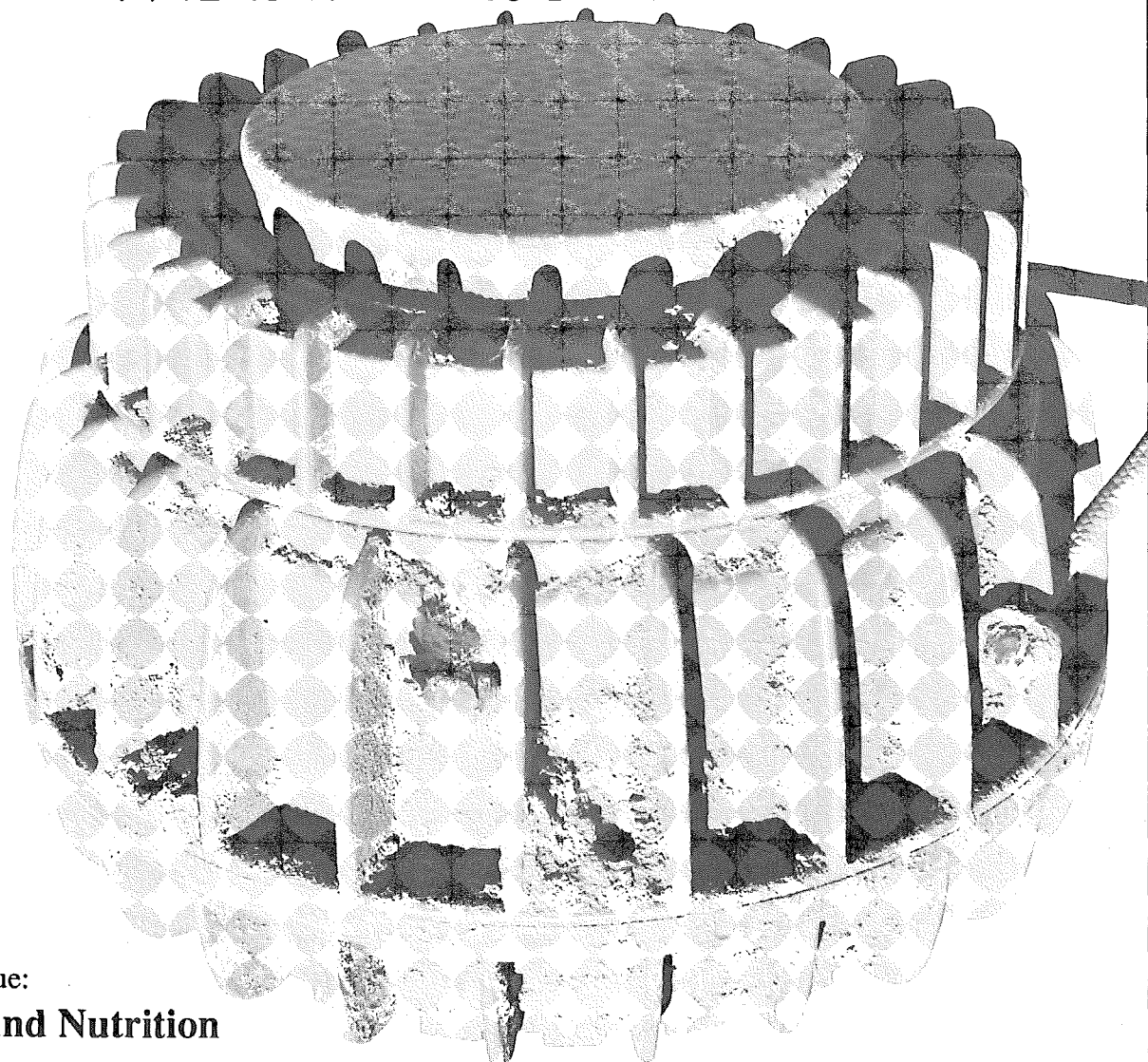


RPN REFUGEE PARTICIPATION NETWORK 9

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MINE WARFARE: AN AID ISSUE



Also in this issue:

- * Health and Nutrition
- * Psychotherapy for Tortured Refugees
- * Dealing with Dying
- * Refugee Law in Zambia
- * Well being and Cultural Maintenance
- * Reviews and Update

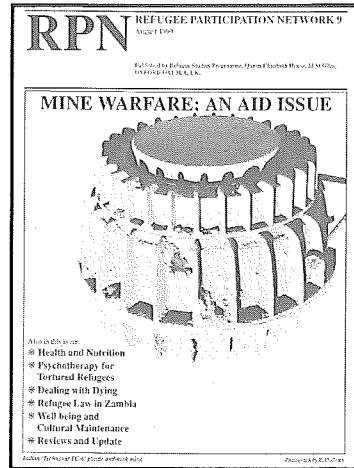
Italian 'Technovar TC-6' plastic anti-tank mine.

Photograph by R. McGrath

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THE REFUGEE PARTICIPATION NETWORK (RPN), published quarterly by The Refugee Studies Programme, aims to provide a forum for the regular exchange of practical experience, information and ideas between people who work with refugees, researchers and refugees themselves. The RPN is currently mailed, free of charge, to approximately 1300 members in 75 different countries around the world. If you are not already on the mailing list and would like to become a member of the RPN, please fill in the application form found on page 35 of this issue and return it to the address given below.

The Guest Editor for this issue of RPN is **Alex de Waal** assisted by **JoAnn McGregor**. The layout, design and printing is by **OXFAM**.

As the success of any network depends on the participation of its members, short articles and other information which will be of value to the wider community involved in refugee work are always needed. Contributions to the RPN - articles, letters, poetry, responses, comments, information - are all very welcome. Please send us feedback on past issues and suggestions for future RPN's. Write to:

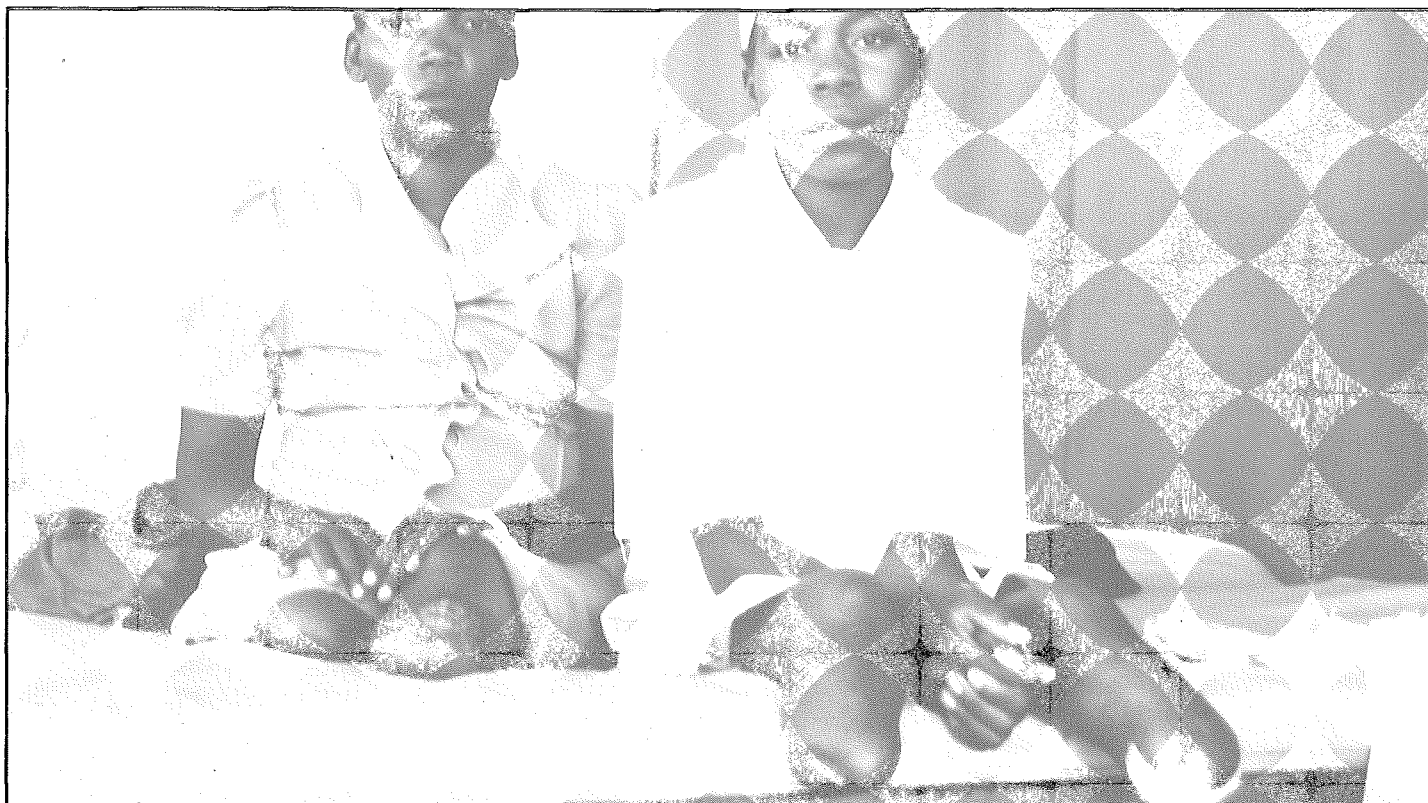
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LAND MINES

Land mines are commonly used both by government armies in their counter-insurgency campaigns, and by rebel armies in their resistance and sabotage. The removal of land mines, or failing that, peaceful coexistence with limited minefields, are issues needing to be tackled by refugee repatriation programmes in different parts of the world. Unfortunately, these problems are too often ignored, on account of expense, intractability, or sensitivity.

In this issue of *RPN*, we take a broad look at the problems caused by land mines, at programmes for their removal, and at the international legal conventions which - in theory - surround their use. There is no single prescription for removing land mines, or for convincing international agencies to do so. However, we do hope to show what can be achieved by de-mining programmes, so that refugees and their helpers are aware of what they should lobby for. By raising these issues, we also hope to facilitate progress towards an international consensus that the removal of these devices is a necessary part of post-conflict repatriation and reconstruction.



Victims of Land Mines in Angola

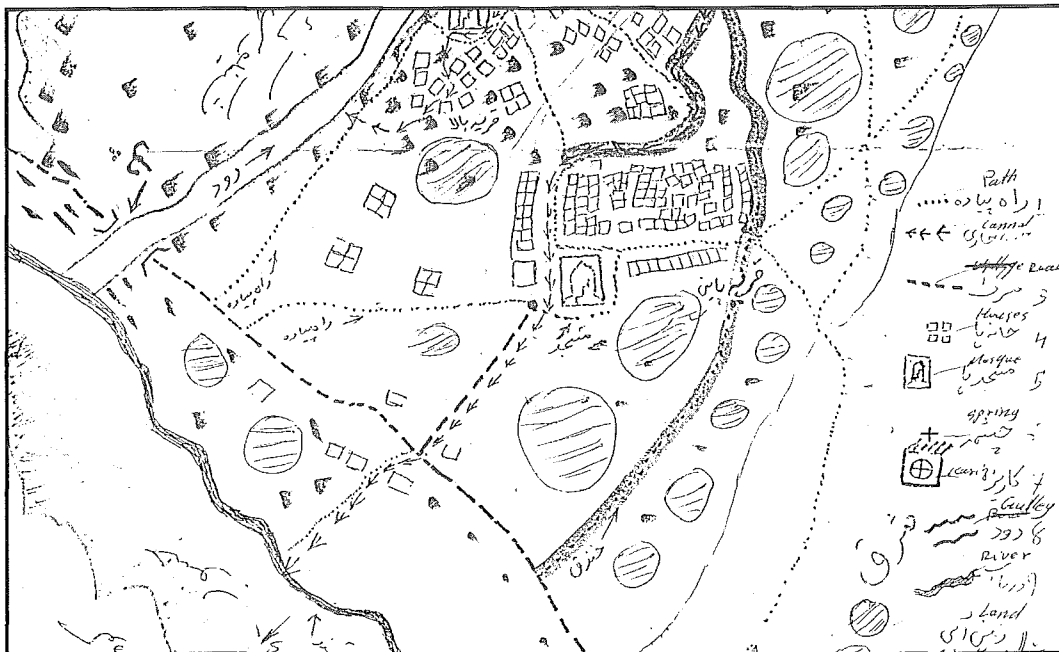
MINE WARFARE - AN AID ISSUE

Introduction

In February 1989, when the final contingents of the Soviet army withdrew from Afghanistan one Russian field commander is reported to have told an Afghan: 'We may be going home but our mines will kill your grandchildren'. This was no idle boast, rather a

prophetic statement, and over a year later the fatalities and maimings caused by land-mines continue unabated. De-mining teams have had little impact on this huge problem and, as the *jihad* gives way to a divisive civil and tribal conflict, successive seasons of snow, rain and baking sun make the detection and removal of mines more difficult.

The lingering nature of the Afghan conflict is an all too familiar scenario and one likely to be repeated in



Section of a Community Produced map showing mined terrain in the Shinkorok area of Kunar

other parts of the world in the coming decades. But one aspect in which the Afghan situation differs from others is the involvement of Relief Agencies in mines-related programmes - this ranges from mine-awareness instruction for refugees to physical mine eradication in Afghanistan to enable their safe return. Almost inevitably this involvement became, and continues to be, a fractious issue, both on moral and technical grounds.

While politicians can negotiate ceasefires and even arrange for mass weapons amnesties, they can do nothing to stop the continued slaughter wrought by mines. Land mines are weapons that recognise no armistice, are indiscriminate in operation and are cheap and durable. They may well kill or maim the grandchildren of the soldiers who laid them. *Jane's Military logistics Manual* lists 76 pages of different types of mines in use by the major armed forces of the world, and the list is by no means comprehensive. As scientists invent new high technology devices, the old, equally lethal, models are unloaded onto the surplus arms market or supplied as military assistance to groups like the Afghan Mujahideen. In Afghanistan, and elsewhere, mines are an aid issue that cannot be ignored.

There are strong arguments against humanitarian agencies becoming operational in such fields as land-mine eradication. However, the presence of mines may present an obstacle to effective relief, rehabilitation and repatriation programmes and threatens the lives and livelihoods of the civilian population on a scale comparable to famine or flood. If, as in the case of Afghanistan, military teams are unable to perform the task,

there would seem to be no humanitarian alternative. In the Afghan situation, UN 'blue beret' teams or similar uniformed groups are not an option. While relief efforts move ahead, the war between Najibullah's forces and the Mujahideen continues and such a force would, at worst, be the target for both armed and political assault. Even in the best scenario, it would only serve to confuse an already complex situation.

The purpose of this article is, therefore, not to question the rights and wrongs of UN and NGO involvement in mine eradication, but to examine the Afghan situation from a

technical standpoint and attempt to extract relevant lessons which may prove of use to agencies involved in similar circumstances elsewhere in the world.

Initial criteria

The primary rules which would dictate a *humanitarian* operation against mines are as follows:

- * Where a post-hostility threat to the civilian community exists.
- * Where vital aid and critical community support programmes are seriously obstructed or made impossible due to the presence of mines.
- * Where no effective clearance operation is planned by the established authorities.

The latter rule is the key issue in most countries. Any effective programme, except on an extremely localised basis, requires a high level of funding and logistical support. In most foreseeable scenarios, some degree of support and co-operation from government level is a necessity for a successful clearance programme.

Operational considerations

The United Nations de-mining efforts in Afghanistan met an unexpected delaying factor. This was the lack of relevant technical knowledge among military advisors. Military mine removal training is based on the military need to *breach* minefields (i.e. to clear a path wide enough for advance or retreat) and not the humanitarian necessity of totally eradicating mines. It was only after considerable pressure, predominantly

from non-military people with an intimate knowledge of the field situation, that planning and training was adapted to meet real needs.

The key factor in any such programme is that mines are destroyed in situ by explosives or mechanized means.

Some situations, such as the close proximity of houses, dictate that live mines are removed and then destroyed elsewhere. This calls for the deployment of highly trained specialists. It is not desirable to train large numbers of local personnel to this level of expertise for two reasons:

1. Training costs would be unacceptably high, and more importantly,
2. The temptation for such experts to retain mines for sale or use in local conflicts (a major problem in Afghanistan) presents a considerable risk and defeats the object of the operation.

Any mine eradication programme will be high-cost. Use of cheap and unreliable equipment, inadequate training methods or inappropriately qualified specialists will inevitably cost lives and result in an undependable and, therefore, irresponsible programme.

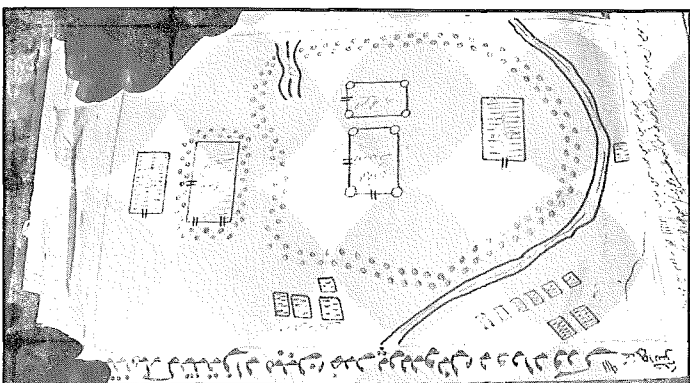
Technical Considerations

Good initial planning and logical operational progression are the keys to success in mine eradication. The following points provide a working basis for eradication operations.

1. Operational Aims

To eradicate mines from a given area and *re-establish community confidence in the land.*

The latter aim is of key importance - if the community *believes* an area of ground is mined, it must be shown to be clear before it can be brought back into use. This is an essential part of de-mining operations particularly in rural agricultural communities.



Captured military mine maps Paktika, Afghanistan

Photograph by P. Brise

2. Information collation

- a) Identification of target areas.
- b) Identification of mines by type.

