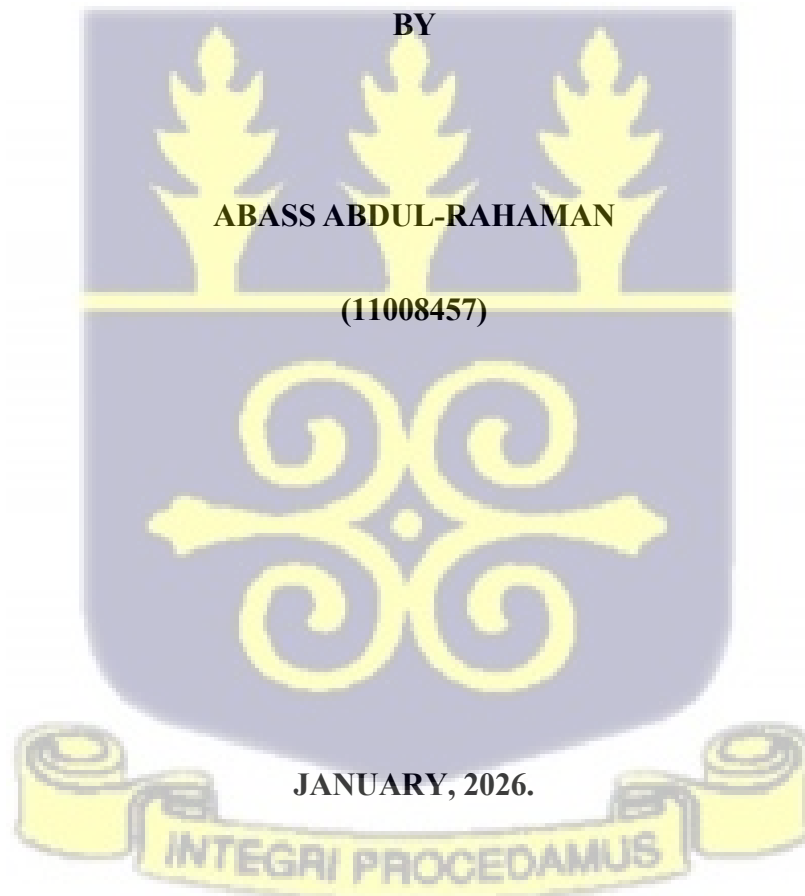


**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON.**

**SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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**IMPACT OF BURKINABE REFUGEES ON HOST COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN  
GHANA.**

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**THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
OF UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN  
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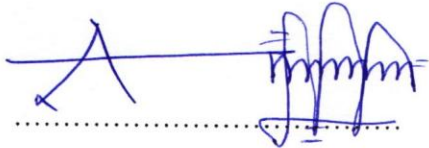
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As the proverb aptly states, "Gratitude is the fairest blossom that springs from the soul." This work stands as a testament to the collective efforts of those who believed in me and supported me through this journey.

**DECLARATION**

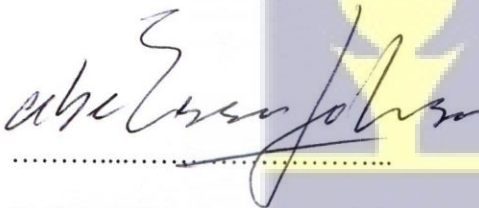
I do hereby declare that this work is the result of my own research and has not been presented by anyone for any academic award in this or any other university. All references used in the work have been fully acknowledged. I bear sole responsibility for any shortcomings.



DATE 21<sup>st</sup> JANUARY, 2026

Abass Abdul-Rahaman

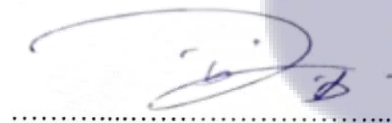
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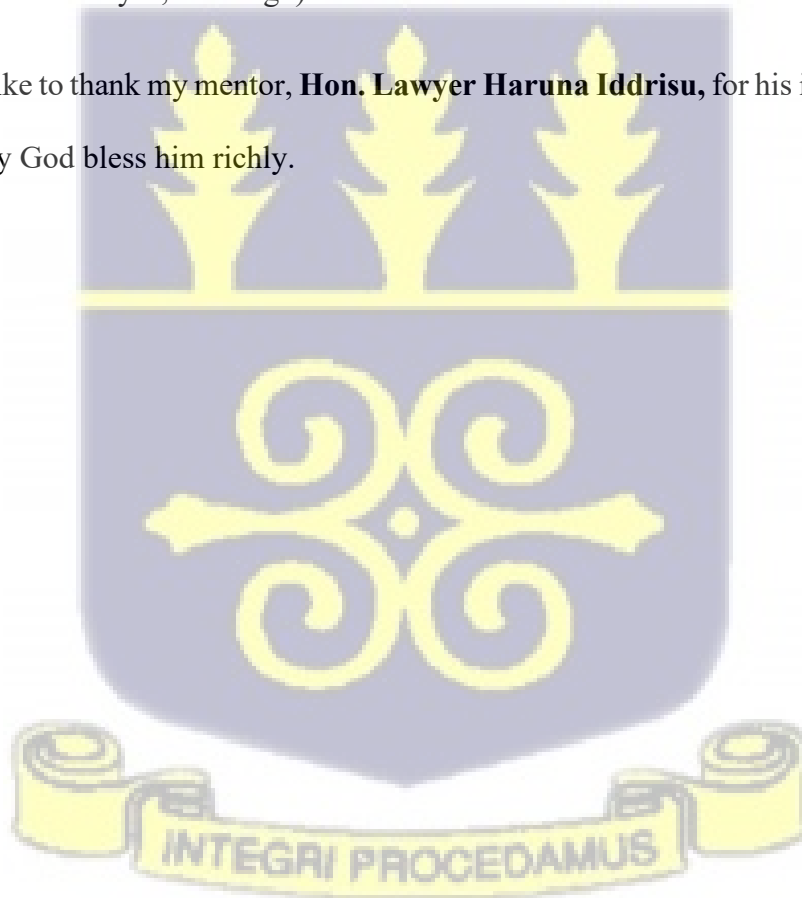


## DEDICATION

I humbly dedicate this work to the memory of my late father, **Nabia Abass** and the entire family of **Tolon Naa Suleman Bila (Yeni Tuzei Naa Dahamani Family)**, whose legacies of hard work and resoluteness continue to inspire me to date, and to my beloved mother, **Hajia Ayishetu Abass**, for the endless love, prayers, and sacrifices.

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## ABSTRACT

The presence of Burkinabe refugees in Northern Ghana encompasses a very dynamic and intertwined interaction between socio-economic and environmental impacts for the host communities. The socio-economic effects of this phenomenon are investigated using a descriptive research design: looking at demographic features, competition for resources, cultural integration, and strain on infrastructural facilities. Data were collected from a stratified sample of 250 respondents, including refugees, host community members, and stakeholders, through structured questionnaires containing both closed-ended questions and Likert scale items. The results indicate some significant socio-cultural contributions, such as increased cultural diversity (58.4%) and improved social networks (74.8%). At the same time, however, challenges experienced by host communities have also come to the fore in the form of resource competition (60.4%), increased living costs (63.6%), and strain on infrastructure. Refugee integration is further hindered by language barriers (76.4%), discrimination (58%), and inadequate government support (89.2%), underscoring the need for more inclusive policies and effective stakeholder collaboration. Despite these challenges, opportunities for better integration exist, particularly in rural areas where cohesive social structures provide a supportive environment. While international agencies play a critical role, poor coordination with local authorities, as noted by 67.2% of respondents, limits their effectiveness. Descriptive data analysis was done using SPSS, version 24.0, and the study of the relationship between variables. Informed consent, confidentiality, and the rights of participants were guaranteed through the ethical considerations taken. The paper, therefore, concludes that the Burkinabe refugees have a dual impact on host communities, contributing to cultural enrichment alongside exacerbating tensions related to resources.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Forced displacement has emerged as one of the most critical humanitarian and development challenges of the twenty-first century. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the global number of forcibly displaced persons reached approximately 89.3 million by the end of 2021, including over 27 million refugees (UNHCR, 2022). While much of the global discourse on forced migration has focused on displacement toward Europe and the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa continues to host a substantial proportion of refugees, often within countries that themselves face significant socio-economic and infrastructural constraints.

In West Africa, forced migration has intensified in recent years due to a combination of armed conflict, political instability, and environmental stressors, particularly within the Sahel region. Burkina Faso has experienced escalating insecurity driven by violent extremism, communal conflicts, and governance challenges, resulting in widespread displacement both internally and across international borders. As a neighboring country with a long-standing reputation for political stability and commitment to international refugee protection frameworks, Ghana has increasingly become a destination for Burkinabe refugees, especially within its northern regions (Boateng, 2020; UNHCR Ghana, 2023).

Northern Ghana shares strong historical, cultural, and economic ties with communities in Burkina Faso, which has facilitated cross-border movement and settlement. However, the region is also characterized by relatively high poverty levels, limited infrastructure, and fragile livelihood systems (Ghana Statistical Service [GSS], 2022). The growing presence of Burkinabe refugees has

therefore introduced additional pressures on host communities, particularly in relation to access to land, water, employment opportunities, education, healthcare, and other social services (Abdulai & Mumuni, 2018; Owusu et al., 2021).

Empirical evidence indicates that refugee presence in host communities produces both positive and negative socio-economic outcomes. On the one hand, refugees can contribute to local economies through labor participation, small-scale trade, skills transfer, and cultural exchange. On the other hand, poorly coordinated refugee settlement and integration processes may intensify competition over scarce resources, strain public infrastructure, and generate social tensions, particularly in resource-constrained settings (UNHCR, 2022). In Ghana, government institutions such as the Ghana Refugee Board, in collaboration with international and non-governmental organizations, have implemented various interventions to support refugees and host communities. However, these responses are often constrained by limited funding, weak institutional coordination, and insufficient empirical evidence on localized impacts, particularly in Northern Ghana (Ministry of Interior, 2023).

Despite the growing influx of Burkinabe refugees into Northern Ghana since 2021, there remains a notable empirical and theoretical gap in research that systematically examines their socio-economic impacts on host communities at the local level. Existing studies largely focus on national refugee policies or refugee welfare, with limited attention to host-refugee interactions, livelihood dynamics, and integration outcomes within northern Ghanaian contexts. Moreover, few studies explicitly apply theoretical frameworks to explain how refugee integration processes interact with host community livelihood systems. This study is therefore necessary at this time to generate context-specific, theory-informed evidence that can guide sustainable refugee management and local development policies in Ghana.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

The influx of Burkinabe refugees into Northern Ghana has introduced complex socio-economic and environmental challenges for host communities that already face structural vulnerabilities. Limited access to basic services, fragile livelihood systems, and inadequate infrastructure render these communities particularly sensitive to population pressures. As refugees settle within host areas, competition for land, water, employment, housing, and public services has intensified, raising concerns about social cohesion, livelihood sustainability, and long-term development outcomes (Abdulai & Mumuni, 2018).

Although refugees may also contribute positively to host communities through labor supply, skills transfer, and small-scale economic activities, the absence of clearly coordinated integration strategies risks exacerbating inequalities and tensions between refugees and host populations. Existing studies on refugee dynamics in Ghana tend to emphasize legal frameworks, humanitarian assistance, or refugee protection issues, with insufficient empirical focus on how host communities are socio-economically affected by refugee presence, particularly in Northern Ghana.

Furthermore, the limited application of analytical frameworks in previous research has constrained understanding of how refugee integration processes interact with host community livelihood systems. This gap limits the ability of policymakers and development practitioners to design sustainable interventions that balance refugee protection with host community development. Grounded in the Host-Refugee Integration Theory and the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, this study therefore seeks to examine the socio-economic impacts of Burkinabe refugees on host communities in Northern Ghana, with the aim of informing evidence-based policies that promote sustainable integration and shared development outcomes.

### 1.3 Research Objectives

The general objective of this study is to examine the socio-economic impacts of Burkinabe refugees on host communities in Northern Ghana within the context of refugee integration and sustainable livelihoods.

#### The specific objectives are to:

1. Assess the socio-economic impacts of Burkinabe refugees on host community livelihoods in Northern Ghana.
2. Identify the key challenges and opportunities associated with the presence of Burkinabe refugees within host communities in Northern Ghana.
3. Examine the strategies employed by local authorities, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to support both Burkinabe refugees and host communities.

### 1.4 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the socio-economic impacts of Burkinabe refugees on host community livelihoods in Northern Ghana?
2. What key challenges and opportunities are associated with the presence of Burkinabe refugees within host communities in Northern Ghana?
3. What strategies are employed by local authorities, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to support both Burkinabe refugees and host communities in Northern Ghana?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

This study is significant as it provides a comprehensive understanding of the socio-economic and environmental impacts of refugees on host communities in Northern Ghana. Findings from this study will inform policymakers, non-governmental organizations, and local authorities in formulating effective strategies to address challenges arising from forced migration. Additionally, the research will contribute to the academic literature on refugee-host community dynamics, particularly in the context of West Africa, where migration continues to affect regional stability.

### **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

This study is limited by the availability of recent data on refugee movements and their socio-economic impacts. Additionally, access to some host communities may be restricted due to logistical challenges or security concerns. Finally, there may be language barriers in interactions with the Burkinabe refugees, potentially limiting the depth of primary data collected.

### **1.7 Organization of the Study**

This study is structured into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the background of the study, the problem statement, the research objectives, research questions, the significance of the study, limitations, and organization. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature on refugees, socio-economic impacts, and integration challenges. Chapter Three outlines the research methodology, including the study area, population, sample size, and data collection methods. Chapter Four presents and discusses the findings of the research. Finally, Chapter Five offers conclusions and recommendations based on the findings, including suggestions for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Global Overview of Refugees' Movement

##### 2.1.1 Historical Context of Refugee Movements Globally

Environmental catastrophes, violent conflicts, persecution, and political upheavals are all deeply entwined with the history of refugee flows. Refugees are a worldwide phenomenon who have long left their home nations in quest of security, safety, and a more stable future. A complicated interaction between state reactions, international policy, and humanitarian initiatives has influenced refugee migrations. The main historical events that have shaped international refugee movements and their root causes are thoroughly reviewed in this essay.

##### *Early Movements of Refugees: From Antiquity to World War I*

The history of refugee movements begins in antiquity, when people escaped persecution, invasion, or natural disasters. Mass displacement resulted from the fall of empires like the Roman Empire and the Crusades during the Middle Ages (Zolberg, Suhrke, & Aguayo, 1989). However, international mechanisms to accommodate refugees did not begin to take shape until the 17th and 18th centuries. The establishment of territorial borders by the Westphalian idea of the sovereign nation-state aided in the development of contemporary refugee problems. When King Louis XIV of France repealed the Edict of Nantes in the 1680s, Huguenots (Protestants) were persecuted and fled to neighboring nations like Switzerland, the Netherlands, and England, resulting in one of the first known refugee movements (Betts & Loescher, 2011).

As a result of the Armenian Genocide (1915–1917), which saw over a million Armenians flee to neighboring nations to avoid persecution by the Ottoman Empire, Armenians were displaced in

the years preceding World War I. The establishment of international organizations entrusted with handling displaced persons was influenced by the modern refugee flows that began with this crisis (Barnett & Weiss, 2011).

### ***The Refugee Crisis During and After World War II***

Many people believe that World War II was the single most significant event in the 20th century that resulted in large-scale refugee flows. Millions of people were compelled to migrate as a result of the Nazi regime's persecution of Jews, Roma, political dissidents, and other minorities (Holborn, 1975). By the end of the war, more than 12 million people including Jews and other oppressed groups had been displaced by the Holocaust alone. Millions of people were forced to escape communist oppression as a result of the ensuing split of Europe, which included the construction of the Iron Curtain and the installation of communist governments in Eastern Europe (Gatrell, 2013).

The 1951 Refugee Convention, which is still the mainstay of refugee law today, was brought about by the conflict. "Has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion" is the definition of a refugee under the Convention (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 1951). It also describes the legal duties states have to safeguard refugees and their rights. Although its effects have persisted into the twenty-first century, this legislative framework was mainly established to address the millions of refugees who were uprooted by World War II (Loescher, 2020).

### ***Cold War and Decolonization Refugee Movements***

The Cold War era was marked by multiple regional conflicts, political persecution, and proxy wars, all of which resulted to widespread relocation. For example, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 resulted in the flight of roughly 200,000 Hungarians who fled to Austria and Yugoslavia to avoid Soviet repression (Gatrell, 2013). Similarly, from the mid-1950s to 1975, the Vietnamese War caused the relocation of over 3 million people, prompting the formation of refugee resettlement programs in nations such as the United States, Australia, and Canada (Zolberg et al., 1989).

From the 1950s to the 1970s, decolonization in Africa and Asia resulted in various refugee crises. Algeria, Angola, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo's independence fights resulted in major refugee flows when former colonial powers withdrew, leaving behind civil wars and political instability. In Asia, the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 triggered one of history's largest mass migrations, with an estimated 14 million Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs escaping religious persecution (Talbot and Singh, 2009).

### ***The Refugee Crisis in the Post-Cold War Period***

The dynamics of international refugee migrations changed in 1991 with the end of the Cold War. Millions of people were displaced as a result of conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s, especially the Bosnian War and the Kosovo conflict. Widespread ethnic cleansing characterized the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and by the time the war ended, over 2.5 million people had been displaced, many of them fleeing to Western Europe (Betts, 2013). International participation in these wars and the establishment of safe havens brought attention to how humanitarian responses to refugee crises are evolving (Barnett & Weiss, 2011).

The Rwandan Genocide in 1994, which resulted in the displacement of more than 2 million people to neighboring countries including Tanzania, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, had a significant impact on post-Cold War refugee migrations in Africa (UNHCR, 2022). Significant refugee flows across West and East Africa were also facilitated by civil wars in Sudan, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, which resulted in long-lasting refugee problems that continue to this day (Loescher, 2020).

### ***Contemporary Refugee Movements and Challenges***

The main causes of refugee flows in the twenty-first century have been state breakdown, terrorism, and civil wars. One of the worst refugee crises in recent memory has resulted from the Syrian Civil War, which started in 2011. More than 6.6 million Syrians are still displaced abroad as of 2023, while millions more are internally displaced (UNHCR, 2023). Conflicts in the Sahel region of Africa, the ongoing bloodshed in Afghanistan, and the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar are some recent conflicts that are fueling refugee flows. As more people are forced to migrate due to natural catastrophes and climate change, environmental variables have also become more important in determining refugee movements. By 2050, more than 200 million people may have been displaced by environmental conditions, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (IPCC, 2021). However, the 1951 Refugee Convention does not apply to climate refugees, which presents a problem for international law.

Countries that host refugees, especially those in the Global South, have found it difficult to house a significant number of displaced people in recent years. While the European Union and North American nations have seen political backlash over immigration and refugee policy, nations like Uganda, Lebanon, and Jordan have welcomed significant numbers of migrants despite having little

resources (Betts, 2013). This has brought attention to the necessity of more fair burden-sharing arrangements amongst countries.

### **2.1.2 New Age of Refugees Migration**

Research within public discussions indicates that refugee migration activities show both numerical transformations and substantial modifications. The number of refugees has dramatically increased since 2010 and Western nations now observe growing refugee asylum applications.

Official institutions together with international bodies have repeatedly stated that refugee numbers show rapid increases. UNHCR documented in 2020 that refugee and migrant numbers reached an all-time increased to 80 million across the world (including asylum seekers and displaced persons). The world has documented that refugee numbers have reached an all-time high of 26 million people. These alarmist statements spread through different international organizations later get magnified by media outlets which together produced public perception of a new refugee migration period driven by conflict and oppression and climate change effects. Disaster-precipitated refugee actions stand as one of the most significant humanitarian problems facing humans during this century.

Research indicates that globalization through continuous world cultural integration has led to an increase in refugee movements. Refugees now use better communication and travel services to escape from their homes and find distant asylum by overwhelming Western asylum systems. New migration patterns of refugees from Syria into Europe and from Central America toward the United States seem to support these observations. Brell et al. (2020) predicted that “refugee outflow from poor sections of the world will persist unchecked because political instability in rapidly expanding nations has made it easier for people to seek refuge in secure areas.”

Hatton (2020) presents the growing international alignment with the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and the EU's Common European Asylum System as the foundation for increased asylum applications in Western territories because these policies offered "clear incentives for spontaneous migration from poor, strife-prone countries to the developed world" (2020, 91). The rise of asylum applications toward Western countries stems from both the development of migration networks with routes by Hatton (2020) and Capps et al. (2019).

Multiple doubts surround these factual findings combined with uncertainties about forecasting current observable patterns forward into future timescales. The increased refugee arrivals in the European and North American region can primarily be linked to the geographical closeness of Western targets to ongoing conflicts throughout Syria and Central America. We must approach the idea of this being a future-present tendency with caution by conducting thorough investigation.

The study conducted by Czaika and de Haas (2015) challenges the notion that globalization led to increased international migration patterns. The authors established that global migration intensity has not changed since World War II but the primary migration flow changes focus on geographic movement patterns. The home residency of Europe as a migrant source diminished at the same time South America declined its status as destination country while Europe along with the Middle East gained positions as new global migration destinations. A growing number of immigrants from different Asian and Latin American and African nationalities have chosen to settle primarily in select prime destination countries.

The research between Czaika and de Haas established that globalization expands global migration disparities because more countries show net emigration trends after being initially net immigration destinations. The presented research results oppose basic assumptions which indicate that the merged forces of globalization and universal disparities will inherently fuel population migration.

The research demonstrates that destination and origin distance in international migration grew slightly from 3,000 to 3,700 kilometers between 1960 and 2000.

