

Refugees Role in Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons: The Case of Kakuma Refugees Camp -Kenya

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Abstract: Intra-state conflicts and resultant population displacements transcending their territorial boundaries to seek safer heavens in the neighboring states world over. This situation is aggravated by the fact that weapons used in this conflict find their way to refugee camps hence posing a security threat not only in the camp but also to the surrounding environs. This paper seeks to unearth the role played by refugees in proliferation of small arms and light weapons in Kakuma camp in Kenya. The paper was guided by the following objectives: to find out the origin of small arms and light weapons that proliferate in Kenya, to examine the reasons why they proliferate and finally the types of weapons that proliferate. The paper adopted a mixed approach in data collection and analysis. The paper found that; the weapons that proliferate originate from unstable neighboring states, the reasons for their proliferation are numerous ranging from their availability, portability and protection, the types of small and light weapons are: MK 4, FN, G3 FMP, G3 COF and AK 47. The paper finally recommends that there should be concerted efforts by the concerned states to address the issues leading to refugee's situations to mitigate on proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

Key words: Small arms and Light Weapons, proliferation, Security, Refugees.

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The United Nations convention on the status of refugee of 1951 defines a refugee as, "any person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for a reason of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of the country".

Kenya has continued to receive refugees from other East African countries since the late 1980s. Campbell (2006) posits that, "the first refugees recorded in Kenya numbered about 12,000 in early 1980's and were allowed to reside anywhere in the country, had a right to obtain work permits and attain an education". However, the political instability that plagued Kenya's neighboring countries in the 1990s led to unprecedented influx of refugees from these countries. As a result, there were about 400,000 refugees by 1992, most of

which were from Somalia. According to the UNHCR report (2013), refugees in Kenya come from different countries as shown below.

Table 1 Refugees population in Kenya

Type of population	Origin	Jan 2013	Dec 2013
Refugees	Ethiopia	12,170	12,540
	Somalia	544,000	568,000
	Sudan	31,100	22,770
	Various	16,430	23,340
Asylum-seekers	Ethiopia	7,380	7,610
	Somalia	1,840	1,920
	Sudan	19,070	13,960
	Various	16,600	23,590

UNHCR Data (2013)

According to Ndonga (2013), of the estimated 1.1 million refugees in Kenya, 735,800 get assistance from UNHCR. Loescher (1992) argues that refugees are both a humanitarian and a political problem in terms of security. Refugees presence in host countries are known to accelerate existing internal problems. Kirui and Mwaruvie (2012, p. 162) argue that in developing countries, the refugees problem is compounded by armed groups of exiles engaged in warfare with politically motivated objectives. Usually, 'refugee warriors calls for military retaliation, complicated relations with other states and threaten the host states and the security of their citizens' (Loescher, 1994). African states face the dilemma between humanitarian concern for the refugees, and the fact that they can be a source of tension between the African states. Cases of conflict between refugees and host community are common occurrences. Kirui and Mwaruvie (2012, p. 164) state that 'In Dadaab for instance, the Kenyan Somalis feel the refugees are given special preference than them because they receive assistance from humanitarian organization like UNHCR and other NGO's. Refugees are given food ration, medical attention, education, and other

social services. Majority of Kenyan Somalis cannot afford this and therefore view the refugees (who are also Somalis) as enemies who are taking ‘Milk and Honey’ while they starve in their motherland’.

There has been constant fear that refugees are agents of arms proliferation. The establishment of the Dadaab refugee camp in 1991 was as a result of the fear that refugees (allegedly thought to be in possession arms) influx into Northeastern province. Kirui and Mwaruvie contend that ‘refugees alone are not the only ones suspected to be key figures involved in the proliferation of SALW. In fact several pastoral communities in Kenya and especially those in the border counties have always been accused of illegal possession of firearms’.

