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EASTERN AFRICA REGIONAL STUDIES

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REFUGEES IN EASTERN AFRICA
TOWARDS A POLICY FORMULATION

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This is the third regional study in a series and is intended to provide an overview of the refugee situation. Any comments or corrections concerning the approach in general or the document in particular will be gratefully appreciated.

FOREWORD

This paper is less a detailed assessment of the current refugee situation in East Africa and more a setting out of issues which need to be considered in the development of a policy towards refugees.

It is clear that dramatic refugee movements are a catalyst for humanitarian response. We try to help with food, water and other provisions. The paper suggests that in the chronic situation prevailing in Eastern Africa attention also needs to be directed at the somewhat longer term development possibilities for the refugees. Assisted self-settlement is suggested as an ideal approach though there are many problems in achiveing this.

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REFUGEES IN EASTERN AFRICA

1. INTRODUCTION

Refugees are a category of involuntary or forced migrants. In general flight occurs because people estimate that the physical, socio-political and economic costs of resettlement are less than the cost of staying. The extent of suffering varies but, for almost everyone, the process of becoming a refugee involves a transition from relative security and prosperity to uncertainty and poverty.

In comparison with refugees from other continents, most African refugees are fortunate in that they suffer less political discrimination and social disorientation. Almost all are rural people who remain within their ethnic territory although crossing an international boundary. This occurs because many of the colonial boundaries bisected pre-colonial ethnic territories, leaving, on both sides, populations who shared the same ethnic identity, language and way of life. Refugee status means loss of government protection and support but national identities are relatively recent in Africa and the level of national consciousness is comparatively low. Most African countries have allowed rural refugees to resettle and re-establish themselves in the countryside with few restrictions although urban employment and educational opportun-

ities are limited. Most rural refugees have, in fact, spontaneously resettled, i.e., they have incorporated themselves with little governmental assistance or supervision. Incorporation is facilitated by sharing language and ethnic identity with host communities.

Another characteristic of African refugees is that movement occurs in family groups. Depending on the severity of physical disruption of the communities in preflight situations, whole communities, or remanents thereof, move with their leaders and elders. Rural refugees can be treated on a community basis as distinct from urban refugees who, in most instances, require individual processing, counselling and solutions. Consequently, rural refugee situations have frequently produced permanent solutions through settlement schemes whereas for urban refugees subsistence and successive scholarship assistance has proved to be the main vehicle of assistance.

Although the history of rural refugee populations in Africa is not entirely bleak, international attention is rarely focused on their plight. As the refugee problem grows, land scarcities will increase. Refugees, never certain of secure access to land, will depress local wages, further impoverishing the resident population, and continue to remain underdeveloped and undernourished.

2. THE SIZE OF THE PROBLEM

Estimated numbers of officially acknowledged refugees in Africa have risen from 400,000 in 1964 and 700,000 in 1967 to 1.2 million in 1976 and 2.1 million in 1979 and perhaps 3 million in 1980 (See Table 1). Figures from the OAU Secretary-General suggest that 1980 totals may actually be in the 4.5 million range. Such figures, however, reflect political sensibilities -- total refugee populations probably considerably excede 5 million. One to two percent of all Africans are refugees. At present, more than 60 percent of these refugees live outside any organized scheme or settlement. With continued conflict in the Horn of Africa and the liberation struggles in Southern Africa, the in numbers are likely to increase.

3. A REVIEW OF REFUGEE EXPERIENCE IN EAST AFRICA

Table 1 provides official data for 1978-79. Since then numbers have increased dramatically, to over 1.3 million in Somalia for example. The total number of refugees in East AFrica may now be between 2 and 2½ million.

Table 2, details UNHCR expenditure on refugees in Eastern Africa. A comparison of the per capita costs between funds contributed by UNHCR's office for urban, as opposed to rural refugees, indicates a greater cost-

TABLE 1A

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN EASTERN AFRICA

	Rural	Urban	Total
Botswana	18,000	1,000	19,000
Burundi	40,000	10,000	50,000
Djibouti	18,000	2,000	20,000
Ethiopia	10,500	500	11,000
Kenya	3,000	3,000	6,000
Rwanda	7,500	--	7,500
Somalia	500,000	--	500,000
Sudan	85,000	145,000	230,000
Tanzania	165,000	2,000	167,000
Uganda	111,000	1,000	112,000
Zambia	65,000	5,000	70,000
Totals	1,023,000	169,500	1,192,500

Source: UNHCR 1979, pp. 6-7.

