

FORCED MIGRATION

3

December 1998

incorporating the RPN

review

published by the Refugee Studies Programme in association with the Global IDP Survey

In this issue:

Psychosocial support
for refugee children

Environmental
programmes in
Tanzania

The IDP/refugee
debate

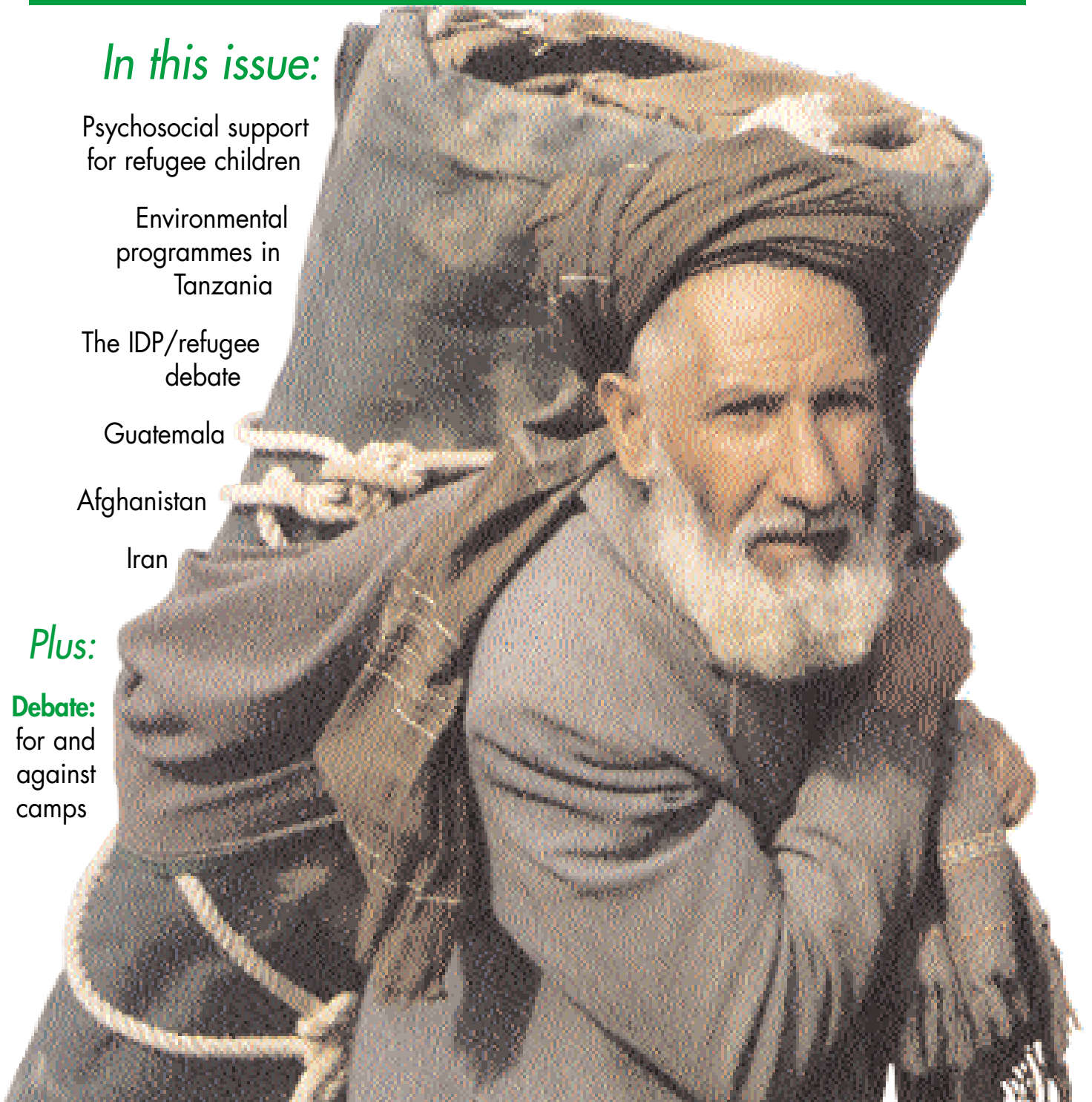
Guatemala

Afghanistan

Iran

Plus:

Debate:
for and
against
camps



Forced Migration Review provides a forum for the regular exchange of practical experience, information and ideas between researchers, refugees and internally displaced people, and those who work with them. It is published three times a year in English, Spanish and Arabic by the Refugee Studies Programme/University of Oxford in association with the Global IDP Survey/Norwegian Refugee Council. The Spanish translation, *Revista de Migraciones Forzadas*, is produced by HEGOA, Bilbao/Spain.

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Forthcoming features:

The next two issues of *FMR* (April 1999 and August 1999) will include special feature sections on different aspects of security and asylum/integration.

We encourage the submission of material in English, Spanish or Arabic, relating to the special feature of each issue or any aspect of forced migration.

FMR articles can be accessed via the websites of the RSP at <http://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/rsp/> and the Global IDP Survey at <http://www.nrc.no/idp.htm>

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from the editors

This edition of *Forced Migration Review* was originally intended to include a special feature section on refugees and internally displaced people in urban settings. Unfortunately, it proved very difficult to gather material on this subject and we eventually decided to drop the feature and devote the whole issue to other material received on a range of issues. The particular situation of displaced people in urban areas remains, however, an important - and apparently neglected - subject; and one to which we still intend to devote a future feature section... Please contact us if you would like to contribute to this!



Tamsin Salehian

This issue sees the introduction of a number of innovations in the content of *FMR*.

On page 27 you will find the first Debate section in which an article or articles from a previous issue (in this case those presented in the 'People in camps' feature of *FMR* 2) are commented on and elaborated. This section provides a forum for the constructive debate of issues of particular significance in the field of forced migration and allows us to cover some of the more controversial issues from a number of angles. Also new in this edition is the Update section - a round-up of short news items from around the world - and the Website directory which will, in future issues, reflect the feature theme of the issue in which it appears.

On the operational side of things, we are delighted to welcome Marc Vincent, the recently appointed Coordinator of the Global IDP Survey, to the *Forced Migration Review* Editorial Advisory Board. Marc is based at the Norwegian Refugee Council office in Geneva and will be our key contact on matters relating to internally displaced people. He will also be keeping readers up to date with issues relating to IDPs via the Global IDP Survey news page (see page 38). All members of the Editorial Advisory Board are now actively involved in the review of articles submitted for publication.

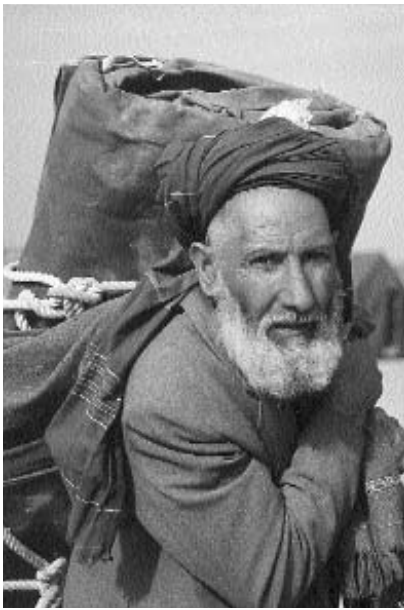
The next two issues of *Forced Migration Review* - *FMRs* 4 & 5 - will present a two-part feature on security. The feature section in *FMR* 4 (April 1999) will focus on the security of field personnel and implications for policy/programme planning and implementation. *FMR* 5 (August 1999) will widen the debate to look at security in the framework of international relations. *FMR* 5 will also include articles relating to asylum and integration.

Please share *Forced Migration Review* with your colleagues. We are happy to send out sample copies - simply provide us with contact details for anyone who you think might be interested in receiving it regularly.

We wish you well in your work.

Marion Couldrey & Sharon Ford
Editors, *Forced Migration Review*

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What can we do to support children who have been through war?

by Anica Mikuš Kos and Sanja Derviškadić-Jovanović

This article documents reflections on four years of psychosocial support given to young refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina by members of the Center for Psychosocial Help to Refugees at the Slovene Foundation, Ljubljana. It suggests that the deleterious psychological impact of war on children is frequently exaggerated.

Claims as to the ravaging long-lasting psychosocial and psychological effects of war on children may be based on the over-generalisation of clinical findings. Clinical workers see only children suffering from psychological disorders - they do not encounter the huge number of children who have suffered much but whose mental health and psychosocial functioning have not been significantly affected. Some statements which have never been scientifically proven are repeated constantly and uncritically in the professional literature. Describing adolescents exposed to war events as aggressive, revengeful and hateful - without indicating how many are affected - is one good example. The Slovene screening of 15-year-old Bosnian adolescents¹, for example, does not confirm frequent aggressive and revengeful feelings in this population. Another example is the repeated statement that violence necessarily breeds violence. There are many nations which have manifested extreme violence or been victims of extreme violence but where violence has not become a recurring phenomenon.

The war experience certainly does influence a child's perception of the world and humanity and their social construction of reality, but this does not mean that the child is psychologically harmed. In most cases the psychological consequences of war on children are in the range of normal human feelings and memories. Astonishingly little attention has been paid by mental health professionals to the actual functioning of

children who have experienced war. Their largely satisfactory social functioning and coping are therefore mainly underestimated and it is only in the last few years that issues such as protective factors and processes and resilience have appeared in the professional literature.

The immense protective function of good psychosocial functioning has also been overlooked. Good functioning evokes positive social reactions which enhance self-esteem. In contrast, inadequate social and school functioning evokes negative reactions, rejection, low self esteem and new stresses. A well-functioning child is contributing positively to their social environment whilst a badly functioning child provokes new adversities in their environment. Mental health programmes may often not be sufficiently concerned with promoting good functioning and coping with important life tasks in war-affected children.

Positive influences of war on personality, values, relations and behaviour are rarely quoted. The war experience can, however, enrich one's personality as any difficulty in life can. It can encourage empathy and positive social behaviour, enhance coping capacities and social maturity. Many well-adjusted Bosnian adolescents reported that the war experiences, related losses and the adversities of asylum life mobilised their strength and enhanced their personal and moral development.

The fact that the consequences of war on children may not be as psychologically devastating as presented by many professionals does not, however, mean that children do not suffer. Neither does it entitle us to remain inactive and to desist from helping children.

The philosophy and activities of the Center

In the spring of 1992 the Counseling Center for Children, Adolescents and Parents in Ljubljana initiated mental health and psychosocial activities for refugee children, adolescents and their families. In 1994 these activities were transferred to the Center for Psychosocial Help to Refugees at the Slovene Foundation. About 35,000 of the approximately 70,000 refugees who came to Slovenia were children. From the very beginning, we realised that the few mental health workers who were actively involved in helping refugees would not be able to treat thousands of frightened, anxious, depressed and traumatised children. Our first and main question was therefore how to provide some help to all children, or at least to the majority of children. Instead of screening and detecting traumatised children for whom we could not, in any case, provide adequate psychotherapeutic help, we developed population-oriented outreach models of psychosocial help.

Mobile mental health teams visited collective shelters for refugees on a monthly basis. Members of the team met with - sometimes very large - groups of parents and gave basic advice about children's needs. They emphasised simple measures such as holding a child's hand or singing to them before they fell asleep. Some pre-school children were very disturbed to learn that their houses in Bosnia had been destroyed and we counselled mothers to help the child construct a house from mud so that the child could see that a new house could be constructed.

The majority of our efforts were invested in the education of Bosnian children. We supported the Bosnian schools and refugee teachers working in these schools². (A similar project has been run for kindergartens in collective shelters.) The basic aim was to create an emotionally safe and friendly environment in schools, to prevent further school-related traumatisation and to incorporate into schools mental health interventions from which all children could benefit. Teachers acted as psychosocial helpers. Half of the teachers were untrained and needed additional educational support. All of them needed some psychological instruction in order to support their pupils. Most importantly, all teachers needed psychological support for themselves. They too were refugees and were exposed to the same war-related traumas and adversities of asylum life as their pupils.

A health education project was initiated in collective shelters and run by Bosnian refugee physicians. As refugee physicians were not allowed to work for payment in Slovenia, or even to practise their profession on a voluntary basis, they started to work as health educators. They discussed sex education with groups of adolescents. They visited chronically ill and handicapped people. They also talked with hundreds and hundreds of mothers about feeding children and the everyday problems of raising children. Discussion of health issues opened the way to discussing psychological problems linked to the war and to life in asylum.

The activities of the Center were much more of a psychosocial nature than of a psychological nature. We prioritised the normalisation of children's lives by incorporating them into schools and confronting them with usual developmental tasks, on the assumption that a structured and predictable part of life with achievement of normal developmental tasks will protect children's mental health. The major aim of the Center has therefore been to ensure a good and supportive school for refugee children, to help them to learn and to achieve academically. Attending a regular school means that the child maintains their social role - the role of pupil. Children who are still pupils have normal working obligations, tasks, functions and responsibility. Being successful in school enhances self esteem, which is of crucial importance for coping.

The impact of psychosocial interventions

There are many unanswered questions concerning the impact of psychosocial programmes for children affected by war and reliable evaluation is problematic. Even if mental health workers had the time, energy and money in an emergency situation to conduct scientific evaluation, there would still be many issues which would not be satisfactorily clarified. The main methodological problem is the lack of controls or comparative groups. It would be unethical and practically impossible to create comparative groups for the sake of research in emergency situations. Comparing the mental health situation and social functioning of refugee children from the programme region and in a region with no programme, or in different countries with different psychosocial programmes, might be a possibility for evaluation. However, we know that the whole context of life influences the feelings, behaviour and coping of people and these vary in different regions and countries. Comparing before and after intervention does not help very much either because time is the most important healer. The state of mental health and psychosocial functioning improve in the great majority of children without psychosocial intervention. Even if we were sure that the intervention had made a difference, we could not prove which ingredient or which activity was the most beneficial.

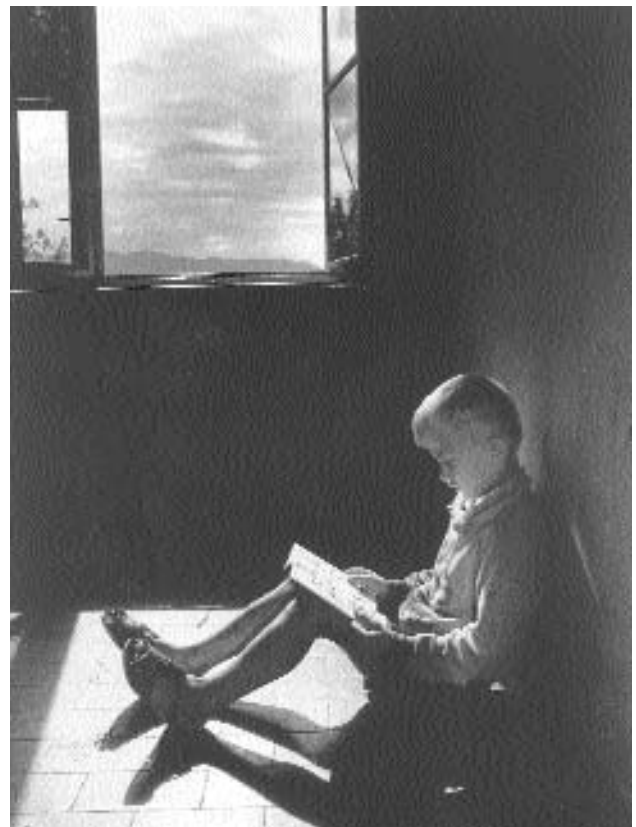
It is the opinion of the authors that psychotherapeutic skills and other specialised professional knowledge have been of much less importance in our work with refugees than in normal working conditions. Establishing a good relationship and displaying a caring attitude and concern for the basic material needs of refugees play a much more important role. For example, supporting Bosnian teachers was of the greatest importance in

our programmes but the majority of supportive interventions did not warrant the designation of psychotherapy. Material help was a part of the support: raising money for a Bosnian school's excursion, thereby maintaining a traditional end of term event, or finding a hearing apparatus for a hearing-impaired child in order to enable him to follow the class like his classmates.

In many cases, our professional titles and positions have primarily provided a greater social power in advocating normalisation and improvement of everyday life conditions of refugee children. You do not need to be a psychiatrist or a psychologist to recognise the importance of a good school for the quality of children's lives. But the Slovene experience shows that there is a far greater chance of establishing a project which will raise the psychosocial quality of the school if such a project is proposed by mental health workers whose specialised opinion is given weight in this context.

Natural healing processes versus professional therapy

There is a tendency for the mental health profession to underline its own importance in situations of armed conflict and in the lives of refugees, and to overestimate the impact of therapeutic



Jože Suhadolnik/BOBO

interventions. We are much inclined to forget that millions of people have survived wars in the psychological sense without any professional help. Many ingredients of psychotherapeutic interventions are available and used in normal everyday life. We should be asking ourselves which ingredients of our interventions are professional-specific, and cannot be substituted by natural social interactions.

Some of the most basic psychotherapeutic principles - providing a secure environment in which the child can talk about the traumatic experience; giving the child the opportunity to share their experiences with others; giving the chance to realise that their reactions are normal and commonly experienced by peers in a similar way; helping the child to develop feelings of security and reinforce their self-esteem - can be provided by people who are a part of the child's natural support network. In natural social groups, people comfort each other and provide mutual support, debrief and correct the perception of traumatic events through discussions. In catastrophes affecting a huge number of people, such as wars, people do not need psycho professionals to learn that their reactions to loss and trauma are normal processes and common to people who went through the same hell.

The professional assumption is that through therapy, meaning is given to the traumatic experience and the experience is integrated into the continuity of one's life. We consider that both processes are immanent to the human nature and that they happen in any case. Meanings and explanatory models are quickly produced and spread in disaster situations. Many parallel explanatory models are available and everybody adapts and elaborates the meaning according to their needs and experiences. The explanatory models are a part of culture, of the national character, of beliefs, of national history. The war is characteristically seen by Bosnian children in depersonalised terms. Sometimes they seem to perceive the war as a natural catastrophe caused by a special unfortunate combination of forces which stimulate violence. Bosnian people often speak about war in the detached way which might be applied to floods or earthquakes.

We mental health professionals also sometimes seem to forget that many people have the capacity to register, to

perceive and to understand the psychological processes and psychosocial interactions as well as we do. Indeed, their descriptions and interpretations are often much more vivid, precise and rich than those expressed in sterile professional vocabulary. We have frequently been impressed by the capacity of refugees with little formal education, to perceive, to understand and to express.

*"We are not crazy.
What we feel is not
abnormal - the
situation is crazy and
abnormal. Our reactions
are human and
normal."*

When offered psychological help, practically illiterate peasants politely explained: "We are not crazy. What we feel is not abnormal - the situation is crazy and abnormal. Our reactions are human and normal." Many poems written by Bosnian children and adults describe their state of mind in a much more illustrative and authentic way than psychiatric textbooks.

Among the most impressive lay observations we have heard concerning Bosnian children was that of a Bosnian teacher who explained to professional psychologists: "Our children are not disturbed. There is a deep sorrow for losses and anguish for native land in their souls." Only some years later psycho professionals discovered that the great majority of refugee children from Bosnia functioned well, and that the symptoms listed in various check lists were astonishingly infrequent. However, there was 'something' in these children which could not be reached, described and presented in the classic language of our profession - this 'something' was exactly hidden sorrow and longing.

