

Refugees in Western Tanzania: The Distribution of Burdens and Benefits Among Local Hosts

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This paper examines the impact of more than one million refugees from Rwanda, Burundi, and Congo on host communities in western Tanzania. It argues that the burdens and benefits associated with the refugee presence were not distributed evenly among local hosts. Some Tanzanians benefited substantially from the presence of refugees and international relief agencies, while others struggled to maintain access to even the most basic resources. The impact varied within host communities based on factors such as gender, age, and class. Host experiences were also different from one area to another depending on settlement patterns, existing socio-economic conditions, and the nature of host–refugee relations. In the end, hosts who already had access to resources, education, or power were better poised to benefit from the refugee presence, while those who were already disadvantaged in the local context became even further marginalized.

Introduction

Between 1993 and 1998, nearly 1.3 million people from Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) sought refuge in western Tanzania. The population of the two host regions increased by more than 50 per cent, and in some areas refugees outnumbered Tanzanians five to one. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) established massive relief programmes to address the needs of refugees and, in some cases, local hosts. Together, the sudden presence of refugees, aid workers, and relief resources significantly altered all aspects of life for people in the northwest corner of the country. This article examines the implications of the refugee presence for host communities in western Tanzania.

There is a small but growing body of academic research about the impact of refugees on host populations. Over the years, there have been many calls for strategies linking refugee relief with local development, but a number of factors have impeded their effective integration, including lack of donor support, weak coordination between refugee and development bureaucracies, and increasing numbers of refugees (Betts 1981, 1984; Gorman 1994). Despite the common

assumption that refugees represent a problem or burden (Harrell-Bond 1986), it is clear that refugee migrations bring both costs and benefits to host countries (Kuhlman 1994; Sorenson 1994; J. Baker 1995). Refugees generally impose a burden on local infrastructure, environment, and resources, but they also provide cheap labour, expand consumer markets, and justify increased foreign aid.

Rather than asking whether or not host communities on the whole benefit, it is important to disaggregate the question: who benefits and who loses from refugee influxes and why? Refugees are assumed to have a different impact on diverse classes, genders, sectors, and regions within the host country (Chambers 1986; Kuhlman 1990; Sorenson 1994), but little empirical research has been done. This article seeks to contribute to this line of inquiry by examining not only the burdens and benefits associated with the refugee presence, but also their variations among host populations.

The refugees arrived in Tanzania during a period of transition. After nearly thirty years of one-party state socialism, the government was moving hesitantly along a path of liberalization that included a shift toward capitalist development and the adoption of a multiparty system. The implementation of an economic reform package since 1986 was finally producing results, with price incentives shifting in favour of agriculture and per capita income once again increasing. Still, adjustment carried with it inevitable difficulties, including a decline in government investment in social services, growth that favoured some Tanzanians more than others, and increasing dependence on assistance from foreign donors (Barkan 1994). In western Tanzania, as will appear, these patterns were to become further complicated by the massive influx of refugees and relief resources.

Methodology

This article is based on data collected by the author during two years of field research from 1996 to 1998. With the help of four Tanzanian assistants, intensive research was conducted in Karagwe district for nearly one year, and subsequently comparative data were collected through shorter research periods in Ngara, Kibondo, Kasulu, and Kigoma rural districts. In each district, study villages were selected at varying distances from the refugee camps. Data were collected from a total of fifteen villages in the five districts. Local leaders, government officials, and NGO and UNHCR representatives in the district capitals and in Dar es Salaam were also interviewed.

A range of participatory research methods were employed. In each study village, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with people selected through the snowball approach. Focus group meetings with separate groups of men, women, and young adults involved a combination of discussion and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques. These included cost/benefit rankings, time use surveys, and map drawing. Data were also gathered through participant observation in government meetings, NGO activities, and local negotiations. With the exception of those with UNHCR and NGO

representatives, all interviews were conducted in Swahili. In total, more than 950 people were consulted during the course of the research.

Changing Opportunities in the Local Context

There is a saying in Swahili: *Kila kibaya kina uzuri wake*. It is roughly equivalent to the English expression, 'Every cloud has a silver lining'. Such was the case with the massive refugee influx into western Tanzania, which brought both new possibilities and additional challenges. Although hosts experienced the changes differently, this section focuses on the broad patterns that emerged in the refugee-hosting areas.

Agriculture is the primary occupation of more than 90 per cent of the residents of western Tanzania and the large majority of refugees. The sudden population increase affected food security in local villages, particularly at the beginning of the influx. Even after refugees started receiving rations, though, they continued to depend on local crops and livestock. Refugee rations consisted primarily of beans, maize, cooking oil, and salt. To diversify their diets, refugees sought other foods produced by local farmers, including vegetables, cassava, cooking bananas, and sweet potatoes. Refugees used a variety of strategies to gain access to these items, including trading, purchasing, and stealing.

With this huge increase in demand for local crops, food prices skyrocketed—especially for cooking bananas, which were the desired staple of both refugees and hosts. In response to market forces, many Tanzanian farmers sold high proportions of their own food stocks (Food and Agriculture Organization 1995). Meanwhile, to avoid creating scarcity of supply, the World Food Programme (WFP) purchased beans and maize for refugee rations from other regions of Tanzania and neighbouring countries. This alleviated food security concerns in western Tanzania, but also caused prices for these goods to plummet as refugees sold their rations to buy other items. Tanzanian farmers who produced surplus beans and maize were thus unable to sell them for any profit at all.

