

## Enhancing Sustainable Participation in Local Livelihood Activities by the Refugees in Nigeria

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**ABSTRACT** The extent to which the international bodies provide for the refugees is far from being a success story. These refugees face serious problems of hunger, molestation, street begging, theft and prostitution. Out of the three zones, Oru/Awa/Liaporu zone was purposively chosen for the study. One hundred and nineteen refugees were randomly selected. This research study focused on potential livelihood activities of refugees in order to identify areas for helping them. The study showed the problems the refugees faced such as lack of Education (68.6 %) lack of healthcare (41 %), discrimination from indigenes (43.8 %) and inadequate food supply (41.9 %) as very serious constraint, leaving a greater percentage of them surviving on alms, while some get involved in self-sponsored commercial activities with little or no returns. Some income generating activities of these refugees include: very few of the male (18.7 %) engaged in sawmill and Okada riding (17.6 %). While the female engaged in petty trade (23.1 %) and weaving (6.6 %). The result of the study revealed significant difference between gender and livelihood activities ( $t = -5.448$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). Spearman's rho rank correlation coefficient showed a correlation between constraints faced and engagement in livelihood activities ( $r = -483$ ;  $p = 0.000$ ). This circumstance does not favor the refugees and this denies them of any right. Without rights such as access to humanitarian services, work, movement in and out of the camp and settlement, they will find it difficult to benefit and therefore become trapped and impoverished. The refugees need to engage themselves in various activities in order to supplement with what they receive from philanthropist in order to alleviate their sufferings. Therefore, attention should be given on how they can contribute to their own survival and development.

### INTRODUCTION

Refugees are individuals seeking asylum or safety in another country due to, political instability, crisis, war and or natural disaster in their own countries of origin. For the refugees, admission into this kind of life leaves them with little or no choice at all as they are forcefully displaced from their normal way of life, due to the high level of insecurity and deplorable situations available to them. A place of refuge is usually made available by that country providing asylum/safety in order to create an enabling environment for them. However, the situations are often not the same as many of them find it difficult to regain the kind of lifestyle they had built for themselves over time in their own respective societies. The high-class people are often the most affected as a class society of small and or great does not exist in the refugee camp as in a normal society. To some extent refugee life has forced the once powerful individuals literally to their knees. People are brought to the same level when everyone has to stand in a long queue to get a plate of cooked food or humble oneself to get a loaf of bread for

ones family. The path-breaking Impoverishment Risk and Reconstruction (IRR) model, developed by World Bank Sociologist Micheal Cernea, has been vital in showing how displacement risks, when ignored, evolve into processes of physical, social and economic exclusion which results in a broad range of impoverishment risks (Mehta 2002). The risk encountered by sub-groups within a community, who suffer specific losses, that are often not predicted by policymakers and planners. Consequently, however, these set of people undergo more severe problems than the indigenes.

The refugee crisis being a global one, has not been ignored by non governmental and philanthropic agencies and individuals. Some of the activities of these organizations include the distribution of relief supplies and the provision of housing units through the United Nations High Commission for refugees (UNHCR). This organization has also been able to provide a UN sponsored voluntary repatriation program, introduced in 1998 for African refugees. Others involved are the Red Cross and some philanthropists such as Chief Mrs Oprah Benson in the supply of drugs, health services and cash gifts.

Harrel-Bond (2002), confirmed that the refugee camps continue to constitute serious risk to the refugees and children especially. A participation approach draws on a rich line of thinking in the broader development field is the best option or to reducing poverty among this vulnerable group, the refugees (Frankenberg 1996).

A common feature of all societies is the need for food, clothing, and shelter, as well as social and self-actualization for themselves and the members of their families. Making a living is done through a portfolio of activities so that households and individuals are flexible and can adapt to a wide range of misfortunes and external shocks (Whitehead 2000).

