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# Factors in Refugee Resilience Building during Humanitarian Response

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Factors in Refugee Resilience Building during Humanitarian Response

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Author Note

A capstone paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in Sustainable Development at SIT Graduate Institute, DC Center in Washington, DC, USA

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Suzanne Simon

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Date: July 27, 2018

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>3RP</b>	Regional Response
<b>HIF</b>	Humanitarian Innovation Fund
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>IDP</b>	Internally displaced persons
<b>GHDF</b>	Global Humanitarian and Development Foundation
<b>GoR</b>	Government of Rwanda
<b>MIDIMAR</b>	Ministry of Disaster Management and Refugees
<b>NGO</b>	Nongovernmental Organization
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SHRP</b>	Syrian Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan
<b>SRP</b>	Syrian Response Plan
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNHCR</b>	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
<b>WASH</b>	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

## **Abstract**

If countries hosting refugees want to build resiliency and reduce dependency on foreign relief, humanitarian response and local development need to be addressed simultaneously, and collaboration at all levels of stakeholders needs to take place in planning and decision making. Additionally, innovation and strong leadership are strong factors in creating and leading new ideas as funding and world leadership dynamics change, especially with traditional leaders such as the US and the UN losing influence. Observations made at the Mahama Refugee Camp in Rwanda as well as existing document analysis reflect these traits by active efforts of camp administrators and humanitarian leaders to build resilience with refugees through self-reliance activities such as camp jobs, growing their own food and encouraging positive relationships with the host community. Investing in resiliency is crucial for the future, and providing tools and resources to facilitate any organization or program to implement effective methods for collaboration and innovation can make a huge difference in whether refugees and their hosts can envision possibilities of growth and prosperity in these circumstances, or not.

## **Introduction**

As more and more people are displaced in the world due to catastrophic forces such as violent conflict or environmental disaster, it is becoming increasingly evident that many of these situations could be more or less permanent. Many examples of refugees that have considered their stay in a country to be temporary (less than six months) may end up staying for ten years or longer. During this waiting period, a refugee could almost consider themselves in a holding pattern - not wanting to commit to their new life in the host country, waiting patiently to return home, and essentially in delayed growth. This is particularly true for those in refugee camps where a majority of their basic needs such as food and shelter is provided via aid organizations and the host country, and they are not required to think strategically about their next move except to look towards returning home. Over time, what can happen is a dependency and complacency that can be hard to reverse, which can create a semi-permanent welfare state if the pressure to find work is not there.

For my practicum, I was able to observe how the country of Rwanda has managed their influx of Burundian refugees at the Mahama Refugee Camp in Eastern Province. Mahama was established in January 2015 and, out of the six other camps in the country, is the largest with almost 60,000 refugees. The Government of Rwanda, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Refugees (MIDIMAR), UNHCR and a host of partner nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) administer the various programming and services available to the refugees on the camp. The organization with which I worked, Global Humanitarian and Development Foundation (GHDF), is the NGO designated for WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) programming which includes garbage collection, latrine discharge and disposal, and hygiene promotion- all in an effort to prevent the spread of hygiene-based diseases such as cholera and typhoid.

During my time at Mahama observing various camp activities, what stood out as very proactive and forward-thinking was that the refugees themselves are active participants in a variety of self-reliance inducing initiatives to include employment with GHDF to conduct routine hygiene tasks, cultivation of their own gardens and animal husbandry, and running a business in the market place, all in an effort to diminish their dependency on relief. This is in contrast to another camp in Rwanda called Kiziba located in Western Province, where refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo have been dwelling for almost 20 years. At Kiziba, a confrontation between refugees and police broke out in February due to diminished food relief from UNHCR, which the refugees had become highly dependent on and what triggered the pushback. Seeing the difference between these two scenarios demonstrated the importance of advancing opportunities for refugees that is not solely dependent on relief disbursements, and encourages more productive self-reliant activities such as job creation which can ultimately have a positive impact on refugee well-being and independence.

Another important scenario I observed while at Mahama Refugee Camp is that investment in facilities such as latrines and shelters for refugees was also implemented for the neighboring communities. This strategic gesture contributed to reduced tension that could emerge when the host community does not receive the same benefits as the refugees, yet are dealing with their own development issues such as lack of infrastructure and community services.

