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ABSTRACT

This research was a quest to learn, understand and analyze the survival strategies available to asylum seekers in Sogndal Norway, with intent to contribute to the knowledge base for future research. The research also tried to look at the services provided by Government to the asylum seekers and evaluate the impact the same services had on the life of asylum seekers. This, therefore, meant that the study required a literature review, interviews and meeting respondents. These were undertaken. It called for ethical consideration, professionalism and openness on the part of both the respondents and the researchers. The research used an in-depth type of interview which engaged both the respondents and researchers to open up more and dig out the required information. The study for the research was forecast on the asylum reception center based at Kaupanger of Sogndal and covered a period of one year, from 2012 to 2013.

The research findings revealed that the asylum seekers spent most of their time in social gatherings where they met with people of different nationalities had meals, shared and received support from one another as a means of survival strategy. Others cling to religion and met with members of their respective religion as also a means of survival strategy. For most women whose answers came out negative from the Government, they were forced to look for odd jobs as their allowances had reduced. Over and above the research revealed that the asylum seekers had no economical survival strategies availed to them because the Norwegian Policy does not provide for employment of asylum seekers. However, the asylum seekers are only helped by Government through its agency called LOPEX which advances some allowance in the form of cash fortnightly as well as provide guidance for intergration into the Norwegian Society. The study brought out survival strategies apparently at the disposal of asylum seekers in Kaupanger, Sogndal. The research made some discussions and recommendations that may help in assisting the asylum seekers with their survival strategies; it further gives other means of suggestions of how the asylum seekers could be improved while living in their reception centers.

Key Terms: Asylum Seekers, Refugees, Survival Strategies

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Migration of people is a momentous and complex phenomenon that is as old as recorded history. Moses led his persecuted people out of Egypt across the Sinai to Canaan. In the modern era there have been several distinctive waves of migration, starting in the seventeenth century as a result of the breakup of empires and the two world wars. Since the end of the Second World War, globalization of migration has been accelerating Weiner (1997). Human migration is the movement by people from one place to another with the intention of taking up permanent or semi-permanent residence.

According to the United Nations Population Facts, there are 232 million people living outside their place of birth about, representing 3.2% of the world population United Nations (2013). There are two types of migrations, internal and international migration. Internal migration is normally movement of displaced citizens within a country. International migration refers to the movement of people that usually takes place over long distance across borders. According to Geddes (2003), international migration is defined as permanent or semi-permanent movement of people across state borders. As people cross state borders, they are referred to by recipient countries as immigrants. There are several reasons why people migrate and immigrate. These reasons can be classified as economical, social, political, religious or environmental:

- a) Economic migration may involve moving to find work or following a certain career path.
- b) Social migration may involve moving somewhere to find better quality life or to be with friends or family.
- c) Political migration is usually the movement of an individual or persons fleeing from political persecution or war.

d) Environmental migration involves people moving away from areas prone to natural disasters or swept by natural disasters such as tsunamis, floods or volcano.

Migration may be individual, family units or in large groups. Whichever the case may be, Lavenex and Ucarer (2003) argue that people are influenced to migrate by push factors and pull factors:

a) Push factors could be political fear or persecution, war, not enough jobs, discrimination, fewer opportunities.

b) Pull factors could be the feeling of having more political and or religious freedom, security, better living conditions, job opportunities and better services.

Often, those that are forced to migrate become refugees and among this group of people are asylum seekers who, according to the International Organization for Migration, have defined as persons seeking safety from persecution or serious harm in a country other than their own and await a decision on the application for refugee status under relevant international or national instruments. Further, Tribe and Keefe (2007) defined an asylum seeker as a person whose claim is in the process, with a decision pending. The claims process including appeals can last several years during which time people put down roots. The longer an individual or family waits for a decision, the harder it is for them to deal with the possibility of refusal and return. Claimants live in constant uncertainty and fear of being refused and deported. In case of a negative response, the person must be expelled just like any other non-national in an irregular situation, unless permission is granted on humanitarian or other special related grounds. According to Lavenex and Uçarer (2003), the concept of an asylum seeker is a person who should meet the definitional requirements of the Geneva Convention of 1951. It was argued that an asylum seeker should be a person coming from a third country deemed to be unsafe otherwise the application for asylum maybe rejected.

The concept refugee on the other hand as defined by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), is a person who has been forced to flee his or her country because of war or violence. A refugee has a well founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group UNHCR (2013). Therefore, this research aims at finding out the survival strategies available to asylum seekers in sogndal.

1.1.1 History of Norwegian Immigration

According to Kjeldstadli (2003), Norway has been home to diverse ethnic groups for some time, the Sami people have lived in Northern Norway for over two thousand years. The main waves of immigrants in the 20th and 21st century was caused by wars and riots in the migrants' home countries: Jews from Eastern Europe early in the 20th century, refugees from Hungary in the 1950s, Chile and Vietnam in the 1970s. In the mid-1980s, there was an increase in the number of asylum seekers from countries such as Iran and Sri-Lanka.

In the 1990s, war refugees from the Balkans were the predominant immigrant group accepted into Norway; a large number of which have since returned home to Kosovo. Since the end of the 1990s, new groups of asylum seekers from countries such as Iraq, Somalia, and Afghanistan arrived.