Klare (1995), Mogire (2003; 2004) and Njoroge (2007) show the causal relationship between Small arms and light weapons and violent conflict. Although there is increasing research on the participation of refugees in violent conflict in the host countries and countries of origin, there has been no systematic examination of how refugees can participate in Small arms and light weapons proliferation especially in camps which are assumed to be safe because they are manned by the host country security personnel.

There has been limited study on the extent to which refugees have contributed to Small arms and light weapons proliferation. There is therefore a theoretical and practical interest in understanding how refugee involvement in armed conflict can and has led to arms proliferation. This study is an attempt to fill these research gaps. A major focus of Small arms and light weapons research is to analyze the ‘why’ (demand analysis) and the ‘how’ (supply analysis) of Small arms and light weapons proliferation and how the proliferation cause regional insecurity. According to Klare (1995), Small arms and light weapons proliferation is the transfer of Small arms and light weapons from a handful of producing states to a growing number of recipient states and non-state actors. Klare, (1995, p. 3) further states ,proliferation on the other hand, suggests the dispersal of arms within societies extending not only to governments and state owned entities but also to private armies and militias, insurgent groups, criminal organizations and other non-state actors.

The literature on Small arms and light weapons proliferation has not dealt with refugees as a distinct category of actors that can foster Small arms and light weapons proliferation. Refugees are rather seen as a consequence of Small arms and light weapons proliferation and misuse (Boutwell and Klare, 1999). The contribution of this study to Small arms and light weapons research is to examine the role of refugees in Small arms and light weapons proliferation through analysis of supply and demand.

Researchers and policy makers alike acknowledge that one way in which refugees can contribute to insecurity is through the trafficking of illegal arms (Mogire, 2003). The same study

also acknowledges that little research has been done on the same. So this research tried to analyze how refugees affect national and regional security.

The issue of Small arms and light weapons has been a major concern in Kenya which led to the signing of Nairobi declaration on the problems of the proliferation of illegal Small arms and light weapons in the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa. This research tries to examine how refugees are linked to the problem of Small arms and light weapons proliferation.

Statement of the problem

Most states in the Horn of Africa have been characterized by armed conflicts for almost three decades since the early 1980s. Such conflicts have not only contributed to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the region but have also led to the forced displacement of mass population of persons. The conflicts in Uganda, Somalia, Southern Sudan, and Democratic Republic of Congo and to a smaller extent Ethiopia are symptomatic of the conflicts in the region.

Although the impact of such conflicts on proliferation of Small arms and light weapons has been of interest to governments, governmental agencies, community leaders, Non-governmental organizations, security experts and personal, policy analysts and researchers, making clear connections with different actors has always been problematic. For instance, defeated rebels, arms traffickers or deserting government soldiers may also carry arms with them. Such groups however remain underground. In the event of installation of new governments in previously conflicted zones, mopping up arms in civilian hands and other groups remain an uphill task. In situations where there is influx of refugees there’s been the assumption of Small arms and light weapons proliferation due to the fact of conflicts and availability of arms in the “refugee origin” countries. It is instructive that the different groups may seek refuge to cover their roles in arms trafficking and conflicts. The more difficult problem however is to ascertain with certainty that the influx of refugees from conflict zone is equivalent to rise in insecurity in the host country.

The case of Kenya is even more problematic. The economic activity of the communities where refugee camps are located is mainly pastoralism, and their environment typified by harsh terrain and aridity which leads to conflict between the refugees and locals due to limited natural resources. Even before the refugee camps were set in Kakuma and Dadaab, insecurity attributed to cattle rustling were relatively high compared to other parts of the country. However, it has been difficult identifying the key source of Small arms and light weapons menace as either emanating from the refugees, the locals or some other ulterior source. Researchers who have dealt with the problem, for instance Njoroge (2007), reveals the sources of Small arms and light weapons to the pastoralist’s communities and how they affect regional security.

This research therefore tried to establish whether influx of refugees plays a role in arms proliferation as assumed by sections of host governments.

