

RPN

Refugee Participation Network

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Education and Training

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Refugee Studies Programme,
Queen Elizabeth House, 21 St Giles,
Oxford OX1 3LA, UK.
Tel: +44 (0)1865 270267
Fax: +44 (0)1865 270721
E-mail: rsp@qeh.oxford.ac.uk

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Cover photo: Palestinian woman studying at an UNRWA womens training college in Ramallah on the Occupied West Bank. Photo: © Howard J Davies



Whenever I think about refugees, my first image is of Ogujebe in northern Uganda, a 'transit camp' to nowhere, for Sudanese refugees. Rows of grimy white tents in the heat and dust, very few trees, almost no shade, and soon after the first greetings to the visitors, the questions over and over again; 'When are we going to have schools? Can you help? We need schools for our children'. For people who have lost all their other assets, education represents a primary survival strategy. Education is the key to adaptation in the new environment of exile. Education is the basis upon which to build a livelihood. For some, education will be the decisive factor for resettlement in a third, normally richer country. Finally, education will ease reintegration on return home.

For host countries, refugees' initiatives, fuelled by a voracious demand for education and training, can bring significant economic benefits, as well as enabling them to transcend their initial dependency on aid and welfare.

Crucial to the success of education and training programmes is consultation with refugees. Ironically, while most people agree that education is a basic need, what refugees are typically offered is basic primary, or more accurately, rudimentary education. Literacy, numeracy and vocational courses are common, but opportunities for university or even secondary education are rare. Being a refugee

should not predetermine a maximum level of education, but tragically for many, it does.

In this issue we have also tried to show that education is not only a formal process happening in a classroom or in a teacher-pupil relationship, but also that it occurs through community participation, enabling people to gain awareness of their circumstances and their rights. This 'non-formal' education approach has also to be encouraged.

For all these reasons it is paradoxical that in too many cases refugees remain deprived of education, are denied training, or are prevented from participating in designing and implementing assistance projects. Refugees rightly demand access to all levels of education and this thirst for knowledge and skills should be valued and encouraged. It is not just a right, it is also the catalyst for making their contribution to their country of refuge. The provision of education should never be considered a burden without payback... but read this issue and tell us of your own experience.

RPN 22 scheduled for July/August, will focus on **Protection**. We welcome contributions in the form of articles, field reports, letters or testimonies. We would particularly like to receive material relating to protection of internally displaced populations. Please submit your contributions before the end of June 1996.

Because deadlines seem always to come too soon, here is advance notice of probable topics for future RPNs:

The military, their role and their involvement in humanitarianism.

Specific needs and rights of refugee children and adolescents.

Local organisations: their role, their work and their influence.

With best wishes, Isabelle Flukiger-Stockton

Alere Resource Centre: an Education Base

The educational needs of refugees are too varied to be met by a traditional system of formal education alone. Refugees of all ages may need to learn a new language, as well as skills for productive activity. Education may have to be fitted around work such as agriculture. An *Education Base* is a resource centre designed to meet the needs of refugees, whatever they might be.

An example of an Education Base, the *Alere Resource Centre* was developed for the Southern Sudanese refugee settlements in Northern Uganda and is managed by the Education Programme for Sudanese Refugees with funds raised by the World University Service (UK). It has been in operation since 1992. Alere provides several facilities, including education, job training, a resource centre and a community centre. Over half the people in the East Moyo settlements can reach the complex of buildings on foot or by bicycle. The centre stands near the refugees' self-help secondary school and two primary schools. Some 150 secondary students live in grass huts, which they built behind the centre, during term time. Alere exists for all people and seeks to provide equal facilities for boys and girls, men and women. Staff work to reduce barriers to equal access. The centre includes the following facilities and activities:

Accommodation

The accommodation at Alere allows students to live near the school in term time, and is used for participants in residential seminars and training courses in vacations.

Demonstrations and models

Resident students have vegetable plots, which provide a supplement to their WFP rations, and are also used as demonstration plots during farming improvement workshops.

An Education Base can be used to provide demonstrations of good practice in many fields: e.g. agriculture, sanitation, health. Books, charts and demonstration models can be displayed and regularly updated.

Library

The library at Alere caters for the whole community, providing reading rooms for private study, resources for teachers, books of general interest, periodicals relevant to Sudan, and notice boards for news items. The centre's generator provides power for lighting until 10 p.m.

Vocational and employment skills

Tailoring courses for women, supported by UNHCR and World University Service (Uganda), take place daily. Examples of short courses are a seminar for refugee shopkeepers on the marketing of family planning items, arranged by MSF, and a two-day workshop in bee-keeping and marketing of honey, sponsored by ACORD.

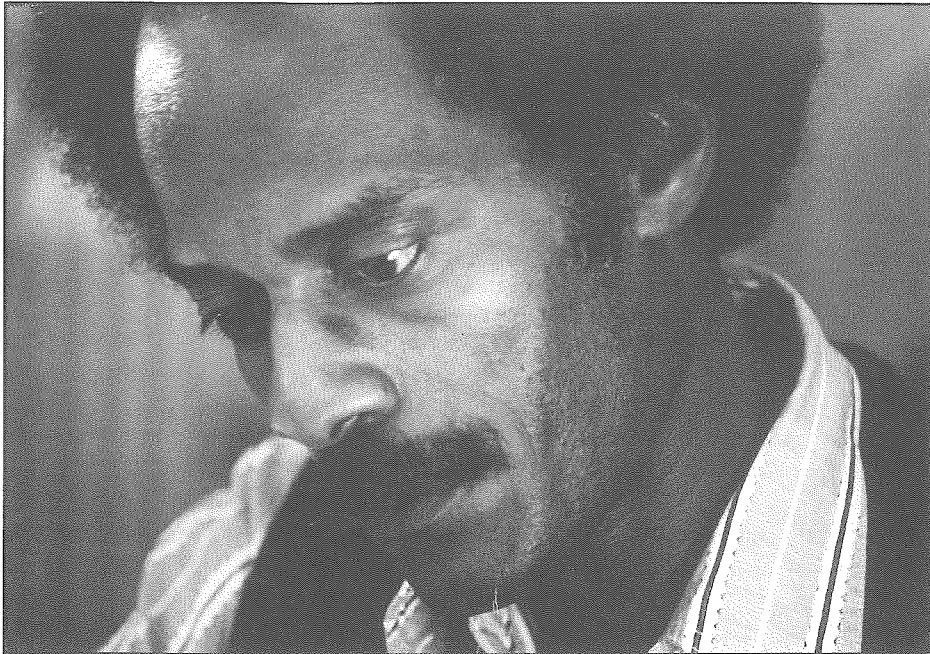
Community centre

The managers of Alere Resource Centre have encouraged its development as a community centre. The following have been provided, with varying degrees of success: mail facilities and a box number for users; a radio; indoor and outdoor games; cultural activities, such as drama and music festivals; a bookshop; printing of pamphlets and newsletters, handouts, and examination papers for schools.

For more details about the services provided by Alere Resource Centre and other Education Bases, please contact CMT-Education Base, PO Box 1021, Kampala, Uganda Fax: 256-41-531777.
e-mail: bsesnan@mail.imul.com

Summarised from Education Base, © Barry Sesnan 1996

In memory of Dr Ahmed Abdel-Wadoud Karadawi



Ahmed Karadawi, whose memorial meeting was organised by the Refugee Studies Programme, and held at St Antony's college, Oxford, on 9 December 1995, received tributes from many quarters as well as obituary notices in the Guardian, and the Times. Space does not allow their reproduction here but copies may be obtained from the Editor.

A few weeks ago I was driving down the Banbury Road and saw an unmistakable figure - Ahmed Karadawi. In the same week I read an exciting and insightful report he had written for an NGO on the refugee situation in eastern Sudan - a report which highlighted an understanding of refugee politics and aspirations that is rare, almost unknown, in most NGO reports and project documents. I urged the NGO to ask him to edit the document for publication, because its insights were so important and so relevant to other refugee situations. I was looking forward to contacting him to say hello, and to discuss the report and other issues. Then I heard the news that he had died in Sudan, attending his brother's funeral.

I met Karadawi when working on a refugee research project in the Sudan in the early 1980s. Thousands and thousands of refugees were pouring into Sudan from areas of Tigray and Eritrea, where famine had finally depleted all the local reserves and ability to cope, because the international community had failed (or refused) to put food aid into the area for political reasons. The conditions and scale of the problem were appalling. His was a voice of reason amidst the madness of the media rat packs looking for stories, filming death and decay - dying babies, dying mothers, haunting, tragic stories.

His was a voice arguing for the recognition of all the talents and organisation that the refugees had brought with them when international NGOs were pouring into Sudan, complete with landrovers, walkie-talkies, and goodwill, but often with contradictory policies on drugs and health, food rations and water regimes for refugees. Too often the UN and NGOs ignored or by-passed the resources and values the refugees themselves had, and wanted to use.

His was a voice of anger at the arrogance of outsiders labelling and planning, by-passing the Sudanese and the refugees, ignoring their histories and traditions, their ways of handling such situations, their ideas.

Karadawi's righteous anger - at the misleading media images and arrogance of many outside agencies, portraying the Sudanese as corrupt in every way, treating the refugees as helpless, dependent, disorganised - was legitimate. These pictures and stereotypes did not reflect the hard work of the Commission for Refugees, nor the fierce determination of many of the refugees to organise and take control of their own lives. They wanted education, not just food; assistance to build for a future, not just a present dependence on handouts.

He understood the political intricacies of the context, and had a deep concern for the rights and welfare of the refu-

gees within Sudan's borders. As many have said he was an integrationist, seeing them as people, not refugees; as people who needed to live alongside their hosts, hosts who in turn one day may need their hospitality in their home country. A situation that sadly has been found in many regions in recent years.

I so enjoyed meeting him, discussing with him, and the challenges he threw out to those coming in from outside Sudan. His focus on listening to the refugees - learning from them what they wanted and needed - guided much of my research, which highlighted so powerfully the importance of education to people disrupted, living away from home.

I am glad that I was able to share with others the grief about his death yesterday, and to listen and learn about those years of his life when I didn't see him. The international community has lost a profound critic, and a man who challenged everyone to examine their assumptions and to work harder to understand and learn from those they were trying so hard to assist. He will be sorely missed and, as one speaker said, a light indeed has gone out - not only in Sudan but for all those involved with refugees or refugees themselves who have met, discussed, argued, laughed and listened to him.

Tina Wallace, 10 December 1995

The 'It's too theoretical' syndrome

by Eftihia Voutira

Most people involved in imparting knowledge encounter the response, 'This is too theoretical'. It is easy for academics to dismiss such remarks as expressing resistance to studying or learning, as outright laziness of thought, or as demonstrating defensiveness in the face of new ideas or moral challenges. Since this response is a significant bar to learning, however, it is worth some analysis. This article aims to examine its underlying causes, as well as the multiple educational contexts that give rise to the syndrome. Finally, it suggests how the gap between academics and humanitarian aid workers can be bridged without resorting to a rejection of theory.

The challenge is fundamentally an educational one, involving *teaching* rather than *training*. The former is understood as the activity of imparting knowledge through reason giving and explanation; the latter is an activity that aims at imparting a skill presumed to be of some value and use. The educational challenge, it will be argued here, arises in the context of redressing the balance between the intellectualist bias and intelligent practice.

One assumption underlying this syndrome is that 'theory' is fundamentally irrelevant to issues faced by people in the field of practice. A number of factors contribute to this view, which tends to be inculcated among practitioners in ways which further reinforce the ostensible gap between themselves and academics. It is the contention of this article that any attempt to transform existing practices without attempting to transform attitudes towards education as a whole - and vice versa - is doomed to failure.

How theory should *not* be taught

In many educational institutions it is common practice to transmit knowledge by methods which are little more than rote learning. This approach has been aptly described by Gilbert Ryle as the 'hydraulic injection' model of education. At higher levels of education where theories are involved, students are exposed to what 'x' authority has said and are then supposed to reproduce what 'x' said, with no evidence of either comprehension or critical assessment of its value. In this model, the ability to produce information is viewed as the major criterion for effective teaching.

Two difficulties arise from this approach. The first is that if students grow up in an educational system in which excellence is judged by the ability to memorise and faithfully reproduce, and are never taught to think in an abstract way, they will naturally be averse, or even hostile, to such unaccustomed exercise.

The second is that they are likely to see 'book learning' as occupying a closed world of its own, quite cut off from the real world in which they live; they will thus reject it as irrelevant.

At the higher education level, students are often exposed to theory through selective reference to the 'greats' in different subjects; they are expected to appreciate the relevance of particular theories in the development of the discipline which they are studying. This appreciation, however, does not necessarily entail a corresponding appreciation of the relevance of theory in making sense of everyday life or in problem solving. Quite often, the boundaries of the theoretical relevance become co-extensive with the boundaries of the disciplinary relevance, so that accepting or 'seeing' the relevance of Durkheim or Weber, Wittgenstein or Malinowski is often tantamount to using a sociological, philosophical, or anthropological approach.

What is needed, therefore, is a radical departure from teaching in order to impart information, to teaching in order to enable thought.

The way theory can be taught: the Socratic method

In philosophy, students commonly approach the problem of ethics through the Socratic dialogues, in which the method of teaching is to ask questions in order to scrutinise and challenge the interlocutors' pre-existing assumptions. Socrates' friends (who are essentially his pupils) come up with various answers, which are then tested with further questions. Only when a proposition has stood up to questioning from all points of view can it be accepted. The types of questions asked are not incidental; normally they involve trying to understand concepts that guide action. Thus in most dialogues the cardinal virtues that formed part of the ancient system of values, courage, temperance, wisdom, and prudence are examined.

Although a reading of these dialogues will reveal 'the answer', it is obvious that their value lies in the method employed, which teaches students to scrutinise common assumptions and question their own beliefs. In fact, the reader may learn a lot from a particular dialogue without necessarily agreeing with the 'answer' at the end. Socrates often asks those who profess to be teachers or students whether virtue can be taught and, if so, then why it is not taught as a branch of knowledge like grammar or mathematics; why it is that we have no courses in generosity, temperance, patience or compassion. His dialogue with Meno ends with the answer that virtue is not taught because it comes to the individual by chance. However, this answer is far from definitive, and merely serves as a foretaste to the discussion of moral education which takes place in the *Republic*, which addresses the role of education in an ideal state.

As far as is known, the Socratic dialogues have never been dismissed as 'too theoretical'. With their simple language, they do not appear to be at all theoretical, in the sense of being loaded with abstract jargon. Furthermore, the questions which they discuss have obvious relevance to everyday life. The question whether 'virtue can be taught' and how it can be transmitted are questions asked by every parent around the world; whether morals *can* be taught in school is still being debated within the British education system. Though simple in form, the dialogues are, however, an intellectual challenge to any student and a brilliant course in the skill of reasoning and learning to think theoretically.

The limits of theory: teaching virtue as a 'pain in the neck'

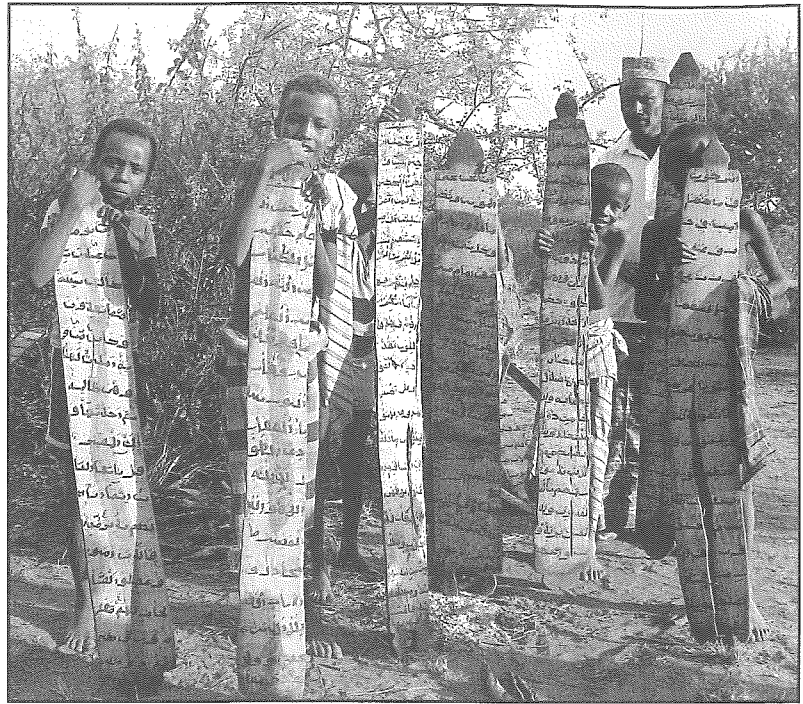
Unlike the cardinal virtues in the ancient world, the Enlightenment introduced its

own 'Christianised' version of ethics which transformed these ideals into a view of morality as a 'pain in the neck'. Virtues in the post-Kantian universe are not values, they are 'categorical imperatives': a set of duties and principles for action meant to apply to *all and only* rational human beings. Kant's solution to the problem of ethics is thus a highly theoretical and formalistic one as it assumes that the ultimate principles or axioms of a system of ethics, as in Euclidean geometry, can never lead to a conflict of duties sanctioning and prohibiting the same action at the same time. In this rational system a contradictory moral law is not possible because it would be *irrational* to accept it, or even think of it, let alone act in accordance with it.

For instance, if observing the duty to tell the truth and not to lie is absolute, there can be no exceptions. Applying the Kantian view literally would entail a counter-intuitive situation where one would first 'betray' one's friend before being 'true to them'. Imagine, for instance, as Kant asks us to do, a situation where your friend is hiding in your house from the police who are pursuing him. Rather than lying to the police to save your friend, which would appear to be the most *reasonable* course of action, the *rational* (Kantian) point of view would be to act only in accordance with your 'duty' which, in this case, would require you to tell the truth to the policeman first, and then try to save your friend.

It is evident that such a theory of morality will produce the response, 'It's too theoretical'. This is a valid response since one way of establishing a theory's relevance is by determining its capacity to account for real life situations and accommodate empirical facts. Every day, each individual is likely to be faced with moral dilemmas which involve a continuous juggling of priorities: for example, choosing between telling the truth or saving a friend. The Kantian solution of breaking down one's actions so that they fall under the obedience of a single maxim is a luxury that real life does not afford. Furthermore, the urgency of saving one's friend often takes precedence over the duty to tell the truth.

The educational challenge to the teacher is to tease out of Kant the relevance of entertaining a rational system of thought



Theory can seem a world away to the worker in the field, where annotated wooden boards are the only available books. Photo: B Press, UNHCR

even if the world in which we live is not, in fact, rational.

Interlude: What is theory?

Teaching theory as a progressive development from the more simple and specific to the more abstract and inclusive, is one way of addressing the challenge of the relevance of theory. In the examples given above, it is easy to see how the issue confronted in a specific situation (how to educate the young) can lead on to an abstract question (What is virtue?, Is it rational to be virtuous?) and numerous responses to these questions. The use of the scientific method includes collecting empirical data and forming a hypothesis. The hypothesis is then tested against other data in different situations, and considered acceptable so long as no data are found to contradict it.

An example of this is the theory of evolution which is based on the study of variation in individual species, in order to provide an explanation of life forms in general. Furthermore, according to most contemporary research, learning from others and through teaching constitutes an evolutionary mechanism of the utmost importance. Thus a theory is considered valid when it is based on evidence and reasoned arguments, and when there is no evidence to contradict it.

In many cases, however, what is called

a theory is in fact no more than a hypothesis. For instance, the theory of racial superiority articulated at the beginning of this century postulated a spurious correlation between physical characteristics and mental abilities. There is no valid inference that can be drawn between the colour of a person's skin and the degree of their intelligence or emotional constitution. Although proponents of the 'theory' may cite examples which they claim prove it, their opponents will find an infinite number of examples to prove them wrong. Furthermore, the fact that people still believe in racial inferiority is not evidence in support of the theory.

Another example of spurious theory which can have dangerous results is the traditional explanation of disease: for example, the belief that malaria is caused by evil spirits. Where such a belief exists, the fact that traditional 'treatment' (by exorcising the spirits) has very limited success may be explained in all sorts of ways which do not conflict with the theory. Even where a doctor appears with medicines which can both prevent and cure malaria, the villagers will 'believe' the doctor's cure, not because it has been explained to them and they now 'know' what causes malaria, but because the doctor's cure is more effective. For all practical purposes, they may still believe that malaria is caused by evil spirits and have simply replaced one medicine with another. If,

The 'It's too theoretical' syndrome . . .

however, the doctor endeavours to explain the causes of malaria, the 'It's too theoretical' syndrome may arise!

