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Humanitarian assistance to refugees in rural Ghana: Implications for refugee–host relations

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In the face of protracted refugee situations worldwide, peaceful co-existence with host populations is necessary to ensure a meaningful life for refugees. Refugees need assistance to survive, especially in the emergency phase of their arrival in host communities. However, establishing refugee camps in predominantly rural communities with poor living conditions questions the type of assistance that should be offered in order to avoid resentment from rural hosts. The article explores the implications of humanitarian assistance to refugees in Krisan Refugee Camp in Ghana for refugee–host relations. Where assistance to refugees is perceived to be above average living conditions in the host communities, there is likely to be resentment among hosts. This may create antagonism between refugees and hosts, thereby jeopardising peaceful co-existence. It is concluded that assistance should also take the needs of local populations into consideration in order to create a congenial atmosphere for co-existence.

Keywords: *Ghana, humanitarian assistance, Krisan Refugee Camp, refugees, resentment*

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Introduction

The United Nations' 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees provides the legal framework for humanitarian assistance to refugees coordinated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (McNamara 2007). Lending credence to the need for humanitarian assistance is the poor living conditions of refugees, especially in the emergency phase. As noted by Sadako Ogata in her speech to the United Nations Security Council on 13 January 2000, the trauma of refugees fleeing from violence and conflict is almost invariably compounded by poverty (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 1999).

Establishing refugee camps in predominantly rural communities is a matter of concern to stakeholders involved in solving the refugee problem worldwide. This concern arises from the fact that living conditions in some of these communities are so poor that the local population needs various interventions to make a living. Herz (2009) noted, when studying the planning process of refugee camps in Sudan, that in some situations life expectancy – an indicator of development – is higher in refugee camps than in some host communities. Livelihood opportunities are also limited in these areas, making attempts to achieve self-reliance for all (including refugees and hosts) a huge challenge. As a result, refugee-hosting communities are sometimes envious of humanitarian assistance that mainly targets only refugees.

Considering the costs that are associated with hosting refugees, it has been argued that assistance to refugees should take into consideration the needs of host communities (Jacobsen 2001). The basis for this argument could be that a satisfied local population would be more likely to accommodate refugees to some extent, thereby facilitating peaceful co-existence between refugees and their hosts pending the implementation of any durable solution. It should be noted that in a protracted refugee situation assistance to refugees may extend beyond the emergency phase. This subsequently has implications for relations between refugees and their rural hosts. Different economic categories of hosts experience the impact of the presence of refugees differently with the poor and the vulnerable being hit the hardest (Chambers 1986).

Recognising the likely impact of refugees on host communities, in the 1980s the International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa I and II (ICARA I & II) not only discussed the increasing humanitarian assistance deficit to refugees in Africa but also reached a general consensus that assistance to refugees should be development-oriented and should take into account the needs of host populations (Gorman 1986; Whitaker 1999). ICARA II specifically 'advanced discussions between refugees and the development process' (Gorman 1986, 283). Although Gorman has identified some obstacles which hindered the realisation of the ICARA II proposals, they are beyond the scope of this article. Here, I explore the implications of humanitarian assistance to refugees for refugee–host relations. I specifically explore arguments for assistance to host communities and assess the implications of the perceived neglect of host communities using a conceptualisation of resentment as a framework.

Linking refugee assistance to the development process in host communities

Various arguments have been advanced to defend the view that assistance to host populations is necessary if refugees are to be accepted in host communities. According to Fielden (2008), where repatriation or resettlement is not a viable option, especially in protracted refugee situations, local integration can play a significant role in restoring refugees' dignity, sense of peace, and self-reliance. Fielden's (2008) argument was based on the assumption that local

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integration of refugees was an economic process of empowering refugees to attain sustainable livelihoods and could help them to function within the local economy in host communities. On the basis of this assertion, it is important to note that the achievement and sustainability of cordial relations between refugees and their hosts depend to a large extent on how refugees are accepted by the host population.

