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ASYLUM STATES AND URBAN REFUGEES: THE BENEFITS OF AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH

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While refugees have traditionally been viewed as a burden, an alternative view of refugees as resourceful and beneficial to the host state has emerged. This paper focuses on the benefits of urban refugees to host states. Specifically, urban refugees bring to host states much-needed human and financial capital. Current state policies, however, constrain the activities of refugees and limit them from fully integrating into host societies. They also discourage urban refugees from registering with aid agencies, which undermines efforts to provide funding and assistance to refugees. This paper argues that it is in the best interests of host states to allow urban refugees to work and live freely within their cities.

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INTRODUCTION

The total number of refugees¹ worldwide has remained fairly constant throughout the last decade, hovering around the internationally accepted number of fifteen million persons (U.S. Committee for Refugees 2003, 3). While this figure has remained virtually the same over this period, the regions from which the refugees originated have varied greatly. The number of European refugees has declined significantly, while figures in both Africa and the Middle East continue to skyrocket. The asylum state is not always equipped to handle the emerging influx. Host states frequently face the daunting tasks of having to obtain financial support for humanitarian relief and secure what are often porous borders, while simultaneously preserving the overall peace and stability of the region in which the refugees have settled.

The traditional school of thought has been that there are no benefits to hosting refugees and that their mere presence results in only negative consequences for receiving communities. Karen Jacobsen, however, challenges this notion in her article, “Can Refugees Benefit the State? Refugee Resources and African Statebuilding” (Jacobsen 2002). Jacobsen states, “While refugees impose a variety of security, economic and environmental burdens on host countries, they also embody a significant flow of resources in the form of international humanitarian assistance, economic assets and human capital” (Jacobsen 2002, 577). In proving this theory, Jacobsen focuses much of her attention on rural refugees and largely neglects the potential benefits of urban refugees. This paper expands the literature to incorporate the prospective advantages of hosting urban refugees in Africa’s city centers.

Recognition of the benefits brought by urban refugees may encourage policy changes in many African states. Currently, the vast majority of African governments view urban refugees negatively because they believe refugees compete with locals for jobs, increase the overall cost of living, and heighten criminal activity. However, if this article’s assertion of the benefits of urban refugees proves to be valid, then government policies that remove refugees from urban areas and deny them work permits may be counterproductive.

This paper explores the prospective benefits of urban refugees to host states by examining the policies of several African states. It demonstrates that more liberal policies, which incorporate asylum seekers into the economic sector, have the potential to create positive outcomes for both host states and urban refugees.

REFUGEE PERCEPTIONS AND TRENDS

In 1960, the total number of African refugees amounted to less than one-half million; however, by 1992, the number had increased to more than five million (Bascom 1993, 320). Refugees reside in forty-one countries in Africa, with Ethiopia, Guinea, Malawi, Sudan and Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of the Congo) hosting “‘overloads’ of more than 250,000 people” (Bascom 1993, 320). It was originally believed that the traditional next of kin hospitality with which African states welcome refugees was all that states needed in order to successfully absorb the influxes. At the 1979 Arusha Conference on Refugees, several states noted that the belief in true hospitality was convenient because it “‘absolves government and aid agencies from doing something about [the spontaneous settlement of refugees]. If they are not causing any political

problems, the temptation is to leave well alone ... ” (Betts 1981, 214). However, Bascom points out that the “hospitality of host countries in Africa is beginning to wear thin, especially for those refugees without assistance and protection from the United Nations” (Betts 1981, 320). In particular, the generosity of host states and local communities is now waning with regard to the growing numbers of urban refugees in Africa’s cities.

While numbers of urban refugees are increasing, it is extremely difficult to determine exact percentages of urban refugees worldwide. Some of this difficulty can be attributed to common misperceptions in differentiating urban refugees from migrant workers. In this paper, I use the term “migrant” as defined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Migrants as “a person who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a State of which he or she is not a national” (United Nations 1990). While there are many differences between an urban refugee and a migrant worker, host states often categorize them together as unwanted foreign nationals.