Livelihood activities can be conceptualized as that activity which an individual engages in, in order to support /sustain or maintain himself and his family. Often, livelihood activities are considered mainly as income generating activities. In any case, there are also wide ranges of other activities such as health, political, educational, social and faith based. These livelihood activities can be gained in a variety of ways from different types of jobs, all of which coincide together to form or create a totality of means by which people secure a living (Loubster 1995; Sanderson 2000; Olawoye 2001) in a sustainable way. Livelihood activities therefore become inevitable activities among the refugee on camps, and cannot be excused due to the conditions in which they find themselves, and most especially as the efforts of non-governmental organizations, philanthropic individuals and agencies are often not forthcoming (Drinkwater and McEwan 1992). Unfortunately, these efforts have not been able to grapple with the demands as the refugee population continues to grow in Nigeria. Job opportunities on the other hand are very scarce and this leaves them mostly women and children begging for arms, exposing some of the girls to prostitution and some die out of starvation while relying on the food ration often provided for them. The promotion of refugee livelihoods by humanitarian agencies is of little use unless refugees are empowered to develop their own livelihood strategies. So what impact can be made (Chambers 1998) to maintain sustainable livelihood activities for the refugees as long as they live on camps (Chambers 1992). The main objective of this research is to assess selected activities that can empower the refugees for sustainable livelihood during their stay in the camp in Nigeria.

## METHODOLOGY

The area selected for this research is Ijebu north Local Government area of Ogun State; it is located between latitude  $7^{\circ}04' 7^{\circ}00'N$  and longitude  $3^{\circ}52' 3^{\circ}53'E$  of the Greenwich meridian. Ijebu north local government area covers an area of 13,394 ha, according to the National Population Commission; the population in 2006 was 284,336. It is located in the north central part of Ogun State, bounded by Oluoye local government area of Oyo state in the North, in the East by of Oyo state Ikenne local government area to the West and Odogbolu and Ijebu North East and Ijebu-Ode and South West respectively. The local government area is tropical in nature, with two distinct seasons. The rainy season (April to October) and dry season (November to March). It experiences an annual rainfall of between 2023mm and 2540mm, the heavy rainfall explains why the area is made up of thick forest, majority of the people engaged in agriculture, a factor that is responsible for the local government area being one of the leading food producing areas in the State. Their products include maize, cowpea, cocoyam, yam, sugarcane, plantain, banana, and oil palm, citrus, and coffee, cocoa and timber as well as livestock production.

Out of the 3 zones in the local government area, which are Ijebu Igbo, Ago-Iwoye, and Oru/Awa/Iiaporu, Oru/Awa/Iiaporu zone was purposively chosen, because this is where we have the refugees residing in a camp, a simple random sampling technique was used to select 119 respondents, which is 2.5 percent of the total population of the refugees, 4768. A structured questionnaire containing both open and closed ended questions was used to collect information from the respondents. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency counts, percentages and mean) inferential statistics such as chi-square, spearman rheo and t-test were used.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The presentation and interpretation of the result, is guided by the focus of the research, based on findings on the livelihood activities they engage in and the constraints they face in securing benefits. In addition, presentation of the findings on the chi-square, spearman rheo and t-test for association, significant relationships and difference were presented.

Table 1 shows the distribution of the personal characteristics of the refugees. Their age distribution indicates that the percentage of young people between 20 and 24 years (32.4%) are more, followed by those between 30 – 34 years (26.7 %) and then those with 25 – 29 years (22.9 %). The mean age is 37 years. This shows that more of the youths and few of older persons are found within this refugee camp. Few of the elderly people, this could be probably because they would not be able to withstand the stress of the camp and therefore did not move. It is interesting

**Table 1: Distribution of personal characteristics**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentages</i>
<i>Age</i>		
20 – 24	34	32
25 – 29	24	22.9
30 – 34	28	26.7
35 – 39	13	12.4
40 – 44	6	5.7
Total	105	100
mean age: 37 yrs		
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	48	45.7
Female	57	54.3
Total	105	100
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	55	52.4
Married	30	28.6
Widowed	8	7.6
Separated	12	11.4
Total	105	100
<i>Level of Education</i>		
No formal education	17	16.2
Adult literacy	10	9.5
Primary	11	10.5
Secondary	53	50.5
Tertiary	14	13.3
Total	105	100
<i>Years of Residency</i>		
0 – 4 years	45	42.9
5 – 8 years	38	36.2
9 – 12 years	18	17.1
13 – 16 years	4	3.8
Total	105	100
mean yrs of residency: 7 yrs		
<i>Nationality</i>		
Liberian	68	64.8
Ivorian	7	6.7
Democratic Republic of Congo	7	6.7
Guinean	8	7.6
Sierra Leon	10	9.5
Rwanda	5	4.7
Total	105	100
<i>Faith Based</i>		
Christianity	76	72.4
Islam	20	19
Traditional	9	8.6
Total	105	100

