Refugee-Host Interaction in the Krisan Refugee Settlement in Ghana

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Abstract

The limited opportunities available for refugees to resettle in a third country, the reluctance of refugees to voluntarily repatriate to place of origin and the unwillingness of some host countries to encourage the integration of refugees have led to protracted refugee situations, especially in developing countries. This paper assesses factors likely to influence the integration of refugees at a camp near Krisan in the Western Region of Ghana within the context of refugee-host interaction. Quantitative data were collected from 180 people from the host population and 180 refugees and in-depth interviews were held with opinion leaders, representatives of UNHCR and partners. The paper argues that the integration of refugees depends on the tolerance of host communities to infractions and the preparedness of the refugees to operate within the acceptable norms of the community. Where the activities of refugees threaten the systems of the host population, peaceful co-existence is likely to be problematic. At Krisan, the host population has tolerated and accommodated the refugees to some extent, but there have been misunderstandings on issues such as use of forest resources. To ensure peaceful co-existence in areas such as Krisan, there is the need for periodic platforms for stakeholders to interact and address potential conflict areas. Keywords: Krisan Refugee Settlement, refugee-host interaction, local integration, peaceful co-existence[12]

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Introduction

Unlike the countries of the Great Lakes Region of Africa, West Africa has had limited refugee experience. In 1988, there were only twenty thousand refugees in the sub-region, leading to limited interest in refugee studies (Owusu, 2000). But the total number of refugees shot up to seven hundred thousand by 1994 and continued to increase due to political problems in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Togo and Cote d'Ivoire. Since then, the sub-region has seen an upsurge in refugee population: by 2000, Guinea was hosting about eight hundred thousand refugees (UNEP, 2000) and Ghana reportedly had about 48,000 as at 2004, most of them from Liberia (UNHCR, 2004). As at January 2011, the West African sub-region was hosting 149,000 refugees; in Ghana there were 14,578 persons of concern to the UNHCR, of whom 13,828 were refugees (UNHCR, 2011). The sudden increase in the number of refugees in the sub-region has led to re-adjustments arising from refugee-host interactions in settled areas in a manner which did not pertain previously. Refugees, like any other migrants, attempt to take advantage of economic opportunities at their destination, especially in the informal sector, and their pursuit of livelihoods invariably leads to interactions with host populations (Whitaker, 1999; Zakaria & Shanmugaratnam, 2003). Pursuing normal economic activities at their destination helps to recreate social and economic interdependence as well as create new social networks within and between communities through exchange of labour and social interactions (Jacobsen, 2003). New social networks, considered to be an important asset enabling refugees to cope with many adversities, help to re-develop cultural identity in the new environment (Bihi, 1999), and to find support from others which helps them to function as normal human beings. Therefore, one of the most common survival strategies for refugees is to intermarry with host populations since an indigenous spouse is more stable and better positioned to offer the necessary assistance to the refugee spouse (Harrell-Bond &

Voutira, 1992).

The importance of the role of host populations in stabilising refugees is very often downplayed on the assumption that host populations are supposed to submit to the overall political authority of the country. As a result, relations between host populations and refugees have over the years been over-romanticised with the assertion that once refugees are willing to integrate locally, there will be little resistance from the host population. But recent literature has been more realistic and has revealed that conflicts, especially those that emanate from the use of local resources by refugees, have brought to the fore host populations' reluctance to accept local integration of refugees as a durable solution (see Agblorti, 2011; Martin, 2005; Kibreab, 2003). There is therefore the need to understand micro (community) level factors which contribute to or hinder the acceptance and integration of refugees in host communities.

Peaceful co-existence with a host population is paramount if refugees are to be accepted and to live meaningful lives. The concept of peaceful co-existence hinges on the view that one should not do anything to bring about resentment and anger which will disturb the peace among and between individuals and communities. Among the Akan of Ghana this is depicted in one of the Adinkra symbols (Bi-nka-bi: no one bites another). Therefore, the nature of interactions between refugees and host populations could play a key role in ensuring the much-desired process of healing and integration for refugees. The absence of such conditions could lead to conflict and rejection. To resolve some of the challenges refugees face in their host area, there is the need to understand aspects of refugee-host interaction. This paper contributes to the search for understanding by assessing the interactions between host populations and refugees and identifying the activities of refugees and their implications for peaceful co-existence between the refugees and their hosts at a camp in the Western Region of Ghana.