Many refugees reside in urban areas illegally and intentionally do not register within the country of asylum or with international relief organizations. In 2001, 13 percent of all refugees who registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) lived in urban environments, up from just one percent in 1996 (Jacobsen 2005, 39). As of 2004, just 2.7 million persons—18 percent of the population under care of the UNHCR—were registered as urban refugees (UNHCR 2004, 49).

However, the number of urban refugees may be underreported. For example, “Human Rights Watch ... estimates that there are 60,000 refugees living in Nairobi, while UNHCR says that only 15,000 of those are legitimate and therefore fall under its mandate” (Buscher 2003, 2). One is likely to find similar discrepancies in numbers of real versus reported refugees in other states, as urban refugees frequently fail to register with UNHCR.

Two distinct groupings of urban refugees have become apparent in Africa’s city centers in the last decade: refugees with urban origins and refugees who migrated to the city from rural areas. The flight patterns of these groups vary significantly. Rural refugees tend to flee en masse with entire “clans or communities,” whereas urban refugees tend to escape “individually or in very small groups” (Kibreab 1996, 149). Flight movement for a refugee ultimately determines the type of settlement in which he will reside in the state of asylum.

For urban refugees destined for city centers, there are two distinct phases of flight. The first phase involves flight from the country of origin across the border to the relative safety of an asylum state. The second phase consists of migration from the original point of safety within the host country to urban centers within that same state (Kibreab 1996, 149). In instances such as these, refugees are attempting to retain their former way of life prior to flight from their country of origin, as opposed to solely seeking economic gain.

It is important to note the distinction between refugees with urban origins and refugees with rural origins. Kibreab explains that “refugees with rural backgrounds came first to the border areas, but later drifted to the urban areas due to ... [a] lack of employment or income-generating activities [in those areas]” (Kibreab 1996, 150). These refugees migrate because they

believe they will find better employment opportunities in urban areas. This phenomenon, referred to as urban drift, does not account for those refugees with urban backgrounds for whom the city was their original point of destination (Kibreab 1996, 150).

Urban drift occurs for several reasons. Many refugees have recently found that “annual incomes are higher in the urban areas than in the rural areas even for unskilled workers” (Kibreab 1996, 160). Other standards of living increase in the city as well, including “life expectancy, adult literacy, central government transfers, primary enrollment rates, and sugar supplies” (Kibreab 1996, 159). Aid agencies have observed that several “push” factors have spurred hundreds of thousands of rural refugees in Sudan to flock to Khartoum. Push factors such as high population density, increased levels of unemployment, drought and subsequent low yields and abject poverty in rural settings have led refugees to seek the alternative lifestyles of urban living (Kibreab 1996, 159-160). Still, the actual proportion of urban drift refugees to refugees with urban origins is relatively small, suggesting that if host governments alter their policies to accommodate urban refugees, they will not significantly impact the number of rural refugees coming to the city.

It is becoming ever more apparent that UN-operated camps and rural settlement schemes are not appropriate for all refugees. Many refugees come from urban areas and are intent on relocating to cities upon their arrival in the country of asylum. African host states have tended to “lump together all refugees irrespective of their occupational and cultural backgrounds in rural land settlement schemes or rural reception centers” (Kibreab 1996, 132). Refugees of urban origins often find themselves feeling lost and alienated because they are not only in a foreign land, but also in an unfamiliar setting. More and more of these refugees are “vot[ing] with their feet” and shifting to Africa’s city centers; hence urban refugees are “[growing] in defiance of host-government policies and, consequently, remain outside the purview of the international assistance and protection regime” (Kibreab 1996, 132).

