REFUGEES, DISPLACED PEOPLE AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS
CHANGING THE FACE OF DEVELOPMENT1

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Introduction

The last two decades have seen a proliferation of civil wars and bloody conflicts that have spilled over the borders of nation-states in most regions of the world. The origins of these conflicts, their impacts and consequences are varied and complex. Each requires specific investigations in its particular context. However, there are some similarities in their impacts and consequences that when examined can assist us in thinking about possible alternative agendas for development that combine with strategies for political reconciliation. The following reflections are concerned with addressing these issues and should be seen as a work-in-progress to stimulate some debate towards new development strategies.

In this presentation I am pursuing two areas of reflection concerning the limitations of development strategies, both of which result from my observations of armed conflicts: one is what happens to refugees, displaced persons and the diaspora (including, international migrants) and the other is what happens to the nation-state as it attempts to reconstruct and reconcile to prevent further conflict. In both areas of reflection, any form of conventional development models or strategies appear questionable and may even worsen the situation. For the purposes of this presentation, I am going to take most of my examples from the objective conditions prevailing in the Great Lakes region where I have been conducting research since 1987. I shall also use examples from the Sudanese conflict which borders Uganda in the North and has been the source of continued instability and fear, creating the largest numbers of refugees in Uganda at this time.

When first thinking about this presentation, I was struck by the similarity of experiences between Rwandan refugees hosted over several decades in Uganda and those of Palestinians in refugees camps in Lebanon. Both have had a long 30 year history in precarious conditions What preoccupied me most was: how can we ensure rights and entitlements for people in these situations, especially where they are hosted by a less than welcoming state? And embedded in the question is the dilemma of how does one do this while continuing to address the resolution to the conflicts in their countries of origin? In my analysis, there are other contradictions, such as the fact, as revealed in the case of Rwandan refugees after the 1994 genocide, that not all "refugees" are worthy.

I - Points of Concern

However, let me set out three areas of concern emanating from my reflections which are all quite inter-related: the first is what we could term "people-centred concerns"; secondly, nation-states hosting refugees and the thirdly, the nation-state reconstructing with the return of refugees.

A - People-centred Concerns

Here I am referring to refugees, displaced persons and international migrants. Refugees are people having to flee their country of origin to a neighbouring country in their region or elsewhere. My focus is on refugees remaining in their region which is increasingly the plight of the greatest number of refugees. Displaced persons are those who have had to move from one area of their country to another due to conflict. The greatest number of displaced persons in the world is in the Sudan where of a population of 25 million, an estimated five million are displaced (U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1998). International migrants

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involve those who leave their country of origin to seek employment elsewhere, often in precarious conditions. [2]

B - Nation-states Hosting Refugees

Often the nation-states that host refugees do so unwillingly and if one traces the evolution of response to refugees from a particular country to another, there will be contradictory evidence. Rwandans in Uganda represent such evidence over the more than three decades they have sought refuge in that country, a country that was itself suffering from instability and violent conflict.

C - Nation-states Reconstructing with the Return of Refugees

The third point of concern for me was to think about the dynamics of refugees returning to their country of origin and participating in a near collapsed state as it attempts political reconciliation and economic reconstruction. One of the most interesting and important recent books illuminating these issues comes from the work of the team examining this situation in Guatemala (see North and Simmons, 1999). In the case of Rwanda, refugees — recent and old, from the region and the diaspora — began returning to their country in 1994 to a situation of unresolved conflict and a state struggling to reconstruct. The complementary issues of continued emergency relief, reconstruction and development need to be simultaneously addressed.

II - Global Context

Let me now set the global context in which I am situating my reflections. War, internal armed conflicts and even genocide are increasingly threatening any form of development in the poorer regions of the world. At present there are 31 conflicts or countries at war worldwide, only two of which are between opposing states (India-Pakistan and Ethiopia-Eritrea).

The major sites of most armed conflicts continue to take place not in Western Europe or North America, certainly not in the wealthier "developed" countries, but rather in the regions of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East where 2/3 of the world's population reside. Conversely however the manufacture and trade of weapons, particularly small and medium-size arms, conventional legal arms which fuel most of these conflicts are primarily from North America and European companies. These implications of our global interdependence must not be overlooked. Our economic prosperity is inversely connected to the growing impoverishment of countries in the South.

