

Open-Doors Policy and Economic Contribution of Urban Refugees in Host Countries: Evidence from Benin

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Abstract: This paper assesses the economic contribution of urban refugees in Benin. The main objective of the research is to assess the economic contribution of urban refugees settled in Cotonou to the host community in Benin, examine the challenges they are facing, and the refugee's policy impact. Therefore, this study used a mixed-methods approach to design and collect primary data on refugees from Central Africa Republic (CAR) who resides in the urban areas of Benin in Cotonou. In addition, the study used respondent-driven sampling (RDS) technique. The qualitative data collected enable us to understand the challenges facing refugees and policies and practices in Benin. Meanwhile, the theory used in this research is inspired by the neoclassical theory of demand and new institutional economics. Moreover, the quantitative analysis is strengthened by the econometric framework analysis. The results revealed that the refugees in the urban areas of Benin in Cotonou face a lot of challenges in terms of employment. The larger population of them lack a consistent income to strengthen their livelihood. But the refugee's policies and practices are in their favour. Thus, the regression analysis revealed that the refugees in Benin contribute positively and significantly to the host community's economy.

Key words: Urban Refugees, Host Country, Benin, Economic contribution, Open-Door Policy

I. INTRODUCTION

Owing to the dynamic world today, refugees¹ and the process of forced migration have implications on the social, political, and economic conditions of host countries globally, and especially in Africa (Linet, 2017). The overall estimated population of forcefully displaced people is about 79.5 million (UNHCR, 2020). More than 26% of these refugees are hosted in Africa. Many countries, like Kenya and Benin, have hosted refugees since the 1970s. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees the government of Benin presently plays hosts to 1,244 refugees and 435 asylum seekers populations in West Africa. The vast majority are from Central African Republic (78.6%) followed by Ivory Coast (13.2%) while 8.3% are from other countries (UNHCR -

Benin, 2020). Several African countries perceive refugees as a threat to their resources and national security. Moreover, most host governments have been reluctant to reallocate scarce resources for the benefit of these non-citizens; many have in fact have perceived them as aliens seeking permanent local integration (Betts, Ali, et al., 2017). Increase in the number of refugees around the world has also raised critical issues regarding their contributions in host countries and host communities.

Some studies (see (Betts, et al. (2019); (Linet, 2017); (Omata, 2012)) for instance) have, on the contrary, shown that refugees are economic actors who contribute positively to the economy of the host country—they are not just a social liability as many have perceived them. This negative perception about refugees, among other factors, has made some host countries repatriate the refugees to their countries of origin or host them in designated camps. For instance, Kenya has for decades designated Kakuma Refugee and Dadaab camps as the site for hosting refugees. It recently given notice to the UNHCR of its steady-fast intention to close the two camps (UNHCR, 2019a).

Due to the perceived negative perception about refugees, host countries in Africa have normally not concerned themselves with acting towards providing an enabling environment to harness the refugees' economic potential. Evidence is however mounting on the economic benefits that refugees bring. For instance, according to Alloush et al., (2017), based on their research in three refugee camps in Rwanda, financial inclusion of refugees in the country's economic system generated income which had a positive and significant impact on the host community's economies. Additionally, Dadush (2018) looked at the question of hosting refugees strictly from an economic perspective in economically advanced countries (and considered all the main economic dimensions such as fiscal, economic growth, and labour market impact) and found that for most advanced countries, the costs of hosting refugees are front-loaded, while the benefits of hosting them only accrue over time. An examination on how these fairs within developing economies would be timely; this is what the present study focuses on.

¹The 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Optional Protocol stipulates in its article 1(A)(2): "a refugee as an individual who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence who is unable or unwilling to return due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on his or her race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group"

Refugees also face a myriad of problems. This includes exclusion from economic opportunity, social challenges, access to higher education, lack of freedom of movement, among others... (Omata, 2020)). This article therefore endeavours to highlight the challenges that refugees in Benin are faced with, and attempts to show how despite these odds, these refugees have still managed to contribute to the economy of their host country. Of note as well is that refugees and forced displacement research is currently dominated by qualitative approaches. Betts, Omata, et al., (2017) for instance argues that few researches on refugees have used a quantitative approach. Betts et al., (2017:4) also note that refugee's research has mostly been carried out over short periods of time and have relied on small, unsystematic, and unrepresentative sampling, thus limiting insights that would have otherwise been derived from long term studies. This article provides insights from a quantitative approach in refugee and displacement studies. The article focuses on Benin as a case study.

1. Benin and its Refugees

The United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2019b) suggests that refugees have legal and de facto access to decent work such as through rights to work, ownership of business, access to financial services, to land, to property ownership, and freedom of mobility. Furthermore, improving livelihoods through economic inclusion is a key component of achieving protection and independence outcomes for refugees. Economic inclusion contributes to the self-reliance and resilience of refugees, empowering them to meet their needs in a safe, sustainable, and dignified manner; avoids aid-dependency and negative coping mechanisms; and contributes to their host economies. To enable the refugees settle in Benin and aid in improving their livelihoods through economic inclusion, the government of Benin issued an Order (Ordinance: No. 75-41 of 1975) which in article No. 6 stipulates that “*beneficiaries of refugee status receive the same treatment as citizens with regard to access to education, scholarships, right to work and social benefits*”. To measure the effectiveness of the aforementioned government order, this study explores the various economic activities in which the refugees in Benin engage in to generate income for themselves and their host community. As Betts, et al. (2017) argue, that no matter the restriction placed on refugees and the difficult circumstances that they find themselves in, refugees nevertheless engage in significant economic activity which allows them to create new opportunities for themselves (and others around the world).

The Republic of Benin is among countries in West Africa with an open door refugee hosting policy. Benin has several policies² of reintegration and facilitation towards refugees, yet, it is not clear to policymakers how these policies are

navigated by the different actors for economic participation. For this reason, a study of the economic effect of urban refugees hosting is timely. Indeed, very few selected countries implement policies that allow progressive economic integration—the few that do so include countries such as Uganda, Zambia, South Africa, and Benin, with varying degrees of success (Betts, Omata, et al., 2017). There is also a need for primary and relevant field data on refugees for an evidence-based policy to inform policymakers on the matter of economic inclusion in the host country.

According to the statistics from the *UNHCR-Benin* (2020), the refugees' population in Benin is 1,244. The vast majority (78.6% of these refugees) are from the Central African Republic followed by refugees from Ivory Coast (13.2%) and the rest (8.3%) are from other countries.

2. The Cost of Hosting Refugees

Hosting refugees has an economic impact on the host nations. The consequences for hosting refugees could either be negative or positive to the host state. These consequences can be determined by the total number of refugees hosted in the country, the number of refugees relative to the national population and number of refugees relative to the wealth of the country. The negative effect of hosting refugees could be the strain it exerts on access to local resources such as schools and hospitals. The refugees can also exert a strain on infrastructure like roads and housing, and on availability of land and thus causing a burden on the social and administrative services of the host country (Deardorff Miller, 2018). Some common perception hold that refugees take jobs from the nationals and that they live in luxury such as free housing, free medical services, provision of maintenance money among others. Another burden is that the presence of refugees forces the host country to divert money from other development activities to fund security related expenses such as the payment of salaries to extra guards and other security related expenses such as (CCTVs), erecting of tents and look-out posts, fencing and cost to officials who ensure that this is maintained

Baloch et al. (2017) focus their research on the economic impact of more than three million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. The authors used data spanning 35 years from 1979–2014 and used the ARDL bounds testing approach. Among their findings was these Afghan refugees have a strong negative impact on economic growth of Pakistan. They concluded that hosting refugees can never be a boon to Pakistan's economy. However, as we shall soon show, refugees can also have positive economic impact to the host state, especially when they have access to land, labour market and are permitted to move around freely. In this way, they are able to create jobs, provide crucial services (such as medical, agricultural and engineering from professionals among them). They can also be an economic benefit through receipt of international aid (that they attract).

