



Internally Displaced Persons and Refugee Crisis in West Africa Sub-Region

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ABSTRACT

Africa has not only witnessed a drastic increase in the inflow of refugee across borders, but also an enormous increase of internally displaced persons. This chapter which is exploratory and explanatory in nature of sound development plans for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in West Africa sub-region sought to assess the causes, and impacts of refugees on the host Africa countries. Also the study examines the general challenges of IDPs and refugees such as food, water, security and health facilities. This chapter derives its data from both primary and secondary sources. The primary source includes a structured questionnaire and interview conducted among some officers in-charge of camps and refugees from five selected African countries' camps online. The secondary source includes the data obtained from journals, textbooks and internet materials. The interview data were analyzed through simple categorization of responses and very important responses were quoted. The findings revealed that the deplorable conditions of IDPs and refugees in the continent in terms of adequate social facilities, such as security, infrastructural facilities as well as social amenities need to be properly addressed. The chapter advocates for paramount need to restore orderliness, protection and provision of relief assistance and security for the IDPS and refugees. Therefore, African governments should evolve a policy and partner with developed countries to ensure food security, and a free flow of protection under international humanitarian law to make life meaningful for the IDPs and refugees in African countries.

Keywords: Refugee, Internally Displaced Persons, Security, International , Humanitarian, Law

Introduction

Africa is not only faced with natural catastrophes, such as droughts and famine which produce economic refugees, but it is also afflicted with civil wars; ethnic strife, terrorism, human rights abuses, coups and oppressive governments are the most important factors responsible for the large numbers of refugees on the continent. At present, African countries have become host to about 18 million displaced and refugees who have fled their countries mainly as a result of civil wars, terrorism, natural disaster and armed conflicts. (IOM Report, 2022). Internally displaced persons and Refugees share a common threat; the agony and cost of being forced to flee their homes. Many countries in Africa face a double burden of diseases and large numbers of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Refugees. No African Country is absorbed of this, but the gravity varies from one country to another. Nine of such countries are Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan, Somalia Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia and DR Congo and Ethiopia. United States Emergency Plan focused on above countries. In recent years, the entire World witnessed an unprecedented 71.1million displacement in 2022 due to mass population displacements resulted from Russia's war in Ukraine and floods in Pakistan,(Jiont report by IDMC and NRC, 2022) . The global refugee problem is a subject of international concern as it affects Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, and North America Refugee crisis is a particularly serious problem in Africa where the IDPs and refugee population on the continent amount to about 18 million which represent 40 per cent of the world's refugees, surpassing even the population of some individual African nations. In Somalia Camp is home to about 3.9million Refugees and IDPs In Nigeria the displacement figure is placed at around 3.3million people at the end of 2023 (IDMC). There are few International Organizations that are exclusively devoted to addressing the protection and assistance for IDPs and Refugees. Although there is less consistent data about displaced populations, this often leads to problem of proper planning for the IDPs. However, addressing the protection and assistance of IDPs may require overcoming other barriers as well. No sound is more distressing than the plea of the homeless. Their cry expresses the pain of hunger, thirst, repression, disease, and denotes the fear of death and insecurity. The cry is not pretence, but a reflection of grim reality. It is an expression of tragedy occurring daily, especially in Africa where one of every two refugees resides. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Mozambique, Angola, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Rwanda and Somalia have generated the largest numbers of refugees (UNHCR, 2023). With this huge number of IDPs one would conclude that all is not well with the continent.

However, the most affected are women and children with approximately 80% of the refugee population. In many countries, refugee women and children are vulnerable to gender-based violence, abuse, and exploitation (Spiegel, Miller, Schilperoord, 2015). In 2020, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimated that there were approximately 25,000,000 IDPs displaced by conflict in 48 countries. More than half of the world's displaced people

live in Africa. <http://www.internal-displacement.org> With more than two million persons displaced solely by conflict and terrorist activities in the northern region of Nigeria, the issue of internal displacement has emerged as a significant political concern in Nigeria. Next to Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria ranks is the third country on the continental map of high Internally Displaced Persons population in Africa.

This paper notes that the original idea of IDPs/refugee protection was good. But with time that well-celebrated history of law, policies and practice ceased to be in tandem with contemporary changes in the New Millennium especially with the impact of global processes such as economic globalization which has changed the scenario. Our aim is not to only introduce a new implementation theory of IDPs and refugee protection in Africa, but to identify general patterns from diverse development. Therefore, the objectives of this paper are to:

- (i) Identify and discuss the causes of displacement, the challenges of IDPs and suggest the possible preventive measures.
- (ii) Assess the impacts of IDPs and the Refugee on their host country and make a recommendation to facilitate the Africa Governments and other stakeholders to revisit and reframe their policies for protection and assistance needed of IDPs and refugee as part of their agenda for African Governments.

