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## Refugee Livelihood: Understanding the Vocational Training Experiences of Foreign Refugee Women Living in Malawi

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REFUGEE LIVELIHOOD: UNDERSTANDING THE VOCATIONAL  
TRAINING EXPERIENCES OF FOREIGN REFUGEE WOMEN  
LIVING IN MALAWI

by

MARY PATRICIA DAVIS

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the University of the Incarnate Word  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

May 2019

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Mary Patricia Davis

## DEDICATION

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TRAINING EXPERIENCES OF FOREIGN REFUGEE WOMEN  
LIVING IN MALAWI

Mary Patricia Davis

University of the Incarnate Word, 2019

With Africa holding 26% of the world's refugees, it is critical to understand the educational opportunities that are accessible for refugees, especially in the context of African women who are historically excluded as the primary target for education (UNHCR, 2018a). Despite the policies and institutional commitment to education for the refugee population, there is little evidence to ensure quality, or access to education, at the regional or local levels. For women and young girls in displacement, access to education is particularly limited to the secondary level (UNHCR, 2011a). In response to the need for quality education for refugee women, Malawi's vocational training and secondary education institutions have centered on activities to increase opportunities for formal secondary education of both refugee and Malawian women (UNESCO, 2008). As opportunity and awareness of quality secondary education for refugee women becomes more prevalent, there is a need to understand how these programs have influenced their sense of livelihood. For these reasons, this study explored the individual experiences of African refugee women focusing on how their experiences in completing a vocational training program have influenced their lives in terms of self-efficacy and empowerment in creating a livelihood.

Findings of this study revealed participant livelihood experiences were influenced in varying degrees as a result of their vocational training. Vocational training was perceived by

participants as a positive influence on livelihood capabilities as well as their positive feelings of self-efficacy and empowerment. However, education alone was only part of these outcomes, as other experiences of relationship building, creating alternative solutions for income-producing activities, and sharing their knowledge also influenced their feelings of self-efficacy and empowerment.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	xii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xiii
OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY .....	1
Historical Context of International Organization and Policy .....	2
Global Refugees Today.....	5
Durable Solutions.....	7
Education for Refugees in Africa .....	9
Statement of the Problem.....	11
Purpose of the Study .....	13
Research Design.....	14
Research Questions.....	15
Significance.....	16
Theoretical Frameworks .....	17
Conclusion .....	19
Definition of Key Terms.....	21
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	25
Global Migration Overview .....	25
Evolution of International Refugee Organizations .....	36
Connecting Global Refugee Policy at the Local Level.....	39

## Table of Contents—Continued

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Response to Improve Refugee Livelihood.....	43
Theory of Sustainable Livelihoods .....	45
Clenora Hudson-Weems’s Africa Womanist Perspective .....	48
Sara Longwe’s Women’s Empowerment Framework.....	50
Challenges of Refugee Women Living in Africa .....	51
Encampment Challenges.....	52
Education of Refugee Women in Africa.....	55
Education in Malawi.....	57
Albert Bandura’s Theory of Self-Efficacy.....	60
Conclusion .....	60
METHODOLOGY .....	62
Rationale for Research Approach .....	62
Research Design.....	63
Data Collection .....	66
Data Triangulation .....	69
Interview Method.....	69
Study Sites .....	70
Research Participants .....	74
Research Perspective .....	76
Risk Analysis .....	77

## Table of Contents—Continued

## METHODOLOGY

Consent .....	80
Validation Techniques .....	81
Researcher Bias.....	82
Delimitations and Limitations.....	82
Subjectivity Statement .....	83
Data Analysis .....	83
Malawi Research Proposal Work Plan .....	85
Conclusion .....	86
FINDINGS .....	88
Theoretical Frameworks .....	89
Summary of the Study .....	91
Participant Background.....	92
Vocational Programs of Malawi Employee Interviews .....	93
Introduction of the Participants.....	96
Emergent Themes .....	100
Major Themes Discussion.....	101
Conclusion .....	111
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSION.....	112
Summary of the Study .....	112
Study Discussion.....	113
Research Question One.....	114

## Table of Contents—Continued

## SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSION

Research Question Two .....	123
Research Question Three .....	131
Summary of the Discussion .....	136
Implications from the Study.....	137
Suggestions for Future Research .....	139
Conclusion .....	141
REFERENCES .....	144
APPENDICES .....	153
Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Flyer .....	154
Appendix B: Refugee Women Participant Guided Interview Protocol .....	156
Appendix C: Recruitment Script for Potential Participants in the Study.....	160
Appendix D: Employee Interview for Vocational Programs of Malawi Nonprofit .....	163
Appendix E: Vocational Programs of Malawi Employee Consent .....	166
Appendix F: Subject Consent .....	172
Appendix G: IRB Approval UIW .....	178
Appendix MERLENE: Malawi Protocol Approval.....	180

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Vocational programs of Malawi Graduates for the Fall of 2017 .....	75

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Number of occurrences of each subcategory within each major theme .....	93
2. Four major themes with subcategories .....	101
3. Process of regaining livelihood with education as the foundational basis.....	137

## Overview of the Study

Victor Frankl, a Jewish survivor of four Nazi concentration camps, wrote “when we are no longer able to change a situation . . . we are challenged to change ourselves” (Frankl, 1946/2006, p. 112). This is but one example in history of the many individuals who have found the inner resolve to create an entirely new life for themselves despite the unbearable conditions surrounding them. This is precisely what 68.5 million displaced people around the world are courageously choosing to do – change themselves (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2018). Individuals who have endured life-threatening situations brought on from war, genocide, famine, and natural disasters often seek change for themselves since they cannot control or change the situation(s) in their native lands.

Many people have survived to tell their stories and are a testimony to the untold bravery of so many who have witnessed and endured human suffering associated with being displaced. One such example is the story of Immaculee Ilibagiza, a Rwandan native and member of the Tutsis tribe, who found herself held up in a bathroom with seven other women for approximately 3 months (Ilibagiza, 2006). They hid there in attempt to dodge death as more than 1 million Tutsis were slaughtered in what is known today as the Rwandan Holocaust (Ilibagiza, 2006). In 1994, Immaculee Ilibagiza shared an inner-strength much the same as Victor Frankl portrayed in his book *Man’s Search for Meaning* (1946/2006). These two people represent millions of displaced people who have sought safety in another region or country to evade the devastating consequences of remaining in their homeland (UNHCR, 2000, 2018b).

For example, in 2015 Europe witnessed an influx of an estimated 1,008,616 refugees and migrants who sought asylum within their neighboring countries (Maley, 2016; UNHCR, 2017). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report, *Global Trends: Forced*

*Displacement in 2017*, affirms the ongoing desperation of people's effort to seek safe haven in another country. The UNHCR reports an exponential growth of displaced people and, accordingly, an expansion of needs to provide safety and protection to these individuals and families (UNHCR, 2018b).

Greater understanding of the refugee story can provide insight to the underlying issues of past and current movements of refugees into Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia (Betts, 2015; Gatrell, 2013). With a record number of refugees and displaced people, Betts (2015) asserts "refugees and displacement will likely become the defining issue of the 21st century" (p. 2). To learn more about the impact of displacement involving African refugee women, this study investigated the experiences of the African women refugee population within the Dzeleka Refugee Camp near Lilongwe, Malawi. The study explored how vocational training influenced these women's perceptions of self-efficacy and empowerment.

### **Historical Context of International Organizations and Policy**

As early as the turn of the 20th century, a new international organization, the League of Nations, began in January 1920; providing protection of national minorities was of prime importance in its programs and, accordingly, to keep political influence out of refugee relief efforts (Gatrell, 2013). In 1921, as their first major assignment, the League of Nations was recruited to deal with the large influx of Russians into Western Europe as they fled from the Bolshevik Revolution (Maley, 2016).

It was during this inter-war period that Fridtjof Nansen and James McDonald began their humanitarian legacy for international work with refugees. The first High Commissioner for Refugees, appointed by the League of Nations, was Fridtjof Nansen, from Norway, who was assigned to deal with over a million Russian refugees in Western Europe (Gatrell, 2013). As



High Commissioner, Nansen worked to establish the legal status and employment of the Russian refugees in their host countries, which eventually became the basis for the foundational structure of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (Gatrell, 2013). In 1922, as a result of his humanitarian efforts, Nansen was awarded the Nobel Peace prize for his work with refugees (UNHCR, 2000). After Nansen's retirement in the 1930s, the League of Nations appointed James McDonald as High Commissioner to deal with resettlement issues around the world involving refugees coming from Germany. His most notable work included a letter he wrote at his resignation to the international press calling for direct intervention from the world over the persecution of Jews in Germany. The humanitarian work of both Nansen and McDonald greatly influenced the application of international protection for refugees (UNHCR, 2000).

During World War II, and immediately post-war, there were approximately 60 million displaced people in Europe, considered the largest displacement in modern history (Maley 2016; UNHCR, 2000). The United Nations and other organizations soon realized their role in overseeing the refugees of post-World War II was certain to change from organizations focused on repatriation, to a much broader role in the protection and humanitarian rights of people (UNHCR, 2000). In response to this emergency, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was created in 1943, before the war had even ended, with its "primary focus on repatriation of refugees" (UNHCR, 2000, p. 14).

In an attempt to resolve the refugee situation in post-World War II Europe, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration of 1943 was replaced by the International Refugee Organization in 1947, and, subsequently followed by the current Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2000). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1951 to help the millions of Europeans

who were without a home or had to flee their homes due to war (Gatrell, 2013, UNHCR, 2000). Originally, the UNHCR was mandated as an agency of the United Nations to provide international protection and seek permanent solutions for refugees post-World War II and would dissolve after completion of the 3-year project to repatriate refugees to their homes (Gatrell, 2013; UNHCR, 2000).

In addition to the establishment of international organizations for the care and protection of refugees, international law was created as a protocol for humanitarian conduct and the treatment of refugees. As stated by Goodwin-Gill (2014) international law was necessary to ensure

every refugee enjoys the full complement of rights and benefits to which he or she is entitled as a refugee; and that the human rights of every refugee are guaranteed ... protection is thus based in law; it may be wider than rights, but it begins with rights and rights permeate the whole. (pp. 36–37)

Three significant policies were created to define and support humanitarian rights and remain as a foundation for international law for refugees (UNHCR, 2000). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) established universal human rights. Following the Declaration of Human Rights, the Geneva conventions (1949) set forth four treaties which further defined humanitarian conduct and treatment of civilians during armed conflict (Gatrell, 2013). The creation of the most significant policy took place at the Convention of 1951 which established the Status of Refugees and is considered the foundation of international law for refugees

with the key provisions of the Convention being the obligation of states, which are party to it, not to expel or return a refugee to a state where he or she would face persecution, known as the principle of non-refoulement. (UNHCR, 2000 p. 25)

International laws and policies have assisted in the establishment of a framework in which to provide basic human rights and to recognize displaced people as the most vulnerable

group of people of the world. Milner (2014) points to the critical role of global refugee policy and the necessity of understanding the global policy-making process. Milner contends global policy is concerned with particular criteria identifying it as policy, where the process of making global policy impacts the implementation and how global policy converges at the national and local level. In the final stage, Milner (2014) and Betts, Bloom, Kaplan, and Omata, (2017) emphasize the importance of understanding processes involved in shaping the implementation of global policy and how to best influence the wide range of actors at the local levels who ultimately hold much of the ability to improve protection and solutions for refugees.

Understanding the interconnectedness of policy as it leaves the global arena is imperative to the future success of how regional and local actors embrace these policies at the local level to benefit the refugees as well as their host community. Equally important is to understand the depth and breadth of today's refugees and the host countries' ability to work in tandem with refugee agencies for the successful integration of refugees into the host community (Jacobsen, 2005; Maley, 2016; Patuzzi & Embiricos, 2018).

### **Global Refugees Today**

To address the challenges of the refugee crises, research provides stakeholders with data to inform with planning and decision-making, which ultimately impacts the globally displaced and how they engage with host countries. The UNHCR report, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017*, revealed a record high of 68.5 million people forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations (UNHCR, 2018b). Of the 68.5 million people displaced, 25.4 million were refugees, 40.0 million were internally displaced, and 3.1 million were seeking asylum (UNHCR, 2018b).

For the fourth consecutive year, Turkey has hosted approximately 3.5 million people seeking asylum, the largest number of refugees worldwide. Other leading refugee-hosting countries are Pakistan, Uganda, Lebanon, Islamic Republic of Iran, Germany, Bangladesh, and Sudan (UNHCR, 2018b). With the exception of Germany, these host countries are largely considered developing countries and have continued to provide assistance to displaced people regardless of their limited economic resources (UNHCR, 2017).

**UNHCR Global Trends Report.** The annual UNHCR report, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017*, also revealed that more than two-thirds (68 %) of all refugees worldwide came from just five countries: Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar, and Somalia (UNHCR, 2018b). Syria continues to account for the largest forcibly displaced population in 2017, having 12.6 million Syrians who were forcibly displaced, of which this number represents 6.3 million refugees, 146,700 asylum-seekers, and 6.2 million Internally Displaced People (IDP). Syria is followed by Colombia with a 7.9 million displaced population, with the third largest displacement situation being the Democratic Republic of the Congo having 5.1 million forcibly displaced people (UNHCR, 2018b). The UNHCR report noted other large displaced populations (either internally, as refugees, or asylum seekers with over 2 million people) to include: Afghanistan, Iraq, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Nigeria, Ukraine, and Yemen (UNHCR, 2018b).

While it is important to understand the vast numbers of people worldwide who have been directly or indirectly impacted through displacement, it is also imperative to understand the human perspective of both the refugee and the host countries as they commit to viable short and long-term solutions for what has been deemed the largest global refugee crises on record (Betts, 2015). Short term needs include safety, food, water, shelter, and medical care but do not resolve

the long-term demands for displaced people. In strategizing durable solutions for refugees, the UNHCR considers three options as viable prospects for long-term durable solutions for the future of refugee placement to include voluntary repatriation, Third Country resettlement, and local integration (Betts et al., 2017; UNHCR, 2000).

### **Durable Solutions**

Originally, refugee organizations were established to implement a permanent solution to what was viewed as a temporary problem. However, resolutions to the refugee situation have shifted to create a temporary solution for a permanent problem. After World War II, the primary focus for the UNHCR was repatriation of the millions of displaced people in Europe to their homes (Barnett, 2013). With the end of World War II, global displacement has grown exponentially with repatriation remaining as the primary durable solution (Barnett, 2013). However, refugees must return voluntarily, and according to data from UNHCR (2017), this segment represents less than 5% of the overall refugee population (UNHCR, 2018b). Other statistics from UNHCR reveal approximately 6.5 million (18%) of the internally displaced people returned to their area of origin and resettlement solutions were provided to 189,300 refugees (UNHCR, 2017). Reinforcing this discouraging data, Zong and Batalova (2017) reported fewer than 1% of refugees worldwide are resettled annually (p. 1).

As part of the resettlement process, the UNHCR assists refugees from developing nations by transferring these people to a country of asylum in which refugees are granted permanent residence (Gatrell, 2013; UNHCR, 2006). As stated earlier, international policies influence those who seek durable solutions for refugees at both the national and local levels (Milner, 2014). As a result of local policy, many refugees are left for years living in their host country within a

refugee camp where living conditions are often meager and safety is compromised, especially for refugee women (Milner, 2014; UNHCR, 2008a).

Thus, host country integration is rapidly becoming the most favorable solution for refugees (Betts et al., 2017; Patuzzi & Embiricos, 2018b). Host country integration involves a refugee finding a permanent home in the country of asylum and integrating into the community (Betts et al., 2017; UNHCR, 2000). Recent studies have shown local integration to have great potential as a solution for refugee populations who reside within refugee camps throughout the world (Betts et al., 2017; Patuzzi & Embiricos, 2018; Smit, 2015; UNHCR, 2008b). For example, Ugandan research states refugee integration and innovation has taken place despite the local constraints of policy with refugee entrepreneurial endeavors. Refugees in Uganda are using their existing skills to create trade markets for themselves and training other refugees. The entrepreneurial spirit of refugees can transform their imposed structural limitations for livelihood into opportunities, which in turn, provides economic growth benefits to both refugees and their host communities (Betts et al., 2017).

Durable solutions, or long lasting and more permanent solutions, are sought through programs designed to produce activities that bring income and self-reliance of the refugee (Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016). Helping families to achieve self-reliance has become increasingly urgent. Hence, self-reliance was affirmed as a primary goal for durable solutions in the UNHCR (2003a) publication, *Framework for Durable Solutions for Refugees and Concerned People*, which emphasized refugees are often unable to use their skills and experiences from their home countries, thereby leaving their entire livelihood in jeopardy. Livelihood assets are more than material ones; they include human capital such as health, education, skills, and experience (Betts et al., 2017; Calhoun, 2010a). Often, personal loss and trauma from forced displacement is

further complicated by the psychological and cultural impact to refugees placing them at an economic disadvantage upon arrival (Bhugra, Craig, & Bhui, 2010; Jacobsen, 2005). As a final limitation, refugee policy and regulations in certain countries prevent refugees from seeking employment even with legal refugee status (Betts et al., 2017; Goodwin-Gill, 2014).

Accordingly, education has become a key factor in host country integration due to the transformational qualities of creating a stable future through literacy; and skills for gaining independence and access to employment. Studies affirm once basic needs of food, water, and shelter have been met, refugees' primary concern is education for themselves and their children (Crisp, Talbot, & Cipolone, 2001; UNHCR, 2011a). In response to the refugee concerns, the International Federation of Social Workers advocate for planning services where the needs of long-term protracted refugee situations are addressed to enhance employment prospects. The International Federation of Social Workers provides refugee services to include: adult literacy, language training, income-producing skills training and opportunities, family life education, child care, and development of creative abilities with emphasis on education to address the needs of women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities (International Federation of Social Workers, 2012).

### **Education for Refugees in Africa**

With Africa holding 26% of the world's refugees, it is critical to understand the needs and educational opportunities accessible for refugees in Africa, especially in the context of African women who have been historically excluded as the primary target for education (UNHCR, 2018a). In 1966, the UNHCR focus on primary school opportunities shifted to post-primary education offering secondary scholarships for refugees from UNHCR and other nonprofit organizations (UNHCR, 2011a).

The underpinnings of the provision of refugee education are articulated in Article 22 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which specifies signatory states shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education and treatment as favorable as possible with respect to education other than elementary education. (UNHCR, 2011c, p. 11)

**Challenges in education for the refugee population.** Access to education for the refugee population is uneven and varies in quality, especially in developing host countries that struggle to provide equitable education to the local communities (UNHCR, 2011a). The UNHCR report, *Refugee Education: A Global Review*, has revealed access to education depends on regional differences with primary and secondary school attendance

where primary school gross enrollment ratios range from 46% across much of Africa and up to 90% in the Middle East and Northern Africa. At the secondary level, regional variation in camp settings is stark, with school participation at only 20% in Eastern and the Horn of Africa and at 86% in Western Africa. (UNHCR, 2011a, p. 26)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees specifies urgent challenges to access of education for refugees and have focused its attention to providing access to post-primary education for refugees, ensuring quality programs and improved protection to refugee women and children (UNHCR, 2011a).

**Refugee women's education in Malawi.** After short-term emergency needs of shelter, food, and health care have been met, male refugees become the major target group for education and training (Haffejee & East, 2015; UNCHR, 2011a). This is partially due to the policies and programs that have remained essentially the same over the past 3 decades. Hall (1990) asserts women have historically been regarded as a secondary source to participate in meaningful productive activities for the economic well-being of the family. However, in recent years, vocation training and secondary education have shifted to bring more equity for education of both refugee women and Malawian women (UNESCO, 2008). Government and humanitarian organizations of Malawi have made an intentional focus to improve participation and provide



quality programs for refugee women (World Bank, 2010). Nonprofits such as the Jesuit Refugee Training Program and the Vocational Programs of Malawi, both located near the Dzeleka Refugee Camp, are examples of institutional focus on parity for women involvement in educational programs (Griffin & Slaven, 2015).

The subordination of African women as witnessed during colonial rule has continued with the postcolonial unrest as wars, dictatorships, and cultural practices remain present today (Torres, 2007). Torres reveals sexual violence against refugee women from Africa is widely prevalent, where some refugee women have experienced sexual and physical violence from police, soldiers, and civilians as unrest persists in many regions of Africa. African cultural norms also contribute to the impact on educational and employment opportunities for women whose primary role is seen as caretakers for children and the home (Hatoss & Huijser, 2010). However, even with gender inequalities, the future of African women is improving in Malawi due to government and humanitarian organizations that have committed to improve participation and expand program offerings for both refugee women and Malawian women (World Bank, 2010).

One example of outreach to women can be seen in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp within the Dowa District of Malawi. Dzeleka is home for approximately 40,000 refugees coming from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Burundi and is the larger of two refugee camps in Malawi. Dzeleka has benefited from post-secondary programs offered through the Jesuit Higher Education at the Margins facility located adjacent to the Dzeleka Refugee Camp (Griffin & Slaven, 2015). From the Jesuit educational programs' inception in 2010, the Jesuit Refugee Service in Malawi has set a goal for gender parity for students. In 2015, it was able to achieve 50% female participation among its non-degree certificate programs and approximately one-third female participation in the diploma program (Griffin & Slaven, 2015).

Vocational opportunities for African refugee women are increasing through the institutions, mentioned above, where there is active intention to emphasize women participation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Although, research shows approximately 50% of the refugees in Africa are women, education and training opportunities have traditionally been designed for men (Haffejee & East, 2015; Hall, 1990). UNHCR indicates opportunities for women refugee education have improved (UNHCR, 2008a, 2016). However, African women's educational opportunities continue to be a subject of concern for the United Nations and other humanitarian organizations (UNHCR, 2016). This interest is further affirmed in the UNHCR *Handbook for the Protection of Women and Girls* which states the UNHCR works in cooperation with a wide variety of international agencies and is required to mainstream gender equality into their policies, programs, and operations (UNCHR, 2008a).

In Africa, the violence and wars erupting since the 1990s brought a new understanding of the challenges faced by refugee women from African countries (Torres, 2007). Despite the policies and institutional commitment to education for the refugee population, there is little evidence to ensure quality or access to education at the regional and local level. For women and young girls in displacement, access to education is particularly limited to entry in the secondary level (UNHCR, 2011a). University female enrollment in Malawi has been reported in the range of 30% in public universities and approximately 45% in private institutions (World Bank, 2010). The low female enrollment in higher education can be attributed to a number of factors. The first reason would be the high dropout rates for females throughout primary and secondary levels of schooling. Economic difficulties and behavior such as early marriage, pregnancy, and family responsibilities help to explain the fragility of school demand. The lack of supplies, crowded

classrooms, open air or temporary classrooms, and incomplete schools also have a negative effect on retention (World Bank, 2010).

As stated in the World Bank (2010) publication, *The Education System in Malawi*, data revealed total bed space for the University of Malawi for males was 2,761 in comparison to 1,383 for females leaving less room for female residents. With the formal trade school system, TEVET (technical, entrepreneurial and vocational education and training) limited access for girls is also evident. TEVET enrollment for Malawi is at 2% of the total secondary education enrollment. World Bank (2010) also indicates female participation in the main TEVET entrance examinations (trade testing and Malawi craft) are 10% and 23% respectively, indicating low access to TEVET for females.

Quality education, in the area of vocational training, for African refugee women is critical to bring confidence, skills, and independence for displaced women in Africa (Haffejee & East, 2015; UNHRC, 2001, 2008a, 2011a). As opportunity and awareness of quality secondary education for refugee women becomes more prevalent, there is a need to gain understanding of the value of such programs through the lens of participants who are African refugee women and how these programs have influenced their sense of livelihood. For the purposes of this study, the individual experiences of African refugee women were explored focusing on how their experiences in completing a vocation training program influenced their lives in terms of self-efficacy and empowerment in creating a livelihood.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore the self-perception of empowerment and self-efficacy of African refugee women as a result of completing vocational training provided by the Vocational Programs of Malawi, a nonprofit organization located near Lilongwe, Malawi.

This qualitative phenomenological case study focused on the lived experiences of the female participants and how they made meaning of their individual lives. As a main tenant of the qualitative research process, “the researcher kept a focus on learning the meaning participants hold about a problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or the writers express in the literature” (Creswell, 2014, p. 186).

### **Research Design**

Using a qualitative approach, this phenomenological case study included participants who were African refugee women residing at the Dzeleka Refugee Camp in Lilongwe, Malawi. Lichtman (2013) states phenomenology refers to an approach focused on “the lived experiences of those who have lived with or experienced a particular phenomenon” (p. 85). Lichtman distinguishes a case study as an approach to qualitative research involving the specific and detailed study of a case or cases which can be limited to a type of characteristic or one type of situation. The two approaches for a phenomenological case study were combined to allow the exploration of the characteristics of the individual participants who have lived as refugees while participating and completing a vocational training offered by the Vocational Programs of Malawi training facility.

Phenomenological research design was conceptualized with the work of Edmond Husserl in the early 1900s. Husserl is generally regarded as the father of phenomenology and he proposed multiple ways of gaining knowledge with context important for understanding phenomenon (Lichtman, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). In the phenomenological process, Moustakas clarified the importance of grasping individual experiences with his statement “perceptions, memories, judgments, reflections, are core and figural in our developing understanding of things and people” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 94). Phenomenological research centers on the description of

the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants and typically involves interviews (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994).

Case studies are a design of inquiry found in many fields where the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, or process of one or more individuals (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). Yin (2018) states,

the essence of a case study is the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions; why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result. (p. 14)

Yin (2018) also places emphasis of a case study as a two-fold definition, with the first part having to do with the scope and the second part focused on the features of the study. Hence, case study research “comprises an all-encompassing mode of inquiry, with its own logic of design, data collection techniques and specific approaches to data analysis” (p. 16). Therefore, as part of the data collection semi-structured individual interviews were employed to include 10 to 15 semi-structured guided questions, participant observations, researcher memos, and researcher field notes (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

### **Research Questions**

This study’s focus was to understand the lived experiences of African refugee women who have completed a vocational training program. The intent was to discern how their lives have changed, if at all, and, more specifically, how empowerment and self-efficacy influenced the women’s development and transition. As a result, the study’s research questions include the following:

- 1) How have livelihood experiences impacted female participants who reside in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp?

- 2) How has vocational training contributed to the economic advancement of female participants who reside in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp?
- 3) How do the female participants, who reside in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp, describe perceptions of self-efficacy and empowerment in relation to their present lives?

### **Significance**

The significance of studying the experiences of African refugee women who have completed vocational training at the Vocational Programs of Malawi provides direct insight into the participants' self-perceptions after completion of vocational training. Pham (2016) asserts relatively few studies have focused on the refugees' own perspectives. Traditionally, African refugee women have had less opportunity to voice their opinions and perceptions about their experiences of programs and resettlement (Pham, 2016).

Re-conceptualizing refugee education to account for the realities of refugee life and to align with the human rights approach will be critical in meeting UNHCR's Global Priorities and for the future refugee education as a key factor in creating sustainable durable solutions. (UNHCR, 2011a, p. 10)

Research is necessary for understanding the lasting impact of education on refugee women. Thus, fieldwork provides actors with a more informed assessment of the quality and relevance of current programs. The needs of refugee women extend beyond the basic survival necessities to include education and skills for the facilitation of the development of confidence to cope with a changing world, job competence, and increased family responsibility. Continued research with refugee women from Africa is important to support and acknowledge shared characteristics and to provide a voice in which to express traumatic experiences and to improve family livelihood (Haffejee & East, 2015).

The researcher's intended outcomes were to support or build on theory of African refugee women self-efficacy and empowerment as a necessary component of sustainable livelihood for

African refugee women and to provide a foundational base for more in-depth research studies related to refugee women's self-perception of empowerment as a result of formal education. A deeper understanding of African woman refugee's self-perceptions of how a vocational training program has influenced them in terms of empowerment and self-efficacy may inform present and future program planning for refugee women.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

Although this phenomenon and research problem can be investigated from several frameworks, this study employed four theoretical frameworks to provide perspective for shaping the research questions and for analysis of the data: Karen Jacobsen's contributions to the sustainable livelihoods framework; Clenora Hudson-Weems's African womanist perspective; Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy; and Sara Longwe's women's empowerment framework. The following sections will introduce each theoretical framework with the second chapter presenting a more in-depth discussion of the frameworks.

**Sustainable livelihoods framework.** Jacobsen (2014) claims most livelihood theory stems from Chambers and Conway's (1992) definition to include the "means of gaining a living, including livelihood capabilities, tangible assets, such as stores and resources and intangible assets, such as claims and access" (Jacobsen, 2014, p. 100). As understanding of the livelihood theory has evolved, a more holistic meaning of livelihood extends its view from livelihood outcomes to "include various elements of human capital and social capital" (De Haan & Zoomers, 2005, p. 33). This concept of livelihoods assets would encompass human capital such as health, education, skills and experience and social capital of family and community (Jacobsen, 2005). Jacobsen's research emphasizes a focus on protracted refugee income-generating activities and their social network capacities to effectively inform refugees and the host

communities of refugee capabilities of self-reliance (De Vriese, 2006; Jacobsen, 2005). Aligned with Jacobsen, Betts et al. (2017) argue the current sustainable livelihoods framework is too narrow in scope and necessitates a shift to a more inclusive analysis of wider markets for a greater holistic insight to the underlying markets impacting refugee economic activities (Betts et al., 2017).