In contrary to aforementioned researchers, Alloush et al. (2017) conducted a unique study by analysing the economic

² (Ordinance: No. 75-41 of 1975): “beneficiaries of refugee status receive the same treatment as citizens with regard to access to education, scholarships, right to work and social benefits”

impacts of refugees on host country economies within three Congolese refugee camps in Rwanda by using simulation Monte Carlo methods. They found that cash aid to refugees creates significant positive income that spill over to host-country businesses that benefits households. Moreover, their simulations found that additional influx of refugees increases total real income. Furthermore, trade between the local economy and the rest of Rwanda increased by \$49 to \$55. They also found that there were economic spill-overs when refugees purchase goods and services from host country businesses stationed outside the camps. Their findings also showed that refugees were also a source of much needed labour to host country farms and businesses, creating additional economic impacts.

A study commissioned to investigate the level of urban refugee contribution to the economy at the household level as well as the self-sufficient by Upton (2015), found that only 3% of urban refugees completely rely on Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) support for their livelihood. Meanwhile, the majority (97%) rely on remittances, business profits and employment for income. More importantly, besides being customers and creating demand for goods and services, the study pointed out that refugees' households with businesses created employment for refugees and Kenyan nationals. Almost half (49%) of all those working in refugee-owned enterprises are Kenyan nationals. These findings demonstrated how refugees can create jobs for the host country and contribute positively and significantly to the host country's economic growth.

Dryden-Peterson & Hovil (2004) found that refugees in Uganda (Moyo District) opted out of the settlement sites, often because they saw the commercial advantages of doing so, even though it meant they did not receive basic allocations of food, non-food items, and land. Instead of receiving handouts or trying to farm small parcels of inadequate land, they engaged in a wide variety of commercial activities throughout the district. The researchers narrated the story of a young boy who often travelled to Sudan during the mango season to pick mangoes that he would later sell in local markets in Moyo. By doing this, he generated enough income to pay for his school fees. This study demonstrated how refugees were creative and seized on opportunities presented to them. This research also points out how the young refugees are eager to succeed in the host country even though they do not have the support of the UNHCR or NGOs.

Betts, et al. (2017) conducted a study in Uganda among the refugee's communities to assess opportunities available for refugees towards self-reliance. The study sampled 2,213 refugee households. The findings show that in the city, refugees had the highest income and lowest dependency levels. Moreover, the study noted that among Congolese refugees for example, those with higher levels of income and those who were less on aid were found in Kampala than in other sites. This implies that when institutional rules and regulations in the host country allow refugees to settle, to have

a freedom of movement and to have the right to work, then the greater the refugees were able to generate better income for themselves and their households.

Findings by Taylor et al. (2016) conducted in refugee settlements in Uganda, also found that refugees presence benefitted local economies. More specifically, their findings revealed that an average refugee household which received cash food assistance increased their annual real income in the local economy by 1,106 USD at Rwamwanja Settlement, and by 1,072 USD in Adjumani Settlement. Furthermore, the impacts of refugees who received aid in food instead of cash are 866 USD and 806 USD at the two settlements, respectively rephrase this. The study concluded that the local income generated by an additional refugee household was significant at both settlements. The study urged policy makers to carefully design aid policies that would have both positive and significant impact on the host country economy.

According to Miller (2018) Canadian refugees reported higher rates of employment, higher incomes and that they paid more taxes compared to other immigrant groups. The study found that refugees contributed significantly to the economy of the host country through the international support that they received. Apurva (2016) study among refugees in Kakuma camp in Kenya also reported similar findings, in which the presence of refugees in the region boosted the gross regional product by over three per cent and increased employment by about three per cent. Moreover, the Turkana area also experienced notable development arising from the presence of the refugees, where host per capita incomes rose by six per cent. A same study in the same camp by Gengo et al. (2017), found out that the presence of refugees in northern Kenya had a positive effect on the nutritional status of inhabitants of Turkana. Gengo et al. (2017) proposed that the benefit may have accrued as a product of economic opportunities made possible by free movement of refugees within Turkana that other areas did not enjoy. These results strengthen the argument that indeed the presence of refugees positively affect the host communities.

According to Betts, et al. (2017) in a research conducted in Uganda, found that attainment of higher education has positive economic outcomes for refugees. Acquiring an additional year of education was associated with a 3 percent higher average income. The type of education also matters; an additional year of primary education was positively associated with 1 percent higher earnings, secondary school with 10%, and tertiary education with 27%. Completing primary school was associated with a 30% higher income. However, these returns vary considerably by nationality according to their findings. Each year of education was associated with a 0.1% return for Congolese, a 2.2% return for Somalian and 2.4% return for Rwandese. These differences were found even when institutional variables were controlled. This shows that education enhances and empowers refugees to rise their income in the host country, the higher the income for refugees the higher they will spend in the host community.

Betts, et al. (2019) thus concludes that refugee's education has positive and significant correlated with higher livelihood status

Access to education for refugees is also recognized as a key component to enhancing social cohesion in the host community. Idris (2020) found that refugees in settlements (and even those in urban area of Uganda) witnessed more friendliness from their neighbours due to interaction among their children. Moreover, refugees access to education services are seen as an opportunity to promote interaction with the host community and the refugee population.

3. *The Socio-Economic Factors that Affect Refugees and How They Cope With these Challenges*

The joint report of the World Bank & UNCHR (2018), to understanding the socioeconomic conditions of Refugees in Kalobeyei, Kenya showed that the major challenges faced by refugees in the host country are the livelihoods and unemployment. This is so difficult to the humanitarian organisations to solve those challenges. Meanwhile, Nyaoro & Owiso (2021), pointed out that the legal frameworks put in place by the government of Kenya promote the rights of refugees, they enjoy basic rights from the UNHCR and its partners such as documentation, in-kind and in-cash donations to enable them to cope up with their daily life sustainability.

The study of Schneiderheinze & Lücke (2020), showed that the major challenges faced by refugees to get employed in the host country are language barrier, lack of experiences, and education. These challenges do not allow them to compete with the host community, however, they end up looking for job in the informal labour market so that they would be able to sustain themselves.

The other major challenge face by refugees in the host countries in developing world is the way to get a work permit so that they will be able to access the formal labour market. This challenge lead them to search for job in the informal sector where they are mostly mistreated with very low wage payment. This due to lack of proper documentation and inclusion in the host country. Okoth & Dulo (2021), said that very few work permits are granted to urban refugees but the camp refugees are not allowed to have work permits so that they will be able to look for a job in the formal job market. Nevertheless, some international organizations work towards refugees' wellbeing in the urban areas of Nairobi for their self-reliance. For instance, they received technical training on business skills, administrative and capital facilitation to start their own business from Danish Refugee Service and Norwegian Refugee Service (Nyaoro & Owiso, 2021).

II. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a sequential mixed study research approach. The qualitative aspect was first used and it was aimed at providing an in-depth understanding of the socio-economic factors that affect refugees and how they cope with these challenges. The quantitative aspect was then used to determine

refugees' economic contribution in the host community. The survey was conducted in Cotonou, an urban city in Benin. This research site was selected since most of Benin's refugees were settled in this area (see Ba & Kouton, 2006).

In Cotonou, the study used an experimental approach to urban refugee profiling respondent-driven sampling (RDS) which allowed the study to access hidden and hard-to-reach populations that pose a major challenge to traditional sampling approaches. According to Baraff et al. (2016), Respondent-driven sampling (RDS) is a common way of reaching hidden and hard-to-reach populations by allowing a small number of respondents to recruit further respondents in the target population using their personal contacts. The survey was conducted between January to March 2020.