To this end, the paper explores a broader conception of IDPs and refugee crisis in this new era and recommend the same to Africa governments, though, IDPs and refugee share a similar experience, the dynamic and nature of their displacement differs but they share some common problems in terms of protection, food scarcity, shelter, medical facilities, assistance, human right violation and other such concerns.

Literature Review

There is a paucity of literature on the subject on IDPs and Refugee crisis in Africa in particular. The available ones can be cited as follows:

Evolution of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

The most spectacular example of the complex mix of reasons why people leave their homes is found in Africa. An account of the IDP and refugee crisis in Africa reads like a series of entries in the Guinness Book of world Records under the heading "Misery". Africa today has a refugee population of over 7 million, in addition to some 15-18 million internally displaced persons. Civil strife and armed conflicts has led to massive loss of lives; the region has witnessed the destruction of its physical, economic and social infrastructure, the collapse of civil societies, the breakdown of family unit and the displacement of its people in unprecedented numbers. In some places, hungers alone have caused refugees and IDPs. Today's refugee policy mainly consists of responding to crisis as they happen rather than trying to prevent them. Moreover, refugees are treated and considered as the other half of the world with scant respect for their human entity. This made them powerless and voiceless.

Categories /Types of Internally Displaced Persons and Refugee

We have discerned six basic categories or types of refugees and internally displaced persons, viz: Anticipating IDPs/Refugees; IDPs/Semi-refugees; IDPs/ Impelled Refugees; Refugees/IDPs of war; Expellees; Ex-camp-inmates Refugees/IDPs. (Kunz, 1981:43).

a. Anticipating IDPs/Refugees

These are persons that on the first sign of possible danger for their personal or family security immediately made use of "an escape a necessity". As a rule, they belong to higher social levels.

b. IDPs/Semi-refugees

These people left their homes although there were no real dangers, or else they were, influenced by induced frightening. These "refugees" are used to "proving" before public opinion. The peril faced by certain ethnic groups, in this case by the Serb community in Croatia was grievous. The Great Serb movement staged this type of refugee flow first from Kosovo (in the late 1980s), which helped Milošević find an excuse to annul the autonomy of Kosovo and to introduce a military-police dictatorship in these provinces.

c. IDPs/ Impelled Refugees

This type concerns people, who had been exposed to diverse modes of pressure, threats and intimidation, aimed at forcing them to flee. It is, in a way, the most typical category in political refugee population.

d. Refugees/IDPs of war

In a place where war activities are being carried on, either as aggression (or liberation for parties defending their legitimate rights), or else as civil conflict, all refugees from the region in war may be broadly labelled "war refugees". Namely, such cases are directly tied to the war, or to the roots of the war and refugee flows, which are basically the same.

e. Expellees

This type of refugee (and displace) has been literally expelled from home. Such people actually do not have the possibility to remain in their domiciles, without their lives being exposed to immediate danger. Before expulsion, they are subjected to various forms of maltreatment and humiliation.

f. Ex-camp-inmates Refugees/IDPs

The IDPs and refugees who were previously detained in camps, prisons, forced brothels, and even in their own homes and domiciles (without freedom of movement, often with forced labour and daily humiliation) had the worst pre-refugee experience.

The Root Causes of IDPs and Refugee

There are many factors that displaced people and make them seek for refugee, such as natural disasters, namely flood, earthquake, terrorism, civil strife/armed conflict etc. Among the factors aforementioned, armed conflict is the main factor in developing countries that give the largest population birth to IDPs and Refugees. Therefore, armed conflict is responsible for IDPs and Refugee. The causes of armed conflict are numerous and interconnected. Africa countries have different histories and geographical conditions, different stages of economic development, different sets of public policies and different patterns of internal and international interaction. The sources of conflict in these regions thus reflect this diversity and complexity, yet a number of common trends and legacies seem to tie them together.