The communities in target areas are the most valuable source of primary intelligence. Well devised community surveys should be begun as soon as possible to obtain this information before its value deteriorates with the passage of time. A Community Mapping Project mounted by the UN-funded Mines Clearance Planning Agency (MCPA) has provided good initial results and has the added advantage of identifying people with relevant knowledge in participating communities. Where available, military data should be obtained. Of particular value is information relating to the spatial patterning of mines in specific areas. Minefield maps are obviously useful, although it should not be forgotten that false maps may have been produced to confuse an enemy force. Military data will usually provide the best primary source of information concerning the types of mines sown and, through UN and other high-level channels, it may be possible to access intelligence from government and embassy sources, given a general acceptance of the humanitarian nature of the task.

As soon as practicable, specialist teams should be deployed to survey selected areas in detail to identify and confirm the kinds of devices likely to be encountered by de-mining teams. They should make initial recommendations concerning equipment, personnel and training requirements.

Where mine dissemination is widespread, surveys should be an on-going process on two levels:

- (I) Specialist technical surveys immediately prior to eradication operations in each area.
- (II) Widespread community surveys to assist long term operational planning.

3. Specialist staff

Where the political or security situation does not allow for intervention by a UN blue-beret team (as employed, for instance, in Namibia) it is unlikely that any form of direct military assistance would be available. This should not, however, tempt NGOs to undertake a 'do-it-yourself' operation, since this would be foolhardy, dangerous and ultimately unsuccessful. Civilian specialists of a high technical calibre do exist and can be retained, normally on a consultancy basis, through reputable companies. Naturally such work demands a high premium and potential employers should be suspicious of operatives who offer their services at low rates. While retaining staff through a consultancy entails an additional expense, it is unlikely that an individual could obtain adequate insurance for such work to indemnify the employing agency against accidents.

4. Training

Probably the most telling lesson learned as a result of the Afghanistan programme is that training of indigenous de-mining staff must concentrate on quality rather than quantity. Of the 10,000 plus Afghans trained by UN military teams in Pakistan, fewer than 5% have shown any inclination to put their training into practice in Afghanistan.

Courses must be tailored to the local situation and the intellectual ability of the trainees, and be conducted in as realistic an environment as is feasible. They should concentrate on the search for, and destruction of mines. Trainees must be exposed, at an early stage of training, to live detonations and perform supervised live search and eradication tasks before the completion of their course. Team leaders can be provisionally identified at this stage and recalled for advanced training after a period of satisfactory deployment in the field.

One possibility to be considered is mobile training teams which provide instruction to selected trainees at community level. Equipment can then be provided on loan for clearance of designated areas of the locality. This method has much to recommend it where mines are plentiful. It has proved successful in a pilot programme implemented in Paktia Province of Afghanistan during 1989/90. However, such projects should be closely monitored and specialist staff should be on call to provide technical advice and support. Care should also be taken to allocate tasks within the technical capability of the teams.

5. Equipment

De-mining equipment should be of the highest standard. It should be noted that, as with most tools, detection gear is only effective and safe in the hands of adequately trained operatives.

The range and type of equipment will depend upon the task to be undertaken and should be determined by specialist staff with the necessary technical knowledge. An early attempt by a non-specialist to procure equipment for the UN Afghan programme led to the embarrassing and potentially dangerous purchase of hundreds of toy 'treasure' detectors. These were cheap (less than \$20 each) and totally useless. By comparison, a good mine detector, providing both audio and visual indication and a suitable level of sensitivity, would be unlikely to cost less than \$900 per copy even when purchased in quantity.

The increasing production and deployment of 'non-detectable' plastic mines (such as the Italian manufactured TC-6 supplied to the Mujahideen and laid in great numbers throughout Afghanistan) calls for additional detection techniques, usually

the use of specially trained dogs. These animals are expensive to train, the costs normally involve an integral breeding programme, and require purpose-trained handlers. Where such 'non-detectable' mines have been heavily disseminated, this may be the only course of effective action in areas where mechanised clearance is not an option.

Undoubtedly the most effective technique for clearing high densities of mines, including plastic devices, is to employ purpose-manufactured vehicles which disrupt or detonate mines by impact. The UN implementation agency has recently imported two Aardvark Flail Units for use in Afghanistan. The limiting factor of such an approach is the high initial cost of such machinery (an Aardvark Flail Unit costs approximately \$255 000), however, in a situation as serious as Afghanistan, speed and safety of operation outweigh the high price of the investment.

It should be emphasised that Flails do not provide a total solution. Although they expedite clearance considerably in suitable areas, manual teams and possibly dogs are still a requirement.

6. Monitoring and Support

Until a sufficient level of technical proficiency has been acquired, indigenous teams should be accompanied, or closely supported, by a fully qualified specialist. It is unlikely that this level of expertise would be reached within six months and a year is probably a realistic period in most circumstances. Some level of technical support should remain available, even to experienced teams, throughout the programme.

Intensive monitoring of clearance operations is essential and must concentrate on the following key issues:

- * Destruction of all mines
- * Good record keeping and mapping of cleared areas
- * Correct safety procedures
- * Use of effective eradication techniques
- * Security of explosive stores and equipment

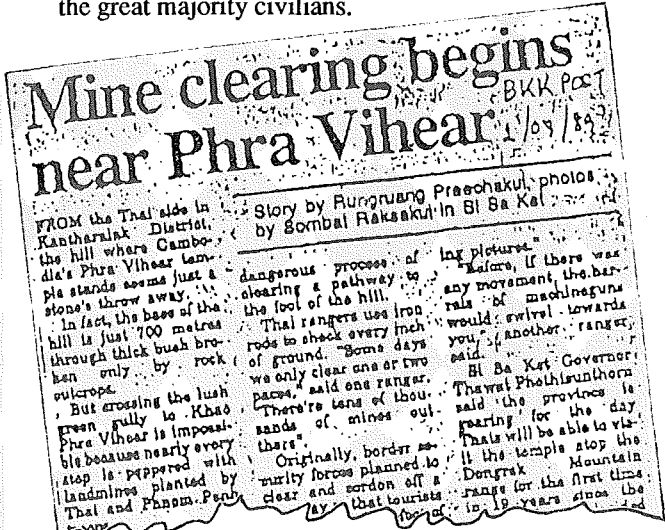
Monitoring teams should consist of personnel qualified to physically check areas claimed to be clear and should, as such, be fully equipped as a clearance team. Survey teams conducting technical surveys and marking operations prior to clearance should also be subject to monitoring, since their task helps the eventual effectiveness of the overall operation.

Rae McGrath

Mines Advisory Group, Peshawar

MINE AWARENESS AMONG CAMBODIAN REFUGEES

Cambodia shares with Afghanistan the unwelcome distinction of being one of the most land mine-infested countries in Asia. The mines, sown mostly by the three resistance groups, are estimated to have maimed and killed more than 10,000 people - the great majority civilians.



The United Nations Border Relief Operation (UNBRO) has recently become concerned with land mines, in the context of the imminent repatriation of refugees in Thailand. In a message to all displaced Khmer civilians, UNBRO spoke of its desire "that all of you will soon be able to return to your country to resume a normal life." But, UNBRO went on, "Thousands and thousands of land mines have been laid in numerous locations and can explode at any time. You cannot see them, they are hidden in the fields and forests and under the soil."

The reality is in fact even worse, because Cambodia's military technicians are constantly inventing new types of booby-trap. A recent creation is a small mine called a "hing" (frog in Khmer) which looks like a frog and floats on the water of rice paddies. Cambodia also has a problem with unexploded bombs, many of them dropped by the US

Airforce in the early 1970s. Many of these mines and munitions will stay for years and years after peace has returned, exploding unexpectedly to kill or maim people who may not even have been born when the mine was laid.

UNBRO's response to the threat posed by land mines has been to launch a "mine awareness programme". The programme does not remove mines, or teach civilians to remove mines, or assist them in doing so. Rather, it teaches them to identify and avoid mines, and is linked to training in first aid and emergency care for victims of mines, and programmes for rehabilitation of these victims.

UNBRO summarises the "mine awareness" aspect of the programme thus:

Teams of experts will train Cambodian refugees to recognise and mark mine fields, mines and other ordnance, and ways and means to ensure safe self-extraction from mined and booby-trapped areas. Students will be provided with a kit of mine-awareness materials, including silk screens, bags and handkerchiefs designed to promote awareness of the dangers posed by mines and ordnance. The programme will give attention to reaching women and children through schools, clinics, and community centres.

Staff on the programme have been sent to Pakistan to learn from the Afgans' experience. A comparison with the Afgan programme, however, reveals some shortcomings. The Cambodia programme does not actually remove land mines, and so only addresses the symptoms of the problem, and not its root causes. It does not take away the fear and suspicion that people have of areas which they believe to be mined, and which are therefore useless, whether mines are actually present or not. It is questionable how much people need "mine awareness", as they all know friends and relatives who have been the victims of mines. However, the programme should demonstrate how with only small inputs, people can be helped to live - albeit to a limited extent - with landmines.



With thanks to Liz Bernstein

COALITION FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION: CAMBODIA

THE NEXT MEETING SHOULD BE IN KHAO I DANG HOSPITAL

Far from Jakarta. Far from Paris. Near Svay Jake, Thma Pouk and the other battlefields. Rather than in a luxury hotel, the Cambodian leaders should meet in the surgery ward of this refugee camp in Thailand. Where a man with a patch over one eye and a stump where his right arm used to be leads a man with patches over both eyes. Where an orderly, a "bed attendant", says he has been changing beds for ten years, helping people hobble to the bathroom, feed themselves, adjust to their newly-mutilated bodies. "The big guys are meeting to talk, in a far away country, while the little people are still fighting here ... eleven years ... they've talked before, but each time they just go on fighting. These beds are still filled. We ran out of space ... we had to put some next door in the leprosy clinic. Mines. Shells. Grenades. Missing legs. Missing arms. Missing eyes."

Sarun is 16, a student in Site 2. Someone threw a grenade in the room where he was watching a video. He doesn't know why. He keeps touching the scar on his stomach, staring at it while we talk. "My arms are getting stronger now. I can wheel myself around faster. But I want to go back to school. Can I go in this chair?"

Choem is from a village 8 kilometres from Thma Pouk, in the recently resistance-controlled area. Her husband was harvesting rice and stepped on a land mine. She wanted to take him to the new hospital controlled by the "para" (resistance troops) in Thma Pouk, but the government troops are advancing trying to retake this area. "They have new beds and everything there, but they told me it was just too dangerous to go there. We've been here two months already. I just want to go back. My children are there. My home. But they say he's not well enough yet. Can you go back from Site 2?"

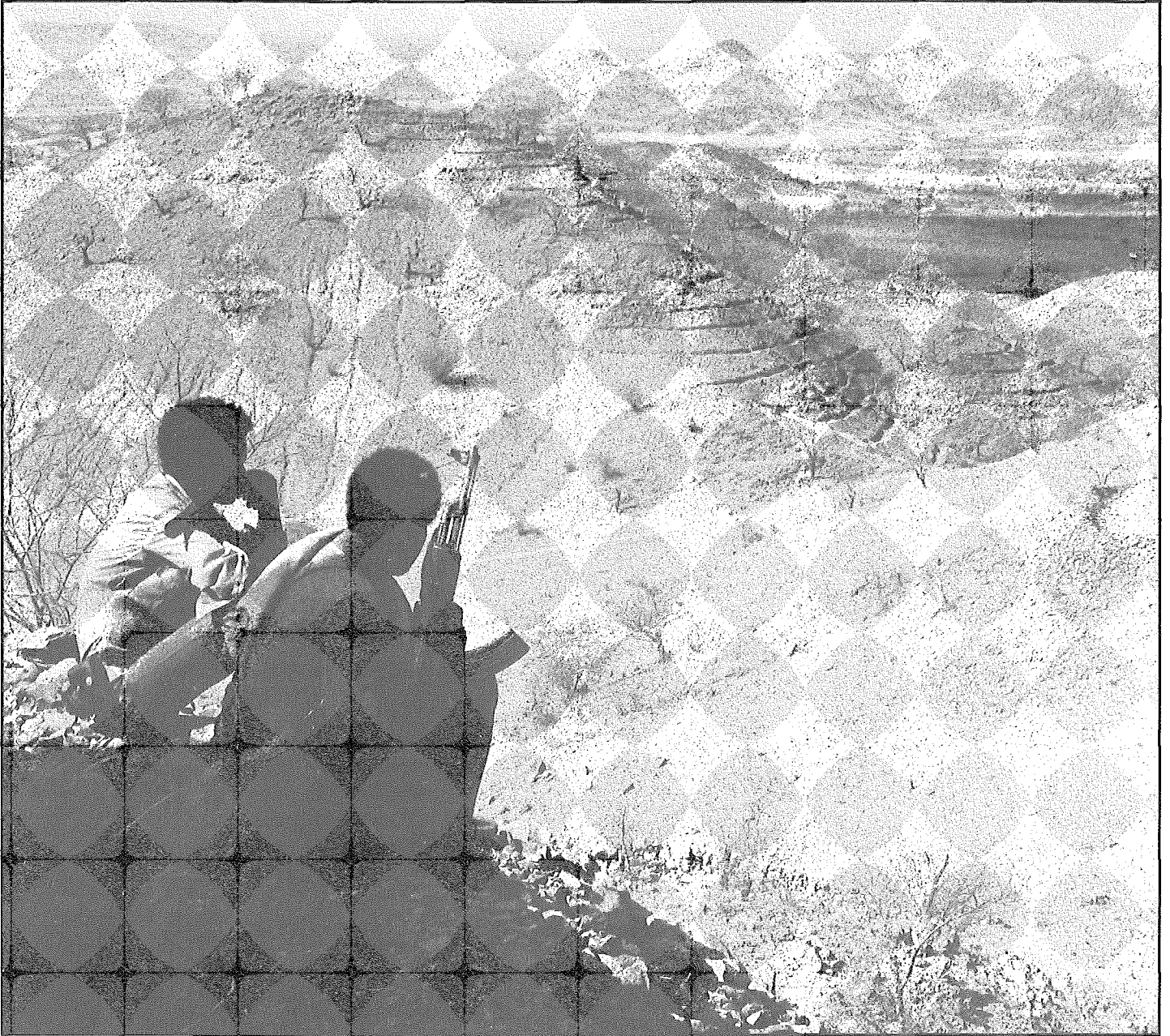
Chum is a "para", a resistance soldier with the KPNLF. He's 20, and been a soldier for 2 1/2 years. He stepped on a mine and had his right leg blown away. "Cha-et howie" he murmurs, "Fed up. Had enough." "Cha-et howie," Sarun and Choeum echo in agreement. Fed up, of knowing nothing but war. Maybe if the leaders had their next meeting in this ward, their chorus of "enough already" would be harder to ignore.

NOW IS THE TIME TO SAY NO! NOT NOW! NOT EVER! NO MORE!



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For more information on the activities of the Coalition, see Update.



Tigray and Eritrea: Some of the most heavily mined areas in the world

INTERNATIONAL LAW CONCERNING LANDMINES

Introduction

There is little that civilians living in areas subject to land mine warfare can do either to prevent the warring parties from indiscriminately disseminating land mines, or to ensure that the land mines are removed when their immediate military use is over.

The use of land mines in armed conflicts is, however, subject to international law. This fact is important because it provides the only basis on which civilians in areas of conflict can appeal to have the use of land mines restricted, and can assist in lobbying for international agencies to implement de-mining programmes. This article will outline the (limited) provisions of the land mines protocol.

The Land Mines Protocol

The principal source of international law governing the use of land mines and comparable explosive devices is the 'Land Mines Protocol'. It applies only to international armed conflicts and to a limited class of wars of national liberation, not to most civil wars. Despite these shortcomings, it provides the only guide whereby the use of land mines by a warring party can be assessed.

The Protocol on Prohibition and Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices is part of the 1981 *Convention on Prohibition or Restriction on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which may be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious and to have Indiscriminate Effects*. One of its aims is to prohibit warring parties from making war in an indiscriminate or unlimited fashion - e.g. targetting civilians as well as enemy combatants. Another aim is to prohibit the warring parties from using weapons that cause 'superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering'.

The Land Mines Protocol embodies many of the principles to be found in a succession of UN Resolutions concerning the respect for human rights in armed conflicts, and by implication, those general provisions are also applicable to the use of land mines. The Protocol seeks essentially to protect civilians, and not military personnel. In this respect it differs from most other provisions of international law concerning warfare.

The Land Mines Protocol contains several provisions:

- * The fundamental rule that immunizes civilians from direct attack is found in Article 3(2). It prohibits in all circumstances the direct use of land mines against the civilian population.
- * Article 3(3) states the rules for protecting civilians and civilian objects from the collateral effects of land mines used against military objectives. This article prohibits the 'indiscriminate' use of these weapons. 'Indiscriminate' is defined as the use of mines against non-military objectives, or (an important addition) in such a way that they may be expected to cause injury or death to civilians *out of proportion* to the military objective of the use of the mines.
- * Land mines, placed without customary precautions, and which are unrecorded, unmarked, or which are not designed to destroy themselves within a reasonable time, may also be termed 'blind weapons',

and are thus prohibited under the Geneva Conventions.

- * Article 3(4) requires that warring parties take all feasible precautions to protect civilians from their effects.
- * Article 4(2) prohibits the use of mines in cities, towns, or villages, unless they are placed on or close to a military target, or are clearly marked so that civilians are able to avoid stepping on them.

Making Use of the Land Mines Protocol

The Land Mines Protocol is very difficult to enforce. It has several major shortcomings.

- * It does not apply to most internal conflicts.
- * Many countries have not ratified the Protocol.
- * It cannot be used to *compel* warring parties to restrict or remove land mines, or even provide information as to their whereabouts (such as maps).
- * There are no established legal or administrative procedures whereby UN or other international agencies can be mandated to remove the mines.

The slender basis for lobbying for the restriction or removal of land mines lies in the fact that the Protocol defines some uses of land mines as 'legal' and others as 'illegal'. While the issue of the legality of the planting of an individual mine makes little difference to the victim of that mine, it is less sensitive for international agencies to remove 'illegally' planted land mines.