On the assumption that refugees are poor, any improvement in the economic conditions of refugees is often perceived to be the outcome of assistance from donors. Coupled with the fact that host populations expect refugees to be worse off, resentment tendencies, often manifested in unhealthy comments, characterise the relations between refugees and hosts. The host population becomes resentful of refugees who appear to be better-off as a result of assistance from humanitarian agencies (Bakewell 2001). This contrasts with the assertion of the capabilities of refugees within host communities, especially those in the informal sector (Brun 2003). Where refugees settle in urban areas they are able to take advantage of existing opportunities to improve their lives. However, opportunities are limited when refugees settle in rural areas with poor living conditions.

Equal assistance to refugees and hosts: some debates

The basic assumption behind linking refugee aid to the development process in host communities is to offset some of the costs associated with hosting refugees (e.g. environmental degradation). Different arguments have been put forward regarding the commitment of international humanitarian actors with respect to the extent of support and the frequency. What is gradually emerging as popular opinion is that the commitment to providing development assistance to host populations is not as strong as that for assistance to refugees. For example, a report on the beneficiary-based evaluation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Guinea in 2000 (UNEP 2000) mentioned that little attention had been paid to the host communities and to the existence of resentment tendencies there (Andrews 2003). Konyndyk (2005) specifically noted how refugees in Guinea received extensive support from humanitarian agencies while impoverished villagers had little to eat.

There has been increasing pressure on the donor community to recognise the fact that relief assistance to refugees should seriously consider the needs of host populations. Since the 1980s, Refugee Aid and Development (RAD) theories have linked refugee relief programmes to local development policies (Betts 1981; 1984; Gorman 1993; Whitaker 1999). Hein (1993) argued that 'economic development and assistance to refugees are inseparable issues ... because the "refugee" is an indicator of world system dynamics' (Malkki 1995, 506). Such theories have given considerable thrust to the issue of extending assistance to refugees and hosts alike.

Despite these assertions, there is much to be done in linking refugee aid to development in refugee-hosting communities. As pointed out by Jacobsen (2001), refugees are temporary guests and questions of development and human capabilities are put on hold. Thus, investment in the development arena involving refugees and hosts is not a priority to the humanitarian community. Indeed, when assessing the level of development in some protracted refugee-hosting areas Crisp (2003) indicated that a major characteristic of Africa's refugee camps is that they are located at peripheral border areas of asylum countries which are insecure and have harsh climatic conditions, thereby making such places unattractive to central government and development actors in terms of investment. On this basis, it could be argued that where the host government is reluctant to invest in such areas, there is no moral justification in persuading donors to do so. For example, donors were reluctant to include refugees in district development plans for the implementation of the Self-Reliance Strategy meant to locally integrate refugees in Uganda (Dryden-Peterson & Hovil 2003).

Even in cases where relief programmes for refugees are linked to development programmes in host communities, it is grounded in politics rather than a realistic assessment of the changing needs of the community. Macrae (1999, 5) has noted that 'the entitlements of populations to official relief or development resources depends not only upon the national political context but also the interpretation of that context by international political actors.' Claire Short, then British Secretary of State for International Development, remarked in 1999 that 'humanitarian and military objectives are intertwined' (as quoted in Porter 2000). These two statements indicate that the need factor alone does not necessarily bring about humanitarian assistance; there are other considerations. In addition, the targeting of specific humanitarian package to refugees from specific countries or sometimes to refugees within specific regions in the same country lends credence to the argument that donors will necessarily serve their own interests. A case in point is the availability of resettlement packages only for refugees from Southern Sudan, thus excluding refugees from other parts of Sudan currently residing in Krisan Refugee Camp in Ghana. Extending humanitarian assistance to refugees or development aid to host communities is solely the prerogative of the donor, and situations on the ground have a limited role to play in this regard.