- i. Historical legacies (Colonialism):- A major cause of conflicts in some parts of the developing countries relates to the historical process of state formation, which arbitrarily brought together different communities and ethnic groups to form single nations and also divided unified communities and ethnic groups to separate states.
- ii. Political legacies:- The nature of political power in many developing countries characterized by political exclusion through single party and state dominated authoritarian rule is a key source of conflict. It is generally the case that political victory assumes a 'winner-takes-all' with respect to wealth and resources, patronage, prestige and the prerogative of office. Political and economic powers are heavily centralized and monopolised resulting in massive corruption, nepotism, tribalism and abuse of office.
- iii. Ethnic legacies:- Ethnic cleavages are tools leaders utilise to gain and consolidate political power. Many leaders have emphasised differences rather than similarities among ethnic communities and their desire for political power with authority over resource distribution is often tied to ethnic mobilisation. Also, pre and post-independence integration in developing countries has, all too often, been at the expense of various nationalities and peoples' distinctive identities, interests and aspirations and generally have been enabled due to the domination of small ruling classes belonging to or allied with one particular ethnic group that is strongly contested by others.
- iv. Economic legacies: - Economic factors have played a key role in generating and fuelling conflicts, as there are those who benefit from the chaos and lack of accountability. Competition for control and exploitation of resources such as diamonds (in Angola and Sierra Leone), timber (in Liberia) and inequitable distribution of oil wealth (in Nigeria) to local communities have ignited and prolonged conflicts in these countries. In Rwanda, disputes over land tenure and property ownership are the most explosive issues in the country.
- v. Environmental legacies:- Land degradation caused by climatic change and human activities such as farming and cutting trees heightens social inequalities and forces poor inhabitants of degraded ecosystems to compete for diminishing resources which often result in conflict as in the conflict between pastoralist tribes in Sudan (Conflict Prevention). Instability caused by environmental pressures that leads to further insecurity as people arm themselves for protection against theft of their resources and potential violence.
- vi. Globalization: - Local conflicts and civil wars have become more prevalent since the end of the Cold War, leaving a security vacuum as super powers' ideological priorities give way to corporate rivalry over economic opportunities.
- vii. Terrorism: - The case of displacement by Boko Haram in the North Eastern region in Nigeria could be linked to the activities of terrorism. More than two hundred thousand people were displaced and rendered homeless. Also, more than twenty thousand people were killed. Almost ten thousand children were orphan.

Qualification for Refugee Status

African countries grant refugee status according to the following:

1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (28 July 1951)

1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees (31 January 1967)

Basic Agreement between the Africa countries and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (6 September 1993).

1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.

To qualify for refugee status, one must be able to present evidence that one's life was in danger due to persecution as a result of one's race, tribe, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group; or if there is war in one's country. No other reasons exist to apply for refugee status.

A refugee can apply for permanent residence after five years of continuous residence from the date of asylum being granted. Only recognized refugees can apply for Africa countries ID book. One's application must be adjudicated within 180 days of application.

Losing the Refugee Status

One can lose one's refugee or asylum status if:

One leaves the country without the permission of the National Commission for Refugee

One contravenes any conditions of one's permit

The application is fraudulent, unfounded or abusive

The application for asylum has been rejected; or

One is ineligible for asylum (Nigeria decree of 1989, No 52).

Research Methodology

Data for this chapter were generated through primary and secondary sources of data collection. For primary data, in-depth interview instruments were used to collect useful information and opinions from the public agencies managing the camps. The data collection for this paper has been a rigorous process and involved immense coordination between various groups and stakeholders.

The other research method used was online-interviews targeting the Refugees and policy makers in charge of the refugee camps. Representative of camp commandants in different camps in West Africa were involved in the interview. Fifteen Refugees were interviewed in five countries' camps in West Africa viz; Camp in South Chad, Minawao refugee camp in the North in Cameroon, [Comè](#) camp in Benin, Buduburam Camp in Ghana and IDPs Camp in Borno northern Nigeria to elicit information on their challenges and the general situation of the camp in order to get public opinion on the subject. Also, the community hosting the IDPs and refugee were interviewed on their, (IDPs camp) effects on the community. The secondary data for this research were sourced from relevant textbooks, journals, newspapers, conference papers, handbooks, bulletins, Internet and libraries. The interview data were analyzed through simple categorization of responses and very important responses were quoted. Secondary source of data were mostly valuable for the literature review of the paper.

Findings and Discussion on IDPs and Refugee Crisis in Africa

A visit to the Benin Refugee camp (where Nigerians are hosting as refugees as a result of Boko haram) and Ebeju-Leki of Lagos State Refugee or a IDPs resettlement camps in Nigeria or, for that matter, any other refugee camp in any part of Africa highlights pictures of their vicelessness and powerlessness in refugee situations in the host countries and elsewhere. Refugees are not the world's other half for they have been forced to leave their homes and hearths due to the ruthless actions of some leaders which have caused poverty, hunger, unemployment, diseases, deprivation and wars and civil strife and it is responsibility of the Government to remedy this situation and improve their wellbeing.

