

# Security Implications of Refugees on Host Communities: Perspectives from Buduburam in the Central Region of Ghana

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives and lived experiences of the people of Buduburam in the Central region of Ghana about the security implications of refugees in their community and the meaning they make of those experiences. The study adopted a qualitative research approach through a case study design. Data was collected through interviews and focus group discussions. The analysis of the data was thematic. The findings show that there are mixed perceptions of the prolonged refugee stay in the Buduburam community. While participants expressed some positive views (attraction of development, source of market, cordial interactions) about the refugees' presence in Buduburam, they equally shared some concerns (increase in criminal activities, social vices, and influx of other foreigners) about their stay. The study also reveals serious security challenges about the refugees' presence in the community. The Buduburam community has been turned into a hiding ground for criminals from other parts of the country and beyond. To cope with the situation, community members resort to faith for protection and safety. The overarching recommendation of the study is that the government of Ghana should take immediate steps to address the security concerns in the Buduburam community.

**Keywords:** Security Implications, Refugees, Buduburam, Perspectives, lived experiences

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## 1. Introduction

Security is a very important need desired by every individual (Azar, 1994; Burton, 1990; Burton, 1979). Thus, a feeling of insecurity can be very traumatizing to people and a constraint to development. It is argued that "Insecurity is a primary development challenge of our time" (UNICEF, 2011, p. 8). Insecurity could thwart the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UNICEF, 2011). The influx of refugees into a country can pose a threat to security. As such, "refugees and asylum seekers are never far from international and domestic security discussions [regardless of] whether they are viewed as victims of security deficits or potential threats to national or international security" (Edwards, 2009, p. 774). Research on global refugee situations and trends is flourishing (Devictor & Do, 2016; Amnesty international, 2015; UNHCR, 2012; Milner & Loescher, 2011; UNHCR, 2019; UNHCR, 2020; Sørensen et al., 2017; Bonnett, 2018). The Global Crisis Centre (2017) indicates that "wars, persecution and political turmoil have triggered human movement within regions, countries and beyond" (p. 8) and that "one in every 122 human beings is now either a refugee, internally displaced or seeking asylum" (p. 3). Refugee situations and their management is thus a global concern. Yet, refugee host countries are the ones with fewer resources to host them (Miller, 2018). In Africa, refugee issues appear to be worrisome to recipient countries. Refugee situations in Africa have gained significant attention in research (Crisp, 2002; UNHCR, 2004; Hamrell, 1967, Verwimp & Maystadt, 2015; Akokpari, 1998; UNHCR, 2014). Refugees constitute one of the security issues recipient countries must grapple with (Miller, 2018).

Ghana has been one of the recipients of refugees from different African countries. Most of the refugees in Ghana have settled in various parts of the country including Klikor in the Volta region and Buduburam in the Central region. Since the 1990s, Buduburam has hosted refugees from Liberia. Omata (2012) described the Liberian refugees' situation in Ghana as protracted. Some of these refugees have established and raised families in Ghana over the years. Meanwhile, although there is relative calmness of situations in Liberia, the reduction in humanitarian support and unfavourable living conditions among refugees in the Buduburam camp, many of the Liberian refugees appear unwilling to return to their native country (Omata, 2012). As a result, Buduburam still had approximately, 11,000 refugees from Liberia as at 2011 (Omata, 2012). Also, Omata (2012) indicates that although the Liberian refugees were originally settled at a designated area in Buduburam by the government of Ghana, many more refugees kept coming in and this led to some refugees moving to stay among the indigenes since the allotted area could not cater for all of them.

Although the Buduburam community has hosted refugees for a long period, it is yet to be known what meaning the people of the community make of the refugee presence and the attendant security implications. Do the people of Buduburam feel safe about the presence of refugees in their community over the years? Refugees have been blamed for increasing insecurity in host countries (Loescher, 2002). Over the years, public opinion in

Ghana has raised security concerns about the presence of the refugees in Buduburam. Barimah (2021) reports how the Chief of Buduburam on November 26, 2020, indicated to the President of Ghana (Nana Akuffo Addo) about the insecurity in the community when the president visited the community during his campaign trail. According to Barimah (2021), the insecurity in Buduburam is “a national security time bomb” waiting to explode. Although several studies have been conducted on refugee situation in Buduburam, there is paucity of literature on the meaning of the lived experiences of the indigenes regarding their security and safety in the midst of refugees.

Again, research has reported the experiences of refugees in Buduburam (Tanle, 2013). However, the voices of the people of Buduburam who have lived with these refugees over the years have not been sufficiently heard. As such, little is known about what meaning the people of Buduburam give to the protracted presence of refugees in their community and the security implications on the community. Thus, the meaning of the indigenes’ lived experiences has been missing from the security discourse in Ghana. Furthermore, studies on the impact of hosting refugees have focused solely on the socio-economic implications (Agbesi, 2019; Global Crisis Centre, 2017; Alix-Garcia & Saah, 2009; Dzimbiri, 1993) while paying little attention to the security implications. Research has looked at the environmental security implications of refugees in Buduburam (Macedo, 2012), but the human security implications have not been adequately explored. Additionally, research has reported the strategies refugees in Ghana (Dako-Gyeke & Adu, 2015) especially refugees in Buduburam (Sarfo-Mensah, 2009) adopt to sustain themselves. However, not much is known about the strategies the indigenes or host communities adopt to navigate their interactions with the refugees over the years. Therefore, this research was an attempt to bridge that gap by exploring the perspectives and experiences of the people of Buduburam on the security implications of the presence of refugees in their community and the meaning they make of those experiences. The study contributes to the understanding of security implications of refugees on host countries. The study brings to the fore the perspectives of local host communities in the security discourse. The study also provides relevant information to help understand how indigenes’ perceptions of the refugees influence how the latter are received, treated, and interacted with.

