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Refugee integration in Ghana: the host community's perspective

Samuel K. M. Agblorti

University of Cape Coast
Ghana

E-mail: sagblorti@ucc.edu.gh

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UNHCR
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Policy Development and Evaluation Service

**Policy Development and Evaluation Service
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
P.O. Box 2500, 1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland**

**E-mail: hqpd00@unhcr.org
Web Site: www.unhcr.org**

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Introduction

In his Opening Statement to the 61st UNHCR's Executive Committee meeting on 4 October 2010, UNHCR chief António Guterres acknowledged concern over the increase in the number of quasi-permanent, or protracted, refugee situations confronting UNHCR.¹ In addition to the human suffering that such situations represent – in which refugees effectively have their lives put on hold, sometimes for decades – the increasing number of protracted refugee situations poses a significant challenge to host countries and the international refugee regime with regards to security implications and resource limitations.

They also generate policy challenges to governments and agencies working to find durable solutions. Despite the efforts of host governments and the international humanitarian community, however, statistics show that the number of protracted refugee situations has increased from 22 in 1999 to 30 in 2008, with refugees living in limbo for an average of 17 years.²

Many of these protracted situations are in Africa. Since the 1970s, African countries have been noted for their exemplary role in assisting those who have sought asylum within their territories. As Hatch commented in 1970, “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.”³

However, this willingness to host refugees has increasingly been eroded over the past decades. Particularly since the 1990s, many African countries have become increasingly reluctant to receive refugees seeking asylum within their borders. As Frelick noted, commenting on the rejection of refugees from Liberia in 1996:

What better metaphor for 1996 than the “Bulk Challenge” that refugees represent to a largely uncaring world? Never was asylum more in doubt in more places than in 1996. Africa, which decades stood as a shining example of solidarity and hospitality, retreated from fundamental principles. On both of the continent, the spirit of generosity withered. Some, such as the refugees aboard the Bulk Challenge, had doors of refuge slammed in their faces.⁴

This growing reluctance to host refugees – which is a global phenomenon, but is particularly brought into focus in a context such as Africa – is, in part, attributed to

¹ UNHCR, “ExCom: UNHCR chief warns of rise of new semi-permanent global refugee population”, Retrieved 4 October 2010, from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home>

² K. Jacobsen, “The forgotten solution: Local integration for refugees in developing countries,” *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working Paper No. 45, 2001. Retrieved 21 January 2011, from <http://www.unhcr.org/3b7d24059.html>. See also G. Loescher, J. Milner, E. Newman, and G. Troeller, “Introduction” in G. Loescher, J. Milner, E. Newman, and G. Troeller, (eds.), *Protracted refugee situations: Political, human rights and security implications*, United Nations University Press. Tokyo, 2010.

³J. Hatch, “Historical background on the African refugee problem.” In Brooks, H. C. & Percy, D. R., (eds.), *Refugees south of the Sahara: An African dilemma*, Westport: Negro University Press, 1970. pp 11–26.

⁴B. Frelick, “The year in review.” *World Refugee Survey 1997*, US Committee for Refugees, 1997, p. 14.

the protracted nature of many refugee situations which have negated the assumption that refugees are temporary guests and are likely to leave as soon as conditions at home normalise. The problem lies in the fact that often this “normalisation” can take decades – or, in some cases, remain elusive indefinitely. And in a context in which repatriation has been emphasised by host governments and the international community as the most preferred of the three durable solutions (local integration and resettlement being the other two options), millions of refugees have been left living in limbo for decades.

This problem is well recognised by governments and the international community, and has been the subject of much policy debate. In particular, local integration – defined as “the ability to participate fully in economic, socio-cultural and political spheres in the host country without relinquishing one’s ethno-cultural identity and culture”⁵ – has increasingly been pushed by numerous national and international non-governmental organisations as a workable durable solution for refugees, especially those refugees in the global south. Scholars have argued, for instance, that in situations where there are numerous cultural and economic similarities between refugees and their hosts, and where voluntary repatriation is unworkable, local integration of refugees should be promoted as a durable solution.⁶

However, while at a policy level local integration of refugees in first asylum countries is increasingly being seen as a panacea for protracted refugee situations in developing countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, in practice many of the legal, socio-cultural and economic issues regarding local integration in host communities are vaguely explained. Furthermore, there is little active support from host governments who continue to show considerable reluctance to let the discussion move from theory to practice. And, at the end of the day, the potential success of local integration as a durable solution is largely reliant on the willingness of host governments to pursue this end.

In particular, it is important for governments to formalise a process that often takes place regardless of the legal structures. Studies that have suggested local integration in first asylum country as a durable solution to the refugee problem⁷ often argue that even in the absence of any specific policy that formalises local integration, the phenomenon still happens unofficially, hence the need for policies to legalise it.

But in order to legalise the phenomenon, it is important to have a broad discussion with all stakeholders on the issues involved in order to give the process the necessary legitimacy and acceptance. In this regard, in addition to government co-operation, another key player in the potential success of local integration remains under-explored and under-consulted within this debate – namely the host population.

As evidenced by Hatch’s comment above, too often relations between refugees and their hosts are over-romanticised, and assumptions are made regarding a host populations’ willingness to accept the presence of refugees – temporarily, let alone permanently. Recent literature has become more realistic in this regard, showing the

⁵ K. Valtonen, “From the margin to the mainstream: Conceptualising refugee settlement processes”, *Journal Refugee Studies*, 2004, 17(1): 70-96.

⁶ Jacobsen, 2001. See also A. Fielden, “Local integration: An under-reported solution to protracted refugee situations.” PDES Working paper No. 158, UNHCR.

⁷ For instance, Jacobsen, 2001.

extent to which refugee-host relations are often plagued by conflicts, for instance those that emanate from the use of local resources.⁸

As Dryden-Peterson and Hovil note, due to the crucial role that host communities play in ensuring access to livelihoods for refugees, it is important to include them in exploring possible durable solutions for refugees.⁹ Indeed, local integration is highly dependent on a significant level of buy-in from the host population. As Da Costa says, local integration is “the end product of a multi-faceted and on-going process, of which self-reliance is but one part. It requires preparedness on the part of the refugees to adapt to the host society, without having to forego their own cultural identity.

It also requires host communities that are welcoming and responsive to refugees, and public institutions that are able to meet the needs of a diverse population.”¹⁰ This explanation puts into proper perspective the role of host communities and refugee-related institutions in the host country in successful integration of refugees, emphasizing the extent to which host communities and the relevant institutions in the host country are key stakeholders whose decisions carry a lot of weight.

Yet consultation with host communities remains under-explored: local communities who, through their social and cultural institutions, play key roles in integrating refugees are often relegated to the background in discussions on durable solutions, often because they are supposed to submit to the political authority in the host country. Their absence from the debate undermines it.

