

Refuge Point Diligence Visit Notes – Nairobi, Kenya  
Initial Diligence Visit, October 10, 2016

FP Reps: Jason and Elliott

Refuge Point (“RP”) Reps Met:

- Jacob Bonyo, Country Director
- Janet Ouma, Regional Resettlement Coordinator
- Paul Karanja, Urban Program Coordinator
- Amelia Bulloch, Resettlement Expert

RP Mission

- To provide lasting solutions for the world’s most at risk / vulnerable refugees. RP identifies and protects refugees who have fallen through the cracks of humanitarian assistance programs and have no other options for survival. They emphasize helping women, children and urban refugees.

Background / Problem

- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a United Nations program mandated to protect and support refugees at the request of a government or the UN itself and assists in one of three “durable solutions”:
  - voluntary repatriation to the home country (rarely happens)
  - local integration (either through formal legal structures in the host country or by modest assistance UN can provide under asylum treaties that provide some protection for registered refugees)
    - This is the model RP is focusing on in Nairobi and that RP believes can be replicated in other cities. RP wants to roll out the model to other NGOs that can replicating partners in other countries.
  - resettlement to a third country that accepts refugees (generally very small quotas relative to total number of refugees)
- An exception to UNHCR’s focus on “durable solutions” is UNHCR’s significant commitment to child protection cases.
- There are many more refugees fleeing conflict affected countries than the UNHCR can handle given its limited financial and human resources. In addition, number of refugees that can be resettled into 3<sup>rd</sup> party countries given the small numbers of refugees most countries are willing to accept, and the strict screening criteria in place (fewer than 1% of all refugees). Voluntary repatriation often is not an option due to extended conflicts that rarely resolve quickly in the home country. The result is that many refugees become stuck in refugee camps in the countries to which they flee, or exist in the informal refugee community (off in big cities) and attempt to integrate into the local community illegally (unregistered) or quasi-legally (registered by the UN as asylum-

seekers, which provides some legal status that the host country should recognize per UN treaty obligations). Due to UNHCR's limited resources, most refugees become stuck in the system for years and struggle to survive.

RP Programs – can be divided into two program areas

- UNHCR Collaboration Project, aka “Deployments”. RP deploys qualified staff to 17 UNHCR offices across Africa to increase resettlement and child protection capacity. UNHCR works with many NGOs that provide these augmented staff resources. Deployed individuals work in UNHCR offices mostly as though they are UN employees, although the NGO has some ability to influence the types of cases the NGO employee works on. Deployed individuals are paid by the supporting NGO.
  - Budget \$1.9m in 2015
- Livelihoods Program (offered only in Nairobi). RP helps the most vulnerable refugees, whether already registered with UNHCR or otherwise, achieve self sufficiency by teaching them how to survive in the host country, access benefits through the UN, integrate with the local community, start businesses, etc. RP also offers psychosocial support, medical support for injured refugees, education in business and financing, and provides small business startup grants. Employment with local employers is usually not feasible due to lack of skills, lack of legal status, and persecution, so small business / entrepreneurship education is at the heart of RP's livelihoods program.
  - Budget \$1.1m in 2015

Refugees in Africa and Kenya

- Most countries in Africa, including Kenya, have an “encampment” policy that officially requires refugees to live in a refugee camp, even though refugees who live in Nairobi are rarely pressed to move to a camp. Kenya has two camps:
  - Dadaavb – NE Kenya, 350k refugees
  - Kakuma – NW Kenya, 180k refugees
- Refugees can generally live in cities if they are eligible for one of the three common exceptions to the encampment rule offered by most host countries:
  - Are enrolled in a formal education program
  - Have a medical condition that makes it dangerous to live in a camp
  - Are employed legally
- Most refugees living in the cities do not have official exceptions and live informally. These refugees can get some protection if they have a pending asylum application with the UNHCR, which triggers international laws that provide some protection against police harassment, deportation, etc. Their status is best described as “quasi legal”. They are not eligible for government benefits and they are frequently harassed by police for bribes, etc.
- The refugee problem in Kenya began with the collapse of the Somali federal government in 1991 (Kenya's northern coastal neighbor). Many Somalis fled by boat and arrived in Northern Kenya, resulting in the establishment of Kenya's two refugee camps. 25 years later, the Somali situation remains unresolved, so refugees have

