

The Impact of Humanitarian Interventions on the Wellbeing of Youth in Kasulu District, Tanzania

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Abstract

This study provides an understanding on the impact of humanitarian interventions on the wellbeing of youth in Kasulu District, in Tanzania. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect data from respondents who included youth, parents/caretakers, officials and youth leaders in the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp and adjacent communities in Herushingo and Makere wards, who acted as the control groups. The results show that humanitarian interventions on the wellbeing of youth are vivid in the district because greater transformation was observed among some youths. However, a growing vulnerability among a larger majority was equally observed. This vulnerability was caused by outdated refugee acts, poor coordination of interventions and parenting among refugees and the host community. The study recommends improvement in coordination and matching interventions to cope with changing vulnerabilities and the needs of youths born and living in the district. Also, balance should be maintained between the active roles among youths and humanitarian actors through planning and implementation of projects, as well as promoting self-reliance for sustainable resilience among the youth. Equally, the study recommends that the Refugee Act of 1998 be amended to provide special immunities to refugee youths born in the country.

Keywords: *coordination, humanitarian, interventions, youth, wellbeing, Tanzania*

1. Introduction

A refugee is defined as a displaced person who has been forced to cross national boundaries, and who cannot return home safely unless the disaster that caused the displacement of this person has been eliminated. Sometimes if this disaster is not attended to in time, it may lead to overstay in the country of asylum, causing an increase in the number of children in the country of asylum, who have different needs from their parents (Goodwin, 2021; Mbonile, 2018; Crisp 2003). Globally, a protracted refugee crisis has resulted into vulnerabilities to both youths born and raised in the country of asylum, as well as those in the host communities who suffer the consequences of living close to refugee camps. Such consequences include limited freedom of movement, poor access to quality education, violence, exclusion in self-reliance activities and other key programmes related to people's wellbeing. Others include early marriages with the associated responsibilities, unemployment, extreme poverty, child trafficking, and stress. Such

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vulnerabilities grow and change in nature with time. Even worse, securing funds to support such a population becomes a big challenge for humanitarian communities as concentration and interest of donors automatically shift to new influxes of refugees (de Bruin & Becker, 2019; Abrego, 2006).

Some of the key contributory factors to refugees' long stay in the countries of asylum include extreme poverty, prolonged tensions, and political instability in the countries of origin, hence calling for the adoption of strong intervention measures to meet the demands of refugee children and those of host communities (Fletcher et al., 2018; Høvring 2018; Xia et al., 2015; Crisp, 2003; Rutinwa & Kamanga, 2011; Tieman et al., 2007). Regionally, these experiences have been observed in Latin America and Asia where experiences confirm that well-coordinated intervention measures are likely to result into a variety of positive outcomes than individual approaches could cover (Tanzania CRRF, 2017; IOM, 2017). The overall coordination, easy synergies among actors, and referrals are easily attained, and interventions meet systematic needs rather than individual support which may end up touching only few needs (Mallitt et al 2017; Nan, 2003; Lancaster, 2001). This is because humanitarian aid to the community itself is complex and therefore interactions of its structure and processes explain the quality of its response towards the demands on the ground. However, in Africa, especially in the Great Lakes Region, interventions are not always aptly coordinated, and this results into negative impact to the wellbeing of the served population. This may worsen the vulnerability of the youth.