Refugees also represented a source of cheap labour for Tanzanian villagers. Local farmers generally hired refugees to do agricultural work, but also to build houses, tend livestock, and fetch water or firewood. Wages varied depending on the distance from the camps and the type of work. Nearly three-quarters of the time, refugees were paid with food instead of money (Lawrence and King 1998). Wages were higher during agricultural seasons when labour was in demand, but many sympathetic Tanzanians hired refugees even at low seasons when their labour was not required (Maruku Agricultural Research Institute 1997). In this sense, therefore, the relationship between hosts and refugee labourers was perhaps not as exploitative as otherwise perceived (Kibreab 1985).

In western Tanzania before the refugees arrived, labour shortages and lack of markets were significant constraints to agricultural production (Ndege *et al.* 1995; Maruku Agricultural Research Institute 1997). Some areas regularly produced a surplus, but bananas and beans went rotten because there was no

market. The massive influx of refugees increased the size of the local market and the pool of labour. Tanzanian hosts responded quickly to market opportunities by using refugee labour to expand their farms and increase production. In Karagwe district, for example, farmers on average doubled the size of their cultivated lands and doubled their production of bananas and beans between 1993 and 1996. These findings demonstrate that farmers respond to price incentives by altering production patterns (Bates 1981; Kasfir 1986; Barker 1989; Callamard 1994).

The refugee presence in Tanzania negatively affected local access to environmental resources. Although deforestation was a problem even before the refugees, its rate accelerated after their arrival. According to household surveys conducted by CARE International, refugees used 65 per cent more wood on average than local Tanzanians. Refugees rarely put out fires between meals due to the shortage of matches, and dried food rations took longer to cook. In an area where trees are the primary source of fuel, deforestation posed a problem to both hosts and refugees. Compared to other contexts (Hyndman 2000), however, there were few reports of physical conflicts between the groups over access to firewood. Water resources were also depleted during the refugee presence, and several rivers were diverted from host villages to refugee camps. Land usage rights were contested for farming and grazing livestock. Environmental degradation was worst in areas closest to the camps, but its ripple effects were felt throughout western Tanzania.

The sudden increase in the size of the local market generated a huge upsurge in business and trade conducted by both hosts and refugees. Commercial centres developed in the camps, and towns were transformed from sleepy outposts to thriving economic centres. Several enterprising Tanzanians even opened shops that catered to expatriate aid workers' tastes for chocolate, cheese, European wine, and satellite television. The boom was not restricted to refugee-hosting areas; entrepreneurs and aid agencies conducted considerable business at supply centres in Bukoba, Mwanza, Kigoma, and Dar es Salaam.

Trade also increased at the village level. Before the refugee influx, farmers had difficulty finding local markets for their harvests, and often traded across the border in Rwanda or Burundi (Ndege *et al.* 1995). The coming of the refugees effectively moved markets closer to local villagers. Suddenly, instead of walking or hitching a ride to the border, hosts sold their products in nearby camps and to refugees who came to their homes. Sweet potatoes, cassava, pineapples, palm oil, vegetables, bananas, and local brew were exchanged for items the refugees received from relief distributions: vegetable oil, soy beans, flour, plastic sheeting, soap, and even farming hoes. According to WFP estimates, refugees sold or traded about three-quarters of the food distributed to them.

The refugee relief operation meant an increase in employment opportunities for hosts. NGOs hired Tanzanians at all levels from guards, drivers, and maids to field staff, administrators, and accountants. Salaries in the relief operation were two to three times the salaries for similar positions elsewhere in Tanzania (Waters 1996). The UNHCR office in Ngara district alone had a *monthly*

payroll of roughly \$40,000 at the peak of its operation (Food and Agriculture Organization 1995). The inflated salaries offered by relief organizations also had negative consequences. Many employees from hospitals, schools, and government departments left their positions in search of greener pastures. In Ngara, according to a senior official, more than 50 per cent of health centre staff and 35 per cent of dispensary workers left their government posts to work with relief agencies.

The economic boom associated with the refugee presence was accompanied by an increase in the cost of living. The prices of basic items such as meat, salt, soap, and kerosene rose by 100 to 400 per cent (see Table 1). Price increases were a particular hardship for teachers and civil servants whose salaries did not include cost-of-living allowances. But price hikes were not solely attributable to the refugee presence. The 1997 drought reduced farm yields in other areas of Tanzania, causing traders to purchase produce from the western districts and driving up prices. In 1998, prices of non-farm products rose sharply because of transportation difficulties resulting from heavy rains.

The refugee situation in western Tanzania also affected local infrastructure. During the influx, border area schools were damaged when refugees slept in classrooms, burned desks as firewood, and filled latrines. Local health facilities quickly became over-stretched. Even after the establishment of hospitals in the camps, refugees continued to use district and regional facilities as referral hospitals. Refugees occupied more beds than Tanzanians at several hospitals. The criminal justice system was also overburdened; according to government records, refugees at times represented as many as 75 per cent of jail inmates. Frequent travel of heavy relief trucks on the dirt roads combined with heavy rains to make some roads virtually impassable.

