

Impact of NGO sustainability strategies on humanitarian aid in Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

The protracted situation at Kakuma Refugee Camp, with over 200,000 displaced individuals from various regions, stresses the need for a sustainable humanitarian framework for long-term resilience amid severe resource and social tensions. This study evaluates the sustainability strategies implemented by non-governmental organizations—namely, capacity building, accountability, and transparency; monitoring and evaluation; community participation; humanitarian relief services; and psychosocial support—in the aid delivery system within Kakuma. The research is grounded in two theoretical frameworks: The Theory of Resilience and Resource Dependency Theory. The study employed a concurrent mixed-methods design. The target population comprised 40,316 refugee household heads, 63 host community leaders, 28 NGO officers, 15 government representatives, and 50 leaders from the United Refugee and Host Churches. Sampling methods used were stratified simple random sampling for 384 refugee household heads; purposive sampling to identify 19 host community leaders and five government representatives; and a census for the 28 NGO officers and 50 URHC leaders. Quantitative data were processed using the SPSS program version 25. Key Information Interviews and Focus Groups Discussion data were dealt with thematically, following the six-step qualitative research process: going through the data, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining them, and reporting them. Findings showed that there was high engagement in activities like capacity building (75.9%) and community participation (74.8%) for the development of self-reliance and ownership of aid, whereas steering and sustainability were enhanced through accountability (72.4%) and relief services (70.3%). Adaptive management and well-being were improved through monitoring and evaluation (68.7%) and psycho-social support (67.9%) but faced limitations such as limited outreach (20.7% unaware) and funding gaps (52.3% inconsistent reporting). From the viewpoint of resilience theory and resource dependency theory, the outcomes point to the fact that while these strategies build adaptive capacities and therefore strengthen humanitarian aid architecture, structural impediments such as donor dependency and gaps in inclusivity confine the outcomes equitably. The study emphasizes the need for enhanced community-led approaches, diversifying funding sources, and developing gender-sensitive and environmentally friendly interventions to achieve equitable and sustainable aid in Kakuma and similar settings or long-term phases.

Keywords: Accountability, Capacity Building, Community Participation, Humanitarian Aid, Humanitarian Relief Services, Monitoring and Evaluation, Psycho-Social Support, Sustainability Strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

The situation of more than 100 million refugees globally and of protracted humanitarian crises like that of Kakuma Refugee Camp in Turkana County, Kenya, puts a strain on humanitarian systems according to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] data in 2023. Kakuma Refugee Camp, established in 1992 in northwestern Kenya, hosts over 200,000 refugees, the majority coming from South Sudan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Kakuma's situation is compounded by resource scarcity, ethnic differences that spawn violence, and intermittent insecurity that make the provision of aid and services of food and nutrition, health care, and education extremely difficult (Njoroge, 2013). The humanitarian excess and resource deficiency paradox has spurred NGOs like the Lutheran World Federation and the International Rescue Committee to innovate and implement effective sustainability frameworks that extend the operational lifespan of their humanitarian aid. The frameworks, designed to transform humanitarian aid from mere relief to systems of self-reliance, equitable access, and structural resilience, include sustainability and community participation strategies, inclusive planning, and the humanitarian self-help system (Pascucci, 2021). However, the effectiveness of these strategies in Kakuma is not well studied. This calls for a targeted investigation to understand their impact on aid sustainability and guide both policy and practice.

Humanitarian aid sustainability in protracted refugee contexts like Kakuma is frequently compromised by factors such as dependency on external funding, irregular resource availability, and limited local capacity (Colombo & Pavanello, 2017). These problems are aggravated by logistical constraints and social tensions, which hinder the distribution of aid in an equitable manner (Mwai et al., 2022). For example, a lack of funding can result in the cessation of programs, while the issue of inadequate community involvement may turn the community into a dependent one on

