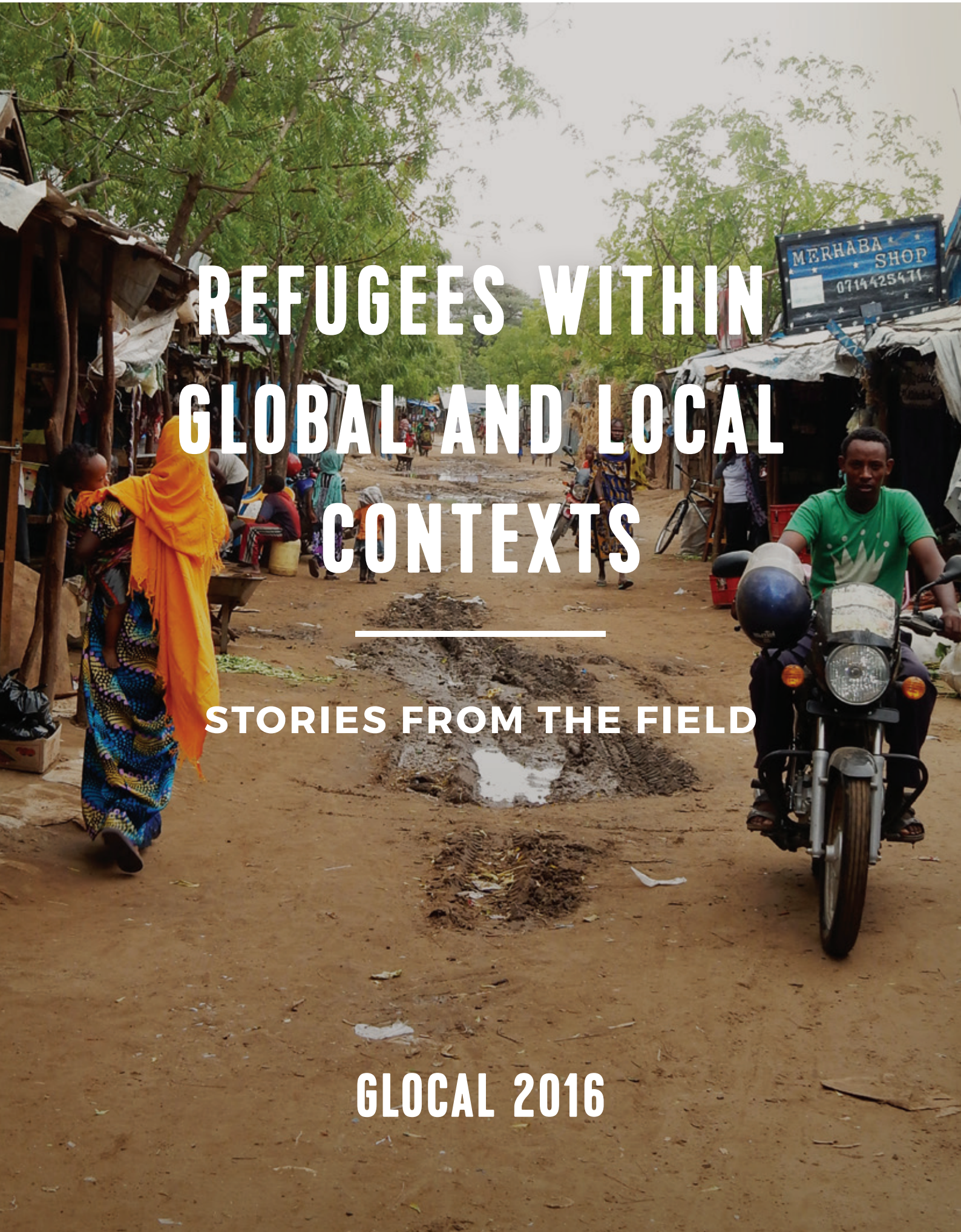

REFUGEES WITHIN GLOBAL AND LOCAL CONTEXTS

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

GLOCAL 2016

REFUGEES WITHIN GLOBAL AND LOCAL CONTEXTS

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CONTENT

REFUGEES FROM A GLOCAL PERSPECTIVE

Prof. Guy Harpaz,
Academic Head of The Glocal Community-Development Studies Program

In recent years the world has witnessed a wave, unprecedented since the end of the Second World War, of forced migration. This phenomenon can be examined through the prisms of migration, immigration, refugee law, human rights and international economic law. It can also be conceptualized as a challenge for international development, and particularly for community development.

In response to this challenge, Glocal has focused this year on issues of refugees and immigration. Throughout the academic year, the program conducted a research workshop with refugees in South Tel Aviv, offered a course on demographic changes and initiated a seminar hosting academics and practitioners from the field. Furthermore, we are hosting an event discussing long-term perspective upon refugees and will hope to send various students to intern in refugees communities over the fall semester, as a part of the Glocal academic program. As this magazine reflects, many of our students are gaining meaningful work experience in assisting refugee communities, in Israel and elsewhere.

Israel, like numerous developed countries, has in recent years faced various challenges posed by migrants and refugees (who have arrived mainly from Eritrea and Sudan). Yet the Israeli-Jewish experience is unique in certain respects: Numerous instances of forced migration are recorded in Jewish history. Six million Jews perished in the Holocaust, many of them after displacement from their homes, including those who died on forced marches. Israel defines itself as a country that absorbs immigrants but such commitment is reserved constitutionally only for Jews. Israel is the only country in the world that borders the landmass of an African country (Egypt), and the influx of refugees creates special security issues. In addition, issues pertaining to refugees are highly sensitive in Israel's discourse because of the Palestine refugee problem.

Jewish historical experience, in particular the Holocaust, might have caused Israel to pursue a benevolent approach towards refugees. Indeed, I am of the opinion that the State of Israel is under a special moral obligation to tackle the roots of the problem (e.g., by refraining from selling weapons to be employed in areas of conflict) and its symptoms (alleviating the hardship of those victims of internal conflicts and of human rights abuses and persecution). Regrettably, the State of Israel has too often chosen a different path. The Israeli parliament adopted harsh legislation (held by the Israeli Supreme Court to be unconstitutional and hence illegal), the Israeli executive adopted aggressive measures against refugees and some Members of Parliament employed some of the worst racist and defamatory language towards asylum seekers and work immigrants.

