NEW ISSUES IN REFUGEE RESEARCH

The forgotten solution:
local integration for refugees in
developing countries

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Introduction

One of the most significant problems today for refugees living in first asylum countries is that return is not an early possibility. The mass repatriation of Albanian Kosovars from Macedonia and Albania that took place a scant six weeks or so after they were displaced from Kosovo in 1999 was an exception. In most cases, some spontaneous repatriation occurs, followed by new outbreaks of violence, and refugees ebb and flow across the border but are unable to return to live securely in their homelands for many years. In some cases, repatriation does occur for large numbers of refugees, but some are unable or unwilling to return for a variety of reasons.

In these protracted situations, refugees spend years living in border zones, many of which are also zones of conflict. Many live in camps or other unsatisfactory and unsafe circumstances, with few means to support or educate themselves and their children, and few prospects. Their legal status in the host country is uncertain, they are not granted full asylum, and nor are they likely to be resettled in a third country. As shown in Appendix A, between 1980 and 1999, twenty-two of the world's largest refugee populations were protracted ones, i.e. where refugee populations greater than 100,000 lived in host countries for more than ten years. In addition, there are numerous cases of smaller numbers of refugees living in protracted situations, including Bhutanese, Chinese, Salvadorans, Iranians, Laotians, Malians, Mauritanians, Nicaraguans, Sri Lankans, Togolese, Turks, Yemenis and Yugoslavs.

One of the "durable solutions" promoted by UNHCR in protracted situations is local integration, where refugees are offered permanent asylum and integration into the host society by the host government. As set out in international refugee conventions,[1] local integration refers to the granting of full and permanent asylum, membership and residency status, by the host government. It takes places through a process of legal, economic, social and cultural incorporation of refugees, culminating in the offer of citizenship (Kibreab 1989: 469). Refugees with this status enjoy a range of human and civil rights, often referred to as 'refugee rights', which are set out in the 1951 Convention

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[1] Article 34 of the 1951 Refugee Convention calls for host states to integrate refugees: " The Contracting States shall as far as possible facilitate the assimilation and naturalization of refugees. They shall in particular make every effort to expedite naturalization proceedings." (quoted in Frelick 2001: 42). Self-reliance and local integration were taken for granted when the refugee regime was being established in 1950. According to a January 1950 report of the UN Secretary-General, written as the International Refugee Organization was being dissolved in favor of the UNHCR, "… the refugees will lead an independent life in the countries which have given them shelter. With the exception of 'hard core' cases, the refugees will no longer be maintained by an international organization as they are at present. They will be integrated in the economic system of the countries of asylum and will themselves provide for their own needs and those of their families. This will be a phase of the settlement and assimilation of the refugees. Unless the refugee consents to repatriation, the final result of that phase will be his [sic] integration in the national in the national community which has given him shelter." 'Memorandum by the Secretary-General to the Ad Hoc Committee on Statelessness and Related Problems', UN Doc. E/AC, 3 January 1950, pp. 6-7.

and other international instruments,[2] and include the right to marry, to practice one's own religion, to own property, to work and seek employment, and to have access to education and to housing. Under these circumstances refugees have once again acquired the protection of a state, and are no longer refugees.

During the Cold War, permanent asylum and local integration were widely practiced particularly in asylum countries in the West. In developing countries, the full offer of permanent asylum and integration was less widely implemented. Many host governments, particularly in Africa, permitted refugees to settle amongst the local host community without official assistance – a practice known as self-settlement. However, the legal aspects of local integration, which require that refugees be granted full refugee status, permanent residency and other human and civil rights, were seldom granted by host governments in developing countries.

The promise of local integration applies to relatively few refugees in protracted situations today. Since the end of the Cold War, the likelihood that host governments will offer refugees permanent asylum and integration into the host society has become increasingly small. In developing countries, host governments tend to view refugees living in border zones as *prima facie* refugees, because they have not undergone determination procedures and therefore do not have full refugee status.[3] Most refugees in these countries never become Convention refugees and do not experience the rights and privileges of Convention refugees, nor are they ever likely to be legally integrated into the host country. (Indeed, in many host countries, some of these rights are not even in place for the local population.) By contrast, UNHCR regards *prima facie* refugees as refugees in every sense of the word, and entitled to all the rights offered by the 1951 Convention, including local integration.

In recent years, even the practice of allowing self-settlement has been restricted, and only a small number of governments, including Uganda, Mexico and Belize, have offered refugees who cannot or do not wish to repatriate the opportunity for local integration. In both developed and developing host countries, the preference is for temporary protection and restrictions on refugees, including encampment, until repatriation takes place. Local integration, with its connotation of permanence, has fallen out of political favor, and the term is now a loaded one arousing negative reactions in host governments and donor agencies alike.

In the West, the reasons for this trend in the treatment of refugees reflect the shifting politics of asylum since the end of the Cold War (Frelick 2001). In developing countries,

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[2] See 1951 Convention, and 1969 OAU Convention. Also the 1981 UNHCR Executive Committee Conclusions defines 16 basic human standards that asylum seekers should enjoy pending local integration.

[3] Convention refugees refers to those who have undergone full determination procedures and have formal refugee status in the host country. Their numbers tend to be much smaller. Even those who have undergone full determination and have legal refugee status, may find that their actual rights and residence status to be insecure and incomplete. Not all host countries signatory to the Convention have implemented the Articles of the Convention. See J. Hyndman and B. Nylund, "UNHCR and the Status of Prima Facie Refugees in Kenya," *International Journal of Refugee Law* 10(1/2), 1998, pp. 21-48.

this shift occurred partly as a follow-on to the West's new reluctance to support local integration, and also because the presence of refugees was becoming increasingly problematic for host countries. Refugees were increasingly associated with security problems like the militarization of camps, the spillover of conflict from their countries of origin, and increased criminal activity. In addition, refugees were seen to impose economic and environmental burdens on the host community, and were blamed for a variety of social ills and problems affecting the local population in the hosting area. In these circumstances, host governments sought to impose restrictions on refugees, and began to insist that they stay only temporarily.

Protracted situations are characterized today by a 'care and maintenance' or 'warehousing' model of refugee assistance in countries of first asylum. Host governments, UNHCR, donor governments and international agencies have, with a few exceptions, been unimaginative in their response to long term refugee populations. There is no vision that refugees and assistance programs could be a development asset to countries of first asylum, or that they could promote human security there. To quote one observer, "In a refugee context questions of development and human capabilities are put on hold – the situation is supposed to be merely temporary after all."[4] This failure to look for more creative and positive approaches to protracted refugee situations represents an extraordinary waste of resources. As Jeff Crisp, a UNHCR officer once remarked, "It doesn't make sense to confine refugees to camps and to insist that they survive on food aid when agricultural and income-generating opportunities are waiting to be exploited."

How refugees in protracted situations should be settled and assisted in host countries is one of the challenges facing the international refugee regime. The problem is not simply how best to help refugees, but, given the climate of restrictive and temporary asylum, it is about how to find solutions that are acceptable to host countries – for without the host country's acquiescence and active involvement it will be much more difficult to help refugees. In many ways, it is as important to focus on the needs and constraints of host countries and governments as much as on those of refugees.

This paper explores an approach to protracted situations that address the human security needs of both refugees and the host country. As an alternative to camps and the warehousing model, the paper argues that the old and neglected durable solution of local integration can and should be revitalized – with modifications that will make it more acceptable to host governments.

Local integration can be revitalized, the paper argues, because as a local and unofficial practice it has never disappeared. Although host governments do not support the *policy* of local integration, informal integration is widespread. Except when concerted efforts are made to round up and forcibly relocate refugees, governments and local authorities lack the will or capacity to find and extract refugees living outside camps. Most of the time

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[4] *Minimum Standards and Essential Needs in a Protracted Refugee Situation. A Review of the UNHCR Programme in Kakuma, Kenya*. UNHCR/EPAU/2000/05, November 2000.
http://www.unhcr.org/

self-settled refugees are simply ignored by the authorities,[5] and eventually they become integrated into the community, This process of integration is influenced by many factors, as discussed below, and the refugees' legal status is always in doubt.

In recent years there has been little research on the process of local integration and its consequences for refugees and their hosts.[6] This is largely because the international humanitarian community has been preoccupied with repatriation as the preferred refugee solution. UNHCR's evaluation unit has undertaken numerous studies of repatriation and reintegration programs, as well as a major review of UNHCR's resettlement policy,[7] but it has not systematically examined what happens to self-settled refugees who become integrated in countries of first asylum.[8]

This paper seeks to remedy the 'research gap' by exploring the circumstances in which refugees in protracted situations live outside of camps and pursue a sustainable existence within the host community. The premise is that because many self-settled refugees do become integrated into the host community, largely without official assistance, a policy of assisted local integration in which refugees, the local population and the host government are encouraged and enabled to work together, is potentially workable in protracted situations.

However, a revitalized local integration policy must be modified from traditional approaches to local integration in two main ways:

a) first, the circumstances under which local integration is, or could be made feasible for a host country, and acceptable to the host government, must be determined. To do this, a flexible approach must be developed – one that addresses the needs and concerns of the host government and local population as well as refugees. In some situations, local integration may not be feasible for the host country. Local integration should only be pursued when it promote the human security of everyone living in the hosting area.

