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“Everyone was overwhelmed by the fears and the panic of the unknown disease”

Kenyan Refugee Protection and the COVID-19 Pandemic

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1. Introduction

“Everyone was overwhelmed by the fears and the panic of the unknown disease”—with this telling statement, a person of refugee background highlighted the worries arising for those in Kenyan refugee camps in light of the current global pandemic (R38). Living conditions have become more difficult in recent weeks—not only due to COVID-19, but more broadly due to looming threats of camp closure. On March 24, 2021, the Kenyan Ministry of Interior released a statement giving a two-week ultimatum to the United Nations refugee agency, UNHCR, to make plans for the closure of two refugee camps situated in the country. This threatened disbandment of Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps puts at risk the lives of the many refugees who receive shelter and assistance there. This is not the first time the Kenyan government has threatened such closure, but it is the first time this has happened in the midst of a global pandemic. UNHCR and other aid and civil society organizations have issued statements voicing strong concerns about the proposed camp closures (e.g. UNHCR 2021a, Amnesty International Kenya 2021); for the time being, at least, the High Court of Kenya has intervened and placed a temporary block on such a move happening (see Al Jazeera 2021, Wangui 2021).

At the time of writing in April 2021, it remains unclear whether and when the camps will indeed be closed. Even if the Kenyan government backtracks from their threat, the lives of those living there have been shaken up by the announcement. And the threat alone is already severe enough—temporary in nature or not—with it yielding great risks, insecurities and psychological stress for refugees living in the two camps (see also Rodgers/Talil 2021). Again, this comes at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic has already placed great burdens on the lives and livelihoods of refugees and exacerbated uncertainties—and the accompanying anxiety. To better understand how the pandemic has affected refugees in Kenya, we discuss results from a recent study based on responses to a written qualitative questionnaire on refugee protection there and in five other African countries (see below). Based on the data focusing on Kenya itself, we highlight the following perspectives from our respondents:

Challenges: The pandemic has exacerbated existing challenges, and partly created new ones. Economic issues and the anxiety that accompanies them have intensified due to lockdowns, restricted movements and business closures. Moreover, health risks are on the increase in crowded camps with insufficient distribution of masks and sanitizer; access to services has become more difficult due to the suspension of programs and closures of field offices. The latter also affects refugee-status determination and resettlement.

Responses and decision-making: The Kenyan government’s and aid agencies’ responses to the pandemic have also encompassed refugees living in the country. While the government decides on exact measures, they are primarily implemented in cooperation with aid agencies in camps. Donors are said to influence these responses through funding, but the decrease of revenue made available during the pandemic has also been criticized. Regional organizations such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) remain largely invisible for refugees though. Several respondents ascribe key roles to refugees and their own activities regarding the responses witnessed, as they are trusted in the community and deliver crucial support. In addition to community representatives, refugee organizations are important.

Interaction between different groups: Relations between the different actors involved have been influenced by the pandemic to varying degrees. Interaction between the government and aid agencies is said to be affected by the resorting to remote work and the scaling down of

operations; it remains unclear, however, to what extent such cooperation (may) have changed exactly. Tensions partly arose between aid agencies due to competition over limited funding, but it was also noted that cooperation intensified in striving to tackle the pandemic. Funding cuts have contributed to tensions among refugees, as well as between refugee and host communities. Refugees report an increase in the risks of violence as well as being stigmatized as carriers of the virus, in addition to continued competition over resources with host communities.

These issues weigh even heavier in light of the threat of camp closures. Though the questionnaire was carried out prior to the government's indications of overseeing the latter, several participants already even then expressed concern about the Kenyan state's willingness to host refugees given the pandemic currently raging. Risks for refugees would certainly intensify if the camps were to be closed. Moreover, given the importance of the Dadaab and Kakuma camps to the local job market also for Kenyans, their closure would likely generate unrest in areas traditionally neglected in Kenyan regional governance, closing off one of the most significant sources of local income.

In the following section, we provide an overview of the research design as well as background information on refugees, the two camps Dadaab and Kakuma, and on refugee protection in Kenya more generally. Next, we address findings, focusing on four specific areas: vulnerabilities of refugees and asylum seekers; decision-making during the pandemic response; interaction between the Government of Kenya and aid agencies; and, finally, the effects of the pandemic on refugee and host communities.