In the last resort, it is not international law that restricts the use of land mines and facilitates their removal, but the international opprobrium surrounding the use of weapons which indiscriminately kill and maim civilians. Human Rights organizations, notably Human Rights Watch, are lobbying to increase awareness of the problem of land mines, and for the provisions of the Protocol to be extended to internal conflicts.

Note

This article is based upon a section of the report by Africa Watch, *Angola: Violations of the Laws of War by Both Sides* (April 1989), researched and written by Jemera Rone with the assistance of Bob Goldman. Africa Watch is a section of Human Rights Watch. The kind permission of Africa Watch is gratefully acknowledged.

COPING WITH TRAUMA, LOSS AND EXILE

Trauma, bereavement and involuntary separation from homeland, relatives and friends are all part of the refugee experience, and helping refugees in coming to terms with them is one of the most important aims of refugee assistance programmes. In the following four articles RPN presents some of the varying aspects of how this can be done.

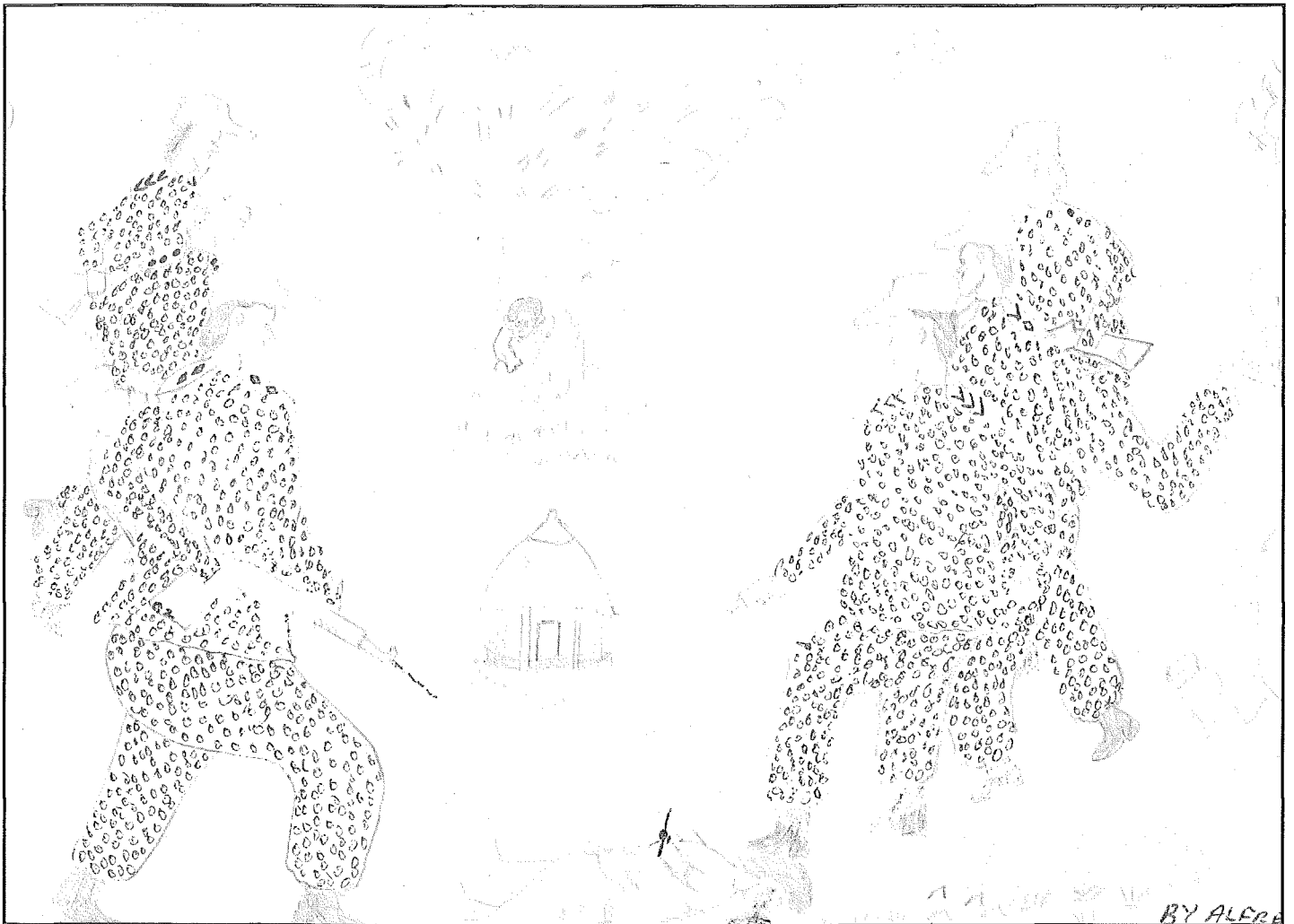
The first article draws on experience of Indo-Chinese refugees in New Zealand to develop a model of the stresses of refugee life in a country of resettlement. Much of the article consists of direct quotations from refugees and their hosts. The article stresses a D.I.Y. - "Do It Yourself" - approach to solving these problems.

The second article is about working with refugees who have survived torture. Sadly, there are few professionals with expertise in the field of psychological care for the tortured, and

there is no consensus on what kind of intervention is most appropriate. This article describes the psychotherapeutic approach, which is followed by psychologists who draw their inspiration ultimately from the work of Sigmund Freud. We hope that this article will encourage other psychologists with different approaches to the same problem to join a debate on this important but neglected issue.

The third article addresses the issue of mourning, noting that in most societies throughout the world, socially-acceptable forms of burial and expression of grief are important, but that refugee assistance programmes commonly fail to recognize this.

The final article describes how a heterogenous group of refugees in New York has begun to recreate forms of mutual assistance appropriate to the unfamiliar culture in which they find themselves, and the problems they face in doing so.



The traumas of a refugee: drawing by Alfred Eriga, a Ugandan child in Sudan

WELLBEING AND CULTURAL MAINTENANCE - D.I.Y

"You might think that on the departure of a refugee family there might be an end to their fight over terror" **Lang Chung.**

Refugees often experience a series of problems both during and after their resettlement which lead to stress. This article is based on the experience of Indo-Chinese refugees in New Zealand, and common causes of stress are examined from the refugees' own perspective. An holistic approach is taken both in understanding the causes of stress and in working toward the well-being and cultural maintenance of an ethnic community. The emphasis throughout is on "do it yourself" ways of solving problems by the refugee community itself.

UNDERSTANDING STRESS

Stress can be caused by the host community and/or by the refugee community.

A. Host Community

"You are welcome here as long as you fit in, don't criticise, are grateful, undemanding and become like us as soon as possible; if you can't become like us, then keep to yourselves or go elsewhere." C. Hawley, 1987. 'Refugees: Education Involvement', New Settlers.

Refugees experience little or no support, are perceived in terms of negative stereotypes and suffer from prejudice. They are often alienated from and rejected by the host community. Inappropriate behaviour by some refugees in the past created a bad impression with employers and in the community. Some companies have used this subsequently as a reason for refusing to take on any refugees. This is compounded by prejudice against refugees, for example a pensioner commented on Mangere Immigration Hostel thus: "These refugees come to pinch our jobs. We don't need them."

As a result there are very few back-up support systems or training programmes and existing social services seldom look at things in a multi-cultural way. There is a general lack of awareness of refugee needs, as a comment at a preliminary meeting for a refugee seminar made clear: "No, refugee communities do not need resources."

The lack of multicultural awareness in New Zealand is profound:

"We thought that we could put the Indochinese - Khmers, Laos and Vietnamese - to perform together in the same item. We didn't realize there are three completely different cultures." An opening ceremony organizer, XIVth Commonwealth Games, Auckland, June 1989.

B. Refugee Community

Observations and discussions within the Khmer community have identified five main reasons why refugees fail to cope successfully with transition and resettlement. Firstly refugees lack resources, as is well illustrated through the words of Saon Ream:

"At work friends asked me why I looked sad, I could not say anything to them; but I knew if I had enough money to feed my family and to send money to my relatives overseas, I'd be happy..."

The skills which refugees have brought with them are often inappropriate for the new environment. One Khmer who was part of the Refugee Education Programme commented: "What I can do best is planting rice. I don't know what I can do in this country. I can't even write my son's name in English"

Another Khmer stressed the lack of social contact and initial isolation of life in New Zealand: "It was very difficult at first to get around due to the language barrier. Life was lonely here without any close friends nearby for company." Lang Chung, 1988.

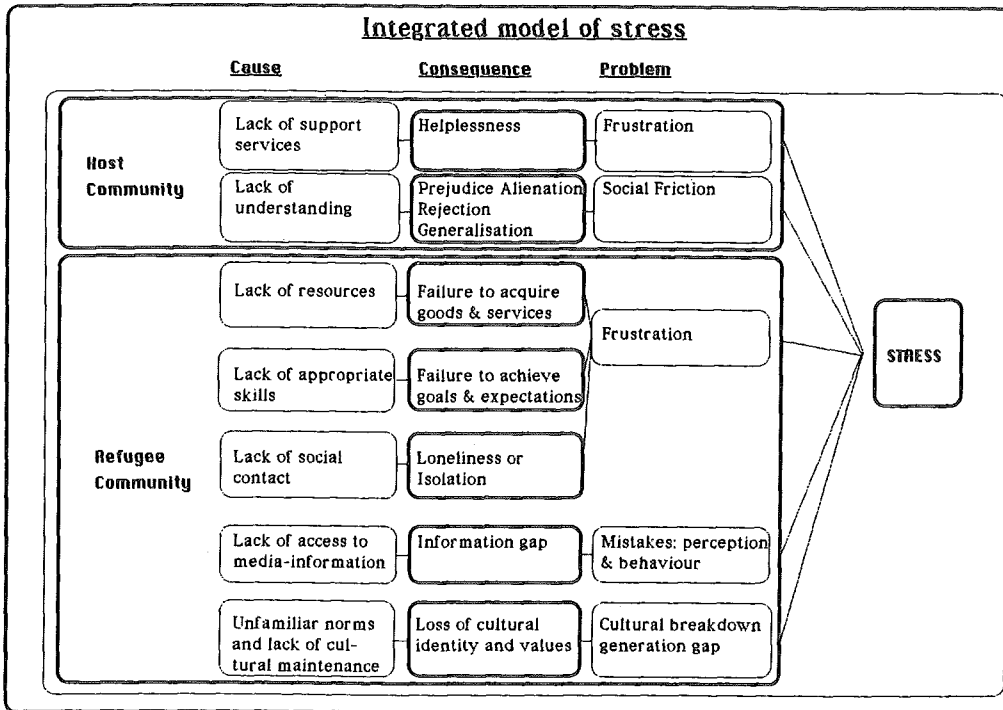
The Phanthaboualoy family commented on a further problem, that of their unrealistic idea of life in New Zealand prior to arrival, and the inaccessibility of reliable information about the country of resettlement: "All I knew about New Zealand was...that it was a paradise." The unfamiliar norms of life in the new country and the lack of cultural maintenance are also frequently mentioned as stress-causing. Dr Ruth Farmer has noted that: "There is much grief for the loss of one's country, and deep concern among the more educated refugees about the generation growing up in New Zealand with little understanding of their cultural heritage."

DYNAMIC MODEL OF STRESS

A dynamic model of stress can be used to point out the problems that are likely to occur at the time of arrival, during resettlement, and after resettlement. Stress here is shown to operate at a number of different levels (individual, familial, group and organizational).

A. Individual Level

Unless refugees feel secure that support and help are available to them, they will suffer chronic anxiety. Acceptance of a degree of change on one hand while preserving one's cultural values on the other, is the first step toward eliminating stress. Flexibility is the most practical attitude that refugees can adopt



work through its members' contacts. The community can also play a role in persuading refugees to retrain.

Individuals often complain about their loss of social status. The community needs leaders and people who can see the potential of members to use their skills for the benefit of the community. Creating opportunities for them to play a useful role or take on a position of responsibility within the ethnic community can promote social recognition and revive personal pride. Furthermore both the individual and the community benefit from the social activities and cultural maintenance.

in a new environment. But the community should not forget its social responsibility towards its own people. Especially on arrival and during resettlement, refugees are in need of moral support, and personal, friendly visits by members of their community will be a great help until they can stand on their own feet.

Mistakes can be made persistently if they are based on false information or if advice is misunderstood. The community has an important role in selecting and providing information needed by refugees for their resettlement. Ethnic language newsletters, group meetings and personal visits are possible ways that such information can be communicated.

Refugees will be isolated and lonely if they cannot communicate well with their neighbours, cannot easily make contact with their friends and have limited opportunities to socialize. The community can help to minimize isolation and loneliness by organising religious and other groups which meet regularly, social events, sports clubs and cultural activities. Cultural activities also maintain ethnic culture and hence personal pride.

Learning the host language is vital. Refugees have to acquire the host language, at least at a survival level, so that they can cope with their new environment.

The majority of refugees cannot get suitable employment immediately after resettlement. Others are unable to find employment at all which destroys self-esteem and confidence. Qualifications and previous experience are often not recognized in a new country, and retraining in this case is the only option available. A very effective way of increasing opportunities is for the community to set up an employment network to find

B. Familial Level

Besides the individual problems of its members, the family as a unit can encounter problems. For most families the short-term drive for survival and financial advancement tend to overshadow all else.

Parents commit themselves to many hours of overtime and spend too little time caring for and guiding their children. They may pick up habits and practices from the host community which diverge from those of their families. Relationships can suffer as a result and rifts can be created in families, traditional values and practices may be lost. Intergenerational links are particularly fragile. To reinforce links between different generations, the community should promote its values and identity to the younger generation in a way that is attractive and exciting to them so they will feel that ties to the community are worthwhile.

During and after resettlement, most children fail school exams. Parents tend to blame this failure on hereditary factors or the children's laziness. Parents are often not aware that they need to encourage their children to learn, or of how this can be done. If the parents cannot create a learning environment for their children, they should contact others who know how to assist. Sometimes the community can offer direct help when appropriate or it can make contact with relevant agencies such as a school authority or education department.

C. Group Level

At the group level, the unfamiliar environment and the lack of cultural maintenance leads to homesickness and loss of identity. The community has a role to play in creating familiar situations

so that members will not always feel the absence of their homeland so acutely. This can be done by organizing group meetings or ethnic social activities so that members have opportunities to share common interests, spend time together and pursue their cultural activities.

No one, other than the ethnic community itself, is going to maintain an ethnic culture. Continued existence requires hard work. The community should persuade members to appreciate the contribution of each individual towards cultural maintenance, so that their unique identity can be handed over to the next generation.

D. Organizational Level

At this level the wellbeing of the community and its cultural existence is very dependent on the personality of leaders and organisational strategies. Some of the ethnic associations have been poorly managed and have lacked concrete or relevant strategies.

Group leaders have often complained about a drop in membership or support. However these leaders themselves were often unaware of their members' needs, especially those of the very young and the very old. Being out of touch, they set up unrealistic objectives that did not provide any obvious benefits.

In the Khmer community, different political factions have endeavoured to infiltrate and stir up political unrest and led to effort and resources being wasted. The members saw nothing in the groups which would promote their wellbeing or the survival of their cultural identity. Thus they dropped out or didn't bother to join at all.

Some public social services, for instance in translation counselling and education, provide very limited services as they lack skilled people or funding. Although refugees try to help their people from their own strengths, they are constrained by resources and time. Furthermore help can be poorly coordinated due to the lack of management skills.

CONCLUSION

"In New Zealand people are kind and friendly, greet me with a smile. Some do not understand. They swear at me, tell me to go back to where I come from...

"I wish people would understand
The difficulties, trying to lead
A life in a different country.
Powerlessness, acting mute and dumb.
Using hand and sweat
Instead of mental agility.

Alienation, no recognition, no status
Disapproval, hostility from others.

Depression, stress, anxiety,
Loneliness, withdrawal are only a few problems
Khmer people face in a new society."
Sivleang Ung, p20 MHN Dec 1988

"I don't think much about the past. It is so horrifying. It is not easy, sometimes I get a nightmare or something but I try and put it away. To do otherwise would make it impossible to get on with living." Susie Londill. 'Putting the past behind him' Man Hau Liev, *Waikato Times*, April 11 1987.

"There is nothing to stop you from building it again when you find your castle has crashed. There is nothing to stop you from dreaming again, when the things that you worked for are smashed. There is no law to stop you from wearing a smile though perhaps you are crying inside; but there is no reason for losing your grip, your faith and your pride.

There is nothing to gain by recounting your woes into every listening ear for pity and sympathy would not get you far, though it may be quite kind and sincere. Get on with the job of rebuilding your life, for it is useless to sigh and complain. The best thing to do, is to start out anew, pluck up courage and try again." A Young Cambodian Man's Thoughts on being in New Zealand, Dunedin, *ESL News*, 1982.

Wellbeing and cultural maintenance are complex goals for refugees to work out. The problems they encounter lead to stress. Refugees and hosts need to work hand in hand, both as individuals and communities, to understand each other and acknowledge differences.

Refugees need help and support from the host community and government departments. Refugees themselves have to strive for their own wellbeing and cultural maintenance, helping members to live harmoniously among themselves as well as within their hosts.

by Man Hau Liev

This article is based on extracts from a document of the same name, published by the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, PO Box 37 438 Parnell, Auckland, New Zealand. 1989.

PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH TORTURED REFUGEES

This article will look into the role of the psychotherapist's intervention with refugees who have experienced torture. Through psychotherapy, it is possible for a survivor of torture to undergo a psychic recuperation, regaining the emotional



Images of violence live on in the memory

strength to revive expectations of life which had been broken by the dual experiences of torture and displacement.

In a compressed form, this article will discuss crucial factors to aid understanding of the needs of the tortured refugee and the role of psychotherapeutic assistance. Because of the complexity of the subject, many aspects will remain unaddressed.

The Reality of Torture

Many refugees carry with them the emotional burden of traumatic situations that they have experienced in their country or during flight. This creates a challenge for receiving countries. Most refugee programmes are concerned with attempting to satisfy the immediate needs of survival and protection. However, the problems of mental health that arise as a consequence of trauma also require attention. Expectations of life are broken by wars, persecution, escape, and imprisonment, and may also be shattered by the experience of torture.

