

Working paper

The nexus of displacement and urbanisation

Assessing the asset vulnerability and livelihood strategies of urban refugees in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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The Nexus of Displacement and Urbanization: Assessing the Asset Vulnerability and Livelihood Strategies of Urban Refugees in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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Using a dataset on urban refugees and Tanzanian slum dwellers in Dar es Salaam this article explores the asset vulnerability and livelihood strategies of both populations in the city. In addition to the five main established assets, attention is also paid to the importance of political capital and the rights of the refugees. Results indicate that while both groups are asset poor in some areas such as income, the urban refugees are significantly more disadvantaged in the accumulation of particular assets such as human and social capital. It also highlights that the assets the refugee group in particular already possess are being significantly eroded due to a lack of available policies to exploit these resources. The article discusses the policy implications of the results for Tanzania going forward.

Key Words: Urban, refugees, Right to the City, Asset Vulnerability, Dar es Salaam, Livelihoods

Introduction

The Great Lakes crises of the 1990s had many repercussions for the populations of East African countries. Hundreds of thousands were displaced, both internally and as refugees (UNHCR, 2015) fleeing to neighbouring states. In the intervening period many refugees have returned to their countries of origin, however a considerable number have also settled permanently in other countries, including Tanzania, historically one of the most generous countries for refugee hosting in Africa (Milner, 2009). With the resurgence of violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi in recent times, a new wave of forced migrants are making their way across borders (UNHCR, 2015b), and to Tanzania's largest city Dar es Salaam.

This paper examines the coping mechanisms which the refugees in the city use to develop sustainable livelihoods strategies through the accumulation of assets, in order to protect against vulnerability. Their assets are compared to the Tanzanian population whom they live adjacent to in the informal settlements of Dar es Salaam – the low income indigenous group with whom they compete with for resources. The comparison is intended to give a snapshot of the relative poverty experienced by the refugees, and to consider their position within the wider context of vulnerable populations. As Jacobsen (2006) notes, urban refugees are “subsets of two larger populations; other foreign born migrants, and, because they live amongst them and share their challenges, they are also a subset of the national urban poor” (pg 276).

The research for this paper was conducted over the course of 15 months (March 2014 – June 2015) in three locations across Dar es Salaam. The locations of these sites will not be disclosed in order to protect the whereabouts of refugees living in the city. 90 interviews and 2 focus groups were conducted in total; 30 interviews with refugees, 30 with Tanzanian urban slum dwellers and 30 with various UNHCR, UN HABITAT, NGO, local government and academic staff. Interviews were conducted in Kiswahili, French, Kibembe and Lingala. Due to the clandestine nature of many refugees' lives, it would have been extremely difficult to gain access to them without working in partnership with local organisations. So too it would have proved challenging to enter the informal settlements unaccompanied by a local guide. Therefore, the researcher collaborated with two organisations to complete the fieldwork; Asylum Access Tanzania (AATZ), an NGO which provides free legal aid to refugees, and the Centre for Community Initiatives (CCI), an NGO which has a strong presence in the slum settlements of Dar es Salaam, managing capacity building and housing projects.

Respondents for both the refugee and Tanzanian groups were offered a 25,000 TZH (approximately \$15 USD) stipend in recognition of the time taken away from their work. As the refugee participants were chosen from the list of Asylum Access clientele, it is likely that there exists a slight bias in the selection of participants towards more proactive refugees which contacted the organisation. The sample size for both groups is relatively small, and so the representativeness of the data to the wider refugee and Tanzanian urban slum populations as a whole may not be generalizable, nevertheless certain trends can be acknowledged and give a partial snapshot of the needs of both communities.

Background to Urban Displacement

The encampment policy for refugees throughout sub – Saharan African countries has resulted in numerous camps mushrooming across the continent, springing up as a consequence of the many conflicts in the region (Crisp, 2010). When these camps were originally established, it was not envisioned that they would become the permanent structures that they have developed into (Crisp and Jacobsen, 1998), with thousands of children being born inside the camps and never knowing any other life. However, this trend is resulting in more and more refugees seeking independence and better opportunities in cities, while foregoing assistance from UNHCR, which provides only a limited service in some urban areas to a small number of legal refugees. Governments too are often loathe to allow organisations such as UNHCR to operate in urban areas, believing this will only draw more refugees into the city (Pavanello et. al., 2010).

The challenges for refugees and IDPs arriving in new cities often without existing social networks is enormous, and many end up living in the informal settlements alongside the established urban poor (Crisp et. al., 2012). Surveys conducted in various cities to date (such as the Sanctuary in the City Series conducted by the Overseas Development Institute) have uncovered that refugees and IDPs and urban poor encounter many of the same problems due to lack of services and adequate infrastructure. Although several of these surveys were conducted examining IDPs rather than refugees, one could extrapolate from this data that they face similar problems. Notably what Davies and Jacobsen uncovered is that urban IDPs were found to be “poorer, at a great disadvantage and experiencing more insecurity than their non IDP neighbours” (2010 pg 13). Therefore this growing urban population of refugees and IDPs are often hidden, hoping to avoid detection and so the urban space is an opportunity for them to begin working on building a new life undisturbed. Yet, the challenge for UNHCR to provide assistance in these difficult circumstances is proving considerable.

Over the years UNHCR has attempted to tackle the urban refugee issue through the introduction of several policies and subsequent addendums (UNHCR, 1997; UNHCR, 2009a; UNHCR, 2009b; UNHCR, 2011; UNHCR 2012). Criticism of the 1997 policy which was considered to be biased toward camps and lacking on practical suggestion on how the implementation of the policy would be achieved were not completely addressed in the revised 2009 version (Edwards, 2010). These criticisms are also endorsed by others (Morris and Ben Ali, 2015) in particular UNHCR’s lack of intention to the protection of human rights of the refugees. In addition, the most recent urban refugee policy (2009) acknowledges that issues have existed in the past regarding a fraught relationship in some instances between UNHCR staff and refugees, which may partly explain the reluctance to push the urban refugee agenda; paragraph 84 noting that “UNHCR’s relationship with refugees in urban areas has on occasion been a tense one, characterised by a degree of mutual suspicion” (UNHCR, 2009 pg 14). This discourse within UNHCR has historically also been complemented by the strong preference of governments to keep refugees in remote parts of the country, forcing them to remain separate from the host society (Kibreab, 2007) as well as allowing the responsibility of their care to fall firmly on the shoulders of UNHCR. It is a case of ‘out of sight out of mind’ to a certain extent, noting that refugees are seen as “a factor that exacerbates the urban condition” (Kibreab, 2007 pg 29).

Livelihoods and the Asset Vulnerability Framework

An asset is defined as a “stock of financial, human, natural or social resources that can be acquired, developed,

improved and transferred across generations, it generates flows or consumption, as well as additional stock” (Ford, 2004). The five main capital assets are indicated below (see Figure 1), however other assets exist including aspirational (Appadurai, 2004) assets as well as political and civic capital in addition to human rights (Moser and Norton, 2001). The five main assets can be separated into tangible assets – which comprise natural physical and financial assets, and intangible assets – social and human capital (Arun et. al, 2014). However Mitlin (2003) notes that natural capital is not quite as key as the others in developing livelihoods.