2. Research Design

This working paper is based on a qualitative questionnaire crafted to better understand how exactly the COVID-19 pandemic has affected refugees and refugee protection in six African countries: namely Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. We sought to gain insight into the perspectives of persons of refugee background, of scholars, as well as of government officials and aid actors working with and for refugees. Our paper focuses on those responses that concern Kenya only.

This qualitative questionnaire was carried out as part of two research projects: namely "Forced Migration, Women – and Peace? Peacebuilding practices of women in refugee camps" and "Forced Displacement in Africa: The politics and stakeholders of migration governance." Both projects are independently funded by the German Foundation for Peace Research (DSF). In light of the pandemic, the projects' respective principal investigators decided to come together to jointly study in comparative perspective the effects hereof on refugee protection, and hence across the different country contexts. Two cases in West Africa were added to gain a better impression of what is happening overall in the different regions of the continent. Further information on the two projects is provided at the end of this paper.

The qualitative questionnaire does not aim to be representative. It comprised anonymous, open-ended, and multiple-choice questions, seeking to gain insights into local developments and acquire diverse perspectives at a time when on-the-ground research is very difficult and poses a health risk for all involved—participants and researchers alike. The questionnaire was digital (using SurveyMonkey) and shared across various networks, using snowball sampling. Responses were gathered in January

and February 2021. Structured into three main sections, the questionnaire focused on the main challenges arising for refugees and asylum seekers due to the pandemic; decision-making and refugees' participation in the pandemic response; and, effects of the pandemic on society, interaction, peace, and conflict.

A total of 27 respondents took part who stated they were based in Kenya.¹ These include five women, 21 men, and one person who did not disclose their gender. With multiple answers possible, 16 respondents stated they were persons of refugee background, three identified as scholars, six as staff members of international nongovernmental organizations, and three as media representatives. Fifteen identified further as students, and one individual also as a member of a civil society organization / staff member of a national NGO. An overview of the respondents' (anonymous) biographical information is provided in the Appendix.

All data provided by respondents was collected anonymously and treated confidentially. In addition to performing a simple descriptive analysis of answers to the multiple-choice questions to illustrate distributions thereof as well as overall tendencies, the responses to open-ended questions were furthermore explored through qualitative content analysis to extract the core issues addressed by participants.

3. Refugee Protection (and Encampment) in Kenya

Kenya has been hosting refugees for decades now, but conflicts in neighboring states sparked massive displacement in the early 1990s particularly—most notably with the overthrow of Siad Barre's regime in Somalia. Many sought safety in Kenya, and have remained there for years on end. According to UNHCR, as of 2021 the country hosts 512,494 refugees and asylum seekers—with the vast majority being settled in the camps Dadaab and Kakuma (UNHCR 2021b).²

The first of the two major camps, Dadaab, was created in 1991 in Garissa County in eastern Kenya in reaction to the influx of Somali refugees at the time. Dadaab consists, in fact, of the three camps Dagahaley, Ifo, and Hagadera, and currently hosts 224,462 refugees and asylum seekers (UNHCR 2021b). The second camp, Kakuma, was established in 1992 in Turkana County in northwestern Kenya in response to the influx of refugees from the ongoing conflict in Sudan, to regime changes and civil wars in Ethiopia and Somalia, and to violent disputes in the Great Lakes region. The camp consists of four sections, Kakuma I, II, III, IV, which are further divided into zones, between them hosting 163,299 refugees at the time of writing (UNHCR 2021b). To promote self-reliance and foster interaction between refugees and host communities, Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement was established close to Kakuma in 2016.

Refugees in Kenya are protected under the National Refugee Law of 2006. Refugees have the right to work but are restricted in their movement. In the camps, a variety of aid agencies provides measures to protect and assist refugees. Yet for several decades now especially Somali refugees (as well as Somali Kenyans) have been exposed to a securitized rhetoric, one instrumentalizing the community as

¹ A further eight respondents from Kenya left all answers blank and were therefore disregarded in the analysis.

² According to UNHCR, of the total number of refugees and asylum seekers in Kenya, 83,723 reside in urban areas—mainly in Nairobi, but also in other urban settings like Eldoret, Mombasa, and Nakuru (UNHCR 2021b).

