

Explored Socioeconomic and Cultural Conflicts Emanating from Refugee Integration in Meheba Refugee Settlement, Zambia: Husserlian Phenomenology Approach

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ABSTRACT

This study explored socioeconomic and cultural conflicts emanating from refugee integration in Meheba Refugee Settlement, Zambia. The objectives were to: (i) establish challenges associated with refugee integration in Meheba, (ii) describe socioeconomic and cultural conflicts emanating from refugee integration in Meheba, and (iii) explore gaps in the actions taken by stakeholders to deal with socioeconomic and cultural conflicts emanating from refugee integration in Meheba. Data was qualitatively generated by interviewing 13 participants, selected purposively and through snowballing in a Husserlian Phenomenological approach. Slothful award of legal identity documents, rampant unemployment, intolerable controls and restrictions in conducting businesses, inadequate sustainable farming enablers and poor provision of public services were established socioeconomic challenges hindering smooth refugee integration in Meheba while language barriers and lapses in customary practises were cultural challenges. These challenges mushroom identity conflicts waged among integrating parties due to scarce and imbalanced distribution of resources and opportunities. Thus, among others, law reforms, policy intervention, and community-based conflict management programmes were recommended.

Keywords: Socioeconomic and Cultural Conflict, Refugee Integration, Meheba, Zambia

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Security Council's principal mandate is to preserve global peace, stability and security yet several lives are presently under threat of extinction due to armed conflicts coupled with endemic human insecurities prevalent in our societies. These insecurities are constantly forcing people to flee apparent or exact calamities prone within their indigenous localities and seek refuge in new areas. Such forced migrations cause great socioeconomic and cultural trepidations among recipient populations especially when displaced persons cross international borders.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), also known as the UN Refugee Agency, is primarily entrusted to provide protection of human rights and promote dignity to internationally displaced persons resulting from human insecurities in countries of flight (UNHCR Nicosia, 2014; Carciotto and Ferraro, 2020). With the roll-out of the 2016 Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) that seeks to promote sustainable and durable solutions to the refugee crises such as integration, new dimensions aimed at addressing challenges that come with integration are being sought after. Thus, several scholars have arouse interest in advancing public discussions to help mitigate potential conflicts associated with refugee integration.

If not cautiously implemented, refugee integration can cause serious conflicts within host communities (Smyth, Stewart and Da Lomba, 2010; Hynie, 2018). This is because most refugee integrating communities,

especially those in Africa, are endemically poor and witness pint-size annual socioeconomic growth, not so pleasing to native populations. Resultantly, there lies potential for conflicts to escalate triggered by meagre resources and or opportunities.

Hence, the study problematized integration as a potential competition trigger between refugees and locals over already limited social and economic resources and opportunities. According to Hynie (2018), competition for resources and opportunities can obstruct meaningful and peaceful refugee integration into host communities thereby cause conflict. This competition against dwindling resources and opportunities can potentially cause conflict (Patel, 2020). Equally, socioeconomic and cultural conflicts emanating from refugee integration remained less investigated as most studies focus on refugees' wellbeing while less attention is paid to local's sentiments. Also, the fact remain that failure to bridge socioeconomic and culture gaps/rigidities between locals and refugees had potential to trigger conflict based on relative-deprivation, depending on which reference group (locals or refugees) feels most disadvantaged (Longley, 2021).

A. Statement of the Problem

Meheba Refugee Settlement rolled-out contemporary refugee integration policy by implementing the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees, informed by lessons from the 2016 CRRF. However, the community struggles with endemic poverty hence subjecting integrating refugees and locals to compete against limited socioeconomic resources and opportunities. According to Hynie (2018), competition for resources and opportunities can obstruct meaningful and peaceful refugee integration into host communities thereby cause conflict. Thus, this paper explored socioeconomic and cultural conflicts emanating from refugee integration in Meheba, to add a scholarly view on this topic which still remain poorly investigated, with hope of averting possible violence.

B. Specific Objectives

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

1. To establish challenges associated with refugee integration in Meheba.
2. To describe socioeconomic and cultural conflicts emanating from refugee integration in Meheba Refugee Settlement.
3. To explore gaps in the actions taken by stakeholders to deal with socioeconomic and cultural conflicts emanating from refugee integration in Meheba Refugee Settlement.

C. Theoretical Framework

The study used the relative deprivation theory through Robert K. Merton's Middle-Range Theories that aim at incorporating theory and empirical research (Boudon, 1991). The Middle-Range Theories start with an empirical phenomenon and abstracts from it to create general statements or assumptions which can then be verified through a research. In this study, the concept of integration was considered as an empirical phenomenon through which socioeconomic and cultural conflicts emanate due to relative deprivation, which is the actual or perceived denial of the right to access resources and/or opportunities among integrating parties. Thus, the use of relative deprivation theory underlined reference group ideologies in which integrating groups (refugees and locals) feel deprived of resources and/or opportunities reasonable to their expectations. Relative deprivation (with respect to reference group) is, therefore, notorious for causing social disorder like rioting, looting, terrorism, and civil wars (Longley, 2021).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. Refugee Integration

The concept of refugee integration is a highly contested subject in recent times. With the roll-out of the

UNHCR's Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) of 2018, regional, national and local governments have been challenged to consider early refugee integration in host communities as a durable solution to their protracted stay, citing repatriation and or third country resettlement as far-fetched (UNHCR, 2021).

In the study titled *Considering Local Integration for Refugees in Indonesia*, Olivia et al (2021) indicate that protracted refugees, as a result of being stranded in a transit country for years, jeopardizes their lives. Though the study was carried in Indonesia, which is not a State party to the 1951 Refugee Convention that lays a responsibility to assimilate refugees in the resettlement, it reviews protracted refugees as problematic when the number of refugees coming in the country of asylum increase. Mubanga, Muleya and Simui (2021) in *Lived Experiences of Rwandan Former Refugees in Lusaka* agree with this contention after revealing that Zambia still experienced protracted refugees to which local integration is seen as a viable solution.

