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**EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON REFUGEES IN TANZANIA**

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## **EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON REFUGEES IN TANZANIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The impact of COVID-19 to the globe has been cross-cutting. A number of sectors and segments of the population have been affected albeit to varying degrees. The refugee population is one amongst those affected by the pandemic globally. Being stigmatized by the fact that they are in a country not of their origin, the effects of the pandemic potentially compounds the stigma and vulnerability of refugees. This paper examines the impact of COVID-19 on refugees in Tanzania. In so doing, it explores the means and methods that are used by refugees to cope with the situation. The research also explores the roles of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the host community in general including the government in promoting refugees' resilience in the face of the COVID-19. The research is undertaken using qualitative methods of data collection. Interviews by way of telephone and the administration of online questionnaire were the primary modes bearing in mind the requirement to maintain social distancing. Physical interaction was resorted only when mobile communication was impossible. Desk research formed part of the research methodology as well. The research inter alia finds out that, the COVID-19 highly impacted the income generation activities of refugees both in the camps and non-encamped. The pandemic also caused fear and insecurity to refugees and limited the humanitarian access from humanitarian providers. The pandemic negatively affected CSOs responsible for humanitarian assistance in Tanzania. Majority of these organizations closed their offices. The paper finally makes recommendations on curbing the stated problem.*

### **1.0 BACKGROUND**

COVID-19 pandemic became a global challenge from March, 2020 when WHO proclaimed it as such.<sup>2</sup> The corona virus spreads through *inter alia* movement of people whether within national boundaries or transnational.<sup>3</sup> Put differently,

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<sup>2</sup> Helen Branswell and Andrew Joseph, "WHO Declares the Coronavirus Outbreak a Pandemic", STAT, 11 March, 2020, available at <https://www.statnews.com/2020/03/11/who-declares-the-coronavirus-outbreak-a-pandemic> [accessed 3 November 2020].

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

migration has emerged as the key means of the spread of the pandemic.<sup>4</sup> In as far as vulnerability of refugees is concerned; refugees hosted in developing countries are more vulnerable to the social and economic impacts of COVID-19.<sup>5</sup> This is because, developing countries face various challenges related to economic recession, xenophobia and increase in unemployment.<sup>6</sup>

Migrants and refugees are particularly vulnerable due to different factors. These factors include economic dependence, living conditions due to congestion in some camps as well as lack of adequate access to information.<sup>7</sup> Their exposure is worsened in crisis situations as it is in the case of COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless of the measures announced by governments to minimize the transmission, the pandemic was already affecting the movement of migrants.<sup>8</sup> Thus, mobility restrictions that expose refugees to COVID-19 pandemic forced different organizations dealing with migration issues including UNHCR to temporarily stop refugees' travels.<sup>9</sup>

As already stated, the effects of COVID-19 pandemic are far more pronounced among refugees hosted in developing nations such as Tanzania. In these nations, migrants are affected basing on their living places and limited access to income including remittances. The hindrance of refugees to social safety which is rising with discrimination marks their economic independence being caged<sup>10</sup>. Policy making which is highly influenced by nationalism in association

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<sup>4</sup> IOM, (2020). Migration Fact Sheet No.6.The Impact of COVID-19 on Migrants. Synthesis Analysis Drawing on IOMs World Migration Report Series. <http://iom.int/migration-research>. (accessed 15 October 2020), pp. 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Hellen Dempster, "Locked Down and Left Behind: The Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees' Economic Inclusion", *Policy Paper No. 179*, July-2020, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> H. Beech and B. Hubbard, "Unprepared for the Worst: World's Most Vulnerable Brace for Virus", *The New York Times*, 26 March, 2020, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/26/world/asia/coronavirus-refugees-camps-bangladesh.html> (accessed 03 November 2020).

<sup>8</sup> A. Petherick, B. Kira, and S. Webster (2020). Variation in Government Responses to COVID-19. <http://www.bsg-ox.ac.uk/research/publications/variation-government-response-covid-19>. [Accessed October 10, 2020] p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> IOM, 2020, pp. 6 and 9, above.