The largest immigrant groups were Poles and Lithuanians who mainly came as labor immigrants, followed by Somalis and Eritreans who mainly came as refugees. Other countries in the top ten were Romania, Latvia, the Philippines, Spain, Afghanistan and Thailand. In 2013, Norway had registered 171 648 as refugees and 80 100 as asylum seekers. This can be explained in the Table shown below:

Table 1: Persons with refugee status as of January 2013

	2013	Change in per cent	2013	
		2012 -2013	Proportion of persons with refugee background of all immigrants (%)	Proportion of persons with refugee background of the whole population (%)
Total	171 648	5.0	28.9	3.4
Principal Applicants	125 044	5.0	21.1	2.5
Asylum Seekers	80 100	6.3	13.5	1.6
Resettlement refugees	26 015	5.7	4.4	0.5
Other refugees	10 271	-0.9	1.7	0.2
Unspecified	8 658	-0.8	1.5	0.2
By family connection to refugees	46 604	4.9	7.9	0.9
Family enlargement	14 670	3.4	2.5	0.3
Family reunification	31 884	5.7	5.4	0.6
Family unspecified	50	-3.8	0.0	0.0

Source ssb Norway (2013)

As can be noted from the table above, asylum seekers are the majority at 6.3% compared to other proportions of persons with refugee background. The number has steadily been rising over the years, this could be attributed to the favorable immigration

policy Norway has coupled with political will. Though Norwegian immigration policy is compared to other European nations, Norway accepts more asylum seekers in relation to her population. The other possibility is the financial crisis that some European nations are facing. Other countries more especially in Southern Europe have high unemployment levels that have led to asylum seekers picking on Norway which is seen to be financially stable with a low unemployment rate Norway Post (2014).

1.1.2 Position of Political System towards Immigration in Norway

Norway has a multiparty system, with different political parties. Therefore, when people go to vote they have many alternatives from which to choose. The recent elections in Norway of 9th September 2013, saw the outcome of elections as shown in table below:

Table 2: September 2013 General Elections Preliminary Results

Registered Electors	3,641,753		
Turnout	2,851,014	78.2%	
Valid Votes	2,836,029		
List of Political Parties	Votes	%	Seats
Labour Party	874,769	30.8	55
Conservative Party (Høyre)	760,232	26.8	48
Progress Party	463,560	16.3	29
Christian Democratic Party (KristeligFolkeparti)	158,475	5.6	10
Center Party	155,357	5.5	10
Liberal Party (Venstre)	148,275	5.2	9
Socialist Left Party	116,021	4.1	7
Green Party	79,152	2.8	1
Red	30,751	1.1	0
Others	49,437	1.7	0

Source (Norwegian parliamentary election 2013)

The highest decision making body, the Storting is composed of eight different Political Parties with divergent ideologies on immigration. The Party with the largest representation, the Labor Party, has 55 seats and its position as regards immigration is liberal but favors labour immigrants. On the other hand, Norway's most conservative party, the Progress Party has proposed new criteria for approval of refugees' application for asylum in Norway. The Progress Party stands for a restrictive and responsible immigration policy where taking up residency is made subject to obligations. Participation in employment, language proficiency and obeying the law are central elements in a successful integration policy. Equality among groups is a decisive factor in preventing conflicts. There is no place for religious extremism and intolerant (The-Progress, 2014).

The Christian Democratic Party on the contrary, believes an overarching goal of integration policy that immigrants who come to Norway, feel respected and part of the community and should have the duties and rights as other citizens have (The Christian Democratic party, 2014). However, more and more political parties have taken a stance on immigration in recent years. Still the manifestos do not reveal a general trend in either a restrictive or liberal direction. Furthermore, even if parties express different policy preferences, this does not mean that government positions differ accordingly. The frequent coalition and minority government in Norway is one reason why one cannot expect a one-to-one relationship between preferences and policies. Although the dominant party generally can be expected to influence policies more strongly than minor Parties, this is not always so. If an issue is particularly important to a Party, it could exert stronger influence regardless of its size. The Party may block decisions by, for instance, threatening to leave the government.

The Conservative Party which is the lead political party, is of the opinion that Norway shares responsibility for those forced to flee their countries for political reasons. Accordingly, Norway should admit enough refugees to fulfill its international commitments. Given that all people are created equal, the ideal situation would be the

free movement of people across national frontiers. However, as mobility across national frontiers is large and unpredictable, it is difficult for one country to pursue an immigration policy which differs significantly from that of neighboring countries. The Conservative Party favors an immigration policy which promotes the free movement of people based first and foremost on individuals' potential for supporting themselves and their families.

1.1.3 Community Attitude towards Immigrants

For a number of years, Statistics Norway has been mapping the attitudes of the Norwegian population towards immigrants and immigration through questions in its annual interview surveys on behalf of the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion. The first interviews were conducted in 1993 and were repeated each year until 2000. After partially changing the questions, the practice was resumed in 2002. Originally hosted in Statistics Norway's omnibus survey, the questions were transferred to the travel and holiday survey in 2005. However, this did not entail any serious change in the framework of the mapping ssb.no (2010).

According to Statistics Norway (2010), the majority prefer immigrants to assimilate with the majority population. One of the questions in Statistics Norway's attitudes towards immigrants and immigration shows that almost half (47%) in 2009 think that immigrants in Norway should endeavour to become as similar to Norwegians as possible. In recent years however, the idea of multiculturalism has been subject to criticism as its supporters have been accused of yielding to male dominated and anti-democratic features of some immigrants' actions and values. The critics believe it is imperative that such trends are prevented from developing in the Norwegian society. Women's use of head scarf has also been debated in recent times ssb.no (2010).