The livelihoods approach is one which has become popular within development and humanitarian circles, and Moser’s asset vulnerability framework “represents a livelihoods approach to systematically analysing the relationships between the assets and vulnerabilities relevant to the urban poor in the Global South” (Parizeau, 2015 pg 162). It is also important to clarify from the outset what is meant by the term ‘asset vulnerability’ as there exists some confusion around the terms livelihoods, asset accumulation and social protection in academic discourse. The asset vulnerability framework which the paper focuses on “emphasises the relationship between assets, risks and vulnerability. At the operational level, this relationship is at the core of social protection policy and programs” (Moser, 2006 pg 9). Asset accumulation policy however, is “the associated asset-based operational approach that focuses directly on creating opportunities for the poor to accumulate and consolidate their assets in a sustainable way” (Moser, 2007 pg 90).

Much work has already been completed on the livelihoods strategies which have been adopted by the urban poor, and the concept is being considered more frequently in the context of urban refugees (Campbell, 2006; Metcalfe et.al, 2011; Pantuliano et. al, 2012; Haysom, 2013). The potential benefits and reframing of refugee crises as development opportunities are also linked to this creation of effective livelihoods strategies, as can be seen in the work of academics such as Jacobsen (2002) and Zetter (2014). However, this group has a unique set of vulnerabilities and arguably faces greater challenges than aboriginal populations in accumulating assets, and so a more complete understanding of the complexities regarding their livelihoods may help develop better programmes to meet their needs. In this paper the focus will remain on the five main assets as indicated by Moser (1998), but also conceptualise further the political and civic assets which urban refugees aspire to accumulate, and which are necessary for them to prosper – rights, in this case the Right to the City. The paper therefore ambitiously attempts to develop linkages between these areas; asset vulnerability, livelihoods, and the Right to the City.

Figure 1

Most Important Capital Assets

Definition of the most important capital assets for individuals, households and communities

Physical capital: the stock plan, equipment, infrastructure and other productive resources owned by individuals, the business sector or the country itself.

Financial capital: the financial resources available to people (savings, supplies of credit).

Human capital: investments in education, health and nutrition of individuals. Labour is linked to investments in human capital; health status influences people’s capacity to work, and skill and education determine the return from their labour.

Social capital: an intangible asset, defined as the rules, norms obligations, reciprocity and trust embedded in social relations, social structures, and societies’ institutional arrangements. It is embedded at the micro-institutional level (communities and households) as well as in the rules and regulations governing formalized institutions in the marketplace, political system and civil society.

Natural capital: the stock of environmentally provided assets such as soil, atmosphere, forests, minerals, waste and wetlands. In rural communities land is a critical productive asset for the poor; in urban areas, and for shelter is also a critical productive asset.

Source: Moser (1998)

Integrating Livelihood and Rights Approaches

Livelihoods and asset – based approaches tend to focus attention on the dynamics of wellbeing at the household level, while rights - based approaches often focus at the more macro, institutional scale. In essence the difference lies within the context of social protection; at the household level risk is a danger, while at the operational level in terms asset accumulation policy, risk is an opportunity (Moser, 2007). However, in recent years academics have begun to recognise that that this dichotomy is not beneficial to examining the needs of low income populations, and that in reality there is not a clear cut separation between the two approaches; they are complementary and both must be considered when developing effective policies in addressing the needs of vulnerable groups. As Conway et. al (2002) notes, rights analysis can “provide insights into the distribution of power”, while asset vulnerability frameworks can highlight areas where this power is lacking at the household level. The importance of rights which can be realised cannot be understated, indeed “the capacity to make claim effectively is a significant livelihood capability for most people” (Moser and Norton, 2001 pg 40). Cook (2007) contends that vulnerability includes such issues as physical insecurity, exposure to violence and discrimination, which are all forms of erosion of assets; in this case assets which are political or rights - based in nature. Therefore the linkages and connections between household, institution and state levels are crucial to understand.

The ability of vulnerable populations to change this dynamic depends in large part on their capacity to accumulate another asset – that is the development of networks and social movements. The establishment of rights by the state is not enough as this does not automatically translate into rights being realised. Indeed as noted by Arun et. al. (2013) the ability to accumulate assets “depends on a range of factors and circumstances” (pg 281). This framework of rights must exist alongside a space where populations can accumulate assets and be permitted to assert their rights. If these two pillars do not exist in tandem, then it is likely that these populations will remain vulnerable. As Moser and Norton (2001) note, “the underlying logic is that a rights / livelihoods perspective enhances social justice, through the application of non – discrimination and emphasis on ‘equitable accountability’ of the state to all citizens” (pg ix). It is important to see rights as one mechanism to address the imbalance of power which exists to prevent vulnerable people from acquiring or accumulating assets (Moser and Norton, 2001). From a broader perspective it can act as a mechanism to move vertically the power between micro and macro levels, to gain access to important institutions, as rights do not always equate to power - “Rights seek to contain the flow of power like bottleneck....but power leaks out, and flows around rights” (Wilson, 1991 pg 17).

In the following analysis the vulnerabilities and assets that influence the urban refugee population and Tanzanian slum dwellers of Dar es Salaam are presented, as is the interplay between the two groups. The demographic characteristics of both groups are shown in Table 1 below. Many of the assets available to both cohorts are precarious in nature and so such livelihood strategies are arguably not sustainable in the longer term. The case study is intended to demonstrate the complex nexus between livelihoods, rights, urbanisation and displacement within the context of a sub – Saharan African city.

The Right to the City

The Right to the City was a concept originally constructed by Henri Lefebvre in his 1968 book *Le Droit à la Ville*, which examined urban dwellers freedom and access to urban life. Marcuse (2009), describes Lefebvre’s right to the city as “a cry and a demand, a cry out of necessity and a demand for something more” (pg 190), stating that the demand of the Right to the City comes “from the directly oppressed, the aspiration from the alienated” (191). In order to explore the urban populations of Dar es Salaam within the context of the Right to the City, the meaning of the phrase must first be clarified.

The idea has become quite amorphous, in some cases co-opted and expropriated by various groups claiming that it espouses their claims to the city, and Marcuse (2014) identifies no less than 6 different readings of Lefebvre’s original work, each with quite diverse interpretations. Lefebvre’s own reading, the author would contend, remains the most pivotal. As mentioned above, Marcuse notes that Lefebvre’s own thoughts on the right to the city are more radical than others interpretations, they are a call for a revolution of the urban. However Marcuse decries the use of the term ‘right’ as the concept is “not a Right in the sense of a legal claim enforceable through the judicial system, but a moral right, an appeal to the highest of human values” (Marcuse, 2014 pg 5).

Table 1

Comparison of Refugee and Tanzanian respondents		
	Refugee (%)	Tanzanian (%)
Gender		
Male	70	66.6
Female	30	33.3
Country of Birth		
Tanzania	--	100
Democratic Republic of Congo	90	--
Burundi	4	--
Kenya	3	--
Rwanda	3	--
Age		
18 – 25	13.4	10
25 – 35	33.4	26.7
35 – 45	23.3	23.4
45 – 55	23.3	26.7
55 – 65	3.3	6.6
Over 65	3.3	6.6
Religion		
Christian	89.3	50
Muslim	50	10.7
Marital status		
Married	36.7	53.4
Never married	26.7	23.3
Cohabiting	6.6	3.3
Separated / divorced	20	10
Widowed	10	10

Source: Interviews (2014 – 2015)

For the remainder of the discussion the Right to the City will focus on the ‘strategic reading’ of Lefebvre’s work, as noted by Marcuse (2014). The strategic reading identifies with groups which are the underprivileged and suffering in urban society, prohibited economically or socially from real inclusion in the City. They are simply seeking ‘to obtain the benefits of existing city life from which they have been excluded’ (Marcuse, 2014 pg 6). In considering the ‘right’ of the refugees and Tanzanian urban slum dwellers within this context as set out above, one must also consider another salient point highlighted by Purcell (2013) which is that “in almost all its forms the right to the city is understood to be a struggle to augment the rights of urban inhabitants against the property rights of owners”.