**Clenora Hudson-Weems's African womanist perspective.** The African womanist perspective views every African woman's experience as distinctly different and with African refugees from different countries have different experiences (Haffejee & East, 2015; Phillips, 2006). Clenora Hudson-Weems's (1993) African womanist theory best fits the experiences of the African women as neither black feminism nor African feminism sufficiently define the realities of the African woman (Phillips, 2006). Hudson-Weems distinguishes feminism as a term adopted by white women and thus designed to meet the needs of this particular group (Phillips, 2006). Hudson-Weems's African womanist ideology is appropriately designed and articulated to express the unique struggles and experiences of African women, which suggests African womanist ideology is quite different from the mainstream feminist perspective due to their historical realities and present stance in society are not the same (Phillips, 2006).

**Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy.** It is essential to understand the concept of self-efficacy as it applies to the African refugee women and their experiences with vocational training. Artino (2012) describes the concept of self-efficacy as "a personal belief in one's capability to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (p. 2). Adding to this definition, perceived self-efficacy is described as possessing an optimistic belief that one can perform new or difficult tasks and cope with difficult situations presented (Schwarzer, 1992). Albert Bandura's defines perceived self-efficacy as "people's



beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 2010, p. 1). Bandura’s theory claims self-efficacy beliefs influence individual’s feelings, thoughts, motivation, and behavior. Such beliefs produce diverse effects through four major processes to include “cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes” (Bandura, 2010, p. 2) The main sources of developing self-efficacy are through “mastery, social modeling, social persuasion, and through control of stress” (Bandura, 2010, p. 2).

**Sara Longwe’s women’s empowerment framework.** Sara Longwe’s women’s empowerment framework is a significant contribution on how the concept of empowerment is viewed in relation to African refugee women. Longwe’s empowerment framework has been used in the UNHCR (2001) guide, *A Practical Guide to Empowerment: Good Practices on Gender Equality Mainstreaming*, as a tool to explore the empowerment process. Longwe’s women’s empowerment framework identifies five dimensions of women’s empowerment that focus on “the ability of women to access resources, exercise self-awareness with respect to their rights, mobilize around their rights, control their environment with a facility equal to that of men” (UNHCR, 2001).

## **Conclusion**

The African continent has a long and complex history of internal conflict and war, which has influenced the sociopolitical landscape throughout the continent and which has greatly impacted the safety and well-being of people in every region (Pham, 2016; Gatrell, 2013; UNHCR, 2000). For the past 2 decades, the ability for host countries to take in refugees from neighboring countries has been greatly influenced by the spill-over of other countries’ conflicts. Host countries, that are primarily third world countries, have their own economic struggles that

are compounded with the added stress of providing shelter and basic needs to incoming refugees (Maley, 2016). Although host country regulations differ, generally legal refugee status allows access of services. However, in developing countries few refugees have formal refugee status and are more likely to be asylum seekers (Betts, 2013). Without legal documents or local policy for work, challenges remain for refugees in their right to pursue a livelihood and seek protection making them highly vulnerable (Hovil, 2014). As a result, the safety sought by refugees has been compromised within and outside of refugee camps. Consequently, many women are victims of sexual assault and encounter the very abuse they had fled in their country of origin. As African refugee women seek refuge in neighboring countries, the expectation for education is limited for refugees as well as for many women in Malawi.

Fortunately, data indicates improved status as for secondary education as UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations target vocational training and higher education as a solution for refugee livelihood (Torres, 2007; UNHCR, 2008b; UNHCR, 2011a). Today, education is increasingly viewed as a durable solution for promoting self-reliance and integration of the refugees into the host country. For these reasons, this study explored the perception of self-efficacy and empowerment of African women after participating in a vocational training program to gain an understanding of how vocational training has influenced their livelihood.

## **Definition of Key Terms**

Throughout the course of this study, several terms will be used specific to the topic of refugees along with related organizations and policies. Key terms with definitions have been provided for clarity and understanding for the audience.

Asylum seeker is someone who has made a claim that he or she is a refugee, and is waiting for that claim to be accepted or rejected. Asylum seekers are persons who have applied for asylum or refugee status, but who have not yet received a final decision on their application. A distinction should be made between the number of asylum-seekers who have submitted an individual request during a certain period (asylum applications submitted) and the number of asylum-seekers whose individual asylum request has not yet been decided at a certain date (backlog of undecided or pending cases). The Statistical Online Population Database provides both types of data. Caution should therefore be exercised when interpreting data on asylum-seekers (UNHCR, 2006).

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) protected/assisted by UNHCR internally displaced persons are people or groups of individuals who have been forced to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of, or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural- or human-made disasters, and who have NOT crossed an international border. For purposes of UNHCR's statistics, this population only includes conflict-generated IDPs to whom the Office extends protection and/or assistance. UNHCR statistics do not provide a comprehensive picture of global internal displacement. Moreover, UNHCR's IDP statistics are not necessarily representative of the entire IDP population in a given country

but are exclusively limited to the ones who are protected and/or assisted by the Office (UNHCR, 2006).

Durable solution is a long-lasting solution to the plight of refugees. It refers to a voluntary repatriation, local integration, and Third Country resettlement (UNHCR, 2006).

Encampment or confinement policy is a regulation in which refugees are obliged to reside in a specific place usually determined by the host country (UNHCR, 2006).

Host Communities are communities that host large populations of refugees or internally displaced persons, typically in camps or integrated into households directly (UNHCR, 2006).

Local Integration is a durable solution to the problem of refugees involving their permanent settlement in a country of first asylum, and eventually being granted nationality of that country (UNHCR, 2006).

Migrants (Economic) involves persons who leave their countries of origin purely for economic reasons not in any way related to the refugee definition, or in order to seek material improvements in their livelihood. Economic migrants do not fall within the criteria for refugee status and are therefore not entitled to benefit from international protection as refugees (UNHCR, 2006).

Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) is an organized entity functionally independent of, and does not represent, a government or State. This term is normally applied to organizations devoted to humanitarian and human rights causes, many of which implement their refugee-related programs in partnership with UNHCR and other agencies (UNHCR, 2006).

Refugee Article 1 (2) of the 1951 Geneva Convention defines *a refugee* as someone who owing

to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country (UNHCR, 2000).

Refugee Camp refers to a plot of land temporarily made available to host refugees fleeing from an armed conflict in temporary homes. UN agencies, particularly UNHCR, and other humanitarian organizations provide essential services in refugee camps including food, sanitation, health, medicine and education. These camps are ideally located at least 50 km away from the nearest international border to deter camp raids and other attacks on its civilian occupants (UNHCR, 2006).

Returned Refugees (Repatriation) the population category of returned refugees refers to refugees who have returned to their country of origin. In returnee situations, UNHCR seeks to reintegrate former refugees as soon as possible by targeting both returnees as well as receiving communities. Partners are actively engaged to provide development assistance. For statistical purposes, only refugees who have returned during the calendar year (January-December) are included in the population of concern (UNHCR, 2006).

Resettlement is the transfer of refugees from the country in which they have sought refuge to another State which has agreed to admit them. The refugees will usually be granted asylum or some other form of long-term resident rights and, in many cases, will have the opportunity to become naturalized citizens. For this reason, resettlement is a durable solution as well as a tool for the protection of refugees. It is also a practical example of international burden and responsibility sharing (UNHCR, 2006).

Stateless Person refers to a person who, under national laws, does not have the legal bond of nationality with any State. Article 1 of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons indicates a person not considered a national (or citizen) automatically under the laws of any State, is stateless (UNHCR, 2006).

UNHCR Mandate gives authority to the role and functions of UNHCR as set forth in the UNHCR Statute and as elaborated in resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly. UNHCR's mandate as declared in its Statute is to provide international protection and seek permanent solutions for refugees. UNHCR has an additional mandate concerning issues of statelessness, as it is given a designated role under Article 11 of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. The Office has also been requested by the General Assembly to promote the 1954 and 1961 statelessness Conventions, and to help prevent statelessness by providing to States technical and advisory services on nationality legislation and practice (UNHCR, 2006).

United Nations Commission on Human Rights refers to the UN human rights monitoring body established under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. An intergovernmental body composed of 53 state representatives, with the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights functioning as its secretariat. The Commission is responsible for coordinating the human rights activities of the UN and is the main forum for dealing with human rights violations. Since the Commission generally meets only once a year, most of its work is conducted through mechanisms (either an individual, called a rapporteur, or a working group) which deal with a specific theme or country (UNHCR, 2006).

## **Literature Review**

The literature review for this study begins with an overview of global migration focusing on post-World War II, the consequences of forced migration, and the international organizations and related policy that have evolved to provide solutions to the ever-increasing numbers of the world's displaced populations. The literature views theory in relation to forced movements of people in Africa, in particular the challenges and opportunities women face as refugees residing in Africa. Finally, the literature concludes with research evidencing the women refugee's experience in the context to opportunities and challenges in relation to access of vocational training programs currently available to this group in Malawi.

### **Global Migration Overview**

Today, there are approximately 68.5 million displaced people in the world of whom 25.4 million are refugees (UNHCR, 2018b). When attempting to grasp the magnitude of today's global displacement crises, it is helpful to view the history of movements and underlying reasons as the root of forced migration. Chalabi (2013) has provided insight into the major movements of people throughout history by providing the reader with evidence of religious persecution and war as dominating themes for these movements. Although not all forced migration movements are mentioned, the overview of migration movements evidences the challenges faced by displaced people fleeing their homeland and how displaced people have in many situations contributed to the socioeconomic progress of host countries.

Chalabi (2013) reveals the movement of people from the earliest of times beginning with the Israelites in 740 BC when Assyrian rulers conquered the lands of the Israel and expelled 10 out of twelve tribes from these lands. Another major historical movement originated in 1685, when Louis XIV prohibited the Huguenots from practicing their Protestant faith resulting in

approximately 200,000 Huguenots fleeing to England, the Netherlands, Germany, Prussia, Switzerland, Scandinavia, and Russia (Chalabi, 2013).

The invasion of the Ottoman Empire in 1783 transformed the region of present day Turkey. Chalabi (2013) states the 5 to 7 million Muslims, who arrived from Caucasus, Crimea, Crete, Greece, Romania, and Yugoslavia, have transformed a primarily Christian population of Turkey into primarily a Muslim country. The assassination of Russia's Tsar Alexander II, in 1881, encouraged extreme prejudice of the Jewish population, which over the next 2 decades would see the migration of 2 million Jews to the United Kingdom, the United States, and Europe (Chalabi, 2013).

**Major movements of World War I.** With the onset of the first World War, Germany's invasion of Belgium resulted in approximately 2 million Belgians fleeing to Holland, France, and England; this number also includes the internally displaced persons in France (Gatrell, 2013, p. 32). For the most part, the refugees from Belgium were welcomed as they provided a positive contribution to the work force and economy to war-time Britain. Gatrell (2013) states the War Refugees Committee was originally formed by the British to help Protestants in expectation of civil war in Ireland, but the War Refugees Committee quickly turned into a program to help Belgium Catholics (Gatrell, 2013). With the oversight from the War Refugees Committee, volunteers "separated lower-class Belgian refugees from the better-off. The latter received a pink card entitling them to better transport and accommodations" (Gatrell, 2013, p. 32). Those considered as lower-class were given a blue card and housed in temporary camps. This segregation practice was a foreshadowing of the even greater exclusionary experiences of the refugees of the second World War 27 years later. Even with supportive measures in Britain, not



all were in support of the Belgian refugees. Some British felt the Belgians were ungrateful, complained, and did not work as they should (Gatrell, 2013; Maley, 2016).

In this same time period, during and after World War I, 2 million Armenians were killed by the Ottoman empire in what was later acknowledged as the first genocide of the 20th century, leaving half of the population dead by 1918 and hundreds of thousands as stateless refugees. Today, the Armenian diaspora is around 5 million with 3.3 million in what is today the Republic of Armenia (Gatrell, 2013; Maley, 2016). The Great War was a time of expansion for the Great Empires, yet at the same time countries of Western and Eastern Europe were gaining independence as new nation states (Gatrell, 2013; UNCHR, 2000).

In 1915, the Russian Empire also felt the impact economically by the Belgian influx of refugees; however, the influx of refugees created economic, demographic, and social strife. Provincial and private charitable organizations provided basic needs such as clothing, hygiene, and other necessities to the refugees. All manner of local institutions such as “schools, factories, and even prisons were transformed into make-do accommodations ultimately transforming entire communities” (Gatrell, 2013, p. 33). Another significant movement during the Great War, was experienced in Italy with 87,000 Italian residents of the Austro-Hungarian empire returning to Italy in support of the Italian war effort (Gatrell, 2013, UNHCR, 2000). With the movement of enormous numbers of civilians during the Great War, new questions began to surface about what type of assistance was to be offered, who determined this assistance, who counted as a refugee, and what type of impact would the displaced have on the host country and ultimately how would the crisis be resolved (Gatrell, 2013).

**Major movements of post-World War II.** At the close of World War II, there were over 40 million displaced people in Europe alone which left Western Europe with the

overwhelming problem of how to assist in the repatriation of nearly 40 million displaced people who were now under the oversight of the Allies (Gatrell, 2013; Maley, 2016; UNHCR, 2000). In response to this unprecedented emergency, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was created in 1943 before the war had even ended with a primary focus on repatriation (UNHCR, 2000). Understandably, many refugees from the Ukraine and the Baltic regions did not want to return to a communist regime from which they had fled to Western Europe seeking refuge (Gatrell, 2013). Repatriation of refugees to their country of origin was the primary option sought by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, which resulted in 400,000 refugees remaining homeless after World War II with hope of resettling in Western Europe and North America (UNHCR, 2000).

**United Nations Relief and Works Agency.** As an outcome of World War II, Britain delegated Jewish control over Palestinians within the Palestine homeland. In 1949, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency was created to support Palestinian refugees needing assistance (UNHCR, 2000). The United Nations Relief and Works Agency supports Palestinian refugees and their descendants who fled from their homes in the 1948 Palestine War and the 1967 Six Day War. In the absence of a solution to the Palestine refugee problem, the General Assembly has continually renewed the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and remains a separate agency from UNHCR designed to help refugees from a specific region (Gatrell, 2013; UNHCR, 2000). As a solution to the limited scope of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, the International Refugee Organization was formed in 1947 as a temporary agency to broaden the functions of refugee assistance. In 1951, the United Nations General Assembly established the office of the UNHCR as a permanent international organization for protection and oversight for the expanding needs of refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2000).

**Global refugee issues of 1950s focus on resettlement.** The UNHCR's first major relief operation took place in 1956 with an assignment to deal with the needs of 200,000 refugees who fled Hungary to escape the Soviet take-over in Budapest. Refugees sought asylum in Austria and Yugoslavia, which marked a turning point for the UNHCR focus as primarily a World War II resettlement agency to a multifaceted international agency with a much more expansive role in the international needs of globally displaced people (UNHCR, 2000). Paul Weiss, legal advisor to the High Commissioner of UNHCR in 1957, made the important clarification of the 1951 Convention's definition of refugee, successfully claiming the "bodies which drew up the definition in the Convention made it clear that the date on which a person became a refugee was irrelevant" (UNHCR, 2000, p. 31). According to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Article 1, refugees are classified as

[Any person who] . . . owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence . . . is unable or, owing to such fear is unwilling to return to it . . . . (UNHCR, 2000, p. 23).

Primary interest remained in resettling refugees from Hungary to a third country along with the option for repatriation (UNHCR, 2000). The problems associated with unaccompanied minors were first witnessed in Hungary and remain an important issue even today (UNHCR, 2000).

**1960s decolonization of Africa.** The sub-continent of Africa has witnessed immense refugee movements with more than half of the world's total refugee population at the turn of the millennium (Gatrell, 2013). The decolonization of Africa in the 1950s and 1960s resulted in huge population displacements as people struggled to gain independence and find new leadership (Gatrell, 2013). In 1960, the Algerian war marked the beginning of decolonization for Africa. Algeria's war of independence from France led to many Algerians fleeing to Morocco and

Tunisia. In 1962, after independence was achieved, the UNHCR, in partnership with the International Commission of Red Cross, participated in the repatriation of 250,000 Algerians to their home country (UNHCR, 2000). By 1965, all British, French, and Belgian colonies would obtain independence with the exception of Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Namibia, would decolonize in the next decades. Many refugee movements resulted from the internal conflict and civil war of many African states during the 1960s (UNHCR, 2000).

Two of the most historic accounts of violence and displacement in Sub-Saharan Africa occurred with Rwanda/Burundi and with Sudan. The Rwanda and Burundi displacement originated with the independence in 1960 of the Belgian colony of the Congo and the Belgian controlled territory of Ruanda-Urundi, now Rwanda and Burundi (Maley, 2016). The Congo's independence set off a chain of events culminating with the violence and blood-shed decades later with the 1994 Rwandan genocide of some 800,000 Tutsis and a complex resettlement of 120,000 Rwandan refugees stemming from political problems associated with the division of the Tutsi and Hutu peoples (UNHCR, 2000). The 1994 Rwandan genocide stemmed from King Leopold's rule of Belgium where he systemically separated the Tutsi and Hutu peoples resulting in the polarization of these two groups and the involvement of neighboring states; most people fled to the Democratic Republic of Congo (Gatrell, 2013; UNHCR, 2000).

In 1962, the independence movement in Sudan elevated into civil war and lasted almost 2 decades between northern Sudan, where the population was predominately Muslim, and the southern part, which was considered less developed. By 1970, 166,000 refugees from the South Sudan were in Uganda, Zaire, Ethiopia, and the Central African Republic with an additional 500,000 estimated internally displaced from southern Sudan (Gatrell, 2013). In 1972, the Khartoum Peace Treaty was signed and created a Southern Assembly and a president for the

Southern Region of Sudan (Gatrell, 2013). In the 1980s, the Sudan was again involved in civil war where another 1.5 million refugees fled to Zaire, Kenya, Uganda, Egypt, and southern Ethiopia. In addition, approximately 4.5 million were internally displaced as they sought refuge from the counter-insurgency of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (Gatrell, 2013).

**Movement of the Asian Subcontinent during the 1970s.** Major movements of the 1970s witnessed President Idi Amin, ruler of Uganda, expel approximately 50,000 Asians (UNHCR, 2000, p. 69). President Amin gave the Asian people 6 months to leave, claiming the Asian minority was not loyal and did not comply with integration or commerce. Many Asians had been brought to Uganda by the British to work under the British (UNHCR, 2000).

In relatively the same time period, Afghanistan also experienced another devastating refugee movement when the Soviet Union sent 5.5 million people fleeing the country after a successful coup of the monarchy in 1978 by the Democratic Party of Afghans followed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 to suppress the new regime (Gatrell, 2013; UNHCR, 2000). Conflict has continued with the Taliban causing many Afghans to seek refuge in neighboring countries, such as Iran and Pakistan, only to find themselves in an equally hostile situation (Gatrell, 2013).

Major movements were involved in the separation of East and West Pakistan in 1969. As a result of West Pakistan dominance of East Pakistan, East Pakistan declared the new independent nation of Bangladesh (UNHCR, 2000). In 1971, the Bangladesh war for independence led to the largest humanitarian refugee crisis for UNHCR and the first involvement on the Indian sub-continent (UNHCR, 2000). The independence of Bangladesh prompted 10 million Bangladeshi to flee to India. The UN Secretary-General called upon UNHCR to coordinate the UN and all other international assistance. Ongoing strife, and the inability to find

a durable solution with the Pakistan refugees living in India, resulted in the largest population exchange in history between Pakistan and Bangladesh. In India, the UNHCR also became involved with the Rohingya from Burma who fled to Bangladesh. The UNHCR also assisted Asians who experienced expulsion from Uganda by President Amin in 1972. In 1979, followed by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, over 6 million Afghans began to seek asylum in Iran and Pakistan creating even more complexity to the migration movement in this area (UNHCR, 2000).

**Refugee protection 1970s and 1980s.** Beginning in the mid-1970s, refugees fled from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam due to political unrest and persecution. Over 2 decades, three million people fled their countries and unlike previous political upheavals, the refugees were not repatriated but instead resettled into a third country as the favored option for the Indochinese refugees. During this time period, the UNHCR greatly expanded its role and helped in the rescue-at-sea activities to protect Vietnamese “boat people”. During the 1980s, conflicts in the Horn of Africa, Asia, and Central America created new refugee populations as well as complications associated with determining long-term solutions for displaced people became a priority for the UNHCR ( 2000).

**Major conflicts and migration of 1990s.** In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the war from 1992-1995 caused 2.5 million persons to flee Bosnia making it the largest displacement of people in Europe since World War II. Ethnic cleansing took place in 1995 with the Srebrenica massacre of more than 8,000 Bosnian Muslim refugees (Gatrell, 2013; UNHCR, 2000). In December 1995, concluding from the international intervention with the Dayton Accords “two ethnically defined polities, one Bosnian and the other Serb were created in which people were to move to their country” (Gatrell, 2013, p. 262). As a result, approximately 1,200,000 people fled Bosnia for refuge in nearby countries due to restrictions of mixed marriages and other laws placed with the

Dayton Accords (Gatrell, 2013). During this same time period, the war in Iraq resulted in 4.4 million leaving their homes as internally displaced and 2 million asylum seekers leaving the country to nearby Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria (Chalabi, 2013; UNHCR, 2016).

**Asylum seekers in 1980s and 1990s.** The 1980s proved to be the decade of large refugee camps with no plans for long term durable solutions for the refugees. During this time-frame, UNHCR also became involved in the large numbers of resettlements occurring in Europe and North America from those seeking asylum due to the conflicts in South America in Chili and Argentina. At the end of 1989, the UNHCR played a significant role in repatriation of refugees from Cambodia, Salvador, and Mozambique (UNHCR, 2000).

Many asylum seekers came to Europe and North America during the 1980s and 1990s only to find increasing policies challenging migrants and refugees from gaining asylum. Consequently, there has been an increase in human trafficking, unaccompanied minors, and prolonged stays in detention centers that have increased the challenges for an already problematic situation. In 1991, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Soviet region experienced movement of approximately 9 million people either returning to the Soviet region or as becoming internally displaced as the new national boundaries placed people outside their homeland (UNHCR, 2000).

**Current global refugee emergencies.** Within the last 2 decades, several major emergencies remain in need of large scale assistance from the UNHCR, making it increasingly evident the UNHCR's role will be in continuous evolvement resulting from the expansion of humanitarian action (UNHCR, 2000). Recent global migration movements include the war in Darfur of 2003 with more than 2.5 million internally displaced people. Boko Haram is an Islamic extremist group based in Nigeria targeting both Christians and Muslims while fighting against

the Nigerian government to form an Islamist state. From 2009, Boko Haram has killed more than 20,000 and displaced more than 2.3 million, of whom 1.3 million are children (UNICEF, 2017). In 2014, 276 schoolgirls were abducted from Chibok, Nigeria. Similar to other conflicts in Africa, girls have been exposed to sexual violence, forced marriage, and other human rights violations resulting in depression and loss of hope (UNICEF, 2017)

The ongoing refugee movement of Syria originating in 2011, which began as protest, has resulted in Syrian displacement at a reported 12.6 million people at the end of 2017 (Maley, 2016; UNHCR, 2018a). In Iraq, at the end of 2016, it was estimated that over 11 million Iraqis were in need of humanitarian assistance (UNHCR, 2017). More than 3 million Iraqis have been displaced across the country from the start of 2014 and almost 220,000 are refugees in other countries. By 2015, the war in Iraq resulted in 4.4 million leaving their homes, becoming internally displaced, and 2 million fleeing the country to nearby Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria (Maley, 2016; UNHCR, 2017). UNHCR reports almost 1.8 million Iraqis and Syrians have taken refuge in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where an estimated 20% of the population is displaced (UNHCR, 2017).

Beginning in December 2013, brutal conflict in South Sudan has claimed thousands of lives and has driven nearly 4 million people from their homes (UNHCR, 2017). By 2018, the South Sudan refugee crisis entered its fifth year and remains the fastest growing and largest refugee crisis on the African continent with 2.5 million South Sudanese refugees hosted in six asylum countries: The Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda (UNHCR, 2018a). Uganda currently hosts the largest population of South Sudanese refugees, having taken in more than 1 million. While many remain displaced inside the country, more than 2 million fled to neighboring countries seeking safety



with the majority of the refugees being women and children, many of whom made the journey across the border alone (UNHCR, 2000, 2018a).

In Yemen, one of the poorest countries in the Middle East, ongoing problems with violence has impacted millions of lives with widespread casualties and massive displacement of 18.8 million Yemenis. According to UNHCR data, over 2 million Yemenis now live away from home in situations without having the most basic of needs (UNHCR, 2000, 2017). The UNHCR (2017) publication, *Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2017*, states that Columbia, which UNHCR claims has the least amount of media coverage, has a major refugee crisis that has extended over decades. The United Nations estimated Columbia had 7.7 million citizens who were displaced at the time of the data of UNHCR (Chalabi, 2013; UNHCR, 2018b).

Another current emergency exists within the state of Myanmar where approximately 700,000 Rohingya people fled violence from the Rakhine province of Myanmar (Burma) seeking refuge in Bangladesh. The Rohingya are a Muslim minority where they live as a stateless minority in the Rakhine state of Myanmar, a predominantly Buddhist country (UNHCR, 2017). A *stateless* person is defined as “a person who, under national laws, does not have the legal bond of nationality with any State” (UNHCR, 2006). *Stateless* means being denied a legal identity when they are born, without access to education, health care, marriage, job opportunities, and even the dignity of an official burial and death certificate. The Myanmar government has refused to recognize the Rohingya as a people. In June 2017, violence broke out in Myanmar’s Rakhine State which resulted in the majority of Rohingya refugees having to flee to Bangladesh. The majority of refugees were women, children, and the elderly who have sought shelter in or near the camps of Kutupalong and Nayapara. The refugees tell of stories of abuse and lack of basic needs where the Bangladesh already have limited resources for their own (UNHCR, 2017).

These current displacement situations rely on the UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations' work to meet the immediate needs such as protection, food, and shelter for an ever-growing population of displaced people. Today, the UNHCR has responsibility as the primary oversight organization for the globally displaced populations of the world (UNHCR, 2000). For 68 years, the UNHCR has remained in existence with the primary mission of protecting the globally displaced and has now extended protection to the stateless people of the world; those people whom no country recognizes as citizens (UNHCR, 2017). Accordingly, the responsibilities of UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations have expanded over the last decades in attempt to address the critical needs of the millions of globally displaced people in existence today.

### **Evolution of International Refugee Organizations**

After the first World War, the refugee issue came to be regarded as an international problem that needed to be addressed at the international level (UNHCR, 2000). In 1919, as a response to the growing refugee population, the League of Nations was formed (UNHCR, 2000). Today, international organizations such as UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations have expanded their services and geographic locations to protect and care for the current 68.5 million globally displaced people of whom 25.4 million are refugees (UNHCR, 2018b). The role of the UNHCR has been especially present and working in partnership with host countries in Africa to provide safety and health needs to large populations. Studies reveal women and adolescents have been particularly impacted from conflicts of war through sexual and human violations both in their country of origin and host country where they sought safety (Deacon, 2009).

The origins of international humanitarian assistance can be traced back to World War II, where the Allies and the Soviet Union created the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation

Administration with the primary duty to assist with repatriation of people who were displaced as a result of World War II (Bhugra et al., 2010; UNHCR, 2000). With assigned duties to provide emergency assistance to thousands of people, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration became increasingly frustrated with the limited authority under Allied forces, the lack of preparation for dealing with displaced people, and the associated impact of devastated areas. In addition to these problems, many of the displaced people did not want to be repatriated back into their home country where they feared suppression and persecution. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was not set up financially, nor was prepared, to resolve the mass refugee issues in Europe as a result of World War II. With the flawed establishment and implementation of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, the United States pushed an agenda calling for a new refugee organization, one with the capability of dealing with a multitude of refugee issues (UNHCR, 2000).

In 1947, the International Refugee Organization was created with the intention of existing as a 3 year temporary agency under the umbrella of the United Nations to deal with all facets of refugee needs. The expanded duties of the International Refugee Organization included “repatriation, identification, registration, care, and protection, which marked a clear departure for the narrow scope of repatriation under the International Refugee Organization” (UNHCR, 2000, p. 16). The International Refugee Organization made a shift from an emphasis on repatriation to resettlement as the economic benefits from additional labor were realized (UNHCR,2000). Eastern bloc countries, “argued that resettlement was a means of acquiring ready source of labour” (UNHCR, 2000, p. 17). However, the original intent for the International Refugee Organization as a temporary agency had come to fruition with 400,000 people remaining displaced at the end of 1951 (UNHCR, 2000). The residual displaced community, along with the

associated problems of finance and long-term solutions still at hand, made it apparent refugee issues were not temporary but were ongoing with an urgent need for permanent international oversight (UNHCR, 2000).

