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HUMANITARIAN ACTION: SOCIAL SCIENCE CONNECTIONS

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Larry Minear, and Thomas G. Weiss

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## FOREWORD

As a rule, conference proceedings make dull reading. They are usually of interest to the conferees who want a readable record of what transpired or to a small circle of academics who are curious about what they missed. This volume, I believe, represents an exception to that rule.

First, its topic is timely. As humanitarian practitioners confront a daunting array of challenges in the post-Cold War era, they are increasingly aware of the need to move from reflexive to reflective action. In their quest for more effective and savvy approaches to carrying out their mandates amidst internal armed conflicts and uprooted populations, practitioners are discovering that the social sciences offer an underused but promising resource.

Second, this reprise makes good reading. The first chapter identifies key themes of a conference held in April 1999 at Brown University on the subject "Population Studies and Humanitarian Action: Exploring the Connections." Chapters 2 through 5 contain commissioned papers presented to the group and then revised to reflect the ensuing dialogue.

"Who Has Counted the Refugees?" by Jeff Crisp (Chapter 2) addresses crucial issues related to the mandates and methodologies of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in particular and, in a broader sense, of other aid agencies as well. Anthropologists Marc Sommers and Stephen Lubkemann present original research on Burundians in Tanzania and Mozambicans in South Africa and Zimbabwe (Chapters 3 and 4). They identify important insights from the social sciences available to, but largely ignored by, aid organizations. In "The Quest for Accuracy in the Estimation of Forced Migration" (Chapter 5), anthropologist Susanne Schmeidl examines both the need for and the difficulties of obtaining useful numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons as the basis for assistance and protection work.

Third, the process of exploring the connections between humanitarian action and the social sciences extends

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well beyond a single conference. The issues it touches are the subject of continuing reflection in a variety of venues. In a special session in January 2000, the United Nations Security Council itself reviewed those issues. The council's debate demonstrated, in the words of one reporter, "how new wars demand new definitions and, probably, new policies, if millions of people they have made homeless are to survive." The Social Science Research Council, which was represented at the Brown conference, has subsequently held a conference of its own and is actively pursuing the topic, as is the National Academy of Sciences through its ongoing Roundtable on Forced Migration.

In exploring the contributions that social science can make to humanitarian praxis, this volume complements earlier research and publications by the Humanitarianism and War Project. A recurring theme in our studies, whether of Central America, the former Yugoslavia, or, most recently, the Caucasus, has been that effective humanitarian action requires thorough familiarity with the historical and cultural contexts of the crises to which it responds. This volume identifies the tools and methodologies, the perspectives and insights that social science practitioners can bring to bear.

Another leitmotiv of the Project since its inception in 1991 has been the interaction between humanitarian principles and activities, on the one hand, and political forces and factors, on the other. This volume extends and deepens that analysis by examining how much the counting of refugees and internally displaced persons is itself often infiltrated by political agendas, not only of governments but also of aid agencies and the affected persons themselves. A recognition of the political terrain upon which humanitarian action is mounted can, as noted in our other studies, help depoliticize aid activities and render them more effective.

A third connection with earlier Project work concerns the examination here of the interplay among humanitarian practice, public policy, and social science research. The

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dynamic relationships among these three sectors recall an earlier study in which we analyzed the interplay among humanitarian actors, government policymakers, and the media. We proposed the concept of a “crisis triangle” as an analytical device for understanding the dynamic interaction of three sets of institutions, each with its own interests in humanitarian matters and its own constraints in dealing with them. In the present study, too, an “actor matrix” describing the triad of institutional actors—practitioners, policymakers, and researchers—may be a helpful analytical tool.

The intellectual journey retraced in this volume reflects a collaboration between Brown University’s Humanitarianism and War Project and its Population Studies and Training Center (PSTC). The interest of the Project has been to promote more systematic interaction with, and input from, the social sciences as a key ingredient in increasing the effectiveness of humanitarian action. For its part, the PSTC has a long and distinguished history of basic research on demographic processes relevant to humanitarian action (including reproductive health, migration, mortality, and morbidity) and of developing sophisticated methodological tools for indirect estimation. The collaboration between the two entities has offered the opportunity to explore how social science insights and methodology may inform humanitarian action, and vice versa.

As with other publications of the Humanitarianism and War Project, this Occasional Paper is written primarily for busy humanitarian practitioners who, while not card-carrying social scientists, are increasingly open to the insights that those disciplines may provide. However, the monograph is also framed with academics and policymakers in mind. Aware of the competing demands on practitioners’ time, we had initially envisioned something shorter, only to find that it was impossible to do justice to the connections between humanitarian action and social science research as succinctly as we had hoped.

Indeed, the different perspectives on the length of this

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publication illuminate one of the critical tensions between the two constituencies. Left to their own devices, aid practitioners, who in the past have demonstrated little patience for nuanced discussions of sociocultural context and the methodologies of enumeration, would have settled for a five-page checklist of “how-to’s.” For their part, the contributions from the social scientists would have been not only lengthier but also more technical and jargon-laden.

In framing the workshop’s discussions and preparing this volume, we have accepted neither the aid community’s impatience with social science nor the reluctance of social scientists to bring their insights to bear on the specific programming challenges and constraints of aid agencies. In the middle ground where humanitarian practice and social science increasingly connect, aid agencies need to make more space for reflection while social science research design and presentation needs to be shaped less by theoretical conjecture and more by the relevant demands of aid practice.

The desideratum of the dialogue, as we understand it, is not to transform aid workers into anthropologists or to convert social scientists into humanitarians. It is rather to sensitize humanitarian organizations to the indispensable contribution of the social sciences to their own effectiveness and to enrich the social sciences with the experiences, insights, and access that aid agencies can provide. We offer this monograph as a contribution to the constructive interaction between the two communities.

The April conference and this present publication were facilitated by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which in recent years has made grants to both the Humanitarianism and War Project and the PSTC program. We extend our special thanks to Carolyn Makinson, who has not only encouraged the kind of interaction described but has been an active participant in the process.

The planning of six luncheon discussions during the 1997-1998 academic year and then the conference itself in April 1999 have involved a number of people at the univer-

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sity. These have been, from the PSTC program, David I. Kertzer, professor of Anthropology and History; Michael White, chairman of the Department of Sociology; David Lindstrom, assistant professor of Sociology; and, from the Humanitarianism and War Project, Larry Minear, director, and Thomas G. Weiss, principal consultant. The process has also benefited from the input of Stephen Lubkemann, currently a post-doctoral fellow at the Watson Institute and a consultant to the Humanitarianism and War Project. Steve has provided continuity in conference planning, execution, and follow-up. He has also contributed the chapter based on his own research and assisted in the overview provided by Chapter 1 as well.

We also express appreciation to those at the Watson Institute who have assisted at various points in the process. These include Margareta Levitsky, Andrew Blackadar, Laura Sadovnikoff, and Fred Fullerton. We are grateful to our editors Ann Byrne and Mary Lhowe as well.

As with other publications in the Occasional Papers series, we welcome comments from readers.

Larry Minear, Director  
Humanitarianism and War Project  
Providence, Rhode Island  
January 2000



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## ACRONYMS

EXCOM	Executive Committee (UNHCR)
FINNIDA	Finnish Cooperation
FRELIMO	Frente para a Libertação de Mocambique Front for the Liberation of Mozambique
GTZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
MAARP	Manica Agricultural Rural Reconstruction Programme (Mozambique)
NAR	Nucleo de Apoio ao Refugiado Refugee Support Unit (Mozambique)
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PSTC	Population Studies and Training Center (Brown University)
RENAMO	Resistência Nacional Moçambicana Mozambican National Resistance
RSA	Republic of South Africa
STAT1	Internal refugee statistics forms (UNHCR)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
USCR	United States Committee for Refugees



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## CHAPTER 1

### UNDERSTANDING FORCED MIGRATION: RETHINKING COLLABORATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

by Stephen Lubkemann, Larry Minear,  
and Thomas G. Weiss

Forced migration represents a growing challenge to policymakers because of its impact on a wide array of interrelated processes. These include regional and international security, economic and political development, population growth, public health, and the environment. In northern Iraq at the beginning of the 1990s and in Kosovo and East Timor at the end of the decade, forced migration moved from the sidelines to center stage as a factor sparking international security crises.

Through the 1990s, humanitarian and development practitioners have increasingly had to reconsider how the complexities of forced migration influence the effectiveness of their programs. The rising importance of involuntary migration to humanitarian policy and practice, and the recognition of the complexities of its causes and effects are generating a perceived need for new approaches to understanding forced migration processes, populations, and contexts.

As a result, six informal discussions were held at Brown University during the 1997-1998 academic year on the subject "Population Studies and Humanitarian Action: Exploring the Connections." The sessions were a collaborative effort of two of Brown University's applied research units, the Watson Institute's Humanitarianism and War Project and the Population Studies and Training Center (PSTC). Made possible in part by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the series was designed to contribute to a better understanding of forced migration processes and contexts.

Drawing on a broad variety of experience, each seminar speaker emphasized specific gaps in understanding and

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the challenges to be faced in bridging those gaps. Charles Keely (professor of Demography, Georgetown University) and Bela Hovy (chief statistician for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) spoke on the importance of understanding the different sources for refugee statistics, the different criteria used to determine who is counted, which populations are generally missed, and how an understanding of a population's demographic structure and basic forms of differentiation (by age and gender) are critical for humanitarian programming.

Julia Taft (U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration, and former president of the professional association of U.S. nongovernmental organizations, InterAction) stressed the need to understand how refugees themselves often become implicated in the conflicts that produce their displacement. She called for research into how camp life affects social and political change among refugees.

In their presentations, anthropologist Arthur Hansen (professor of Anthropology, Clark University-Atlanta and director of the International Association for the Study of Forced Migration) and Kim Maynard (director of Civil Society Initiatives at Mercy Corps International) joined Taft in identifying a need for new institutional mechanisms to bring those with specialized knowledge of specific socio-cultural contexts together with practitioners and policymakers in those contexts.

Kathleen Newland (senior research associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, D.C.) joined Hansen in stressing the importance of research that establishes an understanding of indigenous coping strategies prior to designing and mounting assistance programs. Contextually sensitive programming, she and others noted, is essential in order to avoid damage to local capacities in the process of providing aid. Maynard suggested that a better understanding of populations in areas of potential crisis could also play an important role in shaping policy aimed at preventing the eruption of conflict.

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The 1997-1998 seminar series brought together a mix of practitioners, policymakers, and researchers that mirrored the diversity among the six presenters. Participants included Brown students as well as Watson Institute researchers and invited guests. A consensus emerged on the urgent need for a far more empirically based and nuanced understanding of how sociocultural organization and demographic structure shape forced migration and are, in turn, affected by displacement. Remarkable differences in the behavior of displaced populations across cases have revealed the shortcomings of one-size-fits-all approaches to forced migration.

It was also evident that though desperately needed, even the most rudimentary information on demographic differentiation is generally lacking. These shortcomings were all the more evident as displacement in many contexts has become a long-term structural constraint circumscribing development efforts. Better understandings of sociocultural and demographic factors were viewed as crucial for informing policy analysis, clarifying agency mandates, and improving the division of labor among institutions.

Feedback from senior policymakers and practitioners confirmed a practical demand for programs that combine strong social science research in demography and sociocultural processes with sensitivity to the dynamics of actual humanitarian practice. More strategic and synthetic thinking about forced migration should be reflected over time in the methods, practices, and frameworks used by aid agencies. Also identified as needing more thought were the mechanisms that make social science research available to policy decisionmaking and humanitarian practice and how such links may be made more routine and effective.

Building on needs identified in the 1997-1998 discussion series, the Humanitarianism and War Project and PSTC organized a two-day workshop at the Watson Institute in April 1999 to accelerate the reflection process on these questions. Entitled "Understanding the Social Dimensions of Forced Migration: Practitioner Needs, Policy Sensitivities,

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and Social Science,” the workshop examined how demographic data about refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are produced and used in decisionmaking and humanitarian action. It sought to identify gaps and suggest improvements in practice. Participants examined how social science methods could be used and adapted to help improve decisionmaking and assistance activities in crises. They also considered what types of institutional relationships could make social science knowledge more readily available to policymakers and aid practitioners.

To ground the discussion of these issues in the real world of humanitarian practice, four researchers were asked to draw on previous field work and empirical studies to explore how a better understanding of sociocultural and demographic dimensions made, or could have made, a difference to policy formulation and humanitarian action in specific country contexts where involuntary displacement was a major problem.

The workshop drew upon an interdisciplinary set of authors with varying levels of policy and practice experience. Jeff Crisp is a development economist with long experience at UNHCR, most recently as senior policy research officer. Marc Sommers is an anthropologist, development consultant, and member of the Boston University African Studies Program, whose most recent work in West Africa (Liberia and Sierra Leone) and East Africa (Rwanda and Burundi) has been complemented by research for the Humanitarianism and War Project about coordination challenges and the 1999 crisis in Kosovo. Stephen Lubkemann is a recently minted Ph.D. in Anthropology from Brown University whose fieldwork in southern Africa (Mozambique and South Africa) continues while he works as a post-doctoral fellow and researcher at the Watson Institute. Susanne Schmeidl, also an anthropologist, was formerly the coordinator for the Prevention/Early Warning Unit of the Centre for Refugee Studies at York University in Canada and a consultant at UNHCR in Geneva. She now works with the Swiss Peace Foundation’s Institute for

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Conflict Resolution. Each author brought interdisciplinary perspectives to the task. Additional biographical information is provided in Appendix II.

## Organization

This monograph contains the four papers commissioned for the workshop, the themes and discussion of which are highlighted in this present chapter.

In Chapter 2, Crisp's "Who Has Counted the Refugees?" examines how refugee estimation is normally motivated as much by competing institutional interests as by a desire for numerical accuracy. He questions why the politicization of refugee numbers has not received analytical scrutiny by scholars, and examines the implications of this politicization for the quality of policy dialogue and humanitarian action. He also considers whether the process of population estimation can (or should) be depoliticized and discusses UNHCR's evolving efforts to deal with these questions.

In Chapter 3, Sommers addresses the contribution of refugees to the rapid urbanization of Africa, "On the Margins, in the Mainstream: Urban Refugees in Africa." Sommers points out that one of the most significant effects of forced migration in Africa may be its contribution to urbanization. Many refugees who do not live in the camps find themselves off the screens of government agencies and aid organizations. In addition, the experiences of those who reside in camps may also be "urbanizing" in terms of the lifestyles and expectations created through the often-lengthy duration of their stays. Such realities, however, remain on the margins of the thinking of aid agencies and policymakers, as that thinking continues to revolve around the static and dated "refugee in a camp" model.

In Chapter 4, Lubkemann's "Sociocultural Factors Shaping the Mozambican Repatriation Process" examines how an understanding of social organization, historical experience, and cultural context may inform what statistics imply

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about people's behavior. He examines how Mozambican forced migration to South Africa resulted in new forms of transnational household organization, with men opting to maintain multiple households in South Africa and in Mozambique following the war. Their migration back and forth across the border has thus confounded the expectations of practitioners who assume that return and non-return are mutually exclusive options. Both Lubkemann and Sommers demonstrate that during drawn-out complex emergencies, populations change in vital ways that make preemergency baselines inadequate for planning and executing postemergency efforts.

In Chapter 5, Schmeidl's "The Quest for Accuracy in the Estimation of Forced Migration" provides a reference piece for understanding how different methods and sources affect the numbers produced and the kind of population data available. Whereas information on refugee stock is the most readily available, far less data is available with far less reliability in measuring refugee flows. She lays out the variety of criteria used by different organizations in defining who is counted and which sources are used, criteria which help account for the variety of numbers produced. She discusses the operational constraints and limitations in forced displacement contexts that challenge the production of valid and reliable statistics.

The chapters by Crisp and Schmeidl raise a series of basic questions, drawing on field data and field experience. Their focus is on macrolevel forces that influence the production and use of demographic estimates in policy and practice. They review institutional factors, including the capacity of aid agencies to collect and assess statistical information and the challenges of generating figures that are as accurate as possible in difficult and highly charged circumstances. Crisp's approach is more broad-gauged and Schmeidl's is more technical, although both address crucial policy issues faced by practitioners.

Drawing upon in-depth fieldwork in eastern and southern Africa, the chapters by Sommers and Lubkemann call

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into question the traditional ways that policymakers and practitioners frame issues. Their anthropological case studies posit that a better understanding of communities improves the quality of humanitarian action. They also raise questions about how the larger framework of the humanitarian enterprise itself, which consistently ignores sociocultural context, influences the types of data sought and how it is used.

At the workshop, each of the four papers was commented upon initially by two discussants and then by the others. (Appendix I provides a list of workshop participants.) The diverse group of policymakers, humanitarian practitioners, and social scientists from various disciplinary backgrounds provided a wealth of knowledge and a fruitful exchange. The mix of practitioner and academic viewpoints and of governmental, intergovernmental, and nongovernmental perspectives enriched the dialogue.

Looking to the future, a final panel considered how the relationship among social scientists, policymakers, and aid practitioners might be developed to incorporate a better understanding of sociocultural and demographic forces. The ensuing discussion reflected on the strategic problems of bridging the gaps among the three audiences. Throughout the workshop, participants also considered the particular methodological challenges of knowledge production and the research questions and agendas that should be addressed in order to improve policy and humanitarian practice in these contexts. The papers that appear in Chapters 2 through 5 have benefited significantly from the interaction at the workshop. What follows is an attempt to capture key points from the discussions. Given the off-the-record ground rules, observations and comments are not attributed to particular participants.

## **Major Themes**

The workshop discussion revolved around the six major themes described in the remainder of this chapter, all of them related to identifying and closing existing knowledge

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gaps. The themes were the uses of counting, whom and what to count, the requisite specificity of knowledge, assumptions about time frames, the politics of counting, and the development of better collaborative mechanisms.

### *The Uses of Counting*

The first theme concerned the benefits of a subtler understanding of the demographic composition of populations of forced migrants. Such knowledge was seen as making aid more effective, strengthening the protection provided, identifying specific vulnerable groups, minimizing the harm that humanitarian activities might cause, and promoting greater awareness of the roles that refugees play in the conflicts themselves. Each of these contributions is examined separately.

*Making Aid More Effective.* Until recently, even such basic forms of demographic differentiation as age and gender have often been ignored in the collection of data on refugees. Numbers often still appear at the highest level of undifferentiated aggregation. An understanding of whether a displaced population is older or younger and of its gender composition is important in planning and providing for health care, shelter, and transportation needs. Accuracy in establishing such elementary differentiation is a prerequisite for all other demographic estimations such as mortality, morbidity, and fertility that bear directly on the challenges of providing assistance.

Similarly, if humanitarian actors have knowledge of the preconflict baseline age structure and morbidity and mortality patterns of displaced populations, they can respond to the needs of the displaced with greater accuracy and cost-effectiveness. For example, since European populations are older than African ones, they can be expected to have a higher percentage of elderly among the displaced. Conversely, displaced African populations may have a higher percentage of children and infants. The differences point to dramatically different forms of health and nutrition assistance requirements.

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*Protection.* Several participants pointed out the importance of numbers not only for more cost-effective assistance but also for better protection of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Preconflict demographic population profiles, which are rarely consulted even though they may be available, may also serve as baselines against which the demographic profiles of forced migrant populations can be examined to establish whether human rights have been violated. The tragic events in Kosovo that were taking place as the workshop met added relevance to this discussion (and also prevented several invited participants from attending). The shortage of men in Kosovar Albanian refugee flows provided an example of the value of demographic analysis. The identification of missing population segments poses important questions about the causes of those absences. Are certain types of people targeted by Yugoslav forces? Is their absence related to their status as combatants? Could a breakdown of the missing segment by age help provide an explanation?

*Identifying and Assisting the Most Vulnerable Subpopulations.* A better understanding of context-specific socioeconomic and sociocultural factors is also needed in order to improve humanitarian planning and practice. It is not only biologically based differences with respect to age and gender that determine the greater vulnerability of particular subpopulations among the displaced. (Subgroups within larger refugee populations such as the elderly or widows are often assumed to be particularly vulnerable.) It is equally important to understand what age, gender, and marriage status imply in terms of control over others and access to resources.

Because the rights and obligations implied by age or gender are largely culturally determined, they are highly variable across different social settings. As Lubkemann explained, social norms in parts of Mozambique often dictate that older widowed women, usually assumed to be one of the most vulnerable groups, were not, in fact, particularly vulnerable given their control over their sons'

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wives. Sommers described the importance of religious affiliation in determining which enterprising young men are able to draw on church networks to gain urban employment and which remain disenfranchised in camps.

There is also an urgent need to understand how social organization and cultural identity influence interpretations of crisis and shape responses. In many cases, people's sense of displacement and their ability to cope economically and psychologically may have less to do with geographic displacement than with severed or disrupted social networks. For instance, as pointed out by Arthur Hansen in his seminar presentation and again at the workshop, many Angolan refugees geographically displaced into Zaire remained within territory inhabited by the same sociocultural group. Thus they did not define themselves as "displaced" or face extreme difficulties in coping with their situation despite having been obliged to migrate. On the other side of the continent in Mozambique, by contrast, populations that barely moved any distance were cut off from their social networks and faced severe psychological and physical distress.

Similarly, the most insecure areas in the Balkans were the so-called UN safe areas, where the populations might be described as "displaced in place." Indeed, the view that displaced populations are automatically more vulnerable than those who have remained behind should be regularly reexamined as programs are planned and carried out. In Mozambique, considerable local conflict was generated by assistance provided primarily to those returning from being "displaced" abroad, when, in actuality, this group was far better off than those who had stayed put during the war.

*Minimizing Harm.* Humanitarian action can constitute a "second disaster" if it does not incorporate a fairly refined understanding of local coping capacities and strategies. Mary Anderson's work demonstrates how in sectors such as health and other services, local capacities can be depleted when outside actors compete with, rather than reinforce, indigenous institutions. Coping strategies can be damaged

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by well-intentioned aid agencies unaware of the impact of their programs. Well-designed research can help reduce the dangers of outside assistance or, better still, help create synergy with local capacities.

In many places family subsistence strategies may depend on some members living in rural areas while others work in urban areas. In Africa in particular, attention should be paid to how urban/rural, gender, and generation distributions play a role in these strategies. During the course of the seminars that preceded the workshop, Taft had discussed several cases in which nomadic unfamiliarity with a more sedentary life had resulted in dramatic health and nutrition problems and increased mortality. The nomadic populations were given food whose preparation and storage they were unfamiliar with, which resulted in its underuse. The implications for subsistence and survival should be clarified prior to mounting relief efforts.

The cultural aspects of displaced populations' economic and social organization also seriously affect the organization of refugee camps. Social science research can provide information concerning the ways in which social, political, and economic strategies are mapped by the displaced onto demographic structures and distributions. For example, different co-residential arrangements can be expected in different contexts because of different cultural beliefs. As Lubkemann and Sommers note in their chapters, a history of labor migration can result in camp demographics that are skewed toward higher numbers of women and children. At the same time, remittances from male family members who have migrated to urban settings nearby or abroad may play a critical role in the survival strategies of refugee camp households but are rarely reflected in planning projects to assist particular communities or types of beneficiaries.

*Understanding the Political Roles of Refugees in Conflicts.* More probing analysis of demographic and sociopolitical processes can also contribute to understanding how refugees and IDPs themselves are implicated in the armed

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conflicts that produce their displacement. In Rwanda young male refugees were often combatants. In the cases of the Palestinians and Kurds, refugee status has fueled nationalism and armed opposition which in turn depend on, and influence, the social and even residential organization of refugees. In Mozambique, Peru, Ethiopia, and Central America, the control of population flows and of settlement patterns often has become an essential component in military strategies. The use of refugee camps for recruiting soldiers and staging military activities has become a growing concern in post-Cold War assistance policymaking and aid programming.

### ***What and Whom to Count***

The second recurring theme was that the process of counting contributes not just to a better knowledge of age and sex differentiation but, more broadly, to a fuller awareness of the affected populations, including the internally displaced and host families as well as the refugees themselves.

*Beyond the Basic Indicators.* Data on forced migrants tends to be presented in highly aggregated forms that often do not differentiate even with respect to age and sex. The data available tend to focus on refugees in official camps, although they constitute a minority not only in Africa but even recently in the Kosovo crisis. Schmeidl's paper confirms the fact that the poorest and sparsest data tend to be on refugee flows as they are taking place and on IDPs. The methodological challenges of counting refugees in flight are legion, as was made abundantly clear in Rwanda, yet greater accuracy is needed. Demographers in particular have a long experience with indirect estimation techniques and might develop them further to help humanitarian actors and policymakers cope.

Despite the need for far greater attention to even these most basic types of demographic data, one of the major themes at the workshop involved the question of what

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other forms of differentiation should also be infused, whenever feasible, into surveying forced migrants. While reaffirming the need to pay attention to gender and age differences, Sommers and Lubkemann argue that culture plays an essential role in informing what age and gender differences imply for vulnerability, the ability to command resources, and ultimately the impact of displacement. Similarly, Crisp laments the inattention to socioeconomic differentiation (class and wealth differences) in counting refugees and IDPs and in translating those numbers into assistance priorities.

*Undocumented and Internally Displaced Populations.* Although they represent the largest proportion of those who are displaced, undocumented populations are rarely well understood or adequately addressed by humanitarian agencies and policymakers. Little is usually known about the size, social, and demographic characteristics, or economic behavior of either self-settled or internally displaced populations. Yet important ties and interdependencies often exist between officially camp-settled and illegally self-settled persons outside camps, or between those displaced internally and those who cross international borders. Policy that does address self-settled populations often does so on the basis of theory based on rumor and innuendo rather than on empirical fact. Theory that is not empirically grounded is often used to justify repressive measures.

Sommers' analysis of how young male refugees use Pentecostalism to organize their lives in urban settings challenges assumptions about the political danger they represent. This is propagated by theories such as the "New Barbarism." Lubkemann found that, contrary to the view in the media and even among aid workers, Mozambicans in South Africa tended to be victims rather than perpetrators of crime. Clearly, action needs to be informed by evidence based on empirical research rather than on speculation and unquestioned assumptions. As both studies show, anthropological methods may be particularly apt for studying undocumented migrants. In conjunction with demographic

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indirect estimation techniques and social network analysis, new insights on even less-accessible populations such as the internally displaced are also possible.

*Broader Contexts.* Host and Distressed Populations. For both assistance and protection purposes, who is counted has a direct impact on whether agencies fulfill their mandates and meet their objectives. Forced migration also influence the quality of life for others than the migrants themselves. Understanding the demographic profiles and socioeconomic organization of populations in areas of host countries to which migrants flee is relevant to the practices, outcomes, and political economy of humanitarian efforts. The impact of forced migration on these hosts, in turn, affects forced migrants. A narrow focus on the populations that move does not provide an adequate understanding of the broader factors that circumscribe the range of policy options for forced migrants. Often those who do not flee or those who are hosts are also highly “distressed” populations, themselves constituting vital elements of the humanitarian challenge.

### ***How Specific Does Knowledge Need to Be?***

A third recurring theme involved discussion of the links between the specificity of knowledge and its uses. Are differing degrees of accuracy acceptable at different points in the evolution of humanitarian crises?

*Precision or Accuracy?* The fieldwork by Sommers and Lubkemann illustrates why more context-specific knowledge of cultural and socioeconomic organization can improve policy formulation and assistance. With that in mind, participants repeatedly returned to the question of what degree of precision is needed. The consensus was that the precision that can be expected will vary according to the particular stage of a given emergency, perhaps along a continuum. During a breaking crisis, only rough precision is needed; once the emergency has been stabilized, reasonable precision is required and possible; and during postconflict

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resolution, good data is necessary and achievable.

Greater precision and subtler understanding come at a cost that may be more acceptable and pay greater dividends at some times than at others. The time and financial requirements in the immediate emergency phase may not be justified in light of the urgency of coping with massively life-threatening circumstances, particularly if achieving such precision diverts funds from assistance activities. Yet even in these most chaotic and urgent phases, social scientists with knowledge of preconflict demographic baselines, sociocultural organization, and basic methodologies may arm humanitarian actors with information and tools that will allow them to be more accurate, if still somewhat imprecise.

Several participants pointed out that in many of the more intractable emergencies, humanitarian action over a period of years or even decades had undergone several cycles. Many of the most significant and visible emergencies have become long-term if not actually structural. Such situations provide a laboratory for fundamental research on socioeconomic and cultural organization. Context-specific, in-depth data that is crucial on matters of return, conflict perpetuation, negotiation, and coping capacities could and should be researched for almost all cases of long-term forced migrants. Findings would be useful for programming in long-term cases as well as elsewhere.

### ***Rethinking Assumptions about Time Frames***

A fourth major theme involved the need to rethink the prevailing assumption that displacement is an isolated event. That assumption shapes the culture of humanitarian organizations and influences how action is framed and funds are mobilized. If the reality that displacement is a process was taken into account, the revision in assumptions might produce changes in strategies and programs.

*Long-Term as the Rule Rather than the Exception.* A working assumption behind many aid activities is that crises are short-term and in-depth analysis not possible. More than

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one participant lamented that hurried judgments by humanitarian organizations lead them to reproduce rather than correct mistakes. Evidence increasingly contradicts prevailing assumptions. Crises routinely become extended, along with humanitarian activities. It is thus necessary, said one participant, that “reflection should replace reaction as the dominant characteristic of humanitarian action.”

It is essential for policymakers and aid practitioners to understand the effects that long-term displacement and subsistence in crisis can have on demographic, social, political, and economic changes in these contexts. Palestinian, Liberian, Mozambican, Angolan, Rwandan, Sudanese, Yugoslavian, and, in several countries, Kurdish populations are examples of structural displacement. Population size or age structure may change; resource and power distributions may be reorganized within families or communities; educational or economic profiles may be substantially altered; and new experiences with urban or rural lifestyles may dramatically reshape expectations and aspirations.

Sommers and Lubkemann demonstrate that forced migration taking place during long-term or chronic crises results in fundamental reorganization of population structure at household, community, and population levels and in the transformation of social and economic organization. During the drawn-out complex emergencies that increasingly characterize many recent crises in Africa (the Great Lakes, Liberia, Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Mozambique, Angola), populations have changed in ways that make preemergency baselines either inadequate or undesirable for planning postemergency activities. In Mozambique, Angola, Palestine, and the Sudan, whole generations have grown up and been socialized in urban environments that differ radically from the rural social and economic milieus from which their parents fled. Inadequate consideration of these demographic changes may generate tensions that threaten the construction of peace, the effective delivery of humanitarian aid, and the success of postconflict peace building.

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*Changing Aid Agency Culture.* Participants generally agreed that the dominant culture and practice of aid agencies should change in order to have a significant effect on the time horizons of humanitarian organizations and on the expectations of financial supporters, donor governments, and private contributors alike. During the 1997-1998 series, Maynard had noted that even organizations with the shortest-term mandates were finding that their on-the-ground presence in humanitarian crises often passed the three-year mark. If longer-term engagement has become the rule rather than the exception, should activities not be based on more carefully gathered and context-specific information? Anthropologists in the group were particularly committed to that kind of in-depth research, although they noted the time and resources required. Discussants saw the potential contribution of case studies in shedding light on aid strategies in extended emergencies.

Immediate crises with a premium on rapid responses and back-of-the-envelope estimates lend themselves less readily to this type of social science input. Nonetheless, many participants pointed out that even in the most time-constrained stages at the onset of a complex emergency, there may be ways to draw on existing research about social and demographic processes and contexts that had been produced prior to the outbreak of war. An inventory of social scientific researchers with expertise in particular topics for specific geographic areas might be created, to be mobilized when policymakers and aid agencies require such expertise.

Pointing to the Project's practice of routinely associating area specialists and generalists in its country research, the workshop organizers suggested that there were creative means to draw on expertise built up through years of fieldwork. Rapid-analysis funds could be earmarked for bringing in researchers with knowledge of a specific context to look at more specific problems and serve as a resource for generalist practitioners. They could subsequently become involved in continuous monitoring and

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evaluation work, identifying local considerations of relevance to ongoing decisionmaking and implementation.

### ***The Politics of Counting***

Political realities shape not only the collection and interpretation of data but also the processes by which such data is shared. That reality raises numerous issues for social scientists and humanitarian practitioners alike.

*Multiple Interests at Stake.* Crisp's paper stimulated a line of discussion that continued throughout the workshop. The springboard was an examination of how estimations of forced migrants typically reflect quite extraneous factors such as the interests of multiple political actors in manipulating data. Host and home governments, bilateral donors, intergovernmental and nongovernmental aid agencies all have different and often contradictory interests in how numbers are produced and disseminated. The group examined the consequences of such interests, what could be done about it, and what results could be expected.

One person argued for developing analytical frameworks that identify the types of interests and biases of different institutional actors and social groups. The major actors are likely to have contrasting interests in inflating or deflating estimations in particular ways. Those interests may even vary for the same group or institution over time, depending on the uses for these numbers. For example, for a fundraising appeal, a government may use inflated numbers, whereas in other contexts the same government may have an interest in minimizing those counted as displaced. Given the wide variation in specific circumstances, the proposed analytical framework would serve as a point of departure for more sophisticated analysis that could then go on to account for specificities of context.

Crisp argued in his oral presentation that the presumption that the use and promulgation of numbers is shaped by self-interest is often racist in so far as such motives are attributed only to Third World host and home governments

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and forced migrants themselves. In fact, humanitarian organizations and donor governments are implicated as well. He pointed out how the end of the Cold War affected the ways and the reasons for politically manipulating data. Those who manipulate data today often reflect not political ideology but historically forged antagonisms based on ethnicity, trade interests, or the proliferation of a complex global arms market. As several discussants pointed out, numbers often take on a life of their own, particularly when they are dramatic and when they gain wide currency through uncritical repetition in the electronic and print media.

Forced migrants themselves often have a strong self-interest in minimizing their own enumeration and documentation. That reality raises ethical considerations about the role of enumeration in power relations: refugees are usually at a disadvantage. Participants took issue with the common view that enumeration serves primarily to reproduce and extend the “ideology of control,” an idea popularized in the writings of Barbara Harrell-Bond. She views the current refugee regime and its practices as benefiting primarily the interests of states and larger institutional actors, often to the detriment of refugees themselves. Aid is provided in a fashion that controls refugees’ movements and economic behavior and that guards the power of others over resource distribution. In this view, enumeration usually serves interests other than those of the refugees.