Vulnerability context of the urban refugee population in Dar es Salaam

(a) Overview of the vulnerability context of urban refugees

The refugees reside in informal settlements throughout the city, which make up to 80% of the residential urban area (UNHABITAT, 2010). The vast majority of Dar es Salaam remains informal despite continuing efforts from the government to reduce the level of slums. The combination of an increase in population; 2.9% nationally since the last census, with an increase of 5.6% in Dar es Salaam (URT, 2013), in addition to high levels of migration from rural areas has resulted in the rapid growth of the urban space and the inability of the government to effectively provide services for the population influx.

It is unknown the exact number of refugees currently residing in the city. A survey was recently undertaken by the Tanganyika Christian Refugee Society (TCRS) commissioned by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to determine the level of urban refugees nationwide, however the results of this survey have not yet been released to the public. Nevertheless it is estimated that there at least 10,000 refugees residing in Dar es Salaam (USDS, 2012), though the actual number is likely to be considerably higher given the recent exodus of Burundians and Congolese in particular.

Officially all refugees are required to reside in camps in Western Tanzania, only one of which now remains open, Nyarugusu camp. A very small number are given permits to live in other areas, including Dar es Salaam, usually for medical reasons or due to security and protection concerns (AATZ, 2011). Up until recently the Government of Tanzania had not publicly acknowledged the existence of the considerable number of refugees in Dar es Salaam; and in an interview with UNHCR staff they confirmed that the number of officially registered refugees residing in the city at the time totalled less than 100 (O23, Interview). As the refugee population has not caused any major disturbances with the local inhabitants, it appears that the Government has not had any reason to pursue more stringent action against them. Notwithstanding, the recent survey undertaken suggests a change in Government policy in the coming years as indicated from an interview with a Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) official, who explained the reasons for Tanzania’s continued encampment policy and the Government’s thoughts on urban refugees:

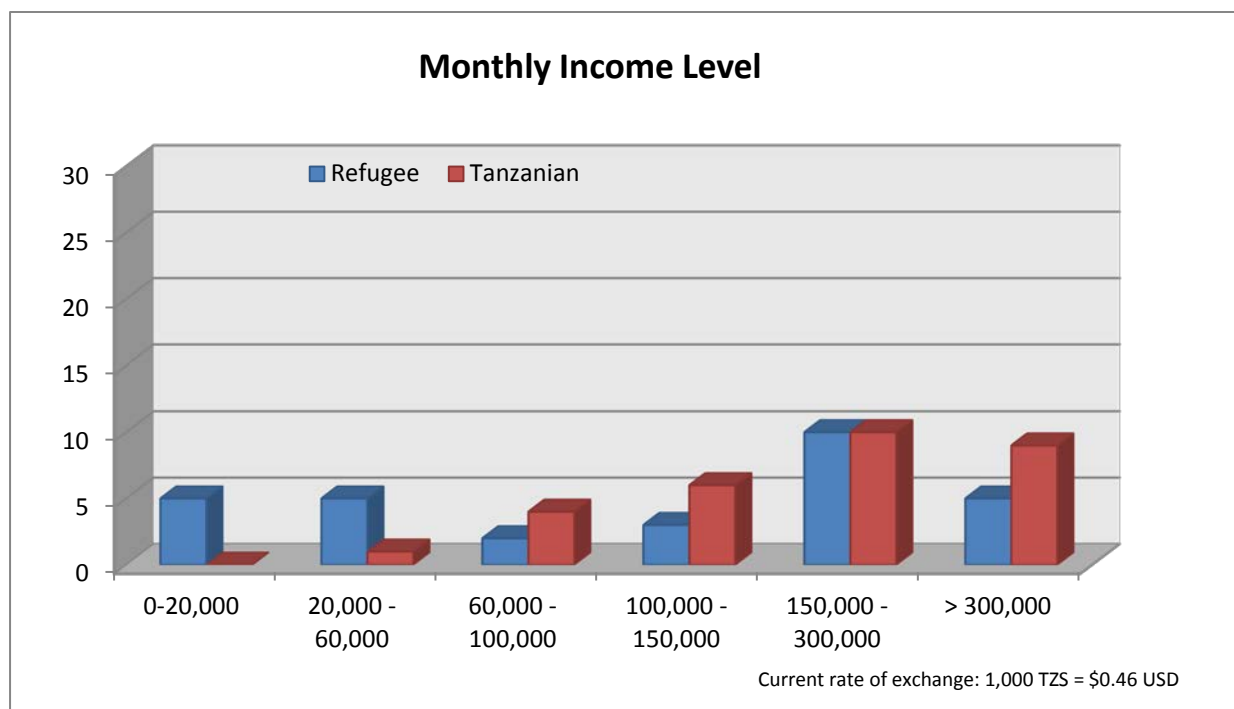
‘Its simply because over the years we were worried about the security, to be honest the security issue was the over ridding factor. Because of the huge numbers. I mean it is true it could act as a pull factor. But now that we know that we have many refugees we want to document them, and legalise the stay, legalise those who have reasons to justify to stay in any of our cities’. (O17, MHA official).

(b) Low income work and precarious earnings (vulnerabilities of labour)

Urban refugees find work in the informal sector mostly as food sellers, statue carvers and hairdressers. The majority go to work every day, but in the case of the statue carvers in particular income is very precarious. As can be seen in Figure 2 below, the majority of urban refugees survive on less than 300,000TZS (approx. \$138 USD) per month. Almost 27% of the group survive on less than 60,000TZS (approx. \$28 USD) and are in some cases the only breadwinner in the family. What is most significant in the case of income level is that while the Tanzanian inhabitants of informal settlements are also poor by Tanzanian standards, relatively speaking they are less vulnerable to the extreme deprivation which the refugee population experiences: only one Tanzanian respondent interviewed earned 60,000TZS or less per month.

Figure 2

Monthly Income Level for Both Groups



Source: Interviews

As alluded to above informal work is very inconsistent and so the figures shown are an average for what the refugees most likely earned in the course of a month; it is not a given that they earn the same amount each month. Variations in income depended on several factors from health (there is no sick pay in the informal sector), to the weather, as Dar es Salaam is subject to severe flooding and notoriously difficult to navigate during the rainy season.