But many other Israelis have chosen not to be swept up by these racist and inhuman actions. As the Director of Glocal, and as one whose grandparents fled Europe after the First World War and on the eve of the Second World War, I take special pride in learning about those Glocal students who have joined the efforts to alleviate some of the hardships of refugees in Africa and Israel. The experiences of these students, some of which are expressed in this issue, are moving and thought-provoking.

Glocal was established six years ago. The initiative was a bottom-to-top one, initiated by international development activists, including Rabbi Micha Odenheimer of Tevel b'Tzedek (literally: repair of the world). I truly believe that the work of Glocal students, and particularly those committed to assisting communities of refugees, serves the very vision of the founders of Glocal. Our title "Glocal" embraces the twin concepts of global and local work, and our international students working collectively and individually, under the auspices of an international program, to tackle an international challenge that manifests itself both internationally and domestically, are true to Glocal's title and core vision.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Liel Maghen

Throughout History, wars, persecution and environmental disasters have forced people to flee their homes and seek refuge and safety elsewhere. In fact, mass immigration resulting from wars is one of the enduring components of human civilization. Over the centuries, waves of immigration have determined the history of continents and affected almost every modern country. This is especially evident here in Israel, which was established originally as a refuge for Jews fleeing the pogroms in Eastern Europe in the nineteenth century, the Holocaust throughout the 1930s and 1940s, and eventually even the persecution practiced in Arab and Muslim countries in the second half of the twentieth century.

However, despite these historical trends, refugees are often considered a local and contemporary matter. Even today, when the number of refugees worldwide reached 60 million, host countries commonly introduce policies relevant to their own economic and political realities without sufficient cooperation on a wider, international scale. These policies show a tendency to see refugees as temporary immigrants who deserve short-term solutions, including the construction of camps and detention centers, while enduring integration is routinely thought of as problematic to the national agenda.

Yet, as worldwide displacement has now reached the highest level ever recorded, it is necessary to discuss the phenomenon of refugees in a global and long-term perspective. As the Israeli story tells us, long term integration of refugees can lead countries to develop and even to flourish. Yes, besides the human morality of accepting refugees, refugees also have skills, experiences and aspirations. Moreover, they are able to benefit their host countries and support themselves, at least until they are able to return home or become legally recognized citizens. As can be seen from past examples, when opportunities for integration were offered, various refugees became key figures in their host countries and culture. It would be hard to imagine our world without the remarkable work of Sigmund Freund and Albert Einstein, who were both granted asylum in the US after escaping Nazi Germany, our popular culture without Freddie Mercury, who fled Zanzibar with his family or even the modern technology without Steve Jobs, who was a descendant of a Syrian refugee.

The 2016 issue of Glocal Magazine series is Glocal's modest attempt to draw connections between different refugee communities from around the world in order to illuminate the story of refugees in global and long-term perspectives. The articles that follow begin with the life journey of a Congolese refugee, Sylvain Ruhamya, which emphasizes the importance of offering opportunities to this community. Secondly, we present articles by two development practitioners, Inbal Nachum and Abigail Hurwitz, who discuss the permanency of Congolese refugee camps both in Kenya and Uganda. Following these, Anne-Sophie Cardinal presents key phenomena in the mental health of the most vulnerable groups among refugees, the elderly and women. In the second part of the magazine, Or Mor and Estefania Brasil write about initiatives taken by refugees and members of Israel's civil society to support African asylum-seekers in the country, while Ahmed Yasin discusses the story of third-generation refugees in the West Bank. This issue closes with Nehara Mor's article on the historical lessons Canada has learned from its experience in providing asylum and how it shapes present policies.

This is only our modest endeavor to discuss the global phenomenon of refugees in a wider perspective. Such perspective can present past lessons through illuminating the best practices and successful stories. As I truly believe such discourse can lead to a new perspective towards refugees, I can only hope that similar efforts will follow. But for now, I hope you will enjoy your reading.

Kenya /

A CONGOLESE REFUGEE CHANGES HIS DESTINY

by Sylvain Ruhamya

I believe that I will still get chance to return to my home country, the Democratic Republic of Congo. It has been almost a decade since I left after being persecuted for human rights activism. Back then, I had just joined a law firm and was happy to be closer to my dream of becoming a well-established advocate focusing on civil and human rights. As part of my work, I was elected chairman of the commission responsible for the electoral process. Thus, during the presidential campaign, various politicians tried to persuade me to support them, but when I refused, I was arrested several times to prevent me from monitoring violations. Eventually, this is why I was tortured and, in the end, was almost killed by the hands of my persecutors. In fact, I was left on the shores of Lake Kivu as my persecutors thought I was already dead. The next day, I found myself in the hospital without knowing how I got there, and later I managed to escape with the assistance of local Catholic priests.

This happened in 2006, but I still remember how when I arrived in Tanzania and later to Kenya, everything was strange to me: the culture, the people, the spoken language, and even the weather. Immediately, when I arrived to Kenya, I was taken to Kakuma Refugee Camp, a place where no locals would choose to live. It is an extremely hot and dry place, well known for the local "fauna" of scorpions and snakes, and the prevalent diseases of malaria and diarrhea which are worsened by poor infrastructure and health facilities. Without doubt, it was difficult to live in those conditions alone, far from my family and friends. Many times, it seemed like we are put to a test: if we persevere in such conditions, we prove our status as refugees, and if not, state authorities assume we probably have a better place to go, to and thus we do not deserve the asylum. Personally, I can say that if I had somewhere else to go, I would not spend even a night in the camp, but unfortunately, I spent almost eight years there before I had the option to leave.

PICTURE BY SYLVAIN RUHAMYA

The camp has neither a physical or economic infrastructure. Thus, employment is low and often refugees become the cheap labor at the same level as uneducated locals. Another option for employment is offered by international organizations in exchange for basic supplies. For example, we had the option of working in monitoring participation and attendance in high schools, but in exchange for receiving hygiene basics like soap instead of a regular salary.

For me, it was painful to understand that, after everything I have done to receive my diploma, I needed to start from scratch, as my refugee's status did not allow me to practice law in Kenya. Therefore, it was clear that I did not have a full control over my destiny, but just needed to take advantage of small opportunities that may come in my way. One of these opportunities was returning to school. At first, I got the chance to learn English through "Windle Trust Kenya" and later, the Jesuit Refugee Services offered me to study online via Regis University. Through this decision, I managed to start a new chapter in my life.

