



Social integration of Congolese refugees in a town in
Southern Norway.

By

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Master's Degree Programme in Peace and Conflict Transformation

Faculty of Social Sciences

Spring 2008



Centre for Peace Studies

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ABSTRACT

Social integration of refugees is a concept that connotes ideas of enjoying the opportunities, rights and services available to the citizens of the refugees' new community.

This thesis examines the problems and process of social integration of Congolese refugees in one of the southern towns of Norway. This research mainly aimed at finding out whether Congolese refugees are socially well-integrated; and establishing factors that contribute to their integration or lack of it. Based on the expression of social integration theories, this research has used qualitative methods through interviews and document analysis. Results have shown that some Congolese refugees are socially integrated in the Norwegian community. Findings indicate that the mastery of the Norwegian language and the ability to establish social network with Norwegians citizens are the momentous factor to refugees' integration. This study suggest that the service in charge of refugee should develop a mechanism to ensure that refugees are given enough psychological assistance due to the fact that a good number of them have experienced such serious traumatic situations that financial and/or material assistance alone do not suffice for them to feel socially integrated in this new community.

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ACRONYMS

AFDL: Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo

DRC: Democratic Republic of the Congo

ECRE: European Council on Refugees and Exiles.

EEA: European Economic Area

EU: European Union

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus

ICSEY: International Comparative Study of Ethnocultural Youth.

IMDi: Directorate of Integration and Diversity

NGO: Non-governmental organization

OSCE: Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

OUA: Organisation of African Unity.

PTSD: Post-traumatic stress disorder

UDI: Norwegian Directorate for Immigration

UNHCR: United High Commissioner for refugees.

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

This thesis is about social integration of refugees in Norway. The problem of integration of refugees is so complex that the UN has developed a convention relating to the status of refugees. The main importance of this study is, therefore, to critically investigate the social integration of Congolese refugees in the Norwegian society.

This research follows two interrelated objectives: To examine the social integration process in Norway empirically, by using the Congolese refugees in “Southtown” municipality as my primary source of information and to investigate on the refugees, life in Norway.

Background

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), formerly known as Zaire, is one of the largest African Countries and is located in Central Africa. The DRC was ruled by the Mobutu regime from 1965 and its ruling was characterized by corruption and bribery. The country was under chaos, lack of justice and the economy was completely destroyed.

State failure means that a state breaks down in decisive respects. Instead of protection of citizens there is domestic chaos and often civil war. Laws are not made; order is not preserved; central political authority is absent or highly deficient. In many cases the economic system has failed as well, being unable to provide even the most basic elements of welfare for the population (Griffiths 2005:262).

As Rotberg (2004:94) argues: “Governments like those of Mengistu Haile Mariam in Ethiopia, or Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire, were encouraged by the availability of externally supplied armaments to assume that opposition could be dealt with by force, rather than by political compromise”.

In 1996, Laurent Kabila and Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo began the first war. Within a matter of a few months, an armed offensive emanating from Rwanda and

eastern Zaire in October 1996 led to the fall of President Mobutu, and Laurent- Désiré Kabila seized power on 17 May 1997.(Weissman 2004a: 210). Mobutu Sese Seko, the deposed leader in Zaire, escaped with his family and died in Morocco in 1997. (Wallenstein 2007:130).

The Dictator Mobutu Sese Seko was therefore deposed by rebel forces supported by Rwanda, and Uganda. Laurent Kabila, the rebel chief declared himself President on 17 May 1997, and renamed the country the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The union between the new Congolese government and its allies collapsed on 27 July 1998: L-D. Kabila ordered the Rwandan and Ugandan troops to leave the country and unleashed a series of pogroms against Tutsi of both Congolese and Rwandan origin. (Weissman, 2004b:211).

On 2 August 1998, and the days that followed, mutinies broke out in the eastern DRC and Kinshasa among contingents of Rwandan and Banyamulenge soldiers (the Banyamulenge being Rwandophone Congolese long settled in South Kivu). The Rwanda and Uganda armies quickly intervened. (Weissman 2004c: 211). This was the beginning of the second war.

Kigali claimed the right to intervene to protect its border and to pursue the *génocidaires* who had taken refuge in the DRC, but in practice the Rwandan forces, like the Uganda troops also present in the region, constituted an army of occupation. (Weissman 2004d: 218). In reality troop concentrations and targets indicate that the economic exploitation of occupied areas was a principal goal of intervention. As a number of United Nations investigations have documented, the illegal exploitation of Kivu's natural resources and the plundering of its installations to benefit Rwanda and Uganda military oligarchies constitute one of the major stakes of the conflict. (Weissman 2004e: Ibid).

The war officially ended in April 2003 through a compromise peace sponsored by South African government and all foreign military forces withdrew from the Democratic Republic of Congo. A coalition government was set up in Kinshasa, with various rebel groups joining the government of Joseph Kabila. (Prunier Gérard quoted in Gutman et.al. 2007:130).

Both wars resulted in killings, up to 3.5 million are estimated to have died as result of violence (International Peace Committee), with 3.4 million internally displaced and 17 million without

food security out of a population of 53 million (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (Swing, 2003:25 quoted in Ramsbotham et.al 2005:201).

Social integration of the Congolese refugees is therefore a subject of inquiry in this research. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has been taking care of the refugees and arranging for their resettlement in third countries that accepted to welcome refugees, Norway being one of them.

The Norwegian Government has so far been doing a lot to assure the social integration of Congolese refugees. It is well known that refugees are vulnerable people. It follows that the issue of social integration for them is multidimensional, and as such requires a systematic analysis.

As most of the cross-border refugees in the world stem from conflict situations, peace is also important as a way of handling the world's refugee problem. (Wallenstein. 2007:150).

Research questions

This research attempt to address the following questions:

1. There are several Congolese refugees in Norway. How far have the Congolese refugees integrated into the Norwegian society?
2. There are some Congolese refugees who are integrated in the Norwegian welfare system and who have succeeded in earning their living. There are some others who are not yet integrated in the Norwegian society. Why is there such a discrepancy between these refugees?

I have broken down this research in 31 questions covering the following topics:

1. Access to and possible discrimination by the local welfare system; consisting of employment, social office organization and life in the municipality.
2. Degree and types of employment and if they correspond to their qualifications
3. Economic needs satisfaction
4. Degree of satisfaction with jobs and social life
5. Norwegian language training
6. Psychological trauma back in Congo, and psychological system in Norway

7. Friendships with others immigrants and Norwegians
8. Degree of organization in NGOs.

Research methodology

There are no rights or wrong methods. There are only methods that are appropriate to your research topic and the model with which you are working. (Silverman 2005: 112).

A methodology refers to the choices we make about cases to study, methods of data gathering, forms of data analysis, etc., in planning and executing a research study. (Silverman 2005: 99). The method that has been used to conduct this study is qualitative. As Holliday (2002:10) puts it, in many ways qualitative research is what we all do in everyday life. We have continually to solve problems about how we should behave with other people in a wide range of settings. To do this we need to research not only how others behave but also how we should behave with them.

To successfully carry out this research I chose to employ two research tools, namely interviews and documents analysis. According to Cannell and Kahn, 1968:527 (quoted in Cohen, L. et. al 2000:269), research interview has been defined as a “two person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him [sic] on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation”. I used the interview to gather detailed primary data, qualitative descriptions of how the social integration system functions in Southtown municipality. In addition, interview was used to collect secondary data from the Municipality as the provider of social services.

In order to get reliable information about the integration of Congolese refugees, I analyzed some public documents from the Directorate of Integration and Diversity. (Integrerings-og mangfoldsdirektoratet IMDi). The IMDi is the structure working for the integration and social inclusion of the immigrant population and refugees in Norway.

Limitation of the study

The current study focuses on the lifestyle of Congolese refugees who have been resettled in Norway and particularly in Southtown Municipality. The study will be based on the guidelines of the Norwegian policy for social integration for refugees.

Organization of the study

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The introduction chapter presents the problem in a general way, questions of research and an overview of the methodology.

The second chapter includes a series of discussions around the academic theories on the concepts integration, assimilation, social integration, social networks, structural violence, discrimination, social exclusion and pluralism/ multiculturalism. All of these concepts have been analyzed and discussed. To be more effective, it was necessary to show the relationship between social integration and peace. The third chapter addresses immigration and asylum policy, and Norwegian social integration. The concepts immigration, refugee and resettlement have been explained. The fourth chapter deals with the data presentation. This chapter describes the situation of the research field and gives details on data collection procedure and some words about difficulties encountered during my research. The fourth chapter ends with an overview of the question to the informants and the Refugee Adviser. The fifth chapter presents a systematic and coherent analysis of the data. Finally, the last chapter summarizes the research, makes some recommendations and concludes the whole work.

Chapter Two: The concept of social integration in social sciences.

This chapter explores several aspects of social integration. To understand better what social integration means, I will first of all focus on the concept integration, assimilation, social integration, social network, structural violence, discrimination, social exclusion pluralism/multiculturalism, social integration and its relationship with peace.

Integration concept

In the present chapter the concept integration will be the target as a way of bringing people together into a whole in order to include or be included in a community. We can talk of integration when there is a social cohesion, it means when a group of people, minority, is in relation with a larger one.

The concept integration comes from a Latin word *Integer* that means untouched or whole (Maagerø and Simonsen, 2005: 147).

According to Spencer (2003:6) Integration is not simply about access to the labour market and services, or about changing attitudes or civic engagement; it is a two –way process of adaptation by migrant *and* host society at all of those levels.

Across the EU, there have been sharp differences in view on whether the focus of integration should be foreigners or ethnic minorities, whether the priority should be ensuring access to the labour market or cultural adaptation, whether migrants' diverse cultures are barrier to be overcome or a contribution to be welcomed, and whether measuring ethnic differences reinforces the very barriers that we are trying to overcome or is an essential tool in delivering equality. (Spencer *ibid*: 7). The most important step in integration is to insure that both involved parties agree to share things they have in common. In this regard, people join in diversity to form a new society. The most common aspect is to put together all the cultural, social and economic differences in order to make a common heritage. Integration is, in a way, a more ambiguous concept because it can refer both to the intake of new members and to the forces of internal cohesion within the wider social unit. (Baubock et. al. 1996:10).

For Kaladjahi (1997a: 15), integration of immigrants in the new societies has been divided into different dimensions by different researchers depending on their theoretical approaches. The division used here is inspired by Parson's distinction between economic, social, cultural and political arenas of social reality (1978). This work outlines socio-economic aspect of social integration.

1. Economic integration

In Kaladjahi (ibid: 18) two broad approaches can be distinguished in the studies of economic integration of immigrants in the new societies. The first approach evaluates the economic integration of immigrants by reference to the general correspondence between their last occupations in the country of origin and their present occupations in the new country. According to this approach immigrants are economically integrated if their present occupations in the new country correspond to their last occupations in the original country. According to this second approach, an immigrant is economically integrated if he/she enjoys the same socio-economic status and economic standard of living that is generally enjoyed by the population of the host country.(Kaladjahi ibid.:19).

Integration in terms of employment is technically defined to be achieved when the employment levels of third country nationals including refugees are similar to those of nationals. (ECRE 2005: 29). This definition meets the principle of equality, equality of chance and rights. When people are not more favored or unprivileged than others, then only their own individual efforts can distinguish them.

I can therefore say that economic integration refers to social equality between immigrants and the people in the host country. The fact of enjoying the same socio-economic rights is important in promoting the new kind of mixed society. It goes without saying that obtaining a good employment (similar to the one the immigrant had in his country of origin or the one that allows him enjoy the same economic standard with his host country people) indicates that the immigrant is professionally integrated in the host country. By integration we should understand a rather complex phenomenon that incorporates not only economic or professional aspects but also cultural, social, political, etc. beliefs between two or more communities.