Gender is generally of little significance to attitudes towards immigrants and immigration, but it does play a part in questions that relate to immigrants' cultural significance and whether they should try to be as similar to Norwegians as possible. Women have a greater appreciation than men of the immigrants' cultural contribution

and believe to a lesser extent that they need to be as similar to the majority population as possible. They are also less interested in limiting refugees and asylum seekers' opportunities to obtain a residence permit in Norway. On the other hand, men are more disposed than women to appreciate the economic significance of labor immigration.

1.1.4 Geographical Position of Asylum Seekers in Songdal

Sogndal is one of the Kommunes in Norway with a population of 7,477 (statistic year book Norway 2013). It is about 387.4 kilometers (6 hours drive) from Oslo the capital city of Norway. Sogndal has about 180 asylum seekers, the maximum number the municipality is able to accommodate. There is a refugee office based in the Sogndal Kulturhus AS building situated opposite the Police Station along Gravensteinstgata road. This office specifically deals with refugees. Sogndal has nearby villages, one such is Kaupanger where government maintains a camp for asylum seekers, this is where they are kept pending the outcome of their application as refugees. Refugees that are also waiting for accommodation are temporarily accommodated at the same camp.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The rationale of this study is to find out the survival strategies available to asylum seekers in Norway and Sogndal Kommune in particular. In recent times, Norway has had immigrants from many countries; notable of those countries are Afghanistan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Somali. As researchers we wonder as to how these people come to be integrated in the Norwegian culture and ultimately what sort of life they lead. Researchers saw it prudent to carry out a research on the same after having received some concerns from some asylum seekers through interactions with them in Sogndal Kommune.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

- i. To learn about the survival strategies among asylum seekers in Norway with focus on Sogndal Kommune.
- ii. To contribute to the knowledge base for future research and give recommendations on how the lives of asylum seekers may be made better.

1.3 Research Objectives

- a) To find out survival strategies at the disposal of asylum seekers besides services provided by the government.
- b) Outline the survival strategies among asylum seekers in Sogndal.
- c) To ascertain the impact the Norwegian policy on refugees has on asylum seekers.
- d) To determine the impact of services provided by the government on asylum seekers.

2.0 Literature Review

2.0.1 Survival Strategies among Asylum Seekers

Cushner Kenneth and Richard Brislin (1996:365) state that adjusting to life and work within a culture other than their own, people experience emotional reactions due to displacement and unfamiliarity as a result of anxiety. In order to overcome this ordeal, Asylum seekers spend an immense time learning a new language as a means to achieving new forms of survival strategies.

Though Norway is not part of the European Union, in many ways she employs immigration policies comparable to her European neighbors with standards way ahead of them Lavenex and Ucarer (2003:232). Asylum seekers are faced with among others challenges ambivalence Goldins (2011:193,209); and Khawaja et al (2008) asserts that the commonly used survival strategy to reduce this traumatizing experience is the use of religion; Asylum seekers seek the intervention of God in their situation through prayer. Khawaja also observes that social network groups play a vital role. Asylum seekers meet for social gatherings and have meals, coffee and give and receive support from one another, family, friends and caregivers. Khawaja also argues that at times, Asylum seekers use cognitive processes of reframing their situations, critically analyze them and thus personal evaluation of difficulties they face thereby allowing them to adapt to a strategy when there is a change of situation. Usually, accepting that everyone is in the same situation is what is generally employed as a strategy, believing that there is nothing that one can do about the prevailing situation. The other strategy Khawaja has highlighted that Asylum seekers employ is three tiered and cognitive in nature, firstly no one wishes to have war in their country, secondly, everyone would want to get an education, thirdly, find work and have a family, thus Asylum seekers wish that wars in their home countries come to an end and continue with peaceful lives.

According to Diane Taylor (2009), some women engage themselves in prostitution because they do not have a choice and still yet others enter into agreements with

entrepreneurs or business houses, instead of payment in cash, they are paid in kind. This is because Asylum seekers are not permitted to work and most often than not, Asylum seekers are exploited for their services. Crawley Heanven, et al (2011:117-1184) reiterates that, though some relationships are transactional, both men and women engaged in commercial sex as a survival strategy end up physically abused and sexually exploited or worse still forced to stay against their will. This contribution is relevant in showing survival strategies asylum seekers are likely to use.

2.0.2 Impact of Survival Strategies on Asylum Seekers

According to Lavenex and Ucarer (2003:294-311), all persons who want work in Norway, except citizens of the European Economic Area (EEA) need a work permit. This means that asylum seekers have to find strategies of finding work that may not be deemed illegal and get a payment in cash. Diane Taylor (2009), states that asylum seekers are profoundly resourceful people who have come through a great deal. They have often lost everything, including children, family, friends, health, livelihood and status. Destitution is eroding their sense of self and their will to survive, which is often all they have left. They feel that their lives are forgotten and wasted especially when they have no jobs, thus when they find some work they feel alive and appreciated. Most asylum seekers send the extra money they make back to their families in their home countries.

Arenas et al (1987) contends that some asylum seekers sometime suffer from trauma of return, a situation he describes as a crisis in which the victim's hope and expectation of returning home one day overshadows the wish and ability to integrate. This trauma paralyzes the asylum seekers and keeps them from doing things that in their opinion are contradictory to returning. Norway has an outdoor culture of long walks and mountain climbing which to a great deal helps asylum seekers cope with this kind of stress and trauma. These insights are used as a theoretical foundation for this paper.