Many participants also concluded that some degree of control might, however, be the price for protection. Refugees are not the only ones affected by their own displacement. The interests and concerns of host populations and governments should be taken into account. At times refugee populations may face hostility and threats of harm from hosts themselves. Although refugee empowerment should be maximized and far more attention devoted to seeking out their voices and participation, particular circumstances influence what forms of control should be negotiated in order to guarantee assistance and protection. In some cases, enumeration and regulation play a critical role in providing

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assistance and protecting human rights. As the workshop met, the Serbian military practice of stripping Albanian Kosovars of their documentation was playing a vital part in deprivations of civil rights and in rendering persons uncountable. In such cases the enumeration of forced migrants can not only play a role in assistance and protection but also in guaranteeing the civil rights of those who have been politically disenfranchised.

*Transparency and Accountability Through Depoliticization or Professionalization?* The debate over which numbers will be utilized has influences at many levels. One veteran government official said that some of the most intractable problems in interactions between policymakers and aid practitioners stem precisely from disagreements about which figures will be used for resource allocations. Discussion focused on how social science might improve the quality and objectivity of policy debate by helping depoliticize the numbers. The concepts of politicization and depoliticization were used to describe the process whereby extraneous factors infiltrate, or are excluded from, the enumeration of forced migrants.

The policy debate over Mexican and Central American immigration to the U.S. over the last decade illustrated the point. Greater access to data, involvement in data collection, and debate among social scientists about methodological validity and standards have contributed to the professionalization of data collection on U.S. domestic immigration—that is, to greater transparency in sources and methods. Whereas widely divergent numbers and estimates for illegal immigration to the U.S. had circulated in the mid-1980s with a disparity of almost 1-to-5 between low and high estimates, the concerted efforts of demographers to examine and develop better estimation methods and standards has radically reduced the range of variation.

One person suggested that methodological transparency has the potential to clarify what types of political agendas or perspectives inform data creation. Rather than mounting naïve and ultimately futile attempts to depoliticize

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numbers, he suggested explaining how numbers become politicized. The greater relative transparency that resulted might promote more focused debate about genuine differences in the criteria for constructing estimations rather than about differences in numbers themselves. That is, the initial debate would be about methodology rather than conclusions. As in the case of the immigration debate, methodological transparency might help resolve this issue and focus the debate on realistic policy options.

As a consequence of greater consensus on standards and figures, policy debate on the immigration question no longer involves disagreement over which numbers should be used. Rather, it has moved on to questions that could not be considered had these facts not already been established. This experience may serve as a model for the contribution of social science to improving the quality of the national and international public policy debate.

In a forthright presentation of the limits of intergovernmental bodies, Crisp argues that depoliticization is not possible. Political interests as well as organizational mandates often dictate divergent criteria for enumeration. Instead, greater professionalization of field staff in terms of data-gathering skills may provide ways to improve the quality of estimates, whatever the criteria. To date, only modest investment has been made by aid agencies in professional statisticians. However, the process of producing a visible report such as UNHCR's biannual *The State of the World's Refugees* has meant that the methods and sources for estimations have become more transparent and subject to critical review by outsiders. In a step toward still greater transparency, UNHCR has recently declassified its internal evaluations.

There was general agreement about the difficulty of building routine safeguards into the estimation process. It was viewed as unlikely that UNHCR would "outsource" statistical operations or that governments and organizations would agree to subject themselves to even modest independent oversight. Yet since aid agencies are respon-

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sive to informal pressures from the international marketplace, they might be persuaded to involve credible academic institutions more systematically in evaluating and commenting on their assumptions and methods. Here, too, the process surrounding Mexican immigration data may be suggestive.

Funders and even policymakers could help by insisting upon such transparency. Rogue estimates would be discounted or would be less likely to be circulated. Greater social science rigor—methods of data collection and analysis are constantly subject to critical peer-review processes—might help establish stricter standards. Applying and sanctioning departures from these standards could work to establish numbers as facts in debate rather than as terms of dispute.

Crisp chided academics for not taking a more sustained and critical look at how political interests influence data availability, production, and dissemination. His paper observes that many new types of data have been made available to researchers by UNHCR in the last few years, although there is still a lag in researchers' knowledge and use of what is available. At the same time, access is still highly limited to particular and often very general data sets that obscure more case-specific and sociodemographically detailed data.

Indeed, the very availability of data from organizations may be constrained not only because of political interests but also because exposure to scrutiny could result in negative evaluations and eventual retaliation from funders. NGOs often feel doubly vulnerable. First, the data on which their appeals or programming decisions are based rely on information from governments or UN organizations that have implicit biases. Second, aid agencies are aware that their own data and methods of data collection, while sometimes providing an alternative perspective, may not bear up under scrutiny.

A host of related questions surfaced and were examined. Can relationships be forged between academic institutions

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and practitioners to assess how data is produced and used, and to modify data collection procedures? How can the tone of outside researcher involvement with aid agencies be changed from a predilection for ferreting out “defective work” to more constructive collaboration? In short, is it possible to approach research as a dimension of learning in which organizations are rewarded for self-criticism rather than penalized for candor? What kind of interaction and advocacy with funders, the media, and policymakers should occur for this sea change to become a reality? What steps should be taken within the international humanitarian system to build a consensus that rewards change?

As several seminar speakers had emphasized in the earlier 1997-1998 series, humanitarian organizations have increasingly become gatekeepers for much of the new academic and policy research carried out in contexts where insecurity makes access difficult unless facilitated by aid agencies themselves. However, agencies often do not put a priority on such research or impose tight controls on the use that researchers may make of data gathered while in their employ or with their assistance. The ground rules and responsibility for the wider circulation of research findings should be discussed and more clearly spelled out. Is it possible for agencies to permit researchers to use data from commissioned research in other writings? Would researchers be required to do so without reference to the agency involved? How can distressed populations themselves be given greater voice in these discussions? In a broader sense, how can relationships between humanitarian organizations and outside researchers be placed on a less adversarial basis? These are critical questions that warrant further reflection and bold experimentation.

### ***Developing Better Collaborative Mechanisms***

Throughout the workshop, participants struggled with a sixth theme: how collaboration among social scientists, policymakers, and humanitarian practitioners could be-

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come more systematic and institutionalized. In his chapter and presentation, Crisp noted that many bureaucracies were thirsty for appropriate analyses and urged academics to translate what they produce into language and format that practitioners and policymakers would find accessible. Many key UN documents, he pointed out, already reflect influence from professional social scientists. Yet most agencies enlist social scientists only as temporary consultants, making use of their contributions in specific projects rather than to improve agency-wide policy or operating procedures.

*From Ad Hoc to Institutionalized Collaboration.* The forms of assistance that a university-based research institution might provide included in-the-field training of “barefoot demographers”; organization and supervision of services that match up area and technical specialists with practitioners or policymakers active in particular crises; original research in displacement contexts; technical consultation and participation in ongoing monitoring exercises; and organization of training workshops and programs at the senior policy planner and practitioner levels. University-based research institutions should consider how they might help reorganize existing knowledge on forced migration to encourage user-friendly availability of information and greater cumulative impact of often disparate and overlapping research efforts. The current panoply of uncoordinated research involves what one participant termed “ingenious ways of reinventing wheels.” Greater discipline and networking among research institutions is clearly called for.

More thoroughly institutionalized forms of collaboration could evolve through a process in which research contributions to urgent problems identified by practitioner organizations serve as a vital first confidence-building step in a more wide-ranging and intimate partnership. Later steps centering on collaborative research in a learning tone might involve exchanges between the two communities. That is, researchers would work with new data or function as advisers in fieldwork while aid staff would participate in

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the intellectual activities of the academic community, perhaps on practitioner sabbaticals. Regularly scheduled workshops and exchanges on themes of mutual interest could evolve into joint appointments, with selected individuals spending time each year within both a research institution and an aid agency. At an advanced level, such collaboration could involve creation of professionalization programs at research institutions that encourage and reward participation of practitioners in comparative research and reflective analysis. The greatest payoffs would come from long-term and systematic collaboration on an institutionalized rather than an ad hoc basis.

Partnerships could be tailored to the needs and interests of staff at various levels. Development of relationships at the senior practitioner and policy-making levels, for example, may be critical since the parameters for humanitarian practice and the incentives for critical evaluation are established there. If decisionmakers are made more aware of the importance of neglected dimensions of social science knowledge and of concrete methods for obtaining and using of that knowledge, they could themselves encourage these to be addressed at the operational level. At the same time, interactions between more junior staff and counterparts from academia at headquarters and in the field would help train staff and improve analyses even if nothing were institutionalized in the short term.

*Comparative Advantages and Interests.* Such programs should exploit the comparative advantages of each partner. In terms of cultivating proactive and long-term relationships, research institutions are well placed to encourage structured dialogue among practitioners, help distill lessons learned, and synthesize new insights to be fed back into and applied by humanitarian practitioners. The capacities of scholars to bring to bear the best available data and analyses as well as historically grounded perspectives are strengths to be exploited. In addition to having the resources to finance research with direct policy impact, practitioner organizations also are well-positioned to identify

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pressing research questions, facilitate research, assess what are the best mechanisms for ensuring research impact on organizational conduct, and contribute a wealth of practical experience in multiple settings to thinking about problems and theory.

Institutional arrangements between universities and practitioner organizations should permit more thorough examination of existing data, albeit not always readily available or comprehensible to non-specialists. This type of data is more likely to be translated and used if a level of trust between producers and consumers is forged through the cultivation of long-term institutional relationships. Such links are more likely than ad hoc encounters to involve active negotiations that balance the interests of practitioner organizations and researchers. Agencies need to feel that there will be positive returns based on private rather than public critiques.

Reciprocal attention should also be paid to the interests and reward structures that could entice scholars to take more seriously the research agendas of aid agencies. Privileged access to data is certainly one such incentive. There should also be room to explore what the analysis of crisis populations can offer to academic disciplines. The complexity of studying populations in flux presents important new conceptual and methodological challenges and opportunities for social sciences. Aid agencies can provide indispensable access.

Collaboration of most interest to social scientists will require considering factors and dimensions hitherto outside or on the fringes of usual humanitarian thinking. One strategy might involve a series of in-depth and longer-term case studies that review complex emergencies and examine which social and demographic dimensions remain unconsidered despite their significant impact on humanitarian action. Such analyses could be partially new work, partially a compilation of previous work, but mostly a reworking by researchers of already collected data cast against a new set of themes and questions. Such research would be relevant

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in cases of flawed humanitarian action (e.g., Rwanda) as well as in more successful instances (e.g., El Salvador).

At all levels, the success and institutionalization of any program was felt to be dependent on the production of user-friendly knowledge, on systems for making that knowledge more readily available and accessible, on clear demonstrations to potential users of the necessity and advantages of those types of knowledge, and, perhaps most importantly, on the creation of incentive structures. A fruitful three-way relationship among practitioners, policymakers, and social scientists requires frank discussion about what each participant should get out of the collaboration and how activities will enable all parties to achieve their objectives.

## **Conclusions**

The workshop produced an informal agenda for further research, reflection, discussion, and experimentation. There was consensus on the need for more regular and strategic collaboration among social scientists, humanitarian practitioners, and policymakers. Better humanitarian action could result from better research. Complex emergencies should be viewed from a holistic, interdisciplinary, and contextual perspective that encompasses an understanding of the affected populations and host countries over time.

The discussions, both in 1997-1998 and in 1999, confirm the appropriateness of such a perspective and of the inductive methodology that have characterized previous research by the Humanitarianism and War Project. Particularly for conflicts of a more structural and ongoing sort, analysis should reflect better comprehension of the complexities of subnational socioeconomic processes without neglecting larger political-economic and macroinstitutional ones. Analysis also should examine the interrelationships among various humanitarian concerns such as assistance, protection, postconflict reconstruction, and development. Demographic and sociocultural processes are factors that bear

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importantly on emergencies but remain insufficiently researched, let alone addressed.

Social scientists can contribute in a variety of ways to humanitarian policymaking and practice. At the more tactical end of the continuum, these contributions involve refining methods that address questions that already fit within the parameters of humanitarian thinking. At the strategic end, these contributions involve questioning those parameters themselves. Contributions by social science on the tactical end are more likely to be acknowledged by policymakers and practitioners; contributions of a more strategic sort may be recognized and welcomed less quickly. While strategic questions may form the most critical area of future collaboration, they represent a much harder sell within aid bureaucracies. Yet social scientists may serve as allies for those staff within the agencies who are already questioning fundamental assumptions and taking a longer view. Collaboration on matters of a more tactical sort may nurture relationships on which more paradigmatic questions can be addressed.

A number of immediate contributions are already evident to researchers and practitioners alike. The expertise of demographers and the methods of anthropologists can provide better estimates than are currently employed for hidden populations as well as more efficient and cost-effective methodologies for studying forced migration based on sample survey and indirect estimation techniques. There is need to examine how researchers can support practitioners in developing better methods for, and systems of, data collection and analysis. Such activities could involve staff training and collaboration in production of manuals and consultations about data collection protocols and survey questionnaires and procedures. The wealth of demographic and sociocultural knowledge of particular contexts prior to their eruption into violence is also valuable and should be organized, drawn upon, and disseminated.

The central challenge, however, is far more complicated than merely improving enumeration techniques. So-

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cial science can make more strategic contributions to humanitarian policymaking and practice. It can contribute to more systematic thinking. Which numbers best serve which purposes? What are the most relevant subcomponents of larger problems? What are the linkages among such issues as protection, assistance, and development? How can key social science indicators be used better?

Practitioners and policymakers have yet to react to humanitarian crises as elements of longer-term processes rather than short-term events. Participants from both public and private organizations pointed out that the urbanization of forced migrants has not yet been recognized in humanitarian policy and thinking, despite its substantial implications for programming. Urbanization may, in fact, be one of the most globally important effects of long-term crises, particularly in Africa. In many forced migration contexts, both urban and rural populations have been redistributed along and across national borders. Transnationalism and border residence have come to be incorporated into economic survival strategies, social relations, and political identities with important implications for humanitarian work. Displacement processes must be examined far more holistically since they involve not only forced migrants but also those left behind as well as host populations.

More discussion and experimentation is necessary to address the pragmatic aspects of collaboration among social scientists, practitioners, and policymakers. One of the more formidable challenges is confronting the prevailing stereotypes, which contain some truth but also considerable misinformation. How can long-standing misimpressions be changed?

There is a perceived anti-research environment in many aid agencies. They devote only minimal expenditures to the social science research that might better ground and inform their activities. Moreover, when they expend funds, they often rely on former staff members or other practitioners rather than card-carrying members of the academy. Are the

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agencies consciously excluding such knowledge or simply finding it inaccessible or difficult to use? Their incentive structures reward can-do performance, not reflection and self-criticism.

For their part, social scientists are viewed as interested in data as fodder for theory, not in addressing pressing problems in jargon-free language accessible to nonspecialists. Career incentives within the academy so dictate.

However, the spirit and collegiality of the workshop suggest an open moment in which practitioners and social scientists recognize new reasons for and rewards from working with each other. The painful and embarrassing failures that humanitarian actors have experienced in Rwanda and Angola have whetted appetites for more context-specific understanding. Practitioners recognize that more time spent in analyzing situations may pay crucial dividends in preventing costly mistakes and wasted efforts.

Many social scientists are also recognizing that given the prevailing insecurity in many conflict areas, humanitarian organizations function as gatekeepers to data otherwise inaccessible for research. Some social scientists are interested in using their research skills to help address pressing problems. Baseline studies and evaluations lend themselves particularly well to collaboration. Yet it is unrealistic to expect agencies to swell their ranks with social scientists: neither the agencies nor the social scientists would find their very different interests well served.

The solution to collaboration probably does not lie in either creating a form of pseudo-social science framed solely by practitioner concerns nor in expecting practitioners to take on the added professional burden of being social scientists. Much of what social science can offer in terms of insight on the dynamics of particular problems results from the ability to reflect in some depth on a much broader set of problems than those of immediate and urgent concern to practitioners. To create a highly problem-confined social science would sacrifice the larger perspective that allows social scientists to place these problems in

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context and more clearly identify their contours and dynamics. It is not only by studying wartime migration to urban areas but by understanding the broader implications of urbanization for development, household structure, and economic behavior that demographers and anthropologists can produce insights regarding the likelihood of repatriation and the expectations of refugees who do return.

The challenge in establishing more effective collaboration lies not in subsuming the goals and practices of social scientists under those of practitioners or vice versa, but in identifying the comparative advantages each can offer to the other, in accepting that collaboration can serve multiple purposes, and in identifying those activities where parallel purposes can be most effectively and usefully pursued. Effective collaboration requires, above all, agreed-upon goals and mechanisms rather than the mix-and-stir approach in which cooperation and knowledge sharing is assumed somehow to occur through osmosis. The following sets of questions were identified as essential in constructing more productive and sustained encounters between social scientists and practitioners.

What are the different imperatives and incentive structures in practitioner, policy, and academic organizations that influence interest in and use of particular types of knowledge? How should attention to these differences figure into the building of research and institutional arrangements to ensure that knowledge produced or already available is used? What kind of negotiated expectations for collaboration can result from a better and more explicit mutual understanding of, and respect for, these differences in imperatives?

When is humanitarian practice unaware of certain dimensions or factors of analysis despite their relevance to situations in which assistance and protection activities are carried out? How can a wider awareness of this need be nurtured?

What are the time, methodological, and political constraints of different disciplinary types of knowledge pro-

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duction? How do these constraints limit the contributions that different disciplines can make in different types or stages of emergencies? What methods and forms of knowledge production might practitioners learn to use even in time-constrained contexts? What forms of knowledge require the kind of time and distance absent in emergencies?

How can understandings of the complex connections between local context and larger political-economic processes be built and drawn upon in aid practice? How can a historical perspective be provided within which to interpret ongoing developments? What mechanisms for continuously updating preconflict baseline knowledge are possible in situations characterized by rapid change and high levels of insecurity?

To what degree is knowledge in practitioner and policy arenas ad hoc, particularized, and personalized rather than systematized, synthesized, and institutionalized? How may research institutions help reorganize such knowledge in order to encourage greater cumulative impact and availability?

How can social scientists present knowledge that responds to the pressing demands of nonspecialist practitioners and policymakers, and how might those demands be restructured to incorporate the depth of understanding necessary for informed action?

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## CHAPTER 2

### WHO HAS COUNTED THE REFUGEES? UNHCR AND THE POLITICS OF NUMBERS

by Jeff Crisp<sup>1</sup>

“It is no wonder that the salvos of cruise missiles into Yugoslavia have been accompanied by salvos of sanctimonious justifications by Clinton, Blair and Co. But how feeble their justifications sound. Tony Blair and Defence Secretary George Robertson rabbit on about a ‘humanitarian catastrophe’. Figures are airily brandished of 250,000 Kosovan refugees, with 20,000 leaving their homes in the past few days. Where is the hard evidence for this? Who has counted the refugees?”

Corelli Barnett, *The Daily Mail* (London),  
26 March 1999

It is almost impossible to think or write about refugees and forced migration without some reference to statistics. When studying complex emergencies, for example, the analyst is immediately prompted to ask: how many people have been displaced; what proportion of that number have remained within the borders of their own country; how many have sought asylum elsewhere; and to which destinations have they gone?

In more stable refugee situations, numbers play an equally important part in any analytical endeavor. The scholar, like the practitioner, will want to know: how many refugees live in camps and how many have settled elsewhere; what is the ratio between refugees and local residents; how many of the refugees have become self-

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sufficient; how many continue to receive assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian agencies; and what is the demographic structure of the refugee population?

When it comes to examining the resolution of refugee problems, statistical issues continue to feature prominently. How many refugees have repatriated to their country of origin? At what rate are they returning? How many have been accepted for resettlement in third countries? And how many have become integrated in their country of asylum?

Finally, in the context of the industrialized states, statistics constitute a necessary foundation for the examination of many key refugee issues. How many asylum applications have been submitted in a given state or region? How have those numbers varied on a year-by-year basis? From which countries do the asylum seekers originate? And what proportion have been successful in their requests for refugee status? Without addressing questions such as these, and without having access to the figures needed to answer them, it is impossible to do any meaningful analysis of refugee policies in North America and Western Europe.

Despite the centrality of statistics to the field of refugee studies, scholars working in this area have been remarkably inattentive to the issue of quantitative data. While all of the standard works on refugees are replete with numbers, few even begin to question the source or accuracy of those statistics. Scholars have generally been content to rely on figures offered by the two leading producers of refugee statistics—UNHCR and the United States Committee for Refugees (USCR)—despite the fact that the figures presented by the two organizations very often differ! The existing literature on refugee statistics is itself extremely meager, much of it focusing on the technical and methodological dimensions of the issue.<sup>2</sup> To the best of the author's knowledge, no substantive article has ever been published on the politics of refugee numbers.

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## The Utility and Uses of Refugee Numbers

There is a school of thought which questions the whole notion of refugee enumeration, especially when it is linked to the distribution of material assistance. As one scholar has written, “since the time international humanitarian agencies became involved in assisting refugees in developing countries, this seemingly entirely reasonable requirement—the need to count the refugees—has, to a significant extent, dominated policy, planning, implementation and evaluation.” Setting out to expose the “underlying ideological assumptions” of enumeration, the author argues that “the requirement to count refugees leads to highly undesirable, oppressive consequences for refugees. It forms a central component in an ideology of control which is part and parcel of most assistance programmes.”<sup>3</sup>

While it would be wrong to dismiss every element of this argument (because assistance programmes *are* informed by an ideology of control, however benign the motivations of the individuals responsible for implementing them), it is difficult to envisage a situation in which the task of collecting refugee numbers could simply be ignored by the actors which constitute the international refugee regime. UNHCR, for example, needs “caseload statistics” to fulfill its mandatory task of refugee protection, to plan its programmes, to draw up its budgets, to allocate its resources, to procure essential assistance items, to establish logistical systems, to raise money from donor states and to account for the organization’s expenditure. Registration is also in the interests of refugees themselves. As the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Médecins sans Frontières (MSF) has observed, “without registration, refugees have no rights and families cannot be reunified. Without registered names, the numbers of refugees are easy to manipulate and assistance is difficult to monitor.”<sup>4</sup>

Within the donor states, those ministries responsible for funding relief and development activities need refugee statistics to justify the resources that they receive from the

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treasury and taxpayer. Host governments need statistics for security purposes, to anticipate the social and economic impact of a refugee influx and to ensure that the refugees' presence is taken into account in the formulation of local, regional and national development plans. And the media (which, if not a part of the international refugee regime, is used by and exerts a considerable influence upon it) need statistics to provide their audience with information about the refugee movements, mass displacements and asylum flows taking place throughout the world.

The precise nature of the statistics required by these different actors evidently varies. Journalists and advocacy groups, for example, are most likely to be concerned with easily-digested "headline" figures: the size of a refugee influx; the total number of refugees to be found on the territory of a given state; or the relative number of asylum applications received and recognized by different governments in the same region.

For UNHCR and its operational partners, however, the level of statistical detail required is normally much greater. To provide a refugee population with effective protection and assistance, it will normally be necessary to know something about the composition of that community in terms of gender, age, ethnic origin and household structure. And in situations where an exiled population wishes to return to its homeland, statistical data on the refugees' place of origin, educational background, skills and occupational status is an obvious prerequisite for effective repatriation and reintegration planning.

During the past 10 to 15 years, the requirement for such statistical data has been strengthened by the recognition that refugee populations are not simply an undifferentiated mass of people with identical needs and capacities. Rather, such populations consist of many different (and overlapping) social groups: males and females; elderly people, adults, adolescents and children; the able-bodied and the disabled; female-headed households and unaccompanied children. The collection of accurate data on these different

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social groups not only provides an important basis for effective programming, but also contributes to the all-important task of mobilizing financial resources. As UNHCR's registration guidelines point out, "it is easier to raise funds for the needs of particular groups within a population when there is detailed information available on the beneficiaries."<sup>5</sup>

### **Constraints on Accuracy and Consistency**

While statistics are central to the functions of the international refugee regime, it has long been recognized that the collection of accurate data on displaced populations is confronted with some formidable obstacles. Writing in 1985, for example, Gaim Kibreab pointed out that "there is a cloud of uncertainty and unreliability surrounding African refugee statistics."<sup>6</sup> Six years later, a report issued by the U.S. State Department's Bureau for Refugee Programs noted that "counting refugees is at best an approximate science."<sup>7</sup> And a recently published International Labour Office (ILO) volume on the collection of international migration statistics observes that "much of the information available on refugees and persons in need of protection is tentative at best."<sup>8</sup>

UNHCR has also acknowledged its own limitations in this area. In the words of the agency's flagship publication, *The State of the World's Refugees*:

The press and the media, NGOs, and research bodies make constant demands on UNHCR for facts and figures, especially when major refugee movements or repatriation operations are taking place. All too often, however, UNHCR finds it difficult to answer such queries with any real degree of accuracy. Moreover, the figures collected by UNHCR frequently diverge from those reported by journalists, voluntary agencies, host governments and donor states.<sup>9</sup>

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Why exactly is it so difficult for UNHCR and other elements of the international refugee regime to produce accurate and consistent figures in relation to displaced populations? This section begins to answer that question by focusing on the definitional and operational obstacles to effective enumeration, while the following section looks at the way in which political considerations impinge upon refugee statistics.

### ***Definitional problems***

Any form of enumeration exercise must be based upon a clearly defined unit of measurement if it is to produce reliable, usable and comparable data. In the case of refugee statistics, however, such clarity does not always exist.

The word “refugee” is itself subject to quite different definitions and interpretations. Under the terms of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention, the refugee concept is used to describe those people who are outside of their own country and unable to return to it because they have a “well-founded fear of persecution” there. That continues to be the definition used by the industrialized states. In less-developed regions such as Africa, Central, and South America, however, the concept has been formally broadened [through the Organization of African Unity’s (OAU) Refugee Convention and the Cartagena Declaration] to include people who have sought refuge in other countries as a result of aggression, occupation, generalized violence and events seriously disturbing public order. As a result of these different approaches, an individual who would be counted as a refugee in one part of the world might not qualify for that status in another.

The USCR, which publishes an influential annual survey of refugee affairs, employs yet another approach, counting those refugees and asylum seekers who are deemed to be “in need of protection and/or assistance.” The distinguishing characteristic of such refugees, the USCR has explained, is “their inability to repatriate due to continued

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fear of persecution in their homelands and the absence of permanent settlement opportunities in their countries of asylum or elsewhere.”<sup>10</sup> The result of this approach (which has been subject to some criticism by UNHCR’s senior statistician) is to exclude some sizeable groups of refugees who have settled in regions such as Western Europe, North America, and Australasia.<sup>11</sup>

Conversely, while the USCR includes in its global refugee statistics the three million Palestinians who are registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), UNHCR does not include this group of refugees as they fall outside of the agency’s mandate. Scholars and journalists who make use of the USCR and UNHCR figures almost invariably fail to recognize these important definitional differences.

The general level of confusion surrounding the issue of refugee statistics is compounded by the fact that many commentators on international affairs (especially those in the popular press) use the refugee concept to denote anyone who has been forced to leave their usual place of residence, whether or not they have crossed an international border. Media reports about Afghanistan, Angola, Somalia and Sudan, for example, frequently refer to the large number of “refugees” living in those countries, when they are actually referring to internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The enumeration of internally displaced populations is characterized by its own set of definitional and methodological difficulties. Unlike the refugee concept, the notion of an “internally displaced person” has never been defined in international law. Many humanitarian organizations and advocacy groups make reference to IDP statistics in their publications. But a number of important questions usually go unanswered. In the absence of a clear criterion such as the crossing of an international border, how far does a person have to move to be considered “internally displaced”? When do internally people cease to warrant that status: when they return to their original place of residence,

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or when they have achieved a certain degree of physical and socioeconomic security in the place to which they have fled? Given that a large proportion of the world's IDPs are thought to live in towns and cities, how can they be differentiated from other rural-to-urban migrants? How does one distinguish a refugee from an IDP in situations such as former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union, where international boundaries have changed? And in countries which are engulfed by armed conflict, does it make any sense to distinguish IDPs from "war-affected populations" who are besieged in their own homes?

The difficulties associated with the IDP concept are symptomatic of a broader problem confronting the international refugee regime: the extent to which established categories and definitions are being undermined by operational realities. In a number of countries around the world, UNHCR has become involved in emergencies of such complexity that it is very difficult to make a meaningful distinction between refugees, returnees, internally displaced people and local residents. And even if such distinctions can be made in strictly legal terms, they are irrelevant in terms of human needs and humanitarian assistance. This point is brought out neatly in a review of UNHCR's operations in Ethiopia, which states:

Categorizing people as refugee or returnees did not in this situation have a strong social validity. Most of the refugees and repatriants were nomads or semi-pastoralists who traditionally crossed borders. Discrete categories of beneficiaries could not be confidently established in many situations. 'Refugees' and 'returnees' were often living amongst local residents, and, on the basis of clan and family ties, were indistinguishable from them.<sup>12</sup>

The former Soviet Union provides another interesting example of the way in which established categories of

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displaced person (and thus established units of data collection) have been reconsidered in recent years. In 1996, an international plan of action was established to address the problem of displacement in the former Soviet Union. Rather than confining itself to the traditional vocabulary of the international refugee regime, the plan identified no fewer than eight categories of person whose situation had to be addressed: “refugees,” “persons in refugee-like situations,” “internally displaced people,” “involuntarily relocating persons,” “repatriants,” “formerly deported peoples,” “illegal migrants,” and “ecological migrants.” According to UNHCR’s latest statistical report, the number of “involuntarily relocating persons” in the Russian Federation stands at 957,000—a significant proportion of the 22.3 million people of concern to the organization throughout the world.

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that problems of definition and categorization occur only in situations where refugees are mixed up with other groups of displaced person or migrant. For even in conventional refugee situations, different figures may well be given with regard to the size of the same refugee population, depending on the source of those statistics and their means of calculation. The government may produce one figure while UNHCR reports another. One statistic may refer to the number of people who are supposed to be receiving assistance from the international community, while another statistic may refer to the number of people who are actually receiving such assistance.

### ***Operational Problems***

According to a recent paper presented to UNHCR’s Executive Committee, the world’s most affluent states, with all of their resources and technological sophistication, “have great difficulty in answering or are not able to provide an answer to the simple question, ‘how many refugees are living in the country.’” “Similarly,” the paper continues, “information is generally lacking on essential charac-

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teristics of the refugee population, for example, country of origin and sex.”<sup>13</sup>

If it has proved so difficult for the industrialized states to provide a comprehensive statistical picture of the refugees on their territory, then it should come as no surprise to discover that refugee statistics in developing regions of the world are also lacking in detail and reliability. The only real exception to this rule is to be found in southeast Asia, where the majority of Vietnamese boat people were kept in closed camps and carefully counted from the day of their arrival to the day of their resettlement or repatriation.

Many of the world's largest refugee and returnee populations are now to be found in poor and unstable states such as Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Zaire. In such societies, the authorities simply do not have the capacity to collect high-quality refugee statistics. And while UNHCR has sought to fill this gap, the organization is poorly equipped and inadequately resourced for this task, especially in emergency situations.

In several recent refugee crises, very limited numbers of UNHCR field staff have been confronted with movements of half a million refugees or more, across large geographical areas and in some of the most remote, weakly administered and environmentally hostile territories on earth. In such circumstances, the obstacles to effective enumeration are legion. Refugees may enter a country of asylum at numerous different points along a border. They may arrive in such large numbers that they can scarcely be counted. The influx may take place in an area where UNHCR has no access, due to insecurity or governmental obstruction. Some refugees may prefer not to be identified or counted. And UNHCR and its partners may well consider that their limited resources are best spent on the provision of life-saving assistance, rather than on counting the potential beneficiaries.

As a refugee influx levels off and relief operations become more organized, the potential for the collection of accurate statistical data evidently improves. Once refugees are concentrated in specific locations and assistance pro-

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grams have been established to provide them with food, water, shelter and medical services, then reliable demographic data begins to come on-stream. At the same time, however, the establishment of such programs provides local residents with greater incentives to register as refugees, thereby distorting the accuracy of any statistics collected.

The operational constraints on effective enumeration do not end there. In order to survive and to prepare for their eventual repatriation, refugees have to be mobile. To an extent that is often neglected, refugees come and go across international borders and move around within their countries of asylum. They may go in and out of a camp to take advantage of seasonal agricultural opportunities or move to a town to trade or look for work. In many situations, some family members will remain in the country of asylum and continue to receive assistance, while others visit their country of origin in order to tend their farm or to assess the prospects for a longer-term return.

Refugees may also be mobile—and consequently less countable—because they continue to be subjected to persecution and violence in their ostensible country of asylum. As UNHCR has reported:

Forced population movements are becoming more complex. Movements of refugees and internally displaced people now often criss-cross each other, collecting and discarding people on the way. At the same time, there would appear to be a growing number of situations in which people are repeatedly uprooted, expelled or relocated within and across state borders, forcing them to live a desperately insecure and nomadic existence.<sup>14</sup>

An additional operational constraint to effective enumeration derives from the fact that refugee populations,

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like any other population, are dynamic social entities. Refugees die, get married, and give birth. Refugee households may split up or regroup. However accurate they may have been at the time of their collection, statistical data about the size and composition of a refugee population can quickly become outdated. Updating this information is not a straightforward exercise either, especially when the refugee population or host country concerned records births, deaths, ages and family relationships in ways that do not correspond with standard demographic practice.

The most obvious way of dealing with some of the difficulties identified above—namely for UNHCR to conduct periodic registrations or revalidations of refugee populations—is easier said than done. Such exercises are expensive—around a dollar per head in Africa, a sum that excludes indirect costs such as staff time and travel costs.<sup>15</sup> Registrations and revalidations are logistically complex and can only be undertaken if the necessary skills and experience are available. Such exercises can lead to discomfort and even danger for the refugees concerned, especially when they require large numbers of people to gather in a single location or to queue up for long periods in exposed areas.<sup>16</sup> Finally, experience has demonstrated that registration exercises may be actively resisted by the host government, by the refugees themselves, and even by UNHCR's operational partners. As one report on this issues has observed:

In some situations, staff and officials may not merely neglect registration, but oppose it. In one recent emergency, for example, voluntary agency officials are cited as having repeatedly refused to 'get involved with registration' as being against their humanitarian principles. In yet another, officials of a major donor organization are reported to have criticized efforts towards accurate enumeration, and urged that generous overes-

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timates would suffice. In still another case, UNHCR field staff attempting a sample survey have been criticized by voluntary agency staff for their 'intrusive bureaucracy.'<sup>17</sup>

### **The Politics of Refugee Numbers**

How does politics impinge upon the collection of comprehensive, reliable and up-to-date statistical data on refugees and other groups of displaced people? The simple answer to this question is: in many different ways and at many different levels of the international refugee regime. Before going on to substantiate that assertion, it should be made clear that this article uses the notion of "politics" in its broadest sense, to denote the efforts of individuals and institutions to pursue their own interests and to influence the behavior of others. In the context of refugee situations, those actors fall into a number of conventional categories: countries of origin; countries of asylum; donor states; refugee populations and humanitarian organizations. This section uses such categories as a convenient (if somewhat simplistic) framework to examine the politics of refugee numbers and to introduce some illustrative case studies, drawn mainly from the author's personal experience over the past 15 years.