Lack of access to the labour market during the initial period of arrival in a country of asylum seriously hinders integration in long term. (ECRE 2005:29). In other words, the integration process starts when the refugee reaches the country of asylum. In the case of Norway and the Congolese refugees the initial period should be the period the refugee is studying the Norwegian language. For refugees who arrive with a certain professional background or experience, the language training should be a transition before entering the active life.

2 Cultural integration and acculturation

The term culture denotes language, traditions, and material creations of people, as well as tensions of different opinions, struggle among competing persons within and outside it, and dynamic change. (Dirks, Eley and Ortner, 1994; Haig-Brown, 1995, Quoted by Harvey 2001: 71). According to this definition, culture comprises beliefs, and customs of a group of people that are transmitted from generation to generation by means of a language. Each human society has its model of social life. Culture is characterized by its dynamism, it can change and adapt to a new social reality or diversity. Culture is different from acculturation which is a culture change.

Gordon defines acculturation as “*change of cultural patterns of “immigrants” to those of host society*”. By cultural patterns he means “*prescribed ways of behaving or norms of conduct, beliefs, values, and skills*” and “*the artefact created by these skills and values*” (Gordon, 1964:33; see also Richmond, 1973:253 for similar definition, quoted in Kaladjali, 1997: 76).

The cultural integration of a minority depends on how the host country is organized. When the minority is obliged to assimilate the cultural beliefs of the host country, the integration becomes forced assimilation or assimilation on the part of the minority alone.

There is no principal disagreement among students of ethnic relations on the definition of acculturation. “*Culture change resulted from direct contact between two distinct cultural groups*” or “*acquisition of cultural traits of one group by another one*” have been more or less established (See Redfield et al, 1936: 149-52; Gillin& Raimy, 1940:371; Herskovits, 1958:10;

Spicer, 1968:21; Shannon & Shannon, 1973: 35; Teske & Nelson, 1974: 351; Berry, 1977: 10; Schonplug, 1986:95; quoted in Kaladjali *ibid.*: 75).

According to Baubock *et.al.*(1996:10), in past academic literature and in current political discourse, however, the term integration has been so closely associated with required cultural assimilation that many present authors have abandoned it in order to avoid being misunderstood.

Assimilation

The Latin word assimilation means to make it similar. Socially and politically, this strategy implies that there is a dominant norm for people to follow in order to be accepted as member of a given society, and this strategy therefore signals that some people have to change so as to be like the main group (Maagerø and Simonsen 2005:146).

For instance, I can mention the case of Congolese refugees coming to Norway for their resettlement just as an assimilation example among many others. The Norwegian Government has put in place a policy of scattering refugees through out the whole country in order to integrate them within the different Norwegian communities. These refugees move and resettle in other municipalities together with other Congolese refugees, where they can form or maintain important aspects of their own identity; as one could say they run away from forced assimilation.

In Westermeyer's (1989: 28) view, assimilation occurs when a separate social and cultural identity ends, and the non-dominant group is absorbed both politically and economically into the societal mainstream.

We should note that there is a great similarity between assimilation and acculturation since assimilation is a form of acculturation. In cases, people are obliged to forget their original culture and adopt that of their host community.

Integration differs from assimilation by stating that society consists of different, equal groups who are supposed to live together in mutual respect. In an integrated society, diversity and multiculturalism are viewed as positive and stimulating (Maagerø and Simonsen 2005:147). I can highlight the difference between integration and assimilation in the sense that with integration,

each community or group of people equally keeps its different identity though there might be a kind of share between the two groups of communities, which are supposed to live together in mutual respect. Assimilation has almost become a dirty word for many proponents of the multiculturalism, who identify it with coercive inclusion in a dominant culture. (Baubock et al.1996: 9).

After having explained the concepts integration and assimilation; the following step will deal with the concept social integration.

Social integration

There are numerous ways to define social integration.

According to Rainer Strobl in Ritzer George (2007:4429), social integration refers to elements in a social system. The term social system is used in a broad sense here. It describes a social unit with a relatively stable order that establishes a border between itself and its environment. In this sense groups, organizations or even whole nation-states are examples of social system. The term social integration connotes the relationship between people in a society. It refers to social harmony, how people live and organize themselves in a community.

Angell (1968) argues that: In mainstream sociology “social integration” has been defined as “*the fitting together of the parts to constitute the whole society*” (Quoted by Kaladjahi, 1997:116).

This definition is clear enough. “Fitting together” suggests that all members and groups of a community are closely related in sympathy in order to form one unity of interests. The purpose here is to promote equality at all levels of the society. Unlike social integration, social exclusion or disintegration refers to a situation where a person or a group of people does not fit in the mainstream of the society. In other words, social disintegration or exclusion of a group of persons from the mainstream of society is just the opposite of social integration.

Clearly, both mainstream and minority interests need to be accommodated and require a delicate balance (Baubock et. al 1996: 275)

For some, the goal of social integration is to create “a more stable, safe and just society for all”, in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play. Such an inclusive society must be based on the principles of embracing – not coercing or forcing –

diversity and using participatory processes that involve all stakeholders in the decision-making that affects their lives¹

Social integration here connotes justice for all in the society. When justice is established social cohesion becomes easy because people live in mutual confidence. The principle here is a society for all in which people play an active role for peace and development within an enabling environment created by governments, and in partnership with the United Nations and others.²

Marshall, G. (1994:488) says that: “Social integration refers to the principles by which individuals or actors are related to one another in a society; system integration refers to the relationship between parts of a society or social system.”

In Turner’s (2006:576) opinion, the different parts of social life depend on each other and fulfill functions contributing to social order and its reproduction.

These two definitions of social integration show that in socially integrated society each part depend on each other. In other words, parts are interrelated. The main characteristic of social integration is the cohesion that exists in the community to form a unity and diversity that make this community function properly.

Durkheim finds two general types of integration which are compatible with two general types of social system: traditional and modern. The first, called *mechanical solidarity* in Durkheim’s terminology, is related by common values and beliefs (collective consciousness), while the second, called *organic solidarity*, is realised [sic] by interdependence and reciprocal functions (Durkheim quoted in Kaladjahi; 1997b:116).

Speaking about mechanical solidarity Durkheim refers to the way people are linked together through a very solid collective consciousness. Regarding organic solidarity, the modern society puts people in a situation where people are complementary dependent on one another in term of functions. Each person totally depends on what is done by his counterpart.

¹ United Nations E-Dialogue “Creating an Inclusive society: Practical Strategies to Promote Social integration”, (2007, October 10) [online]. URL http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/inclusive_society/social%20integration.html

² United Nations “Building peaceful social relationship by, for and with people”, (2007, November 10) [online]. URL <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/peacedialogue/background.htm>

By trying to delineate different facets of social integration and their relationships with each other Werner S. Landecker, has distinguished four types of social integration:

- 1) *cultural integration* : the degree to which cultural standards are mutually consistent.
- 2) *normative integration*: the degree to which the conduct of individuals conforms to the cultural standards of the group,
- 3) *communicative integration* as the degree to which the members of the groups are linked to one another by exchange of meanings,
- 4) *functional integration* as the degree to which they are linked to one another by exchange of services (Landecker, 1951 quoted in Kaladjahi 1997c:116).

Members of a migrant community may be socially integrated through intermarriage, and the acknowledged role models of youth fashion and music, as are the UK's Afro-Caribbean population; but we have not succeeded when they are also disproportionately unemployed.

Likewise, we have not succeeded if migrants are working but leading parallel lives, with little social contact or civic engagement in the broader community. (Spencer 2003:7).

Social integration is a whole; it concerns all the aspects of the social life. Migrants and the minority must feel they really belong to the community.

Socially integrated societies create values and ethics that accommodate diversity, and enhance values of freedom, security and democracy. In these societies, violence is less likely to develop when disagreements arise. While recognizing that complete social integration of diverse groups is unlikely to happen, social integration is an essential ongoing task³

The difference between theories of integration, assimilation, and segregation are made evident when they are related to the discussion about equal opportunities for ethnic groups in a society. Shared for the three theories is that the basic premise for equality relate to the whole population and not separate groups. Amongst themselves, the theories diverge in the question of whether equality is desired between individuals or between groups. (See Hamburger; 1993:39-47 for a discussion on integration in Denmark, quoted in Zeuner1993: 138)⁴

³ United Nations "Social integration as a process of building peaceful social relations", (2007, November 12) [online]. URL http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/egm/e_dlg_sumry.htm

⁴ My translation from Danish to English

Effective integration system needs to understand the truth of the theory of equality. Equal rights, status and advantages increases the chances of peacefully coexistence.

Social network

The term network refers to individuals (or more rarely collectivities and roles) that are linked together by one or more social relationships, thus forming a social network. (Marshall and Scott 2005: 444).When people are interconnected by social relationships they belong to the same network in order to exchange information about social services. The relationship here is reciprocal.

Social services are provisions that respond to the needs of individuals, groups, or communities to improve social, emotional, and physical well-being not supplied by carers who are kin. (Ritzer 2007:4521).

According to Spicker (2000a:23), the relationships within groups are sometimes referred to as a “network”. The term is expressive: like a net, the lines of communication run both outwards and across each other.

The expression “like a net” in this definition stands for the relationship between people belonging to a network in order to share and enjoy the best in the community.

The network promotes social relationships in a group or among groups and makes integration in the society quite easy.

If social contacts improve the chances of getting a good job at high pay, net of individual abilities, workers must have the right social contact to get ahead. (Korcynski et al. 2006:287).

People with extensive networks are better able to gather information and exert influence at work; this enhances their task performance and career prospects in many settings (Burt 1992 quoted in Korcynski Ibid, 286).

The social network is a major factor to insure a successful integration on the job market. Members in the network form a unit in order to exchange information, pieces of advice and

experience for their betterment: increasing their chances of pulling jobs on their sides. Thus, together they stand. They are so united that their goals become one.

This does not mean that every member of the group must have a relationship with every other member. The relationships which exist within a group are complex; there are often many relationships, and networks overlap. (Spicker, Ibid, 23).

Structural violence

Johan Galtung has introduced the concept “structural violence” to denote causes of human suffering that are not the result of evil individuals but of unjust social structures. He writes, “I have found it useful to distinguish between three types of violence: direct violence, often expressed as military power, usually killing quickly, and intended to do so; structural violence, often expressed as economic power, usually unintended, killing slowly; cultural violence, often expressed as cultural power, legitimizing the other two types of power, telling those who wield power that they have a right to do so, even a duty-for instance because the victims of direct and/or structural power are pagans, savages, atheists, kulaks, communists, what not (Galtung 1990, p.252, cited in Fischer 1993).

Structural violence comprises forces such poverty, racism, socio-economic inequality and discrimination which necessarily have an influence on people’s health. (Farmer, 1999 Quoted in Kelly 2005, 61:721-73).

Structural violence is the result of unequal distribution of basic needs satisfaction in a society; a system that harms health, and peace. A stressful social system exposes the members of a society to illness, like mental illness. Structural violence means, individual or group of individuals are victim of discrimination in social system. Unequal rights and obligations in a social system are also related to structural violence.

Racism is an example of structural violence and is an obstacle to social integration. Racism is the violent behaviour towards people who belong to another race; the belief that certain races are better than others. Race which is considered as inferior is excluded from the main community. All institutional barriers against minority, migrants in a community are called structural violence.

I do agree with Farmer (2004, 45:305-326) when he argues that “social inequalities are the heart of structural violence”, and I also agree with the assertion that inequitable socio-political and economic structures are the roots of disease.

As a result of these over-arching social and economic factors, many individuals with mental health problems are systematically excluded from full participation in civic and social life, and are constrained to live lives that are shaped by stigma, isolation, homelessness and denial of rights. (Farmer, 1999 Quoted in Kelly 2005, 61:721-73).