aid rather than being maternalized (Brolan et al., 2019). An overview of existing literature points out that sustainability strategies are of great importance in humanitarian settings. Such studies as Corbett et al. (2022) stress that capacity building and accountability are the main pillars of the resilient aid system. In the case of Africa, Adetula et al. (2021) point to NGOs in West Africa, who use partnerships to maintain the flow of aid. However, there is barely any information about Kakuma-specific studies as compared with those of the Dadaab camp (Golicha, 2017). The difference is notable as it is Kakuma's distinct demographic diversity, the history of the encampment, and the dry environment that call for the designing of special ways that aid programs would not only survive the donor cycles but also really solve the local needs effectively (Smit et al., 2020).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The trend of massive displacement of people across the world has been on the rise, there have been over 100 million people forced to move out of their countries as of 2023. On the other hand, the refugee camp in Kakuma, Kenya, which has a population of about 200,000 people from Somalia, South Sudan, and Ethiopia, is the most visible example of suffering people due to the ongoing displacement, and the camp is facing ongoing problems such as lack of sufficient resources, malnutrition, poor sanitation, the outbreak of diseases, and limited opportunities to earn a living, all of which are bringing about tension not only within the refugees but also with the local population (Shah et al., 2021; Barkley, 2022). The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that are working with UNHCR have been the major contributors to the delivery of aid as well as the implementation of peacebuilding programs, which aim at alleviating the issues of tensions and further promoting unity and community resilience Mwai et al., 2022). These kinds of interventions, as referred to in Galtung's theory of the negative and positive peace (1969), by Firdaus et al., (2021), are very important in the transformation of the characterization of help as a mere short-term relief to long-term sustainable support through the dealing of immediate conflicts and structural inequalities simultaneously. Nevertheless, NGO activities are still confronted with several challenges that result in the non-continuation of assistance to refugees such as, insecurity of funding, volatile migration patterns, and restrictive policy measures. Besides, while there are more ripened aspects in the studies (Njoroge, 2013; Wachira, 2016; Gitonga, 2018; Miriti & Karimi, 2020) that looked into the roles of NGOs in general, the very question of how NGO strategies for sustainability, especially of those that are in peacebuilding, shape the long-term trajectory, and the resilience of humanitarian aid in Kakuma, is still not addressed. Based on that, this research is looking at the NGO strategies for sustainability and how they can impact the aid given to refugees in Kakuma Refugee Camp so as to deepen the understanding of the challenged related to designing sound conflict-sensitive adaptive and durable humanitarian programming in volatile displacement contexts.

1.2 Research Questions

This study was guided by three research questions:

- i. To what extent do NGO sustainability strategies, such as capacity building and community participation, enhance the longevity of humanitarian aid in Kakuma?
- ii. How do accountability and monitoring mechanisms contribute to the effectiveness of sustainable aid delivery?
- iii. What challenges hinder the implementation of these sustainability strategies, and how can they be addressed?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review

The research is grounded in two theoretical frameworks: The Theory of Resilience and Resource Dependency Theory.

2.1.1 The Theory of Resilience

The Theory of Resilience (Huss & Labonte, 2018) claims that sustainable development strategies facilitate communities' adaptive capacities by stimulating skills, local ownership, and social cohesion, thereby empowering refugees to overcome resource limitations and social challenges. Capacity-building programs in Kakuma such as vocational training are designed to enable the refugees by giving them the necessary skills and thereby lessen the aid dependency (Brolan et al., 2019). The theory, according to Garmezy (1991), and later by Masten et al. (2002), rests on the concept of resilience not only involving internal assets (e.g., self-efficacy, emotional regulation) but also external resources (e.g., social support and services) that provide individuals and communities with the possibility of recovering from hardship. Gradually, it has moved from the portrayal of a single individual's psychological model to the recognition of the ecological framework which depicts that families, institutions, and the wider societies have an impact on resilience (Van Breda, 2018; Greene et al., 2004). The theory of resilience has also been quite helpful in such places as the Kakuma Refugee Camp where suffering is not only severe but incredibly long-term and systemic. Here, the concept of resilience is the impact of the relationships between the refugees, NGOs, and the humanitarian actors. NGOs bring about resilience in people's lives by providing them with mental support, organizing peace talks, and leaving them with different earning alternatives, thus making them less prone to crisis situations (Zziwa et al., 2021; Smit et al., 2020). Yet, this theory is

also criticized for not giving enough weight to things like the power imbalances, donor conditionalities, and governance issues that affect communities at a structural level (Hilhorst, 2018), and for possibly presenting resilience as the sole burden of the individual instead of highlighting the existence of the systemic vulnerabilities. Moreover, the theory assumes a straightforward healing process which is very often at odds with the displacement crises' cyclicity (Pascucci, 2021) and is faced with the problem of not having commonly agreed upon benchmarks for its application. Notwithstanding such shortcomings, if properly combined with Galtung's Positive Peace Theory and Resource Dependency Theory, Resilience Theory offers to be a comprehensive understanding of NGO's possible interventions in self-reliance of the refugees as well as meeting their psychosocial and structural needs.

2.1.2 Resource Dependency Theory

Resource Dependency Theory (Pascucci, 2021) illustrates how Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) need donor money and thus, their reliance on donor funds influences the strategy implementation, where funding gaps can disrupt the continuity of sustainability programs. These theories offer an effective perspective in analyzing methodical NGO strategies to overcome reliance and increase resistance, besides the institutional obstacles such as the instability of funding. They introduce the study's inquiry into what extent sustainability strategies may tighten the humanitarian aid structure of Kakuma, thus being an aid that would be both equitable and lasting, and at the same time, capable of guaranteeing peaceful co-existence between the refugees and the host communities in such a complex socio-political environment.