Conceptualising resentment

Literature on refugee–host relations has established a positive link between continued resentment and conflict between refugees and their host (Berry 2008). Resentment affects interactions between refugees and their hosts, thus making resentment a conduit for conflicts. Berry (2008) noted that host populations should be given a voice in order for stakeholders to understand and appreciate the impacts of hosting refugees. However, three main issues are likely to lead to resentment tendencies among host communities. First, the security implications of hosting refugees could lead to resentment (Malkki 1995; Jacobsen 1999). Second, it has been asserted that the presence of refugees increases the population–resource ratio in a given region, leading to an overuse of local resources. This, coupled with the fact that

refugees are perceived as poor and exceptional resource degraders, means that the impacts of refugee activities especially in camp situations could be pronounced (Black 1994; Black & Sessay 1998). Third, there is the perceived neglect of host communities by humanitarian actors involved in a given refugee situation (Charny 2009). Charny (2009) opined that in the world of internally displaced persons and refugees the host communities are almost invisible.

When studying the interactions between refugees and host populations at Krisan Refugee Camp in Ghana, Awusabo-Asare and I proposed an analytical framework for understanding refugee-host relations.[1] We indicated that acceptance or otherwise of refugees is a function of the activities of refugees within the refugee hosting area. In particular, we noted that where the activities of refugees (e.g. provision of cheap labour for local industries) favour the host population there are likely to be cordial relations between the refugees and their hosts, leading to acceptance of refugees; otherwise, resentment could set in and pave the way for conflict. The framework identified economic, religious, and socio-cultural dimensions as the main areas where refugees are likely to operate within the host communities, with the legal framework in the refugee-hosting area providing the context within which such activities are carried out. This article conceptualises resentment as pronouncements, actions, and other gestures whereby host populations express their disagreement with the presence of refugees.

Implications of assistance to refugees

Konyndyk (2005), when advocating a new model of assistance to refugees in emergency situations, identified some problems associated with the 'traditional model' by which humanitarian assistance is extended to refugees during the emergency phase and even when the level of vulnerability has reduced significantly. He indicated that this not only makes refugees aid-dependent but more importantly undermines the long-term goal of asylum: repatriation. The sustained provision of free services, he noted, erodes refugees' livelihood mechanisms, making them dependent on donor support. As a result of continuous free services, there is little motivation for refugees to use their job skills, leading to a situation where these skills deteriorate or are forgotten in the long term. Also, the sense of functioning in normal economic conditions is lost, as refugees tend to forget the real cost of food, health care, and education because these facilities are provided free of charge to them. This makes eventual reintegration in their home communities difficult. For example, Liberian refugees in Buduburam Refugee Camp in Ghana were given until 31 March 2009 to choose voluntary repatriation. However, a number of them were reluctant to do so, indicating they would prefer to stay in Ghana rather than going to another 'displacement camp' in Liberia, where they would be faced with what they encountered on their arrival in Ghana. This was a clear case of refugees comparing the conditions in Buduburam Refugee Camp to what they were likely to face in Liberia. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a significant number of those who had been repatriated earlier had returned to Ghana, citing difficult living conditions in Liberia as the reason for their return.

Konyndyk (2005) identified another problem associated with the 'traditional model' of assistance to refugees. He noted that refugee assistance usually ignores the host communities. He further indicated that while some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) strove to raise funds to carry out some development projects in host communities, such projects were inferior to those for refugees. Although Konyndyk (2005) mentioned hosts' resentment resulting from neglect of host communities by humanitarian actors, the focus of his discussion was advocating a new paradigm in refugee assistance. He argued that the paradigm should take into consideration refugees' level of vulnerability in assistance programmes. Thus, during the emergency phase, when refugees are highly vulnerable, assistance programmes should cater for all their immediate needs. Konyndyk therefore considered assistance to refugees as a function of their level of vulnerability at any point in time.

