

IMPACT OF REFUGEES IN NORTHWESTERN TANZANIA

STUDY BY CENTER FOR STUDY OF FORCED MIGRATION

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POLICY CONTEXT...

In the 60s to early 80s, the GOT practiced an 'OPEN DOOR' refugee policy that was characterised by the liberal admission of refugees who were awarded full SOCIO-economic rights and were only repatriated to their countries when conditions were conducive. Policy change occurred in the 90s and the GOT awarded 'TEMPORARY' protection of refugees with a view to rapid voluntary repatriation. Furthermore, refugees' freedom of movement and engagement in self-reliance activities was restricted. The GOT cited the NEGATIVE IMPACT of refugees as necessitating the above policy shift and stated its intentions to advocate for a revision of the existing international refugee regime so as to have refugees protected in 'safe zones' in their own countries. The GOT has also stated that it will not grant mass naturalisation to refugees. Tanzania's NEW FOREIGN POLICY seeks "to ensure that URT's relations with other nations and international entities are also driven in line with economic interests". This new policy subjugates political interests (including refugees, human rights etc.) to economic priorities. Effectively, this implies that, in the instance of increased tension with neighbouring countries over refugee hosting, it would not be in the government's interest to enter a costly war for the sake of asserting its territorial integrity and affording protection of refugees.

REFUGEE IMPACT STUDY.

The following humanitarian agencies in Tanzania were concerned about the possibility and effects of PRECIPITATED AND PREMATURE REPATRIATION OF REFUGEES, and commissioned a study on 'The Impact of Refugees in North-Western Tanzania': AFRICARE, CONCERN, OXFAM GB and TANZANIA CHRISTIAN REFUGEE SERVICES (TCRS) with logistical support provided by INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE (IRC), MEDICINS SANS FRONTIERES (MSF) - SPAIN and NORWEGIAN PEOPLES AID (NPA). The study was conducted in Ngara and Kibondo districts (Kagera and Kigoma regions, respectively).

The objectives of the study were to gather and analyse qualitative and quantitative data regarding the above subject for policy and advocacy guidance. The following methods were used: (1) literature review e.g. legislation, newspaper articles and research documents.; (2) discussions with key officials of humanitarian and refugee-related agencies in Dar-es-salaam, Kigoma and Kagera regions; (3) field research in Ngara and Kibondo districts; (4) interviews with regional and district government officers; (5) focus groups with local community representatives; and (6) site visits to areas surrounding refugee camps, markets, tree nurseries, development projects, hospitals etc.

RECURRENT ASSERTIONS...

Government at all levels; the media as well as society at large has made like following **NEGATIVE**, recurrent assertions regarding refugees. That is, that refugees are

- threatening external and internal peace and security;
- causing environmental degradation;
- destroying physical and social infrastructure;
- creating an excessive burden on local governance and administration; and
- hampering socio-economic development. The overall assertion made is that Tanzania, a poorly resourced country, is being forced to shoulder a disproportionate share of the refugee burden socially, politically and economically due to inadequate international assistance thus threatening to reverse the gains made so far by the country. Altogether, the hosting of refugees is viewed as an overwhelming **LIABILITY** with **NO BENEFIT** accruing to Tanzania. The literature review did not yield a single positive assertion regarding refugees.

STUDY FINDINGS.

A. IMPACT ON EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL SECURITY

Tanzania's relations with some of its neighbours have been strained - in particular, Burundi has made the oft-repeated (and oft-refuted) claim that Tanzania is harbouring, training and arming rebels. In the mid-90s, the GOT responded by asserting its sovereignty and its obligation to protect refugees on Tanzanian soil at whatever cost, but in later years reacted by expressing intentions of forcibly repatriating Burundi refugees as a means to avoiding the possibility of a costly war.

Notwithstanding that forced repatriation of refugees to countries of origin before conditions are conducive is in express contravention of the principles of international refugee law, what is barely mentioned are the possible effects of rapid or forced refugee repatriation:

ONE: Aggravation of political crisis in the country of origin resulting in increased conflict and human rights abuses, which could in turn lead to an increased wave of refugees within the region (and Tanzania); and

TWO: Conflict could assume regional dimensions thus (ironically) undermining regional peace and security, one of the central objectives of Tanzania's new foreign policy.

Internal peace and security has been affected by the increase in serious criminal activities such as murder, armed robbery and illegal possession of arms and ammunition. The impact of these crimes on local populations has been devastating, resulting in: internal displacement of individuals, families, communities and even whole villages; cessation of agricultural activities by some of those displaced; and tension between refugee and host populations. Research statistics reveal that:

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the high rate of crime in these regions is not largely attributable to refugees, but to the country's proximity to a conflict zone that allows for the Government at all levels, the media: as well as society at large. Have made the following NEGATIVE, recurrent assertions regarding refugees. That is, those refugees are:

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B. IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Refugees have impacted negatively on the environment, as several studies have corroborated. The impacts include: deforestation; devegetation; erosion destruction, degradation and pollution, of water sources and catchments areas, illegal poaching and fishing; and overgrazing. These negative impacts were felt most severely in the period preceding 1997 due to the rapid, heavy refugee influx.

In subsequent years, humanitarian agencies incorporated environmental considerations in overall program design and began, implementing environmental education, awareness and conservation programs that were wide in scope, taking the broader local context into account and with benefits accruing to host as well as refugee communities. Numerous organisations that were/are involved in such programs include BRDP, CARE, CARITAS, CHEMA, GTZ, KAEMP, KRMP, NPA, REDESO and UNHCR. Over six million trees have been planted in camps and surrounding villages with 20 to 60% of all raised seedlings being earmarked for distribution to host communities. In fact, the trend has now been reversed whereby more trees and vegetation are being planted than are being harvested! NPA runs an active forest protection project as part of its larger environmental intervention program, as well as conducts environmental education, awareness and conservation activities. UNHCR was heavily involved in the demarcation of game reserve boundaries as well as the construction of game posts so as to aid game wardens in anti-poaching activities.

