

# Livelihood coping strategies for refugees - A case of the Great Lakes Community in Nairobi Kenya.

Aseyo R.E and Ochieng B.M  
Great Lakes University of Kisumu.  
\*evaaseyo@yahoo.com

## Abstract

Kenya hosts more than 271,473 of these refugees .18% live in urban areas compared with about 26% in camps while the rest are dispersed in rural areas. Nairobi is home to at least 40,000 refugees.

The objective of the study was to determine factors influencing livelihood coping strategies of refugees in Nairobi. The study was descriptive, cross sectional study that adopted both quantitative and qualitative methods. A total of 240 refugees were interviewed. They were involved in craft making, tailoring, Groceries, farming, commercial sex work and artisanship as forms of IGAs.

(68%) of refugees said that the place of residence influenced their way of life. Refugees with secondary education were more likely to be independent, those with tertiary education were likely to be dependent these was statistically significant ( $p=0.003$ ).

Refugees are engaged in income activities that are not officially recognized. The contribution of urban refugees to the Kenyan economy could highlight the positive contribution of refugees to the Kenyan economy.

## 1.1 Introduction

Globally there are about 11.4 million refugees outside their countries and 26 million others displaced internally by conflict or persecution at the end of 2007 (UNHCR, 2008). The global number of people affected by conflicts increased from 24.4 to 26 million, with UNHCR providing protection or assistance either directly or indirectly to 13.7 million. By the end of 2007, there were an estimated 11.4 million refugees under UNHCR responsibility, including some 1.7 million people in refugee-like situations.

Dix (2008) observes that Kenya has been receiving refugees since 1970, with mass migration since 1990. Camp populations were about 230,000 as per August 2006. Kenya currently hosts more than 271,473 of these refugees (RCK, 2008). Furthermore it is estimated that about 18 per cent of refugees live in urban areas compared with about 26 per cent in camps while the rest are dispersed in rural areas or other locations. UNHCR (2008) report observes that Nairobi is home to at least 40,000 refugees. The refugees come from various neighboring countries, including Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Rwanda and Burundi. Refugees continue streaming into the urban areas even as policies by the host governments and other international agencies continue putting restrictions on their movement. More so, refugees in Nairobi have been innovative and energetic in establishing livelihood coping strategies despite numerous barriers to their success. They have established community structures in Nairobi, and many see themselves remaining in Nairobi for the undefined future (Dix, 2008).

## 1.2 Study Objectives

### 1.2.1 Broad Objective

To determine factors influencing livelihood coping strategies of refugees in Nairobi

### 1.2.2 Specific objectives

To identify the demographic factors influencing livelihood coping strategies

To describe economic factors that influenced livelihood coping strategies

To determine the influence of socio-cultural factors on the livelihood coping strategies

## 2.1 Methodology

### 2.3 Study Design

This study was a descriptive, cross sectional study that adopted both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Quantitative data was captured through the household questionnaires while the qualitative data was captured through the FGDs with the help of an FGD guide and KIIs with the help of a KII guide.

## 2.4 Study Area

The study was carried out in Nairobi which was purposefully selected because it hosts many refugees from the Great Lakes region who were registered members of the Great Lakes Community (RCK, 2008). Six hundred and fourteen households from the Great Lakes Region were registered with the Great Lakes Community and lived in Nairobi.

## 2.5 Study Population

The total population of refugees from the Great Lakes Region who were registered members of the Great Lakes community was 614 households composed of about 3100 individuals.

## 2.6 Sampling by proportion

Sampling by proportion was used to sample households from Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. Number of households' proportion was arrived at by dividing the total number of households from each respective country by the total number of households and multiplying it with the sample size.

Country	Total No of Households	No of household to be selected
Burundi	53	21
DRC	212	83
Rwanda	349	136
<b>Total</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>240</b>

## 3. Results

### 3.1 General characteristics of the respondents

All respondents were from the Great Lakes Region (Rwanda, Congo and Burundi). All had stayed in Nairobi for more than 2 years and were above 20 years of age. Majority were males, unmarried, had secondary education and were able to rent housing made of permanent materials. Most of the respondents supported their livelihoods with earnings from IGAs. More than half of the respondents encountered restrictions in their livelihood coping strategies.

The outcome of the study showed that the majority 208 (86.7%), of the respondents were independent, while the rest, 32 (13.3%), relied on humanitarian assistance to meet their livelihood needs and thus were categorized as dependent. In this study a refugee was categorized as independent if they were able to pay for housing, food, water and clothing without depending on humanitarian assistance. On the other hand, a refugee was categorized as dependent if they were unable to pay for housing, food, water and clothing without depending on humanitarian assistance.

### 3.2 Demographic characteristics

A total of 240 refugees were interviewed and 57% (136) of the refugees were Rwandans while 34% (83) were Congolese and 9% (21) were Burundians. The mean age for the refugees was 36.3 (10.6) years and majority were males (65.4%) and 52.9% were unmarried. Most of the refugees (61.3%) reported having permission to live in the country and 64.4% had stayed for more than 5 years. The size of households was 1 to 3 for 46.9% and 4 – 7 for 38.9% of the refugees.