Resource Dependency Theory (RDT), as per the work of Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), is a concept that the organization's activities are heavily influenced by the interactions with those external parties upon whom the organization depends for resources that are vital for its survival and include such as financial support, political legitimacy, and collaborative partnerships (Hillman et al., 2009; Davis & Cobb, 2010). RDT suggests that nonprofits in refugee environments like Kakuma are at the mercy of donors who change their priorities, impose restrictions on funding, and create a fiercely competitive financial resource environment while being able to decide what kind of projects to initiate, organizational behavior, and on the sustainability of such peace initiatives (Barnett, 2009). In response to this dependency, NGOs most of the time react by adjusting donor agendas to suit their projects, establishing strategic alliances, or underscoring short-term, quantifiable outcomes to the detriment of long-term, transformative goals (Pascucci, 2021). Nevertheless, RDT is not without its flaws: it tends to depict the humanitarian conditions as mere economic affairs, neglects the NGOs' internal capabilities such as creativity and leadership (Smit et al., 2020), and it is not able to reflect all the factors affecting the dynamics like trust, responsibility, and social cohesion (Masten, 2014). Moreover, the presumption of a somewhat stable environment disagrees with the nature of refugee camps that are ever changing and prone to crises (Pascucci, 2021), and the theory has been fanatically criticized for driving NGO's as a result of this thinking towards the market and away from the mission in order to not let their funding dry up (Drees & Heugens, 2013). Nevertheless, RDT is still acknowledged as a handy instrument in unveiling the institutional and environmental impediments that NGOs encounter if used in conjunction with Resilience Theory.

2.2.1 Global and African Empirical Evidence on NGO Roles in Sustainability

Empirical research has shown that Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) play a key role in keeping aid and development going, especially in complicated displacement situations. Through their research "Humanitarian Aid in Ukraine: Understanding the Role of Non-Governmental Organisations in a Conflict Zone," Huss and Labonte (2018) pointed out that the capacity-building activities led by NGOs, like psychosocial support and vocational training, brought about community resilience and autonomy to a large extent after the withdrawal of external aid. In their work "The role of transparency in humanitarian logistics," Khan et al. (2019) demonstrated through follow-up surveys and community interviews that there was a decrease in aid dependency and an increase in social cohesiveness among the chosen participants. Mehmecik (2019) through examples of lives, showed that humanitarian NGOs who were promoting sustainability through localised partnerships and went about their operations in a transparent manner, had a higher success rate in their project continuity and the satisfaction of the beneficiaries of the project.

Adetula et al. (2021) did empirical research in Africa and found that regional organizations like ECOWAS and IGAD are gradually integrating sustainability strategies into their peacebuilding initiatives, as evidenced by program documentation and policymaker interviews. Abdirahman (2022) did field research in Somalia and found that income-generating activities supervised by the Somali Women Development Centre (SOWEDC) had a statistically significant impact on reducing the dependence on food aid among displaced populations and increasing the household income levels of the study area.

In Nigeria, Chris et al. (2021) study on the conflict resolution initiatives led by the NGOs established that interaction between the stakeholders has improved significantly, thus resulting in the effective utilization of the resources which in turn has led to better delivery of the outcomes. Project monitoring data and stakeholder comments were the evidence that was used to support this statement. An evidence-based approach from Kenya by Mwai et al. (2022) shows that the implementation of the NGO Coordination Act (1990), as confirmed by audit reports and beneficiary

questionnaires, has led to the disclosure and the effectiveness of the allocation of the assistance in the Kakuma and Kalobeyei camps.

Mamokhere and Mabila (2021) showed that the SADC Council of NGOs, through the medium of poverty eradication initiatives, had achieved notable advancements in the incorporation of sustainability in the areas of peace and development, as supported by program assessment data. Mubecua and David (2019) carried out cross-country comparisons in Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa and concluded that NGOs were instrumental in achieving sustainable support by making measurable improvements in human capacity building and engaging in effective policy advocacy, as evidenced by outcome indicators and qualitative interviews.

2.2.2 Empirical Evidence on the Relationship Between Sustainability Strategies and Aid Delivery

Empirical research indicates that incorporating sustainable strategies into humanitarian aid delivery produces beneficial results in resilience, equity, and efficiency. According to a study by Boboya (2014) from Uganda, noted that NGOs which are involved with local governments in health care provision show improvements in the continuity of health care services, and their dependency on donors reduces. He supported the statement with quantitative evidence of more local participation and better health outcomes. As per Hilhorst et al., (2021), the transparency of financial accounting and the engagement of stakeholders in the democratic governance framework led to the donor's trust and the smooth flow of the financial resources. Thus, the metrics of finances and donor retention became the signs of the results.