B. Challenges Associated with Refugee Integration

Çöduygu and ?im?ek (2016) in *Syrian refugees in Turkey: Towards Integration Policies* argue that the refugee crisis require long-term solution, which is integration. However, they equally acknowledge the long-term economic, social, and political responsibility of supporting both refugees and host community. They furthermore state that integration by creating a number of new legal and administrative tools through a well-established, comprehensive integration policies are needed to address their immediate needs. This article gives this study room to explore Zambia's integration policies in order to understand long-term socioeconomic and cultural challenges that integrating refugees are faced with in respect to Meheba.

Hynie (2018) in *Refugee Integration: Research and Policy* refers integration as the economic and social inclusion and participation of refugees into the host community. The article came from a range of disciplines and countries thereby determining a common theme on how policies shape identities, stereotypes and interactions among integrating parties. Though it sheds light on the importance of policies and initiatives that challenge attitudes and beliefs about refugee integration, the article took a broader approach in highlighting social and economic challenges affecting the process from various countries. This approach is important in informing international and national policies but has limitations as challenges associated with refugee integration must be locally established.

Similarly, Gronau and Ruesink (2021) in *What Makes Me Want You Here? Refugee Integration in a Zambian Settlement Setting* point to religiosity, group membership, life satisfaction, food insecurity, agricultural ownership and natural resources uses of the host society as main factors that need policy consideration in refugee integration. Their paper deals with factors that affect host's opinions towards and contact with refugees by applying an econometric analysis among 275 households across settlement setting in rural Zambia. The gap here lies on the research methodology which quantified the phenomenon rather than qualitatively extracting factors that need policy consideration for the promotion of refugee integration. A quantitative approach in analyzing challenges associated with refugee integration leaves a gap that explores lived-experiences thus this phenomenological approach is justified.

Drawing on a qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with refugee tourism and hospitality entrepreneurs in Istanbul – Turkey, Alrawadieh, Karayilan and Cetin (2017) explored four key issues; legislative and administrative, financial, socio-cultural and market-related obstacles to refugee entrepreneurship. In carrying a study in which challenges associated with refugee integration in Meheba Refugee Settlement – Zambia using a similar research design would reveal the integration process from the perspectives of parties involves and bring out lived experiences. Additionally, data extracted from individual-level semi-structured and focus group discussions from refugees and hosts, as applied by G?urer (2019) in *Refugee Perspectives on Integration in Germany*, gives an individual and social dimension of

integration which is important in analyzing individuals' adjustment and coping mechanisms.

C. Conflicts Emanating from Refugee Integration

Theoretical and empirical research on socioeconomic and cultural conflicts emanating from refugee integration in Meheba resulting from the implementation of the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) is still scant. Local integration, if not well implemented, can potentially trigger conflict. Hynie (2018) states that refugee integration is influenced by policies at national and local level which often shape their (refugees) attitudes and ability to participate socially and economically. Furthermore, the study revealed that competition for resources and opportunities can obstruct meaningful and peaceful refugee integration into host communities thereby cause conflict.

According to Agblorti and Grant (2020) in *Revisiting the Host-Refugee Environmental Conflict Debate: Perspectives from Ghana's Refugee Camps*, refugees are often blamed for causing conflicts in host communities because of their demographic and socioeconomic status. Their study involved in-depth-interviews and group discussions to establish that environmental conflicts are driven by hosts' inability to fulfil their economic interests from refugee activities. While their research brings out important aspects of research methods/designs vital to this study, it focused on encamped not integrating refugees. Encampment is a short-term activity in the waiting of durable solutions such as resettlement and repatriation yet integration is a lifetime event hence understanding conflicts thereof is significant.

Additionally, Adong (2021) in *Armed Conflicts and Forced Displacements: Incentives and Consequences on Consumption and Social Preferences*, a thesis that examined prosocial attitudes between hosts and refugees and attempted to identify discriminations thereof, as well as evaluated the role of social preferences in informal contractual land arrangements between hosts and refugees among other objectives, found no evidence of discriminatory social differentiation of "us refugees" and "them host" during interactions. Nonetheless, the gap in research borders on the design used; a case study with panel data methods and a lab in the field experiments focusing on the post-conflict North region in Uganda's Adjumani District while this study uses a phenomenological approach which assumed that there is identity conflict arising from social differentiation based on reference group; "us" verses "them". However, Adong's (2021) paper is significant to this study as it suggests that creating opportunities for meaningful refugee and host interactions such as community groups, sports activities, and religious worship can minimize discrimination by hosts and boost refugee integration. These findings, therefore, can be explored in Meheba too.

In the study *Migrant's Integration on the European Labour Market*, Marcu et al (2018) gave a perspective that reduction in the unemployment rate of the foreign population are generated jointly by active labour policies, enhanced attainment of secondary education and advanced welfare. Though they used spatial analyses, bootstrap estimations, structural equations (SEM), and Gaussian Graphic Models (GGM) to grasp migrants' labour market in confining integration among developed nations, this study will use their perspective to narrate possible economic conflicts emanating from refugee integration from underdeveloped community's perspective in which most labour policies are unknown, secondary education is hardly attained, and poor welfare.

D. Stakeholders Role in Refugee Integration

The UNHCR is simply tasked by the UN to coordinate various stakeholders and the material support needed to protect refugees and implement their integration in host communities. WEF (2017) and Terfassa (2016) in *Migration and its Impact on Cities* and *Migration and Inclusive Community* argued that UNHCR and host governments cannot handle all issues affecting refugee alone thus partner stakeholders lift their burden. Some stakeholders include civil society actors, government entities, non-governmental bodies, other UN

agencies, religious and traditional leaders, refugees groups, and host communities, who in response to their different institutional roles ensure integrating refugees are protected (Fitzmaurice, 2016; UNHCR, 2021; UNHCR, 2002; and ACCORD, 2017). The question, perhaps, is to what extent can gaps in the distinct roles played by stakeholder escalate or de-escalate conflict among integrating refugees and hosts.

However, by analyzing studies on refugee integration elsewhere, the process rises intense debate about how many stakeholders are to be involved, for how long and how well they will participate in the integration process. Integration, being a complex process, thrive on roles played by various groups yet implemented differently by different stakeholders due to differences in national and local policies. Understanding the stakeholder's different roles in refugee integration is vital in addressing conflicts that may emanate. More importantly, the focus shifts from providing material support to refugees alone but includes locals too.