In light of this, the interaction between host populations, refugees and the debate around local integration forms the focus of this paper. Using Buduburam refugee settlement and the surrounding area in Ghana as a case study – an area that has hosted refugees for two decades – this paper explores the socio-cultural dynamics and policy challenges that affect the process of local integration as a durable solution for Liberian refugees in Ghana who have, in effect, had their lives put on hold: some have been in Ghana since the conflict in Liberia started in 1990 while others arrived during a more recent wave of conflict in 2002.

Despite a peace agreement in Liberia in 2003, many of these refugees currently remain in Ghana reluctant to repatriate. Yet there remains a lack of clarity regarding alternative durable solutions for this group, in particular the extent to which local integration is a possibility. The paper therefore considers the extent to which policy, or lack of policy, plays a clear role in either promoting or preventing local integration, and specifically looks at the role played by the Ghana Refugee Board in this regard.

⁸ See, for example, A. Martin, “Environmental conflicts between refugees and host communities.” *Journal of Peace Research*, 2005, 42(3): 329-346.

⁹ S. Dryden-Peterson, and L. Hovil, “Local integration as a durable solution: Refugees, host populations and education in Uganda.” *New Issues in Refugee Research Working series*, No. 93, 2003, Retrieved: 1 November 2010, from [http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=3f8189ec4&query=New Issues in Refugee Research](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=3f8189ec4&query=New+Issues+in+Refugee+Research)

¹⁰ R. Da Costa, “*Rights of Refugees in the Context of Integration: Legal Standards and Recommendations*”. Geneva: UNHCR, 2006.

Refugees in Ghana

Unlike the Great Lakes region of Africa where there have been a number of significant refugee flows since the end of colonialism, the West African sub-region only became a substantial refugee generating and receiving region in the 1990s. Since then, however, it has generated a substantial proportion of the continent's refugees as a result of intractable conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire and Togo. The mass influx of refugees that has characterised the sub-region over the last two decades is therefore unprecedented.

That is not to say that there were no refugees before the 1990s. Ghana, for instance, has witnessed the presence of refugees since it attained independence from British colonial rule on 6 March 1957.¹¹ However, this experience was somewhat unique both in terms of the number of refugees involved (for which there is limited documentation)¹² and the geographical location of the country of origin.

In the case of the latter, the Pan Africanist disposition of Ghana's post independence administration and the fact that Ghana was the first sub-Saharan country to achieve independence from colonial rule meant it was considered a forerunner in the independence liberation struggle. As a result, the country attracted a number of so-called 'freedom fighters' from the southern Africa sub-region seeking asylum,¹³ including, notably, Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Mariam Makeba of South Africa and Hastings Banda of Malawi.

It was not until the 1990s that Ghana received the first mass-influx of refugees as conflicts proliferated in the region. Political stability in Ghana over the past two decades made it an obvious destination for displaced populations, especially those within the sub-region, and the country began to experience the more tangible impact of hosting refugees in large numbers. The consequent influx, particularly of Liberian refugees, immediately posed challenges, not least as the country had no refugee policy or designated legal framework with which to manage refugee protection.

As Essuman-Johnson noted, duplicating roles were played by the various government agencies as mandates were not clearly defined.¹⁴ Finally, as a result of lobbying from UNHCR and other agencies, a refugee law was passed in 1992¹⁵ and, subsequently, the Ghana Refugee Board was established as the government agency responsible for refugee issues.

By 2004, Ghana hosted 48,034 refugees living primarily in three camps – Krisan camp in the Nzema East District of the West Region near the Ghana-Cote d'Ivoire border; Klikor in the Ketu South District of the Volta Region near Ghana's eastern

¹¹ A. Essuman-Johnson, Ghana's policy towards refugees since independence. *Ghana Social Science Journal (New Series)*, 2003, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 136-161. See also S. Dick, Liberians in Ghana: Living without Humanitarian Assistance. *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working Paper No. 57, 2002a, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, UNHCR, Geneva; and S. Dick, (2002b). Responding to protracted Refugee Situations: A Case Study of Liberian Refugees in Ghana, 2002b, Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, UNHCR, Geneva.

¹² According to Dick, by 1985 there were 175 refugees in Ghana of which 72 were students. (Dick, 200b)

¹³ Essuman-Johnson, 2003.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ PNDC Law 305D.

border town of Aflao; and Buduburam in the Gomoa East District of the Central Region.¹⁶ The diversity of countries from which refugees had fled was striking: Krisan refugee camp alone hosted refugees from eleven African countries (Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Togo, Eritrea, Congo DR, Rwanda, Congo Brazzaville, Cote d'Ivoire, Chad and Somalia) totalling about 1,321 in 2005.¹⁷

With a number of conflicts in the region and beyond reaching resolution, many of these refugees have returned home. For Liberian refugees in Ghana, who have dominated the Buduburam camp since its creation, the process of repatriation was officially initiated by a tripartite agreement signed between the government of Ghana and the government of Liberia and UNHCR after the signing of the Liberian peace agreement in August 2003, which led to the resignation and subsequent departure of Charles Taylor to exile in Nigeria and ended 14 years of civil war.¹⁸ The repatriation exercise initially targeted 14,000 refugees, but in reality only 4,000 returned to Liberia.¹⁹

Security considerations and the lack of economic opportunities back in Liberia have been cited as the main reasons why refugees were reluctant to return to Liberia.²⁰ People were also wary of the fact that on earlier occasions when Liberians had decided to return home (following an earlier lull in the conflict) the journey itself had been fraught with danger.

On one occasion, a ship carrying Liberian refugees from Ghana and Nigeria had engine failure on the high sea and the refugees had to be rescued. On another occasion, Liberian refugees returning from Ghana were stranded on the Guinea/Mali border for approximately two weeks, as the Guinean authorities refused them entry.²¹ For instance during a discussion the author had with a refugee in Buduburam camp in 2009 after the expiration of a UNHCR-organised repatriation exercise, one refugee told of how it would be better to remain in Buduburam camp than to go to Liberia and be put in another "refugee camp."²²

Meanwhile, most countries have closed off the possibility of resettlement.²³ As a result, many Liberian refugees continue to remain in Ghana: a verification exercise by the Ghana Refugee Board in 2009 put the total number of refugees in the Buduburam

¹⁶ UNHCR Ghana, Profile of Ghana Country Office, UNHCR, 2004, Accra, Ghana.

¹⁷ S.K.M. Agblorti, Refugee-host interaction in the Krisan Refugee Settlement in Ghana, 2006, Unpublished master's thesis submitted to the Department of Geography and Tourism, University of Cape Coast, Cape Coast, Ghana. Currently, two refugee camps remain open: Buduburam and Krisan. Klikor, which previously hosted refugees from Togo, was closed on 28 November 1997, when the refugees were moved to the Krisan camp for security reasons. Refugees who were kept in the Klikor Camp were those displaced during the political instability that plagued Togo in the 1990s. Some of these refugees fled because they were against the incumbent government at the time. It was therefore thought that encamping them just across the border of the country they had fled from (Togo) was not safe. The Ghana Refugee Board therefore decided to send them to the Krisan Camp.

