

The Nexus of Refugees and Irregular Migrants in the Perspective of National Security in the Southern African Development Community

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Abstract

The nexus between refugees and irregular migrants within the realms of national security presents a complex and multifaceted challenge for the Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states. This article delves into the intricacies of this relationship, exploring how the movement of refugees and irregular migrants across borders impacts the security dynamics of the SADC region. By analyzing various factors such as socio-economic pressures, legal frameworks, and the increasing securitization of migration policies, this study sheds light on the delicate balance that SADC countries must navigate. It addresses the humanitarian obligations to protect refugees under international law while simultaneously safeguarding national security interests. Furthermore, the article examines case studies within the SADC region, highlighting how member states have responded to these challenges through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms. It critically assesses the effectiveness of these approaches, considering the potential for both positive and negative impacts on regional stability and security. The findings suggest that a more integrated and compassionate approach to handling the nexus of refugees and irregular migrants is essential for ensuring both the security and the welfare of all individuals involved. Collaborative efforts among SADC member states, along with the engagement of international organizations and civil society are required. Adom et al (2016) the study philosophical paradigms was underpinned by realism, constructivism and post-colonial. This was a qualitative research methodology (Denzin, 2017) using primary and secondary data which was comprehensively reviewed through content analysis.

Keywords: SADC, Refugees, Irregular migrants, National Security, Migration Policies border control.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The complex of refugees and irregular migration is a global phenomenon suffocating a number of nations and states in terms of securing national interests. Albeit, critical intercessions into contemporary discourse (Kreutz, 2022) on migration, some people especially with realist approach, either in government or private sector do not understand the distinctness between asylum seekers, refugees, irregular/illegal migrants, human smuggled and human trafficked.

In my earlier article vol. 74 pages 7-15 of 2019 published by IISTE, I labored to articulate scholarly definitions and distinguish these terms. This article "Nexus of Refugees and Irregular Migrants in a Perspective of National Security in SADC" will dwell only on the differences in terms of Asylum seeker, refugee and irregular migrant, thereafter, navigates the intersection of refugee drift and irregular migration through the lens of national security within the SADC (Ng'andu, 2019). It delves into the implications of these interconnected phenomena on the security landscape of SADC member states, shedding light on background of refugees and irregular migrants in SADC, theoretical motivation, legal frameworks at international, regional and national laws, security implication, the policy challenges and strategic considerations, social-economic impact and provide case studies or examples of specific SADC countries that have implemented successful strategies or encountered difficulties in dealing with refugees and irregular migrants in relation to national security. Through a nuanced examination of these issues, the article seeks to offer insights into how countries in the region can address the complex security risks posed by refugee and migrant movements, thereafter draws the conclusion.

2.0 Background

The SADC region member states have been engulfed with refugees and irregular migrants, some from within the region and others out of the region due to various elements, inter alia political instability, armed conflicts,

economic hardships, and environmental issues. UNHCR Report, (2022), indicates that over the years, the countries in the SADC region have hosted a significant number of asylum seekers and refugees. Some of the countries in the region include South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe has been major destinations for refugees and irregular migrants looking for safety and better opportunities. In the SADC region, the issue of refugees and irregular migrants is a complex and multifaceted one. The region has seen a significant influx of people fleeing conflict, persecution, economic hardship, and environmental disasters from neighboring countries. However, the continued influx of refugees and irregular migrants has posed a security concerns to governments and other stakeholders in the SADC region, thereby subjecting the refugees and irregular migrant to encounter challenges in so many ways dating from; limited access to basic services, discrimination, and legal hurdles. Many end up living in overcrowded refugee camps or informal settlements, struggling to rebuild their lives in a new and unfamiliar environment.

On one evening of April, 2024 in Lusaka, five (5) Zambians who included a traditional ruler of Luapula Province and residents of Chalala and 15 miles of Lusaka and Chibombo districts respectively;

Vehemently expressed anger at how refugees, especially those former refugees from Rwanda how were being frequently arrested by law enforcement officers. They lamented that refugees were adding value to the economic growth of Zambia through their various business ventures and contribute to social service delivery like health, education as some were endowed with skills that are unique and wondered why they were being victimized. The discussants felt that governments in SADC needed to adopt common mechanism to integrate them.