The analysis includes complete migration data including refugee and non-refugee cases yet requires thorough evaluation of two assumptions linking globalization patterns to growing refugee movement and continuous asylum seeker increases to Western nations. This type of analysis reflects the potential Western bias which suggests that most refugees together with other migrants' desire to settle in Western countries while stretching recent circumstances into future projections without justification. The concept of geographic direction changes in refugee migration better explains movement patterns compared to the shift in migration distance or quantity. Civil wars now focus primarily on less than a dozen lower income nations that repeatedly face recurring wars (Blattman & Miguel 2010). Multiple analytical studies define Afghanistan along with Burundi and Sudan as nations trapped in an endless cycle of civil war patterns (Collier & Sambanis, 2002). The data suggests that refugees mostly come from few impoverished nations which experience prolonged conflicts. Present-day conflicts in Libya as well as Syria and Venezuela indicate civil wars are not exclusive to nations with low income levels.

The observation of expanding refugee numbers could have been affected by analyzing data from the post-1951 period for our refugee migration analysis. The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees was created which set both refugee rights and obligations and a formal definition of a refugee.

The necessity of convention led to UNHCR taking charge of refugee migration data collection which developed systematic procedures over time. Since refugees lacked formal international legal status before 1951 systematic data collection about them was not feasible. A brief examination of historical documents proves large refugee migrations are not modern phenomena (Marrus 1985,

2002; Skran 1995; Zolberg 1983; Zolberg, Suhrke, and Aguayo 1989; and Gatrell 2013 for historical overviews). According to Zolberg (1983) at least one million people suffered population displacements during Western European state formation between the late-fifteenth and the late-seventeenth centuries. An estimated 10 million Europeans faced displacement because of World War I (1914–1918) which happened either inside their own borders or internationally (Gatrell 2007, 2008, 2013). According to Gatrell (2013) approximately 12 million people lost their homes because of World War I alongside the Balkan War (1912–1913).

Around 1 million individuals had to move due to the Russian Revolution that occurred between 1917 and 1920 according to Gatrell (2013). As a result of the Greek-Turkish War which raged between 1919 and 1922, 1.5 million people became displaced while Spanish Civil War refugees totaled 465,000 individuals when they sought refuge in France between 1936 and 1939. During the Second Sino-Japanese War between China and Japan from 1937 to 1945 experts calculate displacement numbers at between 60–95 million people (MacKinnon 2008; Muscolino 2010). Research indicates that between three and ten million people lost their lives because of Japanese aggression in Asia from 1931 through 1945 (Rummel, 1998) alongside the huge displacement of approximately 60 million Europeans during World War II (Proud foot, 1956). The Nazi regime conducted a detailed plan of Jewish persecution which resulted in the forced deportation and genocide of 6 million European Jewish people (Haas, Miller, & Castles 2020).

Global displaced populations reached 175 million after World War II raising their number to approximately 8 percent of the total world population at that time although these numbers significantly exceeded modern levels when measured by absolute or relative counts. After World War II terminated European countries experienced massive population movement combining

Holocaust survivors with displaced persons along with approximately 12 million ethnic Germans who were displaced through ethnic cleansing processes (Thera, 1996).

The establishment of postcolonial states contributed to increasing population displacements. The British colonial departure from British India in 1947 hastened the mass migrations of at least 10 to 15 million Muslims and Hindus between the new nations of India and Pakistan (Gatrell 2013). Gatrell (2013) established that displacement numbers reached their peak during the middle period of the twentieth century when compared to both the first and last century halves. Large-scale population transfers served as key motivation behind founding the UNHCR along with the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration which would later convert into the International Organization for Migration to develop better global responses for displaced human populations (Haas, Miller, & Castles 2020). The new framework led to refugee population registration along with associated registration incentives.

Since refugee recordkeeping began after the peak refugee population levels from the mid-century the reported recent numbers may appear inflated when studied outside of historical trends due to insufficient early data collection. Recent refugee increases along with Western asylum applications demand an assessment regarding their role as permanent shifts in global refugee patterns or as temporary reactions to current conflict zones which will fade when conflicts resolve.

### **2.1.3 International Refugee Laws and Conventions**

International refugee laws and conventions form the backbone of global efforts to protect individuals fleeing persecution, violence, and human rights violations. These legal frameworks are essential in safeguarding the rights of refugees and outlining the obligations of states to offer protection and assistance. Over the past century, numerous legal instruments have been developed, with the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol being the cornerstone of international

refugee protection. This essay discusses the major international refugee laws and conventions and how they have evolved to address the changing nature of global refugee crises.

### ***The 1951 Refugee Convention***

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees exists as the essential international treaty that establishes refugee rights together with state responsibilities regarding refugee protection. War-induced displacement during and after World War II prompted countries to adopt this Convention. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 1951 definition a refugee stands as someone who escapes persecution based on race and religion or nationality or membership of particular social groups and political beliefs and exists outside their nation while lacking protection from their government or cannot seek refuge due to such fears.

Through the Convention refugees can find protection from forcible return when their lives or freedom would face peril in the prospective destination country. Host countries must provide asylum while fulfilling their obligation to grant fundamental rights such as work opportunities along with educational access as well as legal safeguards according to Hathaway (2021). The Convention at first protected only European refugees after World War II until the 1967 Protocol expanded its application to refugees from any place around the world (UNHCR, 1967).

### ***The 1967 Protocol***

The 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees expanded the 1951 Refugee Convention to protect refugees throughout the entire world in every situation regardless of the original European confines or historical timeline. The protection of refugees became essential because refugee movements across Asia and Africa and Latin America heightened following decolonization and political unrest and armed conflicts (Loescher, 2020). Through the 1967 Protocol Refugees gained

global protection under refugee laws which did not modify the central provisions established in the 1951 Convention.

All countries who took part in either the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol must follow the guidelines listed in these international agreements. Each year since 2023, 149 states maintain membership in the 1951 Convention and 146 states maintain membership in the 1967 Protocol thus embracing them as essential international laws (UNHCR). States that ratified these treaties struggle to uphold their commitments because increasing nationalistic beliefs and hostility towards immigration exist worldwide (Betts, 2020).

### ***Regional Refugee Frameworks***

Alongside the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol there exist multiple regional guidelines which target the particular refugee challenges across the world. Burundi became an early member state of the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. The OAU Convention generates an expanded definition of refugee status to include persons who escape from generalized violence or external aggressors or occupants in acknowledgment of African conflicts territory-wide and between states (Crisp, 2000). The extended definition helps refugee authorities handle refugee situations in Africa including those caused by the conflicts that occurred in Rwanda and Sudan and Somalia.

A regional refugee protection framework exists in Latin America through the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees. The Cartagena Declaration extends refugee classification to embrace victims who escape from environments with violent conditions along with massive human rights violations or foreign military intervention. Regional political collaboration and solidarity efforts receive special attention in the 1984 Cartagena Declaration on Refugees for handling refugee

emergencies that match current events involving Venezuela and Central American nations (Loescher, 2020).

### ***Role of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)***

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) plays a critical role in the implementation of international refugee laws and conventions. Established in 1950, the UNHCR's mandate is to protect and assist refugees worldwide, ensuring that they have access to basic rights and facilitating their voluntary return, local integration, or resettlement in a third country. The UNHCR is responsible for overseeing the application of the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol, working closely with governments and other international organizations to ensure that refugees are protected under international law (UNHCR, 2023).

The UNHCR also engages in advocacy and provides technical support to countries facing large refugee influxes, helping them develop policies that align with international legal standards. In recent years, the UNHCR has been at the forefront of addressing protracted refugee situations, where refugees remain in exile for long periods without the possibility of returning home due to ongoing conflicts. The agency has called for more robust international cooperation to find durable solutions for refugees, including greater efforts to share the burden among host countries (Betts, 2020).

### ***Challenges to International Refugee Laws***

Despite the existence of comprehensive international frameworks, there are significant challenges to the effective protection of refugees. One major issue is the lack of enforcement mechanisms in international refugee law. While the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol establish legal obligations, there is no global enforcement body to ensure compliance. States may choose to ignore

or reinterpret their obligations, particularly in the face of domestic political pressures or security concerns (Hathaway, 2021). This has been evident in the responses of some European countries to the Syrian refugee crisis, where barriers to asylum have been raised despite obligations under the Convention (Loescher, 2020).

Another challenge is the increasing criminalization of refugees and asylum seekers, particularly in the context of irregular migration. Many countries have introduced policies that restrict access to asylum, detain asylum seekers, or push back refugees at their borders, in violation of the principle of non-refoulement (Betts, 2020). This has led to growing concerns about the erosion of refugee protection in regions such as Europe, North America, and Australia, where restrictive immigration policies have been adopted to limit refugee admissions (UNHCR, 2023). Moreover, climate-induced displacement poses a new challenge to international refugee law. The 1951 Convention does not recognize climate refugees, leaving millions of people displaced by environmental factors without adequate legal protection. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change could displace up to 200 million people by 2050, raising questions about how international law should evolve to address this emerging issue (IPCC, 2021).

#### **2.1.4 Current Worldwide Refugees Statistics and Trends**

The global refugee crisis has reached unprecedented levels, with millions of people forcibly displaced by conflicts, persecution, human rights violations, and increasingly, climate change. As of mid-2023, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported that over 108.4 million people were forcibly displaced worldwide, including 35.3 million refugees under UNHCR's mandate (UNHCR, 2023). This figure reflects a continued upward trend, exacerbated by prolonged conflicts in countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan, as well as more recent crises, such as the war in Ukraine and ongoing violence in Sudan. Understanding the current

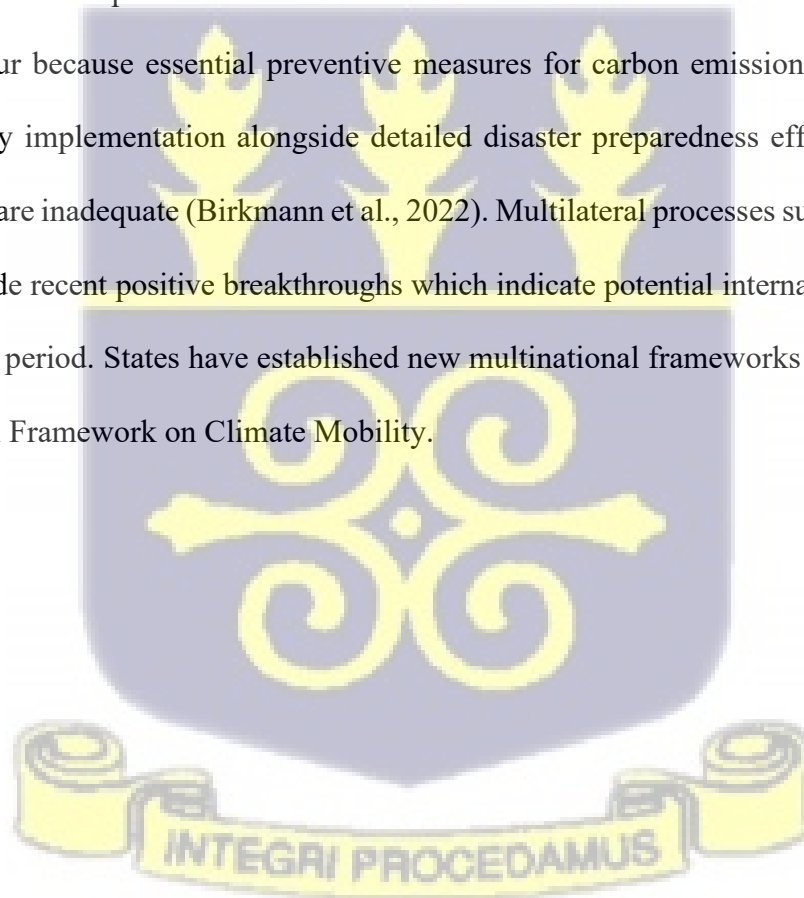
global refugee landscape requires an analysis of the geographic distribution of refugees, the factors driving displacement, and the policy challenges faced by host countries and the international community.

The World Migration Report 2022 appeared more than two years ago to present global analysis of intense changes affecting worldwide movements and displacements. The 2022 report examined ongoing population transitions and economic and social transformations yet focused mainly on significant geopolitical and environmental and technological developments influencing migration and movement trends to a deep extent. During the past two years the global system-wide changes have deepened their impact on worldwide effects. The world has seen unseen conflicts expand their scope and nature because geopolitical relations are becoming stricter. Globalization ended after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022 according to Maddox (2023) who described it as a sudden end to international teamwork and global process. The war between Russia and Ukraine impacts millions in Europe and Ukraine directly but its global effects reach numerous times more people as the conflict continues to impact global food security along with energy security, international law, multilateralism, military strategy and alliances (Coles et al., 2023).

Severe conflicts throughout many regions of the world during the previous two years (particularly in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen) have been followed by an especially shocking Hamas military operation which triggered a devastating war in Gaza (IASC, 2023; Wright, 2023). Current dangerous geopolitical shift causes severe regional and global effects which demonstrate fast-paced dangerous political changes (Khoury, 2023; Wright, 2023). The number of casualties together with population displacement reached high levels when this report was published in November 2023 while humanitarian response operations remained tremendously complicated and challenging (IASC, 2023; UNRWA, 2023).

Unsupported human ecological activities cited in the World Migration Report of 2022 have intensified since then because the world does not stop facing faculty resource deplete and biodiversity loss alongside global climate change and economic overproduction and overconsumption problems. Our current state of knowledge about how destructive acts go against preserving environmental systems has reached unprecedented levels. The effects of climate change on human population movements will change global awareness levels according to climate records.

Different groups (United Nations, 2023; WEF, 2023) continue to dispute the specific future predictions that science provides while the world breaks new records. The major impacts are expected to occur because essential preventive measures for carbon emission management and green technology implementation alongside detailed disaster preparedness efforts and adequate climate funding are inadequate (Birkmann et al., 2022). Multilateral processes surrounding climate change have made recent positive breakthroughs which indicate potential international cooperation in the upcoming period. States have established new multinational frameworks which include the Pacific Regional Framework on Climate Mobility.



The figures below present a data of international migrants in 2024 based on the World Migration Report.

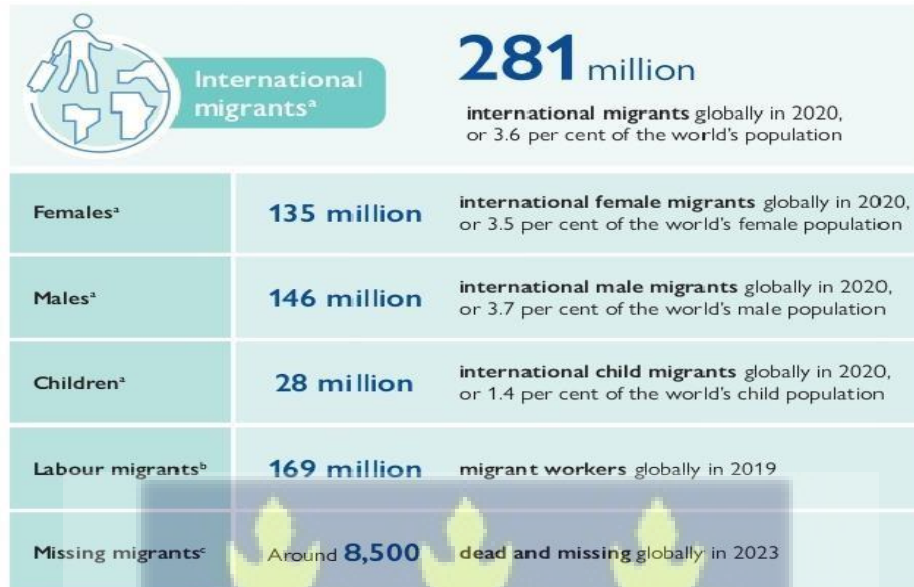


Figure 1: World Migration Report, 2024.

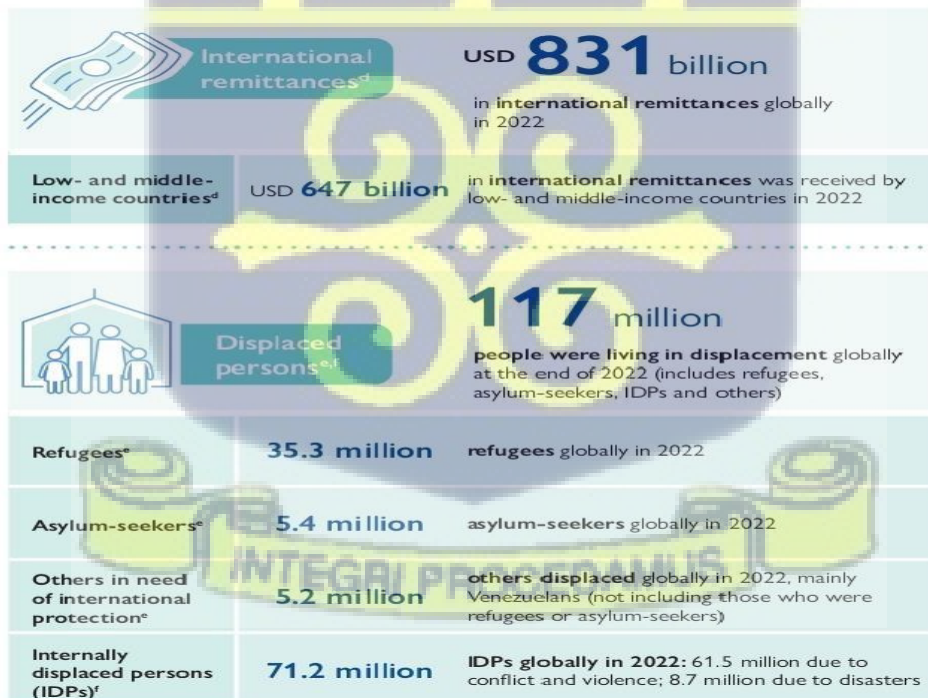


Figure 2: World Migration Report, 2024.

## **Geographic Distribution of Refugees**

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region continues to host the largest concentration of refugees, primarily due to the Syrian civil war, which has displaced over 6.8 million Syrians. Most of these refugees remain in neighboring countries, with Turkey hosting over 3.6 million Syrians, making it the largest host country in the world (World Bank, 2022). The burden on Turkey's infrastructure and resources has been immense, as the country has struggled to provide adequate healthcare, education, and employment opportunities for refugees (İçduygu, 2021). In Jordan and Lebanon, which also host significant numbers of Syrian refugees, the influx has led to increased competition for housing and jobs, as well as mounting political tensions (Amnesty International, 2021).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, countries like Uganda, Sudan, and Ethiopia have become major refugee-hosting nations, largely due to conflicts in South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Somalia. Uganda, for example, is currently home to over 1.5 million refugees, most of whom are from South Sudan (World Bank, 2022). Uganda's open-door policy toward refugees, which grants them access to land, work, and education, has been lauded by the international community. However, the sheer number of displaced people places a significant strain on local resources, and international support is often insufficient to meet the growing needs (UNHCR, 2023).

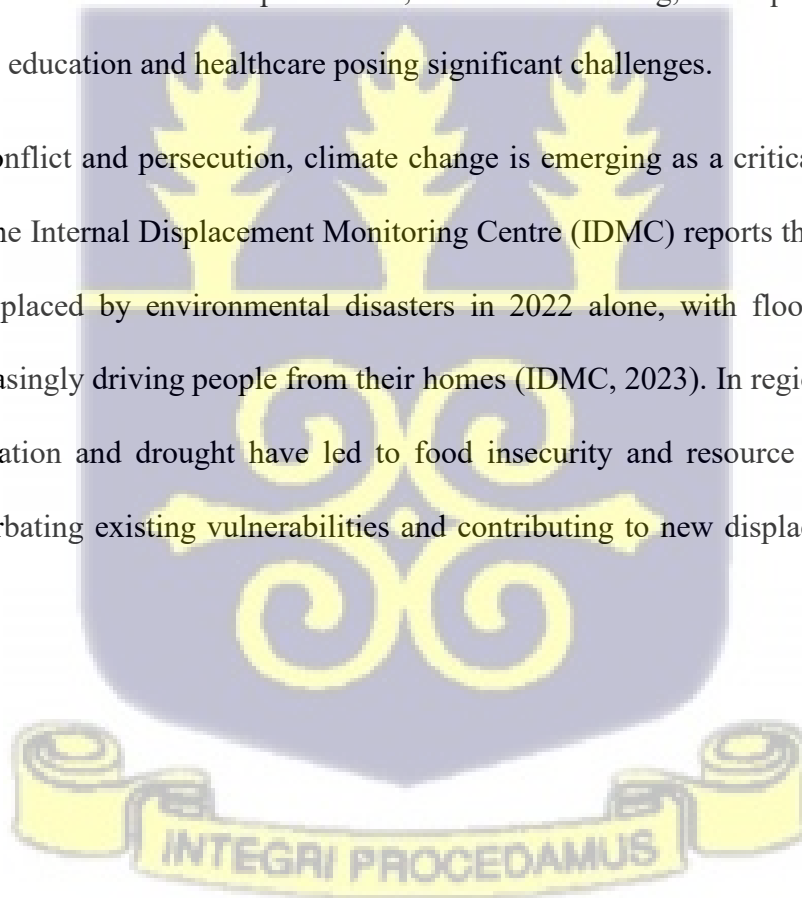
### ***Drivers of Displacement***

While conflict remains the primary driver of refugee flows, other factors, including political persecution, human rights abuses, and climate change, are increasingly contributing to displacement. According to UNHCR, ongoing conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and

more recently, Ukraine and Sudan, have resulted in the displacement of millions of people (UNHCR, 2023). The war in Ukraine, which began in 2022, has led to the displacement of over 7 million people, primarily within Europe, while the conflict in Sudan, which escalated in 2023, has displaced over 1 million people (UNHCR, 2023).

