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AHMR is an interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal created to encourage and facilitate the study of all aspects of human mobility in Africa, including socio-economic, political, legal, developmental, educational and cultural aspects.
Through the publication of original research, policy discussions and evidence-based research papers, AHMR provides a comprehensive forum devoted exclusively to the analysis of current migration trends, migration patterns and some of the most important migration-related issues.

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Editorial

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We are delighted to announce the release of the second issue of 2024 of the African Human Mobility Review (AHMR). This issue features current, high-quality, and original research, including a book review and articles focusing on various aspects of human mobility in Africa. AHMR benefits from the expertise of a skilled editorial board, a global network of scholars, and an interdisciplinary approach, ensuring contributions that support evidence-based policymaking.

We would like to extend our gratitude to all contributors, authors, the editorial board, the publisher, and anonymous reviewers, who have supported the journal. Our goal is to continually enhance the journal's quality and achieve new milestones, positioning it more prominently within the international scientific community. This issue includes a book review and four articles, all promoting original research and policy discussions, while providing a comprehensive forum for examining contemporary trends, migration patterns, and key migration-related issues in Africa.

The first section of this issue is a critical and academic appraisal by Daniel Tevera of a book entitled "Lifeworlds in Crisis: Making Refugees in the Chad–Sudan Borderlands," authored by Andrea Behrends. The reviewer indicates that the book is divided into three parts. Part I, organized around the themes of displacement and emplacement, provides an exposition of how the war had shaken many lives, with some families losing almost everything and recovering very little. Part II focuses on the refugee camps and the everyday realities of people living in and around the camps in the borderlands. Part III provides a close analysis of the Chadian government's intricate categorizations of the borderlands, such as delineating security zones and allocating resources. Tevera comments on the author's discussion of the nuanced strategies that households and communities in the borderlands employ to navigate everyday situations of severe crisis and uncertainty. Furthermore, the reviewer notes the author's detailed examination of the interventions of international, military, and non-governmental organizations that have reshaped the social landscapes of the borderlands. Tevera further indicates that the book is a richly textured discussion of refugee precarity and the permeability of borders in the Chad–Sudan borderlands.

The first article by Franzisca Zanker is entitled "'When There Is No Migration, the Whole Region Has a Problem': The Political Priorities of Migration Policies in West Africa." The paper is based on over 130 interviews with policymakers,

politicians, civil society activists, and academic experts in Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and The Gambia in 2019. It adds to the literature on the agency of migration states in the Global South. The study's findings revealed that the lack of prior political attention to migration governance becomes most evident when we consider that in Nigeria, Niger, The Gambia, and Senegal a National Migration Policy (NMP) was only developed and introduced following external funding for these schemes from the European Union (EU) and their member states. The juxtaposition of the lack of policy implementation and an everyday lived reality of mobility comes across clearly, considering the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) framework. Addressing the political priorities of migration policies in West Africa is crucial.

The second article by Gracsious Maviza and Divane Nzima is entitled "Dynamics of Protection in a Shrinking Economy: A Peak into Zimbabwe's Refugee Regime." The methodological approach employed in this research is qualitative research based on 12 in-depth interviews with key informants to explore how the prolonged socio-economic crisis has impacted the state's ability to provide social protection to refugees in Zimbabwe. The author argues that although the refugee regime in Zimbabwe mandates the state to provide protection services to refugees, the macroeconomic reality is the major constraining factor. The author further indicates that even though the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its partners strive to offer protection, they often become overwhelmed by the extensive demands involved in providing housing, improving livelihoods, ensuring food security, and delivering water, sanitation services, and public health systems. The findings of this research uncover that socio-economic challenges in a shrinking economy affect the protection outcomes of refugees, regardless of the presence of a robust refugee regime in the country.

The third article by Aklilu Asha and Thanyani Madzivhandila is entitled "Does Climate Change Transfer Poverty from Rural to Urban Areas? Implications for a Regional Sub-Saharan Research Agenda." The research is based on an extensive review of existing literature using qualitative document analysis. The purpose of this article is to examine the role of climate change on rural-urban migration, which ultimately contributes toward the increase in urban poverty. Using a thorough literature review, the authors contend that the impacts of climate change are widespread, affecting agriculture, water resources, and biodiversity, and disproportionately burden vulnerable communities. Addressing climate change requires urgent action, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions, transitioning to renewable energy, and implementing sustainable practices. Overall, this paper provides a novel concept on the implications for a research agenda in the context of sub-Saharan Africa towards sustainable ways to respond to the challenges of climate-induced migration, urbanization, and poverty.

The fourth article by Learnmore Mvundura is entitled "Institutionalizing Anti-Migrant Discourse in Public Healthcare: An analysis of Medical Xenophobia against

Zimbabwean Migrant Women in Johannesburg." The research broadly focuses on how Zimbabwean migrant women navigate maternal health inequities in South Africa. The narratives are from 13 Zimbabwean migrant women who have been in the country from as early as 2008. The paper focuses on the utterances and practices that the participants attribute to nurses and frontline staff in their interactions in healthcare facilities, drawing parallels with the anti-migrant discourse that populates certain platforms outside the healthcare facilities, especially in the conventional media, political discourse, and narratives from other anti-migrant platforms in the community and on social media platforms. The result of this study concludes that the practices that constitute medical xenophobia in the public healthcare system are rearticulations and restaging of the anti-migrant discourse that has been popularized by the media, politicians, and certain anti-migrant groupings in the community.

Finally, I encourage more researchers, academics, and students to join us in exploring new and impactful research areas with significant social and practical applications across various disciplines. I also hope they will bring original and substantial research ideas to this journal.

Scalabrini Network

SIHMA is part of the **Scalabrini International Migration Network** (SIMN), and joins an existing **Network of Scalabrini Study Centres** around the globe:

CSER (Centro Studi Emigrazione Roma), established in 1964 in Rome (Italy)
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Journal: Migrations Société
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CMS (Center for Migration Studies of New York), established in 1969 in New York (USA)
Journal: International Migration Review (IMR)
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www.cmsny.org

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Book review

Behrends, Andrea, 2024

Lifeworlds in Crisis: Making Refugees in the Chad–Sudan Borderlands

London: C. Hurst & Company, 307 pages
ISBN: 9781911723226

Lifeworlds in Crisis: Making Refugees in the Chad–Sudan Borderlands is an engaging book that addresses the gap in the literature on refugee precarity in the Chad–Sudan borderlands. The book pursues an intersectional approach to examine crises and gendered forms of migration and unpack the complex web of cross-border activities and the multifaceted experiences of refugees in the Chad–Sudan borderlands. Andrea Behrends engages with critical questions about borderland migration regimes and civil society responses to crises and precarious livelihoods. She provides a compelling account of the contexts and conditions of lifeworlds in crisis that illustrates how crises profoundly reshape refugees' social and spatial worlds.

Behrends discusses the nuanced strategies that households and communities in the borderlands employ to navigate everyday situations of severe crisis and uncertainty. Also, she examines the interventions of international, military, and non-governmental organizations that have reshaped the social landscapes of the borderlands. She assesses livelihoods before, during, and after the Darfur war and discusses how communities struggled to sustain their livelihoods when social and institutional arrangements were disrupted.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I, organized around the themes of displacement and emplacement, provides an exposition of how the war had shaken many lives, with some families losing almost everything and recovering very little. Behrends highlights the resilience of the communities who reacted to violence, displacement, and everyday insecurity in the borderlands following the outbreak of war. Drawing on ethnographic data collected from participants in the study, Behrends expounds on the increased mobility brought about by the 2003 Darfur war, its negative impact on the established modes of subsistence in the borderlands, and the different responses of various communities.

Part II focuses on the refugee camps and the everyday realities of people living in and around the camps in the borderlands. It discusses the tensions and dynamics in the borderlands, which had become an arena that embodied the struggles of displaced refugees engaged in precarious work. Behrends examines the socio-

spatial processes in the Chad–Sudan borderlands by exploring the dynamics that are influenced by the area's socio-spatial features (space-dependent dynamics) and the dynamics that shaped the area's physical-spatial structure (space-forming dynamics). This exploration sheds light on factors that determined whether refugee households returned to their former homes or remained in Chad. Behrends argues that despite the urgency and trauma of war in the Chad–Sudan borderlands, the fabric of daily life, in the form of routines, practices, and social interactions, survived in the face of forced mobility and displacement.

Part III provides a close analysis of the Chadian government's intricate categorizations of the borderlands, such as delineating security zones and allocating resources. Behrends shows how, because of the trauma of war in the Chad–Sudan borderlands, refugee livelihoods became difficult for all displaced people who did not have the capacity to access land, housing, food, work, and healthcare. The crisis described in the book highlights the highly dynamic ways of living in or near war zones.

A compelling feature of the book is the richly textured discussion of refugee precarity and the permeability of borders in the Chad–Sudan borderlands. The book also provides nuanced insights into crises, migration, and migrant legal-status complexities. Behrends frames the Chad–Sudan borderlands as dynamic socio-spatial phenomena that require a critical and socially embedded understanding of the crisis and migration nexus. The author's disentanglement of the socio-spatial processes in the borderlands not only highlights the materiality and permeability of borders but also helps to unpack the crisis and migration nexus. While the book has a shortcoming of limited data on official policies on refugees in the Chad–Sudan borderlands, it nevertheless addresses an important niche on borderlands.

Prof Daniel Tevera, University of the Western Cape, South Africa

"When There Is No Migration, the Whole Region Has a Problem": The Political Priorities of Migration Policies in West Africa

Franzisca Zanker[1]

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Abstract

This paper considers the implications of migration to Europe for West African governments in relation to other forms of politically relevant mobilities. This helps to understand what governments in West Africa prioritize when it comes to migration policy. No doubt, there is an increasing European influence on the migration agenda. However, despite this influence, there are still other West African interests when it comes to migration governance. These are diverse, covering development and humanitarian concerns, and include pro-active diaspora policies, restrictive immigration regimes due to economic protectionism and security concerns, as well as protecting migrants and displaced people. Thus, different countries in the region have varying sets of political priorities, though underlined by a broader unpolitical nature of migration of the everyday. The paper is based on over 130 interviews with policymakers, politicians, civil society activists, and academic experts in Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and The Gambia in 2019. It adds to the literature on the agency of migration states in the Global South.

Keywords: diaspora relations, ECOWAS, internally displaced people, irregular migration, migration states, Nigeria, Niger, refugees, Senegal, The Gambia.

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INTRODUCTION

There has been growing research and policy focus on migration in West Africa. What has traditionally been deliberated on in terms of the predominant circular labor migration and the benefits and pitfalls for development (e.g., Adepoju, 2003, 2011; Awumbila et al., 2017) has increasingly become a discussion on the implications of irregular African migration toward Europe (e.g., Adam et al., 2020; Deridder et al., 2020; Gaibazzi et al., 2017; Mouthaan, 2019).

This change in perspective is tied to an increasing focus in European policymaking on migration in their external policies, notably in West Africa. The first common framework on migration cooperation with so-called "third countries" – outside the European Union (EU) – is from 2005, adapted in 2011 to the Global Approach to Migration and Mobility (GAMM). One of the major outcomes of the GAMM was the possibility of mobility partnerships, which aim to improve direct coordination on migration, including legal pathways but also returns. The EU signed three out of nine such partnerships with African countries, namely Cape Verde (2008), Morocco (2013), and Tunisia (2014). Another format, with less commitment, but to signal a wish to advance cooperation on migration in the long run, was added through the Common Agenda for Migration and Mobility. To date, only two such agreements exist, both in Africa, namely in Nigeria and Ethiopia (both signed in 2015).

From the onset of the so-called "migration crisis" in Europe, the cooperation attempts gathered even more speed. By the summer of 2015, an unexpectedly high number of refugees and other migrants arriving in the EU led to newfound urgency in migration cooperation partnerships with third countries, especially in Africa. According to figures from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 1,032,408 refugees and other migrants arrived via the Mediterranean in 2015, with 3,771 reported as dead or missing (UNHCR, 2021b). By the end of the same year, the very first summit between African and European heads of state dedicated to migration took place in Valetta, Malta. At the summit, an EU Emergency Trust Fund for Stability and Addressing Root Causes of Irregular Migration and Displaced Persons in Africa (EUTF for Africa) was launched. By 2021, when it formally ended, though projects are still running, it was worth nearly €5 billion, funded mostly from EU development funds (88%), in addition to contributions from EU member states (EU, 2020). The EUTF was not renewed after 2020 and has been replaced by the EU Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) (for a critical discussion, see Pope and Weisner, 2023).

Not long after the launch of the EUTF, in 2016, the New Partnership Framework on Migration with Third Countries (NPF) was launched, in which all priority countries, chosen as a starting point for partnerships were in Africa (namely Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal). The NPF aimed to create more tailored approaches through migration compacts, including migration policies addressing areas like aid, trade, energy, and security. Throughout all these policy initiatives, European interest in migration governance centers on regulating migration flows

in the region generally and stopping irregular migration to Europe in particular. This interest is pursued through institutional and legal capacity building on issues such as "smuggling" persons, human trafficking, border control, and (forced) return cooperation. All these interests were supported by the EUTF projects that seek to address the "root causes" of migration, including lack of employment and conflict.

In West Africa, migration has both historically and post-independently been of vital importance to the region for regional development – for example, both Nigeria and Senegal have enshrined the right to migrate in their constitutions. Yet, the topic has also previously received little political attention, perhaps with the exception of periods of mass expulsions of immigrants from the region up to the 1980s, for example, in Nigeria and Ghana (Okyerefo and Setrana, 2018). This is because there is an everyday lived reality of migration that does not necessitate further policy development on migration governance (Arhin-Sam et al., 2022). Yet, as will be further explored below, the region has not been left untouched by the heightened attention and funds for migration policy development. In recent years, much has been written about the effects of European externalization policies in West Africa (Cham and Adam, 2021; Frowd, 2020; Jegen, 2023; Mouthaan, 2019; Opi, 2021; Strange and Oliveira Martins, 2019; Vives, 2017). Yet, what about other forms of migration and mobility in the region? What happens to West African policy interests in migration *despite* external influence from a very powerful actor?

A small but growing body of research has started pointing to the agentic role of Global South states in migration governance (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, 2020; Gazzotti et al., 2023; Zanker, 2023). The literature argues that despite the constraints and external influence from more powerful actors, like the EU, states are still managing to carve out their own responses – be it creatively or otherwise (El Qadim, 2014; Kandilige et al., 2023; Zanker and Altrogge, 2022). More than mere "passive recipients" of external policies, West African states show their domestic interests in pursuing certain migration policies – including the importance of remittances (e.g., Mouthaan, 2019), domestic legitimacy (Altrogge and Zanker, 2019), and how domestic interests interact with external interests (Adam et al., 2020; Frowd, 2020). Others have focused more on the micro-level adaptation to externalization responses (Deridder et al., 2020). What these critical works have in common is that they largely focus on the type of migration that is relevant for European stakeholders: irregular migration to Europe. While the amount of time, effort, and money that has gone into this objective no doubt has a political effect for countries in West Africa, there are also other forms of migration that play a role in the region. This includes involving diaspora abroad, which plays a significant role for the development of the countries in question, not least through their financial remittances (addressed by some; see, Adam et al., 2020; Mouthaan, 2019). Notwithstanding such diaspora interest, the current body of work does not engage with other forms of migration, such as the political dynamics of regional mobility (Okyerefo and Setrana, 2018) or the significant populations of displaced people. As of April 2024, there are 13.7

million forcibly displaced and stateless persons in West and Central Africa, including 8 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) (UNHCR, 2024). This paper seeks to consider the place of migration to Europe for West African governments in relation to other forms of politically relevant mobilities. Taking 2019 as a snapshot year for migration governance in the region (when the EU interest was at a peak and a first wave of EUTF projects were being implemented), the paper highlights how other forms of migration policymaking were also important for gaining political capital for countries in the region. In particular, this includes diaspora relations (top priority in Nigeria and Senegal) as well as humanitarian protection of displaced persons, which was second and third political priority in Niger and Nigeria, respectively. By showing the political capital related to migration policies varied, even in this year of massive EU interest in irregular migration, showcases the agency of Global South states in prioritizing their own interests when it comes to migration policymaking and that mobility speaks to a whole range of interests that go far beyond those making their way to Europe.

In the first part, the paper introduces the influence of the European agenda on migration, to explain the high prioritization of irregular migration for many countries. The second part demonstrates that despite this influence, there are still West African interests when it comes to migration governance, including those related to development interests as well as protecting displaced people. The interests are not straightforward and go in different directions but highlight the importance of other forms of migration. The third section summarizes the different migration policy priorities for 2019 in Niger, Nigeria, The Gambia, and Senegal, highlighting that states consider various interests when looking at migration, which go far beyond irregular migration. A concluding section sums up the overall priorities, as well as notes the overall non-political nature of migration governance in the region.

METHODOLOGY

The paper draws on a research project on the political economy of migration governance in Nigeria, Niger, The Gambia, and Senegal, carried out in 2019. These four countries are all important source and transit countries of migration toward Europe, as well as playing a prominent role in regional migration. Moreover, the fact that the study includes both Anglo- and Francophone contexts as well as countries with varying sizes in population, is an indication of different types of political interests and stakes. They thus provide an interesting snapshot for balancing political priorities.

The project was conducted in 2019 and this is also the time frame for the migration policy priorities under review. At the time, the European interest in trying to influence West African migration policies was at a peak, with many EUTF projects unfolding and intense political activities taking place to develop migration policies in Senegal, The Gambia, and to a lesser degree, in Niger. For the research project, the research team conducted fieldwork in different localities in all four countries:

Niamey, Abuja, Lagos, Benin City, Banjul, Dakar, and Tambacounda (and a small number of interviews in different European cities) and included interviews with 133 policymakers, politicians, civil society activists, and academic experts. The interviews generally asked about migration policies in the country, to understand how European-influenced agenda-setting compares to own interests in migration governance. The research design was participatory and resulted in open-access country case-study reports that were peer reviewed, mostly by experts from the countries themselves. The project team also presented the findings at dissemination events for further feedback and revisions in Abuja, Banjul, Niamey, and Dakar. Furthermore, we discussed our findings with academics and civil society activists from the four participating countries at a workshop in Accra during 2019. The paper draws on insights from these interviews, the reports from the project (Altrogge and Zanker, 2019; Arhin-Sam, 2019; Jegen, 2020a, 2020b), as well as an analysis of policies, reports, and newspaper analysis from the period under review.[2]

Regarding migration policies, this paper acknowledges that a clear delineation between various definitions of movement at best obscures overlapping motivations and consequences and at worst speaks to certain political interests (see, e.g., Erdal and Oeppen, 2017; Mourad and Norman, 2020). However, states label a certain type of movement (and act on it) for a variety of reasons. Even if this does not speak to a clear-cut motivation, legal status, or journey of people on the move, it speaks to a policy agenda. Thus, the paper considers five types of migration policies. First, "irregular migration," depicting policymaking around migration from West Africa to Europe affected by European policy interests. Second, "diaspora relations," which include interests around remittances, "brain drain" and "brain gain" as well as migration-for-development discussions. Third, what I term "ECOWAS immigration," includes interests related to regional labor migration, as well as tensions between migrant communities and political scapegoating in times of economic downturn within the region. Fourth, "displacement" concerns policymaking around internally displaced persons (IDPs). Fifth, "refugee hosting" considers policies related to refugees in the country.