(c) Health issues (vulnerabilities of human capital)

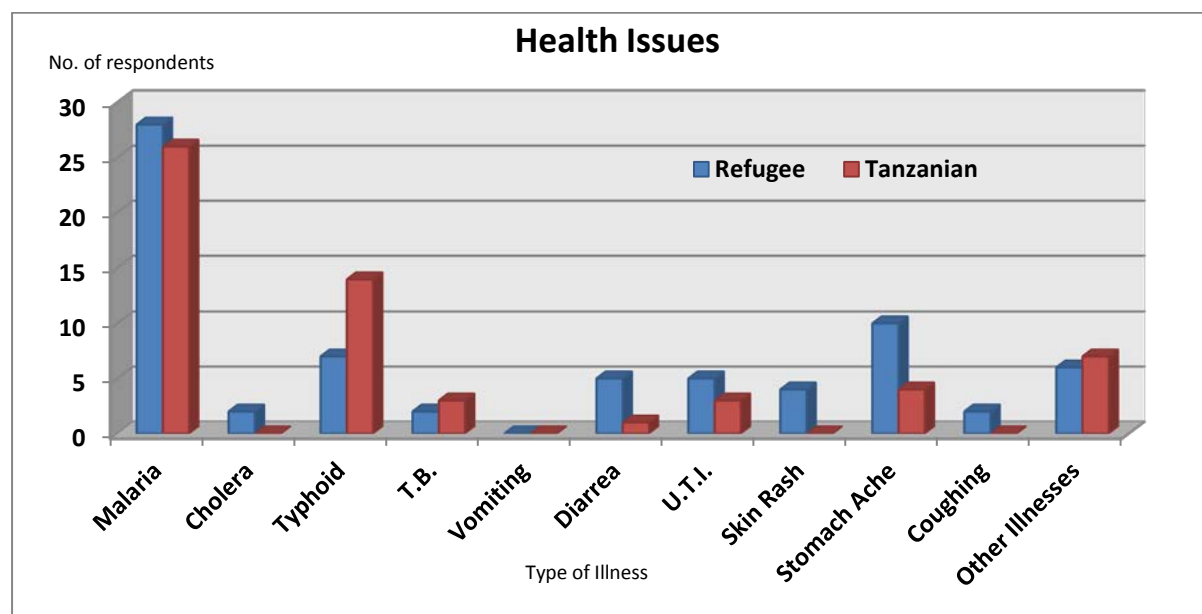
In the interviews conducted, a large proportion of refugees reported suffering from some health problems (see Figure 3). It is acknowledged within the literature on livelihoods that ill-health and health-related expenses are the primary cause of descending into poverty (Moser, 2007). Malaria is clearly the most serious concern; however other significant issues present included urinary tract infections (U.T.I), typhoid and stomach aches which can all be attributed to unsanitary living conditions and lack of access to clean water. The cost of regular visits to hospitals or pharmacies for the treatment of malaria in particular proved prohibitive for many respondents (the minimum cost is usually at least 20,000TZH / \$9.30USD for hospital visits). Tanzania currently has a health system where both public and private hospitals are available, however, one needs to be a Tanzanian national in order to access public health centres at a low cost; if you are found to be foreigner you may be charged double or triple the price of citizens (R25 Interview). Public hospitals can also be located some distance away from the informal settlements, and require costly and arduous journeys on the local *dala dalas* (minibus) transport system. As Chambers (1995) notes, the importance of a strong, healthy body is underestimated by those in developed countries who often rely more on their brains than bodies to generate income, but sickness or disability can greatly hamper the ability of low – income people to develop sustainable livelihoods, and so this is a crucial asset for the refugee population to possess.

As Figure 3 also indicates the refugee cohort appears slightly less susceptible to illness than their Tanzanian counterparts in the results, for example in the instance of contracting T.B. and typhoid. However it is salient to keep in mind the relatively small interview sample. Other illnesses which were not as common but were also mentioned by a small number of respondents included high blood pressure and eye – related diseases such as

cataracts. While interviewees were asked if they had contracted AIDS/HIV, none gave positive answers, although given the current rate of infection in Tanzania (5.3% as of 2014) (World Bank, 2015) it is possible that some may have contracted the disease but due to the stigma surrounding it chose not to disclose that information.

Figure 3

Health Issues Experienced by Both Groups



Source: Interviews

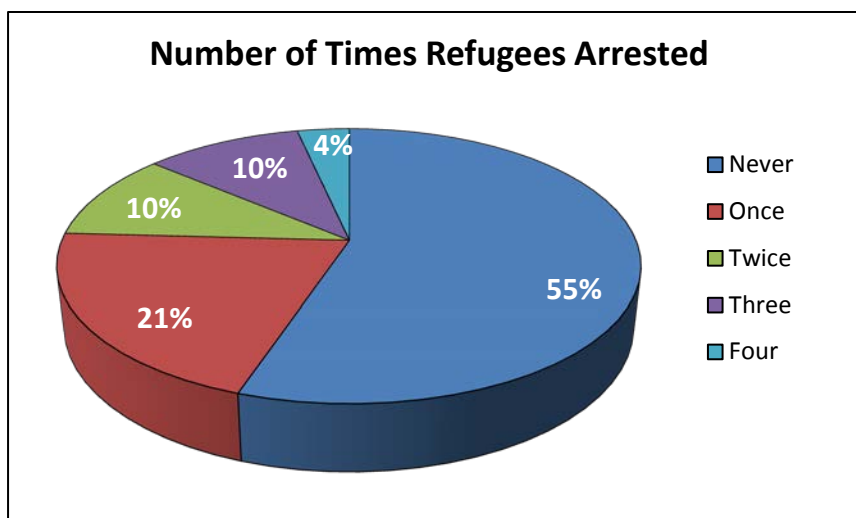
There is also a caveat regarding the detection rate of malaria in Tanzania as the disease has been known to be misdiagnosed in sub-Saharan African countries from time to time, and so the actual incidence of malaria may be somewhat lower. However, even if the real number of cases of malaria are not as severe as indicated in the results shown here (Chandler et. al, 2008), it nonetheless presents a significant problem for both populations. Currently the National Malarial Control Program (NMCP) estimates that 60,000-80,000 malaria deaths occur annually on mainland Tanzania among all age groups (USAID, 2014). Malaria prevention within the research conducted for this paper indicated that just 12.5% of the refugee cohort using an insecticide treated net (ITN), while 54% used nets which were not treated, and 16.6% used no prevention methods at all.

(d) *Stigma, discrimination and conflict (vulnerabilities of social and human capital)*

Discrimination and prejudice against urban refugees is widespread in the Global South (Pantaulino et. al, 2012) and one of the reasons that these populations go to such extremes to hide their true identities in the urban space. In addition to the xenophobia that often accompanies having a different appearance, language or religion to the native population, the urban refugee cohort is also in a continuous battle for already scarce resources with their Tanzanian counterparts. Many of the respondents reported repeated incidents with police during which they were arrested (Figure 4) and were kept incarcerated until they paid substantial bribes (usually between 50,000TZH – 150,000TZH / \$23.20USD - \$69.70USD), often to have the process repeated several weeks later. Several had also experienced conflict associated with their living arrangements (either through arguments with neighbours or landlords). As outsiders they are eschewed, and daily interactions with Tanzanians became increasingly difficult if their identities were known. A refugee described how, when waiting in line to take her turn drawing water at a local well she often faced discrimination, and was reminded that she had no right to be there:

‘They will tell you ‘step aside you are a refugee. We need citizens to get the water first. You are just coming here’ – sometimes they can just be rude at you because you are just a refugee, so you step aside’ (R27, interview).

Figure 4

Number of Times Refugees Arrested

Source: Interviews

50% of refugees interviewed stated that they had to pay a bribe of some type since arriving in Dar es Salaam, whether to police officials for release from prison, or neighbours who had threatened to report them to immigration authorities. As the quote above highlights, the level of social exclusion of the refugee population can be quite visceral and in addition to the psychological and emotional impacts of living with this type of discrimination on a daily basis, it highlights the linkages between the assets of refugees at both household and state level: they lack the political capital to fight for their right to something as basic as water, and this is exacerbated at the local level by the native population with whom they are seen to compete with. Without addressing the root causes at both levels, the issues will not be adequately resolved.

