

An assessment of Community Integration Process for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). A Case Study of Mugondi Community in Chipinge district, Manicaland Province, Zimbabwe

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Abstract

This study assessed community integration for internally displaced persons (IDPs) of Chipinge (Mugondi) District, Zimbabwe. The research adopted an explorative methodology using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. Purposive sampling technology were employed on 40 respondents IDPs and host communities), local stakeholders comprising of local authorities, government and development partners.

The study revealed that there was considerable progress made on community integration of IDPs in Mugondi community and found out that the Mugondi population appreciated the process of integration between the IDPs and the host community. The study recommends that in order to accelerate and sustain a vibrant process of community integration for IDPs in Zimbabwe, there is need for political will from Government Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare. Furthermore, Government should adopt the Mugondi as a model of integration between hosts and IDPs and replicate it in other areas where IDPs are found. The study also recommends that Government team with the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) to ensure IDPs achieve durable solutions.

Keywords: Integration, internally displaced population, host communities, development partners, Chipinge district, Mugondi community and Zimbabwe.

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I. Introduction

IDPs figures in Zimbabwe has been increasing since 2003 and aggravated by the “Fast-track Land Reform Programme” (FTLRP), “Operational Murambatsvina” (OM) and Political violence (PV) related to the 2000 and 2008 general elections¹. An IDPs is defined as

“...persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result

of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border” (Simon, 2021).

The Government of Zimbabwe (GoZ) is a signatory to the Kampala declaration. The declaration empowers the countries to defend and support displaced individuals residing within its boundaries. The Governments have the responsibility of aiding and protecting IDPs.

Manicaland province houses the most IDPs in the country and the district of Chipinge hosting the largest number of IDPs in the Province (IOM Report, 2020). Chipinge district lies in a valley in the Southern eastern highlands near the Mozambique boarder. The district has a population of 283,792 with 57 684 households. The percentage distribution of male and female is 47.54% and 52.46% respectively. (ZIMSTAT, 2020). Due to the largest numbers of IDPs, Chipinge was purposely selected for the study of the assessment of community integration process for IDPs.

Mugondi area in ward 15 of Chipinge boarders around small scale commercial farms. For more than 30 years, the small scale commercial farmers have allowed other households to settle on the land, cultivating sizeable pieces of land in return for labour for the farmer. Over 400 households have been living on the farms

¹ IDMC, 2020

under this arrangement. In recent years households living on farms have been assuming and claiming autonomy over the land they were occupying on the farms much to the discomfort of the farmers. The climax of the tension between the farmers and land occupants was when self-proclaimed leaders of the later group went out pegging pieces of land for the occupants. The farmers approached local leadership and the local authority who advised them to seek protection of the law. Eviction orders were issued and the police and the messenger of court went out burning houses of over 400 occupants and forcing them out of the farms. The evicted households mobilized themselves and retaliated by burning the houses of farmers and loyal occupants who had been asked by farmers to remain on the farms. (Chipinge Rural District Council, Minutes, dated 26/04/2006).

Mugondi, small scale farming area was turned into a battle field between the evicted households and the farmers. Several people were injured before the police and the army came in to quell the tension. The security forces were allegedly brutal to the evicted, beating them on site and denying them the chance to take their possessions from the farms they were evicted from. A majority of the evicted households, who were women and children lost their possessions. The tension in the area forced the evicted to flee into the bush and settle along the Mozambican border. A few others especially women sought refuge at Chief Gwenzi and Kraal head Muzite's courts. Tension remained high and security fragile among both the farmers and the evicted households. Eventually, two make-shift camps were established, one at Muzite and the other in Gwenzi while the local and traditional leadership looked for land for resettlement of the affected households in Mugondi.

According to a United Nations (UN) report (Tibaijuka, 2005) IDPs in Zimbabwe face severe difficulties in gaining access to key services, such as health and education. IDPs often have limited knowledge regarding their rights and the procedures for realizing them in practice and to participate in development. This is a grave challenge for regional integration and human development. The cost of replacing national identity cards destroyed in the process of displacement is prohibitive, and without such documentation it is impossible to gain access to these social services. (UN and GoZ Joint Report, 2009)

A joint GoZ and UN "IDP assessment" conducted in 2009 to evaluate the situation of IDPs in Zimbabwe revealed that while some IDPs have resettled, the majority are yet to fully integrate in their new communities.