Like Rwanda, many countries and organizations have realized that working towards resilience and self-reliance with displaced populations such as refugees could reverse a potential life-sentence of dependency as well as diminish a confrontational existence with host communities needing similar resources. “Enabling self-reliance can lead to more sustainable



displacement situations, making refugees less dependent on aid while enabling them to contribute to their local host economies.” (Huang et al, 2018, p13). In order for resilience programming to be effective, the factors that have the most enduring impact is ensuring that programming addresses both humanitarian and development assistance for refugee and host communities; collaborative planning and collective action by all stakeholders is implemented; the promotion of innovative solutions is encouraged; and strong, multi-level leadership is enabled to ensure sustainable progress.

In this Independent Practitioner Inquiry Capstone paper, I will examine various case studies and plans that have made positive contributions to refugee resilience. I will also discuss the results of my observations in Rwanda and corresponding actions that have been factors in their own refugee response in regards to Mahama Refugee Camp. Finally, I will discuss how these complementary components can be intentionally used together in humanitarian response. With the progress that has been made in countries such as Rwanda, other regions that are dealing with large refugee populations may be able to see the benefit to their communities of working with these displaced people (instead of against) and to use existing, successful programming templates and adjust them towards their own positive solutions.

## Literature Review

Common themes among previous studies demonstrates the importance of promoting resilience in refugees. Gatter (2018) examines the difference between two refugee camps in Jordan where one allows freedom of movement and has as an active market and the other, considered a model camp, is highly structured and refugees are almost exclusively dependent on aid owing to the remote location of the camp which makes creating their own livelihoods difficult. The disposition of the refugees from the less-structured, less-isolated camp is much better than the one with more restrictions and less opportunities for engagement. Furthermore, an example of the importance of refugee-host community relationships is shown with Liberians in refugee camps in Ghana, and the results of those refugees who make a concerted effort to engage with the local community. Learning the Ghanaian language and building social networks with the locals via economic exchange are some of the influential factors that contribute to those refugees who are able to create livelihoods in their temporary home and better resilience (Porter, Hampshire, Kyei, Adjaloo, Rapoo, & Kilpatrick, 2008) versus those who struggle to be productive outside of the camp boundaries. Arega (2017) discusses another example where Eritrean refugees at the Shimelba Refugee Camp in Ethiopia are forced to flee the abuses of their home country just to be forced into isolation, unable to leave the camp without restrictions nor able to pursue outside work with the local economy.

Compared with these negative examples in Ghana and Ethiopia, an effective livelihood initiative is found with Somalian refugees whereas they have received training while displaced in Kenya in business management and entrepreneurship. Upon returning to their home country, former refugees were able to use their skills to build new income-producing opportunities (Musa, 2016). In the spirit of leadership, Esses, Hamilton, & Gaucher (2017) discuss the important role

of the host country in the acculturation of refugees into the local society. National level policies and improved strategies to address livelihoods can have positive long-term benefits on refugees' resilience as they resettle in a new country and potentially contribute to the local society and economy.

For Rwanda, a UNHCR report addressing gender equality at refugee camps underscores the importance of livelihood and positive coping of refugees, especially for women and girls. Without proper ways of supporting themselves and their families, many girls can resort to high risk behavior such as exchanging sex for money as well as having more children in order to receive more relief supplies. Odicoh reports on one camp that “[I]n Kiziba, which at 20 years is the oldest camp, the sense of hopelessness manifests in alcohol abuse and aggressive/violent behavior targeted at women and men in public and private spaces” (2017, p.11).

Due to the many constraints placed on refugees, especially in a camp environment, it is important to encourage stakeholders to develop innovative solutions that address resilience. The Humanitarian Innovation Fund (HIF) published *More than just luck: innovation in humanitarian action* guide to outline actionable steps on how an organization or program can implement an innovation process and take it to scale. Based on fifteen of HIF case studies, a Five Stage Model was developed consisting of activities in innovation recognition, ideation, development, implementation, and diffusion. In addition to implementing these stages, the concepts of open collaboration, space for creativity and strong leadership should be encouraged to ensure success. Because developing and implementing new ideas takes time, it is important to remember that “every innovation project is a unique process of exploration, trialing, setback and discovery” (Obrecht, 2016, p.51) and should be approached with reasonable results expectations.

Mercy Corps demonstrated this with a unique approach to a humanitarian crisis when international organizations such as the UN and the International Red Cross were unable to enter certain parts of Syria due to conflicts of interest with the government of Syria in Damascus. With these constraints, Mercy Corps and other international NGOs took independent action to fill the leadership gap and, in the spirit of innovation, developed new ways of working with impacted people in the conflict zones via existing relationships with local Syrian actors as well as the use of communication technology to respond to hard to reach areas (Mercy Corps, 2015).