**United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.** In 1951, the UNHCR was established and the adoption of the United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of the Refugees. Together both provided a “formal structure for responding to the needs of refugees and standards for the protection of refugees under international law” (UNHCR, 2000, p. 2). The UNHCR’s definition of who was a refugee would be further clarified and established at the 1951 UN Convention in Geneva (UNHCR, 2000). The 1951 Convention relating to refugee status continues to this day to serve as the foundational framework for the UNHCR to provide protection and assistance on a global level to global refugees (UNHCR, 2017). The 1951 UN Refugee Convention was significant for two reasons:

Article 1 (A)2 provided a general definition of a refugee as someone outside his or her own country and unable to return as a result of a well-founded fear of persecution on grounds of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a social group. (UNHCR, 2000, p. 23)

Second, Article 33, of the 1951 Convention, recognizes that people who fall within the refugee definition should benefit from certain rights. The Convention places obligations upon the states which are party to it, to the principle of *non-refoulement* meaning that the country of asylum cannot force people to return to situations where they have a well-founded fear of persecution. The primary responsibility of refugee protection remains with the state where asylum is sought. However, the UNHCR has a role in promoting and monitoring states’ adherence for the protection of refugees, even to those countries who do not participate in the signing of 1951 Convention (UNHCR, 2000).

The UNHCR mandate was to provide international protection and solutions for refugees. The core mandate has not changed since 1951. The mission remains, from its inception, with three solutions for refugee problems traditionally sought through: voluntary repatriation, local integration in the country of asylum, and resettlement from the country of asylum to a Third Country (UNHCR, 2000). With the establishment of UNHCR in 1950, the activities and responsibilities of the UNHCR have greatly increased. In recent years, the UNHCR's role has extended to cover categories of people under the protection and assistance to include "displaced people within the borders of their own countries, returnees (refugees or internally displaced people who have returned), asylum seekers (whose formal status has not yet been assessed), stateless people, war-affected populations and others" (UNHCR, 2000, p. 3).

In response to the changing dynamics of displaced populations, durable solutions have turned their focus to self-sufficiency for globally displaced populations (Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016; Milner & Loescher, 2011). With a greater emphasis on self-reliance, the UNHCR, European Union, and other organizations collaboratively seek innovative solutions for the creation of refugee livelihood opportunities and policy revisions to allow entrepreneurial activities to be established within the host countries (Patuzzi & Embiricos, 2018).

### **Connecting Global Refugee Policy at the Local Level**

It is essential to understand how global policy frames the capabilities for livelihood of the refugee at the local level. Global refugee policy is a "formal statement of, and proposed course of action in response to, a problem relating to protection, solutions or assistance for refugees or other populations of concern to the global refugee regime" (Soroos, 1990, p. 318). Refugee policy is approved within UNHCR's governing structures or the United Nations General Assembly, the decision-making bodies of the global refugee regime (Milner, 2014). Specific refugee situations

involve different kinds of actors primarily states, and the UNHCR, but may also include NGOs and other advocacy groups (Milner & Loescher, 2011). The process of global policy-making involves policy formulation, formal decision-making by adoption, and policy implementation at the regional and local levels (Milner, 2014).

Implementation of global policy is shaped by the challenges of compliance from a number of political and social interests outside the global refugee regulation down to regional and local levels (Milner, 2014). Milner (2014) and Loescher (2001) state that limited literature exists on how global refugee policy is made and the factors influencing policy implementation. As refugees are increasingly living outside camps, Milner (2014) argues the need to examine factors impacting scope of global policy in a national context. Two such policies having direct agency on the extension of refugee status include: 1967 Protocol to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention (1967 Protocol) and the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Refugee Convention of Africa.

**1967 protocol.** As a result of independence conflicts in Africa, there were almost 1 million refugees within Africa at the end of the 1960s. New issues regarding the displacement prompted the establishment of the 1967 Protocol amendment to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention. The 1967 Protocol lifted the time or geographical constraints of the 1951 Convention's definition of a refugee, which had recognized a refugee as one displaced before 1951 (UNHCR, 2000). Initially, the 1951 Convention was focused on the protection of European peoples displaced from World War II. The 1967 Protocol expanded the scope of the 1951 Convention by removing the geographical and time limits that were part of the 1951 Convention. According to their provisions, refugees deserve the same standards of treatment by other foreign nationals in a given country and, in many cases, the same treatment as nationals

(UHNCR, 2011).

Today, the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol remain the cornerstone of refugee protection and are as relevant now as when they were drafted (Bhugra et al., 2010; UNHCR, 2011). The 1951 Convention inspired critical policy such as the 1969 Organization of African Unity Refugee Convention in Africa, the 1984 Cartagena Declaration in Latin America, and the development of a common asylum system in the European Union (Goodwin-Gill, 2014).

**1969 Organization of African Unity.** The 1967 Protocol was followed by the 1969 Organization of African Unity, a regional convention of Africa, to address the specific refugee problems unique to African states (UNHCR, 2000). In 2002, the 1969 Organization of African Unity was changed to the African Union. The African Union was created to ensure that refugees were resettled in the interior of neighboring countries to prevent cross border conflict and clashes among groups (Gatrell, 2013).

With ever-increasing numbers of the refugee population, the UNHCR and other actors realize the traditional humanitarian practices of protection and assistance cannot sustain the needs of the globally displaced long-term (Betts et al., 2017). Additionally, the assistance to the refugee community, provided by host countries that are most often developing countries themselves, adds to the already existing economic hardship of the host country for long-term sustainability. The UNHCR, and other nongovernmental agencies, are actively pursuing innovative livelihood approaches to provide refugees with the skills and access for self-reliance (UNHCR, 2011a). Currently, nonprofits and government organizations are collaborating with the refugee community with the intention of refugees becoming entrepreneurs in their own right and, thereby, making positive contributions to the host country economy (Betts et al., 2017; Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016; Milner & Loescher, 2011; Patuzzi & Embiricos, 2018). With the international

community emphasizing refugee entrepreneurship, and in the context of this study, it is necessary to understand the influence of local and regional actors in relation to how global policy is carried out at the local level in the states of Africa.

**Local policy of Malawi.** At the local level, a refugee policy is non-existent as it remains in draft form. A national migration policy, which serves as the umbrella of refugee policy and is funded by the International Organization for Migration, is only at a consultation level. The “Refugees Act of 1989” of Malawi is the only legal framework for refugees at the domestic level and states that any person granted refugee status under this Act shall be subject to the laws of Malawi, jurisdiction of courts in Malawi, and to all measures taken for the maintenance of public order (Malawi Refugee Act, 1989).

The Government of Malawi’s Encampment Policy restricts freedom of movement and the right to employment limits refugees’ opportunities to earn a living. However, the refugees at the Dzeleka Camp have no restrictions of movement to travel within the Dowa district where the Camp is located. In order to travel out of the district, they are required to obtain permission from the Camp administration. The Camp administration, as well as the refugees, have indicated permission for travel is easily obtained from Camp officials (UNHCR, 2014a).

**Current global situation.** After the second World War, the response to the refugee situation focused on care and safety of refugee populations, often in camp settings. The understanding was refugee situations were temporary and refugees would soon return to their countries of origin (Maley, 2016). Today, services have expanded and UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies assist with basic needs of food, health care, and shelter, among other services to refugees during the period where the refugees’ country of origin prevents them from returning (Gatrell, 2013; Maley, 2016; UNHCR, 2000). Continuous global disasters, conflict,



and persecution have resulted in rapid growth of the globally displaced (UNHCR, 2018a). Currently, 40% of the 25.4 million refugees remain in protracted situations (ongoing for 5 years or more) and it is not uncommon for refugees to reside at a camp for more than 2 decades with the average protracted refugee situation now at more than 25 years (Betts et al., 2017). Resettlement is not a legal obligation of any country, thus ultimately, is an option for a very small percentage, with only less than 1% of the refugee population resettled into a third country (Betts et al., 2017; Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016; UNHCR, 2011b, 2018a, 2018b).

Providing perspective to the distribution of globally displaced people, the UNHCR *Global Trends: Forced Displacement Report in 2016* states 55% of the world's refugees come from three countries: South Sudan 1.4 million, Afghanistan 2.5 million and Syria 5.5 million (UNHCR, 2016). Additionally, the world's largest concentration of refugees is located in host countries who are considered developing countries: 17% in Europe, 16% Americas, 11% Asia and Pacific, 26% Middle East and North Africa with the largest percentage of 30% in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNHCR, 2018b).

### **Response to Improve Refugee Livelihood**

As a long-term solution, permanent integration within the host with country is now being viewed as the most viable pathway to resolve the situation of protracted refugees (Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016; Patuzzi & Embiricos, 2018). Other durable solutions such as repatriation, where refugees return back to their country of origin or resettlement to a third country are no longer viewed as sustainable long-term solutions (Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016). The UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations recognize financial resources are not available for long-term aid to refugees; hence, there is an urgency for innovative solutions to assist in refugee self-reliance as a pathway to integration within the host country (Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016; Milner & Loescher,

2011; UNHCR, 2008b).

Livelihood programs from both public and private sectors are being sought as solutions to help refugees become self-reliant. Livelihood programs seek to increase the capacity of households and individuals to provide for themselves through an increase in income, trade skills, and assets in ways that support their own life sustaining goals (Milner & Loescher, 2011; Patuzzi & Embiricos, 2018). Increasingly, global humanitarian actors are turning to skills training for displaced individuals as an answer to provide jobs, income, and social capital (Patuzzi & Embiricos, 2018). Calhoun (2010a) argues for support of community-based participation as a way for refugees to take part in the design and projects regarding their needs. With a commitment from the community, programs can be more effectively implemented and ultimately assist refugees with full integration into the host society (Calhoun, 2010a; Patuzzi & Embiricos, 2018; UNHCR, 2008b).

Current research affirms engagement of refugees in market activity allows for refugees to transition from recipients of relief into economically independent people who can contribute to their own livelihoods and the local community (Betts et al., 2017). Betts et al. assert the need for a model of sustainability, rather than one of dependency, to afford more opportunities for refugee self-reliance and a deeper understanding of the economic life of the refugee. A livelihood theoretical framework is essential for interpretation of the economic needs of displaced people and to acknowledge the distinct institutions held by the refugee (Betts et al., 2017; Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016).

### **Sustainable Livelihoods Framework**

The concept of sustainable livelihoods was originally developed in a 1987 report by an Advisory Panel of the World Commission on Environment and Development (Chambers &

Conway, 1992). The WCED came to use variants of the original definition with the following modified definition widely adopted for sustainable livelihoods:

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living; a livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contribute to net benefits to other livelihood at the local and global levels and in the short and long term. (Chambers & Conway, 1992, p. 6)

Contributor Karen Jacobsen (2014) in *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies* argues for a theory of displaced livelihood with its merit due to three distinct characteristics of the forced migrant. First, “all forced migrants begin from a position of loss, including the loss of assets, family and community, and often emotional and physical health” (p. 99). A second characteristic is concerned with the imbalance of socio-political, legal, and policy factors within the host country placing the forced migrant at a great disadvantage to re-gain their livelihood (Jacobsen, 2014). The third distinction, cited by Jacobsen (2014), claims forced migrants, unlike other migrants, are often recipients of humanitarian assistance and livelihood programs which can result in “unexpected or indirect negative effects” for the migrant (p. 99). Thus, as the livelihood framework has evolved, Betts et al., (2017) supports Jacobsen’s broader concept of livelihoods assets to include income generating activities and social capital of refugees in “recognition of the production, consumption and finance-related activities, as well as interactions with host communities and wider transnational networks” (p. 46). Building relationships with host communities and other organizations outside of the Camp are critical for refugee long-term economic sustainability.

To understand the concept of social capital in the context of the refugee livelihood, Narayan (1998) defines social capital as “the norms and social relations embedded in the social structures of society that enable people to co-ordinate action and to achieve desired goals” (p. 6).

Calhoun (2010a) further refines social capital as having both structural aspects (groups, networks institutions) where people interact with family, workplace, and local associations; and cultural aspects of social capital to include “generally accepted attitudes, behavioral norms, values and social trust . . . most of which are unwritten” (p. 7). Boateng (2009) contends social capital is of significant importance to groups like immigrants and refugees because “it can contribute to economic survival and success, even though they may lack economic resources, such as skills, education, and financial capital” (p. 62).

Most refugee livelihoods literature has sought to understand refugees’ income-generating activities; however, research has neglected to view the economic lives of refugees holistically and to include core economic and international developments in relation to the various economic outcomes of refugees (Betts et al., 2017; Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016). Research is emerging to address the impact of refugee livelihood and to have a better understanding of how to improve the economic lives of refugees. Betts et al. (2017) assert that the limitations of such research could be due to research being viewed as a basis for policy intervention on the local level. However, research centered on protracted refugee income-generating activities is thought to be valuable in evidencing refugees’ skills and capacities utilized for self-reliance (De Vriese, 2006; Jacobsen, 2005; Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016).

Betts et al. (2017) argue that the sustainable livelihoods framework could be strengthened with the inclusion of wider markets to inform a more holistic analysis and greater insight to the underlying markets in which the economic activities take place. Calhoun (2010a) broadens assets of sustainable livelihood to include “more than material, such as cattle, land or money, the framework includes human capital such as health, education, skills and experience, and social capital” (p. 1). De Haan and Zoomers (2005) contend refugees are often denied the use of this

human capital, known as social exclusion theory, due to the policies within the host country of permission to work, having a lack of appropriate credentials, and some faced with discrimination at their workplace. Thus, social exclusion can be described as “a process in which groups try to monopolize specific opportunities to their own advantage” (p. 33).

Jacobsen (2005) in *The Economic Lives of Refugees*, segues from the traditional policy - driven research, to provide a broader account of income generating activities, production, consumption, and interactions of refugees with host communities and wider networks in relation to their economic contributions to refugee livelihood (Betts et. al., 2017; Jacobsen, 2005). Betts et al. (2017) support Jacobsen’s (2005) argument for a theory of displaced livelihoods in order to address and organize complex data (qualitative or quantitative) to “generate ideas about what explains variations in economic outcomes for refugees” and what “justifies refugee economies being looked at as a distinct sub-economy” (Betts et al., 2017, p. 46).

**Middle-range theory, theory of access, and social capital for integration.** The research of Ager and Strang (2008) claims that the livelihood of refugee families can be associated with how successfully families are integrated into the host society. The authors developed a Middle-range theory based on the experiences of refugees (Smit, 2015). Ager and Strang (2008) identify three indicators for achieving integration into the host community. The first set of indicators is referred to as “markers and means of achieving integration” where refugees have limited access to housing, quality education, health care and regular income as central in the achievement of successful integration (p. 169). The second set of indicators includes the ability of refugees to speak the main language and having cultural knowledge of the host society; having legal rights as refugees; and feeling safe in their environment (Ager & Strang, 2008). The third set of indicators of this conceptual framework is related to the processes

of social connection (Ager & Strang, 2008). The authors introduce Albert Putnam's (2000) theory on social capital, with reference to the different forms of social connection. Social bonds refer to relationships with relatives and other members of the same cultural or ethnic community as a possible source of emotional support for settling into their new environment. Social bridges are realized with the relationship of respect and friendliness observed between refugees and members of the host community as contributing to feeling at home. The third form of social capital, social links, is the involvement of state structures or government services in the new country enabling ease of integration (Ager & Strang, 2008).

Although sustainable livelihood theory helps to inform how refugees create income-producing activities and network within communities to integrate into the community, for the context of this paper, it is essential to understand the African women's perspective of livelihood, in particular African refugee women, as they move forward to regain their economic, physical, and emotional loss due to displacement. The following section will explore Clenora Hudson-Weems's African womanist ideology as uniquely different from other feminist perspectives and most appropriate to understand the distinct characteristics and challenges of the African woman.

### **Clenora Hudson-Weems's African Womanist Perspective**

Research indicates refugee women and girls account for more than half of the refugee population, a proportion that continues to grow (UNHCR, 2014b). This significant trend is now being referred to as the "feminization of migration" (Ross-Sheriff, 2011, p. 234). Scholars maintain this trend is a critical variable in population movements calling for research to address migration's gender challenges (Ross-Sheriff, 2011; Haffejee & East, 2015). When focusing on the integration experiences of refugees, research affirms that African women face distinct obstacles beginning with orientation at a camp through the process of resettlement (UNHCR,

2011b). These include conflict and friction that may arise as a result of changing gender roles in traditional families as well as women's fears for their own safety (Haffejee & East, 2015; UNHCR, 2011b). Smit (2015) proposes even with the noted challenges refugee women face, there is potential for empowering opportunities. Refugee women, and refugees in general, are often perceived as victims; however, in reality, refugee women have incorporated creative survival strategies in an attempt to facilitate their family's integration into the host society (UNHCR, 2014b). The African womanist perspective has been further developed by scholars to explain the distinct historical, cultural, and political positionality of women of African descent in America (Kasun, 2009). Central to this perspective is the exploration of identity formation (i.e., histories and cultures) commemorative of the struggles of African women as well as their achievements (Haffejee & East, 2015).

Hudson-Weems's African womanist perspective "places the experiences of refugee women from Africa in the center of the analysis" (Haffejee & East, 2015, p. 2). Every refugee woman's experience is distinctly different and refugees from different countries have different experiences (Haffejee & East, 2015; Phillips, 2006). Clenora Hudson-Weems asserts African womanism best fits the experiences of African women as neither black feminism nor African feminism sufficiently define the realities of African women (Phillips, 2006). Hudson-Weems distinguishes feminism as a term adopted by white women and thus designed to meet the needs of this particular group. Hudson-Weems proposes that African women are not concerned with feminist's construct, but rather align with a commitment to the African-American struggle, both men and women, involved in a racist system (Kasun, 2009; Phillips, 2006). Accordingly, Hudson-Weems's African womanist ideology is appropriately designed and articulated to express the unique struggles and experiences of African women (Kasun, 2009; Phillips, 2006).

Hudson-Weems distinguishes African Womanism with 18 defining characteristics:

self-namer, self-definer, family centered, genuine in sisterhood, strong, in concert with male in struggle, whole, authentic, flexible role player, respected, recognized, spiritual, male compatible, respectful of elders, adaptable, ambitious, nurturing, and mothering. (Kasun, 2009, p. 1)

### **Sara Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework**

Longwe's framework positions women's poverty as not from a lack of desire to be productive, but from denied access to resources stemming from inequalities. Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework is used as a navigation tool for increasing equality, starting with access to basic needs, and moving to equality in the control over environment and productivity (Longwe, 1991). Contributing to the understanding of the African woman's unique perspective both as an African woman and a refugee, Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework supports the empowerment process of African refugees and identifies five levels of equality on which women's empowerment is based: "the ability of women to access resources, exercise self-awareness with respect to their rights, mobilize around their rights, control their environment with a facility equal to that of men" (UNHCR, 2001, p. 5). Longwe's Women's Empowerment Framework contributes to the understanding of women refugees' perception of empowerment and is affirmed with the adoption of Longwe's framework in the UNHCR's guidelines for women refugee empowerment. The UNHCR (2001) publication, *A Practical Guide to Empowerment: Good Practices on Gender Equality Mainstreaming*, defines empowerment as "a process through which women and men in disadvantaged positions increase their access to knowledge, and decision-making power, and raise their awareness of participation in their communities, in order to reach a level of control over their environment" (UNHCR, 2001, p. 3). Longwe's framework, as well as Hudson-Weems's African womanist view, lends a unique perspective and knowledge for the researcher to gain a greater understanding of how the African



woman, in particular the African refugee woman, processes and copes with the challenges of war, persecution, and sexual violence.

### **Challenges of Refugee Women Living in Africa**

The violence and wars that have erupted since the 1990s have resulted in a new understanding of the challenges faced by refugee women from multiple African countries (Torres, 2007). The Refugee Council (2009) publication, *The Vulnerable Women's Project: Refugee and Asylum-seeking Women Affected by Rape or Sexual Violence*, reports refugee women are more affected by violence than any other population of women in the world, and all refugee women are at risk of rape or other forms of sexual violence (Refugee Council, 2009). Data regarding sexual violence is often under-reported due to the stigma attached and is confounded with the instability of the area (Miller, 2011). Ganeshpanchan (2005) and Miller (2011) state refugee women flee persecution with their family, thus, leaving known coping skills in the past. New ways of accessing services and seeking community support diminish the capacity of refugees to feel empowered (Ganeshpanchan, 2005; Miller, 2011). Adding to these challenges, in times of armed conflict, families frequently choose to send out women and girls to do tasks placing them at risk for sexual violence because it is considered the less dangerous option as men and boys would most likely be killed (Miller, 2011).

The most difficult element regarding rape or sexual violence within refugee populations is the cultural perception of rape. Sexual violence against refugee women in Africa is significant in the displacement and refugee camp experience. For example, the majority of women survivors of the Rwandan genocide were sexually assaulted by Rwandan soldiers (Torres, 2007). In the same report, thousands of displaced women from Liberia and Sierra Leone were sexually and physically violated by police, soldiers, and civilians (Torres, 2007). Adding to the trauma,

African cultural beliefs claim a raped woman is untouchable, dirty, and defective. Research claims the social stigma of rape creates an extreme degree of psychological distress caused by the rejection from husbands and communities. Miller (2011) contends there are not enough authoritative figures to oversee and protect women from sexual violence. For example, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, there is only one person who investigates sex crimes in the eastern portion of the country.

Refugees are affected by sexual violence both as victims of war-related rape crimes and as victims of increased domestic abuse that occurs during conflict (Refugee Council, 2009). The sexual abuse of women during conflict is not new, but it has remained an under-researched and under-documented issue. Sexual violence has served to bring instability and fear to refugee populations, most often women, which has been overlooked in many countries originally thought to be a place of safety and refuge (Miller, 2011). As a result, women are at an increased risk for sexual violence and health risks within camp settings (Bhugra et al., 2010). Many displaced people, to include women, survive in protracted situations at camps which last for years, even decades, resulting in secondary problems such as alcoholism, depression, long-term health issues, and mental disorders (Betts et al., 2017; Bhugra et al., 2010).

### **Encampment Challenges**

Bakewell (2014) states the term *encampment* “refers to a policy which requires refugees to live in a designated area set aside for the exclusive use of refugees, unless they have gained specific permission to live elsewhere” (p. 129). This definition supports a general thought of encampment as being a place to impart protection and basic needs for refugees. However, Gatrell (2013) provides an alternative description of encampment asserting “for many of the world’s refugees the characteristic experience has been incarceration . . . and a means of mobilizing

refugees ideologically and militarily” (p. 9). Gatrell states that refugees are forced to live in extreme conditions and left with a feeling of little capacity to exercise control over their lives. In addition, refugee women face distinct challenges in relation to camps and ultimately resettlement. Encampment restrictions, for refugee women, become even more complex as they “face significant pressures to provide for their families and may consequently not be able to take full advantage of resources, such as language learning and education, that would allow them to improve their socioeconomic conditions” (Deacon, 2009, p. 274). Long-term dependency becomes problematic for many refugees who flee their country of origin without assets or the ability to work in their host country. Studies claim refugee aid programs have often served to increase dependency of refugees instead of helping them to become self-reliant and to run independent lives (Adam, 2012). Bakewell (2014) states “self-settlement of refugees is often the option that people select if they have any choice. Refugee preferences for self-settlement relate to their aspirations for return, access to livelihoods, and maintaining autonomy” (p. 132).

**Dzeleka Refugee Camp.** According to the UNHCR (2014) report *Joint Assessment Mission Report: Dzeleka Camp*, refugees in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp originate from nine different countries, mainly in the Great Lakes Region (UNHCR, 2014a). The great majorities are from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi. The living conditions for the refugee population at Dzeleka and access to resources are supported from UNHCR through a sub-agreement with the Ministry of Health in Malawi to provide nutrition and health services. Health services are provided free of charge: outpatient, maternal and child care, malaria testing, tuberculosis, growth monitoring of children less than 5 years, immunization, HIV testing, and counseling. The health center has limited operation and experiences shortage of drugs. Malaria, ulcers, diabetes, HIV, and blood pressure are the most common health problems. Nutrition

assessment in 2014 revealed overall stability with malnutrition at acceptable levels. However, chronic malnutrition in children and anemia in both children and women remain a concern (UNHCR, 2014a).

Water and sanitation in the Camp is poor due to congestion, poor drainage, and limited access to family latrines. The majority have latrines in their homes with a few communal latrines. Most of the dwellings are grass-thatched with mud floors. On average, 80% live in their own homes differing in size due to family size. Blankets are used in the winter; however, mosquito nets are not used due to the structure of the houses (UNHCR, 2014a).

The UNHCR (2014) *Joint Assessment Mission Report: Dzeleka Refugee Camp, Malawi* reveals crime to be relatively high with theft and rape at the top. The protection and safety of children, the disabled, and the elderly are of particular concern and these groups are considered the most vulnerable in the Camp. Their safety, physical, and psychological well-being often deteriorate due to the social and family disconnection of refugees. Some girls as young as 15 and 16 years old are reported to be sexually abused and some leave school due to early pregnancy. Many children are working long hours and are reported to live on one meal a day. Furthermore, there are over 400 unaccompanied minors registered in the Camp. Some are associated with foster families, while others live on their own. Discrimination and marginalization are reported in both cases (UNHCR, 2014a).

### **Education of Refugee Women in Africa**

The well-known African proverb, “If you educate a man you educate an individual, however, if you educate a woman you educate a nation,” speaks to the importance of educating African women. When women, who contribute almost half of the displaced population, are empowered it will strengthen the host country’s economy. Education is considered as a milestone

for women's empowerment because it enables them to respond to challenges, to confront their traditional role, and change their lives (Shetty & Hans, 2015). The World Bank (2008) publication *Girls' Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* emphasized the importance of educating adolescent girls and boys, but more so for girls. The report suggested an increase in access to primary education; targeting the most excluded with alternative forms of education; and addressing the needs of facilities, nutrition, and health (pp. 130-131). The publication asserts greater investment in a girl's education is vital for the increasing female participation and productivity in the labor market. Giving women "greater access to education positively impacts the well-being for the household" (World Bank, 2008, p. 2). In support of prioritizing and improving access to women's education, Glewwe, Hanushek, Humpage, and Ravina (2011) claim access to education for women can help reduce poverty and play a more prominent role in the political and economic arena resulting in the development of their own communities.

The basis for the provision of refugee education is articulated in Article 22 of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees clarifying the educational obligations of signatory states with articulation that states, "shall accord to refugees the same treatment as is accorded to nationals with respect to elementary education.... [and] treatment as favorable as possible... with respect to education other than elementary education" (UNHCR, 2011a p. 13). The educational vision of UNHCR is to

ensure the right to education for all people of concern to UNHCR by achieving universal primary education and creating increased opportunities for post-primary education (secondary, vocational training, non-formal and adult education) with special focus on girls, urban, and protracted situations. (UNHCR, 2011a, p. 24)

Pacheco's (2011) study supports the focus of education for refugee women and suggests supportive relationships amongst refugee women are a necessary component for success in formal education programs. Oikonomidou (2007) extends the value of these relationships to

include networking with the host country institutions to cultivate educational opportunities stating, “their experiences in these social and cultural institutions are critical to their future paths of integration in the host country” (p.16). However, the support of education to refugee women and children in protracted situations can be difficult when host countries have limited resources for educating the people of their own country. The UNHCR (2011a) publication, *Refugee education: A Global Review*, identifies challenges faced by host countries in the provision of refugee education stating, “Lack of financial resources, and their inconsistency, as well as a shortage of educational expertise both within UNHCR and among Implementing Partners (IPs), limits progress in refugee education” (p.69).

Pham (2016) emphasized the position of women as being the most vulnerable during wartime which impedes their ability to attain new skills and work. Research continues to reveal the complex situation of meeting the critical needs of refugee women and the limited level of support from host countries for language acquisition, educational opportunities, and basic resources (UNHCR, 2011a). Adding to the situation, current literature on refugee women highlights the insidious and significantly negative effect of gender-based violence experienced by women of all ages within refugee communities as well as mental-health issues already present upon entering a refugee community (Bhugra et al., 2010; Haffejee & East, 2015; Pham, 2016; Torres, 2007, UNHCR, 2008a). Even with assistance of UNHCR and other participating NGOs, the needs of the refugee community are profound, and understandably difficult for host countries to meet. For Malawi, meeting the educational needs of the refugee community as well as their own citizens can be extremely challenging given the current socio-economic situation of Malawi.

### **Education in Malawi**

To gain insight into opportunities for education among refugee women in Malawi, it is

essential to gain background knowledge of the socioeconomic infrastructure that currently impacts opportunities for the refugee population as well as the entire population of Malawi. Geographically, Malawi is a landlocked country in southern Africa bordering with Tanzania to the north, Zambia to the west, and Mozambique to the east and south. *The Development and State of Adult Learning and Education* reports Malawi as ranking among the world's least developed countries with a GNP per capita estimated at \$200 USD and the real growth GNP per capita of .05% in 2008 (UNESCO, 2008). Additionally, the Economic Development Document of Malawi, published by the International Monetary Fund (2017), places Malawi's annual growth rate at 2.8%, with Malawi's population almost double from 9.9 million in 1998 to 17.3 million in 2017. The economy is dominated by the agricultural sector, which accounts for about one-third of the GDP. International Monetary Fund data reveals 65% of all households (84 % of rural households) reported experiencing food insecurity for at least 1 month per year with approximately 25% of the population living in extreme poverty.