The ability to speak a new language – English, helped me to integrate into the Kenyan society more quickly. I could now offer my skills to Kenyans as an interpreter, and be accepted among elites around the camp. Moreover, I even became the teacher of Congolese French to some managers and high personnel in the camp who were in need of a second international language. Luckily, or even with the help of God, some of my "students" were promoted and acknowledged my contribution to adding French to their primary skills.

In these extreme conditions, sometimes the refugees managed to become creative. In this context, I came up with the idea of starting an English program, which accommodated refugees of all levels. With this program, I was able to improve the lives of many refugees and even to show an example of the impact of social entrepreneurship on the local community. Eventually, one of my students became the founder of "Happy for Life", a charity network dealing with children's rights and promoting quality education for Kenyan children living in the slums and others became more socially involved as well.

This work enabled me to receive my scholarship to study at Glocal program in the Hebrew University and basically, to offer me a way out of the camp. However, I found my way back earlier than I thought. As a part of the Glocal program, I needed to look for potential internship placements for accomplishing my degree. When I started to look for

internship opportunities, I was driven to choose Kenya specifically, as I wished to express my gratitude towards the asylum I was granted there for eight good years.

Finally, in September 2015 I returned to Kenya, this time not for seeking asylum, but as a development practitioner. My work was located at "Homabay" and it focused in youth and women's empowerment in an area which is considered one of the most affected by HIV/AIDS. Throughout my work, while I was dedicating my whole time to support local children at risk, I shared my story with many, and it became an example of the different destinies that refugees may have if they would be offered by the right opportunities. I wish that more people around the world would understand the potential of refugees. I truly hope that the awareness about successful migration and refugees will rise and that the prejudices about this population will be eradicated.

Before I conclude, I want to remind us of the famous Roman phrase: "Today is me, tomorrow it may be you". This phrase is highly important when examining the contemporary origins of refugees. If we will look at my country for example, Congo (previously known as Zaire), was a stable country in 1990s and it hosted thousands of refugees from Burundi and Rwanda after the 1994 genocide. Unfortunately, back then, Zairians perceived the refugees as beggars and the local government did not introduce any policies for supporting this population. In the long run, the phenomenon of orphans and abandoned children growing up and becoming gang members, armed robbers and local militias became one of the main causes of insecurity in Congo today.

When looking at this case, there are several important lessons that should be illuminated. First, no one chooses to be a refugee. It is an imposed condition which results from a local danger. I can say from my personal experience that no one hates his home, but he only truly misses it when he is not allowed to return. As the refugees make the greatest sacrifice on their way to find a refuge, they need to be supported and not pushed back to return to their countries.

More importantly, refugees have a great potential and should not be seen only as a burden. Often, they leave their countries when they are already certified lawyers, doctors, teachers, journalists or businessmen that just wait for the option to execute their skills. I can promise you that a refugee who is given an equal opportunity can do well and contribute to the well-being of his new country at least as much as a local can. Furthermore, their life journeys can make them more energetic, dedicated and creative in overcoming obstacles. I am convinced that the struggle I went through became the motivation for my current dedication to fighting atrocities, violence and corruption around the world.

Lastly, refugees are not the cause of the problem, but rather the victims of the ongoing instability and violence in their home countries. Developed countries may punish them, incarcerate them, or despise them, but they will continue to arrive as long as they are in danger. The developed world must confront the root cause of the refugee crisis instead of punishing the victims who survived the atrocities.

PICTURE BY SYLVAIN RUHAMYA


PICTURE BY ABIGAIL HURWITZ

Kenya /

REFUGEES FOR LIFE: THE CASE OF KAKUMA CAMP

by Inbal Nachum

On July 28th, 2014, I arrived at Kakuma refugee camp to start my internship with IsraAID. I knew very little about the camp except that it housed 180,000 refugees; that it was located in the desert in North West Kenya; and that it had harsh weather conditions. I did not even truly know what my position would be, a natural state for an intern. After exploring a few options, I was assigned the position of the organization's Programs Coordinator, having different levels of involvement in all activities, as well as initiating an educational program that connects eligible refugees to online tertiary education.

IsraAID (The Israel Forum for International Humanitarian Aid) is an Israel-based humanitarian organization that responds to emergencies all over the world with targeted help. Kakuma camp was established in 1992, and IsraAID began their work there in 2012. IsraAID implemented four programs during my stay: a Psychosocial Training of Trainers (ToT) for teachers in the camp to identify and deal with psychosocial issues in their learners; a Water and Sanitation ToT which targets mainly youth from the host community; a Doctors Program, designed to connect volunteer doctors from Israel to the two hospitals in the area, and the Online Education Program. During my time in Kakuma, I learned many things that I do not believe can be taught in a classroom. My internship was unique in the sense that it is not a place, population or work environment that one might come across by chance, without aiming specifically for it. In spite of reading about the subject during my coursework and in preparation for my internship, the reality was far more complicated than I anticipated, and in different ways than one might think.

In some areas, my expectations of the camp were correct, such as poor conditions and infrastructure. However, the level of commerce in the camp and the strong relationship the camp's residents had with the host community, for example, were new and surprising to me.

What struck me most when working in Kakuma, a camp twenty-three years old, was how many of the refugees know only this state of instability. Born after their family arrived in the camp or shortly before, some of the camp's residents have never lived anywhere else. They are considered citizens of their home countries and identify as such, whether because of their family ties, or because they hold no other citizenship. However, they have either never actually lived in their country of origin, or left when they were too young to remember, and many of them are now adults.

After working in the camp for some time, it is easier to spot those who have been born there, or came as infants. They seem to have a better ability to handle life in the camp and suffer less from the psychological issues that usually burden a refugee's mind. It is not to say that their lives are any easier, but having not experienced persecution first hand, they adapted to the life in the camp more easily.

As practitioners, we must ask ourselves, how does this permanence affect their identity, mental peace, and ability to plan their lives? When people grow up in a system where they are dependent on NGOs, what are their chances of leading an independent life? How does this affect their chances of being resettled? Even if they had a choice, would it be in their best interest to leave a place that, although difficult and holds many challenges, is familiar and has been their home their entire lives?

It is important to note that most of these refugees do not wish to stay in Kakuma. They have not built their lives and families there out of choice, but simply because they have nowhere else to go. They came from countries that suffer a continuing war and persecution, and were never presented with the option of being citizens of any other country.