The findings from different five camps in Africa countries revealed the general factors that place IDPs and refugees at risk as major crisis include the following: displacement, social instability, increased mobility, sexual and gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse, poverty and food insecurity, Lack of access to health services, Lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate health information

Data from different camps' Emergency Management Agency (which grew out of the committee handling the crisis) shows that the major problems in the camps are shortage of food; water, and appalling sanitary conditions such as, " people defecating everywhere". In some of the camps, the arrival of the refugees brought some benefits such as borehole when people (refugees) came. Other crisis would be comprehensively analyzed in sub-heading below.

Life in the IDPs and Refugee Camp

Refugees generally agreed to the bad nature of life in the camps. Particularly at the onset, there was boredom, "waking up and down nothing to do except to just sit" (interview with Esene, Abuja, June 7, 2020). For people who were mostly farmers and therefore used to active lives, this was obviously devastating. These people have been living under the condition of great hardship from lack of food, medicine, shelter and absence of work to provide income. Their children are missing out on education because there are insufficient schools and educational materials. In addition, there were general uncertainties about food and water. As most of the refugees arrived to the camp with nothing, only their clothes on them, food was a constant problem. In the first weeks, refugees relied on relief materials from government and donation from others, including the host communities. Some also brought some money food items along, while those who had some bought food in the open market until they ran out of money. Pressed for food but with no money, many of the refugees did whatever was possible to obtain a meal. (Interview with Hagija, Abuja, June 7, 2022).

Matters were not helped by the proclivity of the locals to queue up with refugees for food rations and relief materials. In several instances, because the locals were themselves involved in food distributions as part of humanitarian work, they gave priority to their relatives in the communities. (Interview with Hagija, Abuja, June 7, 2019).

Furthermore, the deprivation led to a thriving system in which refugees traded sex for food. Other items such as clothing, bath soaps and other toiletries were also popular merchandise in the sex trade. Host community members said marriage was easy to contract with refugees as the usual bride price was

waived and 'one could marry without money'. The exigency of the time thus brought back the long forgotten tradition of 'exchange marriage', albeit in a new form. Unlike the past when females were exchanged, quantities of food were all that were required to marry. In several instances, such marriages were contracted in exchange for links with the community and more food security. The new marriages, especially those who lived more affluent lives could not endure the deprivation in the camp (interview with Borode, January, 2012).

Sexual activities in the camp were not limited to the outsiders as youths also indulged in these. There were persistent stories about youth' (both from the host community and within the camp) sexual escapades. The adults explained this as a way of filling idle time (interview with Borode, January 25, 2012).

The situation reveals the precarious role of women in conflicts. In the most active phase of the violence, they suffered rape; when violence subsided they were exploited, sometimes by parents driven to desperation by the crises. As the experiences show, a parent either encouraged or turned a blind eye to sexual activities in and around the camp in addition to the more coerced ones during the conflict. Beside the dehumanization and brutalization that process entailed, many rape victims were infected by HIV/AIDS and others with sexually transmitted infections. In a region that already has one of the highest prevalence rates; the situation could have been further fuelled by the conflicts (interview Hagija, Abuja, June 25, 2019).

Water supply was a persistent problem in the camp. While water was provided by government through periodic deliveries, there was always a rush and attendant stampede whenever the water tanker arrived. It was often a survival of the fittest contest in which women and children, who traditionally hauled water, were disadvantaged. The situation forced several refugees to forage for water in streams and community ponds. Much later, some boreholes were provided to alleviate the situation (interview with Morriss, December, 2015).

While there were no threats of being attacked because of the security provided by law enforcement agents, security of property, or what little they had, remained a problem in the camp. There were consistent complaints of stealing of items like food, soap and clothing. The situation was further aggravated by the obvious lack of privacy in a context where thousand find themselves crammed into the perimeter of a camp (interview with Ogunbayo, December, 2019).

The camp did not run any technical schools, and therefore left the children idle. However, there were periodic lessons run by religious organizations and members of the National Youth Service Corps. In many instances, some of the educated refugees taught the younger ones; UNICEF also assisted organizing such classes. These classes did not, however, use any specific curricula, or address particular needs such as preparation for secondary school entrance examinations or the university matriculation. In effect, children's education was disrupted throughout the period (interview with Lawrence, December, 2019).

There were no specific programmes on maternal child health, or indeed any other aspects of health. Rather, visits by UNICEF and other agencies were to assess and tackle immediate problems such as outbreaks of diarrhoea, in many instances, figure from the camp's clinic showed a heavy burden. Within a month, 'out of the total 2,819 patients treated (in the camp clinic) 507 were treated for diarrhoea, 422 for malaria, 322 for measles (but) low figures for other disease' (Alli and Egwu 2019:13).

