life and are thus completely unable to improve their living standards.

Since the end of the 19th century, there have been an increasing number of refugees escaping from violence and conflicts from other nations within the West African region. The presence of Liberian refugees in Ghana dates back to 1990, resulting from Liberia's internal conflict which began in 1989. The socio-economic activities of Liberian refugees were severely limited because the Ghanaian government did not recognize or value professionals such as nurses and teachers from Liberia. The situation was worsened by their ineligibility for work permits. This made it virtually impossible for these refugees to secure any meaningful employment in Ghana. They struggled to make ends meet and earn eke out a living with the low income generating means within their reach (Omata, 2017).

The socio-economic status of urban refugees in South Africa was filled with challenges. In South Africa, the ability of urban refugees to secure formal employment is an uphill task because they do not have the required work permits. According to Northcote (2015), these refugees

engaged in a wide array of informal economic activities to earn a livelihood. Most of them ventured into insecure and informal employment activities such as casual labor in construction sites, street trading, tailoring, and beadwork. Currently, many urban refugees are hawkers and engage in selling sweets, cigarettes, fruits, and vegetables, as well as cosmetic and hygiene products. In the mean streets of Accra, most refugees face a variety of challenges which mainly include unwillingness by locals to pay the required price or, in some cases, refuse to pay for the goods all together the moment they realize that the person selling to them is a refugee. These hurdles impact negatively on both their earnings and on their ability to improve their livelihoods.

In the East African region, Uganda is a popular destination for refugees from Burundi and Rwanda. In the 21st century, the socio-economic status of refugees in Kampala was characterized by rampant poverty low levels of literacy which disqualified them from better paying formal job opportunities. They were thus faced with high levels of unemployment and, in most cases, lived in poverty and could not access decent shelter. They were struggling to survive and were unable to afford more than one meal a day (Ayine, Fredrick & Kabumbuli, 2017). As a means of survival, they engaged in various small-scale economic activities such as roadside petty trade, tailoring and brewing of illicit alcohol. They also ended up practicing subsistence crop cultivation to complement their meager income by providing a cheaper source of food. They could not easily access formal employment due to lack of work permits and those who were lucky to get jobs only ended up being way below the normal amount. They had to stomach all these just so they can survive and fit into their new society.

East Africa's economic power house, Kenya is a very popular destination for Banyamulenge urban refugees. Banyamulenge refugees hail mainly from the Democratic of Congo. The Banyamulenge acquired citizenship and were, as a result, declared Congo citizens in 1971. However, in the year 1982, the same citizenship was abrogated through the parliament and they were deprived of their citizenship (Learchared, 2009). As a result, ethnic clashes erupted between them and the neighboring Bantu communities, with whom they had previously lived peacefully with, in Congo. They were eventually forced to migrate. Their migration from Congo made them scatter in different countries, including Kenya. Most of them finally settled in different parts of Kenya but majority of them opted to set up base in Nairobi.

A large number of refugees found in Kenya come from other African countries. Most of these are from neighboring East African countries such as Burundi, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (International Organization Migration, 2015)). In Kitengela, an rapidly expanding town found on the outskirts of Kenya's capital city Nairobi, urban refugees are faced with poor socioeconomic conditions which pushes them into a vicious cycle of poverty. According to Sara, Elhawary, & Pantalian, 2010, refugees are often faced with limited access to formal employment and the lack of legal work permits. This is a major stumbling block because it greatly hinders their access better paying employment opportunities. Those lucky enough to secure some form of employment end up being paid lower wages, as compared to other locals doing the same work.