As the US loses leadership in the international sector, and funding diminishes across the spectrum of development and humanitarian interventions, dependency on strong NGOs and even private companies and foundations filling those gaps may start to become a reality as shown by Mercy Corps in Syria. Runde, Yayboke, and Milner with the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) report essentially the same perspectives with the acknowledgement that the US's role in humanitarian and refugee response is diminishing due to recent changes in policies and funding for important programming normally dispersed by the US State Department and USAID. Their main argument is that "a coalition led by the US and its allies best represents the hope for leadership in the global forced migration crisis," (Runde, Yayboke, & Milner, 2018) and that it is in the US's security interest to maintain this role. With the current political environment in the world, it is hard to believe that existing power dynamics could revert to former times, and innovative ways of approaching the growing refugee crisis, including leadership roles, will have to be considered.

Capitalizing on the change in global leadership, Alexander Betts (2016) of the Refugees Studies Centre details in his TED Talk that the current refugee response system was developed over 50 years ago and how our current political systems have failed to adapt to the current

globalized world, augmenting the fear that refugees will impact negatively the lives of local citizens. In response to that argument, Betts highlights the case of Uganda where “against the odds of extreme constraint, refugees are innovating” (2016) by having open access to the Uganda economy and opening businesses in the camps. He even mentioned that in the capital Kampala, 21% of the refugees own businesses, and many of these businesses also employ Ugandans (Betts, 2016). This is a great example of how a country and local community can benefit from collaborative economic initiatives that can potentially benefit both groups.

Michelle Fleming (2014) from UNHCR relays a powerful message in her TED Talk on why investing in refugees’ growth and development in addition to humanitarian relief can be just as crucial to their future. For many, as soon as their education is completed or no longer available, there is no future or hope as many are living in environments such as refugee camps that do not provide opportunities for growth beyond school. “Not investing in refugees is a huge missed opportunity” (Fleming, 2014), with the reality that the existing refugee crisis is not diminishing it should be further incentive for developing innovative solutions to help refugees flourish versus languish.

It seems that actors in the Middle East have heeded Fleming’s words. In 2015, countries in the region hosting Syrians to include Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt developed the Syria Response Plan (hereafter, SRP) and the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (hereafter, 3RP) to address the reality that refugees have been fleeing Syria since 2011, and the potential for the flow to stop is bleak as is the potential to return safely to their homes. UNDP details resilience and recovery within Syria via the Syrian Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP)(n.d.). The development of these plans recognizes that not confronting the refugee crisis with proactive solutions can threaten stability within refugee, host communities and

neighboring areas. According to UNDP, investing in mutually beneficial projects, such as infrastructure construction, “will lead to sustainable improvements and durable transformational changes, equipping host governments with the means to cope with this and possible future shocks” (UNDP, n.d., p.6). Two subsequent Regional Strategic Overviews for 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 detail the progress that has been made since the initial development of the SRP and the goals for the coming years. The 2015-2016 report is the first addition as part of the regional effort of 3RP, whereas humanitarian and development interventions are jointly planned and financed since many of the countries and communities hosting refugees are in desperate need of assistance themselves. The report includes two objectives. The first objective addresses both the needs and protection of the refugees and vulnerable members of the host communities. The second objective targets strengthening the national government capacity in responding to citizens’ needs and crisis activities. Following on as an update, the 2017-2018 report shows that intervention measures detailed in the initial planning phase have been implemented, and 3RP actors’ collaboration and coming up with local solutions is paying off. Progress has already been seen whereas in Turkey “more than 400 of these Syrian health personnel have been hired by the Ministry of Health to work in more than 80 refugee clinics” (UNDP & UNHCR, 2018, p.10) and “the Government of Jordan took the unprecedented step of announcing the start process of partial economic inclusion of Syrian refugees” (UNDP & UNHCR, 2018, p.11). In Iraq, meetings with the local government, UN and camp NGOs will be administered by all participants in the spirit of collective action. Egypt also reported progress in refugee employment in the service sector. The difference between the results of the first and second reports underscores the potential of collaborative efforts at all levels and the results when national governments are vested in making things work with the refugees. 3RP actors will continue to work towards better programming,

acknowledging that progress does not happen overnight and solutions have to be systemic in targeting local and refugee populations.