CHALLENGES FOR URBAN REFUGEES

Urban refugees face far greater challenges than do those who choose to reside in organized camps and settlements. While refugees who remain in UN-designated camps and settlements have basic amenities such as food, water and shelter, urban refugees have no choice but to be self-sufficient in cities. Lacking proper identification papers, they must find employment and face the threat of detention or deportation/forced relocation (Bailey 2004, 31). The inability to access credit or open bank accounts affects urban refugees more than refugees in camps because refugees in the city must pay for housing and other high-cost living expenses.

Refugees often become convenient scapegoats in states plagued with economic and social problems. In Sudan, locals hold refugees “responsible for sky-rocketing rents, periodic shortages of essential commodities, overcrowding of schools and health-care facilities, and other urban ills” (Weaver 1985, 148). Weaver concludes, however, that it is actually “[m]acro-economic factors such as inflation, declining productivity, and lower prices for exports, rather than refugees [that] have reduced the once abundant and generous Khartoum economy” (Weaver 1985, 155). In this instance, Ethiopians were an opportune scapegoat because they arrived at the

same time as the financial deterioration of the state (Weaver 1985, 155). This scenario has been observed in other states such as Kenya and Ethiopia as well.

The local population often takes advantage of urban refugees. In practically all states, “landlords and gray market employers often exploit urban refugees who, in many refugee-hosting countries, do not have legal protection” (Buscher 2003, 4). Urban refugees are usually paid less than locals with equivalent skills, yet also have to pay more per month for necessities such as housing.

One misconception among governments is that refugees increase crime rates in a city. If anything, the increased crime rates are due to locals taking advantage of refugees. In their study on Johannesburg, Landau and Jacobsen observe that “migrants are far more likely to be victims of crime or police harassment than South Africans” (Landau and Jacobsen 2004, 45).² In fact, even with limited experience in the country “almost three-quarters (72 percent) of the migrants surveyed reported that they or someone they live with has been a victim of crime, compared with 43 percent of South Africans (who have spent most of their lives in the country)” (Landau and Jacobsen 2004, 45). Furthermore, the Hillbrow Police Station, situated in the heart of Johannesburg’s migrant community, has verified that foreigners are most often the victims of crime and are seldom the perpetrators (Landau and Jacobsen 2004, 45). Urban refugees are less likely to commit acts of violence for fear of being caught and faced with detention and/or deportation. Thus, while their presence may result in increased crime rates, the majority of refugees are not responsible for instigating crimes.

Urban refugees also face limited access to financial institutions. The policies of most African states do not permit urban refugees to open bank accounts or take out loans. The lack of a safe place to store money makes refugees, especially entrepreneurs, “known targets for mugging and theft” (Landau and Jacobsen 2004, 46). Furthermore, a “lack of credit” limits refugees’ ability “to pursue entrepreneurial initiatives” and prevents them from engaging in economic activities that benefit both themselves and the state (Landau and Jacobsen 2004, 46).

CURRENT POLICIES OF HOST STATES

African states have a history of having extremely generous and accommodating refugee policies. At one point, “it was convenient to believe that traditional African hospitality could handle much of the [refugee] problem ... [since] scattered refugees were quite often welcomed by many if not all of the host populations” (Chambers 1986, 248). Yet in recent years, many host states have established restrictive policies for refugees residing in urban areas. Mass migration of local populations from rural to urban areas, motivated by severe drought, economic difficulty, and conflict, has increased pressure on city economies and social structures. Frequently, this type of shift occurs “in the absence of any structural transformation in the economies concerned” (Kibreab 1996, 131). While the majority of persons relocating are natives to the state, refugees are making the move as well, and many “African host-governments see the situation in their urban centers being exacerbated by the presence of refugees” (Kibreab 1996, 131). However, African states are not entirely at fault for policies that are not always conducive to refugees’ well-being. States are forced to deal with enormous population influxes with very little or no notice at all, and they frequently lack the time and resources to implement appropriate policies