Similarly, irregular migrants are subjected to multiple risks such as exploitation, human trafficking, and deportation due to their undocumented status. They often take dangerous routes in search of better opportunities, putting their lives at risk in the process. Now, the question rise, who is a refugee and irregular migrant, because both seem to cause national security concern to host governments?

To clear misconceptions and misunderstanding on the difference of asylum seeker, refugee and irregular migrant, the article briefly define the three elements of discussion in order to level the playing field of national security and individual well being of the concern. Therefore, the differences as alluded to in terms of asylum seeker, refugee and irregular migrant are herewith;

- **Asylum seeker** – Bradby (2015) this is an individual who has run away from his or her country of origin where is deemed to be a citizen to another country looking for protection. The seeking for protection could be owing to fearing the war, harassment or persecution because of race, gender, regions, tribal, ethnic, political etc, albeit the claim not yet evaluated. According to Zambia's Refugee Act No 1 of 2017, the person can show interest to seek asylum thereafter, appear before a Commissioner for Refugees or any other officer as assigned by the Commissioner in line with the law. The person will go through the process of registration and depending on the nationality and other attributes, the Commissioner may deem it fit to be accorded a prima facie legal status of refugee (Act 1 of 2017), otherwise the report is supposed to be tabled before the Refugees Status Determination Committee (RSDC) appointed by the Minister of Home Affairs and Internal Security with membership drawn from twelve (12) institutions who are mainly security wings. An individual is expected to be on an asylum seeker status only for six (6) months subject for approval or rejection. In an event of rejection, the applicant has the legal right to appeal either to Commissioner or Minister. Now what happens to an individual who has been accorded a legal refugee status?
- **Refugee-** this is an individual whom the hosting government through Commissioner of Refugees (COR) in the case of Zambia and almost all SADC member states, is satisfied that such a person does not pose any security danger to the state and that all the claims (Bradby, 2015) s/he advanced have been evaluated by RSD and deemed valid in line with the 1951 UN Convention, 1968 Protocols as well as Act 1 of 2017 or other relevant legal frameworks. This means that the hosting government has a full duty to protect and manage the welfare of such a person and not UNHCR or any other agency. UNHCR is merely a partner and has no any right to force the hosting government to act contrarily to the domestic laws but to offer support. Meanwhile, the admitted refugee together with an asylum seeker is

expected to follow the law of the land as they fall under category of migrants (Immigration and Deportation Act 17 of 2010).

During the study through purposive sampling, some refugees and asylum seeker in South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Botswana gave similar anguish statements that they were being perceived as irregular migrants and some point threaten with deportation or removal to their countries.

One respondent in South Africa narrates;

Security officers arrested us as four (4) families when we sought asylum. They accused us of having being rejected in Zimbabwe because of coming from..... country which was perceived to be of risk to Africa countries. They locked us in detention for many weeks until we decided to take the matter to court. The judgment has not come out up now, but whole what we want is refugee here in South Africa.

Respondent from Tanzania said,

Immigration and refugee officers called us to avail them with details to prove that we were long time refugees from Burundi. We tried to give evidence they refused and told to go back to Burundi. We are now suffering we don't know what to do next because most of our children were born here.

In Zambia the respondent narration was;

I arrived in 2016 and I was given an asylum seeker which they renewed twice but later they refused to renew. Asked the problem they told me to wait up to now. Immigrations arrest me four times but luck they release me. One time I even appeared in court where I was released and advised to come to COR. I am now married a lady who is a refugee from Congo DR but me am not refugee. I have no paper to live in Zambia. Every time I come to COR they tell me next, next why?

Those few narrations from some respondents though responses from law enforcement agencies have not been included for some security reason, the question rises, who is an irregular migrant?

- **Irregular immigrant-** this is an individual who choose to leave his/her country and enter the country that he or she does not belong to without required immigration documents, lives in the country with expired documents, engages in an employment contrarily to the permit was given, overstays the visa and devote most of the time in evading security authorities (Solomon, 2000). However, it is worth noting that some migrants may enter the country with all valid required immigration documents but decided or forget to renew once expired then they are deemed as irregular migrants (Immig. Deport Act 18 of 2010). In the case of the three assertions by those respondent refugees from South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia, it can be deduced that the government through COR in Zambia had subjected the stressed applicants to be irregular migrants due to the delays to conclude the matter, whereas in the Tanzanian case the culprits were irregular because they lacked proof of papers. The South African scenario needs more study to determine which legal framework would apply.