Participation in public affairs at all levels on an equal basis with the resident population is a challenge to the process of integration of IDPs. IDPs have been systematically excluded from the mainstream social and economic life in Zimbabwe. Most, IDPs settlements are considered "illegal," and those living in them remain in constant fear of eviction and further displacement. A stigma is attached to IDPs, who are referred to as "squatters," "aliens," "opposition supporters," and "vagrants."

Programmes supporting the durable solutions process through local integration have not been closely studied to determine their success in facilitating the achievement of durable solutions. By strengthening the network of organizations and integrating IDPs communities into mainstream development strategies and programmes interventions. IOM aims to advocate for durable solutions for Zimbabwe's IDP communities while contributing to the wider early recovery and development processes in these areas.

IDPs are the most affected because displacement tends to erode their livelihoods and coping strategies, coupled with their deficiency of access to shared amenities, social exclusion and stigmatisation (Dorman, 2016). The IDPs have little admission to social infrastructures for example schools, clinics, welfare centres, roads and have reduced sources of income as they have lost their livelihoods. IDPs are admittedly harassed and confronted by marginalisation due to risk factors in the form of food insecurity and poverty concerns due to their displacements (Mandishekwa, 2014).

According to the United Nations Children's Education Fund-UNICEF (2018) vulnerability is not the sole causal effect of displacement and certainly displaced individuals are the first line vulnerable in the Zimbabwean society. Furthermore, UNICEF (2018) asserts that: "The most acute humanitarian needs include those of populations affected by serious food insecurity, Human Immune Virus (HIV) and cholera outbreaks as well as those displaced during the fast-track land reform programme". The UNICEF report concludes that displaced populations fail to cope and sustain their livelihoods as a result of economic hardship caused by lack of opportunities in comparison to the host communities and thus calls for assistance (*ibid*).

II. Methods

Maree (2016) posits that qualitative research focuses on understanding human behavioural patterns in different social contexts. On the other hand, Quantitative research is defined as "a systematic process that is objective in its way of using numerical data from only a selected subgroup of a population to generalise the findings to the population under study. As postulated by Creswell (2015) no research is entirely qualitative or quantitative.

Multiple methods of data collection were applied. A total of one hundred and three (**n=40**) respondents were purposively selected through snow-balling from the targeted population. These included IDPs, host communities, local authorities and NGOs or partners. Three focus group discussion sessions per district

representing a small number of homogenous individuals for women, men and youths were conducted. The selection was influenced by the need to further identify information-rich cases that provided the researcher with more in-depth information, deemed useful. Besides, the technical officials selected understand the experiences of IDPs and are knowledgeable about the discourse.

Data were collected using in depths interviews, focus groups discussions and questionnaires. Questions included education, health, participatory mechanisms and effects. Data analysis focuses on bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data and well as breaking data into smaller units to reveal their characteristic elements and structure.

The study used a content analysis tool to analyse the qualitative data. Furthermore, the qualitative data analysis focused on identification, examination and interpretation of patterns and themes in textual data and determined the themes and patterns to respond to the research questions (Creswell, 2020).

III. Results and Discussion on the assessment of community integration process for IDPs

Table 1: Origins of the respondents N = 40

Origins of the respondents	Frequency	Percentage
YES	6	15%
NO	34	85%
Total	40	100%

Table 1 shows that there were 34 respondents who constituted 85% of the respondents who said there were not originally from Mugondi area. Only 6 respondents represented 15% of the respondents were originally from Mugondi. This could mean that the majority of the respondents were not originally from Mugondi also implying that the displaced persons were being accommodated as new settlers through the integration process in the Mugondi area by the host community.