Source: Field survey 2004

to note that these youths are good resource and can be empowered to engage in livelihood activities as they are still in their active age. A high proportion of the respondents interviewed are female (54.3 %) while 45.7 percent are male. Reason could be that the males did not move as they are engaged in the war back in their home countries. The marital status of the respondents indicates that 52.4 percent interviewed are single while 28.6 percent of them are married. The distribution of the educational level of the refugees shows that 50.5 percent of those interviewed have only secondary education, 16.2 percent of them have non-formal education while 13.3 percent are educated to the tertiary level. With this level of education, the respondents should be able to engage in basic livelihood activities. They should also be provided with education opportunities to enable them to enhance their educational status. The reason is that level of education would determine what kind of jobs they would be opportune to get interested or engage in. The distribution of their years of residency shows that 42.9 percent of those interviewed have stayed for up to 4 years, 36.2 percent have stayed on for more than 5 years. Only 3.8 percent have stayed on as refugees for more than 13 years. The reason for this number may be due to the fact that, what keeps them on refugees' status for a long time could be in form of difficulty in integrating into the new society. This includes; lack of access to free facilities, security, relief supplies, educational and employment opportunities and a host of other benefits which they had no access to before the wars in their respective countries. It could also be mainly due to the fact that the war is still on or whatever that displaced them has not been removed from their origin.

**Table 2: Distribution of the livelihood activities by gender**

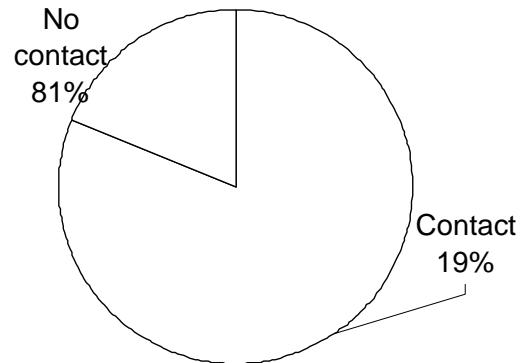
<i>Livelihood activities</i>	<i>Male</i>		<i>Female</i>	
	<i>Fre- quency</i>	<i>Percent- ages</i>	<i>Fre- quency</i>	<i>Percent- ages</i>
Crop farming	4	4.4	4	4.4
Livestock	2	2.2	0	0
Trading	8	8.8	21	23.1
Okada riding	16	17.6	0	0
Weaving	0	0	6	6.6
Working at sawmill	17	18.7	0	0
Carpentry	2	2.2	0	0
Teaching	7	7.7	4	4.4

Source: Field survey 2004

Table 2 shows that 18.7 percent of males interviewed work at the sawmills around the area, while 14.6 percent engage in "okada" riding, while the highest form of livelihood activity for the females is petty trading (32.1 %). Then weaving 6.6 percent followed by crop farming 4.4 percent. The distribution shows a very low level of interest in farming activities as a means of livelihood, which could be due to the fact that they lack the wherewithal to carry this out (they do not have access to land and could not hire). The engagements in some of these things are really not permitted among the refugees in the camp. Therefore, there is no commitment and seriousness, which leads to low yield and returns.

Table 3 shows that amongst serious constraints ticked by the respondents, lack of access to education or training ranked highest with 68.6 percent, lack of information and discrimination both had 43.8 percent while health problems had 41.9 percent. This indicates that the refugees in the study area are having difficulty integrating into the system due to language barrier, lack of information towards prospective job/other benefits and lack of basic educational qualification. This circumstance does not favor the refugees and this denies them of any right. Without rights such as access to humanitarian services, work and movement in and outside their camp and settlement freely, they will find it difficult to benefit from anything.

Pie chart below indicates that 81.0 percent of the refugees interviewed said that they had no contact with agricultural extension service. While very few (19.0 %) said that they have had contact with them. This could mean that the refugees' participation in agricultural livelihood activities as indicated with the result on Table 2 is not official. The reason has been that they are not supposed to do any job, thus showing few agricultural extension attentions. As the host country and the internal organization are, suppose



**Fig. 1. Distribution of the respondents on contact with agricultural extension services**

Source: Field survey 2004

to cater for them. Nevertheless, the extent to which they perform this responsibility is questionable.