The challenge that faces the teacher here is not only to inculcate true beliefs but also to persuade students to entertain and accept evidence that undermines their beliefs. To paraphrase Max Weber, the teacher's main task is to teach students to recognise those 'inconvenient facts' which challenge accepted opinions, and compel the students to accustom themselves to the existence of counter-evidence to their more cherished assumptions. In fact, progress in human knowledge depends on refuting theories previously held to be true - on the basis of new evidence - and thus on continual willingness to acknowledge such 'inconvenient' facts.

The relevance of theory for humanitarian workers

The academic world takes for granted the value of engaging in theoretical thinking. Others, however, may be sceptical about the value of theory in general, as well as of the work of academics.

One such situation arises in the context of interactions between academics and humanitarian workers. The challenge to the relevance of theory in this context arises from the different priorities and assumptions each party brings to the interaction. A frequent additional obstacle is a fundamental and mutual mistrust, largely based on ignorance and preconceived ideas about each other's activities. It is in this climate of mistrust that 'It's too theoretical' is most likely to be heard. On the psychological level, such an utterance may be understood to reflect the underlying fear that many people isolated from academia may have concerning 'intellectuals' and the potential threat that intellectual activity represents.

One common assumption among humanitarian workers is that theory is a luxury afforded only by academics who have the necessary time to read and think. The humanitarian world, on the other hand, defines itself by the urgency of putting out fires and saving lives. On the side of the academics, there is the widespread view that knowledge is itself a type of intervention, that thought is a precondition for action, and that improved thought leads to improved action. How is this barrier to communication between academics and practitioners to be bridged

in an educational context where the academic is the educator and the humanitarian worker, the educated?

If the education process here is understood as one in which a knowledgeable teacher transmits information to ignorant students (as in the system described at the beginning of this article), then both sides are bound to be dissatisfied with the results. Humanitarian workers are not children. They come to the educational experience as adults with a set of experiences in the field which have shaped their perceptions and responses. Since academic institutions have only recently entered the field of study of humanitarian work, the educator is new to the specifics, and the students already presume to know what they are supposed to learn. The situation is paradoxical because, as educational psychologists would say, no learning can take place where there is a presumption of knowledge. The challenge for the academics is to find ways to relate theory to the workers' experiences in the field, without assuming an appreciation of the value of the theoretical approach.

Interpreting the 'syndrome' in the context of humanitarian assistance

What are people objecting to when they say, 'It's too theoretical'? This could be an objection to too much theory rather than to theory as such. Another possibility is that the instructor is too vague, and there is no reference to students' personal experience. Finally, 'it's too theoretical' may mean 'too complex'. Complexity is a feature of the phenomena most theories aim to explain. The objection that a theory is too complex is a serious one, as a key criterion of a successful theory is that it explains complexity in simpler terms.

Consider for example, the complex phenomenon of humanitarian assistance itself. The usual explanation for why aid is given to the destitute is reference to the virtues of generosity and compassion. There are two problems with this kind of explanation. First, it does not explain why these virtues are not manifested in all cases of destitution, but only in some. Secondly, it tries to explain an obscure phenomenon through something even more obscure; in other words, it uses 'virtue', a term fraught with ambiguity, to explain an 'industry' which has grown to over US\$8,000 million per annum. It would be more

appropriate to introduce the relevant concepts that can accommodate the multiple dimensions of international humanitarian assistance. One strategy for analysing complexity is to identify the common denominator shared by multiple manifestations. In this sense, although a complex bureaucracy determines how goods will be distributed, at the core of all humanitarian activity remains the simple act of giving and receiving.

The most simple form of exchange is that of giving a gift. As anyone who celebrates Christmas knows, gifts entail obligations to reciprocate. The exchange of gifts defines the status and power relationships between the giver and the recipient. Receiving places the recipient in an inferior position vis-à-vis the giver until the gift is reciprocated. This simple insight into the structure of human relations is not 'too theoretical' because it provides a way of understanding all the complex levels of power involved in any transfer of commodities and interactions between human beings - which are at the heart of humanitarian assistance.

In fact, what this example illustrates is that the explanation of giving and receiving as the core of all aid cannot be accounted for by the sheer and oft repeated reference to individual motivations such as compassion, generosity or altruism. What is needed is reference to something as fundamental to all social relations as the power and control structures, including those relevant to the transfer of knowledge and what counts as 'knowledge', which academics, practitioners and recipients of aid learn to manipulate in order to survive.

Dr Eftihia Voutira is a Research Associate at the Refugee Studies Programme

Do you have publications to share or advertise?

If you produce a publication which might be of interest to other RPN readers, please send details (and a copy if possible) to the Editor (address p 2). *Remember to include any price/subscription charges plus address and tel/fax numbers.*

Deadline for the next issue of the RPN is 30 June 1996

Education: the least of UNHCR's priorities?

UNHCR responds

In two interviews with senior UNHCR Officers, former RSP student Ann Avery puts UNHCR's policy and practice regarding education and training under scrutiny. Margaret Sinclair outlines the educational provision for refugees and Catherine Whibley discusses staff training programmes.

Margaret Sinclair, Senior Education Officer in charge of the Education Unit at UNHCR headquarters, spent several years advising on field operations in UNHCR's vocational training and income generating activities in Pakistan and Afghanistan. As an educational planner and scientist, she brings an analytic and practical perspective to UNHCR's responsibility for refugee education.

RPN: It is often said that education and training programmes are under-funded when compared with other urgent needs of refugees. In terms of budget allocations, where does the provision of education for refugees fall within UNHCR's priorities?

MS: Our 1995 budget for education was about \$52 million, while budgets for other key 'technical sectors' were \$63 million for water and sanitation, and \$97 million for health. In addition, some non-formal education is funded under projects in other sectors.

How is the education budget distributed? Does primary education get a fair share?

In 1995, the budget for recurrent costs of primary schooling was \$20 million, while most of the education sector's budget of \$11.5 million for construction activities also related to primary schooling. A major part of the \$4.5 million sectoral support and management costs should also be attributed to primary education, together with in-service training costs of \$0.5 million.

UNHCR also attaches importance to secondary schooling. In most countries, however, the refugee enrolment pattern shows an education pyramid with a broad base and narrow top. This is also the situation in many of the rural areas of the countries from which refugees originated, but we should not perpetuate it. We should encourage our implementing partners to work with refugee communities to increase participation in schooling, especially of girls. We would like to see more schooling for out-of-school adolescents, including school re-entry programmes.

How does UNHCR determine which organisations will be its implementing partners in education and training and which projects will be selected and funded? How does UNHCR evaluate the impact of its projects?

UNHCR programmes are developed at local level, in discussion with refugees, NGOs and government representatives.

Because refugee situations vary so widely, decisions are heavily influenced by UNHCR staff on the spot, although policy guidance may often be provided by staff in the Branch Offices and Headquarters, who will also decide on the availability of funding.

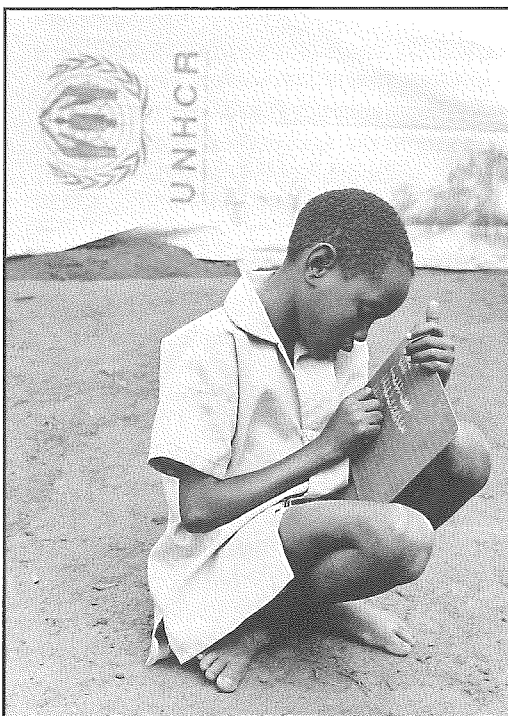
The Revised (1995) *Guidelines for Educational Assistance to Refugees* should help a prospective implementing partner understand what UNHCR is looking for in education and training projects. We are also producing a sourcebook which gives guidance and examples of good practice on skills training for refugees. It explains why we prefer to support apprenticeships, mobile training, and resource centres combined with production rather than expensive training centres. Before too long we hope to have a sourcebook on distance learning in refugee situations.

In principle, UNHCR attempts to promote refugee schooling and, where possible, also to support a balanced and appropriate programme of non-formal education and training. Decisions on implementing mechanisms and partners should maximise quality while ensuring cost-effectiveness. A recent trend is to encourage the same NGO to undertake community services activities and provide support for education sector activities, which would ensure a community-based approach to education. This is not a rule, however. UNHCR emergency teams now usually involve a community services officer, whose duties include the initial mobilisation of communities for simple recreational activities for children,

followed by support for non-formal schooling.

The choice of implementing partners for UNHCR support for more structured education programmes is made on the basis of the practicalities on the ground at this time.

Regarding impact, education statistics are collected annually, and there are periodic monitoring visits by headquarters staff or consultants. Education features in the country reviews conducted by UNHCR's new Inspection and Evaluation Services. These reviews are internal management tools. In 1995, there were two Regional Education Workshops in Africa, at which concerned staff from UNHCR and some implementing partners shared experiences and ideas on policy guidelines for the mid-1990s.



Mugano Camp in Muyinga Province, for Burundil Rwandese refugees. Photo A Hollmann, UNHCR

The 1990s have been declared to be the decade of repatriation. How does refugee education policy reflect this emphasis on repatriation?

UNHCR, jointly with UNICEF and UNESCO, now emphasises 'education for repatriation'. This is not a new idea. For example, the Afghan refugees in Pakistan followed an Afghan curriculum in their own languages, ready for return, not the curriculum of Pakistan (which uses the national language, Urdu). The Mozambican refugees in Malawi and Zimbabwe followed the Mozambican curriculum, which greatly facilitated their resumption of education on return to Mozambique. More recently, the Rwandan refugees in Tanzania, Burundi and Zaire, have been following a simplified version of the Rwandan curriculum, in Kinyarwanda language, which will facilitate their return.

UNHCR policy is summarised in its Revised (1995) Guidelines for Educational Assistance to Refugees, which emphasises the concept of education for repatriation. Three phases have been distinguished, based on recent experience:

- In **Phase 1** of a refugee emergency, refugee teachers and others should organise recreational and simple educational activities for refugee children, since these group activities, with familiar adults, will help ease the psychosocial problems of trauma and exile.

- In **Phase 2** of what is hopefully a rapid educational response (now the policy of UNHCR's Executive Committee), there should be non-formal schooling by familiar refugee teachers using familiar educational materials (again helping overcome the strangeness of exile).

- In **Phase 3A** - the reintroduction of textbooks, common timetables and examinations - the curriculum should be that of the country or area of origin, or compatible with it. If, however, repatriation is likely to be long delayed, or the solution is to be one of local settlement, then (**Phase 3B**) elements of the host country curriculum and/or languages may be blended with elements of the curriculum of the country or area of origin, according to a formula decided through consultations among the host government, the refugee community and UNHCR.

This policy places emphasis on the refugee child's initial right to follow a familiar curriculum taught by familiar teachers with the minimal delay. Children do not lose the study skills and curriculum-specific learning that they need for reintegration into the education system when they repatriate. When repatriating, students and teachers should be provided with documentation about their educational and teaching experience while in exile. Local school officials of the districts of return should be informed and UNHCR may if necessary intervene in the initial integration phase to ensure that adequate facilities and personnel are in place. Information and counselling on available educational programmes and employment opportunities should be provided to those whose studies were interrupted by repatriation.

Acquiring the language of the host society is basic to the process of becoming economically and socially secure. What is your policy and practice on provision for adult language training? Could you explain why there is not more activity in this area?

This is an important issue in some locations, and I would like

to add to it the need to promote adult literacy. A lot depends on the refugee and host government's perception of the needs in a given situation. We mention in the vocational training sourcebook that learning the local language or an international language can increase the employability of refugees while in exile or after repatriation or resettlement.

UNHCR funded language learning programmes for 3,260 refugee adults in 1993 and 2,500 in 1994. In addition, some independently organised groups or UNHCR-funded Community Services activities arrange teaching of the host country language. In principle, UNHCR is willing to assist self-help initiatives in this area with necessary technical support, or to assist isolated individuals as appropriate.

What new developments in refugee education are afoot at UNHCR?

While emphasising the concept of using the country or area of origin's curriculum as the starting point for education programmes, UNHCR also seeks to enrich the education programmes it sponsors with messages supportive of peaceful and sustainable durable solutions. A pilot project for environmental education begins in East Africa in 1996, and preliminary steps are being taken to introduce education for peace and conflict resolution and human rights.

If readers have experience in these areas we would be grateful for their input. [Please see contact address at the end of this interview. Ed.]



Gomoa Buduburam Camp's Women's Centre was opened to help refugee women acquire new skills.

Photo: L Taylor, UNHCR

Many of our readers are both practitioners and researchers. From your perspective, what lines of research might lead to improved practice in refugee education?

We need to develop better models of in-service teacher training in refugee camps and affected areas. We need to learn of practical approaches that have succeeded in different parts of the Third World. We need to build up educational activities for out-of-school youth, including 'non-formal' primary education, drawing on recent experience in non-refugee situations.

In general, NGO staff implementing education programmes in refugee camps or settlements are cut off from information on exciting new NGO programmes for nationals in Bangladesh or Zimbabwe or Country X. This is a gap which could usefully be filled.

Education: the least of UNHCR's priorities?...

Finally, would you like to share your personal vision of refugee education?

It has been said that the only thing most refugees take home to their country is what they have learned. We would like them to go home with the knowledge and desire to build a peaceful, well-functioning society; with self-confidence and knowledge from formal and non-formal studies; with environmental awareness and related skills; with an understanding

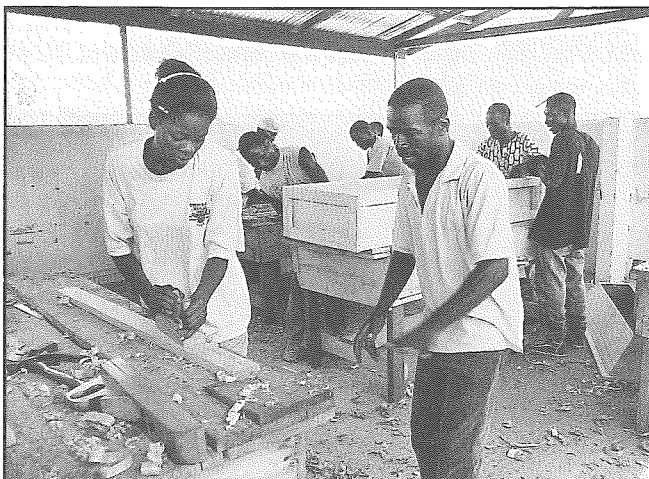
of conflict management and how the observance of human rights at local level is made possible by responsible community action; and with practical experience of such community-based activities, especially in caring for vulnerable members of society.

Margaret Sinclair can be contacted at the Education Unit, UNHCR, P O Box 2500, CH-1211 Geneva 2 Depot, Switzerland; Fax (41-22) 739 73 71; or E-mail sinclair@unhcr.ch.

Catherine Whibley, Senior Training Officer in the Division of Human Resources Management, Staff Development Section, discusses the training structures in place for UNHCR staff.

RPN: What are the training procedures employed by UNHCR with regard to its field staff?

CW: New recruits normally have a week-long structured briefing at Headquarters before proceeding to their duty stations. This provides a general introduction to various aspects of UNHCR's work, with sessions focusing more specifically on the tasks to be performed. A security briefing is an obligatory part of the schedule.



*In addition to training, Gomoa Buduburam Camp's Women's Centre provides loans to enable women to open small businesses.
Photo: L Taylor, UNHCR*

The story does not, of course, end there. Each field office has access to a network of training coordinators. These staff provide support to the Head of Office when it comes to identifying the team's training needs. This information then feeds into the yearly training plan - an exercise orchestrated from Headquarters - which is mainly designed to assess priority needs, and to fix budgetary resources accordingly. More often than not, needs exceed what can be made available, but staff have come to live with and accept this reality of life.

More and more, we are exploring alternative training options - ones which are less costly than formal workshops. Extensive use is made of self-instructional materials, the number of which has been growing each year. Experienced staff are encouraged to coach their less experienced colleagues, sometimes undertaking a mission to a neighbouring office for this purpose. Most important of all, supervisors are made aware of their responsibility for the performance of their staff which leads

in turn to their involvement in identifying and responding to training needs.

Given the practice of reassigning field staff every two years, how does UNHCR deal with the need for re-training and re-tooling staff as they move from one part of the world to another?

While it is true that rotation of staff from one duty station to another is common practice for UNHCR staff, the length of stay varies from one location to another. The shortest 'Standard Assignment Length' is indeed two years in certain categories where living conditions are hard. It is longer (three or four years) in other duty stations.

There is currently no systematic re-training upon reassignment, with the result that staff sometimes feel as if they are being thrown in at the deep end, regardless of their skills in swimming! However, the picture is not as bleak as might first appear. Wherever possible, there is an overlap period to allow the outgoing staff member to help the new arrival to get to know the ropes (apologies for the mixed metaphors!). Many staff have gone to great lengths to prepare detailed hand-over files to make sure that the benefit of their own experience is not lost, and to reduce the learning curve for the newcomer.

In addition, the organisation is in the process of introducing a Career Management System (CMS), currently in a pilot testing phase. The new system integrates performance appraisal, staff development and career planning. Its main objective is to help ensure that the organisation has the right person in the right job at the right time - an ambitious programme! Professional development figures prominently in this scheme, which should reduce the risk of the sink or swim phobia.

Does UNHCR consider academic training in the field of humanitarian assistance and international law and human rights an advantage in the recruitment of personnel?

The short answer is yes, although academic training alone is not enough. The area of studies will of course vary according to the function. For protection/legal officers studies in human rights, international refugee law, humanitarian studies are an asset; for programme officers qualifications in management and accounting, logistics, project design, etc. The minimum qualification is a first university degree, coupled with a minimum of three years' experience in a multi-cultural environment, and some experience of having worked in developing countries with limited infrastructure.

The 1994 evaluation of UNHCR's gender-sensitivity staff training programme revealed a lack of coherence between the policy and the behaviour of its personnel. What has your department done to address this challenge?

There has been an intensive training effort to help close the gap. So far some 1,500 people have gone through a people-oriented planning (POP) workshop. This number includes staff of implementing partners and 36% of UNHCR's professional staff. A number of steps are currently being taken to increase the availability and impact of this training. They include a strategy for active training of trainers in order to increase the number of workshops (a minimum of 25 are planned for 1996), while integrating the POP concept into other training programmes such as programme management, protection, emergency management, food aid and community services. The POP concept is also being integrated into a new training programme for UNHCR Representatives, as well as the Career Management System mentioned earlier. Four Senior Regional Advisers for Refugee Women have recently been appointed, with training as part of their functions. Lastly, staff of indigenous women's organisations in South Asia and East, Southern and West Africa are being targeted as POP trainers, to further the concept at the local level.

Although UNHCR's mandate is to provide refugee protection, since the 1970s its main emphasis has been on providing material assistance. How does the organisation ensure that its staff continue to be trained in ways relevant to their daily activities - largely concerned with delivering assistance - while still carrying out their role of protection?

Before responding to the question of training, it might be helpful to dispel a few misunderstandings commonly encountered concerning UNHCR's mandate and how it has evolved over the years. Under its Statute, UNHCR is mandated to '... assume the function of providing international protection ... to refugees ... and of seeking permanent solutions for the problem of refugees ...'. Programmes of material assistance have always formed part of UNHCR's regular activities, although it is true that there has been a spectacular growth in the volume of these programmes, particularly over the past decade.

On the question of training, one first observation is that there was in fact very little available for many years. The Training Section (now called Staff Development Section) came into being in the latter part of the 1980s, prior to which activities were mainly limited to computer and language training. Another important fact is that the training function has become an integral part of a number of work units, and is supported by the network of training coordinators.

