



**ECONOMIC ASSET OR NATIONAL SECURITY BURDEN? RETHINKING
KENYAN GOVERNMENT POLICIES TOWARDS SOMALI URBAN REFUGEES**

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Disclaimer:

This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies. The views stated therein are those of the author and not necessarily of the institute.

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Be brave. Take Risks. Nothing can substitute experience-Paulo Coelho

Acronyms

ERT	Equal Rights Trust
DRA	Department of Refugee Affairs
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IOM	International Organization for Migration
NCA	Norwegian Council for Africa
OAU	Organization for African Unity
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees

Abstract

Despite valid security trepidations, the Kenyan government directive to counter terror known as 'Operation Usalama Watch' has made the Somali community previously known as excellent business people, creators of small companies, employment and opportunities for investment an easy target. This is because they are now being associated with a new set of images of violent crimes in Kenya. This research paper is based on a study carried out among Somali urban refugees in Eastleigh. The main objective of this study was to investigate the factors that have caused a shift by the Kenyan government to relabel Somali urban refugees as a security threat despite their economic contribution to the country. Drawing on a document analysis and qualitative field research, this study considers the reaction of the Somali refugees to the label of security threat and uses the theoretical approach of labelling, refugee governance to comprehend the Kenyan's government's narrative towards Somali urban refugees. By examining the existing policies and practices of the Kenya government in relation to the issue of Somali Refugees we see the dilemma faced by both the refugees and the government regarding security and economic benefits. Ultimately, the study highlights the necessity for directing focus towards the refugees being part of the development agenda with the government investing in their businesses and supporting their plans to be integrated into the Kenyan society or go back home and a need for the government to alter its counter-productive measure of encampment of refugees. Meanwhile, there is need to expand the evaluative space to take into account the value of refugees to the Kenyan economy as well as relational outcomes.

Keywords

Somali Refugees, Security, Economic Asset, Urban Areas, Policy, Kenya

CHAPTER ONE: The change in labelling Somali Refugees in Kenya

1.1. Introduction

The Kenyan operation to counter terror known as ‘Usalama Watch’ has made the Somali community in Kenya an easy target (Amnesty International 2014:4). Somalis, concentrated for in Eastleigh Nairobi for example, were previously stereotyped as being excellent business people, as creators of small companies, employment and opportunities for investment. Despite them (Somali refugees) being associated in the past with illegal status, Somali piracy and crime, overall they were viewed as an asset to the Kenyan economy. Kenya’s participation in the war on terror began in 2011 when troops were sent to Somalia to fight against the Islamist militant group Al-Shabaab (The Guardian 2013). Since then, Somali refugees in Eastleigh have been associated with a new set of images of violent crimes, with terrorism and with a threat to public and national security (Rasmussen 2014:1). Although the Kenyan state has valid security trepidations, could it be that the counter-terrorism operation acts as an excuse for extensive targeting of the Somali population in Kenya?(ibid). The issuance of a directive in March 2014 aimed at the encampment of all refugees, including the estimated 51,000 refugees residing in urban areas was claimed to be in response to the developing security setbacks facing the country. The security operation has led to the arrest of many refugees and asylum-seekers of different nationalities in widespread swoops not only in Eastleigh and Nairobi but other urban areas. Those arrested have subsequently been detained and forcibly relocated to the refugee camps. These unfortunate events also acted as an excuse to rape, beat, extort money from, and arbitrarily arrest, at least 1,000 people by the police who described these victims as “terrorists,” and wanted bribes for their freedom (Human Rights Watch 2014:2). Some 3,000 refugees were relocated to camps though most of them subsequently returned to urban centres where for many years they have been securing their livelihoods (UNHCR-Kenya 2015:8). A directive similar to Operation Usalama Watch had been issued in December 2012 and later quashed by the High Court in July 2013 because the Kenyan government had failed to demonstrate how refugee presence in urban areas resulted in an increased national security threat (Amnesty International 2014: 4-5).

The discussions surrounding the review of existing refugee laws have been unpredictable because of the insecurity in Kenya (UNHCR-Kenya 2015: 9). This has influenced some refugees to choose to

go back to Somalia despite the conflict. Also, the situation of Somali refugees has deteriorated from bad to worse as the government is determined to repatriate all the refugees in Dadaab camp back to Somalia. The government of Kenya believes that the refugee camps are being used by Al-Shabaab terrorists to plan attacks in the country, and as such are preparing to close the camp (Daily Monitor 2015).

The closure of Dadaab camp and the repatriation of Somali refugees will have a detrimental economic effect on the North Eastern province, in particular, the Garissa district where the camp is located. Enghoff et al. (2010) report shows that the Dadaab camps on a yearly basis contributes approximately \$14m to the surrounding community. This study that was commissioned by the Kenyan, Danish and Norwegian governments, demonstrates that the annual turnover of Dadaab refugee-run camp-based businesses was estimated to be around \$25m. In an area that is poverty-stricken as Kenya's North Eastern region, these are significant numbers that cannot be ignored (Enghoff et al. 2010: 45-47). On one hand, the Kenya government has labelled Somali refugees as a security risk and a threat to national security and wants them out of the country. On the other hand, the impact of Somali refugees on the urban and camp economy is highly significant, and their departure can hurt the Kenyan economy.

Throughout the 1990s, Somali refugees transformed Eastleigh from a predominantly residential area into an effervescent profit-making business centre ranging from real estate, import-export businesses to retail outlets (from small-scale hawking and street stalls to shopping malls) (Pavenello et al. 2010:22-23). The transformation of Eastleigh into a commercial zone has led to competition amongst businessmen forcing out Asian traders, who initially controlled the businesses (Campbell 2006: 402). The retail malls in Eastleigh are not just used by individual consumers, but larger commercial businesses also depend on retailers in Eastleigh for a wide variety of goods, and the smaller shops that sell other items are also predominantly owned by Somalis (Pavenello 2010: 24). According to Farah Abdulsamed, an analyst at Chatham House, a think-tank in the United Kingdom, the Somali trade centred in the Nairobi suburb of Eastleigh has had an active market transformation felt far beyond Kenya and Somalia to the Gulf States and Central Africa. "Eastleigh is at the centre of a network of trade that connects the Arabian Peninsula, Somalia, Kenya and East and Central Africa, with the Somali business community as the common thread" (Abdulsamed 2011: 7). He further argues that besides the fact that the emergent Somali investment in Nairobi has

attracted several banks and many other service providers, it is evident that urban refugees are not a burden on the state but can become an economic asset (Abdulsamed 2011: 3).

On the flip side, Kenyan officials seek to promote the issue of security due to the large numbers of refugees residing in urban areas. An example is the late Assistant Minister for Internal Security in Kenya, Orwa Ojode, who once likened the predominant Somali community in Eastleigh to an Al-Shabaab enclave in Kenya. In his address to the parliament, he said, “Al-Shabaab is like a snake with its tail in Somalia and its head in Eastleigh” (NPR 2011). The hate messages against Somalis posted on social media sites anytime there is an attack by Al-Shabaab further compounds the problems of the Somali refugees residing in the city. For example, after two grenade attacks in Nairobi in 2011, there was a barrage of hate posts and messages on social media against Somalis. The hate posts only subsided after a non-Somali Kenyan was arrested, tried and sentenced to life incarceration (NPR 2011).

This stereotype that refugees of Somali descent are a threat and their labelling has been used to challenge the citizenship and identity of Kenya-Somali ethnic group in Nairobi¹. The Equal Rights Trust (ERT) 2011 report demonstrates significant proof that suggests that Kenyan Somalis are subject to direct discrimination concerning citizenship and identity and, as a result undergo rigorous procedures before they can be issued identity cards and passports. For example, “applicants had to produce their parents’ and grandparents’ identification documents, a requirement that does not apply to individuals of other ethnic groups” (ERT 2011:79-80). In addition, to acquire a Kenyan passport, those that have a Somali appearance or appear to be of Arab origin have to undergo a screening interview conducted by the National Security Intelligence Service in Nairobi (Equal Rights Trust 2011:80). The adjacency of the Kenya-Somalia border makes it hard to monitor the flow of refugees into the camps especially after considering that it is hard differentiating between Kenyan-Somalis and Somali-Somalis² who share some similar physical characteristics as well as one language. The probability of mistaken identity is highly likely (Kirui & Mwaruvie 2012; 161)

With this backdrop of contradiction between security risks and economic growth, questions arise around the interest of the Kenyan government in the Somali refugee situation. The government is

¹ Note: Kenyan Somalis are a Cushitic tribe that reside in the North Eastern Province of Kenya and are Kenyan citizens of Somali ethnicity. They are the fifth largest community in Kenya with their population at two million www.kenya-information-guide.com/somali-tribe.html Accessed on 25 October 2015

² Somali-Somalis are a Cushitic ethnic group that dwell in the Horn of Africa and are traditionally nomadic.

willing to repatriate about half a million people under the guise of national security when a substantial number of these people constitute a significant nucleus of the capital's economic development. Melanie Teff, a senior advocate and European representative for Refugee International called on the Kenyan government to change its counterproductive encampment policy for refugees and to include Dadaab in its development plans, to realize significant economic and human benefits. "Instead of being a burden, the 500,000 Somalis in the camps should be integrated into Kenya's economy as part of a development plan for the country's north-east" (The Guardian 2012).

Scholars like Hovil have argued that since refugees are fleeing from areas of violent conflict many governments see them as posing a potential security threat, which could disturb the safety of the country and need to be observed in camps (Hovil 2007:604). Restrictive arguments are supported by one of the official positions of the Kenya Government which is that urban refugees are an economic and security burden on the city and, therefore, should be collectively forbidden from living and working in Nairobi. This is one of the state's principal justifications for its refugee encampment policy (Campbell 2006: 398) and of recent calls for the closure of camps and repatriation of more than 500,000 Somali refugees back to Somali. In a speech by the former Cabinet Secretary of Interior and Co-ordination of the National Government Joseph ole Lenku; "the safe return of Somali refugees to their country will pave the way for infrastructural, institutional development and reforms that will enhance democratic growth and governance in their country" (Standard Digital 2014).

1.2. Problem Statement

This study will explore the paradox that while the Kenyan government has labelled Somali refugees as a security risk and wants them out of the country at all cost, the impact of Somali refugees on the urban economy is highly significant, and their departure could, therefore, damage the Kenyan economy. This is because the economic transformation of Eastleigh has brought tremendous competition to the marketplace, driving down the cost of goods and services and generating employment, including for non-Somali Kenyans. For example, laptops in Eastleigh were found to be about 30 percent cheaper than in the city center and identical imported furniture about 20 percent more affordable (Abdulsamed 2011). Somali businesses can offer lower prices since shops are often used for storage and sleeping as well as selling; indeed some businesses sell direct from shipping containers. Many individual consumers, as well as large commercial and medium sized traders now,

rely on retailers in Eastleigh (Abdulsamed 2011: 7). Despite this being a benefit not only for citizens but the government as well, Kenya still faces the issue of genuine humanitarian involvement and the need to control its borders for security purposes (Kirui & Mwaruvie 2012:161). This makes it imperative to investigate the factors involved in labelling Somali refugees as either a security threat for the Kenya government or as bringing their substantial economic benefit for the country. In addition this study will reflect on how Somali refugees have responded to such shifts in labelling, in the context of existing, sometimes inconsistent, policies and practices with regards to Somali refugees in Kenya.

