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## SOCIOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Dissecting shelter for the displaced immigrants' operations and challenges in the 2015 xenophobic violence in Durban

Evangelos Mantzaris<sup>1</sup> and Bethuel Sibongiseni Ngcamu<sup>2\*</sup>

**Abstract:** The 2015 xenophobic attacks in Durban left thousands of the victims mostly displaced foreign nationals in the shelters arranged by the South African government in accordance with the regulations of the United Nations. Millions were spent by the government in ensuring and providing basic services and necessities and professional assistance by a number of government departments, civil society groups and universities. Despite these concerted coordinated efforts by government, criticisms have been levelled against them on shelter management, operations, living conditions and lack of the inter and intra-stakeholder coordination by the media, scholars and anti-state civil society groups. Meanwhile, an empirical study dissecting the displaced shelters' operations, stakeholders' activities, reintegration and repatriation challenges as well as the living conditions in the establishments has not been published. This study intends to interrogate the displaced shelters for the immigrants' government agencies and civil society operations, success and failure stories as well as the reintegration and repatriation challenges faced by the government officials. This angle has not been researched and

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

The authors of the article have collaborated at all levels on a number of very crucial, fundamental and challenging topics in South Africa, Africa and the world as a whole, xenophobia, good governance and corruption. They have also listened to the call to contribute original research on key issue associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, especially on the issue of disaster management, its realities, successes and failures at local level.

Their individual and combined publications nationally and internationally on such key challenges facing Africa and humanity at large have been founded on advanced and widely acknowledged and cited theoretical and methodological grounds and principles. This reality has been recognised and acknowledged by the highly respected South Africa's National Research Foundation that has awarded the 3-year THUTHUKA research funding to produce a pioneering report on South African universities' good governance realities. Such research will hopefully be the cornerstone of new policies, rules and regulations.

## PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Xenophobia in South Africa begun in 2008 and has continued until today. It has taken place throughout the country and has taken a wide variety of forms. It has become the center of research emanating from universities, non-governmental organisations and entities such as the United Nations and is associated bodies, international refugee organisations and the World Health Organisation amongst others.

The authors of the present article have concentrated on the massive xenophobic attacks in the city of Durban. The paper assesses the living conditions that were experienced by the victims of the xenophobic attacks which took place in the Greater Durban. The government's voice is also heard in this research, as previously published studies, have depicted government as reacting, inefficient, ineffective, and incompetent in their operations in the centres for the displaced. The research study, therefore, shed a clear light to the local and international community on the active role that were performed by the government of South Africa during and in the aftermath of the xenophobic attacks in Durban.

unearthed by researchers. This study contributes to the scholarly literature by espousing dimensions of the shelters and dissecting the actions and behaviour of the displaced immigrants who have been considered by a host of stakeholders as the victims in the shelters. Their attitudes and activities are analysed.

**Subjects:** Anthropology – Soc Sci; Sociology & Social Policy; Criminology and Criminal Justice

**Keywords:** civil society groups; immigrants; inductive approach; repatriation; reintegration; shelter value chain

## 1. Introduction

The greater Durban metropolitan has experienced isolated recurrences of attacks against the foreign nationals which have been described as xenophobia by the media and scholars. Such attacks are considered as violations of the human rights and dignity of the immigrants and have been condemned by civil society activists, international communities, the media, and scholars. The minority of the vulnerable immigrants from the poor neighbouring countries who have experienced anti-foreign prejudices and sentiments seek refuge in police stations, community halls and churches and subsequently in the displaced shelters during the outbreak of xenophobic attacks. These vulnerable groups have been unconditionally supported by government, civil society groups, NGOs and Community Based Organisations (CBOs) who mobilised different stakeholders and raised awareness to prevent the scourge of xenophobia. Furthermore, diversified activities were performed by universities, industry and government aimed at providing humanitarian assistance to the victims of the xenophobic attacks. Local civil society organisations provided humanitarian and legal assistance and created awareness in respect of defending the rights of the refugees and foreign citizens in this saga. The upsurge in the xenophobic attacks in Durban in 2015 was described initially by the press as fuelled by the Zulu King who called on the immigrants to “go back to their countries”. The attacks left seven dead, both foreigners and South Africans alike, casualties and thousands displaced in the shelters. This has led to strained relationships between South Africa and other African countries. Ngcamu and Mantzaris (2019a, 2019b) attributed the cause of 2015 xenophobic attacks as the labour dispute at Jeena Supermarket in Isipingo where the foreign nationals were employed in the positions previously occupied by locals.

**Despite the relative publicity on the attacks, there is a dearth of published data on the displaced immigrants’ deportations, reintegration processes, challenges in the shelters, value chain and its rules and challenges. The state of affairs of the displaced shelters and the realities faced by all sides associated with them are the key aims, objectives, the primary focus and purpose of the study. This because, such important aspects of xenophobic attacks have received very limited attention from scholars. Moreover, researchers have inconclusively explored the collaboration of inter-stakeholders in the displaced shelters and the living conditions of the immigrants; a hotspot which has necessitated further research. The study attempts to answer the question of the extent to which the shelter operations and systems during xenophobic attacks by different stakeholders have yielded positive results.**