The refugee presence was also associated with an influx of diseases, including a high-fever malaria and an intense dysentery that were resistant to conventional drugs. Skin diseases affected a large number of Tanzanian children. Sexually transmitted diseases were a growing problem, and local hospitals reported an increase in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among blood donors. The dual trend of an increase in diseases and a shortage of drugs is unfortunately common in refugee-hosting areas (Kibreab 1985).

In response to these problems, NGOs initiated development projects in host communities. This reflected a deliberate donor decision to compensate Tanzanians collectively for the burden of hosting refugees (Food and Agriculture Organization 1995). More than 50 primary schools and 20 dispensaries were rehabilitated, four district hospitals were expanded, at least 120 water systems were improved or installed, a community centre was constructed, and several teacher resource centres were built. Donors also invested large sums to upgrade the area's transportation and utility infrastructure. Hosts near the camps gained access to refugee health facilities, although some clinics accepted Tanzanians only as out-patients or did not treat them at all when supplies were low.

Finally, the presence of large refugee populations inevitably altered social dynamics in Tanzanian communities. Rural residents suddenly had cities in

*Table 1***Price Changes in Western Tanzania***

Item	Price before refugees (Tsh)	Price during refugees (Tsh)
Sugar (kilogram)	350–500	500–800
Salt (kilogram)	50–250	300–1,000
Flour (kilogram)	200	300
Rice (kilogram)	200–250	350–500
Cooking bananas (bunch)	50–1,000	1,000–4,500
Onions (kilogram)	250–300	500
Sweet potatoes (20 kilograms)	200–300	700
Cassava (60 kilograms)	1,500	5,000
Tomatoes (25 kilograms)	750–1,000	2,500–3,000
Pineapple	200	400–800
Peanuts (kilogram)	150	300–700
Chicken	500–1,500	2,500–5,000
Goat	3,000–7,000	12,000–25,000
Cow (local)	20,000–60,000	100,000–200,000
Fish	100	500
Egg	5–50	50–150
Meat (kilogram)	250–600	700–2,000
Milk (litre)	50–70	140–170
Firewood (bundle)	100–200	400–700
Water (20 litres)	100	200–300
Building pole (tree)	100–200	200–1,000
Charcoal (sack)	300–800	1,200–1,500
Soda	150–250	250–400
Local brew (litre)	50	100–200

Sources: Green (1994), FAO (1995), interviews by author at village level.

*The price ranges listed here are broad because of the wide variation throughout western Tanzania. Prices for maize, beans, and other items that were distributed to the refugees have not been included because their distortions followed a different pattern. All prices are in Tanzanian shillings (Tsh).

their midst offering many of the same opportunities—both positive and negative—associated with cities everywhere. Districts in western Tanzania that were once considered remote came to be regarded as common places to visit and work. Tanzanians also established extensive social relations with refugees. They socialized together, visited one another, and attended social functions such as weddings and funerals of the other. They competed in soccer and other sports. Some Tanzanian men even took refugees as wives.

Social relations between refugees and hosts also had some negative consequences, however. Certain locals tended to disappear into the 'cities', and did not return home for hours and even days. The camps were associated with problems such as drunkenness, prostitution, and sexual promiscuity. Elderly people perceived a breakdown of the traditional social structure. In addition, western Tanzania experienced high levels of theft and insecurity. Crime rates rose sharply, especially for murder, armed robbery, and illegal possession of firearms (Lwehabura *et al.* 1995). Although officials often blamed the refugees, Tanzanians were also involved. Refugee and Tanzanian thieves cooperated with one another to rob local communities, and armed banditry was a problem in the area even before the refugees arrived. Many villagers did not blame the refugees for these problems, but rather saw them as an inevitable result of the drastic population increase.

Overall, then, the sudden presence of refugees and relief resources changed social and economic opportunities for host communities in both positive and negative ways. These findings are largely consistent with data from other refugee contexts (Harrell-Bond 1986; Kok 1989; Callamard 1994; Kuhlman 1994). Nevertheless, the distribution of burdens and benefits was not uniform throughout western Tanzania. The refugee presence created the opportunity for some *but not all* hosts to benefit; others actually became worse off. The remainder of this article explores these variations, looking first at differences among individual hosts and then turning to broader geographic patterns.

Divergent Individual Experiences

The impact of the refugee situation in western Tanzania varied from person to person. Some Tanzanians managed to gain access to incoming resources, while others lost access to resources they previously enjoyed. It cannot be assumed that all local hosts had the same 'capacity or opportunity to manipulate the advantages of the "aid system"' (Harrell-Bond 1986: 124). It was not the case that some were simply more creative than others. Rather, the extent to which hosts were able to benefit depended on a number of factors, including gender, age, and socio-economic class.

Typical patterns would suggest that women are less able than men to gain access to beneficial opportunities created by a refugee situation, and this was largely true in Tanzania. Women suffered more from the environmental consequences because they are traditionally responsible for collecting firewood and water. As they walked farther and used more time to collect these resources, they had less time and energy to put toward other aspects of their own development. Many women *either* farmed *or* collected firewood on any given day, rather than doing both. In some families, men actually started to help their wives gather firewood on their bicycles because of the distance. In general, though, women shouldered most of the burden of the environmental impact. A

time use survey conducted with women in Karagwe district found that the time they spent daily to collect firewood and water increased by 23 per cent and 18 per cent respectively.