According to Muoka (2015), Banyamulenge urban refugees in Kasarani town, Nairobi, faced employment challenges due to lack of work permits. Their attempts to compete with the locals for any available work opportunities was futile because they did not have work permits – a

legal requirement before any foreigner can work in any new country. The locals thus got the first priority. As a way of overcoming this hurdle, they engaged in casual and self-employment. Another major setback was their difficult search for decent accommodation. Like their Kitengela counterparts, these Banyamulenge urban refugees in Kasarani engaged into petty trade and a variety of self-employment ventures such as selling fruits in the streets, working in the car wash, all this was in an attempt to earn a livelihood in Kasarani.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Urban refugees are one of the most vulnerable groups in any given host country. In Kenya, urban refugee families are forced to live under very difficult conditions as they try and blend into their new surroundings, adapt to new cultures, cope with their unemployment status, and engage in various informal economic activities (Sara, Elhawary, & Pantalino, 2010). Majority of these urban refugees get very little support from relief organizations such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), amongst other organizations. This is because these bodies provide unreliable emergency initial relief assistance only for the first few months. This does little to help the refugees because they eventually have to fend for themselves and meet their economic and social needs.

The revocation of the Banyamulenge urban refugees' citizenship status by the then Congolese government fueled tensions between them – the refugees – and the neighboring communities. The government of Congo failed to socially; politically and economically include them in any development initiatives in the country. As a result of this treatment, the Banyamulenge led a life of poverty while in. They were eventually left with no other option but to migrate to Kenya with the hope of a better life. They settled into Embakasi central sub-county hoping to free themselves from the shackles of poverty. They hoped that their lives would improve but this was not to be. Poverty continued to dog them, even in their new found “Canaan”. They found themselves still grappling with poor socio-economic status and were forced, as a result, to try and survive by any means necessary. Men worked in local bars or as street vendors while the women and girls opted to work as commercial sex workers in local clubs and bars. It was a question of survival for the fittest. They had to endure all this just to raise money to buy food and other basic needs for them and their families.

It is thus important to understand their kinds of livelihood these refugees experience. In urban areas, employment is the major source of livelihood as it is the primary source of income here. Hence, faced with below average income levels, refugees are left to struggle to meet even the basic human needs such as food, healthcare, education, clothing and shelter. An in depth study that will unearth how they survive and what strategies they engage in to ensure the provision of food, shelter and health is important. The presence of Banyamulenge urban refugees in Embakasi has already created problems almost similar to those that caused the conflict back at home in the Congo. More specifically, the refugees and the local community are now forced to share the few available resources. This is a sure trigger for conflicts between them and the local community.

The study sought to discuss the socioeconomic status and survival strategies among Banyamulenge urban refugees in Embakasi central sub-county, Nairobi-Kenya.

1.3 Research objective

This study's main objective was to examine fostering social capital as a survival strategy for the Banyamulenge urban refugees in Embakasi central sub-county, Nairobi- Kenya.

1.4 Literature Review

Social capital theory by Putnam (1995)

Putnam (1995) argues that the social capital theory refers to features of social organizations, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit. He believes that social capital is a quality that can be a facilitator of interpersonal cooperation. The social capital theory is elevated from a feature of individuals and small groups in the local community to a feature of large population aggregates. Social capital becomes a collective's trait functioning at the aggregate level. As such, it becomes a diagnostic tool for economic health/benefits outcome as noted by (Putnam 1996).

The social capital theory is therefore important to this study in that it shows how urban refugees socioeconomic position is determined by their social capital especial social resources and social network support based on non-government organizations, the kinship which facilitates survival strategies among these urban refugees in a host community. Thus as the theory argues that this social capital helps to achieve human and financial capital enabling their access to the labor markets and be able to engage in economic activities in a host society.

Review of Empirical Studies: Brief history of Banyamulenge

In the 17th and 19th century they were immigrants and pastoralists from Rwanda and Zari. This migration involved Rwandan Tutsi who migrated to Congo seeking for a much more favorable climate and availability of pasture for their large herds of cattle. They settled in Mulenge and were renamed Banyamulenge people. They established their settlement with fellow Bantu ethnic groups who included *Wafulelo*, *Babembe* and *Bashi* and, because they spoke *Kinyarwanda* language, were recognized as foreigners by this fellow Congolese communities as noted by (Learchard, 2009). Banyamulenge entered Congo seeking for grazing land for their cattle and also as labor immigrants during colonial time.