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[5] A few host countries such as Ivory Coast and until recently Guinea officially permit self-settlement in designated 'refugee zones' near the border.

[6] The last review of local integration was undertaken by Lance Clarke and Barry Stein (1986), nearly 20 years ago. More recently, Roger Zetter has provided an overview of settlement policies for refugees (Zetter, 1995), which considers some issues of local integration.

[7] McBride, M., 1999. "The Evolution of US Immigration and refugee policy: public opinion, domestic politics and UNHCR,", *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working Paper No. 3, UNHCR, Geneva; Chimni, B.S., 1999. "From resettlement to involuntary repatriation: towards a critical history of durable solutions to refugee problems," *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working Paper No. 2, UNHCR, Geneva; J. Macrae, 1999. "Aiding peace … and war: UNHCR, returnee reintegration, and the relief-development debate," *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working Paper No. 14, UNHCR, Geneva.
All these papers can be found at http://www.unhcr.org/epau

[8] Despite its title, UNHCR's 1995 publication, *The State of the World's Refugees: In Search of Solutions*, spent a scant six pages discussing local integration (pp. 92-97). The editors pointed to the lack of success of past local integration programs, and the current lack of interest by host governments in them. The SOWR did however point to the conditions that enable local integration, and these are discussed later in this paper. The 2000 edition of *The State of the World's Refugees* has no explicit discussion of local integration.

b) second, repatriation must become a component of assisted local integration. Not all integrated refugees will want to repatriate permanently, but various forms of movement between the sending and host country are a significant characteristic of protracted situations, and these cyclical and periodic return movements should be incorporated into local integration policy. Incorporating return migration into a policy of local integration will make it more acceptable to both refugees and host countries.

The paper reviews research on the experience and impact of refugees in protracted situations, and explores actual and potential program interventions that enable local integration. It then outlines and defines the main forms of refugee settlement in host countries, including local integration. It also discusses the context in which local integration occurs – i.e. the security, political and economic variables characterizing the RHA, and the interests of key groups in refugee settlement. It explores the main obstacles to local integration – security problems and competition for resources – and examines the conditions that enable or inhibit local integration, including government policies and external assistance, relations between the refugees and the host community, and the attitudes of the refugees themselves. The following section discusses ways in which local integration can be made more acceptable to host countries, especially the host government, assuming that it does not threaten a country's security or stability. This section explores policies and strategies that have been attempted, such as the use of economic incentives. This section draws mainly on two case studies, northern Uganda and Mexico, both of which impart interesting lessons on local integration.

The paper uses existing research literature, case studies and evaluation reports, available from UNHCR and other depositories such as the Refugee Studies Centre at Oxford University. The literature was supplemented by interviews with UNHCR field officers and NGO practitioners, and where possible with host government officials

Forms of settlement: some definitions

Once they have fled across a border, refugees must find accommodation and become settled, either with official assistance, or by relying on the hospitality of the host community. In some cases, full refugee status is granted by the host government and refugees are allowed and encouraged to become integrated into the host society. More commonly, host governments prefer to manage refugees by locating them in camps or organized settlements. However, most refugee bypass official assistance, and find ways to settle themselves amongst the local population, in a pattern known as self-settlement or dispersed settlement.

Table 2 summarizes some of the main differences between the different types of settlement. A significant characteristic of many host countries is that there are multiple groups of refugees at any one time, from different countries or different periods, and each group can be received by and settled in the host country in different ways.

Table 2
Some Differences in Types of Refugee Settlement

	Camps	Organized Settlements	Self-settlement
Legal Status of Refugees According to Host Government	Defined as *prima facie*; not full refugee status (UNHCR recognizes all as full refugees)	Defined as *prima facie*; not full refugee status (UNHCR recognizes all as full refugees)	No legal status, often defined as illegal migrants (UNHCR recognizes all as full refugees)
Location	Usually close to the border (but are required to be at least 50km away) and thus usually in rural areas	May evolve from camps which have become permanent fixtures	Refugees choose where to live without regard for UNHCR recommendations; often in villages close to borders or in urban areas
Housing Structures and Access to Land	Intended to be temporary (tents or huts); no official access to land	Sometimes more permanent construction; land is available for farming	As in local housing; land negotiated from local population
Administration	Administered by UNHCR and the host government; NGOs provide refugees with relief and assistance	Initially administered by UNHCR and/or host government, then handed over to host government	Not administered
Economic activity	None usually permitted, some income-generating programs based in camp	Refugees usually permitted to farm, or conduct limited activity in local markets	Refugees often active in the local economy (but not legally permitted)
Protection	Host government is technically responsible for security and safety of refugees, but increasingly UNHCR is assuming this role.	As with camps	No formal protection; UNHCR sometimes provides coverage
Long-term solutions	Repatriation or third country resettlement	Repatriation	Repatriation or local integration

Self-settlement

Also known as "dispersed settlement", "spontaneous settlement" or "self-directed settlement", self-settlement occurs when refugees settle amongst the local community without direct official (government or international) assistance. They share local households or set up temporary accommodation nearby, and are helped with shelter and food by local families or community organizations.

Assisted settlement

Assisted settlement for refugees takes various forms, but all are *intended to house refugees on a temporary basis*. In rural areas, camps and local settlements are typical. In more urban areas, refugees are often housed in mass shelters in public building or community facilities such as schools, hotels, barracks, etc. This type of accommodation is often intended to be temporary or transit, because the host population needs the buildings. However, as with camps, what is intended to be temporary often becomes permanent as the refugees' situation becomes protracted. In the cities and towns of countries like Georgia and elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, hotels and other public

buildings have become permanent housing for refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs).

Camps are purpose-built sites, usually close to the border, and thus usually in rural areas. For security reasons, UNHCR encourages camps to be built at least 50km from the border, but even when this regulation is complied with, camps are often in conflict zones. Since camps are intended to be temporary structures, they are seldom planned for long duration or population growth. Dwelling structures are tents or flimsy huts, and water and sanitation infrastructure is problematic, especially over the long term. Camps are administered by UNHCR and the host government. The latter is technically responsible for the physical security of refugees but this responsibility is increasingly being assumed by UNHCR. NGOs, subcontracted by UNHCR, provide food distribution (food aid itself is provided by the World Food Program (WFP), and services such as schooling, health, water and sanitation. Camp refugees are not expected to be self-sufficient. One reason host governments and many relief agencies prefer camps is that in addition to making the management of assistance easier, camps are seen as facilitating repatriation – not least because the austere conditions discourage people from staying in them long.

Local settlements, also referred to as organized settlements, are planned, segregated agricultural enclaves or villages created specifically for refugees, but which differ from camps in that refugees are expected to become self-sufficient pending their repatriation. Local settlements have been widely used in Africa, especially Uganda, Tanzania and Sudan, as a response to protracted refugee situations and as an alternative to keeping refugees in camps. But local settlements are not necessarily intended to enable local integration, and some suggest they are intended to prevent it (Kibreab 1989). There is limited freedom of movement (refugees are usually not permitted to leave the areas of residence defined for them by the authorities), more permanent housing construction, and refugees have access to land provided by the government.

As with camps, it is the needs and goals of the host government and donors that underlie the policy of local settlements. One such goal is repatriation, and settlements were often set up as places where refugees could be segregated and their needs met by international relief agencies until repatriation happens. In other cases, such as the agricultural settlements of Uganda and Tanzania, the goal was agricultural or economic development of an underutilized region, and the settlements were seen as a component of regional development strategies (Zetter 1995: 79). Organized settlements are also used to move refugees away from areas where they pose too much of a socioeconomic burden or security threat, or to improve the government's control of refugees.

Settlements were set up and administered by UNHCR and its implementing NGO partners (sometimes through a tripartite agreement) for a number of years, or, ideally, until they become self-sufficient and international could be phased out, and the settlement handed over to the host government to be integrated into the local district. But the settlement program has been unsuccessful at high cost (Stein 1991: 155).

In many cases, refugees in local settlements are encouraged to become self-sufficient, but no further effort is made to enable them to form a community with the local population. It has been suggested that this is because both the refugees and locals want repatriation to occur. Gaim Kibreab (1989: 480) argues that this approach is both "realistic under the prevailing economic conditions [..in Africa, .. and] consistent with the views of the nationals (host population) and aspirations of the majority of the refugees concerned." However, as Kibreab himself shows, local settlements have historically been a failure. Despite inordinate amounts of international financial support they have not achieved self-reliance, and have not accomplished much in the way of promoting development or security in the RHAs in which they were established.