Commenting in 1957 on the atrocities committed by the French military and police against the Algerians, Jean-Paul Sartre said that 'torture is a plague that infects our whole era.' His words apply even more strongly today. Most contemporary torture is part of a system of domination by a state apparatus. It is an instrument used to obtain information, and a method for punishing and destroying an individual, in mind and body, in order to intimidate and paralyse the rest of society, through the power of horrific example. Torture should be understood as a political phenomenon, which, through brutal and refined techniques, creates physical and psychological damage in individuals. It also indirectly affects the survivor's family, friends, and the whole of society.

The phenomenon of torture is a real and objective experience, though in many cases the survivor will attempt a psychological denial of it. While some of the damage of torture is immediate, it creates long-lasting psychological (and also physical) problems. These may make normal life impossible and require specialised help.

To be tortured is to face a specific trauma that is unique for each person who experiences it. Psychotherapeutic interventions try to 'work through' the traumatic experiences, to support the adaptive mechanisms and remove obstacles that stand in the way of the person's wellbeing.

Elements in Torture

The characteristics of the psychotherapy are determined by the special nature of the problems facing the survivor of torture, and by the dynamic interaction of these with other

psychological factors already present in the individual. Some of the basic factors are:

- * The individual's degree of motivation.
- * The effects of psychological and physical characteristics directly related to the torture (e.g. the development of psycho-somatic symptoms and the presence of brain damage).
- * The type of trauma experienced.
- * The degree of developed psycho-pathology.
- * The structure of personality and defence mechanisms.

The analysis of these factors will give an outline of the possibilities for therapeutic intervention. They also need to be complemented by the analysis of another set of factors:

- * The family dynamic.
- * The social network of work and studies.
- * The degree of political consciousness.
- * Past psycho-pathological conflicts.
- * The presence of other traumatic experiences.
- * Conditions of and attitudes to exile and the hope of return.

Another vital factor in this analysis is the role that we (as psychotherapists) give to ourselves. This determines the manner of intervention. Every intervention involves an essential question: What degree of meaningful contribution can I make to this patient? The all-powerful intention of making changes in the lives of others can be fought by asking the question: To what extent should I interfere in the life of this person and what can be achieved through my efforts?

It is essential to answer these questions adequately when working with the tortured. They reveal our motivations, both as psychotherapists and as human beings, towards people who have been manipulated in a most merciless way and are therefore extremely sensitive to a relationship which, for them has equal significance in professional and human terms.

The Psychotherapeutic Process

Psychotherapeutic process involves cooperation, exchange and solidarity. It is a relationship in which the traumatic past and the present become mixed, allowing emotional roles to be perceived in a clearer way, and allowing insight into the psychological condition.

The main objectives of the psychotherapeutic process are:

- * Relief from distressing symptoms.
- * Working through the trauma.
- * Reconstruction of the expectations of life.
- * Resolution of familial and social problems.

There are major problems with attaining cooperation in the

psychotherapeutic process between the tortured client and his or her therapist. It is difficult to create confidence in a human relationship when similar human beings have attacked and destroyed one of the essential attributes of humanity, 'basic confidence.' This is the confidence which we acquire in our first human relationships with those who feed and care for us, allowing an infant to develop psychologically.

Re-attaining basic confidence is an essential objective in the recovery of lost humanity and identity during psychotherapy. Many practical barriers to this are created by the experience of having been subjected to inhumane treatment. This gives rise to repeated challenges, in which the client unconsciously puts the new relationship with the therapist to the test. He or she may fail to honour agreements, may be provocative, may turn his or her back, or may refuse to cooperate, etc. These actions have to be understood within the context of loss of confidence, and be treated within the aspect of psychotherapy known as the 'containing function.'

The containing function includes the ability to absorb and share the psychological burdens of the client, through anguished and traumatic behaviour such as crying, aggressiveness, and heart-rending stories. It also includes understanding that the relationship between therapist and client demands a receptive capacity on the part of the therapist.

Clarifying Problems

In the first sessions, it is generally difficult to clarify needs and the type of support needed. Obtaining clarity on the central conflicts (often consciously hidden), and the functions of the problems, symptoms, and defence mechanisms, are an important part of the first stage of the psychotherapeutic process.

For example, hypochondriacal fears about a cerebral tumour, based on a constant headache produced by muscular tension, may lead to a medical consultation, and then referral to a psychotherapist. Such connections between muscular-type tensions, headaches, and emotional problems are common. The presence of emotions which are not accessible to the conscious, including feelings of rage, impotence, pain, and grief, create anxiety. This may be intolerable to the psyche, and therefore may be internalised as tension, which creates further anxiety. In turn this renews the internalisation, and consequently the headache. The vicious circle of the symptomatology is established.

This example shows that in therapy for the tortured, it is not sufficient only to establish a solution based on the overt symptoms. An attempted solution based on the symptoms alone would merely serve to create a new pattern of symptoms, .

instead of dealing with the clarification of the deeper unconscious conflict.

Working Through

Another fundamental stage in the psychotherapeutic process is the 'working through'. This follows the achievement of the 'therapeutic alliance' between client and therapist, which allows effective work to proceed on the real problems of the client.

During this stage the therapist carries out different functions. Among these, the basic one is helping the expression of traumatic experiences during torture and imprisonment. Through verbalization, these experiences become understandable, and this diminishes their psycho-somatic weight. This might appear simple, but to be able to revive and communicate these traumas cannot be handled without external help. The therapist is closely involved and identified with the trauma that is being worked through, and is subject to the stress that such a role involves. The therapist shows the client how to reason, look for help, and even sometimes how to make decisions.

Regression

Tortured refugees under psychotherapeutic treatment are prone to regression. Regression is the return to earlier forms of thought and behaviour, including those of a young child.

The experience of torture is conducive to regressive experiences. Regression reveals unsolved problems that have remained buried in the unconscious, possibly including a psycho-pathology. This psychological problem, the origins of which are unrelated to the experience of torture, will interact with the problems resulting from the torture, to produce a complicated symptomatology and psycho-pathology that is not determined solely by the experience of torture. This is another complication in treating the survivor of torture.

Transference

Transference occurs when the client attributes characteristics, emotions and ideas from past relationships to the therapist. Regression during this stage means that the client uses defence mechanisms and forms of aggression that correspond to the degree of regression. Pre-psychotic or psychotic behaviour is common. Attention must be given to the phenomena of transference and counter-transference, which occur in the psychotherapeutic process. Transference is a phenomenon present in all therapy, which makes it possible to work with internalised human relationships, and to bring to the surface unresolved conflicts and emotions which have been fixed by traumatic experience but which have remained hidden.

Counter-transference includes all the interventions by the therapist which are not conducive to the goal of therapy, but which tend to satisfy the unconscious needs of the therapist. Counter-transference is an ever-present risk in work with survivors of torture. It not only creates problems at a personal level, but also interferes with the psychotherapeutic process by making it impossible for the therapist to work effectively with the psychic world of the client. Problems that derive from this include sadistic or masochistic needs, the Florence Nightingale syndrome, and the 'sharing' of the client's sorrow. It is an obligatory (though often overlooked) pre-requisite for effective psychotherapy for the therapist to have worked through his or her own problems in intense individual therapy. Constant supervision is also necessary. Kindness and goodwill are not sufficient to give the necessary help to the tortured.

The End of Psychotherapy

The results of psychotherapy will be determined by the objective external circumstances of the client's life as much as in the therapeutic situation. The surfacing of new problems during the course of therapy often requires that objectives and lines of action have to be reconsidered. In the final stage it is essential for the client to have gained a level of functioning that permits him or her to function in psychological, personal, and social terms. The level of functioning to which the client and therapist aspire may vary greatly. However, the minimum objective of therapy with the tortured is for the client to be able to live with the experience of torture, which will remain a basic fact of that person's existence. Nightmares may continue, but without being an overwhelming burden.

In all therapy there exists the drama of separation. This is an old phenomenon which in psychological terms goes back to our first years. In tortured refugees this issue arises and is aggravated by the real losses of comrades, relatives, and country, if not of language and identity. Therefore the separation between therapist and tortured refugee is particularly intense. The irretrievable loss of this profound human relationship, involving both solidarity and affection, is a challenge to all that has been gained in the psychotherapeutic process. Reactions that include a variety of symptoms appear during the final stage of therapy, and the psychotherapist has to understand them and what they imply: a desire for the prolongation of the therapy and the dependency associated with it. This is in direct contradiction with the primary aim of all psychotherapy, which is to allow the client to become more autonomous and to cope with emotional demands so that it is possible for him or her to become re-established as a social being.

Enrique Bustos

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DEALING WITH DYING

Many refugees die during flight, and may be hastily and inadequately buried, or not buried at all. Many also die in exile, where provisions for their burial are generally unsatisfactory. The lack of an acceptable funeral and burial may contribute to pathological grief among the bereaved families, and thus be the cause of additional trauma for them. Therefore, while relief officials are concerned with ensuring the on-going *material* welfare of the refugees, refugees themselves also place great emphasis on guaranteeing some meaning to life, part of which is necessarily found in reference to the dead.

Refugees often see it as a priority to expend scarce resources on funeral rites and graves. Relief staff commonly fail to understand the importance of this, which can result in conflict between the two groups. If practitioners can appreciate the significance of burial and mourning for the refugees among whom they work, they could do much to mitigate unnecessary suffering, and at the same time lessen tensions between refugees and those who have come to help them. Minimal support to refugees' funerals and burials could have significant benefits for the smooth functioning of refugee communities.

The Meaning of Death and Bereavement

Death does not mean the end of the relationship between individual and society - it may be followed by a long process in which the bereaved resolve conflicts and conclude relationships. This may involve socially prescribed means of burial, mourning, and processes for the division of the inheritance of property and responsibilities. Most of these require rituals involving considerable financial and social investment. If these cannot occur, then the bereavement remains unresolved - and stress, tension and conflict may be the result. Also the 'causes' of death need to be resolved, and malevolent individuals, groups, political regimes or even God may be 'blamed'. Much effort is put into scapegoating, punishing, repenting, absolving or otherwise articulating and coping with the need to allocate responsibility.

How these needs are met is subject to enormous variability, but the aim of understanding is not to get lost in the detail of 'traditions', but to appreciate their meaning and significance.

Those employed in assistance programmes work under considerable psychological stress - and often without special training or ongoing support to help them cope with the problems which they inevitably experience. For example, life and death decisions in the allocation of insufficient food or medical supplies have to be made. Although motivated by humanitarian concern, agency staff often find themselves working in conditions under which they are totally powerless to

alter an appalling status quo. They may respond by distancing themselves from refugees and developing stereotypes which deny common humanity, such as: 'They are used to death and suffering' - and so do not feel and suffer so much.

Death before or during flight

It is seriously disturbing for people to face the future knowing there is no possibility of ever properly burying those who died under the tragic conditions of flight and exile, and this knowledge influences individual and collective behaviour in many ways. In South Asia, Eisenbruch has described how intensive, culturally contextualized counselling may help refugees to cope, and similar work seems to have been undertaken in Afghanistan. In Zimbabwe, drama workshops have been started in refugee camps to provide the opportunity for Mozambicans to act out their experiences, and hence work towards relieving anxiety. In one programme in Zambia the emphasis is on building awareness of such issues among community leaders (e.g. teachers and medical workers).

Western societies have responded to the lack of burial and/or mourning for those who died in war or disaster by subsequently erecting memorials to the dead which can be the focus of community grief and loss. Since independence, Zimbabwe has also established a number of 'Heroes Acres' to remember those who fell in the liberation struggle. Refugee assisting agencies should consider with refugees whether it would be appropriate to sponsor such memorials in refugee camps and settlements.

The failure to find ways to heal these wounds can have profound consequences for the success of assistance programmes. For example, in southern Sudan many refugees suffered pathological grief on account of their inability to mourn adequately. The psychiatric symptoms associated with this condition were often attributed to 'poisoning' by neighbours, and accusations of 'poisoner' were common, which contributed to the high level of social conflict. Children of severely depressed parents were of a much worse nutritional status than those whose parents had better mental health.

Death in exile

Refugees who live in large camps have social contact with more people than is usual in their home setting, and so more frequently encounter death than they did before. This means that people may become more concerned - even obsessively worried about death. They may perceive death rates to be higher in the camps and settlements than in areas outside assistance, and also higher in exile than at home. Whether or not death rates are elevated, large numbers of people will die in exile. This will be additionally stressful when resources for 'adequate' burial are not available, and people may fear the threat of further misfortune. The formal recognition of a death

may be put off for many months, even years, until the necessary funds for a proper funeral can be earned or borrowed.

Although the UNHCR handbook advises that people be allowed to follow traditional burial rites, normally there are no budgets to pay for burial cloth, gravediggers, the extra food required for those who attend the various ceremonies, or funds for travel to funerals for relatives who are required to attend. Expenses may also include mandatory payments to announce the death to particular categories of kin. Furthermore, it is problematic for relief personnel involved in authoritarian programmes to define what culturally appropriate facilities would be without involving refugees - indeed practices can be changed to resist total social control.



Grave of a child, South Africa

The travel associated with funerals is a problem for refugees both because of its cost and due to common restrictions on freedom of movement. Dangerous trips back to the home country may be undertaken to attend a funeral, and movement between settlements may be required of refugees to meet responsibilities to deceased as well as living members of families. These may be misinterpreted by field officers. For example, UNHCR attempted to take censuses of camp populations during the 1982/3 emergency in southern Sudan but were frustrated by the absence of large numbers of people, many of whom were reported to be attending funerals. Field staff were annoyed and these movements were wrongly interpreted as opportunistic strategies to obtain food in other camps.

Attempts at Intervention

The use of blankets for burial has frequently led to friction between refugees and assisting agencies. For example, in southern Sudan, people kept complaining about lack of blankets although UNHCR argued that adequate numbers had been distributed. The problem was that in the absence of burial cloth people were using their own blankets to wrap the dead. In Ukwimi, in eastern Zambia, the Lutheran World Federation provided the deceased families with a blanket, food and help with collection of firewood. Other assistance programmes need

to learn from their experience.

Even if provided, however, blankets are not necessarily the most appropriate item; apart from being more expensive than burial shrouds, they are not preferred by some refugees. For example, refugees in Kunyinda settlement in Malawi prefer to use sleeping mats, despite shortage of the necessary reeds and grasses in the area. Their request for assistance in transporting additional supplies was rejected as its significance had probably not been appreciated. A number of local NGOs have responded to the requests for burial shrouds, for example the Tanzanian Mozambique Friendship Association, and the Malawi Red Cross, and this has been greatly appreciated by the refugees.

Some of the 'food diversions' that were investigated in the Sudan were found to be in response to the need for extra food for funeral ceremonies. A petition presented in southern Sudan included a request for cement for grave markers (the reason given was: how else would they know where to come when visiting the graves after return to Uganda?) This request was made at a time when the programme was not even providing soap and salt. In the cemetery, several graves were found carefully marked with the names of the deceased and appropriate farewells - the cement had been stolen from a school building project.

'Burial societies' are often formed to mobilize resources for the funerals of members. These groups may be linked to churches, political parties, particular ethnic groups or a particular profession. Church groups of this sort are important for Mozambicans in Zambia, and an ethnically based society was organized in some camps in southern Sudan. Agencies could promote such self-help groups.

Organizing Burial Grounds

The location of appropriate burial sites may also be problematic. For example in Kuniyinda, the existing cemetery was divided and half allocated to refugees: it quickly filled up and the disturbing situation of insufficient space meant that skulls from previous burials were being unearthed as new graves were dug.

Refugees may want to bury close relatives together. Communities may want different religious groups to have different cemeteries.

In some places people prefer to bury their dead in their own homesteads. Under circumstances where this represents a public health hazard (in very overcrowded conditions, or where

the water table is high) persuasion rather than force should be used. But generally, this practice is entirely adequate. Annoyance that it disrupts monitoring of mortality should not be an excuse for authoritarianism.

Organization of burial grounds should be according to plans generated through meetings and discussions with representatives of all different groups in the refugee and local population. People may want the option of burying relatives together, or for different religious groups to be separated.

Mortality monitoring

Accurate monitoring of death must be based on an understanding of what death *means* for the people in question. Also it must be appreciated that people have many reasons to distort their responses - for example it is often feared that deaths may not be reported because the family fears a reduction in their rations. This may lead to secret and inadequate burials. The collection of mortality data, especially when undertaken with a suspicion that people are withholding information, may be offensive and deeply distressing to refugees - especially where excess mortality has occurred as a result of inadequate assistance.

Monitoring cemeteries is problematic as it is not possible to be certain that everyone is buried there. The most commonly used method of requesting people to report deaths in their household over a defined period of time is extremely difficult to utilize effectively.

There are various methods of collecting mortality data but they all require utmost caution. The best of the conventional demographic techniques for estimating past mortality are based on measures such as orphanhood, sibling survival and the number of children born/surviving to women interviewed. Prospective data would be better and could be obtained by physically monitoring a sub-sample of the population (presumably the under-fives). However, this is unlikely to be considered acceptable - the time and resources it would require (together with health and nutritional examination) could have paid to keep the children alive. Health officials would feel obliged to advise the parents on the state/needs of the child and hence influence the results. Alternatively, primary health officials could be used to monitor the whole population - but here the problem is the practical difficulty of covering everyone and the likelihood that those not covered would be those at highest risk.

Ken Wilson and Barbara Harrell-Bond, *Refugee Studies Programme, Oxford*. This article was extracted from a longer article with the same title, which has been submitted for publication. Copies are obtainable from RPN on request.

Announcement and Call for Papers
International Research and Advisory Panel

on

**REFUGEES AND OTHER
DISPLACED PERSONS**

Second Annual Meeting
2-6 January 1991

at

Refugee Studies Programme

The IRAP meets annually to discuss and identify issues related to research on refugees. Review papers on the 'state of the art' of refugees studies and papers on research-in-progress are now being solicited. Papers already accepted include a draft statement on ethics in refugee research and one on current policy trends in the US.