Ensuring that training is directly relevant to activities is, of course, an ongoing challenge. One method we have used with some success is to hold a design workshop when putting together a new programme. This brings together staff with first-hand field experience which then becomes the basis for training. The next step is to field-test the training, make adjustments as required, and then organise training of trainers. Once created, no training programme is regarded as static, but undergoes updating and adaptation according to needs. This approach has proved its worth in a number of areas - security awareness, voluntary repatriation, interviewing for status determination, management of food and nutrition - to mention but a few.

Considerable finance is committed to the writing and updating of handbooks and guidelines for various aspects of field operations. Would you comment on the effectiveness of these tools as a method of educating UNHCR staff?

It is true that writing and updating handbooks requires resources - both financial and time. However, in our experience, a number of costly errors can be avoided. The most obvious is entrusting the development of such tools to outsiders who lack the appropriate field experience. The result is likely to be an unusable product, rejected by the very staff for whom it is intended!

Fortunately, there are a number of examples of handbooks, manuals and guidelines which have been mainly developed by staff themselves, at relatively little cost (except to themselves in terms of additional work!) and which are greatly appreciated by colleagues in the field. Again, close consultation with staff on the ground is indispensable. The end products may not be particularly glossy but the content is sound, which is what matters most!

Acknowledgement of donors

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Combining research with educational intervention

by Heloisa Szymanski

'Sociological care is not paternalism. It does not righteously diminish the responsible growth and variety of opinion that it will surely meet. It is not parasitic. Yet it is nurtured only in belonging to others. It seeks community without wanting to dominate the community'. J O'Neill, Making sense together: an introduction to wild sociology

In 1992 a group of researchers at the Pontifical Catholic University of Sao Paulo, Brazil, began a study combining research and intervention in a low income community of migrants in a suburb of Sao Paulo. The approach they took is applicable to both rural and urban refugee situations. This article discusses some of the problems involved in that task, from planning the research to helping the community solve the problems they had identified and looking for financial support to implement these solutions. The project is longitudinal because the problems of development which it addressed are themselves long-term. An intervention which aims at community transformation requires commitment.

This study is based upon the philosophy of Paulo Freire, whose work is best known through his book, *The pedagogy of the oppressed*. The study was informed by the awareness that there is no research which is not an 'intervention': even interviewing is intrusive. Consequently, all research should not only satisfy the aim of the researchers, which is ultimately the production of academic knowledge, but should also result in some benefit to the population studied. This is especially the case where the participants are themselves impoverished and marginalised. We aim to work with the participants, not for them, as McCallin proposes in her study of the impact of forced migration on children and their families.

Aims and objectives

The aim of the study was to plan and implement activities that would improve the conditions of life in the community, after considering with them their social, psychological and material conditions. Actions would be directed to developing human resources within the community and helping them to put their demands to officials and attend to community needs.

A wider objective was to put into practice an educational project that represented an 'authentic' exchange of knowledge between members of the University and the community. The final product of this approach to combining research with intervention should be a community development programme. The point of departure was a psychosocial intervention, because after all, we were psychologists and educators.

Assumptions

The research was based upon the following assumptions:

- change is possible only when it is proposed and accepted by the community, which participates in all stages of implementation;
- the transformation of reality depends not only on critical reflection but on action. According to Freire (1992:103), it is not enough to become aware of the cause of one's poverty and oppression, one must take responsibility for actions which could lead to a transformation of these conditions;
- the development of social consciousness takes place as a result of reflection and action, in the practice of citizenship and in the struggle for social, material and spiritual goods.

Criteria for evaluation

- more children were able to go to school;
- reduction in the rate of children dropping out of school;
- fall in death rates of children in the first months of life;
- improvement in access to clean water, health services and sanitation;
- public authorities improving the streets and extending access to electricity;
- drop in violence within the community in general, and more specifically by men against women and parents against children;
- opening of self-run community services, such as a nursery school and a community centre;
- increase in social events planned by the community;
- changes in family practices, as reported in diaries and interviews.

While these criteria are not comprehensive, they cover some aspects of social life studied and offer a general framework for evaluating the project.

The target community

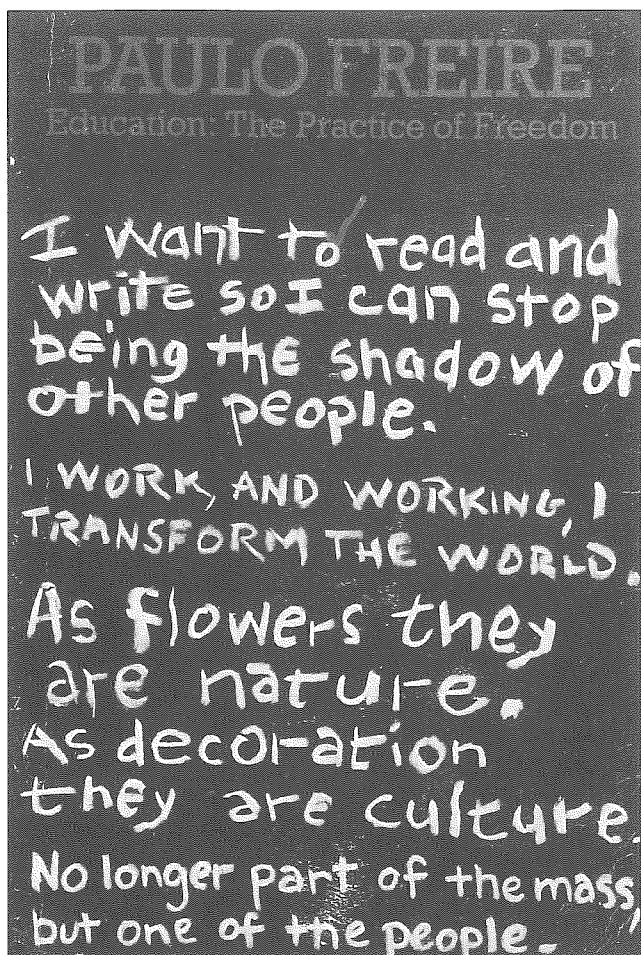
The first step was to identify a 'community' which had already organised itself within some geographical limits, and which could provide us with a basis for contact with the population.

The community we found for the present study, had been formed some 12 years earlier by people who had been expelled from another part of Sao Paulo. Most were migrants from the northeast of Brazil. It originally comprised about 200 families and, since 1992, has grown to include 284. These people had formed a strong Neighbours' Association and already had experience of struggling for better conditions of life. At the time we met, they were negotiating a way to buy the land their houses were built on, a first step before they could request the city authorities to extend such services as water supply, electricity and sanitation to their neighbourhood. In addition to the Neighbours' Association, the community had several churches, many little drinking places, small football fields, and although the 'streets' were only muddy lanes, an active street life.

This community faced the continual danger of drug dealing, which from time to time resulted in a state of war between gangs. Problems were increased by inadequate police surveillance and harassment. Members of the community lived in a state of risk, exacerbated by migration, chronic poverty, expulsion from home, and violence (Garbarino 1992). Alcoholism was also a serious social problem, responsible for much violence both within the household and in public life.

The research

Our interest, for a Programme of Postgraduate Studies in Educational



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Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative

Psychology, was to start our project by focusing on family life with the objective of developing a programme of family education. We needed to learn about people's values and beliefs, and their relation to institutions such as the school. We identified individuals who could be trained to work as community organisers. Through group discussion, data was gathered about the socialisation of children, models of family life, relationships within the community and attitudes towards formal education. People were asked to role play and then comment on their ways to resolve problems within their households.

After six months, we held a meeting at which the results of our research were presented in pictorial form to the people who came and went. Although those involved in our previous meetings remembered our disapproval of using violence as a method of disciplining children, they admitted that they had not changed their ways. Obviously knowledge and reflection had not been enough to bring about changes in behaviour.

It took time to gain people's confidence

even though they appeared to be participating enthusiastically in meetings. The implementation of a psychosocial intervention cannot be rushed. Only seven people had regularly participated in meetings and it was this group that we identified as potential organisers, or, as they preferred to be called, support group. We proposed that this group should become a link between the households and the education and health services; they agreed. In order for them to assess the needs of the families, we trained them in interview techniques and developed a questionnaire. The findings were to be the basis for the family education programme: the 'action' component of our project.

The 'intervention'

Our model of participatory research seemed to be working. The support group started visiting the families. Soon after, instead of carrying on with the planned study, they decided that the best way to begin to help the families was to re-open a nursery school that had been closed a year before by the City Education Council.

Why had the nursery school been closed? Although we never learned all the details of the 'irregular' practices which had led the authorities to close it, we did learn a great deal about the history and dynamics of the community itself. Needing our help to overcome the problems which had arisen, they had to admit and analyse the actions which had led to them. The major insight which they gained was that they had been led astray by strong individuals, both from within and outside the community. Helping a group of people to develop critical awareness about their condition of life is valuable for both sides. For the researchers, the process provided data; for the

members of the community, it provided the basis for addressing the underlying causes of the school's closure. The next step was to prepare the formal appeal to the authorities for permission to re-open the school on a different basis.

Although this meant that our study had to be postponed, we agreed to help them with this process. Our intervention was limited to helping them define priorities and schedule their work. We met with them every two weeks, and they used us as a kind of 'sounding board' to reflect on what was happening.

They needed (and recruited) professional help from a lawyer and a social worker. We suggested they selected community members, although the City Council objected, wanting them to use more highly qualified personnel. Our encouragement helped them to insist on using people of their own choice. Finally, they achieved their objective and the nursery school was allowed to re-open.

We also participated in meetings to decide the criteria for admitting children to the nursery school. The demand far exceeded the 60 places. We did not agree on criteria but the process taught us more than we could ever have learned from simply administering interviews and making observations. Because they wanted our help in training the teachers, we were also able to collect data on the behaviour of the children and their families on a continuing basis.

From then on, the support group, which was by then well established, began work on various community projects. These included improving the water supply and building a community centre. There was a varied degree of convergence between our study and these activities.

Some conclusions

Many NGOs aim to promote participatory planning and implement participatory projects; all NGOs are aiming as organisations to improve their capacity for 'institutional learning'. Although time consuming, I strongly recommend our approach: the community sets the agenda and determines the priorities. Our role, as far as the community was concerned, was to act as a facilitator and also as a sounding board against which they could reflect on their own experience and on their subsequent actions. Although our presence undoubtedly lent credibility to their ne-

Combining research with educational intervention...



*A familiar scene in a low income suburb in Brazil, where improving sanitation and access to clean water are obvious priorities.
Photo: C Pearson, © Oxfam*

gotiations with officialdom, we never did for them what they could do themselves.

We have the satisfaction of knowing that a nursery school is operating, a community centre is being planned, access to clean water has been extended, and that the support group continues to be trained while working for the community. Our researchers continue to be welcome in the community and have begun a new study in the schools, looking at how the education system fails individual students and leads them to drop out of school. One of the team has also done a study of how teachers themselves perceive the community in which they are teaching.

One of the issues raised by this project and our findings is the question of what constitutes 'development'. We believe genuine development begins with developing human resources, not simply with projects which can be shown to be 'sustainable' after three years. It is very difficult, however, to get funding for projects which are aimed at providing

services while developing the human potential of a community. For example, it was a struggle to convince the city officials to allow women from the community to work at the nursery school; they only agreed because there was a team of educators from the Catholic University working with the women. Once the community centre is opened, there will be the same struggle to get agreement to employ people from the community to administer and run it; the City Council will require such positions to be filled by professionally qualified people, but at a level of pay that no professional would accept and in a place where no outsider will want to work.

Finally, it is possible to begin a project combining research and intervention from any point. As we happened to be psychologists and educators, we focused on a psychological intervention from an educational perspective, but in order to follow the lead of the community, we have been forced to work in a multi-disciplinary way.

Dr Heloisa Szymanski is based at the Department of Educational Psychology of the Pontifical Catholic University, Sao Paulo, Brazil, and is currently a Visiting Research Fellow at the Refugee Studies Programme, Oxford.

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Participatory planning with disaster victims

Experience from earthquake-hit areas of Maharashtra, India

by Meera Kaul Shah

Background

On September 30, 1993, an earthquake shook the south eastern region of the State of Maharashtra, India, affecting 67 villages in Latur and Osmanabad districts. According to some estimates, about 10,000 people lost their lives and another 16,000 were injured. 53,000 houses were either totally destroyed or seriously damaged, while another 180,000 houses required urgent repair. In addition, there was extensive damage to public buildings.

In the government's immediate relief operations, temporary shelters were built to house the homeless; cooked food was provided as well as safe drinking water and prophylactic public health measures were taken.

Shortly afterwards, the government prepared a comprehensive plan for rehabilitation of the disaster area. The components of the plan included: economic rehabilitation, restoration of health and community services, and the reconstruction and repair of people's houses. The World Bank agreed to provide a soft loan for the programme, on the understanding that it should be implemented with the full participation of the affected people.

Since some of the villages were reduced to heaps of rubble and had become burial grounds, it was decided that 49 villages would need to be relocated to a safer site.

The government promised to provide a plot of land and a basic house for every household at the new village sites. The layouts of these new villages had to be designed and new houses constructed. NGOs and industrial organisations adopted some of these villages and took responsibility for their reconstruction. Others remained under the government's direct responsibility. This paper focuses on the process of involving the affected people in planning the reconstruction of their relocated villages.

The externally prepared designs

Given the urgency, preparations for constructing the relocated villages began almost immediately. Once the new sites were selected, the Department of Town

Planning started working on the village layouts and several agencies, governmental and private, were asked to prepare house designs.

Since villages usually evolve over many years they rarely need to be *designed*. Because of its specific area of expertise, the Department of Town Planning tried to replicate layout designs which would be used in towns. When these were discussed with the affected people, some of them commented that 'We are villagers and need to live like village people. What's the use of a good-looking design if it is not functional for a farmer?' There was an obvious lack of communication; the affected people were considered as *victims* and were not expected to express views on any of the *technical aspects*. As a result, the suggested plans and designs were completely different from the houses the people had been used to. Houses in this region are built to open onto a courtyard inside the house, and are enclosed by high walls with no windows opening outwards. The proposed houses, like town houses had veranda and windows on outside walls, and no courtyard. Older men and women in the villages criticised this design as it lacked privacy and did not provide storage space for agricultural implements nor for tying the cattle. Women added that they would not find an appropriate space to live in during their menstrual periods, when they are not allowed to mix with other members of the household and are strictly forbidden to enter the kitchen. Traditional house design also allows women to overhear men's conversation without being seen.

Additional problems appeared when the first construction work started following some of the designs provided by the Department of Town Planning. Far more concrete than necessary had been used and houses looked like bunkers. In one village a foreign donor was constructing dome-shaped houses. Even amidst the despair the village people pointed to them in amusement and commented that they would not use them even as cattle-sheds!

Following these failures it was finally agreed to involve people more actively in the planning process. A pilot exercise was decided in two villages.

Pilot process in Sankral: village-level appraisal

A team of six, including three town planners and one architect, facilitated the process in Sankral village. The village comprises 110 households from different caste and ethnic groups. The site had been chosen before the participatory planning exercise started.

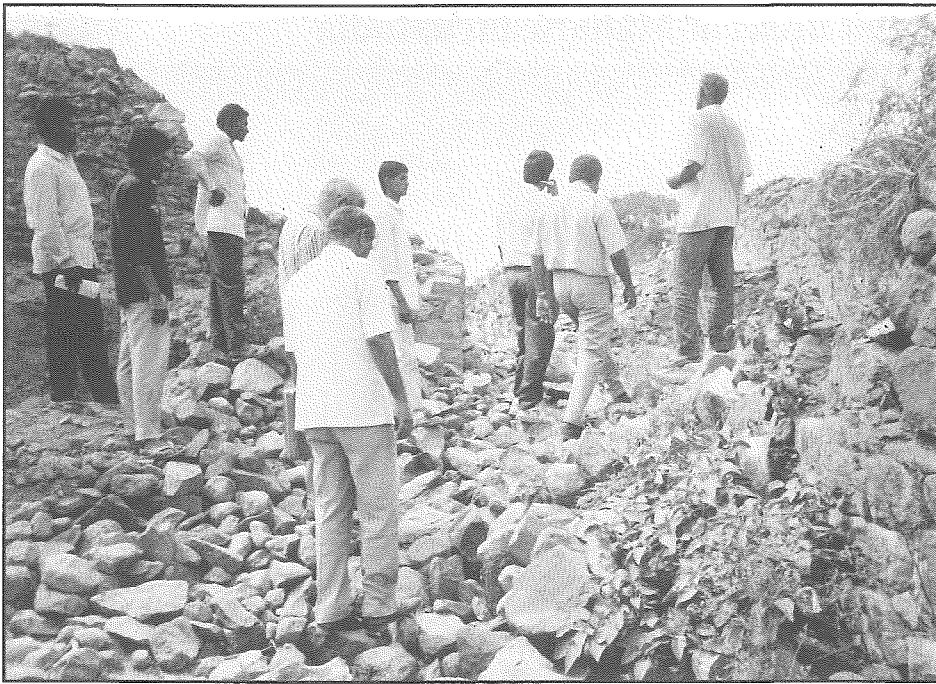
While walking around the ruins of their village, men and children were able to point out how the space used to be allocated and they discussed the positive and negative features of the village. Several meetings followed with different groups of village people. The men, for example, had prepared a detailed map, showing the different streets, public facilities, different clusters of houses and also indicated the individual plots on which their houses had been constructed. The women specially highlighted the spaces they used and the water points. Aspects of the old village site and specific features the villagers would like to retain or modify in the new layout were discussed at length. The groups also undertook a household classification exercise and identified the different groups in the village according to their own criteria, including caste, occupation and economic well-being. The results were rather similar and contributed to incorporate everybody's views.

A visit to the allocated site allowed discussion of its main features. The different groups were then asked to prepare sketches of what the new village should look like. Initially the women had been hesitant to contribute to this process as they feared to express views their husbands would not approve of. However, they did prepare a sketch which focused largely on the location of public facilities.

Deciding options for village layouts

There were heated arguments when these drafts were shared in a common village meeting, attended by all the groups. The younger literate men strongly supported the *grid layout*, prepared by the Department of Town Planning. They pointed out that the village would look good and reflect a better

Participatory Planning with disaster victims...



'While walking around the ruins of their village, men and children were able to point out how the space used to be allocated...' Photo: M K Shah

standard of life, comparable to the towns where they had studied. The older men, young non-literate men and most of the women were of the opinion that this design was not suited to their way of life and daily activities. One young non-literate man had made a layout with 'y'-shaped streets and he explained how very difficult it is to turn a bullock cart on straight roads which cut at right angles.

The main reason for not liking the grid layout was that it did not provide for clustering of houses. The government had announced that plots of three different sizes would be allocated according to the size of the household and the previous house. Plots of the same size would be placed in a row. The plots were also to be allocated by lottery, with the intention to break the caste and social divides. Even if well intentioned, these measures imposed by the government were highly unpopular. The women felt that the grid layout would lead to the disintegration of their social and cultural ties and destroy their support network which works on kinship and caste-based groups. Older men mentioned that though they have no objections to live next to people from other social groups, it was more practical to live next to people from the same religion and social background so that they can share their social events without disturbing others. The situation prevailing in the temporary

shelters was used as an example; the social segregation, existing in the village, had been repeated in the camp. The lower caste people, of their own choice, had settled away from the rest of the village. People had not forgotten their social differences even amidst the tragedy.

Public facilities in the new village

There were few differences of opinion when it came to discussing the location of public facilities. The Maruti temple was placed at the main entrance to the village, just where it had stood in the earlier village. The school was placed at the far end of the plot, away from the road, so that the children could be kept away from the traffic. The institutional area was divided into two locations. Other temples (housing non-vegetarian Gods, usually kept outside the village), along with the mosque and the cremation and burial grounds were placed at one far end of the village which sloped towards a canal. This part of the plot was not suitable for constructing houses as it could get waterlogged. Shops and the council buildings were placed near the village centre. The men earmarked one end of the plot as *green belt*, explaining that it could first be used for grazing their cattle and later for expanding the village.

The women's sketch focused on water points, which had been completely overlooked by the men. These were

categorised into drinking water, water for washing, and water for the cattle. Water points for the cattle were placed at the periphery of the village. The women also wanted separate water points for drinking and washing purposes, so as not to worry about the men watching them when collecting drinking water. They also suggested that a separate water point should be placed near the bus stand and an additional tap on the school compound.