A fluid settlement situation

Refugee settlement is seldom fixed; it should rather be seen as a fluid process, in which refugees settle in different situations, depending on when they arrived, the density of refugees *vis a vis* the local population, their coping strategies, local socioeconomic and security conditions, and the actions of local and national authorities. Refugees often arrive in a series of waves, with earlier arrivals settling in different situations than later ones. Self-settled refugees often risk being forcibly relocated into camps by local authorities but many avoid relocation, and in some cases, refugees move out of camps and become self-settled. During the course of their stay in the RHA, refugees may frequently move between different types of settlement. In some cases, refugees use the camps as part of a broader household strategy of survival. Within an extended family, the workers might live in the local community where they can farm or find income, and the dependents (elderly, mothers and children) might live in the camp where they have access to assistance. Refugees leave the camps to find work, to trade, to explore repatriation options, to join the rebels, to visit the city or to move there. They might return to the camps during the hungry season, or when there are security threats outside. New refugee populations might live in different settlement situations than older ones.

The example of the Forest region of Guinea, where first Liberian then Sierra Leonean refugees arrived in Guinea, is illustrative of this fluid situation:

> A national highway runs parallel to the border for more than 100 kilometers and along its entire length local villages and refugee camps have become interlaced. ...The 'old refugees' who fled several years ago are easy to spot. They have had time to build solid mud houses. Further down the highway new, white tents house more recent arrivals. Some refugees have become 'urbanized' living in large centers such as Conakry where they take menial jobs (*Refugees*, I (118), 2000).

The fluidity of their living situations and the desire by refugees to remain flexible about their options means refugees are often unwilling to be counted and are reluctant to reveal their exact locations to authorities. The numbers and proportions of refugees in the different types of settlement are notoriously difficult to determine. It is generally

accepted that there are many more self-settled refugees than refugees living in camps, and that most refugees in urban areas are self-settled. According to one study, the proportion of refugees being assisted by UNHCR has been gradually declining since 1976 (Bascom 1988: 26).

The fluidity of the situation means that refugees are never fully separated from the local community. Even where refugees are expected to live in camps, it is difficult to seal them off and there is movement in and out by both refugees and local people.[9] In most RHAs, there is a history of migration and mingling between the refugees and their hosts. For example, in northwestern Tanzania, the town of Kigoma and the Lake Tangynika shore have long been target areas of migration for Congolese on the other side of the lake. Refugees and locals mix together for purposes of trade, marriage, entertainment, seasonal work. Local people use refugee camps and settlements for the health facilities and markets.

De facto integration

This commingling of refugees and locals mean that some degree of absorption of refugees into the community inevitably takes place in a RHA. Over time, many self-settled refugees become unofficially integrated after they have lived in and been accepted by the community,[10] and have attained self-sufficiency. We might think of this as *de facto integration*, where the lived, everyday experience of refugees is that of being part of the local community.

Refugees are *de facto* integrated when they:
- are not in physical danger (and do not live under the threat of refoulement);
- are not confined to camps or settlements, and have the right of return to their home country;
- are able sustain livelihoods, through access to land or employment, and can support themselves and their families;
- have access to education or vocational training, health facilities, and housing;
- are socially networked into the host community, so that intermarriage is common, ceremonies like weddings and funerals are attended by everyone, and there is little distinction between refugees' and hosts' standard of living.

This is clearly a process that takes place over time. Recent arrivals are unlikely to be integrated in this way. Whether this process takes place smoothly and is facilitated by the local community, the host government and relief agencies, depends on a range of factors, which are discussed in the next section.

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[9] For descriptions of these fluid forms of settlement, see van Damme (1999) on Liberians in Guinea, or Montejo (1999) on Guatemalans in Chiapas, Mexico, or Bakewell (2000) on Angolans in Zambia.

[10] Not all self-settled refugees are empirically integrated. Recent arrivals who become self-settled are not yet integrated, and indeed, may pose problems for 'older' more longstanding populations of locally integrated refugees, as discussed below.

In situations where refugees are *de facto* integrated, their legal status continues to be insecure and temporary, and poses a serious problem for the refugees. They are still *prima facie* refugees without full refugee status in the host country. At best they are seen by the host government and local community as temporary guests, at worst, as illegal immigrants with no right to be in the country. The insecurity of their legal status can place *de facto* integrated refugees in dangerous and unstable situations, as when the host government engages in roundups and relocations to camps, or even refoulement. A reasonable degree of human security for refugees in this situation would require adjustment of their legal status to make their residence status secure. This is clearly a goal for those seeking to increase the protection of refugees in protracted situations.

The context for local integration: the interests of key groups and obstacles in the RHA

Local integration depends on the good will of key groups in the host country. In the absence of this good will, refugees will find it more difficult to settle amongst the community and become integrated. The willingness of the local population to accept local integration depends on who benefits and who loses from the continued presence of refugees, and on whether the interests of the various actors, particularly the most powerful, are being sufficiently served (or at least not opposed).

There are multiple actors (or stakeholders) in a refugee hosting area, each with varying interests in refugees, and varying degrees of power to block or enable local integration. Table 3 illustrates these different groups. In any particular case, each of these actors must be disaggregated to understand the full range of interests. For example, the "local population" includes a variety of socioeconomic groups: wealthy farmers and businessmen, poor peasants, local authorities such as chiefs and village leaders, and so on. "Donors" include countries with different agendas, regional interests, traditions and history linked to the host country, and so on.

In the next section, the obstacles to local integration are discussed from the perspectives of the host community and the host government, and the refugees. UNHCR and NGOs are also influential in enabling local integration, which UNHCR views as the next best outcome for refugees, if repatriation cannot occur.[11] However, in all host countries UNHCR must work with the host government, and where the latter is opposed to integration UNHCR can at best try to influence the government, but cannot determine the outcome.

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[11] According to the Handbook for Emergencies (August 1999), "the best solution is voluntary repatriation. Where this is not possible, assimilation within the country of asylum (local settlement) is in most cases preferable to assimilation within another country (resettlement), particularly for large groups and in cases where resettlement would take place in a cultural environment alien to the refugees…" (p.8)

Table 3
Interests of Stakeholders* in the RHA

Key Stakeholder Group	Interests
Donors	Better use of relief funds; repatriation; protection of refugees; post-conflict reconstruction in sending country; regional security and economic interests
UNHCR	Protection and rights of refugees; better use of funds; voluntary repatriation; post-conflict reconstruction continued presence in host country; commitments to and dependence on donors
NGOs	Protection and rights for refugees; better use of funds; post-conflict reconstruction continued presence in host country; competition with other NGOs?
Host Government	National security; local economic development; reduced burden on community resources and environment; relations with sending country; relations with donors; repatriation
The Local Population	Security; reduced burden on community resources and environment; local economic development; access to refugee assistance
The Refugees	Security; rights (such as freedom of movement); economic sustainability (become self-supporting); return to homeland; political commitments to outcomes in homeland

* In any particular host country, each stakeholder group needs to be disaggregated to determine the various competing interests and agendas of the actors within the group. For example, "Donors" include a variety of donor countries and international organizations (such as the World Bank) with different agendas, regional interests, and traditional relationships with the host country

Obstacles to local integration

Two of the main reasons for host governments' resistance to refugee settlement amongst the host community are security problems and resource burdens. During the 1980s, many host governments, particularly in Africa, cited the limited capacity of their national economies to absorb refugees as the primary reason for their opposition to local integration. Since the 1990s, security concerns have added an equally powerful reason. Within the host community, initial sympathy and willingness to help the refugees often turns into resentment when they are perceived to create or aggravate these problems. These threats and the resulting resentment increase when refugee numbers continue to grow or with new waves of arrivals.

There is no doubt that security and resource burdens are real problems in many RHAs, and they are discussed in more detail shortly. However, it should be pointed out that refugees are often blamed for pre-existing social or economic problems. Many host countries today are experiencing a range of rapid and disorienting economic, social, and political changes that have resulted in rises in crime and insecurity or declining standards of living. Such changes include, for example, the imposition of structural adjustment

programs, proximity to conflict zones and/or involvement in the conflict, and public health crises like AIDS. In this context, refugees often become scapegoats. An example is Guinea. According to anecdotal evidence, many in Guinea believe that the *de facto* integration of Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees that has been permitted is linked to the rise in criminal activity, delinquency, street prostitution, and drug proliferation that has plagued Guinea in recent years. But Guinea had been experiencing rising poverty and the imposition of structural adjustment programs when the refugee influx began. The social dislocations associated with this poverty are probably aggravated by the integration of refugees, but it is not clear that the refugees should be blamed alone.

The objections to local integration made by host governments and local people are not always backed by substance, but their perceived reality can result in policies against local integration or self-settlement, and local resentment towards refugees and resistance to their integration.

The political situation of the host country also complicates the response to refugees and to self-settled refugees in particular. Countries that are in a period of transition are often struggling with issues of national security as well as problems of national identity and the rights of natives versus immigrants. For example, in Belize, the influx of Salvadoran refugees in the early 1980s occurred soon after the country became independent from Great Britain. The complex ethnic mix in Belize meant the government was concerned with the refugees' impact on ethnic balance and integration into society. According to McCommon (1989: 94), "The government and public response to the refugee plight reflected the country's dilemma in reconciling its roots as an immigrant nation along with concern for the prior rights of native Belizeans and national security."