### 1.1 Research Objectives

The following research objectives were set to guide the study.

1. to explore the perceptions of the people of Buduburam about the protracted presence of refugees in their community
2. to analyse the security implications of the protracted presence of refugees in Buduburam
3. to explore the strategies the people of Buduburam adopt to cope with refugees and the security implications of the protracted refugee presence in their community.

### 1.2 Research Questions

The research questions of the study were:

1. What are the perceptions of the people of Buduburam about the protracted presence of refugees in their community?
2. What are the security implications of the protracted presence of refugees in Buduburam?
3. How do the people of Buduburam cope with the refugees and the security implications of the refugee protracted presence in their community?

## 2. Literature

### 2.1 Impact of Refugees on Host Communities

Miller (2018) indicates that “Understanding the impacts of hosting refugees is at the centre of crafting responses that minimise the costs and risks assumed by host countries and communities, maximise the protection available to refugees, and utilise resources efficiently and effectively” (p. 1). Miller argues that refugees have been falsely portrayed over years. For Miller, the implications of hosting refugees are social, economic, security, environmental and political in nature. Economically, Miller state that:

“...refugees are a strain on local resources; overwhelm health facilities and schools; strain infrastructure such as roads, bridges, warehousing facilities and the availability of land; and place a burden on social and administrative services.” (p. 2).

Miller indicates that refugees could also contribute positively to the economy of the host entity. However, Miller observed that refugees generate environmental concerns, and put pressure on institutions of the host country. Azevedo, Yang and Inan (2016) observed that although there is an increasing population of Syrian refugees in Turkey, the poverty situation of the host community was not affected negatively. On the other hand, Azevedo et al. (2016) discovered that the rate of poverty is rather high with the refugee population. Gomez and Christensen (2010) agree with Miller (2018) that refugee host countries tend to experience political, economic, social, environment and security concerns in the long run. Gomez and Christensen (2010, p. 18) are of the view

that refugees can have both positive and negative impacts on host community or state.

Agbesi (2019) explored the socio-economic implications of refugee presence in Fetentaa on the community and revealed that the presence of refugees has yielded positive socio-economic benefits to the community. Socially, Agbesi discovered that refugees in Fetentaa have added to peaceful coexistence and integration, brought about the construction of important amenities, improved social and health services as well as educational infrastructure. Economically, Agbesi (2019, p. vii) realised that the refugees' presence in Fetentaa "attract international organisations, creates job, contribute to productivity, boosts income and provision of essential goods and services." Fajth et al. (2019) in a mixed method research approach investigated how the presence of Congolese refugees in Rwanda affects social life in host communities in terms of social networks, feeling of safety and trust. According to Fajth et al. (2019, p. 1), the quantitative data "shows no statistically significant differences between host communities with the exception of informal social networks, which are higher in communities closer to refugee camps." The qualitative data demonstrates that trust between the refugees and host communities increased as their economic relationship grows. Fajth et al. discovered "that economic and social support given to refugees plays a key role in reducing and preventing conflict between the two groups." (p. 1). Dadush (2017) observed that refugee host countries spent more to settle and protect refugees at the initial stage however the economic benefits that are enhanced to the country grows as the refugees are fully settled. Refugees enjoy international and national protection and assistance (Bacaian, 2011). However, the Global Crisis Centre (2017, p. 13) indicates that "some people see refugees as a threat to national culture, the welfare state, job security, [and] societal harmony" instead of looking at the economic benefits that accrue to host countries due to their presence.

Codjoe et al. (2013) draw perspectives of host community and refugees to understand the effects of the presence of Liberian refugees in Ghanaian host communities. The results demonstrate mixed perspectives about the impact of refugee presence on host communities. Codjoe et al. revealed that on one hand, host communities attributed increased social vices and costs of goods and services, pressure on facilities and the deterioration of environmental resources to the presence of refugees. On the other hand, Codjoe et al. discovered that refugees have served as a "source of market and trade partners as well as attraction of infrastructural development" to host communities (p. 439). Thus, Alix-Garcia and Saah (2009) argued that understanding refugee impacts on host communities is necessary and important because refugee issues appear to persist. Alix-Garcia and Saah (2009) assessed the economic impact of refugees from Burundi and Rwanda on host Tanzania and realised that the refugee inflow in Tanzania resulted in hikes in the prices of local agricultural products. According to Alix-Garcia and Saah (2009), while the refugee presence increased wealth conditions in rural communities, urban areas were witnessing a decrease in wealth conditions. Dzimbiri (1993) observed that Mozambican refugees had both positive and negative impact on the host Malawi. Dzimbiri realized that refugees from Mozambique impacted on the socio-economic, political, environmental and security spheres of Malawi. Positively, Dzimbiri found that the refugee presence and its associated humanitarian support created jobs for many unemployed Malawian nationals, increased infrastructural and social facilities, boosted local commerce, and improved the image of Malawi in the eyes of the international community. In terms of negative consequences, Dzimbiri discovered among others that refugee presence caused damage to the environment, put pressure on the country's resources and revenue, impaired relation between Malawi and Mozambique, led to the loss of some form of autonomy by Malawi, and increased the cost of security and implicated the security of Malawi. Grindheim observed that "changes, challenges and opportunities" in Kakuma host community were because the refugee population outnumbered that of the host community. Grindheim indicates positive socio-economic impacts of the refugee presence in Kakuma.