While trying to settle in Congo, the Banyamulenge faced discrimination and were excluded by other ethnic groups which included Bafulelo, Bashi and Babembe. These tribes had earlier migrated from their own country when they were under the rule of Belgium reign authorities. Since they were speaking Kinyarwanda they were considered indigenous in Congo by other ethnicities and were given their native authority. However, in the colonial era, Banyamulenge were not recognized as an indigenous group and lacked significant rights such as rights to customary land. They were struggling to be recognized as an indigenous group with the sole aim of having their customary land and authority in Congo.

In the 1970s, the Banyamulenge settled in the North and South Kivu regions. Later, around 1972, the Banyamulenge who are identified from a group of people originated from Rwanda were given Congolese Zairian nationality. They became a popular group in North Kivu. In the year 1981, Congo passed a citizenship bill stating that people who were able to connect their descent from ancestors and resided in Congo since the year 1885 would qualify for Congo citizen. The Banyamulenge were hence recognized in Congo as citizens. However, even after acquiring

citizenship in Congo, the Banyamulenge were not allowed to run for any political office in the country. (Learchared, 2009)

In 1994, after the Rwandan genocide, there was a sharp increase in the number of refugees in Congo making it difficult for the local communities to control foreigners. This fueled animosity and hatred from the indigenous Congolese communities forcing them to demand that the government sends all foreigners back to their home countries. Rwandan refugees, who included the Banyamulenge, were all viewed as immigrants. This was despite the fact that the Banyamulenge had previously been legally recognized as Congo citizens. In the end, the Banyamulenge were also required to be repatriated to their home country, Rwanda. In 1995, the Congo parliament signed a resolution which stated that all Banyamulenge people were refugees, regardless having legally acquired Congo citizenship and regardless of how long they had lived in Congo. As a result of this unfortunate decision, the Banyamulenge people were threatened by other Congolese communities. A violent conflict erupted between the Banyamulenge, Bafulelo, Bashi and Babembe communities in the North and South Kivu. They all wanted them to be evicted from that place. They reluctantly started to migrate back to Rwanda. Unfortunately, despite returning to a country they once called home, the Banyamulenge were now recognized as refugees. This is because the Banyamulenge had earlier acquired Congolese citizenship and were thus viewed as Congolese citizens by nationality. And revocation of their citizenship by the Congolese government, the Banyamulenge remain to be viewed Congolese citizens.

Role of community networking as a survival strategy among immigrants

Urban refugees in a new society tend to form closely knit community bonds as a form of survival. New refugees utilize kinship, village and religious connections to begin their journey and survival in the unfamiliar environment. Urban refugees bring with them their religious beliefs, practices and local deities. According to Kenneth 2003, as a result of the complexity of the various economic, political and social environment of urban refugees in America, religious organizations helps them to build a community and activate network of support built on kinship, region, and faith in their US journey. This community bond helps urban refugees to ensure their survival because it has a positive impact on improving their livelihood in a new society.

In London, urban refugees used community networking as a surviving strategy in the sense that they used the community as a network to share information about accessing work in London. According to Datta, McIlwaine, Evans & Herbert (2006) ethnic networking was important among the urban refugee community due to fact that their academic qualifications were not recognized and lacked marketable skills in the workplace. As a result community networking helped them to access work in London. Moreover, community networking also helped urban refugees to find subsequent housing because those new in London were able to share the house with their community members. Urban refugees formed a social capital network at the community level by forming saving networks amongst themselves. Here, they were able to save regularly on an informal basis and people from the same community could draw on it during times of need. Therefore, this community networking helped them to survive in the new country.