TABLE 1B

ESTIMATED NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN EASTERN AFRICA

June, 1980 Estimates

TOTAL AFRICAN REFUGEES (UNHCR figure)			3,400,000
SOMALIA:			
in camp	-	743,000	
outside camp	-	500,000 - 700,000	
TOTAL	-	1,243,000 - 1,443,000	
SUDAN:		440,000	

Source: UNHCR, August, 1980.

TABLE 2

UNHCR ASSISTANCE IN EASTERN AFRICA, 1977

(US $)*

Botswana	429,000	127,600	--	229,000	785,6
Burundi	65,000	79,200	--	31,500	175,7
Djibouti	446,200	14,200	107,200	--	567,6
Ethiopia	332,600	--	--	48,400	381,0
Kenya	100,000	378,800	--	194,000	672,8
Rwanda	--	30,000	--	127,800	157,8
Somalia	--	--	--		--
Sudan	966,000	360,000	1,800	197,200	1,525,0
Tanzania	2,167,500	127,000	--	284,800	2,579,3
Uganda	--	58,000	--	29,800	87,9
Zambia	1,000,000	23,900	282,100	515,800	1,821,8
TOTALS	5,506,300	1,198,800	391,100	1,659,300	8,754,5

* Excluding program support and administriation

effective ratio for rural schemes. There is an urban elite basis in tackling refugee problems for several reasons including:

* media coverage which highlights the flight of educated articulate, urban refugees;
* service and counselling provision which is focused, given the history of refugee problems, on individual cases;
* the lack of capacity, within agencies, to monitor and develop programs for large rural refugee populations;
* the focus, by well intentioned governments, international and voluntary agencies, on providing scholarships and further education for urban elites.

Although the rise in levels of education and aspirations among refugees, the increasing proportion of refugees who wish to define themselves as urban-based and the increasing difficulty of securing access to cultivable land for rural refugees will tend to give impetus to building more urban programs, the effective intervention should remain rurally focused.

3.1 Rural Refugees - Out of Sight...Out of Mind

Problems for rural refugees will increase significantly over the next two decades. The critical issue will be access to land. FAO estimates rapid growth in rural populations for the last quarter of the twentieth century. (Table 3).

Unoccupied land will continue to be very rapidly colonized. Most land tenure systems are shifting towards less communal and more commercial relationships. Land pressure will make procurement of land for refugee settlement increasingly difficult.

TABLE 3

RURAL POPULATION INCREASE 1975-2000

Country	% Increase
Botswana	65
Ethiopia	70
Kenya	109
Sudan	89
Tanzania	107
Zambia	44

If current refugee programs tend to favor urban elites, then, with the rural experinece, there is also a bias towards settlement schemes rather than self-settling refugees. These include:

* Project bias - the literature on settlement schemes, especially refugee settlement schemes, is disproportionate to their importance. In contrast, evaluation of self-settling refugee experience is almost non-existent.

* Remoteness - self-settling refugees are often in remote areas, inaccessible to those based in capital cities.

* Political impotence - self-settling refugees are usually politically impotent. Remote, unorganized, deprived or their more educated members, they rarely establish contact with agencies on their own initiative. They cannot bang on office doors, speak to reporters or obtain media coverage. Dying in Rural Africa is less dramatic than drowning in the South China Sea.

* Low profile - self-settling refugees particularly in border areas, maintain low profiles fearing harassment and repatriation. Moreover, like many poor people, they are unseen because they inhabit remote, less fertile, more marginal agricultural production zones.

* Inaccurate assessments - refugees, dependent on agriculture, are especially vulnerable to seasonal deprivation particularly during the rains and before harvest. At these times, food is short and expensive sive; labor budgets are strained; morbidity especially diarrhoea, malaria, Guinea worm disease and skin infections, tends to peak and malnutrition is most marked. Yet this is precisely the time at which urban based officials are less likely to travel. In the drier, better conditions assessments are made; in the wetter, poorer conditions, refugees are unobserved.