Justification of the study

In spite of the recognized relationship between refugees and proliferation of small arms and light weapons arising from their acknowledged encounter with the arms from their countries of origin, the relationship has not been given much systematic consideration. For example analyses of refugees’ impact on civil conflicts (Lischer, 2001) and refugee militarization (Lischer, 2000) do not pay adequate attention to how their participation in conflict could lead to the proliferation of Small arms and light weapons.

As it has been shown above, Loescher (1992) posits that refugee’s influx into host countries are not only a humanitarian crisis but a source of political problems in terms of insecurity in these countries. Therefore, this study is important in establishing if there is a correlation between refugees, Small arms and light weapons proliferation.

Significance of the study

The finding of the study has both theoretical and practical implications for the future of Small arms and light weapons and refugee studies in Kenya. It highlights factors that influence Small arms and light weapons proliferation and why refugees may be involved notwithstanding the risks involved. The government may use its findings to improve policies that affect Small arms and light weapons and their movements in and out of the country. The study may be of immediate significance to various government departments dealing with security such as the armed forces, police, intelligence agencies, provincial administration, immigrations, Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS), Kenya Marine Authorities, among others, in the formulation of pertinent policies. Finally, this study aims at adding new insights and knowledge to the available body of literature on the issues surrounding refugees and Small arms and light weapons proliferation.

Scope

The scope of this study focuses on three perspectives: geographically, the study covers refugees in kakuma camp in Kenya while on the time scope covers the period between 2010- 2012 when the study was completed. The subject scope of this study deals with only refugees and the role they play in proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed methodology though largely relied on qualitative approach. The data collection technique used is focus group discussions and interview schedules where respondents were sought using snow ball techniques due to its sensitivity.

Origin of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Kenya

The original sources of small arms and light weapons proliferation in Kenya are wide and diverse. The research established that there are about six sources (the British army, the police reservists, armed forces, cattle raids and refugees who are the core of the study. Although Kenya has policies that don’t allow illegal arms, they are broken and illegal arms are in circulation. According to the research the sources of small arms and light weapons in the area of study are many. This is attributed to the “why” questions answered in role of refugees in small arms proliferation as discussed below. According to the key informant from the security personnel, between 8th March 2010 to June 9th 2010 the fire arms surrendered peacefully were 105 this included: AK 47 59, G3 FMP 11, MK4 20, FN AD 5, RUGGER 1, G3 COF 1, MK 1 and FN 7.

Table 2: Types of Arms surrendered

TYPES OF ARMS	COUNTRY MANUFACTURED	NUMBER SURRENDERED
AK 47	Russia	59
G3	Germany	11
MK4	Britain	20
FN AD	Belgium	5
RUGGER	United States	1
G3 COF	Denmark	1
MK	Britain	1
FN	Belgium	7
TOTAL		105

Research data 2012

As stipulated in table 2 above which shows the number of arms surrendered in the period of three months shows AK47 as the most common type. Averagely, it can be estimated that there is a proliferation of one gun per day. The interestingly, guns like rugger and FN AD are available only to military personnel in their countries of manufacturing. How they end up in the hands of civilians is of concern.

According to the KNFP small arms survey, they found out that guns such as Rugger are only available to the security personnel in their countries of manufacture and can only be got from the same during their training in Kenya. For instance they state that in Samburu there were concerns about uncollected British Army munitions, with claims that some community members get arms and ammunitions from British Army training camps. Some are given as presents after completion of training and on some occasions caches of ammunition are sold at very low prices.

Today things in the camps have changed unlike what previous scholars such as Mogire (2003) and Mkutu (2004) have written. The refugees are involved in small trade like running hotels, shops, M-pesa and many other micro-business enterprises. They seem wealthier than the locals. The research

established that refugees are one of the sources of illegal small arms and light weapon. These arms are carried, dismantled and they are reassembled while in Kakuma as stated earlier. Both refugees and locals say it's for their security purposes. The study further established that refugees are a major source because while they run from the conflicts in their home countries some of them were warlords, militia, soldiers or rebels and hence they run with their arms. When reaching Kenya, because they cannot be allowed into the country with arms, they sell to the communities near the borders to support their new way of living.