At the country level, Tanzania has been hosting refugees for decades, with Nyarugusu Camp as one of the first isolated refugee camps. It was established in 1996 to accommodate a maximum of 50,000 persons from the DR Congo, but due to prolonged political tensions and poverty, the camp is currently accommodating around 140,000 refugees, almost three times its planned capacity (Masabo et al., 2018). Since the establishment of Nyarugusu Camp, the government of Tanzania, United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF), Plan International, Oxfam, Red Cross and other humanitarian actors have been administering interventions to meet youth changing needs: from temporary or emergency response to long-term or sustainable solutions. The main objective of this study is to assess the impact of humanitarian interventions on the wellbeing of refugee youth in Kasulu District.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Related Theories of the Study

2.1.1 Pressure and Release Model

The pressure release model, or crunch model, was developed by Wisner et al. (1994). It states that vulnerability (pressure) is rooted in socio-economic and political processes, which must be addressed (released) to reduce the risk of a disaster. Disasters happen only when hazards affect vulnerable people. Thus, there must be a trigger event—such as conflicts, floods, extreme poverty,

earthquakes or volcanic eruptions—for a disaster to happen. Thus, vulnerabilities of the youth in Kasulu District are due to socio-economic and political conflicts caused by prolonged tensions and conflicts in neighbouring countries like the DR Congo, leading to protracted sharing of over-stretched resources among the youth, and unsafe conditions in the host communities. Therefore, if humanitarian interventions are planned and implemented to address the needs of the youth, their vulnerabilities such as limited freedom of movement, early pregnancies, high school dropout rates, substance abuse, trauma, unemployment, risk behaviours, extreme poverty, and tensions within and across borders will be deeply reduced (Figure 1, Boxes 1-4).

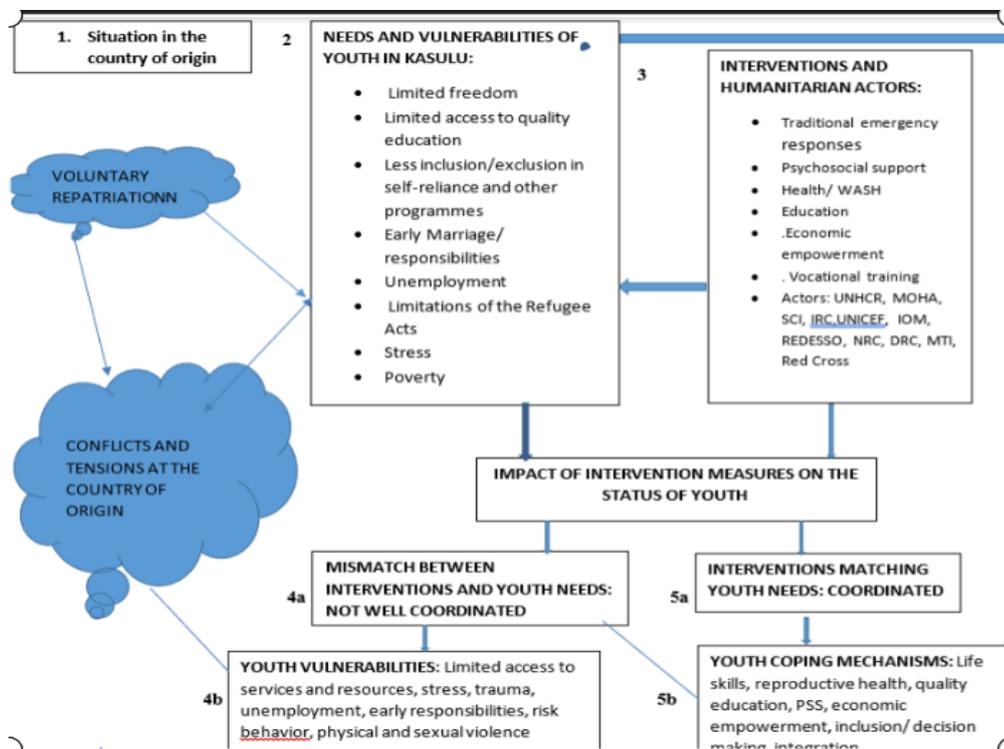


Figure 1: Impact of Intervention Measures on Refugee Youth in Kasulu District

Source: Modified from Wisner et. al. (1994)

The model further reveals a progression of vulnerability, which begins with underlying causes in a society such as population growth, forced migration, and low income. When such hazardous events happen and a community has no capacity to handle them, the capacity to recover from a disaster is quite minimal. For instance, with low income, it is difficult for a population to adhere to safe hygiene practices like proper sanitary, clean water services and safe energy.