Finalising village layouts

An attempt was then made to put together all the ideas provided by the people so that various layout options could be prepared by the town planners. Unfortunately the town planners were not able to incorporate all the views into a single layout. Instead they prepared two options. The first one was very similar to the grid layout prepared earlier and the second was a badly designed cluster layout. The cluster layout was immediately rejected and the revised grid option remained the more acceptable option in the absence of other alternatives. As it became obvious that people were having difficulties in visualising the layouts on paper, we suggested that scale models should be used. This proposal was rejected by the town planners who argued lack of time and appropriate materials.

The Assistant Collector¹, himself an engineer, took the initiative and used locally available material to prepare a scale model of an alternative option which was a mix of the grid and cluster designs. This option was immediately approved by everybody without reservations. A similar process was adopted for designing houses which would suit the rural lifestyle of their inhabitants.

The complete participatory planning process in Sankral village took only three days.

Conclusions

This experience indicates that it is possible to use participatory methods in planning rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes with victims of natural disasters. Even when there is little time for response, it is possible to devise rapid appraisal methods to seek people's views and opinions. There is need, however, for flexible and innovative approaches to tackle situations which have no precedent.

The use of visual methods makes it easy for most people, literate or not, to take effective part in the process. In this

Experience from earthquake-hit areas of Maharashtra , India

case, the use of three-dimensional scale models proved to be decisive. These methods can easily be replicated in other rehabilitation projects.

It is often argued that it is impossible to involve all the affected people while planning such rehabilitation projects in emergency situations because of the large scale of operations involved. In those situations it is important to undertake rapid appraisals with a cross-section of groups and communities to generate multiple op-

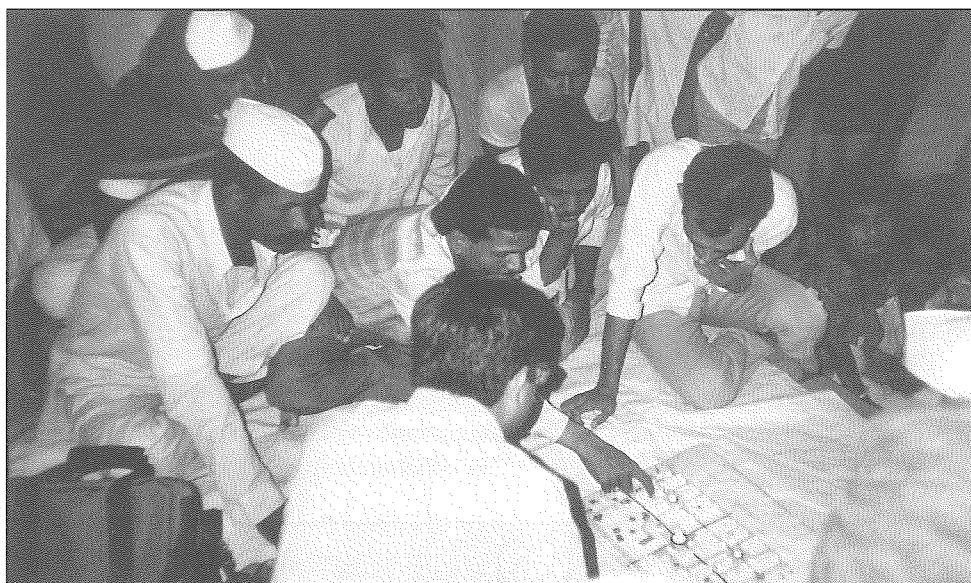
tions and perceptions. Based on the results of these appraisals, other people can be offered options and choices to enable widespread consultation and participation in decision making.

¹ The Assistant Collector was in charge of the rehabilitation project at district level (local government). He was a member of the Sankral team.

Meera Kaul Shah is a development consultant and trainer, based in the UK, specialising in participatory methods and local institution capacity building.

Acknowledgements

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A map of the old village prepared by a group of men, opens the discussion.

Photo: M K Shah

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA): Uses in a refugee situation

What is PRA?

PRA is an approach whereby rural people make their own appraisal, analysis and plans; act; and monitor and evaluate actions and programmes. It has evolved from and draws on many sources, including participatory action research, applied social anthropology, agroecosystem analysis, and rapid rural appraisal (RRA). While RRA is mainly extractive, eliciting information from villagers, PRA is meant to be empowering, enabling villagers to conduct their own analysis and to own the information generated. It emphasises open-ended enquiry, visualisation (maps, matrices, models, diagrams), comparisons, and analysis by groups.

PRA used with refugees can

- lead to vital information 'early warning systems' in emergencies
- provide a positive environment for tedious but necessary procedures such as registration
- encourage refugees' active involvement in strategic policy making and project design

The rapid production of findings has the potential to increase cooperation between UNHCR and NGOs. Results are instantly usable and have visual impact.

Some risks of PRA are:

- faddism and the bandwagon effect. If organisations rush to use this as a fashionable approach, PRA may become discredited

through being badly implemented.

- threats to power and self-esteem. If refugees take charge of an activity, professionals may feel redundant.
- slowness of results. It may take time and patience for professionals such as aid workers to learn to facilitate the approach.

If you would like to find out more:

Several countries have established networks and experienced trainer/facilitators; India is the single largest source. Further information may be obtained from:

Ginni Tym, Sustainable Agriculture Programme, International Institute for Environment and Development, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD, UK. Email iiedagri@gn.apc.org

Publications: RRA/PLA Notes three times yearly. Free catalogue of IIED's Training Series on participatory learning and education.

Jenny Skepper, PRA, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton BN1 9RE, UK. Email qdfe9@sussex.ac.uk

Publication: Participatory Rural Appraisal: Abstracts of Selected Sources. Abstracts may be requested by topic or by country, and are available on the Internet.

Connect to <http://www/ids.ac.uk> or telnet to [info.ads.ac.uk](telnet://info.ads.ac.uk) (login as lynx, no password needed). Then select the menu options for ELDIS followed by sources by subject. An Internet database version is planned for 1996: telnet to [lib.ids.ac.uk](telnet://lib.ids.ac.uk).

Rehabilitating the host environment

A participatory approach to forestry interventions

by Charles O Nyandiga

The negative impact of refugees on the woody and herbaceous resources of the host environment is a matter of common concern. The GTZ-RESCUE approach to the problem comprises rehabilitation, enrichment planting, and creating environmental awareness. A participatory integrated resource management structure incorporating refugees, host community, NGOs and the government has been developed and is now the major mechanism for rehabilitation efforts and for developing and enforcing guidelines for sustainable management of common resources.

Kenya hosts refugees from Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda, mainly in camps at Kakuma near the Kenya-Sudan border and at Dadaab near the Kenya-Somali border. Dadaab region is home to over 115,000 refugees, primarily from Somalia. These are distributed in three camps: Ifo (44,312), Hagadera (40,997), and Dagahaley (30,574).

Dadaab has a semi-arid to arid environment, with high temperatures (23-40°C), annual rainfall of 150-350 mm and an evapotranspiration rate of 2,100-2,500 mm per annum. Considering the fragility of this environment, the refugee population threatens to degrade a large area, increasing with each year. The major cause of environmental degradation is over-harvesting of wood, primarily for fuel and building materials, the two basic necessities of life not provided by UNHCR and other agencies.

In addition, refugees' use or misuse of common resources may cause conflicts with their hosts; for example, physical altercations frequently occur in Dadaab over harvesting of materials for fencing.

Interventions to address these environmental problems are both short- and long-term.

Long-term approaches involve rehabilitation and introduction of sustainable methods of resource management. Short-term approaches mainly aim to reduce utilisation of the resources, for instance through the use of improved cooking stoves to reduce domestic energy consumption.

The Rational Energy Supply, Conservation, Utilisation and Education project (RESCUE) is a UNHCR project imple-

mented by GTZ in collaboration with the Government of Kenya. To alleviate the environmental problems caused by the presence of refugees in the Dadaab area, the project has adopted a two-pronged approach: firstly, to provide minimum stop-gap interventions to the numerous pressures that refugees put on the environment; and secondly, to make refugees and the host community the main agents of intervention. This is based on the recognition that refugees can positively contribute to environmental conservation in collaboration with their hosts.



House constructing using locally harvested tree products, near the Kenya Somali border. Photo: © Oxfam

Impact of refugees on wood resources

Refugees can affect the environment negatively in the following ways:

- clearance of land for camps through use of heavy machinery;
- over-harvesting of wood products, leading to a lack of regeneration potential of the woody and herbaceous vegetation;

- exploitation of species suitable for fencing;
- overgrazing resulting from artificial water points;
- fuelwood requirements.

RESCUE intervention approaches

i) Non-formal participatory environmental education

The objectives of this approach are to create awareness, teach skills, change attitudes and facilitate participation of

target groups (refugees, NGOs, GOK and host communities) in environmental protection measures.

Step 1. Pre-demonstration environmental awareness

Each camp is organised into residential blocks. The blocks are normally ethnically homogeneous and have a social structure, which the project utilises to organise educational meetings. First, social leaders are thoroughly briefed on the intended meetings, and a venue is selected. The leaders are requested to mobilise block members for the occasion. A group of women extension workers explain afforestation activities, using visual aids and

demonstration materials. Discussion is encouraged. At each meeting specific environmental issues are addressed.

Step 2. Demonstration of information discussed in the block meeting

Following the meeting, participants reassemble in a household where demonstration materials have already been acquired. Extension workers plant demonstration trees, emphasising seedling protection, common pests, spacing,

species types and requirements. Questions are encouraged; strategies and project support are discussed. The group then visits the nurseries to collect seedlings of different species.

Step 3. Post-demonstration inspection of the same target population

Immediately after seedlings are distributed, extension workers make a follow-up visit to check on planting and protection. General weak points observed can be addressed at the next block meeting, while house-to-house visits enable discussion of individual problems. Households which tend the seedlings successfully for three months are eligible for an improved stove. Meanwhile, they are encouraged to construct zero-cost earth mound cooking stoves (Rhoda stoves), which have also proved useful in conserving energy.

ii) School-based environmental education

The approach followed emphasises the physical involvement of the pupils in environmental concerns. Structured discussions held by the project staff for pupils and teachers cover the following topics:

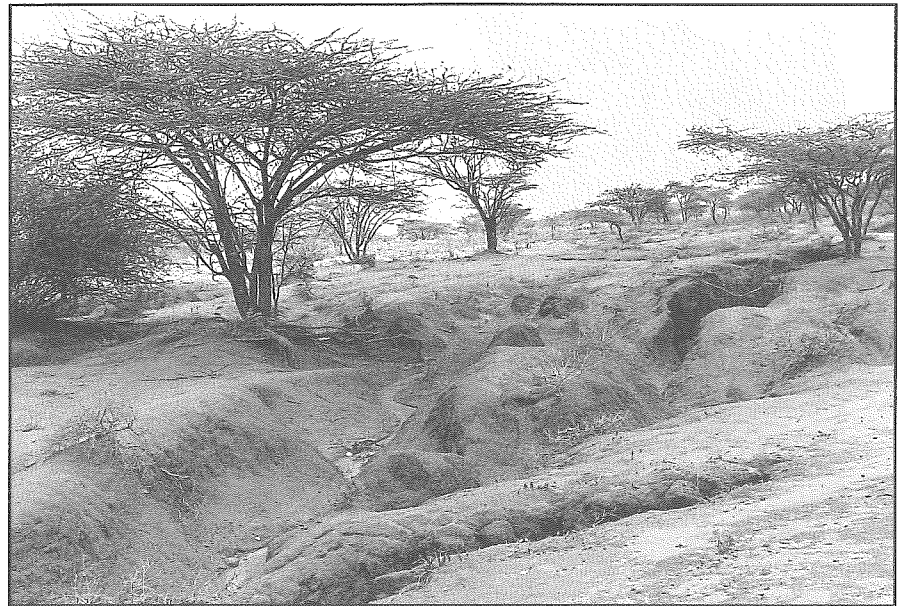
- the environment of the African Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL);
- the role of trees in human environment;
- collection and handling of tree seeds;
- seed pre-treatment, sowing and tending of seedlings;
- establishment of school-based nurseries;
- energy conservation and appropriate technologies;
- fuelwood supply, proper usage and storage, etc.

The programme has had a useful impact on the pupils and the general population. In particular, nomadic households were more successfully involved in tree planting. The pupils became important collaborators on the project within the refugee community and no doubt most of the watering needed at household level was performed by school children. An environmental club was set up in each school, leading to inter-club meetings and an annual regional and camp-based environmental competition, with a trophy for the best school.

This school-based environment programme demonstrated the need to have a teacher of environmental issues armed with an appropriate teaching kit. The development of environmental kits for

refugee situations is now being initiated and a pilot project will take effect by 1996 (Talbot 1995). Constraints noted through this approach included lack of tools and

homestead fencing. Resource protection and policing by the host community developed naturally and became extremely effective. The participation of the



Even before the arrival of the refugees the fragility of the environment is clear in this picture taken in Samburu district, North East Kenya. Photo: G Sayer, © Oxfam

equipment, lack of commitment by headmasters, lack of teaching material, and shortage of teachers with recognised qualifications. The need for constant incentives points to concerns that have been expressed about the sustainability of this approach.

iii) Environmental working group

Late in 1995, the project initiated an informal environmental working group (EWG), consisting of local and refugee elders, government representatives and NGOs, to discuss environmental problems, make recommendations and propose suitable people to carry them out. For example, an effective task group on sustainable harvesting of *Commiphora africana* (A.Rich) Engl. and *Commiphora bluensis* for security fencing in Dadaab demonstrates the kind of multi-level participation expected.

Responsibilities for harvesting (branch cutting in line with EWG guidelines) and monitoring (via local team leaders nominated by the area elders) were allocated. The host community identified sites for exploitation, the refugees and local people each provided half of the donkey carts (paid per trip) for transport, while the refugee members carried out the actual

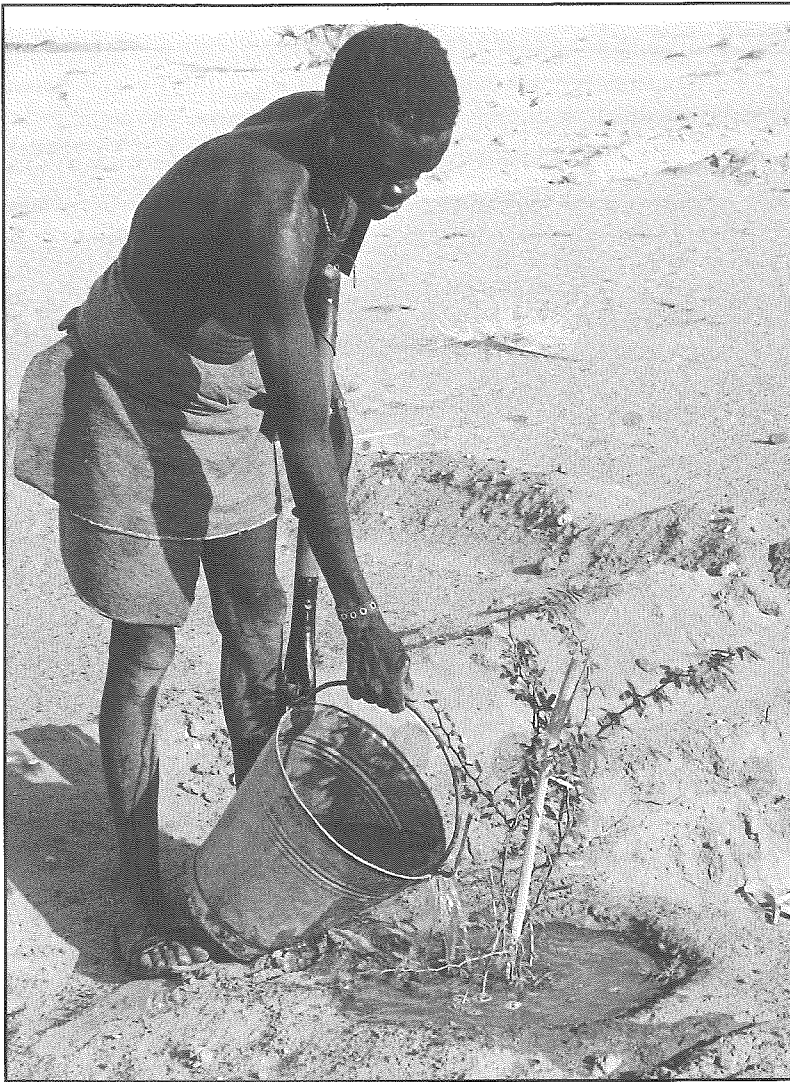
hosts was doubtless partly motivated by the tangible benefits (money) accruing from the exercise, and the fear of large-scale destruction of the important *Commiphora* species.

The EWG is linked to the government Divisional Environmental Committee (DEC) and empowers the local population to have a say in the management of natural resources. Resolutions of the EWG are considered for adoption by the DEC. This augments the localised environmental committees, and could become a channel for future non-formal environmental education.

iv) Vegetative rehabilitation

Initiatives to contain badly denuded areas (either through natural regeneration or tree planting) have been undertaken since 1993. Up to 36 dry land tree species have been introduced. These were propagated in four central nurseries producing over 320,000 seedlings per year for distribution. Provenance trials were carried out across the varied camp environmental gradient to create a selection of camp-specific species, based on their survival both under irrigation (around households, tap-stands and agency compounds) and rain-fed planting (in green

Rehabilitating the host environment . . .



Starting a tree nursery in Lalany Logol, North East Kenya. Photo: J Hanley, © Oxfam

belts under various sizes and types of micro-catchments). The aim now is to increase the tree standing stock to the point where natural regeneration will proceed once the camps close, but not necessarily to reforest every empty area.

Natural regeneration through a protective approach has shown great potential in camps where the site was not bulldozed. Through this method, the project has achieved an estimated vegetative cover of about 5-10% after a year of enclosure. It is envisaged that this will develop into a climax vegetation formation comprising *Omocarpum*, *Acacia*, and *Commiphora* species, which should form at least 10-15% of the vegetation cover. Such a scenario should ensure long-term recovery of the sites. It is hoped that if this process is assisted by enrichment planting with useful and more productive species, the range condition can be improved both qualitatively

(by reintroduction of lost important perennial grasses and tree species) and quantitatively (increase in species diversity).

The major hindrance to natural regeneration strategy is that most dry regions lack site-specific information on processes and rates of vegetation recovery. Therefore the strategy is to enclose only those areas that show potential for natural regeneration, as opposed to blanket protection of all denuded areas, some of which may take a very long time to show any signs of recovery. Areas with low regeneration potential are better rehabilitated through intensive enrichment planting programmes.

Lessons learned and recommendations

1. The project initially failed to recognise the different attitudes to tree planting of different groups. The nomadic Somalis

were interested in grass and water development, while the settled or urbanised Somalis, the Ethiopians and the Sudanese were aggressive in rehabilitation work. Phase II of the project was mandated to address these gaps and fully involve the host community, which was a major stakeholder in the rehabilitation efforts.

2. Refugees should be consulted on the types and modalities of providing incentives, which need not be directly related to the project objectives but should enhance environmental awareness.

3. Once the objectives of the project are understood, the extension approach should be varied, including more intensive house-to-house visits as well as guided discussions on specific topics for specific target populations.

4. The involvement of pupils in environmental matters should not be incentive driven but based on needs as perceived by the teachers. Pupils' involvement in practical aspects ensures early awareness and sustainability.

5. It is vital to ensure host community participation in rehabilitation work. At the outset, project workers should gather information on traditional use of natural resources and set up a consultative structure which empowers the host community. Through this forum, guidelines on common natural resource use and protection can be formulated and respected.

6. A re-vegetation plan should be developed according to the extent of degradation around a particular refugee camp. To encourage the closing up of rehabilitated areas when the target area returns to normal use, the potential for natural regeneration and approach for curative action (tree planting versus grass propagation) need to be spelt out, rather than rehabilitating patches of land in an unco-ordinated way.

7. Baseline surveys should gather data on the climate of the area, so that anticipated activities fit in with weather variations.

Charles O Nyandiga is Field Coordinator for the GTZ-RESCUE Project (Rational Energy Supply, Conservation, Utilisation and Education), based in Dadaab, Northeastern Kenya.

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Education and refugees in Spain: an overview

by Agustín Velloso

Law, traditions and facts concerning refugee education

Spain is a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 New York Protocol, among other related conventions dealing with human rights, refugees, and children. The Spanish legal instruments concerning asylum-seekers and refugees are the 1978 Spanish Constitution, article 13.5, the Asylum Law 5/84 of March 26, 1984, and the Royal Decree 511/84 of February 20, 1985. The Asylum Law was partially modified by Law 9/94 of May 19, 1994, which came into force the following June. And soon a new royal decree will adapt the regulations to develop and apply the legal modifications introduced.