Political persecution and human rights abuses continue to force people to flee countries like Myanmar, where the Rohingya Muslim population faces systemic violence and discrimination. Since 2017, over 1 million Rohingya refugees have fled to Bangladesh, creating one of the largest refugee camps in the world in Cox's Bazar (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2022). The conditions in these camps are dire, with overcrowding, inadequate sanitation, and limited access to education and healthcare posing significant challenges.

In addition to conflict and persecution, climate change is emerging as a critical factor in forced displacement. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) reports that over 30 million people were displaced by environmental disasters in 2022 alone, with floods, droughts, and hurricanes increasingly driving people from their homes (IDMC, 2023). In regions like the Sahel, where desertification and drought have led to food insecurity and resource conflicts, climate change is exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and contributing to new displacement (UNHCR, 2022).



**Table 2.1: Snapshot of refugee and displacement data in Africa and the Whole World in 2024.**

Region/Country	Number of Refugees	Internally Displaced People (IDP)	Notes
<b>Africa</b>			
Sudan	1.8 million	10.5 million	Conflict -driven displacement, ongoing war.
Uganda	1.5 million	N/A	Uganda host refugees from South Sudan and DRC.
DRC	525,000	6.7 million	Protracted conflict and instability.
Ethiopia	900,000	N/A	Hosts refugees from Eritrea, Somalia, South Sudan.
<b>Western world</b>			
Germany	2.1 million	N/A	Hosts mainly Syrians, Afghans, Ukrainians.
Turkey	3.9 million	N/A	Major host of Syrian refugees.
United States	50,000+ annually	N/A	Refugees resettlement varies based on policy.
Canada	30,000+ annually	N/A	Active refugees resettlement programs.

**Source: Researcher's Field Work (2024).**

### **Policy Responses and Challenges**

The international community’s response to the refugee crisis has been marked by both generosity and significant challenges. Countries like Germany and Canada have implemented progressive refugee resettlement policies, offering asylum and integration programs to large numbers of displaced people. Germany, for instance, has welcomed over 1 million Syrian refugees since 2015, providing them with access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities (Federal

Office for Migration and Refugees, 2021). Similarly, Canada's private sponsorship program allows citizens to directly support refugees, facilitating their integration into Canadian society (Government of Canada, 2023).

However, many host countries, particularly in the Global South, lack the resources and infrastructure to adequately support large refugee populations. In countries like Lebanon and Jordan, where refugees make up a significant portion of the population, the strain on public services, including healthcare, education, and housing, has led to growing resentment and political tensions (Amnesty International, 2021). The international community has provided some financial assistance through organizations like the UNHCR and the World Food Programme (WFP), but funding gaps remain a major issue. In 2022, the UNHCR faced a \$3 billion funding shortfall, which severely limited its ability to provide adequate food, shelter, and medical care to refugees (UNHCR, 2022).

Moreover, restrictive asylum policies in many countries have created additional barriers for refugees seeking safety. In Europe, for example, the rise of populist and nationalist movements has led to the implementation of stricter border controls and asylum policies, with countries like Hungary and Poland refusing to accept refugees from non-European countries (European Council on Refugees and Exiles [ECRE], 2022). Similarly, in the United States, the former administration's "Remain in Mexico" policy forced asylum seekers to wait in dangerous conditions across the border while their cases were processed, a practice that has been widely condemned by human rights organizations (Human Rights Watch, 2021).

## 2.2 Burkinabe Refugees in Northern Regions in Ghana

### 2.2.1 Burkinabe Refugees in the Northern Region

The arrival of Burkinabe refugees in Ghana's Northern Region is primarily driven by escalating violence and instability in Burkina Faso, particularly from extremist insurgencies since the mid-2010s. Frequent attacks on civilians, deteriorating economic conditions, and internal displacement have compelled many Burkinabe citizens to flee to neighboring countries, with Ghana being a primary destination due to its geographical proximity and reputation for relative stability (Okubo et al., 2020). According to UNHCR, Ghana has seen an increase in refugee admissions, placing a strain on host communities that were unprepared for such a sudden influx.

Refugees arriving in the Northern Region face numerous challenges in their initial settlement, as resources and infrastructure are limited. Host communities often lack the capacity to provide sufficient housing, sanitation, and healthcare services for refugees, who tend to settle in rural areas where basic amenities are already scarce. Local government and international aid organizations have stepped in to provide some relief, but challenges remain. For instance, the Ghana Refugee Board has worked with the UNHCR to set up temporary shelters; however, reports indicate that these facilities are often overcrowded, which has led to health concerns and compromised sanitation (Boateng & Boakye, 2022).

Economically, the impact of refugees on the Northern Region is mixed. On one hand, refugees bring labor that can bolster the local economy, especially in agricultural sectors. However, the sudden increase in population can lead to job competition and drive down wages in certain labor markets, creating tension between locals and refugees. Market dynamics shift as refugees integrate into local economies, with some engaging in petty trade or other informal sector activities, which can enhance local commerce but sometimes at the cost of resource scarcity, especially regarding

land and water (Nyarko & Mensah, 2019). Agricultural pressures have also increased, as many refugees rely on farming to sustain themselves, leading to potential overuse of land.

Culturally, the arrival of Burkinabe refugees presents both opportunities and challenges. Shared ethnic ties have facilitated smoother integration, particularly among groups like the Dagombas, who share cultural practices with some Burkinabe groups. However, tensions can arise, as refugees may bring different customs that local communities are unaccustomed to. Religious and linguistic commonalities, such as the use of similar languages and Islam as a shared religion among many refugees and locals, have played a crucial role in fostering mutual understanding and social cohesion. Still, there are instances where differences have led to misunderstandings, particularly regarding land ownership and access to social services (Tindana, 2023).

### **2.2.2 Burkinabe Refugees in the Upper East Region**

The Upper East Region has become a frontline for incoming refugees due to its direct border with Burkina Faso. This region experiences frequent refugee arrivals as political instability and violent insurgencies in Burkina Faso escalate, especially in the Sahel region where extremist groups target civilians. In particular, communities near border towns like Paga and Zebilla are significantly affected. As the refugee crisis escalates, the Ghanaian government has collaborated with the UNHCR to set up border monitoring systems and facilitate safe entry for Burkinabe nationals fleeing violence. The situation, however, remains precarious, with local resources stretched thin due to the sheer volume of arrivals (Teye & Badasu, 2021).

Humanitarian efforts in the Upper East Region face logistical hurdles due to limited funding and inadequate infrastructure. Refugee settlements, often located in remote areas, lack essential facilities, with some settlements struggling to provide basic necessities such as clean water, food, and medical services. Overcrowding has worsened the situation, as resources become scarce and

the risk of disease outbreaks rises, especially in areas without proper sanitation. For instance, NGOs such as the Red Cross and the Ghana Health Service have provided basic health interventions, but these efforts are insufficient given the scale of need, highlighting the need for more robust funding and strategic support from international donors (Anarfi & Kwankye, 2023).

Environmental degradation is a pressing concern in the Upper East Region as refugee settlements expand, exerting pressure on natural resources. Forests in particular have faced deforestation, with trees cut down for firewood and shelter construction, which can exacerbate the already arid climate and soil erosion issues. Economically, the arrival of refugees has led to an increased demand for local goods, creating both positive and negative impacts on the economy. While local businesses benefit from heightened trade, the agricultural sector faces stress as increased populations rely on the same limited arable land, reducing productivity and contributing to conflicts over resource allocation (Asante & Adusei, 2020).

The Ghanaian government, with support from international organizations like UNHCR and UNICEF, has implemented measures to improve living conditions for refugees in the Upper East Region. Policies focus on providing temporary housing, healthcare, and educational services to refugees, though funding shortfalls have limited their effectiveness. Local governments have also initiated programs to foster dialogue between refugees and host communities, aiming to reduce tensions and encourage peaceful coexistence. Despite these efforts, the response remains underfunded and sometimes lacks coordination, calling for a more unified approach involving local, national, and international stakeholders to enhance resource allocation and streamline assistance programs (Ofori-Atta et al., 2019).

### 2.2.3 Burkinabe Refugees in the Upper West Region

The Upper West Region, characterized by its porous borders and proximity to Burkina Faso, has also seen a rise in refugee numbers. Since Burkina Faso's security situation deteriorated around 2015, refugees have crossed into this region, which offers immediate sanctuary but limited infrastructure to support large populations. The influx has been especially pronounced in communities along the Black Volta River, where border monitoring is challenging due to geographical factors. These communities often lack the capacity to manage sudden population increases, leading to overcrowded settlements and stretched resources (Mensah & Opoku, 2018).

The economic impact of Burkinabe refugees in the Upper West Region is multifaceted. On one hand, the increased population can stimulate local markets as refugees bring demand for various goods and services. However, there is also heightened competition for jobs, particularly in unskilled labor markets where refugees often seek employment. This has led to decreased wages in certain sectors, causing frustration among local workers. Additionally, agriculture, which is a primary source of livelihood, faces stress as refugees compete for access to arable land, which can lead to conflicts over land use and depletion of soil quality (Awuni, 2022).

The influx of refugees has strained the region's healthcare system, which was already under-resourced. Health facilities are often overcrowded, and there is a shortage of medical supplies, leading to challenges in managing both routine healthcare needs and outbreaks of infectious diseases among refugee and local populations. Education is similarly impacted, with local schools forced to accommodate refugee children, leading to overburdened classrooms and inadequate teacher-to-student ratios. International aid has provided some support, but more resources are needed to ensure adequate educational and healthcare provision for both refugees and host communities (Osei & Quartey, 2020).

International organizations, including the UNHCR and the World Food Programme, have played a vital role in the Upper West Region, providing essential services such as food, water, and shelter. However, limited funding has constrained their ability to fully address the needs of the growing refugee population. Additionally, coordination challenges have sometimes resulted in duplication of efforts or gaps in service provision. The situation calls for a more integrated approach that aligns the efforts of international agencies, local NGOs, and the Ghanaian government to ensure sustainable support for refugees and their host communities (Smith & Abubakari, 2021).

### **2.3 The Sahel Refugee Crisis and its Effects on Northern Ghana**

The region-wide jihadist conflict in the Sahel region caused more than 15,000 people from Burkina Faso to become refugees who crossed into northern Ghana since 2022. Three nations in the Sahel region consisting of Burkina Faso and Mali and Niger suffer from severe humanitarian challenges together with protection crises. UNHCR reports widespread attacks from armed groups and militias, food insecurity, human rights violations, gender-based violence and violence against children. Population displacement became extensive because of both environmental changes and security conditions in this region. As of 2023 the population of displaced people in this region exceeds 4.2 million and refugees and asylum seekers amount to more than 500,000 who have taken shelter in neighboring nations including Ghana.

The observers predict that the number of Burkinabè migrants and Fulani people will significantly increase when they enter Ghana's Upper East and Upper West Regions. The expansion of jihadist armed groups throughout northern Ghana together with refugee influx from Burkina Faso creates rising challenges for the local community populations. Thousand refugees fleeing from Burkina Faso started arriving in the border area between late 2022 and early 2023 and local communities received them as initial hosts. A reception center in Tarikom of the Upper East region materialized

through joint effort between Ghana Refugee Board (GRB) and UNHCR and important government representatives after their High-Level Consultative Dialogue in spring 2023. The New Humanitarian reports that Ghanaian authorities as well as rights groups and local officials have witnessed authorities raiding central and northern Ghana since mid-2023 to execute the forced transfer of Fulani people to Burkina Faso.

### **2.3.1 Allegations of Refoulement of Fulani Refugees**

Researchers together with advocacy groups have documented through their investigations how Fulani communities face persecution as a semi-nomadic West African population which extends across both Sahel and Ghana. Fulani Youth Association of Ghana president Ahmed Barry explains that members experience multiple forms of prejudice including stereotyping and physical violence and all types of discrimination. Research indicates that the high numbers of Fulani in Islamist militant organizations led to the widespread discrimination targeting all Fulani people. The general public views Fulani as jihadist supporters but recent research shows these people have become victims who suffer deadly actions from Malian and Burkinabè military units together with intrusive treatment from Ghanaian immigration officials. The ethnic identity of Fulani in Ghana leads to difficulties when attempting to get legal documentation.

The recent observations show Ghana has welcomed more than 3,000 Burkinabè refugees yet the Fulani struggle to obtain registration status while facing mistreatment by official authorities. Reported by The New Humanitarian that soldiers in Gwolu and Titi villages of the Upper East region detained people with children along with setting their shelters and belongings on fire. Last summer Tabital Pulaaku International Ghana issued a press statement to challenge the Ghanaian government's policy of illegal expulsion of Fulani refugees and asylum seekers. Fulani cultural association Tabital Pulaaku International voiced its stress about Ghanaian government actions such

as making arrests and forced returns of women and children who reached Ghana after the terrorist assault claiming their male relatives. Law enforcement followed by forced relocation to the conflict zone presents major challenges when Fulani roots serve as the basis for deportation.

Despite UNHCR requests to stop Burkinabè expulsion because protection needs of the refugees were infringed upon the Government of Ghana maintained that their actions were aimed at helping Burkinabè people voluntarily return to their homeland. The Ghana Refugee Board shows no signs of registering arriving Fulani refugees even though mass expulsions concluded last August according to news reports that face opposition from UNHCR. The protection officer for UNHCR expressed, “Security considerations must be acknowledged yet Fulani should maintain their right to seek asylum.” The New Humanitarian reports that dangerous situations against Fulani inhabitants have become more pronounced in Burkina Faso. The process of expulsion from Ghana leads to Burkina Faso authorities who arrest and detain people while holding them under prolonged questioning. According to reports some Fulani have vanished and their corpses surfaced near the White Volta river with bullet damages. The New Humanitarian reported that a Fulani informant explained their knowledge of uncomfortable welcome in Ghana with certainty of certain death in Burkina Faso.

## **2.4 Refugees Situation in West Africa**

### **2.4.1 Refugees Movement in West Africa**

Refugee movements have long been a defining feature of the socio-political landscape in West Africa. The region, which consists of 16 countries, has been a hub of both voluntary and forced migration due to various factors, including conflict, political instability, climate change, and economic crises. This has resulted in millions of individuals being displaced either internally or across borders. Countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Mali have

witnessed significant refugee outflows and inflows over the years. Refugee movements in West Africa, particularly since the 1990s, have shaped the demographic, economic, and political dynamics of the region, influencing both hosting countries and the displaced populations.

West Africa has been plagued by several civil wars and political conflicts that have forced millions of people to flee their homes. The Liberian Civil Wars (1989-1997 and 1999-2003) and the Sierra Leone Civil War (1991-2002) led to massive refugee movements across borders. During these conflicts, hundreds of thousands of Liberians and Sierra Leoneans sought refuge in neighboring countries, such as Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana (Gberie, 2016). Refugee camps were established across these regions to cater to the displaced populations. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) played a critical role in coordinating the humanitarian response, offering shelter, healthcare, and protection to the refugees (UNHCR, 2020).

Similarly, Côte d'Ivoire experienced civil unrest in the early 2000s, with an estimated 500,000 Ivorians displaced internally and over 150,000 fleeing to Liberia and Ghana (Zetter & Long, 2012). The political turmoil in Côte d'Ivoire persisted into 2010 with the disputed presidential election, which further triggered refugee movements. Countries like Liberia, already struggling with the aftermath of its own civil war, became host to these refugee populations, adding strain to its fragile recovery process.

In recent years, terrorism and insurgencies have significantly contributed to the displacement of people in West Africa. Boko Haram's insurgency in Nigeria and the broader Lake Chad Basin has resulted in the displacement of millions of people. Since 2009, over 2.5 million Nigerians have been displaced due to the violent activities of Boko Haram, with many fleeing to neighboring countries such as Niger, Chad, and Cameroon (Zamfir, 2021). Refugees from Nigeria have also sought asylum in Mali and Burkina Faso, further complicating the refugee crisis in West Africa.

The spread of terrorism and insurgent activities into the Sahel region, particularly in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, has also worsened the refugee situation. Armed groups linked to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State have been waging attacks on local communities, resulting in large-scale displacement. According to the UNHCR (2022), by mid-2024, over 500,000 people had been displaced in Burkina Faso alone due to the escalating violence, with many seeking refuge in neighboring Mali, Niger, and Côte d'Ivoire.

Beyond political and conflict-related drivers, environmental and economic factors have also contributed to refugee movements in West Africa. Climate change and environmental degradation have severely affected the livelihoods of communities, particularly those dependent on agriculture. The Sahel region, which cuts across countries like Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, has been particularly vulnerable to desertification, droughts, and flooding, leading to the displacement of thousands of people. Environmental refugees from these regions often move to urban centers or cross into neighboring countries in search of safety and better living conditions (Black et al., 2011).

Additionally, economic crises and poverty have also driven migration and displacement in West Africa. Countries facing economic instability, such as Guinea and Liberia, have experienced significant internal displacement as people seek opportunities elsewhere. Economic migrants often find themselves moving alongside refugees, blurring the lines between forced and voluntary migration.

West African countries, through organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), have made efforts to address the refugee crisis. ECOWAS, in collaboration with the African Union (AU) and the UNHCR, has worked to enhance the protection and integration of refugees within host communities. The ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement of Persons allows citizens of member states to move freely across borders, which has facilitated the

movement of refugees and migrants in the region (Adepoju et al., 2010). The UNHCR has been instrumental in coordinating the international response to refugee movements in West Africa. In 2023, the UNHCR reported that over 6 million people across the Sahel and West Africa were in need of protection and humanitarian assistance due to displacement caused by conflict and climate change (UNHCR, 2023). The organization has continued to provide shelter, food, healthcare, and education to refugees, while also working to promote voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement in third countries.

Countries like Ghana and Senegal have been praised for their open-door policies towards refugees. Ghana, in particular, has been a key host for Ivorian refugees during the political crises in Côte d'Ivoire, with refugee camps such as Ampain and Egyeikrom being established to accommodate the influx (Akokpari, 2022). Ghana's commitment to refugee protection has been highlighted as a model for the region. Despite efforts to assist refugees, several challenges persist. Refugee camps in West Africa are often overcrowded and under-resourced, leading to poor living conditions. Access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and clean water is limited in many camps, further exacerbating the plight of displaced individuals. Moreover, refugee populations face protection risks, including gender-based violence, exploitation, and human trafficking, particularly in conflict-affected areas (Betts et al., 2022).

The integration of refugees into host communities has also proven difficult due to economic constraints and social tensions. In countries like Niger and Burkina Faso, where resources are already limited, the influx of refugees has put additional pressure on local infrastructure and services. Host communities often struggle to accommodate refugees, leading to competition for jobs, land, and other resources, which can fuel tensions between locals and displaced populations.

#### **2.4.2 Recent Refugees Statistics in Ghana: Current Trends and Humanitarian Dynamics**

Ghana currently hosts approximately 17,300 registered refugees and asylum-seekers as of December 2024, with the majority originating from Burkina Faso, Togo, Liberia, and Sudan. According to the most recent data available, the refugee population comprises 18,236 refugees, 553 asylum seekers, and 12,055 refugees awaiting registration as of September 2025 (UNHCR Data Portal, 2025). This represents a substantial increase from earlier periods, reflecting the escalating humanitarian crisis in the Sahel region and ongoing political instability across West Africa.

The demographic composition of Ghana's refugee population reveals critical vulnerabilities that demand targeted humanitarian responses. Historical data shows fluctuations in refugee numbers, with 8,531 refugees in 2022 representing a 28.27% decline from 2021's figure of 11,894 (Macrotrends, 2024). However, this downward trend reversed dramatically following the intensification of conflict in Burkina Faso, which has driven unprecedented numbers of people across borders seeking safety and protection in neighboring coastal nations.

The most significant development shaping Ghana's refugee landscape has been the massive influx of asylum seekers from Burkina Faso, driven by escalating jihadist violence and armed conflict. Since November 2022, more than 60,000 Burkinabe asylum-seekers have fled to neighboring coastal countries including Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Ghana, and Benin, with the new influx putting additional pressure on already stretched resources of host countries and communities (Sy & Bohissou, 2023). By March 2024, approximately 209,973 Burkinabè refugees were reported in Burkina Faso's six neighboring countries, with the majority in Mali and Côte d'Ivoire, as well as increasingly in Ghana (IMF, 2024).

Within Ghana specifically, refugee populations are primarily located in four areas: the north for Burkinabe refugees, the west in camp-based settings, urban centers including Accra, and the Volta region for Togolese refugees (UNHCR, 2025). The operation currently prioritizes responses to new arrivals from Burkina Faso in northern regions, where UNHCR supports government-run reception and settlement centers in Tarikom in the Upper East Region and Zini in the Upper West Region. These facilities provide essential services including shelter, food, core relief items, protection services, and access to national systems for health, education, and social support.

The humanitarian context driving this displacement cannot be overstated. Government authorities in Burkina Faso reported that over 2 million people were internally displaced as of the end of 2024, and the country also hosts more than 40,000 refugees mainly from Mali (UNHCR, 2024, <https://www.unhcr.org/where-we-work/countries/burkina-faso>). The security situation has deteriorated dramatically, with violence doubling from 2022 levels and over 8,400 deaths recorded in 2023 alone. This catastrophic violence has forced families to abandon their homes, livelihoods, and communities in search of safety across international borders.

Recent research reveals severe humanitarian challenges facing Burkina Faso refugees in Ghana, particularly concerning food security and living conditions. A 2025 cross-sectional survey found that 100% of Burkina Faso refugees living in northern Ghana experienced household food insecurity, with 95.2% of households experiencing moderate or severe insecurity (Inusah et al., 2025). This level of food insecurity substantially exceeds the national prevalence in both Burkina Faso and across West Africa, highlighting the precarious circumstances refugees face despite fleeing to safety.

