

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR REFUGEE WOMEN AND GIRLS IN ZIMBABWE: A CASE STUDY OF REFUGEE WOMEN AND GIRLS OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Abstract

Writing on a subject close to her heart, the Congolese woman who writes this dissertation critically examines the extent and quality of education provided by, *inter alia*, the Government of Zimbabwe and the UNHCR to girls and women refugees from her homeland living in the harsh conditions of Zimbabwe's Tongogara Refugee Camp. She is acutely aware that it is only through the realisation of this right that these refugees may ever hope to enjoy the prospect of improving themselves and forging full and meaningful lives for themselves within and beyond the Camp. Utilising an intelligent combination of methodologies (in particular, the Grounded and Human Rights Approaches) to collect analyse a wide and diverse range of qualitative and quantitative data (including extensive law and literature research and penetrating interviews with officials and refugee men, women and girls), her exhaustive research exposes, among other problems, persistently high drop out rates among refugee schoolgirls who, in order to escape poverty, leave the little shelter the camp offers and enter into early, and often, abusive marriages. Hence, growing numbers of uneducated Congolese girls and women are populating the streets of Zimbabwe's cities. Using the overall guiding methodology of the Women's Law Approach, the research is convincingly presented through the eyes or 'lived realities' of the Camp's unfortunate Congolese women and girls. This unique feminist perspective reveals factors which militate against the best efforts of the authorities to make the right to education at all levels a reality for this most vulnerable group. Some of these negative factors lie within the control of the State and the UNHCR. For example, in the absence of an agreement between them to co-ordinate their efforts and resources in terms of an overall gender-sensitive refugee education policy, it is discovered that valuable resources (e.g., scholarships for pursuing tertiary education outside the Camp) are being wasted. Finally, the writer makes extensive valuable short and long-term policy, legislative and practical recommendations to improve the plight of Congolese girls and women both within and outside the Camp. Her suggestions are all in keeping with Zimbabwe's on-going and laudable efforts to comply with its commitments to assist refugees in terms of the various regional and international HR instruments binding upon it.

BY

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A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for a Masters in Women's Law, Southern and Eastern African Regional Centre for Women's Law, University of Zimbabwe

2010

DEDICATION

To my Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ for giving me the ability to accomplish this thesis and to obtain a Master's Degree.

To my late mother, Mujinga Mukongo Gertrude, you were a brave woman and an example to many. I dedicate this work to you for your inestimable love and sacrifices you went through in raising my siblings and me.

You would have been proud of my achievement.

Rest in Peace!

To my father, for being a friend and trusting in me, also for encouraging me to go further with my studies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This piece of work would have not been possible without the support of many people.

My appreciation goes to Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for giving me a lifetime opportunity to acquire a Masters Degree.

My profound gratitude also goes to my Supervisor, Professor Julie Stewart for your guidance and encouragement.

I further thank Doctor Amy Tsanga for your advice and knowledge that you imparted to me. My sincere gratitude further goes to Cecilia, Sesedzai, Blessings, Rudo, Jonhson and Shingi for your availability whenever I needed your assistance.

Many thanks also to SEARWCL student members 2009/2010 for your friendship and your kindness.

Special gratitude to Mr. Marcellin Hepie, the Country Representative of the UNHCR – Zimbabwe and the Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Mukaro for allowing me to undertake my field research with all the Agencies dealing with refugee issues.

Special thanks go to my family members, for their love and encouragement.

Thank you to all the respondents for your invaluable participation in this research.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

According to this study:

Asylum seeker is someone who has made a claim that he or she is a refugee, and is waiting for that claim to be accepted or rejected. (UNHCR, 2007:10).

Durable solution is a long lasting solution to the plight of refugees. It refers to a voluntary repatriation, local integration, and resettlement.

Encampment or confinement policy is a regulation that obliges refugees to reside in a specific place usually determined by the host country.

Economic migrant is someone who leaves their country of origin for financial reasons, rather than for refugee ones. (UNHCR, 2007:10).

Article 1 (2) of the 1951 Geneva Convention defines *a refugee* as “someone who owing to a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinions, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.”

Resettlement is one the durable solutions to refugee’s plight. It refers to the transfer of refugees from the first country of asylum to a third country of asylum. People facing particular problems or continued threats to their safety in their first asylum countries are foremost among those who can benefit from resettlement. In some cases, it is an essential life-saving option – or the only way to save a particular refugee from having to resort to desperate measures for survival. (UNHCR, 2007:10).

ACRONYMS

ACPF	The African Child Policy Forum
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AED	Academics for Educational Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CRC	Convention of the Rights of the Child
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
DSS	Department of Social Services
JRS	Jesuit Refugee Services
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
RET	Refugee Education Trust
SADC	Southern Africa Development Community
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WCRWC	Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children

INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS

Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR)

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

SADC Protocol on Gender

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)

The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and to the Convention governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)

NATIONAL LEGISLATION

The Constitution of Zimbabwe

Refugees Act, Chapter 4:03

The Education Act

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
DEFINITION OF TERMS.....	4
ACRONYMS	5
INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS.....	6
NATIONAL LEGISLATION	6
TABLE OF CONTENTS	7
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	10
1.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	11
1.2 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY	11
1.3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON TONGOGARA REFUGEE CAMP.....	12
1.4 THE ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY	12
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	13
1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	13
CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGIES AND METHODS	15
2.1 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	15
2.1.1 <i>Grounded Theory</i>	15
2.1.2 <i>The Women’s Law Approach</i>	16
2.1.3 <i>The Gender Perspective</i>	17
2.1.4 <i>The Case Study Appraoch</i>	18
2.1.5 <i>The Human Rights Approach</i>	19
2.2 RESEARCH METHODS	19
2.2.1 <i>Sample size and Sampling procedure</i>	19
2.2.2 <i>Statistics</i>	20
2.2.3 <i>General Group Discussions</i>	20
2.2.4 <i>In-depth Interviews and Key informant Interviews</i>	21
2.2.5 <i>Literature Review</i>	22
2.2.6 <i>Internet based Research and Desk Research</i>	23
2.2.7 <i>Observation</i>	23
2.2.8 <i>Legal Structure</i>	25
CHAPTER THREE: FACTORS THAT HINDER REFUGEE WOMEN’S AND GIRLS’	
ACCESS TO EDUCATION.....	26
3.1 INTRODUCTION	26

3.2	ACCESSIBILITY TO EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ATTITUDES	27
3.2.1	<i>The Location of the Primary School in Tongogara Camp</i>	28
3.2.2	<i>The overcrowded Living Conditions in Tongogara Camp</i>	28
3.2.3	<i>The limited Number of available Scholarships and the Delay in awarding them</i>	30
3.2.4	<i>The Delay in allocating Scholarships and its Consequences</i>	30
3.2.5	<i>The Seclusion and Remoteness of Tongogara Camp</i>	31
3.2.5	<i>The lengthy Scholarship Application Process</i>	32
3.2.6	<i>The Inability to satisfy Entry Points for Scholarships</i>	33
3.2.7	<i>The Lack of Awareness of Educational Opportunities</i>	33
3.2.8	<i>Negative Refugee Community Attitudes</i>	34
3.2.9	<i>Negative Cultural and Religious Practices</i>	35
3.2.10	<i>Poverty</i>	37
3.2.11	<i>Negative Aspects of the Prospect of Resettlement</i>	39
3.3	NEGATIVE FACTORS ABOUT THE SCHOOLS IN TONGOGARA CAMP	41
3.3.1	<i>Foreign Languages of Instruction</i>	41
3.3.2	<i>Lack of Learning Materials and Uniforms</i>	42
3.3.3	<i>Poor Quality Education</i>	42
3.3.4	<i>Corporal Punishment</i>	43
3.3.5	<i>Sexual Abuse by Teachers and Foster Parents</i>	43
3.3.6	<i>Sexual Harassment of Girl Students</i>	44
3.3.7	<i>Negative Attitudes of Teachers and Social Services Officers</i>	45
	CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS	46
4.1	INTRODUCTION	46
4.2	POVERTY.....	48
4.3	SCHOLARSHIPS.....	48
4.4	ANALYSIS OF THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE	50
4.5	CULTURE AND RELIGION	51
4.6	GENERAL ATTITUDES WITHIN THE CONGOLESE REFUGEE COMMUNITY.....	51
4.7	THE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM	52
	CHAPTER FIVE: HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLIANCE AND NON-COMPLIANCE.....	55
5.1	HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLIANCE ANALYSIS	55
5.2	NON -COMPLIANCE OR GAPS IN HUMAN RIGHTS.....	59
5.3	ANALYSIS OF THE LEGAL STRUCTURES.....	68
5.3.1	<i>Analysis of provisions of Section 12 (2) of the Refugees Act</i>	68
5.3.2	<i>Analysis of the Education Act</i>	68
5.3.3	<i>Analysis of the UNHCR Guidelines on Education and Training of Refugees</i>	70
	CHAPTER SIX: RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREA TO BE PURSUED	72
6.1	RECOMMENDATIONS	72
6.2	AREAS TO BE PURSUED	75

BIBLIOGRAPHY	77
APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE.....	79
APPENDIX 2: MAPS OF ZIMBABWE SHOWING TONGOGARA REFUGEE CAMP	80

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This study is focused on “Educational Opportunities for refugee women and girls in Zimbabwe”. Zimbabwe is a State Party to the 1951 Convention to the Status of Refugees and to the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, which were ratified and domesticated through the Refugee Act, Chapter 4:03 on 28 October 1983.

The research was conducted to examine the difficulties that hinder refugee women and girls in general and those from the Democratic Republic of Congo in particular from pursuing their education. During my investigations, I analyze the government policy of encampment and its implications on the educational opportunities of refugee women and girls. The research aims to uncover the reasons why educational opportunities among refugee women and girls from the DRC are problematic.

Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the United Nations declared that:

“Education is a step ahead to progress. When women are healthy, educated, and free to take the opportunities life affords them, children thrive and countries flourish, reaping a double dividend for women and children”.

Research conducted in a variety of countries and regions has established that educating girls is one of the most cost-effective ways of stimulating development. Female education creates powerful poverty-reducing synergies and yields enormous intergenerational gains as stated by Phumaphi and Leipziger. D, (2008: xvii).

This is the reason why I am concerned about refugee women and girls who are living in poverty because of their lack of education. The lack of interest shown in education by these women is a cause for concern since these women and girls are not sufficiently empowered to enjoy a decent life.

1.1 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aims and objectives of the study were:

1. To examine and uncover the difficulties that hinder refugee women and girls in general and those from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), in particular, from pursuing their education. It was also intended to uncover the reasons why educational opportunities among refugee women and girls from the DRC are problematic.
2. To study the strengths and the weakness of the educational policy for refugee women and girls in Zimbabwe. The study will also look into the prospect of a better future for refugee women and girls in Tongogara Camp through education, especially for those living in urban areas.
3. To raise awareness of the importance of education for refugee women and girls.
4. To find ways to address these issues and make relevant recommendations for the improvement of conditions for accessing education by refugee women and girls in Zimbabwe.

1.2 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

As a citizen of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), I have observed that there are few educated women and girls within the Congolese refugee community. One also finds school girls from the DRC on the streets of Harare. The increasing number of refugee girls and women in the streets of Harare is a serious problem in that these women and girls form a small and vulnerable group of people who are exposed to various forms of exploitation and abuses due to their lack of education and the absence of any government policy to protect them. My interest in the general welfare and development of refugee girls and women's motivated me to undertake this research.

1.3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON TONGOGARA REFUGEE CAMP

In line with provisions of Section 12 of the Refugee Act [Chapter 4:03], the Zimbabwean Government has a policy that confines refugees to a camp. The site is called Tongogara Refugee Camp, named after the Zimbabwean liberation fighter, Josiah Magama Tongogara (born in 1938 and died in December 26, 1979) who was a commander of the Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANLA) guerrilla army in the then Rhodesia. He was leading the war in Mozambique and later died there. The camp was initially established to cater for the rehabilitation of the ex-combatants in 1980. In 1986, it was set up to shelter Mozambican refugees because it near Zimbabwe's border with Mozambique. After the war in Mozambique and in 1996, it became a Centre for vulnerable people like street kids and single women. In 1998, the Zimbabwe Government designated this camp as being the place where all refugees and asylum seekers must reside. Presently, it is more or less like a small village with electricity and borehole water.

