

**BETWEEN INTEGRATION AND SEPARATION: EXPLORING THE ENCAMPMENT POLICY
EXPERIENCES OF REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITIES IN KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP, IN KENYA**

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Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Doctor of Philosophy, is entirely my own work and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, does not, to the best of my knowledge, breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

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List of Abbreviations

ACC: Assistant County Commissioner

ADR: Alternative Dispute Resolution

AU: African Union

CPPT: Community Peace and Protection Teams

CRA: Commissioner of Refugee Affairs

CRRF: Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework

DCC: Deputy County Commissioner

DCU: Dublin City University

DRS: Department of Refugee Services

EAC: East African Community

EU: European Union

GCR: Global Compact on Refugees

GIZ: German Development Agency

IFC: International Finance Corporation

IGAD: Intergovernmental Authority on Development

IOM: International Organisation for Migration

IRC: International Rescue Committee

JRS: Jesuit Refugee Services

KDF: Kenya Defence Forces

KDRDIP: Kenya Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project

KIPPRA: Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis

KISED: Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan

KKCF: Kakuma Kalobeyei Challenge Fund

KPR: Kenya Police Reservists

LAPPSET: Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport Corridor Program

LWF: Lutheran World Federation

NACOSTI: National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

NGO: Non-governmental Organisation

OAU: Organisation of African Unity

OCS: Officer Commanding Police Station

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

RCK: Refugee Consortium of Kenya

REC: Research Ethics Committee

RLO: Refugee-Led Organisation

RSD: Refugee Status Determination

SALIS: School of Applied Languages and Intercultural Studies

TCG: Turkana County Government

UK: United Kingdom

UN-Habitat: United Nations Human Settlements Programme

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

US/USA: United States or United States of America

WFP: World Food Programme

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Abstract

Kenya's longstanding role as a host country for displaced populations has been accompanied by enduring tensions between international obligations and national socio-political realities. Despite successive commitments to global and regional frameworks promoting refugee integration, the lived experience of displacement remains characterised by containment, marginalisation, and precariousness. This study interrogates the policy of encampment as it is experienced by both refugees and host communities in Kakuma Refugee Camp, exploring how it shapes notions of integration and community relations. Drawing on qualitative fieldwork conducted between May and July 2023 and analysed through a thematic framework, the research examines the ambivalences inherent in protracted displacement. It highlights how refugees articulate integration primarily as access to fundamental rights and freedoms, whereas host communities tend to frame it in terms of peaceful coexistence and equitable access to humanitarian resources. These divergent conceptualisations reflect not only personal and collective aspirations but also the structural conditions imposed by the humanitarian regime and the national state apparatus. The findings further reveal the camp as a paradoxical space: a site of refuge from external violence, yet one where new forms of social suffering are produced. Experiences of encampment are differentiated along lines of nationality, gender, and socio-economic status, complicating simplistic narratives of protection or integration. Interactions between refugees and hosts oscillate between fragile solidarity and latent conflict, shaped by unequal access to aid, competition over limited resources, and exclusionary governance practices. Rather than integration being a linear or inevitable process, it emerges as a contested terrain, where hopes for belonging are continually negotiated against the backdrop of structural inequality and political abandonment.

Choice of Terminology

This study focuses on forcibly displaced persons in Africa, making it crucial to clarify the terminology used, as some terms are applied interchangeably and have different definitions in other geographical locations. The term *refugee*, as used in this research, aligns with both the definitions provided by the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, as well as the 1969 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. According to the Refugee Convention, a refugee is defined as any person who:

"...owing to a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of their nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of their former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it" (UNHCR, 1951).

The OAU Refugee Convention expands this definition, stating that a refugee includes:

"Every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination, or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of their country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave their place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside their country of origin or nationality" (African Union, no date)

Asylum seeker, on the other hand, is defined by the UNHCR as an individual who has applied or intends to apply for recognition as a refugee but whose application has not yet been processed by the host government. Essentially, an asylum seeker can also be referred to as an international protection applicant (IPA). Under the OAU Refugee Convention, asylum seekers are considered to be refugees. In this regard, this research uses the term refugee to include asylum seekers as conceptualised under the OAU Refugee Convention.

The term host community, as used in this study, refers to the local population living around the Kakuma refugee camps, primarily members of the Turkana ethnic group (World Bank, 2019c). Lastly, the term *migrant*, as defined in the UNHCR Emergency Handbook, applies to any individual who moves from their usual place of residence—whether within their own

country or across international borders—regardless of whether the movement is voluntary or forced (UNHCR, 2019b).

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction

This chapter sets the stage for the inquiry by presenting the aims, significance, and research questions guiding this study. It first highlights the rationale for undertaking this project, situating it within broader debates on refugee integration and the limitations of existing policy frameworks. The research focus is Turkana County, a region whose geographical, social, and political particularities are crucial to understanding the conditions under which both refugees and host populations navigate displacement and marginality in Kakuma refugee camp.

Special attention is given to the cultural and governance structures of the Turkana people, whose history of socio-political exclusion under colonial and postcolonial administrations continues to shape local perceptions of refugee presence. Rather than viewing integration as an abstract or universally desired goal, the chapter foregrounds the complex interplay between historical grievances, present-day inequalities, and humanitarian interventions. The perception among many Turkana that refugees benefit from preferential treatment, despite widespread poverty within the host community itself, emerges as a central tension explored throughout the thesis.

The chapter concludes by offering a roadmap to the thesis structure, outlining how each chapter contributes to the overall understanding of the entanglements between policy, lived experience, and the contested terrain of integration in contexts of protracted displacement.

2 Rationale for the Study and Research Questions

According to the UNHCR 2024 Global Trends Report, there were approximately 117.3 million people who were forcibly displaced. In Africa, particularly in the Horn of Africa region where Kenya is located, displacement is driven by a combination of factors, including civil conflicts, political instability, natural disasters, human rights violations, and climate change-related challenges such as prolonged droughts and famines (DeJesus, 2018; Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2024; IOM, 2024). By mid-2024, UNHCR estimated that

approximately 5.4 million refugees and asylum seekers were hosted in the East and Horn of Africa, as well as the Great Lakes region (UNHCR, 2025). The presence of such a large refugee population presents ongoing challenges for host communities, many of whom already struggle with socio-economic difficulties such as poverty, marginalisation, and a lack of political will to support refugee integration (Heinrich Boll Stiftung, 2019; Betts, 2022; Hovil and Maple, 2022).

To address these challenges, governments, humanitarian organisations, and intergovernmental bodies have adopted several global commitments aimed at improving refugee protection and integration. Key among these are the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). These international frameworks emphasise shared responsibility in hosting refugees, easing pressure on host communities, promoting refugee self-reliance, and upholding the human rights of displaced populations (UNHCR, 2018a, 2018c). In Kenya, these global commitments have informed the creation of national initiatives such as the Support for Host Community and Refugee Empowerment (SHARE) programme under Kenya's CRRF, the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan (KISED), the Kenya Refugees Act of 2021, and the Shirika Plan, all of which will be elaborated upon. These mechanisms form the core of Kenya's response to refugee challenges, alongside the three internationally recognised durable solutions—voluntary repatriation, resettlement in third countries, and local integration.

According to UNHCR, the durable solutions aim to help refugees rebuild their lives in dignity and peace. However, Maple and Hovil (2025) argue that in practice, they remain largely inaccessible to most refugees. Even when implemented, their long-term effectiveness is often undermined as they are repackaged and adapted in ways that fail to provide sustainable outcomes. For example, Kenya has adopted different approaches to refugee management, such as the establishment of an integrated settlement for refugees aimed at promoting local socio-economic integration of refugees with the host communities in the Kakuma area, rather than long-term permanent integration with clear pathways to

citizenship. As explored in the next chapter, these approaches have attained very little outcomes in terms of the integration of refugees and their access to durable solutions. As a result, many refugees in Kenya remain in a state of uncertainty, where both governmental and humanitarian efforts to support and integrate them are hindered by restrictive policies and a challenging political climate (Milner, 2019; Agwanda, 2022a; Owiso, 2022). This research project examines the refugees' and host communities' experiences of integration policies and practices in Kakuma Refugee Camp by addressing the central research question: What is the impact of refugee policies and practices on the integration experiences of refugees and host communities in Kakuma Refugee Camp?

To answer this question, the study will explore the following sub-questions:

- How do refugees and host communities in Kakuma understand refugee integration?
- How do refugees and host communities experience the encampment policy in Kakuma?
- How are refugees and host communities involved in various integration activities in Kakuma?
- What is the nature of the relationships between refugees and host communities in Kakuma?

When I began this research project, I quickly realised that it would not be feasible to thoroughly examine factors such as gender, age, and the length of time spent in the camp in relation to the experiences of refugees and host communities in Kakuma. These aspects are highly nuanced and exploring them in depth would have made the thesis too broad and exceeded the required word count. Additionally, not all perspectives from the NGO representatives who participated in this study are included in the analysis. Most information about NGO operations, strategies, and plans is covered in the literature review. Therefore, NGO viewpoints are only referenced when needed to triangulate findings, rather than to introduce new perspectives.

3 Research Aims

This study seeks to provide comprehensive insights into the effectiveness of current refugee integration policies and practices in Kakuma Refugee Camp, the challenges faced in implementing integration efforts, and the lived realities of both refugees and their host communities. Additionally, it aims to explore the complexities of protracted refugee situations and the role of policy in fostering integration and promoting positive relationships between refugees and host communities. This research addresses existing gaps in the socio-economic analysis of refugees and host communities in Kakuma by utilising a qualitative approach as recommended by a 2019 World Bank study on the socio-economic conditions of refugees in Kenya (World Bank, 2019b). Previous studies, such as the World Bank's 2016 report on the economics and social dynamics of refugees in Kakuma (Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016) and the 2023 study by Betts et al. on inter-group interaction and host community attitude formation (Betts, Flinder Stierna, *et al.*, 2023a), have primarily relied on quantitative approaches. This study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of refugee integration and the socio-economic dynamics in protracted refugee situations.

4 Positionality

Before undertaking this study, I worked in Kakuma with a local non-governmental organisation (NGO) that implemented projects aimed at improving food security, peaceful coexistence, and livelihoods for both the refugee and host communities. My role involved overseeing project implementation, evaluation, and drafting progress reports. During my time as a humanitarian officer, I had the opportunity to interact closely with both refugees and host communities, gaining firsthand insight into the socio-economic challenges they faced. Despite the numerous interventions by various organisations working in Kakuma, meaningful transformation in the lives of these communities remained elusive. Every year, organisations—including the one I worked for—produced positive project reports showcasing the supposed improvements brought about by their programmes. At the same

time, they continued to request additional funding from donors, arguing that much more needed to be done.

This cycle of project justification and implementation raised critical questions in my mind. If millions of Kenyan shillings were being invested in these initiatives by over forty organisations operating in the region, why was there no substantial improvement in the lives of the refugees and hosts? Why did the communities we aimed to support still express frustration and anger when asked about the impact of these projects? Their dissatisfaction made it clear that there was a disconnect between the humanitarian objectives of these organisations, the actual needs and aspirations of the people they were meant to serve, and the overall policy frameworks used to manage refugee populations in Kenya. This realisation was the main reason why I decided to pursue this research. I wanted to understand why these projects were failing to create lasting change and explore ways through which policies and governance systems can bridge the gap between humanitarian aid efforts and the real expectations of the affected communities.

Therefore, returning to Turkana County, particularly to Kakuma and Kalobeyei, as a doctoral researcher after previously working there as a humanitarian worker presented new perspectives. This change of roles allowed me to observe dimensions of the refugee-host community dynamics that were less apparent during my time as an NGO worker. Moreover, as a Kenyan researcher, my familiarity with the cultural and research context played a pivotal role in facilitating my work. For example, many participants felt comfortable accepting my invitations for interviews and were forthcoming in sharing their experiences and nuanced understandings of life within the Kakuma refugee camps. This openness was largely driven by a shared cultural context, linguistic familiarity, and the trust that stems from being perceived as an insider by most interviewees, at least to some degree.

However, my dual identity—as a former humanitarian worker and now a researcher—presented challenges, particularly in engaging with participants from the humanitarian sector, some of whom displayed hesitation, likely unsettled by my return in a different capacity, possessing prior knowledge and firsthand experience of the humanitarian

landscape in the region. This hesitation highlighted the nuanced and often contested terrain of knowledge production, especially when local researchers with intimate contextual understanding navigate spaces traditionally dominated by external actors and perspectives, like refugee camps (Albtran *et al.*, 2024). In my case, some humanitarian officials might not have fully understood my research motives, given my prior work experience and knowledge of the area and some of the humanitarian issues in Kakuma. Had I been a white, Western researcher, the dynamics of these interactions would have been undoubtedly different. My identity as a Kenyan not only shaped the access and insights I gained but also influenced how my presence was perceived by both the community and humanitarian stakeholders. This experience underscores the complexities researchers face, revealing how positionality, race, power dynamics, and historical relationships impact the research process and the narratives it produces.

5 Turkana County: The Refugee-Hosting Region

Turkana County, located in Northwestern Kenya, borders South Sudan and Ethiopia to the north and Uganda to the west. It falls within the Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) region and is one of the most remote areas in the country (Mkutu *et al.*, 2019). The county is famously known as the "Cradle of Mankind" due to the discovery of early human fossils, particularly the "Turkana Boy¹" in Nariokotome near Lake Turkana in 1984 (Society, 2013; Heitkamp, 2016). It is predominantly inhabited by the Turkana people, who are traditionally nomadic pastoralists², along with smaller ethnic communities. Despite its vast land area, Turkana has a sparse population of approximately 926,976 people and at least 298,053 refugees and asylum seekers residing in the Kakuma refugee camps and the nearby Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019b; UNHCR Kenya, 2024b).

¹ According to National Geographic, this is the most complete human skeleton ever found.

² Nomadic pastoralism is the practice of keeping livestock as a primary source of livelihood and involves movement from one place to another for better pastures (ScienceDirect, no date).



Figure 1: Map of Kenya showing the location of Turkana County (Source: Kakuma-Kalobeyei Challenge Fund)

Turkana County, where Kakuma refugee camp is situated, is one of the most economically marginalised and underdeveloped counties in Kenya (Mkutu *et al.*, 2019), with a human development index of 0.2697, significantly below the national average of 0.520 (CRA, 2012). It has the lowest literacy rate in the country at 39 per cent, the highest poverty levels, and severe gaps in healthcare, including high malnutrition rates and a 34.5 per cent rate of self-assisted deliveries. Additionally, 64.2 per cent of households rely on cash transfers for survival (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2018). Put simply, Turkana is the poorest county in Kenya (Omari, 2011; Sanghi and Onder, 2016). These challenges originate from historical marginalisation under both colonial and post-independence governments

(Shanguhya, 2021). For instance, the colonial administration ignored Turkana as economically unproductive and imposed restrictive policies that negatively affected its development, while post-colonial regimes prioritised agricultural regions like Central and Western Kenya (Eriksen and Lind, 2009).

From the late 1950s to independence on 12th December 1963, the colonial government imposed discriminatory policies that confined the Turkana people to closed districts, restricting their movement and placing them in "famine camps" for relief food distribution (Brankamp and Daley, 2020; Brankamp, 2022). These measures included requiring movement passes and mandatory police registration for travel outside the region (Vemuru *et al.*, 2016). The long-standing marginalisation led to the coining of the phrase "Naenda Kenya" ("I am going to Kenya"), reflecting the Turkana people's perception of being excluded from the rest of the country. Despite gaining formal movement rights in 1986, two decades after independence, this historical experience continues to shape their views on the national government and refugee policies (Shanguhya, 2021). Many Turkana people feel that refugees receive better treatment than they do and harbour resentment towards both the Kenyan government and humanitarian agencies, whom they blame for their continued economic and social struggles (Aukot, 2003).

As an Arid and Semi-Arid Land (ASAL) region, Turkana frequently experiences severe droughts and famines, leading to significant loss of human lives and livestock (Bersaglio, Devlin and Yap, 2015; BBC News, 2019). These harsh conditions often force pastoralist communities to migrate in search of water and pasture, sometimes crossing into neighbouring regions and countries (Opiyo *et al.*, 2015). Such movements frequently result in violent conflicts, as armed pastoralist groups compete over scarce resources. The easy availability of illegal firearms, smuggled across Kenya's porous borders from neighbouring countries experiencing civil conflicts like South Sudan and Somalia, has further fuelled insecurity (Shanguhya, 2021). As a result, Turkana is among the regions with the highest number of firearms in civilian hands (Wairagu and Ndung'u, 2003; Wepundi *et al.*, 2012), contributing to persistent insecurity and tension between host communities and refugees. While these weapons are primarily used by the Turkana people to defend themselves

against armed pastoralist neighbours like the Karamojong from Uganda and the Toposa from South Sudan, they have also been used in attacks on refugees in Kakuma refugee camps (The New Humanitarian, 2003).

Turkana County also has a history of large-scale humanitarian operations predating the establishment of Kakuma refugee camp in 1992. From 1989 to the early 2000s, Lokichoggio town, located in Turkana West, about 30 kilometres from the Kenya-South Sudan border and 120 kilometres North of Kakuma, served as the base for *Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS)*, one of the largest humanitarian responses at the time, providing aid and emergency food assistance to civilians affected by the South Sudan civil war (Maxwell, Santschi and Gordon, 2004). Lokichoggio became a major hub of economic activity during the OLS period. The operation stimulated business between locals, refugees, and international aid workers, and its airport facilitated international flights, aid deliveries, and the movement of humanitarian personnel (Ibid). Additionally, the presence of aid agencies in the area led to the rapid development of infrastructure, including roads and accommodation facilities, which surpassed those found in Kakuma and Lodwar (Turkana County headquarters) at that time. However, following the end of OLS in 2005, Lokichoggio's economy collapsed, and much of the infrastructure deteriorated, making it a case study of how the conclusion of large-scale humanitarian interventions can impoverish host communities (Sanghi, Onder, and Vemuru, 2016).

The experience of Lokichoggio continues to shape the perceptions of the Turkana people toward refugees and humanitarian operations. In this regard, many locals associate refugees and aid agencies with both economic opportunity and eventual decline, leading to mixed reactions toward their presence. As Onder, and Vemuru (2016) suggest, the history of the Turkana and their past experiences with humanitarian operations influence their current interactions with displaced populations. Furthermore, research on integration and development efforts in Kakuma and Kalobeyi has revealed a lack of understanding of the complex social and economic relationships between hosts and refugees (Ibid). This gap has contributed to further economic marginalisation for both groups, as poorly designed

interventions fail to address the intricate local socio-economic dynamics (Chambers, 1986; Aukot, 2003; Alix-Garcia, Artuc and Onder, 2017).

5.1 Pastoralism as a culture and livelihood for the Turkana people.

The Turkana people primarily rely on pastoralism, which is a livelihood system centred around livestock production, serving both economic and cultural purposes (Schilling, Opiyo and Scheffran, 2012; Nyariki, 2019). Pastoralism, as defined by Nyariki (2004, as quoted in Nyariki 2019), is a production and sociocultural system that involves keeping animals within an arid and semi-arid land (ASAL) environment³. Wakhungu *et al.* (2014) and Fitzgibbon (2012) further describe it as a form of farming in ASAL regions, where unpredictable climatic conditions necessitate mobility and adaptive strategies. On the other hand, the Government of Kenya defines pastoralism as both an economic activity and a cultural way of life in ASAL areas, dependent on livestock production in environments characterised by scarce and fluctuating resources such as water and pasture (Government of Kenya, 2012). Socio-culturally, it functions as a sign of wealth accumulation and social status, a means of dispute settlement, and a dowry payment among ASAL communities (Nyariki and Amwata, 2019).

In Africa, pastoralism contributes between 10 and 44 per cent of the continent's gross domestic product (GDP), supporting approximately 1.3 billion people through the livestock value chain (Karaimu, 2013). In Kenya, a 2019 assessment by the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) estimated the pastoral sector's value at approximately 730 million US dollars, employing 2.2 million people directly and contributing 28 per cent of the nation's total meat consumption and 21 per cent of its milk production. In Turkana County alone, the economic contribution of pastoralism is valued at approximately 168 million US dollars (Nyariki, 2019), with 70 per cent of the population engaged in the practice (Watson, 2008).

³ According to KIPPRA (2024) ASAL areas are regions characterised by water scarcity, extreme temperatures, and fragile ecosystems.

Geographically, approximately 80 per cent of Kenya's landmass falls under ASAL regions, where pastoralism is a primary livelihood for about 30 per cent of the country's population (Amwata, Nyariki and Musimba, 2016). These ASAL regions collectively hold around 70 per cent of the national livestock herd, valued at an estimated 800 million US dollars annually (Odhiambo, 2013). However, despite its substantial contribution—approximately 13 per cent of Kenya's GDP (Nyariki, 2019)—pastoralism has historically been undervalued by the national government. ASAL regions have received minimal attention in terms of policy support, development investment, and resource allocation, resulting in prolonged marginalisation.

The form of pastoralism practised in Turkana is characterised by seasonal migration in search of water and pasture, communal land ownership, and maintenance of large herds (Opiyo, Mureithi and Ngugi, 2017). While this mobility-driven practice is essential for survival in an unpredictable climate, it also brings significant challenges, particularly conflicts over dwindling natural resources. Resource-based conflicts in Turkana are further exacerbated by frequent cattle raids, both within Kenya's Northern pastoralist communities and across borders with South Sudan, Uganda, and Ethiopia (Gakuo, 2006). These conflicts often result in widespread violence, loss of lives, and destruction of property, fuelling mutual distrust between neighbouring communities. Such tensions also influence host-refugee relations in Turkana, as some locals perceive refugees as outsiders who receive disproportionate support from humanitarian agencies while local needs remain unmet (Aukot, 2003; Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016).

Cattle raiding has been a long-standing tradition among pastoralist communities, with evidence suggesting it has been practised for over nine thousand years (Moru, 2010). Historically, this practice served multiple purposes, including replenishing herds lost to droughts or disease, expanding grazing lands, securing access to water sources, accumulating wealth, and fulfilling dowry obligations (Moru, 2010). Furthermore, these raids were traditionally characterised by relatively low levels of violence, often following established cultural norms such as respect for life (Ibid). However, in recent years, cattle raiding has undergone a significant transformation, becoming increasingly violent and

difficult to control. A major factor contributing to this shift is the widespread availability of illicit firearms, particularly AK-47s and other weapons, which have been smuggled into the region from conflict-ridden neighbouring states such as South Sudan and Somalia (Johannes, Zulu and Kalipeni, 2015). The use of these weapons in raids has escalated the scale and lethality of conflicts, turning what was once a customary practice into a major security threat. As a result, pastoralism in Turkana has become both a critical means of livelihood and a persistent source of violent conflict, exacerbating instability in the region (Ibid).

Beyond the militarisation of cattle raiding, a combination of socio-political and economic factors has further fuelled its escalation in recent years (Moru, 2010). Key drivers of this trend include the increasing commercialisation of raids, where stolen livestock are sold for profit rather than retained for subsistence; disputes over administrative boundaries; political efforts to establish or maintain homogenous electoral bases; and long-standing land conflicts (Leff, 2009; Omolo, 2010; Njiru, 2012; Greiner, 2013). These factors have contributed to the intensification of cattle rustling, making it not just a traditional practice but a mechanism for economic and political competition.

Additionally, environmental pressures have played a crucial role in exacerbating cattle raiding in Turkana County and other parts of Northern Kenya. Schilling, Opiyo and Scheffran (2012) identified drought and food insecurity as significant drivers of raids, as resource scarcity forces communities to migrate in search of better grazing lands and water. This migration often leads to competition between different pastoralist groups, heightening tensions and increasing the likelihood of violent confrontations (Ibid). Furthermore, the broader challenges of climate change and economic marginalisation have weakened traditional pastoralist livelihoods, pushing communities toward more aggressive and unsustainable survival strategies.

This increasing pressure on natural resources, resulting mainly from climate change, has contributed to tensions between the Turkana host community and refugees in the region. A study by Anomat Ali, Imana, and Ocha (2017) in Kakuma identified resource scarcity and

competition, coupled with socio-cultural differences, as the primary causes of conflict between the host community and refugees. Land, water, and forests are particularly vital to the Turkana people's pastoralist way of life, and the growing refugee population has increased the demand for these critical resources (Ibid). This intensified competition has not only exacerbated existing environmental challenges but also deepened long-standing grievances among local residents (Aukot, 2003).

Despite these socio-economic and environmental challenges, Turkana County holds significant economic potential due to recent discoveries of natural resources and ongoing infrastructure projects. The 2012 discovery of oil reserves valued at approximately USD 25 billion presents an opportunity to address historical marginalisation, create employment, and diversify local livelihoods if managed effectively (BBC News, 2012; Mkutu, 2014; Enns and Bersaglio, 2016). Additionally, the 2013 discovery of a massive underground aquifer with the capacity to supply Kenya with water for an estimated 70 years offers further economic prospects, provided it is harnessed and distributed efficiently (BBC News, 2013; Johannes, Zulu and Kalipeni, 2015). Turkana's strategic location has also attracted major development initiatives, including the USD 25 billion Lamu Port South Sudan Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) project, which integrates roads, railway lines, and an oil pipeline connecting Kenya's coastal Lamu Port to South Sudan and Ethiopia (Browne, 2015). The national government is also implementing the Kenya Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (KDRDIP), which started in 2018 and is funded by the World Bank at a cost of 10 billion Kenyan shillings (approximately 77 million US dollars). KDRDIP aims to expand economic opportunities, improve access to social services, and enhance environmental management for the refugee-hosting communities in Turkana, Garissa, and Wajir counties (Benjamin, 2017; The Star, 2021). In this regard, Lind (2018) opines that the strategic location and resources in Turkana have placed it closer to the national development agenda.

5.2 Devolved Governance System in Turkana County.

In 2010, Kenya ushered in a new era of governance with the promulgation of a new constitution following a referendum in which approximately 67 per cent of voters endorsed the changes (Kanyinga and Long, 2012). This milestone set the country on a path towards democracy and sustainable development, aiming to address decades of political instability, electoral violence—such as the 2007 post-election crisis—and autocratic rule under President Moi's administration in the 1980s and 1990s (Barkan and Mutua, 2010). Scholars such as Hope (2015) have described this legal transformation as one of Kenya's most significant political reforms since independence, while Kramon and Posner (2011, p. 89) argued that it had the "potential to transform Kenyan politics" by securing socio-economic rights for marginalised communities, women, and other minority groups.

At the heart of this constitutional transformation was the restructuring of the state, which decentralised some of the executive power and introduced a devolved system of governance. The Constitution established 47 county governments, each with an executive and a county assembly to oversee key functions such as healthcare, early childhood education, agriculture, and local infrastructure development—responsibilities that were previously centralised under the national government (Glinz, 2011). The devolution framework aimed to promote inclusive development, particularly in historically marginalised counties like Turkana, by ensuring that resources were distributed more equitably. Under this system, county governments are entitled to a share of national revenue and an equalisation fund designated for marginalised regions. They also have the authority to generate revenue through local taxation (Kimenyi, 2013).

As one of the largest and most historically disadvantaged counties, Turkana has been a major beneficiary of the devolved system. Under the provisions of the Constitution (Chapter

12 on Public Finance), Turkana receives both conditional and unconditional grants⁴ from the national government. Between 2013 and 2020, the county was allocated a cumulative equitable share of Kenyan shillings 72.1 billion—the second highest after Nairobi County, which received Kenyan shillings 94.4 billion (The National Treasury and Planning, 2020). In addition, Turkana was granted Kenyan shillings 835.7 million in conditional development grants (Gĩthĩnji, 2017) and raises approximately Kenyan shillings 200 million annually through local revenue collection (Turkana County, 2021). This substantial funding presents an opportunity to address the county’s longstanding development challenges, including high poverty levels, limited infrastructure, and economic disparities between host communities and refugees in Kakuma (Aukot, 2003; Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2018).

As provided for by the Constitution, Turkana County benefits from the Equalization Fund amounting to 1.5 percent of the revenue collected in the financial year, meant “to provide basic services including water, roads, health facilities, and electricity to marginalised areas to the extent necessary to bring the quality of those services in those areas to the level generally enjoyed by the rest of the nation” (Constitution of Kenya, Article 204). According to the 2021 report on Equalisation Fund Administration, Turkana County received a total of 520 million shillings in the financial year 2017/18 meant to improve water accessibility, health, and roads. Moreover, the report indicated that the county received another 192 million shillings for water and health sector development in the 2018/19 financial year (The National Assembly of Kenya, 2021).

As a devolved entity, Turkana County is responsible for formulating five-year County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) that outline strategic priorities based on the needs of its residents. While the county’s first-generation CIDP did not explicitly consider the refugee population, the 2018 CIDP recognised the long-term presence of refugees in Kakuma and Kalobeyi and emphasised the need for inclusive development efforts. Under the theme of refugee integration, the county government committed to harnessing the diverse skills and

⁴ Conditional grants are funds that are allocated to county governments by the National Treasury for implementation of specific projects within a particular duration. Unconditional on the other hand are budgetary allocations to the counties that can be used to address other county needs.

economic potential of refugees to benefit both communities (Turkana County Government, 2018). This approach aligns with the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-economic Development Program (KISDEP), which promotes sustainable integration by enhancing economic opportunities for both refugees and host communities.

Turkana's refugee policies also align with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), which emerged from the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants. The CRRF paved the way for the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), an international commitment to improving refugee protection and fostering self-reliance (Costello, 2019). However, despite these progressive frameworks, several challenges hinder effective refugee integration in Turkana. These include limited government resources, restrictive refugee policies, weak social cohesion, and inadequate infrastructure in host communities (Refugee Affairs Secretariat, 2020). Financial constraints at the national level, exacerbated by Kenya's rising public debt, also threaten to derail the benefits of devolution in the region (African Development Bank, 2022).

While devolution has brought development opportunities, it has also fuelled local political tensions and clan rivalries in Turkana. Lind (2018) and Cheeseman, Lynch and Willis (2016) argued that decentralisation has, in some cases, reinforced ethnic competition and patronage networks at the county level. In Turkana, inter-clan competition over control of county resources has led to political divisions and periodic conflicts (D'Arcy and Cornell, 2016). With Turkana receiving the second-highest national revenue allocation, the position of county governor has become highly contested as most politicians seek the seat to control the huge amounts of money allocated to the county (Were, 2015; Obala, 2017). The county's reliance on humanitarian aid has also led to the politicisation of relief distribution, with food aid, contracts, and cash transfer programmes becoming tools for political influence (Lind, 2018). Some scholars note that the prominence of humanitarian organisations in Turkana has led to the entrenchment of a "relief economy", where political

leaders with backgrounds in aid agencies leverage these networks for political gain (Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000; Lind, 2018).

The underfunding of humanitarian agencies further complicates Turkana's refugee response. As the lead agency managing refugee operations, the UNHCR faces significant financial constraints due to decreasing funds. Between 2010 and 2013, UNHCR's funding for Kenya ranged between USD 417 million and USD 646 million, but this amount declined to USD 207 million–340 million between 2015 and 2018 (O'Callaghan *et al.*, 2019). In 2019, only 14 per cent of the agency's USD 170.1 million budget requirement was met (UNHCR, 2019c). This shortfall impacts both refugees and host communities, limiting the delivery of essential services and economic support programmes. Despite these challenges, the presence of refugees in Kakuma offers economic opportunities for Turkana. Studies indicate that the refugee population contributes to a 3.4 per cent increase in Turkana's GDP and generates an additional 3 per cent of employment opportunities (Sanghi, Onder, and Vemuru, 2016). The International Finance Corporation estimated the value of Kakuma's economy at USD 56 million in 2018, with refugee household consumption contributing USD 17 million (IFC, 2018).

Turkana County finds itself at a pivotal point. The 2010 Constitution has provided an opportunity for economic growth through devolution, while the discovery of oil and ongoing infrastructure projects have the potential to transform the region. The long-term presence of refugees in Kakuma and Kalobeyei also offers economic prospects through trade and integration programmes. However, challenges such as restrictive refugee policies, weak institutional capacity, political divisions, and resource-based conflicts threaten to undermine these gains (UNHCR, 2018b). Some of these uncondusive legal and regulatory frameworks relate to the restriction of refugee movements and work rights, and access to critical documents such as business permits. Incoherent policy formulations, lack of knowledge, and capacity also continue to slow the progress of devolution at national and county levels (World Bank, 2019a; Kimani, 2020).

For devolution to achieve its intended impact in Turkana, refugee and development policies need to balance between host and refugee needs equitably. While initiatives like KISED⁵ demonstrate the potential for inclusive development, a refugee-centric approach alone is insufficient. The host communities—particularly the most vulnerable—must not be sidelined, as they often face similar or even greater challenges than the refugees (Chambers, 1986; Jamal, 2000).

6. Thesis Overview

Following this introductory chapter, this thesis is divided into five more chapters. These include:

Chapter 2: Kenya’s Refugee Policy and Its Broader Context.

This chapter explores Kenya’s history as a refugee-hosting country, tracing its roots back to the pre-colonial era under British colonial rule. It examines Kenya’s longstanding tradition of providing asylum to those seeking international protection while also analysing how restrictive asylum policies, periodic threats of deportation, and border closures have challenged the country’s commitment to its international obligations. Key questions addressed include: What factors influenced Kenya’s acceptance of refugees at different periods? How can this historical trajectory be categorised? And how have various policies shaped social cohesion in refugee-hosting regions? Finally, the chapter explores the underlying reasons for Kenya’s continued hospitality toward refugees, despite shifting political dynamics and ongoing conflicts in the region.

Chapter 3: Key Concepts Relating to Refugee Integration in Kakuma.

The concepts examined in this chapter include integration, social cohesion, refugee and refugeehood, encampment, the host community, and self-reliance. By analysing these terms, the chapter highlights the complexities and challenges of integrating refugees in Kenya. Given that Kakuma operates within national, regional, and global refugee legal and policy frameworks, these broader influences shape the dynamics of refugee integration.

⁵ The Kalobeyei Integrated Socioeconomic Development Plan

Chapter 4: Theoretical Framework

This chapter analyses refugee integration in Kakuma using three theoretical frameworks: Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, Gordon Allport's Contact Theory, and Ager and Strang's Conceptual Framework for Integration. By applying these theories to the experiences of both refugees and host community members, the chapter offers a deeper understanding of the factors shaping integration outcomes in Kakuma. Each framework provides a unique perspective: the Capability Approach highlights the importance of expanding freedoms and opportunities for a dignified, self-sufficient life; Contact Theory explores how positive intergroup interactions can reduce prejudice and foster social cohesion; and Ager and Strang's 2008 framework identifies key integration domains, such as access to resources, social connections, legal rights, and facilitators. While these theories provide valuable insights, the chapter also critically examines their limitations in fully capturing the complexities of integration in Kakuma.

Chapter 5: The Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodological approach used to explore the central research question: *What is the impact of refugee policies and practices on the integration experiences of refugees and host communities in Kakuma Refugee Camp?* It explains the rationale for adopting a qualitative approach, incorporating anthropological methods such as participant observation and field notes. Additionally, I elaborate on my positionality as both a researcher and a former humanitarian worker in the study area, reflecting on how this background influences the research process. The chapter also details the data analysis process, specifically the use of thematic analysis as the chosen methodology. Furthermore, it provides insights into my experience conducting research in Kenya, including the process of obtaining permits, securing ethical approval, and addressing related challenges. Lastly, I reflect on my interactions with research participants, the dynamics of living in the field, and how these experiences shaped the study.

Chapter 6: Thematic Findings and Discussions

This Sixth chapter presents and discusses the findings of this research study. It is organised into three key themes: the first theme examines how both refugees and host communities perceive integration, while the second theme explores experiences of the encampment policy from the perspectives of both groups. Finally, the third theme analyses intercommunity interactions in Kakuma, exploring the nature of these relationships and the levels of trust between refugees and host community members. Through these thematic discussions, the chapter provides a deeper understanding of the socio-political dynamics, challenges, and opportunities that shape refugee integration experiences and outcomes in Kakuma refugee camp.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

This chapter reflects on how the research questions were addressed and examines the study's contributions to understanding refugee integration in the protracted refugee situation of Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya. It also discusses the study's limitations, acknowledging challenges that may have influenced the findings. Lastly, the chapter outlines potential directions for future research on refugee integration in Kenya, with a particular focus on Kakuma, offering insights for further exploration and policy development.

CHAPTER 2: KENYA'S REFUGEE POLICY AND ITS BROADER CONTEXT.

1 Introduction

Kenya has a long history of hosting refugees, dating back to the colonial era in the early 20th century. This tradition of providing international protection has remained a key aspect of Kenya's post-independence governments, despite occasional restrictions on refugee management, such as threats to close refugee camps, border closures, and forceful repatriation of refugees. Kenya's commitment to refugee protection is largely influenced by its status as a signatory to two major international agreements: the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention) and its 1967 Protocol, as well as the 1969 OAU⁶ Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. To better understand Kenya's refugee policies and their evolution, it is important to consider two key questions: What factors influenced Kenya's acceptance of refugees at different times? How have various policies shaped refugee integration in host regions? This chapter argues that Kenya's refugee policies do not merely oscillate between hospitality and hostility but constitute a structured governance strategy that simultaneously contains, extracts value from and politically marginalises refugees.

⁶ The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) officially changed to the African Union (AU) in July 2002.

2 Refugee history in Kenya

Kenya hosts one of the highest refugee populations in Africa and the world (World Population Review, 2022). These high numbers are partly due to the country's geographic location, as it shares borders with or is near several refugee-producing countries, including South Sudan, Somalia, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, and Ethiopia (Hyndman, 1999). Under Kenya's encampment policy, refugees are required to live in two main camps: Dadaab in Garissa County and Kakuma in Turkana County. However, before these camps were established in 1991 (Dadaab) and 1992 (Kakuma), refugees were permitted to settle in towns and urban centres across the country, including Thika, Nairobi, and the coastal region (Adan and Duncan, 2020).

Although Kenya's refugee history is often divided into two main periods—1960 to the late 1980s and the subsequent period (Rutinwa, 2002), it actually dates back to the colonial era between 1935 and 1960. Following the outbreak of a war between Italy and Ethiopia in October 1935, civilians, Eritrean soldiers who deserted the Italian army, and Ethiopian soldiers who fought against the Italians fled to the Northern Kenya region (Shadle, 2019). They were hosted in camps under the colonial administration in North Horr (Isiolo County), Lokitaung (Turkana County), Kapenguria (West Pokot County) and Taveta in Taita Taveta County. Between 1942 and 1967, at least twenty thousand Polish refugees were hosted in various countries across Africa, such as Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, after being evacuated from Iran⁷ by the British colonial administration (Lingelbach, 2020). This relocation was carried out under an agreement negotiated by the British government between the Polish government-in-exile in London and the Soviet government (Lingelbach, 2020). In Kenya, the Polish refugees were hosted in camps located in Mombasa, Makindu, Nairobi and Rongai towns.

However, Shadle (2019) notes that the refugees from Ethiopia who fled to Moyale in Northern Kenya following the Italian invasion were deported back to Ethiopia by colonial

⁷ In September 1939, Soviet Union soldiers invaded eastern parts of Poland and deported thousands of Poles to remote parts of the Soviet Union. Later on, about 120,000 Polish refugees fled to Iran after the Soviet Union was invaded by Germany in 1942 during World War II.

authorities. The administration feared that allowing them to move freely in Northern Kenya could disrupt public order and expose them to attacks from hostile local pastoralist groups (Ibid). Additionally, there were concerns that their presence could create tensions between local communities and the colonial government. Notably, local Kenyan tribesmen did not object to their deportation, possibly due to existing rivalries and competition over scarce resources in the arid Northern region (p. 170). Shadle adds that growing pressure from activists in London, who condemned the government's decision to deport refugees back to Ethiopia, where they faced imminent danger, forced the colonial administration to reconsider its approach (Ibid). As a result, some refugees were permitted to enter Kenya, but rather than being granted full freedom, they were confined to camps closely monitored by police and army officers. This compromise reflected the colonial government's struggle to balance humanitarian concerns with political and security considerations.

Moreover, Britain's complex foreign policy was at the centre of the Ethiopian refugee response situation. According to Shadle (2019), the British government was navigating a delicate geopolitical situation by seeking to maintain friendly relations with Italy to prevent an alliance between Mussolini and Hitler while also responding to domestic and international calls to protect Ethiopians from fascist aggression. Earlier in 1925, the British government ceded part of its Kenyan colony to Italy in return for support during the First World War (Siddiqi, 2023). This refugee situation, therefore, placed Britain in a difficult position, forcing it to juggle its diplomatic interests, obligations to provide asylum, and the need to maintain control over Kenya's volatile and expansive northern region.

In terms of the integration of refugees in Northern Kenya, there was attention from colonial administrators, largely due to geopolitical factors at the time, particularly Britain's foreign policy goal of maintaining friendly relations with Italy. Additionally, the political landscape of Northern Kenya in the 1930s was not conducive for refugee integration since the region had been designated a closed district⁸ by the British colonial administration due to persistent security challenges, including inter-clan conflicts and concerns over the

⁸ A restricted security operation area/zone

expansionist ambitions of Ethiopia (Whittaker, 2015). Local pastoralist communities were also unwilling to coexist peacefully with the refugees, as their presence would have intensified competition over scarce resources such as grazing land, increasing the likelihood of conflict with local Kenyan pastoralists (Shadle, 2019). Furthermore, the region lacked suitable agricultural land, making refugee self-sufficiency through farming impossible. As a result, the colonial administration opted for an encampment policy while negotiating with the Italian government to find a resolution that would minimise conflict wherever the refugees were relocated (Wilkin, 1980). Eventually, in 1939, the refugees were resettled in distant, sparsely populated areas. According to Wilkin, the Eritrean refugees were sent to Gotani in the coastal district of Kilifi (now Kilifi County), while the Ethiopian refugees were relocated along the Tsavo River in Taita Taveta County, both far from the Kenya-Ethiopia border to prevent tensions with local communities.

The integration of Polish refugees in Kenya differed significantly from that of other refugee groups like the Ethiopians, particularly in their reception and acceptance within local communities. Upon arriving at Kenya's coastal port of Mombasa, many Polish refugees recalled receiving a warm welcome, describing it as the first time they had seen smiling faces since their exile began (Lingelbach, 2020). Mombasa served as a key transit point, with refugees temporarily staying there before being relocated to various settlements across Kenya and the broader East African region.

In Nairobi, Polish refugees were gradually accepted as part of the city's white community, and Polish became one of the commonly heard languages on Nairobi's streets due to the significant number of Poles living in the city at the time (p. 36). This reflects the general acceptance of Polish refugees by the local population and colonial authorities at the time. In fact, Lingelbach notes that the Polish refugees were surprised by the warm welcome they received in Nairobi from both Black and White residents (p. 29). The Makindu refugee camp, in particular, developed a strong cultural and educational foundation, including a culture centre and an elementary school. By 1950, most Polish refugees had been relocated to the United Kingdom (UK), while around 300 remained in Kenya, working for the colonial

administration or engaging in farming. However, those who stayed eventually left in 1963, coinciding with Kenya's independence (ibid).

More remarkable is the short time within which the colonial administration in Kenya addressed the refugee challenge at the time. Unlike the refugee influx in the subsequent period (post-1990), which has become protracted and turned transient emergency camps into informal urban settlements (Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000; Oka, 2011), the pre-independence administration strived to provide alternatives to camped refugees in the North and other regions within ten years⁹. For example, the Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees were resettled in Kenya within four years of their arrival, while it took around eight years to resettle Polish refugees. This approach ensured that the refugees never stayed for long durations in the camps and that they could integrate into local communities in which they were resettled quickly. Moreover, this colonial governance logic that certain refugees are more "integratable" than others remains evident in Kenya's contemporary refugee hierarchies, particularly in the differential treatment of Somali and South Sudanese refugees. As such, the colonial governance did not merely precede modern refugee management; it actively shaped how refugees have been categorised and governed by post-independence governments, a legacy that persists today.

The period between Kenya's independence in 1963 and 1990 holds particular significance in the country's refugee history for several reasons. First, for the first time, refugees were under the jurisdiction of a Kenyan-led government rather than colonial administrators. Secondly, it was during this period that Kenya signed the 1951 Refugee Convention (May 1966) and its 1967 Protocol in November 1981 (UNHCR, no date b). The Kenyan government's refugee policies were also influenced by different factors, such as the low number and the professional profile of the refugees. While there was no clear domestic legislation relating to the implementation of international conventions in the post-independence constitution, the government adopted an open-door and generous approach to refugees and placed no restrictions on their movements or labour rights. As Kenya's

⁹ It should be noted that the refugee numbers in Kenya were considerably lower prior to 1990.

interest was in attracting skilled workers and growing the economy, many refugees, mainly professionals and businesspeople, fleeing persecution in Uganda under the dictatorial regime of Idi Amin, were thus able to enter the country and were allowed to settle in preferred locations where they integrated into the host communities (World Bank, 2019c).

The low number of refugees coming from Uganda and their sociocultural similarities with Kenyan communities also played a role in the self-settlement of Ugandan refugees in Kenya's urban and rural areas (Abuya, 2007). Until 1989, Kenya maintained a relatively low number of refugees, ranging between 4,000 and 15,000, and the government managed most affairs relating to refugees, such as the refugee status determination (RSD) (ibid, p. 57). The strong economic performance in 1960s and 70s and the Government's economic vision under the Sessional Paper no. 10¹⁰ also promoted job creation and growth in different sectors of the economy, thus supporting the general perception in the country that refugees were economic assets rather than a burden, as most of them were highly skilled intellectuals and entrepreneurs (Kagwanja, 2000).

Politically, the ideology of Pan-Africanism, embraced by Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta, played a crucial role in shaping the country's refugee policies. It ensured that refugees were welcomed and granted basic human rights protection (Milner, 2009). Moreover, this ideology encouraged Kenya to implement durable solutions such as local integration, as seen in the case of Ugandan refugees who settled in the country. While lacking a clear and generally accepted definition, Pan-Africanism can be defined as "an ideology and movement uniting all those of African descent against Eurocentrism and foreign domination and for the liberation of the African continent and all Africans" (Adi, 2012, p. 272). Indeed, during the decolonisation struggle, the focus of Pan-African leaders like Kenyatta and Nyerere of Tanzania was to expose the wrongdoings of the colonial regimes and demonstrate African solidarity to those displaced by anti-colonial movements (Milner, 2019). This commitment to African unity translated into policies that allowed

¹⁰ This was a Government of Kenya's policy document developed in 1965, highlighting the government's economic goals of achieving rapid growth for the country's economic transformation by improving productivity in high-potential areas.

refugees in Kenya to enjoy various social rights outlined in the 1951 Refugee Convention, including the right to employment and property ownership. Beyond ideology, economic factors also played a role in shaping Kenya's refugee policies. Kagwanja (2002) argues that both the Pan-Africanist philosophy and the economic benefits brought by refugees and asylum seekers contributed to Kenya's hospitable stance toward displaced persons. Recognising the potential of refugees to contribute to the economy, the government deliberately pursued strategies that facilitated their integration into Kenyan society (Ibid). By allowing refugees to engage in socio-economic activities, these policies not only promoted self-reliance among refugees but also fostered good economic and social relationships within host communities.

The welcoming approach to refugees during what was considered to be a golden era was also motivated by the need for donor and humanitarian funds by the government to be used for the development of the refugee-hosting regions, which were mostly underdeveloped and marginalised, such as Northern Kenya and coastal regions like Kilifi and Taita Taveta (Milner, 2019). The newly independent Kenyan government was faced with the challenge of rapid economic growth and high levels of poverty, which was rampant in the country and worse in marginalised regions. As such, welcoming and integrating refugees provided an opportunity for the government to receive humanitarian and donor funds, which were used to support development projects in marginalised communities. These funds also served as a source of legitimacy for the central government. According to Betts (2022), Kenya, like other African states, adopted progressive refugee integration policies as a means of achieving recognition externally and ensuring regime survival internally. Betts further explains that donor resources were "redistributed (partly) to the local level in order to secure subnational authority" (p. 216). This suggests that, beyond humanitarian considerations, refugee policies in Kenya were also influenced by political and economic incentives aimed at strengthening both national and local governance structures.

2.1 The subsequent period: the year of hostilities and encampment

The period starting from late 1989 is perhaps the most dramatic and consequential era in Kenya's refugee history and policy, mainly because of the magnitude of the refugee problem, the security issues associated with it, and the negative impacts on host communities (Rutinwa, 1999). In the Horn of Africa, countries like Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia were experiencing violent civil conflicts, which displaced thousands of civilians who fled into Kenya (Abuya, 2007). The conflict, which began in 1988 in Somalia, for example, led to the subsequent fragmentation of the state and displaced hundreds of thousands of Somali citizens, a majority of whom crossed the border and sought refuge in Kenya. Subsequently, the collapse of President Siad Barre's regime in 1991 and the severe drought that claimed at least 250,000 lives in Somalia led to an increase of almost 280,000 refugees in Kenya within one year (Hammond, 2014). As a result, the government of Kenya was for the first time faced with an emergency of unprecedented scale, yet it had limited human and financial capacity to manage the crisis.

As a consequence, Kenya's refugee policy started shifting dramatically from a more laissez-faire approach, which promoted unhindered integration and self-reliance for refugees, to a stricter and more restrictive stance, which was mainly motivated by security and economic concerns (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond, 2005; Burns, 2011; Lindley, 2011; Kiama and Karanja, 2013). As Milner (2019) postulates, the changing international political context at that time, such as the post-Cold War conflicts, which displaced many people in Africa; the imposition of structural adjustment programmes to address the economic challenges; and the unwillingness of developed Western countries to resettle refugees led to the politicisation of refugee issues on the continent. Milner adds that the reluctance amongst African governments to resettle refugees and the unwillingness of donor governments to support large-scale local integration efforts also meant that refugees were no longer seen as benefiting the government in terms of legitimacy and recognition, becoming associated with the economic turmoil facing the country (ibid).

The strategy after 1990 thus focused primarily on providing temporary protection, delegating the responsibility to manage refugee affairs to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), confining refugees in camps set up in remote, underdeveloped border areas, and rejecting any proposed long-term settlement and regularisation of refugees (Crisp, 2000a). The encampment policy was not merely a containment measure but a structured governance tool that redefined refugee belonging through spatial and legal constraints. In the early 1990s, refugees who had previously settled in small communities across the country were forcibly relocated to the newly established Kakuma and Dadaab camps. Local integration was not considered due to prevailing economic and political challenges, as public opinion toward refugees had grown increasingly hostile, fuelled by the perception that they were a socio-economic burden. Kenya's President Daniel Moi, for example, linked refugees to the rising crime rates and insecurity due to allegations that they possessed illegal firearms (Mogire, 2009).

Milner (2019) described Kenya's refugee policy in the 1990s as centred around two main principles: abdication and containment. Other scholars viewed it as mercurial and draconian, purposely geared towards containing the refugee problem and mobility (Elliott, 2012; Raddatz and Kerby, 2020). Raddatz and Kerby further added that despite Kenya's relative stability, power, and prosperity in a region synonymous with conflicts and displacements, the refugee-hosting communities and the government continued to perceive refugees as a financial burden and a strain on the nation's limited resources, particularly in Turkana, where they were blamed for the destruction of the environment and food insecurity. Due to state security concerns regarding refugee presence and association of social ills such as domestic violence, sexual abuse and robbery to refugees (Crisp, 2000), the government of Kenya stopped pursuing measures that encouraged integration between the refugees and the host communities, such as self-settlement across the country. The policy after the massive influx of refugees in the early 1990s thus shifted mainly to encampment and forced repatriation to the country of origin, even when the situation had not improved, which was against the 1951 Convention principle of non-refoulement.

Border closures and the construction of border fences were also used to keep refugees away from Kenyan communities. Between 1999 and 2007, the Kenyan government closed its borders at least three times, citing concerns over the insurgency in Somalia and the strain on its overwhelmed asylum system. For example, in 1999, following claims by President Moi that refugees were linked to crime and the illicit arms trade, the government shut its border with Somalia for seven months in a bid to curb the influx of refugees, prevent perceived militia members from entering Kenya, and stop the smuggling of illegal firearms (ReliefWeb, 1999). A similar measure was taken in 2001, when the government once again closed the Somalia-Kenya border, citing concerns that refugees were contributing to rising crime rates and the illegal arms trade (News24, 2001). These actions reflected the government's broader concerns about national security and the perceived risks associated with refugee movements during that period. While addressing the border closure, President Moi justified the decision, stating:

Although the prevailing peace has seen the country achieve immense development, it has also made Kenya become a haven for refugees, thus the insecurity problems. These refugees have abused this hospitality by involving themselves in illegal undertakings, like gun-running.

In early 2007, Kenya once again closed its border with Somalia, evacuated civilians living near the border, intensified military patrols, and forcibly returned Somali nationals fleeing conflict in their home country. These actions marked a significant shift in the government's refugee policy, moving from an earlier approach that allowed self-settlement to one focused on non-integration and exclusion. In doing so, Kenya disregarded key principles of the 1951 Refugee Convention, particularly non-discrimination and non-refoulement¹¹ (UNHCR, 1951). Crisp (2000) argues that Kenya's refugee policy after 1990 was largely driven by a "...determination to resist the integration of refugees into the economic and social life of the country..." and the "... maintenance of large refugee camps in remote areas, close to the refugees' countries of origin..." (Crisp, 2000, p. 617).

¹¹ Article 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention states that 'No Contracting State shall expel or return ("refouler") a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion'.

The portrayal of Somali refugees as "troublesome" reflects broader national and international discourses that frame refugees as security threats (Agwanda, 2022a). This perception aligns with Kenya's long-standing approach to refugee management during this period, which was heavily influenced by security concerns (Betts, 2022). In particular, the negative perception of Somali refugees was and still is deeply intertwined with Kenya's domestic politics, where Kenyan Somalis have historically faced marginalisation (Zarembka, 2013). For decades, the Kenyan government viewed the Somalis' struggle for autonomy, especially in the former Northern Frontier District, as a challenge to national unity and stability (Ibid). This marginalisation is exacerbated by Islamophobic narratives that associate Somali identity with extremism and insecurity (Nyabola, 2020).

Beyond Kenya's borders, Western counterterrorism policies also contribute to the securitisation of Somali communities. Feghali, Faria and Jama (2021) argued that global counterterrorism efforts disproportionately targeted Somalis, reinforcing negative stereotypes and justifying restrictive measures against them. These external influences, combined with Kenya's domestic security agenda, fuelled a hostile environment among Kenyan communities in which Somali refugees were scapegoated and viewed with suspicion, further complicating their prospects for integration and peaceful coexistence in places like Kakuma.

2.2 Dawn of the first refugee regime (2006 to 2021).

Until 2006, Kenya had no specific law to govern refugee affairs. This was partly due to the government's decision to delegate refugee management to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) after the influx of refugees exceeded the state's financial and human resource capacity (Milner 2009). However, Mogire (2009) argues that Kenya's reluctance to enact refugee legislation was also influenced by concerns that such laws would constrain government actions in responding to perceived security threats posed by refugees. According to Mogire, implementing formal legal frameworks would have imposed

obligations on the state, such as protecting and respecting refugee rights, to which the government was hesitant to (Ibid). In practice, however, refugees were expected to reside in designated camps located in Kakuma and Dadaab. The people exempted from the encampment policy were those pursuing further education or in need of specialised healthcare not available in camps, those at high-security risk in the camps, and those undergoing resettlement interviews (Human Rights Watch, 2002a; Raddatz and Kerby, 2020, p. 1).

A significant change took place in 2006 when the government enacted the first legislation designed to manage refugee affairs. Under the Refugees Act of 2006, the government committed to the recognition, protection, and management of refugee affairs (OHCHR, 2016). Moreover, new offices and institutions were established to ensure effective management of refugee affairs in the country. They included the Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA) responsible for coordinating and administering refugee matters (section 6); the Commissioner for Refugee Affairs office, which headed the DRA and is responsible for formulating refugee-related policies and promoting durable solutions (section 7); the Refugee Affairs Committee, charged with assisting the Commissioner in matters relating to recognition of persons as refugees (section 8); and the Refugee Appeal Board, to consider and decide appeals (section 9).

Interestingly, the 2006 Refugee Act introduced a legal limit on the number of refugees allowed in Kenya, capping it at 150,000 under Section 16A. Any increase beyond this number required approval from the National Assembly. However, this restriction was largely impractical, as the actual number of refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya far exceeded this limit. At the time, Dadaab refugee camp alone housed approximately 460,000 refugees, while Kakuma had more than 100,000 (Nyabera, 2012; UNHCR, 2012). Jaji (2012) argues that the Act also reinforced Kenya's non-integration policy by institutionalizing refugee camps as mechanisms for restricting refugee rights, particularly the right to work and freedom of movement. Section 12 of the Act mandated that refugees reside in designated camps and prohibited them from leaving without explicit permission from the

Refugee Camp Officer. This provision effectively controlled refugees' mobility and limited their opportunities for economic and social integration within Kenyan society.

The 2006 Refugee Act was praised for transforming refugee protection and management in Kenya by establishing a government-led refugee status determination (RSD) process (Crisis Group, 2014). However, the government was criticized for lacking adequate capacity and political will to implement the Act despite setting out a legal framework to govern refugees, institutions, and procedures to implement it (Pavanello, Elhawary and Pantuliano, 2010). Similarly, Oluoch (2017) noted that the Kenyan government lacked a clear stance on the Act, showing little commitment to implementing its various provisions. Additionally, security concerns at the time of the Act's enactment were reflected in its provisions, raising the risk of being misused by the government. For example, Kiama and Likule (2013) highlighted how certain clauses in the Act were exploited by corrupt police officers, leading to wrongful detentions, prosecutions, and, in some cases, the deportation of refugees and asylum seekers.

This 2006 legislation was therefore primarily driven by security concerns rather than humanitarian and human rights commitments. It focused on controlling refugees rather than fostering their long-term integration within host communities. In this regard, the legislation did not provide a framework for addressing key refugee issues such as expanding their labour and mobility rights, which are crucial for socio-economic integration. Furthermore, there was little commitment to the three durable solutions promoted by UNHCR—local integration, resettlement, and voluntary repatriation—which were largely overlooked in the Act, except for a brief mention in Section 7 under the functions of the Commissioner for Refugee Affairs. Subsection 2(e) stated that the Commissioner would "promote as far as possible durable solutions for refugees granted asylum in Kenya." This vague wording reflected the government's reluctance to fully embrace long-term refugee integration policies.

2.3 New Paradigm in Refugee Affairs (Post-2021 Era).

Despite the enactment of the 2006 Refugee Act, which expanded legal protections and recognition for refugees, there was little change in how the Kenyan government handled refugee affairs in practice. The non-integration policy remained firmly in place, as demonstrated by the border closure in 2007. This restrictive approach was further reinforced in 2011 when the government resisted expanding the Dadaab refugee camp, arguing that such a move would imply a sense of permanence for refugees (Rice, 2011), which could pose a security threat (Siddiqi, 2023). In 2015, the Kenyan government once again announced its intention to close the Dadaab refugee camp. Deputy President William Ruto¹² publicly urged the UNHCR to facilitate the return of all refugees to Somalia (Cumming-Bruce, 2015; Cannon, 2016). Speaking at the 2015 World Humanitarian Summit in Turkey, Ruto justified the decision by stating that Kenya's humanitarian obligations had come at a massive financial, environmental, and security cost. He argued that refugees should be repatriated to contribute to the rebuilding of their home country (Kaberia, 2016). This hardline stance on refugee issues persisted despite the introduction of the Kenya Citizenship and Immigration Act of 2011, which aimed to provide refugees with more rights. The Act granted those with qualifications or professional skills the right to a free Class M work permit¹³, access to essential documents such as refugee identity cards, family reunification, and educational opportunities for refugee students.

Therefore, by issuing threats to close refugee camps and repatriate them to their countries of origin, it was clear that the government of Kenya was not fully committed to respecting and promoting refugee rights and needs, something that received constant criticism from human rights organizations and NGOs working on refugee reforms and rights (United Nations, 2012, 2015; Lavelle, 2016). The government's actions reflected an ongoing tension

¹² William Ruto is the current President of Kenya after being elected in August 2022.

¹³ According to the Seventh Schedule of the Act, the Class M work permit is issued to: A person who has been granted refugee status in Kenya in accordance with the refugee law of Kenya and any spouse of such a refugee who intends to take up employment or engage in a specific occupation, trade, business or profession (Kenya Citizenship and Immigration Act of 2011, p.67).

between its international legal obligations and national security and political concerns, ultimately undermining the possibility of meaningful refugee integration in Kenya.

Following numerous engagements with various stakeholders such as the UNHCR and civil society groups, Kenya once again bowed to local and international pressure and enacted a new legislation: the Refugee Act of 2021. Unlike the previous law, which largely restricted refugee participation in economic activities, the 2021 Act recognized the benefits of socio-economic integration for both refugees and host communities (Laws of Kenya, 2021). A key objective of the 2021 Act was to promote self-reliance¹⁴ among refugees and host communities by allowing refugees to engage in economic activities that contribute to local and national development. By supporting their participation in the labour market and entrepreneurial ventures, the Act aimed to facilitate better integration outcomes, including improved social cohesion and overall well-being for both refugees and their hosts (IRC, 2021; Miller, 2021; Yusuf, 2021). This shift marked a significant departure from previous policies, signalling a growing recognition of the long-term benefits of integrating refugees into Kenya's economy.

Moreover, the Refugee Act of 2021 introduced several institutional changes under Sections 6 to 11, redefining and clarifying the roles of various entities involved in refugee affairs. The Department of Refugee Affairs was replaced by the Department of Refugee Services (DRS), while the Refugee Affairs Committee was restructured as the Refugee Advisory Committee. Additionally, the Office of the Commissioner for Refugee Affairs was retained, and the Refugee Appeals Board was replaced with the Refugee Status Appeals Committee. Despite these structural changes, the core functions of these institutions remained largely the same. The restructuring primarily served to clarify the definitions of roles and responsibilities, rather than significantly altering the way refugee affairs were managed.

Section 28 of the Act bestowed upon refugees all the rights outlined in the 1951 Refugee Convention, its Protocol, the OAU Convention, and the laws of Kenya. Importantly, the

¹⁴ According to the UNHCR Handbook for Self-reliance, it is defined as the social and economic ability of an individual, a household or a community to meet essential needs (including protection, food, water, shelter, personal safety, health and education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity (p.1).

government committed to facilitating the access to and issuance of the requisite documents such as identification documents and business registration certificates, at both national and county levels that enable refugees to contribute to socio-economic development and access rights and services in Kenya. These documents are essential for socio-economic integration since the inability of refugees to register and conduct business affects their economic independence, suppresses their innovative ideas, and perpetuates poverty by limiting their socio-economic freedoms (Jamal, 2003). By promoting socio-economic integration through enhanced access to documentation and opportunities, the Act of 2021 was aimed at realising more socio-economic gains. Indeed, a 2016 World Bank study had shown that refugees contributed at least 3.4 per cent to the overall economy of Kakuma and operated about 30 per cent of businesses in Turkana County (Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016; IFC, 2018a).

The other key provision of the 2021 Refugee Act was the government's commitment, under Section 28(8), to promote the integration of refugees into host communities in alignment with the aspirations of the East African Community (EAC). Section 28(8) states that any refugee from the EAC partner state may opt to voluntarily give up their refugee status to enjoy the benefits due to them under the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community, the Protocol for the Establishment of the East African Community Common Market, and any other relevant written law. Article 104 of the EAC Treaty mandates member states to facilitate the free movement of people, the right to establish residence, and the development of common employment and labour policies¹⁵. Additionally, Article 7(8) of the EAC Protocol requires states to uphold the rights of citizens from partner states in accordance with national laws while ensuring that refugee movements are governed by relevant international conventions¹⁶.

¹⁵ Article 104(1) of the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community states, "The Partner States agree to adopt measures to achieve the free movement of persons, labour and services and to ensure the enjoyment of the right of establishment and residence of their citizens within the Community."

¹⁶ Article 7 of the Protocol on the Establishment of the East African Community Common Market states, "The movement of refugees within the Community shall be governed by the relevant international conventions."

As of 2025, the EAC member states included Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and South Sudan. Based on the UNHCR Kenya's latest data, there were 781,323 refugees from the EAC partner states hosted in Kenya as of March 2025¹⁷, representing approximately 93 per cent of the total refugee population, which was 843,165. In this regard, the Section 28(8) of the 2021 Act offers a significant opportunity for refugees from EAC states—not only to participate in Kenya's socio-economic activities but also to move freely within the other seven partner states. By aligning refugee policies with EAC integration efforts, the 2021 Refugee Act expanded mobility and economic prospects for refugees within the region. However, a major challenge lies in the requirement to forfeit refugee status in order to enjoy the rights and freedoms granted under EAC membership. This poses serious risks for vulnerable refugees, particularly LGBTQ individuals, who may face discrimination and violence. In Kenya, for instance, same-sex relationships remain criminalised, further complicating the safety and legal standing of LGBTQ and other refugees who relinquish their protected status (Wekesa, 2019; Lewis *et al.*, 2023).

Section 34 (1 and 2) of the 2021 Act further provides an opportunity for shared public services, spaces, and facilities between refugees and the host communities. This is aimed at increasing the interactions of the refugees and hosts with the goal of promoting positive social cohesion between them. The Commissioner for Refugees is also in charge of raising awareness among the host communities and of promoting good relations with refugees. The Act further calls for the incorporation of the refugee agenda into the national and county development plans. Section 35 states,

The commissioner shall liaise with the national and county governments for the purposes of ensuring that refugee matters are taken into consideration in the initiation and formulation of sustainable development and environmental plans.

Overall, the 2021 Refugee Act was a renewed effort by Kenya to reform its refugee regime and align it with the changing realities of refugee issues globally, such as the protracted refugee presence in camps. It was an effort to incorporate development into humanitarian

¹⁷ Somalia 479,937; South Sudan 196,974; DRC 64,105; Burundi 33,165; Uganda 4,087; Rwanda 3,055

responses to promote engagement of refugees in the socio-economic development of the nation instead of containing them in camps and limiting their freedoms to move and seek economic opportunities. An example of the new approach is the planned awareness campaign in the host communities about the plight of refugees as a way of ensuring friendly interactions between them and enhancing social cohesion. This Act also incorporated global commitments and agreements such as the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, the 2018 Global Compact for Refugees, and the UNHCR's Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework's (CRRF) three-fold objective of alleviating the impacts of refugee presence on the hosts, achieving self-reliance for refugees and improving humanitarian development. It is also supported by the 2017 Nairobi Comprehensive Plan of Action for Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees, where Kenya pledged to promote self-reliance and socio-economic inclusion for refugees. Kenya's 2020 CRRF, particularly, commits to supporting the transition of refugee camps into urban settlements to promote socio-economic inclusion of refugees and host communities in spite of the government's clear support for voluntary repatriation (Refugee Affairs Secretariat, 2020, p. 41).

While the 2021 Act points to a new and robust approach by Kenya to address refugee affairs, its formulation and implementation are still heavily influenced by the perception of refugees as a security concern. It contains provisions that make it possible for the government agencies to violate the rights of refugees and asylum seekers. For example, Section 4(d) states that the government would not recognise as refugees those deemed to pose a threat to national security, while Section 29(2) also authorises the denial of entry to a refugee or asylum seeker for similar security reasons. Further, Section 19(1) permits the Cabinet Secretary for Interior and Coordination of National Government to expel any refugee or their family member from Kenya on the grounds of national security and public order.

Additionally, the 2021 Refugee Act does not explicitly guarantee refugees the right to work or freedom of movement as a means of enhancing their socio-economic participation in local and national economies. Instead, it primarily focuses on defining the roles of various

institutions involved in refugee affairs while remaining vague on how Kenya will implement long-term solutions for refugees. Betts (2022) argues that the Act reflects the central government's stance that refugee policy "should balance humanitarian concerns with security priorities" (p. 268). This aligns with Kenya's broader approach to managing refugees in Dadaab, where security concerns—particularly regarding the presence of Al-Shabaab—have heavily influenced policy decisions (Ibid) in that camp. The government's focus in Dadaab has been on repatriation and addressing security threats, a perspective that has contributed to decisions such as suspending the refugee status determination process and issuing threats to shut down one of the world's largest refugee camps (Aljazeera, 2021). Regarding refugee-host community relations, the Act provides little guidance on fostering coexistence beyond a brief mention in Section 34(2), which calls for sensitising host communities about refugees to promote "peaceful co-existence". However, it lacks concrete strategies for strengthening social integration and mutual understanding between refugees and their host communities.

Moreover, the anticipated benefits of the 2021 Refugee Act are yet to be fully realised since the regulations and frameworks for its implementation have not been developed. While the Act marks progress in recognising refugee rights, its success will depend on the establishment of practical mechanisms to operationalise its provisions. However, one of the biggest challenges remains the complex relationship between host communities and refugees, which is shaped by multiple narratives. According to Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru (2016), the Turkana community, which hosts a large refugee population, often perceives itself as marginalised and neglected by the humanitarian agencies and the central government, fostering a sense of resentment toward refugees. This super-narrative portrays the Turkana as a struggling population receiving little state support, while refugees benefit from international aid. A related meta-narrative frames refugees as foreign usurpers who take away resources that should belong to the local community, reinforcing the belief that the government and donor agencies in Kakuma prioritise refugee welfare over the needs of the local Turkana people, who equally suffer socio-economic deprivation. At the same time, there exists a more nuanced sub-narrative, where refugees are viewed in

different lights—some see them as a security threat, others recognise their contributions to the local economy, and some acknowledge the benefits they bring through increased resources and services. These overlapping narratives complicate efforts to foster positive relations and effective integration between refugees and host communities.

2.4 Chapter Summary

Kenya's refugee policy has evolved over time, shaped by political, economic, and security concerns. While formal refugee legislation was introduced in 2006 and later revised in the 2021 Refugee Act, the country has largely relied on an encampment policy, restricting refugees' rights to work and freedom of movement (Jaji, 2012). Security concerns and strained regional relations, particularly with Somalia, have reinforced restrictive policies, often framing refugees as a national threat (Brankamp, 2021). The 2021 Refugee Act represents a policy shift toward greater socio-economic integration, largely influenced by donor reports such as the 2018 IFC report, which emphasised the economic benefits of refugee businesses in Kakuma (Refugee Affairs Secretariat, 2020). However, the legislation lacks concrete strategies for fostering positive refugee-host relationships and fails to offer a contextualised approach to key issues such as social cohesion, self-reliance, and integration (De Berry and Roberts, 2018; Rodgers, 2020b). Rather than viewing these policy shifts as contradictory, I argue that they are part of a broader governance strategy that enables the Kenyan state to navigate regional security challenges while maintaining a strategic position within global humanitarian structures. The following chapter explores key refugee-related concepts, such as social cohesion and self-reliance, and applies them to the case of Kakuma

CHAPTER 3: KEY CONCEPTS RELATING TO REFUGEE INTEGRATION IN KAKUMA.

1 Introduction

This section explores and contextualises key concepts related to refugee integration in Kenya's Kakuma refugee camps, located in Turkana County. These include integration, social cohesion, refugee and refugeehood, encampment, the host community, and self-reliance. A critical analysis of these concepts is essential to understanding the complexities and challenges involved in integrating refugees in Kenya. Kakuma operates within a broader framework of national, regional, and global refugee legal and policy frameworks, which further shape the dynamics of refugee integration. Although integration is framed as a progressive alternative to encampment by the humanitarian and donor agencies, this chapter argues that it is deeply uneven, contingent, and structured by economic and legal constraints that ultimately serve the interests of the state.

2 Explaining Refugee Integration.

Research on refugee integration has grown significantly in recent years, driven by increasing concerns over immigration and ethnocultural diversity, particularly in Europe and North America (Holloway and Sturridge, 2022). However, relatively little attention has been paid to integration in the Global South¹⁸, especially in contexts of prolonged displacement. This gap in understanding is critical, given that the region hosts the majority of the world's refugees (UNHCR, 2022b) and grapples with deeply entrenched refugee challenges (Kuhlman, 1991). According to UNHCR statistics, approximately 75% of refugees globally are hosted in low- and middle-income countries, with 69% residing in neighbouring states (UNHCR, 2023a).