European influence on migration governance in West Africa: "Who pays, commands"

No doubt, the increased interest by the EU and its member states has had a growing influence on migration governance in West Africa (Adam et al., 2020; Arhin-Sam et al., 2022; Jegen, 2023; Kandilige et al., 2023). The paper shows the prioritization of irregular migration policies for African states due to the influence and pressure from the EU.

[2] I have included fieldwork data from Judith Altrogge (Gambia 2017, 2019), Kwaku Arhin-Sam (Nigeria, 2019) and Leonie Jegen (Niger, Senegal in 2019) in this paper, carried out in the framework of two projects under my supervision. These are a pilot study on the political stakes of migration governance in The Gambia (in 2017) and the project "The Political Economy of West African Migration Governance" (WAMIG), which was conducted as part of the Mercator Dialogue on Asylum and Migration (MEDAM) in 2019, funded by the Ministry for Science, Research and the Arts of Baden-Württemberg and the Mercator Foundation, respectively. My thanks to my project team for their hard work and collegiality. Thanks also to the reviewers for comments on earlier versions. All errors remain my own.

The increased European interest and influence on African migration governance have affected the agenda setting in the region, dictating the priorities of migration policies. Increasing development aid for migration-related purposes makes it lucrative for governments to cooperate with the EU and its European interests. Taking the case of Senegal, our interviews showed wide agreement among respondents on competing for leadership in the field of migration governance on the political, institutional and civil society levels. More generally, there is a fragmented institutional landscape in which actors operate with partially overlapping and unclear mandates. This itself may make the determination of the best project partner for external partnerships difficult and has in part contributed to particular initiatives failing in their full implementation (Vives, 2017). It also leads to inter-institutional competition, which includes, for example, the development of the National Migration Policy (NMP) in Senegal. This competition is likely to be partly linked to the funding such development projects bring. One implementing actor commented in an interview: "Everyone wants to lead the projects, but why? Because of resources, it's very simple, it's nothing but a question of resources" (Interview, Dakar, July 2019).[3] In the case of the NMP, a civil servant further noted: "The problem is that when the donor arrives, a competition is created" (Interview, Dakar, July 2019).[4] The funds also affect the agenda of certain policy developments. While diaspora migration is a key interest of Senegalese policymakers, European donors have made irregular migration an increasingly important issue in the Senegalese context. As a result, dealing with irregular migration becomes the priority, to which one interlocutor, a civil society activist, noted, "Who pays, commands," highlighting the continuing asymmetric dependencies between European and African states (Interview, Dakar, July 2019; Jegen and Zanker, 2019; Mouthaan, 2019; Vives, 2017).[5]

The influence of external actors on agenda-setting can further be exemplified by the NMP in Senegal. According to our interviewees, the initiative to elaborate the policy did not come from a high political level but from civil servants. This was done without the initial permission from a higher level, which was only granted once the funding was secured. The formulation of the document took place in the framework of an interministerial committee that was coordinated by the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Cooperation and financed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). This raises questions about the exact (political) ownership of policies elaborated, given that the initiative to draft the policy may not have derived from a political priority but rather a funding possibility (see also, Camara, 2022). This may also explain why political adoption of the policy dragged on, even making EU budgetary support conditional upon the adoption of the policy, has so far proved unsuccessful (a National Strategy to Combat Irregular Migration was passed in 2023). A civil society actor stated that donors also have an impact on the policy

[3] Original : « Chacun veut piloter; mais pourquoi? A cause des ressources [financières], c'est très simple! Ce n'est rien d'autre qu'une question de ressources. » Translation by author.
[4] Original : « Mais le problème est que quand les bailleurs arrivent, une compétition se créée. » Translation by author.
[5] Original : « Qui paie command. » Translation by author.

content, for example, making border control a key issue. It is also notable that once the NMP was technically validated, a "lobbying" process followed to push for the adoption of the policy at the political level. While the political approval of the NMP only passed in late 2023, with no official declarations, the EU commenced funding the implementation of some of the policy's proposals and exerted pressure for its implementation much earlier.

Another illustration of undue influence on the migration agenda comes from Niger, a major country of interest due to its "transit" position to countries like Algeria and Libya, the final places for refugees and other migrants on their way toward Europe. The interest and focus on Niger have resulted in much funding for the country – by 2021, the end-period of the EUTF, there were 15 projects under the EUTF for Africa, amounting to over €272 million in development funds. The focus of many of these projects, as well as related ones on "anti-smuggling," including the 2015 anti-smuggling law, has been widely discussed by a number of scholars (e.g. Frowd, 2020; Jegen, 2020a). Less known is the influence at a broader, more general level of migration policymaking. The EU quickly focused on funding the development of the National Strategy to Counter Irregular Migration, tied to the anti-smuggling law. In a record time of under a year, the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) drafted the strategy. This stands in strong contrast to the NMP. Niger launched its Interministerial Commission on Migration (Comité Interministériel Chargé de l'élaboration du Document de Politique Nationale de Migration – CIM) to develop an NMP already in 2007. For numerous reasons, mainly financial, but also due to a lack of strong leadership, this process was put on hold in 2014. The NMP process was only re-launched in 2017 with financial and technical support from the German development agency GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit). Besides the emphasis placed on specific interests (e.g., anti-smuggling in Niger, to stop persons moving beyond the Nigerien borders), the frameworks also limit the involvement of a wider section of the Nigerien community. Two civil society actors were closely involved in the CIM process, in addition to the national human rights council. The GIZ notes that this civil society involvement resulted in the founding of a Migration, Development, Human Rights network (Réseau Migration–Développement–Droits Humains – REMIDDH) in Niger (GIZ, 2017). A new national policy on migration 2020–2035 was adopted in September 2020. Yet, some interlocutors decried the political nature of inclusion in the consultation framework. Accordingly, only those civil society actors that reinforced a security-focused approach to migration governance were given a space to discuss and contribute to the new migration policy (see also, Jegen, 2023).

In sum, the European agenda influences African policy development, excluding more critical voices that follow different interests. Yet, this Europeanized agenda pushing the interests with regard to irregular migrants to the forefront tells only part of the story.

WEST AFRICAN POLITICAL INTERESTS IN MIGRATION GOVERNANCE

Despite the European influence on West African migration governance, there are also national or regional political interests that come into play when considering migration governance (see also, Adam et al., 2020; Mouthaan, 2019; Zanker, 2023). Unsurprisingly, these are not straightforward interests and often stand in contradiction to each other but highlight that these countries also follow their own interests when it comes to migration policymaking. These interests include, broadly speaking, development interests – that play a role in diaspora and immigration governance – and humanitarian concerns, which primarily affect the protection measures toward refugees and internally displaced people. These are discussed in turn.

Development interests: Diaspora and immigrants

An important interest for African states in relation to migration is linked to remittances. These come from both within the region, where most migration occurs, as well as beyond. Remittances, especially those from abroad, make up a substantial part of local economies. For example, personal remittances made up 15.5% of The Gambia's gross domestic product (GDP), 21.5% of Lesotho's, and 34.4% of South Sudan's in 2019 (World Bank, 2020). Due to this, the African Union (AU) has recognized the diaspora as the sixth "area" of Africa. The significance of remittances is reflected in the efforts at prioritizing diaspora relations in migration governance. For example, remittances to Nigeria continue to exceed official development assistance and foreign direct investment. Nigeria is the largest remittance recipient country in sub-Saharan Africa. By 2018, the country received more than US$ 24.3 billion in official remittances (an increase of $2 billion from 2017), representing 6.1% of Nigeria's GDP (World Bank, 2019).

Considering the huge impact of remittances, it is unsurprising that the Nigerian government's priority clearly lies with diaspora migration policies (Arhin-Sam, 2019). Overall, Nigeria has been active in its migration policy development at least since 2014, including an NMP from 2015, strategies on labor migration and diaspora matters, and a coordinating framework to further reform migration governance. The most pro active policies by far are the diaspora policies, which are far-reaching and include an office assisting the president on diaspora affairs, a senate committee on diaspora matters, a diaspora commission, and strong support for the Nigerians in Diaspora Organization. There are ongoing plans to set up a government-owned money transfer system for Nigerians abroad. As a diaspora representative noted, "Diasporas have a political stake in the affairs of Nigeria" (Interview, Hamburg, February 2019).

This focus on diaspora is clearly prioritized over European interests in migration cooperation with the country. A substantial portion of funding for governing irregular migration in Nigeria comes from development partners and particularly the EU. Migration-related projects funded by the EU and member states in Nigeria have focused for the most part on irregular migration, trafficking, return,

and reintegration. The low interest of the Nigerian government to work on this issue is mirrored by the funds provided. For example, the government reduced the annual funding of the primary agency for combating human trafficking and smuggling (NAPTIP) between 2015 and 2016 (see also, Arhin-Sam, 2019).

In a similar manner, immigration is relevant as a political priority. Regional migration makes up around 80% of emigration from West Africa (Okyerefo and Setrana, 2018). This openness is also linked to a general culture of hospitality in the region. One localized version, summed up under the Wolof term, is *Teranga* (spoken in Senegal and The Gambia), which means a welcoming nature and hospitality (Gasparetti, 2011). As a Senegalese government official noted, "We are a country of *teranga*, it's natural, it's really this policy of openness that we've had since our ancestors" (Interview, Dakar, August 2019).[6] To a degree, the regional mobility is something that just happens and is not politically prioritized, "Immigrant communities in Lagos are very active … but they have no political stakes" (Interview with government official, Lagos, April 2019). However, it is also something that can be celebrated, like a "Senegambia Free Movement Day" that was implemented in The Gambia as "a kind of a celebration on ECOWAS Protocol," according to a government official in The Gambia (Interview, Banjul, May 2019). A Senegalese counterpart noted, "We have no negative fixation on one aspect or another of the migration issue. This project [the planned NPM] is a policy that promotes both emigration and immigration, because the vision is positive by nature" (Interview, Dakar, July 2019).[7]

Despite this – and notwithstanding that regional mobility also adds to the remittances and therefore development potential in the region – immigration is also a topic that provides political capital through exclusion. Economic downturns have historically been met by exclusionary rhetoric toward immigrants as a threat to the local labor market. Migrants are scapegoated for economic and social challenges rather than the government addressing corruption, mismanagement, or other causes for such issues (Akinola, 2018). One of the first supplementary protocols to the Free Movement Protocols from 1979 contained additional stipulations for "illegal immigrants," that is, "any immigrant citizen of the Community who does not fulfill the conditions stipulated in the different protocols." This protocol came at a time when several countries throughout the region were expelling citizens from other Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) countries in response to economic downturns. For example, in the infamous "Ghana must go" campaign in Nigeria in 1983, over two million Ghanaians in Nigeria were affected by mass expulsions (Ikuteyijo and Olayiwola, 2018). This was no unique incident, but expulsions also took place from Ghana (1954 and 1969) and Côte d'Ivoire in 1958 (Tonah et al., 2017). Even today, this exception for "inadmissible immigrants" is applied as a matter

[6] Original « Nous sommes un pays dit de la TERANGA… C'est naturel, c'est vraiment cette politique d'ouverture que nous avons depuis nos ancêtres. » Translation by author.

[7] Original « C'est pour vous dire qu'on n'a pas un point de fixation négative sur un aspect ou autre sur la question migratoire. Ce projet est une politique qui donne de l'intérêt aussi bien à l'émigration qu'à l'immigration parce que la vision étant par nature positive. » Translation by author.

of routine across the region (Hamadou, 2020). One of our interviewees working for an international organization in The Gambia told us, "I think there is a previous misunderstanding of ECOWAS Free Movement Protocol. Just because they have them in place, does not mean that you don't need to check the entry and exit records of people who are moving across borders" (Interview, Serrekunda, April 2019). This highlights that at least for some, the free circulation of movement in the region is also subject to securitization and checks. The security situation, in particular in the Sahel, has also led to an increasing salience of controlling immigration to be able to control terrorist organizations that are active across borders. Similarly, Aly Ngouille Ndiaye, the Senegalese Minister of the Interior, noted in 2019 that security questions necessitate having better information of who is in the country: "By putting this system in place, we will know, as all countries do, who is in our country. Because we don't know right now" (Mine, 2019).[8]

Political capital can be drawn from excluding immigrants and controlling immigration for economic and security reasons. In this regard, immigration in the region, while important for regional development (Okyerefo and Setrana, 2018), is increasingly receiving (negative) political attention. This can be linked to economic protectionism and to securitization; thus, reduced mobility in the region cannot merely be explained by European influence in trying to reduce irregular migration. Beyond remittances and development (as well as a degree of political curtailment of immigration), the protection of migrants and displaced persons is also of political interest in the region.

Protection interests: Humanitarian narratives and hosting displaced persons

There is a widespread humanitarian concern for migrants on the move, and this is often repeated in political statements and speeches. Hosting displaced persons – both IDPs and refugees – does, however, also have political implications.

In 2014, Yahya Jammeh, former president and dictator who brutally ruled The Gambia for over two decades, gave a speech at the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in which he argued that Westerners were racist and inhumane and that they were "deliberately causing boats carrying Black Africans to sink, only to select a few lucky ones to be rescued and sent to concentration camps, called Asylum Seekers' Camps [sic]" (Hultin and Zanker, 2019). Though his own human rights records and protection of Gambian citizens were disastrous, the resonance of his provocative statement continues to this day. The danger of traversing various routes toward Europe has, if anything, worsened (UNHCR, 2021a). In response to an incident off the coast of Mauritania in 2019, current President Barrow said: "To lose sixty young lives at sea is a national tragedy and a matter of grave concern to my government" (Shaban, 2019). Similar sentiments were also expressed by a government representative in The Gambia, who noted in relation to migrants who are returned to The Gambia,

[8] Original : « En mettant en place ce système, nous saurons, comme tous les pays le font, qui est chez nous. » Translation by author.

"[While I accept the] need for deportation, the question is how… some of them … are inhumane. You cannot treat humans like that. It has to follow a process. Give them the dignity to the human being" (Interview, Banjul, May 2019).

The release of news channel CNN's footage of African migrants and refugees being auctioned off in slave markets in Libya in November 2017 marked a major turning point, as outrage unfolded across the continent (Cascais, 2017). Coinciding with the EU–Africa Summit in Abidjan, also in November 2017, the footage revealed the plight of African migrants to many governments. The revelations led Burkina Faso to recall its ambassador to Libya, and Niger to summon the Libyan ambassador for talks. In Senegal, the chargé d'affaires of the Libyan Embassy in Senegal was summoned by the Foreign Minister, "to notify him of the 'profound indignation' of President Sall over the sale of Sub-Saharan African migrants on Libyan soil" (Bodian, 2018: 168). Furthermore, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) began to airlift migrants out of Libya, and countries like Nigeria also repatriated its citizens (Arhin-Sam, 2019; see also, Mouthaan, 2019).

Another example of humanitarian interest is the Nigerien anti-smuggling law of 2015, which tries smuggling of migrants to Libya by further criminalizing the popular transportation business. By many accounts, the law was introduced in response to European pressure and funding (Frowd, 2020; Jegen, 2020a; Molenaar, 2017). But the very same law has also been shrouded in a humanitarian discourse by the Nigerien government, as a measure to *protect migrants*, referring to a tragedy in 2013, when a group of over 90 abandoned migrants died in the desert (Jegen and Zanker, 2019; see also, Lambert, 2020). Thus, although humanitarian concerns are by no means the sole priority, it is a political narrative that was relevant to leaders across the region. A Nigerien government official stated in an interview with us that Niger is "always a country of welcome, where we give hospitality to the people" (Interview, Niamey, March 2019).[9]

Hosting IDPs and refugees is also increasingly relevant in the region. While in 2009 there were 149,000 refugees and 500,000 IDPs, a decade later, the number of refugees had nearly quadrupled to 394,796 and the IDP figures were more than six times higher at 3,155,465 (UNHCR, 2010, 2021c). Refugee rights in the region are strong – they are protected mostly with prima facie recognition due to the 1969 Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Refugee Convention. Nonetheless, refugees and IDPs are not always fully protected. Niger faces a huge humanitarian situation with many IDPs due to the conditions in the Sahel (drought and excessive rain), terrorist conflicts, and thus, according to a Nigerien government official, "We are facing all possible risks; we have opened our borders to displaced populations and all the West African migrants" (Interview, Niamey, March 2019).[10] Given the structural problems the country has to deal with, displacement and stark humanitarian situations have made the problem of displacement a priority for the country (Jegen, 2020a).

[9] Original « Toujours un pays d'accueil où nous donnons l'hospitalité aux gens. » Translation by author.
[10] Original « Nous faisons face à tous les risques possibles ; nous avons ouvert nos frontières aux populations déplacées et à tous les migrants d'Afrique de l'Ouest. » Translation by author.

This scenario notwithstanding, states also politically contest protection measures, which are still considered a political priority, albeit in a different way. In Niger, the recent arrival of more Sudanese refugees has sparked strong contestation. The government and regional authorities view the arrival of Sudanese with suspicion, characterizing them as "criminals," "fighters," and "possible members of armed groups in Libya" (Lambert, 2020; Tubiana et al., 2018). As noted in one of our interviews, "In regard to the Sudanese, the people that come from other countries, maybe their practices are not well seen in the country," which "poses problems of social cohesion" (Interview, International Organization, Niamey, March 2019). The Nigerien government certainly displayed reluctance to protect Sudanese refugees. In 2018, they deported 135 Sudanese asylum seekers back to Libya, which amounted to a breach of the non-refoulement principle (Lambert, 2020). The UNHCR had to lobby the Nigerien government to allow for the registration of Sudanese asylum seekers in the first place and to accept the opening of the humanitarian center outside the city of Agadez, which could host them (ibid). The Nigerien government has demanded the resettlement of Sudanese refugees and more aid to deal with the situation. Some respondents highlighted that a few resettlements took place. Living conditions in the humanitarian center are dire, with a lack of education, healthcare facilities, and security (Reidy, 2019). The unacceptable behavior toward Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers is evident in scapegoating them for potential job losses and causing other immigration-related tensions. They have become a target for exclusion, mainly because they do not come from the region (Jegen, 2020a; Lambert, 2020).