Social Capital*(a) Conceptualising social capital*

Social capital, often cited as an “intangible asset” (Moser, 2007) requires clarification in order to discuss the various assets which people may accumulate through the course of their life cycle. Moser (1998) defines social capital as “reciprocity within communities and between households based on trust deriving from social ties” (pg 4). It is a key asset to low income groups (Mitlin, 2003; Jacobsen, 2006), in particular vulnerable groups such as urban refugees where increased security from support networks may at least partly offset having less access to financial capital. It is also particularly important in terms of health benefits: many of the refugees interviewed had suffered devastating traumatic instances such as witnessing the death of loved ones, and sexual assaults. The refugees had received no counselling, and the toll of being forced to begin their lives again in a foreign country was extremely challenging. Having a support network of some sort available could be of great benefit in such instances, in particular for those refugees who were facing regular occurrences of xenophobia and racism in Dar es Salaam. It is important to note that in other studies such as Arun et. al. (2013) social capital in the form of networks were the most important form of asset emerge from the research findings. Social capital is also important because as Conway et. al (2002) notes without some form of community organisation and social mobilisation, the poor will most likely neither have rights or be able to realise them through their interactions with the government or other institutions.

(b) Social capital and vulnerabilities

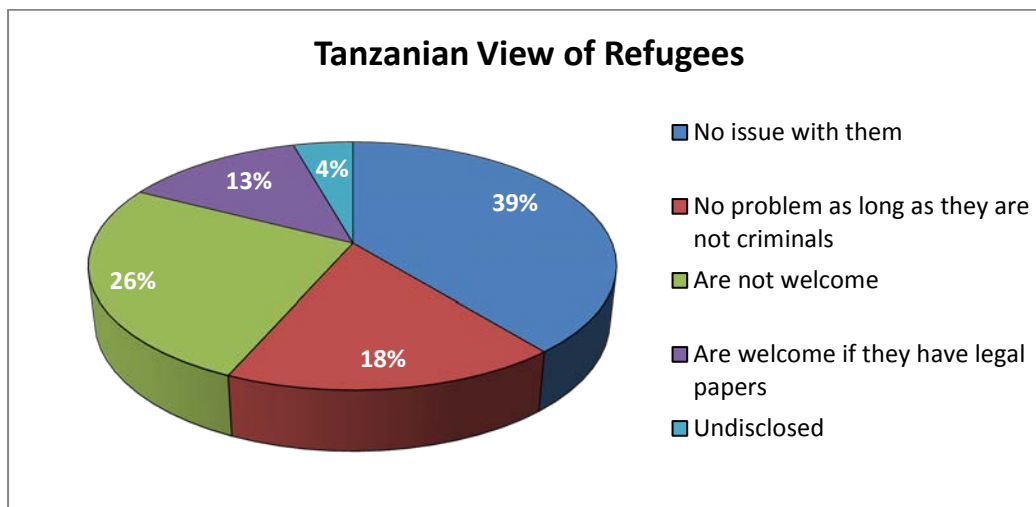
The results indicate that 52% of the refugees in the study did not know anyone on arrival in the city. In addition,

due to the illegal status of many of the group, some chose to purposely not expand their networks too widely, in case of trouble with the authorities (see quote below). However, 67% stated that everyone in their area knew they were a refugee, some explaining that their accent and dialect of Swahili made it impossible to avoid detection. It is interesting to note that the younger cohort of the respondents were more open to mix with their Tanzanian counterparts, and when asked if they were friends with Tanzanians were more likely to say yes, while 26% of the respondents overall stated that they had no Tanzanian friends. One of the refugees described how they tried to reduce contact in order to avoid detection –

‘So I’m really fearful of totally integrating with them or getting used to them because if I start with my Swahili, I don’t have good Swahili, they would identify who I am. So what I normally do, my friends come from the church in [Location 1], and my ethnicity’ (R13, Interview).

Figure 5

Tanzanian View of Refugees



Source: Interviews

On discussing the topic of refugees with the Tanzanian group, it is interesting to note that only 26% (see Figure 5) stated categorically that refugees were not welcome in the city, which counters some of the experiences of the refugee population themselves. However, it is also salient that only 6% of Tanzanians stated they knew a refugee, but as discussed previously the true figure may be higher as refugees where possible often don’t disclose their true nationality. What this finding suggests is that there is a genuine willingness and a well of social capital on the part of a large proportion of the Tanzanian population to welcome refugees, and exploiting this capital will be crucial to the development of coherent refugee policies and programmes in the future. The fact the most Tanzanians have no problem with refugees suggest that with the help of well- developed programmes through participation with the local communities, refugees could be integrated with the indigenous population relatively easily.

Human Capital

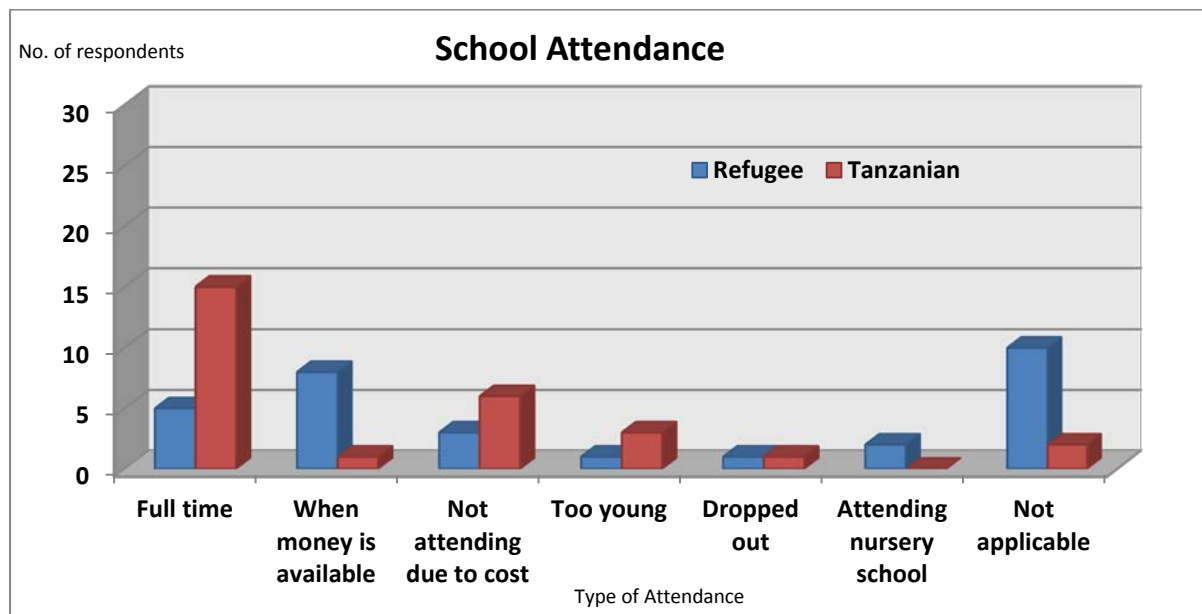
(a) Education

Human capital is a vital part of the assets portfolio of vulnerable groups for one reason in particular – it is required to make use of all other types of assets (DFID, 1999). The development of human capital amongst the urban refugee population is restricted due to several reasons: firstly the education system in Tanzania, while technically free throughout primary school, in reality places a considerable financial burden on households through daily ‘contributions’. These are payments which can be required for anything from sitting an exam to providing school security, ranging from a few hundred TZS to several thousand TZS. This immediately presents a barrier to some children attending primary school fulltime. In addition, should students fail their final exams in primary school (Standard 7), they will not be allowed to proceed to public secondary level education.