There is an established connection between refugees and increased security concerns in host countries (Miller, 2018; Gomez & Christensen, 2010). Grindheim observed negative security implications of refugees in Kakuma. In 2007, Rumbach observed that the protracted refugee situation in Buduburam had caused crime and insecurity problems for the host population and the government of Ghana. Rumbach (2007) indicates that armed robberies, rape, assault, theft, occasional riots, and unrest were characteristic of the refugee camp. Sarfo-Mensah (2009, p. 8) realized that "misunderstandings between the Buduburam refugee community and the Ghanaian authorities have led to deportations, distrust of the Ghanaian government, and a heightened sense of insecurity at the camp." Some of these security issues continue to be a source of concern to many residents in Buduburam (Barimah, 2021). Meanwhile, Rumbach (2007) indicates that to address the insecurity issues in Buduburam that characterized the camp the Neighbourhood Watch Team was established in 2003. According to Rumbach (2007), the Watch Team handled crimes that were petty in nature but handover criminal cases to the police to deal with. Often, "...security implications of hosting refugees are the concerns raised most frequently by host states" (Miller, 2018, p. 6). Miller observed that "refugees have the potential to destabilize host countries, enter host countries with weapons, hostile and/or militant mindset, and can create tensions and imbalances between the local population leading to violence or instability" (p. 6).

Gomez and Christensen (2010) indicate that refugee presence can implicate the security situation of the host

countries including “the expansion of rebel social networks and diffusion of violence, facilitation of transnational spreading of arms, combatants, and ideologies conducive to conflict, and creation of bilateral tensions” (p. 12-13). Gomez and Christensen (2010) suggest that developing a comprehensive framework of sustainable solutions is necessary to addressing the security implications of refugees on host countries. Dzimbiri (1993) observed that refugees tend to implicate the security of host nations when he examined the political implications of refugees from Mozambique on host Malawi. Dzimbiri discovered that the inflow of refugees in Malawi led to a reduced national security and increased security cost in the country. Dzimbiri realized that some criminal refugees brought along weapons and arms to Malawi and this created insecurity situations in the country such as robberies and murder. Loescher (2002, p. 52) corroborated Dzimbiri (1993) when he indicated that “asylum seekers and refugees have come to be seen as direct threats to national security.” Refugee influx tends to threaten the security, stability, and order of host nations (Loescher, 2002). According to Loescher, there is a global security concern of ‘refugeeism’. Refugees have an impact on the national security of hosting countries and could engage in activities that fuel insurgencies and conflicts in their home country. Grindheim (2013) supports the ongoing argument that refugee-host interaction results in “more insecurity and conflicts in the host community” (p. 3).

## 2.2 Refugee-Host interaction

Refugee-host interaction has created conflict situations at some points in Buduburam camp in Ghana (Sarfo-Mensah, 2009). Sarfo-Mensah discovered that factors such as repatriation issues, discrimination, and lack of income were putting stress on refugees and made it traumatizing to negotiate their stay in the camp. As such, many refugees resort to religion, supporting each other to cope with conditions that present themselves in the camp (Sarfo-Mensah, 2009). Tanle (2013) used the Buduburam refugee camp as a case to study the experiences of refugees in host communities. His study shows that refugees had difficulties in their interactions with host communities and access to services. Tanle notes that some refugees find it difficult to sustain themselves and have had to rely on support from their social networks. Refugees experienced “cultural shocks, acculturation, tension and occasional quarrels with the indigenes, stigmatization and discrimination in schools and health facilities, difficulty in accessing formal sector employment, poor security and infrastructure inadequacy” in their stay in the community (Tanle, 2013, p. 867).

Dako-Gyeke and Adu (2015) studied the challenges and coping strategies of refugees in Ghana. They found that refugees experienced increased crime and unemployment, disputes over resources and social networks breaks. Further, Dako-Gyeke and Adu found that for refugees to cope with their situations and to negotiate their interactions with host communities, they leaned on religion, spirituality and income generating activities. Agblorti and Awusabo-Asare (2011) carried out a mixed approach study of how refugees in Krisan in the Western region of Ghana interact with the host community by looking at factors that influence integration. Agblorti and Awusabo-Asare realized that “refugee integration is dependent on the tolerance of host communities to infractions and the preparedness of the refugees to operate within the acceptable norms of the community” (p. 35). Further, Agblorti and Awusabo-Asare indicate that relationship between refugees and host communities tend to be impaired and difficult when the actions and inactions of refugees constitute threats to the host community’s “systems” (values, beliefs, tradition, norms, etc.) and vice versa. Thus, for Agblorti and Awusabo-Asare (2011), addressing such misunderstandings requires occasional creation of fora for the refugees and host population to interact. Rumbach (2007) observed that the daily life of refugees in Buduburam is one that is characterized by a “struggle” to sustain their lives. Arising from the struggles that refugees go through in their interaction with the host population, Rumbach (2007) realized that refugees often resort to God as a source of hope for the future. According to Rumbach (2007), when refugees are asked about their experiences and how they are coping, they tend to use the phrase “by the grace of God” to explain why they keep going despite the challenges of life and the circumstances they find themselves. Rumbach (2007) indicates that the phrase ‘by the grace of God’,

“...is used to explain why this refugee camp exists and the deep sense of uncertainty that characterizes the residents’ lived experience. It reflects the powerful belief Liberians have in God and the protective powers of faith. It also reveals an important day-to-day reality: residents lack control over their present and their future (p. 1).

Thus, for many refugees in Buduburam, their lives are not the way they would have wanted but for the fact that they are still alive and strong they thank God for that. Bortu (2009) observed that “poverty, dreams of resettlement, lack of motivation and the social life in the camp” were the huge challenges children and youth at the Buduburam refugee camp encounter in trying to access education.