1.4 THE ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

My research was based on the following assumptions. That:

1. The educational policy for refugee women and girls is inadequate.
2. There are various barriers and factors that hinder refugee women and girls from completing their education.
3. Cultural and religious factors discourage refugee women and girls from the DRC from pursuing their studies.
4. The lack of adequate awareness concerning education for refugee women and girls makes it difficult for them to access the services available.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions that followed from the assumptions are as follows:

1. Is the educational policy on education for women and girls adequate? Does it address their actual needs?
2. Is the implementation of the policy effective?
3. Are there any barriers or factors that hinder refugee women and girls from the DRC from accessing education?
4. Are there any barriers or factors that hinder refugee women and girls from completing their education?
5. Are there any cultural and religious issues that affect the education of refugee women and girls from the DRC?
6. Is access to education a challenge for refugee women and girls from the DRC?

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In this section, I give details of how some of my assumptions were challenged during my research. This section will further highlight the difficulties I faced in conducting this study.

For example, the fact that I conducted my field research during the exam period in November and during school holidays in December, affected my research in some ways. Most students and respondents were on holiday; consequently, they were not reachable for interviews.

In addition, during the field research in Tongogara Camp, I could not observe any children in class in order to ascertain the number of refugee girls from the DRC because they were on school holiday. It was impossible to interview all the potential informants at the school, because they were also on holiday. The Headmistress of the primary school in Tongogara was not available for interview during my field research. The Deputy Headmaster stood in for her, as the much-needed information was crucial for this study. Moreover, throughout interviews, some respondents requested anonymity because they feared that officials dealing with scholarships for refugees would identify and victimise them. Efforts to make them understand why it is important to mention names of informants were in vain. This might affect my research in that it might raise doubts as to the validity and reliability of the research as stated by Bentzon W. A et al. (1998:279).

The interview with officials from the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS) was difficult due to the unwillingness of officers to assist; fortunately, the intervention of the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees as well as the letter of authority from the Commissioner for Refugees at the Social Services Department helped me in obtaining the required information.

It was not possible to obtain the gender-disaggregated statistics data on girl refugees from the DRC. It was not possible either to obtain access to the national gender policy on education or gender guidelines on education for refugees.

CHAPTER II: METHODOLOGIES AND METHODS

2.1 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I used a number of research methodologies and methods to collect data on this research topic. These included the grounded theory, the women's law approach, and case study approach. I applied these theories because of their particularity in collecting data. They were really practical and important in the compilation of information related to this study. The explanation below will illustrate in detail how useful these methodologies were.

2.1.1 Grounded Theory

The grounded theory or sometimes called the dung beetle methodology was used as the major research approach throughout data collection in this study.

As stated by Bentzon, A, the approach involves an interactive process in which data and theory, lived realities and perceptions about norms are constantly engaged together with others and help the researcher to decide what data to collect and how to interpret it. Bentzon, A. et al (1998: 81)

In conducting my study, I interviewed refugee women and girls to assess whether the Zimbabwean policy on education for refugees is adequate or not. I also wanted to evaluate whether refugee women and girls themselves are aware of the scholarships available for them. During this investigation most of the respondents responsible for the refugees' education admitted that there is no proper awareness of the programs in order to attract more refugee women and girls into the education program. Respondents acknowledge that if an extensive campaign were carried out, most of the factors that hinder refugee women and girls from attending education would fall away.

In addition, this theory allowed me to make adjustments to my data-related analysis, which, in turn, enabled me to build/alter my theories/ assumptions. When I discovered that the entry requirements for refugee women is also one of the factors prevent women from pursuing their education, I was able to include this aspect; I was also able to explain that the policy on education for refugees does not really cater for women who do not meet the entry points requirements.

By using this methodology, I was able to reveal the gaps that exist between the provisions of section 12 of the Refugee Act on the encampment policy, the lived realities, and the experiences of refugee women and girls living in urban areas. This theory allowed me to point out that although refugee women living in Tongogara are qualified to apply for a scholarship, there are no alternatives forms of training offered, e.g., vocational training, and this discourages women from taking up any other training.

The confinement policy aims to gather refugee in one place in order to facilitate and coordinate efforts to assist refugees. However, by so doing refugees, are living in seclusion with no external mode of communication such as a Post Office. This complicates the application process for scholarships because potential beneficiaries should identify a learning institution in town.

Based on their experiences, respondents explained why it is difficult for them to access scholarships. With this theory, I was able to analyze the implications the encampment policy as these affect the educational opportunities for refugee women and girls living in the camp and in urban areas, in particular.

2.1.2 The Women's Law Approach

Tove Stand Dahl 52 states as follows:

“The methodology of women’s law is cross-disciplinary and pluralist and calls for a free use of available material whenever it can be found.”

Tove's sentiments persuaded me to adopt the women's law methodology since I would be able to understand a multiplicity of issues and get to understand the lived reality of women. In using this methodology, I took women as a starting point to explain their position in relation to the law and society. Women's law is a legal discipline, which explores the reality of women's lives and from that perspective, interrogates, and investigates the law.

It helped me identify that the law and the confinement policy as big challenges for the refugee women and girls in urban areas in their attempts to access scholarships. The implementation of the encampment policy creates a huge gap between the lived realities of refugee women and girls with regard to access to education. It is a provision that limits the freedom of movement of refugees; thereby making it difficult for those in urban areas to qualify for scholarships. It also discriminates between those living in Tongogara camp and those who have settled in urban areas.

With this theory, I was able to identify the causes and difficulties that hinder refugee women and girls from the DRC from accessing education. For example, refugee women complained about the complicated and lengthy scholarship application process. This method assisted in the collection of data related to the lived realities of refugee women and girls in accessing formal education and vocational training. Based on their experiences, various respondents narrated their lived realities and difficulties encountered in accessing education and training. They also explained the reason why they do not attend school or training. Some said that it is it was due to the lack of information about scholarships or simply their own lack of interest. I also interviewed various stakeholders involved in the education of refugee women and girls in order to evaluate their implementation of policy in that regard.

2.1.3 The Gender Perspective

This perspective recognizes that men and women have different roles imposed on them by society. This perspective seeks to place women in the same hierarchy with men so that they have equal opportunities. The gender perspective was important in carrying out this research

since it enabled me to examine the position of women and girls within the refugee community and uncover the gender dimension of the educational policy for refugees.

The education policy required that all refugees reside in the camp in order to benefit from the scholarship. However, these women are often disqualified because of various reasons including the lengthy application process that discourages women from taking up any course. Furthermore, this methodology demonstrates that financial constraints and poverty are more likely to affect women than they are men with regard to formal education and training.

This means that education policy for this category of refugee is inadequate since it is not gender sensitive. Using this method, I was able to establish that the lack of interest on the part of female refugees is largely caused by a lack of an intensive awareness campaign about education for refugee women and girls.

2.1.4 The Case Study Approach

This approach emphasizes the study of a small sample, using particular cases, in order to obtain a deeper understanding of a general phenomenon. A case study “is a term used to describe an in-depth investigation of a social phenomenon or life event.” Stewart. J et al. (1997: 52).

This research is particularly focused on refugee women and girls from the Democratic Republic Congo (DRC). As such, respondents from the DRC that I interviewed explained the reason why access to educational opportunities is a challenge among the refugee women and girls in this community. With this technique, I was able to interview a specific group of people to get detailed information on the issues at hand. I had the opportunity to interview six refugee women and two male refugees from Harare as well as three refugee women and two males from the Tongogara Camp. This enabled me to record various experiences of Congolese refugees in Zimbabwe.

Furthermore, using this method, I collected data from a particular group of refugees to enable me to look deeper into the challenges facing these refugee women and girls from the DRC in accessing education. This methodology might not uncover all the women's lived realities, but it assisted in enriching the data collected through other methods.

2.1.5 The Human Rights Approach

The use of this approach helped me to assess the compliance of the Zimbabwean government with various International Instruments related to the rights of women and children in general and to the rights of refugee women and girls in particular. The application of this methodology demonstrates that the government has ratified a number of these instruments.

In addition, the Human Rights Approach helped me to uncover the existing gaps between these instruments and the national law. For example, in analyzing the provisions of the Refugee Act (which is the national law in relation to the protection of Refugees and to issues related them), I noticed that encampment policy is one the factors that prevents urban women and girls from accessing to free education. Although the government has domesticated the International instrument relating to the rights of refugees (see the first paragraph of Chapter 1), it has failed to cater for those in living in the city.

2.2 RESEARCH METHODS

2.2.1 Sample size and Sampling procedure

The use of this method enabled me to get information on the number of refugee women and girls from the DRC attending school. With this method, I interviewed refugee women and girls living in both urban areas and the camp. The use of this method assisted me in assessing the school attendance levels of refugee girls in various schools namely: David Livingston School, Blakiston School, Roosevelt Girls High School, and Queen Elizabeth Girls High, which are all situated in Harare, Zimbabwe's capital city.

2.2.2 Statistics

The collection of statistics in this research confirmed the assumption that refugee women and girls from the DRC have challenges in pursuing their studies. The statistics illustrate the low rate of refugee women and girls enrolled in various training institutions and formal education establishments.

2.2.3 General Group Discussions

This method was used extensively during this study in order to gather data on the experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and views of key groups of informants. Refugee girls, their parents and teachers both in Tongogara Camp and in urban areas, officials from the Department of Social Services, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Jesuit Refugee Services dealing with scholarships and education for refugees all took part in the discussion.

The study involved field research in Tongogara and in public schools in Harare to assess the enrolment and the performance of refugee girls in school. The use of this technique allowed me to gather general information about women's and girls' lived realities and experiences. During the discussions, respondents were able to narrate their personal stories and to tell what they heard and saw from other people. They were also capable of sharing other people's experiences.

This is the method I really enjoyed using the most because of the interaction between the research and the respondents. I recall that as we were in a deep conversation with the Congolese community leaders in Tongogara, other members of the community got interested and joined in the discussion; some were coming just out of curiosity and some, because they thought that I was working for a Humanitarian Agency, and that I had come to bring assistance. Generally, everybody had something to say in relation to education system in the camp.

2.2.4 In-depth Interviews and Key informant Interviews

In conducting this study, I used two types of interviews namely, the in-depth interview and the key informant interviews. The “in-depth interviews” create space for interviewees to express their views, experiences, and responses to the issue being researched. This method also permits a dialogue between the researcher and the respondent to develop, thereby creating a more natural form of exchange within a socially conducive environment. Stewart. J (1998:81)

By using this method, I interacted directly with different respondents, asking questions in order to collect first hand information. During the investigations, I interviewed not only refugee women and girls but also Officials from government schools, Non-governmental Organizations and Government Departments dealing with education for refugees.

In conducting my study, I interviewed refugee women and girls to assess whether the Zimbabwean policy on education for refugees is adequate or not. I also wanted to evaluate whether refugee women and girls themselves were aware of the scholarships available for them. In carrying out the research, interviews of various respondents were conducted to raise points which were important from their own perspectives, but which may not have been anticipated by the researchers. Issues such as the language of instruction are a very big challenge to most parents as well as refugee girls living in Tongogara. This aspect of the problem has never occurred to me as a factor that can hinder refugees’ education.

The interview with key informants gave me an insight into the problem from a technical point of view. Most of them tend to think that with the existence of guidelines on education for refugees as well as the availability of scholarships, there should not be any problem for refugee women and girls in accessing education.

Language: It is important to note that the researcher conducted most of the Interviews in English, widely spoken by professionals in Zimbabwe. This official language was used to interact with officials from different organizations.

Moreover, French, the official language in the DRC, Kiswahili, and Lingala were utilized to communicate with respondents from the refugee community. The researcher chose these three languages in order to make women and girls within the refugee community more comfortable and to allow all the respondents to participate freely in the discussions. Translation or services of an interpreter were not required since I am well versed in those three languages. As the researcher, I therefore guarantee the accuracy of information provided by all respondents from the refugee community.

2.2.5 Literature Review

This process, as part of the research is very useful in that it provides me with an in-depth understanding of what is done in other jurisdictions in order to improve the accessibility of refugee women and girls to quality education. I read books and articles related to refugee women and girls in general and to their education in particular to understand the issues affecting the education of this group of people. This assisted me in understanding how other jurisdictions tackle problems related to access to education for refugee women and girls.

The literature review further indicates the reasons why it is important to educate refugee women and girls. For example, there are articles that give reasons as to why this particular group of refugees does not have access to education. The reasons and challenges highlighted below are very similar to those facing refugee women and girls in Zimbabwe.