<sup>10</sup> A. Guterres. (2020). The COVID-19 Crisis is an Opportunity to Reimagine Human

to unemployment matters, leads to economic recession in hosting communities thus making it difficult for refugees to be included in mainstream economic space.<sup>11</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic which came with financial implications for individuals to manage it, it disadvantaged refugees as they enjoy far less economic self-sufficiency. This is caused by a number of reasons. The reasons include limited access to the labour market, limited movement as well as abuse and harassment from the hosting community.<sup>12</sup>

The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has indeed proved that the reasons to allow economic inclusion for asylum seekers and refugees are more convincing to some nations. Thus accommodating this group in country's economic framework enables them to provide for themselves their basic needs. It is also advantageous in raising the economy of a particular nation, hence invigorating the post COVID-19 economic recuperation.<sup>13</sup>

Many countries were also affected by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic hence affecting the migration aspects in the respective regions. This research was premised on the impact of the pandemic on refugees in Tanzania appreciating her proud historical excellence in hosting refugees from various corners of the world. Globally, there are various restrictions that were emphasized as vital in decreasing the rate of transmission. These include travel restrictions leading to border closure impacting refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable migrants.<sup>14</sup> Migration movement rates are now falling due to travel restrictions as migrants are unable to travel to other nations.<sup>15</sup>

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Mobility. United

Nations. <http://www.un.org/en/corona/virus/covid-19>. Retrieved, October,19,2020.

<sup>11</sup> UNHCR, (2020), "Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion", available at <http://www.unhcr.org/livelihoods.html>, (accessed 20 October, 2020), p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> L.J. Chimanda (2020), "Protecting Female Migrant Workers in Tanzania: A Critical Analysis of International Labour Migration", LL.M Graduate Essay, University of Dar es Salaam, p. 72.

<sup>13</sup> Hellen Dempster, T. Ginn and J. Graham (2020) "Lockdown and Left Behind: The Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees Economic Inclusion" Washington, DC. Center for Global Development, pp. 9, 10 and 19.

<sup>14</sup> Antoine Bouet and David Laborde, "COVID-19 Border Policies Create Problems for

Working migrants are also vulnerable to loss of jobs and wages due to presence of the pandemic.<sup>16</sup> Lock down has affected labour market as a large number of refugees work in informal sectors.<sup>17</sup> According to WHO, 2020, refugees residing in urban areas are more susceptible to infection of this pandemic due to the nature of their living conditions. Migrants are excluded in government response plans to COVID-19 pandemic thus more likely to be vulnerable. Though they are included in health matters and are provided with all required treatments as other entire population.<sup>18</sup>

Needless to say, Tanzania's strategy to end the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic cannot be fully understood outside of the nation's historical familiarity and its ideologies of countrywide self-support and improvement. Tanzania has practically drawn on related internal ideas and resources to react to the current pandemic from other borders.

In the reign of COVID-19, vulnerable population including refugees and asylum seekers has faced diverse challenges. Discrimination by host communities, lack of social and economic inclusion, communication barriers are reported as amongst the challenges.<sup>19</sup> This has resulted to poor prevention measures to be taken in avoiding the spread of this corona viral disease. Refugees are hosted in nations majority of which deny refugees to work in formal sectors.<sup>20</sup> In

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African Trade and Economic Pain for Communities”, 2020, International Food Policy Research Institute, available at <https://wca.ifpri.info/2020/05/14/covid-19-border-policies-create-problems-for-african-trade-and-economic-pain-for-communities/> (accessed 03 November 2020).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Mixed Migration Centre, (2020) “Understanding the Impact of Covid-19 on Refugees and Migrants in

Kenya and Somalia” available at <http://www.mixedmigration.org/4mi>, (accessed 19 October 2020), pp. 7-8.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Clemens, et al, “The Economic and Fiscal Effects of Granting Refugees Formal Labour Market Access”, Centre for Global Development, Working Paper No. 496, October 2018, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> World Bank, (2020). “Covid-19 Crisis: Through a Migration Lens” *Migration and Development Brief Report*, German pp. 5-6.

<sup>19</sup> Anna Ziersch, et al, (2020), “Discrimination: A Health Hazard for People from Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds Resettled in Australia”, 108(20) *BMC Public Health*, pp. 12-14.

<sup>20</sup> See Martha Guerrero, et al, “Refugees’ Right to Work: Progress and Remaining Challenges”, Centre for

Tanzania, although the current position of the law allows refugees to be granted work permits and be employed in formal sectors, it appears that this law is not operational in practice.