Law 9/94 is the result of the Spanish government's effort to harmonise national asylum procedures with European Union policies. It is centred on the asylum procedure and makes no reference to refugee rights on social issues such as housing, health, and education. The Asylum Law only guarantees authorisation for residence and professional and work activities for those with refugee status. For those other social aspects, refugees are usually referred to other regulations for foreigners in Spain. For example, in education the basis is Article 22 of the Geneva Convention.

There is only one legal regulation that deals with refugee education: the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of November 17, 1993. This does not use the term 'refugee' and applies exclusively to nationals from the former Yugoslavia. Spain received some 3,000 persons from the former Yugoslavia between 1992 and 1994. The majority of them were granted only temporary protection (with less protection than refugee status holders). 765 persons have refugee status because they belong to the international programme for former detainees (UNHCR-IOM) from Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Spain has no tradition of accepting either refugees or immigrants from developing countries in general, and therefore there is no specific law dealing with refugees and their education. This is due to two main reasons: first, legal regulations always follow on from so-

cial facts and needs. As Spain is not a major destination for refugees in the European Union, the government has not been under pressure to answer to the needs of refugees. When the number of people coming from former Yugoslavia became significant, then a specific order for former Yugoslavs was published.

Second, the government is not willing to establish a difference in education matters between foreigners in general and refugees in particular. This policy could be applauded as aiming to treat everyone the same. But it could also be criticised because it leaves refugees without the necessary assistance. This is mainly due to the lack of experience in catering for refugees from non-Spanish speaking countries. At the same time, the general feeling may prevail that the problem is still not very serious and that a solution, if necessary, will simply arise in due time. This policy of avoiding facing the specific characteristics of refugees and reducing their social and cultural problems to those of foreigners is an easy option. However, Spanish laws do discriminate among foreigners, for example between citizens of the European Union and other nationals, and between nationals of former Spanish colonies and other nationals.

Refugees arriving in Spain: educational problems

The main problem for refugees arriving in Spain is to get recognition for their educational qualifications. Officials of the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science in charge of checking and approving foreign diplomas and degrees complain that cheating takes place. At the same time, others point out that many years ago, during Franco's time, some Cubans obtained Spanish university diplomas with great ease. If the refugee produces his or her educational documents, the Ministry of Education and Science proceeds to approve them as it does with any other individual who produces a non-Spanish educational document and applies for this administrative action. There are around 6,000 such applications per year, but only 20 or 30 of these on average are made by refugees.

Three responses are possible: full approval, rejection, or approval subject to the successful completion of several subjects related to the studies for which the approval is sought.

However, refugees commonly find it difficult to produce documents. Thus, when they apply for approval, the Ministry of Education and Science has to find a way to deal with the lack of documents. They try to help refugees while ensuring that a minimum control is applied. For example, photocopies; ID cards issued by firms or institutions that require an employee to have a university degree; other related documents; collaboration with Spanish embassies in collecting and checking documents; and as a last resort, a personal document signed on the refugee's oath can serve as substitute for missing originals. The usual Ministry response is to invite the applicant to take a combined exam (*prueba de conjunto*) on several subjects. In this case, collaboration with universities is required and some teachers are appointed to administer the exam. Refugee candidates are not limited either in the number of times they may take the exam or in the number of universities they enrol in for that purpose.

Although this procedure could make everyone happy, there is obviously a problem for refugees who finished their studies many years ago, who have lost the habit of studying, and probably studied different subjects. At the same time, Spanish professional associations complain about professional infiltration by immigrants who, in their opinion, do not hold the appropriate qualifications to practise in Spain. These associations exert political and social pressure in order to get the regulations tightened up. In a country with the highest unemployment figure in Europe, there is general sensitivity regarding job opportunities.

Refugees and their education in Spain

According to the Order concerning people from the former Yugoslavia, a child of compulsory school age is enrolled in a state school. The school principal has the responsibility for placing the child in the right level for his or



If usual channels are disrupted by conflict or war, the **International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)** can help you recover and transmit official documents, such as **birth certificates, IDs, and diplomas** necessary to start or resume studies. For more information contact the nearest **ICRC delegation** or the local branch of the **National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**

Education and refugees in Spain: an overview. . .

her personal development. The child's age is the main factor taken into account in this respect. During the first term, pupils are observed by their teachers so that the school principal can decide whether to move them to another level. At the end of the academic year, which may also be the end of the educational level or cycle, successful pupils receive the corresponding diploma. It is true that the State Educational Inspectorate has to be fully informed about this award and has to approve it. This is not a requirement for Spanish pupils. The most surprising feature of the law is that it says nothing about the pupils' acquisition of the Spanish language. Nor is any mention made about the provision of Spanish language courses for children coming in from the former Yugoslavia. The school to which a pupil is allocated is supposed to meet the child's linguistic, educational and psychological needs from its own resources, although the average school is not equipped to do so.

Children coming from countries other than the former Yugoslavia are unprotected, or at least less protected, since no law applies to their case. However, in practice, the Order of November 17, 1993 could be enlarged to cover non-Yugoslav refugee children and it could serve as a model when a case arises. Where there is no law or it does not apply explicitly to asylum cases, a policy of goodwill is implemented to avoid leaving the children unprotected.

The situation is harder for non-university students who are over the compulsory schooling age. Youngsters still in their teens are over the legal age to be compulsorily enrolled in a school, but they are still rather young to give up an educational career. In the first place, they are supposed to pay for their education, at a cost which is usually out of reach for refugees. They could try and get a grant from a public or private institution to cover at least part of the educational expenses, but the question is whether they have the expertise to make a successful application to such an institution, and whether non-governmental organisations have enough money for all those who want to study. Secondly, they fully depend on the goodwill of the Ministry of Education and Science officials, since they must either produce their education record to show they qualify to enrol at the corresponding level, or face the considerable task of getting an educational

record in Spain. Their anomalous situation is not foreseen in the law.

Specific programmes have been set up to respond to growing needs. During the 1980s the Ministry of Work and Social Security, in collaboration with non-governmental organisations (Red Cross, Spanish Committee for Assistance to Refugees, Catholic Commission for Immigrants and Refugees, and others), offered grants to some refugees to help them afford part of their educational expenses. The final goal is to integrate refugees into Spanish society. These organisations and refugee associations have been increasing their scope and tasks in recent years. They are funded by public agencies, such as the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Autonomous Government of Madrid and the Town Council of Madrid, and carry out several support activities for refugees, education amongst them.

When asked their opinion on the programme they followed, refugee students answered that the money they were given 'is not enough to cover education and living expenses, and that grants do not cover the tuition fees, which account for two monthly payments of that' (*Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social 1985*, p 48). It is a question not only of lack of money, but also of a lack of political will to set up a special system of provision.

Consider the following example of a particular difficulty that is even recognised by the Ministry of Work and Social Security, the main institution in charge of giving grants to refugee students: 'Grant holders are recommended to enrol in state-run schools, because this Programme does not include the payment of tuition fees in private schools, though since they cannot produce their former educational documents necessary to join those, or since no seats are available for them in state schools, they have to apply for a seat in private schools' (*Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social 1985*, p 43).

Since there is no overall frame of reference concerning refugees, their situation and their needs, specific programmes tend to fail because of their limitations. For example, if parents have difficulty in registering in a city census office because they lack the required documents, their children will not qualify for a place in the local school. Since the child is not enrolled parents cannot ap-

ply for an educational grant, which, even if the school is free (as state schools are), could be used to pay for transport, meals, books and so on. Other common problems include difficulty in getting the appropriate information about entitlements, grants and opportunities. Above all, refugees in a country with a very high unemployment figure, like Spain, need to devote all their time and energy to securing a salary before they can start thinking about obtaining education for their children.

Conclusion

It is time to establish a general policy for refugees, rather than making provision for special cases as they arise. The present policy allows refugees to enter Spain and survive on charity for a time, but does not give them the opportunity to take a job according to their qualifications, to support a family - its education included - or to enrol in an educational programme that will lead to a job in the future.

Dr Agustín Velloso is Lecturer in Comparative Education at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Madrid.

The author thanks Dr de Quinto for her advice in the preparation of this paper.

Spanish translation of the RPN

The Refugee Studies Programme now publishes a Spanish translation of the RPN, in partnership with HEGOA (Institute of Studies in International Development and Economics) of Bilbao, Spain. This is a significant step towards expanding RPN membership within Latin America and the Caribbean and attempting to increase the coverage of issues relating more directly to these and other Spanish-speaking areas.

If you have field offices or partner organisations in Spanish-speaking countries who would be interested in receiving a copy, please contact:

Carlos Puig Coordinator of the Spanish RPN, HEGOA, Facultad de Ciencias Economicas, Lehendakari Agirre 83, 48015 Bilbao, Spain.

Tel: +34 4 4473512

Fax: +34 4 4762653.

What's schooling for?

The Vietnamese in the British educational system

by Tom Lam and Christopher Martin

Fifteen years ago the Vietnamese boat people came face to face with the alien culture of Britain. The mass media emphasised their disorientation in what was for them an alien culture, following their uprooting from their homes by war and persecution. Now a quarter of the current Vietnamese population speaks English as their first language and the majority of Vietnamese consider themselves to be permanent residents in the UK. Education has been a vital part of this transition. But how have the Vietnamese managed in British schools, colleges and universities? What are the pros and cons of British education; what future do they see it opening for them and what lessons can be learned from the Vietnamese regarding British educational provision?



Vietnamese refugee children at a state primary school in Brixton, South London, 1990.
Photo: © Howard J Davies

Background

The Vietnamese arrived in the UK as refugees from political persecution following the Vietnam War and the Chinese invasion of Vietnam in the late 1970s. The majority of the Vietnamese in the UK are ethnic Chinese and came from North Vietnam. They are a young population, typically in their twenties upon arrival, and mostly rural or urban unskilled or semi-skilled workers, with few skills transferable to the UK economy. Although their plight was highlighted in the mass media with dramatic pictures of the 'boat people' and their precarious voyage on the South China Sea, they have disappeared subsequently from the public consciousness. What happened to them? How are they faring now?

Once in the UK, they were dispersed throughout the country, ostensibly to diffuse the burden of their settlement requirements and to avoid 'ghettoisation'.

However the wisdom of fragmenting an already decimated people has been widely questioned (Robinson, 1993 and Carey-Wood et al., 1995), especially since there was no pre-existing community of Vietnamese in Britain - a country with which they had no cultural ties. The Vietnamese have responded ingeniously to their dispersion by regrouping themselves in the larger cities, particularly London. In reconcentrating themselves, they have begun to reconstitute themselves as a community, thereby forming interpersonal networks which have been repeatedly recognised as vital for both practical survival and cultural and social well-being.

Education

If building a 'critical mass' of people into a community in a locality is one of the key ingredients for refugees' resettlement, education is another. Whereas community

building consolidates what a group shares, education assists adaptation to the wider society. It does so by inculcating language as well as other communicative skills and by qualifying individuals for employment. For the Vietnamese, as for many of Britain's new minorities, the school or college is the public institution where they have most contact and on which they pin most hope. How have they been faring in the system?

In the early years Vietnamese resettlement studies showed a high proportion of people unable to speak English, a male bias in formal educational participation and a population whose educational qualifications were generally low. On all these counts, there have been notable changes. The proportion of people admitting they cannot speak any English has dropped from 90% to 14%, although older people are disenchanted about the possibility of improvement, something indicated by the drop in language school attendance by this sector of the population. But the overall picture of English language acquisition is of rapid progress, particularly among women. Females are now attending secondary and higher education in equal proportions to males - negating the pre-existing male bias.

Overall, as an increasing proportion of the population has been born and has grown up in this country, so the numbers receiving full-time British education have also increased. Thus the proportion in full-time education has doubled between 1983 and now. Although no systematic studies have been published, evidence from South-East London Schools researched by the authors indicates that Vietnamese pupils are not lagging behind average performance in the schools in question. Currently 7% of the total population is in higher education, which is about the same for Asians as a whole (Lam and Martin, 1996; see also Carey-Wood et al., 1995).

If the Vietnamese are now comparable with the more established, non-refugee ethnic groups, they share with such groups many of the same obstacles - language difficulties, economic problems, socio-cultural distance from the school and its

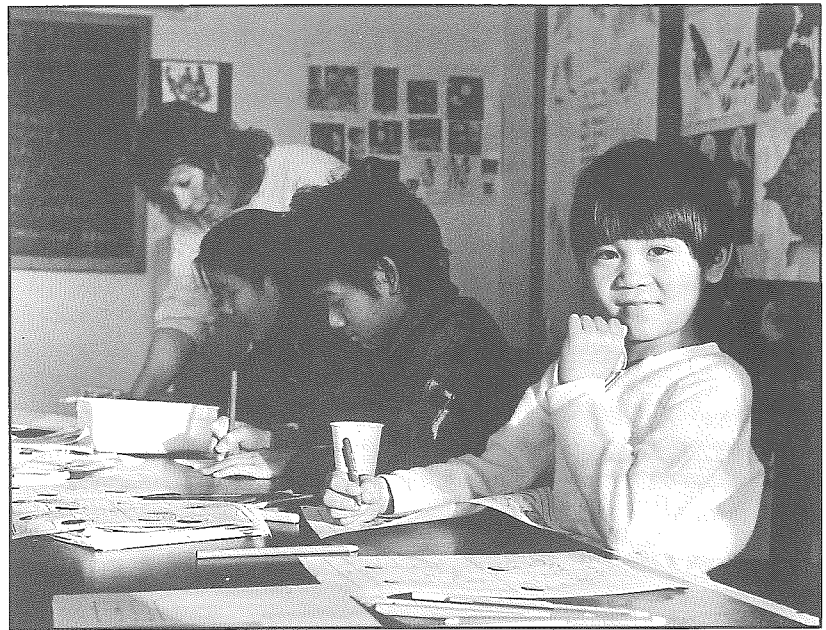
The Vietnamese in the British educational system . . .

values, and discrimination. How do the Vietnamese find the British educational system and how do they cope with it? The information which follows is drawn mainly from the authors' ongoing research project on Vietnamese resettlement and integration at South Bank University (Lam and Martin, 1994 and 1996).

The Vietnamese perspective on education

The Vietnamese prize learning and have a broad notion of its value. This is well expressed in the words of one Vietnamese parent, echoed by many: 'It [formal education] is not a simple question of trying to get rich, rather, it is a way for people to acquire something meaningful in their lives. The value of education is in its ability to make your mind active, stretching your imagination and creativity'. Thus, although education is quite clearly recognised as promoting one's economic betterment, it is not confined to this function. Education is more than a gateway to employment, as succinctly expressed in the following quote from a Vietnamese parent: 'wealth may have dried up; but knowledge will stay forever'. For the Vietnamese, education is the means through which cultural norms are transmitted from generation to generation, as well as a source of knowledge. The Vietnamese are more likely to speak of education as a process of spiritual and moral disciplining and purification, than of 'acquiring skills'.

However, the capacity to earn one's livelihood is not denied. Rather than being seen as the chief purpose of education, it flows from the successful cultivation of spiritual and personal worth. Not only is the latter the foundation for all learning, including functional skills, but spiritual and moral integrity is what guides one in how to make use of one's education in a responsible and effective way. Social responsibility is taught in the school where the child learns to interact with others and make contact with the wider society. But the chief beneficiary of education is the individual. Indeed it is only through the development of the individual's talents, that society can benefit; of necessity society depends on individuals as bearers of needed knowledge, skills and attitudes. The kin-based nature of Vietnamese social organisation means that, after the individual, the family gains most from



Resettled with his family in North Wales, this Vietnamese boy receives schooling at the Ockenden Venture's Hendre Hall. Photo: © Howard J Davies.

education. This is easily seen in the way the older generation rely on the young to help them to communicate with the British and understand their way of life. Though in doing so, the traditional age-based hierarchy is put in jeopardy, a source of great anxiety for many Vietnamese.

Vietnamese assessment of British educational provision

Such perceptions are the background for an understanding of the Vietnamese response to British educational provision. Opinion is generally favourable. Of course the Vietnamese point of reference is a developing, mainly rural country emerging from years of war and stagnation, rather than an industrialised country like Britain, and so praise of the UK education system needs to be considered with this background in mind. The aspects which receive most praise are the breadth of educational opportunity and the quality of the staff and resources. The chance for all young people to continue their studies until the age of 18, with no financial burden placed on the family, is highly valued, as is the access to specialised vocational and technical training in the currently diverse 16-18 year old sector. The older generation are impressed by the variety of adult education on offer and with the whole idea of 'continuing education' on which such provision is based. The Vietnamese are impressed by the schools' equipment, particularly the IT facilities. Also, in

general, the standard of teaching is considered good at all levels, including the English classes that the adults have attended. At school level, the teachers' concern for their students is much appreciated. Vietnamese parents would like to participate more in the education of their children, but feel unable to contribute much. In large part the problem is linguistic since the parents, with their still limited knowledge of English, feel ill-equipped to discuss the details of their children's studies. Often they rely on their children to act as translators, mediating with the teachers, though where the children are the pupils themselves, the result has frequently been unsatisfactory as can be imagined.

Given the Vietnamese educational philosophy sketched above, it is not surprising that the qualms that most Vietnamese have about British education centre on questions of the values and purposes of education. In fact, the Vietnamese have difficulty in discerning any in British education. It is the lack of values, and not incompatibility with values, which they find disturbing. Thus they find no evidence of moral education in schools, no spiritual development, and very little religious education. They cannot see the virtue of teaching sex education (which to their way of thinking is something too private to be dealt with by a public institution) whilst refusing to teach moral discipline. This seems like encouraging the young into sexual activity prematurely but at the same

time denying them the wherewithal, the moral strength, to make mature decisions.

A similar contradiction, from the Vietnamese perspective, is the much appreciated support for students' learning (personal tutors and other advisory officers in and around the school) yet with woefully inadequate efforts to counteract racism and bullying or to maintain basic security in and around the school. The Vietnamese find it difficult to understand the reticence of teachers to impose their rightful authority in this and other matters. Why do teachers refuse to discipline the children more thoroughly? The teachers seem almost to be afraid of their pupils. Whilst many Vietnamese value the cultivation of 'freedom of thought' and 'free speech', especially after experiences of political repression in Vietnam, allowing unruly youngsters to curtail the liberty of others comes across as a travesty of the freedom being espoused.

These doubts notwithstanding, the Vietnamese commitment to their children's formal education is well put by this former fisherman: 'I want them to learn new skills for jobs offered in this country, say, computing, engineering and so on. We will do our best to support our children with their studies so that they will have a future in this country'.

At the same time the Vietnamese do not want their cultural identity to be lost, particularly the mother tongue. Voicing the opinion of most Vietnamese parents, one put it thus: 'Without the teaching of Chinese overseas there would be no overseas Chinese'. It is in this context that the Vietnamese and Chinese Saturday school movement must be understood. This movement is one of the most vigorous of any ethnic group in London, and is financially supported not only by the local authority, but by donations from Vietnamese here and abroad. Both the mother tongue and remedial education in the standard curriculum subjects are taught, mainly by volunteers. As with the Black supplementary school movement, the aim is not to replace mainstream schooling but to enhance it.

Much of what the Vietnamese say about the educational system clearly reflects their own cultural background, their experiences as refugees and the desire to overcome their problems, particularly those of high unemployment and of cultural isolation. The emphasis and hope

they place on education is well-placed according to studies of other, older migrants and refugees. Education does pay off in spite of the limitations, inequities and injustices of its provision. Other aspects of the Vietnamese narrative on education indicate that the Vietnamese now feel that they are refugees no more, but permanent residents and citizens. As such it is not surprising that much of what they say may strike a chord among other sections of the population, perhaps with most of it. Their desire for more sense of purpose, more conviction from the teachers in their job, racism to be rooted out, and the promotion of self-esteem and academic excellence are things most of the population hold as important. The freshness and subtlety of the Vietnamese commentary on British education can perhaps serve to reaffirm its importance, to encourage those who strive to provide it and to hasten its improvement and fairer provision.

Dr Tom Lam, a Vietnamese refugee, currently works as a researcher at South Bank University and has been conducting a survey of the Vietnamese population in South East London. He also works on the Greenwich Health Project.