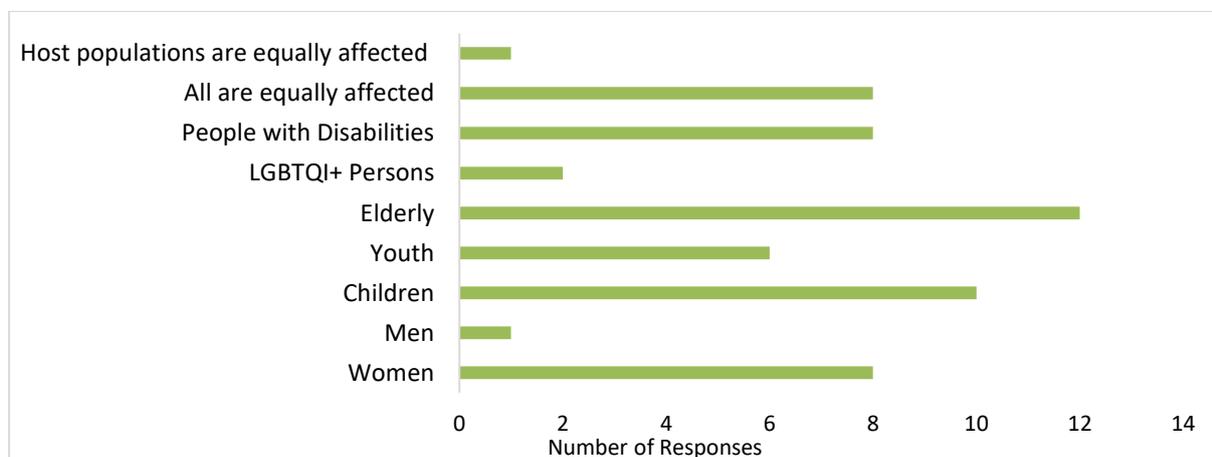
a threat to peace (see Jaji 2014). Repeated terror attacks by Al-Shabaab in Kenya—notably at the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi in September 2013, which led to 71 fatalities, and at Garissa University College in April 2015, which left 148 dead—were previously used as a front for threatening to close Dadaab in 2016 already. The site’s camps, government actors have repeatedly argued, are a threat to internal security. The High Court ruled in 2016, however, that closure would violate principles of *non-refoulement* and was not in accordance with humanitarian principles (Wilson 2016).

This time around, too, the High Court decided that closure must be put on hold temporarily, as it violates international law and the protection of refugees’ rights (Al Jazeera 2021, Wangui 2021). The threat of disbandment now also extends to Kakuma, with the reasoning for either camp’s closure unclear—but perhaps related to increased diplomatic tensions between Somalia and Kenya of late. The timing of such closures amid a pandemic has been widely condemned by aid agencies (e.g. UNHCR 2021a, Amnesty International Kenya 2021). No matter how the political response to these recent developments changes, how are refugees, aid agencies, and others dealing with the ongoing situation? In the following, we present results from a qualitative questionnaire carried out just before the closure announcement.

4. Vulnerabilities and Challenges for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Kenya

Who is most affected by the pandemic? This was one of the first questions we asked participants in the qualitative questionnaire. We listed different groups of refugees and host communities, and respondents could give multiple answers. Most referred to the elderly, children, and female refugees, as the graph in Figure 1 below illustrates. Even prior to the pandemic, studies stressed the various risks that women (e.g. Abdi 2006, Horn 2010) and children (e.g. Bishop 2019, Grayson 2017) especially are confronted with in refugee situations in Kenya. Yet, in our study, about one-third of respondents noted that everyone has been affected equally by the COVID-19 pandemic. This is an important insight, as it highlights the omnipresent issues that the coronavirus’ spread has caused. One respondent highlighted this starkly by noting that: “There is no doubt that everyone in the camp has been equally affected by the COVID-19 because the pandemic affects them the same way” (R38).

Figure 1. Who, amongst the refugee community, is most affected by the current pandemic?



But what specific problems do refugees face? Over the past few years, a growing body of research has evolved that addresses the difficult conditions in Dadaab and Kakuma refugee camps (e.g. Abdi 2005, Grayson 2017, Horn 2010, Horst 2006, Jaji 2012, Jansen 2018). The pandemic has not only accelerated some issues but also contributed to new ones too (e.g. Boru 2020, Rodgers/Talil 2021). Participants in our study frequently referred in their answers to economic, health, structural, and security concerns.