In addition, Kenya shares porous borders with some of the most politically unstable countries in Africa such as Somalia and the larger Sudan. Kenya's borders with Tanzania, Uganda, and Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia and its 536 km coastline are difficult to patrol owing to limited resources and insufficient training of security personnel's. Also, Poor and corrupt policing of the borders between Kenya and its neighbors has facilitated the influx of large quantities of small arms and light weapon into Kenya. Individuals have been able to acquire weapons for overt criminal purposes. The fact that the borders are not properly and effectively policed enable arms traffickers and bandits to find easy entry points along the porous borders. Specifically the rebel movements in Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda benefit from this state of affairs. Towns on or close to the borders of these countries are major entry points for illegal firearms. Kakuma being one of the close towns that's near Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and S. Sudan borders, serves as one of the entry points of such smuggling.

According to the security key informants personnel, many cases of small arms and light weapon proliferation in the Kakuma area are on the borders of South Sudan and Ethiopia. The constant instabilities in Northern part of Uganda and in Somalia have also made the two countries to be among the leading countries as source of arms in the country especially in areas around Kakuma refugee camps for the Uganda case and Dadaab from the Somalia.

The study also established that the KPR (Kenya Police Reserves) are also a source of small arms in the region according to both the locals and the refugees. Those interviewed, especially refugees on the question which states "where do you think these small arms and light weapons come from?" they answered "from the government of Kenya" so when asked to elaborate, they said that the Kenya Police Reserves gives the locals arms to rob then they share what has been robbed. After getting the information the researcher went to the locals to verify the information. The study established it was not just rented for robberies, but was rented mostly for inter communal raids. When the locals prepare to go for raids in other communities, the KPR rent their arms to sharp shooters who share with them what they come back with. Hence this removed the bias that the statement was only from the refugees. Expectedly, KPR respondents refused to comment on the same. By the virtue that the arms from the Government of Kenya are meant for the KPR hands but they

hand them over to unauthorized people makes this illegal. To this extent, this makes KPR a source of small arms proliferation in the areas around Kakuma refugee camp.

Cattle raids are another source of Illegal small arms and light weapon in Kenya. When the locals go to raid the neighboring communities or even in the neighboring countries, they return with other new illegal small arms and light weapon. Raids are one of the main sources of illegal arms in the countries. The local people raid because of many reasons but among the main ones Pride is one of the reasons why they raid to prove you can get a spouse and protect her.

Marriage is the main reason for raids. The cost for a bride in Turkana is counted in goats, sheep and cattle's. One has to pay up to 50 cattle's, 150 sheep and about 300 goats to be considered to have married in honor.

Revenge is another reason for raids. When a community has been raided and they find out which community raided them, they go for revenge to regain their pride plus return their stolen properties.

Inheritance is also another source of accusation of small arms and light weapons. Elders inherit weapons to the younger generation to protect the community and this also increase small arms and light weapon proliferation.

III. TYPES OF SMALL ARMS AND LIGHT WEAPONS IN KAKUMA CAMP AND ITS ENVIRONS

Most of refugee communities in camps are from pastoralist. Turkana County is one of the ASAL counties characterized by low and short seasons rainfall and long dry seasons, this conditions does not allow rain-fed crop farming. Decreasing pasture and watering points for livestock is a major source of conflicts between communities. Majority of refugees in Kakuma refugee camp are women and children who are naturally vulnerable. With the hostility from the host community due to grazing land, this paper endeavors to link how this may lead to potential of arms trafficking in the area.

According to peace personnel there are different types of arms in Turkana County. The most common ones according to the security data include: AK 47, FN, MK 4, G3 FMP, and G3 COF. AK 47 is most preferred in the area because of its portability and price. An AK47 in the region is estimated to cost only four to six goats this means that it easy to acquire one. AK47 are mostly found among the neighboring communities and not that common among the refugees.

