



CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES

REFUGEE

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Refugees and War in Africa: The Failure of Development

In Africa at least one person in two hundred is a refugee and the number is increasing daily. Yet this total, nearing six million, does not include the millions who remain inside their national border, displaced and facing starvation. Certainly it is true that in some parts of Africa -- notably in the South -- drought still plays a part, but it is war and civil strife, complicated by underdevelopment and international politics, which continue to be the primary causes of involuntary migration.

Africa's problems are complex and of long duration. In the 1970s many nations were favoured by unprecedented commodity booms which created markets and buoyant prices for raw goods such as sugar and sisal, cotton and coffee. In the following decade, deflationary policies adopted by Western nations severely hindered African economic advance. These same African nations were now caught between a falling demand for their raw materials and increasing debt repayments as interest rates on money borrowed in the 1970s spiralled. By 1984 Africa's debt burden amounted to over 50% of its total GNP. At the same time, the price of imports, particularly of oil and capital equipment, soared. This further exacerbated balance of payment problems so that in the 1980s African

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Tug Wajale refugee camp, home for 32,000 Ethiopians in Somalia, 1986. BEN FAWCETT/OXFAM (UK)

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