As seen with 3RP, removing the separation between humanitarian and development programming is essential in sustainable development and refugee resilience. Development can help inform about local realities and how best to use the existing resources and local capacities that could benefit the host community as well as refugees (Wairimu, Christoplos, & Hillhorst, 2016). An example can be seen in Jordan where grants are provided to locals via the Norwegian Refugee Council to construct and rent housing to Syrian refugees (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2015). The Middle East Research Institute (2015) also suggests that "the first step is to promote a transformation of refugee camps towards self-sustainable settlements during the extended period of inhabitancy by refugees" while simultaneously growing the local capabilities. Huang et al (2018) further highlight the need for the World Bank's participation through its IDA18 financing program to provide incentives to host countries to engage their refugee community with "an action plan or strategy with concrete steps, including policy reforms for long term solutions that benefit refugees and host communities" (Huang et al, 2018, p.3). Donors may have to get past the idea that countries are only doing the work to receive aid if it in fact has an impact on refugees, this could be linked to results-oriented financing.

It becomes apparent, with examples of refugee engagement seen in Uganda and the 3RP, that effective leadership in leading collaborative, systemic humanitarian responses is vital to building resilience. Senge, Hamilton, and Kania (2015) speak about systems leadership where "helping people see the larger system is essential to building a shared understanding of complex problems" (para.10) and "shifting the collective focus from reactive problem solving to co-creating leadership" (para.12) can enhance the cooperative engagement of all stakeholders.

Transformational leadership can also be effective in innovation and collaboration where Cleavenger and Munyon (2013) point out that what can be beneficial for leaders includes reframing refugee problems as potentially contributing to the resilience of everyone, locally and regionally. Affirmations that all stakeholders are an important part of the refugee resilience process can instigate more participation in developing innovative solutions. From Community Tool Box's (CTB) *Orienting Ideas in Leadership*, another idea of framing leadership for resilience includes building a group of new leaders that can minimize the loss of momentum over several years of programming, and expand support for the cause among several individuals. "Bringing new people into your organization is the foundation community building. The more people you have working for your cause, the more powerful you will be" ("Section 1", n.d.). CTB's description of collaborative leadership as another method in that "the best times are (...) when complex and serious problems arise; when stakeholders are characterized by diversity and/or a variety of interests; (...) when an issue affects a whole organization or community; or when empowerment is a goal of the process from the beginning" ("Section 11", n.d.).

As the country of Bangladesh manages its own refugee crisis, a momentous challenge still at the height of chaos in one of the most vulnerable districts in the country, the *2018 JRP for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis* report not only details these catastrophic circumstances but the plans to incorporate many of the lessons learned from previous humanitarian responses. "The response will focus on saving lives and protecting refugees, but also on reducing their dependency, in order to enhance their ability to cope with the crisis. (...) Resilience will help them prepare for any solution that may materialize" (Strategic Executive Group, 2018, p.31). The Government of Bangladesh is also practicing good leadership, detailing actions where "host community consultations spread across the operational areas are underway to ensure social



cohesion efforts” during the refugee response “maximize the gains and opportunities (...) for strengthening resilience and development” (Strategic Executive Group, 2018, p.31). It is acknowledged that the dynamics of this response will be different from other parts of the world as far as refugee density and environmental fragility but all actors are committed to incremental short-term solutions addressing safety, and long-term plans of resilience.

## **Method**

In order to best determine what practices have been most effective in the field and with the existing time constraints of the School for International Training graduate program, this research has primarily focused on observations of humanitarian work conducted during my practicum in Rwanda as well as key findings from the literature review.

### **Practicum**

During my practicum period in Rwanda, I was able to work with the Global Humanitarian Development Foundation (GHDF) based in the capital of Kigali, observing sites such as the Mahama Refugee Camp to provide an opportunity to analyze and adjust my research question to what seemed more relevant to the current stage of refugee resilience efforts. My initial assumption concluded that refugees were not given opportunities to augment their lives within the context of the host country, and only saw returning home as their potential future, if and when it happened. My observations in Rwanda concluded that this is not always the case, and that refugees have important roles in the camp and that leadership at levels is responsible for making this happen.