All respondents discussed economic problems arising as a result of the pandemic, including insufficient livelihoods, job opportunities, and sources of income. These challenges intensified in light of lockdowns because movements were further restricted and businesses closed. Accounts shared by participants highlight the grave situation, with one noting “we just survive with hand to mouth” (R56). Moreover, the majority of respondents highlighted health-related risks. In addition to criticizing insufficient supplies of masks and sanitizer, participants addressed also the difficulty of social distancing due to crowded areas in camp but also urban contexts, insufficient access to medical services, instances of miscommunication, and rumors spreading about the pandemic. Such issues accelerated distress, fear, and even panic among refugees (R38). Children and youth were said to be particularly affected by restrictive access to child-specific social services, above all education and youth activities, further to increasing risks of idleness and violence for girls. Moreover, some respondents addressed risks of gender-based violence for women particularly; one person highlighted that: “In some instances the rate of GBV is high because women are trapped at homes with their abusers during lock-down” (R54).

One respondent summarized these economic and health-related issues point-by-point: “1. There is no way to follow social distancing related procedures since we share common resources like drinking water points, utensils, etc. 2. It is impossible to have a stock of food items that stay days. 3. Underestimating the danger of COVID-19 considering the multifaceted life challenges and associated sufferings and sacrifices” (R70).

Some of the challenges noted were also linked with the responses of the government and of aid agencies. Some expressed appreciation for protection measures made available, noting despite all the shortages—immediate and structural—that: “I am grateful for the role UNHCR and the government played for the last few months in terms of innovation and coming up with solutions” (R38). Others stated that following the lockdowns, refugee-status determination and resettlement processes were stopped, movements of refugees further restricted with borders being closed, and access to government and aid agencies’ offices limited. Some NGOs no longer exist, our respondents noted, and the delivery of basic services, above all food distribution, slowed down. In addition to the imposed curfews posing risks of increased violence, some respondents also noted that social distancing is hardly possible in the camp.

Importantly, the qualitative questionnaire was carried out prior to the government’s threat of camp closures, but many had already previously expressed worries about the Kenyan state’s willingness to host refugees in light of the pandemic. Among the participants who identified as persons of refugee background, eight noted that the Kenyan government has become less willing to host refugees since the onset of the pandemic. In contrast, NGO staff and scholars did not note any changes in the willingness of the government to provide refugee protection following the coronavirus’ global spread.

5. Decision-Making on Refugee Protection during the Pandemic

Against the backdrop of these multiple issues, it is understandable that many of the respondents (18) stressed the need for the special protection of refugees, though seven individuals did not see this need. Participants generally explained that the pandemic represents an emergency, one requiring humanitarian action. Yet, 21 also stated that refugees should be self-reliant, while four said they should not. This tendency must be seen in light of the recent policy focus as well as of the protracted situations experienced; humanitarian and political policies have increasingly prompted refugees' self-reliance and resilience in recent years, and thus a life independent of aid (e.g. Betts et al. 2020). However, studies on such policies have also addressed their limitations—including the counterproductive neoliberal frameworks they drawn on (e.g. Hunter 2009, Krause/Schmidt 2019). Despite frequent emphasis on self-reliance and resilience in the questionnaire answers, respondents of all groups still widely acknowledged the vulnerabilities and difficult camp conditions encountered—further to the pandemic complicating refugees' fundamental opportunities to live self-reliant lives due to the accompanying economic and social constraints.

But who is it that even makes decisions about the protection measures to be implemented? Pandemic responses are decided upon and regulated by the Government of Kenya itself, while in the refugee camps they are enacted in cooperation with aid agencies. One respondent encapsulated the frustration refugees are likely to feel when they are not able to influence the pandemic response, noting that: "We are nothing, but refugees" (R56). However, many respondents (21) remarked that refugees do indeed influence and participate in mitigation measures. This mostly included direct relief such as the distribution of masks (sometimes handing them out free of charge), or providing handwashing facilities, soup, sanitizer to the wider community. Others also mentioned non-pandemic-related both food and non-food items. Responses further cited digitalizing educational materials to allow some sort of schooling to continue for those with access to smartphones (in Kenya, all schools closed for the first year of the pandemic; see Mlaba 2021).

Refugees and community representatives (including zonal and block leaders) are also instrumental in creating awareness around accompanying issues. In addition to following the public-health measures to reduce the spread of the pandemic, refugees were also identified as being part of lifesaving staff not only in Kenya: "Across the world, refugees have been on the frontline as doctors, nurses, and social workers among others" (R53). One respondent even described that refugee organizations are better trusted to provide information on the pandemic than outside actors are: "The refugee communities have also demonstrated trust from refugee-led local organizations as compared to the UN—Refugee agencies and partners in the processes of thwarting mis/disinformation in refugee camps like Kakuma in Kenya" (R54). This reflects the already limited trust vis-à-vis some aid agencies and government offices, which would be only further damaged if the threatened camp closures were to indeed go ahead.