This observation of how a long-term stay in refugee camps affects refugees' mentality is important now more than ever. We are currently dealing with the most extensive refugee crisis since World War II, with millions of Syrian refugees fleeing to neighboring countries in the Arab World, Europe, and any country that will not turn them away.

The UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) is now working to resettle as many refugees as possible, but this is a solution for only a small percentage. Naturally, with refugees arriving in overwhelming numbers and dying on the shores before reaching their destinations, we cannot yet start to plan and implement long term solutions. However, it is imperative that governments learn from former and continuing crises in such as in Burma or the Democratic Republic of Congo, so that hundreds of thousands of people are not left in an eternal state of dependency on NGOs and foreign governments.

Uganda /

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN THE NAKIVALE REFUGEE CAMP

by Abigail Hurwitz

During the first month of my internship with Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU), I accompanied a team of health professionals who were administering reproductive and sexual health services to the camp residents to Nakivale (pronounced na-chi-va-le), a refugee camp in western Uganda. At the camp they provided HIV testing and cervical cancer screenings, an array of family planning services, and sexuality counseling and education.

The team, which was made up of members from three different RHU branches, was divided into four groups, and each group covered a different area in the camp. Every day, they would go to a health center, pack equipment, and set out to do outreach. Often, this would mean packing 4x4 vehicle with only five seats with six or seven passengers, medication, condoms, test kits, medical supplies, and portable beds for gynecological exams.

When we reached our destination, we would find available mud and straw huts somewhere in the community, and set up shop for the day, a field clinic magically improvised. These huts were typically homes of residents gracious enough loan it to the healthcare team for the day. The conditions they worked in were quite astounding: tiny spaces with no light, constructed out of improvised materials, corrugated metal, with rocks to prevent the roofs from flying off.

I only had a very vague idea of what a refugee camp would actually look like. For example, I was imagining a temporarily erected, dense area full of people, maybe a few thousand refugees camped in a fenced in area, tents, and a camp center that included a NGOs with different projects and activities. I was imagining something that looks very temporary. Instead, I found 100,000 residents in Nakivale a fraction of the current 600,000 refugees and asylum seekers in camps around Uganda, one of the largest recipients of refugees in Africa. The country has traditionally demonstrated a deep sense of regional responsibility and with every fresh regional conflict, such as those in in Rwanda, Sudan, Burundi, Uganda receives an influx of refugees through its borders. The population within the camps fluctuates. Some people go home after some time, and some stay for a decade, two decades, or more.

Nevertheless, it is more accurate to call these camps refugee settlements, many of which are expansive. Nakivale covers an area of land that probably takes about three hours to drive through. It includes different districts or sections where people live and each with its own characteristics. These are like villages, where residents can come and go as they please, sometimes work, they live their lives, have babies, get married, and die.

Refugees in such settlements are meant to be in transit, leaving their home temporarily and seeking refuge where they can. UNHCR provides them with food, and they receive free health services and education (most of the time). So, the majority do not work, and they are living on very little, just enough to get by. That might be sustainable for a few months, but when a year, and sometimes years, go by, this transforms their lives into ones of poverty, exploitation, and social structures that promote extreme patriarchy, and crime. There is no long term plan for these refugees, likely because their situation is not framed as a long term, though it often is.

PICTURE BY ABIGAIL HURWITZ

Life in the camp has profound implications for reproductive health. Many, many children are born in the camps, and there is not enough knowledge about family planning available. A common service the RHU nurses provided was administering or renewing injectable, hormonal birth control implant (commonly known as depo-provera) in women's arms, though this is not always culturally acceptable. For example, one of the women who received that service returned about an hour later, stating her husband beat her and demanding the implant be removed, making me wonder why the husband, a father of three of very little means, would object to that decision.

Another cultural issue that arose was that many people asked to be tested for syphilis though the practitioners normally did not suggest it, only promoting HIV tests. During my time there, only two people received a positive syphilis test (a mother and son), prompting me to inquire why so many residents request a syphilis test, despite low rates. Practitioners answered that there are abundant misconceptions about the disease in the camp and people assume many unrelated symptoms to be an indication of the disease.

Throughout Uganda, and I can only assume other parts of East Africa, there are local and international NGOs working hard to educate the population about family planning and reproductive health and counter misunderstandings and misconceptions, and they are doing a wonderful job. So far, however, this effort has not been extended to the refugee camps. There are organizations attempting to change that, and hopefully there will be a permanent presence of a reproductive health NGO in the camps in the near future.

The core problem with this transient, presumed-temporary but actually permanent population, is that long-term interventions such as education do not seem to fit in naturally in that context. As we can see from the examples above, reproductive health services and sex education are crucial life-saving services which would ideally be part of the refugees' day to day lives.

I am left with many questions regarding the refugee issue in East Africa. The temporary-permanent presence of the refugees makes it hard to know what interventions should be planned for this population. What I do know is that as long as there is not a concentrated effort to make sexual and reproductive health readily available, the more vulnerable members of the refugee camps, women and children, will be the ones who suffer most: women who carry the greatest burden of bearing and raising children in poverty, and children who have few resources, opportunities and unclear futures.

Global /

MENTAL HEALTH AND VULNERABILITY AMONG ELDERLY REFUGEES

by Anne-Sophie Cardinal

Generally speaking, there are still relatively few studies in the field of psychology that focus on elderly populations. This is even truer, when it comes to elderly refugees*, one the most vulnerable groups within refugee populations. While the media landscape increasingly covers the reality of refugees throughout the world, attention is still rarely put on the migration experiences of older refugees. Yet, a study recently found that 65% of older refugees in Lebanon showed symptoms of psychological distress – a rate three times higher than among refugees from other age groups. Unfortunately, the mental health care needs of older refugees often go undetected and untreated.

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS OF REFUGEES IN GENERAL

A "refugee" is a person who is outside the country where he or she was born or lives, and who is unable to return to his or her country of origin for fear of persecution and the impossibility of local protection due to race, religion, nationality, or membership in a particular group or political opinion. The imminent danger that led refugees to flee is often that of war and generalized violence. Refugees from these circumstances are particularly vulnerable to mental health issues because they often experienced pre-migration trauma associated with conflict, in addition to post-migration traumas in the host country. The most common mental health problems experienced by refugees of any age are: post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, sleeping disorders, and survivor guilt. Studies on depression have shown that the rate of prevalence among refugees is four times higher than in the American host population.

