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## ARTICLES

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### *Rural refugees in Africa: Past experience, future pointers*

Robert Chambers

The Ford Foundation  
55 Lodi Estate  
New Delhi 110003  
India

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Rapid change in rural Africa raises new policy problems in dealing with mass influxes of rural refugees. Self-settlement in agriculture has become less feasible and is less acceptable now that its disadvantages are better understood. Organized smallholder settlement can be a better solution where it is economically viable, refugees have freedom of movement, and staff are suitable. But growing land shortage means that increasing proportions of refugees are being placed in camps. To offset this trend, more attention is suggested to programmes for groups of refugees, categorized by time of arrival, by ability to self-settle or to farm, and by skills and experience. Practically-oriented social science research can contribute to these and other approaches which will require imagination and ingenuity. Solutions to future rural refugee problems should be linked with programmes of social and economic development which will make easier the achievement of humanitarian objectives.

Keywords: Africa, refugees, rural settlement, development.

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#### INTRODUCTION

This paper examines some past experience with rural refugees in Africa and tries to identify pointers and questions for the future. In doing this, it faces two problems:

The first problem is nomenclature. The use of terms to describe rural refugee situations is often loose. To make this paper clearer, the following categories and meanings will be used:

Rural refugee means a refugee in a rural area in a host country

Urban refugee means a refugee in an urban area in a host country

Self-settling describes refugees who seek livelihoods outside organized settlements or camps and without sustained official assistance.

Organized settlement is where refugees are provided with a place of residence and a means of livelihood. Most organized settlements are agricultural and almost all of these are smallholder settlements.

Camp refers to an administered refugee centre where refugees are provided with all or part of their subsistence without prospect of their becoming fully self-supporting in that place.

These categories are not always distinct.

The second problem is the speed of change. Africa is the only continent in which the rate of population growth increased during the 1970s: growth per annum now stands at over 3%, and in Kenya it is nearly 4%, with a doubling time of 18 years. Much of the additional population has to be supported in the rural areas, with the consequence of dramatically swift agrarian change and growing land scarcity. Simultaneously there has been a sharp rise in levels of literacy and education. In appraising these and other changes, the observer is usually out-of-date. Publications by social scientists about rural conditions in Africa are permanently behind the times because it takes so long to conduct research, analyse it, write it up, and then get it into print. An average time between research and publication would probably be in the range of 3 to 6 years. In attempting to reduce the timelags of perception, I have been helped by research reports (Betts, 1980; Hansen, 1979a and b, 1980; Lugusha, 1981; Terrill, forthcoming), official sources (e.g. NCAR, 1980a) and accounts by those who have worked with refugees (Cowan, 1979; Johnson, 1979; Wright, 1980) and by journalists (Grand, 1981; Woldegabriel, 1981).\*

Measures to deal with refugees in Africa can be seen historically as a defensive administrative campaign to prevent mass problems becoming individual problems. The tens and hundreds of thousands of refugees in the mass rural movements of the latter 1960s and the 1970s defied individual threatment. A tiny elite minority identified themselves as urban and educated refugees, and received an utterly disproportionate share of administrative attention, humanitarian concern, educational opportunity, and financial aid. The great undifferentiated mass remained largely unperceived and were, and to an extent had to be, treated as guesstimates towards whom food, tools, seeds and the like were sometimes directed. The first solution was "spontaneous integration," in which tribal people settled among their kin and solved the problem in their own way. As situations arose where that could not be managed (with Rwandese BaTutsi in Tanzania and Zaire, for example) because there were no kin among whom to settle, the next

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\*I am especially grateful to T.W.F. Betts and Christopher Terrill for generously sharing with me and allowing me to make use of the findings of their research on rural, and especially self-settling, refugees.

solution was camps leading to organized agricultural settlement. More administration was required, but individuals were still not dealt with, but households, and the households were treated in a uniform manner, each receiving the same tools, the same amount of land, and the same inputs. And although both are becoming more difficult, "spontaneous" self-settlement and organized agricultural settlement are still seen today as the two major means whereby rural refugees may become self-reliant and achieve adequate livelihoods.

But in the 1980s land is much scarcer, refugees are more educated, and more refugees are of urban origin. Influxes on a scale which earlier in Zaire were largely self-settling have, in Somalia and Sudan, made huge demands and posed major, enduring problems of settlement. Somalia has lacked the resources or opportunities to absorb or support the refugees it has received. Sudan has faced new problems of urban refugees on a scale unprecedented in Africa, a warning of what may come to other countries later. Refugees have survived, and been enabled to survive, to a declining degree through rural self-settlement or organized agricultural settlement and to a greater degree through camps, migrant labouring, and urban self-settlement. The problems of Sudan in the early 1980s may well be the problems of other African countries in years to come.

