

Urbanization of Refugee Camps and the Role of Urban Agriculture in Combatting Food Insecurity

Campbell, Michael Baylen; MSc MDP Candidate, Trinity College Dublin/University College Dublin, United States, campbemi@tcd.ie, jannessa@tcd.ie

Managing urban growth has become one of the most important challenges of the 21st Century. Instead of being places of opportunities and prosperity, in many cases urban areas have become places of deprivation, inequality and exclusion. Recent trends have seen the rapid urbanization of unplanned settlements in the form of refugee camps. Refugee camp Dadaab in Kenya is now home to nearly half a million people, most of which have come from Somalia, escaping the civil war that began in the early 1990s. Many refugee camps outlast their initial mandates, and the unplanned nature of these camps result in a myriad of challenges facing an already fragile context. All the while, camps like Zaatari in Jordan develop semi-formal markets, modes of transport, education systems, and much more which is why we chose to categorise such settings as urbanised.

This paper explores the challenges facing refugee camps as zones of urbanization. Our team of multi-disciplinary development practitioners has examined the effects of food insecurity, mental health, economic deprivation and gender-based violence in these environments. From reflecting on these numerous challenges, this paper discusses how urban agriculture can serve as a multidimensional tool for addressing social and economic challenges. Urban agriculture is presented not only as a means to mitigating the issue of food security, but as a mechanism to solving other pressing issues within the urbanized refugee camps of today and tomorrow.

Given the state of the global migration crisis and predicted impacts of climate change over the next 50 years research suggests that similar trends in the urbanization of these transient settings will continue. As such, it is the goal of the essay to outline the beneficial impacts institutionalized urban agriculture practices can play in camp setting and that such programs become a facet of camp management in the future.