Whether a refugee was independent or not was associated to the country of origin ( $X^2=5.992$ ,  $p=0.05$ ). According to this study, refugees from Burundi were more likely to be independent while those from DRC were likely to be dependent. There seemed to be almost uniform distribution among the Rwandan refugees in terms of whether they were categorized as independent or dependent. However, the independent and the dependent refugees showed a similar distribution in terms of sex, refugee status and length of stay in Kenya (Table 1).

From the females and males FGDs; sex, refugee status and length of stay in Kenya were not seen to be important in livelihood coping strategies for refugees. Marital status was seen to be important for women as far as security was concerned. A respondent from the females' FGD said: "As a married woman you are respected and men do not disturb you because they know that having a husband gives you emotional and physical security."

### 3.3 Economic Characteristics

A higher proportion of the refugees had secondary level of education (54.2%), lived in rented houses made of permanent materials (97.1%), earned Ksh 1000 and below per person per week (74.7%) and were involved in at

least an IGA (61.5%). Some refugees (6.3%) were involved in more than one IGA. All the refugees that reported involvement in multiple IGAs were independent while those with no IGA were more likely to be dependent. However, there was no association between independent and dependent refugees in terms of the number of IGAs they were involved in. The findings of this study indicated that majority of the refugees were involved in craft making, sewing and *vitenge* business as forms of IGAs. A few refugees were involved in Grocery shops, Agriculture, commercial sex work and *Jua kali* artisanship as forms of IGAs.

A participant in the females FGD said: *there are refugees both men and women who engage in prostitution not for the purpose of having a good time but for the purpose of getting some income to support themselves. But many women who engage in prostitution are not paid well.*"

In addition, 62.9% of the refugees lived in their households with members above 18 years. Among the households that had members of 18 years and above, 50.3% of them were not involved in any IGA while 47.7% were involved in IGAs. Among those involved in IGA, most of them were in sewing (6.3%), hairdressing (4.2%), craft making (3.8%) and tuition (3.8%).

### **3.4 Restrictions in coping strategies**

More than a half (58%) of the refugees reported encountering restrictions in Kenya that affected their coping strategies while 42% did not encounter restrictions. The restrictions were mainly those that deterred them from movement (32.3), selling of items in the market (29.7%) and relating to Kenyans (17.9%). A few refugees encountered restrictions in relating to other refugees (7.4%) and belonging to a social group (12.7%).

From the two FGDs, this study established that movement was a major restriction encountered by refugees in their coping strategies. Refugees feared to move around freely because most of them did not have valid documents that permitted them to live and work in Nairobi. This restricted refugees from moving freely within the city and its environs in case they were asked for identification by the authorities. Moreover from the KII, the study established that restrictions of movement and selling of items in the market were the utmost obstacles encountered by refugees in their livelihood coping strategies

A key informant further observed that even though some refugees are willing to get legal licenses that allow them to operate their IGAs they may not have the proper documents that are required before the licenses are issued. But since the refugees have to continue supporting their livelihoods, they continue with their livelihood coping strategies despite all the restrictions.

### **3.5 Influence of residential area and UNHCR**

Majority of the refugees (68%) said that the place of residence influenced their way of life. The influence was mainly by presenting business opportunities, affordable housing and facilitated community integration. However, majority also mentioned insecurity to be impacting negatively on their way of life. In addition, majority of the refugees (75.4%) reported that UNHCR did not play any role in their livelihood coping strategies. The refugees that reported UNHCR influenced their way of living mentioned that they were under UNHCR protection and some were provided with health care, house rent and temporary jobs by UNHCR.

Education level of the refugees was a factor that was associated with a refugee being categorized as independent or not ( $X^2=14.259$ ), ( $p=0.003$ ). The refugees with no education were almost similar in proportion in both the independent and the dependent groups. However, while those refugees with secondary education were more likely to be independent, the refugees with tertiary education were likely to be dependent. The type of shelter, the income status and the kind of economic activities the refugees got involved in were not influencing factors as to whether a refugee was categorized as independent or dependent. From both the males and females FGDs, the study established that the level of education contributed positively to the livelihood coping strategies. Those refugees who had secondary education were knowledgeable about sustainable coping strategies and were more likely to be independent.

The least number of refugees (3.8%) did not have any formal education, and among the refugees who did not have any education 3.8% were independent while 3.1% were dependent. Majority of the refugees (54.2%) had secondary education and among the refugees who had secondary education, 58.7% of them were independent while 25% were dependent. Income was not an influencing factor as far as a refugee being dependent or independent. Majority (38.5%) of the refugees earned an income of less than 499 per week while the least (25.2%) earned an income of more than 1000 per week. The data further showed that majority (97.1%) of the

refugees lived in rental houses made of permanent materials. Both the FGD and KII revealed that it is difficult for refugees to disclose their level of income.