Refugeeism in Ghana

The visible presence of refugees in Ghana dates back to the immediate post-independence period when nationals from other West African countries took refuge in Ghana. Influenced by Pan Africanist considerations, Kwame Nkrumah encouraged asylum seekers and freedom fighters from other African countries to settle in Ghana (Dick, 2002). For instance, Hastings Banda of Malawi, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe and Miriam Makeba of South Africa were refugees in Ghana at different points in time. An international hostel was built in Accra to host young African refugees who wanted to study in Ghana. After the overthrow of Nkrumah's Government in 1966, subsequent administrations were less enthusiastic about political refugees from independent African countries. However, as signatories to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 OAU Convention governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, Ghana granted asylum to some refugees, mainly students from the southern Africa region. In 1985 there were 175 officially recognized refugees in Ghana, of whom 72 were students (Dick, 2002).

The first major influx of refugees to Ghana was in 1990 when Liberians were given refuge from their civil war. Although Ghana was a signatory to both the 1951 United Nations (UN) Convention on the Status of Refugees and the 1969 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, at the time of the influx the country did not have a specific law on refugees. Asylum issues were then handled within the context of the legal framework of the 1967 Declaration on Territorial Asylum adopted by the UN General Assembly. Essuman-Johnson (2003) noted that at the time of the refugee influx there was "feet dragging" because there did not seem to be the need for a specific law on refugees. However, the country recognised the need for a legal framework in order to deal with issues emanating from the influx of refugees. Based on pressure from the presence of the refugees, development partners and the UNHCR,

the then government passed a Refugee Law [Provisional National Defence Council (P. N. D. C.) Law 305D]. Among other things, the Law led to the establishment of the Ghana Refugee Board, the government agency responsible for refugee activities (Republic of Ghana, 1992). Thus, the passing of the Law was not spontaneous but was dictated by circumstances. Since then, Ghana has attracted refugees from a number of African countries at three main refugee camps: Buduburam (about 40 minutes' drive west of Accra, the national capital), Krisan (in the Nzema East District of the Western Region) and Klikor (near Aflao, a town on the eastern border with Togo). The refugees from the Klikor camp (mainly Togolese) were later evacuated to the Krisan camp when the Klikor camp was closed down on November 28, 1997 for security reasons (Essuman-Johnson, 2003). The Krisan Refugee Settlement, as at the time of this study, hosted refugees from eleven African countries, namely Togo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, la Cote d'Ivoire, Chad, Somalia, Congo and Eritrea. The few studies on refugees in Ghana have concentrated on the Buduburam camp, probably because of its proximity to the national capital, Accra, creating a research gap as far as other refugee camps are concerned. Secondly, although Buduburam existed before the arrival of the refugees, it had a few people (40 persons in 1984 but 18,713 in 2000 due to the presence of the refugees (Ghana Statistical Service, 2005)), hence refugee-host interaction did not feature much there. This paper examines a dimension (refugee-host interaction) in the growing presence of refugees in the country. The desire of displaced persons in the sub-region and other areas of Africa to seek refuge in Ghana is mainly due to the political stability that the country has experienced over the last two decades and the hospitality of the people. Dick (2002) has noted the role played by the host population during the influx of Liberian refugees in Ghana in the early 1990s. She lauded how the local people pooled resources to assist the refugees in the emergency phase. Long before that, Hatch (1970) observed that "there is a tradition and practice of hospitality in the continent, so that an African is always an African. If he

leaves one society he will be accepted in another". Ghana hosted over 40,000 refugees by the end of 2002 (United States Committee for Refugees, 2003). By 2004, a documentation exercise by the UNHCR put the total number of refugees at 48,034.