¹⁸ IRIN, Ghana – Liberia: Agreement signed for repatriation of Liberian refugees in Ghana, 2004, Retrieved: 4 February 2011, from <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportID=51456>

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ Ibid

²² The refugee was referring to the returnees' camp in Liberia for those who could not trace their homes on return to Liberia as another "refugee camp". (Discussion with refugee, Buduburam camp, 2009)

²³ R. Napier-Moore, 2003. "Long-term refugees: Liberians encamped in Ghana." Found at <http://www.migrationdrc.org/research/projects/Buduburam/Buduburam.html>

camp at 12,000.²⁴ The future for this group of refugees remains in question: refusing to repatriate under current circumstances and with resettlement no longer a realistic possibility, the need to explore the possibility of local integration is becoming increasingly important. Indeed, as this paper went to press, the government announced plans to close down Buduburam camp, highlighting the urgency of the situation.

Ghana's position on refugee integration

Key to the implementation of local integration as a durable solution is the legal framework of the host country that would allow for such a process to take place. It is this framework that legitimizes the integration process and is therefore regarded as the starting point for any debate on local integration. Where this framework is lacking not only do refugees have inadequate access to social and environmental resources but, more importantly, such access, if any at all, lacks legitimacy.

Although Ghana has opened its doors to refugees since independence, most notably during the refugee influxes of the early 1990s, successive governments have been reluctant to promote the idea of local integration for refugees. As in other refugee hosting countries in the global south, security implications and the resource burden of hosting refugees are the main reasons advanced for this stance.²⁵ As a result, the government has given mixed messages regarding its commitment to local integration.

On the one hand, a source from the Ghana Refugee Board maintains that the government is committed to the integration of refugees locally, although the source could not give any precise policy prescription by government to promote the process of local integration.²⁶ Yet on the other, public statements made by politicians contradict this.

For instance, in 2008 the then Minister for the Interior emphasised the government's attitude regarding local integration of refugees when he addressed refugee assistance agencies working in Ghana, in response to a demonstration by a number of refugees from Liberia at the Buduburam camp. At the meeting, he noted: "... let me once again reiterate that Government has not decided to integrate them [refugees] nor does it have any intention to do so...."²⁷

This lack of policy and implementation mechanisms has translated into a lack of information that would allow refugees to make a decision regarding the viability of local integration. As the author observed during the course of the research, on one of the many notice boards in the refugee camp, where attempts were being made to interest refugees in applying for voluntary repatriation, one poster indicated that

²⁴ However, this verification process was never completed. Therefore the current refugee population in the Buduburam camp could be more than 12,000.

²⁵ G. Salducci, "Towards the local integration of Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees in West Africa through enhancing self reliance and promoting regional integration." Regional Conference on Refugee Protection and International Migration in West Africa, April 2008. Retrieved 30 October 2010, from http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=49e479cc0&query=integration_of_Liberian_and_Sierra_Leonean_refugees_in_West_Africa

²⁶ Interview with a source from the Ghana Refugee Board, Accra, 17 August 2010.

²⁷ A statement by Hon. Kwamina Bartels, Minister for the Interior, on demonstration by Liberian refugees in the Buduburam Settlement on Tuesday, 1st April, 2008. Retrieved 30th October, 2010, from http://mint.gov.gh/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=38&Itemid=53

should any of the Liberian refugees opted for local integration instead of going back to Liberia, issues such as where they would be allowed to settle, working rights in the formal sector and other rights they would be entitled to, were not clearly defined. This lack of information reflects a general lack of clarity and commitment to the issue of local integration from the side of the government, suggesting that, in practice, repatriation is the only viable durable solution being offered.

Whether as a result of this lack of clarity over local integration or as a result of other issues, local integration is not a popular choice for many refugees in the Buduburam camp.²⁸ Indeed, the perception that government and UNHCR were intending to impose local integration on the refugees was mentioned as one of the reasons for a refugee demonstration in the camp in 2008. Of course, a number of refugees have no doubt integrated already – whether through marriage or through ‘self-settling’ in Ghana. However, these individuals remain outside of the official processes, and their status as self-settled has not been normalised.

At the same time, and despite extensive documentation of the extent to which host communities in Ghana have been hospitable towards refugees over the years²⁹ the hitherto cordial refugee-host relations that characterised the emergency phase of the refugee arrival in the Buduburam camp has gradually given way to a situation where the host population now see the refugees as competitors and relations have become increasingly antagonistic. As Porter et al. note, relations between refugees in the Buduburam camp and the host population have now become strained.³⁰

As noted in the introduction, although in theory local integration is possible – specifically, section fourteen of the Ghana Refugee Law (PNDC Law 305D) allows for the naturalisation of refugees³¹ – clear-cut policies regarding the actual implementation of local integration in Ghana are lacking. To make local integration practically possible, especially in a context where it is currently not an obvious choice for refugees, there is a need for a clear-cut policy on it. A number of factors could be responsible for this situation.

First, local integration of refugees is likely to impose an increased burden on the government.³² Second, given the fact that refugee-host relations are currently characterised as strained, any attempt by government to integrate refugees locally would be resented, especially where such attempt involves commitment of resources.

²⁸ This lack of enthusiasm for local integration, particularly due to the lack of available information on the matter, was evident in recent research conducted by Naohiko Omata in research among refugees in Buduburam camp. In addition, the research showed the increasingly difficult economic circumstances that refugees find themselves in within the camp. Omata, N. (2011) “Local integration of remaining Liberian refugees in Ghana”, a paper based on PhD thesis, “The Livelihood Strategies of the Liberian Refugee Population in Ghana,” School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

²⁹ M. Owusu, “Reluctant refugees: Liberians in Ghana.” *Journal of the International Institute*, 2000, Vol.7, no. 3. Retrieved 15 September, 2010 from <http://www.umich.edu/~iinet/journal/vol17no3/Owusu.htm>. See also Dick, 2002a and 2002b.

³⁰ G. Porter, K. Hampshire, P. Kyei, M. Adjaloo, G. Rapoo, and K. Kilpatrick, “Linkages between livelihood opportunities and refugee-host relations: learning from the experiences of Liberian camp-based refugees in Ghana.” *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 21(2): 230-252, 2008.

³¹ The Law specifically states that “Subject to the relevant laws and regulations relating to naturalisation, the Ghana Refugee Board may assist a refugee who has satisfied the conditions applicable to the acquisition of Ghanaian nationality.”

³² Salducci, 2008.

In a situation where the level of poverty is relatively high especially in the rural areas of Ghana, any diversion – or perceived diversion – of resources to cater for the integration of refugees would be unpopular among the host population. This is likely to be one of the reasons why the government continues to shy away from openly promoting the idea of local integration as a durable solution for refugees in Ghana, especially those from Liberia who currently constitute the majority of the refugee population in Ghana.