A respondent from the FGD said: *“It is not easy for a refugee to say what their real income is because as a refugee you live in fear and if you say what your income is you don’t know how other refugees and people who are not refugees will think of you. This can affect your stay here.”*

### **3.6 Socio-cultural characteristics**

#### **3.6.1 Language**

Apart from the refugees having their own mother tongue, all reported knowing another language. While all the refugees reported having an understanding of Kiswahili, 64.2% understood English and 76.3% French. Knowing English or French did not determine whether the coping strategy of a refugee was independent or dependent. From both FGDs, the study established that as a refugee having an understanding of English and French was certainly an added advantage to a refugee but it was not necessarily a factor that influenced whether a refugee was independent or dependent.

#### **3.6.2 Social network for refugees**

A high proportion of refugees (72.5%) reported having friends and relatives in Nairobi with 61.7% getting support from non refugees, 56.3% getting support from fellow refugees and 47.5% getting support from friends and relatives. In all the instances of support from fellow refugees, non-refugees and friends/relatives, the kind of support was mainly social support and also to a large extent support in terms of food and finances (*Figure 1*)

#### **3.6.3 Social relationships for refugees**

A high proportion of the refugees (80.0%) belonged to a social group and the groups were mainly solidarity groups (95%). All those belonging to social groups said that the groups were helpful mainly socially and to a little extent financially. In addition, 80% of the refugees belonged to a religious group while 61.7% did not identify with any ethnic group. The support obtained from the religious group was mainly spiritual support as well as financial and material support. All the refugees belonged to a particular ethnic group and majority (61.7%) did not consider ethnicity to be helpful.

Apart from belonging to a social group, majority of the refugees also belonged to a religious group (80%). A small number (13.8%) of the refugees found belonging and identifying with an ethnic group to be helpful. From both FGDs, refugees belonged to a religious group for the purpose of getting spiritual nourishment. The participants in the FGDs were in agreement that a religious group was one of the places where a refugee felt accepted regardless of their social status in the society.

Support received from fellow refugees and non-refugees was significantly different between the independent and the dependent groups ( $X^2=6.558$ ,  $p=0.010$  and  $X^2=8.868$ ,  $p=0.003$  respectively). The dependent group received support from fellow refugees and non-refugees more than the independent group. Similarly the dependent group were more likely to belong to a social group ( $X^2=4.363$ ,  $p=0.037$ ) and to think that belonging to an ethnic group was helpful ( $X^2=14.626$ ,  $p=0.001$ ) than the independent group (*Table 2*).

A participant in the FGD said: *‘belonging to a social group for a refugee is not for the purpose of getting financial or material assistance but it is just for the purpose of finding a sense of belonging because most refugees come from cultures where group belonging is emphasized.’*

### **3.7 Knowledge Attitude and Practice (KAP) of livelihood coping strategies**

Knowledge on the regulations that affected the refugees was high (57%) according to the findings of the study. 43% of the refugees reported having no knowledge of the regulations that affected them. The refugees said that the regulations affected their movement, associations and were obstacles to their coping strategies. In addition, the regulations determined their livelihood coping strategies. Majority of the refugees (36.4%) were aware that they were supported by IGAs, 10.7% had knowledge of being supported through employment, 18% through remittances. The least (9.3%) were aware that they received support through begging.

From the Key informant interviews it was established that many refugees engaged in IGAs because they are able to work from their own houses or community setting without getting into trouble. Some refugees marketed their items through Kenyans and they gave them a small commission to evade the restrictions of selling items in the market without proper documentation.

### **3.8 Refugees' opinion on coping strategies**

Majority of the refugees (59.6%) thought that IGAs helped in catering for their livelihood but the coping strategies did not support them entirely according to 24.6% of the respondents. Other livelihood opportunities were known to 56.7% of the refugees and 64.6% of the respondents said that they encountered constraints in their coping strategies.

The livelihood strategies catered for the four essentials required by a refugee in the country of asylum. These included housing, food, clothing and water (*Figure 2*).

The dependent refugees were aware of other livelihood opportunities ( $X^2=17.116$ ,  $p=0.001$ ) and reported constraints in their coping strategies ( $X^2=11.504$ ,  $p=0.001$ ) than the independent group. However, both the independent and dependent refugees had knowledge on regulations affecting them ( $X^2=0.020$ ,  $p=0.887$ ).

## **4. Discussion**

### **4.1 Livelihood coping strategies for refugees in Nairobi**

The findings of the study showed that the majority of respondents were independent (86.7%) while the rest (13.3%) relied on humanitarian assistance. The respondents categorized as independent had the ability to pay for housing, food, water and clothing without depending on humanitarian assistance. The respondents categorized as dependent were unable to pay for housing, food, water, and clothing without depending on humanitarian assistance. These findings are in line with Konyndyk's (2005) findings that refugees who received humanitarian assistance over an extended period of time were more likely to be dependent than the refugees who did not receive humanitarian assistance.

