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Lessons from a Protracted Refugee Situation

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When refugees seek out the protection of another country, they often wish to eventually return home. However the number of protracted refugee situations around the world is increasing. In addition, the needs of refugees caught in such unfortunate circumstances also change over time. While refugee camps seek to grant basic human rights and protections, refugees living in protracted situations experience much difficulty. One way to alleviate such problems is to provide refugees with a means of economic self-sufficiency and eventual social integration. This presentation looks at the causes, consequences, and responses to protracted refugee situations. By analyzing first-hand documents from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) archives, Goetz explores the development and implementation of self-sufficiency and integration programs for Rwandese refugees in Burundi during the 1960s. He examines the lessons learned from this historical case and how they can be used to improve current refugee assistance programs.

Author's Note:²

This CCIS working paper is an adaptation of the author's work, "Towards Self-Sufficiency and Integration: An Historical Evaluation of Assistance Programs for Rwandese Refugees in Burundi, 1962 – 1965." The original research was undertaken for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit's Protracted Refugee Situations Project.

Presented at CCIS in March 2003, this working paper is not academic in nature and does not utilize theoretical approaches. It is intended for practitioners and policymakers who work directly with and have an interest in finding practical solutions to refugee problems. It begins

¹ The author can be reached for comment at ngoetz17@aol.com.

² This research was undertaken with generous support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit. The author acknowledges the kind assistance of Dr. Jeff Crisp, Arafat Jamal, Dr. Wayne Cornelius, Dr. Gaku Tsuda, Idean Salehyan, Dr. Parul Patel, and the staffs of the UNHCR Archives Unit and the University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre Library.

with an investigation of the anatomy of a protracted refugee situation – its definition, causes, consequences, and responses. It then considers the case study of Rwandese refugees in Burundi during the early 1960s, including an in-depth look at self-sufficiency and integration programs, and problems faced during the implementation process. It concludes with a set of lessons learned and recommendations that link together the historical case study with the present-day, revealing potential responses to these types of situations.

The goal of this working paper, and others contributing to the growing literature on protracted refugee situations, is to inform on new, innovative policy responses. One, largely untested way to do this is the use of historical analysis and evaluation of past responses to such situations, which may reveal useful, yet forgotten, strategies. What must be kept in mind is that research on protracted refugee situations is only three years old and needs considerable development. As literature emerges and policy is implemented, practitioners and policymakers will be able to broaden their knowledge and make more thoughtful and informed decisions.

Anatomy of a Protracted Refugee Situation

Definition

What exactly is a protracted refugee situation? Over the past few years, UNHCR has put together a working definition of it. Of course, this definition continues to evolve, but, for the sake of this particular research project, the author has chosen three elements. The first is a situation seemingly without end and without a solution. At present, millions of refugees caught in such situations seek repatriation back to their country of origin, which is impossible. Second, the refugees are in an organized camp setting for at least five years. Sadly, this is also the norm for most refugees at present and many are now second-generation, having never known anything

but a camp-like setting. Third, the refugees caught in this type of situation have little chance of being accepted elsewhere. Like the “residual refugee caseloads” in Europe following the World War II, these are often the elderly, disabled, and others considered vulnerable or at-risk.

Causes

What causes a protracted refugee situation? There are two causal categories: the direct and indirect. Conflict is the direct cause, specifically, internal, ethnic, or communal. These types of conflicts run the risk of being prolonged indefinitely. Examples of this include Angola’s thirty-year civil war, or Guatemala and other parts of Latin America during the 1980s. With a country in disarray, refugees have little chance of return. The second cause is the indirect, which can have a prolonging effect upon protracted refugee situations. In this case, stakeholders with vested interests in the conflict are to blame. These include smugglers, opposing political factions with control of certain areas of the country, and others who seek to “cash in” on the underground and black market economies created by conflict.

Consequences

The consequences that a protracted refugee situation can have are extremely sobering. Refugees caught in these circumstances often have little that they can call their own and rely upon aid agencies and others to assist them. As they acquire the basics needed for survival, such as food, cooking oil, and firewood, in a competitive environment, they are immediately at risk. This is simply because demand outweighs supply, leading to a rise in theft and petty crime. Psycho-social and gender issues are another consequence. Refugees may be in need of attention for post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychological conditions. One cause is by increased social tension and violence in the camp setting. Relating to this are the negative survival

strategies that refugees may adopt to cope. This includes turning to prostitution and petty theft. Finally, because of the longevity of these situations, many involved feel victimized or taken advantage of. Examples include donors losing interest because of the lack of solutions; hosts becoming pressured by their populations to do something about the camps; and refugees feeling that with no end in sight, their situations are hopeless.

Responses

The responses to protracted refugee situations fall into two camps: traditional and unorthodox. Traditional responses include working toward ending armed conflicts and maintaining the voluntary nature of return. UNHCR has advocated for these solutions in all of their work for the past several decades. While both of these traditional responses are good, they do not fit well as a solution for protracted refugee situations. This is largely why the unorthodox (which the author explores in the case study section) is becoming important. These largely unexplored and untested solutions may or may not be the answer, however, with protracted situations becoming more acute, thinking on this subject needs to be broadened. The two solutions that the author considers in the case study are exploring the potential for local integration and the promoting of self-sufficiency. Both have their strengths and weaknesses, and warrant further debate.

Case Study: Rwandese Refugees in Burundi, 1962 – 1965

Introduction

When a refugee seeks out the protection of another country, there is often hope that they will be able to return home. This is not always the case. More and more refugee situations around the world have become protracted – and the needs of refugees caught in these unfortunate

circumstances change as time passes.³ While camps seek to provide refugees the ability to enjoy basic human rights and protection, life for those caught in a protracted situation is much different and requires alternative provisions. One solution to alleviate a protracted refugee situation is to help pave the road for self-sufficiency and integration. An innovative way this solution can be implemented is to focus upon both the development of the refugee and local populations, thus improving the country as a whole. By doing this, integration of the refugees into the local communities can be done on a solid and continuing basis.

This case study tells the story of how several of the world's leading international organizations combined efforts and expertise in an attempt to implement a self-sufficiency and integration program for Rwandese refugees and the local adjacent populations in Burundi during the 1960s. It explores and evaluates this program implemented in four refugee settlements; and identifies the factors of what made it both succeed and fail, while drawing out important lessons learned along the way.

The conceptual method utilized for analysis in this case study is historical evaluation. This type of evaluation is quickly finding relevance in the field of forced migration, as policy-makers and practitioners seek new, innovative ways to find durable solutions to protracted refugee situations and other problems facing this population. The primary documents on which this paper is based come from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Archives and Betts Collection at the University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre Library. These documents address issues that may not have been on the public radar screen at the time in which the events

³ Jamal, A. "Minimum Standards and Essential Needs in a Protracted Refugee Situation: A Review of the UNHCR Program in Kakuma, Kenya," UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, EPAU/2000/05.

chronicled were occurring. These documents show what went on behind the scenes as the program was implemented; something second-hand sources are unable to fully accomplish.⁴

Although this is a preliminary analysis and the author continues to seek out additional sources, the case study actively attempts to raise issues that may prove to be of use in a present-day context. This is especially relevant as the idea of self-sufficiency and integration has, once again, been brought to the table as a potential solution to existing protracted refugee situations.⁵

In July 1962, the government of newly independent Burundi formally requested the UNHCR's assistance in developing plans to assist 40,000 Rwandese refugees who had sought asylum as the result of ethnic and political persecution. The approach the government sought was an eventual permanent settlement and integration of the refugees in eastern Burundi. However, this sort of approach was new to the UNHCR. It had little experience on the African continent and, more importantly, in creating programs involving the permanent settlement and integration of refugees into a first country of asylum. It realized that given the political situation in Rwanda, the chances of repatriation in the near-term were nearly non-existent.⁶

⁴ The limitation to using this type of document as a primary source is that some documents were missing, causing minor holes in the research at times.

⁵ See Crisp, J. "No Solution in Sight: The Problem of Protracted Refugee Situations in Africa," A working paper presented at the "Forced Migration, International Security, and Humanitarian Assistance" Conference, Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, San Diego, December 2002 (www.ccis-ucsd.org). See also Jacobsen, K. "The Forgotten Solution: Local Integration for Refugees in Developing Countries," UNHCR New Issues in Refugee Research, July 2001 (www.unhcr.ch).