Urban refugees in a new country often experience a dramatic loss or total lack of social support systems. Refugee parents who are separated from their social network, relatives and friends often feel isolated and frustrated in the process of acculturation resulting in a great deal of culture shock in a new country. According Golooba-Mutebi(2004) Mozambican urban refugees

in South Africa emphasized on the importance of community in a host society through joining together to form a sense of community for economic reasons. Community networking also allowed them to improve their livelihoods. Urban refugees emphasize that building a sense of community is very important if one is to become integrated into a new culture and have a sense of belonging by sharing symbols, norms, and events. Community facilitates exchanges support through both the informal and formal social network. This social network, most of the time, helping them with job opportunities, hence improving their livelihood in a host society.

In Kenya, Urban Somali refugees in Nairobi address the importance of community in a host society in a much broader perspective. They view it in terms of the relationship between people, places; identity and security. Due to their strong sense of community, a large proportion of the Somali refugees establish efficient trading links between Somali and Eastaigh. According to Abdi (2013), Somali urban refugees feel that their community makes them belong and feel comfortable in terms of culture, identity and their existence, this community gives the Somali urban refugees a sense of belonging. Their closely knit community bond enables them to share the available resources and help to ensure their survival because it has a positive impact through improving their livelihood and enabling them to survive in the host society.

Locally, Banyamulenge urban refugees in Kasarani, Nairobi also show the importance of community as a sense of belonging and as a networking mechanism in a host society. There is exists an undeniable lack of employment among Banyumulenge urban refugees. Securing employment is very difficult, taking into account the large urban population in living Nairobi city. It is thus very difficult to secure employed as a refugee at the expense of local population as noted by (Muoka, 2015). Urban refugees thus help each other to find something economical to do by helping newcomers in the community to secure work and earn a living. The Banyamulenge in Kasarani use their community network to share information concerning available work provide food to those without. This enables them to survive in Kasarani.

Urban refugees utilize kinship, village and religious connections to begin their new journey and survival in an unfamiliar society. Urban refugees emphasize the sense of community as a survival strategy. In Nairobi, Congolese and Sudanese established community arrangements whereby urban refugees of the same age and gender took care of each other and newcomers could rely on the support of their community (Guiney, 2008). This community bond enables them to share the available resources and help ensure their survival because it has a positive impact on their livelihood while in Nairobi.

The above empirical studies showcase how the community contributes a sense of belonging among urban refugees through sharing norms, values and believes by different researchers but there has been a little empirical study concerning the importance of community among urban refugees in Embakasi central-sub-county. This is why this study is justifiable.

Social welfare programs among immigrants

Urban refugee families face social and economic challenges in their new country. They lack access to even the most basic health services. This socioeconomic circumstance poses a major challenge, particularly to the health and education of their children. As a result, these urban refugee families are forced to seek assistance from social services providers in the new society in an effort to secure healthcare and raise the required school fees for their young ones (Uma &

Nazineen,2005). Welfare reforms have a strong impact on both the livelihood of refugees and on the way they receive assistance. This crucial assistance improves their livelihood within the host society because sick member get access to the much needed health coverage, while the children are able to attend school. Welfare programs therefore play a great role in improving the lives of urban refugees living in the host society.

In South Africa, welfare services from both the government and non-governmental organizations are provided to urban refugees. These services have a very positive impact because they help them to sustain their livelihood in the destination country. According to Mpho (2009), urban refugees in South Africa have access to public services. They are able to get health services and basic education for their children provided for by both the government and the non-governmental organizations. Most of the social welfare programs assist urban refugees to secure various socio-economic rights such as access to basic health care, the right to adequate housing, food and social security in urban areas within the host society.

Community services, as a form of social welfare approach towards urban refugees, involves a one-on-one interaction between an NGO's social workers and the refugees living in identified camps. These workers move through the refugee community with the main aim of identifying their specific needs and later organizing for the distribution of appropriate resources so that the needs of unaccompanied children, elderly people, the chronically sick and others who are socially and economically disadvantaged are met. According to Bakewell(2003), Community services interventions in Tanzania were geared towards helping the refugees re-establish their livelihoods. These activities were mainly centered on vocational training and were expected to facilitate urban refugee community development and capacity building with the end goal being improving education, healthcare, and income levels.