HEALTH AND DISABILITY

When it comes to the specific group of elderly refugees, mental health issues are all the more present. One-third of older Syrian refugees in Lebanon indicated that they were feeling anxious (41%), depressed (25%), insecure (24%), and lonely (23%), and that they felt these negative emotions were caused by their inability to do what was expected of a healthy person of their age. Before arriving in the host country, whether in refugee camps or during their displacement, older refugees often have difficulty accessing general humanitarian assistance aimed for refugees, especially when the services or facilities are not suited to their specific needs. When older refugees have a disability or a chronic condition, this reality is even more exacerbated, especially because they had to stop treatment or specialized care during their displacement. Upon arrival in the host country, the primary healthcare needs of older refugees are usually met – with the continuation of treatment for chronic illness or the use of assistive devices. However, psychological distress may remain if coping mechanisms are not developed to deal with their new reality.

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, DEPENDENCY, AND SYMBOLIC LOSSES

The precarious or uncertain status in the temporary or host country, financial problems, loss of social support and cultural ties, adjustment to a new culture, and the language barrier are some of the stressors influencing the risk of depression in elderly refugees. Populations of immigrants often occupy lower socio-economic layers, thereby experiencing what is called the "double burden", meaning they not only are exposed to higher stress levels but also that fewer resources are available or accessible to them in order to address these stress factors. This is particularly troubling, when we know that the wellbeing of seniors especially is positively associated with education and income levels.

In several Western host countries, older refugees arrive mainly via two migration schemes: family reunification or refugee sponsorship. For younger, working-age refugees, the arrival of elderly parents can bring psychological comfort in the possibility of an expanded social network and support system. Yet, for elderly refugees, problems related to past conflicts and separations, as well as a feeling of 'debt' – towards the younger family members they depend on and towards the host country – as well as a loss of autonomy and rejection could emerge from these two migratory paths. Some older refugees may feel as though they burden the younger generation – materially and psychologically – welcoming them in their new country, which can further contribute to greater psychological distress.

Besides various concrete losses (funds, possessions), older refugees also experience "symbolic" losses driven by their migratory experience. Indeed, loved ones left behind, lost or insufficient social support, customs and cultural practices, or the native language they can no longer speak everywhere can all generate a drop in self-esteem, identity confusion, and a lower psychological well-being among older refugees. According to an article published by Casado & Leung in 2002 in the Journal of Gerontological Social Work, these types of "migratory mourning" are a significant predictor of depressive symptoms among elderly migrants.

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC ELEMENTS

The way individuals view their own mental health issue, its causes, and the appropriate treatment towards healing varies from person to person and from culture to culture. In some traditions, suffering is seen as inherent to life and to the human experience, which may result in an attitude of resignation and modesty, and reduced help-seeking behavior. Mental health care practitioners may therefore have difficulty distinguishing behaviors determined by culture from psychopathological behaviors, due to the lack of awareness about the socio-cultural references which could otherwise help them better support older refugees living in psychological distress.

Generally, older refugees do not work or go to school upon arrival in the host country. This can lead to lower opportunities for intercultural exchange with the host community, while younger refugees enjoy more opportunities to be exposed to the culture and language of their host community. In addition, some older refugees have never had a formal education in an academic institution in their country of origin and, as a result, enrolling in language courses can represent a significant challenge. Furthermore, the lower fluency of elderly refugees in the language of their host country, compounded with the reduced opportunities to speak their own native language both contribute to the potential for isolation in older refugees. This is especially true for refugee communities whose population is small in the host country, as they tend to have less access to shared places of cultural expression that would otherwise strengthen their sense of belonging and collective identity.

OLDER REFUGEE WOMEN

An overview of the specific mental health realities of older refugees would not be complete without the gender angle. Indeed, older refugee women are subject to various forms of discrimination:

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ageism and sexism, in addition to the stereotypes and stigma related to being a foreigner. These women are frequently exposed to victimization, often considered merely through the violence they have previously experienced, – either in their country of origin or during their migratory journey – which gives them a label to which they are forever associated in their interactions with others. Moreover, older refugee women may also undergo various forms of ageism, such as isolation and age-associated poverty. In Western societies, where the 'cult of the young and the beautiful' rules, according to a specific standard portrayed in mass media, older refugee women can see their self-esteem affected as a result of these messages from the host society.

"Older refugee women belong to a generation of women who gave (and still give) great attention to family, especially children". Consequently, it is often refugee grandmothers who play the role of guardians and transmitters of the culture of origin to their refugee grandchildren, whose parents are currently concerned with access to employment and comfortable housing, the recognition of their diplomas, and learning the host language rapidly. "Women transmit, create and update knowledge, memory and insertion practices, adaptation and support". Refugee women are often carriers of the role of transmitting knowledge related to family history, the memory of the community, with cultural references and values. This newly acquired role can positively influence their self-esteem and sense of identity.

INHOSPITALITY IN THE HOST COUNTRY AND AGEISM

It is important to note that once the danger has been eliminated, the attitude of the host society plays a leading role in the sense of belonging and integration of refugees. Indeed, although the majority of symptoms are articulated around the traumatic experiences themselves, they are amplified when there is a great level of inhospitality in the host country.

In their home countries, some older individuals were seen as "wise" individuals and played a role as "community advisors" and keepers of valuable knowledge. Upon arrival in the host countries, particularly in Western societies, being confronted with a burst of this deep respect towards elders and a depreciation of their knowledge can definitely cause a certain form of culture shock or distress. Furthermore, the "successful aging" model, – widely valued within Western societies – whereby the elderly must lead an active life full of social interactions, high-energy activities, and impeccable physical health is often far from the common reality of most older individuals. For instance, older refugees who are unable to work or whose situation does not coordinate with this successful aging model can thus be prone to psychological distress.

CONCLUSION

The path of exile amplifies separations, losses, and pain, while at the same time heralding the opportunity for renaissance. Despite the mental health challenges faced by older refugees, giving in to the tendency of victimizing their experience would be a mistake, for a new life can be constructed in the host country and contribute to their psychological well-being. Indeed, many refugees who arrive in old age do find a sense of psychological wellbeing, through the various coping mechanisms of adaptation and integration.

Having fled their native land, older refugees face both pre-migration stressors and post-migration stressors and often the local polarized attitudes about their arrival. Of course, discriminatory attitudes, at both the individual and systemic levels, do not change over the course of only a few years. As a result, anti-ageism campaigns and actions could be beneficial to bring a change of mindset. To better assist older refugees and reduce their risk of maintaining or developing psychological disorders, a "pedagogy of the reality of refugees," including older refugees, could be developed to generate increased tolerance towards their situation. In this way, the more positive aspects of their reality could be highlighted and their needs better met.