Dr Christopher Martin's PhD thesis was on 'Education and migration in East Africa'; he has also conducted research in the same field in Latin America. He is currently attached to the South Bank University and is conducting research on 'Emigration and new migrants in Britain'.

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Christopher McDowell, *Research Officer, Refugee Studies Programme, Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford*

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Education and the Palestinian refugees of Lebanon - a lost generation?

by Lina Abu-Habib

Background

In 1948, the first wave of Palestinian refugees arrived in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt to seek what was thought to be a temporary refuge. A second exodus, mainly to Jordan, followed in 1967 as a result of the defeat of Arab armies during the third Arab-Israeli war. In 1970/71, thousands of Palestinian refugees fled from the civil war in Jordan to Lebanon. At present, the total estimated population of Palestinian refugees in the Arab world is about two million. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), 320,000 reside in Lebanon. This number is contested and estimates vary between 250,000 to 400,000.

In Lebanon, Palestinians were housed in refugee camps, and their care was mandated to a specially formed temporary UN body, the UNRWA. Refugee status varied greatly according to the host country. In Jordan and Syria refugees enjoyed rights comparable to those of Jordanian and Syrian citizens and had access to state services and benefits. In Lebanon, Palestinians were granted a status of **temporary refugees** with fewer rights and limited access to services, while responsibility for their welfare lay with UNRWA. However, only registered Palestinians living inside or in the proximity of official camps were eligible for, or had access to, UNRWA services.

Palestinians in Lebanon were denied work permits and hence the right to work in the country. In the early seventies, before the start of the Lebanese civil war, Palestinian workers constituted a substantial pool of illegal, unskilled labour in construction, agriculture and factories. In the early days, UNRWA was also an important employer, counting on its payroll several hundred Palestinian men and women in different clerical, technical, professional, and managerial jobs.

Until the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) had been a major employer and provider of social services to Palestinian refugees. It is estimated that the PLO absorbed around 10,000 full-paid soldiers and militia men from among Palestinian

refugees. It also employed several thousand persons in its politico-social infrastructure. This situation, along with remittances received from Palestinians working in the Gulf countries, ensured a relatively stable minimum livelihood for most refugee families.

Inevitably, Palestinian refugees became enmeshed in the Lebanese war (1975-1990), triggering antipathy from different sections of the Lebanese population.

Shrinking provisions

As of 1985-86, the socio-economic situation of the Palestinian refugee population started to deteriorate dramatically as a result of the combined effect of sieges and persecution coupled with the general collapse of the Lebanese economy. This was exacerbated in 1990-91 by the Gulf crisis, resulting in the expulsion of tens of thousands of Palestinian workers from Gulf countries and severance of substantial financial aid to the PLO from Arab oil countries. Prior to this the PLO had already laid off numbers of military and civilian cadres; vast majority of these were young males in their teens with limited skills. This particular group posed a critical problem, and continues to do so. Released en masse in refugee camps, there was little productive activity that they could undertake, and after years of living as fighters, their social integration was a challenge for their communities.

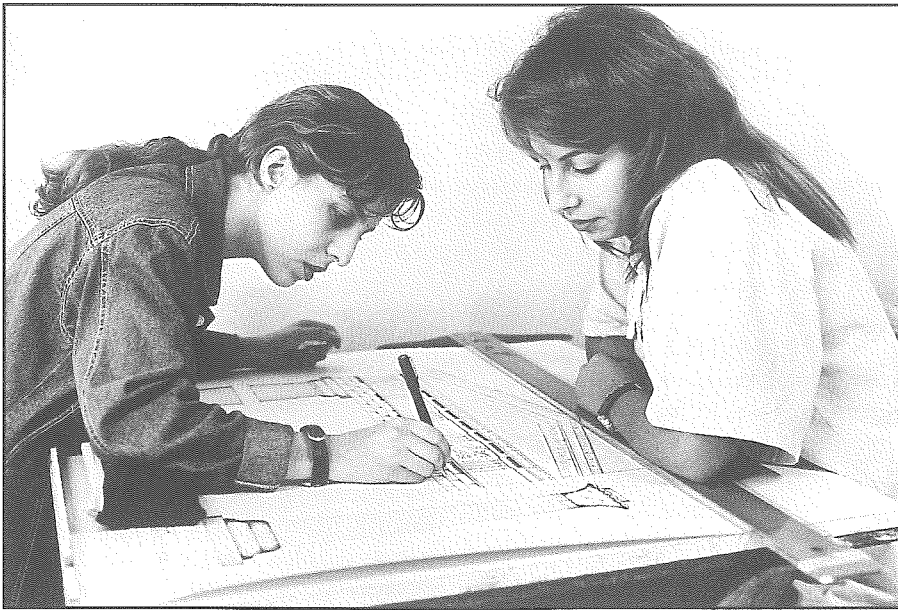
UNRWA provides primary education for the population of officially registered camps. Secondary education, a prerequisite for access to university, was never considered to be within UNRWA's temporary mandate. Until 1982, the PLO used to fill this gap by running secondary schools and by securing university scholarships in Lebanon and other sympathetic countries. This PLO policy contributed to ensuring a high level of educational attainment amongst young Palestinian men and women, until the mid 1980s. With the collapse of the USSR and the expulsion of Palestinians from Arab Gulf countries, as well as the closure of most PLO institutions following the PLO's forced departure

from Lebanon in 1983, access to secondary and higher education became increasingly difficult.

In the 1980s, at a time when extra capacity was needed to absorb an increasing number of uneducated and unemployed youth, UNRWA started facing financial difficulties. The quality and extent of its services had to be gradually reduced, particularly health care and education provision. Distributions of food rations and daily meals to nursery schools and social centres were also run down.

Under these circumstances, very few options were left for providing education to adolescents. UNRWA schools were unable to meet growing demand and increase in population size. Budgetary cuts meant fewer classrooms had to cater for a higher number of students; in addition, parents had to meet part of the schooling costs, which proved to be prohibitive in most cases. Access to Lebanese schools remained extremely limited due to cost, distance, or both. With little and/or poor schooling, most Palestinian youths were unable to progress to further technical or academic education. Drop-out rates increased affecting girls more than boys, as investment in education of girls is considered a lesser priority.

The remaining option, that of technical education or vocational training, is also limited in scope. UNRWA runs a technical institute with places for only a few hundred students every year. Other outlets for technical education are the private sector and NGOs. The private sector provides technical education of varying quality and cost, accessible to only a small number of refugees, so that vocational and training programmes provided by NGOs remain the most popular option. Unfortunately, very few programmes appear to be responding to local demand. In fact, development workers have observed that, particularly in the case of young women, vocational training in 'traditionally feminine skills' such as sewing and hairdressing is unlikely to lead to an economically productive activity or an improvement in status. Short-term vocational training for young men has a slightly



VDSA vocational training at Bourj Brajneh refugee camp near Beirut.
Photo: C Johnson, © Oxfam

better prognosis especially in the case of specific construction skills due to the construction boom and the demand for cheap labour. Still, the impact of foreign-funded vocational training programmes is far from satisfactory when looking at economic and social benefits and improvements.

New approaches

VDSA (Vocational Development and Social Association), a Palestinian NGO officially created in 1986 and supported by Oxfam UK and Ireland, the European Union, and other European agencies, is perhaps among the very few to consciously depart from the conventional trend of vocational training and education in its attempt to address the problems of refugees seeking professional training and education. After years of running typing courses for women and men, flower arrangement for women and plumbing and electrical installations for men, VDSA realised a number of shortfalls in this approach. The market had become over-saturated with people with similar qualifications and in the case of more specialised courses (eg typing, languages...), the methods and curriculum were so outdated that students could not meet the standards required.

Women were particularly disadvantaged in this process. Whereas men equipped with some training were in most instances able to find manual work outside the boundaries of the camp (despite their non-eligibility for work permits)

similar options for women did not exist. In a growing climate of religious fundamentalism and conservatism within the Palestinian community, women were mostly confined to the camps and therefore had even fewer work opportunities; the number of offices, hairdressing salons or sewing factories is fairly limited in refugee camps!

All this convinced VDSA of the need to think through and adopt a new strategy for vocational training. Such a strategy would look at the changes in the situation of the local and regional employment markets, the outlets available for Palestinians given their current legal status, the need to challenge traditional gender roles, and the possibilities for extending support to graduates in terms of job placement or self employment. There was also a need to explore uses of vocational training programmes in promoting refugee rights for education and employment and actively disseminating gender awareness.

Although this process is now well under way, its impact is still limited and offers little long-term prospect. In the absence of any relaxation of laws on the employment of Palestinian refugees, very little can be done to equip them with long-term marketable skills which will ensure sustainable livelihoods. Still, the efforts of NGOs such as VDSA serve a number of purposes, such as introducing new and professional ways of working amongst associations involved with the Palestinians. But perhaps the most important

achievement is the challenge that NGOs such as VDSA and others are introducing as an option to more traditionally defined gender roles and social relationships, at a time when growing conservatism seems to isolate an already marginalised and impoverished population even further.

What future?

For those few fortunate young refugees, mostly men, who do manage to go through mainstream academic education, the prospect of building a professional career in Lebanon remains grim, due to the restraints imposed by employment regulations - a few months ago, a number of Palestinian physicians were asked to stop working as it became illegal for them to practice medicine under the current laws. The main aspiration for most Palestinian youths wanting to go to university, or for those who have completed it, is to emigrate to Scandinavia and other Northern countries, a matter now made more and more difficult by increasingly xenophobic immigration laws.

So long as the peace negotiations in the region are at a standstill, the situation and status of the Palestinians of the diaspora, most particularly in Lebanon, remain in limbo. Meanwhile, there is great reluctance to discuss even their rights to basic services such as health, employment and education. With so little investment in education in general, and more specifically, in secondary education, the level of skills of the Palestinian refugee population in Lebanon is likely to decrease even more, jeopardising any remaining potential for economic independence and productivity. Especially alarming is the loss in education for those who are now in their teens. Whatever political decisions are taken in the future, remedying shortcomings in education for these generations is going to prove difficult, and the impact will be a long lasting one. As for the present, keeping thousands of unskilled and idle youths trapped in camps by poverty and by official indecision concerning their status is not the best way to contribute to a lasting peace in the region.

Lina Abu-Habib is a programme officer with Oxfam UK and Ireland in Lebanon. She is currently working with Oxfam HQ's gender and development team, specialising on the Middle East.

Literacy for Refugee Women: A case study from Nepal

by Tahmina Rahman

Can an emergency response address longer term social development issues? Is it possible to promote the development of skills; raise awareness on health and other social issues and empower women at the household and community level in an emergency response? The Oxfam Bhutanese Support Programme in Nepal attempts to address these issues. Through an analysis of the Non-Formal Education (NFE) component of the programme the following case study will illustrate some of its successes and weaknesses.

'Oh Education!

Education you are like the pouring rain in summer,

.....

Education show me the way to a better life,

Give me wisdom,

Show me light,

Give me strength.'

This poem is a poignant declaration from a Bhutanese refugee woman on the value of education and what it means to her. It was published in the December/January 1994-1995 edition of the monthly 'Humro Kura' (Our Stories), a compilation of poems, articles and essays written by the participants of the literacy classes organised by the Oxfam Bhutanese Refugees Support Programme (BRSP).

Background

In the years that followed the introduction in 1988 of the 'One Nation, One People' policy by the Government of Bhutan, thousands of Bhutanese citizens were arbitrarily arrested, tortured, raped and murdered by the security forces. By 1993 an estimated 100,000 people had moved to southeastern Nepal; 86,000 housed in eight camps in the densely populated districts of Jhapa and Morang. Most of these refugees were ethnic Nepalis, of Hindu culture and agricultural/rural background, of whom around 25% were adult women. Oxfam Nepal, one of the eight agencies working in the camps under the coordination of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), responded to this influx of Bhutanese refugees in a variety of ways. From September 1992 its support focused on two main components: literacy and income generation.

Initial stage of the NFE

The current NFE component was initiated by the Bhutanese Women's Association (BWA). This group felt the need to dis-

seminate information on health and environmental issues. In the course of those informal meetings the association realised that a large number of women in the camps were not educated and decided to start literacy classes.

Approach and Teaching Method

The BRSP prudently decided to use the National Literacy Programme in Nepal as a basis to develop the NFE I, II, and III, to provide a minimum basic education to adults and children not served by the formal system. Children's classes had been discontinued in 1994 on the successful integration of those who had joined in the CARITAS run formal system of schooling. As a result, the programme could respond to the immediate needs of expansion, keeping initial investments for designing a model and developing education materials to a minimum. Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (1968) keyword approach was used throughout the programme. Efforts were made to relate the lessons to the participants' daily lives and provide opportunities for discussion. The instructional strategy involved helping small groups of participants to learn from one another, and in the process develop critical thinking, problem solving, and literacy skills. Refugees were hired as facilitators of this learning process.

NFE I focused on providing basic reading and writing skills in Nepali and arithmetic which refugees (particularly women) could use in their daily lives. NFE II designed post literacy activities for the newly literate from NFE I to enable them to retain literacy and numeracy skills. NFE III aimed to develop individual learning initiatives and therefore to bring the programme to an appropriate phasing out stage. A total number of 1417, 4877 and 6409 refugees participated respectively in 1992, 1993 and 1994 with the following female/male ratio: 5/1, 4/1, and 3/1.

Impact of the programme

Together, these components of the NFE helped to develop the literacy skills of the refugees, particularly in Nepali and English; raised awareness on public health issues; enabled refugee women to come together for emotional support and comfort and to articulate their needs to relief personnel. With the skills and added knowledge, women gained some confidence to participate better in decision-making both at the household and camp levels.

Making space for women

Both the BWA and Oxfam staff were sensitive to the fact that women were suffering stress from both pre-flight atrocities and post flight insecurities in a new environment, but culturally had difficulty in meeting with others and sharing concerns. In Bhutan mobility was fairly restricted for most women. The NFE compounds provided a 'semi-public space' that most men found acceptable for their wife and daughter to use, giving some of the women their first taste of interaction with a range of people outside their own homes. In order to encourage women's participation, separate male and female classes have been organised, and when appropriate different age groups have been set up. Class timings in the afternoon allow women enough time for ration collection, child minding and other household activities before coming to the classes.

Use of literacy skills

Literacy skills enabled women to communicate and express themselves better; it meant that they were able to write simple letters, read sign boards, medicine labels, newspapers, bulletin boards, do simple calculations and distinguish currencies. For the first time in their lives women were in a position to tutor their little ones at



Bhutanese refugee women attending literacy classes. Photo: T Rahman

home. All this made an enormous difference in the way refugees, particularly women, perceived their own lives and approached their future. For instance Shila Rai and her group wrote in an essay:

'...if possible women should move forward. We want to have equal rights with men. We have now become literate and we want to participate in the development of our country...'

Health Awareness

In addition to the health related contents of the NFE text books, workshops were organised in collaboration with Save the Children Fund (SCF) to reinforce health awareness amongst NFE staff and participants. SCF reported an increased use of the health centres, particularly for immunisation and child illnesses. NFE participants are said to have played an important role in the prevention of an outbreak of cholera in the camps.

Initiatives at the household and community level

Women who were initially shy are now challenging ideas, as well as putting forward their own suggestions. For instance, they are now involved in organising ration distribution. NFE participants have been elected in the camp committees and are also members of the Refugee Women's Forum (RWF), the representative body for women refugees in the camps. RWF members, formerly NFE participants, claim that learning to read and write has given them confidence to undertake community activities. Many have motivated their husbands to join NFE classes. Again there are instances of increased confidence at

the household level.

Radhika Mahat, aged 17, never had the opportunity to go to school. She joined the NFE and spent much of her spare time reading and writing. At the time when she was completing NFE I her family wanted her to marry. She refused saying that she wanted to continue her education. She is now working as a community health worker and she feels that through education she gained respect from her family and enough confidence to decide what she wants.

Therapeutic impacts

Refugees are encouraged to borrow books from the reading centres and to write for the camp bulletin board and the Humro Kura. These activities are highly popular among the wider refugee community, and especially among NFE participants who are overjoyed with a sense of pride when their material is selected. Changes on the bulletin boards are always awaited with anticipation. These activities promote a literate environment and help prevent a relapse into illiteracy. The writings are expressions of the creative energy which helps refugee women/men to channel their deepest emotions, the therapeutic impact of which is obvious.

Issues of Sustainability

Issues concerning participation, transfer of responsibility and ownership of the learning process need to be carefully considered in order to address sustainability issues of such a programme.

Although the programme involves a large number of refugee women as participants, supervisors and facilitators, they have little say in the planning and

management of the NFE, which are taken over by senior management staff. This has created a chain of dependency which is likely to inhibit the process of preparing participants/refugee community to assume responsibility for this programme or indeed any other. While recruiting

individual women from the affected community is crucial in the effective running of the programme, there is also a wider need to support and strengthen indigenous women's groups in order to ensure longer term sustainability.

A greater degree of participation in the different stages of the programme such as defining needs, designing teaching aids, producing of post-literacy materials would enable refugees to organise and run similar programmes in the future. More flexibility in order to incorporate changes would also promote meaningful links with other issues arising in a refugee situation. On-site training, in the actual NFE classroom, should be done as opposed to formal workshop situations. Participatory programme monitoring and evaluation with staff, supervisors, facilitators and participants could be incorporated as part of the skill development process.

Conclusion

The Nepal experience has added valuable lessons to our understanding of social development and emergencies. It has drawn our attention to the necessity of addressing issues of skill development, the need for women's space and awareness raising, and the value of such work at the individual and collective level in a refugee situation. At the same time it indicates the importance of working with refugee women's organisations and the need for a greater degree of consultation and participation to address issues of sustainability.

Tahmina Rahman is Oxfam's Social and Developmental Adviser within the emergency and public health department.

'Palaces for children': education in the refugee camps of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR)

by Agustín Velloso

Background

The history of the Western Sahara can be divided into two main periods: before and after 1975. Before 1975, the territory was a Spanish colony. In 1975, with a view to decolonising the territory, Spain, Mauritania and Morocco signed the tripartite agreements under which Spain abandoned its colony in the Western Sahara and the latter two countries divided the territory between them; the Saharawi people began a war for self-determination and thousands of civilians fled to the safety of Algeria where they have lived in tented camps ever since.

In 1976, the General Secretary of the Frente Polisario (Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguía el Hamra and Río de Oro, as the two main parts of the territory are called) proclaimed the creation of the Sahara Arab Democratic Republic. It was introduced as a free, independent, sovereign, democratic, non-aligned Arab state of Islamic religion, adhering to the United Nations Charter, the OAU, the Arab League and the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man.

There have now been more than 20 years of war with declining intensity. During this period, the most important events have been the Moroccan military invasion; the liberation of some territories by the Frente Polisario; the United Nations' resolutions in favour of the right to self-determination of the people and parties involved in the Western Sahara; the recognition of the Sahara Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) and, gradually, by 72 states throughout the world; and finally, the current wait for a referendum on the self-determination of the Saharawi people which should have taken place in January 1992, under the auspices of the UN. To



*The gloom of this schoolroom in the Sahara, its shutters closed against the heat and invasive sand, is broken by the flash from the camera.
Photo: A Velloso*

date, it is still not known when this referendum will be held.

Undoubtedly, the referendum is the key to ending the war and beginning a new era for the Saharawis. The UN presented a peace scheme, under which both parties put the responsibility for organising the referendum into the UN's hands. There is a UN mission for the Western Sahara Referendum, called MINURSO, which is composed of three groups, one civil, one police, and one military. It should also be pointed out that Morocco is trying to change the terms of the referendum in its own favour, as well as delaying a solution to the conflict. If the referendum does not take place shortly, 'it means that the diplomatic way has been closed, which obliges us, naturally, to renew the war for independence,' said SADR President Mohamed Abdelaziz to an interviewer in Washington early this year (*El País*, February 10 1995, p 10).

The area controlled by the Frente Polisario (including the camps of exiles in Algeria) lacks almost any means of production (or else these cannot be put into use); the people use no currency and depend almost entirely on international aid, which to some extent covers every sector of economic and social activity.

This aid is channelled from the Algerian Red Crescent to the Saharawi Red Crescent which distributes assistance through neighbourhood committees.

Education

How do you educate children and youngsters who never see trees, museums or parks in which to play? How do children imagine their future under refugee conditions? How do school teachers teach without suitable training and with inadequate teaching materials? How does a child learn about the outside world when his own is

made up of sand, tents and war?