In countries experiencing these kinds of difficulties, refugees are more vulnerable and more likely to lack protection of their rights. This is also illustrated in case of South Africa, currently struggling with massive inflows of migrants from Africa during a period of transition and stress as it recovers from the apartheid years. High levels of unemployment and a struggling economy, high crime rates and widespread insecurity have led to harassment of migrants, amongst whom there are many urban self-settled refugees from other parts of Africa.

Security problems

A frequent argument made by host governments is that refugees bring security problems to the RHA, and therefore it is better to restrict them to camps where these problems can be controlled. Indeed, there is widespread evidence that refugees import with them the security problems of the regions they flee, and create new dynamics in the RHA that lead to other security problems like crime. As shown in the Appendix, both camp and self-settled refugees are subject to a range of dangers, including direct attacks on camps, military recruitment, and resentment and abuse by locals and authorities. From the perspective of the host government, placing refugees in camps might seem to address these problems. Camps sequester refugees from the host population, and make them

easier to monitor and control. In recent years, the governments of Kenya, Tanzania and Thailand among others have acted on this belief and insist that all refugees live in camps.[12]

However, as I have argued at length elsewhere,[13] camps do not solve security problems and are in fact added sources of instability and insecurity for the RPA because they aggravate existing security problems and create new ones.

In addition to the military problems like raids or direct attacks experienced by camps, their culture and organization makes for a climate of violence and intimidation. Camp conditions often lead to high rates of conflict and violence against women and children. The presence of weapons increases the combustibility of the situation in and around the camps, as does the problem of bored and frustrated young men. These are ingredients for crime and violence, the rise of political and ethnic factions, and the increased likelihood of recruitment into militias or organized crime. In recent years, petty and organized crime have flourished in refugee camps, and several, notably in West Africa and the Thai-Burmese border, have become zones of drug smuggling, human trafficking, illegal logging, and gun running. Few camps are organized to address these problems, and most camps lack an effective system of law and order. Crimes go unpunished because there is no adequate force to back up what rule of law does exist. Perpetrators are able to elude justice by hiding amongst the refugee population, or camps fall under the control of political or military elements, and civilian authority and sources of law and order are undermined. Refugees are then more likely to be deprived of their rights, and subject to violence and intimidation.

As discussed earlier, most camps are not closed entities and so the problems of crime, violence and militarization leach out into the surrounding community. When camps are targeted for military attacks or raids by rebel forces, the local people living near camps are affected as well. Organized crime may be organized in camps, but it is not restricted to them. These problems suggest that placing refugees in camps worsens rather than addresses the security problems, both for the host country and the refugees themselves.

Whether the safety and physical security of refugees is greater inside or outside camps is an empirical question. Obviously, self-settlement is safer when camps are targets for attack or looting by enemy forces. Self-settled refugees are not subject to the insecure conditions of the camp. However, there are security problems that affect self-settled refugees. By blending into the community, self-settled refugees are hidden from the oversight of those who would seek to protect them, such as UNHCR and NGOs. Outside the camps, it is more difficult for international or local organizations to monitor human rights violations, or to assist refugees when they are subjected to danger.

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[12] See Bowles 1998 (Thailand); UNHCR 2000 (Kenya); Rutinwa 1996 (Tanzania).

[13] See *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 19, 2000, and a recent debate on camps in *Forced Migration Review*, Vols. 1 and 2, 1998-99.

One security problem that particularly affects self-settled refugees (and camp refugees who leave the camps) is clashes between refugees and local people. These clashes occur when there is resentment by locals towards refugees for perceived wrongdoings, such as theft or immoral acts, or for inequities resulting from refugees' access to relief resources, or because refugees are blamed for other problems (including security ones) in the RPA and locals want to pressure refugees to leave.

Refugees who have become locally integrated are less likely to be subject to local resentment because they are considered to be part of the community. However, one significant factor that can change the security situation of locally integrated refugees is a new refugee influx. In a number of countries, including Tanzania and Guinea, longstanding, locally integrated refugee communities have been subject to roundups and relocation to camps after more recent influxes of refugees led to security problems. The host governments then came to associate all refugees, recent and locally integrated, with security threats, and sought to address the problem by relocating them, sometimes forcibly, to camps.

Camps aggravate security problems but not all security problems are caused by camps. Whether or not refugees are locally integrated, the security problems that follow refugees will affect everyone in the RHA. This is especially so when refugees and the host population are indistinguishable, as in Guinea where native Guineans are taken for refugees and are targeted by rebel attacks. Self-settled refugees, whether integrated into the community or recently arrived, may be able to escape the problems of camps, but they are only somewhat less vulnerable.

A burden on scarce resources

More than ten years ago, Gaim Kibreab (1989: 473) asked this question:

> Given the severity of the economic crises and the environmental degradation
> facing many of the major African refugee hosting countries, the basic issue
> that emerges is, can these countries be able or be expected to establish
> policies, legal frameworks and institutions which could allow the absorption
> of hundreds of thousands of refugees living within their territories into their
> societies permanently?

Kibreab then argued that, given the absence of burden-sharing, the economic problems, the inability of governments to provide essential goods and services to their own citizens, and the high population growth rates, the "most realistic" approach for African host countries is the local settlement option. He argued that refugees should be kept in spatially segregated sites where the cost of their subsistence could be met by "international refugee support systems." He said, "All other talk about integration is wishful thinking based on inadequate understanding of the economic, social and political realities of the present day Africa." (Kibreab 1989: 474).

Kibreab's position is reflected in the widely held view of host governments that refugees should be restricted to camps or settlements because there they are less likely to compete with locals for scarce resources such as land, jobs and environmental resources (e.g. water, rangeland or firewood), and are less likely to burden existing infrastructure such as schools, housing and health facilities. A refugee influx that occurs into host countries where there are already tensions over land or resources, such as in the Chiapas region of Mexico, can significantly increase tensions, and local integration is less likely to be a popular option or one pursued by the government.

An alternate view is that while self-settled and locally integrated refugees are likely to compete with locals for resources, they can have a multiplier effect, by expanding the capacity and productivity of the RHA economy. When refugees are permitted to participate in the local economy, they contribute their skills, labor and resources like trucks or computers. RHAs often experience increased economic activity in protracted refugee situations, especially in regions that are underdeveloped and under-populated (Bakewell 2000; Callamard 1994; Zetter 1995). This economic boost occurs for the following reasons:

a) increased availability of new goods and services, as refugees bring with them new items and skills for sale or barter, or previously unmarketed or unavailable goods, such as relief items, are commoditized;
b) market growth from increased numbers of people means that goods are imported into the RHA by locals in both sending and host countries for trade;
c) economic activity on the part of self-settled refugees who engage in farming, fishing, or hire themselves out for wage labor.

Evaluating the socioeconomic impact of self-settled refugees compared with camps is difficult, as noted earlier, because in most RHAs there is constant exchange and intermixing between the different populations. Most refugee camps are not sealed off from the local community, and refugees and international assistance find their way into the community, creating different economic effects that are discussed below. Findings from the research on the socioeconomic impact of self-settlement are mixed. A number of field studies have found that self-settled refugees have stimulated some sectors of the local economy in Pakistan (Ashraf 1988), Malawi (Zetter 1995), Zambia (Bakewell 2000), eastern Sudan (Bascom 1998; Kok 1989; Kuhlman 1990 and 1994), Guinea (Van Damme 1995), Tanzania, Mexico and Honduras (see Zetter 1995: 72-73 for a summary). There is somewhat more literature on the impact of camps and of local settlements (Zetter 1995; Kibreab 1989), but in this respect there is the added input of international assistance which provides significant economic resources of all kinds.

The next section describes some key economic factors that affect the impact of self-settlement on the RHA, and which are in turn affected by self-settlement. For example, the availability of arable land increases refugees' economic productivity but is in turn reduced by the presence of refugees. In addition to land, the key factors are: social goods and services (housing, education, health), the labor market and the environment.
Arable land and agriculture

Access to arable land is a key component of successful integration and refugees' economic productivity. A strong finding in the research literature is that integration is more likely to occur when there is land abundance (Bakewell 2000). In many countries, access to land depends on traditional land entitlements. For example, in Guinea, the farmer who occupies the land is entitled to use it. This tradition facilitates the transfer of farmland from locals to refugees. However many RHAs, including Mexico's Chiapas region, are characterized by longstanding struggles over land and locals are more likely to resent and resist refugees having access to it. Self-settled refugees further reduce the availability of arable land when farmers abandon their fields as a result of insecurity associated with the refugees, or when agricultural land is used to build housing for refugees.

By contrast, when production is constrained by available labor and/or access to markets, rather than land, refugees are welcomed because they can make the land more productive. In his study of western Zambia, Oliver Bakewell (2000: 362) demonstrates the complete integration of Angolan refugees that has occurred, and points out that:

> Land is abundant in Kanongesha and Zambian villagers commented that the arrival of refugees was welcome as 'turned the bush into villages'. People can use as much as they can cultivate and the largest land users … were refugees.

Agricultural expansion or intensification is made possible by refugee labor. This has occurred in Sudan (Kok 1989), in western Tanzania, and in the Forest Region of Guinea where Liberian refugees gave a boost to rice production by increasing the cultivation of the lower swamp areas, which is common practice in Liberia but hardly known in Guinea.

