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We Survive Together:
Utilising Transnational Resources for Community Welfare in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya

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Abstract

This paper explores how the virtually continuous states of insecurity experienced by the South Sudanese in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya, are changing their notions of family constitution and moral responsibility. The data presented in this paper suggests that the South Sudanese refugees who received remittances from family members living abroad have a shared sense of responsibility to provide for their community members who are in need through the sharing of their financial and material resources. Since the members of these refugee community networks live in a persistent state of need, the limited economic resources introduced are often invested towards the daily survival of the group rather than the personal advancement of the individual. Consequently, the data presented in this paper suggests that transnational remittances do little to promote livelihood development inside of the refugee camp; however, they do aid in the development of a necessary survival economy.

Introduction

Kakuma refugee camp, home to approximately 147,000 refugees from all across East Africa as of 2018, lies in a remote region of Kenya, only accessible by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) flights and a two-lane road filled with more potholes than asphalt. The camp and its adjacent town are surrounded by hundreds of kilometres of vast desert, with very few natural sources of water and food. From the perspective of an outsider, Kakuma might seem like an oasis in a harsh and violent world for the people who seek refuge there. Numerous shops sell an abundance of food and gadgets to make life comfortable. There are hospitals and schools that cater to both the local population and the refugees in the camp, as well as hostels and restaurants for the rare visitor and residents alike.

Although Kakuma has become a place of opportunity for savvy business people, both Kenyan and refugees, these opportunities are available to a small minority of the camp and town's population – generally those who came to the region with significant social and economic capital in the first place. The vast majority of Kakuma's population survive primarily on what the UNHCR and various aid organisations provide. As my informants repeatedly pointed out, aid packages get increasingly smaller each year and are generally inadequate to sustain a good quality of life. Although additional food, water, and other resources are available to buy, the refugees represented in this study commonly argued that they had very little money to spend on anything beyond the bare necessities for survival. Their statements point to the reality of the underfunded and under-resourced humanitarian system in which Kakuma's refugee population have lived for decades.

This paper is based on data collected during my PhD fieldwork between November 2017 and July 2018. During this time, I conducted semi-structured interviews and participant observation among transnational members of Kakuma's South Sudanese population. The

study participants ranged in age from eighteen to sixty-nine.[1] Of the eighty refugees interviewed, seventy-two had lived in Kakuma on and off since 1992 or were born inside the camp walls. Three primary themes were expressed during these interviews: the regular states of insecurity experienced by Kakuma's South Sudanese population, their coping methods, and the need to maintain their social networks and community solidarity to ensure survival. While these men and women perceived insecurity to be inevitable, particularly those who had lived in Kakuma for several decades, they argued that their relationships with extended family, friends, and neighbours were vital for their survival.

This paper explores Kakuma's South Sudanese refugee community and, more specifically, transnational participants' navigation of states of physical insecurity through community solidarity and welfare support. Conversing with existing literature on cultures of resource sharing in times of precarity, as well as with literature on South Sudanese notions of kinship, I examine my research participants' experiences of insecurity and their participation in networks of financial, material, and social resource sharing, which allow them to ensure the survival of themselves and their community as a whole.

Although all of the participants in this study were recipients of remittances from family members abroad, these remittances were small, infrequent, and primarily used to supplement basic resources necessary for survival. The participants of this study described life in Kakuma for its South Sudanese population in terms of scarcity, insecurity, and vulnerability. Among the South Sudanese men and women with whom I spoke, security – whether it be physical, emotional, or psychological – was measured by the ability to survive each day, rather than the ability to invest in the future stability of their families. Moreover, I discovered that even when a participant claimed to be financially or materially stable at the time of our interview, their survival in the future was highly dependent on their established social networks and their community's perception of whether they were a 'good' person deserving support.

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[1] All of the people represented in this article were either former or active participants in transnational communities, with family and friend networks that extended across the globe.