Moreover, besides the decision-making by the government, many respondents (19) agreed that donors or their interests also influence the pandemic response. One person summarized this in noting that: "The response to the pandemic requires a lot of resources and donor support goes a long way in achieving that" (R42). Respondents detailed both general "support" (e.g. R76) as well as the specific items like face masks (e.g. R59) or personal protective equipment (e.g. R49) that donors have provided. Yet, they also addressed funding gaps. One person explained that: "Since many donors and donor countries were affected by the pandemic there was reduced funding and incentive workers for

example were not paid” (R88). This loss of work for refugees employed by international organizations for a small monthly stipend was reiterated by another respondent. The World Food Programme (WFP) has reported that they have reduced “food or cash transfers by up to 30 percent for over 2.7 million refugees in Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya and Djibouti” (WFP 2020). The pandemic has thus hindered not only the provision of assistance but also contributed to major funding gaps for agencies such as UNHCR (UNHCR 2020). The questionnaire responses highlight, then, the already very strained situation for refugees. Things would no doubt be even more precarious for those having to return to Somalia or South Sudan at a time of global aid reductions in the case of camp closures.

Finally, five of the respondents noted that regional organizations partially or wholly influenced the pandemic response. As one person noted: “They give advice on how things should be done” (R49). Indeed, IGAD was the sole regional organization to take decisive action on refugee issues early in the pandemic. In the very first meeting of the heads of state of this regional body at the end of March 2020, for example, it was agreed that they would need to “formulate a comprehensive regional response strategy and task the IGAD secretariat to develop an accompanying implementation plan to address the COVID-19 pandemic in the IGAD region that also incorporates the protection of populations and special groups that face difficulties accessing the national health systems such as Internally Displaced Peoples, refugees and migrants” (IGAD 2020a: 3). In addition, there was also a ministerial statement on the impact of COVID-19 on people on the move in the IGAD region published in September 2020 (IGAD 2020b).

The remaining questionnaire responses show however that, at least in the camps, regional organizations are largely invisible. “I have never seen them in the camp I am living” noted one individual (R69). Another added that: “Have nothing hear[d] or read any useful thing from IGAD” (R41). This also explains why over half of the respondents either noted they did not know (12) or left this question blank (4). In the words of one person: “It is my first time to understand/hear those regional organizations” (R57). Given the importance of refugee protection to IGAD as a regional organization and the many advances they have made in this regard (see e.g. Research and Evidence Facility 2020), a stronger position could be taken—also in light of the current threatened camp closures.

6. Interaction between the Kenyan Government and Aid Agencies

Previous studies have explored aid structures set up especially in camps, with them often criticizing the governance issues and limitations that consequently arise for refugees (e.g. Brankamp 2019, Jaji 2012, Jansen 2018). In addition to addressing effects on the levels of aid provided, we raised the question also of whether the interaction and relationship between the Kenyan government and aid agencies had altered due to the pandemic too. Responses were mixed. Of the 27 people answering, eight noted that there had been a change, or at least partially so. For these individuals, the major change was in communication, since now “everything was done remotely” (R60) and there was “minimal opportunities to interact and forge solutions collectively” (R53). This also meant that access to many services had become either limited or even suspended overall (R38). Four said they are working together to tackle COVID-19, while many others (14) remarked they did not know or left the answer blank. Here some respondents highlighted how little information they are given access to in terms of government decisions: “Am a refugee [so I] don’t know more about government and agency” (R68).

In line with that, ten respondents were not sure or left no response to the question about whether the pandemic had increased tensions between aid and government agencies. For the seven who did write “yes”, their answers alluded to pandemic nationalism, noting that: “All governments are putting the needs of their people first while aid agencies want everyone to be included” (R53). Others stated that staff layoffs could bring tensions with local governments: “I think in response to the pandemic, most organizations laid off staffs from host communities. This might bring conflict or tensions between the aid agencies and host government[s] like Turkana West” (R41). Given the importance, as noted, of Dadaab and Kakuma camps to the local job market, it is worth reiterating that their closure would bring significant tensions to areas long neglected in Kenyan regional governance, closing off one of the most significant sources of local income (Alix-Garcia et al. 2018, Oka 2011).