Diagram 1 Conflicting assessments N=40

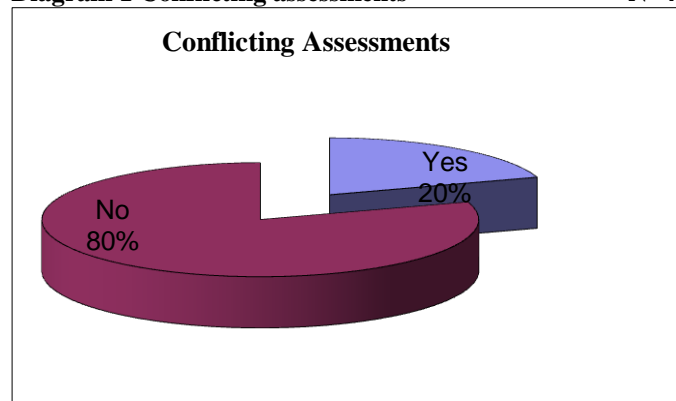


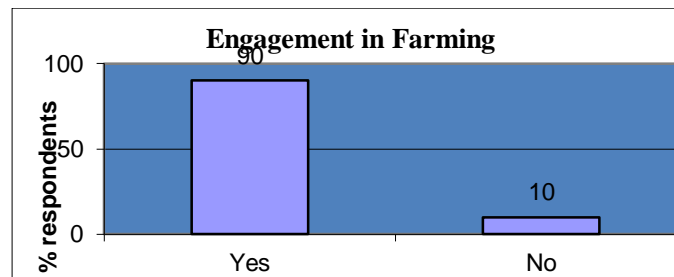
Diagram 1 shows that 80% of the respondents commented that there were no major conflicts between the IDPs and the hosts. The 20% mentioned that there were some conflicts experienced in the area between the host and the IDPs. The difference between those saying there are conflicts and those saying there are no conflicts is huge as indicated in the above table. This is positive for the integration process in the Mugondi area.

IDPs Security Status

Twenty nine (75%) respondents noted that they were safe staying in the area and 25 % recorded being not safe. The respondents mentioned the sources of conflict between the IDPs and the hosts as competition of resources, political difference and Gender based violence recorded 7%. The researcher notes that the figure of gender based violence might be conservative and recommends that an awareness meeting be held for the Mugondi community.

Diagram 2 Engagement in Farming

N=40



Of the 40 respondents 36 (90%) responded that they had been farming and had been allocated some piece of land to settle and farm. 4 (10%) had been allocated land as well but were not farming. Those who could not farm were unable to do so because in general, they had no access to farm land. Respondents, generally raised challenges of: lack of inputs (including seed and fertiliser), limited draught power and insufficient size of the area was not large enough to plant.

Attendance at Meetings

The question of attending meetings by IDPs sought to determine the level of integration and acceptance by the hosts. Of the 40 respondents 35 (88%) responded to attending the meetings, while 5 (12%) responded not to have been attending the meetings. Furthermore, FGDs noted that their views and ideas were been respected by the host community. The attendance and contribution to the meeting by the IDP was a form of acceptance and a plus for the integration process. This showed that IDPs were able to exercise the right to participate fully and equally in public affairs through the community based planning. Interviews conducted with the district officials acknowledged the improvement of IDPs participation in the private sphere. The District Administrator revealed that one of the IDPs was in the process of being appointed a traditional leader, which is kraal head. By all standards, that was a positive move for integration and acceptance of the IDP in Mugondi by the hosts.

Developmental Projects

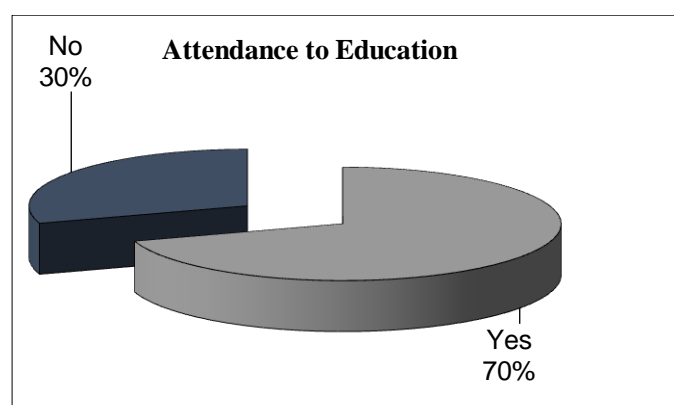
Of the 39 (98%) of the respondents received development aid from the NGOs and 1 (2%) did not receive. From the interviews with the chief executive officer observed that there was need for the NGOs to screen their applicants in food aid related assistance. According to data obtained, all the IDPs who responded were living in brick houses. These houses were confirmed by the interviews as constructed as part of an NGO funded project. This was a concern to the host community who felt they were being left out of developmental projects. One IDP respondent commented that “our type of accommodation can easily identify us as IDPs and thereby negate integration. In this regard, the responsible NGO should ensure that accommodation provided is similar to that in the locality.”