### **Literature Resources**

To substantiate my new observations, further document analysis was conducted with a specific focus examining plans and methods in refugee resilience that have worked in the past and/or are underway. Analyzing those documents for detailed methods and results would inform on the overarching factors that made refugee resilience possible especially within countries and circumstances that are already difficult. In addition to these documents, literature on the factors of collaboration, effective leadership and innovation were further referenced as applied in complex scenarios such as humanitarian response.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The framework for this paper unfolded via field observations in Rwanda and the subsequent literature review in response to those observations and initial analysis. Observations at Mahama Refugee Camp laid the groundwork for resilience building activities happening in the field, and the positive impacts that were being witnessed with the refugees and the host community. With examples of both good and negative refugee resilience efforts from the literature review, determining the positive factors in the case studies and plans previously implemented would build the argument for what has been effective, systematic response especially as far as collaboration, innovation and leadership. It was clear that resilience could not depend on just one solution or organization, or that it should be addressed separately from host development initiatives in those countries impacted. In order for this type of programming to be effective, additional steps of promoting leadership and innovative ideas would also be necessary components as part of a comprehensive response.

## Results

The results from working with GHDF demonstrated that resilience is being promoted in Rwanda at the Mahama Refugee Camp via various self-reliant initiatives for the Burundian refugees such as job opportunities, the creation of small business spaces, and gardening and farming - all within the camp boundaries. Refugees are able to hold jobs with the various NGOs on the camp and, if available, can even pursue work off the camp. A market place in the camp consists of barbershops, restaurants, tailoring and many other businesses ran by refugees as a means of income building. Refugees are encouraged to grow small garden plots near their shelters in order to supplement the existing food rations supplied by UNHCR and to stabilize the soil of the steep embankments stripped of vegetation during construction of the camp. Cattle are also raised on the boundaries of the shelter areas.

To bring all of this together, an extensive amount of planning and feedback meetings take place at the camp such as daily staff meetings for partners working on the camp to larger town halls that allowed participation and input from stakeholders on various issues such as operations and programming. The participants in these meeting included the local community and government representatives, the multitude of NGOs and international organizations implementing the programming on the camp as well as the refugees themselves and their elected leaders.

The meeting I was able to attend while there was conducted by the GHDF hygiene manager for the hygiene promoters, who were refugees hired to instruct and guide the eighteen camp villages on routine practices to prevent disease within their shelter areas and with their children. The meetings were designed to continuously check in on challenges faced by the promoters during their daily activities and to develop solutions together. During the meeting I

attended, the promoter from Village 16 detailed how he typically moves around his village to ensure garbage is collected, toilets are cleaned, hygiene materials provided by GHDF are being used, and identifying any other discrepancies that have developed. One problem he noted was that hand washing was not being done in his village during his last visit, and he wasn't sure about the best response. The hygiene manager said that when he sees negative actions, he needs to set a good example by practicing the desired action himself for the villagers to see and imitate. She also reminded him as well as the other promoters that they are like ambassadors for hygiene, communicating the incentives of good health by practicing these small but impactful actions. It is also important that the villagers do the work, especially cleaning their own latrines and picking up and sweeping in and around their shelters to encourage self-reliance and responsibility.

These routine hygiene promotion and WASH activities take place every day with the goal of constantly reinforcing refugee behavior that prevents disease. Even with the commemoration of the Rwandan genocide, these tasks continued without break because any pause in activities can cause refugees to slip into complacency, and challenge areas with potential for disease outbreak can get out of hand.

As an added impact, instead of being dictated to about what they should do to fix a reported problem, the promoters were encouraged to come up with a solution together and if the problem was really serious, act together. These actions seemed to enhance ownership of a task and prevent indifference as the promoters saw their role as important as well as their ideas. This enabling environment encourages leadership and confidence in refugees who may be more willing to work towards positive responses should relief supplies and services diminish, or if they return to their country and need to rebuild their lives.

Consequently, since GHDF took over WASH and hygiene in 2015, no new major diseases outbreaks have occurred. GHDF promotes good communication and relationships not only with its staff but with other NGOs in the camp in order to facilitate the sharing of information such as an uptick in disease at the health center or a villager needing special assistance to clean their shelter. One problem discussed that had not been resolved is the theft of large water tanks for handwashing and bins for garbage: no clues as to who did it nor innovative solutions from refugees or camp staff on how to prevent further incidents have been presented.

Another part of Mahama's refugee response that I observed was that almost all of the relief programming received by the refugees was also available to the host community just on the other side of the fence. Latrines and shelters that were built in the camp were also constructed in and around the neighborhoods outside the fences. Camp health facilities were also open to the locals, and refugee and host children attended the same schools. The results of these actions was diminished resentment from either community and the reduction of potential conflict. Aid organizations and national governments are realizing that in increasingly likely cases where refugees could be around for years to come, their interests are in that whatever benefits refugees receive should also contribute to the host community's development. Instead of seeing the refugees as competition, refugee presence could result in increased investment in local facilities such as improved infrastructure, increased market and employment opportunities on the refugee camps for local goods and jobs, and improved educational resources and training provided for all.