In analysing the past and looking to the future, it is prudent to be modest and tentative. I shall first review some experience with self-settlement and smallholder settlement (as by far the most common form of organized agricultural settlement), and derive some lessons; and then consider a possible complementary approach to help meet the new conditions.

### THE DEBATE: SELF-SETTLEMENT VERSUS SMALLHOLDER SETTLEMENT

Much debate about rural refugees has concerned the merits of self-settlement versus smallholder settlement. In the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, the balance of opinion favoured self-settlement where possible, with smallholder settlement as an alternative where necessary, especially where otherwise refugees would have to be in camps. More recently opinion has shifted, as reflected in the resolutions of the 1979 Arusha (SIAS, 1981) and 1980 Khartoum (NCAR, 1980b, p. 9) Conferences, towards regarding self-settlement as harsh and unacceptable, and smallholder settlement as preferable.

Until recently, self-settlement was by far the most common mode. During the past two decades, however, smallholder settlements have become much more common. When for humanitarian or security reasons refugees were moved from border areas of self-settlement, or otherwise rounded up, mass solutions were required. In default of voluntary repatriation, these were sought in agricultural settlements. At first, failure was common. But experience was gained, and in some countries with spare land and adequate rainfall some stable and modestly prosperous smallholder settlements were established. Those in voluntary agencies and governments who administered such programmes came to regard them as preferred solutions.

and despite their cost, they became a standard reflex.

The debate on the relative merits of these two approaches continues. The main arguments can be reviewed, drawing on evidence newly available through the comparative research on self-settlement being conducted by Betts (1980). Since much less has been known about self-settlement than smallholder settlement, more space will be given to it here.

### Self settlement

The case for self-settlement once appeared persuasive. The argument was that many refugees simply crossed borders and resettled themselves with ethnic kin, often close by. Providing there were no serious security problems this presented no official difficulties. African hospitality, it was believed, took care of the refugees. They soon had land and huts and reestablished themselves. Official intervention was neither desired by the refugees, nor necessary. The generosity, adaptability and resilience of African rural society handled the crisis. The process was 'spontaneous integration,' a felicitous phrase which suggested a natural and desirable process. Well could and should be left well alone.

There were, and still can be advantages for both officialdom and for the refugees in this approach. The case for self-settlement includes:

**Administrative convenience:** Little needs to be done by the host government.

**Low cost:** Self-settlement makes low financial demands. It may place additional burdens on local services, but the cost of these will be slight compared with the cost of an officially administered programmes of camps or smallholder settlements, with their typically long period of reliance on special funding.

**Self-help and independence:** Able-bodied self-settling refugees generally work hard and are independent and self-reliant. They do not develop the syndrome of complaint and dependence which locks onto those exposed for long to camp conditions and feeding.

**What people prefer:** Many rural refugees may prefer struggle in a familiar environment to dependence in a strange one. Small familiar things mean much to the quality of life, especially to older people. So some refugees may see self-settlement as their best solution especially if the alternative is life in a camp or restricted movements or both.

These arguments still carry weight, but not only have the perceptions of self-settlement changed, but also the underlying reality. Twenty years ago there was more uncultivated but cultivable land; markets in land were less developed; and self-settlement in subsistence agriculture was more feasible and more acceptable. But not much was known, except by the refugees themselves and their immediate hosts, about the conditions under which they 'integrated.' If we examine the evidence (see Betts, 1980; Hansen, 1979a, b, 1980; Chambers, 1979; Eriksson *et al.*,

1981), there is now a strong humanitarian case against self-settlement. This rests on four main points.

**1. Instant impoverishment.** Refugees often arrive with almost nothing. The first refugees to come may bring domestic animals and goods, but refugees who flee acute crises bring less. Money is realized at adverse rates of exchange (10 piastres for one Ethiopian dollar at Wad el Hilayew in Sudan in 1975, against an official rate of 25 piastres, representing an instant loss of 60% of savings). To survive, refugees often have to live off whatever meagre capital they have brought with them. In Zambia, for example, some Angolan refugees had to begin trading their possessions almost immediately on arrival (Hansen, 1980, p. 22). Moreover, as rural levels of living rise in Africa, so the trauma of this impoverishment becomes worse as more is lost. With almost no capital resources, re-establishment through self-settlement can be exceedingly difficult, or impossible.

**2. Access to land.** No land may be available. There was no land for many of the Barundi refugees in South Kivu in Zaire from 1972 onwards, or for the Eritrea refugees at Wad el Hilayew in Sudan when that was a major refugee centre. If land is available, it is likely to be small, economically marginal, and tenurially insecure.

Smallness is to be expected where population is pressing on land resources, as with very inadequate plots to which refugees gained access in Bas Zaire (Grenfell, 1967) and for those who did manage to cultivate in South Kivu.