Jacobsen (2002) observes that to view urban refugees as passive victims, waiting for relief handouts and bringing nothing but trouble to their host countries, fails to see the multiple ways in which they pursued livelihoods for themselves and in so doing can contribute to the economic vitality of host areas. Konyndyk (2005), further critiques the traditional model of assistance since it undermines the long term goal of asylum which is repatriation because with continued provision of free services even after the emergency phase, refugees' livelihood mechanisms are eroded. In Kenya humanitarian assistance is accorded to the category of refugees who are new arrivals. This emergency assistance may be given for a period of not more than one year. Refugees are then required to move to the refugee camps or to support themselves. This prompts refugees to become more creative in finding livelihood coping strategies which enable them to become self-sustaining in the city and thus resulting to independence among many refugees. These findings are also similar to Jacobsen's (2004) findings about a survey carried out among refugees in Johannesburg which found out that just six percent of the sample had ever stayed in a refugee camp, and only two per cent reported receiving aid from an international organization

### **4.2 Demographic factors**

The first objective of the study was to identify the demographic factors influencing livelihood coping strategies for refugees. The study established that the country of origin and marital status for women influenced livelihood coping strategies for refugees. From the findings, whether a refugee was independent or not was associated to the country of origin ( $p=0.05$ ). Refugees from Burundi were independent while those from DRC were likely to be dependent. There was uniform distribution among Rwandan refugees in terms of whether they were categorized as independent or dependent.

Relatively, Burundi was considered a peaceful country and Burundians were encouraged to repatriate back to their country since 2005. Refugees from Burundi were therefore not likely to receive humanitarian assistance, prompting them to adopt self-sustaining livelihood coping strategies and to become totally independent. Moreover, from the KII, it was established that refugees from Burundi and Rwanda were more likely to be independent because they were, by nature, business-oriented people and they had acquired skills in crafts which were marketable. In addition, Rwandan and Burundian refugees had friends and relatives who were resettled in other countries and sent remittances to them. Moreover, Burundi and Rwanda are considered to have relative peace, hence lack of sympathy from the humanitarian agencies which enhanced their ability to become independent in their survival in Nairobi.

However with the new outbreak of fresh fighting and war in DRC, refugees from DRC were, therefore more likely to receive humanitarian assistance than their counterparts. The study established that there were more acceptances by humanitarian agencies for refugees from DRC because DRC was considered a conflict zone, and humanitarian assistance was more likely to be given to them out of sympathy. From the KIIs, it was further

established that refugees from DRC tended to be good in music, but the music industry was competitive, their bands were small and were in most cases exploited by Kenyans.

The dependent and independent refugees showed a similar distribution in terms of sex, marital status, refugee status and length of stay in Kenya. Livelihood coping strategies require tactic and skill regardless of refugee status, sex or marital status. However, marital status was seen to be important for women because it enabled them to gain security of belonging to a husband and hence securing protection. For men, marital status was not seen as an important factor as far as their livelihood coping strategies were concerned. A KII participant observed that, having a Mandate, RIC, or reject did not make a big difference as far as livelihood coping strategies were concerned:

*“A mandate or RIC does not bring food on the table, pay house rent and dress you; you must work hard in order to earn these livelihood needs. Moreover, even if you have a mandate, you are not given land, a job or a house that could make a difference in your life.”*

These findings agree with the findings by Bailey, (2004) that refugees with legal or illegal status share in common certain constraints owing to the fact they have been uprooted from the lives that they had established in their countries of origin. The act of displacement itself creates challenges impeding their pursuit of livelihoods in their destination countries, even before one looks at the rights and opportunities available to refugees owing to their legal status or lack of it. Furthermore, Kibreab (2003) argues that the single largest barrier to pursuing productive livelihoods is the fact that refugees do not belong to spatially bound communities or state entities. This constraint appears to be equally applicable to legal urban refugees and those without legal status. However the findings in this study and the arguments of Kibreab (2003) contrast other findings by Bailey (2004) that refugees with legal status would have an easier time pursuing livelihoods, because the key rights of employment, identity documents and freedom of movement are guaranteed only to refugees legally in the territory. Legal status is therefore not enough. It does not necessarily provide access to the rights guaranteed in the international treaties on socio-economic opportunities.

Jacobsen (2004) observes that urban refugees are self settled, recognized or not recognized but residing in urban areas. The livelihood problems facing the urban poor are similar regardless of whether they are refugees or not. The difference for urban refugees is that they face additional problems related to their legal status and dislike of foreigners by the host community. This may in turn influence their livelihood coping strategies. Furthermore, in many countries, UNHCR assumes that those who make it to cities can support themselves – otherwise they would have stayed in camps where assistance was available. Because they assume that these irregular refugees have moved voluntarily, authorities generally do not offer them adequate assistance in urban areas.

The mean age of the respondents was 36.3 (10.6) years and majority were males and unmarried. These findings are in agreement with Marc, *et al*, (2001) that younger and more productive refugees are attracted to the cities due to the opportunities assumed to exist within the city and its environs. Majority of the respondents were males (65.4%), this is attributed to the fact that majority of the households are likely to be males even in situations where the women are bread winners. Moreover from the KII, it was established that single households were more likely to be of males than females. It was not common to get a female staying alone in a household.