Environmental programs that are being implemented by international humanitarian agencies have significantly enhanced environmental awareness as well as redressed former negative impacts.

C. IMPACT ON PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The heavy influx of refugees in the early 90s and the subsequent roll-in of international humanitarian agencies took its toll on local social and physical infrastructure. Roads bridges, airstrips and school buildings were run down or destroyed while social services such as education, health and water were severely strained. It is important to appreciate that the preexisting social and physical infrastructure was already constrained financially and materially and that increased demand and utilisation only depreciated these further.

From the mid-90s onwards, international humanitarian agencies such as EU, UNHCR and WFP invested heavily in the maintenance, rehabilitation and construction of roads, bridges and airstrips that were essential to the delivery of refugee services. The improved physical infrastructure and road network had a spill-over effect for host communities allowing for more trade, travel and services in these regions. Between 1995 and 1999, UNHCR spent close to USD 450,000 in road works alone. , International assistance in the social services sector has been significant:

Health - supply of personnel and training ; establishment of better equipped refugee hospitals that offer a free service to Tanzanians, construction and/or rehabilitation of local district health facilities (UNHCR, NPA); donation of equipment, transport and drugs (KAEMP, JICA, and direct support/delivery of health services to local populations e.g. vaccination and TB treatment programs and therapeutic feeding. Ngara district is now well above the national average on several health indicators, for example: 26% of the population lives within five kilometres of a health centre compared to the national average of 30% while maternal mortality is at 114 per 100,000 live births compared to the national average of 200 to 400!

Education: provision of transport; Provision of teacher and student books increased number of qualified primary school teachers; political/leadership commitment (GOT); improved living and teaching environment for teachers; and construction of educational facilities. Kibondo has already made huge strides as evidenced by the primary school enrolment rate of 97.8% Ngara district has registered a drastic improvement in academic performance (primary) since 1998, moving up the ranks to become 2nd and 9th (by region and district, respectively).

Water - Joint efforts between local communities and the GOT as well as heavy investment from organisations such as CARITAS, CONCERN, DRDP, EMBASSY OF JAPAN, HESAWA, IRDP, KDP, NPA, OXFAM, ROYAL DANISH EMBASSY, TASAF, TCRS, TWESA and UNHCR has improved access to water facilities. As a result, 64.5% of Ngara's population and 60.8% of Kibondo's population now have access to clean, safe water within the government recommended 400 metres as compared to the national average of 4th%. The contribution of international humanitarian agencies, especially in the health and water sectors. Has been significant.

D. IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

The administration of refugee related issues, especially those related to security, consumes up to 50% of local government officials' time and energy and the increase in population and attendant crime has placed additional pressure (to Varying degrees) on the police and judiciary. However, it needs to point out that prior to refugees, local government authorities were already constrained in terms of staffing and resources.

Local government authorities including law enforcement and the judiciary have received considerable assistance from UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies. In particular, MICR has funded: the posting of up to 300 police officers in and around refugee camps ('Operation Police') to the Value of USD 1 million annually; the construction, maintenance and rehabilitation of police offices and posts, the renovation of key government officials' residences and offices; the provision of administrative support (transport, communication, stationery; well as training the construction of court waiting assistance to district courts.

Assistance rendered for local governance and administration should be more systematic and be increased in light of pre-existing constraints and additional burden.

E. IMPACT ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Internal insecurity has resulted in loss of property, Valuables and in extreme cases, life, as well as caused internal displacement of persons in turn affecting agricultural and economic production. At national level, government resources have been strained owing to continued regional military presence.

On the other hand, the presence of refugees and international development and humanitarian agencies has led to an upsurge in business, especially trade and real estate, owing to increased demand and disposable income. WFP supports local agricultural producers and suppliers through its local purchase policy and has actively facilitated local actors to the point of providing them with adequate packaging materials. Agricultural produce markets have experienced a boom due to demand from aid agency staff and refugees. Central and local government has collected substantial revenue from international agencies through income tax, VAT and customs duties - the largest contributor often being income tax. Refugees have also boosted local agricultural production through their cheap (though illegal) labour. These agencies also employ local people thus easing local unemployment and their presence has led to worldwide publicity, attracting further regional development assistance. Host populations also enjoy services such radio, access to materials such as plastic sheeting, and participation in recreational, sporting and leisure activities. However, these same positive developments have also had the flip side of introducing inflation to the local market and undercutting the local labour force. The benefits of hosting refugees could be maximized e.g. by drafting legal parameters that would enable them to contribute labour etc.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

- The international community should extend adequate assistance to Tanzania to enable the country to maintain internal and external security.
- Current environmental program should be maintained and enhanced; refugee encampment policies should be reviewed; and alternative energy sources should be investigated.(other than firewood).
- Future infrastructure assistance should take into consideration local needs and priorities.
- Investment in social services should be maintained and should take into account local needs and priorities.
- The GOT and UNHCR should advocate and negotiate for formal local governance and administration assistance.
- The GOT should establish an appropriate institutional framework in terms of refugee policy, law and service delivery so as to maximise the benefits of hosting refugees.
- The GOT should reconsider its refugee governing laws especially with regard to their being allowed to work as their/labour contribution has been shown to contribute to increased agricultural production.
- Humanitarian agencies should incorporate local community needs and priorities in their programmes through joint planning and implementation.
- Humanitarian agencies should be more transparent and share information with all stakeholders including government, media, academic and other interested parties.
- Further research should be conducted in other refugee hosting areas.