These biases produce two serious myths about rural refugee solutions. The first myth is that many rural refugees are spontaneously integrated into host communities. Self-settling refugees cross borders and settle with ethnic kin. They are given land to cultivate and quickly re-establish themselves. They are better off than those refugees who are herded into camps. The case

of 500,000 Angolans in Bas Zaire shows how dangerous this myth can be. Refugee populations are not homogeneous. The refugee experience in Africa shows instant impoverishment and mixed reception. Self-settling populations are politically and legally vulnerable, have poor access to land, depress local wages and increase local food prices and, generally, are an additional cost to poor hosts. Refugees, especially self-settlers, are the first to suffer and the last to gain.

A second myth, equally dangerous, is that refugee camps should not be encouraged because they are total institutions which erode self-respect, increase dependency and maintain conditions of poverty. But refugee settlement successes of the early 1970's such as Etsha, Botswana, and Katumba and Ulyankulu, in Tanzania, were in no sonse total institutions most significantly because families were given a high degree of autonomy on land from which they could provision themselves.

In reviewing the settlement process, three action areas can be identified.

(1) ORGANIZED SETTLEMENTS: if adequate land can be found, this may be the best option.

(2) UNASSISTED SELF-SETTLEMENT: a harsh alternative, especially for poorer refugees. Migrant laboring opportunities, for example, may provide adequate livelihood as practiced in Kassala, Sudan.

(3) ASSISTED SELF-SETTLEMENTS: this option may well emerge as the best combination of the desirable and feasible.

4. PROGRAMMATIC AND PROJECT PRINCIPLES FOR REFUGEE SITUATIONS

In designing refugee schemes, several programatic purposes should be considered. Firstly, refugees should be encouraged to achieve self-support. In most situations, the cost, in purely financial terms, of bringing refugees to self-support over a 3-5 year period is no greater than sustaining them in a fully dependent situation. Secondly, this time frame, 3-5 years, should be the time frame of commitment for external agencies, all other things being equal. Finally, the completion of a successful, integrated scheme is a suitable launching point for a development project.

To consider the project planning implications of refugee problems, it is necessary to outline:

(a) factors determining immediate response;