Further observations regarding mental health service intervention

One measure of the impact of mental health interventions is the number of users. A very small number of war-affected children are receivers of psychotherapeutic interventions even when

these are available. However, many costly mental health programmes are dealing with an epidemiologically negligible number of traumatised and otherwise psychologically affected children without ever raising a single question about those children who will never be recipients of any intervention. Whilst helping just one child is already a good thing, resource allocation is an important issue: what is the most just, equitable, rational and economic way of spending available funds for the protection of children's mental health and development?

Mental health professionals sometimes offer their traditional clinical models of help insensitively and without understanding of context. Professionals may show a lack of flexibility for adapting their clinical models and concepts to new situations. When they finally realise that these do not work they quit the scene with indignation. Some mental health workers seem to embrace principles of community work. They change their vocabulary - they speak about community and population-oriented programmes - but their basic paradigm remains the same. They remain oriented only towards the inner processes without paying the necessary attention to the broader social context.

An impressive number of mental health workers remain uninterested and not at all involved in helping refugee children in their country. They are apparently unbothered by the fact that there are thousands or tens of thousands of these traumatised children. Besides the issue of professional morals, it is surprising that there is such a formidable lack of professional interest in a local situation from which mental health workers can learn a lot.

In some cases research on psychological traumas in peace time (street violence, traffic accidents or other accidents) is uncritically transferred by foreign experts to war-affected and refugee populations, with complete neglect of the contextual differences. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is the standard diagnosis and the effects of complex traumatic situations and processes, losses and of chronic asylum adversities are neither understood nor accounted for in interventions.

Therapeutic treatment programmes for traumatised children frequently have a much higher funding priority than popu-

lation-oriented programmes aimed at helping a large number of children by improving their education and psychosocial quality of life. Moreover, all too frequently 'suffering' is unfortunately not a sufficient argument to attract programme funding. To raise funds hard diagnoses are needed, among which the most potent and fashionable is PTSD. In the first two years of war in former Yugoslavia, the question: "How many children suffer PTSD symptoms?" was asked far more frequently than the question "How many children are sad, desperate, deceived, humiliated, scared?" Our practice showed that some programmes were necessarily disguised and renamed as therapeutic programmes in order to obtain funding.

Suggestions stemming from the Slovene experience

- Mental health protection of children affected by war should be primarily based on population-oriented outreach models. Adequate moral, organisational and financial support should be given to such models of psychosocial help. The leading strategy should be the WHO 'Health for All' strategy.
- Programmes should be of a broad psychosocial nature and should be comprehensive. They cannot be isolated from other programmes which improve the quality and normalisation of children's lives.
- The function and role of mental health workers in this context should be of broad social and psychosocial dimensions.

- Effective services and programmes for refugee children with multiple needs should be comprehensive, accessible, flexible, contextually and culturally appropriate, and run in cooperation with regular services in the country of asylum.

In conclusion, the main objectives of assistance to war-affected children should be:

- to reduce children's suffering and prevent their further traumatisation
- to support and develop their natural support system
- to help establish an environment which will enhance psychological recovery and normal development
- to establish a structured daily routine and normality in daily life with normal developmental tasks
- to support their education and academic achievements
- to enable children to reconstruct their social world
- to increase the children's coping capacities
- to provide opportunities for therapeutic help for seriously disturbed children

Anica Mikuš Kos is a retired child psychiatrist and the Director of the Center for Psychosocial Help to Refugees.

Sanja Derviškadić-Jovanović, a medical doctor from Sarajevo, is a member of the mobile mental health team of the Center for Psychosocial Help to Refugees.

Although these two people are named as authors, in reality they only compiled the ideas and experiences of about twenty Slovene mental health workers and hundreds of Bosnian refugees: teachers, physicians, mental health workers, but largely wise persons who have reflected, spoken and - most importantly - acted in the interest of children affected by the war.

A full version of this paper is part of the collection of papers in the book *They Talk We Listen*, published by the Center for Psychosocial Help to Refugees at the Slovene Foundation, Ljubljana (1997). The book gives a comprehensive account of the situation of refugees in Slovenia and the activities of the Center. Available from Slovene Philanthropy, Levstikova 22, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia; fax: +386 61 1212 605; email: anica.kos@guest.arnes.si

Notes

1 Slodnjak V (1998) 'Psychosocial functioning of refugee adolescents in Slovenia' in *Refugees in Slovenia*, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, pp 85-104.

2 The Bosnian school in Slovenia is presented in: Mikuš Kos A 'School as psychological protection of children' in *They Talk We Listen* (see above) pp97-115.



UNHCR/R. Le Moyne

Environmental programmes with refugees: abandon the blanket approach?

by Greg Grimsich and Matthew Owen

Approaches to environmental problems in refugee emergencies have traditionally focused on two main areas: promotion of tree planting and dissemination of fuel-efficient stoves. This is done with the intention of increasing wood supply and simultaneously reducing the level of demand. Such activities are relatively easy for non-specialists to implement. They also produce two visible (and hence quantifiable) assets in a short space of time: trees and stoves.

A case study from western Tanzania illustrates the diminished utility of such approaches where natural resources are locally abundant. Tree planting is of questionable ecological value under such circumstances and stoves have had little effect on reducing wood demand. Cost-effectiveness of both activities is low. Therefore a blanket promotion of similar activities is of uncertain value.

An alternative approach is proposed. Environmental strategies can be based on a fuller consideration of the actual local resources on a camp-by-camp basis. Where refugees are in resource-rich areas, then the environmental imperative is for policies that protect, enforce and regulate. Where refugees are located in resource-deficient areas, programmes can concentrate on support, education, assistance and environmental awareness-raising with the refugee community.

There are 235,000 refugees from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo housed in eight camps across Kigoma Region in western Tanzania. The majority having arrived from war-torn countries in late 1996, these people now make up 20 per cent of the region's total population. The camps are located in a narrow strip of land between the Burundi border to the west and a block of protected reserves to the east.

Two of these camps, Mtabila and Moyovosi, lie in areas already degraded over a long period by the local popula-

tion, while the remaining six are in sites further east that were relatively undisturbed prior to the refugee influx. Nduta and Mtendeli camps are two such camps. Being located in dense *miombo* woodland adjacent to the Buyungu Forest Reserve and Moyowosi Game Reserve, they provide a useful environmental contrast with the more degraded sites.

A series of environmental data collection exercises have been commissioned by UNHCR, CARE and the Royal Dutch Embassy and these have made it possible to compare the resource rich Nduta/Mtendeli camps with the resource poor Mtabila/Moyovosi camps. This paper is based on the findings of this research, and particularly upon natural resource surveys conducted by CARE between September 1997 and March 1998.

The paper addresses issues related to the technical approach followed in the refugee environment programme in Kigoma and is not intended to compare the merits of different implementation systems, institutional structures or participatory methodologies. Nevertheless, the importance of identifying and working with local and community-based institutions to promote a situation of efficient, sustainable environmental management should not be overlooked.

Nduta and Mtendeli

Nduta and Mtendeli camps have a combined refugee population of approximately 60,000 Burundians. They are located in uninhabited *miombo* woodland, sporadically cleared by Tanzanian farmers practicing shifting cultivation prior to the villagisation period of the 1970s, but undisturbed since then, allowing for over 25 years of regeneration. The average weight of usable wood in these forests is an exceptional 120 tonnes/hectare.

Mtendeli camp is located on the boundary of the Buyungu Forest Reserve, which acts as a buffer for the Moyowosi Game Reserve 3 km further east. Nduta lies 4 km from the Moyowosi reserve.

The reserves have both ecological and economic significance. The 20,000 sq km Moyowosi ecosystem is believed to contain 20 per cent of the world's shoebill stork population (listed as "suspected to be threatened" by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature). Additionally, it is one of the few protected habitats of the sitatunga antelope and is a major transit corridor for large mammals such as elephant. It generates \$170,000 in annual hunting revenues for the government of Tanzania.



Mtendeli camp immediately prior to refugee settlement

Greg Grimsich

The Buyungu Forest Reserve is an important protective buffer for this Game Reserve, limiting eastwards expansion of cultivation by local people and illegal poaching and timber extraction. It also generates nearly \$20,000 annually in government royalties for the collection of wood, honey and beeswax.

The large refugee populations have brought a variety of threats to these natural resources. Cultivation is expanding rapidly around the camps, thinning the forest cover and converting the sensitive areas adjacent to the reserve to agricultural land. Cultivation along watercourses disturbs downstream supplies and increases the risk of soil erosion. Cheap refugee labour is employed in unlicensed and illegal charcoal and timber operations, both of which result in further loss of ecologically and economically valuable trees. Poaching of game meat to supply refugee markets poses a potential risk to wildlife populations up to 30 km inside the game reserve.

Mtabila and Moyovosi

Mtabila and Moyovosi are adjacent camps and contain 84,000 Burundian refugees. They are situated some 12 km west of the nearest forest reserve and over 40 km from the Moyovosi Game Reserve. The environmental situation here is very different.

There are three Tanzanian communities within 5 km of the camps with a combined population of 22,000. For several decades these communities have exploited the area for grazing, farming and extraction of wood products. The area is characterised by large open spaces cleared of trees, remnant forest patches and plots of land cultivated on a rota-

tional basis. While some of the valley bottom land is relatively fertile the area is, on the whole, characterised by natural resources of low economic and ecological value. The forests have historically been depleted of the largest and most valued species, while the wildlife has long since moved eastward to more remote and undisturbed habitat.

Environmental programmes

Environmental activities in each camp in Kigoma are implemented by the refugee community services and camp management agencies, under UNHCR coordination and funding and with technical support from CARE. All agencies are expected to work in collaboration with the Tanzanian government's Natural Resource Officers and their staff at district level. Few management responsibilities have been delegated to local community institutions, in large part due to their non-existence or lack of capacity.

The environmental approach of agencies and local government has been uniform across the four camps described. The principal elements are: promotion of household tree planting, dissemination of improved cooking systems and protection of standing trees.

Tree Planting: The tree planting component is centred on agency-run tree nurseries in each camp which employ refugees and local people to produce seedlings. The tree species raised reflect a mixture of agroforestry and woodlot varieties, with a prevalence of Eucalyptus, Casuarina, Pinus, Leucaena, Grevillea, Black Wattle, Papaya and Passion Fruit. Seedlings of all types are distributed freely to refugee households

for planting on garden plots and cultivated land around the camps.

Stoves: Improved stoves constructed of mud, ash and straw are promoted in the camps through a programme of training and awareness-raising. The programme includes the introduction of improved cooking techniques to save energy, such as the use of lids on pots, pre-soaking of hard beans and pounding of maize grain prior to cooking.

Tree protection: A network of approximately 30 forest guards in each camp guides refugees to designated areas for the collection of firewood and building poles, while attempting to protect standing trees and regenerating stumps within the immediate vicinity of the camps.

Impacts of environment programmes

The effectiveness of the environmental programmes has varied across the camps. There has been notably more success in achieving environmental goals in Mtabila and Moyovosi (in degraded areas) than in Nduta and Mtendeli. This may come as a surprise. It might be expected that in a damaged area environmental management programmes might be less successful in controlling further degradation than in a relatively undisturbed area under the influence of new human pressure, whereas the converse seems to have been the case.

Tree planting

The tree planting programme has been relatively easy to implement, monitor and account for in all four camps. Material assets are produced in the nursery and distributed. Every aspect can be quantified, which may be desirable in a relief-oriented programme with short-term planning cycles. True environmental benefits, however, have been more difficult to identify.

In the degraded camps (Mtabila and Moyovosi) refugees have generally been willing to plant and nurture seedlings that they have received. Survival rates and community participation are higher. Trees are being mixed with horticultural crops on garden plots. People have engaged in direct sowing of their own *Sesbania sesban* seeds. There is a perceived need to plant trees to grow products for domestic use and for sale - such as poles, firewood and fruit.

Greg Girmsich



Mtabila camp

In the forested camps (Nduta and Mtendeli) there has been a lower seedling survival rate and less active participation in seedling management. Important questions have been raised over tree ownership, protection responsibilities and harvesting rights. Additionally there are serious ecological concerns over the practice of planting economically preferred exotic species in an indigenous woodland and its impact on future succession and species mix. Fire is a major threat to these exotic species in the event of the refugees' repatriation or re-settlement.

Applying a standardised forestry approach across camps in markedly different ecosystems has brought significantly different results.

Stove promotion

The energy efficiency campaign has resulted in high adoption rates of improved stoves in all camps. Seventy-one per cent of households have stoves in Nduta and Mtendeli, and 75 per cent in Mtabila and Moyovosi. However, in common with the tree planting programme, such statistics make for simple monitoring at only a superficial numerical level. Simply counting the number of stoves fails to reflect the different energy efficiencies actually achieved at household level and the environmental benefits accrued.

An important observation here is that a stove will not be used efficiently if the conditions under which it is used are not conducive to fuel efficiency. Thus in Mtabila and Moyovosi, where firewood is in relatively short supply, the refugees have achieved a considerable reduction in fuelwood consumption to an average per capita weight of 1.8 kg per day. In the forested Nduta and Mtendeli camps, the corresponding figure is a drastically higher 4.3 kg per person per day.

The straightforward promotion of fuel-efficient stoves seems to have had much less influence on energy consumption than has the sheer availability of firewood. Even though over 70 per cent of the households in all camps have built stoves, those in the resource-rich areas consume an average of 140 per cent more firewood. The siting of the camps has pre-determined the likely energy consumption, and stove construction



Greg Grimsich

campaigns have had little influence on this pattern of energy use, other than enabling refugees to save energy if they so wish.

Tree protection

Protection activities, though significant, have been relatively low profile in comparison with the tree planting and stove programmes. One reason for this is that protection activities do not produce new assets. They retard the process of forest clearance and as such merely ensure a 'least negative' level of impact. The activities are less visible and much harder to quantify and monitor than stoves and tree seedlings. In Nduta and Mtendeli, the presence of forest guards has been crucial in the protection of trees both within and outside the camp areas. In Mtabila and Moyovosi they have served more as facilitators of refugee access to distant fuelwood and building pole resources on a rotational basis. The number of forest guards is approximately the same in each camp and has not depended upon the value of assets to be protected.

Summary

Environmental programmes in the Kigoma camps have been remarkably similar from one location to another. A blueprint has been followed that focuses mainly on tree planting, stove promotion and tree protection. This blueprint has paid little attention to local ecological

differences that might dictate other priorities. The result is inefficient use of funds on activities such as tree planting within forested areas, stove promotion in situations of abundant firewood where wood users lack incentives to conserve, and a standardised resource protection approach across camps with natural assets of significantly differing values.

An alternative to trees and stoves?

The Kigoma case study suggests that a different outlook to environmental programmes might be worthwhile. A camp-by-camp reconsideration of supply, demand and protection of natural resources should be made to reach environmental goals. It could save on inefficient expenditure and better respond to environmental threats.

Broadly speaking, a division can be made between camps with abundant natural resources and those with limited natural assets. The project approach in each should be philosophically and operationally distinct.

Camps with abundant natural resources

Where natural resources are abundant, the promotion of tree planting and fuel-efficient stoves runs into serious constraints. Refugees show little interest in either conserving or replacing assets that are freely available in large quanti-

ties. Education and training programmes have failed to confront successfully the physical reality of abundant resources available at no (financial) cost to the refugees.

Under such circumstances it is argued that the principal option available is to boost protection, enforcement and regulation of access to resources. Meaningful deterrents must be put in place to create a situation of restricted access to resources that are physically abundant. This may involve systems of forest guards, alongside concerted support to government and local institutions to better enforce regulations on wood cutting, charcoal making and poaching. The emphasis is on control and containment of refugee access to natural resources, a situation to which they will inevitably respond with greater efficiency in care and use.

Camps with scarce natural resources

Where natural resources around a camp are already degraded the focus of environmental programmes should be radically different. Refugees should be helped to gain access to limited forest products on a sustainable basis. Guided cutting in carefully identified source areas can help meet domestic demand in an environmentally sensitive manner. Environmental education can supplement existing knowledge on energy-saving techniques. The emphasis is on the replenishment and efficient use of depleted resources by the refugees.

Conclusion

Environmental programmes could benefit from leaving behind the traditional focus on tree planting and stoves. Though simple and easily monitored from the point of view of hardware dissemination, such programmes are unlikely to bring real benefits where resources around a settlement are abundant. Environmental programmes should be adaptable, locally specific and based on a long-term vision for each refugee settlement site. Blanket regional policies are not helpful in this regard.

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Tensions between the refugee concept and the IDP debate

by Michael Barutciski

Refugee advocates committed to the promotion of asylum and combating the xenophobia that has reduced possibilities for refuge in host countries should be concerned about the recent debate surrounding the issue of internally displaced people (IDPs).

It is becoming increasingly common for commentators to argue that focusing exclusively on asylum situations ignores the realities of forced migration and represents a restricted view of displacement.

While it may be understandable to seek a comprehensive approach to humanitarian crises, the distinctiveness and importance of the particular problems that are addressed by the term 'refugee', as defined in international legal instruments, should not be ignored. Refugee protection involves issues that are quite distinct from work related to IDPs and general human rights law. There is a natural tendency for human rights advocates to want to extend protection, yet the irony is that such extensions may sometimes be counter-productive. This article suggests that the extension of the refugee regime to encompass internal displacement is actually detrimental to the traditional asylum option that is central to refugeehood.

For some actors (eg aid workers or academics), the new emphasis on a holistic approach to displacement stems from the apparent similarities between the plight of IDPs and refugees (ie externally displaced). For others (eg northern governmental funders), the new interest in internal displacement results from the reluctance of host populations to have contact with refugees and a desire to deal with forced migration in terms of containment. The common denominator

is that the refugee field's specificity in promoting asylum and combating xenophobia appears de-emphasised. Contrary to the aspirations often implied by advocates of IDP rights, a clear distinction should be drawn between the 'refugee regime' and situations of internal displacement.

Why do we have definitions for 'refugees' and 'IDPs'?

Concern about the humanitarian response to the plight of IDPs often arises from a certain uneasiness with the definition of the 'refugee' and its exclusion of many seemingly deserving displacement victims. The reason why a distinct category known as 'refugees' was created appears to be increasingly unclear for many observers. Categories in themselves can be meaningless (and even negative to the extent that labels are reductive or may mask the heterogeneity of a group); it is the corresponding entitlements which give them particular significance. The definitions are essentially for legal purposes. For example, it was decided that a particular group of individuals who fear persecution on account of civil or political status and who escape their countries should be considered as refugees and accorded a specific set of rights that distinguishes them from other foreigners.

Social scientists who suggest that the reality of displacement is the same whether one is a refugee or an IDP are

forgetting one critical distinction in the plight of these two groups that have fled human rights abuses: by being outside their country, refugees are in a fundamentally different situation according to the international legal order. One important consequence of this simple fact is that the international community's access to IDPs can be limited or qualified. This is not the case with refugees.

Being a victim of displacement is not the quality that has historically justified additional human rights protection for refugees. It is rather the quality of being a foreigner who has escaped persecution that is addressed by international refugee law. In that perspective, those who still insist that we should be working to bring the refugee and IDP categories closer together are missing an important point: the kinds of rights granted to refugees would not make sense for displaced persons who are still in their country of origin. Refugee rights include basic socio-economic entitlements that allow them to survive in a foreign country where they do not have citizenship rights. These rights would be redundant if granted to citizens in their own states. If a government is responsible for having internally displaced its own people in the first place, is it useful to insist that it gives partial rights to employment or access to certain types of welfare benefits?