The end of the Cold War at first appeared to appease certain conflicts, such as those in Central America. However, most political accords or agreements made in the early 1990s remain fragile. Recent reports of continued assaults in both Guatemala and El Salvador attest to this. As well, the continued economic liberalization policies accepted by most countries have brought out latent political and ethnic conflicts. While the causes of these conflicts are many and varied, the structural adjustment policies of the IMF/World Bank are surely a significant contributing factor.[3]

Meredeth Turshen (1998) goes so far as to state that:

> (…) the policies of the international financial institutions, notably the
> International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, which have
> weakened African states and helped create power vacuums, have contributed

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[2] See Van Hear, 1998 and Harris, 1995 for a fuller exploration of the new features and new forces of this global migrant phenomenon.

[3] In Rwanda in the late 1980s and early 1990s on the eve of the genocide, Michel Chossudovsky, 1997 documents the IMF/World Bank complicity to that 1994 tragedy.

to the rise of conflict. By imposing financial austerity and structural adjustment programs that shackle the state as provider, the international financial institutions have undermined the ability of legitimate African states to govern and respond to people's needs (Turshen, 1998: 4).

We also know that poverty and growing disparities between the rich and poor do contribute to conflict. Based on the Human Development Reports, the income disparity has seen enormous acceleration: in the 1960s, the richest 20% earned 30 times the income of the poorest 20%; in the 1980s, the ratio was 50:1 and in the 1990s, 70:1 with 1997 recording 74:1.

Movements of people have always been part of human history. But those forced to flee are increasing, particularly in larger numbers from war-torn states into nearby countries of the regions. The total population living outside their country of origin was 75 million in 1965, 100 million in early 1990s and is about 135 million at the end of the century. This figure includes labour migrants and refugees but not displaced persons. There are approximately 20-25 million internally displaced persons (IDP) in all regions of the world, but roughly half are in Africa. The largest number of IDP in the world is in Sudan where there are approximately four to five million displaced persons.

The question arises of whether these conflicts are inherent to the development process itself, since development implies social change and the emergence of a new situation affecting relations between groups and the relationship between people and their environment. In other words, are the dominant development strategies making the situations of conflict worse?

III - Questionable "Development"

At the present time, the dominant development paradigm is contained in the neo-liberal ideology which imposes structural adjustment policies on nation-states and among other things, stresses the building of civil society as opposed to helping consolidate the state. In fact, Leys (1996) reminds us that "neo-liberalism has a deep ideological hostility to government in general and state intervention" or regulation. He goes on to state that no state can pursue any economic policy that the owners of capital seriously dislike. Forms of economic activity and growth are encouraged that do little to reduce poverty and in particular to help the main victims of conflict. Donor agencies have made a "fetish of elections" and "overemphasis on human rights issues" which are conceived as technical solutions to complex political processes underlying conflict (Allen, 1999).

While donor focus has shifted from development to prevention and peace building, concerted development efforts are still needed. By that I mean when donors are considering development strategies as a state begins its reconstruction stage following the cessation of conflict as is the case of Rwanda, different considerations and understanding are required.

> One of the most extraordinary aspects of the period after the Rwandan massacres and the French intervention known as "Operation Turquoise" was the pattern of funding provided by the "donor community". Far more went to support refugees in the camps in the then Zaire than went to the new RPF government in Kigali, which was instead instructed to begin servicing the debt of its murderous predecessor. Inevitably the spending on refugees sustained the Interahamwe and ex-FAR groupings that controlled the major camps, and provided political and financial benefits for the Zairean government and for Mobutu (Allen, 1999: 321).

What we also saw and continue to see in the situation is that "humanitarian agencies involvement damages the search for local solutions" and can often fuel the conflict as happened in the case of Rwanda. The

regional involvement in the armed conflict in the DRC in 1996/1997 has its roots also in the inadequate development relief efforts of NGOs and agencies who inadvertently were supporting those Interahamwe and ex-FAR who hid in the refugee camps. Again, it is this sense that solutions even to complex political emergencies are treated as technical and there is little or no understanding of the politics of conflict in the region.

Partnerships and solidarity activities are important dimensions in all development work. This approach may be slow and necessitates making visits to refugee camps, war-torn areas and exchanging with people and groups on their terrain. While information can be gleaned from Internet and other sources, there is no substitute for actually "grounding" with those in the field. It strengthens points of solidarity, validates the work being done on the ground and provides an opportunity for sharing ideas with more nuanced understanding and learning.

