Empowerment through Education: The Case of Adult African Refugees in Cairo

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by

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ABSTRACT

While much of the existing information on the education of African refugees in Egypt has focused on children, this study reveals critical issues regarding the education of adults. This thesis has three major purposes. It aims to explore the different educational opportunities available for adult African refugees in Cairo. It seeks to examine the challenges that affect their education. It also analyzes the role of education in the empowerment of adult African refugees who either seek to integrate locally, return to their home country, or get resettled to another state.

Research for this study was conducted over a period of three months in the city of Cairo. Substantial information was obtained from interviews with 30 adult students of two major refugee educational programs and four representatives from different organizations and institutions.

On the basis of the results of this research, it can be concluded that due to the lack of access to formal education, the only educational opportunity available for the majority of adult African refugees is English classes provided by alternative refugee educational programs. It can also be concluded that many of the restrictions and obstacles faced by African refugees in Cairo have a negative effect on their education. Findings reveal that education, particularly English knowledge, significantly empowers adult refugees. One of the most significant results of this study is that education showed to be a powerful tool in improving the situation of many of the refugees residing in Cairo.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CBO Community-based organization
CEDAW Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CPA Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CRC United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRS Catholic Relief Services
EFRR Egyptian Foundation for Refugee Rights
GED General Educational Development
ICCPR International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IDP Internal Displaced Persons
IRB Institutional Review Board
LRA Lord’s Resistance Army
MOU Memorandum Of Understanding
NGO Non-governmental Organization
NIH National Institutes of Health
SCAF Supreme Council of the Armed Forces
SCE School of Continuing Education
STAR Student Action for Refugees
UN United Nations
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Egypt hosts a large urban refugee population composed of more than thirty nationalities (Grabska 2006). Egypt continues to be both a destination and a transit country for refugees. As of January 2013, there were 26,664 registered refugees and 32,330 asylum seekers. The largest group of refugees is Sudanese followed by Somali, Iraqi, Eritrean and Ethiopia (UNHCR 2013). For the purpose of this study, refugees from the four largest African nationalities will be observed because they comprise the majority of the people enrolled in the refugee educational programs observed in the following chapters. These include: Sudanese, Somali, Eritrean and Ethiopian. Although African refugees might arrive to Cairo due to its relative proximity, what continues to make Egypt an appealing refugee destination is the existence of one of the largest resettlement programs facilitated by the UNHCR and private sponsorship programs to different Western states including Australia, Canada and the United States (Grabska 2006).

Refugees in Egypt experience numerous restrictions and obstacles. Although the state is signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, it made amendments to Articles that directly limits the lives of refugees including Article 22 on access to primary education and Article 24 on employment (UNHCR 2013). For many matters, including university tuition fees, African refugees are subjected to the same laws as foreigners. Refugees in Egypt do not enjoy full legal protection until they are
recognized by the UNHCR. Due to the complexity of their legal status and the lack of information local authorities have about refugee law, refugees are frequently at risk of being questioned, detained, and often deported. Many do not feel safe to walk in the streets and constantly fear and avoid any interaction with the police. African refugees are generally marginalized within the host society by being deprived of rights from the local government. In contrast to other refugee populations in the country, African refugees are often subjected to additional restrictions. For example, the recently arrived Syrian refugees are able to access public universities, while a large number of African refugees who have been in Egypt for numerous years are unable to do so. African refugees are discriminated by nationals due to false stereotypes, including the assumption that refugees are poor illegal immigrants who will take the resources from citizens (Grabska 2006). Many are also frequently discriminated and harassed by the local authorities and population because of their skin color (Grabska 2005). Another obstacle refugees encounter is the impediment from obtaining legal employment. In order to legally obtain jobs, both foreigners and refugees must obtain a permit, which normally involves a rigorous process. High local unemployment also contributes to the difficulty of obtaining jobs. Consequently, most refugees work in the informal sector with high risks of exploitation and unfair treatment from their employers. As a result of not having a stable income and the unlikelihood of obtaining monthly allowances from aid organizations, refugees also face evident financial limitations. Parents have additional difficulties due to the inability to register their children in local schools. Although Sudanese are generally allowed to enroll in public schools, they are often unable to do so because of the limited seats available. The majority of African children must opt for “refugee schools” which
are generally run by church-based organizations and mainly offer a Sudanese curriculum. A significant number of families cannot afford the school fees and thus are forced to keep their children at home.

Adults also face impediments in the context of education, such as limited access to universities. Higher education is restricted not only to refugees but also to foreigners and nationals. Existing data indicates that before and during the 1990s, the majority of African refugees in Egypt, including Somalis, Eritreans and Ethiopians, were somewhat skilled and educated (Zohry 2003). Many were single men who migrated their countries to attend Egyptian universities. A large group consisted of women who arrived in Egypt to enroll their children in local schools while their husbands worked abroad. However, today, a significant number of refugees are uneducated. In the case of Somalia, for example, the civil war of 1991 led to the forced emigration of thousands of unskilled young men (Zohry 2003). Presently, the majority of Africans in Egypt do not hold university degrees. Many have not completed primary or secondary school, while a large group is illiterate (Al-Sharmani 2003). The restrictions and obstacles faced by adult African refugees, including those stated above, have contributed to the low level of education that exists among them and continue to affect several aspects of their education.

Due to the numerous challenges adults face in relation to employment and the limited vocational training available in Cairo, refugees have few opportunities to gain work experience and skills. As a result, education is the only option for many refugees to
acquire applicable knowledge. It appears to be the best tool for the empowerment of adult African refugees.

1.1 Empowerment and Education Nexus

Empowerment is a concept used by numerous and diverse disciples, including psychology, education, law, community development, economics, among others. It is conceptualized and understood differently among these arenas. It is a multidimensional construct that is difficult to understand in terms of how it should be observed and measured (Kasmel 2011). It is a multi-dimensional social process because it can be experienced in the psychological, economic, sociological, and other ambits (Kasmel 2011). Empowerment arose with the goal of achieving political and social change in development policies (FRIDE, n.d.). The concept has been utilized to advocate for several interventions and policies that are reflected in numerous documents from different organizations such as the UNDP 2004 Nepal Human Development Report (Malhotra and Schuler 2005). Since the term emerged in the field of development, it has been frequently used in feminist literature and movements that focus on women empowerment (Malhotra and Schuler 2005). Empowerment is used in the context of developing countries and vulnerable populations.

Empowerment can be understood as a goal, a process, a product or an approach. According to Naila Kabeer, empowerment is a process of change where individuals who were not given the opportunity to make choices or were “disempowered” become able to
make them. In other words, only the disempowered can potentially become empowered (Kabeer 1999). Some of the most widely used definitions of empowerment include: the expansion of capabilities and resources of underprivileged people (Narayan-Parker 2002), the process of capacity building and understanding resulting in transformative action (Karl 1995), the process through which formerly disempowered individuals increase their access to knowledge and assets (Johnson 1999), the access to useful resources and the capacity to participate in decisions that affect the lives of disadvantaged people (IFAD, n.d.), the process by which individuals or groups develop skills and the capacity of gaining control over their lives (Hawley 2011). Empowerment occurs at several levels, such as individual and community. This research only observes individual empowerment, that is, what occurs on the personal level of the person’s life.

This study defines empowerment as a personal development process through which an individual acquires valuable and applicable capabilities. An increase in capabilities can expand a person’s opportunities and allow him/her to take an active role in his/her life, leading to a sense of self-efficacy, motivation and confidence. Empowerment occurs when a person’s state changes from passive to active. It is a process of inner and outer transformation. The outer component of empowerment, also referred to as external empowerment, refers to the acquisition of knowledge and skills, including the ability to apply them and make changes that affect the individual’s life (Kasmel 2011). An aspect of human development involves an increase in human capabilities, such as applicable knowledge (Hawley 2011). There is a strong connection between self-perception and actual accomplishments. The inner element of empowerment, often referred to as
psychological or internal empowerment, involves the individual’s confidence in his/her capacity to make decisions and make changes in his/her life accompanied with a sense of motivation. When a person experiences an increase in knowledge, skills, and resources, he/she will have a better self-perception resulting in internal empowerment (Kasmel 2011).

A powerful way through which individuals can be empowered is education. Historically, education has been considered a significant influencing tool for the empowerment of individuals and groups (Hannah 2008). It appears to be the best tool for the empowerment of adult African refugees in Egypt. Education empowers African refugees who either seek to integrate locally, resettle to another state or return to their home country. The study analyzes the possible ways in which education can empower the individuals.

1.2 Significance and Objectives of the Study

Much of the existing information on education of African refugees in Egypt has focused on children. The significance of this research is that it reveals critical issues regarding the education of adults. Due to the many restrictions refugees face, education plays a primordial role in empowering individuals who either seek to integrate locally, resettled to a third state, or repatriate. With scarce opportunities to obtain employment or vocational training that could provide significant work experience, education becomes
the only option for many African refugees to obtain useful knowledge. The three main objectives of the thesis are:

- To explore the different educational opportunities available for adult refugees in Cairo.
- To examine the challenges that affect the education of adult African refugees.
- To analyze the role of education in the empowerment of adult African refugees who either seek to integrate locally, return to their home country, or get resettled to another state.

1.3 Structure of Thesis

Chapter one provides an introduction of the thesis accompanied with the significance and objectives of the research. The chapter also looks at the empowerment and education nexus. Chapter two gives an overview of the studied population and provides information about Egypt as a host country, including its international legal commitments and local policies relating to the status of refugees. Chapter three introduces the methodology used for the study, including data collection methods. It also provides a profile of the student participants. A section of the chapter also includes ethical considerations and the challenges encountered while conducting the research. Chapter four explores the different educational opportunities available for adult African refugees in Cairo. Chapter five analyzes the role of education in empowering the refugees. Empowerment is analyzed in the context of the three durable solutions: local integration, resettlement and voluntary repatriation. Chapter six presents significant restrictions and obstacles that affect the
education of the refugees. Lastly, the conclusion summarizes the study and provides the main findings.
Chapter 2

BACKGROUND OF THE TARGET POPULATION AND HOST COUNTRY

2.1 Egypt: a Host Country

Egypt is signatory of several international treaties and conventions that offer a context for refugee rights as human rights. The rights stipulated in these conventions should apply equally to each individual residing in the territory regardless of their status. It is signatory of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the UN Convention on Migrant Workers and their families, the 1981 African Charter on Human and People’s Rights, and the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (OHCHR, n.d.). Article 2 of the CRC implies that all the rights on the Convention are applicable to every child without discrimination of any kinds irrespective of the child’s national origin or status. It states that each child under the country’s jurisdiction should be protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status of the child’s legal guardians or family members (OHCHR, n.d.). Article 39 stipulates that all states should take measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social integration of a child victim of armed conflicts. In regards to education, article 28 instructs countries to make primary education obligatory and free for all children (OHCHR, n.d.). However,
refugee children in Egypt are subjected to many restrictions that prevent them from integrating into society. Public primary and secondary education is not available for the majority of the African refugees.

Egypt is signatory to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. However, it made reservations to Articles that directly affect the lives of refugees within its border such as Article 24 on Employment and Article 22, which states that refugees must obtain same treatment as nationals with respect to elementary education (UNHCR, n.d.). For many matters, including enrollment in universities, refugees are treated as foreigners and subjected to similar laws. As a result, they encounter many obstacles while living in Egypt and trying to integrate into society.

In agreement with the 1954 MOU between the government of Egypt and the UNHCR, all actions relating to documentation, registration, and status determination are carried out by the UNHCR. The organization works closely with the Department of Refugee Affairs and the Ministry of Interior in refugee-related matters. The UNHCR and other organizations struggle to offer all the services that the government of Egypt fails to provide (Grabska 2006). Egypt recognized the right to seek asylum in its previous constitution. Article 53 of the 1971 Constitution of Egypt stipulated “The right to political asylum shall be granted by the State for every foreigner persecuted for defending the peoples’ interests, human rights, peace or justice”. Additionally, Article 151 stated that treaties “shall have the force of law upon being concluded, ratified and published according to established procedures” (Egypt State Information Center, n.d.). After the overthrown of president
Hosni Mubarak on February 2011, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) took the power of the state and suspended the 1971 constitution. With a newly elected president and a new constitution being drafted, it is difficult to predict if the previous migrant and refugee-related policies will be incorporated or modified. Temporarily, the future of the refuges in Egypt remains uncertain.