Refugees also benefit from the fundamental principle of *non-refoulement*, which means they cannot be sent to a country where they fear persecution. Is the international community going to insist that states cannot send their IDPs to a dangerous border? Yet this attempt at drawing analogies has been encouraged by the IDP debate. For example, researchers at the UN Centre for Human Rights are still trying to create a norm of internal *non-refoulement*. The curiosity of this notion is striking: does it make sense to impose a new obligation on a state prohibiting it from sending IDPs to dangerous parts of its territory, even though that state is responsible for not enforcing basic human rights that made the IDPs flee in the first place? The violations of human rights have already occurred - is it necessary to introduce more repetitive rights? There currently exists a vast body of human rights law and additional rights may undermine the persuasive strength and credibility of those existing. It is the basic issue of enforcement that has always been problematic and needs to be seriously con-

sidered if there is a genuine commitment to addressing the 'root causes' of displacement.

Thus, the idea of expanding the refugee definition to include IDPs simply does not make sense because the term 'refugee' addresses a particular situation that is characterised by being a foreigner in a host country. There is not one specific right found in the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees that could logically be applied to displaced persons who have not

Extending the refugee regime to include IDPs is not so obvious once we start looking at specifics...

escaped their own country. The whole Convention is based on the notion of having fled one's country. That is the condition or situation that is being addressed: not displacement or human rights violations *per se*, but rather the fact of being stranded outside one's country without the formal protection that comes from being the national of a particular state. Given that people in this situation do not benefit from the rights that normally follow from citizenship in the host state, they have to be provided with some sort of international protection. In effect, the international community has decided that the host state cannot treat this particular group of foreigners as tourists or visitors with minimal rights in the local community.

That is what has historically been meant by the expression 'international protection' in the refugee context. A close look at the way this term has been introduced in refugee legal documents in the 1920s indicates that it refers essentially to legal protection, and more specifically the type of legal protection that allows a needy foreigner to survive in a host state until a durable solution is found to his/her particular situation. It is not protection from human rights abuses so that the person does not have to flee in the first place. That is a fundamentally different problem and if it is termed 'protection' we must acknowledge that it involves a distinct context.

Extending the refugee regime to include IDPs is not so obvious once we start looking at specifics beyond the superficial appearance which suggests that displacement is the same whether one manages to cross a border or not. In fact, there is a big difference related to whether that border has been crossed.

Do rights really have no borders?

The expression 'rights have no borders' has been increasingly used in the context of forced migration. If the expression is meant to show support for moving beyond an international system based on sovereign states with their own territories, then it is understandable. But if it is supposed to be a statement of fact, is it really accurate?

Given Norway's central contribution to the creation of the international refugee regime, the Norwegian Refugee Council, among others, may like to reflect on its use of phrases such as 'rights have no borders'. The late Professor Atle Grahl-Madsen from Norway is generally recognised as one of the grandfathers of international refugee law and he was very clear on this question of borders: the border is of critical importance. He has written that if one foot crosses the border, then refugee rights apply; if the border is not crossed, then the 1951 Refugee Convention cannot be invoked.

In this context, it is worth remembering the basic principle of the United Nations that prohibits member states from interfering in the internal affairs of another state. Refugee law is distinct from other areas of human rights law in that it involves many questions related to immigration law, an area in which states are very careful about guarding their sovereignty. These refugee rights would be conceptually incoherent if there were no borders. Refugee law was always about something more specific than the general preoccupations of human rights law: it is about membership and inclusion or exclusion from communities. It addresses questions or problems such as the following: What rights do we give to these needy people who are in our community? Do we give them the rights of permanent residence? Do we limit their access to the kinds of rights that lead to integration?

The creation of a distinct category of 'internal refugees' and identification of specific rights that would make sense if applied to those individuals that do not

escape their country might be appropriate. However, it is necessary to have a closer look at what rights that do not already exist in international law could possibly be granted to this particular group. Also, consideration should be given as to whether it is appropriate to single out those displaced for additional human rights protection as opposed to war victims who are not displaced (eg poor villagers caught in a conflict but who cannot escape their village). Given that there is not necessarily a clear differentiation in needs, why grant additional rights to IDPs but not other war-affected populations? In any event, it becomes clear that these issues are really about the old problem of humanitarian intervention, regardless of the new language currently being introduced. For all the innovation being attached to the IDP debate, we know that states have already codified in other areas of international law the standards they are willing to accept regarding armed conflict and interventions. That some groups may sometimes be more vulnerable in particular scenarios is a matter for operational priorities, not for legal or conceptual development.

How have High Commissioners for Refugees traditionally approached their mandate?

When the Office of the first High Commissioner for Refugees was created, the emphasis on non-political activities was very important and helps explain why refugee protection was considered distinct from interventionist type activities. Shortly after the Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen was named the first High Commissioner for Refugees in 1921, he was asked to deal with the consequences of Kemal Ataturk's counter-offensive against the Greek Army in Asia Minor. Nansen was not asked to stop the outflow of refugees or challenge the Turkish leaders for the large number of Greeks they were uprooting, nor were the UK, France and Italy going to send soldiers to stop the mass displacement. Given that there was no willingness on the part of the international community to engage in coercive action, Nansen was sent to deal with alleviating the plight of people who had to flee - essentially by helping them resettle. Privately, we know he was furious about what the Turks were doing, but publicly he did not say anything so that he could go about his 'humanitarian' work effectively. He did not have the necessary military commit-

ment, so he was very prudent in his relations with the belligerents. The general idea behind the origins of the High Commissioner's post was that it is necessary to be seen as non-political and humanitarian in order to facilitate work that concerns the promotion of asylum. That is not possible if the asylum promotion activities are coupled with direct interventions in the internal political problems that cause displacement. Yet this is exactly what results from work with IDPs.

In this context, it is worthwhile pointing out some of the very different approaches of international humanitarian law, international human rights law and international refugee law. **International humanitarian law** is concerned to a large extent with intervening in armed conflicts and convincing the belligerents that it is in their interest to respect certain basic laws of war relating to POWs, medical personnel, non-combatants, etc. It involves an extreme effort at being neutral and impartial, and that is why the International Committee of the Red Cross, which has been developing its prudent and discrete interventions since the nineteenth century, is the main international agency involved in this type of work. **International human rights law**, on the other hand, is almost the opposite in that it may involve condemning governments that do not protect the basic rights of people on their territory. The inter-governmental bodies and NGOs that engage in this work often have a strong political mandate because it may be necessary to challenge governments in order to assure the protection of threatened peoples. The starting point of **international refugee law** is that human rights violations have already occurred and that victims have fled the country of origin. The objective is to convince an asylum state to respect minimal standards for certain foreigners who do not benefit from some other national protection. In this sense, refugee law can be seen as a last resort if people cannot be sure that their human rights will be respected in their own country: the option of voting with their feet. All these legal approaches can certainly be interrelated, yet it would not necessarily be productive to involve the same organisation in these very distinct activities.

If there is no specific legal regime for IDPs, it does not mean that there are no legal standards that apply to internal displacement. All human beings benefit



painting by M. Renold, 1946, The League of Nations 1920-1946

Fridtjof Nansen, first High Commissioner for Refugees

from general international human rights law. If IDPs are caught in situations that are characterised as 'armed conflicts', they also benefit from international humanitarian law. These areas of international law basically cover all legal protection needs. Despite the implied suggestion in *Internally Displaced People: A Global Survey* (p 3)¹, there are no significant and specific forms of legal protection that could be granted to IDPs that do not already exist in international law. Consequently, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement presented to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1998 do not really fill any legal gap; they simply state and interpret existing norms.

What does the 'IDP' concept really contribute?

The question we must ask ourselves is whether this term 'IDP' is particularly useful, especially given that from a legal perspective it is difficult to see what additional guarantees can be added that do not already exist. If we cannot grant particular rights, what is the point of having a designated category? It may be appropriate to acknowledge that the expression 'IDP' has succeeded in drawing international awareness to a serious forced migration problem that should not be ignored. If that is true, then it is a considerable achievement and may be the main contribution of the IDP debate in the 1990s.

However, if that is essentially what the IDP debate has contributed, it should be

remembered that this is a considerably more minor contribution than that which was originally anticipated by IDP advocates at the beginning of the 1990s. At the time it was suggested that many perceived legal gaps would be filled by the drafting of an international treaty protecting IDPs and that displacement itself would be outlawed by the promotion of a so-called 'right to remain' or 'right not to be displaced'. All this may have created a good amount of conceptual confusion, encouraged inaccurate interpretations of international law, contributed to false expectations and resulted in the dilution of the UN refugee agency's asylum mandate. Moreover, there is reason to suspect that it has been used to reinforce *non-entrée* policies by states and justify containment strategies. After all, allowing victims of human rights violations to access asylum states would be contrary to promoting their 'right to remain' (as was argued by European politicians during the Bosnian conflict).

The implicit and dangerous logic is that if a new category called 'IDPs' is granted supposedly new protection under international law, then there is no reason to allow those displaced to become cross-border refugees. Even if the protection does not contain anything substantively new, its formal expression can reduce commitments regarding the availability of temporary refuge across borders. Put bluntly: if the development of IDP norms does not substantively advance the international community's attempts to deal with humanitarian crises and intervene in troubled countries, then the current debate and re-focus on internal displacement would represent little more than capitulation to *non-entrée* and containment strategies to the extent that it de-emphasises the external asylum option.

This is not necessarily to suggest that competing protection concerns exist and that international attention should only focus on one group of displacement victims. (If that were the case, it could seem logical to concentrate resources on IDPs instead of refugees because statistics indicate internal displacement is significantly higher than external displacement.) There are clearly many humanitarian needs in various parts of the world for which the international community should develop genuine response mechanisms. Intervention, however, has always been problematic because it raises complex issues of territorial sovereignty. It has historically been at best *ad hoc* and unreliable. While it is possible that the creation of an 'IDP'

category may encourage international involvement in troubled countries, recent practice does not provide evidence that these interventions will be more constructive or effective. The development of humanitarian intervention norms remains, nevertheless, crucial long-term work deserving of the clear political commitment to make concepts such as 'preventive protection' and responses to 'IDPs' and 'root causes' truly sustainable policy options. However, any failures at this level should not be imputed to supposed problems with the international refugee regime. The goal of the refugee regime is to promote asylum for victims who cannot return to their country, not to prevent conflict or human rights violations.

Until the international community develops effective mechanisms for intervening in troubled countries, we should remember that states generally have unqualified access to the individuals who have escaped, and are in a position to offer refuge. Consequently, in concrete terms, our genuine commitments to victims of displacement can largely be measured by our engagement in favour of asylum.

In essence, an appropriate overall approach should be twofold: development of fair interventionist principles (that necessarily affect IDPs) and, in case their application fails, preservation of the possibility for cross-border flight and external refuge. However, humanitarian intervention and asylum are two distinct areas that deserve to be clearly distinguished and not confused. Work with IDPs falls within the former and the refugee community is not necessarily the appropriate partner for this endeavour. As long as these distinctions are recognised and the relevance of refugee protection principles is appreciated, there is no reason why a holistic understanding of forced migration should not include general issues related to prevention of conflict and human rights violations.

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1 Internally displaced People: A Global Survey, Global IDP Survey/Norwegian refugee Council, 1998. ISBN 1-85383-521-8 (free to FMR subscribers).

Nashrat Al-Hijra Al-Qasriya and Revista sobre Migraciones Forzosas

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Dilemmas facing agencies in the urban centres of Afghanistan

by Peter Marsden

In many situations worldwide where rebel or other movements have wrested large areas of territory from the control of central government or, as in the case of Afghanistan, where the government has collapsed and control is divided between different power holders, humanitarian agencies are having to determine how they should relate to non-governmental power holders.

The issue comes more clearly to the fore when such power holders take over urban areas and therefore have responsibility for the administrative structures of the state within those areas. This article considers how this question has been played out in the context of Afghanistan.

The Afghan conflict has tended to be characterised as one in which people moved in their millions from the villages of Afghanistan across the border to the sanctuary of refugee camps and urban settlements in Pakistan and Iran. However, not all those who fled their villages in response to Soviet military action left the country. Many sought refuge in caves in the mountains and, in recent years, and certainly since the collapse of the Soviet-backed Government of Muhammed Najibullah in April 1992, many more made their way to the urban centres of Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat, Kandahar and Jalalabad.

Each successive phase of the conflict has led to further displacement of the urban population, both within and between urban centres, with the result that one cannot talk in terms of a stable urban population. It is difficult to know whether the population of Kabul is nearer to half a million or a million at any one time although most of the estimates given are around the million mark. A study undertaken by ICRC in December 1996 found that a significant proportion

of the population of Kabul had moved several times as a direct result of the conflict. Similarly, monitoring undertaken by UNHCR at the main entry points to the city found a high level of movement back and forth.

Foremost among those who have left are professionals working for the government administration. With such a significant outflow of professionals, agencies cannot plan on the assumption that those who are currently working in the government administration will neces-

sarily remain, or even that their own staff will stay. Those who are left behind in Kabul are likely to be among the more impoverished because those with the means to leave for Pakistan, Iran or other parts of Afghanistan have already done so. This reality has combined with a deteriorating economic situation within the capital to produce a population close to destitution.

The dilemmas faced by agencies

In seeking to meet what are significant humanitarian needs, UN agencies, ICRC and NGOs have needed to determine appropriate criteria for their interventions and for their targeting of aid. Early interventions in the urban sector, such as those in Mazar-i-Sharif and Jalalabad, were clearly targeted at the internally displaced, in direct response to the outflows from Kabul following the major rocketing episodes. Such targeting, however, is not easily effected. In Mazar, for example, although a couple of small camps were established, most of those displaced disappeared into the wider population and could not easily be accessed.



Afghaneid/Esmatullah Shahpoor

Another dilemma arose for agencies when 200,000 people were displaced from the Shomali Valley to Kabul in early 1997. Humanitarian agencies were reluctant to make provision for a population which had apparently been forcibly removed from their settlements as an act of war, lest this encourage further such action, and agreement was reached that ICRC would simply provide temporary shelter for those who could not find accommodation with relatives, in the hope that people would quickly find their own solutions and return to the Shomali Valley as soon as possible. This policy proved to be reasonably effective and, by the late summer of 1997, about half of those displaced had returned. There remained the question, however, as to whether the remaining 100,000 or so should be specifically provided for and, if so, how, given that these were absorbed within the population. Such targeting was also difficult to justify when so much of the population was nearing destitution and when most had experienced displacement in one form or another.

Different agencies dealt with the issue of establishing criteria and targeting in various ways. ICRC, with its IDP-specific mandate, has taken the view that it should provide for the wider population, on the assumption that the displaced would also benefit (with the obvious exception of the temporary refugee referred to above). UNHCR, with its refugee-specific mandate, has sought to focus on the provision of support to displaced people returning primarily from Jalalabad to Kabul, to assist them in the repair of their damaged houses. The European Commission's DGI has opted to concentrate on the rehabilitation of the agricultural areas surrounding Kabul and other urban areas so as to strengthen the capacity of the agricultural hinterland to receive people returning from the cities.

Prior to the suspension of ECHO funding for Kabul in July 1998, most NGOs in Kabul had been funded by ECHO which had been providing between 10m and 35m ECU per year since 1995. For them, the question of whether people had suffered displacement had not been a major issue. More important had been the question of how best to provide for a population which was nearing destitution in an economic environment which offered very few opportunities and where those opportunities were seri-

ously constrained by the policies of the power holders, such as the controls imposed on the employment of women.

A number of options have been explored including: large-scale relief programmes benefiting up to half a million people but for which the process of drawing up lists of beneficiaries has inevitably been problematic; food-for-work; and income-generating programmes for targeted individuals (difficult in a collapsed economy when there is little or no market for new produce). However, relief distributions have inevitably ended up being the primary solution, both in Kabul and other urban areas.

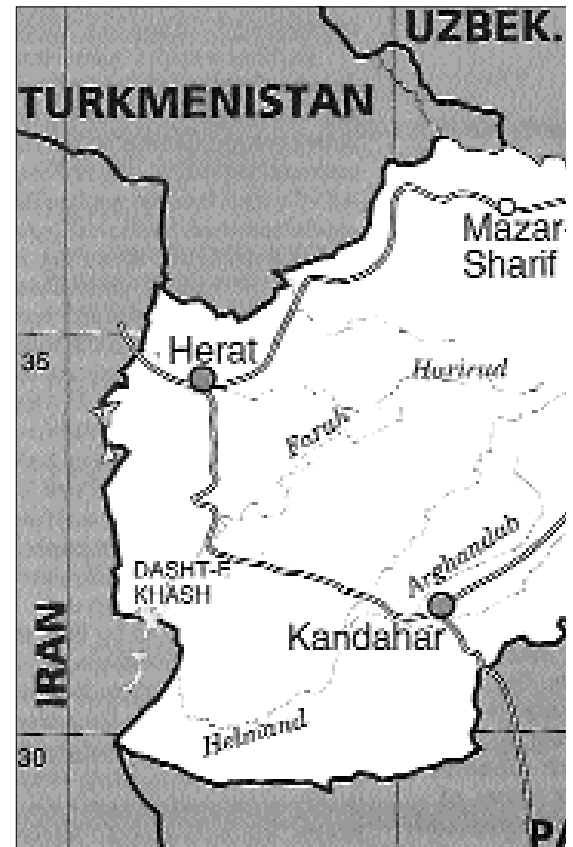
Dealing with the power holders: the provision of public services

Agencies have also had a responsibility to assess whether basic health, water supply, sanitation and education services are available to the urban population. This has required evaluation of the capacity of the governmental and municipal administration, and also of their willingness to commit resources to these services.

In the case of Afghanistan, a number of major dilemmas have arisen in this context since the advent of the Taliban. These arose primarily because the Taliban chose to reduce, as an instrument of policy, the services available to one section of the population - women. Women were denied access to education and faced obstacles in their efforts to obtain equal health care. Women were also not permitted to work outside the health sector and this has made it difficult for agencies to employ women in

order to gain access to women for the provision of services. In addition, the Taliban were entirely focused on the war effort and wished to commit all their resources to this objective. Funding for public services was not, therefore, a priority.

Agencies therefore faced two further dilemmas: whether or not to accept responsibility for the provision of those public services which were permitted by the Taliban and also whether to quietly acquiesce at the denial of equal access to services or to advocate for a reversal of Taliban policy. They also had to con-

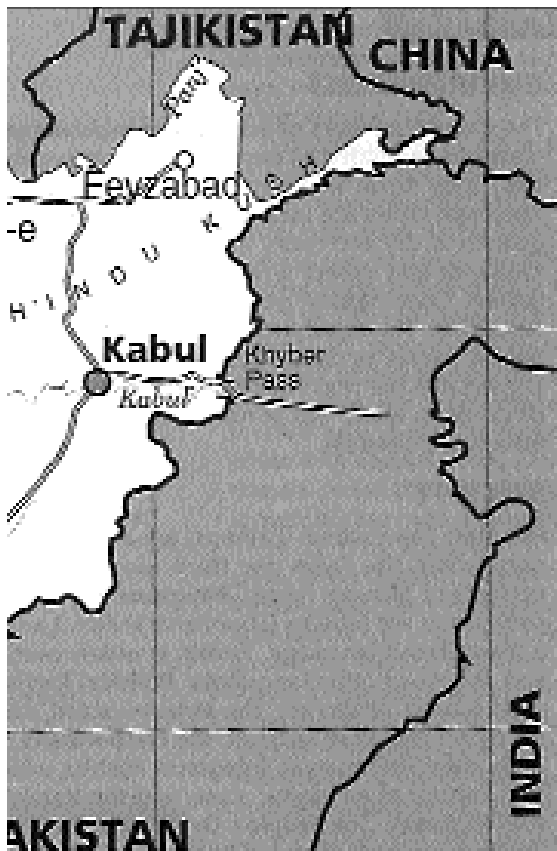


Kabul

Afghanistan/Ematullah Shalipoor

sider to what extent their assumption of such responsibility was strengthening the power holders or reinforcing their policies. Among the questions they had to address were the following:

- Would the power holders be forced to provide public services on a greater scale if the agencies withdrew? If this was unlikely, should the agencies take the view that humanitarian needs dictated that they remain, regardless?