Study Area

The Krisan Refugee camp is located in the Nzema East District of the Western Region near the Sanzule, Krisan and Eikwe communities (Figures 1 & 2). The refugee settlement, about a kilometre from the Krisan village, was established in 1996 to accommodate Liberian refugees. The camp was initially located on the land of both Krisan and Sanzule and was consequently named as the Sanzule-Krisan Refugee Settlement until it was moved to its current location on the land of Krisan, hence the name Krisan Refugee Settlement.
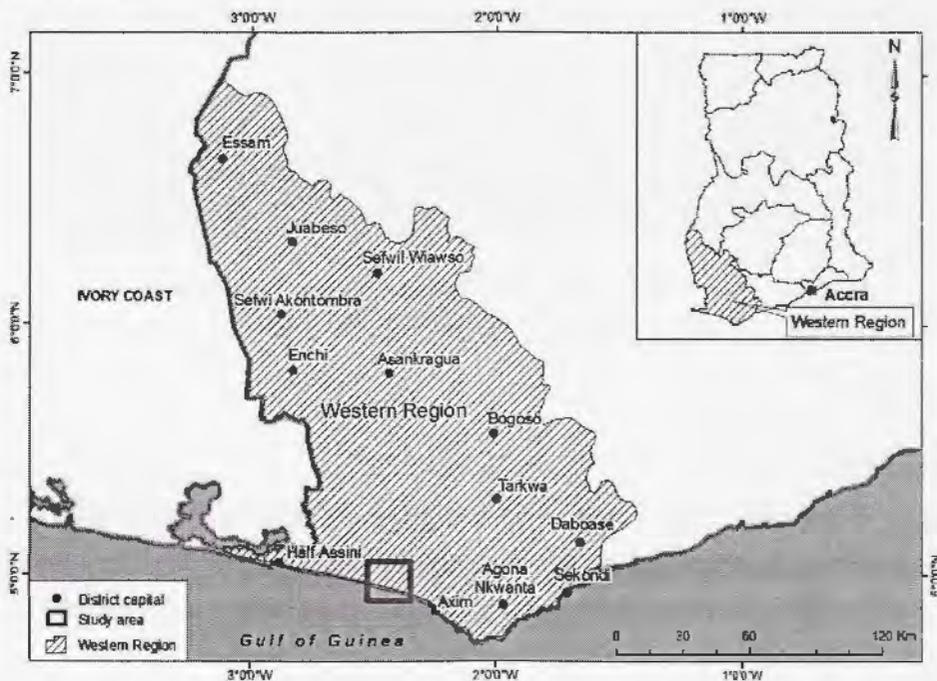

Figure 1: Map of Ghana showing the Western Region and location of the study area
Source: Adopted from Agblorti (2011:78)

Sanzule, Krisan and Eikwe are adjacent coastal communities with farming and fishing as the predominant activities. While fishing is done on a commercial basis, farming in the district is basically at subsistence level. The population of the three settlements was 4,279 as at 2000 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002) and at the camp there were 1,321 residents as on 20 June, 2005 (World Refugee Day).
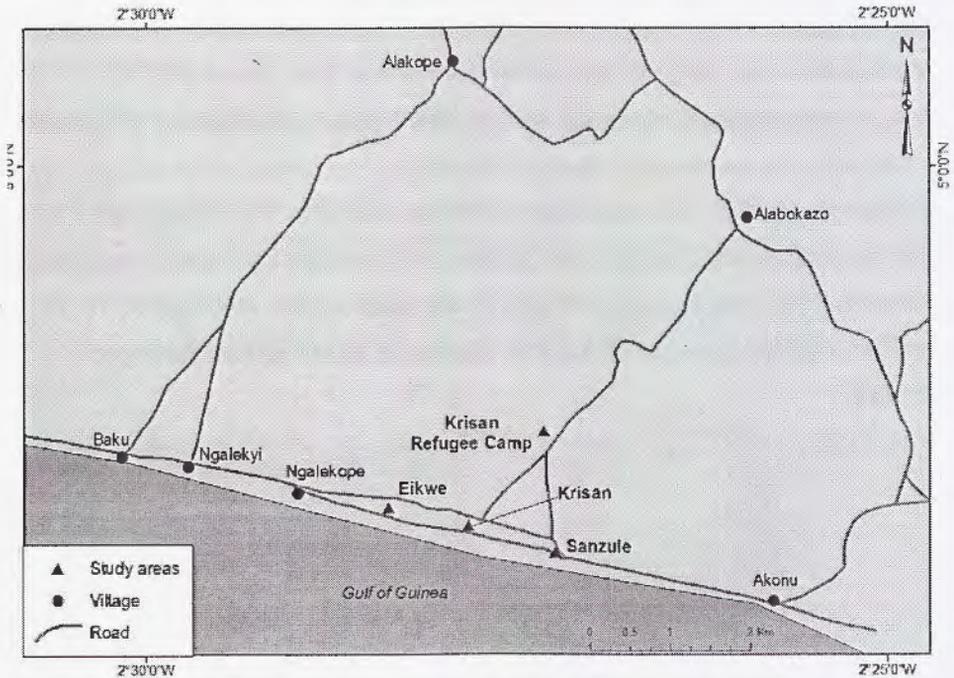