The respondent-driven sampling (RDS) sample size was calculated by use of the Wejnert et al (2012) formula. In this formula before calculating the RDS sample size, the researcher needs to calculate the simple random sample (SRS) size of a given population, and then multiply the SRS by the Design Effect (DE). According to the literature the common design effect used is equal to 2 (DE=2) (Heckathorn, 2007); (Kral et al., 2010); (Gray et al., 2015) all the refs should be in one bracket. The following formula was thus used to compute the RDS sample size:

$$n = \frac{DE * (Pa(1 - Pa))}{(SE(Pa))^2}$$

Where DE is the Design Effect of the respondent-driven sampling, n the RDS sample size, SE the standard error, and Pa is the proportion $Pa(1-Pa)/(SE(Pa))^2$ is the simple random sampling formula. However, following the recommendation of Fearon et al. (2017), which states that one should conduct sample size calculation by estimating population size and considering the relationship between reference period or number of objects distributed and Pa for potential impact on uncertainty. Therefore, this study thus used the time period proportion Pa and the design effect DE = 2 as recommended by literature. Using this following formula, this study was able to estimate the sample size according to the time period proportion. The confidence level was marked at 95% Confidence Interval.

$$N = \frac{Na}{Pa}$$

Then

$$Na = NPpa$$

The sample size estimated using Pa is the proportion attended within three months period of time of data collection. A width of 95% confidence interval with a population size estimate of 1,244 for a value of Pa equal to .05, assuming a design effect of 2, and then the sample size estimated is equal

to 124 refugees population in Cotonou (Benin). But, as the study was only able to reach the Central African Republic Refugees, then the sample size becomes 96 refugees when the study applied the quota formula such as the 78.6 per cent; therefore we were able to collect data on a sample of 74 Central African Republic refugees in Cotonou. According to *UNHCR - Benin (2020)*, more than 40% of the refugees are under the age of 20. Then when the study remove the 40% of the refugees under the age of 20 years old the sample size became 58 refugees. That means the sample size has been reach during the survey.

As mentioned so far in the methodology, the qualitative data was collected through observation and by asking some opened questions that have been set in the survey questionnaire. The same sample size has been used for the qualitative collection but it is not all the participants who answered the opened questions. They answered where it is needed and for the ethical purpose they have not been forced to answer the open questions.

Socio-Economic Challenges Faced By Refugees In Benin

To place the paper in perspective this article first focuses on the reasons why the refugees fled their home country. From interviews, it was revealed that 45.95 per cent fled their home country on account of civil war, while 10.81 per cent left their home country for fear of political persecution, 1.35 per cent for fear of social persecution, and, 12.16 per cent said it was because of religious persecution that they fled their country of origin. Some 1.35 per cent and 4.05 per cent said they fled from their home country because of other forms of violence and for other reasons, respectively (see figure1).

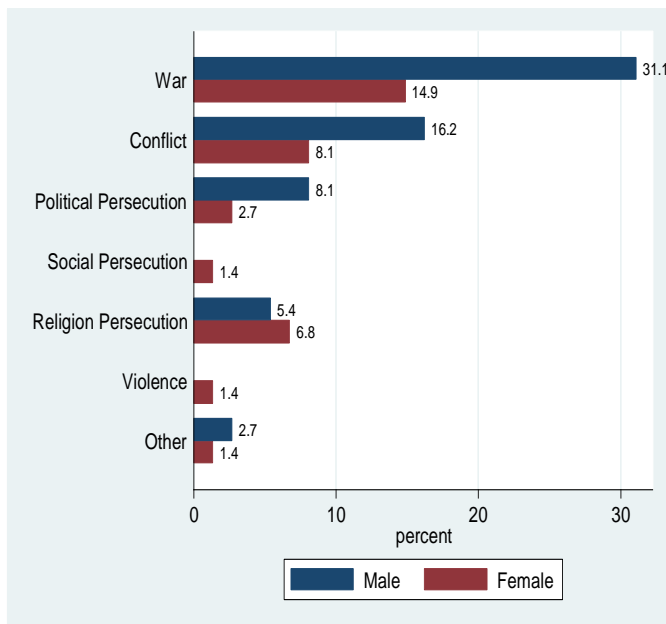


Figure 1: Gender and Cause of Fleeing from the Country of Origin

This study then went ahead to identify the challenges facing refugees in Benin.

I. Housing

This study set to assess the type of housing used by the refugees the host country. 33.78 per cent of the refugees were found to live in single apartment, meanwhile 55.41 per cent of refugees lived in shared apartment. However, 4.05 per cent were found to be homeless, 1.35 per cent taken care of by local authority, 5.41 per cent had other living arrangements (see figure7).

However, 58.11 per cent of the refugees pay their own rent fees. But the 21.62 per cent of the refugees do not know who take care of their rent fees. Moreover, 21.62 per cent of the individuals have their rent fee paid by other people. Only 1.35 per cent of the refugees do not pay rent fee. This means the majority of refugees are self-sufficient in terms of rent fees payment in the host country (figure3). The same result has been found by Upton, (2015) in Nairobi (Kenya) where the larger population of Urban refugees pay their own rent fees and only 3 per cent rely on the NGOs to a pay their rent fees.

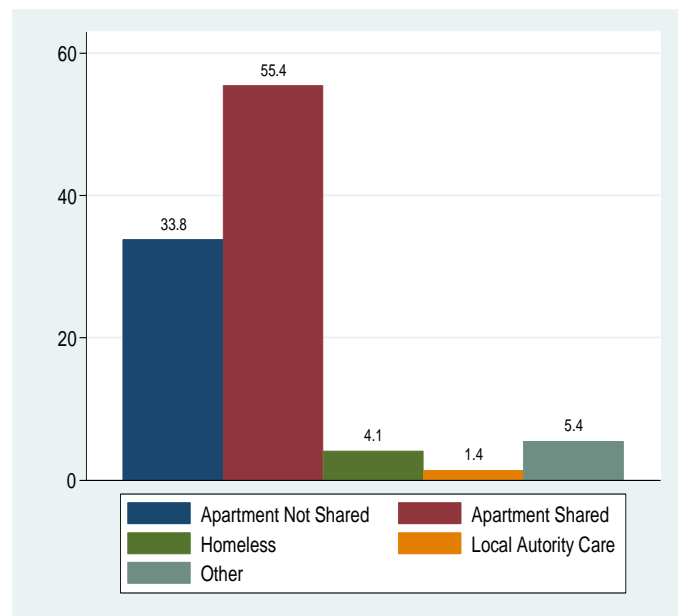


Figure 2: The Refugees Accommodations

Qualitative results provided the following responses:

"[...] I stay with some fellow refugees from the country like me; we are all students." (06-03-2020__Marc__ arrived in Benin since 2015)

"[...] We share this single room with two of my friends from Central Africa Republic (CAR)." (10-03-2020__Nestor__ arrived in Benin since 2013)

"[...]I stay with my wife and daughter" (02-03-2020__Abou__ arrived in Benin since 2014)

"[...] We have been hosted by a Muslim lady with my tree children. I rented when we came in Cotonou but with time without job I could not pay the rent again and we have

been chased away by the landlord.” (04-03-2020__Mariama__ arrived in Benin since 2016)

“[...] I pay around Fcfa 15,000 (USD 30) for my rent and I stay with my brother, he is a student.” (05-02-2020__Henry__ arrived in Benin since 2014)

“[...] I stay in one bed room with my wife and two children. I pay the rent no one pays for me.” (15-01-2020__Joe__ arrived in Benin since 2013)

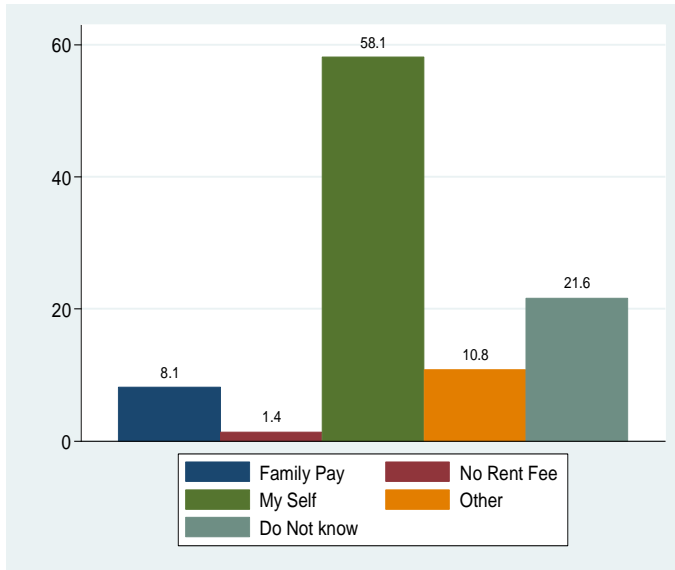


Figure 3: Who paid the rent fee in the apartment where the refugees

2. Refugees Status and Freedom of Movement

The study found that 75.68 per cent of the refugees in Benin were holders of official refugee status. On the other hand, 16.22 per cent were asylum seekers while 5.41% were resettled. The rest (2.70 per cent) were holders of other status such as? (see figure 4). The study shows that refugees in Benin had little challenge with regard to (refugee) status. Unlike some developing countries, getting the refugees status while you are in urban area in Benin was not difficult. Some respondents had this to say about this:

“[...] When I came in Cotonou in 2013, I submitted my document and I got my refugee identity card one month later.” (19-01-2020__Jores__ arrived in Benin since 2013)

“[...] Getting my refugee identity document was not a big deal for me. I even have a refugee’s passport delivered to me by UNHCR” (25-01-2020__Latif__ arrived in Benin since 2015)

“[...] I don’t have my card yet because I have not submitted the require document yet.” (30-01-2020__Faure__ arrived in Benin since 2017)

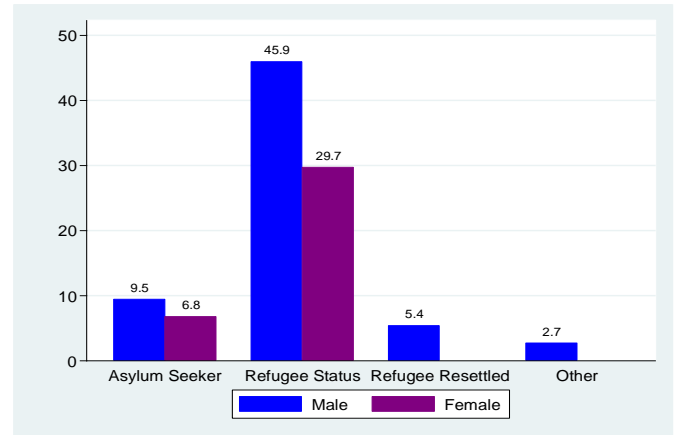


Figure 4: Gender and Refugees Status

More importantly, refugees in Benin were found to have freedom to move about (97.30 per cent affirmed this). Only 2.70 per cent said they do not have freedom of movement (figure 5). Contrary to some Sub-Sahara countries (such as Kenya), the government of Benin allows refugees to move freely within the country. According to Omata (2020), refugees in Kenya especially the ones in the camps are confined in these camps—freedom of movement is only allowed on account of medical assistance or in pursuit of higher education purpose. The Kenyan urban refugees, especially those in Nairobi, are subject to a lot of police harassment, as they are not permitted to live outside the camp..

Benin refugees had this to say:

“[...] Since I arrived in Cotonou, I have never been arrested by police owing to my refugee status. No police stops me yet.” (02-02-2020__Caleb__ arrived in Benin since 2016)

“[...] The last time I have been stopped by the police because of traffic light, but when I showed my refugee ID card they released me.” 05-03-2020__Susan__ arrived in Benin since 2013)

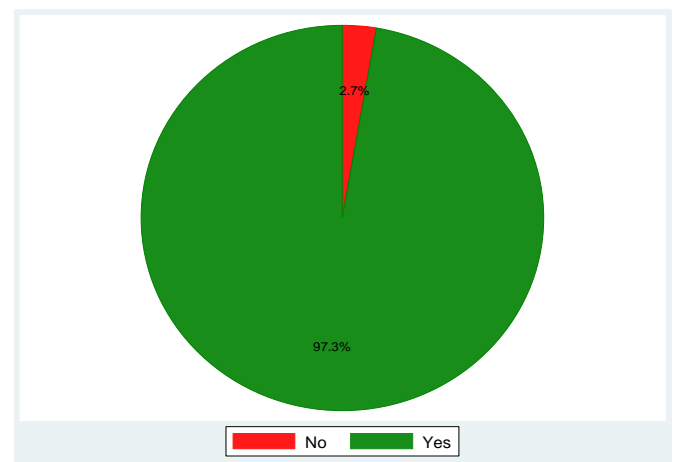


Figure 5: Freedom of Movement

3. Refugees Employment and Social Security

Majority (89.19 per cent) of the refugees were without social security; only 10.81 per cent had this privilege (This is due to the fact that refugees do not have access to the formal job market). They are rarely employed because of their refugees' status and hence cannot secure social security.

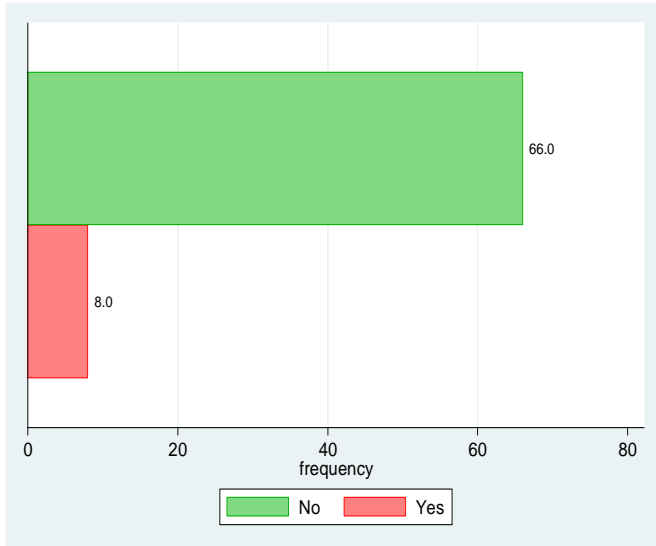


Figure 6: Social Security

This was how they put it:

"[...] I did my internship in a law firm in Akpakpa; I was paid 60,000fcfa (US\$120) per month for 06 months. Until now I have not gotten any job yet" (06-03-2020__Marc__ arrived in Benin since 2015)

"[...] After my master's degree in accounting, I did an internship at the Ministry of Finance. It was good, but they didn't keep me afterwards. I am still looking for Job." (10-03-2020__Nestor__ arrived in Benin since 2013)

From the data collected from the refugees on the field, only the 29.73 per cent had jobs (70.27 per cent were unemployed) This result shows that the refugees in Benin face a huge challenge of working in the host country. This may be due to the already high rate of unemployment in Benin (where unemployment rate stands at).. More insights revealed that 27.27 per cent of those who are working had secured their job through personal contacts with other refugees. 13.64 per cent said that they got their job through a Beninese friend. 9.09 per cent said that they were self-employed, while 9.09 per cent said that they are doing voluntary work. The remaining 40.91 per cent revealed that they got their job through other job searching means.