Education for girls is among the most effective ways of reducing poverty and yet gender disparity in school attendance is prevalent in almost all situations of displacement. Girls drop-out at lower grades than boys and in larger percentages. Girls who drop out or who are unable to attend are at higher risk of exploitation, recruitment by armed factions and early and forced marriage. Non-attendance may be as a result of the lack of access to existing schools,

insufficient schools, excessive distances to schools and the lack of basic resources for school, such as, uniforms, books, and school supplies. Girls may also not attend because of the lack of sanitary materials and facilities at schools, pregnancy (which may be a result of early marriage or abuse) or security concerns while going to and from school and even within schools. Parents and girls may not understand the importance of education and girls may be kept at home to help with childcare and domestic responsibilities. (WCRWC, 2006:15)

From the above reading, I noted that there are similarities among the reasons why refugee women and girls in general and those from the DRC particularly have difficulties in pursuing their education. Reasons such as early marriages, early pregnancy, household chores and responsibilities and the lack of learning materials are also among the factors that hinder refugee women's education in Zimbabwe.

2.2.6 Internet based Research and Desk Research

In addition to the above-cited methods, I also used books, documents, international human rights instruments, policies and internet in the compilation of this dissertation. The review of various international human rights instruments and national laws helped me to understand the extent of the problem that refugee women and girls face in accessing education in Tongogara camp and in urban areas.

Used as second source of information, these tools further assisted in identifying ways to encourage refugee women and girls in general, especially those from the DRC, to take the issue of education more seriously. By so doing, refugee women and girls will improve their living conditions and hope for a better future.

2.2.7 Observation

The Women and Law in Southern Africa acknowledges that this method is the most effective when conducting research. In this technique, the researcher looks out for certain phenomena in the community or just observes social intercourse around specific events to see if it throws

any light on their research problem. This is to be distinguished from participant observation, as the researcher has no special place in the community and no particular insights into that community. Stewart. J et. Al (1997: 55)

This method assisted in the collection of data related to my topic. It enabled me to visit various schools in town as well as those in Tongogara camp. It gave me an opportunity to observe that refugee girls in urban area are indeed facing challenges in continuing with their education. When I visited Roosevelt Girls High School, I was in the company of one girl who could not go back to school because of financial constraints. I observed the respondent was unable to recover her original birth certificate because she owed the school 200 United States dollars. However, the Headmistress was kind enough to invite her to come back if she was still interested in continuing her schooling in that institution.

With this method, I also observed that in urban areas, most school-age refugee girls do not go to school because of financial constraints. I also noted that parents stop paying school fees as soon as the date for travelling overseas has been set. Using this method, I wanted to assess the distance between the Sabi Experiential Primary School in Tongogara and the refugees' houses. I walked twice to the school to evaluate the distance as most refugee parents as well as students complained about the long distance between the primary school and their homes. At the first occasion, I wanted to meet with the Headmistress and the second time was to conduct an interview with the Deputy Headmaster, Mr. Maguto and three other teachers. In both instances, I discovered that I could not walk without stopping and resting under the shade of a tree. The heat was just unbearable!

In addition, the general aspect of the camp struck me. Most of the houses were small especially the wooden ones. I also observed that the camp was divided in groups referred to as Australia, Canada and United States of America, in indication of just how much refugees long to be resettled overseas.

The use of this technique helped me to realise just how serious the current Congolese refugee education crisis is for the refugees themselves as well as the officials dealing with it. For

example, during a one-on-one interview with Mr. Moyo, an official from the Department of Social Services, I was touched by his referring to the refugees as “their children.” This indicates that some officials are deeply committed in their service to the refugees under their authority. Unfortunately, I officers from the Jesuit Refugee Services were not that friendly and were reluctant to assist me in this research.

2.2.8 Legal Structure

This method assisted me in analyzing the implication of Zimbabwe’s national laws on refugees’ educational opportunities and their gender perspectives. National laws such as the Education Act as well as the Refugees Act were examined in order to analyze their provisions. The analysis of the “Overview of Education and Training”; a document that provides guidelines on education and training for refugees, revealed that there are no gender provisions in the text.

CHAPTER THREE: FACTORS THAT HINDER REFUGEE WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' ACCESS TO EDUCATION

3.1 Introduction

This section will contain general discourse about the Tongogara Camp in general, the capacity of the refugees who live in the camp as well as the school facilities that are available in that area. The section will further give details of the living conditions in the camp and seek to give a proper understanding of why these factors cause refugee women and girls not to attend school.

Tongogara is the designated site where thousands of refugees live. It is located five hundred and eighty eight (588) kilometres from Harare, the capital and at one hundred and eighty eight (188) kilometres south of Mutare, the third largest city in Zimbabwe. It is within the enclosure of the Devure National Park, located at 60 kilometres from Chipinge, a small town near Mutare. It is in the rain shadow area of the Chimanimani Mountains; as a result, the region does not benefit from rains that blow inland from the Indian Ocean. Thus, the ground in the area is very dry and not suitable for agricultural activities, making it difficult for refugees to farm. The temperatures in the region are very high. The estimated average temperatures are as high as 35 and 38 degrees Celsius. The region and the camp also is prone to flooding, as it is situated downstream from local rivers. Borehole water is supplied periodically: around six in the morning, 12 noon, and four in the afternoon. When there is no electricity, the water pumps do not work. This small village is overpopulated and promiscuity is a serious problem.

Tongogara is home to refugees from all corners of Africa, with most originating from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Burundi, Sudan, Somali, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Liberia. Zimbabwe currently hosts 5,054 refugees and asylum-seekers, among them, 2,257 are boys and girls, and 1,025 are women. The estimated number of youths living in Tongogara camp is 1,414. (UNHCR, 2009:1).

Inside the Camp the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) built a few wooden and brick houses. However, because of the growing refugee population, most refugees construct their own huts and houses using mud. The UNHCR provides refugees with doors and other building materials. Tongogara camp has a dispensary where mild diseases are treated. It has learning facilities comprising of Tongogara Sabi Experimental Primary School and St Michael's Secondary School. Both are located at two kilometers and hundred meters from the residential area, respectively. The elementary school is called Sabi Experimental School because it is situated within the premises of the camp, which was used for agricultural experiments before it became a refugee camp. Of the total student population in Tongogara, 96% are refugees. The camp further provides refugees with vocational training activities such as sewing and horticulture.



However, because of the growing refugee population, most refugees construct themselves huts and houses made of mud.

3.2 Accessibility to Education and Community Attitudes

It is important to note that there are cross cutting issues that hinder refugee women and girls from pursuing their education and vocational training. The factors cited below explain why access to education is a challenge for refugee women living in Tongogara. They give details of why those who intend to continue with their studies encounter difficulties in that regard.

This section also gives reasons why refugee girls in the camp as well as in urban areas have problems in pursuing their education.

3.2.1 The Location of the Primary School in Tongogara Camp

The Sabi Experimental Primary School is located at around 2 kilometres from the Camp's residential area. The access to the school is along a dangerous, isolated path. According to informants, the path becomes very bushy as a result of tall grass that springs up during the lengthy summer raining season. Since the camp is within the enclosure of a national park, parents also expressed their concerns about the risk of young girls being attacked by stray wild animals. Furthermore, the distance, coupled with the intense heat in Tongogara, discourages young refugee girls from attending school.

Parents who decided to move into urban areas told me that prospects of a refugee girl to succeed in her study are limited under such harsh conditions. They explained that because of the heat, the primary school location, the living conditions in the camp and the inadequate food allocated to the refugee population in Tongogara, they prefer to relocate to town. Mrs. Bilonda, now living in the urban areas, said that after she had been in Tongogara for some months, she noticed that her children would come back home very exhausted and at times traumatized by the wild animals they met on their way to school. She added that, at one time, an elephant came out of the park and was wandering on the road.

3.2.2 The overcrowded Living Conditions in Tongogara Camp

These factors cause many refugees to move into town and settle in urban areas. Mrs. Chaba, a mother of five children, two girls and three boys residing in Tongogara, explained that the family shares a two-roomed cabin where all the children, boys, and girls sleep in one room when her husband is in the camp. She further complained that the conditions are not conducive for the development of the refugee girl child because:

“The child comes back from school tired, she would need to rest before she eats and help with domestic work. Furthermore, due to prevalent power cuts in Tongogara camp, the girl child might not have time to read and do her homework”.

Mr. Froduald Ntawukikura, the former Vice-Chairman of the Parents Education Committee in Tongogara said that this problem affects the girl child’s performance in school because they are not comfortable in their own homes; they think that getting married will deliver them from many difficulties such as poverty and overcrowded living conditions. He spoke about “psychological deliverance”, saying:

“Refugee girls get married for material gain. They hope that the husband will have the responsibility of looking after them and providing for their needs.”

On that aspect, Mr. Mabuto said that the overcrowding is not conducive for the girl child education because most of them do not have time to concentrate on their homework or they have difficulties in reading at home.

Respondents in the camp also explained that it is difficult for newcomers, especially women and girls, to cope with this overpopulation problem. A family already living in the camp will usually offer to share their small living space with newcomers. Under such circumstances, the refugee girls struggle to survive in a new family set up and in a new environment. Very often, when newcomers are in the process of building their own house, cases of rape and sexual abuse of girls occur and this also leads to the underperformance of refugee girls in school.



Wooden cabin built by UNHCR in Tongogara camp where, a family shares a two-roomed cabin. All the children, boys, and girls sleep in one room and parents in another one.

3.2.3 The limited Number of available Scholarships and the Delay in awarding them

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), and the Department of Social Services (DSS) are agencies involved in the education program for refugees; they provide financial assistance to refugees. However, the monetary support is limited and cannot cater for everyone. For instance, the JRS can only sponsor 25 persons; under exceptional conditions, the number may be increased to 30 scholarships per year.

3.2.4 The Delay in allocating Scholarships and its Consequences

DAFI¹ is a German educational program that supports mainly education for youth refugees through the UNHCR. The UNHCR distributes those funds to the Department of Social Services for the implementation of the education project.

Mr. Mabuto said that although DAFI is a good program, its funds are insufficient to cater for all refugee children. For instance, those children enrolled in Form 5 and Form 6 cannot be

¹ DAFI is a German educational program that supports mainly education for youth refugees through the UNHCR.

sponsored by Social Services because of limited funds and so their parents are required to fund their fees. The respondent added that even in the case of University students, the program could not cater for all refugee girls. As a result, refugee girls spend a long time waiting for another opportunity to get a scholarship. The long waiting period after completion their Advanced Level coupled with the lack of funds from UNHCR to sponsor refugee girl children causes them to seek other ways of keeping themselves busy; in most cases, they get married, fall pregnant, and drop out of school.

Furthermore, the delay by the Department of Social Services in allocating the monthly allowance (80 United States Dollars) for bus fares and other personal expenses causes most refugee women and girls to miss their lessons. This affects their performance as they have difficulties in catching up with missed lessons. A refugee woman who requested anonymity said that at the time of interview, she had not attended her vocational training lessons for nearly a month because the department had delayed in paying her fees.

One of the Congolese Community leaders told me that because the waiting period between applying for and being awarded a scholarship is too long, some youths prefer to relocate temporarily to South Africa where they can start making a living.

Mr. Mabuto and Mrs. Chipfuwa both from the Department of Social Services said that the delay is because the UNHCR allocates them a budget quarterly; which means that by the time the department receives its first allocation for the beginning of the academic year, schools have already opened. They both complained that the financial resources are always made available to them too late each academic year.

3.2.5 The Seclusion and Remoteness of Tongogara Camp

The seclusion of the Tongogara Refugee Camp and its remoteness from the rest of the world detrimentally affect refugee women and girls in the scholarship application process. This is explained by the fact that most of those refugees have never been into town (e.g., Chipinge or further a field to Mutare) and they do not know where to go to or which relevant institution to

approach to ask about how to further their studies. Moreover, the non-existence within the camp of public services and modes of communication such as a post office or telephone facilities makes it difficult for these women to make a proper follow up on any enquiries they have pursued outside the Camp, including monitoring any applications they do make for a scholarship. In order to qualify for a refugee scholarship, the child or women has to reside within the Tongogara Camp but the very conditions of the Camp's policy, militate against the securing of such scholarships.

3.2.5 The lengthy Scholarship Application Process

The educational policy on scholarships requires that the applicant obtains three invoices from three institutions where they intend to take up some training. This prevents future complaints from the student. For most refugee women and girls living in Tongogara, the cost involved is too high, as they do not have enough money for bus fares and accommodation once they arrive in Harare or another city to start their education or training. Refugee women that I interviewed explained that it required a lot of their patience and money to pay for bus fares to and from the various offices. They also need cash to pay for the cost of transport to and from the cities or towns in which the learning institutions are based as well as accommodation in those places. Most of the time refugee women in Tongogara do not even know where to go and how to find vocational institutions in cities because some are new to Zimbabwe and have never left Tongogara in their lives. Some never have never stayed in a Zimbabwe town or city for any extended length of time.