continued to arrive in Kenya and remain in camps or in the informal system. Conflicts in other African countries result in more refugees fleeing to Kenya. Civil wars in South Sudan and Congo are recent examples that have resulted in a large influx of refugees to Kenya.

#### Refuge Point Selection Criteria

- Refugees that are easy cases and obviously qualify for one or more of the UN programs (voluntary repatriation, resettlement, etc.) or qualify for a local country exception to the “encampment policy” generally find it easy to get help from NGOs that work through the UNHCR’s deployments program. These NGOs are frequently sponsored by state actors and are heavily incented to “cherry pick” which refugees they work with to get the numbers assisted as high as possible. Refuge Point focuses on those refugees that are the most vulnerable in that they have the fewest available options. An obvious consequence of focusing on the more vulnerable cases results in increased cost per case processed. Common examples that increase the vulnerability of refugees:
  - not eligible for resettlement to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party country
  - not eligible for an exception to the encampment rules in the host country
  - has a medical or psychological problem (frequently related to the flight from the home country)
  - victims of rape or violence (often a cause of the flight, particularly in African countries where tribal conflict results in mass victims)
  - has lost the head of household during the conflict / journey
  - is of a nationality that is persecuted in the host country (very common)
  - does not have an education or job skill (very common)

#### RP’s UNHCR Collaboration Project / “Deployments Program”

- Began when UNHCR requested help from NGOs and RP submitted application to deploy an individual in support of UNHCR’s resettlements activities. Over years, relationship has grown.
  - In Nairobi there are 15 people in the resettlement unit of UNHCR, or which approximately half are through “deployments” (NGO funded staff).
  - RP has three deployments in Kenya:
    - Nairobi
      - Amelia Bulloch – joined RP in Aug 2014 in RP’s Rwanda office, focuses on resettlements to US, Canada, and Australia. Previously worked for RSC-Africa (a large NGO funded by US State Dept.) in Rwanda.
      - Hester Moore – joined RP in 2015, focuses on LGBTI cases as they are a particularly vulnerable category of individual that is frequently persecuted.
    - Kakuma (near site of refugee camp there) – one RP deployment
- RP has 31 individuals currently deployed across 17 countries where UNHCR operates. RP has had deployments in 30 different UNHCR countries historically.

- RP collaborates with UNHCR to identify areas (geographies or case types) that are lacking in NGO support and where incremental capacity is most needed.
- UNHCR enters into deployment contracts on a one-year basis, and the contracts frequently renew for many years.
- RP's work with the UNHCR mainly focuses on the resettlement front (vs. voluntary repatriation and local integration).
- Other significant NGOs active in UNHCR's Collaboration Project
  - RSCCWS – Refugee Support Center. Funded by US State Dept. and dedicated to resettling people to the US. Goal is to fill the approximately 85,000 refugee spots per US quota (2015 quota), and focuses on the easiest “low hanging fruit” cases given the large numbers they must process.
  - ICMC – International Catholic Migration Commission – Similar in many ways to RP, but less focused on vulnerability (large Catholic organization that provides many services to migrating people, including vaccines, humanitarian assistance, and refugee assistance)
  - DRC – Danish Refugee Council – funded by Danish and Euro governments, and the UNHCR itself (can't explain why)
- RP submitted 5,195 resettlement cases last year, all of which were in Africa. It is very difficult to track the actual acceptance of each application submitted due to privacy policies in resettling countries. We know that 80% to 90% of submitted applications to US and Canada get accepted, and can estimate the RP acceptance rate is similar to the averages.
- RP has offices in
  - Boston
  - Nairobi
    - 34 staff
  - Geneva
    - New office setup to work more closely with UNHCR headquarters in Geneva
- We visited the UNHCR center in Nairobi and met with Amelia Bulloch and several UN staff. Notable were the very large numbers of refugees at the facility relative to the number of staff members. The facility is obviously severely lacking in resources. Refugees visit this facility to register (enter the system), and for interviews and processing of their applications for UNHCR assistance (mostly resettlement and child protection applications). Applications can frequently take three to ten years to process.