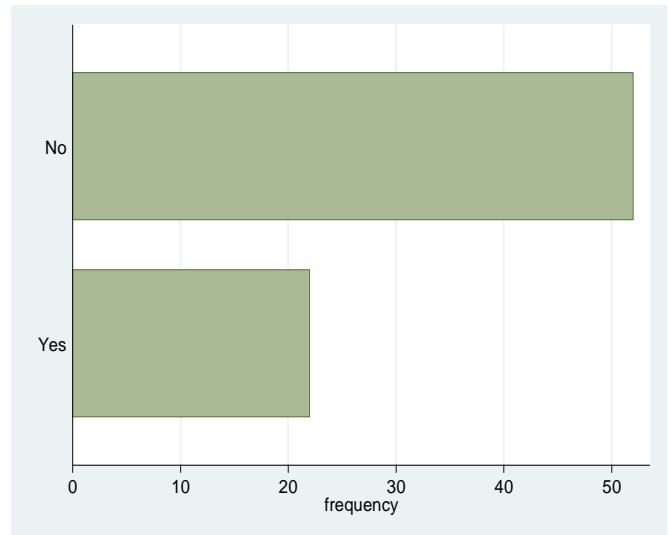


Figure 7: Current Refugees Employment Status

Figure 8 below shows the refugees income. 24.32 per cent of the refugees have no income; this shows how the refugees face a lot of challenges in the host country. Meanwhile some of them have a medium income and there are some outliers where their income is so higher. This issue of lack of income was due to lack of employment

" [...] After this great experience [the internship time]; I came back down to earth suddenly [...] I am only a refugee in Benin and the companies, despite my potential, do not trust me, they told me several times during the job interviews. What is my master's degree used for? Look at how I live." (25-02-2020__André__ arrived in Benin in 2013)

"[...] They paid for my master's degree though, I don't have a job despite my many attempts, to survive I became a security guard (cries) it's not a life that if my father saw me what a shame." (21-03-2020__Adrien__ arrived in Benin in 2014)

"[...] Who would believe that I have a Bachelor's degree, the phone repairman has a Master's degree (sigh) if I do not do then I won't eat; at night I'm a watchman [...] but despite my two jobs, I can't make ends meet even though I have a bachelor's degree [sigh]." (03-02-2020__Télèsphor__ arrived in Benin in 2013)

"[...] For a long time, I struggled not to do like my brothers (doing little jobs), I had to give in to hunger and lack. Despite this master's degree in finance and management, I am a watchman in a bank, which was not easy to get. [...] I owe this job to my brother." (28-03-2020__Manou__ arrived in Benin in 2013)

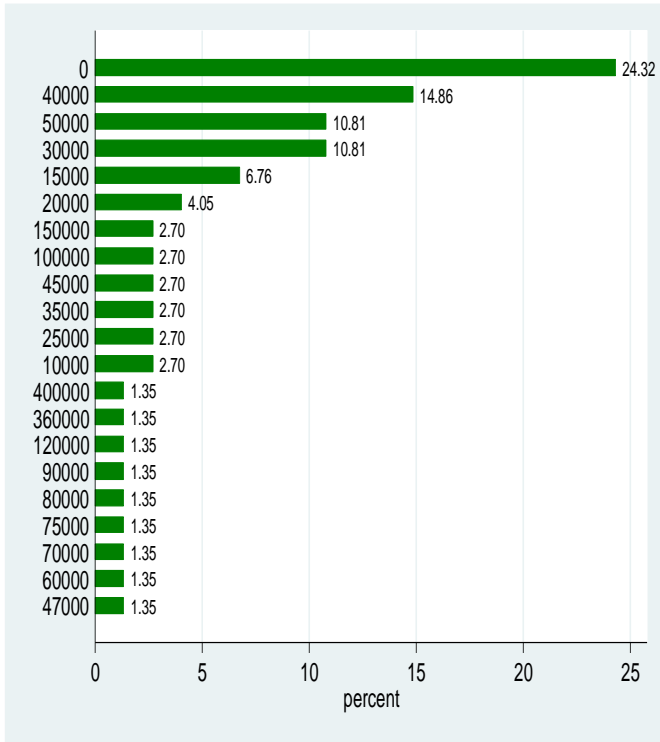


Figure 8: Refugees Monthly Income distribution (Currency in FCFA)

4. Refugees social relations with the local citizens

About 52.7 per cent of the refugees in Benin declined to offer an opinion on this however, 21.6 per cent 40.5% stated that they considered that they had good relations with the Government of Benin. Only 6.8 5.4% and 1.4% indicated that they had sour relations with the government (those who indicated that their relations were bad—5.4%, and those who saw their relations very badly (see Figure 9). Similarly to central government, the local government had similar sentiments on the refugees (see fig.10).

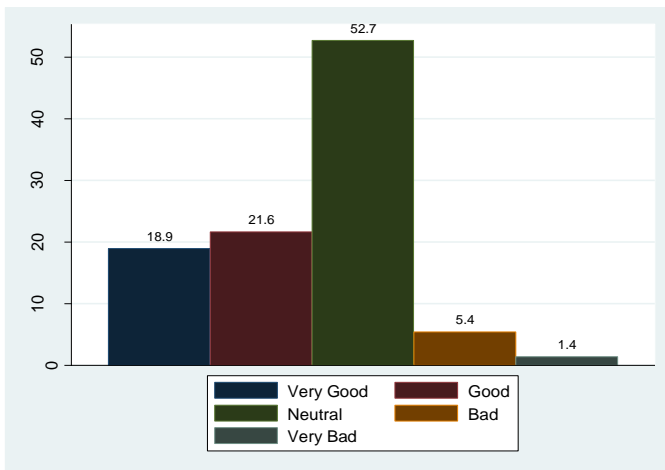


Figure 9: Government of Benin Social Consideration

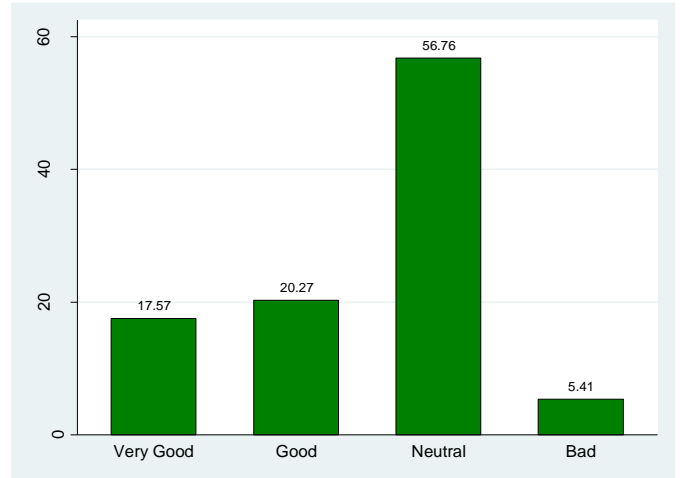


Figure 10: Local Government of Benin Social Consideration

The majority of refugees in Benin (37.84 per cent) said that they have neutral relations with the United Nations High Commission for Refugee (UNHCR) while 36.49 per cent said that they have good relationship with the UNHCR, with 6.76 per cent saying they had very good relations with the UNHCR. Moreover, the minority (14.86 and 4.05 per cent) of them respectively said that they have bad and very bad relationship with the UNHCR (Figure 11).

Qualitative responses revealed the following sentiments:

"[...] You know, I am grateful to Benin people in general because they welcomed us in their territory. "(28-03-2020__ Eduard__ arrived in Benin in 2013)

"[...] I am hosted in the host community and I don't have any issue with them, by the way no one knows that I am a refugees they just know that I am international student from CAR. "(22-03-2020__ Manou__ arrived in Benin in 2013)

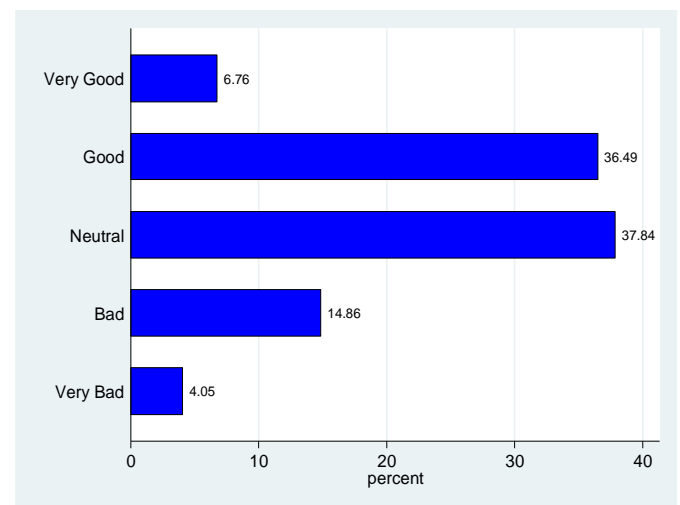


Figure 11: UNHCR Social Consideration

With regard to their relations with Benin citizens, more than half (52.70 per cent) stated that they have good relations with Benin citizens. Meanwhile, 25.56 per cent said that they have neutral relations with the people of Benin, while the rest, 4.05 per cent said that they have bad relationship with the people of Benin (see Figure12).

