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# Documentary

## The Relationship between ICA and Develop

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Over the past five years there have been two separate sets of meetings dealing with assistance to refugees in developing countries. One was a series of meetings on Refugee Aid and Development convened by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the other set of meetings was the two International Conferences on assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA I and ICARA II) convened by the United Nations (UN). In 1984 these separate tracks of meetings have converged resulting in a new international consensus on principles for refugee assistance in developing countries. These new principles were necessitated by fundamental changes in developing country refugee problems which meant that the traditional approaches to refugee assistance no longer seemed adequate to deal with the problems.

### Overview of Refugee Assistance in Developing Countries

As a result of this process of change, in the past decade, many people have "felt the need to define more clearly the relationship between aid to refugees and development assistance" (Goodwillie, 1983). The heart of the problem of refugee assistance in developing countries, which has emerged since the mid-1970s, is "the massive arrivals of refugees in low-income countries where often no durable solutions are at hand" (Hartling, 1983). The three key elements — massive arrivals; low-income countries; no durable solutions — all the above phrases deserve elaborations. Massive arrivals refers to influxes of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of refugees.

Low-income countries bear the main refugee burden. Of 34 countries listed as low-income (less than \$400 per capita GNP) in the 1983 *World Development Report* (World Bank, 1983b), 27 are or recently have been involved in refugee or refugee-like situations as sources, sanctuaries or both. Developing-country refugees are primarily rural, approximately 90 percent fleeing from areas at home to rural areas of the country of asylum.

"Often no durable solutions are at hand" because the first asylum countries will only let the refugees stay temporarily in their territories.

Into the mid-1970s most Third World

refugee movements resulted from independence struggles against colonial extra-continental domination. Host countries maintained a high degree of solidarity with refugees from independence struggles and there was the expectation of ultimate victory, independence and repatriation.

Since the mid-1970s the situation has changed. There has been a large increase in the number of refugees from independent states. Voluntary repatriation has become significantly more difficult to achieve, and even if it will eventually occur, it may be more delayed and incomplete than in the past.

In today's changed circumstances humanitarian assistance that is rooted in the emergency phase and depends on care and maintenance while awaiting repatriation can be very lengthy and expensive. Durable solutions for developing country refugees — integration into the sanctuary or reintegration in the homeland — require more than humanitarian assistance.

Particularly since 1979, a new view of refugee assistance in developing countries has been advanced and increasingly been accepted. The new approach emphasizes linking humanitarian refugee assistance to development assistance.

For solutions to last, assistance to refugees and returnees must aim at their participation, productivity and durable self-reliance; it should be development-oriented as soon as possible and, in least developed countries, it should take into account the needs of the local people as well (ICARA II Declaration) (UN, 1984c).

### Review of ICARA and of Refugee Aid and Development

In May 1979 the Pan African Conference on the Situation of Refugees in Africa was held in Arusha, Tanzania. One subject that received a great deal of attention was the issue of spontaneously settled refugees.

The African host countries were made aware that they were not receiving international assistance for 60 percent of their refugee burden. Many had probably suspected or known it all along, but the Arusha findings and recommendations confirmed feelings that they were not getting an equitable share of international assistance.

Since the Arusha Conference, a new expanded principle of burden-sharing has been advanced, calling for the international community to assist with social and economic infrastructural costs associated with refugees.

The Sudan, which has been a leading proponent of both ICARA conferences, in "the first initiative of its kind taken by a Third World Government" (Sudan, 1980) convened in June 1980 an International Conference on Refugees in The Sudan to request additional assistance from the international community.

Shortly after the conference in the Sudan the UN began preparatory work for ICARA I, and in November 1980 the General Assembly (Resolution 35/42) called for a meeting to be held the following April. The key objective of ICARA I was:

to assist countries of asylum adversely affected by the large-scale presence of refugees to obtain inter-



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# mentary Note: en ICARA II and Refugee Aid Development

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national assistance for projects aimed at strengthening the ability of those countries to carry the extra burden placed on their services and facilities.