Within the last decade, the sheer size and magnitude of Africa's refugee situation has prompted changes to the policies involving urban refugees. Kenya serves as a classic example of how legislation has been reformed. In 1988, Kenya hosted a mere 12,000 refugees, most of whom were Ugandan (Campbell 2006, 399). According to Elizabeth Campbell, refugees formerly "enjoyed full status rights, including the right to reside in urban [centers] and move freely throughout the country, the right to obtain a work permit and access educational opportunities, and the right to apply for legal local integration" (Campbell 2006, 399). In the late 1980s, Kenya was coping with its minor refugee population quite well. The number of refugees was substantially larger in 1991, with 120,000 refugees within state borders. Just a year later, there were over 400,000 refugees (Campbell 2006, 399). Fortunately for the state, the numbers leveled off by the end of the decade and "stabilized around 220,000," composed mostly of Somalis and Sudanese (Campbell 2006, 399). Still, the influx of refugees overwhelmed the central government's capabilities and led Kenya to drastically alter its policies to the disadvantage of urban refugees.

Kenyan officials restricted the movement of refugees outside of camps, denied work permits, and no longer permitted refugees to seek Kenyan citizenship (U.S. Committee for Refugees 2003, 3). These restrictive policies, however, had little effect on the situation in urban areas; few refugees left the city centers because of the new policies. Campbell observed that "the lack of legal status for urban refugees [did] not itself serve as a deterrent for those refugees able to profit from trade and business." (Campbell 2006, 408). As official UN camps and settlements did not enable a refugee to attain any sort of economic self-sufficiency, larger cities such as Nairobi provided some of the only opportunities for a refugee to be financially independent. Ultimately, the change in legislation had minimal effect on refugees already residing in urban centers; refugees in regulated camps were most affected by the new policies.

Because the majority of Africa's city centers suffer from high levels of unemployment, governments are hesitant to permit refugees the freedom to choose where they live (Rogge 1981, 197). Host states worry that if refugees are allowed to work without hindrance, then other refugees will flock to the city center as a result of the generous "pull" factors, with little regard to the more important "push" factors³ of flight (Buscher 2003, 2). This has led to current policies that bar refugees from working in the public sector; in Egypt and Djibouti, refugees "are not allowed to take any paid employment" (Kibreab 1996, 131). Economic disarray is one of the main reasons why African states are issuing more restrictive occupational rules and regulations.

Sudan also has restrictive policies toward urban refugees. For decades, the Sudanese government has refused to provide any services to urban refugees and has tried to keep refugees in "rural settlements" (Weaver 1985, 147). The government prohibits refugees from purchasing land and leaving their "designated" residences (Kibreab 1996, 140). The large majority of Sudan's Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees are from urban origins. Thus, by attempting to confine them to camps, "the authorities required the refugees to adapt to the new situation by abandoning their previously urban lifestyles ... instead of adjusting their policy in response to the changing background characteristics of the refugee populations" (Kibreab 1996, 147). By regulating the refugees' freedom of movement and residence, the government prevented their integration and inadvertently "[prolonged] their refugee status" (Kibreab 1996, 140).

URBAN REFUGEES AS SELF-SUFFICIENT

Citizens of host states frequently view refugees as reluctant or disinclined to work. The Sudanese, in particular, embraced perceptions of a general “lack of motivation or effort by some refugees to build a creative and productive life” (Weaver 1985, 153). However, some refugees may be unwilling to work because they still harbor hopes of repatriation and are unwilling to start new lives in the host country (Kibreab 1996, 170-171).

Given these negative perceptions, current and future refugees will have to display extreme diligence to prove their worth and overcome stereotypes. An analysis of recent trends reveals that the number of asylum seekers continues to increase while the average duration of refugee status has lengthened (Bascom 1993, 341). Gone are the wars of independence with colonial powers where “victory [often] led to rapid voluntary repatriation” (Stein 1986, 277). Protracted civil wars and blatant attacks against unarmed civilian populations have replaced fights for independence. The uncertain nature and outcome of war frequently witnessed today have made some refugees unwilling to repatriate, even after the signing of a peace accord. In states “where voluntary return is not immediately feasible or possible, conditions should be created within the country of asylum for a temporary settlement or the integration of refugees into the community and their full participation in its social and economic life” (Stein 1986, 273). The chronic nature of war today calls for more long-term, durable solutions to the refugee problem.