2.2 Background of the Target Population

Throughout history, Egypt has been a host country of several refugee populations. Egypt hosted those fled after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russian, the Armenian massacres in the 1915 and the 1920s, and Croatia in 1944 (Zohry 2003). The country hosted, and continues to host, significant flows of refugees originating from armed conflicts in Africa and the Middle East including many Palestinians who arrived after 1948, Sudanese after the 1983 civil war, and Iraqis after the 2003 U.S-led invasion. As a result of various conflicts on the horn of Africa during the 1990s, Egypt received an additional number of refugees originating mainly from Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Somalia (Grabska 2006). Egypt today hosts one of the world’s largest urban refugee populations, mainly in its capital. It is very diverse and composed of more than thirty nationalities (Grabska 2006). As of January 2013, there were 26,664 registered refugees and 32,330 asylum seekers (UNHCR 2013). The largest group of refugees is Sudanese followed by Somali, Iraqi, Eritrean and Ethiopia (UNHCR, n.d.). In addition to these numbers are the many unregistered refuges and the significant number of Palestinian refugees.
2.2.1 Sudanese Refugees

Bilateral agreements such as the most recent Nile Valley Agreement of 1976, which allowed the free movement of people and goods between the two countries, permitted the Sudanese to have a status similar to nationals in Egypt. Asylum seekers began to flee to Egypt as a result of the civil war of 1955 (Zohry 2003). The conflict came to an end in 1972 with the Addis Ababa Agreement, which granted autonomy to the southern region in internal matters. The later civil war of 1983 broke out when President Nimeiri breached the previous Agreement and enforced the incorporation of Shari’a law (Islamic law) into the legal system. Southerners as well as non-Muslims in the North were subjected to the Islamic sanctions (GlobalSecurity.org, n.d.). Clashes over resources, water, land and governance also contributed to the outbreak of the conflict. The 21-year civil war has caused the death of around two million people and the displacement of nearly four million. In addition, about half a million have fled the country to seek asylum.

Despite of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in 2005 between the government of Sudan and the Sudan People’s liberation Movement, peace continues to be threatened by intermittent conflicts between the two states. Sudanese have also fled to Egypt due to famine and deplorable conditions in camps around Khartoum. After the 1995 assassination attempt on President Mubarak, allegedly supported by the Sudanese government, Sudanese people lost the privileges of the open-border policy and since then are required to obtain a visa to enter Egypt and to undergo the refugee status determination process if they are seeking asylum (Zohry 2003). Regardless of the large
groups of incoming refugees, refugee status determination was suspended in 2004 for Sudanese as a result of the peace agreement between the North and the South. However in 2009, it resumed to include certain groups of people with particular needs, mainly originating from Darfur (UNHCR 2013).

As of January 2013 there are 10,365 asylum seekers and 5,011 refugees originating from Sudan registered with the UNHCR. In both groups, the number of men is higher than the number of women. Originating from South Sudan, there were 629 registered asylum seekers and 32 refugees\(^1\). They are the largest group of refugees in the country, making up 37.6% of the total registered asylum seekers and refugees (UNHCR 2013). The majority of the refugees reside in Cairo, mainly in the neighborhoods of Arba Wa Nus, Ain Shams, Maadi, 6\(^{th}\) October and Nasr City. A smaller number lives in other parts of Egypt, including Alexandria. Most live in poor conditions and often share apartments with other refugees. Generally, Sudanese are more educated than Somalis. Refugees from the North appear to have a higher education level than those from the South. In addition, women are usually less educated than men mainly due to the Sudanese family structure where women assume the role of the caretakers of the home and children (Al-Sharmani 2008).

\[\text{2.2.2 Somali Refugees}\]

\(^1\) 4,000 asylum seekers would be eligible for Southern Sudanese nationality ethnicity. However, ethnicity verifications has not been finalized.
Somalis constitute the third largest nationality of refugees in the world (UNHCR, n.d.). In Egypt, Somalis compose the second largest group of African refugees, making up 13% of the total number of asylum seekers and refugees. As of January 2013, there were 1,215 asylum seekers and 6,428 registered refugees. Adult women represent the largest category (UNHCR 2013). Some refugees arrive in Egypt after spending either short or long periods of time in countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Libya and the Gulf region (Al-Sharmani 2008). Somalis began migrating to Egypt as early as the 1960s and 1970s. Many took advantage of the bilateral agreement between the two countries and arrived to join local universities. In the decade of the 1980s, women arrived in Cairo in search of better educational opportunities for their children while their husbands found employment in the Gulf countries (Al-Sharmani 2008). With the fall of the government and the escalation of the civil war in Somalia in 1991, Egypt received massive inflows of people fleeing the conflict. Those who fled shortly after the conflict erupted were mainly from urban origin, held university degrees and had previous administrative and professional work experience. Most of the refugees that Egypt currently hosts arrived from 1999 onwards. They have fled from both urban and rural areas and are less educated than the previous groups (Al-Sharmani 2003).

Many refugees are illiterate and received no prior education. Some have received Quranic education for few years, others dropped out in primary school while very few have high school and university degrees (Al-Sharmani 2008). Men appear to be better educated than women. Somali refugee men who previously worked in Somalia before arriving to Egypt were generally engaged in manual labor. Those who formerly settled in the Gulf usually
worked in low-skilled jobs such as construction, sales and car repair. A significant number of young refugees possess no income-generating skills that could facilitate their employment in Egypt. Due to job-relating restrictions, many Somalis depend on remittances sent from family members mainly residing in the U.S, Europe and Saudi Arabia (Al-Sharmani 2003). The majority of the refugees in Egypt lives in crowded apartments shared with other Somalis and chooses to remain within the two major Somali neighborhoods: Nasr City and Ard il Liwa. Those who are able to find employment work in the informal sector mainly within their communities (Al-Sharmani 2008).

2.2.3 Eritrean Refugees

Eritreans make up four percent of the total number of refugees and asylum seekers. The UNCHR fact sheet of January 2013 displays that there are 1,034 registered asylum seekers and 1,317 refugees in Egypt. In both groups, there number of women is higher than the number men (UNHCR 2013). Eritreans have been fleeing to other countries for more than three decades. They fled during the height of the Red Terror of the Dergue regime from 1977 to 1979, the overthrow of the Dergue regime from 1991-1992 and during the Eritrean-Ethiopian conflict from 1998 to 2000. From 2000, they fled the country as a result of religious persecution and the oppressive policies of the government including military conscription for both young men and women. Despite of its size, Eritreans were the second largest group to make asylum claims in the world in 2008. The government has implemented several measures in order to reduce the outflow of people. In August 2008, it suspended the issuing of passports and exit visas. By the end of the
year, only government loyalists were able to obtain travel services. Refugees arrive in Cairo directly from Eritrea and often from Sudan. Those who left Sudan did so due to fear of forced repatriation after Eritrea and the UNHCR invoked the cessation clause of the refugee Convention\(^2\) in the year 2000 (Zohry 2003).

In a previous survey conducted in 2010 with 50 participants, refugees expressed that even though they had better life conditions in Khartoum, they had to leave to Egypt due to fear of abduction by Eritrean security forces operating in the city. They claimed that in Sudan, they had more employment opportunities and were less discriminated and harassed than in Egypt. The survey displayed that all participants had some primary education, almost half completed secondary education and around 18% held university degrees. Men showed to be more educated than women. About one third of the group was attending language classes at the time, primarily English and Arabic. In regards to employment, half of the group was employed mainly in domestic work. Eritreans generally live scattered throughout Cairo and share apartments with family members and often strangers from the Eritrean community (Ajygin 2010).

2.2.4 Ethiopian Refugees

The horn of Africa, including Eritrea, is a region that has experienced decades of political conflicts, war, famine, and natural disasters. This has resulted in millions of IDPs and asylum seekers (Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship,\(^2\) Article 1C of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
Similar to Eritreans, Ethiopians who arrived in Egypt in the early 1990s were mainly skilled and educated young men. They were from both Christian and Muslim backgrounds and generally originated from urban areas (Zohry 2003). This trend drastically changed in the following years. The current refugee population in Egypt is uneducated and composed of more women than men. Ethiopians live spread out throughout the city and seek to remain in a secure environment and to avoid drawing attention. Eritreans and Ethiopians are often studied and treated as a unified group. It is relevant to point out that historically both Eritreans and Ethiopians have been persecuted by each other’s governments. As result, there is great distrust and suspicion between the two refugee groups (Thomas 2006).

Ethiopians are the fourth largest group of Africans in Egypt and compose four percent of the total number of registered asylum seekers and refugees. Of the 1,382 asylum seekers registered as of January 2013, 72 percent are adult women. Of the 892 recognized refugees residing in the country, the majority are also adult women (UNHCR 2013).
Since my arrival in Egypt in August 2011 when I began the Masters degree on Migration and Refugee Studies, I felt the need to apply my knowledge and involve myself directly in working to help refugees. I worked for six months as an English instructor for the adult educational program of Refuge Egypt predominantly with African refugees originating from Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia. During this time, I conducted a short field research relating to the education of adult refugees. The research portrayed the difficulties faced by refugees and their effect on their education as well as the impact of the English classes on the empowerment, motivation and livelihoods of refugees. The fieldwork made me realize the importance and great influence that English classes had on the lives of refugees.

While reviewing literature, I found no existing data relating to the education of adult refugees in Egypt, such as the educational opportunities available for them. Most of the research on education is based on children. In addition, there is limited information about empowerment tools for refugees in Egypt. As a result, I decided to expand the initial research and conduct a study dedicated to the education of adult African refugees. For the purpose of this research, only refugees from the four largest African nationalities were evaluated. The fieldwork was conducted during a three-month period from February to April 2013.
3.1 Data Collection

For the first objective of the research, I visited different organizations and institutions that provide educational opportunities for adult refugees. Meetings were arranged with representatives of Refuge Egypt, St. Andrews Church, STAR, the School of Continuing Education at the American University in Cairo, and Al-Azhar University. I sought to obtain detailed information regarding the different educational programs available for refugees, including the requirements for enrollment and fees. For the second objective, existing data relating to the general obstacles encountered by refugees was observed. Interviews with students were arranged to determine the challenges that affect their education. Interviews were also conducted with representatives from organizations and institution to obtain their opinions about the obstacles that affect the refugees’ education. For the third and last objective, substantial data was obtained from interviews with students to determine how education influenced their empowerment. Opinions of representatives from organizations and institutions derived from the interviews were also included.

3.2 Interviews

Structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 34 participants in Cairo, including 30 students and four informants from organizations and institutions. A qualitative method was used for the purpose of this research. The goal was to obtain information derived from in-depth personal narratives.
The purpose of the research was explained to all participants who agreed to volunteer their time. They were informed that they could discontinue their participation at any time of the process. A consent form was distributed to all participants, which was signed by those who agreed to take part in the study. The informants were not offered compensations for their participation.

Despite of the different educational opportunities available for adult refugees, interviews were conducted with students from two programs specifically dedicated to asylum seekers and refugees. Community-based organization (CBOs) were not included because they do not offer a formal program; instead refugees meet informally and often teach each other English and Arabic. The research focuses on African refugees because the majority of the students enrolled in all refugee educational programs originate from sub-Saharan countries mainly from Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Ethiopia.

30 Students were interviewed from the educational programs of Refuge Egypt and STAR. 30 students were purposely selected out of approximately 700 potential participants. Both male and female were included between the ages of 18 and 45 years.

The St. Andrew’s program is one of the largest and best organized, accommodating around 700 adults. However, interviews were not permitted with the students.

Students enrolled in the two highest levels of English were chosen in order for them to be able to express their experiences with ease in the language. Permission to perform the interviews was previously obtained from the two organizations. The students from Refuge Egypt were selected by the director of the program based on their level of English and willingness to participate. The students from STAR were approached by the
researcher before and after class and were asked if they were able and willing to participate in the study. The interviews were conducted in person using both closed-ended and open questions. The questionnaire is included in the appendix section.

In-person interviews were preferred over written responses in attempts of creating a personal environment and a friendly conversation. Students were able to express themselves freely and extensively, which facilitated obtaining in-depth information. Interviews were held in the location of the educational programs, before or after the students’ English lessons and lasted around 30 minutes each. The main goal of the interviews was to obtain personal narratives; firstly about the students’ view on how education impacts their empowerment; and secondly about the main challenges adult African refugees themselves face in Egypt and how these affect their education.

More than half of the 30 student participants was composed of male adult Sudanese who completed primary school. 19 participants were enrolled in STAR while 11 were registered in the Refuge Egypt’s educational program.

Table 1: Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>43.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total= 30 Students
Table 2: Nationality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sudanese</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>56.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrean</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somali</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Students= 30

Table 3: Educational Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Background</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than Primary School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Primary School</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>60.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed Secondary School</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/University Degree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Students= 30

Table 4: Educational Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Programs</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STAR</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refuge Egypt</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>36.66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Students= 30

Four informants from different organizations and institutions were selected to participate in the study. The coordinator of the adult educational program at Refuge Egypt was
interviewed as well as the coordinator of STAR. Both of the coordinators are also African refugees. An informant from al-Azhar University and from the United Nations in Egypt also participated.

The interviews were conducted in person using a questionnaire that sought to obtain the informants’ opinions about the main limitations adult refugees encounter relating to education. In addition, the interviews also aimed to gain their opinions about what is the role of education in empowering the refugees, considering the few resources available for them in Egypt.

3.3 Ethical Considerations
All interviews were conducted with the approval of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). As required, the training course in “Protecting Human Research Participants” of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) was successfully completed. All possible measures were taken so that interviews were conducted in an ethical manner and the rights and welfare of informants were protected. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, there were no risks to informants pertaining to exposure to physical or psychological harm. Necessary steps were taken to ensure all participants understood the purpose of the study. Consent forms were signed prior to the interviews (consent form in Appendix). In addition, it was ensured that refugee students particularly understood the nature of the research by verbally explaining it to them. All interviewees were aware that their participation was voluntary and that no compensation was to be offered. The identities of
all participants were protected. The names of representatives from organizations and institutions were not used to minimize their risk of jeopardizing their job with their corresponding employers. The names of refugee students were changed in order to protect their identities and safety in Egypt. All data was kept in a password-protected computer accessed only by the researcher. The information obtained from the informants was kept only for the duration of the study.

