

THE ROLE OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT DURING XENOPHOBIC VIOLENCE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Abstract

Introduction: South Africa has experienced repeated xenophobic violence outbreaks resulting in loss of lives and property and thousands of people being displaced. As the South African government and other several stakeholders try to deal with this crisis disaster management finds itself as one of the key players. This paper describes the role of disaster management during xenophobic violence in developing countries. **Methods:** The authors used both published and unpublished literature, newspapers and reports as well as logical reasoning. **Results:** There are several actors responsible for managing xenophobic violence in South Africa. However, Disaster Management primarily plays a coordinating role, especially in humanitarian support for displaced people.

Key words: xenophobic violence, disaster management, South Africa, displaced, humanitarian support

A KATASZTRÓFAVÉDELEM SZEREPE A FEJLŐDŐ ORSZÁGOKBAN IDEGENGYŰLŐK ESZAKI ESETÉN

Absztrakt

Bevezetés: A Dél-afrikai Köztársaságban komoly problémát jelent az idegengyűlölet, amely sok esetben az emberi életet és anyagi javakat veszélyeztet az észak felé. Ennek kapcsán egyre fontosabb szerepet kap a probléma kezelése a katasztrófavédelem területén is. A cikk a fejlődő országok katasztrófavédelmi szervezeteinek megoldási módszereit mutatja be a probléma kezelésére. **Módszerek:** A cikk megírása során fontos szerepet kapott a különböző

nemzetközi szakirodalmak tanulmányozása és elemzése. A cikk eredményeként megfogalmazhatóak az idegengyölölet kezeléséért felelős szereplők és szervezetek, melyek elsősorban koordinációs szerepet vállalva próbálnak humanitárius segítséget nyújtani a lakóhelyüket elhagyni kényszerült embereknek.

Kulcsszavak: idegengyölölet, katasztrófavédelem, Afrika, kitelepítés, humanitárius segítségnyújtás.

1. INTRODUCTION

The theory and practice of disaster risk management is inclined towards the prevention, mitigation and response to natural hazards. [1] The disaster management has many scope of duties all over the world including natural and civilization disasters, like forest fires [2], radiological emergencies [3] or the xenophobic violence. Yet developing countries are at risk from both natural and human-induced hazards which can lead to disasters. Institutional organizations seek to apply principles of disaster risk reduction on hazards from both groups; however, the focus has been different in relation to civil unrest. Much of government, humanitarian organizations and disaster risk reduction efforts have been on response despite both the Hyogo and Sendai frameworks' mandate; which is disaster risk reduction. [4] [5] In the recent years, developing countries have experienced civil unrest, which has resulted in huge loss of lives, property and displacement of people. South Africa, for example, has experienced long and bloody history of xenophobic violence. The immensity of violence in subsequent years remained below that of the 2008 xenophobic attacks, the most recent being in February 2017. However, these successive occurrences indicate that attacks on African foreign nationals have become a feature in South Africa and can erupt at any time. [6] In response to the xenophobic attacks against foreign nationals a question arises concerning the responsibility of disaster management in such a catastrophe.

2. BACKGROUND

The World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance noted with concern the continuing and increasing spread racial and ethnic discrimination and intolerance, including xenophobia, across all continents. [7] Xenophobia is not a recent phenomenon. From ancient times the world has witnessed xenophobic tendencies even in the so called developed world. [8] A few of the recorded xenophobic occurrences in history are the Chinese in America in the 1800s who were denied the right to testify against white men; the most gruesome events of Jewish holocaust during World War 11 where 6 million European Jews were murdered; the anti-Black movement in America in the 1900s called the Ku Klux Klan which murdered black families; xenophobic tendencies among German adolescents in the 1990s and Indian students who were attacked in Australia in 2009. The Rwanda genocide by Hutus against Tutsis could be the worst in recent history yet the 1948-1994 apartheid period is a lasting example, especially in Africa. [9] Xenophobia is like a plague that has spread across the world and should be dealt with.

