

**FOOD SECURITY IN REFUGE AND RETURN:
SOME ASPECTS OF ENTITLEMENTS, MARKETS AND MODALITIES**

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Development is about human beings. They need four things. First is water. It is the first thing needed to live. Without it a plant, an animal or a baby dies. Second is food. Without enough of it, life is miserable and short. Third, once water and food are won, is health - otherwise the human being becomes sick. Fourth is education, once a human being has water, food and health he needs to learn to open new horizons and unlock new possibilities. And there is a fifth - peace and order. Without those none of the four basic needs can be sustained.

- Somali Elder
Baidoa
September, 1995

**Reconstructing Livelihoods: Towards New Approaches to Resettlement
(2nd International Conference on Displacement and Resettlement
Refugee Studies Programme University of Oxford)
Christ Church, Oxford
September, 1996**

FOOD SECURITY IN REFUGEE* AND RETURN: SOME ASPECTS OF ENTITLEMENTS, MARKETS AND MODALITIES

I.

DISPLACED, DISEMPOWERED, DISTRESSED: FOOD INSECURITY IN CRISES

Food security and displaced persons is a more complex topic than it appears. Its aspects are rarely covered comprehensively in respect to all of the groups distressed by war (sometimes prettified into "complex political emergencies") or natural catastrophes (usually drought). Five main groups can be identified:

1. **international refugees** from catastrophes (manmade) and life threatening calamities (natural);
2. **domestic displacees** who differ from the first group by not having crossed an international frontier and by - as a result - receipt of much less average international support and attention;
3. **demobilisees** - ex combatants - basically analogous to the second cluster and rather less similar to other structural adjustment redeployees into livelihood insecurity (or absence);
4. **refugee impacted residents** - in areas swept over and into by very large numbers of refugees (or in principle displacees);
5. **'development displacees'** i.e. households turfed out to make way for projects ranging from dams and game parks through concessions/plantations to urban 'renewal' (or 'tidying up').

Not only are these five groups rarely considered or analysed together, action for/with them is usually uncoordinated. Academic work in most cases concentrates on one or two groups as does most applied research. The same is true of social and political conceptualisation and of government and international programming. In addition the interpenetration of household economic (including food) security, moral economy considerations and macro economic recovery and renewed development (food, GDP, fiscal and export) analysis and action is usually vestigial or absent. In the case of refugees short term survival dominates and links

* Refugees are throughout this paper defined in affected person and common sense perception terms, not those of international law. A refugee is a person forced by natural calamity or manmade catastrophe to flee from home whether or not that flight involves crossing an international boundary and whether or not the intolerable risk to life at home was political, military or climatic.

either to household or macro national post return political economic and economic strategies are usually notable by their absence. Reintegration into society/rehabilitation of livelihood for ex-combatants is often a low priority aspect of demobilisation totally walled off from other social and economic thrusts and refugee impacted community/household programming (especially at long term household, zonal and macro levels) unusual. Project displacees (like drought displacees) are created in non-war/postwar contexts but these displacements are particularly likely to lead to household food insecurity and to dangerous levels of socio political discontent.

In this paper refugees and displaced persons from both calamities and catastrophes are considered together and as central to overall displacement. The centrality turns on their greater numbers. Demobilisees, refugees impacted hosts and 'development displacees' are the subjects of separate sections. Food security (over time and by source) is linked to other necessities, to participation and governance and to gender in place of refuge, during and after return.

Return and return home are used in preference to resettlement unless that form of social engineering characterised by outside planned and imposed new settlements is dominant, as it often is in the case of development displacees and less generally for demobilised persons and war period rural displacees resettled in new plot/village security provided areas. It is also common in some countries in respect to ex-combatants, but tends to be suspect from its historic use to hold down newly conquered areas (e.g. by the Ethiopian New Empire from Tewedros and Menelik through Mengistu). Most internally displaced and international refugees do wish - quite literally - to return home. Even of those who do not (perhaps 20%) self selected new areas whether as households or mini-communities are preferred by most to government/donor picked and designed new settlements(not least because the latter raise negative memories of 'secure villages' which were among the tactics of coercive control and/or proved to be very insecure indeed).

Of necessity the presentation is at a relatively general level but seeks to stress the **critical nature of contexts in strategic design and articulation as well as in refuge and return food security and livelihood empowerment and support**. To suppose that the political realities of participation in Rwanda refugee camps resemble those in former Namibian camps or that the mechanics of return for Rwandais Hutu refugees under Interhamwe (genocide provider) control to present Tutsi governed Rwanda can usefully resemble those of return of Mozambican refugees to Mozambique in a context in which Maputo wished to be a "government of all the people" and almost all Mozambicans were unwilling to fight again, would be the beginning (and rather more than the beginning) of unwisdom.