Kakuma and Refugee Experiences of Insecurity

Kakuma was originally established in 1992 in response to large groups of southern Sudanese refugees, mostly unaccompanied minors, flooding over the border from what is now South Sudan into north-west Kenya (Scott-Villiers 1993; Chanoff 2005; Jansen 2013).[2] These refugees, originally displaced during Sudan's second civil war (1983-2005), were recognised worldwide as the 'Lost Boys of Sudan'. Many of them have since been repatriated back to South Sudan, migrated elsewhere in Africa, or been resettled under the refugee system to nations like the US, Canada, and Australia (Shandy 2007; Luster et al. 2008; McKinnon 2008; Lim 2009; LeRiche and Arnold 2012; Nastios 2012; Patterson 2016). Today, Kakuma's South Sudanese community is composed of populations that have been displaced at various points of insecurity in the history of South Sudan.

Insecurity as a refugee in Kenya in general, and in Kakuma specifically, affects all facets of daily life, regardless of refugees' nation of origin or length of stay in Kenya. Due to a combination of UNHCR and Kenyan government refugee policies, their rights and ability to sustain themselves and their families economically, physically, and politically are significantly restricted (Verdirame 1999; Horst 2006, Nyers 2006, Turner 2010; Betts et al. 2018). Due to their refugee status, members of this population are unable to move freely, are generally denied the legal right to work and earn a living wage, and are virtually incapable of living a life beyond what Newhouse identifies as their 'persistent precarity' (2015: 2293).

At the time of this study, the majority of the camp's refugee population were suffering from protracted states of dependency and insecurity due to their inability to change their circumstances, a by-product of refugee policies that focus on containment and survival

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[2] Authors cite numbers ranging from 10,000 to 20,000 displaced children (Scott-Villiers et al. 1993; Verdirame 1999; Chanoff 2005; Horn 2010; Sanghi et al. 2016). It is possible that the Sudanese People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) could have inflated these numbers in order to receive more aid (Scott-Villiers et al. 1993). It is also well known that along their journey first to Ethiopia, back to Sudan, and then finally to Kenya, many children of this population died of starvation, exposure, dehydration, and attacks by local wildlife. There is no accurate documentation of how many children died during this period.

rather than welfare and livelihood development (Crisp 2002; Wagacha and Guiney 2008; Loescher and Milner 2008; UNHCR 2018). This insecurity within the refugee system is fostered by a structure developed on the dependence, marginalisation, vulnerability, and victimisation of people who identify as refugees (Zetter 1991; Malkki 1995; Turner 2010; Mann 2012; Jansen 2013; UNHCR 2015).

Various authors have observed that food rations and other forms of aid provided to refugees in Kenya have decreased over the years, due to both the lack of funding and the assumption that over time these populations will eventually become economically independent (Jacobsen 2005; Horst 2006; Omata 2013; World Food Programme 2017). Consequently, malnutrition rates are high, particularly among those who do not have resources to supplement their aid packages (Verdirame 1999; Wood Food Programme 2017; Betts et al. 2018). Similarly, despite the availability of effective and relatively affordable medical treatment in Kakuma Town, many refugees suffer from untreated malaria, various infections, parasites, and pneumonia, in addition to occasional outbreaks of typhoid and cholera due to the underfunded and undersupplied healthcare system to which refugees are theoretically entitled (Verdirame 1999; Bayoh et al. 2011; Gladden 2012; Just et al. 2018).

As indicated by the participants in this study, police harassment is a harsh reality of life as a refugee in Kakuma. Hope (2018) argues that the Kenyan police have consistently been identified as the most corrupt institution in the nation. Known for their acts of 'extortion, robbery, burglary, theft, or overzealous policing with the aim of personal advancement' (Hope 2018: 85), the Kenyan police represent a systematic failure of governance. Kumssa (2015) argues that those who suffer most from police corruption in Kenya are the poor, refugees, and those who live in slum areas, since they lack the economic and political power to defend themselves. Being a refugee in Kakuma means that, unless you have money to bribe the police, you are often subjected to arbitrary arrests and detainment (Betts et al. 2018; Refugee Consortium of Kenya 2012; Rogers 2017; Verdirame 1999).