3.4 Challenges

One of the challenges encountered while crafting this research was the lack of similar studies to be used for comparison. The majority of existing data relating to the education of refugees in Egypt targets solely children. In addition, scarce information was found on empowerment tools for adult refugees in Egypt. To overcome this challenge, studies conducted in other countries were taken into consideration. Challenges were also encountered in regards to the interviews. It was possible to arrange interviews only with students of two influential educational programs for adult refugees. St. Andrew’s church, which holds one of the most significant adult educational programs, has a “no interview” policy and thus denied interaction with any of the 700 students. Language and cultural barriers could have potentially influenced the study. Although the students selected were enrolled in the highest levels of the English program, there were doubts as to what extent the students possessed knowledge to express their experiences in detail in a language that is not their native one. The factor of interpretation could have also affected the information acquired from the interviews due to the different manner in which
individuals from other countries and ethnic groups express themselves. Words, expressions, and metaphors may have different meanings in other languages or used in different contexts in other cultures.

The issue of mistrust is significant when conducting fieldwork involving direct interaction with refugees. Refugees often experience loss of trust even prior to their arrival to the host country. When fear of persecution or threat appears, individuals learn to select the few people they can trust, if any. Their survival might depend on mistrusting everyone around them. As they decide to flee, their primary ontological security\(^3\) is jeopardized or even revoked. They are uprooted from their everyday routine based greatly on predictability and trust is other people. Trust in the local government is also lost due to its inability to protect them from danger. Upon arrival, many refugees adopt the attitude of mistrusting everyone they meet. Negative interactions with local officials, representatives from aid organization, nationals, and other refugees are contributing factors to the development of mistrust that exists among refugees. Unemployment, lack of access to education, and discrimination (racial discrimination experienced by African refugees) are all factors that impede the refugees’ regaining of trust and ontological security (Hynes 2003). Interviewed refugees may not feel entirely comfortable in sharing information about their personal lives with strangers and may refrain from providing valuable information to the researcher. To decrease this risk, I explained that I was an American student of migration and refugee studies who wants to work in helping

\(^3\) Referring to a person’s self confidence that originates from the stability of things and dependability of natural process. Ontological insecurity is generated when a person becomes a refugee (Hynes 2003).
alleviate the situation of refugees. I stated I did not work for the government or for any aid organization in Cairo. Fortunately, the students seemed willing to openly share their opinions and experiences.
Chapter 4

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADULT REFUGEES

The majority of African refugees who wish to continue their education have to opt for alternative educational programs while only a few are able to enroll in universities. The educational opportunities currently feasible to most adult African refugees include: Refuge Egypt’s adult educational program, St. Andrew’s adult educational program, STAR, the SCE, CBOs and al-Azhar University. Information about the details of the programs was mainly obtained from conversations with coordinators and members of the organizations and institution.

Refuge Egypt’s adult educational program is one of the programs specifically established and dedicated for refugees. It is located in Cairo and offered by Refuge Egypt. Refuge Egypt is a Christian aid organization located in all Saints’ Cathedral in Cairo. It serves asylum seekers and refugees living in Egypt who have fled their country due to war or disaster by providing emergency and humanitarian assistance, health and medical care, youth programs, education for children and adults, psychosocial support, and self-reliance programs (Refuge Egypt, n.d.). One of the services provided by the organization is the adult educational program for refugees. Its mission is to provide individuals with the valuable skill of learning a language that is widely used in the world. According to the coordinator, the program consists of biweekly English classes taught by volunteer
instructors. The lessons are held in the evening, each lasting an hour and thirty minutes. In order to enroll in the program, refugees must show proof of their UN card, pay a twenty-pound fee for the first course, and take a placement test to determine in which of the twelve levels they fall into. There is an average of 45 students throughout the year of different ages mainly from Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia. During the summer, the enrollment rate reaches around 160 students, including refugees from Iraq, Nigeria, Congo, and Central African Republic. One of the limitations of the program is the shortage of teachers. The organization is unable to pay for the instructors and thus depends on people who wish to volunteer their time. Often, teachers can only volunteer for a few weeks and as a result, students cannot complete their term and have to wait for a new instructor. In addition, students enrolled in different levels of English often have to attend the same class because there are not sufficient instructors for the different levels. Although there are many students who want to enroll in the program, it is not possible to accommodate them all.

Another influential program available for adult refugees is provided by St. Andrew’s church. St. Andrew’s United Church of Cairo began providing assistance in 1976 to refugees who fled the conflicts in the horn of Africa. At that time, the church had a small English program offered to a few people and taught by volunteers. St. Andrew’s grew and expanded and it presently offers a variety of services including legal and psychosocial assistance. Its children education program teaches around 280 students originating mainly from Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Burundi. Its staff includes both volunteers and paid teachers from the refugee community. In addition, students are
offered part time jobs in cleaning around the compound and cooking for other students in the church. This teaches students responsibility and keeps them off the streets. Its adult educational program consists of courses English, Arabic, health, nutrition conflict resolution, and other subjects depending on the availability of teachers (St. Andrew’s United Church of Cairo, n.d.). According to a staff member of the organization, the classes are usually offered bi weekly for an hour and thirty minutes. In order to enroll in the program students must pay 50 LE for the 12 weeks term. The organization seeks to help both refugees and other vulnerable people and therefore it is not required to have a UN card. There are around 600 students each term from different nationalities including Sudanese, Somali, Eritrean and Iraqi. The average age is 30 years although there are students from 20 to 60 years of age. The ratio of men and women is balanced although women have a harder time attending classes because they have to care for their children. The classes are taught by teachers from the refugee community as well as volunteers. The English program has been particularly successful attracting a significant number of students. There are 20 levels available including a basic one for students who are illiterate in their native language. Tutoring is also offered by volunteers, before or after class, to those who need additional help. Instructors have access to useful materials for their class, such as a teacher’s manuals, audio CDs and stereos, and a computer in the teacher’s room. The adult education program is well organized and both teachers and students have to follow specific policies. Teachers are required to plan their lessons in advance and often have to design a mid-term exam for their students. They are strongly encouraged to attend pertinent meetings and training workshops. All teachers are required to undergo classroom observations one to two times per term and to attend a post-observation
meeting. Students are expected to arrive to class on time. In order to pass the class they must take a mid-term exam and final exam composed of a written and oral part. They are allowed to miss no more than four classes; otherwise they cannot take the final exam and have to repeat the term.

One of the largest educational programs available for refugees of all nationalities is Student Action for Refugees (STAR). STAR is a student-run organization at the American University in Cairo. It is an affiliate of STAR UK, which provides services to more than 20 student groups in the United Kingdom. When STAR Cairo was founded in 2001, it offered only a couple of classes to a few adult refugees (STAR, n.d.). The coordinator of the program expressed that the organization offers language classes to about 600 to 700 students. A larger number of refugees apply for the program each term but the organization is not able to accommodate all of them, due mainly to lack of space. Arabic and arts handcrafts courses were offered before the Egyptian revolution of January 2011. Currently, STAR provides five levels of English classes that take place in the Downtown-Tahrir campus of the American University in Cairo. Its staff is composed of volunteers, many of who are from the refugee community. The materials for class, such as books are provided by the organization once students begin their lessons. Students are subjected to examinations in order to pass to a next level and receive a certificate when all levels are completed. STAR seeks to incorporate Egyptians in its program to facilitate interaction between them and the refugees. An informant from STAR expressed the importance of integrating Egyptians with the refugee community who can eventually form friendships “Egyptians do not know about refugees and
refugees do not know about Egyptians” argued the informant. STAR considers language learning a way to reach self-reliance, economic improvement and overall self-development.

The School of Continuing Education (SCE) of the American University in Cairo offers diplomas, international and career certificates and non-credit courses in Arabic and translation, English, business, computer and IT, and youth and special studies. The courses take place in Tahrir, Heliopolis and New Cairo. About 41 percent of the people enrolled in the programs either completed secondary school or are below secondary education (School of Continuing Education, n.d.). It is relevant to include the SCE as one of the educational opportunities for refugees because STAR offers scholarships to five individuals who excel in the completion of their English program. The scholarship covers all levels of the English program. Although a few are eligible to receive it, it is a good opportunity for those who want to advance in the study of the language. Without financial assistance, the English course at the SCE is unaffordable to most African refugees. According to a staff member of the SCE, each level of the English program, lasting around six weeks, costs about 725 EGP that is equivalent to $105\(^4\). In order to enroll, refugees must show a valid document, such as a passport, and take a placement test. The opportunity to receive a certificate from the SCE legitimizes and formalizes the students’ knowledge of the language. With it, they can expand their job opportunities and possibly work as interpreters and English instructors.

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\(^4\) Currency exchange rate as of April 2013
Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) also provide educational opportunities for different refugee groups. They are small centers for refugee communities organized by country, region of origin, and even ethnic groups. For example, there is a CBO for the Oromo and for Darfurians. They are informal gatherings where refugees obtain and share information such as how to access service providers. In such gatherings, refugees often volunteer to others Arabic and English. One of the positive aspects about the CBOs is that it allows refugees to feel safe by minimizing the mistrust that arises from dealing with other refugees from different nationalities, regions, or even clans. Refugees are able to learn a language in a safe environment with people they feel comfortable with.

Due to the high tuition fees that apply to foreigners and refugees in public and private universities, most African refugees are unable to attain a higher education degree. However, al-Azhar University provides numerous scholarships for a large number of individuals originating from African countries. Located in Cairo, al-Azhar University was founded in the 970s as a center of Islamic learning (AlAzhar Educational Website, n.d.). Presently, it is the chief institution for Muslims who want to expand their knowledge of Islam (Zeghal 1999). A meeting was arranged with a professor from the university who provided details of the institution. The university offers diplomas, bachelor’s degrees, master’s degrees and PhDs in both secular and Islamic-related subjects such as Islamic Sharia. Although the university offers various secular majors, 11 Islamic courses are usually compulsory for the completion of any higher education degree. In order to enroll, individuals need proof of documentation such as passports, visas and relevant previous
educational certificates. The university gives priority to those who were enrolled in al-Azhar “institutions” or secondary school. In regards to admission of individuals from African countries, al-Azhar often makes agreements with the embassies of Muslim states to determine the number of people who will be admitted into the university. Due to the limited seats at al-Azhar, previous arrangements with the foreign governments are necessary. The cultural consultant at the embassies usually negotiates with al-Azhar on the tuition of the students. Occasionally, al-Azhar is able to finance the education of an entire group of individuals from a particular nationality. In other cases, al-Azhar pays for the tuition of some students while the embassy pays for the tuition of the remaining individuals. There are African refugees enrolled at al-Azhar, including many Somalis and Eritreans. According to the coordinator of STAR, al-Azhar is best option for refugees who seek to obtain a university degree. The informant from STAR claimed that there is no proof of previous studies necessary. Knowledge of Arabic and overall education is determined by the placement test. Refugees are able to complete their secondary school at al-Azhar and later join the universities. Al-Azhar University provides educational opportunities for a limited number of refugees. It is accessible only by Muslim refugees who are interested in expanding their knowledge of Islam.
Chapter 5

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION

A powerful way through which individuals have historically been empowered is education (Hannah 2008). Education shows to be the optimum tool for the empowerment of adult African refugees in Egypt. Faced with numerous restrictions and obstacles, including the lack of access to employment and vocational training, there are few opportunities for refugees to learn applicable skills. Due to the inability of most refugees to enroll in universities, the only feasible educational opportunity for many is to learn English at the different refugee educational programs, such as Refuge Egypt, STAR and St. Andrew’s. Empowerment is analyzed in the context of the three durable solutions: local integration, resettlement, and repatriation.

5.1 Local Integration

Egypt is considered both a receiver of refugees and a transit country. A 2006 report argued that both Sudanese and Somali refugees are regarded as transit migrants. The study was based on the refugees’ desire to resettle, mainly in the West. We can easily assume that the majority of African refugees can be considered transit migrants because of their desire to travel to a third country (Al-Sharmani 2008). However, Franck Düval challenges this view by claiming that other factors should be considered when categorizing certain refugee populations as transit migrants such as the length of stay in
the transit country, the desire to move again, and the actual outcome of their desire (Al-Sharmani 2008). If we take these factors under consideration we can conclude that Sudanese and Somali are not transit migrants because many of them have resided in Egypt for numerous years while only a small number have been resettled in a third country (Al-Sharmani 2008). The government’s position towards refugees has contributed to their questionable “transitory” categorization. The restrictive policies towards them do not allow them to successfully integrate into society, suggesting that they must find an alternative solution. Al-Sharmani argues that this attitude influences the refugees’ to view their stay in Egypt as temporary even if they have lived in the country for several years (Al-Sharmani 2008). The reality is, in fact, that the majority of refugees do not get resettled and many are not able to repatriate due to ongoing conflict at home. For these refugees the only option available, at least for the near future, is local integration.