⁶ Formal independence under a republican government came to Rwanda on 1 July 1962. Despite the event, war and ethnic violence had plagued the country since 1959 and would continue to do so well into the late 1960s. Such violence over that period served as the catalyst for 300,000 ethnic Tutsi Rwandans fleeing their country. Great Lakes region countries hosted many of the refugees, including over 50,000 finding protection in neighboring Burundi in the early 1960s.

Thus, UNHCR built a program whose aim was to establish a permanent solution to this protracted refugee situation. This was the first of its kind for UNHCR – and the organization realized its importance; for it sought a way to effectively deal with what were seen as ‘new refugee situations’⁷ appearing all over the African continent. The program was implemented at four refugee settlements between 1962 and 1965: Kayongozi, Kigamba, Muramba, and Mugeru.

The first wave of refugees fled and settled between July 1962 and April 1963. During this period, UNHCR and the League of Red Cross Societies (hereafter, ‘the League’) provided the necessary support for the refugee population, including food distribution, tools and seeds for land cultivation. Both organizations, however, viewed their involvement in the settlements as temporary, the League looking to complete its mission by April 1963. Because of this position, the implementation process was significantly rushed.

In April 1963, upon stabilization of the initial land settlement of refugees, the League concluded its mission. UNHCR would stay in order to supervise the transfer of the program to the Burundi government. However, a significant downturn in the economy left the government unable to take responsibility for it, leaving UNHCR to solely lead the program into its next stage.

UNHCR contracted the International Labor Organization (ILO) to set up an integration and zonal development project covering the refugee settlements and adjacent areas. This program provided for the drainage of marshland, the reclamation of arable land, the construction of workshops and

⁷ ‘New refugee situations’ are defined in this context as refugee flows resulting from the decolonization process in Africa and the resulting onset of new governments. This process was often extremely violent and ethnic persecution, among other reasons, was particularly acute. It was the first time UNHCR had dealt with an issue of this sort.

community centers, road building, improvement of livestock, and other related programs. Despite these positive contributions, the program never got completely off the ground. Among the reasons: poor planning and low moral.

In December 1964, a second wave of refugees from Rwanda entered Burundi. Some 25,000 crossed the border into Tanzania, but had to settle in Burundi due to overcrowding. Many of them settled in Bujumbura, Burundi's capital. The reaction of the Burundi government was to forcibly transport all of the male heads of families to a fourth settlement at Mugeru. Their response was, like the first wave, prompted by security concerns; the most threatening of which was armed refugee groups crossing back into Rwanda to fight. Mugeru was located on the eastern side of the country along the Tanzanian border and intended to be a permanent settlement. However, in the rush to transport the refugees, little long-term planning occurred. By the time the remainder of the 25,000 refugees arrived and settled, hunger, disease, and frustration were acute.

Within 8 years of the programs establishment, the four centers declined significantly. In an attempt to identify the causes, the International University Exchange Fund (IUEF) conducted an evaluation in 1976. Results gathered clearly demonstrated that, in less than a decade, the process had almost completely derailed. Why, after much investment by many of the world's leading aid organizations, had this occurred? What can be said for the program as a whole? Did it really ever accomplish its goal of self-sufficiency and integration for the refugee population? What lessons can be, even partially, derived from this experience? Can those lessons assist policy-

makers and practitioners today in their search for sustainable solutions to protracted refugee situations?

Kigamba, Kayongozi, and Muramba Settlements (1962-1964)

By mid-July 1962, nearly 40,000 Rwandese refugees had fled into Burundi, and, feeling immense pressure, the government called upon the services of the UNHCR as well as its neighbors, Tanganyika and the Congo. On 10 July 1962, citing a risk to its security, the government successfully negotiated with neighboring Tanganyika to help it absorb some of the influx. The agreement stipulated that the Burundi government would only send new refugees to Tanganyika and would discourage refugees crossing over the border haphazardly on their own accord.⁸ It also negotiated successfully with the government of the Congo, who agreed to allow a percentage to settle within its borders.⁹ After the completion of both negotiations, Burundi was responsible for approximately 20,000 refugees.

Despite a reduction in the number of refugees, the government's burden remained quite large. It knew that the political situation in Rwanda would not end soon and it would have to provide the refugees with long-term assistance. Luckily, it had already learned from earlier experiences. Since 1959, there had been a steady stream of Rwandese refugees seeking asylum all over the Great Lakes region of Africa. And, because of this, the government had already designated three northern areas for permanent settlement. It hoped that the refugees would voluntarily settle in the areas and provided incentives, such as land for cultivation (2 hectares of land per family) and grazing rights. However, the Burundi government lacked technical and administrative expertise and, thus, called upon the UNHCR and the League to provide temporary assistance.

⁸ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR[1]/70/Report/ 'Refugee Situation in Burundi,' 18 July 1962.

Initially, UNHCR and the League assisted with food distribution by providing seeds and tools to assist the refugees in starting land cultivation. They also focused efforts to make the settlements attractive so that the refugees would be willing to relocate there.¹⁰ By mid-August 1962, the three settlements received their first deliveries of agricultural implements for land clearance. And, within a month, 4,000 refugees had begun to cultivate and sow the land. In addition, reception areas were built and further land clearing begun.¹¹

However, three problems emerged, threatening the success of the project. The first was the reluctance on the part of the refugees to move to the new settlements. They voiced concern, citing superstition to go into areas recently cleared where before there was a thick jungle.¹² In response, the League asked for a few volunteers from among the refugees who would go to the three settlements of Kayongozi, Muramba, and Kigamba, to see the conditions themselves and to advise their people accordingly.¹³ A second problem involved the refugee's initiative to work. Many wanted to return to Rwanda and saw the situation as temporary. Others did not wish to contribute to any community efforts. The third problem was the poor quality of the land. The majority of the soil at all three settlements was not capable of producing an adequate level of crops for subsistence.

Settlement Issues

⁹ Such is an early instance of 'burden sharing,' although the official term had not yet been coined at this time.

¹⁰ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR[1]/70/Report/ 'Refugee Situation in Burundi,' 18 July 1962.

¹¹ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR[1]/172/Interoffice Memorandum/ 'My contacts with the F.A.O. Program Liaison Officer for Africa,' 7 January 1963.

¹² UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR[1]/110/Summary Report/ 'untitled,' 17 September 1962.

¹³ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR[1]/110/Summary Report/ 'untitled,' 17 September 1962.

In November 1962, it was agreed upon by the UNHCR, the League, and the Burundi government that the refugees should be regarded as future citizens of Burundi, their settlement should be made permanent and not provisional, and they should be treated exactly like Burundi citizens.¹⁴

Despite these decisions, the next four months (November 1962 – March 1963) saw very little assistance to the refugees, except in the form of rations. The refugees, Tutsi pastoralists, did not know how to farm; some even rejected cultivation completely. There was also a lack of staff to provide the refugees with guidance. Further, from an administrative standpoint, there was no clear long-term plan in place for running the program. Finally, in an effort to solve this problem, UNHCR's Director of Operations, Thomas Jamieson, put together a brief outlining the goal of the program.

“The purpose of our program for the refugees in Burundi is to give them a chance to survive and to make it possible for them to provide for their own needs through their own efforts. However, it appears to me that we ought not only to enable these refugees to support themselves on a subsistence level, but should give them a chance to improve their living conditions within the development of the country of asylum.”¹⁵

To support this action, Jamieson used the UNHCR “good offices principle;” meaning that UNHCR would not include just providing refugees temporary assistance, but would take an active interest in the problems that lay beyond that stage. A 1963 EXCOM (Executive Committee of the UNHCR) summary outlines UNHCR's position on the matter:

“ [The High Commissioner] feels that he should not hesitate to make available his good offices to the extent to which support going beyond the basic needs of the refugees could possibly be found for this purpose. Therefore, the High Commissioner considered it

¹⁴ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR[1]/150A/Interoffice Memorandum/ ‘Burundi Operational Budget,’ 8 November 1962.