2.1.2 Hierarchy of Needs Theory

The hierarchy of needs theory considers the relationship between vulnerabilities, needs and motivation. The theory posits that it is only when the basic needs are met that an individual can move forward. In this theory, Maslow (1954) investigated the hierarchy of needs, especially from the psychological point of view (Koltko, 2006; Pfeifer, 1998). He presented needs as a pyramid with more basic needs at the bottom. The first category from the bottom includes factors like physiological needs, safety, love/belonging, and esteem; while the top most category includes self-actualization as well as self-transcendence (a motivational step beyond self-actualization). These factors are used to describe the pattern through which human motivations generally move. This means that for a motivation to occur at the next level, the level underneath must first be satisfied within an individual. This eventually describes the behaviour of a person (Figure 2).

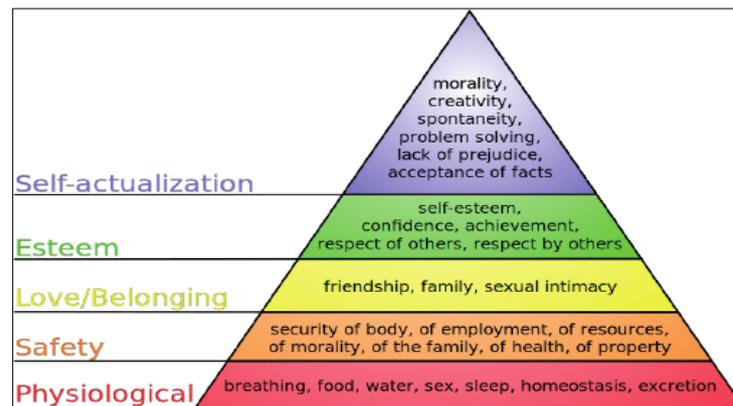


Figure 2: The Hierarchy of Needs

Source: Maslow (1954)

2.2 Empirical Literature

Despite sharing the same context, interventions can have different impacts on youth-wellbeing: both negative and positive (Gizelis & Kosek, 2005; Roberts & Hofmann, 2004; Crisp, 2003). There are different factors that contribute to such differences, and these include coordination, age and the level of participation by the local community. In his push-pull theory, Lee (1966) highlighted migration reaction differentials in terms of age, gender and race. In this regard, social-cultural and biological differences also can affect the impact of intervention on youth wellbeing (Ekvik, 2016). Consequently, planning, implementing, and evaluating intervention measures need to observe such differentials to meet the growing needs of specific age-groups (Bouzenita 2016). Besides, while different interventions come as a remedy of lost opportunities, some could even result into negative impacts to host communities (Høvring, 2018; Meyer & Morand, 2015; Barrett, 2006; Rutinwa & Kamanga, 2003).

Children and youths in refugee camps, as well as poor host communities, should be given priority with regard to interventions. The priority areas include security and safety, access to basic needs and services, education, psychosocial support, youth reproductive health services, freedom of movement, employment and participation in decision-making. This calls not only for high levels of commitment by supporters, but also recognition and building on youth positive coping mechanisms (Brankamp, 2020; Kiruthu, 2020; Nan, 2003; Kriesberg, 1996).

3. Research Methodology

The study used a mixed research design, whereby both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used to obtain a sample size of 396 respondents from the Nyarugusu Refugee Camp in Kasulu District, Kigoma Region. It is the third largest refugee camp in the world, and the first in Tanzania (Figure 3).