Refugees face numerous obstacles and restrictions when attempting to integrate and live a “normal life” in Egypt. There are few employment and vocational training opportunities, while access to university is only accessible by a few. As a result, refugees are left with limited empowerment tools. Education empowers refugees who desire or have no other choice but to integrate locally. Education leads to both external and internal individual empowerment. The alternative refugee educational programs allow refugees to learn a useful skill, such as English, that can be useful for them in Cairo. In addition, attending classes motivates students and increase their self-confidence.
One of the ways in that education leads to individual external empowerment is by increasing the refugees’ qualifications for employment. In a study conducted on Eritrean refugees in Cairo, the refugees perceived language barrier as the principal obstacle to employment. To overcome this, many of the individuals surveyed at the time attended English classes (Ajygin 2010). As many other African refugees, Eritreans are not likely to repatriate and only a few will be resettled in other countries. As a result, they must attempt to gain useful skills to increase the probability of obtaining jobs. According to the STAR coordinator, African refugees are likely to find work as domestic workers. However, Eritreans are hired the most out of the other nationalities mainly because they speak English. “Egyptian families want their domestic worker to speak English to their kids so they can learn it, claimed the coordinator. He also argued that learning English ameliorates the refugees’ situation in Cairo.

Several restaurants in Cairo, including private clubs in the area of Maadi\textsuperscript{5}, do not ask for work permits from their employees. They hire people from varied nationalities, including African refugees. Most of the clientele are foreigners and therefore English is strongly recommended if not mandatory when applying for the jobs. These jobs offer refugees an opportunity to be employed in friendly environments that allow them to interact with immigrants from many nationalities. They also offer average salaries that generally allow refugees to cover their basic expenses. The coordinator from STAR stated that refugees can also obtain jobs as interpreters in organizations, which not only equips them with valuable professional experience but also brings them satisfaction by helping other

\textsuperscript{5} Names of the restaurants and clubs were omitted to protect the refugee employees
refugees. They can also be employed by NGOs in several positions. Although many of
the vacancies are not paid, the refugees can gain experience while they search for other
job opportunities. “I started as a student of STAR with little knowledge of English and
now I am working here helping other refugees” stated the STAR coordinator. He is also
pursuing a Bachelors degree at al-Azhar University. The director of St. Andrew’s
Refugee Services stated in an interview with the Daily News Egypt newspaper that there
are “refugees teaching primary education, English and Arabic, providing psycho-social
services, serving as interpreters, and offering their time in other ways to help their
community”. “We hope that over time refugees will be more and more equipped to help
themselves.” (Comer 2012). English classes showed to empower the students of the adult
educational programs by equipping the refugees with a skill that they are able to apply in
Cairo. Seven student participants answered that learning English does change something
in their life in Cairo (Questionnaire for students in Appendix). Jen, a 29-year-old STAR
student from South Sudan commented that as his knowledge of English improved, he was
able to gain confidence and search for jobs. He was recently employed in a café where he
earns “good money” from tips. He remarked that he enjoyed the job because he can
practice his English with many of the foreign clients. Another young student also from
Sudan shared that he was promoted in his job because he learned English. Alan began
working at a restaurant as a dishwasher where he did not earn much money. After six
months of gaining work experience and language proficiency by regularly attending
classes, he was able to obtain a promotion as a waiter where he makes additional money
from tips. He added that only a few of the African people who work with him speak
English well, which is why they cannot help customers. Three students believed that
learning English would possibly help their situation in Cairo in the future. All three were unemployed at the moment and were committing most of their time to becoming fluent in English in hopes of attaining better employment prospects. Emra, a young STAR student from Somalia shared that she is learning English in order to work as a nannie for families. “I do not want to clean houses, I want to work with children,” stated Emra who wants to gain experience to eventually become a preschool teacher. Nicolas, a 31-year old student is enrolled in the STAR educational program in order to realize his goal of becoming an interpreter in an organization. Nicolas believes he is not likely to get resettled or return home, “I have no family or nothing back home”. As a result, he wants to prepare himself to get married and have a better future in Egypt. After he completes the last English level, he plans to join the School of Continuing Education (SCE) at the American University in Cairo and obtain a legitimate certificate that proves his knowledge of the language. Another student expressed that English has permitted him to help other refugees by teaching them the language at his CBO.

The refugee educational programs allow African adults to not only empower themselves but also to empower their children. African refugee children generally do not receive quality education in Egypt and are often undereducated. Access to free primary education is stipulated in numerous treaties such as in Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Kilbourne 1996), in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and in the African Charter of Human and People’s Rights. Egypt is signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, which in Article 22 specifies that “Contracting States shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to
nationals with respect to elementary education” (Opoku Awuku 1995). However, Egypt made reservations to Article 22. In 1992, a decree was issued by the Minister of Education that permitted Sudanese children to enroll in local public schools. Another decree was issued in 2000 that extended this exception to refugees from other nationalities. All refugees must show documents such as a valid passport, birth certificate, refugee card, original school certificates from their home country and a letter from the UNHCR (Grabska 2006). It is important to consider that Egypt suffers from high illiteracy and dropout rates. According to Grabska, the government often lacks the resources to offer public education for every single child in Egypt regardless if he or she is a national or a refugee. The situation may be alleviated by opening more schools to accommodate all children (Grabska 2006). Although Sudanese are generally able to enroll in public schools, the reality is that refugees from all nationalities are often unable to access them. One of the reasons is that schools are overpopulated and cannot accommodate new students every year. Another reason is language barriers. Refugees from certain backgrounds do not speak or write Arabic and thus are unable to enroll in Egyptian schools. The UNHCR, through CRS\(^6\), provides Arabic classes to children; however, they cannot accommodate all students due to limited resources. As a result, most refugees opt for “refugee schools” mainly operated by church-based organizations.

Schools such as African Hope Learning Center in Cairo educate around 500 students all originating from African countries. They utilize a Sudanese curriculum that allows students to receive a diploma that could be useful if they repatriate. These schools experience several obstacles such as a lack of resources and qualified teachers. Most of

\(^6\) Catholic Relief Services
the staff is composed of refugee volunteers who wish to help their community. The majority of the children are undereducated. It is relevant to point out that many refugee children do not even have the option of attending the refugee schools because parents cannot afford the fees or also because the schools cannot accommodate new students. Through the adult education programs refugee parents can empower their kids by teaching them English. Children who are unable to attend school can at least learn a useful language from the parents while they wait for the opportunity to matriculate. Those who already attend school can also benefit from learning the language or get better at it considering the quality of education they often obtain in Cairo. Samia, a 22-year-old Sudanese participant stated that she is learning English in order to teach it to her three-year-old daughter. “I want her to learn English so she can go live wherever she wants when she grows up”, “I want to make sure my daughter goes to university and has a better future”, commented Samia who fled to Egypt after her husband was killed in Sudan. Fatima, another young Sudanese student argued that learning English allows her to help his child in school. Many kids have difficulty in adapting to their new environment in Egypt. They are forced to leave their homes and abandon their families, friends, and everyday routines. As a result, they may also encounter trouble in adapting to their new schools. Fatima’s 9-year-old son requires tutors every week to help him in many subjects including English. Fatima helps him with his English homework to ensure he improves in the class.

English learning also empowers young refugees. In protracted refugee circumstances, such as the case of many African refugees in Egypt, young boys and girls are often raised
without the ability to realize certain social roles or traditional gender-based responsibilities. Young men are prevented from fulfilling male roles after puberty and reach adulthood with few opportunities to make a living due to the numerous obstacles and restrictions. Many young refugees join gangs as a sign of opposition to their status in the country. Gangs are often formed due to the incapability of the refugee community to attain common goals or solve their current situation. Year after year, young adults loose faith and trust in organizations and service providers. Through joining gangs, they gain a sense of “authority” and control. Gangs in Cairo, predominantly those composed of Sudanese youth, occasionally resort to violent activities usually targeting other refugee gang groups. Evidently, the increasing level of violence between refugee youth threatens the security of the refugee community as a whole (Lewis 2009). The UN informant commented that refugee adolescents are vulnerable to joining gangs because they have nothing to do after they complete high school. The adult education programs offer an alternative for the majority of young adult refugees, who are unable to attend universities or obtain a job. “By attending English classes young refugees are kept away from the streets,” claimed the UN informant. Attending classes gives refugees a sense of normalcy in their lives. They benefit young adults by establishing a routine that requires their commitment and teaches them responsibility. In addition, it gives youth the chance to make friends of similar ages who can motivate each other. One of the youngest student participants, Carlo from Eritrea, stated “I come to class because I want to do something good with my life”. “Many of my friends just stay at home and do nothing”. He chooses to learn English while is currently unable to afford university fees.
Attending classes shows to significantly contribute to the internal empowerment or “psychological empowerment” of the refugees. There is a strong connection between accomplishments and self-perception. When refugees experience an increase in opportunities or skills, they eventually develop a more positive self-perception (Kasmel 2011). The coordinator the Refuge Egypt’s program expressed that many refugees who arrive to Egypt were successful in their home countries. “Some were farmers or teachers”, but unfortunately in Egypt they generally do not have the opportunity to do the same for a living. As a result, they often lack motivation and experience low self-esteem. The adult educational programs “is a place where refugees learn, socialize, and feel good about themselves”, “life in Cairo is lonely because man refugees don’t have their families or friends”, argued the coordinator. By attending classes, refugees are able to make friends in a stress-free and safe environment. “It is a way to entertain themselves, gain motivation, and stay away from police harassment”, claimed the UN informant. The majority of the students (24 out of 30) answered that they enjoy going to class because they are able to share time with friends. An interesting response from a Sudanese student, when asked why he enjoyed coming to class, was “I like coming to class because I can be a normal person and not a refugee”. When asked to elaborate on his answer, he added “we (refugees) don’t feel free and cannot be ourselves in the street, at work, or where we live because we don’t feel safe” or accepted.

Attending classes showed to empower adult refugees both externally and internally. Refugees are able to learn an applicable skill, which allows them to improve their situation in Cairo. In addition, attending classes showed to motivate the students and
positively influence their self-perception. More refugees could benefit from the English classes if they would focus on improving their situation in Egypt rather than on the “romantic idea” of resettlement. “There are resources in Cairo, refugees just need to use them and not sit and wait for resettlement”, claimed the STAR coordinator. The reality is that many refugees spend years waiting for a response from the UNHCR about their case. Some are able to return home while only a few get resettled. During that time, refugees should utilize the existing resources to improve their current situation in Cairo and prepare themselves for the future.

5.2 Resettlement

A large number of refugees are unable to repatriate due to security concerns in their home country. Numerous are unwilling to do so due to unfavorable conditions back home, such as lack of shelter, jobs, schools, electricity and potable water. Others lack protection, live in unsafe situations or require special assistance that cannot be given in the country of asylum. For these individuals, resettlement to a third country is offered as the only feasible durable solution. Resettlement is facilitated by the UNCHR in collaboration with resettlement states, NGOs and international organizations. The third country offers resettled individuals and family members physical and legal protection and grants rights similar to those enjoyed by citizens including political, economic, civil, and social rights.7 Resettled refugees should be allowed to eventually become citizens of the new country (UNHCR, n.d.). Individuals qualify for resettlement under 7 categories: legal and/or

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7 Ideally, refugees should be allowed resettle together with their close family members. However, it is the State’s obligation to uphold the principle of family unity (UNHCR)
physical protection needs, survivors of torture and/or violence, medical needs, women and girls at risk, family reunification, children and adolescent at risk, and lack of foreseeable alternative durable solutions. Resettlement entails the selection of specifically vulnerable individuals. Resettlement of a whole refugee group or population is necessary in certain cases, such as when the refugees are in danger of refoulement or when refugee status is not being recognized. Governments decide who gets resettled in their territories based on their own regulations and migration rules. Unfortunately, resettlement is not a right and countries are not required to receive refugees. They also have full control of the number of individuals that gets admitted into their states. The UNHCR, however, strongly advises states to utilize the agency’s standards on international needs and eligibility. The agency also recommends persons to the majority of receiving states (UNHCR, n.d.).

Out of the millions of refugees all around the world, approximately one percent are submitted for resettlement (UNHCR, n.d.). The number of submissions has increased significantly over the past years, particularly in 2009 where 128,000 individuals were submitted for resettlement (UNHCR, n.d.). Numbers have declined since then, dropping to around 90,000 submissions in 2011 mainly to prevent accumulation and delay of cases that occurred in the past. In that year, the majority of resettled refugees originated from Myanmar, Iraq and Somalia. It is expected that about 181,000 people will need to be resettled in 2013, five percent more than the 2012 estimates (UNHCR, n.d.). Many refugees arrive in Egypt due to the existence of a large resettlement program facilitated by the UNHCR and private sponsorship to different “Western” states including Australia,
Canada and the United States (Grabska 2006). For numerous African refugees, resettlement is the only viable durable solution. They are stranded in a protracted situation because of the inability to return home due to continuing conflict. Many African refugees lack legal protection while others face specific risks or require special assistance that cannot be provided in Egypt. During January 2013, 120 persons were submitted for resettlement and 48 departed including 10 Sudanese, five Somalis, six Eritreans and one Ethiopian (UNHCR 2013).