Many women also saw their opportunities in the economic arena shrink. They often lost control over household resources as their husbands assumed additional responsibilities. Crops whose sales were previously controlled by women became the preserve of men as soon as prices went up and larger sums of money were involved. This pattern conforms to the general tendency for men to take control of petty trade activities whenever these become profit-making (Daley 1991; Callamard 1994). Even when women continue to control the sales themselves, profits are frequently confiscated by their husbands. This situation may cause women producers to be less responsive to capitalist price incentives (Staudt 1987).

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to suggest that all host women were negatively affected by the refugee situation. Many women took advantage of changing opportunities for their own benefit. Some started small-scale businesses that they kept separate from household economics. Many hired refugee labourers on their farms. In an area where women do most of the day-to-day agricultural work, the employment of refugees allowed women to pursue other endeavours. The time use survey in Karagwe found that the number of hours women spent farming per day dropped by more than 25 per cent, while time spent resting, socializing, weaving mats, and doing similar activities increased by 25 per cent. Thus, while the refugee presence may have reduced the power of some women, it afforded others the opportunity to accumulate cash and gain a degree of economic independence. As has been found in similar contexts (Callamard 1994), this change was important to local women who previously enjoyed few income-generating opportunities.

The changing dynamics associated with the refugee presence also created different opportunities for local hosts depending on their age and physical health. Young adults were most able to take advantage of the business and job opportunities, which came at a time when many were unemployed. In contrast, elderly hosts and those with disabilities did not have the strength, mobility, and energy necessary to start businesses or work for NGOs. They were also directly affected by the migration to the camps of local youth, on whom they depended for assistance in collecting firewood and water, farming, and doing household chores. When young people got jobs and started businesses in the camps, many vulnerable hosts were left home alone with no help. Some sought assistance, as it were, from refugee workers. They exchanged crops from their household plots for firewood and water from the refugees. Of course, this assistance was no longer provided to vulnerable Tanzanians by their extended family networks and was therefore not free of charge.

This situation contributed to a perception among older villagers that the refugee presence led to a breakdown in social structures, and that youth no longer treated their elders with an appropriate level of respect. According to one elderly Tanzanian man,

Before the refugees came, we could send our children to do anything. That was our culture for a long time. But now you can't ask a child to do anything. He'll say, 'Give me 200 shillings!'

Similar patterns have been found in other areas where agricultural decline and urbanization lead to high mobility among youth and a concentration of elderly people in rural communities (K. M. Baker 1995; Sommers 1995). Older people often lose control over important productive resources (Parkin 1972) and traditional support structures become less effective. Similarly, in refugee camps, alienation from agricultural production and patterns of relief distribution can alter traditional roles assigned to youth and elders (Turner 1999). Rather than competing for influence with elders, though, young leaders may develop their own areas of competence (Weinbaum 1994). The breakdown in traditional support structures perceived by some hosts, therefore, may have been viewed by others as an opportunity to renegotiate patterns of authority and responsibility.

Tanzanian host experiences with the refugee presence also varied depending on socio-economic class. Wealthy hosts especially were able to take advantage of economic opportunities and expand upon their wealth during that period. They used available start-up capital to build profitable shops and restaurants, and to invest in other businesses, such as minibuses and transport lorries. Some even rented out property (houses, cars) to the relief operation, thereby ensuring a monthly influx of hard currency.

Farmers who produced a surplus of food crops were also poised to benefit from the refugee situation. They sold their surplus crops for unprecedented prices and hired refugee labour to expand their farms, thus increasing production and selling more surplus. Although some were frustrated by the drop in bean and maize prices when refugees sold their rations, they generally made up for the lost sales of these crops through increased sales of bananas and cassava, whose prices skyrocketed. Farmers with surpluses were also able to use refugee labour and their sales of food to construct durable houses of cement or bricks with corrugated iron roofs. Most Tanzanian hosts who had extra money or food were able to devise strategies to benefit from the refugee presence and the relief operation.

Poor Tanzanians, on the other hand, were not able to benefit in the same ways and some became worse off during the refugee presence. The poor were particularly affected by high rates of inflation, which forced them to pay higher prices for basic supplies such as salt, sugar, and kerosene. Subsistence farmers were less able to take advantage of refugee labour because they did not have sufficient disposable funds or crops to pay the refugees. Nevertheless, in some areas, even poor subsistence farmers were able to hire refugee workers by paying with minimal amounts of household food stocks. In addition, poor hosts living close to the camps benefited from refugee health and water facilities. Thus, while wealthy hosts and surplus farmers clearly benefited more from the refugee

presence, some poor Tanzanians also devised strategies to make the most of the situation.

Sub-subsistence farmers who depended on day labour to meet basic household livelihood needs were particularly harmed by the refugee presence. Traditionally, in western Tanzania, poor farmers who cannot produce sufficient food for their families seek work opportunities on the farms of wealthier neighbours. The frequency of this pattern is dependent on weather and other factors; in years of drought or poor harvests, more farmers are forced to sell their labour in order to satisfy household needs. In times of material deprivation, therefore, casual labour is the primary coping mechanism available to disadvantaged households. It is important to note that many of the poorest of these sub-subsistence households are headed by more vulnerable members of society—single mothers, orphans, elderly people, and people with disabilities.