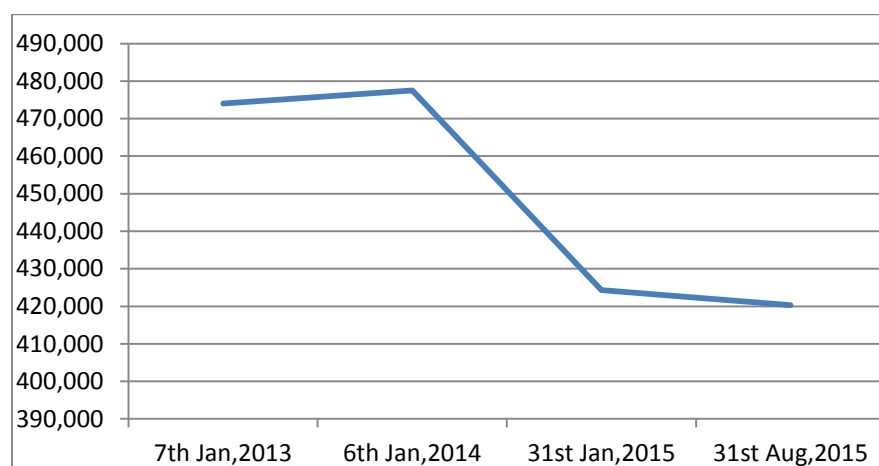
This study seeks to investigate the factors that influence the Kenyan government to label Somali refugees as either a security threat or as a group that makes a significant economic contribution to the country and the current economy. The study will explore how policies and practices with regards to Somali refugees overlap and contradict one another. While looking at the underlying factors that influenced the labelling of Somali refugees as a security threat from 1998 onwards, this study looks at how different positive and negative labels are resisted or accepted both in official policy documents, and the views of Somali refugees on such shifts in language and labelling. This approach helps us to understand how economic and security issues interplay in the compound labelling of Somali refugees in Eastleigh Kenya. For practical reasons, Kenyan citizens of Somali origin have different types of problems when it comes to labelling. Their citizenship status distinguishes them from Somali refugees, and this study will not include this group directly. The focus is therefore only on Somali refugees, which excludes those who have Kenyan citizenship.

1.3. Contextualizing the Problem

The international community's obligation to the refugee question since the early 1990s has concentrated on the mass influx of refugee emergencies, delivering humanitarian assistance and encouraging large-scale repatriation programs in high-profile regions. Today, more than two-thirds of refugees' population are not in emergency situations rather they are entombed in protracted refugee situations (Troeller 2008:3). A large number of these protracted refugee situations are found in some of the world's poorest and most unstable regions and originate from some of the world's most fragile states which includes Somalia. "Refugees trapped in these situations often face significant restrictions on a broad range of rights, and the continuation of the refugee problem frequently gives rise to a number of political and security concerns for host states and states in the region" (Troeller 2008:4).

Kenya has a history of hosting refugees. The refugee populations (mostly Ugandans) by the year 1988 were approximately 12,000 in Nairobi. According to Campbell (2006: 399), the refugees enjoyed full status rights; the right to reside in urban centers and freedom of movement throughout the country, the right to work with a permit and right to get educated, and the right to be integrated locally or regionally. However, the political situation and crises in Ethiopia, Sudan and Somalia in 1991–1992 and later in Burundi, Rwanda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), led to an extensive flooding of refugees into Kenya. According to data by United Nations High Commission for Refugees Kenya (2013-2015), the number of registered Somali refugees has shifted over the last two years. As of January 2013 the number stood at 474,037 and by January 2014 the number increased to about 474,154 refugees. The number of refugees who were in the country in January 2015 had decreased to 424,307 and as of August 2015 the number has further decreased to 420,283³. Figure 1.0 below demonstrates the historical movement of Somali refugee population in Kenya from the year 2013 to 2015.

Figure 1: Somali Refugee Population in Kenya 2013-2015



Sources: UNHCR Kenya (2013-2015)

Lindley (2011:4) argued that the hostility to the idea of a strong Islamist State in Somalia propelled foreign intervention under the guise of the War on Terror further exacerbating and transforming the Somali civil war. These factors in combination with environmental problems created a renewed displacement and refugee crisis. Governance failure and political violence also prompted other problems. The drought in 2011 caused havoc in its wake slowing the process of intervention as

³ <http://data.unhcr.org/horn-of-africa/country.php?id=110/> Accessed 26 October 2015

legislation by the United States government prevented aid from reaching Somalia further worsening the humanitarian crisis. According to Lindley (2011:5), the rejection of Western influence and that of donors' restricted international aid to Al-Shabaab held areas because they are considered to be a terrorist organization exacerbated the crisis. "As of early October 2011, there were some 908,000 Somali refugees registered in neighboring countries, with Kenya hosting some 511,000 – more than half. With the number of Somali refugees nearly treble what it was in 2006, dealing with this situation will remain a key political issue in Kenya in the months and years to come" (Lindley, 2011: 5-6)

Despite the increased number of refugees under the Kenya Government's refugee protection program, the state still shows a lack of interest with refugees' issues in terms of protection and provision of services such as health and education. The Kenya government response to the pre-1991 refugee situation in Kenya was more hospitable, highlighting the importance of local integration; the post-1991 administration became less accommodating with xenophobia increasing and prospects for regional integration declining (Verdirame 1999; Crisp 2000; Kagwanja 2002; Horst 2003; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond 2005).

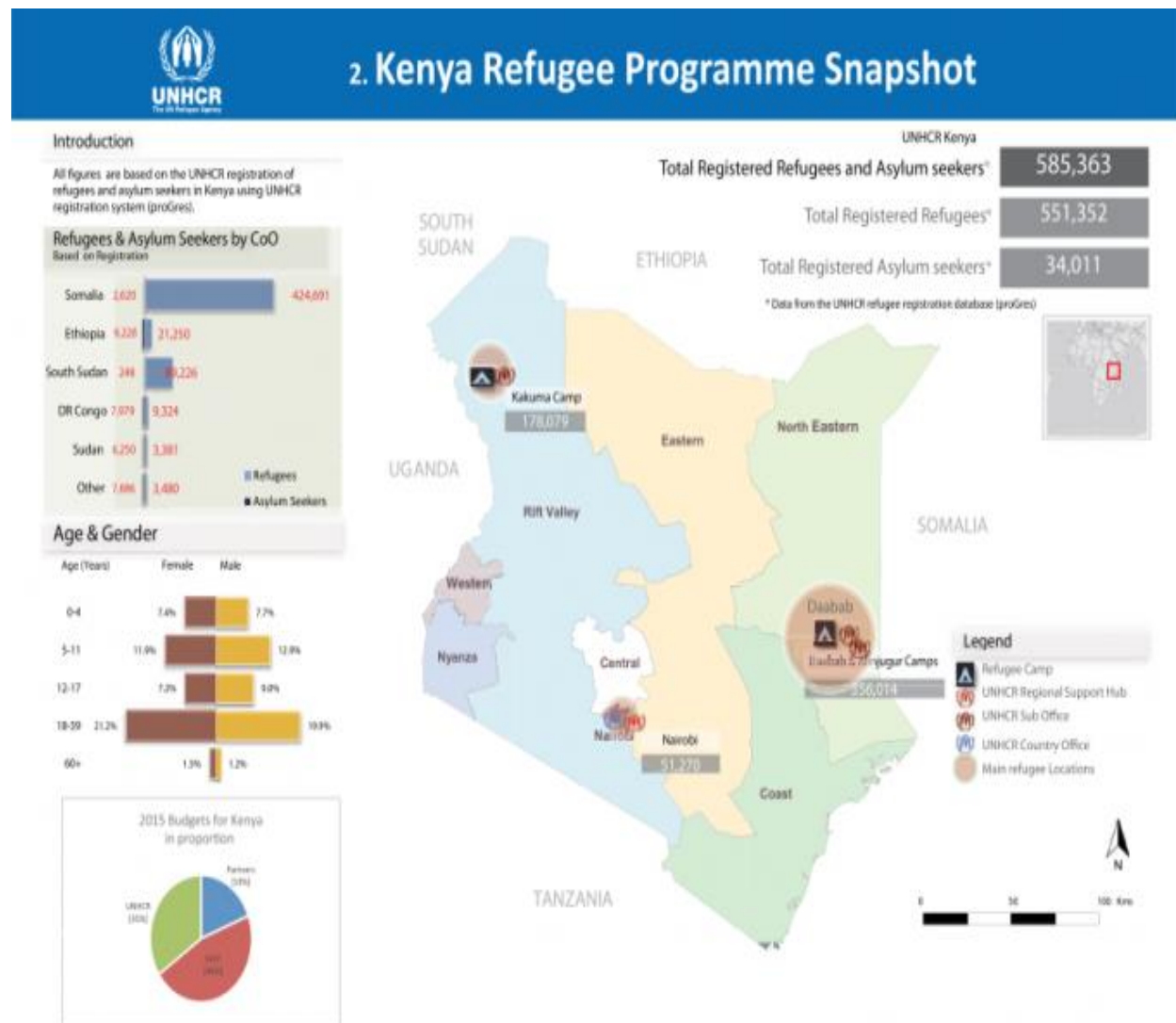
Despite being a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention that is the legitimate document in describing who is a refugee, their rights and the legal commitment of states (UNHCR, n.d.) and signing the Organization for African Unity (OAU) Convention governing the specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa on 10th September 1969 which augments the approach of refugee as a way of seeking responses to the new elements of mass movement of people in need of international protection and assistance (UNHCR, n.d.), Kenya has still been unable to develop its national refugee law that deals with the rights and protection of refugees. It has instead depended on ad hoc policies and prevailing immigration rules and regulation to respond to refugee issues. The most popular system that can be pointed out in dealing with the refugee question after the influx of refugees in 1991 is that of the encampment policy. The Kenyan authorities agreed to accept the new refugees but on the condition that the refugees reside in chosen camps (Horst 2006; Hyndman and Nylund 1998; Verdirame 1999). Two refugee camps, Dadaab and Kakuma, were established in 1991 to contain the thousands of refugees streaming into Kenya (Kirui & Mwaruvie 2012:161).

However, Amnesty International (2014) and Human Rights Watch (2014) reports indicate that the Kenyan Government policy on forced encampment and involuntary repatriation is a contravention

of Kenya's obligations under international law. The two major refugee camps in Kenya are congested and insecure with no provision in place to accommodate the tens of thousands of people expected to be in the camp as a result of forced relocations to camps. "Food is scarce, access to education and health services are extremely strained, and there is little space for people to find shelter" (Amnesty International 2014⁴). On 31st August 2015, Kenya registered 420,283 refugees of which 332,455 were in Dadaab, 55,050 in Kakuma and 33,164 in Nairobi (UNHCR 2015). The diagram below shows the Kenya refugee snapshot as of early this year.

