

Burdens or Benefits: A Critical Analysis of the Nexus between Refugees and Host Communities in Zimbabwe

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ABSTRACT The paper sought to explore the linkages, relationships and the impact of the presence of refugees on the host communities in Zimbabwe. Qualitative research methodology was used to collect data through participant observations, meetings, transect walks, discussions with refugees and host community members and documentary reviews. Generally the study found that cordial relations, peaceful co-existence and cooperation on issues of mutual concern were found between the refugees in Tongogara Camp and the surrounding host communities. The study recommends the promotion of amicable co-existence between refugees and host communities through finding durable solutions to issues or problems that arise due to the coming of refugees into the area.

INTRODUCTION

A review of literature in the field of refugee studies shows that it centers mainly on refugees. However, recent years have seen a paradigm shift with researchers looking beyond the refugee communities to the other groups and individuals also affected by refugee emergencies. In particular, these studies look at how the host communities (the communities living in the areas where refugees eventually settle, either formally or informally) are impacted by the influx of refugees.

It is also noted that the level of hospitality towards refugees and foreign nationals differs from country to country. While most African countries are signatories to the UN Convention

of 1951 relating to the status of refugees and its subsequent 1967 protocol, the relationship between the refugees and the citizens of countries where they seek refuge is not always rosy. South Africa bears a good example of the not so rosy relationship between its nationals and refugees. South Africa has a battered image after the 2008 and 2015 xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals. In most countries, refugees are labeled and prejudiced against. The UNHCR (2017) reports on refugee exploitation and maltreatment in the Mediterranean Region of North Africa, Central Europe by host communities. The UNHCR also reports of welcoming treatment by the Bangladesh Government to the Rohingya refugees fleeing ethnic conflict in Myanmar in 2017. The advent of refugees has in a way benefitted the host communities because aid relief that is provided by the UNHCR and other well-wishers to meet lifesaving needs is provided (distributed) to both the refugees and the host communities (UNHCR 2017).

While the principle of burden sharing defines refugee assistance in Africa, refugees shun some countries because of the inhuman treatment they endure in those countries. This partly explains why Zimbabwe is home to refugees from as far away as Egypt, Ivory Coast, Mali and even

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the Great Lakes region countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). More often than not, refugees are labeled as “rebels”, “intruders” and “foreigners” among other sardonic and pejorative words. At the end of the day, what is evident is that there often will be a hostile relationship between refugees and the local citizens.

Muchinako (1994) noted that the influx of thousands of refugees estimated at over 2 million from Rwanda into western Tanzania negatively affected local communities there. Thousands of hungry refugees (among them former soldiers, militias and civilians) plundered farmlands around Benaco, Chaballisa and other camps looking for food in the cassava fields and banana plantations. In the process the host population was powerless to protect their livelihoods. This created great animosity between the refugees and the host communities. Human Rights Watch (1999) noted that the Tanzanian Government had to intervene to restore normalcy though some of the methods used were reported to be in violation of international human rights.

Refugee protection is not a new phenomenon in Zimbabwe. The country has a history of providing sanctuary to Mozambican refugees during the Renamo-Frelimo civil war from the early 1980s to the early 1990s. During those years, Zimbabwe hosted an estimated 200 000 refugees from neighbouring Mozambique. Due to the Mozambican crisis, Zimbabwe was obliged to open four refugee camps, namely, Chambuta, Nyamatiki, Nyangombe, and Tongogara. This was intended to cater for the refugee influx triggered by the massive killings that were taking place in Mozambique due to civil strife. However, at the end of the Mozambican crisis, all the refugee camps were closed and turned into vocational training centres funded by the National Organisation for the Development of the Disadvantaged (NODED).

With the genocide wars in Rwanda and Burundi that later on coincided with the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1997, thousands of asylum seekers started pouring again into Zimbabwe. As a signatory to the United Nations Convention of 1951 relating to the status of refugees and the 1989 Organisation of African Union (OAU) Convention on the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, Zimbabwe had to adhere to the principles of state responsibility doctrine by reopening Tongogara

Refugee Camp to provide coordinated humanitarian protection and assistance to the refugees.