**Educational situation in Malawi.** The adult (15 years and older) literacy rate is estimated to be 69% in Malawi. Illiteracy of parents delays the achievement of education for all because these parents are less likely to enroll their children in school than literate parents (World Bank, 2010). Approximately 63% of Malawians live on less than \$2 USD per day with the highest malnutrition rate in their region which has resulting in 44 % of preschoolers experiencing stunted growth with an estimated 122 children per 1,000 who die before the age of five. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has also had substantial impact in the development of the education sector because of the deaths of both teachers and parents. Malawi is characterized by a severe lack of quality teachers in general and teachers at the primary level. Economic difficulties and behavior

such as early marriage, pregnancy, and family responsibilities help to explain the fragility of school demand (World Bank, 2010).

The lack of supplies (crowded classrooms, open air or temporary classrooms, and incomplete schools) also has a negative effect on student retention. Furthermore, access for higher education is compromised for women with total bed space for the University of Malawi for males at around 2,761 in comparison to approximately 1,383 for females, leaving less room for female residents (World Bank, 2010). In comparison with other developing countries, research shows enrollment for regions of the developing world from 1980 through 2008 with gross primary enrollment rates at 100% in all regions, and gross secondary enrollment rates were above 50% in all regions except Sub-Saharan Africa (Glewwe, et al., 2011, p. 64).

**Vocational training in Malawi.** Malawi has placed great emphasis on vocational training authorization from the Technical, Entrepreneurial, Vocational Education, and Training Authority (TEVETA), a system to improve quality and access to vocational education and training in Malawi (<https://Merlene.teveta.mw>, 2018). TEVETA's mission is "to promote and regulate sustainable provision of quality technical, entrepreneurial and vocational education and training for the Malawian workforce in a socially responsible manner" (<https://Merlene.teveta.mw>, 2018). TEVET training in Malawi is considered formal education, which is defined by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Guidelines for TEVET training.

The TEVET Authority is a regulatory body established in July 1999 by an act of parliament with the mandate to create an integrated TEVET system in Malawi that is demand driven, competence based, modular, comprehensive, accessible and flexible and consolidated enough to service both the rural and urban Malawi population. (<https://Merlene.teveta.mw>, 2018)

Formal training, commonly provided by a training institution, is structured in terms of



learning objectives, learning time, or learning support, and leads to certification and formal learning which is intentional from the learner's perspective (UNESCO, 2010). The Guidelines for TEVETA training distinguishes non-formal education from formal education, as learning which takes place outside the formal system either on a regular or intermittent basis. The guidelines define informal learning as one where learning is acquired from daily life activities related to work, family, or leisure. Informal learning is part of non-formal learning and is referred to as experience-based learning which can be understood as accidental learning (UNESCO, 2010).

With the formal trade school TEVETA system, limited access for girls is also evident. TEVET enrollment for Malawi is in the range of 2% of the total secondary education enrollment. Female participation in the main TEVET entrance examinations (trade testing and Malawi craft) are 10% and 23%, respectively, indicating low access to TEVET for females (World Bank, 2010).

As opportunity and awareness of quality secondary education for refugee women becomes more prevalent, there is a need to better understand the value of such programs through the lens of the women participants and how these programs and the provided training influences their sense of livelihood. For the purpose of this study, the individual experiences of African refugee women were explored focusing on how their experiences in completing a vocational training program has influenced their lives in terms of self-efficacy and empowerment to obtain a better livelihood. In gaining meaning of the concept of self-efficacy and empowerment and what this means for the African refugee woman, it is helpful to present a brief discourse regarding Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy.

## **Albert Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory**

Artino (2012) states self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these diverse effects through four major developments of cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes. Bandura self-efficacy theory (1994) focuses on people's perceptions of their capabilities to perform courses of action and attain personal goals or performances with two important distinctions in relation to his definition. First, most people "overestimate their capabilities" but they may benefit from this through increased effort and persistence during difficult times (Artino, 2012, p. 2). The second facet of Bandura's definition of self-efficacy is the idea that individuals make use of their efficacy judgments in reference to some goal (Artino, 2012).

Artino (2012, p. 3) described how Bandura categorized four concepts of how self-efficacy is learned:

- 1) Mastery is a strengthened sense of self-efficacy through success of a task;
- 2) Observation belief capability from witnessing others accomplishing the task;
- 3) Persuasion verbal and otherwise can bolster self-image;
- 4) Psychological responses an individual's response and reaction to a task.

## **Conclusion**

This study explored African refugee women's self-efficacy and empowerment after completion of a vocational training program. It was important to understand how theory informed research. Building on knowledge from the Clenora Hudson-Weems's African womanist perspective, Sara Longwe's Women's empowerment framework, Alfred Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, and Karen Jacobsen's (2005) contributions to the sustainable livelihood framework, a greater perspective was gained of the African refugee women's experiences from

completing vocational training. This study informed how formal education influenced their position in society and how education might assist in their future integration into the host community, navigating policy, and ultimately impact future access to education for African refugee women (Jacobsen, 2005).

As the literature has revealed, the experiences of African refugee women are notably different from the experiences of refugee men (Adam, 2012; Jacobsen, 2005). Formal education is considered a means of empowerment for women as well as a vital tool in successful integration for refugees. Studies indicate a need for greater understanding of how refugee women perceive their experiences with formal education and how their perceptions have played a role in successful livelihood within the current host community (Haffejee & East, 2015; Pham, 2016).

Ultimately, the literature helps to bring meaning to the perceptions of African refugee women's self-efficacy and empowerment after completion of vocational training and how this training may contribute to successful refugee integration in the host community. With this study, it is hoped the methodological framework as well as the findings from emerging themes will contribute to current literature pertaining to certain aspects of refugee formal education, thus assist in building a foundation for future research on this topic.

## **Methodology**

A qualitative phenomenological case study was employed to explore the lived experiences of African refugee women and how they make meaning of their individual lives. Lichtman (2013) identifies phenomenology as an approach focusing on “the lived experiences of those who have lived with or experienced a particular phenomenon” (p. 85). A case study as an approach to qualitative research involves the specific and detailed study of a case, or cases, which can be limited to a type of characteristic or one type of situation (Lichtman, 2013). The two approaches were combined to allow the exploration of the characteristics of the individual participants who have lived as refugees while participating and completing vocational training. The purpose of this study was to explore the self-perception of empowerment and self-efficacy of African refugee women as a result of completing vocational training offered through the Vocational Programs of Malawi, a nonprofit organization located in the Dowa District outside of Lilongwe, Malawi.

### **Rationale for Research Approach**

In alignment with the African womanist theoretical framework, this study was designed to focus on African refugee women by giving them a voice to express their unique experiences. African Womanism also provided a framework to understand the experiences of refugee women from Africa through the lens of Clenora Hudson-Weems’s (1993) African womanist theoretical ideology designed for all women of African descent and is grounded in African culture, which focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, and desires of African women (Phillips, 2006).

With emphasis on the individual experience, a qualitative research approach has been selected for this study because it allows for a holistic and detailed exploration of individuals in a natural setting (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, qualitative research gives participants a voice, a

central aspect of women-centered research, and a necessary component for gaining “valuable insights into the ways in which refugees negotiate and construct their lives while living in a protracted situation” (Oikonomidou, 2007, p. 18).

A qualitative phenomenological case study explored the individual experiences of nine African refugee women focusing on how their experiences in completing a vocational training program have influenced their lives in terms of self-efficacy and empowerment in creating a livelihood. Yin (2018) and Stake (1995) suggest case study as a particular style of educational research, which may be appropriate for investigating the concept of inclusion. Further, the benefits of qualitative case study methodology arise from its emphasis on the uniqueness of each case, and the educator’s subjective experience of the case (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). This study was conceptualized as a means to allow African refugee women to have a voice in sharing their individual experiences, specifically refugee women residing in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp who have attended vocational training at the Vocational Programs of Malawi, a nonprofit organization near Lilongwe, Malawi.

### **Research Design**

Phenomenological research design can be credited to German philosopher Edmund Husserl of the early 1900s who is generally regarded as the father of phenomenology (Lichtman, 2013). The philosophical writings of Husserl (1964) advocate for a return “to the things themselves” (as cited in Moustakas, 1994, p. 45). Husserl proposes multiple ways of gaining knowledge with context as a key element to the understanding of a phenomenon (Lichtman, 2013). Also contributing to the development of phenomenology, social science philosopher Alfred Schutz (1967) details meaningful lived experiences as how “we grasp the other’s intentions with the same perceptual intention that we grasp a thing or event present to us” (p.

106). Moustakas claims “individual perceptions, memories, judgments, reflections, are core and figural in our developing understanding of things and people” (p. 94). To further the understanding of the phenomenological process, Moustakas presents Husserl’s thinking on subjectivity as “perception of the reality of an object is dependent on a subject” and self-reflection, as a process of “blending what is really present with what is imagined as present from the vantage point of possible meanings” (p. 27). Thus, Husserl’s phenomenology emphasizes subjectivity and discovery of the essences of experience. Husserl’s approach utilizes only the data “available to consciousness” (p. 45).

A summary of the principles of phenomenology includes (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 58-59):

- Focuses on the appearance of things, a return to things just as they are given
- Concerned with wholeness
- Seeks meanings from appearances and arrives at an essence through intuition and reflection
- Committed to descriptions of experiences, not explanations or analyses
- Rooted in questions providing direction and focus to meaning – the researcher is intimately connected with the phenomenon
- Subject and object are integrated
- At all points reality is part of the process
- The data of experience are regarded as the primary evidences of investigation
- Research questions guide the investigation and are carefully constructed.

**The *epoche* process.** The term *epoche* is a Greek word meaning stay away or abstain and is applied in phenomenology as a method by which prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas are set aside in order to allow things, people and events to enter into consciousness as if for the first time (Moustakas, 1994). The *epoche* process encourages reflective meditation and

preconceptions and prejudgments are permitted to “enter the consciousness and leave freely, being just as receptive to them as I am to the unbiased looking and seeing” (p. 89).

As part of the *epoche* process, a daily journal was utilized to reflect on personal assumptions and biases originating from the researcher’s personal experiences. The journaling process allowed for awareness of how past experiences influence present experiences (Giorgi, 2009). As part of the phenomenological study, the intent was to allow the participants to describe experiences in their own voice without holding preconceived perceptions about their experiences. While impossible to remove all researcher bias from the study, the *epoche* process allowed for awareness and an intent to minimize the researcher’s perspective on participant interpretations of their experiences.

**Case study methodology.** Early case study methodology is attributed to the Chicago School of Sociology with the study of immigrants (Lichtman, 2013). However, Columbia University credited case study with being less rigorous and not scientific. In the following years, case study methodology was revived and widely accepted as evidenced by contributions in the field work of Robert Yin and Robert Stake (Lichtman, 2013). Creswell (2014) defines case study as a “design of inquiry found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (p. 14). Case study is also bound by time and activity using a variety of data collection methods. Yin (2018) further refines case research as having a two-fold definition with the first part as the scope of study and the second part to include the features of the study. Yin states the scope of a case study “investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the case) in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (p. 15). The features of a case study cope with a distinctive

situation with many variables, from the prior development of theoretical propositions, to guide design and relies on multiple sources of evidence to converge in data triangulation (Yin, 2018).

### **Data Collection**

The process of data collection began with a proposal of how data would be obtained. For the purpose of this qualitative study, the data collection plan included how communication was introduced and kept, such as a data storage system, what type of data-gathering activities participants would engage in as well as pre-planning the opportunities for data triangulation (Stake, 1995). Access and permission to collect data were obtained from the appropriate individuals and organizations, such as the University of the Incarnate Word's Institutional Review Board and compliance with the Malawi Institute of Technology & Science, both of which oversee human research protection, authorities in oversight of the Dzeleka Refugee Camp and of the Vocational Programs of Malawi as well as the participants themselves. Stake (1995) contends "almost always data gathering is done on someone's home ground" and "involves some level of invasion of personal privacy" (p. 57). Therefore, it was essential as part of pre-planning to become acquainted and mindful of people, spaces, schedules, and problems of the case as part of the data gathering plan (Stake, 1995).

**Data collection preparation.** As part of the International Education and Entrepreneurship program at the University of the Incarnate Word, the researcher completed coursework and heard presentations where topics centered on developing nations, international organizations, NGOs, and the populations they serve. The abroad internship, as part of the doctoral program, involved a study in Johannesburg, South Africa in the spring of 2015. The researcher was introduced to the process of integrating asylum seekers in South Africa, local



policy regarding asylum-seekers, and the impediment of the socioeconomic structure of post-apartheid as it continues to permeate the people of South Africa.

In preparation for the dissertation topic, the researcher audited the Global Refugee course at the University of the Incarnate Word in the fall of 2017 under Dr. Lopita Nath. As part of the course, students volunteered with refugee families with the Catholic Charities in San Antonio. Through this course, the researcher gained knowledge and insight into customs and religious practices of the refugee family and the history of global migration. Additionally, as preparation for this study, the researcher attended a conference co-organized by the Canadian Mission to the European Union and the European Economic and Social Committee. The conference, “Social Innovation for Refugee Inclusion: Maintaining Momentum and Creating Lasting Change” took place in November of 2017. This Conference included key discussions with over 30 presentations from public officials, academics, and refugee entrepreneurs to consider how social innovation might support integration of refugees into the refugee host country. Topics included the livelihood experiences as asylum-seekers and the innovative ways local organizations have employed to foster refugee integration.

From the internship in Johannesburg in 2015, the researcher had the opportunity to develop relationships with three nonprofits (Vocational Programs of Malawi, Amayi, and Child Legacy), all located in Malawi, that provide support to the refugee and Malawian population through income-producing activities and education. These relationships presented the researcher with insight into refugee livelihood activities, health, and educational opportunities within the community areas of Lilongwe, Malawi. The researcher had the opportunity for an extended visit with relatives who have lived and worked in Malawi for the past 15 years. As a result, the

researcher was able to gain experiences and knowledge about the working community of Malawi and their relationship with the refugee community.

Experience and training related to the refugee population in Malawi included engagement with people in the community who could provide insight into communication and methods of outreach with refugee populations. These conversations included engaging with employees of Child Legacy as part of a tour of the Child Legacy project to observe the agricultural education programs and its hospital. As part of preparation for the study, the researcher attended sensitization sessions provided by staff members of the Vocational Programs of Malawi for recruitment before meeting with potential participants. A meeting was scheduled with the Jesuit Refugee Center to discuss culturally sensitive discourse regarding the refugee population and was followed by a tour of the refugee center to observe the higher education initiatives provided by the Jesuit Refugee Service for a small percentage of the refugee population. After meeting with employees of the Jesuit Refugee Center, the researcher participated in a tour of the Dzeleka Refugee Camp conducted by refugees who reside at the Camp. Other related experience included discourse with the founder of Amayi, who employs refugee women with HIV, for insight into the goals of this nonprofit as it relates to African women of Malawi. Discussions with local stakeholders included the topics of: understanding of cultural beliefs, religious practices, and values of the distinct cultural groups in Malawi and within the camp; using language that is community-oriented preventing dominating the effects of language and communication; being flexible by setting realistic time frames and working to avoid/assume homogeneity of cultures within the Dzeleka community.

As a final step in research preparation, the researcher participated in cultural competency training modules regarding vulnerable people through a collaborative initiative for research

ethics with Brown University for research ethics training. The training materials were created by Northeast Ethics Education Partnership (NEEP, 2017). The researcher completed the following training modules: Cultural Competence and Community Studies; Concepts and Practices for Cultural Competence; Discourse: Forms and Uses; and Informed Consent Theory. After preparation for the study, the researcher engaged in data collection with the use of multiple sources. In the following sections, information is provided to explain how multiple data sources were utilized for the study.

### **Data Triangulation**

Creswell (2014) contends the understanding of a phenomena is best obtained through the use of multiple data sources in qualitative research. Data triangulation is viewed as a strategy in qualitative research to test validity through the convergence of data collected from different sources. Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, Di Censo, Blythe, and Neville (2014) present four types of triangulation: method, investigator, theory, and data source. For the purpose of this study, data source triangulation involved collecting from different people, including individuals, groups, families, and communities, to gain multiple perspectives and validation of data. Thus, data collection included open-ended individual interviews, a 10-item questionnaire for demographic information, participant observations, researcher memos, and researcher field notes (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018).

### **Interview Method**

Phenomenological case study research is a design of inquiry in which the research describes the lived experiences of individuals about a particular phenomenon as described by participants and typically involves interviews (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). As a first step to the interview process, potential participants were solicited using purposeful selection with the

assistance of the director for vocational programs of the Vocational Programs of Malawi. In-depth individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants from the Dzeleka Camp and employees from the Vocational Programs of Malawi. The in-depth individual semi-structured interview is described as one of the most powerful avenues for gaining an understanding of human beings and exploring topics (Carter et al., 2014).

Brinkman and Kvale (2015) contend, as part of the phenomenological philosophy, that interviews should be conducted as precisely as possible, focused on describing, rather than to analyze, where the essence of a phenomenon is given freely in all forms and remains constant. Lastly, phenomenological methods call for reduction or suspension of judgment through bracketing, placing assumptions and foreknowledge about the phenomena aside, in order to arrive at an unbiased description of the phenomena. Brinkman and Kvale describe the semi-structured interview as one closely resembling everyday conversation, but one with focus of purpose and a specific approach without becoming a closed questionnaire. Thus, in-depth individual semi-structured interviews allow for spontaneity with the use of an interview guide, rather than specific questions, as a tool to guide the interviews (Brinkman & Kvale 2015; Carter et al., 2014). In the next section, the background and purpose of the study sites are included to provide a better understanding of the research sites as part of the data collection process of the study.

### **Study Sites**

This section describes the history and purpose of the study sites of the Dzeleka Refugee Camp and the nonprofit organization, the Vocational Programs of Malawi. The Dzeleka Refugee Camp is located approximately 40 kilometers from Lilongwe and is home for approximately 42,000 refugees, primarily from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Ethiopia, and

Burundi (UNHCR, 2014a). The UNHCR office has continued to facilitate voluntary repatriation, resettlement, and local integration. However, interest in return to the home country remains low despite ongoing sensitization. The durable solution of most interest to refugees in Malawi is resettlement. With current local integration prospects limited and voluntary repatriation not an option for most, resettlement remains the most preferred solution for certain groups. UNHCR faces major challenges regarding local integration prospects because of the Government of Malawi's existing reservations on the 1951 Geneva Convention, and the negative perception of the public and authorities to the local integration of refugees (UNHCR, 2014a).

The Government of Malawi statement to the Executive Committee for UNHCR (2018c) affirmed Malawi's Encampment Policy where refugees are allowed limited freedom of movement and the right to employment in and around the Dowa District near the Dzeleka Refugee Camp (UNHCR, 2018c). The Dzeleka Refugee camp is located in an agricultural environment. In 2014, the UNHCR *Joint Assessment Mission Report: Dzeleka Refugee Camp, Malawi* stated the Camp was demographically very small, congested and surrounded by local villages, and there is insufficient access to agricultural land for most of the population. In some instances, there has been success by refugees to engage in small scale self-employment activities, however, the majority of refugees are completely reliant on food aid and other external assistance for survival (UNHCR, 2014a).

Dzeleka began hosting refugees in 1985 when approximately 1.2 million Mozambican refugees sought refuge (UNHCR, 2014a). Dzeleka is the largest of two refugee camps in Malawi that has benefited from a program offered through the Jesuit Higher Education at the margins (UNHCR, 2018c). Education services are run by the Jesuit Refugee Service and include pre-school, primary education, secondary education, as well as adult university and vocational

programs for out-of-school youth. There is, however, a need to boost capacity of schools in relation to infrastructures and increase the number of teachers to ensure good quality education (UNHCR, 2014a).

The Jesuit Refugee Service of Malawi, established in 2010, set a goal for gender parity and in 2015 it was able to achieve 50% female participation among its non-degree certificate programs and approximately one-third female participation in the diploma program (Griffin & Slaven, 2015). Other vocational training opportunities are offered through the Vocational Programs of Malawi and several certified nonprofits in the Lilongwe area that emphasize women participation. The Vocational Programs of Malawi offers vocational programs traditionally offered to males are now being offered to both men and women.

The Vocational Programs of Malawi is a nonprofit organization located in the Dowa District, approximately an hour driving distance from Lilongwe, Malawi. Vocational Programs of Malawi exists to provide access to education and increase income-producing opportunities to refugees as well as strengthen their spiritual life. In conversation with the employees of the Vocational Programs of Malawi, they expounded on the newly established vocation programs. According to Sam, in 2015, the nonprofit began offering four vocational training classes in bricklaying, carpentry, beginner photography, and tailoring. These classes run for 6 months, Monday through Thursday. Certain programs are periodically phased out to prevent saturating the market with too many people in one particular trade. The Vocational Programs of Malawi phased out photography after the fall 2017 term and introduced carpentry at the advanced level. It is the goal of the Vocational Programs of Malawi to run two intakes per calendar year, all running together using the same timeframe. The Vocational Programs of Malawi began courses for plumbing and welding January of 2018.

Additionally, the employee of the Vocational Programs of Malawi, said class sizes are limited to 20 students, who can be either Malawian or refugee. The application process involves an applicant completing an application form available at the office near the Camp. It is available in English, Chichewa, or Swahili. The employee prints out about 75 Chichewa and 75 Swahili advertisements that hand delivered to churches and village headmen who will then inform their people the application process has started. Each application is logged in a spreadsheet, then interviews are held for each applicant. The applicants are asked if they have any prior experience in the trade they want to study (they accept applicants with no prior knowledge or training), what they intend to do once they have completed their course, and must provide proof they can read and write. After the interviews, the director reviews sheets and selects the top 20 from each trade. The director selects with balance of nationalities, sex, age, etc. For example, if there are 30 applications from Malawi and 10 from refugees for a particular class, they take around 15 Malawians and 5 refugees. The same applies to the number of men and women who apply. The employee at the Vocational Programs of Malawi stated that the Dzeleka Refugee Camp is currently made up of about 60% Congolese, 15% Rwandese, and 15% Burundian. The Vocational Programs of Malawi rarely sees applications from Burundians or Rwandese.

According to James and Sam, employees of Vocational Programs of Malawi, employees are currently working for certification with the Technical, Entrepreneurial, Vocational Education and Training Authority (TEVETA), Malawi's skills training authority. TEVETA certification includes assisting in the development of the curriculum used for the programs, providing assessments for the students, student accountability, and the issuing of certificates of achievement for each graduate. This certificate would hold value and credibility in Malawi and in surrounding countries. It significantly increases the graduates' chances of finding employment.

When the memorandum of understanding is signed, the classroom time remains the same, but each student will be required to find an internship for a period of 4 months after the class has finished before they can graduate.

Enrollment data as shown in Table 1, affirms the need for gender parity, revealing an under-representation of both Malawian and refugee women at approximately 29% for all vocational training graduates in the fall of 2017. As photography is no longer offered, courses in plumbing and welding began being offered in 2018 with additional emphasis to be placed on the participation of women as indicated in conversation with employees of the Vocational Programs of Malawi.

### **Research Participants**

Participants included a minimum of nine African refugee women residing at the Dzeleka Refugee Camp in the Dowa District near Lilongwe with additional interviews conducted with two vocational staff members at the Vocational Programs of Malawi. Participants had previously participated and completed vocational training offered at the Vocational Programs of Malawi training facility. The programs director facilitated in the recruitment process of participants who reside at the Dzeleka Refugee camp and have completed vocation training. Specifically, participants were selected by the researcher using a purposeful selection strategy from the women living at Dzeleka, who are at least eighteen years of age and have completed a vocation training program at the non-profit organization Vocational Programs of Malawi.

**Selection of participants.** Maxwell (2013) claims that the term sampling is problematic for use in qualitative research as it suggests a purpose of representing the population. Thus, choosing sampling as a selection strategy for qualitative research is discouraged as it does not incorporate the use of random sampling or convenience sampling.



Table 1

*Vocational Programs of Malawi Graduates for the Fall of 2017*

Course Training	Graduates	Course Training	Graduates
Bricklaying	37	Carpentry	66
Malawian men	27	Malawian men	40
Malawian women	2	Malawian women	3
Refugee men	6	Refugee men	21
Refugee women	2	Refugee women	2
Photography	15	Tailoring	55
Malawian men	6	Malawian men	4
Malawian women	1	Malawian women	19
Refugee men	8	Refugee men	12
Refugee women	0	Refugee women	20

Rather, the author proposes the use of a third category, purposeful selection, where settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information particularly relevant to the questions and goals of the researcher. Maxwell posits five possible goals for purposeful selection (pp. 98-99):

- 1) Achieving representativeness of the settings, individuals, or activities selected.
- 2) Purposeful selection can adequately capture the heterogeneity in the population to ensure adequate representation of populations relevant to your study.
- 3) Deliberately select individuals or cases critical for testing theories studied or developed.
- 4) To establish particular comparisons to illuminate the reasons for differences between settings or individuals.

- 5) To select groups or participants with whom you can establish the most productive relationships that will best enable you to answer your research questions.

Skuzza (2007) argues the appropriate number of participants in a phenomenological study depends upon the nature of the phenomenon to be studied and suggests a phenomenological study may have as few as six participants. For this study, a sample size of nine comprised over 38% of the refugee women participants in the vocational training at the Vocational Programs of Malawi, using 2017 enrollment data provided by Sam, employed at Vocational Programs of Malawi.

### **Researcher Perspective**

Interest in this research originated with a required study abroad to Johannesburg in the spring of 2015. During the stay in Johannesburg, the realities of life for Africans, most notably African women, were witnessed in the struggles of everyday life. As part of the study abroad, the researcher was introduced to people associated with a nonprofit, the Vocational Programs of Malawi, with a mission to provide scholarships and educational training to refugees and the general population of Malawi. After returning to the states, an interest evolved to gain an understanding of the education experiences of refugee women in Malawi and to learn more about the initiatives of the Vocational Programs of Malawi. During the exploration of African refugee women's education, literature revealed a lack of access for women's education, the quality of education available, and the gender inequalities for education in Africa, in which boys greatly outnumbered girls at the secondary school level.

The field of migration studies is a growing academic interest; however, engaging in refugee and forced migration studies should not be based solely on intellectual pursuit. Instead researchers should concern themselves with the realities faced by displacement. It is important

for researchers to find a sense of moral responsibility to account for the injustices experienced by refugees and record testimonies to ensure research not only contributes to academic interest, but makes a contribution to the future well-being of the globally displaced (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al., 2014).

### **Risk Analysis**

As part of the Institutional Review Board process, the potential risk for participants, such as physical, psychological, social, economic, or legal harm, were assessed (Creswell, 2014). The Institutional Review Board process also addressed ethical concerns which included the manner in which data gathering was conducted and distributed. Guided by the Ethical Principles on Research with Human Participants, clear agreements and protocol with research participants were established for maintaining confidentiality and procedures for ensuring full disclosure of the nature, purpose, and requirements of the research established for the purposes of this study (Moustakas, 1994).

Risk analysis included the manner in which data gathering was conducted and distributed. Guided by the Ethical Principles on Research with Human Participants, agreements with research participants established protocol for maintaining confidentiality and procedures were outlined to ensure full disclosure of the nature, purpose, and requirements of the research for the purposes of this study. The participants understood that the nature of the study focused on their personal experiences of vocational training and not events concerning their refugee status. As protection for the well-being of the participants, questions were not asked in relation to, nor were participants asked to describe, the experiences which resulted in their refugee status. In addition, the role of the researcher was clearly articulated and participants were provided time to ask questions as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

The researcher took extra consideration regarding ethical issues which might occur while working with women refugee participants to include: the impact of disparities in power between researchers and participants, negotiating the informed consent, ensuring the benefits of participation outweigh any potential risks, ensuring confidentiality, and prevention of the invasion of privacy of each participant.

**Risks to participants.** At all stages of the study, human research requires ethical reflection informed by the core values of respect, research merit and integrity, justice, and beneficence. To gain understanding of the participant, the researcher obtained background knowledge of participants in terms of socioeconomic conditions, cultural norms and traditions, and the community of the Dzeleka Camp and the Vocational Programs of Malawi training facility before arrival and during initial days at the research location.

As mentioned previously, in preparation for the interviews, the researcher participated in cultural competency training with the Northeast Ethics Education Partnership. Cultural reflexivity called for a continuous assessment of one's attitudes, beliefs, biases, and prejudices toward distinct cultural groups. Other goals for competency training included, the understanding of diverse cultural perceptions, beliefs, practices, and values on health and illness. Additionally, skills development required the researcher to possess a focused and systematic evaluation in areas of problem-solving and communication. Training emphasized the importance of discussing goals, to be transparent, and to ensure the researcher's goals had a community benefit (NEEP, 2017).