⁴ Kenya: Refugees appeal against forced relocation to camps.,
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/07/kenya-refugees-appeal-against-forced-relocation-to-camps/>
Accessed 24 June 2015

Figure 2: Overview of refugees in Kenya



Source: UNHCR-Kenya 2015:8

The diagram is a depiction of the influx of refugees into Kenya from neighbouring countries. It gives a perspective of the number of refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya and a view of their age and gender.

1.4. The Research Aims and Questions

As the brief overview of approaches to Somali refugees at the start of this chapter showed, it is clear that research conducted on Somali refugees in Kenya is of two kinds: first, studies on the economic benefits of Somali refugee populations in Kenya, especially on Eastleigh and its growth as a business area. Second, studies have started to emerge of how Somali refugees are being viewed as a security threat from within the ‘war on terror’ security policy framework. This study tries to link these two fields to show that while Somali refugees may be labelled as a threat; this does not always eclipse awareness of their potential and past economic contributions to Kenya. With the above connections in mind, the research aims and questions are further elaborated below.

The context of this study are the existing policies and practices of the Kenya government in relation to the issue of Somali Refugee. The main objective is to investigate the factors responsible for the Kenya government relabelling Somali refugees as a security threat despite their significant economic contribution to the country that was officially recognized in the past. In addition, the study hopes to contribute some fresh insight into the politics of identity, and how proper labelling can reinforce – or not – negative and positive stereotypes of refugees, making them more or less vulnerable as the case may be.

The main questions are:

What tensions between economic and security interests, have led the Kenyan government to relabel Somali refugees as a threat to security, rather than an economic asset? And in what way do the Somali refugees challenge the negative ‘security threat’ label?

Sub-questions

- a) What are the characteristics of Somali urban refugees in Kenya?
- b) What were the major Kenyan government policies towards Somali refugees over the past decade?
- c) What factors explain how positive economic labels have been replaced with more negative security-related labels of Somali refugees?
- d) How are these negative labels contested by Somali refugees and other actors involved?

1.5. Study Overview

This paper is divided into five chapters. The first chapter covered the features of this study mainly the problem of research, the contextual background to the problem, objectives of the study, research question and sub-questions. The second chapter discusses extensively the study approach and the research methods that were applied in the collection of relevant data. These details include the choice of the study area, the selection of interviews and focus group discussion as a form of data collection and the methods. The chapter concludes with the analysis of ethical issues and challenges encountered in the field during the research process. In chapter three, the literature review and theoretical approach to labelling, Stigmatization and Stereotypes are used to explain the factors that influence the view that refugees are a burden as opposed to being beneficial to the host government. I argue that if unchecked the label of 'refugee' can easily be equated with the negative connotations of a dependent, troubled, helpless or even violent person. I maintain that there is a need to start rethinking the relationship between refugees and the governments of host countries. Host governments and the international community should acknowledge that refugees can be agents of development and economic growth as opposed to being a liability. Chapter four focuses on the results obtained from the field study. The findings are expressed in line with the four sub-research questions, and interlinked with the theory in the paper. In this chapter, I discuss the characteristics of the Somali Refugees in Eastleigh, the Kenyan government policies, practices and discourses towards Somali refugees in urban areas. I also elucidate on factors that explain how these discourses and labels come into play, how these labels are resisted or accepted by refugees, especially in local discourses about their economic activities. The last chapter presents the theoretical and policy implications of this study.

CHAPTER TWO: Methodology; Conducting research in a challenging setting

2.1. Introduction

This chapter looks at how the fieldwork and research analysis were informed by the context of Somali refugees in Kenya. The approach I employed was one of the qualitative traditions since it is more open to a plethora of perspectives and can achieve more depth. O’Leary (2014:130) supports this notion by stating that: “The qualitative tradition therefore calls on inductive as well as deductive logic; appreciates subjectivities; accepts multiple perspectives and realities and does not necessarily shy away from political agendas”. The chapter looks at the instruments used for data collection and challenges that came about conducting this type of research.

2.2. Choice of Research Location

The Study Area is Eastleigh in Nairobi Kenya. I have selected this area because it is host to a large population of Somali refugees, who have been ‘integrated’ into society and earn their livelihoods from conducting business in the area. With this knowledge in mind, they are under pressure from the government to go back to the refugee camps. Although the actual figure of Somali refugees residing informally in urban areas outside the camp is uncertain, various studies (Hyndman 2000; Moret et al. 2005) put the estimates to be around 100,000 in the mid-1990s with the numbers having declined over time because of repatriation or resettlement of refugees to third countries. Most refugees end up in Eastleigh district that has a location in the Far East part of the Central Business District of Nairobi (Goldsmith 1997; Sirola 2001). Eastleigh is an area popularly known ‘Little Mogadishu’. It is a country within a country with a peculiar economy because its strong commercial sector is predominantly dominated by refugees who are mostly Somali. This sentiment is shared by the Norwegian Council for Africa (NCA) who state that: “Anyone would be forgiven for thinking they are right inside Somalia as they walk within Eastleigh area of Nairobi. The population is almost entirely Somali, save for a few indigenous people mingling in between” (Norwegian Council for Africa 2008: np)⁵.

In an attempt to answer the research questions of this study and to achieve the set objectives and goals, I used both secondary and primary data. The secondary data was based on a comprehensive review of literature where I used preliminary information from the statement of the problem to go

⁵ <http://www.afrika.no/Detailed/16696.html/> Accessed 12 June 2015

through journal databases and a general search engine to find existing research on the refugee crisis and the impact of labelling on refugees and actors dealing with the refugee situation.

The primary data comprised semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion to help in having a clear understanding of the tension between economic and security interests debates about refugees. This also covered how the Kenyan government labels Somali refugees, and what have been the latter's responses. To fill in the identified gap, I organized interviews with stakeholders and analyzed their input in line with the research question and sub-questions.

2.3. Instruments for Data Collection

As a result of paucity of data that can corroborate various claims on the clash between security and economic interests of the Kenyan government the most suitable instruments for data collection for this study are interviews and focus groups discussion. Laws (2008: 286) states that interviews offer the platform where respondents can talk about delicate issues that they may not be able to express in a survey. An interview guide was constructed around the main and sub- research questions, serving as a rough structure for discussion to guide the respondents in addressing the elements of interest to the study. At the same time, it ensured a certain degree of freedom for participants to develop their discourse in the way that they found meaningful for the discussion. I opted for semi-structured interviews because “analysis is relatively straightforward, and questions may be asked in different ways” (Laws 2008:287). By doing so, I was able to guarantee the authenticity of responses and allowed each respondent to cover what was most significant to them regarding the topic and areas of discussion. I conducted interviews with two government officials in different capacities and institutions, in addition to 15 interviews with refugees with varying ages.

2.4. Conducting Interviews

Before conducting the research in the field, I was fascinated in exploring the life and world of Somali urban refugees living in Eastleigh. This is to say that my knowledge of Eastleigh prior to my research was limited to my visits of other people and shopping. The research opened a new lens on the world of Somali urban refugees. This qualitative approach looks into the views of people and their feelings (‘Introduction to Qualitative Research, n.d.’)⁶. The aim of this approach was to keep an

⁶ http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/content/BPL/Images/Content_store/sample_chapter/978063205844/001-025/ Accessed 29 October 2015

open-mind when conducting interviews by concentrating on how ethnic Somalis understood and qualified to live in Eastleigh as a result of the Kenya government response to Al-Shabaab threat.

My approach to the interviews was inductive, with the interview guide designed to allow the respondent to elaborate his/her views. I opened up the conversation to a broader and more reflected perception of label and narrative of refugees as a burden to Kenya.

By and large, I was interested in gathering as much as possible in terms of data, to give voice to Somali women, I organized a focus group discussion with the help of an assistant who has worked and still works in close collaboration with Somali women. The choice of focus group discussion was deemed appropriate because they are arranged to discuss a particular issue (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis 2013; Liamputtong 2011), mainly to understand how a group of people feels about a specific issue, in this case, the negative impact of labels and how it affects them as a group. However, the method is not flawless because there is a possibility that the participants of the groups are not honest in expressing their personal opinions on the topic at hand because of their reservations, especially if they hold a different or opposing view. Nevertheless, the aim of using focus group is not to generate a consensus (Hennink, 2007), but rather to encourage a plethora of perspectives that might help in having a deeper understanding of the impact of labelling of Somali refugees on their day to day lives. The focus group discussion was comprised of seven women. This approach was grounded in the cultural and religious norms that limit women from being as vocal in the presence of their male counterparts.

2.5. Sampling Method

In framing the study sample, purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants from the Somali refugee community in urban areas for both the focus group discussion and interview respondents as well as the interviews conducted with the Kenya government officials and officials from UMMA a community-based organization dealing with refugees living in urban areas. This sampling technique was suitable for this research as it involves “selection of a sample with a precise purpose in mind and augments learning by exploring the restrictions or limitations of a situation or phenomenon” (O’Leary 2010: 161-162). Also, accessibility of respondents and their availability to participate also formed the primary basis for selection. This sampling strategy was also justified based on the small number of readily accessible refugees and considering that majority of the

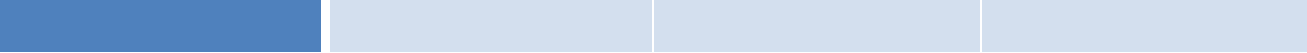
refugee respondents are thought to be illegal in urban areas, the idea of being considered a security threat made this strategy more applicable.

2.6. Selecting respondents

Since the assumption of this study is that the Kenya government anti-terror strategies have an adverse effect on the image of Somali refugees in Kenya, I wanted to find out more about the Somalis refugees who may have had different views to that of the government on the issue of security in Eastleigh and Kenya as a whole. I aimed to capture this by interviewing people with different experiences and thus different viewpoints. Most of the refugees I interviewed in Eastleigh only spoke the local dialect (Somali language) and as such could not speak English, but with the help of a translator the interviewing process was made simpler. Despite that, I had to be aware of how I framed the questions to simplify the task of the translator. To ensure that the interpreter was not biased, I sought one that is in the employ of the community-based organization and is not a refugee. The interviews and focus group discussion was conducted over a period of four weeks. Before my departure to Nairobi from The Hague, I established as many contacts as possible with potential respondents and officials. Despite being Kenyan, I needed someone more familiar with Eastleigh to help me in accessing the refugees and the community based organization. The ‘fixer’ who also doubled up as a translator is called Hassan (real name). He was able to set up interviews with 15 urban refugees and found five women that participated in the focus group discussion. In addition, I approached two women and asked if they would be interested in participating in a focus group discussion. So in total, I was able to interview twenty-two (22) Somali refugees and two government officials bringing the total to twenty-four respondents who participated in both the interviews and the focus group discussions. The focus group discussion comprised seven women and for the interviews, there were seven men and eight women.