The only way they can continue their studies in this scenario is to pay fees to attend a private secondary school, which can range from anywhere between 20,000 TZS – 2 million TZS per year.

Figure 6

School Attendance of Both Groups



Source: Interviews

It is evident from the research conducted that removing children from school (see Figure 6) is often adopted as a coping mechanism when income streams decline or are temporarily stopped. In this instance the children's human capital is being traded off for financial capital (Parizeau, 2015), to their detriment in the longer term. However, it is not so clear cut a choice, as indicated by one refugee:

Interviewer: 'So why did you take them (the children) out of school?'

Interviewee: 'Well they can eat or they can go to school but I can't afford both, so what should I do?'

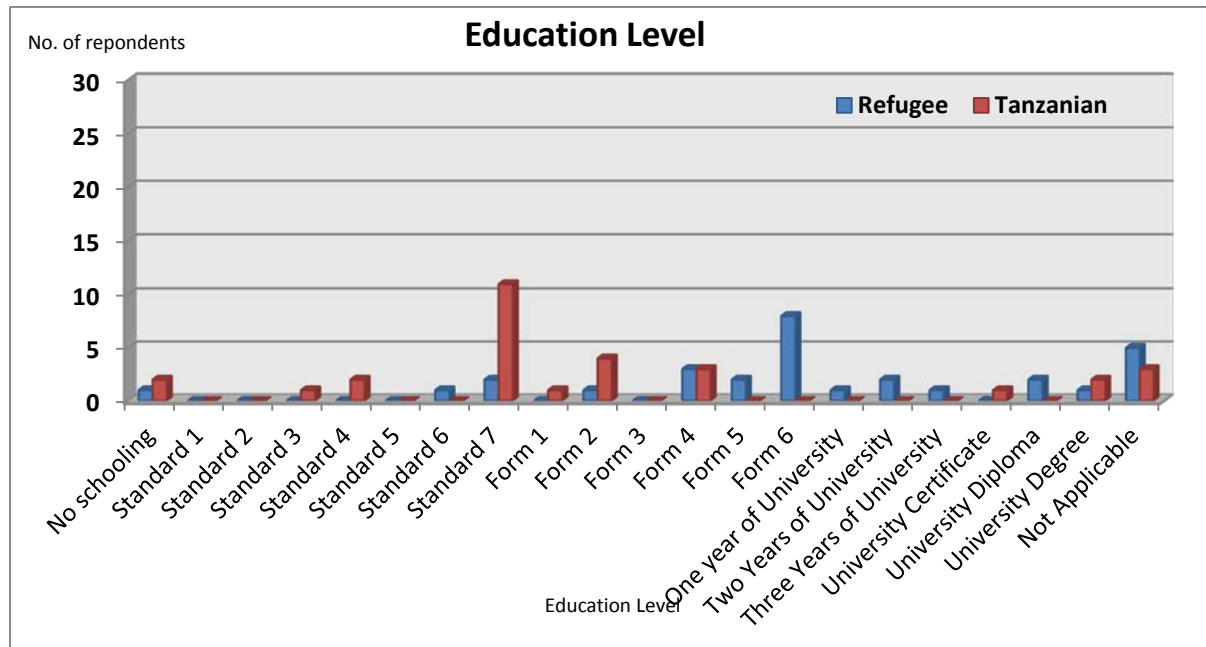
There are several reasons for the poor level of attendance at school and these include, as attested to by Arun et al. (2013) and supported by this research; expenses towards book and uniforms, distance to school, cost of transport, lack of awareness amongst parents and concurrently the lack of role models to demonstrate the benefits from education. From the current school attendance of the refugee children one can suppose that they will achieve a lower educational attainment than the Tanzanian group. This phenomenon is also evidence of the erosion of assets which their parents had accumulated through their own education in their respective countries of origin (see Figure 7), as the refugee cohort are better educated than their Tanzanian counterparts. However, from the data collected it appears unlikely that the children of refugees will achieve the level of education that many of their parents possess. Social mobility through inter-generational asset accumulation is decisively hampered due to the displacement of the populations from their home areas. This is supported by Moser (1998) whose research indicates that households who chose to keep children in school were financially more limited but in the long term less vulnerable as they reduced their vulnerability through the accumulation of human capital.

In addition, the relationship between education level, type of employment and income level of the refugee population all demonstrate that in spite of the human capital assets which they possess, their lack of political capital and rights in Tanzania mean that the potential of these assets are not realised, and many are forced to work in very low paying, precarious jobs for which they are over-qualified. It is not just the financial implications of this under-skilling that is detrimental to the livelihoods of the refugees, the psychological effect also increases their torpor significantly –

'Back in my own country I was well off and I was able to provide, but now here is a fast, suffering and I feel like even my brain is dying' (R21, Interview).

Figure 7

Education Level of Both Groups



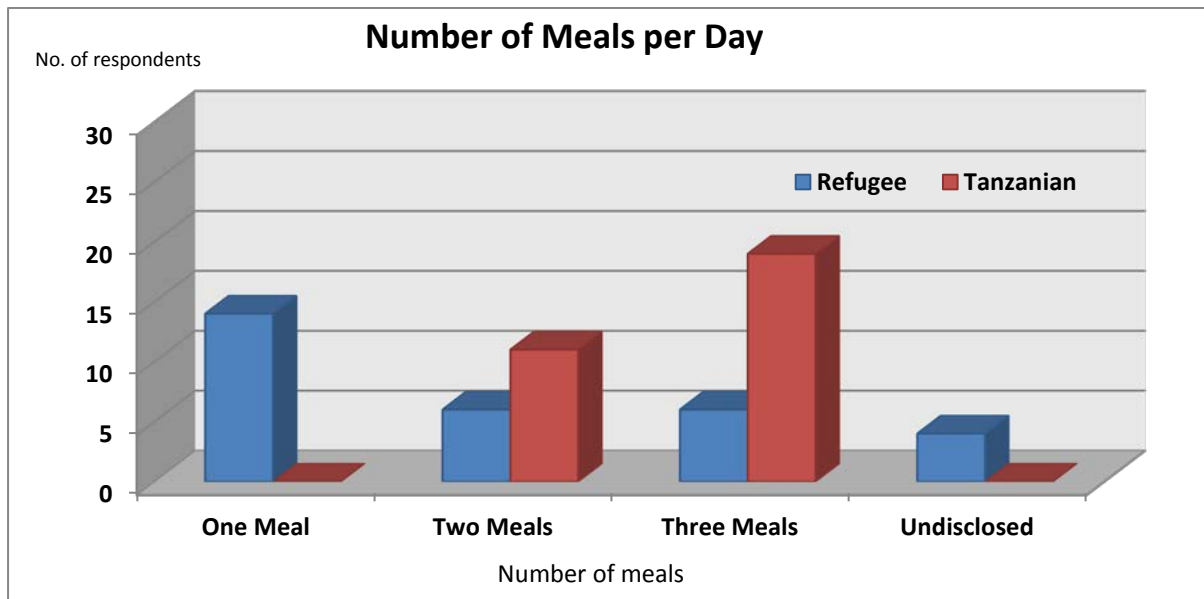
Source: Interviews

b) Nutrition and Access to Clean Water

Adequate nutrition is linked to several other assets, such as the ability to provide labour and also the increase in human capital through education. Lack of adequate nutrition is therefore a key vulnerability and one which is experienced regularly by the respondents as can be seen in Figure 8 where just over 46% of the refugee population survive on one meal per day. Food is cited by 47% of the refugee group and 63% of the Tanzanian group as the most expensive item per month, so clearly it is critical cost for both groups.