As a second part of the cultural competency process, the researcher examined power differentials: distribution of resources, socio-economic status and living conditions, decision-making processes, skills and expertise, communication styles, and references imposed (such as

food and meeting places) (NEEP, 2017). The researcher engaged with the community as a resource to learn about cultural traditions such as rituals, rites of passage, ceremonies, and traditional healing practices. As part of cultural competency, it was essential for awareness and understanding of the multiple burdens within the refugee communities as well as the surrounding broader community of the Dowa District and Lilongwe.

It was also understood that the researcher may need to transfer power (project decision making, skills, funding) in research practices as part of building relationships with underserved communities. The researcher was conscious of the use of academic language vs. community languages to prevent the negative effects of language power dominance. The researcher worked with the employees at the Vocational Programs of Malawi in development and review of materials to be used with the participants to ensure the materials were culturally-based and to avoid homogenizing cultural groups. Finally, as part of the cultural competency process, the researcher did not assume homogeneity of one culture in a community through prior research of cultural groups within the refugee community to gain a sense of past harms or exploitation from previous researchers (NEEP, 2017).

**Privacy and communication.** Effective communication with the participants may be challenged due to obstacles created by differing languages and cultural norms. Refugee populations may be considered at risk because of the captive audience they represent. A risk of misunderstanding or misrepresenting research participants exists through the difficulties of communicating when researchers and research subjects occupy different positions within social structures and are coming from different cultures. Therefore, a reflexive practice of research was utilized to ensure the engagement of active and methodical listening strategies for minimizing the harms of miscommunication.

Special sensitivity was taken with interview questions to reflect compassion and the right for privacy concerning any trauma incurred by participants. The researcher carefully worded questions and communication to ensure participants did not feel uncomfortable or distanced in any way. The researcher provided opportunities for questions and clarity of the study from the participant. The researcher ensured all communication was kept private between the individual participant through planning locations where other nonparticipants were prevented from overhearing communication as well as securing storage by computer passwords and a locked file. The researcher strove to assist the participant to feel autonomy in communicating and, ultimately, capacity-building for her life. As part of privacy, all participants and location of the vocational facility were given pseudonyms.

### **Consent**

The researcher ensured participants had a full understanding of their participation and did not feel compelled to participate because of perceived benefits or potential consequences of rejecting participation. To ensure understanding and trust, the researcher conducted a meeting to introduce herself, the purpose of the study, the role of the participant, benefits from the study, and to make sure participants understood at the initial meeting of their voluntary participation. No data was collected nor consent form signed until a second meeting. The researcher met with participants for a second time where formal signing of the consent was conducted to ensure the participants understood the purpose of the study, and, that risks, confidentiality, and participation were voluntary when explaining the consent form. To ensure understanding and meaning relevant to the refugees, consent was an ongoing process to be understood by the participants and that they could choose to leave the study at any point. The signed informed consent form agreed to participation and participant guidelines which were followed for conducting research without

disturbing their settings in accordance with the ethical code for the researcher and protection of privacy of the participant. In terms of interpretation of data, an accurate account of information was followed to prevent falsifying authorship, evidence, data, findings, or conclusions (Creswell, 2014). After consent forms were signed, interviews were conducted at the Vocational Programs of Malawi training facilities with permission for the use of a voice recorder for the purpose of the interviews.

**Protocol for non-English speaking participants.** The interpreter was present to assist at all meetings and the consent forms were translated into Swahili. The researcher had all documents reviewed by the employee at the Vocational Programs of Malawi to ensure the contents are easily understood by the participants. The researcher allowed time for participant questions and answers to ensure full understanding of the research purpose and participant role and rights.

**Confidentiality.** To address confidentiality, the following procedures were utilized by the researcher. Records and files were safeguarded through computer password and locked files. Access to study documents, interviews, notes, and writings were and remain available to appropriate dissertation committee members. The findings of the study were accessible to share with the director of the Vocational Programs of Malawi institution. No raw data or specific identifiers were included in these findings. Two members of my dissertation committee were authorized to see the raw data.

### **Validation Techniques**

Accuracy of findings are checked through certain strategies to address trustworthiness, authenticity, and credibility (Creswell, 2014). To avoid validity threats or to test validity, the following strategies of triangulation, feedback, rich data, and quasi-statistics were employed for

this study. To re-enforce credibility and trustworthiness, triangulation of the data included interviews, journaling, personal observations, and informal conversations. Feedback was solicited from the committee to prevent skewed logic as well as other discrepancies with data. Writing memos and journaling after interviews created additional data to incorporate with initial reactions and theories (Maxwell, 2013).

### **Researcher Bias**

Two important threats to validity in qualitative conclusions are the selection of data to fit the researcher's existing theory, goals or preconceptions, and the selection of data of which appears to be more prominent to the researcher (Creswell, 2014; Maxwell, 2013). Consequently, qualitative research is primarily concerned with understanding how a particular researcher's values and expectations may have influenced the conclusions. For this study, researcher self-reflection was conducted through personal journaling to recognize bias and address bias accordingly. Self-reflection was essential deeper understanding of participant responses and the inferences drawn from the interview (Maxwell, 2013).

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

Limitations to this study included a sample size that was not representative of the population of African refugee women at the Dzeleka Refugee Camp and thus could not be generalized to the African women refugee population or used for research in this manner. Additionally, the study focused on participants who have completed a specific educational program in Malawi. Thereby, the study did not transfer to all educational programs in Malawi.

Interview questions for participants, as well as answers, risked being misunderstood due to the translation of meaning. Issues considered in conducting multiple-lingual research: those related with collaborators from various sub-ethnic groups; the Institutional Review Board



protocol submission; consistencies in translation process; existing translated versions; and authorship (Im et al., 2016). The interview guide had been translated from English into Swahili but was not back-translated to English to ensure linguistic equivalency. Jacobsen and Landua (2003) recommend ensuring linguistic equivalency guides or questionnaires for back-translated interviews.

### **Subjectivity Statement.**

Qualitative research is subjective by nature and as such, subjectivity is not a “failing needed to be eliminated but is an essential element of understanding by the researchers and their readers” (Stake, 1995, p. 45). Stake follows with saying that the “misunderstanding occurs because researcher-interpretor are unaware of their own intellectual shortcomings and fail to purge misinterpretations” (p. 45). The researcher recognized the subjectivity of the study in that there exists built-in bias that cannot be entirely removed. However, it was necessary in the reflection journal to acknowledge these shortcomings.

### **Data Analysis**

Participant interviews were audio recorded with the facilitation of an interpreter – translator and manually transcribed by the researcher. Field notes and memos were manually written in the field journal to complement the recordings and remind the researcher of situational factors during analysis. Transcripts were manually coded using Attribute, In Vivo, and Concept coding as first cycle methods for coding the data. In Vivo is a manual coding method selected for the use of “short words or short phrases from the participant’s own language in the data record as codes” (Saldana, 2016, p. 294). Concept coding was used as a cross-reference with In Vivo coding. Concept coding made use of “a word or phrase that represented a larger or broader concept than a single item or action” (Saldana, 2016, p. 292). In Vivo Coding, also known as

emic coding, “refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record, the terms used by the participants themselves” (Strauss, 1987, p. 33). Themes and subcategories were identified through the coding process in what Saldana describes as “theming the data.” Unlike a code, a theme is an extended phrase that identifies what a unit of data is about or what it means and ultimately “brings meaning and identity to a recurrent patterned experience and its variant manifestations” (Saldana, 2016, p. 199).

The emerging themes were followed with a second coding cycle for extraction of subcategories and patterns from the collected data. The second-cycle coding employed the use of Pattern Coding, a method “that identifies similarly coded data and organizes the corpus into sets, themes, or constructs and attributes meaning to that organization” (Saldana, 2016, p. 296). Each transcribed interview was re-read several times by the researcher, to refine the emerging themes, identify patterns, and to highlight pertinent quotes deemed as significant representation of the participants’ voices. Themes were subsumed into broader categories, by recording the number of occurrences and then categorized under the major themes resulting in four broader encompassing themes. Final analysis also incorporated memos, journals and field notes in the coding analysis to support coding and to provide additional documentation for triangulation of the data.

The phenomenological analysis of the participants interviews incorporated five-step process (Hycner, 1985, pp. 280-284):

- Bracketing as referring to the researcher’s personal views
- Delineating units of meaning by extracting phrases with significant meaning
- Clustering of units of meaning to form themes
- Summarizing each interview, validate and modify

Determining emerging themes for all the interviews and composite summary

## **Malawi Research Proposal Work Plan**

**Strategic plan, timeline, goals, and outcomes.** The overarching goal of the research study was to gain understanding of how empowerment and self-efficacy play into the refugee women's livelihood development and transition as a result of completing vocational training at the Vocational Programs of Malawi training facility.

Goal 1. The researcher used this time for orientation to both research sites and to schedule introductions with people the researcher has contacted for the purpose of this research. The researcher scheduled an initial meeting with potential participants at the Dzeleka Refugee Camp to provide information about the study and the participant role.

Goal 2. After the initial meeting, the researcher scheduled a second meeting with those interested in participating in the study to go over the consent form with each participant. The meetings were conducted with assistance from the program director of the Vocational Programs of Malawi to align with transportation and schedules for transportation needs.

Goal 3. Participant interviews were completed. The researcher also used this time to further develop knowledge through research observation about the refugee culture at the Dzeleka Refugee Camp, the Vocational Programs of Malawi, and the local community of Lilongwe. Visits to other NGOs and related institutions were scheduled.

Goal 4. The researcher took part in activities to broaden learning experiences through visits to local markets. A final schedule was made to visit with the employees of the Jesuit Refugee Center and recommended institutions that have influence in the role of education for African refugee women in Malawi.

Goal 5. Morning and evening times were blocked off for reflective journaling, to organize field notes, memos, and other research material in preparation for the next day's activities.

Management Goal. The study was carefully monitored by the researcher with the assistance of the research committee chair for feedback for the duration of the study. The researcher also obtained assistance as needed for transportation, scheduling visits to the search sites for: interview visits and to schedule interviews with each participant. In addition, the researcher facilitated a plan for communication with employees of the Jesuit Refugee Center in partnership with the Dzeleka Refugee Camp and the Vocational Programs of Malawi who are assisting for research purposes. The researcher has been provided a place to stay for the duration of the study with relatives who live in Lilongwe.

Outcomes. To support or build on theory of refugee women empowerment as a necessary component of sustainable livelihood for African refugee women and provide a foundational base for more in-depth research studies related to refugee women's self-perception of empowerment as a result of formal education. To explore the vocational skills provided to refugee women in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp in regard to its impact on empowerment and influence of livelihood capabilities.

## **Conclusion**

This study employed a phenomenological case study design to explore the individual experiences of African refugee women, focusing on how their experiences in completing a vocational training program has influenced their lives in terms of self-efficacy and empowerment to obtain a better livelihood. Phenomenology refers to an approach focused on the lived experiences of those people who have experienced a particular phenomenon (Lichtman, 2013).

Whereas, a case study is an approach in qualitative research involving the specific and detailed study of a case or cases. Yin (2018) defines a case study as two-fold with the first part known as the *scope* where investigation of a contemporary phenomenon (the case) is conducted within its real-world context. The second part of the case study known as the *features* of the case study “developing theoretical propositions to guide design, data collection, and analysis” (Yin, 2018, p. 14). By combining the two designs for a phenomenological case study, the researcher was afforded the opportunity to explore characteristics of the individual participants who have completed vocational training offered by the Vocational Programs of Malawi training facility.

Participants were solicited through a selective process and data was collected with semi-structures interviews to include a short demographic questionnaire, participant observations, and other field notes. Four strategies were used for validation of data. These strategies included triangulation, interviews, journal notes, and quasi-statistics and were incorporated for the purposes of this study (Maxwell, 2013).

The following chapter will begin with a short summary of the methodology followed by a summary of the coding, analysis, and theming of the data. After description of the analysis and summary of themes, a brief introduction of each of the participants of the study will be conducted. This chapter will also include discussion relating to the participants’ responses to each theme.

## Findings

This chapter is dedicated to the findings and analysis of the study with an intention to understand the lived experiences of African refugee women who have completed a vocational training program at the Vocational Programs of Malawi training center. The intent of the research was to gain a greater understanding of how empowerment and self-efficacy play into the refugee women's livelihood development and transition as a result of completing vocational training. Three questions have shaped this qualitative research:

- 1) How have livelihood experiences impacted female participants who reside in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp?
- 2) How has vocational training contributed to the economic advancement of female participants who reside in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp?
- 3) How do the female participants, who reside in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp, describe self-efficacy and empowerment in relation to their present lives?

In review of the literature, and relevant to the refugee women population living within the Dzeleka Refugee Camp, several theories and frameworks were explored to shape the research study. In reviewing applicable theories and frameworks, understanding the lived experiences and livelihood experiences of African refugee women were best addressed from theoretical lenses that acknowledged their livelihood, culture, and gender as well as the critical elements of African women refugee self-efficacy and empowerment.

As a result, four theoretical frameworks provided perspective in the analysis of the participant interviews: Karen Jacobsen's (2014) contributions to the sustainable livelihoods framework, Clenora Hudson-Weems's (1993) African womanist perspective, Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy (1994), and Sara Longwe's women's empowerment framework (1995).

The perspectives are briefly presented in this section, with a more detailed examination of the frameworks found in the second chapter.

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

**Sustainable livelihoods framework.** Jacobsen's (2014) research with the sustainable livelihoods framework, calls for expansion of the livelihood framework, presenting three distinct challenges of refugee livelihood pursuits: refugees come from a position of loss; they experience trauma; and come to their new location impoverished. Significant to understanding refugee livelihood, Jacobsen (2014) emphasizes the ability for refugees to recover from their loss becomes more about their ability to access existing skills in their new location which many times are limited by the local policy of the host population (Jacobsen, 2005). Jacobsen contends that "the ability of refugees in protracted situations to pursue livelihoods is influenced by social, political, and institutional factors at the global, national, and local levels" (Jacobsen, 2005, p.13). Furthermore, the success of refugee livelihood depends largely upon who benefits or loses from the refugee's presence and the refugee's ability to make use of whatever economic resources are available both inside and outside the camp. (Jacobsen, 2005).

**Clenora Hudson-Weems's African womanist perspective.** The second framework is Clenora Hudson-Weems' African womanist theory, conceptualized in 1993, that "places the experiences of refugee women from Africa in the center of the analysis" (Haffejee & East, 2015, p. 2). Hudson-Weems brings insight to the unique characteristics of African women which define and delineate the African Womanist perspective from other feminist views (Phillips, 2006). Hudson-Weems points out that each African refugee woman's experience is different and are often perceived, as are refugees in general, as victims (Phillips, 2006). Smit (2015) reiterates the unique experiences of African refugee women who have developed their own survival strategies

in the attempt to facilitate their integration into the host society. Kasun (2009) states Hudson-Weems's words point to a difference in priority from the feminist view; rather, African womanism must be "self-defined and self-named by Africana women, and that conclusion implies a womanist struggle for independent theory and hegemony that resists ethnic and gendered prejudice, a struggle that must be undertaken with the help of men" (p. 2).

**Albert Bandura's theory of self-efficacy.** The third perspective, Bandura's theory of self-efficacy, presents four concepts of how self-efficacy is learned as "mastery, social modeling, social persuasion, and psychological responses" (Bandura, 2010, p. 2). Bandura states, "mastery of a particular task or skill is the most effective way of developing self-efficacy" (p. 2). The second concept, social modeling, is achieved by seeing people who are similar to oneself reach a goal. When the model is perceived to be similar to that individual, the greater the success or failure of the model's persuasion. The third concept, social persuasion, refers to self-efficacy being achieved through someone building the confidence of another by instilling the confidence of the individual's ability to accomplish a specific task. The last concept, psychological responses, is the effect of a person's attitude regarding their self-efficacy. A person's positive mood enhances perceived self-efficacy where a negative mood will diminish a person's self-efficacy (Artino, 2012).

**Sara Longwe's Women's empowerment framework.** Longwe's framework was the fourth primary guiding theory in the analysis process. It was employed as an analysis tool to explore the empowerment process of the participants who reside at the Dzeleka Refugee Camp. The UNHCR (2001) publication, *A Practical Guide to Empowerment: Good Practices on Gender Equality Mainstreaming*, identifies five key dimensions of Sara Longwe's women's empowerment as "access, conscientization, mobilization, control, and gender equality



mainstreaming” (p. 5). *Access* refers to the belief that women should have equal access to resources such as health, education, and security. *Conscientization* involves the understanding of factors which discriminate against women and *mobilization* refers to the process of networking and to devise strategies to overcome problems of discrimination. The fourth dimension refers to *control*, or the balance of power between women and men so neither is in a position of dominance. The final dimension, *gender equality mainstreaming*, involves the level of access obtained as a result of collective actions taken to ensure the needs and resources of displaced women are considered at every step of the refugee cycle.

### **Summary of the Study**

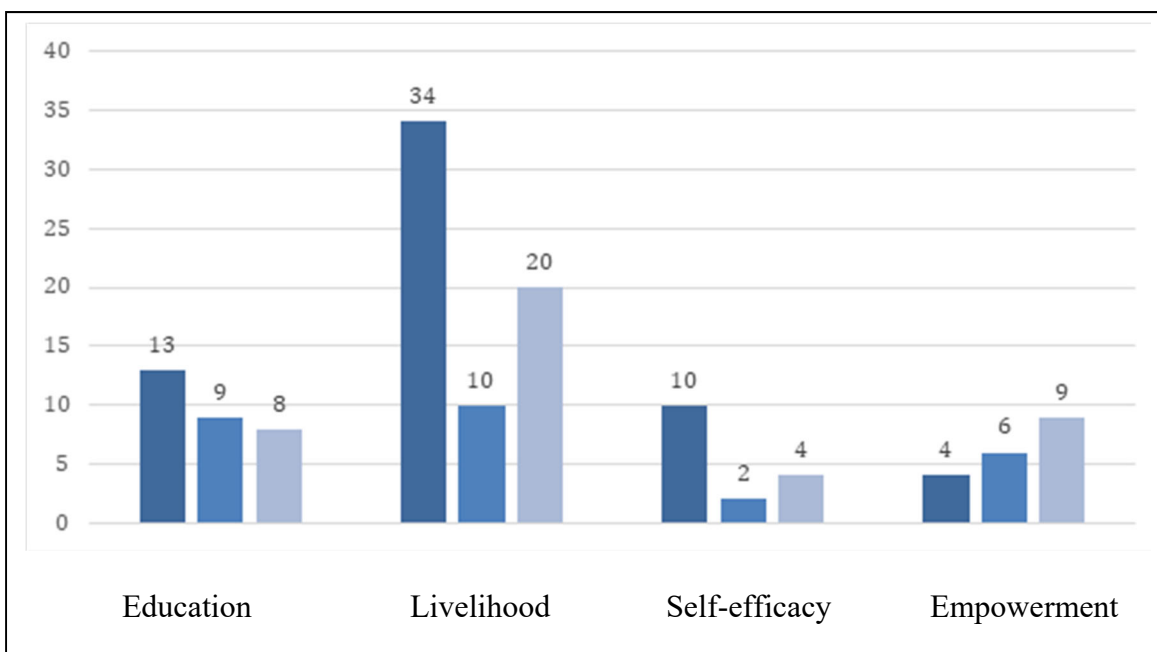
As previously stated in the immediately preceding chapter, this study took place at the Vocational Programs, a nonprofit Christian organization located in the Dowa District of Malawi. The research study included 11 participants, two of whom were employed at the Vocational Programs of Malawi. These employees were interviewed to garner their perceptions of the Vocational Programs of Malawi and their perspective of the programs’ success. The remaining nine participants were African refugee women who reside at the Dzeleka Refugee Camp. A purposeful selection method was used in obtaining participants for this research study. The requirements for participation in the study required the participant be at least the legal age of 18 years; the participant must have completed a vocational training program at the Vocational Programs of Malawi; and the participant must currently reside at the Dzeleka Refugee Camp. Participant interviews were conducted using prepared demographic questions followed by open-ended interview questions as a guide. The interviews were conducted in Swahili, with the assistance of an interpreter, with the exception of one interview being conducted in French.

The interviews were transcribed manually by the researcher in an Excel worksheet for organization and numbering capabilities. Vivo coding and Concept coding were manually employed as first cycle coding methods. The emerging themes were followed with a second coding cycle for extraction of subcategories and patterns from the collected data. The second-cycle coding employed the use of Pattern Coding to identify and collapsed similar coded data into major themes, or broader categories, by recording the number of occurrences and then categorized under the major themes (Saldana, 2016).

Seven major themes were constructed from initial themes, thus providing the researcher with the major themes of education, livelihood, resources, empowerment, culture, gender, and faith. These seven themes were further refined to four major themes or (categories) of education, livelihood, self-efficacy, and empowerment. Figure 1 shows each major theme with the frequency, or number of occurrences of each subcategory mentioned by participants during the interviews.

### **Participant Background**

“Phenomenological research is a design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by participants” (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). As part of the research process, it was essential to establish participant origin and background information as part of the phenomena. All participants originated from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (approximately 60% of the population of refugees) and had sought safety at the Dzeleka Refugee Camp within the last 8 years. All of the participants in the study had previous experience with formal education, to include either primary or secondary education, before coming to live at the Dzeleka Refugee



*Figure 1* Number of occurrences of each subcategory within each major theme. Education: opportunity (13), vocational training (9), helping others (8). Livelihood: resources (34), social capital (10), well-being (20). Self-efficacy: mastery of task (10), trust in abilities (2), control over situations (4). Empowerment: access to resources (4), decision-making (6), gender equality (9).

Camp. After coming to Dzeleka, all but one participant learned of the opportunities for vocational training at the Vocational Programs of Malawi from attending church located within the Camp. The participants of this study represented approximately 18% of the total women (49) who completed programs at the Vocational Programs of Malawi in the spring of 2017. The Vocational Programs of Malawi began offering vocational training programs in 2015, holding initial course offerings in carpentry, tailoring, and bricklaying with the most recent addition of plumbing in 2017.

### **Vocational Programs of Malawi Employee Interviews**

As part of data collection, the researcher interviewed the two vocational programs coordinators employed by the Vocational Programs of Malawi to gain background information to

understand the purpose and mission of this nonprofit. The employee interviews centered on the topics of mission effectiveness and their perceptions of program success for refugee women. As part of the discussion, the vocational coordinators expressed their concerns in relation to the challenges they foresee in the sustainability of programs offered. The following sections provide the main extractions from the interviews with both employees, James and Sam, as insight into their perspectives of their work.

**Employee James.** James has been at the Vocational Programs of Malawi as a youth coordinator and is transitioning to replace Sam as the new programs director. His past experience as a youth coordinator involved work with an ecumenical organization in Lilongwe. Presently, James lives in the Dowa District close to the Vocational Programs of Malawi and the Dzeleka Refugee Camp. James' demeanor projects a very passionate interest in the youth of both the Dzeleka and Dowa Districts. James stated why he believes the mission of the Vocational Programs of Malawi is important to the youth of both the Dzeleka Camp and the Dowa District.

The number of youths, in comparison to the adults or young adults, we have a high percentage, almost 60% of young adults are staying idle. So, training has a lot of impact to young men, like in the past they people they small farming, just for food so, where they could earn money? No way. That is a challenge so, no, they are coming for vocational training. It has helped people find skills they can rely on themselves.

James explained, July 9th was a very important training date with the Technical, Entrepreneurial, and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TEVETA) for vocational training in Malawi. The Vocational Programs of Malawi's certification as a TEVET authorized vocational trainer is a primary goal as well as providing a sustainable micro-loan program to graduating students to fund their business. James was asked about women's participation in the vocational programs.

The programs are going to help the women, only that our budget sometimes doesn't allow them to participate. For people making a living in general, it is a challenge, as I said already, that many people, like in the camp, people there dependent on receiving what food, their daily needs from United Nations, which I feel like they don't, even UN, don't meet their needs. Some they stay in camp for more than 20 years. I can say there is no hope, where living becomes very difficult, because people are doing nothing there, although they would like to work.

Last month I was recruiting students for the next intake. We expect to take 140 students maximum. But over 700 people applied for the programs. I would call success if someone that has moved from a life of depending on someone to being self-reliant. I would call that success.

**Employee Sam.** Sam has been with the Vocational Programs of Malawi as an employee for 3.5 years as part of the team instrumental for the implementation of the vocational training programs in 2015. The director's very first program was to offer educational university scholarships benefiting refugees. Sam expressed the following:

We started the dream of a vocational training program and that's where I came in. Along the way we noticed that there were just as many Malawians in the surrounding communities that were just as hungry and needed those educational opportunities just as much as the refugees.

Just to back up, we started in June 2015 with carpentry level I, that was it. Six months later we started back up with carpentry level I, tailoring and brick laying. That is basically what we've done until January 2018, we've added plumbing in July of this year and will add welding.

Sam affirms women can take any of these programs and they encourage women to enroll in brick laying and plumbing. Sam expressed his perspective on the success or challenges of vocational training for women.

I think number one, is the persona that a woman is perceived by a man here as a child bearer. It's sad because you'll see a woman doing the work of 10 men...while the men are engaged with games they play here. The woman works around the house and does this, that or another with a baby strapped to her back. Image being hired on, you're a woman, hired in with a group of guys to build a house, you're a bricklayer, it's probably a little intimidating and I don't know how the men would be with a woman coming on to the job site. In my opinion, the woman is very capable and has proven herself around the house even, she is very capable of doing many tasks. And so that's one big problem. And as a refugee in Malawi, a refugee doesn't have many rights. They can't integrate into Malawian society and they can't work legally outside of camp. They can volunteer for a stipend but cannot be employed by anybody.

Sam also viewed funding as a major challenge for the success of programs. “You just said it, funding. We were blessed to get a grant this year that will benefit us a lot.” Sam offered his perspective regarding the mission of the Vocational Programs of Malawi.

About a year and a half ago we spent a lot of time kind of re-gearing, retooling how we do things...starting with our strategic plan down to the mission statement. We were spread so thin and doing a lot of things not very well that we back tracked and said we were going to have a pretty painful discussion...we are focusing on what can we do well before we start broadening our programs once again. So, we have stayed quite true to that and I think that is key. There’s so many needs out there.

### **Introduction of the Participants**

A short introduction of each participant is presented to provide demographic information and to gain insight to each of the participant’s lived experience as an African woman refugee who resides at the Dzeleka Refugee Camp and has completed vocational training at the Vocational Programs of Malawi.

**Participant (Bee).** Bee arrived at the Dzeleka Refugee Camp 2.5 years ago seeking safety from the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She is 21-years-old and came to Dzeleka with four siblings. With no parents living, Bee’s older brother is responsible for making the household decisions for the family. While living in the Congo, Bee completed primary school but did not have the opportunity to complete secondary schooling before leaving. Bee learned of the Vocational Programs of Malawi at a church she attends within the Dzeleka Refugee Camp. Bee completed the carpentry training course at Vocational Programs of Malawi and would like to continue her education and become an engineer. Bee expressed her desire to help others, “I want to continue with education so that I should help other people.”

**Participant (Cami).** Cami is 19-years-old and has been living at the Dzeleka Camp for approximately 1.5 years. She and her sister, Merlene, came from the Congo together. Both Cami

and Merlene attended secondary school in the Congo, but did not have the opportunity to complete studies to become teachers. Cami learned of the vocational training classes offered at the Vocational Programs of Malawi through attending church within the Dzeleka Camp. She and Merlene chose the bricklaying course. Cami expressed her desire to continue education. “I would like to continue education so that I can be an expert in building.” She also expressed her dreams for becoming a singer. She exclaimed, “I pray to God to help me be able to be the most well-known singer in the world.”

**Participant (Emere).** Emere is 20-years-old and came to the Dzeleka Camp from the Congo 3 years ago with her three siblings. Their mother is no longer living and it is unknown where their father lives or if he is still alive. Emere lives with her three siblings where her older brother is in charge of making the household decisions for the family. Emere is expecting her first baby in one month. Her smiles, when speaking of the baby, reveal her happiness about her new role of being a mother. Emere attended secondary school while living in the Congo, but like the other participants, she was unable to complete her schooling. She learned of the vocational programs being offered at the Vocational Programs of Malawi and completed the tailoring course. She envisions having her own work place and responds about her training, “I had that dream ever since I was young, to be in tailoring.”

**Participant (Genevieve).** Genevieve is 25-years-old and has two children. She arrived at the Dzeleka Camp 8 years ago with her four siblings. Her parents are not with them, nor does she have a husband. Genevieve makes the decisions for the household. While living in the Congo, Genevieve attended secondary school but was unable to complete her studies. After arriving at Dzeleka, Genevieve learned of the vocational programs being offered at the Vocational Programs of Malawi through other people at the Camp. She chose to train in tailoring because of

her love for the work. When asked about the tailoring program, she responded, “I loved the program and I am proud of sewing.”

**Participant (Irma).** At 18, Irma made the decision 4 years ago to travel alone from the Congo to the Dzeleka Camp. Irma had attended primary school only while in the Congo. She heard about the Vocational Programs of Malawi vocational training while attending church within the Camp. Irma is now 22-years-old and almost whispers when she speaks. Although very soft spoken, Irma lives independently and makes her own household decisions. She chose to participate in the vocational training and has completed the tailoring program. Irma states, “I want to do my own tailoring place. Before I knew nothing, but after doing my studies now I am capable of doing something.”