2.0.3 The Norwegian Policy on Refugees/Asylum Seekers

According to Kjeldstadli (2003), mass emigration in Norway started in 1866 although this came to a halt during the 1920's because of the world economy crisis. In total, approximately 800,000 Norwegians immigrated to America during this period. From the middle Ages until the 19th century it was common practice to bring skilled workers in commerce trade and industry to Norway. For example, the mining industries at Røros and Kongsberg were developed using German expertise. During the period 1800-1920, large numbers of skilled and unskilled workers migrated to Norway especially from Sweden and Finland. In 1985, Norway became part of the 26 nations that signed the Schengen Convention, an agreement that has abolished border controls between participating countries. This has further eased movement of migrant workers between member states. However, Norway has its own immigration policies.

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) is responsible for processing applications from foreign nationals who wish to stay in Norway, the running of asylum reception centers and expulsion cases. The UDI has also return support schemes which allow people to apply for assistance and support as they wait for their application for a resident permit to be considered. In spite of its non membership to the European Union (EU), Norway is influenced by the European development in the area of freedom, security and justice due to formal cooperation agreements and for geo-political reasons. The nation is connected to the member states and the community through the Dublin Cooperation Agreement and the Schengen cooperation agreement. The Dublin mechanism provides for the return of asylum seekers for processing in the other cooperating member states. Those awaiting expulsion are Dublin cases waiting to be returned to the country that was responsible for handling their cases according to the Dublin Agreement. Norway also has a separate interest in gaining knowledge about legislation and policies in the surrounding countries. This is the prerequisite for making national policy adjustments on migration and asylum issues UDI (2014).

According to the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi), asylum seekers with international protection status in Norway and their family members who need to acquire basic qualifications participate in the two (2) year introduction program. The

program includes the language training, the Norwegian society and the rules and laws of the country with the goal to enhance chances of acquiring work in order to be self-sufficient. The asylum seekers also undertake short-term placements in the work places in order to practice their language skills and gain experience from the Norwegian society and labor market. The goal of the program is the successful insertion of the asylum seekers into the Norwegian society and the labor market. They get individual follow-up and tailored support.

The Norwegian Government puts emphasis on the connection between labor migration and integration. Securing integration of the asylum seekers benefits all parties involved. One concern in this regard is to avoid social dumping. imdi.no (2014).

Lavenex and Ucarer (2003) assert that the current law that regulates immigration to Norway, the Immigration Act, commenced on January 1st, 1991. Among other rules and regulations in this Act is the rule for mandatory Tuberculosis (TB) examination that takes place at the health outpost at the reception center. Tests regarding other sicknesses such as HIV and Hepatitis are voluntary but recommended. This regulation only applies to persons coming from third world countries. The Norwegian organization for asylum seekers (NOAS) provides information to asylum seekers on arrival at reception centers on laws of the land, the asylum seekers' rights, application for asylum process and as well as provide counseling services. These studies are of particular relevance to this paper.

2.0.4 Analysis of Social Services Provided by the Norwegian Government

Brekke (2004) asserts that in Norway as in most European countries, asylum seekers are accommodated in reception centers. The Norwegian government is of the view that residents in reception centers should experience the asylum period as a period of qualification for successful integration or as preparation for possible return to their home country. However, several studies have indicated that residents in reception centers experience uncertainty, powerlessness and gradual disqualification. In order to prevent such outcomes, service providers in reception centers are expected to organize

various activity programs and empowerment and integration related activities for residents in the centers(Berg et al. 2005:2).

Further, Brekke and Vevstad (2007:5), assert that reception centers give as much information as possible to asylum seekers on their rights to health care, education and employment. According to Berg (1990:5), the Norwegian reception system provides different types of assistance to residents, but from the point of arrival, residents are treated as clients and largely denied opportunities to contribute using their own initiative. These contributions are relevant in showing survival strategies of asylum seekers.

3.0 Research Design and Methodology

This chapter primarily describes the methods that were used to gather and analyze data. The reasons for using these methods are discussed. The collected data contained in this research paper was obtained using interview guides, books and articles. It was critically analyzed and interpreted using qualitative methods. According to Flick (2011:12), data collected through the above is rich in content, summarized and categorized into similar answers that constitute a step in any project.

The research largely depended on in-depth interviews as they give broader and satisfactory answers to the interviewer other than the other type of interviews.

3.1 In-Depth Interview

An in-depth interview, also known as information conversation interview is a direct verbal method for obtaining information. It is a reliable method of data collection in the study of human behavior of perception (Ghosh, 1992). In a qualitative survey, the main purpose of the interviews is to obtain a specific kind of information which the researcher may wish to find out. Chirban (1996:156) explains that people are interviewed to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe such as feelings, thoughts and intentions. Therefore, the main aim of the interview in this study is to enable researchers to dig deeper into the other person's understanding.

Additionally, Merton, Fiske and Kendall in Judd (1991) contend that, for in-depth interview to occur, first and foremost, the interviewees must be known to have experienced the particular situation under investigation. In this research, asylum seekers living in Kaupanger will be interviewed as they are persons exposed to the situation in an effort to ascertain their perception of the situation. Furthermore, the interview will find out the experiences of the asylum seekers concerning their perceptions, survival strategies used, acquisition of permanent residence in Norway

and job opportunities available to them. It is important to note that in-depth interview does not follow a pre-planned list of questions. Sometimes the questions may develop spontaneously in the course of interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee. Therefore, the researchers will enjoy the freedom to ask any questions that will need to be investigated upon.

3.2 Scope of the Study

This study covered the period 2012 to 2013.

3.3 Population and Sample

This study focused on the asylum seekers living in Sogndal Kommune and the staff at Mottak. The targeted groups were identified according to countries of origin; religion was not taken into consideration. They were therefore identified as key respondents who can supply data required to accomplish this research.