Research setting

Krisan Refugee Camp, situated within the host communities of Krisan, Sanzule, and Eikwe in the Western Region of Ghana, is one of two refugee camps in Ghana (the other being Buduburam Refugee Camp, near the capital, Accra). Krisan Refugee Camp was established in 1996 to accommodate the second wave of refugees from Liberia. The camp started hosting refugees from Sierra Leone and other African countries in 1997. In August and September 2006, when data for this article were collected, Krisan Refugee Camp hosted 1321 refugees from 11 African countries (Togo, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Rwanda, Cote d'Ivoire, Chad, Somalia, Eritrea, Congo Brazzaville, and Congo Democratic Republic). The diverse backgrounds of the refugees in this camp underscored its uniqueness as a melting pot of different cultures.

The refugee settlement is located *c*.1 km north of the three host communities: Sanzule, Krisan, and Eikwe, all coastal villages (Figs. 1 and 2). According to the 2000 Population and Housing Census the combined population of the three villages was 4380 in 2000 (Eikwe 1777; Sanzule 1617; and Krisan 986) (Ghana Statistical Service 2005). Based on the definition of a rural settlement in Ghana (settlements with a total population of less than 5000), the total population of the three communities combined does not qualify them as an urban settlements.

Since the establishment of Krisan Refugee Camp in 1996, humanitarian assistance coordinated by the UNHCR through the Ghana Refugee Board has been a consistent source of sustenance for the refugees. A reconnaissance survey in the host communities in 2005 revealed that some members of the host population were not happy about the inadequate attention being paid to them by UNHCR and its partners.

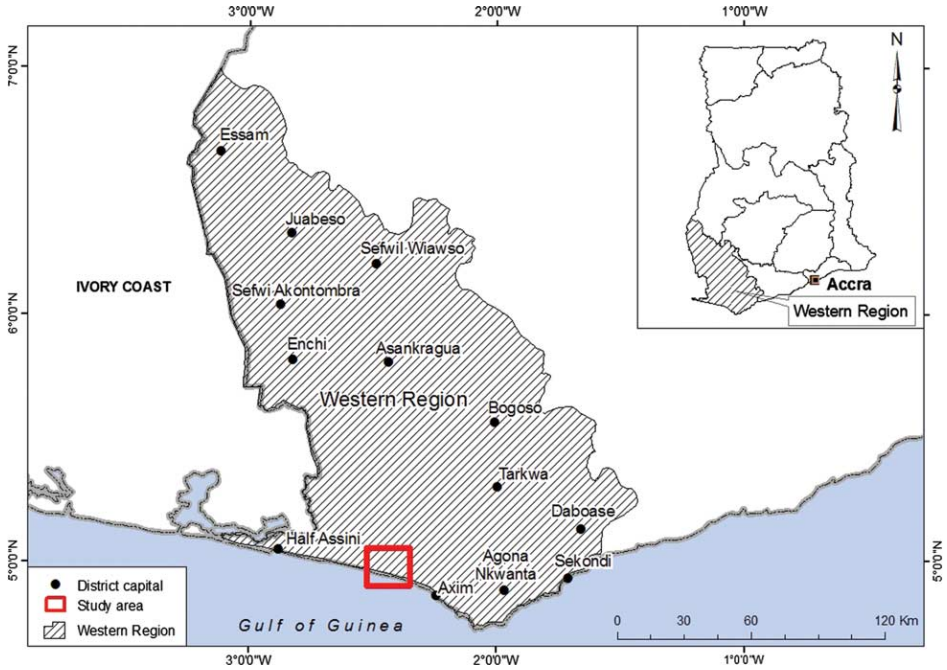

Fig. 1. Map of Ghana showing the Western Region and location of the study area

The economies of the host villages were similar to those in other rural areas in Ghana. Primary activities such as farming and fishing dominated, although petty trading was also practised on a significant scale. The refugee settlement has semi-permanent and permanent structures, comprising tents interspersed with cement block buildings roofed with corrugated iron sheets and/or asbestos.