Many host states induce refugees to be needy and dependent upon outside assistance, while neglecting the fact that policies could be adjusted to alter the current conditions. The majority of states are indifferent to the fact that refugees residing in camps will never attain self-sufficiency; they will be dependent on handouts for the duration of their stay within the camp (Buscher 2003, 2). By allowing refugees to work, the host state will drastically reduce their dependency on state and relief agencies, reducing the costs of the states or organizations providing the services. While urban refugees do not usually receive these services, enabling them to work legally will alter locals’ perceptions of the overall dependency levels of urban refugees, whether assistance is provided by the state or not.

Instead of being a burden to the Kenyan government, the large refugee population in Nairobi has proven to be self-sufficient (Campbell 2006, 402). In a popular district of the city known as Eastleigh, also commonly referred to as “Little Mogadishu,” refugees have created a thriving “informal economy” (Campbell 2006, 402). Refugees smuggle items into this area from Somalia and sell them at extremely low prices. These goods cost so little that they often “[undercut] many Kenyan competitors who do not have access to these networks” (Campbell 2006, 406). The Somalis can then sell cheaper goods to both refugees and locals, offering the best possible prices in town. It is this type of underground trade that keeps many urban refugees afloat.

In urban settings across the continent, refugees are often under-employed in comparison to the education that they have received and the skills that they have acquired from institutions in their home state. Because of widespread unemployment, many skilled refugees work in “menial activities which [are] incompatible with their occupational and professional backgrounds” (Kibreab 1996, 169). To survive, they must often engage in hawking and petty trade in districts

such as Eastleigh. Allowing refugees to work legally would remove the constraints that prevent current refugees from seeking jobs compatible with their education and skills.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF URBAN REFUGEES

Urban refugees can be a valuable asset to society if governments remove the restrictions placed on them. Chambers notes that the influx of registered refugees is likely to lead to improvements in the overall development of an area. Aid agencies, such as the UNDP, WHO and UNHCR, recognize that they cannot completely distinguish between the needs of refugees and the needs of the native population and that locals must be “among the beneficiaries of refugee-related development projects” (Chambers 1986, 258). If urban refugees were accurately cataloged and accounted for, then aid agencies could distribute appropriate funding to the cities in which they reside. This funding would cover the most basic services, such as infrastructure improvements, supplemental health programs, and educational facilities. Most African cities desperately need these services.

Urban refugees tend to have higher levels of education than that of the local city population. The study conducted by Landau and Jacobsen⁴ found that “migrants have higher levels of education and are more skilled [with] 22 [percent having] finished tertiary education or [having] earned a post-graduate degree, compared to 14 [percent] for South Africans” (Landau and Jacobsen 2004, 44). An additional nine percent of migrants have had professional work experience in fields such as medicine, law, and accounting prior to arrival in Johannesburg. These individuals “could help fill the acute skills gap facing the inner city” (Landau and Jacobsen 2004, 46). It is apparent that a large number of migrants and refugees specifically fled to South Africa to take advantage of the availability of skilled professions. The country experienced a brain drain in the mid-1990s and since has had trouble filling professional jobs. As long as South Africa’s policies continue to exclude foreigners from the workplace, urban refugees will remain an untapped source of skilled labor.

According to Campbell, many of the Somali refugees who settled in Eastleigh, Nairobi in the 1990s “were successful businessmen and brought with them entrepreneurial experience and capital” (Campbell 2006, 404). Similarly, the Ethiopian refugees came with education, fluent English, and business experience (Campbell 2005, 13). Weaver points out that while the majority of Ethiopian refugees in Sudan were from the middle and upper classes, their resources and skills remained “under-utilized” (Weaver 1985, 150). Additionally, refugees frequently offer diverse skill sets. For instance, in the cities of Maputo and Johannesburg, refugees have profited from distinctive sewing skills and unique wood carving techniques (Jacobsen 2005, 48). Because of different cultural techniques, refugees could potentially teach locals new skills or more efficient ways of completing various tasks.