¹⁵ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/36/Interoffice Memorandum/ ‘Burundi Operation,’ 28 March 1963.

appropriate to draw up a supplementary program, simultaneously with the basic program [protection and basic humanitarian assistance].”¹⁶

In clarifying this issue, UNHCR sought to ensure that the refugees would be able to live in a dignified way, through their own work. Additionally, this would keep the population from becoming dependent by permanent relief and allow the refugees a really free choice on the question of repatriation.¹⁷ However, UNHCR also realized that success would require a key change in a term it used frequently: ‘basic vital needs.’ This term applied to immediate assistance and protection, and was not viewed as applicable to long-term solutions. Thus, UNHCR sought to re-define the term in a less rigid way. It did so by recognizing that those needs it had not considered as having immediate vital importance were still essential to consolidate the settlement of refugees and to give them an opportunity to improve their living conditions.¹⁸

To help in its efforts, the UNHCR contracted with the ILO to implement a zonal development program that it hoped would be accomplished within a year. On 9 April 1963, officials from the UNHCR and ILO met for the first time to discuss the program. Although it was now participating in a program designed to benefit both the refugee and local populations, UNHCR maintained that it was responsible for the refugees and not for economic development. This attitude was in line with its mandate, but carried with it a sense of indecisiveness as to where it saw itself really fitting in.

¹⁶ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/2/EXCOM/ ‘Report of the Situation of Refugees from Rwanda,’ 13 February 1963.

¹⁷ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/6/Interoffice Memorandum/ ‘Attitude of the High Commissioner’s Office in New Refugee Situations,’ 29 March 1963.

Several other important issues were raised during the meeting regarding the ‘psychological’ side of the programmer’s establishment. They concerned the tribal way of living, which was of particular interest to the ILO. Indeed, the majority of the refugee population in this case was Watutsi (Tutsi) and were not agriculturalists.

“It was felt that their [Watutsi’s] outlook on farming would have to be changed, as up to now [prior to their displacement] the Bahutu [Hutu] servants worked the land for them. Now, as a result, they were out of their normal environment and were confronted with the necessity of performing manual labour.”¹⁹

The ILO agreed, recognizing the fundamental importance of taking into account the refugee’s traditions, customs, and psychology. It made very clear that what was needed was not long exploratory work, but a planning mission which should come up with proposals for action as soon as possible.²⁰ Thus, it was decided that Mr. B. Ghosh, of the ILO’s Lagos (Nigeria) office, would conduct a mission to Burundi and make recommendations accordingly.

Ghosh was to prepare a plan for the economic and social development of the settlements in Burundi,²¹ so that the refugees would be able to derive the maximum benefits from the natural resources available to them by employing suitable techniques introduced to them through a program of technical assistance.²² Importantly, it was noted in a pre-mission brief:

“Both the plan and program of technical assistance should be designed to fit in the national programmes of economic and social development of Burundi. They should, therefore, be considered as a first stage in the long-range economic development of this country, the stage when the settlements may be considered as having entered on the road

¹⁸ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/2/EXCOM/ ‘Report of the Situation of Refugees from Rwanda,’ 13 February 1963.

¹⁹ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/7/Note for the File/ ‘Meeting with Representatives of the ILO,’ 9 April 1963.

²⁰ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/7/Note for the File/ ‘Meeting with Representatives of the ILO,’ 9 April 1963.

²¹ He was also entrusted to carry out the same mission for similar settlements in Kivu. However, they are not covered in this paper.

²² UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/8/Brief/ ‘Project for the Economic and Social Development of the Rwanda Settlements in Kivu and Burundi,’ 10 April 1963.

to development along which further progress will depend upon their own efforts and the efforts of provincial and national authorities.”²³

The situation in the settlements, however, was already very complicated. They were already experiencing setbacks, including tractors used for cultivation breaking down. Although a seemingly minor detail, such had a great impact on the programs progress. Each settlement had been allocated one tractor. Upon delivery, one was already dysfunctional and could not be used; a second was only used once before it broke down; and a third, in Muramba, was available for use, but being kept nearly 20 kilometers away from the fields needing cultivation. To make matters worse, not one of the organizations staff present knew how to operate much less fix the equipment.

Because of this problem, UNHCR staff worried about the effects upon the settlements if the ILO plan was not in effect by the time the League departed, slated for June 1963. In an effort to keep the program from stalling, UNHCR officer Francois Preziosi suggested that the basic principle of refugee operations should be to issue food rations to the refugees as wages for work accomplished and no longer distribute them as relief.²⁴ Preziosi also argued that each of the settlements (communities) should attempt to reach a state of self-governance as soon as possible:

“The community should have its own elected leaders and its own work organization, it should administer itself to the largest possible extent. Any outside help should be in the form of technical advice.”²⁵

Preziosi’s recommendation concerning food as wages was not initially not accepted. The ILO argued that it was in contradiction with the International Convention on the Payment of Wages.²⁶

²³ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/8/Brief/ ‘Project for the Economic and Social Development of the Rwanda Settlements in Kivu and Burundi,’ 10 April 1963.

²⁴ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[3]/298/Memorandum/ ‘Weekly Activities Letter,’ 26 May 1963.

²⁵ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[3]/298/Memorandum/ ‘Weekly Activities Letter,’ 26 May 1963.

Further, it also viewed self-governance in each settlement as a very delicate matter, which might be regarded as compromising the sovereignty of the country.²⁷ However, since the situation in the settlements was not well, food for wages was eventually implemented.

Other recommendations came from UNHCR officer T. Jamieson, who wrote that it is essential to stimulate self-help methods, create confidence in future prospects and retain some control over trucks and tractors until development programs can start.²⁸ Without doing this, he argued, it was likely that the refugees would fail to understand that they should be asked to work for food if until that point they had received free rations.

Jamieson sought out the advice of Dr. Hindley of the Alliance Protestante. Hindley was familiar with the situation and compared the settlements to those of the Nyamata settlement in Rwanda, where refugees were resettled under the Belgian Tutelle. In that settlement, 15-20,000 refugees were resettled in May 1960. At the beginning, the refugees would not work, gradually, however, they were convinced to cultivate their fields. According to Dr. Hindley the refugees in Nyamata cultivated far less than the refugees in the Burundi settlements. Some seed was distributed to them and they received food rations for one year. The refugees received 1 ½ to 2 hectares of land per family. In May 1963, when Dr. Hindley visited the Nyamata last, the refugees were not being fed any longer. They produced more food than they needed and their complaint was that they could not sell the surpluses.²⁹

²⁶ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/Letter/ 'untitled,' 5 July 1963.

²⁷ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/Letter/ 'untitled,' 5 July 1963.

²⁸ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[3]/299/Incoming Cable/ 'untitled,' 28 May 1963.

²⁹ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[3]/313C/Memorandum/ 'Weekly Activities Letter,' 10 July 1963.

As expected, on 30 June 1963, the League concluded its mission in Burundi. During the time it spent in the country, it helped assist more than 19,000 refugees in the three settlements receive land, seeds, and tools. A 25 June 1963 UNHCR interoffice memorandum stated:

“The withdrawal of the League is based on the fact that the objectives of a limited settlement have by and large been achieved. The refugees have land under cultivation, more seeds and the necessary tools are available and in each center a dispensary and simple schools are functioning. In some cases, the refugees have started to plant manioc on a community basis, which is an indication that they intend to stay in Burundi as manioc seeds take up to two years to yield crops.”³⁰

By the time of the League’s departure, the refugees at the three settlements had reaped one harvest of beans and sweet potatoes and were expecting a second harvest by early 1964. This was achieved after T. Jamieson had defined the purpose of the program, promoting the use of several experts to assist the refugees in their cultivation. Their land holdings had also been increased to systematically attain a size necessary for self-sufficiency and to permit the planting of some cash crops.³¹ As this was occurring, Ghosh (of the ILO) submitted his report on 10 July 1963.

Ghosh’s Report

Ghosh’s report was based entirely on the position that both the local and refugee populations would need to benefit equally from the program for it to succeed. He argued that while refugee

³⁰ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[3]/329/Interoffice Memorandum/ ‘Rwanda Refugees in Burundi,’ 25 June 1963.

³¹ UNHCR Archives, “UNHCR Reports: a monthly newsletter published by the UNHCR,” No.25, July-August 1963.

settlements must be planned on an economically viable basis, it is neither possible nor desirable to conceive of them as isolated and fully self-contained economic or social units:³²

“The solutions to the various basic problems of the individual and community life of the refugees cannot and will not always be found within relatively narrow limits of the present settlements. There are many activities or projects of special importance to the settlements, which call for, or can be more effectively undertaken with the active participation of the populations in the adjacent or neighboring areas.”³³

The activities and projects Ghosh referred to should be aimed at addressing the issues of ethnicity, tribal influence, and standard of living of both populations. Both populations were ethnically different, and, in the struggle of keeping their identity, tribal influence would potentially yield a high amount of influence in the settlements.