This makes refugees potentially prone to economic dependence. Thus, a large number of them work in informal sectors hence being more exposed to the pandemic.<sup>21</sup> Tanzania being one of the countries that is affected by COVID-19, has taken different precautions so as to protect people. Prior precautions included closure of learning institutions, stopping mass gathering including sports activities with the exception of worshiping activities that were allowed to proceed under precautions.<sup>22</sup>

Comparable to other nations Tanzania has also been affected by this pandemic. There were various confirmed cases and casualties.<sup>23</sup> Like any other individuals the pandemic threatened the lives of asylum seekers, refugees and other vulnerable migrants. Thus the need to make an investigation on how these groups are impacted by COVID-19 in Tanzania regardless of their statuses arises. As we speak, the situation of COVID-19 in Tanzania is changing to better as there are no new cases and deaths being reported by the government.<sup>24</sup> Living styles are now normal and no any restrictions related to Corona virus.<sup>25</sup>

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Global Development, July, 2020, available at <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/refugees-right-work-progress-and-remaining-challenges> (accessed 03 November 2020).

<sup>21</sup> HellenDempster *et al*, 2020, p. 10, above.

<sup>22</sup> Iddy Ramadhani Magoti, “Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic in Tanzania: The Role of Solidarity, National Unity and Peace” Social Science Research Council, 2020, available at <https://kujenga-amani.ssrc.org/2020/07/09/responding-to-the-covid-19-pandemic-in-tanzania-the-role-of-solidarity-national-unity-and-peace/> (accessed 03 November 2020).

<sup>23</sup> 509 confirmed cases and 21 casualties. See Jaclynn Ashly, “Is Tanzania Covering Up the Real Number of Coronavirus Deaths?”, Aljazeera, 12 May, 2020, available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/05/tanzania-covering-real-number-coronavirus-deaths-200511054304751.html> [accessed 13 August, 2020]

<sup>24</sup> See Abdi Latif Dahir, “Tanzania’s President Says Country Is Virus Free, Others Warn of Disaster”, The New York Times, August 4, 2020, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/04/world/africa/tanzanias-coronavirus-president.tml> (accessed 03 November 2020).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

Generally, this research intended to undertake an investigation on the impact of COVID-19 to both encamped and non-encamped refugees in Tanzania. In so doing, an examination of the mechanisms adopted by refugees to survive the pandemic was also conducted. The research also explored the required support by this vulnerable group to enhance their resilience by examining the role of local and national CSOs and host community members in COVID- 19 response in the context of refugees.

## **2.0 IMPACT OF COVID-19 TO REFUGEES IN TANZANIA**

As it has been indicated earlier, COVID-19 affected every segment of the public in Tanzania. No portion of the public was exempted. However, the vulnerability and living conditions of the refugees, prompted the researchers to have a special attention to this group. The impacts of COVID-19 to refugees in Tanzania are here below highlighted.

### **2.1 General Impact**

Refugee population normally contains sub-groups divisions within the same population. That is to say, within the same refugee population, the nature and pattern of the population are not the same. There are refugees who are more vulnerable than others. For instance, the vulnerability or encamped refugees is not the same to that of non-encamped. Similarly, the vulnerability of refugee men cannot be equated to the vulnerability of refugee women. Same pacing, the vulnerability of refugee youths is not similar to that of refugee older persons. However, despite such diversities, there are impacts of the COVID-19 that were detected to all categories of refugees in Tanzania.

The entire refugee population whether be in camps or not, was affected with fear, upsets and insecurities.<sup>26</sup> The information about the acuteness of the disease made refugees live with no surety of whether they will survive it. This doubled their stigma of fear and insecurity that they already have due to being

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<sup>26</sup> Helen Dempster, 2020, above.

refugees in another country.<sup>27</sup> The disease being related to people’s movements from one country to another, made refugees feel stigmatization from the community feeling that they are the ones who brought the disease.<sup>28</sup>

Further, for all kinds of refugees in every corner of the world including Tanzania, implementation of the resettlement as a durable solution was almost impossible. This is because with the reign of the pandemic, majority of countries closed their borders disallowing entrance of persons from other countries.<sup>29</sup>

Most refugees are employed in informal economy and sectors that the ILO has deemed extremely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>30</sup> Notably, the income downturn is the major challenge that faced refugees especially in urban areas in the reign of COVID-19.<sup>31</sup> This can be seen from the responses of refugees that were gathered from the field. Below are graphs that manifest this:

*Nature of Assistance needed by Refugees during COVID-19*

<b>Number of refugees</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Assistance</b>
14	23%	Food Assistance
12	20%	Financial support
34	57%	Personal Protective

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Paul Bukuluki and George Palattiyil, “The Socio-economic and psychosocial impact of COVID 19 pandemic on urban refugees in Uganda”, *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, Volume 2, Issue 1, 2020, p.4.

<sup>29</sup> IOM, “The Impact of COVID-19 on Migrants”, Migration Factsheet No. 6, 2020, p. 2.

<sup>30</sup> Helen Dempster, 2020, above.