A third drawback to the formulation of explicit policy on local integration of refugees in Ghana relates to the lack of an appropriately constituted institution to carry out this mandate. The 1992 Refugee Law mandates the Ghana Refugee Board to advise government on all matters concerning refugees. The Board is also mandated to liaise with all other stakeholders including UNHCR to resolve refugee issues.

Since the current government's inauguration in January 2009, the Ghana Refugee Board has not met once. At the time of the study, the Board lacked the services of a substantive Chairperson (without whom the Board cannot sit) to effectively perform its functions as mandated in the constitution establishing it. Subsequently, the Board has not been able to advise government on current refugee-related issues.

Many arguments could be advanced concerning the current state of affairs within the Ghana Refugee Board. One argument would be to view this as a deliberate attempt by government to continue to be indifferent towards local integration of refugees, questioning the commitment of government towards the local integration of refugees within the country.

Buduburam: history and context

In response to the mass influx of Liberian refugees into Ghana in the early 1990s, the government of Ghana established a refugee camp at Buduburam, a rural settlement about 35 kilometres west of Accra, the national capital.³³ The Buduburam camp (the first camp to be created in Ghana) is primarily host to refugees from Liberia. On arrival of the first influx of refugees from Liberia, a National Reception Committee was quickly constituted to take charge of the situation, and UNHCR was subsequently called upon to help address some of the emergency issues resulting from the influx. Originally designated for about 5,000 refugees, by 2004 the Buduburam camp hosted approximately 50,000 refugees, most of whom were from Liberia.³⁴

Before the arrival of this group of refugees, and despite its proximity to the national capital Accra, the area around what was to become Buduburam settlement was one of the poorest communities in the Central Region of Ghana. Subsistence farming was the dominant economic activity, and the community had experienced significant out-migration.³⁵

The hitherto stable socio-economic landscape before the arrival of the refugees was dominated by agricultural activities. Partly as a result of the influx of refugees and a

³³ Porter et al. 2008.

³⁴ S. C. N'Tow, "How Liberians live on the camp at Buduburam in Ghana." *The Perspective*: 2004, Atlanta, GA.

³⁵ Porter et al. 2008

sudden increase in the population of the area, and partly as a result of the area's proximity to Accra, this increasingly gave way to a rapidly growing urban settlement dominated by a growing services industry (including, for instance, mobile phone and 'buy and sell' businesses).

Following the influx of refugees, the land designated for Buduburam camp was acquired from the traditional authorities of Buduburam village by the government of Ghana. As such, it is currently under the ownership of the government, and neither the host community nor the refugees have legal ownership of the land on which the Buduburam camp is sited as long as it remains a refugee camp.

With the help of other stakeholders, the government began to put in place the necessary social infrastructure to accommodate this influx of refugees. In addition, UNHCR also targeted assistance to the host community, with 20% of all programmes in the camp being directed towards the host population.³⁶ As Enoanyi notes, \$900,000 was used to build a police station and a fire service headquarters for the community.

However, he also states that some of the programmes (most notably the police station and fire service headquarters) targeting the host population did not deliver tangible results to the host population. He subsequently challenged the surrogate state role of UNHCR by building these facilities and called on the organisation to focus more on using the positive impact of the refugees to attract development agencies to invest in the area which, in turn, would benefit both refugees and the host population.³⁷

Since then, the Buduburam camp has attracted refugees from other African countries, as well as additional Liberians fleeing successive phases of the conflict in Liberia. Currently, the Buduburam camp is a typical urban settlement in Ghana with a thriving economic activity, and has attracted a significant migrant population. These characteristics, coupled with being the largest refugee camp in Ghana, make Buduburam a useful study site for this research.

Research data and methods

Data collection for this study took place in the Buduburam area in August 2010, using a number of methods. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was employed to generate data for the study. From a total sampling frame of 3,060 households within the host community, a sample size of 244 was statistically determined for a quantitative survey.³⁸ The host community was divided into four clusters: two at each side of the main road from Accra to Cape Coast.

Sixty-one houses were randomly selected from each cluster using the house numbers. One household was randomly selected from each house where the house had more than one household. The selection process did not make room for gender balance

³⁶ C. Enoanyi, "Linking relief, rehabilitation and development to protracted refugee situation: A case study of the Liberian refugee situation in Ghana", Unpublished master's dissertation submitted to the Ruhr-University of Bochum, Germany, 2000.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ See A.A. Fisher, J.E. Laing, J.E. Stoeckel and J.W. Townsend, *Handbook for Family Planning Operations Research Design*, New York, Population Council, 1998.

since it was random. A questionnaire was used to solicit data from the quantitative sample of 244 households, administered by trained field assistants.

In addition, qualitative interviews were conducted with key informants working in the host population, including the Assembly member for the area,³⁹ a representative from the traditional authority in the Buduburam community, and another representative from the Ghana Refugee Board. In addition, two focus group discussions (of between 6 and 10 members in each group, including men and women) were held in the host community, in order to allow respondents the opportunity to build consensus on issues raised in the questionnaire and the interviews.

The quantitative data were coded, cleaned and various statistical techniques including descriptive statistics and specifically the Chi² were employed to establish association, especially between respondent type as the independent variable and perception as the dependent variable using the SPSS version 12.0. Frequency tables were also generated to describe the quantitative data. The qualitative data were analysed manually. Transcripts were read thoroughly to identify trends and these were used to complement the quantitative analysis.

A shortcoming in the data collection and therefore the study is that only the host population was targeted leaving perspectives of the refugees on local integration unexplored. However, given that this group of refugees have resisted repatriation for about a decade, it is assumed that, should local integration be offered as a viable option, many would take up the offer. Specifically, previous conversations with refugees indicate that those refugees with competitive qualifications if given the opportunity would wish to integrate locally.⁴⁰

Characteristics of selected household heads

A description of the background characteristics of respondents was important for the interpretation and understanding of respondents' perceptions about local integration as a durable solution to refugees. In this study, the host population was categorised into two main groups, indigenes and migrants, using place of birth as the guiding variable. Those born outside the host community but within Ghana were classified as migrants and those whose birth place was within the area of study were classified as indigenes.

The rationale behind this categorisation was the expectation that people's reactions to the continuous stay of refugees in their communities might be influenced by the benefits accruing to them as a result of the presence of the refugees.^{41,42} It was anticipated that the benefits to the host population would likely vary according to

³⁹ An Assembly member is an elected representative to the District Assembly, the lowest level of political administration in Ghana.

⁴⁰ This statement is based on previous interaction between the author and a number of refugees during a reconnaissance survey conducted in 2009.