According to Spicker (2000b:113), inequality is not just difference. People are different in many ways: they can be tall or short, thin or fat, old or young and so forth. These differences imply inequality only if the difference leads to disadvantage.

When significant differences arise in a society it leads to exclusion from the main community. Here I consider the individuals, groups or communities differences. Many differences can cause disadvantage in social relationships.

Differences of gender, “race” or age commonly lead to discrimination and differential opportunities (Spicker *ibid*).

Socially significant differences have negative effects on individuals or groups, and predispose the community to discrimination. When discrimination emerges, social integration process becomes difficult.

Structural violence comprises also poverty. Poverty consists of unacceptable hardship; the key term here is “unacceptable”, because what that means depends on the codes and values prevalent in a particular society at a particular time. (Spicker 2000c:79).

A social system preventing people from satisfying basic needs of life is a barrier for a successful social integration.

People who have inferior status have not only limited access to social resources and opportunities, but a diminished set of social responsibilities. Their integration into society, and their solidarity with others, is reduced. (Spicker, *ibid*, 112).

According to Jones (2004:300), structural violence can be political or economic, lethal or non lethal. Political examples include discrimination on the basis of race, religion, and gender (e.g. against blacks in apartheid-era South Africa and Kurds in Turkey today; towards Catholics in North Ireland; and against women everywhere).

In summary, structural violence has an impact on the social integration process. The difference between structural violence and discrimination remains on structural levels. Structural violence is the work of one or several institutions while discrimination may or not be structured.

Discrimination

The term discrimination is certainly a contested one and racial discrimination even more so. In Germany some authors believe that one can only talk about discrimination when migrant workers are paid less in the same job as an indigenous worker or when special jobs are assigned to them, that indigenous workers do not occupy at all (Baker and Lenhart 1991 quoted in Wrench 1999:47).

Social integration presupposes equal treatment between migrants and native. The fact that some kinds of jobs are exclusively reserved to migrants or minority groups is employment discrimination. In some cases, discriminatory treatment arises even if migrants are highly educated or qualified. People are only treated unfairly because of their race, sex or age. The quotation below gives more details on what racial discrimination looks like.

The term “racial discrimination” shall mean any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national ethnic origin, which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life. (Banton 1994, quoted in Wrench et al., 1999:8)

Discrimination based on racial background or skin colour is still widespread unfortunately in some countries. Some employers prefer to give jobs to people on their origin (citizenship) grounds rather than competence or high qualification.

We can speak of discrimination whenever a group of people is over-represented in lower, and under-represented in higher, job positions. (Wrench John et. al.1999:47).

This explanation of discrimination is very complex. People can be discriminated even if they have jobs. More narrowly, discrimination in employment can be said to occur when migrants or ethnic minorities are accorded inferior treatment in the labour market or in the workplace relative to nationals or whites, despite being comparably qualified in terms of education, experience or other relevant criteria. (Wrench, John et al 1999:8).

Employers still discriminate. The ethnic young people have to be treated the same as whites if they have qualifications. Employers are inclined to take on those young people with qualifications, as for example, store keepers and they pay them at a cheap rate.

We talk of discrimination at hiring and recruitment when job seekers are treated differently on the basis of non-objective criteria. In some companies, however, to be offered a position, seems difficult or even impossible, because one belongs to a certain race. Some people can never be offered management position simply because they are of a foreign origin. Such a situation increases the rate of unemployment among immigrants.

Wrench, John et. al. (Ibid, 47) has distinguished four different forms of discrimination:

- (1) discrimination within the existing work hierarchy,
- (2) discrimination outside the work hierarchy,
- (3) discrimination through equal treatment, and
- (4) discrimination in everyday work relations.

1. Discrimination within the Work Hierarchy

This kind of discrimination in the workplace excludes minority or migrants into the different levels of importance from highest to lowest. The workplace is organised in order to move a way migrants even if they have qualifications.

2. Discrimination outside the Work Hierarchy

By this, we mean practices that are applied to migrant workers, thus putting them outside the work hierarchy-to their disadvantage. One such practice was the recruitment of migrant workers on short-term contracts, despite their interest in a permanent job (Wrench, John et. al. Ibid, 48).

Temporary or short-term contracts affect the economy of migrants. The future becomes unpredictable. These kinds of contracts make people to live in vacillation and be permanent job seekers.

3. Discrimination through Equal Treatment

For an English-speaking readership the term “discrimination through equal treatment” must sound especially controversial, as “equal treatment” and “equal opportunities” are key terms in anti-discrimination policies. “Equal treatment “is equated with just treatment. (Wrench, John et al Ibid, 49).Equal treatment and equal opportunity means that all have equal social, cultural and economic opportunities regardless their race, religion, beliefs, age or other characteristics. Equal treatment presupposes a minimum of equal status among those who are treated equally. If this precondition is not met, positive discrimination may be needed in order to achieve real equality.

4. Discrimination in Everyday Work Relations

This form of discrimination is perhaps the most distressing one. Discrimination concerning recruitment, job opportunities and upward mobility is bad enough. But living in a market society, where enterprises must make a profit in order to survive, these forms of discrimination can be expected. (Wrench, John et. al. Ibid, 50).

After defining discrimination, I will define the concept exclusion. These concepts are very connected and seem to have the same meaning. Discrimination is the fact of treating people differently in a society or a community while exclusion is the fact of being excluded in a society or a community.

Social exclusion

Social exclusion describes a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migrant status or where they live.

According to Spicker (2000d: 80), a person who is excluded is not part of solidaristic social networks; such a person is outside many of the normal structures of moral obligation which bind people together in society.

Spicker's definition shows that a socially excluded person is the one who has lost all rights, and opportunities within its community.

Exclusion is, then, a function of social integration, and it varies directly with the degree of integration a person has. But it is also an obstacle to social integration, because exclusion diminishes the ability of people to participate in society. (Spicker Ibid: 51).

Some people for example are excluded in the labour market; they cannot participate to the promotion of the society because of their race, they are migrants, they are ethnic minority or quite simply they are foreigners.

Many of these practices of exclusion come under the heading of indirect discrimination: this exists with job requirements or recruitment practices which, although applied equally to all, in practice treat members of one ethnic group more favourably than others. . (Wrench, John et. al. 2004:10).

Social exclusion has a negative impact on the social cohesion. Social life is based on relationships between people in a society. When one or many members are excluded, the cohesion is broken and social integration is deteriorated. Social exclusion is therefore destructive. The quotation below tells clearly what kinds of consequences are related to social exclusion.

Social exclusion is a leading cause to conflict and insecurity in many parts of the world. Excluded groups that suffer from multiple disadvantages may come together when they have unequal rights, are denied a voice in political process and feel marginalised from the mainstream of their society.⁵

The notions of conflict and insecurity appear here. Whether the society choose to promote social cohesion in order to prevent violence and sustain peaceful relationship. Whether the society deals with discrimination and exclusion to promote social conflict and insecurity.

(10) United Nations "Social Exclusion", (2007, November 11) [online]. URL <http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/development/docs/socialexclusion.pdf>

Exclusion and poverty have implications for social cohesion which go beyond the interests of the people who are poor or excluded. Spicker 2000e:82).

Migrants, refugees and other minority experience exclusion from the mainstream of the host community in many countries. Social inclusion can be promoted through social integration and breaking down all the institutional barriers. Some communities are based on exclusion and discrimination with invisible barriers to make it hard for foreigners. We can build inclusive society by promoting social contacts, and equal opportunities for all including immigrants.

Pluralism /Multiculturalism

Pluralism consists of social integration in the larger society while maintaining distinctive cultural identities (sometimes referred to as diverse ethnic identities, since considerable cultural similarity exists among these groups) (Westermeyer 1989:28).

Pluralism is the theory that states that different groups of people can live together in harmonious relationships. Different or diverse ethnic identities can cohabit while keeping their different beliefs for cohesion purpose within a society.

In the following lines, Westermeyer gives a clear explanation about pluralism. Pluralism consists in showing how it is good to different people to live together in a society.

Diverse ethnic groups share common government, medical and educational institutions, access to financial and corporate entities, and public accommodations such as restaurants and lodging. However, ethnic groups can remain distinctive by conducting their own worship, celebrating their own annual events, conducting their own family and life cycle rituals, inducing their young to marry into the group, forming their own social organizations, and retaining their own customs and cultural identity-cultural phenomena largely transmitted within the family (Cavalli-Sforza 1982 quoted in Westermeyer 1989:28).

Cooper Davina, gives an explanation of the characteristics of pluralistic society. In his argumentation he shows that liberty and equality are good principles in order to avoid that one ethnic group have less influence than the others in the society.

There cannot be a pluralism which accepts *all* differences. We must be able to determine which differences should exist within a liberal democratic regime, because those differences are necessary for the realization of principles of liberty and equality...But necessarily, there are also differences which might exist but must be put into question, or should never be accepted, because these differences would create relations of subordination which are not acceptable within a pluralist democracy. (Chantal 1999c quoted in Cooper 2004:21).

Pluralism/ multiculturalism are almost the same concept. People live together; recognize their differences in order to coexisting in equality and diversity.

“...the new pluralists have in mind a social order in which the individual loses his/her individuality and is confined to an ascribed group definition and status.” (Zeuner 1997:139).

The premise of multiculturalism is that we can each belong to many different cultures at the same time, making it possible for a culturally different provider and consumer to find common ground in resolving conflict among those cultural perspectives they share. (Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky 1990, quoted in Deutsch et. al. 2006:651).

Multiculturalism is wide concept that can bring about confusion in its interpretation. It refers not only to the coexistence of different cultures within the same society, but it also involves the presence and lives of minority groups such as refugees. Finally, it refers to a process by which racial minorities become part of a political system to carry out some of their ambitions.

Social integration and relation to peace

Social Integration can be seen as a dynamic and principled process where all members participate in dialogue to achieve and maintain peaceful social relations. Social integration does not mean coerced assimilation or forced integration⁶

When peaceful social relations are absent, the society becomes fragile. Social sustainability depends on individual behaviour in the society. The main goal to be achieved by a peaceful society is to promote diversity and participation from each individual in the every day life of society.

Peaceful social relations are relationships between and among people and groups of people that are non-violent. Non-violent is defined in a broader context, as not merely the absence of visible violence, but as the presence of harmony and cooperation.⁷

⁶ United Nations “Peace Dialogue”, (2007, November 11) [online]. URL <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/peacedialogue/dialogue.htm>

⁷ United Nations “Social integration as a process of building peaceful social relation”, (2007, November 10) [online]. URL http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/egm/e_dlg_sumry.htm

The Social Summit focused on the need to move toward a safe, stable and just society by forming and mending conditions of social disintegration - social fragmentation, exclusion and polarization; and by expanding and strengthening conditions of social integration - including towards peaceful social relations of coexistence, collaboration and cohesion.⁸

⁸ United Nations "Peace Dialogue", (2007, November 11) [online]. URL <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/peacedialogue/dialogue.htm>

Chapter Three: Norwegian immigration and asylum policy

This chapter describes the Norwegian immigration policy. It shows and demonstrates the role that the Government of Norway plays in favour of immigrants. In addition, it points out strategies that the Government puts in place in order to give to each and every one the opportunity to contribute in the betterment of the Norwegian society. The Government fights any form of discrimination and racism to facilitate immigrant's integration.

The government puts the individual at the centre of its preoccupations. Each and every person has the right to difference, to freely choose his or her life style and to think differently from the majority.⁹

Immigration

Norwegian migration policy is based on the idea that the welfare state, the thread that ties Norwegian society together, has limited resources. Hence, two basic principles have remained consistent as Norway has evolved into an immigrant receiving country:

- 1) that immigration must be limited; and
- 2) that all immigrants who are admitted to Norway must have equal legal and practical opportunities in society. (Papademetriou and O'Neil 2005:5).