An inverse political interest is seeking to repatriate refugees from another context in order to highlight the strength of the country. For example, the repatriation of Nigerian refugees in Cameroon back home by the Nigerian government is a sign of improved security in Nigeria, even if this comes at the cost of refugee protection. To highlight their own stability, the government has tried several times to repatriate Nigerian refugees within the Lake Chad Basin. It was politically preferable to repatriate Nigerian refugees, bring them into IDP camps, and label them as IDPs to avoid the embarrassment of having refugees abroad. As argued by Whitaker (2017), it is often in the interest of states to label migrants as "migrants" rather than "refugees," since the producing states can avoid political embarrassment and receiving states can avoid providing them with the refuge they seek. However, even in the migrants' home countries, the governance of IDPs can signal certain political interests.

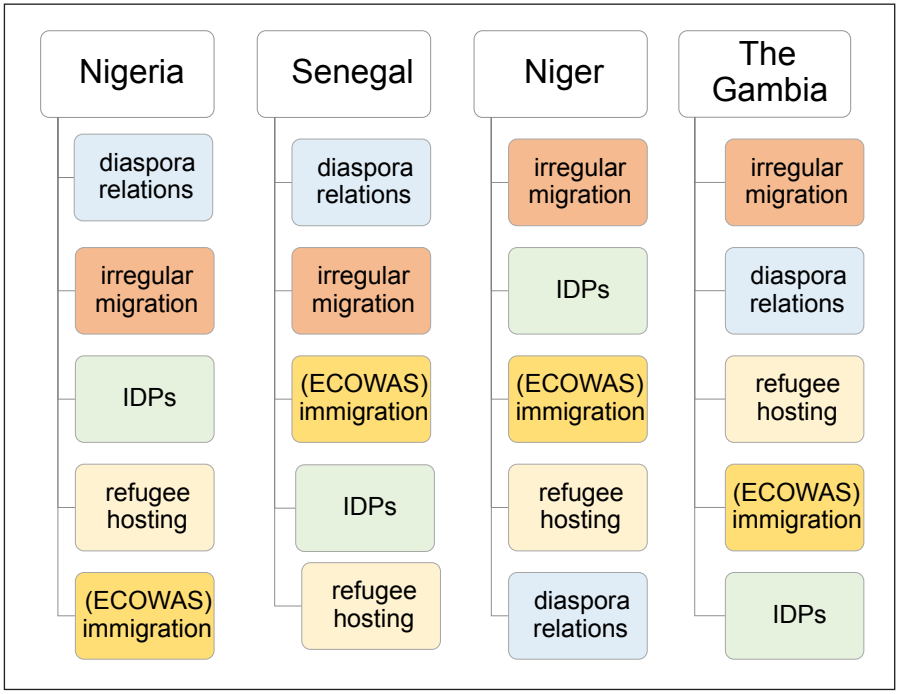
In Nigeria, for example, the IDP situation is of importance due to the personal connection the (now former) President has to the region of displacement. According to one interlocutor working for a research organization, "They [northerners] are his [then President Buhari] people. He understands that context better than the irregular migration in the south, which is in the interest of the EU to stop it" (Interview, Abuja, April 2019). For a policy consultant, this means: "They [the government] are more interested in the IDP issue than in the rising scale of irregular migration" (Interview, Abuja, April 2019). This implies that the President is "spending a lot of political capital

in the north on the plight of the IDPs" (Interview, researcher, Abuja, April 2019). Notably, former President Buhari also politically instrumentalized IDPs to show military strength, especially in the ongoing military operation against the terrorist group Boko Haram (Arhin-Sam, 2019), not least to fulfill his political promises. During the 2015 election, after Goodluck Jonathan's administration had exhausted all means of defeating Boko Haram, the then-presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari, who is also a former military man, campaigned heavily on having what it takes to defeat Boko Haram and stabilize the region. However, after four years and the rising number of IDPs, the situation continues to put political pressure on the government (Carsten and Kingimi, 2018). Considering the rising numbers of IDPs, dealing with IDPs has become a major feat to show military strength. Thus, Buhari declared the northeast region to be in a "post-conflict stabilization phase" in June 2018 (Arhin-Sam, 2019). In the same month, the army asked 2,000 IDPs to return to their home district of Guzamala, adding to the 1,200 IDPs who were also asked to return to the city of Bama in Borno state in April 2018 (Orji, 2018; Urowayini, 2018). Many international actors, including the UN, criticized these desperate political moves, noting the volatile situation of the region in the face of intensified bombings by Boko Haram. This shows that protection interests are diverse and contested, but all the same are a significant political priority often overlooked.

MIGRATION POLICY PRIORITIES

The paper shows what effects external interests from the EU and their member states can have on agenda setting. However, using 2019 as a snapshot, it shows that interests in migration policies are numerous and states have their own interests, and even different priorities. The external push to adopt and implement measures targeting irregular migration toward Europe resulted in "irregular migration" becoming a top priority in Niger and The Gambia in comparison to other mobility-related policy issues; "irregular migration" emerged as the second priority in Nigeria and Senegal (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Migration Policy Priorities in Nigeria, Senegal, Niger and The Gambia



Source: Author's own elaboration

As shown, however, other interests like development and humanitarian concerns also play a role. Diaspora relations are top political priorities in Nigeria and Senegal – at least during the research phase in 2019 – and the second priority in The Gambia.[11] Regional mobility, in what I termed "ECOWAS immigration," was the third priority in Niger and Senegal in 2019, fourth in The Gambia, and last in Nigeria. This highlights that at least in 2019 not much capital was made out of it and shows the non-political nature of mobility. For Niger, displacement was a second priority in the country, unsurprisingly, given the high number of displaced people at the time, and third in Nigeria, for similar reasons and as explained above. On the whole, "refugee hosting" was a relatively low priority for the countries in question.

The order of priorities – based on our research and interviews – shows a rough estimation of how different countries in the region politically prioritize migration governance. It is perhaps no surprise that the smaller countries are seemingly more influenced by external agendas (The Gambia and Niger) and

[11] Since there are very few Nigeriens abroad and the diaspora community is rather small, this was a very low priority for the Nigerien government.

the larger countries prioritize diaspora relations (Senegal and Nigeria). Perhaps it is also telling that regional migration is politically more prominent in the two francophone countries. Regional migration is safeguarded not only through the ECOWAS Free Movement Protocols but the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), comprising the eight states that share the Franc CFA currency to have their own rules on free movement. This may have strengthened the political importance of regional free movement.

CONCLUSION: MIGRATION AS A WAY OF LIFE

The influence on migration priorities has been problematic in many different ways, widely documented in a growing literature (see, e.g., Barry, 2023; Camara, 2022; Deridder et al., 2020; Jegen, 2023; Opi, 2021). One of the most significant examples of this was the Nigerien 2015 anti-smuggling law. One of our interviewees noted: "In the moment when there is no migration, the whole region has a problem" (Interview, civil society activist, Niamey, March 2019).[12] Fast forward to 2024, and there has been a series of coups across the region, and Niger, among other countries, has withdrawn from ECOWAS and abrogated the controversial 2015 law. How migration priorities will develop in the future, is yet to be seen.

It is relevant to note that for governments in the region, migration and mobility are traditionally not a significant political topic. In other words, it is so central to governments and their citizens that it is not politically questioned. In other words, despite more recent framing, migration and mobility are generally not considered a threat or problem in the West African context, but rather are considered a common part of everyday life. Cross-border mobility is very established, with regional variations on the freedom of movement, and includes non-formalized border crossings (see Okyerefo and Setrana, 2018). Indeed, it is in part remarkably normalized due to high informal border crossing that transforms determined territorial borders into artificial borders, dividing communities who maintain close social, economic, and cultural cross-border ties (Arhin-Sam et al., 2022).

The lack of prior political attention to migration governance becomes most evident when we consider that in Nigeria, Niger, The Gambia, and Senegal an NMP was only developed and introduced following external funding for these schemes from the EU and their member states. The juxtaposition of lack of policy implementation and an everyday lived reality of mobility comes across clearly, considering the ECOWAS framework. As one Nigerien interlocutor told us, "Migration is a tradition; it is a way of life"[13] (Interview, Niamey, March 2019). This way of life is a fundamental aspect to understanding where political priorities in migration governance may lie.

[12] Original : « Au moment où il n'y a pas de migration, toute la région a un problème. » Translation by author.
[13] Original : « La migration, c'est une tradition; c'est une mode de vie. » Translation by author.

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Dynamics of Protection in a Shrinking Economy: A Peak into Zimbabwe's Refugee Regime

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Abstract

Zimbabwe has consistently experienced an influx of refugees despite its shrinking economy. This places a heavy burden on the state to provide social protection to refugees. There are limited studies that focus on the dynamics of refugee protection in resource-constrained countries like Zimbabwe, often characterized as being only immigrant-sending countries. We use data from 12 in-depth interviews with key informants to explore how the prolonged socio-economic crisis has impacted the state's ability to provide social protection to refugees in Zimbabwe. The study also explores the relationship between the state and other stakeholders in hosting refugees in Zimbabwe. The findings suggest that socio-economic challenges in a shrinking economy affect the protection outcomes of refugees regardless of the presence of a robust refugee regime in the country.

Keywords: migration, refugees, shrinking economies, social protection, COVID-19, Zimbabwe

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INTRODUCTION

The number of refugees continues to increase globally. Much of the increase is attributed to pervasive persecution, conflicts, violence, human rights violations, and similar events that significantly disturb national and global peace and public order (UNHCR, 2021). According to the UNHCR (2023), these disturbances have seen the global statistics of refugees reaching 43.3 million by the end of 2023, registering a notable increase compared to numbers at the end of 2022. This increasing global challenge has become a significant strain on host countries, especially in light of the social protection mandate levied on host countries by the international protocols on refugees (Andrade et al., 2021; Kool and Nimeh, 2021). In international law, refugees have a legal right to flee from hostile and dangerous conditions and seek safety in any country where their rights will be upheld (Kool and Nimeh, 2021; UNHCR, 2021). In line with conventions and protocols on refugee governance, the host countries are responsible for protecting the refugees while they remain in their jurisdiction (Klaaren and Rutinwa, 2004). However, although refugees are a priority on the global agenda (Micinski, 2020), the issue of protection has become complicated (Kool and Nimeh, 2021; Seyfert and Quarterman, 2021).

Much of the complication stems from the fact that many host governments that are supposed to receive these populations have reached elevated levels of fatigue. For example, in the Global South, countries such as South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe continue to welcome refugees and asylum seekers while the opposite holds for countries in the Global North (Spiegel and Mhlanga, 2022). In the Global South, much of the influx is spurred by proximity to the countries with ongoing and increasing protracted conflicts, growing economic challenges, and the ever-tightening mobility restrictions to the Global North (Spiegel and Mhlanga, 2022). Host countries that would ordinarily welcome and host refugees gradually reach fatigue (UIA, 2020) due to the increased influx of people, a phenomenon that has been termed compassion fatigue (Raney, 2019). The willingness and capacity of Global North countries to assist, especially considering the current economic stagnation and the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, have been intensely tested by the continued influx of refugees. Notably, the ever-increasing number of displaced persons seeking refuge in other countries has led governments in the West to devise policies that contain xenophobic connotations (Coen, 2021; Crawley, 2021). Some countries impose strict border controls that constrain the flow of refugees into their countries, most of which are contrary to the inclusionary fundamentals espoused in the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR) (Spiegel and Mhlanga, 2022). For countries in the Global South, such as South Africa, the fatigue and resentment have increased, as they are overwhelmed by the double burden of having to offer protection to their citizens and to the refugee populations (Spiegel and Mhlanga, 2022; Wamara et al., 2022). Given the economic crises typical of most economies in the Global South, the influx of refugees often triggers conflicts between host communities and refugee populations, as they compete for scarce resources. Hence, most countries have

resorted to the encampment policy to reduce conflicts (Spiegel and Mhlanga, 2022). In refugee protection, the encampment policy refers to a system where host countries accommodate refugees in refugee camps where there is little to no integration with host communities. Conversely, some countries, like South Africa, have devised immigration policies that allow refugees to reside within local communities and thus integrate with the local population.

The fatigue in the Global North is epitomized by the now overturned multimillion-dollar deal recently signed between the United Kingdom (UK) and Rwanda (Kampmark, 2022; Limb, 2022; Oxford Analytica, 2022). The deal was a culmination of the UK's plan to tackle the challenge of illegal migration by transferring irregular immigrants (arriving on small boats or smuggled in lorries) to Rwanda to process their asylum and refugee claims (Limb, 2022). According to officials from both countries, the deal was seen as a migration and economic development partnership (Soy, 2022). The former Conservative UK government had anticipated that it would be a move to eliminate the irregular migration syndicates involved in criminal smuggling. That policy sparked controversy because the refugees and asylum seekers whose claims were accepted would be resettled in Rwanda with the support of the UK government. Although other countries have made similar arrangements, for example, Australia and its offshore detention centers in 2001, as well as Israel and Denmark, accusations have been leveled against the UK. For instance, Limb (2022: 1) proffers that "the UK stands widely accused of trading refugees as commodities to a repressive state, trashing legal obligations, and undermining international protections of refugees." Rights groups also criticized the proposed plans as irresponsible and inhumane because similar approaches implemented elsewhere have failed, leading to humanitarian catastrophes and loss of lives (Kampmark, 2022; Limb, 2022). Moreover, the UNHCR had also condemned the deal, noting that it "evades international obligations, and is contrary to the letter and spirit of the Refugee Convention" (UNHCR, 2022a).

Deals such as the proposed UK–Rwanda scheme emanate from the challenges experienced by the host countries in offering protection to refugees. Besides the costs incurred, refugee protection is problematic, as it causes conflicts and resentment in communities (Neis et al., 2018). The increased competition for employment and services and the ever-increasing rent and food prices are significant drivers of increased tensions within host communities (Kool and Nimeh, 2021). Therefore, in most instances, the conflicts result from disgruntled citizens who view refugees as competitors who receive services and goods that locals do not receive. Thus, if the influx of refugees causes many challenges in these already established economies, the situation can only be worse in resource-constrained countries.

Given the anti-refugee sentiments in the Global North, many non-European refugees and asylum seekers end up in neighboring countries that are resource constrained (Kool and Nimeh, 2021; UNHCR, 2021). This means that if refugees make their way to the nearest possible place, they will most likely end up in these

shrinking economies. This paper explores why refugees end up in these resource-constrained countries and addresses the critical question of protection dynamics in some of these countries with shrinking economies. Its main aim is to gain a theoretical grounding on refugee protection in countries with ailing economies. Undeniably, taking care of refugees' basic needs such as food, education, shelter, and health is very costly. This paper addresses the question of who bears the refugee protection costs, since the encamped refugees do not contribute to the economy but benefit from the host country's resources. Clearly, there are inherent tensions in what would be considered the ideal situations for refugee protection. Using the case of Zimbabwe, this paper addresses the most critical question of the dynamics of protection when the conditions are far from ideal. The paper aims to assess the impact of the prolonged socio-economic and political crises on the country's ability to provide the required protection and welfare services to the refugees it hosts. Furthermore, the paper seeks to understand the relationship between the state and other stakeholders in hosting refugees in Zimbabwe. This country presents a unique case because it is characterized by protracted macroeconomic challenges that have persisted for over two decades. Its economy is characterized by hyperinflation and limited economic productivity. In essence, the economy has shrunk over the years due to deindustrialization. Despite this scenario, the country continues to host refugees from different countries and there continues to be a steady increase in the number of refugees.

ZIMBABWE'S EXPERIENCE WITH REFUGEES

Migration scholarship has long portrayed Zimbabwe as a major emigrant and refugee sender due to the protracted economic meltdown and political challenges stretching over the past three decades (Crush and Tevera, 2010; Crush et al., 2015; McGregor and Pasura, 2010; McGregor and Primorac, 2010; Mlambo, 2010). It is well documented that due to the economic and political challenges, the country transitioned from being a major receiver of migrants to being one of the biggest senders in the region (Crush and Tevera, 2010; Ncube, 2010). However, what has received less attention is the scholarship focusing on the refugee movements into Zimbabwe and the country's experiences in hosting refugees and asylum seekers (Chikanda and Crush, 2016; Takaindisa, 2021). Undeniably, Zimbabwe has hosted refugees since the 1980s (Chikanda and Crush, 2016; Matseketsa and Mhlanga, 2020; Sidzumo-Mazibuko, 1998). However, while the subject of refugees has gained considerable attention from migration scholarship in sub-Saharan Africa, there are knowledge gaps about Zimbabwe's ability to meet its refugee population's protection and welfare needs, considering the ongoing economic challenges.

The first refugees in Zimbabwe were from war-torn Mozambique in the early 1980s. They fled the protracted war between the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO) and the Mozambican National Resistance (RENAMO), which pitted opposition ideologies and regions against each other (Chikanda and Crush, 2016; Emerson, 2014). Throughout the 1980s, the country also received trickles of refugees

from South Africa comprising of political activists fleeing the repressive rule of the apartheid government (Chikanda and Crush, 2016). Although there was a notable flow from South Africa, Mozambique remained the major source. Between 1983 and 1994 Zimbabwe hosted over 200,000 Mozambican refugees (Emerson, 2014; Matseketsa and Mhlanga, 2020). This increased flow of refugees in the 1980s can be linked to the political disturbances in its neighboring countries (Chikanda and Crush, 2016). Notably, much of Zimbabwe's generosity was driven by the spirit of comradeship spurred by the need to protect fellow neighbors who had sheltered Zimbabwe's freedom fighters and its refugees during the war for independence (Munguambe, 2020).