As discussed in the literature review and what reflects practices at Mahama, the 3RP Strategic Overviews for 2015-2016 and 2017-2018 and UNDP work in Syria report on the progress of humanitarian response efforts in the Middle East and what has worked in respect to

impactful resilience building. These reports detailed many lessons learned and best practices which include that a response must be an integrated approach combining humanitarian and development initiatives, the response must promote innovative solutions to strategy and implementation shortcomings, and collaboration with all stakeholders is crucial in order to have sustainable impact. 3RP Strategic Overviews specifically detailed programmatic directions to include Strong National Leadership, Regional Protection Framework, Continued Outreach and Partnerships and Durable Solutions for Syrian Refugees. The last report for 2017-2018 shows that after three years of implementation, national plans have made progress and efforts for innovation have been pursued in places like Turkey where Syrian refugees are receiving various social services to enhance their daily lives and build better relations with local institutions. As reported by UNDP as part of its Syria response efforts, “in addition to the almost 50,000 direct beneficiaries, around 1.5 million crisis affected persons all over Syria are enjoying better health, environmental and living conditions as a result of UNDP’s livelihoods and resilience programme” (UNDP, p16). Investing in resilience can have potential, positive outcomes for all communities and refugees as detailed in Figure 1.

**INVESTING IN RESILIENCE WILL:**

- OPTIMIZE EXISTING RESOURCES BY INVESTING IN MORE DURABLE SOLUTIONS AND AVOIDING PARALLEL MECHANISMS
- STRENGTHEN INFRASTRUCTURES AND NATIONAL CAPACITIES THAT ARE MORE SUSTAINABLE OVER THE LONG TERM
- STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY OF INDIVIDUALS, HOST COMMUNITIES AND STATES TO COPE WITH AND RECOVER FROM POSSIBLE FUTURE SHOCKS
- REDUCE THE COST OF THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE IN THE MEDIUM TERM

*Figure 1 UNDP Investing in Resilience*

In order for humanitarian programming to be most effective, stakeholders must also collaborate at all levels in planning and response. What I saw at Mahama can extend to all

positive refugee responses found during the literature review. In most of these cases, working together has the potential of determining the best ways refugee presence can be a benefit and the best way to do it. Additionally, when a response plan is implemented that has been planned collaboratively, especially with the host community and national government, buy-in and active participation is more likely and programming is much more effective due to this collective decision making. Research has also shown that community members are much more effective in impacting change than outside resources (Saul, 2013).



## **Discussion**

The results from my practicum in Rwanda and findings in the literature review clearly demonstrates that addressing refugee resilience has become an important part of humanitarian response and refugee programming. In order for those interventions to be sustainable, evidence has shown that humanitarian and development initiatives need to be linked and must also include collaborative planning and collective action among all stakeholders. Furthermore, as limited funding and power dynamics change, encouraging innovative, adaptive solutions can bring new ideas that can be inspired by any level of stakeholder, to include locals themselves. Finally, strong leadership development will ensure that new plans and initiatives will be implemented effectively and maintained over time, contributing to a path of long term resilience-building extending past normal programming and intervention limits.

### **Humanitarian and Development Programming**

One of the biggest discrepancies discovered in recent years is how ineffective a humanitarian response can be when isolated from ongoing development problems already existing in the host communities. Humanitarian work is generally implemented by relief programs and managed by organizations such as UNHCR with a principal objective of meeting the basic needs of the refugees and working with the national government coping with the problem. Development agencies, on the other hand, are concerned with everyday poverty and well-being in those communities in desperate need of assistance. When refugees enter a country already lacking in its own basic needs such as food and shelter, they become a huge burden on the host community in terms of land, resources and funding. “Approximately 84 percent of the world’s 22.5 million refugees are hosted by developing countries, which are already struggling to meet the development needs of their citizens” (Huang et al, 2018, p.2). As in regions like the

Middle East with the Syrian refugee crisis as well as Bangladesh and the Rohingya, almost all of the host countries are facing their own development struggles and the refugees can be seen as receiving preferential treatment in the form of aid support at no cost. Situations like these can be breeding grounds for additional conflict as both populations' frustrations rise from competing needs.