**Participant (Lorane).** Lorane came with her husband to the Dzeleka Refugee Camp 2 years ago. Lorane has five children, with three residing at Dzeleka and two who remained in the Congo. Lorane states that household decisions are made together with her husband. While in the Congo, Lorane did not work, but as she stated, “I have loved tailoring since I was young but did not get the opportunity.” She learned of the tailoring program offered at the Vocational Programs of Malawi from the church she attends within the Dzeleka Camp. When asked how the program has helped her, she responded, “I just wanted to finish my education. If the opportunity for education I can go in this area or another as well.” Lorane currently does part-time work for another tailoring shop.

**Participant (Maude).** Maude is 23-years-old and is from the Congo. She has been residing at the Dzeleka Camp for 3 years with four siblings. Their mother is no longer living and their father is not present in their lives. As with the others, they came to Dzeleka for protection from life-threatening conflict in the Congo. Maude lives with all of her siblings and her oldest



brother is in charge of making the household decisions. Before coming to Dzeleka, Maude attended secondary school but was unable to complete her studies. She was working to become a teacher. She learned of the vocational training programs at the Vocational Programs of Malawi while attending church within the Dzeleka Camp. Maude chose to learn tailoring because “ever since I was born that (tailoring) was my dream work, but I didn’t get the opportunity to learn it at Congo. But, when I came to Dzeleka, I found that opportunity and had to take it.”

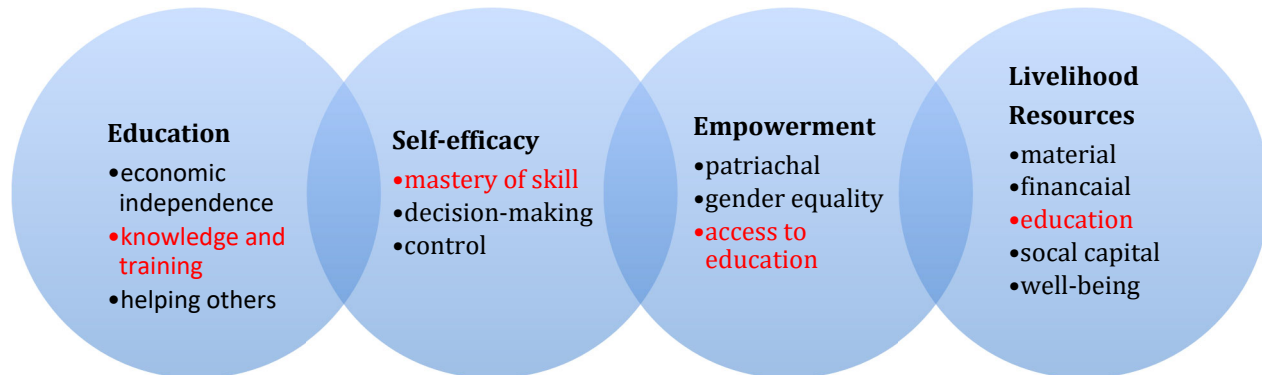
**Participant (Merlene).** Merlene came from the Congo to the Dzeleka Refugee Camp one and one-half years ago with her sister Cami. She and Cami have eleven siblings who are not living with them. They are not aware of where their parents are or if they are still alive. Merlene is 21-years-old and as the older sister of Cami, who is 19, makes the household decisions. Although, both Merlene and Cami have completed the bricklaying training, they are currently without work. Merlene and her sister received some secondary training and both had wanted to become teachers while living in the Congo. Merlene expressed, "I have feelings of doing great things in my life.”

**Participant (Nance).** Nance is 32-years-old and has a spouse and one child. She has been at Dzeleka for 2 years with no siblings or parents living within the Dzeleka Camp. She attended secondary school while living in the Congo, where she had wanted to become a teacher. Nance learned of the training courses offered by the Vocational Programs of Malawi and chose to take the course in tailoring. She had previous experience with tailoring while in the Congo, but had to stop due to a shortage of money. Nance stated that her husband makes the household decisions. Nance learned of the programs at the Vocational Programs of Malawi from other people within the Camp and immediately tried to enroll in the tailoring course. “In the future, I want to be the fashion maker. The one who does fashion style.”

## **Emergent Themes**

This section addresses the themes identified in order of the greatest occurrences as mentioned by the participants. Themes were analyzed in context of how these themes related back to the overarching questions of livelihood, self-efficacy, and empowerment of the participants. Analysis of the nine refugee women participant interviews employed the use of four primary theoretical frameworks assisting in the researcher's understanding and coding of participant responses in relation to these theories. After the first cycle of coding, 38 themes were identified. After, second coding cycle, these themes were condensed into four major themes with each of the major themes possessing subcategories where some of the subcategories overlapped with more than one major theme.

Four major themes emerged with associated subcategories listed in order of most occurrences as mentioned during interviews. The theme of education included subcategories of economic independence, knowledge, and helping others. The second major theme of self-efficacy included the subcategories of mastery of skills, trust in one's ability, and control over their situation. The third major theme of empowerment included subcategories of access to resources, improved decision-making, and gender equality. The fourth major theme of livelihood incorporated subcategories of resources (material, financial, educational), social capital, and well-being. With each major theme, some variation of the concept of education was observed as a subcategory of each major theme (or category), thus, linking all major categories through the component of education. These themes and subcategories are reflected in Figure 2.



*Figure 2:* Four major themes with subcategories

## Major Themes Discussion

The following sections discuss each of the four major themes with extractions from participant interviews to bring evidence and awareness of the participants' personal experiences relating to each major theme.

**Education.** The theme of education was articulated 30 times during the interviews with participants. The following sections discuss how the theme of education was expressed by the participants during the interviews. Participants articulated positive experiences of their vocational training resulting in three main subcategories: an opportunity for economic independence, gaining knowledge, and as a way help to others.

***Opportunity for economic independence.*** As noted by Sam, a programs coordinator at the Vocational Programs of Malawi, women are often left to the multitasking responsibilities of keeping the children and doing household work for the family. Participants responded positively in regard to training and viewed vocational training as a way to increase their knowledge and use their knowledge for income-producing activities. However, the participants did not affirm a feeling of imbalance in household responsibilities, rather their statements focused more on their

enthusiasm for future opportunities and independence brought by vocational training as evidenced by Emere's response, "With my education I should have a place of my own for working and have my own business."

***Gaining knowledge.*** Participants affirmed vocational training courses offered at the Vocational Programs of Malawi as a pathway to fulfill individual dreams and to expand their knowledge. As a refugee, and most notably a woman refugee, opportunities for vocational training are scarce in the Dowa District due to lack of material and financial and human resources as experienced in many countries of Africa (UNHCR, 2011a). In recent years, UNHCR and other NGOs have increased their focus on skills-based programs and are often implemented for specific groups, to include women. Vocational training or TVET training is being advocated as they are seen to promote self-reliance for the refugee (Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016). Participant responses reflected the program's objective to increase livelihood in terms of skills, income and well-being. Emere expressed her thoughts about her future dreams for education and a tailoring business, "I have come with three things: one with education, the second thing I should have a place of my own where I can be working, and to work hard with everything for my vision to come true." Genevieve, who also completed training in tailoring, exclaimed, "I got the knowledge I was looking for and so I got a lot of opportunities"

***Education as a way to help others.*** Participant responses reflected positively in regard to training. All participants viewed vocational training as a way to increase their knowledge and, in turn, use their knowledge for income-producing activities. Several of the participants expressed their desire to share their knowledge with others inside the camp. Merlene's comments revealed the positive outcomes for work and income as a brick layer, responding, "After I have gone to work, the money which I get paid buys the oil, clothes, shoes and even the food at home I

provide sometimes.” The importance of receiving income and helping others was voiced by almost all participants. Emere echoed Merlene’s positive feeling about work and income. Emere responded, “I was able to get money, for my stuff and even help with my relatives.” Maude expressed similar positive outcomes experienced through her vocational training, responding, “I received quality training in which I am able to teach others. So far, I am receiving a lot of customers within the camp. I am working with the neighbors which are living close to me.” Maude further elaborates about new work and as an opportunity to help others, “after finishing my vocation training, people are bringing a lot of clothing, even some for weddings! Wedding dresses and the one in which I am doing will be done for a wedding that is this Saturday.”

**Sustainable livelihoods.** Jacobsen (2014) In the context of the refugee, Jacobsen describes livelihood characteristics as being “more than material goods, they must include human capital such as health, education, skills and experience, and social capital” (p. 100). Emphasizing the role of social capital as a key component for sustainable livelihood, Robert Putnam’s (2000) theory on social capital bestows three facets of social capital for the refugee: social bonds, social bridges, and social links. Social bonds consist of relationships with relatives and other members of the same cultural or ethnic community as a possible source of emotional support for settling into their new environment. Social bridges are relationships of respect and friendliness observed between refugees and members of the host community as contributing to feeling at home. Social links are created through the involvement of state structures or government services in the new country enabling ease of integration (Agar & Strang, 2008). Boateng (2009) emphasizes social capital as of significant importance to immigrants and refugees because it can “contribute to economic survival and success, even though they may lack economic resources, such as skills, education, and financial capital” (p. 62).

The following sections are presented to gain understanding about the three subcategories related to the major theme of sustainable livelihood: access to resources, social capital, and feelings of well-being.

*Access to material resources.* Resources, or rather lack of resources, clearly impacted economic independence for refugee women as well as the entire refugee population, within the Camp. Participant interviews consistently revealed a lack of material resources which was particularly noted with Lorane's comment when asked what she felt were the challenges keeping her from making a better living. Lorane's response was simple and concise, "The first challenge is poverty, that's THE challenge." Lorane's short, yet poignant, comment brought to the forefront the significant and overarching challenge that confronts everyone, not just the refugee population, but the entire population extending throughout the host country of Malawi; the challenge of general poverty in the broadest of definitions.

Participants repeatedly echoed a concern for lack of material resources throughout the interviews, as evidenced by Bee's comment, "We are limited in the camp and don't have materials or tools for working." Lorane expressed the challenges she faces for obtaining a machine she needs as a tailor, "I don't have the machine but some people do for me and I do my work there." For Irma's work in tailoring, she also must borrow a machine. Irma states, "I go there and I borrow the machine and I take it back." Lack of material resources many times results from the lack of financial resources. The cycle of limited financial resources circles back to the issue of limited material resources and vice versa, which in turn creates a cycle of scarcity for both material and financial resources.

*Access to financial resources for work.* In terms of financial resources, the participants' ability to pursue income-producing activities was mentioned 11 times over the course of the

interviews. Each participant voiced their frustration of lack of funding for tools, machines, and materials for making clothes. Genevieve expressed her financial concerns for purchasing materials and tools, “I’m doing work with other people, and would like to have my own business. Income can be more if I get my own machines.” Irma spoke of the common problem of sharing equipment and income when working for others in the Camp. Irma expressed her concern, “I don’t have my own business. I get paid for the work and half of the money I take to the owner and the other I benefit.” Emere explains her work situation to improve her income, “Because of the situation I’m living in the camp and I’m working under someone, the amount of money that she (the employer) wants and if she doesn’t give it, she gives me the money she wants to give. So, it can be either enough or less. It depends on that person.” Positive remarks about creating income, Emere shares “I am sewing now the clothes for her own, for some relatives and for other people.” Other positive remarks regarding income-producing abilities were shared by Maude, “So far, I am receiving a lot of customers within the camp.”

*Access to financial resources for business loans.* Employee interviews revealed the need to create a sustainable method to provide business loans to vocational training graduates. According to James, the current challenges for providing business loans are two-fold. First, “funding through donations and grants need to increase to fill current needs.” Second, the rate of micro-loan repayments for business startups creates a negative flow for availability of loans for new applicants. This challenge is evidenced by Irma who has a vision of owning a tailoring place at the Camp. Irma says, “The tailoring work has improved my economic situation as I have been able to generate income. However, the problem is money for a business.”

*Access to resources for education.* Education presents itself as both a challenge and an opportunity for the refugee population. As mentioned in discussion with the Vocational

Programs of Malawi employees, there is a shortage for funding vocational and university scholarships. As mentioned by a Vocational Programs of Malawi employee, there are 170 applicants with approximately 140 intake each 6-month cycle. Merlene reveals her challenge for educational financing, “I desire to further my education but don’t have the funds or knowledge of a school that teaches engineering.”

In the short existence of vocational programs at the Vocational Programs of Malawi, the need for trained teachers and adequate facilities are already a challenge to address the capacity needs for enrollment applications for vocational training programs. Students are placed on a revolving list and called by the vocational directors when there is space in the program to which they have applied. With a limit of twenty students per class, student admission to a program may be deferred for a year. In discussion with program coordinators, tuition costs were estimated at approximately \$8.00 USD per course. The researcher learned that the average daily wage for Malawians is equivalent to approximately \$1.25 USD, and much less, if any, for the refugee population. Thus, most often refugees rely on tuition assistance from individual donors or the Vocational Programs of Malawi scholarships to pay for their vocational training.

*Social capital.* Putnam (2000) states social capital consists of social bonds or relationships of emotional support. Second, social capital develops in the form of social bridges, or relationships of respect and friendliness with others. Third, social capital develops with social links, which is built through relationships with state structures or government services. The positive impact of social capital is apparent through the participant responses regarding the importance of networking within the church community or informally within groups about certain opportunities for training and for work. The faith community within the camp serves as a place for support for the participants, in the way of communication about opportunities for the



people residing within Dzeleka. Participants expressed their relationship with the church as a way to network and learn about new opportunities such as the vocational training offered at the Vocational Programs of Malawi facility. For example, Cami stated, “I heard about the training program at my church, Zambi Mala, meaning God is Good.” Participant responses also revealed their desire to help family and others in the camp by sharing their knowledge and income. As heard from Lorane, “Now I am seeing a lot of differences because I am capable of helping family. So, when I get called to work, I get paid and I help with the family too.” The participants have also expressed the negative consequences of social capital through their comments as expressed regarding loss of family. Merlene responded, “I have 11 siblings, only Cami is with me. I don’t know where my parents are living.”

***Well-being.*** Well-being, as influenced by livelihood and social capital factors, was viewed by the researcher through the lens of the Women’s Refugee Commission’s “Well-being and Adjustment Index” which encapsulates 12 indicators for well-being. For the purpose of this study, the researcher focused on the specific well-being indicator referring to the participants’ feelings of hope about their goals and their hope for the future (Women’s Refugee Commission, 2017).

All participants, regardless of their current livelihood situation, held positive feelings about their vision and hope for the future. When Merlene was asked what she had gained from the program, she commented, “The program has given me experience, knowledge and I can help others.” Gaining economic independence through the ability to work and make her own money revealed a sense of hope for Maude’s feelings about her future. Maude exclaimed, “When I get the money, I can open a big business inside the camp and other places. I can have a business there. It’s a matter of creating visions.”

**Self-efficacy.** Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1994) viewed perceived self-efficacy as "one's belief in about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives" (Bandura, 2010, p.1). Participants actively sought opportunities to pursue their education and have expressed a belief in their abilities to succeed. As a result of their education and the subsequent work opportunities, they have expressed a sense of mastery in their abilities and confidence in their ability to transcend or overcome difficult situations. Bandura (2010) describes four ways of acquiring self-efficacy with the most effective being mastery of a skill. Mastery of skill is followed by what is known as social modeling of the skill by someone similar to the person learning the skill. The third way of gaining a sense of self-efficacy is from persuasive language of encouragement with the fourth way of creating self-efficacy being the reduction of stress related to acquiring the new skill.

Maude provided insight to her feeling of self-efficacy, "Finishing my vocational training people are bringing a lot of clothing even some for weddings and the one in which I am doing will be done for the wedding that is this Saturday. Vocational training has given me confidence to do weddings." Genevieve explained her feelings of competence as a result of completing her training, "Now I am able to cut the clothes and sew. Other people they can wear and they are happy when I do the work. That's giving me more confidence." Bee revealed her sense of mastery and capabilities in her comments about knowing her trade in carpentry, "I know the cost of wood, nails, and the amount to be paid. I know the work and learned it very well. I understand the work so through that I would make decisions."

**Empowerment.** Agot (2008) describes empowerment as "those who are successful in their own right and by their own (albeit enabled) efforts" (p. 296). Longwe's women's empowerment framework is used to assess displaced women and identifies the five dimensions

of empowerment as “access, conscientization, mobilization, control and gender equality mainstreaming” (UNHCR, 2001, p. 5).

In reference to Longwe’s empowerment framework, participants shared a sense of empowerment in regard to their access and completion of the vocational training, which afforded them new knowledge and skills. Interview responses reflected education as having a profound impact on the lives of the participants. Formal learning, through vocational training, allowed participants independence with the ability to earn an income, increase ownership in decision-making, and increase their awareness of the inequities of education and work as an African woman.

The access to economic independence, and as a result of their vocational training, gave African refugee women a sense of ownership in their ability to impact their livelihood and to have access to others in a positive manner. Maude, aligned with other participants, expressed her feelings of empowerment after completing training stating, “After my education, I feel empowered that I am able to teach it to other people and to do a lot of things on my own” Giving credit to their education, several participants expressed a new sense of empowerment which allowed them to redefine their lives and advocate for their future.

***Patriarchal society.*** Fiddian-Qasmiyeh (2014) urges a “shift from the western feminist definition of patriarchy as power of men over women to recognize a plurality of patriarchal systems as a more holistic approach by incorporating an international concept of patriarchy” (p. 404). For this study, it was deemed appropriate to recognize the plurality of patriarchal systems, as the African cultures are not homogenous; rather, there exists a multitude of diverse cultures within each country and should be acknowledged as such.

In confirmation of the existence of a patriarchal society, participant responses indicated

household decisions continue to be made primarily by the males within the family or in the absence of the male, the oldest sibling fulfills this role. Undoubtedly, this impacts the level of freedom experienced by African women. Irma and Merlene are the exception from the others regarding decision-making as Irma is alone and Merlene, being older than her sister, makes the decisions within the household. Irma came to Dzeleka alone and when she was asked who made the decisions in her household, she responds almost in a whisper, “I make the decisions.” Despite a quiet demeanor, Irma’s independent decision-making, speaks in favor of her inner-strength. For Merlene, as the older sister of Cami, and in the absence of siblings and parents, she proudly proclaimed her role as head of household with, “I make the decisions for the household.”

***Gender equality.*** Gender-based violence can have a profound impact on the lives of refugee women. Thus, livelihood programs, such as vocational training, need to be effective and promote independence while ensuring protection of refugee women. According to the Women’s Refugee Commission (2011) publication, *Preventing Gender-based Violence, Building Livelihoods*, gender equality and violence can be informed through five key characteristics. The first is physical, beating or forced labor; the second is sexual, rape or transactional sex; the third is psychological, through intimidation or threat of physical harm or verbal abuse; the fourth characteristic is economic, the lack of access to rights and education, or withholding money; and the fifth characteristic is socio-cultural refers to discrimination, political marginalization or forced marriage (Women’s Refugee Commission, 2011, p. 4).

The experiences of these women demonstrate that, although the participants have gained a sense of empowerment through the completion of vocational training, change must occur in order for gender equality to be fully established in a traditionally patriarchal society (Longwe, 1991; UNHCR, 2011a). For example, Bee expressed her reluctance to check why she hasn’t been

paid for work, “We were called there (Jesuit Refugee Service) to do the chairs for the students. We were told we would be paid but now it is 5 months.” Asking Bee about her about her pay, she responded, “Out of three I was the only woman that worked for there.” For reasons not articulated, Bee has not received her pay; yet, she is reluctant to ask the other refugee men. Evidencing the desire for an equitable work environment, participants Cami and Merlene, who happen to be sisters, were the only women enrolled in the bricklaying course during their time of training. Merlene felt, as a woman, it was important to take bricklaying because “before many doing brick laying are men. So, I thought I have as a girl to make a difference.”

### **Conclusion**

This chapter began with an introduction to the research study, followed by a summary of the research design and method of collection. The chapter then gave a summary of how the analysis was approached employing Attribute, In Vivo, and Concept coding to provide first cycle themes. A second coding cycle, of Pattern coding and theming of the data was utilized to organize and subsume data into four major themes. Findings concluded with a discussion of the four major themes of education, livelihood, self-efficacy, and empowerment with associated subcategories. The following chapter will present each research question through discussion and observations from the researcher’s journal as well as exploring the relation of theory to each of the research questions. Discussion of the research questions are followed by implications from the study, recommendations for further research, and the conclusion.

## **Summary, Discussion, and Conclusion**

The previous chapter discussed the findings from the data collection for the phenomenological case study which explored the vocational training experiences of nine African refugee women. Findings began with a summary of the methodology and the process of analysis for the study. Findings from the data resulted in four major themes and related subcategories for education, livelihood, self-efficacy and empowerment. Each major theme was discussed and included significant quotes from participants of the study.

This chapter begins with a summary of the study followed by a discussion of each research question, linking related theory and major themes to each research question. Following the discussion of the research questions, implications for practice are discussed with recommendations for further research and final conclusions are presented.

### **Summary of the Study**

Sub-Saharan Africa currently hosts more than 26% of the world's refugees (UNHCR, 2018a). Thus, it is critical to understand the educational opportunities accessible for refugees in Africa, especially in the context of African women who are historically excluded as the primary target for education. In recent years, Malawi's vocation training and secondary education institutions have centered on activities to increase opportunities for formal secondary education of both refugee and Malawian women (UNESCO, 2008).

The purpose of this study was to explore the perception of empowerment and self-efficacy of African refugee women as a result of completing vocational training provided by the Vocational Programs of Malawi, a nonprofit organization located near Lilongwe, Malawi. A qualitative phenomenological case study explored the individual experiences of nine African refugee women focusing on how their experiences in completing a vocational training program

have influenced their lives in terms of self-efficacy and empowerment in creating a livelihood.

Research questions included the following:

- 1) How have livelihood experiences impacted female participants who reside in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp?
- 2) How has vocational training contributed to the economic advancement of female participants who reside in Dzeleka Refugee camp?
- 3) How do female participants, who reside in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp, describe their feelings of self-efficacy and empowerment in relation to their present lives?

Data analysis included manual transcribing of data and manual coding using interview data, journal notes, and memos as part of the transcribing process. After first and second coding cycles, data was organized into themes, resulting in four major themes with related subcategories for each major theme.

### **Study Discussion**

This study brought understanding of how African refugee women, who reside in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp, perceived their education experiences. As evidenced in the responses from participants, the study revealed education to be a key component in providing agency for women to develop a sense of self-efficacy and increase their level of empowerment, which ultimately served to improve their livelihood capabilities. The discussion centers on the three overarching research questions in which discourse incorporates journal and observation notes recorded by the researcher. Following observations, the discussion incorporates the study's theoretical frameworks as they related to each research question. Theoretical frameworks included the sustainable livelihood framework, Bandura's self-efficacy theory, Longwe's empowerment framework, and Hudson-Weems's womanist theory. Subsequently, findings were

discussed in response to the research questions. The following sections are dedicated to the researcher's understanding and knowledge of each research question garnered as a result of this study.

### **Research Question One**

**Discussion.** “How have livelihood experiences impacted female participants who reside in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp?” The concept of livelihood at the most basic level consists of access to tangible assets such as food, shelter, and water. Even for the most essential livelihood resources, participants were dependent upon government agencies such as the UNHCR and other nongovernmental agencies (NGOs), for the basic needs (UNHCR, 2014a). For the participants of this study, their formal vocational training provided a means to construct a living using new physical skills, knowledge, and creativity, and a means to help others within the Camp. The participants arrived at Dzeleka with no assets or the ability to provide an income for themselves. Similar to the experiences of other refugees, the participants experienced a loss of home, assets, friends, sometimes family, and loss of their country.

As part of regaining refugees' livelihood, education is essential to improve opportunities for work and ultimately improved income capabilities. Unfortunately, refugees face challenges to obtain education, as in the case of this study, where there are more applicants for enrollment than admissions intake. As stated by one employee, there are typically 700 hundred applications for each intake period with a capacity for 140 students for each intake. However, the recent expansion of programs at the Vocational Programs of Malawi, grant opportunities with other institutions, and donor scholarships bring hope and opportunity for the refugees. Even with vocational training, the participants' livelihood capabilities remain limited due to Camp restrictions on work outside of the Dowa District. Lack of resources perpetuate a continued



dependency for food and other essentials from the United Nations and other nongovernmental organizations.

**Observations about resources.** Observations at the Camp revealed limited provisions for plumbing and housing material. Facilities, in general, were minimal in the ability to accommodate families and groups with special health and disability needs. Additionally, the camp, itself, must rely on the United Nations for supplies that, as James stated in his interview, “people they are dependent on receiving what food, their daily needs from United Nations, which I feel like they don’t, even the UN, don’t meet their needs.” Although the researcher did not observe any of lack of basic needs within the Camp, it was evident people were in need of financial resources of funding for education and materials or for participants to have their own business. Within the Dzeleka Camp, tailoring shops were observed to be small with two to three people who worked for an owner and shared the profits of work with no carpentry or brick laying activities observed at that time.

Lack of material resources were observed, yet, the abundance of human resources for overcoming daily challenges were evident through the work and persistence to help each other with repair of machinery and caring for the sick such as when one of the participants became ill shortly after her interview. The resilience of the people within Dzeleka was evident as they took in stride the shortage of maize, difficulty in obtaining clean water, and lack of any plumbing system. Children and adults with special needs within Dzeleka were looked after with the most meager of material and physical resources.

For the people of Malawi, there seemed to be few corporate opportunities; rather, there seems an abundance of government jobs and NGOs. Even with the lack of economic stability and resources, there appeared to be an openness and enthusiasm to entrepreneurial ideas (and

freedom from so many regulations seen in the United States). However, much of individual commerce seemed to occur within someone's home such as a hair salon or with roadside stands selling bananas, avocados and Wi-Fi to customers from their cars. The poverty was evident as one traveled through the city as observed with the poor condition of streets, buildings in need of repair, and empty, unfinished apartment buildings. Many people were on foot throughout the day and into the night along the main highways. Bike owners sat ready to take people places, and if one was fortunate to have a bike, it was usually the standard black bike.

Malawi literally depends on generators for energy which creates complex issues for internet and commerce, with daily outages sometimes lasting up to a week. Despite the lack of material resources, there seemed to be a wealth of good-will as all trading was done with a generous Malawian smile. Disparities among the people of Malawi were evident, which extended to cultural lines being drawn between the working people of Malawi and refugee population. Not surprisingly, education was viewed, by many as the solution to their socioeconomic conditions and served as a primary topic of conversation with the refugee population as well as the people of Malawi. Regarding the participants, education appeared to have made a positive impact to their livelihood by providing participants with new skills and training to create, at minimum, income-generating possibilities. Although not all participants gained full-time employment, they expressed a sense of pride from having gained business skills for negotiating rental of equipment and how to negotiate within the market for the sale of their newly acquired skills. Despite the challenges of limited opportunities for work, participants expressed a belief in and positive feelings for their future. In conversation with participants, and other women who have received training from the Vocational Programs of Malawi, vocational training was perceived as a positive resource in the Dowa District. Although participants did not

always receive immediate work from their training, it did bring new skills and new thoughts about how to use existing resources and skills for income-producing activities.

**Linking theory to research question one.** The relation to the first research question, “How have livelihood experiences impacted female participants who reside in Dzeleka refugee camp?” To begin the discussion of relevant theory to the first research question, several characteristics from Hudson-Weems’s (1993) African womanist theory were evidenced throughout participant responses. Primarily, three characteristics from this theory were notably present in relation to the participants’ livelihood experiences.

***Hudson-Weems’s womanist perspective.*** The study findings proposed that Hudson-Weems’s Womanist perspective was exhibited primarily through participants being self-defining, adaptable, and nurturing which were relative to the participants’ livelihood experiences. Self-defining, in context of Hudson-Weems’s theory, was expressed through participants’ pursuit in developing skills for independence and taking a risk to achieve their goals. Several participants reflected self-defining quality in their dedication to the completion of training that was not traditionally considered women’s work, such as carpentry and brick laying, as portrayed with Merlene’s comment, “The training, the vocation training which I learned with, I am now capable of building house on my own and now I can do everything that a man can do in terms of building.” The second marked characteristic evidenced by participants was the quality of being adaptable. The participants showed a willingness to be adaptable to create innovative ways to make a living and to adjust where needed to enhance work opportunities, such as renting equipment or working for others while waiting for their own business. Nance evidenced adaptable qualities in her response about cooking gallettes as a way to make money. She said, “Cooking those gallettes, that was a matter of, I didn’t go to school for that one, that was a matter

of knowledge in which I just used my own so I would be getting something. Right now, I cook, I do make gallettes.” The third characteristic evidenced by participants was their nurturing qualities. The participant responses reflected Hudson-Weems’s definition of the African women’s nurturing role with family and community as evidenced in the priority of family and the refugee community’s well-being, as expressed by Lorane. “The only thing I am capable to do is sewing which I am able to do now, so when I get a machine, I think it will be helpful for me and for the family, and I will help others which I love also to help others.”