#### ***Countries of Origin: the Horn of Africa and Uganda***

Refugee movements are in many senses a symbol of political failure. Few states like to acknowledge that their citizens have been obliged to "vote with their own feet" by leaving their country of origin, even if that state has deliberately engineered their departure. In some situations, governments address this issue by claiming that the "refugees" who have left the country are not refugees at all, or that they are not even citizens of that state. The Bhutanese government's explanation of the ethnic Nepali exodus in

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1991-1992 and the Burmese government's interpretation of the Rohingya refugee movement of the same period both conform to this general model, as does (to a lesser extent) the Vietnamese explanation of the boat people's departure in the 1970s and 1980s.

It is also common practice for countries of origin to suggest that their citizens have departed at the behest of opposition movements and with the specific intention of conducting military activities against them. In a considerable number of cases, moreover, the movement of Namibian refugees into Angola and Zambia, the Afghan exodus into Pakistan, and the more recent "evacuation" of Rwanda's Hutu population to Zaire and Tanzania—such suggestions have some validity.

Another common tactic pursued by countries of origin (and one that is more directly germane to the subject of this article) is to challenge the refugee statistics reported from the country of asylum, and to suggest that those figures have been deliberately inflated by the government of that state. Such was the case in the Horn of Africa throughout the 1980s, when Ethiopia and Somalia were involved in a constant wrangle concerning the respective number of Somali and Ethiopian refugees they had admitted. In situations such as this, where refugees cross an international border in both directions, it can be very difficult for UNHCR to place any statistics in the public domain without offending at least one of the states involved.

Countries of origin encounter some evident credibility problems when it comes to making pronouncements about the number of their citizens who have fled to another state. Without actually being present on the other side of the border, how can they pretend to be in possession of more accurate data than UNHCR or the country of asylum? When it comes to repatriation movements, however, the boot is very much on the other foot.

Unlike refugees, returnees are a symbol of political success. When people decide to go back to their country of origin, the leaders of that state can claim that its citizens are

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expressing some kind of confidence in its government. At the same time, large-scale repatriation movements enable countries of origin to seek large-scale international assistance, both in the form of short-term relief and for longer-term reintegration and rehabilitation activities. In these circumstances, it is not surprising to find that refugee-producing countries are inclined to exaggerate returnee numbers.

Then the government of Milton Obote claimed that between 300,000 and 400,000 Ugandan refugees had repatriated from Sudan and Zaire, while UNHCR's statistics indicated that the Ugandan refugee population in those countries was actually increasing. Despite this evidence, UNHCR and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) endorsed the government's claim, included the figure of 300,000 returnees in a report submitted to the Second International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa (ICARA 2), and invited donor states to contribute \$17.1 million dollars toward the social and economic reintegration of the nonexistent returnee population.<sup>18</sup> The Sudanese and Zairean submissions to ICARA 2 requested donor funding to assist exactly the same group of people in their countries of asylum!

### ***War-Torn States: The Case of Bosnia***

One of the most important trends in the work of UNHCR over the past decade can be seen in the shift from a "refugee-centric" approach, which concerned itself only with displaced people who had crossed an international border, to a more "holistic" approach which provides protection and assistance to other groups of vulnerable people. According to the organization's most recent statistical review, little more than half of the 22.3 million people of concern to the organization are now refugees in the conventional sense of the word.

One manifestation of this trend can be seen in the extent to which UNHCR has become involved in war zones,

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working on behalf of internally displaced people and conflict-affected populations. As Mark Cutts demonstrates in a recent paper on the issue of “negotiated humanitarian access,” the organization’s new role in situations of armed conflict has drawn it into a new (and particularly problematic) form of the “numbers game”: that of determining the relative amounts of assistance to be provided to the different parties involved in a vicious communal conflict.<sup>19</sup>

According to Cutts, about 30 percent of all food aid provided by UNHCR during the war was delivered to Bosnian Serb areas—a figure which reflected the questionable claim that 30 percent of Bosnia’s pre-war population consisted of Serbs. But this allocation ignored the fact that that the *needs* of the Muslim population were much greater, given that many members of that community were to be found in the besieged enclaves of Sarajevo, Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde, where they were largely dependent on humanitarian assistance for their survival.

In Bosnian government areas, Cutts also recounts, the allocation of food for Muslims and Croats again reflected pre-war population figures rather than relative needs of the two communities. “Indeed,” he writes, “because of pressure from the Croat authorities of Herzeg Bosna, who controlled the main route into central Bosnia — large quantities of UNHCR food were distributed to Croat areas in the far south of the country which had hardly been affected by the war at all, and where there was no real need for humanitarian assistance.”<sup>20</sup> Thus by exploiting UNHCR’s efforts to pursue an ostensibly “impartial” approach to the question of population figures, the Bosnian Serb and Bosnian Croat authorities were able to further their political and military objectives.

### ***Countries of Asylum: An African Perspective***

Within the humanitarian community, discussions of the “politics of numbers” almost invariably turn to the way in which countries of asylum in developing regions make

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exaggerated claims about the number of refugees present on their territory. According to the conventional wisdom, they do this for a number of reprehensible reasons: to embarrass the government of the country of asylum and to besmirch its human rights record; to attract large amounts of humanitarian assistance into the country, which can then be siphoned off to members of the political, military and business elite; to provide employment to large numbers of bureaucrats and refugee camp workers, many of whom would otherwise be without work or an income; to ensure a generous supply of food and other relief items to exiled groups which are engaged in political and military campaigns against their country of origin; to maximize the amount of foreign exchange brought into the country by humanitarian agencies, which can subsequently be converted at rates favorable to the government; and to cast the most favorable light possible on the country's commitment to humanitarian norms, thereby bolstering its international reputation and external support.

While the truth of such allegations may be beyond dispute in certain cases, the notion that "host countries always cheat with the figures" is a crude and, given its prevalence in expatriate circles, perhaps even a racist one. Rather than simply repeating the well-worn stories of exaggeration, corruption, and statistical sleight of hand (the most lurid of which almost invariably relate to Somalia and other countries in northeast Africa), this section of the paper considers the role of the asylum country in a different, and to some extent more positive perspective.

While much attention has been given to those countries in which refugee statistics appear to have been inflated, far less attention has been devoted to those situations in which the "politics of numbers" leads host country governments to report artificially low refugee statistics. As Yash Tandon pointed out in an article 15 years ago, according to official statistics, there were some 2,000 Ugandan refugees living in Kenya in October 1983. But, he continues, "any Ugandan in Kenya would argue that there are at least five times that

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number.” Reflecting upon this glaring discrepancy, Tandon observes that “in a situation where two countries are reasonably friendly, or wish to avoid antagonizing each other, it is in the interests of both to play down the number... This is the case with Uganda and Kenya. Official figures have to take into account these niceties of diplomacy.”<sup>21</sup>

Similar arrangements were reported in the 1980s with respect to Somali refugees in Djibouti and refugees in Gabon from several states in Central Africa. During the same period, a number of the frontline states are known to have under-reported the number of South African exiles on their territory, for the eminently reasonable reason of discouraging military reprisals from the country of origin.<sup>22</sup>

Even if African officials and governments have reported refugee statistics which appear to be inflated, their reasons for doing so might in some situations not be so reprehensible as they appear to the external observer. First, as noted in an earlier section of the article, the constraints to effective registration are such that considerable numbers of legitimate beneficiaries may actually be excluded from the statistics collected by UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations. Such was the case in the Ethiopian camp of Hartisheik in 1990, when a hard-hitting television documentary revealed that refugees from Somalia had been denied the assistance to which they were entitled because of a long delay in the implementation of a UNHCR reregistration exercise.<sup>23</sup>

Second, the criticisms made of African governments are often based on the false assumption that the international community provides a full and timely supply of food for the total number of refugees reported by UNHCR. In fact, this is rarely the case. In Somalia, for example, much has been made of the fact that in the mid-1980s, after lengthy negotiations, UNHCR agreed to a “planning figure” of 700,000 Ethiopian refugees—even though the agency and the World Food Programme (WFP) believed the real figure to be in the region of 450,000. But as Waldron and Hasci have revealed, the amount of food delivered after the planning figure had

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been agreed “was only 59 percent of that required to feed 700,000 persons.”<sup>24</sup>

A UNHCR report on refugee enumeration confirms that the tendency of governments to report inflated refugee statistics is linked to the unreliability of the food aid pipeline. The relevant passage of the report deserves to be quoted in full, explaining as it does the humanitarian rationale for a certain degree of numerical manipulation:

As the initial burden of administration falls on local government officials, they may suddenly be called upon to cope with an impossible situation. Officials in three countries, who had experienced a mass refugee influx, have described in almost the same words the uncoordinated flow of information from police, army and other sources, hopeless understaffing and pressing requirement for food and water for refugees. In such a situation, estimates of total daily arrivals are quoted as, for example, 2000 to 3000, on the basis of a visual examination of a crowd gathered at one place. And officials unanimous in declaring that they would ‘not dare’ to base emergency relief requests on the lower guess, because it might result in a fatal insufficiency of relief.

The belief of *all* staff and officials involved, that emergency relief shipments, at least of bulk commodities such as wheat, are likely to take weeks rather than days, leads officials to further generous overestimates of numbers. For example, one official declared that he usually doubled the figures that he had estimated, in the knowledge that by the time deliveries were made, there might well be a shortfall in quantities delivered and a significant increase in the grand total seeking relief as inaccurately assessed numbers of daily arrivals continued to accumulate. In a sense, this may be described as contingency planning...<sup>25</sup>

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A final explanation—and to some extent a justification—for the inflation of refugee statistics in developing countries is to be found in the functioning of the international refugee regime. It is well known that in many emergency situations, the initial assistance provided to the refugees comes not from UNHCR or WFP, but from the local population and authorities. It has also been established (although more research remains to be done on this matter) that the local population, particularly its poorer members, may be adversely affected by the sudden arrival and continued presence of a large-scale refugee population. And yet the needs of local residents are frequently neglected or accorded a relatively low priority in the design and implementation of refugee assistance programs. In such circumstances, it is not really surprising that some citizens of the asylum country should register as refugees, or that government officials should seek to gain some kind of compensation for the areas they administer by exaggerating the figures on which internationally-funded refugee assistance programmes are (theoretically) based.

***Donor States: Western Europe, Eastern Zaire,  
and Post-Dayton Bosnia***

As suggested in the preceding section, asylum countries in the developing world have traditionally come off worst in discussions of the politics of refugee numbers. It is therefore of some importance to identify some of the ways in which the donor states bring their own interests to bear on the production and use of refugee statistics.

First, when it comes to their own refugee and asylum statistics, governments and politicians in the industrialized states have a tendency to be very selective in their presentation of statistical data. An administration which is seeking to justify the introduction of a more restrictive asylum policy, for example, may refer to statistics which demonstrate a sharp increase in the number of people submitting requests for refugee status. But it may neglect to point out

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what proportion of the total have been recognized as refugees or offered some other form of protection. Indeed, the governments of Western Europe appear far happier to talk about the number of asylum applicants who fail to qualify for refugee status, a tactic which helps to reinforce the public perception that there is no essential difference between an asylum seeker, an economic migrant and an illegal immigrant. Similarly, one would have to look long and hard for any official statement that acknowledged or explained the fact that refugee recognition rates in Western Europe (around 24 percent) are less than half the rate recorded in North America (around 63 percent).<sup>26</sup>

Second, the industrialized states have a self-evident political interest in playing down the number of refugees who have fled from countries which are considered to be useful friends and allies, and in playing up the number who have escaped from hostile states. This was particularly the case during the cold war years, when the exodus of refugees and asylum seekers from communist countries such as Afghanistan, Cuba, Ethiopia, Viet Nam, and the Soviet Union itself provided the western bloc with a valuable form of propaganda. At the same time, by establishing generously-funded assistance programs for such refugee populations, the main donor states could also provide active support to exiled opposition movements which were struggling to oust or destabilize Soviet-backed regimes. Thus the very high figures which Pakistan claimed for its Afghan population (more than three million in total) did not come under very serious scrutiny from the donor states until the Soviets had withdrawn and the strategic importance of the Afghan exiles had diminished.

As the final section of this article will suggest, the end of the Cold War has in certain respects facilitated the collection and dissemination of accurate refugee statistics, relieving UNHCR of some of the political pressures to which it was subjected during that period. Even so, events in eastern Zaire in 1996 seemed to demonstrate that the geopolitical interests of the U.S. and its allies can still

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impinge very directly upon the question of refugee numbers.

In November 1996, after more than two years in exile, around half a million Rwandans trekked out of eastern Zaire and returned to their country of origin. Within a matter of days, the mass repatriation was over, encouraging some commentators (including representatives of the U.S. government and the Rwandan authorities) to declare that the refugee crisis in the Great Lakes region of Africa had effectively been resolved.

It soon became clear, however, that the story of the repatriation was less straightforward—and a great deal more tragic—than it first appeared. Contrary to the claim that all of the Rwandans had gone home, there was evidence to suggest that between 500,000 and 700,000 remained in eastern Zaire, where they were being hunted down and killed by the rebel forces linked to the government in Kigali.

At a press conference in Kigali on 23 November 1996, the U.S. military dismissed such suggestions, claiming that their satellite photos had located only one significant cluster of Rwandans in eastern Zaire. That group, moreover, consisted not of bona fide refugees, but of soldiers and militia members who had been responsible for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The political advisor to the Rwandan president adopted a similar position, stating, “we challenge the UNHCR to give us proof of where those refugees are. Nowhere do the American satellite photographs show up any significant refugee concentrations.”<sup>27</sup>

These statements were in turn refuted by a senior official from Oxfam UK, who stated that on 20 November 1996—three days *before* the press conference took place—his staff had been shown the U.S. military’s satellite and aerial photos, which “confirmed, in considerable detail, the existence of over 500,000 people, distributed in three major and numerous minor agglomerations.” “On the basis of the quality and authority of the information received by Oxfam on 20 November,” he concluded, “we feel bound to con-

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clude that as many as 400,000 refugees and unknown numbers of Zairean displaced persons have, in effect, been air-brushed from history.” A UNHCR statement which was consistent with the Oxfam position was angrily rejected by the Rwandan authorities. According to one commentator, “Kigali officials retorted that UNHCR had a habit of exaggerating its figures, so why would anyone want to believe them this time round.”<sup>28</sup>

Third, the interest of donor states in refugee statistics can be strongly conditioned by the desire to limit their expenditure on refugee assistance programs and to bring an early halt to longstanding humanitarian operations which have outlived their political usefulness. That was clearly the situation in Bosnia in 1996, shortly after the conclusion of the war. As a WFP/UNHCR report on the Bosnian food distribution program concluded:

Intensifying efforts to target more precisely became an issue almost immediately after the signing of the Dayton Peace Accord. The overriding factor was donor pressure, which was inspired by a strong desire to reduce rations. The simple logic was that peace should bring stability and economic recovery, and that people would return to their places of origin, and hence large reductions in food aid would be both possible and necessary. Further justifications for reductions of humanitarian assistance were offered, including the usual arguments about avoiding the creation of food aid dependency and disincentives to agricultural production. In any case, what seemed clear was that a policy decision was made, calling for a reduction in the quantities of food aid to be delivered, and hence the need for a reduction in the number of beneficiaries to be assisted.<sup>29</sup>

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Interestingly, the report concluded that the steps taken as a result of such pressure from the major donors had not been in the interests of people trying to recover from the war. "There are difficulties in the process of scaling down the program. The reduction exercise is now being undertaken quite rapidly, allowing the authorities little time to either make a reliable census and to establish structures to assist people who will no longer appear on the beneficiary lists... [The] scaling down exercise is being carried out more rapidly than the government can set up viable and sustainable safety nets."<sup>30</sup>

Finally, as indicated by the quotation at the very beginning of this article, refugee statistics may fulfill the political function of legitimizing action (military action in the case of Yugoslavia) against a country of origin which is responsible for the displacement or expulsion of its citizens. In this respect, the situation which emerged in Kosovo in the first half of 1999 was not entirely unique. Indeed, some significant similarities can be found with the Kurdish refugee crisis of 1991, in that both situations involved gross violations of human rights and mass population displacements, deliberately provoked by authoritarian regimes which had challenged the U.S. and its allies. What seems to have been different in the case of Kosovo is that military action was not mandated by the United Nations (and was opposed by two permanent members of the Security Council), that public support for the airstrikes appeared to be somewhat shaky, and that the country of origin concerned had a relatively effective military capacity.

At the time when this article was initially drafted (the end of March 1999) refugee statistics and projected refugee movements had become the central component of the political and public relations strategy which NATO was using to maintain support for its action. According to media statements made by the alliance's representatives, Europe was confronted with "the greatest humanitarian disaster since the end of world war two."<sup>31</sup> Some 250,000 Kosovo Albanians were said to be on the move, heading toward

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friendly but fragile political entities such as Macedonia and Montenegro. And at least a million more were threatened with displacement. While such statements and statistics may well have been reasonably accurate, there is little doubt that they were very consciously used as a means of relaunching and legitimizing the doctrine of “humanitarian intervention.”

### **UNHCR and the Professionalization of Refugee Statistics**

The preceding section attempted to provide some concrete examples of the way in which political interests impinge upon the issue of refugee statistics. But a great deal more work remains to be done in this area. First, it should be possible to identify a much broader range of case studies, particularly from regions which have been neglected in this article: the Caucasus, Central America and West Africa, for example.

Second, the kind of analysis which the article has applied to countries of origin, countries of asylum and the donor states must evidently be extended to other relevant actors, most notably humanitarian organizations and refugee populations themselves.

With regard to the former, it would be instructive to examine the extent to which aid agencies exaggerate refugee and returnee statistics in the hope of boosting their fundraising efforts and their international reputation.<sup>32</sup> It would also be interesting to analyze the way in which different lobby groups within the humanitarian world—those who act as advocates for women and children, for example—manipulate refugee statistics in order to gain greater attention and resources for their particular “client” group. With regard to latter, a systematic analysis of the way in which refugees and their leaders attempt to manipulate, obstruct, influence or facilitate the processes of registration and enumeration would be of considerable value.

Additional thinking is also required with regard to the

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role which policymakers, practitioners and social scientists can play in improving the accuracy of refugee statistics. In this respect, a tentative hypothesis can be presented.

On one hand, the end of the Cold War seems to have contributed to the task of depoliticization. At the international level, refugee statistics have generally become a less sensitive issue and are less frequently used as a weapon of propaganda. At the same time, countries of asylum in the developing world (especially Africa) which previously enjoyed the support of the superpowers have become economically and politically weaker. Donor states are now less willing to turn a blind eye to inflated refugee numbers, a situation which has in turn enabled UNHCR to collect and disseminate more realistic figures.

On the other hand, there is some evidence to suggest that the struggle over refugee numbers has intensified at the local level. As witnessed in a number of recent wars—Bosnia, Kosovo, Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone—population displacements and humanitarian assistance have both become key variables in the political and military strategies of the warring parties. As well as being a product of armed conflict, refugee camps and emergency relief programs have become an arena of conflict themselves. As John Telford rightly points out, such circumstances have inevitable consequences for the registration and enumeration of refugees:

Good communication with and among all those involved in an assistance program is a *sine qua non* for the reliable collection, analysis and processing of information on individuals, groups or populations. In turn, trust, based on an absence of real or perceived threats to interests, is essential for good communication... Increasingly in humanitarian operations, a mutually trusting environment does not seem to exist. This may reflect as much the politics into which

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humanitarian assistance delivery is becoming drawn, as the poor management of some of its programs.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Practical Steps and Improvements***

To return to the principal theme of this final section, some useful lessons might be learned from the practical measures which UNHCR has taken in recent years to improve its performance in the area of refugee statistics. As a staff member of the agency, the author is poorly placed to offer an impartial evaluation of such initiatives. The following paragraphs will thus be primarily descriptive in nature.

Prior to the 1990s, UNHCR's capacity and commitment in the area of refugee statistics was by any standard weak. Statistics were collected at the country level, but this function was undertaken in an unsystematic manner and with little supervision from headquarters. While statistics had to be presented to the organization's Executive Committee on an annual basis, the figures were prepared on a desk-by-desk basis, and did not conform to a standard format. The Public Information Service published an annual refugee map and statistical table, but this simply contained a single figure for each host country in the world, without any explanatory notes or any indication as to the national origins of those refugees.

When UNHCR's evaluation unit undertook a detailed review of the statistical function in 1985, the severity of the situation was revealed. Because the data at its disposal was so poor, the review concluded, UNHCR was losing control of its programs and losing credibility in the eyes of donors. "As confidence in the statistics provided starts to decline," the review stated, "numerous ad hoc and costly re-enumerations have been embarked upon, but with little consideration of lessons learned in other countries and with little understanding of the limitations of the techniques."

Looking further into the function, the review identified a range of other problems. First, the organization was in

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some situations “totally dependent on host governments for the numbers on which assistance programs are based.” Second, its efforts lacked consistency and continuity. At headquarters, several different UNHCR units were producing their own statistics, but without making any real attempt to coordinate their activities. In the field, enumeration systems were being “reinvented again and again by different staff of different levels of competence.” “In a few countries,” the report observed, “there is no way whatever to be certain about *any* figure.” Third, the report concluded, there was a general lack of seriousness in the way that statistics were handled. “Refugee enumeration is generally recognized as the foundation of effective relief and assistance programs, but it is almost inevitably given the lowest ranking in an emergency... In some situations, staff and officials may not merely neglect registration, but oppose it.”<sup>34</sup>

Seven years later, in 1993, a member of the earlier evaluation team conducted a follow-up review of UNHCR’s policies and practices with regard to refugee enumeration and statistics. He was not able to report a great deal of progress:

Over the past decade, UNHCR has devoted considerable time and resources to the collection of statistical data on large refugee populations. The results of such efforts, however, have often proved to be inaccurate and inconsistent. In many countries, host government figures differ widely from UNHCR’s own statistics and estimates. There is confusion both within and outside of UNHCR about the various categories of people who can be considered and counted as refugees... Some UNHCR staff... see no value in risking a confrontation with the host government authorities and prefer to restate unvalidated official data in their own reports.<sup>35</sup>

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Since those words were written, several initiatives have been taken to professionalize (perhaps a more useful word than depoliticize) the statistical function within UNHCR. First, 1993 witnessed the recruitment of the agency's first professional statistician, an expert in population and migration statistics with previous UN experience. The post has since been upgraded to the title of Senior Statistician and has been given "specialist" status, allowing the staff member concerned to remain in post in Geneva—an arrangement which, according to the incumbent, provides the function with a valuable degree of authority and independence.

Second, since 1994, UNHCR has published an annual statistical overview of "refugees and others of concern to UNHCR." As well as an introductory essay which discusses concepts, definitions, sources, and major trends, the review provides an increasingly broad and detailed set of statistical tables, including a number on the demographic structure of refugee populations. Thus in 1994, the review consisted of 32 pages and included 15 tables. By 1998, the publication had grown to 104 pages and included 32 tables. As well as being widely distributed in hard copy, these tables are available on the UNHCR website and the *Refworld* CD-Rom. The annual statistical review also forms the basis of all the figures which appear in UNHCR publications such as *Refugees* magazine, *The State of the World's Refugees* and the annual *Global Appeal*. Recognizing the fluidity of many refugee situations and the constant need for up-to-date figures, efforts are now being made to collect refugee statistics on a quarterly, rather than an annual basis.

Third, a variety of different steps have been taken over the past five years to enhance UNHCR's capacity in the area of refugee registration. In 1994, the organization's *Registration Guidelines* were published. As well as pooling much of the experience gained by UNHCR, the guidelines (which are periodically updated and refined) provide field staff and operational partners with a variety of different registration tools and approaches which can be adapted to the situation at hand.

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These measures have been taken in parallel with a number of other measures: the establishment of an expanded registration training program for UNHCR, WFP, NGO and government staff; the stockpiling of registration kits, including items such as registration cards and forms, wristbands, tokens, computer software and the registration guidelines themselves; the appointment of two regional registration officers in Africa, responsible for providing UNHCR offices with technical expertise and coordination; and the establishment of a roster of UNHCR staff who have proven skills and experience in the area of registration. In accordance with its Statute, UNHCR continues to undertake the function of “obtaining from governments information concerning the number and conditions of refugees in their territories.” And in support of that function, the organization also undertakes periodic registration exercises in all field operations where refugees are provided with material assistance.

### **Conclusion**

As this article has attempted to demonstrate, the collection of accurate and consistent refugee statistics is an extremely difficult task. A wide range of practical obstacles stand in the way of effective registration and enumeration. At the same time, because of the way they impinge upon the interests of host countries, countries of origin, humanitarian agencies and other actors, refugee statistics will always be a source of controversy and dispute. Recognizing these realities, UNHCR has not sought to accomplish the impossible task of depoliticizing the issue of refugee statistics. But it has attempted to professionalize its approach to this important function.

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## CHAPTER 3

### ON THE MARGINS, IN THE MAINSTREAM: URBAN REFUGEES IN AFRICA

by Marc Sommers

Least examined of Africa's huge refugee populations are those who live in cities. Most reside there illegally. Arriving from camps or directly from across borders and missing from statistics except for the occasional estimate, they devise strategies to avoid notice and survive along the margins of urban life. But these refugees-turned-migrants are also in the mainstream of Africa's demographic transformation. Increasingly, Africans, and young Africans in particular, are setting their sights on cities.

The case of Burundi's refugees hiding in Africa's fastest-growing city, Dar es Salaam, sheds light on a new and emerging Africa: one that is young, urban, and Pentecostal. Despite its growing dominance, this is not the profile that preoccupies African governments and the international aid community. Rarely have the masses of unskilled, poorly educated African youth in cities been a target population for international assistance. Still, youth are heading to the capitals, leaving their villages behind. Tanzanian scholar C.K. Omari observes that "Many rural areas nowadays are left with old people. Go to the villages, and you will observe this phenomenon instantly as you set your foot there."<sup>1</sup> In countries like Tanzania, the urban migrant youth population has long been seen as suspect criminals or social "parasites," a phrase coined by the "Father of the Nation," Julius K. Nyerere, to denounce the rural youth who chose to migrate instead of farm. The resistance to recognizing and addressing the drive of African youth to urbanize is exemplified by Tanzania's many urban campaigns of the 1970s and 1980s aimed at returning Dar es Salaam's migrant youth to the rural areas. All failed to halt the inevitable. Dar

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es Salaam has been one of Africa's fastest-growing cities for decades.

The Burundi refugee case that will be described here underscores the extraordinary determination of African youth to migrate to cities. Nearly all of the Burundi refugee youth in Dar es Salaam were raised in refugee settlements in the center of Tanzania. Arriving clandestinely in the capital, they construct urban lives with the knowledge that their presence is illegal and potentially dangerous. But these refugees represent the confluence of an urge to migrate to cities with another major demographic shift in Africa, the "Pentecostal explosion" that "is changing the accepted face of African Christianity."<sup>2</sup> An informal network has helped Pentecostal refugees migrate to Dar es Salaam while their Catholic peers in refugee settlements (whose population is roughly equal) are virtually nowhere to be seen in the capital. Pentecostal teachings provide a path for quiet success and assistance in avoiding dangerous, and "sinful," temptations. The secret lives of Burundian youth in Dar es Salaam thus provide a glimpse not only of the widening dimensions of African refugee activities but of the stunning growth of cities and Pentecostal churches in Africa and the significance of urban migration in postconflict transition settings.

### **Refugee Life: A Fixed Point or a Set of Trajectories?**

Many African refugees are, in a very real sense, conscientious objectors to the wishes of host governments and international humanitarian institutions. When they become refugees, they face two dramatically different practical alternatives: living in organized settlements or camps, or pursuing what has come to be known as "settling spontaneously." In legal terms, however, the local government usually gives them no alternative because virtually all refugees are ordered to live in refugee camps. Yet almost from the outset, the reality of refugee lives confound common perceptions of them as passive, compliant victims of violence.

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Given a chance, refugees turn entrepreneurial, violating camp regulations along the way. They are risk-takers who prefer to conceal illegal activities rather than constrict their lives inside camp enclosures. The case of Rwandans in refugee camps in western Tanzania after the civil war and the 1994 genocide in Rwanda offers a vivid recent example. Field research in the camps in 1994 and 1996 found Rwandans forming their own Swahili language classes, organizing militia training exercises, trading and traveling widely, and alternatively raiding and working for local Tanzanians—all of which, the refugees knew, were against Tanzanian regulations.

Even though the Tanzanian government found it difficult to control the activities of refugees in their settlements, it nevertheless preferred to keep them there. In this, it was not alone. Kuhlman observes that “Whenever African governments have recognized the existence of a refugee problem, they have favoured organized settlement” over allowing refugees to settle where they choose, a preference “supported mostly by UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees].” Settlements, Kuhlman finds, support two important institutional interests. They promise to limit security risks that refugees may present to either the refugees’ home or host nation. Putting refugees in one place also facilitates the delivery of aid. The aim of “aid organizations ... is to provide aid,” Kuhlman observes, and locating refugees in settlements “make[s] it easy to demonstrate and quantify ... need.” Keeping refugees separate from the host population has the added institutional benefit of isolating relief aid for refugees from development aid for local residents, since “confusing them would raise all sorts of thorny issues regarding the competence of agencies and earmarking of funds.” Despite institutional attempts to keep refugees and host populations separate, Kuhlman’s is part of a growing body of research positing that “most refugees in Africa are spontaneously settled.”<sup>3</sup>

Local governments and the UNHCR have been aware of this. In 1989, Cuénod estimated that three-quarters of all

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African refugees were living outside planned settlements.<sup>4</sup> Refugees may accept the combined local government's and international community's offers of assistance and protection in camps only if they cannot leave them. If refugees, and refugee men in particular, can leave the settlements, no regulation seems able to stop them. But because most refugees live outside camps illegally, they are difficult to track. UNHCR, whose mandate is to protect and assist all refugees but whose funding constraints are considerable, tends to focus on camp refugees. This presents refugees with a clear choice: choosing between the protections and provisions that settlements promise to provide and UNHCR is mandated to assure on the one hand, and accepting considerable risks for the chance to pursue a life outside the camps on the other. Many if not most refugees willingly accept the risk of living outside the camps.

Refugee settlements may actually be the primary home only for those unprepared for the risks of spontaneous settlement. Refugees with the capital, savvy, or networks to survive outside camps do so. Indeed, as Kuhlman observes, the decision to accept or reject settlement life "may be part of some refugees' survival strategy to let relatives who are less capable of fending for themselves live in a settlement where they can depend on aid."<sup>5</sup> Thus it may not be a coincidence that women and children dominate settlement demographics. This is a gender dimension of refugee socio-cultural dynamics left largely undescribed. If refugee camps contain mostly women and children, where have the refugee men gone? The gender imbalance in Guinea's camps for Sierra Leonean refugees, for example, is significant—in 1997, Koloumba, the largest of the camps, was 75 percent female—and "the number of young men in the camps continues to decrease."<sup>6</sup> This is indicative of a larger refugee phenomenon in which "those who are able to fend for themselves gradually drift out of the camps, while those who are not remain behind."<sup>7</sup>

Is the commonly used term "spontaneously settled" misleading? In reality, the actions of refugees living outside

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settlements do not seem to be spontaneous at all, but representative of a series of conscious decisions involving the careful measurement and assessment of risk. Refugees living in camps may be a self-selected group. More often than not, African refugees break laws and avoid restrictions in their determination to negotiate a life in exile on their own terms. In most cases, the way ahead leads toward cities. Kibreab, for example, notes that in Sudan in 1991 perhaps 65 to 75 percent of all self-settled refugees in the Sudan lived in cities.<sup>8</sup>

Underlying such movements, however, is an African phenomenon that links voluntary and forced migration. "An increasing proportion of [African] refugees of rural origin," Rogge observes, "in becoming displaced, simultaneously become urbanized." In such cases, "refugees no longer cease their migratory flight in rural areas across the border in their country of asylum but continue the migration all the way to towns and cities."<sup>9</sup> The magnitude of the migration to cities by refugees of rural origin remains generally unknown, in large part because their flight is illegal and clandestine. In this sense, demography and protection are linked. Refugees in hiding are difficult to count and generally will not show themselves unless they consider it safe. In most cases, local governments and humanitarian agencies overlook the existence of refugees living outside camps and concentrate instead on those who remain in them.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Urge to Urbanize**

Long considered the most rural of continents, Africa has had the world's highest urban population growth rate for decades, and today is the only world region whose urban growth rate is increasing. In 1965-1970, the populations of Africa's urban areas were rising by an average of 4.4 percent a year. The rate increased to 4.9 percent annually by 1975-1980 and held at that rate in 1985-1990.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, South America, which had the second-highest average

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annual urban growth rate in 1965-1970 (4.1 percent), saw its annual average decline to 3.6 percent in 1975-1980 and then to 3.1 percent in 1985-1990. With the rate of population growth in some African cities unprecedented in recorded world history,<sup>12</sup> Africa's urban population was expected to quadruple between the late 1970s and the year 2000.<sup>13</sup> By 2020, more than half of Africa's population will reside in urban areas.<sup>14</sup>

In 1994, an influential article appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* by Robert Kaplan—so influential that, as Richards reported, it “was faxed to every American embassy in Africa, and has undoubtedly influenced U.S. policy.”<sup>15</sup> The article called attention, at last, to Africa's demographic transformation. Kaplan's bleak description of Africa's cities dramatized why African migrant life had been ignored for so long. He focused on West Africa (though his descriptions implicated the entire continent), and found that everything was going wrong there. He considered West Africa a “dying region” and “the symbol of worldwide demographic, environmental, and societal stress, in which criminal anarchy emerges as the real ‘strategic’ danger.”

The centerpiece of Kaplan's sharply negative gaze into the future was the state of West African cities. In his view, “the coming upheaval” of the developing world could be glimpsed in West Africa's urban slums because “the demographic reality of West Africa is a countryside draining into dense slums by the coast.” But not every population segment is proceeding at the same pace toward what Kaplan depicted as hot, hopeless, and hapless cities. Leading the charge into urban poverty and impending criminality are young men. “I saw young men everywhere—hordes of them,” he reported. “They were like loose molecules in a very unstable social fluid, a fluid that was clearly on the verge of igniting.”<sup>16</sup> These young migrant men, widely thought to be at the forefront of Africa's urbanization,<sup>17</sup> are the vanguard of what Kaplan considered the “elemental” threat to the world's future: “nature unchecked” in an increasingly inhospitable developing world.