Mainly, refugees are forced to flee due to push factors which include, war, violence, political, racial persecution or the other situations that seriously disturb public order and are expected to be acquire international protection in line with 1951 Refugees Convention and 1967 protocol, whereas, irregular migrant choose to move away from their countries of origin by pull factors like better employment opportunities, family reunification, poverty etc but without valid documents or over staying the visa, expired document and may decided to return to their country at any time or period of their desire. They normally use ungazetted routs to enter the country. The distinction of the two is critical for security wings and the public in order to have a basis in formulating policies and providing the appropriate support and legal protection.

For easier understanding the disciplines involved in this article, like legal frameworks and it fundament concepts as well as the methodological approach, the study employs a philosophical underpinning developed under paradigms of realism and constructivism. These theories are chosen on the basis that they exponentially articulate the ontological of national security and values of refugee and migrants when discussing among other

common theories in international relations of which the theme under study, anchors on international phenomenon.

3.0 Theoretical Motivation

3.1 Realism Theory:

The proponents of realism theory (Rosch & Lebow, 2018) stress that states have critical duty to safeguard the national interest and uphold the sovereignty of the state as well as maintaining significance of military power. They argue that non actors like migrants and refugees pose a serious security threat to the national security and stability. In ensuring that the sovereignty and national security is not at stake, realism advocates for ignoring the international concerns when dealing with the matter of refugees or migrants and ensure that the borders are fully controlled so that those to enter are adequately screened when entering the country and in some instances surveillance are mounted. The states take interest in their citizens and whenever there are high volumes of refugees or irregular migrants, the states raise an alarm of security compromise and a potential for security threats. Realism fears that if the measures are not fostered, possibilities are very high that some refugees or irregular migrants can be terrorists masquerading as refugees or migrants, they can engage in spreading of extremist ideologies, or even the challenge to domestic stability due to cultural or societal differences.

Nonetheless, (Kreutz, 2022) critics of realism have countered the theory “as problematizes the contemporary philosophy of migration for its moral normativism and it is cataclysmic intrusion”. Realism typically underscores the importance of national self-interest but it can also recognize the benefits of international cooperation in managing migration—for example, through agreements on sharing the burden of refugee resettlements or joint patrols to secure borders. It is also wrong for realism to focus on security and state sovereignty without bearing in mind the humanitarian concerns, such as the rights and welfare of refugees and migrants.

There is also an argument to be made that (Zhou et al, 2023) inclusivity and humanitarian actions could potentially lead to long-term stability by fostering good relationships and alleviating conditions that cause mass migrations. Besides, viewing migration mainly through a security lens might oversimplify or misrepresent the motivations and characteristics of migrants and refugees, potentially leading to policies that are not only ineffective but also unjust. By focusing primarily on state security and interests, realism can offer a clear framework for understanding certain national security decisions regarding refugees and irregular migrants. However, it is important to balance these concerns with humanitarian needs and international legal obligations.

3.2 Constructivism Theory:

Scholars have advanced that the norms, identity, cultural aspects are the major concern of constructivism theory when dealing with international relations because it gives a leverage to understand the social construct. In the study of culture gaps in refugees, (Riley, 2020) expressed worry that despite the Refugees having adapted the culture of the country in which they settle, there is always misgivings among residents of countries where refugees settle who feel this change from the other perspective, watching their country’s demographics change, sometimes very quickly and dramatically.

In national security perspective, refugees and irregular migrant’s matters, constructivism argues those social values, and identities of states and their populations influence and is influenced by their policies and actions toward these groups (Crapolicchio et al, 2023). This means states apply the national identity and prevailing norms to craft the response to these. The case of Rwandese refugees or former refugees is one of significant examples how states respond to national identity and norms as determinants

Constructivist laments that a country with a strong norm of multiculturalism might adopt more open and inclusive policies towards migrants, whereas a country with a history of valuing homogeneity might have more restrictive approaches. On the other hand, threat perceptions are socially constructed rather than objectively determined. The belief of most security institutions in SADC especially on the migrants from Rwanda are socially constructed to believe that they are of a threat to their national security Therefore, whether refugees or migrants are seen as a security threat (economic burden, cultural dilution, criminality, etc.) depends on the dominant narratives within the host country, which are shaped by media, political discourse, and historical experiences.