*It should be noted that research on refugees and elderly immigrants usually considers individuals 50 years of age and older as "elderly", taking into account the lower life expectancy of the refugees' countries of origin compared to that of host countries.

Israel /

ISRAELIS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS REFUGEES

by Or Mor

With sixty million refugees and displaced persons worldwide, more than in the end of the Second World War, displacement and forced migration have become a major global issue in recent years. Consequently, many individuals and organizations in both high-income and low-income countries have dedicated their efforts to support refugees. Likewise, Israel, which hosts dozens of thousands of African refugees, has become the home of civil society efforts to advance the wellbeing of refugees and to offer assistance in response to their many perils.

The largest floods of refugees to Israel began a decade ago, emanating from a civil war and genocide in Sudan and a harsh dictatorship in Eritrea. The refugees that arrived in Tel-Aviv found their first line of support at the African Refugee Development Center, which was the first non-governmental organization in Israel focusing solely on the development of refugees, and offering shelter upon their arrival. In 2007, ASSAF (the Aid Organization for Refugees in Asylum Seekers in Israel) was born, providing aid and psycho-social support for those who desperately needed it. It was not long before a myriad of other humanitarian organizations, human rights advocates, philanthropic institutions, political groups, social activists and religious congregations joined in to offer their assistance.

Governmental support was lacking, and as a result, civil society had to take on the government's role in supporting the refugees that have arrived at our doors. Government policy was mostly opposed to the absorption of refugees and was generally harsh, creating constant obstacles for those who work with this population. However, this was also one of the main reasons for me to join this struggle. Early on, I decided that I want to concentrate my efforts into giving hope where almost none is offered by the government, particularly in face of deportation and imprisonment. I was first motivated to action by the racism and acts of violence that were perpetrated against refugees in Israel, with blatant incitement coming from dominant public figures in the Israeli political arena. I decided that it was my moral obligation to show the proper hospitality to the foreigners that have come to us for protection. When one knocks on your door in search of asylum, I believe, you should do all that you can in order to offer assistance and protection. My work with refugees started in 2013, when I was offered an internship with ASSAF and started to volunteer with their youth program which provides support to teenage refugees. It was there that I learned that the smallest efforts can have the greatest impact on people's lives. When people lack the elementary support systems, the most basic, positive environments can give much hope.

I was also driven by the belief that there is a need to bring more Israelis to empathize with refugees in order to bring change in the way they are treated by government policy. Thus, I joined a group of activists that started a community initiative whose purpose was reaching out to the Israeli public to tell their stories and I coordinated a program of lectures given by refugees in schools and universities.

Later, I was fortunate to take part in founding the first community center for African refugees in Jerusalem. In establishing the center, we have decided to build a structure that will reflect the cooperation between Israelis and refugees in their efforts to bring about a future of dialogue and coexistence. This was our answer to the bigotry that surrounded us, though more importantly, it was our answer to the lack of hope. It was at the center that I learned that where hope is not provided by the government, it is the people themselves who need to work towards bettering their future. Working on this project for the past year-and-a-half, I witnessed how a community is able to develop itself and create hope just by having a place to gather and learn. The Jerusalem African Community Center is now an NGO that is driven from the bottom up, while plans and decisions are made in constant dialogue with its constituents who have taken a major role in the establishment of the center. I truly believe that this project can become a model for how development should take place.

Over the past few years of my work with asylum seekers, I am often asked why I chose to assist refugees, while there are other communities in Israel that are in need. Living in Israel, one is often told that the poor of our cities take precedence over the poor of other countries. This Jewish tenet that gives precedence to the aid of Jews over non-Jews is often seen as a religious imperative. It dominates the Israeli discourse and questions the very foundations of caring for non-Jews. In my view, this conflict lies at the core of the complicated relationship between Israel and the developing world and is a conflict with which every Israeli development practitioner has to deal with.

My regular answer to such criticism is that I have chosen to work not only with the poorest of my city, but with the poorest of the poor. I do not mean this literally of course. The refugee community in Israel might not be the most disadvantaged economically, and in fact, most refugees are generally able to sustain themselves, and are by no means helpless. Yet, they are still, in my view, the most marginalized community in Israel in terms of their status here. Refugees in Israel have almost no social rights, no access to public healthcare, no official legal status, limited options of work, and limited freedom of movement. This social marginalization is in addition to living in constant fear of deportation and incarceration, while being tormented by the monthly ritual of traveling across the country to wait in long lines in order to renew their temporary visas. The difficult reality of living in Israel with no government support adds to the excruciating burden of unattended traumas of human trafficking, torture, and war. These are the factors that I take into account when I choose to define the refugee community the most marginalized community in Israel, and these are the ones that drive my work.

PICTURE BY HILLEL ASSAF

I have learned in the past few years that beautiful things can be done relying solely on the devotion and work of caring citizens and civil society. I have learned that even more beautiful things can be accomplished by communities working to develop themselves. These lessons bring me to the conclusion that change can only come about through the will of simple and ordinary people, often in defiance of the negligence of their government. I remain hopeful that if the people will lead the way, governments will eventually follow to bring about lasting change.

Israel /

SOUTH TEL AVIV'S PARALLEL ECONOMY

by Estefania Brasil

Israel has been receiving African asylum seekers and migrants since 2006. There are currently around 43,000 African asylum seekers/refugees living in Israel who have fled genocide, tyrannical governments and civil wars. Despite the fact that Israel attended the 1951 Refugee Convention and signed its 1967 Protocol, Israeli government has not codified these treaties as domestic law. Instead, its response towards the refugee situation has been deportation, incarceration in detention centers, or the introduction of policies that prevent the border crossings. Furthermore, as a result of ambiguous criteria for visas, the refugee community is facing difficulties finding a decent work or engaging in legal self-employment all of which results in high levels of poverty.

During my internship at Microfy in the South of Tel Aviv, I had the chance to work with the African refugee and asylum-seeker community, where I noticed an interesting phenomenon, unique to this community. Beyond the general conditions, what caught my attention was the local economic dynamic. Apparently, there is a micro-economy that exclusively supports the needs of its own community, has its own goods and services, and remains separate from the Israeli macro economy.