Urban refugee's families face social and economic challenges in the new country. As a result they desperately begin to seek assistance from social service providers to help them survive. Jesuit Refugee Service organization in Kampala started a microfinance scheme which provided loans to vulnerable urban refugees as a way to help improve their livelihood in a new society. According to Macchiavello (2001), urban refugees in Kampala who successfully got a microfinance loan from JRS were able to set up profitable informal businesses selling second-hand clothes, offering tailoring services amongst others. Their children were able to attend good schools and get access to affording health care. This welfare organization had a very positive impact on urban refugees by improving their livelihood in a host society.

Jesuit Refugee Service started assisting urban refugees in Eastern Africa and is still one of the few organizations that greatly assist them. The organization initially started by helping urban refugees with poor socioeconomic status and low income in Nairobi through offering various forms of support such as food, financial assistance, education services, medical care, psychosocial support, information, and non-food items. According to Dix (2006), JRS, in 1993, opened *Mikono* craft shop in Nairobi where about 60 refugees sold their products. The organization also helped them acquire hand skills such as tailoring. Over the years, many urban refugees have been able to meet their daily needs from the earnings they receive from the shop. This has greatly aided their survival in the host society.

Urban refugees with poor socioeconomic status in Nairobi depend on support from their relatives. They receive overseas remittances as a form of social welfare from their relatives. According to Sara, Elhawary, & Pantaliano (2010), Somali and Ethiopian urban refugees received money from relatives overseas through *hawala* social system and, in many cases, Somalis families in Eastleigh rely on husbands, brothers and children to send remittances from Europe or America. To majority of the urban refugees, remittance money is often the only source of income. These funds tend to be shared among close relatives and other needy members of the community with a view to improving their lives in the host society.

The above empirical studies show exactly how welfare programs help urban refugees with food and other basic need in the host community. They however do not provide an insight into how these social welfare programs empower urban refugees in Embakasi central sub-county. This is why this study is justifiable.

1.5 Research Design And Methodology

The research used a case study design. This design combined both qualitative and quantitative approach, culminating to a mixed methods approach, also known as quant-qual. The researcher used these designs to get adequate information which helped reveal the challenges faced by urban refugees and their survival strategies while settling in Embakasi central-sub County.

The researcher collected detailed information by employing both qualitative and quantitative method on the various opinions concerning the study.

Site description, Study and Target population

Embakasi Central sub-county is an elective constituency in Kenya. It is one of the many constituencies found in Nairobi. Embakasi Central constituency is made of five county wards including; Komarock ward with a population of 35,628, Kayole North Ward with a population of 37,580, Kayole central ward with a population of 37,580, Kayole South ward with a population of 37,580 and Matopeni /Spring Valley with a population of 37,580 (Information Cradle, 2018). The target population for this study consisted of adult male and female Congolese urban refugees aged fifteen years and above and have been continuously living in Embakasi central-sub county, Nairobi, from the year 2005 to date. The study also targeted key informants who will be drawn from urban refugee community leaders and employees from humanitarian Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in Nairobi. Therefore the researcher will sample from the above population to get the required information that is important for this study.

Sample size and Sampling Techniques

The sample size was large and manageable enough to represent the entire population under study. This study has no sampling frame to work with. This is because Banyamulenge urban refugees in Nairobi are both documented and undocumented. No formula was used because it was very difficult to choose one without having a specific documented number of them - in Embakasi, it is a mix of those documented and undocumented. The researcher conveniently chose to use 140 Banyamulenge urban refugee families as the study respondents.