In describing institutions, policies and known dynamics there is a danger of overlooking four facts:

- a. 80% to 90% of return is usually household or community self help (whether of refugees or of displaced persons);
- b. a significant number of refugees are living in communities with family and broader kinship ties and are not recorded;
- c. cross flows into and out of refuge frequently characterise war situations as rural security (especially for food production) ebbs and flows differentially by areas with wide swings around any trend and indeed often with no discernible trend until well after the event;
- d. household livelihoods in camps are frequently substantially more complex than receiving food and other items and sometimes - as a result - much larger implying that commerce with host areas is near ubiquitous and often significant.

II.

PARAMETRIC CONCERNS: LIFE, LIVELIHOOD, GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Food security for refugees and returnees is not a simple dichotomy of physical provision of rations in refuge and of growing for household provisioning on return nor does a schematisation of survival in place of refuge and development on return home or resettlement clarify as much as it obscures.

Staying alive is the first priority of food security as perceived by households and, at least verbally, by governments, international organisations and aid agencies. That is correct - for the dead (of famine, lack of water, exhaustion, sickness or other aspects of war and flight) there can be no temporal future in refuge, no resettlement, no return home.

Rebuilding livelihoods follows once survival is assured. But there is no reason to set the initial time for this as necessarily that of return. Indeed to do so is likely to impede the process of return and of livelihood rehabilitation.

Physical availability is the first condition for food security. It is likely to be crucial in places of refuge (initially for logistical and throughout for financial reasons). However, it may be equally problematic during the early stages of return unless a "refugee friendly" mode of return is adopted - not usually once for all whole family shifts unless a detailed arrival area food safety net (or "wages fund") is in place.

Entitlement in respect to rations means meeting external registration or estimation criteria to 'prove' existence and - sometimes - socio political acceptability to internal refugee governance groups. Thereafter - in refuge as in return - it also relates to growing crops/collecting fuel for household self-provisioning or for sale, to food for work and to work for wages for food programmes. In practice, these interact with ration and other goods entitlements because the - inevitable - partial mismatch of those with needs and preferences inevitably (and usually desirably) leads to two-way trade, including food and often labour, with neighbouring communities.

The distinction **in refuge** and **during/after return (or resettlement)** is not unreal even if it is a very broad brush categorisation. A camp - or even a less formal set of arrangements - is not perceived as permanent. Even with the best will by all involved (including hosts) and adequate resources, neither of which can be assumed, a place of refuge affords limited opportunities for sustainable livelihood, food production, self-organisation/participation/governance rebuilding. "Help them grow food not hate and build new lives not plots" is sound advice - especially when resettlement, not return, is the plausible long (a decade or more) prospective. But in camps it has distinct limitations - as seen in the UNHCR and post refugee status phases of the 1959-60 Rwanda's Tutsi community in Tanzania which necessarily involved villagisation plus social, economic and legal (citizenship) integration - a solution very few SSA countries have been willing to envisage on a large scale and as a formal process. **Within return**, the **during** phase has elements rather more analogous to in refuge than to post return (crop harvested/home rebuilt/some services and local infrastructure restored).

KNOWLEDGE, LOGISTICS, PROCUREMENT: SECURITY OF FOOD SUPPLY

To provide food security for displacees including both calamity and catastrophe impacted households requires **knowledge** of who is, or is about to become, food deprived and to move where whether the move caused the food security loss or vice versa. To know how much food to procure and where to move it by when requires that knowledge.

From this fact flows the importance of **early warning systems** providing analysis - from meteorological and ground level crop, household food supply, social and (in catastrophe cases) political data - on probable food shortfalls, possible uses of home village distribution to avert displacement (the optimal drought solution if water is accessible at home) and probable

displacement from where to where. In this area substantial experience has been built up nationally throughout SSA and also regionally in the case of SADCC's Food Security Unit which centralises, analyses, reports on, mobilises response to national system results.