It is clear that the African refugee community brought a different culture including language, food, clothes, personal care, hobbies, holidays and much more. All these different components are reflected in the products they regularly consume. Therefore, except for the rent (collected by Israeli property owners) the remainder of the household spending occurs within the community. Furthermore, most businesses are strongly supported by and support the community. Successful businesses are able to provide loans and financial support to community members, and the community as a whole supports businesses in their struggles. It became clear to me that there is a parallel economic system within the refugee community.

Economically, this development fits the "Leaky Bucket" theory and the concept of the "Multiplier effect". The multiplier effect refers to the potential impact money circulating in a community can have. When one Shekel, for instance, is earned by a community member, and then spent in a local shop, and later the shop owner spends it in a local hair dresser, the value of this Shekel to the community has increased threefold. The more units of currency circulate in a local economy, the more general wealth it creates, and in South Tel Aviv, it is possible to assume that the demand of the refugee community for their own local goods, and the fact that they mostly use their own community service providers, allows them to generate more income within their community.

This is strongly linked to the "Leaky Bucket" theory and strategy. Briefly, the theory behind Plugging the Leaks explains local economic development; famously presented in 2002 by the New Economics Foundation (NEF). Its main hypothesis is that the problem in low-income communities is not so much about "pouring" money into it. Rather, it is the linkages that investment can make with local firms and local people that determine whether or not local people are, in fact any, better off. This theory utilizes the analogy of a local economy as a leaky bucket. The holes in the bucket are channels in which the money pouring in the economy is leaving it, and does not benefit the community in the long run. For instance, these holes are external service providers who take away their income. When holes and leaks are plugged, i.e. for instance local grocery shops are open instead of an external supermarket chain, this enables the community to keep the resources within.

Socially speaking, it became evident to me that consuming in local shops and restaurants became a social activity, where people join, talk and socialize. It should be noted than that this strategy for community development that developed spontaneously among the refugee community in South Tel Aviv also support the community feel and relations among its members.

The similarities I found between this theory and the local economic system of the refugee community can be summarized this way: i) the prioritization of the community for local enterprises. Local businesses respond to the unmet demand of the community; ii) the local economic activities have strong multiplier effects. The owners of these businesses also spend their money inside the community; iii) The cash flow generates an increase in demand for local goods, accompanied by the opening of new businesses, which in turn, generates new jobs, an increased demand for local goods again, and a local economy is ultimately in an expansionary cycle.

Interestingly, it should be remembered that the strategy for "Plugging the Leaks" has been advocated to be taken by practitioners, local governments and civil society when working with marginalized communities. However, the case of the refugee community in South Tel Aviv demonstrates that this strategy was adopted spontaneously, and without previous planning, by the community itself, even against very negative environment created by the government and mostly indirect support given by the NGOs. Specifically, the government has denied work and businesses permits for refugees, forced relocation to detention centers, etc.; all of which has reinforced the communities' vulnerability. Looking at the neighborhood, the local Israeli population is not open to supporting the refugee community. In fact, they perform advocacy campaigns against refugees. The NGOs are almost the only positive actor. While their direct economic impact on the refugee community is low, they create indirect economic impact through different services that improve the quality of life of this community, particularly education, labor rights, health, food programs and etc.

In light of these limitations, I wonder how a process of economic growth and development can take place in such a hostile environment. I ask myself how a refugee community that came to a new country with little money, starting their lives from scratch, and treated as infiltrators, can overcome their situation and actually generate growth? While Plugging the Leaks theory proposes an alternative instrument for local policy for economic development, and not an explanation to it, it can help us to analyze this phenomenon. Yet, a lot of research is necessary in this case in the local economic development field and in the refugee arena at large. This is true especially today, where we are witnessing the refugee crisis, and the responses to it must take into account the economic livelihood of refugees.

PICTURE BY ROI BOSHI

PICTURE BY MRBREFAST

West Bank, PA /

PALESTINIAN REFUGEES: BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT

by Ahmed Yasin

As a Palestinian, growing up in the City of Ramallah introduced me to the concept of Refugee Camps. During my childhood, I was aware to the poor living conditions of these areas and most importantly, to the stories of the residents who were displaced and expelled from their original homes. Year after year, I made friends from a few camps around the West Bank to only notice the differences in infrastructure and housing between my neighborhood and theirs. However, only after participating in a fundraising conference held by the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) in Brussels, Belgium, I managed to fully grasp the challenges and lack of development strategies refugees' face not only in Palestine, but in the rest of the world including neighboring countries like Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and the Syrian Arabic Republic.

UNRWA was established in December 8th, 1949 following the United Nations Resolution 302 which considers the Palestinian refugees. According to its definition, "Palestinian refugees are those who resided in Palestine during June 1st 1946 and May 15th 1948, and lost both home and means of livelihood as a result of the 1948 conflict". This definition, which does not consider locals who were abroad for various reasons in between those dates, still proves wrong the false claim that the land was empty when the partition plan was introduced or Israel was established. Since its establishment, this agency is in charge for carrying out direct work and relief programs and is also responsible for providing services in the nineteen recognized refugee camps. These services are basically the entire public welfare and include: 97 schools with 51,327 Students, 2 vocational and technical training centers, 42 primary health centers, 15 community rehabilitation centers, and 18 women's program centers.

Yet, the camps suffer from poor infrastructure, sewage systems, and density of its residents. It seems like every expansion or progress in those areas was "temporary", in between and resulted without a clear plan or a long term program. A clear example can be seen in Al Am'ari Camp, established in 1949 and located 2 km away from Al Bireh, This camp was built for a small community but now hosts about 10,337 registered refugees living in area of only 90 Dunams (22.2 Acres). The camp's residents suffer from crowding, poor infrastructure, lack of structural or urban planning, and the scarcity of sufficient education or health services. As a result the camp, and the other camps which are in similar conditions, looks like the famous informal settlements known as "slums" or "Favelas" in the developing world.

It is clear that these conditions, especially when they are not confronted by development programs, keep the refugees and their young generations in their poor living conditions. Over the last years, I worked with Palestinian youth including 3rd generation of refugees on the issue of unemployment at different organizations in the West Bank. It was clear that as a part of society, this generation shares the same needs and difficulties of unemployment as other Palestinian youth. However, they face as well another great challenge resulting from their "temporary" status where they fight their right of returning to their lands together with improving their local development and conditions. This generation is jammed in between the horrific past and poor present and thus could not develop the wellbeing of its place of residence.