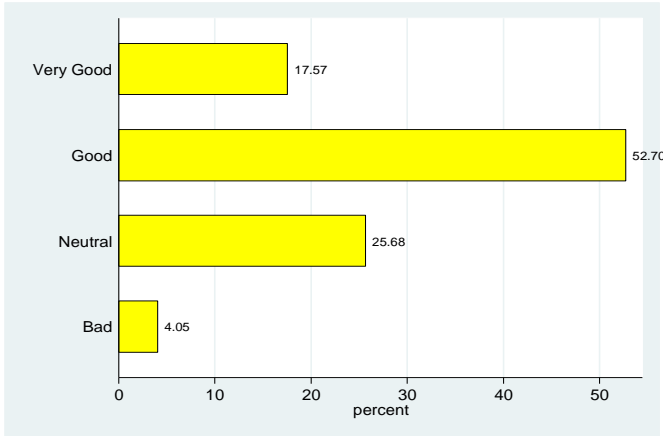


Figure 12: Relationship with Benin people

About half (48.65 per cent) of refugees held the view that they had good relations with the people of Benin (as the citizens do not fear or mistrust them).The other 31.08 per cent said that they do not know what the people of Benin think about them, with the other 20.27 per cent of them saying that the Beninese were sceptical about them (Figure13).

Interestingly, the majority (78.38 per cent) of the refugees said that they have never been publicly insulted (only a minority (21.62 per cent) said that they had been publicly abused by Benin citizens (Figure14).

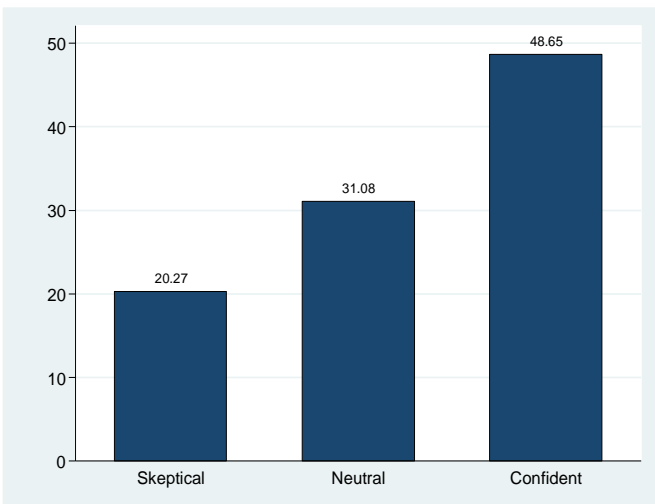


Figure 13: Benin people thought about refugees

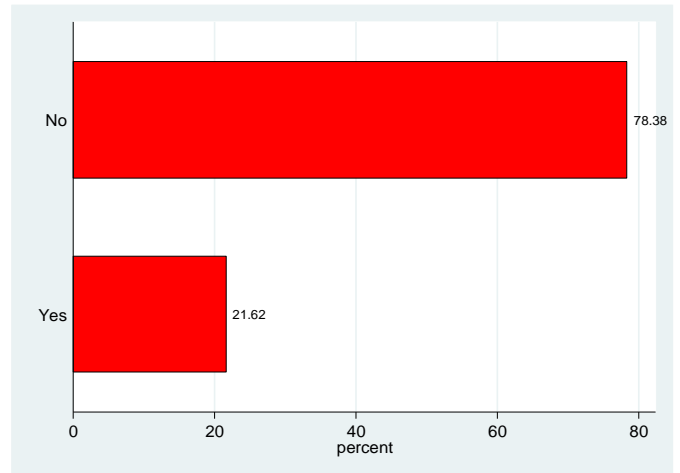


Figure 14: Public Insult towards Refugees delete

Majority of the refugees (94.59 per cent) confirmed that they have never been harassed or been arrested before. Only 5.41 per cent said that they have been arrested by the authorities (Figure15).

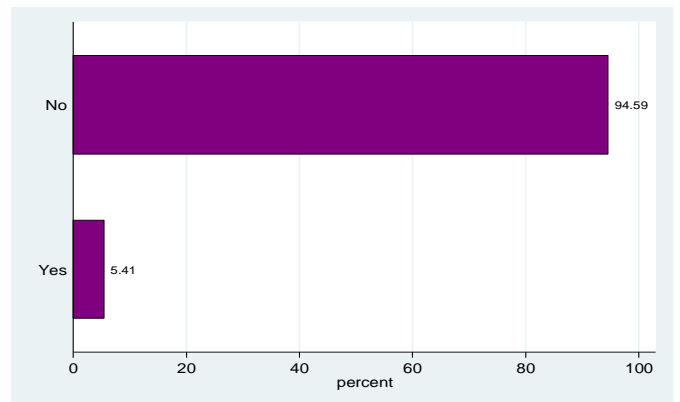


Figure 15: Police harassment

The majority of the refugees(89.19 per cent) acknowledged that they have never been prevented from accessing public services such as health service, schools and administration service. Only 10.81% stated that they have in one occasion or two been denied access to these public services. 86.49 per cent of the refugees acknowledged that they have never been denied the UNHCR services before—only 13.51 per cent stated that they had previously been denied services by the UNHCR. This means that refugees in Cotonou do not face any social or business identity stigmatisation. The main challenges they have in the host community are lack of economic opportunities, lack of descent job. They also feel the absent or bureaucracy time for the administrative work. Let us now turn to the economic contribution of refugees to the host country.

III. ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF URBAN REFUGEES SETTLED IN BENIN

1. Refugees Policies and Practices in Benin Analysis

As mentioned earlier, this study used the Ordinary List Square (OLS) to analyse the outcome of the research. This analysis was used to measure the economic contribution of the refugees in the host country of Benin. Table1 below shows the results of this analysis:

Table1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std.Dev.	Min	Max
Income (log of Monthly Income)	56	10.634	.74	9.21	12.899
Freedom of Movement	74	.973	.163	0	1
Gender	74	1.365	.485	1	2
Age	74	31.73	12.047	16	96
Education	74	4.176	1.616	0	7
French Language	74	3.108	.786	2	4
Refugee Status	74	2.811	.961	1	6
Job Status	74	.297	.46	0	1
Social Security	74	.108	.313	0	1
Public Insult	74	.216	.414	0	1
Police Arrest	74	.054	.228	0	1
Public Service	74	.108	.313	0	1

The above table shows that the participants in the study sample are 74 refugees. The variables are income (log), freedom of movement, gender, age, education, French language and more. The freedom of movement is a binary variable with 1 as Yes and 0 as No. The study then wanted to show whether refugee policies and practices had an effect on refugee income, which would then point to their contribution to the host country's economy in form of taxes etc. Table2 below shows the regression analysis result with relation to this. The results revealed that the freedom of movement of refugees had a positive effect on income generating. Statistically however,

this relationship was not significant..

On the other hand, gender was found to have a negative (and statistically significant) impact on income. This was more so for the female gender. This implies that income generated by females in the host country was so little. This was more so for the reason that the majority had no income.

Age was also found to have a positive effect on the income through this again was not statistically significant. The older one was, the higher the income one generated. This can then be extrapolated to their positive contribution to the host's economy.

Education level was also found to have a positive (0.139 point) impact on the income; this result is statistically significant. This means that many of the refugees were educated and were thus able to secure meaningful employment in the host country. This has important policy significance, in that, host countries in developing world should allow refugees to access higher education so they will be able to generate more income and the more they earn, the more they will spend in the host country economic system.

However, the fact that the majority of the refugees were unemployed meant that the income that was generated by the few who were employed was not significant.. Therefore, good policies would lead to refugees contributing more meaningfully to the economy of the host country. Positive attitude towards refugees (by government and its citizenry) would go a long way towards making this a reality.. Having a social security is also important for refugees as this would ensure that they would contribute more meaningfully and significantly in the host nation's economy. Currently, this impact is missing as a majority do not have social security. This calls upon policy makers to design policies that would help the refugees in the host countries in the developing world to have social security.