3.3.1 Target Population

The research targeted asylum seekers and Mottak staff from Sogndal Kommune.

3.3.2 Sample Population

The sample size consisted of (2 females) Mottak staff; 3 males, 2 females officially organized but were unavailable at the time of the interviews living in Sogndal. 4 females and 3 males were interviewed informally through social events. However, 1 interview failed to take off as the female respondent asked to be excused from taking part. The interviews were taking an average of 1 hour per respondent.

3.3.3 Sampling Procedure

a) *Stratified Sampling Procedure:* This procedure was used in this study in order to observe which category (gender) of the identified population was most likely to use survival strategies in Sogndal.

b) *Judgmental sampling*: This procedure was used for the Mottak staff. This was in order to get the desired data. According to Berg et al (2012), such data collected this way is rich and textured with descriptive in nature.

3.4 Data Collection

Data used in this research paper was collected from both primary and secondary sources.

In order to gather data for this research, a variety of data collection tools were used, such as in-depth interviews, social interactions and literature review. The reason for using a variety of methods according to Gill, P. et al. (2008), is that the weakness of one tool is the strength for the other. By combining both tools, researchers will be able to achieve the best of each while overcoming the deficiencies of each. The instruments were chosen in order to achieve the intended aim set for this research. Ghosh (1992) asserts that the relevance of using particular research instruments will depend on the aim of the study being carried out; for instance, if the aim is to understand how certain phenomenon is done, then the use of interviews and observation to collect intended data is necessary hence the need for researchers using these tools in the study.

3.4.1 Research Instruments

a) *Interview guides*: Interview guides were used in collecting data. According to Flick (2011), this tool was developed and linked closely to the aims and the target group of the research. (Bobner et al 2011) focuses not so much on the personality of the interviewees but rather on the need to retrieve their expertise in a specific area.

b) *Observations*: Respondents were also observed as the interviews were on going, Connelly et al (1990) asserts that this was necessary as certain behaviors and responses can only be noted through observations.

3.5 Data Analysis

Dey (1993:38), suggests that data analysis is the process whereby the mass of qualitative data may be obtained through interviews, transcripts, field notes, observations and participation is reduced and organized by coding, writing summaries and discarding irrelevant data. It is from this background that the following were derived:

- a) Interviews were conducted using the interview guide and observation, inevitably involved selecting data. The selection of data made significant puzzling as the criteria used in selecting data provided a rich source of ideas for generating information.
- b) Ideas were inspired by a prior reading of the relevant literature and their relevance to our analysis was established through the review of the data.
- c) In this study, data was summarized into several identical or similar events and displayed.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Confidentiality and respect were observed; sensitive information was not collected and collected data was not recorded on tape or stored on the computer. The researchers conducted interviews on adults and not minors as conducting interviews on minors could have compromised the research and made it invalid. The pre-interview guidelines of data collection were cautiously explained to respondents.

3.7 Strengths and Weaknesses

3.7.1 Strengths

Researchers conducted a pilot study prior to this research in which 3 respondents and 2 IMDi staff (1 male and 1 female) and 1 male asylum seeker were interviewed. Researchers were able to get free and voluntary responses from the Mottak staff as well

as asylum seeker. This was as a result of the researchers using qualitative research method which allows the use of in-depth interviews. According to May (2001), he asserts that researchers interview participants in-depth and one-on-one. The interviewer typically has a general plan of inquiry but not a specific set of questions that must be asked in a particular order. Rather, it flows more like a conversation in which the respondent guides the direction of the interview.

3.7.2 Weaknesses

Due to language barrier, it was rather difficult to collect data. Most respondents were not fluent in English and the researchers could neither speak Nynorsk nor Arabic. The study was somehow limited to Mottak staff and a few respondents who spoke English. This situation led to the research having a limited number of respondents and thus the limitation that the researchers could not generalize obtained data to be relevant for all asylum seekers. The other weakness researchers found was lack of literature in English language.

4.0 Presentation of Results

Data display, interpretation and reporting will be outlined in the following manner:

4.1 Survival Strategies among Asylum Seekers

Millions of people around the world have been forcibly displaced by conflict, natural disaster, or persecution forcing them seek refugee either within or beyond the borders of their countries. Asylum seekers begin the challenging process of starting a new life, usually in a new culture and new language. There is also the added element of having to navigate a system that requires proof of persecution, were for example, a person who would not necessarily qualify their experience such as torture would do so to increase the likelihood of getting accepted (Bracken et al, 1997).

As a result of increased poverty, psychological trauma due to persecution, war or civil conflict and the need to survive, asylum seekers identify and adopt survival strategies which they hold on to for their psychological well-being.

Every refugee that has requested for asylum and those that have had a negative response to their application will at one point use survival strategies that they have identified to adequately handle their present situation. The common problem that asylum seekers face in foreign lands is living in another culture with a different language other than their own.

a) *Findings from asylum seekers*

Respondents were asked what their social, political and economic expectations were when they first came to Norway, majority answered that they knew Norway to be a democratic and peaceful country. Socially, they said Norwegians are closed and keep to themselves and that it took more time to get close to them. Economically, the majority responded that they thought the moment they got to Norway they would get good jobs, which was not the case because of language barrier. A few thought they would secure good comfortable lives as the country is perceived to be one of the richest in Europe. Coming to the question of what problems they faced living in another

culture, the majority asylum seekers responded that it was difficult living in another culture because of cultural differences. However, they added that the Norwegian government had laid down a platform for them to practice their respective cultures as they wait to be integrated into the Norwegian society even though the climate was not favorable as compared to their countries of origin. They also mentioned that their applications to UDI for asylum took longer as a result they were stressed and psychologically traumatized due to uncertainty.