***Sustainable livelihoods framework.*** In reference to research question one, the sustainable livelihoods framework encompasses more than material goods, it includes human capital such as health, education, skills and experience, and social capital (Calhoun, 2010b). In viewing livelihood through this particular lens, livelihood opportunities were most evident in the participants’ access to education. Vocational training was a positive influence on the participants’ livelihood experience, bringing new skills and work experiences to include opportunities for income-producing activities as evidenced with Maude’s response to her training, “Ok, so far after finishing my vocation training, people are bringing a lot of clothing, even some for weddings and the one in which I am doing will be done for wedding that is this Saturday.” In addition, as part of the livelihood experiences of the participants, their training brought opportunity for new relationships in the form of social capital. These new networks of friends afforded the opportunity to share materials for work and equipment for new business endeavors. As expressed by Irma, “I get paid for the work and half of the money I take to the owner and the other I benefit.”

The limited institutions providing formal education were, and remain, challenged for funding tuition and facility improvement. However, the recent expansion of programs at the

Vocational Programs of Malawi, grant opportunities increased opportunity for the refugees. In discussion with program coordinators, tuition costs were estimated at approximately \$8 USD per course. With the average daily wage for Malawians equivalent to approximately \$1.25 USD and much less, if any, for the refugee population, tuition can be unobtainable for an aspiring student. Thus, most often refugees have relied on tuition assistance from individual donors or the Vocational Programs of Malawi scholarships to pay for their vocational training. Participants and other refugees expressed the need of funding to start a business, such as a micro-business loan. Participants, and others, have been challenged for economic independence due to a lack of financial resources to purchase sewing machines and carpentry and bricklaying tools as evidenced in Cami's comment, "I don't have materials for building if someone want their home built. I have only one tool and borrow the others." Further evidence of lack of resources was expressed by Genevieve, "I don't have money and I don't have my own machines. Even equipment or tools I don't have."

***Social capital.*** Social capital, a component of livelihood, involves the ability to access and form networks with others within and outside of the refugee camp. Due to the existing local policy in Malawi, refugees are limited in making use of their prior skills, credentials, and ultimately to develop working networks outside the Camp. At the local level, refugee policy is non-existent as it remains in draft form. Currently in Malawi, the Refugees Act of 1989 is the only legal framework for refugees at the domestic level. The Government of Malawi's current encampment policy restricts freedom of movement and the right to employment limits refugees' opportunities to earn a living. As expressed by Maude, "Because of the difficulties which are in the camp, it is not simple to do that big business within the camp, but when I get the opportunity to take it to another place I can do that."

The refugees at the Dzeleka Camp have no restrictions of movement to travel within the Dowa District where the Camp is located. In order to travel out of the district, they are required to obtain permission from the Camp administration. The Camp administration as well as the refugees indicated that obtaining travel permission is quite easy, and it takes only a few minutes.

The livelihood activities of vocational training provided participants with opportunities for social networks and friendships through their training. It was not uncommon to see participants go hand-in-hand or arm-in-arm as they walked back to camp. The faith community appeared to be an important source of social capital, where prayer and singing were observed to be common daily traditions at the nonprofit. Several participants were missing family members due to separation or death as they sought asylum. Many times, this loss can result in long-lasting psychological conditions and health issues for the refugee families. Despite their loss, participants appeared resilient and expressed a positive outlook for their future. Research reveals educational institutions as effective responders in identifying mental health and those at risk through employee development of relationships with refugees (Bhugra et al., 2010).

***Well-being.*** The Women Refugee Commission’s “Well-Being and Adjustment Index” identifies 12 indicators related to well-being in the context of refugee livelihood (Women’s Refugee Commission, 2017). As part of the analysis, the researcher focused on the indicator of feelings of hope as an indication of well-being through the analysis of participant responses relating to their personal vision and goals. Participant responses revealed a positive view of the future despite their current circumstances. They expressed hopeful feelings for current work opportunities and hope with future goals, which presented as a positive outlook for well-being within this particular study. All participants expressed hope and plans for their future as evidenced with Maude in her hope for the future, “When I get the money, I can open a big

business inside the camp and other places. I can have a business there. It's a matter of creating visions."

***Bandura's theory of self-efficacy.*** Bandura's (1994) theory was evidenced with participant responses expressing their feeling of confidence due to the mastery of their vocational training and the opportunity to use their skill. Bandura claims mastery is the most effective way to develop self-efficacy. The participants expressed confidence and pride from their skills, giving them the ability to sew clothes with tailoring skills, building a home with brick laying skills, or building furniture with carpentry skills. Bee expressed her confidence about her carpentry skills, "I know the work, I learned it very well and I understand the work so through this I would make more decisions." The mastery of new skills and acquiring new knowledge is central to developing self-efficacy. Bandura explains that self-efficacy is also achieved through social modeling (Artino, 2012). The researcher observed positive role models in the tailoring classroom, where participants had the opportunity to witness mothers bringing their children to class while learning new skills in hope of future work and income. Artino (2012) states self-efficacy is "people's judgements of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (p. 2). In support of Bandura's theory, the participants expressed belief in their ability to perform new skills, and, important to Bandura's theory, the participants expressed their visions and desires to obtain individual goals, as expressed with Maude's comments:

I received quality training in which I am able to teach others. I am receiving a lot of customers within the camp and I am working with the neighbors which are living close to me. My dream is to open a big business within the camp but when I get the opportunity to take it to another place I can do that.

Self-efficacy was evidenced by participant responses about feeling competent in the mastery of their vocational training. As noted earlier, observations revealed participants' training

at the Vocational Programs of Malawi as a place to establish new relationships with employees and to develop a network of friends to share common goals. Nance expressed the importance of these relationships, “I would love to have my own business, but, I prefer to work in a group because to share the ideas.” As Putnam’s (2010) theory on social capital (2000) suggests, these types of relationships make it possible to improve mental health issues from chronic stress and to build networks for advancing future work opportunities. Thereby, relationships prove to assist in diminishing stress and facilitate participants' feelings of control over their future, which Bandura (1994) asserts is a significant influence for building self-efficacy (Bhugra et al., 2010; Putnam, 2000).

*Longwe’s women’s empowerment framework.* The UNHCR acknowledges that women’s independence, self-reliance, and their leadership and decision-making abilities are relevant to the promotion of women’s empowerment (UNCHR 2003a). Longwe’s empowerment framework links the participants’ livelihood experiences through the characteristic of access, with emphasis of access to education, equal treatment, or a balance between men and women where one does not dominate over the other (UNHCR, 2001). Supporting Longwe’s dimension of gender equality, participants shared a common interest in receiving equal opportunities for independent decision-making, making a living, and creating income opportunities as communicated by Emere about her vocational training:

I am able to get money, to my stuffs and even help with my relatives. Before I was not learned at this school, I was not able to buy the things of my own, but now after finishing, I am able to get money to buy soap, to buy oil, to buy other things of my needs.

Furthermore, as part of Longwe’s empowerment indicators, Krause (2014) maintains that forced displacement can break patriarchal patterns resulting in refugees redefining their gender relations while in camps and settlements which could lead to women’s empowerment.



Participants expressed gender role shifts contributed to feelings of empowerment as a result of achieving skills considered to be traditionally reserved for men (Women’s Refugee Commission, 2013). These feelings of empowerment and expressing gender role shifts were echoed by

Merlene:

So, before many doing brick-laying are men, so I thought I have as a girl to make a difference. Because the ones who were doing the work of brick-laying were only men. I have built two houses and I have feelings of doing great things in my life. I am capable of doing anything but the equipment I don’t have.

Empowerment, in relation to participant livelihood experiences, was notably exhibited through the participants’ access of resources and social capital. Longwe’s women’s empowerment calls for access to resources such as health, education, and income producing activities (UNHCR, 2001). Participants were provided the opportunity for education and were able to learn valuable skills they could use to produce income. Additionally, the participants exhibited the fortitude to bring change to their lives by pursuing an education and assuming agency over the inevitable changes of decision-making, and leadership roles, necessary for their livelihood. These qualities were aligned with Longwe’s women’s empowerment framework, and, as recognized by the UNHCR (2003b) statement, “independence and economic self-reliance and their leadership and decision-making abilities” are essential to the success of women’s empowerment” (p. 37). Irma expressed her feelings of empowerment with, “Now I do hire the machine and I do their work. I want to do my own tailoring place. When I get the money, I can at the camp.”

## **Research Question Two**

**Discussion.** “How has vocational training contributed to the economic advancement of female participants who reside in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp?” Vocational training contributed to the economic advancement of a small population of women residing within the Camp. Access

to attending vocational training was challenged in the availability of training courses, limited space for students, and the related tuition fees to attend courses. After receiving vocational training, participants were faced with the challenges of the costs of material and tools needed to engage in their new skills. Several participants expressed that they had networked with others in the camp to access machines for work. A few participants expressed they were able to make a net-income after paying for expenses related to rent of machinery. A couple of participants expressed they were currently not able to obtain work related to their skills but found their training valuable and were hopeful to obtain the tools and materials to start their own business in the future. As expressed by Nance,

I was very grateful and thank God for the training. It added something that was lacking in my life. So far, I am doing nothing. I don't have my own machine, but I was thinking if I got the machine I would continue. It is not difficult to save for a machine if I was working, I could have that amount.

Participants expressed that they had received quality training and through their training they were able to buy food, clothing, and other basic needs they were not capable of doing before their training. Most importantly, the training facility has provided skills to people within the Camp to include women and has intentionally targeted an increase in the number of women participants, thereby giving more women opportunities for economic independence. Regardless of limited resources, the participants were innovative in finding work in their field of training. One even stated that she was not working for pay, but for the knowledge she gained from the tailoring work. Economic advancement may not immediately be realized for some participants; however, their comments revealed a persistence and newfound sense of confidence to improve their economic independence through their future goals for work or continuing education in their respective training.

**Observations regarding vocational training.** The Dzeleka Refugee Camp, the Vocational Programs of Malawi, and the Jesuit Refugee Services are all located on the same highway very close to each other. In fact, Jesuit Refugee Services is within the Camp or appears as if it is. The road was filled with refugees who have received permission to leave Camp for the day. They were walking, riding bikes, or taking the minibus located just outside of Camp. On occasion, I walked this road as well, either to meet with one of the employees, or for travel to and from my visit with the Jesuit Refugee Services.

During my time at the Vocational Programs of Malawi, I met several employees who were refugees living at Dzeleka. A few of the employees were a little reluctant to speak with me, but, for the most part they seemed very eager to say hello and to visit with me. With my first introduction to Bernadette, the tailoring instructor, who also resides at Dzeleka, she was busy working in the tailoring room teaching other ladies to cut patterns. Two babies sat on the floor while their mother was involved with learning the skills of tailoring. The student rarely looked up or acknowledged her babies. Bernadette stared at me in silence when we first met. However, by the end of the day, she opened up to me and became very warm and friendly. Bernadette measured me for a blouse that I agreed to pay her for at her tailoring shop located within Dzeleka Camp. The next week, one of the employees and I visited Bernadette's shop in Dzeleka and she greeted me with a huge smile at the door of her shop within the Camp. She and her husband worked together, along with another employee, in their tailoring shop which is adjacent to their small home. She had finished my blouse and seemed very proud of her work. The employee working in the shop was part-time with the use of one of Bernadette's two machines. Anyone with a tailoring position at Dzeleka was considered fortunate due to limited resources. Upon entering the shop, it was apparent they lacked physical space for work with a limited supply of

the African fabric, known as chicinga, to offer customers. Chicinga could be bought at local markets and many times the customers provided the cloth for tailoring work. Even more challenging for the participants was the lack of financial resources for materials and tools after their training. Bernadette, as an instructor, expressed the difficulty in obtaining sewing machines and the repair of machines.

Upon further observation at the Camp, the researcher found the refugee community eager to work and to please their customers. As example, when my blouse was found to be a little tight, Bernadette immediately began to remove the stitching on my blouse to make the needed adjustments. This work ethic appears to be a common trait as the researcher also observed this trait in the restaurant at the Camp where the owner and the help were focused on pleasing the customers who came for lunch. All assistance to customers came with a smile. However, upon leaving through the backway of the restaurant, the truth of life in the Camp became quite real upon seeing one wash-tub for the cleaning of dishes with no running-water. The researcher was reminded of the reality of water at the Camp. It is a highly treasured commodity for every-day living and can only be obtained through the trail leading to specific water stations near the Camp.

**Linking theory to research question two.** “How has vocational training contributed to the economic advancement of female participants who reside in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp?” The sustainable livelihood framework calls for programs that “seek to increase the capacity of households and individuals to provide for themselves by protecting or enhancing their income, skills, and assets in ways that support their own priorities and goals” (Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016, p. 4). As stated in the discussion, resources for both education and business were needed to help fund refugee tuition, materials, and equipment for business start-ups. Even with completion of

vocational training, participants struggled to obtain an income because they lack the financial resources to purchase sewing machines, carpentry, and bricklaying tools. Regardless of the participants' lack of resources, they expressed their opportunity for vocational training had a positive impact for their livelihood capabilities through learning of new skills, application these new skills, and the establishment of new friends related to their training. Intrinsically, the participants gained more than skills, they gained a new sense of competence and control over their lives which also had a positive influence on their livelihood.

***Sustainable livelihoods framework.*** The vocational training, applicable to this study, was designed to help refugees gain knowledge, skills, and income-producing activities. Participants were able to acquire new knowledge and several were able to achieve an improved level of economic independence. As a refugee, livelihood activities are permitted in the region just outside of Camp, within the rural area of the Dowa District, where there are limited opportunities for work. Despite challenges for work, the participants have built social capital through the sharing of materials, working for another person, or creating innovative ways to produce income. The participant responses reflected an entrepreneurial spirit, such as one participant's start-up business to sell baked goods at the vocational training facility, as expressed by Nance in an earlier comment, "I didn't go to school for that one (making gallettes), that was a matter of knowledge in which I just used my own so I would be getting something." It is becoming increasingly necessary to find ways to create work outside of the Camp within the host community. Revisions to the Malawi encampment policy will most likely shape the opportunities for future livelihood activities for the refugee community outside of the Camp.

***Social capital.*** Social capital, a key tenant in the sustainable livelihoods theory, does not directly provide for basic needs of the refugees; rather, it is the creation of social networks where

pathways for income-producing activities may be developed. Social networks were observed with the lasting relationships participants had developed with the vocational training employees that extended after completion of training. These social bonds or relationships outside a refugee community can be a valuable source of emotional support for settling into the refugee's new environment and to facilitate integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Pittaway, Muli & Shteir, 2009; Smit, 2015). Nance's response evidenced the importance of social capital, "I just heard (about the training) from people and I came straight here to register. The first time I wasn't taken, I wasn't taken for a second time, then I was helping Sam (employee) and was taken."

Social capital involves the ability to access and form networks with others, within and outside of the refugee Camp. Due to the existing local policy in Malawi, refugees are limited in making use of their prior skills, credentials, and, ultimately to develop working networks outside Camp. At the local level, refugee policy is non-existent as it remains in draft form. A national migration policy which serves as the umbrella of refugee policy and funded by the International Monetary Fund is only at the consultation level. This implies that the Refugees Act of 1989 is the only legal framework for refugees at the domestic level. The Government of Malawi's encampment policy restricts freedom of movement and the right to employment limits refugees' opportunities to earn a living. As previously noted, the refugees at the Dzeleka Camp have no restrictions of movement to travel within the Dowa District where the Camp is located. In order to travel out of the district, they are required to obtain permission from the Camp administration. The Camp administration as well as the refugees indicated that obtaining travel permission is quite easy and takes only a few minutes. However, there remains little opportunity for work as the Dowa District is a rural area with little industry. As one employee mentioned, one possibility is to engage in the agricultural sector to increase production of food for the refugee population.

The ability to engage with the outside community is critical for building the necessary social network and relationships for economic sustainability as well as providing for the overall well-being of the refugee population.

***Well-being.*** Access to adequate nutrition, health-care, and shelter are recognized in research as significant indicators of well-being for refugees within a camp. Well-being, as part of the analysis, the researcher chose to focus on the indicator of feelings of hope as an indication of well-being through the analysis of participant responses relating to their personal vision and goals. All participant responses revealed a positive view of their future despite their current circumstances. For example, Genevieve expresses hope with, “I got the knowledge I was looking for what I go so I got a lot of opportunities. I loved the program and I am proud of sewing. I dream to have my own business place in tailoring or another business like the business of selling things or clothes.”

***Bandura’s self-efficacy theory.*** The theme of self-efficacy was demonstrated through participants’ comments regarding their positive feelings after completion of their training. Participants expressed their feelings of competence in their new skills and the ability to maneuver in the business world by estimating costs for their work and materials, negotiating work agreements, and even continuing their education to help others. This was revealed by Bee’s comments, “I want to continue with my education to be an engineer so I should help others.” Irma also reveals an ability to maneuver in the business world, “The problem I am facing, when they bring me the cloth, I judge them the amount of money and they start crying that they don’t have the money, so I reduce the cost.” Most important, they revealed pride in the ability to provide for themselves and help with costs associated with living.

***Longwe’s empowerment framework.*** Two dimensions of Longwe’s Empowerment

Framework related to research question two regarding vocational training providing economic advancement. The first is access, in terms of the participants' belief that they should enjoy equal access to goods and services. Participants expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to participate in vocational training and actively pursued their admission which implied an understanding that they were equally entitled to receive training. Leading to the second dimension, participants generally demonstrated a degree of control, which in the perspective of Longwe's Empowerment framework, refers to the balance of power between women and men to influence their future as an individual and as a community (UNHCR, 2001). Despite displacement as a factor in disempowering women through loss and violence, the participants demonstrated a sense of control over their situation by actively pursuing skills for work through vocational training. The interviews did not reveal a victim mentality; rather, they appeared as women with new skills and abilities for decision-making to pursue their goals. Although there remains an existing patriarchy that these women appear to recognize and honor, their actions affirm a shift in roles that both women and men seem to have embraced to a degree. However, in relation to the concept of control, some participant responses indicated a need for women to find their voice both individually and collectively within the community. This is evidenced in one participant's nonassertive response to not being paid while believing the men who were also on the same work project had been paid for their work. Bee responds,

I have worked but not paid. We were told that we would be paid but now it is 5 months just passed. The thing is there were three and out of three I was the only woman that worked there. They (the others) were given up of the money and there were many month and I don't know if they got paid or not. Maybe those guys [...] took my money.

With this said, Longwe's Empowerment dimensions of control was evidenced at a low level, with Bee's reservation to be assertive over particular circumstances noted by her response. Participants conveyed a sense of empowerment, as viewed through the lens of Longwe's



characteristics with positive responses about their training providing a pathway for gaining employment and receiving an income for their work. The theme of empowerment was emphasized with the participants' comments regarding their ownership of decisions regarding work and the independence gained through the ability to make work decisions that were not possible before their training. Other empowerment characteristics were revealed in the participants' feelings that they do have an equal chance with men in obtaining work. This was a surprise but, one of the participants felt disenfranchised from work; only their ability to do the job was what mattered. For example, when asked if they felt it was more difficult to obtain work as a woman, all responses were similar to Irma's response, "It is not more difficult to obtain work as a woman." Another response by Merlene affirmed their feelings of equal work access, "I'm capable of doing anything but the equipment I don't have." Lack of work was not attributed to their inability to obtain work as a woman; but, due more from lack of material resources to do the work.

### **Research Question Number Three**

**Discussion.** "How do female participants, who reside in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp, describe self-efficacy and empowerment in relation to their present lives?" Self-efficacy and empowerment were evidenced from the participants through their new level of economic independence as a result of new knowledge and skills. Participants expressed a sense of independence and a level of control over their lives by completing trade skills that were traditionally reserved for men. Their capability to compete equally with men was expressed as a feeling of empowerment as they said they could do anything a man could do as echoed by Merlene, "I am now capable of building on my own and now I can do everything that a man can do in terms of building. In the future, I'm thinking of two things. I want to get my education first

and to become the great engineer of the building.” The participants spoke of self-efficacy with their willingness to share their knowledge with others. Empowerment was conveyed with comments regarding the trust they had in themselves to make new decisions about their lives, and remarkably, those decisions impacting the future of their work. The qualities of self-efficacy and empowerment are revealed with Merlene, “In the future I’m thinking of two things. I want to get an education first and to become the great engineer of the building.”

The importance of vocational training, in the development of self-efficacy and empowerment, was most noted in participant responses as providing the participants with a sense of confidence or mastery in their abilities to perform income producing skills. As a result of completing the training program and with their new knowledge, participants expressed their intent to pursue additional education and set personal goals for the future such as starting their own business. As noted in Cami’s response, “I would like to continue education so that I can be an expert in building and the second thing since I am a singer, I pray to God to help me be able to sing the most well-known song in the world.”

**Observations.** Although women continued to respect the male as leader of the family, participants chose to break the tradition of wearing only skirts in exchange for pants which remains quite uncommon. The participants appeared very supportive of each other as seen in their walking arm and arm, laughing together, and staying at the Vocational Programs of Malawi to visit in groups before going back to Dzeleka. In speaking with participants and others at the Vocational Programs of Malawi, training brought hope for their future, new goals were expressed where the focus was on their future rather than the past. The participants seemed very willing to be a part of the research. They walked for 20 minutes from the Dzeleka Camp and were dressed so nicely for interviews. Their dresses were made of cachinga and either self-made

or by a tailor at the camp. The participants wore makeup and had taken great lengths to look nice with their hair pulled-up and wearing accessories. I was not surprised at their self-pride in their appearance and hoped that I would live up to my role as researcher. During interviews, participants' speech and expressions for the most part seemed very positive when describing their future goals. The training facility appeared to have a positive impact with participants as a place where they could come together, create new friendships, and bring their children to class while they learned new skills.

The participants seemed to enjoy their time interacting with each other at Vocational Programs of Malawi. During the interview time, they gathered on the grounds and exchanged discussion with lots of smiles and laughter. At the beginning of interviews, the participants naturally expressed a little reservation and seemed to be assessing the situation before answering the researchers' questions. However, shortly after the interview began, all participants became receptive to the questions and seemed very willing to communicate with the researcher. Most notably, the participants seemed as if they desired to speak of their experiences of fleeing the Congo. As a researcher, it was imperative to redirect participants and stay within the research topic and interview guidelines as opening the conversation about the participants' experiences regarding their country of origin was beyond the scope of this study. Consequently, the researcher felt in some ways restricting the possibilities of discussion may have limited the researcher's insight about the participants feelings of self-efficacy and empowerment.

**Linking theory to research question three.** "How do female participants, who reside in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp, describe self-efficacy and empowerment in relation to their present lives?" Self-efficacy and empowerment proved to be fundamental in the participants' self-perceptions, beliefs, and activities related to improving their livelihood.

***Bandura's self-efficacy theory.*** Bandura states that the most effective way of creating self-efficacy is through the mastery of a certain skill and diverse experiences (Artino, 2012). Bandura also claims that self-efficacy is gained through the exercise of control and coping mechanisms in the face of threatening situations and is strengthened with a resilience to overcome repeated situations of rejection (Artino, 2012). As noted by Sam, program coordinator at the Vocational Programs of Malawi, women are often left with the multitasking responsibilities of keeping the children and doing household work for the family. However, the participants did not affirm a feeling of imbalance or feelings of being overwhelmed in household responsibilities. Rather, their statements focused more on their enthusiasm for the opportunities and independence brought by vocational training. Participants exhibited their mastery of skills and innovation through adapting to situations such as Nance's decision to make and sell gallettes at the Vocational Programs of Malawi for extra money and Bee's decision to take carpentry training and her dreams to become an engineer one day.

***Longwe's empowerment framework.*** The African refugee woman's experience with empowerment is recognized in the participant's active pursuit to gain knowledge, resources, and decision-making as expressed by Nance's persistence in gaining access to the training program. "The first time I wasn't taken, I wasn't taken for a second time and then by helping Sam, I was taken." Longwe's Women's Empowerment framework specifically relates to the African woman's experience with empowerment as affirmed with the UNHCR's adaption of Longwe's framework as understanding of empowerment. In the UNHCR (2001) publication, *A Practical Guide to Empowerment: Good Practices in Gender Equality Mainstreaming*, the essence of empowerment as described by Longwe's framework is "a process through which women and men in disadvantaged positions increase their access to knowledge, resources, and decision-

making, and raise their awareness of participation in their communities to reach a level of control over their own environment” (p. 3). Participant responses provided evidence of empowerment as identified by their independent decisions to pursue and complete vocational training. The participants heard about the program and took action on their own behalf to improve their current situation of economic livelihood. As a result of this training, some participants experienced an increase in decision-making related to their work, an ability to contribute economically, and create their own vision for future goals. As expressed by Maude, “I got some knowledge and skills through that (vocational training) to apply it to home. After my education, I am able to teach it to teach it and do a lot of things on my own.”

***Gender.*** Participants indicated decision-making was primarily the role of the male in the family. Participants’ responses affirmed the traditional role of the male making decisions in the family as evidenced with Nance’s response, “My husband makes the household decisions.” However, traditional gender roles are changing as more women seek educational opportunities such as those offered at the Vocational Programs of Malawi. Roles are changing for women in terms of access to education and work traditionally reserved for men. Participants shared positive feelings about obtaining work as a woman. As heard in Cami’s response about obtaining work as a female brick-layer, “It is a matter of confidence and doing more.” Surprisingly, although women’s access to education and work remain limited, participants expressed positive feelings about their expectation of obtaining work as a woman. As noted earlier, participant responses indicated no difference or difficulty in obtaining work as a woman. As Cami’s final response to obtaining work affirmed, “We have no problem with that.”

***Hudson-Weems’ womanist perspective.*** Characteristics of the Hudson-Weems’s African womanist theory contributing most to self-efficacy and empowerment in this study were the

participants' ability to be self-defining, to be nurturing, and to be adaptable even in the most acute times. Participants demonstrated these qualities of being self-defining when they chose the vocational training that best fit their individual needs and actively obtained their goals of receiving education. The participants revealed strength with adaptability to overcome the challenges of loss in all means of livelihood, the loss of friends and relatives, and even the loss of belonging to a community. The participants exhibited their nurturing nature as they freely gave hugs, huge smiles, and trust to others within their group as well as with employees at the training facility. These African refugee women, as Hudson-Weems's characterized, were self-naming, self-defining, and adaptable; which appeared to provide the needed resilience regarding their displacement and life as a refugee.

### **Summary of the Discussion**

Within the discussion, findings revealed that regaining a positive livelihood was a transformational process for the participants, in which they indicated their vocational training as a starting point for an improved livelihood. Participants felt vocational training was an opportunity for knowledge and subsequently economic independence. After completion of the vocational training, participants expressed a sense of mastery or competence in their vocational skills training which increased their capability to access resources for work, and, ultimately, an improved livelihood. Although not all participants were currently engaged in work, their responses indicated vocational training was considered foundational in the development of self-efficacy and empowerment which, in turn, elevated their capacity for livelihood. The participants' vocational training afforded them new opportunities to engage in networking activities within their communities and the Dowa District, gaining new relationships and learning new ways to increase their income. The figure below represents the participants' process of

regaining a sustainable livelihood after the loss and trauma associated from forced displacement.



*Figure 3.* Process of regaining livelihood with education as the foundational basis.

### **Implications from the Study**

As a phenomenological case study, the lived experiences of nine refugee women were explored as they navigated through formal education of a vocational training program offered at the Vocational Programs of Malawi. The results of this study were not intended to provide generalizations about the education experiences of all refugee women, nor were they intended for African women in general. However, the findings of this particular study did suggest the following outcomes as a result of formal vocational training: establishment of relationships, a shift of gender roles, increased economic independence, and a sense of self-efficacy and individual empowerment.

Within this group of refugee women, the characteristics of Longwe's empowerment framework were found to be similar to other African women communities. The basic rights of food, safety, and shelter, coupled with the opportunities for education and work, proved to be paramount to creating and maintaining a sustainable livelihood within the confines of a refugee camp. Additionally, this study provided insight into how African women refugees' formal education in vocational training has afforded these women a sense of self-efficacy and empowerment as a result of completing vocational training. However, the sense of self-efficacy and empowerment was not derived solely from the education system itself, nor was it related to only one aspect of their educational experience. Rather, their sense of self-efficacy and empowerment emerged from a variety of livelihood experiences associated with their

participation in formal education. The social networks the participants built, as a result of their training, created a sense of community where none existed upon their arrival. It was through these social networks they were able to gain support from each other by sharing common work skills, knowledge, and even tools.

Thus, social capital, as part of sustainable livelihood, is not to be underestimated, as it is a critical component to the wholeness of sustainable livelihood for refugee communities.

Unfortunately, the element of social capital is sometimes overlooked through the lens of the very organizations responsible for the promotion of economic livelihood activities and sustainable programs for refugees. Contributing to this absence of social capital for refugees is the lack of applicable national or local policy for the integration of refugees into the local host community workforce. Refugee policy, as part of the UNHCR mandate, is key to opening doors outside of the refugee camp in building the social networks so essential to the acquisition of sustainable work for refugees.