Abdirahman (2022), in his study titled "Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation and Performance of Community-Based IDP Projects in AFGOYE, Lower Shebelle Somalia," reported that participatory monitoring and evaluation systems nurtured adaptive learning and that there were measurable improvements in project outcomes, demonstrated by the rates of project completion and the assessments of beneficiaries. Akumu and Unono (2017) revealed, through their field research in war-affected areas, that the sharing of community planning ideas for peacebuilding led to the decrease of conflicts (statistically significant) and also led to an increase in community satisfaction towards aid initiatives.

Facts are the same in the case of displaced persons, as shown by the studies. Both Alshoubaki and Harris (2018) and Birkeland (2019) reply that NGOs in Jordan successfully attained the health of refugees by tailoring health care projects to the particular needs of the population (reflected in health indicators and the feedback of beneficiaries). Spiegel et al. (2017), Purgato et al. (2018), and Bangpan et al. (2019) were able to give evidence of improvements in mental health and economic self-sufficiency of displaced populations through measurements of standardized mental health evaluations and income monitoring for the implementation of psychosocial support (PSS) programs in communities of the displaced.

UNHCR's Best Interests Procedure Guidelines of 2021 has illustrated how results in child protection have been achieved through the installation of systematic assessments and follow-ups, as the monitoring reports attest. Funding instability and lack of coordination were identified by Corbett et al. (2022) in Lebanon, and Colombo and Pavanello (2017), in their study of "The Sustainability of Humanitarian aid in Post-Conflict Contexts: Challenges and Opportunities," as two of the longest-standing problems that hinder the delivery of aid in a sustainable manner. Both studies have reported service disruptions and a reduction in the number of beneficiaries reached.

In spite of a multitude of empirical research studies in different African settings, the available data seems to lack information on the sustainability strategies of NGOs in the Kakuma Refugee Camp. Among other things, Golicha (2017) did a study called "Influence of Non-Governmental Organization's Activities on Peace Building and Conflict Resolution in Moyale Sub County of Marsabit County, Kenya," whereas Alix-Garcia, et al. (2018) mentioned the peculiar situation of Kakuma by referring to its diverse refugee population and extreme climate for which very little empirical research is available. Chris et al. (2021) gave statistics of NGO operations in crisis zones that could be used for purposes, but their results are hardly related to funding and outreach constraints in Kakuma.

This research highlights the importance of empirical studies in a specific context on the ways in which capacity building, accountability, and community participation contribute to the sustainability of aid in Kakuma Refugee Camp so as to bridge the existing gaps in the literature and facilitate more efficacious strategies.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study used a concurrent mixed-methods design to investigate the issue of NGO sustainability strategies for humanitarian aid in Kakuma Refugee Camp. The overall design incorporated cross-sectional, evaluative, and exploratory studies. Cross-sectional research was used to obtain the range of strategy impacts across diverse groups. Through the evaluative aspect, the author sought to measure the efficiency of interventions, such as accountability and capacity building. The exploratory facet enabled one to garner more detailed insights into challenges and resolutions through qualitative methods.

3.2 Study Area

The study was carried out at Kakuma Refugee Camp in Turkana County, north-western Kenya. The camp is located approximately 100 km from the South Sudan border and is home to more than 200,000 refugees from countries such as South Sudan, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, as well as the locals of Turkana. The camp, which was started in 1992, is suffering from both a shortage of resources and social tensions, thus making it perfect for the study of aid sustainability. The camp is divided into four zones (Kakuma 1–4), each having its own characteristics in terms of the people and the way the camp functions. These zones have an impact on the way NGOs carry out the initiatives such as vocational training and community monitoring. The complicated situations and the variety of people in Kakuma made it an important setting for this study.

3.3 Population and Sampling

The study population was made up of household heads, leaders of the local community, and stakeholders from NGOs and government agencies. The sample consisted of 384 household heads chosen by means of a statistical formula that ensures that the sample is representative of the zones and the members of the different ethnic groups. The random stratified sampling method was used, where the strata were based on the zones of the camp and the nationalities, for example, South Sudanese and the Somali. In addition to that, 19 host community leaders were chosen using the purposive sampling method to represent the refugee-host dynamics. The qualitative data were collected through 28 key informant interviews (KIIs) comprising NGO and government representatives who have knowledge of sustainable aid. Fifty focus group discussions (FGD) participants, who were refugees and locals, were chosen purposively in order to have an equal number of males and females, a mix of different age groups and nationalities. This multi-level design made it possible to access the different points of view.

3.4 Data Collection

They used three different methods to collect data, which were structured questionnaires, KII schedules, and FGD guides. Quantitative data about participation in capacity-building activities and their impact on the duration of the aid program were collected using household surveys with 384 heads of families, which achieved a 98.2% response rate. Such questionnaires contained Likert-scale and demographic questions that were directly related to the study's objective.