The study used a simple random sampling technique and a purposive sampling technique. The simple random sampling will be used in selecting the respondents to ensure that the entire

targeted population had a chance to be selected. Purposive sampling was used where individual respondents and interviewees was purposively identified and selected based on one's level of knowledge regarding the study.

The study used three methods of data collection which will include standard interview, focus group discussions, and questionnaires. The descriptive statistics method of graphical representation of data was used to analyze the quantitative data with the help of SPSS V. 21. Qualitative data was coded and thematically presented through thematic analysis.

1.6 Results And Discussion

Types of groups in the respondent's community

The researcher wanted to find out the types of support groups that were patronized by the respondents. From the findings, 52.50 per cent (42) of the respondents were members of *chamaa's*, with the women being the majority of these group. They did table banking, acquired credit facilities and hard skills training among other benefits from the *chamaa's*. Majority of the youth were enrolled in youth groups (25.0 per cent (20) of the respondents) where they benefited from credit facilities, hard skills training, and job opportunities. Another group that existed was the Self -Help Groups, (22.50 (18) of the respondents), which came up with initiatives and implemented them to improve the quality of life of the urban refugees. These included small-scale businesses such as car washes, tailoring shops, bakers among others.

“Support groups are essential to everyone, the urban Banyamulenge refugees utilized and benefits from supports groups in their host community, Embakasi. As a young urban refugee, I am enrolled in a youth group in our community. This youth group has empowered and helped me survive, in this area, we help each become economically dependent. Through this group, I was introduced into the business, as I was still new in the country was struggling to survive and decided to join the youth group and got the business channel. And was introduced into hawking business and now I sell coffee and mandazi in the street, as a group we have a place where every morning we come together to make coffee and mandazis and after that, we divide and everyone goes on their own to sell, by the end of every month we share the benefits. I was able to engage in this economic activity all thanks to the youth group, became able to earn a living and survive in the urban area” (translated from kinyamulenge”

Source: respondent (006) 2018

These findings were in line with those from key informants and the focus group discussions who noted that social support groups were essential in giving credit facilities, impacting skills, giving investment ideas and job opportunities to their members. The following quote was extracted from respondent 006.

“Support groups are essential to everyone, let alone the refugees. Here, the urban banyamulenge refugees have utilized the benefits of support groups, and that has kept them going. The majority have gotten employment opportunities, business ideas and life-sustaining skills courtesy of these

groups. Chamaa's are the most common group. Others include self- help groups and youth groups”

Source: interviewee (2019).

Majority of the respondents confirmed that community networking greatly helped them access employment opportunities by identifying them on their behalf. They also helped them create job opportunities and even employed some of them. Above all, they imparted life-sustaining skills that were effective in improving the livelihood of the refugees. This was noted from 71.3 per cent (57) of the respondents involved in this study. They hence indicated that they wished to have even more similar support groups and that they would gain more through working closely with them. However, 28.8 per cent (23) of the respondents indicated that community networking did not, in any way, help them access employment. It is highly likely that this group was made up of those people who were not involved in any type of community event. They believed in the “everyone for him/herself” way of life. They completely ignored membership in these groups.

“Community has helped me a lot since I arrived in Embakasi, our community has helped me access employment. Upon arrival I struggled to make end meets, had no source of income and surviving was a challenge. And started to attend our community church and shared my struggle with fellow church mate and one member of our community helped me get a job in a salon, now I work in a salon as a hairdresser in a salon owned by our fellow urban refugee in our community. The job of a hairdresser does not pay more but at least it has helped to earn a living in Embakasi (translated from Kinyamulenge)

Source: respondent (005) 2019

Social welfare programs

The research study sought to find out if the respondents were aware of the presence of social welfare organizations. From the findings, it was evident majority of the respondents were aware of the existence of social welfare organizations in area (75 per cent (60) of the respondents). This was so because they had sought support from various social welfare programs and had benefited directly from these organizations. Some of the benefits they gained included food, healthcare, housing and school fees to those with school going children, among other benefits. Only 25 per cent (20) of the respondents claimed that they were unaware of their existence. They may have probably been because they had either not benefitted from them, or were ignorant of their existence. It also emerged that most of the undocumented respondents were not aware of the social welfare organization. This was because one needed to be documented to be able to seek support from any welfare organization.