- Were they engaging in institution-building? How could this be defined? If an agency repaired and repainted a hospital damaged by conflict, was this institution-building or a necessary step to provide basic health care in the immediate future to a population at risk? If equipment was provided, did the same argument apply? Should agencies repair damaged pipes and water pumps? Were these essential to immediate public health needs? Should agencies work in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Health, the Municipality and the Water Supply Department, sitting on joint committees, in order to plan the most effective use of resources or should they operate parallel services?

To what extent was there a relationship between the severity of need of the population and the question as to how far agencies should work in conjunction with the state administration? Was it easier to take a more principled position if the severity of need was less?

- Were steps they took now going to make the situation worse in the future? If they supported spontaneous home schools for girls now, would this provide justification for future policy for girls to be educated at home? If they helped to repair and equip a hospital for women, would this later be used to require women to only attend this hospital?
- Would advocacy to urge a change in policy, so that equal access to all services might be achieved, have any impact?

Questions such as these are likely to arise increasingly in situations such as Afghanistan where there is no national government and where blocks of territory are held by particular military elements. Agencies have no choice but to engage with these elements, if only to ensure the security of their staff and their operations. However, if a point is reached where a military force begins to regard itself as the administrative authority for the area under its control, the agency has to reappraise its situation. It will, no doubt, have to seek permission to continue to operate, involving complex interaction with the new authority. The point is reached where the agency has to decide whether or not to involve the authority in decisions relating to the provision of public services.

In a normal situation, where there is an internationally-recognised government, this would not be an issue. However, in a situation where there is no such government the agency has to make a very difficult decision as to whether, in its view, the new authority is demonstrating a reasonable level of responsibility in relation to the provision of services and should, therefore, be regarded as having a legitimate right to exercise control over the provision of those services.

In so far as it may be providing most of the resources to provide the services, the agency potentially has some leverage to negotiate an arrangement whereby services are provided on terms which it finds acceptable. However, with a power holder such as the Taliban, which does

not attach priority to the provision of public services and, at the same time, feels very ambivalent about the presence of foreigners, there is little or no leverage. In Kabul, where funding on a large scale has been provided and where twenty or more agencies have been operating, the humanitarian assistance community has been able to exercise very limited leverage. In Herat, Kandahar and Jalalabad, where agencies are only able to ensure that health and public health services are provided at a very basic level, the leverage is even less,

The relationship is inevitably an awkward one. If the target population has clear humanitarian needs, the agency will probably deal with the power holder to the extent that its cooperation is necessary, or conducive, to the most effective use of resources. This is, however, a difficult balancing act: excessive cooperation may be regarded by the power holder as implicit recognition of its authority; minimal cooperation may undermine service provision and might also weaken what remains of a government administration.

A further issue for agencies with a developmental mandate, particularly those within the UN system, is that the governmental structure provides the natural counterparts for their interventions. This is less likely to be the case for agencies with a relief focus. These will look for whatever structures are likely to be most effective and, while these could include government departments or para-statal bodies such as the Red Crescent, it is likely that ICRC and NGOs, rather than government departments, will play the major role in implementing relief programmes.

One of the key arguments for working with and resourcing the administration in such situations is that, if a legitimate government did emerge, it would benefit from a functioning administration. Those espousing this view argue that if agencies chose to work in parallel with the administration rather than with it, government staff would almost certainly be attracted by the higher salaries and better operating conditions of the agencies and the administration would be further depleted.

The outcome in Afghanistan

In practice, in the urban areas of Afghanistan, both UN agencies and NGOs have worked closely with the Ministry of Public Health, the Municipalities and the

Water Supply Departments. They have taken primary responsibility for the provision of health and public health services but have also provided some resources to the administrative structures of the state to enable them to function more effectively and to play a contributory role. Thus, for example, UNCHS (United Nations Centre for Human Settlements) has provided vehicles to the Municipality to facilitate waste clearance, NGOs have refurbished hospital buildings, and incentive payments have been made to health service workers to encourage them to give time to public services rather than work exclusively in private practice.

Agencies have thus worked in partnership with the administrative structures of the state, at times on the basis of contractual relationships in which both parties agreed to provide certain resources. However, there have been a couple of examples, of late, where the UN has entered into contracts with administrative structures of the state, or with NGOs nominated by the Taliban, to take full responsibility for the provision of particular services (such as vaccination programmes in particular regions or aspects of urban-based relief programmes). This new development in the relationship between the UN and the Taliban has encouraged the Taliban to regard NGOs as competitors for external resources and to think that, if NGOs were removed, the UN would enter into further contracts with the administrative structures of the state or Taliban-nominated NGOs. This would appear to have been one factor in the negotiations which took place between the Taliban and NGOs in July 1998, which resulted in the expulsion of NGOs from Kabul.

However, this ambivalence towards NGOs does not only relate to their position as potential competitors. Western NGOs have also been regarded with suspicion because of the risk that they might undermine the efforts of the Taliban to achieve a spiritual cleansing of the country. Isolated incidents of culturally inappropriate behaviour on the part of aid workers have tended to reinforce this perspective. Further, the Taliban have viewed the multiplicity of NGOs with concern and have felt uneasy at the very limited control which they have had over their activities in a situation in which they have been aiming to impose strict controls on the behaviour of the population. They have thus sought to bring NGOs under tight rein.

In addition, NGOs have been seen as potentially sympathetic to opposition elements, by virtue of their historical links or because particular Afghan members of staff are thought to have certain sympathies or links. The fact that certain NGOs have worked in active support of governmental structures in the past, while the Mujahidin Government was in power, and are now equivocal in their support for the same with the Taliban in control, is a further factor.

This relationship has been played out in a situation where poverty is acute and where public health problems have placed large numbers of people at risk. At times, the complexities arising from the relationship have left donor governments, UN agencies, ICRC and NGOs effectively powerless to meet the needs of the population.

The current situation in the urban centres of Afghanistan is likely to be reproduced within urban centres held by non-governmental power holders elsewhere in the world, particularly if there is a civil war situation. It is far from clear whether the international community has got to grips with how it should most appropriately work in such situations.

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*The Sept/Oct 1998 issue of Crosslines Global Report (issue 33, pp 25-50) includes a special focus on Afghanistan. For more details contact Crosslines, ICHR, Villa de Grand-Montfleury, CH-1290 Versoix/Geneva, Switzerland.
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Iran: a challenge for NGOs

Iran has one of the largest refugee populations in the world, including one and a half million Afghans, half a million Iraqis and a quarter of a million Kurds. Only 5 per cent of the refugees in Iran live in camps and little is known outside Iran of the realities behind the figures.

The International Consortium for Refugees in Iran (ICRI), founded in 1992, raises awareness of the problems facing refugees in Iran and gives practical assistance to NGOs interested in working here. ICRI is a consortium of European NGOs whose members support the development of NGO work with refugees in Iran. Not all have programmes in Iran.

Past obstacles to international NGO (INGO) work in Iran included the conflicting currents of policy regarding INGOs within the Government of the Islamic Republic and the virtual international boycott on funding for projects in Iran. However, neither of these obstacles now seems as intractable as they once were. The election of President Khatami in August 1997 heralded a new approach to 'civic organisations' and, although INGOs still cannot formally register in Iran, they can open bank accounts and establish offices there. European governments are also more willing to consider funding projects in this new climate.

There are currently only three INGOs working in Iran: MSF (France), Global Partners and Ockenden Venture. However, there is a thriving group of about 15 Iraqi, Afghan and Iranian NGOs implementing projects in Iran and in some cases working in partnership with the INGOs. ICRI acts as a coordinating body, sharing information on programme plans and refugee needs and holding regular meetings.

ICRI is housed in the UNHCR office in Teheran. For newcomers to Iran, one of its most useful services is guiding NGOs through the maze of official regulations and policies and providing practical advice and logistical support. ICRI's monthly reports and regular in-depth studies of refugee conditions provide useful material for NGOs planning assistance. ICRI also has a wide network of local contacts in various Ministries, local NGOs and UN agencies.

Contact ICRI by phone or fax: +98 21 877 5464 or email: squire@unhcr.ch

*Catherine Squire
ICRI Representative*

Afghan refugees in Iran: the needs of women and children

by Catherine Squire and Negar Gerami

Forough Foyouzi



It was in this context that the International Consortium for Refugees in Iran (ICRI) started trying to gather more systematic information on the needs and situation of Afghan refugees. As the coordinating body for local and international NGOs working with refugees, ICRI tries to raise awareness of the problems facing refugees in Iran, by disseminating detailed information on their situation.

(1) Individual interviews

Starting from a base of virtually no information on those refugees outside camps, we started the process of information collection between 1996 and 1998 by visiting and interviewing refugee families in all the major refugee areas: Kerman, Shiraz, Sistan-Baluchistan, Mashad, Teheran and Shahriyar (Teheran province). Because of the insecure situation of many of the refugees, it was not possible to conduct systematic randomised sample surveys in any given area. We had no choice but to conduct low-profile individual interviews with refugee families (usually women) who were introduced to us by someone they trusted. Generally, we spent about 4-5 days in each area, accompanied by local community leaders who took us to the homes and workplaces of a selection of families.

We were usually able to interview about 30 families, using a standard list of questions. These included the composition of the family, the work done by different members of the family and how much each was paid, their living expenses (rent and related expenditure) and accommodation situation, any health problems, their occupation and place of origin in Afghanistan and their views on returning to their country. In all we interviewed over 200 families. Based on the information gathered, we compiled a series of reports in which we looked at Afghans' access to work, health, housing and environmental conditions, and in particular the situation of women and children in each area.

Since at least the 1970s Afghans have been coming to Iran, some in search of work, others to seek protection. The political dominance by the Taliban since 1995 has been a significant factor in the acceleration in the flow of refugees.

Refugees who came in the 1980s were given 'green cards' which entitled them to live and work in Iran, and to benefit from schooling and health care. In the early 1990s the government's policy towards refugees changed in the face of the worsening domestic economic situation. After 1992 the authorities stopped issuing refugee cards. The vast majority of Afghans who arrived in Iran since 1992 are considered illegal and have no right to asylum. Furthermore, between 1992 and 1994 many thousands of refugees lost their legal status in a systematic campaign of confiscations of green cards from Afghans living in Khorassan province (bordering Herat). It is not uncommon to find families who repatriated under the UN-sponsored programme in 1996 and 1997, who have returned to Iran because of hardship or fear of persecution. These families had to give up their refugee cards when they

repatriated and now live as 'illegal' refugees who risk being arrested if found.

In such a situation it is extremely difficult to keep accurate figures on the number of refugees in Iran. According to recent official figures, there are about 1.4m Afghans in Iran at present, of which only 22,000 (1.7 per cent) are living in camps. The vast majority of Afghans live integrated into Iranian society scattered around the country, mostly in cities where they can get jobs but also in villages and settlements in rural areas.

The need for better information

For NGOs trying to plan programmes of assistance, the lack of reliable information makes it difficult to identify priority areas or to target particular groups of refugees. This is particularly true of those refugees who do not possess green cards. These refugees tend to be the most vulnerable as they cannot travel to find work and are not allowed to attend schools or use public health services. They are vulnerable to exploitative work conditions, and to random arrest and deportation. Because of their lack of official status they are reluctant to let NGOs gather information about their situation.

Taking stock

By conducting a large number of interviews and cross-checking information we obtained a very rich picture of the lives and problems of some of the poorest refugees. We identified the area in which refugees face the most difficulties (in the south-eastern province of Sistan-Baluchistan), and highlighted the neglected issue of child labour. We were also able to draw up a set of indicators for vulnerability which included the origin of the refugees (rural/urban), the number of people in the family, the material and financial resources they had when they arrived, and the sex and age of the head of household. We gathered a great deal of information on the types of work done by women and children to supplement men's increasingly insecure incomes.

Limitations of individual interviews

The individual interview approach incurred a number of drawbacks:

- (i) It was relatively time consuming, which limits the number of people who can be interviewed.
- (ii) The results and recommendations were based on the interviewers' judgements of the refugees' situations rather than on what the refugees identified as their own priorities. A research method was needed which would both allow more participation by the refugees themselves, and also yield results from which more general conclusions - less reliant on the situation of individual families - could be drawn.

We needed to find out in more detail what NGOs could do to help these groups of Afghans. Both NGOs and UNHCR are increasingly interested in helping refugees to support themselves through credit schemes. It was clear that women needed opportunities to learn skills so that they were not stuck in the most unskilled and low-paid work, but more information was needed on the obstacles to women's work and the type of skills which would be most useful to them.

(2) Focus group discussions

Focus group discussions (FGD) use specific but open-ended questions put by a trained facilitator, to enable a group of people to express a variety of opinions

on a particular subject. In May 1998, a workshop was held by the International Planned Parenthood Federation to train volunteers of the Family Planning Association of Iran (FPA) in the techniques of FGD. Then, during August 1988 and with the collaboration of the FPA, we held a two-day training session in FGD for nine Afghan refugee women. They would be the facilitators and note-takers for the discussions with groups of their peers.

We decided to start with a general needs assessment survey among Afghan women in southern Tehran. The focus would be on job-skills, the problems of working women, their need for education, and their health problems. We also wanted to ask them to rank these issues in order of priority. About 60 Pashtun and Hazara women participated in groups of 6-12 people. After the discussions, which lasted about two hours, the facilitators drew up conclusions based on the views which had been expressed in the groups. These conclusions were then checked again with a sample of the women who had participated in the discussions. Most of the research process was conducted by Afghan women themselves, with ICRI staff only observing the discussions and writing up the final report. The refugees were enthusiastic at the opportunity to give their own views and have the opportunity to shape decisions - even in a remote way - which NGOs and others make on their behalf.

(3) The results

Women's work

During our individual interviews, we observed that in many refugee families Afghan men are no longer able to support their family by themselves. They need women and children to contribute to the family income.

From the interviews we were able to make detailed lists of the most common types of work done by women and children and the income they earn. Work done at home includes shelling pistachios, cleaning wool, making brooms, cleaning saffron, making chains and carpet weaving. Children usually start work at an early age (sometimes as young as five years old). Once they reach school age, those who can get into school study about four hours a day at school and work between four and ten hours every day.

Many Afghan children attend schools not formally recognised by the Ministry

Mahin is a young widow from Kandahar: "My eldest child is 12 and my youngest is two years old. With their help, I make chains at home and earn about 3,000 Rls. (60 cents) per day. People sometimes give me clothes to bring home to wash. I cannot work outside the house, because my children are too young, and there is no one to take care of them. I cannot get pistachios for shelling, because one has to leave an ID card with the merchant as security or have a guarantor and I have neither."

of Education and run by the Afghans themselves. There are at least 10 informal Afghan schools in Mashad and about 24 in Teheran, serving from 50 to 500 children each. NGOs such as Ockenden Venture and Global Partners have been supporting such schools for over a year now with their own funds and some funding from UNICEF. They have provided books and teaching materials, and have conducted eye tests for children and provided spectacles. Ockenden Venture has also organised some teacher training. MSF France has been carrying out a school health project in Mashad, and a local Afghan NGO (Relief Committee for Destitute Afghan Refugee Families) is helping to identify Afghan schools in Teheran and distribute books. Many questions remain unanswered as to why some children attend these schools and others do not.

Amir, a 12 year old apprentice shoemaker: "When we heard that temporary card holders can register at public schools, I asked my father to enrol me in the Iranian school nearby. He said that it might be a trick to collect the temporary cards and that I had better continue at this [informal] school."

Aspirations versus reality

The aspirations of Afghan women and children contrast heavily with the reality of the back-breaking, repetitive and poorly-paid jobs mentioned above. When asked in the FGD study what kind of job skills they would like to be trained in, the answers were: sewing, crocheting, sash weaving, making bags, weaving and embroidery. The Hazara women also mentioned nursing, secretarial jobs,

teaching and flower arranging as their choices. All of these are skilled jobs which are better paid and pose less of a threat to health.

Although we already knew from individual interviews that Afghans do not have enough money to buy instruments for their work, the FGD gave us a better understanding of the constraints women face. We discovered that the most common reasons for taking poorly paid and low-skilled work are illiteracy, being undocumented, having children to look after, and opposition from the husband or his family. The work has to be part-time, home-based and not requiring a 'green card'. One obstacle which the women identified also suggested its own solution. They said that their lack of familiarity with Iran, and particularly with job opportunities, means that they tend to take on the same jobs that other Afghan women are already doing. It was suggested that a job-search service would enable them to access information on other job opportunities.

Education: the top priority

The data on priority needs obtained from our FGD survey gave us some surprising results. Having seen the poverty of many refugee families at first hand, we expected Afghan women to put income-earning opportunities as their top priority. In fact the top priority identified by almost all the groups was education: for the Hazaras it was education in general, but especially literacy; for the Pashtun women it was skills-training. They all believed that they could improve their own lives if they had some education.

In our individual interviews, most of the women and children we had seen were either illiterate or had very little education. We had already noticed that when asked about the future most children had high aspirations: they wanted to finish school and become teachers or doctors. The women we interviewed on the other hand regarded their future as very bleak. All the women stressed the importance of education for their children, picturing a much better future than their own for their offspring. However, until the focus group discussions, we had no way of weighing the relative priority which they gave to education over other needs, nor of asking them about their aspirations.

We were also very surprised at the intensity of frustration expressed by Pashtuns in the focus groups at the limitations imposed on them by their own culture, and their desire to break through these old customs. One Pashtun woman commented "We want our culture to improve: both boys and girls should work". Another said, "We should have female doctors in Afghanistan". The dynamics of the groups made it possible for women to express these views to their peers. It is unlikely that we would have obtained such responses in an individual interview by an unknown Iranian woman interviewer.

Conclusion

Using focus group discussions in the context of understanding the problems and aspirations of urban Afghan refugees has given us a great deal of information to which we did not previously have access. In particular, the fact that the refugees were able to participate in drawing up recommendations regarding the future work of NGOs was a very positive experience. It encourages the beneficiaries themselves to think about their situation and to come up with solutions. It also gives the organisations working with refugees a much clearer picture of the hopes and fears of a refugee community. Past experience at ICRI has shown us that involving the refugees themselves in decision making improves the implementation process, bringing about better results. This does not mean that one method should replace the other, but rather that the methods should be regarded as complementary.

We know that the single most important factor which determines the living conditions of refugees in Iran is their legal status.

However, the results of our research have

Khodadad, a 16 year old boy, works at a perfume bottle workshop: "We came to Iran about 17 years ago. My father has been sick for more than five years now and cannot work very often. To help my family, I had to quit school for three years and work. Right now I work in a workshop on night shift from midnight to 6am. Of the people working on each shift, six are children under 14 years. The pay for the night shift is the same as that of the day shift, that is about 5,000 Rls./day" (less than a dollar).



Farough Feroozat

shown us that the refugees themselves see many opportunities to improve their situation, even within the bounds of the existing situation. We hope these results will help NGOs to plan effective interventions which meet the aspirations of Afghan women.

Catherine Squire has worked with refugees, mostly in nutrition and social service programmes, since 1982. She has been working in Iran since 1993 and with ICRI since 1995.

Negar Gerami returned to Iran from Germany in 1991 and worked for two years with the Iranian Broadcasting Service as a freelance translator and English news announcer in the overseas department.