Economic marginality of land also seems almost inevitable. The better land is already cultivated. Lugisha (1981, p. 30) reports that Barundi refugees in Kigoma in Tanzania were allocated land which was vacant precisely because it was marginal. For Angolan refugees in Zambia, Hansen (personal communication) found that some of the land available was a long walking distance from the settlement; and this (whatever its fertility) made it economically marginal because of the time required of hard-pressed families to go to the fields and return, let alone guard their crops. Economic marginality is also greater where payments, in cash or kind, have to be made to be allowed to cultivate in the first place.

Insecure tenure is a pervasive problem. Refugees are politically weak and easy to exploit and dislodge. They may be driven off land by those from whom they rent it, as happened to some of those who gained access to small plots of land in South Kivu, and to others in Uganda. The insecure status of self-settling refugees also makes them vulnerable to being identified and moved by the host government. The border areas which they often occupy are especially sensitive. Again and again refugees who have tried to settle themselves have been identified individually or rounded up *en masse*, and moved to camps or settlements. When this happens, they lose whatever they have already invested in breaking and cultivating land, leaving the benefit to their hosts. Fear of being rounded up is a disincentive to efforts to get securely established.

**3. Labour, wages and exploitation.** The labour which rural refugees bring is a resource which the less poor and more powerful among the host population may readily exploit. In his study of Rwandese refugees in Tanzania, Gasarasi (1976, p. 161) criticises the policy of sending refugees into the villages of the indigenous people immediately after their arrival. He notes that in such circumstances

“the local community will tend to establish exploitative relations with [the refugees], since at this particular point, they will have no choice other than trying to earn a living at any cost. As a result, the local community, realizing that the livelihood of its uprooted guests is under its mercy, will tend to develop some kind of contempt over them.”

Many refugees have nothing to sell but their labour. If they do not receive relief food supplies, their demand for food drives local food prices up. At the same time, their abundant labour and need for work drives wages down. The terms of trade for labour against food then shift sharply against them. In Sudan, low wages were noted around Wad el Hilayew when that was a refugee site: the agricultural schemes nearby “paid excessively low wages and employed mainly women and children” (Johnson, 1979, p. 420). In Zaire, a voluntary agency staff member has written that Cabindan self-settlement close to the border could not last long or give satisfactory results

“because the Zairois used refugees to carry out refugee labour at very low rates. The social condition of the Cabindans living in these villages could in fact be labelled ‘servile.’ It also happened that the local administrative authorities tended to oppose the grouping of the refugees in our settlements because we should have deprived them of a very cheap labour force.”

quoted in Betts, 1980, p. 68

In Zambia, the extremity of the struggle for food has been described thus:

A husband and wife, if both worked a normal work day every day, would earn only enough to feed themselves. If they had any children or other dependents who could not work, or if one of the two people became ill and could not work, they had to eat less than the normal quantity of food and a less desirable relish.

Hansen, 1979a, p. 373

Driving wages down and food prices up can also hurt the poorer among the host population. If the poorer hosts also have to rely on labouring for their livelihoods, they may be even worse off than the refugees if the refugees get free food and they do not. In such circumstances, the plight of the poorer ‘hosts’ may well be desperate.

**4. Harrassment and fear.** Self-settling refugees’ fear of harrassment is neither well-documented nor well recognized. Although self-settlers have been by far the majority of African refugees, lawyers (that most urban profession) have

paid negligible attention to them. Yet when investigations are carried out, they often reveal fear and persecution. Self-settling refugees are wary of officialdom. They fear the unknown — being rounded up and moved off to a camp or settlement. They are vulnerable to blackmail — to threats of being reported to the authorities. In South Kivu, some were forced to carry equipment for the army in the mountains; others were repeatedly subject to theft — of ducks, fish and the like — against which they had no effective appeal. Refugees tried to remain inconspicuous, and to avoid any display of even modest wealth which might provoke appropriations. Self-settling refugees are not just poor; poverty is their strategy. The situation is worse when all refugees are by regulation meant to be in camps or settlements. This was the policy of the Zambian Government, with adverse effects for successfully self-settled refugees:

If a refugee became too successful and aroused any enmity, or if a refugee attracted too much official attention, he ran the risk of being reported and sent to a camp. This continual political vulnerability operated against the village refugees. They had continually to weigh this factor into their economic decisions.

Hansen, 1979b, p. 378

So, if they cultivate, self-settling refugees have every reason not to plant long-term cash crops (coffee, cashew, or the like). Their insecurity prevents their becoming less poor. The cruellest cut is when their hosts dismiss them. As soon as a drought came, Cabindans who had self-settled as labourers were considered a burden by their hosts and expelled (Betts, 1980, p. 68). When things go wrong, self-settling refugees are made the first to suffer.

### Smallholder settlement

Smallholder refugee settlements have been established in many African countries including Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroun, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zaire and Zambia. Smallholder settlement has been more fully studied and evaluated\* than self-settlement. Here I shall only summarize the main points.