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Kaplan observed young men from a distance. He did not talk to them. Similarly, social scientists examining Africa's urbanization emphasize the statistical effects of urban growth rather than interview those who are driving it. "One of the most significant problems in addressing urbanization issues ... in Africa," wrote Carole Rakodi, "is the dearth of information."<sup>18</sup> Considering the magnitude of Africa's demographic transformation into a continent whose inhabitants live not in rural areas but in cities, the fact that much remains unknown about this phenomenon is discouraging. It is also somewhat understandable. Stresses on urban infrastructure, management capacity, environment and land use are common topics of concern among those who study African cities.<sup>19</sup> But social scientists often rely on notoriously unreliable African government statistics. African cities are largely depicted as "essentially locations for economic activity,"<sup>20</sup> places where Africans congregate out of economic necessity and endure considerable hardships to do so. Yet the literature's strong emphasis on crisis and impending disaster has, in fact, left the migrants' experience of the social or cultural attractions of cities almost entirely overlooked.<sup>21</sup>

What emerges, then, is the view that cities are uninviting receptacles for dispirited, unskilled, undereducated, and perhaps even dangerous young men. This perception affects the administration of aid and protection of refugees. From their offices in African capitals, UNHCR and international aid officials, and sometimes their local government colleagues, may organize support to refugees in camps while knowing other refugees are residing illegally nearby. Relief agencies and host governments tend to operate according to where they think refugees should be, not according to where many refugees want to be, at least until they can return to their homes of origin. As the case of Burundi refugees in Dar es Salaam reveals, urban refugees, like their understudied migrant brethren in African cities, are usually ignored. Having considered their options, they also seem to prefer it that way.

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## ***Kujificha: Skill, Strategy, and Necessity***

In his paper, "The New Nomads," Jonathan Bascom wrote that "Many cities in Africa have sizable refugee populations." These refugees "go to great lengths to avoid camps and get into urban centres," moving into cities after becoming refugees. Bascom added that "the integration of urban refugees" was "one of two main refugee issues that remain relatively unresearched and poorly understood," repatriation problems being the other. Bascom also pointed out that "relief agencies can ignore urban refugees on the false assumption that if refugees reach a city, they are able to take care of themselves," while "some governments have begun to relocate less trained and poorly educated refugees to wage-earning settlements."<sup>22</sup>

Dar es Salaam in the early 1990s is a case in point, but also a case apart. The presence of urban refugees in Dar es Salaam, the capital of Tanzania, has long been known. But the size of this population has been grossly underestimated. In late 1990, at the outset of research on Burundi refugees in Dar es Salaam, UNHCR and Tanzania's Ministry of Home Affairs reported that the total Burundi refugee population did not extend beyond 30 men and their families. Following 20 months of research, it appeared that the size of the Burundi refugee population in Dar es Salaam was at least several thousand people. The total may have been far more, but the secretiveness and narrow networks of Burundi refugees in town made reliable calculations difficult. Burundi refugee informants were certain that the Burundi refugee population in town was very large, but their estimations were vague. Because Burundi refugee society was deeply divided, refugees were almost instinctively suspicious of Burundians whom they did not know. Even so, most refugees knew of others living in many if not most of the city's urban and peri-urban neighborhoods.

The Burundi refugees that were present in Dar es Salaam had a number of characteristics that differ from those commonly assumed about urban refugees. "Urban refu-

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gees,” Bascom observed, “are generally younger, more educated and more politically oriented than their rural counterparts.”<sup>23</sup> The Dar es Salaam case demonstrated almost the opposite. The majority of refugees were young men who had quietly left one of the three huge refugee camps established for Burundians who had fled the 1972 massacres—the refugees called themselves “the people of ‘72”—and entered Dar es Salaam illegally. Most of these young men were generally older than the average age of Burundi refugees. UNHCR statistics indicate that 56.5 percent of Burundi refugees in Tanzania are under the age of 18, while most young Burundi men in Dar es Salaam were 18 or older.<sup>24</sup> They were no better educated than the refugee population they had left in the camps, and the refugees tended to avoid any sort of political involvement. A profile of the Burundi refugee population in Dar es Salaam eventually emerged. Most were young men who had grown up in refugee camps and used their Pentecostal church connections to obtain a patron who would enable them to work in Dar es Salaam’s huge informal sector. Refugees worked as tailors and fishermen. They sold coffee and helped refugee entrepreneurs carry out their trading businesses. For all of them, the modus operandi was *kujificha*, which meant “to hide oneself.”

Bascom’s assumptions,<sup>25</sup> which are generalized to the whole population of urban refugees, reflect what is the greatest methodological barrier to urban refugee research: that most urban refugees in Africa strive to conceal their refugee identity. Those urban refugees immediately apparent to government and agency officials are the comparative few who have obtained permission to reside in cities. But most urban refugees reside in cities illegally, seeking to avoid any contact that might call attention to their presence.

Given this circumstance, snowball sampling techniques were required to gain access to the hidden urban refugee majority. Research in Dar es Salaam began in 1990 with the 30 refugee men granted permission by UNHCR and the Tanzanian government to live in the capital, who thus

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could agree to be interviewed by a foreign researcher. In the process of interviewing these men, and, when possible, members of their families, one refugee man granted access to refugees he had recruited from the refugee camps to work as tailors in the shop attached to his house. Eventually, the research expanded into two other shops where refugee tailors worked, and, at night, slept.

The subsequent research with refugee tailors concentrated on standard participant observation techniques, which included becoming an accepted regular visitor to the shops, observing and recording ordinary and extraordinary social interactions, and, when possible, asking the tailors questions, followed by nightly write-ups of all relevant observations.<sup>26</sup> Before these methods could be carried out, however, the refugee tailors laid out very explicit rules about when I could visit the shops and take notes. Over time, an acceptable research routine was successfully negotiated. Three of the tailors bartered services in exchange for access; two received English lessons while another learned to drive. In each case, the tailors made clear that access was dependent on my following all the rules that they had made. One of the most remarkable aspects of the field research was the persistence of these rules. They did not relax over time.

For more than a year, visits to at least one of the shops took place nearly every day they were open (Monday-Saturday). Responses to different kinds of visitors were noted, and the mere mention of “Burundi” was strictly forbidden. Gradually they shared a number of code words, so that refugees could allude to the refugee settlements or Burundi itself while working in the shops, or, indeed, over meals during lunch or dinner, when the shop’s doors and windows were closed. But individual follow-up conversations became critically important. These individual interviews took place by appointment on Sunday afternoons, the only time that the refugees had any time off. They were carried out in other areas of the city that refugees considered sufficiently safe to be interviewed. Sometimes the

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refugees wanted to visit places that they had never before seen such as a city beach or hotel that they feared visiting alone. On rare occasions these interviews were taped, but usually the refugees did not allow it. These interviews were never carried out in the presence of a third party.

Another important research site was the Pentecostal churches that the refugee tailors attended. Regular attendance at church services became an unspoken research requirement for two reasons. First, it lent credibility to the integrity of the research endeavor. Equally important, however, it provided the refugee tailors cover in case any inquiries were ever made about the regular presence of a foreigner in their tailoring shops. The foreigner, the refugees would often tell them, was a Pentecostal missionary. Every conversation I undertook with the refugee tailors—in the shops, over meals, during private interviews, and during and after church—took place in Swahili, which all the refugees and Tanzanians spoke fluently. A series of additional interviews with Pentecostal pastors, young Tanzanian migrants, and Burundi refugee leaders also took place in Swahili. The conversations were translated into English either on site or at night. Interviews with missionary, humanitarian aid, and Tanzanian government officials usually took place in English.

Although the details of *kujificha* will be elaborated shortly, it is important to note that the refugees' strategy of concealment, though difficult, was actually an extreme example of an established survival tactic for young Tanzanian migrants in Dar es Salaam. Since at least the 1970s, young migrant men had developed methods for hiding various aspects of their urban lives from government authorities.

Dar es Salaam is the fastest growing city in East Africa, the region with the fastest growing urban growth rate in the world.<sup>27</sup> Ankerl noted that Dar es Salaam's population would increase by 1,239 percent over the final three decades of this century.<sup>28</sup> Since 1965, 69 percent of this growth has been due to migration from rural Tanzania.<sup>29</sup> But this should

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never have happened, according to the official conception of the postcolonial Tanzanian state, pioneered by former President Nyerere. Tanzania's future, he preached, should be based on Africa's precolonial past, when "life was easy."<sup>30</sup>

Nyerere's vision of change was a farm-oriented one, which he called Ujamaa. This term translates into English as familyhood or communityhood, but it quickly came to mean "African socialism," and it brought Nyerere widespread fame as a social philosopher and political visionary. "Self-reliance" became the national motto, and every Tanzanian was obligated to pitch in for the common good. But Ujamaa proved a controlling mandate because it urged that those in state collectives were expected to stay there and farm for the collective good. Tanzanian youths, young men in particular, became conscientious objectors to this ideological demand. In response, those young people who did not farm in collective villages quickly became the target of invective from President Nyerere. Though some urban workers were of course necessary to administer Nyerere's socialist vision, the state educational system was specifically designed to prepare nearly all young Tanzanians to be successful farmers in a Tanzanian "happy society."<sup>31</sup> And so Nyerere attacked all urban migrants, first by calling them names like "loiterer," "idler," and Ujamaa's worst enemy, the "parasite," and then by implementing campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s designed to forcibly "repatriate" urban migrant youth to the rural areas they had fled.

Every effort failed. Between 1967, the year of Nyerere's Arusha Declaration marking the beginning of Tanzania's transformation into the Ujamaa state, and 1978, Dar es Salaam's population tripled.<sup>32</sup> In 1983, Dar es Salaam's Regional Commissioner declared that the city had 168,000 workers and 400,000 jobless—a figure that contained nearly every urban migrant youth—in a population of 1.3 million.<sup>33</sup> By 1993, the Minister for Labour and Youth Development, Hassan Diria, estimated that only three youth in a hundred were legally employed.<sup>34</sup>

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Minister Diria referred exclusively to a lack of work in the formal sector. The so-called “urban jobless” were not jobless at all, but had jobs in the city’s enormous informal sector, where all activities lacked official sanction and so were technically illegal.<sup>35</sup> Ishumi’s study of the urban jobless indicated that men “mostly in their young ages” comprised nearly three quarters of this population.<sup>36</sup> But because of the suspect legality of migrant youth activities and the series of state campaigns designed to return them to state-controlled villages, migrant youth and Burundi refugee youth had much in common. They had both left state settlements against the wishes of the state and in the process entered the realm of illegal urban activity.

The presence of so many young “illegals” in Tanzania’s capital provided Burundi refugee youths in the city with a strange kind of benefit. State antipathy toward nearly all young men in town afforded cover for the Burundi refugee youth. Refugees may have been more at risk than their Tanzanian migrant counterparts, but they hardly stood out. A Burundi youth could be seen as just another “illegal” and nothing more. The refugees thus adapted practices established by migrant youth to help them avoid possible interactions with Tanzanian authorities, such as their refusal to participate in the national census, which incorrectly lent the impression that Dar es Salaam’s population was declining.<sup>37</sup> The outlaw status of migrant youth also fueled the development of an urban youth culture of heightened alertness, secret codes, and a kind of desperado energy, which attracted many Burundi refugees as well.

### **Bongoland**

In Tanzania’s migrant youth parlance, Dar es Salaam is known as “Bongoland.” Literally meaning “Brainland,” the nickname reflects more than the difficulties that Dar es Salaam presents to young urbanites. It also reflects an identity: Dar es Salaam is a place where the shrewd and cunning survive and are rewarded, and where non-detc-

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tion and survival has become a rite of passage into manhood.

The rush of youth to embrace “town life” has made Dar es Salaam dense with economic competition, but the challenge also became a point of cultural invention. Though castigated as the *Lugha ya Wahuni* (“Language of the Ignorant”), urban youth spoke what they called, among other things, *Lugha ya Vijana* (“Young People’s Language”) or *Kiswahili Kali* (“Angry Swahili”). This collection of words (those noted here are undoubtedly outdated now) constitute a defiant expression of their status as urban outcasts while connecting its users to the city’s “modern” lifestyle and a striving for upward mobility. In 1992, a typical greeting between youth was *Habari ya Mihangaiko* (“How are your anxieties?”), to which one might respond with a number of words borrowed from English, such as *no sweti*, *fiti* or *fashion design*. *Lugha ya Vijana*’s tendency to create new meanings from English words has arisen partly because, although English is one of Tanzania’s two national languages (Swahili being the other), most Tanzanians cannot speak it. Youth value English highly, for it not only connects ordinary Tanzanians to elite society but, more importantly, to activities taking place across the globe. In the *Lugha ya Vijana*, a “modern” necktie is wide, and is called a “Clinton tie.”

There was something very daring about the young adherents of *Lugha ya Vijana*. Instead of shunning their outcast status, urban youth culture celebrated it. They viewed theirs as the culture of change. It was not bound by tradition but addressed new dangers that urban youths confronted. Words were invented for leaving a place quickly (*kuyeya*, meaning “to escape”), and to indicate the practice of safe sexual habits (*kwa soks*, meaning “with socks,” or “I use condoms”). A famous Dar es Salaam musician, Dr. Remmy Ongala, sang songs using the latest *Lugha ya Vijana* words, which helped legitimize and popularize it. The result was an unusual kind of social outcast group. Though many of Dar es Salaam’s urban youth may have

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been regarded negatively by civic leaders, in demographic terms they were dominant, and they seemed to know this.

Using *Lugha ya Vijana* in Dar es Salaam was controversial, but for Burundi refugee youths it could be particularly contentious. In many respects it symbolized the tug of opposing poles. On the one hand, the attraction of an urban youth culture that was thoroughly Tanzanian, and aided the refugees' ability to hide themselves as Tanzanian migrants; on the other, it reflected an affiliation thought sinful by many of the Pentecostal refugees in town, endangering the effective strategy for successful clandestine urban living that was part of the Pentecostal value structure. This gulf could also expose the subethnic rivalry that fueled an atmosphere of tremendous distrust within Burundi refugee society.

### **Burundi Refugees in Dar es Salaam: Fear and Private Lives**

Burundi refugees in Dar es Salaam were like the urban refugees Kibreab described in Khartoum: "illegal residents" who "were living like fugitives and were not even in a position to protest against the crimes that were committed against them."<sup>38</sup> While many Burundi refugees shared the young migrants' celebration of urban living, their efforts to hide their identities in Dar es Salaam and the depth of their fears went far deeper. A migrant youth's web of networks could extend outwards in a number of ways. Connections to and alliances with other Tanzanian youth were fairly easy to cultivate. The phrase *dole tupu* ("thumb alone"), accompanied by the thumb's up sign, could simply translate as "OK" or "cool." But it might also mean "Hey, I'm circumcised too!" and be used as a signal of togetherness between youths from different ethnic groups which both practice circumcision. This entreaty could create an alliance bringing youth together to gain economic advantage against an array of potential competitors.

Burundi refugees would find such an overt alliance too

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risky to accept because it might expose them as a different sort of “illegal” in town. The goal of all Burundi refugee youth in Dar es Salaam was to present themselves in public as model citizens. Once in town, they were risk-takers no longer, but conservative actors in a fast-paced urban drama.

Burundi refugee youths in Dar es Salaam had spent most if not their entire lives living inside Tanzania, either in camps or cities. Though they were all ethnic Hutu, and had been taught the stories of the “selective genocide” carried out against Hutu in Burundi in 1972-1973,<sup>39</sup> few had ever seen an actual ethnic Tutsi, some of whom had perpetrated the genocide. It was more common to hear refugees use “Tutsi” as an adjective to describe, perhaps, a “Tutsi-like” politician whom they perceived as particularly threatening to them. And though they had not directly witnessed the Burundian atrocities that older members of their families had seen, stories of genocidal terrors had cultivated in the younger generation what might be called cultural fear.

The concept of cultural fear arose during my search to determine exactly what the younger Burundi refugees were so afraid of in Dar es Salaam. For while their lives were circumscribed in large part by the fears they consistently described, they did not seem debilitated by them. In fact, in many respects their lives did not seem scary or fearsome at all. The tailor shops were often pleasant and fairly relaxed work places, and visits to church on Sundays appeared to be mostly enjoyable. Yet while Tanzanian migrant youth in Dar es Salaam were fond of describing their *mihangaiko* (“anxieties”), Burundi refugee youth instead talked of *kuogopa* (“being afraid”). Uncertainty seemed to face migrants and refugees alike. Kerner has noted that Tanzanians in Dar es Salaam generally believed that a large proportion of the urban population in the 1980s were spies.<sup>40</sup> Certainly an informal system of information collection operated through the national party’s Ten Cell Leaders, a mechanism adapted from Maoist China by the Nyerere government that assigned a party official to every ten households in the country, made some sort of surveillance

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a very real possibility. But it was also true that the capital's legacy of campaigns to control urban migration and illegal business activities probably made Dar es Salaam seem more dangerous than it actually was.

However, the depth of fear that Burundi refugees felt went far beyond the everyday Tanzanian concerns. For them, an array of perceived threats emanated from the same source—their ethnic adversaries, the Burundian Tutsi. Refugees connected suspicions of Tanzanian surveillance to the Tutsi-dominated Burundian government, which was thought to be obsessed with carrying out a kind of “final solution” against Burundian Hutu refugees. To the refugees, the Tutsi could invade their lives as silent, invisible predators. Interviews in closed, darkened rooms at night took place in whispers, just in case a Tutsi spy, or his Tanzanian accomplices, might be listening nearby. Several refugees noted how the death of Gahutu Remi, the leader of the Burundi refugee underground opposition party known as Palipehutu, in a Tanzanian prison symbolized Tutsi evil. “The Tutsi *must* have killed him,” several refugees agreed, “because they were afraid of him.” Every Burundi refugee interviewed in Dar es Salaam believed that the Burundian government had had a hand in his death. Fear of the Tutsi-infused unknown, a product of Burundi refugee culture, led refugees to be exceedingly careful in what they said or did in public.<sup>41</sup>

The private spaces refugees inhabited together were also dangerous, because the distrust between Burundi refugees could be profound. Research with Burundi refugees revealed two levels of ethnicity: a public, seemingly enveloping Hutu ethnicity, beneath which lay a hidden subethnic division that separated Burundi refugees into two mutually distrustful groups; the Imbo and the Banyaruguru. Hutu ethnicity is, of course, well known, while the subethnic fracture remains largely hidden from non-Burundians.<sup>42</sup>

Liisa Malkki has described the powerful influence of Hutu ethnicity over Burundi refugees in her book, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among*

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*Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*, which is the most thoroughly documented example of ethnic Hutu history found anywhere.<sup>43</sup> Malkki recorded how historical narratives “emerged” from conversations with refugees in the Mishamo camp for Burundi refugees, the primary site of her 1986 field research, which usually “led to broader, historicizing reflections.” These reflections were remarkably similar; “almost formulaic,” but nevertheless Malkki argued that, in Mishamo camp, “people commonly arranged memories or experiences into mythico-historical configurations” and “standard versions of events routinely produced themselves.”

Malkki’s use of the passive verb tense to describe how history “produced itself” when different refugees entered into conversation with her suggests that the actual process of historical creation was difficult to access. This might be partly explained by the presence of operatives in Mishamo camp for the then dominant Burundian Hutu political party, Palipehutu (Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People). For such a liberation movement, the mythico-history that Malkki described is clearly useful. Indeed, its retelling to a foreign researcher would seem to help broadcast their arguments for Hutu legitimacy and the Palipehutu movement at the same time. This sort of promotion of ethnic solidarity by Hutu leaders has its roots in recent Central African history. The proportion of Hutu in both Burundi and Rwanda is approximately 85 percent, and the tradition of Hutu leaders claiming a huge constituency for themselves dates back at least to the 1950s.<sup>44</sup>

Malkki’s analysis does not directly address the political implications of her findings, an aspect of her work that Gourevitch and Turner highlight.<sup>45</sup> Yet research with Burundian refugees in Dar es Salaam indicated that Malkki and her critics were both correct: the mythico-history was culturally significant and politically powerful. In Dar es Salaam, informants described their refugee camp homes in inland Tanzania as places where refugee leaders censored public discourse. It was not a matter of whether or not

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refugees considered themselves ethnic Hutu. All of them did. What mattered to the refugee leadership was that social divisions should be hidden and ethnic solidarity promoted. This depiction of refugee camp realities differed dramatically from the world that Malkki had described.

Where Malkki saw extraordinary social and cultural unanimity, Burundi refugees in Dar es Salaam described a unifying Hutu history matching Malkki's descriptions, and a private, intense conflict between two sets of refugees (Imbo and Banyaruguru) that reflected a deeply fractured society and an ongoing debate over which refugees represented the "true" Hutu. The refugees also described how the Imbo-Banyaruguru rift was not to be discussed with outsiders. Divisions were to be hidden. Working with refugees in Dar es Salaam eventually revealed the irony of conducting research with refugees in hiding: the secretive urban lives that refugees constructed provided them with reasonably secure private spaces where they could speak freely about underlying refugee realities.

The subethnic division between Imbo and Banyaruguru refugees hinged on the geographic separation of the Imbo section of Burundi—the narrow coastal lowland strip along Lake Tanganyika—from the highland areas where the Banyaruguru had come from. This had created two definitions of ethnic Hutu purity, each determined by conflicting visions of historic relations with Burundian Tutsi. For the Imbo, the Banyaruguru lived and "mixed" with Tutsi in the hills, while they remained "pure" in the coastal areas where the Tutsi did not reside. Banyaruguru refugees maintained that the historic separation of the Imbo from both the Banyaruguru and the Tutsi had left them out of the mainstream of Burundian culture: Imbo had a "fish culture," while the rest of Burundi had a "cow culture." The Imbo were thus outsiders, while the Banyaruguru linked their claim as "pure" Hutu to their proximity to the Tutsi. Centuries of intimate domination by Tutsi neighbors had certified it.

The result of this rivalry was that Imbo and Banyaruguru

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refugees suspected each other of being allies with the hated, feared Tutsi. In Dar es Salaam, where many lived in close proximity to each other, refugees held out fears that those from the other side of the Imbo-Banyaruguru divide might, one day, turn them in to the Tanzanian authorities. This led refugees to calibrate carefully their relations with each other. In one tailoring shop where two refugees—an Imbo named William and a Banyaruguru named John—

worked, ate, and roomed together, the atmosphere was always tense. William had an accent when he spoke that betrayed his Imbo origins, and so usually kept quiet around refugees who may have been Banyaruguru. As the senior tailor, William also bought fish and cassava-based ugali for the meals he shared with John. William knew that John hated this meal. John once privately complained that “William pays for the food, so we only eat the food of the Imbo. Every day, fish!”

William’s assertion of his Imbo values through his selection of food illuminated the tension and resentment that each privately harbored against the other. It was also emblematic of the narrow networks that Burundi refugees typically maintained. John spoke of having “nothing to talk about” with other refugees in town. In general, large support networks in the city were not only unnecessary, they were also potentially disastrous. A friend or parent arranged a position for a young refugee with one of the many refugee entrepreneurs already living in Dar es Salaam, and that refugee businessman assumed the role of the newcomer’s patron. Once in the capital, the young refugees worked long hours and rarely ventured from the haven of the workplace. If trouble with Tanzanian authorities ever arose for refugee youth, the patron was in charge of resolving the problem. A friend or two, if found trustworthy, might be acceptable; but, as John commented, “too many friends could only bring trouble.” In this form of coping, networks were narrow and limited, for intimacy with a number of other refugees was thought to serve no useful purpose.

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## Pentecostal Refugees

Perhaps no aspect of African refugee society and culture is as overlooked by researchers and most humanitarian relief agencies as their religious lives.<sup>46</sup> This may also apply even to religious studies. Pirouet, for example, observed that “I am not aware that theology has ever addressed itself to [the refugee] phenomenon.”<sup>47</sup> For young Burundi refugees searching for opportunities outside the isolated settlements where they grew up, their Pentecostal faith, and the networks that emerged from Pentecostal congregations, allowed them to escape to Dar es Salaam.

“In Africa,” Harvey Cox observed, “Pentecostal congregations are quickly becoming the main expression of Christianity.” Pentecostal churches are particularly appealing to young Africans because “these churches give people a sense of dignity, a place in a community of friends which often stands as a surrogate for an extended family fractured by mobility and change.”<sup>48</sup> Pentecostalism’s ascendancy in Burundi since independence has been noted elsewhere,<sup>49</sup> but this church growth continued in the refugee settlements in Tanzania for Burundians who had fled violence in their homeland in 1972-1973. Missionaries from the Pentecostal Church Association of Tanzania (PCAT) interviewed in Dar es Salaam reported that the numbers of Pentecostal refugees tripled between the mid 1970s and 1992. Ayok and Mbago’s survey of Katumba and Ulyankulu, the settlements from which most Burundi refugees in Dar es Salaam migrated, found that nearly 68 percent of respondents were Protestant, most of them Pentecostals.<sup>50</sup> For Burundian refugees in Dar es Salaam, the dominance of Pentecostals was even more remarkable because every Burundi refugee youth interviewed in the Tanzanian capital belonged to a Pentecostalist church.

Why were Pentecostal refugees able to migrate to Dar es Salaam while Catholic refugees generally were not? The link between religion and mobility was difficult to grasp entirely, due to the limited number of Catholic refugees in

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the city. Burundi refugee youth reported that many of their Catholic brethren in the refugee settlements were equally eager to migrate to Dar es Salaam but lacked the networks and available patrons to support their migration. Refugee youth in town proudly spoke of how Pentecostal refugees had sacrificed to help others come to the city. Indeed, contacts between Pentecostal congregations inside the settlements and Dar es Salaam were strong. Pastors traveled to the capital, as did Pentecostal traders whose families were based inside the refugee settlements. They met in Dar es Salaam at the homes of Pentecostal refugees, some of whom were pastors or other church officials in the capital. Many of these travelers jointly organized entrepreneurial ventures and sought recommendations for young Pentecostal men from the refugee settlements whom they would then recruit to work in the capital, providing an example of what Martin called “protective network[s].”<sup>51</sup>

Once the new Pentecostal refugee recruits entered the city, church instructions provided a spiritual compass for negotiating urban living. The key, as one Burundi refugee pastor explained, was “to keep young people from the attractions of Satan. This is why we try to have many activities for the young.”

For Burundi refugee youth, such instructions were particularly helpful. Pentecostal teachings conjured up an urban environment where danger lurked almost anywhere beyond the home, the workplace, and the church. Pentecostal refugees who had become veterans of city living would repeatedly warn recent arrivals from the Burundi refugee camps against spending money, listening to disco music, speaking with wayward girls, going to movies and, worst of all, attending bars. All of these activities were “sinful.” The newcomers had to learn that Satan was everywhere in Dar es Salaam. At the same time, as African religion scholar Ogbu Kalu explained in an interview, “Pentecostals provide a community which helps the urban dweller build a survival network.” Surrounded by sin and danger, the young refugees’ Pentecostal faith not only mapped out how

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to avoid trouble but identified where refugees could relax, if only a little, in what Kalu considers “the youthful atmosphere of Pentecostal groups.”

### **Toward Peace? Urban Youth and Postconflict Development**

If researchers and humanitarian aid providers are to understand and more effectively address the problems of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) during and following armed conflicts, the role that cities play in the lives of displaced populations needs to be better understood. Developing either an effective humanitarian response or a viable postwar transition strategy requires that aid agencies incorporate, not ignore or overlook, the significance of cities, particularly to youth straining to migrate to them.

A starting point for research would be to acknowledge the connection between demography and protection for displaced populations. All refugees do not remain in camps. Accurately counting the numbers of “illegal” refugees in cities and rural villages will require an extension of protection measures that officially recognize the presence of refugees outside refugee camps. In many contexts, this would call for UNHCR to assert its role in refugee protection in cities, becoming a strong advocate with local governments to recognize the presence of “illegal” refugees there—to make, in other words, the “illegals” legal. Without such commitments, refugees will probably continue to hide and make it difficult to develop accurate estimates of refugees living outside camps. For IDPs, many of whom hide their presence in cities, aggressive advocacy might also be needed to persuade local governments to recognize and provide services to the urban displaced.<sup>52</sup>

“The African state, for the most part,” Jeff Haynes argues, “functions without the support and trust of a significant proportion of its citizens.”<sup>53</sup> Certainly many forcibly displaced people have little reason to trust or support

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the state and African youth have even less. The core of urban youth life exists outside, and often in resistance to, the wishes and regulations of the African state, which often perceives of them as social deviants or what a former Tanzanian Minister for Labour and Youth Development once called society's "antisocials."

War exacerbates this attitude; and when children are directly involved in wars, the violence criminalizes perceptions of them. In cities such as Maputo, refugee returnee youth flocked to the Mozambican capital following repatriation. Fieldwork in peri-urban neighborhoods around Maputo in 1998 suggested that, although the war had ended, violence remained. "Things have changed," one woman explained, "but change is not over." Another added that "There are new problems now, like crime. When you work for yourself, [youth] come and take everything and even kill people. They are called Ninja."

Understanding and addressing the connection between the perception of boys, and sometimes girls, as criminals during and after wars and their role in the construction or obstruction of peace is a critical component of peace building. It is apparent that youth who have been affected by wars, and are increasingly recruited for violent purposes during them, are not only not helped but come under attack after war. Field research in Colombia, for example, on the impact of armed conflict on children and youth revealed an almost complete absence of state or international agency-sponsored programs for youths affected by civil war. Interviews with IDP mothers in Colombian cities evoked similar reactions to those interviewed outside Maputo, Mozambique. "There are no programs for adolescent boys," one displaced mother explained. "The government only has repression programs for boys—when the adolescent boys have problems, the government arrests them." In both countries, mothers explained how they did not want to know about the activities of their sons. All one displaced Colombian mother knew about her oldest son is that "He is outside of society." At a women's group meeting in Maputo,

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mothers reported that they were afraid to report crimes to the police, fearing that “our sons may be Ninjas, and might be arrested by the police.”

Researching youth perspectives and addressing urban youth problems will require a change in how youth are perceived and an enhanced understanding of what their role in postwar transition and development has been. In Dar es Salaam, the urban youth culture that emerged celebrated their separation from the rest of society. The *Lugha ya Vijana* has been thoroughly denigrated by urban residents who consider its adherents as the scourge of urban life. Many believe that the youth who use it are probably engaged in illegal economic activities and outright crime. It is commonly believed that these young people are not merely acting “cheeky” when they use the language, they are signifying their presence beyond the bounds of acceptable urban society. Youth have reacted by according themselves a variety of names for their outcast status. For young men, the names include *Checkibob* (a term evidently arising from an English language film where a character goes to “Check on Bob”) and *Msela* (indicating a sailor looking for adventure in a port city); for young women, there is *Sista Du* (short for “Worldly Sister,” a reference to a woman’s urban guile as well as, sometimes, her sexual availability). Though urban elders might use such names disparagingly, many urban youth wear them with pride.

The demographics of hidden refugees in African cities already suggests that a new kind of gender issue, highlighting the diverse roles young men play in displaced societies, clearly warrants further research. In cities, refugee youth can be difficult to identify not only because they are hiding but because they are part of a much larger phenomenon, namely the fact that “young adult men predominate among migrants in Africa.”<sup>54</sup> This issue nonetheless can be studied provided effective methodologies are applied. Findings described in this paper about the clandestine lives of Burundi refugees in Dar es Salaam illustrate the compatibility of anthropological methods to the research on hidden refu-

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gees. Such techniques could be applied to a number of other contexts to gather a broader understanding of youth survival strategies and aspirations and their sociocultural roles in war and postwar contexts. In so doing, the role that fear plays in urban refugee lives could be probed further. Hansen's research with Angolan refugees in Zambia found that "scheme-settled refugees were more dependent and self-settled refugees were more fearful." Self-settled refugees, Hansen adds, are especially "fearful of exposing their identity as refugees."<sup>55</sup> Further research could determine the various ways that fear impacts urban refugee lives.

If the path toward Africa's urban youth is followed, Pentecostalism and other religious movements will undoubtedly make their presence known. Pentecostalism is "the salient sector of African Christianity today," in large part because it has targeted and accommodated youth needs. Gifford notes that Pentecostal churches "re-order society for the benefit of youth," creating a bond with "many who previously would have been regarded as different."<sup>56</sup> For many urban youth alienated from their state and with few viable options available to them, the attraction of Pentecostalism is great. With few exceptions, African Christian and Muslim institutions in Africa do not often intersect with the international humanitarian aid community, but their effectiveness in providing youths with alternatives to violence, and Pentecostalism in particular, is worthy of further study and, perhaps, some sort of adaptation.

This disjuncture between religious groups and international agency activities is emblematic of a much larger problem. In war or postwar African situations, youths hold the key to lasting peace. If they are featured in plans for reconstructing African societies following war, then the chances for developing economic and political stability increase. But if, as is too often the case, they are not engaged in activities aimed at improving their economic situation or enhancing their role in civil society, then the prospect for lasting peace will inevitably decline. Crime will rise, and

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recruitment into militias and gangs will probably follow.

### **Implications for Assistance Organizations**

African youths, in short, are not the problem. It is their alienation that is potentially dangerous. Richards urges that “one should see political agency in youth cultures others write off as deviant.”<sup>57</sup> But that is just a starting point. Emergency and development agencies, together with local governments, need to research youth needs and aspirations thoroughly before they develop, test, monitor, and evaluate pilot youth programs. These programs should be expanded only after they have been found to be effective. Throughout this process, a combination of flexibility and determination will be required—in the realms of ideas, policies, and programs—first to understand and then to incorporate the dynamic and potentially volatile roles of urban youth into emergency and postconflict initiatives. Without such an approach by international actors, alienated African youths will continue to pose a serious threat to peaceful, civil, and truly inclusive societies.



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## CHAPTER 4

### SOCIOCULTURAL FACTORS SHAPING THE MOZAMBICAN REPATRIATION PROCESS

by Stephen C. Lubkemann

This chapter explores how certain types of social science knowledge might have had a positive impact on humanitarian practice in the return migration of Mozambicans in the Republic of South Africa (RSA). It focuses on the migratory behavior of the population of Machaze district in south-central Mozambique during and following that country's civil conflict (1977-1992). The patterns of return to Machaze district from Zimbabwe and South Africa are described and contrasted. The understanding and analysis by aid agencies of Mozambican wartime and postconflict migration in these two theaters and how these understandings translated into particular policies and practices are examined.

This chapter also reviews how culturally defined social processes played a vital role in shaping both wartime migration and the demographic distribution of the population from Machaze district. It illustrates how the exclusion of sociocultural factors in humanitarian analysis resulted in significant misinterpretations of data and a failure to understand the demographic distribution and the patterns of refugee return. These misinterpretations shaped the planning, implementation, and subsequent analysis of organized postwar repatriation. Finally, it briefly considers some of the reasons why sociocultural factors are generally ignored in the analysis of forced migration, and recommends an alternative analytical approach. The intention here is not to detract from what was generally a successful repatriation effort, but to suggest how a consideration of sociocultural factors could have considerably improved the results.

