

Context, Challenges, Constraints and Strategies of Non-Profit Organisations in Responding to the Needs of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Cape Town, South Africa

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Abstract : While South Africa has been the chosen host country for over 1,2 million asylum seekers/refugees it has at the same time, been struggling to address the needs of its own people who are still trapped in poverty with little prospects of employment. This limited exploratory, qualitative study was undertaken in Cape Town with a purposive sample of 21 key personnel from various NPOs providing a service to asylum seekers/refugees. Individual in-depth face to face interviews were carried out and the main findings were: Some of the officials at the Department of Home Affairs, health personnel, landlords, school principals, employers, bank officials and police officers were prejudicial in their practices towards asylum seekers/refugees. The major constraints experienced by NPOs in this study were linked to a lack of funding and minimal government support, strained relationship with the Department of Home Affairs and difficulties in accessing refugees. And finally, the strategies adopted by these NPOs included networking with other service providers, engaging in advocacy, raising community awareness and liaising with government. Thus, more focused intervention strategies are needed to build social cohesion, address prejudices which fuels xenophobic attacks and raise awareness/educate various sectors about refugee rights. Given this burgeoning global problem, social work education and training should include curriculum content on migrant issues. Furthermore, larger studies using mixed methodology approaches would yield more nuanced data and provide for more strategic interventions.

Keywords : refugees and asylum seekers, constraints of service delivery, non-profit organisations, refugee challenges

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