The study also brought awareness of the innovative ways these women found to provide an economic livelihood. The participants persisted in finding ways to utilize their skills for income. Despite lack of capital and the ability to work outside of the Camp, some of the participants created opportunity for themselves through borrowing equipment, venturing into unknown territory such as making wedding dresses, or using existing equipment to create a business, such as sell galettes to the people at the Vocational Programs of Malawi. The entrepreneurial qualities of these women could benefit through assisting refugee women with skill-based interventions. Jacobsen and Fratzke (2016) suggest several ways to help build opportunities for the refugee community. They propose offering skills training in accounting, language proficiency, and greater access to computers and mobile phones as a way to enhance



their business skills. Current vocational training offered in Malawi, as well as other developing countries, needs to ensure accessible, quality, and relevant programs for both refugees and citizens of the host country. Most likely, the refugees of Dzeleka will continue to reside in their host country of Malawi. Therefore, durable solutions for these refugees should focus on their needs and how best to promote the integration efforts of the host country. With this said, the most fundamental and significant implication of this study is to strive to build a greater understanding of African refugee women's entrepreneurial needs and to support policy, structural, and economic change for refugee integration into the host community.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

This study provided insight about the topic of African refugee women, and as a result, garnered knowledge for further possibilities of research. For the researcher, this study brought insight of how African refugee women, who reside in the Dzeleka Refugee Camp, perceived their vocational training experiences and how this training influenced feelings of self-efficacy and empowerment to obtain a better livelihood. The findings of this study, coupled with the review of the literature, revealed that local policy can significantly influence refugee livelihood and the refugees' ability to rebuild their lives through lifting restrictions that limit economic opportunities outside of the camp. Understanding the transformative nature of policy, it is suggested that there is a need for future research to focus on policy as a topic for refugee research. Loescher (2001) and Milner (2014) suggested future research specific to the process of how global policy is made and the structures influencing policy implementation from the global level to regional and local levels.

Other research suggests a need to understand the nature of policy influence on agricultural production in Malawi. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the

UN, agriculture is the main contributor to the Malawian economy at approximately one-third of the GDP, with primary food crops consisting of maize, tea, and sugar (FAO, 2015). Poor performance in agriculture naturally produces a negative impact of productivity in other sectors of the Malawian economy such as mining, tourism, fisheries, and transport (FAO, 2015). The literature suggests studies are needed to determine which development policies will impact increased production and productivity of farmers. Studies aimed at the improvement of small farming could facilitate and promote agricultural partnerships with the refugee community for sustainable ways of producing their own food supply, thus increasing self-reliance while reducing dependency from the UNHCR and other NGOs (FAO, 2015).

Studies have also identified a gap in the literature related to understanding the long-term effects of displacement on people's livelihood and what can be done to help people recover from the loss and trauma. Jacobsen (2014) states that due to a "lack of empirical data or the ability to obtain representative samples that have the refugees as the target population, studies focusing on refugee livelihood are notably absent" (p. 101). Livelihood studies might include the exploration of experiences of refugee loss as a result of their forced-flee from their countries. As previously stated, refugee loss comes in the form of violence, trauma, and loss of family members and community, all of which takes a toll on the displaced person's ability to restart their lives (Jacobsen, 2005; Jacobsen, 2014; Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016).

Oliver (2017) asserts that years after vocational programs have been established, the achievement of the programs' goals remain to be understood by trainers and even donors. Oliver states this is because "information on assessments of the impact of the vocational training is almost non-existent whilst evidence on social and economic improvement in the lives of beneficiaries is near insignificant" (p. 2). Although, refugees participate in other forms of

education, most often it is within the technical and vocational skills development. Study participants could include younger people who did not have the opportunity to complete primary school or those people who resist entering the formal education system (Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016). This study would involve determining what type of vocational training is needed and relevant to the lives of the refugee communities. Institutions offering vocational training would benefit with studies that examine whether specific practices lead to desired outcomes and goals in terms of positive long-term impact (Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016).

In planning vocational training courses, it is advantageous to know areas where there is a shortage in trade skills and what type of skills are relevant to the needs of the community. Research involving an inventory of unused social capital in terms of existing skills and knowledge would profit from this type of input from the refugee community providing refugees with a voice about their future goals. Valuing the input of refugees on the type of skills needed to improve their livelihood could only serve to enhance feelings of self-reliance through a level of ownership and control over the stability of their future (Oliver, 2017).

Continued research with African refugee women to investigate self-perceptions of their formal education is essential for understanding the level of social and economic advancement as recipients of formal education. And lastly, the research suggests a deeper analysis of the challenges and benefits from the shift in gender roles due to displacement. This study could focus on both men and women while exploring the specific influence of gender shift as empowering women in displacement.

## **Conclusion**

As a result of this study, the researcher gained valuable information and knowledge regarding the influence of vocational training, self-efficacy, and empowerment with African

refugee women. Regarding this study, the researcher found African refugee women to be courageous, resilient, and hopeful about their future. The participants in this study began their journey as people without resources from income-producing activities; some experienced the loss of family and, most definitely, the loss of a place to call home. Participant efforts to rebuild their livelihood advanced through a process in which education served as the core element for transforming their livelihood. Despite their experience of trauma and conflict, the participants are women who continue with their aspirations and dreams, very similar to other women around the world. Hudson-Weems's characteristics of the African woman found to be most appropriate for the women of this study include self-definer, self-nurturing, and adaptable. (Kasun, 2009) These qualities were exhibited in the participants' daily sacrifices, giving demeanor, and hopefulness which were expressed in their sharing of a cup of tea, their gratitude for what they have today, and their constant hope for their future. The refugees' resilience is one that could only be understood among each other. We are outsiders and try as research may, it would be impossible for researchers to capture the total essence of their experience.

The participants' livelihood experiences have been influenced in varying degrees as a result of their vocational training. Some participants have gained more economic independence as a result of their training. Others have found a voice that clearly states they desire to have the same access to job opportunities as men. Most notably, no participant expressed feelings of victimization; nor did they express they were excluded from obtaining a job they were trained for as being a woman. Education was perceived as having a positive influence on participant livelihood capabilities, as well as their positive feelings of self-efficacy and empowerment. However, education alone was only part of these outcomes, as other experiences of relationship building, creating alternative solutions for income producing activities, and sharing their

knowledge also influenced their feelings of self-efficacy and empowerment. From this researcher's perspective, it is hoped this study will create awareness of the magnitude of global displacement and the understanding that we each hold a responsibility in seeking solutions.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A

### Participant Recruitment Flyer

Letter for the participant after the initial meeting regarding the interview process. This letter will be read with participants and sent with them to discern participation. I will schedule a date for decisions and signing consent forms.

Dear (Name),

Thank you for visiting with me today regarding your interest in participating in a study I am conducting regarding women who currently live at Dzeleka Refugee Camp and who have completed a vocation training program at Vocational Programs of Malawi training facility. As mentioned in our conversation today you have been through this particular program and fit the criteria I am seeking for my research. My interview with you will focus on your personal experiences following completion of vocation training and how this program has influenced any self-perception or changes you hold about yourself as a result of this program. The interview with you will begin with a short questionnaire taking approximately 10 minutes to gather some facts about you and your current household. Following the questionnaire, I will begin the interview process by reviewing the purpose of the interview and the importance of confidentiality with your responses. I will also remind you that at any time you may decide not to continue with the interview.

At our next meeting on \_\_\_\_\_, I will bring the formal consent letter that we reviewed today for your signature. Please feel free to ask questions regarding the consent form and your role as a volunteer participant. The purpose of this initial visit was to introduce myself and to provide you with information regarding the purpose of my study.



I will be meet with you again on \_\_\_\_\_ for any other questions and to sign the consent form should you decide to participate in the study. For those who decide to participate, I will schedule a time for our interview at this next meeting.

Thank you for your time with me today,

Pattie Davis

## Appendix B

### Refugee Women Participant Guided Interview Protocol

Introductory information for study participants and explanation of their role and my role in the study prior to interview and as reestablishing what was discussed in the initial visit to obtain consent forms:

Hello again, my name is Pattie Davis and I want to thank you for agreeing to participate in my study and want to remind you of your role as a participant that we previously discussed when signing your consent form to make sure all questions are answered for you before we begin.

Again, I am currently engaged in a study about how women believe their life has been influenced by completing a vocations training such as the one you completed at Vocational Programs of Malawi. There are two parts to my visit with you. The first part includes completing a short questionnaire about you personally (i.e. age, family, and your current activities). The second part involves me asking questions relating to your experience in the program and after your completion of the vocation training. As discussed previously, I will be recording our interview and taking notes to use in my paper and will maintain the confidentiality of answers at all times. Your willingness to participate in this study is very helpful and I appreciate your time taken to assist in completing my study. Do you have any questions before we begin that were not answered at our initial visit?

Demographic questions:

1. Participant name
2. How long have you lived at Dzeleka Camp?
3. How old were you when you came to live at Dzeleka Camp?
4. How many members in your household?

5. Is your spouse part of your household?
6. How many children currently reside in your household?
7. How many members of household are extended family?
8. How many in your household participate in income producing activities?
9. How many members of your household have participated or are participating in some type of formal education?
10. Do you make or take-part in financial decision making for the household?

Interview questions:

To begin, how did you find out about or choose to attend vocation training at Vocational Programs of Malawi facility? [SEP]

How did you choose your particular program of vocation training to participate? (Probe: Is this program part of your goals? Are they related to a making a living, personal development or other future goals?) [SEP]

Have you participated in any formal education in your past or attended school or taken classes in the community before participating in Vocational Programs of Malawi vocation training? [SEP] (Probe: If yes, describe the type of program or class you attended.)

Please tell me more about your experience in this program. [SEP] (Probe: What did you particularly like about the program at Vocational Programs of Malawi? Why?)

Do you feel the experience of completing this training program influenced you? In what way?

Do you believe you have been personally changed by experiencing this program? [SEP] (Probe:

How would you describe your personal change? How do you perceive being empowered by this program?)

Do you have plans for your future as a result of this program? (Probe: Please tell me about your goals or plans? Are any of these goals being realized currently?)

During the program, did you develop new friendships? If yes, do you believe your new friendships have influenced your feelings about yourself? Your feelings of confidence?)

Has your education influenced others and how they relate to you? How has your education experience influenced your other family members? Do you feel you have motivated others to participate in a program similar to the one you participated in?)

In what ways has formal education been beneficial? (Has your training led to a change in income producing activities?)

How would you describe any changes you feel about yourself as a result of this program? decisions regarding your livelihood as a result of this program (self-reliance in pursuing income producing activities that are related to completing this program?)

Do you engage in activities that you previously did not have access or felt confident to undertake? (What type of activities do these include? Are these activities traditionally closed to women? Or limited?)

How has your role in your family been influenced by your education? (Do you feel your responsibilities have expanded? income related decisions increased?)

Are there any examples of contributions to family or community that you have been involved in as a result of your education? (If yes, have does this contribution make you feel?)

How do you see your future goals being influenced as a result of this program?).

Are there any other insights about yourself or about the program you would like to share that

we did not cover today?

## Appendix C

### Recruitment Script for Potential Participants in the Study

Total time approximately 45 minutes - 1 hour

ME:

Hello everyone, thank you for meeting with me today. I am very grateful you are interested in participating in my study. The purpose of today's meeting is to introduce myself, what my study is about and to provide you with information regarding your participation in the study should you decide to participate.

I should begin with an introduction about me personally before we speak about the study. I am from the United States where I live in the state of Texas and attend the University of the Incarnate Word. My studies have always been in education and most recently I have been involved in a program that focuses on international education and entrepreneurship opportunities. For this reason, I was very interested in the vocation programs that you all have participated in offered at Vocational Programs of Malawi. I have known about Vocational Programs of Malawi since 2014 and have been so impressed with the work and programs they offer. So, I was very excited when they approved my study that involve them as well as you.

Personally, I feel very fortunate to have this time with each of you and to learn more about your experience with your training program. As a mother of four daughters, I am very passionate about helping to improve educational opportunities and access to education for women. We have so many strengths as women and it is wonderful to contribute not only to our families but to give back to the community as well. So, this is a little about my background and at the end of this presentation I will be happy to answer any questions you have about me personally or the study.

To explain about my study, let me begin with the purpose:

The purpose of this study is to explore African refugee women' feelings about themselves after completing a vocational training program at Vocational Programs of Malawi. The interview questions will focus on your personal experiences of the program and how this experience has shaped or changed your life in any way, if at all.

I am not looking for a particular answer from you. Only, your true experiences and feelings about yourself as a result of completing this educational program, so there are no wrong answers. By doing the interview and study, I hope to gain a Better understanding of the value of such programs as you have participated in ...through YOUR view and how YOU feel the training you received has influenced your life, making decisions and sense of making a living.

There is a need for your voice, your viewpoint and perceptions of vocational training to be heard so that those involved in creating vocational training programs can Better understand how these programs are impacting women's lives and not only from someone else's perception.

Again, today's meeting was to introduce myself to you, to explain the study and to answer questions regarding your participation. We will schedule a second meeting on \_\_\_\_\_ where you will also have an opportunity to ask questions about your participation in the study and where I will be going over the consent form with you before signing to participate.

Thank you so much for listening to me and now I would like to invite you to ask any questions you may have about me, the study or your participation.

Potential Participant Questions: (TIME FOR QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS Approx. 20 minutes)

Just to get an idea of interest in participating would like to have you raise a hand if you are interested. Thank you for meeting with me and again, we will meet on (DATE) to go over any other questions you have and to sign the formal consent agreement for participation in the study.



## Appendix D

Interview for Director and Assistant Director of Vocational Programs  
of Malawi Nonprofit

1. What is your official title at Vocational Programs of Malawi? Could you tell me what your major job role entails?)
2. Tell me about your understanding of why Vocational Programs of Malawi programs exist and for whom?
3. How did you become involved with Vocational Programs of Malawi? Were you involved in similar programs before this position?)
4. Have you been involved with working or volunteering with refugee population in the past?) (If so, what did that involve?)
5. What is your favorite part of your job here at Vocational Programs of Malawi?
6. In your view, what does success mean for Vocational Programs of Malawi? (How is this aligned with the mission?)
7. What are some goals that you want to achieve in your position in the next few months?

(And long term, 5 years ahead, do you have a direction you would like to see going forward with Vocational Programs of Malawi?)

8. Do you believe your skills are being utilized in way that you want for the programs you are involved? (In other words, do you believe your talents are being used in your day to day work, if so how? If not how would you like to use these talents in the program?)
  
9. Where would you personally like to see Vocational Programs of Malawi to evolve in their vocations training?  
  
(What obstacles do you foresee in the ability to move in this direction?)
  
10. How do you see the current programs being of value for refugee women? (How have you perceived any change in women as a result of completing a vocation training program at Vocational Programs of Malawi?)
  
11. What challenges do you perceive these women having as they move forward in pursuing livelihood activities that would bring income to their family or themselves? (Do you perceive refugee women who have completed a vocations training program at Vocational Programs of Malawi to be more self-reliant and confident in dealing with external challenges to obtaining work?)

12. What do perceive as challenges with creating livelihood activities that do not have to do with the vocations training they have received? (Are there are ways of preventing or minimizing these challenges?)
  
13. What are other factors that you feel could enhance women refugee success in going forward to seek income producing activities within camp or community?
  
14. Are there any other factors that jeopardize the success of the programs for participants that haven't been discussed?
  
15. Is there any other insight to the program or study in general that you would like to include that we have not covered?

## Appendix E

## Vocational Programs of Malawi Employee Consent

## Subject Consent to Take Part in a Study of

## An Exploration of a Vocational Training Program: Empowering Malawi Refugee Women

## University of the Incarnate Word

**Authorized Study Personnel:** Mary P. Davis, PhD, student  
UIW, Dreeben School of Education  
501-319-4988

**Key Information:** Your consent is being sought for a research study. The purpose of the research is to understand the experiences of women who are currently living at Dzeleka Refugee Camp after completing vocation training at Vocational Programs of Malawi. If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:

- Procedures will include an introductory meeting followed by a second meeting with an interview.
- These visits will take approximately 2 hours total.
- There are minimal risks associated with this study to include understanding or clarity of the consent form and possible breach of privacy and confidentiality of interviews.
- Your participation is voluntary and you may decide not to participate at any time

**Invitation:** You are invited to volunteer as one of 8 subjects in the research project named above. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

**Why are you being asked to be in this research study?** You are being asked to be in this study because of your knowledge of women participants in Vocational Programs of Malawi vocation training as an employee involved with vocation training at Vocational Programs of Malawi. The study purpose is to gain understanding of refugee women' experiences of participating and completing vocation training and how this has influenced their livelihood.

**What is the reason for doing this research study?** The purpose of this study will be to gain understanding of how African refugee women feel about themselves as a result of completing vocational training provided by Vocational Programs of Malawi and how this has influenced their decision making for livelihood.

**What will be done during this research study?** The participant will be asked to engage in an introductory conversation explaining the purpose of the study and requirements, a second meeting will be conducted to answer any questions after the first meeting and to formally agree to participate by signing a consent to participate form. After signing the agreement, the participant will take part in a recorded interview facilitated by the researcher consisting of 15 questions that relate to their understanding of the mission and goals of Vocational Programs of Malawi vocational training. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes to one hour.

I would like to audio-record this interview to make sure that I remember accurately all the information you provide. I will keep these recordings in a locked file and they will only be used by myself for purpose of the research. If you prefer not to be audio-recorded, I will take notes instead.

I may quote your remarks in presentations or articles resulting from this work. A pseudonym will be used to protect your identity, unless you specifically request that you be identified by your true name.

**How will my data/samples/images be used?** My data will be used in this study and could be used for future research studies. You are given the option to choose whether you will allow your de-identified data to be stored indefinitely for further analysis or other relevant research studies.

**What are the possible risks of being in this study?** The associated risks include privacy of information to be accidentally heard by other people near the interview location and possibility of confidential information being breached. To minimize the risks interviews will be held in a secure location where there are no other people within hearing range. Also, confidential information shared in the questionnaire or interview will be locked on computer with password and manual field notes locked in a secure file. To minimize any emotional upset, the researcher will be cautious not to invade in the participants privacy by asking questions that the participant would not feel comfortable in answering. In addition, the researcher will encourage the participant to feel free to voice any concerns to the researcher and remind the participant that she may decide not to continue the interview at any point.

Your participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk to you beyond that of everyday life.

You may be uncomfortable with some of the questions and topics we will ask about. If you are uncomfortable, you are free to not answer or to skip to the next question.

As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality of the information we collect from you could be breached – we will take steps to minimize this risk, as discussed in more detail below in this form.

There are no known risks to you from being in this research study.

**What are the possible benefits to you? Benefits of awareness of how your involvement with educational training has influenced your life or may bring questions for further self-reflection about your role in the programs.** However, you may not receive any benefits from being in this research study.

**What are the possible benefits to other people?** The benefits to society may include a greater understanding of the importance of refugee women gaining access to formal education.

**What will in this research study cost you?** There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

**Will you be compensated for being in this research study?** None.

**How will information about you be protected?** Everything we learn about you in the study will be confidential. The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. If we publish with results of the study, you will not be identified in any way “unless you give explicit permission for this below.”

Any data collected consisting of paper records will be stored in a locked cabinet in the principal investigator’s office and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for 7 years after the study is complete.

Electronic data will be stored electronically on a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for 7 years after the study is complete.

**What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?** You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study at any time, for any reason. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will

not affect your relationship with the investigator or with the University of the Incarnate Word.

You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

If you decide to withdraw from the study, the researchers will ask you if the information already collected from you can be used.

**What should you do if you have a problem or question during this research study?**

If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.

If you have any questions now, feel free to ask us. If you have additional questions about your rights or wish to report a problem that may be related to the study, please contact the University of the Incarnate Word Institutional Review Board office at +1 210-805-3036.

**Consent for future use of data**

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

\_\_\_\_\_ I give permission for my de-identified data to be used in the future for additional analysis or other relevant research studies. I understand that no additional informed consent for this use will be sought. I understand that my de-identified data can be stored indefinitely.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for my data to be used for this research study only. I do not give permission for any future use beyond the scope of this research study. I understand that my data will be destroyed within 7 years after completion of this study.

**Consent for use of contact information to be contacted about participation in other studies.**

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:



\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to allow the researchers to use my contact information collected during this study to contact me about participating in future research studies.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not agree to allow the researchers to use my contact information collected during this study to contact me about participating in future research studies.

### **Consent**

Your signature indicates that you (1) consent to take part in this research study, (2) that you have read and understand the information given above, and (3) that the information above was explained to you, and you have been given the chance to discuss it and ask questions. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Principal Investigator/Designee

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Principal Investigator/Designee

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

## Appendix F

## Subject Consent

University of the Incarnate Word

**Authorized Study Personnel:** Mary P. Davis, PhD, student  
UIW, Dreeben School of Education  
501-319-4988  
mpdavis@student.uiwtx.edu

**Key Information:** Your consent is being sought for a research study. The purpose of the research is to understand the experiences of women who are currently living at Dzeleka Refugee Camp after completing vocation training. If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:

- Procedures will include an introductory meeting, short questionnaire and an interview.
- Two visits are required
- These visits will take approximately 2 hours total
- There are OR are not risks associated with this study: Risks in this study include understanding or clarity complication due to limited English language, privacy and confidentiality of interviews.
- You will not be compensated for your participation in the study.
- Your participation is voluntary and you may decide not to participate at any time

**Invitation:** You are invited to volunteer as one of 9 subjects in the research project named above. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. If you have any questions, please ask.

**Why are you being asked to be in this research study?** You are being asked to be in this study because you are in African women refugee 18-years in age or older, reside at Dzeleka Refugee camp and have completed vocation training at Vocational Programs of Malawi. The study purpose is to gain understanding of refugee women' experiences of participating and completing vocation training and how this has influenced their livelihood.

**What is the reason for doing this research study?** The purpose of this study will be to gain understanding of how African refugee women feel about themselves as a result of completing vocational training provided by Vocational Programs of Malawi and how this has influenced their decision making.

**What will be done during this research study?** The participant will be asked to engage in an introductory conversation explaining the purpose of the study and requirements, a second meeting will be conducted to answer any questions after the first meeting and to formally agree to participate by signing a consent to participate form. After signing the agreement, the participant will be asked to complete a questionnaire consisting of 10 questions relating to participant's household and activities. Which will take approximately 10 minutes. Following the questionnaire, the participant will be asked to participate in a recorded interview facilitated by the researcher consisting of 15 questions that relate to the understanding of the participants self-perceptions after completing vocation training. The interview will last approximately one hour.

I would like to audio-record this interview to make sure that I remember accurately all the information you provide. I will keep these recordings in a locked file and they will only be used by myself for purpose of the research. If you prefer not to be audio-recorded, I will take notes instead.

I may quote your remarks in presentations or articles resulting from this work. A pseudonym will be used to protect your identity, unless you specifically request that you be identified by your true name.

**How will my data/samples/images be used?** My data will be used in this study and could be used for future research studies. You are given the option to choose whether you will allow your de-identified data to be stored indefinitely for further analysis or other relevant research studies.

**What are the possible risks of being in this study?** The associated risks include privacy of information to be accidentally heard by other people near the interview location and possibility of confidential information being breached. To minimize the risks interviews will be held in a secure location where there are no other people within hearing range. Also, confidential information shared in the questionnaire or interview will be locked on computer with password and manual field notes locked in a secure file. To minimize any emotional upset, the researcher will be cautious not to invade in the participants privacy by asking questions that the participant would not feel comfortable in answering. In addition, the researcher will encourage the participant to feel free to voice any concerns to the researcher and remind the participant that she may decide not to continue the interview at any point.

Your participation in this study does not involve any physical or emotional risk to you beyond that of everyday life.

You may be uncomfortable with some of the questions and topics we will ask about. If you are uncomfortable, you are free to not answer or to skip to the next question.

As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality of the information we collect from you could be breached – we will take steps to minimize this risk, as discussed in more detail below in this form.

There are no known risks to you from being in this research study.

**What are the possible benefits to you? Benefits of awareness of how your education has influenced your life.** However, you may not receive any benefits from being in this research study.

**What are the possible benefits to other people?** The benefits to society may include a greater understanding of the importance that refugee women gain access to formal education.

**What will be being in this research study cost you?** There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

**Will you be compensated for being in this research study?** No compensation will be paid upon completion of the interview.

**How will information about you be protected?** Everything we learn about you in the study will be confidential. The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. If we publish with results of the study, you will not be identified in any way “unless you give explicit permission for this below.”

Any data collected consisting of paper records will be stored in a locked cabinet in the principal investigator’s office and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for 7 years after the study is complete. Electronic data will be stored electronically on a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for 7 years after the study is complete.

**What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?** You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study at any time, for any reason. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with the University of the Incarnate Word. You will not

lose any benefits to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the researchers will ask you if the information already collected from you can be used.

**What should you do if you have a problem or question during this research study?** If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.

If you have any questions now, feel free to ask us. If you have additional questions about your rights or wish to report a problem that may be related to the study, please contact the University of the Incarnate Word Institutional Review Board office at +1 210-805-3036

### **Consent for future use of data**

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

\_\_\_\_\_ I give permission for my de-identified data to be used in the future for additional analysis or other relevant research studies. I understand that no additional informed consent for this use will be sought. I understand that my de-identified data can be stored indefinitely.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for my data to be used for this research study only. I do not give permission for any future use beyond the scope of this research study. I understand that my data will be destroyed within 7 years after completion of this study.

### **Consent for use of contact information to be contacted about participation in other studies**

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to allow the researchers to use my contact information collected during this study to contact me about participating in future research studies.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not agree to allow the researchers to use my contact information collected during this study to contact me about participating in future research studies.

**Consent**

Your signature indicates that you (1) consent to take part in this research study, (2) that you have read and understand the information given above, and (3) that the information above was explained to you, and you have been given the chance to discuss it and ask questions. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

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Name of Participant

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Signature of Participant

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Name of Principal Investigator/Designee

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Signature of Principal Investigator/Designee

---

Date

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Date

Appendix G  
UIW IRB Approval

April 13, 2018

To: Ms. Mary Davis

From: University of the Incarnate Word Institutional Review Board, FWA00009201

Mary:

Your request to conduct the study titled "An Exploration of a Vocational Training Program: Empowering Malawi Refugee Women" was approved by Expedited review on 04/13/2018. Your IRB approval number is 18-04-006. You have approval to conduct this study through 4/13/19 at which time you will need to submit an IRB Continuing Review Request.

Please keep in mind the following responsibilities of the Principal Investigator:

1. Conducting the study only according to the protocol approved by the IRB.
2. Submitting any changes to the protocol and/or consent documents to the IRB for review and approval prior to the implementation of the changes. Use the IRB Amendment Request form.
3. Ensuring that only persons formally approved by the IRB enroll subjects.
4. Reporting immediately to the IRB any severe adverse reaction or serious problem, whether anticipated or unanticipated.
5. Reporting immediately to the IRB the death of a subject, regardless of the cause.
6. Reporting promptly to the IRB any significant findings that become known in the course of the research that might affect the willingness of the subjects to participate in the study or, once enrolled, to continue to take part.
7. Timely submission of a request for continuing review. Use the IRB Continuing Review Request form.
8. Completion and maintenance of an active(non-expired) CITI human subject training certificate.
9. Timely notification of a project's completion. Use the IRB Closure form.

Approval may be suspended or terminated if there is evidence of a) noncompliance with federal regulations or university policy or b) any aberration from the current, approved protocol.

If you need any assistance, please contact the UIW IRB representative for your college/school or the Office of Research Development. Sincerely,



Ana Hagendorf,  
PhD, CPRA Research Officer,  
Office of Research Development  
University of the Incarnate Word  
(210) 805-3036 wandless@uiwtx.edu

*Ana Hagendorf, PhD, CPRA*

## Appendix MERLENE

## Malawi Protocol Approval

**NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND  
HUMANITIES****Ref No: NCST/RTT/2/6**

Ms. Mary P. Davis, [SEP]University of the Incarnate World,

Dreeben School of Education, 501-319-4988, [SEP]San Antonio TX, [SEP]USA.

Email: mpdavis@student.uiwtx.edu Dear Ms. Davis,

**11 June 2018****RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR  
PROTOCOL NO. P.03/18/261: REFUGEE LIVELIHOOD: UNDERSTANDING THE  
VOCATIONAL TRAINING EXPERIENCES OF FOREIGN REFUGEE WOMEN  
LIVING IN MALAWI**

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform you that the above referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the National Committee on Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and Humanities (NCRSH) in a format that is available at the Secretariat. Once the study is finalised, you are required to furnish the Committee and the Commission with a final report of the study. The committee reserves the right to carry out compliance inspection of this approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it. As such, you are expected to properly maintain all study documents including consent

forms.

**Committee Address:**

*Secretariat, National Committee on Research in the Social Sciences and Humanities, National Commission for Science and Technology, Lingadzi House, City Centre, P/Bag B303, Capital City, Lilongwe3, Malawi. Telephone Nos: +265 771 550/774 869; E-mail address: ncrsh@ncst.mw*

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,

Yalonda I. Mwanza

**NCRSH ADMINISTRATOR** 

**HEALTH, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES DIVISION**

**For: CHAIRMAN OF NCRSH**