Data and methods

This article draws on qualitative data generated via in-depth interviews as part of a project on refugee–host interactions. Two traditional authorities, a health professional, an opinion leader (member of a community who plays a key role in the developmental activities of the community), and

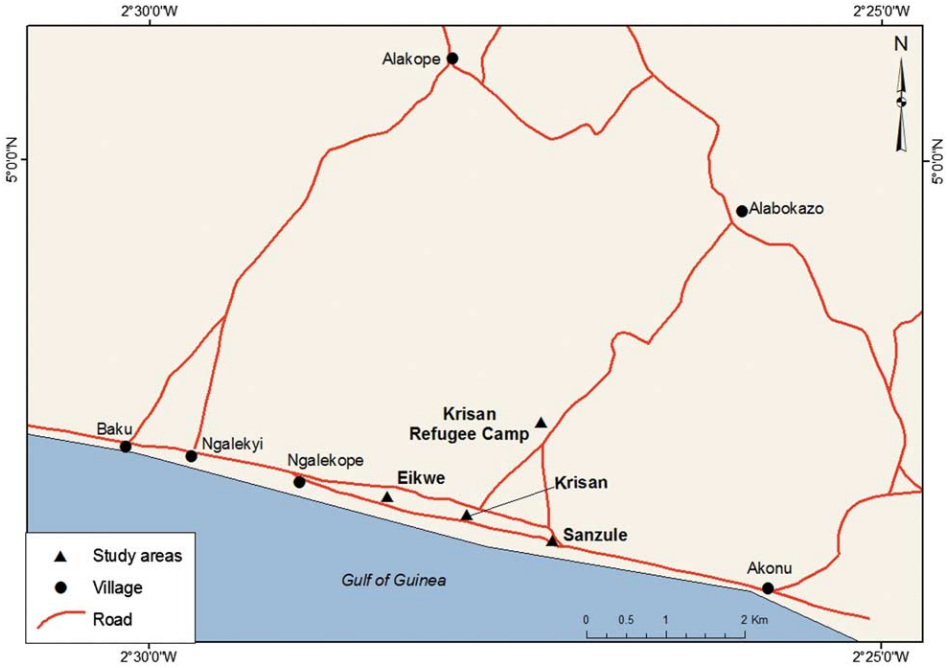

Fig. 2. Host communities and Krisan Refugee Camp

an Assembly member (elected representative to the District Assembly, the lowest level of political administration in Ghana) were purposively selected from the host communities as key informants. In traditional societies in Ghana and elsewhere, the influence of traditional authorities in the local decision-making process cannot be underestimated. The camp administrator was also interviewed as a key informant. Analysis of the in-depth interviews was done manually by reading transcripts and grouping responses into themes for further analysis.

Results

Context and assistance to refugees in Krisan Refugee Camp

The creation of Krisan Refugee Camp was a clear manifestation of Ghana's resolve to extend hospitality to a group of 1559 Liberian refugees on-board the *Bulk Challenge* after the ship had been refused entry by many West African states, including Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria (Essuman-Johnson 2003). This sudden increase in the population of the host communities by a little over one-third (from 4279 to 6838) (Ghana Statistical Service 2005) and the accompanying activities of aid agencies quickly transformed the hitherto stable socio-economic dynamics within the refugee hosting area.

Since its establishment in 1996, humanitarian assistance coordinated by the UNHCR has been the main source of sustenance for residents in the camp, although the host population has also extended some help to the refugees. At the time of data collection, items given to an individual refugee for a month included one bag of charcoal, 1 litre of cooking oil, 5 kg of either rice or maize, two cans of fish, and some bars of soap. A market where rations (e.g. canned fish for local maize) were bartered with local products was created in the camp at the initial stages. Rations distributed to the refugees were highly regarded by the local population as a sign of 'good living' irrespective of the quantity.