There have been three main arguments against smallholder settlement:

**1. Total institutions.** Smallholder settlements have sometimes been run on authoritarian lines, with restrictions on freedom of movement, and with refugee settlers as inmates subject to unnatural constraints.\*\*The comparison is made with other total institutions such as ships at sea, hospitals, prisons, asylums, and boarding schools. Support for this interpretation comes from studies of settlements which have indeed had something of this character, where the settle-

ment manager is called a commandant, and is a Prisons or Police Officer, where he and his staff wear uniforms, and where refugees are confined to the settlement and captured and returned if they run away. Both Sokiri's (1972) analysis of Ibuga in Uganda and Gasarari's (1976) of Muyenzi in Tanzania present some of the features of total institutions.

**2. Failures.** With early refugee settlement in the 1960s there was a high rate of failure in the sense that continual subsidies and support were needed, refugees were not self-reliant, and services broke down. Land sometimes proved infertile, and water supplies failed. Refugees voted with their feet, or remained, miserable and dependent.

**3. Cost.** Smallholder settlement has been a high proportion of total refugee costs, and its cost has not diminished. As it now increasingly becomes necessary to make payments for land for settlement, costs will rise sharply. They will be even higher where settlement has to take place in environments which require mechanization or irrigation for economic viability.

The case for smallholder settlement is well known and often repeated. Against its critics, it can be shown that there are settlements which have not resembled total institutions — Katumba in Tanzania and Etsha in Botswana (Potten, 1976) for example where refugees have been free to move and where the economic base has been adequate. And although the financial cost may be high compared with self-settlement, it is low compared with individual urban cases or permanent dependence in camps. Successful smallholder settlement also enables refugees to establish themselves in a self-reliant manner in a reasonably familiar environment and with familiar livelihoods, contributes both to the economy and the social infrastructure (through schools, health clinics, roads, etc.) of the host country, and makes the management and control of refugees easier. The existence, in several host countries, of secure and stable settlements of refugees, some of whom are now naturalized citizens, and the practical experience gained in how to make settlements succeed, do, in my view, show that smallholder settlement can be a good solution.

Many lessons have been learnt. The mistakes of the 1960s (authoritarian management, excessive social services, doing too much for settlers and undermining self-help, and so on) were quite largely corrected in the 1970s. The **supreme requirement was found to be the economic viability of smallholder agriculture for the refugees**; without this only failure follows. Neldner (1979) has summarized the lessons from Eastern African experience, covering topics such as feeding, housing, health, education, training and agricultural development. Much other experience is not recorded but is in the minds of administrators, voluntary agency staff, and others.

Three points, often misunderstood or neglected, deserve attention: freedom of movement; the organization of production; and the selection and training of settlement staff.

**1. Freedom of movement.** The more successful settlements

\*See, for example reports of implementing agencies such as AIDR, TCRS, and ZCRS, and Chambers *et al.*, (1971).

\*\*For this theme see Feldman (1971); Gasarasi (1976); Gosselin (1970); Moris (1967); Sokiri (1972). For analysis of total institutions, see Goffman (1962) and also his subsequent book *Asylums*.

have allowed refugees freedom of movement. There may be security reasons for restrictions. But confining, or attempting to confine, agricultural settlers to a delimited settlement area has many adverse effects including:

- reducing their ability to learn local agricultural and other practices from their host neighbours.
- inhibiting integration and the sharing of services with their hosts.
- reducing their ability to supplement their incomes and food supplies through agricultural or other labouring, petty trade, and the like, and thereby reducing both household incomes and the economic viability of the settlement.
- inducing a dependent state of mind, and inhibiting self-reliance and willingness to invest time and energy in agricultural development.
- reducing the bargaining power of refugees who do get out and try to get work, since they can be threatened by potential employers with exposure to the police.
- requiring or encouraging the exercise of authoritarian controls by settlement staff, and shifting social and organizational relations towards those of a total institution, with its adverse effects.

**2. Organization of production.** A recurrent problem with agricultural settlement schemes has been the temptation to use them as an opportunity for creating an ideal or model form of organization which corresponds with a planner's or politician's idea of what is good for others but not with settlers' ideas of what is good for themselves. This has taken the form of planning and requiring collective agricultural production. Refugees may seem an easy group upon whom to impose such a form or organization because they are so powerless. But the record speaks for itself. Early attempts at collective production in Zambia failed outright. It was tried with Angolan refugees at Lwatembo Settlement in Zambia in 1968/1969 and collapsed, the refugees (like most small farmers in the world) preferring to work on individual plots (Betts, 1980, pp. 26—28). In Tanzania, the collective production of **ujamaa** was not a success. Only with exceptional conditions of leadership, discipline, dedication, and economies of scale, does collective production stand a chance. Yet among its many humane and sound recommendations, the Arusha Conference of 1979 stated that in order to achieve integrated settlement one component which must be taken into account is "effective integration into the economic structure of the host community through co-operatives for production and marketing etc." (SIAS, 1981, p. 22 — recommendation 10 (3) (c)). Co-operatives for inputs and marketing are one thing; co-operatives for production are quite another. For ordinary mortals, and especially for weak and vulnerable refugees, they are irrelevant and best avoided. Almost all the successful rural settlements of which I am aware have been based on smallholdings. There may be common

services for input supply and marketing; but the basic economic unit is the independent small family farm which is what settlers want.