In South Africa, xenophobia is one of the chief drivers of urban violence since the new democratic nation was born. Urban dictionary (2017) defines xenophobia as a term that denotes “*a phobic attitude towards foreigners or strangers or even of the unknown*”. Two Greek words were combined to form ‘xenophobia’, which are ‘*xenos*’ which means ‘stranger’ and ‘*phobos*’ meaning ‘fear’. [9] Xenophobia in South Africa, however, is not just being attitudinally oriented but also manifests itself in a violently destructive manner to the point of burning people alive. The given definition, therefore, is misleading in the South African context where xenophobia is laden with violence. [8] [10] [11] [12] The term ‘xenophobia’, in this study, embraces a negative attitude and a practice.

The end of apartheid in the early 1990s opened South Africa’s borders to many migrants from across the world. Many African nationals from outside South Africa sought refuge from political strife and economic crises in their countries of birth. [13] Why would they not view the new South Africa as a place of safety? Most of their home countries had sacrificed their own developmental progress in order to see South Africa free. They had provided refuge to South African exiles and educated them in their countries. They looked to South African as their brothers and sisters. Moreover, the legendary Nelson Mandela had introduced a ‘new

South Africa' that would open its arms to everyone; a "Rainbow Nation". [14] Little did they realise that their peace and safety was short-lived, for they would soon be addressed as "*makwerekwere*"; a derogatory term that describes the foreigner as being undesirable. [15]

As early as December 1994 xenophobic conflict erupted in Alexandra Township in Johannesburg, Gauteng Province. Property was destroyed by armed youths who demanded that the suspected undocumented migrants be removed. Xenophobic violence of May 2008 is recorded as the deadliest of all, so far, which saw the recorded massacre of at least 62 migrants and 100 000 displaced. The conflict exploded in Alexandra Township in Johannesburg where foreign nationals were attacked by local South Africans. Within a week it spread across the country to Cape Town, Limpopo, Durban and the Free State Province. Businesses were looted, homes were burned down, property was destroyed and people were burned alive. [6] [16] Xenophobic attacks have been occurring almost every year. In some cases the police have been implicated in such activities; for instance the 2013 incident where a Mozambican man was dragged down a road tied onto a police van. [17] The shooting of a 14-year old Soweto boy in January 2015 sparked some xenophobia allegations. However, the cauldron boiled in April in Durban, and quickly spread to other parts of the country. Eight lives were claimed, more than 2000 displaced and at least 178 arrests were made. [16] [18]

Not all South Africans are xenophobic or support it. In different cities locals have rallied against the deadly xenophobia even to the point of marching in the streets against it. [13] [19] Victims have been housed and protected by South Africans during xenophobic outbreaks. Arrests have been made, political leaders, including presidents Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma have spoken against xenophobia. The government, humanitarian organizations and civil organizations have responded with relief services which include setting up camps for victims. While such intervention is very important, it has mostly been reactive. It only comes after excessive damage has occurred and irreplaceable lives and livelihoods have been lost.

3. STUDY AREA

With nearly 52 million people, South Africa is the 26th largest country in the world by population, the 24th largest by size and the 26th largest economy by gross domestic product. It is a federal state that comprises a national government with nine provincial governments as shown in Figure 1.

It boasts of three capital; Pretoria, Cape Town and Bloemfontein. It is a nation of diverse people, cultures and languages. As shown in Table 1, the Africans constitute a majority of 79.2% of the total population and whites 8.9%.

Table 1: South Africa's Population: Census 2011; Source: [20]

Population group	Number	% of total
African	41 000 938	79.2%
White	4 586 838	8.9%
Coloured	4 615 401	8.9%
Indian/Asian	1 286 930	2.5%
Other	280 454	0.5%
TOTAL	51 770 560	100%



Figure 1: Map of South Africa showing provinces. Source: South Africa Map Search, 2016

Both the white and colored populations constitute 8.9% each. While Indian/Asians constitute 2.5% of the population, it is interesting to note that they make up 16.7% of eThekweni metropolitan municipality (Durban) (Statistics South Africa, 2012). The city of Cape Town is the legislative capital of the Western Cape Province. According to a statistic [20] its population of 3 740 026 is the second largest in the country. The high unemployment rate of 31.9% is unhealthy and can lead to a lot of disgruntlements and possibly high incidence of crime. Although Gauteng is the smallest province, it is the most crowded, highly urbanized region (SA.info, 2016) with a population of 12272263. [20]