The Refugee Studies Programme's Annual Report 1997-98

Now available. Contact Corinne Owen, RSP (address on p2 or email: corinne.owen@qeh.ox.ac.uk)





Visiting Fellowships

Visiting Fellowships at the RSP are open to senior and mid-career practitioners and policy makers who wish to spend a period of study and reflection in a conducive academic environment, and to academics and other researchers who are working in fields related to forced migration. Each Fellow will normally be assigned an academic adviser and will be expected to undertake a specific programme of self-directed study or research. Fellowships may be held for one, two or three terms in any one academic year. There will normally be no more than ten Visiting Fellows in residence at the RSP at any one time.

For more information, please contact: The Visiting Fellowships Administrator, RSP, Queen Elizabeth House, 21 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LA, UK. Tel: +44 1865 270265. Fax: +44 1865 270721. Email: Tania.Kaiser@qeh.ox.ac.uk

New research project at RSP : Responses and solutions to the humanitarian crisis in Kosovo

This project has two dimensions: providing recommendations on the immediate international response to the plight of the civilian populations and exploring proposals for the future constitutional status of Kosovo that can form the basis of a negotiated settlement between local actors. The project follows on from a one-day workshop on the Kosovo crisis held on 18 May 1998 with the support of the Department for International Development and the Foreign & Commonwealth Office. The research will be conducted by Michael Barutciski, RSP Research Fellow in International Law.

This 14-month project began in October 1998 and is being funded by the Department for International Development. Contact: michael.barutciski@qeh.ox.ac.uk

Psychosocial responses to the refugee experience: training module update

The module is primarily aimed at both local and international field workers, as well as managers, administrators and policy makers in programmes of humanitarian assistance. The purpose of the module is to expose all field workers to the psychosocial aspects of their work, rather than to train specialist psychosocial practitioners.

Contributors are currently writing sections on the nature of conflict and the implications for appropriate psychosocial responses, gender and forced migration, refugee children, communication and counselling skills for refugee workers, and community participation.

The module, which will be available both as a hard copy pack of teaching materials and in interactive digital format, will be piloted in April 1999 and available for distribution in December 1999.

The project is funded by the Andrew Mellan Foundation.

For more information, please contact the Project Directors: Maryanne Loughry, RSP (address on p2; maryanne.loughry@qeh.ox.ac.uk) and Alastair Ager, Queen Margaret College, Edinburgh University (a.ager@mail.qmced.ac.uk)

Guatemala: *Nunca Más*

by Carlos Martín Beristain

UNHCR/B.Press



This second article¹ by Carlos Beristain presents the most significant findings of the REMHI Report, the experiences of the victims and issues relating to the process of reconstruction.

On 24 April 1998, the Report of the Project for the Reconstruction of Guatemala's Historical Memory was made public: Guatemala, *Nunca Más* (Guatemala, Never Again).

A. Report findings

During the last 36 years of armed conflict in Guatemala, human rights violations have affected a vast proportion of the population: refugees, internally displaced and those who stayed in their communities. The process of reconstructing the victims' experiences has been the single most important contribution of the REMHI Report.

Violence against families and individuals

Many families suffered multiple losses of family members: loss of a spouse (21%), of parents (22%), of children (12%) and of other members (21%). Furthermore, families suffered family harassment, hounding and later persecution, which often caused their break-up. Over a

longer timescale they have had to face family crises of an economic nature (poverty), social (an overloading of roles) and emotional (separation) which to a great extent have continued to today.

Today, most of the people who testified still show signs of the violence they have suffered. Sadness and a sense of injustice still persist, as do, to a lesser extent, health problems, loneliness and traumatic memories. These factors demonstrate the great need for providing the type of mental health support for the people and families affected which takes account of their experiences, and social measures to help mitigate the damage and promote justice.

Women appear to be the most affected by the loss of family members. More men than women were killed (90% of victims were men), depriving women of spouses; women exhibit greater economic difficulties, family conflicts, overloading and multiplication of roles; and they view the prospect of rebuilding their lives as impossible. There is also the

implication that the consequences of the war in terms of family responsibilities have fallen to a great extent on their shoulders. The information gathered specifically confirms the need for providing psychological and social support to widows.

A significant number (62%) of the massacres analysed included the killing of women, and survivors described sexual violations in one out of every seven massacres. In addition to the enormous personal and emotional overloading suffered by women, many have had to face up to changes not only in their daily lives but also in their social role. Many women confronted the violence in direct forms, opening up for question some of the stereotypes about the role of women in the family and society in the context of war. It was women, for example, who mobilised first to go in search of members of their family, to make the events public and to put pressure on the authorities.

Children also feature in most of the testimonies. Half the cases of massacres registered recounted the collective murder of boys and girls. The descriptions of the ways in which they were killed (burned alive, macheted to pieces and suffering severe head injuries) give an indication of the impact of the horror

Statistics from the REMHI Report

- **6,500 collective and individual interviews: 92% with victims and 8% with those responsible for the events. 61% of the testimonies were gathered in 15 Mayan languages.**
- **Direct victims of the war, approximately: 150,000 people killed; 50,000 missing; 1 million refugees; 200,000 children orphaned; 40,000 women widowed. Total: 1,440,000 victims.**
- **Of the 55,021 victims registered in the period 1960-96 (80% in the period 1980-83), 25,123 were killed (45.7%); 3,893 missing (7.1%); 5,516 tortured (10.0%); 723 held hostage (1.3%); 5,079 detained irregularly (9.2%); 152 victims of sexual violations (0.3%)²; 10,157 victims of different types of attacks (18.5%); and 323 of other violations (0.6%).**
- **422 massacres were documented, of which 103 (24.4%) were in 1981 and 192 (45.5%) in 1982. 13% of the massacres involved between 11 and 20 victims, 27.5% between 21-100, and 9.5% more than 100 victims. 95% were the responsibility of the state's military and paramilitary forces. 3.7% of the massacres were attributed to the guerrillas.**
- **90% of the victims were men, 74.5% indigenous adults. Two out of three of the victims had family responsibilities. 86,813 children have ended up as indirect victims because their parents suffered some kind of violation; of these, 42,047 (48.7%) lost a mother or a father.**

which is still remembered today with great suffering. Among those who died when they were chased into the mountains (11% of the deaths), the majority were children who died from hunger or lack of shelter. Violations like these committed against young children constitute one of the characteristics of genocide pointed out in the report³.

Violence against communities and society

Political violence also affected the social and community fabric, especially in rural areas where the massacres had a very significant effect on the social structure of the indigenous communities, on power structures and on Mayan cultural relations in which the community represents an essential component of personal identity. Alongside the destruction, it was also very evident that there was a profound crisis at a community level with incidences of distrust and breakdown within indigenous communities. Religious practices, in both the Mayan and Catholic religion, had to change due to persecution and the loss of sacred sites and places for worship. The cultural changes which people described most were the loss of religious rites and festivals, the change in values, and loss of indigenous languages and dress: all strongly linked to Mayan identity.

Confronting the violence

Despite the dangers, many people and groups actively confronted the violence in different ways:

- i. Adaptation in the midst of violence**
Many people had to adapt to living for years in a military context and in doing so they employed: forms of self-preservation (such as not speaking), mutual support (such as solidarity channels), trying to do something to confront the events (for example, looking for family members) and religious forms of tackling the situation.
- ii. Fleeing to save their lives**
The forced migrations gave rise to many forms of active defence: tackling the flight collectively and escaping to the mountains, where tens of thousands of people found temporary refuge⁴. There are two types of displacements, though many people's experience is made up of a combination of these:

- Collective and community displacements, generally for a long period of time in places that were not under control of the state, either in the form of exile or of creating an alternative life in the mountains.
- Displacement of families, moving to another community (in many cases, temporarily) and to the capital.

iii. Community defence

Community based vigilance, precaution taking and organisation were part of the life of the communities living in exile and in the mountains where a restructuring of daily life and local power relations took place, demonstrating an active, collective confrontation of the situation.

iv. Resistance in extreme situations

Many people suffered greatly as a consequence of being tortured or of living in the mountains, but they also showed an enormous capacity to face up to traumatic experiences. In confronting these extreme experiences, they drew from their own resources, relying on their own convictions and the support of others.

v. Attempting to change reality

Some testimonies refer to people's social and political commitment and to making a positive interpretation of what happened as a way of facing up to the violence. Despite the enormous de-mobilising effect of the political repression, there were people who organised themselves in groups as a result of having directly suffered violence. These organisational processes were initially as a response to practical problems, providing mutual support in face of the violence, but they also represented for many people a means of fighting against the causes of poverty and injustice.

B. Reconstruction and reparation

The Report includes an analysis of the process of rebuilding the social fabric where, despite the destruction, victims and survivors have been the ones playing a leading role. Years later, in most places, social organisations, traditional leaders and, to some extent, authorities have recovered their roles. Although this process is a slow one, it offers hope for the future.

Nevertheless, there are important factors in play at the moment which threaten this future, such as land problems⁵ aggravated by the numbers of returned refugees and displaced people, and the social problems of reintegrating the civil population with ex-combatants. In addition, the fact that the people responsible

ing social and psychological assistance for the victims and survivors. Nevertheless, the Report warns against projects and possible forms of reparation which might lead to new forms of social control or to legitimising the state, alerting people to the fact that the value of the support needs to be

Guatemala. It analyses the key role played by the Guatemalan intelligence services of military operations, massacres, extra-judicial executions, forced disappearances and torture. It is their officials who have been most linked to the systematic violation of human rights during the years of armed conflict, and the names of many of them appear in the Report. The training system employed by military bodies, based on forced recruitment, obedience training, strong group control and complicity in the atrocities, is also described in detail. This system explains to a great extent why the political repression took such a destructive form and why, given that a large part of this network is still intact today, it is currently manifesting itself in numerous ways during this post war period.

To make things bearable we have to bring them to light. That's the only way the wounds will be healed. We have suffered our history in our very flesh and we don't want such events to be repeated.

Case 0569. Cobán September/81

have enjoyed impunity, together with the education in violence which formed part and parcel of the system of forced recruitment and paramilitary activity, has led to the worsening of social violence. In the last year in Guatemala, there has been a lynching every ten days.

People are still afraid, particularly of having to live in the same community with those responsible for the violations (evident in one out of every three testimonies), of possible reprisals for testifying, and of increasing social conflict. In spite of the end of armed conflict, the consequences of the war continue to operate over a long period of time, threatening the chances of people being able to live together. This makes it essential to prioritise, on the post-war agenda, the ending of impunity and the confrontation of social problems such as the land question.

Mitigating the damage

The survivors' demands were brought together in the Report to express the hopes of the victims and the social changes necessary to follow on from the work of preparing a collective memory. In order of importance these demands include: respect for human rights, truth and justice; social changes as a basis for peace, including demilitarisation and social and economic changes; and making reparations and compensating the victims.

The different forms of 'reparation' relate to economic compensation and development projects, grants and study programmes, commemorations and monuments, and projects provid-

weighed up both in terms of its practical benefit and in terms of maintaining people's sense of dignity. Forms of reparation cannot be seen as a substitute for dealing with the demands for truth and justice. The REMHI Project has put forward numerous concrete recommendations relating to the survivors' demands, particularly to the state but also to the URNG (the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union) and the CEH (Commission for the Clarification of History).

Memory as a weapon against the horror

Lastly, the REMHI Report has revealed the mechanisms which made possible the extreme forms of cruelty of the violence in

The work of the REMHI Project makes it clear that, despite all the pain, keeping the memory of the atrocities alive plays a role in preventing future violence. Official statements are inclined to suggest that it is necessary 'to turn the page of history in order to rebuild society'. This is a deliberate distortion of memory, undermining society and

Nobel peace prize winner Rigoberta Menchú receives a copy of the REMHI Report at its launch in April 1998



humiliating the victims anew. In Guatemala, as in many other countries, dismantling those mechanisms which made the horror possible is, to a large extent, a prerequisite for ensuring that the tragedy is not repeated.

An important, unexpected source of information for the REMHI Project was the testimonies (8% of the total) given by those responsible for, or involved in, the atrocities. The majority of these were members of the civil defence patrols (PAC). Compelled by guilt and a need to unburden themselves, many related how they had been forced by the army to participate in atrocities. Of those who were in the army, the majority spoke of the resentment they felt at having been used, and their subsequent psychological and family problems. Nevertheless, most of these seemed emotionally distanced from their reports and hardly acknowledged their direct involvement in the violence.

Giving back their memory

The work of the REMHI Project does not end with the presentation of the Report. Various teams, based on the network of 600 interviewers/animations who were involved in the gathering of testimonies, are currently working on popularising the report and 'giving people back their memory'. This work is being done via the preparation of educational material, radio programmes and workshops aimed at helping people to better understand what went on, to recognise their own experience, to respect the dignity of the victims and to strengthen their support for the reconstruction efforts.

In addition, the gathering of testimonies activated a demand for the disinterment of hundreds of clandestine cemeteries and for a land registry. Some of these disinterments are currently being carried out, with support for the families and assistance with legal issues. Local monuments and celebrations are being prepared in many cases. In the capital, the entrance columns of the cathedral have been covered with the names of the eighteen thousand known victims and the more than four hundred communities devastated.

Conclusions

The REMHI Project broke the silence and became a collective movement. It was successful, with its psychosocial approach, in gathering and presenting the effects of the violence, the resistance

of the people, and the thoughts and demands of the victims and survivors, and in offering numerous proposals and guidance for the work of social reconstruction.

Working through networks is important in order to achieve wide social involvement in such a project. However, REMHI had to confront different responses even in the church network which promoted it, which made the work more difficult in certain locations.

The measure in which the Report's recommendations - on impunity, investigation, social reforms, etc - can be executed will depend, to a great extent, on this memory being assimilated and used by different social and popular movements beyond REMHI. While the REMHI Project was underway, the government and the URNG negotiated the law of Reconciliation which threatens to become a new instrument of impunity. The assassination of Monsenor Girardi - the bishop most closely associated with the Project - made it clear that REMHI had overstepped the line drawn by those who negotiated the peace: it had named those responsible and had brought about a reconstruction of memory linked to social mobilisation.

Carlos Martín Beristain, a member of the REMHI project team, is a doctor specialising in mental health and in work with displaced populations in Guatemala and other Latin American countries. The REMHI Report has been elaborated in collaboration with other Guatemalan writers and organisations.

For a summary of the Report (in Spanish, English, French, German or Italian) and for information about educational materials used by the Project, contact: Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado de Guatemala, 6a calle 7-77 Zona 1, Guatemala City, Guatemala. Tel: +502 232 4604. Email: odhagua@pronet.net.gt Website: www.guateconnect.com/odhagua

1 Issue 2 of *Forced Migration Review* included an article by Carlos Beristain entitled 'The value of memory' which introduced the Project for the Reconstruction of Guatemala's Historical Memory (REMHI) and discussed the Project's methodology.

2 Stigma and shame caused by sexual violations habitually create an underestimation of the situation.

3 The REMHI Report suggested that some of the characteristics of genocide were present in the case of Guatemala, but the Project could not investigate whether deliberate intention existed. This aspect has been left pending the consideration of the official CEH

(Commission for the Clarification of History) which is preparing a report for the end of 1998.

4 Estimations about the number of people displaced in Guatemala: 1 million displaced within the country; 400,000 exiled in Mexico, Belize, Honduras, Costa Rica, the USA; 45,000 legal refugees in Mexico; 150,000 illegal refugees in Mexico and some 200,000 in the USA; 20,000 people organised themselves into CPRs (community resistance groups), another 20,000 were able to live as displaced people in the mountains for several years. See Fariás P (1994) *Central and South American Refugees*. In Marsella A J, Bornemann T, Ekblad S and Orley J (eds) *Amidst Peril and Pain: The Mental Health and Well-Being of the World's Refugees*, Washington, American Psychological Association.

5 In a country where 2% of the population own 70% of the cultivatable land, the war has aggravated the problems of access to and use of land, due to displacement of the population, the destruction of land registers, and the occupation of land by new communities better inclined towards the armed forces.

Successful Norwegian telethon for IDPs



Norwegian Refugee Council

Every year, for the last 25 years, the Norwegian people have collected money for various causes through a television fundraising drive (a 'telethon'). The Norwegian Refugee Council was the beneficiary of this year's telethon, and the collection has so far raised £9.5 million (115 million Norwegian kroner). The money will be used to help IDPs in the following ways:

- Former Yugoslavia and Kosovo: for centres for Bosnian entrepreneurs (offering advice, training and bank loans to establish enterprises); for legal aid, protection and housing; and for convoys of clothing to IDPs in Kosovo.
- Caucasus: for house building, water drilling, rebuilding of schools and health centres, education and human rights issues.
- Colombia: for protection, food distribution, house building, assistance for self-help activities, and legal aid.
- Central Africa: for housing, jobs, and educational opportunities for children.
- Sudan: for work in cooperation with other organisations.

The Debate section will present responses to and comments on articles from previous issues. In this issue we present an article by Jeff Crisp and Karen Jacobsen, submitted in response to the feature section on 'people in camps' in *FMR* 2, plus a reply by Richard Black, author of the introductory article of the 'people in camps' feature.

Refugee camps reconsidered

by Jeff Crisp and Karen Jacobsen

The August 1998 edition of *Forced Migration Review (FMR)* has played a valuable role in refocusing the attention of researchers and practitioners on the issue of refugee camps.

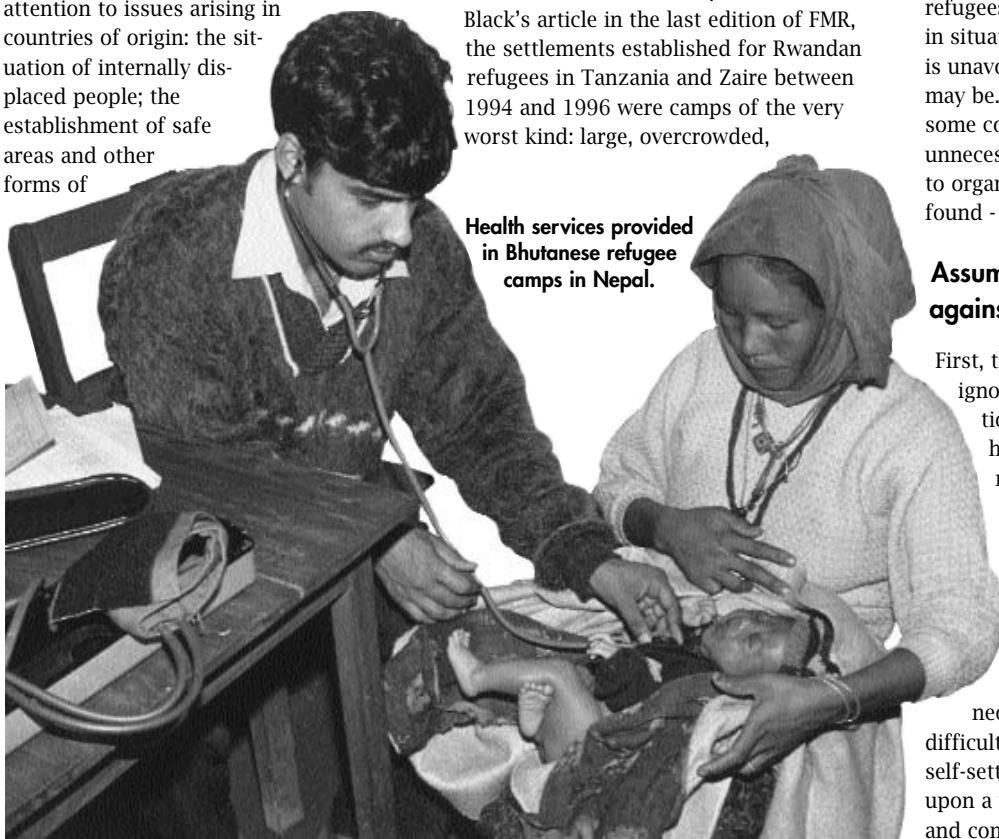
During the 1970s and 1980s, camps were a common topic of research amongst those involved in the expanding field of refugee studies. In the first half of the 1990s, however, forced migration specialists increasingly turned their attention to issues arising in countries of origin: the situation of internally displaced people; the establishment of safe areas and other forms of

in-country protection; the return and reintegration of displaced populations; and the prevention of future refugee movements.