Please send papers and applications to:- Conference Organizer, Refugee Studies Programme, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford, 21 St Giles, Oxford, OX1 3LA, UK.

LIFE IN THE LAND OF MILK AND HONEY? THE MUTUAL ASSISTANCE ASSOCIATIONS OF ETHIOPIAN AND ERITREAN REFUGEES IN NEW YORK

The sign in front of a restaurant in Manhattan's Upper West Side reads 'An African Restaurant'. The menu describes the city of Asmara, after which the restaurant is named, as 'an African city ... which grew and modernized under the Italian colonial era [and] acquired a distinct flavor for Italian dishes which we proudly serve here'. Nowhere is there any mention of the restaurant being Ethiopian or Eritrean. Inside, pictures on the wall feature portrayals of cultural life, but none of them reveals the actual name of the region they represent.



Holy Communion at Holy Trinity Church, The Bronx, New York

Photograph by Laura Hammond

Someone walking in off the street will only discover the national identity the restaurant represents when he consults the Tigrinya speakers seated at other tables or refers to the restaurant as Ethiopian — when he is set straight. 'The first thing you must know about us,' he is gently admonished, 'is that we are Eritrean, not Ethiopian. There is a difference.'

Semhar, the Eritrean who owns the restaurant, insists that her restaurant is open to all, including Ethiopians. The omission of any direct ethnic identification is a means by which she is able to express her allegiance to her Eritrean background without offending her other clientele. It is clear that in the interests of making her business as profitable as possible, Semhar tries to keep her Eritrean politics and ethnic ties to herself. Like the other six Ethiopian and Eritrean restaurants in New York City, Semhar's acts as an informal social centre for a population which lacks a well-defined group identity. It is a place where the many young, single Ethiopian and Eritrean men can go to meet others, reminisce about their lives before coming to America, share their experiences as refugees, and, for a while at least, alleviate loneliness and depression.

There are only 3,500 people from Ethiopia and Eritrea living in New York City. This small number is scattered throughout the area in groups of up to 300. The groups are isolated, making it difficult for a sense of community to develop.

Most are accustomed to relying upon their extended families, so find that they must now construct new social networks. The majority are well-educated and speak some English when they arrive. They are a proud people and prefer to help themselves rather than accept 'charity' from the government. At home, many held highly-skilled jobs in urban areas. In New York, they find that their employers do not recognize their qualifications or that there is no place in the job market for their expertise. Often they must accept low-wage manual labour. Many become taxicab drivers, hotel workers, or cleaners. The most recent wave of refugees are from rural areas and have no education. They are less likely to speak English. Finding a job and setting up a new life in America is even harder for them. They look to those who have been in New York longer or who are better established to help them find jobs, apartments, and access to social services.

Hana lives in a two-room apartment in the slums of South Bronx with her two children. She is in the USA illegally, having stayed on when her tourist visa ran out four years ago. She manages to scrape by on wages earned from 15-20 hours of babysitting and house cleaning a week, and receives assistance regularly from three other Eritrean families who live in the same building. Though they are by no means wealthy themselves, they are recognized by the government as refugees

and are thus eligible for food stamps, welfare support, subsidized housing, and other benefits.

With limited resources, relatively insecure positions in the workforce, and tenuous networks of support to fall back on, such refugees are particularly vulnerable. Abebe came to New York two years ago with his wife and infant son after having lived in a camp in Sudan for two years. He worked as a taxicab driver twelve hours a day for two years until a car accident left him in a coma for four months. Upon his release from hospital, he discovered that because he had no Medicaid or other health insurance, he would have to pay his medical bills - over \$10,000 - by himself.

Unable to pay rent, Abebe was living in a church-sponsored homeless shelter for 'drug users, thieves and Ethiopians.' Having been out of the hospital for one week, Abebe says 'I feel very weak, but I can't rest. I have to find a job and an apartment. I'll do anything.'

People like Abebe have a hard time getting the help they need, partly because the Ethiopian community is splintered into so many opposing factions. Many people insist on being recognized as Oromo, Tigrayan, or Wollo, (quite apart from the Eritreans); their resentment towards the Amhara culture which has imposed its dominance over them runs deep. Joining forces with those they have spent their whole lives fighting against would be tantamount to betraying their brothers and sisters at home in their continued struggle for freedom. These regional differences prevent them from developing the sort of support systems that are common in New York's Chinese or Hispanic communities.

Some do favour a 'pan-Ethiopian' identity. 'I think that if someone is suffering, you should help them, regardless of what tribe or country they are from' says Kassa, who runs one of several small groups which are working to develop effective outreach programmes and financial resources to assist their compatriots. These organizations, known as Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs), are run by and for Ethiopians and Eritreans. For people who do not speak English, the MAAs can be instrumental in introducing them to the new society. Even those who speak English fluently can benefit from having someone help direct their search for affordable housing, employment, educational opportunities, and government-provided social services. Some MAAs provide classes in English, maths and sciences. They maintain their ties to the homeland by also teaching children their native languages. MAAs also help people reconstruct social networks by putting them into contact with others who may share some of the same experiences.

Both regional and 'pan-Ethiopian' MAAs use their organizations to further their specific political goals as well, such as for raising money. They only rarely cooperate with one another.

Much of the MAA's work entails outreach in the form of a social visit to the client's home, perhaps for a meal, in which the social worker also provides services or advice about ways of getting help. In such a relaxed setting, where help comes in the form of friendly guidance or sharing, there is much less risk of losing one's dignity. People are more comfortable and more willing to accept help from fellow Ethiopians, even if they do not know them at all, than from Americans. MAAs succeed, therefore, in dispensing information and helping people in a way that governmental offices, which lack such a personal touch, cannot.

The lack of bureaucratic formality which makes MAAs more effective as sources of help, however, also makes it more difficult for them to obtain assistance and cooperation from the US government and other agencies, which respond to a more formal approach. Asseffa, who used to work for an MAA, says 'it is hard for us to help our fellow Ethiopians. Because we are new to this country, we don't understand all the ways of getting assistance. We don't know all the places to go. Then, too, once we do find the right people we often have a hard time making ourselves clear. People don't listen so carefully to a foreigner as they would to an American.'

'The best organization would be one with an Ethiopian and an American,' Asseffa goes on. 'The Ethiopian is needed to act as a go-between for the refugees and the Whites. The American is needed to negotiate with the government and relief agencies. Black and White, working together, that would be best.'

Churches also provide structure and support in varying degrees to their congregations. Membership in a church community can either bring support directly through outreach programmes or through the contacts established with the congregation. However, the churches are also divided.

The Ethiopian Orthodox Church has its headquarters in the Bronx. The church houses up to ten homeless Ethiopians, serves as a social centre for its congregation, and tries to provide as many services as it can muster with its meagre

budget.

'We're trying to help drug addicts, but we're not successful,' Abūne Yeshaq says. 'Not because we're lazy or we don't try, but because it's not enough to say 'drugs are bad for you'. We have to offer something in return or in its place. We're such a poor church — we can't afford to give them anything much. So they don't want to hear from us.'

The church at Riverside is smarter, more central, and more popular. Asseffa, who goes to the Riverside services because he lives nearby at Columbia University, says 'I think that poorer people are too intimidated to come to Riverside. Most of the upper class, aristocratic Ethiopians go there.'

Very little actual outreach is done there. 'It's a place to go to on Sundays and that's it,' says Kassa, who helped start the services there but has since dissociated himself. 'They don't provide counselling, outreach, job placement; they don't address the problems of fighting families, drug addiction, or homelessness.'

The Riverside congregation is not very close-knit, says Asseffa. 'People come in groups, in clusters. People who know each other stay together and are very close, but as a whole they are not close. There are too many differences between people.'

The need for assistance in coping with the problems and challenges of a new environment results in profound changes in the social life of refugees. Where once they might have turned to their extended families for help, they must now look elsewhere. The ties which bound people to help one another must, in this new community, be substituted with bonds between individuals, nuclear families, church communities, business associations, and Mutual Assistance Associations. The specific situations which individuals confront in America often call for the provision of aid which the extended family in Ethiopia or Eritrea would never have had to give, but the basic tenets according to which help is given are the same.

As with the prognosis for peace at home, the future of the community in New York is cast under a shadow of doubt. If it is ever to occur, solidarity will be a long time coming for these refugees, the newest additions to New York's Melting Pot.

Laura Hammond



Breast and bottle feeding of children in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Photograph by A. Almedom

CHILD WEANING PRACTICES IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Young children, especially those of weaning age, are the category most vulnerable to illness and untimely death during crises such as famines and forced migrations. They are especially vulnerable on account of being in a transitional state between one diet and another, and because they have not acquired immunity to the pathogens that often contaminate weaning foods.

Relief agencies have been aware of this for a long time, and typically single out these children as the target group for intensive feeding programmes in relief shelters and refugee camps. Agencies typically see their task as a dual one: encouraging mothers to breastfeed and to prepare nutritious weaning foods for their children in hygienic conditions, and providing supplementary and therapeutic feeding themselves.

There is, however, scope for improvement. Educational and feeding programmes can be improved with a better understanding of the factors which influence child weaning in countries such as Ethiopia and Sudan.

This paper is based upon studies of child weaning undertaken in *Kebele 11, Kefteгна 24*, a peri-urban area of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and in Wad Sherifei refugee camp, near Kassala in Sudan, during 1987-89. The first study investigated the constraints on weaning in a community that was poor, but not subjected to exceptional stress or food shortage. The community included mothers from the central highlands of Ethiopia and their children. The second study looked into child-feeding practices among Eritrean refugees in Sudan. They had suffered the stresses of forced migration from their homes on account of war, and were living in an unfamiliar environment where they consumed a small and restricted diet very different from that they were used to at home.

The most widely-held view of weaning practices in traditional societies is that there is a cultural norm of standard ages at which children are introduced to weaning foods, and at which breastfeeding is terminated. The Addis Ababa study casts

doubt on this view, suggesting that differences between individual mothers within a single community were at least as important as differences between one community and another. In fact, the notion of a standard or normal age for weaning appeared to have little relevance for these women.

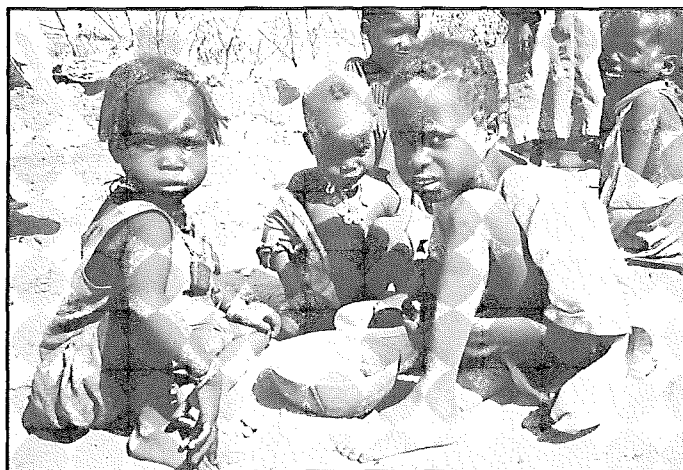
Instead, a variety of factors affected the mother's decision to introduce her child to supplementary foods, and to terminate breastfeeding. For supplementation, the most important factors were "infant-centred": if the infant had a large appetite, or was developing teeth, the mother was likely to introduce other foods. External factors, such as the seasonal availability of weaning foods, was also important. For the termination of breastfeeding, the important factors were "mother-centred": if the mother became pregnant again she would cease breastfeeding almost at once, and similarly if she became ill or her breastmilk became insufficient. Of these, a new pregnancy was the most important factor.

The "mother-centred" and "infant-centred" factors are largely independent of one another. Therefore it is possible - in fact quite common - for the mother to need to stop breastfeeding before the infant has become "ready" to consume supplementary foods. In such a case, both supplementation and termination occur almost at once, in a rapid transition, which may be detrimental to the child's health.

The model of weaning that derives from this study is a "probabilistic" one: the age at which a child is weaned, and the manner of that weaning, depends upon a set of independent contingent factors. The age of weaning ranged widely, with a mean of 9 months for supplementation and 20 months for termination.

The Eritrean mothers who formed the sample in Wad Sherifei reported a similar set of factors determining their decisions to supplement and terminate breastfeeding, while they were at home. However, flight and exile in Wad Sherifei wreaked massive changes on all of the infant-centred, mother-centred, and external factors, and consequently led to a greatly-changed weaning regime.

The most important change was the absence of the normal variety of weaning foods. Mothers were accustomed to feed their children on milk and a variety of high-quality sorghums and millets, but now they had almost exclusively only a low-grade sorghum known as *feterita*, with few if any spices and sweeteners. In cases of the complete absence of weaning foods during flight, some weaned children reverted to the breast, experiencing "weaning in reverse". More commonly, the monotonous diet failed to stimulate the child's appetite, and the child was thus less ready to be introduced to supplementary



Children waiting for food, Sudan

Photograph by D Quinney, OXFAM

foods, and demanded breastfeeding for an extended period.

A second change was that some women suffered illnesses or injuries which forced them to stop breastfeeding. This, which was potentially a very damaging development, was fortunately rare. However, the medical staff of the camp, who tended to see and have to deal with these cases, gave them an exaggerated importance. In Addis Ababa, a similar phenomenon was noted whereby the Ministry of Health and international agencies believed that breastfeeding was on the decline, and therefore they created an ambitious programme to encourage breastfeeding. In fact, while some middle-class mothers may have been changing to bottle-feeding, no poor mother could afford to do so, and all continued to regard breastfeeding as the preferred way of feeding their infants.

The third change among the refugee population was a much lower rate of pregnancy. This fact, which is commonly observed during famines and refugee crises, is due mainly to the absence of men, who either failed to leave home, or migrated elsewhere to look for work. Nutritional and other stress on both men and women may also have played a role. The result of this was that the principal reason for terminating breastfeeding - the mother's new pregnancy - no longer held with the same force. This allowed the mother to acquiesce with her infant's demand for prolonged breastfeeding. The lowered pregnancy rate thus led to later termination of breastfeeding, more than cancelling out any effects caused by increased illness among mothers.

The net effect of the disruptions for the refugee mothers was that the whole weaning process was delayed: both supplementation and termination occurred later. This had both good and bad consequences. Breastmilk is highly nutritious and protects infants from infection. Its beneficial effect is

witnessed by the fact that the infant mortality rate (deaths up to 12 months of age) did not rise among the refugee population. However, for a child above one year, a diet of breastmilk alone does not provide adequate nutrition: supplementation is needed if the child is to achieve normal growth and avoid disease. Under the conditions of Wad Sherifei, a diet of grain alone would also have been inadequate, because it would not have stimulated the child's appetite enough, so that the child would be unable to consume large enough quantities to meet his or her needs. It is in this age group that the danger lies, and it was among children aged one to four that mortality rose most sharply.

The nutritional interventions in Wad Sherifei camp, run by the Swiss Red Cross and *Medicins Sans Frontières* (France) were well-organized and reached most of the children in the camp. They therefore helped to fill the nutrition gap found among these weanlings. In doing so, they were assisted by mothers' prolonged breastfeeding, and there was no crisis.

As well as providing feeding centres, the agencies' second approach to the nutritional problems of the camp was to encourage women to breastfeed, and to prepare nutritious weaning foods in a hygienic manner. This analysis has shown that women needed no encouragement to breastfeed. It has also shown that the late introduction of supplementary foods was not

determined by custom or ignorance, but by the lack of suitable weaning foods. The supply of weaning foods directly to mothers with young children would have overcome this problem. The problem of preparing the foods hygienically was related to an acute shortage of pots and water carriers: frequently one vessel was shared between several families. As so often, the problem was not ignorance or apathy, but lack of resources.

Prolonged breastfeeding was important in protecting the children of Wad Sherifei. In other circumstances, the factors could have combined differently, possibly to dictate early termination of breastfeeding. In such an instance, it would not be appropriate just to encourage the mothers to prolong breastfeeding, as though their decisions were determined by convention, but instead it would be necessary to investigate why this distortion has occurred, and address its root cause.

Astier Almedom

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**International Symposium
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THE NEED FOR NEW APPROACHES
17th-20th March 1991
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The symposium Steering Committee comprises the Refugee Studies Programme with the following agencies: Dept of Human Nutrition, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; International Rescue Committee (USA); *Medicins Sans Frontières* (Belgium); *Medicins Sans Frontières* (France); *Medicins Sans Frontières* (The Netherlands); Oxfam (UK); Save the Children Fund (UK); UNHCR; WFP.

Those interested in attending or submitting a paper, or who want further information, please write to:
The Symposium Organizer, Refugee Studies Programme, Queen Elizabeth House, 21 St Giles, Oxford OX1 3LA, UK.
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EPIDEMIC MALARIA AND UNDERNUTRITION: LESSONS FROM EASTERN SUDAN

Refugee camps in countries such as Sudan provide one of the most pathogenic environments imaginable. It is well-known that the concentration of population in refugee camps gives rise to the spread of infectious diseases, which take a heavy toll of human life. The spread of some of these diseases is facilitated by severe overcrowding: measles is the best example. Others reach epidemic proportions because of lack of adequate sanitation and the absence of clean water for drinking: diarrhoeal diseases and typhoid are good examples of this.

Undernutrition is one factor which promotes the spread of these common camp diseases, but typically the changes in the disease environment associated with arrival at a refugee camp are more dangerous than undernutrition. Diseases which were infrequent among the population in its normal state at home reach epidemic proportions simply because of the fact that a previously-scattered rural population is now concentrated in an urban-type camp environment, without adequate sanitation and drinking water.

One disease that is common in refugee camps in the south is malaria. However, the links between forced migration and malaria are much more complicated than in the case of infectious and water-borne diseases. The case of a malaria epidemic which struck Kassala town in eastern Sudan, and the adjoining Eritrean refugee camp of Wad Sherifei in late 1988, can illustrate these complexities, and point towards some priorities for malaria control in refugee camps.