Table 1: Summary of Objectives, Research Questions, Methodology and Data Sources

Research Objective	Research Questions	Method of Data Collection	Sources of Information
To investigate the factors responsible for the Kenya government to relabel Somali refugees as security threat despite their significant economic contribution to the country.	Given the tension between economic and security interest, how and why does the Kenya government relabel refugee? And how is the negative 'security threat' label challenged by Somali refugees	Semi-structured interviews. Focus Group Discussion	Peer reviewed scientific papers, policy documents, Relevant Government Officials, Somali Refugees
To Identify the existing policies and practices of the Kenya government in relation to the Somali Refugee question	What are the Kenyan government policies and practices with regard to Somali refugees?	Review of secondary data. Semi-structured Interviews	Review of Policy Documents Government officials
	How are Economic and Security Interests reflected in labeling	Semi-structured Interviews	UMMA CBO official
To investigate how identity construction reinforces stereotypes and labelling	What are the characteristics (reasons for leaving Somalia) of Somali Refugees in Eastleigh, Kenya	Focus Group Discussions	Somali Refugees



2.7. Procedure and Data Analysis

Participants were met individually and offered a briefing regarding the goals and scope of the study. They were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity of the responses and informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time. The options of consenting to be interviewed whether verbally or in writing was presented to the respondents. All agreed verbally but were not keen on signing any document. The length of interviews varied between respondents and took about half an hour to forty minutes. The focus group discussion on the other hand, lasted an hour. None of the respondents agreed to be recorded, and most of them opted for using their first name if they were to be referenced in the study report. Subsequently after going through my notes of interviews and that of the focus group discussion I advanced to carry out a content analysis through which the predominant themes in participants' responses were derived.

Beyond my personal opinion and extending to more general interpretations of the subject, recognized throughout participants' discourses, I coded and merged the information into more general units of significance, until the themes referred to different angles of the research problem, helping to answer the research questions in a critical and insightful way. The overarching themes in participants' answers cast light on the relationships between the various areas of interest for me the researcher, specifically a new thinking about how Somali refugees have been painted as a security threat to Kenya's national security.

2.8. Ethics and the Scope and Limitations of the Research

This study aims to look at how the perception of Somali refugees in Kenya has influenced the Kenya government policy development in dealing with the refugee issue. This came with some limitations including and not limited to: Finding personnel working for the government willing to divulge whether policies in place that deal with refugees are driven by security or economic interests. Also, accessing refugees ready to share their opinion on how they are viewed and treated by the local populace and government of Kenya. This is considering that the refugees in the urban centres officially do not exist/ are undocumented. I am conscious of the fact that raising anti-terrorism and security as topics for debate, may be complex, particularly, if participants in the discussion have had first-hand experiences with the meaningful results that follow such. Thus, I made sure that the respondents were acquainted with the context of my study. In addition, I made sure that participation in the process of data collection was voluntarily, and the safety of the participants was

ensured. Some respondents were obviously troubled, and in the course of some of the interviews, I assured them that it was okay for them to stop the interview if they felt uncomfortable at any time with proceeding. Taking the settings in Eastleigh into consideration, it was imperative to clarify that I did not have an authority to assist the respondents on their refugee case.

Among the limitations that I faced in the field were:

- a) Paying refugee respondents for information because their logic was I was taking time out of their schedules and they needed the money to make up for the time spent away from their businesses. Each respondent received the amount of five hundred Kenyan shillings for participating in the interviews. The amount is equivalent to five Euros.
- b) Accessing many government officials as they were not very keen on being interviewed based on the sensitivity of the topic
- c) Accessing officials from HIAS, who had originally been the non-governmental organization that I was going to use since they deal with urban refugees. I called them about five times and visited their offices twice to be turned back because the programme officers were too busy or not available.
- d) Finding a gender balance when it came to the refugees I interviewed. The easily accessible refugees were mostly women who made the data have a bias of sorts.
- e) Collecting data every day became expensive making time spent in the field shorter that is four weeks rather than the anticipated five to six weeks.

To deal with the above limitations, the following approach is what I implemented:

- a) Accessed fewer refugees than earlier desired to reduce the amounts of monies used to pay them.
- b) Talking to the readily available government officials and an official from UMMA I was able to get the general idea of senior official thoughts on the issue of refugees being an asset or national security burden.
- c) I found an alternative community-based organization that deals with urban refugees, and this proved fruitful as they are located in the heart of Eastleigh. The community based organization goes by the name UMMA.

- d) I was linked to more Somali men with the help of Hassan who was also the translator to participate in my study in an attempt to create a gender balance. While they were much older than my expectations as I was keen on interviewing young people who are the target of Al-Shabaab recruitment, their sentiments brought in a new light on how labels affect them and their contribution to society.
- e) To cut down costs of transportation from my place of residence to Eastleigh, I allocated specific days for data collection where the respondents would be interviewed.

2.9. Conclusion

I believe that the approach to the research has been helpful to eliminate biases and misrepresentation of data that can occur during the qualitative research process. I considered the relevance of the data collected from the field to the research questions. I have expounded on Eastleigh as the preferred choice of location as well as the sample procedures and methods that were used to collect data. Also, I address the ethical considerations and limitations of the study with the hope that future researchers may be more aware of what to encounter in the field. The next chapter looks at the link between refugee governance and labelling and identity construction.

CHAPTER THREE: Refugee Governance and Labelling and Construction of Identity

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will address the key ideological and political commitments at stake in state and humanitarian approaches to hosting refugees. While there has been a lot written on this topic, there is significantly less literature addressing the advantages of hosting refugees as opposed to that addressing the challenges and problems associated with refugee-hosting especially in relation to security. I am interested in the benefits of refugee populations to host countries and will thus focus on the discrepancy in the literature to answer the central research questions of this study. By doing so, I will also identify factors that explain how positive economic labels have been replaced with negative security-related labels of Somali refugees. While it is a reality that hosting states must address security problems associated with hosting refugees, they are participating in the complexities of regions experiencing extreme violent political contexts and even war. The preoccupation with security by host countries disproportionately contributes to labelling stigma, stereotype, prejudice and categorization, further contributing to the social exclusion of refugees in the context where they are meant to receive respite.

This literature review will show how the issue of hosting refugees takes shape from a global perspective to one that is more national in this case Kenya and how labels that were formerly positive have shifted to negative ones influencing how the Somali refugees react to them. It is divided into four sections with the first section looking at the global refugee (governance) regime that will be narrowed to Kenya refugee system to understand the Kenyan government's perspectives on Somali refugees. This section is followed by a critical assessment of the framework of labelling and identity construction. The third section and fourth sections will look at the debate on refugees being an asset to a country and them being a burden with the context of Somali urban refugees in Kenya.

3.2. The Global Refugee (Governance) Regime

Global refugee regime is based on international cooperation where states are obligated to offer safety to refugees. Haddad (2008) and Suhrke (1998) posit that the people that flee their countries either temporarily or permanently should be safe as it is in the interest of international security. The global refugee regime incorporates the decision-making procedures, principles, rules, and norms that govern the responses of various states to refugees. It consists of a set of standards, primarily those that are deeply-rooted in the 1951 Convention concerning the status, rights, and definition of refugees. This concept has been viewed in many ways by scholars. For instance, Whitaker (2008:241) describes the concept of refugee regime as a sole reflection of state interests while Kuyper (2014:627) argues from the neorealist or the neoliberal philosophy, which defines the refugee regime as concerned with formal rules and their usefulness in furthering liberal agenda. Jochim and May (2010:304) argue that members of refugee regimes have different perspectives in their definition of problems.

Betts (2010a:1) notes that there is no global migration governance unlike other trans-boundary matters (e.g. Environment, finance and trade), that lacks a distinguishable global institutional framework. Betts maintains that global refugee regime remains the expanse of migration governance with a strong formal multilateralism (Betts 2010a:2). The establishment and empowerment of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees has an administrative obligation to ensure that states parties meet their obligations and commitment concerning refugees (Loescher et al. 2001; Betts et al. 2013). In global refugee regime, there are two primary obligations in the framework of refugee regime: asylum and burden-sharing. Asylum means that a state has an obligation to accept refugees that reach its territory. Burden-sharing epitomizes the duty of countries towards refugees who are not in their territory but that of other states, and this can be through the resettlement of some of the refugees into their territory or by providing financial support to states that have refugees in their territory. As Loescher (1993:11) claims, refugee movements constitute one of the most significant and challenging problems facing the international community in the post-Cold War era. The advent of the cold-war refugee movements have become more normalized and have occurred on a much larger scale due to the combination of increased political support (host communities have had positive experiences with refugees) and an intensification of violence on a mass scale around the world. The movement of refugees has contributed to political change itself with a good example being the outflow of refugees moving from East Berlin to the West, which initiated the fall of the

Berlin Wall (Loescher 1993: 11). The effect of mass movement across international borders forced upon populations either by state sanctioned violence or other forms of violence is vast. Loescher says that, “it is now clear that we are living in an era in which fundamental political and economic changes in the international system result in large-scale movements of people” (1993: 1).

Accepting refugees is perceived as an additional cost to the economic, social, and political costs by some states and this is why international refugee law exists. The law creates a set of norms that obligates governments to a mutual commitment to support refugees.

According to the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, the definition of a refugee is a person who is outside their country of nationality or residence, who may have no nationality and is unwilling to go back to their country due to fear of oppression or discrimination on the grounds of race, faith, social representation or political ideology (94 Stat 102).

3.3. The Kenyan Refugee Regime

Since the effect of mass movement across international borders has intensified over the years at the international level so has the refugee regime in Kenya been subjected to formal changes since 2006. Despite being a signatory to the 1951 and 1969 UN Convention and Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention respectively, there was no national legislation for refugees until 2006 (Lindley 2011). Lack of specific legislation to govern refugee affairs places the refugees in a vulnerable position of being mistreated which is not in agreement with internationally recognized protection standards. As earlier mentioned, the global refugee regime calls for states to provide assistance to the states that have refugees in their territories. This assistance can either be financial or in the form of protection. In the case of Kenya, the influx of displaced people from Somalia and the context of ‘war on terror’ has led the government to call for international support in dealing with the reasons for displacement in Somalia.⁷

According to a UNHCR’s Strengthening Refugee Protection, Assistance and Support to Host Communities in Kenya and Comprehensive Action Plan for Somali Refugees Capacity Project (2005), the responsibilities being carried out by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees should be a task held by the state as an important area of refugee governance. In the same way,

⁷ Government of Kenya, Briefing on the Refugee and Drought Situation in the Country, 21 July 2011, <http://reliefweb.int/node/435254/> Accessed 28 October 2015

Kenya's lack of accountability render tackling of refugee issues to be ineffective, and yet Kenya's reputation in the international global refugee regime arena needs to be upheld.