Moreover, 11 respondents were unsure if the pandemic had contributed to tensions between aid agencies, with only eight people giving a clear “yes” here (two of whom were employed at international agencies). Their answers are telling, however, in noting how the global nature of the pandemic has meant a reduction in funds: “Limited access to funds has increased competition” (R53); “Funding has gone down and many people have been laid off” (R49). Only two persons said “no” with one recounting that: “It boosted the sense and spirit of cooperation among themselves” (R65).

7. Effects of the Pandemic on Refugee and Host Communities

A range of studies has increasingly explored relations between refugee and host communities in recent years, shedding light on various forms of interaction, including trade, and partly also tensions arising, among other things, due to access to aid (Ali et al. 2017, Alix-Garcia et al. 2018, Aukot 2003, Vemuru et al. 2016). In the qualitative questionnaire, we asked if the pandemic is contributing to tensions between refugee and host communities. Importantly, refugees noted widespread misinformation, stigmatization, and being blamed for bringing in and/or spreading the virus. “Despite the rumors that the most affected people are the refugee community, this has brought in discrimination whereby a refugee could be harassed when found in town where the host resides. There was boundaries making movement and freedom harder” (R61). One staff member of an international organization also stressed the hostile tendencies refugees are met with in being accused of spreading the virus: “At the beginning host community members didn’t want to interact with refugees since most refugees travel often to and out of the camps” (R45).

Further tensions were identified due to competition over scarce resources between refugee and host communities, as noted in the previous research cited above. One person of refugee background stated that: “The scaling down of resources and imposed limitations as a result of lockdown have contributed to tensions between refugees and host communities that has also led to insecurity in some refugee camps and elsewhere” (R54). However, other respondents highlighted the collaborative effect of the pandemic: “This disease doesn’t discriminate between refugees and host community. So, the pandemic instead boosted sense of cooperation between the two communities” (R65).

In addition, relations between refugees themselves have been affected; some 15 persons said that the pandemic has contributed to tensions among refugees especially due to increased competition over resources. Respondents, again, elaborated that the pandemic has increased limitations on the availability of resources and led to a reduction in the services offered by aid organizations. This, in turn, creates uncertainties and anxiety about the future. One Kenyan participant stressed in this context

that: “The reduction in essential services has caused anxiety and frustrations in camps resulting to unfriendly behavior among residents” (R54).

The imposed lockdowns and their consequences have contributed to additional difficulties and tensions. On the one hand, these further restrictions on movement have led to job losses and the lack of alternative forms of employment, adding to frustrations and partly resulting in violent behavior. On the other, the lockdowns induce quarrels around the upholding of safety protocols, as illustrated by one resident of Kakuma refugee camp: “The impossibility of social distancing, the potential impact of lockdown to access assistance have created tensions” (R70). Finally, the physical insecurity caused by criminal acts against refugees in camps as well as rumors and misinformation were noted by the respondents to cause frictions too.

It was largely agreed that aid agencies and refugees themselves contribute to peace and help mitigate tensions. In many answers it was stressed that all stakeholders work together closely to solve problems, find solutions to conflicts, and ensure peaceful coexistence. One person of refugee background in Kenya illustrated the level of cooperation with the phrase “they work hand in hand” (R38). Some highlighted refugees’ own ideas and approaches used to contribute to peace and the mitigation of tensions, whereas other respondents provided insights into the practices of peace and conflict resolution taking place in the camps.

8. Conclusions

“Everyone is worried about COVID-19” (R69). This statement by a person of refugee background corresponds with many of the perspectives that respondents would trustfully share with us via the qualitative questionnaire. The data shows that the COVID-19 pandemic is having severe impacts on refugees living in Kenya. The respondents stressed that on top of the uncertainties coming with life in camps, the pandemic has intensified prevailing challenges and partly led to new risks too. Economic issues, limited access to services, social tensions, and increased risks of violence constitute just some of the problems participants shared with us. These issues exist at least partly due to the structures that the government and aid agencies have put in place to protect and assist refugees. Life in limbo thus continues for many.

The Kenyan government’s threat of camp closures, publicly announced after the questionnaire was carried out, is contributing to additional uncertainties and anxiety in an already-tense situation. What would happen if the camps were closed? How would refugees be treated, where would they go, and how would they be relocated? How would they stay safe, something already difficult in light of the pandemic? These and many other questions are worrisome and point to legal, political, and social problems. According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, to which Kenya is a signatory, *non-refoulement* is a fundamental right. Although the situation in the camps is certainly difficult for many refugees—something that all respondents to our qualitative questionnaire addressed—closing the camps with an uncertain future ahead is not the solution either.