#### RP's Self Reliance / “Livelihoods” Program

- Second component of RP's program activity focuses on refugees registered with UNHCR and also unregistered refugees.
- RP's first contact with refugees normally comes via volunteer community workers that work with RP and who are refugees themselves, generally well connected in a local community group. Local communities frequently organize themselves along country

lines and provide initial community level support for newly arriving refugees (albeit limited scope and time, given that the refugee community itself is in a desperate state).

- RP's process involves
  - Initial interview to determine level of vulnerability. Includes self assessment test with many questions about the individual's situation, background, health, family, resources, etc. Generally field volunteers are referring the most vulnerable cases to RP, so most cases tend to get accepted.
  - RP develops a "case plan" outlining a path to self sufficiency for the individual. This includes "holistic" support from RP in several forms that address immediate / survival needs, in conjunction with a long-term empowerment / business training program:
    - Counseling – done in house and through community counseling sessions. Necessary because many refugees are affected by psychological problems resulting from extreme stress (PTSD-type symptoms)
    - Medical Services – RP attempts to help refugees access public health resources (such as the National Hospital Insurance Fund in Kenya). This includes registration when possible with local public health insurance authority. RP also has in-house clinic and pharmacy that is used as a last resort.
    - Education – Helps refugees access public education system (free in Kenya for primary years), pays for incidental cost of primary education (books and uniforms, etc.). RP is trying to setup a system that provides support for secondary education, including helping refugees apply for scholarships and (possibly) setting up a direct scholarship fund for exceptional cases.
    - Rent Support – Newly arriving refugees frequently have no way to afford rent, so RP provides bridging rent support for up to 6 months on a needs basis. Refugees normally rent single rooms on the far outskirts of town where rent is cheapest (20-40 km from city center). To lower the cost of living, refugees frequently use a "hot bunking" system where two people share a bed on the basis of an hourly schedule. Refugees can bring the rent cost per person down by using a combination of these tactics. Rooms are normally \$40 per month, and house up to 12 refugees.
      - Note re. refugees and slums: Rent in the slums is generally cheaper, and proximity to city center is preferable, but slums are generally not safe places for refugees to live because refugees tend to suffer from persecution and violence by the local population and thus can only exist safely where there is a functioning police service.
    - Food Support – Provided on a bridging basis for up to 9 months and includes up to 61% of the needs of the household (i.e. not designed to be a complete food program). Involves distribution of bulk staple commodities once per month for efficiency at distribution centers around the city.