Despite these hardships, the same research indicated that self-reported satisfaction with living conditions varied across the refugee population, with most participants reporting they felt safe and

welcomed by their new local communities. This finding underscores an important dimension of Ghana's refugee response: while material conditions remain challenging, the social integration and community acceptance of refugees provide crucial psychological and social support that enables displaced persons to rebuild their lives with dignity.

The challenges refugees face extends beyond immediate material needs. Displaced people from Burkina Faso are predominantly women and children at 84%, with 38% of heads of households among internally displaced persons being women, compared to 58% among refugees and asylum seekers (IMF, 2024). This demographic composition presents specific protection concerns, including heightened vulnerability to gender-based violence, exploitation, and trafficking. Women and girls displaced by conflict face particular risks during their journeys to safety and in displacement settings, where access to specialized support services remains limited across the region.

Ghana's response to the Burkinabè refugee influx has not been without controversy. Since 2022, more than 15,000 refugees from Burkina Faso have reportedly crossed into northern Ghana, with observers noting that numbers of Burkinabè, including Fulani people, crossing into the Upper East and Upper West Regions are likely to surge (Global Detention Project, 2024). The situation has been complicated by security concerns, as these northern regions represent some of the poorest and least developed areas of Ghana, and face increasing threats from jihadist armed groups expanding operations into northern Ghanaian territory.

Between late 2022 and early 2023, thousands of refugees were initially hosted by local communities along the border before formal reception infrastructure was established. Following a High-Level Consultative Dialogue between the Ghana Refugee Board, UNHCR, and key government stakeholders in spring 2023, a reception center in Tarikom was constructed and the

government began systematically registering refugees in border areas. However, reports indicate that since mid-2023, Ghanaian authorities have conducted raids in towns and villages across northern and central Ghana, detaining and deporting refugees' actions that have drawn criticism from UNHCR and human rights organizations despite security justifications offered by government officials.

### **2.4.3 Ghana's Position on Refugee Integration**

Local integration needs host nations to set in place permanent legal systems supporting these integration procedures. The legal framework represents the core basis that gives power to integration procedures and therefore functions as the primary point for analysis in local integration policies. Refugees cannot access necessary social and environmental resources nor achieve valid protection over those resources because they lack proper legal frameworks. The nation of Ghana has provided protection to asylum seekers since its independence specifically during refugee influxes throughout early 1990s but official support for integrating refugees within the domestic environment remains limited. According to Salducci (2008) security fears and refugee resource costs act as leading causes of this position in refugee welcoming nations across the global southern region. Authorities within the government present conflicting perspectives on their commitment to make refugees fit locally.

A representative from Ghana Refugee Board confirms the government backing of local refugee integration but does not reveal government strategies for implementation (Ghana Refugee Board, 2010). National political representatives provide statements that directly oppose government statements about refugee integration policies. Minister for Interior made it clear at the 2008 meeting between government agencies and refugee assistance organizations about local refugee integration that the government opposed such integration in Ghana. According to Kwamina (2008)

the official indicated at this particular meeting that the government expected no integration plans either at present or for the future.

Insufficient policy frameworks together with poor implementation strategies block refugees from obtaining proper information on local integration prospects. One refugee camp displayed a poster about voluntary repatriation which directed itself to Liberian refugees. The poster neglected to specify refugee settlement areas and work opportunities together with their rights condition. Government services contain inadequate details about their dedication to local integration because they choose to prioritize repatriation solutions as their main approach.

Many refugees living in Buduburam camp show disapproval toward local integration because of unexplained criteria and additional aspects according to Omata (2011). Local integration was accused on both government officials and UNHCR representatives because they intended to impose it upon camp refugees during the 2008 demonstration in Buduburam. Refugees are certainly members of Ghanaian society through both marriage unions and residence within national borders. There is no official oversight of self-settled refugees because their settled status has not attained normal status recognition. The positive relationships between Ghanaian host communities and refugees from the past have evolved into competitive relations during recent years (Owusu, 2000). Sources indicate that refugee relationships within the Buduburam camp have developed conflictual tensions with the local population members (Porter et al. 2008).

Under Section fourteen of the Ghana Refugee Law (PNDC Law 305D) refugee naturalization is possible but Ghana lacks formal policies to carry out local integration in operational terms. The basic policy for local integration needs development because it will enhance operational effectiveness even though refugees dislike the approach currently. The members of refugee populations need to analyze all potential elements contributing to this situation.

Local integration of refugees would create additional pressures for the governing authorities. A current state of tension between local residents and refugees leads people to oppose government efforts at integrating refugees in the community when public resources become needed. The poverty-stricken rural areas of Ghana show strong opposition against refugee integration program due to resource demands. The Ghana government actively avoids supporting local integration as a permanent refugee settlement measure in Ghana because of the established Liberian refugee population.

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#### **2.4.4 Ghana's Role in Hosting Refugees**

Ghana has historically played a significant role in hosting refugees from across Africa, demonstrating its commitment to international humanitarian obligations and regional solidarity. As a member of the United Nations and the African Union, Ghana has consistently provided

sanctuary to displaced individuals fleeing conflicts, persecution, and political instability in neighboring countries. The country's long-standing tradition of offering protection is grounded in both international refugee law and regional agreements, such as the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa and the 1951 UN Refugee Convention.

Ghana's commitment to refugee protection is embedded in its national legal framework, aligned with international standards. The country's refugee laws are based on the 1951 UN Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, as well as the 1969 OAU Refugee Convention, which emphasizes broader protection for displaced Africans (Gyamfi, 2015). The Ghana Refugee Board (GRB), established under the Refugee Law (PNDCL 305D) of 1992, is responsible for overseeing the management of refugees and asylum seekers in the country. This board collaborates closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to provide support and protection to refugees, ensuring their rights and safety are respected (UNHCR, 2020). Ghana has adopted an "open-door policy" when it comes to accepting refugees, allowing asylum seekers entry and providing them with assistance. This policy has seen the country host refugees from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and more recently, Togo, Burkina Faso, and Mali, among others (Quartey, 2020).

Since the 1990s, Ghana has been home to several refugee camps, which have been established to accommodate large inflows of displaced people. Among the most notable camps are the Buduburam Refugee Camp, originally established for Liberians fleeing civil war, and the Krisan Refugee Camp, which has hosted refugees from Sierra Leone and other African nations (Akokpari, 2022). The Buduburam camp, located near Accra, became a major settlement for Liberians during the country's civil wars, at its peak hosting over 40,000 refugees (Lomo, 2012).

In addition to providing temporary shelter in camps, Ghana has also made efforts to integrate refugees into local communities. Over time, many refugees at Buduburam, for example, have moved beyond the confines of the camp, settling in urban areas like Accra, where they engage in economic activities such as trading and skilled labor (Landau & Jacobsen, 2013). This shift towards local integration is reflective of Ghana's broader approach to refugee protection, which seeks to balance the temporary provision of aid with long-term solutions such as integration or voluntary repatriation.

### **Liberian Refugees**

One of the largest refugee movements into Ghana occurred in the 1990s when thousands of Liberians fled their country due to a brutal civil war. By the early 2000s, Ghana had become a major destination for Liberian refugees, offering them sanctuary at the Buduburam Refugee Camp (Akokpari, 2022). Although the conflict in Liberia ended in 2003, many refugees were reluctant to return due to fears of insecurity, political instability, and lack of economic opportunities back home (Dick, 2002). Consequently, the Ghanaian government, in cooperation with UNHCR, worked to facilitate voluntary repatriation while also considering options for local integration and resettlement in third countries (UNHCR, 2004). The Buduburam camp remains a symbol of Ghana's commitment to refugee protection, although its population has decreased significantly since the height of the Liberian refugee crisis. Many of the remaining refugees have either chosen to integrate into Ghanaian society or sought resettlement abroad.

### **Ivorian Refugees**

In 2010, Côte d'Ivoire experienced post-election violence following a disputed presidential election. The ensuing conflict displaced hundreds of thousands of Ivorians, with thousands seeking

refugee in Ghana (UNHCR, 2011). At the peak of the crisis, Ghana hosted around 20,000 Ivorian refugees, with camps such as Ampain and Egyeikrom being established to accommodate them. While some Ivorians have since returned to their country following peace and political stabilization, others remain in Ghana due to ongoing concerns about safety and reintegration (Akokpari, 2022). The Ghanaian government, alongside the UNHCR, has provided shelter, food, healthcare, and education to Ivorian refugees, helping them rebuild their lives. As part of long-term solutions, the UNHCR has worked with the Ghanaian authorities to facilitate voluntary repatriation while exploring local integration opportunities for those who choose to remain in Ghana (UNHCR, 2023).

### **Recent Refugee Inflows**

In more recent years, Ghana has also hosted refugees from Togo, Burkina Faso, and Mali due to political instability and insurgency in these countries. The insecurity in Burkina Faso, in particular, has led to increased refugee movements into Ghana's northern regions. As of 2024, the UNHCR reported that Ghana was hosting over 5,000 refugees from Burkina Faso, many of whom are fleeing jihadist violence and inter-communal conflicts (UNHCR, 2023). Despite its strong commitment to hosting refugees, Ghana faces several challenges. The refugee camps in Ghana are often under-resourced, with overcrowding, limited access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities being common issues. The Buduburam Refugee Camp, for instance, has been criticized for its deteriorating infrastructure and inadequate living conditions as humanitarian assistance has dwindled over time (Akokpari, 2022).

Moreover, refugees face significant socio-economic challenges, including limited job prospects, lack of formal documentation, and difficulties integrating into host communities. While Ghanaian authorities have made efforts to promote local integration, economic constraints and social

tensions often hinder this process. The government and international organizations continue to work towards addressing these challenges, but funding and resources remain limited (UNHCR, 2022).

## **2.5 Impact of Refugees on Host Communities**

Under Section fourteen of the Ghana Refugee Law (PNDC Law 305D) naturalization of refugees is possible but Ghana lacks official policies to apply local integration in operational terms. Local integration policy needs to be developed because it will enhance operational efficiency although refugees are not fond of the approach currently being applied. Refugee population members need to look at all possible factors that cause this condition.

Refugee local integration would put additional burdens on the ruling authorities. The refugees are currently in a strained relationship with the locals, which makes people oppose the government efforts to integrate refugees into society when the public resources are required. Ghana's poor rural communities have a strong resistance towards refugee integration program due to demands for resources. The Ghanaian government openly declines to embrace local integration as a permanent refugee settlement practice in Ghana because of the established Liberian refugee community.

### **2.5.1 Economic Impact**

According to economic theory, a refugee crisis is a large-scale supply-side shock to the local labor market. The quantity of refugees, how they differ from the host community, and the laws governing their absorption into the local economy such as those pertaining to work permits all affect the local population. First, a shock to the labor supply usually makes the labor market more competitive and lowers salaries for locals. However, residents and refugees are not alike; the skills and legal status of refugees determine who they may effectively compete with.

Any country faces significant difficulties when hosting many refugees unless they maintain abundant financial capabilities and capable administrative institutions like developing countries do not possess. The receipt of refugee status often triggers job competition alongside service and resource challenges which creates both population-based and public cost-based problems. These host countries extend monetary assistance and language education programs to refugees which results in additional financial costs. Few refugees reside in high-income nations so such adverse impacts can still be controlled despite their detection according to Ruist (2019). It is common for developing countries to welcome numerous refugees among their population while acquiring generous financial together with technological backing from external sources. Grants from International organizations especially UNHCR furnish at least basic living assistance to refugees through a system that aims to enhance their subsistence needs. International assistance relieves potential financial stress on hosting nations at the same time that it activates their local economy through increased demand for domestic resources. International support levels determine whether refugee presence has a positive economic impact on the local community.

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Labor markets will experience effects that show wide variation between different occupational fields and sectors. The employment restriction for refugees within informal sectors threatens existing workers with possible declines in actual income pay. The sections that benefit from refugee consumption depend both on refugee consumer preferences and the economic structure in the destination region. Safer food production combined with essential service provision dominated by unskilled workers brings about wage and job benefits from hosting refugees in those sectors.

Under refugee residency some residents progressively move up in their occupational positions. Locals gain advanced positions and management duties in work sectors when the majority of jobs are filled by refugees mainly located in informal positions (Akgündüz, Van Den Berg, & Hassink, 2018; Verme & Schuettler, 2019).

The price and wage effects induced by immigration create winners and losers across the population of the host community. The cost increase of basic goods benefits suppliers yet causes negative impacts for customers who were not taking part in the refugee transfer. Agricultural producers stand to gain from enhanced food consumption which will boost their output levels together with price rates and income. Economic growth throughout the nation becomes stronger when income increases and local industries expand as shown by Taylor et al. (2016) and Alix-Garcia and Saah (2009). The redistribution of costs and benefits between socioeconomic groups exists as a matter of factual evidence. Through their actions refugees allow foreign funding institutions and

development organizations to support the economy of their host nation (Miller, 2018). The implementation of such migration services enables rural development projects which serve dual purposes for the needs of both refugees and local people. Major human capital elements that refugees bring enable them to enhance local expertise assets. Export companies benefit from the combination of refugee knowledge about their home countries and their extensive transnational networks (Mercator Dialogue on Asylum and Migration, 2018).

### **2.5.2 Empirical Evidence on the Overall Economic Impact on Host Regions**

There are currently several studies that are trying to estimate the impact of a refugee inflow on the economic lives of members. They differ widely in the object of analysis (goods market, labor market, aggregate) of their work; methodology employed; time period; and setting, such as the size of the refugee inflow, host area's income level, and policy milieu. As expected, findings are extremely varied, although the majority discover positive outcomes for host communities overall (Khoudour & Andersson, 2017; Verme & Schuettler, 2019).

The following section contains strong and informative data points from various specific studies. Researchers at the University of California together with the World Food Program conducted an extremely thorough analysis (Taylor, Filipski, et al., 2016). The authors evaluate three Rwandan refugee camps for Congolese refugees through local general equilibrium models while using micro survey data about host communities for their assessment. Through this analysis they successfully measure overall impacts coupled with determining how labor market changes and price variations as well as direct economic linkages affect the economy.

The refugee support system varies from camp to camp since two facilities provide mobile phone credits yet one facility gives in-kind support. Positive effects observed by Taylor, Filipski, et al. (2016) amount to significant levels for all residents situated within a 10-kilometer distance of cash

camps. Each migrating refugee generates \$253 in total real annual regional revenue at camp 2 and \$205 at camp 1. Refugees receive more worth through mobile money support from each camp than what the World Food Program provides per refugee with clear economic multipliers (Taylor, Filipski, et al., 2016). These payments amount to 63% and 96% of local per capita income near the camps. Households and businesses within refugee camps achieve economic activity spillovers by buying goods and services from businesses operating outside the camps who are run by camp residents.

The local spending of refugees leads to higher neighborhood income which produces sequential expansionary effects within the economy. Real incomes of the host population rise by \$41 for each refugee in camp 1 and expand to \$69 for each camp 2 refugee. Numerous positive effects and cash interchange do not arise from providing refugees with food rather than money (camp 3). Due to trading food assistance for money refugees degrade the aid value and induce decreased food prices (while the cash-based assistance program creates increased food prices). The farmers who live in the area experience negative consequences because of refugee presence. The local economy sees only a weak 25\$ multiplier impact with all funds contained within refugee camp boundaries (Taylor, Zhu, et al., 2016). Research indicates that refugee hosting generates extensive favorable economic outcomes across the local territory.

This research examines only the relation between refugee contact and good and labor market effects yet it fails to identify economic factors tied to constructing refugee camp facilities and their upkeep. The researched developments prove to have positive financial implications. Refugee camps represent the destination where staff members exclusively use their compensation to purchase locally manufactured products and services. The study sets a lower limit for examining how hosting refugees affects a local economy because they fail to document those expenses.

The latest analysis of refugee economic contributions to their host communities comes from Verme and Schuettler (2019). The analytical parameters relating to host countries which extend beyond developing nations (international) as well as refugee migration patterns show substantial differences between these studies. Varied statistical findings can explain why the results show diversity which requires careful examination of any conclusions. The extensive research focuses on revealing all potential influences. Verme and Schuettler (2019) analyzed 49 studies across 17 displacement contexts and the bulk of research materialized after 2011 throughout the Syrian refugee crisis. The authors compile 762 individual findings regarding refugees' influence on local resident well-being and resident prices together with resident income and wages and employment numbers from the 49 analyzed studies. Due to diverse methodologies and disparate refugee situations in the analyzed works Verme and Schuettler (2019) lack the ability to systematically relate varied outcomes between positive and negative wage effects.

The recorded evidence shows that population changes brought by refugees can result in modifications to community income distribution patterns. The welfare improvement of hosting refugees does not eliminate the possibility that some members of the community will suffer losses. Insufficient study results prevent providing sufficient direction about which population subsections face greater risk of losing out and which policy measures can avoid such systematic disadvantages. Additional research must analyze price elasticity across various products and services in numerous receiving countries so the researchers can systematically link price modifications to detailed welfare distributions of households.

The variable of employment receives the most examination in the studies reviewed by Verme and Schuettler (2019). Research findings reveal that two studies from a total of three entities show no significant results. Among all research studies establishing relationships between host populations

and foreign residents, residents experience negative consequences in less than half (19 studies versus 14 studies out of all 125 studies). The economic outcomes distinctively change between different refugee settlements due to the way refugees compete with residents in local markets which is strongly influenced by their socioeconomic capabilities including language knowledge and educational attainment and occupational experience. Labor market performance reveals its most significant indicator through wages while employment constitutes another important metric. The analyzed studies by Verme and Schuettler (2019) present mixed results because nearly all estimates are statistically insignificant and only slightly more show negative signs than positive. Resident wage impacts from refugee immigration extend for only limited amounts of time because authors discovered wage effects decline as time goes by since the refugee arrivals began.

### **2.5.3 Impact on Public Goods**

A large number of refugees' access both facilities and structures provided by their hosting populations. The situation becomes worse when a large number of self-assumed refugees integrate into the native population which causes public facilities including education and healthcare systems to become overloaded. Studies show that health facilities along with schools in African communities' experience severe overload (Whitaker, 2002). The support provided by UNHCR and similar organizations during refugee situations includes supporting the provision of public goods at both national and local levels since inception. External support manages to alleviate strains on services delivery and simultaneously enhances the local infrastructure and service quality according to Jacobsen (2001).

#### **2.5.3.1 Education**

UNHCR reports that refugees who are under eighteen years old represent fifty percent of the total (2018). When refugees arrive there instantly arises a need for education services which frequently

creates difficulties for existing national schooling systems. The inclusion of all refugee children in universal education programming remains essential because it determines positive results for the immediate and developing effects of refugee population increases. Access to educational opportunities for child refugees decreases their likelihood of participating in informal work to support family finances. This group possesses minimal labor expectations combined with superior population size which may yield notable effects on the employment prospects of local residents. The individuals might choose to commit crimes or dangerous illegal actions.

Refugee youths bare the adverse effect of education exclusion through limited professional prospects within labor markets together with restricted economic possibilities for the firms in their host areas. A person's ability to learn languages as well as their formal education serves as fundamental criteria so they can integrate into the economy successfully. Most refugee situations persist so long that host communities, supported by humanitarian and development donors, need to build up refugees' human capital (Devictor & Do, 2017).

The basic informal employment without development contributions becomes the only option for numerous refugees who lack access to educational opportunities. It becomes challenging to provide education services to large numbers of refugees when operating in rural underdeveloped areas. Schools together with teaching materials and professional training for instructors require international donor funds for their implementation. The allocation of financial assistance needs strategic direction because refugees primarily live dispersed throughout host communities thus requiring systematic improvements to national education systems which accommodate their specific needs. Additional resources invested in educational infrastructure will yield benefits for refugees together with residents while avoiding conflicts for educational resources.

Multiple documented studies demonstrate education reforms motivated by refugee arrivals generate positive effects on academic achievements for refugee learners and host population students (Syrian refugees in the Middle East: Ferris and Kirişci, 2016; Dadaab refugee camps in Kenia: Enghoff et al., 2010; Syrian refugees in Lebanon: Kabbanji and Kabbanji, 2018).

### **2.5.3.2 Health**

The health sector requires immediate attention because refugees need urgent medical care and the risk of disease transmission poses an additional urgent need for health services. The risk of vector-borne and infectious disease outbreaks becomes higher when refugee camps lack proper sanitation and local health facilities become overwhelmed (Baez, 2011). The host government's management ability of health service demands depends entirely on its financial and administrative resources according to Ogude (2018). The ability to provide health care services differs significantly between different host countries and regions (Mabiso et al., 2014). International organizations must act hastily to guarantee basic health care access for refugees.

Health care systems that improve due to refugee inflows will eventually lead to better services for both residents and refugees. The research by Maystadt & Verwimp (2014) shows that Tanzania received better health care and sanitation facilities as a result of refugee influx. Previously inaccessible services to local people have become accessible through the combination of UNHCR involvement along with local partner organizations. Research indicates that health services in Tanzania provide better quality to users than other parts of the country and residents make up 30 percent of the user base (Maystadt & Verwimp, 2014).

### **2.5.3.3 Infrastructure**

Physical infrastructure development benefits significantly from the arrival of refugees. The improved road access and transportation in refugee camp regions benefits refugees while simultaneously reducing transportation costs for host communities which drives socioeconomic development (Maystadt & Verwimp, 2014; Miller, 2018).