The spate of the 2015 xenophobic incidences necessitated an increase in the number of the displaced shelters to accommodate mostly the Congolese and the Burundian refugees of whom 85% were found to have symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (Womersley et al., 2016). Okyere-Manu (2016) argued that churches play a pivotal role in combating the wave of xenophobia by providing humanitarian assistance to the victims in the form of food, shelter, clothes and medical assistance. The author is convinced that the church is performing an active role during such a crisis although their activities are not coordinated with other agencies to design an effective long-term plan to prevent such recurring brutal attacks against the foreign nationals. According to Desai and Vahed (2013: 241), the South African government needs to face xenophobia through new responsive policies and stricter laws as well as deal with those culprits who indulge in

xenophobic discourse. There are a few articles that have explored the role of the religious organisations which have sheltered the displaced immigrants during xenophobia and the challenges they have encountered (Bompani, 2013), as well as the contribution of the private sector in understanding their stance and orientation (Nyar, 2011). The above scant literature suggests that there is a paucity of published research on the displaced shelter operations during xenophobic attacks, a reason that triggered this study aiming to dissect the roles of government, its agencies and the civil society in the shelters for the displaced. This study further aspires to describe the reintegration and repatriation challenges encountered by government officials and the displaced immigrants and assess the nature and origins of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the experiences for both the government and the displaced.

This article is divided into four sections which include synthesis of the literature, conceptual and research design and methodology, research findings and discussion of data as well as the conclusion.

## **2. Literature review**

A sterling piece of academic work by Desai and Vahed (2013) examined the response role of the NGOs Gift of the Givers (GOTG) during the 2008 xenophobic violence in South Africa. This study is interesting due to the fact that a myriad of methods was used to discern to the crucial role of the NGOs during the xenophobic conflicts. NGO officials were interviewed, visitations in the shelters for the displaced took place (participant observation), media briefs and the relevant newspaper articles on the issue were scrutinised and analysed. The study espoused the crucial role played by GOTG in providing material support to the victims of xenophobia although criticism were levelled against them based on the “fact” that their strategic response to such catastrophes is short term. In addition, universities such as UCT played a crucial role in responding to the 2008 xenophobic attacks. For instance, Favish (2009) mentioned that a host of South Africans responded to the 2008 xenophobic attacks and assisted the displaced immigrants. The author opines that UCT’s response was in the form of humanitarian aid tailor-made to mitigate the adverse effect of xenophobia. According to Favish (2009), the Faculty of Health Sciences galvanised resources from different departments and centres within the university including the medical personnel and the Refugee Rights Projects to respond to the incidents of human rights abuses and provided protocols for assisting and dealing with the refugees. In addition, the Department of Social Development was mobilised to provide psychological counselling services to the displaced people, and seminars and discussions were introduced which were incorporated into the teaching programmes.

Another pertinent study conducted by Robins (2009) during the 2008 xenophobic violence in South Africa dealt with the responses to the humanitarian crisis. The study described the crucial activities that were performed by Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in providing relief to the displaced immigrants in the shelters in the form of the basic needs including food and clothes. Robins (2009, p. 636) opines that TAC provided legal aid and engaged in activism to promote the rights of the refugees with the AIDS Law Project where they fought the rights of the refugees (both in the shelters and their interaction with the immigration office and the police) through the courts. Robins (2009, p. 638) believed that TAC and other interested non-profit organisations played a tremendous role in pressurising the UNHCR and the government of South Africa to respond to the horrendous conditions of the refugees in South Africa. The author further argues that the civil society groups continued by inculcating the rights, needs and plight of the refugees in government and the public. Peberdy and Jara (2011) acknowledged the mobilisation of resources through the humanitarian response and advocacy work in their study by examining the 2008 response of civil society groups to the xenophobic violence in Cape Town.

## **3. Conceptual framework and research methodology**

**The conceptual framework utilised in this project is the grounded theory, that over the years has been based on a systematic methodology founded on qualitative methods and design leading to hypotheses construction and development through collecting, analysis and dissection of data (Oktay, 2012). The lack of analysis of the shelters and their repercussions set earlier**

generated questions of “how”, “when” and “why”, in need of data collection that could lead to dissection of human realities, facts and concepts. The categorisation and analysis of the data could lead to new understanding of social phenomena, a new set of hypotheses or a new theory. Grounded theory is not based on existing conceptual or theoretical frameworks as it does not choose a theoretical framework in existence (Ralph et al., 2015).

This study followed an inductive theory generation approach (Bryman 2015) where qualitative open-ended interviews were posed to the informants to discover, understand, reflect and explain the interviewees “experiences and viewpoints” (Tracy, 2019, p. 132). The data gleaned from the interviews provided hidden or unseen reactions of key actors to the social and print media perceptions and their adverse reporting on xenophobia while rhetorically constructing meanings and stories (Rubin & Rubin, 2011).

A total of 16 (**with ten male and six females**) key informants were selected from different government departments and agencies during the course of data collection using purposive sampling. **They were randomly selected through the judgemental sampling frame. The selection of the interviewees was based on the fact that all of them were participants in key meetings where all state institutions were represented. Such meetings were instrumental in analysing the existing information and decision-making. They were recruited according to the existing rules and regulations of the state entities involved. A total of 24 informants were requested to participate in the research study, and eight turned down the researchers’ request due to their work commitments. The interviews were conducted by both researchers (male) who have an extensive experience in conductive qualitative in-depth interviews to government officials and the civil society groups. These officials belonged to a wide range of government and its agencies that included the police, Home Affairs, Chief Coordinator of NATJOINTS, shelter coordinators, shelter supervisors and municipal and provincial disaster management officials. The sample size of the in-depth interviews (N = 16) was above the limits of the phenomenological studies, which range between 6 and 10 (Morse, 2010). The previously mentioned research participants were interviewed in their personal capacity and their identities are not revealed in this study as some of the information they provided was considered to be classified by them. Following the interviews, all participants were shown the transcripts for verification. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed to all interviewees in writing.**

The government officials were asked questions regarding the processes followed on the deportation of the immigrants in during the 2015 xenophobia; the repatriation processes, hindrances and challenges experienced in the shelters; the rules and regulations in the shelters and how were they enforced; the living conditions and challenges encountered in the shelters and the extent of the inter-stakeholders’ collaboration challenges in the shelters.