This handicap includes the lack of any programmes on HIV/AIDS, even as crisis periods are known to, and as earlier discussed; encourage sexual activities in circumstances where safe sex was difficult and thereby of HIV/AIDS transmission. The situation was aggravated by the lack of any information or counselling, including condoms, in the camp. It may thus be seen that not only were the refugees hampered by their status from receiving health information as others in society, the challenges created by their status they were often not adequately addressed. This perhaps explains the high number of deaths and 'daily losses' among the refugees (World Organization Against Torture, 2002: 160). Respondents said the deaths affected all age groups, with children bearing most of the brunt. The death of refugees created initial problems of finding a burial place. As we now turn, this issue was part of the sometimes uneasy relations with the host community.

The General Challenges and Rebuilding their Lives

The refugee camps were generally makeshift. In many cases existing structures such as clinics and churches were used as camp. However, in some cases zinc structures were hurriedly erected to accommodate the influx of IDPs at various camps. Whatever the form, the amenities were often grossly inadequate and oversubscribed. The persistent problems were toilet facilities, food and water supply. However, some pit toilets and boreholes were later constructed.

The same is true of health facilities. Where there were periodic visits to camp to address emergencies such as outbreaks of diarrhoea, there was not much else. Thus, there were no special facilities for maternal child health, or HIV/AIDS both of which are huge public health problems. Worse still, the exigency of the period might have predisposed people to conditions that could facilitate the transmission of the HIV/AIDS. In this way, not only were the refugees unable to receive the service available to other Nigerians; some of their specific problems were also unaddressed (Alubo, 2006). While some diseases prevention services needed by refugees and IDP populations already exist in their host countries, several challenges limit their access to those services. These challenges include:

- a. The mobility of some refugee and displaced populations, which poses a challenge to ensuring continuity of care;
- b. Limited resources of both host countries and refugee relief organizations;
- c. The location of many refugees and IDPs in rural and remote areas, which may limit their ability to access host country health services, especially beyond the most basic level;

- d. Poor roads leading to refugee camps, limiting the ability of service providers to provide health services;
- e. Language and skills barriers, including the limited availability of personnel who understand both the languages and customs of the refugee and displaced populations.
- f. Omission of refugees, and in some cases, the internally displaced, from host government's national strategic plans for health, particularly HIV/AIDS.

Internally displaced persons, since they remain inside their own countries, may face additional challenges because:

- a. There may be inadequate protection by their own governments;
- b. Their governments can block or restrict humanitarian assistance;
- c. They may be affected by ongoing conflict and insecurity; and
- d. They may be hard to reach and to gather adequate data, because they often live with families or are well integrated into their host communities.
- e. There is still acute shortage of shelters particularly with the intensity of rains rendering the tents uninhabitable. Refugees were forced to move into the classroom buildings, which has also affected attendance level in the school. According to the Red Cross Camp officer, health care and feeding the most vulnerable refugees have been among the numerous problems facing the camp. Other major problems facing the camp according to the camp Commandant are accommodation, education and security.
- f. Violations of IDPs and Refugees' Rights: - Just as globalised states may present new threats alongside long-standing patterns of repression, globalization offers states declining opportunities to serve as a source of human right protection. Increasing number of residents of increasing number of states is less than full citizens. Over 25 million people are international refugee-mostly undocumented and generally lacking civil rights.

The Impact of Refugees on Host Countries in Africa

Developing countries that host refugees for protracted periods experience long-term economic, social, political, and environmental impacts. From the moment of arrival, refugees may compete with local citizens for scarce resources such as water, food, housing, and medical services. Their presence increases the demands for education, health services, infrastructure such as water supply, sanitation, and transportation, and also in some cases, for natural resources such as grazing and firewood. The impacts of the refugee presence are both positive and negative (UNHCR, 2004). The dynamic between positive and negative factors is complex and varies depending on several factors, including the political economy of host countries, urban-rural interactions, and the nature of host-refugee relations. Montclos(2010) asserts, even when a refugee situation creates economic opportunities for both the displaced and their hosts, there can be gainers and losers in each group.

Economic Impacts

Large-scale and protracted refugee influxes can have macro-economic impacts on the host country's economy. Some of these impacts are associated with increased but uncompensated public expenditures related to the care and maintenance of the refugee population. A report concerning the impact of refugees and IDPs on the national public expenditure in Nigeria during the 2011 concluded that significant direct and indirect expenditure related to refugees affected the scale of the government's capital investment in the social and infrastructure sectors. Direct and indirect costs of refugee influxes on public expenditure were estimated at US\$ 4.4 million for 2011 and US\$ 3.4 million for 1999 (Montclos, 2010). As a result, a UNHCR emergency assistance program was developed to ensure that development projects served the needs of both the displaced and nationals in the refugee hosting areas (Montclos, 2010). This program included a substantial expansion of hospitals, clinics, road networks, and water supply, as well as reforestation plans to alleviate the environmental degradation of felling wood reserves (World Bank, 1999).