In Norway, the state has the responsibility of limiting immigration. The Norwegian immigration policy puts in place some principles based on equality to analyse cases of people who want to immigrate to Norway. According to the Ministry of Labour and social Inclusion, these cases should be treated without taking into consideration people's national origin, race, colour, sex or religion.

The two major pillars of Norwegian migration policy-restrictive admissions and equal treatment-have been present throughout Norway's growth into a significant reception country for immigrants, asylum seekers, and more recently, resettled refugees. (Papademetriou and O'Neil2005:6).

⁹ Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, report No.49 to the Storting (2003-2004, p8)

One of the chief goals of the Government's immigration policy is to regulate immigration in order to insure stable economic and social development. The regulation of immigration shall be in accordance with our international obligations and the need to recruit labour from abroad, and it shall contribute to cultural exchange and the exchange of knowledge.¹⁰

Norway has a low level of immigration, with 6.7% of its total population of 4.5 million born outside the country. In the cities where the International Comparative Study of Ethnocultural Youth (the ICSEYproject) data were collected, the percentage was higher, ranging from 6.4% in Trondheim to 21.4% in Oslo. (Berry et. al. 2006:33)

The low level of immigration can be explained by the efficiency of the immigration control policies. As Bø (2002:34) argues: The Norwegian authorities have for many centuries, like most other states, tried to control immigration into the country in different ways. Passport controls and restrictions on permits for trade and work for foreign citizens in Norway were the means most frequently used. The use of such restrictions date as far back as the 17th century, when German traders dominated the foreign trade and had a very strong position in the local markets of many Norwegian towns.

In Norway, the most important groups of new immigrants are¹¹:

Refugees and persons granted residence on humanitarian grounds. International agreements commit Norway to providing asylum and protection to people fleeing persecution. This is part of the Norway's international humanitarian responsibility.

Labour immigrants. Norway has had a system of regulated labour immigration for many years. The free Nordic labour market and the EEA Agreement have led to substantial labour immigration. In addition a certain amount of immigration from countries outside the EU/ EEA has also been facilitated.

¹⁰ Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion "Immigration" (2008, January 5) [online]. –URL: <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/aid/Topics/Immigration.html?id=1134>

¹¹ Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, Report No.49 to the Storting (2003-2004)

In everyday talk we might not think of Swedes and Englishmen when we talk about immigrants. They are not very visible as immigrants in the Norwegian society, and they come from countries with a cultural history and traditions not different from the Norwegian ones. (Lie 2002:11). However, North and West Europeans are the main group of immigrants in Norway.

Family reunification and family establishment

This is the most important reason for immigration during recent years. Many immigrants arrive to be reunited with families living here already. Others marry and establish new families.

While some immigrants have come to Norway for employment reasons or as family members of such immigrants, others are refugees. Refugees are included in the group of immigrants; they are first generation immigrants (Lie 2002:12).

This paper focuses on refugees as well as other people granted residence in Norway on humanitarian grounds.

My focus will be on the group of refugees.

Refugees

The 1951 UN Convention and 1967 Protocol delineate the status and rights of a refugee: A refugee is any person who

owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political 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 that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (Stedman and Tanner 2003: 139).

According to this UN Convention, a refugee is someone who owing to a fear of persecution, serious human rights abuses as to torture, arbitrary arrest; violence against women and abuse of children among others, is obliged to flee from his own community and country to seek refuge and protection in another country.

While the 1951 Convention definition does not specifically contemplate refugees from armed conflict, the Organisation of African Unity Refugee Convention, adopted in 1974, specifically notes that in addition to the definition provided in the 1951 Convention, the term “refugee”

applies to “every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality.” This definition protects those who, seeking refuge from armed conflict, find themselves outside their country of origin. (Stedman and Tanner, 2003:139).

Africa seems to be one of the continents which provide the most number of refugees throughout the world. Civil wars as well as different ethnic violence worsens the situation and increase the number of refugees and displaced people.

War also results in displacement of people within countries. When people are displaced inside their own country we talk of internal displacement. People flee their homes to escape persecution and all form of abuse. Those people need protection and humanitarian assistance from governmental and/or non governmental agencies or organisations. There is a clear difference between refugees and internally displaced persons.

For the purpose of the principles, internally displaced persons are

persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations, of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border. (Newman and Selm 2003:165).

Refugees and others internally displaced people are forced to flee their homes or countries because of bad circumstances that have come up. The difference between the two groups is that refugees cross borders while internally displaced stay inside their country of origin. According to Ghosh (2000:190), forcibly displaced person include *refugees* in the legal sense of the word, namely people who have fled from and are unable to return to their own country because of persecution and violence as well as *internally displaced* people, namely people who have been uprooted because of the persecution or violence but who remain in their own countries and do not or cannot seek refuge across borders.

There is also difference between refugees and immigrants according to different characteristics that motivate their movements.

Westermeyer (1989 in Mbamalu 1998:4) observes the following contrasts between refugees and other immigrants.

Characteristics	Refugees	Immigrant groups
Motivation	pushed out	pulled out
Source	political pressure	own aspiration
Homeland	rejected by it	rejects it
Decision	involuntary	voluntary
Departure	sudden	planned
Context	tumult, loss	planful, hopeful
Control	loses it	gains it
Time orientation	past	future
Social network	other expatriates	local natives
Expectations	liberation of homeland	work, graduation
Control of destiny	others control	self control

The contrasts given above by Westermeyer clearly show the different motivations which urge people to leave their country of origin to go to live outside in a foreign country. Motivations thus vary from individual to individual and from circumstance to circumstance. From this description, we can see that immigrants voluntarily leave their countries to look for a better life elsewhere; while refugees are forced to flee their countries because of political or ethnic situations beyond their control.

Migrants often flee both because of poverty and economic survival and in order to escape from an oppressive regime or violence. Frequently, these factors are interrelated and cannot be clearly separated. (Ghosh 2000:191).

According to Mjeldheim et.al. (1995: 189-91)¹² the Norwegian Government distinguishes three major categories of refugees.

¹² My translation from Norwegian to English,

1. **Asylum seekers:** are people who come to Norway on their own initiative and seek to be considered as refugees. In that case, they seek refuge at home. “Asylum” stands for “a free area”. Someone seeking refuge needs to be protected against any form of persecution.

2. **Quota refugees:** They are refugees who come to Norway on quota basis under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees’ request to the Government of Norway. It is the Norwegian Parliament that decides on the number of refugees that are supposed to be accommodated. Nowadays, the quota amounts to 1,000 refugees per year.

3. **Humanitarian basis:** There is a category of refugees that does not obtain asylum status but which is allowed to stay in Norway. The reason why this category of refugees is not given refuge is the lack of sound proof of political pursuit by refugees. Such refugees are given a residence permit on humanitarian grounds. However, they do not enjoy the same rights to education and social security arrangements like those mentioned above.

The Norwegian Government makes a difference between economic and political refugees (Mjeldheim et.al.1995: 244-5)¹³

-**Economic refugees** are people who leave their country because of poverty or social issues such as misery. In fact, they are not to be considered as “true” refugees.

-**Political refugees** on the other hand, are those who have left their country because of problems related to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or the like.

Norway is one of the top five refugee resettlement countries in the world. In 2003, Norway resettled 1,630 refugees that had been accepted through a resettlement agreement with UNHCR. Among the 16 countries worldwide that had such agreements with UNHCR; Norway received the fourth greatest number of refugees in 2002. (Papademetriou and O’Neil, P9).

Resettlement

According to the UNHCR there are four reasons why some refugees need to be resettled¹⁴

¹³ Ibid

-Resettlement represents a vital method of protection for those whose safety and security can not be guaranteed in their country of first asylum. Refugees who are threatened with refoulement, refugee women who are at risk of sexual violence, refugees who are threatened with violence or arbitrary detention because of their ethnic, religious or social background all come into this category.

-Resettlement can be an effective measure to assist refugees with special humanitarian needs which cannot be met in their country of first asylum. Such refugees include, for example, those who are suffering from life-threatening medical problems and who require urgent evacuation; those with serious injuries, mental problems or physical disabilities; victims of torture and rape and severely traumatized refugees.

-Resettlement is to be found in the situation of refugees who have already been living in their country of first asylum for some time, who are unlikely to be able to return to their homeland in the foreseeable future, and who are nevertheless unable to remain or integrate in their host society.

-Finally, there is a growing consensus that resettlement represents an important means of sharing responsibility for the refugee problem.

Norwegian social integration policy

Integration has been a key term in the authorities' approach to immigrants in Norway for three decades. In this, the country is in line with most European countries where the term stands as headline for the variety of measures concerning immigrants' lives after the moment of immigration. (Hagelund 2003:161).

¹⁴UNHCR (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), *The state of World's Refugees: In A Humanitarian Agenda*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p86-89

According to Hagelund (Ibid, 180) integration is used in various fields, here limited to immigrant and the multicultural society. The notion signifies the aim of equality through equal opportunities, rights and duties to participation for all, irrespective of origin.

With regard to the host society, the immigrants must have the same values, that is to say that equal treatment have to be seen as a general rule regardless of the origin.

Here in Norway the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) is the structure working for the integration and social inclusion of the immigrant population and refugees. IMDi was established on 1 January 2006 to act as a competence centre and a driving force for integration and diversity. The directorate cooperates with immigrant organisations/ groups, municipalities, government agencies and the private sector. It provides advice and implements government policy.¹⁵

The establishment of the directorate was achieved through a division of the Directorate of Immigration (UDI). A large number of employees in the Department of Integration at UDI were transferred to IMDi as well as key administrative personnel.¹⁶

¹⁵ Directorate of Integration and Diversity (2008, January 14) [online].-URL http://www.imdi.no/templates/CommonPage____6473.aspx

¹⁶ Directorate of Integration and Diversity (2008, January 14) [online].-URL http://www.imdi.no/templates/CommonPage____6473.aspx

Chapter Four: Data collection and presentation

This chapter describes the process of data collection and presentation. To start with I would like to briefly present my field of research, then the informants, the language used during the research, and finally the real process to insure a good success of this study. This chapter also depicts some of the problems encountered on the field of research.

The study site

This study was conducted in a town in Southern Norway. Southtown has been chosen as the research site because there are a number of Congolese refugees living there. Similarly, Southtown is the place where Congolese refugees have been living for a long time compared to other municipalities. I have nicknamed the municipality for the purpose of anonymity.

Informants

The primary data of this was got from 20 people, among them 5 women. The informants' ages range from 30 to 49. Informants were interviewed at their homes and they were asked open-ended questions about social integration system in Southtown, what it was, how it was functioning, access to labor market, and welfare system access. Couples were interviewed separately. My interviews were standard; all mu respondents answered the same questions. The informants were encouraged to talk more freely.

The informants were ensured about the confidentiality during the research during the research following Cohen et. Al's 200:259) remark which states that

“It is important to include in the questionnaire, perhaps at the beginning, assurances of confidentiality, anonymity, and non-traceability, for example by indicating that they need not give their name, that the data will be aggregated, that individuals will not be identified through the use of categories or details of their location etc.”

Thus at the beginning of each interview I gave a firm promise to my informants that they would remain unknown to other people and that the study was only for academic purpose. I therefore, used to keep my informants anonymous.

Language

In order to gather specific information from the target group, three languages were used: Norwegian, French and Swahili. The Norwegian language was used to collect secondary data from the Southtown. This language was used on request of my interviewee who wanted to express himself in Norwegian. French and Swahili were used based on Congolese refugees' ability to use one of these languages. Both languages are spoken in the DRC; French as the official language and Swahili as one of the four national languages¹⁷. Informants had a choice to use either French or Swahili.

Informants had a choice to use either French or Swahili¹⁸. All in all, as an interviewer my principal role was to establish an appropriate atmosphere such that participants could feel secure to talk freely.