IV - Refugees and Development

In its origins, treatment of refugees was to be a stop-gap approach until they could be repatriated or integrated. In fact, when the office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1951, there was an attempt to curb any programs of material assistance and try "to facilitate the voluntary repatriation of such refugees or their assimilation within new national communities". They did not want any "direct responsibility for the material welfare of the refugees". Gradually however more development-oriented approaches are being pursued. Although these programs face many difficulties, particularly those related to assisting displaced people, they present attempts to go beyond simply transit camps or emergency responses, to include three main policies: settlement camps, special integration policies and self-reliance strategies.

One of the dilemmas of these approaches designed to give better conditions and provide livelihoods for refugees, is the following: if refugees and displaced persons are made more secure in these new settlement situations, i.e. if we adopt more of a "developmental approach", do we remove the urgency from resolving the roots of the conflict that produced these refugees or displaced persons? Do we undermine legitimate negotiating space of the nation-state or of the refugees themselves? Will they simply be relocated or prefer to relocate permanently? And if they do, is that to be encouraged? All of these questions raise issues around rights and entitlements through place of origin or place of residence. Citizenship is usually what grants persons rights and entitlements. Can we find other ways to accommodate rights and entitlements?

Massive arrivals of refugees in some of the poorest countries already struggling with their own severe problems are bound to present new problems. Approximately 90% of refugees come from the poorer countries and will remain in those regions. Such a situation continues to upset donor's conventional development plans. They "need to be aware and to address the effects that refugees can have on the host countries. Similarly, as refugee bodies pursue emergency and long-term assistance to refugees, they need to understand how theses resources, as well as the presence of the refugee population, affect the local or regional economies." (Gorman, 1993: 156)

While exploring the issues concerning refugees, displaced persons and international migrants, my examples are taken in this presentation primarily from the situation of Rwandans in Uganda and then what happens upon their return. However, many parallels in these complicated and long-standing dispute processes can be demonstrated when viewing other situations, such as Palestinian refugees in Lebanon or refugees in Central America. A major unresolved issue in the talks towards political resolution between Israel and the Palestinian Authority relates to refugee resettlement. In 1993, officials discussed a proposal to transfer Palestinian refugees in Lebanon to Iraq which would grant them full citizenship in exchange for lifting sanctions. Another proposal has them transferred to the Arabian Gulf monarchies. However, such

relocation does not officially sit well with those who are committed to the refugees' "right of return" to areas within Israel and the occupied territories. Another option discussed is naturalizing most Palestinians within Lebanon itself in exchange for economic aid which also would not gain much approval or acceptance from Lebanon's political class. As is well known, the right to work or to full livelihood for Palestinian refugees is severely restricted in Lebanon at this time. Furthermore, it is significant that the major Palestinian political groups in Lebanon oppose naturalization within Lebanon or resettlement elsewhere.

Other more recent proposals for settling the Palestinian refugees questions have focused on monetary compensation for all refugees and only a small number would be allowed to return to their "homes" in Israel proper. A limited number would be allowed under this proposal to return to the occupied territories. For the most part, however, these proposals have not dealt with the crux of problem which is allowing full repatriation of the Palestinian refugees. For a fuller discussion of these issues, see Khalidi, 1994; Tamari, 1996; and Zureik, 1996.

V - Rwandan Refugees in Uganda

Uganda, one of the poorest countries in Africa with a long history of conflict, has been the host to numerous refugees over the years, most notably from Rwanda and from Sudan. Presently, the largest number of refugees in Uganda are from the Sudan. At the end of August, the total refugee population in Uganda was 211,242 (103,866 female, 107,376 male) of which 90% are Sudanese. The rest are from the DRC (8,968), Rwanda (8,638), Somali (1,075), Kenya (82), Ethiopia (47) and others (25, including one Nigerian).[4]

Uganda's relationship with Rwanda is long and complex. What is important to understand is that the first wave of Rwandan refugees came to Uganda in the early 1960s, following the massacres at that time. By 1992, there were eight refugee settlements in the western part of Uganda. Over the years, these refugees made different choices: some changed their names and tried to integrate into Ugandan society; others even after 30 years felt unaccepted and remained in the settlements. Still others grew up and left Uganda for other parts of the world to become part of the Rwandan diaspora. Their relationship with the host country and people was never very easy: from time to time, they were victimized, especially between 1981-1985 under Obote II as they were thought to be siding with the NRA. Many soldiers of the NRA did indeed come from the Rwandan refugee community; some had even become highly placed officers. While over 200,000 had fled to Uganda from 1960 to 1992, they have always met with varying degrees of tolerance. Approximately 300,000 or so were settled in other countries in the region.