In recent decades, several studies have focused on the impact of refugees on the local economies of hosting countries (Chambers 1986, Whitaker 1999, Alix-Garcia 2007). In Tanzania, an assessment was undertaken of the impact of Rwandan refugees on local agricultural prices between 1993 and 1998 (Alix-Garcia, 2007). The study revealed a significant increase in the prices of some agricultural goods (e.g., cooking bananas, beans and milk) and a decrease in the price of aid-delivered goods (e.g., maize). As a result, many Tanzanian farmers who produced in large quantity benefited from an increased demand for their agricultural products in local markets. Anecdotal evidence suggested that on average, farmers doubled the size of their cultivated land and their production of bananas and beans during 1993-1996 (Whitaker, 2002). The increase in the size of the local markets also boosted business and trade activities conducted by both hosts and refugees (Whitaker, 2002).

Notwithstanding the positive contributions that refugees can make to the economy of host countries, such contributions should be viewed in terms of both positive and negative among refugees as well as host populations. In Nigeria, refugees have provided cheap labour in sectors such as agriculture, construction, housekeeping, and catering. In this regard, the refugee presence has affected the wages of local non-skilled workers and benefited local entrepreneurs (Maystadt and Verwim, 2009). Similarly, an increase in the demand for rented housing from either well-to-do refugees or expatriate aid personnel in Leki, Nigeria during the 2020s, particularly benefitted local property owners and disadvantaged less well-to-do Nigerians looking for rented

housing (Schmeidl, 2002). This illustrates that when refugees arrive, those among the host population who have access to resources, education, or power are better positioned to benefit from the refugee presence, while those who lack these resources in the local context become further marginalized (Maystadt and Verwim, 2009).

While many of the situations described in this brief serve to illustrate the negative and positive economic impacts of refugees in camps, particularly in rural areas, it is important to note that a growing urbanization of refugees has taken place in recent years, mainly in countries where camps do not exist. According to UNHCR, in 2008 almost half of the global refugee population resided in cities and towns, compared to one third who lived in camps (UNHCR, 2009). Urban refugees tend to reside in densely populated and poorly serviced environments. As a result, increasing competition and conflict between communities over limited urban resources such as land and water can aggravate the potential for urban crises (Deikun and Zetter, 2010:6). For example, in Egypt, Cairo and Alexandria host a highly diverse refugee population including Sudanese, Somalis, Eritreans and Ethiopians, in a very difficult environment with limited resources. High national unemployment rates, government regulations and a large population of unemployed youth restrict refugee access to labour markets. Therefore, most refugees are forced into unregulated work sectors and occupations with limited protection. This includes refugee women who are employed in domestic work in Nigerian households (Buscher and Heller, 2010). Similar social and economic conditions are experienced by Chin refugee from Burma, who lives as urban and undocumented refugees in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and New Delhi, India (Alexander, 2010).

Social Impacts

The refugee presence in hosting countries has potential social impacts on the ethnic balance of hosting areas, social conflict, and delivery of social services. The socio-cultural impact of refugees on the host community may occur simply because of their presence. Thus, if traditional animosities exist between cultural or ethnic groups, it may cause problems when one group becomes exposed to another that has been forced to become refugees. For example, in the late 1990s the mere presence of Kosovo-Albanian refugees in Macedonia generated tensions between ethnic Albanians and Serbs in Macedonia (Pini, 2008). However, UNHCR has also found that when refugees are from the same cultural and linguistic group as the local population, there are greater opportunities for peaceful co-existence and interaction among them (UNHCR, 2007). For instance, approximately 25,000 refugees from the Central African Republic were in the Democratic Republic of Congo during the 1990s. Like their Congolese hosts, the refugees belonged to the Yakoma ethnic group, so their integration into the host society was smooth and peaceful. Similarly, 3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, mostly ethnic Pashtun resided for more than a decade among fellow Pashtun communities in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). During the entire period, relations between refugees and the host population were largely peaceful. The same has been the case with the massive influx of Somali refugees into the Dadaab area in Kenya, which is inhabited by people sharing the same culture and language, and which is often related by clan or tribal ties to the refugee population.