In Africa, most refugees are hosted in more than 300 crowded camps and settlements, often located in remote, marginalised and border regions such as Kakuma in Turkana County in Kenya (Jamal, 2003; Camarena, 2023). Moreover, most refugees on the continent live in what UNHCR describes as *protracted refugee situations*—instances where at least 25,000 refugees from the same country have been in exile for over five consecutive years without a foreseeable solution (Crisp, 2003; UNHCR, 2009, 2020a). The enduring plight of millions of refugees across Africa is exemplified by Kakuma refugee camp, established in 1992 to house those fleeing conflicts in Sudan and Ethiopia (Muluka, 2023). The nearby Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement, established in 2016 as a potential alternative to Kenya's encampment policy, has also failed to deliver meaningful benefits to at least 35,000 refugees it hosts (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020a; Brankamp, 2022).

Globally, refugee protection falls under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), established in 1951 (UNHCR, 1951). UNHCR is tasked with facilitating durable solutions for refugees in collaboration with host governments and other organisations. Article 1 of the UNHCR Statute outlines the High Commissioner's

¹⁸ According to Dados and Connell (2012), Global South is a phrase used to refer to regions such as Latin America, Asia and Africa. It is also used interchangeably with terms such as third world, developing countries/economies, and low- and middle-income countries, and often describes politically and culturally marginalised regions.

responsibility to promote voluntary repatriation or integration of refugees into host communities through naturalisation. Naturalisation, in this context, represents the culmination of successful local integration efforts. In addition, Article 8 of the UNHCR Statute lists other responsibilities of the High Commissioner, which include conclusion, ratification, and supervision of international refugee conventions; reduction of the number of refugees in need of protection; promotion of admission of refugees; and obtaining information from governments on the number and conditions of refugees, among others (UNHCR, no date c).

To reduce the number of refugees, the UNHCR focuses on three main durable solutions commonly referred to as the UNHCR durable solutions, which are integration of refugees into the local host communities and granting them citizenship (local integration), resettlement to third countries (often Europe and North America for refugees in Kenya), and voluntary repatriation to the country of origin. Other solutions include complementary pathways like scholarships and community sponsorship. In terms of the effectiveness of the three solutions, resettlement to third and developed countries and complementary pathways are very limited and only accessible to about one per cent of refugees globally (Chimni, 2004; Kelley and Durieux, 2004; Bidandi, 2018), while voluntary repatriation is unattainable, particularly in regions experiencing long-term political violence and civil conflicts like the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region (Chimni, 1993; Bakewell, 2002; Zieck, 2004; Crisp and Long, 2016).

Based on the foregoing, the integration of refugees into host countries is often the only viable long-term solution. However, this approach is frequently opposed by many governments, including Kenya, which prioritises voluntary repatriation as “the preferred durable solution” (Government of Kenya, 2020b, p. 3), citing concerns about the security and stability of host communities (Agwanda, 2022a; Jaji, 2022). According to (Jamal, 2003), African governments commonly isolate refugees to prevent potentially volatile and disruptive groups from affecting local societies. This negative perception of refugees, however, has been challenged by studies highlighting the positive contributions refugees can make to host communities. For instance, a 2016 World Bank study found that refugees

in Kakuma, Kenya, contribute positively to host communities (Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016). Yet, despite such findings, the prevailing negative approach drives governments to establish refugee camps like Kakuma, which serve to isolate and control refugees (Agamben, 1998; Jaji, 2012).

2.1 Refugee Integration in Kakuma.

Integration is a highly contested concept in both academic and policy circles. Its definition and application differ across organisations and policymakers depending on the context (Ager and Strang, 2008; Strang and Ager, 2010), while its interpretation and measurement vary considerably across studies and frameworks (Robinson, 1998; Castles *et al.*, 2002). In terms of research and attempts to define the concept of integration, much attention has focused on the refugee-hosting populations and on immigrants in general in the global North, mainly Europe and North America (ECRE, 2002; Ager and Strang, 2004a, 2004b; Sigona, 2005; Fix, Hooper and Zong, 2017; Donato and Ferris, 2020), despite the majority of refugees being in the global South. Nonetheless, integration is a crucial policy objective and development outcome for most programmes targeting refugee-hosting areas in the global South, and it remains a central theme in public and academic debates (Phillimore, 2012).

The UNHCR defines integration as a mutual, gradual, and multifaceted process with legal, social, economic, and cultural dimensions (UNHCR, no date d). It argues that effective integration cannot follow a single approach, as programmes must be adapted to meet changing needs and conditions (*ibid*). This definition lacks specificity in detailing the four highlighted dimensions and excludes the political dimension, which is vital for enabling refugees to participate in local and national decision-making processes. Relatedly, ECRE (2002) and (Felleson, 2023) describe integration as a dynamic, two-way, long-term, and multidimensional process. This perspective posits that refugees should adapt to the lifestyle of the host community without losing their cultural identity, while the hosts must adjust their institutions to accommodate the newcomers. Felleson (2023) adds that effective integration should result in equal access to resources and opportunities, alongside a sense of security and belonging for refugees. However, such outcomes are challenging,

particularly in contexts like refugee camps where policies restrict access to resources and exclude refugees from decision-making processes that directly impact their lives.

In Turkana County, home to the Kakuma refugee camps, both refugees and host communities face significant socio-economic challenges. Resources and opportunities are scarce, making equal access and a sense of belonging difficult to achieve (Anomat Ali, Imana and Ocha, 2017; Alix-Garcia *et al.*, 2018; Betts, 2022). Government policies also maintain the status quo in public institutions, expecting refugees to adapt to existing systems rather than modifying these systems to address refugees' changing needs. For example, Kenya has long managed parallel service provision for refugees—such as dedicated refugee schools and hospitals—through humanitarian agencies instead of integrating these services into national public systems to ensure equitable access (Betts, 2022). In addition, restrictions on freedom of movement and employment opportunities further hinder integration, even though evidence suggests that refugees contribute positively to the local economy in Turkana (Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016; IFC, 2018b).

As a multidimensional process that “involves many actors, agencies, logics and rationalities” (Sigona, 2005, p. 118), successful integration depends not only on contextual factors such as the socio-cultural, economic, and political environment of the host country but also on the preferences of both refugees and host communities and other intersectional factors such as gender, age, race, and ethnic/countries of origins. According to Bourhis *et al.* (1997), these group preferences play a crucial role in shaping the outcomes of different integration strategies. The relationship between refugees and host communities is influenced by the alignment or divergence of their interests. When the refugees and hosts adopt conflicting integration strategies, tensions and conflicts are more likely to arise. For integration to succeed, both refugees and host communities must be willing to work toward a common goal. If, in a situation where the refugees, for example, are in favour of integration while the hosts prefer assimilation¹⁹, problematic situations such as conflicts and hate will emerge. Additionally, conflicts can stem from integration programs and policies that fail to account

¹⁹ Based on Berry's model of acculturation, assimilation occurs when individuals adopt the cultural norms of a dominant or host culture over their original culture.

for the preferences and perspectives of both groups (Rodgers, 2021). This has been evident in Kakuma, where initiatives like the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan (KISEDPA) have faced challenges due to limited consultation and involvement of refugees and host communities in their design (Betts, Omata, *et al.*, 2019). As a result, integration efforts in such contexts often struggle to achieve their intended outcomes.

The role of individual group preferences is particularly significant in a camp setting like Kakuma, where government policy strongly favours refugee separation through the long-standing encampment policy, while humanitarian organizations advocate for increased interactions to promote socio-economic integration. Refugee preferences in Kakuma vary based on personal needs and social circumstances. For instance, those engaged in entrepreneurial activities may prefer integration due to the economic benefits it offers. Others, however, may favour separation or resettlement in third countries, citing factors such as perceived hostility from the local Turkana community, aspirations for a better quality of life, or the despair associated with prolonged displacement (Muluka, 2023). Similarly, the host community in Kakuma holds diverse views on refugee integration. Some members support the encampment policy, while others recognize the potential benefits of greater refugee inclusion in local economic and social structures (Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016). This complexity reflects what (Owiso, 2022) describes as Kenya's incoherent and contradictory refugee policies. He argues that the 2021 Refugee Act simultaneously endorses both integration and encampment, resulting in a confusing mix of conflicting policy directions (*Ibid*).

If we are to understand refugee integration as a process, it is also vital to identify the point at which it begins for refugees and host communities. According to Strang and Ager (2010), integration for refugees begins upon arrival at a place they consider the destination. Moreover, the experiences of the refugees at the point of arrival, and not the acquisition of the legal status, shape their integration process (*ibid.*). The argument by Ager and Strang, therefore, challenges the notion that integration can only begin once refugees acquire their status. Indeed, the acquisition of refugee status can enable an individual to access greater rights and freedoms within the host country. In Kenya, for instance, refugees without legal

documents such as refugee identity cards and work permits are unable to seek formal employment or engage in business activities, as these require permits that can only be obtained using a valid refugee identity card. However, studies indicate that acquiring these critical identity documents is an arduous process, making it difficult for many refugees to participate fully in the economy or access essential services (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2017).

These policy restrictions imposed on refugees significantly hinder their ability to integrate into host communities. For example, many are required to wait until the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process²⁰ is completed before they are allowed to engage in meaningful work or employment. This prolonged wait, often coupled with the denial or delay of critical documents from government agencies, constitutes what Gren, Abdelhady and Joormann (2023) describe as bureaucratic violence—a practice that constrains refugees' opportunities, undermines their dignity, and threatens their well-being. These barriers leave refugees in a state of dependency and insecurity, unable to rebuild their lives or contribute to the host society. As a result of being denied the freedom and capacity to pursue economic opportunities outside the camp, some refugees may opt to leave Kakuma refugee camp and move across the border or to Dadaab to seek the same opportunities. The UN refugee agency has termed this phenomenon “onward movement”, highlighting the determination of refugees to escape restrictive environments in pursuit of greater autonomy and opportunity. In this regard, (Losi and Strang, 2008) argue that refugees prioritize integration in locations that provide opportunities, safety, and protection. They are not merely seeking shelter but a place where they can establish stable and meaningful lives. As such, it is critical to understand refugees' intentions on whether they want to stay or leave the destination community from the onset so as to better support their integration.

While the 2008 framework by Ager and Strang provides a nuanced understanding of refugee integration, its applicability is limited in the context of protracted refugee situations

²⁰ According to the UNHCR, Refugee Status Determination, or RSD, is the legal or administrative process by which governments or the UNHCR determine whether a person seeking international protection is considered a refugee under international, regional, or national law. In Kenya, this process is done by the government with the support of UNHCR.

in large camps within developing countries like Kenya, particularly in marginalised and remote areas such as Kakuma. Their research, conducted in the United Kingdom (UK), focused on the integration of refugees settled in a developed nation through different patterns, namely self-settlement and dispersal-led settlement (Ibid). This context differs significantly from the experiences of refugees in Kakuma and Kalobeyei, who have not yet accessed durable solutions and are living in a highly policed refugee camp. For example, the citizenship indicator under the Foundation domain cannot be fully achieved in Kenya due to legal barriers that prevent refugees from obtaining citizenship. In addition, it would be challenging to satisfy the refugee housing needs —categorized under Markers and Means in their framework— in Kakuma due to the Kenyan government’s policy of prohibiting permanent and quality shelters for refugees because that may portray a sense of durability and permanence and consequently make refugees unwilling to go back to their countries of origin (Rice, 2011). Yet, despite its limitations, the framework's social connection domain can be used to understand the various forms of social relationships between refugees and host communities in Kakuma, as will be elaborated on in Chapter Four.

The policy in Kakuma, however, presents significant challenges for refugees from the moment they arrive in Kenya. A major obstacle to their integration is the mandatory requirement that all refugees reside in designated camps. Under Kenya’s 2021 Refugee Act, it is an offence for a refugee to live outside these camps without authorisation from the Commissioner for Refugee Affairs (CRA) (Laws of Kenya, 2021). Yet, within the camps movements are restricted, public facilities are overstretched, and necessities such as food, shelter and healthcare are inadequate (Jansen, 2018; Betts, 2022). In addition, refugee reception centres are overcrowded and suffer from poor hygiene, creating inhumane living conditions. Meanwhile, the surrounding host communities, especially in Kakuma, are also experiencing equally poor, if not worse, economic and social conditions than the refugees, further exacerbated by historical violence and injustice from the national government (Rodgers, 2020b, 2022). Therefore, to expect that refugees integrate well, particularly from the onset, is practically impossible, given the policy restrictions and the contextual challenges.

The conditions of the host community also play a critical role in influencing the refugees' decision on whether they can integrate with them or not. While the government of Kenya's favoured policy is voluntary repatriation despite the fact that situations in countries of origin haven't changed, most refugees in Kakuma prefer resettlement rather than local integration. According to Muluka (2023), they are attracted to and stay in Kakuma due to the hopes and desire to be resettled in developed nations in Europe, North America, or Australia.

Muluka states,

Kakuma and Kalobeyei refugee camps have morphed into springboards of further migration to Europe, Australia and the Americas. They lost their original character as emergency relief points and became, instead, holding grounds for people seeking better homes away from their original homes...they were waiting for UNHCR to resettle them in another country. Kakuma and Kalobeyei were their home for the time being (Muluka, 2023, p. 37).

Hence, the motivation to stay in Kakuma and the choice to wait for resettlement instead of integrating inhibit the integration efforts for the thousands of refugees in this camp. In addition, the opposition towards Kenya's integration plans by refugees in Kakuma highlights a disconnect between the intentions and needs of refugees and the assumptions made by the Kenyan government and humanitarian agencies (Lutta, 2025b). These actors often assume that integration will occur naturally without fully considering the complex motivations, challenges, and preferences of both refugees and host communities.

Finally, integration can also be understood in terms of the material benefits the refugees can access, their level of participation in the new societies and their feelings of security and belonging. This is based on an assessment of various definitions of integration by Ager and Strang (2008), who established common themes in the diverse understandings of this concept. As a result, they developed a conceptual framework to assess integration, which features four domains: markers and means, social connection, facilitators and foundation. For each of these four key domains, Ager and Strang further identified indicators for successful integration. These are linked to the various social, political and economic benefits

accessible to refugees and include employment, housing, education and health (as markers and means); social bridges, social bonds and social links (as social connections); language and cultural knowledge and safety and stability (as facilitators); and rights and citizenship (as foundation) (ibid).

In conclusion, integration remains challenging for policymakers and practitioners who understand and implement it differently and in diverse humanitarian contexts. While most research on the concept has focused on resettled refugees in developing countries, specifically in Europe and North America, there is little understanding of the concept and how it applies to refugees in large and protracted refugee camps in developing nations like Kenya. This is one of the factors that has led to the perpetuation of the encampment policy, particularly in Kenya, and the adoption of inconsistent and incoherent policies that do not take into account refugees' perceptions and intentions in the host communities.

3 Social cohesion and refugee integration.

The concept of social cohesion originates from the work of French sociologist *Émile Durkheim*, who broadly defined it as the presence of strong social bonds and the absence of underlying conflict (Fonseca, Lukosch and Brazier, 2019). While the concept has evolved through the work of behavioural scientists, Durkheim was the first to distinguish between two fundamental aspects of social cohesion: the capacity for shared cultural representations and the ability to establish and maintain affiliative social bonds (Taylor and Davis, 2018). Like integration, social cohesion is defined and measured differently depending on the context (Jenson, 1998; De Berry and Roberts, 2018; Rodgers, 2020b; Holloway and Sturridge, 2022). This variability has led some scholars to label it a “*quasi-concept*” due to its vagueness and adaptability for political purposes (Bernard, 1999; Stanley, 2003). In contrast, Kearns and Forrest (2000) argue that social cohesion requires no detailed explanation, as it is generally assumed to be beneficial and widely understood. Interestingly, despite its relevance to refugee situations, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) does not have a specific policy on social cohesion. However, Rodgers (2022) opine that

some of the refugee agency staff believe that social cohesion can help prevent harm to refugees and improve their access to durable solutions.

In refugee-hosting countries and forced displacement contexts, social cohesion plays a crucial role in shaping inclusive and effective refugee policies (Betts, 2022; Betts *et al.*, 2022). Chan, To and Chan (2006) argue that it can foster collective action within communities and improve well-being outcomes following traumatic events such as forced displacement and conflict. When refugees and host communities maintain positive relationships, governments are better positioned to develop refugee policies that address the needs and concerns of both groups while also promoting the socio-economic development of host regions (Ibid). In this regard, sustainable social cohesion policies in refugee settings can help mitigate the negative consequences of large refugee inflows, such as fractured social relationships, grievances, tensions, and economic challenges (De Berry and Roberts, 2018; Pham *et al.*, 2022; Rodgers, 2022).

3.1 The challenge of defining social cohesion.

Despite having emerged in the mid-1990s, particularly in Europe and Canada (Beauvais and Jenson, 2002), the concept of social cohesion received little attention in the global academic and sociopolitical debates before the early 2000s. This changed post-2001 due to the growing hostile rhetoric on immigration, increased violence, xenophobia and racism in Europe and North America, which were prompted, among other factors, by economic stresses, loss of confidence in public institutions, and socio-political impacts of neoliberalism, among others (Holloway and Sturridge, 2022). Larsen (2014) suggests that social cohesion has gained popularity in the global political agenda in the last two decades, mainly because of security concerns after the 9/11 attack against the United States of America (USA)²¹ and the increased economic inequality in Western countries. Furthermore, Larsen states that the decline of social cohesion has been blamed on additional challenges like the development of new information technologies, which have changed how people relate in communities (Ibid). In the case of Europe, the addition of new member states to

²¹ Also known as the September 11th attack, referring to the four coordinated terrorist attacks against the USA in 2001 by the Al-Qaeda terrorist group.

the European Union has been viewed as a challenge to the national identities and welfare systems, thus negatively affecting social cohesion (Schiefer and van der Noll, 2017).

Within international development and policymaking sectors, social cohesion has emerged as both a core policy objective in effectively delivering aid and assistance in complex humanitarian settings. For instance, the World Bank made significant strides in this area by publishing its first comprehensive report on social cohesion and forced displacement in 2022. This report synthesises findings from 26 background studies conducted across diverse regions, including Africa, Asia, Europe, and Central and South America (World Bank, 2022). The report underscores how social cohesion can be a transformative framework for addressing the challenges faced by displaced populations and their host communities, particularly in mitigating tensions, fostering trust, and promoting inclusive development (Ibid).

Similarly, other organisations have integrated social cohesion into their programme core objectives. The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), for example, prioritises social cohesion in its programming to mitigate conflict in humanitarian contexts. In Kakuma, the LWF has established a dedicated department to implement social cohesion activities, aiming to reduce tensions between refugees and host communities while fostering cooperation and mutual understanding (Rodgers, 2020b). These activities often include sports, community peace dialogues, and educational programmes designed to bridge cultural and social divides (The Lutheran World Federation, no date). Based on the foregoing, social cohesion plays a crucial role in refugee-hosting contexts, serving as an important policy and development priority for governments and organisations supporting displaced populations and their host communities (De Berry and Roberts, 2018; Pham *et al.*, 2022).

In long-term displacement situations like Kakuma, which has hosted refugee camps and settlements for over three decades, it is essential to understand the concept of social cohesion, particularly in light of the physical and social separation caused by the encampment policy and its effects on relationships between refugees and hosts. Furthermore, identifying indicators of social cohesion is key to designing effective

measurement tools for integration, aid, and development programmes. As Beauvais and Jenson (2002) noted, the way social cohesion is defined influences what aspects are analysed, measured, and addressed through policy recommendations. Therefore, it is vital to analyse and contextualise various definitions of social cohesion to ensure programmes are relevant and effective.

The concept of social cohesion is understood through three primary perspectives: academic, aid sector, and government-oriented definitions (Holloway and Sturridge, 2022). The academic perspective, rooted in sociology and social psychology, focuses on how social bonds and group interactions shape cohesion (Chan, To and Chan, 2006). The aid sector approach, on the other hand, is shaped by policymakers in development organisations such as the World Bank and UNHCR, which frame social cohesion in the context of humanitarian and development interventions (UNHCR, 2019a; World Bank, 2022). Meanwhile, government-oriented definitions have emerged from states' efforts to measure social cohesion using indicators such as a sense of belonging, trust, and shared opportunities. Countries like Canada, France, Australia, and Luxembourg have developed frameworks based on these indicators to assess and strengthen social cohesion within their societies (Jenson, 1998; Dickes, Valentova and Borsenberger, 2009; Markus, 2021).

Although government-oriented definitions dominate the literature, they primarily focus on contexts in the Global North, with limited exploration of social cohesion in refugee-hosting regions in the Global South, such as Kakuma in Kenya (UNHCR, 2019a; Rodgers, 2020b, 2022; Betts, 2022; Betts *et al.*, 2022). This North-centric framing also extends to the concept of integration, making both social cohesion and integration largely Global North-led concepts. Throughout this study, no systematic study from the Global South that has developed a theoretical framework that effectively and contextually captures both integration and social cohesion was found. This gap highlights the need for context-specific theories that reflect the realities of refugee experiences and host-community dynamics in the Global South.

Within the academic-oriented definitions of social cohesion, some of the dimensions that have been identified include trust in others and institutions, willingness to cooperate or participate in a common purpose, and a sense of belonging (Bollen and Hoyle, 1990; Schiefer and van der Noll, 2017; Kim, Sheely and Schmidt, 2020; Rodgers, 2020b; Leininger *et al.*, 2021). According to Kim, Sheely and Schmidt (2020), trust is the belief that another individual or institution that can harm or betray someone will not do so. This definition of trust can be linked to the feelings and perceptions of safety and security of a person within a community, at a person-to-person level and person-to-institution level. Based on studies conducted in Kakuma, trust can be linked to the feelings and perceptions of safety and security between and among refugees and host communities and towards the governing institutions such as the Department of Refugee Services, the UNHCR and other humanitarian organisations operating there (Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016; World Bank, 2019c, 2019b; Betts, Flinder Stierna, *et al.*, 2023a).

Based on Durkheim's definition, social cohesion can be defined in horizontal (cooperation) and vertical (participation) dimensions, respectively. Cooperation makes up the horizontal dimension of social cohesion since it highlights the relationship between and among individuals and groups as the relationship is geared towards a common good (Leininger *et al.*, 2021). The relationship between groups is called intergroup social cohesion, while within groups, is intragroup (Holloway and Sturridge, 2022). However, participation relates to the vertical dimension of social cohesion since it describes the relationship between an individual and state or state and society and concerns aspects such as the distribution of resources and engagement in political and socio-cultural activities (*ibid*). Thus, Schiefer and van der Noll (2017, p. 588) argued, “participation in public life reflects a sense of belonging, solidarity and the readiness for mutual cooperation in the pursuit of common goals.” In Kakuma, cooperation and participation occur when refugees and host communities engage in activities meant to foster social cohesion, such as sports, community dialogues, and governance events, such as expressing views and feedback on development projects and plans.

The final component of the academic definition of social cohesion is a sense of belonging, described as "the degree to which an individual or collective group feel like they 'fit' together in a group" (Kim, Sheely and Schmidt, 2020, p. 5). Beyond social belonging, Janmaat (2011) introduces the concept of territorial belonging, which refers to the ability to identify with a specific place. This dual identification—with both people and place—can strengthen social cohesion by fostering shared values, norms, and robust social networks (Kearns and Forrest, 2000). For instance, a study conducted in Kalobeyei Settlement in Kakuma highlighted the importance of social networks in promoting cohesion (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020a). It revealed that many refugees transferred to Kalobeyei chose to return to the Kakuma refugee camps due to their well-established social networks and fears of losing these connections. This underscores how extended stays in specific locations, like Kakuma, cultivate a deep sense of people and place-based identity, making relocation to another site within the Kakuma area less appealing.

However, place identity is not without challenges. While it can promote unity within a group, it may also negatively impact social cohesion in contexts marked by strong ethnocultural attachments (Painter, 2013). These territorial identities can foster exclusionary attitudes, leading to resentment or rejection of minority groups, such as refugees, who may be perceived as outsiders or threats. For example, in Kakuma, some members of the Turkana host community view refugees as culturally violent individuals who threaten local resources and land. This stance stems from the perceived depletion and destruction of natural resources attributed to the camp's expansion and population growth (Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016, p. 13). Such tensions illustrate the delicate balance between fostering social cohesion and managing the complexities of place-based identities in diverse and resource-constrained settings.

The aid sector-oriented perception of social cohesion stems from the increasing understanding of refugees' and refugee camps' challenges not as a burden but as an opportunity to exploit for development gains (Richey and Brooks, 2023). This perception has, in turn, led private companies to invest in a range of businesses being run by refugees and in refugee-hosting contexts (UNHCR, 2019a; Herzberg and Yong-d'herve, 2022). For

example, between 2012 and 2019, the IKEA Foundation invested about US\$100 million to support various projects in Dollo Ado refugee camps in Ethiopia, focusing on agriculture, livestock production, environmental conservation, and renewable energy in what was termed the biggest private sector investment in a refugee setting (Betts *et al.*, 2020). In Kakuma refugee camp, the International Financial Corporation (IFC) in 2020, launched a five-year investment programme worth US\$ 25 million—the Kakuma Kalobeyei Challenge Fund (KKCF)—meant to increase private investment in refugee and host community businesses (KKCF, no date).

However, humanitarian development and aid can exacerbate tensions that exist between vulnerable refugees and already marginalised and insecure host communities, mainly if it is unfairly distributed (Rodgers, 2020b; Ahmed *et al.*, 2021). Guay states that “poorly planned aid can contribute to increased divisions between competing groups, undermine local conflict resolution institutions, and exacerbate power inequities” (Guay, 2015, p. 11). Social cohesion therefore plays a critical role in achieving inclusive development in fragile communities (OECD, 2011; Sommer, 2019). In this regard, aid organisations such as the World Bank, OECD and European Union have increasingly factored in the aspect of social cohesion as one of the objectives of some of their projects, especially those that are being implemented in displacement situations like Kakuma in Kenya (Holloway and Sturridge, 2022).

Various aid organisations define social cohesion differently, with their programmatic focus often reflecting their institutional mandates and priorities and their strategic objectives (Holloway and Sturridge, 2022). For instance, development-focused entities such as United Nations agencies tend to prioritise vertical social cohesion—trust in institutions and participation in governance processes. In contrast, humanitarian organisations emphasise horizontal social cohesion, which focuses on interpersonal relationships and community ties (*ibid.*).

Examples of these differing interpretations include the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which defines social cohesion in terms of trust in government and

participation in governance to achieve sustainable peace and development. Meanwhile, UNHCR, as a humanitarian agency, focuses on the social ties that hold communities together, emphasising aspects such as interactions, shared culture, and common interests (Holloway and Sturridge, 2022). This variation is further reflected in how organisations design and implement their programmes. The World Bank integrates social cohesion into its economic development and poverty reduction strategies, while the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe target economic stability as a pathway to fostering cohesion (Schiefer and van der Noll, 2017).

This development-oriented perspective is exemplified in Kakuma by two flagship projects supported by the UNHCR and the World Bank, respectively: the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Program (KISEDIP) and the Kenya Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (KDRDIP) (UNHCR, 2018g; Government of Kenya, 2020a). The KISEDIP plan explicitly mentions social cohesion as a key outcome of its education and protection initiatives. The plan emphasises the role of quality education in equipping individuals and communities with the skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary to build inclusive communities that combat exclusion and marginalisation (Rodgers, 2022). Additionally, the programme advocates for investments in sports infrastructure, such as a sports complex, as a means of creating a safe environment for refugee and host youths to engage in activities that foster meaningful interaction and social cohesion (UNHCR, 2018g, p. 15). On the other hand, KDRDIP focuses on addressing socio-economic tensions by investing in social and public infrastructure to mitigate livelihood challenges, resource competition, and conflicts between host and refugee communities. It proposes area-based inclusive development as a means of achieving "quick wins" that enhance integration (World Bank, 2017, p. 22).

Despite the inclusion of social cohesion as a programmatic objective, neither the UNHCR nor the World Bank provides a clear, contextualised definition of the concept specific to Kakuma. This omission has implications for how these projects are implemented and measured. Holloway and Sturridge (2022, p. 7) argue that many aid organisations treat social cohesion as a "self-evident" term, omitting detailed definitions and motivations in

their program plans. This lack of clarity may stem from a perception among project teams that defining social cohesion is a complex and non-essential task (De Berry and Roberts, 2018). Consequently, most programs addressing social cohesion often fail to achieve meaningful impact due to insufficient contextualisation and understanding of the concept, as well as limited funding allocated specifically for this objective (Ahmed *et al.*, 2021). Without a precise and localised definition, it becomes challenging to design interventions that effectively address the unique dynamics of social cohesion in displacement settings like Kakuma.

Regarding government-oriented perspectives, countries such as Canada, Australia, Luxembourg, and France have made notable efforts to understand and define social cohesion within their policy frameworks. In Canada, the Policy Research Sub-Committee on Social Cohesion described it as "the ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunity within Canada, based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity among all Canadians" (Jenson, 1998, p. 4). This definition highlights key indicators such as trust, reciprocity, and a common purpose, reflecting the importance of shared societal values and equitable opportunities.

Similarly, the Australian government's conceptualisation of social cohesion includes dimensions such as belonging and social inclusion. Indicators under this framework encompass trust in government, participation in democratic and social activities, and acceptance of diversity (Markus, 2021). The French government's Commissariat général au Plan aligns with this perspective by defining social cohesion as "a set of social processes that help instil in individuals the sense of belonging to the same community and the feeling that they are recognised as members of that community" (Jenson, 1998, p. 4). In Luxembourg, the focus on trust and participation at individual and institutional levels further underscores the universal significance of these elements (Dickes, Valentova and Borsenberger, 2009). In general, these definitions suggest that government-oriented approaches to social cohesion often emphasise three critical domains: trust, a sense of belonging, and active participation.

Governmental approaches to social cohesion also extend beyond theoretical understandings to include practical aspects such as economic stability, political order, equity, and overall social well-being (Chan, To and Chan, 2006; Babajanian, 2014). These pragmatic components ensure that policies are grounded in actionable strategies, reflecting the multifaceted nature of social cohesion.

Broadly speaking, social cohesion serves a dual purpose: it is both a means and an end in policies designed to foster refugee integration (Jenson, 1998). It is a key outcome of successful relationships between refugees and host communities and a vital indicator of inclusive and harmonious societies (Chan, To and Chan, 2006; Ahmed *et al.*, 2021). However, the absence of a universally agreed-upon definition complicates its implementation and measurement, especially in refugee-hosting contexts. The perceived complexity of social cohesion among humanitarian organisations and project teams has also led to minimal budgetary allocation for initiatives aimed at fostering cohesion. This is particularly problematic in displacement settings where tensions often arise between refugees and hosts over limited resources and socio-economic disparities (Anomat Ali, Imana and Ocha, 2017; Rodgers, 2020b).

Although much of the existing research on social cohesion focuses on the global North (Betts *et al.*, 2022), it is crucial to examine how the concept applies in refugee-hosting contexts in the global South. In protracted displacement settings like Kakuma, understanding social cohesion is essential for effective integration, particularly in marginalised and conflict-prone regions such as Turkana County. By contextualising the concept and aligning policies with local realities, governments and organisations can foster more inclusive communities, addressing both immediate and long-term challenges in refugee-hosting areas.

4 Refugee and refugeehood.

Refugees are at the centre of global political debates. For instance, the surge in immigration to Europe in recent years has sparked intense political discussions within the European Union (EU) and its member states, accompanied by protests and counter-protests from groups both supporting and opposing migrants. The large-scale arrival of refugees in 2015, often referred to as the "2015 refugee crisis," significantly heightened negative sentiments toward migrants in some European countries. To underscore the centrality of refugee issues in EU political discourses, a 2023 Eurobarometer survey found that EU citizens rank immigration among the top three challenges facing the union (Soler, 2023). Moreover, immigration has become a central issue in election debates across Europe, contributing to the rise of far-right parties in countries such as the Netherlands, Hungary, Poland, Sweden, and Italy among others (Duxbury, 2023; Faiola, Rauhala and Morris, 2023). This growing politicization of immigration demonstrates its profound impact on European politics and society.

In Africa, responses to refugees mirror the restrictive measures seen in Europe and other Western countries. Many African nations, instead of providing robust support for refugees, have implemented policies that limit their rights and freedoms. Some countries, like Rwanda, have made attempts to enter into political agreements with Western nations, such as the UK-Rwanda deal, to act as offshore processing centres for asylum seekers²². Other countries close their borders, forcibly deport refugees, or confine them to overcrowded and remote camps (Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000; Jamal, 2003; Amnesty International, 2012; BBC News, 2022).

In Kenya, for example, refugees are legally required to remain in either Kakuma or Dadaab refugee camps (Laws of Kenya, 2021). These camps are heavily policed and lack adequate access to essential social services, making life particularly challenging for the residents (Jansen, 2018; H. Brankamp, 2019). Refugees are only permitted to leave the camps under

²² In November 15 2023, the UK Supreme Court issued a judgement that the deal was unlawful and Rwanda was not a safe third country (McDonnell, 2023)

specific circumstances, such as for special protection needs. This includes individuals with disabilities, students attending schools outside the camps, those requiring specialised medical treatment, participants in events or conferences outside the camps or the country, and those scheduled for resettlement.

4.1 The definition of a refugee from a global perspective.

Who is a refugee in the global and African context? Why are countries, especially in Africa, trying to control or prevent their movements? Moreover, what space do they occupy in a country's social and political system? What are some of the laws that safeguard and promote their fundamental rights and freedoms? Answering these questions provides better insights into a highly politicised subject that has generated some of the most heated political debates across the world and resulted in the implementation of inhumane and degrading measures meant to curtail the movement of people, which, according to Muluka (2023), is at the centre of the advancement of human civilisation.

The legal definition of a refugee is primarily established in the 1951 UNHCR Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. However, the original scope of this definition was limited, as it primarily addressed those displaced by events in Europe following the Second World War (McAdam, 2017). In this regard, Article 1, Section A(2) of the 1951 Convention defined a refugee as any person who:

As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (Weis, no date).

Furthermore, Article 1, Section B of the Convention allowed ratifying states to interpret the phrase “events occurring before 1951” as either being limited to Europe or applicable to other regions. However, some scholars have argued that this provision reinforced the Eurocentric and colonial nature of the Convention (Abuya, Krause and Mayblin, 2021;

Krause, 2021). The critics argue that by limiting the scope of persecution to events in Europe, the Convention effectively marginalised refugees from other regions, further entrenching the divide between European nations and the Global South within the global refugee protection framework (Ibid).

These geographical and temporal restrictions of the 1951 Convention were later addressed through the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, which amended the original definition. Specifically, it removed the phrases “as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951” and “as a result of such events” from Article 1, Section A(2), thus broadening the definition of a refugee to include individuals displaced by persecution without geographic or temporal limitations. Under the revised definition, a refugee is described as a person who:

Owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of [their] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [themselves] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of [their] former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (Refugee Convention Article 1A(2)).

Yet, even with the modifications introduced by the 1967 Protocol, the definition of a refugee remains a subject of critique by scholars and policymakers. Nyabola (2019) highlights a key limitation of the Refugee Convention and its Protocol: they guarantee the right to seek asylum but not the right to be granted asylum. This limitation creates significant gaps in protection, leaving asylum seekers vulnerable to discretionary decisions by states. Similarly, McAdam (2017) points out that the Convention is silent on procedures for recognising refugees, enabling states to manipulate these processes to deny certain individuals international protection. As a result, millions of displaced people find themselves confined to overcrowded camps worldwide, enduring harsh conditions while awaiting uncertain outcomes. Others face severe rights violations and abuse from states determined to limit the number of refugees they accept. This restrictive stance undermines the humanitarian intent of the refugee protection framework. Another criticism relates to the

principle of *non-refoulement*, which prohibits states from returning individuals seeking international protection to places where they may face persecution. Walker (2002) argues that this principle is contentious because it permits individuals to enter and remain in a country while stopping short of guaranteeing them asylum. This creates a precarious situation for many refugees who are physically safe but lack the security and stability that formal recognition and status would provide, such as being able to find employment and avail of other public services like education and healthcare.

The Convention has also been criticised for its ambiguous application, described by McAdam (2017, p. 1) as "simultaneously blocking and facilitating access to protection." While the narrow focus on five grounds restricts access for many, its open-ended interpretation allows states considerable discretion. In some cases, this has led to progressive expansions, such as recognising gender and sexual orientation as grounds for persecution under the "membership of a particular social group" category. Similarly, some states have acknowledged persecution by non-state actors, including terrorist organisations. Customary international law and domestic legal frameworks have further broadened protection through subsidiary measures. For instance, countries such as France, Germany, the UK, the USA, Ireland, Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and Switzerland offer subsidiary protection to individuals who do not meet the strict refugee criteria but still face significant risks (Worster, 2012). On the other hand, the focus on five grounds of persecution excludes other legitimate reasons for seeking asylum, such as the risk of torture, family ties, serious illness, or gender-based persecution (Berchin *et al.*, 2017; McAdam, 2017).

Despite the incremental expansions, the Convention is widely regarded as ill-equipped to address the modern causes and scale of displacement. Scholars like Biermann and Boas (2008) argue that the UNHCR and its institutional frameworks are unprepared for the challenges posed by climate-induced displacement and other emerging crises. This has led to calls for a new or amended refugee convention. For example, Ferracioli advocates for a revised framework that would "do justice to the moral claims of all those who can only

secure their most fundamental human rights...by immigrating to another country" (Ferracioli, 2014, p. 126). However, Ferracioli warns that revising the Convention in the current political climate could result in a weaker set of norms, as many states view the existing regime as overly generous and lack the political will to broaden protections (Dummett, 2001).

The political and practical barriers to reform of the Refugee Convention are significant. Biermann and Boas suggest that most governments are unlikely to extend legal protections to new groups, even as displacement crises escalate (Biermann and Boas, 2008). Moreover, the previous attempts to depart from the foundational principles of international refugee protection have not only failed to reduce refugee flows but have also exacerbated the plight of vulnerable populations (Türk, 2016). Türk cautions that such departures have led to "ineffective management of large-scale influxes...and ultimately the re-victimisation of those most in need of protection and support" (p. 47). Ferracioli (2014) underscores this point, stating that legal changes to the refugee regime are "at best infeasible, and at worst perilous" (p. 126).

In light of these challenges, the global refugee protection system stands at a crossroads. While there is a clear need for reforms to address the realities of modern displacement, the lack of political consensus and the risk of undermining existing protections make such changes both complex and contentious. The tension between state sovereignty and the moral imperative to protect vulnerable populations continues to shape the debate over the future of refugee law and policy.

4.2 Regional refugee conventions: the African refugee convention.

The debate around amending the 1951 Refugee Convention remains highly contentious, and given the challenges associated with this global framework, some regions, like Africa, have developed additional conventions to address their unique refugee challenges. While the adoption of the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees expanded the scope of the global refugee protection regime beyond Europe by addressing the geographical limitations of the original 1951 Convention, it fell short of covering the unique causes of

displacement in Africa, which often extended beyond the individual, well-founded fear of persecution. These unique causes of displacement in Africa included generalised violence, the imposition of a colonial border, disasters like famine and drought, and internal turmoil, among others (Nicolosi, 2014).

The international community had also failed to provide durable solutions to the new African refugee challenge, due partly to unpreparedness for the high scale of displacement on the continent as a result of conflicts related to the struggle for independence (Nicolosi, 2014), often referred to as the decolonisation wars (Nindi, 1986; Easton-Calabria, 2022). This necessitated the creation of a new continental convention inspired by the Pan-Africanism ideology, which galvanised African leaders and their people against colonisation. Therefore, in September 1969, in Addis Ababa, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa was adopted by the Assembly of African Heads of State and Government. This was groundbreaking since it set new global standards to define refugees (Abass, 2016). Besides adopting the definition of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol, Article 1(2) of the OAU Refugee Convention added the following definition:

...every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination, or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality.

This broadened definition was particularly innovative as it recognised collective forms of displacement caused by broader societal upheavals, such as wars, invasions, and systemic unrest, rather than limiting protection to individuals who could demonstrate personal persecution. Nicolosi (2014) highlights its significant advancements in expanding the refugee definition, reinterpreting the right to asylum, and strengthening the principle of non-refoulement. Unlike its global counterpart, the OAU Convention was designed to be more attuned to the realities of displacement within Africa, addressing both historical and contemporary causes of forced migration. Its broader, more inclusive approach to refugee protection has led some to consider it superior to the international refugee regime and

other regional conventions (Wood, 2019). In this regard, Okoth-Obbo emphasised that the OAU Refugee Convention aimed to ensure “predictability, depoliticisation, humanitarianisation, and coherence” in dealing with refugee-related matters in Africa (Okoth-Obbo, 2001, p. 90). These attributes reflect the Convention’s commitment to fostering a collective and humanitarian response to displacement while minimising negative migration politics.

In terms of application, African countries such as Kenya ensured that the OAU convention was adopted within the nation’s legal frameworks through ratification in 1992. Moreover, the Convention was adopted in the national legal system by enacting the 2006 refugee legislation, the country's first refugee law. Before this, the country relied only on the 1951 Refugee Convention, its 1967 Protocol, and the OAU Refugee Convention. Under Section 3 of the Kenya Refugees Act of 2006, two categories of refugees were created in Kenya: statutory and prima facie. The recognition of a statutory refugee under the 2006 Act was based on the 1951 Refugee Convention and its Protocol of 1967 (Section 3(1a and b)), while the prima facie refugees were based on the OAU’s expanded definition of refugees (Section 3(2)).

Prima facie refugee determination is a group recognition primarily applied in mass displacement situations where conducting individual refugee status determination is impractical (Hyndman and Nylund, 1998). According to Rutinwa (2002), prima facie recognition is adopted by a state based on obvious and objective circumstances in the country of origin that led to forced displacement and admission, protection from refoulement, and provision of essential humanitarian treatment. Following the enactment of the new Refugees Act in 2021, the two categories were amended, but the definitions remained unchanged. As such, the 2021 Kenya Refugee Act defines a refugee based on the 1951 Refugee Convention, its 1967 Protocol, and the 1969 OAU Convention.

With the adoption of multiple refugee conventions, it may be assumed that the refugees in Africa, especially in Kenya, were treated in accordance with the requirements of such conventions. In reality, the treatment of refugees did not improve in Kenya, even with the

ratification of the OAU Refugee Convention in 1992. According to Wood (2019), the implementation of the African Refugee Convention has been inconsistent, as some countries have not fully complied with its requirements and choose instead to violate some of its principles by forcefully repatriating refugees and violating their rights by putting them in camps where their freedoms and rights are restricted. Studies conducted on the Convention's implementation have revealed that its definition of a refugee is often ignored or misunderstood by those who conduct the refugee status determination (Sharpe, 2013; Wood, 2014). Moreover, Abass (2016) suggested that the regional institutions created to monitor the implementation and breaches of the OAU refugee convention are weak and underfunded, thus enabling violations of refugee rights and protection needs in Africa. Other issues, such as lack of political will from the refugee-hosting governments and poor economic conditions, have resulted in the mistreatment of refugees across the continent, as exemplified by the numerous crowded refugee camps where displaced populations are subjected to restrictive and dehumanising conditions (Ibid).

In Kenya, the government continues to grapple with the challenge of refugee management, shifting from a period of generosity and hospitality (1960s to late 1980s) to an era of encampment, containment, and limited refugee rights (Milner, 2019). According to Nyabola (2020), one of the causes of protracted displacement and poor asylum quality in Kenya was the creation of the *prima facie* refugee category, which, according to her, led the government of Kenya to stop conducting individual status determination, hence condemning thousands of refugees to an endless life in a refugee camp like Kakuma without the possibility of accessing durable solutions. Consequently, *prima facie* refugees were treated as “second-class refugees, unable to access the same rights and freedoms as refugees who were granted asylum through an individual determination process or resettled to a third country” (Nyabola, 2020, p. 57). In addition, Wood (2014) argued that the *prima facie* recognition also undermined, in practice, refugee protection in Kenya, as it encouraged the negative perception among the hosts, the police, and government officers that refugees are a security risk because they had not been adequately screened. Besides keeping refugees in camps, the government of Kenya has, in the past, forcefully repatriated

refugees, closed its borders to prevent refugee crossings, and threatened to close some of the camps in the country on numerous occasions (ReliefWeb, 1999; Mutiga and Graham-Harrison, 2016).

The challenges for Kenya and other African countries are compounded by the lack of collective action and responsibility-sharing among African states (Hyndman and Nylund, 1998). While the OAU Refugee Convention expanded refugee protection, it did so without establishing robust mechanisms for burden-sharing or financial and political support (Ibid). As a result, host countries often find themselves managing large refugee populations with insufficient resources and minimal external assistance. Kenya's experience in the early 1990s illustrates the strain this can place on national systems. Between 1991 and 1992, Kenya received more than half a million refugees, overwhelming its capacity to provide adequate protection and basic services. Lacking the resources to manage the crisis, Kenya eventually transferred responsibility for refugee management to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1992 (Campbell, 2006; Lambo, 2012). This shift underscored the inability of national systems to cope with the sheer scale of displacement, particularly in the absence of meaningful support from regional or international actors.

The Kenyan case also highlights the broader challenge faced by many African nations under the OAU framework. While the Convention's inclusive definition of refugees was a humanitarian milestone, it has placed disproportionate pressure on frontline states without offering sufficient support structures (Hyndman and Nylund, 1998). Consequently, millions of refugees in Africa remain in protracted situations, unable to access durable solutions such as local integration, resettlement, or voluntary repatriation. This enduring challenge underscores the need for stronger regional and international mechanisms to support host countries and address the root causes of displacement.

Other issues, such as climate change impacts and natural disasters, have further exacerbated the situation in Kenya as most refugees, mainly from Somalia, flee climate-related disasters such as famine, drought and floods. In 2022, for example, around 80,000 Somalis crossed the border into Kenya's Dadaab refugee camp due to prolonged drought and famine, prompting the Kenyan government to stop the registration of the new arrivals (Hujale, 2022; Majanga, 2022; Yusuf, 2022). Compounded with the lack of adequate solutions, most refugees in Kenya find themselves in unending exile with no hope for either resettlement or voluntary repatriation. They are stuck in expanding and crowded camps among marginalised Northern Kenya communities, dependent on dwindling UNHCR aid and humanitarian support (Jansen, 2018).

5 The Host Community

Host communities play a pivotal role in the integration of refugees and the implementation of humanitarian development plans in refugee-hosting regions. Upon the arrival of refugees, these communities often act as the first responders, assisting with various aspects of humanitarian aid, such as volunteering with aid agencies (Pham *et al.*, 2022). However, hosting refugees can also strain local resources and social services (Rodgers, 2021). In resource-scarce areas like Turkana County, Kenya, the presence of refugees can intensify socio-economic inequalities and sometimes trigger conflicts between refugees and host populations (Anomat Ali, Imana and Ocha, 2017; Rodgers, 2020b).

Historically, the term host community in Turkana referred to the local Turkana people living in and around Kakuma and adjacent refugee camps (World Bank, 2019c). Following the establishment of Kakuma Refugee Camp in 1992, the term began to acquire broader meanings, reflecting the evolving and contested nature of the term. According to Rodgers (2021), in the context of Kakuma, the host community encompasses diverse groups, including Turkana people born in Kakuma and Kalobeyei, non-local Turkana, and non-Turkana Kenyans. Moreover, Rodgers states that in some official documents, such as the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan (KISEDIP) contract, the term host community refers to the Turkana locals (Ibid). However, political interpretations sometimes

extend this definition to include all Turkana people across the county (Rodgers, 2020b). On the other hand, Kenya's Refugee Act of 2021 broadly classifies all Kenyan citizens in Kakuma and Kalobeyei as part of the host community. Conversely, some residents advocate for a narrower interpretation, suggesting the term should only apply to those with local identity cards registered in Kakuma or Kalobeyei (Ibid). These multiple interpretations illustrate the complexity and fluidity of the host community concept.

Recognising the critical role host communities play, international agreements such as the 2016 New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants, the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees, and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) emphasise addressing host community needs (UNHCR, 2018e, 2018f). In Kenya, the CRRF's 2020 plan prioritises supporting refugees and host communities and promoting regional and international responsibility-sharing to ensure durable solutions (Refugee Affairs Secretariat, 2020). Despite these frameworks, research on host communities in Kakuma remains limited. Most studies focus on refugees' needs and experiences, overlooking the diverse and differentiated impacts of hosting refugees on local populations (Sanghi, Onder, and Vemuru, 2016; Alix-Garcia et al., 2018; IFC, 2018).

This refugee-centric approach to research and humanitarian programming has significant drawbacks. Chambers (1986) warned that focusing solely on refugees can obscure the challenges faced by poorer and more vulnerable host community members in rural areas. In Kakuma, for example, while hosting refugees has spurred economic development (Sanghi, Onder, and Vemuru, 2016), the benefits are unevenly distributed. Educated elites, local leaders, and non-local Kenyans often secure lucrative job opportunities, consultancies, and tenders linked to refugee programs, leaving the majority of pastoralists—who lack education and resources—marginalised (Jansen, 2018; Rodgers, 2021). These pastoralists also bear the brunt of displacement, as they are often forced to relocate to make way for camp expansions (Ibid). The resulting inequities exacerbate poverty and deepen tensions

within the host community. As one participant noted in a study conducted by Rodgers (2021):

The people of town (the elites) are the ones who have an opportunity in Kakuma. They are educated, they are employed in jobs, and it is they who have money for doing business (p.1872).

Understanding the diverse needs and experiences of host communities is essential for effective humanitarian programming. Rodgers (2021) argues that the ambiguity surrounding the term host community allows organisations like UNHCR to make broad claims about the benefits accruing to local populations while failing to address the specific needs of marginalised groups. This can be seen in Kakuma, where local leaders frequently clash with humanitarian agencies over employment policies, arguing that the host community should receive at least half of all job opportunities without clearly explaining who those “hosts” are. Disputes also arise within the Turkana community itself, as those originally from Kakuma claim greater entitlement to benefits than other Turkana residents (Rodgers, 2021). These intra-community conflicts underscore the importance of critically examining the term host community to address underlying inequalities and ensure equitable distribution of resources and opportunities.

To achieve inclusivity, humanitarian agencies have sought to integrate host communities into their programmes. In Kakuma, initiatives like the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan (KISED P) aim to support both refugees and local populations (UNHCR, 2018g). Under KISED P, host communities were to benefit from improved public infrastructure, preferential access to employment (70% of jobs), and opportunities to supply goods and services under cash-based assistance programmes (Rodgers, 2021, p. 1868). These benefits were formalised through the 2015 Terms of Engagement (ToE) agreement between UNHCR and the Turkana community, ensuring that the host population receives tangible benefits in exchange for providing land for the Kalobeyei settlement (Ibid).

Despite these efforts, the distribution of benefits within host communities remains uneven. While a 2016 World Bank report indicated that Turkana residents living near Kakuma camps

have more positive perceptions of refugees than those living farther away (Sanghi, Onder, and Vemuru, 2016), this finding masks significant disparities within the host community (Rodgers, 2021). These dynamics highlight the importance of disaggregating the host community to understand how different groups are affected and to design more equitable and inclusive policies.

In general, host communities in Kakuma are diverse and experience the impacts of refugee hosting in complex and unequal ways. The term host community must be critically examined to avoid making generalised claims that obscure the realities of marginalised groups. Effective refugee integration programmes should address these disparities, foster social cohesion, and ensure that the benefits of hosting refugees are equitably shared. By adopting a nuanced and inclusive approach, humanitarian actors can mitigate tensions, reduce inequalities, and promote sustainable development in fragile and historically marginalised regions like Turkana County.

6 Encampment

To better understand who refugees are in the context of this study, their lives, their livelihoods, and the efforts of states to control or exclude them, a critical and contextual analysis of refugee camps is essential. Malkki argued that refugees exist outside the national order, occupying a sociopolitical space created by the state (Malkki, 1992). In other words, refugees are seen by the governments of host countries as individuals who cannot claim an identity within their territories, and therefore, they are confined to politicised spaces—such as camps. These camps represent a form of accommodation, but not one that fully integrates refugees into the host society.

The exclusion of refugees can be linked to the perception that they pose socio-cultural and political threats to host nations. Governments often view refugees as potential disruptors of societal stability, leading to policies aimed at containing them and keeping them out of sight. Agamben (1998) argued that refugees challenge conventional notions of nativity, citizenship, and nationality, making them a destabilising presence within the modern state.

In this sense, their very existence is perceived as a crisis for the nation. By confining refugees to camps, states use these spaces as political tools to physically and symbolically separate refugees from the broader national community, relegating them to the margins of society. This is why refugee camps like Kakuma are often located in remote border regions, far from urban centers and the public eye. Such policies reflect a deliberate effort to manage refugee populations while minimising their visibility and integration into mainstream society (Soguk, 1999; Jaji, 2012).

Encampment can be conceptualised based on three dimensions: extraterritoriality and spatiality, temporality, and exceptionality and exclusion (Diken, 2004; Hanafi and Long, 2010; Turner, 2016). The first dimension is linked to the spatial nature of camps, where they are located in secluded areas that are sometimes not featured in the country's official maps, giving them their extraterritorial nature. Wherever they are located, camps have been described as having defined boundaries with their immediate surroundings. In Kakuma's case, there is a distinction between the camp and the host area despite the lack of a physical fence. The Kakuma camp area can be identified by the housing design, which features corrugated iron roofing—often branded with the UNHCR logo—mud walls, and, in some cases, roofing made from UNHCR-branded tents. Remarkably, some fences separate different sub-camps, zones, blocks, and villages within the camps and the settlement.

Refugee camps, while having distinct spatial features, have often been described as almost non-existent within the sociopolitical system of their host states. Diken characterises refugee camps as "non-places", devoid of cultural meaning, traditions, or rituals (Diken, 2004, p. 91) . However, over time, camps such as Kakuma in Kenya have expanded and developed city-like characteristics, blurring the lines between temporary refuge and permanent settlement (Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000). Diken argues that camps exist “‘in’ but not ‘of’” their host contexts, functioning as exceptional spaces detached from the sociopolitical frameworks of the host nation (Diken, 2004, p. 96).

The extraterritorial nature of refugee camps is evident in the case of Kakuma. Located in a remote and marginalised part of Kenya, Kakuma has grown into a sprawling settlement that

hosts approximately 300,000 refugees (UNHCR Kenya, 2024b). Despite its size and diversity, the camp does not appear on Kenya's official maps, a fact that highlights its ambiguous status. If Kakuma were recognised as a town, it would rank among the largest in the country by population and cultural diversity (Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000). Yet its omission underscores the camp's liminal position as a space neither fully integrated into the state nor entirely outside its control.

However, the extraterritorial nature of camps does not completely separate them from the socio-economic systems of their host societies. In Kakuma, refugees and host communities engage in dynamic economic interactions (Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016). Host community members sell firewood, honey, and charcoal to refugees, while some refugees sell their food rations or hire locals as domestic workers (IFC, 2018b). At the national level, Kakuma has economic links with urban centres like Nairobi. Refugees sometimes travel to these cities to purchase goods, which they resell in the camp, further integrating Kakuma into Kenya's broader economic landscape (Betts, 2022).

This economic reach of Kakuma extends beyond Kenya's borders. Some refugees, for example, the Somali, leverage international networks, particularly connections with resettled relatives, to import goods from other countries such as Turkey and Somalia (Ibid). These goods, including clothing and other products, are sold within the camp, creating a transnational flow of resources and opportunities. Thus, while refugee camps like Kakuma may be portrayed as peripheral "non-places", they are in fact sites of complex social and economic activity. These interactions challenge the perception of camps as isolated spaces, revealing their role as hubs of local, national, and international exchange despite their marginal and contested status.

The extraterritorial character is closely linked to the temporal nature of refugee camps. These are typically established as emergency responses to crises and are not intended to last long or become integral to the care and maintenance phase of refugee assistance.

Ramadan (2013) emphasises that refugee camps are designed to be temporary, mirroring the transience of refugee status itself, which is granted to individuals denied the stability of citizenship. According to Jamal (2003), camps serve several critical functions: they provide essential emergency protection for refugees, address perceived security concerns of host communities, and act as conduits for delivering humanitarian aid and support.

Despite these intended purposes, prolonged reliance on camps as a solution for displacement often results in significant negative consequences. Over time, camps can become sites of material deprivation, mental health challenges, violence, sexual exploitation, and harmful survival strategies for refugees (Crisp, 2000, 2003; Jamal, 2003; Alix-Garcia et al., 2018). While initially envisioned as short-term measures, many camps have persisted for decades, challenging the notion of their temporariness. Originally established to provide temporary refuge for people displaced by conflict in South Sudan (Otha, 2005; Oka, 2011), Kakuma has evolved into a long-standing informal settlement. Its prolonged existence highlights the difficulties in achieving the so-called durable solutions to displacement. Generations of refugees have been born in Kakuma, reflecting the camp's transformation from an emergency response into a quasi-permanent community.

Furthermore, refugee camps can be defined by their exceptional and exclusionary nature. Regarding their exceptional nature, camps function as spaces where normal legal and political frameworks are either suspended or selectively applied. Turner (2016) notes that camps operate under a legal framework distinct from the host government's laws, situating refugees under the partial jurisdiction of the host state while simultaneously exempting them from its protections (Turner, 2005). This duality reflects what Diken (2004) describes as "exceptionality", allowing states to suspend regular legal obligations toward refugees. When laws are suspended in camps by the host government due to refugees' exceptional position within the legal system, refugees are stripped of their rights and reduced to what Agamben calls *homo sacer*—individuals with "bare lives," lacking political and social rights, and vulnerable to human rights violations, including the possibility of being killed without state accountability (Agamben, 1998).

These violations of refugees' human rights are exacerbated by the encampment policies that dominate humanitarian operations in displacement contexts. While camps are established to provide emergency shelter and aid, as has been elaborated in this section, they often deprive refugees of fundamental rights, such as freedom of movement and access to economic opportunities. Žižek (2002, p. 91) highlights this paradox of camps, describing them as spaces where the "human" face of humanitarian aid coexists with the "inhuman" conditions of exclusion and control. Refugees often face violence—both from state security forces and within the camp itself—further illustrating the precariousness of their existence (Crisp, 2000a; Brankamp, 2022). However, the perception of camps as purely spaces of exception is not entirely accurate. (Newhouse, 2015) challenges this view, arguing that camps are also governed by suprastate legal and political frameworks that provide some degree of protection under international and humanitarian law. Refugees, therefore, are not merely disempowered individuals but retain certain rights and protections, even within the constraints of camp life.

Beyond their exclusionary and exceptional nature, refugee camps are also complex assemblages of people, institutions, and organisations. According to Ramadan (2013a) camps are dynamic spaces where various actors interact to produce specific values and outcomes. Far from being monolithic, camps are fluid environments where identities shift, and different stakeholders—including humanitarian agencies, refugees, and host communities—compete for power and influence (Ibid). Due to the absence of a central authority in the camp, a competitive environment emerges where organisations scramble for resources, influence, and the allegiance of the refugee population (Ramadan, 2013) . This competition often extends to disagreements about the future of the camps, including debates over their closure or transformation into settlements (Orwenjo et al., 2021).

In Kakuma, refugees assert their agency by challenging camp authorities and advocating for their rights. For example, in 2018, members of the LGBTQ community staged a protest demanding better protection after a series of homophobic attacks (Bhalla, 2018). In 2020, refugees organised a sit-in protest at UNHCR offices in Kakuma, citing rising insecurity

within the camp (UNHCR, 2020b). Similarly, in March 2025, refugees marched around Kakuma town, protesting planned reduction of food rations and lack of water (Ahmed, 2025; Lutta, 2025a) These acts of resistance highlight the resilience and agency of refugees and the nature of the camp as an assemblage of people and institutions.

In general, refugee camps like Kakuma are multifaceted spaces marked by exceptionality, exclusion, and complex power dynamics. While they provide essential protection and humanitarian aid, they also perpetuate isolation, inequality, and dependency. By understanding camps as both spaces of exclusion and arenas of interaction, it becomes possible to envision more inclusive and sustainable approaches to managing displacement that respect the rights and dignity of refugees

7 Refugee Self-Reliance

In Kenya, the preferred approach to addressing the refugee situation is voluntary repatriation (Government of Kenya, 2020b). However, the protracted presence of refugees in camps such as Kakuma has necessitated innovative strategies for managing refugee populations. This need has become even more urgent given the recent shifts in donor funding, which now prioritise emergency responses over long-term support for non-emergency refugee programmes (Ahmed, 2023; Omata, 2024). In response to these challenges, self-reliance has emerged as a central policy goal for aid agencies and governments, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa (Easton-Calabria, 2019). This approach seeks to empower refugees by engaging them in meaningful economic activities, reducing their dependence on humanitarian aid, and fostering greater independence. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) recognises self-reliance as a crucial component of local integration and broader development efforts (Morand *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, the 2018 UN Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) explicitly promotes self-reliance as a means of reducing pressure on host communities, expanding access to third-country solutions, and facilitating the safe and dignified return of refugees to their home countries (UNHCR, 2018f). In this regard, strengthening refugee self-reliance has the potential to transform the socio-economic conditions of displaced populations by equipping

them with skills and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. It is also closely linked to the broader objective of facilitating a dignified and voluntary return to their home countries when conditions allow (Bakewell, 2014; Easton-Calabria and Omata, 2018; Betts, Omata, *et al.*, 2019).

The UNHCR defines self-reliance as “the social and economic ability of an individual, a household, or a community to meet essential needs (including protection, food, water, shelter, personal safety, health, and education) in a sustainable manner and with dignity” (UNHCR, 2005, p. 1). As a community development strategy, it aims to improve refugees’ livelihoods by reducing their vulnerabilities and reliance on humanitarian aid while integrating them into local economies. Based on the foregoing, self-reliance initiatives seek to ensure that refugees are well-equipped to contribute to the rebuilding of their home countries upon return (UNHCR, 2021). Overall, this concept is based on the recognition that traditional humanitarian assistance, while necessary in emergencies, does not necessarily enhance refugees’ resilience. Instead, prolonged dependency on aid can undermine individual initiative and limit opportunities for long-term self-sufficiency (Harvey and Lind, 2005).

Self-reliance is not a new concept in terms of refugees; its origins can be traced back to the interwar period (1918–1939), when host governments and humanitarian agencies recognised the ability to work and engage in economic activities as essential for refugees to rebuild their lives and address displacement challenges in Europe (Easton-Calabria, 2022). Easton-Calabria and Omata (2018) argue that self-reliance has existed under various terminologies, such as rehabilitation and self-sufficiency, since the 1920s, when the League of Nations facilitated the resettlement of approximately 1.5 million ethnic Greek refugees from Asia Minor to Greece.

7.1 The development of self-reliance

In the 1960s and 1970s, self-reliance was implemented as self-help and zonal development strategies, particularly in Africa, in response to rising refugee numbers due to wars of independence and decolonisation. These efforts aimed not only to sustain refugee

communities but also to improve the economic development of underdeveloped regions in host countries (Easton-Calabria, 2022). During the 1950s, refugee self-reliance in Africa was primarily promoted through agricultural settlements in rural areas (Clark and Stein, 1985). In Tanzania, refugees were organised into cooperatives, while in Uganda and other East African countries, self-sufficiency was measured by the ability of refugee settlements to produce surplus agricultural output for sale (Easton-Calabria and Omata, 2018).

The initial objective of self-reliance initiatives was not only to empower refugee communities to meet their own needs but also to contribute to the socio-economic development of marginalised host regions (Ibid). However, the 1980s marked a significant shift in focus from community-based self-reliance to individual self-reliance. This transition was driven by the increasing number of refugees fleeing prolonged conflicts, which placed greater strain on host countries. At the same time, global efforts sought to integrate refugees into national development plans, recognising that refugee situations were not solely a *UNHCR* responsibility but also a matter of national concern.

In Africa, these global efforts were exemplified by the first and second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA) in 1981 and 1984 (Gorman, 1986). However, despite these initiatives, challenges such as resource constraints, weak coordination between governments and refugee agencies, and limited host country capacities persisted (Betts *et al.*, 2016). In Kenya, the relatively small refugee population in the 1960s and 1970s facilitated their rapid integration into urban centres, where they engaged in economic activities to achieve self-sufficiency (Milner, 2009). Unlike the broader global push to ease the burden on host nations, Kenya's strong economic performance in the 1970s, along with its demand for skilled professionals such as doctors, reduced the urgency of implementing structured refugee self-reliance programs (Ibid). Instead, refugees were largely absorbed into the labour market, benefiting from the country's economic expansion and demand for skilled labour.

Since 2000, there have been renewed efforts to enhance refugee self-reliance in Africa, largely driven by the protracted nature of refugee situations and the limited success of

durable solutions proposed by the UNHCR (Easton-Calabria, 2022). Ongoing conflicts in the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa regions rendered voluntary repatriation unfeasible, while third-country resettlement opportunities remained insufficient. Meanwhile, the possibility of permanent residency in host countries became increasingly elusive due to policy shifts (Milner, 2019). Refugees faced growing restrictions on movement and employment, leaving many in a state of dependency without the rights necessary for successful integration (Milner, 2009).

7.2 Challenges of self-reliance

Yet, despite ongoing efforts to promote refugee self-reliance in Kenya, several persistent challenges hinder its effective realisation. Key barriers include restrictive labour policies, economic underdevelopment in refugee-hosting regions, and limitations on refugees' rights and freedoms under the encampment model (Mohdin, 2015; Betts, 2022, 2023). Omata (2017) argues that governments and humanitarian agencies must address these policy and legal barriers rather than focusing solely on technical livelihood development. Training refugees in specific skills becomes ineffective in environments where labour policies prevent them from securing employment or seeking better opportunities beyond the confines of the camp, as is the case in Kenya. Research by Easton-Calabria and Omata (2018) in Kakuma found that self-reliance initiatives struggle to succeed due to legal and policy frameworks that enforce the encampment model, significantly restricting refugees' freedom of movement and economic participation.

Another major challenge is the absence of clear systems and criteria to measure whether refugees have achieved a meaningful and dignified life, as described in the UNHCR's self-reliance framework (Ibid). While terms such as “dignified life” and “self-reliance” are frequently referenced in UNHCR programmes, there is no universally accepted definition of what these concepts entail, particularly in resource-scarce regions like Turkana, where economic opportunities are extremely limited (Amadala, 2021). This ambiguity is problematic because, as Easton-Calabria and Omata (2018) argue, UNHCR often misuses vague terminology like self-reliance to justify prematurely withdrawing support from refugees, leaving them vulnerable to further hardship. A striking example is the case of

Sudanese refugees in Uganda's Kiryandongo Settlement, where refugees labeled as "self-reliant" by UNHCR saw a reduction in humanitarian aid, even though they lacked adequate legal and material protection (Kaiser, 2000). This fear of losing UNHCR protection fosters dependency, as refugees hesitate to pursue self-reliance initiatives and opportunities created by humanitarian organisations that could result in the withdrawal of aid without corresponding policy changes that ensure their rights and safety.

Critics further contend that self-reliance is often promoted by humanitarian agencies primarily as a response to declining international support for refugee assistance rather than as a genuine means of empowering refugees (Crisp, 2000b). In this regard, self-reliance narratives are part of a broader global shift towards the marketisation of humanitarian aid. This became evident in Kenya around 2016 when the emphasis on self-reliance increased following the launch of the Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement, a project backed by UNHCR and donor governments (UNHCR, 2018d; Felleson, 2023). At the same time, UNHCR experienced significant budget cuts, with its Kenya operations budget dropping from USD 285 million in 2014 to USD 145 million in 2020. Additionally, UNHCR's overall expenditure decreased by approximately USD 20 million during this period (UNHCR, 2022a). By 2022, only 17% of its USD 145.5 million budget was funded, underscoring the financial constraints affecting refugee assistance (UNHCR, 2022c).

The push for economic self-reliance also risks instrumentalising refugees by framing them primarily as economic actors within neoliberal models rather than as vulnerable individuals in need of protection and rights (Easton-Calabria, 2022). This perspective leads humanitarian and governmental agencies to overlook the crucial role of social integration in enabling refugees to rebuild their lives and achieve stability (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020a). Research from Kalobeyei Settlement in Kakuma indicates that despite being presented with economic opportunities, many refugees continued to rely on established social networks from previous camps for survival. In some cases, refugees even preferred remaining in camps over moving to Kalobeyei, despite its promise of "virtually unprecedented opportunities" (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020a, p. 64). This highlights the necessity of building and strengthening social networks as an integral component of self-

reliance, as economic integration cannot be sustained without strong social ties between refugees and host communities.

In conclusion, the prolonged presence of refugees in camps like Kakuma, coupled with shifting donor priorities, has necessitated a focus on self-reliance as a key policy goal (Government of Kenya, 2020; Ahmed, 2023; Omata, 2024). Self-reliance, recognised by UNHCR as essential for local integration and development, aims to empower refugees by reducing dependence on aid and fostering economic independence (Morand et al., 2012). Rooted in historical efforts dating back to the interwar period, self-reliance has evolved over decades, shifting from agricultural settlements to broader economic integration strategies (Easton-Calabria, 2022). Despite its potential to improve refugee livelihoods and support host communities, challenges persist, including restrictive labour policies, limited economic opportunities, and the encampment model restricting mobility (Betts, 2022; Omata, 2017). Critics argue that self-reliance is often promoted as a cost-cutting measure rather than a genuine empowerment tool, with unclear benchmarks for success leading to premature withdrawal of aid (Crisp, 2000; Easton-Calabria & Omata, 2018). Additionally, the neoliberal framing of refugees as economic actors overlooks the importance of social integration in ensuring sustainable self-reliance and their primary rights and freedoms as displaced populations (Betts, Omata & Sterck, 2020). While self-reliance remains a promising approach in Kakuma, its success depends on policy reforms that grant refugees greater rights and access to economic opportunities.

8 Chapter Summary

The challenge of refugee integration in Kakuma lies in the understanding and application of key concepts like social cohesion and host community. Often, a lack of proper contextualisation of these concepts has resulted in the design and implementation of integration plans that fail to address existing challenges. In some cases, these plans have inadvertently exacerbated the marginalisation of already vulnerable sections of the host population. Addressing the protracted refugee situation in Kakuma requires a critical examination of how Kenya's implementation of international conventions and agreements

impacts displacement dynamics, and the quality of asylum offered within the country. These frameworks influence both the scale of displacement and the conditions under which refugees live, shaping their opportunities for integration and self-reliance. Therefore, this chapter argues that achieving social cohesion and self-reliance in Kakuma remains difficult due to a restrictive governance system, which not only limits refugees' potential but also prevents host communities from fully benefiting from the economic opportunities that arise from the refugee presence in the region. In the next chapter, these refugee-related concepts are examined using different theories to understand how they shape the refugee-host experiences and the policy outcomes in Kakuma refugee camps.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. Introduction

This section examines the refugee integration situation in Kakuma using three theoretical frameworks: Amartya Sen's Capability Approach, Gordon Allport's Contact Theory, and Ager and Strang's Conceptual Framework for Integration. These theories were mainly chosen since no single theory can comprehensively and contextually explain the impact of the encampment policy in practice and the experiences of refugees and host communities in Kakuma. While there are other theories that attempt to explain aspects of the refugee experiences in Kakuma, these three frameworks, merged together, provide a more nuanced understanding of the conditions in Kakuma. By applying these theories to the experiences of refugees and host community members in Kakuma, this analysis provides a deeper understanding of the factors influencing integration outcomes in Kakuma refugee camps. Each of these theories provides a distinct perspective on integration. In this regard, the three frameworks provide complementary but ultimately incomplete perspectives on integration. While the capability approach illuminates the structural constraints on refugees' freedoms and agency, contact theory offers a psychosocial lens on intergroup relations, and Ager & Strang's framework provides an institutional mapping of integration markers. By juxtaposing these models, this chapter highlights their theoretical limitations in explaining the structural and political nature of refugee governance in Kenya, ultimately underscoring the need for a more context-specific understanding of integration.

2. Capability approach by Amartya Sen

As discussed in Chapters Two and Three, one of the primary strategies for fostering integration between refugees and host communities is the implementation of development projects designed to address socio-economic challenges in the region. Two key initiatives in this regard are the Shirika Plan and the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan (KISEDIP). The Shirika Plan, launched in 2022, is a multi-year initiative aimed at

promoting the socio-economic inclusion of refugees by transforming traditional refugee camps into integrated settlements (Department of Refugee Services, 2023). This initiative focuses on critical sectors such as health, education, livelihoods, and environmental management, with implementation driven through collaboration between the Government of Kenya and the UNHCR (Ibid). By shifting from a camp-based humanitarian model to an integrated development approach, the Shirika Plan aspires to create a more sustainable and inclusive framework for refugees and host communities. Similarly, KISED, initiated in 2016, seeks to enhance the well-being of both refugees and host communities in Kakuma and Kalobeyei. This project aims to stimulate local economies through the creation of market opportunities, the expansion of social and public infrastructure, and the promotion of livelihood programmes to help refugees achieve self-reliance²³ (UNHCR, 2018g; Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020b; Fellesson, 2023). By adopting a development-oriented approach to refugee assistance, KISED represents a shift toward long-term sustainability rather than short-term humanitarian relief (Ibid).