Procedures of data collection

As stated earlier, I collected both primary and secondary data. The primary data were got from Congolese refugees and included information about Congolese refugees' daily life. The main concern revolved around Congolese refugees and the Norwegian social integration system and different opinions about it. The secondary data was a complement to the original data. As Cohen (2000d: 161) says: "Secondary sources are those that do not bear a direct physical relationship to event being studied. They are made up of data that cannot be described as original". The secondary data were got from Southtown.

I had with me an interview guide that I used in data collecting. My respondents could explain and give their point of view on the issue that is being investigated. They tried to describe more creatively their understanding of social integration in Southtown. All the answers from respondents were recorded using a tape recorder for future references. At the same time, in addition, I took notes of some keys words about each question. My informants were informed that I was recording the interviews. In order to get reliable information about the social integration of Congolese refugees, I took contact with the Directorate of Integration and Diversity

¹⁷ The other three national languages in the DRC are: Kikongo, Lingala and Tchiluba.

¹⁸ English was not used because all my informants were not able to use it.

(IMDi). IMDi's goal is to contribute to equality in living conditions and diversity through employment, integration and participation.¹⁹

Difficulties encountered.

Given the fact that social integration is a very sensible issue for refugees, it was not an easy task to get accurate information from each informant. In addition, not every informant was ready to sacrifice some of his or her time for interview. So, reaching informants was one of the biggest challenges I encountered. I had to arrange phone calls to book appointment. Some could ask me to wait three to four days; others had no time at all. Some others asked me to make my interview through my mobile phone, which in fact was not easy.

Another challenge was that I met my informants in their homes; sometime it was difficult to assume full control over children's disturbances. Also, there was a language barrier problem. My questionnaire was written in English, but I had to interview people in Norwegian, French and Swahili. In this case, I had to retranslate everything in English before analyzing the data. However, as my research was conducted in Norway I did not meet any threats to my personal safety.

¹⁹) Directorate of Integration and Diversity (2008, February 15) [online]. –URL: http://www.imdi.no/templates/CommonPage_6473.aspx

An overview of questions to my informants

Introduction

This is a study about Social integration of Congolese refugees in a town in Southern Norway. The success of this interview depends greatly on your assistance. For this reason I request for your kind response to the following questions. **All the information collected will be strictly confidential and exclusively be used for academic purposes.**

- Sex

-Age

-Marital status

-Educational level

1. Do you have children?
2. Do you have other dependents?
3. Do your children and other dependents go to school?
4. - How long have you been living in “Southtown”?
5. -What would you say social integration is like?
- 6 -How do you think the Municipality welfare system function?
- 7 -Do you think you have equal access to services the same way as Norwegians citizens?
8. Do you think you have the same rights, obligations, and opportunities the same as Norwegians?
- 9.-Are you employed?
10. What economic activity / activities are you engaged in?
12. What do you think are the reasons that can explain your unemployment?
13. Do you feel frustrated because you don't have a job?
- 14- How important is the Norwegian language in accordance with your job position today?
- 15- How easy is it to access the labor market?
16. What do you think were the facts that made you integrate easily the Norwegian welfare system?

- 17 -What do you think make some of the Congolese refugees integrate in the Norwegian welfare system more easily than others refugees?
- 18 -Do you think the Norwegian language training is enough for your integration?
19. Suppose you have the right to choose a certain kind of job here in Norway, what kind could that be?
- 20.-Did you have a job in Congo?
21. a) Coming from a cruel war, where you exposed to different trauma that exhibit different psychological problems?
- b) Did you get any psychological assistance when you arrived in Norway?
- 22) Do you think a psychological assistance could be important?
- 23 Did you suffer from serious human rights abuses back in the Congo?
24. How different is your situation today?
25. Do you feel safe in Norway?
26. What can you suggest to have more peace?
- 27).What do you think the chances are, for you to get mental illness?
- 28) Do you think you effectively contribute and participate in the social life in Southtown?
29. Do you have Norwegians friends?
30. Do you receive visitors, Norwegians or others?
- 31.-Are you part of a social organization with others refugees, or Norwegians?

An overview of question to the refugee Adviser

- Sex: Male

- Position: Refugee Adviser

- 1) How long have you been working in Southtown?
- 2) What can you say regarding Congolese refugees living here in Southtown?
- 3) Do you think the Congolese refugees are satisfied with the social welfare system; especially the way it functions?
- 4) In your view, what makes that many Congolese refugees integrate more easily than others refugees?

5) Are you aware of problems that Congolese refugees encountered?

6) A large number of Congolese refugees have been subject to persecution, violence, and torture that may harm their ability to integrate the new society. Do you agree or disagree with this assertion?

Chapter Five: Data analysis and Discussion

This chapter presents and describes data collected from Congolese refugees in Southtown. It outlines the outcomes of this research through a detailed interpretation of the responses of the conducted interviews. It further describes the results of the interviews.

According to Holliday (2002:99), data analysis is the process of making sense of, sifting, organizing, cataloguing, selecting, and determining themes-for processing the data. This study is organized in themes which are related to the research questions and the hypotheses. This is so in the sense that themes are the basis upon which argument and the data extracts are organized-providing headings for discussion and stages in the argument in the data analysis chapter Holliday (2002: 99).

Among the 20 interviews 4 (20%) did not provide enough and consistent information. Therefore, I decided to discard their responses from the analysis of my data.

All the 16 respondents whose responses have been considered for analysis are adult Congolese. Among them are 11 (68.75%) men and 5 (31.25) women all of them being parents.

I have nicknamed all of them for the purpose of confidentiality/anonymity. As Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (quoted in Cohen et. al 2000:61) say, “The obligation to protect anonymity of research participants and to keep research data confidential is all-inclusive. It should be fulfilled at all costs unless arrangements to the contrary are made with the participants in advance.”

Among my informants, 7 (43.7%) were highly educated persons. They are holding Bachelors degrees from internationally-recognized universities in various field of study, including economics, law, etc. 1 (6.25%) is a nurse, 4 (25%) undergraduates, and 3 (18.75) are qualified in education and 1 (6.25%) holds a state Diploma. My informants’ educational backgrounds clearly show how educated they are.

Informants' views on Social integration

Much has been said to define social integration; the fact that a person from another culture adapts himself to the new society, the capacity of adapting himself to his new society, coming together to form a new society etc. To the question of how Congolese refugees understand social integration, Mr Chaki, a Congolese refugee, said that social integration refers to one's interconnection with different people. Through his/her connections, the newly settled refugee adapts him/herself to the new community. The host community should also make an effort to learn something from the newcomer's culture and life experience. This definition goes along with ECRE's (2005:14) definition that:

The integration of refugees is a dynamic two-way process. This process begins from day one when a refugee arrives within the new host society. Integration is not a course that can be completed, or a test that can be passed, but is much more a continuous process enabling refugees and their communities to live in harmony within the host population of which they form a part.

For Mr Mata, another Congolese refugee, "Social integration deals with human beings in their integrity. We should consider a man in all aspects of life namely economic cultural and social. Refugees should enjoy the same social advantages as other people in the host community." Mata's understanding of social integration refers to human being's integrity. Social integration must be a two-way process where the refugee is in an active interaction with both nationals and other refugees or immigrants. It is in such context that we find fruitful intercultural communication and enrichment. All members in the community are exchanging information and experiences about their past and current lives. They can discuss issues related to employment access among others. It is in this regard that we inquired into the Congolese refugees experience about their views on employment access in the host country.

Access to Employment

Five of the respondents (31.25%) believe that accessing the Norwegian labour market is very difficult, five others(31.25%) said it is difficult; one (6.25) thing it takes time to get a job and four (31.25%) others seems that the labour market is discriminatory with invisible barriers (obstacles). Describing how hard it is to access the labour market Mrs Moto stated that, "Getting a job here is not easy". "It is discriminatory too". "It is only in the health sector where one can

get a job easily. Unfortunately, such jobs are always on temporary basis. Of course it is a short term contract.” Similarly, another respondent’s explanation of how difficult is to access the labour market ran as follows: “To get a job is not easy. One should have someone to pull strings for him. I have realized that job offers are officially announced but it is as if employers know in advance whom to give the opportunity to”.

In the first response, the respondent raises the issue of discrimination within the employment sector. For her, people who do not have connections with Norwegian nationals do not get jobs easily. She considers such a situation to be a sort of discrimination. According to her, the health sector gives jobs but only on short term contract. Mrs Moto’s consideration of the employment sector could be subjective. Nonetheless Wrench, John et. al (1999:48) who has made a distinction between four different forms of discrimination asserts that short term contracts recruitment is a form of discrimination. The second explanation refers to networks; one needs to have a Norwegian friend to connect him/her with employers in order to get a job.

The findings here indicate that Congolese refugees are integrated in the Norwegian labour market. However, the kinds of jobs they are given are generally unskilled, of low status and on a small scale (part-time). To illustrate this point, Mr Mali, a Congolese refugee, holding a Bachelor degree in administration declared that in spite of his level of education, he is working as a newspaper boy. In response to my question about his feelings, he mentioned that he was not satisfied with such a job. He expressed his disappointment in these words: “Mine is a “so-called job”, a job anyone can do”... And “one doesn’t need to be an expert to do it”... “this is not my job; I do it because I have to live and avoid begging at the municipality, but I am not happy with this kind of job. I am somewhat jobless.” Mr Mali is experiencing underemployment despite his high level qualification. He is permanently looking for a job. I don’t think there is a Norwegian who has Mr Mali’s qualification working as newspapers deliver.

According to Mr Maisha, the so-called integrated are those who accept to take up any job in spite of their qualification and experience. For example a lawyer who is working as a street/school cleaner.²⁰ Mr Maisha’s views are in accordance with the theory of Kaladjahi(1997:18), who

²⁰ Interview with Mr Maisha, a Congolese refugee July 2007

claims that refugees are not economically integrated unless their occupation in the present country of residence is of the same level of competence, or status, as their previous level/status in the country of origin.

The findings of this study up to this level are consistent with some previous study findings that; a great number of refugees across Europe therefore face problems of unemployment, underemployment, downward mobility and employment insecurity despite their high-level qualifications and/or re-qualification in the host country. (ECRE 2005:30).

Most of my respondents work in low-paid unskilled auxiliary. The majority said they could do another kind of job if they had the right to choose.

Kaladjahi (1997:30) comments that: “It is not easy to determine whether the lower position of an ethnic minority in the labour market is due to the credentials of its members, the cultural background of the minority or the discrimination enforced by the dominant group.”

Networks-key to integration

50 percent of my respondents are of the view that networks are the key to integration while two (12.5%) think that intermarriage with Norwegians nationals is the main one. Two (12.5%) find the problem of social integration very complex, while the remaining (25%) of the respondent believe that a good choice of profession can lead to fast integration.

Regarding the question on what facilitates some Congolese refugees’ integration in the Norwegian welfare more easily than others; one respondent gave the following answer: “Most of Congolese don’t wait to receive aid from someone. They do what they can to earn their living. We are coming from a country where the state has failed. We should do our best here.”²¹ This respondent has understood that it is necessary to be realistic, and switch to other alternatives that could work well to gain one’s life.

Most of the respondents agree that networks are determinant for one’s integration within the community. People who happen to be well integrated are mostly with good connection among Norwegian citizens and who are flexible. Social relations are very important. The more

²¹ Interview with Mr Chaki, July 2007.

relationship you have, the more opportunities you get. Without social relations, there is no contact and therefore it becomes difficult to penetrate the system. The data has also revealed that women seem to have more opportunities to be integrated because the majority of them work in the health sector where they are very much in contact with people from all sectors of life. Women also get special training opportunities from the municipality. This training is quite a good opportunity for improvement.

Several factors seem to be the base of the integration for the Congolese refugees. Some use their own knowledge, others take advantage that the church offers. They are obliged to manage in order to avoid going to the social office.