As a crisis begins to develop, the reality is that refugees are more than likely funneled to undesirable, fragile areas due to ease of access and with poor populations who have minimal political clout. Instead of just working with the national government, plans need to be in place right away to determine the impact the refugees will have on that community as far as environmental, infrastructure and land access and what can be done to best mitigate the disruption in services or facilities that contribute to host livelihoods and well-being. Even though it can be difficult to determine what communities will be impacted, the same problems can be anticipated for most underdeveloped areas around the world and a plan of action should be developed that can be customized for the different targets.

### **Collaborative Planning and Implementation**

Encouraging collaboration with the host community should be a top priority with refugee work since local people can most effectively influence each other and can decide what type of barriers, such as lack of cooperation, they can construct if left out of the process. Inclusiveness and authentic planning may be difficult at first, but locals ultimately have a better idea of what they can work with, and, with the help of facilitators, can determine what role the refugees can play that can contribute to the economy and the strength of the community. Additionally, everyone will have a sense of ownership of the strategy developed and be more committed to the decisions if allowed to participate.

Collaboration is also important at the highest level. The success of Mahama Refugee Camp depended on the initial agreement of the Government of Rwanda to let refugee work participation take place. This was further underscored in the case of 3RP whereas Middle East regional actors and national governments worked with each other in the development of country-specific refugee solutions. Collaborative relationships need to extend to the national government, donors, private companies and any other stakeholder that will contribute to and be impacted by these decisions, “a collaboration among several groups and individuals is often needed to address a complex issue” (Section 11). With collaboration comes collective action, which further enhances resilience when many put their heads together and implement strategies. When shared outcomes are defined together at global and country level, collective outcomes and shared targets ensure solutions are complementary and have impact (Huang, 2018), duplicate efforts are avoided, and adaptive learning is encouraged by involving different expertise.

### **Encouragement of Innovative Solutions**

As dynamics in the world continue to change, humanitarian solutions must also adapt. In Rwanda, the decrease in funding from UNHCR brought to light how the group of Congo refugees in the northern part of Rwanda had become almost exclusively dependent on relief, and the ultimate cause of their rebellion when rations were cut. The Burundians at Mahama, on the other hand, are actively encouraged to find paying jobs, run their own businesses, and plant gardens to reduce dependency on relief supplies. What still lacks in Mahama and refugee situations around the world are enough innovative opportunities for refugees to become completely self-reliant through job opportunities outside the camp and other sustainable activities.

Vocational training at the camp covers skills in areas such as information and computer technology, tailoring, mechanics and basket weaving but opportunities to make a living free of relief may not be sufficient, especially since local Rwandans are also coping with low job opportunities. Creating space for innovative solutions to address these gaps could potentially inspire new ideas. As part of collaboration, bringing people together from different walks of life in a deliberate effort to make plans and decisions, especially ones that will impact many, can potentially create an atmosphere of innovation. Reaching across boundaries can also have immense payoffs because seeing a difficult situation from different vantage points can create inspiring new ways of approaching challenges and new ways to innovate. This is significant especially in humanitarian work when previous methods have not worked or had long term impact, and the same results keep showing up. Using resources such as the *More than just luck: innovation in humanitarian action* shows the benefits of encouraging innovation and how to implement that creative process.

Additionally, innovation can come in any form that reconsiders existing relationships, social constructs, and tools. Mercy Corps' experience in Syria required looking at their role in a different way when the traditional response leaders such as the UN could not act, but suffering in hard-to-reach places in the eastern part of the country was still happening and action was needed. This case demonstrates how recognizing that a status quo decision is not working for a particular scenario, and implementing intentional strategies to develop outside-the-box responses until an effective, new formula is designed. As the world heads down uncharted paths, innovation is the only way to adapt since the old ways will probably not have the desired impact (Runde et al, 2018). Furthermore, as demonstrated by my observations in Rwanda, cuts in UNHCR funding looming in the future shed light on a crisis that could be on the horizon, and innovation will be

necessary to avert potential collapse of the humanitarian system should funding and resources halt.

### **Designating and Developing Strong Leadership**

Without the Government of Rwanda and MIDIMAR, Mahama would not be able to provide opportunities to refugees and the local community effectively as it has. Without strong camp leadership from UNHCR, the strategies targeting refugee needs would be hard to implement and sustain. Without GHDF's CEO and program managers, supervisors, and hygiene promoters, the day to day details of important tasks might fail. Leadership at all levels has made resilience building at Mahama possible and effective. The 3RP program also demonstrated in the Middle East the positive outcomes of strong regional leadership at all levels that is open to ideas such as collaboration and innovation, and can provide the guidance and means to instigate meaningful action and progress. Strong leaders also have the ability to reframe a challenge from a potential threat to local resources to an opportunity to enhance the well-being of the community.

