
JOHN BOSCO NGENDAKURIO



QPASTT

Queensland program of assistance
to survivors of torture and trauma



HEALING IN EXILE
THE CHALLENGES IN CONTEXT

About the Researcher

Mr John Bosco Ngendakurio

Bachelor of Politics, Asian studies and International Relations (2014)

Master of International Relations, Griffith University (2015)

Master of Arts Research, Griffith University (2017)- Topic: *Congolese Men and Women of Good Hope: The Legacies of Refugee Camps for Work Market Readiness in Hyper-diverse Cities*

PhD Candidate, Griffith University- Topic: *The Impact of Foreign Aid on Human Security in Kenya*

Previously worked as advisor to the QLD Health Minister (2015-2017)

Currently working as advisor to the Minister for State Development, Infrastructure, planning and manufacturing

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

- **My findings are based on the interviews of Congolese refugees residing in Logan**
- **All participants were adults and had lived in Australia for at least 12 months**
- **The results of qualitative interviews have been selected as being the most relevant for evaluating the ideas suggested by the literature**
- **The purpose of my study is to demonstrate how pre- and post-migration conditions continue to shape the refugees' fate**
- **This study aims to help the society across Australia to understand how the legacies of refugee journeys affect their performance in different sectors**
- **Main sections: History of torture and trauma within refugee populations, prospects for education and training, resettlement process, social network, social cohesion, self-confidence, government policies and cultural significance of work**

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- **Bad quality and limited food in the refugee camps**
- **Lack of support**
- **Minimal health services**
- **Lack of facilities**
- **Weak workforce**

“[...] Whenever you think about your family, you try your best to find a job. I tried to find a job. The first time I got the job, I quickly found out my physical health does not allow me to work [...]. It was in a chicken factory. It was too cold while my arm is not physically fit. It hurts inside. I even attended some physiotherapy sessions. So due to the coldness, I had to give up [...]” (Voice 07, Interview, 05 February 2017)



Food process, Refugee camp, Tanzania (Redcross, 2015)



Maternity Ward, Nyarugusu Camp, Tanzania (Redcross, 2015)

SKILLS AND EDUCATION

- **Impact of long stays in the refugee camps**
- **Camps policies and camps designs**
- **Unemployment and general lack of experience**

“[...] and of course I spent a lots of time in the refugee camps and this has its negative impact on how I view a lots of thing and how I can perform, technology being one of the main challenge. I had not used computers before” (Voice 004, Interview, 01 February 2017).

“[...] If you have a family in the camp, you would not go to school and live in harmony with your wife and children. She would ask you if she and the children would eat your stupid pen and paper. It did not simply work” (Voice 008, Interview, 10 February 2017).



Nyarugusu camp, Tanzania

RESETTLEMENT PROCESSES

- **Lengthy resettlement process**
- **Uncertain future**
- **Unclear future directions- increase of hopelessness**
- **Life in limbo**

“Due to a very long wait, you get so tired. I went to the office and begged. At some point, I wanted to go back home and die. Even where I was, I was dying along with my children, slowly [...]”. (Voice 007, Interview, 05 February 2017).

“It is up to the individual countries to accept your case. As far as we were concerned, we were around eight families who started the process in 2002 and we were not able to come before 2006 [...]” (Voice 003, Interview, 31 January 2017).

HISTORY OF TORTURE AND TRAUMA

- **Impact of refugees' experiences**
- **Women at more risk**
- **Family splits**
- **Gender based violence**
- **Using rape of weapon of war**
- **Culture and religion**

"I try to secure a job but this is not an easy task for me. When we were still in the camp, I got mentally sick due to trauma. This was my hindrance to gain work experience." (Voice 002, Interview 18 January 2017).

"I witnessed a lot, especially the rape of women. On top being raped, they [offenders] pushed wooden sticks into the victim's sexual organs. An example is my brother- his wife was being raped and he attempted to fight to stop the rape. They shot him multiple times and he died on spot. They also killed his wife and we buried two bodies [...]" (Voice 007, Interview, 05 February 2017)

"Having separated from my parents, I witnessed bad things in relation to killings. My life became so bad and difficult. Those who were hunting us took us and raped most of the women and this continue to affect us until today [...]" (Voice 002, Interview, 18 January 2017).

PROSPECTS FOR EMPLOYMENT

- **Social network/social capital**
- **Overseas qualifications**
- **English skills**
- **The missing link- a network of friends and community links**

“I got my first job in the factory. A friend of mine from Somali helped me. He handwrote my resume and submitted it on my behalf. I quickly got an interview. But please understand that I got this through a friend. Before that, I tried very hard to secure a job through job agencies. These agencies did their best to help me but it did not work”. (Voice 003, Interview, 31 January 2017)

SOCIAL COHESION ISSUES

- **Exclusion and racism**
- **Racism has negative impact on** EDUCATION, SKILLS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING
- **Africans are portrayed as incapable- being black implies having limited skills for some in the society**

“Sometimes even your own name on the resume can be a hindrance. I noticed that. When I changed my name to look like a western name, I was called for interview. My last name is too long and it clearly shows that I am not originally from here.” (Voice 004, Interview, 01 February 2017)

“We are undermined because we are judged as having limited linguistic skills. That is one of the major issues [...] and racism [...]” (Voice 005, Interview, 05 February 2017)

ISSUES OF SELF-CONFIDENCE

- **Refugees are generally happy with their new life in Australia**
- **Issue of self-esteem**
- **Constant worries**
- **Some adult refugees view themselves as inferior, comparing themselves to children**

“Here is the truth: Look, I am a black person, a young man who grew up in the refugee camp. That is enough to put me down [...]”(Voice 004, Interview, 01

“Before, I did not have any plans- I was mentally destroyed and had lost the sense of life [...] When I got here, I started from the scratch as a child-my level is too low, my way of thinking changed also [...] nothing motivated me to work and gain experience. Those are some of the limitations.”(Voice 001, Interview, 18 January 2017).

THE LEGACIES OF GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES

- **Neo-liberal approaches**
- **Refugees as the least desired clients by job employment agencies**
- **Failure of employment agencies**
- **Long-term dependency on social welfare**



REMITTANCES

- **Almost all refugees remit**
- **Negative impacts of remitting from the senders' perspectives**
- **Positive impact on receivers- the only means for survival**
- **Meaningful employment and education compromised**
- **Long-term plans and big projects compromised**

“It all depends. Some arrive here with enough English and they may decide to continue their studies and get their degrees and even PhD while some will think about their family behind who would suffer if they do not work straight away. They then prefer working to get money and own transport. It is tough not to have own transport if you are new in this country” (Voice 008, Interview, 10 February 2017).

“[...] With these circumstances involving my mother and the orphan relatives she is raising, I had no other options but to look for work. I tried to study English at TAFE. Imagine, I arrived here in Dec 2006 and enrolled at TAFE. I quit and started working in July in 2007 as I could not afford my own expenses and so many people I had to support” (Voice 003, Interview, 31 January 2017).

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF WORK AND MENTAL HEALTH WITHIN REFUGEE COMMUNITIES

- **Employment status shapes their self-image and dignity**
- **Employment status shapes individuals' identity**
- **Community and family pressure**
- **Relationship between employment and personality**
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“It is pretty significant because, as a young woman if you don't really have work in the community you are almost considered like useless [...]” (Voice 023, Interview, 25 May 2017)”.

“Not being able to work, that means you cannot support your family. And that means you are not a man enough because the whole family is relying on you” (Voice 023, Interview, 25 May 2017)



Questions?

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