Hovil and Maple (2022) in *Local Integration: A Durable Solution in Need of Restoration* argued that governments across the world have reluctantly accorded refugees a new citizenship even though several other studies see local integration as the durable solution to the protracted refugee crises. Their article concludes by stating that refugees often continue to negotiate their own access to communities and labour markets against policies of host nations and that a mix of global, national and local processes and forces have effectively conspired to diminish local integration as a durable solution to the point that it has all but vanished from the political arena. As such, this study seeks to explore gaps in stakeholder intervention aimed to reinvigorate refugee integration as a durable solution in Meheba.

Magezi (2021) in *Exploring Possibilities of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' integration with Churches in Refugee Response*, for instance, identifies the churches' involvement refugees' crisis as a meaningful intervention. However, it's noteworthy that refugees integrating in Meheba come from different religious backgrounds hence the UNHCR-Church collaboration may be hindered by those who do not believe in Christianity.

In summary, Auslender (2022) in the paper *Multi-level Governance in Refugee Housing and Integration Policy: a Model of Best Practice in Leverkusen* addresses the adaptation of multi-level governance and collaborative governance in local refugee housing and integration management, stating that a stakeholder approach in refugee integration creates a very direct, fluid connection between government, civil society, and the refugees themselves. Though the paper used the Leverkusen Model, where three bodies (government, caritas, and the Refugee Council) collaborate to manage the governance responsibilities, demonstrating that it expedites refugee integration, it is important to explore individual gaps associated with stakeholder roles in refugee integrating in Meheba too.

METHODOLOGY

A. Design of the Study

Husserlian Phenomenological approach was utilised for purposes of describing lived experiences narrated by individuals who witnessed the phenomenon under investigation (Simui, 2018).

B. Sampling

In this study, the saturation point reached a total of thirteen (13) participants who were categorised into three (3) groups; five (5) stakeholder participants were purposively selected while four (4) refugees and locals were recruited through snowball technique respectively. Stakeholders were identified based on their operations in Meheba while refugee and local participants was through chain-referral recruitment based on at least three (3) years residence in Meheba.

C. Data Generation

A semi-structured and focus group interview session was used for data generation. It allowed the interviewer and the interviewee to flow the discussion without being limited to a formal list of questions, which might be straightforward thereby limiting insightful experiences that would otherwise be shared. This was done on a face-to-face basis and participants' descriptions were presented through verbatim.

D. Data Analysis

Collected data was analysed thematically. This means that collected data was identified and grouped into categories in relations to research questions and emerging themes.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

A. Socioeconomic and Cultural Challenges Associated with Refugee Integration in Meheba

Refugee integration was described as follows by Participant LP01:

It is process of enabling refugees who have not opted to voluntarily repatriate to resettle in Zambia.

Being a process, it must start with the Presidential declaration of the cessation clause to refugee status followed by citizenship naturalisation. Participant IR01 added that:

At the same time, the locals (Zambians) should be willing to welcome refugees to live among them without any discrimination.

Thus, since the process involves assimilating two or more groups, often than not, with divergent socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, several challenges may affect it. The following themes emerged:

(i) "Slothful Award of Legal Documents" to integrating refugees, especially those of Rwandese descent, was the first established challenge. Participant IR01 stated that:

Most Rwandese refugees in Meheba would have been integrated a long time ago but the Government of Zambia says that they are still consulting their nationality status with the Rwandan Government. I wish the pace could be quickened as most of these refugees do not have legal documents.

It must be noted that laws governing citizenship naturalisation in Zambia demand one to possess a nationality which must be renounced firstly. Participant SH01 stated that:

When it comes to possessing legal documents, the main challenge is with Rwandese. I do not know even how to address them; if they are still refugees, former refugees or Stateless persons because most of them do not have documents. It has taken them "forever" to obtain legal documents which are so essential in the integration processes.

Additionally, several illegal immigrants want to identify themselves as refugees yet they do not possess any form of identity. Partially, the Government of Zambia was to be blamed as they accepted most refugees on *prima-facia* basis with hope that they would be encamped and later repatriate voluntarily, which has not been the case. However, it remains a challenge to have a peaceful refugee integration in Meheba if a group of integrating refugees do not have legal documents that support their inclusion and participation in the socioeconomic activities of the host society, agreeing with Crisp (2004) and Hynie(2018) works.

(ii) “Rampant Unemployment”. It’s hard for integrating refugees without proper identification to sale their skilled or semi-skilled labour resource. The following expressions attest:

Due to the delays in acquiring legal documents, it becomes hard to get decent employment. I am saying so because some of the integrating refugees are skilled but can only work if they possess a legal form of identity which most do not have. This is the leading cause of unemployment among integrating refugees (Participant IR04).

(iii) “Difficulties in Venturing into Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)”. Integrating refugees with business acumen face numeracy rigidities that restrict them from conducting economic activities. The lack of citizenship documents identifying themselves as Zambians imply that integrating refugees’ investment value must be measured comparatively at a foreign investors’ monetary policy. Thus, integrating refugees without proper documentation yet running money-making activities risk their ventured businesses being ceased by government authorities or looted by locals.

Due to lack of legal documents, and by law, we are considered as foreign investors hence the Immigration department demands that we possess about \$250, 000.00 (USD) capital assets to set up any business venture. Where are integrating refugees going to find such an amount of money as circumstances leading to them fleeing into Zambia were a matter of survivor? For instance, some came here as a refugee running away from the genocide in Rwanda and even if they had that amount then, they governance system had collapsed then so they could not carry such an amount on the run. This is a challenge; most cannot set enterprises (Participant IR02).

For some integrating refugees who managed to set up enterprises in the community around Meheba and elsewhere across Zambia, they are always in running battles against Immigration Officers. Remember, the majority of them do not have papers allowing them to venture into business (Participant LP03).

(iv) “Inadequate Sustainable Farming Enablers”: Participant SH01 stated that;

To support their livelihood, integrating refugees are allocated a residential plot and farming land to cultivate crops which are expected to feed them throughout their stay in such designated zones. Integrating refugees are equally given some form of farming support to help them with rich crop yield.