Another question was raised as to what was helping them cope with their emotions. All respondents said that they held onto their religious beliefs; they added that holding of meetings with people with the same background and culture, prayer meetings were helping out with relieving stress, they also said apart from spiritual meetings, sharing information on how to find organizations providing venues for their meeting was also helpful. On the daily activities they took part in, most respondents mentioned that they attended three days of compulsory introduction program, besides this, they had personal activities such as church meetings, gymnasium activities and walks in the mountains.

b) Findings from LOPEX staff

Researchers wanted to know what the mission statement of LOPEX was as regards asylum seekers, respondents informed researcher that the mission of LOPEX was to provide guidance, integrate and recruit asylum seekers into Norwegian society and culture. With regards survival strategies that asylum seekers employed for their survival; majority respondents said asylum seekers held on to their religious beliefs that helped in exploring their capabilities.

4.2 Impact of Survival Strategies on Asylum Seekers

a) Findings from asylum seekers

Asked how long they had stayed in Norway, majority asylum seekers said they had lived in Norway more than a year. Further to the above question, researchers wanted to know what documents the asylum seekers had to submit for them to be granted refugee

status; majority said it was not easy to travel with documents and identity cards as they get damaged through the process of running away from wars and unstable situations in their respective countries.

Researchers asked if asylum seekers were all granted refugee status, most responded that they had not yet been granted. Researchers further wanted to know what the asylum seekers would do if they got a negative response. All respondents said they would appeal through lawyers provided by the state.

Asked if they took part in economic, political and social activities before they are granted refugee status, all respondents said they were not allowed to take part in political and economic activities before they were given residence permit. They however said they took part in social activities.

When questioned if they had any information on policies regarding asylum seekers, majority responded that they acquired the information on policies about asylum seekers from the internet.

b) Findings from LOPEX staff

When implored to explain what criteria was used in granting asylum seekers refugee status, all respondents said LOPEX did not give permits but UDI in Oslo. On the period it took one to be granted refugee status, all LOPEX staff responded that it depended on whether one had all the required credentials; usually identity cards quickened the process.

When researchers wondered how many asylum seekers were granted refugee status in the past one year, the respondents responded that only 75 persons out of the 143 were granted, but due to lack of accommodation in the Kommune, a few others were still in the camp.

The LOPEX staff was asked what happens if an asylum seeker was denied refugee status, they responded that if an asylum seeker is denied permit, they appealed with the

help of a lawyer provided by the state.

Further to the above question, researchers asked what time frame asylum seekers were given after receiving two negatives before they were repatriated back, the respondents responded that it depends on the security situation of their respective countries.

When requested to suggest what they would want added to the services they were delivering, they all responded that if only the system would have been much faster in the processing of the applications for asylum seekers, it would have made things easier for them as well as speeding up the process of acquiring accommodation.

4.3 The Impact of the Norwegian Policy on Refugees/Asylum Seekers

a) Findings from Asylum Seeker.

In terms of services asylum seekers received from the government, all participating respondents said government provided them with fully furnished accommodation, free health service, free transport cards for their movement from the camp into town; they are paid money for food and clothing, free education for them as well as their children.

When asked what they would say about the services rendered to them, the majority said they liked the idea as they considered it helps them; they are encouraged to attend the 550 hours of learning the Norwegian culture and are paid for it. A few said they had their allowance reduced when they got the first negative response.

Asked if there was need for government to improve the services they were receiving, the majority said there was need for government (UDI) to speed up time it took to process asylum requests and others said rather than the money aspect government should work on getting them jobs or create a system that links the community and them.

b) Findings from LOPEX staff

When requested to state what services they provided to asylum seekers, all the respondents said that they received financial support from the state which was later paid to asylum seekers through the Kommunes they were part of; they (LOPEX) also

provided the introduction program which was mandatory to all asylum seekers. When asked what impact the services had on asylum seekers, all respondents responded that the impact could only be noticed if asylum seekers learnt the Norwegian language and got integrated into Norwegian society.

Asked if there was room for improvement on services LOPEX provided to asylum seekers, all respondents responded that the Kommune was slow in allocating accommodation to refugees. They felt that the Kommune should be faster in scouting for accommodation.

4.4 Analysis of Social Services Provided by the Government

a) Findings from Asylum Seekers

When requested to state if they were engaged in odd jobs, all the women that participated in the study agreed taking part in odd jobs, though they said, "we know it is against the law."

When researchers wanted to know what help asylum seekers in Sogndal got from the community, the majority said they did not receive any help at all from the community while a few respondents said they got help from the international cafe (Sim Huset) where they are expected to practice the Norwegian language with Norwegians over kaffe and games.

Asked if asylum seekers were getting support from NGOs or other institutions, the majority responded that they received support from the church such as spiritual support and a few said they got none from NGOs.

Researchers further wanted to find out if asylum seekers got in touch with their families in their respective countries, all respondents stated that they got in touch with their families through cell phones once in a while but most of them declined receiving any help while a few said they received help in terms of their relations sending documents such as academic papers and personal identity documents.

With regards to activities organized to manage their lives, all asylum seekers said during holidays they met and prepared their respective cultural foods, they also took part in the Norwegian culture, organized their respective countries' national days which the Norwegian government encourages and supports.

b) Findings from LOPEX staff

When probed whether asylum seekers were allowed to engage in odd jobs, all respondents responded that the law prohibits asylum seekers from engaging themselves in any work related activities that attract payment.