Of course, in order for refugees to increase the productivity of the land, they must not only have access to it but also be permitted to farm and otherwise pursue economic activities. This is a matter both of government policy and the willingness of the local population to allow refugees to participate in the economy.

It is common in official settlement programs for governments to utilize refugees directly for development. In Belize, Uganda and Tanzania, the governments saw refugees as a means to develop underutilized land, and pursued this by allocating land to the refugees. In Belize, in the early 1980s, each refugee family was allocated 50-acre holdings. In Tanzania in the 1970s, each family was given a minimum of ten acres of land for farming (Gasarasi 1987). More recently in Uganda, the government allocated approximately 1,333 square kilometers of land for the development of settlements with the aim of allowing agricultural self-sufficiency, and to encourage local integration (UNHCR Uganda, 1996 and 1999).

Social goods and services

Poorer sections of the local community will be more affected in some sectors of the economy. For example, as the demand for housing stock is increased by self-settled refugees and prices increase, poorer local people may be forced out. In Peshawar, Pakistan, Ashraf (1988) found that a shortage of housing led to escalating rents and inequitable leasing conditions: "Refugees adopted strategies to minimize costs, such as leasing property in groups and seeking accommodation in the villages away from the larger urban settlements. A building boom and out-migration ensued, as local residents capitalized on fast rising property values by leasing or selling to refugees. These impacts were noted at all settlement levels, even in villages, accommodation previously offered as a gesture of hospitality became commoditized."

Sectors like education and health can incur strains on their infrastructure (schools, clinics) from self-settled refugees, but these strains can be offset by appropriate international assistance. In Guinea in the early 1990s, the health-care system in the refugee-affected region was better developed than elsewhere in the country, and benefited Guineans and refugees alike. According to Van Damme (1995: 361), this occurred because when faced with the Liberian refugee influx, the Guinean government, working with UNHCR, did not create camps, but rather gave increased support to villages that welcomed refugees. The Ministry of Health did not create a separate refugee health service, but allowed refugees free access to existing health centers and hospitals on a fee-for-service basis (paid by UNHCR) equivalent to that paid by Guinean patients. [14] The health-care system in this refugee-affected region is now by far the best developed in the country, benefiting Guineans and refugees alike.

Labor market

Refugees who have freedom of movement and are permitted to work are able to compete with and potentially displace local workers. This occurs when refugees' skills are greater or when they are prepared to accept inferior wages and work conditions. Whereas the consequences for the overall economy and productivity of the host country will probably be positive, the consequences for different sectors of the labor market will be mixed. As Chambers noted in 1986, the impact on host communities is most negative for those in the lower economic echelons who suffer from increased competition in the unskilled labor market. However, the effects of refugee labor on the local labor market vary and should not be oversimplified. Research on this topic is limited, but some studies have found the following:

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[14] In areas with high concentrations of refugees and which are distant from any health facility, supplementary health posts were created, offering free health care to all inhabitants. These policies considerably increased the workload in the existing health facilities. Supplementary funding by foreign donors was directed to reinforce the existing facilities, with the involvement of only two medical NGOs (Van Damme 1995: 361).

- Where unemployment is already high, the addition of refugees will aggravate but not cause unemployment.
- In Malawi, a study found that women were more economically active in self-settled locations than in camps, where men tended to dominate economic opportunities (Zetter 1995: 73, citing Ager 1990).
- Findings about urban refugees in Sudan (Kassala town) and Pakistan are that they are likely to be permanently settled but in employment that is generally of lower socioeconomic status than their hosts (Zetter 1995: 72; citing Ashraf 1988 and a study by University of Khartoum 1986).

Environment

Especially in the initial stages of their arrival, self-settled refugees have to rely more heavily on 'free' natural resources either to support themselves (i.e. construct housing or collect food and firewood) or to make a living. Economic activities like charcoal making, fishing, firewood and thatch grass selling, and the cultivation of hillsides can all take a toll on the environment. In addition, local people resent this use of "their" resources. The following kinds of activities are particularly widespread:

- Refugees destroy fields and orchards. For example, in the Forest Region of Guinea, wild palm groves were destroyed and exploited by refugees which led to a decline in the production of palm oil and an increase in the retail price;
- Deforestation and destruction of plant cover, when refugees clear forest for farming, or to obtain wood for construction or for charcoal making;
- Water pollution, loss of watercourses and overburdening of water supplies; uncontrolled fishing;
- Overuse and destruction of rangeland when refugees bring their livestock.

However, the environmental impact of self-settled refugees must be contrasted with that of camp refugees. Empirical findings indicate that compared with refugees in camps, self-settled refugees "exercise far greater flexibility ... in selecting environmentally sustainable locations or in adopting more sustainable settlement practices" (Zetter 1995: 74). As refugees become integrated into the host community, it is likely that the negative practices will be reduced as the refugees become socialized into community environmental practices (Jacobsen 1996).

The relationship between the local population and the refugees

The success of integration depends as much on the relationship between the local population and the refugees as it does on the host government's position. When refugees are welcomed and accepted by the locals, or at least not resented, they will be better able to pursue livelihoods, hide from authorities who would round them up, and face fewer security threats. In many host countries, official policies of encampment are undermined

or subverted by local chiefs and villagers who collaborate in enabling refugees to settle in the community (Bakewell 2000: 390).

The relationship between the refugees and their hosts is affected by a variety of factors in addition to the security problems and economic impact discussed above. One factor is the beliefs and expectations held by both the host community and the refugees, about the temporariness of the refugees' stay and the desirability of repatriation.

Refugees can view repatriation and temporariness in different ways. According to Bakewell (2000: 372):

> In many cases refugees want to maintain their national identity and attachment to their country of origin by remaining marked out with special status and treatment. However there are also… many... who, having fled from their country, wish to establish new lives as 'normal' people among those where they settle.

In protracted situations, the host community is also likely to hold one or other of these views – either believing that refugees are there temporarily and should be separated from the community, or seeing the refugees as part of their community.[15]

These different views have consequences for local integration. Kibreab (1989: 476) cites evidence from Somalia and Sudan, that the mutual belief of both refugees and locals in the temporariness of refugees is why, in spite of common ethnicity and religion, the refugee and host communities "form two distinct social entities with limited social and cultural interactions." Host communities generally view refugees as their guests, Kibreab claims, who have left their countries for reasons of conflict or political problems, and who will return when they are able. This belief motivates local people's initial willingness to assist and accommodate refugees within the community. But the belief in temporariness also explains why refugees do not easily or quickly become integrated into host communities.

In protracted situations, the belief in temporariness proves to be false as refugees either do not return, or new influxes take place. Many host communities become resentful about the presence of refugees amongst themselves, either because of security threats or competition for scarce resources. The locals then pressure the authorities to relocate refugees into camps or segregate them in some way. This evolution of attitudes – from initial welcome and assistance by locals, to increasing concerns about threats and burdens, to outright resentment and resistance to refugees – is a widespread phenomenon. There is evidence of it in Chiapas, Mexico, when locals became resentful of the

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[15] In her book *Purity and Exile*, Liissa Malkki (1995) has famously demonstrated how a refugee community can be split on these two positions. In Tanzania, Malkkii showed how Burundian refugees in camps clung to their identity as refugees and anticipated their return, whereas Burundian refugees who made it to the towns of Tanzania sought to lose their refugee identity and to become absorbed into the host community.

Guatemalan refugees (Montejo 1999), in Somalia and Sudan (Kibreab 1989), and more recently in Guinea (*New York Times*, February 24, 2000, p.1), Kenya, and Tanzania.

However, in other cases, local communities view the temporariness of the refugees differently. In regions where there is a long history of trans-border migration and prior refugee movements, local communities expect that people will move about and stay for varying lengths of time. Oliver Bakewell illustrates this attitude in the Zambian RHA he studied. Describing the rise in numbers of people taking refuge from the escalating war in Angola in the late 1980s, Bakewell (2000: 360) says:

> The extreme violence, scale and speed of movement may have been new but the idea of moving to escape violence was certainly not. The people followed the patterns of migration laid in earlier generations and many came into Zambia and joined their kin who had arrived before.

According to Bakewell, after the initial mass influx of Angolans and the emergency, refugees settled in the community, began to grow their own food and eventually became,

> fully integrated into the local society, their presence was seen as an asset and many are now indistinguishable from Zambians, even down to holding appropriate identity papers. *From the perspective of many of the villagers, there are now no refugees.* (Bakewell 2000: 369, my italics)

Where patterns of mobility and prior migration characterize the host society, refugees are less likely to be viewed as temporary guests who should move on and out. These kinds of host communities expect residence for varying lengths of time, and are more conducive to integration of refugees.

Fear of inundation is however a factor that might disrupt traditional expectations. In situations where the refugees differ from locals in significant ways, such as language, and where new inflows result in the number of refugees exceeding that of the local population, the latter can perceive themselves to be socially overwhelmed. In Guinea, as refugee numbers grew, locals found themselves forced to learn either English or the refugees' language in order to communicate with them, because the refugees were unwilling to learn the host language or French because of their numerical superiority (van Damme 1999).