While such topics are still high on the humanitarian, intellectual and political agenda, the past few years have witnessed a discernible revival of interest in the question of refugee camps. This trend can be ascribed in very large part to the crisis in the Great Lakes region of Africa. For as indicated by Richard Black's article in the last edition of *FMR*, the settlements established for Rwandan refugees in Tanzania and Zaire between 1994 and 1996 were camps of the very worst kind: large, overcrowded,

inaccessible, insecure and controlled by people who were responsible for genocide.¹ It would be wrong, however, to generalise too much from recent experience in the Great Lakes region. The concept of a refugee camp is used to describe human settlements which vary enormously in size, socio-economic structure and political character. To focus only on the worst-case scenario in order to construct a general case against the establishment of refugee camps is not a very helpful approach to the issue.

As the article by Edith Bowles in the same edition of *FMR* demonstrates, refugee camps can assume a far more benign form than those found in the Great Lakes region.² Organised settlements such as those established on the Thailand-Burma border until 1995 - modest in size, village-like in atmosphere and enabling refugees to retain a substantial degree of autonomy and self-sufficiency - are clearly more acceptable than those established in Tanzania or Zaire. The real question, therefore, is not whether or not there should be camps, but how to ensure that camps meet the highest possible standards and provide refugees with optimal living conditions in situations where their establishment is unavoidable. And unavoidable they may be. For the argument advanced by some commentators - that camps are unnecessary and that viable alternatives to organised settlements can always be found - is simply not a sustainable one.



Health services provided in Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal.

Assumptions made by those against camps

First, the 'anti-camp' argument tends to ignore that fact that local populations in countries of asylum also have rights - including the right not to be dispossessed of their land. While there is a body of evidence concerning the negative impact of refugee camps on host populations, there is little reliable data on the impact of self-settled refugees, not least because situations of spontaneous settlement are notoriously difficult to study. The case in favour of self-settlement appears to be based upon a very limited amount of empirical and comparative research. Second, those

who argue against the establishment of camps also tend to assume that self-settled refugees invariably enjoy better conditions of life than those in organised settlements, and that refugees would never choose to settle in a camp if they were given any choice in the matter. Such assumptions have never really been substantiated by means of empirical research.

From a refugee's point of view, a camp might actually provide a safer and materially more secure option than self-settlement. Indeed, in many mass influx situations, refugees and their leaders organise themselves into camp-like settlements before UNHCR or any other humanitarian organisation has arrived on the scene and established an assistance programme. Moreover, once a camp has been formally established and provided with international support, refugees are rarely 'confined' to their settlement in the way that is suggested by Barbara Harrell-Bond's contribution to *FMR*.³ In many situations, refugees move out of their camps periodically to visit their homeland or to take advantage of wage-earning, trading or farming opportunities that exist in their country of asylum. In this respect, the crude distinction which is often made between self-settled refugees and those who live in camps should itself be subjected to greater scrutiny.

Finally, those who oppose camps fail to concede the full significance of the role of host governments in determining refugee policies. Barbara Harrell-Bond's literature review, for example, supports two assertions: that "Refugee policy in the South has been largely driven by the demands of donors and humanitarian organisations" and that "... where host governments have maintained control of refugee policy ... it has benefited both refugee and local populations."⁴ If only the complexities of the refugee situation in Africa and other developing regions could be boiled down to these simplicities! Richard Black's article takes a more nuanced view of the issue, but also states that camps are preferred by aid agencies and implies that it is policy to put people in organised settlements. This is simply not the case, neither as far as UNHCR is concerned, nor with

respect to other international and non-governmental relief organisations. Indeed, UNHCR's policy is to avoid the establishment of camps if viable alternatives are available. This is clearly stated in the organisation's Emergency Handbook⁵, and will be confirmed in any conversation with the organisation's emergency response teams. In most situations, it is the host government that insists on the establishment of camps, or the refugees themselves who congregate in large groups, forming large-scale settlements which eventually become institutionalised.

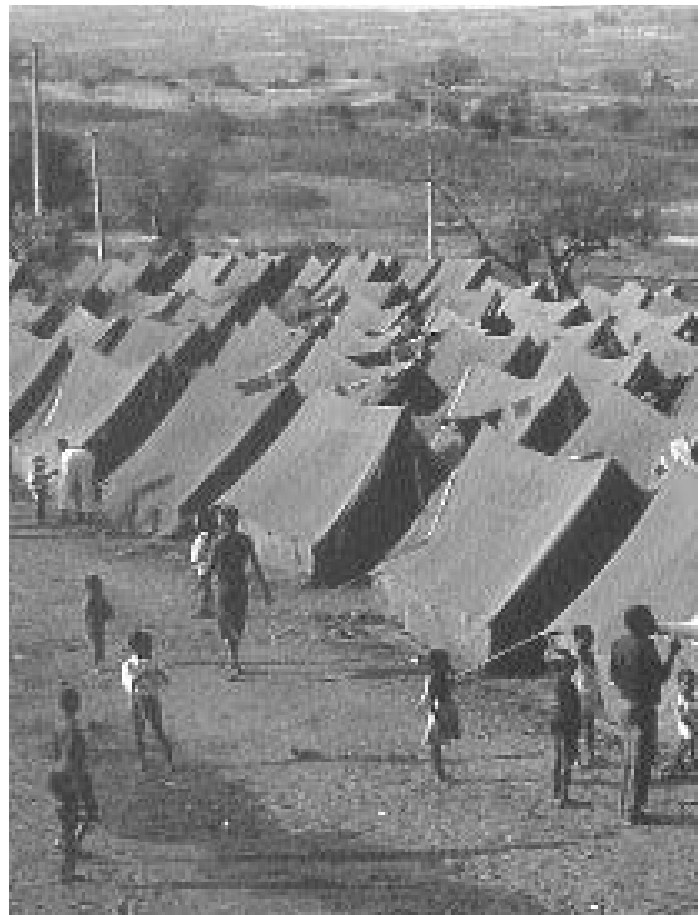
As Gaim Kibreab pointed out many years ago, the preference of host governments for the establishment of camps is not based on humanitarian concerns.⁶ It has much more to do with their interest in preventing the local integration of exiled populations, in facilitating the early and organised repatriation of refugees, and in attracting international assistance through the creation of very visible refugee settlements. In this respect, it is both legitimate and necessary to question the motivations of policy makers who insist on the establishment of camps, especially when opportunities for self-settlement and local integration demonstrably exist. At the same time, and notwithstanding Article 26 of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention (which concerns freedom of movement), legal experts have recognised that host states do have the right to accommodate refugees in special camps or designated areas.⁷ Given the political, economic and legal considerations which have underpinned the establishment of refugee camps, general arguments in favour of spontaneous settlement seem unlikely to have a significant impact on the policies of refugee-hosting states.

As suggested earlier, the real challenge is to ensure that refugees are able to enjoy safe, secure and dignified conditions of life, whether or not they live in a camp. The following section addresses

this issue, focusing particularly on the need to avert the kind of security problems which arose in the Great Lakes between 1994 and 1996 - and which continue today in that region on a lesser scale and with far less international publicity.

The size and location of camps

In a recent report to the Security Council, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan recommends that "for their own security and the security of the states



from which they fled, I strongly urge that refugees be settled at a reasonable distance from the border, in camps of limited size..."⁸ International refugee law makes no specific reference to the size of the camps or settlements in which refugees should be accommodated. UNHCR's *Handbook for Emergencies*, however, notes that "high density camps with very large populations are the worst possible option for refugee accommodation... Large camps of over 20,000 people should be avoided."⁹

The obvious rationale behind such recommendations concerning the size and location of refugee camps is that it is generally more difficult to maintain law and order in camps which are large and densely-populated. Such camps are more likely to be perceived as - and to become - a threat to local communities, particularly when they are inhabited by people of a different ethnic, linguistic or cultural background. Large and densely populated camps are also more likely to have a damaging impact on the natural environ-

to an international border present an inevitable threat to the security of the refugees and the states concerned. When refugee camps retain their civilian character, and when the country of origin acknowledges that asylum has been granted to its citizens on a strictly humanitarian basis, serious security problems are far less likely to arise. Such was the case, for example, with respect to the one million or more Mozambicans who took refuge in Malawi and Zimbabwe throughout much of the 1980s and early 1990s.

the situation as it develops in their homeland. Conversely, refugees may be unable or unwilling to settle in an area where they have no kind of affinity with the local population and where they would be obliged to sever their connections with their country of origin.

Political constraints. As already stated, it is host governments which ultimately decide whether to settle refugees in camps, and which determine the size and location of those camps. These decisions are often influenced more by political considerations than by international conventions and recommendations.

Logistical and financial constraints. When a refugee emergency takes place (and particularly when it involves very large and rapid cross-border movements), decisions by relief agencies have to be taken very quickly in order to provide the new arrivals with life-sustaining assistance. In such circumstances, practical and logistical considerations are liable to take precedence over all other considerations. Refugees may be allowed (or even encouraged) to settle close to their homeland and in large camps in order, for example, to reduce the distance which they are obliged to walk having crossed the border; to avert the need for the host government or UNHCR to provide them with onward transport from the border area; or to facilitate the delivery of food, tents and other relief supplies.

Practical steps

It would be disingenuous to suggest that the constraints identified above will be easily resolved. Even so, there are a number of practical steps that might be taken to address these problems.

First, as previously mentioned, refugee camps are not inherently dangerous or destabilising places, even if they are large and situated close to an international border. Host governments have primary responsibility for the maintenance of security in refugee camps and refugee-populated areas. Those governments must therefore be encouraged and enabled to ensure that refugee camps are managed in ways that are consistent with international standards.

Constraints on implementation

In practice, international standards and recommendations concerning the size and location of refugee camps have proved difficult to implement, for a variety of different reasons:

Environmental constraints.

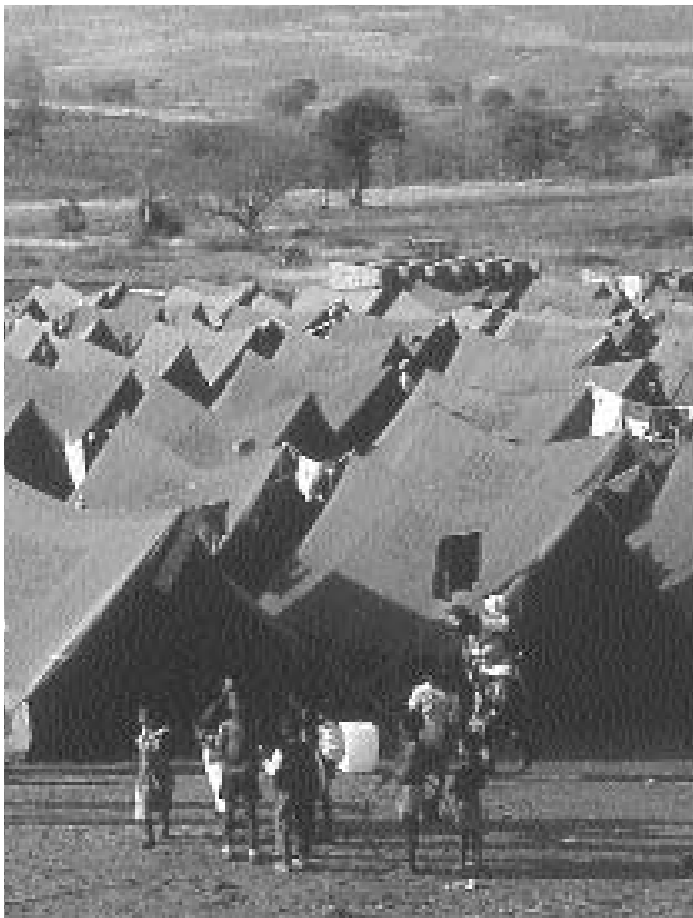
The size and location of refugee camps are often determined or influenced by the nature of the terrain in areas of mass influx. Refugees cannot be expected to settle in mountainous or rocky locations, in areas prone to flooding, where no water is available, or on land infested with dangerous insects, animals or land mines. Similarly, in countries where land is scarce, or where the land is owned or controlled by the local population or private landowners, host governments and UNHCR may have relatively

little freedom of choice in determining the location of refugee camps.

Social constraints. Refugees do not move in a random or arbitrary manner; they frequently settle in areas where they have some ethnic, linguistic or cultural affinity with the local population. And they may prefer to live close to the border with their country of origin so that they can return to their farms when it is safe to do so, engage in cross-border trade, and generally keep in touch with

ment. Furthermore, camps which are situated close to an international frontier are more vulnerable to armed attack. Even if such attacks are targeted specifically at combatants (and often they are not), military raids of this kind inevitably compromise the safety of *bona fide* refugees, not to mention the local population and the personnel of humanitarian organisations.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that all large refugee camps close



Carlos Cuatrecasas/SIPA Pictures

Through their advocacy and training efforts, UNHCR and other actors should place particular emphasis on those provisions relating to the location and civilian nature of refugee camps, as well as the humanitarian character of asylum. In the course of its dialogue with actual and potential refugee-hosting states, UNHCR should also stress that national

The way in which refugee camps are established and managed certainly needs to be re-examined.

and regional security is best reinforced by means of a scrupulous respect for international refugee law, not least its provisions concerning the settlement of refugees at a reasonable distance from borders. UNHCR must also evidently ensure that its own emergency training programmes and emergency management tools place due emphasis on the need to ensure that camps are appropriately located and limited in size.

Greater efforts should also be made to prepare for future refugee influxes, particularly in those countries and regions which are most prone to armed conflict and large-scale population displacements. UNHCR and other humanitarian organisations should, for example, work in close cooperation with government authorities in actual and potential countries of asylum to identify appropriate sites where refugees could be accommodated in the event of a refugee influx. Such sites would be incorporated into the contingency plans established by UNHCR and the states concerned. These plans could also provide details of the practical arrangements required for the establishment of camps, and for transferring refugees to these sites.

Even if such steps are taken, there is a very strong likelihood that Africa and other developing regions will witness future refugee emergencies in which it ultimately proves impossible to establish camps which are modest in size and which are located at a reasonable distance

from an international border. When such situations arise, and particularly when they become a threat to the security of refugees and the local population, the relocation of refugees to sites which accommodate fewer people, and which are situated in less sensitive locations, may be the most effective response.

In practical terms, of course, the relocation of refugee camps and the redistribution of refugee populations are also fraught with difficulties and relocation might therefore be considered a last resort, to be undertaken only in those circumstances where the protection of refugees is at evident risk.

Conclusion

The way in which refugee camps are established and managed certainly needs to be re-examined. There are many situations in which camps create problems for refugees and their local hosts, and there are equally many ways in which the welfare and safety of refugees who are accommodated in camps might be improved.

The critics of refugee camps must bear in mind, however, that refugee policies are being formulated in a political climate of increased hostility towards people who are seeking asylum, both in the industrialised and in the developing regions of the world. In such a political climate, critics must act with caution, lest their words give support and justification for the introduction of further restrictions on refugees.

In the current climate, it is highly unlikely that host states would liberalise their policies by allowing refugees to be "free to settle where they wished..."¹⁰ It is much more likely that governments will refuse to host refugees at all. Rather than simply calling for the abolition of camps, academics, practitioners and advocates must try to persuade governments to pursue more positive and liberal asylum policies. At the same time, further efforts must be made by host governments, UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies to ensure that those refugees who choose or who are obliged

to live in camps enjoy the highest possible standards of physical, material and psychological security.

Dr Jeff Crisp is Senior Research Officer with UNHCR and writes here in a personal capacity.

Dr Karen Jacobsen is Assistant Professor in Political Science at Regis College and Adjunct Professor at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, USA.

1 Black, Richard 'Putting refugees in camps', *Forced Migration Review*, no 2, August 1998, pp 4-7.

2 Bowles, Edith 'From village to camp: refugee life in transition on the Thailand-Burma border', *Forced Migration Review*, no 2, August 1998, pp 11-14.

3 Harrell-Bond, Barbara 'Camps: literature review', *Forced Migration Review*, no 2, August 1998, pp 22-23.

4 Ibid.

5 "The establishment of refugee camps must only be a last resort." *Handbook for Emergencies*, UNHCR, Geneva 1982, p 57.

6 Kibreab, Gaim 'Reflections on the African Refugee Problem: A Critical Analysis of Some Basic Assumptions', Research Report no 67, Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, Uppsala, 1983.

7 Goodwin-Gill, Guy *The Refugee in International Law*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1996, pp. 300-301, note 31.

8 'The causes of conflict and promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa: report of the Secretary-General to the UN Security Council', New York, 1998, paragraph 54.

9 *Handbook for Emergencies* (second edition), UNHCR, Geneva, forthcoming 1998/99, section 3.3.2.

10 Black, Richard, op cit, p 5.

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on articles published in FMR.**

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Material may be submitted in English, Spanish or Arabic.

Refugee camps not really reconsidered: a reply to Crisp and Jacobsen

by Dr Richard Black

Jeff Crisp and Karen Jacobsen's thoughtful response to the August issue of *Forced Migration Review* is helpful in setting out further the terms of the current debate on refugee camps. However, I am moved to respond briefly; for although Jeff Crisp writes in his personal capacity and Karen Jacobson has no direct connection to UNHCR, what they have written reflects quite accurately the views expressed by many UNHCR and other international agency personnel. This might be summed up in three propositions.

Argument 1: It is host governments, not international agencies, who insist on camps.

On this point, I do not disagree – indeed, much of the thrust of my own article was to stress the interest of governments in establishing camps. But far from implying that it was also international agency policy to promote camps, my aim was to highlight how, in spite of being formally opposed to camps, the actions of these agencies on the ground so often fail to defend alternatives. Part of the reason undoubtedly lies in Crisp and Jacobsen's second argument.

Argument 2: There is insufficient evidence that self-settlement is better than camps.

Certainly it seems to me that many international agency personnel are blissfully unaware of any evi-

dence, even though evidence does exist of 'successful' self-settlement. For example, Art Hansen's work in northwest Zambia and Walter Kok's work in eastern Sudan are both explicitly comparative of camp and non-camp populations. Perhaps more research is needed, though, to provide the arguments to support the policy of avoiding camps?

In practice, though, I suspect it is not so much the lack of evidence as the way this evidence is viewed. My own work in

Guinea also examines a largely successful experience of self-settlement; yet I have lost count of the number of times this example has been dismissed by agency personnel working elsewhere as 'unique' and 'unrepresentative', because the refugees moved into an area inhabited by their 'kinsmen'. This of course ignores the fact that most refugees in Africa move over short distances and remain within areas inhabited by related ethnic groups; and that the first waves of refugees to Guinea (who established the current settlement pattern) were far from ethnically homogenous.

Argument 3: Camps are inevitable, so research needs to focus on how to make them better.

I would not deny that research on improving conditions in camps is vital.