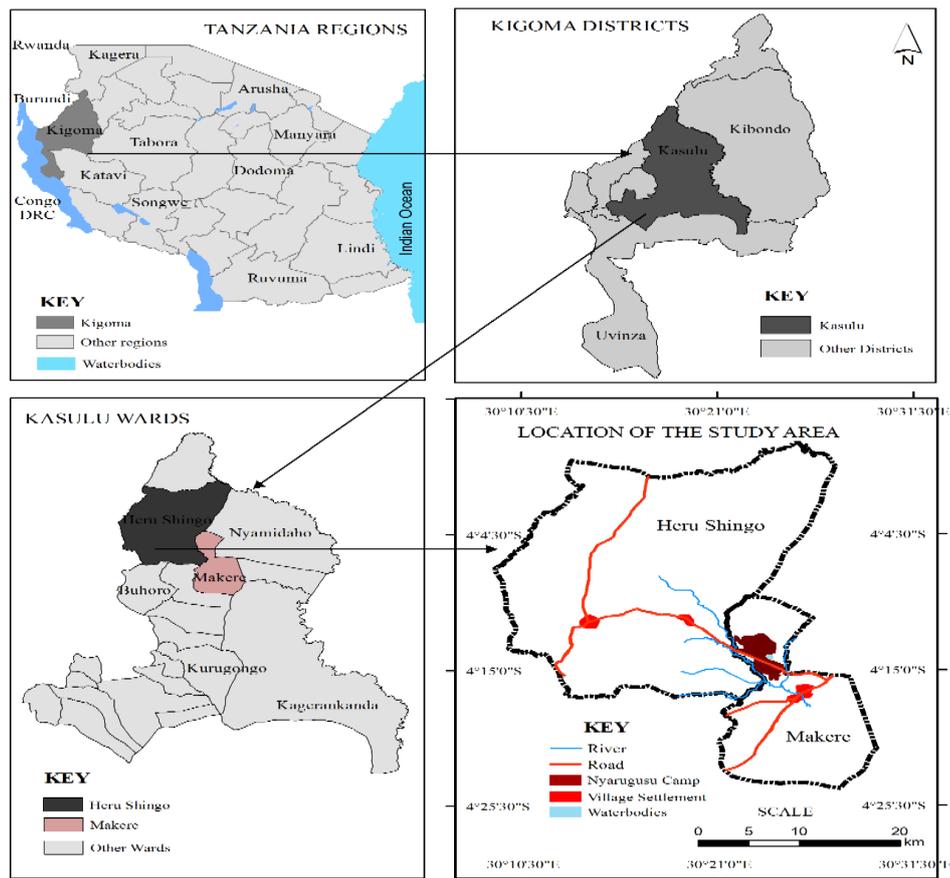


Figure 3: Map of Nyarugusu Camp and Surrounding Wards

Source: Field Survey, 2020

The camp was established in 1996 to accommodate a maximum of 50,000 refugees from the DR Congo, but due to prolonged tensions and overstay of refugees in the camp it currently accommodates nearly 140,000 refugees. Such a population explosion has had some impact on the socio-economic status of youths, both in the Campa and in the surrounding host communities.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Youth Criteria and Definition of Wellbeing

Wellbeing is defined as the state of being comfortable, healthy and happy. Wellbeing or a state of equilibrium, can be affected by life events or challenges in the life of an individual or a group of people (Simons, 2021; Cummins, 2010; Hendry & Kloep, 2002; Headey & Wearing, 1989). Hence, improving the wellbeing of a person is a solution to the myriad issues facing young people.

According to Vernon (2014), Dodge (2012) and Prescott-Allen (2001), the higher the level of wellbeing, the better the individual/group’s condition. As indicated by the tree map (Figure 4) and word cloud (Figure 5), the youth in the Nyarugusu Camp consider income, education, health, freedom, food, care and peace as of high priority in enhancing their wellbeing. This is equally supported by (White, 2007). The medium priority includes quality medical services, proper clothing, resettlement, jobs, protection and security. Low priority includes things like capital and skills.