#### **4.3 Economic Factors**

The second objective of the study was to describe economic factors that influenced livelihood coping strategies for refugees. Majority of the refugees had secondary level of education (54.2%). Education level of the refugee was a factor that was associated with whether a refugee was independent or dependent ( $p=0.003$ ). Refugees with secondary education were likely to be independent because they were more adjustable and more adaptable and used all the available opportunities for income generation than refugees with tertiary education. Refugees with secondary education were simple, more adaptable to small income activities and were capable of exploiting the existing opportunities without being selective. From the KII, it was established that refugees with tertiary education held high positions and titles back in their home countries, hence making it difficult for them to adjust and adapt to less ‘classy’ jobs and income activities.

Jacobsen (2002) notes that IGAs are intended to enable refugees to attain ‘self-sufficiency’ by providing economic inputs and training for livelihood activities like agriculture, service provision e.g. food vending, charcoal making or trade. The idea behind self sufficiency or self-reliance is that most refugees are able to support themselves and should not be forced to depend on food assistance while awaiting their return. However,

Bailey (2004) notes that even in some host cities like Johannesburg, Kampala and Cairo where refugees have legal status to reside in the cities and engage in income activities; the refugees still faced alarming levels of poverty.

Displacement frequently results in the loss of key livelihood assets, such as land, production materials, infrastructure or financial capital. Without access to their regular asset base, including the means for income generation, refugees become dependent on the passive reception of relief and support from the host community. In such a situation, JRS, (2009) argues that IGA is a key programmatic strategy to address the need to find alternative means to make a living in a dignified way: it aims at creating opportunities for the use of resources among displaced people in a meaningful way and with the aim of becoming less dependent, more self-reliant and able to care for the family.

The findings of this study indicated that majority (61.5%) of the refugees were involved in running IGAs. Among the refugees who were involved in IGAs, 6.3% were involved in multiple IGAs. All refugees that reported involvement in multiple IGAs were independent while those with no IGA were more likely to be dependent. These findings were similar with the findings of (JRS, 2009) that IGAs are one way of helping the refugees to help themselves, providing them with a small amount of autonomy and self sufficiency, as well as helping families secure much needed income with which to buy necessary food and pay for their housing. IGAs allow refugees to develop and use their skill, helping to remind them that they are not totally helpless. It is a way of restoring dignity among displaced populations and an important source of self confidence and hope that they can bring about positive change in their own lives.

Like all economic actors, refugees have access to economic, social and cultural resources including household assets, capital, social institutions and networks available through both their local and transnational communities. Refugees often are blocked from or otherwise unable to access the set of resources available to the local community, such as land, legal employment, housing and so on. However, refugees may have their own resources that are not as available to host communities. These include: transnational resources provided by other refugees and co-nationals living abroad, human capital, in the form of education or skills not present in the host community, humanitarian aid and assistance in kind, which are often translated into commodities for trade and their own land back in their home areas, which refugees are sometimes able to access through semi-illicit movement across the border and back (Jacobsen, 2002).

#### ***4.4 Restrictions in coping strategies***

More than half of the refugees reported encountering restrictions in their livelihood coping strategies (58%). The restrictions mentioned deterred them from movement, selling of items in the market and relating to Kenyans. Majority of the respondents (67.9%) said that the place of residence influenced their coping by presenting business opportunities, affordable housing and facilitated community integration. From the FGDs respondents preferred living in residences where there was affordable housing, IGA opportunities and where their security was enhanced. These findings are in agreement with the findings of Sommers (2001) about Burundian refugees in Tanzania whose livelihood activities were illegitimate because their presence was illegal. Refugees living in cities may take great pains to hide their presence from authorities to the extent that minimizing their exposure detracts them from their economic opportunities. The hiding detracts them from their ability to pursue livelihoods.

For majority of the refugees (75.4%), UNHCR did not play any role in their livelihood coping strategies. The refugees that reported UNHCR influenced their way of life mentioned that they were under UNHCR protection; some were provided with health care, house rent and temporary jobs. UNHCR, (2008) notes that in an urban context, where it is necessary for UNHCR to provide direct assistance to refugees, in-kind assistance should normally be avoided. Given the mobility of an urban population and general availability of local market, refugees should be enabled to be self-reliant. Moreover, most mandated refugees in Nairobi hold certificates saying that they do not have the right to access assistance from UNHCR outside the designated camps. Only those with the financial means to support themselves in the city could remain in Nairobi, if they so wish since majority of asylum seekers and refugees are referred directly to the refugee camps (UNHCR, 2007).

From the KIIs the findings showed that UNHCR only offered limited assistance to refugees with valid reasons to stay outside the designated refugee camps. Otherwise all refugees needing assistance were referred to the refugee camps where they could get assistance from UNHCR. This made many refugees living in Nairobi to view UNHCR as not being helpful in their livelihood coping strategies. Moreover, UNHCR worked with GTZ and

other agencies as implementing partners, refugees are therefore likely to assume that they receive support from agencies like GTZ and not UNHCR.