Figure 2: Host communities and Krisan Refugee Resettlement
Source: Adopted from Agblorti (2011:78)

Conceptual Issues

Studies on refugee re-settlement processes have evolved around the three-stage framework of integration (see for instance Valtonen, 2004; for Finland) and the pursuit of livelihoods (Jacobsen, 2003; Dryden-Peterson & Hovil, 2003). Valtonen (2004) referred to the three stages as the Pre-flight, In-settlement and Integration. The Pre-flight stage deals with conditions that cause people to flee their countries of origin, while the In-settlement period is

concerned with issues that facilitate integration in the host community. Integration, the last stage, involves the ability of refugees to participate in the social, political and economic life of the host country and includes the pursuit of settlement goals and substantive citizenship rights. This paper addresses some of the issues in the in-settlement stage. According to Jacobsen (2003), the goals, resources and livelihood plans of refugees are influenced by their desire to survive and are manifested in their choice of various coping strategies.

In general, the coping strategies of refugees can be classified under economic, socio-cultural and religious subsections, with the legal framework in the host country defining the parameters of interactions. To analyse the relationship between refugees and hosts for peaceful co-existence, we conceptualise the acceptance of refugees as a function of economic activities, socio-cultural issues and the legal framework in the host country (Figure 3). All these activities form part of the livelihood strategies adopted by refugees in host communities and have implications for the environment and resource use. Acceptance of refugees may be influenced by how their activities fit into the socio-economic and cultural milieu of the host community and whether such activities fall within the legal framework (Figure 3). For refugees to be accepted into a host community, their ways of life should be seen as resonating with the ideals embodied in the unwritten regulatory structures of the host community. In an attempt to make a living, however, some of their activities could be illegal or infringe on some aspects of life of host societies. For example, among the coastal Akans of Ghana where the refugee camp is situated (Classification of the host communities as subsets of the larger Akan group of Ghana was based on the classification of ethnic groups from the 1960 Population Census of Ghana) (Gil et al. 1964; Ansre et al., 1964), Tuesdays are days of rest from fishing and Thursdays or Fridays are days of rest from farming, depending upon the area. These structures, therefore, set

the limits for some of the economic activities with which communities and refugees are expected to comply. Black and Sessay (1998) have observed that the presence of refugees in a zone increases population-resource ratio and refugees are perceived as poor and exceptional resource degraders. Given their circumstance, refugees may ignore, be unaware of, or be excluded from the regulatory structures that are important for sustainable resource use (Black & Sessay, 1998). Any of such situations could create conditions for conflicts.

In sub-Saharan Africa and other developing countries the natural environment plays a key role in livelihood strategies and the natural environment around refugee camps is likely to be a key source for alternative livelihood as supplement to humanitarian assistance. Socio-cultural and religious needs, such as the need for land for places of worship, tend to bring refugees and host communities together. Social interactions between refugees and hosts also have a certain level of resource use because the host would be expected to help the refugee in terms of access to natural resources. Thus, the physical environment becomes one arena for conflict between refugees and hosts (Figure 3).