(b) design of integrated settlement; and

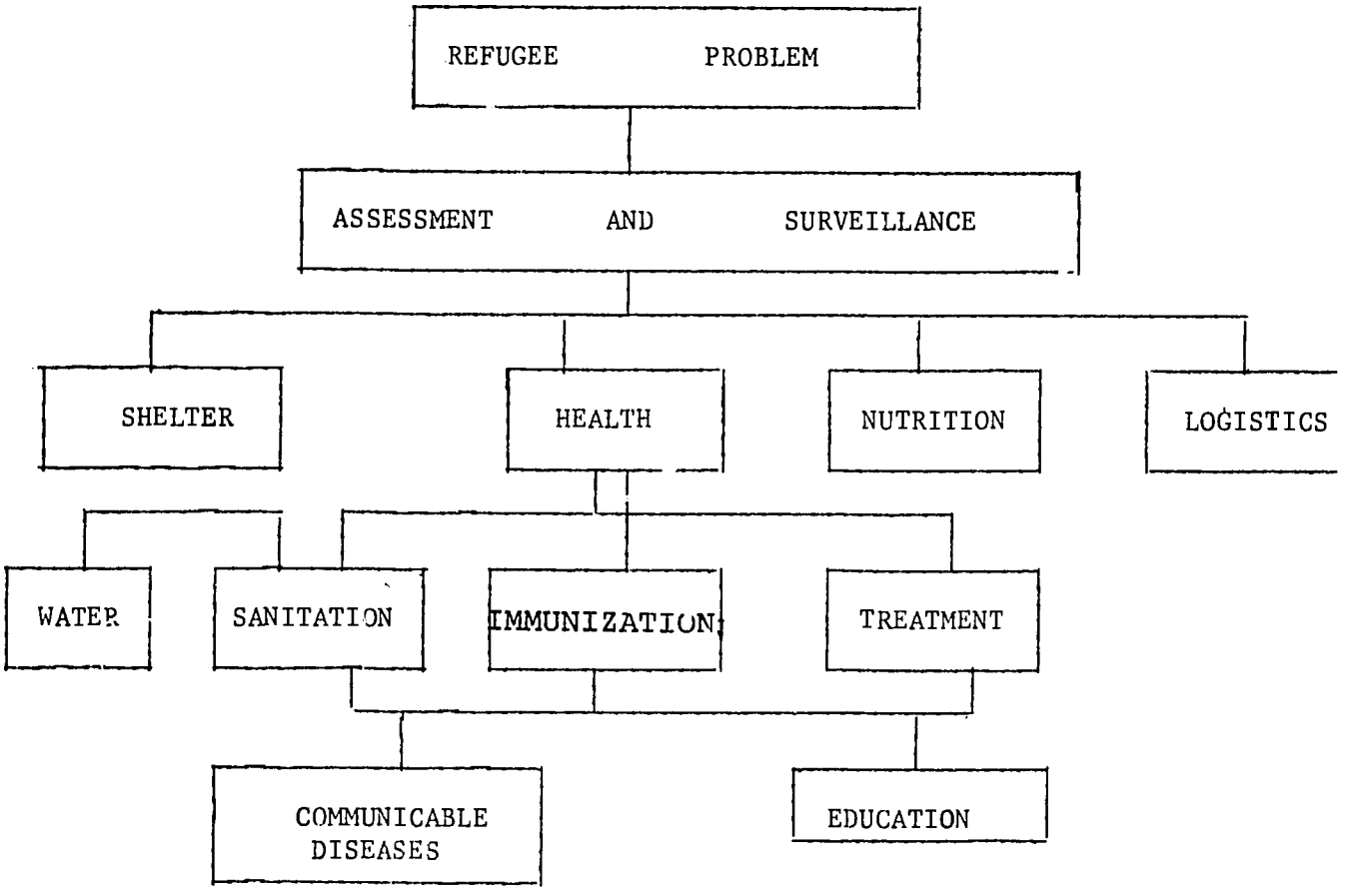
(c) pre-requisites for successful implementation.

4.1 Factors Determining Immediate Response

Figure I shows a schematic of considerations that require immediate attention in refugee situations. Immediate attention should be given to basic health and nutritional problems. Depending upon the incidence, duration and seriousness of the problem, community concern and the possibilities of intervention, a priority ranking of problems should be made. In certain cases, high techno-

FIGURE 1

FACTORS DETERMINING IMMEDIATE RESPONSE



logy should be employed particularly when epidemic conditions prevail.

Feeding programs should be rapidly designed. Camp feeding programs have 3 major thrusts namely:

(i) Selective feeding of vulnerable groups especially young children and pregnant and lactating mothers;

(ii) Therapeutic feeding of severely malnourished; and

(iii) General feeding of the population.

Individual calorific needs should be totalled and converted into weekly camp needs. From this, logistical efforts, i.e., transport and storage requirements, should be calculated.

A well balanced 'food basket' has been evolved by the World Food Program, which provides approximately 2,200 calories a day with basic rations as follows:

... cereal	400 gm. per day
... oil	30 gm. per day
... milk	15 gm. per day
... beans or dried fish	40 gm. per day

A quick glance indicates that refugees consume approximately 0.5 kg. per person per day. This represents a transport and storage need of 5 tonnes per 10,000 refugees, there will be a delivery of one 10 ton truck load of food every day. Should the average round trip, from

port to settlement, be 4 days, at least five 10 ton trucks will be needed to keep 20,000 refugees supplied with daily rations. Logistical considerations require careful attention.

Shelter design is an important issue. Besides providing protection and privacy, the type and spatial arrangement of shelter affects the social life of the camp. Community shelters should be avoided. It is usually argued that the reason Somali refugees suffered relatively few epidemics is that they kept their own individual family tukuls rather than inhabiting mass communal shelters.