## 2.3 Refugees and Repatriation

Some refugees in Ghana have refused to go back to their home country (Omata, 2012). Omata (2012) discovered that many Liberian refugees (approximately 11,000) in Ghana failed to return home as at 2011. Omata found that many of the refugees refused to return home because they do not feel secure when they return home, they do not

have shelter back home, they do not have the confidence of setting up new livelihoods, support networks are not there back home. Omata also revealed that one other reason why there are still many Liberian refugees in Buduburam is that they have not been registered; hence they are not recognized by Ghana and the UNHCR in terms of support and assistance and protection. However, when Omata carried out subsequent interviews in 2012, it was realized that many of these refugees are changing their mindsets about staying in Ghana. According to Omata (2012), many of the refugees are now willing to repatriate to a third country. The protracted situation of the Liberian refugees in Buduburam is affecting the reproductive health of women, yet they seem not to be interested in returning to their country or to a third country (Dauda, 2012). Antwi-Boateng and Braimah (2020) in a qualitative study used Liberian refugees at the Buduburam camp to assess the policy of repatriation. The thesis of Antwi-Boateng and Braimah is that the policy of repatriation has not been able to achieve its objectives and thus unsuccessful. Antwi-Boateng and Braimah's study largely affirms Dauda's 2012 thesis that although refugees in Buduburam are confronted with several unfavourable conditions (such as 'poor economic conditions, broken social networks, fear of persecution, lingering insecurity issues in Liberia') they are still "reluctant" in returning to their country. As such, Antwi-Boateng and Braimah observed that the Liberian refugees in Buduburam camp are in a state of dilemma. Asylum country's (Ghana) conditions are not favourable and the conditions in Liberia too are not welcoming and attractive to these refugees in Ghana. Thus, Antwi-Boateng and Braimah have suggested that the way to tackle these challenges is to integrate the refugees into the Ghanaian society.

### 3. Theoretical Framework: Human Security Theory

The theory of human security was first made popular on the international scene in the 1994 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Since then, the understanding of security has shifted. The analysis of security has also been broadened with the introduction of the human security approach (Gomez & Gasper, 2013). UNDP (1994) described human security as freedom from fear and freedom from want. This echoes the four human freedoms (freedom from want, freedom from fear, freedom of worship and freedom of speech and expression) mentioned by the former president of U.S, Franklin Roosevelt in his 1941 speech (Gomez & Gasper, 2013). The Commission on Human Security (2003, p. 4) describes human security in many ways including:

"...to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment. ...creating political, social, environmental, economic, military, and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood, and dignity."

UNDP (1994) indicates that the threat to human security range from economic, health, food to environmental, personal, community and political security. Human security is concerned with people feeling safe from threats such as poverty, disease, climate change, refugeeism, trafficking, famine, terrorism, among others. The theory of human security as indicated by (UNDP, 1994, p. 23) also concerns with protecting people from "sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life whether in homes, in jobs or in communities." Additionally, human security is concerned with issues that threaten the survival, livelihood, and dignity of people (UNDP, 1994; Gomez & Gasper, 2013). Meanwhile, Gomez and Gasper (2013) indicate that freedom to live dignified lives was a latter addition to the human security discourse. The application of the theory in this paper is that the people of Buduburam have the freedom to live in dignity and from fear and want. However, the prolonged presence of the refugees over the years has resulted in increased human insecurity thereby making it difficult for the people of Buduburam to freely exercise their life choices without fear. The human security theory puts people at the centre (UNDP, 1994; Alkire, 2003; United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, 2016; Commission on Human Security, 2003; Gomez & Gasper, 2013). That is, the theory makes people the central point of concern.

Security from crime is one of the growing concerns of the human security paradigm (UNDP, 1994). As the findings of the study demonstrate, people in the Buduburam community feel insecure and afraid while going about their business to earn a living due to the increased insecurity that the prolonged stay of refugees has brought. People become burdens to the state when they feel insecure (UNDP, 1994). Alkire (2003, p. 4) in clarifying what human security is explains that;

"It is not sufficient for human fulfillment or flourishing... People's lives must not only be protected per se; they must be protected in a manner that is consistent with their long-term good."

For us, it will equally be "unfortunate" when the provision of asylum to people end up making it difficult for the host community to enjoy their freedoms. Also, the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (2016) puts forward the following as the common understanding of human security:

"Human security concerns with the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair...freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential" (p. 6).

The human security theory argues that "people can exercise their choices safely and freely and that they can

be relatively confident that the opportunities they have today are not totally lost tomorrow” (UNDP, 1994, p. 23). Using the human security theory to inform this work helped to understand and explain how the people of Buduburam feel and make meaning of how they exercise their choices safely and have confidence that the opportunities available to them will not be lost in the future because of the prolong refugee stay in the community.

#### 4. Methodology

This study was conducted using the qualitative research approach. The study adopted a case study design to obtain in-depth information from the people of Buduburam on the security implications of the refugees in their community. The study used focus group discussion (FGD) and interviews to collect the data. A total sample of 12 research participants (including chief, elders, community leaders, and women) participated in the study. The participants were selected through purposive sampling technique. Interviews with participants were tape recorded and transcribed. The data were analyzed thematically. The study maintained the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants. Informed consent of the research participants was sought verbally before proceeding with the interviews and focus group discussion.

### 5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 Perceptions of the Prolong Stay of Refugees in Buduburam

The study found out that the people of Buduburam had mixed perceptions of the prolong stay of the refugees in their community.