However, accessibility of adequate enablers for sustainable farming by both refugees and locals impends integration. Some integrating refugees claim that farming inputs are hard to secure:

Nowadays, rain-fed crop farming is a risk venture due to unprecedented climate change we keep experiencing. This situation demands timely distribution of farming in-puts as delayed access to seed or fertiliser may affect the yield. Unfortunately, in-puts are highly inaccessible (Participant IR02).

Participant LP02 also complained that:

We often have good rains here and our soil supports farming of a variety crops. Farming here requires fertilizer for one to have an impressive yield. The problem is that we are given inadequate farming enablers by the government to secure bumper harvest.

(v) “Poverty and Lack of Inclusive Participation”: There is poor provision and access to public goods and services by both locals and integrating refugees in Meheba resulting into endemic poverty. For instance,

Generally speaking, communities surrounding Meheba are ill-provided with basic public services such as

clinics, education and road network compared to the Refugee Settlement (Participant LP03).

Yet, integrating refugees perceive that:

Most of basic needs are poorly accessed. Health centres are far and roads are poorly maintained, no electricity and water is difficult to get (Participant IR02).

For women, going to the clinic means suspending that day's business; health centres are very far (Participant IR04).

The poor often suffer some form of discrimination which to a great extent make them fail to participate equality in issues that may affect them. Poverty limits one from participating freely; in fact, poverty is synonymous to "no brains" (Participant IR01).

The following cultural challenges were established too:

(vi) "Language and Communication Barriers": Language is central to ones' cultural identity; the identity through which people associate and form unbreakable bonds with each other. Through language, cultural ties are strengthened and communicated or shared to new generations as well as new-comers into a given society. However, language barriers impend proper communication between integrating refugees and the locals. The following was said:

We barely speak our language when we leave this site for fear that we will be discriminated at as foreigners. Sometimes it is hard to talk or contribute to a conversation because of our accent too (Participant IR01).

If anything, language is often the first tool that can unlock integration before groups identify cultural dissimilarities, which was listed as a challenge too.

(vii) "Dissimilarities in Cultural Beliefs, Norms, Values and Interests": The following extraction explain how cultural dissimilarities occur as a challenge:

Some traditional practices that integrating refugees have come with are alien to our customs. A good example is the practice of male-circumcision known as "Mukanda" which Kaonde-Speaking people do not practise. Mukanda rituals are extreme and religiously followed (Participant LP03).

The practice of the "Mukanda" demands that certain traditional norms be followed to the later. That is our tradition. But we do not have all that freedom we need to practice it because some locals do not practice it (Participant IR03).

Data reviewed that most integrating refugees are experiencing cultural stereotypes amidst accusations of practicing witchcraft/magic. Participant IR03 further stated that:

Some of our colleagues who are doing well in business out there are accused of practicing witchcraft. It is common for the locals to accuse refugees of such ungodly lifestyle.

B. Socioeconomic and Cultural Conflicts Emanating from Refugee Integration in Meheba

The following participant's responses defined conflict:

It is a fight arising from people failing to live together (Participant IR04).

Conflicts are misunderstandings which lead people to quarrel or fight (Participant LP04).

It is the absence of peace. When people are not at peace with each other, then we can say they are in conflict (Participant SH05).

In view of the established challenges associated with refugee integration in Meheba, the following socioeconomic and cultural conflicts were described:

(i) “The Identity Crisis”: Without proper legal documents, integrating refugees are denied protection of their right to freedom of movement/travel.

Refugees who qualify for local integration find it hard to leave Meheba because they do not possess proper documents to support their stay outside the camp. Therefore, they risk being arrested by the immigration officers (Participant IR02).

However, locals stated that they do not have a problem with refugees integrating with proper documents to aid them search for locally available socioeconomic opportunities. The following verbatim were extracted:

Most Zambians are languishing in endemic poverty. Amidst such harsh socioeconomic problems faced by ordinary citizens, offering foreigners with opportunities that Zambians are not privileged to is a recipe for violence. Honestly, I think we need to give Zambians opportunities first (Participant LP03).

It is one’s right to have an identity. This right is inherent, inalienable and universal. The question lingering our minds is why are former Rwandese refugees without identity documents that legalize their stay in Zambia? Probed Participant LP04).

As long as one fails to produce legal Zambian identity then such is not Zambian and that they must not be given resources that Zambians deserve. It is hard to differentiate between integrating refugees and illegal migrants when both do not have documents supporting their stay in Zambia (Participant SH04).

The identity crisis among integrating refugees is a real threat to a national peace and is potentially a conflict trigger.

(ii) “The Conflict over Scarce Economic Opportunities”: Mass migrations, especially those which involve forced displacement, add enormous pressure on available economic resources in host communities. Competing over scarcely available economic resources and opportunities become inevitable. The following was said:

It is not fair that “us” who were born here – lived our entire lives here – are not getting employed yet “those” who left their countries are employed (Participant LP04).

What I know is that refugees, whether integrating or active refugees, are given free food by UNHCR. It is not, therefore, any fair that they (integrating refugees) are employed while we suffer (Participant LP02).

Nonetheless, most of integrating refugees opt to reside in urban areas where, unfortunately, hundreds of thousand locals remain highly unemployed. Hence, tensions between locals and integrating refugees that lead to conflicts are on the rise. Equally, due the crowded labour market most employers fail to resist the temptation of employing integrating refugees who offer cheap labour in their quest to maximise profits. The following statements were extracted from integrating refugees:

My neighbour’s wife who is a domestic piece-worker complains over poor remuneration for the same work

that the locals receive a better pay for. I think it is better to stay home than working only for hand-to-mouth. Integrating refugees are discriminated at (Participant IR04).

The other economic conflicts come from restrictions and controls in conducting business. The following extractions attest:

Most integrating young men fend from operating motor-bikes by transporting people in and out of Meheba. But the biggest challenge is that they cannot go beyond Meheba (Participant IR04).

I think small enterprises such as running a small shop locally known as “Tuntamba” (a local name for small-grocery shops) should be left for the “locals” only as a form of local empowerment (Participant LP04).