Responding to the growing influx of refugees, the Government of Zimbabwe adopted an encampment policy by establishing four rural refugee camps in 1984, namely Tongogara, Chambuta, Nyanʼombe, and Nyamatiki (Matseketsa and Mhlanga, 2020; Mutsvara, 2015) and the fifth in 1990 known as the Mazowe River Bridge (Chikanda and Crush, 2016; Sidzumo-Mazibuko, 1998). The encampment policy restricted refugees' mobility and their ultimate integration into local communities (Spiegel and Mhlanga, 2022; Wamara et al., 2022). To date, the Zimbabwean government restricts all refugees to camps, with limited freedom to explore economic options (Matseketsa and Mhlanga, 2020; Wamara et al., 2022). Given the high inflow of Mozambicans fleeing the war in their country, these camps were often overcrowded (Chikanda and Crush, 2016). For example, the state established the Tongogara Refugee Camp (TRC) in 1984, with a carrying capacity of 10,000 refugees, but in 1993 it had a population of 52,000 refugees (Chikanda and Crush, 2016). Similarly, the Mazowe River Bridge Camp's maximum capacity was 5,000, but in 1993 it housed over 34,000 refugees, almost six times its capacity (Chikanda and Crush, 2016; Sidzumo-Mazibuko, 1998; UNHCR, 1994).

During this period, the camps were almost exclusively occupied by Mozambican refugees (Chikanda and Crush, 2016). In 1994, FRELIMO and RENAMO signed a peace treaty known as the Rome Agreement (see Emerson, 2014). This resulted in a huge reduction in the number of refugees in the country and the closure of some refugee camps in 1994, leaving the TRC as the only operational camp in the country (Chikanda and Crush, 2016; Matseketsa and Mhlanga, 2020). To date, the TRC remains the only functional camp and is home to approximately 14,413 refugees and asylum seekers (Matseketsa and Mhlanga, 2020; Mhlanga, 2020).

Although the end of the war in Mozambique led to a significant decline in the number of refugees in Zimbabwe, the growing incidence of wars and internal conflicts on the African continent saw a gradual increase in the numbers and sources of refugees in Zimbabwe (Matseketsa and Mhlanga, 2020; Mutsvara, 2015). In the 1990s, there was a notable diversification in the origins of refugee flows in the country, with the source patterns showing a global character (Chikanda and Crush, 2016). Notably, most of the source countries both in and outside Africa were characterized by internal strife and political disturbances (Sidzumo-Mazibuko, 1998). For example,

Rwanda was experiencing genocide while the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) was engaged in war (Matseketsa and Mhlanga, 2020; Mhlanga, 2020; Mutsvara, 2015). By the end of the 1990s, the DRC, Burundi, and Rwanda were the major origin countries for refugees in Zimbabwe (Chikanda and Crush, 2016; Sidzumo-Mazibuko, 1998). Part of the increase in the influx of refugees from the Great Lakes region, mostly Rwandans, during this time was caused by the fact that they had been debarred from Tanzania's Ngara refugee camp (Mutsvara, 2015). According to Jakachira (2003), these refugees did not want to return to their country because they feared retribution from their government. Moreover, the en masse influx of refugees into Zimbabwe was also spurred by the emergence of terrorists in Nigeria, Central African Republic, and Mali, growing ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia, and the perpetual insecurities in Somalia and the DRC (Chikanda and Crush, 2016; Matseketsa and Mhlanga, 2020). With the return of stability in some regions, for example, the Great Lakes, peace in countries like Burundi and Rwanda led to a significant decrease in the number of refugees in Zimbabwe. This was further exacerbated by the economic demise that the country experienced in the early 2000s, climaxing in 2008, making Zimbabwe an unattractive destination for refugees. Notwithstanding this scenario, episodes of instability in some countries like the DRC led to a continued presence of refugees in the country (Chikanda and Crush, 2016).

Zimbabwe's economic outlook continues to be characterized by high uncertainty. However, amidst all these socio-economic challenges characteristic of the country, Zimbabwe has remained host to refugees and asylum seekers from the Great Lakes region since 1998 (WFP and UNHCR, 2019). This influx of refugees presents population pressures that strain the already distressed government resources, compromising its effective service provision to the country's population.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research site for this study was the TRC in Zimbabwe. The refugee camp is located in the Chipinge district, 600 km southeast of the Harare Metropolitan Province (Mhlanga and Zengeya, 2016). This is the only refugee camp that is currently operational in Zimbabwe. Therefore, any study that seeks to understand refugee dynamics in Zimbabwe is likely to gain rich insights by using this refugee camp as a case study.

This paper followed a qualitative research methodological approach. This approach was the most appropriate to employ, given the need to gain an in-depth understanding of refugee protection dynamics in a refugee center with multiple actors. To gain an insider perspective, there was a need for a more explorative approach that enabled the researchers to gather diverse narratives on the different roles played by different actors and how they collectively worked toward providing protection in a shrinking economy. The research team gathered qualitative data through in-depth semi-structured interviews with key informants who represented different stakeholders at the TRC in Zimbabwe. The researchers purposively drew a

sample of 12 key informants from different organizations operating at the TRC. These included officials from the Ministry of Public Service, Labour, and Social Welfare (MoPSLSW), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), World Vision Zimbabwe, Doctors Without Borders (MSF), and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating in the camp. To achieve representative diversity, it was crucial for the researchers to use purposive sampling to select representatives of key actors who played a role in the continued functioning of the refugee camp.

The research team conducted all the interviews in this study in English; hence, there was no need for translations, as all participants understood and spoke the language fluently. In conducting this study, researchers applied due ethical consideration for dealing with human subjects in research and followed the ethical standards and principles as detailed in the Helsinki Declaration. In addition, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Alliance of Biodiversity International and the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) evaluated the ethical considerations of the study, and it was approved under clearance number 2023-IRB72. Prior to the interviews, the research team developed an informed consent sheet that advised participants about different aspects of the study, including envisaged risks and benefits, voluntary participation, the right to withdraw from the study at any given moment, and participants' consent for audio recording the interviews. All those who participated in the study signed the consent form as an indication that they voluntarily agreed to participate in this study.

In the process of data analysis, the research team coded all the interview transcripts for ease of identification and assigned the codes according to the order of the interviews. For example, the first interview was coded as Informant 1 up to the last interview that was coded as Informant 12. After this first coding round, researchers coded the transcripts according to emerging themes and then analyzed them thematically. Maxwell and Chmiel (2013) define coding as a strategy used to organize qualitative data. The process entails the identification of distinct concepts and themes in the data, which then form master headings that become the basic units of analysis (Flick, 2013; Gibbs, 2007). In this study, researchers applied coding inductively based on the emerging themes from the data. Furthermore, they derived first-order codes from the emerging key themes that directed analysis of the refugee regime in Zimbabwe and the social protection initiatives at the TRC. The themes developed formed subheadings under which the research team presented and discussed findings supported by direct excerpts from the interviews.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The state and its obligations of refugee protection

There are three main elements of social protection that vulnerable people such as refugees need: social assistance in the form of access to basic needs; livelihoods support and capacity development; and labor market interventions (Andrade et al., 2021; Barrientos and Santibáñez 2009). The participants of this study agreed that

the state has the responsibility to provide comprehensive protection services to the refugees they host. Commenting on the general obligations of the state at law, some key informants reported as follows:

> The Refugee Act mandates the government to ensure non-discrimination, non-penalization, and adherence to the non-return policy for refugees (Informant 1, September 2022).

> The government should ensure that every recognized refugee is entitled to rights and [is] subject to duties contained in the 1951 Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (Informant 5, September 2022).

According to the UNHCR (undated), the first obligation to ensure basic human rights and physical security of citizens lies with governments. However, when people are displaced and driven out of their countries for whatever reason and become refugees or asylum seekers, this safety net ceases to exist. Considering this, global treaties, conventions, and compacts mandate host countries to uphold and protect the basic human rights of these displaced persons (Barnett, 2002; Chikanda and Crush, 2016). It is from this point of departure that the participants of this study correctly identified the Government of Zimbabwe as responsible for providing protection to all refugees and displaced persons who make their way to Zimbabwe.

The findings of this study show that while the Zimbabwean state provides protection to refugees, it faces resource constraints that limit its capacity. As a result, the state becomes overly dependent on the support of partner organizations. In Zimbabwe, this study found that the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees in the Department of Social Development (MoPWLSW) is largely funded by the UNHCR, including staff salaries, vehicles, and expenses for the programmes implemented in the camp. Therefore, regarding social assistance and access to basic needs, submissions from key informants suggest that although the state has a bigger mandate, it mainly provides services that cannot be delegated to other partners. These include registration, status determination, and provision of security. Some key informants explained:

> TRC is wholly established and owned by the government of Zimbabwe and the government of Zimbabwe has the obligation to provide peace and security, shelter, food, education, health, and all other basic needs and social amenities for refugees (Informant 9, September 2022).

> The settlement has a Zimbabwe Republic Police base manned by five police officers to provide security and protection services (Informant 7, September 2022).

> In line with the Zimbabwe Refugee Act, the government takes the lead in the refugee status determination, issuance of refugee identity cards, birth, marriage and death certificates, and travel documents through the Registrar General's Office. It also issues temporary passes for refugees through the Immigration Department (Informant 3, September 2022).

The above excerpts suggest that resource-intense protection services have been delegated to the partners, with the UNHCR as the main partner. However, while this can be confused with the state negating its obligations, consideration must be given to the state's resource constraints. Zimbabwe has a documented history of economic turmoil that has persisted for over two decades (Kanyenze et al., 2017; Mhlanga and Ndhlovu, 2021; Raftopoulos, 2006). According to Mhlanga and Ndhlovu (2021), while southern African countries experienced broad-based economic expansion in the past 20 years, Zimbabwe remained an exception, largely owing to its poor economic policies and haphazard land reform program. Kanyenze et al. (2017) point out that between 1999 and 2008, Zimbabwe experienced a 52% decline in its gross domestic product (GDP). To date, there is still skepticism around the official economic indicators due to years of hyperinflation and currency failures that decimated the formal sectors. Therefore, the country is a classic case of a shrinking economy that still hosts refugees, despite its limitations. What stands out from the findings of this study is that while the country is poorly resourced, this has not stopped the state from facilitating processes that result in those in need of protection accessing it, even if this means allowing capacitated partners such as the UNHCR to contribute significant resources to keep the program running. In addition, documentation is a widespread problem in refugee management globally, yet this does not seem to be the case in Zimbabwe, where processes are well coordinated to ensure that refugees' needs in this regard are met. In a shrinking economy, strategic partnerships appear to be the sustaining factor in ensuring that vulnerable groups such as refugees access some relief.

Refugee protection services through strategic partnerships

The findings of this study show that at the TRC in Zimbabwe, the UNHCR is the leading strategic partner that works with several partner organizations to complement government efforts in the provision of different protection services to refugees. Table 1 shows the different partners who work together in ensuring that refugees receive the protection they need. While several of these strategic partners are non-state actors, there are some state actors, such as the MoPWLSW. Each partner provides unique support while at times consolidating their efforts to meet the most urgent needs.

Table 1: Partners at TRC and the protection services offered

Partner	Protection services offered
Department of Social Development (MoPWLSW)	Registration, camp coordination and management, shelter, refugee status determination
UNHCR	Registration, durable solutions, shelter, water and sanitation, livelihoods, food security, refugee status determination
WFP	Cash transfers
Terres des Hommes (Italy)	Education, health, child protection, food security, GBV prevention, mitigation and response, life-skills training
World Vision Zimbabwe	WASH and livelihoods
Jesuit Refugee Service	Education, vocational training, pastoral services
Childline	Child protection
MSF (Doctors Without Borders)	Community mental health services (non-clinical)
Zimbabwe Council of Churches	Peace, justice, and conflict resolution
Zimbabwe Red Cross Society	ICT, tracing and restoring family links, livelihoods

Source: Authors' work

As observed in Table 1, the services provided through the strategic partnerships include social assistance, access to basic services, livelihoods support, and capacity development. Commenting on social assistance and access to basic services, some of the key informants offered the following narrations:

> We provide psychosocial support services to the refugees at the TRC. Our needs assessment indicated a gap in terms of mental healthcare needs for the camp population and we believe our mental health program will build resilience and community coping skills, which will ultimately improve the well-being of the camp population (Informant 12, September 2022).

> The host community [at the ward, district, and provincial levels] is essential in ensuring the peaceful co-existence of refugees and communities (Informant 4, September 2022).

The above excerpts demonstrate that refugee protection and assistance is a priority that the collective efforts of strategic partners and surrounding communities strive

for, despite the shrinking economy of Zimbabwe. However, the findings of this study suggest that assistance to refugees must go beyond protection and aim toward finding durable solutions that will allow refugees to rebuild their lives. As a result, providing livelihood support and promoting economic inclusion for refugees have been highlighted as notable contributions from strategic partners. In this regard, some refugees were offered opportunities to embark on self-reliance and economic-empowerment programs to enhance their livelihoods. Despite the scarcity of resources and an ailing Zimbabwean economy, these strategic partnerships demonstrate the concerted efforts to provide refugees with better life experiences at the TRC. The following interview excerpts acknowledge these efforts:

> Some partners at the TRC offer self-reliance and livelihoods programs to help refugees in rebuilding their lives. Different actors offer different services that are an attempt to provide durable solutions to refugees at the camp (Informant 1, September 2022).

> The UNHCR and other partners work with the government to provide community empowerment, self-reliance, and livelihoods assistance to refugees in line with the state, regional, and international obligations (Informant 3, September 2022).

Moreover, these interview excerpts corroborate a report by the UNHCR (2022b) that states that this multilateral institution and its partners have managed to support a number of livelihoods programs at the TRC. Examples cited include a hydroponics agricultural project where refugees managed to produce vegetables for consumption and income generation. In addition, there is an income-generating poultry project where refugees have close to 500 hens that produce eggs (UNHCR, 2022b). Some partners offered capacity development programs, albeit limited in their scope, aimed at equipping refugees with skills suitable for the labor market. An informant confirmed the efforts aimed at skills development:

> Partners have been trying to build refugee capacity through vocational skills training. The goal has been to improve the skills base of the refugees so that they may be fit to join the labor market (Informant 2, September 2022).

Notwithstanding the partners' efforts, the macroeconomic environment in the country has been detrimental to the protection efforts of the different stakeholders at TRC. Scholars have documented Zimbabwe's currency crisis and hyperinflation that made it difficult to earn and secure livelihoods (Kudzai, 2023; Lieto, 2023). This has also affected social-protection efforts, as it made it very difficult to plan and budget in the local currency, leading to an over-reliance on foreign currency that is difficult to come by (Lieto, 2023).

The shrinking economy and its implications for refugee protection

The Zimbabwean economy has been experiencing prolonged challenges that have persisted from the early 1990s to date (Kanyenze et al., 2017; Mhlanga and Ndhlovu, 2021). These were worsened by the fast-track land reform program that led to economic sanctions, which isolated Zimbabwe from the global economic system for decades (Nzima and Gumindega, 2023). During the period between 2019 and 2020, Zimbabwe experienced severe external shocks, namely cyclone Idai, protracted drought, and the COVID-19 pandemic (Spiegel and Mhlanga, 2022). These shocks, compounded by flawed policies during the same period, culminated in a significant recession and peak inflation of 837% (UNDP, 2020). The trends have continued to date, with significant implications for the ability of the TRC stakeholders to provide effective protection services to refugees. Kudzai (2023) maintains that the macroeconomic conditions continue to erode the state's revenue base, compromising its ability to provide meaningful social protection to its citizenry, such as providing social safety nets. If the state struggles to provide social protection to citizens, the situation can only be worse for refugees and asylum seekers. A key informant reported the following:

> The government does not have resources, and the pervasive macroeconomic challenges continue to cripple the government and further diminish its ability to provide protection to refugees (Informant 1, September 2022).

Resource scarcity resulting from the diminishing economic conditions in the country has negatively affected the state's ability to provide effective protection to refugees (Spiegel and Mhlanga, 2022). This is exacerbated by the continued arrival of new refugees putting an additional strain on the government's ability to provide adequate protection. Nearly all key informants expressed these sentiments. An informant from one of the partner organizations said the following:

> The continued influx of refugees and asylum seekers results in increased annual resource needs for shelter and classrooms as well as increased teacher-pupil ratios (Informant 9, September 2022).

The findings of this study suggest that the prevailing macroeconomic conditions at both the national and global levels have led to a scarcity of donor funding (UNDP, 2020). Donor funding has been dwindling and in the recent past, the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine resulted in the diversion of funds to focus on these issues, significantly reducing funding for refugee protection, as seen in the following excerpt:

> The government does not have resources, and the pervasive socio-economic challenges continue to cripple the government and further diminish its ability to provide protection to refugees (Informant 1, September 2022).

The economic reality in Zimbabwe has created significant challenges for the state and its strategic partners due to resource constraints and an ever-increasing demand for services (Spiegel and Mhlanga, 2022; UNDP, 2020). As a result, partners face the dilemma of having to do more with less, as the refugee population at the camp continues to increase. The following interview excerpts provide further insight:

> It has been difficult for partners to provide sustainable and durable livelihood projects to refugees and asylum seekers. Also, markets for the produce have been difficult to find and sustain (Informant 9, September 2022).

> The hyperinflationary environment in the country complicates partner interventions as it erodes the value of the assistance they give (Informant 11, September 2022).

> The UNHCR operation has low budgets due to its small caseload and has had to prioritize lifesaving interventions. Again, the high cost of goods locally has pushed the organization to consider international procurement for value for money and accountability, but global supply-chain breaks mean delays, more so in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic … The COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have resulted in a diversion of funds to focus on these issues, significantly reducing funding for refugee protection (Informant 3, September 2022).

The findings of this study suggest that the ongoing shrinking of the Zimbabwean economy does not only constrain the state's ability to fulfill its mandate, but strategic partners are also affected, and this limits their capacity to provide adequate protection to refugees. The difficult economic environment has led to the erosion of safety nets for improved livelihoods as donor funding continues to dry up. This means that refugees are left in a state of perpetual dependency on aid and handouts, a situation that renders them perpetually vulnerable. Notably, the COVID-19 pandemic and other shocks have had significant impacts on the effective provision of protection services to refugees.

COVID-19 and the provision of protection services at the TRC

The COVID-19 pandemic caused a disruption in the provision of basic services globally. A fuller understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on refugees in Zimbabwe requires a holistic appreciation of the shocks that have rocked their realities in the recent past. According to Alio et al. (2020), refugees across the

globe are heterogeneously affected by various shocks, including pandemics, conflicts, climate-induced disasters, and poverty. Before the pandemic, refugees already existed in precarious and cramped conditions with adverse public health conditions that could easily facilitate the rapid spread of diseases (Alio et al., 2020; Spiegel and Mhlanga, 2022). Although the effects of the pandemic were almost universal and similar, not all populations were affected equally. Crawley (2021) asserts that the pandemic amplified and deepened existing inequalities, with refugees and other stateless persons being the most adversely affected, because they are often the poorest with precarious livelihoods and are most deprived in terms of protection. As such, the pandemic affected them on many levels. The findings of this study show that at the TRC, the pandemic crippled basic service delivery. It impacted both the availability of resources and the actual service provision. The pandemic forced partners to divert resources to ensure compliance with the sanitary regulations to curb the spread of the virus. This meant resources initially earmarked for the provision of protection services to refugees were channeled towards addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. Informants from partner organizations confirmed this unfortunate reality:

> The COVID-19 pandemic meant diversion of resources by governments and partners to ensure compliance with the sanitary guidelines and procure medication. Moreover, the donor countries experienced shocks leading to reduced donations (Informant 3, September 2022).