Table2: Linear Regression (OLS)

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
	In- come	In- come	Income	Income	Income	Income	Income	Income	Income	Income	Income
Freedom of Movement	0.526 (0.533)	0.444 (0.511)	0.405 (0.517)	0.281 (0.495)	0.268 (0.495)	0.314 (0.492)	0.317 (0.502)	0.278 (0.519)	0.318 (0.547)	0.347 (0.552)	0.262 (0.563)
Gender		- 0.491* *	- 0.485* *	- 0.395* *	-0.381* (0.196)	-0.368* (0.194)	-0.370* (0.198)	-0.368* (0.200)	-0.374* (0.203)	-0.404* (0.210)	-0.389* (0.211)
Age			0.0056 8	0.0068 4	0.0072 2	0.0061 9	0.0062 8	0.0066 0	0.0064 7	0.0067 6	0.0059 4
			(0.0087 0)	(0.0083 0)	(0.0083 0)	(0.0082 6)	(0.0086 8)	(0.0088 0)	(0.0089 1)	(0.0089 7)	(0.0090 5)
Literacy level				0.148* *	0.120* *	0.120* *	0.120* *	0.122* *	0.123* *	0.126* *	0.139* *

				(0.0590)	(0.0642)	(0.0636)	(0.0644)	(0.0652)	(0.0660)	(0.0665)	(0.0685)
French Language					0.142	0.125	0.123	0.114	0.109	0.0989	0.0773
					(0.131)	(0.131)	(0.136)	(0.140)	(0.142)	(0.144)	(0.147)
Refugee Status						0.131	0.131	0.130	0.124	0.114	0.123
						(0.0962)	(0.0973)	(0.0982)	(0.102)	(0.104)	(0.105)
Having a Job							-0.00800	-0.00441	-0.000519	-0.0334	-0.0509
							(0.206)	(0.208)	(0.211)	(0.218)	(0.219)
Having Social Security								-0.0964	-0.113	-0.134	-0.148
								(0.275)	(0.285)	(0.288)	(0.290)
Have you ever been insulted since you are in Benin?									0.0631	0.0843	0.101
									(0.242)	(0.245)	(0.247)
Have you ever been denied a public service?										-0.297	-0.245
										(0.441)	(0.447)
Constant	10.13* **	10.86* **	10.71* **	10.03* **	9.668* **	9.336* **	9.340* **	9.399* **	9.386* **	9.466* **	9.578* **
	(0.523)	(0.584)	(0.633)	(0.661)	(0.740)	(0.773)	(0.788)	(0.813)	(0.823)	(0.836)	(0.850)
Observations	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
R-squared	0.018	0.118	0.125	0.221	0.238	0.266	0.266	0.268	0.269	0.276	0.288
Control	No	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Standard errors in parentheses											
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1											

2. Refugees Economic Contribution Analysis in Benin

After looking at how policies impact on refugees’ contribution, the study now turned to examining the actual economic contribution of refugees on Benin’s economy. To achieve this,

the study used the probit model analysis. This model was appropriate as it uses a binary variable which in this case was the taxes that the refugees paid.. The idea here is to look at how the refugees contribute economically through tax payment in Benin.

Table3: Probit Regression

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
	Taxes	Taxes	Taxes	Taxes	Taxes	Taxes	Taxes
Income	0.460	0.465	0.514*	0.722**	0.649*	0.883**	0.925**
	(0.289)	(0.288)	(0.308)	(0.352)	(0.387)	(0.423)	(0.427)
Age		-0.0129	-0.0122	-0.0118	-0.0116	-0.0159	-0.0222
		(0.0260)	(0.0258)	(0.0276)	(0.0272)	(0.0290)	(0.0314)
Gender			0.254	0.366	0.395	-0.0628	0.0971
			(0.527)	(0.575)	(0.582)	(0.704)	(0.737)
Refugee Status				-0.491*	-0.492*	-0.480	-0.429
				(0.283)	(0.282)	(0.298)	(0.304)

Education Level					0.0881	0.152	0.195
					(0.207)	(0.238)	(0.249)
Payment Rent Fees						0.417*	0.416*
						(0.221)	(0.229)
Having a Job							0.556
							(0.617)
Constant	-6.202**	-5.850*	-6.731*	-7.891*	-7.554*	-11.66**	-12.69**
	(3.143)	(3.237)	(3.764)	(4.102)	(4.142)	(4.930)	(5.184)
Observations	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
Control	No	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Standard errors in parentheses							
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1							

Table3 shows that how refugee’s income affects positively or otherwise, the tax contribution to the host country. The results found that indeed, the taxes paid by the refugees contributed positively, and that this was statistically significant at 5 per cent of p-value. This means that the more the refugees earn in the host country, the more likely they are to pay taxes, and the more likely that this would impact positively to the host country’s economy. Therefore, the higher the tax paid the more their economic contribution to the host country’s economy. Moreover, the result revealed that the refugees who pay rent in the host community are likely to pay taxes.. On the negative however, the study revealed that having a refugee status had a negative impact on the tax payment in the host country, as by this status, the refugees had a hard time securing jobs. This may be because of the humanitarian favours they benefit from while in the host country, such as adminis-

trative services, schools, hospitals and more. According to the finding of Nyaoro & Owiso(2021), refugees enjoy basic rights from the UNHCR and its partners such as documentation, in-kind and in-cash donations.

Secondary, this study analysed the refugees’ economic contribution through their food consumption. This means that if they spend more on food than the more likely they would contribute significantly in boosting agriculture in the country, and by that, they would be contributing to the economy of the host country. Table4 shows that 1 per cent increases of the income leads to 0.66 per cent of the food consumption in the host community. Thus, the refugees in Benin contribute to the country economy through their spending on food for consumption. The more they do this, the more they contribute to the country’s economy.

Table4: Linear Regression (OLS)

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
	Food_Exp	Food_Exp	Food_Exp	Food_Exp	Food_Exp	Food_Exp	Food_Exp	Food_Exp
Income	0.619***	0.660***	0.651***	0.664***	0.650***	0.657***	0.658***	0.666***
	(0.115)	(0.121)	(0.123)	(0.131)	(0.134)	(0.137)	(0.138)	(0.140)
Gender		0.198	0.200	0.195	0.199	0.199	0.185	0.186
		(0.188)	(0.189)	(0.191)	(0.192)	(0.194)	(0.198)	(0.199)
Age			0.00556	0.00537	0.00570	0.00584	0.00701	0.00737
			(0.00773)	(0.00782)	(0.00787)	(0.00796)	(0.00837)	(0.00845)
Education level				-0.0175	-0.0327	-0.0337	-0.0352	-0.0328
				(0.0587)	(0.0628)	(0.0635)	(0.0640)	(0.0646)
French Language					0.0889	0.0914	0.0762	0.0803
					(0.126)	(0.127)	(0.132)	(0.133)
Refugee Status						-0.0277	-0.0297	-0.0342
						(0.0943)	(0.0951)	(0.0960)

Having a Job							-0.0961	-0.0788
							(0.196)	(0.200)
Freedom of Movement								-0.289
								(0.489)
Constant	3.303***	2.598*	2.512*	2.460*	2.375	2.364	2.439	2.607*
	(1.226)	(1.396)	(1.408)	(1.431)	(1.443)	(1.457)	(1.476)	(1.513)
Observations	56	56	56	56	56	56	56	56
R-squared	0.349	0.362	0.369	0.370	0.376	0.377	0.380	0.385
Control	No	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Standard errors in parentheses								
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1								

The third analysis of the study was to examine how the refugees contribute to the host country economic through the payment of rent. As rent is paid to the host community's landladies and landlords by the refugees, then the local community develops economically. Table5 below shows that 1 per cent increase in their income leads to 0.55 per cent increases of

the rent fee payment. Hence, the more the ear, the more rent the refugees would pay. It was also noted that it was the male gender that contributed more to rent payment in Benin (most likely because they were the most gender who were refugees, and they were also the gender that were fortunate enough to have secured jobs)