G3 is yet another preferred small arm in the region. This is due to same reason to AK 47 IN addition to its accessibility factor. G3 cost as cheap as Khs.3500 or an equivalent of two to three goats or sheep. Although the AK47 are the most preferred, G3 are also very common. According to the research with the conflicts in Sudan and South Sudan, G3 were the easiest type of illegal arms to get. Turkana being a neighbor to South Sudan and with borders porosity it is easy to acquire.

M4 is another common type of small arms and light weapon which is portable as G3 and easy to use. This type of arms is common in the environs of the refugee camp. This is because the refugee camp is big and there are areas which are uninhabited by the refugees hence they are just fields. The paper established that these areas are hiding places for illegal arms. This is due to the constant tricked security checks of small arms in the camps by Kenya peace personnel's. The most common arms in the refugees are Pistols and Grenades. The availability and attachment to small arms and light weapons by the refugees and the host communities in Kakuma and its environs can be attributed to the following characteristics:

- a) **Increasing lethality:** The increasing availability of rapid-fire military assault rifles, automatic pistols and submachine guns and their distribution to non-state actors have given such actors a firepower that often exceeds that of police or military forces. The adoption of newly available technology into shoulder-fired rockets, mortars and light antitank weapons has magnified the presence of warring factions in civil conflicts.
- b) **Low cost and wide availability:** small arms and light weapons are relatively low tech tools of war, and due to state-driven demand, there are well over 600 suppliers around the world. With more than 550 million in circulation whether newly produced, liquidated by downsizing militaries or circulated from conflict to conflict small arms and light weapons are inexpensive and easily diffused.
- c) **Simplicity and durability:** small arms and light weapons are easy to maintain, require little support and may last several decades. They require almost no training to use effectively, greatly increasing their use in conflicts involving informal militias and children.
- d) **Military, police and civilian uses:** Unlike major conventional weapons, Small Arms and Light Weapons cross the dividing line separating military and police forces from the civilian population. In many countries, there has been a dramatic increase in the number and size of private militias and security firms that, in many cases, are equipped with military-type weapons.
- e) **Portability:** The flow of small arms and light weapons are extremely difficult to track or monitor. Small Arms and Light Weapons can be carried by a single soldier or light vehicle, are easily shipped or smuggled to areas of conflict and can be effectively cached in legitimate cargo, warehouses or the outdoors, often in the harshest of climates.

This clearly shows why small arms and light weapons are the ultimate weapons when we come to the refugees, locals and any other person in need of them.

Figure 1: Pictures of Small Arms and Light Weapon



Picture 1

Picture 2



Picture 3



picture 4

Source: GOK

The above are some of the pictures of Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Picture 1 show the rifles guns. These include M4's, AK47, G3 and M16 these are some of the dangerous small arms weapons in the world. M16 for instance can survive on water and sand without having malfunctioning. Picture 2 shows pistols these are some of the samples of the illegal arms. Picture 3 shows the grenades which are also common to refugees as the findings shows. Picture 2 shows a G3 and how portable they are.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion the study established porous borders, raids, inheritance, smuggling and even KPR as some of the sources and how illegal small arms and light weapons enter in to the country apart from smuggling due to corruption in the borders and porous borders which make smuggling very easy by other actors in small arms and light weapon proliferation apart from the refugees and locals.

The types of Small arms and light weapons in Kakuma refugee camp and its environs include AK47, G3, M4, grenades and pistols this is because the weapons are easy to use, cheap and potable. The most common among the refugees are pistols although there are cases of AK 47; this is due to the fact that the refugee camps are screened by the government of Kenya frequently hence the pistols are easy to

hide. Refugees prefer the smallest of the Small arms and light weapons unlike the locals.

Finally the study recommends that small arms and light weapons should be checked before the situation is out of hand. It's clear that in order to promote security in a country the members of the society should be free from illicit firearms or their easy access. Law enforcement agencies, including the police, play a legitimate and central role in combating and preventing arms trafficking to or through conflict zones.

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