The research by Enghoff et al. (2010) in Kenya shows that 80 percent of host community respondents have started using buses, pick-ups and taxis more frequently. The main purpose of commercial transportation in refugee camps is to enable camp visits for trade activities and family meetings and health facility access and food acquisition (Enghoff et al., 2010). Mabiso et al. (2014) demonstrate that refugee influxes enhance market efficiency and trade dynamism through road investments from international organizations because roads directly link to economic development (Ogude, 2018, p. 13). The construction of better roads in remote areas leads to lower prices for traded goods according to Casaburi, Glennerster, and Suri (2013) which results in increased real income.

### **2.5.3.4 Socio-cultural impacts and security**

Refugee attitudes of local residents develop primarily from their expectations about how cultural transformations will impact their community. The authors of Dadush and Niebuhr (2016) state that overcrowding and saturated basic services and job competition serve as the fundamental causes of social tensions. Economic factors do not influence the development of traditional practices preservation or national security protection which function separately (Dadush & Niebuhr, 2016; Ogude, 2018; Whitaker, 2002) along with local cultural preservation. Neither new nor existing ethnic tensions between groups escalate in intensity when refugees migrate to an area. Nevertheless, fresh tensions can materialize because of refugee movements. Bangladeshis recently

migrated to Northern India while Mozambican refugees established themselves in Malawi alongside Eritrean refugees in Eastern Sudan with Ugandan IDPs who have faced conflicts with local populations in Northern Uganda (Dadush & Niebuhr, 2016).

Pregnant women face the major challenge of their safety rather than economic risks (Taylor, Zhu, et al., 2016). Security related issues emerge from the length of time refugees stay in place and the area distribution of refugees and their actual population numbers (Rutinwa & Kamanga, 2003; Schmeidl, 2002). Refugee encampment policies create opposite and hostile groups between refugees and host populations according to Dadush and Niebuhr (2016). Accommodating refugees in the general economy creates better social and economic relationships among various groups since economic involvement encourages interdependence between different communities (Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2016). When governments apply inclusive policies the combined economic and social outcomes between refugees and their host community populations become stronger.

The social consequences resulting from refugee migration developments depend heavily on the execution approaches opted by host governments. The refugee social situation improves when they settle at their chosen place with their family rather than staying in isolated refugee camps (Miller, 2018). Social cohesion improves within a community based on the integration policies used in prolonged refugee situations according to Miller (2018).

## **2.6 Refugees' Livelihood and Coping Strategies**

Refugees often face significant challenges in securing livelihoods and developing coping strategies in their host countries. These challenges stem from their precarious legal status, limited access to social services, and constrained economic opportunities. This section explores the existing literature on employment and economic opportunities available to refugees, as well as their access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and housing.

### 2.6.1 Employment and Economic Opportunities for Refugees

Employment is a critical component of refugees' livelihoods and overall well-being. According to Betts, Bloom, Kaplan, and Omata (2017), access to employment allows refugees to sustain themselves and their families, reduces dependency on humanitarian aid, and facilitates integration into host societies. However, research indicates that many refugees encounter numerous barriers to securing formal employment, including language barriers, legal restrictions, and discrimination. Refugees are often confined to informal employment sectors, where they are vulnerable to exploitation and poor working conditions (UNHCR, 2021). This situation is compounded by limited recognition of refugees' qualifications, which prevents them from accessing skilled employment opportunities (Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2020).

In Ghana, refugees often experience similar challenges in the labor market. A study by Omata (2017) on Liberian refugees in Ghana's Buduburam camp highlights the difficulty refugees face in accessing formal employment. Many are pushed into informal sectors such as petty trading, agriculture, and low-wage labor, where they are unable to generate sufficient income for sustainable livelihoods. Omata (2017) also points out that women refugees face additional gender-specific challenges, including societal discrimination and limited access to credit for entrepreneurship.

Several initiatives have been launched globally to enhance refugees' access to economic opportunities. For example, the Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement in Kenya promotes self-reliance among refugees by providing opportunities for agricultural production and small-scale businesses (UNHCR, 2021). Such programs aim to transform refugee camps from centers of aid dependency into environments that foster self-sustaining livelihoods. Similarly, Ghana has initiated some efforts to integrate refugees into the local economy by providing vocational training and skills

development (Government of Ghana, 2020). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these programs is often hindered by underfunding and lack of long-term support mechanisms.

### **2.6.2 Access to Basic Services (Healthcare, Education, and Housing)**

Access to basic services, including healthcare, education, and housing, is essential for the well-being of refugees and their ability to cope with their displacement. However, numerous studies suggest that refugees often face significant obstacles in accessing these services, primarily due to legal, financial, and institutional barriers (Veronese, Cavazzoni, & Antenucci, 2018). In many host countries, refugees lack access to affordable healthcare, quality education, and adequate housing, which limits their ability to rebuild their lives after displacement.

#### ***Healthcare***

Access to healthcare is a fundamental human right, yet it remains elusive for many refugees. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2018), refugees are often excluded from national health insurance schemes in their host countries, leaving them vulnerable to untreated illnesses and preventable diseases. For example, in Ghana, studies have shown that while refugees have access to healthcare services through non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international agencies, the quality and scope of care are often inadequate (Adjei & Amanor, 2019). Additionally, refugees frequently face linguistic and cultural barriers when trying to access healthcare services, as well as difficulties in navigating complex healthcare systems.

#### ***Education***

Education plays a crucial role in the long-term empowerment of refugees, as it equips them with skills for self-reliance and facilitates their integration into host communities (Dryden-Peterson, 2016). However, refugee children often encounter significant barriers to accessing formal

education. According to UNHCR (2019), only 63% of refugee children attend primary school, while the figure drops to 24% for secondary school. Challenges such as limited financial resources, overcrowded classrooms, and language barriers exacerbate the situation, leaving many refugee children with insufficient educational opportunities.

In Ghana, the Buduburam camp has been a notable site for studies on refugees' access to education. Despite the presence of schools in the camp, many children lack the financial means to attend, as education is not entirely free (Omata, 2017). Furthermore, many refugee children are unable to integrate into mainstream Ghanaian schools due to language barriers and difficulties in adapting to new curricula. Efforts by international organizations, such as UNICEF, have sought to improve educational access for refugee children, but challenges remain in terms of funding and teacher training (UNICEF, 2020).

### ***Housing***

Adequate housing is a key determinant of refugees' well-being, yet access to secure and dignified shelter remains a challenge in many host countries. According to the UNHCR (2021), housing conditions in refugee camps are often substandard, with overcrowding, poor sanitation, and a lack of basic infrastructure being common issues. In urban areas, refugees often live in informal settlements, where they face the risk of eviction and exploitation by landlords (Jacobsen, 2014).

In the Ghanaian context, housing conditions for refugees have been a longstanding concern, particularly at the Buduburam camp. The camp was initially established as a temporary settlement, but many refugees have lived there for decades under precarious conditions (Agblorti, 2011). Refugees in Buduburam struggle with inadequate housing, and efforts to resettle or integrate them into local communities have been slow. Although the Government of Ghana has implemented

some housing initiatives, including temporary shelters and low-cost housing projects, these efforts have been insufficient to address the growing demand for adequate housing among refugees (Adjei & Amanor, 2019).

## **2.7 Refugee Policy and Management in Ghana**

Ghana has been a host to refugees from various parts of Africa, particularly during conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire. The management of refugees in Ghana is guided by both national laws and international frameworks, which aim to ensure the protection and rights of refugees while promoting sustainable solutions such as local integration, repatriation, and resettlement. This section discusses the national refugee law and frameworks governing refugees in Ghana, followed by an exploration of the approaches to local integration, repatriation, and resettlement.

### **2.7.1 National Refugees Law and Framework**

The refugee protection system in Ghana faithfully serves international treaties starting from the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Refugee Convention which Ghana has officially ratified. The base legal foundation for refugee protection in Ghana appeared through the enactment of the Refugee Law 1992 (PNDCL 305D). Refugees receive legal protection through this law together with administrative guidelines which establish their rights for education and healthcare and right to seek employment. Refugees enjoy equal protection against discrimination and access to public services exactly like nationals of Ghana according to the current refugee law (Adjei & Agblorti, 2020).

PNDCL 305D created the Ghana Refugee Board which functions as the main entity responsible for refugee operations throughout the country. The Ghana Refugee Board partners with international organizations particularly the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

(UNHCR) to execute protective measures and support services for refugees. The refugee policies of Ghana as described by the UNHCR (2021) establish two core priorities aimed at protecting human dignity and enabling refugees to integrate within host communities. The enactment of refugee policies faces numerous obstacles because of funding shortages and governmental process delays and limited resources (Agblorti, 2011).

The government of Ghana uses the 2016 National Migration Policy to guide comprehensive management of refugees throughout the country. Through this policy the government enacts its dedication to protecting asylum seekers and refugees but requires partnership with international agencies under the framework of working with neighboring countries (Government of Ghana, 2016).

### **2.7.2 Local Integration, Repatriation, and Resettlement**

Local integration, repatriation, and resettlement are the three durable solutions identified by the UNHCR for managing protracted refugee situations. Ghana has utilized all three strategies to varying extents, depending on the specific circumstances of refugees.

#### ***Local Integration***

Local integration involves the process of enabling refugees to become self-sufficient and socially integrated into the host country. Ghana has supported local integration through various initiatives, including the provision of education, healthcare, and vocational training for refugees (Omata, 2017). However, full integration remains challenging, as refugees often encounter social discrimination and legal barriers, such as difficulties in obtaining long-term residency or citizenship (Adjei & Amanor, 2019). For instance, Liberian refugees in the Buduburam camp have

lived in Ghana for over two decades, yet many still face uncertainty regarding their legal status and access to economic opportunities (UNHCR, 2021).

### ***Repatriation***

Repatriation, the voluntary return of refugees to their home countries, has been a key strategy in Ghana's refugee management framework. Following the end of civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Ghana facilitated the repatriation of thousands of refugees in collaboration with the UNHCR (Agblorti, 2011). According to Betts et al. (2017), the process of repatriation is often complex, as refugees may face difficulties reintegrating into their home countries, particularly if the conditions that caused their displacement persist. Additionally, some refugees may have developed strong ties to Ghana, making repatriation a less favorable option.

### ***Resettlement***

Resettlement involves the transfer of refugees from their host country to a third country that agrees to accept them for permanent settlement. Ghana has partnered with the UNHCR and other international organizations to resettle refugees, particularly those facing significant protection risks in the country. However, resettlement opportunities are limited, with only a small fraction of refugees eligible for resettlement each year (UNHCR, 2021). In the case of Buduburam, many refugees have remained in Ghana due to limited resettlement prospects, despite efforts to negotiate resettlement agreements with other countries (Omata, 2017).

## **2.8 Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks**

Conceptual and theoretical frameworks are essential for structuring systematic inquiry, guiding variable selection, and anchoring empirical findings within established bodies of knowledge. This study adopts the Host–Refugee Integration Theory and the Sustainable Livelihood Framework

(SLF) to analyze the socio-economic impacts of Burkinabe refugees on host communities in Northern Ghana. These frameworks were selected over alternative approaches such as securitization theory or humanitarian assistance models because they allow for a community-level, development-oriented, and interactional analysis that foregrounds both refugees and host populations as active agents within shared socio-economic systems.

While humanitarian and protection-focused theories prioritize refugee welfare and legal status, they provide limited analytical leverage for understanding livelihood dynamics, resource competition, and reciprocal integration processes within host communities. The combined use of Host–Refugee Integration Theory and SLF therefore offers a more comprehensive analytical lens suited to the objectives and context of this study.

### **2.8.1 Host–Refugee Integration Theory**

Host–Refugee Integration Theory conceptualizes integration as a multi-dimensional and reciprocal process involving refugees, host communities, and institutions. Ager and Strang (2008) argue that integration extends beyond physical settlement to include access to employment, housing, education, healthcare, social connections, and legal rights. Central to the theory is the recognition that integration is not a one-way process of refugee adaptation, but a negotiated interaction shaped by host community attitudes, institutional arrangements, and socio-economic conditions.

The primary strength of this theory lies in its ability to capture social cohesion, belonging, and institutional inclusion, making it particularly relevant for examining refugee settlement in non-camp, community-based contexts such as Northern Ghana. Given the shared ethnic, linguistic, and cultural ties between Burkinabe refugees and host populations in the region, the theory provides a useful framework for analyzing social interactions, acceptance, and tensions at the local level.

However, the theory has notable limitations. It tends to under-theorize material livelihood systems, resource scarcity, and structural poverty factors that are especially salient in rural host communities. Additionally, much of the empirical application of the theory has focused on urban or Global North contexts, limiting its explanatory power when applied in isolation to rural West African settings.

In this study, Host–Refugee Integration Theory is employed to examine social relations, access to services, community cohesion, and institutional responses, particularly how host communities perceive and interact with refugee populations.

### **2.8.2 Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF)**

The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) provides a structured approach to understanding how households and communities mobilize assets to sustain livelihoods under conditions of vulnerability. Originally developed by Chambers and Conway (1992) and later refined by DFID, the framework identifies five core livelihood capitals: human, social, natural, physical, and financial. It further situates these assets within a vulnerability context shaped by shocks, policies, and institutional structures (Scoones, 1998).

The strength of the SLF lies in its capacity to analyze resource access, livelihood strategies, and adaptive responses among both refugees and host populations. In the context of Northern Ghana, where livelihoods are heavily dependent on agriculture, land, and informal economic activities, the SLF is particularly suited to examining how refugee presence affects asset distribution, income opportunities, and livelihood sustainability.

Nevertheless, the SLF has limitations when applied to refugee contexts. It does not explicitly account for power asymmetries, legal status, or social integration processes between distinct

population groups. Without complementary frameworks, it risks treating refugees and hosts as homogeneous livelihood actors, thereby obscuring social boundaries and relational dynamics.

In this study, the SLF is used to analyze livelihood impacts, resource competition, coping strategies, and vulnerability outcomes arising from refugee host interactions.

### **2.8.3 Complementarity of the Frameworks**

The integration of Host–Refugee Integration Theory and the Sustainable Livelihood Framework allows this study to overcome the individual limitations of each approach. While Host–Refugee Integration Theory explains social and institutional dimensions of coexistence, the SLF captures material and economic dimensions of livelihoods. Together, they provide a holistic framework for understanding how refugee presence reshapes both social relations and livelihood systems within host communities.

This complementarity enables the study to move beyond descriptive accounts of refugee impacts toward a theoretically grounded explanation of how and why socio-economic outcomes differ across communities, genders, and livelihood groups.

### **2.8.4 Mapping Objectives and Research Questions to Theoretical Domains**

The frameworks are operationalized as follows:

Objective 1 (Socio-economic impacts on livelihoods) → SLF (livelihood assets, vulnerability context)

Objective 2 (Challenges and opportunities) → SLF (asset access) + Integration Theory (social relations)

Objective 3 (Institutional and stakeholder strategies) → Integration Theory (institutional inclusion, access to services)

### **2.8.5 Application in Subsequent Chapters**

These frameworks will be explicitly applied in Chapter Five (Discussion) to interpret empirical findings and assess how refugee presence influences livelihood sustainability and social integration in Northern Ghana. In Chapter Six (Conclusion), the frameworks will guide synthesis, theoretical contributions, and reflections on the broader relevance of the findings.

### **2.9 Gaps in Literature on Refugees' Impact in Ghana**

Although there is a growing body of literature on refugees in Ghana, particularly regarding their livelihoods, local integration, and challenges, there are still considerable gaps in understanding the full scope of refugees' impact on host communities, local economies, and national policies. One of the primary gaps in the literature concerns the long-term socio-economic effects of refugees on host communities, particularly with respect to their contribution to economic growth, social cohesion, and local labor markets.

For example, while studies such as those by Omata (2017) and Agblorti (2011) have explored the livelihoods of refugees in specific camps, like Buduburam, few studies have comprehensively examined how refugees influence the broader economy. The informal economic activities of refugees, including their contributions to local trade, agriculture, and services, are often overlooked or underexplored in existing research (Jacobsen & Fratzke, 2020). This leaves a critical gap in understanding the economic potential of refugee populations and the role they can play in economic development. Moreover, there is limited research on how refugee populations impact urban centers where they settle outside of designated camps, and how urban integration is facilitated or hindered (Adjei & Amanor, 2019).

Additionally, much of the existing literature focuses on refugees' challenges, such as access to healthcare, education, and housing, but there is less emphasis on the success stories of refugees who have achieved local integration or significant economic contributions (Betts et al., 2017). Exploring these positive cases could provide valuable insights for policymakers in designing more effective refugee programs. Another key gap in the literature is the lack of longitudinal studies on the integration trajectories of refugees over time. Most studies provide a snapshot of the conditions in refugee camps or urban settings, but they do not track the changes in refugees' socio-economic status or their evolving relationship with host communities (Jacobsen, 2014). Long-term studies would help to understand how refugees' prospects change over time and what factors contribute to successful integration or continued marginalization.

There is also a dearth of research on the gendered dimensions of refugee experiences in Ghana. Although women make up a significant portion of refugee populations, their specific challenges, such as gender-based violence, access to employment, and social services, are not adequately covered in the literature (Omata, 2017). A more in-depth analysis of gender-specific issues would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the refugee experience in Ghana and help inform more inclusive policy interventions.

## **2.10 Research Questions**

**RQ1:** What are the socio-economic impacts of Burkinabe refugees on host community livelihoods in Northern Ghana?

**RQ2:** What key challenges and opportunities are associated with the presence of Burkinabe refugees within host communities in Northern Ghana?

**RQ3:** What strategies are employed by local authorities, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders to support both Burkinabe refugees and host communities in Northern Ghana?



## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Introduction

The methodology chapter outlines the research design, population, sampling techniques, data collection techniques, data analysis methods, and ethical practices used in this research. The chapter seeks to give a clear explanation of the way the research was carried out in order to increase the reliability and validity of the results.

#### 3.1 Research Design

A research design, as defined by Creswell and Creswell (2017), represents the overall strategy a researcher adopts to integrate the various components of a study in a logical and coherent manner in order to effectively address the research problem. Similarly, McCombes (2019) describes research design as a structured framework that guides the processes of data collection, analysis, and interpretation, enabling the researcher to respond systematically to the research questions posed. Guided by these perspectives, this study adopted a descriptive research design combined with a case study approach to comprehensively examine the socio-economic impacts of Burkinabè refugees on host community livelihoods in Northern Ghana.

The descriptive research design was considered appropriate because the study seeks to systematically describe and analyze existing conditions, perceptions, and experiences related to refugee host interactions without manipulating the study environment (Cooper & Schindler, 2024). Specifically, the design facilitated the documentation of livelihood impacts, integration challenges, opportunities, and institutional responses as they naturally occur within the host communities. Descriptive research is particularly valuable in social research contexts where the objective is to

capture real-world phenomena and provide an accurate representation of stakeholder experiences (McCombes, 2019).

To complement the descriptive design, a case study approach was employed, focusing on a specific refugee-hosting context in Northern Ghana. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), case studies allow for an in-depth and context-sensitive examination of complex social phenomena within their real-life settings. The integration of a case study approach enhanced the depth of the analysis by enabling a detailed exploration of localized dynamics, institutional arrangements, and socio-economic interactions that may not be adequately captured through broader survey methods alone. The combination of descriptive design and case study methodology therefore strengthened the internal validity and analytical richness of the study by allowing both broad pattern identification and nuanced contextual interpretation.

Regarding data collection, structured questionnaires were administered primarily through face-to-face interviews, a mode deemed suitable given varying literacy levels among respondents and the need to ensure clarity and accuracy of responses. To address potential language barriers, trained interpreters and local language support were employed during questionnaire administration, particularly for respondents who were more comfortable communicating in local languages. This approach improved response validity, minimized misinterpretation, and enhanced inclusivity, thereby contributing to the overall reliability and credibility of the study findings.

### 3.2 Population and Sample Size

The research population refers to the entire group of individuals or units that a researcher intends to study and from which conclusions are drawn (Kindy et al., 2016). In this study, the population of interest comprised Burkinabè refugees residing in selected areas of Northern Ghana and members of the surrounding host communities. Specifically, the population included residents

living in close proximity to refugee settlements, whose livelihoods and socio-economic conditions are most directly affected by refugee presence.

In addition to refugees and host community members, the study also targeted key stakeholders, including local government representatives, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international agencies such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), who are directly involved in refugee management and support activities. The inclusion of these diverse population groups enabled the study to capture a broad range of perspectives on refugee host interactions and their socio-economic implications.

The total sample size for the study was 250 respondents, comprising 100 refugees and 150 host community members. This sample size was considered adequate based on practical and resource-based considerations, including time constraints, accessibility of respondents, security concerns, and logistical limitations associated with working in refugee-hosting environments. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), sample sizes in descriptive and case study research are often determined by feasibility and the depth of data required rather than large-scale statistical generalization. The selected sample size was therefore sufficient to generate reliable descriptive statistics and meaningful insights while remaining manageable within the scope of the study.

### 3.3 Sampling Procedure and Technique

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure that the study sample adequately represented the key subgroups within the study population. Stratified random sampling involves dividing the population into homogeneous subgroups, or strata, and then selecting respondents randomly from each stratum (Cooper & Schindler, 2024). This approach is particularly suitable when a population is heterogeneous and consists of distinct groups with potentially different characteristics and experiences.

For this study, the population was stratified into two main groups: Burkinabè refugees and members of the host communities. From each stratum, 100 respondents were randomly selected, resulting in a total sample of 200 participants. The use of stratified sampling enhanced the precision of the study by reducing sampling error and ensuring proportional representation of both refugees and host community members (McCombes, 2019). This approach also strengthened the internal validity of the findings by allowing for meaningful comparison between the two groups.