⁴¹ R. Chambers, "Hidden losers? The impacts of rural refugees and refugee programmes on poorer hosts", *International Migration Review*, 20(2), Special Issue: Refugees: Issues and directions, 1986, 245-263.

⁴² B. E. Whitaker, "Changing opportunities: Refugees and host communities in western Tanzania", 1999, *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working Paper series no. 11, retrieved 11 November, 2010 from <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=3ae6a0c70&query=New+Issues+in+Refugee+Research>

whether someone was a migrant or indigene. Table 1, below, shows the selected background variables that were used in the analysis.

Table 1: Socio-demographic background of survey respondents

Variable	Frequency	Per cent
<i>Respondent type</i>		
– Indigene	56	23.0
– Migrant	188	77.0
<i>Sex</i>		
– Female	47	19.3
– Male	197	80.7
<i>Marital status</i>		
– Single/Never married	52	21.6
– Married	152	63.1
– Divorced	22	9.1
– Widowed	5	2.1
– Co-habitation	10	4.1
<i>Nationality of spouse</i>		
– Refugee	6	3.8
– Ghanaian	150	94.3
– Other African	1	0.6
– Other non-African	2	1.3
<i>Education</i>		
– None	13	5.3
– Primary	28	11.5
– Middle/JHS/JSS	129	52.9
– Secondary/SSS/SHS	57	23.4
– Post Secondary	17	7.0
<i>Religious denomination</i>		
– Catholic	12	4.9
– Protestant/Orthodox	46	18.9
– Pentecostal/Charismatic	103	42.2
– Other Christian	51	20.9
– Moslem	14	5.7
– Traditionalist	1	0.4
– Others	17	7.0
<i>Ethnicity</i>		
– Akan	195	80.2
– Ga-Dangme	17	7.0
– Ewe	15	6.2
– Guan	2	0.8

– Mole Dagbani	7	2.9
– Other	7	2.9

As the table demonstrates, only 23% of the sampled household heads interviewed were indigenes, indicating a high proportion of migrants in the area. Indeed, within Gomoa district of Ghana, Buduburam has evolved as one of the fastest growing areas since the 1990s. According to the 2000 Population and Housing Census, Buduburam was the ninth largest community in the Central Region of Ghana with a population of 18,713.⁴³ From a population of 316 in 1960 and 380 in 1970,⁴⁴ the area has witnessed substantial growth in population to 18,713⁴⁵ by the year 2000.

Less than one fifth (19.3%) of the household heads interviewed were females, and 63% of the total sample were married at the time of the data collection. An additional four percent were cohabiting. The existence of intermarriage between refugees and host population, which is often viewed as an indicator of strong relations, was marginal (3.8%).

Over half of the respondents had completed basic education, with only seven percent having achieved post-secondary education. The sample was dominated by adherents of the Christian faith (86.9%), of which the Pentecostal/Charismatic denomination constituted the majority, accounting for over 40%. About 80% of the sampled household heads were from the Akan ethnic group, which was not surprising as Akan is the dominant ethnic group in Ghana, and Buduburam has traditionally been an Akan area.

The dynamics of local integration

This section of the paper considers how the sampled household heads perceived refugees in the Buduburam camp on a number of socio-cultural, political and economic issues. The acceptance of these issues provides crucial indicators for the potential co-existence within and between populations.

Issues that were covered in the study included marital status, access and use of resources and people’s ideas around social values, and a number of specific economic and political issues. A five-scale Likert Scale (Strongly Agree = 1, Agree = 2, Neutral = 3, Disagree = 4, Strongly Disagree = 5) was developed to solicit information on the various issues. The ‘mean’, ‘standard deviation’ and ‘percentage in agreement’ were used to analyse these data.⁴⁶

⁴³ Ghana Statistical Service, *2000 Population and Housing Census, Ghana, 2002*, Accra: Ghana Statistical Service.

⁴⁴ Ghana Statistical Service, *1984 Population Census, Ghana, 1989*, Accra: Ghana Statistical Service.

⁴⁵ This total included the refugees.

⁴⁶ F. E. Amuquandoh, “Residents’ perceptions of the environmental impacts of tourism in the Lake Bosomtwe Basin, Ghana.” *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 2010, 18(2): 223-238.

Table 2: Socio-cultural, economic and political dynamics influencing local integration of refugees

Dynamics	N	Mean	Std. D.	% in agreement
<i>Socio-cultural</i>				
– I can marry a refugee	244	3.7746	1.47210	28.3
– I will allow my daughter to marry a refugee	244	3.6803	1.46995	33.3
– I will allow my son to marry a refugee	244	3.5820	1.48429	33.2
– I will accept a refugee as a religious leader	244	2.5205	1.55674	54.4
– Refugees are honest	244	3.1107	1.12585	9.9
– Refugees are reliable	244	3.2459	1.20227	27.0
– Refugees are friendly	244	1.6557	0.89599	85.6
– Refugees are helpful	243	2.5885	1.20063	52.3
– Refugees are selfless	244	2.7541	1.25584	49.6
– Refugees are fellow human beings who should be respected	243	1.6543	1.02240	86.0
– I am prepared to settle disputes with refugees	243	1.5062	0.82507	93.0
– I am prepared to attend social functions organized by refugees within my vicinity	242	1.6901	1.02612	88.9
– I am willing to invite refugees to social functions organized by my community	244	1.8156	1.13439	86.5
– I agree that refugees should own land	243	2.4568	1.42628	66.3
– Refugees are law abiding	240	3.1208	1.33742	41.2
Overall perception on socio-cultural Issues	243	2.6104	1.22902	57.0
<i>Economic</i>				
– I will enter into business partnership with a refugee	244	3.6598	1.56711	33.2
– I can work in a business established by a refugee	243	2.5761	1.61007	65.9
– I can employ a refugee in my business	244	2.5000	1.57527	67.3
– I will work in a business establishment of a refugee	243	2.5761	1.61007	65.9
– I will sell landed property to a refugee	244	2.6025	1.62090	64.7
– I will buy a landed property from a refugee	244	3.0697	1.70429	49.
Overall perception on economic issues	244	2.8307	1.61462	57.7

Political

– I will accept a refugee as an Assembly - man/woman	244	4.2787	1.18121	14.7
– I will accept a refugee as a local Unit Committee chairman	244	4.2049	1.22685	16.7
– I will accept a refugee as a local Unit Committee member	244	3.7131	1.42569	33.2
– I will allow the participation of a refugee as a member of community arbitration committee	243	3.7942	1.41963	30.1
Overall perception on political issues	244	3.9977	1.31335	23.7

Where to integrate the refugees

– I agree that refugees should be integrated into this community	244	2.9385	1.69249	52.0
– I agree that refugees should be integrated into other parts of Ghana	242	3.7810	1.43662	26.8

As these findings demonstrate, a substantial proportion of the survey respondents (93%; mean = 1.51) said that they were willing to resolve disputes with refugees when they arise (Table 2). The least accepted socio-cultural issue related to the perceived reliability of the refugees: only 27% (mean = 3.26) of the respondents agreed that refugees were reliable and trustworthy. On average, 57% (mean = 2.61) of the respondents were in agreement with the socio-cultural variables that were asked.