In refugee-affected and hosting areas, there may be inequalities between refugees and non-refugees that give rise to social tension (Betts, 2009). Refugees are frequently viewed as benefitting from privileged access to resources unavailable to the local host population. In this regard, refugee status offers an opportunity for education, literacy, vocational training, health, sanitation, and basic livelihood. However, when social services provided through international funding also target host communities, the likelihood that the local population will have a positive view of refugees increases significantly (Nordic Agency for Development and Ecology, 2010).

Thus, the Special Program for Refugee Affected Areas (SPRRA) in Nigeria (1999-2007) benefited host communities by promoting farming activities, road construction, and income-generating activities in surrounding areas.

A similar approach is currently being developed by the Government of Nigeria in order to address the protracted situation of Nigerian refugees. In response to the closure of the Oru refugee camp in Oru in 2008 by the federal Government of Nigeria, it is developing a comprehensive new approach to address the protracted situation of refugees in the Oru refugee camp, which seeks to turn the crisis into an opportunity. This approach aims to link relief, recovery, local integration, alternative choice and repatriation activities to refugees (El-Amaout, 2010).

Political and Security Impacts

There are a number of domestic concerns for countries that host refugees. The first of these is internal security. Many refugees come from situations of civil war and bring their weapons with them. These are then used by some for crimes, which include armed robbery and poaching. Large influxes can also place serious strains on the environment and social infrastructure. These problems become more severe where burden sharing through international assistance is (or becomes) limited. For example, it was the lack of sustained cooperation from the international community that contributed in large part to Tanzania's drastic decision to close its borders at a point during the Great Lakes crisis.

At times, refugees can pose a security and political threat to the host country; and this, in turn can create tensions in bilateral relations between neighbouring countries. Examples include the involvement of Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 over his perceived accommodation of the Sri Lankan government, and the involvement of Rwandan Tutsi refugees in Uganda in the removal of the Milton Obote administration (1980-1985).

Environmental impacts

The presence of large influxes of refugees has also been associated with environmental impacts on land, water, natural resources, and slum growth. Various studies provide examples of different types of environmental impacts related to the influx of refugees and their long-term presence (Jacobsen 1997, UNHCR 1998, FAO 2005). The initial arrival phase of refugee influxes may be accompanied by severe environmental impacts when displaced people often move into and through an area to secure their immediate needs (UNHCR/FAO, 1994). Some of these immediate effects include fire wood crises and water pollution in refugee camp areas. As the emergency period passes and refugees become settled, the nature of the environmental impact changes, but can still be significant. A recent environmental assessment conducted in Sudan highlights that the massive presence of refugees is related to serious environmental damage in hosting areas. Environmental impacts are closely associated with the type of refugee settlements and particularly the concentration of people in large camps. The most evident environmental impacts include: (i) deforestation and firewood depletion, (ii) land degradation, (iii) unsustainable groundwater extraction, and (iv) water pollution. In addition, human waste disposal by displaced persons can contaminate local groundwater and cause the spread of diseases (United Nations Environment Program, 2010). Other impacts from the initial and long-term displacement are related to uncontrolled slum growth.

Assistance strategies to IDPs and Refugee

Refugees are agents of development and are temporarily disturbed by unrest in their countries of origin. The problem to solve is how to adequately assist them back on their feet so as to allow them to play again a meaningful role both in the country of asylum and also once back home.

Protection:

The Kampala convention on protection and assistance to the Internally Displace Person was signed in 2009 in Uganda. This provides a legal frame work for the protection and humanitarian assistances to the IDPs. In general, the asylum policy of the Nigerian government is very liberal and up to 90-95% of the cases are accepted; every asylum seeker is pre-interviewed upon arrival and subsequently interviewed by the Eligibility Committee. Asylum seekers rejected are given the right to appeal and allowed to remain in the country while their case is being processed. Federal Government has contributed in the evacuation of Liberians during 2003 crisis in Monrovia. Voluntary repatriation would have been the best durable solution, if the conditions in the respective countries of origin were conducive. It has been the case for Sierra Leonean refugees since the restoration of a democratic regime. After a joint fact finding mission to Serria Leone in order to assess the situation in the country, it was ascertained that the country is conducive and the refugees can now return to dignity and safety (ShambhaviV.M.G, 2005).

Resettlement:

The resettlement as a tool for protection and durable solution is envisaged in some cases where there is an end to the insurgency in their original country.

Overall, the return process enabled the refugees to commence a process of rebuilding their lives. e.g it was debated at the floor of the Nigerian senate that well to do individual should come and adopt among the orphans in the IDPs camp so that the children can live a normal life again. The following areas are worth mentioning:

Education

Schools have commenced in all places that had them before the crisis. Some of the demolished schools are being rebuilt but many still run from tree shades.