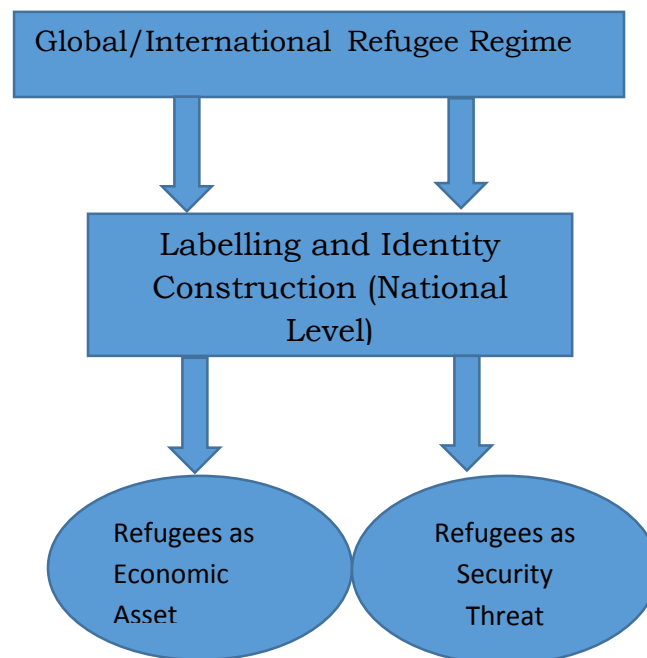
3.4. Labelling in Refugee Policy and the Construction of Identities

It is evident that labelling in refugee policy has been closely related to short-term political horizons that provide simple categories to compartmentalize results. Zetter (1991) describes labelling as the definition of people who are envisaged as objects of policy into available images. If unchecked the label of 'refugee' can easily be equated with the negative connotations of a dependent, troubled, helpless or even violent person. Gupte and Mehta (2007:67) express that "experience has shown top-down labelling policy to feed on such labels to deliver primary needs-driven interventions, limiting efforts therefore to physical protection at best". Furthermore, the functioning of labelling breeds violence because when someone is labelled they are socially excluded and positioned to enact the role that has been assigned to them by the label. The problem here is that these labels and categorizations create different interpretations for the people charged with making and implementing policy on the ground, the communities and the labelled groups. Somalis refugees have been categorized and labelled not only as criminals but as a security threat to the Kenyan society when in reality the Somalis themselves are the ones subject to violence and most in need of protection positive labelling can provide. Jenkins (1994:197) says that categorizations are influential in the creation and reproduction of social identities and have the power to change lives materially. As Jenkins (2000:7) maintained, "the impact on identity of categorization depends not simply on cognitive internalization, but also on its consequences, and the capacity of actors to make their identifications of others count". Like Jenkins, Goffman (1963:11) also argues that, "society establishes the means of categorizing persons and the complement of attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of each of these categories". This is to say that how a group identifies is dependent on how actors acknowledge their identities. Horst (2006:15) says that, "the assumed identity of refugees creates and imposes an institutional dependency; to become a refugee is to accept the passive role of recipient".

Hence when contending with refugee populations and their corresponding social identity, the deconstruction of social stigma is central for a host country to be able to, in fact, provide the kind of safety they are obliged to provide. While it is extremely easy to identify a person who does not "belong" to a particular space as a dangerous outsider, this only creates a stringent definition of persons based on the fears of the entitled population. Zetter (1991:44) in describing labelling says

that “it involves defining a client group in stereotypical, clear-cut ways and then prescribing its assumed set of needs”. An example may be that of a Somali and how the Kenyan population perceives how a Kenyan is supposed to ‘look’ like. Based on events that took place in Kenya where the Al-Shabaab group were held responsible, the differences in physical traits or appearance especially skin tone and hair texture provides a reason to label one as being ‘dangerous’. The diagram below shows how the concepts of refugee regime, labelling and identity construction and refugees as an asset and as a security threat are linked.

Figure 3: Frameworks of Labelling and Refugee Governance



3.5. The Refugee Burden Debate

Gee (2001) in his essay *The Refugee Burden: A Closer Look at the Refugee Act of 1980*, shows how the concept of ‘refugee burden’ emerged alongside policy change and ideological conceptions of citizenship, community and cultural politics. Roberts (1982) explains that the primary objectives of the Refugee Act implemented in the United States in 1980 was to address the distinctly modern realities of refugee experience through the implementation of a flexible national policy that can meet shifting needs based on variable levels of violence occurring in the world. For successful policy to be implemented, it is important that nation states work together. With the growing concern that states would be overburdened due to policy, the *UN Convention and Protocol on the Status of Refugees* was put in

place as an international standard for all host countries to follow (Roberts 1982). Nonetheless, we still see gross disparities between countries, and as Thielemann emphasizes, “Differences in the relative restrictiveness of countries’ asylum regimes over time have come to be regarded as one of the principal reasons for disparities in asylum burdens and their variation over time” (2004: 47).

The term ‘refugee burden’ is a political term that explicitly refers to the financial burden of hosting refugees and thus reflects Brown’s (2015:62) sentiments about economic logic being applied in the political arena. However, the focus on the undesirable effects and costs associated with the refugee question scratches only at the surface. Refugees are termed to impose a burden on hosting countries, and this has been entrenched in various governmental and humanitarian discourses emerging primarily with the term ‘refugee burden’ (Zetter 2012: 50). In a 2004 essay entitled *Why Asylum Policy Harmonization Undermines Refugee Burden-Sharing*, Thielemann claims that the phrase is used to chronicle not only the intensive increase of refugee applications in the mid- 1980’s, but also the disproportionate distribution of asylum requests among countries. The difference between asylum seeker and refugee being the latter in a broader context, covers an individual fleeing their country of origin for reasons such as civil war or natural disaster while the first means an individual who flees on the ground of well-founded fear of persecution on account of religion, race etc. Thielemann (2004:47) says that “average annual asylum applications per head of population have been more than ten times higher in some of the most popular destination countries such as Switzerland and Sweden compared to the least popular ones such as Spain and Portugal”.

As Schuck (1997) claims, the differences on the side of the host countries include their national needs assessment process, criteria for allocation protection, the market for refugee protection quotas and international authority. The several policies of the host countries determine the level of hospitality they are willing to extend towards refugee populations. In reality, the practice is not entirely in line with the political commitment to host refugees in the first place. This kind of contradiction in political stance and actual policy covers up the real and differing political position that is increasingly emerging: the belief that refugee-hosting is a burden for host countries (Schuck, 1997: 246). According to Schuck (1997:276), the success of a proportional burden-sharing system depends critically on the relatively powerful states’ ability to use this advantage more skillfully and forcefully to induce broader participation in the system as refugee flows increase.

3.6. Refugee as an Asset: Developmental Approach to Refugees

We, therefore, need to start rethinking the relationship between refugees and the governments of host countries. Rather than treatment of refugees simply as a load, host governments, and the international community should acknowledge that refugees can be ‘agents of development’. De Montclos and Kagwanja (2000) support this argument by positing that in certain cases the influx of refugees functions as a stimulus to the development of social and political policy and social life through the mobilization of resources in new ways. An example is the use of natural resources by refugee communities in Guinea. The forest region of Guinea witnessed a boom in local agricultural activities as a result of the presence of the Liberian refugee contributions. Similarly, the Sudanese refugees around Gambella in Ethiopia were hired to work in state-owned cotton plantations, the refugees in Southern Sudan of Ugandan origin in the mid-1970s created a low-priced labor force for an increase in productivity. Eritreans around Kassala in Eastern Sudan have also contributed to the twelvefold increase in fruit and vegetable production in twenty years, and this is without taking into account animal husbandry of about 60,000 cattle in the late 1980s (De Montclos & Kagwanja, 2000: 206-207).

Furthermore in Kenya, the number of returns that Somali refugees contribute to the Kenyan economy is quite substantial and opportunities have been created amongst the refugees as traders and consumers. According to Jacobsen (2002), refugees have the potential to make extensive positive contributions to both the society and the economy of their host country. For Jacobsen (2002) if refugees are given the proper infrastructure and resources, they can make significant social and political contributions to the host country. Furthermore, they can contribute to developing political and economic platforms by implementing an extension of the bureaucratic of the state in order to enhance the welfare status of citizens that may be poverty stricken or socially excluded. The realization of this commitment is subject to how the state works to access and control resources dedicated to refugee communities, regardless of the limitations that are assumed to be brought about by refugee communities mainly surrounding the issue of security that may be linked to such a task (Jacobsen, 2002: 578). Ultimately Jacobsen’s point is that refugees can positively contribute to a host economy if given the right resources enabling them to be assets.

Many authors primarily focus on the representation of refugees in light of their adverse effects and negative opinion that is drawn from their existence in host countries. Kirui & Mwaruvie (2012) posit that despite refugee and immigrant communities creating substantial political and security risks for

host governments, these same risks create the political potential for positive change be it through economic activities or being active in political affairs. Loescher in a 1992 essay titled *Refugee Movements and International Security* supports this notion by saying that refugees can be viewed as a social group with the possibility of contributing to society if only perspectives changed from seeing refugees as a humanitarian problem. Loescher's argument is supported by Kirui & Mwaruvie (2012) who point out that the dilemma for the African refugee host states has always been regarding construction of a balance between humanitarian concerns for refugees on the one hand and, on the other hand, the political and security tension that the refugees might bring with them.

The political potential for positive change embedded in refugee communities is largely expressed through the claim that refugees are not passive, rather are empowered as a political force in their country of residence and therefore, can affect a country positively or negatively politically. Refugees can create political change in their host countries through political engagement this can be based on how they react to the politics of the host country and their political relationship with their country of origin. Examples of Somali Kenyans engaging in politics in Kenya include Honorable Aden Duale who is the Majority Leader of the National Assembly of Kenya and Amina Mohamed who is the Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs for Kenya. This goes to show how relations between the sending and receiving countries influence not only localized policies of the host countries, but the transnational political organization (Kirui & Mwaruvie, 2012:162). Furthermore, political activity in this way can only be a positive thing for anyone interested in democracy since it means an increase in political inclusion across diverse populations. Hence, it is understandable that Jacobsen maintains that the possible benefits of the state and its residents extend beyond the burdens and problems created by a mass influx of refugees. The resources that refugees provide potentially ensure long-term gains for the state (Jacobsen 2002:57).

3.7. Conclusion

All in all, in this literature review I have found that while extensive research covers the complex burdens that refugee populations can impose on host countries, little is done to show how refugees can potentially be an asset to society. Following Jenkins (1994; 2004) and Moncrieffe (2006) along with Gupte and Mehta (2007), we have found that this trend can be attributed to categorization and corresponding stigma associated with the fear of hosting nations. With the negative effects outweighing the positive effects of labelling, we also observe that the idea that Somalis are a threat to the national security of Kenya is passively applied on the Somali population. Furthermore, as

elaborated by Goffman (1963), when people are consistently treated as if they are dangerous, they are likely to, over time, take on the role since socially they are prohibited from non-violent social positions or statuses. In this way, it is the social exclusion experienced by labelling itself that constructs violence and not the other way around.

Based on this literature review, the following chapter will look at the contending perspectives on relabelling of Somali refugees and expound on how the labels have been accepted or rejected by the Somali refugees.

CHAPTER FOUR: Relabelling Somali Refugees: Contending Perspectives

4.1. Introduction

Among the countries ranked by “Global Terrorism Index” in 2014, Kenya was ranked as number twelve, one of the highest-ranking countries affected by terror (Global Terrorism Index 2014: 8). Targeted for more than two decades by various groups, Kenya now faces the constant threat from the Al-Shabaab, the Somalia-based Islamist terror organization that has threatened its national security (Lindley, 2011; Laing, 2013; Franklin, 2015). The response of Kenyan government to tackle the problem is to control the Somali refugee inflow, many of whom have integrated into society and settled down as urban refugees in Eastleigh, one of Nairobi neighborhoods (Herz, 2008: 1-9). In addition, it should be noted that many of the refugees residing in urban areas do not have identification cards either because these are confiscated by law enforcement officers or because the move to urban areas is done in a manner where identification may prove risky for their survival. These refugees also receive no support from the government. The consequence of such action has been widespread discrimination against ethnic Somalis living in Kenya either as urban refugees, or as citizens (Lind & Howell, 2010; The Equal Rights Trust, 2012; Campbell, 2005; Lindley, 2011:21). Although, on several occasions this claim has been rejected by the Kenyan government and President Uhuru Kenyatta (Sahara Tribune, 2014), this study did find evidence of such discrimination.