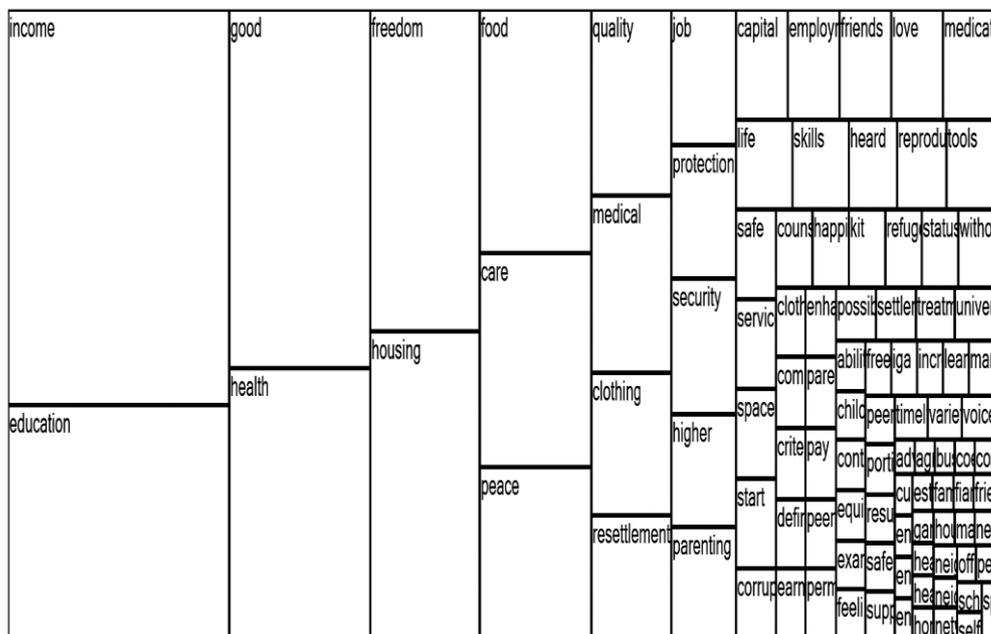


Figure 4: A Map on the Wellbeing Criterion and its Importance

Source: Filed Survey, 2020

Means of Coordination		
Weekly/ monthly meetings	115	29.0
Joint training of planning programmes	87	22.0
Quaternary update sector working groups	55	13.9
Kigoma Joint Programme	48	12.1
Peaceful coexistence meetings with host communities	55	13.9
Referrals (Case identification process, medical treatment)	36	9.1
Total	396	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Figure 6 further shows that individual approach is commonly applied by agencies, followed by sectorial working groups and referral system, which come up with challenges especially in understanding the proper pathway. Thus, not everybody understands a proper route of referral despite the efforts by implementing agencies. Youths further pointed out that a better approach is one in which all sectors work together. Such an approach bridges prevailing gaps between existing interventions and the impact on their wellbeing, and finally, it avoids unnecessary mismatch.



Figure 6: Major Coordination Modalities of Interventions

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Another coordination approach is through joint planning. A good example in the area is the Kigoma Joint Programme (KJP), which was a four-year programme from 2017 to 2021. The programme cut across multiple sectors with the aim of improving development and human security in Kigoma Region. The programme involved 16 UN agencies, and was developed in cooperation with the regional and district authorities, based on the needs of the people living in the region, as well as the capacity of the UN in Tanzania. Overall, it was observed that while humanitarian actors mostly implemented joint and coordinated efforts, youths on the other hand were of the opinion that individual coordination was the most common approach (Word Cloud, Figure 6). These results are similar to what was observed by Rutinwa and Kamanga (2011) on forced displacement in the Great Lakes Region.