In order for the researchers to ensure and elicit the needed responses enabling the achievement of the project objectives a pilot study of six carefully selected participants in the processes following the attacks took place. All questions asked were the ones that were used in the study.

The interviews lasted between one to one and a half hours and were conducted by the researchers. There were no prospective interviewees refusing to participate.

A qualitative data analytical tool, NVIVO software was used to categorise, classify and develop themes. In addition, pieces of reflective thinking, ideas, theories and concepts emerged (Wong, 2008, p. 17). This software was beneficial to the researchers as they were flexible and systematic in recording ideas, enhancing research quality and facilitating data analysis, which was mostly performed manually. It provided the opportunity for researchers to explore trends, identify themes and draw conclusions. The trustworthiness and authenticity of the qualitative data were assessed and found to be credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable

(Bryman et al. 2015: 44). This study on the xenophobic attacks was conducted in accordance with the rules of good practice, and its findings can be applied to other provinces in South Africa. An auditing approach in order to establish research merit in terms of trustworthiness was conducted, and the findings were not influenced by the researchers' values and or theoretical inclinations (Bryman et al. 2015).

#### 4. Research findings and discussion

This study intends to interrogate the displaced shelters for the immigrants' government agencies and civil society operations, success and failure stories as well as the reintegration and repatriation challenges faced by the government officials. The themes extracted from the data also include the shelter value chain processes, inter stakeholder collaboration in the displaced shelters, the displaced shelter rules and the living conditions in the shelter, the reintegration processes and repatriation challenges.

#### 5. The beginnings

The coordinator in all the shelters observed that:

*"As time went by there were over 2500, mostly Malawian, Mozambican and Zimbabwean refugees including many children and women in Chatsworth. They were from Sea Cow Lake, Quarry Heights and New Germany Road. There were one three sleeper marquees and one kitchen marquee at the time".*

*One of the inspectors in the shelters noticed that:*

*"There were 1850 victims from Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi who were sheltered at the Westcliffe Sports Ground in Chatsworth, who previously stayed in Bottlebrush and Chatsworth. There were 380 children and from the first date 1400 refugees wanted to repatriate. Over 500 of them were repatriated".*

These numbers were corroborated from the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees

(UNHCR) in April 2015 (UNHCR, 2015)

#### 6. Shelter value chain processes

A senior Home Affairs official explained the value chain process on the legal processes to be followed by the displaced migrants as:

*"The Police were the key authority that referred a person or group of persons who were forced or felt forced or obliged to leave their homes or places of residence. The displaced persons should immediately approach the nearest police station to lay a complaint and obtain a reference number from the police station. The police station would then refer such person or persons to the relevant shelter if necessary. Upon arrival at the shelter, the displaced was obligated to register in the shelter register and acknowledge acceptance of the rules. They are allocated a reference number for administrative purposes. All occupants of the shelter should adhere to the laws of South Africa, to reasonable instructions issued by representatives of government at the shelter; participate in any lawful processes initiated by the government aimed at reintegration; respect the privacy, dignity and property of other inhabitants; take reasonable precautions to safeguard their own property; take care of their children and other members of their family within the means available to them; live within the shelter with due regard to cleanliness and hygiene; refrain from engaging in any activity which may incite conflict or violence; refrain from using drugs on site and refrain from taking alcohol on site".*

The Home Affairs official further indicated that:

***“Firearms and dangerous weapons were not allowed; no business activities were allowed; religious activities could take place only in designated areas of the shelter; occupants of the shelter could engage in sport/recreational/cultural activities with due consideration to other persons; government representatives could designate spaces within the shelter to accommodate sport/recreational/cultural activities and that was subject to considerations of safety and security as determined by the government, occupants of the shelter had the freedom to enter and leave the shelters at will; government could request occupants who wish to leave or enter to provide their occupation reference number for administrative purposes and the continued existence of the shelter was always at the discretion of government”.***

The Chief Coordinator of NATJOINT saw an increase in the displaced migrants in the shelters. Within two days of the Chatsworth shelter opening, the number of the displaced increased from 500 to more than 1000 then to more than 3000. Then, 98 displaced people from the Umlazi mosque and Merebank were relocated to a third emergency shelter in Greenwood Park. Basic services were arranged and the displaced people at were assisted with cooked meals.

The illustration presented above was verified by a SAPS member who was on duty at one of the shelters who reported that:

***“I was stationed at the Isipingo shelter situated at the Isipingo Beach Sports field. Initially there were more than 950 people at the shelter. Then the number increased by more than 600 people some from Umlazi, the Dakota and Pilgrim squatter camps in central Durban, Isipingo, Malukazi, Puntans Hill, Cato Manor, Mayville, Durban Station, Overport and Mkhomazi. They were from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Tanzania, Mozambique and Burundi. Most of them were verified except for the 100 people that joined the shelter from Central Durban. It took a couple of days to verify them and this created logistical and other problems. The other major problem was that those in the shelter had two basic choices, to be repatriated or reintegrated to their communities following a number of programmes. After two days around 200 Malawians declared that they wished to repatriate, the others wanted to be re-incorporated in their communities, at least initially. This verification was undertaken by the Home Affairs Department. The shelter shut down on 6 May”.***