Refugees in isolated settlements are likely to be insulated from the direct control of the host population, unlike situations where refugees are settled among hosts. In the case of the former, refugee-host conflict is likely to be minimal, while with the latter, their livelihood activities could impinge on those of the host community or breach their norms, leading to conflict and possible rejection. Thus, the type of refugee settlement (whether it is a designated camp, or a location close to the hosts, or a dispersed settlement among hosts) could have implications for interaction and resource use. These dimensions are important since opportunities for refugees to make a living

should be considered within the context of how their activities fit into those of host communities. The level of acceptance or accommodation can be positive or negative depending upon the nature of relationships (Figure 3). This framework is used to assess the nature of host-refugee interaction at the Krisan Camp.
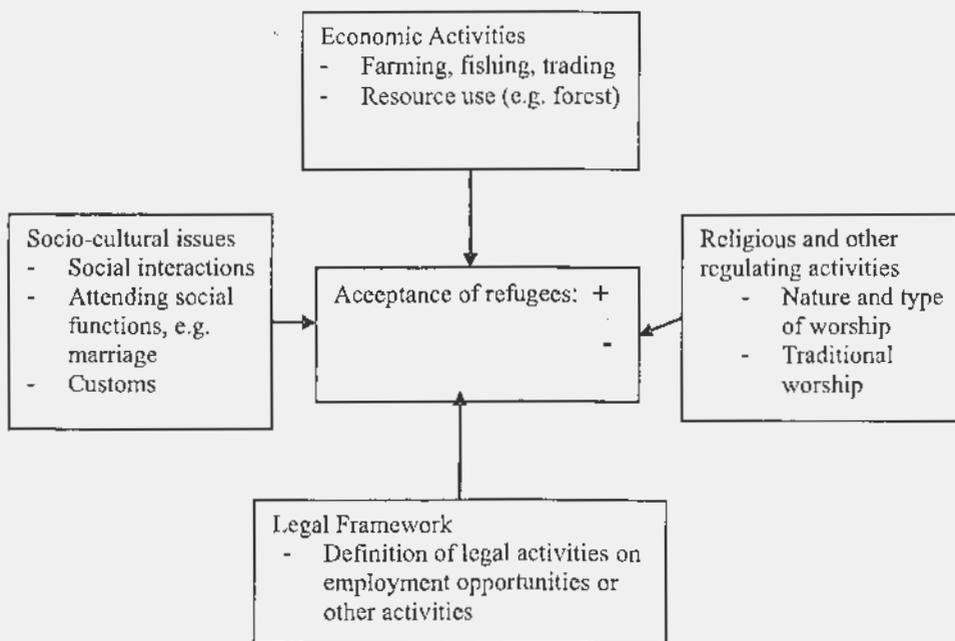

Figure 3: Relationship between activities of refugees and their implications for acceptance

Source: Authors' construct (2008)

Data and Methods

The study consisted of refugee and host populations in the Krisan Refugee Settlement area. As of June, 2005, there were 1,321 refugees. Of that number, 180 were selected for a questionnaire survey. The first stage in the selection process involved the grouping of the refugees by nationality. It was realised

that refugees from six countries had less than 10 persons, and therefore these countries were grouped into one category. Based on the proportion of the population by nationality at the camp, the 180 persons were allocated to the various nationalities (Table 1). Using the register for the distribution of rations, a simple random sampling method was employed to select respondents for the countries with large populations, while for those countries with less than ten persons the total number at the camp was interviewed. In all cases an equal number of males and females was interviewed. For comparison, 180 people were selected from the host communities as indicated in Table 2. Equal numbers of males and females were targeted for the study. The selection process for the host population was in two stages. First, 180 houses were randomly selected from the three villages (see distribution in Table 2) using the listing of houses for the National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS). In each of the selected households one adult member was selected for interview, and the choice alternated between males and females.

In-depth interviews were held with chairpersons of the Welfare Committees in each of the four sections of the camp, chiefs of the three host communities, two Assemblymen representing the communities, the Camp Manager and the Officer-in-charge of the Catholic Relief Services. Data from the host population were collected between 20 August and 19 September, 2005 whilst those from the refugees were gathered during March, 2006. The break in the data collection at the two sites was due to a riot at the Refugee Settlement on 4 November, 2005 as a result of agitation of the refugees for improved living conditions at the camp and their perceived refusal of agencies to assist them to be resettled in a third country (Achiaw, 2005).

Table 1: Distribution of sample size of refugees

Country	Male	Female	Total
Togo	35	35	70
Liberia	19	19	38
Sierra Leone	16	16	32
Sudan	14	14	28
Congo & Congo, DR	2	2	4
Rwanda	1	1	2
Cote d'Ivoire	1	1	2
Chad	1	1	2
Somalia	1	-	1
Eritrea	1	-	1
Total	91	89	180

Source: Field Survey, 2005.