**3. Selection and training of staff.** Managing an agricultural settlement for refugees is difficult. It is much harder than, say, running a state or company farm. It requires agricultural and administrative competence, and a willingness and ability to listen to, understand, and communicate with the refugee settlers. On top of all this, refugee settlement managers have to deal with the local population, the local administration, and their head office.

This requires people of exceptional ability and humanity. It is usually not a popular job as it may involve living in a remote area with poor communications and without urban facilities. It may be a penal posting, a punishment for some departmental misdemeanour. The wrong sort of department (Army, prisons, police) can be a disaster. To be sure, one can find Army, Prisons and Police officers who are balanced, broad-minded and sensitive, and staff in Departments of Agriculture and Community Development who are intolerant, narrow-minded and insensitive. But generally, the latter have professional concerns and training and a style and content of administration which are better suited to managing settlements. It is, however, attitudes that are most important. Here are the views of Gasarasi in the conclusions of his study of a smallholder settlement in Tanzania:

. . . refugee administration is a very difficult task. It is difficult in the sense that the administrators have to deal with frustrated human beings who can respond to their frustrations by refusing to accept reality, by acting emotionally, etc. . . . the personnel acting on behalf of the host government and the various aid agencies ought to be carefully selected. At least a top settlement official like the Settlement Commandant should be a person who has been long in some senior administrative post, who is conversant with the principles of human psychology in order to overcome weaknesses like prejudice . . .

. . . I am making this point because one often hears that a certain Settlement Commandant or any other leader has told the refugees things like "I was told how difficult you people are before I came here." This suggests that prejudice can affect the relationships between leaders and the refugees. A person who cannot resist prejudice can be unnecessarily harsh to a certain category of refugees right from the start, simply because he came with an informal warning to beware of their rudeness . . .

. . . The ideal leader in a refugee settlement is one who is void of superiority and inferiority complexes. If he has some superiority complex, there is a danger of treatment refugees as nonentities who, because of their wretchedness, cannot be expected to have any say in the decisions related to their own lives. If he has some inferiority complex, he will tend to interpret even the most harmless disagreement on the part of refugees as rebelliousness, and he will retaliate with undue harshness. Both kinds of complexes normally result into authoritarian administration. Once this state of affairs is reached, the

relations between the settlement administrators and the refugees deteriorate and the former resort to intimidation. In the case of Muyenzi some settlement commandants have at times told the refugees threateningly that they would hand them over to the Rwanda regime if they did not behave well, or that they would put them in jail.

**Gasarasi, 1976, p. 157**

Beyond the careful selection recommended by Gasarasi, training has a contribution to make. The opportunities for those engaged in refugee administration in Africa to visit other African countries, endorsed by the Arusha Conference (SIAS, 1981, p. 24, recommendation 10,4) is one step. But further than this, there is a case for some suitable international body setting up ad hoc training for those who manage rural refugees and refugee settlements. One part of such training might include simulation games in which staff play refugees and learn from the inside, as it were, what it is like to be a refugee.

#### FOR THE FUTURE: GROUPING REFUGEES

Perhaps the most important lesson is that each situation should be examined afresh. There are no universal solutions to refugee problems. There will still be situations where sensitively assisted self-settlement will be the best policy, or where liberally administered agricultural settlements will be feasible. But the tragic trend has been towards placing more and more refugees in camps. As with many of the refugees in Somalia, this is in danger of meaning semi-permanent or permanent dependence. The search is on for alternatives to camps. These alternatives must not be too demanding of administration or finance. Where there are tens of thousands of refugees, for example, individual attention may be almost unthinkable. The question is whether, besides self-settlement and organized smallholder settlement, there are other administration-sparing approaches.

In the interests of both refugees and host governments, these may be sought through identifying and working with different sorts of groups. Three will be considered here: groups by time of arrival, by ability to self-settle or to farm, and by skill.

**1. By time of arrival.** In any refugee situation, different sorts of refugees come at different times. A pioneering and meticulous study by Terrill (forthcoming) throws fascinating light on one refugee sequence, and suggests practical questions to be asked of others. Terrill studied Acholi refugee movements from the South Sudan into Uganda. He has found that the refugees who crossed into Uganda from 1955 to 1972 came from two groups — the Lobong and the Kal. The Lobong were poorer and feudally dominated by the Kal who controlled the land. On the basis of extensive in depth interviews, Terrill distinguishes four phases and four types of refugee:

**i. Opportunist.** When refugees from further north began to cross into Uganda, the frontier was open for the Lobong also to cross. Although not refugees in the sense of international law, they took advantage of this opportunity to

escape from their Kal overlords. Their attitudes were positive, and they resettled themselves or went to settlements.

