



CANADA'S PERIODICAL ON REFUGEES
REFUGEE

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SPECIAL ISSUE ON MOZAMBICAN REFUGEES

Mozambican Refugees and International Assistance

This issue of *Refuge* focuses on one of the largest and most tragic and complex refugee populations in Africa, the Mozambicans. Over a year ago, the Centre for Refugee Studies, together with the Government of Malawi, organized one of its most ambitious conferences to date to discuss durable solutions to the Mozambican refugee crisis in Malawi and the other asylum states. The conference, *First Country of Asylum and Development Aid*, was held in Blantyre, Malawi from June 8-12, 1992. It attracted a diverse delegation of academics and practitioners from the surrounding region, as well as Canada, the USA and Europe. As a forum for those concerned and working with Mozambican refugees in the various countries of first asylum, the meeting was highly successful. However, the complexity and magnitude of the issues discussed were such that there were clearly no easy solutions. In the end, many left feeling frustrated from the process, and impotent to address the enormous and seemingly impossible challenges of pursuing a developmental approach to refugee assistance, ameliorating the burden to

host countries, preparing for the return of 1.5 million refugees and 3.5 million internally displaced (see Table 1a), and re-integrating the displaced and the former military elements into a

country destroyed by over a decade of civil war.

The following year brought a number of events which gave room for unprecedented optimism. Interna-

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REFUGE

YORK LANE PRESS
Centre for Refugee Studies
Suite 551, York Lane
York University
4700 Keele Street, North York
Ontario, Canada M3J 1P3
Phone (416) 736-5963 • Fax (416) 734-9337
Internet: M3J via World Wide Web
WWW.CS.YORU.EDU

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Editor

C. Michael Lemmon

Book Review Editor

Ian Smith

Assistant Editors

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tional assistance was able to avert the major famine that had been predicted following the failed 1991-92 rainy season of southern Africa. South Africa continued along its shaky road towards dismantling apartheid. Angola held elections (although peace was short-lived). Perhaps most amazingly, the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO) and the ruling Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO) signed a Peace Accord in Rome on October 4, 1992, ending a 16 year civil war which took up to a million lives and reduced Mozambique to its present status as the poorest nation in the world.

On December 16, 1992, the UN Security Council pledged 7,500 UN troops and over US \$300 million to assist the peace process in Mozambique. It was an encouraging start. However, the United Nations Operations in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) has met with a number of delays and problems in the implementation of the peace process. The main delay was in the deployment of UN troops, which did not reach their current number of 6,505 until June of this year. Demobilization has been fraught with difficulties, mainly due to the continued stalling tactics of RENAMO's leader, Afonso Dhlakama, as he attempts to extract the maximum material wealth from the peace process and at the same time redefine RENAMO's new role as a legitimate member of the emerging Mozambican polity. Elections have already been postponed by a full year to October 1994 and the continued inability of FRELIMO, RENAMO and the so-called "group of eight unarmed political parties" to agree on the new electoral laws threatens to lead to further delays. The training of former RENAMO and FRELIMO army officers who will serve as the core officers for a new unified army to be in place by September 1994, however, has finally begun in the British training centre of Nyanga, Zimbabwe.

The next two years will be the most difficult test of the resolve and commitment of the UN and the international community towards peace and

democracy in Mozambique and indeed all of southern Africa. The continued success of ONUMOZ depends on an unwavering commitment of troops and development funds in order to oversee the transition to a peaceful and demilitarized Mozambique. The alternative is another Angola or Somalia. Unlike Somalia, Mozambique still has a functioning government with popular support. It is imperative to preserve and nourish this fragile political infrastructure.

Repatriation, Re-integration and Reconstruction

With tentative peace in place and less than one year remaining before the elections, refugees have begun returning to Mozambique. It is expected that the greatest return will have occurred by the end of this month, as September/October marks the beginning of another agricultural season. However, Mozambicans have been returning in significant numbers since the signing of the Peace Accord on October 4, 1992. The whole repatriation process has been characterized by a lack of current and reliable information, a situation in which the UNHCR in particular finds it difficult to operate. As of July of this year, 234,000 returnees had been registered by the UNHCR in Mozambique, most of them leaving Malawi and returning to Angonia district in Tete. Demining has already begun in Tete, and in Manica province roads are being repaired and agriculture re-established.