> Lockdown restrictions meant reduced earning capacity for many, including refugees (Informant 11, September 2022).

In addition, the findings of this study show that the resultant lockdowns and mobility restrictions had an adverse effect on the livelihoods and economic empowerment initiatives implemented at the camp. Refugees could not move around to sell their products, and this crippled their ability to earn. This occurred against a backdrop that refugees are generally in a marginalized socio-economic position (Crawley, 2021), and restrictions on their economic activities plunged them into deeper precarity. Moreover, the restrictions affected the repatriation and resettlement of refugees. The suspension of the asylum procedures due to COVID-19 left refugees in conditions of protracted uncertainty while exacerbating their already dire living conditions (Crawley, 2021; Ghezelbash and Feith Tan, 2020). The restrictions further affected children's access to education and the camp population's ability to access healthcare services beyond the camp. Other studies note similar findings, detailing the effects of the pandemic on education and health services (Matsilele, 2021; Mbunge et al., 2020; Murewanhema and Makurumidze, 2020). Some key informants reported the following:

> COVID-19 negatively affected access to education for children in TRC because they were out of school for prolonged periods without access to e-learning facilities. This has resulted in low pass rates among the refugee population (Informant 10, September 2022).

> Refugees rely on the national healthcare system and during hard lockdown, services at some major referral centers were suspended due to the pandemic and this negatively affected refugees in need of health services (Informant 12, September 2022).

This study also found that officials from partner organizations could not move freely to implement some of the programs at the camp, which left refugees with limited assistance and increased vulnerability. Moreover, the inability of the Zimbabwe Refugee Committee to meet and process status determination meant that during the COVID-19 pandemic, many refugees remained entirely undocumented. The findings confirm Crawley's (2021) assertion that one of the biggest consequences of the pandemic has been the stalling of status determination, which in some instances compromised refugees' access to rights, work opportunities, healthcare, and education. To augment this, some of the key informants indicated the following:

> Service delivery in many government departments that serve refugees and asylum seekers was disrupted at the height of the pandemic (Informant 9, September 2022).

> The Zimbabwe Refugee Committee used to meet monthly for refugee status determination, that is, conducting interviews for asylum seekers to determine whether their cases warrant a refugee status. Due to COVID-19, the committee has not been meeting and there is now a backlog in cases (Informant 3, September 2022).

Although there were challenges, some positive innovations emerged that improved service delivery. Partners devised strategies to circumvent the effects of restrictions around COVID-19. Key informants further narrated that COVID-19 led to innovations in service provision such as online lessons, WhatsApp surveillance and reporting for child protection and gender-based violence. Partners will continue the implementation of these strategies in the post-COVID-19 era. Therefore, the pandemic significantly affected the provision of protection services to refugees, further exacerbating inequality and precarity in their living conditions.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper concludes that socio-economic challenges in fragile economies significantly affect the welfare and protection outcomes of refugees, regardless of the presence of a robust refugee regime in the country. In addition, accepting refugees remains a political statement of sovereignty, and the macroeconomic instability in shrinking economies may easily mar regional solidarity and the success of the ambitions. In Zimbabwe, the protracted socio-economic crisis has rendered refugee protection a challenge for the state and its partner organizations (Spiegel and Mhlanga, 2022). Shocks such as Cyclone Idai, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the war between Russia and Ukraine have worsened this precarious situation. Additionally, these shocks have worsened the country's macroeconomic environment, significantly shrinking the economy (Spiegel and Mhlanga, 2022; UNDP, 2020). Macroeconomic instability activates subtle inequalities between different population groups in a country (Crawley, 2021; Spiegel and Mhlanga, 2022). Given that Zimbabwe's deep economic crisis has been protracted, it has gradually eroded the state's ability to provide social protection to its citizens by crippling economic production and growth and decreased public budgets, plunging the country into a deep quandary characterized by high unemployment rates (Chikanda and Crush, 2016; Spiegel and Mhlanga, 2022). In the process, refugees and other persons of concern are relegated to the margins of protection (Crawley, 2021), usually left to depend on the benevolence of donors and humanitarian partners to provide services. This demonstrates the struggles around mobility justice in the state's responses to shocks and the influx of refugees and asylum seekers.

Macroeconomic instability and the resultant shrinking of economies complicate the dynamics of protection by compromising the ability to provide the requisite services to the populations in question. The state and its partners thus fail to provide comprehensive protection in the form of social assistance and access to basic services, livelihoods support, as well as building refugees' capacity for labor-market readiness. Although the refugee regime in Zimbabwe mandates the state to provide protection services to refugees, the macroeconomic reality is the major constraining factor. In essence, shrinking economies adversely affect the provision of protection to refugees, as partners do not have adequate resources to provide durable solutions for the refugees. The economic realities leave effective protection elusive with limited to no solutions in sight (Spiegel and Mhlanga, 2022). Although the UNHCR and its partners may make efforts to provide protection, they become overwhelmed by the needs load that entails provision of housing, enhancing livelihoods, ensuring food security, provision of water and sanitation services as well as public health systems. These are resource-intensive needs that may not be fully sustained through donor funding. Thus, the inability of the state to contribute resources toward the protection of refugees complicates the dynamics of protection, leaving refugees in perpetual vulnerability and partners operating in emergency mode. Thus, even though Zimbabwe's refugee regime accords the protection mandate to the state, the protracted

economic crisis in the country has crippled the state's ability to do so. Therefore, this study recommends that the government increases its efforts in seeking humanitarian international assistance with favorable conditions. In addition, the government and its strategic partners must explore innovative financing mechanisms to ensure the sustainability of protection efforts. Lastly, the government and its strategic partners must increase their efforts toward programs and bilateral agreements that promote regional cooperation to ensure better protection outcomes for refugees in the region.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors report that there are no competing interests to declare.

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Does Climate Change Transfer Poverty from Rural to Urban Areas? Implications for Regional Sub-Saharan Research Agenda

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Abstract

There is growing recognition that climate change is a worldwide phenomenon with far-reaching effects and that it is linked to an increase in the frequency of extreme weather occurrences. In rural areas of most of the sub-Saharan countries and other developing countries in the world, the frequent occurrences of extreme weather events such as flooding, heat waves, and drought have significantly destroyed livelihood activities of poor communities. Unfavorable geographic characteristics, a lack of resources, and a higher reliance on climate-sensitive sources of income among many community members in poor nations all contribute to the impact. These include livelihood activities associated with land use and agricultural practices. Sadly, the population's capacity and incentive to stay in rural areas have been altered because of climate change and its detrimental impacts on agricultural output, income, and subsistence living; as a result, many rural dwellers are migrating to urban areas. Rural populations migrate to urban areas in search of economic opportunities to earn a living. It is evident that the expected opportunities in urban areas are not always available; thus, most of the rural migrants are stuck in informal settlements, shanty towns, and slums without access to services. Consequently, it is evident that climate change is somehow transferring poverty from rural to urban areas. This study adopted the push/pull theory as a theoretical framework to guide the discussion and analysis. Based on an extensive review of the existing literature using qualitative document analysis, the purpose of this article is to examine the role of climate change on rural–urban migration, which ultimately contributes to the increase in urban poverty. The article concludes by reviewing the current (limited) research on climate change and poverty and argues for a research agenda in the context of sub-Saharan Africa toward sustainable ways to respond to the challenges of climate-induced migration, urbanization, and poverty.

Keywords: climate change, rural–urban migration, urbanization, poverty, sub-Saharan Africa

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INTRODUCTION

Sub-Saharan Africa, the region located below the Sahara Desert, comprises 90% of the African nations. Despite its diverse cultural, historical, and socio-political contexts, the region commonly confronts formidable challenges and complexities, such as pervasive poverty and malnutrition, rapid and uncontrolled urbanization (related to rural-urban migration), political volatility, and environmental degradation (Szirmai, 2015). The region, much like other developing nations worldwide, is also characterized by fast urbanization (Blekking et al., 2022), and it is expected to be predominantly urban; by 2043, half of sub-Saharan Africa's population will live in urban areas (Jobarteh, 2024). Rural–urban migration is particularly significant in large developing countries undergoing urbanization, such as those in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where rural populations remain disproportionately large (Brueckner and Lall, 2015; Selod and Shilpi, 2021). The rapid increase in the urban population size is attributable to the natural population growth of existing urban settlements, the reclassification of rural settlements to urban settlements, and rural–urban migration (Jobarteh, 2024). The primary drivers include higher urban incomes, better amenities, climate change, conflicts, and the need for insurance against risks (Selod and Shilpi, 2021). This migration pattern is also significantly influenced by economic factors, population size, housing availability, and environmental conditions (Chaplitskaya et al., 2024).

The impacts of climate change, therefore, are pivotal in exacerbating conditions that drive rural–urban migration. This is particularly evident in how climate change adversely affects rural livelihoods, which are predominantly dependent on agricultural practices. Kumar (2018) notes that this region, particularly the drought-prone areas, suffers from one of the lowest levels of agricultural productivity, primarily as a result of water stress during crop growth. The author further indicates that the region is plagued by conflicts, political instability, poor governance, corruption, politics of exclusion, high rural poverty, and weak human resource capacities (Kumar, 2018). Unlike other regions, the main drivers of rural–urban migration in sub-Saharan Africa include dissatisfaction with public services in rural areas, changing weather patterns, land pressures, natural disasters, and conflict (Jobarteh, 2024). Thus, this pattern of migration poses an imminent burden on urban governance (Bawakyillenuo et al., 2018). The most pressing issue is the readiness of urban governance to address the ever-escalating urban poverty associated with climate-induced rural–urban migration.

Sub-Saharan Africa has encountered frequent climate crises, including extreme weather events and natural disasters. Ayanlade et al. (2022) argue that the impacts of climate change are growing more intense and frequent, with the observed effects of climate extremes on sub-Saharan Africa on the rise. Climate change shocks are increasingly common in sub-Saharan Africa (Blekking et al., 2022), for example, the Southern African drought (2015–2016), the East African drought (2016–2017), the Cape Town water crisis (2017–2018), the Ethiopian drought (2019), and the ongoing drought in the Sahel region. To effectively address the climate crisis, sub-Saharan

African nations need to act responsibly, sensibly, and sustainably, despite the absence of specific climate change legislation in most of these countries. These nations continue to combat climate change by deploying and using various measures aimed at mitigating and adapting to its effects. They are also advancing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030. There are several studies investigating the relationship between climate change, migration, and urbanization, particularly how extreme weather and climatic changes promote urbanization (Barrios et al., 2006; Henderson et al., 2017; Dia and Beaudelaire, 2021). However, there are limited studies regarding how climate change exacerbates urbanization and poverty (Henderson et al., 2017). Thus, drawing upon an extensive review of the existing literature, this article aims to examine whether climate-induced rural–urban migration exacerbates the already severe poverty conditions in urban areas of sub-Saharan Africa. This region, already grappling with extreme poverty, provides a critical context for examining the intersection of climate change, urbanization, and poverty.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Migration, in general, is a complex phenomenon influenced by a variety of driving factors. The motivations behind migration are often context-dependent, including a range of socio-economic, environmental, and political drivers. To explain this complex process of migration, different theoretical perspectives have been applied to explore the rationale behind individuals' or groups' decisions to migrate from one geographic area to another, particularly to urban centers. For example, the dual sector theory (Lewis model) on urban–rural migration argues that labor migrates from the rural areas considered underemployed, traditional, agricultural, and subsistence sectors to the urban areas perceived as high-productivity, modern industrial sectors (Knight, 2021). Another example is the Harris–Todaro model, which assumes that expected differences between rural income and urban income or a higher urban wage lead to rural–urban migration (Busso et al., 2021; Bhattacharya, 2024). However, these theories of migration focus mainly on economic dimensions of human migration and development.

This study adopted the push/pull theory, which suggests that people migrate as a result of several push/pull drivers (Al-Khudairy, 2024). Different researchers adopted the push/pull theory to investigate migration, particularly rural–urban migration (Eshetu and Beshir, 2017; Mlambo, 2018; Hoffmann et al., 2019; Nguyen, 2019; Khalid and Urbański, 2021). Applied from a socio-economic perspective, this theory emphasizes that people migrate because of push factors (e.g., unemployment, lack of service, and poverty) in rural areas and pull factors (e.g., better employment opportunities, services, and relatively good living conditions) in urban areas. On the other hand, from an environmental change perspective, the push/pull theory stresses that people migrate because of climate change-related push factors from rural areas to urban areas where they perceive better living and economic conditions. In the context of sub-Saharan Africa, many people migrate from rural underdeveloped areas to urban

areas for various reasons, including climate change impacts. This study, therefore, employed the push/pull theory, as it is relevant for exploring how climate-induced migration can transfer poverty, as migrants may not find sufficient opportunities in urban areas as expected, leading to increased urban poverty challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research approach, which is acclaimed for its significance in providing deep insights into complex issues and fostering the generation of novel research ideas (Maree, 2020). The study used a document review method that involved the systematic analysis of existing documents. This technique is vital in this research to capture rich contextual data in a cost-effective manner (Lim, 2024). It relied on secondary data collection to examine the dynamics of climate change and its impact on transferring poverty from rural to urban areas. According to Maree (2020), secondary sources are materials that synthesize previously published works, which are integral to conducting a thorough literature review. In line with this, the secondary data was drawn from a wide range of existing literature, including peer-reviewed journals, books, and other reputable sources, ensuring a comprehensive analysis of climate change, rural-urban migration, and urban poverty (Lim, 2024). Data collection involved using databases such as Google Scholar and Science Direct, focusing on recent and relevant publications. The study followed qualitative research and document review to explore the complex relationship between climate change and poverty transfer from rural to urban areas. The study provides a comprehensive analysis that contributes to a broader understanding of the impact of climate change on migration by using secondary data from a wide array of credible sources. Thus, the application of the approach underscores the importance of secondary qualitative methods in unraveling the climate-induced rural-urban migration factors that influence urbanization and urban poverty challenges.

IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON RURAL AREAS

Global abnormal natural disasters have significantly increased in recent decades. Ali and Erenstein (2017) explain that between 1980 and 2008 erratic natural hazards moved from an average of 125 per year to more than 500 events. The most common disastrous hazards of global magnitude that impact large numbers of populations, include flooding, drought, heat waves, sea-level rising, and desertification (Araos et al., 2016; Dumenu and Obeng, 2016; Alam et al., 2017; Ali and Erenstein, 2017; Sekkat, 2017; Lucci et al., 2018; Delazeri et al., 2022). Unfortunately, episodes of unprecedented hazards are not slowing down and are impacting different spheres of life, including how communities secure food and other sustenance. In other words, climate-related disasters are continuing to be disruptive to poor households in rural areas whose livelihoods are determined by environmental factors. Activities such as subsistence and small-scale farming are mostly affected. The observable effects of

climate change are becoming more pronounced in terms of variations in temperature, precipitation, and wind. Ali and Erenstein (2017: 184) note that "approximately 2.5 billion people who derive their livelihood in part or in full from agricultural production systems" are impacted by climate change-related stressors. Ironically, the most affected communities, who are in developing countries, contribute less than 10% of the world's yearly emissions of carbon dioxide, which is blamed for the fast-paced manifestation of climate change (Ali and Erenstein, 2017). Even though these people contribute an insignificant portion of the emissions, their over-reliance on the climate and environmentally inclined activities expose them to the risks associated with climate change. Maskrey et al. (2007) anticipate that the poor who reside in agricultural communities in developing nations will be the most impacted by these climate changes. In fact, because of their unfavorable geographic location, scarcity of resources, and increased reliance on climate-sensitive sources of income, most impoverished rural and agricultural populations suffer the most from climate change (World Bank, 2009). Because of the large number of impoverished people and the large populations that continue to rely mostly on rural economies based on agriculture, most African and South Asian countries are especially affected.

Agriculture is a climate-sensitive sector; thus, rural livelihoods dependent on this sector are more susceptible to the damages of climate change-related hazards (Dube and Phiri, 2013; Husain, 2015; Nawrotzki et al., 2015; Tacoli et al., 2015; Araos et al., 2016; Dumenu and Obeng, 2016). For example, in the sub-Saharan region, temperatures are increasing, precipitation has dropped on average, and rainfall patterns have become less predictable, making rural livelihoods in nations like South Africa, Malawi, Zimbabwe, and Zambia more susceptible. In the tropical countries, such as those in South America and the Caribbean, livelihoods have been exposed to hazards associated with increases in sea levels, storm activity, and flooding. The issue of infrastructure is the other underlying component contributing to the effects of climate change. Because of inadequate infrastructure, such as sea walls, and a lack of funding for the development of technological protection, poor and less-developed nations are disproportionately affected by climate change (Tacoli et al., 2015; Araos et al., 2016; Dumenu and Obeng, 2016; Alam et al., 2017). For instance, Pakistan has experienced significant financial losses resulting from infrastructure and property damage, decreased agricultural productivity, and the high cost of restoring and reconstructing areas devastated by natural disasters (Husain, 2015).

There is evidence that the detrimental consequences of climate change are threatening to undo the development gains made with transformation since sub-Saharan Africa's independence in other regions of the continent. Frequent unpredictable weather events, such as floods, droughts, cyclonic storm surges, riverbank erosion, saline intrusion, and water logging, have a negative impact on food, water, health, and energy security, as well as many people's lives and livelihoods, especially the impoverished (Alam et al., 2017). According to Ali and Erenstein (2017), recent extreme weather occurrences in the region – such as flash floods –

are thought to be directly related to climate change and are trapping impoverished communities in nations like Pakistan and India. The disappearance of the flora and wildlife, which the majority of the impoverished rely on for the development and sustainability of their livelihoods, threatens their access to food. Although many adaptation tactics are used by rural communities, such as crop diversification, taking on non-farm secondary occupations, and expanding farm sizes, not everyone can afford these options because they need significant financial resources. The only way out of rural poverty caused by these difficulties has been to migrate from rural to urban areas.