Attendance to Education

The question sought to find out whether IDPs children were attending school in the Mugondi area. Of the 28 (70%) of the respondents reported that their children were attending schools in the area, while 12 (30%) reported that their children were not attending school. The reasons advanced mainly were lack of birth certificates and lack of school fees. The IDPs responded that their children were free and allowed to attend school in the Mugondi area without any problems from the hosts.

Diagram 3 Attendance to Education

N=40

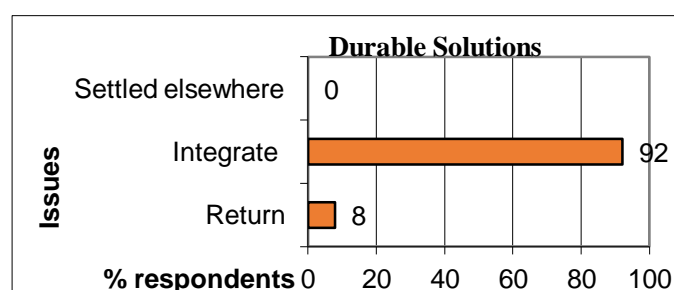


Durable solutions

Regarding the question on perceived durable solution respondents recorded 37 (92%) opting to be integrated in Mugondi area, with only 8 % (3) saying they wanted to return at their place of origins and non-wanted to be resettled elsewhere.

Diagram 4 Durable Solutions

N=40



A follow up question was asked on “What is needed to achieve this preferred durable solution?” There was a wide variety of responses. These included the following: More permanent shelter – that is expanding of existing structures, provision of farm inputs and implements (including draught power), and provision of social amenities, water and sanitation facilities.

Respondents from Government Official on the status and Policy on IDPs

Government officials revealed that there was no agreed position of Government regarding the status and policy on IDPs. The issue of IDPs had been discussed but not fully developed. The official noted that there was however some, realisation by the Government of the need to provide protection to the IDPs. In view of the signing of the Kampala convention by the Head of State and Government, the Government plan to engage the UN to undertake a second joint- assessment to establish the number of IDPs in the country.

The words from the official were that, as Government they maintained that there were no IDPs in the country although at times some quarters argued and agreed that there were pockets of IDPs. The official mentioned that the reason why Government did not fully agree to the existence of IDPs was that most of the cases referred to were as a result of Governmental policies, the Fast land reform programme. The Humanitarian agencies have taken advantage and inflated the IDP figures. Government was willing to conduct a second assessment and thereafter issue a policy on IDPs. Meanwhile humanitarian organisations are allowed to offer assistance to the IDPs.

Integration Model for Mugondi

There were some activities being carried out in Mugondi to integrate IDPs. The local authority had given the IDPs land tenure to settle, and co-host with the IDPs. An irrigation scheme and active participation by IDPs in the community Based Plans was being implemented. There is some form of integration in the Mugondi area as expressed by the respondents, who wished that the Model be replicated in other areas where IDPs are found.

IV. Conclusion

The study established some considerable progress made on community integration of IDPs in Mugondi community and found out that the Mugondi population appreciated the process of integration between the IDPs and the host community. In all facets, IDPs were part and parcel of the communities implying that the State was acting on the core principles of the Kampala declaration to safeguard the IDPs. The study appreciates and recommends the State and urge the Government to adopt Mugondi as a model of integration between hosts and IDPs and replicate it in other areas where IDPs are found.

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