In this chapter, I discuss in part the findings of the four weeks field study in Eastleigh, Kenya, which is predominantly populated by ethnic Somalis as an area of residence and commerce. This chapter is divided into two sections; first I will discuss some of the characteristics of Somali Refugees. This becomes necessary so as to offer information and understanding of the socio and economic background of the refugees since people flee their home for various reasons. The second part will look at the Kenyan government policies, practices, and discourses towards Somali refugees in urban areas.

4.2. What are the characteristics of Somali Refugees in Kenya?

As most asylum seekers and refugees continue to find themselves in neighboring countries, and just a few in the West, civil war, and political subjugation remain the most dominant factors that lead to such occurrence (Bhui et al., 2006:400). The revelation of the findings supported the above claims. During the interview with Hassan (not the translator), a journalist in one of the television station in Mogadishu, he has no other option than to flee Somalia when the political persecutions reach an unbearable stage for him. In his words:

“I fled from Mogadishu 7 years ago after the Islamist group Al-Shabaab came to the office of the television station where I used to work as a journalist. Let’s just say they destroyed equipment and made a mess. For a while, I stayed on, lying low, but the news of colleagues being shot dead coupled with the frequent threat through text messages made me seek refuge here in Kenya” (Hassan, Male, Age 45).

In Somalia, the situation of civilians in areas controlled by Al-Shabaab is of major concern to international communities, as political decrees affecting many aspects of social behavior, recruitment, severe punishment and taxation rules become the order of the day (Lindley 2011:4). The catastrophic condition of civilians in line with Lindley’s (2011) argument was discovered during the interview sections with one of the refugees. According to another respondent:

“I left Somalia 15 years ago because the Al Shabaab militants forced us to join their ranks. They asked us to do all kind of things against innocent civilians. For example, beating people that kept their shops open during prayer times. There was a day one of my friends refused to beat an elderly man; the militants beat him nearly to death for refusing the order. Two weeks later I and three others planned our escape from Somalia and fled to Kenya” (Omar, Male, Age 41).

While some fled Somalia because of forced recruitment to join the Al-Shabaab group, there are others that ran for their lives as a result of physical injuries attained or close calls with death. Examples include Hanoon, a 46-year-old female who claims that selling tea to an officer led to her being shot at by the terrorists. While the basis of refugee flight in Africa has always been multidimensional varying between fear of persecution because of race, ethnicity or religion and being forced to leave involuntarily (Rogge, 1993:18), at times these fears take new forms which include those refugees who flee their countries of origin due to environmental issues. According to

Myers (2002:609), “these are people who can no longer gain a secure livelihood in their homelands because of drought, soil erosion, desertification, deforestation and other environmental problems, together with the associated problems of population pressures and profound poverty”. Two of the respondents elucidated further by saying that;

“I could not bear the suffering any longer; I lost my parents and sibling to the famine that ravaged our land. I did not have a choice but to flee with my other siblings. Unfortunately, only two of us made it to Kenya alive” (Abubakar, Male, 37).

Othman, a nineteen-year-old also had a similar experience to Abubakar but his reason for moving to Kenya was because his parents could not earn a living anymore because of the drought and conflict. Indeed, one of the most horrible famines to have ravaged Somalia in sixty years led to many refugees walking for weeks through landscapes filled with rebels in search of food. By the time they got to Kenya, many could hardly walk or talk (New York Times 2011)⁸.

At the same time, Othman’s experience revealed that there are Somali refugees that did not participate in the decision to leave. His experience was similar to that of Awa a twenty-year-old female who was part of the focus group discussion and was born and raised in Dadaab camp. According to her, she has no connection with Somalia as all her family members are here in Kenya, some in the camp and others in Eastleigh with her. She implied that the question of leaving Somalia does not apply since she has never set foot on Somali soil.

While we see that the core of Somalia’s problems is internal conflicts, the majority of the population have left Somalia because of directly or indirectly being affected by the situation in the country. In a manner, the characteristics of Somali refugees can be related to their reasons for leaving their country of origin with the majority of the respondents stating their reasons for moving as being linked to environmental issues and persecution by the Al-Shabaab terrorist group. It should be noted that, although all refugees are treated the same whether they come from Somalia, Burundi, Rwanda, Ethiopia etc. the refugees that are born in Kenya find it difficult to be motivated to find white collar jobs or hope for placement in recognized companies as many organizations fear having employees that may be ‘terrorists’. Many of these refugees are at home in Kenya that they view themselves as Kenyans.

⁸ http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/16/world/africa/16somalia.html?_r=0 Accessed 16 August 2015

4.3. Kenyan government policies towards Somali refugees in urban areas

The major refugee policy in Kenya was enacted in December 2006. The Refugee Act (2006) implemented by the Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA) only stipulates areas in which refugees may reside such as transit centers and camps. The Act does not in any way specify whether refugees shall be obligatory to live in these selected areas. (UNHCR 2014:2). Although, not targeted at refugees per se, the Kenya Citizenship and Immigration Act (2011) may perhaps offer some prospects for refugees to locally integrate into communities in Kenya. However, “it is fair to say that de jure and de facto local integration of refugees into the Kenyan community is extremely limited. This is owing to the restrictions on their movement and the lack of authorization for refugees to engage in gainful employment or other forms of self-reliance as work permits are not issued to refugees”(UNHCR 2014:2).

The main policy that this research paper is based on is that of Operation Usalama Watch. According to Amnesty International (2014), this directive began in early April 2014. After two attacks in March that injured many people, the Kenyan authorities began rounding up Somalis and forcibly relocating them to refugee camps in northern Kenya. The Deputy Regional Director for Eastern Africa at Amnesty International, Michelle Kagari said that, “Kenya is violating its own constitution and international law by subjecting the Somali community to unlawful expulsions and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment under the guise of its counter-terror operation, ‘Usalama Watch’”⁹. The local media namely Standard Media¹⁰ and Nation Media¹¹ pointed out that the exercise was mainly to remove undocumented migrants from a community that has been portrayed as ‘terrorists’ by the narrative of the state and other Kenyans that are against them.

Human Rights Watch posit that the deployment of about 500 security officers to Eastleigh by the Kenyan police led to the forceful raiding of homes, people being extorted of massive amounts of money and many being harassed and detained.¹² An opportunity to find out more about this directive presented itself when I met one of the government respondents. During the interview session with the government official who refused to be named and for this research shall be referred to as Mr. X, he claimed that the Kenyan government has been fair in terms of treatment to all

⁹ www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/05/kenya-somalis-scapegoated-counter-terror-crackdown/ Accessed 16 August 2015

¹⁰ www.standardmedia.co.ke/article/2000109277/is-operation-usalama-watch-a-somali-gulag/ Accessed 16 August 2015

¹¹ www.nation.co.ke/oped/opinion/Usalama-Watch-a-mask-for-forcible-displacement/ Accessed 16 August 2015

¹² www.hrw.org/news/2015/1/29/kenya-counterterrorism-operations-undermine-rights/ Accessed 17 August 2015

refugees in Kenya regardless of nationality. However upon further probing on why the government insists on Somali refugees going back to the camp and why the belief is that encampment or repatriation of refugees is a durable solution to insecurity in Kenya, this is what he had to say:

“Refugee or not, Kenya will always be a target for the Al-Shabaab terrorist group, but the encampment and repatriation of a reasonable number of refugees will go a long way to reducing the propensity of attacks being carried out in Kenya. Trust me, several potential attacks have been thwarted since the Operation Usalama Watch started”.

The continuing Kenyan government security sweep against Somalis has brought about various reactions as the Kenyan government has vowed to repatriate illegal Somalis back to their country and those suspected of having ties with Al-Shabaab must be deported from Kenya (African Argument 2014)¹³. The issuance of the directive to encamp all those refugees residing outside the camps that are located in the North-Eastern part of Kenya in a manner views refugees as being a threat (African Argument 2014)¹⁴. However, this has been a gross misinterpretation of Al-Shabaab’s transitional nature as the group’s membership is no longer limited exclusively to Somalis but now includes many Kenyans. The directive is in contradiction of Kenya’s international obligations towards refugees. This is because those who move from one country to another in search of better economic prospects are now as easily affected (in terms of how they are viewed) as those who flee from persecution. The UN Convention on the Rights of Migrants indicates that a migrant is an individual who makes a conscious choice to leave his country of origin to seek better prospects. This is expressed more candidly by Al-Jazeera a leading news broadcasting company that points out that: “The use of terminology is of critical importance in shaping our perceptions, attitudes and behaviors. Calling those who flee from persecution, inhumane treatment, torture, violence and war as "migrants" may have irreparable consequences on government policies and the lives of thousands of actual refugees (Al-Jazeera 2015)¹⁵. The respondent Mr. X was convinced that Al-Shabaab terrorists are disguising themselves as refugees to gain access to the country and maintained that:

¹³ <http://africanarguments.org/2014/06/23/kenyas-somalis-caught-between-power-and-profiling-by-hassan-m-abukar/> Accessed 17 September 2015

¹⁴ <http://africanarguments.org/2014/04/02/kenya-and-somalia-must-work-together-on-post-al-shabaab-security-by-abdullahi-boru-hallakhe-and-abihakim-ainte/> Accessed 9 August 2015

¹⁵ <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/08/refugees-terminology-matters-150831091756282.html> Accessed 9 September 2015

“It is for their safety and the security of Kenyans. Intelligence reports show that Al-Shabaab terrorists have chosen to integrate themselves into the Somali community by disguising themselves as genuine refugees residing in urban areas particularly Eastleigh. In order to know who is who, there is an urgent need to respond accordingly so that lives and properties of people living in those communities will be safe”.

Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, countries that host refugees and asylum seekers have since begun using the influx of refugees to exploit the terrorism threat to nations security and their existence, claiming that terrorists hide among the refugee population (ABC Australia 2014). We have also been witness to situations where countries have closed access roads or bridges for security reasons against fleeing internal displaced persons as a result of a conflict. An example is Iraq closing a key bridge used by families fleeing Anbar province that is controlled by ISIL to Baghdad claiming that ISIL terrorists may be hiding among the people fleeing for their lives (Al-Jazeera 2015). The question of why the government attempts to repatriate all Somali refugees back to Somalia with the conflict still ongoing was a question put across to the government officials. Mr. X sharply denied saying that the media’s propaganda made it look like repatriation is a forceful affair. He maintained that every country had a limit in terms of the number of refugees they can take. Kenya has the largest number of refugees in Africa despite the fact that the Kenyan economy is still struggling.

“Looking at what is happening in Europe now in Greece and Italy, you can say that no single country should take sole responsibility of a regional problem. In as much as the Kenyan government would like to play her part in accommodating all people that flee from conflict zones or for other reasons, we can only do so much as the interests of the Kenyan citizens come first” (Mr. X 2015).