4.3 Efficiency of Coordination for Enhancing the Wellbeing of Refugee Youths

Efficiency is the ability to avoid wasting materials, energy, effort, money and time, in doing something or in producing a desired result (Merriam-Webster, 2018). The findings show that there are more than 20 humanitarian agencies in Kasulu District, and a good number of them are supporting youth-related programmes in camp. Although there is a good structure for coordination in place, the results indicate that there are challenges affecting the efficiency of the process as indicated in Table 2. Among others there is competition among agencies (18%), misunderstanding due to different priorities (18%), poor support to youths in the host community (20%), poor planning/delays (9%), limited budget (9%), unreliable database (9%), and different reporting styles by the different donors (9%). All these have resulted into a less positive impact on the wellbeing of youths. As observed by Nan (2003), coordination is not always easy, and collaboration among agencies and authorities does not always result into quality and high-level productivity. Poor support to youths in host communities, financial constraints, absence of uniform guidelines or terms, poor planning and lack of consistent evaluation are good examples of setbacks in Kasulu. Other factors include strict individual organization mandates, limited skills and communication gap; differing priorities among members sometimes leading to unnecessary delays and negative impact on youths’ wellbeing.

Table 2: Challenges of Coordination in Kasulu District

Challenges	Respondents	Percent
Competition among actors	71	17.8
Misunderstanding due to different priorities	71	17.8
Poor planning/delays	35	8.9
Poor support to youths in the host communities	79	20.0
Lack of cooperation with the government	8	2.2
Limited budget	62	15.6
Unrealistic database	35	8.9
Different donor reporting standards	35	8.9
Total	396	100

Source: Field Survey, 2020

Another challenge is poor communication among actors and competing mandates (silent competition among actors) and differences among actors, or sometimes individual mandates contradicting each other. Although there is evidence of improvement as regards differences among actors, it takes time to come to an agreement since spending of time and other resources depends on the interests of individual agencies. Other challenges are procedural, or protocol-related, whereby some agencies opt to operate without consideration of the government’s database. Even if the situation improves with time, the use of unrealistic database for planning and implementing interventions is still a challenge. Usually, when such a trend is discovered, the entire process goes back

to square one. These results are similar to what was observed by Xia et al. (2015) and Kriesberg (1996) in their studies on the coordination of HIV programmes and other projects involving numerous humanitarian actors.

Also, the results show that while joint implementation can be easier, joint planning remains an obstacle, especially when one considers that the Nyarugusu Camp has a concentration of more than 20 intervention agencies (actors) unlike the Herushingo and Makere camps which have no such typical youth interventions. Thus, the lack of joint planning has a negative implication on youth wellbeing. Also, treating refugee issues in Kasulu District as temporary limits the support to host communities as well. Overall, respondents indicated that uncoordinated humanitarian interventions lead to vulnerabilities that results into poor services (20.6%), school dropouts (20.6%), budget constrains leading to double standards of services (17.5%), and other problems as indicated in Table 3.

Table 3: Effects of Uncoordinated Interventions on Youths Wellbeing

Effect	Respondents	Percent
Poor services	82	20.6
Corruption due to low payment	19	4.8
Extreme poverty	19	4.8
Delay to access services	25	6.3
Risk of staff losing opportunities	25	6.3
School dropouts	19	4.8
Conflict among beneficiaries	82	20.6
Mismatch between youth needs and available interventions	57	14.3
Budget constraints leading to double standards or poor services	69	17.5
Total	396	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2020

These results are similar to what was observed by Brankman et al. (2021) in their study of refugees in Kenya, another Great Lakes country.

4.4 Impact of Coordinated Interventions on the Wellbeing of Refugee Youths

As observed by Ungar et al. (2014) and Bai (2009), coordinated youth services are more likely to meet systematic and long-term needs of youths. Given the conditions in the Camp and host communities, youths are facing cumulative disadvantages related to their countries of origin, community, schools, and other individual challenges. As such, coordinated efforts come as a positive approach in strengthening their wellbeing. As a whole, coordinated interventions have resulted into a good source of income for they have been able to assist in the establishment of small businesses. Such interventions have also enabled the youth to secure temporary employment and work in groups to produce items like decorations for selling in the Camp and elsewhere (Photo 1).