Asked whether there is any legal implication if asylum seekers were engaged in odd jobs, respondents said the person who gives asylum seekers work is the one that is penalized.

5.0 Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Discussion

The purpose of this study is to find out the Survival Strategies available to asylum seekers in Norway and Sogndal Kommune in particular. The project further wanted to establish survival strategies at the disposal of asylum seekers besides services provided by the state. The project further wanted to find out the impact of the Norwegian Policy on asylum seekers and to determine the impact of the services provided by the government on asylum seekers. The discussion will thus follow the objectives as set out in the outset.

5.1.1 Survival Strategies available to asylum seekers.

The field findings revealed that most asylum seekers expected to be easily and quickly integrated in the Norwegian society and make it easier for them to find a job, be self reliant, have better accommodation, go or send their children to school and enjoy good health services as soon as they got into Norway. This could have helped the asylum seekers to re-adjust to life and work within the shortest possible time. Cushner et al (1996) states that changing life and work within a culture other than their own, people experience or undergo emotional trauma due to displacement and unfamiliarity as a result of anxiety. However, this has not been the case in Norway and Sogndal Kommune in particular as asylum seekers spend a lot of time learning a new language as a means to achieving new form of survival strategies. The average time period for an asylum seeker to be given residence permit is one year. As a consequence, it is felt that the period is too long for someone to live without any survival strategies accorded to him or her. The findings reveal that as a result of this most asylum seekers especially those whose responses come out negative especially women are compelled to do odd jobs where they are paltry remunerated. Others as Goldin (2001) and Khawaja et al (2008) assert that the commonly used survival strategy to reduce this traumatizing experience is the use of religion. Asylum seekers seek the intervention of God in their

situation through prayers and others (asylum seekers) meet for social gatherings and have meals, Kaffe and give and receive support from one another, family, friends and caregivers. Usually, accepting that everyone (asylum seeker) is in a similar situation is what is generally employed as a strategy; believing that there was nothing that one could do about the prevailing situation.

Diane Taylor (2009) writes that some women engage themselves in prostitution as they do not have a choice and still yet others enter into partnership with entrepreneurs or business houses; instead of payment in cash they are paid in kind. This is not the true situation among asylum seekers in Sogndal Kommune because their privacy is compromised as they are made to live in rooms in pairs. Most women asylum seekers researchers interviewed revealed that they would rather rent an apartment on an individual basis the moment they are integrated to have their privacy secured.

5.1.2 Impact of Survival Strategies on asylum seekers

All persons who would want to work in Norway, except citizens of the European Economic Area (EEA) need a work permit, Lavenex and Ucarer (2003). It is rather difficult for the asylum seekers in Sogndal to find and engage in survival strategies of finding work that may not be deemed illegal and get a payment in cash. Furthermore, the asylum seekers may have the necessary professions and skills to find jobs in Norway but since the process is a rather long winding, and bureaucratic one, it makes it almost impossible for the asylum seekers to find a way of getting into the job system. Diane Taylor (2009) adds that asylum seekers are profoundly resourceful people who have come through a great deal. They have often lost nearly everything; their personal academic credentials, including children, family, friends, good health, livelihood and their statuses. Destitution sets in and erodes the sense of their self and their will to survive which is often all they have left. Without any job, the asylum seekers feel that their lives are forgotten and wasted, therefore, when they find some work they feel alive and most appreciated. Some asylum seekers may even send their extra earnings back to their families in their home countries.

To be given a negative answer when an asylum seeker has been anticipating something positive hurts. It hurts even more when one is told to return to their country of origin. Arenas et al (1987), contends that some asylum seekers sometimes suffer from trauma of return, a situation he describes as a crisis in which the victims' hopes and expectations of returning home one day overshadows the wish and ability to integrate. However, Norway has an outdoor culture of long walks in the mountains and along the fjords which to a greater extent helps asylum seekers cope with this kind of stress and trauma.

5.1.3 Analysis of Social Services provided by the Government to augment Survival Strategies

All the asylum seekers in Sogndal Kommune are accommodated in a reception center located in Kaupanger. The reason behind accommodating the asylum seekers in the same area is that they should live like a family as most of them may have come as individual persons leaving or losing their families back home or through war, whichever case may be appropriate. According to Brekke (2004:1), in Norway as in most European nations, asylum seekers are accommodated in reception centers with a view of the residents to experience the asylum period as a time of qualification to successful integration or as a preparation for possible return to their home country. However, research findings show that most residents in the reception center in Kaupanger experience uncertainty, powerlessness and sometimes gradual disqualification. To prevent such outcome from occurring, Berg et al (2005:1-3), suggests that service providers in reception centers to organize various activity programs of empowerment and integration for residents in the centers. Activities such as short but intensive courses which could enable the asylum seekers make ends meet even when their allowances from Government are reduced.

Additionally, Brekke and Vesvstad (2007), propose that reception centers give as much information as possible to asylum seekers on their rights to health care, education and employment. Most respondents talked to in Kaupanger reported that from the point of arrival, the residents are treated as clients and are hardly given any opportunities to

contribute to their economic wellbeing using their own initiatives. This is confirmed by Berg (1990) who writes that the Norwegian reception system provides different types of assistance to residents but denies asylum seekers the chance or chances for them to economically empower themselves.

5.2 Conclusion

The research brought out some survival strategies lacking among the asylum seekers in Sogndal Kommune. This means a lot of concerted efforts need to be put in place by the major stakeholders involved in order to uplift and economically empower asylum seekers. The Government of Norway could, however, be commended as it has not paid a blind eye to the welfare of asylum seekers. The Government has and continues to pay up-keep allowances through LOPEX which is a Government agency. This work by LOPEX is commendable as it alleviates would be expected sufferings of the asylum seekers as they wait to be permanently settled.