One respondent, who requested anonymity, stated that it took her one year to be considered for a scholarship. She complained about the complicated process which involved her having to be persistent and spending a lot of money on transport to make personal visits to the relevant institution in order to monitor the progress of her application for a scholarship.

This scenario is a real disadvantage to refugee women and girls as compared with men. In general, women are less adventurous than men; it is easier for a young man to venture into and find his way around an unfamiliar city than it is for a young woman. Because society

generally places the burden of domestic household duties on women, as opposed to men, refugee women are more likely to have difficulties leaving behind their families to pursue their personal ambitions than it is for men. Mrs. Melody Makwindi, the Education Officer from the Jesuit Refugee Services, confirmed this when she told me that most refugee women do not undertake vocational training because of their house chores. She said that they had told her that they did not do take up vocational training because, if they did so, there would be no one to stay home to look after young family members. Moreover, attending vocational training outside, as opposed to inside, Tongogara Camp necessarily means that female refugee students must leave the Camp and move to and live in the town or city where the particular training is offered.

3.2.6 The Inability to satisfy Entry Points for Scholarships

Points, subjects, and rules for scholarships are often difficult to satisfy because most women do not meet the requirements. Many refugee women do not have the minimum entry points needed in Zimbabwe to qualify for vocational training or tertiary education. Mrs. Mutukwa, the Country Director for the Jesuit Refugee Services, and Mrs. Makwindi confirmed that the entry requirement points are a challenge for some refugee women who wish to pursue their studies or vocational training. They concurred that either they lack proper documentation showing that they are qualified for a particular type of training or they do not have the minimum points required in Zimbabwe. Here is what they had to say:

“Some women might be interested in taking up a course but do not have the entry points required in Zimbabwe in order to pursue that particular course.”

3.2.7 The Lack of Awareness of Educational Opportunities

Refugee women admitted that they are not properly informed about scholarships provided by the UNHCR, the Jesuit Refugee Services, and the Social Services Department. The majority of them had heard about this facility by word of mouth. One respondent who requested to

remain anonymous said that she learned about the sponsorship at a local church in Harare, where she met with a Social welfare officer who advised her of this opportunity.

All Officials dealing with education admitted that there is no adequate awareness to promote the education of refugee women and girls. Mrs. Chipfuwa from the Social Services and Mrs. Mutukwa, the Country Director for JRS acknowledged this fact and said that usually, the advertisement for education opportunities is done officially by simply sticking posters in Tongogara and in offices in Harare. Mrs. Chipfuwa explained that:

“Between October and November every year, Officers in charge of Education place notices all over the camp, just to make sure everyone gets the information.”

The publication of scholarships is done without focusing on the importance of education for refugee women and girls. No proper awareness campaign is conducted to encourage these refugee women and girls to pursue their education. During the research, I noted that there was no gender policy on education for refugee women and girls.

3.2.8 Negative Refugee Community Attitudes

Mr. Mabuto the Education officer in the camp and the Mr. Mungano the Deputy Headmaster of the primary school both mentioned that parents do not encourage refugee girls to go to school. Lack of discipline from both parents and children do not promote education of refugee children in general and that of the refugee girl in particular. Mr. Mabuto said that Congolese children in secondary school leave the class whenever they feel like it because their houses are too close to the school. Parents of such children do not take any action to discipline them. He also explained that parents in general are reluctant to send their children to school.

Mr. Zengeya, the camp Administrator, told us that due to the proximity of St Michael's Secondary school to houses, parents interfere with their children's lessons. He pointed out that some parents interrupt classes and call their girl children through the window with the

intention of sending them on an errand or summoning them to do house chores. The respondent also cited absenteeism as one of the causes of refugee girls' underperformance at school and one of the reasons why girls drop out of school. The Deputy Headmaster, Mr. Mugano also made the same statement concerning parental interference during lessons. He further added that refugee girls do not value education in general, nor do they do their assignments at all. He said:

“They are not keen to attend school; they are more concerned about beautifying themselves”.

It is important to note that within the refugee community, there are economic migrants who came from the cities in DRC. These economic migrants left a city life expecting to come to Zimbabwe in order to be part of the resettlement program or to get a better life. They compared their past life to the living conditions in the camp stating that the living conditions in Tongogara as well as the quality of education are poor.

3.2.9 Negative Cultural and Religious Practices

Early marriages among the Congolese refugee community were cited as a factor that discourages girls from pursuing their studies. According to Mr. Mabuto, the Education officer in Tongogara camp, two girls had drop out from school due to early marriages at the time of interview. This depends on the educational background of parents. Educated parents do not normally allow their daughters to get married if they are still going to school. According to the community leaders, most of the girls who get married early are those who come from the Bembe tribe in the Eastern part of the DRC. They said that:

“Culturally, a Bembe girl must be a virgin when she gets married. People from this tribe are afraid that their girls might lose their virginity before marriage; as a result, to prevent girls from bringing shame to the family, they prefer to marry them off early.”

The leaders also told me that, due to the prevalent promiscuity in the camp, parents originally from this tribe fear that their girls may easily lose their virginity before marriage.

Furthermore, some refugee girls prefer marriage to education in a bid to escape from harsh living conditions. As underlined by Mr. Froduald Ntawukikura, those girls hope to have a better future once married. He said that:

“Refugee girls accept to get married for material gain; they expect the husband to look after them and meet their needs. They think that they will find solution to their problems in the marriage”.

It is my own observation that because of the stereotypic attitudes among the refugee community, members from the DRC believe that once a girl attains a certain age, she must get married. Pressure from society, family, and peer influences such behaviour among refugee girls from the DRC. Most of them value marriage more than education. The perception is that, once these girls get married, their husbands will assume the duty of looking after them and providing for their needs. This will further reduce the parent’s burden, as the husband will be taking care of the girl.

It is important to note that poverty, culture, and resettlement in this regard, are cross cutting issues related to early marriage. Some girls drop out from school to search for a better life in the marriage. Some refugee girls are not formally married, they practice what they call “*yaka to vanda*” literally meaning “come, we stay together”. Unaccompanied refugee girls and single women irrespective of country of origin mostly carry out this practice. Because of a lack of parental guidance and poverty, a refugee girl or woman becomes a victim of men who are financially stable; she will find it difficult to resist to a proposal made by a man who promises her financial security. Some refugee women and girls choose to get married once the partner is selected for resettlement, hoping that her spouse will take her overseas.

In addition to culture, religion also plays a big role in challenging refugee women and girls’ education. For instance, members of the apostolic faith are allowed to have many wives; generally, they target young girls to marry. For parents who belong to the same sect, it is normal that their young daughters get married early. Thus, early marriages within this religious community reduce the chances of these girls continuing with their studies. Congolese community leaders informed me that some parents, who belong to the Pentecostal

faith, believe that they can only find solution to their plight in God. In that regard, they sometimes take their family for long prayer sessions that affect the regular school attendance of the refugee girl. They added that out of desperation such parents might go for up to three days in prayer meetings.

3.2.10 Poverty

This factor affects negatively refugee girls' education in both urban and camp settlement. According to Mr.Mabuto, schooling is free from primary to Form 4 in Tongogara. Form 5 and Form 6 are self- sponsored because the Department of Social Services does not support higher secondary education due to insufficient funds. As a result, some refugee girls who reached Form 5 and Form 6 level failed to further their education because their parents cannot afford to pay for boarding fees. This leads to early marriage and early pregnancy. Furthermore, when the UNHCR delays in supplying learning materials, teachers will send some children back home because their parents have difficulties in buying the materials due to their low income. Mr. Froduald Ntawulikura, the former Vice-Chairman of the Parent Education Committee in Tongogara spoke about teenagers who are tempted by boys for material gain. He said that:

“Refugee girls accept to get married at an early age as a way of running away from the harsh living conditions. Some refugee girls drop out from school hoping to get a better life in the marriage”.

A woman within the Congolese refugee community told me that at times her children go to school hungry and without having eaten a proper breakfast. She explained that this has happened because she does not have enough money to buy adequate food for her family and because the UNHCR had cut down the food allocation. She said that under such circumstances, she would rather keep a girl child at home than send her to school. The combination of heat and hunger for a young pupil does not encourage either parents or refugee girls to attend school.

As stated earlier, poverty also affects the attendance and the performance of refugee women and girls' education in the camp as well as in urban areas. However, in urban settlement, refugee girls are particularly affected because of the confinement policy that requires all refugees to be in the camp in order to access free education. A refugee girl living in town does not fall under the criteria for selection and cannot be considered for a scholarship.

Consequently, most of their parents cannot afford to pay for their children's education because of financial constraints in town. For example, accommodation in the city must be paid for, water and electricity included. Refugees living in cities prefer to pay for essentials rather than send their children to school. Consequently, refugee girls drop out from school and lose interest in education because of their parents' failure to sponsor them.

It is my opinion that in this regard priorities differ, depending on the educational background of the parents; some would sacrifice and send their daughters to school. For the majority, parents are just concerned about their day-to-day up-keep: i.e., food, water, shelter (meaning paying rent). Such parents keep their daughters at home to help with house chores.

The prevailing socio-economic situation in Zimbabwe affects business activities of some refugees who settled in town. Mr. Joseph Boomenyo's case illustrates this situation. This respondent is a refugee Entrepreneur from the DRC and he told me that his business has been badly affected by the current Zimbabwe economy. As a result, he can no longer afford to pay for school fees for his young sister who is supposed to be in Form 4. He added that his young sister, Mwalihasha Mnyaci, aged 15 has been living with him since she came to Zimbabwe. The respondent approached the Social Services office in order to ask for financial assistance in this matter. He was told that he must send his young sister Mnyaci to Tongogara in order to get free education. Mr. Joseph further expressed concerns about exposing his young female relative without supervision to the camp. At the time of interview, Mnyaci was not attending school.

In addition, Aminata, a mother of three, all girls of school going age, confirmed that since her husbands' business collapsed, they are failing to send their children to school. She explained that they lived in Tongogara for some months and left because of the harsh living conditions.

It is important to note that although some parents within the refugee community have financial constraints, some can manage to send their daughters to school. Investigations made in various government schools in Harare revealed that parents regularly pay school fees for children including girl refugees. School Officials from David Livingstone School, Blakiston School, and Roosevelt Girls High in Harare acknowledge that refugee children are treated as nationals. Therefore, their parents have to pay their schools fees and other related expenses.

However, the Headmistress at Roosevelt Girls High, Mrs. Matchumi informed me of the difficulties facing Congolese students in general; she was not aware that some of the Congolese students were refugees. She gave details of how Ms. Cristelle Kapinga, a Congolese national and former student used to approach their Offices with her uncle to plead with them over late payments of school fees. She added that generally, the student was committed to her studies. However, the late payment disrupted her learning.

3.2.11 Negative Aspects of the Prospect of Resettlement

According to respondents from the DRC, some Rwandese refugees called themselves Congolese in order to benefit from the resettlement program. Congolese refugees are qualified for resettlement because of the ongoing war in the DRC. In addition, Congolese refugees who cannot return home voluntarily and whose lives are at risk in Zimbabwe are qualified for resettlement in a third country of asylum. Unlike refugees from Rwanda, where there is no longer any war, they can choose to go back home or to remain in Zimbabwe. Since most of the Rwandese, also want to go overseas in search of a better life, they declared themselves Congolese. Respondents stated that:

“Not all Congolese refugees are from the DRC because there are Rwandese nationals who told the UNHCR Officers that they originated from Congo. These self declared Congolese speak Kinyarwanda and attend the Rwandese

meetings. This results in growing the number of refugees from the DRC. Not only has it increased the number of Congolese refugees, it also automatically adds to the number of dropouts from school among the Congolese refugees.”

Congolese community leaders further explained why there is a large number of dropouts school among the Congolese students in Tongogara. They said:

“This is partly because of the Rwandese who called themselves Congolese. Some of the girls who fall into this category of “so called Congolese” do not attend school, thereby adding to the number of Congolese refugee girls’ dropouts. This further gives a bad image of the Congolese community.”

Mr. Mabuto, the Education Officer in Tongogara camp explained that the reluctance of parents to send their children to school is due to their high expectations for resettlement. He stated that most parents and children are not motivated to attend the local schools because they think that they will soon travel overseas. Their hope for a life in Australia, in Canada or the United States affects negatively the children’s education in general and that of refugee girls from the DRC in particular. Mr. Mugano and Mr. Matsaire respectively Deputy Head master and Grade four teacher of the primary school in Tongogara confirmed this during the interview, stating that:

“Congolese students and their parents only dream about going overseas.”