The movement of poor people from rural to urban areas has always been there and is influenced by many factors. However, the most common cause has been the lack of income-earning opportunities in rural areas. Dumenu and Obeng (2016) argue that the absence of employment prospects for economically active family members is the main reason why most rural households encourage their young energetic members to migrate to urban areas in search of employment to support the households. With agriculture being the most relied on form of employment and livelihoods in rural areas, it makes sense that the volume of those migrating to urban areas has increased (Nawrotzki et al., 2015; Tacoli et al., 2015). In many developing countries, rural small-scale farming and agricultural livelihoods have been struggling because of climate change. As a result, what remains in agricultural production systems is increasingly centered around large-scale and mechanized farming. These large-scale activities can cope with and adapt to climate change, as they have financial support. The ability of small-scale farmers to respond to climate variability and droughts is hampered by their limited access to technology and credit. In the end, this forces people living in rural areas to migrate to cities in pursuit of employment. With so many people living in urban areas worldwide, it is critical to analyze how climate variability and change will affect urban migration trends. This is a critical area of policy concern. The relationship between climate change, rural–urban migration and the transfer of poverty is at the center of the complex manifestation of climate change and perpetuation of poverty in many developing countries.

THE LINK BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE, RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION, AND POVERTY TRANSFER

In the last ten years or so, the scientific community has been increasingly interested in the connection between population mobility and climate change. The interest has also extended to how these movements manifest into poverty transfer from rural to urban areas. This is undoubtedly not an easy process to understand. Delazeri et al. (2022: 2159) state that the "interactions between climate-induced environmental changes and migration are complex and highly context-specific, mediated not only by the type and severity of climate drivers but also by the heterogeneity and vulnerability of affected societies." Currently, poverty and urban concentration are two of the main issues facing many emerging nations. How much climate change contributes to this

process, is the question that needs to be asked. According to estimates by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), 881 million people, or 30% of the urban population in developing nations, reside in slums (Lucci et al., 2018). This urban concentration, which is constantly expanding in many emerging nations, poses significant hurdles to the process of development. Bearing in mind that climate change-related hazards are not slowing down, more people will continue to leave rural areas to search for survival opportunities in urban areas. As a result, although most people in the developing world currently reside in rural areas, the percentage of those in urban areas will soon climb and surpass that of people living in rural areas. Delazeri et al. (2022) highlight that the reason the numbers of migrants from rural to urban areas are drastically increasing, is that whereas climate change is a contributor, it is adding to other more common pull and push factors.

Migration is significantly influenced by several variables, including social, financial, and human capital. These include amenities such as better services. However, in countries like Sudan and Guinea, "socio-economic factors such as high illiteracy level, heavy dependence on climate-sensitive livelihoods, less diversification of income sources and limited access to climate change information contributed to the high vulnerability of the rural population," fueling their desire to move to urban areas (Dumenu and Obeng, 2016: 208). Households therefore use migration as a tactic to diversify their sources of income and to insure themselves against the risks associated with climate catastrophes. Unfortunately, there have been many challenges associated with the movement of people from rural to urban areas. For instance, high levels of urban concentration have received unwelcome attitudes by officials and other well-off urban residents (Dube and Phiri, 2013; Husain, 2015; Nawrotzki et al., 2015; Tacoli et al., 2015; Araos et al., 2016). Different groups "point to claimed negative externalities of geographically concentrated poverty and irreversibility resulting from the costs of migration, which can mean that migrants to urban areas cannot easily return to their former standard of living in rural areas" (Ravallion et al., 2007: 667). Sekkat (2017) also notes that the concentration in cities leads to traffic jams and environmental deterioration, which lower productivity and raise poverty. Although not all immigrants live in poverty, they are frequently held responsible for the rise in urban poverty. Other challenges include the inability of the migrants, particularly the poor ones, to find adequate housing and to access services. Because most low-income and informal settlements lack basic infrastructure, most of these individuals who live in informal settlements work long hours in low-paying, unstable, and dangerous employment, and are exposed to a variety of environmental risks. Lucci et al. (2018: 297) highlight that "whereas urban poverty may be underestimated, it has implications for targeting interventions and allocating resources in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development." The other dilemma is that poor urban populations, such as those living in informal settlements, are often undercounted, and the indicators used to measure basic deprivations do not provide policymakers with the information they need to formulate and implement policies

to tackle urban scarcities (Lucci and Bhatkal, 2014). To develop suitable policies to address the actual problems encountered by the impoverished urban population, it is crucial to increase awareness and comprehension of deprivation in urban situations.

MITIGATION AND ADAPTATION STRATEGIES

While it is known globally that rural vulnerabilities and poverty are more severe than urban ones, there is evidence of growing levels of helplessness and despair in urban areas. Put differently, the notion that most of the extreme poverty in the developing countries occurs in rural areas is an assumption of development policymaking, although this has significantly changed in the last several years (Ravallion et al., 2007). In fact, some experts think that urban poverty is becoming a bigger issue than rural poverty. With climate change as one of the reinforcers of these changes, emphasizing the need for assessing the susceptibility of local communities to climate change and highlighting the necessity of area-specific measures and policies to mitigate vulnerability and improve adaptation in both urban and rural regions are crucial (Alam et al., 2017; Ali and Erenstein, 2017; Sekkat, 2017; Lucci et al., 2018; Delazeri et al., 2022). However, what is more important for the climate response strategies to work is to ensure that those affected are involved from the beginning of any intervention. The effectiveness of climate change plans hinges on comprehending the perspectives of all stakeholders, including those in rural and urban areas. These include the policymakers, community members, farmers, and nongovernmental civil society organizations, to mention a few. Since climate change adaptation tactics vary over time, from place to place, and even within cultures, a variety of players must be included for any program to be successful (Tacoli et al., 2015; Araos et al., 2016; Dumenu and Obeng, 2016; Alam et al., 2017). It is not surprising that any development-related interventions, including those targeting the impact of climate change, are likely to be met with challenges. High levels of vulnerability to factors beyond climate change make it difficult to have a specific climate-related response without first addressing other social ills. For instance, in urban areas it is difficult to address climate change without considering urban poverty, particularly in slums or informal settlements, where the majority of the poorest people are found in cities of the developing world.

When we conceptualize the poor as being vulnerable, we imply that they are either unable to adapt to the negative impacts of poverty, inequality, and other social problems such as extremes and variability in the climate, or that they are susceptible to them. Thus, the intervention to assist such people requires a thorough consideration of "the complex combinations of socio-economic, political and environmental factors that act and interact to influence vulnerability to climate change, the magnitude of the resultant impact and the set of coping or adaptation strategies that are developed in response to the impacts" (Dumenu and Obeng, 2016: 209). It is evident that these vulnerable populations do not have the necessary adaptive capacity to deal with the effects of climate change (Tacoli et al., 2015). However, what is important is to assist

them to sufficiently respond to the challenges they are facing. Some of the main issues that need urgent attention to succeed, include the approaches to addressing social vulnerability. Equivalent to the system's capacity, social vulnerability is primarily influenced by socio-economic variables such as income distribution, asset ownership, gender, ethnicity, poverty, and source of income. Overcoming the challenges associated with social vulnerability is crucial in alleviating the added pressure from climate-related stressors to both urban and rural poor communities. Initiatives and programs that acknowledge the many needs of diverse households and individuals, including migrants, and that are inclusive of all low-income groups have a greater chance of successfully eliminating poverty in both urban and rural areas, when considering various locations and circumstances.

In urban areas, "policies to address issues related to climate-induced migration must focus on both facilitating migration and assisting vulnerable segments of the population who remain in place, as the less-educated rural population whose livelihoods depend on the agricultural activity" (Delazeri et al., 2022: 2159). Access to information to facilitate a participatory approach toward these initiatives should be encouraged. Strategic communication and an aggressive dissemination effort aimed at addressing both urban and rural populations should be employed to improve access to climate change knowledge. Such data should be packaged and disseminated using context-specific methods and technologies. For example, targeted radio broadcasts, local-language pamphlets, and door-to-door awareness visits could be used to maximum effect in rural areas. In urban areas, targeted television broadcasts, social media, and billboards could be used. The creation of information hubs and the use of mobile communications services could potentially enable communities in both urban and rural areas to better meet their needs to access climate change information. This indicates that more financial resources need to be invested in educating communities about climate change and how it affects both rural and urban livelihoods.

All these efforts play a major part in enhancing urban and rural climate change adaptation. In contrast to mitigation, which allows for the measurement of greenhouse gas emissions to assess the efficacy of policy measures, adaptation lacks comparable "off-the-shelf" measurements (Araos et al., 2016). It is challenging to determine the impact of these efforts when the targeted communities continue to experience unaddressed poverty. Also, the fast-paced impact of climate change on small-scale agriculture and food production that ultimately leads to food insecurity, makes it even more difficult to measure the success of adaptation. Whereas commercial and more-established farmers are adapting to climate change, their small-scale counterparts are facing lower food production security levels, resulting in higher levels of poverty. The small-scale farmers have low adaptive capacity compared to the commercial and large-scale farmers. The latter can promote local adaptation efforts and so increase the resilience of farming practices by having access to financing and information about suitable strategies. According to Alam et al. (2017), for small-scale farmers to

succeed, it is critical that they have local-level knowledge of adaptation to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable households against risks and to deal with climate change and variability. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2007) has centered discussions on developing adaptation solutions based on local knowledge about adaptation. This underscores the importance of developing and integrating adaptation strategies alongside local knowledge and systems that communities have been using for years.

GOVERNMENT POLICY RESPONSES TO THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

The nexus between climate change and rural–urban migration features a broader socio-economic dimension of climate impacts. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, climate change poses a severe threat to rainfed agricultural systems, which are essential for the livelihoods of a significant portion of the rural population (Serdeczny et al., 2017). The disruption caused by climate variability is not only jeopardizing food security but also triggering a notable increase in rural–urban migration. This migration exacerbates urbanization pressures and contributes to rising poverty levels in cities (2017). According to the World Bank (2015), in 2015 the sub-Saharan African region had the highest proportion of people living below the poverty line in relation to all world regions. This means that as climate-induced pressures drive people from rural areas to urban spaces, cities face increased demands on infrastructure and services.

In recognition of the impacts of climate change, governments are adopting a range of climate laws aimed at reducing emissions, promoting renewable energy, and enhancing adaptation measures (Akpuokwe et al., 2024). Within Africa, regions such as North and Southern Africa, including countries like Morocco, Cape Verde, and Ghana, have demonstrated commendable performance in climate policy implementation (Epule et al., 2021). The authors argue that these regions' showcasing of effective integration of climate change considerations suggests that the potential for success is great when strong policy frameworks and governance structures are in place. The post-Paris Agreement era has also seen a wave of legislative reforms across African nations aimed at enhancing climate governance. In this regard, Kenya's Climate Change Act of 2016 and the new South African Climate Change Act 22 of 2024 exemplify efforts to integrate both mitigation and adaptation strategies into national frameworks (Rumble, 2019). These legislative measures are designed to establish comprehensive mechanisms for addressing climate impacts, from greenhouse gas reduction to resilience building. Effective governance structures and coordinated climate actions are pivotal in translating these legislative efforts into tangible outcomes.

Regionally, efforts in East Africa to develop gender-responsive climate policies illustrate a commitment to inclusive and equitable climate action. However, these policies face significant implementation hurdles, primarily because of inadequate resource allocation and insufficient attention to the root causes of climate challenges. For instance, Uganda's focus on clean energy and Kenya's Climate Change Act, which

promote renewable energy, reflect positive steps (Namanya, 2016). Nonetheless, without robust support and effective execution, these initiatives may fall short of achieving their intended impact. This underscores a critical need for enhancing resource mobilization and addressing systemic issues in policy implementation. Likewise, most West African countries have also developed climate policies that comprehensively address various sectors, including agriculture, energy, water resource management, and health (Sorgho et al., 2020). These authors further argued that given agriculture's high vulnerability to climate change, it receives particular emphasis. This sectoral approach reflects a broader recognition of the need for diverse and targeted strategies to mitigate climate impacts and enhance resilience across different facets of society. The integration of climate considerations into multiple sectors is crucial for building a robust and adaptive response to climate challenges.

CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH AGENDA

The climate change condition is paradoxical in Africa because the continent contributes minimally to global anthropogenic emissions but faces severe and multifaceted impacts from climate change, including changes in hydroclimate, biodiversity, and wildfire dynamics that are already prevalent across Africa (Al-zu'bi et al., 2022; Overland et al., 2022). This discrepancy highlights a significant injustice in the global climate narrative and the impacts are exacerbated by the continent's limited capacity to respond effectively because of economic constraints and underdeveloped infrastructure (Ogega et al., 2022).

One of the primary challenges in Africa is the limited capacity for climate change research, with less than 0.5% of the mean gross domestic product (GDP) invested in research and development (Ogega et al., 2022). Strengthening this capacity is crucial, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, which is particularly vulnerable to climate impacts. Adequate resourcing and investment in research infrastructure are essential to build a robust knowledge base and develop effective adaptation and mitigation strategies. Other challenges include insufficient use of modern technologies, models, climate change scenarios, and earth observation products (Kapuka et al., 2022). Funding trends show that there was no significant increase in climate-related research funding for Africa from developed countries after 2015, which is concerning, given the growing need for mitigation research to support a low-carbon, climate-resilient future (Overland et al., 2022). However, as Africa's population, economy, and energy consumption grow, there is an urgent need for research that focuses on mitigation strategies alongside adaptation, particularly to investigate the nexus between climate crisis, migration, and urbanization in the context of sub-Saharan Africa. Nonetheless, the lack of funding undermines the continent's ability to contribute to and benefit from global climate solutions.

A wide range of climate change research has been conducted in different parts of Africa in key thematic areas, including equitable urban transitions, the resilience of smallholder farmers, and the management of hydroclimate extremes (Al-Zu'bi et

al., 2022). There is also a focus on just energy transitions, the intersection of climate with diversity and ecosystem services, and health impacts of aerosol mitigation (Overland et al., 2022). This diversity in research topics reflects the multifaceted nature of climate impacts in Africa, necessitating an inclusive approach to climate research that encompasses environmental, social, and economic dimensions. Further research is needed in terms of the extent to which climate change policies and strategies integrate gender issues, including promoting gender mainstreaming and budgeting in the context of rural–urban migration (Ampaire et al., 2020). Namanya (2016) also points out that detailed analysis is needed to provide deeper insight on the relevance and effectiveness of climate change policy and legal frameworks in energy, agriculture, infrastructure, and water resource management. Furthermore, Sorgho et al. (2020) stress that evaluating the implementation of climate change action in individual countries is paramount.

CONCLUSION

This article demonstrates that climate impacts livelihoods in rural areas, prompting rural–urban migration. Climate change hurts agricultural outputs, rural jobs and income, and subsistence living, compelling people to move to towns and cities. The primary drivers and patterns of migration from rural to urban areas because of climate change are diverse, and contextual. Broadly, the main reasons why people move from rural areas include: lack of income-earning opportunities; less diversification of income and livelihoods; resource scarcity; higher urban incomes; and access to basic services in urban areas. However, the influx of rural migrants as a result of climate change affects poverty levels and socio-economic conditions in urban areas. The expected opportunities are not always available in urban areas, and such migration contributes to rapid urbanization, causing challenges and pressure on housing, service delivery, and the mushrooming of informal illegal settlements. To address the problem of climate change, governments are adopting different climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, including laws and fiscal measures, to reduce emissions. Furthermore, in view of supporting government responses, research in climate change mitigation should be enhanced in sub-Saharan Africa through strengthening capacity and resource allocations.

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Institutionalizing Anti-Migrant Discourse in Public Healthcare: An Analysis of Medical Xenophobia against Zimbabwean Migrant Women in Johannesburg

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Abstract

The provision of healthcare services to African migrants within the South African public healthcare system has been characterized as marred by medical xenophobia. While the literature on xenophobia in the country draws connections between xenophobic violence and how the migrant is characterized through demeaning metaphors in the media and the political space, medical xenophobia literature somewhat remains with the burden of categorically connecting specific practices that constitute medical xenophobia with the broader anti-migrant discourse. Drawing on the narratives of Zimbabwean migrant women seeking antenatal care services within the public healthcare system in Johannesburg, this paper analyzes the utterances and practices of some healthcare providers to draw connections with the anti-migrant narratives obtaining in the media, the political space, and certain anti-migrant formations (bearers of discourse). Like studies before it, this paper observes medical xenophobia and relying on Foucault's disciplinary power as a conceptual tool, it argues that the utterances by some public healthcare professionals are indeed unabridged rearticulations of the normalized anti-migrant discourse in various sites bearing anti-migrant discourse. While acknowledging that some bureaucrats' practices are tangential to the anti-migrant discourse, which decouples their individual actions from the discursive norm, the paper maintains that the standardized anti-migrant discourse for the large part provides frames of reference for some healthcare providers on how to perceive and treat the migrant patient, as their utterances are a restage of this discourse, usually with little to no annotations.

Keywords: medical xenophobia, discourse, Zimbabwean, South Africa, migrants, public healthcare

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INTRODUCTION

The provision of healthcare services to African migrants within the South African public healthcare sector is characterized as marred by "medical xenophobia," which Crush and Tawodzera (2014) define as the discrimination of the migrant "others" based on their non-national presence. The challenges that migrants face when seeking care are documented by many. These include verbal and physical abuse, language barriers, and in some cases the demand for documentation and user fees (Lefko-Everett, 2008; Vearey and Nunez, 2010; Hunter-Adams and Rother, 2017; Makandwa and Vearey, 2017). Some characterize these as medical xenophobia (Crush and Tawodzera, 2014; Zihindula et al., 2017; Chekero and Ross, 2018; Munyaneza and Mhlongo, 2019).

The characterization of these challenges as medical xenophobia has not gone unchallenged. Crush and Tawodzera (2014) caution against a broad application of the term, citing how locals also face challenges within the public healthcare system, a fact that has been observed by many (Jewkes et al., 1998; Vearey, 2012, 2014; Oosthuizen et al., 2017; Maphumulo and Bhengu, 2019). Vanyoro (2019) also critiques the idea of medical xenophobia or the indiscriminate exclusion of migrants, documenting how public healthcare providers, as street-level bureaucrats, draw upon other philosophies like "therapeutic citizenship" and "bureaucratic incorporation" to ensure that migrants get access to medical help.