But this is no more the "real question" than my suggestion for more research on the benefits of self-settlement. Rather, there is a need to explore real and potential outcomes for refugees and their hosts whether or not camps are established, and in specific contexts. Such research would, implicitly, challenge the assumption that refugee camps are inevitable outcomes of policy (as they appear too often to be), and provide arguments for concerned individuals and groups to challenge government or international policy where it is iniquitous. In contrast, research that limits itself to making camps work may already have conceded the most important battle.



UNHCR/25192/05.1995/C.Saillbeiger

Benaco Camp, Ngara, Tanzania. Benaco became one of the world's largest refugee camps, with a population of more than 200,000.

staff were evacuated in August, the very few international NGOs trying again to meet needs from Bukavu and Goma have difficulty negotiating access and all activities and communications are screened by the military authorities.

Humanitarian response, while imperative, is not the solution. Increased diplomatic initiative, from the UN and western governments as well as the current regional efforts, must end the violence, deal with impunity and address the citizenship concerns of the Congo-lesé Tutsi population. Any solution must include measures regarding rebel and non-state armed groups operating in DRC and find a way to achieve accountable governance and development progress for Congolese children and their families.

by Beth L Verhey (who worked with children affected by armed conflict in eastern DRC for 18 months in 1997 & 1998)

updateupdateupdateupdateupdate

The impact of Russia's economic crisis on forced migration in the former Soviet Union

Forced migrants in Russia - 125,400 forced re-settlers and 5,700 refugees - are among the hardest-hit by the current economic crisis. First, the high proportion of unemployed among them will grow even higher. Second, inflation has devalued established loans and subsidies for purchasing and constructing houses and apartments. Those who have accommodation face serious difficulties in paying for wood, heating and water supplies because of the rise in prices. Many cannot even buy basic foods and medical supplies. Third, the paralysis of the banking system was a great blow for many migrants' organisations and firms as well as individual families that lost their savings and active financial resources. Fourth, the crisis has affected international organisations assisting international organisations assisting forced migrants and refugees. UNHCR, IOM and others are holding back their money until the situation improves, and it will take time to restore their programmes.

The crisis has severely limited Russia's Forced Migration Service's ability to implement programmes. Only one third of the 388m rubles designated for compensation of lost properties of forced migrants from Chechnya has been paid. From August-October 1998, no compensation was paid at all. Practically, all FMS money is spent now on maintaining centres for provisional living and on distributing small subsidies. The daily allotment of eight rubles per forced migrant is worth next to nothing when a kilo of white bread costs five rubles.

*Summarised from a report by Professor Valery Tishkov, director of the Center for Study and Management of Conflict at the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology. For a full report, see the November issue of the Forced Migration Monitor:
email refugee@sorosny.org*

Hurricane Mitch - concern for safe relocation of displaced communities

The assault on Central America and the Caribbean by Hurricane Mitch in late October left widespread destruction in its wake. Of some 10,000 estimated deaths so far throughout Central America, 7,000 occurred in Honduras while almost 2 million Hondurans - roughly one third of the population - reportedly lost or had to leave their homes. The UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Hurricane Mitch, which met on 18 November, highlighted the need for projects in the following areas:

- i) early warning systems, national disaster prevention, mitigation and response structures
- ii) resettlement of affected populations to safe areas with access to income earning opportunities
- iii) integrated watershed management
- iv) environmental protection and sustainability, including reforestation and soil management

During the past two decades, the countries of this region have made significant strides in disaster preparedness and mitigation. The Pan American Health Organisation has been working with them in programmes that stress preparedness, prevention, mitigation, emergency relief and post disaster development. The resulting high level of coordination at country level in the days and weeks following Hurricane Mitch has been widely recognised.

For more information, see a) the report of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator and the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Hurricane Mitch at <http://www.reliefweb.int/> and b) the PAHO website at <http://www.paho.org/> PAHO is organising an interagency workshop, 9-12 February 1999 in Santo Domingo, to evaluate the preparedness and response to hurricanes Mitch and Georges.

updateupdateupdateupdate



Sri Lanka

After more than 15 years of armed conflict in Sri Lanka, most people are pessimistic about the prospects of peace, and for the return to their homes of the hundreds of thousands of Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims who have been displaced within the country or have sought refuge overseas. The pessimism has been heightened in the wake of the bloody battle between government forces and LTTE fighters at the key town of Kilinochchi, just south of the Jaffna peninsula towards the end of September, when probably more a thousand combatants were killed. The depressed mood was exacerbated by the downing of a civilian aircraft flying between Colombo and Jaffna, almost certainly by the LTTE, at the end of that month. The Lionair flight was a lifeline for the people of the Jaffna peninsula, since it provided one of the few links between the area and the rest of the country; people used the flight to travel to Colombo to collect money sent back from their relatives overseas, to call family members abroad, and for trade, jobs, study and to escape harsh living conditions. It was also a tentative indication that some kind of normal life was returning to the area.

Outside the conflict areas in the north and east, the signs of a society under siege are pervasive. One Sri Lankan artist has coined the term 'barrelism' to describe the 'check-point' culture that affects everyone - characterised by the concrete-filled oil drums that line road blocks in much of the country. The check-points are increasingly patrolled by women soldiers and police, as more and more male troops are drawn into the frontline. An increase in crime in the country has been attributed to the diversion of police and other security forces from regular duties to the war effort.

Although there have recently been calls for peaceful resolution of the conflict by a grouping of private industrialists and, most recently, by a new grouping, the Women's Coalition for Peace, no mass movement for peace has yet emerged, partly perhaps for fear that it would be

taken over by various political factions. Yet such a movement may be a pre-requisite for peace, to transform the widespread war-weariness that has long pervaded Sri Lankan society into a force for peace.

The experience of many Sri Lankan families during the conflict puts into sharp focus some of the recent debates about the proper role of UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies. Many families - Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim - have experienced complex patterns of displacement: some household members may be internally displaced, within the north and east, or to Colombo or other urban centres; others may have sought refuge in south India; others have sought asylum in Europe or Australia; and still others may be working as housemaids in the Gulf to support those at home. Some have repatriated, only to become displaced again, or stranded and unable to reunite with their families. Given such complex circumstances, it is difficult to see how the argument that protection and assistance should be afforded only to those who are technically refugees can possibly be sustained.

Dr Nicholas Van Hear, Senior Research Officer, RSP (currently undertaking field work in Sri Lanka as part of a research project entitled 'People who stay: migration, development and those left behind')

Austria's strategy paper on immigration and asylum policy

It is quite accepted that the country holding the six-month Presidency of the European Union should use this as an opportunity to raise the profile of an issue high on its own domestic political agenda. Austria wasted no time in doing exactly that when, on the very first day of its current Presidency, 1 July 1998, it tabled a 133-paragraph draft strategy paper, supplemented by an 'Operational plan', on immigration and asylum. This was put forward for discussion and

comment to the EU's cryptically named K4 Committee with a view to later presentation to the Justice and Home Affairs Council of Ministers in December 1998.

The document called for a highly restrictive EU-wide approach to immigration and asylum, for firm policies on the repatriation of illegal immigrants, and for the requirement of adoption of 'Schengen criteria' by countries aspiring to EU membership. Intriguingly, for conceptualising the protection of 'target' countries, it also invoked a concentric-circle analogy for the classification of other countries that recalls some historical approaches to national-defence strategy.

However, the politics of this project are perhaps as interesting as the proposals. The draft was initially intended to be confidential but its existence was revealed in the press in early September, first in Austria and then picked up in other countries. Refugee lawyers and NGOs dealing with immigration and asylum matters were generally alarmed by the tenor of the proposals but much shorthand critical comment focused upon the suggestion (in Para 103) of 'supplementing, amending or replacing the Geneva Convention', as the English-language text said ('replacing' in the German version was '*aufheben*', meaning in this context 'abolish' or 'repeal'). The latest version of the document, for the December 1998 Council meeting, deletes this reference in order to placate the criticism it received, and makes a number of further amendments to those sections of the original text that occasioned particular controversy. However, the spirit of most of the original proposals remains unchanged, as does the concentric-circle analogy.

It will be interesting to see what, if anything, the British Home Office makes of all this in the light of its recently published 'Fairer, Faster and Firmer' White Paper.

*Chris Husbands,
London School of Economics*



Displacement and famine in Sudan

Famine in Sudan poses an immediate threat to hundreds of thousands of displaced people. Some 4.5 million Sudanese have been displaced during the last decade of civil war; the majority have sought refuge in southern Sudan which is now on the brink of famine. Violence has escalated since January 1998, forcing still more from their homes. Food, medicine and seeds are desperately needed, yet the government continues to block relief efforts. In the refugee camps, diseases such as measles are taking their toll. Furthermore, Sudan's eastern state of Kassala has recently registered some 28,300 people displaced as a result of conflict on the Sudan-Eritrea border, and UNHCR has expressed concern over reports that Sudanese refugees are being forced back into war-torn southern Sudan after Sudanese rebels invaded their settlements in the northeastern corner of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Meanwhile, on 26 October, four relief agencies - Oxfam, CARE International, Médecins Sans Frontières and Save the Children Fund - took the unusual step of urging the UN Security Council to act to end the fighting in Sudan. The agencies argue that the 30-year war and the resulting humanitarian crisis 'have now reached an unimaginable and extraordinary level of tragedy'.

300,000 displaced in Guinea-Bissau

The civil war which flared up in Guinea-Bissau on 7 June 1998 has already exacted a heavy toll, although the precise details remain unclear. In addition to the unknown number of deaths, between 250,000-300,000 people have been displaced from the capital, Bissau, which virtually emptied following the first week of violence. There has also been enormous material destruction caused by intense bombardment with heavy artillery. Among the organisations most affected by the destruction is the Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisa (The National Institute of Studies and Research, INEP), which is the largest and most active research institution in the country. The ICRC has been distributing food to about 10,000 people still in and around the capital. The Red Cross, WFP and other relief agencies are implementing aid efforts in other towns in which populations have almost doubled since the start of the conflict. In mid-July the UN launched an appeal for \$28.7 million to help assist displaced people in Guinea-Bissau and refugees who have fled to neighbouring Guinea-Conakry and Senegal.



COURSES

Islam, Human Rights and Refugees Professor Khadija Elmadmad of the University of Casablanca 27-28 March 1999

This seminar will focus on the dimension of refugees in the Muslim world and on the kind of protection granted to forced migrants. It will compare Islamic law on asylum, the practices pertaining in Muslim states, and international law relating to human rights and refugees. The seminar aims, firstly, to show how Islamic law and principles relating to asylum and refugees are very protective of asylum seekers/refugees and, secondly, to analyse their impact on the policy of Islamic states today.

Fee: £120 (excluding accommodation).
Venue: Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford, UK. Contact: Short Courses Secretary (address below).

The Law of Refugee Status Professor James C Hathaway of the University of Michigan 15-16 May 1999

This comprehensive workshop on the scope of the refugee definition gives participants the opportunity to grapple with difficult issues of application of the legal norms in the context of factual scenarios based on actual refugee claims. Questions to be addressed include the standard of proof in refugee claims; the use of international human rights law to inform refugee determination; the extent of a state's duty to protect its citizens; the violation of socioeconomic human rights as

the basis for a refugee claim; and the determination of claims grounded in generalised circumstances. Fee: £120 (excluding accommodation).

Venue: Queen Elizabeth House, Oxford, UK. Contact: Short Courses Secretary (address below).

Short Courses Secretary, Refugee Studies Programme, Queen Elizabeth House, 21 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LA, UK.
Tel: +44 (0)1865 270722
Fax: +44 (0)1865 270721
Email: rspedu@ermine.ox.ac.uk
WWW home page: <http://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/rsp/>

RSP International Summer School 1999

12-30 July 1999

This three-week course aims to provide a broad understanding of the issues of forced migration and humanitarian assistance, against which participants can then examine, discuss and review the role of assistance in practice. Designed for experienced managers, administrators and field workers in assistance and/or policy-making in the humanitarian field. Involves group discussions, case studies, exercises, simulations, lectures and individual study.

Course fees: £1,750 (including B&B accommodation). Deadline for final enrolment/payment of fees: 30 April 1999. Contact: International Summer School Project Manager (address as above); tel: +44 (0)1865 270723; email anthea.sanyasi@qeh.ox.ac.uk.

Master of Studies in Forced Migration

This is a nine-month postgraduate degree course grounded in a multi-disciplinary approach that includes the perspectives of anthropology, law, politics and international relations. It will include courses and seminars on:

Introduction to the study of forced migration
Liberal democratic states, globalisation and forced migration
International human rights and refugee law
Ethical issues in forced migration
Research methods
Issues and controversies in forced migration

Enquiries should be addressed to: Graduate Admissions Office, University Offices,
18 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD, UK.

Tel: +44 (0)1865 270055 · Email: graduate.admissions@admin.ox.ac.uk

Conferences

The Compulsory Exchange of Populations between Greece and Turkey: Assessment of the consequences of the 1923 Lausanne Convention

4-6 September 1998 : Wadham College, Oxford (hosted by the Refugee Studies Programme)

Conference convenor : Renée Hirschon

This multidisciplinary conference was organised to mark the 75th anniversary of the Lausanne Convention on the Compulsory Exchange of Populations between Greece and Turkey. The conference was attended by 60 participants from Turkey, Greece, the US, Canada, the UK and other European countries. The conference focused on the consequences of the mass population expulsion for the two countries, from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. It aimed to address the relevance of this historical event and to increase understanding of the long-term consequences of refugee settlement in the context of contemporary solutions to inter-ethnic conflict.

Oxford provided neutral territory for a constructive academic forum in which current research findings could be disseminated between scholars who seldom have the chance for contact because of the divisions between their disciplines as well as for geo-political reasons. Disciplines represented included international law, international relations, political science, history, sociology, social anthropology, economics, architecture, town planning and literature.

The Lausanne Convention constituted the first internationally endorsed compulsory exchange of populations, amounting to a programme of 'ethnic cleansing': an age-old and by no means unique phenomenon. What was unique perhaps was the compulsory character of the Lausanne Convention, and the fact that it was internationally recognised. Given the scale of the population expulsion, involving over 1.5 million people, and the time which has elapsed, it is surprising that so little attention

has been paid to the consequences of this event in the field of forced migration studies. The need for greater awareness of history was noted by Dr David Turton, Director of the RSP, in his opening address.

The first presentations from international law and international relations situated the Lausanne Convention in its historical context, and referred to more recent instances of population transfers. The short- and longer-term effects of the exchange on Greece and Turkey were presented in the following sessions by historians, political scientists, economic historians and sociologists. Sessions devoted to cultural dimensions included literature, architecture, town planning and music. Policy issues in contemporary Greece and the historiographical effects of traumatic events illustrated the long-term and often unseen consequences of major national crises. At the micro-scale, case studies of displaced communities from both sides of the Aegean, based on in-depth fieldwork, provided graphic illustrations of some of the processes of uprooting and settlement. For most themes, the same topic was addressed by a scholar from Greece and from Turkey, revealing significant contrasts. The concluding panel session and floor discussions raised broader philosophical issues, and the conference ended on a suitably reflective note.

The conference papers will be published in an edited volume; for more details, see the next issue of FMR or contact rsp@qeh.ox.ac.uk

Workshop on internal displacement in Africa

19-20 October 1998 : Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

While there is currently a global crisis of internal displacement, Africa is by far the most seriously affected continent. There are currently between eight and ten million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Africa, around half of the world-wide total.

On 19-20 October 1998, the Brookings Institution, UNHCR and the Organization of African Unity jointly convened a workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to focus attention on the issue of internal displacement in Africa and to identify ways of improving the continent's response to this growing humanitarian problem. The 55 participants in the workshop represented a wide range of international organisations, regional bodies, NGOs and research institutions.

The workshop was the first in a series of regional meetings to promote the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and to identify examples of good practice among international organisations working with internally displaced people. It is expected that similar meetings will be held in Angola, Colombia and Southeast Asia, involving the Brookings Institution, the Norwegian Refugee Council/Global IDP Survey, UNHCR and the US Committee for Refugees.

Each workshop has different objectives. The Addis workshop had three specific objectives: to promote the application of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which were presented to the UN Commission on Human Rights earlier this year; to explore the role of Africa's regional and sub-regional organisations in responding to the needs of IDPs; and to formulate recommendations on the problem of internal displacement for submission to the OAU Ministerial

Meeting on Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons, to be held in Khartoum in December 1998.

With regard to the first objective, the workshop welcomed the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which set out the rights of internally displaced populations as well as the obligations of governments and other actors towards such groups of people. The participants noted that the Guiding Principles could be put to a variety of different uses: as a basis for advocacy and awareness-raising activities; as a means of initiating a dialogue with states and interceding on behalf of the internally displaced; as a way to monitor the treatment of IDPs and to hold the authorities responsible for their actions; and as a reference for use in the drafting of national human rights legislation.

In terms of the second of the workshop's objectives, participants encouraged regional and sub-regional organisations in Africa to develop a more active role with the internally displaced, given the absence of any single international agency with a mandate for this task. Particular attention was drawn to

the role of regional and sub-regional organisations in averting and resolving the kind of conflicts which create large numbers of IDPs. In view of recent experience in Liberia and Sierra Leone, participants also suggested that personnel involved in regional peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations should be informed of and required to respect the Guiding Principles.

In accordance with the third of the workshop's objectives, the principal conclusions and recommendations of the meeting have been incorporated in a report which will be submitted to the OAU Ministerial Meeting on Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons. According to Francis Deng, the UN Secretary-General's Representative on Internally Displaced Persons: "I believe that the Addis Ababa workshop has established a valuable model for the promotion of the Guiding Principles, and hope that similar events will soon take place in other regions of the world."

Copies of the report of the Addis Ababa workshop are available from Jeff Crisp, UNHCR, CP2500, CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland. Email: crisp@unhcr.ch

UNHCR ExCom

October 1998

For information on the proceedings of this year's annual UNHCR ExCom (Executive Committee) and pre-ExCom meetings, we refer you to material by the Advocacy Project, who have been publishing a series of newsletters - *On the Record*, available on-line and in hard copy - looking at forced displacement as discussed and handled at the 1998 ExCom meetings. Issue 6 is published in partnership with ICVA and includes an article entitled 'Making more of ExCom' by Ed Van Mierop Schenkenberg, the new coordinator of ICVA. In the same issue Iain Guest (former spokesman for UNHCR in Cambodia and Haiti) writes about 'Refugee Protection in a Lawless World'.

On the Record is distributed to subscribers by email: contact geneva@lists.advocacyproject.org. Or visit the Advocacy Project website for more information and back issues of On the Record (including issue 6 with the above articles) at www.advocacyproject.org

forthcoming forthcoming forthcoming forthcoming

Conference on Displacement, Forced Settlement and Conservation

9-11 September 1999 : Refugee Studies Programme, University of Oxford, UK

Two major research and philosophical threads will run through this conference. One thread is the philosophical underpinning of many modern conservation projects which presupposes that wildlife needs to be protected from people. The second thread is the historical and still contemporary sentiment that mobile people (nomadic or unsettled) constitute a threat to settled communities and centralised political governments; many such communities are pushed into permanent settlements as a result of their forced removal from areas set aside for wildlife conservation. In the last decade, some attention has been given to the concept of bringing indigenous populations into the management and running of conservation efforts. In East and Southern Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, Asia and India, examples of such efforts are emerging. The confer-

ence organisers welcome papers that discuss and analyse this humane conservation effort. Total number of participants should not exceed 100. Proposals for papers (about 300 words) to be submitted by 1 March 1999. Participants should plan to raise their own fares though the RSP will endeavour to raise some funds to cover such costs, particularly for paper presenters.