For both refugees living in the camp and in urban settlement, the attitude is more or less the same with regard to resettlement. It was noted that in urban areas, once informed that they are going through the last stages of the resettlement process, some parents stop paying school fees for their children. This affects badly the refugee girl’s education in that parents are not aware that the last stage of resettlement might be longer than expected. In Harare and at the time of the interview, most refugee girls who were awaiting resettlement had stopped going to school. Maman Jacquie, a mother of five now in Australia, said that her daughter stopped attending school because of financial constraints and because they were due to relocate to Australia.

The relocation program negatively affects the parents' attitudes toward education; those refugee women and girls think that they are in transit going to some other countries. A statement made by a refugee woman from the DRC confirmed this. She told me that her children will further their education only overseas.

3.3 Negative Factors about the Schools in Tongogara Camp

3.3.1 Foreign Languages of Instruction

Respondents from the DRC explained that lessons at the Sabi Experimental Primary School in Tongogara camp are given in Shona and English, which are the required languages according to provisions of the Education Act. However, the majority of pupils at Sabi Experimental Primary School who originated from the DRC cannot speak Shona. As a result, they have difficulties in coping and understanding the lessons. The dilemma is further exacerbated by the fact that children have to cope with two foreign languages of instruction at once. Parents said that the language of instruction affects the school performance of most of the refugees including girls; in that, refugee children have difficulties in coping with learning Shona and English as they come from a French speaking country. They further complained about the fact that teachers in primary school use Shona more often than they use English. Mr. Mugano and Mr. Matsaire the Deputy Head master and Grade four teacher of the primary school in Tongogara, respectively, are concerned about the inability for refugee girls to write English. They said that:

“Refugee have language problem when they enroll in a class. Usually, it takes time for them to cope with the challenge.”

Unlike in Harare, at Blakiston Primary School for example, the Headmaster said that when teachers encounter problem in communicating with a child who do not speak English, they request for assistance from another child who speak the same language. The later will serve

as an interpreter. In most cases, the former child manages to cope quickly with the language barriers.



Sabi Experimental Primary School
in Tongogara Camp.

3.3.2 Lack of Learning Materials and Uniforms

Parents in the Congolese community complained about the failure by the Department of Social Services and UNHCR to supply school uniforms and learning materials for refugee children. They also pointed out that children without the required textbooks and uniform are usually sent back home; this exposes a girl child to harassment from boys in the village as she might have to go back home alone. Mrs. Chaba told me that:

“A girl child without uniform is particularly at risk when she gets lost on her way to or from school because her identification by members of the public will be difficult. She added that it is easier to identify a child in uniform and return her to the relevant school authority than a child in plain clothes.”

3.3.3 Poor Quality Education

Some parents said that they observed that teachers spend most of their time outside the classroom chatting instead of giving lessons. They complained about the lack of seriousness and commitment to their teaching duties. This is translated into poor performance by the

refugee school children, especially the girls. Furthermore, Mr. Chaba from the DRC blames the education system in the camp, added that although children are attending lessons regularly, some are still unable to read and write in English properly. In order to solve this problem, parents decided to operate an English school within the camp to allow children to cope with their difficulties with the language .

Both Mr. Mabuto and Mr. Zengeya, Officials from the Tongagara camp, confirmed that the quality of education, particularly at secondary level is affected by the strikes and financial problems facing the institutions. This is due to poor remuneration of teachers who are civil servants. Mrs. Runesu, the Education Officer at UNHCR also corroborates this statement. She said that:

“Like all over in the country, the education system has been affected by the poor remuneration of teachers.”

3.3.4 Corporal Punishment

During the interview with the Congolese community leaders, it was stated that pupils and students receive harsh corporal punishment. Respondents stated that at St Michael school, either there is lack of adequate disciplinary measures against students; in that students can walk in and out of a classroom any time and as they feel like, or the punishment is too severe for learners. They said that some students were injured in the process, leaving parents with no option by to withdraw their children from school. This also forced some refugee girls to drop out of school.

3.3.5 Sexual Abuse by Teachers and Foster Parents

Mrs. Chaba complained about her Form 4 daughter who was harassed by her teacher from St Michael School. She said that the teacher once came to her house wanting to visit her daughter; the harassment was so persistent that she decided to withdraw her daughter from school. At the time of the interview, she was not attending school. She also explained

that in the camp, unaccompanied refugee girls, i.e., orphans placed in a foster family, end up being sexually abused by male members of the foster family, leading to early pregnancy and subsequently, forcing the girls to drop out school.

Mr. Mabuto explained that the lack of a father figure in some families affects the girl's attendance in school in that most of the orphan girls are difficult to discipline and lack interest in education. He added that some father figures abuse refugee girls placed under their care, in a foster family. Some simply start a love relationship with the girl leading to a lack of respect for them, rebellious behaviour, and eventually the girls drop out from school. Mr. Mabuto indicated that in most cases, those girls become disobedient and do not want to go school once they have started that sort of relationship.

3.3.6 Sexual Harassment of Girl Students

Another factor that hinders refugee girls from attending school is the harassment they experience when going to school. This occurs in most cases between the residential area and the primary school. Parents are concerned about boys from the neighbouring villages who often attack young refugee girls on their way from and to school. Some parents in Tongogara camp decided to remove their girl children from school because they are afraid that their daughters might be raped one day. In that regard, some parents were forced to move into town in order to place their daughters in a safe place. Officials in the camp and at the UNHCR confirmed these harassments, as they told me that:

“In order to tackle this issue, it was agreed that parents must accompany very young girl children to school.”

Mr. Teddy Binene, a DRC community leader, father of four girls and one boy, lives in Tongogara with his family. He explained that all refugee girls attending the primary school are in constant fear and danger of being raped. He stated that there were instances of local boys who abducted some refugee girls and raped them as they were going to school.

3.3.7 Negative Attitudes of Teachers and Social Services Officers

Refugee parents, women, and girls complained about Social Services Officers and teachers' attitudes which discourage them from approaching them when they need to apply for scholarships. They stated that generally, some Officials look down upon refugees and treat them as second-class citizens. Ms. Batiki who once applied for a scholarship said that:

“When I went back to the Department of Social Services, the officer never paid attention to what I was saying; she never even looked at me as she was reading some papers. I was disappointed and never went back to enquire whether I got the scholarship or not.”

The lack of consideration for refugees by teachers is demonstrated by the fact that some teachers at St Michael School took the opportunity to use some students as builders when the school was under construction. They used this opportunity to punish undisciplined students. Children were spending more time fetching water and helping in the building of the school instead of studying. In addition, parents are concerned about the lack of commitment of teachers to educate refugee children. They added that the lack of consideration for refugee community causes local educators to spend most of their time speaking in Shona. This makes it difficult for the majority of students who are refugees to assimilate the lessons.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Education is a fundamental catalyst for achieving durable solutions for children and plays a crucial role in the prevention of cycles of conflict and in rebuilding the community. From the onset of displacement, education and recreational activities provide children with a sense of normality. Moreover, it is a protection tool for girls and boys, essential to prevent various forms of abuse and exploitation, and their involvement in illegal activities. In addition, education is particularly important for unaccompanied and separated children as a means of empowerment in the absence of parental care and protection. (UN General Assembly, 2005: 10). In addition, the lack of adult male presence in a family or the loss of their traditional male role as economic provider can lead to protection risks for displaced women and girls. Even when adult male family members are present, gender roles often change dramatically in contexts of displacement. (WCRWC: 2007:15)

In this regard, Mr. Mabuto said that:

“Girls who are sexually abused by their father in a foster family, or those who are having an affair with the father become rebellious. As a result, they lose interest in school; and there is nothing that the father can do because of that.”

The fact that within the Congolese refugee community, there are girls, who lost their parents or arrived from DRC without an adult, exposes them to all form of abuses. Refugee girls placed in foster families end up dropping out of school because male members of the foster family sexually abuse them. Girls in this situation become rebellious and difficult to discipline due to the loss of the traditional male role in their lives. Again, in order for the responsible authority in the camp to tackle this prevalent issue, there is a need for extensive sensitization that will help change the mindset and the perception of women in general.

Most of the countries sheltering refugees are among the world's poorest and have difficulty providing education for their own children. Some national governments open their own schools to refugees, but many do not have sufficient resources to do so. In these cases, outside assistance is required, which can be provided by UN organizations, international and local NGOs, and local community and religious groups. Donors fund education in emergencies via support to UN organizations or to NGOs. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is charged with the protection and wellbeing of refugees and a significant number of refugee children have access to school because of its assistance.

From the above readings, we can conclude that Zimbabwe is in a similar position where the government has provided school facilities to refugees in Tongogara. With the assistance of international agencies such the UNHCR and the Jesuit Refugee Services, refugees have access to free formal education and vocational training.

However, due to socio-economic hardships that the country is facing, some refugee women and girls cannot obtain access to free education. Refugee girls in urban areas and those who have completed Form 4 in Tongogara camp have trouble in accessing scholarships. The Department of Social Services, for instance, delays paying school fees and other related expenses due to the country's current financial crisis.

Among the unaccompanied refugee girls and single women in general and particularly those originally from the DRC, some choose to live together first and later on get married officially. They do this in order to go overseas with their partners. Once a refugee male or female goes through the first stage of the resettlement process, it becomes easier for girls to accept his proposal of marriage or for living together. Under these circumstances, the refugee girl (even at school going age) find difficult to resist to such propositions. Subsequently, this forces the refugee girl to drop out of school and leads to early pregnancy.

Single refugee women and girls in general and those unaccompanied in particular are the most vulnerable under such circumstances; because they desperately want to escape from poverty and the harsh living conditions in the camp as well as in urban areas. Generally, they

do not see the need for education now. It is understandable that the complicated and lengthy scholarship application process coupled with all other factors cited in this research discourage refugee women and girls from furthering their education. It takes someone who is psychologically motivated and lives in a good environment in order to think about studies and the benefits of an education. The lack of interest coupled with the inexistence of an adequate and intensive awareness campaign to attract Congolese refugee women and girls exacerbate the problems.

4.2 Poverty

It is important to note that most of the self-settled refugees in urban areas are in the informal sector. With the current economic challenges prevailing in Zimbabwe, most of them cannot afford to send their daughters to school. This also is justified by the fact that these people were once residents in Tongogara and are now living in the city; it becomes difficult for them to go back to Tongogara and live in harsh conditions.

4.3 Scholarships

With regard to the delay in processing the scholarships for refugees, parents living in Tongogara complained about the inequality in the number of recipients. They argued that most of the beneficiaries of scholarships are Rwandese and few are from the DRC. Mrs. Rose, one of the Congolese refugees in Tongogara, told me that her children applied for financial assistance, but they have received no reply for the past two years. Once again, it is understandable that under such circumstances youths in general and girls in particular will be tempted to indulge in illegal activities or in getting married. Ms. Chaba who was concerned about her daughter's ideas made this statement as she said that:

“Since my daughter stopped going to school due to the harassment from the teacher, she is now thinking of getting married.”

This means that inactivity is a among the push factors that promote early marriages in Tongogara camp. It was brought to my attention that refugee girls in Tongogara are also vulnerable when it comes to early marriages because they are attracted to the boys who go to South Africa and bring back fancy commodities such as clothes or cell phones. They get married at an early age for material gain.

Unfortunately, statistics were not available to ascertain exactly how many refugee girls from DRC were among those currently being assisted by Social Services. It is important to note the discrepancy between the information provided by Mr. Moyo an Official from the Department of Social Services and Mr. Mabuto the Education Officer in Tongogara with regard to financial assistance for refugee students in Form 5 and Form 6.

Mr. Moyo, an officer from the Department of Social Services gave me information concerning the financial support for Form 5 and Form 6 students. He said that:

“Students who were attending boarding school before the construction of St Michael Secondary School in Tongogra (in particular those who were in Form 4) were not removed from boarding school as they continued up to completion of their A level. The Department of Social Services (DSS) currently sponsors students whose schooling was paid by parents up to Form 4. They received assistance from the DSS after their parents approached the department requesting for financial support.”

In line with the above information, Mr. Teddy Binene, a Congolese national residing in Tongogara advised that he was concerned about his daughter’s education because she was completing her Form 4. He said that because of financial constraints he is not able to send her daughter to a boarding school in order to continue with her education. This clearly indicates that parents are responsible for payment for students attending Form 5 and Form 6 learning since the camp do not provide for this program. It also implies that refugee girls like Mr. Binene’s daughter will eventually stop going to school because their parents do not have money.

Congolese refugee community leaders added that students who are in boarding schools are from “well-to-do” families, most of them from Rwanda. They explained that within the

Rwandese community, the majority are running business that enables them to send their children to better schools.