For some Congolese refugees, the level of speaking the Norwegian language is also another important key. These who speak fluently the Norwegian language have the chance to succeed.

The Language factor in social integration

One of the most important factors in social integration in Norway is the knowledge of the language. It has been found that Congolese refugees, who can speak the Norwegian language well, have an added advantage over those who cannot.

The big majority, 15 persons (93.7%), is of the view that language is very important; it is the vehicle of our thoughts and culture and communication tool in general. Language is very important not only for integration, but also for doing any successful kind of business in Norway. The Norwegian Language is one of the keys that both refugees and Norwegians use to open doors for job opportunities. That is why upon arrival in Norway, open-minded Congolese refugees immediately concentrate their efforts on learning the Norwegian language. The more you master the language the easier socially integrated you become. By practising the Norwegian language Congolese refugees participate in the promotion of their own social integration.

It is clear from the above statement that the Norwegian language is the main factor for social cohesion. Two respondents explained in this way: “Language is the main key”. The UDI use to

say that many doors are closed for those who cannot speak the language and everything is done through language. We lose many opportunities when we do not know the language.²²

A respondent added that experience has demonstrated that refugees cannot communicate effectively without speaking Norwegian here in Norway. The Norwegian language enables us to widen our vision of the Norwegian reality, to share our ideas, our feelings, our agreement or disagreement with the others he commented. Congolese refugees need to master the Norwegian language to avoid being marginalized in the host community.

Answering the question about the importance of the language, one Congolese refugee argued "...One can get a job thanks his relationship even he doesn't master the language. A very little spoken Norwegian language can be sufficient if one has good friends"²³. One can live with few or no friends at all but you cannot live without communicating. It is interesting to note that the knowledge of the language constitutes a determining factor of social and professional integration for refugees who reside in Norway.

Welfare system access

As far as Congolese refugees' access to welfare system is concerned, I have noted the following observations from collected data: at least for my data about 10 (62.5%) of Congolese refugees access the welfare system by their own networks, 2 (12.5%) they have used their experience, capacity, and 2 (12.5%) Congolese refugees think the Norwegian language had played a big role in accessing the welfare system. 2 (12.5%) say they have access the welfare system thanks to their education, know-how or expertise.

Views vary significantly between respondents about the accessing the welfare system in Norway. There are two explanations for this. First, some think they have the same rights when it comes to accessing services just like any Norwegians. It is true that everybody is taken care of regardless of one's background but all depends on the person who is looking after the case. Regarding the Financial aspect, they usually give the same amount of money to both a refugee and a Norwegian.

²²Interview from Mr Mali and Mr Baha, Congolese refugees , July 2007

²³ Interview with Mr Jua, Congolese refugee, July 2007

Second, there are some Congolese refugees who think they do not enjoy equal access to services. Of course every Congolese refugee case needs to be treated separately regarding the nature of the problem presented. This aspect seems to be normal because all people do not have the same problems. Every case is presented and treated, appreciated and evaluated separately from other Congolese refugees' problems at the municipality.

Still, there are some Congolese refugees who think they are discriminated and therefore, do not have the same advantages, as so do their Norwegian mates. I can notice such an attitude in some Congolese refugees' responses like this: "...doors are opened for all of us but our needs are not accepted as the Norwegians." Another one said: "We behave like beggars. We do beg for our rights, i.e. we have to ask for everything even though they know what we should enjoy as refugees. The way they use the law is according to their own feelings and cultural experience." It is clear from this refugee's response that sometime there is mistrust between refugees and the leaders of Southtown Municipality. Some Congolese refugees feel they do not enjoy equal access to services all dependants on the municipality's way of handling, or addressing refugee matters.

Welfare System Assessment

As for the welfare assessment, my data show that 7 (43.75%) respondents think the Municipality welfare system functions badly and is not facilitating social integration of refugees. Four (25%) of Congolese refugees are moderate. They think the system has both good and bad sides. And 5 (31.25%) of them think the system functions well.

Those who think that the system is not performing well say that it is rather discriminatory, unfair; that it favors some people to the detriment of others. People with the same needs and who belongs to the same category, are not equally treated. It also seems that if one does not know and claim his/her rights, she/he never get them. The main argument used against Southtown Municipality is that they create a difference between the Norwegian law and the system, as it is explained in the following refugee's explanation:

The very problem here is what they call system and law. They say law can recognize your right but the municipality system cannot recognize the same right. That's a terrible mess and the beginning of both injustice and discrimination.

(Mrs Maisha, a Congolese refugee living in Southtown).

In the refugees' point of view, the system comprises rules established by the Municipality to ensure its normal operation. It seems that in Norway each Municipality can make its own system; that is why we often find slight differences in the welfare system from municipality to municipality across Norway. It also appears that people who think the system is not working well are of the view that instead of wasting their time "begging" assistance, they should find other alternatives. For example, create and manage their selves. Thus, stop begging at the social office. Refugees say that the "Norwegian social policy is well elaborated but it has no follow up from the Government. The municipalities do whatever they want. That's why some of them are shameful, in the sense that they cheat or just ignore some refugees' rights."²⁴

Another commenting on the Norwegian welfare system said:

The system works very badly. It is supposed to help people whenever they are in need. The responsible for the structure have a philosophy that I could qualify as structural violence to crush shyly refugees. They are cunning. When someone comes to seek for help they welcome him with a smile. They don't threaten him but afterwards they write to her/him a bad letter. At least at 90 percent of what one requests for is not given.

(Maisha, a Congolese refugee living in Southtown).

This reaction is one of the most open attacks against the social welfare system. This Congolese refugee had the opportunity to speak from the bottom of his heart. He referred to structural violence, simply to mean that the system is well organized to do evil to refugees by preventing them from enjoying some of their rights. The question about the welfare system assessment emphasized much negative reactions on the part of the Congolese refugees. As the different views raised by refugees about the welfare system show a situation of mistrust.

²⁴ Extract from the interview with Mr Jua a Congolese refugee, July 2007

Mr Chaki a Congolese refugee thinks that the communication channel between the Southtown Municipality and the Congolese refugees seems not to work properly. This might be the major cause of their conflict. He expressed his view in the following words:

Failure! Integration doesn't succeed. The system is based on material; the Municipality believes that when they give some money to someone they have given all. Integration is not only about money, house! No! We need interaction, communication, exchanging. Especially here in Southtown integration don't really exist, for every contact they think one needs money.

(Chaki, a Congolese refugee living in Southtown).

These opinions raise questions about the relationship between the Municipality and the Congolese refugees. It seems that there is an absence of harmonious communication between some refugees and the municipality and use this opportunity (of which there may be very few) to raise some negative criticism to the “Southtown”Municipality.

For those who believe that the system functions well, although it has some weakness related to the implementation of the refugee welfare rights.

The refugees' capacity to understand and adapt to the system plays a role in social integration. Those who get integrated have a role that they have played, they have made a given effort contrary to those who cross their arms and keep complaining.

Other refugees have a neutral tendency in assessing the welfare work done to them such persons stated : “The social system works well, with of course some weaknesses since it is a human society” and “Well, we are given the minimum we need for life. We should be grateful”.²⁵

Mr Buku, a member of the above group of refugees added the following:

“The system is intermediate to help people when they arrive and not to guarantee life. People who come and do not receive what they expected to guarantee their life are those

²⁵ Extract from the interview with Mr Kalala and Mrs Tumaini Congolese refugee, July 2007

who are disappointed because they arrive here with great expectations; they expect to get a lot of money and end up being disappointed when they just get the minimum”.

According to this respondent the system is only a transition to allow people to be prepared for the big struggling for life. This is an objective way of thinking. The system is not elaborated to encourage laziness. Success or failing to integrate is refugees' responsibility, the municipality being the scout to show the way by leading refugees by facilitating them studying the Norwegian language.

Congolese refugees' seem to be divided as far as their views about the welfare work is concerned. This leads to the understanding that this way of thinking is universal. All human societies are somehow like this. This controversy clarifies the interpersonal differences we find in every society. All in all, we should take in account social cohesion by eliminating all kinds of social exclusion for any successful social integration to take place. Southtown Municipality should consider creating room for true dialogue with Congolese refugees; they are supposed to assist to avoid useless conflicts entertained by misunderstandings and poor communication.

Access to Southtown welfare services seems to be very difficult for some Congolese refugees. They prefer to do whatever they can in order to avoid going to the social service, in fact the refugee Adviser recognized it in his interview with me when he said that certain Congolese refugees consider it a begging. This difficult access constitutes a kind of motivation for the Congolese refugees. They are motivated to make their own way in Norwegian society.

What emerges from these refugees' assessment of the municipality work is that there is a hidden conflict between refugees and the Southtown authorities working for the social welfare of refugees. It would therefore be a good idea to seek ways of solving this issue to attain a successful refugee social integration.

Trauma experience

Referring to the case of the DRC bad experience, I would like to point out that the Congolese refugees underwent serious suffering, serious human rights abuses including rape, torture,

arbitrary arrest; killings, violence against women. The government did not guarantee its citizen's human rights. They were experiencing a lot of insecurity in their own country as result of armed conflicts and/or political instability.

Two (12.5%) of Congolese refugees interviewed went through awful distressing experience, 12 (75%) have experienced some trauma, and only 2 (12.5%) of them indicated that they almost did not experience trauma personally. It was further noticed that refugees who lived under these traumatic situations have some mental or emotional problems that could be identified as Post-traumatic stress disorder.

According to Mollica (2006:140), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a psychiatric illness resulting from a life-threatening traumatic event and characterized by current memories and nightmares of event; avoidance of thoughts, places, or persons that evoke the trauma; feelings of detachment and withdrawal from people; and ease of being startled or physiologically excited. This definition shows that PTSD may be developed because of traumatic situations undergone. Shock or surprises may also cause PTSD for some people. Refugees who have experienced war conditions are among people with high risk of developing mental disorder.

The implication here is that the level of trauma experienced in the country of origin could also be one of the factors that complicate Congolese refugees' social integration in Norway. Refugees who have been exposed to high traumatic situation can become very aggressive or schizophrenic. The same can happen to those with little trauma experience. Conversely, refugees who underwent a lot of trauma, and who meet a friendly efficient social system in their country of resettlement, may more easily integrate themselves in the host community. It follows that social integration might become easier for refugees who have faced little or no trauma.

Psychological assistance

While responding to the question about the importance of psychological assistance, all respondents said they did not get any psychological assistance upon arrival in Norway even though most of them think that psychological assistance ought to be the first help. They remain convinced that the second step after the Norwegian Government has granted someone a refugee status should be to give him/her a psychological assistance. During this phase, refugees should be

given an opportunity to share their experience as refugees especially if they had gone through serious traumatic situation of war, killings, rape, arbitrary arrest, and imprisonment.

The great majority of Congolese refugees come to Norway fleeing armed and political conflicts. Upon arrival, they need some kind of psychological assistance. Many are living with a burden of stress that they carried from the DRC. To illustrate the importance of psychological assistance for the Congolese refugees, here are some claims that were raised during interview: "...Yes, it could be very important for us coming from a traumatic situation. Not only we need material goods but also and especially psychological support" and "I think it is better first to know people's problems before pretending to integrate them. In fact hearing people is easier than giving them money as a priority"²⁶

Speaking about how a person in the above situation can get rid of mental traumatic experience, Mollica (2006:157) argues that: "Day by day and hour by hour, violence challenges people to use their traumatic experiences to build new lives and focus on the present instead of the past". This is the kind of assistance Mr Mali, Mr Chaki and many others needs. He should focus on his present situation and forget the past.