With regard to the standard of living issue, the Rwandese refugee population had enjoyed a high standard of living prior to settling in Burundi, the local inhabitants in the areas adjacent to the settlements standards were relatively low. In these circumstances, argued Ghosh, if the proposed development program aims to exclusively improve the social and economic conditions of the refugee groups, facilitating the attainment of a higher standard of living than that of the local populations, it could potentially be a source of serious political difficulties and social tension.³⁴

However, there was some indication that social tension was not a factor in some of the settlements. In fact, in certain areas in and around them, the refugee and local populations were actively collaborating in various economic activities and community projects. One example of

³² UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/40A/Report/ ‘Report of the Planning Mission on Settlement of Rwanda Refugees in the Congo and Burundi,’ 10 July 1963.

³³ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/40A/Report/ ‘Report of the Planning Mission on Settlement of Rwanda Refugees in the Congo and Burundi,’ 10 July 1963.

³⁴ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/40A/Report/ ‘Report of the Planning Mission on Settlement of Rwanda Refugees in the Congo and Burundi,’ 10 July 1963.

such was the mutual use of seeds and land, and construction of roads and schools.³⁵ Success was also seen in the fact that the makeshift schools and medical posts, set up within the refugee settlements, opened themselves up for use by the local population, living within the adjacent areas.³⁶ These collaborations, however, were only being done in very few cases and were not significant enough to say that the settlements were becoming truly integrated.

Ghosh's summary of recommendations came under three major headings: 1) the new communities must have a viable economic basis; 2) the importance of an integral and balanced approach; and 3) the role of social promoters.

New communities must have a viable economic basis: Economic viability or satisfactory land allocation – is an essential prerequisite in the sound and long-term development of the communities concerned.³⁷ In Burundi, pressure on the land is relatively high and the soil less fertile, and this alternative measures (e.g. soil improvement and more intensive methods of cultivation, mixed with farming and reclamation of swampland) may prove especially useful.³⁸

Importance of an integral and balanced approach: In order to make an effective impact, the program must cover all the major aspects of individual and community life: economic activities, particularly agricultural and handicraft production; health, education and training; psychological

³⁵ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/40A/Report/ 'Report of the Planning Mission on Settlement of Rwanda Refugees in the Congo and Burundi,' 10 July 1963.

³⁶ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/40A/Report/ 'Report of the Planning Mission on Settlement of Rwanda Refugees in the Congo and Burundi,' 10 July 1963.

³⁷ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/40A/Report/ 'Report of the Planning Mission on Settlement of Rwanda Refugees in the Congo and Burundi,' 10 July 1963.

³⁸ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/40A/Report/ 'Report of the Planning Mission on Settlement of Rwanda Refugees in the Congo and Burundi,' 10 July 1963.

attitudes and social habits; joint or cooperative action and various forms of social organization.³⁹

Importantly, Ghosh argued, the refugee settlements or similar rural communities are particularly vulnerable to various types of social imbalance resulting from too great or too little an importance given to activities in a particular field.⁴⁰

The role of social promoters: The introduction of change, implicit in a new development program, especially when achieved through concentrated outside efforts or sudden pressures, might easily upset the existing harmony and structure of these communities. Because of this, Ghosh argued that the population may feel obliged to submit to such “imposition,” but the development program, in that event, will hardly leave any lasting results. By the effective and rational use of social promoters such dangers could be avoided.⁴¹

On 11 July 1963, UNHCR and ILO officials met to discuss UNHCR’s role and the funding of the program. It was estimated that it would take about six months to implement Ghosh’s recommendations. Therefore, it was decided that the UNHCR would provide funds for the program during the rest of the year (1963) and that the ILO would include provision for additional funds in support of the program in 1964.⁴² The UNHCR’s responsibility for the program would end in 1964. After that point, if the ILO required assistance it may call upon the

³⁹ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/40A/Report/ ‘Report of the Planning Mission on Settlement of Rwanda Refugees in the Congo and Burundi,’ 10 July 1963.

⁴⁰ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/40A/Report/ ‘Report of the Planning Mission on Settlement of Rwanda Refugees in the Congo and Burundi,’ 10 July 1963.

⁴¹ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/40A/Report/ ‘Report of the Planning Mission on Settlement of Rwanda Refugees in the Congo and Burundi,’ 10 July 1963.

⁴² UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/51/Interoffice Memorandum/ ‘untitled,’ 11 July 1963.

good offices of the UNHCR which may consider the request sympathetically, although at this time, no promises can be made.⁴³

Evaluations of the Three Settlements

In September 1963, officials from the UNTAB (United Nations Technical Assistance Board) paid a two-week visit to the three settlements. This was the first visit and assessment conducted by an agency not directly involved with the program. Its findings indicated that the program was in a critical state. In Kayongozi, several fields were examined. Despite some appropriate soil conditions, none of the fields had produced enough for successful self-sufficiency amongst the population. UNTAB recommended bringing the soil up to full productivity for an eventual bean harvest.⁴⁴ The refugees who had been given land, to this point, were never effectively taught this process. Thus, as a result, valuable time was lost. On a related matter, the tractor of the settlement was still out of commission at the time of the visit, further aggravating the situation.

The diet of the refugees was also a concern. Little cultivation of the land and lack of a diverse crop created health problems. The nurse at the settlement dispensary reported many cases of stomach pains due to a constant diet of flour-paste and night blindness resulting from lack of vitamin A.⁴⁵ UNTAB recommended to work toward broadening the types of crops being planted.

⁴³ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/5A/51/Interoffice Memorandum/ 'untitled,' 11 July 1963.

⁴⁴ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[3]/341/Field Notes/ 'Remarks on Visits to Kayongozi, Kigamba, and Muramba,' 6 September 1963.

⁴⁵ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[3]/341/Field Notes/ 'Remarks on Visits to Kayongozi, Kigamba, and Muramba,' 6 September 1963.

In Kigamba, it was found that despite an increase in efforts to persuade the refugees to cultivate their plots of land, there was still reluctance. Matters were made worse by the fact that, like Kayongozi, there was no tractor to assist with the process. Further, since the amount of rations per family had been reduced, refugees were even more reluctant to plant the bean-seeds, which had been provided to them for that purpose. Instead, they were eating them and, in individual interviews, not one family among those asked would admit to possessing any of the bean seeds.⁴⁶

UNTAB found the situation in the Muramba settlement unique. According to field notes, the refugee leaders at Muramba stated amiably but unequivocally that their people were there only until such time as they should be enabled to return to Rwanda under their Mwami.⁴⁷ The difference in attitude could be accounted for because Muramba is close to the northern border and thus more exposed to political currents from Rwanda, whereas the other centers are separated by the vast Ruvuvu Valley.⁴⁸

In its evaluation, UNTAB expressed a concern for including the local Burundi population. UNTAB observed that it would be useful to know whether local inhabitants might be included in projects from the very outset, and whether some programs might be drawn up specifically on their behalf – coffee or banana plantations, for example, in which the refugees themselves

⁴⁶ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[3]/341/Field Notes/ 'Remarks on Visits to Kayongozi, Kigamba, and Muramba,' 6 September 1963.

⁴⁷ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[3]/341/Field Notes/ 'Remarks on Visits to Kayongozi, Kigamba, and Muramba,' 6 September 1963.