4.4 Analysis of the Gender Perspective

The following analysis reveals that gender is not taken into account in the allocation of scholarships to refugee women and girls. It is important to note that the budget allocated to the Department of Social Services includes a monthly allowance for refugee students. The grant of eighty United States Dollars is for transport cost and other personal expenses.

For refugee women and girls living in Tongogara and have who relocated to the city for furthering their education, this amount of money is insufficient to meet their daily expenses. Considering that the majority of vocational training institutions are located in big cities such as Mutare (which is the nearest big town from Tongogara) and Harare (which offers a divers type of training), those who are willing to continue with their studies will have to move from Tongogara to the city. The rent price for an average one room is 50 dollars or more depending on the location. Eighty dollars allowance allocated to them is not sufficient for accommodation in town nor is it adequate for refugee women with babies or small children.

Because of family responsibilities and inadequate financial support for refugee women particularly, it is difficult for them to continue with their education. The majority of them are most unlikely to enroll for vocational training under such conditions.

In order to comply with these provisions, the UNHCR provide financial support for refugee women who require to travel from Tongogara to town to search for a learning institution. The allowance will ease the budget of women and girls who are already struggling to make ends meet. As Mr. Mabuto pointed out, the lack of financial support with regard to transport and accommodation discourages most of the refugee women from taking up vocational training or formal education. The gender perspective in this case is not taken into account to encourage refugee women and girls to pursue their education.

4.5 Culture and Religion

Culturally, Congolese women and girls value marriage very much. Refugee girls think that marriage is more important than school. This is explained by the increasing rates of dropout schoolgirls from Form 3 onwards. In this regard, Ms. Melody of the Department of Social Services said that there is a huge discrepancy between the number of refugee girls in Primary school and those in secondary starting from Form 3. She said:

“When refugee girls enroll in primary school, they come in big number, but as they progress and reach Form 3, most of them drop-out from school.”

The respondent further clarified that when the Department conducts life skills workshops with a focus on women, only 15% of women attend. Generally, women give family responsibilities as the reasons why they do not participate in such activities. This is an indication that as is the case elsewhere in Africa, women, especially mothers, are confined to doing domestic chores while men enter the public sphere where they make decisions for their absent women. In addition, interference of parents during lessons in Tongogara schools is an indication that they do not value education. In this regard, Mr. Ntawulikura, the former Vice-Chairman of Education Committee, said:

“In the African context, girls are solicited to help their mothers in doing domestic chores. In Tongogara for instance, when it is the time to fetch water, mostly girls are sent for this duty.”

4.6 General Attitudes within the Congolese Refugee Community

Officials in the camp complained about the general lack of interest in learning on the part of Congolese refugees. They told me that women and young girls from the DRC are more interested in the way they look than in studying. Mr. Maguto, the Deputy Headmaster at Sabi Primary school said,

“Young girls are more interested in beautifying themselves than focusing on their studies”.

The statement made by a woman among the Congolese community leaders confirmed this, as she said that she does not send her daughters to school because the school requires them to wear short hair.

4.7 The Resettlement Program

As stated before in this research, the reasons why refugee women and girls are not attracted to learning are crosscutting issues. One of the observations made when this research was conducted is that the resettlement program is among the factors that influence such practice within the Congolese community. The lack of intensive awareness campaign specifically focused on the education for refugee women and girls support the lack of interest on their part. This also explains why they are not keen to take up further studies once they are selected for the resettlement program. For those in urban areas, the fact that they withdraw their children from school is an indication that they do not value education.

A statement made by a woman beneficiary of the resettlement program confirmed this as she told me that her children should only attend school overseas. It further shows that some refugee women and girls specifically from the DRC do not give due importance to education. Looking at the statistics provided by Mr. Mabuto, I noted that the enrolment of girl refugees is higher in primary school than in secondary and tertiary education. According to him, the enrollment of girl refugees in Tongogara is as follows:

“In 2009, 30 girls against 28 boys in pre-school, 289 girls in primary school against 306 boys and 41 girls against 56 boys in Secondary school.”

The tables below indicate the number of refugee women and girls enrolled in formal and vocational training. They also show the number of Congolese refugee women and girls pursuing their education.

2009 STATISTICS OF REFUGEE STUDENTS

Level/ Type of training	Number of Students & Sex	Sponsor	Location
Pre-school	30 F 28 M	Department of Social Services	Tongogara camp
Tongogara Sabi Prim. School	289 F 306 M	Department of Social Services	As above (A/A)
St Michael Secondary School	41 F 56 M	Department of Social Services	(A/A)
Chibuwa Boarding School: Form 5 & 6	4 F 6 M None from DRC	Parents	Chipinge
Form 1 – Form 4	16 F 27 M (2Females from DRC)	Parents	These students are living in Tongogara camp.
Tertiary education	9 F 4 M 1Female from DRC	UNHCR	Harare

F = Female

M = Male

2008 - 2010 STATISTICS OF REFUGEE STUDENTS

Level/ Type of training	Number of students & Sex	Sponsor	Location	Year
Vocational training	25 students: 6 females: 1 female from DRC	Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS)	Harare for the majority	2010
As above (A/A)	30 students: 16 females: 10 Females from DRC	A/A	A/A	2009
A/A	25 students: 10 females: 2 females from DRC	A/A	A/A	2008

CHAPTER FIVE: HUMAN RIGHTS COMPLIANCE AND NON-COMPLIANCE

5.1 Human Rights Compliance Analysis

In 2000, at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, 180 countries committed to “ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girl children, in difficult circumstances (including those affected by war) and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality” (UNESCO 2000).

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)

Education is a human right: No matter where you live, no matter who you are, everyone is entitled to education. Even if you have been forced to leave your home and live in another town or village, a camp for displaced people or outside your country, you still have the right to go to school. The right to education is protected under many international agreements, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. (Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 2007: 6).

Provision of Article 26 of the UDHR outlines the right to free and compulsory education at the elementary level and urges that professional and technical education be made available. It further states that parents have the right to choose the kind of education provided to their child.

Education is a basic human right provided in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Education is a fundamental catalyst for achieving durable solutions for children and plays a crucial role in the prevention of cycles of conflict and in rebuilding the community. From the onset of displacement, education and recreational activities provide children with a sense of normality. Moreover, it is a protection tool for girls and boys,

essential to prevent various forms of abuses and exploitation, and their involvement in illegal activities. In addition, education is particularly important for unaccompanied and separated children as a means of empowerment in the absence of parental care and protection. For girls, this is particularly important given that they are more likely to be subject to rape and other forms of gender-based violence. UN General Assembly, (2005: 10)

This right is incorporated in the **Education Act of Zimbabwe**. Section 4 of the Education Act provides for the right to education for children including refugee children. Furthermore, Section 4 (1) of the Education Act establishes the right to education for all children. It reads as follows:

“Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any other enactment, but subject to this Act, every child in Zimbabwe shall have the right to education.”

This implies that Zimbabwe acknowledges and protects the right to education for all children, including refugee girls. The Act also provides for admission to school for every child irrespective of tribe or gender. The implication of the provision of this Section is that whether a child is a national or a refugee, he/ she has the right to be enrolled in school.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

This International Instrument has been ratified by all nations except Somalia and the United States and it stresses the right of all children to education. Governments that have ratified the CRC have committed to protecting and ensuring children’s rights and to be held accountable for this commitment. The international community (including governments, NGOs, UN agencies, communities, and parents) shares the responsibility of ensuring that children’s rights are upheld, including that of girl refugees.

Article 28 of the CRC

The Article recognizes the right of the child to education with a view to achieving this right based on an equal opportunity basis; it stresses the need for financial assistance in case of need. Indeed, the UNHCR through the Department of Social Services provides refugees with free education in Tongogara camp and vocational training for qualified refugee students both in the camp and in town. The UNHCR provides refugee students with 80 dollars as a monthly allowance toward their transport and accommodation costs. Under these circumstances, the government has complied with provisions of Article 28 (b) of the CRC.

Article 28.3 of the CRC provides that:

“States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.”

This is the case in Zimbabwe, where the government has shown its commitment to abide by the provisions of the above Article because it allows international donors and agencies such as DAFI, a German program that supports the education for refugees, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Jesuit Refugee Service to actively deal with programs related to educating refugees.

Zimbabwe has ratified both the **1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa** and domesticated them in terms of Zimbabwe’s **Refugees Act, Chapter 4:03**.

Section 22 of the Refugees Act provides for public education and for the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas, and degrees as well as the remission of fees and charges and award of scholarships. The government has complied with the provisions on education set out in these International Instruments because it recognizes foreign certificates; this allows qualified refugees to take up vocational training and formal education. Refugee children are guaranteed the right to elementary education in section 22 of the Refugee Act,

which states that they should be accorded the same opportunities as nationals of the host country. Beyond primary school, refugee children are treated as other aliens, allowing for the recognition of foreign school certificates and awarding of scholarships.

Article 28.1 (a), (b) and (c) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides as follows:

“States Parties recognize the right of the child to education and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:

Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;

Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;

Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means.”

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare provides for learning facilities to enable refugee children to go to school. The existence of the Sabi Primary School and the St Michael School built recently are the indications that Zimbabwe has complied with above International Instrument. Moreover, the government through the Department of Social Services pays all the levies required at those learning institutions. In addition, most of the funds emanating from the UNHCR are directed toward the financial assistance required for those who are attending tertiary education.

It important to note that through the Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS), refugees in general and refugee women in particular are offered free vocational training. The government, by so allowing this Non-Governmental Organization to operate within the camp and in the city shows its commitment to the promotion of the refugee child’s education. Article 28.1 (b) of the CRC are fully complied with; in that refugee women and girls who are fully sponsored by the Ministry of Labour, Public Service and Social Welfare or JRS get an allowance for their transport costs, accommodation and personal needs.

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural and Rights (ICESCR)

Zimbabwe has ratified this international human rights instrument and recognizes the provisions related to the right of everyone to education set in Article 13 of the ICESCR. Zimbabwe in line with provisions of this Article includes the right to education for every child in the Education Act. Furthermore, Section 12(3) of the Refugees Act in the spirit of Article 7 of this international instrument provides for equal rights to employment.

Section 12 (3) of the Refugees Act provides that:

“Subject to this Act, every recognized refugee and every protected person within Zimbabwe shall, in respect of wage-earning employment, be entitled to the same rights and be subject to the same restrictions imposed generally on persons who are not citizens of Zimbabwe.”

The establishment of free primary and secondary education for all refugees living in Tongogara, as well as free vocational training and tertiary education implies that Zimbabwe recognizes and protects the right to education for all refugees.

However, the provisions of section 12 of the Refugees Act in relation to the confinement policy, is a hindrance to the free education of girl refugees living in urban areas. The paragraphs below best explain this finding.

5.2 Non -Compliance or Gaps in Human Rights

Whilst the Zimbabwe’s Department of Social Services tries to comply fully with all the provisions of Article 28 of the CRC, there is a need to address issues related to the increase of drop-out rates and encourage regular attendance at schools by refugee girls. With a lack of adequate awareness about the persistent low levels of education among refugee women and girls, as well as the absence any gender policy on the education of refugees within the UNHCR or the Department of Social Services, the Zimbabwe government is failing to encourage regular attendance of refugee girls in schools and prevent drop-out school as required in Article 28 (e) of the CRC.

Article 28.2 of the CRC and Article 11.5 of the **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)** provide that:

“States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child’s human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.”

As stated earlier on in this research, teachers in Tongogara camp administer harsh corporal punishments that cause bodily harm.

Article 11(2) of the ACRWC states:

- “d) Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.
- e) Take special measures in respect of female, gifted, and disadvantaged children, to ensure equal access to education for all section of the community.”

Statistics provided by officials from Tongogara show that the government is failing to meet the requirements of the above Article. The absence of Form 5 and Form 6 in the camp is a serious challenge for girl refugees from disadvantaged families because their parents cannot afford to pay for boarding schools or other institutions outside the camp (e.g., in towns like nearby Chipinge or Mutare). The lack of funds by the Social Services Department to establish classes within the camp that can cater for Advanced Level seems to be a failure by the government to comply with provisions of Article 3(e).

Article 22 of the CRC and Article 23 of the ACRWC

These articles address the rights of child refugees and asylum-seekers to appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance. By not providing adequate support to refugee girls living in urban areas, the Zimbabwean government does not fully comply with provisions of the above treaties, which it has ratified.

The Human Right to Freedom of Movement

Section 12 (2) of the Refugees Act empowers the Minister of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare to designate places in Zimbabwe within which refugees shall live. This section is not in line with provisions of Article 26 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, which Zimbabwe has ratified and domesticated. Article 26 of the Convention provides for refugees' right to choose their place of residence in the country of asylum. The Section does not comply with Section 22 of the **Constitution of Zimbabwe**, which provides for freedom to move freely throughout Zimbabwe and to reside in any part of the country as well as immunity from expulsion from Zimbabwe.