Demographic Overview

According to official UNHCR statistics, a total of 11 597 refugees and asylum seekers resided in Zimbabwe as of 15 October 2017. Of this number, 10 030 refugees and asylum seekers were camp based while 1 567 were urban based. About 73 percent are from DRC; 9.4 percent are from Mozambique; 7 percent from Rwanda; 6.6 percent from Burundi while 4 percent are mainly from the Horn of Africa countries namely Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea and others. The average monthly influx rate stood at 100-150 persons. These arrival rates related to asylum-seekers with intentions to seek asylum in Zimbabwe.

Table 1 shows the population composition of refugees by country of origin (as on 15 October 2017).

The influx of refugees and asylum seekers attracted attention from the international community. In response, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in partnership with other international and local non-governmental organisations and the Government of Zimbabwe established massive relief and developmental projects to cater for the needs of refugees at Tongogara Refugee Camp and the host communities.

Profile of Tongogara Refugee Camp and the Host Communities

Tongogara Refugee Camp (TRC) is located in Chipangayi area of Chipinge District, Manicaland Province, some 550 kilometres south-east from Harare (the capital city of Zimbabwe) and approximately 80 kilometres using the main road, west of Chipinge town. The camp area falls under the agro-ecological region five that normally experiences very low rainfall, on average 200 to 400 mm per year. It is mostly a dry, hot and dusty area for the better part of the year. It is accessible during dry periods. However access becomes difficult during the rainy season which normally occurs from around October to May and sometimes floods are experienced. The terrain is flat, barren and dry. The climatic conditions militate against meaningful agricultural activities to enhance self-reliance. The camp is surrounded by poor and remote villages of Maronga, Musapingura, Chisanga, Stage 3A (popularly known as

Table 1: Zimbabwe refugee population

Country of origin	Reg. groups* PA	Country population for all "refugees and asylum seekers" in Zimbabwe										Grand total					
		Female					Male										
		0-4	5-11	12-17	18-59	60+	Total	0-4	5-11	12-17	18-59		60+	Total			
Angola	2	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Botswana	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Burundi	241	61	50	68	155	5	347	43	63	80	225	3	414	2	761		
Central African Republic	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
China	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Congo, Republic of the	3	1	1	1	4	0	7	2	1	1	1	1	6	1	13		
Côte d'Ivoire	24	1	1	1	0	4	7	2	1	0	24	0	27	31			
DRC	2772	855	689	816	1592	45	3723	682	924	728	2237	27	4598	8321			
Eritrea	11	4	3	2	6	0	13	1	0	0	9	0	10	23			
Ethiopia	43	8	7	5	14	0	31	2	4	6	39	0	51	82			
Ghana	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1			
Kenya	2	1	1	0	1	0	3	2	2	1	1	0	6	9			
Lebanon	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1			
Mali	50	2	1	0	2	0	4	2	0	0	48	0	50	54			
Mozambique	381	187	149	194	228	41	713	138	187	94	176	23	618	1331			
Rwanda	245	68	35	70	198	9	379	44	62	69	209	14	398	777			
Somalia	15	1	2	0	4	0	6	2	1	0	14	0	17	23			
South Africa	2	1	0	4	1	0	5	1	1	0	1	0	3	8			
Sudan	5	1	1	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	4	0	4	6			
Syrian Arab Republic	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	2			
Uganda	3	0	0	1	2	0	3	0	2	0	4	0	6	9			
Yugoslavia	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	2			
Zambia	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	1	4			
Other	16	14	10	17	61	0	96	10	20	5	2	0	37	133			
Grand Total	3824	1208	950	1182	2274	100	5343	931	1269	984	3000	70	6254	11597			

Source: UNHCR Statistics, October 2017

MaSettler) populated by the Ndaу people under the jurisdiction of traditional Chiefs Musikavanhu and Mutema. The Save River forms the western boundary and across this river is the Save Conservancy running parallel to the camp. The villages fall under the same climatic conditions with the refugee camp. There are no meaningful economic activities in the area except subsistence farming. Local populations depend heavily on subsistence rain fed crop production, livestock production and casual labour at the nearest sugar cane farm known as Chipangayi Estate which is part of one private investor's massive sugarcane project meant to produce ethanol.