Water needs for a population should be assessed including the effect of dry season availability. Clean water sources should be sought rather than establishment of a treatment project for contaminated water; great care must be taken that human and animal excreta does not enter the water. Total water needs may be assessed by allowing 15 litres per capita per day. Sanitation problems are easily accommodated with selective siting of pit latrines. Account needs to be taken of community practices so that camp technology does not offend taboos.

Given the high probability of epidemic diseases, immunization programs should have high priority. With a concentrated population, it is easy to obtain good coverage and establish an effective cold chain. Measle vaccine, BCG, combined diptheria, whooping cough, tetanus and polio are the primary vaccines. Typhoid and cholera vaccines

are frequently needed - cholera, for example, decimated the camp population of Wollo, Ethiopia.

The major health problems are these associated with poverty. Respiratory diseases, gastro-enteritis and dehydration, worms, malaria, accidents and burns, skin diseases, anaemia and conjunctivitis are prevalent. Table 5 contains a list of recommended drugs for simple curative and preventive measures. Because refugees face new conditions, and often a totally new environment, educational programs are needed to ensure rapid, and successful, adaptation. Besides ensuring a clean water supply, adequate sanitation, immunization and treatment of communicable diseases, efforts should be made to eradicate specific communicable diseases. For example, case finding and treatment of TB should have high priority especially among groups, such as nomads, who exhibit high prevalence.

4.2 Design of Integrated Settlements

The major objectives of settlements design is:

... to maximize utility with minimal means;

... to maximize material utilization with minimal effect on the environment;

... to maximize amenity to the users with minimal means.

It is necessary to stress these major objectives for there is no universal solution to the problem of

TABLE 4

LIST OF RECOMMENDED DRUGS

1.	For general use	acetyl salicylic acid 300 mg. tabs. one strong pain-killer (e.g. Pethidine HCI 50 mg. amps). cough mixture (Mist. Expect. sed.) dyspepsia mixture (Magnesium Trisilicate powder) anti-convulsant (e.g Phenobarbtone 30 mg. tabs. sterile diluent water for injections
2.	Anti-infective	
a.	Anthelminthic	piperazine adipate 300 mg. tablets tetrachlorethylene capsules
b.	Antibacterial	oral penicillin (Penicillin V 250 mg. tabs.) injectable penicillin benzyl penicillin G 1 x 10 I.U. amps) tetracycline 250 mg. tabs.
c.	Antiprotozoal	chloroquine oral (150 mg. base tabs) chloroquine injectable (40 mg base/ml amps)
d.	Antituberculosis	inclusion and selection will depend upon national programmes
e.	Antileprosy	(Other drugs will depend upon local prevalence of disease e.g. Schistosomiasis, filariasis etc.)
3.	Nutritional	iron (ferrous sulphate 200 mg. tabs) folic acid 5 mg. tabs vitamin A 50.000 i.u. vitamin B cpd tablet, strong B.P.C.
4.	Dermatological	antispetic e.g. gentian violet antifungal e.g. Whitfields oinntment antiscabies e.g. benzyl benzoate
5.	Eye preparations	tetracycline eye ointment 1% 5gm
6.	Anti-diarrhela	oral rehydration mixture i.v. fluids
7.	Oxytocics	ergometrine maleate 0.5 mg/1 ml amps
8.	For minor trauma	gauze bandages suturing material
9.	For laboratory	basic chemical stains etc.

designing refugee settlement. Neither using imported systems and materials nor emulating indigenous building traditions will solve the issue.

Major resources for the design and provision of refugee settlement are listed in Table 6. Many relationships are self explanatory. For instance, it is obvious that in the construction of shelters, the use of material foreign to the area should be minimized whereas the use of materials, renewable energy and labor indigenous to the area should be maximized. In order to avoid solutions which create unforeseen problems because of inherent incompatibility between refugee settlement construction and existing socio-economic patterns, it is necessary to:

(i) ensure settlement stability by designing structures familiar to the region;

(ii) design structures to facilitate refugee organization;

(iii) erect structures in such a way as to involve the refugee population;

(iv) ensure structure construction is compatable with local socio-economic environment e.g., by favoring labor intensive solutions; and

(v) utilize indigenous building materials, especially in emergencies to minimize transport, restrict capital outflow and achieve similarity to local building types.