Although Section 22 of the Constitution protects the right to freedom of movement, refugees living in Tongogara camp are deprived of their freedom of movement because whenever they want to go to town, they have to request authority from the camp Administrator. In addition, they must reside in the camp in order to access assistance such as free education and food allocations from UNHCR or the Department of Social Services. This implies that refugees' right to freedom of movement is limited. This Section does not comply with the provisions of Article 13(1) of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) that recognizes the right to freedom of movement.

Article 11 (4) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

The provisions of Section 12(2) of Zimbabwe's Refugees Act do not comply with the provisions of Article 11(4) of the ACRWC. Article 11 (4) of the ACRWC provides that:

“States Parties to the present Charter shall respect the rights and duties of parents, and where applicable, of legal guardians to choose for their children's school, other than those established by public authorities, which conform to such minimum standards may be approved by the State, to ensure the religious and moral education of the child in a manner with the evolving capacities of the child”.

In this set-up, parents of refugee children in Tongogara do not have a choice of schools, other than those established by public authorities; this means that girl refugees cannot attend other schools apart from those in the camp. For those for those attending tertiary level education and vocational training, both the camp's confinement policy and the limited number of scholarships challenge the provisions of Article 11(c), (d) and (e) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. This is because Tongogara camp only provides for free education up to Form 4.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Article 10(d), (e) and (h) of the CEDAW provide for appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure them equal rights to access education as well as reduction of female student drop-out rates. The provisions of this Article of the CEDAW have been seriously challenged by the encampment policy at Tongogara Camp in that, women living in the Camp are not afforded the same opportunities to access the training that is offered in towns (such as Chipinge and Mutare) due to their commitment to performing household chores, family responsibilities, and the lack of sufficient information about the institutions where they are supposed to register for training. Women do not have the money to secure accommodation if they travel to towns and stay there until they secure a place to study. This results in big challenges for women and girls living in Tongogara camp, as they cannot easily go into town to search for better schools.

The provisions of Section 12(2) of the Refugees Act are a contributory factor to the increasing number of female student dropout rates. Women and girls are discouraged from pursuing or undertaking formal education or training because of the encampment policy. Furthermore, due to the policy, refugee women and girls living in urban areas are automatically disqualified from applying for scholarships. For example, refugee girls in Form 5 and 6 are supposed to go to boarding school. The funds allocated to them is insufficient, therefore, a limited number of girls benefit from the scholarships. In addition, there is no

awareness to promote the right to education for refugee women and girls are not included in the program.

Article 11 of the ACRWC and Article 28 of the CRC both acknowledge the right to free primary and secondary school education. This does not apply to refugee girls living in urban areas, where their parents have to pay for schools. All the officials responsible for the education for refugees confirmed this as they stated that education is free in the camp.

Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights acknowledges the right to adequate housing. It says that:

“The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing, and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.”

As highlighted in the background information on the Tongogara refugee camp, the living conditions are not conducive for a good education. The situation in the camp is not favourable for a refugee girl child’s learning. This is the reason why some parents decide to move into town and withdraw their children from schools in the camp. Once in urban areas, where education is not free, and because the UNHCR does not support primary and secondary education for refugees living in town, some of these parents have difficulties in paying for their children school fees, thus forcing the girl child to drop-out of school.

Article 10(a) of the CEDAW

The Zimbabwe government has partially complied with the provisions of this Article in that women refugees are subject to the same conditions as male refugees when they access vocational training or any other professional education.

However, provisions of Article 10(d), (e) and (h) of the CEDAW have been seriously challenged by the encampment policy: women living in the Tongogara camp are not afforded

the same opportunities to access training that are offered in the town due to house chores, family responsibilities and their ignorance of institutions at which they are supposed to register for training. Women are discouraged from taking up vocational training in town because they do not have money for bus fares neither do they have cash for their accommodation and other expenses whilst in town.

The provisions of Section 12(2) of the Refugees Act contribute to the increase in the number of female student drop-outs. Women and girls are discouraged from pursuing or undertaking formal education or training because of this policy.

Article 11 of the ACRWC and Article 28 of the CRC provides for free primary and secondary school education. This, however, does not apply to parents living in urban areas where schools are not free. The provisions of Article 11(c), (d) and (e) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child are being challenged by the confinement policy and the limited number of scholarships for those attending tertiary and vocational training in that in the Tongogara camp, only Form 4 is catered for. Refugee girls in Form 5 and 6 are supposed to go to boarding school. There are, however, no funds for them.

Article 11 of the ACRWC and Article 28 of the CRC recognize the right to free primary and secondary school education. The **Millennium Development Goals** reads as follows:

“Goal 2 of the MDG: Achieving Universal primary education by 2015 and
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women.”

Target 3A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015. This target places emphasis on the ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Goal 3 of the MDG: Promote gender equality and empower women

Poverty

The eradication of extreme poverty was the first Millennium Development Goal, as set by 179 United Nations Member States in 2000.

Continued focus on girls' education is required to reach the Education for All (EFA) goal of "eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2015."

As stated by Perlman, J, all local and international actors must ensure that all individuals have access to quality and appropriate education opportunities. Quality and appropriate education in emergencies can provide a safe, protective environment, so that learners are able to improve not only their cognitive skills, but also prevent a cycle of violence. Quality and appropriate education includes a multitude of elements, including: (1) a safe learning environment; (2) competent and well-trained teachers who are knowledgeable in the subject matter; (3) adequate materials for teaching and learning; (4) participatory methods of instruction and (5) reasonable class sizes. Curricula should be relevant to the present and anticipated future needs of the learners, including information on peace education, civic education, mine awareness, HIV/AIDS, human rights, and the environment. Supplementary life skills education should be available for children who are not in school, their parents, the elderly and marginalized groups. (WCRWC: undated, p 4)

The findings of the research revealed that the quality education provided in Tongogara as well as in the rest of the country is poor. Officials dealing with education of refugees confirmed this. It was further supported by the testimony of Mr. Chaba' testimony confirmed this as he said:

"In Tongogara, when you call a child and give him a book in English to read, he cannot because they are not properly taught."

In order to meet the Millennium Development Goals, the international community must prioritize quality education for refugees in the following ways:

Perlman, J. stated that: All local and international actors must ensure access to education, especially for girls. Girls' education is the best single investment a country can make. Girls' school attendance improves their chances of breaking the cycle of poverty and becoming mothers who raise healthier children and send their own children boys and girls to school. To reach the education and gender equality goals, countries must enroll all school-age children and keep them in school. Education providers must assess the particular needs of vulnerable groups with special needs, such as the disabled, adolescent girls, children associated with fighting forces, teenage mothers, etc., to ensure that they benefit from education opportunities. Educational interventions should focus not only on providing formal and non-formal educational services, but also on addressing the obstacles, such as discrimination, school fees, and language barriers, that exclude certain groups. (WCRWC, undated)

Refugee girls attending Tongogara Sabi Primary school in the camp are taught in Shona, which is not their mother tongue; hence, they are not given the same opportunities as nationals. This constitutes non-compliance by the government to the provisions of Article 22 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and to the Provisions of Articles 13.3.

In line with the Millennium Development Goals, UNHCR has continued to promote equal access to education for refugee girls. Some country operations have put in place special initiatives for retaining girls in school, as the number of dropouts after the first years of schooling is still high. Several projects were funded in 2004 to increase girls' enrolment and retention in selected countries where the proportion of girls in school is still low. These projects considered the root causes of the problems of enrolment and retention of girls through a community-based approach, including by addressing the issue of unaccompanied and separated girls, who are at higher risk of dropping out owing to the burden of domestic responsibilities, early marriage, and cultural beliefs. (United Nations General Assembly, 2005: 11).

From the above reading, we can safely say that refugee women and girls in urban areas are not given the same chances as those in Tongogara in order to attend school or vocational training. Furthermore, incentives for poor children to attend school, such as providing them

with a daily meal, should be put in place. Such strategies are grounded in fulfilling basic human rights; hungry children have a human right to food to facilitate their education.

In relation to Goal 1, the study has shown that even in Tongogara camp, refugee girls are failing to attend schooling because of hunger. Ms. Chaba told the researcher that:

“At times children come back home very hungry and tired because they did not have proper breakfast in the morning”.

She further explained that the decreasing food allocation by the UNHCR exacerbates and affects children’s learning.

Article 14 of the **Southern Africa Development Community** has provisions in relation to Gender Equality in Education:

“States Parties shall, by 2015, enact laws that promote equal access to and retention in primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational, and non-formal education in accordance with the Protocol on Education and Training and the Millennium Development Goals.”

Article 11.1(b) provides that:

“States Parties shall adopt laws, policies and programmes to ensure the development and protection of the girl child by: ensuring that girls have equal access to education and health care, and are not subjected to any treatment which causes them to develop a negative self-image;”

The challenges facing a refugee girl child in Tongogara and urban areas do not allow them to achieve the Millennium Development Goal, neither do they encourage them to remain in school. See also Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (Art. 13) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Both treaties recognize that every child has a human right to education and that primary education should be compulsory and free. States must give primary education an immediate priority and ensure it is provided on a non-discriminatory basis. (United Nations, MDGs, 2008: 23).

5.3 Analysis of the Legal structures

5.3.1 Analysis of provisions of Section 12 (2) of the Refugees Act

This Section will offer an analysis of the implications of this part of the Act on the educational opportunities for refugee women and girls. Although the intention of this section is to make it easier to assist the refugee population, it has created many obstacles that hinder women and girls' education.

Because of the harsh living conditions in Tongogara some refugees choose to settle in urban areas. This causes them not to be qualified for free educational assistance since the educational policy for refugees requires that refugees who are applying for scholarships must reside in Tongogara camp.

Refugee girls living in urban areas do not have same access to educational opportunities as compared to those in Tongogara; as a result many of them dropout of school. Educational services do not address the girl-child's access to and retention in school for those living in the cities. Subsequently, those girls become vulnerable to all form of exploitation and abuses as they are struggling to make a living. This is the reason why the much-needed education will help refugee women and girls to be free from exploitation, all forms of abuses; they will be able to acquire a decent job and remove themselves from poverty.

5.3.2 Analysis of the Education Act

It is noted that sections 4 and 5 are consistent with the CRC, which Zimbabwe ratified in 1990 by stating that:

- “1. No child shall be denied access to education through any acts of discrimination or refusal for admission to any school.
2. It is the intention of Zimbabwe that primary education be compulsory for every child of school going age.

3. Children are entitled to enroll at schools nearest to where they are ordinarily resident.”

A closer look at Section 6 of the Act reveals that although the Act intends to make education a fundamental right for every child, it is not in line with the spirit of compulsory and free learning as provided in the CRC. Furthermore, the Education Act does not put any emphasis on the education for a **girl** child; it is not gender sensitive. Education in Zimbabwe is neither free nor compulsory, resulting on placing the burden on the parents who are responsible for the payment of school fees.

At the time of conducting this research, parents in Tongogara camp were still concerned about the fact that teachers would request incentives from them. Mr. Teddy Binene and Mrs. Chaba confirmed this as they stated that their daughters stopped going to school because they did not have any groceries to give to the teachers. They explained that teachers would ask each child to bring a bottle of cooking oil as a form of payment. Those who did not comply with the request, were sent back home, resulting in some girls losing interest in schooling. In the case of Mr. Binene, the father of three school going girls, it was difficult to meet the request because of the inadequate food allocation. This is what he had to say in connection with the teachers’ request:

“If I had to give three bottles of cooking oil in order for all my three girls to be able to attend school, it means that I will not have anything to use for my family.”

The analysis of the provisions of Section 4 and Section 5 of the Education Act reveals that the Act is not gender sensitive. If there were gender requirements focusing on education for girls and if education were free and compulsory, refugee girls living in urban areas with their parents would have had access to education. They would have had a choice to enroll free at any school near their place of residence, anywhere in the country.

5.3.3 Analysis of the UNHCR Guidelines on Education and Training of Refugees

It is important to note that the aim of this analysis is to reveal the implication of the lack of gender provisions relating to education for refugee women and girls. The “UNHCR Guidelines on Education and Training of Refugees”² only take into account: age, financial need, and refugee status for one to be eligible for scholarships. When referring to ‘refugee status’, it means that a person must be of concern to the UNHCR under the mandate of the Office. It therefore follows that a refugee girl whose parents are asylum seekers does not qualify.