**ii. Anticipatory.** Later, as physical danger approached, other refugees crossed, anticipating imminent hostilities.

**iii. Acute.** These were refugees actually displaced by military activity, and were predominantly Kal, who had remained partly because they had more to lose by moving. Their attitudes were dependent and negative, and many ended up in camps and settlements.

**iv. Normative.** These were later refugees who, although fearful, had remained in the Sudan and who crossed the border when they learnt of the advantages being enjoyed by the kin who had crossed earlier.

There is a parallel here with Hansen's findings with migrants and refugees from Angola coming into Zambia (1979a, pp. 371—372). Earlier migrants (perhaps some of them equivalent to Terrill's opportunist and anticipatory refugees) were able to change their monetary savings at the border, and either sell their cattle before leaving, or drive them into Zambia. In the acute phase, it was dangerous to drive cattle because the Portuguese were bombing anyone they saw in the free fire zones which had to be traversed, and refugees "could only carry smaller less valuable items (clothes, blankets, tobacco, axe heads etc.)" (Hansen, 1979, p. 372), and money could no longer be changed.

Terrill's and Hansen's accounts indicate that refugees arriving at different times differ in motivation, in resources, in how much they have lost, and in ability to fend for themselves. This, in turn, suggests that far from there being an imperative to treat rural refugee influxes as uniform, there is an opportunity to separate out different groups at different times with different needs and abilities. This opportunity may, however, often be obscured by standardized and uniform administration, and by the pressures of an emergency.

**2. By ability to self-settle or to farm.** Analysis of differences by time of arrival points to marked differences in motivation and ability to self-settle. Opportunist migrants or refugees coming in good order and bringing capital with them are better placed to fend for themselves, and in the early stages of an influx there is less pressure on the receiving population and environment. To sweep all of them up into a uniform programme — of camps, or of smallholder settlement — may be neither what they want, nor what makes sense for the host government. In contrast, those who come in an acute phase, in distress, with very little or no capital, and having lost a lot may require a mass programme of relief. There will be more pressure on the receiving population and environment; and they may be less inclined and able to fend for themselves, having lost and suffered more. Both the circumstances of their departure and those of their reception are likely to induce dependence.

Within any refugee population coming at the same time there will also be marked differences between individuals

and between households in ability and willingness to self-settle or to farm. At one extreme there are widows, female-headed households, orphans, and the sick, starving and injured; at the other, there are strong able-bodied families eager to start at once the struggle for self-sufficiency. The former cannot be expected to settle themselves without support; but the latter, with some temporary assistance, may be much better able to do so, whether through self-settlement or through smallholder settlement.

**3. By skills.** Refugee populations also contain a wide range of skills. These are easily underestimated or undervalued. A quick survey (like that carried out in South Kivu in the mid-1970s) can be used to identify people like teachers, carpenters, tailors, barbers, fishermen, herders, masons, drivers, clerks, and traders. Such groups can then be provided with the tools of their occupations — sewing machines, boats and nets, carpentry or masonry tools and blackboards or employed on refugee administration.

The practical implication here is that the composition of a refugee population may permit a first screening which will reduce the later case load. Those who can settle themselves may then be encouraged to do so. They will tend to be found among those who are:

- i. Opportunist or anticipatory refugees.
- ii. Less poor, having capital (cash, animals, tools of their trades, etc.) with which to reestablish themselves.
- iii. In host countries which are known to permit and encourage self-settlement, thereby reducing or removing the disincentives of fear and harassment.
- iv. In areas with high demands for labour around the year.
- v. Able to gain secure access to the means of production, whether land or equipment.
- vi. In areas which are ethnically similar to those they came from.

If this is the first screen, the second may be smallholder settlement for those who remain, keeping the administrative burden manageable while still achieving humanitarian objectives.

This amounts to an argument against, in the new circumstances of the 1980s, the blanket solutions sometimes adopted in the past — allowing **all** refugees to self-settle, or putting **all** refugees into smallholder settlements or camps. In contrast, one strategy which might be pursued consciously, is suggested by Zambian experience. This is to have camps or settlements which act as safety nets to catch and support those who cannot make it in other ways. Hansen suggests that despite the unpopularity among self-settling refugees of the Meheba smallholder settlement, those who failed in the attempt to settle themselves did make their way there (1979b, p. 380). If self-settlement is encouraged as a means of reducing the burden, safety nets may also be badly needed.

Beyond this, there are the specialized group solutions proposed or already implemented in Sudan (for range and livestock, poultry, irrigated horticulture, fishing, and even settlements for agricultural labourers (NCAR, 1980a, pp. 7—10)). Learning from the experiences with such group approaches should provide lessons of value. A major question may be whether the administrative demands exceed the capacity that can be mustered, and if so, whether there are ways in which those demands can be reduced (for example through refugee participation and management) so that such group approaches can be spread more widely.