Separate questionnaires were administered to the sampled host and refugee populations. In addition to general questions on variables such as socio-demographic background information (e.g. age, marital status and religious affiliation) and interactions between refugees and host population, there were sections peculiar to each group. For instance, for the refugees there were questions on their activities in the host communities, while for the host

communities, questions covered issues such as their perceptions of refugees and how activities of refugees fitted into social and economic structures of their communities. Given the nature of the area and the general interest of the population, the study achieved a 100% response rate. The in-depth interview guides for the leaders of the refugees and the host population as well as the camp administration also focused on issues pertaining to their spheres of operation.

Table 2: Distribution of sample size of hosts

Community			
Sex	Sanzule	Krisan	Eikwe	Total
Male	34	19	37	90
Female	34	19	37	90
Total	**68**	**38**	**74**	**180**

Source: Field Survey, 2005.

Results

The next section presents the results from the survey and covers the socio-demographic background of both host and refugee populations, the nature of interactions between hosts and refugees, perceptions of the refugees among the host population and their implications for peaceful co-existence.

Background of Respondents

Of the 180 hosts interviewed, 42 per cent were aged thirty years or less while 13 per cent were more than 45 years, with a mean age of 34. The ages of the 180 refugees ranged from 18 to 64 years with a mean of about 35 years. Twenty-four per cent of the males interviewed in the host communities were

in the age group of 35-39 while for the females, 24 per cent were aged 25-29. About 68 per cent of the host population and 65 per cent of the refugees interviewed were between 20 and 39 years (Table 3). The refugees, especially the males, had higher formal education than the host population: 59 per cent of the males and 33 per cent of the females had had at least second cycle education, compared to 17 per cent of male and eight per cent of female indigenes. Over half of the males and females were married in both populations. The two groups were predominantly Christians (over 90 per cent of the indigenes and over 70 per cent of the refugees); about a quarter of the male and 11 per cent of the female refugees were Muslims, compared to five per cent of males in the host population. The Charismatic/Apostolic denomination dominated (50 per cent) among females in both the refugee and the host populations.

Table 3: Background characteristics of respondents

Age group	Host population		Refugees	
	Male (%)	Female (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
Less than 20	3.3	3.3	3.3	5.7
20-24	11.1	10.0	11.1	17.7
25-29	21.1	24.4	29.5	17.7
30-34	11.1	20.0	16.7	15.6
35-39	24.4	16.7	11.0	15.6
40-44	9.0	9.0	19.6	13.4
45-49	10.0	10.0	3.3	4.4
50-54	6.7	2.2	2.2	4.4
55+	3.3	3.3	3.3	5.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Education				
None	12.2	24.4	0.0	19.1
Primary	18.9	30.0	11.0	20.2
Middle/JSS	52.2	37.8	29.7	28.1
Sec/SSS	8.9	5.6	50.5	31.5
Higher	7.8	2.2	8.8	1.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Religion				
No religion	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Catholic	36.7	33.3	33.3	12.4
Protestant	36.7	16.7	22.0	20.2
Charismatic/Other Christian	16.7	50.0	20.8	56.2
Muslim	5.5	0.0	24.2	11.2
Traditional	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total	100.0	100.01	100.0	100.0
Marital status of respondents by sex				
Single	*32.2*	*27.8*	*45.1*	*11.2*
Married	*55.6*	*54.4*	*54.4*	*61.8*
In-cohabitation	*1.1*	*1.1*	*0.0*	*0.0*
Separated	*0.0*	*0.0*	*0.0*	*3.4*
Divorced	*10.0*	*15.6*	*18.7*	*1.1*
Widowed	*1.1*	*1.1*	*4.3*	*22.5*
Total	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*	*100.0*

Source: Field Survey, 2006.