⁴⁸ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[3]/341/Field Notes/ 'Remarks on Visits to Kayongozi, Kigamba, and Muramba,' 6 September 1963.

showed no initial interest.⁴⁹ Further, UNTAB notes that if a serious effort were made on such works among the Barundi with eventual success, others might be moved to emulate it.⁵⁰

A month later, Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan visited the settlements. Sadruddin was worried that UNHCR and ILO were prematurely phasing out much needed relief measures. In his field notes, he mentions that although the 20,000 refugees, grouped in three settlements, are cultivating the land and thus laying the basis for self-sufficiency, many of them in the meantime have not had enough to eat.⁵¹ Sadruddin wrote,

“The crux of the difficulty lay not in a shortage of rations, but in a temporary breakdown in transportation, a service which the Burundi government agreed to take over following the withdrawal of the League in July 1963. What is difficult to repair in such a situation, however, is the all-important element of morale. Material assistance is meaningful only when the recipients feel they are working hard and trying to establish themselves.”⁵²

To help solve this, Sadruddin met with United Nations Operation in the Congo (UNOC) Senior Community Development Consultant Ernest Grigg. Grigg was responsible for the creation of self-help projects for refugees in the Congo and Sadruddin sought his assistance with setting up a similar set of projects in the Burundi settlements. Such projects, it was felt, could help build moral amongst the refugee population. Grigg informed Sadruddin that the program could be conceived as a series of self-contained projects with a specific objective and a foreseeable terminal date.⁵³ Under this program, the UNOC was prepared to assist any organization (governmental, non-governmental, private agency or company, etc.) to help the people in a selected region to resolve special problems of development and generally raise their standard of

⁴⁹ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[3]/341/Field Notes/ ‘Remarks on Visits to Kayongozi, Kigamba, and Muramba,’ 6 September 1963.

⁵⁰ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[3]/341/Field Notes/ ‘Remarks on Visits to Kayongozi, Kigamba, and Muramba,’ 6 September 1963.

⁵¹ UNHCR Archives, “UNHCR Reports,” No.27, Nov. 1963.

living.⁵⁴ Grigg noted, however, that the selection of an area to be assisted is based upon the fact that the individuals themselves have demonstrated their willingness and interest in the project by making available whatever resources they have and be willing to work for themselves.⁵⁵

Decline of the Three Settlements

In November 1963, shortly after Sadruddin and Grigg's meeting, the political situation in Burundi with concern to the refugee population worsened: refugees in Muramba attempted to return by force to Rwanda. Fighting broke out before they crossed the border, but had lasting consequences on the programs progress. Because of the situation, the overall program came to a standstill, including all projects aimed at the consolidation of the economic situation and the improvements of social conditions for the Rwandese refugees residing in the three settlements.⁵⁶

Further, Ghosh's recommendations were placed in serious jeopardy. The Burundi government had begun to rethink the entire programs future. Among the issues it re-considered was whether the settlements would indeed be long-term or would repatriation and resettlement to other countries of asylum be better solutions?⁵⁷ The ILO and UNHCR, in response, sent a team to investigate the situation in all three settlements in January 1964. From their mission goals, it is evident that they were also unsure about the program, as they wished to determine the minimum

⁵² UNHCR Archives, "UNHCR Reports," No.27, Nov. 1963.

⁵³ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[3]/66/Letter/ 'untitled,' 18 October 1963.

⁵⁴ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[3]/66/Letter/ 'untitled,' 18 October 1963.

⁵⁵ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[3]/66/Letter/ 'untitled,' 18 October 1963.

⁵⁶ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[5]/715A/Memorandum/ 'Projects for Old Rwandese Refugees in Burundi,' 23 March 1964

⁵⁷ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[1]/84/Letter/ 'untitled,' 12 December 1963.

conditions (administrative, economic, and financial) under which implementation of the zonal development project, as originally conceived, would be feasible.⁵⁸

Following their mission, the ILO decided to scale back the zonal development program. Among the changes: the UNHCR self-help projects would not be implemented and the ILO would take over the program completely.⁵⁹ In the meantime, another crop would be planted with the assistance of the two organizations, which would be ready by July 1964.

By March 1964, the economic situation of Burundi was even worse, prompting the government to inform UNHCR that the refugee population could not be given the same treatment as the local population. This hindered the efforts of integration, placing a boundary between the refugee and local population. One example the government cited is that it was not possible to explain to the Burundi population that their produce cannot be bought while free food can be given to the refugees.⁶⁰

As a result, hunger in the camp became increasingly acute. Although there was a crop on the way, it was unlikely it would be enough, since the refugees did not receive enough land to produce in the first place.⁶¹ To add to the situation was the fact that rations had been cut significantly after the transition phases of the program had ended. UNHCR feared that the refugees would not have enough food to exist upon.⁶² Reports from Muramba indicate the health

⁵⁸ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[1]/91/Letter/ 'untitled,' 8 January 1964.

⁵⁹ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[2]/92/Memorandum/ 'untitled,' 17 April 1965.

⁶⁰ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[5]/718/Memorandum/ 'Projects for Old Rwandese Refugees in Burundi,' 8 April 1964.

⁶¹ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[5]/760/Memorandum/ 'Report from VSO Team,' 25 April 1964.

⁶² UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[5]/760/Memorandum/ 'Report from VSO Team,' 25 April 1964.

of the refugees was deteriorating, as many children developed whooping cough and other deficiency diseases.⁶³

By June 1964, it was painfully evident that the original goals of the program would not be able to be implemented. Many of the crops had dried up and there was no longer sufficient food for the refugees. UNHCR and the ILO realized that permanent settlement would not be achieved.⁶⁴ The ILO's plan for implementing the program had been delayed so many months, that there were now additional problems in financing, which could not be solved. Although some parts of the settlements achieved permanent settlement by the refugees, there was not the sense of community that had originally been intended. Further, the local population never really benefited one way or the other by the program. This population was essentially forgotten.

For the next six months, rations were provided to keep the population stable. Neither self-sufficiency nor integration was ever established. By January 1965, refugees were leaving the settlements, primarily Kigamba because of the food situation.⁶⁵ Those who did remain still received aid, but conditions really never improved.

Mugera Settlement (1964-1965)

Even after independence, fighting in Rwanda continued and thousands of new refugees fled. Many sought protection in Tanzania and other camps in different regions of Burundi, but because of overcrowding, moved to Bujumbura. By January 1964, there were 25,000 new

⁶³ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[6]/797/Memorandum/ 'Report of the VSO Teams,' 22 May 1964.

⁶⁴ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[6]/857/Memorandum/ 'Report of the ISO VSO Team,' 29 June 1964.

refugees in the capital. Once again, the Burundi government was faced with a crisis. Reports from United Nations observers in Rwanda told of genocide with the most horrible of descriptions and the estimated numbers of victims exceeding ten thousand.⁶⁶ The Burundi government's only solution was to create a fourth settlement with the hope that it could sustain the new refugee population.

However, the political tension escalated with the assassination of Burundi Prime Minister Pierre Ngendandumwe on 16 January 1964. A Hutu, Ngendandumwe was assassinated by a Tutsi refugee, Gonsalve Muyenzi. Muyenzi worked for the United States Embassy and claimed he received instructions to carry out the assassination as well as 1.5 million Burundi Francs.⁶⁷ The United States Ambassador denied the charge. Following the arrest, Burundi soldiers seized 1 ½ tons of arms and ammunitions at another refugee camp, Murore, and 35 refugees were arrested in the operation.⁶⁸

The situation in Burundi grew extremely tense as rumors of a civil war ran through the country. The two opposing groups comprised of those who wanted to overthrow the monarchy and establish a people's republic, and those who preferred the status quo. The first group was comprised of Tutsis, while the second comprised of all Hutus and those Tutsis who remained

⁶⁵ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[2]/107/Cable/ 'Message from US Mission,' 28 April 1965.

⁶⁶ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[4]/598/Cable/ 'untitled,' 13 January 1964.

⁶⁷ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[7]/1078A/Memorandum/ 'Composition of the New Burundi Government,' 15 January 1965.

⁶⁸ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[7]/1085/Memorandum/ 'Interview with the Prime Minister,' 30 January 1965.

loyal to their Mwami.⁶⁹ Interestingly, the same day as the assassination, the People's Republic of China broke off diplomatic ties with Burundi.⁷⁰

Forced Resettlement

On 27 January 1965, the Burundi government met with UNHCR. The new Prime Minister was interested in moving the refugees from Bujumbura to the new settlement of Mugeru as soon as possible. He mentioned that two conditions would be required to ensure the success of the resettlement scheme: speed and the secrecy of the operation.⁷¹ Little did the UNHCR know, but the "secrecy" component would cause a great deal of trouble for the settlement.

On 15 February 1965, the Burundi Government decided to transfer the heads of Rwandese non-settled families to Mugeru, citing security as the main reason. Family members would join them after the building of huts was completed.⁷² The Prime Minister of Burundi contacted UNHCR, wanting to know whether such an operation based on national security grounds was compatible with the spirit of the refugee conventions.⁷³ UNHCR informed him that the matter of internal security was entirely competence for the Burundi Government, but from a humanitarian angle, the operation appeared to be precipitated and would cause hardship for which the Burundi Government might be blamed.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[7]/1078A/Memorandum/ 'Composition of the New Burundi Government,' 15 January 1965.