Literature Review

There are little or no published academic researches on the nexus between the refugees and host communities in Zimbabwe. The majority of researches have been conducted on the wellbeing and coping mechanisms of refugees on foreign land. There is, therefore, a dearth of academic information on the inter-connection between refugees and host populations. According to Whitaker (1999), there has been little academic research on the impact of refugees on host populations, although the issue has caused growing concern on the part of the international community and host governments. Betts (1981, 2009), Betts and Pitterman (1984) and Gorman (1993) argue that since the 1980s, Refugee Aid and Development (RAD) theories called for strategies linking refugee relief programs with local development policies. Harrell-Bond (1986) argues that the RAD theories are predicated on the assumptions that refugees pose a burden on the host population. Fundamentally as noted by Berry (2008) these theories ignore the benefits the host population derives from the presence of refugees in those communities.

In the final analysis, the conceptualization of refugees as a burden to the host population undermines the link between the two. Whitaker (1999) argues that, "Rather than asking whether or not the host country as a whole benefits, one should disaggregate the question: who benefits and who loses from refugee influxes and why?" In the same breadth, Chambers (1986) and Kuhlman (1990) argue that refugees are assumed to have a different impact on diverse classes, gender, sectors, and regions within the host coun-

try but little empirical research has been done on this issue. In addition, the situation is expected to be dynamic over time; what starts out as a liability might turn into a resource, and vice versa. It was therefore the intention of this paper to unravel the linkages and relationships between the refugees and host communities in the context of Zimbabwe at Tongogara Refugee Camp.

METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on data collected at Tongogara Refugee Camp where one of the authors is employed as a Refugee Status Determination Officer. The research is a qualitative one. Much of the data was gathered through participant observation in government meetings, NGO activities and in implementing partners' meetings. Transect walks, documentary reviews and conversations with both refugees and host community members were also used to gather data to augment observations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to the UNHCR (2004), the impacts of the refugee presence are both positive and negative. The World Bank (2009) argues that the dynamics between positive and negative factors are complex and varied depending on several factors, including the political economy of host countries, urban-rural interactions, and the nature of host-refugee relations. Basing on the data gathered through the research, the findings and discussion are based on the following themes: economic opportunities, employment opportunities, agricultural opportunities, educational opportunities, the natural environment and change over time, deforestation, brick molding, the social dynamics and change over time, intermarriages between refugees and Zimbabweans and transport and infrastructural development.

Economic Opportunities

Tongogara refugee camp is situated in the midst of poverty that characterises the nearby villages. As a result, the local populations benefit heavily from the economic opportunities obtaining in the camp. Locals frequent the camp to sell their vegetables like tomatoes, rape, *tsunga* and *munyevhe*. They also sell mangoes, orang-

es, avocado pears, sweet potatoes and bananas. What is so fascinating is that Zimbabweans travel to the camp from as far away as Chimanimani (a neighbouring district) and Mt Selinda (an area in the same district but about 150 kilometres away) to sell their products in the camp.

Meanwhile, refugees also benefit from the economic opportunities obtaining in the nearby villages. Once refugees receive their monthly food and non-food item allocations, they sell the products in order to diversify their food basket. It is important that refugees are provided with both food and Non Food Items (NFIs) by UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies supporting them. This research gathered that mealie-meal, corn soya, beans, porridge, galvanized pots, cooking oil and buckets were sold to the host communities or exchanged for other items needed by the refugees through barter trade.

The research also gathered that clothes being brought all the way from DRC have a ready market in Zimbabwe. Such clothes, like African Attire, are now very popular and even the affluent are after them. Refugees are also bringing in their beauty therapy oils from DRC especially the skin oils. All these have a ready market in the Zimbabwe.

Employment Opportunities

In other countries like Kenya the locals provide casual jobs to refugees (Whitaker 2002). However, in Zimbabwe, the situation is vice versa. Refugees are providing locals with casual jobs. Many women from the local communities frequent the camp on a daily basis in search of jobs. They are given jobs like fetching water, watering gardens and laundry for refugees. In turn the locals are paid with mealie-meal, cooking oil, corn soya, beans, porridge and beauty therapy oils. Such is the life that exists between the locals and the refugees in Tongogara Refugee camp. This relationship has been strengthened by the fact that refugees receive cash support at the end of each month. This has eased liquidity challenges facing the local population. As a result, the local population brings their wares and goods to sell in Tongogara Refugee Camp. These goods include, cassava which is very popular with many Congolese, maize grain, tomatoes and vegetables among others.