To some extent, the discrimination that the Rwandan refugees faced in Uganda in 1990 played a role in their decision to invade Rwanda in October 1990. After having lived in Uganda since childhood and many having fought in the civil war in the 1980s to help liberate Uganda, they were now being redefined as "foreigners" and called "aliens" during a special parliamentary debate in August 1990 (discussed more fully in Boyd, 1994). Other factors involved the partial solution that the Ugandan government was negotiating in 1990 for the repatriation of refugees to Rwanda. The NRM/NRA government was attempting a "workable solution" to resettling the Rwandans from Uganda peacefully in their homeland. Later, Uganda was a participant in the Arusha Peace Accords of 1993 which also dealt with the rights of the return of refugees and the settlement of displaced persons. Among the many provisions, its Section 1 of Chapter 1 outlines seven basic principles, including "making lands available" (Art. 3), the "right to repossess their property on return" and "the principle of dual citizenship".

Rwandans in the diaspora, beyond the region, wanted to return to Rwanda not through passive repatriation organized by others where they would be obliged to "reintegrate' into the status quo which

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[4] These statistics were obtained from office of UNHCR, Kampala in September 2000.

required ethnic identity cards and restricted their full participation as citizens. They wanted their return to be a self-organized and collective act where they would be able to participate in transforming their conflict-ridden society. Such was the thrust of the Protocols signed in Arusha on 9 June 1993, negotiated between the RPF and the Rwandan Government and which formed part of the overall Arusha Peace Agreement. The series of protocols and final peace agreement continue to be the basis of reconstructing the Rwandan polity unless through time they are inappropriate.

According to Payne, "settlement programmes, in contrast to transit camps, seek to provide an opportunity for refugees to become more independent, by giving them a chance to develop their own livelihoods, and integrating them within the official structures and systems of the host population" (Payne, 1998: 1). However, in the case of Rwandans in Uganda, especially at the critical moment in 1990, such was not the case. As Uganda pursued its reconstruction, it became increasingly difficult for Rwandan refugees to gain citizenship. The 1995 Constitution which, though heralded for its many forward-looking considerations, made birth of a grandparent in Uganda a condition of citizenship, a condition that most Rwandans would not fulfill.

Following the cessation of the 1994 genocide, Rwandans are slowly returning to their country of origin. Here they find an extremely poor country attempting to reconstruct, similar to what Uganda faced after their protracted civil war when the NRM/NRA took power in 1986. Poverty, drought and a near collapsed state are part of the objective conditions. However, Rwanda has additional features that require specific understanding. The most notable are the legacy of genocide with its trials, mistrust and agenda for reconciliation, the continued internal insurgency, the rise of HIV/AIDs and other unforeseen problems, the insecurity related to external organized insurgency using countries in the region as their base (for example, the ex-FAR and Interhamwe in the DRC) and the caution or hesitancy towards the RPF as a military regime with limited legitimacy.

Conclusion

In focusing on refugees and displaced persons in the Great Lakes region, I have attempted to illustrate how issues of refugees, poverty and real development are all interlinked. As stated in my opening remarks, few development models or strategies address the new situation of increased refugees and displaced persons faced by many regions of the developing world where nation-states are engaged in continuous conflict and war. While the nation-states weaken and regions grow increasingly unstable from poverty and war, some suggestions for debate follow from my reflections:

- Nation-states must be viewed in their regional contexts and seen as in continual transition; resolutions to violent conflicts must involve refugees and displaced persons as a central part of an on-going negotiation process.

- A regional approach to development should be complementary to assistance to nation-states in order to strengthened regional cooperation and avert continued regional instability.

- Relevant institutions should find a way to develop universally recognized resident status in order that rights and entitlements of refugees and/or displaced persons can be assured.

- We must recognize that development is about politics and people, not technical 'fix-it' solutions; emergency aid packages can often hinder rather than help conflict situations.

- Finally, in acknowledging that the task at hand involves political choices for

people-centred development, we must address whom development is for, to accomplish what ends and that it requires constant reassessment in different contexts.

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