However, despite these and other development initiatives, the overall socio-economic conditions for refugees and host communities in Kakuma have not seen significant improvements. Studies suggest that policy restrictions on refugees' freedom of movement and work remain major obstacles to achieving self-reliance (Betts, 2022). Furthermore, Betts, Omata and Sterck (2020a) highlight that, despite sustained financial investments from major donors such as the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank, and the European Union, key self-reliance enablers remain largely unchanged in Kalobeyei compared to Kakuma Camp. More broadly, the persistent failure of self-reliance initiatives in Kakuma is not merely a policy inefficiency but a reflection of a larger political economy in which development aid serves multiple interests—including those of the state, humanitarian organisations, and donors—without necessarily enhancing refugees' long-term capabilities.

²³ For more about Kalobeyei, see section B of the Methodology Chapter.

Additionally, research by Betts, Omata and Sterck (2020a) found that relatively few refugees in Kakuma were willing to relocate to the Kalobeyei settlement, despite its international portrayal as a more sustainable and beneficial alternative to the main Kakuma camps. This reluctance raises critical questions about the effectiveness of these development models and suggests a possible misalignment between project objectives and refugees' lived experiences.

To better understand the gap between humanitarian development objectives and the experiences of refugees in Kakuma camp, Sen's Capability Approach offers valuable insights (Sen, 1985). While Sen introduced the capability approach in the 1980s, Martha Nussbaum developed it by conducting a lot of pioneering research on its conceptual and theoretical aspects (for some of her work on the capability approach, see Nussbaum, 1988, 1992, 1998, 2000; Nussbaum and Glover, 1995; Nussbaum, 2004). The capability approach is a broad normative framework used to evaluate individual well-being, assess social structures, and inform policy design and proposals for social change. It is characterised by its interdisciplinary nature and its emphasis on the multidimensional aspects of well-being (Robeyns, 2005). A key distinction within this approach is the difference between means and ends, as well as between substantive freedoms (capabilities) and achieved outcomes (functionings). It focuses on the real opportunities people have to achieve a fulfilling life, rather than just the resources available to them, making it a valuable framework for analysing social justice and development policies (Ibid).

Derived from Sen's critique of welfare economics, Frediani (2010) states that in the context of development, this framework can be used to evaluate individuals' ability to achieve their goals, shifting the focus from economic indicators such as income and consumption to the freedoms they have to pursue meaningful lives. While most studies on Kakuma have primarily measured refugee and host community well-being through income and consumption metrics (See Oka, 2014; Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016; IFC, 2018a; Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020c), the Capability Approach provides a broader perspective. By applying this framework, we can better assess the real impact of refugee policies—particularly whether they uphold and enhance the fundamental rights and freedoms of

refugees, as outlined in various international and regional conventions (UNHCR, 1951, 2018c; African Union, no date). In this regard, the impact of development should not just be on the utility or resources but also on what they do to people in terms of their choices and rights (Sen, 1985; Clark, 2002).

In his seminal work, *Development as Freedom*, Amartya Sen argues that the primary means and end for development is to expand the freedoms that people enjoy (Sen, 1999). He elaborates on the connection between development and freedom, stating that freedom depends on determinants such as facilities for education and healthcare and civil and political rights (Ibid). Furthermore, to realise development objectives, Sen posits that there is a need to remove sources of unfreedom, such as poverty, poor economic opportunities, systematic social deprivation, and intolerance of repressive states, which he argues limit people's choices and opportunities to exercise their agency. To him, the success or failure of development depends on people's agency, which is the ability of people to achieve the things that they value (Frediani, 2010), and "whether the freedoms that people have are enhanced" (Sen, 1999, p. 4).

Using Sen's capability framework, development should be understood through three key components: functionings, capabilities (freedom), and agency. Functionings refer to the actual achievements of an individual—"what they manage to do or be"—such as being healthy, educated, or socially engaged (Sen, 1985, p. 10; Dang, 2014). Capabilities represent the range of functionings a person has the real opportunity to achieve, meaning the ability to live a life they value based on available choices. Agency, on the other hand, concerns an individual's ability to make independent choices and pursue goals freely, highlighting their role as active participants in shaping their lives rather than passive recipients of aid (Frediani, 2010). This approach is particularly useful in evaluating humanitarian development policies because it recognises human diversity and shifts the focus of assessing development initiatives from economic indicators to real opportunities for well-

being (Dang, 2014). In this regard, Dang (2014) opines that development should not be measured solely by access to resources but by an individual's actual ability to convert those resources into meaningful opportunities. This distinction is crucial when assessing the humanitarian development in Kakuma, where the availability and distribution of key determinants of freedom—such as education and healthcare—are severely limited and unequally allocated between refugees and host communities (O'Keeffe and Lovey, 2023; Okello, 2024).

A study by Bolon *et al.* (2020) highlights overcrowding and inadequate access to healthcare as major challenges affecting both groups, with refugee camp hospitals and personnel struggling to address the overwhelming demand for medical services. Similarly, the education sector in Kakuma faces structural and resource-related challenges, including poor infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, unsafe learning spaces, and a shortage of qualified teachers and teaching materials (Mendenhall, Collas and Falk, 2017; O'Keeffe and Carron, 2023). These shortcomings significantly limit educational opportunities for both refugees and host communities, restricting their freedoms and capabilities and leaving them dependent on humanitarian aid rather than empowered to shape their own futures (Harvey and Lind, 2005; Jansen, 2016a).

From the perspective of Sen's capability approach and the notion of development as freedom, the humanitarian system in Kakuma does not adequately expand the fundamental freedoms of refugees, especially when access to social services, healthcare, and education remains not only insufficient but also disproportionately distributed (Horn, 2009; Jemutai *et al.*, 2021; O'Keeffe and Lovey, 2023). As will be demonstrated in Chapter Six, while both refugees and host communities in Kakuma face severe shortages of critical social services, the host community experiences even greater disparities in resource allocation and access to vital services (Aukot, 2002; Rodgers, 2020b). This imbalance raises fundamental questions about the sustainability of humanitarian development efforts, the fairness of resource distribution, and the long-term prospects for integration of the refugees and host

communities in Kakuma. For development to be meaningful under Sen's framework, policies must go beyond providing basic services and instead focus on ensuring that individuals have the real capability to improve their lives. Thus, refugees and host communities must have equitable access to quality education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, thereby expanding their freedoms to shape their futures. Only through such an approach can humanitarian effort in Kakuma move from short-term relief to genuine, long-term human development and self-reliance.

Moreover, as the Kenyan government and its humanitarian partners, such as UNHCR, shift their focus toward self-reliance and development-oriented humanitarianism, another way through which sustainable integration and development for refugees can be realised is by rethinking the current approach in Kakuma, where host communities are integrated into refugee-focused humanitarian systems. Instead, a more effective model would involve integrating refugees into Kenya's national social and public services (Betts, 2022). This unified integration approach would allow both refugees and host communities to access shared healthcare, education, and other essential public services. Such a shift could help reduce resentment among host communities, who often perceive refugees as receiving preferential treatment from international aid organisations (Rodgers, 2020b). Furthermore, by expanding access to national systems, both refugees and hosts would gain greater freedom and capacity to pursue opportunities of their choosing, rather than being restricted by the limited availability of critical social services (Bolon *et al.*, 2020; O'Keeffe and Carron, 2023).

From a capability perspective, the limitations of humanitarian development models in Kakuma are not simply failures of policy implementation but are structurally embedded in Kenya's governance of refugees. Encampment policies themselves function as restrictions on capability development, effectively ensuring that refugees remain dependent on aid rather than achieving genuine self-reliance. For instance, Article 30 to Article 33 of the Kenya Refugees Act of 2021 confines refugees to designated camps such as Kakuma and Dadaab, severely limiting their freedom of movement, access to employment, and ability to fully participate in society (Betts, 2022). Although the Kenya Refugees Act of 2021 has been

recognised as a step toward enhancing refugee socio-economic inclusion (Halakhe, 2024), its implementation remains deeply influenced by Kenya's security-driven approach to refugee management. Article 28, Section 4 of the Act acknowledges the potential contributions of refugees to Kenya's economic and social development, stating that they should be granted access to documentation necessary for work and integration. However, several provisions within the Act continue to prioritise national security over refugee rights, ultimately restricting their freedoms. For instance, Section 4(d) explicitly denies refugee status to individuals deemed a security threat, while Section 29(2) permits the government to deny entry to asylum seekers on similar grounds. Additionally, Section 19(1) grants the Cabinet Secretary for Interior and Coordination of National Government the authority to expel a refugee or their family members on the grounds of national security and public order. These clauses reflect an ongoing policy tension where the government seeks to balance "humanitarian considerations with security concerns" (Betts, 2022, p. 268).

These refugee policies and practices undermine refugees' agency and ability to lead independent lives, as they remain heavily dependent on humanitarian aid and are restricted from fully participating in the national economy (Jansen, 2016a; Easton-Calabria, 2019, 2022). Kenya's refugee framework and practices continue to limit these freedoms, reinforcing a system where refugees remain marginalised, controlled, and unable to realise their full potential (Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016; Alix-Garcia *et al.*, 2018; Brankamp, 2019). To align with the capability approach, Kenya's refugee policies need to shift toward full and meaningful inclusion, ensuring that refugees are not only provided with basic needs but are also empowered with the legal rights and structural opportunities necessary to thrive. This would involve not only easing restrictions on movement and employment but also fostering a rights-based approach that sees refugees as active contributors to national development rather than as security risks. As Frediani (2010) postulates, the rights-based and capability approaches are similar, as they both focus on the expansion and protection of a set of agreed norms and values, which, in the case of Kakuma, involves refugees' political and civil rights as highlighted in the 1951 Refugee Convention (Article 12 to Article 19).

While the Capability Approach provides a useful framework for assessing integration efforts, such as development and humanitarian projects in Kakuma, it has several limitations that affect its practical application. One key critique is that much of its application has focused primarily on listing capabilities and evaluating policy impacts on them, rather than addressing the broader processes that shape freedoms (Frediani, 2010). This has resulted in a strong emphasis on identifying concrete dimensions of well-being and developing indicators to measure freedoms, such as access to education, healthcare, and employment. However, this indicator-driven approach often overlooks the social and political conditions that influence people's ability to exercise their freedoms (Ibid).

Another challenge of the capability approach is its "deliberate incompleteness", as it does not prescribe which functionings or capabilities should be prioritised (Frediani, 2010, p. 177). This open-ended nature allows for flexibility but also makes it difficult to apply in policymaking, as different practitioners may have conflicting views on which capabilities matter most. Moreover, Comim (2001) highlights that the approach lacks clear guidelines on how to measure or assess certain capabilities, making its practical implementation challenging. For instance, while material well-being can be assessed through economic indicators, evaluating agency, empowerment, or social inclusion is much more complex and subjective. Additionally, Sugden (1993) argues that the Capability Approach's multidimensional and context-specific nature reduces its operational significance. Unlike traditional economic models, which rely on clear, standardised metrics, the Capability Approach requires context-dependent evaluations, making it harder to implement at scale or compare across different settings. This lack of universality limits its effectiveness for policymakers and development practitioners who require clear, actionable guidelines.

Furthermore, unresolved theoretical debates continue to challenge the approach's effectiveness. As Frediani (2010) points out, there is ongoing discussion about the balance between individual and collective capabilities, as well as the tension between universal and locally defined capabilities. These debates make it difficult to determine whether

development efforts should focus on enhancing individual freedoms or community-level well-being. In the context of Kakuma, for example, should interventions prioritise individual refugee self-reliance, or should they focus on building collective community resources that benefit both refugees and host populations? The lack of consensus on such questions makes it harder to design coherent and effective policies. As a result, the Capability Approach remains somewhat abstract when applied to real-world projects and policies (Ibid). While it provides a valuable philosophical perspective on human development, its practical implementation is hindered by its lack of specificity, measurement challenges, and unresolved theoretical debates. These limitations make it difficult for development practitioners to fully integrate the approach into project design and evaluation, ultimately reducing its influence in shaping refugee integration policies.

3. The Contact Theory/Hypothesis by Gordon Allport

The Contact Theory, developed by the American psychologist Gordon Allport in 1954, also provides a valuable framework for understanding the challenges of refugee-host integration in Kakuma. As one of the “most durable ideas in the sociology of racial and ethnic relations”, this theory can help explain inter-community relationships, perceptions, and the factors that influence social cohesion or division between different groups in Kakuma refugee camp (Connolly, 2000, p. 169). In his book *The Nature of Prejudice*, Allport’s underlying hypothesis is that if people are constantly exposed to members of other groups in some ways over a duration of time, they will develop more positive attitudes about them than prejudicial behaviour. This positive perception is as a result of the direct provision of more accurate information about values, beliefs and experiences of the members of the other group through the contact than the provision of information through less direct sources (Ellison, Shin and Leal, 2011). Recognising that intergroup exposure alone cannot adequately address prejudice between different people, Allport suggested some conditions that need to be fulfilled. These include: equal status, common goals, cooperation, and institutional support. Allport emphasised that equal status is crucial in preventing one group from feeling superior or subordinate to the other, as unequal interactions can reinforce prejudice and deepen social divisions. In the context of Kakuma Refugee Camp, achieving

equal status would mean granting refugees the same rights and freedoms as the host Turkana community, such as freedom of movement, employment opportunities, and property ownership.

Conversely, for the host community, equal status would require access to humanitarian aid, such as monthly food rations and cash transfers, which are currently reserved exclusively for refugees. Regarding common goals, Allport argued that different groups working together toward shared objectives strengthen their relationships and foster a sense of unity. In Kakuma, common goals such as peaceful coexistence, economic development, and trade partnerships can serve as unifying factors between refugees and hosts. By promoting collaborative business ventures, joint education programmes, and integrated community initiatives, policymakers and humanitarian organisations in Kakuma can enhance meaningful contact, helping to bridge social divides and build a more cohesive and inclusive society.

Allport's third condition for reducing prejudice emphasised that effective intergroup contact must involve cooperation, with individuals working together rather than competing for limited resources such as jobs and housing (Allport, 1954). Esses and Stelzl (2004) argued that when groups are in direct competition, tensions and negative stereotypes are reinforced. However, when they collaborate toward shared goals, a sense of common identity develops, helping to reduce discrimination and negative attitudes (Ibid). In Kakuma, this notion is reflected in initiatives that encourage cooperation between refugees and host communities, such as the Kitchen Garden Program. This programme brings refugees and Turkana hosts together to cultivate shared farm plots, promoting rural agriculture to improve nutrition for both communities (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020c). Finally, the fourth and final condition for successful intergroup contact is institutional and social support from leaders and governing authorities (Allport, 1954). Such support ensures that equal status, cooperation, and shared goals are not only encouraged but also sustained through policies and community initiatives, which are enforced by the authorities, for example, by imposing sanctions on those who do not abide by them (Ellison, Shin and Leal, 2011). In Kakuma, this could take the form of political leaders and government agencies

actively backing integration efforts by enacting legislation that addresses sources of tension, such as unequal distribution of humanitarian aid and restrictions on refugee movement and employment rights (Rodgers, 2020b; Betts, 2022). When institutions provide consistent support for refugee-host cooperation, they create a more stable and inclusive environment, allowing integration efforts to flourish.

While contact theory assumes that intergroup relations improve under conditions of equal status and cooperation, this chapter demonstrates that the governance structures of Kakuma actively prevent such conditions from emerging. The state's encampment policy, economic marginalisation of the host community, and restrictive refugee work rights create an uneven playing field where contact does not necessarily lead to positive integration outcomes. For example, refugees and the host communities do not enjoy equal status before the law, as some aspects of refugees' fundamental rights, such as movement, work, and property ownership, are limited by the law (Jaji, 2012; Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016; Betts, 2022; Jacobi and Jaji, 2022). These restrictions reinforce structural inequalities, preventing refugees from achieving full participation in the local economy and community life. Furthermore, as elaborated in Chapter Six, the local hosts view refugees as being treated more favourably even though they equally suffer from extreme poverty and marginalisation (Aukot, 2002; Rodgers, 2020b; Amadala, 2021). Historically, the Turkana people have been neglected by the central government, leading to a deeply rooted perception of exclusion and disadvantage (Sanghi, Onder & Vemuru, 2016). This self-perception of marginalisation shapes how they view and interact with refugees and humanitarian organisations operating in Kakuma (Ibid). Many Turkana residents feel overlooked, especially as they struggle with high poverty levels, limited access to social services, and economic underdevelopment—challenges similar to those faced by refugees.

This fragile and deprived status of the local Turkana people raises critical questions about whether, as the host community, they possess the socio-economic capacity to effectively integrate with vulnerable refugees. Unlike other host populations for example in the global North, which may have more resources and capacity to support and absorb refugee populations (Betts, Flinder Stierna, *et al.*, 2023b), the extreme levels of economic hardship

faced by the Turkana people complicate the integration process (Opiyo *et al.*, 2015; Amadala, 2021). As explored in Chapter Six, the boundaries between hosts and refugees in Kakuma are fluid and constantly shifting, often influenced by factors such as economic status, social networks, and access to aid or employment opportunities. These dynamics further blur the distinction between host and guest, highlighting the complex and evolving nature of refugee-host relationships in Kakuma.

Refugees in Kakuma, on the other hand, often perceive themselves as being discriminated against, particularly due to restrictive refugee policies that severely limit their freedom of movement, employment, and economic participation. These legal barriers prevent them from engaging in meaningful livelihood activities, forcing them to rely almost entirely on humanitarian aid, which has been steadily declining due to shifting donor priorities and funding constraints (Oka, 2014; Jansen, 2018). This dependency not only weakens their self-sufficiency but also exacerbates tensions with the host community, who often view them as being unfairly advantaged. Even with these restrictions, many refugees have established extensive social networks within both the refugee and host communities, which they leverage for informal economic activities such as small-scale trade and services. However, due to legal constraints, these activities cannot be fully formalised because refugees also lack access to essential documentation such as business permits and revenue certificates, which remain restricted by Kenyan law (Balakian, 2016; Norwegian Refugee Council, 2017; AREL, 2024b). Without legal protection, refugees who engage in informal trade are often vulnerable to harassment by local authorities, as shown by reports of arbitrary arrests and demands for bribes in exchange for their freedom (Balakian, 2016; Betts, 2022). These experiences reinforce a sense of exclusion and undermine the potential for positive refugee-host interactions. Ultimately, this unequal status between refugees and host communities negatively impacts intergroup contact and overall integration outcomes, as the existing policies fail to uphold the core purpose of refuge, which, as Betts (2022) argues, should ensure that “refugees receive access to their rights, as both refugees and human beings” (p. 26).

Regarding the second and third conditions for effective intergroup contact outlined by Allport (1954)—common goals and cooperation— there is evidence of some level of collaboration between refugees and host communities in Kakuma. Studies have shown that refugees and hosts engage in joint farming initiatives using shared plots, construction projects, and inter-community peace committees, which aim to promote peaceful coexistence and economic cooperation (UNHCR, 2019a; Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020c; Rodgers, 2020b). Many of these cooperative initiatives are spearheaded and supported by NGOs such as the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), which runs social cohesion programmes and supports peace initiatives in Kakuma (Rodgers, 2020b; The Lutheran World Federation, no date). In addition, as will be discussed in Chapter Six, some NGOs like the Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK), together with the Government of Kenya, have established alternative dispute resolution (ADR) committees composed of elders from both refugees and host community members to provide a localised approach to conflict resolution by addressing inter-community disputes in ways that are more accessible and culturally appropriate than formal legal mechanisms like the courts of law. The overarching goals of these cooperative efforts include promoting peace, improving nutrition through agricultural initiatives and fostering economic self-reliance (UNHCR, 2019a; Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020c; Rodgers, 2020b).

However, despite these positive examples of cooperation, significant challenges persist, particularly concerning the meaningful participation and involvement of both refugees and hosts in shaping these initiatives (Cohere, 2022; Milner, Alio and Gardi, 2022a). As highlighted in Chapter Six, the principle of refugee and host participation in shaping policies and interventions that affect their lives is a key component of global refugee agreements such as the 2016 New York Declaration, the 2018 Global Compact for Refugees, and the Comprehensive Refugee Response Frameworks (CRRFs) (UNHCR, 2018c; Harley and Hobbs, 2020). In Kakuma, the reality is different, as findings indicate that humanitarian organisations and government actors often fail to fully integrate refugees' and hosts' perspectives into programming, which ultimately undermines the effectiveness and sustainability of these cooperative initiatives. For instance, while the CRRF advocates for

enhanced collaboration between refugees and host communities, their voices are often marginalised in local governance structures, perpetuating a top-down approach to refugee management, where policies and programmes are designed and implemented without adequate consultation with those directly affected (Milner, Alio and Gardi, 2022). Consequently, many cooperative efforts fail to fully address the needs and concerns of both groups, making it difficult to build trust and achieve common goals. In addition, the lack of meaningful involvement in decision-making processes reinforces feelings of exclusion and disempowerment, which can fuel resentment and hinder the development of positive intergroup relations.

The fourth condition of Allport's Contact Hypothesis emphasises the need for support from social and institutional authorities to facilitate meaningful and sustained intergroup contact. In Kakuma, refugees and host communities receive various forms of institutional and social support, ranging from policy-level interventions, such as the Refugees Act of 2021, to practical humanitarian assistance, including cash-based aid and food rations (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020c; Sterck *et al.*, 2020; Laws of Kenya, 2021; Betts, 2022). One key example of institutional support fostering positive intergroup interactions is the Shirika Plan, which aims to transform refugee camps into open and integrated settlements, thereby enhancing socio-economic interactions between refugees and host communities (Department of Refugee Services, 2023). Additionally, the Kalobeyei Socio-Economic Development Plan (KISEDPP), developed by UNHCR in collaboration with other partners, adopts an area-based development approach that promotes shared social infrastructure such as markets, hospitals, and schools. These shared facilities are designed to increase positive contact between refugees and host community members, encouraging economic cooperation and integration (UNHCR, 2018g). Beyond these large-scale development initiatives, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) also play a critical role in providing institutional support for refugees. For instance, organisations such as the Refugee Consortium of Kenya and Kituo Cha Sheria are actively engaged in legal advocacy and rights protection for refugees, working to ensure access to justice and promote fair treatment (Wirth, 2013; Woldemariam and Pacifique, 2024).

Despite these institutional efforts, several challenges hinder these projects' effectiveness in fulfilling Allport's fourth condition. One of the primary obstacles is the unfavourable political environment that limits the extent of support provided to refugees. While numerous studies have demonstrated that encampment policies negatively impact refugee well-being, research also shows that refugees contribute positively to local economies and that a majority of Kenyans support their right to work (Jaji, 2012; Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016; Alix-Garcia, Artuc and Onder, 2017; Alix-Garcia *et al.*, 2018; IFC, 2018a; Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020c; Betts, 2022). However, there remains a lack of political will to implement meaningful reforms in Kenya's refugee protection system that would allow both refugees and host communities to fully benefit from their coexistence (Betts, 2022). A major point of contention is the ambiguity within the Refugees Act of 2021, which, while addressing institutional responsibilities, fails to clearly define refugees' socio-economic rights. For example, the right to work and freedom of movement, which are critical for refugees' economic integration and self-reliance, are not explicitly guaranteed under the Act (Betts, 2022). Instead, the legislation primarily defines the roles of various institutions involved in refugee affairs without clearly outlining the extent to which refugees can participate in economic activities. This lack of clarity creates bureaucratic barriers that make it difficult for refugees to obtain work permits, start businesses, or move freely. As a result, refugees remain heavily reliant on humanitarian aid, limiting their opportunities for long-term integration and self-sufficiency.

Furthermore, the lack of a comprehensive strategy for durable solutions in Kenya's refugee policy framework exacerbates these challenges. While global refugee agreements, such as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), advocate for self-reliance and inclusion in national economies, Kenya's policies remain largely focused on containment rather than long-term integration (Harley & Hobbs, 2020). This disconnect between international frameworks and national policies limits the potential for meaningful contact that could reduce prejudice and enhance cooperation between refugees and host communities.

Broadly speaking, while institutional and social support structures exist in Kakuma, the effectiveness of these initiatives is undermined by policy ambiguities, political resistance, and bureaucratic barriers. For example, some programmes, such as KISEDPA and the Shirika Plan, aim to promote positive intergroup interactions, but the broader legal and political framework fails to fully support refugee-host interactions. These policy barriers restrict refugees' ability to participate in economic and social life on equal footing with hosts, thereby limiting the potential for intergroup contact to foster genuine mutual understanding and cooperation, as envisioned in Allport's Contact Hypothesis.

In conclusion, while the contact hypothesis can be used to promote the intercommunity relationships in Kakuma, scholars have pointed out its weaknesses, which may limit its relevance in different contexts. Ellison, Shin and Leal (2011) argue that many of the studies on the contact hypothesis were done in controlled environments under ideal conditions, which are not present in real-world encounters among diverse cultural groups. Consequently, some scholars posit that the theory ignores the real-world broader social processes, institutions, and structures that create and sustain intergroup divisions (Connolly, 2000; McKeown and Dixon, 2017). For instance, Connolly (2000) critiques the framework for treating the state as a passive actor in intergroup relations, assuming that its role is merely to facilitate contact and promote positive attitudes while disregarding its influence in constructing and maintaining social divisions. This perspective risks allowing the state to evade responsibility for policies and actions that contribute to intergroup tensions.

In Kakuma, while the Kenyan government could do more to encourage interactions between refugees and host communities, it is also responsible for policies that perpetuate unequal treatment of these groups. Government regulations that restrict refugee rights, limit their economic opportunities, and enforce encampment policies contribute to negative perceptions and strained relationships between hosts and refugees. Therefore, fostering better intercommunity relations in Kakuma requires not only increased contact between the groups but also policy reforms that address systemic inequalities and institutional barriers.

Furthermore, based on Connolly (2000) critique of the Contact Theory, it can be argued that hostility towards refugees in Kakuma is not purely a function of intergroup attitudes rather than political and economic deprivation. As will be demonstrated in chapter six, the marginalisation that the local Turkana hosts experience also negatively affects the way they perceive refugees. As some scholars have argued, refugees in Kakuma receive better treatment and have access to better social services as compared to their hosts (Aukot, 2003; Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016; Anomat Ali, Imana and Ocha, 2017).

4. The Conceptual Framework for Integration by Ager and Strang

While both the Capability Approach and Contact Hypothesis are broad theoretical perspectives that are not specific to any one context, the integration framework proposed by Ager and Strang (2008) was developed based on a study conducted in a refugee-hosting community in the United Kingdom. It provides a structured approach to understanding integration by identifying key elements that contribute to what is considered a "successful integration" (Ager and Strang, 2008, p. 166). The framework categorises integration into four main domains: Markers and Means, Social Connection, Facilitators, and Foundations. Within these domains, it outlines ten essential indicators that serve as a comprehensive method for assessing how refugees adapt in new destinations. The core elements of the markers and means domain represent public outcomes of integration as well as the means through which they are achieved (Ager and Strang, 2008). Some of the indicators listed under markers and means include employment, housing, health, and education (Ibid).

The second key domain is social connection and includes indicators like social bridges, bonds, and links, which, according to Ager and Strang, drive integration at the local level (p. 177). The third domain is integration facilitators, which includes language and cultural knowledge and safety and stability, which Ager and Strang argue can facilitate or constrain integration at the local level (p. 182). Rights and citizenship are the indicators of the fourth domain. According to Ager and Strang, the indicators of the fourth domain mainly promote a sense of identity at the national level.

In the Kakuma refugee camp, the domains of integration outlined by Ager and Strang (2008) are not fully realised, presenting significant challenges to the integration process. Under the Markers and Means domain, access to employment remains a major obstacle for refugee integration due to restrictive policies that limit their right to work and prevent them from obtaining essential documents such as tax certificates (Balakian, 2016; Betts, 2022). While some refugees secure employment with humanitarian agencies operating in Kakuma, they do not enjoy full labour rights (Betts, 2022). Many are classified as "incentive workers", a status that restricts the amount of salary they can receive, limiting their financial independence and economic stability (Jansen, 2016a). Similarly, access to quality housing, healthcare, and education remains inadequate, with many refugees struggling to meet their basic needs (Rice, 2011; Betts, 2022; O’Keeffe and Lovey, 2023). Furthermore, under the Foundation domain, refugees in Kenya do not have a legal pathway to full citizenship (Dhala, 2024). The country’s refugee policy primarily emphasises voluntary repatriation rather than local integration, leaving thousands of refugees in a prolonged state of legal and social uncertainty (Government of Kenya, 2020b).

According to Ager and Strang (2008), the absence of conflict and the promotion of tolerance and diversity are key indicators of successful integration. In Kakuma, several initiatives promote intergroup cohesion, with organisations such as the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) implementing social cohesion programs that encourage dialogue and cooperation between refugees and hosts (The Lutheran World Federation, no date). Additionally, various community-based activities, including peace dialogues, sports, shared schools, and even intermarriages, serve to strengthen relationships between the two groups. Ager and Strang also emphasise the importance of establishing connections with ethnic groups that share similar cultural practices, as this can facilitate effective integration (Ager and Strang, 2008).

In the Facilitators domain, language and cultural knowledge play a dual role in either promoting or hindering integration in Kakuma. Since the camp has existed for decades, some refugees have grown up there or have lived in the area for an extended period, enabling them to become familiar with the language and customs of the Turkana host community (Jansen, 2018). Additionally, certain refugee groups share linguistic and cultural

similarities with the Turkana, such as South Sudanese refugees from the Lotuko or Toposa ethnic communities (Ibid). These commonalities contribute to deeper integration and foster positive relationships between the closely related groups. However, in cases where refugees and hosts do not share a common language or cultural understanding, tensions can arise, creating barriers to integration. Aukot (2002) notes that cultural differences have occasionally led to conflict, particularly when refugees dismiss certain Turkana traditions, such as dowry and pregnancy compensation, on the grounds that they either cannot afford the livestock required or do not relate to the practice. Such misunderstandings can contribute to strained refugee-host relations.

Despite providing a useful framework for evaluating refugee integration efforts in Kakuma, Ager and Strang's (2008) conceptual model is not entirely applicable to this context. One of its primary limitations is that the research underlying the framework was conducted in the United Kingdom—specifically in Islington (London) and Pollokshaws (Glasgow)—and focused on two settlement models: self-settlement and dispersal-led settlement. Neither of these models is practised in Kenya, where the dominant approach to refugee management remains encampment (Jaji, 2012; Agwanda, 2022a). As discussed in Chapter Two, Kenya's refugee policy has historically restricted refugees to designated camps, limiting their freedom of movement and access to economic opportunities. This structural difference means that many of the integration indicators proposed by Ager and Strang do not fully align with the realities of life in Kakuma.

Additionally, the broader sociopolitical and economic contexts of the two settings differ significantly. Ager and Strang's study was conducted in a developed nation (the United Kingdom) where many refugees had already accessed the durable solution of resettlement. In contrast, Kenya is a developing country where the majority of refugees remain in a prolonged state of displacement, unable to access any of the three primary durable solutions: local integration, voluntary repatriation, or resettlement (Crisp, 2003; Hovil and Maple, 2022). Consequently, the absence of a clear path to permanent status for most refugees in Kenya significantly alters the nature of their integration experience in Kakuma. Without legal rights to work, move freely, or gain citizenship, refugees in Kakuma face

structural barriers that are not adequately addressed by a framework designed for a context where such rights are more readily available.

Finally, while Ager & Strang's framework provides a structured means of assessing integration, it also reflects the ways in which integration is governed and measured within humanitarian and policy frameworks. This chapter argues that the framework's predefined domains—markers and means, social connections, facilitators, and legal rights—do not fully capture the political dimensions of integration, particularly the ways in which refugees are deliberately positioned as economically active but politically excluded subjects

5. Chapter Summary

While existing theoretical frameworks provide useful insights into refugee integration in Kakuma, they fail to fully capture the structural and contextual challenges refugees and host communities face. A key limitation is their inability to account for Kenya's encampment policy, which restricts refugees' movement, employment opportunities, and legal pathways to long-term residency or citizenship. Unlike integration models in countries with supportive legal frameworks, Kakuma operates within a system that hinders meaningful socio-economic inclusion. Additionally, Turkana's historical marginalisation, poverty, and weak infrastructure further complicate integration, as both refugees and host communities struggle with resource scarcity, fuelling tensions over aid and economic opportunities. Existing theories also overlook the role of power dynamics, governance structures, and sociocultural factors. For instance, while the contact hypothesis suggests that intergroup interaction fosters positive relations, in Kakuma, such interactions occur within an unequal legal framework. Similarly, the capability approach emphasises expanding freedoms but does not address the restrictive policies that limit refugees' opportunities. By critically engaging with these three theoretical frameworks, this chapter highlights their limitations in capturing the full political, economic, and spatial realities of integration in Kakuma. Ultimately, this analysis suggests that refugee integration should not be conceptualised solely through existing humanitarian and policy frameworks but rather through a

governance-focused lens that accounts for the ways in which integration is actively shaped, constrained, and instrumentalised by state and international actors.

CHAPTER 5: METHODOLOGY

1 Introduction

This chapter is organised into two sections: A and B. The first section outlines the methodological approach used to address the main research question: *What are the integration outcomes of refugee policies on refugees and host communities in protracted refugee situations?* The second section discusses my reflections about my positionality, the process of obtaining the required research permits, the journey to Kakuma, the experiences of interviewing participants, and the challenges encountered in the field, along with strategies I adopted to overcome them. However, beyond these procedural elements, this section also reflects on the affective and moral experiences of negotiating research access, particularly within a space shaped by bureaucratic power and the politics of control. Finally, the methodological approach in this thesis is not merely a means of data collection; it is an

epistemological stance that challenges dominant representations of refugee governance. By combining policy analysis, interviews, and ethnographic methods, I trace the everyday manifestations of governance logics beyond the official discourses of the state.

2. Part 1: Design and Framework

Theoretically and empirically, few research bodies have examined refugee policy outcomes in protracted displacement situations in the Global South (Betts, Flinder Stierna, *et al.*, 2023a). A World Bank (2019a) report highlighted the need for more qualitative research in Kakuma to better understand the socio-economic conditions of both refugees and host communities. This study aims to bridge this gap by exploring how integration policies and practices affect these groups in Kakuma.

The study is grounded in the ontological assumption that multiple realities exist regarding the experiences of refugees and host communities with integration policies in Kakuma (Guba and Lincoln, 1988). It seeks to represent these realities through the perspectives of refugees, host communities, and other stakeholders involved in integration efforts. These diverse experiences are expressed as themes that capture the nuanced realities of the participants. Epistemologically, the study draws on the subjective experiences and perceptions of participants (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Data collection involved fieldwork in Kakuma using qualitative interviews, participant observation, and field notes to capture these subjective perspectives. In this research, the term host community refers to the Turkana locals who live close to the camp and are affected by its presence. Many refugees also perceive the term to mean local Turkana people (World Bank, 2019b).

2.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is often associated with humanistic research approaches that emphasise understanding people's perspectives and is commonly used in fields like sociology and anthropology (Alasuutari, 2010; Pathak, Jena and Kalra, 2013). According to Walcott (2009), the term qualitative research was rarely used in the 1960s, and its development was significantly influenced by the Chicago School in the early 20th century

(Jovanović, 2011). Although similar methods were used earlier, qualitative research became recognised as a distinct field of inquiry in the late 20th century (Leavy, 2020).

Good qualitative research interprets and sheds light on participants' subjective views, actions, and social context (Fossey *et al.*, 2002). Lincoln (1995) argued that good qualitative research is mainly based on two aspects: whether participants' perspectives have been accurately represented in the research and whether the findings are coherent and relate to the data and the social context from which they were derived. Based on Lincoln's argument, qualitative research is mainly interpretive and constructivist in approach and thus views reality as socially constructed and experiences as subjective, varied and multiple (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). This research adopted this approach by seeking to understand and interpret the experiences and perspectives of refugees and host communities in relation to the refugee integration policies and practices in Kakuma. As such, it sought to go beyond the statistics that have been generated in Kakuma through numerous quantitative studies, such as the one conducted on the intergroup relations in Kakuma by Betts, Flinder Stierna, *et al.* (2023a) and the 2021 World Bank study on the socio-economic conditions of refugees in Kenya by Johann *et al.* (2019), to understand the impact of refugee policies and practices in Kakuma. According to Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010), the focus of qualitative research is primarily on words and texts, as opposed to numbers.

Data in qualitative research is collected through methods such as participant observation, interviews, and focus groups (Fossey *et al.*, 2002). On the other hand, experiments and surveys are the main methods of collecting data in quantitative research (Watson, 2015). In terms of epistemological orientation, quantitative research can be said to be positivist, meaning that reality is assumed to exist independently of the research process and is observable and measurable (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). In addition, in positivist orientation, social reality is predictable and can be controlled (*ibid*). While quantitative research is concerned with collecting and analysing data that can be represented numerically, only qualitative research can provide an explanation and insight into why participants think, feel, and act in a particular manner (Goertzen, 2017).

Qualitative research, while invaluable for capturing in-depth and nuanced insights, has its limitations. A key concern is generalisability, as qualitative findings are often specific to the contexts in which the research is conducted and may not extend to broader populations (Atieno, 2009). In the case of this study, the findings are contextual, reflecting the unique experiences of refugee and host communities under the encampment policy in Kakuma. This limitation arises partly from the smaller sample sizes typically employed in qualitative research, which are necessary for deep, focused engagement but limit the scope for broad applicability. Additionally, qualitative research demands significant time for data analysis to produce meaningful results, further constraining its scalability (Samaduzzaman, Farhana and Mou, 2014; Rahman, 2016).

Beyond these practical constraints, a pure qualitative method may also struggle to fully capture certain forms of knowledge due to structural and affective barriers faced by participants in Kakuma. Refugees and hosts, for instance, may be hesitant to articulate their experiences openly due to fear of reprisal, trauma, or a lack of trust in the research process. Structural inequalities, such as power imbalances between researchers and participants, can further limit the accessibility of certain insights, as some participants may feel their voices are marginalized or undervalued.

The research onion model developed by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2016) provides a better description of the stages involved in the formulation of an effective methodology. It outlines stages such as philosophy, theoretical development approaches, methodology choice, strategies, time horizon, and techniques. Based on the diagram below, if a researcher adopts a positivist philosophy, then their theoretical approach is deductive, utilising quantitative methods and strategies such as experiments and surveys. On the other hand, as in the case of this study, if a researcher's philosophical approach is interpretivist, their theoretical approach is inductive, utilising strategies like ethnography and case studies. While the research onion is useful in organising the research and developing the design, it cannot be adapted as it is in all types of research, as some research studies are complex (Melnikovas, 2018).

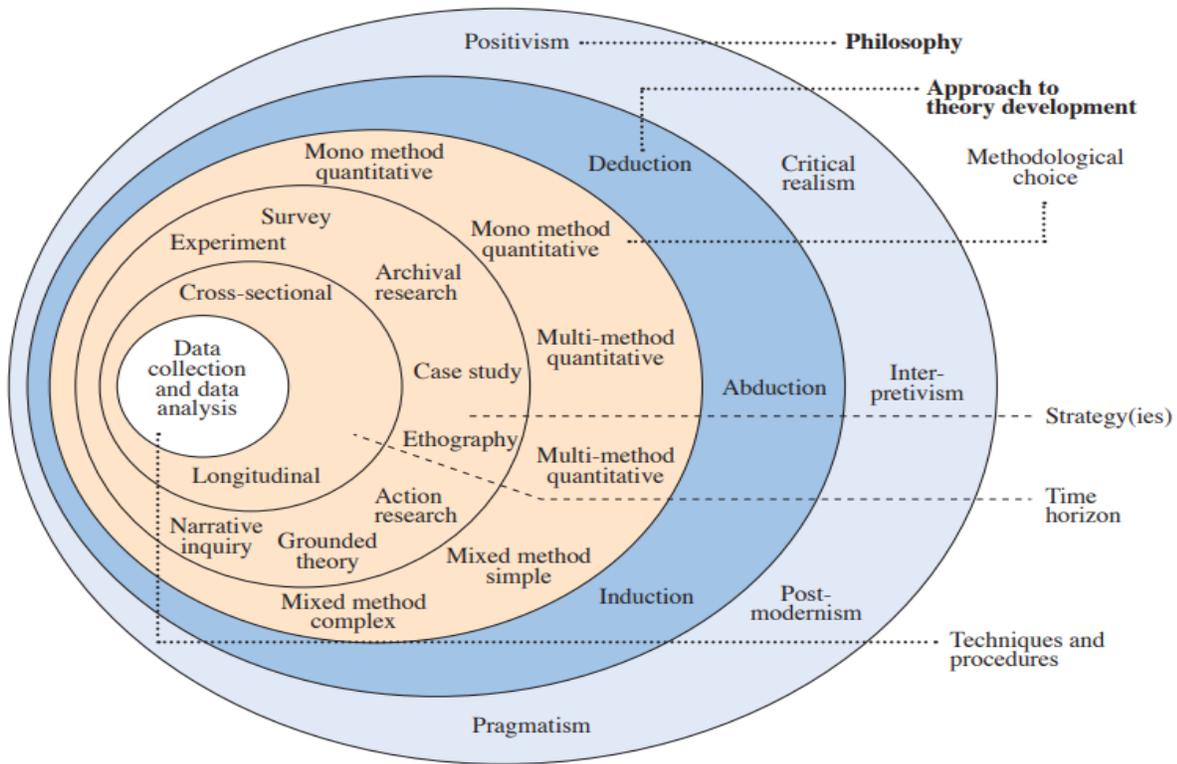


Figure 2: The research onion by Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016

To conduct good research, the researcher needs to identify his or her own ontological and epistemological positions based on the choice of methodology. These are key research paradigms that guide the researcher on how they will conduct the research process (Yong, Husin and Kamarudin, 2021). According to Kant (2014), ontology in social science is concerned with the nature of reality and questions whether reality exists independently of the research or whether everything is relative. On the other hand, epistemology is concerned with how reality can be known and the relationship between the researcher and the researched. As shown in the table below, the position of this research in relation to ontology and epistemology is that reality is socially constructed and can be understood through perceived knowledge and understanding of a specific context (Carson *et al.*, 2001). While reality might be specific to an individual, similarities might exist between and among individuals and groups of individuals; thus, this approach seeks to explain how people make sense of a situation at a particular time in a particular space and context (Highfield and Bisman, 2012).

Table 1: Broad definitions and explanations of positivism, interpretivism, ontology and epistemology.

	Positivism	Interpretivism
Ontology Nature of being/nature of the world	Have direct access to real world	No direct access to real-world
Reality	Single external reality	No single external reality
Epistemology Grounds of knowledge/relationship between reality and research	Possible to obtain hard, secure objective knowledge	Understood through perceived knowledge
	Research focuses on generalisation and	Research focuses on specific and concrete

	abstraction	
	Thought governed by hypotheses and theories	Seeking to understand a specific context

(Carson et al.,2021)

Therefore, the qualitative research methods, such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observations, allowed me, as the researcher, to interpret events as they occurred and to consider factors that might have been overlooked in statistical data or generalised across populations. By utilising the interpretivist paradigm, which views reality as shaped by interactive processes within specific social, cultural, and temporal contexts, the research was enriched by the analysis of the experiences from the perspective of those who live them (Glaser, 2012). In this study, the impact of refugee policies and practices was examined from the viewpoints of those directly affected by the Kakuma camp—refugees, host communities, and representatives from government and non-governmental organisations.

2.1.1 Interviews: Semi-structured in-depth interviews

Interviews are the most common method of data collection in qualitative research. Qualitative interviews seek to elicit participants' perspectives on their lives as shared in their stories, with the purpose of understanding their experiences, actions, and social worlds (Fossey *et al.*, 2002). As Denzin and Lincoln (2001) put it, qualitative interviews enable the researcher to understand how people attribute meanings to their social experiences, thus providing a comprehensive description of phenomena that cannot be explained using predetermined hypotheses. Furthermore, Carson *et al* (2001) posited that the purpose of interviews is to get into someone’s mind and perspective and to seek feelings, memories, and opinions that cannot be observed or discovered in any other way. Qualitative interviews foster the establishment of a hermeneutic relationship between the researcher and participants, where the participants’ subjective perspectives, as well as the researcher’s interpretation of these, form the foundation of the interview approaches

(Camic, Rhodes and Yardley, 2003). Some types of qualitative interviews include: structured, unstructured, semi-structured, and in-depth interviews. In structured interviews, questions are asked verbatim and based on a particular order, while unstructured interviews are conducted in a conversational way in which the interviewee takes the lead to a greater extent in sharing their story, rather than the researcher directing the interview (Mueller and Segal, 2015). Semi-structured interviews, on the other hand, are used in more focused conversations on a specific subject using an interview guide that contains a list of questions and prompts designed to direct the interview in a focused and flexible conversational way (Jamshed, 2014).

This research utilized semi-structured in-depth interviews to seek participants' perspectives and opinions about their experiences of the refugee policies in Kakuma. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allowed me to probe into other pertinent issues that might come up in the course of the interview while remaining focused on the subject (Adeoye-Olatunde and Olenik, 2021). As a qualitative method, in-depth semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to explore issues of interest to the topic in a conversational manner and allow the participants to express their opinions, feelings, and experiences in a dialogical manner (Longhurst, 2009; Scanlan, 2020). According to Szombatová (2016), semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to go into detail and explore specific responses to a particular issue, thereby revealing new insights that could validate the information from other sources that the research will utilise, such as secondary sources. This flexibility and adaptive nature of the semi-structured interview ensured that all issues that emerged during the process were effectively explored without deviating from the main issue (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2010).

Semi-structured in-depth interviews also enabled me to collect data in a relational manner without a significant division or hierarchy between me and the participants (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2010). To achieve this, I incorporated both dialogic style and dialectic approach in conducting the interviews, thus ensuring that the research was not based on the 'traditional power relationships of interviewer and subjects, which could have negatively

impacted the data collection process (Angrosino, 2007, p. 12). In a dialogic style, the interview is more of an interactive conversation, building rapport and co-constructing knowledge with the participant. Meanwhile, the dialectic approach focuses on the emergence of truth from the interplay of diverse opinions, values, and beliefs expressed openly and freely, rather than imposing homogeneity or external researcher-driven conclusions (Russell and Kelly, 2002; Angrosino, 2007).

2.1.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation is a qualitative research method in which the researcher is actively present in the study setting, engaging in daily activities, interactions, and events to gain insight into both the explicit and implicit aspects of participants' lives (Carson *et al.*, 2001). In this context, explicit aspects are part of what the participants can express themselves, while implicit aspects are what are outside the researcher's and participants' awareness and consciousness. This data collection strategy allows the researcher to gain insight into the phenomena being investigated from the perspective of the participants (Musante (DeWalt) and DeWalt, 2010). Bonner and Gerda (2002) furthermore suggested that these perspectives are gathered through listening, looking, and asking. While this approach is primarily used in ethnographic studies, it also has a long history in sociology and has been widely integrated into qualitative research (Bernard and Gravlee, 2014). In addition to observing and participating in the natural setting, researchers utilising this approach also record their experiences in the form of field notes.

In disciplines like cultural anthropology, participant observation is considered the central and defining method of research (Musante (DeWalt) and DeWalt, 2010; Bernard and Gravlee, 2014). Some scholars opine that participant observation encompasses what happens during the fieldwork and includes formal and informal interviews (Maanen, 1988; Agar, 1996; Grills, 1998; Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte, 1999). Moreover, Spradley (1980) viewed participant observation as the general approach to fieldwork, especially in ethnographic studies. According to Agar (1996) participant observation is a critical aspect of fieldwork because it forms the basis upon which interview questions are asked in the field.

In this research, I used observation to complement the interviews conducted with participants in Kakuma. As some scholars suggested, this method enhances both the quality of data collected through other methods and the accuracy of interpretation (Bernard and Gravlee, 2014; Shah, 2017). I actively participated in and observed various activities and events in Kakuma to systematically document the behaviours, events, and interactions of refugees and host communities (Kawulich, 2012). Some of the activities I joined included the World Refugee Day celebrations on June 20th (year) in Kalobeyei Village One, visits to the Kakuma One market, attending a sports tournament in Kakuma Three and visiting refugee-led organisations like Action Pour le Progrès, Humanity Hands, and Faulu Productions. During these visits, I observed daily activities such as planning meetings, where I listened to discussions on planned actions, challenges, and how they would be addressed. In the markets, I observed interactions, purchased personal items, and had coffee at the well-known Ethiopian restaurant in Kakuma Two. Moreover, during the ten weeks I spent in Kakuma between May and June 2023, I would often travel around the camps using a motorbike taxi to experience what it is like to move around and outside the camps for refugees.

Participant observation as a data collection method can be broadly categorised into two types: covert and overt. Covert participant observation involves the use of deception, where the researcher assumes a hidden role and the participants are unaware of the researcher's true identity or purpose (Lauder, 2003; Roulet *et al.*, 2017). On the other hand, overt participant observation involves the researcher disclosing their role and purpose and getting full and informed consent from the participants (Whyte, 1979; Bulmer, 1982b; Lauder, 2003). In sociology, the ethical implications of covert versus overt participant observation have been widely debated. Some scholars contend that covert observation is less ethical due to its use of deception and the lack of informed consent from participants (McKenzie, 2009; Cunliffe and Alcadipani, 2016). In addition, covert participant observation can only generate informal data with no concrete quotes, may put the researcher at risk if discovered, and in some occasions, the researcher may be part of or witness illegal behaviour (Roulet *et al.*, 2017; Strudwick, 2019). On the other hand, overt participant

observation is seen as more ethical and built on trust and free exchange of information (Bogdan, 1973; Bulmer, 1982a; McKenzie, 2009). Despite this, covert studies have made significant contributions to social science, including the development of cognitive dissonance theory, the exposure of inhumane treatment of asylum seekers, and insights into the human tendency to obey authority (Milgram, 1963; Festinger, Riecken and Schachter, 2008; Goffman, 2017; Roulet *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, Lauder (2003) argued that covert participant observation is vital in researching deviant communities, such as religious movements that exist at the margins of society.

In this study, I adopted an overt participant observation approach for several reasons. First, the Kakuma refugee camp and its surrounding environment are not “closed” field sites, where covert participant observation might be necessary (McCurdy and Uldam, 2014). In closed field sites, researchers are generally prohibited from conducting studies (Ibid). However, due to significant scholarly interest and the frequent research permissions granted by the Government of Kenya, numerous studies have been conducted in Kakuma and its surrounding areas (Omata, 2020a). Additionally, my prior experience working in Kakuma as a humanitarian worker (2020–2021) meant that many refugees, host community members, NGO staff, and government officials already knew me and were aware that I had left to pursue further studies. As a result, attempting a covert approach would have been impractical, as it would have been difficult to convince them that I was not conducting academic research.

Given these pre-existing relationships and the fact that I had stayed in touch with many of my contacts, concealing my identity during fieldwork would have been challenging. Prior to travelling to Kakuma, I had already communicated with some contacts about my research and my plans to visit their organisations or offices for data collection through interviews or participant observation. This early communication was intended to build trust, which was crucial to minimising any changes in participants' behaviour in my presence (Roulet *et al.*, 2017; Strudwick, 2019). Additionally, due to the vulnerability of refugees in Kakuma, the

camp authorities, including the Kenyan government and UNHCR, would not have permitted me to conceal my identity, as I needed their approval to access the camps.

However, achieving full overt participant observation proved challenging in some situations during fieldwork, especially in public spaces such as markets, playgrounds, hotels, and bars. Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2007) noted that obtaining full consent from all individuals in a public setting is challenging due to the number of people who might be living in a particular area. Additionally, McKenzie (2009) pointed out that consent is not straightforward, as it depends on complex and dynamic field conditions. For instance, some participants may not fully comprehend all aspects of the research, and overt researchers rarely disclose everything to every participant (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Furthermore, researchers cannot guarantee that the information provided to participants is always sufficient (Wiles *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, in this research, some aspects of covert participant observation were utilised, especially in public spaces. As McKenzie (2009) suggested, the realities of the field are complicated; thus, adopting a strictly overt approach is almost impossible.

2.1.3 Field Notes

Field notes are a crucial component of the participant observation approach in qualitative and ethnographic research (Tjora, 2006). They are informal written records or detailed accounts of observational data gathered in the field, such as events (Jackson, 1990; Montgomery and Bailey, 2007). Additionally, field notes document essential contextual information (Sanjek, 1990), helping the researcher provide a rich, detailed description of the study's context, encounters, interviews, and focus groups (Sanjek, 1990; Mulhall, 2003; Phillippi and Lauderdale, 2018). While they used to be in the form of writings, nowadays, the field notes can be directly typed into an electronic device like a laptop (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007). According to Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (2011), field notes capture the experiences and observations gained through active participation. The use of field notes

dates back to the early 1900s and is associated with anthropologists such as Malinowski, Boas, and Mead (Ottenberg, 1990; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011).

Various types of field notes are used in research. These include inscription notes, scratch notes, and jotted notes (Montgomery and Bailey, 2007; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011), as well as description notes (Sanjek, 1990). Spradley (1980) further categorised field notes in participant observation, identifying the condensed account, the expanded account, the fieldwork journal, and notes for analysis and interpretation. Since it is impossible to document everything that happens in the field (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007), condensed notes are used to capture the researcher's encounters in brief summaries, often consisting of "phrases, single words, and unconnected sentences" (Spradley, 1980, p. 69). Spradley emphasises that these notes should be written immediately after observation. Expanded notes, on the other hand, are more detailed versions of the condensed notes and are usually written afterwards. Additionally, Spradley advises that researchers maintain a journal to record their experiences, fears, ideas, and any issues encountered during data collection. This dated journal is crucial for helping researchers assess personal biases and emotions, allowing them to "understand their influences on the research" (Spradley, 1980, p. 72). Finally, analysis and interpretation field notes help link the ethnographic record to the final written ethnography by generating insights, meanings, and interpretations of the culture being studied.

While there is a gap in the literature on the practical details involved in taking field notes (Wolfinger, 2002; Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2011), some scholars have proposed various methods for categorising field observations and determining the structure of field notes (Peshkin, 2001; Wolfinger, 2002; Hellesø, Melby and Hauge, 2015). Peshkin (2001) outlined four strategies: observing and recording everything, observing without focusing on anything specific, searching for paradoxes, and identifying the main problem participants face. In contrast, Wolfinger (2002) suggests two approaches: the salience hierarchy, which emphasises the most interesting or significant observations, and comprehensive systematic note-taking, which involves documenting everything that occurs at a specific moment

during the fieldwork. Key elements of comprehensive note-taking are shown in the figure below:

Table 2: An example of comprehensive notetaking

Who is he?
What does he do?
What do you think she meant by that?
What are they supposed to do?
Why did she do that?
Why is that done?
What happens after _____?
What would happen if _____?

What do you think about _____?

Who is responsible if _____?

(Lofland and Lofland, 1984: 48)

Spradley (1980) also outlined nine key elements similar to Lofland and Lofland (1984), that contribute to a well-crafted field note, with the primary ones being place, actor, and activities. The remaining six dimensions to consider when making observations are object, act, event, time, goals, and feeling. Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018) added that essential components of a field note include the study title, the researcher's name, and the date and time of the observation. Beyond these basics, the researcher may include any other relevant information (Ibid). Montgomery and Bailey (2007) highlight that field notes should capture the "what," "how," and "when" of the observations. However, Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) argued that the style and content of field notes depend on factors such as the researcher's role, the research setting, and the nature of the study.

Table 3: Dimensions of a social situation observed in a field note

1.	Object	The physical things that are present.
2.	Act	Single actions that people do.
3.	Event	A set of related activities that people carry out
4.	Time	The sequencing that takes place over time.
5.	Goal	The things people are trying to accomplish.
6.	Feeling	The emotions felt and expressed.

(Spradley, 1980).

In this research, I used field notes to document my observations during fieldwork in Kakuma. These notes were both handwritten in my dated diary and typed on my password-protected laptop. The handwritten notes were mostly brief summaries that I jotted down

during encounters in the field and immediately after participating in interviews, focus groups, or participant observations. My field notes did not follow a strict format but included key details such as the date, time, location, and observations. After the fieldwork, I expanded these condensed notes, typing the detailed versions on my laptop. These expanded notes became part of the data collected in Kakuma.

While field notes are invaluable in capturing rich, contextual details of events and experiences during fieldwork, the process of note-taking is influenced by several factors, including the emotions experienced by both the researcher and participants, the power dynamics inherent in their relationship, and the agency of the participants themselves (Kapoor, Ambreen and Zhu, 2023). Holmes (2015) emphasizes the importance of emotional reflexivity in navigating these complexities. Emotional reflexivity involves interpreting the emotions expressed and experienced by both the researcher and the participants, recognizing that emotions are shaped by the intricate social contexts and relationships at play. By reflecting on these emotions, researchers can gain deeper insights into the meanings attributed to actions and experiences within the research setting (McQueeney and Lavelle, 2017). Suppressing or disregarding emotions, as Kleinman and Copp (1993) warn, risks diverting the researcher's attention from critical details that could enrich their understanding of the issues and individuals being studied.

During my fieldwork, I experienced emotionally charged moments, particularly during interviews where participants shared traumatic experiences such as accounts of physical abuse or hardships within the camp. These moments underscored the dual challenge of capturing and experiencing the lived realities of others. One poignant example was my attendance at the Kakuma Sound Festival, a popular event celebrating the cultural diversity and talent within the camp. Witnessing refugees dancing, singing, and showcasing their talents was uplifting, highlighting their resilience and agency. Yet, these moments also carried an underlying sadness, as the joy and freedom expressed during the festival were constrained by the encampment policy that continues to limit their rights and opportunities.

To navigate these tensions, I incorporated emotional reflexivity into my research process, particularly when recording field notes. After each day of interviews and observations, I would reflect on and document key emotional moments, ensuring these were preserved for later analysis. For especially impactful experiences, I made brief notes immediately following interviews to capture the essence of the emotions while they were still fresh. These emotional reflections were subsequently integrated into the interview transcripts and analyzed alongside other data using NVivo software. By treating these emotional insights as part of the dataset, they directly informed the research findings, enriching the analysis with a nuanced understanding of the emotional dimensions of life in Kakuma. This approach allowed me to balance the dual roles of observer and participant.

2.1.4. Focus Groups

Focus groups are a widely used method for collecting qualitative data across various academic disciplines, including sociology (Morgan, 1996). Typically, a focus group consists of six to twelve participants in an informal setting, discussing a topic set by the researcher (Clifford *et al.*, 2016). (Carey, 1994, p. 226) defined focus groups as "semi-structured group sessions, moderated by a group leader, held in an informal setting to gather information on a specific topic," while (Gibbs, 1997) described them as a group of people selected and gathered by the researcher to discuss a research topic from personal experiences. Moreover, discussions in focus groups are mostly audiotaped, which are then transcribed and analysed qualitatively (Wilkinson, 1998). In focus groups, the researcher leverages group dynamics to encourage discussion and gather information from participants (Guest *et al.*, 2017). Similar to in-depth semi-structured interviews, the researcher may have a set of guiding questions but is encouraged to let the conversation flow naturally (Litosseliti, 2010). The main distinguishing feature between interviews and focus groups is that whereas in interviews the researcher asks questions and the interviewee responds, in focus groups, the focus is on interaction within the group. Litosseliti's emphasis on free-flowing discussion aligns with Morgan's (1996) identification of three key features of focus group research: method of data collection, interaction as a source of data, and the researcher's role in

facilitating group discussion for data collection. Wilkinson (1998, p. 188) also listed three features of focus groups as “providing access to participants' own language, concepts and concerns; encouraging the production of more fully articulated accounts; and offering an opportunity to observe the process of collective sense-making.”

One of the advantages of using focus groups in qualitative research is their ability to capture respondents' attitudes, reactions, feelings, and experiences in ways that other methods, such as individual interviews or observation, may not (Gibbs, 1997). McLafferty (2004) argues that focus groups are particularly effective for exploring people's attitudes and opinions on specific social issues. Additionally, focus groups generate a substantial amount of data in a short time due to their interactive and interpersonal nature (Kidd and Parshall, 2000; Kaplowitz and Hoehn, 2001; Greenbaum, 2003). When combined with qualitative interviews, both methods allow researchers to access people's experiences that may not be directly observable (Kaplowitz and Hoehn, 2001). Originally developed for market research, focus groups typically last between one and two hours (Clifford *et al.*, 2016) and are well-suited for studying marginalised communities, such as refugees (Madriz, 1998; Kidd and Parshall, 2000).

McLafferty (2004) categorises focus groups based on the type of knowledge they generate: everyday knowledge and scientific knowledge. Everyday knowledge refers to the language people use to interpret and understand their daily experiences, while scientific knowledge involves numerical measurements used to test hypotheses (Calder, 1977). These two types of knowledge correspond to qualitative and quantitative research, respectively. In qualitative studies, focus groups can take several forms: exploratory groups, which validate scientific concepts against everyday experiences; clinical groups, which approach qualitative research as a scientific study; and phenomenological groups, which aim to understand people's common perceptions and everyday explanations (Calder, 1977; McLafferty, 2004).

While focus groups enable researchers to capture participants' shared experiences that might not emerge in one-on-one interviews (Powell and Single, 1996), this method also presents some challenges. Focus groups can lead to conformity among participants, as some may fear expressing unpopular opinions or feel anxious in the presence of others (Mansell *et al.*, 2004; Acocella, 2012). This conformity can result in stereotypical responses that lack innovation or fail to offer new insights. To mitigate this risk, I used a strategy of asking questions in the third person (Moser and Kalton, 1971). This approach ensured that the participants were comfortable to share their experiences without worrying about how the others would perceive them. Additionally, the focus groups were kept homogeneous—focus groups for refugee and host community groups were conducted separately to avoid mixing different participant categories. In most cases, I also paid keen attention to the group dynamics and ensured that communities that were known to be in conflict in the camps, such as the Nuer and Dinka from South Sudan (Joselow, 2014), were not present in the same focus group.

The internal dynamics within focus groups significantly influence the type and scope of data generated through participant interactions (Rabiee, 2004). For instance, in homogenous groups—such as those comprising members of the same gender, particularly women—participants may feel more at ease discussing sensitive issues like crime, including rape and assault, without the fear or apprehension that might arise in one-on-one interviews or heterogeneous groups (Madriz, 2000). The shared gender identity fosters a safe and supportive environment, enabling women to delve into their lived experiences and their aftermath with others who can understand these realities at emotional, intellectual, and visceral levels (*ibid*). To maximise the effectiveness of focus groups, W.Stewart, N.Shamdasani and W.Rook (2007) advocate for creating ethnically and socially homogenous groups, particularly when researching sensitive or controversial topics. This can be achieved by carefully considering participants' characteristics and expectations to ensure group cohesion and comfort.

Three key demographic factors—age, gender, and nationality—emerged prominently in shaping the dynamics of the focus group discussions I conducted. Regarding age, younger participants were observed to interrupt one another more frequently and displayed lower levels of empathy towards the refugees’ struggles compared to older participants. This aligns with W.Stewart, N.Shamdasani and W.Rook (2007) assertion that empathy tends to increase with age, while tendencies toward simultaneous talking and interruptions diminish. Despite these challenges, most participants, irrespective of age, were able to articulate and defend their perspectives, even when they diverged from the prevailing group opinions. This diversity in age enriched the discussions, resulting in nuanced and detailed exchanges.

In this study, focus groups were used to gather detailed information from refugees and host community members with shared experiences of life in Kakuma refugee camp and the policies governing refugee management in the area (Hennink, 2013). Four focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted, each with five participants. Two FGDs were held with refugees and two with members of the host community. Key social factors such as age, gender, and country of origin were considered to facilitate comfortable interaction among participants. A smaller group size was chosen to allow for a deeper exploration of the participants' complex experiences, enabling each person to share their views for better comparison (Morgan, 1995). Given that the information sought required participants to feel at ease, focus groups provided a comfortable setting where participants could engage with peers since the method encourages open discussion and reflection on one another’s views. This approach allowed for a richer understanding of the diverse experiences within the groups (Greenwood, Ellmers and Holley, 2014). As noted by Kidd and Parshall (2000), focus groups are especially valuable for exploring issues in socially marginalised groups, making this method suitable for collecting data from both refugees and host community members who have experienced socio-economic marginalisation in Kakuma (Aukot, 2003; Shanguhya, 2021).

Gender differences also played a noticeable role in shaping focus group dynamics. As W.Stewart, N.Shamdasani and W.Rook (2007) note, sex and gender differences in

interpersonal communication often reflect the influence of social and cultural environments. During the discussions, men tended to dominate conversations, focusing primarily on collective issues such as the shared benefits of hosting refugees. Women, in contrast, emphasized personal safety and entrepreneurial opportunities within the camp. This gendered disparity in focus groups likely stems from cultural norms in the local Turkana community, which is predominantly patriarchal (Korobe, 2021; Mukoshi and Hamasi, 2022). Similar gendered behaviours and priorities were observed among refugee participants from other patriarchal societies, such as South Sudanese, Congolese, and Somali communities. These shared social and cultural dynamics impacted the observed dynamics, highlighting the intersection of gender, culture, and lived experience within the focus groups.

2.2 How my positionality impacted the fieldwork.

Having previously worked in the Kakuma area as a project manager with a local Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) implementing development and livelihoods initiatives for both host communities and refugees, I was aware of how my new role as an academic researcher and being known to some of the participants could influence the data collection process and create power imbalances with potential participants. For instance, in interacting with refugees and host community members I had previously known through humanitarian work, I anticipated that issues of power dynamics and expectations of direct benefits might arise (Mackenzie and McDowell, 2007; Omata, 2020b; Pincock and Bakunzi, 2021; Solie, 2024). During the fieldwork in Kakuma, I encountered participants' expectations for direct benefits in exchange for their participation in the research, as will be elaborated in section B under contacting and recruitment of participants. For instance, one participant reached out to request financial assistance after our interview, explaining that their monthly allowance was insufficient to meet their needs. Despite clearly stating in the consent and plain language forms that my research would not provide direct financial benefits, such requests persisted.

The act of compensating participants for their time or facilitating their participation raises significant ethical dilemmas, especially in research involving deprived and marginalised

populations. Largent and Lynch (2017) opine that there is no ethical guideline on what makes compensation ethically acceptable or not. In addition, they state that there is a debate about whether or the extent to which offers of compensation coerce or unduly influence individuals to participate in a research study. However, they agree that participants do not have to pay expenses such as transportation costs incurred as part of participating in the research and should be reimbursed for such costs.

While gestures such as offering refreshments or covering transportation costs may seem considerate, they can inadvertently create power imbalances or foster expectations of material compensation that the research cannot sustain (Nyangulu *et al.*, 2019). Such actions risk blurring the line between ethical appreciation and undue influence, particularly in contexts like Kakuma, where economic hardship is widespread, and participants may perceive these gestures as incentives for participation. To navigate these challenges, I prioritised transparency and fairness. I explicitly informed participants that these gestures were not intended to persuade or influence their decision to take part in the research. Furthermore, I ensured that the information about any form of compensation, such as refreshments or transportation reimbursement, was shared with the potential participants only after they had agreed to take part in the interviews, not beforehand. This approach was crucial in preserving the integrity of the consent process and ensuring that participation remained voluntary and free from coercion or undue inducement. By adopting these measures, I sought to respect participants' agency while addressing their practical needs in an ethical and equitable manner.

To address potential expectations of direct benefit from my research, I used my prior contacts among refugees and the host community to reach out to and recruit potential participants, ensuring they understood that my research provided no direct financial or material benefits and that I was in Kakuma as an academic researcher. The snowball recruitment method also helped address issues of direct benefits, as my initial contacts could inform participants of my academic role and the purpose of the research (Eide and Allen, 2005).

I was also mindful of how my identity as a Kenyan might impact the research. On many occasions, being Kenyan from the Luo tribe²⁴, who historically migrated from parts of Southern Sudan, often addressed power imbalances, mainly when recruiting and interviewing participants from the host community and refugees, especially South Sudanese refugees, who were warmer and often engaged with me about shared cultural ties. Additionally, as a non-Turkana, I noticed that most refugee participants felt comfortable discussing their experiences and perceptions of the Turkana people and the area, while local Turkana hosts openly shared their own views on interactions with refugees and humanitarian organisations.

However, I faced occasional challenges with government and NGO representatives, specifically regarding my identity as a Kenyan researcher and someone who had also worked in Kakuma. For example, while reaching out to government and NGO officers for interviews, my initial approach of introducing myself by my full name, university, and research purpose was sometimes met with resistance. Adjusting this by using only my first name (Gordon), university affiliation (Dublin City University in Ireland), and reason for the interview proved more effective, highlighting how not divulging my Kenyan identity influenced participant engagement, especially with officials. During interviews, some participants expressed surprise upon hearing me speak Swahili, perhaps having expected a researcher from a European background. To make the participants comfortable, I engaged them in a brief informal conversation before the interview to discuss my motivations, background, and familiarity with the region, putting them at ease.

2.3 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is defined as a process where researchers engage in internal dialogue and critically evaluate their own position within the research, examining how this position may impact the research process and its outcomes (Berger, 2015, p. 221). As such, reflexivity is a means of ensuring research rigour and ethics to enhance the credibility of the findings

²⁴ The Luo community is a nilotic tribe found mostly in Western parts of Kenya, particularly around Lake Victoria. They are spread across the East Africa region and are also found in Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan, DR Congo and Ethiopia.

(ibid). Salzman (2002, p. 806) emphasizes that reflexivity requires “constant awareness, assessment, and reassessment by the researcher of their own influence on intersubjective research and the resulting findings.” In interpretive qualitative research, which is based on the assumption that reality is not singular and shaped by experiences and social contexts (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2013; Wiesner, 2022), researchers should explicitly recognize and reflect on their biases, values, and personal backgrounds—such as gender, culture, history, and socio-economic status—that could shape their interpretations during the study (Creswell, 2009). Thus, reflexivity is essential in minimising personal preconceptions, beliefs, and stereotypes related to the social realities of the participants, for example, life in refugee camps or settlements (McCorkel and Myers, 2003; Charmaz, 2008). In this interpretive qualitative research, it is essential to recognise my values, personal history, and potential biases that may have influenced this study.

Having worked and lived in Kakuma before doing this research, my previous experiences inevitably shaped how I interpreted the data collected during the study. To counteract potential biases, I actively employed reflexive practices, including maintaining a reflexive journal in which I documented my preconceptions, which I became aware of through observation and discussions with the participants. Moreover, I also documented the evolving nature of participant interactions and my interpretation of emerging themes. This ongoing self-awareness allowed me to critically assess how my positionality influenced not only the data collection process but also the narratives I constructed from it.

As a non-Turkana Kenyan, a PhD student at a European university, and someone without personal experience of forced displacement, I recognise my socio-economic privilege, particularly in contrast to the marginalisation faced by refugees and local communities like the Turkana, who are affected by longstanding encampment policy and limited government support. My previous work experience with these communities shaped my perspectives toward both the host and refugee communities, as well as the agencies operating in the area. In my role as a humanitarian worker, I was focused on achieving project objectives as defined by donors, but as a researcher, my aim was to understand and interpret the

experiences of refugees and hosts (including experiences with the humanitarian projects) from their own perspectives. This required ongoing reflection on my preconceptions shaped by my previous work in the region.

At a personal and professional level, I had been involved in advocacy, policy research, and integration projects related to refugee issues such as labour market integration, rights, and livelihoods development. Through this experience, I have become aware of the many challenges refugees face along their journeys, in camps, and even after resettlement in third countries. I have advocated for fair, just, and inclusive policies that uphold refugee rights and freedoms, while also supporting opportunities for them to pursue their personal aspirations. This study is not an attempt to speak for refugees and the host communities but rather to give them a voice by presenting their challenges, experiences, and perspectives with the hope of informing policies and actions that foster positive change at both the local (Kakuma area) and national levels.