The three largest receiving countries are the United States, Australia and Canada, welcoming around 90 percent (UNHCR, n.d.). The official language in all three states is English. Evidently, it is extremely beneficial that individuals have knowledge of the language before being resettled. English classes empower refugees who will be resettled in the West. Since the process can take from months to several years, it is crucial that refugees learn English and equip themselves as much as possible while they wait in Egypt. When asked why they wanted to learn English, the majority of the students interviewed (20 of 30 persons) expressed their wish to travel abroad, predominantly to the West. Most of them (26 of 30) agreed that learning English would benefit them if they get resettled. Benjamin, a 23-year-old refugee from Darfur commented: “I am learning English to travel to Europe or the U.S because life in Cairo is no life”. He fled to Egypt after his parents were killed and has been residing in the capital for three years. “My biggest wish is to go work and have a life” expressed Benjamin in frustration of not being able to find employment or continue his studies. Amira, a single mother from

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8 The second official language in Canada is French
9 Referring mainly to the U.S, Canada, Europe and Australia.
Ethiopia is confident that she will be resettled. “I have no future here for me of my daughter,” said Amira. She also added that she is often called names and harassed by people in the streets. She attends the English lessons regularly while she waits for resettlement.

The adult educational programs allow refugees to learn a skill that they can apply abroad. Learning English empowers them for resettlement and benefits them in various ways. It broadens employment opportunities, facilitates access to universities, allows them to access more and better services and helps them integrate with the local population. Several students expressed that speaking English could help them find a job if they get resettled. Omar, a 41-year-old Sudanese student was forced to abandon his small business when conflict erupted in his hometown. He claimed that learning English could help him establish his own business abroad. Emmanuel, a 20-year-old Somali student commented that if he gets resettled, English proficiency could help enroll in a university and eventually work as an architect. The UN informant asserted that English is essential in order to find work abroad. “If refugees speak English, they can obtain better jobs and work in hotels and international organizations and do not have to settle for low-skilled jobs”. “We (the UN) encourage refugees to learn English as a priority,” claimed the informant. By obtaining employment, refugees can become self-reliant and less dependent on monetary assistance from organizations. In a study by Julie M. Kornfield, 17 resettled refugees, including six Africans, were interviewed in the U.S. They reported that not speaking English was the biggest obstacle in obtaining a job. The refugees stated that even though they were qualified for the jobs they sought, they were not employed
because they could not communicate in the interviews. In addition, some reported being hired but rapidly laid off because of not comprehending instructions (Kornfield 2012). The emphasis on learning English prior to departure is due to the short time refugees often have to develop skills and knowledge of the language before entering the labor market (Chu, McLeod and Reinardy 2011). Refugees, including Africans regularly do not speak English before traveling to the new state (U.S Committee For Refugees and Migrants, n.d.). A study conducted on newly arrived refugees in the United States reported that the majority had no knowledge of the language. This trend often results in the refugees accepting jobs that are below their qualifications. After being employed, learning English becomes more difficult due to lack of time and resources. Language training is therefore a vital element to attain durable long-term-sufficiency (Chu, McLeod and Reinardy 2011). The coordinator of STAR also agreed that English is crucial for refugees who are resettled and seek employment. The UN participant added that refugees who speak the language could teach it to other incoming refugees.

Learning English facilitates the process for adults who seek to enroll in universities. Refugees who learn the language prior to resettlement can avoid taking preparatory English courses that could make them spend additional money and time. Often students have to take more than one semester in order to reach college-level English, which may delay their career by various years. Adult refugees who have not yet completed secondary school can also benefit from learning English in Egypt prior to departure in order to save time. Resettlement countries generally offer programs to obtain a high school diploma. In the United States, for example, people over 18 years of age can obtain a high school
credential by taking the GED test. Students usually attend a short course in preparation for the exam, which is only offered in English, French and Spanish (GED Testing Service, n.d.). The coordinator of the adult educational program at Refuge Egypt argued that refugees often stay many years in Egypt before they are resettled. In those years refugees should learn as much as possible in order to not loose additional time in the new country. “By learning English refugees can continue their studies, go to universities and be successful” he commented.

English also empowers resettled refugees by increasing their power to make decisions that affect their lives. Empowerment occurs when the state of an individual changes from passive to active (Kasmel 2011). Knowing the language allows the newly arrived refugees to gain knowledge of the environment around them. It allows them to familiarize themselves with their legal rights and benefits. It also permits them to learn about the government and local laws. Although organizations aim to inform refugees about everything relevant to them, not all information is available in all the refugees’ native languages. When refugees arrive in the resettlement country, they are offered indispensable services by governmental and non-governmental organizations such as orientation, housing, furnishing, food, clothing and financial aid. They are also offered additional services such as orientation to the community, education, health care, employment assistance, language classes and vocational training (UNHCR, n.d.). In many cases organizations, such as the International Rescue Committee in the United States, provide social service referrals, often recommending a particular health care provider (Eisenhauer 2007). Although organizations have the best intention in helping
people, individuals who speak English can search and choose the services that better serve their needs. Speaking English also enables refugee parents to get involved directly with the education of their children. They are able to understand how schools function and what is expected from both the parents and the students. They are capable to talk to the teachers and be informed about the child’s progress. In addition, parents can help their children with homework. Refugees with knowledge of the language can have access to the media, allowing them to be informed about local and international events. It allows individuals to enjoy all the benefits of living a developed country such as access to technology, which is generally inaccessible for refugees in Egypt. Knowing English makes resettled refugees independent by not having to constantly rely on other for translation.

Overall, having knowledge of the resettlement state’s language shortens the process of adaptation. English proficiency facilitates the integration of resettled refugees with the local community. Resettlement is generally a gratifying experience that is also challenging due to many integration barriers. Although refugees generally receive pre-departure information about the new country, they are often unaware of the local culture and population. Children tend to integrate faster to the new environment and usually learn the language rapider than their parents (Reedy 2007). The majority of African refugees get resettled in countries where the language and culture are totally different to them such as the U.S, Canada and Australia. Sudanese in Australia experience several cultural differences with the broader Australian community. Language is often the principal barrier in the first years (Dunja and Dharmalingam 2012).
The importance of learning English prior to arrival in the new country is that individuals can obtain a faster and better understanding of the community and even lessen “culture shock”. As previously stated, once refugees begin to work it becomes more difficult for them to learn the language. Although culture gaps are inevitable, language proficiency certainly eliminates a significant barrier for integration. Refugees are able to communicate with nationals and begin to create their social circle in their workplace, place of worship, etc. Since refugees are not always resettled near people from their same nationalities, developing friendships with nationals may be the only way for them to have a social life. Developing friendships and having a support system in the resettlement country is very beneficial, especially when refugees are far from their family and friends. It can significantly influence their self-esteem and contribute to their internal empowerment. In several cases, refugees who are not successfully integrated face higher risks of having low self-esteem (Dunja and Dharmalingam 2012). Successful integration of immigrant groups including refugees is favorable for both the individuals and the receiving country. Immigrant groups, including refugees are often marginalized and secluded due to the gaps that exist between them and the host population. Speaking the local language may prevent seclusion by removing a significant barrier that divides the refugees from the rest of the society.

5.3 Voluntary Repatriation

The right of return is recognized by international law and expressed in several human rights instruments such as in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and
in the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination. Article 13(2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that “Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country” (Sikkink 1998). The right of return evidently applies to refugees who should be allowed to return whenever they desire. In regards to the durable solutions for refugees, voluntary repatriation is the preferred option. Voluntary repatriation requires the reestablishment of national protection and the ability for individuals to successfully reintegrate into their societies. The UNHCR establishes essential elements of voluntary repatriation, which are divided into four categories. The first category is “physical safety”, which includes a general improvement of security, the decline of intimidation and violence, the restoration of local authorities and human rights entities, and the lack of mines. The second category, “legal safety”, refers to the elimination of legal impediments to return in addition to a legal framework necessary to guarantee documentation, property, citizenship, etc. It also refers to the presence of instruments to address and solve human rights violations. The third category is “material safety”, which requires the non-discriminatory access to indispensable services such as water, housing, healthcare and education. It also requires the presence of job opportunities and resources for the returnees to make a living. The last category, “reconciliation”, involves the encouragement of equity between returning refugees and the rest of the population (UNHCR, n.d.).

Voluntary repatriation entails that individuals must not be pressured to return by the host country, organizations, or other stakeholders. Refugees must obtain information about the local situation in their home state such as the political, economic, and social
conditions. In addition, repatriation must occur only when refugee feel comfortable to do so. The UNHCR facilitates voluntary repatriation and monitors the individuals’ reintegration into the home country (Black and Saskia 2006). The agency generally arranges the departure of the refugees and usually provides repatriation packages. The packages often include monetary assistance to cover travel costs and/or to help with basic expenses after arrival (Troger 2008).

Voluntary repatriation is the ideal durable solution for many African refugees in Egypt. Not all refugees are able to integrate locally and only a small number are resettled. Over the last recent years, Sudanese have been the largest group to be repatriated of all the African nationalities. After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in 2005, around 334,000 South Sudanese refugees have returned from Egypt, Ethiopia, DRC, Uganda and Kenya with assistance from the UNHCR (UNHCR, n.d.). Voluntary repatriation continues to be the preferred durable solution for the rest of the population in exile. During January 2013, 13 Southern Sudanese and one Sudanese repatriated (UNHCR, n.d.). For the entire year of 2013, the UNHCR aims to provide 1,200 refugees in Egypt with monetary assistance and safe transportation to return home (UNHCR 2013). Many refugees reside in Egypt for years before returning to their home countries. One of the interviewees reported that after being in Cairo for 12 years he plans to go home soon to reunite with the rest of his family. Upon repatriating, refugees often encounter great difficulty in re integrating into society. For example, South Sudan continues to have poor security conditions due to violence mainly perpetrated by the LRA and between ethnic groups (UNHCR, n.d.). The country also lacks essential
infrastructure and social services with particular need for shelter, water, health services and sanitation. In 2013, the UNHCR forecasts that it will only be able to provide shelter for around 20 percent of the population of concern (UNHCR, n.d.). South Sudan also lacks legal structures and necessary institutions to apply the rule of law (Jooma 2005). Large inflows of returning refugees can pose great strain to its delicate infrastructure and economy. With more than half of the population living in poverty, it is essential for returning refugees to develop themselves both professionally and academically as much as possible before returning. Due to the several restrictions imposed on refugees in Egypt in regards to employment and access to education, there are limited opportunities for them to gain work experience or applicable skills.

The refugee educational programs provide adult Africans the opportunity to learn a skill that can be applied when they return home. Learning English empowers refugees because it equips them with a valuable capability that may increase their opportunities. Learning English may help refugees in obtaining employment upon returning home. More than half of the students interviewed (17 out of 30) stated that learning English would help them if they repatriate. The majority of them answered that knowing the language could potentially expand their employment possibilities. The coordinator of the Refuge Egypt’s program asserted that refugees could work in hotels, companies, and business. He also stated that although refugees face difficulties in Egypt, adult African refugees in camps are often not offered English classes. Senwe, a 34-year-old Ethiopian student from STAR hopes to return home some day. He claimed that English might help him in establishing his own business of selling goods. He recalled knowing an area back home where there
are tourists to whom he can sell different objects. Refugees could also work in local schools teaching English. “Maybe I can work as a teacher for children’s school in my home city and help the children in my village” claimed Abeje, a 26-year-old Sudanese student.

Although some refugees receive cash grants to support their reintegration upon arriving, the amount lasts for a short period of time and often does not cover all of their expenses. As a result, it is crucial for refugees to engage in income-generating activities to rapidly become self-reliant (Turton and Marsden 2009). Returning refugees can also aid in rebuilding their countries. In the case of South Sudan, decades of violent conflict have led to the destruction of its infrastructure. The UN informant expressed that refugees, especially those with English proficiency, can work in the construction and rebuilding of South Sudan. Many companies, often in cooperation with the government, work in South Sudan due to the need for all kinds of infrastructure. With a growing population and large numbers of returning refugees, there is urgent need for housing, government facilities, roads, etc. (Embassy of the Republic of South Sudan Ankara, n.d.). English proficiency may be a desirable advantage in obtaining jobs in private companies, such as Eyat Oilfield that is in charge of an important road construction project (EYAT Oilfield Services, n.d.). Refugees may also be employed by NGOs and work in the construction and operation of schools, shelters, health facilities, orphanages, etc.

Refugees may be able to find employment in public institutions. For example in South Sudan, years of violent conflict have led to a lack of human capacity in several sectors of
government institutions including urban planning, rule of law and finance management (UNDP, n.d.). English proficiency may also facilitate refugees who seek to work with organizations, such as in the UN (UNDP), that are actively present in post-conflict locations.