Shared identity, in the form of *cultural, linguistic or ethnic affinity* is another factor affecting relations between refugees and hosts. Affinity is seen to create social expectations and facilitate communication and conflict resolution between refugees and locals. However the evidence for this effect is mixed; the 'ethnic card' is often trumped by other factors and the importance of affinitive links should not be over-emphasized. In his study of eastern Sudan, Johnathan Bascom (1998) argues that while ethnic and kinship relationships helped refugee settlement in the past when sending and receiving communities were characterized by "traditional' economies, today, the positive effects of

these links have been weakened by new kinds of expectations and economic relationships.

The refugee population

The refugees themselves play a key role in integration, both in terms of the characteristics of the population and the attitudes of the refugees towards integration and repatriation.

A refugee population that has high proportions of vulnerable groups (elderly, disabled, pregnant) and female heads of household translates into an absence of economically active people. Refugees from urban areas who are settled in rural areas in the RHA often have difficulty adapting. These groups might have more difficulty with local integration in protracted situations.

The interests of the refugees themselves in integration is a key variable. Much depends on whether refugees hold out for repatriation. Refugees initially view their stay in the host country as temporary, but as their situation becomes protracted, this view may begin to change, and some give up the idea of repatriation and seek to become integrated. In other cases, refugees hold onto the hope of repatriation, and continue to view their situation as temporary and resist integration or any form of settlement that might obstruct their ability to repatriate. In Mexico, many Guatemalans resisted being relocated away from the border region in Chiapas to the Yucatan because they felt such a relocation would jeopardize their chances of repatriation (Montejo 1999). There are many African cases during the 1980s where either the refugees themselves or their leaders resisted being relocated to local settlements, because they feared this would jeopardize repatriation. In Algeria, the Polisario, the political leadership of the ethnic Sahrawis refugees who are fighting for control of Western Sahara, has consistently opposed any solution other than repatriation. As in other cases, like the Goma camps, the refugee leadership's political interests lay in keeping the refugees visible, and this is done best when they are in camps.

Integration and repatriation

Are integrated refugees more or less likely to repatriate? A widely held view is that unlike refugees in camps, integrated refugees will not wish to repatriate, especially when their countries of origin are still rebuilding after conflict (Hansen 1990). This was found to occur in Mexico, where the Guatemalan refugees in camps in Chiapas were much more likely to return at the end of the conflict than the refugees in the Yucatan where the integration program was implemented. This was probably due to the stability created by the developmental assistance, and the refugees' security of land tenure.[16]

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[16] On the other hand, one cannot completely rule out frustration with the political developments in Guatemala. Many, if not most, of the returnees held strong political motives in returning. There is anecdotal evidence of younger returnees who had spent most of their lives in Mexico returning on their own to Mexico after being unable to reintegrate in rural Guatemala.

Recent findings suggest that it is not always the case that integrated refugees are less likely to repatriate. Oliver Bakewell's intriguing argument views the situation through an entirely different lens. In his study of the Zambian border communities discussed earlier, Bakewell found that Angolan refugees who had become integrated into host communities were the first to repatriate when the situation in their home country stabilized (Bakewell 1999a).

In sum

The obstacles to integration are threefold:

a) The real and perceived security threats that accompany refugees prompt government authorities to keep refugees in camps where they can be monitored;
b) Economic and environmental resource burdens (perceived or actual) lead to resentment by locals, resistance to integration and pressure on authorities to segregate refugees;
c) The attitudes and beliefs of both refugees and locals about the continued presence of the refugees in the RHA.

The empirical findings about the economic impact of self-settled refugees, compared with those in camps or settlements, are mixed, but the evidence suggests that self-settled (and *de facto* integrated) refugees can contribute positively to their host communities. A key point to be made about these refugees is that they are making economic contributions without receiving formal assistance.

Promoting local integration in protracted situations

This paper argues that in many protracted situations, local integration can be a viable and productive solution which promotes the human security of both the refugees and the host country. The evidence for this is that self-settled refugees, who significantly outnumber officially assisted refugees, survive without depending on any official assistance programs. As discussed above, they depend on their own resourcefulness, the support of the local community, and access to economic opportunities available in the region. Clearly, these refugees would benefit from host policies and international assistance programs aimed at supporting local integration processes. Local integration could then be even more successful and productive. The next section explores how host government policies and international assistance can positively affect local integration.

A caveat

One of the challenges facing refugee advocates is to persuade host governments that refugees are not necessarily a burden and a threat, and that if they were allowed to

integrate themselves into the local community this could serve the development interests of the host country. Integration is a better alternative than encampment.

However, a serious effort must be made to determine the real effects of local integration on the host country' security or stability. If it is determined, to the host government's satisfaction, that local integration can benefit the refugees and host communities, the government is more likely to cooperate in assisting refugees. But not all RHAs can support local integration. Where local integration aggravates existing security problems, or adds to the economic and social problems and instabilities in the RHA, it is neither fair nor feasible to expect that integration be pursued. Therefore,

> *a careful determination must be made about the stability and security of the RHA. Where it appears that local integration would create new or additional problems, other options for refugees must be developed.*

This requires a flexible, case-based approach. Within any host country, local integration is sometimes more politically feasible in some regions than in others. In Mexico, local integration of Guatemalans was encouraged in the Yucatan, but not in Chiapas where there was significant tension over land and an incipient rebellion.

Local integration is an appropriate strategy after the emergency phase of a mass influx. During the emergency phase, host governments often have legitimate security concerns and want refugees to be screened and segregated in camps. Over time, as settlement situations become more fluid, and many refugees in the RHA are no longer in camps, interventions that enable local integration will be more feasible. In every case, it is essential that the merits of local integration or assisted self-settlement be carefully considered before it is pursued. There may be circumstances when encampment is a preferable route.

Promoting local integration: the host government

Local integration benefits the host country when it augments development by boosting the productivity of the host community. Host countries can encourage this positive outcome by enabling the economic viability of refugees and by viewing the refugees as legal residents with the rights and freedoms that are available to the native population.

Enabling refugees to become self-sufficient and part of the local community does not necessarily mean that governments should allocate land to refugees, or give them special privileges. Simply by not restricting refugees to camps and by allowing them freedom of movement, refugees are able to negotiate arrangements with local landowners and employers, engage in trade, and otherwise pursue livelihoods. Freedom of movement (itself an enshrined right of refugees) means that refugees have the opportunity to become economically active and participate in the local economy, contributing to its growth, rather than wasting their economic potential in camps.

As part of a comprehensive integration approach, refugees should be given access to land, and to the social services and employment opportunities available to nationals. There is plenty of historical precedent for this practice dating from the 1960s and 1970s when local integration was more widely accepted by host governments. For example, in Tanzania, in the 1970s, social services set up in the refugee settlements were guided by the national policy of socialism and self-reliance, in which primary education, health services were free and economic activities were run by cooperatives. Refugees were understood to have the same rights and terms of use of the land as nationals.[17]

The host government and UNHCR can facilitate and support refugees' economic productivity without creating assistance programs that benefit refugees but also separate them from locals. Many refugee assistance programs are set up so as to make new services available to both refugees and locals. This practice works towards creating a joint community of refugees and locals. However, these programs must be implemented so as to ensure that they do not create local resentment. Adding infrastructure for which refugees are the main beneficiaries can lead to resentment by the local populace. For example, in Guinea, the refugee influx aggravated existing problems of access to drinking water and sanitation, and created health and environmental problems. However when the refugees' water points were maintained free of charge by relief agencies, the local population viewed this as unfair, and their resentment took the form of refusing to do their part to maintain community water outlets

Allocating formal legal rights of residence to refugees is a key component of successful integration. Although UNHCR views *prima facie* refugees as legal residents by virtue of their refugee status, many host countries keep the legal residence rights of *prima facie* refugees rather vague, and view them only as temporary guests. Clarifying their rights of residence and freedom of movement will give all refugees greater security, and enable them to pursue economic opportunities. Even if this is permitted only within designated zones, such a step by the host government is a positive one and will potentially benefit both the refugees and the host community.

Promoting local integration: development agencies

From an institutional perspective, designing international assistance programs that will help local integration is a tricky matter, because these kinds of programs fall into the infamous "gap" between relief and development. Ill-fated efforts to link development and refugee-related assistance began in the 1960s with "integrated zonal development", then were tried again in the 1970s and 1980s with the "refugee aid and development approach" culminating in 1984, at the second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA II). At ICARA II, donor countries committed themselves to

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[17] However, not all government policies applied to refugees in the settlements. Secondary education was not free, as it was for nationals. Refugees had to secure a scholarship, normally from UNHCR or a voluntary agency, and admission of refugee children to secondary schools was governed by a non-citizen quota system of two percent of available places.

128 different refugee aid and development proposals amounting to some US$362 million in assistance, in order to assist African host countries with the economic and social burden of refugees. However this commitment never fully materialized, and, aside from a small number of cases, such as the Income-Generating Project for Afghan Refugees (IGPAR) in Pakistan, there was no increase in refugee-related development assistance (Crisp 2000, Gorman 1991; Stein. 1991).