Issues of hospitality and justification for assistance to host communities

The available literature is replete with issues regarding the costs of hosting refugees to host communities (e.g. Whitaker 1999; Kibreab 2003; Martin 2005). All spheres of human endeavour suffer from the presence of refugees. Various writers have alluded to the massive environmental degradation that usually characterises the activities of refugees (e.g. Jacobsen 1999; UNEP 2000). A camp administrator reacting to a question on the level of deterioration indicated that the nearby forest reserve had suffered major degradation from charcoal production by refugees. He further intimated that all attempts by the camp administration to restrict the refugees from degrading the forest failed as refugees carried their charcoal production activities at night. Such incidents are usually the basis of refugee hosting communities' agitation for development assistance and, as Martin (2005) noted, in response the UNHCR sometimes provides physical infrastructure such as school buildings for refugee-hosting communities.

Since the arrival of the first refugees to the host communities in Ghana in 1996, agitation for the provision of assistance to the host population has been spearheaded by traditional authorities and/or assembly members of the host communities. The initial issue was that the UNHCR and its collaborators should adequately compensate those whose land and crops had been destroyed to pave way for camp construction. An assembly member of one of the host communities, when asked to comment on this issue, indicated that it was their belief that some of the affected persons were not compensated adequately. He further narrated the story of a man whose coconut plantation was destroyed to allow for camp construction and lamented the inadequate compensation paid to him. While admitting that 'refugees are brothers and sisters in need', the assembly member contended that any attempt to settle them should not affect hosts negatively. This statement of refugees being brothers and sisters probably explains Hatch's (1970, 16) statement 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.' This could explain why African refugees seeking asylum in Africa tend to be temporarily integrated into host communities relatively easily.

In Ghana in particular, Dick (2002) noted how various categories of hosts pooled resources to help refugees from Liberia in the early 1990s. Reacting to a question on community action during the emergency phase of the refugee problem in the study area, two respondents stated:

> When they arrived here they had no food to eat. One could see how they struggled to survive, so we felt for them. They are human beings like us. What happened to them could happen to anyone, so we sympathised with them. That was why we allowed them to use all the social amenities available to this community such as the borehole. (Assembly member, male, 51 years)

> When we went to the sea and some of them came to the shore we supplied them with fish because we felt for them. Later on the District Chief Executive acquired land for them to cultivate some crops. Some of our townsmen volunteered to help some of the refugees who were making farms, so we share resources together. (Opinion leader, male, 60 years)

The above quotations are clear indications of the friendliness that characterised refugee-host relations especially in the emergency phase. The opinion leader further stated that as a result of the initial interest in the welfare of the refugees, the host communities' social interaction with the refugees had improved, leading to cases of intermarriage, but he was quick to point out how this goodwill had given way to a situation of mistrust and attributed this to inadequate attention received from the agencies operating in the camp.

To explore further the issue of intermarriage, I attempted to interact with members of the host population whose spouses were refugees. A female respondent who had been interviewed earlier was, according to the opinion leader, married to a refugee, yet she had not report that fact during the earlier interview despite having been asked where her

spouse had come from. In an earlier study I have also described how being referred to as a 'refugee' is one of the unacceptable forms of behaviours reported by refugees (Agblorti 2006). Thus, informing that one has a refugee spouse might have negative connotations, and this may account for the female respondent's reluctance to mention her spouse's origins. Issues regarding intermarriage in refugee settlements need further investigation. In the following, however, I document a reversal of the hospitality accorded to the refugees during the earlier period of their stay in the refugee-hosting area.