Plate 1: Refugee Decoration Products at the CDC in Nyarugusu Camp

Source: Data from the Field, 2020

Other positive impacts of coordinated interventions on youth wellbeing include creativity, confidence and activeness in community-related activities, as expressed by one official in the Camp:

The impact of coordinated intervention on youth wellbeing includes activeness in community related activities; youth are protected from risk behaviour, and they have gained confidence (An Official in Nyarugusu Camp, 17th Sept. 2020).

Other respondents mentioned survival, good health, and improved employability because of coordinated interventions. This is illustrated in the following quotation:

I have been enabled to advance my studies. I have a small business and I gain income out of it. I have good health and hope to be employed in the future (Young Youth in the Camp, 13th August 2020).

That little gain from small businesses and volunteering allowances directly contribute to the local economy in return, and act as a relief to daily challenges.

Besides this, it was observed that coordinated efforts make it easier for youths to access resources. Programmes on vocational training, tailoring education and after-school programmes, sports and games, community service activities, religious youth groups, and other community-based activities have been confirmed to play a key role in the lives of youths, especially when approaches are well-coordinated. Mental health is another good outcome of coordinated interventions for it is known that youths often face challenges that can undermine

important opportunities while thriving to achieve their full potential. These may include considerations like performance in school, workplace, relationships, peer groups and within themselves. Coordinated mental health interventions in Kasulu have contributed to self-esteem, self-awareness, self-reliance, good performance at school, relief after therapy, active participation in programmes, and also reduced the level of substance abuse. Several respondents emphasized the impact that coordinated interventions have on their happiness. These results are similar to findings from other studies like Martin (2018), in his study of Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya (Photo 2).



Photo 2: Computer and English Course Students at Nyarugusu Camp
Source: Field Survey, 2020

Furthermore, good relationship is important for youths as elaborated in Figure 7. However, sometimes refugee youth face other challenges like tensions and violence when they get out of the Camp, which erodes good relationship with host communities. However, overall there is a strong good relationship between refugees and host communities from family to community levels, except in Herushingo where insecurity cases emerge daily despite government efforts to curb them. Moreover, the main hospitals in the Camp are managed by TRCS and MTI. Thus, host communities are granted free treatment too in the Camp. However, in this regard one is required to meet certain conditions to get a permit from village authorities before getting treatment in the Camp. Overall, there are few referral cases that call for further treatment outside the Camp. Yet there are complications in accessing referral permits, and consequently some young mothers die on their way to referral hospitals.

The majority of youths in Nyarugusu Camp confirmed that they have strong immunity and their ability to study has been enabled through a friendly school environment as illustrated by the following quotation:

Now I know myself better after attending primary and secondary school. I can easily communicate with the external world after attending the English course (Youth in Nyarugusu Camp, August, 2020).

Furthermore, through coordinated efforts some youth and their family members have been granted resettlement opportunities in a third host country such as Canada and the USA, depending on the availability of opportunities in such countries. Also, others have been granted scholarship within or outside the country, although their number is small when compared with the needs.

There are quite a number of factors describing the impact of uncoordinated interventions on the wellbeing of youths. The implication is quite significant on the wellbeing of youths, and it sometimes leads to the emergence of new types of youth vulnerabilities. Therefore, when interventions are not well-coordinated they exacerbate the cycle of youth vulnerability; and since this increases with time, it leads to some youth engaging in alcoholism at quite an early age, prostitution and robbery as verified by one youth:

It is hard to get practical tools, and certificates are not given at the end of the training. This is a challenge as I have no evidence that I attended the course (Youth Nyarugusu Camp, October, 2020).