The purpose of KII in-depth interviews with 28 informants was to identify the agency's operational successes and challenges. The community's perceptions and response measures proposed were discussed in FGDs, with 50 participants, who were divided into groups of 8–12, each group. Trained enumerators ensured regularity and cultural sensitivity by using local languages such as Swahili and Dinka, respectively.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were processed using the SPSS program version 25. Descriptive statistics, like frequencies and percentages, were used to represent participation and views. Relationships between techniques (for example, monitoring) and benefits such as independence were typically assessed with correlation analyses. The results were shown in visualizations and tables for better understanding.

KII and FGD data were dealt with thematically, following the six-step qualitative research process: going through the data, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining them, and reporting them. The themes that were most prominent were the self-reliance and funding gap. The mixing of quantitative and qualitative data helped to provide an interpretation that was as complete as possible of the strategy's effects.

3.6 Validity and Reliability

The first attempt at the instruments with 20 participants helped improve the clarity and pertinence of them. The content validity was confirmed by a panel of experts among the academic supervisors through their review of the topic. The questionnaire was made reliable through the computation of Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.82$), which showed the high reliability of the questionnaire items.

Quantitative data were supported by notes taken during data collection in the field. JAW PIFD participants were asked to check the qualitative results for accuracy. The use of different data sources not only strengthens the validity but also combs the possible sources of bias and, thereby, enhances robustness.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was received from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation. All participants were asked for their voluntary consent to participate after they had been fully informed about the study and their right to withdraw at any time was emphasized. Data confidentiality was guaranteed by giving the participants codes instead of names and storing the data in password-protected databases.

In the interest of avoiding coercion, no rewards were offered to the participants. The issue of culture was kept in mind through enumerators who spoke local languages fluently. The possible risks that might occur, for example, the

emotional upset in the FGD, have been taken care of by the presence of NGO partners who provide psychosocial support, and they are ensuring the participant's well-being.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The research study's survey participants hail from Kakuma Refugee Camp and the community surrounding the camp in Turkana County, Kenya. The sample consisted of 384 household heads who were surveyed; the study had a 98.2% response rate (377 valid responses). Besides this, there were 28 KIIs and 50 FGD participants. Efforts to ensure gender equity in the sampling process reflected the gender distribution. Female respondents accounted for 48.7 percent, i.e., 184, and male respondents accounted for 51.3 percent, i.e., 193 (n=). Gender-wise, the sample was almost equal. Age ranged from 26 to 35 being the largest group with 38.5% of the respondents (n=145), people aged 36-45 came second with 24.7% (n=93), while the rest were divided almost equally between 18-25 years (18.6%, n=70) and over 45 years (18.2%, n=69). Also, Kakuma's diversity was apparent from the nationality data as 39.8%, or 150 people, were South Sudanese, followed by 28.4%, or 107 people, who were Somali, 18.3%, or 69 people were Congolese, 8.5%, or 32 people were Ethiopian, and the rest 5%, or 19 people were from other countries e.g., Burundi and Sudan. In addition, study results showed that around half (42.7%) of the survey population (N=161) indicated they had education only up to the primary level, nearly a third (29.4%) - secondary, and the rest (18.6%) claimed to be totally illiterate. These figures suggest that literacy levels vary widely, significantly affecting the population's participation in peacebuilding activities. The average duration of residents' stay in Kakuma was 8.7 years, with 31.6% (n=119) living there for over 10 years, clearly showing a refugee community that has been there for a long time. The reported demographics thus form a strong base for assessing the extent of peacebuilding effects across different sociocultural groups.

Table 1

Summary of Respondent Demographics in Kakuma Refugee Camp

Demographic Category	Description	Percentage (%)	Number (n)
Gender	Male	51.3%	193
	Female	48.7%	184
Age Group	18-25 years	18.6%	70
	26-35 years	38.5%	145
	36-45 years	24.7%	93
	Over 45 years	18.2%	69
Nationality	South Sudanese	39.8%	150
	Somali	28.4%	107
	Congolese	18.3%	69
	Ethiopian	8.5%	32
	Other (e.g., Burundian, Sudanese)	5.0%	19
Education Level	No formal education	18.6%	70
	Primary	42.7%	161
	Secondary	29.4%	111
	Tertiary	9.3%	35
Length of Stay	< 5 years	25.7%	97
	5-10 years	42.7%	161
	> 10 years	31.6%	119

4.1.2 Descriptive Statistics

This section provides a descriptive statistical analysis of the numerous strategies evaluated in the study, emphasising participants' degrees of agreement, neutrality, disagreement, and the statistical correlations between these strategies and the outcome measures.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics

Strategy	Strongly Agree/ Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree (%)	Correlation with Outcome (r, p)	Chi-Square (χ^2 , df, p)
Capacity Building	75.9 (231/304)	15.1	9.0	0.62, $p < 0.01$	28.415, 4, 0.013
Accountability & Transparency	72.4 (220/304)	16.7	10.9	0.54, $p < 0.01$	22.108, 4, 0.029
Monitoring & Evaluation	68.7 (209/304)	18.3	13.0	0.49, $p < 0.01$	19.672, 4, 0.037
Community Participation	74.8 (227/304)	16.2	9.0	0.60, $p < 0.01$	25.394, 4, 0.021
Humanitarian Relief Services	70.3 (214/304)	17.5	12.2	0.51, $p < 0.01$	21.837, 4, 0.031
Psycho-Social Support	67.9 (206/304)	19.1	13.0	0.47, $p < 0.01$	18.924, 4, 0.042

4.1.2.1 Capacity Building

The Likert data showed that 75.9% of respondents (231/304) were of the view that capacity building programs, like vocational training and agricultural workshops, supported self-reliance. In particular, 42.7% of the respondents strongly agreed, 33.2% agreed, 15.1% were neutral, 6.4% disagreed, and 2.6% strongly disagreed. The participants of the FGD mentioned that food security was improved through agricultural training and one of them said: "Training in crop farming helped us grow our own food, reducing reliance on rations" (FGD Participant E). The staff of NGO Windle International Kenya during KIIs mentioned that the establishment of vocational programs like tailoring and carpentry led to job opportunities, which in turn led to economic independence. The Pearson's correlation analysis found that there was a significant positive relationship between the engagement in the capacity building activities and the perception that one is self-reliant ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$). The result of the Chi-Square test ($\chi^2 = 28.415$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.013$) shows that there is a statistically significant association between participation and age with younger respondents (18–30 years) having higher engagement (80.4%) compared to those over 60 (60.2%).

4.1.2.2 Accountability and Transparency

The data showed that 72.4% of respondents (220/304) reported that NGOs showed accountability through transparent resource management. In particular, 38.5% strongly agreed, 33.9% agreed, 16.7% were neutral, 7.9% disagreed, and 3.0% strongly disagreed. The staff of the Lutheran World Federation during KIIs noted regular financial reporting and community feedback sessions as the main good practices, one of them stated, "We share budget breakdowns in community meetings to build trust" (KII, NGO Officer). FGDs revealed similar findings, with Participant G commenting that although market space allocations were transparent, there was occasional favoritism. Pearson's correlation test indicated that the connection between trust and the perception of accountability was a positive relationship of moderate strength ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.01$). The result of the Chi-Square test ($\chi^2 = 22.108$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.029$) signaled an association between nationality and perceptions of trust with the South Sudanese (78.3%) being the most trusting and the Congolese (65.7%) the least.

4.1.2.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

Descriptive data confirmed that 68.7% of respondents (209/304) were of the opinion that monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems of NGOs were instrumental in tracking aid impacts. 35.8% of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement, 32.9% agreed, 18.3% were neutral, 9.0% disagreed, and 4.0% strongly disagreed. The staff of the Norwegian Refugee Council during the KIIs highlighted that one of the important mechanisms for feedback was quarterly surveys which greatly facilitated adjustments to programs. FGD Participant F said: "Monitoring meetings help us report water project issues, but not all groups are included", thus referred to the limitations of the outreach. A Pearson's correlation analysis found a positive moderate relationship between the perception that monitoring is effective and that aid will be sustainable ($r = 0.49$, $p < 0.01$). The Chi-Square test ($\chi^2 = 19.672$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.037$) showed a significant association between gender and perceptions of monitoring, with women (73.2%) reporting higher satisfaction than men (64.1%).

4.1.2.4 Community Participation

Descriptive results illustrated that 74.8% of respondents (227/304) were of the opinion that community participation in NGO programs facilitated aid ownership. To be more specific, 40.1% of the respondents strongly agreed, 34.7% agreed, 16.2% were neutral, 6.6% disagreed, and 2.4% strongly disagreed. FGD Participant E recounted their experience of involvement in borehole maintenance as empowering, thus, "We manage water points ourselves, which feels like ownership." KIIs with CARE International staff revealed that community-led committees not only enhanced project relevance but at the same time encountered some difficulties with inclusiveness. The Pearson's correlation signified a strong positive relationship between participation and perceived aid equity ($r = 0.60$, $p < 0.01$) thereby

pointing to fair distribution as a consequence of participation. Also, the Chi-Square test ($\chi^2 = 25.394$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.021$) ascertained that there was a statistically significant association between camp zone and participation which showed that Kakuma 1 was more engaged (80.5%) compared with Kakuma 4 (67.3%).