### 3.4 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Primary data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire, which was designed to gather information on the socio-economic impacts of Burkinabè refugees on host community livelihoods in Northern Ghana. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended questions and Likert-scale items, allowing for the systematic collection of quantifiable data. Likert scales are widely used in social research to measure attitudes and perceptions by asking respondents to indicate their level of agreement with specific statements (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5), was employed.

The questionnaire was administered primarily through face-to-face interviews, a mode selected to enhance response accuracy and completion rates, particularly among respondents with limited literacy skills. To address language barriers, trained interpreters and local language assistants were engaged to facilitate communication with respondents who were not fluent in English. This language support ensured that questions were clearly understood and responses accurately captured, thereby improving the reliability and validity of the data collected.

The questionnaire was organized into sections covering demographic characteristics, socio-economic impacts, integration challenges, and perceptions of refugee–host relations. This structured approach enabled the collection of data that could be easily coded and analyzed

statistically, while also allowing for a nuanced understanding of respondents' attitudes and experiences.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

Data collected from the field were analyzed using Version 24.0 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). SPSS is widely used in social science research due to its capacity for efficient data management, statistical computation, and accurate interpretation of quantitative data (Babbie, 2016). Prior to analysis, completed questionnaires were coded and screened to ensure accuracy and consistency.

Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize respondents' demographic characteristics and to describe key variables related to socio-economic impacts, livelihood conditions, and integration experiences. These descriptive measures provided an overview of patterns and trends in the data. In addition, cross-tabulation was employed to examine variations in responses between refugees and host community members.

To examine relationships between variables, appropriate inferential statistical techniques were applied. Chi-square tests of independence were used to assess associations between categorical variables such as refugee presence and perceived impacts on employment, access to services, and social relations. Where variables were measured on ordinal or continuous scales, correlation analysis was conducted to determine the strength and direction of relationships between refugee-host interactions and livelihood outcomes. These inferential analyses enhanced the study's ability to move beyond description to examine statistically meaningful relationships, consistent with the study's objectives.

Missing data were minimal and were handled using listwise deletion, whereby questionnaires with substantial incomplete responses were excluded from specific analyses. This approach is appropriate where missing data are limited and randomly distributed, as it minimizes bias while preserving analytical integrity (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The assumptions underlying the statistical tests were considered prior to analysis. For chi-square tests, assumptions regarding independent observations and minimum expected cell frequencies were checked. Correlation analyses were conducted with attention to linearity and the level of measurement of the variables. Overall, the analytical approach ensured methodological rigor and supported valid interpretation of the relationships between refugee settlement dynamics, socio-economic conditions, and integration outcomes among refugees and host communities.

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

Any study project must take ethics into account, but this is especially true when working with vulnerable populations like refugees. Informed permission, participant protection from harm, and confidentiality are just a few of the ethical standards that researchers need to make sure their study abides by, according to Creswell & Creswell (2017). Prior to gathering data, the investigator obtained consent from pertinent authorities. The goal of the study, the participants' freedom to withdraw at any moment, and the confidentiality of their answers were all explained to the participants (Flick, 2018).

Furthermore, the investigator made certain that the data collection procedure was carried out in a way that honored the participants' rights and dignity (Babbie, 2016). To preserve the respondents' privacy, no personally identifying information was gathered, and all replies were anonymized. Before the study started, ethical clearance was secured from the University's Ethics Committee to make sure that all protocols adhered to the relevant ethical guidelines.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter offers the analysis and interpretation of data collected on Burkina Faso refugees' influence on host communities in Northern Ghana. The chapter begins by describing the respondents' demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, education, occupation, and length of stay in the host towns. Understanding these characteristics is critical for gaining insight into the variety of perspectives and experiences shared by participants. This information serves to contextualize the replies and investigates how different demographic characteristics influence local perceptions of migrants' impact on their communities. The next sections investigate each demographic characteristic, followed by an examination of how these qualities are distributed among the sample population.

#### 4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic data is essential for understanding the profile of persons whose perspectives contribute to this study on the impact of Burkina Faso refugees on Northern Ghanaian host communities. Respondents' age, gender, education, occupation, and duration of stay in the community all influence their experiences and perceptions on the socioeconomic, cultural, and infrastructural implications of refugee presence. This section analyzes these demographics, focusing on key distributions and trends that support the study's findings.

4.1.1 Respondents' Age Distribution

*Table 4.1.1: Displays age distribution of the respondents*

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-25 yrs	41	16.4
26-35 yrs	77	30.8
36-45 yrs	75	30.0
46-55 yrs	33	13.2
56 and above yrs	24	9.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From table 4.1.1, the distribution shows that the majority of respondents (60.8%) are between the ages of 26 and 45. This preponderance of young and middle-aged adults shows that a major number of the replies may represent the perspectives of economically engaged persons who are more likely to be affected by or react to economic and social developments in their areas. The reduced participation of older age groups, particularly those over 56, may imply fewer opinions from those with long-term historical knowledge of refugee impacts in the area.



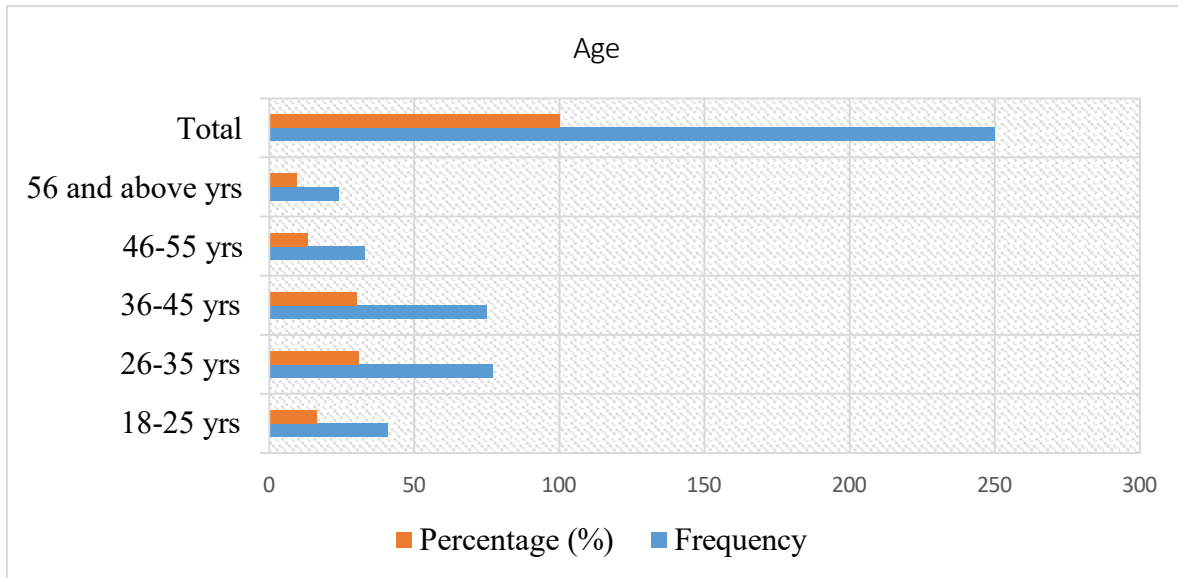


Figure 4.1.1: Shows the age distribution of the respondents

#### 4.1.2 Respondents' Gender Distribution

Table 4.1.2: Presents Respondents' Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	145	58.0
Female	105	42.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From the table, Men make up 58.0% of the 250 responders, while women make up 42.0%. This gender distribution suggests that there are slightly more male viewpoints than female ones, which could skew the results in favor of opinions more typically linked to men's roles in these groups. However, the inclusion of both male and female respondents offers a more balanced perspective,

illustrating how the presence of refugees may have varying effects on men and women in Northern Ghanaian host communities. This variance enhances the investigation of the effects of refugees on the social and economic fabric of the region by enabling the study to take gender-specific responses into account.

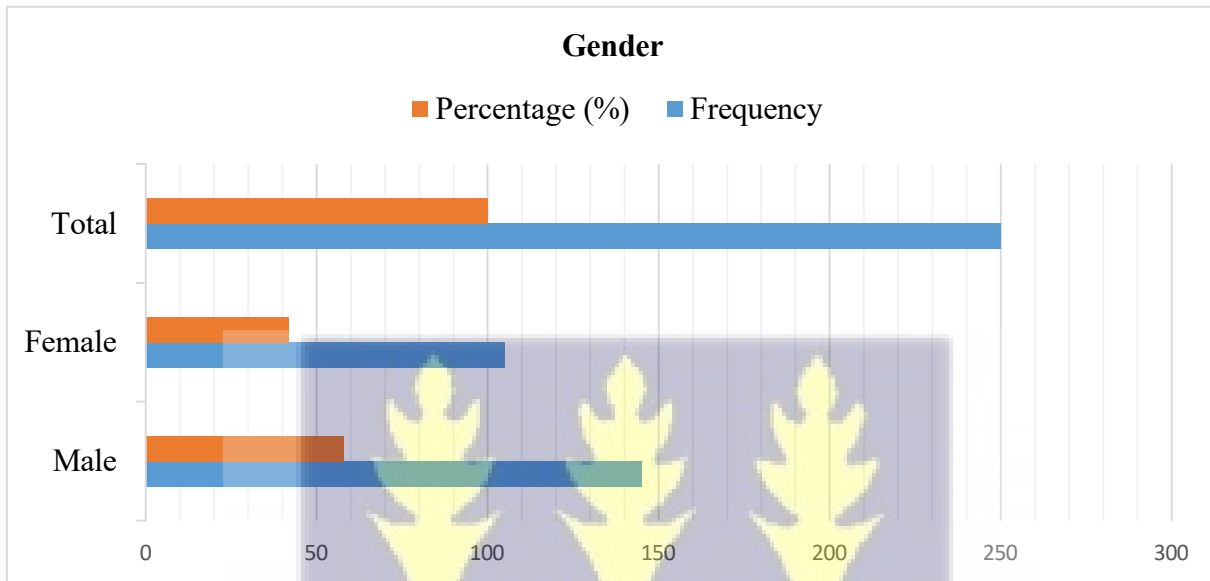


Figure 4.1.2: Shows Respondents' Gender Distribution

#### 4.1.3 Respondents' Education Level

Table 4.1.3: Presents Respondents' Education Level

Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No Formal Education	61	24.4
Basic Education	52	20.8
Secondary Education	59	23.6
Tertiary Education	78	31.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The table shows that, respondents' educational backgrounds range from 24.4% with no formal schooling to 20.8% with basic education, 23.6% with secondary education, and 31.2% with university education. With a sizable percentage of respondents obtaining higher education, this distribution demonstrates a highly broad educational background. Higher education levels may provide more analytical perspectives on the economic and infrastructural problems or contributions offered by refugee communities, and this disparity in educational attainment may influence perceptions and knowledge of issues related to refugee impacts.

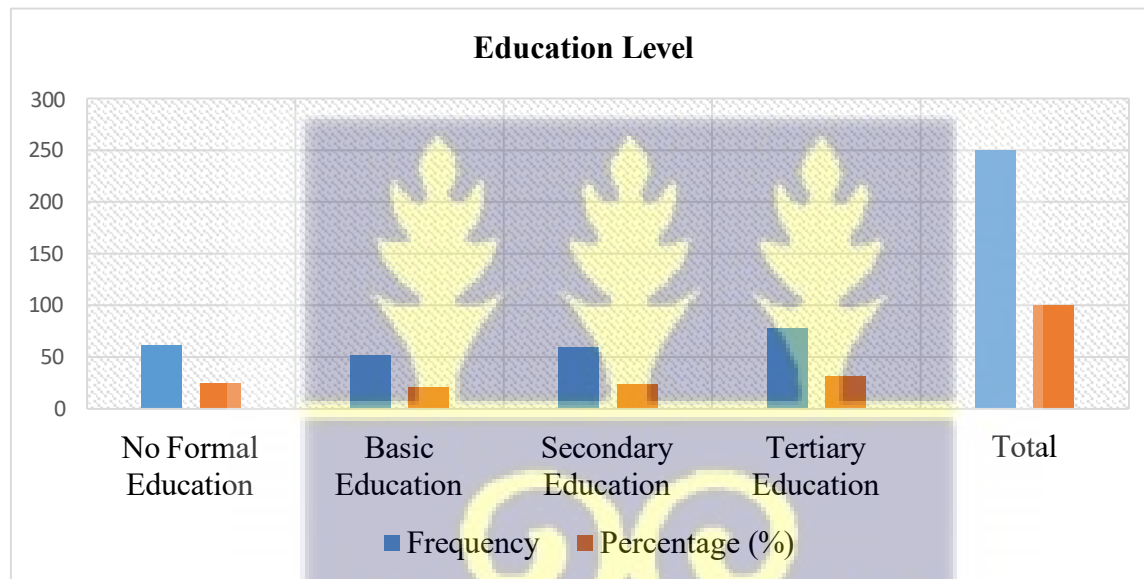


Figure 4.1.3: Displays Respondents' Education Level

#### 4.1.4 Respondents' Occupation

Table 4.1.4: Presents Respondents' Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Unemployed	67	26.8
Employed	91	36.4
Student	50	20.0
Retired	42	16.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.0</b>

From the above table, 26.8% of respondents are jobless, 36.4% work, 20.0% are students, and 16.8% are retired. The largest group, employed individuals, is likely to be directly affected by refugee economics, either through labor competition or business prospects. A sizable proportion of unemployed respondents suggests that attitudes on employment or resource access may figure heavily in the study results. Furthermore, the perspectives of students and retirees provide a broader social perspective on refugee impacts, enriching the community's understanding of refugee-host interactions.

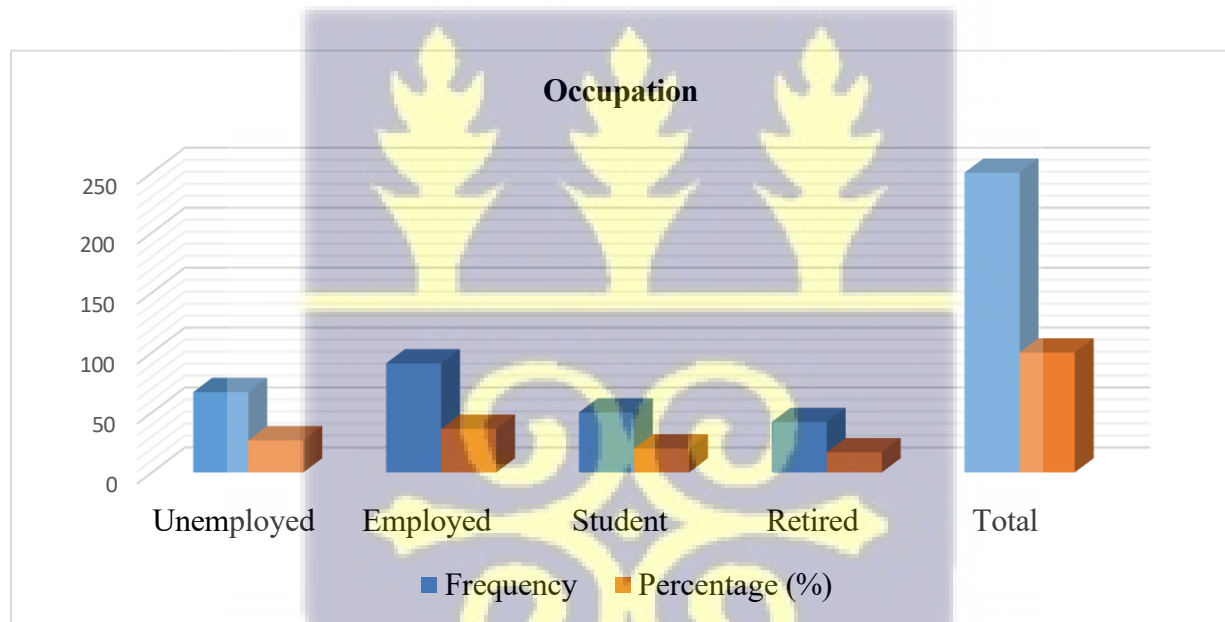
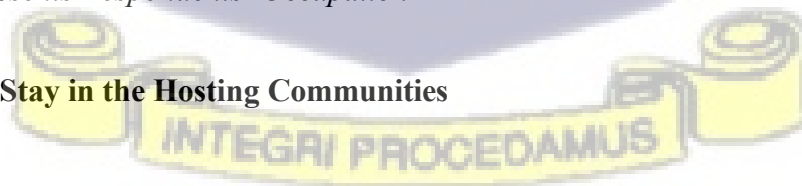


Figure 4.1.4: Presents Respondents' Occupation

#### 4.1.5 Length of Stay in the Hosting Communities



**Table 4.1.5: Shows the Length of Stay in the Hosting Communities**

<b>Length of Stay in the Hosting Communities</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Less than 1 year	24	9.6
1-5 years	79	31.6
6-10 years	84	33.6
More than 10 years	63	25.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100.0</b>

According to the results from the table, the majority of respondents have lived in the communities for a considerable amount of time, which could help provide a comprehensive understanding of the long-term impacts of the presence of refugees. While people who have lived in the area for more than ten years (25.2%) can offer more thorough viewpoints on historical shifts in community dynamics after the arrival of refugees, those who have been there for six to ten years (33.6%) are likely to offer insights on mid-term effects. This range in duration of residence offers a fair assessment of the current and long-term effects of refugees on communities in Northern Ghana.

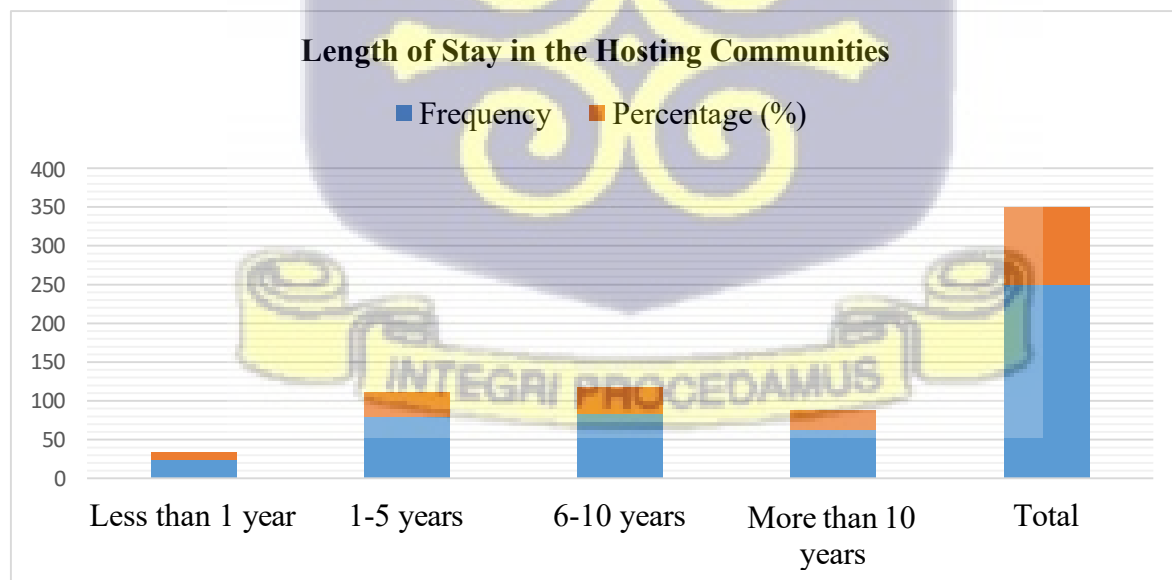


Figure 4.1.5: Shows the Length of Stay in the Hosting Communities

#### 4.2 Socio-Economic Impact of Refugees at Northern Ghana on the Local Community Host

Table 4.2: Shows the Socio-Economic Impact of Refugees at Northern Ghana on the Local Community Host

S/N	Items	SD	SD(%)	D	D(%)	N	N(%)	A	A(%)	SA	SA(%)
1	Refugees at Northern Ghana have contributed positively to the local economy	96	38.4	74	29.6	45	18.0	20	8.0	15	6.0
2	The presence of refugees has led to increased job opportunities for the local community.	94	37.6	94	37.6	28	11.2	21	8.4	13	5.2
3	There has been increased competition for resources (e.g., housing, food) due to the refugee population.	25	10	42	16.8	45	18.0	59	23.6	79	31.6
4	The refugee population has improved the cultural diversity of the community.	29	11.6	32	12.8	43	17.2	67	26.8	79	31.6
5	Refugees at Northern Ghana have enhanced the social networks within the local community.	24	9.6	45	18.0	2	0.8	87	34.8	92	36.8
6	The local community has faced higher costs of living since the arrival of Refugees in the Northern Ghana.	30	12.0	53	21.2	8	3.2	67	26.8	92	36.8
7	The influx of refugees has led to overcrowding in public services (e.g., health, education).	42	16.8	44	17.6	21	8.4	65	26.0	78	31.2
8	The refugee population at Northern Ghana has promoted local trade and business.	15	6.0	55	22.0	10	4.0	68	27.2	102	40.8

<b>9</b>	The local community's infrastructure has been strained by the presence of refugees.	23	9.2	65	26.0	11	4.4	72	28.8	79	31.6
<b>10</b>	The interaction between refugees and locals has strengthened social cohesion.	17	6.8	36	14.4	10	4.0	89	35.6	98	39.2

The study's findings reveal a complex socio-economic impact pattern of Burkinabe refugees on host communities in Northern Ghana. While a majority of respondents disagreed that refugees have contributed positively to the local economy (68%) and increased employment opportunities (75.2%), many acknowledged positive social dimensions, such as increased cultural diversity (58.4%) and strengthened social networks (71.6%).