Learning English can particularly empower women who return to traditional social structures characterized by discrimination and inequality. By acquiring a skill, women may return home with increased confidence and self-esteem. According to the Special Report of the U.S Institute of Peace, the independence of South Sudan brought an expansion of empowerment opportunities for women. Although there continue to exist several cultural practices that are harmful to women, the local government has voiced its commitment of promoting gender equality and protecting women’s rights (Ali 2012). English proficiency may facilitate women who in cooperation with organizations, seek to advocate for women’s rights. In addition, refugee women may empower other women and girls by teaching them the language.
 chapter 6

restrictions and obstacles affecting education

6.1 urban refugees

Only one third of the world’s refugees now live in camps. As urbanization increases globally, refugees are more likely to settle in urban areas. In the past, many of the refugees who settled in cities were young men who had the skills and the ability to face difficult situations (UNHCR, n.d.). However, urban refugee population today includes many women, children and elderly persons, which make it more vulnerable as a whole. Refugees who settle in urban areas do not always originate from urban backgrounds, in fact, a large number come from rural areas without never experiencing city life. Evidently, this group is likely to face more adapting challenges. Men in particular encounter more difficulty in finding employment, especially those who previously worked in agriculture. They lack the necessary skills that city jobs require and thus need additional time and resources to acquire such skills. Women in the contrary are likely to find jobs in the domestic sector, restaurants, and customer service. Refugees from rural backgrounds often believe that settling in urban areas will provide them with greater economic opportunities and safety (De Vries 2006). As the case of Cairo demonstrates, urban areas do not always guarantee protection and economic prosperity. There are both advantages and disadvantages of seeking refuge in urban settings. Refugees who live in towns or cities have more opportunity of self-reliance. They do not depend on rations or
other resources; and thus have to seek employment to provide for themselves. However, many refugees are employed in the informal sector, especially those who live in countries that are not party to the 1951 Convention or states that fail to implement it such as Egypt. This makes them more vulnerable to low wages and exploitation. In regards to assistance, aid to refugees in urban areas is often scarce and unequally distributed (Kobia and Cranfield 2009). Moreover, refugees have more difficulty accessing the available aid. Many are unaware of available assistance and others reside far away from the UNHCR offices and other organizations. In the context of adult education, refugees living in urban settings frequently encounter obstacles in accessing available opportunities due to many factors including transportation costs and tuition fees. In addition, many often lack time to enroll in educational programs because of their work schedules and children. Some refugees refuse to attend programs when they have to commute long distances in order to avoid possible discriminating attitudes or harassment from the host population and local authorities. As opposed to living in camps, refugees are able to remain anonymous in urban areas. This poses a greater challenge for organizations that seek to locate refugees and assess their needs. Because of the complexity of their legal status, urban refugees face greater fear and likelihood of detention and deportation than those located in camps. In many countries such as Egypt, the local authorities are unaware of refugee policies and thus assume refugees are illegal immigrants.

Refugees in urban settings experience many of the same difficulties as the poor citizens in urban areas such as increasing unemployment, competition for resources, inadequate housing and exploitation. Colombian refugees in Ecuador not only share many privations
with poor nationals but are also subjected to discrimination and obstacles related to their legal status. In numerous countries such as Egypt, these already existing difficulties are added to several government restrictions that prevent refugees from successfully integrating into society (De Vriese 2006). The majority of the refugees in Egypt are concentrated in Cairo, which is one of the most populated cities in the world. Refugees not only experience evident urban challenges but also face numerous difficulties. In order to build up a livelihood in urban areas, legal and physical protection is critical as well as access to the job market. Although Egypt is signatory to the 1951 Convention on refugees, it made reservations to Article 22, which states that refugees must obtain same treatment as nationals with respect to elementary education, and Article 24 on employment (UNHCR, n.d.). As a result, it is very difficult for children to join public schools and adults have to rely on the limited illegal jobs available in the informal sector. Moreover, adults are impeded from accessing universities by being subjected to foreigner tuition fees. Refugees in Egypt have scarce economic opportunities, which have driven a large number to poverty. Additionally, refugees lack protection from the local authorities and live in fear of detention and deportation. They also face discrimination from the host society originating from a negative public opinion about refugees, particularly about Africans. Although residing in urban settings can be beneficial for many refugee groups, it appears to pose greater challenges to African refugees including their access to education. The urban obstacles they face, accompanied by the restrictions encountered in Egypt, show to affect several aspects of the education of refugees.

6.2 Restrictions and Obstacles that Affect Education
Several of the obstacles faced by adult African refugees in Cairo showed to negatively affect their education and ultimately impede their empowerment. The obstacles influenced both the refugees’ access to educational programs and the performance of the students in two adult educational programs. These include: lack of access to formal education, fear of detention and deportation, discrimination and harassment, job-related obstacles, financial situation, children-related obstacles and lack of access to the alternative educational programs.

### 6.2.1 Lack of Access to Formal Education

Formal education opportunities for adult refugees in Cairo are very limited. There are no programs for adults or young adults to complete primary and secondary education. Only those younger than 20 years of age are often able to complete their studies. The UNHCR provides grants for students of all nationalities from three to 20 years old to enroll in either public, private, or “refugee” special schools. However, Somalis are commonly unable to enroll in schools because they do not speak Arabic. The UNHCR, through its partner CRS, provide Arabic classes to Somali children but are unable to service all candidates due to limited resources. Therefore, if a 21 year-old young adult wishes to complete his/her education and possibly aspire to enroll in a university, it is unlikely that he or she will be able to do so.

Regarding access to university, there are many obstacles that prevent refugees from joining. Although Sudanese are generally able to receive tuition discounts in public
universities such as in Cairo University, the majority of African refugees are subjected to foreigner tuition fees. Even with a discount, the tuition, along with books and other materials remain unaffordable to most of them. The UNHCR offers only 10 yearly grants for students to join universities such as October 6 University, located in Cairo. The UN informant argued that the agency does not have the necessary resources to provide grants for all students who wish to attain a higher education diploma. In a private university such as in the American University in Cairo, Egyptian undergraduate students pay about $2,315 or L.E 14,295 per class\textsuperscript{10}, whereas as a foreigner or a refugee pay $3,018 or L.E 18,301. An average semester for a non-Egyptian student costs about $12,374 or L.E 75,036\textsuperscript{11} (The American University in Cairo, n.d.). Evidently, the majority of the refugees are not able to enroll in the university. Even if they obtain partial tuition discount through financial aid or scholarships, the fees will remain high and unaffordable for most.

Article 22(2) of the 1951 Refugee Convention stipulates “States shall accord to refugees treatment as favourable as possible, and, in any event, not less favourable than that accorded to aliens generally in the same circumstances, with respect to education other than elementary education” (Opoku 1995). This implies that Egypt does not have an obligation to treat refugees as nationals in regards to secondary and higher education.

STAR offers scholarships for only five students who excel in the completion of the five-level English course. The scholarship covers the entire English course in the School of

\textsuperscript{10} Each class is three credits. Each credit has a cost of $795.

\textsuperscript{11} Non-Science majors take 15 credits, while science majors take around 18 credits.
Continuing education at the American University in Cairo where refugees receive a legitimate certificate that demonstrates their knowledge of the language.

Another obstacle regarding access to university is the lack of proof of previous studies. Many refugees who flee their homes often do not have the time to gather important documents, such as school certificates. When they arrive in Egypt, it becomes difficult to contact their school mainly due to the violent conflict in their home region. As a result, those who completed secondary school frequently cannot provide the certificate and transcripts necessary to register in universities.

While they may wait years for their refugee case to be resolved, individuals are unable to continue their studies or obtain a higher education degree that could benefit them when they repatriate or get resettled to a third state. The UN informant argues that because organizations are not able to provide grants for university tuition, a significant number of young adults do not have anything to do after they complete high school and thus are more likely to join gangs or engage in illegal activities around their neighborhood. This is more likely to occur if the young adults are not able to find employment, which is the majority of the cases. Emmanuel, the 20-year-old Somali English student, has been waiting two years for the opportunity to enroll in a University. “I want to be an architect,” claims Emmanuel who graduated high school with honors in his hometown. “I come to the English classes because it is the only good thing in my life now” stated the young man who struggles to find a job to support himself and his mother who still lives in Somalia. The lack of access to universities lowers the overall refugees’ level of
education. Along with the existing employment restrictions, refugees are left with few tools for empowerment and opportunities to succeed.

### 6.2.2 Fear of Detention and Deportation

Refugees flee in search of protection denied from their local governments. However, they do not enjoy full legal protection until they are recognized by the UNHCR. In many cases, the UNHCR can order the release of a detainee and stop deportations. Due to the unclear legal status of refugees and the lack of information local authorities have about refugee law, Egyptian police rarely provide refugees with assistance. It is very difficult for a refugee to report a national to the police. When they approach a police station, they are often ignored or even harassed and abused by the police (Briant and Kennedy 2004). African refugees of all nationalities frequently fear interaction with local authorities. There have been reported incidents of random arrests due mainly to the lack of information the police has on refugees and their legal status. Racial discrimination has also contributed to the arrests. In January 2003, the police searched for black Africans, regardless of their country of origin, around the neighborhood of Maadi in order to have them detained. They were arrested without formal charges and were locked in prisons for up to several days (Ajygin 2010). As of January 2013, there were 37 refugees and asylum seekers held in detention, all originating from sub-Saharan Africa. Of this group 16 were Sudanese, 10 Somali, six Somali, two Ivorians, one Rwandan, one Ugandan and one Stateless. Of the 37 individuals, 13 were women (UNCHR, n.d.).
There is evidence showing an unidentified number of refugees being held in prison across Egypt without evidence. The Egyptian Foundation for Refugee Rights (EFRR) reported that two Sudanese men were arrested on the accusation of smuggling weapons without evidence from the government. Although the EFRR was able to prevent their deportation, the two men have not been released from prison (EFRR, n.d.). Another case involved a Sudanese man in Alexandria sentenced to six years in prison. According to the EFRR, the man was falsely accused of trafficking drugs when he refused to pay “royalty” bribes to police officers. With the EFRR intervention, the man was not sent to prison (EFRR, n.d.).

The events mentioned above, along with many others, have caused fear to spread among distinct refugee communities. Refugees fear they can be detained or sent back home at any moment. They do not feel safe to walk around in the streets and thus often choose to remain secluded and to remain within their neighborhood. This impedes the refugees’ access to information, services and programs that could benefit them.

Many Eritreans isolate themselves particularly because of fear of being deported. Eritrean refugees often leave their country in order to evade military recruitment, which is compulsory for all both men and women. They refuse to join because of the deplorable conditions they undergo during the period of service. The US Department of State stated that there are many cases of violence against female conscripts, including raping, sexual slavery and denial of discharge. There are no exceptions for individuals who wish to abstain from joining based on religious or personal opinions. Those who refuse to join and those who are caught escaping the country are likely to face indefinite years in prison and even be subjected to death. Human Rights Watch reported that individuals are held in
unsafe prisons for unspecified amount of time without formal charges (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, n.d.). Many individuals flee to other states, including Egypt, to seek protection. However, Egypt does not consider military service evasion as grounds for providing refugee protection. As a result, they are likely to be deported, which can cause them to be subjected to torture and even death in Eritrea (Ajygin 2010).

The education of adult refugees is greatly affected by the lack of protection they experience in Egypt. Fear of detention and deportation has caused numerous of individuals to remain secluded within their neighborhoods, preventing them from accessing the different educational programs available to them. Zahra, a young Eritrean student from STAR, commented that many of her friends do not want to enroll in the English classes because they are held in Tahrir Square, a major public town square where violent protests have taken place. “They only stay close to our home because they are afraid,” claimed Zahra. She argued that even though she is also at risk in the streets of Cairo, she is not going to limit her life. “I want to learn English because I like it so much,” said Zahra who will continue to attend classes.

Student attendance is also affected by the fear of detention and deportation. Kamal, a Sudanese student shared that he does not attend classes whenever there are clashes in Downtown Tahrir Square. His classes are held at Refuge Egypt, which is located in the area of Zamalek (about 10 minute ride from Downtown). He believes that if there are protests the police will not care about his safety. “They do not care about Africans
(refugees), “I know men who are in prison and they are innocent”, “they are locked because they are refugees” claimed Kamal. Although he falls behind on the lessons by missing class, he chooses not to jeopardize his safety.

### 6.2.3 Discrimination and Harassment

As part of the exile experience, refugees frequently feel marginalized within their host country. Marginalization refers to legal, economic, political, social, and cultural exclusion and inequality. Refugees experience marginalization by being deprived of basic rights by the host government, such as the right to work. In addition, many individuals are discriminated by the society due to false assumptions and stereotypes (Grabska 2006). Refugees are often considered poor illegal immigrants who will drain the state’s resources, will not contribute positively to the new society. In many instances, they are regarded as a threat to both the economy and the “national identity” or social values of the state. In Egypt, there is a popular xenophobia towards refugees, especially Africans. As a result, they experience economic, political, and social discrimination from its host state and citizens. The current local economic conditions create an even stronger base for discrimination to occur. According to the World Bank’s figures, poverty in Egypt has continually increased since 2000 and now accounts for around 22.0% of the population (The World Bank 2013). In addition, there is a high level of unemployment that results in the competition of available jobs and resources. Understandably, nationals feel threatened by the newcomers and fear that they might “steal” jobs and take away the few opportunities and resources available for them.
In Cairo, there is a general negative public opinion about refugees. Some assume that they come to Egypt to obtain money and visas in order to travel to Europe or other places and that in the mean time; they take advantage of the national resources (Sudan Tribune 2003). Others assume that they are very poor and likely to engage in illegal activities, such as stealing, selling drugs, and prostitution. Nationals have the misconception that African refugees, particularly young Sudanese men, are likely to join gangs or participate in robberies, mainly of local business and stores. African refugees are often discriminated because of their skin color regardless of their nationality. “They do not like people from Africa,” argued Habiba a 25-year-old Eritrean student of Refuge Egypt. Many Africans, including Somalis, intentionally segregate themselves from nationals and remain within their neighborhoods due to fear of racism and police harassment. They also segregate themselves due to the existing cultural and language barriers (Al-Sharmani 2003). Recent reports indicate that discrimination and harassment have increased since the revolution of January 25th. Safety in Cairo has decreased for both nationals and immigrants since former President Hosni Mubarak was overthrown. Moreover, the police have been recently less willing to assist refugees who report incidents of harassment or violence (Ma’an News Agency 2011). Refugees feel unprotected by the local authorities and thus feel unsafe to go freely around the city. “I hear all the time about African refugees being called names in the streets” said Habiba. She claimed that refugee women are particularly vulnerable to discriminative activities and name-calling in the streets. She argued that when somebody is harassed, the entire community hears about it because many of them
know each other. Fear is then spread among the members of the community, which makes them isolate themselves even more from the host society.