The decision-making process regarding national security policies for refugees and migrants is influenced by the interactions and debates among various groups within a state, including politicians, bureaucrats, civil society, and the public. These interactions help construct the "reality" of the security situation that the policies aim to address. We need to know that states cannot operate in isolation but they need to be part of an international society that has its own norms and rules influencing national policies. The Institutions of human rights has norms that compel states to adopt certain policies towards refugees and migrants, even when there are significant domestic pressures to act otherwise.

Constructivism also highlights that state policies and attitudes towards migrants can evolve as norms, identities, and knowledge structures change over time due to various factors, including changes in government, influential refugee contributions to society, or shifts in the global geopolitical environment. Constructivist theory helps explain why different countries with similar security environments might adopt vastly different policies towards refugees and irregular migrants. It highlights the importance of non-material factors and the subjectivity inherent in policy responses to perceived threats or opportunities presented by migrant flows.

4.0 Legal Frameworks

SADC member states like other regional blocs globally, do not operate in isolation; hence states are party to bilateral or multilateral in various sectors that include protection and management of refugees and migrants. Besides, member states enact their domestic laws to regulate and manage asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. This article explores some few international, regional and domestic legal frameworks and policies.

To address the complex challenges of refugees and irregular migrants in the context of globalization against national security, SADC member states can learn from some of the international and regional frameworks.

4.1. International Conventions

Refugees and migrant are governed by a number of Conventions and protocols. Some were adopted in view of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) after the Second World War. United Nations felt it imperative to uphold the rights and dignity of refugees and migrants. In that regard, two main conventions regarding refugees and migrants were developed. The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (UN Convention, 1951). The 1951 Convention defines a refugee, their rights, and the legal obligations of states to protect them. The 1967 Protocol removed the geographic and time restrictions of the original convention, making its provisions apply globally. It remains the key legal document in defining the rights of refugees. In 1990, an International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families was adopted aimed at to protect the rights of migrant workers and their families. It covers a range of rights, including equal treatment, protection against violence, and the right to form associations. Both conventions are important in safeguarding and upholding the rights of refugees and migrant workers, as well as addressing issues related to displacement, discrimination, and vulnerability.

In addition to the UN conventions I mentioned earlier, there are also other important international agreements that pertain to refugees and irregular migrants. To ensure that all children including those of refugees and migrants were not left vulnerable to violation of human rights, in 1989 a UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was adopted (UNCRC, 1989). This treaty emphasizes the protection, care, and rights of all children, regardless of their legal status or background.

4.2 Regional legal Framework

Regional agreements on refugees and irregular migrants vary around the world. In European Union (EU) the member states agreed to admit asylum seekers using Common European Asylum System (EU,2024), whereas African Union (AU) has the Kampala Convention, which addresses internally displaced persons in Africa. Meanwhile, Organization of American States (OAS) has the Cartagena Declaration, which expands the refugee definition to include those fleeing generalized violence and foreign aggression.

SADC Secretariat (2019) region comprises sixteen (16) countries, each with its own national laws and policies regarding refugees and irregular migrants. SADC does not have a specific agreement solely focused on refugees and irregular migrants, but it addresses these issues in various protocols and agreements. The Protocol on Displaced Persons in the SADC Region, adopted in 2006, aims to provide a legal framework for the protection and assistance of refugees, returnees, and internally displaced persons within the region. Additionally, the SADC

Protocol on Immigration and Facilitation of Movement addresses issues related to irregular migration, border management, and human trafficking within the SADC region. The specific legal framework of each country within the SADC region provides an understanding the laws and regulations pertaining to refugees and irregular migrants. The study dwells on the national laws and policies for Zambia and Namibia in SADC being the neighboring countries with various similarities.

4.3 National Laws and Policies: Zambia and Namibia

Zambia and Namibia have their own unique laws and policies regarding refugees and irregular migrants. In Zambia, refugees are protected under the Refugees Act No 1 of 2017, which outlines the process for seeking asylum and the rights of refugees. In January, 2024 the country launched the first ever National Refugees Policy and its implementation plan. The country also uses immigration and deportation Act 19 of 2016, Anti-Human Trafficking Act 16 of 22 and other legal frameworks.

The Zambian government works closely with the UNHCR and other partners to provide assistance and protection to refugees within its borders. Furthermore, in 2022, the country coined a model for effective management of refugees to enable them become self reliant together with the host communities and contribute to economic growth of the country through Modernization of Refugees and Host Communities Settlement Approach (MORHCSA).