From my experience working with 3rd generation of Palestinian refugees, I see a need of designing clear policies for the benefit of locals in a long term perspective despite their "temporary" status. It is clear that the refugees will never ask to change their refugee status or even to leave the camp permanently without promising their Right to return but they will accept any policies to enhance their livelihood. Thus, the Palestinian Authority should develop a code of conduct to develop the infrastructure of refugee camps through a general urban plan and detailed development policies. I understand that the camp forms a symbolic place for all refugees as it keeps reminding them of their right to return, however, this does not contradict with providing a better life for them within those camps.

Secondly, In the Palestinian case, few steps can be taken to positively change the situation of camps. Definitely- in my opinion- we as development practitioners have many thoughts to contribute to change the local Livelihoods. But in general, the international organizations should not only provide basic services as education but generate holistic programs that deal with various dimensions of being at refuge. These programs should consider long term social development standards and contemporary political statuses. Additionally, as usually the camps form a unique indigenous community, who was expelled from the same geographic region, the programs should recognize the unique characteristics of a certain community, including the language, history and traditions in order to promise the perseverance of the community.

Lastly, I suggest the implementation of local and international advocacy campaigns forcing Israeli commitment to provide all services, including financial and logistical needs to support Palestinian refugees, not only in the West Bank but in all camps around the world. There should be an ethical commitment by Israel to help and develop the situation of refugees, since its establishment was the main reason for their creation and eventual suffering.

The development of groups like refugees brings hope and enlightens us to respect the special needs and desire of each community. At the end, we are- development practitioners- must work to bring hope, help, and better quality of life to people according to their standards, not ours.

Canada /

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION POLICY REFLECTS LESSONS FROM HISTORY

by Nehara Mor

PICTURE BY GGIA

Canada is a country that is composed of immigrants from all around the globe. The average Canadian holds a more positive view of immigration than those in other countries, and therefore, it is not surprising that it has a long history of providing asylum to refugees. A sign is that Canada's changed in late 2015 its immigration department's formal title to "Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (from "Citizenship and Immigration Canada), and its website declares that "our compassion and fairness are a source of great pride for Canadians".

Canada's asylum history started when it was the first country to abolish slavery in 1793, leading many fugitive slaves from United-States to seek refuge in Canada. However, Canada has a dark shadow in its past that colors its current record. In 1939, the S.S St. Louis, a ship carrying German Jewish refugees pleading sanctuary from Nazi Germany, docked on Nova-Scotia's shore after being denied entry by Cuba and the United-States, and ultimately Canada as well. While Canada had substantial economic concerns at the dawn of WW2, today these are not perceived as a reasonable excuse to deny entry to asylum-seekers and send them back, in some cases, to their deaths. To this day, many Canadians recall this event when debating contemporary refugees' crisis. It has almost entirely altered Canada's asylum policy. In 1969, Canada signed the UN Convention Relating the Status of Refugees and its protocol, and in 1986 the UN awarded Canada the Nansen Medal for its outstanding humanitarian tradition of settling refugees. Each year, Canada provides asylum to more than 10,000 persecuted persons, and welcomes another 12,000 refugees from abroad. [Refugee system in Canada]

THE REFUGEE SYSTEM IN CANADA

Canada works with UNHCR and resettles refugees after they undergo a careful screening system, Refugee Status Determination (RSD), in order to ensure that there are no security, criminality, or health issues, and to validate the asylum-seeker's grounds for the application.

Canada administers three formal programs for refugees resettlements:
1) Government-Assisted Refugees Program (GRA) and the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP): Through these two programs the government provides immediate and essential services, starting with income support for food and shelter, typically for one year. Sometimes the refugee might also receive temporary accommodation, assistance in finding permanent accommodation and employment, language training and orientation to better understand life in Canada, and links to other federal/provincial resettlements services.

2) Private Sponsors – "Sponsorship Agreement Holders": Sponsors across the country have an agreement with the government to provide the refugee financial and emotional support, usually for a year. In many cases, these donors are Canadian individuals/communities of the same national origin as the refugee(s), offering a "warm welcome" to the new comers.

3) Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) program: Matches refugees identified for resettlement by the UNHCR with private sponsors.

4) Sanctuary Cities: An informal, somewhat subversive program. It is rooted in the notion that churches are also a harbor for persons being persecuted – whatever the reason may be. Residents of Sanctuary Cities prevent local authorities from ever inquiring about an individual's immigration status (unless it is court-ordered), thus allowing everyone access to essential city services such as health and childcare, food banks, social housing, and the police.

The movement started as a political campaign in the 1980s in the United-States, under the slogan "No one is illegal." Initially, it called on the local authorities to shelter refugees fleeing civil war in Central America. With time, it spread worldwide, and today it runs in many cities around the globe, including Toronto, Vancouver and Hamilton. This campaign is unique in that was entirely initiated and led by local residents – and not formal governmental authorities – and it is the residents who determine the local policy and its means of implementation. Examples for these means are mandatory training for all city workers and implementation of non-discriminatory rules – including employment law.

Looking back on refugees' absorption in Canada over the years, we see a satisfactory state: culturally and socially, immigrants and refugees influence Canada deeply and vibrantly. We see their integration in all spheres of life, including the media, academia, public service and of course the culinary. However, in their first decade or so past arrival, refugees tend to have lower income than Canadian-born, due primarily to language barriers and adjustments to the Canadian culture of work. Current data shows a growing incidence of poverty among immigrants and refugees, mostly among university-educated and unemployment rates are historically double than those of Canadian-born.

Looking at the future, Canada's current cabinet members (and future role models) are descendants of various national origins such as India, Ukraine and Afghanistan. One such example is Maryam Monsef, the Minister of Democratic Institutions, who came to Canada with her family as an 11-year-old refugee from Afghanistan. Canada is currently facing an economic recession due to a sharp decline in oil prices and other commodities. Even so, it is finding the ways and means to reach out to those in need and offer them haven. Through this, perhaps, make amends for the SS St. Louis tragedy, its past mistake.

ABOUT GLOCAL

The Glocal Community-Development Studies program is an innovative, interdisciplinary M.A. program in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
This 18-month program aims to provide students with the academic theory and background, as well as professional skills and tools to work with communities across the globe. An integral part of the program is a four months internship with an international NGO in a developing country, which offers an opportunity to gain a direct experience from the field.

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