<sup>31</sup> Cristiano D’Orsi, “Refugee camps versus urban refugee: what’s been said-and done”, *The Conversation*, November 3, 2019 available at <https://theconversation.com/refugee-camps-versus-urban-refugees-what’s-been-said-and-done-126069>.



		Equipments
Total 60	100%	

Figure 1

*Major challenges for refugees during COVID-19*

<b>Number of Refugees</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
13	22%	Financially unstable
18	30%	Lack of jobs
29	48%	Lack of Personal Preventive Equipments
Total 60	100%	

Figure 2

**2.2 Refugees in Camps**

An obvious question would be, how would encamped refugees be at risk of the COVID-19 while they are already ‘locked down’ in the camps? While this question makes sense, nonetheless spread of the COVID-19 to the camps is possible due to access of various personals to the camps.<sup>32</sup> These include members of the CSOs and IGOs as well as government officials.<sup>33</sup> The Republic of Tanzania has a number of camps hosting refugees in various regions. In densely populated camps, social distancing is testing and if basic sanitation

<sup>32</sup> Qais Alemi, et al, “Refugees and Covid-19: Achieving a Comprehensive Public Health Response”, Bulletin of the World Health Organization, 98 (8), 510, 2020, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

lacks, proper hand hygiene is close to impossible.<sup>34</sup> There are camps which are congested resulting to the number of refugees exceeding the capacity of the camp. Nyarugusu camp and Nduta camp are said to be congested.<sup>35</sup> By 30 September 2020, out of the total population of 276,046 refugees in Tanzania, these two camps hosted total number 204,814 refugees.<sup>36</sup> As it is well known, the COVID-19 is anti-gathering disease. That is, the disease has been labeled as spreading through human gatherings and congestion. With this nature of the disease, refugees in the Tanzania congested camps were highly at risk of contamination.

The risk was even doubled due to lack of adequate hygiene enabling tools. The practice of washing hands regularly could not fully apply to refugees due to shortage of water supply. The twenty liters per day for every refugee supplied to refugees could not be enough for washing hands regularly plus drinking and bathing. With this fact, the risk of contamination of the pandemic to refugees in the camps was really.

Refugees in the camps are further faced with a challenge of poor access to information. Information during public emergencies is key. This because in that situation of public emergency, information plays a role of giving updates on the progress of the situation and the means and methods of preventing and managing the situation.<sup>37</sup> The government of Tanzania has put some measures in place to ensure some degree of refugees' access to information. For instance, camps in Tanzania are featured with notice boards written in refugees' own languages. The big challenge is; camps in Tanzania are not electrified hence access to radios and televisions becomes exigent.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> UNHCR, (2020), "Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion", available at <http://www.unhcr.org/livelihoods.html>. Retrieved, October, 20,2020

<sup>36</sup> UNHCR, "Tanzania Refugee Population Update" as of 29 February 2020, available at <https://www.ecoi.net/en/countries/united-republic-of-tanzania/maps/> (accessed 12 October 2020).

<sup>37</sup> See Mixed Migration Centre, "Impact of COVID-19 on Refugees and migrants", COVID-19 Global Updates, 27 May, 2020, p. 3.

The philosophy behind not electrifying the camps traces its origin from the nature of the durable solutions that Tanzania offers to refugees. Tanzania prioritizes two major durable solutions: voluntary repatriation and resettlement to third countries. The nature of these durable solutions implicates that, refugee camps in Tanzania are temporary since at any time after the refugee situation ceases, a refugee will be repatriated. Local integration is not a durable solution prioritized by Tanzania. Due to this situation, the country sees no need to electrify the camps majority of which are located far from towns and cities.

Absence of reliable source of power in the camps, incidentally makes few refugees to undertake entrepreneurship self-employments of charging refugees' phones. Indeed, this makes few refugees run small income generating activity which however during the reign of COVID-19 deteriorated after the limitation of physical interaction within the camps as a response to the pandemic.

A resort to other sources of power becomes problematic due to the fact that, refugees in Tanzania are financially disabled. Further, the fact that most refugees in Tanzania are financially poor, they are unable to possess phones that have access to internet. As a result, access to information becomes solely dependent on Tanzania radios and televisions, media which are crying for independence due to presence of media unfriendly laws in the country.

Caged access to information makes it inevitable for refugees to solely rely on information provided by humanitarian organizations and government officials. Language barrier cements on the constraints in accessing information for refugees in Tanzania. Majority of refugees do not understand Swahili or English. They majorly come from countries (Congo and Burundi) whose major languages are French and vernaculars. This becomes contradictory to the dominant languages in Tanzania which are Swahili and English.