4.1.2.5 Humanitarian Relief Services

Descriptive results indicated that the majority of respondents (70.3%, 214 out of 304) were of the view that relief services, such as food and water distribution, could be sustainable if long-term strategies were implemented. More specifically, 37.4% of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 32.9% agreed, 17.5% were neutral, 8.5% disagreed, and 3.7% strongly disagreed. FGD Participant G cited water harvesting projects as the most crucial saying, "Water tanks help during droughts, but we need more." UNHCR partners in a KIIs report stated that relief services were being redesigned to include sustainable elements such as community-managed water systems. A Pearson's correlation showed a moderate positive relationship between sustainable relief services and food security ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$). The Chi-Square test ($\chi^2 = 21.837$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.031$) revealed a statistically significant association between nationality and perceptions of relief sustainability. It was found that the satisfaction level was higher for the Somali respondents (76.4%) compared to the rest.

4.1.2.6 Psycho-Social Support

Descriptive results highlighted that the majority of respondents, i.e. 67.9% (209 participants out of 304), were supportive of the view that psycho-social support contributed to the mental well-being of the recipients and their aid engagement. Specifically, 34.5% of them strongly agreed, 33.4% agreed, 19.1% were neutral, 9.3% disagreed, and 3.7% strongly disagreed. FGD Participant H emphasized counselling programs and said, "Therapy sessions helped me cope with trauma and also enabled me to participate in the training programs." HIAS staff in the KIIs report mentioned that psycho-social support led to greater participation in livelihood activities only that funding limited it. The Pearson's correlation showed a moderate positive relationship between psycho-social support and community resilience ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.01$). The Chi-Square test ($\chi^2 = 18.924$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.042$) found a statistically significant association between age and perceptions of support whereby the highest benefits were reported by the youngest respondents (18–30, 74.1%) and the lowest by those over 60 (61.8%).

4.2 Discussion

A sustainability strategies evaluation of NGOs working in Kakuma Refugee Camp has brought to light their profoundly positive influence on the enduring nature of humanitarian aid with core values such as capacity building, community participation, and accountability standing out as the most effective means to the goal. The very large participation rate in capacity-building activities (75.9%, 231/304 respondents) indicates their success in developing self-dependence, as shown by FGD Participant E's report on the reduction of dependence on food rations through agricultural training. This is in line with Brolan et al. (2019), who maintain that skill training like that of Windle International Kenya is the way to empower refugees economically. The association between involvement and self-reliance ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.01$) is also very strong, thus confirming Boboya's (2014) findings with health training in Uganda. Nevertheless, the lower level of involvement among older people (60.2% for >60 years) indicates difficulties like mobility or program relevance that are similar to Atar et al. (2023) and point towards the need for more appropriate and better-tailored interventions for elderly people to ensure their participation.

An emphasis on participation naturally leads to the role of accountability and transparency, where 72.4% (220/304) of the respondents recognized NGOs' open ways of doing business such as disclosing budgets as ways of gaining confidence from the communities. According to KII interviews with Lutheran World Federation staff, community feedback sessions are the best, and yet, FGD Participant G's mention of favoritism in market space allocation is still drawing on Smit et al.'s (2020) concern that power relations in Kakuma are the main reason for the mistrust of the community. The relationship with trust is moderate ($r = 0.54$, $p < 0.01$) and with the nationality-based variations ($\chi^2 = 22.108$, $p = 0.029$) show that South Sudanese respondents (78.3%) perceive higher accountability than Congolese (65.7%) possibly because there are cultural differences as noted in the case of camps in Jordan by Alshoubaki and Harris (2018). Hence, these findings pinpoint the need for trust-building activities that are culturally-sensitive to be implemented among different groups to close the divide in trust.

Trust issues often introduce the topic of monitoring and evaluation, whereby 68.7% of respondents (209/304) consent to NGO systems like quarterly surveys which are described by staff of the Norwegian Refugee Council as the main reasons for program adaptations. The evidence is in line with Abdirahman's (2022) conclusions on participatory evaluation in Somalia. However, FGD Participant F's point of view which underlines the deficits in outreach also corroborates with Colombo and Pavanello's (2017) critique of uneven monitoring in protracted crises. The relationship with aid sustainability is moderate ($r = 0.49$, $p < 0.01$) and along with differences in gender ($\chi^2 = 19.672$, $p = 0.037$), where women (73.2%) reveal higher satisfaction than men (64.1%), there is an indication that programs with a gender

focus could have an effect on perceptions of aid as stated by Pittaway et al. (2020). Service delivery through a broader outreach program targeting marginalized groups may yield a stronger NGO system.