How social welfare supports the refugees

The researcher wanted to find out how these welfare organizations supported the respondents. From the findings, it was evident that the welfare organizations catered for most of the basic necessities required by the respondents. This mainly included food (40 per cent (32) of the respondents). Majority enjoyed these free provisions, especially when they arrived in the country for the first time and had nowhere to go, nothing to eat and knew no one in the country.

Other basic needs addressed included healthcare (21.25 per cent (17) of the respondents), skill training (21.25 per cent (17) of the respondents) and education. A school fee is offered to urban refugee students in secondary schools. Accommodation is not available to most urban refugees, except those with special needs such as those with disabilities and the elderly ones who cannot engage in any meaningful economic activity. The welfare organizations helped address these needs until such a time when the individual had fully settled and was able to survive without any assistance from these organizations. The organizations also helped those, the sick especial those with chronic illness, orphaned and the disabled, who could not do much in fending for their daily survival needs.

This was reiterated by the focused group discussions from where it became evident that necessities were being availed to new refugees by the social welfare organizations. The following verbatim was extracted from the focused group discussions.

“There are several social welfare organizations here, some formed by the refugees themselves to help others who are in distress. These groups support those who have just come until they are well enough to cater for themselves. This could go for up to a year depending on the state of the person. HIAS Social welfare organization in Embakasi offer necessities needs, primarily including food, shelter, healthcare which are received by newcomers for the first few months in the country, the organization also offer education to those willing to go to school. And finally, Banyamulenge urban refugees are given skills in the form of training that would help them sustain their lives.”
(Translated from kinyamulenge)

Source: respondent (2019).

The key informants also shared similar opinions by indicating that the social welfare organizations were instrumental in shaping and supporting the urban Banyamulenge refugees.

“Yes, there are social welfare organizations here supporting the livelihood of urban banyamulenge refugees. These organizations are instrumental in availing the necessities to a refugee until they are set to settle. The organizations further impact skills which include trainings among the refugees to enable them to sustain their lives.”

Source: interviewee (001) 2019

Frequency of support from social welfare

Frequency of support	Frequency	Percent
Once in a month	11	13.8
Twice a month	11	13.8
Once in three months	47	58.8
Other	11	13.8
Total	80	100.0

Source: Researcher, 2019.

The researcher further analyzed the frequency of support from the welfare organizations. The findings were as presented in table 1 above. Majority of the respondents indicated that this

support came once in three months 58.8 per cent (47) of the respondents, after which the refugees could be put under observation to monitor their progress. Once the organizations noted that the individuals could survive on their own, they slowly started withdrawing their support. Other respondents indicated that support came once in a month, twice a month, twice a year, once in a year or when a problem arose and the respondents could not handle it on their own.

“The first few month after arriving in Embakasi I was getting support from social welfare organization monthly, was getting food voucher every end month and this real helped me and many family survive for the first six month in a new society. And after the first few month the support reduced from once in a month to once in three month and because of this slow withdrawer of support made our life difficulty. I had no choice but to start looking for something to do and I was able to start a vending business selling groundnuts on street. The support I get from social welfare once in three month is not enough to sustain me and my family in Embakasi.