In addition to food insecurity, water is also an issue with the refugee population in particular suffering from a lack of consistent access to clean water. Many respondents cited drinking salt water as a coping mechanism when they were required to cut back on spending – 33% of refugees interviewed drank only salt water, while no Tanzanian respondents drank salt water solely, although 16% of Tanzanians did drink a mixture of both fresh and salt water. The effects of this included serious health issues such as typhoid, stomach aches, diarrhoea, and skin rashes. However, interviewees viewed it as a rational choice as in most cases salt water is only 50% the cost of fresh water. Even in cases where the respondents did purchase fresh water, this was often from street vendors who purported to be selling clean water when in fact the water was contaminated. This is as a result of the poor public water service available through Dar es Salaam Water and Sewage Corporation (DAWASCO) which is notoriously unreliable, with public taps generally supplying water only one day per week. Therefore residents of informal settlements have no choice but to supplement their water supply by alternative means.

Figure 8

Number of Meals Per Day

Source: Interviews

Physical Capital*a) Housing*

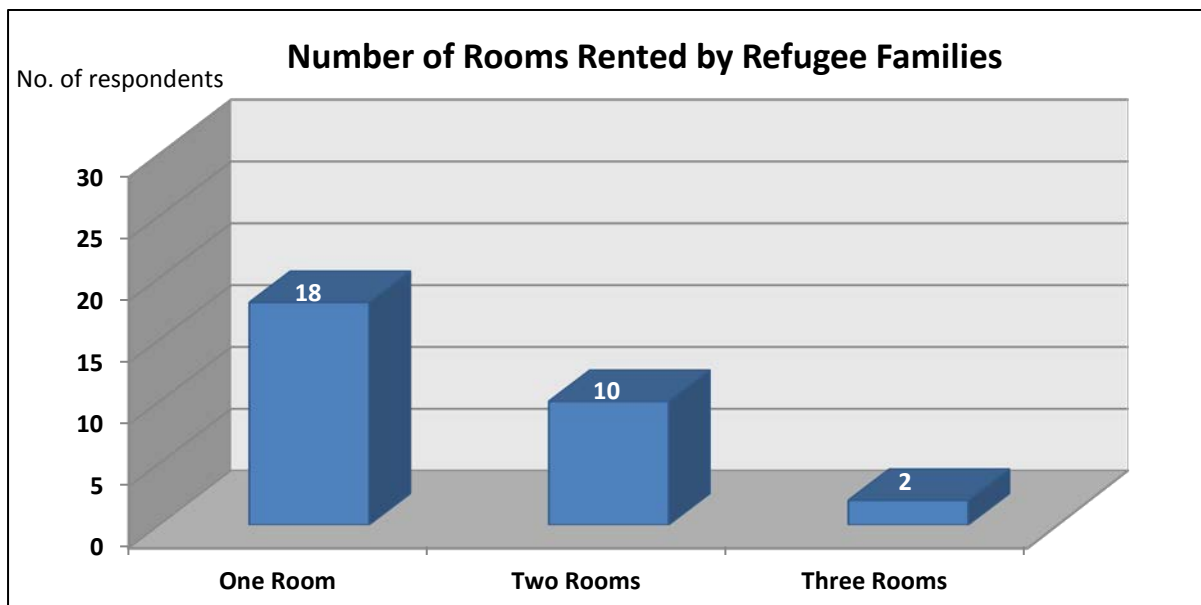
Housing is a crucial asset for the urban refugee population for several reasons: Firstly, refugees are not allowed to own property in Tanzania, so even if the group had the means to purchase property, (which the vast majority do not), they would not be legally allowed to do so. This is important because as noted by Moser (2007 pg 41), “housing is the first – priority asset, and while it does not necessarily get households out of poverty, adequate housing is generally a necessary precondition for the accumulation of other assets”. Therefore the prevention of the refugee population in acquiring this asset is a serious obstacle to them pulling themselves out of poverty. Indeed Moser (1998) purports that it is the most critical of all assets; “the removal of tenure – insecurity related obstacles that prevent or constrain households from using their housing effectively as a productive asset is possibly the single most critical poverty intervention” (pg 11).

In addition, the lack of secure accommodation generates a host of other problems for the refugees: it results in regular moving of house due to rent increases, poor environmental conditions or disagreements with landlords and neighbours. It also means less ability to earn income as they are not able to rent out rooms as are Tanzanian neighbours (55.5% of home owners rented rooms), and reduces their abilities to get loans considerably due to lack of collateral (Parsa et. al, 2011). Furthermore the housing quality of many of the respondents was very poor; 23% had no access to electricity and 60% of families lived in one room (see Figure 9). Only 13% of the refugee population had their own toilets, in comparison to 23% of the Tanzanians, and 50% of the refugee respondents were sharing toilets with 5 or more other families, which could be in excess of 24 people as the average household in Tanzania is currently 4.8 persons (UNFPA, 2015).

It is also important to consider the knock on effects of not having access to proper housing as Arun et al. (2013) notes that this further stunts households’ ability to exploit the potential of this physical asset, through income diversification strategies such as using the space for setting up a small business. Indeed it is a key factor in developing resilience against shocks, as it is “23% less likely for a household that owns any form of physical asset to experience an adverse shock than for a non – ownership house” (Arun et. al, 2013 pg 294). In addition, the lack of toilet facilities causes health problems including the instances of urinary tract infections (U.T.I.) which again presents a financial burden, particularly on female members of the household if they are unable to work due to contracting the infection.

Figure 9

Number of Rooms Rented by Refugee Families



Source: Interviews

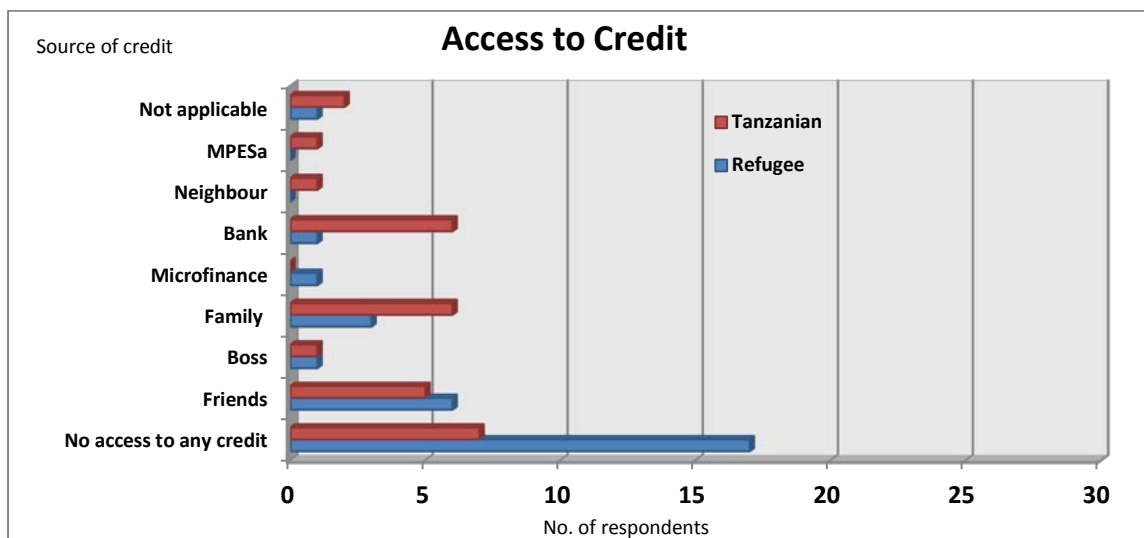
Financial Capital

(a) Access to Credit

The research conducted indicates that urban refugees have very limited access to any type of formal financial institutions, from national banks to small scale microfinance groups (see Figure 10). For example, only 20% of the refugees interviewed had a bank account, in comparison to 40% of their Tanzanian counterparts. In addition, 62% of the refugee population stated that they were unable to save any money, in comparison to 46% of the Tanzanian cohort.