Access to the market

In all locations, the returnees now have unimpeded access to the market where they can buy or sell produce. With little money and farm produce, markets point more to future potentials. Some of IDPs said they do not go to market for fear of being attacked.

Access to land

This is a thorny issue as there were complaints that some of their farms have been taken over by others. Some people complained that they have to rent land to farm.

Economic activities

There was a gradual return of economic activities in the conflict areas. There were however challenges of where and how to start as neighbours, the church and other avenues where community members relied for loans were also in distress. The communities affected areas are therefore gradually rebuilding their lives.

Political participation

There was general acknowledgement that "there are no problems". However in many communities, the returnees also indicated that they had not been invited to political meetings.

There was therefore some resettlement process underway; the returnees were doing what they can to literally re-build their live from the scratch again.

Conclusion

These findings highlight current trends in IDPs and refugee-related crisis in Africa and lay the groundwork for studies of the impacts of IDPs and refugees on host community and country. For now, future scenarios offer a mixture of hope and caution. One possibility is that the proportion of IDPs and refugees involved in crisis in Africa will continue to decrease as the great powers lose interest in arming various exile groups. If civil wars, ethnic strife, human rights abuses, coups and oppressive governments that the most important factors responsible for the large numbers of refugees in Africa are reduced, definitely, there should be a vast decrease in IDPs and refugees. A new trend toward international humanitarian intervention could vastly decrease IDPs and refugee-related challenges.

Upon return to their countries of origin, regular monitoring and follow-up to ensure continuity of care for refugees is a particular challenge. Whether refugees qualify for ART and how treatment can be maintained is a judgment that must be made based on the overall situation of each population. The U.S. Government intends to maximize the ability of refugees to benefit from ART, but is not in a position to be responsible for on-going treatment in the case of repatriation to countries such as Angola, Sudan, Somalia or Liberia, which are not focus countries and where conditions do not presently exist that would allow widespread ART (US Report, 2006).

African governments will encourage open dialogue among international partners, host countries, and countries of origin to ensure the continuation of ART and other services for repatriated refugees. African government works with partners to strengthen sub-regional initiatives that serve refugees

African governments coordinate and partner with UNHCR, UNAID, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the World Bank (through its Multi-Country AIDS Program), NGOs, and host governments to identify gaps in HIV/AIDS services to refugees (US Report, 2006). Because U.S. bilateral programs are implemented on a decentralized basis, in-country collaboration with these partners is important to address identified gaps. African government works with other national and international actors to collect reliable data on refugees and promotes sharing of findings among partners to inform implementation. It works with USAID and other partners on the collection of similar data for displaced populations. The Emergency Plan works with UNHCR to bring refugee needs to the attention of the international community. The Emergency Plan and PRM also encourage UNHCR collaboration, where possible, with UNAIDS and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in various camps in Africa.

Recommendations

Consequently, the need to re-strengthen the existing institutions to cope with the dilemma of regional nationalism which, must be erected on the following recommendation:

One, by recognizing the challenges of refugees and IDPs, one will recognize the problem. By recognizing the problem, one will start on the need to accepting responsibility and implementing solutions and there is need for the international community to work towards clear policy guidelines and framework by way of international covenants recognizing the status of IDPs and refugees and the need for their protection. The problems associated with IDPs and a refugee is enormous and challenging. Since the IDPs and refugees are important aspects of human right protection, human rights groups, humanitarian organizations, the UNHCR, African Governments, and U.N. human rights agencies should take hard look at their respective roles and make coordinated efforts for the elimination of human rights abuses and protection of the rights of the refugees.

Also, in the areas of protection and security, there is a need to build new types of partnership to guarantee the required protection of refugees and humanitarian assistance. There should be special training for armed protection officer for each of the refugee's camp in Africa. The National Legal Framework for Assistance and Protection of refugee should be in accordance with the UN Guiding principles on refugees and should be harmonized with the Africa refugee law.

Furthermore, the affected country, as matter of urgency should establish a skill acquisition center to train the youth in the camp. Also, it would be necessary to embark on a high profile educational program/campaign that aims to educate the IDPs and refugees on how to keep their environment clean.

Future refugee and IDPs policies must give proper attention to the particular needs of children for their physical protection and humanitarian assistance. Early warning systems with involvement of all stakeholders and effective lines of communication between the Sub-regional, Regional, and International levels must be established and closely linked to local conflict mediation mechanisms.

Above all, African leaders should learn and imbibe a peace culture so that this will guarantee a sustainable peace and harmony in the continents.

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