Poor access to information is manifested by the diverse knowledge that the respondent refugees had about the Pandemic. Below are the graphs evidencing this finding:

Examining the Impact of Covid-19 on Refugees in Tanzania.

*Knowledge about Corona (Symptoms, Transmission, and Prevention)*

<b>Number of Refugees</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Symptoms</b>
12	20	Headache
14	23	Coughing /chest pains
24	40	Flue
10	17	High fever
60	100	

*Figure 3*

<b>Number of Refugees</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Transmission</b>
19	32	Through air via sneezing
20	33	Touching different parts of your body including nose
21	35	Hand shaking
60	100	

*Figure 4*

<b>Number of Refugees</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Prevention</b>
18	30%	Wearing masks
16	27%	Washing hands frequently
26	43%	Social distancing
TOTAL 60	100	

*Figure 3*

Refugees in the camps were further negatively affected by the fact that, CSOs access to the camps to provide humanitarian and legal aid was limited. CSOs

spent time negotiating access to the camps with the government. Without access of the CSOs to the camps, the protection framework for refugees in the camps was curtailed. Access to the camps by CSOs was limited for the reason that if their access was not controlled, it could lead to spread of the pandemic to the camps.

### **2.3 Urban Refugees**

Globally, sixty percent of refugees live in urban areas while the remainder is encamped.<sup>38</sup> The practice is however contrary in Tanzania where majority of refugees are encamped sharing about 99% of all refugees.<sup>39</sup> There is however a considerable number of refugees residing in Tanzania's urban areas. Urban refugees were more affected by the COVID-19 than encamped refugees. Refugees in the camps were already 'locked down' in the camps; hence their risk of contamination was not high compared to refugees in the urban areas who live as integral part of the urban community. Dar es Salaam is a leading city in Tanzania with more cases of confirmed COVID-19 to other regions.<sup>40</sup> By 29 April 2020, the city had 228 cases out of 509 total numbers of cases in Tanzania.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, it is a city with more urban refugees compared to any other region in the country. It is estimated that, by the end of 2018 Dar es Salaam harbored about 500 refugees.<sup>42</sup> Majority of urban refugees in Dar es Salaam are found in the streets of Buguruni, Kimara and Kariakoo.<sup>43</sup> This exposes the reality that, urban refugees in Tanzania were located in the epicenter of the COVID-19 hence prone to contamination.

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<sup>38</sup> Cristiano D'Orsi, 2019 above.

<sup>39</sup> Aisling O'loghlen and Nondo Nobel Bwami, "Refugees in Towns, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: The City As A Safe Haven?", 2018, available at <https://www.refugeesintowns.org/dar-es-salaam> (accessed 03 November 2020).

<sup>40</sup> See Peter Mwai and Christopher Giles, "Coronavirus in Tanzania: What Do We Know?" BBC News, 19<sup>th</sup> June, 2020

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Aisling O'loghlen and Nondo Nobel Bwami, 2018 above.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

Most of urban refugees are not registered hence they are not beneficiaries of most humanitarian assistances. This makes them responsible for their own survival. During the reign of COVID-19 in Tanzania these refugees had a burden of buying PPEs and having enough water for regularly washing their hands. This has a financial implication as buying those facilities needed money. The situation went even more severe for most urban refugees as their income flow was highly affected.<sup>44</sup> Due to discouragement of gatherings, the informal sectors to which most urban refugees are employed potentially ceased to operate.<sup>45</sup> This left them with no source of income. It should be remembered that, refugees in Tanzania as we speak are not allowed to be employed in formal sectors. With the crisis of the informal sectors during the COVID-19, urban refugees' source of income was blocked.

Non-registered refugees also do not benefit from the financial assistance from the UNHCR. The UNHCR in Tanzania provides 300,000 TZS per month to every urban refugee who is registered. Most urban refugees being unregistered this financial assistance passed like a shadow. Again, most urban refugees live a congested life in their rented rooms. It is not uncommon to find 6-9 refugees living in a single room. This increases their risk of contamination of the pandemic.

Urban refugees during the reign of COVID-19 were also hit by communication breakdown. This is because, from early February, the Tanzania Communication Regulatory Authority made it mandatory for all Tanzanians to register their SIM Card using national identification documents. As far foreigners are concerned, were eligible for SIM Card registration only if they have a permit to stay in Tanzania for at least six months. Unluckily, the permits for urban refugees to stay in Tanzania are given on the basis three months renewable. This makes them not eligible for SIM Card registration. As a

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<sup>44</sup> ILO, "Protecting the rights at work of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons during the COVID-19 pandemic", Policy Brief, June-2020, pp. 12-14.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

result, they could neither be contacted by humanitarian organizations nor by their colleagues.