The predominance of negative economic perceptions aligns with research indicating that refugee inflows often intensify competition for scarce resources in host environments with limited livelihood assets (e.g., land, jobs) and fragile infrastructure. Studies in Ghana have similarly reported that refugees can increase the cost of goods and pressure on public services, despite some positive trade effects (e.g., Codjoe et al., 2013). In contexts where formal employment markets are weak and resources are limited, host populations may not perceive significant direct economic benefits (Walelign et al., 2022).

In the language of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF), this reflects constraints in financial and physical capital, where competition over existing assets like jobs and infrastructure produces negative livelihood outcomes for hosts. The SLF posits that if asset stock (e.g., employment opportunities and infrastructure) is insufficiently augmented, new population pressures will likely be perceived as burdensome rather than beneficial. For Ghana's Northern Region, where development infrastructure is already strained, such perceptions are consistent with generalized vulnerability contexts faced by rural populations experiencing refugee inflows.

Despite economic concerns, the data show that respondents perceive enhanced cultural diversity and stronger social ties with refugee communities. This pattern resonates with other West African cases where prolonged refugee presence can foster meaningful social connections, improved cultural exchange, and communal cooperation (Boamah-Gyau, 2008). For example, research at Buduburam, a long-standing refugee settlement in Ghana, found that intermarriage and shared social events helped build social cohesion between Liberian refugees and Ghanaian hosts, illustrating that extended interaction fosters relational capital.

Within the Host-Refugee Integration Theory, such findings point to social integration domains, where mutual acceptance, social connections, and shared networks form key components of successful integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). That many host respondents perceived strengthened social cohesion suggests that, even where economic integration lags, social capital may grow over time as communities interact and adapt.

The current study also found that a significant proportion of hosts reported increased competition for resources (55.2%), higher cost of living (63.6%), and strain on infrastructure (60.4%) and public services (57.2%). This pattern echoes Codjoe et al.'s (2013) findings in Ghana, where increased population pressure was linked to rising costs of goods and pressure on health and education facilities.

This aligns with SLF's concept of vulnerability context where shocks to local resource availability such as large refugee influxes can diminish existing livelihood assets and heighten feelings of resource insecurity among host populations. Competition for water, land, and services often creates perceptions of loss or inequality, particularly in rural settings with weak public service capacity.

Interestingly, although respondents largely disagreed with positive macroeconomic effects, a solid majority (68%) agreed that refugees have promoted local trade and business. This resonates with global literature showing that refugees can stimulate aggregate demand by expanding local markets through consumption and labor participation (Taylor et al., 2016). In contexts where refugees sell goods or participate in informal trading, they can indirectly contribute to local economic activity even when formal employment effects remain limited.

This pattern suggests that refugee impacts may differ across economic domains negatively perceived when competition over scarce formal employment and services is salient, yet positively experienced in informal trade and market diversification. This duality matches global synthesis findings where refugees sometimes create small business opportunities while also triggering labor market pressures in low-asset settings (Rozo & Grossman, 2025).

From a Host-Refugee Integration Theory perspective, the mixed findings reflect partially realized integration: social interaction and cultural exchange are present (indicators of social cohesion), yet economic participation and institutional inclusion remain limited. Integration Theory emphasizes that access to services, employment, and rights are crucial for full integration outcomes (Ager & Strang, 2008). The current results suggest that while relational integration (social capital) shows signs of progress, structural integration (economic and institutional) remains weak.

These findings are consistent with several Ghana-specific studies. Codjoe et al. (2013) find mixed impacts economic pressure and social benefits when Liberian refugees settle in Ghana. Similarly, Agbesi (2019) shows refugee presence can boost certain businesses and social coexistence while overwhelming local amenities and resources.

Within the broader West African context, research on Ivorian refugees in Ghana also highlights infrastructure and resource strain as key challenges, even when cultural exchange is relatively positive. This cross-case similarity indicates that socio-economic impacts often reflect pre-existing local vulnerabilities combined with refugee presence dynamics, rather than refugee presence being a singular causal factor.

The study’s results suggest that sustainable refugee integration policies must go beyond humanitarian relief to include structural economic opportunities, public service expansion, and livelihood asset development. According to Walelign et al. (2022) evidence, increasing livelihood diversification and economic engagement opportunities can mitigate social tensions and improve host–refugee relations through enhanced financial security.

### 4.3 Challenges of Integrating Refugees into The Local Economy and Society

*Table 4.3: Presents the Challenges of Integrating Refugees into The Local Economy and Society*

S/N	Items	SD	SD(%)	D	D(%)	N	N(%)	A	A(%)	SA	SA(%)
11	Refugees face significant difficulties in accessing employment opportunities in the local community.	25	10.0	54	21.6	24	9.6	59	23.6	88	35.2
12	Language barriers are a major challenge for refugees trying to integrate into society.	19	7.6	22	8.8	18	7.2	93	37.2	98	39.2
13	Refugees have limited access to healthcare and education services.	80	32.0	64	25.6	19	7.6	49	19.6	38	15.2
14	Discrimination against refugees is common in the local community.	37	14.4	47	18.8	21	8.4	59	23.6	86	34.4
15	There are limited government programs to support refugee integration into the local economy.	0	0.0	0	0.0	6	2.4	105	42.0	139	55.6

16	Refugees are well-supported by NGOs and international agencies in Ghana.	91	36.4	89	35.6	7	2.8	46	18.4	17	6.8
17	The lack of documentation poses a major obstacle to refugee employment.	43	17.2	43	17.2	11	4.4	53	21.2	100	40.0
18	The local community is welcoming Refugees at Northern Ghana.	118	47.2	110	44.0	10	4.0	12	4.8	0	0.0
19	Refugees have been successfully integrated into the social activities of the local community.	97	38.8	62	24.8	14	5.6	51	20.4	26	10.4
20	Refugees face fewer challenges when integrating into rural areas compared to urban areas.	17	6.8	43	17.2	10	4.0	87	34.8	93	37.2

The results show that Burkinabe refugees in Northern Ghana encounter multiple structural and social barriers that impede their integration into the local economy and society. A substantial majority of respondents (58.8%) agreed that refugees face considerable difficulties accessing employment opportunities, a problem reinforced by language barriers, which 76.4% identified as a major impediment. Similarly, 57.6% reported limits in access to basic services such as healthcare and education. Close to 58% also noted widespread discrimination, further constraining refugees' ability to participate socially and economically.

These challenges mirror broader findings from Ghana and sub-Saharan Africa, where refugees frequently confront institutional and market barriers that restrict their integration outcomes, including limited recognition of qualifications, mismatch between skills and labour demand, and employers' reluctance to engage refugees (Afrifa, 2020). Indeed, studies in Ghana find that refugees suffer employment marginalisation due to a combination of skills mismatch, language limitations, and discriminatory hiring practices, which together reduce access to stable livelihoods (Afrifa, 2020).

The widespread perception of employment challenges aligns with integration literature emphasizing labour market constraints as key obstacles for refugees globally. Research identifies language proficiency as a critical determinant of employability, where limited host-country language skills substantially reduce job search efficiency, networking capacity, and access to formal employment (Fasani, n.d).

This pattern resonates with your study's findings: language barriers not only reduce employment access but also reinforce broader marginalization dynamics. Indeed, linguistic integration has been linked to both social cohesion and improved economic outcomes in refugee contexts; where language skills lag, refugees remain confined to low-wage, informal, or unstable jobs (Mavisakalyan et al., 2025).

From the Host-Refugee Integration Theory perspective, these labour market barriers reflect limitations in institutional inclusion, where language, documentation, and employment access act as gatekeeping mechanisms that restrict refugees' full participation in host communities (Ager & Strang, 2008). Without equitable access to jobs and services, refugees' ability to develop meaningful economic ties with host populations remains constrained, limiting their integration across domains.

This study's findings also highlight significant access issues to healthcare and education, with over half of respondents recognizing these limitations. These bottlenecks are consistent with broader integration research showing that refugees often face administrative, financial, and systemic barriers when seeking essential services even in contexts where formal access exists (Agblorti et al., 2024).

In Ghana, qualitative research has documented how refugees struggle with service access due to structural constraints such as lack of documentation and weak institutional support, limiting their participation in national education and health systems (Amoani, 2019).

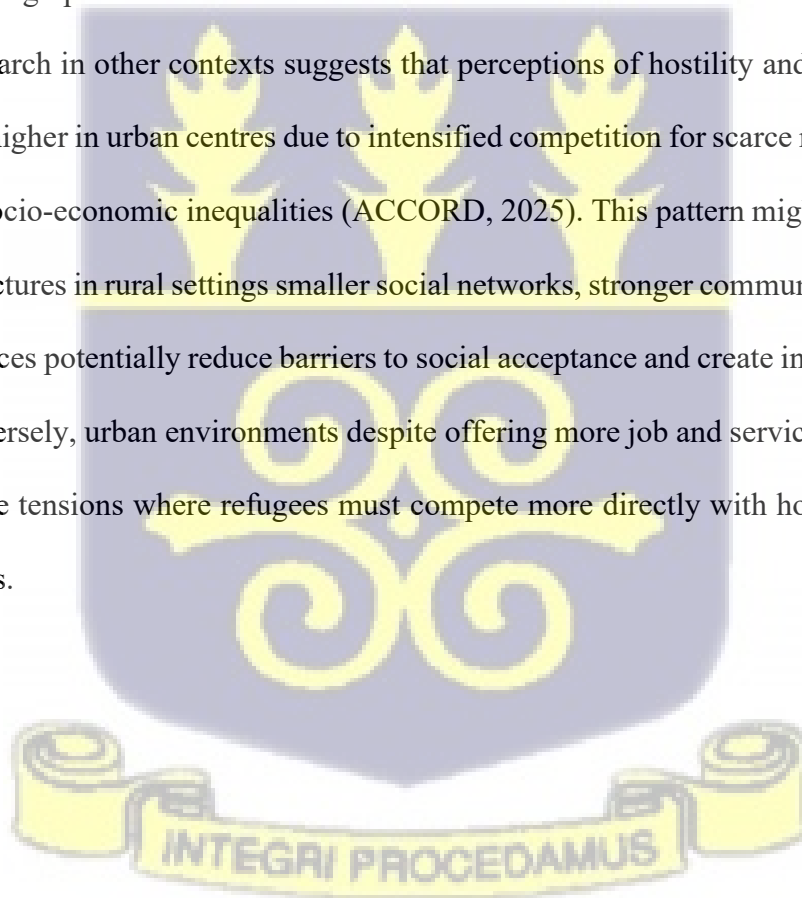
In terms of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF), limited access to services depletes refugees' human capital, while discrimination and weak institutional support constrain social capital and financial capital, exacerbating vulnerability and reducing refugees' capacity to improve their livelihoods.

Discrimination, identified by 58% of respondents as common, further impedes integration. This finding echoes evidence from both African and global refugee contexts where stigma, xenophobia, and negative host attitudes contribute to exclusionary practices in employment, housing, and community participation (Ng'andu, 2024). Such social barriers directly tie into Host-Refugee Integration Theory's focus on social connections and cultural acceptance, which are essential components of integration. Persistent discrimination undermines the formation of positive social ties, inhibiting refugees' ability to build supportive networks and engage fully in community life.

The near-unanimous agreement (97.6%) that government initiatives are limited underscores a major policy and institutional gap. This echoes mixed findings in Ghanaian refugee studies, which observe that integration policies and institutional frameworks often lack coherence, financial capacity, and implementation effectiveness, thereby leaving refugees dependent on international agencies or informal support (Naquentera et al., 2025). Simultaneously, respondents' perceptions that NGOs and international agencies do not sufficiently address refugees' needs (72% disagreeing with adequate support) reflect similar sentiments in both academic and practice worlds that humanitarian actors are often constrained in scale, scope, and sustainability of their programs compared to the magnitude of integration challenges.

The finding that 61.2% believe lack of documentation restricts employment aligns with broader evidence that legal and bureaucratic barriers significantly hamper refugees' economic integration. Research across Africa shows that refugees often cannot obtain formal work permits or have their foreign credentials recognized, limiting them to informal and precarious labour (Gebeya report, 2023). Such legal exclusion not only reduces economic opportunities but also weakens refugees' incentives to invest in skills and social integration, as formal pathways to stable livelihoods remain blocked.

The significant finding that 72% view rural integration as easier than urban integration introduces an important geographic dimension. While limited African evidence exists on rural–urban differences, research in other contexts suggests that perceptions of hostility and competition with locals are often higher in urban centres due to intensified competition for scarce resources, housing pressures, and socio-economic inequalities (ACCORD, 2025). This pattern might be explained by opportunity structures in rural settings smaller social networks, stronger communal ties, and shared livelihood practices potentially reduce barriers to social acceptance and create informal integration pathways. Conversely, urban environments despite offering more job and service opportunities — often concentrate tensions where refugees must compete more directly with host populations for limited resources.



#### 4.4 Policy Responses of the Ghanaian Government and International Agencies

*Table 4.4: Presents Policy Responses of the Ghanaian Government and International Agencies*

S/N	Items	SD	SD(%)	D	D(%)	N	N(%)	A	A(%)	SA	SA(%)
21	The Ghanaian government has provided adequate support for refugees at Northern Ghana.	147	58.8	76	30.4	10	4.0	17	6.8	0	0.0
22	International agencies have played a major role in managing the refugee situation at Northern Ghana.	80	32.0	66	26.4	18	7.2	57	22.8	29	11.6
23	There is clear coordination between the Ghanaian government and international agencies in handling refugees.	76	30.4	63	25.2	4	1.6	45	18.0	62	24.8
24	The Ghanaian government has implemented policies to promote the long-term integration of refugees into society.	97	38.8	53	21.2	19	7.6	52	20.8	29	11.6
25	The Ghanaian government's policies are sufficient to address the challenges faced by refugees.	82	32.8	82	32.8	7	2.8	52	20.8	27	10.8
26	International aid has been instrumental in maintaining the welfare of refugees at Northern Ghana.	78	31.2	55	22.0	11	4.4	54	21.6	52	20.8
27	Government policies have effectively supported the local community hosting refugees.	79	31.6	74	29.6	4	1.6	49	19.6	44	17.6
28	Refugees at Northern Ghana have received sufficient legal	8	3.2	31	12.4	1	0.4	93	37.2	117	46.8

	protection from the Ghanaian government.										
29	International agencies have been slow to respond to the changing needs of refugees.	33	13.2	44	17.6	5	2.0	82	32.8	86	34.4
30	More policy efforts are needed to address the prolonged refugee situation at Northern Ghana.	19	7.6	49	19.6	9	3.6	73	29.2	100	40.0

The findings reveal that host community members in Northern Ghana perceive government and international agency responses to the Burkinabe refugee situation as largely inadequate, poorly coordinated, and unresponsive to evolving socio-economic needs. A pronounced majority (89.2%) disagreed that the Ghanaian government has provided sufficient direct support for refugees in the study area. Similarly, 60.0% expressed skepticism about the adequacy of long-term integration policies. These perceptions reflect broader concerns that existing policy frameworks may be more declarative than operational, lacking the resources and implementation capacity necessary to address the cumulative and protracted nature of refugee needs.

Furthermore, 65.6% of respondents believe that current policies are insufficient to resolve emerging refugee challenges, while 58.4% disagreed that international agencies have effectively managed the evolving situation. A considerable 67.2% indicated that international agencies have been slow to respond to changing refugee needs. Coordination between the government and international partners was also widely perceived as inadequate, with less than half (42.8%) affirming clear cooperation between these actors. Despite these concerns, 42.4% acknowledged that international aid has played a role in supporting refugee welfare. Notably, 84.0% agreed that refugees receive sufficient legal protection from the Ghanaian government, suggesting that statutory rights frameworks are viewed more favorably than operational support systems. Finally,

69.2% of respondents believe that additional policy effort is urgently needed to ensure sustained refugee support.

From the standpoint of the Host–Refugee Integration Theory, effective integration extends beyond legal recognition to encompass institutional inclusion, participation, and access to services (Ager & Strang, 2008). The strong agreement on legal protection suggests that legal frameworks (e.g., asylum rights and protection norms) are broadly recognized in Ghana. However, the widespread perception of inadequate policy support and slow international response illustrates shortcomings in institutional inclusion and service provision key theoretical domains of integration that facilitate participation in social, economic, and civic life.

Similarly, the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) emphasizes the role of transforming structures (e.g., policies, institutions, market systems) in mediating access to livelihood capitals (human, social, financial, physical, and natural). Insufficient policy support constrains refugees' access to educational, economic, and social resources, thereby limiting their ability to build sustainable livelihoods (Scoones, 1998). The perceived inadequacy of government and international support highlights barriers in converting legal protection into tangible improvements in financial and human capital such as employment access and quality health services for both refugees and host communities.

Empirical research on refugee integration in Ghana confirms the pattern seen in your data. A UNHCR research report on local integration published in 2011 emphasizes that the absence of strong government support for local integration has historically constrained durable solutions for refugees, with limited policy direction beyond basic protection (Agblorti, 2011).

More recent qualitative and policy analyses note that while Ghanaian law aligns with international protection standards, institutional implementation and coordination mechanisms are weak, particularly in peripheral regions such as the North where administrative capacity is limited (Codjoe et al., 2013). Studies also document how refugee camp systems and service delivery structures, often managed jointly by UNHCR and government partners, struggle to adapt rapidly to new arrivals and shifting needs, contributing to perceptions of delayed institutional responses.

Beyond Ghana, comparative evidence from West Africa highlights similar challenges. Research on refugee-host integration in Ghana's Western Region (Krisan) shows that while host communities may tolerate refugee settlement, institutional support for economic and social integration is limited, and tensions arise when international support is insufficiently coordinated or sustained. These regional parallels reinforce the notion that policy effectiveness, especially in rural and resource-constrained contexts, remains a systemic challenge across West African host settings (Agblorti, 2011).

The strong perception of legal protection as adequate appears consistent with Ghana's reputation for political stability and adherence to international refugee law. UNHCR country profiles indicate that Ghana, in collaboration with the Ghana Refugee Board and international partners, works to ensure refugees are included within national systems for health, education, and protection services (Omata, 2012).

At the same time, the widespread view that policy responses are insufficient reflects a practical implementation gap between legal policy and on-the-ground capacity. Ghana, like many developing host states, often relies on international humanitarian partners to provide material support, yet these partnerships are subject to funding limitations and logistical constraints leading to perceived slow responsiveness.

#### 4.5 Inferential statistics

*Table 4.5.1 – Chi-square Test for Socio-Economic Impact (Item 1)*

Statement: "Refugees at Northern Ghana have contributed positively to the local economy"

Response Category	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E
Strongly Disagree	96	50	42.32
Disagree	74	50	11.52
Neutral	45	50	0.50
Agree	20	50	18.00
Strongly Agree	15	50	24.50
<b>Total <math>\chi^2</math></b>			<b>96.84</b>

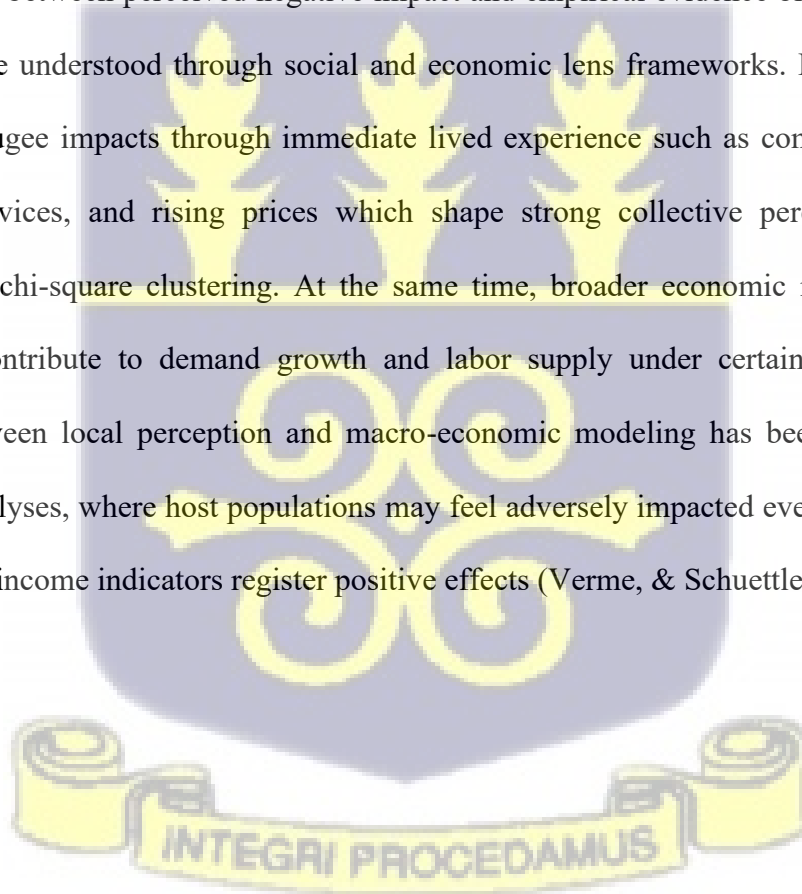
df = 4, p < 0.001

The chi-square test for Item 1 (“Refugees at Northern Ghana have contributed positively to the local economy”) yielded a statistically significant result ( $\chi^2 = 96.84$ , df = 4, p < 0.001), indicating that responses were not evenly distributed across categories and clustered toward disagreement. In other words, a significantly larger proportion of host community respondents disagreed that refugees have made a positive economic contribution. This pattern aligns with empirical evidence suggesting that perceptions of refugees’ economic impact often diverge from macroeconomic effects reported in the literature. For example, Codjoe et al. (2013) found that Ghanaian host communities frequently view refugee presence as increasing the cost of goods and competitive pressures on local resources, even if some economic opportunities arise from trade and service demand generated by refugees (mixed impacts documented).