Host governments are reluctant to assign development-earmarked funds to projects involving non-nationals, and development agencies see refugee assistance as the prerogative of relief agencies. As exemplified by the largest donor of all, the United States, most donor countries do not target their assistance at local integration in asylum countries, but rather seek to "ameliorate the situation of refugees, the host community and state, pending the day when those refugees [return] to their country of origin" (Crisp 2000). Donor countries like the U.S., despite a history of commitment to the principle of linking refugee aid and development, have shown little real commitment to promoting local integration in host countries. An examination of US State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration program funding from January to May 2001, reveals that most refugee assistance was for basic services for refugees, resettlement, UNRWA, IDPs, and repatriation and reintegration activities. Only four programs were associated with local integration, and they were in Europe (Azerbaijan and Armenia) or West Asia (Tajikistan and Kazakhstan). [18]

The recent focus on repatriation assistance stems from a variety of factors: the post-Cold War assumption that refugees could and would "go home" as conflicts ended; the reluctance to pour resources into asylum countries if refugees were going to return to countries of origin; and the reluctance to contribute additional development funding to host countries. Once repatriation had occurred, assistance funding focused on reintegration and reconstruction programs in the country of origin. This approach was exemplified in the mid-1990s by the so-called Brookings process, jointly sponsored by the World Bank and UNHCR, which focused on reconstruction in countries of origin through a relationship between development agencies and refugee agencies and the integration of refugee-national programs.

Can the integration of refugee programs and development occur in countries of asylum in protracted situations? The attention and energy devoted to linking relief and development in reintegration programs in countries of origin have yielded some useful

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[18] See US State Dept at http://www.state.gov/g/prm/fund/
The assistance was for NGOs (Action Against Hunger, Catholic Relief Services, Counterpart International and Mercy Corps International). In Azerbaijan, the program was to improve living conditions of the most vulnerable IDPs and local population by integrating them into sustainable agricultural activities. In Armenia, the program sought to increase local integration of ethnic Armenian refugees through developing Parent Councils and mobilizing them to effect school repairs. In Kazakhstan, the program sought to promote the integration and adaptation of refugees and IDPs into local communities in Almaty and Akmola through strengthening of indigenous NGOs working with refugees. In southwestern Tajikistan, the program provides skills training, production opportunities, and start-up credit to returnees, IDPs, and refugees to improve their economic livelihoods.

lessons that can be applied to protracted situations in countries of asylum. One such lesson is the comprehensive institutional approach envisioned in the Brookings process in which a number of key players are mobilized for reintegration programs. Such an approach could be utilized in countries of first asylum.

It can be argued that countries of asylum are better suited to relief-development programs than countries of origin. Reintegration programs usual occur in marginalized areas of poor and conflict-affected countries of origin which find it difficult to attract development assistance. By contrast, asylum countries are generally less conflict-affected, more stable, and have development processes already in place. This suggests that relief-development programs aimed at supporting local integration have a good chance of success.

New strategies: regional economic initiatives and repatriation packages

This section reviews successful local integration programs that have been implemented recently in different countries, as well as some ideas about potentially workable programs. One criterion for success is that local integration programs should be sustainable and benefit both self-settled refugees and their host communities.[19] Examples of this kind of low-key, sustainable assistance include food provisioning at carefully selected sites in the RHA, surveys of agricultural implements, facilitating access to land by helping negotiate with locals (Diegues1981).

Local integration programs should also seek to fit with the development policies and programs of host governments. The key to pursuing local integration in protracted situations is the host government, and the key will turn more smoothly with encouragement in the form of programs that address the needs of both host government and refugees can do this. For example, in Costa Rica, the government was encouraged by the international assistance that occurred through the CIREFCA program, to permit permanent residency for displaced families wishing to remain in the country after the repatriation that followed the peace process. After November 1992, a legal framework was implemented, in the form of a one-year executive decree, which expedited the issuance of proper immigration papers. All recognized Central American refugees were offered the opportunity to change their immigration status to temporary or permanent resident, and they were exempted from paying overdue taxes for immigration procedures. Refugees have access to a UNDP project called SISBEN (System for Selecting Beneficiaries of Social Expenditures) which offers assistance to low-income people. Other countries in Central America, including Belize and Mexico, have offered permanent residence to longstaying refugees who have not chosen to repatriate.

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[19] Economic stimulus programs must take into account the differential impact of increased competition for resources on disadvantaged or vulnerable social groups such as older people, unskilled workers, and landless households, both in the refugee and host populations. The economic impact on these groups is likely to vary over time: more negative in the initial stages, but evening out as the economy is stimulated.

Regional economic initiatives

This paper has argued that support for return movements should be a key component of assistance programs aimed at local integration. In addition to programs that assist local integration in the asylum country, a strategic regional approach could be utilized, in which assistance programs that support local integration in asylum countries are linked to reintegration programs in countries of origin. The goals of such a program would be to create joint communities, diversify the economy and stimulate development in both the RHA and the areas to which refugees return, and offset the negative effects of both refugees and returnees.

Roger Zetter (1995) has proposed that the levels of investment needed to achieve a modest stimulation of the regional economy for self-settled refugees and hosts are likely be far less and the returns far greater, than for equivalent investment in conventional camps and settlement schemes. Zetter says (1995: 75): "Sectoral investment might include communications infrastructure, supply of building materials, trading and market centers, and selective investment in industrial and agricultural sectors."

Conclusion

This paper has argued that in certain protracted situations, local integration is a desirable outcome for refugees and their host countries, and in most cases, a realistic alternative to keeping refugees in camps. Such an approach must be used judiciously, however. Local integration will only work if it is acceptable to host governments, to the local community and to refugees. It should not be advocated if it threatens the security and instability of either the local community or the refugees.

Local integration can be encouraged through assistance programs that benefit both refugees and local communities. These programs are likely to be cheaper than conventional assistance programs aimed at meeting all the needs of refugees kept segregated in camps. Such programs will enhance the human security of everyone living in the RHA, and will also boost economic productivity in the region.

Protracted refugee situations will not be resolved by forced repatriation and will not be prevented by interdiction at the borders. Refugees will always find ways to settle themselves in border zones, where they can monitor the situation in their home regions and repatriate when possible. Forcing reluctant refugees into camps is not a solution. Camps create new problems for the host country – including new security problems – and do not solve any old ones. Nor can host governments rely on external assistance to get them through protracted situations. Donor interest in funding protracted refugee assistance programs diminishes over time, and UNHCR is not a development agency. Host countries must face these realities.

One approach is to embrace refugees and view them as a potential asset. By allowing and assisting refugees to become integrated in the community, host governments and UNHCR could find that they cost less in food and other support services. The pursuit of integration programs aimed at creating communities of refugees and nationals will place host governments on the agendas of development organizations such as the World Bank and UNDP as well as bilateral donors. Embracing refugees will earn host governments the kudos of human rights organizations, and thereby international public opinion, and this can result in positive consequences of all kinds. Finally, embracing refugees and helping them become part of the RHA community would give refugees the human rights to which they are entitled, and would increase the human security of everyone living there – the greatest asset of all.

APPENDIX

Table A
Protracted Refugee Situations, 1980-1999
(Continuous refugee presence of more than 100,000 for more than eight years)
N = 22

Country of Origin	Main Host Countries	Period	Max. No./Year (in '000s)	No. in last year (in '000s)
Afghanistan	Pakistan and Iran	1980-99	6,326.4/1990	2,562.0/1999
Angola	Zambia, Namibia, DRC	1980-99	457.1/1980	350.7/1999
Armenia	Azerbaijan	1992-1999	201.5/1994	190.3/1999
Azerbaijan	Armenia	1992-1999	300.0/1992	13.2/1999
Bosnia & Herzegovina	Neighboring countries	1992-1999	893.6/1996	382.9/1999
Burundi	Rwanda, Tanzania, DRC	1980-99	871.3/1993	524.4/1999
Cambodia	Thailand, Vietnam	1980-99	192.7/1980	38.6/1999
Chad	Sudan, CAR	1980-99	234.3/1981	58.2/1999
DR Congo	Neighboring countries	1980-99	1980/116.8	249.3/1999
Eritrea	Sudan	1991-99	1991/500.6	1999/345.6
Ethiopia	Sudan, Kenya, Somalia	1980-99	2,567.4/1980	53.7/1999
Iraq	Iran	1982-1999	1322.7/1992	572.1/1999
Liberia	Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, S. Leone	1990-99	794.2/1994	285.0/1999
Mozambique	Malawi, Zambia, S. Africa	1986-1995	1,344.9/1992	125.5/1995
Burma	Thailand, Bangladesh	1992-1999	281.3/1993	127.8/1999
Rwanda	Burundi, Tanzania, DRC, Uganda	1980-1996	277.0/1981	467.7/1996
Sierra Leone	Guinea, Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia	1991-1999	142.6/1992	487.2/1999
Somalia	Ethiopia, Kenya	1988-1999	788.2/1992	451.5/1999
Sudan	Uganda, Ethiopia, Chad, Egypt	1984-1999	180.1/1984	467.7/1999
Uganda	Sudan, Kenya	1980-1987	315.3/1983	111.0/1987
Vietnam	Cambodia, China, Hong Kong	1980-1999	344.5/1980	326.3/1999
Western Sahara	Mauritania, Algeria	1981-1999	165.0/1981	165.9/1999

Source: SOWR 2000, Annex 5

Note: these figures represent total stocks not flows; i.e., during the period there could have been repatriation and renewed outflow, so while there was continuous presence, the individual refugees present would have varied.

