Urban Refugee Youth Livelihoods:
Findings from three cities and global guidance
Introduction

- One-year project funded by BPRM
- Panama City, Nairobi, Cairo
- Youth ages 15-24
Purpose

• Gap in knowledge and programming for refugee youth in cities.

• Little literature, few impact evaluations
Methods

• Literature review

• Field assessments
  – 254 refugee youth consulted
    • Groups by age, sex, nationality
    • Individual interviews
  – Informant interviews
  – Visits to work sites, agencies
Youth bulge often seen as a threat

...but when education, healthcare and employment are available, young people can revitalize economy
Opportunities in the city

- Private firms and productive technologies
- Continuing education, mentorship, internships, apprenticeships
- Through self-selection process, many urban refugee youth have more initiative and drive
Tapping the potential of urban environments

- Economies of scale make concentrated urban areas more productive
- Urbanization is one of the biggest drivers of economic growth
- The largest 600 cities home to 22% of the population produce more than 50% GDP
- Largest 100 cities produce 38% of GDP
- 25% of global population will live in largest 600 cities by 2025
- Large cities attract the most talent
- Large cities attract more investment

- Cost of delivering basic services – water, housing, and education 30 – 50% cheaper in concentrated population centers

Research. Rethink. Resolve.
Main Findings

• Enormous untapped potential for empowerment

• Most youth contribute to household

• Insufficient income, safety

• No time to earn & learn
“Invisible” girls in domestic work face exploitation, abuse
Policy Environment

- 2009 UNHCR Urban Refugee Policy not implemented
  - Govts still restrict right to work, freedom of movement
- Services more appropriate for camps
- Youth not aware of rights, laws, refugee policies
- Police over-zealous, suspicious of foreigners
- Local laws (municipal/neighborhood) restrict refugees from earning a living
Security

- Live in least-safe neighborhoods: petty crime & violence
- Young women risk GBV in public spaces
- Males at risk of recruitment into gangs
- Police harassment: bribe-seeking, youth can’t assemble
- “We just stay at home” = isolation, anxiety
- Esp. young women b/c household chores, cultural constraints

= LIMITED ABILITY TO LEARN, EARN & SOCIALIZE
Human Capital

Education

Barriers to school:

• Cost of tuition/uniforms/supplies/transport
• Discrimination
• Cultural constraints for some girls
• Low demand:
  • poor quality of instruction
  • relevance of curriculum
  • language barrier
Human Capital

- Training
  - Few opportunities for technical and vocational education and training (TVET)
    - youth unaware of programs
    - curricula out-of-date
    - too costly
  - Lack “work readiness” skills
Social Capital

- Young people crave affiliation & useful connections to gain access to human and financial capital
- Lack strong social networks – makes young men vulnerable to gang recruitment
- Few refugee youth groups exist
Financial Capital

- Informal market = main option
  - Capital seen as main barrier to making business
- No contact with banks or informal lending
  - No outreach by banks
  - Legal restrictions to bank accounts
Existing programs

• Limited education, training or livelihood programming
• Training is short-term, only tracks # trained, not job attainment
• not linked to market demand
• Few programs participatory
• Little gender analysis
Guiding Principles

• **Systems approach:** build local capacity to deliver services, rather than parallel systems

• **Mainstream participation:** engage young people as resourceful contributors to program design, monitoring and evaluation
Guiding Principles

• **Inter-generational engagement:** many have lost families

• **Gender mainstreaming and gender targeting:**
  – Targets for female participation in co-ed programs AND
  – specific progs for young women

• **Start at the margin:** find and recruit out-of-school youth, disabled, ethnic and religious minorities, adolescent girls

• **Integrated approaches:** multiple, simultaneous interventions for youth
Guiding Principles

- **Link education and economic strengthening:** set targets for employment/self-employment and re-orient education programs towards transition to work

- **Cross-sectoral partnerships:** agencies, government, private sector

- **Graduated approach:** use the CGAP Graduation Model to connect beneficiaries to services specific to their poverty level
Guiding Principles

• **Build bridges:** engage mixed groups of host country and displaced youth

• **Mitigate risk:** include protection strategies in livelihoods programs
  – WRC has tools

• **Enabling environment:** mainstream youth refugees as part of a wider pro-poor urban effort
Recommendations

Advocacy:

• Fundamental rights (work, education, equal treatment for refugees of all nationalities)
• Go local... very local
• Better regulation of informal market
  – domestic workers
Education: Out-of-school

- accelerated learning
- online & distance learning?
- catch-up courses
- flexible
- scheduled around income-generating activities
- maximize demand with PARTICIPATION IN DESIGN
Education: In-school youth

• promote access to secondary and tertiary, equal with host nationals

• Help make transition to work by adding to curricula:
  – work readiness
  – business skills
  – career guidance services
Training

TVET should lead to increased income
   – Measure employment not number of persons trained

Training should be linked to:
• national strategy for youth employment
• market assessment of local demand for good and services
   – See WRC Market Assessment Toolkit
Financial Capital

- Facilitate access to youth-friendly, flexible loan and savings products
Social Capital: adding social capital components to a LLH program can make it more successful

- Support/build “safe spaces” to interact, exchange info & learn skills
- Support youth-led & youth-serving organizations
- Engagement through sports
- Support volunteer work, to create bridges w/host communities
## Asset Building

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