#### 4.5 Socio-cultural factors

The third objective was to determine the influence of socio-cultural factors on the livelihood coping strategies. All refugees reported having an understanding of Kiswahili; in addition, 64.2% understood English while 76.3% understood French. However, knowing English and French did not determine whether a refugee was independent or not. From the FGDs, it was established that knowing the common language spoken within a community was essential for survival. The findings showed that all respondents were in a position of speaking and understanding Kiswahili which is commonly spoken in Nairobi. These findings agreed with the findings of Macchiavello (2003) about a study in Kampala: the refugees in Kampala who did not speak English felt that language barrier directly affected their chances of working in Kampala.

Even though speaking and understanding English and French was an added advantage, it did not necessarily determine whether a respondent was independent or dependent. Respondents who spoke English and French could find tuition and interpretation jobs as their coping strategies while the others were involved in different income activities as their coping strategies. Most (61.7%) of the refugees received support from non refugees and fellow refugees (56.3%), while 47.5% received support from friends and relatives. In all the instances of support from fellow refugees, non-refugees and friends/relatives, the kind of support was mainly social support. From the FGDs and KIIs it was established that social support was not just an end in itself; rather there were more benefits derived from the social support received. Livelihoods were supported by providing loans, enhancing confidence, and assistance during sickness and funerals.

A high (80.0%) proportion of the refugees belonged to social groups. Among the refugees who belonged to a social group 95% of them belonged to a solidarity group. From the KIIs, the study established that refugees from the Great Lakes region have a horizontal leadership structure as opposed to the hierarchical leadership structure. Group belonging was therefore likely to be strong among the refugees from Burundi, DRC and Rwanda since they team up in groups that trust each other. These findings complement Chambers' (2003) findings that people seek to maintain and extend personal relationships. Moreover, the findings compare with findings by Banki (2004) that social factors played a role in refugee integration in Nepal.

However the findings from this study contrasted with Banki (2004)'s findings that even though Bhutanese refugees are ethnically, linguistically and religiously similar to the Nepalese, their levels of integration are low. The Tibetans, who are socially distinct from the Nepalese, are freely integrated. Moreover, the findings of Kinyeki (2006) about a study carried out on survival strategies among urban refugees showed that Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees kept to themselves, making their presence to be unnoticed.

From the FGD one participant said: *"a solidarity group can be equated to a small Christian community or a family, in this group a refugee is well known and trusted and through this group a refugee who wishes can receive a loan that is paid without any interest. Refugees who don't get humanitarian assistance depend on this social support whereby they are given money or material things that have to help them to help themselves."*

The findings showed that the dependent group received support from fellow refugees and non refugees more than the independent group ( $p=0.010$  and  $p=0.003$ ). Similarly the dependent group was more likely to belong to a social group ( $p=0.037$ ) and to think that belonging to an ethnic group was helpful ( $p=0.001$ ) than the independent group. These findings were in line with the KII findings that most refugees are in Nairobi because of past and present ethnic tensions and wars; ethnicity therefore, created a lot of tension for majority of the respondents and hence they did not find it necessary to belong to an ethnic group.

However, independent refugees did not find ethnicity helpful because ethnicity had caused them past pain and they preferred coping through finding activities and general groups like the solidarity group that supported them rather than depending on their ethnic groups for livelihood support. From the KIIs, it was established that refugees from the Great Lakes preferred working in small groups where they had built trust and established relationships than identifying with their ethnic groups which created suspicion and tension. These findings contrast with Banki (2004)'s findings on a study carried out on Somali refugees. According to the findings the Somalis, who shared a common ethnicity, language, religion, and history of trade routes with those Somalis who arrived earlier on the Kenyan boarder had been more successful at integrating.

#### **4.6 Knowledge Attitude Practice (KAP) of livelihood coping strategies**

Majority of the refugees were aware that IGAs played a major role in their livelihood coping strategies. IGAs were seen to be important and contributed to their survival in Nairobi. In an FGD a respondent said:

*“IGAs are important to a refugee because from IGAs as long as you have established your customers you can count your earning each day and bring food on the table and even save for your rent on daily basis.”*

The KII revealed that IGAs are a major way of earning daily income for the refugees. Many refugees acquired skills from their home countries, like tailoring and craft making, since these skills were common practices within their home communities. In Nairobi there is market for products made by the refugees prompting many refugees to use their inherent talents by engaging in activities like craft making and sewing.

The dependent refugees were more likely to know of other livelihood opportunities and to report constraints in their coping than the independent group. From the KIIs it was established that daily activities were the ones that presented opportunities. If one was used to getting humanitarian assistance then they were likely to establish what other humanitarian opportunities existed. The independent refugees knew opportunities of enhancing independence, like where to find a new market for their items or where to get a loan to enhance their IGA. Refugees therefore had knowledge of opportunities depending on whether their livelihood coping strategies were dependent or independent.

Even though most of the refugees (59%) reported having knowledge of the regulations that affected them, there was no association between the knowledge and the status of their coping strategies. These findings imply that even though most refugees have knowledge of restrictions affecting them, they continue striving to survive and to integrate. These findings contradict Banki (2004)'s findings that Pakistan authorities were reluctant to furnish the urban refugee population with the same freedom as it had the rural population, and for these newer refugees, integration proved more difficult.