Resultantly, not only are some integrating refugees operating in fear of law enforcement agents seizing their merchandize because they lack proper documentation, local looters target their shops too because they know that refugees cannot report the loot to law enforcers. Equally, venturing into agro-economies by integrating refugees is either unpredictable or restrictive. The following was said:

We heavily depend on the rain-fed cultivation but the rainy-season is so unpredictable nowadays. I wish we could be empowered with irrigation equipment for sustainable food production just like the locals (Participant IR01).

Land preparation for commercial farming is labour intensive and yet my family is small to cultivate on a larger scale. Even if the family was big, I do not have proper tools that enables me to produce more than I do. Additionally, we do not have a ready market to sale even the little we produce in comparison with the local farmers (Participant IR03).

(iii) “Conflict Emanating from Imbalanced Distribution of and Access to Social Amenities”: The following grievance was lodged:

Our children have to walk long distances to access schools. When they come back from school, they have to walk about 2 to 3 kilometres to fetch water and prepare supper. By the time they are done, as you can see that our houses are not connected with electricity, they cannot study nor prepare adequately for school (Participant IR03).

However, the locals shared a different view concerning the similar complaint. It is common for conflict to occur where poverty is widespread. Statistically, North-Western is one of mineral rich provinces but ill-provided with social amenities. This situation angers the locals and the weakest population through which this anger is vented upon is the integrating refugee group. This is because the locals believe that integrating refugees are empowered by various social and humanitarian organisations and that they must not benefit from government led development schemes. The following was said:

Meheba Refugee Settlement is better provided with basic services compared to our communities out here. Our children walk longer distances of about 10 to 20, others up to 30, kilometres to access education while in Meheba are plenty primary schools at almost every after 2 – 3 kilometres. The same is true with health care services too (Participant LP03).

From what I know, many water boreholes were drilled in Meheba, almost every short distance of about a kilometre or less is water. For us, we depend on digging shallow water wells or fetch water downstream. So who is best provided for with basic needs, judge for yourself (Participant LP04).

Whenever there is perceived or actual imbalanced distribution or access to social amenities among people who see themselves as different from the other, peace hardly prevails. Lack of access to social amenities that threaten the existence of any group of people has potential to be a source of anger, frustration and resentment to those perceived to have.

(iv) “Cultural Misconceptions, Disbelief and Exploitation”: There are several stereotypes and accusations that integrating refugees practise sorcery and ritual killings which locals were concerned of.

This has flamed excessive fear among integrating refugees in venturing into businesses as revealed below:

Not so long ago, some locals looted shops owned by refugees integrating around nearby community on suspicions that they practiced witchcraft in businesses. I am, therefore, scared to become the latest victim even when I honestly do not practise sorcery (Participant IR03).

Communication barriers caused by language differences between the integrating refugees and the locals has potential to trigger cultural conflict as each group may fail to fully express themselves.

I believe it is easy to exploit a people who cannot communicate widely spoken local languages. Most refugees do not understand indigenous languages hence it becomes much easier to unjustly plot against them (Participant LP03).

Data collected also indicated that there are dissimilarities in norms, values or interests about accepted traditional beliefs, practices and festivities in Meheba among integrating refugees and the host communities. The following responses were recorded:

To some degree; our traditional practises are different. One major example is to do with the practise of boys' initiation into adulthood called “the Mukanda” which is alien to the host tribes. The Mukanda has its own rules and one rule held religiously is no trespassing by uncircumcised boys or men because it is believed that they are unclean. It is a serious taboo (Participant IR03).

C. Gaps in Actions taken by Stakeholders to deal with Socioeconomic and Cultural Conflicts Emanating from Refugee Integration in Meheba

The study unearthed two main gaps in actions taken by various stakeholders in addressing socioeconomic and cultural conflicts emanating from refugee integration in Meheba:

(i) “Diplomatic Resolution of the Identity Crisis, International Cooperation and Legislative/Policy Interventions”. The diplomatic engagements are a necessary tool to solve the puzzle of identity crisis surrounding integrating refugees' conflict with Zambia's immigration laws, especially with former Rwandese refugees.

The Zambian laws provide for local integration of former refugees into our societies. By law, those who have ceased the refugee status must present an identity confirming country of origin, renounce it and apply for adoption. The gap in action suffered by some former refugees intending to integrate (otherwise calling themselves as integrating refugees) is that they do not possess any form of nationality identity other than records at the Commissioner for Refugees' office. Unfortunately those records cannot be used in the application for Zambian citizenship. Therefore, officers from the immigration department are duty bound to arrest these persons outside refugee camps (Participant SH04).

The main group faced with identity crisis is that of former Rwandese refugees. Apparently, there are no

known Government agencies that can give them any form of an identity other than the Rwandese Embassy in Lusaka but most of them do not want to approach the authorities there. As for some former Angolan refugees who are faced with identity issues, most of the difficulties faced border on red-tape by the Government of Zambia (Participant SH01).

Based on the principle non-refoulement as provided for in the International Convention relating to the Status of Refugee of 1951 and its protocol, the Zambian government which is a signatory to it cannot send back to Rwanda persons who seek refuge or asylum within its borders even if it is for the purpose of acquiring passports. The former Rwandese refugees in Zambia have the right not to turn themselves to Rwandan authorities if they are unwilling to do. Thus, to claim the status of Statelessness to former refugees who failed to produce legal documentation identifying them with a particular nationality is not right especially that the Zambian government knows about such a group.

The former refugees without legal documents are neither Zambian nor Rwandese. Are they Stateless? Maybe! But to be addressed as a foreigner is unfair. They are person of concern. The Zambia Immigration Officers know their plea but since they do not have proper documentations allowing their stay outside the camp, they are arrest and a lot of money is spent to transport them back to Meheba. It is a predicament (Participant SH03).

The Embassy (Rwandan) does not give documents identifying former Rwandese refugees as citizens of that country. What former refugees are urged to do is to travelled back to Rwanda and arrange the documents like a passport then return to Zambia to formalize integration as required by the Zambian immigration law. However, most of them are scared to go to Rwanda, fearing accusations of having participated in the 1994 Genocide. What that mean is that the chance to return to Zambia if one decides to go to Rwanda is zero; they fear to be killed or imprisoned without fair trial (Participant IR02).