## **2.4 Refugee Children**

Refugee children are evident in every refugee population. They normally move with their parents. They are dependent on the migratory movements of their parents. By December, 2019, 54% of the refugee population in Tanzania was children (UNHCR, 2020). The impact of COVID-19 to refugee children can be grouped to three dimensions: poverty, health and learning.<sup>46</sup> The impact on poverty is implicated bearing in mind that most refugee children come from families with economic downturns. The hit of the pandemic to the income generation of the poorest refugee families affected even the livelihood of the refugee children. As far as health is concerned water shortage coupled with latrines challenges put children at risk of contamination of the pandemic. The predicament to this is even stressed on the fact that, ordinarily children hardly manage their own hygiene due to intellect dependence. During the COVID-19, most countries in the world closed schools something which affected majority of children including refugee children.<sup>47</sup> The closure of schools apparently impacted the learning framework of refugee children in Tanzania. By December, 2019, 20% of refugee children in Tanzania were in school.<sup>48</sup>

## **2.5 Refugee Women**

According to ILO it is estimated that during the COVI-19, 42 percent of women are working in highly impacted sectors, compared to 32 percent of men.<sup>49</sup> The

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<sup>46</sup> Donzhen, Y., et al, "Migrant and Displaced Children in the Age of COVID-19: How the Pandemic is Impacting them and What Can we Do", X(2) Migration Policy Practice, 2020, pp. 33-34.

<sup>47</sup> Bahati Hategekimana, et al, "The Impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic on Refugee Protection with a Particular Focus on Education", UNHCR Interactive Conference, June 17, 2020, p. 7.

<sup>48</sup> UNHCR, 2020, above.

<sup>49</sup> ILO, 2020, above.

parenting roles attributed to women generally, made refugee women at the risk of contamination of the pandemic. The hygiene precautions for refugee women were beyond their personal limits extending to their children. Precisely put family care and responsibilities pertaining to refugee women two-folded the risk of contamination. In Tanzania, as of February, 2020, 50% of the refugee population comprised of women.<sup>50</sup> Domestic and sexual abuse for urban women refugees with families was also reported during the COVID-19 in Tanzania. The deterioration of the informal sector that employs a number of urban refugee women as well affected the economic aptitude of refugee women.

## **2.6 Refugees with Disabilities and Older Persons**

The refugee population by February, 2020 for older persons comprised of 3%.<sup>51</sup> According to WHO, older persons were at more risk of being highly affected by the pandemic than other age groups. On other side, due to highest need of physical assistance needed by persons with disabilities need, their risk of contamination of the pandemic was high. Unfortunately, there are scanty data for refugees with disabilities in Tanzania. This implies that, the attention is not sensitive to refugees with disabilities in the country. Fear, upset, panic and insecurity was unavoidable to this vulnerable group during the reign of the pandemic in Tanzania.

During the reign of the pandemic, refugees with disabilities suffered from special vulnerabilities. Normally, these persons do not access the humanitarian organizations on their own even if they are not encamped. They must either be escorted by another person or rather be physically visited by the humanitarian providers. This adds their risk of contamination when compared to refugees without disabilities.

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<sup>50</sup> UNHCR, 2020, above.

<sup>51</sup> UNHCR, "Figures at Glance", 2020, available at <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html> (accessed 15 October, 2020).



### **3.0 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE ROLE PLAYED BY VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS.**

#### **3.1 The Impact of Covid-19 on Civil Society Organizations And International Organizations In Protection Of Refugees**

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and International Organizations play a big role in humanitarian assistance in many countries globally. Despite some legal and practical challenges that manifests, international organizations civil societies in Tanzania have been central in protection of refugees and migrants. Some of international organizations and civil societies with relevance to refugees and migrants in Tanzania are UNHCR, IOM, IRC, TCRS, REDESO, DIGNITY Kwanza, ECAW, CARITAS, WLAC, CHESO, CEMDO and ADRA to mention but a few. Majorly, these organizations deal with provision humanitarian reliefs such as food, water, legal aid and awareness creation to refugees and other vulnerable migrants.

During the reign of COVID-19, the operations of these organizations were affected in diverse areas. From the outset, the access to the refugee camps was limited. As a result, the organizations spent much time negotiating access to the camps with the government. This made refugees fail to access the services of these organizations. It was also revealed from the field that, during the reign of the COVID-19, most staff working for these organizations worked while caught up with fear and panic. This affected their effectiveness in provision of their services.