In the refugee context, sub-subsistence farmers were not able to compete with refugees in the labour market. After the refugee influx, the wage paid to a casual labourer dropped by 50 per cent in many areas. This depression of wage rates was caused by two factors. First, the sudden presence of a huge refugee population greatly increased the supply of labourers. Second, refugees were able to accept lower wages because they were already receiving food rations and other non-food assistance (Kibreab 1985). To some extent, the international relief effort served to subsidize local farmers who hired refugee labourers (Kok 1989; Kuhlman 1994). Poorer hosts were thus forced to accept lower wages or look for work in other areas. As wages fell and prices of food and consumer goods rose, the lives of these sub-subsistence households became particularly difficult (Food and Agriculture Organization 1995).

Although many Tanzanians benefited from job opportunities, employees on fixed incomes were negatively affected by increases in the cost of living. Government salaries were raised on a national basis during the refugee period, but no adjustment was made for the high cost of living in host districts. Salary discrepancies eventually caused problems within one Tanzanian NGO whose operations were split into a development programme, funded by small-scale income generating activities, and a refugee programme, funded by UNHCR. Employees in the development programme were paid significantly less than those doing identical jobs on the refugee side, and serious tensions emerged between the two groups. Eventually, employees on UNHCR salaries agreed to contribute to a general fund to supplement the salaries of development staff. Other Tanzanian organizations in the area also found it difficult to compete with the salary scales of UNHCR-funded NGOs. Several Tanzanian NGOs and church missions were forced to adjust their salary scales upwards by as much as 40 per cent in order to attract qualified employees.

These findings largely confirm hypotheses offered by Chambers (1986) about the impact of refugees and relief operations. People in all socio-economic classes benefited from refugee services that were shared with hosts, as well as development projects in local communities. Most suffered in similar ways from refugee exploitation of common property resources and increased pressure on

existing services. High food prices were beneficial to surplus farmers, but detrimental to sub-subsistence farmers who relied on food purchase to satisfy household needs. Surplus and some subsistence producers made use of cheap refugee labour, while sub-subsistence farmers could no longer depend on selling their labour during times of scarcity. Finally, with respect to overall economic development, the refugee presence opened up opportunities on which some hosts—particularly wealthier ones—were able to capitalize more than others. Nevertheless, poor hosts tend to lose less in periods of economic growth than they lose in periods of decline (Chambers 1986), a pattern that also held true in western Tanzania.

Variable Local Dynamics

The impact of the refugee presence in Tanzania also varied across geographic locations. In general, villages closer to camps were better able to take advantage of refugee labour, trade opportunities, and relief services. These hosts were also more affected by the negative consequences, though, including environmental degradation and theft. In contrast, populations far from camps were less able to benefit from opportunities created by the refugee presence. This trade-off was recognized in Tanzania even before the recent crisis, when the remoteness of refugee settlements was seen as preventing the realization of broader economic and social benefits (Armstrong 1987; Stein and Clark 1990). Border villages experienced the worst of both groups; their resources and infrastructure bore the brunt of the initial influx, but once refugee camps were established farther inside Tanzania, they were too far away to take advantage of business and other opportunities.

These geographic patterns extended to the district level, leading to marked differences among refugee-hosting districts. Karagwe in particular benefited more than others. Local communities took full advantage of refugee labour, and many hosts profited from small-scale business and trade. Ngara district received more donor-funded projects and saw exceptional business activity, but experienced the highest levels of crime and insecurity. Kasulu witnessed an increase in trade, although use of refugee labour remained minimal. Finally, Kibondo and Kigoma rural districts seemed to benefit least from the refugee influx. Residents made moderate use of refugee labour, but local businesses did not flourish and the NGO presence in those districts was limited.

There are several explanations for the geographic differences in refugee impact. The following sections examine five factors: refugee settlement patterns, the extent of refugee–host interaction, the location of NGO development projects, differences among host populations, and differences among refugee populations. Although some of these factors were predetermined by the situation, others were the result of deliberate decisions by government and NGO officials, suggesting that policymaking plays a role in shaping the impact that refugees have on host communities.

Refugee Settlement Patterns

The density, location, and nature of refugee camps influenced the opportunities that were available to host communities. These characteristics were determined to a large extent by Tanzanian government policy, which changed dramatically during this period. Prior to 1993, Tanzania welcomed refugees with an internationally-recognized open door policy. The government experimented with different settlement approaches, including spontaneous settlement in local villages, isolated agricultural settlements, and semi-permanent camps. Refugees were encouraged to participate in agriculture, move toward self-sufficiency, and contribute toward the production of the country.

With the arrival of half a million Rwandan refugees after April 1994, however, the government's approach toward refugee settlement necessarily changed. Massive camps were established with tiny plots, and agricultural cultivation by refugees was officially discouraged. Rather than moving toward self-sufficiency, the idea was to make the refugee situation as temporary as possible. There continued to be significant variation among the districts in western Tanzania, due in part to differences in the relative size of the refugee population (see Table 2). At one extreme was Ngara, where refugees outnumbered Tanzanian hosts three to one. In contrast, Kigoma urban and rural districts combined hosted just 52,000 refugees—one for every nine Tanzanians.