#### **5.1 Conclusion**

According to this study, majority of the refugees from the Great Lakes Community in Nairobi are independent. Group belonging was an important factor that influenced livelihood coping strategies for refugees. Majority of the refugees were aware of the regulations that affected them and deterred their livelihood coping strategies. IGAs were an important way of supporting refugees in their livelihood requirements. The dependent refugees had knowledge of livelihood opportunities that enhanced dependence while the independent refugees had knowledge of livelihood opportunities that enhanced independence.

#### **5.2 Recommendations**

##### **5.2.1 Recommendation to UNHCR**

UNHCR, together with the Department for Refugee Affairs should come up with strategies that support sustainable livelihood coping strategies for refugees who have resolved to live in Nairobi.

##### **5.2.2 Recommendations to refugee agencies**

Majority of the refugees are independent; humanitarian assistance should, therefore, strictly be provided to the refugees who qualify for such relief assistance like the new arrivals for a limited period of time.

Income generation is a key strategy of supporting refugees and displaced people. Refugee agencies should continue supporting refugees to acquire means of supporting their livelihoods through income generation by providing micro credit facilities, grants, vocational training and business training.

#### **References.**

- Bailey, S. (2004). *Is legal Status Enough? Legal Status and Livelihoods Obstacles for Urban Refugees*. Thesis – Masters of Law and Diplomacy. The Fletcher School, Boston
- Banki S. (2004). *Refugee Integration in the Intermediate Term: A study of Nepal, Pakistan and Kenya*. Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Boston
- Chambers, R. (2003). *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last*. ITDG Publishing, Southampton Row, London
- Dix, S. (2008). *Urbanization and the Social Protection of Refugees in Nairobi*. HPN, Nairobi, Kenya
- Jacobsen, K. (2002). *Supporting Displaced Livelihoods: the Economic Impact of Protracted Conflict and Displacement, and Lessons Learned from Four Micro Enterprise Interventions*, November 2002

JRS (Jesuit Refugee Service). (2009). Income Generating Activities – Some Examples of JRS Income Generating Programmes, JRS, Rome Italy.

Kibreab G. (2003). Displacement, Host Government’s Policies and Constraints on the Construction of Sustainable Livelihoods. Blackwell Publishing Limited, Oxford, USA

Kinyeki, J. M. (2006). Survival Strategies Among Urban Refugees in Nairobi, University of Nairobi, Kenya

Konyndyk, J. (2005). Towards a New Model for Post-Emergency Refugee Assistance. Humanitarian Exchange Magazine, Commissioned and published by the Humanitarian Practice Network

Macchiavelo, M. (2003). Forced Migrants as an Under-utilized Asset: Refugee Skills, Livelihoods, and Achievements in Kampala, Uganda. New Issues in Refugee Research, Working Paper no 95, UNHCR, Geneva, 2003

Marc, V. and Borgitte, S. (2001). Caught Between Borders, Response Strategies of the Internally Displaced, Pluto Press, London

RCK (Refugee Consortium of Kenya), (2008). Enhancing the Protection of Refugee Women in Nairobi, RCK, Nairobi

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). (1982). Handbook for Emergencies, Geneva

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). (2007) Information for Refugees and Asylum-Seekers in Nairobi, UNHCR, Nairobi

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). (2007). Protracted Displacement and Remittances: The view from Eastleigh, Nairobi, Research Paper No. 143, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford, United Kingdom

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). (2008). Policy on Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban areas, Geneva.

**List of Tables and figures**

**Table 1: Association of demographic characteristics and status of coping strategies**

Demographic Characteristics		Independent n (%)	Dependent n (%)	$\chi^2$	P
<b>Country</b>	Burundi	30 (14.4)	0 (0.0)	5.992	0.05
	DRC	70 (33.7)	15 (46.9)		
	Rwanda	108 (51.9)	17 (53.1)		
<b>Sex</b>	Male	135 (64.9)	22 (68.8)	0.181	0.67
	Female	73 (35.1)	10 (31.7)		
<b>Marital status</b>	Married	99 (47.6)	14 (43.8)	0.165	0.685
	Not married	109 (52.4)	18 (56.3)		
<b>Refugee status</b>	Permitted	126 (60.9)	21 (65.6)	0.379	0.827
	Not permitted	34 (16.4)	4 (12.5)		
	Appointment	47 (22.7)	7 (21.9)		
<b>Length of stay in Kenya</b>	<=5 years	72 (35.8)	11 (34.4)	0.007	0.934
	>5 years	133 (64.9)	21 (65.6)		