The Saharawis who live in the camps near Tindouf, Algeria, are a people who are consciously preparing themselves for life in a modern nation. Perhaps the most remarkable achievement of the Ministry of Teaching and Education, established in 1976, has been the provision of education to all children living in the camps around Tindouf.

This accomplishment must be seen against the fact that, before exile, many parents did not send their children to school. When the camps were first established there was a complete absence of school buildings and teaching materials, as well as a shortage of trained teachers. These difficulties were compounded by the continuing difficult conditions of life in the Sahara desert.

Conditions for teaching remain extremely austere. The Saharawis have constructed schools out of adobe bricks, and because of the high desert temperatures and the wind which blows the sand, the tiny, glassless, wooden windows must be kept bolted; as a consequence, light is extremely scarce inside the classroom. Desks designed to seat two often have to seat three. With the exception of the Secondary School, there is little equipment

for sports or other activities, no lecture halls or space for school clubs.

A most serious problem is the lack of textbooks. For some subjects there is one book available per pupil, but in other subjects two, three or more pupils share one book, and in the worst cases there is only one book for a whole class. This problem is worse for the higher grades. Library resources are practically non-existent. Given the lack of resources, it is not surprising that the educational system lacks provision for children with special learning needs. There is a lack of money even to fit those who need them with spectacles; short-sighted children must be accommodated in the front rows!

Despite these and many other difficulties, the Saharawis' attitude towards the education of their children is expressed in the name given to their schools; they are called the 'palaces for children'.

The Saharawis have three major priorities in improving their palaces for children. These are to continue to write and publish textbooks and produce other teaching materials, to upgrade the school buildings and other facilities, and to ensure that adequately trained teachers are available for all levels of education.

Since the early days of their exile, some textbooks have been published by support groups in Europe. Now there are two projects - one Spanish and the other Swedish - for installing printing facilities in the camps. In the meantime, most texts are produced in the camps using a duplicator, the pages stapled together.

The 'palaces' are also in urgent need of maps, educational games, instruments for measurement and calculation, pictures of social or natural subjects, and sports equipment. The Saharawis emphasise practical education, but the car engines used are very old models which may be too unlike the models currently available on the market. The carpentry workshop makes use of materials from the crates in which aid was shipped. Typing skills are learned on manual typewriters.

Some of the teachers have been trained abroad, others have not received formal training. The Ministry of Education organises regular in-service courses for this latter group. As is the case everywhere, a great deal of effort, imagination and educational skill is required to motivate, teach and encourage pupils to study. Saharawi teachers work six days a week, which

includes classes and the tasks related to daily school life. During the holidays they attend extra training courses or take part in missions or other activities. At one point, a move was made in favour of a five-day week, but this was rejected because of the recognised importance of occupying children's time.

Anyone visiting the Saharawi camps will be struck by the content of the children's drawings. They draw things they have obviously never seen: flowers, cities, highways, mountains, and fields. From the early 1980s, with the help of some European Saharawi support groups, each year a group of children have a holiday from their life in the camps and visit a

European country. This gives them an opportunity to know something about other ways of life. These youngsters are accompanied by Frente Polisario delegates. When they return to the camps they share their experiences with fellow students. The Saharawis place great value on academic achievement and this is the main criterion for choosing which children will go on a holiday to Europe.

Dr Agustín Velloso is Lecturer in Comparative Education at the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, Madrid. His book on the subject of this report, La educación en el Sahara Occidental, was published by UNED in 1993.

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OXFORD JOURNALS



Community-based adult education

Some observations on how individuals and groups learned from self-help projects in Kenya's coastal camps: Utange, Marafa, Swaleh Nguru and Hatimy

by Ann Avery

In March 1995, just before Utange Camp closed, I spent two weeks with the social services team of the Kenya Red Cross Society/International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (KRCS/Federation). My brief was to assist them in documenting their approach to promoting self-reliance for especially vulnerable refugees. Their frame of reference was community-based social services. My purpose in writing this article is to point out the educational value of such an approach, both for individual participants and for communities. This article is my personal reflection on that documentation, from the perspective of an educator. It is not a statement of the KRCS/Federation.

When we think of education and training for adult refugees, we should work with the activities that refugees organise themselves. Encouraging refugee initiatives has been the approach of the social services team of the KRCS/Federation in the coastal camps of Kenya. With the support of the team and various donors, dozens of small self-help projects have provided the setting for women and men to learn manual and managerial skills. They have also augmented their incomes, though marketing products has usually been difficult. Indirectly, and most importantly, they have learned through experience that they themselves can take initiatives and manage their own affairs *in partnership with*, rather than total *dependency on*, an aid agency.

What were the 'self-help projects' and who participated in them?

In December 1993, to take a typical month, there were groups practising the following skills in one or more of the four coastal camps: · fire-fighting · first aid · tailoring · tie dyeing · accounting · mat making

· hat making · crocheting/embroidery · agriculture · wholesale business · child care · kitchen gardening · environmental protection · scouting · sign painting · cultural dances · photography · library training.

In the first place, the participants in these projects were refugees who had been identified as 'most vulnerable'. In some cases they were also the refugees who had taken the initiative to form their own

refugees who had been trained and were paid to visit each household in their zone, gathering and disseminating information. The social outreach workers were taught certain criteria for vulnerability, such as being alone without support, being part of a minority group, having mental or physical disabilities, and having suffered violence. These factors might be balanced out by other factors, such as having a job or business, receiving aid from abroad, or already having access to a specific community service.

They invited groups of such persons to propose a project which would enable them to improve their skills or their income or both. The participants in each group lived in the same zone and had something in common (for example they might all be widows, young single women, out of school youth, men with disabilities). Each group had its own objectives, monitoring system, and budget. These budgets were relatively small in comparison to other camp expenditure, and donors - both local and international - often

found it convenient to support single projects.

Trainers for projects

Trainers were first sought within the refugee community and then from the local Kenyan community. Sometimes a Red Cross staff person led the training, as in the case of an agriculture course and first aid courses.

Learning about management

Writing proposals for the project was often the first skill learnt by the participants. The social workers gave them general guidelines for the proposals, and then negotiated the terms with them. Once accepted, that proposal was the guide both to self-monitoring and monitoring by a staff member, the 'objective outsider' whose



KRCS and IFRC staff arriving at a coordination meeting at the Mombasa Branch. Photo: Ann Avery

groups, like the youth associations.

How the approach developed

The first and largest of the coastal camps was Utange, established near Mombasa in 1991. After Utange had been running for two years, KRCS/IFRC started a programme of community-based social services. Working with zones established since the camp had begun, they selected and trained a staff of social outreach workers to gather information about the needs of each household and to distribute to the households information about resources and programmes that could help them.

Organisation and support

The skill-building groups were organised from the bottom up. In the camp there was a system of social outreach workers,

duty was to guide them in evaluation, reminding them when necessary of the objectives they had set and of any responsibilities they had assumed in relation to donors or community.

What were the incentives to participate? And the disincentives?

In our documentation sessions, the organisers reported that some participants were motivated by the social aspect of the groups. It was good to have a responsibility, an activity to go to where they had a part to play, a skill to learn or to teach, a little money to be made.

It is often difficult to involve the most vulnerable persons in self-help projects, while the ones who need them least may be most eager to participate in them. These are the self-starters. One of the first projects proposed in this programme was put forward by a woman who had run a successful business in Mogadishu. She first proposed a gym and beauty salon, but when persuaded that these would be most helpful to those in least need, she and her group agreed instead to put their strength behind training pre-school teachers and opening a pre-school.

Another project involved a shoemaker who trained seven young apprentices in return for the provision of a machine for sewing shoes. A third project was mat making, a traditional skill which involved many women. The Red Cross made an initial investment in dyes and fibre. After that the women operated a revolving fund, selling the mats in the market, then buying more raw materials. Thus they developed accounting skills as well as others. Some used their savings from this activity to start a small commerce in the market.

Though the demand for mats was high, marketing other handicrafts was a recurrent problem, and some participants were frustrated. Two young women showed me the fine embroidered traditional hats they had learned to make. When asked about selling them, they simply shrugged. Nevertheless, they were proud of their skill. Acquiring raw materials was also difficult. When refugees depended on the 'procurement department' of the staff, a kilo of blue dye for example might be delayed for months in the face of more urgent demands.

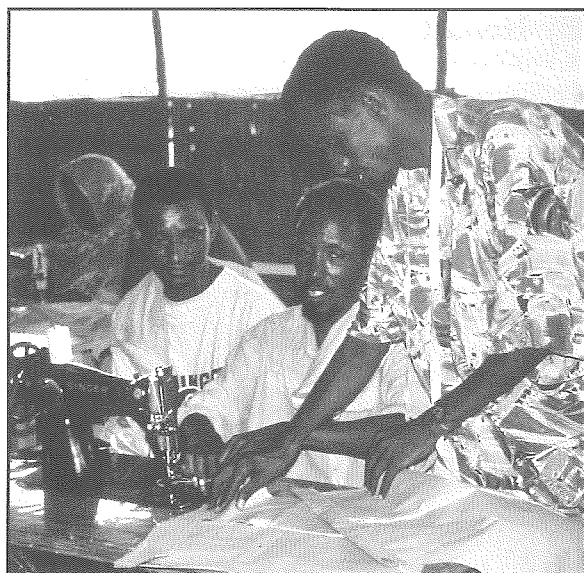
Community leadership and community learning

When I refer to *community learning*, as in the first paragraph, I mean to call attention to the changing consciousness and behaviour of the various communities, within a camp or quarter.

Part of the documentation routine was a series of meetings with elders (mostly men) in each of the four camps, to get their opinions on the importance and impact of the projects. We also talked with other 'opinion leaders', more often women. In general the elders used the occasion to press their requests for more capital-intensive projects, for jobs, a hospital and resettlement. It was difficult (at least for the most vocal of them) to acknowledge the significance of these modest projects targeted at the poorest. Teachers and women's leaders, on the other hand, were in general enthusiastic about the value of the projects and backed them with their own participation and advocacy.

Another valuable part of the documentation was a meeting with representatives of each of the departments of the KRCS/Federation operation. Their staff, not only social services staff, acknowledged the importance of raising the profile of activities to promote self-reliance. It was suggested that this could be done through exhibits and displays, and also that the social outreach workers (refugees) might meet regularly with the elders. Another proposal was to organise workshops for refugee traditional leaders and others to explore the evolving situation of the community and to share information about methods of leadership and community organisation. These workshops should be designed to be a bridge toward understanding for the staff as much as for community leaders. Staff readily admitted their need to counter the dependency that aid structures had fostered.

The social service staff described the self-reliance projects as inexpensive, labour intensive, and high impact. In the process of providing training for the self-help groups, this design made good use of the human resources of social outreach



Vocational training as described in the article.

Photo: Ann Avery

workers, who required and benefited from much training and supervision.

This experience of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Society in Mombasa provides one of many important experiences in the dynamic integration of community organisation, income generation, and skills training. The young Kenyan staff who are now experienced in this approach form a valuable resource for further Red Cross work, whether with refugees or their own compatriots. The Uganda Red Cross social services programme in Koboko was set up along the same lines as that in Mombasa. Federation delegates from diverse situations, including many from ex-Yugoslavia, shared their experiences of supporting refugee initiatives in a workshop on community-based services in June 1995.

Ann Avery works in Geneva as a freelance consultant in refugee education.

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RSP Documentalist.

The impact of return migration : the case of Chile

By Helia Lopez Zarzosa

Following the military coup of September 1973, as many as 500,000 Chileans went into exile. These refugees began to return in 1976. According to the National Bureau of Return (Oficina Nacional del Retorno - ONR), the highest rate of return was registered between 1990 and 1992. Their experiences, both as exiles from and returnees to Chile, were traumatic.

Returnees' emotions upon re-encountering Chile

As pointed out by Salamovich and Dominguez, returnees encountered contradictory emotions upon return, coming in two clearly acknowledged phases. First, the former exile felt initial euphoria, filled with the sensations of finally accomplishing the much desired return to the homeland, family, roots, stability, security and social network, coupled with the possibility of resuming unfinished projects. This phase was followed by a period of depression that, in some cases, was quite extreme. The returnees felt that they were living in a sort of internal exile, feeling the same sensations as in the country of exile. They had to endure feelings of being a stranger, of not belonging, of a loss of people, of places and situations no longer existing, of projects finished without them. The encounter with the unexpected produced distrust, threat, insecurity and fear, which most often turned into regressive attitudes, feelings of inability to control reality and the overwhelming need to 'start again'.

A structural view of the return migration

Although the general impact of return has been generalised from a psychological perspective, it is imperative to provide a sociological view of the problem, as the particular experiences of the different social classes and categories of the returnees are different.

Class and return

According to the data available, the return to Chile is mainly a middle class experience. Data published by Llambias-Wolff and taken from the ONR shows that 68 per cent of registered returnees were professionals or technicians, while only 15.6 percent declared themselves as manual workers. This trend has been corroborated by a study carried out by Lopez in 1993 in the province of Concepcion, showing the same social distribution. Working-class returnees face more problems adapting than middle-class ones. They usually do not bring back from exile any assets or

skills, such as higher degrees, specialised qualifications, savings or personal contacts. They re-enter the strongly nepotistic Chilean culture at best on the same level as when they left, but with the society having moved on in their absence. Working-class returnees re-enter the Chilean class system disadvantaged in relation to their middle-class counterparts.

Returnee women

Returnee women, particularly those who were exiled in industrialised countries faced ever greater difficulties. They adapted to countries where gender subordination has been challenged, and they came back to a 'machista' society where individual opportunities are subject to compliance with an accepted feminine behaviour. Merit only counts after being approved by the patriarchal canon. When in open opposition to these rules, women are labelled as seeking conflict and become marginalised.

As Gissi has rightly pointed out, many women within the Chilean society endorse 'machismo', consciously or unconsciously. In other words they subscribe to the societal ideology that keeps them oppressed, thus limiting their opportunities for self-realisation. As for returnee women, this situation meant greater isolation and lack of gender solidarity and support.

Children and forced migration

Involuntary refugees is the term Lopez uses to refer to children of the Chilean refugees who grew up during the exile of their parents. They also face difficulties with the adaptation process. They feel exiled in their parents' country of origin. In most cases, they were brought back to Chile involuntarily. Few were really consulted about return, and most of those consulted felt that they had been cheated. The country they arrived in did not seem to fit the image which their parents dreamt about while in exile and promised them. Lopez calls them forced immigrants.

Yes, we did say yes etc..., but over there one cannot imagine how it is to live in this country, in this society,... at the

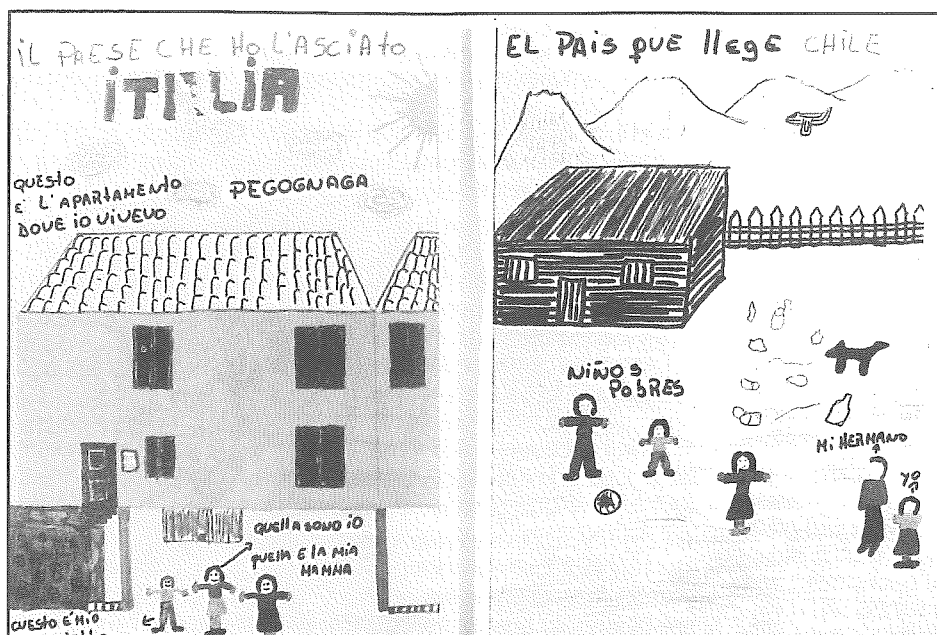
beginning it was voluntary but I arrived to an unknown world, what that meant is that I did not arrive to the Chile that they (my parents) had told me about, I arrived to another world, that is as if the plane had not landed in Chile and I was left in another place, therefore I felt that I was forced to come, I didn't feel as if it had been voluntary.

(Boy from France, 18 years old, 15 when he arrived)

Children had not been prepared to face the problems involved in their forced migration. Very few had attended Saturday Schools in the host countries and far less had been prepared in a realistic way by their parents. For example, on arrival, most children spoke and understood Spanish, but still experienced language difficulties at school: their level of day to day communication was adequate but their vocabulary was poor and they lacked basic writing skills.

In 1992, conscious of the problem, the Ministry of Education and the ONR attempted to ease the integration of returnee children into mainstream Chilean education. This joint programme was well intentioned but produced little in the way of results. It was only implemented in the three major urban centres of the country - Santiago, Valparaiso and Concepción - and within those centres it seems to have reached a very limited number of teachers. In the province of Concepcion, for example, only 12 teachers out of approximately 5,000 in primary and secondary education attended in full the six-Saturday course provided by the programme.

According to a study by Lopez on school adaptation, children not only had to face different teaching and learning strategies, teachers' attitudes and modes of leadership, but also a very classist, racist and sexist society which permeates the educational system. The teachers expected them to conform and accept both pedagogic policies and practices, and organising principles. The study shows that adaptation was not considered to be a process which, in some cases, would take



Gloria 15, represents the country she left and the country she returned to. Drawings collected and published by PIDEE, Santiago de Chile.

a long time, and the system failed to acknowledge that some children would never get over the initial period of total rejection. In addition, in several cases, children felt excluded from their peer groups.

Conclusion

As briefly outlined in this paper, returning to Chile has been a painful and traumatic experience. Many families felt as if they had become alien once again, at a time when they believed their exile to be at an

end. The Chilean society to which they had returned was not the one which they had left nor the one of which they had dreamt. However, not all returnees live the same experience; because their opportunities are linked to the structural factors described earlier, the ways they cope are different.

The ordeal of returning did not always end the migratory cycle. On the contrary, in extreme cases, it marked the beginning of a further migratory cycle, with 'another return'. As their expectations were not fulfilled, many returnee families migrated

to the country where they had sought refuge. The problems the children faced at school, coupled with a generally difficult integration of the younger generations, played a decisive role in the determination to leave Chile again.

Helia Lopez Zarzosa, a refugee for 15 years, returned to Chile for three years but is now back in the UK. She is a social scientist who specialises in Development Studies and Educational Sociology.

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 Professor James Hathaway, Osgoode Hall Law School, Canada

Nigeria: A Safe Country?

Saturday, 1 June 1996
 Speakers to include: Richard Carver, Chidi Ondinkalu, Shehu Othman and Gavin Williams

Fourth Pontic Day

Identities, Spaces and Activities in Eastern Anatolia

Saturday, 8 June 1996
 Speakers: Neal Asherson, Anthony Bryer, Jim Crow, Stephen Hill and Eftihia Voutira

Training for aid workers

Dear Editor

As a recent graduate, when I started RSP's Foundation Course - intended as a basic introduction to humanitarian work - I was a little surprised to discover that several of my fellow students already had field experience. I decided to interview five of them about the preparation they had received before going into the field and why they were following the RSP course at this stage in their career.

My first discovery was that those who had worked in humanitarian emergencies brought only previous work experience to their assignments, while the one who had worked for a 'development' agency had been required to undergo a three-month training course, including intensive language courses. Moreover, upon his arrival in the country of assignment, he was given one month to familiarise himself with the country and its people. Each time he returned to his head office, he was thoroughly debriefed.

In the case of another of my interviewees, the only briefing she received related to the organisation's policy and mandate and she was given training in specific technical skills. For the four who worked in emergency situations, no prior briefing on the cultural background and language had been given. Only two of the four spoke the official language of the country to which they were assigned. One of them said that training as a 'logistics officer in an army would have been more appropriate in order to grasp some of the dynamics of what was going on in the country' he had been assigned to.