Figure 10

Access to Credit for Both Groups



Source: Interviews

Low-income groups are notoriously risk averse and generally view access to credit as a risk rather than an opportunity and so the ability to save is of particular importance to these groups. As noted by Chambers (1995) providing loans to people to acquire assets can increase vulnerability as the loss of the asset can result in them being worse off than before.

The inability of the vast majority of the refugee population to access any form of savings and credit, formal or otherwise places them in a very perilous state. As for the most part they rely solely on their labour to generate income, any disruption to this source such as sickness can result in the refugees becoming destitute very quickly as they have no or a very limited support network to assist them through the crisis. One refugee explained what happens when they get sick:

‘This is before God as my witness, my children will stay here, don’t go to school that day, we probably won’t eat, the electricity can go off for a week’. (R03, Interview)

Political Capital

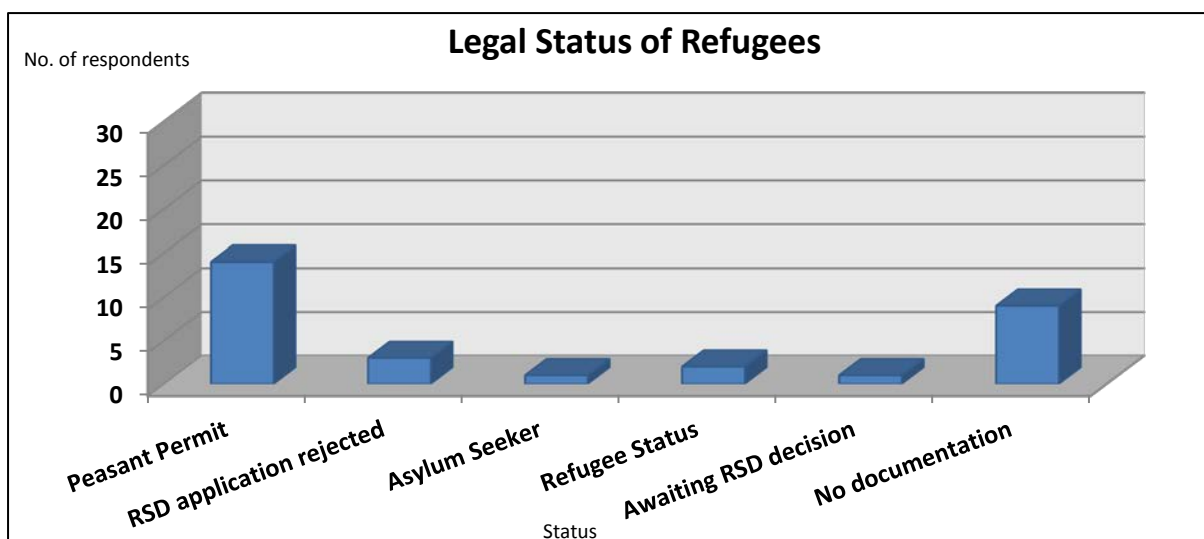
(a) Legal Status

Arguably the most basic of rights is the right to existence itself, and it is one which is currently being denied to the urban refugees, at least within the confines of the legal context and the cityscape. As can be seen from Figure 11, almost 47% of the refugees interviewed had acquired peasant permits, while the remainder were in various states of precariousness regarding their refugee status, with 30% having no documentation of any kind. Even those with a peasant permit (a permit for temporary farm labourers and only available to Congolese applicants) were in an unstable position as the permits had recently been recalled by the Government and replaced with receipts. Consequently many of the Congolese were anticipating that in the future no further permits would be issued to them, which would be a major step back and the removal of arguably their most valuable asset in Dar es Salaam:

“The peasant permits were very very helpful because before we had a terrible fear living without any permit, now when we got those permits we are free, we can do the things that we want to do, freely”. (Refugee Focus Group).

Figure 11

Legal Status of Refugees



Source: Interviews

It is not just the lack of political capital available to the refugees that increases their difficulty, but also the lack of powerful organisations championing their issues on their behalf. Although Asylum Access provides free legal aid to refugees in Dar es Salaam and has been of great help as attested to by the interviewees, UNHCR appears less concerned with the undocumented urban refugees. While there had been some attempts to draft an

urban refugee policy to submit to the MHA (as confirmed by interview conducted with UNHCR, TCRS and Asylum Access), since the development of the Burundian crisis in Western Tanzania UNHCR appears to have shifted its properties elsewhere. It is also notable that in spite of several publications on the challenges facing urban refugees in Dar es Salaam (AATZ, 2011; Pangilinan, 2012) to date there has been no concerted effort on the part of UNHCR to improve the situation of those who refugee who find themselves in challenging circumstances in the city. As a result the assets of the refugee population are further diminished, as without the aegis of a powerful institution such as UNHCR supporting them, they are lacking the agency to make and noticeable improvement to the circumstances on their own.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The livelihood strategies adopted by the urban refugee population of Dar es Salaam acknowledges the complexities of managing complex asset portfolios, but their choices are clearly limited in comparison to their Tanzanian counterparts, who are themselves vulnerable – “Those with more assets tend to have a greater range of options and an ability to switch between multiple strategies to secure their livelihoods” (DFID, 1999, pg 6). Refugees’ ability to accumulate the five main assets as noted by Moser (1998) is seriously curtailed by their lack of another asset: political capital, and as Chambers and Conway (1991) notes, the problem is not just of assets but entitlements - their lack of rights means that the assets they do have, such as labour and education can, and indeed are, being significantly eroded, while those assets which they aspire to accumulate (such as housing) will likely never be realised due to government policies which do not recognise them as having a Right to the City.

The insecurity of their lives and their dependence on often one single asset, their labour, to survive means that any shocks or negative occurrences has an extremely negative effect on their ability to survive let alone prosper. Their vulnerability is deep seated and inter – generational, as their lack of political capital is often passed on to their children, who will also be excluded from accessing many of the rights of their Tanzanian counterparts. The important linkage to emerge from this research is the connection between the different levels of power; how asset vulnerability at the household level can have an impact on the asset accumulation policy at the state level and vice versa. Legitimising the existence of the urban refugee population in the city is the first step which is required to allow them to begin accumulating assets. Without the regularizing of their status, it will be extremely difficult for refugees to develop any of the other main assets discussed. The recent survey undertaken by the Government of Tanzania suggests that it may now be considering a change to the refugee policy, and hopefully any amendments will take into consideration the very real concerns and needs of the urban refugees of Dar es Salaam.

Results also indicate the potential for income generation and the salutary contribution refugees could make to the economy of the city. The human capital assets of the group are being vastly underutilised, and with the implementation of effective policies the skills, education and experience which the refugees possess could not only create sustainable livelihoods for them, but also be of benefit to their Tanzania hosts for the foreseeable future.

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