Kenya's refugee economy is largely made up of people who rely on transnational remittances, people who are employed by the UNHCR and other NGOs, and people who work for various businesses established in the camp (Verdirame 1999; Jansen 2013; Betts et al. 2018). Due to their inability to obtain work permits, the vast majority of refugees who work in Kakuma are labelled as 'volunteers' and work for a fraction of what a Kenyan national would make for the same job (Verdirame 1999; Horst 2006; Betts et al. 2018). Therefore, the aim of this paper is to explore the means in which transnational members of Kakuma's South Sudanese population challenge their states of insecurity through a system of community solidarity and welfare support networks.

Family and Community Solidarity

Community solidarity and the practice of sharing resources in times of economic and social hardship have been researched across many sub-Saharan African communities. Studies on the Basarwa of Botswana (Fleurett 1986) and the Bambara of Mali (Adams 1993) suggest that in times of food insecurity rural African communities often establish food sharing economies based on complex systems of reciprocal exchange. Adams (1993) argues that these practices are based on friendship, kinship, and patronage, whereby the obligation to share labour and capital is embedded into local culture. Studies on HIV/AIDS-affected urban households in South Africa and Uganda similarly show that informal social networks among family and neighbours help strengthen households' ability to cope with food insecurity (Kaschula 2011; Tsai et al. 2011). Moreover, these authors suggest that participation in resource sharing activities is dependent on individuals' and families' tenure within their community; their involvement with local community organisations; their alliances built on gender, age, or moral standing; and their personality and temperament.

Studies on African refugee populations who have undergone experiences of displacement, dependency, and economic and physical insecurity identify similar community support systems (Grabska 2005, 2014; Horst 2006; Omata 2013). Omata (2013) argues that Liberian refugees in a Ghanaian camp who are relatively economically stable often share their cash, food, and other economic resources with those who have more limited livelihood and

employment opportunities.A Somali refugee living in Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya argued that it was necessary for his community to share their resources because 'being a Somali as well as a Muslim entails a responsibility to assist those who have less' (quoted in Horst 2006: 124).

Grabska (2005: 2014) suggests that among South Sudanese Dinka and Nuer communities, it is common practice to borrow money from family, friends, and other tribe members in order to meet one's daily needs, particularly in time of extreme insecurity. Among South Sudanese Nuer communities, the sharing of food, kinship, and community are interrelated and dependent on each other. In *Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer* Evans-Pritchard suggests that kinship (*mar*)[3] often extends beyond the nuclear family in traditional South Sudanese communities (1951). He argues that all members of a village are identified as kin among the Nuer. Kinship entails a social system built on multiple generations' worth of interpersonal relationships, and it obliges community members to care for the welfare of one another. Hutchinson (1996) expands this definition and argues that the Nuer commonly interlink relatedness with food. According to Hutchinson, the sharing of food creates a bond of kinship among Nuer communities, because *mar* combines shared substance (blood, kinship) with a shared vitality (food).

In Kakuma, it is estimated that approximately 32% of South Sudanese refugees receive remittances from family members living in places like the USA, Canada, Australia, the UK, and Egypt (Shandy 2007; Betts et al. 2018). The introduction of these economic resources has profound effects on the relationships between transnational participants, as well as on the structure and culture of receiving communities, especially for the communities of refugees who experience protracted states of insecurity.

Existing studies of the remittances sent to Kakuma's South Sudanese community (e.g. Shandy 2007; Johnson and Stoll 2008; Grabska 2010; Patterson 2016; Betts et al. 2018) fail to acknowledge factors that can influence the quality of life for remittance recipients

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[3] Also spelled *maar*.

currently living inside the refugee system, including the frequency of remittance patterns, the average amount received, and the expected use of these financial resources by the participants of these transnational communities, contributing to skewed assumptions about their potential influence on the welfare of the recipients currently living inside a refugee camp. South Sudanese remittance recipients in Kakuma were barely able to manage their daily experiences of insecurity, a reality that was escalated when participants were expected to share their already limited financial and material resources with their surrounding community network.