By definition, the global refugee regime implies that while every state that accepts refugees are considered to be acting on behalf of the international community in protection and safeguarding the fundamental human rights values. Sequentially, asylum states are in their right are to anticipate the support of others none asylum states, whether it is through political, material aid, financial, or preferably, taking actions that will address the problems that produce refugees in the first place. Sadly, such support is uncommon, and the overall cost of taking care of refugees is unduly endured by countries that are not in a strong financial or security position to afford it (Goodwin-Gill and Sazak 2015: np). Refugee hosting states such as Kenya rely solely on the intentional, voluntary

contribution that allows other states to decide on how much they are willing contributes to foreign aids operations. Therefore, the needed amount of aid habitually surpasses received contributions. While the Kenya Government have rights to raise concern about the slow response of the global refugee regime, findings show that the Kenya Government has not been abandoned by the international community as depicted by the Mr. X. The United States alone has provided \$289 million in the past two years to Kenya refugee situation and also offer \$100 million in military aid to support the battle against terrorism, in addition to drone strikes against Al-Shabaab in Somalia (Washington Post 2015). Apart from financial and military support from International community, “IOM Nairobi facilitates the resettlement of refugees from Kenya to various destinations including USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and at least 10 European nations under governmental resettlement projects. Thousands of migrants are assisted each year” (International Organization for Migration 2011:1).

Against this backdrop, one can argue that the Kenya government given reasons of refugee burden is unfounded because Kenya has not been left alone to carry the load of hosting the refugee alone. The global refugee regime, considering the available evidence has supported the Kenya government to share the burden financially through funds to sustain the refugee camps and military support. The explanation by Mr. X resonates Whitaker’s sentiments on the emergence of walls coming up in the 90s in a bid to shut out refugees. He (Whitaker) describes the system as global apartheid (Whitaker 1998:413-414). A policy that can be used to explain global apartheid is one of an encampment. Although international law prohibits any form of forceful encampment, in the case of Kenya it has become the norm. Mr. X stated that encampment is an accepted practice all over the world and to suggest that more than half a million refugees go about their business with no form of monitor or control is unthinkable. In line with issues that come with supporting encampment of refugees, I raised the question of security and asked Mr. X on his opinion about the claim that Eastleigh is a hub for terrorists, he said that:

“Tons of intelligence and security evidence corroborate that Al-Shabaab terrorists disguise themselves as refugees to gain access to the camps and urban areas such as Eastleigh to plot attacks. The government has had no reason to raise alarm over insecurity as it was not an

issue but in the wake of West Gate¹⁶ and Garissa attacks¹⁷ the government's prerogative is to prevent similar attacks from taking place again.”

What Mr. X was expressing was how the existence of Somali refugees in urban areas had become an issue that raised security concerns based on prior events in the country.

However available evidence suggests that terrorism is increasingly a homegrown phenomenon. In the case of Kenya where according to the Economist Magazine, “all four Garissa gunmen were probably Kenyan. Others arrested and tried for Al-Shabaab attacks in Kenya in the past have been Kenyan, too. Some were new converts to Islam and none was a refugee” (Economist 2015), the current portrayal of refugees is that of them being a threat. According to Waever et al (1988 cited in Mogire and Mogire 2011:20), anything labelled as a security issue can be contended to be of more pertinence and preference compared to other matters. Mogire and Mogire (2011:21) maintained that the perceived existential threat that is evoked by securitization of an issue does not necessarily have to be real. Therefore, it can be argued that refugees do not need to pose a threat in order to be portrayed as a perceived threat. They just need to be accepted as a threat by the resident population. While the state has played an important role in the securitization of refugees, international organization, media and individual politicians have also served to nominate them as a threat both discursively and through policy actions (Mogire and Mogire 2011:21). The interview session proceeded by asking him (Mr. X) if he believed that the government actions towards Somali refugees negate their economic contribution to the economy of Kenya and his response:

“I do not believe so because the government did not stop them from doing their business. However, there are those that engage in criminal activities or not willing to abide by the laws of the land. Law and order is to be maintained by everyone, so if they are willing to stay or wish to stay, they must be ready to follow the rules of the country”.

The Kenyan government insists that Garissa County that is host to approximately 500,000 refugees is a haven of bandits, smugglers and terrorists hiding within the refugee population. The image of Dadaab camp depicted by media is as a source of entry for small arms which exacerbates the security

¹⁶ Westgate Mall an upmarket shopping centre in Nairobi was raided by Al-Shabaab militants on 21st September 2013 who killed unarmed civilians as they tried to flee. At least 67 people were killed (The Guardian, 4th October 2013).

¹⁷ Garissa Attacks took place on 2nd April 2015 where 147 people mostly students were killed in Garissa University which is in North-Eastern Kenya after an assault by Al-Shabaab militants (The Telegraph, 2nd April 2015).

threat to Kenya. Garissa County Commissioner Rashid Harun Khator says that "The Kenyan-Somali border has been the main entrance of small weapons into the country, which have had devastating effects on the security of the country," (Al-Jazeera 2013). Menkhaus (2013) claims that a vast majority of Kenyan borders are un-policed and unguarded leaving a huge security gap and a show of lack of commitment on the part of Kenyan Government. Despite acknowledging that some of the activities such as smuggling has an adverse effect on Kenyan import and export revenue, it would be absurd to place the loss of income at the border purely on Somali refugees while there exist corrupt Kenyan customs officers that work with them(Menkhaus 2013:51).

4.4. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is clear that the narrative of security threat depicted by the Kenyan government is unjustifiable as available evidence suggests that the attacks on the country were carried out by homegrown radicalized groups. A fact that remains is that urban refugees have contributed to the economy of Eastleigh. Despite this knowledge of the contribution of refugees to the country, the Kenyan government is unwilling to assist refugees adequately. The findings of this study reveal that forceful encampment of refugees does not solve the refugee crisis. With minimal refugee protection, violation of human rights and harsh conditions, refugees tend to move towards urban areas to avoid those.¹⁸

¹⁸ Lindley, The Early Morning Phone call

CHAPTER FIVE. Influencing Factors and Reaction of Somali Refugees to Negative Labels

5.1. Introduction

It has been widely noted that discourses on ‘refugee burden’ contribute to constructing social stigma that negatively depict refugees as devalued subjects (Gupte and Mehta 2007). To explain the factors that influence the view that refugees are a burden as opposed to being beneficial to the host government, this chapter brings to the fore the voice of the Somali refugees by sharing their experiences. We did this in two parts, the first part is to gather their experiences so that we address the factors that explain how these discourses and labels come into play. While the second part examined how these labels are resisted or accepted by refugees, especially in local discourses about their economic activities. The last part will be the conclusion that will highlight the key findings

5.2. Factors explaining the play of discourses and labels

In order to understand the effect of the Kenyan government representation of Somali refugees and reactions of the refugees to the label allotted to them and local discourses especially about their economic activities, relevant questions were asked in both the focus group discussions and the interviews. I was more interested to know how they have been treated since the directive of Operation Usalama Watch by the government and findings showed that police persecution and intimidation is not new to the residents of Eastleigh especially after the directive was issued.

Nimo, a 61 years old widow that lives on handouts from well-wishers and relatives due to high blood pressure and asthma, said that the directive has affected her because she has been once arrested and harassed. Inability to find menial jobs due to her old age has also made it difficult for her to sustain herself as the people she was dependent on for hand-outs got arrested too. Other than that it has been hard not only for Nimo but others as well to use public service vehicles because they are Somali. Many respondents like Zeinab a female who is thirty four years old corroborated Nimo’s story by saying that many journeys to the city centre have been stopped for lack of identification or skepticism by other passengers.

A respondent by the name of Mohammed shared his experience with bitterness saying that:

“if you have money to pay bribes consistently then you can move freely without so much worry if not, you risk getting thrown at the back of a truck awaiting your final destination which is the camp. I used to run a shop of my own but after constantly closing shop for fear

of arrest I ran at a loss and shut it down. I now survive on money from strangers or well-wishers. I am not as strong as I used to be (*Mohammed, Male, and Age 60*)

Mohammed's experience cannot be considered unique as many refugees suffer the same plight on a regular basis. The harassment by police shows how the generalization of refugees as all being threats negatively affects the refugees themselves. It is unfortunate that the few with identification cards also face similar harassment as their brothers without identification. Interaction with one of the respondents emphasized this plight saying that harassment for them has become the order of the day. According to Gupte and Mehta (2007) the primary factor that leads to the stigmatization of migrants and refugees comes hand in hand with the processes of categorization that impose labels upon them in the first place. "Refugees are labelled as 'problems' for host countries, and interventions are focused on 'durable solutions' that is voluntary repatriation, resettlement in a third country or some cases, integration into the host society" (Gupte and Mehta 2007: 64). The host society which is Kenya has developed corresponding negative perceptions about what immigration of people into its society means.

The findings of this study show that the harassment of Somali refugees is so rampant to the extent that making ends meet is as challenging as it gets in Eastleigh. The testimony of Selam, a woman with three children supported this claim as she said:

"The label has affected everybody negatively. It is tough to get employment or move about without fear. It is sad that everyone assumes that because we are Somali we have ill intentions" (Selam, Female, Age 35).

Agreeing with Moncrieffe's (2006:42) argument, it is clear that labels influence stigmatization and discrimination that generate fear. This position is supported by Leuda et al. (2004:244-245) in their analysis of categorization. Hausendorf (2000) argues that the average understanding of people is organized in membership categories, in which the activities of a category are bound together by the rules for their application. "Knowledge about people as it is locally invoked and reproduced...stresses that categorizing is normally done to accomplish something other than just categorizing" (Hausendorf, 2000 cited in Leuda et al. 2004:244). The concept is used to create a platform of dichotomies such as 'us' and 'them' and discourses that function to exclude systematically such as 'we' and 'ours', among others.

I later met with two women (Fawzia, Age 55 and Fardosa, Age 49) who would only talk to me in a group discussion with other women and only in a secure area in the Eastleigh neighborhood. Both women made a living out of selling tea to construction workers and other vendors before their goods were confiscated during one of the many anti-terrorism raids. They claimed that their lives have taken a turn for the worse considering the harassment and confiscation of their goods. In Fawzia's case, the police took her card and money that she had made from selling tea. For Fardosa, a single mother of five children her biggest concern was that monies that the police take from them is solely to feed her children and detention leaves her children with no guardian.

It is without a doubt that the label of 'terrorist' has created a lucrative business for the law enforcement personnel in Kenya. Refugees part with a lot of money as bribes whether or not they have identification. The finding shows that refusal to pay bribes by refugees is a risk of being detained as a terror suspect. The experience of Ali, a 27-year-old born in Somalia but moved to Kenya when he was one provides great insight. As a volunteer with a youth group in Eastleigh he says that paying of bribes to police officers frustrates his efforts to try and lead a normal life. He believes that Kenya has provided him with an opportunity to be a better citizen and forceful encampment of refugees limits access to services that refugees can get in urban areas. With no family in Somalia, Ali sees no need to send money back to Somalia so the money he makes is only for him and his mother. He says that Operation Usalama has led to him being ejected from public service vehicles and getting yelled at by Kenyans in public spaces claiming he is attempting to kill them.