*Contact: Dawn Chatty, Refugee Studies Programme, Queen Elizabeth House, 21 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LA, UK.
Tel: +44 (0)1865 270722
Fax: +44 (0)1865 270721
Email: dawn.chatty@qeh.ox.ac.uk
WWW home page: http://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/rsp/*

Refugees and the Transformation of Society: Loss and Recovery

21-24 April 1999 : Amsterdam and Soesterberg, the Netherlands

This international multi-disciplinary conference will focus on four broad topics:

- long-term and immediate causes and consequences of forced migration
- loss and recovery in new environments
- challenges of creating a new home (integration, resettlement, return)
- transformations of countries of origin and host societies

Keynote speeches include contributions by Dr Aristide Zolberg (New School for Social Research, New York, US), Dr Francis Deng (The Brookings Institution, Washington, US) and Professor Debarati Guga-Sapir (Centre for Research on Epidemiology and Disaster, Louvain, Belgium). Conference fee: \$375 (all inclusive except for travel to/from Amsterdam); \$225 for PhD students.

*Contact: Brigitte Lammers, InDRA, University of Amsterdam, Nieuwe Prinsengracht 130, 1018 VZ Amsterdam, the Netherlands.
Tel: +31 (0)20 525 5032.
Fax: +31 (0)20 525 4051.
Email: B.Lammers@frw.uva.nl*

Please note: In the previous issue, the email address for Karin Geuijen (relating to the IRAP conference) was incorrect. Her email address is: K.Geuijen@fsw.ruu.nl



Norwegian Refugee Council

Global IDP Survey



Norwegian Refugee Council

The Directorate

The Global IDP Survey, as a project of the Norwegian Refugee Council, is administered through its Geneva office. It has an academic Advisory Board of 15 leading experts in the field of forced migration.

Staff

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Gry Sando

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Website

The Global IDP Survey website includes a full IDP bibliography and can be accessed on <http://www.nrc.no/idp.htm>

For more information

If you would like more information about the project, or would like to receive Global IDP Survey publications and are not a subscriber to *Forced Migration Review*, please contact:

Global IDP Survey

Chemin Moïse-Duboule 59
CH-1209 Geneva Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 788 8085
Fax: +41 22 788 8086
Email: idpsurvey@nrc.ch

Articles in Forced Migration Review can be accessed and downloaded from FMR pages at the Global IDP Survey's website: <http://www.nrc.no/idp.htm> and at the RSP's website <http://www.qeh.ox.ac.uk/rsp/>

Not just another database

The Global IDP database and the role of information

"... many decisions are still taken in emergencies with very little information beyond that in people's heads."

In a world of instant communication, Internet, satellite phones and CNN, this comment, found in the *World Disasters Report 1997*,¹ is initially surprising until one reflects on the realities of field work.

Field officers from humanitarian organisations spend a vast amount of time gathering data, writing reports and transmitting information to senior officers further up the hierarchy. Attempts at analysis are often frustrated by a lack of context. In other words, from the perspective of a field officer in an isolated duty station it is difficult to know what is going on further afield which in turn makes it hard to identify and define patterns: something akin to not seeing the forest for the trees. Furthermore, field officers are frequently called upon to make immediate decisions on something of local importance but need to fit their decisions into a national or regional strategy; this too can be hampered by organisational information flows. Information almost invariably flows up, sometimes down and rarely laterally.

Among a plethora of NGOs and UN organisations working towards common goals in both humanitarian emergencies and long-term development, it inevitably emerges that some organisations are conducting similar projects or gathering the same information without either sharing or comparing information, and sometimes without even being aware of each other's activities. It is the age-old problem of field coordination. In the case of internal displacement, to make matters more complicated, there is no single responsible institution. Agencies are involved with internally displaced people (IDPs) on a more or less *ad hoc* basis and must try to coordinate their activities themselves.

This is why the Global IDP database is so important.

The Global IDP Survey's proposal for a database devoted exclusively to IDPs has been endorsed by the IASC-WG (Inter-Agency Standing Committee - Working Group).² In the first year, a comprehensive information-gathering programme will be undertaken for countries experiencing crises of internal displacement. In the short term, the project will take information currently available in the public domain and organise it into country profiles and themes. Much of the information will be gathered through Internet access although existing focal points within relevant NGOs, UN agencies and research institutions, plus interested individuals, will be encouraged to submit information.

In the long term, the Norwegian Refugee Council/Global IDP Survey hopes to make the database the central component of an expanding information network on internal displacement including IDP focal points within national and international NGOs, UN agencies, academic institutions and regional organisations. Eventually, it is expected that focal points within organisations dealing with IDPs will regularly provide and validate database information. Government authorities, where possible, will be included in the information network. The database will be posted on the World Wide Web.

At the international level the database will assist decision making and coordination for the IASC and will support the work of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, who chairs the IASC and is the UN focal point for IDP issues, by providing an overview of the activities of various organisations. The database will also support the work of the UN Secretary-General's Representative on IDPs through the provision of up-to-date, accurate information on internal displacement in a standardised and organised format that will allow cross-country comparison.

But more importantly the database will centralise information on internal displacement. As anyone who has researched crises of internal displacement knows, information on IDPs is scattered, fragmented and insufficient. Surprisingly a lot of the information does exist if one knows where to look or who to ask. The centralisation and compilation of IDP information was one of the original aims of the Global IDP Survey. While *Internally Displaced People: A Global Survey* has accomplished this to a certain extent much remains to be done and it is clear that a bi-annual survey is not enough; situations of internal displacement change too quickly. The database will enable the accumulation in one place of diverse and pertinent information, regular update of this information and its general accessibility to anyone wishing to use it. For the individual humanitarian worker in the field, it will not replace information networks of individual organisations but it will be an important resource. Whilst it will not offer instant operational information, it will present a national profile of internal displacement and place it in a context that will assist the individual worker in analysis.

Perhaps the most meaningful question is how the database will help IDPs themselves. It has been said that the best protection against human rights abuse is an informed population. Information is protection. Information is empowerment. The database will provide valuable information for the advocacy efforts of IDPs themselves and national NGOs working with them. It will provide, for example, access to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, electronic links to relevant organisations and training manuals online.

In order to be successful, the database must contain information and in a world with shrinking budgets and fewer staff there is a risk that the information needs of the database may not be met. It requires interested people to participate in the process, to encourage their respective organisations to support the project and contribute information... and, most importantly, when the database is up and running, to use it!

Marc Vincent
Coordinator, Global IDP Survey

¹ *World Disasters Report 1997*, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, p37, OUP

² The IASC is a principle coordinating body of the UN, made up of heads of agencies, and is part of Kofi Annan's reform and streamlining of the UN system.

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- AUSTCARE/Australian Council for Overseas Aid
- Danish Refugee Council
- ECHO
- European Commission
- European Human Rights Foundation
- International Planned Parenthood Federation
- Lutheran World Federation
- Norwegian Refugee Council
- Save the Children Fund (UK)
- The Ford Foundation, Cairo Office
- World Vision (UK)

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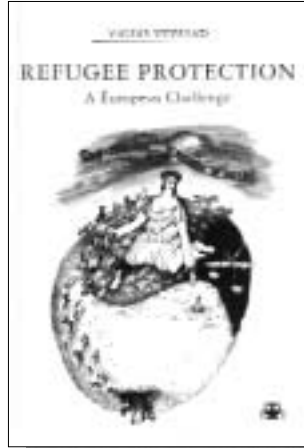
Laurence Whitehead
Official Fellow in Politics, Nuffield College, Oxford University

Erratum

In *FMR 2*, the information on ECHO (sponsor of *FMR 2*) should have stated: 'In 1997, it donated funding of almost 442m ECU, not including aid that the EU's 15 Member States gave separately.' The date 1996, rather than 1997, was printed by mistake. We regret any resulting inconvenience to ECHO.

Refugee Protection: A European Challenge

by Vigdis Vevstad. Norwegian Refugee Council/Tano Aschehoug. 1998. 336pp (hb). ISBN 82-518-3630-1. NOK 298 (£32.00) hb.



Refugee Protection challenges all European States to develop a comprehensive and human rights based refugee policy by creating a new European Refugee Convention to meet today's requirements for international protection. *Refugee Protection* presents and analyses the current state of refugee and asylum law at a global and regional level, while focusing in particular on European developments. Its chapters cover the historical background; sources of international refugee law; the 1951 Convention refugee status and its criteria; evolution of the refugee concept; international protection and the principle of *non-refoulement*; asylum issues; and, finally, a proposal for a new European convention on refugee protection.

Contact: Tano Aschehoug, *Sentrum*, 0109 Oslo, Norway. Or: Law Books Now, Customer Sales & Enquiries, PO Box 2979, Poole, Dorset BH12 3YS, UK. Tel: +44 01202 722 681. Email: lbn@bebc.co.uk

Unwanted and Unprotected: Burmese Refugees in Thailand

Human Rights Watch. 1998. 52pp (stapled). ISSN 1079-2309. £2.95.

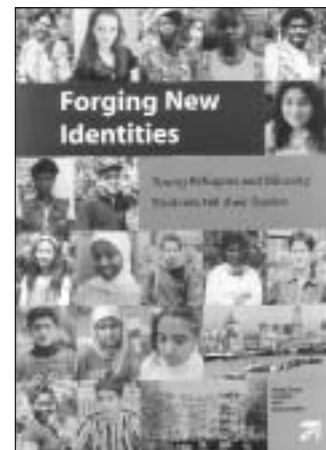
This report profiles the two major groups of refugees from Burma: the 'students' (mostly urban students and professionals who took part in the 1988 uprising and subsequent political protests) and members of the different ethnic minority groups living close to the Thai-Burmese border who have fled armed conflict, forced displacement,

forced labour and other abuses. It discusses the difference in treatment that the two groups of refugees have received from the Thai government and UNHCR, analyses why protection of Burmese refugees in Thailand has failed, and presents a series of recommendations to the parties involved.

Contact: Human Rights Watch, Publications Dept, 350 5th Avenue, 34th Fl, New York, NY 10118, USA. Tel: +1 212 290 4700. Fax: +1 212 736 1300. Email: hrwnyc@hrw.org Or contact HRW offices in London (hrwatchuk@gn.apc.org), Brussels (hrwatcheu@gn.apc.org) or Hong Kong (rmunro@igc.apc.org).

Forging New Identities: Young Refugees and Minority Students Tell their Stories

Minority Rights Group International. 1998. 36pp (wirebound). ISBN 1-897693-07-9. £5.70 incl p&p. Available in English and Dutch.



Forging New Identities is a collection of autobiographical writings from young refugee and minority students living in London and Amsterdam who write about their memories, good and bad, of leaving their home countries and about their new lives. As well as giving first-hand accounts of migration, they explore how their identities are changing in their host countries - whether through culture, language or religion, or through new friends and challenges. *Forging New Identities* includes photographs, notes for teachers, student project worksheets, country and region information, and related resources lists.

Contact: Minority Rights Group, 379 Brixton Road, London SW9 7DE, UK. Tel: +44 (0)171 978 9498. Fax: +44 (0)171 738 6265. Email: minority.rights@mrg.sprint.com

Health on Air

by Gordon Adam & Nicky Harford.
Health Unlimited. 1998. 103pp (wire-bound). ISBN 0-9526159-1-6. £4.99 (plus p&p).



In the least developed countries, there are ten times as many radios as televisions: radio is a powerful force for social change in areas of the greatest health needs. *Health on Air* takes a step-by-step approach to explore ways in which radio programmes can be developed locally, and is presented in an easy-to-read format with illustrations, 'hints and tips' and a variety of examples drawn from the experiences of health education projects and radio stations around the world. These techniques have proven successful with refugee populations such as Afghan refugees, and many of the principles can be adapted to broadcasting on other subjects.

Contact: Jo McKenzie, *Health Unlimited, Prince Consort House, 27-29 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TS, UK. Tel: +44 (0)171 582 5999. Fax: +44 (0)171 582 5900. Email: ae161@dial.pipex.com*

Refugees and Reproductive Health Care: The Next Step

Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium. 85pp (pb). Free.

The RHR Consortium was established in 1995 to address the need for reproductive health services for refugees. This report reflects upon accomplishments and challenges over the past three years, and advocates proactive partnerships between the international, public health and relief communities to improve standards, services and sustainability of refugee reproductive health services. It includes chapters on Afghan refugees in Pakistan; Thailand; Mexico and Guatemala; Palestinians in Lebanon; Rwanda; Somali refugees in Ethiopia;

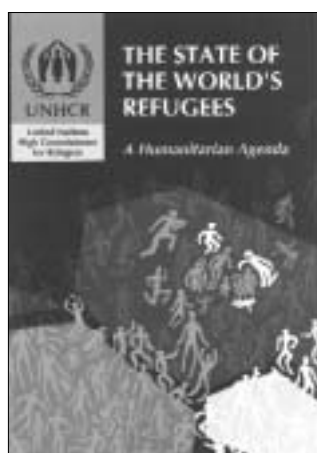
Tibetan refugees in South Asia; Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Sierra Leone; and Former Yugoslavia.

Contact: Samantha Guy, Marie Stopes International, 153-157 Cleveland Street, London W1P 5PG, UK. Tel: +44 (0)171 574 7400. Fax: +44 (0)171 7417. Email: sam.guy@stopes.org.uk

Regular publications

The State of the World's Refugees 1997-98: A Humanitarian Agenda

UNHCR. Oxford University Press. 1997. 298pp (pb). ISBN 0-19-829309-7. Published in English, French, Arabic, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Turkish.



This edition provides a detailed examination of the problem of 'forced displacement', focusing on the different groups of people who are protected and assisted by UNHCR, namely: refugees, returnees, asylum seekers, internally displaced and stateless populations. Each of the main sections includes statistics, maps and case studies from around the world. The book also sets out a wide-ranging agenda for action, suggesting many ways in which the security of these groups might be safeguarded more effectively.

Contact: Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford OX2 6DP, UK. Tel: +44 (0)1865 556767. Fax: +44 (0)1865 556646. Also available via publishers in countries of languages listed above (email cdr@unhcr.ch for details).

International Review of the Red Cross (No 323)

International Committee of the Red Cross. June 1998. 396pp (pb). ISSN 0020-8604. Annual subscription: 30 Swiss francs/US\$18. Single issue: 10 Swiss francs. Published in English, French, Spanish, Arabic and Russian. Published four times a year.

This edition is a special issue on cooperation between National Societies and the ICRC but also includes articles on: 'The ICRC as a humanitarian mediator in the Colombian conflict: possibilities and limits'; 'The impact of humanitarian aid on conflict development'; and 'Security in ICRC field operations'. Articles in the *International Review* are accessible on the ICRC website: <http://www.icrc.org> (English) or <http://www.cicr.org> (French).

Contact: Hans-Peter Gasser, *International Review of the Red Cross, 19 avenue de la Paix, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland. Tel: +41 22 734 6001. Fax: +41 22 733 2057. Email: review.gva@icrc.org*

Conference/workshop publications

The Demography of Forced Migration: Summary of a Workshop

National Research Council Committee on Population. 1998. 29pp (pb). ISBN 0-309-06141-5. Free.

This is the report of a workshop held in November 1997 on 'The Demography of Forced Migration'. Questions covered include: What is known about the demography of forced migrant populations? How are the numbers and vital rates of groups of refugees, IDPs and other forced migrants estimated? How might our knowledge of the demography of forced migrant populations be improved?

Contact: Holly Reed, *Committee on Population, National Research Council, 2101 Constitution Avenue, Washington DC, 20418, USA. Tel: +1 202 334 3167. Fax: +1 202 334 3768. Email: cpop@nas.edu*

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website directory

AlertNet (of the Reuter Foundation)

<http://www.alertnet.org/>

News from Reuters for the international disaster relief community; review of news and trends (includes special reports, conference reports/announcements, and job advertisements); public information announcements and emergency helplines; news from aid agencies; list of AlertNet members with website links.

Center for International and European Law on Immigration and Asylum

<http://www.unikonstanz.de/FuF/ueberfak/fzaa/welcome.html>

Current projects/publications/conference papers; events (conferences/workshops); links to related international organisations, governments, UN agencies, and legal/migration/law journals.

Danish Refugee Council

<http://www.drd.dk/indexeng.htm>

Links to ministries and government agencies, other Danish organisations, international and regional organisations, and research institutions; emergency personnel roster; US Dept of State Country reports on Human Rights Practices and the Inter-Governmental Consultations on Asylum, Refugee and Migration Policies; library (searchable); publications.

European Council on Refugees and Exile (ECRE)

<http://www.ein.org.uk/ecre/>

ECRE's research programmes, documentation service and publications; position papers; policy seminars and networking activities through ELENA (European Legal Network on Asylum).

http://www.refugeenet.org (ECRE Task Force on Integration)

Integration topics (education, employment, vocational training, community organisation, health,

housing); news corner (calendar, publications, press releases, photo gallery); organisations.

Forced Migration Projects (focusing on former Soviet Union)

<http://www.soros.org/fmp2/index.html>

FMP's activities, special reports, resources; *FM Alert* (electronic bulletin of news and updates on people, places and events concerning refugees and displaced persons); *FM Monitor* (bi-monthly publication); *Migration Law Monitor*; links to refugee related sites.

INCORE (Initiative on Conflict Resolution and Ethnicity)

<http://www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/about/index.html>

Research; conflict data service; ethnic conflict research digest; ethnic studies network; news & events; publications & papers.

Index on Africa

<http://www.fellesraadet.africainfo.no/africaindex/index.html>

News on Africa; Africa news update; country pages; subject pages; comments; search index on Africa.

Norwegian Refugee Council

<http://www.nrc.no/engindex.htm>

Global IDP Survey; emergency standby force; publications; library; links to various Norwegian sites, UN organisations and other refugee resources.

REFWORLD

<http://www.unhcr.ch/refworld/welcome.htm>

UNHCR and UN documents; legal information; country information; reference materials; CDR publications (such as *State of the World's Refugees*); maps; links to news sources on Internet. (CD-ROM version contains fuller information on all these areas.)

The War-Torn Societies Project

<http://www.unicc.org/unrisd/wsp/>

Project update; country projects; publications; database; parallel initiatives.

The World Bank Group

<http://www.worldbank.org/html/extdr/regions.html>

Regions and countries; partnerships; development topics; development forum; publications and projects; news and events; data.

UNHCR

<http://www.unhcr.ch/>

Country-specific information about refugee situations (via maps or text); photos of refugee life; NewsWire service; articles; UNHCR publications (including *Refugees* magazine); a 'For Teachers' section; REFWORLD. This site is also available in French, Dutch, Japanese and Korean.

United Nations Human Rights

<http://www.unhchr.ch/html>

Treaties; documents; publications; meetings; press room; statements; databases.

US Committee for Refugees

<http://www.refugees.org>

Country by country database of information on refugees; *World Refugee Survey*; papers and reports; refugee interviews and testimonials; photo gallery; Postcards from the Field (on-site personal looks at refugee situations); press releases; links to related sites.

In subsequent issues, listed websites will relate to the feature section of that particular issue of *Forced Migration Review*. Do contact us with details of websites that you find particularly useful (email: fmr@qeh.ox.ac.uk).

I WISH I HAD A MASK

If I could have a mask, I would want it to be a true one.

I would like my mask to be the shape of the sun.

On cold winter days I would put the mask on my face and I would warm my sister and all the children who are cold.

If I had a mask of sunshine, I would then be above Bosnia where I would heat my people and all the children and my father, and even more.

If my wish were to come true, that I was truly the sun, my mask would allow me to see my father!

*Mirsada Salihović, nine years old
(refugee in Slovenia)*