Table5: Linear Regression (OLS)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
VARIABLES	Rent_Fee	Rent_Fee	Rent_Fee	Rent_Fee	Rent_Fee	Rent_Fee	Rent_Fee	Rent_Fee
Income	0.509***	0.660***	0.555***	0.555***	0.551***	0.529***	0.542***	0.551***
	(0.103)	(0.121)	(0.0950)	(0.100)	(0.102)	(0.100)	(0.102)	(0.103)
Gender		0.198	0.483***	0.483***	0.471***	0.442***	0.458***	0.437***
		(0.188)	(0.142)	(0.144)	(0.147)	(0.145)	(0.147)	(0.150)
Age			0.000758	0.000758	0.00127	0.000468	-0.00140	-0.00156
			(0.00555)	(0.00562)	(0.00574)	(0.00565)	(0.00611)	(0.00614)
Education Level				0.000325	-0.0134	-0.0112	-0.00725	0.00661
				(0.0412)	(0.0481)	(0.0471)	(0.0476)	(0.0508)
French Language					0.0614	0.0650	0.0750	0.0486
					(0.108)	(0.106)	(0.107)	(0.113)
Refugee Status						0.103	0.107	0.106
						(0.0647)	(0.0651)	(0.0654)
Having a Job							0.114	0.126
							(0.138)	(0.139)
Freedom of Movement								-0.373
								(0.461)
Constant	4.356***	2.598*	3.233***	3.234***	3.133***	3.108***	2.902**	3.226**
	(1.115)	(1.396)	(1.060)	(1.078)	(1.102)	(1.081)	(1.113)	(1.188)

Observations	45	56	45	45	45	45	45	45
R-squared	0.364	0.362	0.505	0.505	0.509	0.540	0.548	0.556
Control	No	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Standard errors in parentheses								
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1								

The fourth analysis of this study was to examine how the refugees contribute to the host community through their involvement in the transport sector (movement via any means of transport). Table6 shows that the refugees spend 0.6 per cent on transportation averagely when their income increases by 1

per cent. This means that the refugees in the host country, Benin, contribute to the economy via the transportation network—and the more income they would earn, the more they would contribute to the economy of Benin through travel

Table6: Linear Regression (OLS)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
VARIABLES	Transp_Exp	Transp_Exp	Transp_Exp	Transp_Exp	Transp_Exp	Transp_Exp	Transp_Exp	Transp_Exp
Income	0.643***	0.626***	0.653***	0.621**	0.594**	0.609**	0.601**	0.606**
	(0.207)	(0.215)	(0.216)	(0.233)	(0.233)	(0.237)	(0.241)	(0.241)
Gender		-0.119	-0.154	-0.145	-0.129	-0.131	-0.138	-0.213
		(0.345)	(0.346)	(0.350)	(0.348)	(0.352)	(0.356)	(0.364)
Age			-0.0154	-0.0150	-0.0119	-0.0113	-0.00962	-0.00888
			(0.0142)	(0.0144)	(0.0145)	(0.0147)	(0.0158)	(0.0158)
Education Level				0.0412	-0.00854	-0.00981	-0.00805	0.0266
				(0.107)	(0.114)	(0.115)	(0.116)	(0.121)
French Language					0.295	0.306	0.281	0.217
					(0.240)	(0.243)	(0.258)	(0.266)
Refugee Status						-0.0771	-0.0772	-0.0847
						(0.167)	(0.168)	(0.169)
Having a Job							-0.116	-0.105
							(0.364)	(0.365)
Freedom of Movement								-1.193
								(1.199)
Constant	1.873	2.214	2.457	2.590	2.013	2.017	2.177	3.446
	(2.222)	(2.452)	(2.457)	(2.505)	(2.534)	(2.558)	(2.636)	(2.928)
Observations	48	48	48	48	48	48	48	48
R-squared	0.174	0.176	0.198	0.201	0.228	0.232	0.234	0.253
Control	No	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Standard errors in parentheses								
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1								

The reanalysis of Hunt et al. (2017), supports the finding of this study from the fact that refugees do not take job from native-born. If they do take job from the native-born then the

observed effects could have been higher and significant. Moreover, this research revealed that the majority of the refugees in Benin are jobless, and the few who are working are in

the security industry and very few native-born in Benin do that kind of work.

Monras (2015), in contrary to his study the research did not look at the effect of refugee's influx in the Benin labour market but the study looked at the area they mostly work in as a refugee. But this research found that the majority of the refugees in Benin work in the low skilled labour market such as security industry. The study found that even if they are highly educated they prefer working in that area because there is few Benin national who work in that security industry.

The findings of Peri et al. (2017), showed the same result as the one by David Card (1990) that means there is no significant effect on the wage and employment of the low skilled worker in Miami by using serial source of Data. Our study does not look at the refugee's influx effect on the wages and employment of low skilled native worker but it shows that refugees' presence in Benin does not have any negative impact on the wages or on the local native workers in Benin.

Clemens & Pritchett (2019) assessed the new economic case for migration restrictions. This paper assesses the migration policy of restriction in the host country but their findings show that there is no clear evidence that support the fact an open door policy has an impact on the economic productivity. In line with this finding, our study supports the fact that it is always good to have an open door policy to welcome refugees in the host country. Their findings also confirm that there is no negative effect on the host country economic productivity.

IV. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This article highlighted the challenges that refugees in Benin are faced with, and showed how despite these odds, these refugees have still managed to contribute to the economy of their host country. The main objective of the research was to assess the economic contribution of urban refugees settled in Cotonou to the host community in Benin, examine the challenges they were facing, and the refugee's policy impact. Therefore, the refugees in Benin especially from Central African Republic faced a lot challenges such as housing problem, lack of formal employment, lack of social security. But they majority acknowledged that they do not face police harassment in Cotonou (Benin). This is contrary to the finding of Nyaoro & Owiso (2021), said the refugees in Kenya benefit basic policy framework but the freedom of movement and police harassment are still on, especially in the camps.

Moreover, the findings of this study showed that the urban refugees in Benin, even though they faced challenges of unemployment they positively contribute to the host community economies via their expenditure. Thus, they positively contribute to the host country economic in Benin. This proved that the refugees could be welcomed in the host community and given opportunity then they will contribute more and significantly.

The recommendation from this research is that the policymakers should develop a policy that will allow the refugees in Be-

nin to integrate into the job market after their vocational training or access higher education. Additionally, to facilitate the refugees' economic inclusion. The policymakers should develop policies that will allow refugees to be self-employers instead of being employees so that they will be able to contribute more to the host community economy. Some findings by Upton (2015), suggest the same things saying that the refugees entrepreneurs in Nairobi employed the host community people than their fellow refugees.

In short, this study found out that the Central African Republic refugees in Benin are self-sufficient but they face a lot of challenges. They face challenges such as lack of jobs, difficulty to generate a consistent income. However, the study found that the majority of the refugees have several facilities to access vocational training or higher education because of its provision by the government of Benin. Therefore, the policies and practices towards refugees in Benin allow them to mingle with the host community and benefit from administration services, school, and health services. Meanwhile, the refugees in Benin contribute economically to the host community through their spending on food consumption, rent fees payment, and transportation. The results show that the more they earn in the host community the higher is their economic contribution.

NOTE:

The Republic of Benin is among the refugees hosting countries that offer a great social and economic inclusion³ opportunities and freedom of movement to refugees. Assessing the urban refugees' economic contribution in the host community is an opportunity to contribute to the existing literature in the field of refugees' economics research and to improve how to address asylum policies related to refugees economic inclusion in developing countries by the international organisation and the policymakers. Secondly, this study helps to improve the data collection strategy on urban refugees by using the respondent-driven sampling (RDS) technique, because this population is a hidden and hard-to-reach study population.

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³ Order (Ordonnance) No. 75-41 of 1975 on the refugees' status dated on 16th July 1975. This order stipulates in its article No. 6 that "beneficiaries of refugee status receive the same treatment as citizens with regard to access to education, scholarships, right to work and social benefits"

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