2.4 Research Questions

This study examines the experiences of refugees and host communities with the policy and practice of refugee integration in Kakuma by addressing the overarching question of: What are the integration outcomes of refugee policies on refugees and host communities in protracted refugee situations? The study addresses the following specific questions:

1. How is refugee integration understood by refugees and host communities in Kakuma?
2. What are the experiences of refugees and host communities with the encampment policy in Kakuma?
3. How are refugees and host communities involved in different activities that promote integration in Kakuma?
4. What is the nature of the relationships between refugees and host communities in Kakuma?

To address these questions, it is essential to explore the experiences, opinions, and perspectives of both refugees and host community members in relation to Kakuma's encampment policy. Equally important is critically examining which definitions of integration are being prioritised and which are excluded in the context of Kakuma. Additionally, understanding the underlying power dynamics is crucial for unpacking the relationships, inclusion practices, and lived experiences within the protracted refugee situation. This calls for a qualitative research approach, which is better suited than a quantitative one for capturing the nuanced and contextualised realities of those involved.

2.5 Sample and Sampling Techniques

The research sample comprised a diverse group of participants, including refugees, members of the host community, officials from the Government of Kenya, representatives from the County Government of Turkana, and staff from humanitarian agencies operating in Kakuma Refugee Camp and Kalobeyi Settlement. Participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling techniques. These methods were selected because the specific insights sought by the research were accessible only to individuals directly connected to or affected by the encampment policy, such as refugees, host community members, humanitarian workers, and government officials (Morgan, 1996; O.Nyumba *et al.*, 2018). Snowball sampling was particularly advantageous for reaching marginalised voices and hard-to-access groups within the camp, as noted by (Woodley and Lockard, 2016). According to Parker, Scott and Geddes (2019), snowball sampling starts with a small number of initial participants, who are then asked to recommend other possible contacts who fit the research criteria and might be willing to participate in a study, who then recommend other participants, and so on. However, this method has faced criticism for potential selection bias, particularly due to the skewed selection of subsequent participants by initial contacts (Johnson, 2014; Emerson, 2015). To address this selection bias in my research, I informed initial contacts about the desired profiles of subsequent participants. For instance, I asked participants to recommend individuals of the opposite gender and different nationalities if

they could. A male South Sudanese refugee was, therefore, encouraged to refer a female refugee from a different country of origin.

In this regard, my prior experience working and living in the research area allowed me to leverage an existing network of contacts among refugees, host communities, humanitarian officials, and government representatives to get initial participants for this study. This network facilitated the recruitment process and mitigated the selection bias often associated with snowball sampling (Parker, Scott and Geddes, 2019). My established connections also proved invaluable in addressing potential gatekeeping challenges and fostering trust with participants. Building on these relationships ensured that participants felt comfortable and willing to share their experiences and perspectives, enriching the depth and authenticity of the data collected. In one instance, a senior humanitarian officer mentioned that they frequently receive interview requests from researchers via email, which they often ignore due to their busy schedules. However, when introduced to a researcher by a colleague or counterpart in Kakuma, they are more likely to agree to the interview with minimal bureaucratic hurdles, often informing their supervisors in Nairobi about the request for permission. Eide and Allen (2005) described this as a positive recommendation process, which enhances the researcher's legitimacy and competency in the eyes of new participants.

Due to limited funding and time for data collection in Kakuma, the sampling techniques allowed the researcher to identify and select only participants who had lived in the camp for at least two years and were between 18 and 35 years old (Mason, 2002; Robinson, 2014; Palinkas *et al.*, 2015; Andrade, 2021). The snowball sampling technique also ensured the inclusion of participants with diverse and significant ideas and opinions relevant to the research objectives, thereby enhancing the study's rigour, data credibility, and trustworthiness (Campbell *et al.*, 2020). At the time of the fieldwork for this study, Kakuma refugee camp hosted approximately 291,000 refugees and asylum-seekers by August 2024 (UNHCR Kenya, 2024b).

The sample size consisted of 30 participants, including refugees, host community members, government officials, and humanitarian officers. This number was informed by the time allocated to each participant (30 to 45 minutes) to gather as much information as possible. Since the research aimed to provide a deep, nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of refugees in Kakuma camp and the perspectives and experiences of host community members on encampment policy and refugee integration issues, ample time with each of the 30 participants was essential. This approach ensured that sufficient, reliable information was collected, and the principle of saturation—where adding more participants no longer yields new insights—was achieved (Shetty, 2018).

2.5.1 Participant Group 1: Refugees living in Kakuma refugee camp

According to the UNHCR Kenya statistics, as of March 2025, the overall population of refugees in Kakuma is predominantly South Sudanese (114,885), followed by Somalis (35,847), refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (14,477), and Burundians (12,228) (UNHCR Kenya, 2024).

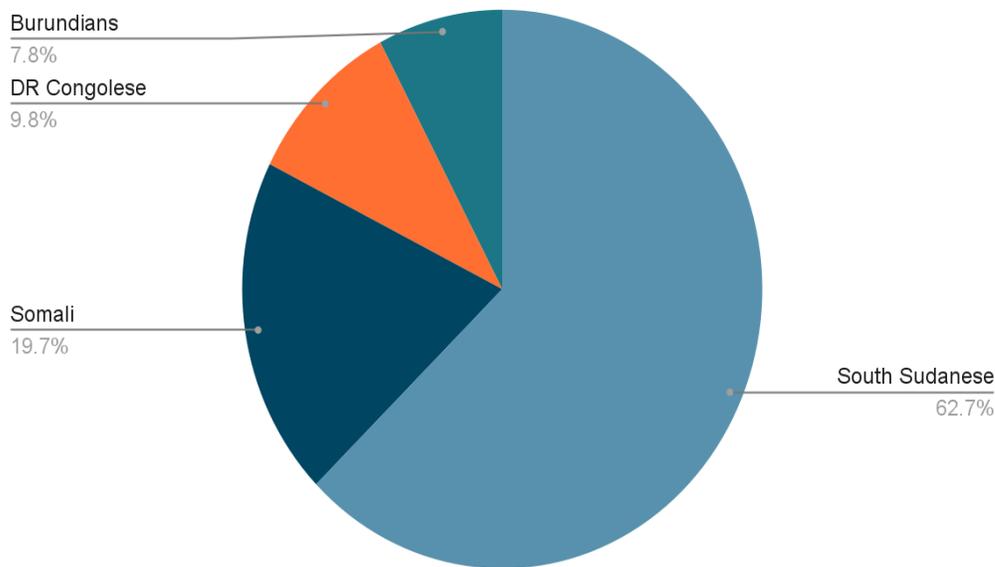


Figure 3: Refugee Population in Kakuma as of May 2023.

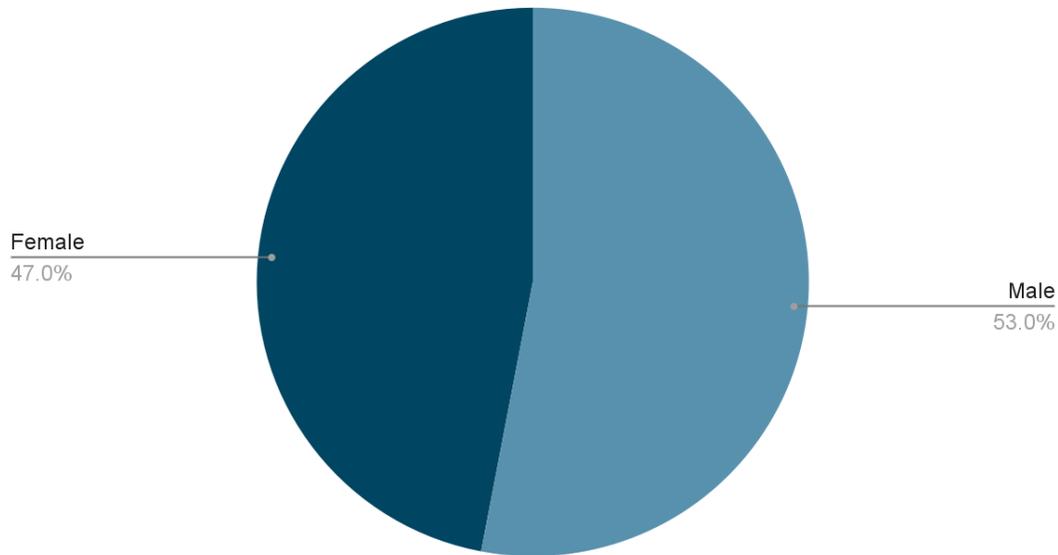


Figure 4: Kakuma refugee population by gender as of May 2023

I interviewed ten (10) refugee participants to gather insights about their experiences with the encampment policy and practices in Kakuma. The participants' nationalities included one Ugandan, five South Sudanese, one Burundian, one Somali, and two from the Democratic Republic of Congo. The South Sudanese participants were the largest group, reflecting their status as the majority nationality in the camp and settlement. The gender composition of the participants was six males and four females, with ages ranging from 20 to 45. Notably, one participant was born and raised in the camp. Some of the host participants who took part in the interviews were later divided into two groups for the two focus group discussions (FGDs). The first and second refugee focus groups each consisted of one female and four males. The refugee participants were then divided into two groups of five people for the two focus groups with refugees.

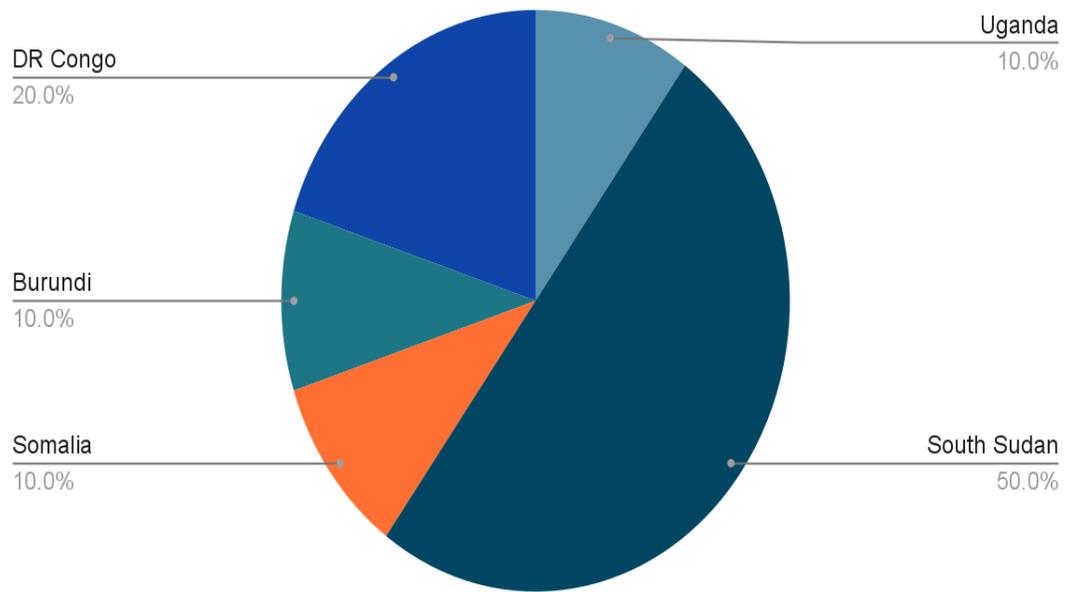


Figure 5: Refugee research participants by countries of origin.

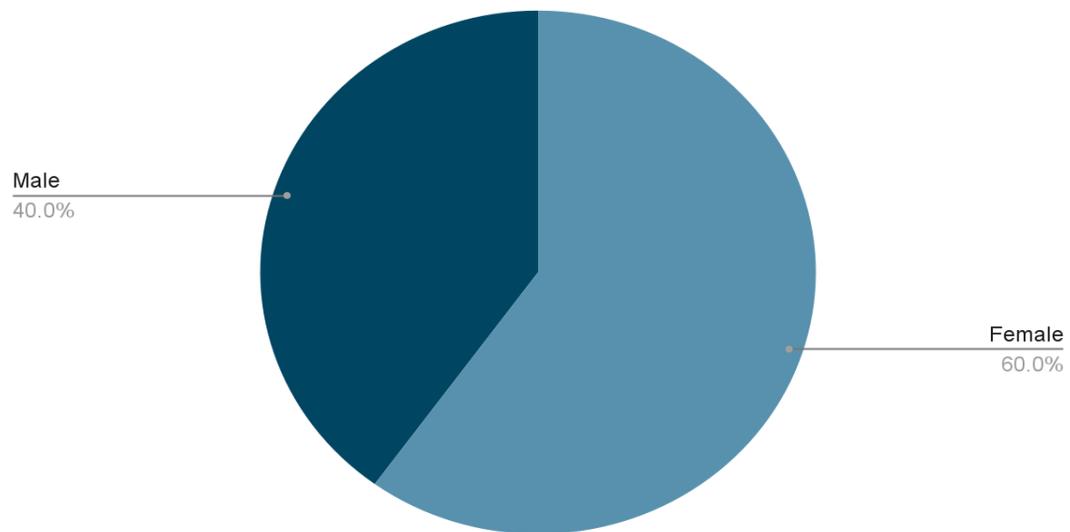


Figure 6: Refugee participants by gender.

2.5.2 Participant Group 2: Representatives from the Host Community.

Another ten (10) participants were selected from the host communities in the Kakuma and Kalobeyei areas. Of these, six were female and four were male, all residing near the camp and settlement. Their ages ranged from 25 to 50, primarily from the local Turkana host community. The participants came from diverse socio-economic backgrounds: some were employed by NGOs operating in the camp and settlement, while others were entrepreneurs running businesses in the area. A key criterion for selection was that participants needed to be engaged in activities that brought them into regular contact with refugees or lived adjacent to the camp, sharing common social services with them. Some of the host participants who took part in the interviews and were later divided into two groups for the two focus group discussions (FGDs). The first host focus group consisted of two males and three females, while the second group included one male and four females

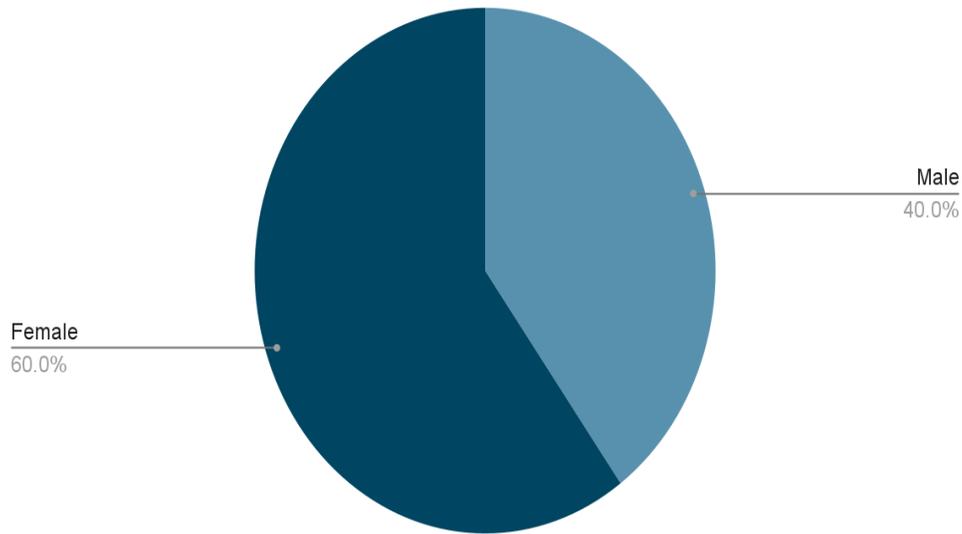


Figure 7: Research Participants from the Host Community.

2.5.3 Participant Group 3: Government officials.

Four (4) government representatives from both national and county (local) government levels were selected to participate in the research. This group included one representative

from the Department of Refugee Services (DRS), which is the official government agency responsible for managing refugee affairs in Kenya, and its representative provided information about the encampment policy and integration strategies from the government's perspective. One representative from the Turkana County Government (TCG) talked about issues relating to refugees at the sub-national level, highlighting how their roles are directly linked to and influenced by the presence of refugees. Additionally, the Assistant County Commissioner (ACC) for Kakuma and the ward administrator for Kalobeyei, both local administrative representatives of the national government, contributed further perspectives on the phenomenon under study

2.5.4 Participant Group 4: Representatives from humanitarian agencies.

The fourth group of participants consisted of six officials from humanitarian organisations. The non-governmental organisations represented were the Danish Refugee Council (DRC as the lead organisation implementing peace and social cohesion projects in the research area and Peace Winds Japan (PWJ), which leads water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and shelter programmes in Kakuma and Kalobeyei. Furthermore, the study included participants from the Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK), a national organisation focused on refugee advocacy and policy affairs, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which oversees overall protection, support, and assistance for refugees in the Kakuma and Kalobeyei areas and Lotus Kenya Action for Development Organisation (LOKADO).

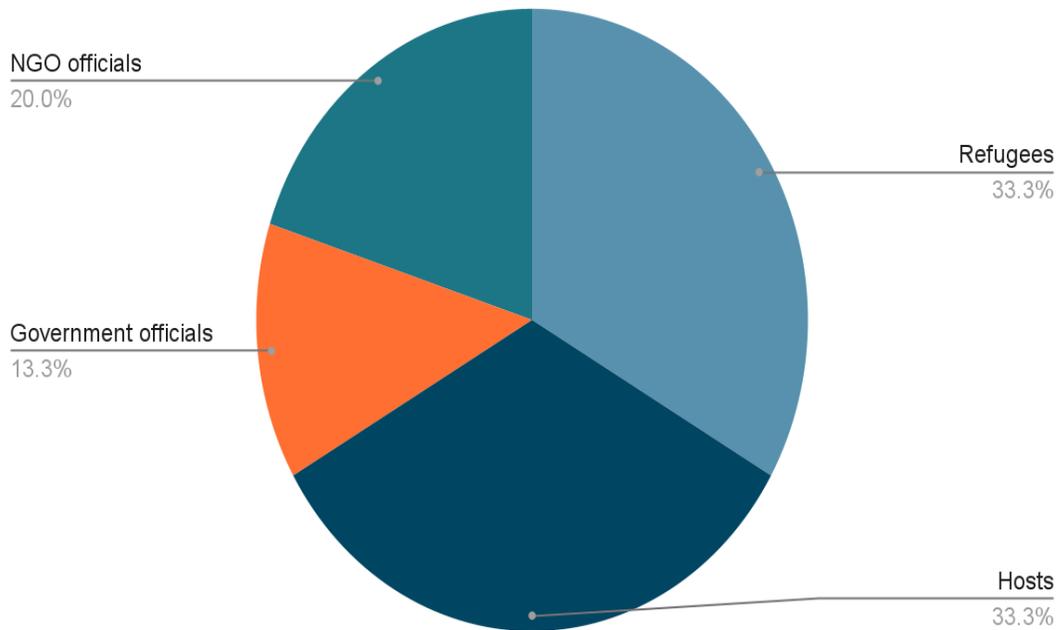


Figure 8: Research participants for this study

2.6 Summary

In summary, this research involved a diverse group of participants, including refugees, host community members, government officials, and humanitarian agency staff from Kakuma Refugee Camp and Kalobeyei Settlement. Participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling methods, which were chosen to access individuals directly affected by or involved with the encampment policy. Snowball sampling was particularly useful for reaching marginalised and hard-to-access groups. Leveraging my prior work experience and established networks in the research area, I was able to efficiently recruit participants and build trust, overcoming common research barriers like gatekeeping and participant reluctance. The final sample consisted of 30 participants, each interviewed for 30 to 45 minutes, allowing for in-depth exploration of their experiences and perspectives.

2.7 Methodology in Data Analysis

This study employed Thematic Analysis (TA) to analyse the qualitative data collected through interviews and participant observation. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a method for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning within a dataset. They emphasise that researchers must clearly state their methodology and the philosophical orientation guiding the data analysis process. According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 81), it is crucial for researchers to articulate the theoretical position of their thematic analysis, as it shapes assumptions about the data and what they represent regarding "the world", "reality", and other concepts. A well-executed thematic analysis makes these assumptions explicit. The philosophical approach underpinning this study is interpretivism, which posits that reality is subjective and that meanings and experiences are shaped by social context (Ryan, 2018; Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020; Nickerson, 2024). Additionally, I used an inductive approach to the data analysis, allowing themes and patterns to emerge from the data rather than being predetermined or predefined.

2.7.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is one of the most widely used methods for analysing primary qualitative data (Thomas and Harden, 2008; Braun and Clarke, 2012). Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 79) define it as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail.” Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) emphasize that the focus of thematic analysis is to identify and describe both implicit and explicit ideas within the themes. This method aims to uncover common patterns in the textual data by breaking the data into units and coding them into categories (DeSantis and Ugarriza, 2000; Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013). These categories are classified into two types: those that emerge from the participants' experiences and words, and those identified by the researcher as central to the research focus (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Thematic analysis is descriptive and is guided by theoretical assumptions and research questions (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018).

Nowell *et al.* (2017) highlight the flexibility of thematic analysis as one of its main advantages. They argue that this method can be adapted to various studies, allowing for a rich and complex account of the data. Additionally, thematic analysis is accessible and easy to learn, making it suitable for researchers from diverse methodologies (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013). Its strength lies in its ability to analyse different participants' perspectives, revealing both similarities and differences and generating valuable insights (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Thematic analysis is also systematic in how data is transcribed and analysed. Braun and Clarke (2006) outline six critical stages of thematic analysis: transcription, code identification, developing codes into broader themes, and producing a detailed report describing these themes.

However, due to the multiple interpretations of the themes, Guest, MacQueen and Namey (2012) questioned the reliability of the thematic analysis. Others argue that the coding process may encourage the researcher to decontextualise interview discourses in order to fit specific categories (Joffe and Yardley, 2003; St. Pierre and Jackson, 2014). While describing the process of coding as nonsensical, St. Pierre and Jackson (2014, p. 716) posit:

To code data, then, one must assume that words textualised in interview transcripts and field notes are not only data but also brute data that can be broken apart and decontextualised by coding—even using existing coding schemes from others' research projects. Once coded, words can be sorted into categories and then organised into “themes” that somehow naturally and miraculously “emerge” as if anyone could see them.

To address criticisms of thematic analysis, particularly regarding the decontextualisation of participants' views, the researcher must ensure that participants' perspectives are accurately categorised. In this regard, the researcher should clearly communicate the epistemological stance that informs the empirical claims (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, credibility can be enhanced by sharing the findings and interpretations with participants for validation (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Other strategies include maintaining a personal research diary to capture additional details, which can then be coded alongside interview data (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 86) emphasise

the importance of "constantly moving back and forth between the entire data set, the coded extracts, and the analysis" to ensure credibility.

2.7. 2 Stages of data analysis

In this study, I relied on reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) to ensure that the themes that were generated through the coding process, as will be explained below, represented the participants' perspectives. In a reflexive approach, themes are produced by grouping together codes that share commonalities or have a central organising concept that the researcher interprets from the data (Byrne, 2022). As outlined by Braun and Clarke (2019), reflexive thematic analysis requires researchers to reflect on three critical aspects of the analytical process: the dataset, the theoretical assumptions underpinning the analysis, and their own analytical skills. In alignment with these principles, I integrated my field notes with interview transcripts during the coding process to capture participants' perspectives more comprehensively and ensure that their experiences were accurately represented. To further enhance the credibility of the themes and the analytical process, I carefully reviewed the codes and revisited key phases of analysis, specifically phases two through four. This iterative review allowed me to refine the generated themes and verify their alignment with the data. By engaging in this reflective and rigorous approach, I aimed to produce findings that were both methodologically sound and deeply rooted in the lived experiences of the participants.

After data is collected and organised, it undergoes disassembly through the coding process. (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018) describe coding as the process of transforming raw data into usable data by identifying themes or ideas that are connected. According to (Austin and Sutton, 2014), during coding, specific words or phrases used by participants are grouped together to allow the researcher to derive more meaningful insights. The researcher then assigns labels or names to these words, phrases, or sentences that reflect the participants' views. This process is systematic and occurs in distinct stages (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Castleberry and Nolen, 2018).

Other scholars have also outlined different stages of data analysis. For example, Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggested vital stages in data analysis, including identifying themes or sub-themes, narrowing down themes to those that are manageable and relevant, building theme hierarchies, and linking themes to a theoretical model. Ibrahim (2012), on the other hand, provides three stages of thematic analysis, which include: data reduction, data display and data drawing and conclusion. According to him, data reduction involves selecting, simplifying and transforming the data through coding (ibid). Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise that data analysis begins when the researcher starts noticing patterns or issues of interest through field observations or interviews, often during data collection and continues until the patterns or themes are reported. Similarly, Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) list stages in data analysis, which include organising the data, describing and presenting it, analysing and interpreting it, drawing conclusions, reporting findings, and ensuring accuracy, coherence, and validity. They also note that the data analysis process is not linear; instead, it involves moving back and forth between different phases (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). For this research, I adopted the six-stage thematic analysis process highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2006), as shown below in Table 4.

Table 4: Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Description of the process
Phase 1: Familiarising yourself with your data:	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas.
Phase 2: Generating initial codes:	Using Nvivo to code interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion using Nvivo, across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
Phase 3: Searching for themes:	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
Phase 4: Reviewing themes:	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis
Phase 5: Defining and naming themes:	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
Phase 6: Producing the report:	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

(Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87)

2.7.3 Phases of thematic analysis as applied in this research.

In addition to the six stages of the thematic analysis process, Braun and Clarke (2006) offer a fifteen-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis. This research incorporates these criteria as part of the data analysis process to ensure that the rigour and reliability of the process are achieved. It uses both the fifteen-point checklist (as shown in Table 5) and the six-stage process to analyse data from the 34 interviews.

Table 5: A 15-point checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis

Process	Number	Criteria
Transcription	1.	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'.
Coding	2.	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3.	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
	4.	All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.
	5.	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
	6.	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.
Analysis	7.	Data have been analysed/interpreted, made sense of / rather than just paraphrased or described
	8.	Analysis and data match each other / the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
	9.	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story about the data and topic.
	10.	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.
Overall	11.	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.
Written report	12.	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
	13.	There is a good fit between what you claim you do and what you show you have done- i.e., the described method and reported analysis are consistent.

	14.	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
	15.	The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just emerge.

(Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Phase One: Familiarising myself with the data through transcription

In this phase, my first task was to actively listen to the 30 interviews I conducted with participants in Kakuma. This involved paying close attention to interesting patterns and meanings and making notes about them for reference in the subsequent phases. Following this, I transcribed the interviews into English, as some participants had spoken in Kiswahili. Austin and Sutton (2014) recommend that researchers handle transcription themselves, despite it being time-consuming, as it helps them engage more deeply with the data and simplifies subsequent analysis (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). According to Austin and Sutton, transcribing the data allows the researcher to get “a sense of the entirety of the data and allows a greater understanding of phrasing or the meaning of a term when viewed within the context of the whole” (Austin and Sutton, 2014, p. 808). Doing the transcription personally also allowed me to protect participants' identities by anonymising them.

During transcription, I took specific measures to ensure clarity and focus. I omitted pauses made by participants while responding and excluded fillers that lacked meaningful content. Repeated words were also omitted unless they conveyed significant meaning. In instances where the audio was unclear, I marked the words as "(unclear words)" in brackets. Since some interviews took place in open areas, such as under trees or in front of shops or houses, background noises like strong winds affected the audio quality, making it difficult to hear certain words. In these cases, I referred to my field notes to piece together what might have been missed in the recordings. After completing the transcription of the participants' responses, I reread it and checked it against the recorded audio for accuracy (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Phase Two: Generating Initial Codes with Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS).

The second phase, following familiarisation with the data, involves generating initial codes. This stage centres on creating basic codes from the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Boyatzis (1998, p. 63) defines a code as “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon.” Codes highlight a feature of the data that is notable to the researcher and may vary in length but still convey a complete idea (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). Coding may be data-derived or researcher-derived (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data-derived codes, often semantic, are based on explicit meanings within the data, whereas researcher-derived codes identify implicit meanings that extend beyond the text, guided by specific research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Bernard, Wutich and Ryan (2016) offer guiding questions for researchers during the coding process, as illustrated in Figure 9.

What is happening in the text?

Who are the actors and what are their roles?

When is it happening? (preceding event, during event, reaction to event, etc.)

Where is it happening?

What are the explicit and implicit reasons why it is happening?

How is it happening? (process or strategy)

Figure 9: Questions that can assist in producing codes from the data (Bernard, Wutich and Ryan, 2016)

In this stage, I chose to code in two steps. The first involved producing initial codes from the field notes and observations I wrote down during data collection. The codes generated from the notes and participant observations using NVivo were then combined with codes that I had generated through listening to the audio interviews and during the transcription of the audio interviews. This preliminary coding process was done so that I could have a broad idea of some of the key themes that I may generate once I begin the full coding with the software, as I will explain later in this section.

The second step in this phase was carried out using Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). These are helpful programs used as tools to provide technological support “to the qualitative research that streamlines the data analysis process and allows for more complex, deeper analysis of the data.” (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018, p. 809). These tools do not conduct the analysis of the data but leave the power and control of the analysis process to the researcher (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018).

I chose NVivo because it is user-friendly and can effectively assist in sorting, organising, classifying, and analysing qualitative data (Castleberry, 2014). To learn how to use NVivo, I attended two online training sessions in February 2022 and February 2023 organised by the DCU Graduate Studies Office. Moreover, I consulted the training service provider and reviewed journal publications on the software at different points when I began coding and analysing the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Castleberry and Nolen, 2018).

In this phase, I expanded the coding process by reviewing the 34 transcripts and a document containing typed field notes and observations, categorising the data into broader codes called "nodes" in NVivo. For instance, in the initial coding phase, I created categories based on general sentiments, such as positive or negative perceptions among participants. In this second phase, I refined these sentiments into specific categories like culture, language, and resource access.

By the end of this process, I had created 121 nodes through open coding—that is, the codes were not established before but created as coding progressed (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018). A sample of the codes generated at this stage is illustrated in the figure below.

The screenshot shows the NVivo software interface for a project named 'PHD Project.nvp'. The left sidebar contains navigation options under 'Quick Access', 'IMPORT', 'Data', 'ORGANIZE', 'Coding', 'Cases', and 'Notes'. The 'Coding' section is expanded to show 'Phase 2- Generating Initial Codes' as the active phase. The main window displays a table of codes generated in this phase, with columns for Name, Description, Files, and References. The table lists 20 codes, with the last one, 'ZZ Sentiment', highlighted in blue. At the bottom of the main window, a search bar shows 'GO 121 Items'.

Name	Description	Files	References
Access to resources	References to access of resources such as jobs, opportunities, food, and services	25	152
Community based structur	These are structures put in place to ensure good relates in the camp	9	32
Conflict sources	Refers to comments related to conflict between hosts and refugees	23	119
Culture	References to cultural issues in the camp	12	35
Equitable distribution of re	Refers to comments relating to access and distribution of resources among hosts and refu	21	59
Government role	References to the role of government in integration	14	36
Hosts Perception of Trust	References by host regarding trust for other	9	70
Hosts welcome Refugees	References about hosts welcoming to refugees	9	15
Integation projects	Projects implemented by different actors meant to promote integration.	3	20
Integration challenges	Refers to opinions of people on the issues that affect integration efforts in Kakuma	20	153
Integration opposition	This refers to opinions by refugees and hosts against greater integration.	1	1
Interactions	References to interactions between hosts and refugees	28	225
Kalobeyei Settlement	Refers to positive descriptions of Kalobeyei Settlement	23	89
Language	Positive references to the role of language in integration	20	47
Participation	Refers to how refugees and hosts participate in activities and projects in the camp	28	88
Perceptions of trust	References to whether there is trust between refugees and hosts	10	90
Personal safety and securit	References to feeling safe and secure	26	86
Policy related experiences	References to policy issues	17	48
Refugee Policy Issues	References to the law such as Refugees Act, and the Constitution	8	70
Refugees Feel welcomed	Refers to refugees feelings of being welcome and accepted in Kakuma and Turkana	5	5
Refugees perceptions of h	References made by refugees about their hosts	7	11
The main camps	References to Kakuma main camps	16	49
What is Integration	This is how different groups (refugees, hosts, and government and NGO officials conceptu	23	150
ZZ Sentiment		0	0

Figure 10: A Screenshot of some of the Codes generated in phase 2 and how they were organised in this study using NVivo (R1)

Phase Three: Generating Initial Themes

In this phase, I focused on developing themes aligned with the critical research questions. This stage began once all data had been coded, with the goal of creating broad themes by grouping related codes into related categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Themes are described as meaningful, interconnected patterns that encompass multiple related codes and provide a more comprehensive picture of specific aspects of the data (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Braun and Clarke (2013) describe themes as patterned meanings within the dataset that highlight important aspects related to the research question. Through the coding process, some initial codes can be developed as main themes, others as sub-themes, while a few might ultimately get excluded (Braun and Clarke, 2012). To ensure the themes' relevance and quality, I used guiding questions suggested by Castleberry and Nolen (2018), which are outlined in figure 11 below, as a framework for developing the initial themes in this study.

- Is this a theme (it could be just a code)?
- If it is a theme, what is the quality of this theme (does it tell me something useful about the dataset and my research question)?
- What are the boundaries of this theme (what does it include and exclude)?
- Are there enough (meaningful) data to support this theme (is the theme thin or thick)?
- Are the data too diverse and wide-ranging (does the theme lack coherence)?

Figure 11: Questions to use to check the quality of themes developed (Castleberry and Nolen, 2018).

In this phase, I grouped the codes into broad themes and sub-themes, with each theme relating to the four key research questions I had formulated. Moreover, I utilised and referred to the memos I had created using NVivo to develop the main themes of this study. Some of the comments created in the memos were helpful in writing the findings and discussion section. By the end of this phase, I had narrowed down (something missing here) to four main themes and eighteen sub-themes. The four initial themes were integration, interactions, legal and policy issues, and participation, as shown in Figure 12 below.

The screenshot displays the NVIVO software interface. On the left is a dark blue sidebar with navigation options: Quick Access, IMPORT (Data, Files, File Classifications, Externals), ORGANIZE (Coding, Codes, Phase 1- Data Familiarization, Phase 2- Generating Initial Codes, Phase 3- Generating Initial Themes, Phase 4- Developing and Reviewing Themes, Phase 5- Refining, Defining and Naming The..., Phase 6- Writing the Report, Relationships, Relationship Types), Cases (Cases, Case Classifications, Demographics, Field Notes on observations), and Notes (Memos, Framework Matrices, Annotations, See-Also Links). The main window has a menu bar (File, Home, Import, Create, Explore, Share, Modules) and a toolbar with icons for Clipboard, Item, Organize, Query, Visualize, Code, Autocode, Range Code, Uncode, Case Classification, File Classification, and Workspace. Below the toolbar, the title bar reads 'Phase 3- Generating Initial Themes' with a search box 'Search Project'. The main area contains a table of themes:

Name	Description	Files	References
Integration	All codes that fall under this theme relates to integration	31	426
Culture	References to cultural issues in the camp	12	35
Hosts welcome Refug	References about hosts welcoming to refugees	9	15
Integation projects	Projects implemented by different actors meant to promote integration.	3	20
Integration challenge	Refers to opinions of people on the issues that affect integration efforts in Kakuma	20	153
Integration oppositio	This refers to opinions by refugees and hosts against greater integration.	1	1
Language	Positive references to the role of language in integration	20	47
Refugees Feel welco	Refers to refugees feelings of being welcome and accepted in Kakuma and Turkana	5	5
What is Integration	This is how different groups (refugees, hosts, and government and NGO officials conceptualise in	23	150
Interactions	Codes relating to the theme of interaction in Kakuma and Kalobeyei	31	601
Conflict sources	Refers to comments related to conflict between hosts and refugees	23	119
Hosts Perception of T	References by host regarding trust for other	9	70
Interactions	References to interactions between hosts and refugees	28	225
Perceptions of trust	References to whether there is trust between refugees and hosts	10	90
Personal safety and s	References to feeling safe and secure	26	86
Refugees perceptions	References made by refugees about their hosts	7	11
Legal and Policy Issues	Codes relating to legal and policy issues.	31	292
Government role	References to the role of government in integration	14	36
Kalobeyei Settlement	Refers to positive descriptions of Kalobeyei Settlement	23	89
Policy related experie	References to policy issues	17	48
Refugee Policy Issues	References to the law such as Refugees Act, and the Constitution	8	70
The main camps	References to Kakuma main camps	16	49
Participation	Codes relating to participation in various activities, approaches and projects in Kakuma	31	331
Access to resources	References to access of resources such as jobs, opportunities, food, and services.	25	152

At the bottom of the main window, a search bar shows 'GO' and '122 Items'.

Figure 12: A screenshot of some of the initial themes generated in phase 3.

Phase Four: Developing and Reviewing Themes

In this phase, I reviewed some of the themes I had developed and checked the transcripts and the coded data extracts for coherence with the themes identified (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Moreover, I examined the themes developed in terms of their validity in relation to the research questions. I also had to reorganise some of the sub-themes to ensure that there was enough data to support them and to achieve internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity—that is, ensuring that data within themes are coherent together meaningfully and that there was a clear and identifiable difference between the themes (ibid). For example, in Phase Three, I had five sub-themes, such as the government role and the main camps. These sub-themes were reorganised in Phase Four as the role of government and impacts and policy impacts in the main camps, respectively. As Braun and Clarke recommended, I also generated a “thematic map” (shown in the figure 13 below) of the analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 87), which summarises all the themes and sub-themes.

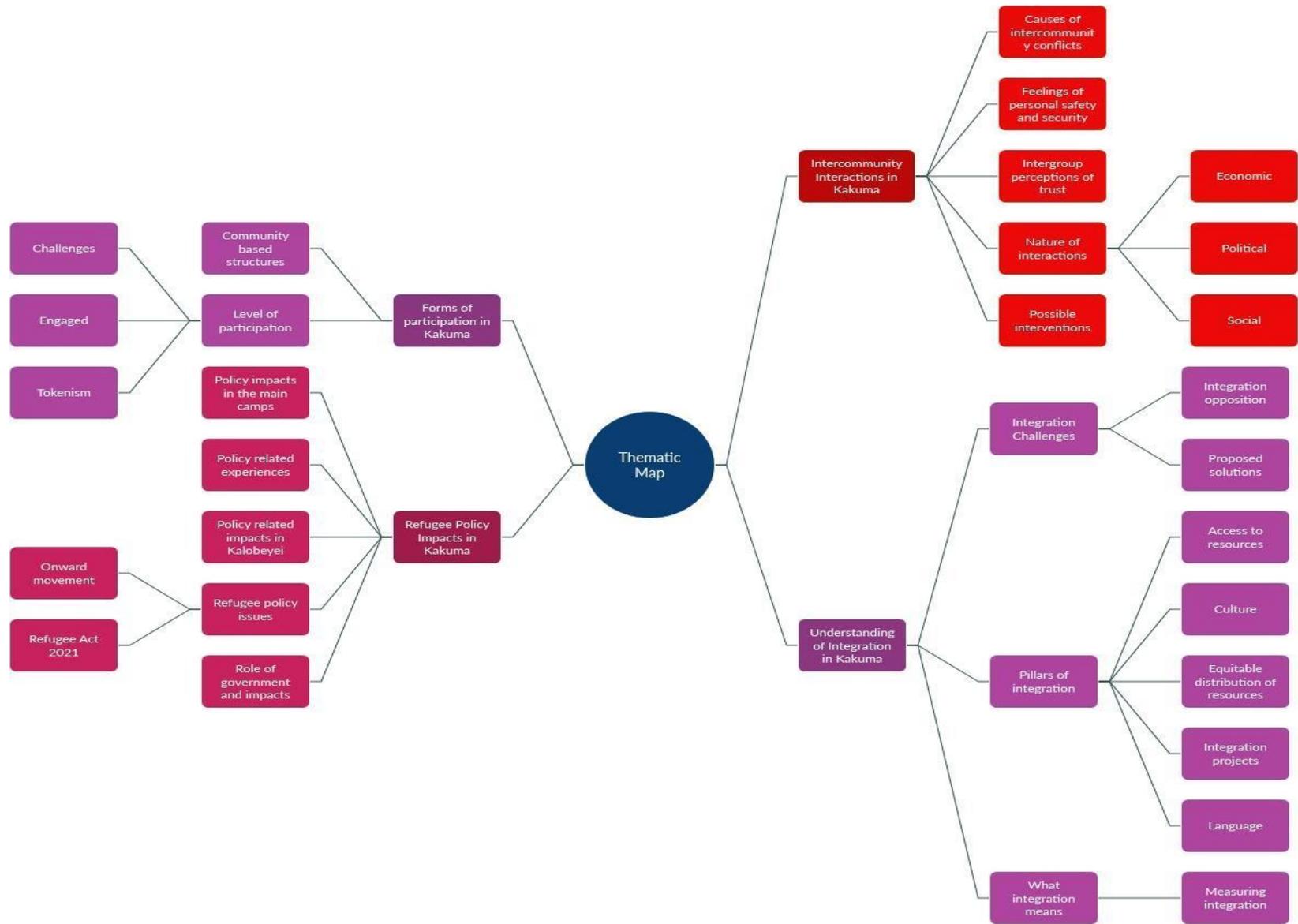


Figure 13: A Mind Map of the Themes that I identified in the Study.

Phase Five: Refining, Defining and Naming Themes

Three main themes were identified through data analysis in relation to the refugee integration policy outcomes in Kakuma refugee camps. These are: Understandings of integration in Kakuma, Experiences of encampment in Kakuma, and Intercommunity relationships in Kakuma. The theme of participation in the community process identified in phase four was merged into experiences of encampment in Kakuma, since it did not have sufficient data to be on its own. The final themes are shown in Figure 14.

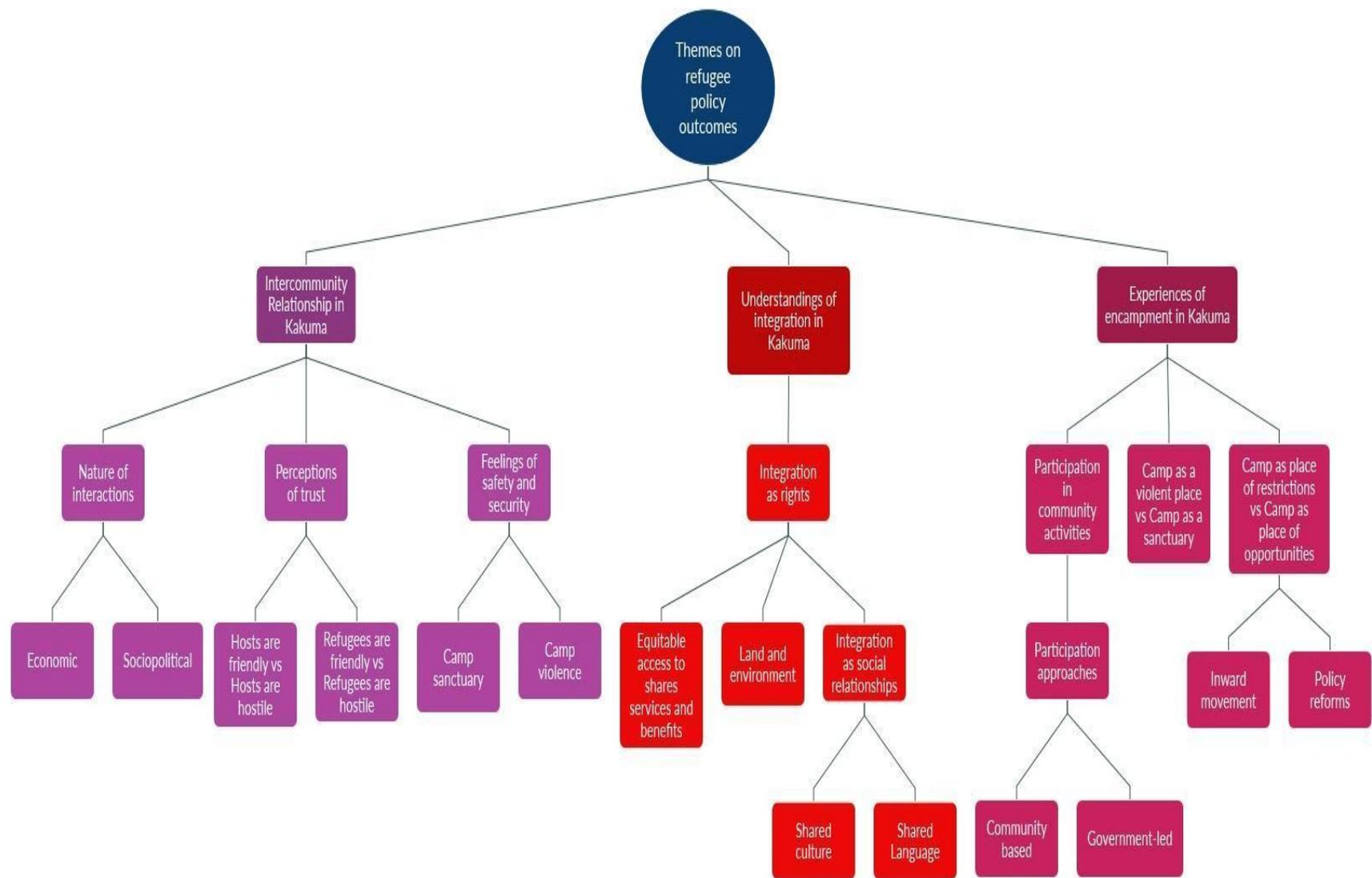


Figure 14: Mind Map of the Final Themes that I identified in the Study.

Phase Six: Writing the Report

For this report, I have adopted an analytical approach to discussing the findings, as Braun and Clarke (2013) recommended. This approach involves a thorough and integrated analysis of the results, where the findings are discussed alongside relevant literature within a single, cohesive narrative. Consequently, the analysis will include a detailed examination of the findings, a discussion of their implications, and connections to existing literature throughout. This method contrasts with separating the findings and discussion into distinct sections, allowing for a more interconnected exploration of the study's results.

2.8 Section Summary

This chapter discussed how the data for this study was collected and analysed. First, it discusses the rationale for adopting a qualitative approach and the methods that were used to collect data, such as interviews, participant observation, focus groups and field notes. It then presents how the data was analysed using the Thematic Analysis (TA) framework, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), which took place in six phases, namely: familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, generating initial themes, developing and reviewing the themes, refining, defining and naming the themes, and writing the report. Three main themes were identified in relation to the refugee integration policy outcomes: understandings of integration, experiences of encampment, and inter-community relationships in Kakuma.

3. Part 2: Kakuma fieldwork

Navigating the complex approval process at Dublin City University (DCU) and in Kenya brought to light the entanglement of academic research with systems of governance and surveillance of “problematic groups” such as refugees (Goodman, Sirriyeh and McMahon, 2017, p. 108; Staples, 2019). As I moved through layers of bureaucracy, from national agencies such as the National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI) and the Department of Refugee Services (DRS) to local offices like the Kakuma Ward Administrator’s office, I found myself repeatedly reflecting on my positionality. Being Kenyan afforded me certain privileges—linguistic familiarity with those who spoke Kiswahili and my native *Dholuo* language, cultural understanding, and access to local networks—that made it easier for me to carry out research in ways not accessible to all researchers. Yet, even with these advantages, the process was emotionally demanding. Waiting for hours in government offices, negotiating unclear requirements such as conditions set out by the DRS to be objective, balanced and in compliance with Kenyan laws as part of the clearance to do research in Turkana, and encountering inconsistent information felt both frustrating and challenging. Each step served as a reminder of the systemic barriers that shape who can conduct research in spaces like Kakuma and what aspects of refugee lives and experiences are ultimately documented.

The ethical dimensions of this process were equally significant. Seeking permission to access refugee camps raised questions about complicity in systems that perpetuate control over marginalised groups (Jaji, 2012). While the permits were necessary to ensure compliance and safety of the researcher and the refugees, they also underscored the broader power dynamics at play—where refugees are treated as security risks and researchers must align with state protocols to gain entry. As Betts (2022) argued, despite recent policy reforms, Kenya’s stance towards refugees is still fundamentally shaped by the security perceptions, hence the heavy presence of police inside and outside the camps. This negotiation of access often felt like walking a tightrope between fulfilling institutional requirements and staying true to the ethical responsibility of amplifying marginalised voices and experiences. For

example, I found myself questioning how the security-centric administration of the camp and access restrictions might influence the narratives I could explore or the willingness of participants to share sensitive experiences.

In this section, I delve into the ethical and emotional terrain of conducting research in Kakuma. By integrating reflexive insights, I hope to unsettle the notion of refugee integration as a straightforward process and illuminate the intricate interplay of power, access, and positionality that shapes knowledge production in contexts characterised by marginalisation, oppression and restrictions (Jaji, 2012; Brankamp, 2019; Agwanda, 2022b).

3.1 Access to the required research approvals/permits.

Conducting research in Kenya, especially targeting vulnerable groups like refugees located in camps, requires the researcher to get permission from government agencies and local governing authorities. This is partly because refugee camps are state-controlled areas with certain restrictions on the inward and outward movement of persons and because refugees are scapegoated as posing security risks to the government and the local populations. Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps are particularly perceived as “gateways for global counter-terror initiatives” and are constantly seen as posing a threat to the security and sovereignty of the nation (Agwanda, 2022; Brankamp and Glück, 2022, p. 1). Moreover, Crisp (2000) and Brankamp (2016) suggest that there exist numerous forms of violence within the camp perpetrated by refugees against fellow refugees, such as sexual violence, assault, theft, armed robberies, and organised crime, warranting the presence of security agencies like the Kenyan police and other formations such as the community policing and protection teams (CCPT). In this regard, obtaining permission to access controlled areas like refugee camps and to conduct interviews with refugees is a process controlled by the government and presented as a security measure.

This process of gaining access to do research in Kakuma involved, first, obtaining clearance from the DCU Research Ethics Committee (REC) and an introductory letter from my department. For the REC clearance, I had to fill out an ethics form, which I then sent to the committee for a review. In the ethics form, I had to elaborately outline my research

objectives, participants involved, the ethical measures such as data protection, the consent, and the plain language statement. With these documents in hand, I could then apply for a permit from Kenya's National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI), which authorised me to conduct research in Kenya, specifically in Turkana County.

The main permit required to conduct research in Kenya, including the camps, is provided by the Kenyan National Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation (NACOSTI). After acquiring the NACOSTI permit, an application is then sent to the Commissioner for Refugee Affairs, who leads the Department of Refugee Services (DRS) in Nairobi, to secure an additional permit specific to refugee areas. Upon arrival in Kakuma, researchers must also obtain permission from the DRS Kakuma Refugee Camp Manager. Although the NACOSTI and DRS permits allowed me to begin field research within the camp and settlement, further approvals were required to interview local hosts and government officials. These included letters from the Turkana County Commissioner, the Deputy County Commissioner for Turkana West Sub-County, the County Director of Education, and the Assistant County Commissioner for the Kakuma-Kalobeyei area. This approval process illustrates the complexity of obtaining research permits in Kenya (Holt, 2021) .

Securing the necessary permissions to conduct research in Kakuma involved several challenges, including financial constraints, logistical hurdles, and government bureaucracy. To address these, I planned carefully and made repeated visits to government offices to follow up on pending approvals. For instance, at the County Commissioner's office, I waited approximately six hours for the permit to be printed and signed due to a power outage in the area. Additionally, obtaining approval from the Deputy County Commissioner required two visits, as he was unavailable on my first attempt. The process was further complicated by unclear information regarding the required permits, their purpose, and the steps involved in conducting research in Kakuma. For example, at the office of the Deputy County Commissioner in Turkana West Sub-County, I was instructed to first obtain approvals from the County Director of Education and the County Commissioner, despite already holding a NACOSTI permit authorising my research in Kakuma.

Additionally, some permits required fees. For instance, the NACOSTI permit costs 2,000 Kenyan shillings (approximately 15 US dollars). Beyond permit fees, there were additional expenses for food and transportation while travelling between various offices across the county. These challenges were furthermore exacerbated by the fact that some offices were located at considerable distances; for example, Lodwar, where the County Commissioner and Director of Education's offices are based, is about 123 kilometres from Kakuma. According to the UNHCR visitors' guide, this journey typically takes two to three hours.

To avoid delays in data collection due to bureaucratic processes for approval letters, I initially focused on collecting data at sites where I already had research approvals, such as within the camp and settlement, while I continued to follow up on pending permissions. These two sites only required NACOSTI and DRS approvals. Later, as planned, I secured the necessary permissions from county government offices to conduct research within the host community, aligning with my research schedule, which prioritised interviews with refugees before engaging host communities, government, and NGO officials.

Being Kenyan and having previous experience working in Turkana, my prior work in the area also helped me locate offices easily and reconnect with contacts in various administrative roles within the county and national governments. These contacts were instrumental in introducing me to additional officials whose approvals were required. For example, the Assistant County Commissioner for the Kalobeyei area, with whom I had previously interacted in my humanitarian work, helped me access the offices of the Deputy County Commissioner and the Sub-County Administrator for Kakuma.

3.2 Implications of bureaucratic structures on research in Kakuma

The bureaucratic structures involved in gaining research access to Kakuma have implications on the knowledge produced, as they exert control over who can engage with refugees and the host populations. In particular, these structures prioritise governmental oversight, security concerns, and formal protocols, which might create barriers for researchers through denial or restricted access to the research site and potentially silencing the voices of marginalised groups like refugees. As Ashby (2011) postulates, a person is defined by the

stories they tell about themselves as well as by the stories other people tell about them. In Kakuma, these bureaucratic structures manifest in the form of multiple institutional approvals—from national bodies like NACOSTI to local officials in Turkana County— which might privilege researchers who have the financial resources, time, and local connections to navigate these complex systems. Meanwhile, researchers without these resources, especially those from economically marginalised backgrounds or underfunded institutions, may find it challenging to do research, effectively excluding their perspectives and findings from academic and policy discourses. This issue can be seen in the composition of research studies done in Kakuma, which are mainly dominated by white Western scholars and institutions located in the global North that, among other reasons, are more likely to have much-needed capital and resources to support such academic endeavours.

As part of the security measures, I was required to inform the officer commanding Kakuma police station (OCS) of my travel plans within the refugee camps and whether I needed a security escort. Upon further inquiry, I was informed that it costs about 2,000 Kenyan shillings (approximately 15 US dollars) per hour to be given two police officers as security escorts²⁵. These measures can be viewed through a security lens, where refugees are perceived as potential threats to national security, with restrictions justified by fears of terrorism and reports of crime within camps (Brankamp, 2019; Brankamp, 2021). This governmental gaze often determines who is “permissible” to access refugee spaces, privileging researchers who align with state interests, possess the requisite credentials to pass through these layers of scrutiny, or have the resources to hire two police officers during their research activities inside the camp. At the same time, the voices of refugees themselves are indirectly silenced, as the security-centric approach influences the types of questions researchers can ask and the stories refugees may feel safe to share. In this regard, I had to share information about the type of questions I wanted to ask refugees with the OCS and even the DRS Kakuma camp manager.

²⁵ There is no option of having one police officer as an escort, as the rule is that there have to be two officers providing security escort services in the camp.

The bureaucratic processes also dictate which aspects of the refugee-host dynamic are prioritised for investigation. By requiring permissions from officials across different sectors, such as government, county and sub-county administration, the system reinforces a top-down perspective, emphasising formal structures and government narratives such as the government's role in managing the camps. In contrast, grassroots perspectives—such as the nuanced everyday interactions between refugees and host communities or critiques of camp governance—risk being overlooked or sanitised to align with the approval process. Consequently, researchers may feel pressured to adapt their focus to ensure compliance with official expectations, further shaping the knowledge that emerges. In addition, these processes reinforce power imbalances in knowledge production. The result is a curated and often incomplete picture of the realities in Kakuma, shaped by bureaucratic constraints and the privileging of certain perspectives over others. This incomplete perspective of the realities in Kakuma is evident in studies (Some of these studies include Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru (2016) and IFC, (2018)) which portray refugee presence as greatly benefiting to Kakuma without acknowledging the restrictions and human rights violations refugees endure under the encampment model. Indeed, the lack of meaningful integration outcomes and successful integration projects in Kakuma can be linked to this phenomenon of bureaucratic constraints and marginalisation of refugee voices.

Governmental controls also shape the identity and positionality of researchers deemed “permissible” in these spaces. For example, being Kenyan, a former humanitarian worker, and familiar with Turkana County gave me a significant advantage in navigating these systems of control and access. My ability to communicate in Kiswahili and leverage prior relationships with local officials facilitated the acquisition of permits and access. However, this privilege highlights an exclusionary dimension: researchers without similar linguistic or cultural capital, or those from less accessible international backgrounds and fewer social networks in Kakuma, may face greater resistance or fail to gain access entirely. As Krause (2017) observes, the complicated system of approvals and governmental oversight in conducting research in Kakuma profoundly impacts the narratives that are constructed and who constructs them.

3.3 The journey from Nairobi to Kakuma.

Kakuma Refugee Camp is located in Kenya's arid northwestern region, bordering Uganda to the west and South Sudan and Ethiopia to the north. By road, Kakuma is about 850 kilometres from Nairobi, or roughly a 2-hour 30-minute flight. While I had made a number of visits to Kakuma from Nairobi both by road and air before, for this research trip to Kakuma, I opted to travel by road for two main reasons: first, I wanted to understand how the journey from Nairobi to Kakuma links the camps within a broader socio-economic and infrastructural network and the role that infrastructure plays not only as a physical connector but also as a site of power and socio-economic tension. Secondly, by choosing to travel by road—a mode of transportation most commonly used by refugees and host community members—I aimed to gain insight into how infrastructure operates as both a facilitator and a barrier to mobility, equity, and access.

Due to the long distance between Nairobi and Kakuma, passengers often spend the night in Kitale town before embarking on the second phase to Lodwar and finally to Kakuma town. The socio-economic links between towns like Kitale, Lodwar, and Kakuma reveal a dynamic but fragile network of commerce, migration, and aid that both supports and constrains the region. Kitale, for example, is a pivotal commercial and logistical point. As a supplier of bulk goods—from fresh produce to household items—it is an important transit hub that supports the economic activities of both Kakuma's refugee and host populations. While this demonstrates the centrality of infrastructural networks in sustaining livelihoods in Kenya's northwestern region, it also reveals the disparities in access and the precarious nature of such dependencies. Indeed, refugees and traders from the host communities travelling between Kitale and Kakuma encounter logistical and bureaucratic challenges such as security roadblocks, hiked fares, and the possibility of violent attack along the highway.

Kitale also serves as an essential stopover for refugees and asylum seekers travelling on their own between Kakuma and other refugee camps in Kenya, especially Dadaab. In this regard,, refugees from nearby countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) often stop in Kitale on their way to Kakuma, as the camp is

perceived as offering better food, healthcare, and educational resources (Human Rights Watch, 2002b, 2002a; Wafula and Awori, 2023). Due to its proximity to the Kenya-Uganda border and Kakuma, Kitale has become a critical transit point for refugees travelling within Kenya and across borders (Jaola, 2023).

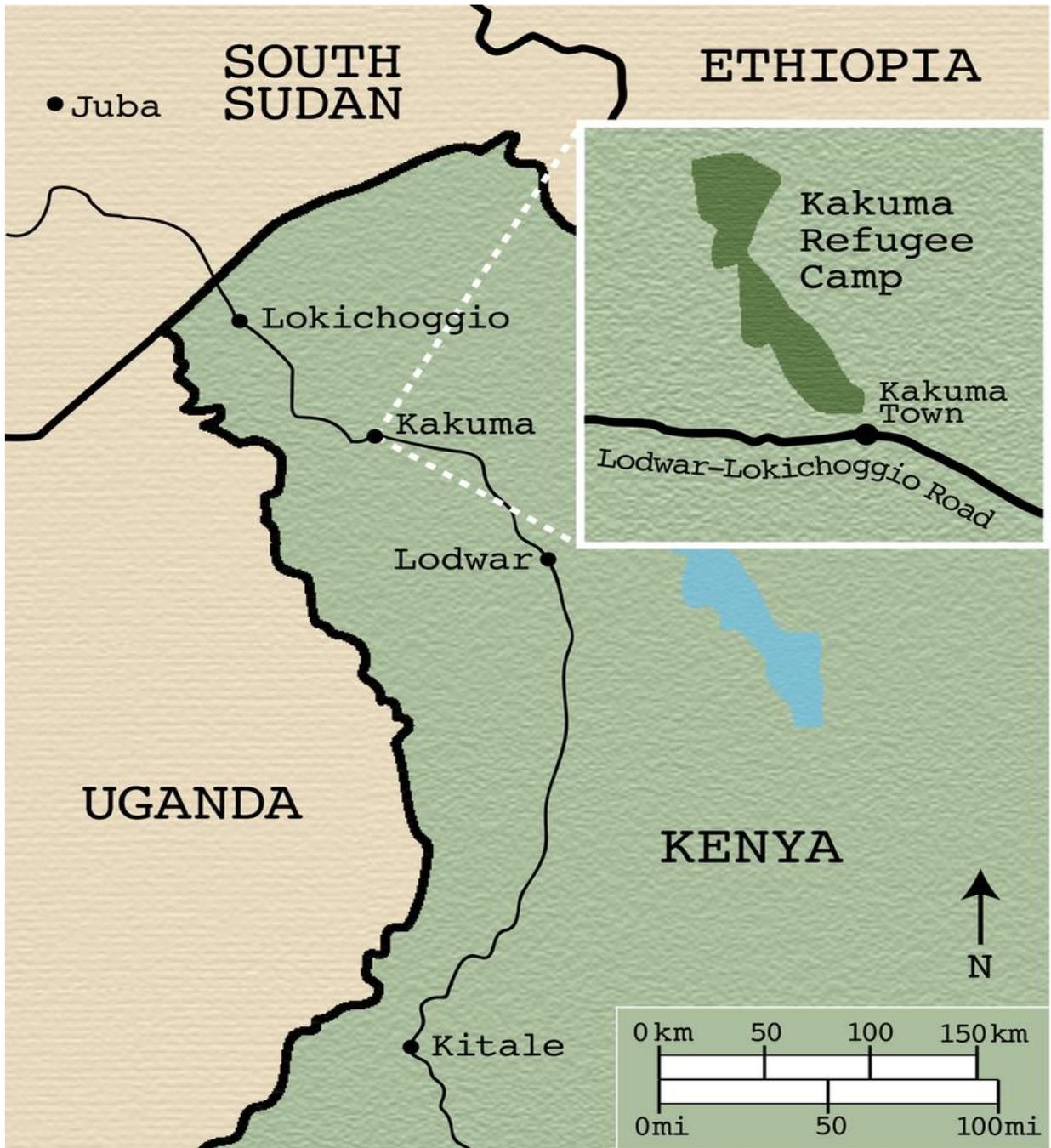


Figure 15: A section of Kenya's map showing the key towns linked to Kakuma camp (Source: Rahul Oka)

During my brief stop in Kitale, I observed new refugee arrivals from Uganda staying at the town's recreational grounds, which temporarily served as a reception centre where they received emergency aid from organisations like the Red Cross and the UNHCR. These refugees, referred to as "onward movers" by UNHCR and Kenyan government officials, had left settlements in Uganda due to challenges such as reduced food rations and allowances. According to UNHCR officials with whom I spoke in Kakuma, the term describes refugees who relocate from their initial registration camp to another camp, either within or outside their original host country (Lubanga, 2023; UNHCR, 2023c). The living conditions at the Kitale reception centre, however, were difficult. According to media reports at the time, many families were staying in tents and received minimal support in terms of food rations and medical assistance from the Kenyan government (Jaola, 2023; Lubanga, 2023).

Highlighting the challenges of hosting refugees in Kitale, the area governor stated in a local Kenyan TV interview that his administration lacked adequate facilities to support the refugees and described them as posing a public health risk to the town and its residents (K24 Television, 2023). Such remarks stress the perceptions held by some Kenyans and local political leaders, who often wrongfully view refugees as health risks and burdens to communities and governing bodies, even in towns with relatively low numbers of refugees and asylum seekers.

Such views and political statements contribute to the often poor and inhumane treatment of refugees, impacting the quality of services they receive and leading to ongoing hardship. In Kitale, for example, the inadequate support for refugees led to the tragic death of a minor, who reportedly passed away at the reception centre due to hunger (Jaola, 2023). Moreover, Kitale town's strained capacity to host transient refugee populations underscores how infrastructure can reflect broader socio-political power dynamics in Kenyan urban planning, where resource allocation often prioritises urban dwellers who are nationals over marginalised and minority populations such as refugees (McAteer *et al.*, 2023).

3.4 The security dynamics along the Kitale-Kakuma highway.

Key towns along the Kitale-Kakuma road—Kainuk, Lokichar, and Lodwar—are essential to the politics, security, and socio-economic conditions of Turkana County, which directly affects Kakuma and the refugees in nearby camps (Mugambi, 2023; Yusuf, 2023). The local border disputes, for example, have inhibited the development of towns such as Kainuk and negatively impacted the safety of travellers, mainly refugees and host community members, along the Kitale-Kakuma highway (Kibe, 2020). The territory on which Kainuk, a town of about 26,000 residents (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019a), sits is politically contested by the Pokot and Turkana communities, each claiming ownership. This border dispute has led to frequent armed clashes between the Turkana and Pokot communities, undermining regional security and stability (Netya, 2015).

The climate crisis has intensified this insecurity, reducing grazing lands and worsening water scarcity for both pastoralist groups. As a result, the Turkana and Pokot often compete over limited natural resources, leading to recurring conflicts, especially during prolonged droughts, as well as incidents of cattle rustling and banditry around Kainuk town and occasionally in villages near Kakuma (Mkutu and Wandera, 2013; Trocaire, 2021). Cattle rustlers in Kainuk have frequently targeted vehicles along the highway, firing on buses carrying civilians and even on military and police convoys, resulting in loss of life. In one such incident in February 2023, a bandit attack on this high-risk route led to the deaths of four police officers and five passengers, including a Sudanese refugee student who studied in Kitale town (Etyang and Ombati, 2023; Mugambi, 2023; Wanjala, 2023).

To address gun violence along this critical highway linking Kenya to South Sudan, the Kenyan government launched a security operation in Kainuk aimed at dismantling cattle rustling networks, restoring peace, and recovering illegal firearms from civilians (Yusuf, 2023). Between April and June 2023, multiple security units—including the Anti-Stock Theft Unit, General Service Unit, Kenya Defence Forces, Kenya Police Reservists (KPR), and regular police—were deployed following a presidential directive. Although police reservists were already present in the area, they were unable to fully manage the high levels of insecurity.

Notwithstanding the fact that Kainuk has one of the highest number of Kenya Police Reservists in the country, highlighting the severity of the region's security challenges (Mkutu and Wandera, 2013).

These intercommunity and cross-border conflicts between the Turkana and neighbouring groups like the Pokot in Kenya and the Karamojong and Toposa across the Ugandan and South Sudanese borders have shaped how the Turkana perceive and interact with outsiders, including non-locals and refugees in Kakuma. Many Turkana people view outsiders as exploiting Turkana's marginalised status to extract resources or pursue personal interests. According to Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru (2016), the Turkana see themselves as "beleaguered hosts" in a context where refugees are often perceived as foreign intruders who compete for land and resources and are seen as the "violent Others". The frequent bandit attacks along the Kitale-Kakuma highway reflect the insecurities that arise from historical neglect and competition for scarce resources in Turkana County. This violence disproportionately affects refugees, who are already vulnerable due to their displacement and must navigate a treacherous physical and socio-political landscape to access basic services or pursue economic opportunities.

Due to high insecurity along the Kitale-Kakuma highway, public service vehicles (PSVs) on this route are sometimes provided with a police escort between Kainuk and Lodwar to protect passengers from potential ambushes by bandits roaming the area. This measure to escort PSVs underscores both the physical and symbolic violence embedded in the region's infrastructure and signifies the contested nature of mobility in Turkana, where safety and access are privileges unevenly distributed among different groups.

Furthermore, this journey highlighted the impact of security dynamics across Turkana County on the daily lives and livelihoods of both refugees and host communities. It provided insight into how some refugees perceive their Turkana hosts and their sense of safety both within and beyond the refugee camps. Some research has shown that many refugees view the Turkana as armed and hostile, which is a necessity in the Turkana's ongoing tensions with the Pokot and cross-border neighbours (Bevan, 2008). Consequently, disagreements

between refugees and Turkana hosts in Kakuma have at times escalated into serious conflicts, with the use of firearms by local hosts adding a further layer of tension (Rodgers, 2020b). One of the deadliest conflicts between the hosts and refugees in Kakuma took place in 2003, following a dispute over cattle, leading to the killing of nine refugees and two locals (McKinsey, 2003a; The New Humanitarian, 2003).

The heightened security presence along the Kitale-Kakuma highway extends into Kakuma itself, with a checkpoint approximately 2 kilometres outside the town centre, manned by Kenya Police officers. At this checkpoint, all individuals entering or leaving Kakuma must show identification documents to the police, a security measure aimed at safeguarding both refugees and local residents. Yet, these checkpoints also reflect entrenched power imbalances, as they operate as sites of exclusion and exploitation, purposely designed to prevent refugees from exiting the camp without Department of Refugee Services (DRS) authorisation and to control the movement of restricted materials into and out of the camp. The police officers often exploit this checkpoint, using it as an opportunity to demand bribes from refugees, even those with valid travel permits issued by DRS (Brankamp, 2016; Omata, 2021a). Refugees without proper identification or who refuse to pay bribes are removed from their vehicles and directed to a nearby security desk, where they must negotiate their release with the senior officer on duty (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2018).

One of the ways in which the police officers check the documents to establish whether one is a refugee or a Kenyan is by speaking to the person in Kiswahili and asking them whether they are Turkana or which part of the country they hail from (Brankamp, 2019). As Brankamp further argues, these roadblocks reinforce a “racialised, ethnicised, and legal categorisation of belonging sedimented in moments of passage” (Brankamp, 2019, p. 71). The language “tests” employed by police at these checkpoints further emphasise the weaponisation of language against vulnerable populations, using it as a tool for segregation and control. To facilitate easier passage, bus operators typically charge refugees an additional fee on top of the standard fare (Brankamp, 2019), which is then used to pay off officers at the checkpoint on behalf of the refugees (Pavanello, Elhawary and Pantuliano, 2010; Norwegian Refugee Council, 2018). Those unwilling to go through the checkpoint

sometimes resort to more dangerous village routes, where they risk encounters with bandits.

Lodwar, another key town on the road from Nairobi to Kakuma, has a significant socio-economic influence on Kakuma and the refugee population there. Approximately 120 kilometres from Kakuma, Lodwar is the largest town in northwestern Kenya, serving as the headquarters for the Turkana County Government and a critical transit point to South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Uganda. Over recent years, Lodwar has experienced rapid growth due to Kenya's devolved governance system, the discovery of oil in nearby Lokichar, and increased migration into the area (Vemuru *et al.*, 2016; UN Habitat, 2022). According to (KIPPRA, 2022), Lodwar's population grew from 58,290 in 2019 to about 87,554 in 2020. Other factors that have led to the population growth include the presence of development and relief organisations such as the Red Cross and United Nations, which have consequently spurred the economic growth of the town and enhanced its political importance (Vemuru *et al.*, 2016).

Lodwar's infrastructure includes an airport with daily flights to and from Nairobi, five-star hotels, and the county's largest hospital, Lodwar Referral Hospital (LRH). The town also has reliable electricity, paved roads, and a vibrant market lined with retail and wholesale shops. Given Lodwar's central role in the regional economy, refugee entrepreneurs frequently travel from Kakuma to purchase wholesale goods, which they then sell within Kakuma refugee camp. This creates a strong economic link between Lodwar and Kakuma, with the economic impact of Kakuma's refugee population evident in Lodwar through humanitarian organisation workshops, local flights transporting aid workers to and from Nairobi, and continuous goods and services exchanges.

In general, my choice to travel by road was deeply informed by a desire to understand these lived realities and to reflect on the broader implications of infrastructural justice in Kakuma and its surrounding areas. The journey exposed how infrastructure in this context operates as both a lifeline and a site of exclusion. The road connects Kakuma to vital resources and opportunities, yet it also entrenches systemic inequities, as seen in the barriers to mobility

and the violence that marks its use. Moreover, the precariousness of the Kitale-Kakuma road journey reflects the broader sense of isolation and exclusion experienced by refugees in Kakuma. The physical remoteness of the camp is compounded by socio-political alienation, as refugees are often viewed as economic burdens or security threats by both host communities and government authorities. This exclusion is evident in the infrastructural disparities along the highway, where the presence of checkpoints, coupled with the threat of violence, underscores the systemic marginalisation of both refugees and local communities.