Early warning systems are most effective in a context of accessible physical national food stocks (whether state or enterprise held) and of finance to handle emergency distribution and commercial imports until external finance, procurement and shipment can - if necessary - be mobilised because that process rarely takes less than ten months from initial early warning reports to external food reaching outlying impacted household cooking pots. Lest that time assessment be viewed as hysterically exaggerated, it is a fact that Zimbabwe's early warning system went red in November 1991 and initial commercial import orders were placed then; FAO/WFP - under pressure - moved an assessment mission to March/April 1992; a joint UN-SADCC pledging conference (and detailed SADCC-Donor discussions on logistics) was held in June 1992 and food aid reached much of rural Zimbabwe in September 1992. Yet the Southern African 1991/1993 great drought/dearth response is considered (with some reason) to be an example of rapid, coordinated, adequate response to relatively well documented and early warnings.

In fact the problem today is **not so much that early warning systems do not warn but that they are often not responded to adequately or timeously**. One reason is clear. To be adequate in providing response time a system must flash at least an amber light so early that late rainfall and temperature patterns can reduce a wipe-out to a lean year (or even an average harvest), as happened in parts of Central and Northern Mozambique and Southern and Northern Tanzania in 1992. To react early risks wasting resources; to react somewhat late (forcing shortcutting on procurement and in extreme cases airlifting in logistics) also wastes some resources; to react late (when disaster is assured or even visible in food intake) guarantees wasting lives. If losing \$200,000 is a lesser loss than 1,000 tonnes of delivered maize (which could be put into a rolling quick response reserve) and still less serious than 10,000 lives, **early** response is prudent. Given the macroeconomic costs of dislocation and death even hard headed macro economists might logically accept this ranking.

Linked to hesitancy to cry "drought disaster" until too late is the absence of **early response mechanisms** that could take initial steps on amber lights which would save time, money and lives if the lights went red but cost little if they stayed mild amber or reverted to green. Botswana's interministerial coordination mechanism (headed by a full time Deputy Secretary in Finance) and its liaison with external actors as well as SADCC illustrates what can be - but rarely is - done. A catastrophe analogue existed - effectively for a time - in Mozambique under Deputy Minister/UNDP co-chairmanship. In these contexts planning plus mobilising pledges, working out tentative procurement and logistics, speeding up non crisis "in pipeline"

flows can be carried out at relatively limited cost. If initial shipments need to be set in train before certainty of need exists, these can either be put into rolling reserves for early (or isolated drought pocket) use or absorbed back by slowing down normal pipeline flows.

In addition such coordination structures might reduce the agency and donor suspicion (not always wrong) of SSA data that forces multiple rechecks and delays action. In the Southern African case for over half the countries initial data was available in November and reasonably full data - plus a SADCC Food Security analysis for the region - by February. The FAO/WFP March-April Mission virtually totally endorsed these sources' numbers and analysis. Luckily the donor representatives who even then wanted their own restudies were not backed by their capitals. Regular contact (quarterly even if no drought) of domestic and external actors could lead to greater confidence in domestic data (and technical assistance to its collectors and analysts) and a standby WFP-FAO-UNICEF survey/confirmation mission capacity allowing 60 day response to amber lights by serious national and regional warning systems.

Catastrophe early warning is inherently problematic but not quite so problematic as it might appear at first glance. How many Rwanda refugees there would be in 1994 was not clear until they came. That there would be very large numbers to Tanzania, Burundi and Zaire however was certain two to four weeks earlier when the assassination of the Rwanda President returning from potentially successful (so his assassins feared) peace talks led both to genocide by extremist Hutu leaders and to an unstoppable advance by the (Tutsi) RPA which had initially invaded in 1990 and could clearly defeat the then Rwanda official army. From early 1990 the strength of the RPA militarily, their goal of regaining the hegemony the Tutsi establishment lost in the 1969-70 jacquerie, the weakness of the moderate Hutu forces seeking a settlement and the vacillation of the President (backing both serious incorporationist proposals and calls to - though not implementation of - genocide at the same time) certainly gave a clear amber light. Agency-donor-potential host coordination on contingency planning in same detail (as well as more preventive diplomacy) would have been prudent. While Rwanda gave more of an early warning than most **new** catastrophes, ongoing ones do afford time to plan how to respond to likely/potential new flows. Insight and process not information, time - or even funding - appear to be the main gaps.