Community networking was hence thus played a major role in improving urban refugee livelihoods. The respondents indicated that support groups were present in the area and that they had membership in some of them. Majority confessed of how important these support groups were in improving their livelihood. The support groups identified included *chamaa's*, youth groups and Self- Help Groups (SHGs). The respondents claimed that these groups helped them access employment opportunities. When they came together in these groups, members were able to find information concerning available employment in the community. Some were employed by their fellow urban refugees, especial those with either saloon or tailoring shops. Most women are members of *chamaa's* and claimed to get job opportunities by being members of these groups. The youth were assisted in setting up small business by fellow youth in their respective groups. Others got leads on employment opportunities such as car wash jobs. It is therefore clear that community groups have helped Banyamulenge urban refugees to sustain their livelihood in Embakasi. Respondents affirmed that community networking helped them access employment opportunities as the groups could help them identify suitable job opportunities, created job opportunities, employed people and imparted life-sustaining skills that were effective in improving the livelihood of the refugees

The respondents indicated that there were social welfare organizations in Embakasi central that helped the refugees by providing most of their basic necessities including food, healthcare, skill training, education and accommodation. The welfare organization addressed these needs, especially for newcomers, until the individual had fully settled and was now able to survive without relying on donations from these organizations. Majority of the respondents indicated that this support came once in three months and that it was slowly withdrawn once the organizations noted that the individuals could now survive on their own. Only those with special needs such as the elderly, the disabled and those suffering from chronic illnesses received further support.

The role of community networking

The study found out that social support groups are indeed a reality in the refugee community. Most of the respondents, 73.3 per cent, were not only members of these support groups, but acknowledged the importance of these support groups in their community. Majority of women's enrolled in Chama's support groups and benefited from its business skills training sessions. They were able to get job opportunities through the *chamaa* because members could

share with each other about the job opportunities around them. Those *chamaa* members who were more established offered jobs to newcomers. The youth enrolled in youth groups. These groups helped many youth to set up small businesses in their community through sharing of ideas. They gained hard skills and even got small loans whose repayment terms were quite favorable, typically a couple of months. The youth were also able to share leads on suitable job opportunities and introduced each other to new business opportunities. The respondents also affirmed that the sense of community was very important in the sense that community networking helped newcomers and others to access employment opportunities and job skills.

The study concludes that the community plays a big role in supporting the respondent in their community to ensure their survival.

1.7 Recommendations

The study recommends that the government of Kenya should put in place laws that will help protect the Banyamulenge urban refugees from undue harassment from locals, making them feel more at home as they try to fit into their new society. A policy notice to ensure their safety within Embakasi central sub-county should be effected. This should be enforced in conjunction with the area chief with a view to eradicating harassment and stigma. The study recommends that Banyamulenge urban refugees should make an effort to fit in with the local communities through joint participation in social and economic activities. This will not only promote a sense of togetherness, but will also help them learn more about the local's cultures and increase awareness about new opportunities in the new society. The study recommends that Banyamulenge parents should encourage the youth to further their education. This is because once in Nairobi, most young refugees lose interest in education. The study recommends that Community leaders should encourage young Banyamulenge girls to go to school so as to secure a brighter future, as opposed to getting married at a tender age.

Social welfare programs

The study recommends that social welfare organizations, in partnership with the Kenyan government, provide the Banyamulenge urban refugees with the necessary assistance to help cushion them from the harsh economic reality that they face once they arrive. Social welfare organizations, together with Kenyan government, should strive to increase awareness to this urban refugee on the available education opportunities in Kenya. Free or subsidized education would be a good starting point. The study further recommends that welfare organizations improve their health care services that they currently provide to the Banyamulenge urban refugees. Social welfare staffs should do their best to ensure that urban refugees are empowered with key economic tips and skills. They, social welfare organizations, should provide counseling services to those urban refugees who may have been traumatized as a result of the violence they witnessed while still in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The study found out that lack of information hindered Banyamulenge urban refugees' access to projects and tertiary training from social welfare organizations. These training forums should target all urban Banyamulenge refugees with a view to ensuring that a fairly large number of them are able to participate in the projects and training. In conclusion, the researcher suggested further areas of study. These included:

- Other areas of similar research on socio-economic status and survival strategies among Banyamulenge urban refugees who settled in other counties in Kenya.

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