Table B
Types of Security Threats and Likely Causes

Type of Threat to Refugees	Likely Causes	Examples
I. *Direct Armed Attacks*		
a) Bombing or shelling	To force or prevent repatriation; presence of combatants among refugees	Eastern Zaire, 1995-6; Thai-Cambodian border, 1980s-early '90s; Guinea, 1998-2000.
b) Raids by rebel groups	To obtain resources or hostages; forced conscription; recrimination	Northwest Uganda-Sudan RPA; Northeast Kenya: Somali bandits prey on RPA; Guinea: raids by Sierra Leonean rebels Georgia-Abkhazia border, 1998-2000.
c) 'Hot pursuit' by regular security forces from country of origin	Presence of combatants or "subversives" among refugees (militarization and/or "hot pursuit")	NW Tanzania: incursions by Burundian forces; Thai-Burmese border: raids by Myanmar forces or allied ethnic Karen; Guinea-Liberian border: looting by Liberian soldiers; El Salvador: incursions by Honduran soldiers; Mozambique and Tanzania: raided by South African army in 1970s searching for ANC.
II. *Non-Military Threats*		
a) Violence/conflict between refugees and locals	Ineffective policing by host authorities; resentment by refugees and/or locals about camp policies or conditions	NW Tanzania (Burundian refugees); NW Kenya, Kakuma camp subject to ethnic clashes and demonstrations by refugees; NE Kenya, Dadaab area; Goma camps (Eastern Zaire); Ngara camps (Tanzania); Kosovo Albanian camps in Albania; Hong Kong camps
b) Violence between refugees	Conflict between political or ethnic factions; refugee leaders seek to maintain power and control over resources	
c) Violent crime		
d) Abuse or intimidation by host government authorities		

Case Study 1: Northern Uganda

In 1999, UNHCR and the Government of Uganda began to implement a long-term assistance strategy aimed at self-reliance for the Sudanese refugees who have been present in the West Nile region of northern Uganda since 1988. The strategic plan, called "From Local Settlement to Self-Reliance" is intended to unfold over four years (1999-2003), and is designed to enable the refugees to "manage their own lives and share services with nationals." (UNHCR Uganda 1999, p.2) The goal is also to integrate refugee assistance into national systems of service delivery and to enhance the government's capacity to take over this responsibility. The program is noteworthy in that:

- It embodied full cooperation between host government and UNHCR;
- It sought to improve living standards for refugees and nationals in the RHA;
- It bridged the gap between relief and development;
- It is intended to prepare the refugees for eventual repatriation by "giving them skills and knowledge that will serve them in the reconstruction of their home country." (ibid.) After repatriation, the local community will benefit from the infrastructure left behind.

The Ugandan government acted progressively by assisting refugees in two ways. First, with the host communities' cooperation, it provided land to refugees and permitted local settlement; second, it drafted a new refugee bill that addressed legal issues like taxation and freedom of movement and employment.

The government had tried to implement a local settlement program for many years but insecurity from rebel activity in the region hampered progress. It was not until relative security was achieved at the beginning of 1998 that there was political momentum to pursue a long-term strategy to make refugees self-reliant. Ongoing insecurity is still a potentially limiting factor in implementing the strategy, but insecurity is now viewed as delaying but not preventing the achievements to date.

Although the self-reliance program has yet to prove itself, there are several lessons to be learned from what has been accomplished so far. The host government has recognized the need to approach a protracted refugee situation in new ways, and has recognized its national interests in doing so. The government understood that a) there was diminished donor interest in funding protracted refugee assistance program; b) UNHCR is not a development agency, and c) self-reliant refugees would cost less in food and other support services. At the same time, integrated refugee-national programs would be considered part of the agendas of development organizations such as the World Bank and UNDP as well as bilateral donors. The program has progressed even in the context of national security problems which makes it a good model for other host countries.

Case Study 2: Mexico

Some 45,000 Guatemalan refugees entered Mexico through the historically troubled state of Chiapas in the 1980s, mostly in 1982, and while most of them have gone back, some 22,000 are still in southern Mexico. Problems revolving around land, primarily, though not exclusively, pitching indigenous communities against the privileged *Ladino*s, were not all that dissimilar from the circumstances that had led the refugees to flee Guatemala. The arrival of the refugees raised concern for further instability and the logistical issue of where to put them. The already complicated situation was aggravated by several episodes of hot pursuit into Mexican territory by Guatemalan forces.

The solution arrived at was to move the refugees to the sparsely populated and distant Yucatan. While living conditions there were more difficult – it was hotter, there were generally poorer agricultural conditions, and the refugees were culturally isolated – security was more certain and refugees would have access to land to farm and thereby achieve some self-sufficiency.

The Mexican government policy was different for the two primary clusters, the Yucatan (Campeche and Quintana Roo) and Chiapas local integration was encouraged for those refugees who accepted relocation to the settlements in the Yucatan, and a "care and maintenance" policy was implemented for those who refused to relocate and stayed in refugee camps (127 of them) in Chiapas. Many of the Guatemalan refugees refused to be transplanted and insisted on remaining in Chiapas, poised to return to Guatemala when conditions there permitted. They resisted efforts to move them citing the geophysical and cultural differences between their home communities and the Yucatan. The Chiapas refugees had no or limited access to land, and relied mostly on international assistance. They lived in small clusters of families or camp-like structures hosting over two hundred families with their own schools and clinics. Given the internal problems within Chiapas, UNHCR could not actively encourage self-sufficiency there, and food rations remained a part of the assistance package, though on a reduced level.

The costs involved for UNHCR from the start were quite high, but donors were sympathetic and a number of existing *fincas* were purchased for the refugees and established within communal guidelines. Basic services were provided apart from local institutions and over the years the refugees did manage to achieve a degree of self-sufficiency.

In general, local Mexican communities accepted the refugees among them, both in Chiapas and on the Yucatan Peninsula. Conflicts over resources were frequent between some communities, but this was also true where refugees were not involved. In the Yucatan the impact of the refugees, especially with the 'value added' of UNHCR assistance, was markedly less negative than in Chiapas, and recently authorities have alluded to the economic contribution of refugees in the state of Campeche where integration is almost complete. Financially, UNHCR's contribution in this cause has been substantial and the refugee/cost ratio is probably among the agency's highest in the world. UNHCR has provided the basic inputs so that all the refugees had to concern

themselves with was food production, which has been generally supported through granting of some basic equipment and, later, credit.

Refugees in Chiapas have lived a much more unsettled existence in exile but they have not been totally dependent on outside assistance. It is believed that nearly every family has an extra-legal, means of income to purchase clothing, televisions, and other comforts. Some work outside of the camps as seasonal laborers, displacing some of the more traditional sources, i.e., Guatemalan migrants, while many others informally lease land from neighbors. These practices are known to authorities and tolerated.

The Mexican government's position on integration

Initially, the Mexican Government reacted negatively to the Chiapas refugees' refusal to move. For example, their children born in Mexico were not registered by Mexican authorities despite this being against the Mexican Constitution. However, by 1996, as the numbers of Guatemalan refugees declined with repatriation and there were indications that a residue might resist repatriating, the government began considering making the legal status of those who remained more permanent. At first, this loosening of policy was considered exclusively for refugees outside of Chiapas. By allowing refugees to remain in the Yucatan the government lost nothing, and gained the economic contribution of the refugees. Mexico also gained moral high ground in any debate on migration within the region. Then in early 1998 the government indicated that it was willing to consider allowing refugees in Chiapas to remain legally. Immigration documents would be issued which would enable holders to work legally in Mexico, something that was proscribed with only refugee documentation – which also only permitted land to be secured through purchases under the names of Mexican-born children.

Once the principle of integration was accepted the modalities for implementation became the issue. In Mexico there is chronic conflict over land and any sort of arrangement in which land was allocated in manner that would antagonize local peasants had to be avoided. In the Yucatan, where UNHCR and the government had virtually bought villages for the refugees, refugees must now purchase the land from those who own it.

The Campeche/Quintana Roo refugee integration program can be seen as an example of integrated rural development in a relief context, and a case where the "refugee aid and development" approach did bear some fruit, albeit at high financial cost. Given the current funding outlook for international assistance, this program may not be a workable model for other self-sufficiency programs today, however there are several lessons that can be drawn from the case.

The Mexican case illustrates that a key difficulty with local integration is the political one. UNHCR and donors approached the Chiapas and Yucatan caseloads differently because the political situation in each was different. The host government's position towards self-sufficiency and integration differed on each, and consequently so did

opportunities for supporting local integration. There is no political formula to achieve local integration. In many ways, the best approach UNHCR, NGOs and donors can take is to seize opportunity when it arises so as to facilitate the integration process and provide financial assistance where required.

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