3.5 The research area: Kakuma town and the refugee camps

3.5.1 Kakuma town



Figure 16: Map of Kenya showing the location of Kakuma town (Source: (Brankamp, 2019)).

Located about an hour's drive north of Lodwar town, Kakuma is a vibrant socio-economic hub where people from various backgrounds engage in commercial activities and work with local, regional, and international organisations providing humanitarian assistance to refugees in the nearby Kakuma refugee camp and the surrounding host community (Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000). The socio-economic opportunities created by the presence of the refugee camps have attracted many non-locals and host community members to Kakuma. Before the camp's establishment in 1992, Kakuma area's population was estimated to be between 2,000 and 8,000 people (Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000; Otha,

2005; Jansen, 2018), but it has since surged to approximately 103,000 residents (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Kakuma town offers various social amenities, including numerous retail and wholesale shops, supermarkets, livestock and traders' markets, hotels, restaurants, nightclubs, an airstrip, a referral hospital, a university campus, and several private colleges and primary and secondary schools. Small traders sell a wide range of goods, such as fresh produce, clothing, charcoal, honey, and animal products, along the highway in the town centre throughout the day and into the night.

Compared to my last visit to Kakuma in 2021, I noticed significant improvements in the town's infrastructure, particularly the newly expanded two-way tarmac road running through it. Additionally, streetlights had been installed, allowing traders to operate at night. The hospitality sector also flourished due to increased demand for quality accommodation from humanitarian agency workers and visitors. As a result, finding an affordable room in Kakuma has become challenging. To secure a budget-friendly option, I reached out to my former contacts in the hotel industry to arrange a room at one of the hotels where I previously stayed while working in the area.

Some NGOs, including the UN Migration Agency (IOM), UNHCR, Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), and the World Food Programme (WFP), offer private accommodation services for visitors and humanitarian workers in the area. For this study, I opted to stay in a private hotel not affiliated with any humanitarian agency because I wanted to avoid any assumptions from my participants that I worked for or had connections to these organisations. Additionally, I felt it was important to conduct interviews outside of agency-owned compounds to prevent any discomfort among participants, especially if they held negative views about those organisations. Conducting interviews in such settings could also have led to unintended expectations of material benefits from the participants.

Kakuma's economy has been described as a "refugee economy" due to its strong socio-economic ties to the refugee population and humanitarian aid infrastructure (Betts *et al.*, 2016). While this term highlights the centrality of refugees in driving economic activity in the area, it can reinforce a narrative of "refugee extractivism," where economic benefits are

derived from refugees' presence without adequately addressing their well-being and rights (Morris, 2022). Moreover, viewing Kakuma's economy as solely "refugee-driven" may obscure its economic history and oversimplify the complex interplay between local and refugee economies. A more nuanced characterisation would acknowledge that while the refugee population and humanitarian aid are integral to Kakuma's economy, they are not its sole foundation. Historically, Kakuma's development predates the establishment of the refugee camp. In the 1960s, Somali traders set up shops in the area to serve both local pastoralist communities and transport drivers travelling along the Kitale-Juba highway (Oka, 2014). This early exchange of goods and services facilitated the formation of an extensive business network spanning Northern Turkana and Southern Sudan, laying the groundwork for the town's commercial identity (Oka, 2011).

This history indicates that Kakuma's economic system is broader than what its current reliance on refugee and humanitarian activities would seem to indicate. In recent decades, however, the refugee population and related humanitarian operations have significantly shaped Kakuma's economy. According to a 2018 International Financial Corporation (IFC) study, the town's economy was valued at approximately USD 39.7 million, with growth largely fuelled by the presence of refugee camps. The IFC reported that Kakuma had around 232 shops along its roads and adjacent streets, reflecting a bustling commercial environment supported by refugee-driven demand. Nevertheless, the economy remains fragile, as evidenced by lower-than-average consumption levels: per capita household consumption in Kakuma town in 2016 was approximately USD 602 per year, while in the camp, it was only USD 94, both falling below Kenya's national average of USD 800 per year (IFC, 2018a).

To the refugees, Kakuma town represents a rare and invaluable space of relative freedom, comfort, and social engagement outside the confines of the camp. During the day, most refugees travel to the town within curfew hours to interact with friends, partake in social and recreational activities, and escape the monotonous and restrictive camp environment (Jansen, 2018). For many, the town offers access to a semblance of normal life, including entertainment venues, casual socialising, and even opportunities to network or seek

informal work (ibid). It also serves as a critical transit hub and a gateway, as refugees use the long-distance public service buses departing from Kakuma to travel to other towns and regions in Kenya and beyond, offering a literal and symbolic connection to the broader world (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2018; Iazzolino, 2020). At night, despite the risk of arrest, some refugees sneak out of the camp to frequent local entertainment establishments, such as bars and social clubs, where they can unwind and engage with the local community and humanitarian workers who visit such places in the evenings to rest after work (Jansen, 2016a). These nighttime ventures highlight the refugees' resilience and determination to carve out moments of leisure and normalcy despite the government's strict regulations on their movement. The restrictions, while intended to control and manage the refugee population, often compel refugees to challenge and creatively navigate these boundaries in pursuit of better life experiences (Jansen, 2018).

Kakuma also presents a striking contrast: on the one hand, it is a vibrant town with a diverse community engaged in various socio-economic interactions, while on the other, just a kilometre away, over 270,000 refugees and asylum seekers live in overcrowded camps with limited access to basic necessities such as water, food, and shelter (Duale, 2020). Additionally, within the Turkana host community, there are noticeable and subtle differences among various social groups, including pastoralist Turkana people, the political elite, and educated individuals (Jansen, 2018). These differences are manifested in various ways, such as clothing, language, and general physical appearance. For instance, pastoralists often wear clothing wrapped around their waists and upper bodies, wear sandals, and sometimes carry AK-47 rifles when tending to their livestock (ibid). Moreover, pastoralists typically have a thinner physique than other groups, such as politicians, businesspeople, and educated elites (Jansen, 2018).

Due to high illiteracy rates across Turkana County, which stood at 82 per cent based on the 2019 national census report, fewer pastoralists speak Swahili or English, making it necessary for them to sometimes speak in Turkana language (*Ng'aturkana*) when conducting business

transactions. In the town, pastoralists—often referred to as *raia*²⁶ by the educated and political elite—typically sell unprocessed honey, milk, medicinal herbs, firewood, and charcoal. In contrast, the political and educated elites dress in modern clothing, wear shoes, and are fluent in English and Swahili (Jansen, 2018). Many directly benefit from the camp economy through employment with humanitarian agencies or ownership of businesses that supply goods and services to these agencies, the town, and the camps (Ibid).

In Kakuma, an individual's social class significantly influences their access to socio-economic opportunities and privileges. For instance, due to their higher social status and the power they wield, the political and educated elites are the primary beneficiaries of opportunities such as jobs and contracts offered by NGOs operating inside the camp as well as the host community (Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000; Jansen, 2018; Brankamp, 2022). Conversely, pastoralists are often marginalised, becoming passive recipients of humanitarian projects negotiated by these powerful groups, such as education scholarships and social infrastructure development among others (Jansen, 2016a, 2018). Their challenges of socio-economic marginalisation are further exacerbated by the devastating effects of climate change and the growing size of the refugee camp, which frequently displaces them to make room for new arrivals. This economic marginalisation highlights the invisible contrasts within the community, where an individual's societal status depends on their access to resources, revealing a clash of capitals in which some individuals have resources while others do not (Jansen, 2018).

3.5.2 Kakuma refugee camps

The Kakuma refugee camp was established in early 1992 when approximately 12,000 young Sudanese boys were brought from the nearby border town of Lokichoggio. These boys, who had also been forced to flee from various refugee camps following the outbreak of political conflict in Ethiopia and had returned to Southern Sudan, undertook a journey of nearly one thousand miles to reach Kenya (Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016; Jansen, 2018). After

²⁶ Raia is a Kiswahili word for common citizens without any authority. In this case, it is used to denote socio-economic backwardness of the pastoralists considered to be of lower social class.

spending a few months in Lokichoggio, they were relocated to Kakuma, settling about one kilometre from the town centre at what is now known as Kakuma Camp One. In this regard, Kakuma refugee camp has been described as having ‘appeared almost out of nowhere’ (Otha, 2005, p. 231).

Since its inception, Kakuma refugee camp has evolved into one of the largest and longest-lasting refugee settlements in Africa, characterized by features typical of a large town (Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000; Otha, 2005, p. 231; Oka, 2014; Jansen, 2018). The camp's growth has been driven by the increasing influx of refugees and asylum seekers displaced by conflict, violence, and climate change from the Horn of Africa and Great Lakes regions. As a result, new camps have been continuously created to accommodate these new arrivals. As of November 2024, the camp's population surged to about 297,258, up from approximately 58,000 in 1998 (Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000), encompassing at least 15 nationalities. There are now more refugees in Turkana West Sub-County than in the local host communities, which number around 239,000 (KNBS, 2019). In Turkana County, refugees constitute 23 per cent of the total population.

The infrastructure within Kakuma refugee camp is also fairly developed (Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000). The camps are equipped with essential social and public services, including schools, hospitals, roads, playgrounds, hotels, and restaurants. In terms of spatial organisation, the camp is divided into four sub-camps namely; Kakuma one, two, three, and four. The four sub-camps are further divided into blocks (UN Habitat, 2021). A sub-camp is a large area demarcated by the UNHCR and the Government of Kenya to hold a specific number of refugees arriving in Kakuma within a particular period. Once the area is full, another space is established as a way of preventing congestion in the camp. Each of the four sub-camps has a hospital, and there are well-established market centres, a university campus (Southern New Hampshire University), and field offices for institutions like Oxford University. Humanitarian agencies, including Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), the German Development Agency (GIZ), the UN Migration Agency (IOM), and the International Rescue Committee (IRC), maintain field offices within all the sub-camps. Additionally, government offices such as the Department of Refugee Services and the National Police Service are

located within each of the sub-camps. Some of the popular locations include the Somali market in Camp One—the largest and most vibrant market centre—, the Franco Hotel operated by Ethiopian refugees in Camp Two, and Kakuma General Hospital, managed by the International Rescue Committee (IRC). Overall, the camp and its settlement feature around 52 schools (including early childhood education centres, primary, and secondary schools), approximately 21 boreholes, 35 elevated steel water tanks, 11,000 pit latrines, and eight health facilities.

Kakuma refugee camps and the surrounding settlement exhibit characteristics of an informal urban settlement. According to Montclos and Kagwanja (2000), such a settlement is characterised by well-developed infrastructure, residents drawn from various regions, and the presence of international agencies, giving it a semblance of urban life. However, this informal urbanisation conceals a deeper evidence of infrastructural justice and injustice that frames daily life for refugees (AREL, 2024a) and influenced my role as a researcher navigating this space. For instance, basic public and social services were not equitably distributed, and their supply often lagged behind the needs of the refugee and even the host population (Jansen, 2018). While market centres like the Somali market in Camp One and the Ethiopian-run Franco Hotel in Camp Two exemplified the vibrant economies and enterprises emerging within the camps, they coexisted with persistent shortages in basic services like water, sanitation, and adequate healthcare (Ibid). The visible infrastructure suggests a self-sustaining community, but the lived reality of refugees tells a far more complex story of resource scarcity and restricted opportunities (Oka, 2014; Duale, 2020; Omata, 2021a).

The management and administration of the camps and the settlement are overseen by the Department of Refugee Services (DRS), which also handles refugee status determination (RSD). The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) primarily provides protection services and assistance to refugees, including food distribution, cash-based support, shelter provisions, and resettlement interviews. To ensure safety and security, the government has established several police posts within the four camps and the surrounding settlement. Additionally, the DRS has created a community peace and protection team (CPPT) that reports crimes to

camp authorities and serves as a liaison between the authorities and the refugees regarding security services (Brankamp, 2020). There is no physical barrier separating the camp from the host community, except for certain areas like the IOM and World Food Programme compounds, which have secure entry points manned by private security guards and police officers. This absence of physical barriers except in humanitarian agency compounds creates a paradoxical dynamic. While this openness facilitates some degree of interactions between refugees and hosts, the way the camp is administered explicitly delineates refugees as separate and controlled subjects through confinement into what can be referred to as “a web of intricate internal borders” exemplified by the walled fence protecting the UN compound and wire fences spread across different sections of the sub-camps (Mbembe, 2003, p. 28).

Navigating this space as a researcher required constant self-reflection about my positionality and the privileges that allowed me to move freely, while those whose experiences and daily realities I studied remained constrained. For example, as I accessed the well-maintained roads within the camp and observed the functioning of boreholes, steel water tanks, and pit latrines, I was reminded that these provisions, although vital, symbolised a form of managed survival in a liminal space rather than infrastructural justice. As elaborated in Kenya’s Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), the only durable solution favoured by the government of Kenya is voluntary repatriation (Government of Kenya, 2020b). Hence, the infrastructure present in Kakuma cannot adequately sustain refugees’ lives, as it is overstretched and, in some cases, of low quality (Rodgers and Bloom, 2016). The presence of government offices and police stations within the camp underscored the pervasive surveillance and regulation that refugees endured, contrasting sharply with the autonomy afforded to non-refugee visitors like myself.

In terms of settlement patterns, it is common for members of the same community to reside together in specific zones without intermingling with other groups. Refugees often choose to settle near their kinsmen for a sense of community and security against potential violence from other refugee groups (Jansen, 2018). This tendency challenges the perception of refugee camps as culturally diverse spaces (Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000),

revealing instead a pattern of in-group separation where different refugee groups strive to preserve their own cultures (Jansen, 2018). The UNHCR allocates spaces based on the refugees' registration and arrival dates. Within the camps, refugees maintain their socio-cultural beliefs through the types of houses and religious centres they establish, the food served, and their traditional dress. Notably, a prominent Ethiopian Orthodox church built by Ethiopian refugees around 2008 stands a few meters from Kakuma town, serving as a symbol of cultural and religious continuity for refugees (ibid). Similar places of worship, including mosques, are also present across the four camps.

Overall, Kakuma's infrastructure embodies the tensions between humanitarian support and structural injustice. It offers refugees critical services and a semblance of normalcy while simultaneously reinforcing their marginalisation and disempowerment. This duality serves as an example that infrastructural development in refugee settings must go beyond functional efficiency to address questions of equity, agency, and long-term sustainability. As I conducted my research, this awareness shaped not only my observations but also my approach to documenting and analysing the complexities of life within Kakuma refugee camps.

3.5.3 The Kalobeyi Integrated Settlement.

In the recent past, there has been a notable shift in the management of refugee responses in Kenya. In 2015, the government, along with the UNHCR and its partners, launched the Kalobeyi Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan (KISED), aimed at fostering greater socio-economic interactions between hosts and refugees through an area-based development approach. Located about 4 kilometres from the main Kakuma camps and covering approximately 15 square kilometres, Kalobeyi Settlement hosted approximately 77,202 refugees as of December 2024 (UNHCR Kenya, 2024b). The settlement model was touted by Turkana county officials as a first of its kind in the country, where the hosts and refugees live alongside one another, signifying a change in Kenya's refugee response and management away from the camp model, which has been in place since 1992 and denied the refugees a chance to pursue socio-economic opportunities due to limited interactions

with the hosts and freedoms (UNHCR, 2017). In terms of its design, the settlement was to offer an opportunity for joint humanitarian and development interventions in the Kakuma area by placing both refugees and hosts on the development plans and agenda through an inclusive approach to managing displacement and promoting durable solutions. The EU Head of Development Cooperation at that time, Mr Erik Habers, described it as a program which sought to;

Enhance protection for refugees and host communities and catalyse development in Kalobeyei settlement so that it becomes a place in which refugees and the host communities live peacefully together, have access to social services, and develop economic ties to build sustainable livelihoods (UNHCR, 2017).

In this regard, Kalobeyei is designed to differ significantly from traditional camps in terms of spatial planning, aid delivery, and socio-economic programs for both hosts and refugees. Its core objective is to transform refugee management from an aid-based humanitarian assistance model to a more sustainable area-based development approach that promotes self-reliance for refugees while benefiting local communities.

In terms of spatial organisation, Kalobeyei is divided into residential and commercial areas within three villages, which are further subdivided into neighbourhoods and compounds. Each compound consists of 28 houses, equipped with a solar light post at the centre, kitchen gardens, and water points. Demonstrating a commitment to renewable energy, Natukobenyo Hospital—the main healthcare facility in the settlement—is fully powered by solar panels. Refugees in Kalobeyei have access to essential services like water, electricity, and durable housing constructed with brick walls and iron sheet roofs, offering better protection against the harsh, desert-like climate compared to the mud-walled or tent-like structures found in the main camps.

The main road through Kalobeyei is paved and features streetlights. The settlement also includes recreational community spaces such as basketball courts, libraries, football fields, community centres, schools, and hospitals, all accessible to both refugees and host community members. The significance of these community spaces was highlighted when the UNHCR celebrated World Refugee Day 2023 in Kalobeyei Village Three, an event

attended by the UNHCR High Commissioner, Filippo Grandi, as well as local government officials and representatives from various NGOs (UNHCR Kenya, 2023).

In the commercial areas, there are market centres, retail and wholesale shops, cyber cafés, barber shops, bars, restaurants, and movie theatres, all operated by both refugees and members of the host community. Humanitarian agencies and private institutions, such as local banks like Equity and Kenya Commercial Bank (KCB), also maintain offices and field posts in the settlement, providing vital humanitarian, economic, and financial services. These banks enable refugees to open accounts where they receive monthly stipends, known as “Bamba Chakula” (Swahili for “Get your food”). This innovative aid delivery model allows refugees greater agency over their household decisions regarding food and other essentials, shifting them from being passive recipients of in-kind aid to more active participants in their own support (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020d; Sterck *et al.*, 2020).

Walking through Kalobeyei offers a unique perspective on humanitarian support for displaced populations and reveals how hosts and refugees interact. Unlike in the Kakuma main camps, where there are strict movement and employment restrictions, refugees in Kalobeyei are allowed to move freely within the settlement and engage in trade with host community members at shared market centres (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020e). While Kakuma enforces a curfew, refugees in Kalobeyei can move freely even at night. People from both communities attend the same schools and hospitals and worship in the same churches. Additionally, at the UNHCR farms in the settlement, refugees and members of the host community share plots and cultivate crops side by side. Refugees in Kalobeyei receive their assistance in the form of cash, electronically sent to their phones (Bamba Chakula), which they can use to purchase food and other personal items from authorised shops (Betts *et al.*, 2018; Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020c; Sterck *et al.*, 2020).

Based on the KISED model, the management and living conditions for refugees in Kalobeyei are markedly different from those in the Kakuma main camps. In the Settlement, it is common to find households belonging to members of the Turkana host community within the settlement itself (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020a). The overall water and

sanitation conditions in Kalobeyei are better than those in the camps due to less overcrowding and more planned infrastructure (ibid). Additionally, due to the area based humanitarian development approach, projects implemented within the settlement target both refugees and host community members through shared social and public services, aimed at alleviating poverty and addressing the issues of unequal aid distribution that can lead to tensions between the two groups (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020c, 2020a).

Yet, beneath these livelihoods and infrastructure advancements under KISED, there is an enduring structural limitation: Kalobeyei's framework still operates within the broader context of Kenya's encampment policy, which restricts refugees' movement and economic participation beyond designated areas (Laws of Kenya, 2021; Brankamp, 2022). Moreover, cash-based assistance to the refugees is limited to transactions within authorised spaces and has been found to have negative impacts such as indebtedness (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020d; Sterck *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, while the settlement promotes economic interaction with the Turkana host community, it does so in a controlled manner that reinforces the spatial and legal boundaries imposed on refugees (Brankamp, 2019). Thus, while Kalobeyei represents an important step toward improving refugee living conditions, it stops short of addressing the systemic inequities and power asymmetries that underpin the encampment model itself (Brankamp *et al.*, 2023).

Moreover, the portrayal of Kalobeyei as a success story in humanitarian development by humanitarian and donor agencies like the UNHCR must be contextualised within the broader humanitarian governance framework, which often privileges neoliberal ideals of efficiency and market-based solutions over addressing deeper structural injustices (Brankamp *et al.*, 2023; Liu-Farrer, Pearlman and Al-Masri, 2024). Programs like KISED emphasize the economic contributions of refugees and their potential as development actors, aligning with global and capitalist narratives that prioritise productivity and self-reliance. However, this focus risks overlooking the fundamental rights of refugees to freedom, mobility, and self-determination. By positioning refugees as "entrepreneurs" or "contributors" to host economies, such initiatives may inadvertently reinforce the view that refugees must earn their place in host societies rather than being entitled to protection and

dignity as a matter of humanitarian principle. Consequently, Brankamp opines that the settlement was designed to attain surface adjustments but not a complete overhaul of the encampment policy in the country, with the goal of triggering enthusiasm from fatigued donors and making camps a better investment opportunity for private funders (Brankamp, 2022).

3.6 Contacting and recruiting participants.

Conducting qualitative research in the Turkana region, particularly in the Kakuma refugee camps and Kalobeyei Settlement, can be quite challenging, especially when it comes to recruiting participants to engage in the research. These areas have been extensively studied, leading to research fatigue, heightened expectations for financial or material compensation among potential participants, and a general distrust of researchers, which stems from the lack of meaningful change that has resulted from the numerous studies conducted in the area. Clark (2008, p. 955) defines research fatigue as “when individuals and groups become tired of engaging with research, and it can be identified by a demonstration of reluctance toward continuing engagement with an existing project or a refusal to engage with any further research.” This fatigue typically arises in two contexts: during longitudinal studies and within research groups that receive constant requests for participation. Repeated experiences of this nature contribute to “over-research”, a common issue among marginalised groups such as refugees and the Turkana community (Omata, 2020b). Ashley (2021) expands on the concept of research fatigue, describing it as a state of psychological and emotional exhaustion that results from participation in research. Marginalised groups, like refugees and the Turkana people, often experience this fatigue due to their small population size and the significant interest from humanitarian researchers.

The Kakuma refugee camps and Kalobeyei Settlement are among the most researched areas in Kenya and globally concerning refugee studies (Omata, 2020). Continuous visits and inquiries from researchers, NGO consultants, and government agencies have led some refugees and members of the host community in Kakuma to develop a dislike for

researchers (Omata, 2019). This sentiment is often witnessed through participants' expression of frustration over frequently being asked the same questions about their lives and experiences (Ibid). In a study conducted by Omata in Kakuma in 2016, a participant noted that they had not seen any positive outcomes from the research findings on their livelihoods adding that they felt the research would only benefit the researcher, leading to refusal to participate or lack of enthusiasm for participating (Omata, 2019). Ashley (2021) warns against conducting research that does not yield real benefits for participants, as this can lead them to perceive research as a futile endeavour, causing disinterest in current or future studies. For marginalised communities, research that lacks impact can foster resentment towards researchers, who may be seen as self-serving and exploitative (Anne, 2009).

Audra Simpson's concept of "refusal" can provide a useful frame to explore how research fatigue might actually embody a form of passive resistance. In her work about Mohawk people's refusal to engage with institutions with links to colonial dispossession and violence in Canada, (Simpson, 2007) questions the ethics, methods, and theories that ethnographic research is built upon, viewing them as ongoing systems of settler colonialism justifying acquisition of bodies, territories, and knowledge. Moreover, Simpson linked the refusal of the Mohawks to the perceived false promise of inclusion and empowerment by public institutions. Drawing from this perspective, the refusal of some refugees and host community members in Kakuma to participate in some research studies can be seen not merely as disinterest but as a deliberate act of resistance against extractive research practices (Yan, 2023). Resistance by participants in this regard, is against the perceived commodification of their experiences by researchers and other visitors to the camp (Omata, 2019; Yan, 2023). By choosing not to participate, these individuals challenge the dominant paradigms of knowledge production, advocating for research that is more equitable and impactful (Ibid). Finally, refusal, as (Meier, 2023) elaborates, is not merely an act of non-cooperation but a form of engagement and a way of asserting agency for researchers to move beyond extraction and toward collaboration, ensuring that their work addresses community problems and promotes meaningful change.

Another challenge encountered during fieldwork related to research fatigue among participants was the act of providing mechanical answers, which was a consequence of repeated involvement in numerous research studies (Nyabola, 2020). These performative responses pose a significant risk to the integrity of the research findings and the well-being of the refugees. Nyabola (2020, p. 147) points out that the pressure for responses from over-researched populations “compels them to “otherise” their own communities, to pathologise their existence and to dislocate themselves from their day-to-day reality in order to sell convincing stories.” According to Nyabola, this performative act by participants can be linked to the unending challenges facing underprivileged communities, since those who participate in research are not transparent when revealing the issues they face (Ibid).

One contributing factor to research fatigue and the performative responses observed among participants in Kakuma is the over-reliance on the same individuals and community gatekeepers by researchers and humanitarian agencies (Omata, 2019, 2020b). Due to the repeated participation in most studies conducted in the area, certain individuals have emerged as well-connected intermediaries who facilitate access to participants for visiting researchers and consultants (Jansen, 2018). This group primarily consists of educated refugees, such as community leaders, who leverage their connections with humanitarian agencies like the UNHCR and the Department of Refugee Services (DRS) for research referrals (ibid). Over time, these influential leaders have become gatekeepers within their communities, often deriving financial benefits from the tokens of appreciation received from researchers seeking their insights on a range of issues (Jansen, 2018).

While gatekeepers can play a vital role in research by preventing exploitative practices, facilitating participant recruitment, acting as cultural mediators, and legitimising researchers within the community, they can also hinder access to minority or marginalised participants (de Laine, 2000; McAreavey and Das, 2013; Spellecy, 2023). According to Sixsmith, Boneham and Goldring (2003), gatekeepers can negatively affect research by imposing their own perspectives and only presenting participants of whom they approve. When gatekeepers provide the same participants for multiple studies, it can restrict the diversity of the sample and limit the understanding of the community (Eide and Allen, 2005;

Sanghera and Thapar-Björkert, 2008). This lack of diversity can lead to misguided policy interventions that perpetuate existing issues rather than addressing the underlying problems comprehensively. For my research, my prior knowledge and experience in Kakuma allowed me to bypass gatekeepers and rely solely on participants, whom I had to meet before conducting the actual interviews.

To identify and contact the appropriate and willing participants for this research, I first utilised my existing knowledge and connections within humanitarian organisations, as well as among the refugee and host communities. My outreach to potential participants began prior to my arrival in the research area. I briefly informed them about the objectives of my research and expressed my interest in their participation, particularly focusing on refugees who had been in the camp for at least five consecutive years and were engaged in socio-economic activities that connected them with the host communities. This early communication was crucial for building trust between myself and the potential participants. Eide and Allen (2005) noted that establishing trust can be challenging, especially in short-term research, making it essential to identify and communicate with key community contacts early to ensure the integrity and credibility of both the research and the researcher. Additionally, early identification and contact help streamline the research process and reduce time spent in the field. Once I arrived, I organised informal meetings with some participants, as requested, to facilitate familiarisation. These meetings allowed me to further build trust and share details about my fieldwork and the reasons for selecting them for interviews

3.7 Interviewing participants, field notes, and observations.

After selecting the research participants—from the refugee and host community—with the right profile for this study from both the refugee and host community, I organised a pre-interview meeting whenever requested. This pre-interview involved informal sessions before the official interview, where I would share my profile and explain the objectives of the research with the aim of making them at ease and establishing a rapport with them. The next phase involved conducting the actual interviews. These interviews took place in public

locations such as hotels or offices, or in private locations like the homes of the interviewees, particularly for refugees who could not leave the camp. I aimed to ensure that interviews occurred in comfortable, natural settings chosen by the participants. Holding the interviews in the participants' preferred places and spaces helped address the power relations between me and the participants, as it ensured they were comfortable and felt free to speak about their experiences. Madriz (2000, p. 841) suggests that using places that participants are familiar with reduces the chances of "otherisation" during the interviews. In this study when a participant preferred to meet at a hotel outside the camp, I arranged and covered the cost of transportation, paying for motorcycle taxis to and from the interview location.

A challenge I faced in selecting interview locations was the distance from the interviewee's home and the vastness of the camp. I needed to choose locations that were close enough to minimise transportation costs. Additionally, I prioritised the safety and security of both the participant and myself. To assess the camp's general safety and take necessary precautions, I visited the Kakuma police station to share my movement plan within the camp. I also relied on information from the participants and two motorcycle taxi drivers—one refugee and one local host—who transported me around the camp and the surrounding community. These drivers were helpful sources of information, providing insights about local events and places of interest. Personal safety is crucial in the camp, especially in areas with frequent incidents of robbery and violence, such as the Hong Kong area in Kakuma sub-camp 1 (Crisp, 2000c; Bishop, 2019). While I did not experience any theft, a group of visitors was robbed in the Hong Kong area on the same day I conducted a focus group discussion there. Being Kenyan, Black, and having prior experience in the area helped me navigate security challenges in the camp and the host community.

Another challenge during the interviews was the adverse weather conditions, which occasionally disrupted the audio quality of my recordings. Strong winds and noise affected

sound clarity, so I took notes on key points during the interviews to ensure I captured important information. Flexibility and patience were also essential when dealing with participants. In some instances, I waited a bit longer for participants to arrive at the interview venue. One example is when I had to wait for about one hour for a church service to end so that the participants could be available.

Before starting the interviews, I provided printed copies of the consent and plain language statement forms to the participants. For those who could not read, I read and explained both forms, emphasizing the importance of obtaining their formal consent for the interview. This stage also included obtaining consent to record the interview, which I carried with me. According to Mackenzie, seeking and getting informed consent from the research participants ensures that they “are fully and adequately informed about the purposes, methods, risks, and benefits of the research and that agreement to participate is fully voluntary” (Mackenzie and Mcdowell, 2007, p. 301). Most participants had no issues with the forms or the recording device, but I noticed that some felt uncomfortable and nervous, primarily due to the complexity and length of the documents. To alleviate this, I explained the contents in either Kiswahili or English, which all participants understood. Additionally, I made sure to position the recorder where it was not immediately visible to the participants after obtaining consent, often placing it in my pocket or covering it with my notebook.

My initial plan was to conduct two interviews each day—one in the morning and another in the afternoon. In between interviews, I would reflect on the first discussion and prepare for the next one by travelling to the agreed location and ensuring I was adequately prepared. Each interview was expected to last between 30 to 45 minutes; however, the actual duration varied. Some interviews extended beyond one hour as participants provided detailed descriptions of their experiences in response to my questions. This longer format also allowed participants, particularly the under-researched who had never been interviewed by a researcher or any agency before, to express long-held opinions that had previously gone unasked (Omata, 2019). This aspect was significant to my research, as some refugee groups from less represented nationalities, like Burundians in Kakuma are

constantly overlooked by researchers and consultants who focus mainly on majority groups like South Sudanese and Somalis (Ibid)

This study provided a platform for refugees and local hosts in Kakuma to share their perspectives, many for the first time, highlighting voices that have been marginalized despite their prolonged exile and valuable insights into integration. Rather than "giving them a voice," the study recognized that participants already possessed a deep understanding of their experiences and aspirations. Muluka (2023) emphasises the importance of giving marginalised refugees a voice in the research process, as it helps to understand the personal factors that influence their migratory decisions and their experiences in exile. According to Muluka, the perspectives of refugees yield critical insights into "their own thoughts on why they have remained in refugee camps for inordinate periods". He adds, "We are also able to appreciate better the refugees' thoughts on what they would want as a permanent solution to their refugee status" (Muluka, 2023, p. 58).

By giving some refugees and hosts a platform to share their experiences with a researcher for the first time, this study centred the marginalised perspectives of those who are often overlooked by other researchers or agencies (Omata, 2019). It did not give them a voice, as they already possess in them the understanding and perspectives of their experiences and their aspirations. Nyabola (2020), while quoting Arundhati Roy, states that "there's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced or the preferably unheard." This perspective resonated in Kakuma, where gatekeepers, often self-appointed "voices" for refugees, suppressed alternative narratives to protect the image of humanitarian agencies and government authorities (Jansen, 2018). These gatekeepers' dominance restricted authentic expressions of other community members. My research sought to challenge this dynamic, creating a safe space where participants could freely share their experiences without fear of retribution or misrepresentation. By taking this approach, the study countered the tendency of humanitarian agencies and researchers to amplify the views of gatekeepers, instead focusing on the diverse and nuanced realities of those typically excluded from the integration conversation.

After conducting the formal interviews, I engaged participants in casual post-interview conversations to make them more comfortable and to organise my notes and reflections. These conversations often occurred over refreshments and allowed participants to discuss additional topics they might have overlooked during the formal interview. This approach helped create a relaxed atmosphere, and participants shared further important information related to my research. Consequently, and with permission from the participants, I incorporated these post-interview insights into my reflections and used them to prepare for subsequent interviews.

To observe the nature of interactions and relationships between refugees and host communities in the research area, I visited several locations where these groups commonly interacted, including Kakuma town, the markets in Kakuma refugee camp, places of worship, hotels, cultural centres, and sports grounds. I attended events that brought the two communities together, such as the Kakuma Sound Cultural Festival in Kakuma Camp 1 and the World Refugee Day celebrations in Kalobeyei Settlement Village 3. At the Kakuma festival, I witnessed a vibrant display of cultures and artistic performances from both refugees and local hosts. The festival, themed “Borders and Migration,” aimed to highlight the cultural diversity of the camp and promote peaceful coexistence between the two communities.

During the World Refugee Day celebrations, I observed, listened, and took detailed notes of the speeches from government officials, NGOs, and humanitarian agencies discussing their plans and programs for refugees. The event also marked the launch of a new refugee integration strategy known as the Shirika Plan (formerly the Marshall Plan for refugees). The theme for the 2023 celebrations was “Hope Away from Home,” and it featured notable dignitaries, including the area Member of Parliament, the DRS Commissioner for Refugee Affairs (CRA), UNHCR High Representative Filippo Grandi, UN-Habitat Executive Director Maimunah Sharif, Turkana County Governor Jeremiah Lomurkai, and the Government Principal Secretary for Immigration.

At the event, the UNHCR High Commissioner praised the Shirika Plan as a commendable example for Africa and the world (Ibid). The CRA emphasised the need for social integration of refugees by expanding integrated settlements and acknowledged the high crime rates in the camp. The Governor focused on improving the implementation of the settlement plan, reforestation, and addressing disparities in aid distribution between refugees and host communities (*World Refugee Day 2023 in Kakuma, 2023*). However, the area MP voiced the grievances of the local Turkana host community, asserting that peaceful coexistence could not be achieved if development remained imbalanced in favour of refugees (Ibid). He insisted that effective integration could only occur if the voices of the Turkana people were acknowledged.

Conducting interviews with refugees in Kakuma proved to be an emotionally intense experience, particularly due to the distressing and traumatic stories shared by participants. Before arriving in the field, I made preparations to refer any refugees showing signs of psychological trauma to a qualified counsellor affiliated with one of the agencies providing psychosocial support. However, I never expected nor prepared for the toll that listening to these stories would take on me. This phenomenon, often referred to as secondary trauma, occurs due to listening to or witnessing accounts of harm and suffering of others (Fathallah, 2022). Prolonged exposure to such narratives can lead to vicarious trauma, which manifests as shifts in one's perceptions, thoughts, and emotional responses (SVRI, 2016). These effects underscored the relational aspect of vicarious trauma in ethnographic studies, where both researcher and participant inhabit a shared space of varying vulnerability and emotional intensity.

As a result of spending time in the field with participants and experiencing part of their "everyday" (Das, 2013), I became aware of the delicate boundary between research and care, and between professional detachment and empathy. The act of engaging deeply with refugees' experiences blurred these boundaries, as the stories they shared elicited profound sadness and shock. Although I had formerly worked in Kakuma and interacted with refugees, this fieldwork involved an unprecedented depth of engagement with their

lived realities. In response to the emotional burden of these encounters, I sought support from the same counselling psychologist to whom I had intended to refer participants, recognising that my mental well-being was essential for the integrity and continuity of my research.

Furthermore, to navigate the effects of secondary trauma and maintain emotional resilience, I implemented several self-care strategies. These included regular exercise, nurturing connections with friends, and visiting recreational and entertainment venues to create balance amidst the challenging work. These moments of self-care allowed me to process the shared emotional intensity of the fieldwork, reflecting on how empathy can be a powerful tool for understanding participants' realities while also demanding deliberate efforts to manage its impact on the researcher's mental health. This experience underscored the importance of acknowledging vicarious trauma as a relational phenomenon and fostering self-care mechanisms in emotionally demanding research contexts such as refugee camps.

3.8 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, the experience in Kakuma was as engaging as it was challenging. Throughout my field visit to the research area, I came to understand and appreciate the value of qualitative ethnography in an enduring displacement context and my role as a researcher in a climatically hostile and challenging research area. By interacting with participants, staying in the area, and observing the lived experiences of refugees and host communities in Kakuma and Kalobeyei, I got an opportunity to observe and understand their lived experiences from their own perspectives. These experiences are organised thematically in the next chapter on the findings of the study. Moreover, the experiences are shaped by the strict camp governance policies that are meant to not only inhibit refugees' socio-economic progress but also to marginalise and exclude them from the wider Kenyan and global discourse and attention.

CHAPTER 6: THEMATIC FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Compared to where I came from, there's nowhere as harsh as this place. The sun is unbearably hot, it rarely rains, and we don't have enough water. Honestly, if the UNHCR leaves us here, we will all die (Refugee Participant #3 from Burundi).

1. Introduction

This chapter presents a discussion of the research findings, structured around three key themes. The first theme explores how refugees and host communities perceive the notion of integration, focusing on two main dimensions: integration as access to rights and opportunities and integration as social relationships. The second theme examines the experiences of the encampment policy from the perspectives of both refugees and host communities. These experiences include accounts about the camp as both a place of

restrictions and opportunities, the paradox of the camp as a "violent sanctuary", and the extent to which refugees and hosts participate in decision-making processes within Kakuma. Lastly, the third theme delves into intercommunity interactions in Kakuma, analysing both the nature of these interactions and the perceptions of trust between refugees and host community members. Through these thematic discussions, the chapter provides a nuanced understanding of the socio-political dynamics, challenges, and opportunities that shape integration outcomes for refugees and host communities in Kakuma.

2. Theme 1: Understandings of Integration in Kakuma

The concept of integration is understood in diverse and often contrasting ways by both refugees and host communities in Kakuma. While it is a central theme in humanitarian policies and development plans—such as the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan (KISED) and the Turkana County Integrated Development Plan—it does not have a singular, universally accepted definition among those who experience it firsthand. Instead, the meaning of integration is shaped by individual experiences, social interactions, and survival priorities within the refugee camp and surrounding host communities.

For many refugees, integration is associated with access to basic needs, opportunities for self-reliance, and peaceful coexistence with the host community. For host community members, however, integration is often viewed through the lens of intergroup relations, cultural compatibility, and economic competition. The perception of integration varies not only across these broad categories but also within them, influenced by factors such as ethnicity, economic status, and historical tensions between groups.

2.1 Integration as access to rights and opportunities.

According to the participants in Kakuma refugee camp, the term integration is understood by refugees and host communities within the context of access to more rights and socio-economic opportunities within the camp and in other places across the country. Given that

Turkana County itself is a historically marginalised region with limited resources and underdeveloped infrastructure (Shanguhyia, 2021), both refugees and host communities view integration as a pathway to securing better living conditions. For refugees, integration is deeply tied to access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and sustainable income, which are not just critical for survival but also for fostering dignity and economic independence. This is well captured by the views of a refugee participant #3 who said:

One area that will improve our integration here is I would like the organisations work to improve the water access for the people in the camp because getting water sometimes is very hard. Because we are getting water according to our blocks, some blocks can go for a week and they don't have water (Refugee participant #3, male refugee from Burundi).

The same refugee participant #3 expressed concerns about the prospect of becoming a naturalised Kenyan citizen, citing the challenges of surviving as a Kenyan due to widespread economic difficulties and human rights issues. According to him, acquiring citizenship does not necessarily represent an improvement in the refugees' circumstances. Furthermore, the fear of xenophobia from the local Turkana hosts significantly influences their decision to remain in the camp, even when they marry local community members. The participant #3 from Burundi explained this sentiment:

The only thing people fear is that they can be given citizenship and be called Turkanas so that they remain here, which many say they will not accept. Some say that they don't trust most Kenyans because even on the radio we hear how the citizens are being oppressed, being denied their rights (Refugee participant #3, Male Refugee from Burundi).

This observation by the Burundian participant sheds light on a profound mistrust in the broader socio-political interaction environment in Kakuma and Kenya in general, where refugees think they will not access their human rights and opportunities. These fears are rooted in both direct experiences of marginalisation and broader systemic issues, such as weak governance structures, lack of accountability, and the poor treatment of vulnerable groups within Kenya. Consequently, remaining in the camp is seen not only as a means of accessing humanitarian support but also as a way to avoid further risks and uncertainties associated with life as a naturalised Kenyan citizen.

Furthermore, integration is tied to economic independence and the ability to pursue socio-economic opportunities. The refugees view integration through the lens of being able to work, acquire skills, and build a sustainable future. However, given the economic realities in Kenya, some refugees fear that integration could leave them worse off if they are unable to secure employment or access land for farming. The Burundian refugee voiced concerns about being integrated into a system that does not provide pathways for economic independence:

Kenya is becoming more and more expensive. So if you tell me as a refugee, I have never gone to school, and I have no work skills, and you integrate me in Kenya, where am I going to start because if I was a farmer, unless you give me some land, so that I can work on this land, where am I going to start. So if you integrate me, I fear that I will not have the opportunity to actually go beyond what I am currently. That fear is the one which is making people not want integration (Refugee participant #3, Male Refugee from Burundi).

Similarly, host community members view integration in terms of access and retention of their right to ownership of property, such as land. The host participants were concerned about land ownership and the potential displacement of local people, as illustrated below:

I don't have a problem, but my understanding is that there is just a way that people will feel that refugees are taking over their land. You know, let's say if refugees are given a chance to buy land, maybe they will buy three-quarters of Kakuma (Female host Participant #9).

These comments underscore the deeply entrenched biases, anxieties, and frustrations among host communities regarding refugees. Many hosts perceive some refugee groups as a threat to local resources, cultural norms, and territorial claims.

For other host community members, integration is perceived as a mechanism for achieving mutual benefits through shared access to services, economic opportunities, and development projects that remain scarce in the region (Aukot, 2003; Shanguhya, 2021). As host participant #10 observes:

If the Turkana were getting food here, like the refugees they would have a better relationship and integrate better because they would see that they are treated equally. We can even share the firewood we have here because I also have what I can cook for my children, just like them. When they come from the camp, you can

even tell them to cut down one or two trees to go and use. But if now they are cutting and it is the only thing we rely on for livelihood, where do they expect us to get the livelihood from? (Host participant #10, Female).

However, achieving meaningful and effective integration in Kakuma—particularly through large-scale development initiatives such as the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan (KISED P)—requires more than just access to basic services. It necessitates the recognition of fundamental rights and freedoms, including the ability to own property, seek formal employment, and move freely within the country (Betts, 2022). Without these rights, integration in Kakuma remains a restricted and conditional process, limiting the extent to which refugees can truly rebuild their lives. Moreover, the development projects through which donor and humanitarian agencies hope to achieve integration risk exacerbating the existing intercommunity tensions in Kakuma and worsening the well-being outcomes, as was established by (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020b). This argument aligns with Amartya Sen’s Capability Approach, which posits that freedom is both the primary means and the ultimate end of development (Sen, 1999). Sen emphasises that development is incomplete if individuals are not granted fundamental freedoms such as political participation, economic opportunities, and peace. These freedoms enable individuals to seek better opportunities and lead fulfilling lives (Jamal, 2003). In the context of Kakuma, however, restrictive refugee policies significantly curtail these freedoms. The requirement for refugees to reside within designated camps confines them geographically, restricting their mobility and limiting their ability to engage meaningfully in Kenya’s broader economic and social systems. The encampment policy, while providing a level of protection and humanitarian assistance, ultimately undermines refugees’ autonomy and their capacity to contribute to long-term development. This reality exposes a fundamental disconnect between the humanitarian and development actors’ objectives and refugees’ actual capabilities. While agencies promote self-reliance and integration through livelihood development programmes and education, the structural limitations imposed by Kenya’s refugee policies hinder true economic and social inclusion.

Through the lens of Sen’s framework, it becomes evident that without substantive freedoms—including economic participation, social opportunities, and legal protections—refugees and hosts in Kakuma are not only denied the chance to improve their living conditions but also the dignity and agency that are essential for their survival and well-being. This raises an important question about the effectiveness of integration efforts in Kakuma: whether meaningful integration can exist within a framework of restrictions or freedom and empowerment. Addressing this tension is crucial in ensuring that integration policies and development plans in Kakuma do not merely sustain dependency among refugees but actively create pathways for them to thrive within their host communities

Jacobsen (2001) identifies critical markers of successful integration, such as access to education, healthcare, and adequate housing. However, in Kakuma, these markers are not merely unmet goals but sites of profound disenfranchisement and dehumanisation. The temporary and overcrowded conditions of education, healthcare, and housing in Kakuma refugee camp reflect a broader strategy of maintaining refugees as liminal figures within Kenya’s national landscape—neither fully included nor entirely excluded (Owiso, 2022). These conditions reinforce a state of impermanence, where refugees remain trapped in a cycle of dependency and restricted opportunities, unable to build sustainable futures for themselves and their families. Moreover, overcrowded schools and healthcare facilities illustrate the systemic neglect of the basic needs of refugees, thereby limiting their integration process. Education, often hailed by the UNHCR as a pathway to self-reliance (Easton-Calabria, 2022; UNHCR, no date a), remains out of reach for many due to a lack of adequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, and insufficient resources (Agol *et al.*, 2020; O’Keeffe and Lovey, 2023). Similarly, healthcare services are overstretched, with refugees waiting in long lines for limited medical attention (Bolon *et al.*, 2020). Housing is another stark reminder of refugees’ precarious status—due to Kenya’s encampment policy, permanent structures are prohibited, leaving many to reside in overcrowded, makeshift shelters that offer little security or dignity (Thomson, 2016). These conditions create an environment where refugees are systematically denied basic human rights, reinforcing their exclusion from broader socio-economic participation. As refugee participant #8 opines:

So you find most of the shelters are really not of a good quality, because they are not cemented, if you want the floor to be cemented then you use your own money, until now my house is not cemented. So they build just the walls and you know it's not of good quality because those holes that are there in the walls cannot give you security, because sometimes snakes and scorpions stay there, even rats (Refugee Participant #8- Female South Sudanese).

For many refugees, these barriers are not just bureaucratic obstacles but deeply personal sources of frustration and emotional distress. Somali refugee participant #4 articulated the psychological burden of being perpetually labelled a refugee, emphasising how this status limits access to opportunities and perpetuates economic disenfranchisement:

I think the Kenyan government should not limit refugees in terms of their state and integration. Like just being called a refugee, sometimes it's heartbreaking, you know. You can't access some things like access to education opportunities. Also, when it comes to work, there should be good harmonisation, where they should not limit refugees to only incentives. Because you can find someone who did a degree majoring in certain subjects, when they get the job, they are being paid less. Not even less, it's something like just saying thank you. It's not even a salary; it's just a thank-you thing. It's heartbreaking (Refugee Participant #4, Female Somali Refugee).

This statement highlights the disregard for refugee work by humanitarian agencies in Kakuma and the structural inequalities embedded within Kenya's policies toward refugees. Despite acquiring education and professional skills, refugees are often restricted to low-paying incentive²⁷ jobs within the camp, reinforcing economic precarity and dependency. The inability to seek fair employment opportunities outside the camp further entrenches the perception that integration remains an unfulfilled promise rather than a tangible reality.

Beyond economic exclusion, restrictions on movement further hinder integration of refugees and hosts in Kakuma (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020b). The encampment policy, enforced through bureaucratic travel restrictions, prevents refugees from freely relocating to seek better opportunities outside Turkana. During the research period, the Kenyan government's dusk-to-dawn curfew, imposed as a security measure, further constrained both refugees and host community members. Additionally, refugees face bureaucratic

²⁷ Incentive is a small stipend that is usually paid to refugees by NGO or Government employers at the end of every month for the work done.

hurdles when seeking permission to travel outside Kakuma for work or business, requiring approval from the Department of Refugee Services (DRS). A study by the Norwegian Refugee Council (2017) highlights the inefficiencies, delays, and complexities in obtaining necessary travel documents, compounding refugees' frustrations and limiting their ability to establish independent livelihoods. As Crisp (2004) argues, freedom of movement and access to documentation are essential legal measures to foster meaningful integration. One refugee expressed the deep frustration caused by these movement restrictions, advocating for the right to settle outside Turkana County and pursue economic opportunities elsewhere:

We should also be given the opportunity to live outside the camp, like maybe to down country (outside Turkana County), where we can do our business, where we can have a good life. Refugees should not only be limited to Kakuma. (Refugee participant #2, Female South Sudanese refugee).

This perspective underscores the need for policies that grant refugees autonomy over their lives rather than confining them to spaces of economic and social stagnation. Without the freedom to move, work, and integrate into Kenyan society on an equal footing, refugees in Kakuma remain trapped in a system that perpetuates their exclusion rather than fostering their self-reliance. The policy failure to address these fundamental barriers not only undermines integration efforts but also raises a critical question about the extent to which integration efforts can empower refugees and hosts in Kakuma when policy measures are designed to sustain refugees in a state of temporariness and control.

Life as a refugee in Kakuma comes with significant challenges. Even when they secure jobs, their legal status often subjects them to wage disparities, earning significantly less than Kenyan citizens for the same work. The denial of formal employment rights forces many refugees into the informal economy, where they operate small businesses without official permits, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, police harassment, and arbitrary enforcement of local regulations (IFC, 2018). Omata (2021b) argues that Kenya's encampment policy systematically excludes refugees from formal employment, reinforcing their economic marginalisation and dependence on humanitarian aid. In this regard, the

economic regulation of refugees is not separate from their spatial containment; encampment policies serve to limit refugees' economic mobility while simultaneously providing a labour pool for specific industries.

The institutionalised denial of employment rights positions refugees as reserve workers within Kenya's neoliberal economy, where their work is commodified for economic productivity while being denied substantive labour protections. This is exemplified by the incentive work arrangements, where refugees are employed by NGOs and aid agencies but receive only a fraction of what Kenyan workers earn for the same roles. This system of differential wages reflects broader patterns of labour exploitation within Kenya's international protection system, where refugees are utilised as a cheap source of labour to sustain the humanitarian system in Kakuma. Using refugees as incentive workers without actively advocating for their employment rights allows humanitarian organisations to benefit from refugee labour while sidestepping obligations to provide fair wages, benefits, or labour protections.

Such labour inequalities have profound implications for refugees' autonomy and dignity. The High Court of Kenya, in a ruling on refugee encampment, acknowledged that restricting refugees' access to the labour market lowers their dignity and deepens their dependency on external humanitarian aid (Lugulu & Moyomba, 2023). This ruling underscores the paradox of integration efforts in Kakuma—while development programmes emphasise self-reliance, refugees are simultaneously denied the legal and practical means to achieve it. The Kenyan government's restrictions also directly contravene Article 17 of the UN Refugee Convention, which affirms that:

The Contracting States shall accord to refugees lawfully staying in their territory the most favourable treatment accorded to nationals of a foreign country in the same circumstances, as regards the right to engage in wage-earning employment. - UN Refugee Convention, Article 17.

By failing to uphold these international human rights standards, Kenya's labour policies perpetuate a system where refugees are economically necessary yet structurally marginalized, allowed to participate in the economy in ways that benefit the state and

humanitarian agencies but denied the legal recognition and rights that would enable them to attain self-reliance.

As a result, some refugees view integration as having the right to equal treatment regardless of their refugee status. As suggested by Nabeny (2022), integration efforts in Kakuma should be anchored in legal rights for refugees that promote significant equality between different groups. One Burundian refugee reflected on the transformative potential of genuine integration:

The thing I can say about integration is that the government should organise all the policies that are needed because it is a good thing and we praise it. For the ten years that I have been living here, I have had a lot of stress because my life has no direction. When I consider my future or my children's future, I don't see anything. But if someone is properly integrated, they are able to build their lives and earn a living because we have the strength to look for work, and we have the minds to create jobs. But here in the camp, we don't have the freedom to pursue our dreams. Secondly, we don't have the capital to begin (Refugee participant #3, Burundian male refugee).

This statement reveals the gap between the idealised goals of integration policies—rights and opportunities—and the lived realities of those affected. He views integration not only as a policy objective but as a practice of unlocking individual and community potential, stressing that they already possess qualifications and skills—critical tools for agency and self-determination—but are hindered by systemic barriers. This understanding of integration as having the capability to pursue socio-economic goals aligns with a broader critique of the global humanitarian systems that view refugees primarily as passive recipients of aid rather than active agents of their destinies (Black, 1998; Balakian, 2016; Brankamp and Daley, 2020). In this regard, refugees in Kakuma demonstrate that integration is not merely a policy goal to be achieved through compliance but a lived, evolving practice rooted in the potential for self-empowerment.

Some participants also emphasised that integration rooted in equal treatment of refugees and local residents could address the discrimination and inequalities they face, offering a more inclusive and supportive environment. They argued that parity in opportunities, rights, and social interactions would help alleviate many challenges stemming from their refugee

status. For instance, one South Sudanese refugee highlighted how equitable treatment could have far-reaching impacts on their psychological well-being, social relationships, and future contributions to the community:

I will be more comfortable with more integration because that will give us refugees many answers. Maybe when we work, we can be paid at the same rate as them. We will not be underpaid while some of them are paid more. It will also open up more opportunities and make us feel like this is our home not a refugee camp. So, psychologically it will help a lot. So if we have that belief that this is home, it will make us build things that even if we leave later on, can help the hosts. And it will give us more freedom to interact with them. The problem now is that we think in terms of us being refugees and they being Kenyans, so they are likely to be treated better than us. That's why sometimes we fear them and we don't want to cross paths with them. But if we have equal rights, I think it will be better for us and for them (Refugee participant #2, Female Sudanese refugee).

In Kenya, refugees receive support from NGOs and humanitarian organisations under the 1951 Refugee Convention, while host community needs are primarily met by the government (Betts, 2022). In Kakuma, however, where the host community has long faced marginalisation, the humanitarian support provided to refugees can be perceived by the hosts as preferential treatment (Aukot, 2003), creating potential tensions (Rodgers, 2021). However, this does not mean that the economic conditions of refugees are any better. A refugee participant #3 stated:

For the camp we are given a little token, in terms of money, we call it bamba chakula, which is six hundred shillings, about six dollars. And then we also get to get ration for food, about three kilos of cereals, and a half kilo of parsley, a kilo of oil. However, these are not enough to support us for a whole month and you have to sometimes borrow food from a shopkeeper. Sometimes people can go up to three or four months borrowing. And the shopkeeper will give you what you need at that time, but they will keep your ration card as a guarantee (Refugee participant #3, Burundian male).

Anomat Ali, Imana and Ocha (2017) opined that the disparity in access to social welfare and resources negatively impacts the relationship between refugees and hosts in Kakuma. According to them, members of the host community in Kakuma feel that refugees are economically privileged due to the humanitarian aid that they receive. Indeed, Nabenyó (2022) confirmed that distribution of humanitarian aid to refugees in Kakuma is a

contentious issue since the hosts also experience severe forms of marginalisation and vulnerabilities. These experiences of unequal access to resources in Kakuma shape the perspectives of refugees and host communities regarding integration and what it means to them.

A Congolese refugee also highlighted this issue:

I'm Congolese and I live with Sudanese, we are living with people from other places as well, it isn't a problem. That would be good integration, but the challenge I see with that is, the host community members will feel under-served. Now, if we live in the same community, for example, if I have a Turkana neighbour, we will fetch water from the same tap, but at the end of the month, I will go to collect food, and he will not go. At some point, they will start feeling like they are somehow under-served. I think that will be a problem. But if they can open the limits to the camp, I can come and stay somewhere here, and a Turkana can come and stay in the camp. If we can just freely stay like that, it would be great (Refugee participant #10, Male Congolese DR refugee).

For many refugees, integration means equitable access to resources and services, freedom of movement, and the ability to contribute to the community in meaningful ways. These understandings of integration in Kakuma echo Ager and Strang's 2008 conceptual framework for integration by adding a critical element of mobility/movement, especially in protracted displacement contexts. According to Alastair Ager and Strang (2008), policy documents and analyses view integration along the sectoral issues like employment, housing, education, and health, which make up "Markers and Means." In addition, these indicators do not just mark a successful integration process but are also important means of achieving integration. The same can be said in Kakuma, where access to these critical aspects, including rights and freedoms, is limited, yet they play a crucial role in the process and achievement of integration of the hosts and refugees.

This vision of integration, however, contrasts with current policies, which limit such freedoms and make integration within Kakuma challenging. While the government of Kenya enacted a new refugee law in 2021 to address aspects of integration such as shared economic opportunities and public resources and services, there were still sections of the

new law that limited refugee rights and freedoms such as movement. For example, Section 8(2)(o) bestows the power of issuing movement passes to refugees wishing to travel outside the designated areas to the Commissioner of Refugee Affairs (CRA). Moreover, the restrictions of refugees to refugee camps still remained under the new law, thus deliberately confining the refugees to poor, economically marginalised host regions with no prospects of achieving meaningful self-reliance and integration. While the encampment policy is not explicitly mentioned in the policy, the requirement for the refugees to stay in “designated areas” under Sections 30 to 33 includes the camps since they are legally recognised as designated areas for hosting refugees.

The understanding of integration in terms of access to services in Kakuma can also be linked to the humanitarian program objectives being implemented by different organisations in the area. These programs often aim to promote integration by presenting their initiatives as equally beneficial to both refugees and host communities (De Berry and Roberts, 2018; Holloway and Sturridge, 2022). In some cases, they explicitly state that benefits will be shared evenly between refugees and hosts. However, in practice, these aspirations often fall short, leaving certain groups, particularly members of the host community, feeling marginalised and underserved. De Waal (2010, p. 130) critiques this practice of setting unrealistic expectations, arguing that the failure to deliver on such promises in a humanitarian context amounts to a form of cruelty, as it fosters disappointment and a sense of betrayal among affected populations. This disconnect between promises and outcomes is evident in the testimonies of host community members in Kakuma. One male host expressed frustration with the unfulfilled promises of shared benefits:

So many things were to benefit both the refugee and hosts. But you see, those for the hosts have been at a standstill. Though some are still pending, almost nearly half of the promises have been fulfilled. You see, like in education matters, there were scholarships they (humanitarian organisations) were saying that if they give to the refugees, they also give to the host community. Which none has been implemented. So that's the problem, even some of us who have gone to school see it. That is what would have benefited us in terms of integration (Host Participant #7, Male Member of the Host Community).

A female host community member highlighted the disparity in access to resources, referencing the Terms of Engagement (ToE) agreement signed in 2015 between the UNHCR Country Director and local representatives (Rodgers, 2021). She pointed out that while the agreement stipulated equitable distribution of resources between refugees and the host community, the reality on the ground paints a different picture:

Based on the agreement, which was signed for this settlement, it said that everything inside this settlement should be 50 per cent equal for refugees and hosts. So if you follow this agreement you will find that it is not adhered to, because they are biased towards refugees. They should have even said 70 per cent refugees and 30 per cent host that would have been at least better. When you look at water for example you will find a lot of boreholes inside the settlement but when you look at our side like right now we don't even have water for drinking, we use the water from the river which is not safe (Host participant #5, Female member of the Host Community).

This observation by host participant #5 underscores how perceived inequalities in resource distribution fuel tensions between refugees and the host community. Access to clean water, employment opportunities, and social services remains a major point of contention. The ToE outlined that 70% of job opportunities within the Kalobeyei settlement should be allocated to the host community, with unskilled and semi-skilled jobs designated entirely for locals (Rodgers, 2021). Additionally, the agreement emphasised prioritising members of the host community for national job opportunities linked to refugee programmes (p. 209). However, discussions with participants revealed that information about the agreement is poorly disseminated, with only a few individuals—such as politicians and senior humanitarian officials—having full knowledge of its details and implementation framework.

As a result of the knowledge gap regarding key policy documents in Kakuma, many host community members operate under misconceptions about resource allocation, believing they are entitled to 50% of all opportunities. This lack of clear communication leads to frustration and perceptions of systemic bias in favour of refugees, and create a sense of exclusion among the host community (Nabenyo, 2022). Additionally, the mismatch between policy goals and implementation realities undermines trust of the host community in the integration processes, such as development projects, exacerbating long-standing grievances

about marginalisation in Turkana County (Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016). Ultimately, sentiments like those expressed by Host Participant #5 highlight the structural challenges of refugee-host integration in Kakuma. The failure to ensure equitable access to resources, rather than fostering cooperation and coexistence, as was evident in the comment by the host participant #2:

Most projects that are implemented in the refugee camp nowadays are just concentrated inside the camp, none leaves unless there are unrest, quarrels, and sometimes demonstrations. Now, you see it's the refugees and the humanitarian organisations encouraging demonstrations because I can't see you being served while I am not, I will start a fight. So they can't say I'm the one who started the fight. It is caused by the person who gives one person and leaves the other (Host participant #2, Male).

These perspectives on integration in Kakuma by host participants #5 and #7 challenge common definitions of integration, as outlined by ECRE (2002), Bourhis et al. (1997), and Sigona (2005). The participants' views expand on Fellesson's (2023) concept of integration as a two-way process, arguing instead that integration must ensure equal access to resources for both refugees and host communities. While Fellesson suggests that effective integration should provide refugees with equal opportunities, security, and a sense of belonging, these aspirations remain difficult to achieve in Kakuma, where the host community also faces systemic deprivation and marginalisation (Jansen, 2018). As Gordon Allport's (1954) contact theory emphasises, equal status between groups and strong institutional support are essential for fostering positive intergroup relations and sustainable integration outcomes. However, in Kakuma, such equal status is undermined by the lack of a long-term integration and development strategy that benefits both communities.

Yet, these challenges to refugee integration in Kakuma also reflect broader global humanitarian governance systems, which often conceptualise refugee integration not as a pathway to full inclusion but as a mechanism of stabilisation (Jaji, 2012; Agwanda, 2022a; Ngendakurio, 2022). In this regard, integration efforts tend to be framed within the logic of containment, ensuring that displaced populations remain in regions of first asylum rather than being resettled elsewhere or fully incorporated into national economies (Betts, 2022;

Ngendakurio, 2022). This is evident in Kenya's encampment policy, which restricts refugee mobility and access to formal employment, thus perpetuating a reliance on humanitarian aid. Such refugee policies align with global trends where donor states and international humanitarian agencies prioritise regional solutions that keep refugees and other migrants within the Global South, such as the EU Trust Fund for Africa, which is increasingly being tied to the EU's policy strategy of stopping irregular migration from Africa and facilitating return of nationals (Raty and Shilhav, 2020; Betts, 2022). Ultimately, integration, as a concept and practice, cannot be separated from the global humanitarian governance systems that shape it. If integration initiatives in Kakuma continue to be framed primarily as a means of stabilising displaced populations rather than as a commitment to promoting refugees' human rights and access to equitable socio-economic opportunities, it will reproduce existing inequalities rather than challenge them.

2.2 Integration as social relationships

The social fabric of Kakuma is stretched and stitched together in uneven patterns, where refugees and host communities navigate the fragile terrain of coexistence. Relationships between the two groups are complex, layered with moments of collaboration and conflict, connection and distance. These interactions, however tentative, create a web of shared life that is both tenuous and necessary. Trade, social activities, and even intermarriages weave together a sense of belonging, but this fragile interdependence is constantly tested by structural inequalities and historical marginalisation. The rocky relationship between refugees and hosts (Anomat Ali, Imana and Ocha, 2017) is occasionally disrupted by episodes of violence between the groups²⁸ (McKinsey, 2003b; Jansen, 2011a, 2018; Betts, Flinder Stierna, *et al.*, 2023a), which threaten long-term integration.

According to the participants, both refugees and host community members in Kakuma view integration as the ability to establish and sustain meaningful relationships with one another.

²⁸ For example, in July 2024, more than 3,000 Ethiopian refugees fled from Kakuma refugee camp after an attack by South Sudanese refugees which led to the death of two Ethiopian refugees and many others injured (Lutta, 2024)

Despite the policy-driven separation between the refugee camp and the host community, evidence of social interactions—such as intermarriages, business partnerships, and friendships—illustrates the intertwined lives of refugees and hosts. These relationships align with the concepts of social bonds and social bridges described in Ager and Strang’s (2008) framework for understanding integration. Based on this framework, social bonds refer to the connections within co-ethnic or co-national groups, which provide emotional support and a sense of belonging. Social bridges, on the other hand, represent connections with members of other communities, fostering participation in broader social systems and promoting harmonious coexistence. Yet, in Kakuma, these bonds, like business partnerships, are not simply a product of cultural affinity but are also a response to exclusionary structures that limit refugees’ ability to engage with the host community on equal terms. Given legal restrictions on movement, employment, and property ownership, refugees are often forced to rely on informal economies and social networks within their own communities (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020a; Pincock, Easton-Calabria and Betts, 2020).

Ager and Strang also identify other critical elements of integration, including markers and means, facilitators, and a sense of foundation. Markers and means encompass tangible public outcomes of integration, such as employment, education, health, and housing. Facilitators are policy measures aimed at reducing barriers to integration, such as promoting peace, stability, and equal access to rights. The foundation of integration, however, lies in belonging and shared nationhood. In Kenya, this foundation is weakened by the lack of pathways to citizenship for refugees, reflecting the government’s view of refugee status as a temporary condition. Even refugees who marry Kenyan citizens are denied the right to naturalise, reinforcing their marginalisation and limiting their sense of belonging.

For the refugee participants in Kakuma, building relationships at the local level is essential for feeling settled. Social bonds offer critical emotional and psychological support by connecting refugees with people who share similar values, interests, and experiences (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020a). Without these bonds, refugees often struggle with isolation and mental health challenges such as depression (Ibid). At the same time, social

bridges between refugees and members of the host community promote mutual understanding and collaboration. Shared activities in the camp, such as weddings, sports, education, and attendance at religious events, foster trust and cooperation. Schools and churches, for example, serve as vital spaces for building these connections.

For some refugees, particularly those born in Kakuma, the camp and its surroundings already feel like home. One South Sudanese refugee stated,

For me, I have stayed here all my life. I was born here, and I don't even know South Sudan. So if they say that we should integrate more with the hosts and maybe settle permanently, I will just stay here. I will continue staying because I am already used to the area and the people (Refugee participant #8, Female Refugee from South Sudan).

Host community members also recognise the relationships formed with refugees through intermarriage, trade, and collaboration, but these connections are deeply shaped by the political and spatial constraints of the encampment system (Aukot, 2003; Jansen, 2018; Muluka, 2023). The camp is designed as a site of both refuge and restriction, where refugees are provided shelter and aid but are also confined to a designated space, separated from the host community (Jaji, 2012). Despite these imposed barriers, personal relationships have emerged as a way to navigate, and at times challenge, these divisions.

A Turkana man described how intermarriages have taken place within the camp, blurring the rigid boundaries between refugees and the host population:

So many Turkana have married the refugees. They have even married within the camp. They have married Ethiopians and even Somalis. They stay with them in the camp because they have a house there. So they stay together with the wife there in the camp (Host participant #6, Male member of the Host Community).

As for why a member of the host community would choose to move to join his or her partner inside the camp, one possible explanation is the practical and legal constraints that prevent refugees from easily moving outside the camp. Many lack the right to reside or work freely in Kenya (Betts, 2022), making it difficult for them to relocate to Turkana towns or villages outside the camp permanently after marriage. This movement challenges the policy of separation and containment inside the camps, demonstrating that social and

familial ties do not conform to the rigid structures of the encampment system in Kakuma. However, the movement also highlights the unequal power dynamics at play, as refugees remain restricted within the camp even after marrying and integrating into local families.

Beyond marriage, everyday social interactions—such as attending the same schools, vocational training programs, and religious gatherings—create informal social bridges between the two groups. A Congolese refugee described how these relationships flourish despite the constraints of encampment policy:

I think there is some good integration, but I would classify that as two ways. I think at a personal level, there is a good relationship between refugees and the Turkana people. We talk, we meet, we play together, we do things together. Unfortunately, because we have to live in different areas, we have to be in the refugee camp, and they have to be outside the refugee camp, we don't always meet that much. Yeah, but I would say based on my own experience, I have met most Turkana people in schools, in vocational training, not in public schools (Refugee participant #7, Male Congolese DR refugee).

This statement reflects a paradox: while meaningful interpersonal relationships do exist, they do not necessarily translate into structural or legal integration. The state-enforced separation of the camp and the host community limits the frequency and depth of social interaction, restricting opportunities for deeper integration. Schools and vocational training programs serve as some of the few shared spaces where refugees and host community members interact, but these spaces are shaped by disparities in access to education and employment. Ultimately, while personal relationships—through marriage, trade, and social gatherings—help foster a sense of connection and coexistence, they do not dismantle the broader political, legal, and economic inequalities that define the refugee-host dynamic in Kakuma (Aukot, 2003). The encampment system remains a powerful force in shaping who belongs, who moves, and who remains confined, demonstrating that integration is not simply a social process but a deeply political one, contingent on power, rights, and access to resources.

These participants' accounts reflect Ager and Strang's findings in Pollokshaws and Islington where integration was shaped by community-level relationships (Ager and Strang, 2008). In

Kakuma, personal connections between refugees and hosts serve as powerful enablers of integration, helping both groups navigate challenges and fostering a shared sense of humanity. However, the absence of legal inclusion situates refugees in a state of permanent liminality, where their social connections, no matter how robust, remain insufficient for achieving full membership in the host society. For example, the denial of naturalisation as a pathway to obtaining Kenyan citizenship, even in cases of intermarriage, underscores the fragility of integration in Kakuma (Dhala, 2024). Ultimately, the relationships formed in Kakuma highlight the participants' perception of integration not only about policies or service provision but also about the interpersonal connections that create spaces of resilience, collaboration, and mutual respect despite systemic constraints.

The idea of integration, particularly through social relationships, is also closely linked to the ability to coexist peacefully. While schools, markets, and places of worship provide important spaces for interaction, these exchanges occur within a broader context marked by resource scarcity, systemic neglect, and socio-political tensions. As a result, building and maintaining harmonious relationships becomes essential for enabling individuals to coexist and thrive together. One Somali refugee reflected on how peaceful interactions with the local Turkana community embody the core of integration:

For us, integration would be if we could live together; for example, here in the settlement, many of the Turkana live close by; in fact, many have their houses nearby. They live with the refugees peacefully. If the hosts will be brought to stay together with us, it's not a problem; people will agree, and we can't refuse (Refugee participant #4, Female Somali Refugee).

This statement reflects a readiness among some refugees to interact more with hosts when such interaction is accompanied by mutual respect and peace. The presence of local Turkana neighbours living in close proximity to refugees in the camp serves as a practical example of the integration process in action, driven by social connections and mutual benefits rather than solely by policy objectives. For others, the notion of integration is deeply tied to the emotional and psychological comfort that exists in a peaceful environment. A South Sudanese refugee explained:

For me, you know from my heart, integration means being in a peaceful place, and that's where my heart wants to be. But if a place is not peaceful, I don't wish to be here. So, although in Kalobeyei, we have a lot of challenges, there is too much sun, and the weather changes every time; above all, what humans need is always peace. Where there is peace is where someone can live (Refugee participant #6, Male South Sudanese Refugee).

This sentiment highlights that the outcomes of a meaningful integration policy and approach extend beyond the enjoyment of material resources or legal rights—they encompass the fundamental human need for stability and safety. In displacement and fragile contexts like Kakuma, peaceful coexistence allows individuals to focus on rebuilding their lives, establishing relationships, and contributing to the community, rather than living in fear or conflict (Desai, 2020; Marley, 2020). The recurring emphasis on peace as a prerequisite for integration also points to its potential role in resolving tensions between host and refugee communities. Many integration challenges in Kakuma, such as competition over resources, feelings of marginalisation, and cultural misunderstandings, could be mitigated through sustained efforts to promote peace and intercommunity dialogue. When peace is established, trust can grow, enabling refugees and hosts to collaborate on shared goals, such as socio-economic development.