On the other hand, Namibia's refugee and asylum policy is governed by the Refugee Act of 1999. This law outlines the rights and obligations of refugees and asylum seekers in Namibia, as well as the procedures for seeking asylum and the conditions under which asylum can be granted. Both countries are signatories to international conventions and protocols related to refugees and migrants, such as the 1951 Refugee Convention. These agreements provide a framework for the treatment of refugees and migrants in both Zambia and Namibia

5.0 Security implications of Refugees and irregular migrants to SADC member states

The influx of refugees and irregular migrants into host countries normally attracts variety of security implications. These are intricate and nuanced, varying largely based on volume of refugees and irregular migrants, their countries of origin, the host country's economic and political stability, and its existing immigration and asylum policies. Concerns about security implications related to refugees and irregular migrants in the SADC region are many inter alia;

5.1 Challenges for Border Security

It is undeniable fact that most of the borders in SADC region porous in the sense that some are long whereas others are unmanned (Maimane, 2023). The vulnerability of the border security is compounded by inadequate manpower and resources like digital equipment for effective border management. Refugees and irregular migrants may cross borders illegally, posing challenges for border security and immigration control. The movement of refugees and irregular migrants across borders can facilitate cross-border crime such as smuggling, drug trafficking, and arms trafficking, which can pose significant security challenges for the region.

5.2 Human Trafficking

To distinguish asylum seekers and human trafficking or human smuggling is a very complex work. The institutions entrusted to oversee national security need to be alert at all times so that the three are not confused. There may be an increased risk of human trafficking, as some refugees and irregular migrants may become victims of exploitation by criminal networks. In addition to human trafficking, there may also be an increased risk of trafficking in goods and illicit substances across borders, facilitated by the movement of refugees and irregular migrants. Some refugees and irregular migrants may be vulnerable to exploitation by criminal networks for various illegal activities, including human smuggling, prostitution, and forced labor, posing security risks and harming individuals' well-being.

5.3 National Security

In line with realism, perception always pope up when there is influx of refugees and irregular migrants that there will be increased crime or insecurity. Although not universally true and often exaggerated, such perceptions can impact community relations and policies towards migrants and refugees.

While the majority of refugees do not pose a security threat, host countries are often concerned about the potential for terrorist to pose as refugees in order to cross borders. This necessitates rigorous security screening and intelligence sharing among SADC member states. The influx of refugees and irregular migrants can strain national security resources and systems, potentially leading to challenges in monitoring threats and criminal

activities. There is a risk that terrorists or extremist groups may exploit the movement of refugees and irregular migrants to infiltrate the region, carry out attacks, or establish networks, leading to destabilization and insecurity. However, security policies aiming to tackle issues related to refugee's arrivals might sometimes infringe on human rights organization and creating diplomatic strains.

5.4 Public Health

There could be public health concerns related to refugees and irregular migrants, especially in terms of disease outbreaks and access to healthcare services. The other social impacts are the challenge of integrating refugees and irregular migrants into host communities. Integration issues can arise from language barriers, cultural differences, and societal resistance, potentially leading to isolation or marginalization of these groups.

5.4 Economic/social Impact

The informal economy may be affected by the influx of irregular migrants, who may work in low-wage sectors and compete with local workers, potentially leading to economic disparities and job insecurity. Large numbers of refugees and irregular migrants can strain public services and resources of the host country such as education, healthcare, and housing. Refugees and migrants often send remittances back to their home countries, which can have significant positive effects on poverty reduction and economic stability in those countries. However, this outflow of capital might be viewed negatively in host countries, especially if the economic contributions of these communities are not well recognized. Tensions may arise between host communities and refugees/irregular migrants, potentially leading to social unrest and conflicts. The presence of a large number of refugees and irregular migrants can strain local resources such as water, food, housing, and healthcare, leading to tensions with host communities.

5.6 Political instability: The presence of refugees and irregular migrants can strain political relations between countries in the region, especially if there are disputes over border control or the handling of migration issues. Some refugees bring with the political ideologies from the countries of origin which sometimes conflict with those of the host country, thereby causing political tension and polarization. In some cases, refugees and irregular migrants may come from countries experiencing conflict or political instability, leading to the potential for spillover of violence or security threats into host countries.