The existing circumstances described above were also reported in Winsor (2020)

#### ***Inter-stakeholder collaboration in the displaced shelters***

There was an inter-stakeholder collaboration as evidenced by shelter coordinators who were also in charge of the logistics as well as the living conditions in the shelters for the displaced. One of the shelter coordinators disclosed that they:

***“We were very strict with the conditions because the United Nations’ representatives visited often to inspect the living conditions and communicated directly with the leaders of the groups because they had elected them so they that could be represented. Three social workers visited the site every second day to provide counselling, the Municipal Health Department provided a mobile clinic and EMRS, a trauma response team, counselling work with the affected children on site and four security personnel per shift”.***

This is in agreement with the results found by Womersley et al. (2016) on the disproportionately high percentage (85%) of people in the displaced shelters in the 2015 xenophobic attacks to have the post-traumatic stress disorder.

The NATJOINT chief coordinator who was involved in the shelters mentioned numerous government departments which performed different functions in the shelters including Home Affairs, Social Development, Department of Health, EMRS, Safety and Community Liaison department,

Municipal Health Unit, Provincial Health, SAPS, Municipal Community Participation unit, Durban Solid Waste, Disaster Management Unit, Metro Police and RTI.

The initial numbers of displaced migrants in the shelters included 279 migrants, mostly from the DRC in Isipingo; in Chatsworth over 850 Zimbabweans, 120 Mozambicans, 110 Malawians and 5 Burundians and in Greenwood Park 40 Malawians, 50 Mozambicans, 10 Zimbabweans and 8 Congolese from the DRC.

A host of the government departments provided the displaced migrants with necessities and the specialist support. One of the senior Home Affairs officials painted this picture on the impartial role played by government staff:

At the minimum, regardless of the circumstances, and without discrimination, competent authorities like the police, the provincial and local government officials provided the displaced persons with help and ensured safe access to essential food and potable water; basic shelter and housing; appropriate clothing, essential health and social services such as psychosocial care and support, medical and police attention.

The Chief Coordinator of NATJOINT explained the religious groups, NGOs and SAPS performed a proactive role and provided supplies provided to the displaced migrants in the shelters.

The coordinator indicated that:

***“The verification of all displaced people by Home Affairs started immediately and supplies such as personal hygiene products, mattresses, blankets and food through a mobile kitchen were supplied by an NGO that facilitated the preparation of meals on site. Three marquees were set up at the Isipingo Beach Sports Ground to initially accommodate approximately 180 women, children and men on Day 1. As of 7 April 0276 people consisting of 231 adults and 45 children were accommodated in shelter. A mobile CSC was supplied by SAPS, and the Metro Police was also represented at the site, with 16 private security officials, eight per shift on night and day shift. The site was supplied with electricity, water, sanitation and waste bins. A mobile clinic was present for two hours a day to provide primary health care. The Department of Social Development provided psychosocial support on demand. Environmental Health inspected all food to ensure it met the required standards. After several days reintegration back into community life started. There were urgent interventions to identify a suitable site for relocating the foreign nationals as the operations at the police station were compromised. Departments, NGOs, and religious groups that could provide services such as food, water, electricity and medical treatment were activated and deployed to the new site. SAPS worked on a shift system to provide 24/7 security at the alternate location so the reintegration the national foreigners into the community could begin”.***

Okyere-Manu's (2016) findings confirmed that the churches had played an important role in combating xenophobia, despite the fact that the author also questioned their activities describing them as uncoordinated contrary to the findings presented above.

One of the SAPS members stationed in one of the shelters described the crucial role that was played by the religious groups in the displaced shelters as follows:

***“Three tents erected and daily there were three meals, mattresses, buckets, blankets, and clothing. All these were donated mostly by Muslim organisations and businesses such as Al Imdaad, Igbal-nash, clothing donated by Gift of the Givers, Red Cross, Ayoob C-darul and Babs Recycling throughout the period. They were very generous all the time. There were eight toilets and eight showers, electricity and water supply but no proper water drainage in the tap area,***

***resulting in stagnant water filled with litter. There were no lights at the ablution facilities, three bins on the side but no refuse collection, resulting in a build-up of litter”.***

One of the shelter coordinators detailed the different stakeholders who were in charge of the logistics in terms of securing appropriate living conditions in the displaced shelters. He indicated that:

***“The basics were covered as they had dry food, blankets, toiletries, mattresses, baby nappies, cutlery and most of it was not from the government but by organisations like Red Cross, Al-Imdaad, Neighbourhood Watch, Light Foundation, Crossroads, Ministers’ Forum, Darull Uloom Sunninghill, Durban Christian Church and Ezempilo Publishing There were one 30-sleeper marquee, two 300-sleeper marquees, one kitchen marquee, five toilets but no showers. In addition, bins were provided on site, one water tap was available, electricity existed but was insufficient, and the sports ground floodlights were not working. The Municipal Health Clinic provided screening every second day and the EMRS did random checks. There were problems and the victims made this very clear to all government and other officials who visited them”.***

One of the eThekweni Municipality leaders shared with the interviewees the nature of donations from different organisations which were meant for the wellbeing of the migrants in the displaced shelters. This member of the strategic committee revealed that:

***“Initially 11 tents were donated by the Municipality and COGTA of which three were removed at the end of April. A Muslim organisation donated a prayer tent. There were six container toilets, 12 showers and two mobile toilets for officials. A small number of casual workers cleaned the ablution facilities and there were eight bins while waste was collected by Durban Solid Waste every day. There were seven temporarily connected taps and a Jojo tank with a water capacity of 1000 litres. Under the circumstances the shelters were much better equipped at the beginning than the time they closed. Initially, there were no problems created on the part of the displaced, but as time went the on situation worsened for the authorities because the shelter inhabitants became increasingly demanding as the services could not satisfy a number of basic needs at a number of levels in terms of service delivery”.***

The above realities have been also recorded without much detail in A Jazeera television station (Essa, 2015)

## **7. Displaced shelter rules and the living conditions in the shelter**

Numerous government officials did comply with the UN agreements in dealing with the displaced migrants with special focus on the designated groups. This was exemplified by the Home Affairs senior official who said:

***“All the rules and regulations for the refugee shelters were planned by the Provincial Government of KZN and were based on the key rules and regulations of the United Nations, the World Health Organisation and the international agreement of the country as a key to human rights. Of course, the first step forward in a situation such as this was for the government to respect and protect the lives of the displaced and their human rights and in the process do everything possible to re-integrate them into their communities. Special care was given to vulnerable groups such as children and their mothers, expectant mothers, persons with disabilities and elderly persons, who were entitled to protection and assistance required by their condition and to treatment which takes into account their special needs”.***

The above description concurs with Favish (2009) who opined that UCT provided legal services through the Refugee Rights Projects to respond to the incidences of human rights abuses during this catastrophe. In addition, the civil society groups such as the TAC provided food, clothes and legal aid to the displaced refugees during the 2008 xenophobic attacks (Robins, 2009)

A SAPS official, project manager, member/liaison of the Strategic Planning Committee had this to say concerning the conditions in the shelters for the displaced:

***“I spent a few days inspecting the shelters with a special interest in the Isipingo one, where from day one the people there were completely against the whole atmosphere, the set-up, the environment and the surroundings. They were disgruntled with all the existing conditions and there was serious infighting among them because access to key amenities and necessities was difficult”.***

One senior police officer narrated the existing conditions in the shelters for the displaced and the logistics in terms of securing appropriate living conditions:

***“The municipality, SAPS and Home Affairs as well the existing Coordinating Committee were there. Home Affairs was responsible for verifications, a process that angered the many of the victims who felt this was not necessary, and even became more agitated when the United Nations offered vouchers and told them that this was the international law. The logistics and their management were similar in all shelters as the orders and objectives were to provide them with a decent living according to the existing budget and resources. Our priorities then concentrated on the basics like food three times a day, clothing, beds etcetera. In this, we were assisted by donations from NGOs and private business, churches and other institutions. There was 24/7 security as speed fencing was provided on site; however, victims moved the speed fencing for easy access affecting control measures. There were four security personnel per shift and the request for four additional security personnel to assist with access control was not accepted”.***

This finding is supported by numerous researchers (Desai and Vahed, 2014; Okyere-Manu, 2016) that the NGOs played a sterling job during such attacks although their responses were short-term lacking a long-term strategy.

One of the interviewees from the security cluster described the government’s position to the displaced migrants:

***“They were told directly what is on offer and were guided from the first day to the existing facilities, but for many of them, the conditions were unacceptable despite the fact that the conditions were the same in all the shelters. They were told this is what the state could afford and they should expect the best treatment within a specified budget. What I say does not mean that the conditions are up to the high standards expected from the victims, but it was extremely difficult to describe to them the financial situation and the real difficulties that such actions and services demand, especially at that time”.***

The security cluster officials recorded some mixed feelings and expectations in the shelters concerning those who wanted to stay in the shelters, be reintegrated into communities or repatriated into their own countries. The Senior SAPS official liaison officer was of the view that:

***“The policy that was adopted began with looking after the people there and ended with working with communities and the displaced towards reintegration. But the problem was that the displaced were never happy because many wanted repatriation while others wanted resettlement to another shelter because they had heard that the food was better, the toilets cleaner and there were vouchers from NGOs for food and clothing. These were the main issues talked about amongst the displaced together with the frequent in-fighting amongst them”.***

Policemen who worked in the shelters mentioned that the most disgruntled and vocal displaced were the Malawians and Mozambicans who created noise and arguments about almost everything. When he was directly involved with the shelters, there were approximately 1000 people in

Chatsworth, 280 in Isipingo and 200 in Greenwood Park. They were mainly Zimbabweans, Congolese, Malawians, Mozambicans, Ethiopians and Somalis.

Several senior government senior and executive leaders visited the displaced shelters as evidenced by the Chief Coordinator NATJOINT:

***“The first key government officials who visited the Isipingo SAPS station on 30 April 2015 where 170 victims found refuge were Transport, Safety and Community Liaison MEC Willie Mchunu, eThekweni Mayor James Nxumalo, SAPS Major General Chiliza and NGOs provided food. Officials from the MEC’s office, the eThekweni Municipality and 10 foreign national representatives were also present. They had the first meeting there. A number of meetings were attended by senior government officials: Minister of State Security, DM Mahlobo, Minister of Police Mr N Nhleko and National Commissioner, General Phiyega. They visited the three emergency shelters. The displaced were allowed to be visited by family and friends at specified times and there were regular visits from the United Nations, the MEC, the eThekweni Mayor and Deputy Mayor and municipal officials, politicians from the ANC and the IFP, the Ministers of Police and State Security and the SAPS National Commissioner and a number of other senior Government officials”.***

A host of the government department officials consistently agreed that responsibilities performed by government departments were not satisfactory. A senior representative from the eThekweni Municipality provided this background:

***“If one visited the shelters the truth was all there, dirty, no security, no water, few toilets; these things cannot be hidden. Disaster Management did its job, no one can deny it and the plans were according to international, national and provincial policies; the plans were well researched, scrutinised and agreed upon. The key question was ‘can you convince a SAPS member that is the voted and agreed plan of how to do the job, or a social worker to come on time because the children have problems?’ There were infrastructural problems in the shelters in terms of toilets, water, tents and security amongst others because the plans were there but the budgets were not, and if the NGOs and the religious people were not there more problems would be there with food, blankets and infrastructure. These are the things that most journalists picked up and made them their flagship, they did not write anything good although there were many things that were done well and with care. It was a mixed thing, good planning and agreements but implementation was sometimes a failure”.***

The interviewees from the security force acknowledged the crucial role that was played by donors in the shelters. This was alluded to by the SAPS member who was stationed at the shelters who said that he could not judge, but the feeling amongst those living there was dissatisfaction, they complained about everything, they had their own meetings to discuss the conditions and complained to those in charge and the United Nations when they visited. The feeling was that these were the conditions that the government could afford and if it were not for the donors, things would be much worse. The costs for feeding, clothing and servicing over 600 people in one of the shelters, but there were many more people in other shelters. There was continuous contact amongst staff in all shelters and there were signs that things were worse there.

On the perceptions was that the victims of xenophobia in the shelters were ill-treated by the South African government. The overall shelter supervisor believed that it was a difficult dilemma to explain for a number of reasons; the most important being that the victims in the shelters came from different backgrounds in all aspects: language, type of jobs, religions and lifestyle. Occasionally they spoke to one another but in almost most cases they only socialised with their own kind. However, the reality was that every day they faced the same life and conditions and they all agreed that the conditions were not good. They communicated how they felt to those in charge and the response was based on the existing instructions, orders and available resources.

Following a memorandum penned by a number of stakeholders of the shelters' Coordinating Committee and the relevant departments on a host of problems they faced in the shelters, an interviewee indicated that the existing challenges were identified, beginning with the report on the Chatsworth Emergency shelter where there was no refuse collection, the displaced interfered with security speed fence, there was a shortage of wrist tacks, no cold room to store the donated meat and beverage, at least five extra bins were needed, water from ablution facilities ought to be channelled away from marquees and that three marquees required electricity. At the Isipingo Emergency Shelter water needed to be channelled away from the marquees, there was no refuse collection on site and that additional bins were needed, and lights ought to be installed at the ablution facilities. It was also reported that more than 130 additional Malawians were dropped off unannounced at the Chatsworth shelter by an unknown bus and truck.

For the Phoenix Emergency Services, there were recommendations for more mobile toilets as the existing ones were insufficient; six container toilets were not functioning as yet as fittings were still to be secured; floodlights were not working posing a security threat; there was an insufficient number of tents and many victims spent the night outside in the cold; there was an urgent need of wrist bands for verification purposes; there was no access control; there was a need for speed fencing; additional bins and plastic bins to avoid littering and the services of Social Development and Home Affairs.

None of this happened.

#### **8. Displaced migrants' deportations processes: the government headache**

The deportation processes commenced immediately after the verification processes at the displaced shelters were completed. The previous activities and decisions were echoed by stakeholders including the SAPS analyst and the Provincial Coordinator on communication who said that during the first few days what was decided was the deportation of people with no valid documentations following decisions and processes introduced by the NatJoint group starting with the Lindela Camp. Such catalogues would also include people wanted for criminal cases such as rape, theft or murder. Immediately after the 10 000 people march, the Mozambican Embassy organised two buses in order to repatriate the Mozambicans who were willing to go back to their country. Approximately 300 Mozambican nationals were repatriated on those buses on 16 April 2015.

The municipal disaster manager who was involved in the shelters observed an increased number of the migrants who voluntarily returned to their countries despite the government officials' visitations and addresses regarding the displaced plight.

The manager indicated that without his department's knowledge there were news reaching the Provincial Joint Coordinating Committee that on 17 April 2015, over 1000 migrants left the country voluntarily since the attacks started, mainly from the Golela border. In the meantime, the repatriation process became a norm as eight full buses from the Malawian Embassy were organised on the same day to transport 270 compatriots from the Chatsworth shelter and 140 from the Isipingo shelter back to their country. During the first days of the shelter operation, President Zuma together with the responsible Ministers and leaders from the KZN Departments, the municipality and the province visited them all in order to talk to the displaced about repatriation, community reintegration and cohesion and confirm that as brothers and sisters they were always welcome in South Africa. In the two shelters of Isipingo and Chatsworth, there was chaos and ill-discipline by the displaced migrants; they shouted, were disgruntled and refused to listen attentively to the address by the State President.

They booed him continuously.

## 9. Reintegration processes and repatriation challenges

The reintegration processes had its challenges and were mainly caused by the displaced immigrants in the shelters. SAPS members at the displaced shelters shared this experience as they indicated that as time passed new problems and challenges made the closing down of the shelters extremely difficult emanating mainly from the problems created by the displaced people who were becoming economic with the truth about themselves, especially those without documentation. All of them claimed that they were refugees from oppressive regimes, but they had no proof.