Another key consideration in the interrogation of the idea of medical xenophobia is the health system itself that is characterized by significant systemic challenges. Thus, while medical xenophobia indeed exists, as some challenges that migrants face are very specific to them and stem from their nationality, some studies argue that the context of service provision should be considered. The South African public health sector faces significant challenges that include brain drain, heavy workloads, understaffing, and the burden of communicable diseases like HIV and AIDS, which incapacitates the system to satisfactorily meet the needs of all health help-seekers (Jewkes et al., 1998; de Jager, 2009; Kruger and Schoombee, 2010; Maphumulo and Bhengu, 2019; Malakoane et al., 2020). However, while the considerations of these factors should be key in understanding the complex terrain of health help-seeking in the public healthcare sector, they should not be the premise for bundling the experiences of migrants with those of citizens. Anti-migrant attitudes mediate the experiences of migrants when they seek healthcare.

The studies that highlight medical xenophobia observe that healthcare providers harbor anti-migrant sentiments, which are manifested in how they deal with migrant patients (Crush and Tawodzera, 2014; Zihindula et al., 2017; Munyaneza and Mhlongo, 2019). However, while the literature argues – mostly in a cursory fashion – that these anti-migrant sentiments are reflective of the broader sentiments that permeate sections of the society, it is mostly preoccupied with the excavation of specific practices that constitute medical xenophobia (the "what" aspect of the issue). While we have literature that discuss general xenophobia in

the republic (Crush, 2001, 2008; Crush and Pendleton, 2004; Landau et al., 2005; Neocosmos, 2006; Misago, 2016) and literature that draws connections between this xenophobia and how migrants are characterized in the media and other spaces (Danso and McDonald, 2001; Mawadza and Crush, 2010; Mawadza, 2012; Banda and Mawadza, 2015; Tarisayi and Manik, 2020), migration and health literature, especially on medical xenophobia, remains saddled with the burden of clearly drawing links between the discursive framing of the migrant (in the media and other spaces) and this medical xenophobia.

This paper feeds into medical xenophobia literature, edifying it by attempting to draw clear links between the xenophobic practices in the public healthcare space and the discursive framing of migrants, especially in various forms of the media and the political space. By focusing on specific utterances and practices of some nurses and frontline staff, the paper argues that just as the portrayal of migrants by the media and some politicians largely informs xenophobic practices in sections of the wider society (Danso and McDonald, 2001; Mawadza and Crush, 2010; Banda and Mawadza, 2015; Tarisayi and Manik, 2020), the same discursive framing of the migrant provides a template for certain nurses and frontline staff on how to perceive and interact with migrant patients. The paper argues that discourse informs practice, and certain practices in the public healthcare bureaucracy are indeed almost a mirror image of the discourse obtaining in the media and the political spaces, as this discourse is rearticulated with little to no annotations.

MIGRATION AND HEALTH IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa is a popular destination for migrants in the region, dating from the migrant labor regime under apartheid (Crush, 1992; Crush et al., 1995) to the present day where migration is now more a result of people seeking better livelihoods and fleeing conflict and environmental hazards (Landau and Wa Kabwe Segatti, 2009; Crush et al., 2017; Stats SA, 2022). The number of foreign-born populations in the country has increased over the years. The 2022 census recorded 2,4 million migrants, which is a considerable increase from 800,000 in 1996 (Stats SA, 2022). Most of the migrants are young adults between the ages of 20 and 44 years, which partly explains why the establishing of families in the country is becoming a norm (Polzer, 2008; Crush and Tevera, 2010).

As migrants establish themselves in the country, the need for healthcare services arises. It must, however, be noted that healthcare is not the primary reason why migrants are in the country. While a handful of migrants are indeed in the country for medical reasons (Pophiwa, 2009; Crush et al., 2012; Vearey et al., 2018), for many, the need for healthcare only arises once they are in the country. South Africa has a two-tier health system – the private health system that offers world-class services to those who afford, and the state-funded public health system relied upon by large sections of the population (Crush and Tawodzera, 2014). The citizens must therefore share services with migrants within the public system, most of whom

do not afford the private sector. This system that these populations rely on grapples with many systemic challenges that incapacitates it to satisfactorily meet the needs of its own citizens (Coovadia et al., 2009; de Jager, 2009; Crush and Tawodzera, 2014; Maphumulo and Bhengu, 2019; Malakoane et al., 2020). The system is therefore met with an additional task of providing services to an increasing migrant population, which is coupled with often unclear and confusing policies regarding migrants' access to healthcare services in the sector.

On the surface, the country's policy on migrants' access to health services is progressive. The National Health Act of 2003 guarantees access to basic health services for all, and it guarantees free access for all pregnant and lactating women, and for children under the age of six (RSA, 2004). Section 27 (g) of the 1998 Refugees Act also guarantees refugees the same access to treatment as citizens. However, sub-national policies are vague on these provisions. In Gauteng province, where this study was conducted, the Hospitals Ordinance 14 of 1958 does not mention free services for all pregnant and lactating women and children under six (Section27, 2022). The 2020 Gauteng Department of Health's Circular 27, Policy Implementation Guidelines on Patient Administration and Revenue Management (Gauteng DOH, 2020), sections of which were deemed illegal by the Johannesburg High Court after litigation (Khumalo, 2023), classified all non-citizens as full-paying patients, and it has been argued how these gray areas in policy usually lead to the disenfranchisement of migrant patients, as some medical staff manipulate this schism in policy to deny migrant patients services (Section27, 2022). This partly explains why some boldly characterize the practices of some nurses and frontline staff as medical xenophobia (Crush and Tawodzera, 2014; Zihindula et al., 2017; Munyaneza and Mhlongo, 2019). This paper, while acknowledging the systemic challenges within the public healthcare system and the attendant confusing policy, supports the medical xenophobia explanation. However, to fully understand the premise of medical xenophobia, it is critical to locate it within the broader xenophobia literature.

METAPHORICAL FRAMING OF MIGRANTS AND XENOPHOBIA IN SOUTH AFRICA

Intolerance against African immigrants is as old as the democratic dispensation itself. The failure by the democratic government in alleviating poverty and delivering on electoral promises has left many citizens disgruntled (Tshitereke, 1999; Crush, 2008; Adjai and Lazaridis, 2013). This disgruntlement is often directed at African migrants with whom they share space and limited resources in the once "forbidden cities" (Landau et al., 2005). Migrants are perceived as hindering the full enjoyment of the fruits of democracy, and consequently, there have been periodic and sustained violent attacks against migrants in the republic (Crush, 2001, 2008; Crush and Pendleton, 2004; Neocosmos, 2006; Adjai and Lazaridis, 2013; Misago, 2016).

The media has been seriously implicated in the negative characterization of migrants through demeaning metaphors that are drawn upon by certain sections of the population in their attacks of migrants (Mawadza and Crush, 2010; Polzer and Takabvirwa, 2010; Mawadza, 2012; Adjai and Lazaridis, 2013; Banda and Mawadza, 2015; Tarisayi and Manik, 2021). For example, aquatic metaphors like "waves," "tides," "flowing," "pouring," which exaggerate the numbers of migrants in the country are frequently used (Mawadza and Crush, 2010). These cast migrants as invaders and a burden on the country. Indeed, migrants have been blamed for "stealing" jobs, abusing the system by living at the expense of taxpayers, and for overwhelming and swamping the healthcare and other systems (Tshitereke, 1999; Banda and Mawadza, 2015). The global literature has observed how this framing of migrants through this crisis lens constructs individual perceptions of the social order (Sides and Citrin, 2007; Moore et al., 2012; Gallagher, 2014; Blinder and Jeannet, 2018). In South Africa, tabloid and other forms of media, which have also been accused of overly focusing on undocumented migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, while ignoring skilled migrants (Tarisayi and Manik, 2021), have been implicated in being responsible for how the general news consumers perceive and respond to immigration and migrants (Wasserman, 2010; Kariithi, 2017).

As argued by Moore et. al (2012), these narratives have a political thrust, as political parties with anti-migrant agenda pursue them. The recent election cycles in South Africa have been marked with various political parties drawing on the anti-migrant discourse for political expediency (Mashego and Malefane, 2017; Bornman, 2018, 2019b, 2019a, 2024; Madia, 2018; Mailovich, 2018; Davis, 2019; Fogel, 2019; Machinya, 2022). For example, in 2018, the then Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi was on record for accusing migrants of flooding South Africa and overburdening the public health system (Heleta, 2018; Moodley, 2018). In 2017, the then Minister of Police, Fikile Mbalula, was also on record for blaming ex-Zimbabwean soldiers residing in the country for violent crimes (Maromo, 2017). Across the opposition political aisle, in 2017, Herman Mashaba, former mayor of Johannesburg and now leader of the Action SA party, was recorded blaming illegal immigrants for holding the country to ransom and for causing unemployment (Chaskalson, 2017). At the time of writing, he was canvasing people to "investigate" spaza shops run by migrants, which he blames for acting as fronts for criminal activities (Kgobotlo, 2024). Gayton Mackenzie, the leader of the Patriotic Alliance party, has also become popular on the political scene with his anti-migrant rhetoric. For example, at the launch of his 2024 national elections' manifesto in Orlando Stadium in Soweto, he was quoted accusing "illegal" foreigners as devils sent to sell drugs to South Africans, and he went on to blame migrants for unemployment in the country (Moichela, 2023; HRW, 2024). If elected, he threatened, he was going to go to Rahima Moosa Hospital to switch off the oxygen supply for foreigners (Mlambo, 2023). While the efficacy of these narratives on substantive electoral gains is yet to be established, politicians still cling to the anti-migrant discourse.

Besides the political space, certain formations in society also harness and reinforce these anti-migrant narratives. Of note is the Put South Africans First (PSAF) movement, which is a social media formation that became popular around 2019 by mobilizing the citizens around hashtags like "All foreigners must leave," "We want our country back," and "Clean South Africa" (Dratwa, 2023), and these messages found articulation on the ground through Operation Dudula, a militant group that queries the membership and presence of foreign nationals in the country (Nhemachena et al., 2022). The media and politicians are thus very central in framing the narratives around immigration, and these draw from and influence the other.

These narratives, Neocosmos (2006) argues, are coopted into various government departments. For example, the Department of Home Affairs has been accused of being xenophobic in its dealing with asylum-permit applications for refugees and other visas (Adjai and Lazaridis, 2013; Johnson, 2015; Khan and Lee, 2018; Carciotto, 2021). Similarly, the South African Police Services (SAPS) is also known for abusing and preying on especially undocumented migrants from whom they occasionally demand bribes (Harris, 2001; Valji, 2004; Nduru, 2005; Vahed and Desai, 2008; Polzer and Takabvirwa, 2010; Adjai and Lazaridis, 2013).

Those who allude to medical xenophobia base their arguments on the institutionalization of anti-migrant narratives in the public health system. The literature on medical xenophobia (Crush and Tawodzera, 2014; Zihindula et al., 2017; Munyaneza and Mhlongo, 2019), including those who sparingly allude to this term (Alfaro-Velcamp, 2017; Hunter-Adams and Rother, 2017; Makandwa and Vearey, 2017; White et al., 2020), argue that the institutionalization of the anti-migrant discourse is in the public healthcare space. However, it still remains to be categorically ascertained how the practices of healthcare providers (nurses and frontline staff) are specifically indicative and reflective of the discursive norm on migrants. This article, while far from being a comprehensive discussion on this topic, feeds into the above literature, arguing that medical xenophobia indeed exists. Moreover, the utterances and practices of some healthcare providers seem to prove that the anti-migrant discourse that populate the media and the political and other platforms is co-opted by some public healthcare bureaucrats in its raw form, and it provides a mental roadmap for perceiving and dealing with migrants.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: DISCIPLINARY POWER

This paper uses the concept *disciplinary power*, particularly nibbling on the notions of the *discursive norm* or *normalization* (Foucault, 1977, 1978, 1982), to articulate how the dominant forms of "knowledge" about migration from various forms of the media and the political space assumes the authority of truth. It also shows how this "knowledge" is materially enacted and embodied in the practices of some public healthcare professionals toward migrant patients. In a profound shift in the understanding of how power operates in modern societies, Michel Foucault (1977, 1982) coined the term *disciplinary power* to represent more subtle and pervasive

mechanisms of control (opposed to spectacular forms found in sovereign power). These control mechanisms are embedded in everyday life, shaping individuals and populations through a complex web of institutions, norms, and practices. Shifting focus from the body as the primary site of power, Foucault argues that *disciplinary power* targets the mind, behavior, and identity of individuals. More specifically, it is concerned with the regulation of daily life, the management of time, space, activity, and the creation of a self-regulating subject who internalizes the superior norm and discourse that permeate the society (Haugaard, 1997; Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014).

Foucault provides the mechanisms for such form of power, one of them being *normalization* (standardization/universalization), which is a process by which standards of behavior are established, against which individuals are measured, judged, and corrected. This is facilitated by systems of knowledge (institutions) that claim to know the individual, or any communication and representation (verbal or otherwise) that enables activity or limits it (Johnston, 1991; Nadesan, 2008; Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014). According to Foucault (1977, 1978, 1982), individuals are manufactured and reconstituted (subjectification) through these systems of knowledge that provide fields of comparisons and frames of reference for individuals on how to perceive and respond to the political and social order. Thus, to Foucault, "analyzing power must then embrace an analysis of how subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organizations, forces, energies, material desires, thoughts etc." (Kelly, 1994: 35). This paper harnesses these thoughts, arguing that the anti-migrant discourse in platforms like the media, the political space, and other societal formations constitutes systems of knowledge that shape how some healthcare providers perceive and interact with the migrant patient.

Of course, Foucault has been criticized for this focus on the microphysics of power. Some, coming from a Marxist perspective, critique Foucault's analytics of power for negating economic and material dimensions of life (Fraser, 1981; Wacquant, 1989). Others, coming from a humanist position of a free and rational subject, criticize Foucault's conceptualization of power for limiting the possibility of agency, democratic participation, resistance and social transformation, and the moral dimensions of everyday life (Fraser, 1981; Honneth and Roberts, 1986; Shapiro, 1986; Butler, 1989; Hartsock, 1989; Diamond et al., 1990). Indeed, a laser focus on microphysics of power does not envision that people, while being subjects of discourse, exercise agency, and they may draw from other philosophies that either inadvertently or overtly stage resistance against dominant narratives. As this paper observes, and as has been observed elsewhere (Vanyoro, 2019), some healthcare providers exercise agency and discretion in their encounter with migrant patients, which certainly decouple their practices from the dominant anti-migrant discourse.

Thus, while acknowledging the above shortfalls of *disciplinary power*, the paper nevertheless maintains that the concept is useful in the understanding of how individual behavior is not autonomous of dominant and prevailing forms of knowledge. Using this concept, the paper draws attention to how the practices and

utterances of some healthcare providers are reflective and indicative of the anti-migrant discourse that has been standardized and normalized in the media, the political space, and certain societal formations. This discourse, the paper posits, shapes the perceptions and practices of certain healthcare providers, as their utterances are largely a rearticulation of this discourse in its exact form.

METHODS

This paper is part of the author's PhD project, which broadly focuses on how Zimbabwean migrant women navigate maternal health inequities in South Africa, therefore the narratives are from 13 Zimbabwean migrant women (see Table 1) who have been in the country from as early as 2008. The paper focuses on the utterances and practices that the participants attribute to nurses and frontline staff in their interactions in healthcare facilities. Furthermore, the paper attempts to draw parallels with the anti-migrant discourse that populates certain platforms outside the healthcare facilities, especially in the conventional media, political discourse, and narratives from other anti-migrant platforms in the community and on social media platforms.

Table 1: Study population

Participant	Years in South Africa	Stated Age	Residence
Nyasha	8	35	Ebony Park
Samantha	12	Undisclosed	Ivory Park
Faith	7	30	Rabie Ridge
Mai Brenda	9	32	Ivory Park
Seda	11	37	Ivory Park
Mberi	12	40	Rabie Ridge
Jessica	16	38	Ebony Park
Chipo	11	39	Ivory Park
Octavia	15	42	Ebony Park
VaMasibanda	6	29	Ivory Park
Mai Precious	5	Undisclosed	Ivory Park
Mary	7	Undisclosed	Rabie Ridge
Gwaumbu	6	26	Ivory Park

Source: Author's own work

The author conducted the study in Ivory Park, Ebony Park, and Rabie Ridge, suburbs located in Midrand, which is situated in the north of Johannesburg and encompasses suburbs around the N1 highway north of the Jukskei River. I should therefore make

it clear that the analysis in the paper largely applies to this context, though through extrapolation, the findings may be useful in understanding other contexts as the narratives of the participants here corroborate those in studies outside this context.

The suburbs in this study, which are adjacent to each other, fall under the Johannesburg Metropolitan Municipality and are all adjacent to the township of Tembisa, which is under the Ekurhuleni Municipality. Therefore, participants in this study use various healthcare facilities in both municipalities, especially Tembisa Hospital, which is the only referral hospital closer to where the participants live. Also, while some participants may reside in Ivory Park, it is usually convenient for them to use facilities in Tembisa, as some of these facilities are much closer to them than the ones situated in Ivory Park. Within these suburbs, Black Africans constitute almost 99% of the population (Stats SA, 2022). While data on the number of migrants within the space is unavailable in census reports, the author, through regular prior visits to a relative in Ivory Park, observed that the suburbs host a significant number of African migrants, especially Zimbabweans, which made the place a convenient site for the author's PhD project.

The focus on Zimbabwean nationals was justified by the fact that Zimbabwe contributes a large portion of migrants in the country as a result of the deteriorating political and economic situation in that country (Polzer, 2008; Crush and Tevera, 2010; Chiumbu and Musemwa, 2015). The recent South African 2022 census report records Zimbabweans in the country as a little over 1 million, which is 45% of the migrant population (Stats SA, 2022: 31). However, owing to border porosity and inadequate record keeping by the government, these official statistics may not be an accurate reflection of the actual numbers of immigrants in the country (Chekero and Ross, 2018; Chekero and Morreira, 2020).