⁷⁰ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[7]/1085/Memorandum/ 'Interview with the Prime Minister,' 30 January 1965.

⁷¹ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[7]/1085/Memorandum/ 'Interview with the Prime Minister,' 30 January 1965.

⁷² UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[1]/6/Incoming Cable/ 'untitled,' 19 February 1965.

⁷³ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[1]/6/Incoming Cable/ 'untitled,' 19 February 1965.

⁷⁴ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[1]/6/Incoming Cable/ 'untitled,' 19 February 1965.

The Prime Minister replied, stating that the Burundi Government had evidence of attacks by refugees on Rwanda planned for 25 February 1965 and of the planned assassination of Hutu ministers of the Burundi Government. Further, the Prime Minister informed UNHCR that various measures had been taken within the limited means of the Burundi Government to reduce hardship to a minimum, but strongly appealed through UNHCR to the international community to send relief and urgently assist the Burundi Government in the fourth settlement (Mugera).⁷⁵

In the early morning hours of 18 February 1965, Burundi troops surrounded the refugee quarters in Bujumbura and the first group of 600 heads of family left Bujumbura in 17 trucks without incident.⁷⁶ The next day, another thirty departed to Mugera. It was estimated that during the two-day operation, 2,000 heads of families were transported to Mugera. However, because the refugees were forced to go, quite a number of them escaped the control of their guards, scattered through the country and/or crossed the border into Tanzania.”⁷⁷

An appeal went out from UNHCR for food aid to support the refugees arriving at Mugera, as the refugees had no possibility to supplement their rations by locally grown products until they were stable.⁷⁸ It was felt that the Burundi Government had acted in haste, without any kind of preliminary planning.⁷⁹ Further, there were feelings that the Burundi Government might have ultimately moved all Rwandese refugees out of the city, but such would have caused a disruption

⁷⁵ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[1]/6/Incoming Cable/ ‘untitled,’ 19 February 1965.

⁷⁶ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[1]/8/Incoming Cable/ ‘untitled,’ 20 February 1965.

⁷⁷ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[1]/21A/Report/ ‘Rwandese Refugees Crossing the Burundi Border,’ 15 March 1965.

⁷⁸ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[1]/8/Incoming Cable/ ‘untitled,’ 20 February 1965.

⁷⁹ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[1]/17/Meeting Notes/ ‘Meeting with Col. Henniquiau,’ 5 March 1965.

in the economic activity in Bujumbura, where most of the business firms have to rely on Rwandese clerical staff.⁸⁰

The Development of Mugeru

On 10 March 1965, the first group of experts arrived at Mugeru to assess the situation. Representatives from the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) conducted a brief survey of the soil at the site and noted in their preliminary conclusion that:

“It must be appreciated that the region is a difficult one, and that any settlement will require a great deal of assistance, both as regards advice and encouragement for their (refugee’s) agricultural techniques, and supplies of food, seeds, etc. during the period of years when they are getting established.”⁸¹

Despite this news, it was decided that the soil was adequate for beans, bananas, and groundnuts. The FAO recommended that at least 2 hectares would be required per family, which were granted by the Burundi government. Seeds and tools were immediately provided, as well as support from UNHCR personnel. Rations were also increased and support brought in from the World Food Program (WFP) in Rome. The United States also got involved by authorizing a food donation worth over \$910,000, and stressed the idea of settling the Rwandese refugees away from the Rwandan border as an important contribution towards internal and regional stability.⁸² It also agreed to provide assistance to the Burundi government if the project could

⁸⁰ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[1]/17/Meeting Notes/ ‘Meeting with Col. Henniquiau,’ 5 March 1965.

⁸¹ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[1]/17B/Report/ ‘Brief Study of the Soils in Mugeru,’ 10 March 1965.

⁸² UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/RWA[1]/78/Report/ ‘WFP,’ April 1965.

include elements of the local population in the resulting benefits.⁸³ On 13 April 1965 agreement was reached that it would be feasible but difficult to settle all 25,000 refugees in Mugera.⁸⁴

With regard to the structure of the settlement, UNHCR hoped that it would avoid having a non-governmental agency in charge of Mugera, which, it believed, would create a state within a state and relieve the various Ministers of the Burundi government of their respective responsibilities.⁸⁵ However, because of the lack of experience the government had and the problems experienced in the first three settlements, UNHCR believed the presence of one or more coordinators on the spot would be an essential prerequisite for the success of the plan.⁸⁶

Plans for building up infrastructure, including roads, water supply, agricultural needs, and social centres were agreed upon on 16 April 1965. The Burundi government received aid from the UNHCR to build a system to ensure clean water for the settlement, and from UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) and several faith-based organizations funding for agriculture and social centres.⁸⁷ The Burundi government provided the necessary support for a new medical dispensary where the refugees could obtain basic health care. The League also returned to Burundi to provide administrative support.

⁸³ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/RWA[1]/78/Report/ 'WFP,' April 1965.

⁸⁴ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/RWA[1]/80/Report/ 'untitled,' 13 April 1965.

⁸⁵ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[7]/1042A/Memorandum/ 'Visit from Mr. Jan S.F. van Hoogstraten,' 24 November 1964.

⁸⁶ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/BUR/RWA[7]/1042A/Memorandum/ 'Visit from Mr. Jan S.F. van Hoogstraten,' 24 November 1964.

⁸⁷ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[2]/90/Memorandum/ 'Estimated Budget for Mugera,' 16 April 1965.

In addition to the planned infrastructure, the UNHCR, now executive agency of Mugeru, sought to define the settlement's purpose. UNHCR officer J. Cuenod wrote to the High Commissioner on 21 April 1965:

“Mugeru is first and foremost a long-term rural development project from which not only the refugees but also the local population will benefit. It should therefore be conceived as such from the initial stages, notwithstanding the fact that it has to start with a relief operation merged with a quick land settlement phase. The problem created by the settlement of 25,000 persons in Mugeru will not be entirely solved once UNHCR, and possibly the League, have completed their task.”⁸⁸

Nonetheless, plans for the settlement of all 25,000 refugees was carried out. The plans noted that in order for Mugeru to transform into a viable agricultural area, it required a formidable effort not only on the part of the refugees, but also on the part of the Burundi government and the organizations that have declared themselves prepared to render assistance to the government to that end.⁸⁹

“It is essential that the executing agency appointed can make available the necessary professional skill in agricultural development. This point cannot be too strongly emphasized being the decisive condition for the successful execution of the project.”⁹⁰

By May 1965, the settlement had progressed into a full agricultural settlement. Adding to the growth was the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), who implemented several successful youth centres, and German government who donated DM 1 million⁹¹ The Germans were interested in the implementation of a program that contained “pilot” elements, i.e. something which was new for the area. Mugeru fulfilled this requirement.

⁸⁸ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[2]/98/Memorandum/ ‘Executive Agency for Mugeru,’ 21 April 1965.

⁸⁹ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[2]/98/Memorandum/ ‘Executive Agency for Mugeru,’ 21 April 1965.

⁹⁰ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[2]/98/Memorandum/ ‘Executive Agency for Mugeru,’ 21 April 1965.

⁹¹ UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[2]/112A/Memorandum/ ‘Further German Contribution,’ 6 May 1965.

With the relative success of the program, the FAO assumed the role of executive agency in May 1965. The organization, along with UNHCR, UNDP (United Nations Development Program), ILO, and WFP (World Food Program) worked at strengthening and developing agriculture in the settlement. In addition, they provided projects for the maintenance and development of communal facilities including water supply, road improvement, and communal building.

However, political problems in Burundi kept the new projects from beginning. At the time of their inception, the Burundi government was in a state of flux. The government had changed earlier in the year and the King had yet to appoint a new Prime Minister. The political tension in the country was increased because, as noted previously, Hutus and Tutsis were at odds. The Tutsi still looked to end the monarchy, while the Hutu clung to the status quo. This caused France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States to stop aid that they were sending through the various United Nations agencies into the settlement. The reason they cited was the principle that linking bilateral aid projects with the settlement was still thought to be too political.⁹² Despite this, the FAO continued to work in close collaboration with the other organizations to expand the program, with limited success.