Although this figure is slightly higher than the proportion of respondents in disagreement with these issues as they pertained to the refugees, the marginal difference could not warrant absolute acceptance of local integration of the refugees. The 43% that was in disagreement calls for caution in interpreting the result with regard to the preparedness of the host population for local integration of the refugees. Also, any discussion of the above statistics should be done within the context of the composition of the sample size – indigenes and migrants – where migrants from other parts of Ghana residing in the host community were more likely to accept local integration of the refugees.

Host perceptions of refugees: socio-cultural dimensions

At a socio-cultural level, exploring the host population's perceptions of refugees in the Buduburam camp was a key component of the study, and was used as a means of assessing the general health of the relationship between refugees and their hosts from the perspective of the host population.

As the results showed, there was wide disparity in this regard: approximately one third (34.8%) perceived the refugees positively with about 40% having negative perceptions about the refugees. One quarter (25.8%) indicated that refugees were like any other human beings whose reactions and actions depended on the circumstance. In order to better understand this disparity of views, the following section explores some of the reasons behind varying perceptions of refugees.

First, people's perceptions were often linked to their impressions regarding the refugees' way of life. Those who perceived the refugees negatively talked negatively about refugees' lifestyle, which they saw as being somehow overindulgent: they indicated that refugees in the Buduburam camp lived as if they were very rich. As one respondent said, "these people keep making demands on UNHCR and its partners that they are in need of basic assistance but you often see them in expensive clothes, some driving expensive cars, something even indigenes cannot afford".⁴⁷

Another respondent went even further to assert that their affluent lifestyles were likely a result of criminal activity, contending that the men were criminals and the women were prostitutes. He noted,

We are often surprised about where the refugees get the income to support their expensive lifestyles. If you want to ascertain what I am saying for yourself, visit here during the night and you will be convinced about what I am telling you. Such lifestyles can only be sustained through illegal activities such as prostitution and armed robbery.⁴⁸

Such criminal activity, it was asserted, was being used to support their expensive lifestyle.⁴⁹ Similar findings regarding the assumed extravagant lifestyle of refugees in the Buduburam camp, particularly those from Liberia, was noted by Dick when she quoted a respondent:

If a Liberian man gets \$1000 he will live like a \$1000 man. If a Ghanaian gets \$1000 he will live like a \$500 man and save the rest for the future. Many Liberians are wasteful. We want the good life, and instant gratification.⁵⁰

Such assumptions regarding the source of wealth amongst refugees has previously been attributed to the deteriorating relations between the Liberian refugees and the Ghanaian hosts in the Buduburam community, as noted by Porter et al.,⁵¹ It is worth noting that these perceptions about refugees by host populations are often informed by the fact that refugees at the time of arrival in host communities lacked basic social amenities. Sudden changes in the lifestyles of refugees, therefore, are assumed to be linked to incomes from unacceptable activities, taking into account employment restrictions imposed on refugees and/or non-availability of job opportunities.

The host population disregarded, or appeared unaware of, the fact that refugees have diverse sources of legitimate income, including remittances from multi-national networks. As one respondent indicated: "I sometimes find it difficult to believe that these were the people who came some years ago and were willing to take anything as a gift because they were really in need."⁵² These perceptions – whether true or not –

⁴⁷ FGD, female participant, Buduburam in the compound of one participant, 16 August 2010 in local language (Twi) and translated into English.

⁴⁸ Interview conducted with opinion leader from the host community, Buduburam, 15 August 2010, conducted in English

⁴⁹ Interview with traditional authority representative, Buduburam, 15 August 2010, conducted in local language (Twi) and translated into English

⁵⁰ Dick 2002a: 52

⁵¹ Porter *et al.* 2008

⁵² FGD, Buduburam near the chief's palace, 17 August 2010, interview conducted in local language (Twi) and translated into English

inevitably have implications for the extent to which the host population is likely to accept the idea of local integration.

Others talked more positively about the presence of refugees, talking of them as people who were kind and respectful. One respondent, for instance, indicated that during the initial emergency phase, when refugees first arrived, a number of refugees had stolen from people, but that this problem had now subsided.

In addition, many talked positively about the fact that a number of refugees are working in the informal economy of the indigenous community, which was seen as positive for host-refugee relations. A respondent who had earlier hired the services of one of the refugees noted: “I hired one of the refugees to do some menial jobs in my house and I have not regretted hiring him.”⁵³

These different perceptions – both negative and positive – varied significantly according to a number of factors relating to the respondent’s own situation. In particular, a Chi² ($p > 0.023$) test established an association between respondent type (migrant and indigene) and the type of perception about the refugees: migrants from other parts of Ghana residing in the Buduburam community were more likely to perceive refugees positively than indigenes.

It also emerged from the study that most of the migrants in the Buduburam community were in the informal economy, where the main economic activity is petty trading, an activity that benefits from a large population size in order to thrive. Therefore a large refugee population was seen positively as a market for trading activities which, in turn, led to a greater acceptance and willingness to promote economic integration. This assumption is supported by other studies in which refugee populations have been seen positively as a market for local production.⁵⁴

These perceptions, in turn, inevitably had a bearing on the extent to which respondents accepted the idea of local integration as a durable solution for refugees currently living in the Buduburam camp. One hundred and thirty nine household heads said that they would accept local integration of the refugees. Of this total, about three-quarters (75.5%) were migrants from other parts of Ghana residing in the Buduburam community.

This statistic is a further indication that people’s reactions to the refugees’ presence and local integration in particular, depends on what they stand to gain by the continuous stay of refugees.⁵⁵ Furthermore, findings from the qualitative data were not as skewed as in the quantitative data: participants in the focus groups were divided on the issue of local integration. Whereas a section of the participants indicated their

⁵³ FGD, Buduburam, near the chief’s palace, 17 August 2010, interview conducted in local language (Twi) and translated into English

⁵⁴ See Whitaker, 1999; T. Kuhlman, “Responding to protracted refugee situations. A case study of Liberian refugees in Cote d’Ivoire.” UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, 2002; and L. Landau, “Challenge without transformation: Refugees, aid and trade in western Tanzania.” *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 2004, 42(1): 31-59.

⁵⁵J. Macrae, “Aiding peace and war: UNHCR, returnee integration and the relief-development debate.” *New Issues in Refugee Research*, 1999, PDES Working Paper No. 14. Retrieved: 10 November, 2010 from [http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=3ae6a0cc0&query=New Issues in Refugee Research](http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/search?page=search&docid=3ae6a0cc0&query=New+Issues+in+Refugee+Research)

resolve to resist any move to integrate the refugees, others were receptive to local integration.