## ISSUES FOR RESEARCH AND POLICY

Urban refugees are more likely to be researched and written about than rural: they are politically more visible and vociferous; and they are more convenient for researchers. The more difficult and more important research concerns policy for the rural refugees who will remain the great majority in most countries. Six areas can be suggested.

**1. Sequences in refugee situations.** The research of Terrill and observations by Hansen outline the changing characteristics over time of those who cross borders and become refugees. Is the sequence which Terrill found — opportunist, anticipatory, acute, and normative — common? Analysing more refugee situations over time, would one find similar or different patterns? What are the characteristics of the different types of refugee? How do officials and others perceive the stages, and adapt their responses to the different types of refugees that come at different times? Are there other practical implications, for example, for monitoring a refugee influx?

**2. Self-settling refugees.** Research to find out more about self-settling refugees was recommended by the Arusha Conference (SIAS, 1981, p. 24, recommendation 10, 6). Four aspects can be listed for special attention, besides those already mentioned:

- i. Which refugees manage to settle themselves, and how, and which do not?
- ii. How are they differentially affected in self-settlement? Are women affected differently from men, as shown for north east Zambia by Spring (1979)?
- iii. How administration — sparing and effective can group specific assistance be to self-settling refugees? For example, the provision donkeys for women who live by fetching water (Wright, 1980), or of tools of their trade to fisherpeople, tailors, carpenters, labourers and others?
- iv. Is it practicable to catch skilled people at the early stages of a refugee influx, before they become habitually dependent on official support, and to enable them to become self-sufficient? Does this imply a new and different sort of organization or staff for dealing with refugee influxes?

The completion of the comparative analysis already begun by Betts (1980) will shed more light on this subject, and can be expected to raise additional questions.

**3. Refugee livelihoods.** Very poor people often adopt one of two strategies for survival. Either they become totally reliant on one source — a patron, an employer, or with refugees a government feeding programme; or they cobble together a livelihood out of bits, improvizing here, migrating there, fitting together a sequence of seasonal work to secure more or less adequate flows of food and income round the year. Officials in government agencies and workers in voluntary agencies may be inclined to see both of these as undesirable. With the first strategy, there is no argument: dependence on being fed, usually in a camp, is demoralizing and costly, and no one supports that unless for security reasons or because there is no alternative. With the second, one may ask whether enough is known. More, perhaps, than any other African country, conditions in Sudan have allowed refugees to opt for this strategy, taking advantage not least of the opportunities of patterns of seasonal employment in and near Kassala Province in Eastern Sudan. Some have combined smallholder settlement (on Qala en Nahal, for example), with construction work on roads and agricultural work on irrigation projects. With its short cultivation season, the Eastern Sudan is, indeed, not an easy place for secure agricultural settlement without other sources of income.

Research here might investigate the strategies used by households to secure livelihoods, and assess how crucial are freedom of movement and of employment. The experience of refugee labourers restricted to Suki in Sudan (Cowan, 1979) suggests that freedom of movement can make the difference between on the one hand fatalism and apathy and on the other active attitudes and self-reliance. Many of the poorest rural people in the world survive through seasonal migration. To restrict refugees in a highly seasonal agricultural environment is liable to condemn them to dependence, denying them the option which they may prefer of combining seasonal work elsewhere with seasonal work at the camp or settlement. Year round case studies of refugee households might here provide invaluable new insights. An excellent model of the sort of case study required can be found in Leela Gulati's book *Profiles of Female Poverty* (1981).

**4. Refugee participation.** "Participation" is more often advocated than practised. It is difficult when there is a polarization, as is inherent in refugee situations, into "us" and "them" — "us" being outside observers, officials and workers in voluntary organizations, and "them" being refugee clients. The temptations of paternalism — of "us" saying what is good for "them" — to which I have repeatedly succumbed in this paper — are difficult to resist. Yet if refugees are to participate, reversals to the top-down flow of values, ideas and orders are necessary. It is difficult for a commandant of a camp, or even a manager of a smallholder settlement, to feel empathy with the point of view of refugees when they appear as an opposing team. Perhaps here some sensitive participant-observation by researchers

who identify with neither side could help. It would not be enough simply to study relations and communications between refugees and others. It would be important to go further and become involved in action research, in the improvement of communications, in the growth of institutions, and in training. This would be asking a lot of the researchers, the managers, and the refugees, but might shed new light on old problems, and show how refugees can be more involved in the management of their affairs and how flows of communication and understanding can be two-way.