The last documents from the UNHCR Archives are from May 1965. As highlighted above, Burundi was in a state of flux and such was negatively impacting efforts in Mugeru. Although this was occurring, Mugeru did prove to be the most successful out of all four settlements. It endured for another decade and was sustained by a variety of non-governmental and other international organizations. It is probable that documents exist which provides additional details of the settlement's activities; and will have to come from other sources, such as Burundi

Government records or interviews with those who may have participated in the program. As this paper adds new analysis, such will be made available to the public.

A 1976 Evaluation: Did the Settlements Succeed?

From 1969 to 1971, David Moore, of the International University Exchange Fund (IUEF) resided in Mugeru. In 1976, Moore conducted an evaluation of the four settlements in order to ascertain success. The methodology of his evaluation consisted largely upon conversations with UNHCR staff, missionaries representing various programs, and, most importantly, refugees of varied experiences and backgrounds. He discusses at length the condition of the settlements and the different issues that arose following their creation some fifteen years earlier.

State of the Settlements

Kigamba and Kayongozi settlements were found nearly deserted. The bitter lesson of Kayongozi, Moore notes, is that the land is not productive for much besides grass for grazing and it has been gradually abandoned by the refugees.⁹³ Making this point even more poignant is the simple fact that such information was known and largely ignored from the time of the inception of the program. Experts like Ghosh from the ILO strongly recommended a thorough soil analysis to determine if the land could be sustainable - and, if not, to make alternative recommendations. This was never completely accomplished and resulted in wasted time, effort, and funds – leading to the community not being able to achieve full self-sufficiency.

⁹² UNHCR Archives, HCR/15/81/BUR/MUG[2]/126/Cable/ 'untitled,' 21 May 1965.

However, Moore's evaluation does point to the fact that at least some of the land proved fertile over the long-term. These spots turned out to be marshland, cultivated in close collaboration between a few Rwandese and local Barundi.⁹⁴ This collaboration, although small, shows some success with concern to the original intent of the program. One of the goals was to provide integration for the refugees, and opportunity for the local Barundi population.

By the time of Moore's evaluation, Kigamba settlement had also fallen into near disarray. Perhaps the worst problem was the fact that, since the population had begun to dwindle, wild pigs ravaged the strongest crops. Moore notes that, after speaking with some who remained, many had become convinced that their future lay elsewhere – and, as a result, they planned on moving to Mugeru settlement, Tanzania, and Bujumbura.⁹⁵

Muramba settlement's problem lay in the fact that it had been overcrowded since inception. This led to heavy exploitation of the land, leading to poor crop yield. By 1976, the food shortages had become acute, despite people choosing to remain rooted to the spot.⁹⁶

The fourth settlement, Mugeru, was found by Moore to be plagued by malaria, endemic intestinal parasites, and amoebic dysentery amongst the population. This was due largely to the

⁹³ University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre, Betts Collection, Box 23/Document 221/ 'Report on Rwandese Refugees in Burundi,' November 1976.

⁹⁴ University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre, Betts Collection, Box 23/Document 221/ 'Report on Rwandese Refugees in Burundi,' November 1976.

⁹⁵ University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre, Betts Collection, Box 23/Document 221/ 'Report on Rwandese Refugees in Burundi,' November 1976.

⁹⁶ University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre, Betts Collection, Box 23/Document 221/ 'Report on Rwandese Refugees in Burundi,' November 1976.

malfunctioning of the water system.⁹⁷ However, Moore noted optimistically that people are coming back in small numbers from Tanzania and other places to re-settle in Mugeru.⁹⁸ Mugeru also had produced good crops, resulting in the local population buying beans from the refugees on a regular basis. However, except for one or two isolated cases there was little or no social interaction between the refugee and local populations.

Naturalization

Because repatriation was not an option for this protracted refugee situation, the UNHCR maintained pressure on the Burundi government to grant the naturalization of the Rwandese refugees who sought it. Moore found that, at the time of his evaluation, UNHCR had not been successful. However, there was still the hope that eventually it will allow refugees to move from the status of “foreigner” to that of Burundi citizen.⁹⁹ Moore noted,

“There seems to be no haste on the part of most refugees to change their nationality, not knowing what will happen in the next ten years or where they may eventually end up. They are conscious, I feel, that their position is tenuous in an ever-changing continent. In the meantime, Rwandese employees in the city hold down good office jobs, but for how long? Employers are told how many Rwandese they can engage in any given year and there are cases of the phasing out of Rwandese as soon as there are Burundi capable of replacing them. This, as you can imagine, is the cause of much bitterness.”¹⁰⁰

Conclusion

⁹⁷ University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre, Betts Collection, Box 23/Document 221/ ‘Report on Rwandese Refugees in Burundi,’ November 1976.

⁹⁸ University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre, Betts Collection, Box 23/Document 221/ ‘Report on Rwandese Refugees in Burundi,’ November 1976.

⁹⁹ University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre, Betts Collection, Box 23/Document 221/ ‘Report on Rwandese Refugees in Burundi,’ November 1976.

¹⁰⁰ University of Oxford Refugee Studies Centre, Betts Collection, Box 23/Document 221/ ‘Report on Rwandese Refugees in Burundi,’ November 1976.

Self-sufficiency and integration could not be successfully implemented under the wider scope of development in Burundi. Although all involved realized its importance and saw it as the goal of their program, the living standards of both populations did not significantly improve. Many of the refugees, as noted in Moore's evaluation, actually became worse off than when they were originally settled. By this time (1976) Burundi was hosting over 60,000 refugees, making the situation extremely difficult upon both the organizations and government. The refugees continued to receive aid, but many sought their futures elsewhere.

Problem of Land Size

The first and foremost reason for failure was land. This was due to the poor quality of the soil and the fact that the refugees were not given a sufficient amount for them to be capable of producing more than just subsistence crops for themselves and their families. Thus, any attempt at providing a viable economic basis for the settlements was lost. Land that was deemed adequate was mostly marshland that needed reclamation. This was not accomplished until several years into the program. In Moore's evaluation, it was found that by 1976, it was this reclaimed marshland where most of the refugee population (who stayed) was living. The marshland was cultivated and produced crops, but not enough to provide for the entire settlement.

Problem of Failed Crops

It was assumed by the organizations involved that the refugees would be successful in cultivating their land. However, many were not and those that did produce a crop did not have enough to feed their families. This was the case primarily in the first three settlements, where rations were prematurely cut-off. T. Jamieson and F. Preziosi recommended using rations as wages, which, it was thought, would provide incentive for the refugees to cultivate their land and keep them from becoming dependent. However, since the quality of the soil was poor, there was a lack of personnel to assist, and equipment, such as tractors, was not functioning, this was not realistic. Although UNHCR Deputy High Commissioner Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan noted this, nothing was done. Acute hunger set in and many of the refugees moved to other places. In fact, all four settlements experienced large out-migrations in their early years, some of them losing as much as 90 percent due to poor soils, a desire to be reunited with family members located in other asylum countries, resistance to becoming farmers, and a lack of opportunity for refugees from urban areas.¹⁰¹

Problem of Appropriate Levels of Aid

All of the above problems raise the issue about appropriate levels of aid for the refugee population. None of the organizations involved ever established what it deemed to be as appropriate. Because of this, the four settlements all received, at best, minimal support in such places as their dispensaries and schools. When the UNHCR and League first became involved in the early settlements, they viewed their roles as temporary. As soon as the refugees could reach temporary self-sufficiency and the Burundi government could take over administration, they

¹⁰¹ Van der Meeren c.1969. "Burundi: Project Rural Integrated Development of Cankuzo-Mosso Area." Preliminary Draft, UNDP/FAO/AGS/FSR/BD17.

would depart. This mindset affected the first three settlements the most; as all of them were still dependent upon food aid well into the mid-1970s, when Moore conducted his evaluation.

Problem of a Viable Economic Basis

Because an appropriate level of aid, i.e. effective vocational training and opportunities, for the refugee population was never established, neither was a viable economic basis. With low yields and restrictions on the selling of cash crops, there was really no way that the settlements could even reach a basis through agriculture alone. Other opportunities provided, such as carpentry and a mechanics shop, were underutilized. They allowed the refugee to work on their skills, but did not offer a means to allow them to participate in the local economy.