ICARA I "fell short of the expectations of the African countries" (Perez de Cuellar, 1983a). The donor community was not ready to accept the new notion of burden-sharing advanced by the African states. The donors felt that the African countries had unrealistic expectations. The proposals they submitted to ICARA I were technically weak. (The conference was rushed from call to convening in just four months, greatly limiting the time for preparatory work.)

The disappointing results of ICARA I did not lead to the dropping of expanded burden-sharing by means of infrastructural assistance but rather to the calling of a second conference. ICARA II in July 1984 benefited from a much longer preparation period — 18 months in contrast to ICARA I's four plus months — which was used to prepare more technically sound proposals and to engage both donors, concerned governments (hosts or sources), and international agencies in a fuller discussion of the new ideas and issues.

It is too early to tell if ICARA II has been successful in gathering more resources to offset the refugee burden on low-income countries. However, one can view it as a success in terms of the principles embodied in its final Declaration and in the new policies announced by many countries and several international organizations:

As a result of the adverse impact on

the national economies... of the least developed countries, there is need to provide these countries with the required assistance to strengthen their social and economic infrastructure so as to enable them to cope with the burden... of refugees and returnees. This assistance... should be additional to, and not at the expense of, concerned countries' other development programs (UN 1984c).

The other parallel track of international discussions, on Refugee Aid and Development, has its recent roots in the July 1979 UN Meeting on Refugees and Displaced Persons in Southeast Asia. At that meeting then American Vice-President Mondale presented a United States proposal for a UNHCR Fund for Durable Solutions. Burden-sharing and spontaneously settled refugees were not the main concern of the fund proposal. Rather, the focus was on promoting durable solutions - leading to integration and self-sufficiency of refugees in developing countries.

There is a direct connection between expanded burden-sharing and durable solutions. Donors do not necessarily reject the concept of expanded burden sharing but they are concerned that burden sharing without an emphasis on durable solutions could lead to open ended costly refugee situations. With international burden-sharing host governments might have a reduced sense of responsibility for the refugees, thus impeding efforts to find durable solutions.

The discussions about the fund raised another issue that has been a mainstay of the refugee and development dis-

course, namely the role of UNHCR in development activities relating to refugees and the need for new institutional arrangements to bring refugee aid and development aid together. There is a longstanding concern that UNHCR not act as a development agency but rather as a catalyst, cooperating and coordinating work and projects with the development arms of the UN system.

Since the shelving of the fund proposal, the refugee assistance-development assistance linkage has been discussed and analyzed in many forums and nine UNHCR meetings: the October 1982 Executive Committee (Ex Comm); a February 1983 informal Ex Comm; the August 1983 Meeting of Experts on Refugee Aid and Development (which produced a report, UNHCR, 1983b, which was the focus of discussion at the subsequent meetings); the October 1983 Ex Comm; a November 1983 Meeting of Nongovernmental Organizations on the Report of Experts on Refugee Aid and Development; a December 1983 Meeting of Intergovernmental Organizations on the Report of Experts on Refugee Aid and Development; Informal Ex Comms in January and June 1984; and finally the October 1984 Ex Comm where a set of "Principles for Action in Developing Countries", which pulls together elements from the many meetings was accepted as representing the new international consensus (UNHCR, 1984d).

## Review of Principles

As a result of all these meetings the refugees and development discussion has achieved consensus on most of the important principles and issues. The main line of reasoning is as follows:

1. Refugee problems demand durable solutions because failure to act early means prolonged suffering, dependence and higher costs to hosts and the international community.
2. From the outset there is a need to avoid dependence and promote refugee productivity through self-help activities, engagement in food or other agricultural production, employment and other economically productive activities.
3. However, often no durable solutions are at hand, because in low-income countries sufficient jobs or readily cul-

tivable land are not available. Therefore, the only alternative to permanent dependence on relief is to create income-generating opportunities on a large scale.

Several things flow from this conclusion. First, creating income-generating opportunities is another way of saying development projects. In other words, under current conditions in the low-income countries, durable solutions can only be achieved through development-oriented assistance from the outset. Secondly, "for social, psychological and political reasons, this can hardly be done for refugees alone" (UNHCR, 1983c). Both the refugees and the local population must be included. This means that the system has moved from humanitarian assistance to refugees, to creating income-generating opportunities for refugees, to development-oriented assistance, from the outset, "for the whole area where the refugees live".