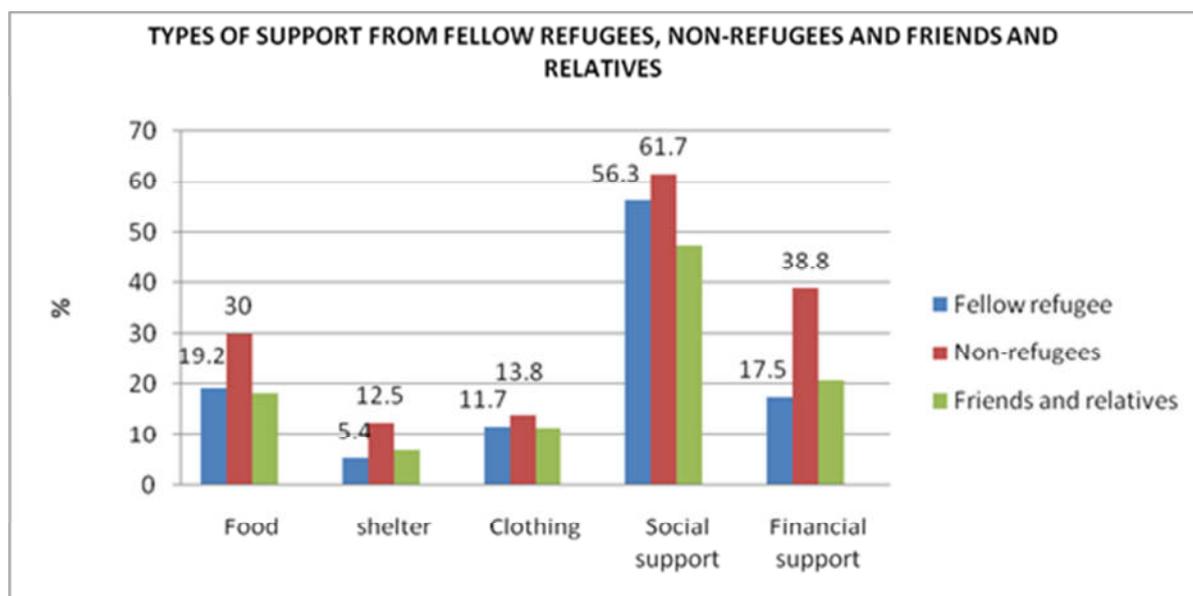


Figure 1: Type of support from fellow refugees, non-refugees and friends/relatives

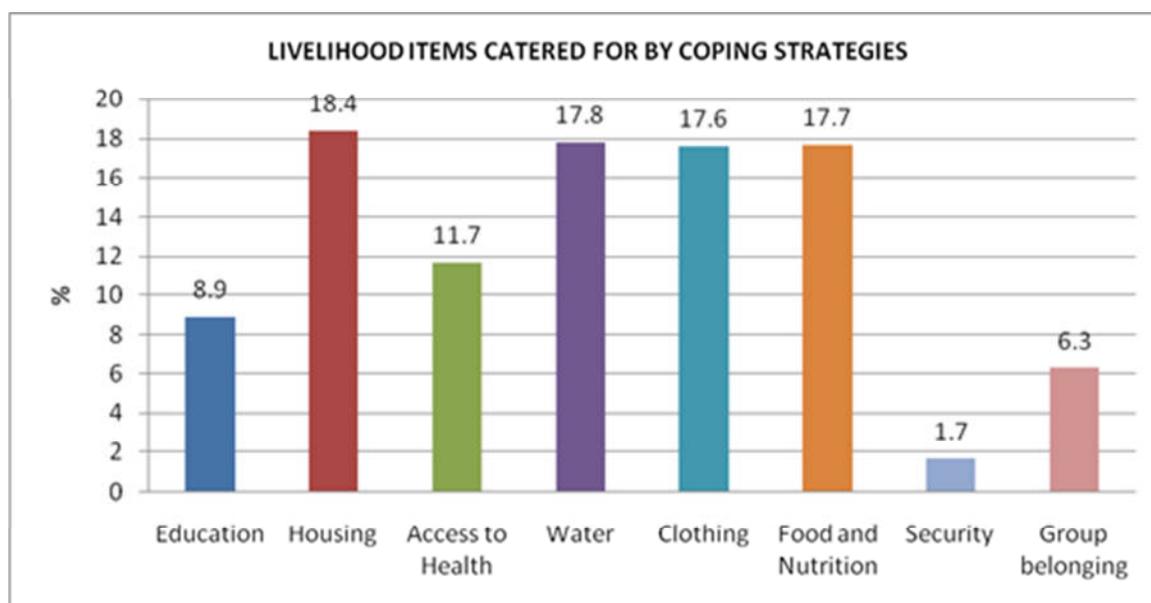


Figure 2: Livelihood items catered for by coping strategies

This academic article was published by The International Institute for Science, Technology and Education (IISTE). The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open Access Publishing service based in the U.S. and Europe. The aim of the institute is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the publisher can be found in the IISTE's homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

## CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

The IISTE is currently hosting more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals and collaborating with academic institutions around the world. There's no deadline for submission. **Prospective authors of IISTE journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> The IISTE editorial team promises to review and publish all the qualified submissions in a **fast** manner. All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Printed version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

## MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

Recent conferences: <http://www.iiste.org/conference/>

## IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