In stark contrast, the findings of the qualitative questionnaire clearly point to specific needs. In times of COVID-19, protection and assistance should be intensified (including through resettlement to third countries), access to services should be guaranteed, and information about response measures should be made readily available. Since refugee representatives and organizations enjoy a high level of trust

among the communities, government and aid agencies should cooperate with them in responding to the ongoing pandemic. In order for the various protection and assistance measures to be delivered, donors should provide funds reliably too. No matter how the political response to the threatened camp closures develops, our findings show: refugees and their safety and representation should be at the front and center when it comes to deciding on the future of their lives.

Although the qualitative questionnaire we conducted is limited by the relatively small sampling and the brief timeframe, it still helps to gain insight into local issues, developments, and needs arising from the pandemic. Some of these challenges existed already, while further research is required to explore how conditions will evolve going forward too.

Acknowledgements

This paper was developed as part of the two research projects “Forced Migration, Women – and Peace? Peacebuilding practices of women in refugee camps” and “Forced Displacement in Africa: The politics and stakeholders of migration governance.” Both were independently funded by the DSF, for which we are extremely grateful. Moreover, we would like to express our sincere thanks to all respondents for taking the time to answer the questions and trustfully share a wealth of pertinent information with us. For their support in the designing of the qualitative questionnaire and with the initial analysis, we are also indebted to Magdalena Maier and Alina Pfeiffer.

Further Information about the Research Projects

As noted above, the qualitative questionnaire was carried out as part of two research projects, both independently funded by the DSF: namely “Forced Migration, Women – and Peace? Peacebuilding practices of women in refugee camps” and “Forced Displacement in Africa: The politics and stakeholders of migration governance.”

“Forced Migration, Women – and Peace?” is led by Ulrike Krause and carried out by Nadine Segadlo at the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS), Osnabrück University. The project draws on the broad academic discourses about the nexus of conflict and displacement, complementing these narratives by placing peace at the core of its investigations. Through empirical research in Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya, the project aims to explore how refugees there—and women especially—understand peace, how they seek to contribute to peaceful conditions on-site and in regions of origin, and what opportunities and limitations they experience in their respective peacebuilding practices. More information about the project is available at the websites of [DSF](#) and of [Osnabrück University](#).

“Forced Displacement in Africa” is led by Franzisca Zanker at the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, being conducted in close cooperation with co-researchers Khangelani Moyo in South Africa and Ronald Kalyango Sebba in Uganda. The project draws on and contributes to Conflict Studies as well as (Forced) Migration Studies to better understand migration governance in conflict-torn regions. To this end, the research aims to explore the political stakes and societal discourses related to migration governance in and across four cases in sub-Saharan Africa: namely South Africa, South Sudan, Uganda, and

Zimbabwe. It considers the different types of stakeholders (including both governmental and nongovernmental ones) involved in developing migration-governance policies, their roles, and the types of influence they leverage. Thus, the project applies a multiscalar perspective, differentiating between numerous types of agency (external/internal) and actors (governmental/nongovernmental) respectively. More information about the project is available at the websites of [DSF](#) and of the [Arnold Bergstraesser Institute](#).