It was clear from the shelter coordinators that the logical challenges of reintegrating the displaced immigrants emanated from the immigrants' selective approaches regarding the choice of reintegration areas even after being consulted. The shelter coordinator listed a number of processes, initiatives and pitfalls which included the following:

At the initial stages, a total of 440 displaced migrants were interviewed and profiled while three township workshops were conducted in Kwa Mashu. The meetings were arranged with the Councillors but very few displaced people turned up. There were reported incidents but no communication dialogue as the councillors did not arrive. The state negotiations' leadership wished to know where the people would prefer to be relocated and reintegrated, and where community dialogues had taken place. It was reported by Safer Cities NGO that the displaced people constantly changed the places they wished to be relocated to and such an attitude negatively affected the whole integration strategy. COGTA leaders proposed that the issue of integration be dealt with by all departments as a collective approach and allow Community Safety & Liaison to lead the process. It was resolved that a meeting should be held with all stakeholders to discuss the reintegration process and a task team be formed. It was further requested that the reintegration list should also include where the people came from and to where they would like to be relocated. The successful reintegration of displaced people at Bottlebrush was reported and highlighted. It was also recommended that the Ministerial committee visit Bottlebrush and the Department of Communications from all sectors should form part of these meetings. Finally, it was emphasised that good interventions by Government were not communicated.

One of the shelter coordinators indicated that the Committee and the displaced people's leadership were also involved with UNHCR, NGOs and religious organisations in their efforts to coordinate the whole process of safety repatriation and reintegration into the communities.

A government official who was responsible for the coordination of the reintegration processes cited the aims and objectives of such a process and the policy decisions that shaped them:

***“The policy was that the displaced deserved proper accommodation with satisfactory conditions of safety, nutrition, health and hygiene and that members of a family were not separated. Its aims and objectives were to find the suitable ways for those victims who were not repatriated to be reintegrated into the communities they lived in or other communities and problems such as the education of the children be resolved. It was a very difficult task because it included meetings with the victims as well as the surrounding and other communities and their preparations to receive them”.***

The Liaison Officer of the Strategic Planning Committee indicated that he spent a few days inspecting the shelters with a special interest in the Isipingo one where from day one the people were completely against the whole atmosphere, the set-up, the environment and the surroundings. They were disgruntled with all the existing conditions and there was serious infighting among them because access to key amenities and necessities was difficult. It was interesting that there was direct communication amongst all of them and their compatriots and when good food was available the numbers in some of these shelters increased and the same happened when there were the rumours about better toilets and other facilities. Most of these displaced immigrants received visits from their embassies and consulates who promised them money, food, clothes and

return to their countries, but they only offered them repatriation on a few occasions because this was the responsibility of the UN and SA.

An interviewee amongst the SAPS members who was present during most of the coordinating committee meetings highlighted a number of challenges during the reintegration process which were identified as the key challenges and difficulties even during the first days of the attacks that initially affected the challenge of reintegrating between 240 and 250 displaced people. While the shelters were opened and functioning there was direct daily communication with NatJoint, but as time passed and problems increased in the shelters, the situation became more complicated for the group in charge of them because the key to the success of the state institutions at this juncture was the setting of a reasonable date for the closure of the shelter. This was to become the most challenging issue and question for the united formal structures and committees dealing with all key issues, including NatJoint. However, everyone knew that this re-incorporation process would be the outcome of a common decision of state institutions, committees and the communities themselves.

A member of the strategic committee member and a senior eThekweni Municipality member cited a multiplicity of challenges which were triggered by the repatriation to distant countries, UN's issuing of vouchers, and the reintegration processes. The strategic committee member argued that the UN group in the process became very concerned about how to plan reintegration especially for those in the Isipingo site because of their large number and the fact that the majority especially those from Burundi and the DRC wanted to return to their countries, because they feared for their lives. They were more than 80 people and the UN staff were afraid as these were complicated situations because these countries were very far away; therefore, the UN advised these displaced of the need to return to the community at least temporarily until their repatriation. As time passed the main threat was the fact that the voucher system created serious problems because it attracted large numbers of people at different shelters. On the other hand, the decision of the South African authorities was that the reintegration was urgent and that there should be a stop to the relief voucher system at the shelters because it was considered a barrier to the plan of closing down the shelters, especially in Isipingo. In this process, the decision of the South African authorities was that the Department of Home Affairs should be engaged in assisting with the provision of documentation on site. In the meantime, a specialised team of the state would play its role in the reintegration process. It would communicate to communities the need for reintegration of foreigners and attempt to convince South African nationals to stop attacking them. The state undertook to work with the UN as an international organisation to achieve this and a system should be put into place where the people are issued with vouchers and they should be reintegrated into the community. The UN should provide a list of people issued with vouchers so that the government could assist with reintegrating them back to the community.

There were interventions that were initiated by government departments in order to support the reintegration initiatives and within this context, the chief coordinator of NATJOINT mentioned that the reintegration process is crucial and following this decision the city manager convened a meeting with the foreign national representatives to organise a massive march against xenophobia. The Department of Safety and Community Liaison oversaw the repatriation and reintegration plan that would be implemented with immediate effect.

One of the informants from the Home Affairs department cited a number of hindrances in respect of reintegrating the displaced migrants to communities as well as the repatriation processes. It was felt that the key problem was that the victims constantly changed the places they wanted to be relocated to and that affected the whole integration strategy. The process had a collective approach, and it was the Community Safety & Liaison that led the process and meetings with all stakeholders were held often to discuss the reintegration process. Time frames were set, and the key priority was the drawing of a list of those to be relocated and where within a specific time frame so the shelters could be closed. The lists were expected to include all particulars of the displaced. The first successful re-location and reintegration of displaced people took place in Bottlebrush. Problems existed in terms of the repatriation of those without valid documentation despite the fact that such a process had already started at Lindela. This was

accompanied by thorough screening for people wanted for criminal offences such as rape and theft. There were also problems associated with Operation FIELA (comprising of the Departments of Home Affairs, International Relations, Social Development and Defence in conjunction with the National Prosecuting Authority) which not only dealt with foreign nationals but also had eight priorities, one of which being to deal with undocumented people.