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## Mozambican Repatriation Operations from Zimbabwe and South Africa

From 1993-1995 in Mozambique the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in conjunction with various humanitarian assistance organizations, carried out in Mozambique what has been widely regarded as one of its most successful repatriation efforts. Over 1.6 million Mozambican refugees returned either spontaneously or through organized efforts from Malawi, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and South Africa. UNHCR estimated that it assisted in the organized return of approximately 320,000 of this total<sup>1</sup>—a monumental and largely successful effort.

The two assisted Mozambican repatriation flows of relevance to this discussion are those from the official UNHCR camps in Zimbabwe and those by spontaneously self-settled refugees from South Africa. Machaze district received a significant influx of returnees from both destinations. Over 31,000 returnees were repatriated through the organized efforts of UNHCR and its implementing partner organizations from the camps in Zimbabwe (primarily from Tongogara) by the end of 1995.<sup>2</sup> A far smaller number were repatriated through organized humanitarian efforts from South Africa during this time.<sup>3</sup>

Both Zimbabwe and South Africa were also understood to have been the source of a large but indeterminate number of spontaneous returnees: that is, persons who returned without the assistance of humanitarian organizations. Among those returning from South Africa the majority of returnees to the district (estimated as high as 80 percent) were believed to fall into the spontaneous returnee category.<sup>4</sup> The repatriations from Zimbabwe and South Africa were regarded by UNHCR and its partners as distinct operations that involved separate and different types of populations: in Zimbabwe official “camp refugees” and in South Africa undocumented “self-settled” ones. Ultimately the two operations experienced very different rates of success.

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Since 1984 UNHCR had been in charge of running official refugee camps for Mozambicans in Zimbabwe. These camps had responded to the intensification of war-time flight from Mozambique, and to Zimbabwean government concerns with the burgeoning, unofficially self-settled, Mozambican population within its borders. By 1992 these camps housed over 140,000 Mozambicans, primarily from Manica, Tete, and Gaza provinces.<sup>5</sup> Over 39,000 listed their origin as from Machaze district (Manica province). Over 35,000 of these were located in the largest of the camps, Tongogara.<sup>6</sup>

After the peace accord in 1992, planning for the repatriation of these refugees began.<sup>7</sup> Assisted returnees were allowed to choose their destination within Mozambique and aided with transportation, food, seeds, and an array of domestic and agricultural tools. They also received cards that allowed them to continue to receive food assistance in Mozambique for several months while they reestablished themselves. The repatriation operation from the camps in Zimbabwe was evaluated as a success because the operations proceeded in orderly fashion, and because the estimated number of returnees corresponded closely to the actual numbers of those documented as returning due to organized assistance efforts.

In contrast, the repatriation of Mozambicans from South Africa produced actual results that fell far short of expectations. UNHCR had created the logistics capacity to cope with the approximately 200,000 self-settled Mozambicans in South Africa, who were expected to return during 1994-1995. However, only a fraction of the total expected returnees came back, at least with the assistance of official humanitarian efforts. UNHCR reported in June of 1995:

The preparatory work undertaken by UNHCR and its implementing partners in all sectors of activity was to some extent overshadowed as the expected large number of Mozambican refugees returning home

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from South Africa never materialized ... By March 1995 when the repatriation operation from South Africa was closed the total [of returnees] for the operation amounted to 31,589.<sup>8</sup>

It was not only the failure of the expected numbers of returnees to materialize that plagued the South African repatriation operation. Throughout 1994 and into 1995, the problem of distinguishing between “economic” migrants and “genuine” refugees became another major problem. Numerous reports surfaced by late 1994 noting that the vast majority of Mozambicans being assisted in their return were single males. They were suspected of being labor migrants rather than refugees, taking advantage of the opportunity for a free trip home for themselves and their luggage. Two convoys from South Africa in November 1994 had a total of 183 returnees, 78.6 percent of whom were single males.<sup>9</sup>

This view was reinforced by the fact that the returnee population from the Republic of South Africa was attempting to bring back a volume of luggage far unlike that of the other Mozambican refugee populations being assisted by UNHCR elsewhere. A UNHCR report of January 17, 1994 stated that

The luggage per family is great and may be greater with future movements. In some (possibly extreme) cases it could be *one 10 MT truck per family*. [emphasis in the original.] HCR RSA indicated that it would be impossible to limit luggage except saying we wouldn't move animals ... what we need to know is how much luggage there is — the people are just a minor addition to the luggage...There was considerable discussion on how to deal with 'economic migrants' compared to the more deserving

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'refugees' in South Africa. It was suggested that these two groups can be separated based on their stated reason for leaving, what they did in the RSA, and where they lived in the RSA. It seems unlikely that anyone will say they went to the RSA for work once the benefits of being a 'refugee' are known.<sup>10</sup>

Throughout 1994 and 1995 UNHCR, its implementing partners and its Mozambican counterpart Nucleo de Apoio ao Refugiado (NAR) sought ways, generally with limited success, to distinguish between "economic" migrants and "genuine" refugees so as to focus assistance on the latter.

The perception was that most so-called economic migrants returned to South Africa after receiving transportation for themselves and their baggage, a procedure repeated by the same individuals more than once. This "revolving-door syndrome" created problems for UNHCR in its efforts at prioritizing assistance. In late 1994 the UNHCR's office in South Africa reported that

... measures to tackle the "revolving-door syndrome" are being taken...However, and despite our best efforts, it has become evident during the last few months, that the revolving door is close to spinning! Our own observations at the transit facilities, through field-level contact with the local 'network' of community knowledge and from comments and questions directed to us by organizations, agencies, and general observers suggest that the number of single young males traveling with convoys across the border has increased significantly. Of particular concern is the number of journalists and TV crews who follow the repatriation operation with keen interest. We know

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that some journalists have actually focused on the issue of migrant labour movement ... Our office would like to open serious discussion on the issue and see what measures can immediately be taken to combat the flow of migrant labour (legal and illegal) who are clearly taking advantage of the UNHCR operation.<sup>11</sup>

A few months later a UNHCR/NAR mission held community meetings with Mozambican refugees at different locations within South Africa. Refugees made known their objections to UNHCR efforts to limit assistance to so-called economic migrants:

... the issue of single males not allowed to return on the convoys was raised by the refugees during all of the meetings and stimulated the most vocal and excitable participation...many single males (*who could not be considered bona fide refugees*) [emphasis added] were aggrieved by the fact that they were being excluded from the repatriation operation. Again, they were informed that they would be treated on a case-by-case basis by UNHCR-RSA staff, and were not necessarily excluded from organized repatriation.<sup>12</sup>

A barrage of reports and assessments ultimately produced an array of different and sometimes contradictory explanations for the unexpected problems and unfulfilled expectations in the South African repatriation process. These explanations identified three types of macrolevel factors: organizational, economic, and political.

In one report on lessons learned, the low rate of return was explained as a result of “the much stronger socio-economic situation in South Africa...why leave a country where

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there are plenty of job opportunities, health care and schools?" UNHCR had been denied a presence in South Africa until 1991 and had consequently only created a field presence in refugee areas as late as 1994. The Mozambican refugees in South Africa were self-settled, and this was also regarded as a significant factor that made repatriation efforts more difficult. Finally, the weakness and inexperience of UNHCR implementing partners was cited. Nevertheless, the report still found the low rate of return puzzling since "the operation contained strong elements of information campaign and well-functioning logistics structure, in reality door-to-door service ...."<sup>13</sup>

Another UNHCR report based on informal fieldwork in one area of South Africa concluded that the low rate of Mozambican participation in repatriation efforts was largely a matter of timing. Mozambicans struggled in South Africa under the adversity of their illegal status to earn enough in order to be able to reestablish their homes when they returned to Mozambique. Those who returned before being "fully prepared" i.e., with sufficient resources, reportedly came back to South Africa highly discouraged. These "failed returnees" influenced others to delay or forgo their plans to return. Other reasons for nonreturn were uncertainty over the political climate, fear of corruption and land mines, and the extreme wartime suffering that led some to want a total cutoff from the past.<sup>14</sup>

Other reports cited lack of knowledge about how to go about registering for repatriation assistance or even of the existence of these services.<sup>15</sup> One alleged that South African farmers and industries organized misinformation campaigns about the situation in Mozambique because they benefited from inexpensive Mozambican labor.<sup>16</sup> Several reports identified a need for better public education and information. However, another mission dismissed this factor as irrelevant:

... the refugee communities are 100 percent fully aware of the end date for the

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repatriation operation...it was interesting to note that throughout the whole mission *none of the old reasons* [emphasis added] (political uncertainty in Mozambique, physical security, mines, banditry, food security, elections in the RSA and in Mozambique, the planting season and harvest, etc. etc.) were presented by the refugees as to why they couldn't return to their places of origin.<sup>17</sup>

The overall degree of confusion and uncertainty within the UNHCR over the problems experienced in the South African repatriation effort was perhaps most revealingly articulated in the final report on reintegration in Mozambique's southern region:

The operation in the South was geared for an expected high number of refugees returning from South Africa. This did not happen. However, the reasons for the 'no show' of an estimated 200,000 plus Mozambicans expected to return from the RSA have been well documented and debated long into the night! The question that comes out in the end is, how did the UNHCR get its estimates so wrong?<sup>18</sup>

Despite an organizational effort undoubtedly as competent as those carried out elsewhere, UNHCR remained bewildered about the problems encountered by the South African repatriation effort. None of the explanations seemed fully satisfactory. The bewilderment conveyed in mission reports was confirmed in conversations with UNHCR staff in the field and in Maputo, who openly acknowledged the need for additional understanding of the type that social scientists could provide.

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## The Kinetic Structure of Humanitarian Analysis

All of the factors analyzed—organizational, political, and economic—were treated as aspects of the environment that acted *upon* refugees. However, there was little if any in-depth examination of differences that might be viewed as internal to the refugees themselves—for example, aspects of social organization that might differentiate these refugees from others and affect their choices. Culturally defined differences in gender relations, socioeconomic organization, division of labor, or household structure and the interrelationships among these factors remained unexamined.

The terms of analysis applied in agency assumptions regarding refugee behavior may be described as “kinetic,” a concept articulated in the rather abstract models produced by Kunz in his creation of a formal typology of refugee flows.<sup>19</sup> Although most humanitarian organizations do not explicitly employ his framework, many implicitly subscribe to the assumptions of this framework. Kunz contrasts “kinetic” with “dynamic” models of behavior. In a kinetic model, forces external to and beyond the influence of migrants themselves are seen as determining migration behavior entirely apart from the migrants’ own internal motivations. In dynamic models, internal motivation is viewed as influencing migration behavior and outcomes. According to Kunz, “An inner self-propelling force is singularly absent from the movement of refugees. Their progress more often than not resembles the movement of the billiard ball: devoid of inner direction their path is governed by the kinetic factors of inertia, friction, and the vectors of outside forces applied on them.”<sup>20</sup>

Kinetic models eliminate the need to investigate refugee behavior altogether by reducing the interests of all “forced migrants” to a singular, universally generalizable “survival-utility.” In the throes of war, people are seen as having no life projects other than survival itself. This formulation assumes that in the face of sheer terror, violence

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somehow renders all normal engagement in ongoing, culturally defined, social life strategies virtually insignificant in shaping behavior. War-distressed populations, in short, are seen as having no life projects other than living—they are no longer socially defined, economically positioned, or culturally implicated actors. They become minimized and undifferentiated, “People Lite,” as it were. Since the motivational basis for migration is assumed to be known a priori, no attempt is made to examine people’s own understandings of the situations in which they find themselves or how these understandings affect migratory conduct. There is thus no investigation of what social scientists refer to as “actor agency,” i.e. the exercise of an actor’s own will and understanding in shaping his own activities.

### ***Privileging the Macropolitical***

Since forces viewed as external to and unaffected by the agency of migrants are seen as the determinants of behavior, the explanations for the patterns and the effects of forced migration are sought exclusively through analysis of the dynamics of much larger macrolevel forces. Political forces in particular receive privileged attention because they are the most visible macrolevel factors directly implicated in coercive violence. Assumptions about migration behavior are made, and differences among cases of forced migration behavior are explained, in terms of variations in these larger forces.

In its simplest form, this understanding operates in the following manner. War or the threat of war occurs in Area A and acts as a force akin to a billiard cue, driving persons from Area A of violence to the nearest shelter in Area B. This process may be replicated in stages, producing a variety of refugee “vintages,”<sup>21</sup> each the product of different military-political actions.<sup>22</sup>

Investigation of possible differentiation between successive vintages is generally limited to the political affiliation of the population on the assumption that such affilia-

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tion will affect the relationship of a populace to a military force and thus its exposure to violence.<sup>23</sup> In order to understand the patterns of refugee movement, it is seen as sufficient to analyze the political struggles taking place between military forces. Other macroenvironmental factors, albeit conceptualized as external to and acting upon refugees, may also be examined. These include the organizational structure and agendas of intervening institutions and the larger economic settings within which forced migration flows occur.

Since kinetic models assume that migration is shaped directly and mechanistically as a reaction to political struggle carried out at the macrolevel, no investigation is made of ongoing normal life strategies or of power struggles at other levels of social interaction typical of nonwartime social processes. There is no examination of how struggle for power within communities, gendered divisions of labor, or culturally defined notions of intergenerational relations influence migratory decisions. To build on Kunz's own analogy, the emphasis is centered on the cue rather than the ball—that is, the emphasis is on understanding ball movements by examining what types of cues are forcing the balls to behave in particular ways, rather than on how differences in the properties among the balls influence movement. Aspects of social and cultural differentiation that inform migrant agendas and objectives are ignored.

Even variables often thought of as cultural are, in fact, understood in ways that reduce them to expressions of macro-political factors. For example, ethnicity, when it is invoked in such explanations as a so-called cultural factor, tends to be thought of as a rough proxy for political affiliation in conflicts in which political divisions are seen as falling along ethnic lines. However, ethnicity is not invoked as a proxy for differences among migrants in terms of their own socioeconomic organization or culturally specific terms of interpreting and directing experience.

This analytical lens treats refugees as largely homogeneous groups, with little attention to the differences be-

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tween or within displaced populations. In the case of Mozambique, one could theoretically remove ethnically Ndaou refugees and replace them with another ethnic group (such as the Makuas) despite the differences between these groups in sociocultural and economic organization. Similarly, internal differentiation with respect to gender, class, or generation is ignored as a factor shaping migrant behavior. If households could stay together, the assumption was that they would. None of the UNHCR studies cited investigated whether gender disparities in refugee migration flows might be attributable to culturally specific social structure or to strategies of socioeconomic organization. In line with kinetic assumptions, refugee populations were assumed to come from areas closest to the respective borders. An investigation of migration's preconflict role in social and economic life indicates this was not always the case.

A further consequence of kinetic assumptions is that the refugee behavior is assumed always to occur in "panic mode." The severity of the danger faced is assumed to reduce motivating concerns to more fundamental and thus presumably culturally undifferentiated needs, i.e., physical survival. Without denying the importance of survival or of the moment of panic in influencing reactions to violence, even in extreme situations how people act to survive and what they consider survival to be is influenced by sociocultural understandings about whom to go with, where to go, and why. Notions of survival are conditioned by culturally shaped understandings of what normalcy and order involve and how to reestablish some semblance of it in a radically altered environment. War and displacement as processes do not replace social imagination or needs with a *tabula rasa*, nor do they eliminate people's engagement with a series of other ongoing life projects and concerns other than the war itself. This is particularly the case inasmuch as war and reactions to it often now develop as a long process, involving many years (as in Mozambique) or decades (as in Angola, the Sudan, or Palestine).

A final consequence of analyzing migrant behavior

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using kinetic assumptions is that questions for analysis are defined in terms of the structure of the international political system that privileges the state. Behavior of displaced populations, however, is often based on other realities. In this instance, no significant relationships were ever considered between Mozambicans returning from Zimbabwe and those returning from South Africa. They were assumed to constitute separate populations, problems, and processes because they involved populations in separate countries. Similarly, the framing of the problem of return itself was structured by assumptions based on the political structure of the international system. Because it was inconceivable that populations might pursue life strategies based on residence and activity in more than one country simultaneously, analysis applied to the Machazian population was distorted. The options of return and nonreturn were structured as mutually exclusive.

The application of such assumptions may take on a life of its own. Understanding why and how refugee flows are produced influences one's understanding of organization in exile, of subsequent patterns of return or nonreturn after conflict, and finally even of the basis for postcrisis reconstruction and development. The following section draws extensive research in three countries among Mozambicans from Machaze district in order to demonstrate how a far different understanding of the South African and Zimbabwean repatriation processes results from analysis that examines sociocultural and socioeconomic organization and their influence on wartime and postconflict migratory behavior.

### **Sociocultural Factors and Wartime Migration in Machaze District**

Soon after independence from Portuguese colonial rule, Mozambique began to experience its own civil war. The Machaze area was one of the first districts to become fully engaged. By late 1979 it was embroiled in the war between

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the Rhodesian-supported (and, later, the South African-supported) antigovernment faction, RENAMO (the acronym in Portuguese for Mozambican National Resistance), and the government forces of FRELIMO (acronym in Portuguese for Front for the Liberation of Mozambique). Before the conflict ended in 1992, some 60 to 80 percent of the population was estimated to have left the district, many to South Africa and Zimbabwe and some to destinations elsewhere within Mozambique. Almost without exception everyone, even people remaining in the district, was moved. Those remaining in Mozambique took refuge either in communal villages under the government's control or went deeper into the bush areas under the nominal control of RENAMO. Fieldwork was conducted in Machaze itself with those who remained in the district during the war or who returned to it after the conflict from Zimbabwe and South Africa and from the internal destination of Chimoio. Refugees from Machaze remaining in South Africa also were interviewed.

As the civil war intensified in Machaze, particularly from 1980 to 1983, migration became a more prevalent reaction to the threat of violence. Migration was patterned in highly gender-specific ways, as evident from the clear pattern emerging from fieldwork, including several surveys and almost 100 extensive life histories. Women were far more likely than men to remain in the district, or to move to adjacent areas within Mozambique or to Zimbabwe. Very few Machazian women ever went to South Africa.<sup>24</sup> Men, on the other hand, particularly if they had been to South Africa, were likely to migrate first and foremost there. In Zimbabwe, men were also more likely than women to be found illegally self-settled outside of the camps.

The explanation for this pattern of wartime migration can be explained largely by two factors. The first is the gender-differentiated experiences and expectations regarding migration and the organization of socioeconomic life. The second involves struggles over power distribution and gender role definitions within households. Each set of

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factors, which are missed by an exclusive focus on macrolevel processes, is examined here.

***Sociocultural Continuities: Engendered Interests  
and Wartime Migration***

International migration has been implicated in the organization of social life in Machaze for over a century. At the broadest level, the social division of productive and reproductive labor has been gendered in ways specifically embodied in migration. The prewar experience of subsistence involved a social division of labor between female nonmigratory agricultural subsistence labor and male migratory cash-earning labor. Male migration was virtually universal and incorporated as an informal and yet strongly socially marked rite of passage. Male participation in economic life was reflected in migration-based wage labor, and only secondarily in very specific and sporadic tasks in subsistence agriculture (mostly clearing new fields). The vast majority of men spent most of their migratory careers in South Africa. Unlike other areas of Mozambique and even Manica province, female nonmigration in Machaze was virtually universal and economic activity was largely limited to non-cash subsistence agriculture.

On one hand, gender selectivity of out-of-district wartime migration reflected the very different ways that women and men were targeted by the military forces. RENAMO and FRELIMO troops generally forced women and children to move into an area under their control. Men were either forced into military service or often simply killed on the spot. The far greater motivation by men than by women to migrate should be factored into the Machazian population's early form of redistribution. Many men left for South Africa or extended their sojourns there as labor migrants expecting the war to end quickly, permitting their return.

As the war dragged on and its effects became exacerbated, particularly by drought in 1982-1983, many men

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assisted household members who were left behind in Machaze. Initially they attempted to provide assistance through remittances, but as the situation worsened many sent instructions or personally returned to help family members move into safer areas within Mozambique or neighboring Zimbabwe. As of 1984-1985, one of the major survival strategies was to place spouses and other dependent family members in UNHCR refugee camps in Zimbabwe and then to proceed back to employment and residence in South Africa. These men often maintained support and communication channels with their families in the camps that served as surrogate home bases. Yet they systematically avoided having family members, spouses in particular, join them in South Africa. In fact, husbands actively discouraged spouses from joining them in South Africa even if they desired to do so.

Men thus continued to pursue long established life course strategies that would have been far more difficult if their Mozambican wives had joined them in South Africa. The humanitarian aid provided in UNHCR camps reduced the cost of maintaining their families in a manner analogous to subsistence in Machaze. Many men interviewed argued that having a Machazian wife move to South Africa would have drained their earnings: she would become a dependent since subsistence cultivation in the township areas in which most Machazian migrants lived in South Africa was impossible. This claim is highly questionable in light of both the field research and the larger body of research on women's successful participation in the flourishing informal economy in South African townships.<sup>25</sup>

Probably far more important for men in preventing dependents from joining them in South Africa was the effects of a wife's support services for other dependent family members, such as small children and aged parents, who might also be in Mozambique or in the UNHCR camps. These other categories would certainly have represented a drain on income. Discouraging spouses from coming to South Africa played an important role in keeping a whole

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array of other dependents from migrating as well.

Other noneconomic reasons also played an important role in Machazian men's efforts to prevent spouses from joining them. The men frequently longed for aspects of their life in Machaze that were absent in South Africa. In Machaze they did not pay for cooking or heating fuel, and the availability of home-grown food allowed them to spend far less. The ability of men to pursue these life strategies remained dependent on control over the labor of wives who provide such services free and on women's willingness to accept the culturally sanctioned and gendered division of labor, power, and authority.

Women have always provided virtually all labor for subsistence agriculture in Machaze, where poor land quality and acute water scarcity make domestic and agricultural tasks highly labor-intensive. The average woman walks over eight kilometers a day to get water. While men are expected to participate in the initial clearing of fields, a labor-intensive but short exercise that may occur every few years, other agricultural activities are primarily women's work.

Machazian men's life strategies have benefited throughout this century from culturally prescribed asymmetries in gender relations that allow them to exploit women's labor. Keeping women in Machaze and preventing their outmigration thus served other purposes besides colonial governance and capitalist accumulation. It guaranteed men the social control over women that enabled them eventually to retire from labor migration and live their chosen lives upon returning to Machaze. Most men interviewed were quite explicit about the need to keep Machazian women unaware of ways of life that could undermine the division of labor and pattern of deference that men back in Machaze depend on. The most straightforward expression of this sentiment came from a Machazian man interviewed in Vereeniging, South Africa.

In Machaze there must always be suffering to live. Women must always suffer. If the

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women from Machaze come to South Africa they will become corrupt like the South African women are. They will always spend money. Once you feed a dog from a plate it will never again eat off the floor.

Interestingly, the few Machazian women interviewed who had experienced life in South Africa did express evolving ideas about how gender relations should be configured. One woman interviewed in South Africa commented,

... these men are afraid of [South African] immigration [officials]? Bah! What they should be is afraid of *me* because of what I have to say if I go back to Machaze! I know of their other women here, and I know that they treat these women here better than their own wives in Machaze, and that these men buy things for them when they ask. Men even do work in the house for these women! When I say these things to other women [in Machaze] that is when these men should be afraid. They should be afraid of me!!”

Such statements lend credence to the fear concerning the detrimental effects of a spouse’s sojourn in South Africa on men’s domestic authority and relative power. At the same time, most Machazian men did not feel that a sojourn in Zimbabwe would have the same negative effect on Machazian women as time spent in South Africa. They frequently alluded to the similarity between customs in Machaze and in nearby Zimbabwe, in contrast to the much larger differences in women’s ways of life in South African townships. One noted,

In Tongogara [the largest UNHCR camp in Zimbabwe] it was different from Machaze but not so much as here [in South Africa]. If

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[the women] worked outside the camps [in Zimbabwe] it was in the *maachambas* [fields] ... The others in the camp were also mostly from Machaze and knew the right way to behave.

### ***Social Change for Machazian Men in South Africa***

Preventing Machazian women from joining them in South Africa not only played a role in protecting men's established life strategies. It also reinforced their ability to take advantage of developments of emerging social opportunities in South Africa. Even prior to the civil war, regulatory, labor-market, social, and demographic changes in South Africa had opened up new possibilities and motives for migrant Machazian men to establish more involved conjugal relations and more permanent residential and legal status in South Africa itself. The most important of these changes involved the shift after World War II from legal and regulated mine labor participation to illegal and secondary or tertiary sector labor participation.<sup>26</sup> Mine labor involved deferred payment and obligatory return home after 18 months for leaves of at least six months. Since non-mine employment did not have deferred pay schemes or time restrictions, Machazian men increasingly shifted from mine to non-mine employment.

Another important change had been the emergence in the 1960s and 1970s of township and township-based (hostel) housing for migrant men. Previously those employed in mine and non-mine labor lived in single-sex company compounds in which interactions with those living outside of the compounds was severely restricted. In the 1970s, the townships experienced a massive explosion of illegal squatter settlements that overwhelmed official attempts to thwart them. The growth of South African female migration to these peri-urban areas vastly improved the "conjugal market" for men.<sup>27</sup>

Throughout the 1970s, Mozambican men from Machaze

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began to establish more permanent forms of conjugal unions in South Africa with South African women, unions that increasingly involved a multidimensional array of rights and obligations: sexual, domestic, paternal, economic, residential, and juridically sanctioned. However, they also retained their conjugal unions back home. Machazian men had thus been exploring more permanent residential and total social life options in South Africa just prior to the outbreak of the Mozambican civil war.<sup>28</sup>

The arrival of the civil war in Machaze in 1979 intensified male outmigration to South Africa and contributed to the attraction of these options. As the war continued and intensified, many men began to consider the possibility that they might be unable to reconstitute their lives in Mozambique. For some, the war had partially or thoroughly disrupted their contact with family members back in Mozambique. Even for those who maintained contact, the heightened risk to family members made traditional life strategies dubious. The possibility of developing alternative ways of realizing their own life course strategies in South Africa itself through conjugal relationships with South African women proved increasingly attractive.

The war's extended duration increased the attractiveness of pursuing total social life options in South Africa and augmented the pool of Machazian men participating in them. Even Machazian men who had been miners sought employment in the secondary sector and residence in townships rather than face mandatory repatriation to war-torn Mozambique after their contracts expired. This became an even more attractive alternative in 1986 when the South African government arbitrarily decided to return all Mozambican miners as a way of exerting pressure on the Mozambican government to stop supporting actions by the African National Congress.<sup>29</sup>

By 1997, 52 percent of surveyed Machazian men in non-mine employment reported a conjugal relationship with a South African woman, as contrasted with only 30 percent among those employed during the 1970-1978 period before

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the war. Perhaps more important, among a subsample of 24 men who reported not being in such a relationship with a South African woman in 1997, 19 (79 percent) reported having been in at least one such relationship during the previous decade. In sum, an estimated 91 percent of Machazian men in South Africa in non-mine employment were pursuing conjugal unions with South African women at some period since the beginning of the war.

The ability to do so was, and still is, largely dependent on keeping South African partners unaware of marriage partners elsewhere. The possible presence of a Machazian wife in South Africa promised to introduce undesirable management problems into Machazian men's life course strategies. South African women were often against the idea of polygyny in general and adamantly opposed the physical presence of a Mozambican co-wife in their homes.

The presence of a Machazian wife in South Africa was also seen as a threat to men's relationships with their Machazian wives. Men feared that Machazian women would become discontent with the discovery of South African counterparts and with their lack of authority over these wives, whom they considered junior because they were not Machazian. This discontent was felt to increase the likelihood of the husband or even a South African wife being exposed to witchcraft. The physical proximity of a Machazian woman was believed to amplify witchcraft's effects.

The presence of a Machazian wife in South Africa also threatened to expose the Mozambican identity of these men themselves, subjecting them to greater risks of deportation. Many of these men endeavored to manage their Mozambican identity even *vis-à-vis* their South African partners so as to prevent these spouses from knowing they were Mozambicans. Machazian men thus often presented themselves to South African women as Shangaanas from the Giyani area in South Africa, a more problematic ploy if accompanied by their Machazian wives.

Consequently, most Machazian men actively sought to

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discourage their wives from joining them. They used both active and passive strategies. One very generalized behavior which came to light through the in-depth life history interviews was the refusals by men to respond to requests by spouses for help that would have allowed these women to join their husbands in South Africa. Machazian men either ignored such requests, gave reasons that were dubious and misleading, or delayed decisions. Sometimes men would simply not answer these letters.

A small number of exceptional women made their own way to South Africa and found their spouses, despite poor or even misleading information. In four cases, they were sent back by their husbands either to the camps in Zimbabwe or into the war zone in Mozambique itself.

### ***Transnational Polygyny as a Way to Diversify Risk***

That these men established new total social life options in South Africa did not mean that they renounced relationships and rights with their Machazian wives. Support sent by some of these men or occasional visits to wives in Mozambique and Zimbabwe confirmed this view. However, even those who had no knowledge of their wives' whereabouts or fate or who did not actively support their families despite knowing of their whereabouts still considered their rights intact despite their failure to fulfill ongoing obligations.

Machazian men were particularly assertive concerning their rights in cases in which the culturally prescribed obligation of *lobola* (bride price) had already been fulfilled and in which the wife had children. The payment of a substantial portion of *lobola* allowed these men to preserve their claims in the marriage, despite their own passivity and failure to fulfill the obligations to their spouses that *lobola* signified. Their rights could only be negated through the negotiated repayment of *lobola* itself, a process that implicated not only the interests of the wife but those of her family members who had received (and quite possibly

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subsequently used) this payment. It was consequently quite difficult for many of these women to obtain a divorce and remarry. The men's retention of these claims represented a largely cost-free investment in a Mozambican social option.

Maintaining a social option outside of South Africa clearly served their interests. The cash dependence and high cost of living in South Africa made the option of reestablishment in Mozambique well worth preserving. Rising violence in the townships throughout the 1980s reinforced this sentiment. Illegal status in South Africa also made Machazian men vulnerable to crime, given that it was known they would not report it to authorities. The threat of deportation as illegal aliens made them prey to extortion by corrupt officials. Thus, the existence of new total social life options in South Africa did not nullify the legally structured vulnerabilities that they faced and encouraged them to diversify options and minimize risks.

### ***Transnational Polygyny and Transformed Life Strategies after the War***

Machazian men's interest in transnational polygamy continued to grow after the end of the Mozambican civil war in 1992. The wartime devastation of Mozambique and the uncertainties about the postwar political situation reinforced the importance of economic options in South Africa. In the view of most interviewees, South African employment would clearly continue to play a central role in any strategies that they might envision for life there and in Machaze itself.

A significant qualitative shift has occurred in the way many Machazian men conceptualize their presence in South Africa and in Mozambique. In contrast to the period preceding the war, many of these men no longer see South Africa as merely a place of employment or Machaze as the only place to raise families and establish long-term residence. The shift is true even for many of those who have already reestablished homesteads in Machaze or elsewhere

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in Mozambique or who hope to do so. South Africa is considered a location in which to pursue a total social life<sup>30</sup> that parallels and complements, rather than simply contributes to, their lives in Machaze.

These multiple social life options increasingly include conjugal unions in South Africa and various forms of transnational polygyny. In a 1998 survey of 200 Machazian men in non-mine employment and resident in the townships, 23 percent had conjugal relations only in Mozambique, 26 percent only in South Africa, 37 percent in both South Africa and Mozambique, 3 percent only in Zimbabwe, and finally 2 percent in all three countries. Only 9 percent reported no conjugal relations whatsoever.<sup>31</sup>

The transnationalization of polygynous marriage has radically transformed the meaning of marriage and of migration for Machazian men. Prior to the war, polygynous marriage was used by men to ensure the quality and success of those aspects of their life strategies that were exclusively carried out in Machaze.

These aspects included reproduction, agricultural and domestic labor, comfort and security in old age and retirement, and the struggle with other men for local social status. Marriage, polygynous or otherwise, dealt with men's Machaze-specific problems. This is no longer the case. Men now engage in transnationalized polygyny as a strategy for dealing also with the opportunities and risks of political and economic insecurity which operate at the level of the state. Maintaining households in both South Africa and in Mozambique diversifies the risks to their life strategies.

### **Recasting an Understanding of the Repatriation Processes**

This analysis has focused on three generally neglected factors shaping the migration of the Machazian population: the culturally specific structure of social roles and relations; historically developed and socially embedded forms of

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economic organization; and the social struggles such as those within marriage and households, operating at levels other than the macropolitical. These factors have been examined within the context of larger political and economic processes without being reduced to mere expressions of macrolevel processes.

This approach suggests a far different picture of Machazian wartime and postconflict migration than that produced by kinetically structured models of analysis. It is unnecessary and incorrect to deny the importance of macropolitical developments, variations in economic context, or the organizational structure of intervening institutions. What the analysis suggests, however, is that those factors alone offer a partial and misleading explanation of events. Understanding sociocultural and socioeconomic organization can provide better information and more useful interpretation of available data. In the cases of repatriation from South Africa and Zimbabwe, the difference is remarkable in several respects.

### ***Issue 1: Defining Populations and Units of Analysis***

A consideration of social organization and process suggests that the two repatriation processes were not the separate and unrelated phenomena that aid agencies assumed them to be. The greater prevalence of women among residents from Machaze in refugee camps and within Mozambique resulted largely from the way in which men manipulated information to control female migration in order to further their own agendas. Men took these measures to protect an advantageous structure of gender relations and to capitalize on the asymmetry. These measures also allowed them to develop new strategies for struggling with larger political and economic instability.

Refugee camps were crucial for men in their pursuit of these simultaneous and interdependent life strategies; gender politics played a significant role in shaping the organization and demographic distribution of Machazian wartime migration. The men constituted not two different and

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unrelated populations, but rather two parts of the same population.<sup>32</sup>

### ***Issue 2: “Economic” versus “Genuine” Refugees***

This analysis also sheds a different light on the problem encountered in the South African repatriation of “economic” and “genuine” refugees. It makes clear why most returnees from South Africa would be single men. Once they are understood to have ties to genuine refugees returning from camps in Zimbabwe, how much sense does it make to distinguish them as economic refugees? Why divert assistance from these economic migrants in order to help genuine refugees? Doing so probably had detrimental effects on the household members, many returning from Zimbabwe, who these economic migrants were trying to help by returning. Ironically, those men who were refused assistance undoubtedly represented those Mozambicans most committed to reestablishing a life in Machaze, as evidenced in their attempt to bring back significant amounts of material goods. By prioritizing so-called genuine refugees, UNHCR may have in fact inadvertently heightened their vulnerability.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Issue 3: Rates, Patterns, and Meanings of Return***

An understanding of social change among Machazians, such as the rising trend toward the transnationalization of polygyny, explains the low rates of return migration from South Africa as well as the revolving door syndrome. For Machazian men involved in or contemplating transnational polygynous unions, the assumption that return and nonreturn are mutually exclusive options does not capture the reality within which they live.<sup>34</sup> Their own approach defies the assumptions of an international system based on the idea that citizens belong to one and only one state, and of the need to map this exclusivity onto the residence, social lives, legal status, and economic activity of populations.