Moreover, peace facilitates the development of shared spaces and activities, such as schools, markets, and places of worship, where both communities interact positively in Kakuma. Such shared spaces are not only practical but also symbolic of the mutual respect and intercommunity relationships that underpin effective integration. However, to achieve this vision, deliberate efforts from both local leadership and humanitarian organizations are necessary to promote dialogue, resolve disputes, and address grievances that may disrupt peaceful coexistence. Ultimately, peaceful coexistence is more than the absence of latent conflict as conceptualized by sociologist Émile Durkheim (Fonseca, Lukosch and Brazier, 2019)—it is the presence of conditions that allow for cooperation, understanding, and the building of shared futures. As refugees like the Somali and South Sudanese participants have expressed, it is this peaceful foundation that enables integration to evolve into a process of mutual benefit.

To explore the nature of social relationships in Kakuma, having friends and living side by side were examined. When asked whether they had friendships with members of the other community and if they would be comfortable living as neighbours, the participants in the Kakuma offered a range of responses. For example, some indicated that they had close friendships with refugees and would welcome the idea of living together in the same area. For them, such integration seemed like an automatic progression of their already established relationships. One host community member shared:

There are few refugees whom we have interacted with and built those synergy and friendship with. So I will be comfortable with more integration and living together with them, because I will be able to learn from them and interact, maybe learn their culture. Adopt good interventions or good initiatives from them. I can learn more, they can as well learn some good things they can be able to replicate in their homes within or when they will get back to their nations (Host participant #6, Female member of the host community).

However, not all participants shared this view. Some, even if they had friendships with refugees, were reluctant about the idea of living in the same space or neighbourhood. Their concerns were often linked to practical issues, such as environmental sustainability, shared resources, and the broader implications of integration on the host community. One host participant who had friends from the refugee community remarked:

Yes, I have some friends from Sudan, and some from Congo and Burundi. We talk daily, every other time, and then we do business together. Like I can buy goods here, I send her and she sells for me and sends me the money, she also sends me goods and I sell for her. However, I think more integration will need a negotiation between the community and maybe the government first. Because it's rare, I don't know, I'm not sure if the community can really agree to that (Host participant #1, Female member of the host community).

The above response highlights that while personal relationships may be positive, the broader question of integration involves more complex considerations. In this case, the host community member pointed out that the process would require careful negotiation involving all stakeholders to ensure that the interests and concerns of the community as a whole are addressed. Furthermore, this negotiation points to a broader desire for integration to be a shared responsibility, where both refugees and hosts contribute to and adhere to agreed-upon practices.

These calls for negotiated and agreed-upon integration in Kakuma by the participants, like host #1 can be explained using Jacques Derrida's concept of "conditional hospitality" (O'Gorman, 2006). Derrida suggests that while people may show hospitality to others, it is often limited by boundaries; they may not be willing to accept everyone unconditionally or relinquish full control over their space, home, or nation to outsiders (Ibid). Derrida's concept of conditional hospitality highlights the inherent power dynamics in Kakuma, where hosts retain control over the terms of coexistence. This is evident in the Turkana's emphasis on protecting local resources, such as trees, and their demand for reciprocal contributions from refugees. Such conditions reveal the fragility of the host-guest dichotomy, as hospitality is continually negotiated and reasserted. In Kakuma, the concept of hospitality is deeply intertwined with the socio-political and economic realities of the host and refugee communities, revealing both the limitations of hospitality and the fragility of the host-guest dichotomy. While there are moments of solidarity and mutual support, the boundaries between host and guest are frequently blurred, reconstituted, or even violently reasserted based on shifting circumstances.

The conditional nature of the welcome extended to refugees by hosts in Kakuma highlights the limits of hospitality in this context. While many local Turkana hosts welcome refugees, they do so on terms that protect their interests and address concerns like resource competition and environmental conservation. For example, some hosts expressed their willingness to live alongside refugees but emphasized that refugees must ensure that they play a role in protecting local resources, such as trees, which are vital for Turkana's already fragile ecosystem. This reflects a form of hospitality that is conditional, shaped by the socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities of the host community. The participant said:

I can agree for refugees to be here and to live among us. The only thing I have an issue about is the issue about trees. They sell trees around village three and village two. (Host participant #5, Female local member of the host community)

Another host participant said:

I don't have a problem with refugees, they are good people. They are just human, when you interact with them you will see there is no difference. The only problem I have is the issue of land ownership by refugees. Let's say if refugees are given a

chance to buy land, maybe they will buy three-quarters of Kakuma (Host participant #9, Female local member of the host community)

Based on the comments by host participants #5 and #9, refugees are expected to adhere to the expectations and values of the host community, such as not cutting down trees and not owning any property, like land. By setting these conditions, the hosts maintain a sense of control over their space while allowing integration to a degree that aligns with their priorities.

Despite these conditions imposed by hosts in terms of their hospitality towards the refugees, the host-guest dichotomy in Kakuma is also sometimes violently asserted when tensions arise, especially due to the perceived inequities in resource distribution (Aukot, 2003). Some host community members, for instance, express resentment over refugees receiving food aid and other forms of international support. This perspective is well captured by (Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016, p. 13) who stated that “Turkana groups largely coexist in a dynamic landscape wherein distrust, reinforced by numerous narratives and experiences of wrongdoing and aggression, might occasionally explode into violence”. One Congolese refugee pointed out the potential for conflict due to shared resources like relief food. This creates a fragile balance where integration is conditional on addressing perceived inequalities and ensuring that both groups feel equally supported.

Yes, I have friends from Sudan and South Sudan, that's the majority for me. And very few Turkana and Kenyans. For me more integration and living together wouldn't be a problem. I'm Congolese and I live with Sudanese, we are living with people from other places, it isn't a problem. That would be also good, but the challenge I see with that is going to be, the host community members will feel underserved. Because now if we live in the same community like if I have a Turkana neighbour, we will fetch water from the same tap, but at the end of the month I will go to collect food and he will not go. At some point they will start feeling like they are somehow underserved. I think that will be a problem (Refugee FGD participant #18, Male DR Congolese refugee).

Similarly, some refugees exhibited ambivalence toward closer integration, highlighting safety concerns and cultural differences that perpetuate the separation between the groups. A female South Sudanese refugee expressed discomfort with the idea of living too

close to the host community, citing fears of violence and the presence of firearms among some host members. These apprehensions highlight how trust and coexistence can remain contingent on maintaining physical and cultural boundaries. She observed:

Yes, I have host friends and would love to integrate more with them, if we will stay in peace. However, I will not feel comfortable, maybe if they want to do that, the host community should stay on the other side, we stay on the other side. To be honest, I fear those people because of the guns (Refugee FGD participant #14, Female South Sudanese refugee).

Moreover, the notion of the "host" itself is complex and contested in Kakuma. While the Turkana community is officially designated as the host population, they often endure the same hardships and marginalisation as the refugees they are said to host. This shared experience of vulnerability blurs the lines between host and guest, with the Turkana frequently perceiving themselves not as privileged providers of sanctuary but as co-survivors in an environment marked by resource scarcity and systemic neglect. This perspective is captured in Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru (2016) observation that the Turkana locals describe themselves as "beleaguered hosts" and "neglected others" relative to the refugees.

The fluidity of the host identity in Kakuma is further exemplified by the economic interdependence between the Turkana and the refugees. Many Turkana residents engage in the refugee camp's economy, taking on roles such as hotel attendants, shopkeepers, and cleaners. This economic participation reverses the usual expectations of host-guest relations, as the so-called hosts frequently depend on the refugee-led businesses for employment and income. A Kenyan government official described this phenomenon:

From here in Kalobeyei, you will find almost every morning between six thirty and seven thirty, a big number of women and children from the host walking towards the settlement zone. They are employed there, in manual jobs like hotel attendants, shopkeepers, cleaners, stuff like that, so you will find them walking towards the settlement then in the evening they will be coming back (Government participant #1, Assistant County Commissioner (ACC)).

This daily movement of Turkana residents to the camp highlights how the refugee economy has become a lifeline for many in the host community. It also challenges the traditional portrayal of hosts as autonomous providers of assistance and guests as dependent recipients (Pincock, Easton-Calabria and Betts, 2020). Instead, the relationship is one of interdependency, where both groups somehow benefit from the local economy. The contested nature of the host role also underscores the inequities embedded in the humanitarian system in Kakuma where the refugees mainly receive international aid in the form of food rations, education, and healthcare services, albeit insufficient to meet their needs. Meanwhile, the Turkana host community, despite being the official host population, frequently lacks comparable access to these services. This disparity worsens the sense of grievance among the Turkana people, who then perceive the refugees as disproportionately benefiting from the international humanitarian apparatus at their expense.

In conclusion, the varying perspectives on integration between host community members and refugees highlight the deeply rooted systemic issues that shape their daily lives and relationships. For host community members, integration often centres around equitable access to resources, such as food, water, and employment opportunities. Their concerns are primarily driven by resource scarcity and the fear of losing access to local benefits, which are already limited. Many host participants emphasised the need for a community-wide consensus on how refugees should be integrated, suggesting that integration should not solely be about coexistence but also about ensuring that no group feels marginalised or burdened by the presence of the other. This view reflects a broader desire for integration to be a fair and mutually beneficial process—one that protects the interests of the host community while fostering cooperation. On the other hand, refugees in Kakuma view integration more through the lens of rights and freedoms. For them, integration is about the ability to move freely, access work opportunities, and pursue their goals without restrictions tied to their refugee status. While most refugees expressed a willingness to integrate with the host community, some preferred maintaining distinct boundaries between the two groups, seeking autonomy and a sense of independence. They highlighted

that integration, for them, was not just about coexisting physically but about achieving parity in rights, opportunities, and recognition.

These differing views underscore the complex nature of integration in Kakuma. To move toward a more equitable form of integration, it is crucial to address these structural challenges. For example, there is a need to implement equitable resource distribution mechanisms that ensure both refugees and host communities have access to essential services and opportunities, such as clean water, education, and employment. Additionally, shared governance models that involve both refugees and hosts in decision-making processes could foster mutual understanding and collaboration. Greater recognition of refugee rights—such as the right to work and freedom of movement—could also alleviate tensions and pave the way for more genuine integration. These challenges and potential solutions are not unique to Kakuma. They reflect broader global patterns of protracted displacement, where refugees are often trapped in limbo, living in conditions of uncertainty and restricted opportunities. Addressing these issues in Kakuma can serve as a model for other regions grappling with similar challenges, demonstrating how systemic inequalities must be addressed for integration to be a truly transformative and inclusive process.

Overall, while the perspectives on integration in Kakuma differ, the ultimate goal should be to create a foundation for sustainable livelihood—one that goes beyond the constraints of policy and acknowledges the lived realities of both refugees and host communities. This requires a commitment to dismantling the systemic inequalities that divide them and building a more inclusive, equitable future. With a focus on shared resources, governance, and respect for rights, integration in Kakuma can evolve from a contested ideal to a practical and transformative reality, where both refugees and hosts can flourish together.

3. Theme 2: Experiences of the Encampment Policy in Kakuma

The experiences of refugees and host communities in Kakuma are shaped by a complex interplay of legal, social, and structural factors that vary depending on nationality, gender, and socio-economic status. According to the participants in this study, refugees' experiences within Kakuma refugee camp are far from homogeneous. While some find ways

to engage in economic activities or establish small enterprises, others face compounded challenges in accessing those opportunities. For others, the camp embodies a violent sanctuary—offering safety from external conflict but creating new struggles within its confines.

The host community's relationship with the camp is more nuanced than the traditional host-guest narrative suggests. Members of the local Turkana community, officially labelled "hosts" by the government and humanitarian agencies, often feel marginalised and face their own struggles with resource scarcity and limited opportunities. Many view themselves as "co-survivors" rather than privileged beneficiaries, sharing vulnerabilities with the refugee population. This shared hardship complicates notions of integration, which in Kakuma is less about simple coexistence and more about recognising overlapping vulnerabilities and addressing systemic inequalities that affect both groups. True integration, therefore, requires strategies that go beyond fostering harmony to actively confronting and rectifying the structural inequities that shape the lives of both refugees and hosts. In this context, both communities navigate the camp's constraints in search of stability and opportunity, making the concept of "co-survivor" particularly relevant to understanding life in Kakuma.

3.1 Kakuma Refugee Camp as a Space of Restrictions and Opportunities.

In Kakuma most refugees viewed the refugee camp as a restrictive space, mainly due to the legal requirement that all refugees in Kenya stay in camps and limitations on their socio-economic activities. For example, Article 31 of the 2021 Refugee Act requires refugees to stay in designated areas such as camps except under special circumstances such as the pursuit of higher education and special healthcare, among others. In this regard, Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps make up two of the main designated areas hosting refugees in Kenya. There are also a sizable number of refugees (13.4 percent) living in urban areas such as Nairobi, Eldoret, Kitale and Mombasa (UNHCR Kenya, 2024a). Based on these legal limitations, Crisp (2003) argued that the right to asylum in Kenya is premised upon compliance with certain restrictive conditions. One refugee noted:

Some restrictions like you are not allowed to change the shape of the house. So, you have to live in a tent house until your house is constructed by Peace Winds Japan. That wait takes around four to seven years. Now, you know the roadblocks around the camp. You cannot pass the roadblocks if you don't have the travel documents, and if travel documents are offered by the camp manager, you have to attach a serious reason. That serious reason should be medical or a very big urgency that requires you to go out of the camp. But other things like going to look for a job, going to see a friend, those ones you are not issued that document (Refugee participant #9, Male refugee from Uganda).

Initially established as emergency shelters in the early 1990s, refugee camps in Kenya have evolved into rigid, politically driven structures. Jaji (2012, p. 221) describes them as a “social technology” used to control refugee populations through regulatory frameworks, physical infrastructure, and movement restrictions, aligning with Kenya’s non-integration policy. Sytnik (2012) highlights systemic barriers that hinder refugees from obtaining documents or asylum status, reinforcing their isolation. These measures are often justified by security concerns, framing refugees as both vulnerable populations and potential threats (Mogire, 2009; Brankamp, 2021). Critics, including Betts (2022), argue that the Refugee Act of 2021 prioritises security over human rights, treating refugees as risks rather than individuals in need of protection. Reflecting on these policies, one NGO participant noted:

For me, I see the restrictions as a good thing because now, when you have different nationalities, and most of the reasons for flight are conflicts, then you need to be able to protect the country because if you don't securitise the laws on refugees and refugee management, it will be very difficult to manage them. After all, what will happen is that those rebels might create small militias here. Then, it will force us, the hosts, to look for safe havens (Non-Governmental Organisation participant #3).

This view positions the restrictions on refugees as a means to protect the host country from broader geopolitical instability. In addition, it also reveals how the camp’s governance, which is rooted in a securitised framework, directly impacts refugees’ daily lives and limits their potential. However, security logics do not exist in isolation from economic concerns; rather, securitisation of refugee policies often serves to justify the selective economic incorporation of certain refugees while excluding others

Within the camp, refugees face stringent regulations and extensive monitoring, turning Kakuma into an “occupied enclave” (Brankamp, 2019, p. 69). These controls permeate

nearly every aspect of their lives, from movement restrictions to limitations on basic services and opportunities. One refugee participant described how even obtaining a simple mobile phone SIM card is fraught with barriers. She explained that, at one point, Safaricom, a mobile network provider, had, without prior notice, suspended the issuance of new SIM cards for refugees, stating that there was a need for fresh registration inside the camp. At present, she cannot even obtain a new SIM card due to her "alien" status, which restricts her from engaging with essential services. Furthermore, the economic limitations placed on refugees extend into their professional lives. Refugee teachers, for instance, earn a modest salary of less than one hundred dollars per month, which cannot be increased because of the UNHCR's policies that prevent salary adjustments for refugees working in the camp. These financial constraints exacerbate the broader issue of restricted movement, as refugees are not allowed to leave the camp without explicit permission, often for only a limited time. This restriction is particularly frustrating for those who have entrepreneurial aspirations. Refugee participant #1, for example, shared how some refugees with strong business skills are confined within the camp's boundaries, despite the fact that the best opportunities for their businesses might lie elsewhere. The camp's policies force them into a position of stunted potential, where even their ambition is inhibited by bureaucratic control. She notes:

There was a time when the Safaricom sim cards were closed because they needed renewing. And currently, as a refugee, I cannot get a new sim card because I cannot use my alien identity to get a sim card. Also, primary school teachers who are refugees earn less than a hundred dollars per month. Due to the restrictions that come with UNHCR, their salaries cannot be increased. We are very much restricted in terms of movement in and out of the camp. You will find there are very good business people who would like to expand their business, and they are very restricted from doing that. They are confined to the camp, and sometimes the opportunities are not just here; they might be somewhere else, but the policy says refugees are not allowed to move, and if you do, you will have to have permission from the camp for a specific period of time. So that restricts many people from achieving their potential actually (Refugee participant #1, Female refugee from South Sudan).

Another refugee participant provided a powerful metaphor to illustrate the complete control that the UNHCR and the Kenyan government wield over refugees. He compared

their situation to that of an insect being held in someone's hands, with the authorities deciding whether the insect remains alive or is crushed. He stated:

To the UNHCR and the Government of Kenya, our situation is like someone holding an insect in their hands. If someone asks them whether the insect is alive or dead, it's entirely up to them. If they want it to live, they can let it be. If they want it dead, they simply squeeze it (Refugee FGD participant #12, Male refugee from DR Congo)

This analogy starkly conveys the profound sense of powerlessness that refugees experience. Like the insect, their fates are entirely determined by the decisions of those in positions of authority, such as the UNHCR and the Kenyan government. The metaphor underscores the lack of agency that refugees feel—how their lives are not their own to direct but are instead subject to the whims of external powers that can easily decide their future, much like squeezing an insect to its end. This sense of being trapped under tight control in Kakuma limits refugees' fundamental freedoms and severely curtails their long-term potential for integration and self-reliance. It highlights a broader system of governance that places refugees under constant scrutiny and constraint, all under the guise of security, but in reality, it strips them of basic opportunities and rights to build lives of dignity and autonomy (Agamben, 1998).

While the camp restrictions mainly affect the refugees, the hosts are also impacted since some measures, such as curfew, affect their movements and interactions with the refugees. Most members of the host community are critical of the policy restrictions and their impacts on the lives of the refugees. As one participant observed:

As from six o'clock, the refugees are always back in the camp because of the curfew. Past six, we are not allowed to walk across the camp. I would say maybe the UN has its reasons, but I don't think it's fair. I think the curfew is mostly because of the new arrivals. You know, it's like the new arrivals are caged, like they are enclosed in one place and are not allowed to walk around. I think it is to prevent people from attacking one another (Host participant #10, Female member of the host community)

Another one said:

Most of the sanctions were put by the government within the camp. In the camp, by six o'clock, there is no movement, and there are no host community members in the camp. There are police patrols and the General Service Unit (paramilitary police), and if you are caught, you are beaten thoroughly. I think they can lift most of those measures they have put within the camp. They need to support the camp people with services, like maybe having birth certificates, services like travelling permits or documents (Host FGD participant #11, Male member of the host community).

The other reasons why the camp is viewed by refugees as a restrictive space relate to its location as well as to the individual status and identities of refugees. Kakuma refugee camp is located in Kenya's remote, arid northwestern border region, far from areas with better socio-economic prospects where the majority of the nation's population lives. In choosing this area, the government's aim was to keep the refugees invisible in public discourse and programmes, leaving much of the responsibility of hosting refugees to the UNHCR. As Opi (2024) suggested, Kakuma refugee camp serves to make refugees feel alien and alienated from the rest of the country. By confining refugees to Kakuma, the Kenyan government has pushed them to the margins of society, effectively rendering them voiceless. In this setting, refugees assume a subaltern status, occupying a space that, as Agamben (1998) describes, is designed to sustain "bare lives" — lives stripped of rights and dignity. Consequently, the restrictions in Kakuma are imposed not on individuals based on who they are, but rather because of what they represent: refugees. As one refugee said:

I think the restrictions are because of the state of being a refugee. That term usually limits us. But you can find refugees who go beyond the limitations and succeed in many things. But mostly when it comes to education, you can find many youths who have finished high school but don't have access to higher education (Refugee participant #4, Female refugee from Somalia).

Another participant highlighted that the location of the camp in a place with hostile climatic conditions imposes significant restrictions on access to basic necessities. Located in a region with high temperatures, low rainfall, and little agricultural potential, the environment makes it challenging for refugees to access essential necessities like adequate water and a healthy, liveable environment vital for human survival. As Oka (2011, p. 223) described it, Kakuma is an "inhospitable landscape". In addition, being far from Kenya's capital city

further compounds the challenges faced by refugees, as they are not able to easily travel and connect with the majority of the citizens.

Even compared to where I came from, there's nowhere as harsh as this place. The sun is unbearably hot, it rarely rains, and we don't have enough water. Honestly, if the UNHCR leaves us here, we will all die. Who will take care of us? And what will the hosts do, since they receive most benefits due to the presence of humanitarian organisations supporting refugees here. If I am left here to survive on my own, I will leave this place just like I left my homeland Burundi (Refugee participant #3, Male refugee from Burundi).

The Kakuma Refugee Camp is often perceived as a paradoxical space—a place of restriction and control that simultaneously serves as a hub of economic opportunity. Refugees and members of the host community engage in diverse livelihood activities, turning the camp into an unexpected centre for economic activity. Jansen (2018) introduces the concepts of “campital” and “digging aid” to describe how refugees, and even local hosts, navigate these restrictions to create income-generating opportunities that supplement their humanitarian assistance.

“Campital”, a combination of financial, social, and human capital, reflects the diverse resources refugees draw upon to survive and thrive within the camp. These resources include the skills they bring, their social networks, and the innovative strategies they employ to adapt to the camp’s limitations. “Digging aid”, in particular, describes the ways refugees and host community members make use of the camp’s infrastructure and resources to sustain their livelihoods. In Kakuma, this includes activities such as selling food rations, running informal businesses, working for aid organisations, or even trading the houses allocated to them.

Meanwhile, host community members also partake in this informal economy, bartering goods and selling items like honey, charcoal, and firewood within the camp. Jansen's concept of “digging aid” emphasises the creative and resourceful ways both groups exploit the camp’s economic environment to their advantage. These activities help both refugees and hosts navigate the constraints placed upon them, highlighting how the camp becomes a space of active economic engagement, rather than one solely defined by passive

dependence on aid. Ultimately, Jansen argues that this appropriation of humanitarian resources reshapes the camp from a space of restriction into a dynamic, albeit informal, economic ecosystem.

By framing Kakuma as a space of economic survival and adaptation, Jansen's analysis invites a rethinking of refugee camps not merely as zones of confinement, as conceptualised by Jaji (2012) and Agamben (1998), but as complex socio-economic systems. This perspective acknowledges the agency of refugees and host community members, who navigate and reshape the camp's constraints to sustain their livelihoods. Thus, while Kakuma remains a site of significant socio-economic challenges, its dynamic economic activities demonstrate how aid, when reimagined and utilised creatively, can become a tool for empowerment and resilience rather than mere assistance.

According to participants, some refugees and host community members are involved in diverse economic activities, ranging from working for government agencies and NGOs within the camp to operating small businesses. Others have found employment as shopkeepers, cleaners, or waitstaff in Kakuma's hotels. Consequently, both refugees and host community members have come to depend on the camp for their livelihoods. One refugee participant said:

"There are opportunities here. Some people find jobs with organisations, and refugees can even work in hospitals as cleaners or junior doctors—especially those who studied medicine but couldn't complete their training. Many also work as teachers in schools, while others are employed by construction companies, though not everyone finds these jobs. I know several people like me and my friends who have started Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and receive support from NGOs. There are many other new CBOs emerging." (Refugee FGD participant #15, Male refugee from Burundi).

Another participant commented:

For the host community, I think the refugee camp is helping them in that many of them can work in casual jobs inside the camp and in Kakuma town. I think many of the opportunities are because of refugees being here, and you find that even some of us in the host community benefit through getting jobs in the organisations supporting refugees (Host FGD participant #20, Female member of the host community).

Another participant added that the presence of refugees in Kakuma benefited the hosts, as it acted as a ready market for some of the products sold by some members of the host.

The camp benefits the hosts so much because they depend on it to sell firewood. It's easier for hosts to go to the camp and sell their firewood, and it helps them. They also sell charcoal and exchange firewood for food in the camp, or some purchase using money. (Host FGD participant #12, Male member of the host community)

A government official also highlighted the camp's significant economic benefits, explaining that both refugees and host community members gain from the opportunities available within it. The official noted that many host community members frequent the camp to shop, while others find employment in low-waged roles. Additionally, host community members engage in trade with the camp residents, selling products that have high demand within the camp. This exchange not only sustains livelihoods but also strengthens economic ties between the camp and the surrounding communities.

Members of the host community often prefer shopping inside the camp, believing that the market there offers cheaper prices and a wider variety of goods. Here in Kalobeyei, you can see many women and children from the host community heading toward the camp almost every morning between 6:30 and 7:30. Many are employed in the camp in manual jobs like hotel attendants, shopkeepers, and cleaners, so they commute there in the morning and return home in the evening. They go to the camp to buy and sell goods, and as pastoralists, they frequently bring their animals to sell there as well. Charcoal sellers also find their main customers in the camp. Additionally, hosts often gather firewood to sell, knowing there's high demand within the camp (Government participant #2, Department of Refugee Services (DRS)).

Compared to other refugee camps, such as Dadaab, Kakuma offers more job opportunities, making it easier for refugees to find employment. However, some refugee participants expressed frustration over the low wages paid to refugees in these roles. Refugees are often hired as "incentive workers", a category that allows employers to pay them significantly less than their Kenyan or international colleagues performing similar work. Regarding the opportunities in Kakuma, one participant noted:

I think it's fair in Kakuma. I remember when I was looking for a job for the first time in Kakuma as a new arrival. It only took one month, and then I got a job. But in Dadaab, you will have to struggle. You don't even see the job opportunities. (Refugee FGD participant #11, Female refugee from South Sudan)

On the quality of the jobs and wages, one participant commented:

The camp is much bigger, so obviously, there are more opportunities. But in terms of income generation, it's very low. No matter how educated you are, if you are a refugee, the incentive is very standardised, and it's very low. The kind of work that's available for refugees is only incentive work. This means the payment is not like for a Kenyan with the same qualifications, with the same level of education, for the same amount of work. I could be doing much more, but the Kenyan will be given a higher salary (Refugee participant #1, Female refugee from South Sudan).

Due to the economic opportunities in Kakuma created by the camp's presence, some refugees from other camps in Kenya and across the border in Uganda occasionally move to Kakuma refugee camp. This type of movement can be described as inward secondary²⁹ movement, as it involves the movement of refugees who had previously settled in another camp. At the time of data collection for this research, refugees from Uganda were hosted in transit camps in Kitale town on their way to Kakuma refugee camps (Wafula and Awori, 2023). According to media reports, the refugees left Nakivale, Kayak II and Lamwanja settlements in Uganda for Kakuma due to better services in Kakuma and reduced food rations in Uganda (ibid) among other reasons. Other refugees also move to Kakuma from other camps in the hope of being resettled in another third developed country faster (Muluka, 2023).

As one participant representing an NGO put it,

Uganda reduced the rations for refugees. In Uganda, you are not given food continuously; you are given food the first few months when you are still a new arrival; afterwards, you sort yourself, so most of them are not used to that; they want to be fed continuously. So, between Uganda and Kenya, they prefer to come to Kenya because in Kenya, you receive food perpetually, and there are more economic opportunities in Kakuma. So, in Uganda, you only continue receiving food if you are

²⁹ Inward secondary movement of refugees to Kakuma is used in this context to include onward secondary movement as well.

very vulnerable; that is what has made them leave the camp in Uganda to come to Kakuma. (Non-Governmental Organisation Participant #4, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) officer).

Another participant said,

The so-called self-reliance in Uganda is what is making refugees and onward movements to Kakuma. Because we are having an influx of onward movers- people who decided to leave Uganda saying that it is difficult to survive, so most of them are coming to Kenya (Non-Governmental Organisation Participant #5, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) officer).

Tegenbos and Büscher (2017, p. 41) argue that the “onward movement” of refugees to Kakuma challenges the common perception of the camp as an unwanted space due to its negative effects on refugee lives and livelihoods. It also questions Agamben’s concept of the camp as a purely biopolitical tool for control and oppression, reducing refugees to “bare lives”. Instead, Kakuma, viewed through the lens of its economic opportunities and the active participation of refugees in various socio-economic activities, becomes a space where refugees—despite policy constraints—exercise agency in pursuing economic goals. Therefore, life goes on inside the refugee camps – although it is a life that is impacted by the camp (Turner, 2016).

Tegenbos and Büscher (2017) and Betts, Omata, *et al.* (2023) describe this secondary movement of refugees to Kakuma as a form of mobility that counters common assumptions about refugee movements, such as the belief that refugee flows are primarily from South to North, that refugees in their initial host countries are largely immobile, and that refugee movement is solely an act of forced flight. While the arrival of new refugees from camps in Uganda to Kakuma raised concerns among humanitarian and government agencies regarding the capacity to cater for them at the time of this research (Jaola, 2023; Xinhua, 2023), this was not an unprecedented occurrence. Historically, Kakuma was established to host South Sudanese refugees who had previously fled to Ethiopia (Oka, 2011; IRC, 2014). In this sense, Kakuma was “founded” by secondary movers (Tegenbos and Büscher, 2017, p. 43). Due to regional political and economic dynamics, Kakuma continues to function not only as a destination for secondary movers but also as a transit point for refugees seeking better opportunities within the region and beyond (Muluka, 2023).

However, the opportunities created by the camp's economy and presence, including the system of incentive work, also provide a critical lens through which to examine global labour economies and the ways neoliberal market logics permeate the camp economy. Indeed, beneath these motivations for a better life in Kakuma lies a structural reality in which refugees are integrated into exploitative labour dynamics that reflect and reinforce broader global, regional, and local economic inequalities. This system exemplifies neoliberal principles, emphasising self-reliance and cost-efficiency while keeping refugees in a state of economic precarity. Refugees' participation in incentive work illustrates both their resilience in navigating limited opportunities and their entrapment within a system that undervalues their labour. As one refugee participant noted,

Opportunities are there: there are jobs that people get in organisations. Refugees even get work in the hospitals, like cleaners, some are junior doctors who studied but did not complete their medical studies, they usually find work in the hospitals. In schools they are there, some are in construction companies, but not all. There are so many that fail to get opportunities to earn a living (Refugee FGD participant #15, Male refugee from Burundi).

As such, the labour dynamics in Kakuma reflect a broader trend in global labour markets, where marginalised populations are pushed to precarious, undervalued roles with little pay. In Kakuma, although participating actively in the camp's economy, refugees are limited by structural inequalities that mirror those faced by informal and low-wage workers worldwide. This system also reflects the commodification of refugee labour under the guise of humanitarianism, a hallmark of neoliberalism. By emphasizing self-reliance and providing limited viable pathways for income generation, humanitarian and government actors normalize economic precarity for refugees while reducing the cost of maintaining refugee support systems. Refugees' agency in engaging with these opportunities cannot be fully disentangled from the exploitative structures in which they operate. The reliance on incentive work not only sustains Kakuma's economy but also reinforces refugees' dependence on constrained systems of aid and labour.

This movement of refugees into Kakuma refugee camp also underscores the limitations of regional policies. Uganda's self-reliance model, while progressive in theory due to the freedoms it accords refugees, such as work, movement and property ownership, creates survival challenges for many refugees, pushing them toward camps like Kakuma, where continuous food aid and limited economic opportunities appear more accessible though in limited quantities (BBC News, 2016; Betts, 2021). However, the perceived advantages of Kakuma must be understood critically. The camp's appeal as a site of opportunity should not be used to justify confining refugees to spaces that perpetuate their marginalisation. Instead, the structural inequalities that shape Kakuma's camp economy should motivate a re-evaluation of refugee policies both regionally and globally.

From a global perspective, the inward secondary movement of refugees to Kakuma and their participation in the camp economy reveal how neoliberal logics infiltrate humanitarian spaces, especially in the global South, positioning refugees as a source of cheap labour while framing their economic participation as empowerment. This scenario can be seen in Kenya's latest move to implement the Shirika Plan, which is being touted as a transformative strategy meant to capitalise on the refugees' economic participation to promote socio-economic integration (Government of Kenya, 2023; UNHCR, 2023b). In this regard, these dynamics mirror global labour inequalities, where marginalised workers sustain broader systems of economic exploitation.

3.2 Kakuma Refugee Camp as a Violent Sanctuary

Kakuma embodies the paradox of encampment as a "violent sanctuary", where the promise of refuge is continually undercut by the structural and systemic violence woven into the camp's social order. Kakuma has grown into a complex, near-cosmopolitan site, home to people from over 15 nationalities. This diversity, while enriching in its potential for cultural exchange, also carries the weight of unresolved conflicts and intersecting vulnerabilities. Camps are often used by humanitarian agencies due to the protection they offer to the refugees and the convenience they provide in terms of the delivery of humanitarian assistance (Jamal, 2003). However, as temporary camps become long-term measures due to

lack of durable solutions for refugees, they undergo demographic and physical transformations. For example, due to its growth, Kakuma refugee camp has been described as an “accidental city” (Jansen, 2011b, p. 8), “virtual city” (Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000, p. 206) and a “refugee town/city” (Oka, 2011, p. 223).

Yet, the camp’s longevity brings negative effects for the refugees and host populations. Studies conducted on encampment have revealed that long-term encampment exposes refugees to psychosocial problems, violence, exploitation and material deprivation (Jamal, 2003; Horn, 2010a; Wiel *et al.*, 2021; Betts, 2022). In Kakuma, the levels of violence inside and around the camp, which involve serious injuries and can be lethal, are difficult to quantify, as this can be a daily occurrence (Crisp, 2000a). They include domestic and community violence, sexual and gender-based violence or armed robberies and are perpetrated within national refugee groups, between national refugee groups, between humanitarian agencies and refugees, and between refugees and local populations (Crisp, 2000c, 2000a; Beswick, 2001; Verdirame and Harrell-Bond, 2005; Brankamp, 2019; Sundaram, 2024). According to most participants, the majority of violent incidents are experienced at night. One participant said:

In the camp, there is a lot of insecurity, particularly at night; I have been feeling unsafe most of the time. Just when it reaches 7 pm, when it is dark, particularly in my area. The area is called Hong Kong; in that area, particularly when it reaches seven, you don't have to cross any road anyhow; you have to go to places where you know and where you are sure you are safe (Refugee participant #7, Male refugee from Congo DR).

The experiences of pervasive violence within and around Kakuma can be understood using Jansen's concept of the camp as a “warscape” to explain “how violence shapes the landscape or the social and spatial ordering of Kakuma” (Jansen, 2016b, p. 430). Jansen contends that violence is intrinsic to the camp's social order and should not be viewed as an anomaly. Similarly, Loescher and Milner (2004) attribute this endemic violence to an asylum system which does not offer adequate protection for refugee rights and freedoms. As a result, host governments may exploit these weaknesses to impose further restrictions on refugees. Reflecting on the persistent insecurity in Kakuma, one participant remarked that

the camp is never truly safe, with the constant threat of attack at any time of day. She stated:

You see, when it gets late while you are in camp, there are many issues involved, like you can be mugged, and there are so many theft cases in the camp. In the evenings, around six o'clock, you can be walking in Kakuma One, and someone just mugs you. But even during the day, there are places that if you go, you can still be mugged at any time. It is not that safe at all inside the camp; it is not safe (Host FGD participant #15, Female member of the host community).

Writing about the experiences of refugees in Kenya and Uganda, Verdirame and Harrell-Bond (2005) examined the inhumane treatment refugees suffered at the hands of humanitarian officials, especially the UNHCR officers who are supposed to protect their rights. According to them, humanitarian assistance to refugees by humanitarian organisations will continue to be inhumanely delivered due to the lack of legal remedies for refugees living in camps against violations by humanitarian officials (Harrell-Bond, 2022). They state that significant challenges like financial constraints change the UNHCR's perception of the refugees, viewing them as the problem, rather than people with problems (Verdirame and Harrell-Bond, 2005). They provided specific examples of harmful actions by humanitarian organisations, such as the cessation of payments by the UNHCR to refugee workers in camps in 1996, which significantly worsened their well-being. More recently, in April 2024, the World Food Programme reduced monthly food rations, suspended food vouchers, and cut cash transfers for hundreds of thousands of refugees in Kakuma and Dadaab camps due to budgetary constraints (Ang'ela, 2024). These reductions sparked protests by refugees in both camps, resulting in arrests.

Such measures by humanitarian agencies are part of the broader violence that refugees experience in Kakuma. One participant highlighted physical violence perpetrated by humanitarian agency workers, describing firsthand accounts of abuse. He said:

Some of them are actually good, but some of them do react in a harsh way. There are things that happen that even us refugees don't feel good about. For example at the food distribution centres some refugees are sometimes beaten by security

employees of some NGOs. To some extent we need to be treated in a way that makes us feel safer. There was a time when a certain woman left her things in the line for someone and when she came back, the police saw her, she was beaten and everyone felt bad about the issue. There is no way we can react to that, just to keep quiet even though we feel angry, but there is nothing we can do (Refugee FGD participant #13, Male refugee from South Sudan).

The insecurity and violence refugees experienced within the camp is also due to the ongoing conflicts in their countries of origin. Tensions and hostilities between certain refugee communities, which began before they fled to Kenya, often carry over into Kakuma, resulting in continued clashes and conflict, occasionally leading to tensions in and around the camp and complicating efforts to provide protection services in Kakuma. For example, the political turmoil in Sudan in the mid-1990s was felt in Kakuma camp through clashes between the refugees from the Dinka and the Nuer tribes, leading to the relocation of the Nuer community to the margins of Kakuma One (Jansen, 2018). As a result, the camp sometimes mirrors the very struggles refugees seek to escape, with old disputes resurfacing and affecting the overall security and cohesion within the camp and the surrounding community. One participant commented:

Mostly the Nuer and Dinka tribes at times attack each other. We don't know the source of the conflict between them, and at times, they attack other refugees as well. Also, you know they have so many children, so you find most of their youth do not work, so they look for ways to live well and buy shoes, phones and clothes without working hard. (Refugee FGD participant #20, Male refugee from Rwanda).

Border conflicts were also highlighted as a significant factor impacting refugees' experiences of violence and refuge within the camp. Tensions along the Kenyan border, particularly between the Turkana host community and neighbouring groups that are also represented in refugee groups inside the camps, sometimes spill over into the camp. One participant explained that during periods of heightened cross-border hostilities, a sense of unease permeates the camp, leaving many refugees whose communities are involved in the border conflicts feeling vulnerable and unsafe. These external conflicts create an atmosphere of uncertainty, as refugees fear that tensions could escalate and directly impact their own security within a space that is supposed to be a sanctuary. This spillover effect underscores

how regional dynamics, especially border disputes, shape the refugees' day-to-day experiences of violence and sanctuary. As one participant stated:

Some months ago around February, there was an issue between the Toposa, who are South Sudanese, and the Turkana people along the border. In that place, there was a conflict due to cattle raiding issues, which caused problems even here in the camp. For example, I was travelling back to South Sudan one day when I saw a certain car, and the driver told me that if that guy had seen me, there could have been a problem because I am South Sudanese (Refugee participant #6, Male refugee from South Sudan).

To address incidents of violence within the camp and surrounding areas, the Government of Kenya, with the UNHCR's support, has established police posts at various locations within the camp and a central police station near Kakuma town. Furthermore, the camp is spatially organised to ensure that communities that are in conflict, such as the Dinka, Nuer and Equatorians, live far from each other (Jansen, 2018). Because many refugees come from regions experiencing breakdown in law and order due to the conflicts, they may lack familiarity with structured governance, which can contribute to conflicts and violence within the camp. However, some refugees reported being harassed and physically abused by government security agencies. The participant said:

You know we are hosting people from different nationalities and from different backgrounds, and some were not used to so much organised government. I don't know what type of rules they normally use because it's a big challenge, especially for communities from South Sudan. Their level of respect for the government is very low, and it has a very big implication for security because a large number of refugees in Kakuma come from Sudan. That's why we normally even have fights because of communities from South Sudan. Sometimes, they stretch our resources; that's why UNHCR has a policy that each camp has a police post (Government participant #4, Turkana County Ward Administrator).

In general, the experiences of violence within Kakuma camp and its surrounding areas are shaped by the interplay of local, national, and regional socio-political and economic dynamics. These experiences challenge the common perception of a refugee camp as an isolated humanitarian space existing on the margins of society (Agamben, 1998; Turner, 2005; Jaji, 2012). Instead, they reveal the camp as deeply interconnected with and influenced by broader external activities and systems.

Despite the experiences of the camp as a violent space, some participants from the refugee and host communities perceived it as a safe sanctuary. The participants in the Kakuma camp found a space for hospitality where they could feel safe and protected (Ramadan, 2008). One of the factors that some participants mentioned as vital to their experiences of safety was the social relationships between the refugees and host community. One participant said:

I don't feel unsafe walking in the refugee camp. Because we've got friends, I've got friends whom we have interacted with in sports activities, whom we eat together, we sometimes drink together, they come to this side from the refugee to host community, we stay, we have talks, friendly matches, many things we do together. So sometimes, even if maybe one person from the refugee side who doesn't know you tries to do something to you, they (the refugee friends) are the ones coming and saying no, this is our person, this is our trainer, this is our player, you don't need to do that. So, they defend you. So I don't feel unsafe (Host participant #8, Male member of the host community).

Another participant commented:

We feel safe with the host community. You know, with the host community, they don't have any problem because they know that even if you are benefiting, they are still also benefiting from you. With the host community, there is nothing to fear. Personally, I have friends from the host community; whenever I don't have anything, I ask them, and they help me. So, they are the best. They are really safe even though sometimes they fight among themselves, but they don't harm refugees; I have never seen in Kakuma that refugees are being harassed by hosts (Refugee FGD participant #19, Male refugee from Congo DR).

For some host community members, the experiences of safety and security depended on the gender of the refugees and the setting. One participant noted that places like the market are generally safe, largely because women are the primary vendors there. As a result, she explained that vendors felt comfortable selling goods alongside refugee women, adding that incidents of violence involving refugees in other areas were rare.

At the market, there is no issue of insecurity; you stay there because, you know, at the market, it's the women who are many, so they usually don't have many bad

issues. We just stay; if we have our goods, we just sell by their side. These things of insecurity usually happen that even surprise us; you hear they (refugees) have killed someone. That they have done something somewhere, but inside the market, you won't hear much (Host participant #5, Female member of the host community).

Moreover, refugees reported feeling more secure around other refugees than around host community members. This highlights the significance of bonds within the refugee community, which served as a vital source of security and protection. Additionally, this sense of ingroup safety was reflected in the settlement patterns within refugee camps, where refugees tended to live in ethnically homogenous areas, referred to as "refugee communities" by Jansen (2016b, p. 430). One participant noted:

I feel safe among the refugees in the camp because if I tell you I feel safe among the host community, I'll be lying to you. Maybe in the workplace, or maybe in some institutions where people come for a certain training or something. Okay, I'll feel safe outside the camp, but I can't go to a host community (Refugee participant #8, Female refugee from South Sudan).

Therefore, for many refugees, the sense of sanctuary was rooted in the strong social connections and bonds they formed within their communities, which promoted mutual protection and solidarity. These social networks provided informal mechanisms of care and collective security, enabling refugees and hosts to navigate the precarity of camp life. For example, some refugees found comfort within their own ethnic or cultural groups, which offered familiar support systems and a shared sense of identity and belonging.

In Kakuma, the experiences of sanctuary coexist with violence, reflecting the paradox of encampment. The camp's long-term existence has transformed it into a sprawling, near-cosmopolitan space where its growth has been accompanied by demographic, social, and physical changes which have brought with them multiple vulnerabilities, including threats of violence that manifest in different forms. These layered social networks and community bonds play a crucial role in shaping the camp as a place where experiences of sanctuary can coexist with violence of and inside the camp.

3.3 Participation in Decision-Making Processes.

The refugees are not adequately included. You know, we are refugees; there are things that we just come to be told, but when making decisions regarding programmes, people are not really adequately included. They just come and give you updates (Refugee Participant #7, Male refugee from Congo DR).

The call for greater inclusion of refugees in decision-making processes has gained prominence in recent years, marking a significant shift in the humanitarian sector. International agreements like the 2016 New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants and the 2018 Global Compact for Refugees (GCR) emphasise the need for refugees' participation in shaping policies and interventions that affect their lives. These global frameworks advocate for a multi-stakeholder approach, ensuring that refugees are not merely passive recipients of aid but active participants in decision-making processes at the local level. For example, Paragraph 69 of the New York Declaration underscores the need to recognise refugees' political agency, aiming to empower them as vital stakeholders in local, national, and global refugee responses. This approach is further supported by the Global Refugee-Led Network (GRN), which highlights the socio-economic and practical benefits of involving refugees in programme design and implementation (Global Refugee-Led Network, 2019; Harley and Hobbs, 2020).

However, despite these progressive policy aspirations, the reality in contexts like Kakuma demonstrates significant gaps in practice. Refugees in Kakuma are rarely included in meaningful ways in the governance and decision-making processes that shape their lives. The restrictions on their mobility, limited access to formal employment, and a dependency on aid create barriers that inhibit their agency and ability to engage as partners in refugee integration approaches. Humanitarian and government actors often fail to fully integrate refugees' perspectives into programming, which reduces the effectiveness and sustainability of humanitarian interventions. For instance, while the CRRF seeks to enhance collaboration between refugees and host communities, the voices of refugees are

frequently marginalised in local governance structures, perpetuating a top-down approach to refugee management and integration efforts (Milner, Alio and Gardi, 2022b).

The absence of meaningful participation not only undermines refugees' empowerment but also exacerbates the disconnect between global policy objectives and local realities in displacement contexts. In Kakuma, many refugees express frustration over the lack of consultation in decisions that affect their daily lives. For instance, while international frameworks like the GCR prioritise socio-economic empowerment, refugees in Kakuma mainly pointed to a more immediate need for basic necessities, security, stability, and peace as prerequisites for effective integration. A South Sudanese refugee in Kalobeyei settlement articulated this sentiment, noting that:

“As long as a place is peaceful, that’s where my heart wants to be... All what humans need is always peace.” (Refugee Participant #1, Female South Sudanese Refugee)

This focus on peace and safety reflects a fundamental disconnect between refugee priorities and the economic and governance-centred models of integration promoted by global and national policies. This can also be seen in Kenya where the government, alongside partners like UNHCR are in the process of implementing the Shirika³⁰ plan, which was launched in 2023, to transform refugee management from aid-dependency to self-reliance and development (Department of Refugee Services, 2024; Segadlo, Ogutu and Ismail, 2024). Key among its objectives is the transition of the refugee camps into integrated settlements for the socio-economic integration of refugees (Miller and Kitenge, 2023; Nasubo and Muon, 2024)

Furthermore, as Milner, Alio and Gardi (2022b) argue, the historical exclusion of refugees from decision-making processes within camp settings reinforces dependency and severely limits their ability to achieve self-reliance. In Kakuma, the absence of meaningful participation in governance and integration efforts leaves refugees feeling disempowered and disconnected from the very programmes designed to support their well-being. This exclusion not only diminishes the effectiveness of aid interventions but also undermines

³⁰ Shirika stands for Socioeconomic Hubs for Integrated Refugee Inclusion in Kenya.

trust and collaboration between refugees and the host community. Without transparency and local participation, development efforts can appear opaque and disconnected from the realities on the ground. A host community participant #3 highlighted this frustration, emphasising the lack of accountability and inclusion in decision-making:

You see, sometimes even the refugee and the host community feel like these organisations are not honest. They have never even been able to call the host and the refugee community members and say you see, this is our financial plan, our budget. This is how we will be going to spend this budget. Now I'm talking in terms of good governance. They have never come, they just implement their activities, people don't even know how much funds the donors are pumping to these organisations. So it's a blanket thing, like something hidden (Host participant #3- Female)

Local socio-political dynamics in Kakuma also influence the implementation of these global refugee frameworks. These dynamics, rooted in the historical marginalisation of Turkana County, competition over resources, and strained host-refugee relations, shape how international commitments are interpreted and implemented. As indicated, while global agreements promote inclusive and rights-based approaches, the realities on the ground, especially in Kakuma, present significant barriers to their achievement. In the Kakuma area, local political dynamics complicate the implementation of global refugee agreements aimed at promoting integration. For example, political leaders and community representatives in Turkana frequently leverage refugee-related issues to advance their own agendas (Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000; Micinski, 2023). While global agreements encourage the socio-economic inclusion of refugees, local leaders in Kakuma may resist these measures to protect perceived advantages for host communities or to extract concessions from humanitarian organisations. As a result, integration policies are often selectively applied, with local priorities taking precedence over international commitments. A host community member highlighted this tension, remarking that broader integration efforts would require negotiations between the community and the government to ensure mutual agreement and benefits:

Yes, I have some friends from Sudan and some from Congo and Burundi... However, I think more integration will need a negotiation between the community and maybe the government first. (Host participant #3, Female member of the host community).

Another host participant commented,

Personally, I won't have an issue if the refugees stay with us in the community and integrate. However, I think that will need a negotiation between the community and maybe the government first. Because it's rare. I'm not sure if the community can really agree to that (Host participant #4, Male).

These statements by host participants #3 and #4 underscore how local governance structures mediate integration efforts, often framing them within broader concerns of resource distribution, political influence, and community buy-in. In Kakuma, integration is not solely a matter of policy implementation, but a negotiated process shaped by competing interests at multiple levels. While humanitarian organisations and international bodies push for greater inclusion, host communities may perceive such efforts as a threat to their already limited resources. This results in a delicate balancing act where refugee integration is often contingent on local acceptance, resource availability, and political will. Without meaningful engagement with host communities and local political actors, refugee integration efforts risk being met with resistance or implemented in ways that do not align with global commitments. Addressing these challenges requires a more context-specific approach—one that acknowledges the power dynamics at play, fosters dialogue between all stakeholders, and ensures that both refugees and host communities benefit from development interventions.

Therefore, understanding how refugees and host communities engage in various projects in Kakuma is crucial for promoting inclusive and participatory governance in camp settings. Exploring these dynamics provides critical insights into the challenges and opportunities for meaningful refugee involvement and integration, particularly in a context where the encampment policy has historically limited refugees' participation in governance processes. In Kakuma, both refugees and host communities engage in various forms of participation, primarily through involvement in humanitarian and community activities and processes. According to participants, this engagement occurs through two main avenues: community-based approaches and government-led initiatives.

Community-based participation approaches in Kakuma involve refugees and host community members organising themselves, with support from the government and NGO agencies, to address specific needs at the community level through various committees. These include a peace committee, a security committee, registered community organisations and engagement in periodic meetings focused on key areas such as education, peace and security, and healthcare. These committees generally comprise representatives from the host and refugee committees, with some selected through interviews and others through elections.

Highlighting the role of community-based initiatives, a participant explained:

We have community-based structures such as community dialogues, peace committees, and village committees. For the village committees, we have them in both the refugee community and local host sides. During times of conflict, we involve all of them to bring peace and understanding. For the locals and refugees, they are appointed. It's just about finding someone who is vocal here but also someone who is respectable (Government Participant #2, Department of Refugee Services (DRS) officer).

In contrast, government-led participation approaches are mostly aimed at the organisation and administration of the camp. During the fieldwork for this research, I observed how officers from the Community Peace and Protection Team³¹, which is a formal refugee and host community security team set up to support community policing activities inside the camps, did their work in managing crowds and maintaining order during the World Refugee Day celebrations held at Kalobeyei Settlement Village 3. From what I could observe, the refugee security officers were wearing distinguishable uniforms complete with military boots and berets and held clubs. These government-led initiatives also incorporate a mechanism to report information about security incidents in the camp to the Kakuma Camp Manager. This approach is vital for fostering a sense of ownership and engagement in processes and initiatives by both groups (Brankamp, 2016).

³¹ CPPT is a refugee force that cooperates with the Kenyan police in patrolling, crime investigation and crowd control inside Kakuma camps. Established in 2007, it operates under special agreements and a Community Policing framework between the Government of Kenya and the UNHCR. In Kakuma, there are 330 refugee security officers (55 women and 275 men) and 27 Kenyan nationals in supervisory roles (Brankamp, 2016).

Regarding the frequency of the meetings, a participant said:

There are also monthly and weekly coordination meetings where our people meet with the camp and host leaders to receive feedback from them. So, those meetings tend to inform us. We also have other groups, even WhatsApp, where we have the community leaders together with our teams and they update us every time something is happening in the camp and within the host community. When things get out of hand, we have a community service team whose mandate is to resolve conflicts that touch refugees and hosts (Government participant #3, Turkana County Deputy Sub-County Administrator).

In Kakuma, the main government-led approaches were the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) committees and the Community Peace and Protection Teams (CPPT), both established to administer the camp and support the peace and security functions. Moreover, they create a direct link between the camp authorities and local communities in efforts to ensure peace in Kakuma and to promote sustainable integration based on trust with the communities (Brankamp, 2016). These government-led initiatives have grown over time in terms of members and areas of operation. For example, the CPPT was made up of about 282 refugee officers and 30 Kenyan nationals in supervisory roles. Regarding CPPT, one participant said that their main duty is to share information with the government for timely actions and interventions.

We have Nyumba Kumi in Kenya; every block in the camp has two community peace and protection teams (CPPT). These teams consist of individuals who help us enforce law and order in the block and report to us daily. We also have offices in each zone within the camp, and we have a national staff member who goes to that office every day. For every camp, we have a CPPT Counterpart as the head. So below them, we have zonal supervisors, and below them, we have assistant zonal supervisors. Then, we have the CPPT per block now. They resolve issues and also do alternative dispute resolution (ADR) (Government Participant #2, Department of Refugee Services (DRS) officer).

On ADR, one participant observed:

The constitution talks about alternative dispute resolution, such as mediation. We have traditional justice structures for Somalis composed of the elderly. This is because, within a specific community, they respect the elders. Where everything cannot be solved at the community level, they are referred to the alternative dispute resolution mechanism, which the constitution promotes to look at ways of compensating the victims (NGO participant #3) officer).

Despite the critical role they play in promoting refugee and host community participation in Kakuma, these approaches also face challenges. For instance, NGO participant #3 highlighted concerns with the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism, noting issues with fairness in administering punishments, describing certain traditional structures as overly punitive. Additionally, some Community Peace and Protection Teams (CPPTs) were reported to exhibit bias based on ethnic and sectarian affiliations, making it challenging for the government to ensure they performed their duties effectively (Brankamp, 2016).

Participants also reflected on their involvement in decision-making processes within Kakuma by exploring the meaningfulness of their participation. Their perspectives highlight the extent to which refugees and host community members are genuinely engaged in shaping policies and programmes that affect their lives. This issue is particularly important in protracted refugee situations, as it sheds light on whether refugee policies and humanitarian actors are facilitating integration or reinforcing restrictive measures. This refugee and host community's participation relates to the social connection indicators, particularly social links, as highlighted in Ager and Strang's conceptual framework for integration, in which social links refer to the connections or relationships between individuals and state agencies or services. Due to refugees' circumstances, there is a need for additional support from the wider host community to realise effective integration. In the case of Kakuma, the additional support could be the establishment of frameworks that promote meaningful engagement and access to critical humanitarian services.

The Global Refugee-led Network³² guidelines define meaningful participation as:

When refugees — regardless of location, legal recognition, gender, identity and demographics — are prepared for and participating in fora and processes where strategies are being developed and/or decisions are being made (including at local, national, regional, and global levels, and especially when they facilitate interactions

³² The Global Refugee-led Network (GRN) is a network of refugee-led groups in six regions, North America, South America, Europe, Africa, MENA and the Asia Pacific. It is governed by an eighteen-person steering committee, with three representatives from each of the six regions. Steering committee members represent the regional branches of the Network, which work autonomously under the umbrella of the Global Refugee-led Network to shape local, national and regional policies (Global Refugee-Led Network, no date).

with host states, donors, or other influential bodies), in a manner that is ethical, sustained, safe, and supported financially (Global Refugee-Led Network, 2019, p. 13).

For meaningful participation to be achieved, humanitarian and government actors need to create a safe policy environment that empowers refugees and hosts to have an influence on policy priorities and outcomes and on matters that directly affect their lives inside the camp (Oxfam, 2022). Moreover, refugees must have the freedom to speak freely and be informed about the purposes and intended outcomes of their participation (R-SEAT, 2024).

Roger Hart's (1992) *Ladder of Participation* provides a useful framework for assessing the extent and meaningfulness of refugee and host community inclusion in Kakuma. Originally designed to evaluate youth participation, this model has been widely adapted to examine different forms of engagement in decision-making processes (Anderson, 2023). Hart categorises participation into two broad zones: non-participation and degrees of participation (Cahill and Hart, 2007). The non-participation zone includes three lower levels—manipulation, decoration, and tokenism—where involvement is superficial and lacks genuine influence. In these cases, participation may exist in name only, with refugees and host communities appearing to be engaged but having no real power to shape decisions or policies. Conversely, the degrees of participation zone include five higher levels, ranging from assigned but informed to young people-initiated shared decision-making with adults (Cahill & Hart, 2007). These levels represent increasing levels of autonomy, influence, and shared decision-making, which align with the ideals of refugee inclusion in humanitarian governance.

Building on this *Ladder of Participation*, Oxfam (2022) developed an adapted participation framework specifically tailored to assess the participation of refugees in decision-making processes that directly affect their lives. This framework refines Hart's levels to evaluate the quality and depth of refugee engagement in camp governance, programme planning, and service delivery. It provides a structured way to measure whether participation is truly meaningful or remains symbolic.

By applying the framework shown below to the context of Kakuma, it becomes evident that refugee participation largely remains at the lower levels of the participation ladder, often restricted to tokenistic consultation rather than meaningful shared decision-making. This highlights the need for a shift towards more inclusive governance structures that empower both refugees and host communities to take an active role in shaping policies that impact their futures.

Step 8: Refugee-initiated, shared decision-making with non-refugee policy makers.

Step 7: Refugee-initiated and directed.

Step 6: Non-refugee-initiated, shared decision-making with refugee leaders.

Step 5: Refugee leaders consulted and informed.

Step 4: Assigned but not informed.

Step 3: Tokenism.

Step 2: Decoration.

Step 1: Manipulation

Figure 17: Oxfam Framework for refugee participation (Oxfam, 2022).

The restricted engagement of refugees and host communities with humanitarian and government actors in Kakuma exposes them to various vulnerabilities that undermine meaningful integration efforts. Participants highlighted that the situation reflects a broader system that marginalises their voices and reinforces tokenism rather than genuine inclusion. The reality in Kakuma falls far short of the ideals of participation frameworks mentioned above. In practice, both refugees and host community members often find themselves in roles with minimal influence, restricted access to information, and superficial involvement in programmes that directly impact their lives. Rather than being active stakeholders in shaping policies and interventions, they are frequently consulted in ways that do not translate into tangible change. This exclusionary approach fuels frustration and deepens perceptions of inequality, particularly among members of the host Turkana community,

who feel sidelined despite being officially recognised as the camp's hosts. As host community participant #2 noted, employment opportunities within humanitarian organisations are a clear example of this exclusion:

Our people, the Turkana, are in the lowest cadres of employment. None is in the decision-making cadre. And it was said they would be given priority. It's not that the Turkana are uneducated; those who came first placed barriers (Host participant #2-Male).

The impact of the limited participation in Kakuma is profound. It exacerbates refugees' already precarious situation, reinforcing a sense of disempowerment and limiting their ability to effectively advocate for their needs. Participants thus described how their opinions were often sought during consultations but rarely implemented, a dynamic that reflects broader patterns of symbolic inclusion without substantive impact or engagement. One refugee observed that they are often "just told" about decisions rather than being involved in their formulation. This exclusion not only denies refugees their agency but also perpetuates a cycle of dependency, undermining their potential to contribute constructively to their own well-being. One participant said:

The refugees are not adequately included. You know, we are refugees; there are things that we just come to be told, but when making decisions regarding programmes, people are not really adequately included. They just come and give you updates (Refugee Participant #7, Male refugee from Congo DR).

The local host community members also face almost similar marginalisation, despite their critical role in fostering integration with the refugee communities. Participants reported being informed of projects only after they were already underway, with no involvement in their initial design. One participant highlighted how organisations such as Handicap International fail to consult the community about their needs, selecting beneficiaries or initiating projects without their input or adequate information and awareness. This disconnect can reduce the confidence between humanitarian agencies and the communities they aim to serve, weakening the potential for collaboration and sustainable outcomes. Based on their history of marginalisation, when decisions are made without their

involvement, host communities may feel excluded and overlooked, fuelling resentment and complicating relationships with refugees.

But in quite a number of these projects or programmes, the hosts are included just at the participation level. The actual implementation level is where you come to realize that this is a project. It's like this and this, but from the inception level, most people, like the host and the refugees, do not even know that the project design started with the baseline survey (Host Participant #3, Female member of the host community).

Another participant added:

So, these days, even those companies that are coming here don't bother asking host community members about their challenges; you just see them come. Like a Handicap, I'm just mentioning it as an example; when it came, it did not even introduce itself to the community regarding the kind of projects they would engage in. You only see that sometimes they pick one child or a child is taken to them. The selected child is used as a glorified example for the rest of the years to come (Host Participant #2, Male member of the host community).

Whenever participants voiced dissatisfaction with their limited involvement in decision-making or their lack of access to information about certain aspects of the projects, some reported facing dismissive attitudes from the leaders of the host community or humanitarian agency officials. These officials often disregarded their concerns by arguing that such opinions could potentially disrupt or jeopardise the success of the projects. In some cases, the officials attributed the participants' struggles to their status as refugees, implying that their predicaments were a consequence of their situation. This status, participants noted, often resulted in restrictions on their freedoms, including being denied equal treatment and opportunities for meaningful engagement.

Maybe the elders can be consulted, and they accept. However, when the youth say the proposed project is not good or they have not been given a good deal and should be added more benefits, the older people dismiss them. They say the youth might end up ruining the process. (Host Participant #9, Female member of the host community).

Participants representing government and humanitarian agencies identified several challenges that hinder their ability to promote the meaningful participation and involvement of refugees and host communities in humanitarian processes. A recurring

theme was the lack of adequate time and resources, which they noted significantly constrained their efforts. One NGO official emphasised the importance of public participation and awareness while also recognising that the information often does not reach the broader community, leaving them uninformed. He further observed that the leaders attending these meetings are already overburdened with other activities, and even when they do share information, they may do so with inherent biases. stating,

You know public participation is very important. Public awareness is very important, and this is a crucial stage in any governance. As much as I know this has good intentions for the refugees and hosts, I think many options should be explored to ensure that they understand this information. If they don't, those are the things that bring issues later. But an observation is this has not gotten to the people, to the community members. A few leaders who happen to go to these meetings are also constrained with other activities, and I think they don't even have time to go and tell others, and if they tell them, of course, they have their bias also (Non-Governmental Organisation participant #1, Danish Refugee Council (DRC) officer).

Similarly, a county government official admitted to the shortcomings in their engagement with the community, attributing these gaps to resource constraints. He explained:

Like us, as the county government, we have not fully engaged with people. That is our weakness because, like my office, if I am not funded, I will not be able to do anything, and you know everything works with money (Government participant 4, Turkana County Ward Administrator).

At the systemic level, the limited participation of both refugees and hosts highlights deeper risks to the effectiveness and legitimacy of humanitarian efforts (Global Refugee-Led Network, 2019; Oxfam, 2022). Without paying attention to the lived experiences and insights of these two communities, integration programmes in Kakuma risk being poorly designed or disconnected from local needs. Moreover, the exclusion of refugees and host communities reflects a broader critique of humanitarian governance, where power is concentrated in the hands of external actors who prioritise efficiency and top-down decision-making over meaningful engagement and a bottom-up approach (Gibbons and Otieku-Boadu, 2021; Slim, 2021; Dizolele, Kurtzer and Abdullah, 2022a). This top-down approach not only undermines the principles of equity and inclusion but also perpetuates

structural inequalities, leaving marginalised populations at the mercy of decisions and actions they cannot influence.

The lack of organised leadership structures within the refugee community in Kakuma was also identified as an aspect that compounds the participation challenges. Unlike the host community, which benefits from elected representatives, refugees face significant obstacles in forming their own advocacy groups (refugee-led organisations) due to restrictive encampment policies. For example, the process of registering refugee-led associations and getting vital documents such as identity cards and tax certificates in Kakuma is bureaucratic and complex. This weakens their ability to negotiate for their rights and participate in governance processes, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and neglect. One participant noted how the absence of documentation among refugee teachers contributed to their acceptance of extremely low wages, highlighting the intersection of structural marginalisation and economic precarity. The participant observed:

There are times when refugees are involved, for example, in proposal writing or budget drafting for a specific thing. But the implementation, I wouldn't say, is that well because I might be called to give an opinion, but it will not be implemented. For example, because of things like our documentation, primary school teachers are getting less than ten thousand shillings per month (Refugee Participant #3, Female refugee from South Sudan).

Therefore, the precarious engagement of refugees and local hosts with power in Kakuma reflects broader risks associated with systemic exclusion in humanitarian settings. It perpetuates cycles of dependency, erodes trust between communities and aid organisations, and limits the effectiveness of interventions. Addressing these challenges requires a fundamental shift toward inclusive, participatory decision-making processes that prioritise the voices of refugees and host communities. Strengthening leadership structures within the refugee community and fostering greater collaboration between refugees, hosts, and humanitarian actors are essential steps toward achieving meaningful participation.

4. Theme 3: Intercommunity Interactions in Kakuma

There are refugees who buy products from me. Even one is standing here right now. I sell to them. They buy things like milk, water, cigarettes, and soda. We also buy so much from the camp, especially wheat, oil, and maize. There are people who bring things to me, and I sell (Host participant #7, Male member of the host community).

The Kakuma refugee camp is a dynamic space where refugees and host communities interact and engage in various activities. While its design and geographical location aim to isolate refugees from Kenyan public attention and discourse, the camp's social infrastructure plays a pivotal role in fostering interaction between these groups. For instance, it hosts the largest market in Turkana West Sub-County, where refugees and locals trade goods and services. These economic exchanges not only strengthen ties within Kakuma but also connect its residents—both refugees and hosts—to the broader Kenyan economy. Some traders, for example, travel to other towns to purchase goods wholesale and resell them in the camp at retail prices. Somali refugees, in particular, utilise their social networks to source goods and services from Nairobi's Eastleigh market. These connections to local and national commerce challenge the idea of the camp as an isolated "exception space", as conceptualised by Agamben (1998) and others (see Fresia and Von Känel 2016; Tuastad, 2017). Furthermore, Kakuma challenges Ramadan's view of camps as purely spaces of humanitarian emergency, highlighting their role in fostering intercommunity contact between refugee and host communities (Ramadan, 2013).

In Kakuma, the interactions between refugees and host communities can be analysed through two key lenses: the nature of their interactions and the perceptions of trust between the groups. Examining the nature of their interactions sheds light on the diverse forms these interactions take and the settings in which they occur, ranging from marketplaces to community initiatives and shared public spaces. These interactions between refugees and hosts are often shaped by practical needs such as food, cultural exchanges, and economic activities. Equally important are the perceptions of trust, which provide critical insights into the deeper social dynamics at play. Trust—or the lack of it—reveals the values, roles, and hierarchies that underpin the relationships within this multi-layered society. By understanding how trust is built or eroded between refugees and host

communities, we gain a better view of the broader social cohesion, the integration process, and potential areas of tension or collaboration (Voutira and Harrell-Bond, 2023). Together, these two dimensions help create a comprehensive picture of the complexities and ambiguities of coexistence in Kakuma.

4.1 Nature of Interactions

Kakuma refugee camp can be understood as a space defined by the interactions, relationships, and identities of those who reside in and around it. In his analysis of refugee camp spaces, Ramadan (2013) conceptualises them as an assemblage—a dynamic collection of people, institutions, organisations, events, and the relationships that emerge and are sustained within and around it. He argues that the camp space is shaped by the practices and interactions between its inhabitants and the institutions operating within it (Ibid). Ramadan's idea is connected to Doreen Massey's concept of space as an outcome of interrelations and identities which constantly interact (Massey, 2005).

Based on the participants' responses, the interactions within Kakuma refugee camp can be broadly categorised into two types: economic and sociopolitical. Economic interactions primarily occur in marketplaces and town centres, where refugees and host community members engage in activities such as trading goods and services, employment in businesses and organisations, and other forms of economic exchange. Sociopolitical interactions, on the other hand, encompass activities that foster social and cultural engagement. These include intercommunity peace meetings, sports events, entertainment programmes, and religious gatherings, among others. Together, these interactions highlight the complex and multifaceted nature of life in the camp.

The main forms of interactions in Kakuma are economic. As one participant put it:

The refugees and hosts interact in business, mostly in marketplaces. The best way of interaction is in the market areas, where you see the hosts bring goats and charcoal. They also have their businesses around here where they sell different goods. So that is one thing I consider a powerful way of interacting (Refugee participant #8, Female refugee from South Sudan).

As previously mentioned, participants frequently expressed a preference for shopping in the markets within the camp, citing lower prices compared to shops in Kakuma town. According to data from the International Financial Corporation, the camp hosted ten major market centres distributed across its sub-camps, with Kakuma One accounting for the largest share, hosting four of these markets (IFC, 2018a). The diversity of goods available in the camp was attributed to the refugees' extensive networks beyond its borders (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020a). Refugee entrepreneurs, particularly Somalis, leveraged these networks and the Hawala³³ money transfer system to source goods from outside Kakuma (Iazzolino, 2020). These commercial interactions, both within and beyond the camp, have been described by Oka (2014) as mechanisms through which refugees re-establish a sense of "normality" in their lives. A 2018 IFC study revealed that Kakuma camp supported approximately 2,000 businesses, while the town itself had only about 232 shops, illustrating the camp's role as a significant economic hub (IFC, 2018a). In this regard, the economic lives of refugees and hosts in Kakuma are interdependent and sustained by the interactions that occur between them.

As one participant noted:

We interact with refugees at the market because most of them are doing business. For example, in Kakuma one, there is the Ethiopian market, where we engage in trade. Many motorbike taxis are also owned by refugees, and some are employed in hotels (Host FGD participant #11, Male member of the host community).

While the economic interactions within Kakuma refugee camp are mutually beneficial and stem from the dynamics of the camp itself, they also present significant risks to refugees' lives and livelihoods. This is particularly evident in the context of the recent shift toward refugee self-reliance by humanitarian actors. Such initiatives often frame economic interactions as evidence to support neoliberal policies aimed at reducing humanitarian aid and promoting refugee independence (Liu-Farrer, Pearlman and Al-Masri, 2024). Moreover, this shift in humanitarian policy occurs against a backdrop of strained donor resources, a

³³ The hawala system is a semi-formal financial institution that builds upon trust relationships, allowing to convert social capital into financial capital

growing global displacement crisis, and the protracted nature of many refugee situations, which place considerable pressure on humanitarian systems.

In protracted refugee situations, as the humanitarian aid provision transitions from emergency relief to care and maintenance, traditional humanitarian aid often proves insufficient to address long-term needs. Development support becomes increasingly necessary to bolster refugees' economic capacities and mitigate the impact on host communities (Easton-Calabria and Omata, 2018). In response, organisations like UNHCR and its partners have prioritised self-reliance and economic independence as strategies to tackle the challenges of protracted refugee situations, such as loss of autonomy, deprivation, and poverty (Crisp, 2003; Milner, 2011; UNHCR, 2020a). Several self-reliance initiatives have been implemented in Kakuma to address these challenges, including the establishment of the Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement, the construction of markets and factories, the promotion of dryland agriculture, innovative cash-based transfer programmes, and technical training programmes for refugees. Kakuma has, in fact, become a testing ground for numerous pilot projects targeting refugees worldwide. These initiatives reflect a broader effort to balance immediate humanitarian needs with long-term developmental goals, even as questions about their sustainability and inclusivity persist.