Most organizations closed their offices. These organizations were compelled to have COVID-19 leave to their staff, a leave which was not anticipated. Few organizations such as REDESO while continued to work, they limited the number of staff to be physically present at the office to the maximum of three staff per day. Physical access of the refugees and migrants in need to these offices was as well restrained. As a response to this, online operations vide

working from home. Although this was helpful in coping with the pandemic, it was not free from obstacles.

At the end of year 2019, the Tanzania Communication Regulatory Authority (TCRA) spearheaded SIM Card registration exercise using National Identification Card for all SIMC Card users in Tanzania. In order for a person to have his or her SIM Card registered he or she was supposed to be in possession National ID. For persons from other countries they could qualify for SIM Card registration if they had a pass entitling them to stay in Tanzania for at least six months. It was impossible for refugees to have their SIM Card registered as their passes are given on duration of three (3) months. Therefore, the online platforms that were resorted to as a response to COVID-19 could not help refugees.

COVID-19 affected the budget structure of the Civil Society. New budgets were to be approved to contain the pandemic. For instance, REDESO allocated a COVID-19 budget of twenty-one (21) Million Tanzania Shillings. The pandemic being not anticipated, most CSOs fell short of fund. In this circumstance resort to fund raising activities was inevitable.

### **3.2 The Impact on the Role of The Government In Protection Of Refugees During Covid-19**

While in many other countries COVID-19 was at its peak, in Tanzania by 29 April, 2020 no more COVID-19 case or casualty was reported. At this time there were reported 509 cases and 21 casualties. Post 29<sup>th</sup> April, the government continued its businesses as usual. In most sectors the operations continued as if no COVID-19 was really save for closure of schools and distribution of PPEs in government offices. The distribution of face masks was on the rate of two masks per one person. An announcement was also made compelling all offices including private offices to make sure that they comply with all COVID-19 precautions. Apart from these measures all other activities were unaffected. The use of steam inhalation and garlic juice were in different

occasions emphasized by some government officials as proper medications for COVID-19. This helped to trim down fear and panic amongst members of the public.

With particularity to refugees, the government endeavored into ensuring availability of enough water in the camps at the rate of twenty liters per individual per day. Supply of Masks and sanitizers was also effected by the government on diverse numbers.<sup>52</sup> Provision of these PPEs went hand in hand with awareness creation about the pandemic. Awareness creation was conducted using refugees' own languages. The government also limited access to the camps by Civil Society Organizations and other humanitarian organizations. Authorization to access the camps was hardly given. With the pandemic, the government's policy of not admitting new asylum seekers was even more toughened so as to avoid contamination to refugees already registered and to the general public.

### **3.3 The Role and Impact Of Host Community In Protection Of Refugees During Covid-19**

Talking about the host community includes both the government and the general public. The roles of the government during the pandemic as far as refugees are concerned have been explained in the preceding section. This section strictly deals with the role of the general public. Again, it should be noted that, the role of the general public for encamped refugees is lenient compared to non-encamped refugees. This is because in the camps there is less interaction between the refugees and the general public due to limited access. In the reign of COVID-19, the interaction between refugees and the surrounding community was even more restricted as a response mechanism in containing the pandemic.

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<sup>52</sup> Faith Mario Mjalila, "The Increased Vulnerability of the Refugee Population to COVID-19 Within Tanzania Refugee Camps, LERRN, April 6, 2020, available at <http://carleton.ca/lerrn/2020/the-increased-vulnerability-of-the-refugee-population-to-covid-19-within-tanzanian-refugee-camps/>.

For non-encamped refugees especially urban refugees, -psychological and stigmatization was evident. The pandemic being believed to have been imported from foreign countries, in some incidences, refugees were stigmatized by their neighbors for being labeled as the source for the spread of the pandemic.<sup>53</sup> This affected the urban refugees' psychological and mental comfort.

Generally, the general public is responsible for ensuring peace and security to refugees. It determines the peaceful presence of the refugees in the host country. Save for the stigma that has been pointed in this section, no any reported harm that was reported pointing the Tanzania general public as disturbing the peaceful presence of refugees during the COVID-19.

#### **4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### ***4.1.1 Economic Empowerment of Refugees***

The refugee policy and practice of Tanzania should be reviewed so as to accommodate economic independence for refugees. The right to work that is well enshrined in the laws of Tanzania should be implemented. So far this right exists on papers but not in practice. The implementation of this right can enable refugees in Tanzania be economically dependence. This may shrink their reliance to humanitarian aids from the government, civil society and international organizations. This can as well reduce the vulnerability of refugees during times of public emergencies as it has been the case in the COVID-19 pandemic.