TABLE 5

USE OF RESOURCES

	Foreign Resources Indigenous	
maximum	minimum Degrees of use minimum	maximum
	Socio-cultural resources	
	x.....Political	x
	x..... Social customs	x
	x.....Value system	x
	x..... Labor-skills	x
	Educational system	x
	Socio-economic resources	
	x..... ..... Capital x	
	x..... Labor, employment	x
x	Scientific and technical concepts	x
x	Administrative, managerial concepts	x
	Physical resources	
	x .....Materials	x
x	Materials improvement	x
	x..... Renewable energy	x
	x..... Nonrenewable energy x	
	NA..... Land x	

4.3 Pre-requisites for Successful Implementation

It is essential that a refugee community integrate as rapidly as possible into the local environment. Such integration means that, without becoming a privileged group, refugee populations should be encouraged to establish a self-supporting food production system, generate some cash income so that they can contribute to the costs of services as well as sustain their basic personal requirements. In order to achieve such a program, several vital elements must be taken into account.

(i) An adequate knowledge by the planners and administrators of the potential of the local area and the probable relationship between the area and the refugee population.

(ii) A sound program of increasing food production to provide after subsistence needs are met cash for clothing, household goods, etc., and which will allow host government to levy taxes on the settled population.

(iii) Effective integration into the commercial structure of the community through co-operatives for production and marketing.

(iv) Formation of a leadership group in the refugee community through which the community becomes a third partner in a bilateral program, if it is UNCHR - government project, or the fourth partner if the project is being operated by an executive agency under a tripartite agreement. If a settlement is to be integrated and self-reliant, then, after the first phase when outside guidance and decision-making is necessary and acceptable refugees must participate in development. Involvement of refugees

does not influence the ultimate decision as to whether refugees return to their former country but it does guarantee the success of the project.

In summary, it is necessary to realize that, although refugee situations are not development projects, it is posisble to build towards a genuine development opportunity. However, the degree of planning, sophisticated evaluation and target establishment associated with development projects are inappropriate considerations where the most important commodity is time.

5. CONCLUSION

Several points emerge from this discussion paper which could be used as guidelines for policy formulation.

* Because refugee situations are generated by political conflict political and diplomatic factors have an important bearing. Host governments may not wish to prejudice relations with neighboring countries by accepting bilateral aid which is ideologically 'suspect'. Even if support is established through the United Nations network, UNHCR staff may be so inhibited, through fear of damaging their relationship with the host country, that they do not mount an effective operation. Serious consideration should be given to strengthening NGO (non-governmental organization) capability such as Oxfam-America, to establish rapid relief operations.

* If refugees of rural origin -- the majority of refugees -- are not to become urban attention must be focused on settlement. As adequate land for organized settlement becomes increasingly scarce, attention should be focused on assisted self-

settlement. Such attention implies a more staff-intensive and a more developmental approach than in the past. Assisting the establishment of poor refugees among an existing rural population requires, not only funds but a perceptive and imaginative staff. The lack of suitable staff, rather than a lack of finance, will be the greatest problem for assisted self-settlement.

* For successful settlement, needs and purpose of the program must be defined by the refugees themselves as soon as possible. Although some of the refugee decisions will not please aid administrators, they must accept that successful programs which will run between 3-5 years before self-reliance is achieved, can only be based on refugee participation.

* In design of settlement, aid emphasis should not be the importation of synthetic, foreign materials but rather, preference should be given to the provision of administrative and managerial know-how (e.g., mass production, task scheduling, land management, etc.). Technical staff who can diffuse knowledge about materials improvement, production, materials utilization and joining are especially valuable.

* The provision of direct material aid should be be strictly reviewed.

  ... food provisions should be within a range of acceptable products. (for greater detail see - PAG, Guide to Food and Health Relief Operations in Disaster. New York, 1977).

  ... drug provision should focus on the supply of generic compounds (for greater detail see Figure 5).

  ... most importantly, logistical support should be included in any aid package especially motorized transport.

If attention is focused upon these issues, steps towards a solution, however faltering, will have been taken.

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