The resulting settlement patterns were quite different. Ngara district hosted more than half a million refugees in a very concentrated area; over 400,000 lived in camps covering just a few square kilometres. These camps were located within the boundaries of a single Tanzanian village (population 10,000), but were relatively removed from other towns. This area became a focal point for business and trade activity, but also witnessed the most pronounced

Table 2

Host and Refugee Populations in Western Tanzania, 1994–1998^a

District	Tanzanian Population	Peak Refugee Population/Origin				Approx. Host–Refugee Ratio
		Rwanda	Burundi	DRC	Total	
Karagwe	350,000	162,000	–	–	162,000	2:1
Ngara	197,000	415,000	112,000	–	527,000	1:3
Kibondo	222,000	2,000	108,000	–	110,000	2:1
Kasulu	410,000	–	90,000	46,000	136,000	3:1
Kigoma ^b	471,000	–	–	52,000	52,000	9:1
TOTAL	1,650,000	579,000	310,000	98,000	987,000	2:1

Sources: UNHCR, Government of Tanzania, other reports (various dates)

a. Data refer to camp-based refugees.

b. Includes Kigoma Urban and Kigoma Rural districts combined.

environmental problems. In Karagwe, on the other hand, the refugee camps were less densely populated and were interspersed among several Tanzanian villages. Four of the five camps were within four kilometres of local village centres; two camps essentially engulfed one village. Of all the districts in western Tanzania, refugees and hosts lived in closest proximity in Karagwe. Interestingly, it was also the district that benefited most from the refugee presence.

Further south, in Kibondo, Kasulu, and Kigoma rural districts, the population ratio of hosts to refugees was more similar to that of Karagwe than Ngara. Rather than putting the refugees near Tanzanian villages, though, a government directive specifically required districts to identify camp locations as far from host communities as possible. As a result, just three of eight camps were within four kilometres of local villages and none was less than three kilometres away. Although this situation reduced security and health risks in local communities, it also became more difficult for villagers to take advantage of the positive opportunities created by the refugee presence.

Beyond camp population and location, Tanzanian communities were also affected by the extent to which refugees practised agriculture. Refugees who cultivated their own crops could supplement aid rations with their own production, while those who were not provided farm land were more likely to steal from local villagers to get enough food (Lawrence and King 1998). In Ngara, local residents noticed a decline in the theft of food crops when refugees in the nearby camps started to farm, despite official government guidelines. In another area, villagers complained of more theft after the establishment of a temporary holding site there. Because the site was temporary, the refugees did not engage in agriculture and there were problems of crop and livestock theft in surrounding areas.

The impact of the refugee situation was thus influenced to a large extent by settlement patterns. This is not surprising in the context of the long-standing debate about the relative implications of refugee camps versus self-settlement. That issue has received renewed attention recently, with camp opponents reiterating arguments that camps undermine local institutions, generate hostility between refugees and hosts, and cause greater environmental problems (Harrell-Bond 1998). Even so, for political and security reasons, host governments continue to prefer the establishment of camps (Black 1998). Certainly in the case of Tanzania, the government made it clear that camps were the only option. In many ways, though, it is not camps *per se* that cause problems; instead, their size, location, and other characteristics determine their ultimate impact (Crisp and Jacobsen 1998). As the current research demonstrates, it is possible for refugee camps to have a positive local impact depending upon such factors.

Government Policy on Refugee–Host Interaction

Tanzanians' ability to take advantage of opportunities created by the refugee presence was also influenced by the extent of their interaction with refugees.

This was in part a function of camp location, as discussed above, but was also affected by government policy. During the height of the refugee presence in Ngara and Karagwe districts in 1994 and 1995, there were few restrictions on the mobility of refugees and hosts. Tanzanian- and refugee-owned businesses thrived. Refugees provided labour on Tanzanian farms throughout the area, and Tanzanians moved in and out of the camps to conduct business, socialize, and make use of camp-based resources such as water taps and hospitals.

After 1996, however, the government controlled more carefully the movement of refugees within its borders. This was a response to high levels of crime and banditry, but also sought to alleviate fears on the part of the Burundi government that rebels were preparing to use the refugee camps to launch cross-border attacks. Controls were tightened on movement in and out of refugee camps; visitors were issued passes to enter, and refugees could request passes to leave. Tanzanians had to get special permits if they wanted to conduct business in the camps.

In Kibondo, Kasulu, and Kigoma rural districts, where the refugee population did not peak until later, the tighter controls on refugee–host interaction affected the extent to which hosts could benefit. Tanzanian wholesalers had to get permission to go into camps to supply refugee salespeople. Villagers complained that they were prevented from exchanging goods in refugee markets and that refugees were restricted from leaving camps to work as labourers on their farms. As a result, even in villages close to camps, there was virtually no noticeable refugee presence and limited trading activity. Again, the ability of hosts to benefit from the refugee situation was dependent upon their access to markets and resources in the camps. While mobility restrictions may have reduced the negative effects of the refugee situation, it also minimized the positive opportunities.