Access and use of land: the economics of integration

One of the key factors that determined the receptiveness of the host population to the idea of local integration was the economic implications of integration, and in particular the issue of distribution of resources. Inevitably, resource distribution is a crucial factor in ascertaining the state of relations between refugees and the host population. By implication, resources play an important role in people's lives and subsequently their interactions. Two specific resources were mentioned during the research – land and water – and these are discussed in turn.

The most dominant issue that was raised was the issue of land. The value of land within the economy of many developing countries, including Ghana, goes beyond the economic value that the land holds. In the Ghanaian context, land occupies a central position in uniting ancestral spirits with the living and is intimately connected to the past, the present and to future generations.⁵⁶ As a result, the present generation not only uses the land to sustain themselves, but, in essence, only plays a caretaker's role, keeping it for future generations. This is the context in which access to and use of land, which is crucial to the stability of both indigenous and migrant communities, is discussed.

Furthermore, the historical context is important in this regard, in particular the extent to which the host population has felt marginalised within the influx of refugees.⁵⁷ With the arrival of refugees and migrants, the Buduburam community moved from being a small rural settlement with a plentiful supply of land, to a vibrant urban community in which land has assumed a crucial role in the daily activities of both refugees and host population.

As part of the Akan community of Ghana, ownership of all land in the Buduburam village before the arrival of the refugees was vested in the traditional authorities. The chief of the village, by virtue of his position as the head of traditional authority, was then in charge of deciding how land was acquired and used within the Buduburam community. After the portion on which the refugee camp was situated was acquired from the traditional authorities by the government of Ghana, the chief ceased to be the custodian of that portion of land. Therefore, neither the chief nor the refugees could have access to that portion of land and the amount of available land outside of the refugee settlement was substantially reduced.

As a result, access to land has become one of the main sources of tension and conflict between the refugees and camp administration on one hand and the host population on the other. Participants of the focus groups contended that with the 'connivance' of the

⁵⁶ S. B. Kendie, and B. Guri, *Traditional Institutions, Culture and Development*. 2004, Cape Coast: University of Cape Coast Press.

⁵⁷See T. Kaiser, "Participation or evaluation? Reflections on 'beneficiary based' evaluation of UNHCR's programme for Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees in Guinea." 2000, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 17(2): 185-204; and J. Konyndyk, "Towards a new model for post-emergency refugee assistance." 2005, Retrieved: 15 August, 2010 from <http://www.odihpn.org/report.asp?id=2745>

camp administration, refugees have gone beyond the original boundary of the camp and have sold land to people without the knowledge of the traditional authorities. Several appeals to camp administration proved futile. For instance, a respondent in one of the interviews noted:

Even now the camp administration is hiring the houses of refugees who have repatriated without consulting the chief of the host community. Our chief is being treated just like any ordinary person. He has no authority over our own resources. The camp manager disregards any instruction from the chief, indicating he [the Camp Manager] only takes instructions from Accra. Our only wish is for the authorities to close down the refugee camp so that our property will be returned to us.⁵⁸

These sentiments paint a bleak picture for the possibility of local integration of refugees currently living in the Buduburam camp, jeopardizing the possibility both from the perspective of the host population and the refugees themselves. It shows how crucial it is that in any attempt to promote the local integration of refugees, the feelings and perceptions of the host population need to be considered as one of the key stakeholders in such discussions.

Furthermore, it raises questions regarding *where* integration should take place. It was interesting to see that, in general, 52% (mean = 2.9) of the respondents agreed that the refugees should be integrated into the Buduburam community, while 26.8% (mean = 3.78) held the view that refugees could be integrated into other parts of Ghana. However, of significance was the fact that the issue of whether refugees should be integrated into the host community or elsewhere in Ghana varied substantially with respondent type. Only 23% of the indigenes supported integrating the refugees into the host community as opposed to 77% for the migrants. This result once again brings to the fore the issue of what people stand to benefit from the continuous stay of refugees.

A second key resource issue related to access to and use of pipe-borne water, an issue that was seen to have generated considerable controversy in the Buduburam area. Its distribution, therefore, has implications for local integration. Participants in the two focus groups indicated the neglect of the host population with regard to pipe-borne water, a view that was confirmed by one key informant in the host community who noted:

Although the refugee camp is adjacent to the host community, in terms of access to potable water, it seems as if the two communities are one hundred kilometres apart. Whereas the refugees have frequent flow of piped water, this is not the case in the host community. We have, on average, three days within a month when we have water flowing through our taps. It is difficult to understand why this situation exists for many years.⁵⁹

Regardless of the accuracy or otherwise of this statement, it is clear that perceptions of the host community regarding resource access and usage are key determinants in the decision of host populations in whether or not to welcome the idea of local

⁵⁸ Interview with opinion leader, male, Buduburam, 15 August 2010, conducted in local language (Twi) and translated into English.

⁵⁹ FGD conducted on 16 August 2010, Buduburam, in local language (Twi) and translated into English.

integration as a durable solution for refugees. Inevitably, where host populations perceived themselves as being discriminated against, attitudes towards the refugee population in general were soured.

Political integration

Among the three dimensions captured – socio-cultural, economic and political – political issues received the least support. With the political landscape in most African countries gradually moving towards multi-party democracy, the issue of politics has assumed an important role in discussions relating to who has the legitimacy to participate in the political processes of a country. Respondents were asked whether they would allow refugees to occupy certain political positions, and four community level posts were named in the questionnaire – Assemblyman/woman, Unit committee Chairman,⁶⁰ Unit Committee member and Community Arbitration Committee, all of which are elected positions except for the Community Arbitration Committee.

As the findings demonstrate in table above, respondents were clear on this issue. The proportion of respondents in support of refugees being allowed to occupy local political positions ranged from 14.7% (mean = 4.28) for Assemblyman/woman, through 16.7% (mean = 4.20) and 30.1% (mean = 3.80) for Unit Committee Chairman and Community Arbitration Committee member respectively, to 33.2% (mean = 3.71) for Unit Committee member (Table 2). The overall average of 23.7% (mean = 4.00) that supported refugees holding these political positions is a clear indicator that the majority of the respondents did not support this happening.

Reports from the qualitative data were also revealing in this regard. Respondents from both the in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were explicit on the long term political implications of integrating refugees in Ghana. While there was less objection to *economic* integration, interviewees showed a strong reluctance for refugees to be offered citizenship – the basis for participation in political activity – expressing concerns about the impact of this on the future cohesion of the country. As one respondent noted:

We can offer any other support to the refugees. They are our West African brothers and sisters. But for giving them permanent citizenship status, that should not be the case. Do you want us to experience what is happening in neighbouring Cote d’Ivoire where one presidential aspirant was accused of not being a citizen of Cote d’Ivoire? We should not be so passionate about locally integrating these refugees. Let the government help them in any other way but not local integration.⁶¹

Or, as another person said, “Even now that they are not citizens but they are selling lands; giving them the opportunity to integrate will give them more power”.⁶² In other words, while there was a degree of acceptance around the idea of refugees being able to integrate socio-culturally and economically, there was much greater reluctance about allowing them to integrate politically.