Logistics differ significantly between calamity and catastrophe cases as well as within both. Among the factors are:

- a. **location** of displacee persons - peripheral and at the end of weak transport links or more readily accessible? Catastrophe victims - on the whole - are in more inaccessible areas although these who have fled to the environs of secure towns (as on the Mozambique coast) may be exceptions;

- b. **security** of handling and transport against pilferage (or worse) in ports and en route and in catastrophe cases against the violence that caused the displacement since food relief convoys are only occasionally accepted to be "zones of peace". Pilferage escalates to very high levels - on occasion over 50% from arrival to displacement when all the handling chain from stevedores through hauliers, guards and clerks and their families are themselves in severe food insecurity/inadequacy either because the only flows are relief grain (e.g. parts of rural Mozambique in mid to late 1980's) or because catastrophically inadequate pay disentitles them to food even though it is physically available (e.g. more generally in mid 1980's through early 1990's Mozambique). In such cases the delivery exercise bears a distinct resemblance to trying to carry water in a litre tin with the bottom rusted out. Only either a broader food and entitlement supply system, or food ration payments to all the low income workers in the food aid logistical chain, can reduce losses to single digit levels;
- c. availability of **transport** (public or private) in both cost and physical terms. Procuring vehicles is likely to take longer than procuring grain and setting up new operating units longer than either. Private operators (without unconditional war risk cover including prompt vehicle replacement - rarely if ever provided albeit proposed in Mozambique) are unlikely to be willing to carry cargo on highly risky routes although they may - at a price - also be able to 'negotiate' their way across combat zones (e.g. commercial grain trade in Tete from 1988 through 1992);
- d. pre-existing **capacity** and **experience** in respect to response to calamities and catastrophes in the past including communication and liaison networks, vehicles, physical, and financial stocks, coordination links among governments - domestic social sector - NGO's - donors. These vary widely even among countries where they might be expected to be similar e.g. in the great 1991-2 Southern African drought and 1992-3 dearth the Botswana and Tanzania systems (except for stocks in the Tanzania case) were in good working order; the Zimbabwe one - after its initial atrophy was revealed - rapidly revived but Zambia and Swaziland had very little institutional capacity or experience, requiring rapid patchwork 'jobs to secure functional networks;
- e. **warning time** determines how well prepared - or how Jerry built (or West African lashup job - logistics can be. Dearth following drought should have (6 to 9 months warning; mass movements of refugees from war rarely does and keeping capacity to hand for all potential areas of sudden flow is impracticable;
- f. availability of **stocks** (public or private) and **pipelines** (commercial or aid) to be used until resource and food mobilisation (national, NGO, donor or mixed) can replace them is crucial to having food in the hands of hungry displaced people - even commercial orders

for landlocked African countries (e.g. Botswana) often require six months from global market order placing to arrival in country and rather more to users especially if up country distribution systems are insecure;

g. **politics** play a major role in logistics for military and control as well as ideological reasons.

The last point requires expansion because there is a **myth that food aid can be apolitical** and that **logistics are purely technical**. Humanitarian concern, desire to avert unrest, treating famine as a matter of national dishonour and averting it as a strategic priority (or an element in baseline good housekeeping) are political. The fatalism in the face of, and low priority to averting or even mitigating, it which characterised the New Empire in Ethiopia; the cynical appearance of concern to raise external resources and facilitate population movement to drain rebel areas by the Last Emperor (Comrade Ras Mengistu); the firm declaration that averting famine is a matter of national honour backed by priority allocations of personnel, attention and resources by the present government are equally political even if ones normative judgements on the three political stances may be very different.

In time of war **access to food** (for troops and key supporters) is one of the **sinews of war**. Therefore the logistics of who gets food where and how are not purely technical. The political and public relations concerns of "starve them out" versus "let all civilians eat" - qualified in the latter case by the fact that feeding civilians but not troops is not practicable whatever the stated conditions - are real and have logistical implications. Governments vary on this choice - Mozambique fairly consistently accepted in principle food delivery to civilians under Renamo control if most of the food reached them and it allowed ICRC deliveries even though most of the food went to Renamo troops; Angola's government has been much more hesitant. Insurgents usually do try to starve out the state but may agree to corridors of food aid to isolated towns even at the price of lengthening their holdout - e.g. the Eritrean Liberation Movement albeit when the war against Mengistu had entered end game.

Much of the politics of refugee and displacee support is the **politics of control** rather than of ideology in a more standard sense. For example in Mozambique USAID wanted a centralised state lorry fleet managed by an autonomous CARE junta; the government wanted to contract private and parastatal hauliers and to run its own logistical management with computer and systems support including a handful of seconded personnel. The unifying theme in parallel channel - whether donor or foreign NGO - is control but there are four ideologies under that umbrella. The up front ones are **strengthening domestic civil society** (not always well served by sidelining the government and very rarely using/building up domestic social sector institutions as channels) and **increasing efficiency** in terms of food reaching the hungry (even if at the expense of fragmenting information flows and coordination and decapacitating government institutions so that in the process becomes self justifying - or addictive). Two