Contrasting these perceptions, some rigorous microeconomic studies show that refugees can create measurable positive spillovers at local levels. Research in Rwanda found that refugee spending

and labor participation can increase real income for nearby host households and stimulate trade linkages greater than the value of the aid they receive, indicating that economic contributions may be under-recognized by local populations (Taylor et al., 2016). Similarly, panel studies in West Africa suggest that refugee shocks can have positive effects on GDP per capita and labor supply, although such benefits may be modest and context dependent (Nkwatoh, & Ibrahim, 2021). These findings point to the complex reality that objective economic effects of refugees may not always match perceived impacts, especially in environments where resource scarcity and public service strain dominate everyday experience.

The discrepancy between perceived negative impact and empirical evidence of potential positive spillovers can be understood through social and economic lens frameworks. Host communities often assess refugee impacts through immediate lived experience such as competition for jobs, pressure on services, and rising prices which shape strong collective perceptions captured statistically via chi-square clustering. At the same time, broader economic models show that refugees can contribute to demand growth and labor supply under certain conditions. This divergence between local perception and macro-economic modeling has been documented in World Bank analyses, where host populations may feel adversely impacted even while aggregate consumption or income indicators register positive effects (Verme, & Schuettler, 2019).



**Table 4.5.2 – Chi-square Test for Integration Challenge (Item 12)**

Statement: "Language barriers are a major challenge for refugees trying to integrate into society"

<b>Response Category</b>	<b>Observed (O)</b>	<b>Expected (E)</b>	<b>(O-E)<sup>2</sup>/E</b>
Strongly Disagree	19	50	22.41
Disagree	22	50	16.64
Neutral	18	50	20.48
Agree	93	50	38.72
Strongly Agree	98	50	48.08
<b>Total <math>\chi^2</math></b>			<b>146.33</b>

df = 4, p < 0.001

The chi-square result for Item 12 (“Language barriers are a major challenge for refugees trying to integrate into society”) was highly significant ( $\chi^2 = 146.33$ , df = 4, p < 0.001), indicating that host community responses were not evenly distributed but clustered strongly toward agreement. This means that a clear majority of respondents perceive language barriers as a critical impediment to refugee integration. Such statistically significant clustering reflects a collective perception rather than random variation, underscoring the salience of language difficulties in shaping social and economic interactions between refugees and hosts.

Empirical studies from refugee settings in West and East Africa corroborate this pattern. Research in Ghana and Ethiopia highlights that language differences particularly between English-speaking hosts and refugees from Francophone countries significantly hinder access to services, social participation, and institutional engagement, as refugees often depend on local intermediaries for basic communication in healthcare and administrative contexts (Agblorti et al., 2016). This is consistent with broader migration literature showing that host language proficiency is crucial for

successful integration; limited language skills isolate refugees from cultural, economic, and civic life, reinforcing marginalization and reducing opportunities for meaningful participation (Atobatele & Mouboua, 2024).

From a Host Refugee Integration Theory perspective, language functions as a fundamental facilitator that affects multiple domains of integration, including social connections, access to education, and employment (Ager & Strang, 2008). When refugees lack proficiency in the dominant language(s), they are constrained in building networks with host members, accessing institutional supports, and transitioning into local labour markets dynamics that are evident in your dataset’s pattern of strong agreement on language barriers. Moreover, the importance of linguistic integration for broader well-being is supported by research showing that improved language proficiency enhances social interaction, trust, and even health outcomes among refugees, further emphasizing language’s central role in integration processes (Mavisakalyan et al., 2025).

**Table 4.5.3 – Chi-square Test for Policy Response (Item 21)**

Statement: "The Ghanaian government has provided adequate support for refugees at Northern Ghana"

Response Category	Observed (O)	Expected (E)	(O-E) <sup>2</sup> /E
Strongly Disagree	147	50	184.90
Disagree	76	50	10.76
Neutral	10	50	32.40
Agree	17	50	11.22
Strongly Agree	0	50	50.00
<b>Total <math>\chi^2</math></b>			<b>289.28</b>

df = 4, p < 0.001

The chi-square test for Item 21 (“The Ghanaian government has provided adequate support for refugees at Northern Ghana”) is highly significant ( $\chi^2 = 289.28$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), showing that respondents’ perceptions are strongly skewed toward disagreement. In practical terms, this result means that the majority of the host community does not view government support as adequate, which suggests that the visible institutional response falls short of local expectations and felt needs. This pattern is consistent with refugee integration research that distinguishes between formal legal frameworks and operational delivery capacity: while host states may uphold refugee rights in law, actual implementation and the tangible support experienced by refugees and hosts can lag due to resource and coordination constraints.

In Ghana, the Ghana Refugee Board (GRB) is mandated to coordinate refugee management including registration, documentation, facilitation of services, and coordination with partners such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and NADMO yet literature highlights persistent implementation gaps in delivering comprehensive socio-economic support on the ground. The GRB’s formal mandate, for example, includes assisting in education, employment, shelter, and healthcare access, but scholars have noted that implementation challenges and resource limitations undermine the effective realization of these rights and supports in refugee contexts, such as in Egyeikrom and other camp settings where basic service provision often remains inadequate (Ghana Refugee Board mandate; case studies on Ghana refugee law implementation) (Atobatele & Mouboua, 2024).

Moreover, although Ghana has a strong legal commitment to refugee protection reflected in ratification of international conventions and domestic policies research on refugee integration in Ghana shows that structural support systems, funding levels, and cross-sector coordination remain weak, particularly in northern regions hosting new influxes. For example, service quality and

institutional engagement often depend on external partners (e.g., UNHCR, EU/UNICEF projects), and national capacity to deliver consistent, quality programs is constrained (e.g., divergent service provisions and reliance on international project funding). This gap between legal frameworks and lived policy implementation is also noted in Ghana–Ethiopia comparative research, where national systems struggle to provide integrated services without significant external support, leading to differentiated quality that affects perceptions of adequacy (Agblorti et al., 2016).

From a theoretical perspective, the Host–Refugee Integration Theory helps explain why host perceptions of inadequate government support are meaningful: the theory posits that integration depends not only on formal rights but on institutional inclusion and capacity to deliver services, economic opportunities, and social supports (Ager & Strang, 2008). Where institutional capacity is perceived as insufficient as your chi-square result indicates integration processes stall, reinforcing host community frustration and refugee marginalization. In addition, the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) suggests that supportive policy structures are key “transforming structures” that mediate access to livelihood assets; weak governmental response undermines these structures, thus limiting refugees’ and hosts’ ability to convert legal protection into improved human, financial, and social capital.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the analysis of data in Chapter Four into the socio-economic impacts, challenges, and strategies that characterize the presence of Burkinabe refugees in Northern Ghana. The findings have been framed by the demographic characteristics of respondents, which provide a contextual basis for interpreting the impact of refugees on host communities. Discussions delve into how these findings align with existing literature and theoretical perspectives.

#### 5.1 Demographic Characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the respondents greatly influenced the perceptions on the impact of Burkinabe refugees. By age, it was observed that the majority (60.8%) of respondents fell between 26 and 45 years, who are conventionally considered as economically active and more likely to be impacted by socio-economic changes. This age demographic had given insights into employment, resource competition, and infrastructure use. The smaller representation for respondents 56 and over suggests fewer long-term residents who can provide a wider historical perspective about the impacts.

The gender distribution was biased towards male participation at 58%, whereas the female participation ratio was 42%. This could be a biased balance of the findings since in most cases men's roles in economic and public domains dictate their perceptions regarding access to resources and jobs. However, representation by female respondents did provide useful information on social cohesion and household-level problems.

The educational attainment was diversified, with 31.2% having tertiary qualifications and 24.4% not having any formal education. Such variation provided a balance in the perspective, as highly educated would more likely contribute with analytical views about policy and economic dynamics, while low-educated individuals highlighted challenges at the grassroots level.

Occupation data showed that 36.4% of respondents were employed, while 26.8% were unemployed. These figures bear testimony to apprehensions about job competition and inadequacy of resources. The 20% who were students and 16.8% retirees provided valuable additions in the perspective of education and social services, respectively. Lastly, the length of stay in host communities showed that 59% of respondents had stayed there for over six years. This distribution provided comprehensive insights into the medium- and long-term impacts of refugee presence: shifts in infrastructure, culture, and economy.

## **5.2 Socio-Economic Impacts of Refugees**

The socio-economic impacts of Burkinabe refugees were multifaceted. Respondents reported increased cultural diversity (58.4%) and stronger social networks (74.8%) as the most salient benefits. These findings point to a positive role that refugees can play in strengthening communal bonds and cultural exchange. However, there were significant economic challenges identified. Increased competition for resources, as identified by 60.4% of respondents, has stretched housing, food supplies, and infrastructure. The rising cost of living was identified by 63.6%, showing the economic pressures on host communities. Despite these issues, 68% of respondents identified that refugees have stimulated local trade, showing their contribution to economic activity.

### **5.3 Challenges and Opportunities**

Language barriers (76.4%) and discrimination (58%) emerged as major challenges impeding refugees' integration into local society. Limited access to employment and essential services compounded these difficulties, leaving refugees vulnerable to marginalization. Additionally, the lack of government support (89.2%) was a recurring theme, emphasizing the need for policy reforms. Opportunities were, however, found in rural areas where the cohesive social structures supported better integration. This indicates that targeted support in rural settings can help improve the relationships between refugees and their hosts, thus easing pressures in urban centers.

### **5.4 Strategies and Policy Responses**

While the role of international agencies and NGOs in supporting refugees was acknowledged, 58.4% of respondents questioned their responsiveness and effectiveness. In addition, 67.2% noted the lack of coordination between these agencies and the Ghanaian government in implementing policies. However, 84% of respondents felt that refugees are accorded adequate legal protection, hence some progress in protecting their rights. The findings call for increased collaboration between stakeholders to alleviate the protracted refugee situation. Policy reforms should focus on the integration of refugees into the socio-economic fabric of host communities while mitigating resource-related tensions.

### **5.5 Conclusion**

In a nutshell, the findings unearth the complex network of pros and cons Burkinabe refugees face in North Ghana: it is a marked cultural enrichment and a reinforcement of social ties, while at the same time an economic burden coupled with very limited policy support. The challenges could only be surmounted with the commitment of the government, international agencies, and local stakeholders in the promotion of sustainable solutions for both refugees and host communities.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations arising from the study titled Impact of Burkinabe Refugees on Host Communities in Northern Ghana. Drawing directly from the empirical findings and theoretical frameworks that guided the study, the chapter synthesizes key insights on the socio-economic impacts of refugee presence, integration challenges, and policy responses. The conclusions explicitly address the study's research objectives and questions, while the recommendations are structured to reflect both immediate and long-term policy and practice implications. In doing so, the chapter situates the findings within the Host–Refugee Integration Theory and the Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) to inform sustainable and context-sensitive responses to refugee–host dynamics in Northern Ghana.

#### 6.1 Conclusions

This study concludes that the presence of Burkinabe refugees in Northern Ghana has produced complex and multidimensional socio-economic outcomes for host communities, consistent with theoretical expectations of refugee-host interaction in resource-constrained settings.

With respect to Objective One, the findings demonstrate that refugee presence generates both livelihood opportunities and pressures. While refugees have contributed positively to local trade, cultural diversity, and social interaction, they have simultaneously intensified competition for housing, food, public services, and infrastructure. From the perspective of the Sustainable Livelihood Framework, these outcomes reflect uneven access to financial, physical, and social

capital, where livelihood gains are offset by heightened vulnerability within the host community's asset base.

Regarding Objective Two, the study finds that refugee integration into the local economy and society remains constrained by limited employment opportunities, language barriers, documentation challenges, and perceived discrimination. These barriers restrict refugees' ability to convert available human and social capital into sustainable livelihoods. The findings align closely with the Host–Refugee Integration Theory, which emphasizes that integration is not solely dependent on refugee adaptation but also on host community receptivity, institutional inclusion, and access to shared social spaces.

In relation to Objective Three, the study concludes that existing institutional and stakeholder strategies are widely perceived as insufficient. Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the level of government support, the timeliness of international agency responses, and the coordination among key actors. Although legal protection for refugees is viewed positively, weak implementation capacity limits the translation of legal rights into meaningful socio-economic inclusion. This underscores a gap between formal policy commitment and operational effectiveness, a challenge widely documented in protracted refugee settings.

Finally, addressing Objective Four, the study concludes that current policy frameworks do not adequately support sustainable refugee–host integration. The findings indicate an urgent need for more comprehensive, coordinated, and development-oriented policy interventions that recognize refugees not only as beneficiaries of protection but also as active contributors to local development processes.

## 6.2 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed. Each recommendation is directly linked to empirical evidence and is prioritized according to feasibility and time horizon.

### Short-Term Recommendations

#### 1. Strengthen Livelihood Support and Employment Access

In response to widespread perceptions of limited employment opportunities and documentation barriers, the Government of Ghana, in collaboration with NGOs and international agencies, should expand short-term livelihood programs, including vocational training, cash-for-work schemes, and simplified work permit processes. These interventions can enhance refugees' access to financial and human capital while reducing economic tensions with host communities.

#### 2. Improve Language and Social Integration Support

Given the prominence of language barriers and weak social inclusion, targeted language support services and community-based integration programs should be introduced. These initiatives can foster mutual understanding and strengthen social capital, consistent with the Host-Refugee Integration Theory's emphasis on social connections and shared norms.

#### 3. Enhance Institutional Coordination

To address perceived delays and fragmentation in service delivery, clearer coordination mechanisms should be established among government agencies, UNHCR, NGOs, and local authorities. Regular joint planning and monitoring forums can improve responsiveness while minimizing duplication of effort.

## Long-Term Recommendations

### 4. Invest in Host Community Infrastructure and Services

The strain on health, education, and housing infrastructure highlights the need for long-term development investment in refugee-hosting areas. Integrating refugee response into district and regional development plans can strengthen physical capital for both refugees and hosts, reducing competition and resentment.

### 5. Adopt a Development-Oriented Integration Policy Framework

Current refugee policies should be reviewed to move beyond emergency assistance toward sustainable local integration strategies. Such policies should explicitly link refugee inclusion to local economic development, consistent with SLF principles and the integration theory's institutional domain.

### 6. Promote Social Cohesion and Conflict Prevention

Long-term social stability requires structured intercultural dialogue, joint community projects, and civic engagement initiatives. These efforts can consolidate positive social relations already observed in the study and mitigate future conflict risks.

### 6.3 Feasibility Considerations

While these recommendations are evidence-based, their implementation is subject to important constraints. Limited funding, fluctuating donor priorities, and competing national development demands may restrict the scale of interventions. Political will at both national and local levels is essential to prioritize refugee-hosting regions within development planning. Furthermore, effective implementation depends on strong institutional coordination, which requires sustained

commitment from government agencies and international partners. Addressing these constraints will be critical to translating policy intentions into tangible outcomes.

#### 6.4 Directions for Future Research

Future research should build on this study by examining the long-term livelihood trajectories of both refugees and host community members, with particular attention to employment sustainability and entrepreneurship outcomes. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insight into how integration evolves over time. Further research is also needed on sector-specific impacts, especially in health and education, to inform targeted policy design. Finally, comparative studies across different refugee-hosting regions in Ghana and West Africa would enhance understanding of how contextual factors shape refugee–host interactions and policy effectiveness.



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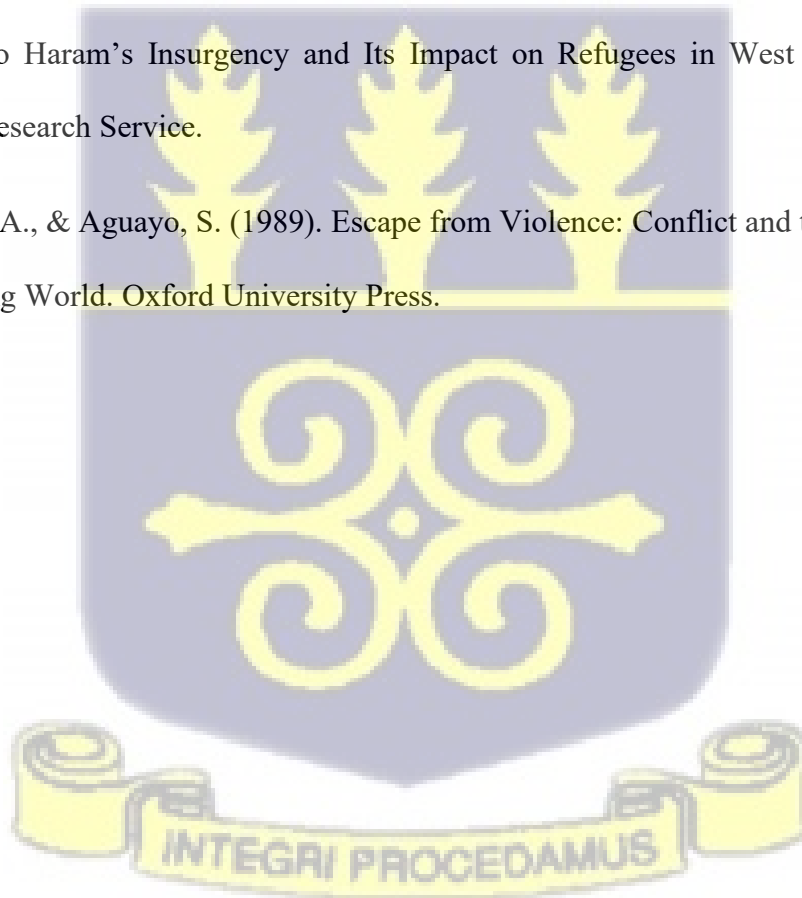
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**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON**

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

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**Introduction:**

Dear Respondent,

I **ABASS ABDUL-RAHAMAN**, an MPhil student at the University of Ghana, Legon, currently conducting research on "**Impact of Burkinabe Refugees on Host Communities in Northern Ghana**" The aim of this study is to assess the socio-economic impact of refugees in Northern Ghana on the local host community, examine the challenges faced in integrating refugees into the local economy and society, and explore the policy responses from the Ghanaian government and international agencies.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary, and all the information you provide will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. There are no right or wrong answers your honest opinions are what we are seeking. The questionnaire consists of a demographic section followed by statements related to the research objectives. You are kindly requested to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements using the 5-point scale provided (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Thank you for taking the time to contribute to this important study.

**RESEARCHER'S NAME: ABASS ABDUL-RAHAMAN**

**INDEX NUMBER: 11008457**

**Part A: Demographic Characteristics**

**Age:**

- 18-25                       26-35                       36-45                       46-55
- 56 and above

**Gender:**

- Male                       Female

**Education Level:**

- No Formal Education     Basic Education     Secondary Education     Tertiary Education

**Occupation:**

- Unemployed               Employed               Student               Retired

**Length of Stay in the Community:**

- Less than 1 year         1-5 years               6-10 years               More than 10 years



**Part B: To assess the Socio-Economic Impact of Refugees at Northern Ghana Camp on the Local Community Host.**

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Please kindly tick (✓) the level of your agreement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Refugees at Northern Ghana have contributed positively to the local economy.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The presence of refugees has led to increased job opportunities for the local community.	1	2	3	4	5
3. There has been increased competition for resources (e.g., housing, food) due to the refugee population.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The refugee population has improved the cultural diversity of the community.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Refugees at Northern Ghana have enhanced the social networks within the local community.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The local community has faced higher costs of living since the establishment of Northern Ghana.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The influx of refugees has led to overcrowding in public services (e.g., health, education).	1	2	3	4	5
8. The refugee population at Northern Ghana has promoted local trade and business.	1	2	3	4	5
9. The local community's infrastructure has been strained by the presence of refugees.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The interaction between refugees and locals has strengthened social cohesion.	1	2	3	4	5

**Part C: To examine the Challenges of Integrating Refugees into The Local Economy and Society**

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Please kindly tick (✓) the level of your agreement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
11. Refugees face significant difficulties in accessing employment opportunities in the local community.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Language barriers are a major challenge for refugees trying to integrate into society.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Refugees have limited access to healthcare and education services.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Discrimination against refugees is common in the local community.	1	2	3	4	5
15. There are limited government programs to support refugee integration into the local economy.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Refugees are well-supported by NGOs and international agencies in Ghana.	1	2	3	4	5
17. The lack of documentation poses a major obstacle to refugee employment.	1	2	3	4	5
18. The local community is welcoming to refugees at Northern Ghana.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Refugees have been successfully integrated into the social activities of the local community.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Refugees face fewer challenges when integrating into rural areas compared to urban areas.	1	2	3	4	5

**Part D: To Explore the Policy Responses of the Ghanaian Government and International Agencies**

Please rate the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5: (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

Please kindly tick (✓) the level of your agreement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
21. The Ghanaian government has provided adequate support for refugees at Northern Ghana.	1	2	3	4	5
22. International agencies have played a major role in managing the refugee situation at Northern Ghana Camp.	1	2	3	4	5
23. There is clear coordination between the Ghanaian government and international agencies in handling refugees.	1	2	3	4	5
24. The Ghanaian government has implemented policies to promote the long-term integration of refugees into society.	1	2	3	4	5
25. The Ghanaian government's policies are sufficient to address the challenges faced by refugees.	1	2	3	4	5
26. International aid has been instrumental in maintaining the welfare of refugees at Northern Ghana.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Government policies have effectively supported the local community hosting refugees.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Refugees at Northern Ghana have received sufficient legal protection from the Ghanaian government.	1	2	3	4	5
29. International agencies have been slow to respond to the changing needs of refugees.	1	2	3	4	5
30. More policy efforts are needed to address the prolonged refugee situation at Northern Ghana.	1	2	3	4	5

**Thank you**