5.7 Radicalization and Extremism

Vulnerable populations such as refugees and irregular migrants may be at risk of radicalization or recruitment by extremist groups, potentially posing a security threat within the region. The challenges in cultural integration can lead to marginalization of refugees, which might foster environments conducive to radicalization, particularly if refugees feel isolated or discriminated against.

5.8 Displacement of Indigenous Populations

The presence of refugees and irregular migrants may lead to the displacement of indigenous populations or exacerbate existing social tensions, particularly in areas with limited resources and competing interests. Besides, the presence of refugees often forces countries to re-evaluate their immigration policies, which can shift political landscapes and policy priorities.

5.9 Cyber security Risks

With the increasing reliance on digital technologies for communication and transactions, refugees and irregular migrants may be vulnerable to cyber threats, potentially compromising data security and privacy in the region

5.10 Environmental Impact

An increase in population due to refugees and irregular migrants can strain natural resources and contribute to environmental degradation, affecting the overall security and stability of the region. Migrants often contribute to the economy through entrepreneurship, filling critical skill gaps, and through their labor in key sectors such as agriculture, mining, and services. Their economic activities can lead to a broader economic contribution, through taxes and increasing demand for goods and services. Refugees and irregular migrants often fill labor shortages in host countries, taking on jobs in sectors like agriculture, construction, and domestic work. While they can provide essential labor, their presence may also create competition for low-skill jobs, affecting wage levels and employment opportunities for local low-skilled workers.

3.11 Challenges and solutions to refugees and irregular migrants in SADC

Refugees and irregular migrants in SADC region were not insulated from challenges that are similarly faced by others globally. Many are the times that they lack of legal status and documentation, which can lead to difficulties in accessing essential services such as healthcare, education, and employment. In certain instance they face discrimination and xenophobia, which can make it challenging for refugees and irregular migrants to integrate into the local community. Masiko-Mpaka (2023) expressed concern on the sporadic lethal xenophobic harassment in South Africa against Asian foreign nations including asylum seekers, refugees, and both documented and undocumented migrants living in the country.

They face limited access to legal assistance and protection, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation, risk of human trafficking, exploitation, and other forms of abuse due to their vulnerable status. Economic hardships is the daily song, as many refugees and irregular migrants struggle to find stable employment and face barriers to starting businesses or other income-generating activities. In some SADC states they lack access to basic services such as housing, healthcare, and education due to legal status. They also experience mental health issues stemming from trauma experienced before and during migration, as well as the stress of living in uncertainty.

Albeit, (Rohini, 2018) stressed that improvement of economies in the countries of origin was the major solution to the challenges faced by refugees and irregular migrants apart from solutions of voluntary repatriation, resettlement to the third country, integration and tackling the root cause of their fleet. Establishing community support programs to help refugees and irregular migrants navigate local services and resources. SADC member states should strengthen border control measures to prevent human trafficking and exploitation. Endeavour to promote cultural exchange and understanding through community events and initiatives.

Providing mental health support and counseling services to address trauma and stress-related issues. By addressing these challenges and implementing targeted solutions, the SADC region can work towards creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for refugees and irregular migrants. There was need of strengthening legal frameworks to protect the rights of refugees and irregular migrants, and ensuring access to legal documentation and status regularization. Promoting awareness and addressing xenophobia through education and community engagement initiatives. Regional member states may consider increasing access to legal aid and support services for refugees and irregular migrants.

Providing training and support for economic integration, such as skills development programs and entrepreneurship initiatives. Language and vocational training, education, and social programs can enhance social cohesion and economic contributions. Strengthening Regional collaboration and addressing issues of migration, refugees, and asylum seekers through regional cooperation to share best practices, resources, and to ensure that movements across borders do not lead to security or health risks.

Furthermore, SADC member states should invest in infrastructure and services by enhancing the resilience of local infrastructure and services to cope with increased demands is crucial. This involves both short-term humanitarian aid and long-term development planning. Creating Legal Pathways for Migration through establishment of legal and safe channels for migration that would help manage the flow of people, reduce the incidence of irregular migration, and ensure that the rights of migrants are protected.