Views of resentment: reactions to unmet expectations

Chambers (1986) has long indicated that the burden of hosting refugees is felt more by the poor than those who are well off. By implication, where the natural environment is the main source of livelihoods host communities are likely to experience a direct impact from refugees' activities. It has been observed in refugee-hosting communities that, due to their vulnerable situation, the poor lose the opportunities which were available to them before the refugee crisis (Brun 2003). Hence host communities are likely to expect some form of assistance from the humanitarian community. The expectation of the host communities in Krisan Refugee Camp was captured in the following statement:

> So, now we are like a signboard that reads 'school boys are going to school'. The school boy goes to school every day but the signboard will never go to school. The school boy will finish school and get a well paid job but the signboard still remains there. (Traditional ruler, male, 60 years)

This traditional ruler clearly felt that the host communities had been taken for granted. There was a feeling that scarce resources were being used for the benefit of refugees only, without any return to the host communities. This statement helps explain the frustrations of the host populations as a result of the perceived inadequate attention from the UNHCR and its collaborators. The traditional ruler also indicated that the best way to treat the hosts would be to enable them to benefit from any intervention targeted at the refugees. He specifically mentioned that part of any resettlement package should be reserved for the host communities. He lamented how the attitude of UNHCR and its partners was likely to create problem between the host communities and the refugees. He was, however, unable to mention other specific benefits from the humanitarian community to the refugees but contended that the lifestyle of the refugees was enough to explain the benefits they received from the UNHCR and its partners. A close observation of the refugee settlement revealed that one of the houses in the refugee settlement was using a satellite dish to receive television channels. This was a preserve for the elite in Ghana because of the financial obligations associated with using this facility. Some of the hosts at times paid to watch foreign programmes, such as football matches, at this house. This example may account for the perceptions that refugees were being supported by UNHCR and its partners.

Another manifestation was an earlier refusal by one traditional leader to take part in the study. The leader claimed that he was not interested in any discussion relating to the refugee settlement. When he finally agreed to respond to the issues raised, he explained that since the establishment of the settlement the host communities had been neglected by the UNHCR despite the significant destruction that their environment had suffered over the years. He specifically noted how one of the two buildings at the old settlement had been taken away from them by the UNHCR after the settlement was relocated due to periodic flooding. According to him, this was a project they had initiated before the arrival of the refugees and which had been completed by the UNHCR and thought it would have been proper for the UNHCR to release these buildings for their Vocational Institute project.

In a situation where host populations perceive themselves as being cheated, the slightest provocation from refugees may fuel existing anxieties. For example, a health professional was furious because some of the refugees came to the hospital at *c*.22.00 hours to visit a sick colleague who had been admitted. Although the health professional informed them that it was not an appropriate time to visit patients, the refugees insisted on being allowed to see their colleague and this generated some misunderstanding. To the health professional it felt like they were 'adding insult to injury'. He added:

> These are people who destroyed our environment at will and pay nothing for it. They are even doing what indigenes are not supposed to do. They enter our forest reserve and fell trees indiscriminately. Local regulations mean nothing to them because they regard us as villagers. (Health professional, male, 39 years)

The above quotation is an expression of the respondent's frustrations over the perceived inadequate support they received from the humanitarian community. On the assumption that refugees were poor because they had been uprooted from their countries of origin and had few resources, it was expected that their costs would be borne by humanitarian actors. Failure on the part of the UNHCR and its partners to support the host population had the potential to lead to strained relations between the refugees and their hosts. The refugees' insistence on visiting the patient late at night went beyond not obeying hospital regulations and had implications for the host communities' future relations with the refugees. Further, the claim that refugees entered the communities' only forest reserve to fell trees indiscriminately was corroborated by one camp official who indicated that refugees carried out their charcoal production activities at night to avoid arrest and that this was a major challenge for the camp administration. In a context where the value of forest reserves is perceived as not only for the present generation (Kendie & Guri 2004),[2] their degradation could have serious implications for relations between host and refugees.

It is also worth mentioning the issue of specific assistance provided to refugees by the UNHCR and its partners, as this was likely to cause resentment among hosts. When an opinion leader was asked to comment on the specific

benefits that refugees had received from humanitarian sources, he responded:

> You don't need to see the refugees carrying any tangible resources for you to conclude that they are being assisted by the UNHCR. These were people who came here with no resources. Where did they get the money to support the kind of lifestyle that we see?