Table 4 shows that 100 percent of those interviewed agreed that the primary reason why they engaged in the activities was to make up for what they lacked from what the international organizations and the host countries are giving them. While 12.4 percent of the refugees interviewed, agreed to the secondary reason that the activities earned them income faster. A large proportion (90.5 %) of them ascertained to the secondary reason for engaging in livelihood

**Table 4: Distribution of respondents on reasons for engaging in livelihood activities**

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Primary Reason</i>		
To satisfy needs (Clothing, and Foods)	105	100
<i>Secondary Reason</i>		
It brings income quickly.	13	12.4
To move out from refugees status	95	90.5

Source: Field survey 2004

**Table 3: Distribution of the constraints faced by the respondents in securing benefits**

Constraints	Not a constraint		Not a serious constraint		Serious constraint	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of food	34	32.4	44	41.9	27	25.7
Health problem	14	13.3	47	44.8	44	41.9
Discrimination	28	26.7	31	29.5	46	43.8
Lack of information	23	21.9	36	34.3	46	43.8
Lack of access to education/ skill	11	10.5	22	21.0	72	68.6

Source: Field survey 2004

activities is to move out from refugee status. This participation is an approach that shows the humanitarian services provided to them by international organization and host country is too little to keep them going until they return to their country. Therefore, they need to empower them to develop their own livelihood strategies.

The result of chi-square analysis shows that there is a significant association between gender, nationality, and livelihood activities (Table 5). While the result on marital status and level of education shows that, there is no significant association with livelihood activities. This means that sex differential roles plays important part in determining whether the refugee should be involved in an income generating activity. From the previous result, it was discovered that more of the females are engaged in livelihood generating activity.

Table 6 shows Pearson's Product Moment Correlation test on years of residency and livelihood activities. This revealed that there is significant correlation between how long one has stayed and the engagement in livelihood activities. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant correlation between years of residency and a livelihood activity is rejected and the alternative accepted. It implies that those that have stayed in the camp for long have the urge to establish livelihood activities because of what they have gone through. The Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis on age and livelihood activities shows no significant correlation. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant correlation between age and livelihood activities, is accepted. This implies that livelihood activities the respondents engaged in do not depend on age. The result also revealed

that there is a significant correlation between constraints faced in securing benefits and livelihood activities. Therefore, the null hypotheses, which states that there is no significant relationship between constraints faced in securing benefits and livelihood activities is rejected and the alternative hypotheses is hereby accepted. This means that constraints faced in securing benefits will determine whether or not, they should engage in livelihood activities. Nevertheless, because they have these constraints before them, therefore, they must engage in at least one activity.

Table 7 shows the result for the t-test on equality of means, revealing that there is a significant difference between gender and livelihood activities. Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference by gender and livelihood activities, is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. This indicates that their livelihood activities are gender specific. This result also coincides with the view that more women are involved in livelihood activities than men are.

**Table 7: t-test of significance difference by gender and livelihood activities**

	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender	5.448	2	0.000

## CONCLUSION

The humanitarian efforts supporting Nigerian refugee camp is often not enough to sustain them while in the camp for the period they are to stay. The promotion of refugee livelihoods by humanitarian agencies is of little use unless refugees are empowered to develop their own

**Table 5: Chi-square test of association between personal characteristics and livelihood activities**

Characteristics	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>	Decision
Gender	23.244	2	0.000	Significant
Marital Status	5.443	4	0.142	Not significant
Level of education	4.672	5	0.323	Not significant
Nationality	15.831	6	0.007	Significant

Source: Field survey 2004

**Table 6: Distribution of correlation between age, duration of residence and livelihood activities**

	<i>r</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>	Decision
Age	-.056	5	0 .586	Not significant
Years of residency	.241	4	0 .017	Significant
Constraints	-.483	5	0 .000	Significant

livelihood strategies. As the refugees in the project area are forced to employ various strategies to alleviate their hardship at the camp. It is therefore necessary to improve their productivity as well as their living conditions, by recommending programmes for developing skills and training. They need to engage in various activities in other to supplement with what they receive to alleviating their sufferings. Therefore, attention should be giving on how they can contribute to their own survival and development. The adoption of these new approaches does not mean that the notion of the eventual return of refugee has been abandoned.

In order to improve the level of living and the economic contribution of the refugees, the level of agricultural and non agricultural contribution to the gross domestic product, as well as a reduction in social vices within the camp. The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

- The refugees should be allowed to settle among the local people, seek work to support their families and therefore contribute to the local economy as well as develop themselves.
- The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) should direct their economic improvement and provision of facilities through indigenous developmental programmes or agencies, such as National Directorate of Employment (NDE), Directorate of Food, Road and Rural Infrastructure (DIFRRI) (land and other poverty alleviation strategies) in other to extend skill training and development to the refugee camp.

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