NGO Approach to Local Development

Another factor influencing the outcome in local communities was the location and approach of donor-funded projects. NGOs simply chose to do their rehabilitation and development projects in some villages and not in others. Many concentrated activities in areas closest to the refugee camps in an effort to mitigate their impact. Other agencies specifically selected villages that were farther away due to the concentration of NGOs in camp areas. Although district officials tried to coordinate donor activities, some villages received several projects while others were overlooked. Certain districts also received more donor attention than others. Ngara district in particular experienced what one observer called a ‘cash bath’ (Waters 1996).

Despite these differences, there was general concern that the benefits created by NGO projects in Tanzanian communities would be short-lived. Most projects were implemented by agencies that were focused primarily on relief operations and thus had short time horizons. NGOs often hired refugee labourers and treated the projects as emergency projects, rather than using a development

approach that involved local communities and planned for long-term sustainability. The situation was further complicated by donor distinctions between humanitarian assistance and development aid; refugee operations were funded through UNHCR while local rehabilitation activities were funded through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), leading to frequent coordination problems (Whitaker 2001).

Although pleased that donors were finally paying attention to local hosts, Tanzanian officials were concerned that they would face difficulty sustaining the projects after the departure of the refugees and, presumably, the relief agencies. Indeed, when the Rwandan refugees were repatriated from Karagwe district in late 1996, all but a handful of NGOs closed their offices and moved to areas further south that continued to host refugees from Burundi and Congo. Several donor-funded projects continued in host communities, but it was clear that the focus of development efforts would soon move further south as well. Thus, the lack of effective integration between refugee relief and local development prevented Tanzanian communities from realizing greater and longer-lasting benefits from the refugee presence.

Existing Livelihood Strategies in Host Communities

The impact of the refugee situation was also influenced by differences among the host populations. Karagwe district communities, for example, benefited from their capacity to produce a surplus of food. The population there had relatively higher levels of education, and more than 95 per cent sold coffee as a cash crop (Ndege *et al.* 1995). Kibondo district, on the other hand, benefited much less from the refugee presence, in part because of its own poverty. Prior to the refugee influx, Kibondo was isolated from the rest of Tanzania. Residents depended on subsistence agriculture, and there was no cash crop to support the economy. There were hardly any local business ventures and limited economic opportunities. The few young adults who went on to secondary school generally sought to lead their professional lives far away from the district.

Hosts in Kibondo were thus less able than those in neighbouring districts to take advantage of opportunities that accompanied the refugee presence. Few had the up-front capital to start businesses, and many could not afford to hire refugee labour. Production levels were not high enough to capitalize on the refugee market. Related to this situation, aid workers became frustrated by the low level of *mwamko* (awareness) in Kibondo. In interviews, employees of four agencies complained that they had repeatedly pressured district officials to write proposals for grants, without success. In neighbouring Kasulu district, on the other hand, donor encouragement led to regular government coordination meetings and a slick project proposal by the district council. Interestingly, the refugee presence may have eventually served to increase levels of *mwamko* among the host population. Recent reports suggest that Kibondo has started to realize more positive benefits from the continued presence of Burundi refugees (IRIN 2002).

In many ways, the host population in Ngara was similar to that of Kibondo. People there had relatively low levels of education and limited experience conducting trade and business. Because the refugee population in Ngara was so large, however, people flocked there from all over Tanzania to open businesses and exploit trading opportunities. Many of the Tanzanians who established shops or were employed by the relief agencies in Ngara were from other areas of Tanzania. When the Rwandan refugees were repatriated in late 1996, these same Tanzanians moved south to the districts of Kigoma region where there continued to be a large number of Burundi refugees.

These findings are consistent with evidence from other refugee situations. Generally, the local impact of refugees does not necessarily become negative until a situation of scarce resources leads to intensified competition between refugees and hosts (Kibreab 1985; de Waal 1988). Resource levels vary by region and over time. When drought conditions emerged in 1977–78, for example, local hosts in Zaire (now DRC) expelled Angolan refugees (Betts 1980). It was not until the 1984–85 drought that the negative consequences of Eritrean refugees in Sudan became manifest (Kok 1989). In Tanzania, existing socio-economic conditions in the various districts influenced the extent to which hosts could benefit from the refugee presence.

Differences among Refugee Populations

Finally, differences may have arisen from the fact that the refugees themselves had different backgrounds. Hosts attributed differences between Karagwe and Ngara to such factors. Rwandan refugees in Karagwe were primarily peasant farmers like their local hosts, while the camps in Ngara included '*wajanja wajanja* (con artists)' who came from towns and cities in Rwanda. (Of course, as discussed earlier, the Rwandan refugee population in Ngara was also much larger.) Similarly, villagers in Ngara claimed that the Burundi refugees who arrived there in late 1993 caused fewer problems than subsequent Rwandan refugees, in part because they were 'peaceful farmers just like us'.

In Kasulu, hosts argued that the refugee impact became worse after the 1996 influx, which included Burundi refugees from city areas who had first fled to eastern Zaire. Lastly, farmers in Kigoma rural district complained about the attitude of Congolese refugees, who reportedly refused to work on Tanzanian farms and demanded food, places to stay, and other assistance when passing through local villages. While these arguments are based solely on villager impressions, they suggest that the origins of the various refugee populations influenced hosts' attitudes toward interacting with refugees and thus altered the opportunities available to them.