4. DISASTER MANAGEMENT ROLE IN XENOPHOBIC VIOLENCE

There has been some debate about the role of disaster management in xenophobic violence. The Memorandum for Disaster Management Legal opinion by Fast is one such document that seeks to address the subject. [21] The study revealed that the Republic of South Africa has

two national organisations which coordinate the management of all potential hazards. Depending on the kind of hazard; either disaster management or safety and security coordinate the management of different threats such as natural or human-induced, war and external threat, and crime, terrorism and subversion as illustrated in Figure 2. [21]

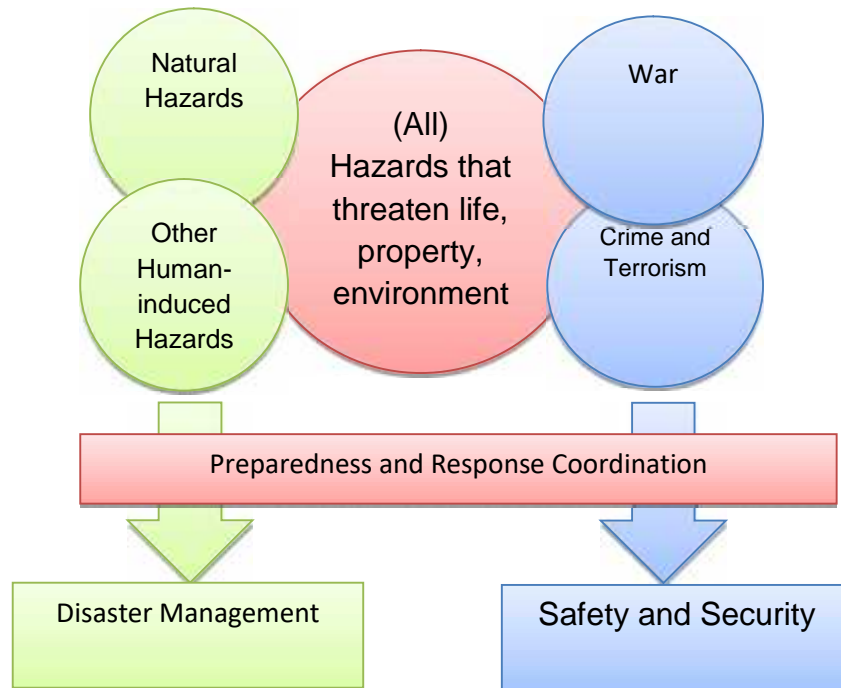


Figure 2: Coordination responsibilities for Disaster Management and Safety and Security linked to mandates for hazards. Source: [21]

According to the Disaster Management Act, Act No. 57 of 2002, [22] disaster management is a continuous and integrated multisectoral, multidisciplinary process of planning and implementing measures intended to carry out the following:

- Prevention or reduction of the risk of disasters
- Mitigation of the severity or consequences of disasters
- Emergency preparation
- A rapid and effective response to disasters
- Post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation

In essence, disaster management integrates both the pre- and post-disaster activities so that it can effectively safeguard the people’s lives and property. The role of disaster management is to prevent (where possible), mitigate as well as respond to disasters. In this regard, disaster

and risk management coordinates activities at all the stages of disaster management cycle, as shown in Figure 3. A question remains whether this is practical in the case of xenophobic violence.

The three levels of disaster management, national, provincial and municipal have been assigned to coordinate risk assessments and response to disasters. However, it has mostly been involved in environmental or natural hazards. Theoretically, this is in agreement with some of the goals of both the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015) and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030). They both focus on disaster risk reduction which involves preventing, mitigating, preparedness, response and rehabilitation. [4] [5]

With regards to xenophobic violence, various organisations lead out in different roles. Safety and security structures assume the leading role in ensuring the peace and protection of both local and foreign nationals during the response phase through the South Africa Police Service (SAPS) [21][23] However, disaster management and SAPS do not work independent of each other; rather they support and complement each other. For example, SAPS and disaster management centre, as well as local government and the civil society, together, set up a safety forum in order to contain violence and safeguard security of the public. [24]