Wad Sherifei Reception Centre, Sudan, with the hills of Eritrea in the background

Photograph by OXFAM

Wad Sherifei is a reception centre for refugees from Eritrea. At the beginning of 1988 it held about 10,000 refugees, many of whom had been there for some years. Starting in April, after the escalation of the war in Eritrea, refugees began to arrive. They came mostly from Keren area (Halhal and Anseba), which was the scene of heavy fighting between the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Ethiopian army, and from Barka, where there was chronic insecurity due to bombing, banditry, and the activities of Ethiopian garrisons, and also drought. Most of the people displaced by the warfare were catered for by relief programmes run by the Eritrean Relief Association (ERA), but about 40,000 came to Wad Sherifei and its environs. The refugees continued to arrive in large numbers throughout 1988, with smaller numbers coming in 1989.

The refugees suffered many of the customary health problems of such migrant populations, and child mortality (ages 1 to 4) rose sharply. In August there was an outbreak of diarrhoeal diseases, associated with a rapid expansion of the camp, and flooding. Measles was absent, due largely to a comprehensive programme of vaccination. The main problem, however, was a severe outbreak of malaria.

Among the newcomers to Wad Sherifei, there were 15 deaths diagnosed as due to malaria in September, 74 in October, 49 in November, 11 in December, and 5 in January 1989. In the Swiss Red Cross hospital, which serves both the camp and the surrounding villages, there was a similar trend. Some of the cases diagnosed as malaria were probably in fact typhoid, dengue, and several other rare fevers. However, in the absence of systematic diagnosis of these other fevers, the epidemic will be analysed as one of exclusively malaria. This is of course no recommendation for medical practitioners to do the same thing — treating a patient with typhoid with repeated courses of chloroquine can only be disastrous.

In August 1988, Kassala and the surrounding areas suffered severe flooding. This is normally a dry area, and malaria is endemic only in the rainy season (June to September). The severe flooding created ideal conditions for the multiplication of malaria-bearing mosquitoes. The epidemic of malaria did not, however, occur until September, peaking in October and November. This is explained by the observation that mosquitoes require stagnant water for breeding, and that the flood waters remained disturbed until 12 September because of continued rain. The peak of mosquito breeding probably occurred one week later, and the three strains of malaria present (*Plasmodium falciparum*, *vivax*, and *malariae*) have pre-patent and incubation periods ranging from 16 to 66 days. Therefore, the peak incidence of malaria cases occurred well after the flooding, and also after most of the mosquitoes had disappeared.



Floods in Sudan, August 1988 Photograph by Jeremy Hartley

Africa is generally an area of endemic malaria. A malaria epidemic is quite unusual. This arose from several factors:

- * The years 1981-87 were generally dry, leading to lower levels of malarial transmission. As a result, the population had lower levels of acquired resistance to the disease.
- * A minority of the refugees came from highland areas of Eritrea where malaria is not epidemic.
- * Exceptionally good breeding conditions existed for mosquitoes after the floods of August, due mainly to the blocking of drainage channels in the prolonged drought, which caused exceptional accumulations of water.
- * There is an unexplained seven/eight year cycle of malaria epidemics in highland Ethiopia and Eritrea. Epidemics have occurred at regular intervals since at least 1951.

There is no evidence that new strains of chloroquine-resistant strains of *Plasmodium falciparum* malaria were introduced to Kassala area by the refugees. Such strains have been common in Sudan, Eritrea, and Ethiopia since the early 1980s.

The most intriguing aspect of the epidemic was whom it hit. During the epidemic, medical staff noted with surprise that the more well-fed children appeared to suffer malaria more commonly than the less well-fed, contrary to expectations. This is no mere anecdotal report; systematic investigation of hospital and clinic records comes up with similar findings:

- * Analysing admissions to the Swiss Red Cross hospital, we find that children admitted for malaria

were significantly better-nourished (using weight for height as an indicator) than those admitted for other complaints.

- * Comparing admissions to the hospital for malaria with a survey of the general nutritional status of children in the camp, we find that the children admitted to hospital for malaria were significantly better-nourished than the general population of children.
- * Comparing the records for deaths of children in the camp population (which include evidence on their nutritional status) with the survey of the general nutritional status of the population, we find that children dying from malaria were worse-nourished than the general population.
- * The malaria epidemic occurred at a time when the price of grain was falling, food deliveries to the camp were increasing, the feeding programmes were expanding, and the nutritional status of children was improving.

These observations lead to the conclusion that malaria appeared to be more likely to strike the better-nourished children, but that those dying from malaria were more likely to be undernourished. Severe malaria causes anorexia and may itself be the cause of the undernutrition among those who died. Undernutrition appears to protect against developing malaria, but to contribute to a higher risk of death once the disease is caught.

If these findings were unique and unprecedented, we might be tempted to dismiss them as a freak, due perhaps to inaccurate records. However, they are in fact not unusual. There is a growing body of evidence which shows that certain forms of undernutrition inhibit the growth and multiplication of the malarial parasite, thus suppressing the development of clinical malaria. A shortage of free iron in the blood is particularly important, and is often linked with the consumption of a diet which includes much milk and little grain.

Clinical and experimental studies of humans and animals show that an absence of iron suppresses the development of malaria. This may follow from the consumption of a milk diet. Malarial infection is not prevented by this diet, but the development of an initial infection into the full-blown disease is inhibited. Pastoral peoples, such as Somalis, Nigerien nomads, and Tanzanian Maasai, appear to be protected from malaria - until they start to consume a diet of grain. The initial consumption of grain leads to a brief period of hyperferraemia - excessive iron concentrations in the bloodstream - which allows the recrudescence of previously-latent infections. These infections can be latent for long periods, and only develop into what is called "re-feeding malaria" many months afterwards.

The suppressive effects of undernutrition are specific to certain deficiencies, notably chronic lack of iron, and are not so pronounced, or are absent altogether, with other forms of deficiency. Deficiencies common to refugee camps, such as protein-energy malnutrition, and deficiencies of vitamins A and C, are unlikely to have such suppressive effects on the malarial parasites.

Many of the Eritreans in Wad Sherifei came from a pastoral background - particularly those who originated from Barka. In the refugee camp, their diet changed from one with a large element of milk to one based on staple grain. This probably contributed to the outbreak of malaria - and to the fact that it was most pronounced among those who were best-fed on the grain. The feeding programmes in the camp may therefore have unwittingly contributed to the malaria epidemic.

The recommendations which arise from these findings are not that undernutrition should be encouraged! Rather, there are certain circumstances in which feeding programmes for undernourished children need to be implemented with extra care. In refugee camps and feeding programmes where children originate from pastoral areas, and in conditions where they are at increased risk from malaria, indiscriminate re-feeding of undernourished children on a grain-based diet may be dangerous. The first requirement is to be aware of the dangers of "re-feeding malaria", and therefore be prepared to act should signs of it appear. If re-feeding malaria is believed to be likely, there are two main options for fighting it. One is to re-feed on a milk-based diet rather than a grain-based one. The second is to accompany the re-feeding of children with a course of malarial prophylaxis. Neither course of action is likely to be wholly successful, but either should assist in preventing unnecessary deaths from this apparently paradoxical condition.

Alex de Waal

Alex de Waal was a research officer at Nuffield College, Oxford, and currently works for the human rights monitor, Africa Watch.

Note: This article is based upon the findings of research conducted in Wad Sherifei refugee camp, Kassala, Sudan, during 1989. *The author would like to thank ActionAid, who provided the funding for this project, and the office of the Commissioner of Refugees, who facilitated the research. The full findings are available in a report, Population and Health of Eritreans in Wad Sherifei: Implications for the Causes of Excess Mortality in Famines (London, Action Aid, 1989).*

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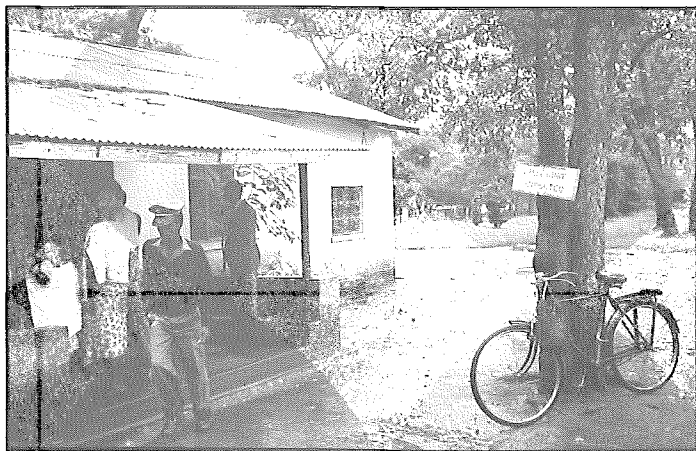
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THE REFUGEE CONTROL ACT OF ZAMBIA

Since Independence in 1964, Zambia has taken a number of measures to address the refugee problem. Among others, these have included the establishment of an Administrative Committee, the Eligibility Committee for the Determination of Refugee Status (for the purpose of processing individual asylum seekers) and the enactment of the Refugee (Control) Act No 40 of 1970, for the general purpose of refugee administration. This article takes a critical look at these measures and suggests possible remedial measures that could address their weaknesses.

Influx of Refugees: the Historical Background

The problem of refugees in Zambia goes back to the time when the country was still a British colony. The first officially-known refugees were Polish evacuees during the Second World War. The Commissioner of the East African Refugee Administration was responsible for policy matters affecting these refugees, and they came under the administration of the Polish Delegation based in Nairobi, Kenya.

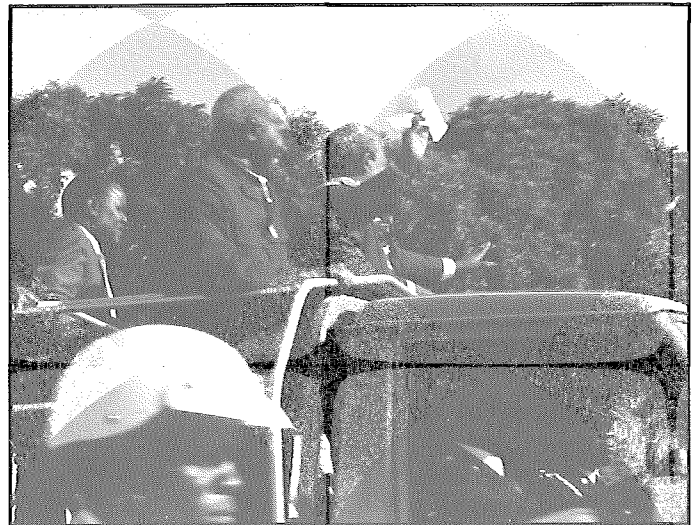


'Absconding Prohibited'. Maheba refugee settlement, Zambia.

Photograph by B. Harrell-Bond

The liberation wars in southern Africa caused refugee flows to Zambia from the mid 1960s onwards. The refugee population gradually increased to a peak of 145,000 in 1986. Since then the number has fallen slightly with the repatriation of Namibians, and now stands at just over 140,000.

The largest single grouping is the Angolans, who now number over 100,000. Angola has been at war since before Independence, and has been a battlefield of the armies of many different nations and competing ideologies. Angolans have come to Zambia in several waves, during the liberation struggle and due to the internecine strife between the MPLA, UNITA



President Kaunda with Nelson Mandela in Lusaka, Zambia

Photograph by B. Harrell-Bond

and FNLA. Only 4000 were officially repatriated at the time of Independence in December 1975.

The second largest group is Mozambicans, who at the height of the influx in 1985 numbered 25,000. The presence of these refugees is not a recent phenomenon. They first sought refuge in Zambia during their country's liberation struggle, and Mozambique has not known peace since a month after Independence in June 1975, when the FRELIMO government first came into conflict with opposition forces backed by the rebel Rhodesian government. At Zimbabwe's Independence, South Africa took over the backing of RENAMO, which became more vicious in its brutality towards civilians, displacing two million people within the country and over a million into neighbouring countries.

There are also 9000 refugees from Zaire, some dating from the Katanga conflict of the 1960s, and others from a resurgence of that conflict in 1978. Zambian government policy has been to support SWAPO and the ANC, which has entailed accepting refugees from Namibia and South Africa. Most of the 7,300 Namibians repatriated during 1989. There are about 3,500 South African refugees. Other refugees, from an urban background, include Ugandans and Malawians, and some from as far away as Poland, Burma, Czechoslovakia, and Lebanon.

Accession to Refugee Conventions

Zambia has acceded to and ratified both the 1951 United Nations and the 1969 OAU Conventions on refugees. Accession to the OAU Convention was done immediately it came into force. This served to regularize the status of thousands of refugees in the country. The OAU's definition is broad and well-suited to address Zambia's and in general

Africa's refugee problem. This broad definition, while including the UNHCR definition, includes in addition 'persons who owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order are compelled to flee from their home countries.' The Angolans, Mozambicans and Zaireans in Zambia are all covered under this definition.

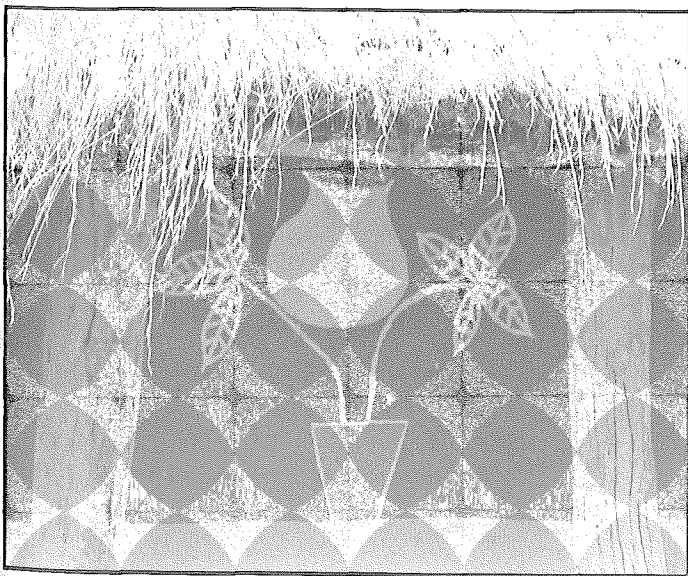
Measures Taken to Address the Refugee Problem

Zambian foreign policy has actively encouraged liberation movements throughout southern Africa, and the country has, as a corollary, welcomed refugees from the countries in which liberation struggles have been fought. In order to address the refugee problem, the government established the Office of the Commissioner for Refugees, under the Ministry of Home Affairs, which is responsible for implementing Zambia's asylum policy. This is an open door policy and to date Zambia has not been known to have created any deterrent measures. There has been no move to refuse refugees entry, and those not accepted as refugees are not forcibly repatriated but are helped to resettle in third countries, such as the USA, Canada, and Australia.

The Commissioner for Refugees office is also responsible for articulating assistance from the international community, and administers refugee settlements. This coordinating role has not been easy as NGOs, particularly international NGOs, have not tended to cooperate with the Commissioner's coordinating role.

Determination of Refugee Status

The determination of refugee status is in essence a practical demonstration by asylum countries of their readiness to



Mozambican refugees' home, Zambia

Photograph by B. Harrell-Bond

interpret refugee instruments. The UN Convention does not include any references to the procedures necessary to implement its provisions, these being left up to the national authorities, which results in significant differences between countries. The OAU Convention deals additionally with large-scale refugee movements, and the granting of asylum to whole groups where it is impractical to determine refugee status on an individual basis.

In Zambia, there are two ways in which the determination of refugee status is dealt with. By and large refugees have been granted asylum on a group basis. The second method is through the Eligibility Committee for the Determination of Refugee Status, which processes individual applicants. The Eligibility Committee is composed of the Commissioner for Refugees, the Senior Refugee Officer in the Ministry of Home Affairs, one representative from each of Immigration Headquarters, Police Headquarters, Office of the President, National Registration and Passport Office, and a representative from UNHCR.

The Zambian Refugee (Control) Act No 40 of 1970, apart from giving all the powers to the Minister to make the final decision on all applications, makes no mention of the Eligibility Committee and its functions and procedures. The Act furthermore makes no mention of what one is to do in the case of a negative decision, this being left to the initiative of the Committee to advise applicants. In the majority of cases of a negative decision, no appeal is made.

The determination process in Zambia takes on average one year before a decision is made. There can be no doubt about the severe psychological stress placed on applicants. Asylum seekers are also entitled only to minimal assistance, making matters worse.

It is obvious from the above that while Zambia's record of granting asylum to refugees is very good, there is still more that could be done in speeding up the determination process, notwithstanding the danger that acceleration of asylum procedures could lead to a deterioration in the quality of decisions. Some measures to improve this could be suggested. The law needs to be amended to give more powers to the Commissioner for Refugees to make the final decision on applications. This will cut the delay experienced waiting for the Minister to make a decision, and lessen the burden of work on the Minister, who can then be brought in only for appeal cases. The Eligibility Committee needs legal backing and its functions clearly spelt out. The period of waiting before a decision is made needs to be made known. It would also appear that the Committee needs to be expanded as it lacks the services of a lawyer, a social welfare officer, and a representative from

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. An independent appeal procedure is also needed for cases in which asylum has been denied.

Only a fraction of the refugees in Zambia have been dealt with by the Eligibility Committee. The great majority have been granted status on a group basis. These refugees have come in large numbers and would swamp the administrative capacity of the Committee, and the situations that have led to their flight have been obvious - wars in Angola and Mozambique. Group determination has been done in the spirit of the OAU Convention.

The Refugee Control Act

The enactment of the Refugee (Control) Act No 40 of 1970 was in large part a response by the government to security concerns, resulting from the increasing number of refugees, and the volatile political situation in the region. By allowing refugees to settle freely among nationals in communities in the border areas, fears were expressed that enemies could easily infiltrate the country posing as refugees. An administrative machinery backed by law needed to be established to ensure control over refugees. The passing of the Act was also seen as a measure to ensure the implementation of both the UN and OAU Conventions.

The Act was modelled on the Tanzanian Refugee (Control) Act, which has its origins in legislation adopted during the Second World War to control German prisoners of war and war evacuees, and is in essence a reproduction of colonial refugee regulations. UNHCR has pressured both Tanzania and Zambia to reform their laws, and both countries have set out to make amendments. While the amendments proposed in Tanzania are regarded as progressive, the Zambian act is being amended using Zimbabwean legislation as a model, which emphasizes control and therefore restricts refugees and their movements.