##### 5.1.1 Attracted Infrastructure Development to the Community

The study discovered that the protracted stay of refugees in the community attracted infrastructural development and social amenities. According to participants, world organizations such as the United Nations were interested in the well-being of the refugees in their community and as such, they supported the refugee community with facilities and amenities which the local community also benefited from. One elder narrated in the interviews as follows:

*It was in 1990 that they brought the refugees here. At that time our community was not this developed. But their coming brought some development to our community. Because the UN and government of Ghana have a duty to ensure that they stay comfortably, they had to support them with some basic facilities. When they put any infrastructure here the community also benefits. (Interview with participant, July 2021)*

This supports Agbesi’s (2019, p. vii) argument that refugees “attract international organisations” support. Another elder also indicated that:

*I must be very frank with you they have brought development to the community. We do not farm, and we were doing our little trade to survive. People have been able to build houses because of them. You see people wanted to build their houses, but they were not having the finances to do so. But the refugees will also come around looking for a place to rent so they used to come to agreement with the refugee who wants the place to rent to help and complete the house then stay for a period and handover to the landlord. As such, some people were able to own or complete their houses because of the refugees. (Interview with participant, July 2021)*

The comments indicate that the refugee stay led to some development in the Buduburam community. Other participants’ comments during the FGD illustrating the developmental contribution of refugees include the following:

*As for me I cannot say that their stay did not bring good things to us, neither can I say we have not benefited from their stay in our community. (Focus Group Discussion with participants, July 2021)*

*Look, let us say the truth. These people have been good to us. This place was not like this. There are certain things and social amenities that we get because of the refugees. Do you think if not because of the refugees we would have gotten some of these things like schools, clinics? If I say they did not bring us development I will be telling lies. (Focus Group Discussion with participants, July 2021)*

*Yes what the chief is saying is true. All the time people only talk about the bad side and tend to forget about the good side. Some of them [refugees] have business here. They are acquiring lands and putting up infrastructure. So as for development they have helped. (Focus Group Discussion with participants, July 2021)*

Overall, the findings indicate that refugees contribute positively to development in the host community. The findings lend support to Agbesi’s (2019) argument that refugees enhance positive socio-economic benefits to the host community.

##### 5.1.2 Source of Market

The study also discovered in the interviews that the refugees have been a source of market to the community. Codjoe et al. argue that refugees have served as “source of market and trade partners as well as attraction of

infrastructural development” to host communities (p. 439). Participants indicate that they engage in trade and business to sustain livelihoods and as such the presence of the refugees in the community gives them more market and boosts their businesses. Participants explained that when the refugees came that they did not bring food and other basic things and had to rely on buying for their everyday living. This led to expansion in the business of indigenes and a boost in income generation. Agbesi (2019) argues that refugees boost income generation in host communities. Some of the elders made the following comments during the FGD:

*...when they [refugees] came we got a lot of market. When they came, they brought nothing. They just came with their few cloths. Apart from that they did not come with food and other basic necessities, so they had to buy and this gave us a lot of market. So, people expanded their business... Those who are still here still buy to eat so our people get market. (Focus Group Discussion with participants, July 2021)*  
*...our people used to sell on top of small tables like this one. But when they brought the refugees in 1990, it boosted trade activities and business in the community. Some people who were not selling even started selling because the refugees were buying a lot. They really brought a lot of market to our people. (Focus group discussion with elders, July 2021)*

The comments indicate that trade activities in the community were boosted by the coming of the refugees. Refugees’ stay also boosted renting business. For example, some participants indicated in the FGD as follows:

*One other thing is that some of them come around looking for places to stay and we rent to them. So, they stay and pay rent. (Focus group discussion with elders, July 2021)*

Generally, the comments suggest that the continuous stay of refugees in Buduburam provides a source of market to the community and boosts trade and rent business. This finding is affirmed by Miller (2018) who found that refugees contribute to the economy of host communities.

#### **5.1.3 Influx of other Foreigners and Nationals from other parts of the country**

The study realized that the protracted stay of refugees in the Buduburam community has led to the influx of other foreigners into the Buduburam community. Participants mentioned that Nigerians, Malians, Sierra Leoneans, and Nigeriens have also come to stay in the community. They influx also includes people from the northern part of Ghana. Insecurity in the community has thus been blamed on the influx of foreigners and the nationals from the other parts of Ghana. A participant stated in the interviews that:

*When the camp started here it was only the Liberians who they brought in 1990. So, as they stayed, and it was time for them to go back and some refused like that it got to a point other people started coming into the community too. People from Nigeria came in. We have people from Niger too. Then other people from the north [northern Ghana] also came. So now the community is not only hosting the Liberian refugees but also Nigerians, Niger people and some northerners. As for the Liberians around, they are good. It is the Nigerians around who are making troubles. (Focus group discussion with elders, July 2021)*

Also, one elder shared that Sierra Leone citizens have come to settle in the community:

*It is not only Liberians who are here. We also have Nigerians, and people from Sierra Leone. The Liberian refugees are not bad but the influx of other people into the community brought about the deplorable security situations you always hear in the news. (Focus group discussion with elders, July 2021)*

A chief intimated in the interviews that:

*As for me I will always say the truth. The Liberians are good but when the Nigerians infiltrated, that was how all these social vices increased. (Focus group discussion with elders, July 2021)*

The comments seem to attribute the increase in criminal activities in Buduburam in recent times to the influx of other people into the community. This supports Loescher (2002) study which argued that refugee influx tends to threaten the security, stability and order of host territories. One participant shared one of the tactics foreigners use to enter the community as follows:

*The place is now full of Nigerians. The Nigerians are many here. This one will come and by the time you realized they have brought their friends to join them. What they do is that one person will come and act like he wants to rent a place for only himself. But when you rent the place out to him the next thing you will see is that he will bring many people to come and stay. So, they are now many here. Even when they chase them away, they return. (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)*

#### **5.1.4 Increase in Social Vices**

Participants claimed that the refugees’ prolonged stay has resulted in increase in social vices. As indicated earlier, participants shared that the prolonged stay of the refugees from Liberia resulted in other foreigners taking advantage of it to come into the community. They shared that many of those people who come into the community do not have any job and as such they tend to engage in social vices such as prostitution, armed robbery, and kidnapping to survive. Some participants indicated in the interviews and focus group discussions as follows:

*Some of them are into prostitution. Sometimes we hear that someone has been kidnapped or that. In the*