While parents are expected to support in such a situation, experience shows that parents too are affected by the overstay of refugees. Thus, instead of supporting their children they sometimes end up mistreating them because of the hardships they face, as confirmed by one of the youths:

No one is there to talk with my parents about their bad behaviour. I get stress as a result of them selling or misuse of distributed items (Youth Nyarugusu Camp, August 2020).

As the above statement shows, some youths are mentally and physically affected because their parents sell or distribute the humanitarian items they receive as aid. This is partly because the youth have neither mandate over family wealth, nor any other means to sustain themselves. As a result, poverty levels increase with time. This is confirmed by the following quotation:

Camp life doesn't allow self-reliance activities since refugee youths are regarded as people just on transit in the country of asylum (Youth Nyarugusu camp, October 2020).

Uncoordinated efforts result into unintended discrimination whereby some vulnerable youths are not supported accordingly compared to others. For example, while some zones get extra support, others are under-served. This was confirmed to be the source of silent tensions among different zones:

There is completely no project, my kids are not part of any youth project (A parent in Nyarugusu Camp, on 7th October 2020).

5. Conclusion

This study provided an understanding of the impact of humanitarian interventions on the wellbeing of youth in Nyarugusu Camp, Kasulu District, and the surrounding host communities. The results indicate that youths in Kasulu District have their own way of defining wellbeing by using key measures such as income, followed by education, freedom of movement, good health and housing. Hence, their wellbeing is considered to be enhanced only when the aspects specified above are taken care of. This study further confirmed that to intervene on the wellbeing of youths, there are no 'one-shoe-fits-all' solutions. Although there are similarities in the challenges, perceptions differ from one location to another. For example, freedom of movement did not prevail as a crucial issue for youth wellbeing in host communities who are free to go anywhere in their country. This is different for refugee youth.

Furthermore, the results indicate that the impact of humanitarian interventions on the wellbeing of youths is enhanced through proper coordination of intervention measures. Therefore, the effectiveness and efficiency of coordination of interventions will likely bring positive impact on the wellbeing of youths. For coordination to be fruitful, it must ensure efficiency and effectiveness. Youths can easily establish their small businesses and earn a little income. Also, information-sharing will be up to date, and cooperation among agencies be on the rise. As for Kasulu District, host communities can be supported through programmes that address the challenges they experience due to the over-stay of refugees.

Moreover, the results show that uncoordinated interventions result into negative impacts on the wellbeing of youths. This includes situations where organizations concentrate on their individual interests instead of on joint efforts that will have greater impacts on the wellbeing of youths. Since the needs of youths in Kasulu District are complex, services responding to their needs should be coordinated for successful interventions.

Also, normally youths are left in limbo as they can neither influence their parents' decisions on their lives, nor make a living out of individual efforts. A good example is when students finish their advanced level of secondary education without financial support to join universities or technical schools. This becomes the end of their dreams for further education and employment opportunities. Also, some youths end up being stressed and having other worries because of their parents selling or misusing aid stuffs. This can similarly lead into a huge divide between the served and the not-served. Host communities too are suffering due to uncoordinated interventions. For example, by refugees cutting trees in neighbouring communities this leaves such areas degraded. Thus, there should be programmes that address such outcomes arising due to the presence of refugees.

Hence, to create peaceful co-existence, interventions should be improved to enhance positive impact on youth wellbeing. Overall, there is a need for feedback systems to enhance coordination, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian interventions. For instance, a platform for youths to give their inputs on service delivery should be provided; while opportunities for regular sharing of experiences among host and refugee peer groups could be another innovative way of enhancing the impacts of humanitarian interventions.

Finally, the study findings show that although there are good structures in place to ensure coordination, sometimes these are not used. Overall, improper coordination of interventions lead to negative adaptations by the youths. While other conditions can be controlled, the overstay of refugees increases possibilities of unintended outcomes of interventions. Though interventions are meant to protect, build capacity, regain confidence, control negative effects, and instil skills and knowledge among peer groups, positive adaptive measures by the youth should be sought and maintained.

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