Surviving Daily Crisis Situations in Kakuma

Between November 2017 and July 2018, I rented a small studio apartment in Kakuma Town and travelled into the refugee camp every day to meet with members of the South Sudanese population, particularly those who identified as former or active participants in transnational communities with family abroad. Although my research focused on the sustainability of refugee transnational family networks and remittance sending patterns, my participants' narratives often addressed their experiences of insecurity and vulnerability.

While all of the eighty participants in this study had received remittances at some point during their stay in Kakuma, the vast majority of these men and women disclosed that these financial resources were irregular and were primarily sent either in extreme emergencies or specifically to be invested in children's education. Therefore, while one might have assumed that these financial resources would diminish recipients' states of insecurity, the social and economic reality was significantly more complicated. My interviewees reported receiving remittances in amounts ranging from 5,000 Kenyan shillings ($50 USD) to 20,000 shillings ($200 USD) and in frequencies varying from once per month to once per year. As a result, the remittances did not aid refugees' livelihoods, or the livelihoods of those for whom they felt responsible, including their family members, friends, and neighbours.

Even though these South Sudanese refugee transnational participants were far more fortunate than many of their friends and neighbours, due to their social networks that extended beyond the refugee system, they continued to live in persistent insecurity. Based on the experiences expressed by the refugees I interviewed, I classified their insecurity into three primary categories: lack of food, lack of medicine, and harassment by the Kenyan police. These forms of insecurity impacted the daily lives of everyone I interviewed. My interviewees often argued that even when they were personally relatively free from insecurity, it was their responsibility to ensure the survival of their extended family network in the camp as well as that of their friends and neighbours within their community.

I found that food insecurity was often a daily issue,[4] with participants reporting that they received on average eleven to twenty grams of grain per person per day in food rations, supplemented by small amounts of oil and sugar. For the thirty-six men and women in this study who were fortunate enough to be 'employed' in the camp, receiving between 5,000 and 8,000 Kenyan shillings ($50 to $80 USD) per month in salaries, food was their primary expense.

Although healthcare was theoretically provided to Kakuma's refugee population by organisations like the Red Cross and International Rescue Committee (IRC), participants regularly reported being sent home with only paracetamol for life-threatening diseases such as malaria, rabies, typhoid, and cholera, due to the lack of testing equipment and medicine. Participants argued that medical emergencies were less common than food insecurity; however, such occurrences were more threatening and needed to be acted upon quickly.

Several of my interviewees expressed concerns about police harassment and recounted past experiences in which either they or their family members were unjustly jailed. The 'crimes' for which participants reported being arrested ranged from walking around the

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[4] I found that many refugees struggled to feed their families even during the periods of time in which they received their food rations due to a tendency of falling into an endless cycle of indebtedness with local vendors in the attempt to provide for their families' needs. Some participants expressed the need to sell their food rations to pay their debts for that month.

camp too early or too late, travelling around Kenya, being in possession of a stolen phone, holding an unsanctioned workshop preaching peace among youth leaders, and being the wife of a man who criticised the South Sudanese government on a Facebook post. In each of these accounts a bribe was requested by the police ranging from $100 to $2000 USD.[5] Failure to pay these bribes in a timely manner threatened refugees with illness incurred in disease-ridden jail cells, further imprisonment outside of Kakuma, and possible deportation to their home nation. [6]

Each of these forms of insecurity posed threats for further impoverishment, sickness, and death for members of the South Sudanese community, as well as their family, friends, and neighbours in the camp. Although all the participants in this study were recipients of remittances, since these financial resources were primarily sent in cases of emergency, they were used to prolong survival rather than to promote a sustainable quality of life. None of my participants reported having more than 10,000 Kenyan shillings ($100 USD) in savings. Since the men and women examined in this article were unable to finance a life outside the camp, the financial support sent to them from family members abroad was spent to supplement food rations, buy medicine, pay for police bribes, and buy clothes, shoes, and school supplies for their children. Consequently, I identified all of the men and women represented in this study as insecure due to their and their families' lives being at risk in the case of an emergency without the financial support of both their family members abroad and their community support network in Kakuma.