The Guidelines provide for informal training projects that can be designed to meet the specific needs of a refugee group. In the Tongogara Camp, for instance, there is a need to diversify the type of vocational training in order to cater for women and girls who are not interested in horticulture and sewing. In this respect the following section of the Guidelines is helpful:

“Certain sub-groups of refugees often face difficulties in achieving self-support which appropriate training may help resolve. Efforts should be made to: identify the refugees who will benefit most from training and arrange that training projects are accessible to them (e.g. organize childcare for women who are heads of families).”

² “Overview Guidelines on Education for Refugees” is an unpublished document that UNHCR, the Department of Social Services and the JRS use in dealing with refugees’ education.

Unfortunately, due to the family responsibilities, refugee women still have difficulties in pursuing their education. Mrs. Mukwindi and Mrs. Mutukwa from the Jesuit Refugee Services confirmed this as they said that:

“Because of responsibilities, women are concerned about who will take care of their children when they attend a vocational training in town.”

To meet the Millennium Development Goals and the provisions of the CEDAW as well as those included in various international and regional instruments on education for women and girls, the UNHCR with its partners should ensure those refugee women and girls enjoy equal access with refugee men to education.

A critical evaluation of the provisions of these Guidelines reveals that there are no gender provisions relating to the education of refugee women and girls. Officials interviewed admitted that no campaign had been held so far to promote education for refugee women and girls. The main requirement for any refugee to benefit from free education is to be resident in Tongogara. This condition is stipulated by the government in its camp confinement policy and its obstacle for refugee children is that it discriminates against refugee girls who live outside the camp in urban areas.

CHAPTER SIX: RECOMMENDATIONS AND AREA TO BE PURSUED

6.1 Recommendations

One of the mandates of the UNHCR is to promote the education of youths. UNHCR policy states that:

“In all actions taken concerning refugee children, the human rights of the child, in particular his or her best interest, are to be given primary consideration”. UN General Assembly, (2005:7)

As stated by Sesnan, B. there is a need to stress that learning is a life-long process in order to counter the perception that a young refugee’s hope for a better future ends with the formal education he/she receives: they need to realize they can independently explore many diverse paths to enhanced knowledge and skills. Deliver training, wherever possible, to younger women and girls in their communities: men are much more likely to be able to access centre-based training that may take them away from home for considerable periods of time. Sesnan, B. et. Al. (undated: 34).

This means that the government, the UNHCR and various donors should make available to refugee women and girls vocational training that gives them hope; not only sewing (which is presently offered in Tongogara Refugee Camp) but also other neutral vocational training such as bakery and soap making among other forms of training. It is important to note that the current vocational training in Tongogara reinforces traditional gender roles that impose restraints on livelihood opportunities.

It is my recommendation that various stakeholders involved in the education and training of refugee women and girls diversify their training options. In order to be able to deliver adequate training and education, to refugees in general and refugee women and girls in particular, teachers in Tongogara must be particularly sensitive to issues related to refugee women and girls.

Quality education must be provided, and it must be appropriate to the refugee community's needs. It must include teacher training, appropriate content, and community involvement in school management. Quality education must support positive community values, and it must address additional psychological, public health, and security concerns that arise out of conflict. The use of a wide range of information technologies such as radio, tape recorders, CDs and computers: in Tanzania and Pakistan the Foundation for the Refugee Education Trust (RET) has provided computers to give teenagers Internet access to transcend the borders imposed by poverty and isolation. Sommers, M. (2003: 17)

In this context, the use of the internet will serve as a mode of communication with the external world as there is no Post Office in the camp. Therefore, I recommended that the use of a solar panel be implemented in Tongogara camp for this project to operate without interruption when there is power cut. This will also help in saving fuel used for the generator.

Given that there is serious lack of awareness campaign on the importance of education for refugee women and girls, an extensive sensitization on the matter is indispensable. All stakeholders involved in the training of refugees, teachers and the refugee community at large should take part in this campaign. An intensive awareness campaign on basic education, vocational training as well as life skills including human rights of women will encourage refugees in general and those from the DRC particularly, to change their attitudes vis a vis the educational opportunities available to them.

I believe that promoting the education of refugee women and girls in the Tongogara camp and within the DRC refugee community in particular will help decrease the number of drop-out student refugee girls. It will further help in addressing a number of problems that refugee women and girls are facing such as poverty, early marriage, and early pregnancy. Education will empower women and girls economically as it will provide them life skills. As stated by Dale Buscher, we know that providing economic opportunities can be an effective means of protecting women from gender-based violence and exploitation. We know that when women

earn money it is more likely to be spent on the health, education, and nutrition of their children. Buscher. D, (2009:1)

Mr. Mabuto the Education Officer confirmed that an extensive awareness campaign to change the mind set and the attitudes of reluctant parents is imperative. He said that there was a need to tell these parents that education is in the best interest of the child. Parents should motivate their children in general and the girl child in particular to attend school whilst they are in Zimbabwe awaiting resettlement. He further added that a certificate acquired locally would help refugee girls' progress once overseas rather than starting school from scratch. Mr. Mungano, the Deputy Headmaster suggested that Swahili and French languages be incorporated in order to help refugee children to assimilate easily.

Donor funding specifically designed for education for refugee women and girls should be increased. Greater investment should be made into expanding efforts to ensure the right to education for girls, children with disabilities, and children from ethnic or religious minority groups and to increasing the availability of education for adolescents, including post primary education, vocational and skills training, and life skills education.

Due to their heightened vulnerability, it is generally accepted that refugee children require an increased level of protection and assistance in order to find durable solutions for their particularly tragic situation. (ACPF, 2007:96). In that regard, I recommend that the section 12(2) of the Refugees Act be amended to give refugees the choice whether to reside in the camp or in urban areas. This will facilitate refugee women in their application process for scholarships; it will help refugee girls living in urban areas to qualify automatically for scholarships.

To meet the needs of refugee girls and women, the Education Act should be amended to conform incorporate Articles 28 and 29 of the CRC and in Article 11 of the African Charter (ACRWC) [i.e., so as to, e.g., make to make primary education free and compulsory]. This will assist Zimbabwe in its efforts to reach the MDGs as stated by ACFP which are concerned about achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education. This is indeed

possible since the UNESCO report states that Kenya has achieved this goal. Botswana is likely to achieve it by 2015, while all the other countries including Zimbabwe, which are involved in this review, are unlikely to achieve gender parity in education by 2015. (ACFP, 2007:62).

Realizing that girl refugees in the urban areas and those unaccompanied are especially prone to all forms of sexual abuses, due to inaccessibility to scholarships, it is recommended that the educational policy on education for refugees be amended to suit the needs of those who are particularly vulnerable. Unaccompanied refugee girls for instance should be given special attention in order to provide free education for them and prevent them from becoming vulnerable to abuses and exploitation.

As stated by Perlman. J, educational interventions should focus not only on providing formal and non-formal educational services, but also on addressing the obstacles, such as discrimination, school fees, and language barriers, that exclude certain groups. (WCRWC, 2009:4).

In order to promote women's and girls' right to formal and non-formal education, UNHCR, together with national and international partners should carry out the following activities: Advocate with States and education authorities for the fulfillment of national laws and international commitments, such as the CRC, which promote equal access to quality education for girls and boys regardless of their status, and access to learning opportunities for women and adolescent mothers. (UNHCR, 2006: 105)

6.2 Areas to be pursued

In case of limited scholarships, what other educational opportunities can be availed to refugee women and girls living in Tongogara?

Are there any prospects for the education for refugee girls living in the city? Can the encampment policy be amended to suit the educational needs of refugee girls living in urban settlements?

Refugee girls living in the urban area are not considered for scholarships, yet most of the International Human Rights Instruments on the rights of the child promote the right to education for children in general and for a girl child in particular. The Zimbabwean government and all the Non-governmental Organizations responsible for the education of refugees need to form a discussion group or panel to find ways of assisting refugee girls in urban areas. This will decrease the number of refugee girls in the streets, it will also protect refugee women and girls from abuses and exploitation. It will further empower them and equip them with life skills necessary for the improvement of their living conditions. The aim of this panel/group's discussions should be to increase the sharing of lessons learned and future collaboration of individuals and agencies working with refugees and displaced people. Ideally, the panel will be a mix of academics, practitioners, policy makers, government representatives and forced migrants.

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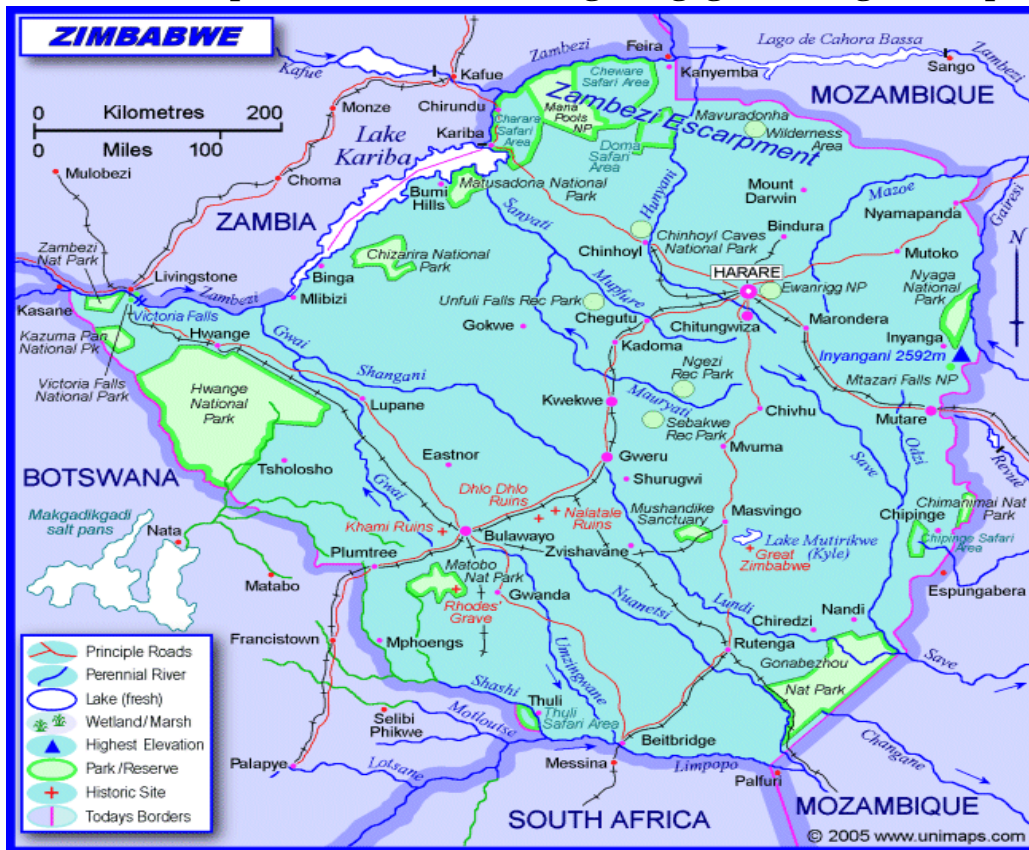
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APPENDIX 1: Questionnaire

1. Most women and girls complained about the school location in Tongogara Refugee Camp. They said that the school is situated in the bush and it is not safe for young girls to pass through the bush in order to attend school. (Comment).
2. Lack of discipline in school at Tongogara was further raised. Refugee women and girls are complaining about the credibility of the school in Tongogara, stating that: “schools are not serious”. For example, students can walk out of the class during lessons. (Comment).
3. What is the UNHCR policy on education for refugee women and girls?
4. Is the implementation of the policy effective?
5. Is the educational policy on education for women and girls adequate? Does it address their actual needs?
6. Primary education is mandatory; some Congolese refugee girls still have difficulties in accessing education? Why and is the UNHCR aware of that?
7. What category of refugee does UNHCR sponsor? Both Urban and the ones living in Tongogara?
8. Statistics of refugee women and girls (refugee women in general and Congolese in particular) sponsored by UNHCR: those living in Tongogara and those in urban settlement.
9. How many did complete their studies? How many dropped-out of school? Any prospect of being sponsored from primary to tertiary education?
10. What are the Criteria of selection: are they based on first come – first served principle?
11. How does UNHCR reconcile the above principle with the prospect for refugee women and girls to complete their studies/ training?
12. Sustainability of scholarships: are they always available for refugee women and girls? Currently, is the UNHCR able to cater for all refugee women and girls with regard to education?
13. Are schools gender-friendly in Tongogara? Do they promote education for refugee girls and training for women?
14. May you please assess the quality of education in Tongogara Refugee Camp.

APPENDIX 2: Maps of Zimbabwe showing Tongogara Refugee Camp



Tongogara Camp located at 60 kilometers after Chipinge town.