In this special issue, Malawian researcher Lewis Dzimbiri raises some important issues concerning the sovereignty and obligations of politically and economically weak host countries who have to shoulder heavy burdens in hosting a refugee population. Dzimbiri discusses the political and economic costs and benefits of hosting a large refugee population.

In my article, I have attempted to explain the integration or marginalization of refugees into host societies as a function of their access rights to land and natural resources of the host country. It is argued that refugee camps

work against integration and sustainable management of the host environment by segregating the host and refugee population and thereby creating conflict and competition over land and forest resources. The alternative of fostering integration by supporting indigenous relief efforts and facilitating more equitable access to the host population's resources has not been attempted.

Violet Bonga argues that in countries of asylum with limited resources like Malawi, refugee aid should be combined with developmental ap-

proaches aimed at increasing the long term agricultural potential of the host country. While meeting local refugee needs, such an approach could also provide the resources and impetus for mobilizing international support for economic development within the host country.

Agnès Callamard analyses the food assistance program, underlining the current problems facing the repatriation and reconstruction program for Mozambicans. She highlights some of the inherent imbalances at the local, regional and international levels which foster abuse within the food distribution system and, in the face of spontaneous unplanned repatriation, create tremendous volatility.

J.A.R. Wembah-Rashid discusses the cultural problems faced by return-

refugees in this remote part of rural Zambia. Commonly heralded as one of the success stories of UNHCR sponsored refugee settlements, Ukwimi has received attention from numerous refugee scholars. However, Lassailly-Jacob points out that the settlement has reduced the availability of valuable wild resources to the local population and has generated considerable conflict over scarce land. She points out that the host population is not only resentful of the degree of assistance and subsidized or free agricultural inputs provided to the refugee population, but this conflict has been fostered by the refugee-centred policies of the assisting agencies themselves.

The special issue highlights the fact that refugee assistance remains an ad hoc international response to local

**Table 1
Refugees in Southern Africa***

Table 1a: Mozambican Refugees in Surrounding Asylum Countries

Malawi	905,500 **
Zimbabwe	264,000
South Africa	250,000
Tanzania	72,000
Swaziland	45,000

Total outside	
Mozambique	1,536,500
Internally displaced	3,500,000
Total	5,036,500

Table 1b: Angolan Refugees in Surrounding Asylum Countries

Zaire	280,000
Zambia	118,000
Congo	6,000
Botswana	200

Total outside Angola	404,200
Internally displaced	900,000
Total	1,304,200

Table 1c: South African Refugees in Surrounding Countries

Swaziland	7,000
Tanzania	3,000
Botswana	200
Lesotho	200

Total	10,400
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* For various reasons these numbers are highly disputed. Source, World Refugee Survey 1993.

** as of August 1993.

The continued success of ONUMOZ depends on an unwavering commitment of troops and development funds in order to oversee the transition to a peaceful and demilitarized Mozambique. The alternative is another Angola or Somalia.

ing Mozambican refugees in the 1970s. For Wamakonde refugees in Tanzania, living with the host population eroded traditional values and resulted in the loss of female dominance in their formerly matrilineal society. Initiation rites were commercialized by men to "assert economic dominance." The fundamental social changes that occurred in Wamakonde culture while in exile made reintegration into Mozambique a very painful process, particularly for children.

As Olaf Tataryn Jeurgensen writes in his article, the international community has been extremely slow to respond to the reality of returning refugees. The inability of agencies to shift resources and operations from asylum countries to Mozambique has greatly undermined the efforts of Mozambicans to rebuild their lives.

Véronique Lassailly-Jacob discusses the preliminary findings of her field research conducted in the Ukwimi Refugee Settlement. In a unique approach she has investigated the relationship between host and

emergencies. Intervenor in emergencies remain poorly informed and this results in inappropriate and counter-productive responses. In the end it is perhaps unfair to be too critical of the relief process. Instead we should be working to develop more proactive responses to refugee flight, and increasing the flexibility of intervention, both on the ground and at an international level. All of these articles emphasize that something has gone terribly wrong in the implementation of humanitarian assistance. It is important to learn from the Mozambique experience and to continue striving to respond to the rapidly changing situation, while at the same time looking ahead towards durable peace, reconstruction and rehabilitation of the Mozambican people and state. ■

Ian Smith, Guest Editor

Ian Smith from the Faculty of Environmental Studies is a research associate at CRS, York University.