⁶⁰ The Unit Committee is the basic political structure at the community level and is supposed to feed deliberations at the District Assembly through the Assemblyman/woman.

⁶¹ Interview with key informant, male, Buduburam, 15 August 2010, in English.

⁶² FGD conducted in Buduburam, 16 August 2010, in Twi and translated into English.

This reluctance to allow the political integration of refugees needs to be understood in a context where current perception in Ghana is that once an individual assumes political position they can make any decisions they want in their own favour. As a traditional leader noted: “Giving citizenship status to the refugees, which would allow them to participate in political activities, would amount to selling our ‘rights’. That should never be the case.”⁶³

Hosts and the camp administration

Throughout this discussion, an important factor in determining refugee-host relations was the relationship between the host population and the camp administration. It emerged from the qualitative data that the relationship between the hosts and camp administration was generally poor at the time of data collection. During focus group discussions, participants consistently blamed their current situation – in particular lack of water and how some portion of their land was perceived to have been taken from them – on the activities of the camp administration, claiming that the administration was insensitive to their plight. Inevitably, neglect of the host population, whether real or perceived, has implications for refugee-host relations and the subsequent acceptance of local integration by hosts.

In particular, participants accused the camp administration of diverting resources meant for the community for their personal gain, specifically insisting that in cases where refugees had been accepted for resettlement, part of the package that they received should be given to them as the host. No explanation could convince them that such a package was only intended for the refugees being resettled. They argued that once some Ghanaians had benefitted from such a package through the connivance of the camp administration, and therefore it was only proper for them to also benefit from it.

Accusations regarding the misappropriation of resettlement packages within the refugee camps have attracted a lot of attention amongst host communities throughout refugee-hosting areas in Ghana. Similar accusations were levelled against the camp administration in the Krisan Refugee Settlement.⁶⁴ Where these perceptions are widespread, it is difficult for camp administrators to establish cordial relations with host communities. As one respondent noted:

The camp administration benefitted a lot by ‘selling’ part of the resettlement package to locals at exorbitant prices. Some of these administrators claimed they were only volunteers; where did they get the money to put up these mansions, ride in expensive cars? I cannot be convinced that third country resettlement was for only refugees. It was just on paper like that, the reality was that a lot of locals had access to it.⁶⁵

As a result, currently there is a cloud of mistrust dominating the relationship between the administrators of the Buduburam camp and the host population which, inevitably,

⁶³ Interview with traditional leader, Buduburam, 16 August 2010, conducted in Twi and translated into English.

⁶⁴ Agblorti, 2006

⁶⁵ Interview with opinion Leader, male, Buduburam, 15 August 2010, conducted in English.

is going to have a negative impact on the host population's receptivity to the idea of local integration.

Conclusion

This study sought the views of the host population at the Buduburam Refugee Camp in Ghana on issues regarding the potential local integration of refugees currently at the camp. The main objective was to explore socio-cultural issues within the host community and to consider some of the specific policy challenges that affect local integration of refugees from the perspective of the host population. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to collect and analyse data. Three main areas were covered in the instruments used to generate data – socio-cultural, economic and political.

Key variables, such as respondents' acceptance of local integration, varied markedly by respondent type: most notably, migrants were more likely to accept local integration than indigenes. Access and use of resources were identified as a major concern for the host population, and were a significant source of tension.

In particular, land and potable water were identified as the two resources whose use and access have generated most suspicion and mistrust between the refugees and camp administration on the one hand, and the host population on the other. These issues have not only strained relations between the refugees and their hosts, but have serious implications for the potential acceptance of local integration of the refugees within the host community.

The research instruments were constructed in such a way as to lead to an overall index, or proportion of the sample, which could be used to case for or against the idea of local integration from the perspective of the host community. From the three dimensions captured, an overall proportion of 46.1% of the survey respondents were essentially positive about the idea of local integration.

However, within this group there were still reservations. Furthermore, many of the reasons against the idea of local integration advanced by all those interviewed were based on misunderstanding and mis-perception of the refugees and/or the camp administration. This indicates that should there be appropriate and adequate grassroots consultation, local integration would likely be viewed far more favourably by the host population generally.

Overall, therefore, the study points to a number of policy implications. First, it highlights the need to adequately engage the host population in any discussion surrounding the possibility of local integration in order to ensure broad consensus. If this does not happen, then local integration as a durable solution is unlikely to be sustainable.

Furthermore, the host population, as the findings have demonstrated, are not a homogenous group and their different opinions need to be taken into consideration and understood. As Chambers observed with regards to the impact on host communities of hosting refugees, for decisions concerning local integration it is important to disaggregate the host population so that the interests of various segments

are sufficiently served.⁶⁶

The starting point is for the host country to clearly state its position regarding the issue of local integration: allowing refugees to integrate requires deliberate policies that are clear and unequivocal both in their intention and implementation, and that are aimed at not only legitimising the process but more importantly giving it the necessary legal backing.

In addition, the camp administration's relationship with the host population needs to be evaluated and taken into consideration. In practice, the camp administration is at the forefront of implementing any policies relating to refugees. It serves as the lens through which host populations assess the policies of both government and UNHCR.

To the extent possible, the camp administration at the Buduburam camp should endeavour to create the necessary conditions that facilitate the performance of their mediating duties between refugees, the host population, government and UNHCR. In order to remove the mistrust that has soured relations between the host population and camp administration, there is a need for periodic meetings between the two groups, possibly through the initiation of a third party such as UNHCR. This dialogue will restore trust and at the same time clarify issues regarding the benefits of local integration to the host communities.

Issues of access and use of resources in the camp have also attracted the attention of the host population and are likely to be one of the areas for conflict between the host population and the camp administration. Whether real or perceived, addressing these issues as they arise is important for mutual understanding and peaceful co-existence, key ingredients in any refugee context. Periodic meetings could further create the necessary platform to address some of the issues.

Furthermore, refugees need to be given more information regarding the issue of local integration. There is an urgent need for greater clarity over how this process might take place, including access to land and livelihoods, the anticipated timescale of any local integration process and the assistance that will be provided. Only when refugees have the necessary information can they make informed choices.

While admitting the challenges confronting government as far as refugee issues are concerned and the fact that decisions on local integration are difficult to arrive at, it is also important for government to demonstrate its commitment by first putting in place the constitutional body responsible for refugee issues through the appointment of a substantive chairman.

In addition, the government needs to be clear on its stance towards local integration and not give off mixed messages in this regard. In particular, clear guidelines for implementing local integration, including readily available information for refugees, is vital.

⁶⁶ Chambers, 1986.

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