Cultivating leadership at all levels will also ensure continuity of a program. One of the important assumptions of this approach is that communities have the capacity to heal themselves and that the greatest resources for recovery are the community members themselves (Saul, 2013), which is why leadership from even the beneficiaries and community members is essential to build a strong foundation that can resist crises and adapt more quickly to changes in humanitarian programming.

There are many other important factors in resilience not covered in this paper to include livelihood creation and refugee coping mechanisms or how Rwanda can fix the problems with legacy refugee camps such as Kibiza or how to prevent an onslaught of refugees should a

country or community have successful programming consequently drawing more migration. What also seems to be missing or is not clear is a path to implementing a collaborative system for a project or program in a complex environment such as humanitarian work. These are important new research and policy questions for myself and others. Being able to develop an intervention that automatically includes different stakeholders needs carefully designed steps derived from best lessons learned from past efforts so that any organization can plan for resilience at all steps of the process. This is especially important when dealing with people of different cultures and religions that may have different ideas about what is acceptable as a humanitarian solution, what is not, and setting expectations for the difficult but possible road ahead. Rwanda has benefitted from the Burundians being similar in culture and language, other scenarios such as Somalians entering Kenya or Uganda might be completely different. Having the right tools and resources available can be an additional incentive for use of collaboration going forward for any project or program.

## **Brief Reflection on Sustainable Development**

Communities that suffer under circumstances that contribute to poverty and lack of opportunity can see their predicament become even more dire with a mass influx of refugees forced into their already fragile home. Existing sustainable development programming can see careful efforts towards progress reversed if not completely halted as refugees' emergency status absorbs all of the existing resources in an effort to keep them alive and to promote stabilization. Many of the same needs of the host community in a developing country are also demanded by the refugees. Addressing both needs will be crucial to sustainable development especially if the complex conditions become semi-permanent. Looking at the United Nations' seventeen Sustainable Development Goals, the same expectations for refugee resilience can be seen in creating a world free of poverty and where all people can enjoy prosperity. These goals should be seen in the same light since many of the humanitarian issues are connected to development. The goals of industry, innovation and infrastructure (9), peace, justice and strong institutions (16), and partnerships for goals (17) are just a few that can be integrated in refugee resilience building.

Developing infrastructure for both refugees and host communities will elevate collective resilience by not only providing important resources such as water, power and roads but could also be important for creating jobs and economic opportunities. Building roads can make it easier for businesses to receive raw goods from other areas, and also be able to transport their own products such as processed food. Ease of water and power access may encourage more refugees and locals to start their own businesses such as tailoring and laundry.

Enhancing both communities can lead to less violence and more peace within areas impacted by refugee presence. SDG 16 emphasizes inclusive societies and institutions in which

humanitarian work that is approached from a collaboration of stakeholders and leadership from all levels ensures plans and results that are more fair in benefit distribution and identify inequalities. The consequences of diminishing this important goal can produce resentment and frustration that can potentially lead to conflict, as seen in the Kiziba Camp in Rwanda.

Partnerships for goals can be achieved by using various stakeholders to work together in planning strategic responses to refugee resilience. For this SDG, strong and consistent partnerships with national governments, donors and international organizations will be key to local solutions being implemented and sustainable.



## **Conclusion**

Having been refugees themselves, Rwandans want to ensure that they can provide reciprocal services to others forced into a situation Rwandans have already experienced after the genocide, and this empathy shows in the comprehensive efforts exerted by all levels of the response. The countries in the Middle East that are receiving so many Syrian refugees have also accepted that working with the refugees and their resilience is a better solution than waiting for them to go home. As Bangladesh is in the midst of receiving a mass amount of Rohingya that are taxing local resources and the environment, the government and humanitarian partners such as UNHCR are fully aware that any relief response will eventually have to include the host populations, and collaborative efforts will be made to prioritize interventions and develop innovative ideas to confront this complex challenge. Leadership is being encouraged at all levels from locals to donors to the UN to guide decision making and implementation of programming that is thoughtful of all factors that can have a positive or negative impact on all beneficiaries. As these countries set the precedence for how refugees can be successfully integrated into society as contributors to the social and economic systems, other national governments, including those in developed nations in Europe, can understand the positive benefits of proactive and inclusive efforts refugees can bring if given the opportunity and the right resources. Otherwise, a group of displaced people and even their descendants could be left in desolation of not being able to live to their fullest potential, leading to a variety of negative consequences that could otherwise be avoided.

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