While Zambia has pledged to continue to receive refugees, it still has reservations on some of the articles in the Convention. In particular, Article 34 of the Convention requires contracting states to facilitate assimilation and naturalization of refugees. However, Zambia is not willing to grant citizenship to refugees even when it is apparent that a good number of them will never return to their countries of origin. For instance, some Malawian refugees have been in the country since 1964. For them, naturalization is the only durable solution. However it appears that the government still regards the refugee problem as transient and therefore that the granting of citizenship to some refugees as unwarranted. Such a measure would in fact meet strong opposition in the National Assembly. In addition, Angola and Mozambique would probably not take kindly to the granting of citizenship to their nationals. The two governments

try to visit their nationals outside their own borders to ensure that they do not forget about one day returning home.

Tanzania was loudly applauded for granting citizenship to 36,000 Rwandese refugees in 1972. Serious questions are raised today about this gesture. The great majority of these refugees still wish to return to their country, and have declared their opposition to the measure of obligatory naturalization negotiated between the governments of Rwanda and Tanzania, without consulting the refugees themselves. The naturalization was agreed in exchange for the Rwandan government participating in a hydro-electric project in the Tanzanian border region of Kagera.

To avoid this problem, Zambia and other refugee host countries should make it voluntary for those wishing to acquire citizenship. In the case of Zambia, such a move will greatly assist those refugees who have married nationals but are denied citizenship. The current law discriminates against children fathered by a refugee, whose mother is a Zambian. The children automatically assume the status of the father, and become refugees. By contrast, when the father is a Zambian and the mother is a refugee, the children are automatically Zambians.

Control on the movement of refugees has been greatly criticized, but the Zambian government has argued that this has been necessitated by the security situation in the region. This has further been defended by citing Article 2(6) of the OAU Convention, which states that 'for reasons of security, countries of asylum shall, as far as possible, settle refugees at a reasonable distance from the frontier of their country of origin.' It is left up to the contracting states to decide on the local settlement pattern. Zambia and Tanzania, for example, put refugees in organized settlements. This of course is in contravention of Article 26 of the UN Convention which states that 'each state shall accord to refugees lawfully in its territory the right to choose their place of residence and to move freely within its territory, subject to any regulations applicable to aliens in the same circumstances.' Zambia and other countries should perhaps give refugees the chance to be self-settled.

Finally, in making amendments to existing legislation, it would be advisable to look at a number of practices in as many countries as possible, otherwise, by looking at Zambia's Act alone, the Refugee Control Act, even in its amended form, will still be found wanting.

Lameck Mwaba

Assistant to the Commissioner for Refugees, Ministry of Home Affairs, Lusaka, Zambia.

UPDATE

PUBLICATIONS

Report of the International Conference, 'Refugees in the World: The European Community's Response' has been published by the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights and the Dutch Refugee Council. The publication which is written in English, includes a selection of the conference papers, and some of the addresses, along with final conclusions and recommendations.

The recommendations are part of a programme proposal for a European refugee policy with particular reference to four issues, those of Human Rights, Migration, Asylum Policy, Migration and Development Cooperation. The recommendations are directed at the European Community, the EC Member States, the Council of Europe and the United Nations. Amongst the recommendations are proposals for the establishment of an EC Advisory Committee on Human Rights and an additional Protocol on Refugees to the European Convention of Human Rights.

For more information contact:
Alex Voets (Dutch Refugee Council)
3e Hugo de Grootstraat 7
1052 LJ Amsterdam, The Netherlands

or
Deny de Jong (Netherlands Institute of Human Rights)
Boothstraat 6
3512 BW Utrecht
The Netherlands

A special issue of the **International Children's Rights Monitor** (1989 Vol. 6) focuses on the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the General Assembly of the UN in November 1989. It includes the text and an unofficial summary of the Convention plus a series of articles on the same theme, including 'What some of the Governments said', 'Campaigning for Ratification', 'An Opportunity for Ratification'. The legal foundation for the protection of children's rights which this Convention provides will have implications for refugee children and their rights.

The Monitor is the Quarterly Publication of 'Defence for Children International'. Subscriptions are for annual volumes which comprise four issues.

Defence for Children International
PO Box 88
CH-1211 Geneva 20
Switzerland

Sudan Democratic Gazette, is a new monthly newsletter concerned with the analysis of events as they unfold in Sudan. It advocates the principles of democracy in general and human rights in particular. It does not represent any particular political party within Sudan. Issue No. 1 came out in June, and contains articles on the political background to the June 1989 coup, opposition to the revolution command council, relief and relief agencies in Sudan. The Newsletter also reviews recent books on Sudan. Bona Malwal, previously Editor-in-Chief of the Sudan Times acts as editor and publisher. Issue No. 2 was published in July.

Contact:
P.O. Box 2295
London W14 0ND

Information disseminated recently by the **Australian Council of Trades Unions** includes documents on various current refugee issues. The documents are entitled 'Indochinese Refugees: Sorting out the Issues', 'Overseas Students in Australia: Problem or Profit?' 'The Wall, Immigration and Refugee Implications' and 'Immigration, Hong Kong and 1997'.

The documents and further information are available from:
Alan Matheson
ACTU
393 Swanston Street
Melbourne 3000, Australia

ORGANIZATIONS

The **Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation** is a group of concerned individuals from various countries who have joined together in the effort towards peace and reconciliation in Cambodia. The idea of this organization originated on the Thai Cambodian border amongst Khmer and foreign relief workers. Membership is open to all who share the organization's goals and want to work towards peace and reconciliation by peaceful non-violent means including education, information, advocacy and networking with other interested groups.

For further information, please write to:
Coalition for Peace and Reconciliation
P.O. Box 1
Sanam Pao
Bangkok 10400
Thailand

Prepare is a secular non-profit action research development organization promoted by a group of professionals and scientists long involved in work amongst the poor (harijan, adivasi and fisherfolk communities). It is concerned with rural reconstruction and disaster preparedness. It is involved in emergency work, primary health care, rural reconstruction, technology, pesticides action, and rural water supply. Training programmes are offered, as are evaluation/consultancy services.

For further information write to:-
Prepare, 364 North Main Road
Anna Nagar West Extension
Madras - 600101, India

A Working Party on 'Refugees in Crisis' met in March 1990 to discuss and plan the initiative to set up an **Irish Refugee Council**. This first meeting established a Statute, clarifying aims, methods and organizational framework. The Council will take initiatives for refugees both in Ireland and elsewhere. It will be a network or umbrella body for organizations and individuals concerned with refugees which will seek to develop existing work through active collaboration and consultation.

It is hoped to hold the first Annual Meeting in the Autumn. For further information on the initiative, contact:

Dr Wendy Cox
Working Party Secretariat
44 Fitzwilliam Square,
Dublin 2, Ireland.

The **International Catholic Child Bureau** is a network for consultation and action on children's issues. Its work from 1990-1992 will take 'Intercultural Awareness' as a theme. A centre of 'cultural' training was established in 1989 to attack the problems of social maladaptation of children in an intercultural context. The aim is to help children to live confidently in a multicultural society.

Currently, applied research on the psycho-social needs of refugee children is being undertaken in conjunction with operational agencies. In particular, a survey questionnaire addresses the needs created by migration (between rural areas, from rural to urban areas, internationally, and from marginal into core cultures). It addresses the possible ways of responding to the shock that a technological/industrial culture provokes in children who come from a 'traditional' culture.

For further information, contact:

Mrs Hilary Brusset,
Intercultural Programme, ICCB
Secretariat General 65, Rue de Lausanne
1202 Geneva, Switzerland

REGIONAL NETWORKS

A **Refugee Network** is being established in Kenya. A preliminary meeting of members was held in June. The main focus of the Kenyan Refugee Network will be the facilitation and development of income generating projects. Advice and ideas from elsewhere in the world would be much appreciated.

Please contact:

Sharon Wilkinson
Chairperson, Kenya Refugee Participation Network
PO Box 30853
Nairobi, Kenya

CAMPAIGNS

The Education and Training Group of the World University Service (UK) have drawn up a **Refugee Education Charter** which will be the basis of a campaign to address the lack of national policy on refugee education. Responsibility and blame are passed between government departments and local authorities while refugees' most basic education needs remain unmet. The Charter sets out ten principles upon which a policy should be based. As the Education Reform Act and changes in local government finance are putting new pressures on the education sector, it is crucial that the educational needs of refugees are not forgotten or marginalized.

For further information, please contact:

Refugee Education Advisory Service
20 Compton Terrace
London N1 2UN

DATABASE

A **Database for Migration Medicine** is in the process of being set up by two major London health regions. The North East and North West Thames Regional Health Authorities are compiling data on all aspects of health and research on migrants including refugees who reside in the two regions.

For further information, please contact:

Dr Ghada Karmi,

Consultant in Public Health Medicine,
NW Thames RHA, 40 Eastbourne Terrace, London W2 3QR.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

The **Research and Information Centre of Eritrea (RICE)** is organizing an international conference on 'A Century of Oppression and Struggle for Peace in Eritrea'. The conference will take place on Friday 23 November 1990 at Regent's College, Regent's Park, London.

The conference will bring together scholars on Eritrea, the morning papers providing a detailed analysis of the historical, legal and political contexts vis-a-vis the Eritrean question. The afternoon session will focus on post conflict challenges in Eritrea which will be debated by four panellists from independent positions.

All inquiries to:

Centenary Conference Organisers
2 Bramcote Drive
Wollaton
Nottingham NG8 2NH, UK
Tel: (0602) 281779

Call for Papers:

A forthcoming conference '**The Refugee Crisis: Geographical Perspectives on Forced Migration**' will be held at King's College London in September 1991. The conference is convened jointly by the Developing Areas and Population Geography Study Groups of the Institute of British Geographers. The following themes will be covered: demographic aspects of refugee migration; the settlement and socio-economic integration of refugees in countries of first asylum; the growth of 'environmental refugees'; resettlement of refugees in Europe and the United States; the geopolitical causes of forced migration; and the use of Geographical Information Systems in refugee management.

Proposals for papers and requests for further information should be addressed to either of the following convenors:

Richard Black
Department of Geography
King's College London,
The Strand,
London WC2R 2LS

Vaughan Robinson
Dept of Geography
University College, Swansea
Singleton Park
Swansea SA2 8PP

Call for Papers:

An International Symposium to mark the fortieth anniversary of the Geneva Convention for Refugees, is entitled **Obligations and their Limits: Refugees at Home and Abroad** and will be held in Toronto, Canada, May 25-28 1991. The tentative programme includes the following possible topics, plus workshops:

- * Domestic Refugees:
- Temporary Asylum versus Permanent Residence: Principles and Practice
- The Political Sociology of Backlash and the Role of Public Opinion
- * The Obligations of States from the International Perspective:
- Uncivil War: Humanitarian Involvement and Intervention
- Protection for Combatants and Innocent Victims of Civil Wars
- International Agencies and Development Assistance

For further information contact:

The Centre for Refugee Studies
York University

4700 Keele Street
North York, Ontario M3J 1P3
Canada

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

The following research themes are currently being pursued by members of staff, students and associate researchers at the **Research Resource Division for Refugees** of Carleton University:

Christine Vincent - Social construction of the category 'Refugee'
Les Teichroew - Refugee child health (mental/physical)
Behnam Behnia - Theory and refugee community
Kabahenda Nyakabwa- Changing family patterns in refugee populations
Ivana Filice - Sexual violence against refugee women
Eva Rihova - Czech. refugees in Canada
Kala Leon - Central/South American refugees.

For further information, write to:-
Research Resource Division for Refugees
Centre for Immigration and Ethno-Cultural Studies
Room 112A, Social Sciences Research Building,
Carleton University
Ottawa, Canada K1S 5B6

JOBS

Unipal, the Universities Educational Fund for Palestinian Refugees, is looking for suitably qualified people to work as long term teachers (1 year posts) inside Israel, in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

For further information, contact:

Unipal
12 Helen Road
Oxford OX2 0DE, UK

If you are not already a member of RPN and would like to join, please fill in the tear-off form below and return it to RPN as soon as possible.

YES, I WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE REFUGEE PARTICIPATION NETWORK

Name _____ Position _____

Address _____

Town _____ Country _____

Main area of work experience (e.g. education, health etc) _____

Special interest group (e.g. refugee women, disabled etc.) or second area of experience _____

Geographical area of interest (e.g. Africa, Asia etc.) _____

Type of organisation (e.g. non-governmental, international agency, refugee-based, individual etc.) _____

*Please send to: Refugee Participation Network, Refugee Studies Programme,
Queen Elizabeth House, 21 St Giles, OXFORD OX1 3LA, UK*

The **Danish Refugee Council** is looking for for a highly qualified professional person to fill the post of 'Associate Project Counsellor' with the Project Counselling Service for Latin American Refugees (PCS) in South America. The place of work will be Costa Rica and involves extensive travel. Tasks will be:

- Counselling of local voluntary agencies in the development of self-help projects for refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons in the region.
- Project identification leading to project proposals.
- Participation in the decisions on the use of a Discretionary Fund for the financing of small projects.
- Responsibility for the administration of specific projects and projects funded by the discretionary fund.
- Participation in the overall management of the PCS.

For further information write to:

Paul Brandrup
Danish Refugee Council
Borgergade 10
PO Box 53
DK-1002 Copenhagen K

SCHOLARSHIPS

Ten **Oxford Student Scholarships** are available for 1991 to students from the developing world (including refugees). Minimum qualifications for applicants are grades AAB at 'A' level (or equivalent), or a good upper second class degree. Closing date for applications is the 30th November 1990.

Application forms can be obtained from:

The Advisor to Overseas Students
Graduate Admissions Office, University Offices
Wellington Square
Oxford OX1 2TD.

REVIEWS

Rising from the Ashes: Development Strategies in Times of Disaster by Mary Anderson and Peter Woodrow. Westview Press, Boulder Colorado, 1989.

Disaster seems to occur everywhere and quite frequently. The media is full of such news. People often react quickly to overcome the effects of the crisis, whether it is drought, flood, earthquake, or a volcano erupting, or an influx of refugees from a war zone. The management of aid is a major concern, especially with regard to its long-term effects. The authors use recent case studies to argue clearly that there is a need to build closer links between relief and development work. They point out that aid agencies need to be aware of the capacities and vulnerabilities of the recipients of aid. The message that comes through clearly in the book is that all aid should enable people to take charge of their lives.

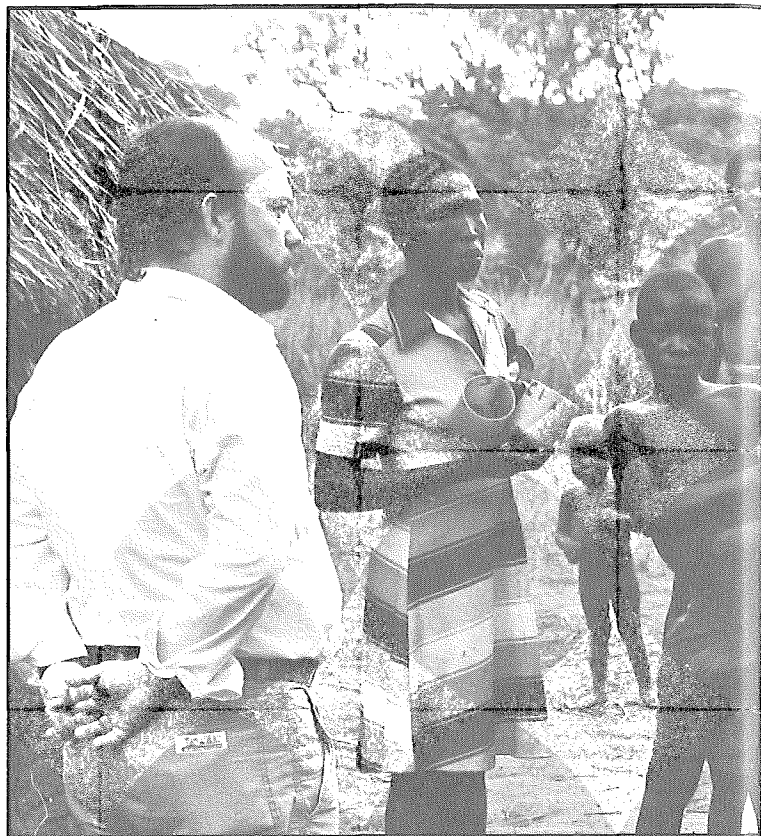
Rising from the Ashes is divided into two parts. The general framework for programme formulation is discussed in part one, divided into eight chapters, and part two deals with the eleven case studies.

The reader is told, right at the beginning, that this is not a "how-to-do-it" book. But, as one reads through, it is clear that they have not fully avoided pointing out how things are done. There is no new information or startling revelations. In fact, the issues raised are those known by aid agencies all along, and often talked about - though rarely successfully put into practice. The truism that is argued successfully is that "no one ever 'develops' anyone else. People and societies 'develop' themselves." The central message of the book is "help people to take charge of the things that affect their lives". An agency's role is to give support and encouragement and be partners in development, a catalyst.

The reader might find the style a bit difficult to read at the start, but soon the book grows on you as you realize that it contains a message that is worth reading about. The book is simply and clearly written, and no doubt will find its way onto the shelves of aid agencies who are always ready and willing to examine the long-term effects of their work.