Socio-cultural Interactions

The arrival of the refugees increased the population of the area by a third (Host: 4,279; Refugees: 1,321). This immediately changed the size and composition of the rural population, introducing a relatively adult population within a small area, and made their presence very obvious. About 94 per cent of the sampled host population admitted that there have been changes in the area in terms of the social relations and dynamics. Five changes were identified, namely the creation of more social networks (90 per cent), availability of potential spouses (68 per cent), emergence of new ways of doing things (six per cent), adulteration of indigenous values (15 per cent) and the compelling of indigenous children in public schools to speak English (38 per cent). The last issue was important for the community since it helped to improve interaction and also assisted the rural community to improve their reading and communication in English, the official language of Ghana. As observed by Harrell-Bond and Voutira (1992), marriage is one way of improving relations between refugees and hosts. Availability of potential spouses, as reported, is an indication that the hosts were willing to marry the refugees. At the time of the survey four refugees had married from the host communities. The opinion leaders interviewed also indicated that there were liaisons between the hosts and refugees. Both the refugees and the hosts reported being involved in the social activities of one another such as weddings, funerals and local festivals. Such social interactions were considered to have created a congenial relationship between the refugees and the host population.

Religious Activities

For displaced populations, religion serves as one of the major social institutions through which social networks are restored and new ones built

(Ives et al., 2010). With about 95 per cent of hosts and 82 per cent of refugees identifying with the Christian religion, religious worship had become a common platform for interaction. For instance, about 65 per cent of the hosts mentioned the church as their first encounter with the refugees, making religious worship a conduit for social interaction and the building of social networks. A camp administrator also commended the contributions of religious bodies to the upkeep of the refugees, especially during the emergency phase. The Catholic Relief Services was one of the religious institutions operating in the camp during the time of the survey, and was responsible for the provision of social services with support from the UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies. The involvement of religious institutions in humanitarian services to displaced populations has been noted elsewhere (Ives at al., 2010; Hardgrove, 2009).

However, some members of the host communities expressed worry about the proliferation of Apostolic/Charismatic churches at the refugee camp. At the time of the survey, there were over six sign posts of different Christian churches at the entrance to the camp. Among them were the African Bible Church, the Church of Christ and the Assemblies of God. The concern of the indigenes was that these new Churches could be used to dupe people, as had happened in other parts of the country (Effah-Kyeremeh, 2009).   Others contended that it could lead to campaigns to attract members of the traditional local churches to those found at the refugee camp. The predominance of females in the Apostolic/Charismatic Churches among both the indigenes and hosts could have informed the views of some of the community members. In general, the Apostolic/Charismatic Churches constitute one of the largest Christian religious denominations in Ghana, accounting for 26 per cent of the population in the Western Region (Ghana Statistical Service, 2005).

Economic Activities

According to the indigenes, the presence of the refugees had helped to revive fishing and farming activities which had gone down in the communities due to shortage of labour. Community leaders indicated that the refugees were prepared to offer labour at lower fees than did the indigenes in these two sectors. As pointed out by one fisherman, they (refugees) were willing and ready to help in any fishing activities. Among the farmers, 79 per cent indicated that the refugees were prepared to work on their farms, which was not the case for the indigenes. In addition, the host population reported that the presence of the refugees had created a market for local produce. As indicated by one opinion leader: "They (the refugees) have expanded our market size. We do not want them to leave". As pointed out earlier, the presence of the refugees added a third to the population of the area. Some of them also had disposable income, contributing to an expansion of the rural economy. The creation of a market for a local economy has widely been identified as a key factor that could influence the acceptance of refugees (Whitaker, 1999).

However, some of the economic activities of refugees were found to be unacceptable by the indigenes. One major area of concern for the hosts was the indiscriminate felling of trees for fuelwood and the production of charcoal for sale. Of the 180 host respondents, 87% reported observing deforestation in the area and 99 per cent out of that attributed the deforestation to the harvesting of fuelwood by refugees, while 43% mentioned the use of marginal lands for farming and five percent indicated that farm lands had been used for residential purposes. The presence of refugees might not necessarily lead to environmental degradation. Nonetheless, the people perceived the refugees as being responsible for such degradation. One of the chiefs summed up the situation as follows:

The problem now is the environmental degradation that characterizes their activities. You know, because of livelihood practices such as burning of wood for charcoal, they cut trees indiscriminately and that is a bother to us. They

have entered the small forest reserve that we have and felled trees indiscriminately. Sometime ago we arrested some of them and sent them to the Camp Manager and they were warned. [Traditional Leader, Male]

The harvesting of trees for fuelwood and for charcoal burning also took place in restricted areas (protected groves) within the communities. Zoned as the abode of the ancestors and revered, these areas contained some of the matured trees and varieties of wood in the area (see Esia-Donkoh, 2007). Without the prior knowledge of and affinity to any ancestors of the area, the refugees entered and felled trees in the groves. This practice created conflict between the refugees and the host communities.