**5. Monitoring, evaluating and comparing new approaches.** The first smallholder refugee settlements in Africa were pilot projects, and several were disasters. But gradually the lessons were learnt and performance improved. Similarly, it would be surprising if there were not problems with some of the new approaches being forced on African governments by new situations, such as the semi-urban settlements and rural labour settlements in Sudan. In order to learn the lessons of these approaches quickly, research, monitoring and evaluation are needed. This requires restraint and generosity both from the official side and from those who research, monitor and evaluate. There is no place here for the negative social science which looks only for what has gone wrong. There are always positive as well as negative lessons. If these are fed back to policy and practice, improvements should come faster than with the earlier self-settlement and smallholder settlement.

Various models are possible for such monitoring. One is for a refugee agency itself to set up a monitoring cell, but this may not have the independence or incentive to do really useful work. Another model is the pattern of research and feedback established with the pilot village settlements of Tanzania in the 1960s, in which individual Ph.D students did their fieldwork in different settlements, and wrote informal reports. The research contributed to crucial decisions about the village settlement programme. Most of the researchers at that time were foreigners but national universities or research institutes should now be better placed to conduct such programmes.

**6. The refugee's eye view.** I have a vivid and shameful memory of Wad el Hilayew in Sudan. As evaluation officer of UNHCR I was making a (typically short, rushed) two-day visit. With a party of officials I was walking round the huts. Three young men wanted to talk to us. They were agitated. It was evident that if we stopped to listen to them, we would face a problem. The whole group of us got into our vehicles and drove off to another point. The young men followed us running, and tried again to talk to us. In the meantime, our own attitudes had hardened. To listen to them now would be to give in. What is more, they were now angry, besides out of breath. Our pride was also engaged, as it is when one refuses a beggar, and the beggar persists. We never listened to them; and I have wondered since what resentments and problems our refusal built up and what I did not learn because I would not break from my colleagues and listen.

The point of this anecdote is to illustrate the built-in resistance and obstacles to seeing things from the refugee's eye view. It is exacerbated not just by such reluctance to

listen, but also by what weak fearful or angry refugees will say when dealing with powerful, intimidating or unsympathetic officials from whom they hope to secure benefits. It suggests that much more time is needed than officials usually have available, and that a third party, from whom favours cannot be expected, may be able to help. Those who are or who have been refugees, but who have a certain detachment, may be the best people. Sokiri (1972) had a refugee background and did his student dissertation on the basis of long vacation research in the Ugandan settlement where he had relatives. Gasarasi (1976) had a similar advantage. More research should be conducted by refugees themselves, no least to enable those of us who are not refugees to gain a fuller understanding and a more balanced view.

### CONCLUDING: REFUGEES AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Agricultural settlement, both self-settling and organized, is becoming, and will continue to become, more difficult. The rapid growth of population in Africa, south of the Sahara, increasing urbanization, the pressure in many places on the little remaining common land, and raising levels of literacy and aspiration, will transform the nature of refugee problems in the next decade, as indeed they have already done in Somalia and Sudan. These two countries face today problems which other African countries will have to face and try to solve tomorrow. The old solutions — self-settlement, and organized agricultural settlement — should not be written off. But the proportions of refugee populations that can accommodate themselves, or be accommodated through such means will diminish.

This points to two conclusions:

1. There is a need for imagination and ingenuity in devising more ways of assisting refugees. These have to be intermediate between mass solutions as these become more difficult (widespread supplies of basic requirements for self-settlers, or large smallholder settlements), and individual solutions which are impossibly administrative-intensive (as with urban counselling). This points towards the development of a wide repertoire: training programmes; standard assistance to all people with a category skill (fisherpeople, tailors, carpenters, masons, teachers, and so on); rural programmes for livestock, poultry, irrigated horticulture, fishing, forestry; credit; self-help packages of equipment or materials; the provision of sites and basic amenities where refugees can live and work.

2. Economic and rural development are of overriding importance. If for example, the terms of trade shift against the rural sector, rural settlement becomes that much more difficult, and rural opportunities sparser. Here the recommendation 12(4) of the Arusha Conference deserves to be taken seriously. The Conference called upon UNHCR

to go beyond its present temporary and short-term assistance policies. To this end, assistance programmes related to the socio-economic development of regions inhabited by refugees who cannot be repatriated should

evolve with the support of the UNHCR and other refugee-serving agencies.

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More and more, refugee settlement will require and will only be possible through opportunities generated by development. The appalling danger is that African countries, failing to develop, may drift into conditions like that of Bangladesh where there is no spare land and no jobs for refugees, where through the practice of supplying too little food, over ten thousand Burmese refugees died, starving in camps (Aall, 1979). One way to avoid such disasters is through development which creates labour demand and employment and which makes it easier for governments to be generous. This points towards exploiting refugee situations for the purposes of development. Refugees are not just a problem. They present also an opportunity to mobilize resources — national and international, financial and human — in order at one stroke to achieve both humanitarian objectives and social and economic development; and the more social and economic development is achieved, the easier the humanitarian approach will be.

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