*night they rob people and beat them too. (Interview with elder, July 2021)*

*Hmmm me the way they live their lives I don't like it. Some of them dress naked and do all kinds of things and because of that I don't want to even hire a house close to where they are also staying. I have children and the way their girls live their lives they can spoil my children. (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)*

According to one of the elders, the thing he dislikes about the prolonged stay of refugees and other foreigners is their engagement in prostitution which has the tendency to corrupting children in the community:

*As for me the only thing I do not like about them, or their stay is the prostitution. Many of them are into prostitution and this can spoil our children due to the way they dress. (Focus group discussion with elders, July 2021)*

Participants are concerned that the increase in social vices is affecting their day-to-day living and activities. The study found out that some of the refugees engage in drug trafficking. A community leader made the following comment about refugee engagement in drug business when we took a ride around the refugee camp:

*You see where they stay! Look at their houses but if you want to get any quantity of drugs you can get it here. The camp is small but there are major drug dealers here. Even if you want sacks of cocaine or 'wee' you will get. I am telling you, there is no amount of drugs you won't get from here. So, if there is to be any swoop, they will get a lot of drugs. (Interview with community leader, July 2021)*

The findings affirmed Codjoe et al. (2013) study which observed that refugee host communities in Ghana attribute increase social vices to the presence of refugees. Indigenes are worried about the increased in social vices in the community. Some participants indicated that they live in fear because of the increase in social vices. The human security paradigm indicates that crime creates a situation of insecurity thereby making it difficult for people to exercise their life choice freely without disturbances (UNDP, 1994). Thus, some participants suggested that a constant security patrol both in the day and night in the community would help calm the situation.

#### **5.1.5 Friendly Relationship**

Participants also indicated that they had cordial relationship and co-existence with the Liberian refugees in the community in various ways such as trade, schooling, and sports (e.g., football). Participants indicated that they schooled together with some of the refugees, eat together and build friendships. For example, some participants stated that:

*The Liberian people are good. I know a lot of them, and I can tell you that we do not have problems with them. It is other people who came into the community that began making trouble. The time they came I was still small. I went to school with them, and we were friends. We played together. We trade with them. They are source of market for our people who sell goods and services, so we lived cordially with them. (Interview with a chief, July 2021)*

*Some are good but others too are not. Some want to do business, but you also have others who don't want to do anything. So, some of them are there we don't have problem with them, we interact (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)*

One community leader shared that the Liberian refugees are friendly:

*You see they are free and friendly people. They are my friends and I have good relationship with them. If I go with you to their place now and you see how we interact you would think that I am one of them. They are not as what some people perceive them to be. They are very friendly and free people. It is the Nigerians who have come into the community who are causing the troubles. (Interview with a community leader, July 2021)*

It is noteworthy that some participants indicated that the indigenes and the refugees date each other with the hope of getting married. As such, participants noted that most of the refugees are good but only a few engage in negative behaviours:

*Oh, some of our people date the Liberian girls and their men too date our girls, so it is like that. We interact well with them. It is when other foreigners came in that they started doing bad things but as for the Liberians I don't have a problem with them. Only a few of them are wayward. (Interview with a chief, July 2021)*

Thus, participants described their experience and interaction with the refugees in their community as peaceful and cordial. However, participants mentioned that the friendly interaction and relationship between the indigenes and refugees is appearing strained due to the influx of other foreigners whom they claim commit crimes and accuse the refugees of perpetrating those acts.

Overall, there are mixed perceptions of the refugee presence in Buduburam. This supports the literature that there are mixed perspectives about the impact of refugee presence on host communities in Ghana (Codjoe et al., 2013). Also, the findings speak to the literature that refugees can contribute both positively and negatively to host communities (Miller, 2018; Gomez & Christensen, 2010).



## 5.2 Security Implications of the Refugees' Prolonged Stay in the Community

The prolonged refugee stay in Buduburam has created serious security concerns. The following subsections discuss in detail, the security implications of the prolonged stay of refugees in Buduburam.

### 5.2.1 Increased in crime and criminal activities

Participants indicated that the refugees' prolonged stay has brought about increase in crime and criminal activities in Buduburam. This affirms Rumbach (2007) observation that the protracted refugee situation in Buduburam had caused crime and problems of insecurity for the host population and the government of Ghana. Participants claim that most of the refugees do not have jobs to do and as such they tend to sell drugs, engage in pickpocketing, and armed robbery. For instance, a participant indicated in the FGD as follows:

*...because they [refugees] refused to go and they don't also have any job to do and support themselves they now do criminal activities. Some of them are into stealing and robbery. If you don't have anything doing you know you will think of bad things. And also, they have to survive, so they do all kinds of things. Nigerians too have come to add, and they are now the people doing most of the bad things in the community.* (Focus group discussion with elders, July 2021)

Participants attributed the increased in crime and criminal activities to the influx of other foreigners in the community. For instance, one elder indicated in the interviews that:

*...crime was there but not as it is now. It is when the Nigerians and other people came in that crime started increasing. When we were with only the refugees things were not like this but you see other people started coming in and things started changing.* (Focus group discussion with elders, July 2021)

Thus, from the comments it appears that participants are convinced that the influx of other foreigners into the community is responsible for the worsening insecurity and crime situation in Buduburam. As such, there is the tendency that other people may be committing crime in the community and continue to accuse the Liberian refugees of such crimes. During the FGD with the women some of them described the security situation of the community in the following statements;

*Now the place is not safe. You will get up hear that somebody's child was kidnapped, or someone has been robbed here and that. Although it has not happened to me, we hear of such in the community and in the news. The other day I learnt a child was kidnapped. So now when you are walking around you are even afraid, even in the afternoon I am afraid because you never can tell.* (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)

