

Xenophobia in South Africa: Preparedness, Disaster and Responses

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Abstract

Many Foreign nationals were victims of mob violence and those who owned properties had their property, including shops looted and burned down, while they and their respective family members were badly wounded, killed or chased away from their homes. In May 2008 more than 70 people died because of it, and the displacement of 35,000 people was witnessed. The ultimate aims of this research paper was to review the work done during and after xenophobic attacks in South Africa, to identify factors that contributed to the xenophobic attacks, to identifying how the government NGO donor organizations and international community dealt with the situation and what measures they put in place to prevent such brutal behavior and actions of xenophobic attacks from happening again and to Identify the logistics work done to alleviate the pain and suffering of the victims

Keywords

Humanitarian supply chains, Logistics, natural disasters

1. Introduction

Very few cases of xenophobia have been recorded around the world. Xenophobia and the associated disasters got a little bit of attention when it occurred in South Africa mainly in 2008. Several incidences have since reoccurred and there is always growing fears that another attack or attacks might be looming. It has been described as any kind of fear related to an individual or group perceived as different from the person that has the phobia. It has led to disasters that have resulted in extensive damage to property, businesses lives and livelihoods.

Many Foreign nationals were victims of mob violence and those who owned shops had their shops looted and burned down, while their respective family members were badly wounded, killed or chased away from their homes. In May 2008 more than **70** people died because of it, and the displacement of **35,000** people was witnessed.

Two main patterns of the xenophobic culture were identified in 2008 by the Human Sciences Research Council, the first pattern is that the violence was not against foreigners in general but at other African nationals. The second pattern that they identified was that the violence largely took place in the urban informal settlements of major cities in South Africa

1.1 Aims of the study

- The ultimate aims of this research paper was to review the work done during and after xenophobic attacks in South Africa
- to identify factors that contributed to the xenophobic attacks
- identifying how the government NGO donor organizations and international community dealt with the situation and what measures they put in place to prevent such brutal behavior and actions of xenophobic attacks from happening again.
- Identify the logistics work done to alleviate the pain and suffering of the victims

1.2 Objectives

- identifying what has been done to alleviate the suffering of the people.
- To identify what aid was donated by who, if it was enough and how the aid was transported and distributed
- To identify if the aid was stored somewhere before distribution and if all the affected got the aid
- To investigate the root causes of Xenophobia so that the government can be able to address them.
- To detail the negative impact that xenophobia has on businesses.
- To give recommendations on how the problem could be resolved

2. Methodology

This was mostly a desk top research of literature, over 30 relevant different journals and websites were assed. It was also complemented by structured interviews (20 key stake holders were interviewed). Several interviews were conducted with people who specialize in the emergency field and analyzed data of impacts of drought was conducted too. The design of the paper provides a review of academic literature and illustrative graphs. There is strong need for empirical research in the humanitarian logistics field.

3. Results and findings

The events that unfolded were very unfortunate and unexpected, the Government was not prepared did very little to reduce the xenophobic incidents and to help the victims. Churches and Faith Based Originations responded very quickly to the incidents and played a vital part in which they assisted the victims of xenophobic attacks in areas across South Africa by providing the victims with food, blankets and the volunteers played a role in coordinating the aid to aid to the various places, furthermore, many of the churches opened up their premises to provide shelter to the victims who were displaced and after the xenophobic crises ,the churches and Faith Based Organizations continued to assist the victims by providing them with legal and psychological assistance as well

as promoted and implemented programs of repatriation, reintegration and reconciliation to the victims who wished to still stay in South Africa.

- The **Gift of the Givers Foundation (NGO)** was one of the first disaster relief organizations to respond to the xenophobia crises according to Gift of the Givers (2010) in which they supplied 200 hundred blankets and food on the first day of the crises.
- they provided necessities such as food parcels, baby goods, blankets and tents to those who were affected
- organizing and paying for the transport in which foreign internationals could safely be transported back to their homelands and supplied them with food for one week in which they could eat on the way until they get to their respective countries
- Most organizations assisted mostly by conducting assessments after the incidence and making reports

Other organizations involved included UN Habitat, The United Nations Development program ,UNICEF, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, and the Consortium for Refugees and Migrants in South Africa. All these relief organizations played a vital role during the crises and they were more effective when they worked together but there were some challenges that they faced and somethings that they didn't do such as ensuring safety for the victims

3.1 Challenges faced by humanitarian organisations

- Getting products and the right resources to the right place of disaster at a fast pace as soon as possible after the disaster occurs, Moeiny (2011).
- Relief organizations are dependent on donations. Moeiny (2011) states that some donors elect and decide how their resources are used. Which restricts Relief organizations from using their resources during a disaster which slows down the supply chain.
- Moeiny (2011) says that there is information uncertainty as information is not readily made available to relief organizations when a disaster occurs, therefore relief organizations may not be immediately told of such a disaster that has occurred or what type of resources are needed

ROOT CAUSES OF DISASTER

1. government's failure to maintain law and order and to combat violent crimes
2. the perception that foreigners are winning over South African women and jobs to the disadvantage of locals
3. poor service delivery by all levels of government;
4. foreign nationals accepting poverty level wages (Nyamnjuh, 2006);

5. the failure of South African foreign policy that condones election theft and dictatorship in other African countries, resulting in ‘economic refugees Humanitarian coverage interventions must be geographical, with the range of basic services.

Recommendations

These recommendations focus on strengthening the supply chain in which aid can be made available to the victims quicker for future relief operations:

1. Acknowledging the problem
2. Address the main causes of the problem
3. Hold people in high power accountable for their actions in spreading xenophobia
4. The South African government must protect foreign nationals
5. The public in South Africa need to know the rights of foreign nationals living in the country
6. The promotion of government and civil society coordination on the goal of tackling xenophobia
7. Labour issues should be addressed and partnerships as well as sharing should be encouraged

Proposed solutions for disaster response

- Ensuring the distributing of materials to micro retailers not to be disrupted
- Engaging micro-retailers as flood relief response (collaboration government etc)
- ALL unnecessary waste should be eliminated from the process
- Where possible ship bulk unassembled and unpackaged relief items to more local locations for final assembly or packaging closer to the victims
- Increase flexibility and agility of the supply chain such that they can be quick enough to react to the ever changing uncertainty of the humanitarian supply chain.

Conclusions

Many victims were assisted with transportation back to their home countries and it is clear that early intervention is required before the crises of xenophobia reach disaster levels (Lawyers for Human Rights, 2015). Many foreigners are still in South Africa, more still needs to be done to avoid the attacks from reoccurring. This must lead to the development of flexible and swift humanitarian supply chains supporting the response phase to xenophobic attacks. These must focus on saving lives, giving food and shelter to those who have lost their homes, and providing healthcare necessities to victims. There is a need to monitor closely how quickly and efficiently humanitarian organizations can respond xenophobic humanitarian disasters. What’s even more disturbing is the fact that its black to black violence, the white population has not been affected by xenophobia yet, more research needs to be done in order to solve this as well.

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Biographies