Literature

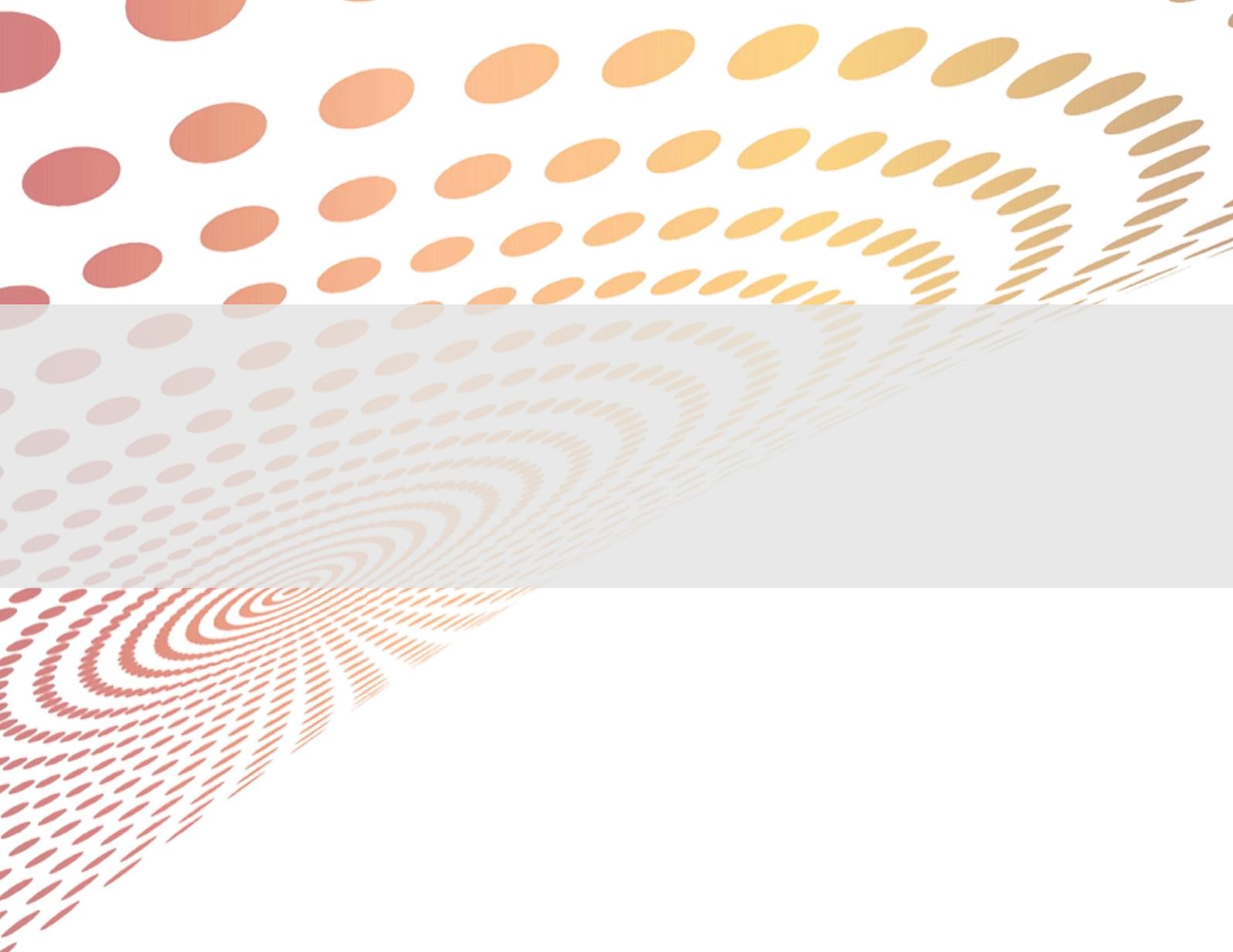
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Biographical Information about Respondents

Original Respondent Number	Overview Description
R3	Academic/Scholar; Female; Kenyan
R35	Person of refugee background; Female; Congolese (DRC)
R38	Person of refugee background; Student; Male; Somali
R41	Person of refugee background; Media; Male; Ethiopian
R42	Staff of international NGO; Male; Kenyan
R43	Staff of international NGO; Female; Congolese
R45	Staff of international NGO; Male; Kenyan
R48	Person of refugee background; Student; Male; Sudanese
R49	Staff of international NGO; Student; Male; Kenyan
R54	Person of refugee background; Male; Ethiopian
R53	Person of refugee background; Student; Male; Ethiopian/South Sudanese
R55	Person of refugee background; Student; Female; Somali
R56	Person of refugee background; Media; Student; Male; Burundian
R57	Person of refugee background; Male; Burundian
R58	Media; Male; South Sudanese
R59	Staff of international NGO; No gender indicated; Burundian
R60	Student; Male; Burundian
R61	Staff of international NGO; Person of refugee background; Student; Female; South Sudanese
R65	Person of refugee background; Student; Male; South Sudanese
R67	Student; Male; South Sudanese
R68	Person of refugee background; Student; Male; South Sudanese
R69	Person of refugee background; Male; South Sudanese
R70	Academic/Scholar; Student; Male; Ethiopian
R76	Person of refugee background; Student; Male; Sudanese
R81	Person of refugee background; Student; Male; Somali
R87	Member of civil society/national NGO; Person of refugee background; Student; Male; Kenyan
R88	Academic/Scholar; Male; Kenyan

The numbering is not consecutive as the original data of all participants of the questionnaire was retained.



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