Discrimination and harassment affect the everyday lives of many refugees and have demonstrated to significantly influence their education in various ways. Many students do not enroll in the refugee educational programs because most take place in the evenings. They feel vulnerable because they believe that crime is higher at night. Many refugees reside in remote neighborhoods of Cairo and have to commute long distances. Most have to take public transportation, mainly busses and a train to access different destinations, including their lessons. Marco a 51-year-old Darfurian student of Refuge Egypt avoids taking the bus at night alone. “People look at me because I look different, one time a young man try to steal from me,” commented Marco. He only attends the lessons that end before eight in the evening. Often, his class is moved to the later time in order to accommodate the volunteer instructors. When this occurs, he chooses not to attend unless he arranges to return home with other classmates who live close to his home. “I do not feel safe in the streets of Cairo at night, I am afraid that if something happens to me the police will not help me and my wife and three children will have nobody to take care of them”. Samia, the 22-year-old Sudanese student, commented that she often misses classes when she hears another woman in her community was harassed in the streets. “All my classes end when it’s dark and I am afraid to walk alone to my home”. Samia resides about an hour and a half away from Zamalek, where her English classes take place. She has to take two different busses and then walk half an hour to her house. Fear of discrimination and harassment forces many refugees to isolate themselves and to remain
within their neighborhoods. As a result, they become unaware of the existing educational opportunities. If more people become isolated, the education level of refugees will drop even lower and their likelihood of obtaining better livelihoods will continue to decrease.

**6.2.4 Job-related obstacles**

Refugees face several challenges when trying to earn a living in Egypt. The opportunity to obtain legal employment is almost nonexistent. Due to the reservation made by the Egyptian government on Article 24 of the 1951 Convention, refugees are treated as foreigners according to domestic employment laws. Sudanese refugees, who are the largest number in Egypt, are legally allowed to work in many professions. In 2004 the governments of Sudan and Egypt signed the Four Freedoms Agreement that grants the right for Sudanese to work in Egypt and vise-versa. However, Egypt has failed to successfully implement it. The 2004 Decree of the Ministry of Manpower and Emigration and the 2003 Labor Law stipulate that foreigners must have a permit to legally work in the country (U.S Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, n.d.). The requirements to obtain the work permit are very strict and include employer sponsorship, proof of travel documents and residence, an HIV test, a fee of L.E 1,000 or around $167, and proof of particular skills that demonstrate no threat to the local labor force especially in low-skilled jobs. This rigorous process discourages employers and poses a greater difficulty on refugees who seek legal employment (U.S Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, n.d.). Another factor that adds to the challenge of refugees obtaining jobs is the unemployment of nationals. In October 2011, Egypt experienced the highest
unemployment rate in ten years (Ahram Online 2011). As of November 2012, different sources showed the percentage of unemployment to be around twelve percent (Trading Economics 2012). With such high unemployment rate among citizens, it becomes even more difficult for refugees to find jobs. Most asylum seekers and refugees, including persons with closed files, are either unemployed or obtain employment in the informal sector, often temporary, with little pay and higher risks of exploitation. “There are no jobs for all refugees” commented the coordinator of the Refuge Egypt’s program. Since he is prevented from obtaining a legal job in Cairo, he works full-time as a volunteer in the organization and also works cleaning houses of Egyptians on the weekends in order to support his wife and children.

The lack of job opportunities in Cairo has driven many women who never worked in their home countries to work as cooks or domestic workers in order for them to sustain their families. This has affected traditional gender roles of different communities, such as Sudanese and Ethiopian where the man is known to be the breadwinner and the woman the caretaker of the house and children. As a result, many men feel frustrated and often experience depression due to their inability to provide for their families.

The consequences of the employment situation for adult African refugees in Cairo have demonstrated to influence in many ways their education. Most of the educational programs are offered only in the evenings. The latest English lesson of the Refuge Egypt program begins at eight P.M. This poses an obstacle to adults who have to work at night. Domestic workers usually work until six and often until eight P.M. Raiza, a 28-year-old
Eritrean student who is currently unemployed commented that she was not able to enroll in the English program because she previously worked until seven P.M as a nanny. The house she worked at was situated in 6th of October city, a neighborhood in the outskirts of Cairo that is about 30 kilometers from Downtown where the majority of the refugee educational programs are located. “Sometimes it took two hours to arrive to downtown because of the traffic, so it was impossible to register in the English classes”. Raiza was laid off because the family she worked for returned to England. She is able to attend the English classes twice a week while she finds another a new job as a nannie.

The problematic employment situation in Egypt also affects student performance. Several students experience difficulty concentrating in class because they arrive feeling tired from their jobs that often require strenuous physical work. Habiba, the 25-year-old Eritrean student works as a housekeeper four times a week and sometimes cleans up to four houses in one day. She commented that certain days she arrives to class feeling very tired and unable to concentrate on the lesson. “Sometimes I do not have time to do my homework because when I go home I have to clean and cook”. It is difficult for students who work in harsh conditions to find time and energy to do their homework or read materials that would enhance their learning. As a result, students frequently fall back on their lessons and have to remain in the same level for several months until they are ready to move to the next. Due to the limited employment opportunities, refugees often feel frustrated and many experience depression. Several students expressed their frustration of being unemployed and some reported feeling sad as they think of their life in Cairo.
6.2.5 Financial Situation

Many refugees in Cairo are unable to provide for themselves and their families financially. The overall situation for refugees has worsened after the revolution of January 2011. The financial situation for nationals as well as for refugees has deteriorated due to the current economic instability and financial crisis, which have drastically reduced tourism, lowered investment and significantly increased food prices (Reliefweb 2013). Many are unemployed or work with very little pay that does not cover their necessities. Because they live in an urban setting, refugees they must obtain income to pay rent, utilities, transportation, and other services. “People think that because I work I am self-reliant, but not at all. It is never enough money,” said the coordinator of the Refuge Egypt’s program.

There are organizations that offer monetary assistance to refugees in Cairo. However, they do not have the resources to give financial aid to all refugees in need. Caritas, for example, provides monthly allowances to refugees recognized by the UNHCR depending on the need and size of the family. The majority of healthy, single individuals are not entitled to allowances (The American University in Cairo, n.d.). A large number of refugees, thus, remain unemployed and also unable to obtain assistance. Early in 2013, the UNHCR announced that it would reduce the number of individuals who receive monetary assistance due to a budget decrease (UNHCR, n.d.).
The majority of African refugees live in poverty and a large number are even under the poverty line. The majority live in small apartments usually shared with up to eight other people who generally are also refugees. These apartments have no air conditioning or heating, which is problematic since temperatures in Cairo can go up to 40 C in the summer months and down to 5 C in the winter. Although they often mistrust other refugees, especially if they are from different nationalities, regions or clans, they are forced to share the expenses of the household. Sudanese are known to settle in an area named Ain Shams located in Cairo where they have established a community. It is a very crowded and polluted neighborhood with high unemployment and low living standards. What attract refugees, particularly Sudanese, to settle in this area is the existing communities of a large Sudanese community and low rent prices in comparison to other parts of the capital (SCDP, n.d.).

In the interviews, poverty showed to influence greatly the education of the refugees. Poverty demonstrated to affect two aspects of education. It affected the refugees’ access to educational programs as well as the student performance of individuals registered in the English programs. As previously stated, many refugees are unemployed and the vast majority who work are hired with very little pay, often temporarily or seasonal. Because they live in an urban setting, the majority of the income they obtain either from jobs, monthly allowances, or from relatives abroad is spent in rent, utilities, food and transportation. Refugees usually spend between 200 and 600 EGP each month for rent and utilities and from 100 to 400 EGP on food for themselves and their families (Ajygin 2010). Others are not able to pay for these basic expenses. Refugees who have children
have to pay school tuition because not all children are able to attend public schools. Evidently, parents prioritize educating their children before themselves. Yousef, a single Sudanese refugee arrived in Cairo in 2011 seeking refuge from violence in his hometown in South Sudan. He has been unemployed for two months and is not entitled to allowances. He currently lives with four other refugees who have become his best friends in Cairo. Yousef heard about the English classes as soon as he arrived in Egypt but could not afford it because of his numerous expenses. He claimed that as time went by he was able to “save some money from work to pay for the course” which lasts for 12 weeks. Although he appeared enthusiastic about attending the classes, he was dubious of whether or not he will be able to register for the following term because he did not find employment yet. 35 EGP or around 5 USD seems fairly inexpensive for a course/term at one of the English programs, usually lasting for several weeks. However, for an individual who has to cover his expenses but has no income, even the smallest expenditure becomes significant. In local shops, a notebook costs around 5 EGP that is equivalent to a meal for two people such as Kosheri, a typical Egyptian lunch made of rice, pasta and lentils.

Refugees who wish to attend one of the educational programs must to pay for public transportation. Although Cairo has a public train that costs 1 EGP or 0.15 USD for a one-way ticket anywhere in the city, many areas are not accessible by train such as Ain Shams where many refugees are settled. Depending on the area in which they live at, they have to take several microbuses to reach downtown. Usually, the commuting to downtown Cairo takes can take up to an hour and a half due to traffic. Some refugees also
take taxis to go around the city. Mary, one of the visiting volunteer English Instructors at Refuge Egypt shared that several of her students often miss class because they cannot afford to pay for taxis or do not have time to reach class after work.

Traditional gender roles of many refugee groups have been altered due to the standard of living they encounter in Egypt. Most of the African refugees in Egypt originate from patriarchal societies where generally, the man is the provider of the family and the woman is responsible for the house chores and raising the children. In rural areas of Sudan, it is common for women to work in the fields as well (Taha and Gray 1993). Almost all women interviewed reported they never worked back home and agreed that in their hometown the women usually stay at home cooking and taking care of children. However since their arrival in Cairo, many had to find jobs. They are more likely than men to find employment in the country, mainly in the informal sector. Hoda from South Sudan who works as a domestic worker twice a week stated that her husband has been unemployed since they arrived in Egypt one year ago. “He does not like to stay at home with the baby,” said Hoda who dreams about being a schoolteacher. “He feels he is not doing anything in life,” commented Hoda who also feels bad about not being able to take care of her 10-month baby. The fact that women have to become the main provider for the entire family can cause men to feel useless and emasculated. Many experience depression and anxiety because they are forced to stay at home with no family or friends to turn for support. A study showed that immigrants with problems adapting to the new socio-cultural environment are more likely to experience low self-esteem (Dunja and Dharmalingam 2012). Not providing for their families can make men unmotivated to
seek other activities that could benefit them such as learning English. Hoda stated that her husband “has been sad for 6 months because he doesn’t find a job and only wants to be at home”. Hoda finally convinced her husband to attend the English lessons with her. She hopes that he will feel happier and make friends in class.

Poverty also impacts student performance. Factors such as house instability, food shortage and lack of access to medical care affect the students’ ability to concentrate in class. One of the student participants commented that she could not see the blackboard clearly and many times fell behind on the lessons. She did not have enough money to buy reading glasses at the time. Due to the tensions derived from living in poverty, students often attend classes feeling gloomy. Additionally, students have difficulty in doing their assigned homework because of the discouraging learning environment they experience at home (Balfanz 2012). Abdullah, a young Eritrean student occasionally feels guilty for attending classes regularly. “My family in Eritrea say I am loosing my time by coming to class” claimed. His family argues that because he is unemployed and not receiving an allowance by organizations he should not be doing things that will not alleviate his current economic situation. In class, he often thinks about how he is going to pay his bills and questions whether he should be looking for a way to make a living during the hour and a half class period. Despite of this concern, he does not stop attending classes four times a week.

6.2.6 Children-related Obstacles
Refugee parents encounter many obstacles when attempting to provide an education for their children in Egypt. Of all African refugee children, only Sudanese are generally allowed to enroll in public schools. However, schools are overpopulated and often cannot welcome new students. In addition, parents are unable to pay school fees and necessary materials (Grabska 2006). Many refugees including Sudanese enroll in special “refugee schools” mainly operated by church-based organizations. Others cannot attend because parents cannot afford the tuition. A significant number of refugee children remain uneducated and are forced to stay home. Parents who are employed or those seeking to find a job face great difficulty in finding a caretaker for their children. Daycare centers for the younger children are costly and thus are inaccessible by the majority refugees. Often one of the parents stays at home with the child, depending of who finds employment. In other instances, the child stays at home alone or with other family members or friends from the community. Parents who wish to enroll in educational programs and those who are already registered also have difficulty in finding a caretaker for the evenings. They have to find a trustworthy person to care for their child because there are no childcare facilities in the location of the educational programs. Although many refugees live with other persons in the same apartment, these are often strangers and parents feel hesitant to leave their child. Younger children require more care, which forces many women to stay at home and refuse to enroll in evening classes. An informant from St. Andrew’s Church commented “women have more difficulty attending the English classes”. In other cases, refugee women bring their babies with them to class “I have to breastfeed my baby and I also have no one to take care of her. If I want to come to class I have to bring her with me” said a 19-year old Sudanese student. She often falls
behind on the lessons because her baby becomes inpatient, which forces her to step out of class. Samuel, a 35-year-old Sudanese student from the English classes shared that he and his wife had to make a decision of who will attend the lessons. They decided that he would assist the classes while she takes care of their two-year-old son. When he returns home, he teaches her what they learned in class so that both can gain proficiency in the language. Refugee parents have an additional challenge when trying to obtain an education. It is already challenging to find basic services for their children, such as health care, and even more difficult to find secondary services including child day care services.