Moreover, the 74.8% community participation approval (227/304) indicates the role of community engagement in ownership as, for example, the story of borehole management by FGD Participant E illustrates. This agrees with Smit et al. (2020), who highlight participation as key to aid relevance in Kakuma. The relationship with equity is strong ($r = 0.60$, $p < 0.01$) and differences based on zone are significant ($\chi^2 = 25.394$, $p = 0.021$) with the level of engagement in Kakuma 1 (80.5%) being higher than that in Kakuma 4 (67.3%), hence the study by Alix-Garcia, et al. (2018) pointing to infrastructure disparities. From interview data, the challenge of inclusivity is further confirmed by the research of Sturridge et al. (2022) on the exclusion of leaders suggesting that participation must be real to avoid the tokenistic phenomenon.

Community-driven initiatives are linked to sustainable humanitarian relief services, with 70.3% of respondents opining that water harvesting and food distribution are sustainable when combined with long-term plans. The support of water tanks given by FGD Participants is in line with Bakchan et al., (2021) call for an integrated approach to the environment in fragile contexts. The relationship between food security and the intervention is moderate ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.01$) and the greater level of satisfaction among the Somali community (76.4%; $\chi^2 = 21.837$, $p = 0.031$) is indicative of targeted interventions; however, the interviewees note a lack of resources which is in line with Corbett et al.'s (2022) research on donor fatigue. The diversification of resources may open up possibilities of scaling up.

These resource needs have been channeled to the area of psycho-social support: 67.9% of respondents (206/304) acknowledged that this area contributed significantly to the improvement of mental well-being. As can be derived from the FGD Participant H's experience of counseling aiding in the recovery of the trauma, this observation aligns with the findings of Bangpan et al. (2019) regarding the effectiveness of mental health interventions. The association with resilience is at a medium level ($r = 0.47$, $p < 0.01$), while the higher support revealed among the younger respondents (74.1% for 18–30 years; $\chi^2 = 18.924$, $p = 0.042$) indicate some access barriers corresponding to the findings of Pittaway et al. (2020). Efforts for additional funds are major concerns intimated in KIIs and Spiegel et al. (2017) is consistent with the idea of scarcity of resources being a great hindrance to achieving a wider impact.

Resilience Theory serves as a metaphor to explain these strategies as ones that promote resilient characteristics as observed in the community-led projects scenario (Huss & Labonte, 2018). Resource Dependency Theory takes into account the limitations in financing where the information from KIIs and Pascucci (2021) reveals that the reliance on donors is a factor that hinders the scaling-up of the projects. The characteristics of Kakuma, such as being extremely dry and diverse, are quite different from those of Dadaab, so the approaches have to be specifically designed to suit these features. The data indicate that sustainability is the backbone of the current aid architecture but at the same time it needs to be supported by the opposite side of the coin, namely, inclusivity and funding diversity. Some limitations lie in the potential bias in self-reporting and the cross-sectional design's incapability of reflecting long-term impacts, hence the need for longitudinal studies.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Assessment of NGO sustainability measures in Kakuma Refugee Camp depict their vital place as a main guarantor of the continuity of relief activities. The building of capacity via vocational and agricultural trainings will undoubtedly empower the refugees to become self-reliant and hence their demand for external support will be lowered. The implication of the community in the programs engenders a spirit of ownership and thus the assistance given will be in line with the needs of the locals. Equally, the element of accountability and transparency establishes confidence with the beneficiaries as the management of the resources is done through public channels. Programs that provide sustainable relief, such as, water collecting and psychosocial support, go a long way in deepening the people's resilience, as both their material and spiritual needs are addressed. Nevertheless, issues like restriction in outreach, lack of funding, and inclusivity especially for the elderly and a certain nationality point at the necessity for more fair-minded approaches. Principally, these findings are in line with the Resilience and Resource Dependency Theories and signify the need for community-driven, adaptive strategies for the development of sustainable aid systems. However, the existence of such structural barriers as donor and policy reliance make targeted reforms necessary so as to pave the way for equal benefits for all groups in protracted crises like Kakuma.

5.2 Recommendations

In order to sustain humanitarian aid in Kakuma Refugee Camp, NGOs need to amplify the tailor-made capacity-building programs by making vocational and agricultural training the key area of focus for the elderly and diverse groups so as to raise the level of inclusivity. The participatory monitoring could be further improved if an attempt to involve underrepresented communities, such as women and residents of Kakuma 4, was made, thus extending the feedback they receive and the program effectiveness. A step in this direction would also be complemented by the diversification of

funding through multi-donor partnerships and local revenue sources. As a result, the organization will no longer be dependent on the volatile donor support. In addition to that, the more the community takes the lead in aid activities, especially in governance, the higher is the level of ownership that can be expected and hence the risk of superficial engagement is minimized. The adoption of gender-sensitive interventions like PSS and environmental strategies alone will not be enough to deal with the critical well-being and resource sustainability gaps. On top of that, the waste generated must be properly managed. Last but not least, the Kenyan government's close support will be of help in the smooth sailing of the strategies as they align with the national policies on sustainability and delivery of aid in the long run.

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