Agricultural Opportunities in the Irrigation Scheme

To enhance self-reliance and livelihood opportunities to refugees, the government of Zimbabwe in partnership with UNHCR established an irrigation scheme. The main aim of establishing the irrigation scheme was to enhance self-sufficiency of refugees. Twenty-five hectares of land was placed under irrigation and is benefiting both refugees and the local population. To enhance co-existence and mutuality between refugees and the locals, the Zimbabwe Government and UNHCR decided that 10 percent of the irrigated land would be allocated to the local population. As a result, both refugees and the locals are benefiting from the three cropping practice taking place every year. They are all benefiting from the maize, beans and butternuts production taking place on the irrigation scheme. To show that there is no difference between refugees and the locals, all the farmers in the irrigation project are provided with inputs such as seeds and fertilizers. In addition, all the farmers benefit from the technical support provided by the Agricultural Extension department from the Government of Zimbabwe. The irrigation scheme has enhanced food security and nutrition within the refugee camp and the host communities.

Educational Opportunities

Due to the presence of the refugees, primary and secondary educational opportunities for locals improved. Uniforms, stationery and the infrastructure at Tongogara Primary and St Michael's Secondary Schools is improving on a yearly basis. During the uniform distribution process, the locals benefit from the uniforms. Every child is provided with a set of school uniforms. Every term refugee children receive stationery which is distributed at both the primary and secondary schools. All the children regardless of their status benefit from the stationery. Though the general enrollment figures for Zimbabwean children at both the primary and secondary schools are low, school authorities reported significant improvement in school attendance due to the availability of uniforms and stationery for the local community children. This sentiment is shared by World Bank (2009) who argue that refugee status offers opportunity for education, literacy, vocational training, sanitation and basic livelihoods.

Local children are now multi-lingual due to the presence of the refugees in Tongogara Refugee Camp. Prior to the availability of refugees from DRC, Rwanda, Burundi among other countries, the local population was well known for its conservatism towards their *Ndau* language. However, with the refugees at Tongogara refugee camp and through inter-cultural socialization, many local children are now conversant with Kiswahili, French, Lingala and a bit of Kinyarwanda. This has been facilitated by the fact that Kiswahili and French languages are taught at both the primary and secondary schools. In the same way, refugee children are also now fluent *Shona* and *Ndau* speakers due to the exposure and interaction with local children and local community members at large. As most refugees came from the French speaking countries, they are now conversant with another international language, English and this has widened their language advantages especially those who are educated.

The Natural Environment and Change Over Time

The environment around Tongogara refugee camp is depleted of trees and other vegetation which can be used as fuel for lighting fires for daily cooking or warming during cold months. Daily refugees look for wood and this has contributed a lot to depletion of natural environmental cover. This is in tandem with the observation by Whitaker (1999) that one of the most frequently cited negative impacts of refugees by host countries in recent years, is environmental degradation and natural resource depletion. However, Whitaker (1999), further argues that it is not only the host governments that claim that refugee camps cause environmental degradation because over the past several decades, there has also been a growing acceptance by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other organizations working with refugees, as well as by independent researchers, that the presence of refugees often leads to environmental degradation and natural resource depletion both within and around the refugee settlements. As written in the UNHCR manual entitled Key Principles for Decision Making, "Evidence shows that large-scale dislocation of people, characteristic of many recent refugee crises, can create adverse

environmental impacts" (Harild and Christensen 2010). Environmental degradation and the associated resource depletion have been shown to sometimes create or exacerbate conflict between groups competing for these increasingly scarce resources (Schwartz et al. 2000).

Environmental Impact as a Result of Deforestation

There is a saying in *Ndau* (the local dialect of the *Shona* language): "*Kunaka kwezvimweni kushata kwezvimweni*". In Swahili (a language spoken by most refugees from the African Great Lakes region): "*Kila kibaya kina uzuri wake, kina uzuri wake kila kibaya*". This is roughly equivalent to the English expression, "Every cloud has its own silver lining or every bad thing has its good side." Such is the case with the proliferation of refugees at Tongogara Refugee Camp which brought new possibilities though with additional challenges as well.

Zimbabwe implements the encampment policy which calls upon all refugees to stay in a refugee camp. This policy restricts the movement of refugees though with somewhat flexibility since some refugees are finding their way into urban areas. Some scholars argue that refugees are "warehoused." Under such circumstances, refugees are expected to survive with what they have. Under this arrangement, refugees are supposed to get all the relief and developmental assistance. They are expected to be passive recipients of humanitarian assistance. They are provided with food stuffs, non-food items namely cooking utensils, sleeping mats, blankets, water containers and firewood. In simple terms refugees are expected to rely heavily on the benevolence of aid agencies.