Other former refugees from Rwanda fear to even go to their Embassy because authorities will identify them, know where they reside and organize extradition or be butchered silently. They feel safe when no Rwandan government official knows their way about (Participant LP01).

Since this gap has been identified between laws governing local integration of former refugees and the immigration law, the onus falls directly on the government to come up with policy addressing this challenge.

The immigration law is a fair legislative piece for Zambians. There is no need whatsoever to change this law. Rather, the best could be policy formulation addressing the predicament faced by former Rwandan refugees who can not avail themselves to their national authorities (Participant SH03).

It is totally impossible to ignore the plight of the former refugees who are unable to produce documents yet we live with them. They have become part of us; they work harder and they have assimilated well into our cultures. We may not change laws but definitely for this group, we can formulate policy addressing their plea (Participant SH05).

The above narratives suggest that there is lack of diplomatic resolution of the identity crisis through international cooperation and legislative amendments. Bridging difficulties faced by Rwandese refugees in acquiring Rwandan national identity necessary for the Zambian government to issue them with naturalized citizenship, for example, can be resolved through diplomatic means. The two governments can definitely reach a win-win agreement while protecting the concerns and interests of former refugees at bilateral engagements. Furthermore, there is a gap in international bodies such as the UNHCR in influencing political will in form of negotiate or mediating for a mutual agreement among affected governments to amend

blocking legislations hindering smooth refugee integration. Therefore, diplomatic resolution of the identity crisis through international cooperation and national legislative amendments emerged as a theme. It is believed that once the identity crisis is solved, then most of socioeconomic and cultural challenges established earlier would be solved too.

(ii) Limited Social and Cultural Interactions between Integrating Refugees and the Locals: In most cases, social and cultural interactions such as sporting activities promote a proactive conflict management approach among integrating groups. Interactions of such kind enhance collaboration, fair play competition, culture exchange, and minimizes confrontations.

There are few social and cultural activities that bring us together. One of the contributing factor being that Meheba Refugee Settlement is still viewed as a refugee encampment.

Locals can hardly access the site and integrating refugees still need a permit to leave the site (Participant IR03).

Also, the setup of Meheba Refugee Settlement does not allow mingling of the two groups for an obvious reason; the site was initially established to host active refugees and that integration is simply a recent initiative. As a result, the site is hardly accessible to locals.

The challenge causing limited interaction among locals and integrating refugees is the distance between Meheba's centre of activities and that of locals. There is roughly about 20 to 30 kilometres between; coupled with poor transport system. This hinders us from moving about (Participant LP03).

Furthermore, the process of integration has accommodated very few locals into Meheba refugee settlement and absolutely no integrating refugee is resettled outside Meheba. Therefore, the gap in action limiting social and cultural interactions between integrating refugees and the locals can be solved by re-engineering the entire process through reshuffles.

Restrictions on movement imposed on most integrating refugees because they do not possess necessary documentations hinders them from leaving the camp site (Participant SH02).

Cultural practices such as traditional dances, music, or ceremonies are important tools that can be used in the integration process. Little is known about refugees' culture; they are too closed (Participant SH05).

As such, the gap lies between limited social and cultural interactions among integrating refugees and the locals. Social activities such as games and art in form of cultural dances, singing and aesthetics exhibition are key instruments that enhance social and cultural integration among people. Thus, deliberate efforts by stakeholders in sponsoring or supporting any form of interactive initiatives can really yield positive results as long as there is fairness, mutual respect, and win-win tactics deployed before-hand.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

A. Established Socioeconomic and Cultural Challenges Associated with Refugee Integration in Meheba

In identifying hindrances to a smooth and peaceful refugee integration in Meheba, the slothful award of legal documents to some deserving integrating refugees was cited as the root cause of all socioeconomic and cultural challenges all research participants. The study is, first of all, agreeing with Crisp (2004) who established that challenges associated with refugee integration stem from policies that receiving governments subject refugees to.

In the case of the Zambian Government, laws that govern immigration and refugee integration have continuously impeded a sect of refugees believed to be of Rwandan origin to integrate because they do not possess necessary documentation such as a passport in order to facilitate naturalisation of citizenship. It goes without saying, refugees intending to resettle in Zambia require total adherence to domestic laws and policies to safeguard their transition into host communities. However, it remains a challenge to have a peaceful refugee integration in Meheba if a group of integrating refugees do not have legal documents that support their inclusion and participation in the socioeconomic activities of the host society.

As a result of the aforementioned, various socioeconomic challenges such as rampant unemployment as well as controls in small and medium enterprises ventured by integrating refugees' spring. Perhaps, the argument advanced by the UNHCR Research (2013) finds strength here as it stated that integration as a process must be pursued individually than homogenously applied to a group of people. For instance, employers seek proof of national identity which a refugee intending to integrate may not be in possession. Even with right skills and academic qualifications, integrating refugees without legal documents cannot be employed. Worse still, those with business acumen are under strict control because lack of documentation as a Zambian citizen implies that integrating refugees are seen as foreign investors. Meanwhile, integrating refugees without proper documentation risk their ventured businesses from being ceased by government authorities or looted by locals. Thus, as MUN Refugee Challenge (2019) explained, failure to understand the individuality and or group factors of refugees can lead to irregular movements or protracted stay in host States, which may in turn pose as a threat to peace, security and stability.

The other socioeconomic challenges faced by integrating refugees include poor provision, and exclusion from equal utilisation of and access to public goods and services. In reality, Zambia like any other developing third-world country lacks adequate resources to mitigate sufferings of its citizenry hence it is common sense that integrating refugees would not find it easy anyway. This is rightfully put by UNHCR's (2021) literature which comments of untold sufferings faced by refugee hosting countries. To the integrating refugees, access to public goods such as sustainable farming enablers is inadequate compared to the locals. Equally, access to public services such as roads, health centres, education facilities, power and drinking water is still a challenge while the locals are perceived to have it easy. Meanwhile, the case is similar in host communities yet the locals will always compare themselves with integrating refugees regarding hardships faced in the provision of goods and services by stakeholders.