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These men have reconfigured their total social lives on the opposite premise: that Machaze and South Africa are not mutually exclusive options. To return to Machaze for these men is thus not necessarily a matter of leaving South Africa, in any sense that might have applied prior to the war.

Among 200 men surveyed in one peri-urban township in South Africa in 1998, only 11 percent reported that they had no plans to return to Mozambique. However, return to Mozambique did not necessarily imply forsaking social and economic options in South Africa. In a subsample of 64 of these men, 79 percent planned to keep a house and 72 percent a business in South Africa even after returning to Mozambique. Forty-seven percent reported enrollment in a pensioner plan, which they must be in South Africa to collect.

The low level of Machazian male participation in UNHCR's organized repatriation efforts becomes more comprehensible in light of what these men believed such assistance might imply for their ability to maintain their transnational strategies. Many feared jeopardizing their status as "South Africans," achieved by obtaining South African identity papers through forgery or bribery. For many it was far safer to return unofficially in a way that did not result in the loss of such documentation or in specific identification by authorities of their whereabouts.

The obstacles implicitly created by UNHCR for those who did try to avail themselves of its services heightened suspicion of what organized return might imply. Identification of single men with large amounts of baggage for purposes of exclusion from assistance immediately triggered perhaps the greatest concern of undocumented Machazian migrants: that when caught and deported as illegal aliens, their accumulated possessions would be confiscated.

In the final analysis, there is an ironic relationship between return as conceived by the international humanitarian system and governments in southern Africa, and the sense of displacement as felt by Machazian men whose life strategies seek to maintain transnationality itself. Ef-

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forts that aim to correct these men's wartime displacement by providing for, inducing, or enforcing a return to Mozambique but preclude maintenance of linkages and lives in South Africa engender a strong sense of displacement. Machazian men are highly resistant to the imposition of state-centric notions of return that threaten to displace them from their transnational life strategies. Hence the low participation in official UNHCR return efforts, the preference for self-organized return beyond the pale of official scrutiny, and the revolving door syndrome.

The analytical approach of UNHCR, with its kinetic model and dichotomies between "returnees" and "stayees" proved ill-suited to the situation on the ground. As Ranger points out,

... the concept of 'repatriation' derives from the idea of a 'patria' and this in turn implies that an individual's primary identity, rights and obligations derive from the membership of a 'nation.' The nation encapsulates 'home' in terms of language, culture, rights to citizenship and land. Yet this is precisely what is at stake in many countries which generate refugees and returnees ... Even where the idea of return to one's 'country' is a national as well as a local sentiment, that idea co-exists and sometimes conflicts with many other senses of identity and entitlement ... Any study of return needs, therefore, to look closely at such multiple ideas of identity and entitlement.<sup>35</sup>

The juxtaposition of socioculturally informed analysis of Machazian return migration with the kinetic assumptions employed by humanitarian organizations suggests several conclusions.

First, culture is not stripped away by the violence of war. People do not suspend their social life strategies or culturally configured views of the world as a result of

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exposure to violence. Culturally defined forms of social organization and life strategies retain relevancy as factors influencing the behavior, migratory or otherwise, of war-distressed populations.

Second, decisionmaking and organization regarding wartime migration is shaped by social struggles other than macropolitical ones. The gendered demographic distribution of Machazian refugees reflected in large part an effort on the part of men to maintain their social power over spouses and to enhance their power within the household through the transnationalization of polygyny. These struggles are carried out with culturally and socially specific bases and terms of reference and are not comprehensible in universally generalizable terms. Analysis that focuses solely on the macropolitical level thus precludes assessment of other forces that bear on the migration's causes, organization, and impacts.

Third, since social process does not stand still, socio-cultural factors should not be treated as static and unchanging. Rather, social process must be examined in historical perspective as ever evolving. As this case demonstrates, social organization can be modified by social struggles under new circumstances. Machazian men's attempts to transnationalize the polygynous aspects of marriage during the war transformed Machazian demographic and social structure at a household level. Having two wives implies a very different form of household economy and migration pattern if this polygynous relationship is transnational than before the war, when it was not. It is inaccurate to assume that refugees either envision or are attempting to return to some unchanged prewar baseline of social or economic organization.

### **Toward Alternative Analytical Approaches**

As this case study shows, analytical approaches that do not consider culturally specific forms of social structure and economic organization or culturally specific forms of social process and struggle below the macropolitical level

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risk misunderstanding refugee intentions, organization, and behavior. An analysis of Machazian social structure and household economic organization results in a far different picture of the same data than the picture UNHCR had when looking at the South African and Zimbabwean repatriation operations.

In searching for approaches to apply in a wide variety of refugee-producing situations, humanitarian organizations and policymakers tend to focus on factors of analysis, the terms of which are not dependent on a high level of context specificity. Kinetic frameworks do this well because they seek explanations by drawing comparisons in terms of factors that are assumed to operate under structurally similar principles regardless of context. Once familiar with the relevant principles by which such factors are assumed to universally operate, the analyst can focus on only these aspects of a particular context, disregarding the rest. This approach involves deploying a preestablished typology of variables, the interplay among which is examined in a particular context.

By contrast, the inclusion of sociocultural factors suggests that it is impossible to know a priori all the relevant variables. The terms of some of those variables must be defined and understood at a much more context-specific level. The assumption that guides this alternative type of analysis is thus quite different and more open-ended, placing a premium on highly context-specific factors.

The development of an approach based on these assumptions suggests devising a theory of method rather than a theory of universally applicable variables. Investigation of the specific sociocultural and socioeconomic systems in any given context then becomes part of the standard operating procedures for humanitarian work. What is standardized is the methodological approach used to identify relevant variables rather than an assumed set of predefined variables themselves. Such an approach expects no surprises in the emergence of previously unknown relevant variables and is suspicious in their absence.

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Other dimensions of social, cultural, and economic organization relevant to understanding aspects of Machazian wartime and postwar migration behavior are not addressed in this paper. They include intergenerational conflict, local community political structure, and religious beliefs. These aspects are relevant to specific activities of humanitarian and development organizations in Machaze. To make the most of this type of knowledge and guarantee its application requires continuous input by those with context-specific knowledge throughout the process of program planning, implementation, adjustment, and evaluation. Rather than inserting a social and cultural factors section in each report or assessment, ways must be sought to ensure attention to that knowledge throughout the whole decisionmaking process.

One method often used by humanitarian organizations to address cultural context issues is to use nationals in their work. However, this approach does not necessarily solve this problem. In culturally diverse countries such as Mozambique, “national” is not synonymous with “cultural.” Throughout Mozambique, tension often arises when national aid workers with one cultural background work in a different cultural area, a problem exacerbated in ethnic conflicts. Even in cases in which nationals are working in their own cultural milieu, their participation in a cultural, social, or economic system does not guarantee the essential tools for analyzing social relations. Whether in America, France, or in Mozambique, being native may simply inject a particular viewpoint or bias as a result of one’s own social positioning in terms of gender, class, generation, or political affiliation. There is no reason that a social scientist could not be a national, but being a national does not make someone a social scientist.<sup>36</sup> Reliance on local staff to provide knowledge of sociocultural context does not automatically translate into a systematic knowledge of complex social organization or cultural belief. Local staff rarely have the time or continuity of employment to pursue in-depth analysis of sociocultural organization.

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## Conclusion

Since the Machazian case demonstrates why an understanding of sociocultural organization should be incorporated into analysis that informs humanitarian practice, it is worth considering why this alternative usually is not introduced as a corrective to kinetic analysis. The costs involved in continuing the traditional approach also merit examination.

### ***Sociological Factors: The Cultural Embeddedness of the Humanitarian Community***

Among the fundamental reasons why context-specific sociocultural knowledge is rarely regarded as important in humanitarian analysis is the social and cultural systems in which analysts and practitioners are themselves embedded. They are shaped by their own cultural backgrounds, which influence what they regard to be natural social formations and processes or possible factors of influence. The current international humanitarian system is a largely Western product, and the highly cosmopolitan community of people who carry out that project are themselves, by and large, embedded in Euro-American sociocultural frameworks. It is thus not surprising that polygynous marriage would never appear as a blip on a typical aid worker's radar of possible factors to consider in analyzing rates and patterns of Mozambican return from South Africa, regardless of broad field experience in other crisis situations.

The importance of nationality in organizing personal identity and interaction naturally becomes part of an implicit and yet powerful currency in which understandings and expectations about the behavior of others are formulated and explanations are legitimized. However as this case and others establish, many of the cultural concepts and identities as self-evident to humanitarian practitioners and policymakers—the primacy of national identity is but one—do not necessarily play the same role in the lives of those the practitioners set out to assist.<sup>37</sup>

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Which empirical bases will be regarded as relevant in understanding and analyzing the behavior of those who are assisted? In a very important sense there is no such thing as an “unempirical” finding. As pointed out by anthropologist Michael Herzfeld, empirical is derived from the Greek word for experience.<sup>38</sup> The critical issue is not whether understanding is based on experience but on *whose* experience it is based. By failing to investigate the cultural terms used by refugees to create meaning and organize their own social experience, the experience that ends up informing an understanding of refugee life becomes that of the analysts themselves, if only by default.

An approach that assumes that social and cultural difference exist and that they matter is far more likely to ground its findings on the empirical base relevant to the case at hand. The same quality and empirical rigor that policymakers and social scientists demand for economic, demographic, political, or sociological analysis in Western societies should also inform studies of such processes elsewhere. How valid would an analysis of American society’s marriage patterns be if it assumed that the major factors affecting marriage decisionmaking were an interest in the creation of alliances between fathers of brides and grooms, and the calculation of the value of a wife’s labor for her mother-in-law? The conclusions of such an analysis would be regarded as preposterous. Yet these are what a Machazian would most likely apply to analyzing marriage decisionmaking in our society if he or she constructed the terms of analysis solely on his or her own socially and culturally embedded experience. A similar process occurs in the reverse when the humanitarian and policy community neglects to examine sociocultural context.

### ***Time Horizons***

One practical objection against the possibility of obtaining and using socioculturally specific knowledge is that it involves a long time. Humanitarian crises, by contrast,

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often emerge virtually overnight, and the mandates of relief organizations for responding are frequently short-term. There are, to be sure, situations for which the production of the detailed understanding advocated here is difficult.

However, in most situations it is not necessary to start from scratch. There is a small and diminishing number of places and societies that have not already been studied by culturally knowledgeable social scientists. Perhaps what is needed is the creation of institutional mechanisms by which existent expertise can be drawn on readily by humanitarian practitioners and policymakers.

Many major humanitarian crises have come to stretch out over years if not decades, becoming chronic and even, in many ways, structural. Mozambique's 14-year civil war would certainly qualify. The ongoing series of crises in the former Yugoslavia, in the Great Lakes region, in Angola, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, and in Liberia are also prominent examples.

The duration of these emergencies and their bewildering complexity seems to justify the consideration of factors that have hitherto been minimally or only superficially examined. There is little ground in such cases for arguing that inadequate time exists for achieving the type of in-depth understanding advocated in this chapter.<sup>39</sup>

### ***Research Feasibility***

Another objection often raised is that displaced populations are reluctant to provide information as a result of the trauma of their experiences and the tenuousness of their status. Yet there are plenty of instances that clearly demonstrate that such research is not impossible. The conduct of the fieldwork in South Africa with Mozambicans who were highly sensitive about their illegal status was largely a function of time spent winning the confidence of the Mozambican community. What would certainly not have worked—and did not for two other researchers—would

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have been an attempt to conduct a quick survey without a long period of prior fieldwork interaction. Furthermore, in order to even understand questions relevant to ask, such as those about transnational polygamy, prior qualitative research into culturally specific terms and forms of social life was indispensable.

### ***Cost and Value of Knowledge Questions***

What is the cost of this type of knowledge? How many anthropologists could have provided the aid community with adequate coverage of a country as culturally diverse as Mozambique? Although a single economist or political scientist could wield the conceptual tools necessary for analyzing the macroeconomic dynamics throughout all the operational arenas in question (Malawi, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique), numerous anthropologists would be required for similar coverage. What is the cost and benefit for the production of context-specific knowledge to inform humanitarian and development policy and practice?

The decision about how much socioculturally specific knowledge is necessary hinges on several questions. Is the knowledge and degree of accuracy in information that kinetic approaches produce adequate for responding to the specific level of problems with which humanitarian organizations and policymakers wrestle? Is the margin of error and misinterpretation that kinetic approaches entail acceptable for purposes of humanitarian work and policymaking? This case and others offer ample evidence that the answer to both these questions is no.

In an era in which emergencies are increasingly structural and in which the links to longer term development are increasingly viewed as important in devising effective assistance programs, the longer term cost of not considering sociocultural factors is high. In the short term, the construction of such an understanding may seem too time-consuming, messy, and costly. But over a succession of short-term

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periods (wartime outmigration, settlement, repatriation, and development), the cost of not understanding these factors is cumulative and damaging.

In a pioneer effort to improve the transition between emergency assistance and development, UNHCR and UNDP sought from 1995 to 1998 to establish a set of district development profiles for every district in Mozambique. They were intended to provide a baseline of information for future development work. Much of the information provided is very useful and this project is a step in the right direction. However, the report for Machaze also clearly reflects the cumulative effects of the application of forms of analysis bereft of understanding of local social organization. Whereas a total population figure for the district is given, there is no breakdown by age or gender. No discussion of even the most basic aspects of the highly gendered division of labor that shapes all economic activity and social organization in the district is found in the discussions of crop cultivation, land tenure, financial systems, commerce, and food security. Despite these formidable inadequacies, this information may well serve as foundational for future development projects in Machaze.

Perhaps most remarkably, in an area where migration has figured for at least a century as the most important factor in the organization of social and economic life, the entire commentary on this aspect of Machazian life is limited in this report to the following lines : “Migrant labor is a source of household income, since many youths go to work in the mines in South Africa and on the tea and coffee plantations in Zimbabwe.”<sup>40</sup>

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## CHAPTER 5

### THE QUEST FOR ACCURACY IN THE ESTIMATION OF FORCED MIGRATION

by Susanne Schmeidl<sup>1</sup>

Estimating the number of forced migrants has been an integral part of legitimizing the work of relief agencies. It helps them design programs: for example, in ordering the proper amounts of food, health supplies, and shelter equipment. Numerical estimates are also essential to planning durable solutions such as repatriation or resettlement. Estimates are a form of institutional memory, aiding agencies and scholars in the study of trends and assessing the causes of population movements. They provide essential early-warning tools for preventing new population displacements. Last but not least, good estimates can assist in countering the manipulation of figures for political purposes.

In recent years the existing methodologies for enumerating forced migrants, be they refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs), have drawn sharp criticism. Politicized cases such as eastern Zaire in 1996-1997 have raised doubts about trusting any estimates whatsoever. The criticisms that "no statistical sources are free from bias, whether intentional or inadvertent," and that "all hard facts are to some extent 'soft'"<sup>2</sup> are particularly true when dealing with such estimates. The use of the word "estimates" instead of "numbers" or "statistics" reflects the uncertainties involved in counting people on the move, whether voluntary or forced. Those who move during emergencies often do not want to call attention to their flight out of fear of attack or forced return. Furthermore, while basic demographic data regarding fertility and mortality is clear-cut, major definitional issues are involved in determining when someone becomes or ceases to be a refugee.

The needs of data users may vary. At the beginning of

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a mass movement of people, approximations may be adequate, whereas later on, when programs are to be mounted, greater levels of detail may be necessary. For aid groups seeking to provide relief assistance, considerable detail may be important. For advocacy groups, by contrast, rough estimates may suffice, although the groups' credibility may be harmed by inflated numbers. Levels of aggregation of data and margins of error that are acceptable to social science researchers may not meet the needs of program managers on the ground, although, ironically, social scientists may scrutinize numbers more closely than field workers. Although this paper does not provide a definitive answer to which methodologies and approaches are more valid and reliable, it seeks to shed light on the reasons for discrepancies in different data sources and types, and on what, from a social science viewpoint, may be considered acceptable ranges of error. It also suggests specific ways to improve the quality of estimates.

### **A Note on Estimates of Forced Migration**

Most refugee estimates are collected on the ground in countries receiving refugees. The most basic and widely available statistic is "refugee stock." Usually a census-type count at the end of a certain time period (year, month, week, etc.), this statistic can encompass the generic number of refugees in a given location (highest level of aggregation) or can be broken down according the origin of refugees and/or sociodemographic characteristics (age, sex, ethnicity, maybe even class/strata). The more detailed data requirements become in terms of disaggregation, the harder it is to obtain systematic estimates of high quality. Official estimates on a rough age and sex composition of refugee populations, for example, exist in some systematic fashion since the late 1980s. However, estimates on specifically vulnerable populations such as small children, pregnant women, or the elderly are only available on an ad hoc basis. Similarly, while information on the country of origin is

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widely available, more specific information on ethnic background may not be. The basic rule of thumb is that the likelihood of error and uneven data increases with the level of detail required, and that existing errors in aggregate data increase in magnitude during disaggregation.

A desirable but hard to obtain estimate is that of “refugee flow.” This measures both arrivals (newcomers, resettlement, or returnee arrivals) and departures (repatriation, resettlement, or even local settlement). These movements are largely unassisted and often volatile. New arrivals in particular (aside from resettlement or returnee cases) tend to be spontaneous. Resettlement is most likely to provide the best-recorded flow statistics when the movement is organized and uses outside assistance, although resettlement, too, may be spontaneous. Unless border crossings are staffed round the clock for counting purposes, only rough estimations of repatriant numbers may be possible. As a rough proxy for flows, increase in refugee stock numbers can be taken as inflows and decreases as outflows, without knowledge on the specific type of arrival (new inflows, resettlement, or even birth) or departure (repatriation, resettlement, local integration, or even death). Such crude estimation of refugee flows, useful for general assessments, does not provide a deeper analysis of the movement of people.

Inconsistencies in reporting make demographic increases (births) and decreases (deaths) in refugee populations often the hardest to gauge as compared to stock estimates. Unless the terrain is too hard to bury the dead (as in Goma), most refugees prefer to inter victims themselves rather than leaving this task to aid organizations. Similarly, in the absence of organized maternal and child health or other official functions, births are often recorded only when refugees apply for additional assistance. A basic prerequisite for obtaining such information would be to establish basic demographic characteristics (sex, age) first to provide an idea of the average number of women in childbearing ages and the average number of population (for example, children and the elderly) vulnerable to health (mortality)

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risks. Nevertheless, since fertility and mortality rates are important indicators of the general health of refugee populations, “creative” estimation efforts (e.g., extrapolation from sample surveys and case studies) exist.<sup>3</sup>

Among forced migrants are also IDPs, who have not crossed international borders and thus do not qualify as refugees. The difficulties of obtaining quality and disaggregated data about IDPs clearly exceed those just described for refugees. As mentioned, becoming a refugee is not a demographic reality such as death or birth, yet refugees at least share a commonly accepted definition: the crossing of internationally recognized borders. IDPs, by contrast, are displaced within their own countries and remain under the jurisdiction of their own political authorities. “Their movement is far less likely to be traced for a variety of reasons: government incapacity; failure to recognize minorities or insurgents formally; or simply denial of the problem. The exception here might be internal displacement due to natural disasters, which does not always point to government failure.”<sup>4</sup>

There are other complicating factors as well. Despite the fact that “a number of different international organizations have contributed to the welfare of internally displaced populations during the past few years, no single humanitarian agency has been given statutory responsibility for their protection.”<sup>5</sup> In addition, IDPs are by and large less accessible than their refugee counterparts, who have settled in generally more secure settings in third countries and often in organized refugee camps. As a result, in most IDP situations only rough stock estimates exist, with a range rather than a precise numerical estimation provided. Flow estimates or information on further breakdowns (sex, age, ethnicity) are completely absent from systematic data sources.

### **Overview of Existing Data Sources**

Estimates of refugee numbers may be obtained from many sources, including individual aid organizations,

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NGOs, host and donor governments, and the media. Such data, however, tend to be often ad hoc and unsystematic. As for IDP estimates, data were available until recently only from the U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR). “Unlike the collection of refugee statistics, a task undertaken by UNHCR, no single UN agency has assumed the responsibility for the collection of figures on internally displaced populations.”<sup>6</sup> UNHCR provides such estimates only when specifically mandated to assist this population. In 1997, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) initiated a global IDP survey, first published in 1998 and then expanded the following year to include a global IDP database.<sup>7</sup>

For present purposes, estimations from two organizations that have made an effort to produce systematic refugee estimates across countries and over time are considered.<sup>8</sup> They are the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which has published country summaries and estimates in its reports to its Executive Committee (EXCOM)<sup>9</sup> since 1993 in a comprehensive *Statistical Overview of Refugees and Others of Concern to UNHCR*,<sup>10</sup> and the U.S. Committee for Refugees (USCR), which had published refugee estimates in the *World Refugee Survey (Report)*<sup>11</sup> since the early 1960s. Observations are also included about the Norwegian Refugee Council’s (NRC) more recent efforts at IDP estimation.

UNHCR and USCR both arrange information regionally by countries of asylum, broken down by countries of origin. Information for Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand is generally lacking. In many cases, only the overall number of asylum seekers is provided. In the 1990s, refugee populations from the former Eastern Bloc seeking asylum in the West were closely tracked, unlike smaller flows from other parts of the world. This anomaly reflects complicated asylum procedures and definitional issues related to forced migrants rather than neglect or inattention. Although each affected government may provide systematic refugee statistics, it is often difficult to report such data in a comparative survey and to match such

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categories to refugee definitions used by UNHCR or USCR. UNHCR's *Statistical Overview* has recently begun to address this difficulty by including information on asylum seekers in Western countries in its tables.

### ***UNHCR Estimates***

UNHCR began enumeration shortly after the formal establishment of the High Commissioner's office in December 1949 and the first Refugee Convention in 1951. Until 1993, the only systematic estimates were published in EXCOM documents such as the periodic *Report on UNHCR Assistance Activities and Proposed Voluntary Funds, Programmes and Budget*. A main purpose for data collection was justifying and allocating funds, not quality statistical estimation. Internal data on refugee statistics (called STAT1 forms) sent to the field were returned to the Program Coordination and Budget Section in UNHCR headquarters.<sup>12</sup> In 1993, with the creation of a statistics unit and the recruitment of a statistician, internal STAT1 forms were translated into an official publication, *Populations of Concern to UNHCR: A Statistical Overview* [hereafter, *Statistical Overview*], which parallels the EXCOM reports. While the Program and Budget section was, and the Statistics Unit is, responsible for STAT1 forms, area desks and field missions usually contribute the country summaries to the EXCOM report. This division of responsibilities can result in differing numbers depending on the sources used, exactness, and timing of reporting.

UNHCR estimates are "provided, in the main, by governments, and ... [are] thus based on their own records and methods of estimation; in certain instances they include persons in 'refugee-like situations'."<sup>13</sup> UNHCR documents prepared for EXCOM generally provide information only on refugee stocks (mainly end-year totals), with very little detail about other populations (e.g., IDPs, returnees). In addition, refugee estimates are buried in case descriptions. Since the creation of the statistical unit, however, EXCOM

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reports incorporate a statistical overview table. Both STAT1 forms and the new *Statistical Overview* provide an abundance of information on stock and flow estimates (main increases and decreases) arranged in thematic tables. Demographic data (age/sex) has been included in these tables since 1987. Although STAT1 forms also provide information on births/deaths, these are often hard to separate from general increases and decreases in refugee stock due to uncounted arrivals or departures. All three reports focus on end-year estimates, albeit some midyear STAT1 forms exist and some EXCOM reports refer to midyear estimates. Estimates in EXCOM and STAT1 forms are “raw” while the *Statistical Overview* presents “statistically manipulated” (e.g., rounded) figures. Not all countries are covered in EXCOM reports, and some STAT1 forms are missing or do not exist.

### ***USCR Estimates***

USCR has published refugee estimates annually since 1964, with the exception of 1975, 1976, and 1979, which interrupts the data stream.<sup>14</sup> Data from 1974, 1975, 1978, and 1980 are apparently missing. All data are arranged by country of asylum except for 1977 and 1978, for which they are organized by country of origin. USCR provides statistical tables in addition to country reports. Prior to 1991 estimates were generally not end-year but the most recent available. USCR goes beyond UNHCR by listing people in “refugee-like” situations, internally displaced populations, and repatriation figures. This information, however, is scant in the early years and repatriation data was included only in 1982 and initially pooled across years. No demographic information is provided.

Until 1983, the main source for USCR estimation was UNHCR itself, but the sources were indicated in the statistical tables only until 1979. In 1984, USCR began, by its own account, to use a variety of sources for its data to “arrive at ... figures after careful scrutiny of every reliable source available—official and unofficial—including ... [our] own

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first-hand documentation. In the end, some numbers prove very solid, and others are little more than educated guesses.”<sup>15</sup> Expert judgment of area staff rather than systematic statistical methodology is used to reach final estimates. Unlike UNHCR, USCR challenges estimates (e.g., government statistics) if, in its judgment, official figures do not correspond to the realities in the field. In addition to UNHCR sources, USCR takes into account material from governments, international agencies, NGOs, and daily news reports. Its numbers are generally rounded, but without indication as to the amount of rounding done.

### ***The Global IDP Survey and Data Base***

The first *Global IDP Survey* presents a discussion on IDPs, including 12 regional profiles covering 55 countries. The survey presents statistical tables with rough stock estimates of conflict-induced displacement for 1997-1998. It also lists and discusses selected cases of internal displacement caused by development projects, natural disasters, or economic migration. The data base, however, has information only on a limited set of countries (14 at present) covering only about 5 years.<sup>16</sup> As with UNHCR’s and USCR’s ongoing efforts at refugee enumeration, the IDP data is still a work in progress that will evolve and improve over time.

### **Influences on the Quality of Refugee Estimates**

While errors in estimation are never desirable, certain unavoidable circumstances increase the likelihood that they will occur. The key to good reports is to follow consistent rules and to document the procedures applied to the available data, such as rounding, grouping, and aggregation. Negligence resulting in avoidable errors undercuts the validity and reliability of estimation, as, of course, does the manipulation of data for political reasons. Major sources of error are reviewed here in order to raise awareness of the

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importance of exercising care when interpreting data. In their approach to and use of data, humanitarian organizations are well advised to be as informed as possible (read the fine print) and to remain critical of what the data in question may or may not represent.

### ***Realities in the Field***

Since the nature of forced migration makes enumeration difficult, a certain margin of error and range of estimation should be acceptable. Certain settings, such as stable camp situations where it is possible to conduct more accurate census counts, can lead to better estimates. But even then, as the Goma experience illustrates, if the population does not cooperate or manipulates the outcome, uncertainties will remain.<sup>17</sup> In addition, affected locals may participate in a given census, creating a problem of proper categorization (who are the “real” refugees vs. who are the people in need).<sup>18</sup> Conversely, refugees from similar ethnic backgrounds may blend with the local population and remain uncounted.

Very specific categorization problems arise if it is unclear whether figures refer to cases or individuals, assisted or non-assisted refugees, or all refugees, whether in camps, cities, or dispersed in rural areas. A complex and explosive example concerns the presence of “refugee warriors” in camps among bona fide refugees. While they may not fall under the protections of the Refugee Convention, they may be included among refugee estimates and receive assistance. During the dispersal in eastern Zaire and subsequent repatriation in 1996-1997, armed elements escaped from the main refugee population and contributed to the impression of missing refugees.<sup>19</sup>

Thus it is important to treat with caution numbers provided in volatile displacement situations, expecting and utilizing figures involving ranges or margins of error in keeping with the insecurities on the ground and difficulties in data collection. About 10 percent for refugee stock and a

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higher percentage for refugee flow estimates could be considered acceptable margins of error in such circumstances.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Definitional Disagreements***

Some discrepancies in figures reflect different approaches to the populations to be enumerated.<sup>21</sup> UNHCR's approach is guided by the 1951 Refugee Convention, which describes a refugee as a person who,

As a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951 and owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.<sup>22</sup>

The two essential requirements are that the refugee has crossed an international border (thus excluding the internally displaced) and has fled due to well-founded fear of persecution (conditions prior to flight), or is "unwilling or unable to return" due to a well-founded fear of persecution.<sup>23</sup>

Regional adaptations have broadened the definition of a refugee to incorporate the realities of forced displacement. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1969 included persons fleeing external aggression, occupation, or foreign domination, and accepted groups rather than requiring proof of individual persecution. In 1984 Central American countries adopted the Declaracion de Cartagena, which includes "persons who have fled their country be-

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cause their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violation of human rights, or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order.”<sup>24</sup>

USCR’s approach has been generally more inclusive than UNHCR’s. Since 1993 it has counted as refugees those “who require international protection and/or assistance [and] are unable or unwilling to repatriate due to fear of persecution and violence in their homelands.”<sup>25</sup> As of 1999, it had broadened its working definition to include “refugees who are unable or unwilling to return to their home countries because they fear persecution or armed conflict there and who lack a durable solution; and asylum seekers who are awaiting a refugee status determination.”<sup>26</sup> Despite differences in definition, however, estimates from the field are more likely to vary due to estimation techniques than definitional distinctions. UNHCR tends to provide assistance foremost to people in need, or of concern, rather than engaging in more extended and formalistic determinations.

Definitional differences between various approaches are complicated further still when governments overlay the data with their own understandings, often highly politicized in nature. Many countries interpret existing definitions restrictively or expansively for purely political reasons, creating yet another error source. Under U.S. asylum policy prior to 1990, for example, those fleeing communist countries or countries supported by communist states were considered “refugees” without the need of individual proof of persecution.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, forced migrants from Nicaragua had a higher likelihood of being accepted as refugees than did Salvadorans, who, because of the fact that their government was allied with the U.S., were considered to be economic migrants and qualified only for temporary protective status.

Such definitional practices make data comparison in Western countries particularly difficult, although it has less effect on refugee estimates in general. One possible ap-

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proach is to separate data comparison by regions, mainly the West (or North) from Africa, Latin America, Asia/Oceania, and the region of southwest Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East, as was done in this chapter.<sup>28</sup>

Another main definitional difference lies in the fact that UNHCR does not count asylum seekers in its estimates since they have not yet proven their refugee status. USCR began to include them among its refugee estimates in 1991 on grounds that they are in clear need of protection. Once having obtained refugee status, a refugee (particularly one living in Western countries) is by definition no longer threatened in the sense of needing immediate protection and would thus be dropped from the USCR count. UNHCR, on the other hand, would at that point begin to include such persons in its tabulations. While the inclusion of asylum seekers makes sense in terms of the vulnerability of those populations, adding such persons to bona fide refugees confuses categories and makes comparison with other sources difficult. A better solution would be to present separate tables for asylum seekers and refugees as UNHCR does in its *Statistical Overview*.

### ***Imprecise Grouping of Data***

Discrepancies in data are also a function of the process of disaggregation, as in, for example, seeking to identify countries of origin. Sources differ in the level of detailed information they provide: for example, whether they group information regionally (e.g., Indochinese) or utilize “other,” “various,” or “unknown” categories, indicating that no detail was available or that refugee numbers were considered too small to be listed separately. Between 1969-1992, UNHCR EXCOM reported 200 of these regional or other entries while USCR and STAT1 reported only 108 and 95, respectively. For 1993-1996, the UNHCR *Statistical Overview* used 30 such codes and USCR only 18. Fewer such entries does not always indicate higher levels of detail provided but often a potential exclusion of smaller cases

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(UNHCR's *Statistical Overview* does not list estimates below 50) or their incorporation in large refugee numbers (done on occasion by USCR).

Another error source is the use of qualitative descriptions such as "most," "the bulk," or "some" refugees (mainly found in EXCOM documents). This may reflect the realities in the field where an accurate count may not be possible, or alternatively a choice of staff who may not trust certain refugee estimates. Between 1969-1992 EXCOM reported 221 cases of "vague data" while USCR only 71. However, USCR does some preselection of numbers and asterisks estimates that vary widely (providing the actual ranges in their case description). Since this practice began in 1983, 250 estimates were identified as "varying a lot" without further explanation. STAT1 generally does not report ranges and neither does the *Statistical Overview*.

### ***Improper Labeling***

While some categorization problems may be unavoidable, researchers at a minimum should describe what an estimate means, who is and is not included, and what extenuating circumstances exist in the field. In addition, categories should be kept separate and clearly identified. Otherwise, estimates are harder to compare and are subject to misinterpretation and abuse. Both UNHCR and USCR have made headway in acknowledging data difficulties as the following respective descriptions in their recent statistical tables show:

The quality of the data presented here varies greatly. While some of the data is based on detailed registration systems maintained by the government or by UNHCR, other data, such as that on demographic characteristics, may be based on extrapolations resulting from health surveys, visual assessments or surveys. In general, however,

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assisting refugees on a regular basis requires registration, usually at the individual or family level. While such beneficiary statistics are prone to inflation, as they are linked to entitlements, they are also subject to close scrutiny, because they form the basis for the assistance program. Statistics on refugees who do not receive assistance may be based on the delivery of refugee identity cards or demographic censuses. Statistics on groups that are not assisted by UNHCR are subjected to a lesser degree to updating and verification than statistics on the assisted population.<sup>29</sup>

Statistics on refugees and other uprooted people are often inexact and controversial. One country's refugee is another's illegal alien. Today's internally displaced persons may be tomorrow's refugee. As such, government tallies cannot always be trusted to give full and unbiased accounts of refugee movements.<sup>30</sup>

Minor discrepancies can be introduced through such practices as poor explanation of the use of large minimum-maximum data ranges or vague data descriptions, inconsistent and varying rounding procedures, or collapsing of categories and subsequent loss of detail. Proper labeling is essential to ensure data quality. While lengthy disclaimers in front of refugee estimates may be off-putting, they are needed to alert the untrained observer to data limitations and factors affecting the quality of estimates. UNHCR, for example, flags the limitations of being an intergovernmental organization relying for the most part on data provided by governments:

In cases where UNHCR is directly responsible, appropriate statistical reporting is

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usually possible. However, in many cases, UNHCR is dependent for its statistics on governments or implementing partners. In such cases, the frequency and scope of the statistics may be different from UNHCR's standard reporting requirements.<sup>31</sup>

An example of how otherwise adequate estimates can become problematic because of poor and inconsistent labeling is provided by USCR in its early years. At that time, it not only used different time points for data collection but was also careless in labeling its tables. The 1980 table is labeled "1980 World Refugee Statistics" with a footnote indicating that "statistics are current as of January 1, 1980 when possible, or are based on the latest figures available in the second half of 1979."<sup>32</sup> The result was a mixture of 1979 mid- and year-end estimates. In addition to confusing the untrained observer, inconsistent dates of estimates create highly inconsistent time-series and other discrepancies. In 1991, USCR solved this problem by using only year-end estimates and clearly so indicating. The damage for historical data, however, cannot be undone.