5.3. Reactions to labels by refugees in discourses on economic activities and being a security threat

The labeling of refugees particular those that come from Somalia as being a security threat was widely rejected by all the respondents that I talked to in Eastleigh. Despite thousands being detained and approximately 500 deported in 2014 as a result of security sweep by the government (Rasmussen, 2014:1), the Somali continue to resist the stereotype of being terrorists and continue to assert their right to live and work in the neighborhood. This stereotype of Somalis as terrorists has evoked angry responses from the respondents and some like Hassan finds it incredulous that all Somalis would be thought of as terrorists. His thoughts on the issue are as follows:

“I am always angry when I hear educated people talk like this. How can a refugee that fled for his life from Al-Shabaab leaving property and their life back in Somalia come to Kenya to support the same people that made him flee in the first place? As I told you before I had my reputation back home, and here I am nothing and yet someone will still believe that my allegiance lies with the same group that took everything away from me” (Hassan, Male, Age 45).

A majority of the respondents were of the opinion that if Somali refugees are indeed supporters of Al-Shabaab as claimed by the government, then they have no reason of leaving Somalia in the first place. Granted, most refugees believe that joining the terror group guarantees you a better life in Somalia so living in poverty in Kenya would not be as attractive. Many maintained that those that believe that all refugees are indeed supporters of Al-Shabaab are being unreasonable. For Abshir for instance, the label of terrorist is a political statement for political gain:

“All Somali refugees support Al-Shabaab? That is just a dominant statement by politicians to confuse the public. I do not think that it is difficult for anybody to understand that being an Al-Shabaab supporter would imply living like a king back in Somalia as such I have no reason to be in Kenya” (Abshir, Male, Age 30).

Abshir expression of how he feels about politicians exploiting the refugee situation for political gains is not new and has been supported by various scholars. For instance, Lovejoy and William (1997) and Murshid (2013) argue that politicians capitalize on the refugee situation and blamed them for an array of long standing problems, including imbibing the attitude of scapegoating for creating economic predicament in their constituencies, adding to unemployment and creating a myriad of social problems. But as the findings have demonstrated, even the refugees can easily identify the political undertone in the response of Kenya government to Somali urban refugees

Most of the refugees that dwell in urban areas, in this case, Eastleigh, did not just decide to leave the camp for the neighborhood. Many of them moved at the prompting of clan members already living in Eastleigh with established businesses. During the study, I discovered that vast majority of refugees plan to go back home as soon it becomes safe to do but need to be gainfully employed in order to send money back home to family members looking up to them for assistance. Staying in the camps restricts their movements and limits their chances of getting jobs and are fully dependent on United Nations High Commission for Refugees for support. Omar, a 41 year old man decided to

leave Dadaab camp after ten years and decided to move to Eastleigh five years ago after realizing that going back home was not going to happen anytime soon. His reasons for moving came about due to the limited camp rations and no options of getting any form of employment. He expressed that with people waiting for him to provide back in Somalia, life in the camp was not very conducive for him.

By and large the refugees' decision to continue living in Eastleigh has been not having anything to call their own at the camps. This drives many to seek greener pastures outside the camps making them an economic asset to the country. The refugees I interacted with said that the Kenyan government should appreciate their efforts in developing Kenya visible through the transformation of Eastleigh as opposed to advancing their country.

“Eastleigh was not economically advanced before the arrival of Somali refugees, and now that we have developed the place into a renowned business hub, they want to chase us away. Terrorists do not build; they destroy. Our sweat has gone into changing this place for the better and yet they call us terrorists. I am a hardworking Somali, not a terrorist” (Abubakar, Male, 37).

Despite the investment that refugees make in Eastleigh, Kenyan anti-terror strategies are keen on discriminating certain groups such as the ethnic Somalis. (Campbell 2006; Prestholdt 2011; Simpson & Laper 2013; ‘Somalis are scapegoats’ 2014). Somali refugees have found ways of creating employment not only for themselves but Kenyans as well. The findings show that many Kenyans are not only clients to Somali-owned businesses, but some are in the employ of these businesses as well. Abdulsamed supports this claim by stating that the emergent Somali investment in Nairobi has drawn in many service-providers, it is clear that urban refugees are certainly not a burden on the state but rather an asset (Abdulsamed, 2011: 3). The majority of the respondents I spoke to run their own business or are employed in an industry or another.

5.4. Conclusion

The most significant point made by Leuda et al. (2004) is that the discourse of categorization is a form of systematic violence that constructs very material realities. This discursive, yet concrete form of systematic construction of exclusion through the implementation of language and categorization is echoed by the work of Rasmussen (2014). According to Rasmussen (2014), an analysis of the material function of discourse provides an explanation for why Somalis especially, those in Eastleigh are considered a problem, many of whom are Kenyan by birth and descent. The implementation of a fine form of stereotyping casting Somalis as interlopers in Kenya and as agents of terrorism forces Somalis to continue to assert their right to live and work in the neighborhood where they are excluded based on discursive forms of social exclusion. (Rasmussen 2014: 1). When social groups are labelled and stigmatized as being nothing other than their label we find that social exclusion is produced retroactively through language, rather than the mere representation of something pre-existing.

While it is clear that the government's standpoint is one that is keen on ensuring refugees remain in the refugee camps, the refugees feel otherwise. They believe that their extended stay in the urban area of Eastleigh not only benefits them as they can support their families, but they are also enhancing the economic growth of Kenya. With labelling and stigmatization by all sectors of the Kenyan society being rampant in Eastleigh, the sentiments shared show that their efforts to progress is hindered by the labels imposed on them by society. This chapter has elaborated the findings of the data in the field and attempted to engage the data with the literature on the discourses surrounding the refugee burden debate.

CHAPTER SIX: Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

6.1. Conclusion

This study began with an investigation of Somali refugees in Eastleigh Kenya. The primary aim of the study is to explore the shift of relabelling Somali refugees as a security threat from being an economic asset. In this study, we look at the views of Somali refugees towards the label of security threat. The Kenyan government implemented the Operation Usalama Watch directive as a counter-terrorism exercise whose target group was mainly the Somali community in an attempt to curb 'terrorism'. This security operation led to the arrest of many refugees and asylum-seekers in widespread swoops mostly in Eastleigh an urban area in Nairobi. Arrests resulted in the detention and the forceful relocation to the refugee camps in the North Eastern part of Kenya. This widespread swoop also acted as an excuse to extort money from people by the police who demanded payments for their freedom. Therefore, the research highlighted the views of refugees regarding the policy of Operation Usalama Watch. The refugee perspectives were relevant to this study since they are labelled as 'terrorists' and Operation Usalama Watch directly affected them. The findings revealed that the Somali refugees viewed all the steps taken by the Kenyan Government as a politically calculated move to exploit the refugee situation.

The dominant discourse on the migration of Somali citizens to Kenya is that of internal conflict. However, the findings of this study revealed that the reasons behind the migration of Somali refugees to Kenya were not limited to internal conflict rather included forcible recruitment into Al-Shabaab, political persecution and environmental issues such as drought and deforestation that was not favorable for their livelihoods.

In terms of economic impact, Somali refugees especially those that reside in Eastleigh have been estimated to contribute much to the Kenyan economy. In this study, I argued against the negative label placed upon refugees that disregards their economic contribution. Despite the Kenya government declaration that Somali refugees are a security threat, their departure from the country may affect the urban economy of Kenya in a negative manner. The economic stimulus generated by the presence of refugees leads to the opening and development of host regions. This stimulus can be through the acquisition of foodstuff, agencies providing relief components, aid workers' expenditure, refugee capital, as well as employment and revenue accrued to the local population, directly or indirectly, through projects that assist refugee areas. Refugee presence also contributes to

the creation of jobs that benefits the local population, directly or indirectly (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, n.d.).

In terms of security matters, the Kenyan government has sworn to repatriate Somali refugees back to Somalia since the belief is that the refugee camps are being used by Al-Shabaab to plan attacks on the country. During the interviews, the refugees were asked to express their feelings concerning them being labeled as ‘terrorists’ and the how the directive has affected them in the day to day activities.

Regarding the policy, the research was able to discover that the policy was not refugee-friendly. Using the findings, we find that the harassment of Somali refugees has been rampant to the extent that making ends meet or earning their livelihoods is challenging in Eastleigh.

6.2. Policy Recommendations

This research paper presents the following recommendations that are based on the study and its analysis

- a) More research should be conducted on the economic impact of refugees. Through this, the Kenyan government can weigh in on how this quantifiable impact benefits the economy and the advantages of being more receptive to economic migrants.
- b) The Kenya government should be mainly considering refugees as an asset i.e. they lead to economic growth rather than being labeled as security threats to the country. This can tap into sectors in which the refugees thrive such as shipping (offering shipping services for individuals who purchase goods outside the country and seek cheaper options of bringing their goods into Kenya).
- c) A Refugee Bill should be adopted that does not override with any other legislation such that issues arising from the Bill favor refugee rights. This is to say that a Bill that is customized to the refugee situation in Kenya.
- d) Mechanisms should be put in place that encourage refugee protection in agreement with international regulations. This ensures that refugee affairs are not handled in an ad hoc manner and protection is guaranteed in the country in which they seek refuge.
- e) The government of Kenya should alter its counter-productive measure of encampment for all refugees and instead include the refugee camps in its development agenda. This not only

means investing in businesses that the refugees engage in but supporting their personal plans to relocate back to Somalia or integration into the Kenyan society.

- f) Together with the refugee legislation, a national policy should be introduced and incorporated that states the government's agenda in line with refugee issues and encompasses other matters that are not legislative in nature.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Interview Guide

For Somali Refugees

- a) What are your reasons for leaving Somalia? When did you leave Somalia and when did you arrive in Kenya?
- b) What influenced your decision to move from the camps to Eastleigh?
- c) Did you have any family or relatives residing in Eastleigh prior to you moving there?
- d) Please state what you do for a living and if you send money back home to your family from your business on a regular basis?
- e) Have you faced any form of persecution from the government or fellow Kenyan-Somalis since your arrival in Eastleigh?
- f) What are your thoughts on the government demanding that all refugees return to the refugee camps?
- g) Have you been treated differently since the directive by government of Operation Usalama Watch? If so, how?
- h) What is your opinion of Somali refugees in Kenya being regarded as supporters of Al-Shabaab?
- i) How has this label affected your day to day life in Eastleigh?

For Government Officials

- a) How long have you been working on refugee issues?
- b) What are the government policies on refugees and their rights?
- c) Why does the government insist that Somali refugees should go back to the camps?
- d) Why has the government attempted to repatriate all Somali refugees back to Somalia with the conflict still ongoing?
- e) What are your thoughts on forceful encampment and repatriation of refugees being a contravention of refugee rights according to United Nations regulations?
- f) Do you believe the government actions towards Somali refugees negates their economic contribution to the economy of Kenya?
- g) Is the government aware of the economic contribution made by refugees?
- h) Are other refugees from other countries treated the same way the Somali refugees are treated?
- i) Do you believe repatriation or encampment of refugees is a durable solution to insecurity in Kenya?

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