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[5] Bribes from the Kenyan police in Kakuma were frequently requested in USD, considered an international currency. This was due to a combination of the excessive amounts requested as well as the assumption that the victim would receive the money from family members abroad.

[6] UNHCR and the Refugee Consortium of Kenya (RCK) hire protection officers within Kakuma refugee camp to help reduce violence and harassment; however, these services were notoriously difficult to access, hidden by long lines or heavily guarded aid compounds. On three occasions, I was asked to help participants in this study to access a protection officer. On one occasion, we accessed the RCK and we were told that there was nothing they could do to prevent a woman's deportation to South Sudan for her husband's crime. On another occasion, we managed to contact a UNHCR protection officer; however, since it took days, the family had already paid the bribe to the police, fearing unjust treatment in the Kenyan court system if their son were to be deported.

Challenging Insecurity through Resource Sharing

Among Kakuma's South Sudanese population, 'family' was an ambiguous term. Family was virtually synonymous with community and embodied a sense of bondedness that had arguably developed through both their cultural values and their shared experiences of deprivation and marginalisation. In many instances, members of Kakuma's South Sudanese population introduced me to their brother or sister, daughter or son, only for me to then discover that these relationships were not built on blood ties but were rather based on their friendship and loyalty to one another. For example, Simon, a forty-year-old quality control manager for Kakuma's school system, claimed:

> Brother does not necessarily mean that you share the same parents, but you are from the same people. We are one family, and we are responsible for one another. I have to be my neighbour's keeper because we are all equal. When they don't have [food], we must share what little I have together.

The men and women represented argued that within their traditional culture, family was fundamental to their social identity and crucial to their survival as a community; it represented solidarity, mutual support, and responsibility. In the extreme conditions of Kakuma, in which virtually every member of these tight knit social communities was perceived to be family, there was a general agreement that individuals and families would share what they had with the less fortunate members of their community. James, a forty-six-year-old builder said:

> When someone is arrested, I contribute [towards the bribe]. If someone says 'I don't have shoes', then I can give. This builds your relationships with the people around you. We don't just share money and things; we share our problems. If you do not do these things, then you have no relationships, and you have no one to support you when you need something.

Survival within this community went beyond just meeting immediate demands driven by insecurity. My informants had long since accepted that insecurity was inevitable and unpredictable. Given the inability for the majority of this population to advance their economic situation due to their refugee status, members of Kakuma's South Sudanese population needed to rely on their community's solidarity in order to best ensure their survival. In this context, community solidarity was primarily interpreted as the provision of economic and material resources when available, and the utilisation of social resources such as mediation skills and combined social networks.[7]

People often referred to those willing to offer their resources to members of their community as 'good people', and thus saw them as deserving of similar support in the future. This culture of willingness to share resources, which distinguished between 'good' and 'bad' people among community members, was a common theme discussed throughout most of my interviews in Kakuma. Sharing the community's financial and material resources was often symbolised as the sharing of problems. For instance, people would often say, 'How can I eat if I know my neighbours have not eaten for three days?' Paul, a sixty-year-old Nuer pastor and active community leader, argued:

> Of course, it is difficult to share what little we have but that is our society. You cannot suffer here while someone has something. You must support the community otherwise many of us would have perished. So many of us don't have relatives and support outside of Kakuma. If a family is struggling, my wife and I will discuss what we can give them because we cannot let them die. How could you let a friend suffer and die while you survive? We must divide what little we have and pray that it all works out.

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[7] Since all of the participants in this study were transnational participants, their active social networks extended across the globe. Through the sharing of resources gained through these social networks developed among the South Sudanese diaspora globally, all members of Kakuma's South Sudanese community could benefit to some extent from these social ties. For example, if a person's neighbour was ill, that person could call their sister in the US and ask for some money for a family member's medical emergency. Since members of this population considered their surrounding community in the camp as like-family, it was not uncommon to utilise all available social, material, and financial resources for the community's continued survival.