This large leap leads to the other central focus of the refugees and development discussions, the need for new institutional arrangements to carry forth such double-target projects. "No single international organization has the mandate, the expertise and the funds required" (UNHCR, 1983c).

Finally there is the issue of "additionality". This is a major issue that has appeared in both set of discussions and is closely connected to the question of infrastructural burden-sharing. Low-income host countries want refugee assistance of all types, but particularly development-oriented assistance, to be over and above, additional to, the normal development assistance they would receive if there were no refugee situation. Donor governments, on the other hand, point to limited availability of funds and the impossibility of expanding the assistance purse. While the donors recognize that it is not equitable for the asylum countries to have to share their resources with refugees, the donors indicate that refugees incorporated within development projects should be "potential contributors" to the development of an area. "It is reasonable, therefore, for host countries to accept that a share of the (development) assistance...should also apply to the refugee areas" (UNHCR, 1984a). In other words, partial rather than full additionality.

Finally, some brief comments on the seven key issues and principles that have emerged from this process.

1. Equitable Burden-Sharing. For low-income countries the presence of refugees places a burden on many sectors of their economy and society. The ICARA II Declaration "recognizes that the condition of refugees is a global responsibility...and emphasizes the need for equitable burden-sharing" and that:

As a result of the adverse impact on the national economies of the...least developed countries, there is need to provide these countries with the required assistance to strengthen their social and economic infrastructure.

2. Spontaneously Settled Refugees mixed among the local population are a main reason why an expanded concept of burden-sharing was developed and also are central to requests for new forms of refugee assistance. Traditional UNHCR assistance designed essentially to benefit refugees has great difficulties reaching refugees who are not in discrete units. The burden thus falls on the host country.

3. Aid to Both Refugees and Locals. As a response to the difficulties of aiding spontaneously settled refugees the principle has emerged that:

In low-income areas, the needs of the local people should also be taken into account, in such areas developmental initiatives may therefore be needed which would permit both refugees and local people to engage in economically productive activities to ensure them a decent livelihood (UNHCR, 1984d).

The need for development initiatives and the inclusion of the local people moves this aid beyond UNHCR's competence and thus will be a difficult principle to implement.

4. Additionality. With regard to the question of total or partial additionality no agreement on principle has been achieved, only a statement that can be read either way: "such projects should normally be additional to, and not at the expense of, the country's other development programs (UNHCR, 1984d).

5. Development-Oriented Assistance. The ICARA II Declaration states that:

For solutions to last, assistance to refugees and returnees must aid at

their participation, productivity and durable self-reliance; it should be development-oriented as soon as possible.

This principle represents an important and fundamental reorientation of traditional refugee assistance. It represents an attempt to view refugee assistance as a comprehensive integrated solution-oriented process rather than as a series of ad hoc reactions to problems.

6. Durable Solutions. "Refugee problems demand durable solutions" (UNHCR, 1984d) but in fact no such demand is made and this principle is greatly weakened by the political realities that give many refugees only temporary settlement at best. In some ways the heart of the new approach is "temporary measures pending a durable solution" and the need to make the best of a long-term temporary situation by promoting refugee productivity and self-reliance while waiting for solutions.

7. New Institutional Arrangements will be needed to put these new principles into action. A major achievement of the process of discussion thus far has been the alerting of the development community, in the hosts, donors and the UN system, to these issues and problems. In particular the United Nations Development Program has stated that it "stands ready" to continue active participation, and the World Bank, the International Labour Office and the World Food Program have also become more active in this field.

The refugee assistance system has for the most part successfully cleared a crucial hurdle in its efforts to alter the ways in which refugee assistance is provided in developing countries. The results thus far are impressive and are an indication of the responsiveness and adaptability of the refugee assistance system when it is faced with fundamental changes in conditions. The 35th session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Program effectively closed the first phase of response by approving a set of "Principles for Action in Developing Countries" that have been drawn from the ICARA meetings and from UNHCR's meetings on Refugee Aid and Development. The second phase will involve putting these principles into operation in Africa, as a follow-up to ICARA II, and globally.