If states altered their existing policies and enabled displaced persons to work, then governments would benefit from the distribution and sale of essential work permits to refugees. Governments would also be able to tax goods imported from the country of origin. In Eastleigh, business owners in the city center, who must abide by strict regulations, pay taxes, and purchase permits, worry “about less regulated refugee businesses cutting into their profit margins” (Campbell 2006, 404). The Kenyan government would be wise to recognize refugee activity in

the Eastleigh district by legalizing businesses and subjecting them to the same taxes that other Kenyan industries face.

Entrepreneurial refugees also contribute to the host state's economy by employing locals. Nairobi's Eastleigh refugees have been quite successful in this manner. By offering products at the lowest possible prices, Somali businessmen have expanded their customer base. To keep up with their growing markets, Somalis have found it necessary to employ Kenyans. Most locals provide work as unskilled laborers, though some have received skilled employment in the *matatu* (minibus) industry as drivers, operators and mechanic (Campbell 2006, 407). In 2001, the unemployment rate in Kenya stood at roughly 40 percent (CIA World Factbook 2007). With unemployment that high, natives appreciate any opportunity to work. Thus, refugees in Eastleigh have managed to create jobs for locals that would not have existed otherwise.

Refugees in South Africa have also employed locals. Thirty-four percent of migrants in Johannesburg have hired someone to complete a task sometime within the duration of their stay, whereas only 20 percent of South Africans have reported doing the same (Landau and Jacobsen 2004, 46). Furthermore, of those employees hired by migrants, 67 percent have been local South Africans (Landau and Jacobsen 2004, 46). The employment of locals would magnify greatly if refugee businesses were allowed to conduct commerce legally. The need for translators alone would be enough to employ numerous local citizens. Under current conditions, refugee businesses are illegal, which makes contracting with locals prohibited by law.

Urban refugees have the skills and ability to enhance the economic livelihood of the state. The Kenyan case illustrates that urban refugees do not necessarily constitute a burden to host states. Urban refugees in Eastleigh have become "self-sufficient entrepreneurs" who have contributed to "infrastructural development," "retail growth," and local employment (Campbell 2005, 15).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND CHANGES

African states should fundamentally alter their refugee policies to take advantage of the resources that urban refugees have to offer. Regardless of states' desires, urban refugees are in their cities and there to stay. The protracted nature of wars means that repatriation is not always a viable option. Forcing refugees to remain in designated camps or settlements prevents them from becoming self-sufficient. Instead, states should implement durable solutions that integrate refugees into communities. Implementing durable solutions could be expensive, but "experience shows it is over the long run much cheaper, as well as better, to have refugees be self-sufficient rather than dependent on relief" (Stein 1986, 279).

Importantly, states and humanitarian organizations cannot allocate an appropriate level of funding and aid to refugees without more accurate data on the composition and numbers of refugees in urban areas. Thus, states should conduct a census of major cities, making it clear that current urban refugees will not experience negative ramifications for registering with census officials. With more accurate statistics, governments will be in a stronger position to solicit the assistance of the UNHCR in helping with the refugee situation.

Another possible policy change involves allowing refugees to settle where they see fit. Refugees should be permitted to make choices that are beneficial to their families; states should not force refugees from urban areas to live in rural settlements. Currently, the majority of refugees fail to register their refugee status because they fear being caught living illegally in a city. By removing this fear, governments will encourage refugees to register with international relief organizations. If governments recognize the rights of “urban refugees to reside where they are, donor agencies can [then] provide assistance to promote their economic integration” (Weaver 1985, 155). This will benefit not only the refugees, but also the host state. The registration of refugees enables donor organizations to allocate funding and provide assistance to communities in which refugees inhabit.