The study used purposive and snowballing sampling to recruit participants, and the author benefited from existing networks in Ivory Park to recruit more participants. Interviews ranged between 30 and 75 minutes; all participants consented to the recording of the interviews and pseudonyms were used throughout the study. The researcher obtained ethics (non-medical) approval from the University of the Witwatersrand. Obtaining data from women was not an easy task, especially considering that the researcher is a man. For women, especially the married or those living with intimate partners, the author provided a leeway for the partners to be joint participants in the interviews. The interviews, which were semi-structured, were conducted in Shona, the native language of most of the participants and the author. The interview audios were transcribed into English and the author repeatedly listened to and read them to generate themes; this was done using thematic content analysis. Three main themes were discovered: physical and verbal abuse, the demand for user fees, and the demand for passports. The author observed that the utterances accompanying these practices were in most cases a mirror image of anti-migrant articulations in the media, the political space, and certain anti-migrant formations gaining considerable popularity in the community.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Verbal and physical abuse: Rearticulation of the numbers and burden nomenclature

The characterization of migrants as a burden and coming in numbers into the country to swamp the public healthcare system permeates the media and the political space (Mawadza and Crush, 2010; Banda and Mawadza, 2015; Matlala, 2018; Moodley, 2018; Tarisayi and Manik, 2020). In this study, these same characterizations were rearticulated, with no annotations, by some nurses whose verbal and physical abuse of migrant patients was accompanied by these characterizations. For example, Samantha, who delivered her baby in 2022 at Esangweni Clinic in Tembisa, narrated how she was verbally abused by attending nurses who were complaining about how foreign nationals come into the republic to burden them with work. According to her, some of the nurses were shouting at her, saying how they wished for Operation Dudula to come and take all the foreigners away:

> That day, I was assisted by a male midwife. Another woman came … to assist the man. The man was okay, he was never rough with me, but the woman was rough. I had stitches done on me, and she did it without giving me an injection. She did it live. She said for me not to make any movement, and if I did and smear her with my blood, things were not going to be good for me. The man had the injection to administer, but the woman objected to it. … She actually said that foreigners come all the way here to burden them with work. She asked why I did not go back to Zimbabwe to deliver instead of burdening them with work. … They were casually saying, "Call you father, Mugabe, from the grave to help you," because I was pushing before eight centimeters (cervix dilation). I was feeling that I should push, but they were objecting. I pushed anyway and the child came out, yet they were saying I shouldn't. … They will be saying that foreigners are coming to burden them with work. The day I went for three days (postnatal follow-up visit) to the clinic with this child, … they were saying they wish for Dudula to come and take us all because we were coming to burden them ... They will be saying, "Go back to your country, don't you have hospitals there?" (Samantha, interview, Ivory Park, 6 April 2024).

The casual references to Operation Dudula, an anti-migrant group known for crude and violent attacks against African migrants (Masweneng, 2022; Nhemachena et al., 2022) directly locates some of the nurses' utterances in the discourse of anti-migrant formations that popularize anti-migrant discourse. Participants in this study continued to narrate their ill-treatment in public healthcare facilities, with the healthcare professionals constantly blaming them for inundating the system. Nyasha, who also delivered her baby at Esangweni Clinic in 2017, narrated how the nurses were shouting at her, citing how Zimbabweans are bothering them and how the

people with the name "Nyasha" were many and becoming a problem, implying that Zimbabweans are many and crippling the system:

> I gave birth there, but it was not easy there. They were always shouting at us saying, "Your doctors are doing nothing in Zimbabwe, while you are busy bothering us here in South Africa. I have just helped another patient by the name Nyasha. You Nyashas are troublesome. The Nyashas are becoming a problem here" (Nyasha, interview, Ebony Park, 24 February 2024).

Similarly, Faith explained how she was ill-treated at Tembisa Hospital in 2021. She cited verbal abuse from nurses, whom she claimed were blaming Zimbabweans for being too many and for coming into the country for their maternal health needs:

> I was ill-treated at Tembisa Hospital. They don't like foreigners, especially those from Zimbabwe. They will be shouting at us saying, "You Zimbabweans are coming in numbers to deliver here … you are delivering here in numbers," and many other things they were saying (Faith, interview, Rabie Ridge, 16 March 2024).

Mai Brenda, who delivered through cesarean-section (C-section) at Tembisa Hospital in 2022, also cited ill-treatment from nurses. She narrated how the nurses were uncouth and shouting, blaming migrants for coming to South Africa to deliver and to trouble them:

> I delivered the same day through C-Section. So, after I was operated on, when it comes to them giving you your baby, they throw it at you … they will be shouting at you saying, "Foreigners, you are troublesome. Your habit is to come and deliver here instead of your country. Did you not hear that you should go back home?" (Mai Brenda, interview, Ivory Park, 24 February 2024).

While migration for health help-seeking is indeed a present phenomenon in South Africa (Crush et al., 2012; Crush and Chikanda, 2015), it should not be overstated. I argue that the exaggeration of this phenomenon is directly connected to how migrants are generally characterized with regards to healthcare seeking in various spaces (Banda and Mawadza, 2015; Heleta, 2018; Matlala, 2018; Moodley, 2018). The utterance against Mai Brenda, "Did you not hear that you should go back home?" is arguably a clear indication that the specific nurse benefits from the narratives of Operation Dudula and other political figures who are on record calling for the mass deportation of foreign nationals (Mashego and Malefane, 2017; Nhemachena et al., 2022). According to Foucault, knowledge systems discipline individuals to think and act in specific ways (Foucault, 1977; Kelly, 1994; Lilja and Vinthagen, 2014). In our case, it is quite evident that the anti-migrant discourse as a system of knowledge

in the media, the political space and other societal formations disciplines, train certain individuals, and provide frames of reference for behavior, as this discourse is rearticulated in almost similar ways.

Demand of user fees: Policy implementation with undertones of popular anti-migrant discourse

As stated earlier, the policy regarding the payment of user fees is very confusing. While the National Health Act (NHA) No. 61 of 2003 precludes all pregnant and lactating women from paying user fees, the Gauteng Department of Health Circular 27 of 2020 categorized all non-citizens as full-paying patients. This has "enabled hospitals to interpret its provisions to deny pregnant women and children access to free services if they are asylum seekers [and] undocumented persons" (Section27, 2022: 8). While it is quite a simplistic view that demanding user fees is indicative of medical xenophobia, sometimes the utterances accompanying the process of demand justify this judgment. As this study observed, the statements by some frontline staff closely dovetailed with some narratives to the effect that migrants should pay for services (White et al., 2020; White and Rispel, 2021). Seda, a participant in this study, narrated how in 2020 when she used Thuthukani Clinic and Tembisa Hospital for antenatal care, she had to pay. Additionally, the frontline staff said that migrants are too many and should therefore pay – a narrative that has close links with the discourse elsewhere that migrants are abusing the system and "stealing" the birth rights of citizens (Crush and Tawodzera, 2014; Banda and Mawadza, 2015; White and Rispel, 2021):

> When I was pregnant with the first one in 2016, it was good, but for the second one (2020) it was different. There were problems now. The difference was that on every checkup they required us to pay money (R395 – approximately 22 USD). So, if you go to Tembisa for checkup, they would require money from you as a foreigner. If you don't have money, they do not tend to you … they record that you have a debt. So, it was now different. In 2016 I did not pay any money, but back in 2020 I paid lots of money, from registering until I delivered. You will not get a card without paying money. So, the difference was huge. It was very tough. … I paid R700 (approximately 38 USD) for the card. Without paying that money, you wouldn't get any help … They were saying we foreigners are too many and we are a burden, so we should pay" (Seda, interview, Ivory Park, 6 April 2024).

Considering the livelihood strategies of most participants in this study (scrap collection, house help, and small market stalls), these amounts of money are relatively significant. While the demand for payment was implementation of policy, statements related to the volumes of migrants and the burden they impose on the system highlight

how some members of staff draw on prevailing anti-migrant discourse, and the schism in policy may sometimes serve as a platform for the articulation of such discourse.

Mberi, another participant in this study, also narrated how payment is indeed required. She narrated how the frontline workers accompany the demand for payment with the narrative that if migrants do not want to pay, they should trek back home for services, which is a discourse largely situated in utterances by politicians. For example, the then (2022) Limpopo Health Member of the Executive Council, Dr. Phophi Ramathuba was recorded ranting to a Zimbabwean patient that the province did not have a budget for migrants (Monama, 2022). This rhetoric has been very popular with politicians in the past years, and it is creeping to the public healthcare sector where these narratives are repeated. Mberi narrated:

> With the current situation, … if I get ill, they will not tend to me if I don't have money to open a file … It's either I produce money, and even if I do, they will give a prescription for me to get medication elsewhere … I was told that migrants should get services back home, and if I want services here, I should pay (Mberi, interview, Rabie Ridge, 24 March 2024).

This was the case with many participants in this study. Jessica and Chipo also claimed that it is now impossible to get attended to without payment, and that frontline staff tell migrant patients that its either they pay or go back home for services – utterances that are reflective of the dominant discourse:

> Nowadays, it requires money. To register you need money. On delivery you cannot be discharged until you pay. Those days it was good. It's only becoming a problem these days … These days, people are complaining a lot. They are told that nothing is for free and if they can't stand it, they should get a bus back home. Money. Money is now required more (Jessica, interview, Ebony Park, 16 March 2024).

> It is now getting very tough these days. During the time I first gave birth (2014), it was not as tough as it is now. It is now getting very tough. The person who was registering me clearly told me that there are no free services for those who don't pay tax ...There is huge change now as compared from the beginning. When we gave birth, there was no money required. The only money that was required was for the card and the stamp. Now the monies that are required are a lot. The money can be as high as R621 (Chipo, interview, Ivory Park, 25 February 2024).

The reference to paying tax draws from the prevailing narratives, mainly by politicians who argue that migrant patients are overwhelming the system, which has no budget for foreign nationals (Banda and Mawadza, 2015; Heleta, 2018; BusinessLive, 2019;

Monama, 2022). Thus, this discourse accompanies the implementation of policies that are, of course, already confusing. Yet, as confusing as the policies are, these utterances seem to prove that implementation of policy is accompanied by broader discourse regarding the number of migrants in the country and the supposed burden they impose on the system. Other participants, while not specifically noting any phrases from the healthcare staff that mirror the universalized norms on the characterization of migrants, nevertheless narrated an over-emphasis on the demand for payments:

> On this one (second child delivered in 2021), I paid around R600. They gave me the card, but I had to pay to get a stamp so the baby would go to clinic. The stamp needed, I think, R652 or R632. Locals don't pay. I also delivered through operation (C-section), and when I went for the removal of the stitches, I paid money. It was around R300. It doesn't exceed R400, it's almost like at a private hospital … at Tembisa, they treat you bad even after paying, because you are a foreigner (Faith, interview, Rabie Ridge,16 March 2024).

> …at Tembisa, on the second child in 2019, I paid. It was foreigners only … I remember when I was getting in labor, I paid R150. When I was due to be discharged, they said the money was not enough. I remember I paid R300. If you haven't paid, they will not give you the baby's card, the one you use to go to scale (postnatal checkups) with … [the reason was being] a foreigner. They will say you have no papers … you have no proper documentation. But even if you had a passport, they made you pay (Mai Octavia, interview, Ebony Park, 23 March 2024).

When Mai Octavia and Chipo delivered in 2019, the Gauteng Circular 27 of 2020 that categorized migrants as full-paying patients was not yet in effect. It potentially highlights the fact that frontline staff can draw upon the normalized discourse about immigrants and implement it as policy, even in advance of its inclusion in official directives. Therefore, while we should definitely consider the confusing policy terrain that healthcare staff work under (White et al., 2020; White and Rispel, 2021), we should also consider that the disjuncture in policy is tantamount to manipulation (Section27, 2022). Moreover, it can serve as a platform for the rearticulation of popular anti-migrant discourse. To some degree, then, anti-migrant discourse creeps into the public health system as it is reflected in some frontline staff's utterances. Resultantly, the public health bureaucracy becomes somewhat of an echo chamber of this harmful discourse. As Foucault argues, discourse is critical in agenda setting (Foucault, 1977, 1982), and as seen above, some politicians' utterances seem to have become the "superior norm" that sets the tone for the policy implementation environment in the public health system.

Demand for passports: A blatant form of exclusion or clerical requirement?

Of the documentation required for the registration of patients, especially in Gauteng province, the Gauteng Department of Health specifically requires proof of identification, which can be a passport, identity document, refugee permit, among other identifying documents, including proof of residential address (Gauteng DOH, 2020). While these requirements should be for the purposes of registration and the classification of patients, when migrants are seeking care, they encounter challenges from frontline staff that overemphasize the need for passports (White and Rispel, 2021). This potentially indicates that other agendas may be at play, because above a wide array of documents needed for registering patients, utility bills and proof of residence can also serve the same purpose and some migrants indeed use these (Crush and Tawodzera, 2014). In Messina, Limpopo province, it has already been documented how frontline staff can simply use the information that the migrants verbally provide (Vanyoro, 2019). However, in this study, some participants narrated how the overemphasis on passports has led to them being outrightly sent away from facilities. For example, Mberi, like many other participants in the study, noted that it can be difficult to get services if one is not in possession of the "proper papers" – a synonym for an up-to-date passport:

> During that time (in the past), nothing like that was happening. Even when opening a file for treatment or checkups, they didn't want anything. You would just go for registration using your proof of residence only … (These days), if you have no papers, they will not tend to you. You may be sent back … If I don't have proper papers, they will not treat me … So, the situation now is different from the beginning (Mberi, interview, Rabie Ridge, 24 March 2024).

Mberi's narrative is proof that it is indeed possible for a migrant patient to get services without a passport, as was the case during the period she calls "that time," which is around 2012 when she delivered her first baby. Backing this fact, some participants stated how they were tended to without passports, proving that denial of services based on passports may be more rooted in other intentions, other than the simple registration of patients. In 2012 and 2021, Faith stated how she used her Zimbabwean drivers' license for registration:

> I registered using a Zim driving license (Faith, interview, Rabie Ridge,16 March 2024).

Similarly, VaMasibanda managed to register at Rabie Ridge Clinic in 2019 without any documentation, with the staff only relying on what she verbally provided:

> The nurses treated me very well because the first time I went there, they only asked my residential address and name. They asked me if I had a passport, and

> I said I didn't have. They didn't say anything (VaMasibanda, interview, Ivory Park, 24 March, 2024).

Mai Precious was also able to register in 2023 without any form of documentation, and she only verbally provided the information that was needed:

> I have no papers that I use. I do not even have a passport … They served me without it. I was just giving them the details they needed (Mai Precious, interview, Ivory Park, 20 April 2024).

This is proof that while passports make the registration and classification of patients easy, discretion and improvisation by staff can ensure no one is denied services on account of not producing a passport. To prove that the requirement of passports is not cast in stone and is dependent on attending staff, Mary recounted how she was sent away at Tembisa Hospital in 2019 for failing to produce a passport, and was, however, served the following day at the same facility by a different person under similar circumstances:

> They wanted an ID (identity document) or passport, and I didn't have any, so I went back home. I went there the following day and encountered a different person, and I registered without a passport (Mary, interview, Rabie Ridge, 25 February 2024).

Gwaumbu also faced a situation mirroring Mary's. She narrated how she was sent away from Thuthukani Clinic in 2021 because she did not have "papers," only to be served at Halfway House Clinic:

> I went to Thuthukani, and they chased me away because I did not have papers, but at Midrand (Halfway House Clinic) they served me like that (Gwaumbu, interview, Ivory Park, 20 April 2024).

From the above, it is clear that the demand for passports is not a standardized practice, and it is dependent on the attending staff, perhaps their mood for the day, and probably a candid expression of medical xenophobia. While the above narratives are insufficient to categorically inform the conclusion that the emphasis on passports is a manifestation of medical xenophobia, they tend to gravitate toward that direction, especially when read in concert with observations elsewhere that an emphasis on passports is a mechanism for denying migrants services based on their nationality (Crush and Tawodzera, 2014; Chekero and Ross, 2018; White et al., 2020). A critical lesson from the above narratives, which we also get from Vanyoro (2019), is that healthcare providers are always innovative in finding means, sometimes against the grain, to ensure that all patients, including migrants, receive services. This gives

credence to Foucault's critiques who aver that his conceptualization of disciplinary power limits the possibility of agency (Honneth and Roberts, 1986; Shapiro, 1986; Butler, 1989; Hartsock, 1989; Diamond et al., 1990). In a context where the wisdom of providing services to migrants is questioned in various platforms, some healthcare providers draw on other forms of reasoning that go against the common narrative. Therefore, in acknowledging medical xenophobia and how it is largely indicative of the prevailing discourse, the limits of discourse in orienting practice must be appreciated.

CONCLUSION

This paper attempted to ascertain how practices termed "medical xenophobia" draw from the broader anti-migrant discourse by drawing parallels between public healthcare providers' practices with the anti-migrant discourse outside the public healthcare system. The migrant women in this study claimed that they encountered physical and verbal abuse, an emphasis on passports, and the demand for user fees – challenges that have been documented by many (Lefko-Everett, 2008; Vearey and Nunez, 2010; Hunter-Adams and Rother, 2017; Makandwa and Vearey, 2017; Chekero and Ross, 2018). Importantly, through a focus on some statements that the participants attributed to healthcare providers that accompany these practices, it is evident that some of these utterances are reflective and indicative of the anti-migrant discourse that permeate the media, the political, and other platforms. This, the paper argued, is proof that these platforms serve as systems of "knowledge" that provide some templates for some bureaucrats in the public healthcare sector on how to make sense of and interact with migrants. This dovetails with Foucault's argument that discourse in institutions of knowledge (bearers of discourse) discipline individuals by training them how to react to and perceive the subjects of this "knowledge" or discourse (Foucault, 1977, 1982; Kelly, 1994; Haugaard, 1997).

However, the paper also found that while anti-migrant discourse certainly provides frames of reference for some bureaucrats, agency and discretion mediate the practices of some nurses and frontline staff. This makes the public healthcare bureaucracy not an entire echo chamber for what obtains in the media and the political and other spaces. Thus, as Foucault's critiques argue, *disciplinary power* is not always overbearing, as agency and the moral dimensions of life can resist the superior norm (Fraser, 1981; Honneth and Roberts, 1986; Shapiro, 1986; Butler, 1989). As seen in this study, especially regarding the demand for passports, certain individual practices are tangential to the standardized narratives. Be that as it may, most of the evidence in this paper points to medical xenophobia, and the discourse about migrants through various demeaning metaphorical representation in the media, in politicians' utterances, and in anti-migrant groupings find their way into the public healthcare bureaucracy, as certain practices and statements of some bureaucrats are verbatim articulations of the prevailing anti-migrant narrative in those spaces. The paper therefore concludes that the practices that constitute medical xenophobia within the public healthcare system are rearticulations and restaging of the anti-migrant discourse that has been

popularized by the media, politicians, and certain anti-migrant groupings in the community. Just as this discourse provides a blueprint for sections of the society in the "othering" of the migrant, sometimes through violent confrontations, the same discourse usually presents itself as a frame of reference regulating the behavior of certain bureaucrats in the public healthcare system.

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