Meheba has hosted refugees from different ethnic backgrounds, majority being Angolan, Congolese (DRC) and Rwandan nationals. Cultural challenges faced in the face of refugee integration include language barrier and lapses in some customary practises leading to stereotypes and discrimination. It was discovered that a number of integrating refugees have communication challenges because of poor understanding of the local language. Most of refugees are not from Anglophone States while those who may be exposed to English still exhibit high levels of misunderstanding of the language, partly because they are not schooled. Thus, domestic employers find it hard to pass vital instructions nor are ordinary locals able to carry meaningful conversations. Also, refugee integration means allowing resettling persons to practise their cultures including commemoration of festivities, exhibition of aesthetics and traditional leadership. However, integrating refugees are forced to assimilate in almost all aspects of host community's way of life expect exhibitions performed during World Refugee Day commemorations. This is against UNHCR Nicosia's (2014) recommendations which demand that integrating refugees be given freedom to practice their customs.

B. Described Socioeconomic and Cultural Challenges Conflicts Emanating from Refugee Integration in Meheba.

Right at the outset, the researcher interrogated what participants understood to be the meaning of conflict. The study defines conflict in the face of refugee integration as a misunderstanding or perceived competition

of interests which might lead into a quarrel, discrimination and or violence between integrating groups. Manifestly, failure to live in harmony emanate. This is in line with Patel (2020) definition of conflict.

The study explored identity crisis, scarcity of economic opportunities, imbalanced distribution of social amenities as well as cultural misconceptions, disbelief and exploitation to be major socioeconomic and cultural conflicts emanating from refugee integration in Meheba. However, these findings should be interpreted cautiously because some actions which might be viewed biased and lead into integration conflicts may simply be acts of law and procedure necessitated by law. For that reason, conflicts emanating from law enforcement should not be misconstrued as an act of refugee dislike and or failure to integrate. Integration of refugee's world-wide is governed by domestic rules and therefore if host communities act lawfully, collectively or individually, such actions should not be misinterpreted as unjust acts (Smyth, Stewart and Da Lomba (2010). Nonetheless, refugees are a special group and attract international protection. Thus, if there are any impediments in domestic law (UNHCR, 2013) and or actions by law enforcers or locals hindering safe integration of refugees into host communities, and that such may lead to socioeconomic and cultural conflict emanating from refugee integration in Meheba, then the interpretations will serve that purpose in the discussion of the research finding(s).

Arguably, almost all forms of conflicts emanating from refugee integration in Meheba stems from the struggle faced by most integrating refugees regarding lack of legal identification documents. It is believed that this is the root cause of all problems hindering a fast, smooth and peaceful integration of locals and assimilating refugees. The implication of lacking legal documentation in the face of refugee integration is that a safe corridor into a society's way of life by new-comers is threatened thereby compromising a peaceful transition. This has led to continued fear of attacks from the locals who perceive them as foreign competitors on limited resources and prospects. This is a fertile ground for conflict escalation and violence in form of xenophobia. To McLeman (2017), lack of proper national documents supporting refugee integration is a recipe of conflict; agreeing with the findings.

To substantiate the argument above concerning the identity crisis allegedly suffered by integrating refugees, it is important to state that only a portion of integrating refugees in Zambia do not have forms of identification. Former Rwandese refugees who fled the 1994 Genocide are the majority of the said portion. The findings revealed that this category of former refugees have not normalized their legal obligation as demanded by the Zambian laws for citizenship naturalization to be complete. The Zambian laws mandate a refugee who qualify for the cessation of refugee status to provide proof of citizenship being renounced in order for such to obtain the National Registration identity. It is only after that process being followed religiously that a refugee would be considered to be integrating. On the other hand, former Rwandan refugees are unwilling to avail themselves to Rwandan authorities for the purpose of obtaining passports which can be used by the Zambian Government to begin or complete the integration process.

That is where the challenge listed as slothful award of legal documents stems to which the identity crisis is discussed. The identity crisis, therefore, stems socioeconomic conflicts because access to social and economic opportunities is only by identification as a citizen and is justifiable by law. Therefore, the slow pace at which integrating refugees are awarded documents to legalize their claim of socioeconomic assets and opportunities creates a pool of risks which may escalating conflict. This is where identity conflict emerges.

Further, the study revealed that when resources and opportunities which define a group's existence are scarce, manifestation of anger, frustration and resentment to the group perceived as competitors emanates. An example of a scarce economic opportunity in Meheba is employment even amidst the growing Mining industry. The locals feel entitled to employment opportunities and that they must be prioritized whenever the labour market is recruiting. This sense of entitlement comes with demand for better wages and working

conditions yet the availability of unemployed integrating refugees offers an alternative cheap labour force. As a result, employment interests for both integrating refugees and the locals are hardly met and discrimination of integrating refugees is on the raise. Furthermore, there is inexorable demand from locals that opportunities to run small and medium enterprises be left to indigenous businessmen only. However, integrating refugees appealed for more protection of their small holdings from government authorities against local looters. (UNHRC, 2006)

Other economic activities such as farming have not been spared. Farming as an economic activity might have been a perfect alternative to conflicts arising from economic hardships but there are inadequate enablers too for integrating refugees to thrive. Integrating refugee's main challenge is access to the market for their agricultural produce. As a result, they are confined to subsistence farming fearing wastage. To the locals, the government seems to be doing more for integrating refugees at the expense of growing subsistent farmer's ability to produce more while integrating refugees had their own perspective too. The argument is that integrating refugees have many organisations providing for them unlike the locals who only depend on the government.

Thus, there is a section of society holding views that integrating refugees be excluded from citizenship benefits that the government provides for its people. This creates citizenship classes between the two groups, this is roaming conflict. The above testimonies show that there is conflict between integrating refugees and locals regarding how each group pursue available scarce socioeconomic opportunities. The points above give a frightening image concerning actual or perceived deprivation sentiments harboured by both sides. Discrimination and the feeling of total entitlement of opportunities available is a recipe for conflict.