While some self-reliance initiatives have achieved positive outcomes, Easton-Calabria and Omata (2018) caution that poorly interpreted and implemented programs can lead to unintended consequences. Critics of the self-reliance approach argue that it often reflects a neoliberal model that instrumentalises refugees, treating them as economic actors without granting meaningful rights and freedoms (Hunter, 2009; Skran and Easton-Calabria, 2020; Doyel, 2022; Easton-Calabria, 2022; Liu-Farrer, Pearlman and Al-Masri, 2024). This critique is evident in Kakuma, where refugees continue to face socio-economic marginalisation despite the proliferation of self-reliance initiatives. These programmes are frequently justified by studies highlighting the economic potential of refugees and the camp (Betts, Chaara, *et al.*, 2019; Betts, Omata, *et al.*, 2019; Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020a, 2020b). For instance, a 2016 World Bank study advocated for an economic integration model that views refugees as economic contributors while offering no legal pathway to Kenyan citizenship (Sanghi,

Onder and Vemuru, 2016; IFC, 2018a). Similarly, the International Financial Corporation (IFC) conducted a 2018 study recommending a market-based approach to development in Kakuma (IFC, 2018a). These models, while highlighting refugees' economic potential, risk perpetuating systemic inequalities in refugee-hosting regions by prioritising economic outcomes over the fundamental rights and freedoms of refugees, leaving them vulnerable to continued marginalisation and without any meaningful integration.

The camp is also defined by the social and political interactions involving different groups and entities. According to Ramadan (2013), different actors, organisations and agencies compete for power and influence in the camp as a result of the absence of a single authority. These competitions, which are socio-political in nature, target the provision of security, social services, and other administrative affairs necessary for the functioning of such spaces but also for the general support of the refugee population.

In terms of sociopolitical interactions, some common places where refugees and hosts meet in Kakuma include churches, schools, hospitals, bars, and sports grounds. Some of these meetings, such as intercommunity peace meetings, are political in nature, as they are meant to discuss issues related to the administration of the camp, refugee protection needs and intercommunity issues such as peace and security. As one participant observed:

Most of the time, we interact in sports. There are these intercommunity-engaged discussions about the importance of living in peace that usually bring the host and refugees together. Some are organised by organisations like the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) that bring them together, and they are trained and taught the benefits of living in peace, and how they should resolve conflicts between themselves. In schools, the hosts learn in the same schools as the refugees. We also interact in the health facilities where the host and the refugees will seek medication. They are served equally, and they see each other as brothers who are coming for the same thing because the same problem is challenging them (Refugee participant #5, Male Refugee from South Sudan).

Intermarriages, as pointed out under integration as social relationships, also form part of the social interactions in Kakuma. Most participants indicated that these marriages typically involve refugees marrying host community members and continuing to reside within the camp. This arrangement is often preferred by both hosts and refugees due to the perceived

advantages of access to humanitarian support, such as food rations and cash assistance, which would not be available if the couple chose to live outside the camp. For the hosts, moving to the camp makes economic sense, as life in Kakuma is really challenging due to the historical marginalisation and inadequate support from the humanitarian organisations supporting refugees. Under Kenya's encampment policy, only refugees living in the camp are eligible for assistance from UNHCR and the government, meaning that those residing outside the camp forfeit benefits such as the monthly support provided by UNHCR. These camp incentives are used to perpetuate encampment policy, as they discourage those who would want to move to other locations. Consequently, refugees who live outside the camp often face significant challenges, including arbitrary police arrests, criminal violence, abduction, forced repatriation, and xenophobia from some members of the local community (Campbell, 2006, 2015; Pavanello, Elhawary and Pantuliano, 2010). Therefore, for many refugees, staying in the camp with their host-community partners serves as both a livelihood and a protection strategy. As one participant explained:

So many Turkanas are married to the refugees, but for the two South Sudanese tribes, they are difficult to intermarry. In the camp, there are Turkana men who have married refugee women; some of them stay with the refugees inside the settlement. And they are living their lives well (Host FGD participant #15, Female member of the host community).

Another reason why refugees choose to stay with their local host partners inside the camp is the hope of being resettled to a third country in the future. As Muluka (2023) opines, camps like Kakuma have morphed from sanctuaries for people seeking refuge to transit points in refugee journeys to resettlement in developing countries. This desire of being resettled abroad was also alluded to by one NGO participant in Kakuma who stated:

The problem is that most refugees, specifically here, want to seek resettlement. This is the sole desire that they have when they actually come all the way to Kakuma. And as I said, resettlement options are very few, and availability of that option can only consider people with specific backgrounds with protection concerns (Non-Governmental Organisation participant #4, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) officer).

While intermarriages foster positive inter-community interactions in Kakuma, they remain a contentious issue and a source of conflict between refugees and host communities. Cultural differences often exacerbate these tensions, particularly when established marriage practices such as dowry payments and pregnancy compensations are not observed. For instance, some local communities find it deeply offensive when one of their members marries someone from another group without adhering to traditional cultural rites. Aukot (2003) highlights how refugees' lack of understanding or disregard for the cultural significance of practices among the Turkana people has contributed to the perceived cultural erosion of the host community.

As Aukot (2023) explains, several contentious practices have emerged in this context. One is elopement, which has become increasingly common between local Turkana girls and refugees, bypassing traditional marriage negotiations. Another is refugees' frequent refusal to pay dowry in the form of cattle, as required by Turkana custom, citing their lack of cows or disconnect from the cultural practice as reasons for non-compliance. Additionally, some refugees adopt a dismissive attitude, claiming that the girls choose to follow them willingly, thereby shifting responsibility for the breach of tradition onto the local women. These cultural misunderstandings and tensions demonstrate how intermarriages, while creating opportunities for cultural exchange and intercommunity relationships, can also serve as a flashpoint for deeper conflicts when traditional values and expectations are not met. These tensions are compounded by broader societal concerns, as illustrated by one host community member who questioned the long-term implications of intermarriage for identity and belonging:

I have told you that the main issue of culture is the first problem. When we integrate, we will be intermarrying. What will we call those children who will be born? What will we call them?. And then those children, will they be Kenyans, Sudanese, Congolese, Burundians or what? And then from the background of their communities, you know some of these people have been involved in political disturbances against their governments. Now, in fifty years to come, these children

will have what kind of blood? You see now that's where the problem is (Host participant #2- Male).

This sentiment reflects deeper anxieties about identity, national belonging, and the long-term socio-political consequences of intermarriage in a refugee-hosting area like Kakuma. While some view it as a bridge between communities, others see it as a challenge to cultural preservation and a source of uncertainty for future generations.

4.2 Perceptions of trust

Trust in Kakuma exists on a spectrum, shaped by interpersonal relationships, cultural values, and systemic inequalities. Based on participants' views, the perception of trust between refugees and hosts in Kakuma is not a static or uniform experience but rather a complex and evolving phenomenon influenced by historical grievances, economic disparities, and institutional frameworks. In this context of protracted displacement, where refugees and host communities have coexisted for decades under conditions of resource scarcity and political marginalisation, trust remains both fragile and multifaceted. Analysing the intersection between intercommunity interactions and perceptions of trust offers critical insights into how long-term displacement reshapes social relationships (Voutira and Harrell-Bond, 2023). Trust—or its absence—directly impacts peaceful co-existence, integration efforts, and cooperation between refugees and hosts (De Berry and Roberts, 2018). It influences everyday interactions, such as business transactions and social exchanges, but also affects broader systems, such as access to employment, education, and governance structures. In this way, trust is not just an abstract concept but a practical determinant of co-existence, shaping both opportunities and tensions within Kakuma (Voutira and Harrell-Bond, 2023).

The Contact hypothesis by Gordon Allport is one framework that can be used to understand the inter-community relationship in Kakuma, especially the perceptions of trust (Allport, 1954). Allport's theory, which was mainly informed by research conducted in New York in the early 1950s, has rarely been used to analyse refugee-host relationships despite its contextual applicability in the global South (Betts, Flinder Stierna, *et al.*, 2023a). In his book

The Nature of Prejudice, Allport found that intercommunity contact between majority and minority groups can reduce prejudice under certain conditions. These are: if the members of the two groups have equal status, if the two communities have common goals, if the members of the two groups work cooperatively, and if there is support by social and institutional authorities (Allport, 1954).

However, in Kakuma, these conditions are not fully met, making the development of trust difficult. Unequal status persists due to Kenya's de facto encampment policy, which restricts refugees' movement and economic participation, keeping them dependent on humanitarian aid (Betts, 2022). Meanwhile, the host community experiences systemic marginalisation, with limited access to the aid and services available to refugees (Shanguhya, 2021). This imbalance fuels resentment, as many Turkana residents believe that refugees receive preferential treatment while they themselves remain impoverished and underserved (Anomat Ali, Imana and Ocha, 2017; Rodgers, 2020b; Nabeny, 2022). These perceptions of economic and social disparity serve as a key barrier to trust-building.

Beyond structural inequalities, the diverging aspirations of refugees and host communities further complicate their relationship. Many refugees see Kakuma as a temporary stop on the way to resettlement abroad, and their primary goal is to access services and potential opportunities for relocation. This aspiration to relocate to third countries makes their engagement with the host community temporary (Muluka, 2023). In contrast, members of the host community seek to gain equal access to the benefits and opportunities afforded to refugees, particularly in terms of economic aid and development programmes. These conflicting priorities limit cooperation between the two groups. Unlike in contexts where common long-term goals encourage intergroup trust; refugees and hosts in Kakuma often operate within parallel, rather than intersecting, economic and social spheres. Additionally, as noted under the concept of meaningful participation, joint decision-making between hosts and refugees is rare, and opportunities for collaborative projects are limited. Without active inclusion and shared initiatives, trust remains elusive, reinforcing perceptions of inequality and division rather than fostering a sense of collective belonging.

4.2.1 Interpersonal Trust and Social Bridges

According to the participants, personal friendships played a crucial role in fostering trust between refugees and members of the host community in Kakuma. Refugees who had established friendships with host community members generally expressed higher levels of trust in them compared to those without such connections. Likewise, members of the host community reported feeling greater trust toward refugees with whom they had personal relationships and frequent interactions. These friendships served as essential social bridges, facilitating understanding and cooperation in a context often marked by cultural and socio-economic differences. One South Sudanese refugee emphasised the importance of interpersonal connections in building trust and support networks:

The immediate trust can go to the host community and the refugee leaders because they are the ones overseeing my well-being when living here. The government and NGO officials are very far from me. Maybe they are in their headquarters, but I am here with the chairperson of the camp and with the host community, whom I live amongst (Refugee participant #6, Male Refugee from South Sudan).

This statement points to the localised nature of trust-building in Kakuma, where refugees often rely more on immediate support from local hosts and community leaders than distant government or NGO officials. In this regard, daily interactions in Kakuma create opportunities for mutual dependence and understanding, forming the foundation for more effective integration. Another refugee, a female participant from South Sudan, echoed this sentiment:

With the host community, they don't have any problem because they know even if you are benefiting, they are still also benefiting from you. I myself have friends from the host community; whenever I don't have anything, I ask them, and they help me. So, they are the best (Refugee Participant #8 – Female South Sudanese).

Similarly, members of the host community recognised the significance of these friendships in Kakuma. A male host community participant shared his experience:

I trust them and have so many refugee friends. Some are from South Sudan, Burundians and Ethiopians. It is normal to share with each other. Sometimes, I could be overwhelmed, and I go and share with them. Sometimes they come to me and tell

me they need help in a way. For example, there is one from South Sudan (Lotuko) who is my best friend. He sometimes comes to me when he has some problems and needs some financial support because he is my friend. Due to that friendship, I trust him, and I don't believe he might run away with my money (Host participant #7, Male member of the host community).

Another male host community member further elaborated on the role of intercommunity friendships in business and daily life:

I have some refugee friends from Sudan and some from Congo and Burundi. We talk daily, every other time, and then we do business together. Like I can buy goods here that I send to the Congolese friend, and he sells them for me and sends me the money; he also sends me goods, and I sell them for him (Host 4, Male).

These experiences by hosts and refugees of personal friendships suggest that localised, community-based approaches to humanitarian aid and integration are crucial. Consequently, the participants expressed the need for more locally driven humanitarian interventions that empower both refugees and host communities by transferring greater responsibilities to them. This concept, often referred to as "localisation" by humanitarian policy analysts and practitioners, emphasises strengthening existing community structures rather than relying solely on external actors (Dany, 2021; Dizolele, Kurtzer and Abdullah, 2022b; Frennesson *et al.*, 2022).

The duration of exile also played a significant role in shaping trust dynamics between refugees and host communities. Many participants noted that prolonged displacement and being born in the camps allowed refugees to develop a deeper understanding of the host community's culture. This familiarity fostered shared experiences and common traits that contributed to stronger social bonds. One refugee, who had spent her entire life in Kakuma, shared her perspective:

I am more accustomed and more familiar with the ways of Kenyans. So, I am more like a Kenyan than actually of my country. I have friends from both sides, and I wouldn't say I trust this group more or this one less because I have trust in both equally (Refugee participant #8, Female refugee from South Sudan).

A female host community participant reinforced this idea, emphasising the importance of time in building trust:

Yes, I trust refugees and have some friends there. I have one from Uganda, and the other is from South Sudan. I don't mind because they have been there for a long time. We have been in touch for the longest time, so I trust them. Refugees are good people (Host participant #6, Female member of the host community).

These accounts by refugee and host participants show that meaningful integration and cohesion are built over time through sustained interactions and shared experiences. Refugees who spend years or even decades in host communities often develop hybrid identities, blending elements of their original culture with those of the host community. This dual identity fosters a sense of belonging that bridges divides and strengthens trust between the two groups.

In summary, personal friendships and prolonged interactions play a fundamental role in fostering trust and integration between refugees and host community members in Kakuma. These relationships not only provide immediate social and economic support but also contribute to long-term integration. As such, recognising the significance of localised integration approaches and the evolving nature of refugee-host interactions is essential for creating policies that promote deeper and more sustainable integration.

4.2.2 Structural Barriers to Trust

Intercommunity friendships and long-term contact in Kakuma do not always lead to positive perceptions of trust between refugees and host community members. While some participants from both groups acknowledged personal friendships, these relationships often did not lead to broader trust toward each other. Factors such as perceived rights to land and property, violence, access to resources and negative stereotypes continue to influence attitudes and exacerbate tensions. For instance, some host community members expressed distrust of refugees despite having individual refugee friends. Negative perceptions were tied to fears about crime and substance abuse, which they attributed to specific refugee populations. One host participant remarked,

I don't trust them, and we don't believe that they are all good. There are those who are good, and then there are those who are bad, like groups of young men who use hard drugs. But I have one friend from South Sudan (Host participant #9, Female member of the host community).

This statement by host #9 illustrates a nuanced perspective on trust—while she acknowledges a personal connection with a refugee, negative stereotypes about crime and drug use continue to shape her overall perception of the refugee population.

Another host participant linked distrust to the perceived unpredictability and violent tendencies of some refugees, stating,

No, they cannot be trusted; they are not people that you can trust to help you with anything. They are people that can be triggered by very minor issues. You will think they are okay but when evening comes, they attack you. And that's why you see that for most Turkanas, staying in the camp until late in the evening is not good (Host #10- Female).

This perspective highlights how fear and generalisation influence intergroup relations in Kakuma, where isolated negative incidents or assumptions about one group contribute to broader distrust and avoidance behaviours. On the other hand, refugee participants described feeling unwelcome and excluded by the host community, particularly in relation to disputes over land and belonging. A refugee participant from the Democratic Republic of Congo shared,

These hosts—we live with them, but we don't trust them. There are times they tell us, 'This is our land; what are you bringing here? This is not your land.' You see issues like that. You are living, but you feel like you are not at home. Something hurts when you are told like that (Refugee FGD participant #18, Male refugee from Congo DR).

Such statements by refugee #18 reinforce the perception that refugees in Kakuma, regardless of their length of stay, are seen as outsiders with no lasting claim to the space they inhabit.

Security concerns also played a critical role in shaping refugee perceptions of trust toward the host community. A South Sudanese refugee participant expressed his unease, stating,

If I tell you I feel safe among the host community, I'll be lying to you. Maybe unless in the workplace, or in some institutions, whereby people come for a certain training or something. Okay I'll feel safe but I can't go to a host community because they have guns (Refugee participant #5, Male South Sudanese).

This view shows how structural factors, such as access to weapons by hosts in Turkana and the perceived threat of violence, reinforce distrust between the two groups.

Concerns about corruption in Kakuma further exacerbate tensions, particularly among refugees who felt that the justice system was biased in favour of the host community. One refugee participant remarked,

With Kenyans, there is no trust. Because, even if right now we catch a host who has killed someone and we take them to the police. Tomorrow you will see that person in the community, why? Because they have paid money and they have colluded with the police. We have so many criminals who are doing bad things but have been released by the police (Refugee #8- Female South Sudanese).

This perception of impunity and unequal access to justice deepens mistrust, making it harder for integration initiatives to foster positive intercommunity relationships.

Overall, these accounts by refugees and hosts reveal the deeply rooted and multilayered nature of trust in Kakuma. While personal friendships between refugees and hosts exist, they are often overshadowed by broader structural and historical tensions. The persistence of negative stereotypes, competition over resources, and perceptions of insecurity continue to erode trust, demonstrating that mere contact between the groups is insufficient to foster long-term social cohesion. Contact theory suggests that regular interaction can help reduce prejudice (Allport, 1954), but the Kakuma context shows that for this to happen, deeper systemic challenges—including economic inequalities, land disputes, and institutional biases—must be addressed. Without efforts to tackle these underlying issues, trust will remain fragile, limiting the potential for meaningful integration and peaceful coexistence.

4.2.3 The Role of Shared Cultural Values in Trust-Building

As noted in the discussion on intermarriages as a form of interaction, shared cultural values, particularly linguistic similarities and religious affiliation, play a crucial role in fostering trust

and bridging divides between refugees and host community members. While tensions persist due to resource competition and systemic inequalities, commonalities in language and cultural practices provide a foundation for mutual understanding and cooperation. As Betts, Flinder Stierna, et al. (2023) observe, communities with close cultural ties tend to perceive each other more favourably, a pattern that is evident in the relationships between the Turkana host community and certain South Sudanese refugee tribes, such as the Lotuko and Toposa. These groups share linguistic and cultural similarities, reinforced by their geographic proximity along the Kenya-South Sudan border, which helps build familiarity and trust.

Language, in particular, has proven to be a powerful tool in facilitating interactions and fostering a sense of belonging. A host participant emphasised the advantage of linguistic commonalities, stating,

With Ethiopians, we speak Swahili, but for the South Sudanese, some of them speak the local language because they have stayed here for a while. There are some two Tribes from South Sudan that speak a similar language, like the Turkanas (Host participant #7- Male).

This demonstrates how long-term cohabitation can lead to cultural exchange, allowing for deeper social integration. For local businesses, language has become an asset, enabling shopkeepers to build relationships with refugee customers.

A female shopkeeper noted,

In the past, communicating with refugees was difficult. But these days they are learning English; some even know the Turkana language. And even us we understand their language. So I have many refugee friends. In fact, it's the refugees who are making some of the things I sell. At around 3:00pm, there is even one who is coming right now to fix my son's electricity (Host participant #1- female).

Therefore, economic interdependence, facilitated by language, fosters positive social interactions and trust between the two communities. Similarly, another host participant described how multilingualism has improved communication and interactions between the two groups, stating,

Most of the refugees try to speak English, and most have also tried to learn Swahili. For the ones who have been born here and they go to this education system of Kenya, they know Kiswahili. So we communicate in Kiswahili and more in English. Other refugees know Arabic, and there are people also from the host community who know Arabic, and some have even learned the Somali language, the Sudanese language. So most of the host people talk and interact with them (Host participant #3, Female).

The ability to communicate in multiple languages by hosts and refugees has created spaces for interaction beyond just economic exchanges, fostering friendships and reducing social barriers. From the refugees' perspective, shared language is equally important in building trust and promoting social cohesion. A South Sudanese refugee emphasized this, stating,

Language actually plays a vital role because it is the one which eases communication because here we have over fifteen tribes who are speaking different languages. Because most of us speak the official language of Kenya, Kiswahili, there is a way it tries to make people bond, in terms of communication, in terms of doing business, in terms of friendship, so the language actually plays a vital role when it comes to the refugees and the host community (Refugee participant #1- female South Sudanese).

By fostering cross-cultural connections, language allows refugees and host community members to engage in shared economic and social activities. For those involved in employment or business outside the camp, speaking a common language is even more critical. A South Sudanese refugee who worked alongside host community members as a security guard explained,

With those who know the language, they can interact with the hosts and collaborate together. For some time I was working as a night security guard for this shelter; we would sleep in the same place with the hosts, I would spend the night with them because I know the language. But if you don't know the language, it's really hard (Refugee participant #2- female South Sudanese).

Another refugee from Somalia noted how Kiswahili has allowed her to seek business opportunities beyond the camp, creating pathways for economic independence and enabling a more effective integration into the local economy.

Being able to speak Swahili has helped me. First of all, on my side, when I find some money, I usually go to conduct business on the side of Kenyans. There are times I go to Kalokol, where they fish, and there were times I was even going to places like Nadwat, where they mine gold, to seek a living by conducting business, and it is through Kiswahili that I can communicate with every Kenyan (Refugee participant #4- Female Somali).

This view highlights how language proficiency fosters friendships but also economic relations. Beyond language, shared religious values also serve as a bridge for building trust and solidarity. Many refugees and host community members share religious affiliations, particularly within Christianity, which provides a common cultural framework that fosters social support. A Burundian refugee described how his church community has strengthened his relationships with Kenyan hosts, stating,

I have a few Kenyan friends whom I trust, especially people from church because, you know there is the Christian culture where they try to assist each other; even yesterday we were in church, and there was a woman who was crying that everything of hers had been stolen. So, the pastors announced that everyone should try to assist that person; at least she gets food for some days. Everyone contributed what they could, and at least that woman could get something to eat this week. So, my closest friends are Kenyans and church members (Refugee participant #3, Male refugee from Burundi).

Shared religious values thus promote acts of kindness and mutual aid, strengthening trust between different community members in Kakuma refugee camp.

Despite shared cultural values helping to build trust in Kakuma, intergroup relations remain complex. Positive interactions sometimes foster cooperation, but systemic inequalities, exclusion from decision-making, and competition for resources often reinforce tensions. Trust is particularly fragile when either refugees or host community members perceive discrimination in the distribution of humanitarian aid and services. Many hosts feel refugees receive preferential treatment, while refugees feel excluded from local governance and

integration processes. These ongoing tensions highlight the need for meaningful inclusion and collaborative decision-making. Shared values like language and religion can help bridge divides but must be supported by policies that promote equity and cooperation. Sustainable trust and coexistence require fair resource distribution, opportunities for cross-cultural engagement, and joint participation in community development, turning shared values into lasting foundations for mutual respect.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

1. Introduction

This chapter reflects on how the research questions in this study were answered. It highlights the contributions of this research to knowledge on refugee integration in the protracted refugee situation in Kakuma refugee camp, in Kenya. Additionally, it explores the limitations of this study. Finally, it offers some directions for future research on refugee integration in Kenya, particularly in the Kakuma refugee camp.

2. Review of chapters

Chapter One introduced the study, highlighting the research questions and outlining the broader context of the refugee situation in Kenya, with a specific focus on Kakuma Refugee Camp. The chapter began by exploring the geographical, social, and political landscape of Turkana County, offering insights into the region's unique environmental conditions, governance structures, and socio-economic realities. By also examining the culture of the Turkana people and the system of governance, the chapter highlighted how geography, culture, governance, and socio-political dynamics intersect to shape both the opportunities and challenges of refugee integration in the region.

Chapter Two delved into Kenya's refugee policy history and its broader context. The chapter traced the evolution of these policies, beginning with Kenya's independence in 1963, and identified key phases of refugee management in the country. While existing scholarship often divides Kenya's refugee history into two phases—the period between the 1960s and

late 1980s and the subsequent period—the chapter expanded this framework. It incorporated an examination of refugee situations before the 1960s and further subdivided the post-1980s period into two distinct phases: the *dawn of the first refugee regime* (2006–2021) and the *new paradigm in refugee affairs* (post-2021). This expanded categorisation provided a nuanced understanding of the historical and policy shifts that have shaped refugee management in Kenya.

Chapter Three reviewed the literature on key concepts related to refugees and their interactions with host communities in Kakuma. Concepts such as *refugeehood* and *integration*—commonly explored in studies focused on refugees in third countries—were examined here through both theoretical and contextual lenses. The guiding question for the chapter was, “What do these concepts mean in the specific context of Kakuma?” The chapter also explored the application of global and regional refugee conventions and agreements, analysing how these frameworks influence Kenya’s refugee policies and the experiences of refugees in Kakuma.

Chapter Four outlined the study's methodology, explaining the qualitative approach employed and the rationale for the data collection methods used. Semi-structured interviews and ethnographic methods, including participant observation and field notes, formed the core of the data collection process. The chapter also detailed the stages of inductive analysis conducted through Thematic Analysis (TA). NVivo software was utilised to organise the data into codes, categories, and themes. The coding process identified three primary themes: understandings of integration, experiences of encampment policies in Kakuma, and intercommunity interactions. By incorporating ethnographic methods, the study captured both explicit and implicit aspects of participants’ lives (Carson et al., 2001). Meanwhile, interviews allowed for a deeper exploration of participants’ perspectives on encampment and integration policies (Fossey et al., 2002).

Chapter Five presented and discussed the thematic findings. It revealed that understandings of integration vary significantly between refugees and host community members, shaped by

their individual and collective experiences with the encampment model in Kakuma. Refugees and hosts experience the camp as both a place of restriction and opportunity, and their perceptions of Kakuma as a *violent sanctuary* reflect the complex dynamics of the environment. The findings also highlighted the nature of interactions and the perceptions of trust as central factors influencing relationships between refugees and host community members. This chapter underscored the multi-layered nature of integration in Kakuma, shaped by policy, social dynamics, and individual agency.

3. Answers to the research questions and Recommendations

This research sought to examine the impact of refugee policies in the protracted refugee situation in the Kakuma refugee camp. By utilising qualitative interviews and ethnographic methods, it answered the research question, *What are the integration outcomes of refugee policies on refugees and host communities in a protracted refugee situation in Kakuma refugee camp?*

And the sub-questions

- How is refugee integration understood by refugees and host communities in Kakuma?
- What are the experiences of refugees and host communities with the encampment policy in Kakuma?
- How are refugees and host communities involved in different integration activities in Kakuma?
- How do the refugees and host communities in Kakuma relate to one another?

This study provides critical insights into the impact of integration policies and the perspectives of refugees and host communities on the policies implemented in the Kakuma refugee camp. Kakuma's long-standing refugee situation and Kenya's shifting refugee policy landscape provide a rich context for understanding the outcomes of integration efforts, refugee experiences, and host-community dynamics. This study examines these interconnections, contributing critical knowledge to the global discourse on refugee

integration and the socio-economic conditions of refugees and hosts in long-term camps like Kakuma refugee camp (World Bank, 2019c).

Kenya, and particularly Kakuma, was selected as the case study for several reasons. Firstly, Kakuma refugee camp is one of the world's oldest refugee camps, established in 1992 (Otha, 2005). As a protracted refugee situation, Kakuma has significant global attention from policymakers, donor institutions, and humanitarian organisations seeking to implement initiatives aimed at fostering socio-economic integration between refugees and host communities (Betts, 2022). Notable projects in Kakuma include the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan (KISEDIP), the Shirika Plan and the Kenya Development Response to Displacement Impacts Program (KDRDIP). Alongside the recently passed Refugee Act of 2021, these programmes highlight the ongoing efforts to address refugee-related challenges in the research area and on a national and regional level. Over time, evidence of integration has become apparent in Kakuma, demonstrated through intermarriages, shared markets, and the adoption of common languages (Jansen, 2011; Sanghi, Onder, and Vemuru, 2016; Alix-Garcia et al., 2018). In this regard, the camp's enduring humanitarian operations and various initiatives provide a unique context for examining the dynamics of integration, policy outcomes and refugee experiences.

Kenya's evolving refugee policies over time have also significantly shaped the experiences of refugees and host communities in Kakuma. Before 1992, Kenya operated an open-door policy that allowed refugees to settle freely across the country (Montclos and Kagwanja, 2000). This approach, which existed without formal refugee legislation, offered refugees considerable autonomy. However, the situation changed in 1992 when civil wars in neighbouring Sudan and Somalia led to a sharp increase in refugee numbers (Crisp, 2000b, 2003; Milner, 2019). In response, the government adopted a more restrictive policy, requiring refugees to reside in designated camps such as Kakuma and Dadaab. In this regard, this thesis contends that these evolving and sometimes contradictory policies (Owiso, 2022) represent a deliberate governance strategy that serves multiple functions: containing refugee populations, extracting economic and geopolitical value from them, and politically marginalising them. Beyond mere humanitarian management, these policies

reflect a broader governance logic that enables the Kenyan state to leverage its refugee policies to secure strategic advantages, such as being a regional actor in refugee response strategies. By controlling refugee populations, Kenya positions itself as a key player in regional security frameworks while also securing international humanitarian aid and diplomatic influence within global refugee governance structures. Thus, refugee policies in Kenya are not merely reactive measures but part of a calculated strategy that intertwines domestic political considerations with regional and global interests.

In 2006, Kenya enacted its first refugee-specific legislation, establishing the Refugee Affairs Secretariat (RAS) to manage refugee affairs and returning the RSD process to Kenyan authorities. This legislation marked an important step in institutionalising refugee management. More recently, the Kenya Refugee Act of 2021 introduced further reforms, recognising the economic potential of refugees and incorporating measures to promote their socio-economic inclusion (Betts, 2022). More broadly, Kenya's refugee policies have often been shaped by major political events of the time. For instance, in response to a series of terrorist attacks between 2011 and 2013, refugees were unfairly scapegoated as threats to national security (Agwanda, 2022). This situation led to repeated threats of camp closures and security operations that specifically targeted refugee communities in urban areas such as Nairobi (Jaji, 2013, 2022; Brankamp, 2019; Milner, 2019; Agwanda, 2022). These operations included arbitrary arrests, forced relocations, and increased surveillance, reinforcing the perception of refugees as a risk to national security rather than as vulnerable individuals in need of protection (Ibid). Such actions underscore the complex and often contradictory relationship between Kenya's security concerns and refugee rights. While recent policy shifts, such as the 2021 Refugee Act and the Shirika Plan, indicate intentions to adopt more inclusive approaches, the historical tendency to use refugees as scapegoats in times of crisis raises concerns about the consistency and sustainability of these reforms.

Currently, refugees living in camps in Kenya face significant restrictions, including limited freedom of movement and denial of the right to work (Sanghi, Onder and Vemuru, 2016; Betts, 2022). Kenya's official policy, which prioritises voluntary repatriation (Government of

Kenya, 2020b), further complicates efforts to integrate refugees locally, hindering any long-term strategies to improve their socio-economic inclusion. A good example of the challenges facing integration efforts is the Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement, which is situated about 5 km from the Kakuma main camps. Despite substantial investments and international support, Kalobeyei remains unattractive to many refugees due to its restrictive conditions, such as limitations on movement and militarised policing (Betts, Omata and Sterck, 2020a; Rodgers, 2020a; Brankamp, 2022). These issues underscore the need to look at the encampment policy as not merely a containment measure but a structured governance tool that redefines refugee belonging through spatial and legal constraints.

The findings of this study also challenge conventional understandings of key concepts related to refugee integration, particularly the notion of the "host community". In Kakuma, the very idea of who constitutes a "host" is fluid and contested. While the Turkana people are officially designated as the host population by the government and humanitarian organisations, they often experience the same socio-economic hardships and marginalisation as the refugees they are said to host. This shared experience of economic vulnerability complicates the traditional host-guest dynamic, as many Turkana residents do not perceive themselves as privileged providers of sanctuary but rather as co-survivors in an environment defined by resource scarcity, economic struggles, and systemic neglect. The fluidity of host identity in Kakuma is further highlighted by the economic interdependence between the Turkana people and the refugee population. Unlike conventional host-guest relationships, where the host community is expected to provide support, the economic reality in Kakuma reverses these expectations. Many Turkanas in Kakuma actively participate in the refugee camp's economy, working as hotel attendants, shopkeepers, and cleaners, among other roles. In many cases, their livelihoods depend on refugee-led businesses, demonstrating that the assumed power dynamic between host and guest is not as clear-cut as it is often portrayed.

This complex relationship between locals and refugees in Kakuma underscores the need to rethink rigid classifications of host and refugee populations in protracted displacement settings. Instead of viewing integration through a one-directional framework where refugees are expected to fit into a dominant host society, the reality in Kakuma suggests a more nuanced interaction—one marked by mutual dependency, shared vulnerabilities, and evolving roles within an interconnected socio-economic landscape. Recognising this complexity is crucial for developing policies and programmes that address the needs of both communities equitably, fostering a more inclusive and sustainable approach to refugee integration.

Another significant finding of this study is the coexistence of both violence and sanctuary within the Kakuma refugee camp. While some refugees reported feeling safe and protected, others recounted experiences of violence, including physical abuse perpetrated by fellow refugees and government security officers. This duality challenges the prevailing depiction of refugee camps as solely violent spaces, a narrative commonly emphasised in recent scholarship on encampment (see Beswick, 2001; Jansen, 2011b, 2016b; Jaji, 2012; H. Brankamp, 2019; Agwanda, 2022b; Brankamp, 2022). Instead, the findings suggest that the camp also functions as a sanctuary, offering protection and support that many refugees lacked in their countries of origin. This dual characterisation portrays the camp as a dynamic and multifaceted space, shaped by state policies and the interactions among its inhabitants. In Kenya, for example, the mandatory encampment policy for refugees, coupled with inadequate security measures and gaps in humanitarian service provision, creates conditions that allow violence to flourish in certain sections of the camp (Jansen, 2018; Rodgers, 2020a; Brankamp, 2022). This state of insecurity exposes refugees to additional vulnerabilities, including instances of internal displacement within the camp itself (Crisp, 2000a; Horn, 2010b; Bishop, 2019; Sundaram, 2024).

These dynamics underscore the complex interplay between sanctuary and violence in the camp, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding of refugee camps as spaces that are neither entirely secure nor wholly threatening but exist along a spectrum shaped by a

variety of structural and social factors. Furthermore, there is a pressing need to reconceptualise the refugee camp beyond its traditional characterisation as a “biopolitical tool” (Jaji, 2012), “occupied enclave” (H. Brankamp, 2019) or “an exceptional space” designed solely to manage “bare lives” (Agamben, 1998). Such reconceptualisation should acknowledge the camp's role as a dynamic and contested space where policies, relationships, and lived experiences continuously reshape its identity and function.

Finally, this study found that personal friendships and prolonged social interactions within Kakuma Refugee Camp play a fundamental role in fostering trust and integration between refugees and members of the host community. These relationships are strengthened by various factors, including intermarriages, shared cultural practices, and common religious beliefs, which create points of connection between the two groups. Beyond their immediate social significance, these interactions contribute to long-term integration by fostering mutual understanding, cooperation, and a sense of shared community. Moreover, relationships between refugees and host community members provide essential social and economic support. For example, refugees and Turkana residents often engage in informal networks of trade, employment, and cultural exchange, creating interdependent economic relationships that benefit both groups.

However, while some interactions have successfully built bridges and fostered solidarity, others have reinforced tensions due to systemic inequalities, exclusion from decision-making processes, and competition over scarce resources. A key source of friction in Kakuma is the perception of unequal treatment. Many members of the host community feel that refugees receive preferential access to humanitarian aid, employment, and social services, while their own struggle with poverty and marginalisation is overlooked. Conversely, refugees often express frustration over their exclusion from local governance structures and limited opportunities for full participation in integration efforts. These grievances underscore the complex and sometimes contentious nature of refugee-host relations in Kakuma.

To foster sustainable trust and coexistence, the Government of Kenya and humanitarian organisations should implement meaningful, inclusive policies that address structural inequalities. While shared cultural values such as language and religion can serve as important bridges, they must be reinforced by initiatives that promote equity, collaboration, and joint decision-making. Strengthening opportunities for cross-cultural engagement, ensuring fair resource distribution, and fostering active participation in community development projects can transform these shared values into lasting foundations for trust, cooperation, and mutual respect between refugees and hosts in Kakuma.

Based on the foregoing, this thesis recommends the following:

1. The current encampment policy in Kakuma should be reformed, and a new approach that promotes refugees' rights to work, move freely, and access land or property, in line with international refugee conventions and humanitarian laws. The new policy should also address wage disparities and ensure equal pay for equal work regardless of status (refugee or host).
2. There is a need for language training and support for both refugees and hosts in Kakuma. Language such as Kiswahili enhances social integration, economic collaboration, and mutual trust between refugees and host communities in Kakuma. The findings of this study demonstrate that shared language skills, particularly in Kiswahili and English, enable deeper social connections, facilitate business relationships, and break down social barriers. The ability to speak common languages in the camp fosters friendships, economic partnerships, and smoother interactions in daily life, while also providing access to broader economic opportunities outside the camp.
3. There should be training and programmes on intercultural competency and empathy targeting both the refugee and host communities in Kakuma. These initiatives can help address the negative perceptions by the hosts about refugees as foreigners

who are taking advantage of the Turkana hospitality and make them realise the plight and experiences of refugees.

4. The government and NGOs should create joint decision-making structures and regular forums where both refugees and host community members in Kakuma can participate in camp and local governance.
5. The government and humanitarian agencies operating in Kakuma should invest in and promote activities that bring the refugees and host communities together, such as sports, performance arts and cultural centres. These will create opportunities for refugees and hosts to build friendships, networks, and a shared sense of community.
6. Refugees and host communities in Kakuma should be meaningfully engaged in the conceptualisation, design and implementation of various programmes in Kakuma. This will promote transparency and foster community ownership.
7. The security agencies operating in Kakuma, such as police officers, should be trained on human rights issues, especially refugee rights. In addition, the training should be focussed on trauma-informed policing so as to support refugees who may be experiencing trauma resulting from displacement and the experience of forced migration.
8. The government and NGOs should ensure that the humanitarian aid in Kakuma is delivered with dignity, respect, and accountability, minimising abuse and exploitation.
9. The government and NGOs in Kakuma should recognise and establish plans to address the unique vulnerabilities of both groups, including the host community's marginalisation and refugees' restricted rights.
10. The government and NGOs should put in place clear indicators and regular assessments of integration outcomes in Kakuma, including access to rights, services, and participation.

4. Contributions to knowledge on integration outcomes

While most scholarship on refugees and their integration journeys focus primarily on the global North (ECRE, 2002; Ager and Strang, 2004a, 2004b; Sigona, 2005; Fix, Hooper, and

Zong, 2017; Donato and Ferris, 2020), there is a notable gap in understanding the impacts of integration policies on refugees and host communities living in protracted situations in the global South, where the majority of refugees are hosted (Betts et al., 2023). This study fills this gap by contributing knowledge about general theories of integration. For example, the accounts by refugee and host participants about the impact of the duration of exile on trust in Kakuma camp challenge the traditional notion of integration as an immediate process that begins upon arrival. Instead, they highlight that meaningful integration and cohesion are built over time through sustained interactions and shared experiences. Refugees who spend years or even decades in host communities often develop hybrid identities, blending elements of their original culture with those of the host community. This dual identity fosters a sense of belonging that bridges divides and strengthens trust between the two groups.

In addition, by analysing the conditions, perspectives, opinions and experiences of refugees in Kakuma, this study provides critical insights into how integration policies and local contextual factors influence the lives and livelihoods of both refugees and host communities. The research highlights the interplay between policy frameworks, social dynamics, and economic realities, offering a nuanced perspective on integration challenges and opportunities in protracted refugee situations.

This research also offers unique and firsthand insights from an insider perspective, making it one of the few research studies conducted in Kakuma by an African researcher with lived experience of working with and supporting refugees and hosts in a protracted situation. This aspect of my identity and positionality as an African, Kenyan and a researcher who had worked in Kakuma is important since it fills a gap in academia, especially knowledge production by African scholars. As Tilley and Kalina (2021) argue, research on Africa produced by African scholars is under-represented in internationally recognised journals and conferences. Moreover, Landau (2019, p. 29) notes that the exclusion of African voices and perspectives from scholarly debates significantly limits the depth and breadth of understanding global issues, privileging a “geographically concentrated group of scholars to set global academic agendas”. This imbalance often results in narratives that lack contextual

sensitivity or fail to reflect the lived realities of those directly affected (Albtran *et al.*, 2024). Therefore, my perspectives in this research project enrich the study by integrating professional expertise and academic and cultural understanding, thereby providing a nuanced view of the refugee integration dynamics within Kakuma refugee camp. By contributing to the academic discourse from the standpoint of an African scholar, this research aligns with the notion of “African solutions to African problems” as coined by Ghanaian economist George Ayittey (Ayittey, 1994). It also underscores the importance of locally informed knowledge in addressing the challenges faced by refugees and host communities in Africa (Erdilmen and Sosthenes, 2020; Khoury and Scott, 2024).

The insider perspectives that have been utilised in this study also allow for a deeper engagement with the cultural, social, and political nuances that shape the refugee experience in Kakuma. It enables the research to bridge the gap between global frameworks and local realities, offering insights that are both academically rigorous and practically relevant. This approach challenges the dominant discourses that often overlook or oversimplify African human experience (Mbembe, 2001) and highlights the value of inclusive, diverse scholarship in developing effective, context-specific solutions to complex issues such as displacement and integration. As Nyabola wrote in “Africa for Beginners”, much of the academic conceptions of Africa are projections by scholars mainly from Europe, adding that such perceptions continue “a colonial legacy of dichotomising and atomising the African experience through the lens of European institutions.” (Nyabola, 2020, p. 144).

This research also contributes valuable knowledge about the perspectives and opinions of both refugees and their local hosts regarding one another and the policies implemented in the camps. It highlights the importance of qualitative research in understanding the lived experiences and views of refugees about the socio-economic conditions in Kakuma, as emphasised in the 2019 World Bank survey (*World Bank, 2019*). Most existing studies on refugees and hosts in Kakuma adopt quantitative methodologies (see Sanghi, Onder, and Vemuru, 2016; Alix-Garcia *et al.*, 2018; Betts *et al.*, 2018, 2023; Sterck *et al.*, 2020), providing statistical insights but often lacking the depth needed to capture the emotional and social complexities of refugee integration and experiences. For instance, a 2016 World

Bank study found that 33 per cent of the host community reported negative impacts from refugees in Kakuma (Sanghi, Onder, and Vemuru, 2016). While the study was critical in unravelling the impact of refugees' presence in Kakuma, it did not explore the underlying reasons behind these perceptions, leaving critical gaps in understanding the dynamics driving tensions and negative attitudes.

5. Limitations of the study

While this research achieved its primary objectives, it also faced several limitations. One notable limitation was its lack of detailed focus on the gendered perspectives of refugees and host communities in Kakuma, age and length of time spent in Kakuma. Gender is a critical dimension in integration, as individuals experience displacement and integration differently depending on their gender (Gerver and Millar, 2013; Albrecht, Pérez and Stitteneder, 2020; Lubit, 2024). However, this study did not delve deeply into gendered dynamics to avoid expanding its scope beyond manageable limits. These aspects are highly nuanced and exploring them in depth would have made the thesis too broad in scope and exceeded the required word count. As a result, these dimensions were not explored in detail, though I made an effort to ensure balanced representation of both male and female participants' views in the discussion of the findings (Chapter Six). Additionally, not all perspectives from the NGO representatives who participated in this study are included in the analysis. Most information about NGO operations, strategies, and plans was incorporated into the literature review rather than the main analysis. NGO perspectives were primarily used to triangulate findings and support the main arguments, rather than to introduce new viewpoints. This approach ensured that the focus remained on the experiences and perspectives of refugees and host community members themselves. The study recognises that every refugee and host community member has a voice regarding the policies implemented in Kakuma and their lived experiences. My overarching aim was to amplify these voices, particularly those of individuals and groups often overlooked by researchers and policymakers (Omata, 2019; Nyabola, 2020; Muluka, 2023).

Another limitation pertains to the generalisability of the findings to other contexts. Since this study focused exclusively on the Kakuma refugee camp, its findings cannot be directly applied to explain integration outcomes in other displacement settings. As Ager and Strang (2008) and Strang and Ager (2010) assert, organisations and policymakers define, apply, and measure integration differently across varying contexts. In addition, there are contextual factors that are unique to Kakuma only, such as the presence of the integrated settlement, the pastoralist host community, and the heavy private sector and donor-funded investments. Consequently, while the study offers insights that might be relevant to other protracted refugee situations—particularly those involving camp settings—additional research is necessary to determine whether these findings are applicable elsewhere (Simon and Goes, 2013; Starman, 2013).

This study was also limited in terms of resource availability. Conducting fieldwork in Kakuma refugee camp, which required travelling to the area and spending at least two months there, necessitated a significant financial capability. I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Agnès Maillot, for reimbursing my transportation costs to and from Kenya. Additionally, I received €500 from the DCU Research Office to help cover some of the research expenses. However, these financial contributions were insufficient to meet the full costs of the fieldwork. As a result, I had to cover several expenses, including accommodation, food, and local transportation during my stay in Kakuma, using my monthly scholarship stipend.

6. Directions for future research and concluding remarks

This study advances the understanding of refugee integration in protracted situations, offering valuable insights into the opinions, perspectives, and experiences of both refugees and host communities regarding camp-based refugee policies. Amid unprecedented global displacement levels (UNHCR, 2022; United Nations, 2022) and a prevailing focus on managing refugee flows from low-income regions such as Africa (Betts, 2022), this research provides a nuanced analysis of the challenges associated with integration. It sheds light on the complex and context-specific dynamics that influence relationships between refugees and host communities in camp settings, contributing to a more comprehensive

understanding of these critical issues. However, due to the limited scope of the research and financial constraints, this study was not able to explore the gendered dynamics of integration in protracted refugee situations. Hence, future research could focus on gender analysis of integration outcomes in enduring camps like Kakuma. Such a study would yield insights that could advance understanding of integration from gendered perspectives since women, for example, are disproportionately affected by displacement and experience integration differently as well (Cheung and Phillimore, 2017; Liebig and Tronstad, 2018; Albrecht, Pérez and Stitteneder, 2020).

Life in a refugee camp is fraught with challenges. To be born or spend one's most productive years in a camp like Kakuma, situated in the harsh environment of Turkana, only amplifies these difficulties. To put this into perspective, one of my participants said, "*If the UNHCR leaves us here, we will all die*". Yet, despite the overwhelming odds, the people living there hold on to hope, dreams, and aspirations for a better future. They yearn for a life where their rights and freedoms are protected, where they are recognized as human beings—not merely defined by the displacement they have endured or their status as refugees. Through this research, I had the opportunity to connect with the human side of those residing in the Kakuma refugee camp. Their stories revealed not only their fears and struggles but also their resilience and hope for solutions to the challenges they face. Many welcomed me into their homes with warmth and generosity, often sharing a cup of tea despite the visibly difficult economic conditions reflected in their surroundings. While most of the people I met remain in Kakuma at the time of writing this thesis, others have relocated—whether through resettlement programs to countries like Canada or through secondary movements to urban centres such as Nairobi or other camps within and outside Kenya. Meanwhile, Kakuma refugee camp continues to exist, albeit in different forms- a camp, a home, a market, and a transit point.

This research journey has profoundly expanded my understanding of displacement and integration as a solution to the challenge of refugee management. Along the way, I gained practical skills such as project management, data analysis, and teaching. I also forged friendships with individuals whose stories and perspectives have deeply influenced how I

approach and engage with issues of protracted displacement and encampment. Meeting them has been a transformative experience, and I am grateful for the insights they shared with me. I hope this research will contribute to positive change, inspiring improvements in the policies and practices implemented in the Kakuma refugee camp. The people I met deserve nothing less than solutions that preserve their humanity, support their aspirations, and recognise their resilience in the face of immense adversity.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire for Refugees and Host Communities

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

SEMI-STRUCTURED IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR REFUGEES, HOST
COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

a. FOR REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

I. Level of involvement in programs and the Settlement.

1. What is your opinion about the Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement (Is it better than the camp, if yes, how?).
2. Do you think your primary needs (shelter, food and basic income) have been taken care of in the Settlement?
3. How informed are you about the development and humanitarian programs being implemented in the Settlement? (not informed, adequately informed, very informed)
4. Do you feel included in the decision-making processes for development and humanitarian programs being implemented in Settlement? If Yes, how? And if No, why?
5. Do you feel included in the implementation of the development and humanitarian programs by the NGOs and the Government in the Settlement? If Yes, how? And if No, why?
6. In your opinion, what should be improved in the Settlement?

II. Interactions: Safety, Security and Trust in the Settlement.

1. How frequently do you interact with the refugees/ host community members? (On a daily basis, weekly, monthly, never)
2. In what way/s do you interact with the refugees/ host community members?
3. How would you describe your interactions with the refugees/ host community members?
4. Do you trust the social interactions with refugees/ host community members?
5. Do you trust the Government and NGOs to resolve the social cohesion challenges in the Settlement?
6. Would you like to interact more with the refugees/ host community members? If Yes, how, If No, why?
7. Are you aware of government regulations within the settlement?
8. How have the Government regulations affected your social interactions in the Settlement

Appendix B: Interview Questionnaire for The Government and NGO Officials

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

SEMI-STRUCTURED IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR GOVERNMENT AND NGO
OFFICIALS

a. FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

I. Level of involvement in programs and the Settlement.

1. How has the government approach to refugee protection changed under the new Refugee Act of 2021?
2. What is the Government's position/conceptualisation of refugee and host community social cohesion?
3. What is the role of the government in ensuring refugee and host community social cohesion in the Settlement?
4. Is the Settlement model better than the camp at enhancing inclusion and cohesion between refugees and hosts? If Yes, how...if no, why?
5. Do you think refugees and hosts have been involved meaningfully in the Settlement programs by the government? If Yes, how...if no, why?
6. How has the presence of refugees in the Settlement affected government operations in the host community?
7. What can be done to improve social cohesion of refugees and host community members in Kalobeyei Settlement?

II. Interactions: Safety, Security and Trust in the Settlement.

1. What is the role of the government in ensuring security of interactions within the Settlement and its environment?
2. How would you assess the level of interaction between the hosts and refugees in Kalobeyei?
3. Do you think the interactions are safe and involve trust between the two groups?
4. How can the level of safety, trust and security of interactions be enhanced within Kalobeyei?

b. FOR NGO OFFICIALS.

I. Level of involvement in programs and the Settlement.

1. What does social cohesion between refugees and the host communities mean to your organization?

2. How does social cohesion between refugees and host communities manifest in your development or humanitarian programs?
3. How have you involved/included the refugees and hosts in the organization's programs in the Settlement?
4. Is the Settlement approach a good model for realizing social cohesion for refugees and host communities?
5. Have you faced any challenges related to the Settlement's design and implementation in regards to social cohesion? If so, which ones?
6. How did you address the above-mentioned challenges in relation to the Settlement's design and implementation?
7. How do the refugee policies and regulations by the Government of Kenya affect your organization's social cohesion programs in the Settlement?

II. Interactions: Safety, Security and Trust in the Settlement.

1. In your opinion, does the Settlement enhance socio-economic interactions between the hosts and refugees in Kalobeyei Settlement? If yes, to what extent?
2. Do you think the interactions within the Settlement are safe and involve trust between the two groups?
3. How can the level of safety, trust and security of interactions be enhanced within Kalobeyei?
4. What is the role of NGOs in ensuring security of interactions with the Settlement and its surrounding?

Appendix C: Plain Language Statement for Government and NGO Officials

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

Plain Language Statement (For Government and Humanitarian agency officials)

Research Title: Self-reliance for integration: Investigating Social Cohesion among Refugees and Host-community at the Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement in Kakuma -Turkana, Kenya'.

Faculty: Humanities and Social Sciences of Dublin City University.

Researcher: Gordon Ogutu (Email: gordon.ogutu2@mail.dcu.ie).

Supervisor: Dr. Agnes Maillot (Email: agnes.maillot@dcu.ie).

Purpose of the research.

This research attempts to investigate social inclusion and cohesion among the refugee and host -communities at Kalobeyei Settlement in Turkana, Kenya. It particularly explores the role of social cohesion at the Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement model for humanitarian assistance and development. The settlement was established as a new approach away from the camp model purposely to promote mainstreamed social services and markets in a setting where refugees and host communities will live side by side and interact through shared public services for the attainment of refugee self-reliance and economic development for the hosts. It is carried out in the School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies.

As a participant, you have been chosen to take part in this research because of your role in the implementation of the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio Economic Development Plan. You will be involved in an in-depth interview that will last for an average of 25-30 minutes and may be audio-taped by the researcher with your consent. This involvement has very low potential for risks but should you be affected, please inform the researcher for referral to certified psychosocial support by a qualified agency. The research will generate new knowledge on the integrated settlement model of refugee integration and offer alternative perspectives to improve the social cohesion between the refugees and host communities in Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement. Finally, this research will culminate in a publication of a dissertation by the researcher and publication of journal articles.

The Data collected will be managed by the researcher (Gordon Ogutu) and controlled by Dublin City University. The study will be conducted in compliance in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and if you have any concerns regarding how your data concerning this study has been handled, you can contact; DCU Data Protection Officer, Mr. Martin Ward – (data.protection@dcu.ie Tel: 01-7005118/01- 7008257) who will handle any concerns arising from this research. An individual also has the right to report a complaint concerning the use of personal data to the Irish Data Protection Commission. If you have any question relating to the research, you can contact the researcher through email- gordon.ogutu2@mail.dcu.ie or the supervisor Dr. Agnes Maillot at agnes.maillot@dcu.ie. Additionally, if you have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, you can contact the Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000, e-mail rec@dcu.ie.

The data requested during the field visit will be stored in an encrypted and password protected laptop, backed up to DCU Google drive, transcribed using NVivo software and used by the researcher as part of the requirements for the fulfillment of his doctoral research studies. They will be analyzed to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon of refugee and host-community integration in the Kenyan context and will feature aspects such as personal profiles (e.g age, gender), social and economic interactions, perceptions of security and trust, and experience in the settlement. Some of the questions you will be asked will be on the socio-economic impacts of the policies within the settlement and level of participation of refugees and hosts in development projects in the settlement. Your identity as a participant will be strongly protected within the limits of the law and the researcher will use pseudonymisations such as Government Official A and NGO Official A. A volunteer translator will be available for the participants who neither speak nor understand Kiswahili and English, which will be used in the data collection process. These data collected will not be shared with a third-party data processor and used only by the researcher for only academic purposes related to the research study such as publishing of dissertation and journal articles. The audio recordings will be uploaded by the researcher to the secure DCU google drive accessible only to the researcher at the end of the interview by the researcher. Afterward, the transcription will be done by the researcher and the audio recordings permanently deleted by the researcher. The transcripts and the rest of the data will then be destroyed safely by the researcher both digitally and physically and supervised by Dr. Agnes after the 2-year retention period. As a respondent, you have the right to lodge a complaint with the Irish Data Protection Commission if you are not happy with how your data is handled.

You have the right to access your personal data directly through the researcher (Email: gordon.ogutu2@mail.dcu.ie) or through the Data Protection Unit of DCU. Participating in the research is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw consent to participate in this research at any level of the data collection process by notifying the researcher. No future data collection will take place upon withdrawal of consent and the previously collected data will be withdrawn from the study.

Appendix D: Plain Language Statement for Refugee and Host Community Members

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

Plain Language Statement (for refugee and host community members and leaders)

Research Title: Self-reliance for integration: Investigating Social Cohesion among Refugees and Host-community at the Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement in Kakuma -Turkana, Kenya’.

Faculty: Humanities and Social Sciences of Dublin City University.

Researcher: Gordon Ogutu (Email: gordon.ogutu2@mail.dcu.ie).

Supervisor: Dr. Agnes Maillot (Email: agnes.maillot@dcu.ie).

Purpose of the research.

This research attempts to investigate social inclusion and cohesion among the refugee and host -communities at Kalobeyei Settlement in Turkana, Kenya. It explores the role of social cohesion at the Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement model for humanitarian assistance and development. The settlement was established as a new approach away from the camp model purposely to promote mainstreamed social services and markets in a setting where refugees and host communities will live side by side and interact through shared public services for the attainment of refugee self-reliance and economic development for the hosts. It is carried out in the School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies.

As a participant, you have been chosen to take part in this research because of your role in the implementation of the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan. You will be involved in an in-depth interview (for refugees and host community members) or Focus Group Discussion (For refugee and host community leaders) that will last for an average of 25-30 minutes for in-depth interview and 1 hour for FGD, and may be audio-taped by the researcher with your consent. The research will generate new knowledge on the integrated settlement model of refugee integration and offer alternative perspectives to improve the social cohesion between the refugees and host communities in Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement. Some of the questions you will be asked will be on the socio-economic impacts of the policies within the settlement and level of participation of refugees and hosts in development projects in the settlement.

This study will be conducted in compliance with GDPR. If you have any concerns regarding how your data concerning this study has been handled, you can contact DCU Data Protection Officer, Mr. Martin Ward through data.protection@dcu.ie Tel: 01-7005118/01-7008257. Any question about the research should be sent to the researcher through gordon.ogutu2@mail.dcu.ie or supervisor Dr. Agnes Maillot through agnes.maillot@dcu.ie .You also have the right to lodge a complaint concerning the use of their personal data with the Irish Data Protection Commission. Additionally, if you have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, you can contact the Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Research and Innovation Support, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000, e-mail rec@dcu.ie.

As such, the data requested during the field visit will be stored on an encrypted and password protected laptop, backed up to DCU Google drive, transcribed using NVivo software used by the researcher as part of the requirements for the fulfillment of his doctoral research studies. The identity of the participant will be strongly protected within the limits of the law and the researcher will use pseudonymisations such as Refugee Participant A and Host Community Participant A. A volunteer translator will be availed for the participants who neither speak nor understand Kiswahili and English, which will be used in data collection process. These data collected will not be shared with a third-party data processor and used only by the researcher for only academic purposes related to the research study such as publishing of dissertation and journal articles. The audio recordings will be uploaded by the researcher to the secure DCU google drive accessible only to the researcher at the end of the interview by the researcher. Afterward, the transcription will be done by the researcher and the audio recordings permanently deleted by the researcher. The transcripts and the rest of the data will then be destroyed safely by the researcher both digitally and physically and supervised by Dr. Agnes after the 2-year retention period.

You have the right to access your personal data directly through the researcher (Email: gordon.ogutu2@mail.dcu.ie). Participating in the research is voluntary and participants have the right to withdraw consent to participate in this research at any level of the data collection process by notifying the researcher. No future data collection will take place upon withdrawal of consent and the previously collected data will be withdrawn from the study.

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

INFORMED CONSENT FORM.

Research Study Title: Self-reliance for integration: Investigating Social Cohesion among Refugees and Host-community at the Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement in Kakuma -Turkana, Kenya'

Researcher: Gordon Ogutu (gordon.ogutu2@mail.dcu.ie)

School: School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies (SALIS).

Supervisors: Dr. Agnes Maillot (Email: agnes.maillot@dcu.ie).

Purpose of the research

This research seeks to investigate the social cohesion among refugee and host-communities at the Kalobeyei Settlement in Turkana, Kenya. It explores the role of social cohesion at the Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement model for humanitarian assistance and development. The settlement was established as a new approach away from the camp model purposely to promote mainstreamed social services and markets in a setting where refugees and host communities will live side by side and interact through shared public services for the attainment of refugee self-reliance and economic development for the hosts. The research will generate new knowledge on the integrated settlement model of refugee integration and offer alternative perspectives to improve the social cohesion between the refugees and host communities in Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement. It is carried out in the School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies. The Data collected will be managed by the researcher, Gordon Ogutu, and controlled by Dublin City University.

You have been chosen to take part in this research because of your role in the implementation of the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-economic Development Plan. As such, the data requested during the field visit will be used by the researcher as part of the requirements for the fulfillment of his doctoral research studies. Some of the questions you will be asked will be on the socio-economic impacts of the policies within the settlement and level of participation of refugees and hosts in development projects in the settlement.

The identity of the participant will be strongly protected within the limits of the law and the researcher will use pseudonymisations such as Refugee Participant A and Host Community Participant A. You are advised to inform the researcher to make arrangements for a translator in case you cannot speak English or Swahili. The audio recordings will be uploaded to a secure DCU google drive and will be destroyed alongside other data after a two-year retention period.

Confirmation of particular requirements

Name in Block Capitals: _____

Witness: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Sample Interview Transcript for Host 10 in English

Interviewer: So maybe as we begin, were you here when this settlement was being built.

Host 10: I was here. Because since it began, it began in village one. I was still where I am now. I was 2005, until 2006, until 2017 is when village one began.

Interviewer: And since it began up to now, how do you see it, is it a good place or there are

Host 10: You know the problem that we are seeing now. Is that unlike when they came when they were people with no issues, they were just staying amicably with others, but recently how they began to bring those in Kakuma four, village one, Kakuma one...the period when (Laga unclear world)..and they began to bring them here is when we began to see bad things.

Interviewer: Things like?

Host 10: Things like these young men beginning to involve themselves in crime, breaking into people's houses, removing things.

Interviewer: Do they even cross over to this side for the hosts?

Host 10: They even walk on these sides at night. They even walk here during the day. Just recently there was a day they carried (wind)...firstly these bodaboda operators, how many have died, that they go and kill down there.

Interviewer: And when they engage in those crimes, do the police look into

Host 10: The police usually go because when they work in the refugee camp they usually don't leave. So when they get someone who has been killed, it is when they go to the police to report, then they come and pick the corpse because they still don't know who has killed that person. So that is where we see the camp is bringing us problems, even last year during Christmas in this Laga where the motorbikes pass, you could not pass there at 7pm, they had crowded that place with spoons and spears for hitting people, they hit two people and before a car could be rescued, it had to go this school.

Interviewer: And now if there is a state of insecurity entering the settlement market, do you feel your security is guaranteed?

Host 10: At the market there is no issue, you stay there because you know at the market it's the women who are many, so they usually don't have many bad issues. We just stay, if we

have our goods we just sell by their side. These things usually happen that even surprises us, you hear they have killed someone, that they have done something somewhere, but inside the market you won't hear such.

Interviewer: And these plans that the NGO's inside the camp were doing like building for the hosts houses, schools, do you see they have increased, like did they do something good?

Host 10: Nothing, KAMURA are the ones who were doing that, we thought those things would be implemented until this place, but those things were not implemented beyond Kamura. We did not get those houses, even these two houses, I don't know if they are five or....its for that time when these people were removed from the lower side where they were given a field, so it's them that decided that instead of this people going to suffer, they came and built them these shelters. The UN itself has not started to give us programs here, because previously they required that when houses are being built for refugees, even us we were to be built for. Right now everything is just quiet. It's only on the other side that we see houses being constructed but on this side none.

Interviewer: And issues about hospitals and schools?

Host 10: We don't have hospitals right now, we usually go to theirs which is located down there. But this whole area from Kamura, let's say from Kalobeyei itself as you come up until you come to the town we don't have a hospital.

Interviewer: And this hospital of Nakoyo and the one for (unclear word), which one is good.

Host 10: Even right now if you go you will find so many people, such that someone can even die before they are attended to. Because since you arrive in the morning, they follow a numbering system, sometimes before they call your number, your patient can't even die there. So sometimes the one that helps us is Nakoyo. When you go with a patient in critical condition, they prioritize you and assist you. Or they call for you an ambulance while still

injecting you with saline water as they see that this person should not go back home. They assist you by looking for a vehicle that can take you to the clinic center.

Interviewer: And this issue of, when you go there, the treatment that someone gets is good?

Host 10: Yes it's okay, even these people right now I don't see them going here as much, they do go to this other one, right from Kakuma four and this whole area, they usually go to this side. Because this other one, when you go they delay you so much that you find time has gone, you can even leave there at four pm without being attended to, and you left in the morning. It's because the hospital is small and it serves everyone so it's impossible.

Interviewer: And you know at the settlement there are so many NGO programs, these chances for people to be given jobs, do they usually come to the hosts or...

Host 10: No they dont, those are not available, those who mostly get work are refugees. Here at our place there is none, it's not easy for the Turkana to find work, whether at the hospital, or as cleaners or anything.

Interviewer: And for the women?

Host 10: Even for the women, you will mostly find it's the refugees only.

Interviewer: And in terms of business, which businesses do the Turkana and Refugees usually conduct together, like what do they buy from you sides and what do you people buy from their side?

Host 10: On our side, there is nothing that they come to take, because what we buy is this Bamba of theirs which they are given. It's what if you have money you buy and stay with on the roadside.

Interviewer: What are those?

Host 10: Things like maize, wheat flour, at times...

Interviewer: The Turkana buy from there.

Host 10: We buy from there because here we don't usually get food that they can come to buy from us. We don't get, on this side getting food is not easy. So if you have money, you go and buy from the refugees.

Interviewer: And are the prices okay?

Host 10: The prices are so bad, right now we buy flour at 100.

Interviewer: Oooh, and there are these things, I hear the Turkana sell wood.

Host 10: Maybe things like wood, or charcoal, those are the only businesses of the Turkana, they will only be able to buy food from there after taking these things to sell over there. Only that, but the other thing is that the Turkana get food and sell it to the refugees, that is not happening. The only business for the Turkana is this, and maybe sometimes making charcoal.

Interviewer: And I hear there are these conflicts between the refugees and the Turkana around cutting down trees, have you....

Host 10: That one is there because the refugees are usually being given money for firewood, they are usually given food, they get almost everything in their community. Now their problem is when they get that, they use the funds to do their businesses or to make their alcohol, and if they get a tree like this, they don't see the benefit of these trees like for shade or for the Turkana animals. They simply cut it down, just recently this place had so many trees here, you see how this host place has remained, because of refugees. They cut everything down, and now if you cut down your tree that you are going to sell to them, they refuse to buy because they have already come and cut down trees on their own.

Interviewer: So even that...

Host 10: So that brings quarrels.

Interviewer: That business is now also not good.

Host 10: It can't be good because you end up going round with that firewood and still fail to sell it, your kids end up sleeping hungry. Because there is nowhere else you are depending on.

Interviewer: And what else brings conflicts?

Host 10: At times water, because us at times when it rains is when we get water from the Laga. There was a time when the UN used to fill for us these tanks, but right now there is no water. So right now maybe for you to get water, you have to look for it at the refugee, and you will get like one jerrycan after standing in line and until maybe someone who knows you considers that one jerrycan of yours. Even just going to search for water with that one jerrycan is already a recipe for quarrels. And it is that water you bring that you will use to drink and cook.

Interviewer: Are there not even dams, or boreholes that have been dug on the other side, or even in the countryside?

Host 10: There is none.

Interviewer: And is there another issue that brings quarrels, maybe like water, land.

Host 10: With water it is normal because when going to look for water there, you hear them insult you, they tell you that why are you Turkana coming to this side, is it that you don't have leaders in your place who can assist you. So that usually brings complaints until the Turkana feels so bad, because they say that instead of our leaders bringing us good people, they are bringing for us people who insult us.

Interviewer: You know they say that they constructed the settlement so that it could improve the relationship, like business and social relationships.

Host 10: You know that could have been, but you know sometimes this thing brings problems because they bring people who cause quarrels, they start fights, because of water. Right now when water begins to become scarce, we get a lot of problems. What is still helping us is there is still water to drink. We don't have to go there, let it dry

completely, people get in so much trouble. You can even wake up in the morning, the water is opened at six in the morning and you stay up to eleven am and the water is depleted before you get even one jerrycan. They decide to come back, and the place where they are meant to get water is in Nakuryo. There is nowhere else nearby that they can get water, or on the side of kangurwa which is far, there is on place in between even up to the lager called Kelele, there is no water.

Interviewer: And what usually brings refugees and hosts together? Like where do you usually meet most of the time?

Host 10: Sometimes what helps is when they are going, what always makes them calm down for a while, is when they are going for meetings.

Interviewer: What do you mean?

Host 10: Meeting, the one for collecting people.

Interviewer: Oh, meeting.

Host 10: In committees both from here and there. So those from there are usually told to warn their people, and those from here are also told to warn their people. That is when they can stay peacefully for a while. But as for the youth, there is nothing like sitting down for meetings, it is only the elderly who can accept to sit down and talk. But as for the young men who smoke weed around, they usually don't want to know what is going on.

Interviewer: And in meetings, you said people usually meet at the market and at those meetings. You also told me you meet at the church...

Host 10: These are those that we are used to, those that we stay together with so we have no issue.

Interviewer: Where do they come from?

Host 10: These are those who come from the village....

Interviewer: Are they Sudanese, or Congolese?

Host 10: They are Toposa.

Interviewer: So you are able to understand their language.

Host 10: Yes we understand each other's language.

Interviewer: So that you are able to understand each other's language, the relationship is good.

Host 10: Those are okay with us, they have no problem. You see, they even know where we are, they are at the Turkana's land, and even when there is drought we go to their place and stay together. But over there, they know that it's only goats and cattle that usually bring fights. But here what they will fight over, there is nothing, so they just stay with no problem.

Interviewer: And have you walked through the settlement?

Host 10: Inside there, I usually walk inside there everyday. There are even times when we are with them in the farms inside there. So in the farms is where refugees, the Dinka, Nuer and all other tribes are mixed in there, and we all plant vegetable gardens.

Interviewer: So people also meet in the farms?

Host 10: We all meet there, that's where all tribes are.

Interviewer: And how are those farms?

Host 10: They are just okay. There is no problem.

Interviewer: People just cultivate with no issues.

Host 10: People cultivate with no issues, people are okay, they harvest their vegetables.

Interviewer: And is the water okay or....

Host 10: The water at times becomes scarce when the water from both the Laga and tap dry up. That brings problems. Recently we heard that we will be piped for water, but I don't know if these days water is there or when the taps dry up it will be an issue, but that is what we don't know because we are still using the tap water.

Interviewer: But that farm is okay or...

Host 10: It's okay because it helps where it helps, because even if you pluck vegetables of 100 shillings it will help you to buy even flour for your kids.

Interviewer: And in your walks through the settlement, have you ever felt that your security is not okay? Like are there places you walk and feel unsafe? Or the time when you walk?

Host 10: I have never but I have heard that sometimes, because sometimes when you leave.... You know these things that are happening are happening because of the youths. But those that you are with together, there is no issue because when they finish their issues, they go to their homes, when you finish your business you also go back to your home. The thing that usually brings problems is this issue of the youth. You will find that it's they that sometimes bring fights. At times you find that even among themselves, they fight, you hear that someone was killed the previous night, you are even surprised because they invade people's homes and kill them. But they fear invading Turkana homes. When they come they just walk around and steal things like hens, sufurias, but in terms of doing extremely bad things, they are aware that the Turkana are also fierce.

Interviewer: And when you walk there past seven, would you still say you would feel safe.

Host 10: At night no, it's not safe over there at night. It's not safe for refugees at night. Because at night in their villages, the elderly are sleeping, but the youths don't sleep. They just walk about as they do their vices.

Interviewer: But now let's say someone like you who lives with them, and who is farming with them. When you look at them as refugees, are they people who can be trusted?

Host 10: No they cannot be trusted, they are not people that you can trust to help you in this or that. They are people that can be triggered by very minor issues. You will think they are okay but when evening comes, they attack you. And that's why you see that for most Turkanas, staying here until late in the evening is not good.

Interviewer: So it's not that they are people you can be friends with?

Host 10: They are not people to be trusted that you can say you are friends with.

Interviewer: So it's just going and conducting your business.

Host 10: Conduct your business and leave.

Interviewer: Even on the farm, you are not in group chamas with the refugees or...

Host 10: There are no chamas.

Interviewer: And these government officials who work here, when you say that these people are contributing to insecurity, is there something that they do about it?

Host 10: You know even if we say that, you know these people are stubborn, even if you call them for a meeting even right now during the day, and by evening you will hear they have caused trouble somewhere. They are not trustworthy. And even those who will come to the meeting are not the same ones connected to the unrest or crimes. So when unrest occurs, it's the security that goes there. So those elders and committees go to the meeting and just hear that something happened somewhere, so it's those issues that they say in meetings, calling concerned village names and numbers, but even though they might know the culprits, they don't speak up because they know they can be attacked later.

Interviewer: So they don't say who is responsible?

Host 10: They don't say because they know their youths when night comes, you might speak now but when night comes they attack you. That is usually the problem.

Interviewer: So the state of the relationship of lets say the Turkana who stay on this side and the refugees, would you say their relationship is good or bad?

Host 10: It's good but not that good. Because you cannot say that you are okay with someone that you don't trust. Because it's someone who can turn on you at any time. They are fifty fifty because we have been friends, but when they decide to cause trouble, you can even be surprised.

Interviewer: So what can the government do to improve that relationship?

Host 10: Maybe it's these meetings that they keep organising that might be of help to the people.

Interviewer: Meetings!