6.2.7 Lack of Access to Alternative Educational Programs

Due to the lack of public educational programs available for adult refugees to continue their education and the unaffordable university tuition fees that apply to both foreigners and refugees, adults have to opt for alternative educational programs. These programs give refugees the opportunity to learn a language or a skill that could be utilized if they stay in Cairo, resettle in a third country or repatriate However, not all refugees who wish to enroll are able to do so. One of the reasons is the limited seats available. For example, STARS receive 1000 applications each registration period, however they can only accommodate around 600 students. Since STARS holds its classes at downtown campus of the American University in Cairo, they are given a limited number of rooms that they can utilize for the lessons.
Another factor restricting more refugees from joining the programs is insufficient staff. Refuge Egypt has the space for the students it receives but does not have enough volunteers to teach. The organization is able to provide only certain levels of English because there are no available instructors. The coordinator of the educational program stated that he has to “keep students at home until there are teachers for their classes”. The programs offered by STAR, Refuge Egypt, and St. Andrew’s all depend on volunteers who donate their time to help refugees. The organizations also survive with a very limited budget. Refuge Egypt utilizes most of its resources in providing refugees with primary services such as medical care and elementary education for children. The majority of its staff is composed of volunteers often from the refugee community. Due to the harsh condition for refugees in Egypt, adult education is not perceived as a priority and thus receives inadequate funding.
CONCLUSIONS

While much of the existing information on education of African refugees in Egypt has focused on children, this study reveals critical issues regarding the education of adults. The studied had three main objectives. It explored the different educational opportunities available for adult refugees in Cairo. It sought to identify the challenges faced by adult African refugees that affect their education. Lastly, it analyzed the role of education in the empowerment of adult refugees who either seek to integrate locally, return to their home country, or get resettled to another state.

Chapter four explored the educational opportunities for refugees in Cairo including the programs of Refuge Egypt, St. Andrew’s, STAR, the SCE, CBOs and Al-Azhar University. Al-Azhar University is only accessible by Muslim refugees while the SCE is only accessible by few refugees who have the resources to afford its costly fees. Only five students receive scholarships to complete the English program at the SCE. We conclude that due to the lack of access to formal education, the only educational opportunity for the majority of adult African refugees is provided by the different refugee educational programs.

The role of education in the empowerment of the refugees was analyzed in Chapter five. In this study, empowerment was defined as a personal development process through which an individual acquires valuable and applicable capabilities. An increase in capabilities can expand a person’s opportunities and allow him/her to take an active role in his/her life. Substantial information was derived from interviews conducted with
students and representatives from organizations and institutions. The findings showed that education, particularly English learning, significantly empowered the refugees. Due to the lack of access to formal education, English classes provided by adult refugee programs, showed to be the only educational opportunity for a majority African refugees. In addition, due to employment restrictions that impede refugees from gaining valuable work experience and the limited vocational training that exists in Cairo, learning English provides an alternative for refugees who seek to learn an applicable skill.

The role of education in empowerment was analyzed in the context of the three durable solutions: local integration, resettlement and voluntary repatriation. Learning English showed to empower African refugees who seek to integrate or who have no other choice but to continue to reside Cairo. It showed to be a powerful tool in improving the situation of many of the refugees. One of the most significant ways was by expanding their employment opportunities. Several refugees reported that English proficiency facilitated them in obtaining employment. Due to the lack of access to public schools and the poor education children receive in refugee schools, learning English allowed refugee parents to empower their children by teaching them the language. The adult educational programs also showed to empower young adults who are not able to enroll in universities or obtain jobs. In addition, learning English contributed to internal empowerment by motivating the students and increasing their self-esteem.

English learning also showed to empower refugees who are waiting for resettlement. The majority of the student participants expressed a desire to travel abroad. The majority also
claimed that learning English could aid in finding employment in the West. Learning English may aid refugees in the country of resettlement by broadening their employment opportunities, facilitating the access to universities, allowing them to access more and better services, and helping them integrate with the local population. A significant way that learning English empowers refugees is by increasing their capability to make important decisions in the new state. English proficiency allows refugees to familiarize themselves with their legal rights and benefits. It allows refugees to gain awareness of the resources around them.

In regards to voluntary repatriation, more than half of the students interviewed answered that English would help them if they repatriate. The majority of them stated that knowing the language could potentially increase their employment opportunities back home. Refugees can work in the rebuilding of their countries such as in reconstruction of infrastructure and reestablishments of institutions. English proficiency empowers women who return to traditional discriminative social structures by increasing their confidence and self-esteem. It may also facilitate women who in cooperation with organizations, seek to advocate for gender equality.

Chapter six explored the challenges that affect the education of adult refugees. The findings reflected challenges experiences by refugees, which showed to negatively affect their access to education and performance in class. The obstacles included: lack of access to formal education, fear of detention and deportation, discrimination and harassment, job-related obstacles, financial situation, children-related obstacles and lack of access to
the alternative educational programs. Existing data indicates that the majority of African
refugees, including Somalis, Eritreans and Ethiopians in Egypt before and during the
1990s were somewhat skilled and educated. Presently, a significant number of the
African refugees are uneducated. Some are illiterate and others have not completed their
primary and secondary schools (Zohry 2003; Al-Sharmani 2003). The decline in the level
of education among African refugees in Egypt can be attributed, in part; to the increasing
restrictions and obstacles they have faced until present time. One of the most significant
obstacles is the lack of access to formal education, mainly to universities. However, we
can safely predict that even if all African refugees had the same rights as nationals in
regards to access to universities, they will continue to face eminent challenges that impair
their education. Evidently, all the obstacles that restrict the education of the refugees
ultimately impede their empowerment.

In the context of local integration, it was possible to evaluate how education empowered
African refugees in Cairo. It was also possible to analyze in what ways they are able to
apply their knowledge of English while residing in Egypt. However in the context of
resettlement and repatriation, it was not feasible to evaluate how African refugees, who
previously resided in Cairo, were able to apply their English knowledge.

We can conclude that education could have a greater impact on empowerment if
individuals faced less restrictions and obstacles. In regards to local integration, education
could have a greater impact in empowering refugees if they were able to successfully
apply the skills. A factor that impedes the empowerment of a larger number of refugees is
the limited seats available in the refugee educational programs. Every term, the two largest programs are able to accommodate only around 600 students from approximately 1000 applicants. If the programs obtained additional funding, they would be able to expand and accommodate more students. Due to the fact that for many African refugees English learning is the only educational opportunity and empowerment tool, it is crucial to advocate for increased funding for the organizations that provide the programs.

Ajygin, Erin "Livelihoods and Family Formation Among Eritrean Refugees in Cairo". Master’s Thesis. The American University in Cairo (2010)


The American University in Cairo. School of Continuing Education. http://www.aucegypt.edu/see/about/Pages/default.aspx (accessed January 11, 2013).


UNHCR. Egypt Fact Sheet January 2013.


Appendix 1: Participant Consent Form

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO

Documentation of Informed Consent for Participation in Research Study

Project Title: Education as Empowerment: the Case of adult African Refugees

Principal Investigator: Valentina Hiegemann

*You are being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of the research is to know the problems adult African refugees have while living in Cairo and how this affects their education. Also, it is to evaluate the influence of education in empowering refugees, and the findings may be published, presented, or both. The expected duration of your participation is 30 minutes. The procedures of the research will be as follows: collect qualitative data will be obtained in person. Both close-ended and open-ended questions will be asked. Officials and employees of pertinent organizations and institution will be interviewed as well as students from various educational programs in Cairo.

*There will not be certain risks or discomforts associated with this research.

*There will not be benefits to you from this research.

*The information you provide for purposes of this research is confidential. Your name and contact information will not be used and your identity will be protected.

*For questions about the research, my rights, or research-related injuries should be directed to Valentina Hiegemann at mobile number 01013521799.

*Participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or the loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Signature

________________________________________

Printed Name

________________________________________

Date

________________________________________
Appendix 2: Questionnaire for Student Participants

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION: THE CASE OF ADULT AFRICAN REFUGEES

STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

1. Date of Birth 

2. Sex: Male _____ Female _____

3. Marital Status: Single _____ Married _____
   If married:
   Is your spouse working? _____ YES _____ NO
   If YES:
   What type of work? 

4. Country of Origin 

5. Date of arrival in Cairo 

6. Who do you live with? 

7. Educational background
   a. Less than Primary School _____
   b. Completed Primary School _____
   c. Completed Secondary School _____
   d. College/University degree _____

WORK

8. Did you work before coming to Cairo? _____ YES _____ NO
   If YES, describe your job:

9. In your hometown, who works in the family?
a. Men _____
b. Women _____
c. Both _____

10. Do you work now? _____YES _____NO
If YES:
a. How many hours a day? _____
b. Describe your job

c. How did you find work in Cairo? _______________________________________
d. Does the money from your job pay all your expenses? _____YES _____NO
e. Have you missed class before of work? _____YES _____NO
f. Can you concentrate in class after a day at work? _____YES _____NO

CHILDREN

11. Do you have children? _____YES _____NO
If YES:
a. How many? _____
b. How old? _________
c. Does he/she/they lives/live with you _____YES _____NO
d. Enrolled in school? _____YES _____NO
If YES:
  1. Public _____
  2. Private
  3. Refuge School _____
If NO:
  1. Who takes care of them __________
e. Who takes care of them when you come to class? ________

LIFE IN CAIRO

12. Do you like living in Cairo? _____YES _____NO.
If NO, why?

______________________________________________________________

a. Would you prefer to:
  Go back to your country _____
  Travel to a different country _____

13. What are some difficult things about living in Cairo? Please Explain:
14. Do you have family in Cairo? _____YES _____NO
15. Do you have friends in Cairo? _____YES _____NO
   If YES:
   a. Egyptians _____
   b. From your nationality _____
   c. Other nationalities _____

16. Do you feel welcomed and accepted by Egyptians? _____YES _____NO
   If NO, why?

17. Have you ever felt discriminated? _____YES _____NO.
   If YES, how and by who?

18. Do you feel safe in Cairo? _____YES _____NO.
   If NO, why?

19. Have you ever missed class because of not feeling safe? _____YES _____NO.
   If YES, please explain:

20. Do you trust the Egyptian police to protect you if you were in trouble?
    _____YES _____NO
    If NO, why?

FINANCIAL SITUATION

21. Do you receive money from:
    d. Organizations _____
    e. Family members in Cairo _____
    f. Family members back home _____
    g. Family members in another country _____
    h. From other resources _____
    i. No money received _____

22. Do you have trouble paying for your expenses? _____YES _____NO.
    If YES, which expenses?
a. Rent _____
b. Food _____
c. Doctors and Medicines _____
d. Children School _____
e. Transportation _____
f. Clothes _____
g. English classes _____
h. Other _____ please specify:

____________________________________

ENGLISH PROGRAM

23. Name of the program ____________________________

24. Time enrolled in the program __________

25. Level __________

26. Why do you want to learn English?

________________________________________________________________________

27. Does learning English change something in your life in Cairo? _____ YES _____ NO
   Why or why not?

________________________________________________________________________

28. Will it help you if you go back to your country? _____ YES _____ NO
   Why or why not?

________________________________________________________________________

29. Will it help you if you travel to a different country? _____ YES _____ NO
   Why or why not?

________________________________________________________________________

30. Do you enjoy coming to class? _____ YES _____ NO
   Why or why not?

________________________________________________________________________

31. Do you have time to do your homework and study? _____ YES _____ NO.
   If NO, why?

________________________________________________________________________

32. Do you often miss class? _____ YES _____ NO.
   If YES, why?
Appendix 3: Questionnaire for Participants from Organizations and Institutions

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION: THE CASE OF ADULT AFRICAN REFUGEES

PARTICIPANTS FROM ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

1. Name of Organization/Institution ____________________________________________

2. In your opinion, what are the main challenges that refugees face in Egypt?
   ________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________

3. In regards to education, what are the main obstacles faced by adults?
   ________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________

4. Considering the few opportunities and many restrictions for refugees, what is the role of education in adults? (Is it important)?
   ________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________
   ________________________________________________________________________

4. In regards to the durable solutions, what can education do for refugees?
   a. In the host country (local integration in Egypt)
      ________________________________________________________________________
      ________________________________________________________________________
      ________________________________________________________________________

   b. If they return to their home country
      ________________________________________________________________________
      ________________________________________________________________________
      ________________________________________________________________________

   c. If they get resettled to a third country
5. If more adults were able to access educational programs and universities, do you think their situation and status would be different in Egypt?

6. In your opinion, are organizations doing enough in regards to providing educational programs/services for adult refugees? Please explain/give suggestions.