6.0 Strategies implemented in dealing with refugees and irregular migrants by some SADC member States

The SADC region aims to further socio-economic cooperation and integration as well as political and security cooperation among its members. One of the challenges faced by SADC member states is the management of refugees and irregular migrants. The situation varies significantly across the region, depending on political stability, economic conditions, and the capacity of each country to manage migration. Here are case studies of a few SADC member states that have encountered difficulties in dealing with refugees and irregular migrants:

➤ South Africa

South Africa is one of the main destinations for refugees and migrants in Africa due to its relatively robust economy and political stability compared to other African countries. The country has faced challenges such as xenophobic violence, pressure on social services, and a complex asylum system that often leads to prolonged legal limbo for asylum seekers. The government has been working on policy reforms and improving the asylum processing system, but challenges remain in effectively integrating refugees and managing irregular migration.

➤ Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe has both produced and hosted a significant number of refugees and migrants due to its political and economic challenges. In recent years, economic deterioration has led many Zimbabweans to leave their country, while the country itself hosts refugees from neighboring countries. Issues include strained resources, the need for integration policies, and the protection of refugees and asylum seekers' rights.

➤ **Mozambique**

Mozambique has seen an influx of asylum seekers and refugees, mainly from the Great Lakes and Horn of Africa regions. The country grapples with providing adequate protection and basic services to refugees and asylum seekers, who are primarily located in rural areas. Additionally, the recent insurgency in Cabo Delgado has internally displaced hundreds of thousands of people, complicating the broader migration and displacement context.

➤ **Tanzania**

Tanzania has a long history of hosting refugees from the Great Lakes region, including from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Rwanda. While Tanzania has been praised for its hospitality and open-door policy towards refugees, it faces challenges such as overcrowded refugee camps, limited resources, and tensions between host communities and refugees. The country has also seen a shift in government policies towards a more restrictive approach in recent years.

➤ **Malawi**

Malawi, despite its own economic challenges, hosts a significant number of refugees, particularly from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Burundi. The refugees are primarily settled in the Dzaleka Refugee Camp, which is vastly overpopulated and faces severe resource shortages, including food, water, and healthcare services. The country struggles to provide adequate services to these populations due to limited financial resources and infrastructure.

➤ **Angola**

Angola has seen fluctuating waves of refugees and irregular migrants, primarily from the DRC, due to ongoing conflicts and economic instability in the region. The country faces challenges in offering sufficient humanitarian assistance and protection, partly due to its own recovery from decades of civil war. Angola's oil-dependent economy has also been hit by global oil price fluctuations, affecting its ability to support both its citizens and migrant populations.

➤ **Zambia**

Zambia hosts refugees from various neighboring countries, including Angola, the DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, and Somalia. While the country has been commendable in its open-door policy and granting of refugee rights, it faces considerable challenges in terms of settlement space, resources, and integration of refugees into local communities. The protracted presence of refugees has put a strain on local resources and the environment, particularly in areas surrounding refugee settlements.

➤ **Namibia**

Namibia is both a destination and a transit country for refugees and migrants, particularly from Zimbabwe, Angola, and the DRC. The country has a relatively small number of refugees and asylum seekers but struggles with issues related to documentation, detention, and integration. Namibia's challenge lies in balancing national security concerns with the protection of refugees and asylum seekers' rights.

7.0 Conclusion

Addressing these diverse security implications requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach that involves cooperation among SADC member states, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations to develop effective strategies for managing migration flows, enhancing border security, and addressing the root causes of displacement and insecurity in the region. These security implications highlight the complex and multifaceted challenges that need to be considered when addressing the issue of refugees and irregular migrants in the SADC region. Each of these factors requires thoughtful analysis and strategic responses to ensure the security and well-being of all individuals and communities involved. There is need to take into account the humanitarian needs of refugees and migrants while also considering the security and stability of the host communities and countries in the SADC region. It is important to establish robust policies and mechanisms in place to address these security implications effectively while upholding the rights of refugees and migrants as stipulated in international law.

The challenges faced by these countries are multifaceted and include overburdened asylum systems, resource limitations, social integration issues, and sometimes, xenophobic attitudes. SADC member states facing difficulties with refugees and irregular migrants can explore several strategies for improvement, including, strengthening regional cooperation and coordination on migration issues. Member states can enhance the capacity of asylum systems to quickly and fairly process claims and fostering social inclusion and economic integration of refugees into host communities. Need to develop policies focused on the sustainable integration of refugees into host communities can alleviate some pressures by providing refugees with access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Efforts to address the root causes of displacement and irregular migration, such as conflict, poverty, and political instability, are critical to long-term solutions.

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