So why did these experienced people decide to study at RSP? All of them mentioned the need to reflect, to have some distance from their experiences and to re-evaluate their work. Furthermore, they all added that it was important to keep up with new research and to analyse different work approaches.

Pauline Enthoven

Visiting Study Fellow, Refugee Studies Programme

'The staffing of NGOs' - the other viewpoint

Dear Editor

I am writing in response to the article by Eddie Adlin-Yaansah and Barbara Harrell-Bond ('Regulating the non-governmental sector: the dilemma', RPN 19). While they make some valuable points and ask a number of well-placed questions, they at times over-simplify the issues. Having worked with Oxfam and other NGOs for 15 years, and having also been a staff delegate and union representative in negotiations concerning the terms and conditions of Oxfam's staff round the world, I take particular issue with section (iv) of the article, 'The staffing of NGOs'. It is vital not to generalise; differences exist within large NGOs that operate in dozens of countries. And many of the criticisms of NGOs could equally be made of multilateral and bilateral organisations as well, I suspect, of academic research programmes. That said, I would like to draw attention to the following:

- During 1989-90, David Bryer (now Director of Oxfam) embarked on a major exercise (the Overseas Employment Review) to examine existing practice(s) and to work out how to implement global principles (such as salary differentials) governing the employment of local and expatriate staff. The outcome was a Universal Staff Charter laying down the terms and conditions guaranteed to everyone employed by Oxfam, supplemented by a National Staff Charter for each national context (including the UK) that would encompass local labour law and obligations. Where a discrepancy exists between Oxfam's provision and local law, Oxfam offers the better of the two. For instance, maternity provision is better in some countries than in the UK, and Oxfam honours this.

- In the course of these negotiations, it became clear that most (not all) local staff were well paid by comparison with similar employers. However, in some (not all) cases, the senior staff (including expatri-

ates) were paid significantly below the market rate. There were also cases where the old system gave rise to huge discrepancies between the total remuneration package of a foreign national, and the local staff (as described in the article). But while the point of the review was to find a more equitable way of doing things, the problem remains that people who work overseas on fixed contracts have to function in two (often very disparate) economies.

- While it is well known that in emergencies, where there is competition for personnel, NGOs (and IGOs) contribute to an unsustainable increase in local salaries, there are often problems in finding experienced people to work in places where the local salary is very low in international terms, eg Nepal, especially when the job is not tenured and there is no guarantee of employment afterwards. For instance, someone like myself with 15 years of professional experience, two children under five, and a UK mortgage, could not take a four-year contract to work at almost volunteer rates of pay. And for senior jobs, one is looking for experienced mid-career staff who are likely to have a range of personal and financial commitments.

- The claims about tax-exempt salaries need fine tuning. Many countries insist that their nationals continue to pay tax for a period of two years or more, irrespective of where they live and work (US citizens are obliged to pay US tax indefinitely). In the case of Oxfam, UK nationals who work abroad have 20% docked from their gross earnings in lieu of income tax. It is expected that staff will meet any local tax burden, in accordance with the law. Practice varies between countries which operate a PAYE system, and those where it is the duty of the individual to declare earnings or become a tax evader. This is an ethical question for the employee, not the employer.

I have challenged the 20% deduction from earnings on the grounds that this both affects one's earnings-related benefits (such as life assurance and pension), and deprives the employee of the rights as well as the obligations conferred by being a tax-paying member of the public. As a UK citizen, I am concerned about having a broken tax record - one never knows what other rights will be denied on this basis in the future. The sleazy picture of NGO workers portrayed in the article casts a slur on people who are not, in my experience, less law-abiding or less principled than in any other sector.

- The practice of encouraging NGOs to employ local staff is not restricted to developing countries. The EU has stringent rules requiring employers, including international NGOs, to demonstrate that no EU national could be found before employing a third-country national. This affects the capacity of NGOs to recruit developing country nationals in their Head Offices as, in the case of the UK, do the requirements of the Home Office. Again this is a subject that merits attention, especially given that the ODA is sponsoring the research.

But in fact many international NGOs (large and small) have had a policy of 'indigenisation' that far pre-dates the pressures from national governments referred to in the article. More can and should be done, in my opinion; but let us not overlook the considerable advances made over the last decade.

- Of the many other issues that could be explored, it would be especially useful to look at the question of health and life assurance for NGO staff (of whatever nationality) working in high-risk areas. This is a question that is ever more critical for those of us who have worked in life-threatening areas, including war zones, protected by nothing more than a half-baked insurance policy, and a fixed-term contract that absolves the employer of any responsibility for one's employability and well-being in the event of long term physical injury or mental damage. A number of international NGOs are now working on this subject.

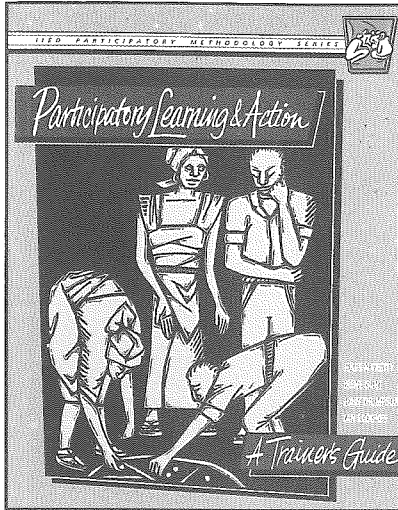
I make these comments in the hope of making a constructive contribution to the directions the research on the matter might take.

Deborah Eade

Editor, Development in Practice

We welcome letters from our readers on any subject relating to forced migration.

Participatory Learning and Action: A Trainer's Guide



by Jules N. Pretty, Irene Guijt, John Thompson and Ian Scoones, 1995. Paperback published by the International Institute for Environment and Development.

Available from IIED, 3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DD. 267pp. ISBN 1 899 825 00 2.

The authors of *Participatory Learning and Action: A Trainer's Guide* have set out a daunting task for themselves in creating a guide which they envisage is more than a conventional handbook or 'cookbook' and which does not block innovation or lead to standardisation. Instead, they have designed their guide 'for dipping into, to excite interest' and 'to give [the reader] a taste of what is possible'. Indeed the guide succeeds at this in many ways. Not only is it accessible to both experienced and new trainers interested in using participatory methods, but it also contains a wealth of practical ideas and materials to utilise in the field to encourage community involvement and make adult training more effective. By practising what they preach, the authors have created a resource that makes use of existing understandings of participatory methods while at the same time encouraging readers to experiment and try the ideas for themselves in order to see what is the most effective. While the focus of the guide may be on educational and training uses of participatory methods, there are many helpful exercises which researchers will find useful.

The guide is made up of two halves: theory and application. In the first half, *Trainer's Guide*, the authors outline the issues and principles in adult education and participatory methods as well as the challenges for trainers and the organisation of workshops. The second half, *Games and Exercises for Trainers*, consists of over a hundred exercises that are designed for different stages and aims of workshops, from icebreakers and enhancing group dynamics to improving skills such as listening, analysis, evaluation and interviewing. The presentation of the material is often concise, clear and user-friendly.

While issues of the effectiveness and appropriateness of participatory methods are beyond the scope of the guide, the authors of *Participatory Learning and Action* have created a useful resource for practitioners and researchers interested in these methods.

Reviewer: William J.G. Coley, Visiting Studies Fellow, Refugee Studies Programme

Focus on Refugee Children

Handbook for Training Field Refugee Workers in Social and Community Work

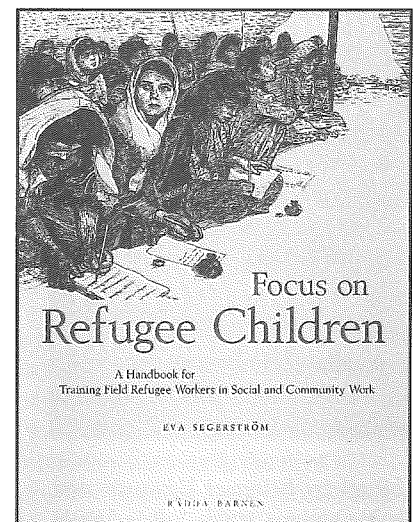
Rädda Barnen recently produced a handbook titled *Focus on Refugee Children*, which is addressed to practitioners working with refugee populations. In the author's experience, the best way of improving the physical and mental well-being of uprooted children is to mobilise and train skilled refugees who then are in a position to provide support to their children. What this means practically and how this principle can be implemented at the field level is developed in the two sections of the handbook. To start with, the theoretical framework of the training programme is described. Then the handbook provides training material to mobilise the community and teaching material to organise workshops focusing on issues related to refugee children.

The first section of the handbook, the 'Resource Book', consists of a general introduction highlighting some basic concepts and principles underlying social and community work among refugees. The presentation begins with a series of important questions, such as who is a refugee, what makes refugee children vulnerable, and how they can be helped. By answering these questions, the author sets up the framework of the training programme. Key concepts such as social and community work, community participation, social assessment and participatory evaluation are explicitly defined and explained and followed by practical advice and guidelines.

In the second part of the module, methods and material are supplied in order to set up workshops and training courses. Each presentation addresses a specific topic related to the well-being of children and starts with an introduction of its goals, followed by questions and issues which can be developed in group discussions. Two examples of community activities: a school project in Yemen, and a psycho-social project in Afghanistan, illustrate this section.

Although primarily produced for field workers focusing on refugee children, the methods and materials provided are useful for a broader range of readers and can also be of interest to theoreticians and policy makers involved in humanitarian assistance.

Reviewer: Marianne Coppey Lanzer, Visiting Study Fellow, Refugee Studies Programme.



By Eva Segerström. 1995. 116pp. ISBN 91-88726-20-7.

Published by Rädda Barnen, Swedish Save The Children. Available from: Rädda Barnen, 107 88 Stockholm [Torsgatan 4], Sweden. Tel: +46 8 698 90 00. Fax: +46 8 698 90 12.

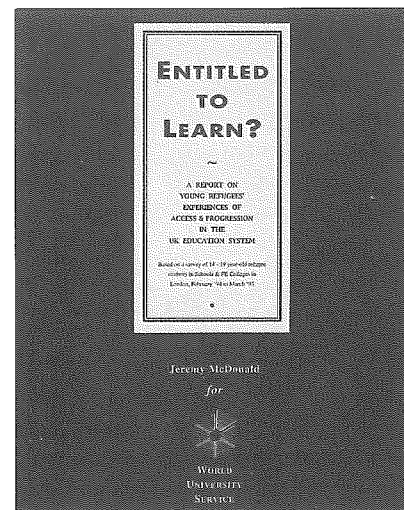
Book reviews

Entitled to Learn?

A Report on Young Refugees' Experiences of Access and Progression in the UK Education System

This report starts with an analysis of numbers and distribution of young refugees in the UK, showing that most of them are concentrated in greater London and come from a handful of source countries. A survey was carried out using interviews with 38 refugee students aged 14 to 19 in four London boroughs, as well as school and college staff. Although the sample was not random it is claimed to be reasonably representative, ranging from those who had little formal education and no knowledge of English on arrival, to those who had already attended an English-language secondary school. There is much of interest in the quotations from the interviews and the discussion of current practice and policy, but the most salient fact is that individuals' progress in the education system is very much a matter of luck. Although some education authorities and individual schools do all they can to help those refugee students who come to their notice, there is no overall system in place for initial assessment of refugees' educational needs. Many students had to find their own way in the system, or received inappropriate advice; for others, poverty and responsibility for younger siblings prevented them from following the courses they wanted. The amount and quality of English language and other support available varied widely, as did the ability of schools to provide an environment where learning could take place. Part of the problem, no doubt, is the generally poor situation in inner London schools; but the report clearly indicts central government for failing to meet its obligations to refugees, and gives a list of recommendations.

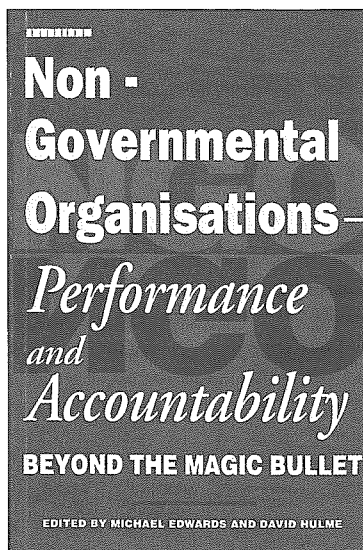
Reviewer: Margaret Okole, Refugee Studies Programme.



By Jeremy McDonald for World University Service. 1995. 59pp. No ISBN. Published by: World University Service (UK), 20 Compton Terrace, London N1 2UN. Tel: +44 (0)171 226 6747. Fax: +44 (0)171 226 0482.

Non Governmental Organisations -

Performance and Accountability: Beyond the Magic Bullet.



Edited by Michael Edwards and David Hulme. 1995. 260pp. ISBN 1-85383 310 X Paperback. £9.95. Published by: Save the Children Fund/Earthscan Publications Ltd, 120 Pentonville Road, London N19JN. Tel: + 44 (0)171 278 0433. Fax: + 44 (0) 171 2781142

This volume picks up where the editor's earlier volume *Making a Difference* left off four years ago and presents twenty varied articles dealing with NGO performance and accountability. Four of these pieces are conceptual, nine articles offer case studies from Africa, Asia and Latin America and the remaining seven chapters discuss, as constructively as possible, ways in which NGO performance and accountability can be improved.

Edwards and Hulme's introduction provides a useful service to all NGO practitioners by setting out in very clear terms the political and economic climate in which most NGOs are now working. The argument is as follows. NGOs have gained access to more resources, but may be losing autonomy. Because NGOs are accountable to such wide range of groups (such as beneficiaries, donors, staff, governments, partners) NGO priorities can all too easily become confused. Finally, in order to judge NGO performance, the authors argue, appropriate indicators need to be negotiated among all these groups.

Although honest about the frequent lack of NGO professionalism and the dangers and problems arising from the current donor fashions for NGOs, it offers some constructive ideas for NGOs willing to confront the need for change.

Readers of the RPN should note that there is little here which deals specifically with relief issues. One exception is Pratten and Baldo's chapter on Sudanese migrant associations. However, readers active in the relief field should find Fowler's framework for assessing NGO performance stimulating and Tandon's critical analysis of the problems of NGO boards (almost unique in the NGO literature) likely to be of interest to most concerned with improving their internal management practices.

Reviewer: David Lewis, Centre for Voluntary Organisation, London School of Economics.

Do you have publications to share or advertise?

If you produce a publication which might be of interest to other RPN readers, please send details, and a copy to the Editor. Remember to include any price or subscription charges plus address and tel/fax numbers. **Deadline for the next issue of the RPN is 30 June 1996**

Research findings

Education for Eritrean and Ethiopian Refugees in Sudan

by Kaviraj Appadu

The aim of the report is to provide an overview of the educational provisions for Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees in Sudan. The research is limited to the primary and post-primary educational levels. It describes the activities of various agencies involved in educational activities in the different camps and settlements. Types and sources of funding, have been the main factor for determining the different education systems implemented. As a consequence, there is a general lack of curriculum consistency and no provisions have been made to facilitate re-integration into the education system of the countries of origin. It has also been observed that the majority of the refugee children prefer to attend the Front Schools rather than the Commissioner for Refugees (COR) schools, funded by the UNHCR. This choice is motivated by cultural and political reasons; both parents and students tend to favour a school system they know better and in which they are able to participate. High drop-out rates are widely observed and there is an attempt to quantify them in a few selected COR schools. The report concludes that there is a need for more case studies to be conducted in the area of refugee education and that existing systems need to be assessed in order to design more appropriate educational intervention for the refugee and internally displaced populations.

Available from: Swedec International AB, Rehnskaatan 20, 4tr, P.O Box 190 90, S-104 32 Stockholm, Sweden. Tel: +46 8 674 66 00. Fax: +46 8 612 77 64.

E-mail: k.appadu.swedec@hifab.se.

STUDIES ON EMERGENCIES AND DISASTER RELIEF: REPORT NO 5

The UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs in Angola: a model for the coordination of humanitarian assistance?

by Toby Lanzer

This report outlines DHA's role in Angola. It provides background information on the recent conflict in Angola, and includes sections on humanitarian diplomacy, advocacy, policy, and strategies. The report illustrates day-to-day features of coordination, such as inter-agency collaboration, joint needs assessments, and information sharing. It also focuses on funding strategies such as DHA's consolidated appeal process, which in Angola took place on behalf of both UN agencies and non-governmental organisations. Further, the report details some innovative coordination approaches, such as the DHA-SIDA mechanism which enabled NGO projects to be approved for financial support in seven days. Finally, it highlights the security procedures and capacity building programmes that DHA fostered.

Published by The Nordic Africa Institute, in cooperation with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Available from The Nordic Africa Institute, PO Box 1703, S-751 47 Uppsala, Sweden.

Newsletters, journals and papers

Information Bulletin about Guatemalan Refugees in Mexico, produced weekly by the Jesuit Refugee Service. Available from Oficina Campeche SJR, Calle 10, No. 310, Barrio San Roman, C.P. 24040, Campeche, Mexico.

Juntamundos, is a teaching guide aiming to offer materials for Education for Development as well as for UNDP's Human Development concept. More information from Hegoa, c/Manuel Iradier 6, bajo. 01006 Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain.

Papers, issued three times a year by the Research Centre for Peace (Centro de Investigación para la Paz). Covers human rights, development, and environment issues. Available from Centro de Investigación para la Paz (CIP), Duque de Sesto 40, entreplanta, 28009 Madrid, Spain.

Shaml, monthly newsletter produced by the Palestinian Diaspora and Refugee Centre - Shaml as a channel for communication and interaction between Palestinian in the Diaspora and those in the homeland. More information from Shaml, P.O.Box 874, Ramallah, West Bank.

Under the Same Roof-Understanding a Global World, analyses more than thirty topics related to the dynamic between the 'North' and 'South' and the global population, especially in the most poverty stricken countries. More information from Hegoa, Av. Lehendakari Aguirre 83, 48015 Bilbao, Spain.

ACSUR-Las Segovias

a Spanish development NGO based in Madrid with delegations in Latin America and Palestine. ACSUR is part of Grupo Sur. For more information, contact: ACSUR-LAS SEGOVIAS. Avda. America, 10-Quinto B, 28028 Madrid, Spain. Tel: +34(9)1725-5289.

CASA DEL MIGRANTE

Casa del Migrante (the house of migrants) began in 1987 to give first-aid to migrants in this most busy and difficult part of the border between Mexico and the USA. It was set up to give temporary housing to Mexican and Central Americans who move to Tijuana in order to cross the US border. Now, however, with the introduction of 'Operation Gatekeeper', an effort to keep migrants out of the USA, the Casa del Migrante is mainly serving people who have been deported. It serves on average up to 130 migrants each week. Contact Senor Campese c/o Calle Galilea #239, Col.Postal, Tijuana, B.C. C.P. 22350.

FUNCOE

Fundacion Cooperacion y Educacion is an NGO specialised in education for refugee populations. For more information, contact: FUNCOE. Plaza Tirso de Molina, 5, 28012 Madrid, Spain. Tel: +34(9)1369-2777.

GREDOHMP

The Research Group on Human Rights and Population Movements (GREDOHMP) was established in 1993 as part of the University of Casablanca's Law Faculty. It conducts and supports multidisciplinary research on the linked subjects of human rights and forced migration.

The Research Group is part of a network of universities studying forced migration under the auspices of the UNESCO/UNITWIN programme. The network includes Oxford University in the UK, as well as universities in Palestine, Jordan, Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique and South Africa. Since its establishment, the Centre has, among other activities, conducted research according to its mandate, organised seminars on issues relevant to the subject and set up exchanges among scholars working in the field.

For more information contact: GREDOHMP. Faculté de Droit, Route d'El-Jadida, B.P. 8110 Oasis, Casablanca. Tel: 212-2 23 1100/ Fax: 212-2 25 0201.

NIGERIAN WELFARE AND MONITORING COUNCIL

is an organisation aiming at providing an organised basis for Nigerians seeking asylum in the UK. Individuals interested in joining this newly-established charity can contact the Nigerian Welfare and Monitoring Council, 44 Lewisham High Street, London SE13 5JH. Phone/Fax: 0181 318 5839.

Join the Refugee Participation Network...

THE REFUGEE PARTICIPATION NETWORK is a network of some 2,200 individuals and organisations in 110 countries, bringing together researchers, policy-makers, refugees and those working on the ground with refugees. Members receive the RPN Newsletter which is published three times a year and includes articles and reports, book reviews, letters and updates on publications, forthcoming conferences, etc.

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