As another example of how disagreements in labels can create data discrepancies, Stein<sup>33</sup> reported 77,000 cases of repatriation from South to North (Arab) Yemen at the point of unification in 1990. Neither UNHCR nor USCR reported this figure as an actual repatriation since the definition of a refugee requires displacement across internationally recognized borders. The unification of the two "countries" eliminated this definitional requirement and thus, while the population was still displaced from their homes, they were no longer bona fide refugees and essentially were now internally displaced.

### ***Institutional Limitations***

Avoidable sources of error may result from factors more institutional than methodological. These include narrow mandates and agency priorities, officials poorly trained

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in estimation techniques, and limited awareness of the importance of accurate data. UNHCR or USCR priorities lie in refugee assistance and protection and not in data collection. Few staff are trained in proper estimation techniques and in demographic and statistical methods to help them cope with the realities on the ground. Field staff members in refugee camps, for example, are often expatriates on short-term contracts or locally recruited hires, both of whom lack proper training in record keeping and data collection. As a result, the accuracy of estimates varies widely across countries, camps, and field staff. Meanwhile back at headquarters, UNHCR's rotation system leads to a high staff turnover at area desks and limited institutional memory. USCR, a privately funded organization with far fewer resources to work with, had similar problems in its early years.

UNHCR created a statistics unit in 1992 and hired a statistician. Yet a single person cannot train all field staff in proper data collection, let alone check inconsistencies among estimates. USCR has also tasked a person for data collection, but the individual is not a trained statistician or demographer and the agency has no statistics unit. Even modest investments in staffing, training, and sensitization can increase the quality of estimates appreciably. Inadequate training increases the likelihood of errors along the data-reporting chain from field to headquarters as well as in its analysis there.

Straightforward adding and labeling errors do, at times, occur on STAT1 forms. If such errors are not caught immediately, they may become permanent. Trained staff members are needed to check on data reporting, although in principle data should go through as few hands as possible. The UNHCR statistics unit is now in direct contact with the field, minimizing this problem. Nevertheless, UNHCR is not yet fully centralized in terms of data collection, which still leads to the release of unchecked figures that may create variations even among the agency's own estimates.

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## *The Politics of Refugee Data*

The five sets of factors already noted that influence the accuracy of data are largely methodological in nature. The politicization of data is in a category by itself. Here estimation techniques are no longer important: numbers are manipulated or created to make a political statement or advance a political goal, be it to intervene in a given crisis, to win political support for certain activities, or to downplay failed efforts, or win political support. Governments are the main culprits, but NGOs and other organizations can also manipulate data when competing for scarce resources.

Eastern Zaire provides a good example of a battle royal over conflicting numbers and agendas. UNHCR insisted on the accuracy of its camp figure of 1.2 million refugees prior to November 1996. This number was considered far too high in many circles, including USCR. UNHCR worked from its stock estimate to calculate the number of "missing people," a figure that created fears that the 1994 genocide by Hutus of Tutsi in Rwanda might now be revenged by Tutsis killing Hutu in eastern Zaire. Contrasting sharply with UNHCR estimates was

the public release by the U.S. embassy in Kigali on 22 November 1996 of the evidence of refugee numbers determined by overflights and satellite imagery which provided a much lower figure than had heretofore been used. The NGO community claimed that the U.S., for its own political purposes, had deliberately understated the figures. Nick Stockton of OXFAM, U.K. labeled the press release as part of "Operation Restore Silence" (February 1997) and claimed that there was a concerted effort to "air-brush" the allegedly missing refugees [400,000 at the time of the OXFAM complaint] out of international consciousness.<sup>34</sup>

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While continuing to highlight the need to find and protect all the refugees, UNHCR could have avoided an ugly and perhaps avoidable political debate by simply admitting that the initial camp counts were not a firm census but an estimate that might in reality be considerably lower. UNHCR was itself divided in how to respond to the confusion about the numbers of persons involved. Despite the fact that its *Statistical Overview* documented the possibility of data error resulting from the volatility in eastern Zaire after refugee dispersal,<sup>35</sup> some in UNHCR were less open to accept the possibility of a margin of error or of a lower minimum estimate than it had initially provided.<sup>36</sup> A UNHCR acknowledgement early on that its numbers were uncertain due to refugee warriors in camps might have helped defuse the politically loaded debate.

### **Types and Comparability of Data on Forced Migration**

In order to provide a general overview of data availability and quality, this section surveys three types of estimates from different sources. Since refugee stock numbers are most complete, much of the comparison concerns estimates in asylum countries and the sums of estimates by countries of origin. Repatriation figures for flow estimates and for demographic information, such as age and sex distribution of selected refugee populations are discussed. Finally, available information on IDPs is briefly introduced.

#### ***Refugee Stock***

For the purpose of the present analysis, two sets of data were compared for 1969-1992. A comparison of UNHCR and USCR refugee estimates is used to illustrate how different definitions of refugees and different estimation techniques can lead to disagreement in data. A comparison of two sets of UNHCR data (EXCOM and STAT1), however, goes more deeply into an analysis of organizational policy

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and into the importance that different sections of an international organization assign to accurate collection, presentation, and interpretation of refugee data. Several levels of comparison are presented, based either on the number of refugees that are being hosted in asylum countries in a given year (also referred to as asylum/year cases), and/or on a cumulative count of refugees by country of origin (also referred to as origin/year cases).

First, and most basic, the data will be compared on the grounds of whether or not each source lists the same country of asylum (or origin) in a given year, regardless of the estimate for the refugee population that is provided. If both sources list the same country of asylum in the same year, the situation is referred to as a “match.” Second, and more specific, the levels of agreement of the numerical estimates are compared. If they are the same, then the result is a complete match or agreement. The degree of difference between any two estimates is referred to as a percentage.

For UNHCR, STAT1 (1,441 asylum/year and 984 origin/year cases) and the *Statistical Overview* (354 asylum/year and 192 origin/year cases) provide the most information on refugee receiving and sending countries. USCR, however, has more information (1,349 asylum/year and 722 origin/year cases) than do EXCOM documents (1,236 asylum/year and 719 origin/year cases). This suggests that while UNHCR may have detailed information available within the organization, this did not get integrated into public reports until the launch of the *Statistical Overview*. When comparing a simple match of countries of asylum listed, we find a quite high degree of agreement among the internal UNHCR documents (90 percent of EXCOM information could also be found in STAT1 and 77 percent of STAT1 in EXCOM). This is still true when moving down one level and comparing origin/year matches (88 percent of EXCOM information could also be found in STAT1 and 64 percent of STAT1 in EXCOM). For interorganizational comparison, the agreement is lower but not drastically so (80 percent of USCR asylum cases and about 82 percent of

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USCR origin cases were matched by UNHCR). Yet UNHCR and USCR have 18 and 13 percent “unique” asylum and 29 and 17 percent “unique” origin cases, respectively, which are not mentioned by the other source, probably due to definitional or political considerations.

Discrepancies are accentuated as one moves down a step on the data comparison from a simple match of countries to a detailed comparison of the estimate for the refugee population in countries of asylum. This divergence is particularly drastic when comparing estimates for refugee population by countries of origin for which yet another level of detail is required (as data gets collected by country of asylum). It would be unrealistic to find 100 percent agreement among refugee estimates since even small numeric changes such as rounding can show a discrepancy. Yet it is noteworthy that nearly half of all internal UNHCR asylum estimates matched completely, while only 17 percent of all origin estimates did. If one allows for a 10 percent difference to account for rounding and other smaller variations, two-thirds of internal asylum data can be considered essentially matching, while not even 50 percent of origin estimates are in agreement.

With respect to UNHCR and USCR documents, complete agreement among asylum estimates can only be found in about 10 percent of the cases; for origin this is about 7 percent. When allowing for minor disagreement of the data (10 percent), about 40 percent of all asylum and 30 percent of all origin cases can be considered as matching. Obviously error sources such as timing, grouping, rounding, and, above all, definitional disagreements are most likely at the root of the discrepancies.

There are several ways to cope with these data differences. First, a clear kinship between EXCOM and STAT1 data sources can be found, particularly among asylum figures. While in the ideal scenario, agreement among data from the same organization should be greater, one also needs to acknowledge the limitations of a large bureaucracy that until 1992 did not have a statistics unit that was

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responsible for data management and the training of field staff. Thus, EXCOM reports continue to come from the field with staff sometimes inserting the most recent estimates, and not necessarily following the rule of consistently using end-year stocks as is done by the statistics unit in the *Statistical Overview*. Clearly internal data coherence has improved since a statistician was hired, but for now he still manages only about 85 percent of all data flow, with little control over ad hoc data on specific refugee sub-populations. It is impossible for one person to be in charge of all (often daily) briefings between field personnel and field missions. His goal, however, has been that field staff understand the importance of the proper labeling of data: for example, labeling ad hoc data as “working figures.” In this, improvements within UNHCR have been made, particularly on end-year stock data, but awareness-raising among field and headquarter staff on how to deal with data is still a work in progress.

Second, it is evident that interorganizational data differences exist and will continue to exist. This is largely linked to different estimation techniques and, more important, definitional and even political considerations of who is counted as a refugee. A reduction in such discrepancies would indeed be welcome. However, such differences highlight the inherent problem in estimation and point to the vitality of a range of estimated, with the truth lying somewhere between the extremes. When data discrepancy is low, this can be a good solution. However, when it is very large (30 percent or higher), it is useful to check on the situation on the ground to understand why one source may have used a drastically different estimate than the other (as in the case of eastern Zaire). Alternative estimates may also serve a useful purpose in assessing an organization’s assumptions and performance. In sum, it is important for untrained observers to be cautious when using refugee estimates and educate themselves in their proper use and constraints.

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### ***Comparison of Refugee Flows: the Example of Repatriation***

As an example of refugee flow, repatriation lends itself to examination because of availability of data from more than one data source. UNHCR is represented by STAT1 and, later on, by the *Statistical Overview*; no systematic information is presented in EXCOM reports. USCR began publishing repatriation figures after 1983, with information reaching back to 1975. An analysis by Barry Stein based on various UNHCR and USCR reports and a book by John Rogge<sup>37</sup> provide instructive examples of skilled independent researchers trying to make sense of existing, and conflicting, estimates.<sup>38</sup>

Repatriation flows can be measured in two ways. The preferred way is to obtain figures of actual annual flows through assisted repatriation (actual counts) or estimates from border crossings, and the number of returnees (actual arrivals) reported in the country of origin. A more imperfect way is to measure flow by change in stock. This may be done on both sides of the border: in the asylum country by assuming that a decrease in refugee stock is a measure for actual departures, or in the country of origin by counting the increase among the number of returnees as actual arrivals. In the former case, however, it is never assured that all departures are actual repatriation. (There are other exit options such as resettlement, moving onto a third country, or local integration.) The latter, even if not as “clean” as observing actual flows, may very well be the best alternative. Since repatriation estimates, as any kind of information on refugee flows, are difficult to obtain, the figures in the data sources probably represent a combination of actual yearly repatriation departures from countries of asylum (flows) and returnee stocks in the countries of origin.<sup>39</sup>

Even more evident, as in the case of stock figures, UNHCR seems to have the best information on actual repatriation flows. Both USCR and Stein repatriation streams are more sporadic, with occasional gaps. Albeit UNHCR

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information covers a larger amount of repatriation streams, the estimates for these streams is on average smaller than those reported by USCR, and particularly by Stein, who has the largest figures of all sources. The size difference (and discrepancy) could be due to UNHCR's greater access to detailed information on actual repatriation flows while USCR and particularly Stein may have had to rely more on returnee stock figures that often tend to be cumulated at the end of repatriation streams.

Another explanation or factor is that UNHCR reports mainly on assisted repatriation, which usually is smaller than spontaneous departure. This does not mean that non-assisted repatriations do not count, but rather that it is UNHCR practice to report on populations "of concern" (for which the agency has better figures) rather than on refugee populations in general. Since the largest portion of returning refugees do so using their own means and without assistance from UNHCR or other aid groups, even UNHCR is most likely missing a significant portion of the actual picture.

The first explanation, however, is the only one that can be documented. UNHCR, for example, reports repatriation to Myanmar in 1978 and 1979, while Stein and USCR report the full number in 1978. Similarly, Stein reports a high repatriation estimate to Cambodia in 1979, while UNHCR reports a more constant flow throughout the prior and following years. (USCR omitted this repatriation flow almost completely.) Figures for larger and maybe more visible repatriation movements, such as to Afghanistan and Mozambique, are in greater agreement, both in years and numbers reported.

Several conclusions emerge. First, flow estimates show far less agreement (both in countries covered and actual number) than stock numbers, illustrating how difficult it is to estimate people who are literally on the move. It is hard to imagine how to track refugee flows (other than organized and assisted ones) accurately without the use of certain dehumanizing practices (such as the capture/re-

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capture method used for the tracking of animals). Secondly, the problems of tracking refugee flow have led to different estimation techniques, that, if not made explicit, can lead to major misunderstandings and large discrepancies. Here it is important to differentiate between actual measured flows (through transportation or border counts) and inferences made from stock numbers (counting a diminishing of refugee stock in the country of asylum as departure/repatriation and in an increase among returnee populations as actual inflow). The actual problem of counting flows may make the latter method the easier and more common way to capture refugee flows.

Third, since the majority of repatriations (and also refugee inflows) is actually non-assisted, making direct counts impossible, it is important to understand that the acceptable margin of error for flow estimates should be higher than merely 10 percent. Nevertheless, as overall estimation of refugee populations has improved over time, so has the attention paid to flows, although better staffing at border crossings could improve data gathering further still.

### ***Demographic Information: Age and Sex Distribution of Selected Refugee Populations***

Information on demographic breakdowns was first recorded in semi-systematic fashion through STAT1 forms in 1987, but only for a certain proportion of all refugees, with availability ranging between about 18 and 40 percent.<sup>40</sup> The demographic information includes a breakdown by sex, but increasingly information for three age groups is also provided: 0-4 years, 5-17, and 18 and above. More information is available on a general sex breakdown than the more detailed age/sex categories (e.g., male/female infants age 0-4). Until 1993 the statistics are dominated by information about male refugees; later years begin to show a more even sex ratio, with about 50 percent male and 50 percent female refugees.<sup>41</sup> The proportional increase

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of female refugees could reflect an actual increase of women in refugee camps with more men remaining outside to fight. It might also reflect improvement of reporting on all refugees and not just male heads of households due to increased sensitivity by field staff.

The data also initially reflected a greater proportion of adults (18 years and older) in refugee camps while the age ratio seemed relatively consistent and even (50-50) across time and regions after 1993. On average, Africa is the region with the most children, although not necessarily the region with the most female refugees reported. Using those two pieces of information, an even distribution of men and women and adults and children in refugee camps may help in unpacking the widely used proposition in refugee literature that 80 percent of all refugees are women and children. Clearly such a high percentage can only be achieved when adding children of both sexes (0-17 years) to females age 18 and above. This, however, means that there is not necessarily a large proportion of women in refugee camps, but simply children below the age of 18 (about half male and half female). The 80 percent is more or less constituted of about one-third women and two-thirds children. Looking at the average population composition in developing countries, this should come to no surprise, given the general "youth bulk" in most countries that are the sites of forced displacement.

These findings do not neglect the fact that in specific refugee populations, particularly with refugee warrior communities, fewer men are found in refugee camps (for example, of Bosnian and Kosovar populations) having remained at home to fight. In other words, while it is important to have a good idea on overall compositions of refugee camps, it is crucial not to be blinded by easy generalizations and to recognize the situation on the ground, which may be unique. In addition, estimates are often available from only a proportion of refugees, not the entire population. Furthermore, while the awareness of the different needs of refugee women and children has increased since the mid-1980s,

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specific assistance and protection activities are still inadequate.

Thus, demographic statistics should always be interpreted with caution. For instance, one could make the argument that existing age categories are too broad, or too Western-centric. In many developing countries, girls bear children as early as 12 years of age and quite frequently by 16 to 18, which may not justify their inclusion among refugee children. In addition, life expectancy in developing countries is usually lower than that in Western countries, making an age category of 60 and above less meaningful. More detailed categories might disaggregate small children (0-4), children (5-12), teenagers (13-18), young adults (19-25), adults (26-49), and older adults (50 years and older).<sup>42</sup> Needless to say, detailed information on age/sex breakdowns in refugee camps could improve age- and gender-specific assistance and protection activities.

### ***Internal Displacement***

Given the recent nature of the new IDP Survey and Data Base mentioned earlier, the discussion of estimations of internal displacement focuses on USCR estimates between 1969 and 1996. Since a more detailed discussion is available elsewhere,<sup>43</sup> only the most essential information is provided here. Given the focus on forced displacement, only conflict-induced internal relocation and not upheaval related to environmental or development causes is discussed here. As with all data on forced migration, it is possible that IDP realities on the ground are not adequately reflected in statistical estimations.

The first important observation is that internal displacement tends to occur in a majority of cases parallel to refugee migration. This suggests that refugees and IDPs flee from similar root causes rather than responding to completely different occurrences. The few cases where internal displacement occurred without refugee migration were due to very targeted violence (as in Tanzania in 1980-

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1981 and Panama in 1981), to strong border controls (as in Egypt in 1970-1972 and Syria in 1970-1973 and 1986), or to obstacles to exit (as in Cyprus in 1973-1996).<sup>44</sup> "In other words, one major difference between IDPs and refugees might be the conditions that allow for (or discourage) exodus across international borders."<sup>45</sup>

Despite similar trends, internal displacement is more variable than refugee migration and with a shorter duration of displacement. Variability, however, could also be due to issues related to estimation, in that less attention was paid, and less access available, to IDPs prior to the 1980s. As a rule of thumb, refugee (or international) displacement, accordingly to evidence from existing estimates, tends to precede internal displacement by a minimum of one, but usually several years. This could be due to the fact that either international attention to the plight of refugees ultimately allows greater visibility of IDPs, or that IDPs emerge only as conflict worsens, exit options close down, or the more vulnerable (women, children, and the elderly) are uprooted. The only exception to this rule are cases in which real or perceived obstacles to exit exist (East Timor and Peru), fighting neighboring countries give little option for safe haven (Cambodia, Croatia, and Laos), or violence is specifically targeted (Russia).

As in the case of refugee migration, internal displacement has shown a steady increase over the years, both in numbers and in duration. Prior to 1990, there were only seven cases (out of 36 total) where internal displacement lasted for ten or more years (Angola, El Salvador, Laos, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Cyprus, and Cambodia). By 1996, there were 20 cases (out of 62 total) that had lasted 10 or more years. In the 1990s, the incidence of internal displacement has thus nearly doubled. This could be due to an increase in the root causes and/or to an increase in the attention paid to this form of forced displacement.

Nevertheless, in comparison to refugee migration, internal displacement still tends to be shorter in duration, even though the trend mentioned above shows this is

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changing. In terms of size, however, internal displacements tend to be on average far larger (often more than double) than refugee dislocations. In most cases, the countries with large internal and international displacement are one and the same, emphasizing both a similarity in root causes and also the enhanced visibility of IDPs provided by large-scale refugee crises. In 1996 there were approximately 19 million IDPs worldwide as contrasted with about 10 million refugees. The IDP figure is probably conservative since the likelihood that IDP displacement (particularly displacement involving fewer people) will remain unreported is higher than for refugee streams. The absence of a single organization with an IDP mandate doubtless contributes to the undercounting.

In terms of regional concentration, in the 1970s there was little internal displacement in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East. Due to the war in Indochina, the majority of all IDPs were located in Asia. In the 1980s a shift occurred with more IDPs being reported in Africa and the Middle East. Latin America did not report any IDPs until the mid-1980s and is overall the region with the least amount of internal displacement reported. The former Eastern Bloc experienced large-scale internal displacement in the 1990s and by 1993 had surpassed Asia and Latin America.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This paper has sought to provide an overview of the various problems encountered in the quest for accuracy in forced migration estimates. It is clear that the nature of migration will always pose a problem to achieving the desired level of reliability and validity. At the same time, conscientious professionals applying proven methodologies can document error sources and work to limit their effects. Most headway so far has been in the area of stock estimates, leaving room for improvement in demographic information (age/sex), demographic changes (births/deaths), and flow estimates. Sample surveys and other

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creative demographic estimation techniques should be explored in order to fill these gaps. Recent progress in improving the estimation of IDPs, with the Norwegian Refugee Council reinforcing the work already done by USCR, is also encouraging and may even lead over time to improvements in the enumeration of refugees.

In the final analysis, however, the major constraints to improved enumeration are less methodological than institutional. Most data collection and analysis is done by organizations that have neither a direct mandate nor adequately trained staff for good estimation. Despite recent improvements on the methodological side, the unexciting task of data gathering and analysis still lacks the required priority for many practitioner organizations. Some officials in headquarters and workers in the field still do not see the payoff; numbers, they say, do not save lives. In addition to improving technical training and increasing capacity, therefore, a change in attitude and institutional culture among practitioner organizations and donors is essential.

This is particularly important for UNHCR because it is the major international organization funded by UN member states to protect and assist refugees. As an NGO, USCR has far fewer resources and is not in a position to try to match UNHCR's efforts. However, since USCR has emerged as the only other major data source for estimates on forced migration, the organization needs to pay close attention to proper labeling, definitions, and documented estimation techniques.

Rather than seeking total accuracy in data on forced migration, however, it is important to acknowledge that rough estimates may suffice. For purposes of mobilizing resources from donor countries, a rough stock figure without demographic breakdowns or even identification by origin countries may be sufficient. Only at the point of needing to address different health and protection needs does more detailed and disaggregated information become important. Individual agencies thus should decide on the level of detail necessary for their own purposes. USCR as an

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advocacy agency may require less detailed estimates than UNHCR for protection and assistance purposes. Moreover, the amount of detail necessary may vary over time. Rough notions of magnitude may be adequate at the onset of a crisis, with more demographic data about the population needed as responses are mounted.

The quest for accuracy should not be understood to require a common set of estimates of forced migration accepted by all the major players. As long as major organizations such as UNHCR, USCR, and NRC articulate their underlying assumptions, sources, and estimation procedures, varying sets of estimates should be expected. From a standpoint of analytical rigor and accountability, they may even be desirable. However, discrepancies within a single organization (for example, within UNHCR between EXCOM and STAT1/*Statistical Overview*) should be kept to a bare minimum since they are likely to create confusion and undermine credibility.

### ***Recommendations***

The following suggestions emerge from the preceding analysis and discussion. They are applicable to individual humanitarian organizations and the wider humanitarian community of agencies, as the case may be.

- Proper labeling. Improve the labeling of refugee estimates: who is counted, who did the counting, when and how, what circumstances on the ground? Identify estimation procedures, definitions, and potential error sources.
- Confidence intervals (i.e., the use of minimum-maximum ranges). Use ranges of figures in estimations and indicate margins of error for estimates.
- Disaggregation. Provide tables for specific populations rather than merging categories (such as refugees, IDPs, and asylum seekers).
- Broadened data collection. Improve the collection of demographic data (as well as demographic changes) in

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- order to enhance assistance and protection for vulnerable groups.
- **Creative methods.** Explore creative techniques to obtain information on fertility and mortality as well as to improve demographic breakdowns and flow estimates. Employ demographers as consultants and train staff to use innovative methods.
  - **Training and awareness.** Improve the training of field and headquarters personnel dealing with estimates, including raising awareness of the importance and limitations of data and proper record-keeping.
  - **Capacity building.** Staff statistical units adequately to the task at hand. Train and rotate new field staff. Check on data inconsistencies and work on improving overall estimation procedures. For major agencies one person per region seems necessary, particularly given the need for regional expertise.
  - **Partnerships.** To increase the quality of data collection and estimation, consider partnerships between aid organizations and demographic centers of expertise. The independence of outside institutions would help resist political pressure from states.
  - **Independent evaluation.** Create an independent capacity to carry out an annual assessment of data and analysis available from UNHCR and USCR. Since UNHCR is the largest major official organization that has access to comprehensive refugee statistics, the role of USCR as an independent source of assessments might be reinforced. In that case, USCR should clarify the basis on which it arrives, when it does, at different estimates from the official UNHCR figures.



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## NOTES

### Chapter 2

1. This chapter is written in Jeff Crisp's personal capacity and does not represent the views of UNHCR. See also, Jeff Crisp, "Who Has Counted the Refugees? UNHCR and the politics of numbers," *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working Paper #12, Geneva, UNHCR, also available at <http://www.unhcr.ch/refworld/pub/wpapers/wpno12.htm>.

2. Some limited discussion of the politics of refugee numbers can be found in the following works. Gaim Kibreab, *The State of the Art Literature Review on Refugee Studies in Africa* (Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1991): 8-15; Robert Gorman, *Mitigating Misery: an Enquiry into the Political and Humanitarian Aspects of US and Global Refugee Policy* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1993), 143-145; UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees: In Search of Solutions* (Oxford: UNHCR and Oxford University Press, 1995): 244-246; Holly Reed, John Haaga, and Charles Keely, eds., *The Demography of Forced Migration: Summary of a Workshop* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1998): 9-12.

3. Barbara Harrell-Bond, Effie Voutira, and Mark Leopold, "Counting the Refugees: Gifts, Givers, Patrons and Clients," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 5, no. 3/4 (1992). Similar arguments can be found in John Telford, *Counting and Identification of Beneficiary Populations in Emergency Operations: Registration and its Alternatives* (London: Relief and Rehabilitation Network, Overseas Development Institute, 1997).

4. "UNHCR must take full responsibility for all of the Kosovo refugees," *MSF press release*, 9 April 1999.

5. UNHCR, *Registration Guidelines*, on *Refworld* CD-Rom, Geneva, UNHCR, 1998, 2-3.

6. Gaim Kibreab, *African Refugees: Reflections on the African Refugee Problem* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1985): 10.

7. U.S. Department of State, *World Refugee Report* (Washington, D.C.: Government Priority Office, 1991): 85.

8. Richard Bilborrow, et. al., *International Migration Statistics: Guidelines for Improving Data Collection Systems* (Geneva: ILO, 1997): 227.

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9. UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees*, 244.
10. USCR, *World Refugee Survey* (Washington, D.C.: U.S.C.R., 1995): 41.
11. Bela Hovy, "The Demography of Refugees: Discussant Notes," comments presented at the Population Association of America Annual Meeting, Washington D.C., March 1997; "The State of the World's Refugee Statistics," paper presented at the Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, November 1997. My thanks to Bela Hovy for making these papers available to me.
12. Constantin Sokoloff, "Review of the Cross-mandate Approach in Ethiopia," (Geneva: UNHCR, 1995): 1.
13. "Refugee registration and statistics," *UNHCR Executive Committee Paper*, no. EC/48/SC/CRP.35, August 1998.
14. UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees: A Humanitarian Agenda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 33.
15. Telford, *Counting and Identification*, 57.
16. For a first-hand account, see Beth Elise Whitaker, "Faces in the Crowd: Counting Heads and Deciding Fates in a Camp for Rwandan Refugees," *Princeton Alumni Weekly* (October 23, 1996).
17. Peter Romanovsky and Rob Stephenson, "A Review of Refugee Enumeration: Proposals for the Development of a Unified System" (Geneva: UNHCR, September 1995): 3.
18. Jeff Crisp, "Ugandan Refugees in Sudan and Zaire: the Problem of Repatriation," *African Affairs* 86, no. 339 (1986); Jeff Crisp, "Finding the Funding and then the Returnees," *African Business* (November 1984).
19. Mark Cutts, "The Humanitarian Operation in Bosnia, 1992-95: Dilemmas of Negotiating Humanitarian Access," *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Working Paper no. 8 (Geneva: UNHCR, 1999).
20. Cutts, "The Humanitarian Operation in Bosnia," 15.
21. Yash Tandon, "Ugandan Refugees in Kenya: a Community of Enforced Self-reliance," *Disasters* 8, no. 4 (1984): 268.
22. Kibreab, *The State of the Art Review*, 14.
23. Telford, *Counting and Identification*, 26.
24. Sidney Waldron and Naima Hasci, *Somali Refugees in the Horn of Africa: State of the Art Literature Review* (Uppsala, Nordiska: Afrikainstitutet, 1995): 26.

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25. Romanovsky and Stephenson, "A Review," 3-4.
26. UNHCR, *Refugees and Others of Concern to UNHCR: 1997 Statistical Overview*, (Geneva: UNHCR, 1998): 72-74.
27. Johan Pottier, "The 'Self' in Self-repatriation: Closing Down Mugunga Camp, Eastern Zaire," in Richard Black and Khalid Koser, eds., *The End of the Refugee Cycle: Refugee Repatriation and Reconstruction* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999): 148. See also Simon Massey, "Operation Assurance: the Greatest Intervention that Never Was," *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, <<http://www-jha.sps.cam.ac.uk>>, posted February 15, 1998.
28. Pottier, "The 'Self,'" 149. At the end of 1997, UNHCR reported that "some 173,000 Rwandans remain unaccounted for." UNHCR, *Refugees and Others of Concern to UNHCR*, 13.
29. "WFP/UNHCR Joint Evaluation Mission: Emergency Food Assistance to Returnees, Refugees, Displaced Persons and Other War-Affected Populations in Bosnia-Herzegovina" (Rome: WFP and UNHCR, 1997): 23.
30. "WFP/UNHCR Joint Evaluation Mission," 25-26.
31. NATO spokesperson Jamie Shea, on CNN, 29 March 1999.
32. UNHCR has often asserted, for example, that 1.7 million Mozambican refugees returned to their homeland between 1992 and 1995 "in the context of a UNHCR repatriation program." This expression tends to obscure the fact that only 375,000 of the returnees were provided with transport and reception facilities by UNHCR. See Jeff Crisp, "From social disarticulation to social reconstruction: a critical review of the UNHCR reintegration programme for returning refugees and displaced people in Mozambique," paper presented to the conference "Reconstructing Livelihoods: Towards New Approaches to Resettlement," Oxford, September 1996. For an example of the way in which statistics can become a source of dispute between different humanitarian agencies, see Lina Payne, *Rebuilding Communities in a Refugee Settlement: A Casebook from Uganda* (Oxford: Oxfam, 1998).
33. Telford, *Counting and Identification*, 17.
34. All the preceding quotations are taken from Romanovsky and Stephenson, "A Review."
35. Rob Stephenson, "Refugee Enumeration and Statistics:

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a Review of UNHCR Policies and Practices” (Geneva: UNHCR, 1993): 1-2.

### Chapter 3

1. C.K. Omari, *Development: Proceedings of the Workshop held at YMCA, September 20-27, 1980* (Moshi, TZ: National Council of Social Welfare and Service, 1980): 2.

2. Paul Gifford, “Some Recent Developments in African Christianity,” *African Affairs* 93 (1994): 525.

3. Tom Kuhlman, “Organized Versus Spontaneous Settlement of Refugees in Africa,” in Howard Adelman and John Sorensen, eds., *African Refugees: Development Aid and Repatriation* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press; North York: York Lanes Press, 1994): 122,124.

4. Jacques Cuénod, “EC Assistance to Regions with Large Numbers of Refugees,” Paper presented at the International Conference on Refugees in the World: The European Community’s Response (The Hague, 1989): 8, cited in Kuhlman, “Organized Versus Spontaneous Settlement.”

5. Kuhlman, “Organized Versus Spontaneous Settlement,” 130.

6. Marc Sommers, *The Children’s War: Towards Peace in Sierra Leone* (New York: Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, 1997): 18.

7. Kuhlman, “Organized Versus Spontaneous Settlement,” 130.

8. Gaim Kibreab, “Refugees in the Sudan: Unresolved Issues,” in Howard Adelman and John Sorensen, eds., *African Refugees: Development Aid and Repatriation* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press; North York: York Lanes Press, 1994): 57.

9. John R. Rogge, *Too Many, Too Long: Sudan’s Twenty-Year Refugee Dilemma* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allanheld, 1985): 128.

10. The only case of urban refugees residing illegally in African cities that has attracted a number of researchers are those who have occupied Sudanese cities. See, for example, Ahmed Karadawi “The Problem of Urban Refugees in Sudan,” in John R. Rogge, ed., *Refugees: A Third World Dilemma* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1987): 115-129; Kibreab, “Refu-

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gees in the Sudan"; Angelika Pezaro, *Refugee Women Research in Khartoum: Preliminary Report* (Saarbrücken: Socio-Psychological Research Center on Development Planning, University of Saar, 1987); Johan Post, *Planned and Spontaneous Settlement of Refugees in Gederef* (Amsterdam: Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Free University, 1985); and Rogge *Too Many, Too Long*.

11. World Resources Institute and Institute for Environment and Development, *World Resources 1988-89* (New York: Basic Books, 1988): 266-267.

12. Eugene Linden, "Megacities: Our Urban Future," *TIME* 141, no. 2 (January 11, 1993).

13. Osita Ogbu and Gerrishon Ikiara, "The crisis of urbanization in sub-Saharan Africa," *Courier* 149 (January-February 1995): 53.

14. *World Urbanization Prospects: The 1992 Revision* (New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, 1993). Cited in "Introduction" by Carole Rakodi, *The Urban Challenge in Africa: Growth and Management of Its Large Cities* (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 1997): 1.

15. Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone* (Oxford: James Currey, 1996): xv.

16. Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *Atlantic Monthly* (February, 1994): 44-76. Quotes from pp. 44, 46, 49, and 54, respectively.

17. See, for example, Sylvia Chant and Sarah A. Radcliffe, "Migration and Development: The Importance of Gender," in Sylvia Chant, ed., *Gender and Migration in Developing Countries*, (London and New York: Belhaven Press, 1992): 1-29; Alan Gilbert and Josef Gugler, *Cities, Poverty and Development: Urbanization in the Third World*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," 54.

18. Rakodi, "Introduction," 10.

19. See, for example, significant edited volumes such as Richard E. Stren and Rodney R. White, *African Cities in Crisis: Managing Rapid Urban Growth* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1989); Rakodi, "Introduction"; and Jonathan Baker and Tade Akin Aina, eds., *The Migration Experience in Africa* (Uppsala: Nordsiska Afrikainstitutet, 1995).