Here is another refugee's response regarding whether there is any psychological assistance refugees receive upon their arrival in Norway:

I have never received any kind of psychological assistance. They didn't have time for that, they only thought about how much money they would give me. I know a Congolese here who foolishly killed his wife as a result of mental problem. He was given money while what he needed first and foremost was counseling. This is the Norwegian social welfare's mistake. Norwegian people think that money and material are better than the rest. I think this is even the reason for Norway high divorce rate. They put money and material first and forget that materials are source of conflicts. The Norwegian society considers more material possession than social values.

(Chaki, a Congolese refugee living in Southtown).

²⁶ Interview with Mr Buku and Jua, Congolese refugees, July 2007.

The unfortunate event about the Congolese refugee who foolishly killed his wife reveals some truth about Southtown municipality's shortcomings in properly handling appropriate handling of refugee issues. The refugee who killed his wife comes from the most fatal zone of the DRC which is the south Kivu. While in Norway, he did not adapt to new life. The very problem was that he could not tolerate the interference of his wife in the management of the family.²⁷ Maybe the worst could be avoided if he was offered a psychological assistance as soon as he arrived. Now his « integration » is taking place in the nursing home.

Psychological assistance is important to allow the victims to overcome the psychological disturbances for a better social integration. When a refugee does not manage to forget the trauma she/he underwent, her/his integration becomes difficult. Talking on the importance of psychological assistance; Mr Mali a Congolese refugee expressed himself in the following words:

“Of course! I do remember whatever happened in my country. However, I do all my best to forget what happened in Congo but I don't succeed. It is difficult to forget the entire trauma. Sometimes while going to job in night, I expect meeting someone who can kill me like in Congo; from time to time I forget that I am in Norway.”

This statement shows how traumatic events caused by armed conflicts have awfully affected refugees' lives. Such a person needs some counseling in order to be mentally stable. He needs to be healed from this trauma in order to integrate the society.

Norwegian friends

As far as friendship is concerned, the data have revealed, at least for my data, that 11 (68.75%) have Norwegian friends or receive visitors. 5 (31.25%) of refugee had few Norwegian friends and had rarely get visitors. These friends constitute what I previously referred to as social networks. The result of my study supports the assumption that the social network is a sign of social integration in a community, and as such, it is a major factor in accessing the job market.

²⁷ Extract from the interview with Mr Chaki a Congolese refugee, July 2007

Peace aspects.

The result of the interview shows that 14 (87.5%) respondents say that peaceful in Norway and only 2 (12.5%) feel they are insecure. Those feeling in peace say they cannot complain as long as they are far away from their troubled country. “We are safer here regardless the problem of the Norwegian social system. The Norwegian people are kind in general”²⁸ Such an observation implies that the Congolese refugees and the host population have promoted peaceful relationships. They develop good relations and promote social harmony. This aspect contributes to effective social integration. The peace that the Congolese refugees are enjoying in Norway is sometimes disturbed by alarming information that comes from the DRC where their families live. “Whenever things fall a part in DRC I also feel it” and “when the situation in Congo is dreadful I feel the same here too.”²⁹ The situation of Congo is reflected in the life of Congolese here. As a result, they do not fully enjoy the acquired peace in Norway. It follows that the overwhelming familial situations in Congo may also be one of the causes that make it difficult for some Congolese refugees to integrate socially.

The two (12.5%) of respondents, not feeling safe in Norway had the following to say: “I don’t enjoy peace at all. I think one day my head will explode. Peace is not democracy, when I am tortured and my rights aren’t respected I don’t feel peace.” And “Norwegians think that when you have food you are peaceful. However, peace includes moral and physical aspects, i.e. moral and material. As a matter of example, when you don’t enjoy some rights you feel frustrated. Besides, children also complain about the way they are treated at school.”³⁰

The interview revealed another way that refugees consider peace. According to Congolese refugees, peace takes in consideration all life aspects. A person who estimates that his/her rights are violated lives in frustration and consequently does not feel in peace. Peace is also part and parcel of social integration. No one can pretend to be integrated in a community where she/he does not feel peaceful.

²⁸Extract from the interview with Mr Jua and Baha Congolese refugees, July 2007.

²⁹ Extract from the interview with Mr Buku and Baba Congolese refugees, July 2007.

³⁰ Extract from the interview with Mr Mali and Maisha Congolese refugees, July 2007.

Equal treatment

Regarding the issue of opportunities, equity and diversity the majority, 13 (81.25%) of Congolese refugees interviewed, reported that they do not have the same opportunities or rights to access services as Norwegians have. Only 3 (18.75%) of them reported to have equal treatment with Norwegians. For instance, refugees made the following statements when they were asked whether they received the same kind of treatment as their Norwegian mates:

“No, I don’t think we receive the same treatment as our Norwegian friends. Theoretically, they tend to follow what is written in the law, but in practice its quite different. It is not today or tomorrow that we will reach equality. Even our children will suffer from this discrimination”,

“We cannot pretend to have the same rights. We should forget about that. Having same obligations yes. Same opportunities are simply a dream...”³¹

From the above statement, it is understandable that refugees are not fully enjoying the equal rights and opportunity as stated in the Norwegian policy of integration. In some cases the system gives priority to Norwegians. As a consequence, refugees feel a bit discriminated and such feeling of inequality that creates an obstacle to social integration.

Although refugees feel discriminated because they are generally not represented in key jobs in the Norwegian public administration, the government clearly states that:

Rights, obligations and opportunities will be the same for all, regardless of ethnic background, gender, religion, sexual orientation or degree of functioning. The government will combat discrimination, prejudice and racism in order to give everyone the same opportunities for social participation. At the same time we will make it clear that all inhabitants are obliged to participate, comply with the law and support the fundamental democratic values of our society.³²

³¹ Interview with Mr Jua Congolese Refugee, July 2007

³² <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/aid/Topics/Integration-and-diversity.html?id=1138>

The ideal of the Government is to make everyone capable of contributing to the development of the Norwegian society. Realistically, it is always not easy to meet each and every person's expectations or satisfy everybody's needs. That is why some non-satisfied refugees think they have the same obligations with Norwegian nationals but not the same rights or opportunities as stated by a refugee: "I think we are not treated differently from Norwegians, everybody is taken care of but all depends on the person who is looking after your case"³³. On the other hand, those who feel satisfied do not hesitate to mention that they are sharing the same rights, obligations and opportunities as Norwegians.

Overall situation

This research has revealed that 9 (56.25%) of interviewed people are satisfied by the social welfare system in Southtown while 7 (43.75%) have arguments which go both for and against the system and think that the social welfare system functions with some imperfections. Women seem to be most satisfied more than men. The reason for this may be that the municipality had organized a special training for them in order to incorporate them into the health sector for the improvement of their social integration.

It is interesting to find that all refugee women interviewed are employed. Economically, they do not depend on their husbands, as is the case in the DRC. Socially speaking, they have created their own women's network, while in the DRC their social situation was promoted by their husbands. I believe all these aspects contribute to make them more satisfied with the Norwegian social integration system than men.

Men who feel satisfied are mainly those who were not employed in Congo. They came to Norway, settled down well after they had secured jobs for themselves. Most of these people were unemployed in the DRC. They feel at ease in Norway and do not mind about the rest. Let's consider for example what Mr Baha and Kalala clearly reported during in the interview: "We are in peace, and we need more permanent jobs to secure our economic situation, part time-jobs insecure us", and "I feel very safe here in Norway"³⁴

³³ Interview with Mr Baha and Buku, Congolese refugees, July 2007.

³⁴ Interview with Mr Baha and Kalala, Congolese refugees, July 2007

Those two refugees are glad to be in Norway. They never worked before. The interview with Mr Buku has revealed another aspect. Mr Buku who seems to be satisfied with the system has been living in Norway for 21 years and is now familiar with the system. He seems to have understood the way the Norwegian welfare system works. It is also obvious that most of these satisfied Congolese refugees are coming from insecure areas where human rights abuse, armed conflicts, and ethnic hatred was not so high.

Unlike this category of refugees, those who came from more insecure areas were exposed to more human rights abuse are less satisfied than those who were not.

Organizations participation

Congolese refugees living in Southtown (Norway) are not passive. They are not only doing their best to penetrate the Norwegian labour market, but also they are in non profit organisations industry. In this study the following organisations were presented:

Bibi Amka³⁵

Bibi Amka means “Woman wake up”. It is a non-profit organization which has been working in Norway since February 2001. Bibi Amka has been formally operational from 2004 to promote and defend women and children’s interests so that they can live a decent life.

Its vision is to sensitize women in order to make them realize their abilities and strengths to influence, participate in and contribute to build a society that respects the human rights, a society that fights injustice, and violence. Its main objective is the integral development of human beings through the peace promotion and democracy.

Bibi Amka would focus on:

- Promoting instruction, networking, political initiative, cultural and social activities
- The rights of older women, youth and children in Africa and Norway
- Immigrant experience in Norway
- Influencing the integration of women in the Norwegian community
- Promoting collaboration between women’s organizations working with focus on Africa

³⁵ My translation from Norwegian to English; Bibi-Amka, (2008, January 8)[online].URL <http://www.bibi-amka.no/>

- Promoting Peace, Democracy and solidarity
- Supporting Africans in Norway by promoting integration and rights so that they can adapt to the new society.

Congolese all together³⁶

Congolese all together was founded in July 2006 and has its headquarter in Oslo.

Its main goal includes:

- Helping to understand the social rules in Norway
- Orientating and supporting the integration of Congolese immigrants and sharing experience with other minorities in difficulty.
- Promoting the Congolese culture

Specific objectives:

- Contributing by our own efforts into the smooth integration
- Orienting the youth and women in trouble by organising seminars for a moral support.

Some achievements

- Congolese all together has worked within the framework of assistance to families newly resettled in Norway.
- Congolese all together organized days for cultural promotion events in Oslo
- It works with youth referrals in guiding them to make right choices for their future careers.

KIM³⁷

KIM in English is the Contact Committee for Immigrants and the Norwegian Authorities. KIM was established in 1984. KIM is a Government advisory body and at the same times a forum for dialogue. Half of the members come from the immigrant organizations from all parts of the

³⁶ My translation from French to English, Kilima Gaby (2008 February 8) KONGO ALLE SAMMEN [e-mail to Kamitanji Kabuya [online]. Available through email: kami_tanji@yahoo.com.

³⁷ KIM "Presentations on discrimination" (2008, February 12) [online]-URL: <http://www.kim.no/templates/Page.aspx?id=153>.

country, and the other half of the members represent the political parties in Parliament, and the government ministries that are most relevant to immigrant issues.

KIM has two important agendas: the one is to advise the government (or Parliament, or institutions, or organizations) on issues of concern. The second agenda is to carry on a dialogue between the immigrant minorities and the authorities.

KIM discusses matters of importance for the immigrant community. The Committee as a whole is a forum for dialogue. Within the Committee there is an Immigrant Forum which formulates advice to authorities and also seeks to influence policy in relevant areas.

Black Expression « Integration here in Norway and development over there in Africa»³⁸

Black expression is a non profit organization created to defend the interests of black Africans from sub-Sahara Africa, living in Norway. The association focuses on social policy issues and is apolitical and secular. Black expression has a dual vision, namely, first to highlight the positive aspects of black people in the Norwegian society increasingly multicultural and secondly to participate as much as possible in the development of poor countries in Sub-Sahara Africa where they come from.

Black Expression thinks that exile has a meaning only if it is supported by a back African idea. Therefore, Black expression has been engaged in integration activities “here” in Norway and development activities “over there” in Africa. Black expression fights against illegal immigration. To work effectively on immigration and integration, it is better to know why African people are migrating to Norway.