From Paul's perspective, the survival of the community as a whole was dependent on the willingness of every able community member to look after the collective. 'Bad people' were consequently identified as those who were known to have financial and material resources but refused to share these resources beyond their immediate family. Since 'bad people' looked out for themselves, when they eventually needed help themselves, their community was significantly less likely to support them.

Among my informants there were a few people who claimed to hide the fact that they received remittances from their family members abroad. Some of these individuals explained that if their community knew that they had money, they would be expected to share some of this money with their extended family, friends and neighbours. One young man named Michael said, 'My uncle sometimes sends money for me and my siblings to buy food. Sometimes it is just to buy clothes for Christmas. Other than my parents, I am the only person who knows. I know my friends would expect me to share and this would be difficult'.

The few remittance recipients who did not share their transnational financial resources with their wider community knew there was a risk. Every member of the community had to either share what little they had when necessary or risk the lack of future community support from others in the camp.

When asked how friends and neighbours knew that someone received money from family members abroad, respondents would often say that they could be seen shopping in the market, bathing their children with soap, or eating more meals per day than reasonable if their only income were their food rations or a refugee salary. In addition to living within close proximity to each other where everyone knew what everyone was doing, the members of this refugee community were often highly dependent on the social support of other members. One elderly woman who introduced herself as Mama said, 'I need my neighbours' help going to pick up the money because I do not speak Swahili. I also need

help getting food from the market. Everyone around me knows that I get money from my sons in the US'.

One's ability or decision to help their community members through the provision of financial and material resources was interpreted in a variety of ways. Some people claimed that they could not justify, either to themselves or their surrounding community, having enough food for a week when their friends and neighbours had obviously not bathed or eaten for several days. Others said they only tried to help their extended family, specifically anyone related to them by blood or marriage. Finally, others argued that their family pooled together resources for a community member only in the case of a medical emergency, such as when life-threatening but reasonably affordable conditions such as malaria could not be treated at the free clinics available to refugees. Thus, the responsibility to share resources was open to interpretation. I found that for the members of this population virtually all interpretations of need and responsibility were collectively accepted with the assumption that each individual or family contributed to the best of their ability.

The men and women who identified themselves as leaders within their community often helped their friends and neighbours through both acts of support and the provision of financial and material resources. For example, Paul, who organised youth leadership workshops, would actively confront authority figures whenever a member of his community was imprisoned for reasons that he believed to be unjust. Similarly, at the time of his interview, a thirty-four-year-old cafeteria worker named Isaac fostered fourteen teenage boys. Isaac said, 'They have been here ten years. It's difficult parenting so many teenagers, but if they were not here then they would be on the street'. I found that the actions of these men were not uncommon within this community, and that people tried to help in the most useful ways possible. Paul and Isaac both argued that they were luckier than most because they had jobs and wives to support their choices, and they claimed that it was their responsibility to help those who could not help themselves. Both of these men felt the need to share their relative social stability in order to care, teach, and advocate for young adults within their community.

All of my interviewees claimed that they needed help from their extended family, friends, and neighbours in the camp frequently. A person's ability to receive help from one's extended social network was highly dependent on their strength or weakness of their established transnational social networks, their current experiences of insecurity in emergency situations, and their current state of indebtedness due to past experiences of insecurity. Angela, a twenty-seven-year-old single mother of four, said:

> The food is never enough here, everyone knows that. We just have to accept
> it and trust the people around us will help when we need it. Sometimes I have
> to sell my food rations to buy my children's school supplies or to pay for
> medical treatment. The people around me know this and they try to help in
> any way that they can.

Active participation within this community of welfare support and resource sharing therefore acted as a form of social investment, ensuring that each individual and their dependents would similarly be supported in the future when they inevitably experience insecurity.