One official identified refugees from a particular country as being responsible for the burning of wood for charcoal. He observed that the refugees felled and burnt the wood for charcoal at night in order to avoid being caught. The refugees, on the other hand, blamed the UNHCR for failing to honour an agreement to supply them with fuel for cooking, and said that this situation had forced them to burn charcoal. According to one of the leaders of the refugees:

There was a time that charcoal supply from UNHCR was not forthcoming. That was the time that some of the refugees went into the nearby forest to burn charcoal. But now I think the camp administration has asked those involved to stop immediately. But whether they stop or not is what I cannot say. [Refugee Leader, Male]

The inability of the UNHCR to provide charcoal regularly had led to a gap between the intentions and activities of the Agency, thereby creating antagonism between the refugees and the host population over fuelwood. The negative environmental impact around refugee camps, though worrying, is not a new phenomenon in communities hosting displaced populations (Berry, 2008; Black & Sessay, 1998; Haug, 2003). Where there is an increase in population within a short period in a restricted rural area, there is bound to be stress on resources, especially land and forest products. As noted by Biswas and Tortajada-Qulroz (1996), where substantial numbers of

displaced populations settled in a restricted area, negative environmental impacts such as deforestation become a common phenomenon.

Discussion and Conclusion

There is the on-going debate on the durability and acceptability of local integration as a workable alternative to repatriation and resettlement in a third country. More often, the argument is that the decision to locally integrate refugees is the sole prerogative of the central government. Proponents of this view play down the influences of host communities, claiming that they are obliged to abide by the laws of their country. Although this assertion is true because the laws of the host country provide the general legal framework for local communities, the experiences, perception and the nature of the hosts and the refugees feed into decision making process of the refugees on whether stay and/or for the host community to be welcoming. The acceptance of refugees into host communities is influenced, among other things, by the extent to which refugees are able to adhere to normative behaviour and expectations of the host community and the interactions between refugees and the host population (Figure 3). While admitting that the bulk of interactions at the Krisan Camp had led to an acceptance of refugees, there have been areas of conflict which tended to threaten the relationship between the hosts and the refugees. Socially, marriage and common religious affiliation have helped to create conditions for accommodation and peaceful co-existence. Furthermore, the refugees have provided much needed labour in a rural economy which was experiencing labour shortage and a market for the produce of the hosts while obtaining additional income.

On the other hand, conflict has emerged over the approach to and the use of forest resources. The forest reserve, a revered resource of traditional communities and an area believed to be the home of ancestral spirits and abodes of gods (Asare, 2005), was being defiled by the refugees. Secondly, the indigenes perceived the cutting of trees for charcoal burning as a threat to

their eco-system. In particular, the time during which the cutting of trees took place and where it was done created conditions which seemed to threaten the fragile peaceful co-existence and possible local integration of the refugees. The current situation indicated that so long as there was mutual benefit for both the host (e.g. the availability of cheap casual labour) and refugees (a source of supplementing income), there was some level of tolerance. But where there have been threats to their belief and existence (as in the case of forest resources), these could become a source of conflict and disharmony. Continuous acceptance of refugees and possible local integration depends, to a large extent, on how they relate to and adhere to the rules of host communities. It would be prudent for institutions such as the UNHCR and local partners like the Ghana Refugee Board to periodically bring out issues of mutual concern, especially those which threaten peaceful co-existence, and address them. Through this process refugees can be educated on local norms and practices as well as acceptable social behaviour. This can lead to a situation where mutual trust can transform relationships to bring about local integration.

Ownership, control and use of land and forest resources are central to the perception of the Akans regarding such resources. Land is for three generations – the dead (ancestors/ancestress), the living and those yet unborn (Asare, 2005). Therefore, any activity which is likely to disrupt this relationship could create conflict, and that was what emerged in the area. The refugees with high levels of formal education were unable to obtain jobs commensurate with their training under the existing circumstances and within a restricted rural environment (Dryden-Peterson and Hovil, 2003).

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