The implementation if the right to work should go hand in hand with the implementation of other collateral rights such as the right to free movement and the right to education.<sup>54</sup>Free movement of refugees may prop up refugees' entrepreneurship. The right to education though amply implemented, the curriculum should be revised so as to allow refugees be taught using the

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<sup>53</sup> See Paul Bukuluki and George Palattiyil, 2020, above.

<sup>54</sup> See ILO, "Impact of COVID-19 on Syrian Refugees and Host Communities in Jordan and Lebanon", Evidence brief for Policy, 2020, p. 11.

education curriculum of the host country, that is Tanzania. This may make refugees fairly compete in the internal labour market.

#### ***4.1.2 Strengthening Access to Information***

It has been noted that access to information for refugees during public emergencies is vital. It is hereby recommended that, the government should strive to ensure that access to information for refugees in Tanzania is smooth. To spearhead this, the electrification of the refugee camps is inevitable. Adequate power supply in the camps will ensure refugees' utilization and access to televisions, radios and telephones. Language translation into refugees' own languages should also be highly encouraged in all activities involving refugees.

#### ***4.1.3 Social Service Inclusion***

It is hereby recommended that, there are should be inclusion of refugees in other social services such as smooth access to hospitals and water supply. These hospitals should be permanently and specifically available to refugees. They should as well be adequately supplied with necessary equipments, facilities and infrastructures.

#### ***4.1.4 Collaboration between the Government, CSOs and International Organizations***

It is recommended that, there are should be effective coordination mechanisms between the government, the civil society and international organizations. These entities should not work in isolation. They should work together with common working plan. This can ease the access to camps by humanitarian providers as well as refugees' access to humanitarian providers.

#### ***4.1.5 Having contingent Plans***

The government, civil society and international organizations should indulge into developing plans for anticipatable emergencies. Risk managements plans should be in place so as to avoid deterioration of services and operations during emergencies as it was the case for the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 4.1.6 ***Mainstreaming Refugees-Led Initiatives***

It is recommended that, the government should put in place enabling environment for the fertile operation of refugees led organizations in liberating themselves from the survival hardships in their refugee status. Spearheading refugees led initiatives draws its origin from the World Humanitarian Summit of 2016 which put a strong emphasis on the concept of localization.<sup>55</sup> This concept *inter alia* recognizes support for refugees as being effective if it is sparked primarily by refugees themselves.<sup>56</sup> The mechanism has been considerably successful in some neighboring countries such as Kenya and Uganda where refugees led organizations have been sound supported by the government and IGOs.<sup>57</sup>

#### 4.1.7 ***Having an Effective Statistical Framework for Urban Refugees***

As it has already been pinpointed, the fact that most urban refugees are not registered makes them live a clandestine life. This makes them inaccessible not only by the government but also by other partners in humanitarian assistance. Consequently, this makes their data regarding their number prone to inaccuracy.<sup>58</sup> It is recommended that, there should be established a tenable system of research aiming at maintaining accurate data for urban refugees. This will make them easily accessible for assistance especially during public emergencies, as it was for the COVID-19.

## 4.2 CONCLUSION

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<sup>55</sup> The Summit led to the Grand Bargain which made some of the largest donors and Humanitarian organizations to commit themselves to getting more means into the hands of persons in need. It was held in Istanbul, Turkey, May 2016.

<sup>56</sup> See Alexander Betts, et al (2020), "Refugee-Led Responses in the Fight against COVID 19: Building Lasting Participatory Models", (64) *Forced Migration Review*, pp. 73-75.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> See also Florenzo Lozet and Evan Easton-Calibri, above.

Majorly, income generation disruption that occurred during the reign of the COVID 19 highly impacted the well-being of refugees in Tanzania. Even the small income generating activities that are legally allowed to be undertaken by refugees in Tanzania could not smoothly operate due to reduced flow of people. This compounded the economic dependence that refugees suffer in the country. As a result, a burden to the government, civil society and the international organizations was unavoidable in provision of humanitarian assistance to this vulnerable group. Even, the support that CSOs in Tanzania get from partners abroad has been affected as most of partners have been hit by COVID-19. Notably, to date there is no official confirmed case of COVID-19 for any refugee in Tanzania. It therefore appears that, the survival response for refugees in Tanzania against the COVID-19 has been effective. Nonetheless, the COVID-19 massively affected the humanitarian provisions of the civil society and international organizations.

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