Finally, several elders and community leaders argued that it was inappropriate to ask directly for money or material resources. Paul, the Nuer pastor mentioned previously, said, 'We don't ask, it is not appropriate because we are all poor and struggling. We can talk and talk for hours but we never ask for money or food. We have to just sense it'. According to Paul, being a 'good person' meant being involved enough within your community to know when someone is struggling. It is therefore the responsibility of active community leaders to know who is continuously sick, whose family has not been seen eating, who has been arrested. Through a combination of word of mouth and efforts to find economic and material resources within the community, 'good people' contribute what they can, but also facilitate the operation of social networks necessary for a sustainable resource sharing culture.

Surviving Insecurity in Kakuma through Community Solidarity

The data presented in this article sheds light on a social phenomenon of survival which has emerged as a consequence of prolonged states of insecurity in a refugee camp experienced by these transnational participants and their surrounding local community. While none of the men and women in this study were financially stable,[8] almost all expressed a profound sense of responsibility to the people within their community. I believe that remittances under the conditions of the refugee system have a unique potential to stabilise the welfare of refugee communities; however, their ability to significantly influence livelihood development was minimal in the face of pervasive insecurity.

In the case of the South Sudanese population of Kakuma refugee camp, remittances acted as a ripple effect for the receiving community. On the one hand, members of this population were able to survive daily states of insecurity through the utilisation of their community support networks. On the other hand, in order to remain valuable members within their community, remittance recipients were also expected to share any financial and material resources that were not absolutely necessary with their extended family, friends, and neighbours. Therefore, remittances introduced into this population had a significant influence on the continued survival of the collective community in the camp and consequently had limited influence on the economic development of the receiving individual.

A common aspect in the experiences of marginalisation and deprivation among Kakuma's South Sudanese population was their embedded sense of responsibility to their nuclear and extended family members, as well as to their friends, neighbours, and other people experiencing similar difficulties. Thus, the members of this community had a shared understanding of moral responsibility and family constitution, arguably a by-product of

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[8] Financial stability is defined as having enough savings to support their household with the provision of adequate food, in addition to sufficient resources to account for unforeseen medical emergencies and police bribes.

both their traditional culture and the severity of their social and economic conditions. In this community, members are responsible for being conscious of other members' suffering and offering their social and economic support when possible, thus securing the most basic survival needs of others. In this context, I found that the offering of social and financial support to those in need identified community members as 'good people' and, thus, as deserving recipients of similar assistance in the future.

It is important to note that being labelled a 'good person' was crucial for the survival of every individual. While it was important for each member to share their financial, material, and social resources to ensure the continued survival of the collective, individual survival was dependent on the strength of a person's social networks. People shared what few resources they had managed to accumulate not simply because it was perceived to be the morally right thing to do, but also because it was inevitable that they would need similar help from their community in the future.

In the context of this paper survival is both literal and figurative. My informants had to survive starvation despite the provision of food rations, as well as untreated diseases like malaria despite the apparent provision of medical care. More importantly, my informants were fighting for the survival of their dignity, the cohesion of their families and communities, and their belief that one day their lives might improve, despite having lived decades in a refugee camp in an environment of scarcity, insecurity, and socio-economic marginalisation. Survival was also multidimensional, often requiring the utilisation of multiple networks and individuals, including kinship relationships, community members, and the various organisations in the camp such as the UNHCR and IRC, which offered, albeit limited, protection, food, and medical treatment.

As suggested by existing literature, the establishment of a community resource sharing economy in times of insecurity is not unique to South Sudanese refugees, particularly among sub-Saharan African populations. Given that survival is dependent on mutual participation, and the distinction of good and bad people within the community, I argue that resource sharing under these conditions cannot simply be reduced to a moral sense

of responsibility to one's community members, but rather acts as an investment towards the individual's survival in the future. Among Kakuma's South Sudanese community, members needed to be labelled as a good person who actively contributes to their community's wellbeing and who maintains strong social bonds, so that others would also feel compelled to help them mitigate their eventual insecurity.

About the Author

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