Host 10: And then also those who have their children should warn them, because there is even a meeting where it was agreed that if you have a male teenager, you should not let them stay out past eight pm. Ask them where they are and where they are coming from at that hour, to prevent bad issues from happening in our home. Without that, if you say you have a teenager and that teenager does things like that, one day if he goes and does bad things out there, you might not know what can be done to them, they can be harmed or killed. But hearing that the refugees are correcting their youths is difficult, because among the Turkana, we usually tell our young people to not be found there from a certain time.

Interviewer: Like in the evening hours.

Host 10: The evening hours.

Interviewer: And now that they are saying that the camp is full, and even the reception to the settlement is full. They want to extend the settlement. Do you think the community will take that plan positively or?

Host 10: They will take it negatively because those who are in the existing camps are not doing good things. And firstly what brings so many issues are those from these places.

Interviewer: From the camp or

Host 10: From this camp, from Kakuma one, Kakuma two, Kakuma three upto Kakuma four. That is where they are full of issues. Because everyone who is removed from....I tell you that previously we used to live peacefully with these people. What really brought problems are

those people that it was said (unclear word)...this side, then they were brought here. It's these young men who keep adding problems to the others.

Interviewer: And where were these youths coming from?

Host 10: They came from Kakuma one and Kakuma two upto Kakuma three.

Interviewer: But the first ones were good people.

Host 10: It's the very first ones, the first ones have no problem. Even since they came to Kalobeyei, there have been no fights like the ones I wake up to here from Kakuma four, Kakuma three, Kakuma two upto Kakuma one. Here, you wake up to fights that even they themselves find it hard to stay there. They move from their homes and come here where they can find peace. But since they came here, we have not heard of them fighting among themselves.

Interviewer: So it's those they are removing from the other side, the first ones.

Host 10: Those who are coming from there, being brought here because they say that they have been (eaten by Laga), they are the ones who come here to further the unrest.

Interviewer: And now this issue, let's say the issue of food. You have said that they are usually given food distributions. But even here there are usually periods of drought, do the NGO's usually come to assist the community here?

Host 10: No one helps the Turkana; the only help the Turkana gets is to make charcoal. If the refugees are getting their food, the Turkana has to go and sell the charcoal, firewood, to be given that food. Because they will only be given that food for their firewood. They will be given that food depending on their charcoal. That's when they can come and cook for their children. But to say that help will come in the form of the government bringing some help, that has not yet materialised.

Interviewer: And now in that settlement, there at Kalobeyei one, village one, two upto three.

Host 10: Upto three where we are at now.

Interviewer: What do you see that if they do or add or improve can make the relationship between the refugees and the Turkana to be better?

Host 10: If the Turkana were getting food here, like they are getting. If they were also getting food, they would have a better relationship because they would be seeing that because I am getting the same ration as they are getting, there is no issue, we can share the firewood because I also have what I can cook for my children, just like them. Because when they come from the camp, you can even tell them to cut down one or two trees to go and use. But if now they are cutting and you yourself who is supposed to earn a living from that tree, where will you get a livelihood from? That is what usually brings so many problems to the Turkana, food.

Interviewer: And I also wanted to ask this issue of integration. Let's say things like schools, they are built far, when you look at that distance, are they not far or...even the hospital is located far away, same to schools, water points. Is there a problem or are they not that far away?

Host 10: They are far, that is a real problem. Because right now, in the refugee school has surpassed its capacity for learners, and even when you say that children should go to school, some are learning while others are just playing outside. So when lunchtime reaches, you find that a child has learned nothing. They are only being given food and then they go back home. So if we had got our own school here, it would be at least better. Because you see the one that is on the side of Kangura, that one helps. So these kids that seemed seem bright, we decided to remove them from the refugee school because there is nothing they were learning there. So we decided to take them there, but that place is far.

Interviewer: Is that the one that is called Eskret or.

Host 10: Eskret. But that place is far, if we could get a school nearby, it would be better. Even the younger ones would be learning in the morning and then they go back home, and then the others could remain in school upto three pm or one pm then they go home. But now you know when their kids leave here, they leave here at four am, five am, before they reach there... at times they are late, at times they come back without learning anything.

Because also over there, when they are late, the teachers close the gates on them, so the kids come back without learning anything. At least one that is nearby, even if it's a hospital and a school, those are the best things. Because at times a sick person will get worse if it's a night. It will be good if we have a nearby hospital, because you can rush them to the hospital, if the case is serious, if there are ambulances, you can call them and they will assist you to seek treatment faster. But right now if someone gets sick at night, it's a problem. When the ambulance is called, if someone falls sick in the evening, the ambulance will come around four pm, five pm. How will that help you? And at school, sometimes the child wakes up that early in the night, and at that time these bad people like to hide in the bushes. When they get your child and harm them, what will you do? You will not know what to do. You will blame yourself because you are the one who recommended they go and learn in that place, you see. So that whole place there is a problem, or if that child gets sick in school, before they come from school and arrive home, it will be a problem.

Interviewer: That's alright, I think those are the questions I wanted to ask.

Host 10: Here we wanted water, school and hospital.

Appendix G: Sample Interview Script for Host 10 in Swahili

Interviewer: So labda tukianza. Ulikuwa hapa wakati hii settlement ilikuwa inajengwa?

Host 10: Nilikuwa hapa. Sabatu tangu ianze, ilianza village one. Nilikuwa tu mahali sahii niko hapo. Ilikuwa sijui 2005, 2006 mpaka 2017 ndio hapa ilianzwa village one.

Interviewer: Na tangu ianze, mpaka sahizi. Mnaona iko aje, ni mahali pazuri ama kuna....

Host 10: Unajua sasa shida yenye tunaona sana, ni vile sahii vile wako hivyo. Vile walikuja walikuwa tu watu hakuna shida, walikuwa wanakaa tu na watu vizuri, hakuna shida. Lakini juzi juzi hivi tena vile wameanza kuleta wale wa kakuma four, village one, kakuma one, wakati lager ilikula hao wakaanza kuletwa hapa ndio tukaona tena vitu imeanza kufanyika zile mbayambaya.

Interviewer: Vitu kama gani

Host 10: Vitu kama hii vijana vijana kuanza kufanya ukora, kuingia ingia kwa manyumba ya watu kutoa toa vitu.

Interviewer: Wanakuja mpaka pande hii ya host?

Host 10: Hata huku sazingine hata usiku huwa wanatembea. Wanatembea hata hapa hivi hata mchana. Si hata juzi kuna siku walikuwa wamebeba [...] kwanza hizi maboma [...] wangapi wameua hapo chini.

Interviewer: Na wakifanya hizo ukora ukora, polisi hawaangalii?

Host 10: Polisi anaendanga kwa sababu polisi nao inafika wakati.... Sasa wakati wanapata mtu kama ameuliwa, ndio sasa ripoti ende polisi wanakuja wanachukua huyo mwili kwa sababu hawajajua mwenye ameua yeye hapo. Sasa hapo ndio tunaona inatuletea shida. Hata wakati mwaka jana chrismasi, kwa hii laga mahali mapikipiki inapita hapa. Hapa ilikuwa huwezi pita saa moja, saa moja. Wamezingira hapo na mavijiko, na hii mamishale ya

kugonga watu. Waligonga hata mtu karibu mbili, mpaka huyo gari kitambo kuokolewa imeingia kwa hii shule.

Interviewer: Na sasa, ikiwa kuna hiyo hali ya hatari, ukora. Kuingia hapo kwa settlement hapo, juu kuna soko, hapo kuna market. Mnaskia aje. Mnaskia hali yenu ya usalama iko mzuri?

Host 10: Hapo kwa soko hakuna shida. Tunakaa tu kwa sababu hapo kwa sababu hapo sasa [...] Si unajua kwa soko wamama ndio wako wengi. Sasa hawakuwengi na vituko vituko ile mbaya mbaya. Mnakaa tu pamoja, vitu yenu nayo mkiwa nayo mnauza tu pamoja. Hii inafanyikanga tu hata sisi wenyewe tunashtukianga tu wameua mtu flani, mahali flani lakini huko lakini kwa soko ndani hauwezi pata.

Interviewer: Na hizi mpango zenye walikuwa wana [...] Hizi ma NGO zenye ziko hapa kwa kambi zilikuwa zina fanya, tuseme kama ilikuwa inajengea wa host hapa vitu kama wanawajengea nyumba, mashule. Unaona kwamba walifanya vizuri ama?

Host 10: Hakuna UNHCR ndio walikuwa wanafanya hiyo kitu, tulikuwa tunafikiria hiyo kitu itafika mpaka huku [...] UNHCR huko, lakini sisi hatukupata hizo manyumba. Hata hizi nyumba unaona hii mbili. Ni ile hao watu wakati walingolewa huko chini mahali walipea hao watu, sasa UN wenyewe wakaamua kuliko hao watu waende wahangaike wakakuja wakatengenezea hao watu hapa hii vibanda. Ndio wakajenga, wakaishi. Sasa UN wenyewe hawajaanza kutupatia program ya hapa hivi. Juu kitambo walikuwa wanatakananga ikitengenezewa wale manyumba, pia nasi tukuwe ndani. Sasa sahii kila kitu imenyamaza tu hivyo. Pande hiyo tu ndio manyumba tunaona lakini pande hii hakuna.

Interviewer: Na maneno ya hospitali na shule?

Host 10: Hospitali nayo sahii hatuna hospitali. Tunaendanga na huyo tuhospitali ama tunaingia huku ndani kwa ile yenye iko huko chini. Lakini hapa, area hii yote, kuanzia Kahura, tuseme tu kuanzia huku mahali inaitwa Kalobeyei yenyewe, upande kabisa upande hii mpaka uingie town, hatuna hospitali.

Interviewer: Na hii hospitali ya Nakoyo na hii ya ma refugees gani mzuri?

Host 10: Hata sahihi unaona, huko tukienda, watu wanakuanga wengi, wengi sana mpaka hata mtu anaweza kufa kama hujapata dawa. Kwa sababu tangu aende asubuhi, unafuata number. Number labda kama hujafikiwa na number hata mtu wako anaezafia hapo. Sasa sazingine yenye inatusaidianga ni hii. Hii ya Nakoyo. Ukienda sazingine kama mtu yako ako mbaya, wanaona wanakusaidia. Ama wanakulipia ambulance kama bado wanakununulia maji wanaona hii mtu hawezi kurudi nyumbani. Wanakusaidia. Wanakutafutia gari ya kukupeleka clinic center.

Interviewer: Na hii maneno. Na ukienda hapo matibabu ile mtu anafanyiwa ni mzuri?

Host 10: Iko sawa tu, si hata hawa sahizi hata sioni kama wanaendanga huku sana. Huku ndio wanaenda, mpaka kuanzia kakuma four, mpaka hapa yote huwa wanaenda wote pande hii.

Interviewer: Sababu hii imejaa?

Host 10: Sababu hata sasa ukienda unachelewa unapata wakati umeisha. Unaezatoka hata saa kumi na hujapata dawa na ulitoka asubuhi. Sababu ya hospitali saa ni kidogo. Sasa hapo hiyo hospitali peke yake hii dunia yote. So haiwezekani.

Interviewer: Na unajua hapo kuna hizo programs mingi za ma NGO ziko hapo kwa settlement. Hizi nafasi za kazi, watu kupewa kazi, zinakujanga kwa mahost kweli?

Host 10: Hapana. Hiyo haipatikani. Sanasana wenye wanapata kazi ni warefugee. Hapa kwetu hakuna, hakuna. Waturkana si rahisi wapate kazi, hata hospitali kama cleaners, nini [...]

Interviewer: Na kwa wamama?

Host 10: Hata kwa wamama. Unapata tu ni refugee peke yao.

Interviewer: Na kufanya biashara, ni biashara gani huwa waturkana na marefugee wanafanya pamoja. Ni nini wananunua huku, na ni nini watu wananunua pande ile ingine.

Host 10: Pande yetu hakune yenye wao wanaezakuja kuchukua. Kwa sababu yenye tunanunua, tunanunua hii bamba yao yenye wanapewa. Ndio ukiwa na pesa, unanunua unakaa nayo kwa barabara.

Interviewer: Ni nini hiyo?

Host 10: Mahindi, hii unga ngano. Saa zingine [...]

Interviewer: Waturkana wanunua huko?

Host 10: Tunanunua huko. Kwa sababu hapa kwetu sisi hatupati chakula yenye tunaazakuwa tunauza hapa wanakuja kununua pia nasi tunanunua kwao. Sasa hatupati. Huku kwetu, kupata chakula sio rahisi. Sasa ukiwa na pesa, unaenda huko unanunua refugee.

Interviewer: Na bei yao iko sawa?

Host 10: Bei ni mbaya sana. Sahii tunanunua unga mia.

Interviewer: Na kuna hizo nini [...] Naskia waturkana wanauza pia inaitwa aje, miti?

Host 10: Labda mikogoro kama hii miti, ama achome makaa. Hiyo ndio business ya waturkana. Ndio apeliye hiyo vitu auze, ndio anunue chakula huko akibebe. Hiyo tu. Lakini kazi hii ingine ati wapate chakula aende auzie hawa hakuna. Hiyo biashara ndio yao, hii miti, na makaa sazingine achome, hiyo ndio kazi.

Interviewer: Na nasikia kuna hizo ma ugomvi kati ya marefugee na waturkana labda kwa miti ama nini?

Host 10: Hiyo iko, hiyo iko kwa sababu refugee huwa wanapewa pesa ya kuni, huwa wanapewa chakula yao, kila kitu huwa inawapata huko kwa community. Sasa shida yao, saa yenye wanapata hiyo, wanatumia hiyo kufanyia kazi yao huko ama kutengenezea hii mapombe yao lakini huwa sanasana wanarudi pande hii kutafuta kuni. Na akipata miti kama hii, haoni hii miti inasaidia kivuli, inasaidia saa zingine hii wanyama ya waturkana. Yeye ni kufyeka, anamaliza. Kufyeka [...] hapa yote si ilikuwa juzi mamiti mingi hapa, unaona hii mapost vile imebakibaki yote hivi...refugees, wanakata, na sasa wewe ukitoa hii yako eti

unapelekea hao, wanakataa kununua kwa sababu wamejuka kujitolea wenyewe. Sasa hiyo inaleta ugomvi.

Interviewer: So hata hiyo biashara haikuwi mzuri.

Host 10: Sasa haiwezi kuwa mzuri. Kwa sababu unaenda unazunguka na hiyo kuni yako, unakosa mahali ya kuuzia, watoto wako unarudi tu wanalala njaa. Kwa sababu hakuna mahali ingine unategemea, ni hiyo ndio unategemea.

Interviewer: Na ni nini tena inaleta ugomvi?

Host 10: Saa zingine maji. Sababu sisi hapa saa zingine mvua ikinyesha ndio tunapata maji ya ma laga. Wakati mwingine tulikuwa tunamwagiliwa maji na UN kwa hii tangi. Sasa sahii hakuna maji. Sasa sahii labda upate maji uende utafute maji refugee. Upate kama ni jerrycan moja. Na hiyo jerrycan umeenda umesimama, umengangania labda mwenye anakujua achukue hiyo jerrycan yako moja. Hata hiyo jerrycan kwenda kupata maji ni ugomvi. Na hiyo maji sasa ndio utaleta, utumie kukunywa, utumie kupikia.

Interviewer: Hakuna hata ma dams, hata ma boreholes imechimbiwa hii upande ingine ama ya county?

Host 10: Hakuna pande hii, hakuna.

Interviewer: Na kuna nini ingine tena inaleta ugomvi, hiyo ma maybe maji?

Host 10: Maji iko kawaida ugomvi kwa sababu kwenda kutafutana na maji huko ndani unaskia wanakutusi, wanakuambia sasa nyi waturkana mnakuja huku, kwani kwenu hamna wakubwa kwenu wenye wanawasaidia, sasa hapo inaletanga complain mpaka waturkana wanaona mbaya kabisaa wanaona sasa kumbe hii wakubwa yetu badala watuletee majirani mzuri, wanatuletea wale watu wanatuharibu.

Interviewer: Na unajua hiyo settlement wanasema waliitengeneza hapo ndio uhusiano uwe mzuri, labda uhusiano wa kibiashara, labda uhusiano tu ya kijamii.

Host 10: Unajua sasa ingekuwa, sasa unajua saa zingine, hii kitu inaletanga shida kwa sababu inaletanga watu hapa kukorogana, wanaanza vita kwa sababu ya maji. Maji sahii

ikianza kukauka kauka hapa. Tunapata shida kweli. Tunapata shida kabisaa. Sahii kenye inaokoa watu, bado maji iko, hakuna kufika huko. Wacha sahii isemekane kumekauka. Watu wanapata shida. Labda mtu hata anaeza kuenda asubuhi, maji hiyo wamefungulia asubuhi saa kumi na mbili, mtu anakaa, kufika saa tano saa ine maji ikakatika hajapata hata jerry can moja, anaamua kurudi bila maji. Na sa kurudi bila maji, na mahali huwa sasa inatakikana wapate maji wapi? Nakuyo? Hakuna hapa maji mahali ingine. Ama upande ya kanguro huko, mahali mbali, hapa katikati yote mpaka hii laga ingine yenye inaitwa elele, hakuna maji.

Interviewer: Na ni nini huwa inaletanga marefugee na mahost pamoja? Mara mingi huwa mnakutana wapi?

Host 10: Saa zingine kenye inasaidia ni saa yenye wanaenda [...] kenye inaletanga hawa wanakua, saa zingine wanatulia kidogo, ni saa yenye wanaweka meeting.

Interviewer: Meeting aje?

Host 10: Meeting hii ya ma committee. Ya hapa nay a huko. Sasa ya huko wanaambiwa wakanye watu yao, ya huku wakanye watu wao. Sasa ndio wanaeza kaako na Amani. Lakingi vijana vijana, hawananga hiyo kitu eti mnaitwa watu wanakaa. Watu wazima ndio wanaeza kubaliana wanakaa. Lakini hii vijana vijana wenye wanakunywa mabangi hapa, hawatakangi kujue ni nini inaendelea.

Interviewer: Ulisema pia watu wanakutananga kwa soko na hizo meetings, hapa kwa kanisa uliniambia pia mna....

Host 10: Hawa ni wale tu wenye tumezoeana nao na tunakaa tu nao hakuna shida.

Interviewer: Wanatoka? Wasudanese ama wakongo?

Host 10: Hawa ni toposa.

Interviewer: So mnaelewana kilugha?

Host 10: Hao tunaelewana kilugha.

Interviewer: Kwa hivyo wale mnaelewana kilugha uhusiano inakuwanga mzuri ama?

Host 10: Hao wako sawa na sisi tu hakuna shida. Unajua hata hao wanajua sahi mahali tuko hapa wako kwa waturkana, ndio hata sisi nao wakatu tuna kiangazi tunaenda huko kwao tunakaa wote pamoja. Unajua tu huko kwao sasa wanajuanga tu ni mbuzi na ngombe ndio inaletanga shida ya kupigana. Lakini sasa hapa hivi watangangana nini? Hakuna, sasa wanakaa tu hakuna shida.

Interviewer: Na wewe ushawahi tembea hapo kwa settlement?

Host 10: Hapa ndani. Hapa ndani natembeanga.

Interviewer: Kila wiki?

Host 10: Hapa ndani mimi nakuwanga kila siku. Hata tunakuwanga nao kwa mashamba huko. Sasa kwa mashamba ndio refugee, hii wadinka, nuer, kabila yote inasanyika hapo ndani. But tunapanda wote mashamba ya mboga.

Interviewer: Mashamba pia ni mahali watu wanakutananga pia.

Host 10: Sasa hapo tunakutana wote hapo, sasa hapo ndio kabila yote iko ndani.

Interviewer: Na hizo mashamba ziko aje?

Host 10: Ziko tu sawa hakuna shida.

Interviewer: Watu wanalima vizuri?

Host 10: Watu wanalima tu wako sawa, mboga yao nayo wanavuna.

Interviewer: Maji iko sawa ama?

Host 10: Maji sasa saa zingine huwa inalemea wakati hii ya lagan na maji inaisha kwa tap. Inaleta shida. Sasa juzi tukasikia tutavutiwa maji. Sasa sijui siku hizi maji iko ama tap ikiisha tena itaanza kuleta shida. Sasa hapo ndio hatujajua kwa sababu tunatumia ya tap.

Interviewer: Lakini hiyo shamba ni mzuri sana?

Host 10: Ni safi tu haina shida, is inatusaidia, unachuna hata mboga mia mia si itakusaidia tu, umenunua tayari ugali ya watoto yako.

Interviewer: Na kwa matembezi yako hapo ndani ya settlement, umewahi hisi ya kwamba hali yako ya usalama si mzuri. Kuna mahali unatembea unaskia hapa ni hatari. Ama saa yenye unatembea.

Host 10: Sijawahi lakini kuskia naskianga tu sazingine kwa sababu unaezatoka...unajua kile kitu inafanyika, inafanyikanga kwa hii vijana vijana. Lakini wenye mko nao pamoja, hakuna shida sababu yeye anamaliza shughuli yake anaenda kwake, we nawe unamaliza shughuli yako unaenda kwako. Sasa kenye inaletanga shida kabisaa ni hii mambo ya vijana. Ndio unaezapata sazingine wanaleta kukorogana. Sazingine unapata tu hata huko kwao wenyewe kwa wenyewe wanakorogana, unaskia wameua jana mtu Fulani usiku. Sasa unashindwa, na wanakuja tu wanaingilia mtu kwa boma na wanammaliza. Lakini huku kwa turkana huku wanaogopa kuingia. Hata wakikuja kutembea tembea kuiba iba vitu kama kuku, masufuria, lakini kufanya vitu mbaya wanajua turkana nao ni wabaya.

Interviewer: Na ukitembea hapo saa moja hivi usiku, unaskia tu uko sawa?

Host 10: Usiku hapana, huko usiku sio mzuri. Usiku refugee hapo sio mzuri. Kwa sababu usiku inakuwanga hiyo kijiji yao watu wazima wale wakubwa wanalala lakini vijana kulala hawalalangi. Sa ni vitu yao, wanatembea tembea wakifanya vituko yao.

Interviewer: Na sasa tuseme kama wewe mwenye umeishi na wao, unalima na wao hapo kwa mashamba. Ukiwaangalia kama marefugee, ni watu wenye wanaezaaminika kweli kwako?

Host 10: Hao huwezi aminika nao. Hawa sio wale watu unaeza kusema ati wanaeza aminika, ati nimeamini huyu mtu atanisaidia hivi, atanisaidia hivi. Ni mtu sazingine mambo tu kidogo ikimpitia hivi, sasa tu ikimpitia tu kidogo hivi, we utafikiria mtu amekaa vizuri lakini kufika jioni anakuvamia. Ndio unaonanga sisi waturkana sanasana mambo ya kukaa hapo ati ifike usiku si mzuri.

Interviewer: So kwa hivyo si ati watu wanakuwa marafiki nao?

Host 10: Sio watu wa kuaminika ati ukuwe marafiki nao. Hapana.

Interviewer: So ni kuenda tu kufanya kazi yako?

Host 10: Fanya tu kazi yako tu na utoke. Fanya kazi yako tu na utoke.

Interviewer: Hata hapo kwa mashamba hamko kwa machama na marefugee ama nini?

Host 10: Hakuna chama iko hapo.

Interviewer: Na hawa watu wa serikali wenye wanafanya hapo, mkisema eti hawa watu labda wanaharibu hali ya usalama, kuna vile wanafanya.

Host 10: Sasa hata tukisema hivyo, unajua hiyo watu kichwa ngumu hata wakiwekwa meeting, hata sahih wanaezaeka meeting mchana na kufika jioni unaskia wamefanya vituko mahali Fulani. Hakuna uaminifu wako nayo. Hata wale wazee, kwanza wale watakuja kwa meeting, ni wale hawahusiki na ile vituko inafanyika huko. Sasa huko masecurity ndio wanafanyanga vituke yenye wana nini huko, sasa vile inafanyika, masecurity ndio wanaenda. Sasa wale wazee, macommittee, wanaenda tu wakisikia mambo Fulani imefanyika mahali Fulani. Sasa hiyo mambo ndio wakati wakileta, wakisema wanakaa meeting, sasa hiyo mambo ndio wanasema. Kijiji Fulani, sijui namba Fulani imekuwa hivi, imekuwa hivi. Na sasa hao wenyewe, labda wenyewe wanajuana lakini sasa kutoa huyo mtu kuonyesha hadharani anajua atakuja kumfanyia vituko ananyamaza.

Interviewer: Kwa hivyo hata hawasemi hao ni watu wagani?

Host 10: Hawasemi, kwa sababu wanajua hiyo vijana yao ikifika usiku, unaezaongea sahih kufika jioni anakuvamia. Hiyo ndio inakuwanga shida.

Interviewer: Kwa hivyo ile hali ya tuseme uhusiano kati ya waturkana tuseme wenye wanakaa pande hii ya village tu hii, na marefugee, uhusiano wao unaezasema iko mzuri ama iko mbaya?

Host 10: Ni mzuri tu lakini sio mzuri sana. Sababu yule mtu hujamwamini huwezi kusema at uko sawa. Kwa sababu ni mtu anaweza kukugeukia saa yoyote. Wanakaa tu fifty fifty tu kwa sababu tumekuwa tu marafiki. Lakini saa yenye wanaamka kufanya vituko hata unashangaa.

Interviewer: Sasa ni nini inaeza [...] Nini yenye labda serikali inaezafanya ndio huo uhusiani ikuwe mzuri zaidi?

Host 10: Labda basi hii mameeting unaskia wanasanya sanya hii ndio itasaidia watu mahali ingine. Alafu basi na yule mtu ako na mtoto wake akanye mtoto wake. Kwa sababu hata kuna meeting tulieka, ikasemekana ukiwa na mtoto kijana, usikubali mtoto yako afike saa mbili kama ako nje. Ulizana huyo mtoto uko wapi, hii masaa umetoka wapi, ndio sasa uzuie mambo mabaya kwa boma yako. Bure sasa ukisema eti wewe uko na kijana alafu huyo kijana anakufanyia tu kiburi kama hiyo, siku moja itakuja tu atafanya tu vituko huko na huwezi jua amefanyiwa nini huko, ameuwawa ama ako. Lakini hawa refugee kusikia hiyo kitu inakuwanga ni ngumu. Kwa sababu kwa sisi waturkana sahii hata kijana yetu tunasemanga huko isifike masaa Fulani kama bado uko ndani.

Interviewer: Kama masaa ya jioni?

Host 10: Saa ya jioni.

Interviewer: Na sasa sahizi vile wanasema huko kakuma huko kambi imejaa, hata hapo reception ya settlement imejaa, wanataka kuongeza hiyo settlement, mpango kama hiyo, unadhani hawa community wataichukua vizuri ama?

Host 10: Watachukua mbaya kwa sababu sasa wale wako ndani hapa hawafanyi kitu kizuri. Na sasa kwanza kenye inaleta shida sana, ni wale watu wanatoka huko.

Interviewer: Huko kwa kambi?

Host 10: Kuanzia kambi hii, kakuma one, kakuma two, kakuma three, hapo ndio kumejaa kitu. Sababu wale wanatolewa huko. Hapa nakuambia kitambo tulikuwa tunakaa na hawa vizuri. Kenye ilileta shida kabisaa ni wale watu walisemekana eti laga ilikula pande hii. Halafu wakalipwa hapa hivi. Sasa hao vijana ndio wanazidi kuongeza wale wengine mambo.

Interviewer: Na hao vijana walikuwa wanatoka upande gani?

Host 10: Wanatoka kakuma one mpaka kakuma two, mpaka kakuma three.

Interviewer: So lakini wale watu wa kitambo walikuwa tu wazuri?

Host 10: Ni wale wa kitambo kabisa, wachana, wale wa kitambo waliletwa hapa, hawa hakuna shida. Hata kalobeyei hapa tangu wakuje, hakuna vita vita kama ile inaamkanga hapa hivi. Kuanzia kakuma four, kakuma three, kakuma two mpaka kakuma one. Huku kunaamkanga vita ile hata hao wenyewe hakuna kukaa hapa. Wanahama wanarudi huku mahali wapate Amani. Lakini hii tangu ikuje hapa hatujawahi kusikia wakipigana.

Interviewer: So ni wale wenye wanatoa huko upande ile ingine, wale wa zamani.

Host 10: Wale wanatoka huko eti wanaletwa hapa eti kwa sababu eti wamekuliwa na laga, wanakuja kuendelea kufanya vituko mbaya.

Interviewer: Na sasa hii maneno, tuseme labda maneno ya chakula, unajua hapo umesema wanapewa chakula, hapa pia kuna saa zingine hali ya kiangazi inatokea, huwa hata hizo ma NGO's wanakuja wanasaidia community ama?

Host 10: Hapa hakuna mtu anasaidia waturkana, waturkana kusaidika tu ni kubeba kuni, achome makaa, kama hawa hata wanapata hiyo chakula yao, ndio aende auze hiyo makaa, anini kuni apewe hiyo chakula, sababu hiyo chakula atapewa sababu ya hiyo kuni yake. Atapewa hiyo chakula kulingana na hiyo makaa yake ndio akuje apikie watoto yake. Lakini at usaidizi itoke ati usaidizi ndio hii ya serikali imewaletea sijui nini, bado haijakuja.

Interviewer: Na sasa kwa hiyo settlement. Hapo Kalobeyei one, village one, two mpaka three, ni nini unaona wakifanya hapo ama wakiongeza ama wakisawazisha inaezafanya uhusiano na nyinyi kama waturkana ikuwe mzuri?

Host 10: Hapa unajua turkan wangekuwa wanapata chakula sasa wangekuwa na uhusiano kwa sababu wataona ile hao wanapata hata mimi Napata hakuna haja, wacha to tushare wote, kama ni hii miti wach tushare kwa sababu hata mimi niko yenye nitawapikia watoto yangu. Vile hata hao kwa sababu hata akikuja kutoka huko, unaezaambia yeye kata hii moja ama mbili end ahata wewe utumie. Lakini sasa kama yeye anakata, na we mwenyewe mwenye unatakikana ukule hiyo miti kwa sababu hiyo miti ndio unategemea, kila kitu yako iko kwa hiyo miti, sasa yeye akikuja afagie na wewe utakula wapi. Hiyo ndio inaletanga kabisaa shida kwa waturkana, chakula.

Interviewer: Hii maneno ya watu ku...wanasema integration, vitu kama shule zimejengwa huko, unaona hiyo distance, kutembea mpaka hapa si inakaa mbali sana? Ama hiyo distance, hata hospitali iko mbali, shule, maji, kuna shida ama iko karibu?

Host 10: Iko mbali, iko shida kabisaa. Kwa sababu sahii hii shule ya refugee, watoto wamejaa hivi, n ahata ukisema watoto waende shule, wengine wanasoma wengine wanacheza tu huko nje. Sasa kufika lunch, hakuna kitu mtoto amepata. Anapewa tu chakula na kutoka. Sasa sisi tungekuwa tumepata shule yetu hapa, ingekuwa afadhali, kwa sababu unaona sasa yenye iko pande hiyo ya kangura hiyo, hiyo inasaidia, sasa watoto wengine wenye wameanza kukua na akili, tulitoa kwa hiyo shule kwa sababu hakuna kitu yenye wanaelewa. Tukaamua wacha waende huko, na sasa huko ni mbali.

Interviewer: Hiyo ndio inaitwa Escret ama?

Host 10: Eskriat, sasa huko ni mbali, ingekuwa sasa hii yenye iko tunapata hapa shule ingekuwa mzuri. Ingekuwa hata hawa wadogo wadogo wanasoma asubuhi tu wanaenda tu nyumbani alafu wale wengine wanabaki mpaka saa sita, ama saa saba, wanaenda nyumbani. Sasa unaona sahii mtoto vile anatoka, anatokanga hapa kitu saa kumi, saa kumi na moja, kitambo afike huko, saa zinginine anachelewa. Anarudi tena sazingine kama hajasoma. Sababu huku sasa ukichelewa unaambiwa na walimu, wenye wamechelewa wote wamefungiwa huko nje hakuna kazi yao itakimbia. Sasa mtoto anarudi hakuna kitu amefanya. Afadhali yenye iko karibu, hata kama hospitali, hospitali na shule ndio kitu mzuri sababu sazingine hata mtu atashindikana kama ni usiku, ni mzuri hospitali kama iko karibu unamkimbiza. Kama atashindikana kama kuna mahali ma ambulance, unapigia ambulance simu ikusaidie ikuokoe mahali utaeza kupata matibabu. Lakini sahii hapa, mtu agonjeke usiku, ni shida. Ambulance kitambo kupigiwa simu, na mtu labda ameanza kuugua jioni, ambulance ikuje kitu saa kumi, saa kumi na moja, sasa hiyo itakuwa imekusaidia nini. Na shule, sazingine mtoto aamuke mausiku hiyo, na sahiyo watu wa hapa, sazingine hii vijana wakora wanapenda kukaa kwa hizi ma kalavat akipata mtoto yako amalizie kwa barabara utafanya nini? Unashindwa kitu ya kufanya. Unajilaumu mwenyewe kwa sababu we

mwenyewe ndio ulikuwa unasema aende asome. Unaona? Sa hapo yote iko shida, ama huyo mtoto atoke shule amegonjeka sasa kitambo atoke huko kufika hapa ni shida.

Interviewer: Sawasawa. Hizo ndio maswali nilikuwa nataka kukuuliza.

Host 10: Hapa tulikuwa tunataka maji, na shule na hospitali [...]

Appendix H: Interview Transcript for Refugee 7 from DRC

Interviewer: So maybe you can tell me where you are from or your country of origin, and where you stay?

Refugee 7 Kal: My name is (unclear), I am from the Democratic Republic of Congo, I came here and have been here since 2016 and I stay here in the Kalobeyei settlement, Kalobeyei village one, level 21, house 12.

Interviewer: Did you come directly to the settlement or were you first taken to the camp before being transferred.

Refugee 7 Kal: The time we came, because we Kalobeyei had just been opened, we were first placed in the reception.

Interviewer: Kalobeyei reception?

Refugee 7 Kal: Kakuma reception. But then after that is when we were brought here in Kalobeyei.

Interviewer: And were you told if you would be settled permanently in Kalobeyei, or you were just brought without being given any information?

Refugee 7 Kal: The time when we were brought, we had not been told that it would be a settlement, but when we arrived here we were told it would be a settlement.

Interviewer: And have you agreed to settle permanently in Kalobeyei or you still have hopes of being resettled somewhere else....maybe third countries in Europe or the U.S

Refugee 7 Kal: According to what we were told when we were being brought here, we were told that by 2023, we would have good roads, we would have good schools, we would have people's businesses being supported financially, but upto now people are not seeing that. And that makes most people fearful of staying here permanently.

Interviewer: So their services are not to the expectations that you were promised?

Refugee 7 Kal: They are not, if you compare.

Interviewer: And now generally if you compare Kalobeyei to the camp, which place is preferable that someone would decide to stay either in Kalobeyei or in the camp.

Refugee 7 Kal: Previously, people preferred to stay here in the settlement, but now the cost of living has gone up, people no longer desire to stay here. Because right now in the settlement, you are paid two thousand shillings as the monthly enumeration for the Bamba Chakula. But that amount is insufficient to purchase food for the whole month.

Interviewer: So the food is not enough?

Refugee 7 Kal: The food is not enough. And at the camp, they get half the money for bamba chakula and then they also get food.

Interviewer: So the camp model is better.

Refugee 7 Kal: The camp model is seen as preferable compared to this one. Because this one has made people have so many loans because the food is not enough.

Interviewer: How do the loans come about?

Refugee 7 Kal: The loans come about because the cash you are given you purchase food with it, but the food is not enough, it's quickly depleted before even twenty or ten days ahead, so people are forced to go to the shops to borrow, you take food on loans.

Interviewer: And now if you consider those shelters, the houses that are being constructed for people. Are they good or?

Refugee 7 Kal: The houses themselves are not good, because like the ones that were constructed here in village one, they don't consider the size of your family, everyone was constructed for a single house like that, even if you are twenty in a family, so you will get children and everyone in the family share that one house. So the houses are not good.

Interviewer: And if you consider healthcare issues, hospitals.

Refugee 7 Kal: The hospitals are also a problem. You know the hospitals being treated in the camp are just to give you a small relief. The people that I see are better off in getting treatment are the women, when women go they are adequately taken care of...

Interviewer: And men?

Refugee 7 Kal: But men, you can go in the morning and come back in the evening.

Interviewer: And the status of education, are the schools good?

Refugee 7 Kal: The status of education, that is also a problem because the schools are overpopulated. You find a class that has about one hundred learners. Those learners cannot get quality education.

Interviewer: So the schools are full.

Refugee 7 Kal: They are full.

Interviewer: And if you consider this issue of bamba chakula, is the money enough or what is your opinion? Like is it something that someone can survive on?

Refugee 7 Kal: That money is not enough, it is not enough, because as I have told you, the cost of living has gone up. Size one gets two thousand, that two thousand divide it in a month, how much can you eat, that daily amount, is it something that someone can eat in a day? The money is not enough.

Interviewer: And these issues like the status of getting employment, are there jobs here, because they say that there are these trainings for business or that there are these jobs where they employ refugees.

Refugee 7 Kal: Those business training sessions are happening and people are getting them for free. They are being offered by these companies, like ARC, DRC and other companies that also give those training sessions. But now employment is low, because now if you see those who are unemployed in the camp, they are very few compared to those who are unemployed. So most are unemployed.

Interviewer: And how many hospitals are in the settlement that you might know of?

Refugee 7 Kal: The settlement has two hospitals, there is the Kenya Red Cross that is in village one, and there is another one in village two.

Interviewer: And these mobile loans like the ones for safaricom, like mshwari. Are the refugees really getting them?

Refugee 7 Kal: Those ones the refugees are also getting them because they have.... but there is a small problem due to that. Most refugees have registered their lines using the ID of Turkana people. Because when we arrived here, we did not have IDs so it forced us to register using their IDs, so at times if you take a loan, you are asked to bring the original ID, so it becomes difficult for you to get it because you don't have it.

Interviewer: When you go to take a loan from equity or...

Refugee 7 Kal: At equity.

Interviewer: So you are told to come back with the original refugee ID card or which one?

Refugee 7 Kal: The Turkana ID, but in taking a loan from the bank, it depends on the business you are doing. If you have a good business they can come and assess it and then give you a loan from the bank.

Interviewer: Do you have examples of businesses you have heard have been given loans by the banks?

Refugee 7 Kal: For example this business of bamba chakula, there are people who have heard they have been given loans.

Interviewer: How is the business? Like, what type of business?

Refugee 7 Kal: It's the one where people stock food.

Interviewer: Those with the bamba shop?

Refugee 7 Kal: Eeuh.

Interviewer: In your opinion, do you think the refugees here in the settlement are being adequately represented in...

Refugee 7 Kal: They are not adequately included, you know we are refugees and there are things that we just come to be told the information, but making decisions regarding programs, people are not really adequately included. They just come and give you updates.

Interviewer: So they are just told that there is this project now....

Refugee 7 Kal: Eeuh, that this project has arrived and it will be like this....just that.

Interviewer: So their ideas and suggestions are not heard?

Refugee 7 Kal: They are not heard.

Interviewer: Like which challenges do the refugees have here in the pursuit of their livelihoods?

Refugee 7 Kal: The challenges are big because you know if you are a refugee, for example, when you are working, you cannot be paid as a national, you are paid small amounts, like seven thousand, six thousand.

Interviewer: And the work?

Refugee 7 Kal: And the work you are doing is the same. So that cannot make you progress.

Interviewer: And which reasons do they give for paying like that?

Refugee 7 Kal: They pay that because they say there is a law that limits refugee salaries to not surpass 12,000. That if you are paid above that they will begin deducting tax, that's what they say.

Interviewer: So it's just that the only reason you have heard?

Refugee 7 Kal: Yeah, that is one, another reason, another challenge that is facing us is that you know we are refugees, and there are some services that we cannot do because we are refugees. You are required to be....for example for now if you have started a CBO which you want to register as refugees, but you will be told you have to include the Turkana or other Kenyans. So you are forced to consider other things.

Interviewer: Here in the camp?

Refugee 7 Kal: In the camp it will be difficult.

Interviewer: And now in your opinion, what do you think that if it is changed, the livelihood in the camp can be improved?

Refugee 7 Kal: The first thing I did was that they promised people so many things, they brought people and said this would be a settlement. If it's truly a settlement, let them bring those things they promised to bring to the settlement. They said they would bring these big corporations, people to start businesses that would make them progress.

Interviewer: And do you have a job that you are doing, or do run a business or do you just depend on the bamba chakula?

Refugee 7 Kal: I am employed.

Interviewer: And are you just being paid in incentives like the other refugees are being paid?

Refugee 7 Kal: Yes.

Interviewer: How do you interact with the host community?

Refugee 7 Kal: In terms of the hosts and refugees, I don't see many problems. You know where people live, there can be no absence of small problems. But because people have stayed here for a while, people have become familiar with each other and we are progressing well. It's just that small challenges cannot be lacking.

Interviewer: What are some of the problems?

Refugee 7 Kal: The problem is, you know this is a settlement, and right now all the Turkana are inside the camp. There are those who smoke weed, there are those who take illicit brew, and at times they have squabbles, fights break up, such things. But the situation is not that bad.

Interviewer: And in which areas do you mostly meet with the turkana?

Refugee 7 Kal: Mostly we meet in the markets, bars, where we can meet with them.

Interviewer: And here in the settlement, are there times when you have felt unsafe, like your security state is bad.

Refugee 7 Kal: Yes, there was a time like that, there was a time there were fights, there was an old man who was bringing firewood using a bicycle, but as he was passing, he knocked a pregnant Sudanese woman in the stomach. The woman was taken to the hospital and she died. It brought fights, people fought over the issue here. But people sat down and resolved the issue and right now people are okay.

Interviewer: So when fights or squabbles occur, you usually don't feel safe?

Refugee 7 Kal: Yes, when they occur, you won't feel safe. And there are other problems that face those who keep animals. For example, there is a donkey that died and that also brought problems, so there are times that you don't feel safe.

Interviewer: Can you say you trust your fellow refugees, or you also trust the host community or...which group do you trust the most.

Refugee 7 Kal: I mostly trust the refugees, because these hosts we live with but there are times they tell us this is our land, what are you bringing here, this is not your land, you see issues like that. You are living but you feel like you are not at home. Something hurts when you are told like that.

Interviewer: So they tell you that this is their home.

Refugee 7 Kal: Eehh

Interviewer: And in trusting do you trust refugees from another community or only Congolese?

Refugee 7 Kal: Even other communities because like for me all my neighbors are Sudanese and we have lived for seven years and we are okay.

Interviewer: And do you also trust the NGO officials?

Refugee 7 Kal: There are those who do their work very well, and others....they are human beings.

Interviewer: And those who work for the Kenyan government, like the police?

Refugee 7 Kal: The police are the ones with a problem. They have a problem, you know the police in the camp are different from the police from downy. The camp policemen, we don't know what their problem is, their concern is only money. Every little thing money.

Interviewer: Can you say that knowing Kiswahili that is perhaps spoken by most Kenyans and hosts, is there a way that it has improved your relations with Kenyans and other communities?

Refugee 7 Kal: Yes it has really improved, you know even in the camp, when people were coming, people had a language barrier. Communicating was a problem, and you would get people fighting, quarreling for no reason because they could not understand each other. But now that people have stayed and they understand Kiswahili, right now many, beginning with the hosts who are there, people are speaking well, that has really helped.

Interviewer: Did you know Swahili in Congo or did you learn it here in the camp?

Refugee 7 Kal: I knew Kiswahili from when I was in Congo.

Interviewer: Which community do you usually go to when you need advice or any information, like those that you can share your secrets with? Are they the hosts or refugees from other communities, or just family members or refugees from Congo?

Refugee 7 Kal: The ones that I mostly share my secrets with are the refugees from Congo.

Interviewer: Not others?

Refugee 7 Kal: The others

Interviewer: And also, which responsibility do you think the government and the NGO's that are here at the settlement, which responsibility can they focus on, lets say for example issues like security and the relations between the different communities here to be good.

Refugee 7 Kal: In these groups, it's a must that they keep holding meetings, for example the WFP were conducting meetings of the host community and refugees. And that really helped at that time. They had those trainings, they used to bring people together, teaching people how to live together, and that really helped. So we are asking that they continue doing that.

Interviewer: What were the training about, or were they these awareness campaigns?

Refugee 7 Kal: They were doing these awareness campaigns, there were also those meetings where they used to include people from the hosts, especially the leaders, they used to talk about peaceful existence, there were also peace committees which they placed. Those were really helping.

Interviewer: Would you mind if most of the hosts are brought here in the settlement where people are mixed, or would you prefer people to live in separate areas, they live on their side and the refugees to also live on their side?

Refugee 7 Kal: For us we are used to....if they can live, for example here in the settlement, many of the Turkana live close by, in fact many have their houses nearby. They live with the refugees peacefully. If they will be brought to stay, it's not a problem, people will agree, we can't refuse.

Interviewer: And you personally, would you prefer to be settled here permanently and you become like a Kenyan or there are those rights that you might want, like moving freely within the country.

Refugee 7 Kal: It depends on the environment, but in this environment of today, I would not be happy staying here because the environment is not good.

Interviewer: And maybe the last question. What in your opinion can improve the general lives of people in the camp, that will give the refugees more rights and that will enable their opinions to be heard more?

Refugee 7 Kal: The thing that can help refugees to be heard more, it's that we are asking the UNHCR to try improving issues, especially these problems that people are going through, the state of the economy has become harder making it hard for people to live. So if the UNHCR will have a budget, they should see if they will increase the amount of the bamba chakula. Right now the bamba chakula is too small.

Interviewer: Thank you, that was the last question.

Refugee 7 Kal: Okay, thank you.

Appendix I: Turkana West Deputy County Commissioner Approval



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Telegraphic address: "DEPUTY COUNTY COMMISSIONER"
Telephone: KAKUMA
Telex:
Fax:

When replying please quote

REF: TWSC/EDU./12/1/VOL. I/146

DEPUTY COUNTY COMMISSIONER
TURKANA WEST SUB-COUNTY
P. O. BOX 1
KAKUMA

26TH MAY, 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION OF GORDON OCHIENG OGUTU TO VISIT KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP AND KALOBEYEI RESETLEMENT.

The above mentioned person has been authorized to carry out research on " **Social cohesion between refugees and host communities at the camp**"

The research period ends on **May to July, 2023.**

Please accord him any necessary assistance


JOHN K. KARUGU
FOR: DEPUTY COUNTY COMMISSIONER
TURKANAWEST SUB-COUNTY KAKUMA

26 MAY 2023
DEPUTY COUNTY COMMISSIONER
TURKANA WEST SUB-COUNTY
KAKUMA

Copy to: -CHIEF KAKUMA LOCATION

-CHIEF KALOBEYEI LOCATION

Appendix J: Department Of Refugee Services Approval

RESTRICTED



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND NATIONAL ADMINISTRATION,
STATE DEPARTMENT FOR CITIZEN SERVICES

DEPARTMENT OF REFUGEE SERVICES (DRS) - KAKUMA

Website: www.refugees.go.ke
E-mail: refugee.affairs@kenya.go.ke
Tel: +254-020-2093675
Fax: +254-020-8047923
When replying please quote:
DRS/KKM/ADM/5/23

Kakuma Field Office
P.O. Box 57-30501
Kakuma, Kenya

17th May, 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: AUTHORIZATION TO VISIT KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP

Your request is here refer; -

Permission is hereby granted to the person mentioned below. The purpose of visiting will be to collect data relating to social cohesion between refugees and host communities in Kakuma refugee camp. He will be in the camp as from 18th May to 30th July, 2023 time not exceeding 1800hrs.

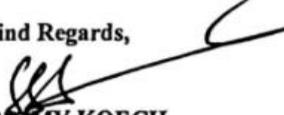
NOTE; Overstaying without Official permit is an offense

S.no	NAME	ID/PP. NO	NATIONALITY
1.	GORDON OCHIENG OGUTU	AK0132386	KENYAN

However, you are required to adhere to the regulations of the camp during the visit.

Upon expiry return the permit to DRS.

Kind Regards,


SAMMY KOECH
D/CAMP MANAGER- KAKUMA CAMPS AND KALOBEYEI SETTLEMENT
Cc: SCPC Kakuma



Appendix K: Department Of Refugee Services Authorisation to Visit Kakuma



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
STATE DEPARTMENT FOR IMMIGRATION AND CITIZEN SERVICES
DEPARTMENT OF REFUGEE SERVICES

Website: www.refugee.go.ke
E-mail: refugeeaffairs@refugee.go.ke
Tel: +254-020-434-348-143/5, +254-020-4405057
When replying please quote:

Corporate Place, Upper Hill, Kiambere Rd
P.O. Box 42227 -00100
Nairobi, Kenya.

DRS/OPER/2/22/Vol. XV (26)

28th April 2023

Gordon Ochieng Ogutu
Dublin City University
+254768639668

RE: AUTHORIZATION TO VISIT KAKUMA REFUGEE CAMP

We refer to your letter dated 26th April 2023 regarding the above subject matter.

Authority has been granted to Gordon Ochieng Ogutu, **Nationality; Kenyan, Passport No/ID; AK0132386** to visit Kakuma refugee camp and Kalobeyei Settlement from May -July 2023.

The purpose of the visit is to collect data relating to social cohesion between refugees and host communities at the camp.

This clearance however, is subject to the following conditions:

- i. Adhere to all security and Covid-19 protocols at the camp.
- ii. Your visit shall be objective, balanced and in compliance with the Laws of Kenya.

On arrival they will all be required to report to the Camp Manager before transacting any business in the camp.

J.K AWUOR
FOR: COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEE AFFAIRS

Copy to: Camp Manager
Kakuma Refugee Camp

Appendix M: DCU Research Ethics Committee Approval

Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University



Mr Gordon Ochieng Ogutu
School of Applied Language and Intercultural Studies (SALIS)

14th November 2022

REC Reference: DCUREC/2022/153

Proposal Title: Self-reliance for integration: Investigating social cohesion among refugees and host communities at the Kalobeyei Integrated. Settlement in Kakuma -Turkana, Kenya.

Applicant(s): Mr Gordon Ochieng Ogutu, Dr Agnes maillot

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for your application to DCU Research Ethics Committee (REC). Further to expedited review, DCU REC is pleased to issue approval for this research proposal. **This approval is conditional on the DCU Data Protection Unit (DPU) approving the project and any related documentation, such as a data protection impact assessment (DPIA). Research should not begin until this is in place.**

DCU REC's consideration of all ethics applications is dependent upon the information supplied by the researcher. This information is expected to be truthful and accurate. Researchers are responsible for ensuring that their research is carried out in accordance with the information provided in their ethics application.

Materials used to recruit participants should note that ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee. Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further amendment submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr. Melrona Korrane'.

Dr. Melrona Korrane
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee



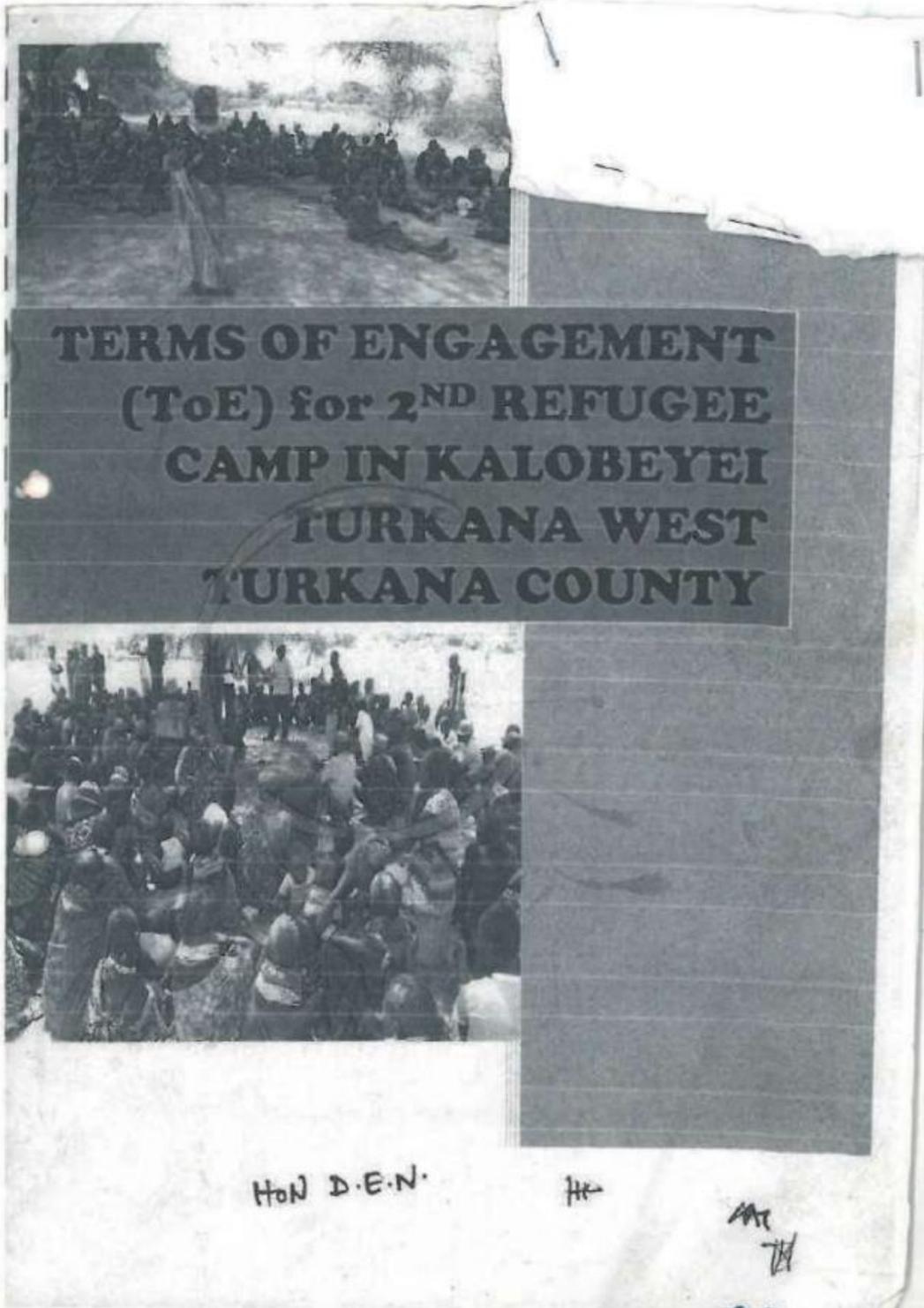
Taighde & Nuálaocht Tacaíocht
Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath,
Baile Átha Cliath, Éire

Research & Innovation Support
Dublin City University,
Dublin 9, Ireland

T +353 1 700 8000
F +353 1 700 8002
E research@dcu.ie
www.dcu.ie

Note: Please retain this approval letter for future publication purposes (for research students, this includes incorporating the letter within their thesis appendices).

Appendix N: Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement Terms Of Engagement



**Terms of Engagement
(ToE)**

Between

**DEPARTMENT OF REFUGEE AFFAIRS
Herein referred to as DRA-(Kenya National Refugee
Agency)**

And

**KALOBYEI COMMUNITY/TURKANA WEST COMMUNITY
Herein referred to as TURKANA/ HOST COMMUNITY**

ON: Establishment of a Second Refugee Campfor Refugees

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Drafted at ELIYE Springs -Lake Turkana, February 2015

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TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT

For PROPOSED SECOND REFUGEE CAMP AT KALOBYEI, TURKANA WEST SUB-COUNTY.
7th February, 2015

TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT DESIGN (ToE)

i. PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

- a) Respect and preserve of host community culture and way of life
- b) Uphold dignity
- c) Sincere relationship
- d) Inclusive stakeholders engagement
- e) Equitable resource sharing
- f) Transparency and accountability
- g) Participatory decision making
- h) Justice and fairness
- i) Effective communication
- j) Sensitivity and respect to environment
- k) Uphold constitutionalism and rule of law

THEMATIC INTERVENTION AREAS

1. EDUCATION

- a) Support construction of ICT Centres
- b) Capacity building.
- c) Construction and equipping school infrastructure.
- d) Support WASH Programs in schools.
- e) Support to sports and recreational activities.
- f) Scholarship for students
- g) Child protection
- h) Persons with disabilities
- i) Polytechnic collage
- j) Solar systems for schools
- k) Library

WATER

- a) Provision of water for Livestock – putting up Dams, rock catchments, water pans, sand dams
- b) Provision of clean and safe water for human consumption – putting up boreholes, piping system and distribution and running costs.
- c) Water for crop production – support irrigation, encourage water harvesting.
- d) Putting up cost effective wind power, solar panel
- e) Water tinkering during drought

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HEALTH

- a) Infrastructure development – existing facilities and building of new ones to fill the gaps – mortuary infrastructures, support of ambulances for service delivery

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- b) Service delivery – supply of drugs, lab equipment, lighting systems, disease surveillance, vaccination and follow up visits.
- c) Building Leadership and governance information systems for monitoring and evaluation
- d) Sanitation, WASH and hygiene-setting of a site for waste management e.g. cemeteries, landfills, incinerators.
- e) Training and supporting of community health workers.
- f) Access to health facilities in refugee camps
- g) Support medical outreach in remote areas and mobile clinics

4. IGA (WOMEN GROUPS, YOUTH ETC.)

- a) Support cottage industries for the youths, women's and vulnerable groups.
- b) Capacity building on business skills developments.
- c) Support of cooperative and organized groups to implement feasible income generating activities e.g. lodges, livestock markets/yards, eco-tourism, abattoirs, drugstores for livestock.
- d) Economic integration- centralization of business activities in one place both for the host community and refugees.

5. AGRICULTURE

- a) Support livestock production, health and husbandry.
- b) Support destocking and restocking programs at appropriate session.
- c) Support development of pasture and fodder production.
- d) Support buying and marketing of agricultural products.
- e) Support proven agricultural production systems for both refugees and host community
- f) Support post-harvest and marketing of the surplus produce.
- g) Support irrigation technology
- h) Establishment of food processing center

EMPLOYMENT

- a) Hiring of staffs: should be embraced on 70% to 30% - host community and other Communities.
- b) Affirmative action for gender, people of disabilities and vulnerable without discrimination to be considered for employment opportunities as per the Kenyan constitution...records of applicants should be kept.
- c) National job opportunities should also be accorded to the host community as a priority.
- d) Unskilled and semi-skilled job opportunities should be 100% given to the host community.
- e) Job advertisements be open to the public through Host Community Public Offices and should be open for a period of 2 weeks before closure date.
- f) All Local, National jobs advertised should be put on notice board.
- g) Interviews should be conducted at the field offices.
- h) Recruitment of community liaison officer with DRA

6. ENVIRONMENT

- a) Support Afforestation and reforestation (green belt) activities.
- b) Ensure sustainability, exploitation, utilization, management, protection and conservation of land as a resource e.g., achieving and maintaining tree coverage (afforestation) of at least 10% of land provided by Kenyan constitution.
- c) Use environmentally friendly building and fuel materials. e.g. prefab, fabricated iron sheets,

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- d) Protection of indigenous knowledge and bio-diversity and other resources.
- e) Encourage public participation in management, protection and conservation of environment.
- f) Preservation and protection of dignity of cultural practices and traditions.
- g) Creating awareness and sensitization of host community on environmental management in a sustainable, productive and equitable way.
- h) Recycling waste materials.
- i) Plan live trees around the camp as live boundary
- j) Beaconing of the camp at four corners of the camp
- k) Establish systems of environmental impact assessment, environmental audit and monitoring to eliminate processes and activities that endanger the environments' e.g solid and liquid waste disposal and also cemeteries.

7. SUPPORT TO IMMEDIATE HOST COMMUNITIES

- a. Compensation and benefits accruing from the sharing of Corporate Social Responsibility and Local Content resources mobilised from the camp shall benefit the following
 - i. Kalobeyei Community – 30%
 - ii. Turkana West Constituency where the refugee camp located – 70%

8. CONTRACTS AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY

- a) Contracts and tenders award should be given to the host communities without discrimination.
- b) Advertisement of contracts and tenders should be done in public through notice boards and other public means.
- c) Transparent and open procedures of bidding shall be done in line with the law (Constitution, Statutes/Act of parliament and Subsequent Legislations).
- d) 30% of contracts to go to the youth and persons with disability provided that the group is qualified to execute the task

9. PEACE AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

- a) Peace building and conflict prevention/resolution
- b) Embrace traditional conflict and resolution mechanism i.e. any dispute or controversy should be settled by negotiation or other agreed mode. e.g. by arbitration
- c) Sensitize refugee and host community to uphold law and order – Refugee Agencies e.g LWF/DWS (conflict among Refugees), Department of Refugee Affairs and Contracted Host Community Local Non-Governmental Organisation (Host Community versus Refugees) e.g. LOKADO.
- d) Initiate investigation on complaints and recommend action by Security agencies lead by Department of Refugee Affairs.
 - a. Design and setup refugee/host community conflict sensitive response mechanism by Turkana West Dialogue and Development Committee in consultation with Refugee Agencies.
 - b. Setup all inclusive/joint conflict and management resolution committee.
 - c. Funds related to peace building committee should be channelled to local (host community) through non-governmental organization
 - d. Should the camp be closed the land together with the infrastructure shall be handed over to the host community

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9. Security

- f) Turkana west security agents should give balanced focused attention to both Host Community (Turkana Community) and the Refugees whenever civil/criminal offences occur. (Observed biasness is skewed towards the refugee hence Hosts are usually suspects of offenses committed around the refugee camp.
- g) Refugees should not be in-fighting in the demarcated camp area
- h) Sensitize host community and refugees on community policing.
- i) No harassment of host community residents in the camp.
- j) UNHCR will construct a police station in Kalobeyi and police posts in the camp under SPP2

10. SOCIAL ISSUES MANAGEMENT

- k) Fair mechanism and strategies of managing child labour, marriage relationship between host and refugees, in the name of asylum seeking, Human trafficking
- l) Enforcement of customary laws to guide marriages between host communities and refugee communities.
- m) Refugees should not be allowed to exploit natural resources outside the designated area.
- n) Support establishment of Trauma healing and counselling psych-social centre.

11. PRIORITISATION

The community/committee would prioritise activities to be implemented in 2015 and beyond based on the funds made available by UNHCR.

12. NETWORKING AND COLLABORATION

Refugee agencies and host community should nurture a conducive environment to attract and retain investors, development and financial partners.

The host community members, Department of Refugee Affairs, County Government and Implementing Partners and Operation partners should seek a platform to dialogue on issues affecting the harmonious and peaceful coexistence.

The network of refugee and host community partners should encourage open, accountable, inclusive and consistent information sharing.

13. COMMITTEE TO FOLLOW-UP IMPLEMENTATION

There shall be Community Dialogue and Development committee in the following proportion:

- 1. Kalobeyi Committees -80%
- 2. County Government - 10%
- 3. National - 10%

Further to the selection criteria the following shall be observed

- 1. Professional - 80%
- 2. County Government - 10%
- 3. National Government - 10%

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14. RISKS AND MITIGATION

The following mitigation measures are identified against each potential envisaged risks in Kalobeyei during Refugee Camp Setting and Assistance Program as shown the table below;

Potential Risk	Mitigation Measures
Resource Based Conflict	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Just and Equitable Resource Sharing as outline in this document 2. Embracing Traditional Conflict Resolution Mechanism
Social Crimes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Community Dialogue 2. Law enforcer's Intervention 3. Civic Education
Political Interference	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rights based Civic Education and awareness creation 2. Legislation of this document to allow enforceability of the document
Clash of policies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regular Partner Coordination meetings shall clarify clash of policies and procedures
Clash of interests	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transparency 2. Accountability 3. Participatory Decision making 4. Embracing Consensus based approach in resolutions 5. Following Rule of law 6. fairness
Duplication of Efforts	Joint planning
Environmental degradation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Environmental Impact and Social Assessment 2. Alternative supplement of energy 3. Natural Resource Mapping 4. Spatial Planning
Unfulfilled Commitments by Implementation Partners and Operation Partners, UNHCR, DRA and County Government	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Disruption of operation 2. Conflict Resolution 3. Enforcement of Consequential Clauses in the Agreement 4. Application of the Constitutional and subsequent relevant legislations in other levels of redress (Court of Law, Appeal to County Government, Closure of the Camp and its operations). Leading to cancellation of the agreement.
Lawlessness among the Refugees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Immediate Repatriation, relocation 2. Admission on only peaceful and law abiding refugee communities. 3. prosecution
Pastoral Livelihood disruption	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote Community Dialogue 2. Promote diversification of Livelihood 3. Integrate Refugee and host community market and value chain system 4. Promote resource sharing 5. Do no Harm Approach 6. Embrace Rights Based Approach against Needs Based Approach in effecting Development Programmes in the host community 7. Enact enforceable law to regulate businesses run by refugees in the camp.

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15. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

1. The technical team shall set monitoring, evaluation and accountability tools to assess the quantitative and qualitative indicators of performance and agreement progress.
2. The Turkana West Dialogue and Development Committee shall follow up implementation using tools developed by the technical team.
3. The community of Turkana West Constituency Shall organise annual evaluation meeting on the progress of the Host and the Refugee Communities' relations and agreement.
4. The refugee and host community implementing and operation partners shall share periodical progress report of assessment in coordination and committee meetings.
Note; an operational plan shall be developed later...
5. Turkana west dialogue and development addressing the emerging issues.

16. CONSEQUENTIAL MEASURES. (AMENDMENTS, ARBITRATION AND MEDIATION)

a. AMMENDMENTS

Should any clause or article or section of these terms and conditions of the agreement not favourable to any of the parties concerned, an amendment for review shall be recommended by the party affected and shall be subject to unanimous agreement by the Turkana West Constituency host community upon consultation and consensus through popular participation.

b. ARBITRATION AND MEDIATION

In the first two opportunities of misunderstanding, amicable conflict resolution mechanism shall be applicable.

17. SUSTAINABILITY AND EXIT STRATEGY

- a) Disposal of transferable asset should be donated to the institution of need and preference given to the host community. E.g. youths, chiefs, women and organisations, CBOs.
- b) Any asset handed over or donated to the host community shall be rendered, utilised and disposed off as follows:
 1. In good working condition to be utilised in the following purposes
 - i. Socio-economic productivity in Turkana West,
 - ii. To support Education, Health, and Security Institutions

To support Local Non-Governmental Organisations

County government to provide regulation on land and property utilization.

HON D.E.N.

HK

For and behalf of KALOBEYEI COMMUNITY (REPRESENTATIVE)

Name: HON. PETER ERIPETE

Designation: COUNTY SECRETARY - TURKANA COUNTY

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Date: 19.06.2015

Name: HON. DANIEL EPUYO NANOK

Designation: MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT TURKANA WEST

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Date: 19/06/2015

Name: MR. HARUN KOMEN

Designation: COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEE AFFAIRS (CRA)

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Date: 19/6/2015

Name: MR. RAOUF MAZOU

Designation: UNHCR COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVE

Signature: [Handwritten Signature]

Date: 19/6/15

HK

cast

Appendix O: DCU Introduction Letter



Scoil na Teanga
Feidhmí agus an Léinn
Idirchultúrtha, DCU
Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Baile Átha Cliath 9
Eire

DCU School of
Applied Language and
Intercultural Studies
Dublin City University
Dublin 9
Ireland

T +353 1 700 5193
F +353 1 700 5527
E salis.office@dcu.ie
W dcu.ie/salis

Dublin, 13 April 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Gordon Ochieng Ogutu, currently registered as a PhD student in Dublin City University, is carrying out research for his doctoral thesis under my supervision on the following topic:

“Self-reliance for integration: Investigating social cohesion among refugees and host communities at the Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement in Kakuma -Turkana, Kenya”.

In order to collect the necessary data to complete his investigation, Mr Ogutu intends to conduct some field work in the Kakuma and Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement, for a period of two months (from May to July 2023).

I would greatly appreciate it if Mr Ogutu could be granted to research license which will enable him to carry out his field investigation.

Thanking you in advance for your help with this matter,

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Maillot', is positioned above the typed name.

Dr Agnès Maillot
Head of School,
School of Applied Languages and Intercultural Studies

Appendix P: Turkana County Education Office Authorisation



REPUBLIC OF KENYA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
STATE DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING AND BASIC EDUCATION

Telegram 'ELIMU', Lodwar
Telephone 'Lodwar' 054 21076
Fax/No: 054 21076
Email: cdeturkana@education.go.ke
When replying please quote
REF: TC/CONF/ED. 12/2/VOL.12/ (75)

TURKANA COUNTY EDUCATION OFFICE,
P.O. BOX 16- 30500,
LODWAR.

12TH JUNE, 2023

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION: MR. GORDON OCHIENG OGUTU
LICENCE NO: -NACOSTI/P/22/25345

The above mentioned is a student from Dublin City University, and has been authorized to carry out research on "SELF-RELIANCE FOR INTEGRATION: INVESTIGATING SOCIAL COHESION AMONG REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITIES LIVING IN INTEGRATED SETTLEMENT IN KAKUMA-TURKANA COUNTY, KENYA. The research period ends on 25th APRIL, 2024.

Any assistance accorded to him will be appreciated.

Thanks in advance.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Akoyo Lubanga'.

MR. HENRY AKOYO LUBANGA
COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
TURKANA COUNTY.

COUNTY DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
TURKANA COUNTY
P. O. Box 16 - 30500,
LODWAR

CC: -The County Commissioner - Turkana County

Appendix Q: Turkana County Commissioner Authorisation



OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

**MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND CO-ORDINATION TO THE NATIONAL
GOVERNMENT**

Telegraphic address "DISTRICTER" LODWAR
Telephone: LODWAR
Telex:
Fax:

COUNTY COMMISSIONER
TURKANA COUNTY,
P.O BOX 1-30500,
LODWAR

12TH JUNE , 2023.

E-mail:cc.turkana@interior.go.ke

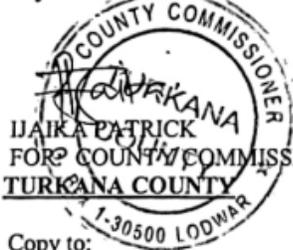
REF:TC.CONF.ED.12/2/VOL.12/(75)

DEPUTY COUNTY COMMISSIONER
TURKANA WEST COUNTY

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION: MR. GORDON OCHIENG OGUTU.
LICENCE NO:-NACOSTI/P/22/25345.

The above mentioned person is from Dublin City University, and has been authorized to carry out research on "SELF -RELIANCE FOR INTEGRATION:INVESTIGATING SOCIAL COHESION AMONG REFUGEES AND HOST COMMUNITIES LIVING IN INTEGRATED SETTLEMENT IN KAKUMA- TURKANA COUNTY,KENYA" The research period ends on 25TH APRIL, 2024.

Any assistance accorded to him will be appreciated.


JAIKA PATRICK
FOR COUNTY COMMISSIONER
TURKANA COUNTY

Copy to:
The Director of Education
TURKANA COUNTY

MR GORDON OCHIENG OGUTU.

Appendix R: Photos Taken by the Researcher in Kakuma during Fieldwork



Figure 18: Photo of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, which was built by Ethiopian refugees in Kakuma around 2008



Figure 19: Photo of a refugee child behind their tented house at Kalobeyei refugee reception centre.



Figure 20: Photo of a Market stalls built for refugees in Kalobeyi Settlement



Figure 21: Photo of the famous Franco Hotel run by Ethiopian refugees in Kakuma 1.



Figure 22: Photo of a section of Kakuma town main street, with some women refugees selling second-hand clothes.



Figure 23: Photo of a section of Kakuma main street at night.



Figure 24: Photo of Turkana women performing traditional dance during Kakuma Sound Festival, which brought refugees and hosts together.



Figure 25: Photo of a retail shop run by a refugee inside Kakuma camp.



Figure 26: Photo of a refugee household in Kakuma 3.



Figure 27: Photo of Turkana women going to fetch water in Kakuma 3.



Figure 28: Photo of a brick-walled refugee household inside Kalobeyei Settlement



Figure 29: Photo of a Kenyan police officer managing a crowd of refugees at an event in Kakuma 3.



Figure 30: Photo of a Turkana woman with a child inside Natukobenyo Health Centre in Kalobeyei.



Figure 31: Photo of a Turkana man carrying firewood in a bicycle on his way to Kakuma market to sell to refugees.