Provision of social amenities to uplift welfare of citizens is a responsibility that heavily lies on the government shoulders of any State. Often than not, imbalanced distribution of these social amenities such as education, health, transports, communication, water and sanitation facilities and services among beneficiaries can cause social unrests and political upheaval. The case in Meheba showed that the refugee settlement is well-equipped with social amenities than the surrounding communities to the displeasure of locals. The roads in Meheba are often maintained, there are several health centres and schools equipped with staff every about five to ten kilometres yet locals travel longer distances of about twenty to thirty kilometres to access such services on deplorable roads. Equally, integrating refugees voiced their teething troubles in accessing national grid electricity and higher education bursaries among other amenities that only locals enjoy. The above data revealed that both integrating refugees and the locals' alike suspect that the other group is well provided for with basic needs. This deepens a feeling of deprivation with reference to a group perceived to be doing better than the other.

Lastly, the data collected revealed that there are cultural misconceptions, disbeliefs and resulting exploitations among integrating refugees and locals with a risk to spill into cultural conflicts. Some integrating refugees conducting businesses around Meheba and the surrounding areas have been victims of traditional misconceptions and disbelief. Of major concern is the stereotype that integrating refugees suffer on suspicion that their trading ventures are directly linked with sorcery and ritual killings. This has flamed excessive fear among integrating refugees in venturing into businesses. It was revealed that most of these integrating refugees are easily spotted because of language barriers and their accent.

Worse still, data collected showed that there is exploitation in some day-to-day dealings between integrating refugees and the locals emanating from language and communication barriers. Equally, this has limited integrating refugees from accessing socializing platforms such as sports and recreation facilities hence contributing to slow exchange of cultures by the two integrating groups. Therefore, communication barriers caused by language differences between the integrating refugees and the locals has potential to trigger cultural conflict as each group may fail to fully express themselves. Needless to state, language is the most

noticeable indicator of cultural dissimilarities in norms, values or interests about accepted traditional beliefs, practices and festivities in Meheba among integrating refugees and the host communities.

C. Explored Gaps in the Actions taken by Stakeholders to deal with Socioeconomic and Cultural Conflicts Emanating from Refugee Integration in Meheba:

The study revealed that there is a gap that requires diplomatic intervention between the GRZ and States which refugees without national identities are believed to have come from. The diplomatic engagements are a necessary tool to solve the puzzle of identity crisis surrounding integrating refugees' conflict with Zambia's immigration laws, especially with former Rwandese refugees. Based on the principle non-refoulement as provided for in the International Convention relating to the Status of Refugee of 1951 and its protocols, the Zambian government which is a signatory to it cannot send back to Rwanda persons who seek refuge or asylum within its borders even if it is for the purpose of acquiring passports. The former Rwandese refugees in Zambia have the right not to turn themselves to Rwandan authorities if they are unwilling to do. Thus, to claim the status of Statelessness to former refugees who failed to produce legal documentation identifying them with a particular nationality is not right especially that the Zambian government knows about such a group. Since this gap has been identified between laws governing local integration of former refugees and the immigration law, the onus falls directly on the government to come up with policy addressing this challenge.

A refugee refer to a person owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted is unable or unwilling to avail oneself to the protection of the State and resultantly has fled his or her country of origin or nationality (UNHCR, 2021). By fleeing their countries, refugees do not only become a recipient country's but an international problem. Hence, various stakeholders such as national governmental refugee specialised institutions, NGOs and individuals, under the superintendence of the UNHCR, collectively adopted refugee integration as the most durable solution to the refugee problem. One of the recent international legal frameworks supporting this paradigm shift from voluntary or involuntary repatriation and resettlement to integration is the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) of 2018. Since the adoption of the GCR, GRZ rolled out the practise of early refugee integration in the new refugee settlement in Mantapala while Mayukwayukwa and Meheba Refugee Settlements strategically implemented it through already existing refugee integration protocols. Therefore, stakeholders such as UNHCR should work hand-in-hand with GRZ to bridge diplomatic gaps to ensure Rwandese national are awarded legal documents to enable them integrate smoothly.

Other than those struggling with the identity crisis, the study also revealed that there several gaps limiting social and cultural interactions among integrating refugees and the locals. In most cases, social and cultural interactions such as sporting activities promote a proactive conflict management approach among integrating groups. Interactions of such kind enhance collaboration, fair play competition, culture exchange, and minimizes confrontations. Firstly, the setup of Meheba Refugee Settlement does not allow mingling of the two groups for an obvious reason; the site was initially established to host active refugees and that integration is simply a recent initiative. As a result, the site is hardly accessible to locals. Secondly, the process of integration has accommodated very few locals into the settlement and absolutely no integrating refugee is resettled outside Meheba. Therefore, the gap in action limiting social and cultural interactions between integrating refugees and the locals can be solved by re-engineering the entire process through reshuffles.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusion

The study established that there are some legislative/policy gaps or rigidities impending the integration

process such as the Immigration Law and Refugee Act. The primary challenges faced by refugees intending to integrate is lack of legal identity documents that are necessary to the process. Hence, most integrating refugees are faced with rampant unemployment as well as several other restrictions hindering them from engaging into socioeconomic activities. Those without legal identity, for instance, face limiting controls in venturing into Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and also fail to have a safe corridor into the society's way of life. This compromises a peaceful transition by integrating refugees into host-communities. Each group (refugees and locals) lead a life of continued fear of attacks from perceived opportunity/resource competitors, a situation fertile enough to trigger conflict.

B. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made among others;

- **Law/Policy Reform and Diplomatic Intervention:** The Government of Zambia should consider re-designing a law/policy to deal with the plight of refugees of Rwandese descent aimed at allowing them to legally integrate. The Zambian laws governing refugee integration are perfectly designed and need no alterations but, for the sake of integrating refugees who cannot avail themselves before their governments for identity queries due to perceived or actual threats to their security, the government of Zambia can craft laws/policies or engage into international diplomacy to deal with this challenge.
- **Issuance of UNHCR Passport:** Refugees without legal identity should be considered for UNHCR Passports which can allow them to freely enjoy the right to education, employment and freedom of movement and travel.
- **Stakeholders involved in the integration processes in Meheba** should practice fair distribution of socioeconomic opportunities between refugees and host-communities.
- **Social and cultural interactions among refugees and locals** should be enhanced as a way of bringing the groups together. Activities such as gaming sports, traditional festivities, and academic expositions can potentially lessen chances of escalating conflicts resulting from group referencing.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Authors declare that they do not have any conflict of interest.

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