However, while the aid agencies are making frantic efforts to provide for the wellbeing of refugees, they are also faced with enormous challenges. What is more evident is the fact that UNHCR, the principal aid agency faces challenges in providing alternative energy to refugees. Refugees receive firewood yet they often complain that they are not used to the use of firewood. In turn, refugees respond by cutting down trees for charcoal making. This has resulted in environmental degradation. Refugees are always in running battles with the police. Authorities in the camp are always called into action to represent refugees who would have been arrested for

charcoal making and selling. As if that is not enough, this has also resulted in the authorities facing off with the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) mandated to protect the environment under the Environment Act of Zimbabwe. The rate at which trees are being razed down is threatening the already bare soils. The indigenous *muunga* trees, common around Tongogara Camp, are in danger of extinction. This observation dovetails with World Bank (2009) argument that large influxes of refugees is also associated with environmental impacts on land, water, natural resources and slum growth. The most evident environmental impacts include deforestation and firewood depletion, land degradation, water pollution among others.

It is important to note here that although there is a general agreement amongst international organizations and NGO representatives, local communities and the Government of Zimbabwe that refugees are contributing to the environmental degradation in the region, there is not enough data to show just how much is directly related to the refugee population, and how much is in fact a result of the local communities' agricultural and land use practices and the need for firewood. One Non-Governmental Organisation's employee who has worked in Tongogara refugee camp since 2009 argued that the deforestation was actually caused by the combination of the refugees and the growing population of villagers and their unsustainable farming and tree harvesting practices.

Nevertheless, and what is most relevant for this research, is that the Government of Zimbabwe is on record as saying that the refugees have caused incalculable environmental damage to the country, destroying natural vegetation within and around the camps. The UNHCR-WFP Joint Assessment Mission Report (2014) confirms this claim. From observation and one of the researchers' experiences, having grown in and now working in the area, there was evidence that refugees were playing a pivotal role in environmental degradation though the local population was also contributing. It should be noted that there is an intricate relationship between the refugees and local populations. Refugees were wantonly felling trees because charcoal from the trees from the local forests was on high demand in the refugee camp. Both the refugees and staff members at Tongogara refugee camp provided a ready market for char-

coal. Some of the charcoal from the refugees and local population is even being transported to places like Harare (the national capital) and Mutare (the provincial capital). This shows the extent of demand for charcoal hence the producers could not resist the benefits from such an endeavor.

Brick Moulding

With the proliferation of refugees and asylum seekers, authorities at Tongogara Refugee Camp can no longer provide ready accommodation to refugees. As a result, refugees are expected to construct their own houses and huts. Refugees have responded by molding bricks in numbers thereby threatening the environment. There are *makoronga* (gullies) almost everywhere in the refugee camp. In 2014, the camp authorities were almost punished by Environmental Management Authority for the environmental degradation that was taking place in the camp. As a result, the aid agency responsible for environment management in the camp forked out more than US\$ 5 000.00 in gullies rehabilitation.

While refugees were busy degrading the environment in the camp, their counterparts from the host communities were doing the same in their locality. Bricks from the host communities have a ready market in the refugee camp. Massive construction of houses, ablution facilities and classrooms have resulted in the host population molding bricks in large quantities to cater for the rising demand. This has also contributed to the environmental degradation. This was exacerbated by the fact that both refugees and the local population use firewood to burn their bricks. This has resulted in large tracts of land being deforested.

However, every bad thing has its good thing. Brick molding is a source of livelihood for both refugees and local population. It enables the locals to raise cash to send their children to school. They are able to buy school uniforms, stationery among other things. For refugees, once they sell their bricks, they are able to diversify their food basket. Therefore, there is an intricate relationship that exists between refugees and local populations. However, in most cases refugees bear the brunt of blame for environmental degradation even by the locals who claimed that they owned the area and had the right and privilege of harvesting trees and soils for brick moulding and charcoal making.

The Social Dynamics and Change Over Time

Ndau people who are the inhabitants of the areas adjacent to Tongogara refugee camp are well known for being conservative. They are conservative both on their language and culture. They love their Ndau language. They take pride in their mother language. They take pride in their traditional practices. Ndau people are proud of their socially ascribed roles and responsibilities. However, with the presence of refugees, the local culture and traditional ways of doing things have been altered.