On the other hand, disaster management provides a coordinating role with regards to humanitarian support for victims of xenophobic attacks. The xenophobic attacks of 2008 were declared a disaster and disaster management was responsible for coordinating the establishment of camps to shelter displaced people, with the support from safety and security [21][25] Since then disaster management has been coordinating humanitarian support for displaced persons during xenophobic violence. Thereafter, coordination of response by stakeholders to subsequent xenophobic incidents has been the responsibility of disaster management while SAPS is mostly involved during the violence. In essence, it is not disaster management's role to take up line department work and or responsibility, but it only acts as a coordination structure. [21]

For instance, in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda District Disaster Management Centre contingency plan, in North Western Province of South Africa, disaster management assumes a secondary responsibility in response to xenophobic violence while the South Africa Police Service takes the primary one. [23] The contingency plan stipulates that the District Municipality Disaster Management Centre (DDRMC) is responsible for convening the district Joint Operation

Centre (JOC), giving out information about the attacks, providing the link between the disaster management system and the community as well as providing emergency relief aid.

In a similar way, the Local Municipality Disaster Management Centre coordinates the activation of the local contingency plan as soon as it receives an early warning. Responsibilities are similar for both local and district disaster management centres; however, the local centre also feeds the DDRMC with operational information. Moreover, if it fails to cope with the emergency it seeks help from the higher level, DDRMC, and has a representative on the district JOC. [23]

This corroborates in the Memorandum for Disaster Management Legal opinion that Disaster Management should not be the primary structure for xenophobic violence. [21] However, when it relates to the humanitarian stage, the tables turn; Disaster management coordinates the stakeholders that are involved. Ngwenya (2015 reports that in the 2015 xenophobic attacks the JOC for Disaster Management in both Ekurhuleni and Johannesburg were activated in order to assist people who had been affected. Tshwane, Ekurhuleni, Sedibeng, the West Rand and Johannesburg were some of the areas hard hit with xenophobic violence. [26]

According to Ethekewini Attack on Migrants Update Report (2015), Ethekewini Metropolitan Municipality recorded about 6087 (Table 2) displaced people as a result of the 2015 xenophobic attack that were first reported on 30th March 2015. Disaster management services also engaged in coordinating humanitarian support for displaced people. [27] Food, clothes, temporary shelter, security, medical services and other services were provided by government departments, NGOs and the private sector. Table 2 shows the role that disaster management played during the 2015 xenophobic attacks.

Table 2: Status report: 17 April 2015 - 30 June 2015

ETHEKEWINI MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENTS/ UNITS			
DISASTER MANAGEMENT			
Emergency shelters	Isipingo	Chartsworth	Phoenix
Displaced people	907	2580	2600

DEPLOYMENT	2 officials	2 officials	2 officials
INTERVENTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanitarian Services • Integrated Coordination • Reporting • Stakeholder Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanitarian Services • Integrated Coordination • Reporting • Stakeholder Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Humanitarian Services • Integrated Coordination • Reporting • Stakeholder Communication

(Adapted: Attack on Immigrants Update Report, 2015)

However, Naidu argue that the during the 2015 xenophobic incidents disaster management services in the city of Durban did not effectively coordinate the necessary stakeholders such that there was serious delay in providing facilities like showers at one of the camps. This shows the ‘reactive’ nature of disaster management in the face of emergencies, especially xenophobic violence. Naidu corroborates this notion by arguing that, generally, governments all over the world do not respond proactively to xenophobic crises. Their responses have generally been on an ad hoc basis and disjointed. Moreover, they claim that the centre was ill-resourced to deal with the attacks. [8]

Even though the disaster and risk management mandate is to reduce disaster risk by preventing it wherever possible, preparing for imminent incidents and mitigating disaster impacts [22] its role has been mostly reactive rather than proactive. By the time disaster management intervenes, irreplaceable lives and property will have been lost already. It has been more involved at the response stage than the reduction of xenophobic crisis or mitigation of damage due to violence.

CONCLUSION

While there are several actors involved in managing xenophobic violence, the discussion shows that disaster management takes up the primary role of coordinating humanitarian support to cater for ‘victims’ of the attacks. The role of various government departments,

humanitarian organisations and civil society in xenophobia risk management cannot be underestimated. Safety and security services, through SAPS, play a crucial primary role in managing the incidence of violence. However, these actors need to be coordinated to avoid fragmentation of their efforts which may lead to miscarriage of their important responsibilities. With the recurrent xenophobic incidents it is necessary for disaster management to be better resourced and always prepared for action.

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