Policymaking and the Impact of Refugees on Host Communities

The geographic differences in refugee impact were thus based on a range of factors. While some were given in the situation (e.g., characteristics of refugee

and host populations), others were the result of deliberate decisions by government officials and NGO representatives. Government policy was important in three ways. First, the government identified camp locations, thus affecting the extent to which nearby hosts could exploit the refugee presence. Second, the government's effort to enforce tighter controls on refugee–host interaction after 1996 influenced the opportunities available to Tanzanians. Third, the government approach of discouraging refugee agriculture exposed some local communities more than others to the risks of crop theft and banditry. On the NGO side, decisions to implement development projects in some locations and not in others—often based on the recommendations of government officials—also shaped host experiences.

The policies of the Tanzanian government and aid agencies therefore had a significant impact on the extent to which host communities could benefit from the refugee presence. These findings suggest that it is possible to develop approaches toward refugee assistance that are more likely to benefit host populations. The establishment of relatively small camps (approximately 20,000 refugees) near local villages allows hosts to take advantage of the opportunities of the refugee presence while minimizing the negative effects. Trade and labour exchange between refugees and hosts can be encouraged through shared markets and freedom of movement. The provision to refugees of small farming plots increases production levels and enhances food security. Finally, closer coordination among local officials and NGO representatives can allow for a more balanced approach that permits host communities to benefit evenly from development projects.

Conclusion

The sudden presence of refugees, relief resources, and aid workers in western Tanzania created both positive and negative opportunities for local hosts. Agricultural production and economic activity increased dramatically, as refugees represented both a large consumer market and a source of cheap labour. Social services were insufficient at first to meet the massive demand, but ultimately improved after the construction of facilities in the refugee camps and the implementation of development projects in host communities. The refugee presence was also associated with important problems, including widespread environmental degradation and an increase in crime and insecurity. These changes were not evenly distributed throughout western Tanzania, however, and varied across geographic areas and among social groups.

The broad pattern that became apparent in Tanzania was that hosts who already had access to resources, education, or power were better poised to exploit the positive opportunities of the refugee situation. Meanwhile, hosts who were disadvantaged in the local socio-economic structure struggled to maintain access to even the most basic resources and thus became further marginalized. This pattern held true at a broader level as well; districts that were already generating development opportunities tended to benefit more

than poorer areas. In this sense, it was a typical example of the type of development that reinforces divisions embedded in the local setting. Still, in some cases, these realities were transformed by the emerging possibilities of new circumstances.

In the context of ongoing political and economic liberalization, the refugee situation reinforced some dynamics and altered others. Economic adjustment was generating renewed growth in many areas, but the benefits of that growth were accruing disproportionately to wealthier businesspeople (Barkan 1994). This sparked resentment among many Tanzanians, particularly toward the Asian business community. These tensions were exploited in the early 1990s by new opposition parties, which pushed for 'indigenization' of the economy (Mmuya 1998). In western Tanzania, the refugee presence generated similarly uneven benefits, with businesspeople and other advantaged groups clearly gaining more. In this case, most beneficiaries were African, though there were certainly some traders of Asian origin who profited as well. The combined effects of economic adjustment and the refugee situation had the potential of further widening the gap between rich and poor and creating added resentment down the road.

Political and economic reform in the early 1990s also led to an expansion of the NGO sector in Tanzania and a corresponding privatization of development activities as government budgets declined. The influx of NGOs after the arrival of the refugees, therefore, furthered a trend that was already underway throughout the country. As international and local organizations initiated projects in host communities, they became an alternative source of development resources; schools and hospitals were upgraded despite the lack of government funds. In many ways, this may have prevented widespread frustration with the government by providing resources it could no longer deliver. At the same time, it also meant that responsibility for development was placed in the hands of donor-funded, semi-commercial enterprises that were only narrowly accountable to the public interest (Gibbon 1995).

Different strategies and structures thus led to a wide range of experiences within Tanzanian host communities. The key question is how long these changes will last. The opportunities created by the large market and cheap labour exist only as long as refugees remain. Crime and insecurity tend to go down with population levels. Infrastructure improvements, if properly maintained, can continue to benefit local communities, and people who gained business skills and job experience can apply them to future endeavours. A visit to Karagwe more than sixteen months after the Rwandan repatriation found towns and villages that were surprisingly vibrant despite the departure of the refugees and most aid agencies. Several NGOs were proceeding with development projects, and a few organizations set up new operations. Many entrepreneurs continued and even expanded their businesses. Most surprising, though, was the rapid recovery of the natural environment, especially in areas closest to the former camps.

In the end, the long-term effects of the refugee situation in Tanzania will depend to a large extent on what those who have benefited do with their

newfound wealth. If they invest in local projects and businesses, the benefits of the refugee situation could have a lingering effect. Interestingly, many people in Karagwe are investing in projects such as tree farms from which they would profit if refugees were to return to the area; given the history of Rwanda, they apparently feel they are making a wise investment. Either way, it is clear that communities in western Tanzania will never be quite the same as they were before 1993. After such a massive influx of refugees, relief resources, and visitors from around the world, a return to the past seems very unlikely.

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