*They rob people all the time. Even in the afternoon you are not safe. I used to get up early and go to Accra and buy goods for the market. Sometimes I used to leave home around 2am, 3am or 4am to travel to buy goods. But now I cannot do that again. If you get up at that time again now to travel, you could be robbed or attacked.* (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)

These comments are evident to the sense of insecurity, fear and uncertainty that has been created in residents of Buduburam. Participants are concerned about their safety. Dzimbiri (1993) argued that the presence of refugees has high security implications on the host communities. The Human Security Theory indicates that people's survival, livelihood, and dignity should not be threatened (UNDP, 1994; Gomez & Gasper, 2013). Yet, the findings indicate that people's lives and survival are threatened. UNDP (1994) indicates that people's daily worries result in feeling of insecurity in them. There were also concerns about increase in drug dealing in the community. For instance, a participant made the following statement in the interview:

*Let me tell you something, one thing that these people do is drugs. You can get any amount of drugs here. If the police do a swoop they will find a lot of them, even sacks. But the thing I don't understand is how they get these drugs in such large quantities and hide them there.* (Interview with community leader, July 2021)

The claim is that since most of the refugees and foreigners do not have steady jobs, they tend to engage in criminal activities such as dealing in drugs, thievery, robbery and kidnapping to survive.

### 5.2.2 Fear and Uncertainty

The study discovered that the refugees' prolonged stay has led to situation where people in the Buduburam community now live in constant fear and uncertainty. Participants explained that because of the criminal activities such as armed robbery, kidnapping and thievery that are being perpetrated by the refugees and other foreigners in Buduburam, people are now afraid of their lives. Some participants indicated in the interviews that the mere sight of them brings fear and panic:

*As for me I fear them. The way they behave, their hairstyle and everything is scaring. So, the moment I see them I am afraid. I am always shaking and praying to God whenever I see them that nothing should happen to me. Because you do not know what they can do to you; they can rob or kidnap you or the children.* (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)

*Hmmm! seeing them brings fear. I fear them. Yes, I fear them 'papa' [a lot].* (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)

An elder also indicated in the discussions as follows:

*People are afraid of them. There is fear in many people. You know because of the armed robberies and other criminal activities that some of refugees and other foreigners engage in there is fear in the community.* (Focus group discussion with elders, July 2021)

There is a feeling of insecurity in residents of the Buduburam community. People now close early from market so that they can avoid being robbed in the night. Some participants also indicated that they are now afraid to get up early in the morning to travel or go to their workplaces. Some participants shared in the FGD as follows:

*I am afraid of them. That one I am afraid. I cannot wake up early to do my work, travel to buy my goods as I used to do. You cannot do that again. Hmmm! now I can no longer walk in the night.* (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)

*Because I am afraid of them, and you do not know what will happen to the children I always make sure I send them to school and bring them back myself. When I am walking with children, I hold their hands.* (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)

Some participants claimed that when they are going to the market that they are afraid:

*When I am going to the market, I am afraid. You see you don't know or can tell what will happen to you there or on your way there or from there.*

One woman made the following statement in the interviews:

*We are no longer safe. We are afraid of them, so we need your help [participant appealing to the researcher]. If there is any way you can help you do because we are not safe. Help us talk to the government. One of the parliamentary candidates for the 2020 elections promised to build us a police station but unfortunately, he did not win so that has not been done. I am happy that you have come to do this work so if you can talk to government or if your work can make government to hear our cry and help us, I will be happy.* (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)

The sense of insecurity, fear and uncertainty makes it difficult for people to go about exercising their live choices freely. People have become afraid of the safety of their properties and lives.

### **5.2.3 Increased Suspicion**

Due to the increased in criminal activities in the Buduburam community and coupled with the fear and uncertainty that has been created in residents, there is now suspicion among the Buduburam population. From the interviews, the study discovered that the people are not just afraid of the refugees and other foreigners in their community but are also suspicious of them. One participant statement illustrating this issue of suspicion is as follows:

*You see all these Rastafarian boys around they are all criminals. They don't do anything. All they do is smoke and go about stealing.* (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)

As indicated earlier, not every Liberian refugee or Nigerian in the Buduburam community is into crime. However, due to the criminal activities that participants claimed some of them engage in, it has resulted in a situation where every Nigerian and Liberian refugee is suspected of being a criminal and treated as such by some residents. One elder indicated:

*...it is not all of them that are bad. Yes, some are bad but not all. But because of the bad behavior of some of them people tend to lamp all of them together and say they are criminals but all of them are not criminals. I personally know some of them who are into good business. But you know there is a saying that even if one monkey destroys the corn or millet, they always say that it is monkeys.* (Focus group discussion with elders, July 2021)

The suspicion that has been created among the Buduburam population could cause a situation where innocent people would be suspected or accused of committing crimes that they did not engage in. It could result in innocent foreigners getting punished for crimes they did not commit. Also, indigenes may commit crimes and rather blame it on the refugees and other foreigners in the community.

### **5.2.4 Community turned into a Hideout for Criminals**

One other security implication that became apparent in the interaction with participants was that Buduburam has now become a hideout for criminals in the country. Participants indicated that Buduburam has been tagged as the hob for criminal activities. Thus, criminals in other parts of Ghana would often commit crimes and run to Buduburam to take refuge. As such, some participants claimed that not every criminal caught in Buduburam is a regular resident in the community. Rather, some are people who use the community as a hideout. For instance, an elder in the interviews indicated that:

*Crime is there but not all the criminals you hear in the news that are being caught here are from here. They are criminals from other parts of Ghana who tend to run into the community whenever they commit a crime in their area. For example, some criminals from Kumasi and Accra do something and run into the community to hide.* (Focus group discussion with elders, July 2021)

Another elder corroborated his colleague's statement above in the following comment:

*This place is now a hiding place for many criminals. Even people from Cote D'Ivoire and Nigeria will commit a crime and when they are looking for them, they run to Ghana and come here and hide. In*

*Ghana those criminals in Kumasi, North and Accra hide here when they do any bad thing and are being sought after. (Focus group discussion with elders, July 2021)*

Thus, the people of Buduburam are concerned that their community has been turned into a hideout for criminals. Overall, the findings support Barimah's (2021) argument that security issues continue to be a source of concern to many residents in Buduburam. Also, the findings demonstrate that people in Buduburam are finding it difficult to "...exercise their life choices safely and freely and...be relatively confident that the opportunities they have today are not totally lost tomorrow" (UNDP, 1994, p. 23). The study reveals that there is human insecurity in Buduburam. People are supposed to live freely without fear and want (UNDP, 1994). However, the findings show that many residents of the community are living in fear.