In conclusion, what came out so prominently as some of the survival strategies lacking are business oriented short courses, speedy execution of the asylum seekers' application for refugee status and availability of any bankable assets which can easily be converted into money in an event of a negative response from the Government. The Norwegian Policy on language appears to be difficult for asylum seekers to be integrated into society as it is a mandate to learn and understand norms, values and culture. This tends to be de-motivating to the high and positive expectant asylum seekers as a result of the Norwegian Welfare bureaucracies.

Norway is welfare state which does not only believe in universalism but also individualism as a culture. Universalism demands that all welfare services available should be given to all human beings irrespective of race, ethnicity, religious or political inclination. Individualism on the other hand, entails that a human being has a democratic right to lead a life and culture as he or she pleases. Furthermore, the existence of universalism means that everyone should enjoy equal and uniform services regardless of one's nationality, but in reality this does not apply to asylum seekers in

general. The problem of asylum seekers to be finally settled and given residence permit continues to pose a big problem to the survival strategies of the asylum seekers.

Finally, the findings show that the asylum seekers are at no point sorted according to professions and skills for those that have so that they can be better placed to help enhance the survival strategies. Instead they are lumped together and put in the same confinement notwithstanding the abilities and capacities these different people may possess which can also add to the economic enhancement of the state of Norway.

5.3 Recommendations

The research would like to recommend the following as a result of this study:

- a) Government through its various institutions to expedite the process of acquiring permanent residence to the asylum seekers.
- b) Decentralize the point from where the residence permits are issued from as a way of cutting on bureaucracy.
- c) Government should give appropriate jobs to deserving asylum seekers within their reception centres, for instance, nursing to those that were working as nurses where they came from.
- d) The state to come up with short and intensive courses meant for asylum seekers to economically empower themselves. This could greatly assist the asylum seekers even in an event of a reduction in the allowance received as a result of the negative answer from the state.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

Objective 1

Outline the survival strategies among asylum seekers

1. What were your expectations when you came here?
 - Politically
 - Socially
 - Economically
2. What problems are you experiencing living in another culture if any?
3. What is helping you cope with your emotions?
4. How is it helping you?
5. How are managing your cultural practices living in another culture?
6. What do you do every day as an asylum seeker?

Objective 2

To ascertain the impact the Norwegian policy on refugees has on asylum seekers.

1. How long have you stayed in Norway?
2. What documents do you need to submit in order to be granted resident permit?
3. Are you granted resident permit?
4. If the answer is negative what would you do next?
5. Do you take part in activities such as economic activities, politics or social services before you are granted a resident permit?
6. What information if any do you have on policies regarding asylum seekers in Norway?

Objective 3

To determine the impact of services provided by the government on asylum seekers.

1. What services do you receive from government?
2. What would you say about the services provided to you?
3. What do you think government ought to do in order improve to upon these services?

Objective 4

To find out survival strategies at the disposal of asylum seekers besides services provided by the government.

1. Are you engaged in any odd jobs?
2. What kind of help are you getting from the community if any?
3. Other than government support, are you receiving any support from NGO's or any other institutions?
4. If yes to above question, what type of help do you receive?
5. How are you getting in touch with your families back home?
6. What sort of help are you receiving from your home country?
7. What sort of activities do you organize by yourselves to help manage your daily lives?

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR LOPEX STAFF

Objective 1

Outline the survival strategies among asylum seekers

1. What is the mission of your organization?
2. What survival strategies do you think asylum seekers hold on to for their psychological wellbeing?

Objective 2

To ascertain the impact of the Norwegian policy on refugees has on asylum seekers.

1. How long does it take for one to be granted a resident permit?
2. In the past 12 months, how many asylum seekers have been granted resident permits?
3. What happens if an asylum seeker is not granted a resident permit?
4. What time frame is given to those denied resident permits before they are deported?
5. Are there any changes that you might suggest to add to the current system?

Objective 3

To determine the impact of services provided by the government to asylum seekers.

1. What services do you provide to asylum seekers?
2. What impact do they have on asylum seekers?
3. Do you think the services you provide are beneficial to asylum seekers?
4. Is any room for improvement in service delivery to asylum seekers?

Objective 4

To find out survival strategies at the disposal of asylum seekers besides services provided by the government.

1. Are asylum seekers allowed to engage in odd jobs before resident permits are given?
2. Are there legal implications if an asylum seeker is engaged in odd jobs before they are granted resident permit?
3. If yes what are they?
4. If no, is there time limit?

Appendix: Letter of Introduction for pilot

February 27th, 2014

The Project Coordinator

Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi)

Sogndal.

Student Research Work: Letter of Introduction.

Students 21, 13 and 01 are attending the course 'Global Knowledge' at Sogn og Fjordane University College spring term 2012.

As part of the course, students are required to do project work which implies the collection of empirical data. 21, 13 and 01 are looking into Survival Strategies among Asylum Seekers and would like to interview (4) members of staff and (6, 3 females and 3 males) asylum seekers, from all groups.

In order to protect the interests of the informants taking part in the research, the data collection and analysis has been planned according to the relevant scientific norms and regulations, as stated by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD).

Sogn og Fjordane University College would appreciate your co-operation in assisting the students on the selection of informants, and regarding other relevant practical matters during the data collection.

If you have any questions, please contact assistant professor Gunnar Onarheim, who is the supervisor of this project.

Regards,

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