- Business Training –
    - This is the core of the Livelihoods program. Involves a free day training program and business startup support, including:
      - Entrepreneurship education via four-day group clinic. Training based on “Get Ahead” training package developed by International Labor Organization, with subjects covered including
        - Intro to entrepreneurship
        - Developing and screening of business ideas - with specific focus on ideas that work in the local community and can be started with minimal capital, and that leverages the skills of the individual entrepreneur
        - Record keeping
        - Money management – budgeting, cash flow simulations, etc.
        - Savings - importance of savings, providing for working capital needs of business, sizing of “distributions” for family support, etc.
        - Marketing and sales – including networking
        - Business plan development – with assistance of training personnel, helps
      - Micro-granting – RP will provide up to \$150 to \$200 of startup capital for some business in the form of a grant (no loan concept). RP funds about 220 businesses per year.
      - Follow-up monitoring and mentorship
    - We attended a field visit to a Congolese refugee family home that RP says exemplifies their typical beneficiary. The family consisted of three sisters and a brother that fled tribal violence in Congo, and their 10 children. The husbands of the sisters both died (or are presumed dead) during the conflict or flight from Congo. The brother was severely beaten in the conflict and nearly died, and has been a mute since the day he left. The two mothers are thus the heads of household. They fled Congo in 2015 and have been with RP since July. RP is providing the family with the full range of support services, including psychosocial support and is trying to get a CT scan for the mute brother. Two of the sisters have been through the Entrepreneurship training program and started businesses last week (one as a wholesale cloth trader, the other trading Tilapia fish). The eight youngest kids have all been placed into the primary education system (free in Kenya). RP is working on getting the two older daughters into secondary education. RP provided them with rent support, and hopes the support will terminate once the businesses become established.
- Measurement and Evaluation
  - RP measures impact by:

- For the Deployments program, on the basis of resettlement applications submitted. Getting actual data on accepted applications is impossible, but because acceptance rates are predictable, submissions can be used as an accurate proxy for applications accepted.
- For the Livelihoods program, on the basis of refugees that achieve “self-reliance”. RP determines self-reliance on the basis of self assessment tests that are given to the refugee every six months. Once the individual no longer requires NGO support, the individual is considered a “graduate”.
  - There is no “control sample”, so unclear how many refugees would have “graduated” anyway. A control sample would probably be meaningless anyway, given that RP selects the most vulnerable cases, so a comparison to an “average” refugee would not provide meaningful information.
- **RP does detailed M&E reporting to donors. We have requested a recent report and are told it will be delivered shortly.**

#### Budget and Funding

- RP’s total budget was \$3.6m in 2015. This breaks down to \$1.9m for the Deployments program and \$1.1m for the Livelihoods Program in Nairobi. Fundraising and G&A were \$623k. Nairobi office is not knowledgeable about details of the budget and directs us to Christine in Boston for further information.
- Major RP donors include foundations and HNW families. For more information, we are told to contact the Boston office.

#### Pics

NOTE: Pics at the UNHCR center in Nairobi were strictly prohibited.



The lobby of the Refuge Point office in Nairobi is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of an office tower. It houses approx. 30 staff members.



Refuge Point's pharmacy (and the medical clinic too) is located in its Nairobi office. RP has a relationship with subsidized medicine providers and fills many prescriptions out of this pharmacy. Prescriptions are usually delivered to the field by RP personnel on home visits (because it's too far away for most RP beneficiaries).



Jacob Bunya introduces us to RP's admin staff in the Nairobi office.





Overstock for some foodstuffs is kept in the Nairobi office. Commodities like these are given as food support to RP beneficiaries once per month at local distribution centers around Nairobi.



Incidentals such as mattresses are also provided in some circumstances.



We attended an Entrepreneurship training session in Nairobi. This was day one of a four-day clinic. Participants discuss business ideas that work in Nairobi. Selling tea, fish, and making simple crafts are examples of businesses that work in Nairobi.



We talk to RP's training leader who has become famous in Nairobi's refugee community. He has been with RP for four years and is widely recognized as a startup guru. We are highly impressed by his professionalism and presentation to the attendees.



Refugees do not live in slums, but the outskirts of the city where they do live resemble the slums in many ways. The population density is lower.



We meet with a Congolese family that fled Congo in 2015 to Burundi, where they found a civil war. So they followed a refugee trail to Kenya.



The family of 13 (excluding RP field officer, far right) has been the victim of many atrocities, such as murder (both fathers), rape (one of the mothers), severe beating (brother that is now mute, third from right), persecution (by neighbors in Kenya). With both of the fathers killed, the mothers (second and third from left) have become the heads of household and have each just started a business with the help of RP.