Problem of Integration

Integration of the refugee population never had a chance to occur. Although the organizations and Burundi government agreed that they would work toward the refugees becoming citizens, naturalization never happened. Further, the local population really did not benefit one way or another from the program. There were only a few reported cases of the two populations interacting, and even fewer for mutual economic gain. Only in Mugera, after failed crops in other parts of Burundi forced the local population to rely on cash crops produced in the settlement, such as beans and other staples, did the refugees get a chance to participate in the Burundi economy.

Because the refugees were not able to integrate fully into the local economy, many of them eventually moved back to Bujumbura or other cities around the Great Lakes Region in search of employment. It was found later that many took up administrative jobs, which they were somewhat successful at. Although this trend occurred and the refugees became self-supporting, no credit can be given to the settlements for it. They had no choice but to move on.

Problem of the Burundi Government

The Burundi government's inability to take responsibility for the administration of the settlements harmed the program significantly. The settlements could not stand solely on the aid given by organizations such as the UNHCR, rather, they really needed the government to be the primary provider of services aimed at such things as keeping up public works and other infrastructure.

Lessons Learned

The case study illustrated in this working paper did not fall into complete obscurity following the implementation (and failure) of the self-sufficiency and integration programs that were created for the Rwandese refugees. Generally speaking, UNHCR and other aid organizations took with them a variety of lessons learned from the experience.

Specifically, policies emerged on the need to provide infrastructure early in a settlement's life – to indicate permanence and to encourage those refugees who value education and other services

to remain at the settlement rather than to settle spontaneously. Others were based upon the administrative pattern for settlements – preferring to work with agencies, usually NGOs, that were able to remain with a settlement project through to its completion rather than only working on the relief stage or settlement stage.¹⁰²

These policies were taken into consideration in other protracted refugee situations up until the early 1980s. After that point, UNHCR and other organizations shifted their focus towards promoting repatriation as the primary solution to both protracted and other refugee situations. A twenty-year gap (1980 – 2000) in promoting the solutions of self-sufficiency and local integration has left practitioners and policymakers with little choice but to start from scratch, illustrating, among others, the problem of the lack of institutional memory of large aid agencies

Four lessons drawn out of the case study by the author attempt to bridge the historical gap. They are seemingly simplistic in nature. However, this is the Achilles' Heal, for when taking into account other present-day protracted refugee situations, each falls by the wayside and is forgotten about in the decision-making process.

What Are the Needs of the Refugee Population?

As shown in the above case study, this question was completely overlooked. The UNHCR and ILO sought to create and implement an agriculturally-based zonal development program. Whereas the adjacent Burundi populations were agriculturalists, the Tutsi Rwandese refugee

¹⁰² Stein, B. "Refugee Integration and Older Refugee Settlements in Africa," A paper presented at the 1990 meeting of the American Anthropological Association, New Orleans.

populations were pastoralists. Further, before seeking protection within Burundi, the Tutsi were regarded as the aristocracy of Rwanda. This made farming completely foreign to them, making the program extremely difficult to successfully implement over the long-term.

This question should be the most important factor when considering the development and implementation of self-sufficiency models as a solution to a protracted refugee situation. By the very nature of the situation, i.e. one with little hope of a solution in the near-term, such will have a profound impact on the refugee population effected by a self-sufficiency program. The outcome will certainly be failure if this question is not answered prior to the development of an assistance program.

What is the Appropriate Level of Aid Needed?

Touched upon above is the imbalance of the levels of aid utilized in the refugee settlements. The majority of aid went directly toward the establishment of the agriculturally-based zonal development programs. Very little went to develop such necessities as infirmaries, dispensaries, and schools, negatively affecting the refugee populations.

The ideal balance of aid that should be achieved in a protracted refugee situation is equal attention to and development of education, psycho-social, and self-sufficiency programs. Often, this may be the initial goal when a program is implemented, however, there is no mechanism to ensure that balance is maintained. This is especially the case when multiple agencies are

engaged together in the program. There is often little communication between the agencies concerning logistics in the field, resulting in imbalance, and the wasting of time and resources.

Is There a Viable Economic Basis for the Program?

The case study painfully shows how without a viable economic basis, the situation of the refugees can be made even worse than it was prior to implementation. For nearly a decade, the refugees languished in the four settlements, and, only after this, did many decided to move on in search of a better life. What seemed so promising in theory was not so in practice.

The ability to establish a viable economic basis is extremely difficult, especially when those seeking to develop programs for refugees cannot pick and choose where the physical setting of the camp will be. However, an across-the-board approach like that which was taken in the settlements in Burundi is not wise, either. Implementing agencies should engage as much as possible with the host population and government, lobbying for participation of the refugees in the local economy. Where full participation may not be an option (and often is not), the ability to set up an economy like that found in the Kakuma Camp, Kenya (see below in the ‘recommendation section’), which has a variety of different, viable economic basis, should be sought. The most important element in successfully achieving a viable economic basis is to not exclude the local population and engage them as much as possible in all aspects – from the planning process through the programs establishment.

Is Integration Possible and Realistic?

At the onset of the situation in Burundi, the government sought to fully-integrate the Rwandese refugees. This was evidenced when they called upon the services of UNHCR to engage in such a proposition. However, as time passed and the situation showed little positive results, the government changed its intentions. This was largely done because of the perceived security risk, especially following the assassination of the Burundi Prime Minister.

Full integration of refugees into their host nation is extremely difficult as a solution to any refugee situation, but even more so when it is protracted. This is especially the case when a host government itself is attempting to develop its own economy. Refugees are viewed as a direct drain upon the country and quickly are seen as an unwanted burden. Such makes integration almost impossible. Where integration has been attempted, many refugees (like those in the case study) never become fully naturalized citizens.

Recommendations

Can the solution of self-sufficiency be rekindled in the present-day context and is it a viable option? In some respects, yes. An example of this is found in Kakuma Camp, Kenya, which, over the past couple of years, has been experimenting with these types of programs. Kakuma is focusing upon these solutions because repatriation for the majority of the camp's inhabitants is not an option. These programs are aimed at improving the quality and standard of life within the camp by providing refugees with a greater degree of control over their own affairs, and enhancing capabilities by equipping them with skills to help them until a solution has been found

to their plight.¹⁰³ The programs include the improvement of facilities within the refugee camp, such as housing, hospitals, and schools; diversification of programs being offered within the refugee camp, such as new education and skills training opportunities; greater use of income-generation and community self-management projects, such as zonal development programs; the construction of community centers and workshops; and the improvement of access to livestock and agriculture.¹⁰⁴

The solution of integration is highly complex. Tested in Kenya and other nations playing host to refugees caught in protracted situations has yielded little positive results. With the amount of barriers increasing, especially post-9/11 (and evidenced by this working paper's case study), the primary recommendation is to focus on the solution of self-sufficiency. In doing so, people involved in the solution making should realize that needs are different between the short-term and long-term refugee situations. Thus, self-sufficiency programs need to look just beyond just the immediate needs of the refugees.

The establishment of programs (as seen in Kakuma and other refugee camps deemed protracted situations) should focus on long-term education, skills training, and other self-help options. This gives the refugees a greater control over their own affairs and also allows those being resettled to a third country of asylum a set of skills to help them as they adjust from the camp setting to their new homeland.

¹⁰³ Jamal, A. "Minimum Standards and Essential Needs in a Protracted Refugee Situation: A Review of the UNHCR Program in Kakuma, Kenya," UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, EPAU/2000/05.

¹⁰⁴ Jamal, A. "Minimum Standards and Essential Needs in a Protracted Refugee Situation: A Review of the UNHCR Program in Kakuma, Kenya," UNHCR Evaluation and Policy Analysis Unit, EPAU/2000/05.

Balancing this equation are psycho-social programs, which should be implemented alongside those focusing on self-sufficiency. This includes adequate access to counseling, educational opportunities, and other program focusing upon the refugee's mental health. The primary benefit of this approach is that regardless of the protracted situation's final solution, i.e. repatriation, resettlement, or local integration, participants in such programs will have a smoother transition into their new lives.

Appendix A

List of Acronyms

EXCOM	Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
ILO	International Labor Organization
IUEF	International University Exchange Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOC	United Nations Operation in the Congo
UNTAB	United Nations Technical Assistance Board
WFP	World Food Program

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