The above quotation is a clear indication that hosts' perception of refugees during the emergency phase, when rations were the main source of livelihood, permeated all interaction between refugees and their hosts. Whatever happened afterwards was not a major issue. Thus, although refugees were poor and had little to eat in the emergency phase, any subsequent improvement in their living conditions was seen to result from humanitarian assistance. Clearly, there seems to have been a communication gap as far as the activities of agencies operating in the refugee settlement and host communities were concerned. Juxtaposing the above statement with the hosts' perceptions of the refugees on arrival – 47% had positive perceptions about the refugees (Agblorti 2006) – brings to mind Montemurro's (2005) assertion that more often initial solidarity with refugees in the emergency phase gives way to a situation where locals consider refugees as competitors, implying changes in the perception of refugees.

Discussion

Studies which have recommended assistance to host populations have been mindful of the cost of hosting refugees (e.g. Jacobsen 2001; Fielden 2008). On this basis, inadequate assistance to host populations could have negative implications for refugee–host relations. With traditional leaders as the custodians of traditional values and the heads of authority in traditional systems in Ghana, any issue that has their approval could be binding and has implications for how the wider community relates to the refugees. For this reason, the comment made by the traditional leader regarding the perceived neglect from the UNHCR and its partners is worrying, as it is indicative of potential strained relationships between the host population and refugees.

This study has presented comments indicating resentment on the part of the host population, which is likely to foment trouble between refugees and their hosts. Due to concerns about the use of resources by refugees, the host communities demanded assistance from the humanitarian agencies operating in Krisan Refugee Camp. Further, statements which painted a picture of the disadvantaged situation of the hosts were likely to cause resentment in the host population and could affect refugee–host relations negatively.

Nevertheless, the host population is misguided in thinking that the refugees' tangible resources were provided solely by the humanitarian community. There is evidence that some of the refugees arrived in Ghana with some financial resources. Some also benefited from remittances from kinsmen residing in the developed world (Agblorti 2006). Thus, the host populations' perceptions may be based on lack of evidence. Such perceptions more often than not emanate from lack of credible information on the refugees' sources of income. Nevertheless, the total neglect of the host communities as revealed by the respondents undoubtedly contributes to unhealthy relations between them and the refugees.

Concluding remarks

The evidence presented in this article suggests that the issue of assistance to refugees and its implications for refugee–host relations can be understood from two angles. First, such assistance may influence refugee–host relations positively or negatively. If hosts are satisfied with the benefits they derive as a result of hosting refugees, they are likely to accommodate the refugees: otherwise, their relations with the refugees may be strained. Second, the hosts' perception that anything of value which refugees possess comes from the humanitarian community is unreliable and may lead to decisions based on false premises, and hence does not promote good neighbourliness between refugees and their hosts.

There is need for the humanitarian agencies operating in Krisan Refugee Camp to re-assess their operations in the camp, especially their dealings with the host communities. There should be periodic meetings between all stakeholders where issues are discussed dispassionately and solutions found. Such a forum could help to eliminate doubts regarding sources of assistance to refugees and outline areas where the hosts are likely to benefit from the agencies operating in the camp. Refugees' need for assistance should be tackled in tandem with the needs of host populations in order to ensure a congenial atmosphere in the refugee-hosting area pending the implementation of a durable solution to the refugee situation in Ghana.

Notes

1 S.K.M. Agblorti & K. Awusabo-Asare 'Refugee-host interaction in Krisan Refugee Camp in Ghana'. Paper presented in 2008 at the International Conference on Environment, Forced Migration and Social Vulnerability (EFMSV), UNU-EHS, Bonn, Germany.

2 Forest resources are of value to three generations: the dead (ancestors/ancestresses), the living, and those yet unborn.

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