Prostitution and disintegration of the institution of marriage has increased amongst the host population. The refugee camp is a microcosm of poverty stricken areas and as such many refugee women turn to prostitution in order to eke out a living. As a result many local men are now shunning their wives in favour of refugee women. This further undermines the institution of marriage which usually was deemed to be sacred. Prostitution has also increased the prevalence of HIV in the host communities and all the bad fingers point at presence of the refugee camp.

Regardless of the fact that the *Ndau* people are conservative socially, they have failed to withstand the pressure that comes with refugees. Dressing has changed much in the locality. Behavior of children has also been altered due to the presence of refugees. Mini-skirts are fast becoming the dress code amongst the locals. Related mischief like lack of respect for parents and adults is also invading the local population.

Desecration of previously sacred bushes and areas has also increased in the area. Refugees have their own way of burying their beloved ones which is contrary to the *Ndau* cultural practices. Many refugees' practices when burying their loved ones are incompatible with the *Ndau* traditions. Graves dug by refugees are too shallow contrary to the *Ndau* tradition. As a result, many unfortunate things taking place in the area are blamed on refugees. For example, during a conversation with one Ndau man (during data collection) he remarked, "How can we have rains anymore in this area with the presence of culturally insensitive people who invaded our area? They don't respect our traditional places. They are diluting our traditional practices and most of them "*vakan'ora*" meaning they are not clean because they killed their relatives where they came from." These sentiments were highly subscribed to amongst the locals who

bemoaned lack of rains due to the presence of refugees. Refugees were also blamed for failing to respect the local culture like honouring "*chisi*" (a sacred day set apart every week when no work should be done on the land/fields). Communities are also required to avoid tampering with certain sacred trees and places. At one point, the refugee camp authorities were fined US\$ 800.00 plus an ox after refugees cut down a tree that was regarded as sacred. This incident involving traditional religious regulation of the environment revered as sacred is supported by findings by Muchinako (2015 forthcoming) in a study among the *Njanja*, another *Shona* community who share similar beliefs and practices with the *Ndau*. Unless handled carefully violation of local traditional practices can strain relations between host communities and refugees.

Inter-marriages between Refugees and Zimbabweans

Inter-marriages were taking place between refugees and their hosts. Many local women were tying knots with the refugees. This research obtained that there were more than 30 Zimbabwean women married to refugees. On the other hand, Zimbabwean men were also marrying refugee women. What this implied was that there was general co-existence between refugees and the local population. Marriages were creating new kinship relations between refugees and the host communities.

Transport and Infrastructure Development

While in many countries, refugees are regarded as a burden, the situation is different in Zimbabwe. Refugees provide ready transport to all and sundry. They own mini buses and small vehicles that ply Chiredzi, Checheche, and Chipinge and Harare routes. On all those routes, refugees provide transport to both Zimbabweans and refugees themselves.

CONCLUSION

This study was done to find out whether refugees were burdens or benefits to the host communities. The paper established that, while in many countries refugees were regarded as a burden to the local population, the situation was different in Zimbabwe where there are both social and economic activities taking place in both the refugee and host communities for mutual

benefit. While at times refugees were blamed for aggravating the rate of environmental degradation, their presence was a benefit to the previously 'forgotten' host population. In essence, there are fundamental developmental economic activities that were being implemented and benefitting refugees and the host communities. The benefits of refugees to the host communities far outweighs the burdens. In the final analysis, it is generally agreed that there should be co-existence between the refugees and the local populations. Refugees should not be seen as a burden, but as people needing compassion as they seek safety and refuge from life endangering situations in their places of origin. Refugees bring with them new cultures and skills that potentially benefit host communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The authors of this paper make the following recommendations for consideration in intervening in refugee situations:

1. Developmental projects must be planned and implemented in such a way that they benefit both the refugees and host communities.
2. Environmental conservation programs such as afforestation, soil conservation and use of renewable energy sources like solar and wind power need to be implemented with active involvement and participation of both the refugees and host communities.
3. Both refugees and host community residents with knowledge and skills should be facilitated to share those skills and knowledge for mutual benefit.
4. As and when appropriate, refugees must be accorded opportunities to learn skills that will help them to rebuild their lives if and when they return to their land of origin.

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