Policy changes in Sudan led to almost immediate benefits for the asylum state. Once the Sudanese government officially recognized the Eritreans as refugees, it was able to transfer responsibility for the refugees to the international community. This handover of responsibility could have never taken place had the refugees not been officially recognized as refugees (Kibreab 1996, 138).

Developed nations could also aid the refugee situation by increasing their resettlement quotas, the number of refugees that are legally allowed to be resettled in a state for a particular year. For instance, there should be incentives for host states that incorporate urban refugees in their economies and provide services to them. Developed countries, and Western states in particular, should reward good behavior by increasing resettlement quotas for the states that are adjusting their policies and making strides in integrating refugees into the social and economic framework of the state.⁵

Once urban refugees are appropriately registered, their official numbers will increase by tens of thousands to reflect refugees that are already in cities but previously had not been accounted for. Higher numbers of refugees may compel developed nations to expand their resettlement quotas and share some of the physical burden of providing for refugees. Support from the international community is essential. Kibreab emphasizes the necessity for the international community to “share the responsibility of hosting refugees in a manner that enables the [refugees] to become self-supporting while offsetting the pressures that their presence causes on the host country’s social and physical infrastructures and local commodity and labor markets” (Kibreab 1996, 169).

Host states fear that favorable policies toward urban refugees may encourage huge numbers of refugees to migrate to cities, but this is unlikely. For the most part, very few refugees of urban origin currently reside in official camps—they tend to be self-settled, and most have already moved to cities (Jacobsen 2005, 40). Also, it is rare for refugees of rural origin to migrate to city centers unless they are unable to find employment in the locations where they first settled, as was the case in Sudan.

Host states should create an environment that “encourage[s] the commitment of international assistance to upgrading the existing public amenities, not only to offset the additional burden, but also to create new opportunities for the local hosts” (Kibreab 1996, 171). International agencies often hire locals to complete tasks such as food distribution,

transportation, and security. Incorporating locals in these types of international relief efforts may improve the economic and social relations between native and refugee populations (Kibreab 1996, 171).

CONCLUSION

The interests of urban refugees and host states are not altogether incompatible. Urban refugees seek to acquire self-sufficiency and stability while host states seek to enhance their economies by attracting human and financial capital. Considering the educational and professional background of many urban refugees, as well as the success of refugees in places such as Eastleigh, policies that allow urban refugees to work and access credit could help both refugees and host states achieve their goals. Policies that improve the plight of urban refugees, however, are only possible if there is a paradigm shift from viewing refugees as a burden on the state to viewing them as individuals with skills and resources to offer host countries. The international community may help by highlighting the potential benefits of urban refugees to host states.

ENDNOTES

¹ According to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), a refugee is defined as one who, “owing to a 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 his nationality, and is unable or ... unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”

² It is important to note that this is a study of both economic migrants and refugees. The figures do not differentiate between the two; therefore, in reference to this study, the term “migrants” will be used as designated by Landau and Jacobsen.

³ “Push” factors refer to the reasons for which one leaves their country of origin and typically relate to persecution. “Pull” factors refer to conditions in the host country, such as favorable migrant worker conditions or a demand for labor, that lure workers from other countries. Push factors are more forceful in nature, while pull factors are typically viewed as an option.

⁴ The author notes that there may be a significant structural flaw in Landau and Jacobsen’s survey. They imply that the survey was mailed to the homes of various residents. Because it was a written survey, the percentages may be skewed in favor of a more educated, literate, migrant refugee population. However, this is one of the only surveys of its kind and provides a good foundation for future study. For further details on this survey, please see Landau, Loren B. and Karen Jacobsen. 2004. Refugees in the New Johannesburg. *Forced Migration Review* 19: 44.

⁵ Developed states, especially those in Europe, will be experiencing dramatic decreases in population in the near future. Accepting larger numbers of refugees could help these states maintain their current way of life.

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