#### **10. Repatriation processes and hindrances: unhidden agendas**

A number of the informants who played a commanding role in the shelters including the shelter coordinators consistently mentioned how the reintegration process was organised, the departments that were involved and initiatives performed. One of the shelter coordinators stated that the Education Department, COGTA, Community Safety & Liaison, Disaster Management and the eThekweni Municipality were responsible for improving services on site and a key issue was the distribution of Refugee Social Services vouchers and the re-profiling process. Several community workshops for the victims who wished to be reintegrated and meetings with the councillors of the areas into which the victims wished to be re-integrated were held in the townships. These were not very successful as the councillors were either busy, unable or not keen to participate.

A host of challenges were raised by numerous government officials on the government's approach in terms of communication, coordination and sinister agendas. One of the process owners in the reintegration process pointed out that the first and vital challenge was that the actions and good interventions by the government were not communicated to the communities through the printed and social media because the Departments of Communication from all sector departments did not form part of the Coordinating Committee meetings. The other concern was that the displaced people were not involved in the community dialogue process and the residents in Pretoria took much time in confirming that were ready to accept the displaced people. The displaced people were unhappy with the rental fee of R200 that was provided as support to over 400 people. There was a lack of coordination amongst departments when dealing the people with no valid documentation. The displaced sent several letters on a few occasions to the state departments so that because of these perceived problems their situation could be improved. These letters which were mainly on the money/voucher issue were forwarded to MEC Mchunu and the leadership of the UNHCR. The voucher issue was debated seriously with the UN in order to discuss the best way to manage their distribution and organs of civil society were asked to assist in the matter. Other challenges were the identification of rolling out the reintegration process, lack of capacity and the facilitation of community dialogues. The importance of hiring a service provider to assist with the process was discussed. One major problem was associated with the finalisation of setting a reasonable date for closing the shelter. This was an issue that should be based on a review of the process and outcomes debated within the committee that could arrive at a final decision on the matter and resolutions should be adopted and implemented. Several challenges were related to the hindering of the process of closing the shelters, such as promoting different agendas and utilising the opportunity of the shelters to fulfil their agendas and inconsistency in terms of the information provided by the displaced people. The fact that SAPS did not participate in a number of meetings, especially with respect to the issues faced in the shelters and communities was also a serious concern. Although there was a general agreement that the reintegration process should inform the shelter closing date, time was wasted preparing a comprehensive operational plan for the reintegration process and the number of people that would need to be trained on the reintegration processes.

A SAPS member on duty indicated that the group of the Coordinating Committee in charge of logistics and the situation was not exactly the best one for the task. New problems, logistics, supply chain and procurement difficulties, budgets and other concerns created panic. Home Affairs and police officers began profiling the migrants so that all the necessary details like the nationality, gender, and age categories were on record.

The shelter coordinators mentioned that the challenges on the reintegration processes and logistics were compounded due to the fact that:

***“Those in the shelter were given the opportunity to relocate to and reintegrate into other shelters if they wished. This created logistics problems because there was a possibility that such moves could lead to overcrowding of the preferred centres that were considered ‘better’.***

## 11. Conclusion

This research study analysed and dissected the central role performed by government departments and state agencies in managing the displaced shelter processes and systems as well as reintegration and repatriation challenges encountered by them. The dissatisfaction from both the host and the immigrants in the displaced shelters on the quality of services rendered in the shelters and the despicable behaviour displayed by immigrants towards the government officials were unearthed in this article. The government lens has been unveiled in this article and the police processes to accommodate the displaced victims of xenophobia and the protection of the designated groups including children, women, the aged and those living with disabilities have been analysed. The government's agencies during the xenophobic attacks were considered to be central in maintaining the immigrants' dignity and possible reintegration into their societies. In furtherance, the police in the shelters performed sterling functions, they restored law and order and ensured that businesses and religious activities were not taking place. Whilst, there were unverified media reports on the unhealthy conditions in the shelters, the government who were coordinating the shelters were transparent in their operations as the UN representatives with different sectors including the non-profit organisations, faith-based organisations and the private sector were constantly present. Apart from the government's role, the civil society groups played a very significant role in providing necessities and their experiences in dealing with the humanitarian crisis was acknowledged by all key stakeholders. In addition to the concerted efforts by different actors in this crisis, there were challenges experienced including electricity connections, infighting amongst the immigrants and their unreasonable expectations and demands against the limited budget and ill-discipline displayed by the immigrants in the displaced shelters. The latter challenges were found to have been perpetuated by the distribution of vouchers which led to the increase of people in the shelters and lack of coordination amongst departments and agencies. What was noteworthy in this study was the causal relationship that was developed between the availability of quality food in the shelters for the displaced and an increasing number of shelter dwellers. It is suggested based on the findings gleaned from this study that the government officials should be trained on screening and accommodating the genuine victims of xenophobia. Due to the fact that xenophobia is a recurring phenomenon in South Africa, the deportations of the immigrants should be within the rules and regulations of the country as well as the internationally signed protocols, rules and regulations, as there is a likelihood that hard core criminals benefit during such ill-informed repatriations. The limitation of this study is methodological as it was conducted in Durban and amongst selected government officials and it cannot be generalised to other cities and towns although it provides a foundation for future researchers to quantitatively test the propositions found in this study.

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