Solomon Inquai

International Extension College, Cambridge

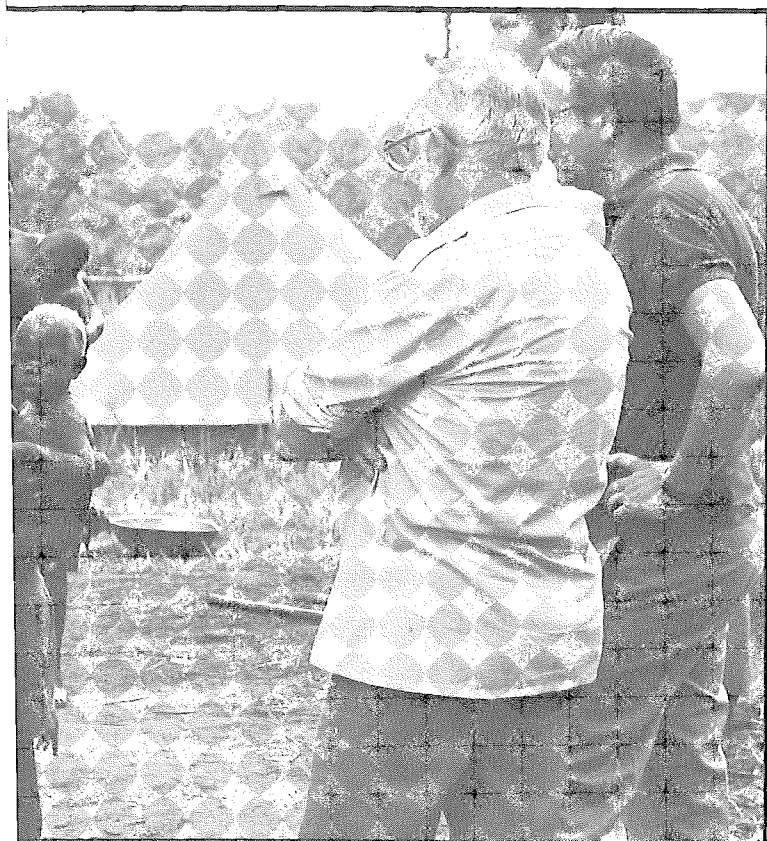


'Lords of Poverty'

The Lords of Poverty: The Freewheeling Lifestyles, Power, Prestige and Corruption of the Multi-Billion Dollar Aid Business, By Graham Hancock. 1989. London, Macmillan. Price £14.95 hardback.

Everybody who has worked in a relief or development agency has experienced disenchantment and cynicism concerning the aid world. Projects are inappropriate or damaging, expatriate staff inadequate, blunders lead to massive wastage, and the gap in lifestyles between those calling themselves helpers (Hancock's "lords of poverty") and those they are ostensibly helping is too large for comfort. Academic researchers have also savaged aid programmes: mega-projects such as dams and project food aid have been particular targets, but almost no part of the relief and development system has escaped criticism. Frequently it is claimed that the recipients of aid were better off before development agencies started assisting them, and analysts of refugee programmes such as Barbara Harrell-Bond have favourably compared self-settled rural refugees to those living in assisted settlements.

Yet, having made their devastating appraisals, workers in aid agencies and academic critics almost always conclude that more aid is needed, not less, albeit of better quality. Each has



Photograph by B. Harrell-Bond

doubtless considered arguing that the poor would be freer and better fed without external aid, but has preferred not to say it out loud. Graham Hancock has at last confronted this issue head on, and drawn the logical conclusion. "Aid is not help", he says, and "the time has come for the lords of poverty to depart."

Many will take issue with Hancock's discomfiting book. Part three, which opens "why do people work in development?" - the part that is alluded to in the book's subtitle - should cause the most disquiet. Many of the cases of corruption and wastage he refers to will no doubt be disputed, and people will argue that many positive attributes of aid have been overlooked. In Hancock's defence, we may note that he explicitly excludes private NGOs from his discussion. He also excludes some of the greatest crimes perpetrated in the name of development, such as the Ethiopian government's resettlement and villagization programmes.

Whatever the merits of this book, it must not be ignored. Hancock has raised a question too rarely addressed, and proposed his own radical solution. Debate is needed.

Alex de Waal

Cycles of Violence: Human Rights in Sri Lanka Since the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement. 1988. An Asia Watch Report, published by Asia Watch, 739 Eighth Street SE, Washington DC 20003, USA.

This is a research report on the human rights implications of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement of 1987. The Agreement aimed at ending the violence and ethnic conflict in North and East provinces which flared up in 1983. Sinhalese and Tamils, the two ethnic groups involved in violence, feel themselves to be threatened minorities for different historical reasons. Ironically, although the Agreement provided for an end to the armed conflict, substantial local autonomy, an amnesty for prisoners and termination of the emergency, it added new dimensions to widespread violence. The LTTE, the largest Tamil guerrilla group, did not accept the Agreement; and neither did the radical Sinhala nationalist Janatha Vimukthi Peremuna (JVP) in the South. The government of Sri Lanka, which is predominantly Sinhala, depended on an Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) to contain the LTTE in the North and East, while the Sri Lankan security forces fought the Sinhala rebels in the South. The Report describes with firsthand information how the actors of this complex drama have resorted to various strategies to fight the opponents with heavy assaults on civilian populations. The implementation of Emergency Regulations, appointment of private armies by the members of Parliament, attempts of LTTE to terrorize Sinhala settlers in the East, IPKF's indiscriminate shelling or strafing of civilian areas and JVP's campaign of assassination against supporters of the Accord have destabilized the society and economy and threatened basic human decency.

What is the solution? The chances of having a forum for all the parties involved in this destructive warfare to discuss their demands are rather bleak. The Report, however, suggests several conventional remedies such as appealing to the government and guerrilla groups to refrain from violence, the abolition of certain nasty laws and regulations which justify state terrorism, and appointment of local and international commissions of inquiry and invitation of ICRC to carry out a full range of its protection activities.

The strength of the Report is its impartial discussion of grave violation of human rights. It goes beyond the conventional arguments of legal or ideological justifications of violence and destruction. The Report reflects finally on Buddha's teaching - 'Universal compassion is the spirit of human rights. If it is not in the heart of the people, no government can enforce it. It alone can break the cycles of violence'. If this is the only way, can we 'moderns' achieve it?

Jayantha Perera
Refugee Studies Programme, Oxford

LETTERS

Dear RPN

After ten years of dark and horrible nightmares, Afgan refugees may now see the initial rays of hope with a renewed wave of enthusiasm. Although the deadly drama has not yet witnessed the final scene, the end is looking bright and hopeful.

There should be peace in Afganistan soon (Allah willing) and the proud and victorious Afgans will be able to return to their homes with honour and dignity. But they will have a big challenge ahead and a new battle to fight, a battle of economic survival, rehabilitation, resettlement, reconstruction of a war-stricken country, clearance of mines and many other fields.

The return flow of over five million refugees from Pakistan and Iran, the return of over two million internally displaced persons to their ruined villages, especially with hundreds and thousands of widows, orphans, and disabled people, will not only put a strain on the already destroyed ecology. To rehabilitate and resettle them will also not be as easy a task as many experts believe. It has to be made sure that the Afgan nation is not subjected to other tragedies such as starvation, epidemics, or any other disasters as yet unforeseen.

The Afgan refugees will have the following requirements during and after repatriation:-

1. Every third of fourth refugee family is in debt to a shopkeeper, a fellow refugee, or a local person. They will have to clear their debts before departure, and will definitely need some cash assistance.
2. Refugees have a substantial quantity of personal belongings they would like to carry with them, especially roofing materials, since they are aware that timber is scarce in Afganistan. In case transport is not available to carry these things back, they would require cash assistance for hired transport.
3. The first thing they would require on their return will be some kind of shelter like a tent, since their homes will be in no shape to accomodate them.
4. They will require at least three months' free ration immediately on their return. The market place will not be able to provide for them in this period. The refugees will be busy settling down and will need time to reconstruct their houses, prepare the fields, and clear their areas of land mines.

5. The repatriation and reconstruction programmes of the UN should start simultaenously, so that when refugees get back to their villages, adequate job opportunities will be available to them.

6. Since in many areas the land has not been cultivated for several years, the soil has become very hard with lots of wild growth. In these cases they will require assistance with mechanized ploughing of land initially.

7. The other priorities will be the improvement of drinking and irrigation water resources. *Karezes* and surface water channels will require some rebuilding in some cases.

8. On the medical side, the returnees need to be immunized before repatriation, and later mobile health units should tour villages before basic health units or clinics are established.

9. There is an acute shortage of fuel in Afganistan. Firewood, bushes, and cow dung, which are normally used as fuel for cooking, are hardly available.

10. Repair of the infrastructure like bridges, roads, and tracks should be a priority.

11. Education facilities have practically collapsed in Afganistan.

12. Afganistan was famous for excellent fresh and dried fruits which used to be a major export. Very few orchards can now be seen. A comprehensive effort is required to restore the damage done to orchards.

With joint efforts of the UN Coordinator, UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF, FAO, UNDP, WHO, and a number of NGOs, Afganistan will again, *Insha Allah* emerge as a country being a symbol of love, unity, brotherhood, prosperity, hospitality, and tradition.
Ahmad Zeb
Afganistan

Dear RPN,

I would like to bring to your attention some of the problems of refugee students in the universities of Ghana.

Recent years have seen a growth in the number of student refugees in Africa. This has come about through the retrenchment of education budgets in African countries, following on from economic austerity programmes. Students have resisted the cuts in educational opportunities and the increase in fees for education, and governments have

responded to this resistance with repression and violence. In South Africa, apartheid has also been a cause of student refugees.

Student refugees from all over Africa began entering the University of Ghana in large numbers in the early 1980s. Presently, there are thirty refugee students studying in the university.

The Ghana State authorities have given a cordial welcome to student refugees. They have granted them permission to stay and arranged for their admission to university. The university, both as an institution and as a community, has also been very welcoming.

But after the initial flurry of care, the problems of every refugee rear their ugly heads. A central problem is the acquisition of refugee status: student refugees are the victims of slow and haphazard bureaucracy, both on the part of the Ministry of the Interior and UNHCR, and often requests for refugee status are turned down. Currently there is no student refugee in the University of Ghana with legal refugee status. Students from southern Africa have been more fortunate, because of the high level of publicity that has been given to their plight.

The other aspect of the student refugee problem is that of funds to finance their education and to provide for welfare during their course of study. Southern African students have obtained backing from UNHCR in their appeals to international charitable organizations, but students from other African countries remain in severe difficulties. The University of Ghana has made helpful concessional arrangements for refugee students, who can pay their fees in local currency, by instalments, and even defer payment until the course is completed. Presently, of the thirty refugee students in the University, 17 are without a source of funding.

To all these problems is added the problem of the fate of the refugee students upon completing their courses: they are faced with very limited employment opportunities in Ghana.

In the face of these problems, the University of Ghana student refugees appeal through the Refugee Participation Network to the international community for assistance for the needy students in the form of finance for their education and other materials to meet their welfare needs.

Edward Swarey
Ghana

NEWS FROM RSP

Transit Centres for Refugees

The RSP would like to encourage members of the RPN to share experiences and ideas for improving conditions for refugees who live for varying periods of time in transit centres around the world.

A great deal of publicity has been given to the prison-like conditions under which refugees live in Hong-Kong and to the fact that many western governments have been detaining asylum seekers - sometimes in prisons. In many countries unaccompanied minors are found living in situations which are not conducive to providing adequate care for children. However, little attention has been paid to conditions which obtain in the so-called transit centres which exist in most developing countries which host refugees.

Usually transit centres have been established to provide temporary housing for asylum seekers, but they inevitably become more long-term residence for a number of different categories of people for whom any other solution is difficult to find. This is the group of people referred to by UNHCR as 'ICs' (individual cases). Individual cases are the bane of all assistance programmes designed for large groups of people and which presume that the whole group is an undifferentiated mass whose needs can be met through standardized services. For their inmates, even if their right to freedom of movement is maintained, these transit centres can be virtual prisons and within them one finds all the sociological features of prison life.

Dr Linda Hitchcox, an RSP Research Associate, has conducted a second study on conditions for refugees in Hong Kong. In addition to documenting the appalling social impact of the prison-like conditions under which the Vietnamese are living, she used her well-established contacts to report and discuss her findings with authorities, including members of the prison service who have responsibility for putting down the riots which regularly occur and for maintaining 'law and order'. The police, as superintendents of the camps, were more concerned with maintaining control than with resolving the issues that give rise to unrest. In these discussions, Dr. Hitchcox argued that improving the conditions for the Vietnamese by giving them more responsibility for and control over their situation was the key to a more stable environment. Subsequent communication from Hong Kong would suggest that at least some of her recommendations will be implemented.

The transit centre, Lusaka, Zambia is another case in point. Refugees are fed from a communal kitchen and receive no allowances. While they are free to come and go, the Centre is located some 10 km from Lusaka and no regular free transport is available. The facilities are extremely basic. Recognizing that the food rations supplied by World Food Programme are inadequate, and that funds to supplement the diet are lacking, attempts have been made to convince the refugees to grow vegetables for their own consumption. This has not been very

successful as individuals perceive their stay as temporary and see no guarantee of personal benefit from their labour. Funds were made available for improving housing and providing basic furnishing, but there are many problems in providing services to what is basically a transient population. For example, some refugees sell such items as blankets, mattresses and even beds and other furniture as they lack any other source of money.

The numbers staying at this centre vary and the population is very mixed by age and nationality. It includes: asylum seekers, individuals who are not farmers and thus resist going to the agricultural settlements and who have been unable to find other employment in Lusaka, individuals requiring special protection because of problems they have encountered in the settlements, refugees requiring medical services not available in the settlements, and those who are awaiting resettlement in another country. They are mainly single men, but there are families and single women with children. There are no special facilities which would guarantee that their special needs are met, including their need for protection from sexual harassment. Many are students whose studies have been cut short by events in their own countries. The numbers of students at Makenni have recently been greatly increased by the more than 100 Zairis who have survived the May massacre at Lubumbashi University.

During a visit by RSP staff to Makenni in February, discussions with the refugees led those responsible to a greater appreciation of a number of problems with which they, the Zambian counselling staff, lacked resources to resolve. Moreover, as is so frequently the case, failing to realize the UNHCR's budgetary limitations for supporting such centres, the refugees laid the blame for their situation on their Zambian hosts.

With the staff of Refugee Services and the UNHCR office, discussions were held on how conditions in this centre could be improved. Plans have been made to allow refugees to receive individual rations and to cook their own meals. Refugees have been encouraged to form a committee to liaise with authorities. Since February, a women's committee which includes members of the Lusaka community has been formed to work with the refugees to develop means of earning income. One idea which has been mooted is for the women to grow flowers for sale. A visit was made to a local commercial flower farm to seek advice and permission to bring the women refugees to visit. This commercial farmer expressed fears about 'security' if nine refugee women were allowed to visit his farm. The initial response of the owner demonstrates how serious is the need to educate the general public of all host countries on the situation of refugees. Hopefully, the committee will be able to overcome his fears and he will give the kind of modest help they require to begin such a project. The RPN looks forward to reports on progress at Makenni and others who are working towards improving life for refugees who live in such centres.

NEWS FROM RSP

Farewell

We are sad to say goodbye to **Mary Kilmartin** who has worked on RPN since it began in 1987, and has played such a valuable part in its success and expansion to date.

New RSP Staff

Nicholas Van Hear joined the RSP as researcher in May 1990, filling the post of HRH Crown Prince el Hassan bin Tanan of Jordan Researcher in Refugee Studies. He will be preparing a series of reports and briefings on a wide range of refugee issues including refugees and displaced people in Africa; the prospects for refugees in the Middle East; refugees, health and nutrition; the enumeration of refugees; early warning of mass exodus. We also are happy to welcome RSP's first Ford Fellow, **Jayantha Perera**, a social anthropologist from Sri Lanka who will be teaching the course on Field Methods in Social Research. Previously he worked as a consultant for a Washington-based rural and agricultural development agency.

Research in Zambia

In July, the RSP completed the design of an agricultural project for Petauke District, Zambia. When implemented, it will benefit 1,600 Zambian and Mozambican women in improving household food security. This project was carried out through a contract between the RSP, the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Zambia and was led by **Dr Harrell-Bond**.

Petauke District is in the Eastern Province and hosts some 20,000 refugees at the Ukwimi refugee settlement and an unknown number who are self-settled along the border.

In preparation for the withdrawal of UNHCR assistance, more than half of the villages in Ukwimi have already been declared 'self-sufficient', but research indicates that despite the overall high production rates which have been reported, there are a large number of households unable to feed themselves.

Although this region of Zambia produces a surplus of maize, high rates of malnutrition have been reported. This problem is related to the production of cash crops as a priority over crops for family consumption. The new project is aimed to support women in growing food for their families.

Another aim is to devise a method which can be applied elsewhere and which will encourage the integration of services to refugees and their hosts. The project in Zambia will involve Refugee Services (a local NGO) working in close collaboration with the District Agricultural Department with the Provincial Women's extension officer acting as the overall supervisor.

Further research is currently being undertaken in Petauke District by **Dr Richard Black** and **Ken Wilson** through the Rural Development Bureau of the University of Lusaka. **Professor Malimo** (of the Bureau) and **Dr Harrell-Bond** also intend to develop a research programme which will enable Zambian graduates to undertake field research as part of their degree programme.

Research in Gaza

Dr Margaret Godel has drawn up a research proposal on 'The Psychological and Physiological Manifestations of Stress in Violent Environments' which is currently under review by various funding organizations. She has recently returned from a visit to Gaza, the purpose of which was to make contact with international and local organizations concerned with physical and mental health of Palestinians. As a result of the visit and general enthusiasm for the project which was considered highly relevant to the needs of the community, it is hoped that implementation of the project will follow shortly.

RPN Index

An index of the first 8 editions of RPN has been compiled and is now available to members. Entries are based on the International Thesaurus of Refugee Terminology for the refugee-specific index terms, in addition to being classified by author, geographical region and title. This will be a valuable resource for libraries and documentation centres and others who keep back copies of RPN. The index covers not only the articles, but also reviews, update and other information contained in the publication.

The Index is available free of charge; please let us know promptly if you would like one by sending back the slip below:

Please send me a free copy of the RPN Index:

Name _____

Address _____

This may be your last issue of RPN

The initial funding on which the RPN was founded is now almost at an end. We are approaching major agencies whose staff benefit from this publication for support. To date we have received commitments from the Norwegian Refugee Council and Christian Aid.

If you feel that this publication is of value, we would appreciate hearing from each member of RPN. Your letter would help us to convince major donors of the importance of maintaining this Network