### **5.3 Host Community Coping Strategies**

#### **5.3.1 Resort to God for protection**

Throughout the interviews and discussions, it became apparent that one key strategy that the people of Buduburam adopt to cope with the refugee situation in their community is that they resort to God for protection. According to participants, they put their lives in the hands of God to protect them against any form of harm. For example, one participant indicated in the interviews as follows:

*Hmmm! because we cannot do anything we only pray to God to protect us. The only thing I do is pray because I know with God all things are possible. (Interview with elder, July 2021)*

Some other participants indicated that they usually commit their children in the blood of Jesus every day when they are going to school for him to protect them so that go safely and come home safely.

*What I do is that put my children in the blood of Jesus. Because we are living with all kinds of people our children are not safe. They like kidnapping children here, so I put my children in the blood of Jesus. Yes so I pray even while they are in school I pray that nothing should happen to them. (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)*

The comments suggest that people in the community resort to their faith for protection as they go about their day-to-day activities. During the focus group discussion with the women, one of them intimated that:

*I am afraid of them. Even when I am going to the market, I am afraid. So, I pray whenever I am going to the market so that nothing bad will happen to me. That is how I have been doing over the years. I pray for my husband and children especially when you are not around, and the children are alone you don't know what will happen to them. (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)*

People in the community depend on God and prayer for their protection and safety. Just like refugees who resort to God to cope with their stay in host communities (Dako-Gyeke & Adu, 2015; Rumbach, 2007), the host people of the Liberian refugees in Buduburam also resort to God to cope with the refugees. Therefore, both refugees and host communities tend to lean on God for their survival.

#### **5.3.2 Avoidance of Night Movement**

One other coping strategy that emerged from the interactions with participants in the interviews and discussions was that people have stopped moving in the night. Some participants indicate that due to the increase in crime in the community, they no longer walk in the night or wake up early to go anywhere. According to participants, most of the criminals operate in the night and as such to avoid them they have decided not to move about in the night. One participant illustrated this in the following statement:

*I have stopped moving in the night. When I am out, and it is getting dark or to the evening I start rushing home. When it is dark, and you joke you will be robbed or even molested especially if you are a woman. (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)*

One of the women in the FGD shared how she stopped night movement to cope:

*Previously I used to get up early and go to the market. You know you must go early and sweep the place before you start selling. I also used to get up early sometimes 2am or 3am and travel to Accra to buy my goods. That time when you want to travel you can get up at any time and you will get a taxi that will take you to the station to pick a car to Accra. But because these people from other places came to join the refugees here and there insecurity everywhere I do not get up early in the night again to go to the market or go to Accra to buy goods. Even when it is 6am I do not move out of the house. So, my business is affected. I go to market late and close early to avoid being robbed or attacked in the night. (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)*

The comment from the participant reveals that people now resort to limiting their movement in the night to avoid attacks from criminals who are among the refugee population and other foreigners.

#### **5.3.3 Carefulness and Vigilance**

Vigilance and carefulness were other strategies which were resorted to by participants in the study to cope with the refugees and other foreigners in the community. Some typical comments from the focus group discussion included:

*One thing I do is that I try to be careful whenever I am out. As I walk, I hold my children's hands. I*

*don't leave my child hands when I am out in the street. (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)*  
*Everybody is now careful. When you are walking you must be looking back to see who is following you.*  
*We hear of kidnapping and armed robbery so these days everyone is now careful. (Focus group discussion with elders, July 2021)*

*As for me I make sure that I send my children to school and pick them from school. I told them when they close, and I am not in, yet they should stay and wait for me. So, they will wait until I come, and we all walk home together. If you are not careful you will lose your children. My children's school is just over there but I don't allow them to go to the school alone. Since my children started going to school this is what I have been doing. (Focus group discussion with women, July 2021)*

From the concerns that participants expressed about human security, people in Buduburam have become acutely careful and vigilant in their daily activities and interactions.

## 6. Conclusion

The refugee situation in Buduburam is a complex mix. It has both positives and negatives to the indigene, refugees, and researcher. Refugee stay has provided a source of market to the Buduburam community. It has also brought some development projects to the community. Friendly relationships between the indigenes and refugees have soared. Marriage between indigenes and refugees in Buduburam has been on the rise. Despite these positives, there is increasing human insecurity in Buduburam. Crime and criminal activities abound in the community. The insecurity in Buduburam is a major source of worry to many residents in the community and makes it difficult for people to exercise their life choices freely and without fear or want. The use of the community as criminal hideout poses a serious security threat to the community and the nation.

## 7. Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

- i. It is recommended that there should be constant day and night police patrols in the community. The police should also widen and strengthen their surveillance in the community to detect and quell any criminal plans or activities.
- ii. Ghana Immigration Service should strengthen their border checks and patrols to ensure that people from other countries do not enter the country without proper screening.
- iii. Avenues should be provided for the refugee population and the host community members to interact and discuss critical issues that affect their lives and co-existence. Such avenues will ensure that issues of misunderstanding between the refugees and residents are addressed.

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