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20. Rakodi, "Introduction," 4.

21. See, for example, Marc Sommers's review of "The Migration Experience in Africa" in the *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 30, no. 3 (1998): 636-638, which argues that the migration experience in Africa is actually "less about the experience of African migration than the study of African migration as a phenomenon."

22. Jonathan Bascom, "The New Nomads: An Overview of Involuntary Migration in Africa," in Jonathan Baker and Tade Akin Aina, eds., *The Migration Experience in Africa* (Uppsala: Nordsiska Afrikainstitutet, 1995): 205, 207, 208, and 209. Bascom also cites John R. Rogge and J. Akol's "Repatriation: Its Role in Resolving Africa's Refugee Dilemma," *International Migration Review* 23 (1989): 184-200, in highlighting the understudied urban refugees.

23. Bascom, "The New Nomads," 207.

24. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Refugees and Others of Concern to UNHCR: 1997 Statistical Overview* (Geneva: Statistical Unit, UNHCR, July 1998).

25. Similar characteristics were mentioned by Robert Chambers in his still influential 1979 article, "Rural Refugees in Africa: What the Eye Does Not See," *Disasters* 3, no. 4 (1979): 381-92. A response to Chambers's claims can be found in Marc Sommers's "Representing Refugees: Assessing the Role of Elites in Burundi Refugee Society," *Disasters* 19, no. 1 (1979): 19-25.

26. Bernard observes that participant observation "involves establishing rapport in a new community; learning to act so that people go about their business as usual when you show up; and removing yourself every day from cultural immersion so that you can intellectualize what you've learned, put it into perspective, and write about it convincingly." H. Russell Bernard, *Research Methods in Cultural Anthropology* (Newbury Park, London: Sage Publications, 1988): 148. The research in Dar es Salaam expanded on this foundation.

27. Barbara Boyle Torrey, for example, recently observed that "The most rapid growth in urban populations currently is in East Africa" in "We Need More Research on the Impact of Rapid Urban Growth," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (October 23, 1998): B6.

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28. Guy Ankerl, *Urbanization Overspeed in Tropical Africa, 1970-2000: Facts, Social Problems, and Policy* (Geneva: Interuniversity Institute Press, 1986).

29. Nigel Harris, "Urbanization, Economic Development and Policy in Developing Countries," *Habitat International* 14, no. 4 (1990): 3-42.

30. Julius K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism: A Selection from Writings and Speeches, 1965-67* (Dar es Salaam: Oxford University Press, 1968): 137.

31. Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism*, 170.

32. Abel G.M. Ishumi, *The Urban Jobless in Eastern Africa: A Study of the Unemployed Population in the Growing Urban Centres, with Special Reference to Tanzania* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1984): 21-22.

33. Allen M. Armstrong, *Urban Control Campaigns in the Third World: The Case of Tanzania*, Occasional Paper Series, No. 19 (Glasgow: Department of Geography, University of Glasgow, 1987): 23.

34. *Daily News* (Tanzania), Aug. 3, 1993.

35. Donna O. Kerner, in "'Hard Work' and Informal Sector Trade in Tanzania," in Gracia Clark, ed., *Traders and Versus the State: Anthropological Approaches to Unofficial Economies* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1988): 46. Describes a "shadow economy," in which everyone participated in an informal economy that was "sometimes illegal, sometimes legal and sometimes only hazily so."

36. Ishumi, *The Urban Jobless in Eastern Africa*, 36.

37. John Briggs, "Population Change in Tanzania: A Cautionary Note for the City of Dar es Salaam" (Comment), *Scottish Geographical Magazine* 109, no. 2 (1993): 117-118.

38. Kibreab, "Refugees in the Sudan," 58-59.

39. René Lemarchand and David Martin, *Selective Genocide in Burundi* (London: The Minority Rights Group Report No. 20, 1974).

40. Donna O. Kerner, "'Hard Work' and Informal Sector," 41-56.

41. The issue of "cultural fear" will be described in detail in Marc Sommers' *Fear in Bongoland: Burundi Refugees in Urban Tanzania* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, forthcoming).

42. Catherine Watson has alluded to this divide, but has not

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described it in detail. *Transition in Burundi: The Context for a Homecoming*, Issue Paper (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1993).

43. Liisa H. Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995): 49, 56, and 58.

44. See, for example, Warren Weinstein with Robert Shrire, *Political Conflict and Ethnic Strategies: A Case Study of Burundi* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Foreign and Comparative Studies/Eastern Africa XXIII, 1976).

45. Philip Gourevitch, "The Poisoned Country," *New York Review of Books* (June 6, 1996): 58-64 and Simon Turner, "Representing the Past in Exile: The Politics of National History among Burundian Refugees," *Refugee: Canada's Periodical on Refugees* 17, no. 6 (1998): 22-29.

46. Field research with Rwandan refugee church congregations in camps in Tanzania, for example, suggests that the local humanitarian community had little knowledge of refugee church activities in their midsts, including the work of the refugee churches on conflict resolution. See Marc Sommers, *Reconciliation and Religion: Refugee Churches in the Rwandan Camps* (Uppsala: Life and Peace Institute, 1997).

47. M. Louise Pirouet, "The Churches and Refugees in Africa," in Christopher Fyfe and Andrew Walls, eds., *Christianity in Africa in the 1990s* (Edinburgh: Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1996): 82.

48. Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1995): 15, 259.

49. See, for example, Donald Hohensee, *Church Growth in Burundi* (South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1977).

50. A.C. Ayok and M. Mbago, *Problems and Prospects for Integration of Burundi Refugees in Tanzania: A Case Study of Katumba and Ulyankulu Settlements*, Refugee Management Series, No. 2 (Dar es Salaam: University of Dar es Salaam, 1987).

51. David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford, UK, and Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1990): 231.

52. An example of internally displaced persons problems

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in cities is illuminated in a report by the author and Holly Myers, on Colombian women and children, called *A Charade of Concern: The Abandonment of Colombia's Forcibly Displaced* (New York: Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, forthcoming).

53. Jeff Haynes, "The Revenge of Society? Religious Responses to Political Disequilibrium in Africa," *Third World Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (December 1995): 729.

54. Kempe Ronald Hope, "Urbanization and Urban Growth in Africa," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 33, no. 3 (August 1998): 352.

55. Arthur Hansen, *Refugee Self-Settlement Versus Settlement on Government Schemes: The Long-Term Consequences for Security, Integration and Economic Development of Angolan Refugees (1966-1989) in Zambia* (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1990): 32.

56. Paul Gifford, *African Christianity: Its Public Role* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998): 33, 347.

57. Richards, *Fighting for the Rain Forest*, 168.

## Chapter 4

1. UNHCR, "Repatriation and Reintegration of Mozambican Refugees: Progress Report Covering January 1, 1995 to May 30, 1995" (Maputo: UNHCR, June 8, 1995).

2. Hans-Joachim Wenzel and James Bannerman, "Population Structures and Migration: Modern Development Trends—Manica Province" (Osnabruck/Chimoio: Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit [GTZ], 1995).

3. While the final total for the number of Machazians assisted by UNHCR in returning from South Africa is unclear, reports on at least one set of convoys indicate that at least 1,100 were assisted. UNHCR Convoy Manifests, UNHCR Regional Office, Chimoio, Mozambique (September 1994).

4. The range of figures found in different estimations has been so variable as to warrant extreme caution. This is the case for the contemporary working estimates of even the most basic figures, such as the district's total population. As late as 1997, five years after the end of the conflict and two years after the organized repatriation effort had terminated, the variation

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between different official estimates was still over 100 percent. (Stephen Lubkemann, "Demographic and Social Profile," in Finnish Cooperation (FINNIDA), *Manica Province Integrated Health Project-Term II Review* (Helsinki: FINNIDA, 1997).

5. Stella Tandai, "Mozambican Refugees: Preparing for Repatriation" (Harare: Report prepared for CIES /School of Social Work, 1992).

6. GTZ, "Conflict Driven Migration, Postconflict Reintegration, and Rehabilitation 1984-1996" (Chimoio, Mozambique: GTZ-MAARP [Manica Agricultural Rural Reconstruction Programme], 1996).

7. The official camp-settled refugee population remained the primary target for UNHCR operations. The still self-settled Mozambican population in Zimbabwe was encouraged to come into the camps in order to avail themselves of humanitarian assistance in their return as well.

8. UNHCR, "Repatriation and Reintegration of Mozambican Refugees: Progress Report Covering January 1, 1995 to May 30, 1995" (Maputo: UNHCR, June 8, 1995): 3-4.

9. UNHCR, "File Note-Economic Migrants and the RSA Repatriation Operation" (Maputo: UNHCR, November 25, 1994).

10. UNHCR, Mission Report to RSA January 8-16, UNHCR Logistics Office (Maputo: UNHCR, January 17, 1994). [emphasis added.]

11. UNHCR, "Migrant Labour and the UNHCR Repatriation Operation (RSA/MOZ)" (Maputo: UNHCR, December 1994).

12. UNHCR, "Mission Report-Joint NAR/Mozambique Government/UNHCR Mission to RSA February 11-14, 1995" (Maputo: UNHCR, February 21, 1995).

13. UNHCR, "Note for the File: Lessons Learnt: Voluntary Repatriation of Mozambicans from RSA" (Giyani, South Africa: UNHCR, March 23, 1995).

14. Graehme Rodgers, "Mozambican Refugees' Attitudes to Repatriation from South Africa" (Giyani, South Africa: UNHCR, May 20, 1994).

15. UNHCR, "Report on Mission to South Africa, February 10-20, 1994" (Maputo: UNHCR, March 3, 1994).

16. UNHCR, "Report on UNHCR Meeting in Nelspruit

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South Africa, May 27, 1994" (Maputo: UNHCR, May 30, 1994).

17. UNHCR, "Mission Report-Joint NAR/Mozambique Government/UNHCR Mission to RSA February 11-14, 1995" (Maputo: UNHCR, February 21, 1995).

18. UNHCR, "Reintegration Programme in the Southern Region Report" (Maputo: UNHCR, March 26, 1996).

19. Ergon Kunz, "The Refugee in Flight: Kinetic Models and Forms of Displacement," *International Migration Review* 7 (1973): 125-146; and "Exile and Resettlement: Refugee Theory," *International Migration Review* 15 (1981): 42-51.

20. Kunz, "The Refugee in Flight," 131.

21. Kunz, "The Refugee in Flight," 125-146.

22. Ken B. Wilson and Jovito Nunes, "Repatriation to Mozambique," in Tim Allen and Hubert Morsink, eds., *When Refugees Go Home* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1994).

23. As an example, Wilson and Nunes, "Repatriation to Mozambique," examine the successive waves of Mozambican refugees into Malawi. They describe a process by which one wave of refugees who were politically aligned or associated with FRELIMO would flee across the Malawian border in the face of a RENAMO offensive. These would be followed in turn by a wave of refugees from the same area, but who were politically aligned with RENAMO, once a FRELIMO counter-offensive reversed the military fortunes in the area.

24. The gender distribution of the wartime population is difficult to determine because of the difficulty of reconstructing a population dispersed and decimated by over a decade of war. However, several sources of independent evidence establish that gender differences in outmigration from the district and among returnees from the camps in Zimbabwe was dramatic. The 1980 census which took place in Machaze as the war was underway (and was actually interrupted by it) verified a female-to-male ratio in the district of 1.6:1. See Wenzel and Bannerman, "Population Structures and Migration." A 1993 survey of the population in several communal villages counted almost twice as many women as men in the 16 to 64 age group. GTZ, *Projecto de Reintegracao, Reassentamento e Reconstrucao do Distrito de Mossurize* (Chimio, Mozambique: MAARP, 1993). Prior to the unfortunate disposal of most of these records at the UNHCR district office at the time of the organization's depar-

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ture, I obtained a sample of these records for over 5,000 different returnees from several different convoys. For purposes of this chapter, I drew on a randomly selected subsample of 123 households from the official UNHCR return convoys from Tongogara to Machaze in early 1996. A larger subsample could easily be examined at a later date. I found that a total of 46 households were classified as female-headed along with six solo females, which, if counted together, comprise 42 percent of the total returnee households in these convoys. Without presuming to generalize this particular figure too broadly and allowing both for the limitation of this data and for a large margin of error, it is still possible to say that a significant percentage of families returning to Machaze were seen as "female-headed." Two other studies, one conducted in Tongogara camp (of which Machazians were only a part of the total camp population) (Tandai, "Mozambican Refugees: Preparing for Repatriation") and one in Machaze itself. CARE, *Baseline Nutritional Survey—Machaze District* (Maputo, Mozambique: CARE, March 1994). Both verified high levels of female-headed households (Tandai 20 percent; CARE 30 percent). In the CARE study only 2 percent of households that were not female-headed had no adult women in the household.

25. See, for example, the work by Belinda Bozzoli, *Women of Phokeng: Consciousness, Life Strategy and Migrancy in South Africa 1900-1983* (Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1991). In my own fieldwork in these townships, those few Machaze women who actually had been brought by, or found, their husbands in South Africa and remained there were generally quite successful entrepreneurs. In 1997 I conducted a small survey-based review of the economic situation of 31 households with male migrants from Machaze residing in South African townships who had wives from Machaze living with them. I collected data on reported monthly household expense and on women's earnings. These women earned, on average, at least 44 percent of the total reported monthly household budget. This survey highlights the situation in 1997 and not necessarily throughout the 1980s when the war was in full swing. However in light of the fact that women have been extensively studied and documented as successfully involved in the informal economy in the townships for well over two decades, the explanation that

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Machazian wives had to be kept out of South Africa because they would be unproductive economic burdens is highly questionable. Further analysis and comparison with other social categories of actors indicates that 30 percent of these households contained one or more adult men who were being supported at the time as dependents since they were unemployed and contributed nothing to the household expenses.

26. Whereas 75 percent of migrants surveyed were involved in mine labor in the migrant labor trips undertaken prior to 1950 and only 12 percent in the secondary or tertiary sector, by 1974, 58 percent of migrant laborers were involved in the secondary/tertiary sector and only 30 percent in mine labor.

27. Philip Smit, "The Process of Black Urbanization," in Hermann Gilomee and Lawrence Schlemmer, *Up Against The Fences* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985): 114-125.

28. The economic downturn and resulting employment crisis in South Africa during the late 1970s gave employers considerably more power over employees, which they did not hesitate to exercise. By the late 1970s it was not only far harder to find employment but it was also necessary to abide by much stricter guidelines, particularly with respect to leave times, in order to remain employed. As unemployment rose, Machazian men began to comply. The average leave time of two weeks granted by employers and its stricter enforcement discouraged them from visiting their families and homes back in Machaze.

29. The memory of this and other similar actions by the South African government nourished Mozambican men's suspicions of what the actual intent of postwar UNHCR repatriation efforts might be.

30. By "total social life," I am referring to the possibility for men to pursue a culturally prescribed life course in its entirety. That is, the possibility of achieving an expected series of goals and progression through life stages as understood by a particular cultural group to be a normal life progression.

31. More important than the actual figure of those currently in transnationally polygynous unions is that these men are generally seen as successful role models worthy of emulation by other Machazian men, in particular younger men, who are not yet engaged in transnational marriage arrangements. This

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model of marriage and household structure may thus influence current behavior more than the simple percentage of men already engaged in such unions might indicate. An age breakdown of respondents might show a life-cycle pattern that culminates in transnational polygyny. Therefore the percentage of nontransnational polygynists observed is not a reflection of a rejection of that option but an earlier life-cycle stage en route to eventual realization of transnational polygyny.

32. The dynamics and organization of wartime migration from Machaze is unlikely to account for all or even the majority of the Mozambican migration to South Africa. There are indications from other researchers that very different social processes and patterns characterized wartime migration from large areas of the provinces further to the South (Gaza, Inhambane, and Maputo). In many of these areas there was no, or insignificant, migration to Zimbabwe. At the same time, my own brief field-based research in some of the northern areas of Gaza province where outmigration during the war was heaviest (Massangena, Chibuto, and Chicualacuala districts) does indicate that the social and demographic processes similar to those operative in Machaze were shaping migration there. However, there were variations in other areas in which outmigration to Zimbabwe and South Africa occurred and where different forms of sociocultural organization and socio-economic systems can be found, such as in Barue or in southern Gaza. In these areas, prewar labor migration and subsistence agriculture regimes and aspects of gender relations differed significantly from those in Machaze. Such data only reinforces the point that an examination of context-specific sociocultural factors is an important dimension of analysis for humanitarian work.

33. It seems ironic that the distinction between “economic” and “political” migrants is so starkly drawn at the same time that the idea of refugee self-empowerment is stressed. This distinction seems counterintuitive in situations of long-term structural crisis. Is the assumption to be that refugees are willing, or likely, to remain economically inactive or dependent for decades because they have “political” asylum that precludes them from economic activity that other immigrants engage in? Most research seems to indicate otherwise.

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34. I have limited the main focus of this paper to men's life strategies. In my more elaborated work I deal with Machazian women's strategies. Whereas transnational polygyny has allowed many returnee women from Zimbabwe to avail themselves of some material benefits from husbands in South Africa, transnational polygyny in the long term represents an erosion in the relative power of women within the household.

35. Terence Ranger, "Studying Repatriation as Part of African Social History," in Tim Allen and Hubert Morsink, eds., *When Refugees Go Home* (Trenton, N.J., Africa World Press, 1994): 289.

36. My personal position is that the humanitarian and development endeavor should more explicitly consider playing a critical role in developing national social and natural scientific capacity rather than simply relying on foreign researchers. At the same time, foreign researchers, who are undoubtedly politically and socially positioned in ways that affect their perspective, may have a positive role to play because the ways in which they are positioned differ from those of national researchers. This difference also means that collaboration with national researchers will provide important cross-perspectives that greatly enhance foreign researchers' work as well.

37. Arthur Hansen, "Self-Settled Rural Refugees in Africa: The Case of Angolans in Zambian Villages," in Arthur Hansen and Anthony Oliver-Smith, eds., *Involuntary Migration and Resettlement* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1982); Arthur Hansen, "Some Insights on African Refugees," in Pamela De Voe, ed., *Selected Papers on Refugees I* (Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association, 1992): 100-110; Arthur Hansen, "The Long-Term Consequences of Two African Refugee Resettlement Strategies," in Mary Carol Hopkins and Nancy Donnelly, eds., *Selected Papers on Refugee Issues II* (Arlington, VA.: American Anthropological Association, 1992); Barbara Harrell-Bond, *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Liisa Malkki, "National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity Among Scholars and Refugees," *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 24-43; David Turton, "Migrants and Refugees" in Tim Allen, ed., *In Search of Cool*

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*Ground* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa Watch Press, 1996); and Ken B. Wilson, "Refugees and Returnees as Social Agents," in Tim Allen and Hubert Morsink, eds., *When Refugees Go Home* (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 1994).

38. Discussion held at the Thomas J. Watson, Jr. Institute for International Studies Conference: "Categorizing Citizens: The Use of Race, Ethnicity and Language in National Censuses," February 4-6, 1999, Brown University, Providence, R.I.

39. See also Ian Smillie, *Relief and Development: the Struggle for Synergy*, Occasional Paper #33, Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies (Providence, R.I.: Watson Institute, 1998): 53.

40. UNDP, "District Development Profile-Machaze," (Maputo: UNDP, July, 1996).

## Chapter 5

1. Views expressed in this paper are that of the author and not of the Swiss Peace Foundation. This research builds on earlier work completed in 1995 and 1997. I would like to express my gratitude to Bela Hovy (UNHCR) and Steve Scanlan and Craig Jenkins (both of Ohio State University) for assistance on this research.

2. Janet L. Abu-Lughod, "The Demographic Transformation of Palestine," in I. Abu-Lughod, ed., *The Transformation of Palestine* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971): 139-165.

3. See for example Denise J. Jamieson, Susan F. Meikle, Susan D. Hillis, Doris Mtsuko, Shairose Mawji, and Ann Duerr, "An Evaluation of Poor Pregnancy Outcomes Among Burundian Refugees in Tanzania," *JAMA* 283, no. 3 (2000). <<http://jama.ama-assn.org/issues/v283n3/full/jlf90028.html>>

4. Susanne Schmeidl, "Comparative trends in forced displacement: IDPs and refugees, 1964-96," in Janie Hampton, ed., *Internally Displaced People: A Global Survey* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd., 1998): 24-33.

5. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *The State of the World's Refugees 1997-98: A Humanitarian Agenda* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 99.

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6. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *The State of the World's Refugees*, 104.

7. Hampton, *Internally Displaced People*.

8. The U.S. Department of State also used to publish the *World Refugee Report*. The time series, however, is far shorter than that of UNHCR or USCR (early 1980s to early 1990s).

9. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Report on UNHCR Assistance Activities and Proposed Voluntary Funds, Programmes and Budget* (Geneva, Switzerland: Executive Committee for the High Commissioner's Programme, 1969-1992).

10. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *Populations of Concern to UNHCR: A Statistical Overview* (Geneva, Switzerland: UNHCR, 1993-present).

11. U.S. Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1964-1974); *World Refugee Survey Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1967-1978); *World Refugee Survey* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1980-present).

12. Obviously, refugee estimates were also collected for purposes of protection and finding of permanent solutions. However, systematic documentation of these estimations seems historically linked to budget purposes.

13. UNHCR, *Populations of Concern to UNHCR*, 2.

14. Extensive research did not unearth these back issues of the *World Refugee (Survey) Report*. Not even USCR staff knew whether during those years' reports were not published or were simply lost.

15. USCR, *World Refugee Survey 1992*, 32.

16. The countries currently available on the Global IDP Project website are: Afghanistan, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bosnia/Herzegovina, Burma/Myanmar, Burundi, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Peru, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Uganda. Aside from country profiles and some statistics, the website also provides information on training materials on IDPs, thematic information and other useful IDP-related links. <<http://www.idpproject.org>>

17. "A census of the Goma-area refugee camps in February 1995 by UNHCR and other relief groups was hampered by significant fraud orchestrated by Rwandan refugee leaders, according to relief workers at the time. Representatives of some

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relief agencies withdrew from the census exercise because of fraud. The final 1995 census statistics in Zaire were imprecise, although useful for planning humanitarian programs and budgets. An attempt by UNHCR to refine its estimates in late 1995, using a combination of aerial photography and on-the-ground checks found that official population estimates remained high." See USCR, "How Many Refugees are in Eastern Zaire? Why Estimates Vary Widely," Press Release (Washington, D.C.: USCR, November 26, 1996).

18. In refugee camps, assistance is generally extended to whoever claims it. UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees: The Challenge of Protection* (New York, N.Y.: Penguin Group, 1993).

19. For a discussion of the Zaire situation, see "Humanitarian Operations among Belligerents and Criminals," in Mark Frohardt, Diane Paul, and Larry Minear, *Protecting Human Rights: The Challenge to Humanitarian Organizations*, Occasional Paper # 35 (Providence, R.I.: Watson Institute, 1999): 61-91.

20. Susanne Schmeidl, "From Root Cause Assessment to Preventive Diplomacy: Possibilities and Limitations of the Early Warning of Forced Migration" (Columbus, OH: Department of Sociology, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1995).

21. For a more extended discussion, see "International Law on Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons," in William G. O'Neill, *A Humanitarian Practitioner's Guide to International Human Rights Law*, Occasional Paper #34 (Providence, R.I.: Watson Institute, 1999): 39-43.

22. UNHCR, *Collections of International Instruments and other Legal Texts Concerning Refugees and Displaced Persons* (Geneva, Switzerland: Division of International Protection of the Office of UNHCR, 1995): 11.

23. Robert DeVecchi, "Determining Refugee Status: Towards a Coherent that Policy," *World Refugee Survey* (Washington, DC: U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1983): 10-15.

24. UNHCR, *Declaracion de Cartagena: Coloquio Sobre La Proteccion Internacional de los Refugiados en America Central, Mexico y Panama: Problemos Juridicos y Humanitarios* (Cartagena, Columbia: UNHCR, 19-22 November, 1984): 34.

25. USCR, *World Refugee Survey* (1993), 50.

26. USCR, *World Refugee Survey* (1999), 2. This definition, however, was used so broadly in the years before 1981 that

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USCR estimates included even “those [refugees] who had resettled in third countries” if they still required assistance. Not abolished until 1981, this practice had some impact on data consistency such as the size of refugee populations. USCR states that “one effect is an apparent reduction in the worldwide total of refugees and displaced persons. This survey reports 12.6 million still in need. The 1980 survey reported 16 million, but the editor noted that 3 million of these had already been resettled.” U.S. Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey* (1981), 33. According to the USCR, UNHCR “lists resettled people as refugee until they acquire a new nationality.” U.S. Committee for Refugees, *World Refugee Survey* (1981), 33.

27. See Dennis Gallagher, “The Evolution of the International Refugee System,” *International Migration Review* 23, no. 3 (1991): 579-599; and Gil Loescher and John A. Scanlan, *Calculated Kindness: Refugees and America’s Half-Open Door, 1945 to the Present* (New York: The Free Press, 1986).

28. Such an exclusion means an overall loss of estimates of about 5 percent, since that the majority (some 85-95 percent) of the world’s refugees seek first asylum in the developing world. UNHCR, *The State of the World’s Refugees: The Challenge of Protection* (New York, New York: Penguin Group, 1993). The biggest exclusion after 1990 are Eastern Bloc refugees since the majority is hosted in the West.

29. UNHCR, *Populations of Concern to UNHCR* (1999), 6.

30. USCR, *World Refugee Survey* 1998, 2.

31. UNHCR, *Populations of Concern to UNHCR* (1993), 2.

32. USCR, *World Refugee Survey* (1980), 33.

33. Barry Stein, “Table 1: Repatriation and Return 1975-1996,” (unpublished manuscript, 1997).

34. Howard Adelman, “The Ethics of Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Relief: A Pragmatic Versus a Principled Approach, The Case of Zaire,” (York University: unpublished manuscript, 1999): 17. Interestingly enough, members of the U.S. State Department now seem to claim that overflights never happened and that the statement was a fiction created by the U.S. ambassador in Kigali. In retrospect, nobody wants to be associated with politically manipulated estimates.

35. “The developments at the end of 1996 have caused uncontrolled movements and it is, therefore, not possible to

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provide precise figures on the refugee population as at the end of 1996 nor on population changes during the year.” See UNHCR, *Populations of Concern to UNHCR* (1997), 5.

36. Correspondence USCR-UNHCR. Letter from Roger Winter, USCR, to Madame Sadako Ogata, UNHCR (dated July 30, 1997). Response by Sergio Vieira de Mello, UNHCR, to Roger Winter, USCR (dated August 15, 1997). Response by Roger Winter, USCR, to Sergio Vieira de Mello, UNHCR (dated September 5, 1997).

37. John Rogge, *Refugees: A Third World Dilemma* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowmann & Littlefield Publishers, 1987).

38. Stein, “*Table 1: Repatriation and Return 1975-1996.*”

39. This was done during my consultancy at UNHCR when I compiled the information from STAT1 forms and the comparison shows that USCR and Stein most likely did the same.

40. For more information, see Susanne Schmeidl, “The Neglected Majority? Demographic Information on Refugee Women and Children,” unpublished manuscript, 1998.

41. Schmeidl, “The Neglected Majority?”

42. The *1996 Statistical Overview* had a category for elder refugees age 60 and above. The data, however, are still scant.

43. Susanne Schmeidl, “Comparative trends in forced displacement,” 24-33.

44. Schmeidl, “Comparative trends in forced displacement.”

45. Schmeidl, “Comparative trends in forced displacement,” 33.

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## APPENDIX I

### PARTICIPANTS IN THE WORKSHOP

#### **Toward Understanding the Social Dimensions of Forced Migration: Practitioner Needs, Policy Sensitivities, and Social Science**

***Watson Institute for International Studies and  
the Population Studies and Training Center  
Brown University, April 23-24, 1999***

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Brown University

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## APPENDIX II

### ABOUT THE AUTHORS AND INSTITUTIONS

**Jeff Crisp** graduated in 1975 from the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, with a degree in international politics and history. He subsequently completed an M.Soc.Sc. and Ph.D. at the Centre of West African Studies, University of Birmingham. After working with the British Refugee Council and the Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, he joined UNHCR in 1987, where he has held the positions of public information officer, senior evaluation officer, and senior policy research officer. He has published widely on refugee, humanitarian, and development issues, as well as African affairs. His chapter is written in a personal capacity and does not represent the views of UNHCR.

**Stephen Lubkemann** is a post-doctoral fellow at the Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies and the Population Studies and Training Center at Brown University, and a consultant to the Humanitarianism and War Project. Trained as an anthropologist and demographer, he completed his Ph.D. on Mozambican refugee migration at Brown University in 1999. His research continues to focus on the long-term social and demographic effects of internal and international wartime displacement among both camp and undocumented migrants in Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Portugal. Most recently he has begun to work with displaced Liberians in the U.S.

**Larry Minear** is co-founder and, since September 1998, director of the Humanitarianism and War Project at Brown University. He has worked on humanitarian and development issues since 1972, when he directed a refugee resettlement program in the southern Sudan. From 1974 to 1991 he headed the advocacy office in Washington, D.C. of Church World Service and Lutheran World Relief. Over the years he has served as a consultant to United Nations organizations, governments, and NGOs. He has conducted research

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in many recent humanitarian emergencies and has written extensively for general and specialized audiences.

**Susanne Schmeidl**, a native of Germany, received her diploma in social work from the Evangelische Stiftungsfachhochschule für Sozialpädagogik (Nürnberg, Germany, 1987) and her M.A. and Ph.D. in sociology from Ohio State University. She worked at the Centre for Refugee Studies (York University, Canada) as a postdoctoral researcher (1995-1996), where she coordinated activities in prevention and early warning. She has also served as a consultant for the Food and Statistics Unit of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva. She has been active in the work of the International Studies Association in the area of ethnicity, nationalism, and migration. She currently works at the Swiss Peace Foundation's Institute for Conflict Resolution in Bern. Her research on forced migration and the early warning of humanitarian disasters has appeared in refereed journals and edited books.

**Marc Sommers** has worked on issues ranging from humanitarian coordination and civilian-military relations to the impact of war on children and youths. A research fellow at Boston University's African Studies Center, he has served as a consultant for a wide range of agencies, including Oxfam America, UNESCO, the UN Office of Humanitarian Affairs, the U.S. Department of Defense, and the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. His research has been supported by the Ford, Guggenheim, Mellon, and Rotary foundations. His forthcoming publications include *Fear in Bongoland: Burundi Refugees in Urban Tanzania* and a monograph on humanitarian coordination, to be published by the Humanitarianism and War Project at Brown University later this year.

**Thomas G. Weiss** is presidential professor at The Graduate Center of The City University of New York, where he is codirector of the United Nations Intellectual History Project and one of the editors of *Global Governance*. From 1990 to 1998 as a research professor at Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies, he also held a number of

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administrative assignments (director of the Global Security Program, associate dean of the faculty, associate director), served as the Executive Director of the Academic Council on the UN System, and co-directed the Humanitarianism and War Project. He has also served as executive director of the International Peace Academy, a member of the UN secretariat, and a consultant to several public and private agencies. His latest book is *Military-Civilian Interactions: Intervening in Humanitarian Crises* (1999).

### **The Humanitarianism and War Project**

**The Humanitarianism & War Project** is an independent policy research initiative underwritten by some 50 UN agencies, governments, NGOs, and foundations. Since its inception in 1991, it has conducted thousands of interviews in and on complex emergencies around the world, producing an array of case studies, handbooks and training materials, books, articles, and opinion pieces for a diverse audience of humanitarian practitioners, policy analysts, academics, and the general public.

The Project is currently examining the process of institutional learning and change among humanitarian organizations in the post-Cold War period. Recognizing that humanitarian agencies nowadays are not only in greater demand but are also experiencing greater difficulty in carrying out their tasks, the Project is highlighting innovative practices devised by individual agencies to address specific challenges.

Current research builds on case studies, both geographical (the Persian Gulf, Central America and the Caribbean, Cambodia, the former Yugoslavia, the Great Lakes Region, and the Caucasus) and thematic (the interface between humanitarian action and peacekeeping and the roles of the media and the military in the humanitarian sphere). Research is tailored to the expressed needs of humanitarian organizations, the primary constituency of the Project, and to generating materials designed for reflection and training

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purposes. Findings and recommendations are also being followed with interest by the project's other main constituencies: policymakers and academics.

Intergovernmental organizations that have contributed to the Project are the European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), International Organization for Migration, OECD Development Centre, UNDRO, DHA, OCHA, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNITAR, the UN Special Emergency Program for the Horn of Africa, UN Staff College, UN University, UN Volunteers, WFP, and WHO.

NGO contributors are the American Red Cross, CARE-US, Catholic Relief Services, Danish Refugee Council, International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development (Canada), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, International Orthodox Christian Charities, International Rescue Committee, Lutheran World Federation, Lutheran World Relief, Mennonite Central Committee (U.S.), Mennonite Central Committee (Canada), Mercy Corps International, the Nordic Red Cross Societies, Norwegian Refugee Council, Oxfam-UK, Save the Children-UK, Save the Children-US, Trócaire, and World Vision-US.

Project donors include the governments of Australia, Canada, France, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Generous support has also come from the Arias Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Fourth Freedom Forum, Gilman Foundation, MacArthur Foundation, McKnight Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Pew Charitable Trusts, Rockefeller Foundation, and the U.S. Institute of Peace.

The Project is an activity of Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies, which was established in 1986 to facilitate analysis of global problems and to develop initiatives to address them. Additional information about the Institute and the Project may be found at [http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson\\_Institute](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Watson_Institute).

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## The Population Studies and Training Center

The Population Studies and Training Center, a program in population studies at Brown University introduced in 1952, initially flourished as part of the course offerings of the Department of Sociology. As concern for population issues became widespread, a number of programs at Brown began incorporating a population component into their research and training activities. As a result, the Population Studies and Training Center (PSTC) was established in 1965 to promote and enhance research and training in population studies; to develop cooperative arrangements with departments that had incorporated a strong population component; and to coordinate activities with related cross-disciplinary programs. Academic departments began hiring faculty with population interests, bringing nationally known demographers to Brown as visiting faculty.

Multidisciplinary since its founding, the PSTC remained closely identified with the Department of Sociology until the late 1980s. The Department of Sociology served as the major source of active faculty associates in population studies and provided the departmental base for the graduate training program in demography. Although housed within Sociology, the PSTC has served as a substantive and administrative link for scholars in population studies with appointments outside of Sociology, becoming the campus focus for faculty and students interested in population studies. PSTC receives support from the National Institutes for Child Health and Human Development and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Areas of research include social demography, economic demography, anthropological demography, and population health. Additional information about PSTC may be found at <http://pstc3.pstc.brown.edu/>.