To give a general answer to the question above, we should keep in mind the fact that dictatorship, civil wars, poverty and misery in Africa constitute the major migration causes of people to Europe. It does not make sense to establish harsh laws against immigrants and closing borders against immigration. Instead something should be done to tackle the main cause of this exodus right down from the source. Of course, helping to establish democracy in Africa is the simplest

³⁸ My translation from French to English, Raymond Kahungu (2008, February 17). Texte corrigé [e-mail to Kamitanji Kabuya[online]. Available through email: kami_tanji@yahoo.com.

most effective and efficient way of curbing immigration. It is therefore important to support Africans in Africa by improving their lives and contributing to a human immigration policy. Thus, the immigration of people from poor countries in Black Africa can be naturally regulated in Europe in general and in Norway in particular.

Secondary data

Apart from the primary that collected from refugees through interviews, an important part of data was collected from the refugees' adviser in Southtown Municipality.

According to refugees' adviser, Southtown municipality received the first Congolese refugees in 2000. They were coming straight from Africa; especially from the DRC neighbouring countries. The municipality also welcomed refugees from other Norwegian municipalities who come to live in Southtown.

According to the refugee adviser, people who come under UNHCR are generally qualified as true refugees. When refugees reach, Southtown Municipality they are offered an adequate follow-up. They also receive some counselling and guidance on how they can become active members of part of the Norwegian community. It is stated that:

Congolese refugees can be split in two categories: those who are highly qualified, and who lived in good conditions in the DRC. For this category, they find that it is a shameful to come to the social office to ask for assistance. They consider it as begging. The second category is made up with people who do not mind coming to the social office to ask for assistance whenever they are in need. Are they satisfied with by services they are offered? I don't know. May be those people would be in good position to answer this question.

(Refugee Adviser, Southtown Municipality, August 2007)

This officer has noted that the majority of the Congolese refugees seem to like living an autonomous life. They prefer to work on their own and not be spoon-fed like babies. Most Congolese refugees seem not be satisfied with the kind of life they are running in Southtown

since “they find that it is a shameful to come here to the social office to ask assistance. They consider it as begging”, remarked the advisor.

Based on the assumption that a normal person in need, and especially a refugee, cannot obstruct herself to seek for assistance when he can be given some, it can be inferred that, when some Congolese refugees obstruct themselves to ask assistance, it is an indication that something may be going wrong between the municipality and themselves.

Talking about key to integration, the refugee adviser supports the idea that the knowledge of the Norwegian language constitutes a prerequisite to integrate in Southtown Municipality. Those who speak the language are lucky enough to get jobs; to have some connections, and to improve their social welfare. One’s qualifications and expertise constitute an important factor in being integrated easily in the society, the advisor added.

The findings from the primary data have shown that refugees who have been exposed to human rights abuses had a low degree of satisfaction with the social integration system. The following observation by the refugees’ adviser commenting on the Congolese refugees’ situation goes along with such claim.

I am aware of the serious problems Congolese have gone through; they have gone through situations of trauma; and I am sure this situation has a negative impact on their life in Norway. Those who are already in Norway should feel lucky because Norway is a wonderful country where people are really at ease. If you have no money here, you can launch an application at the social office. If you have a problem such as racism for example, the police can easily help you. In others words, for any kind of problems you encounter, you always find assistance.

(Refugee Adviser Southtown Municipality, August 2007).

It is clear from this quotation that the Southtown Municipality is aware of the Congolese refugee sufferings. The municipality knows that those sufferings can have a negative impact on their social integration, but the Congolese should stop thinking that they are the only ones who have

experienced problems. Other people have experienced difficulties like the tsunami, and who have overcome such a problem and have started a new life. We should overcome challenges in life. All in all, I note that the major integration responsibility is in the hands of the Municipality authorities. The municipality still has a lot to do if they want to in help refugees to be fully integrated.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations

In this study, I explored the social integration of Congolese refugees in Southtown Municipality. One of my major points has been to find out whether the Congolese refugees in southtown feel integrated into the community locally and nationally.

The overall assessment of integration by refugees is answered by respondents as asked in questions number 8 from the questionnaire of this study. The question was asked like this: "Do you think you have the same rights, obligations and opportunities the same as Norwegians?" 13 out of 16 answered no or less strong no to this question.

I used interview technique to collect data for analysis and interpretation. The information recorded from the interviews helped me understand how refugees are socially treated in the Southtown Municipality, challenges faced by both parties, and opportunities offered.

Results from the data indicated that 56.25% of my informants feel they are socially integrated in the Norwegian community while 43.75% of them feel they are not. The main factors that contribute to social integration of Congolese refugees in Norway, according to themselves are mastering the Norwegian language and establishing good or strong social networks with Norwegians. It has also been pointed out that these refugees' trauma is a considerable burden for them even living in Norway and that the situation of their relatives back home in Congo can often add to that burden. According to the refugees Adviser in southtown, these refugees should look a head and not back and he has no help to their trauma.

This study has also shown the variations in some of the responses of respondents; some said that they had an easy access to the welfare system using their network, while others said they have no problem because they are able to use their own acquired skills. Some think that the labour market access is difficult, and continues to be so, while the others think that it takes time to access the labour market.

It looks like the host country's psychological assistance service is defective and inefficient if not lacking for these persons. This may be a hidden factor or a barrier against the social and employment integration of many refugees. Similarly, the Norwegians' labour market seem to be difficult to penetrate by refugees and those lucky poor souls who get jobs, are usually offered them on part-time basis and oftentimes the jobs are far below their level of competence/ qualifications.

The Southtown Municipality's way of caring about refugees has been judged (by the majority of the population of this study) less performing and so disappointing that a good number of Congolese refugees have judged it better to manage instead of struggling for the social assistance in vain –an assistance which they consider has been changed from right to favour. Nevertheless, as small number of those apt and /or lucky refugees who happened to integrate and find a better job (than what they had in DRC-if they had any) had a different attitude towards the overall situation.

Lastly, the point showing that female refugees with some training feel better integrated in Norway calls for some particular attention on the study of social integration based on gender differences and/or the level of gender awareness in the home and host countries.

Recommendations

To have a peaceful society, Southtown Municipality should promote equal rights, obligations and opportunities among all citizens. It would be unrealistic to talk of any social integration without equal treatment.

It would also be advantageous to improve on the relationship between the communication system between the Municipality and refugees in order to curb the proliferation of wrong information regarding both the refugees and the Southtown social authorities. In this way mutual trust and understanding can be developed and productive. It is through fruitful communication that Southtown authorities project a more positive image and learn to know about refugee's situations. Such dialogue opportunities offered to refugee by social authorities' constitute a remedy that

heals the kind of wounds (trauma) that most refugees suffer from. The open dialogue that should be maintained between refugees and authorities prepares the ground for peaceful refugee social integration in the host community, because it is when someone feels a sense of worth, feels valued and believes what she/he contributes matters that she/he can easily integrate the group or the community.

Refugees should be advised to quickly learn the Norwegian language since the language is one of the prerequisites for getting employed and more integrate the Norwegian community. Language is important, because it allows anybody to communicate, exchange, and establish a great social network.

It is also important that the Municipality authorities find ways of helping improve the lives of highly educated refugees (for it was noted that about 2/3 of my informants are highly educated people) who are involved in such works as cleaning, newspapers distribution, etc. by raising both their awareness and performance; otherwise they will end up losing interest in what they are doing and therefore become dangerous to the country. Therefore, the municipality should help them recover their dignity by accessing jobs fit well their qualifications/expertise and experience.

Services taking care of refugees should be aware that although not all refugees went through dramatic traumatic experience, all refugees need both psychological and material assistance for them to feel a sense of belonging in their new community. Therefore, they need appropriate attention and assistance from authorities for them to feel relieved from their burden and thus contribute to the development of their host country. They need their voices to be heard and their human rights to be recognized as well as their cultures and personalities to be respected. In short, they need to be socially integrated in their new society.

It is my considered opinion that if the entire shortcomings that have been pointed out through this work and the recommendation given here are attended to, the social integration of Congolese refugees will be a successful enterprise in Southtown. Once applied to any community where refugees' social integration is posing problems, the findings of this study can be helpful, with some adaptation according to the particularities of a given case study.

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APPENDIX 1

Matrix of informant's key information:

Sex Name Age/ Years in South	Language importance	Key to integration	Labour mark access	Trauma Experience	Psych assist	Welfare assessment	Welfare syst. access	Org part.	Norw Friends	Equal treatment	Overall situat.
Mr Mali 46/7	key to job, instruction	Intermarriage	Very difficult /local networks	Yes	None	Very difficult/une qual	Friends	Assoc/ Mov	F+V	No	Discont ent
Mrs Pesa 32/6	very important key	A good choice of profession	Bad/Une qual	Not personal	None	Big variation	Friends	Black Expres sion	F+V	No	Ok
MrChaki 49/	Important	Emulation	Almost impo ssible	Heavy is unstable	None	Very bad/acci dental	Educatio nal backgrou nd	Refug ee organi sation	F+V	No	Unstable
MrBaba 38/8	Important, but insufficient	Background / choice of profess	High barriers	Yes, still affected	None	KIM	Intellectu al capacity	KIM	Rare	No	Physical safe psych unsafe
Mr Moto 37/8	Very important	Information	Much discri minati on	No	None	Stressing	Networks	BIBI AMKA	RARE	No	Much stress little at ease
Mr Mata48/7	Key, but insuffisant	Networks	Very difficult	Yes	No	Very badly not facilitating integration	Self manage ment	Congo all of us togeth er	Rare	No	physical safe
Mr Buku43/21	Very import	Educational level/ spoken language	Takes time	Yes	None	Only a transition/ help, as should be	Spoken language	Black expres sion	F+V	Yes	Satisfied
Mrs Safari 37/3	Important	Networks	Not easy	Yes	No	Bad	Managed self	No	Rare	No	Unsatisfi ed

Mr Maisha 47/3	Very import but should be practiced		Very difficult	Yes	No	Bad	Friends	No	No	No	Discont ent
Mr Bahati 38/5	Very important allows making great networks	Friends	Difficult	Yes	No	Nothing goes well	Friends	Black expres sion	F+V	No	Stable
Mr Jua 41/6	Little spoken Norwegian is sufficient if one has friends	Friends/ Intermarria ge	Very difficult one should struggle with friends	Yes	No	Nothing goes well	Friends	congo all of us togeth er	F+V	No	Satisfied
Mr Chungu40/ 6	Very helpfull	Networks	Difficult	Yes	No	A bit well discrimina - tory systeme	Spoken language	Red Cross	F+V	No	safe
Mr Saidia 37/7	Very important	Churches	Difficult	Yes	No	Well but with weakness	Friends	NO	F+V	No	Satisfied
Mrs Tumaini 30/6	Very important to facilitates social integration	Networks	Difficult	Yes	No	Well	Networks	No	F+V	No	Satisfied
Mr Kalala42/5	Crucial	Networks	Difficult	Yes	No	Well with small weakness	Friends + c hurches	KIM	F	Yes	Satisfied
Mr Baha 39/8	Important	Networks	Not easy	Yes	None	Well	Networks	Red Cross	F+V	Yes	Satisfied

LIST OF INFORMANTS

Names	Marital status	Education
1. Mr Mali	Married/ Children	BA
2. Mrs Pesa	Married/ Children	BA
3. Mr Chaki	Married/ Children	BA
4. Mr Baba	Married/ Children	Candidate/Undergraduate
5. Mrs Moto	Married/children	Auxiliary Nurse
6. Mr Mata	Married/ Children	BA
7 Mr Buku	Married/ Children	BA
8 Mrs Safari	Married/ Children	State Diploma
9 Mr Maisha	Married/ Children	BA
10 Mr Bahati	Married/ Children	Qualified
11 Mr Jua	Married/ Children	Qualified
12. Mrs Chungu	Married/ Children	Candidate/Undergraduate
13. Mr Saidia	Married/ Children	Qualified
14. Mrs Tumaini	Married/ Children	BA
15. Mr Kalala	Married/ Children	Candidate/Undergraduate
16. Mr Baha	Married/ Children	Candidate/Undergraduate