

**Book Review**

## **African Refugees: Development Aid and Repatriation**

*Edited by Howard Adelman and John Sorenson.  
Boulder, CO: Westview Press, and Toronto:  
York Lanes Press, 1994; xix-264, index.*

**Reviewed by Charles Smith**

This impressive collection of twelve articles is written by fifteen contributors and a non-contributing editor. The book is timely insofar as it coincides with worldwide media coverage of the carnage in Rwanda and other wars on the African continent. Ideally, a work of this sort should provide an analytical and theoretical foundation necessary to understand the contexts and some underlying causes of the current situation; for the most part, this book succeeds.

Africa is the world's poorest, least developed continent, yet it contains at least one-half of the world's known refugees, if not more, considering that many internally displaced and self-settled refugees do not register with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Most African refugees have little choice but to settle in a neighbouring country, so that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) policy of discouraging refugees from settling outside Africa (*cf.* Winter) is probably irrelevant. Yet most countries face a dilemma, because they lack either the economic means or the political will to cope with refugees once their numbers reach hundreds of thousands. As Sorenson points out, at the height of the war with Ethiopia, 80,000 Eritreans (a quarter of Eritrean population) were in exile, mostly in neighbouring Sudan. In the past, people of the same or a closely related ethnic background would adopt exiles into their families, clans, and villages; however, this informal system is inad-

equated for the mass migrations of the 1980s and 1990s.

All African countries attempt to control and manage the flood of refugees by establishing special settlements. Financially strained treasuries stand to benefit from UNHCR assistance: as Kibreab and Bakwesegha point out, many governments try to force refugees into settlements where governments can enumerate them and claim per capita aid. Many authors in this collection report abuse based on overestimating the numbers of refugees. There are other reasons why African governments prefer settlements. They usually establish them in remote and underdeveloped areas to minimize contact with the local populations. In defence of settlement policy, governments claim that it protects refugees from cross-border raids. As Sterkenburg, Kirkby, and O'Keefe explain, however, sometimes relief is self-perpetuating, since the settlement areas are often poor to begin with, and the land is soon degraded beyond its "absorptive capacity". Subsequently, when refugees cannot feed themselves, aid is necessary and a "syndrome of dependency" develops.

It is hardly surprising that refugees choose to "self-settle" within the host community whenever they are not legally and physically prevented from doing so. Sterkenburg, Kirkby, and O'Keefe, Kibreab, Kuhlman, and Koehn all refer to studies that explain why most refugees prefer this option: it gives them a greater sense of autonomy, as they often fear being attacked by their persecutors if they remain in organized settlements. It is the spontaneously settled that are the most likely to acquire skills, to succeed materially, and to earn higher incomes, as Kuhlman illustrates with some comparative tables. Often the settlements prove to be unsustainable, partly because a disproportionate number of residents are very old, very young, or disabled and therefore require assistance.

Gorman criticizes Stein's suggestion that refugees act against their own interests when they leave settlements

where they receive better social services, health care, and education. In fact, several articles in this volume point out that spontaneously settled refugees may be exploited and subjected to harsh and arbitrary treatment by the host community. In few cases are they able to obtain official status, travel permits, business licenses, identity cards, and the like. Nevertheless, as Gorman asserts, "autocratic paternalism" (forcing refugees into settlements) is, at best, not guaranteed to provide more benefits and, at worst, is another harmful form of paternalism.

The central issue addressed in this volume is that of outsiders imposing solutions on refugees who have little or no say in planning and implementing policies that define their life situations and chances. Every article argues that the official refugee caretakers need to consult their supposed clients, who themselves should play an active part in planning and implementing programs of resettlement and repatriation. This volume does succeed in isolating and analyzing the structures and the root causes of refugee movements in Africa but, in so doing, it illustrates how difficult it will be to draft and implement workable and sustainable solutions.

No book on African refugees can possibly keep up with the rapid pace of change. For example, no one could possibly have predicted the shooting down of President Habyarimana's plane, which caused a full-scale civil war. Kiddu-Makubuya's article on Rwandan refugees in Uganda states that, when the RPF (Rwandese Patriotic Front) invaded Rwanda in October 1990, they might have defeated the government if not for armed intervention by Belgium, France, and Zaire. The combatants agreed in principle to a ceasefire in July 1992 but, with the wisdom of hindsight, we can see that the Arusha accord was mainly posturing. One has to question the logic of intervention, since the savagery of the current war reflects the frustrations of the past. It probably would have been better to let the combatants resolve the conflict themselves in 1990.

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Nevertheless, as the article reveals, the Ugandan government covertly assisted the repatriation of the numerous Rwandan refugees in Uganda. Kiddu-Makubuya quotes the opinion of an influential newsweekly in nearby Kenya, which accused President Musoveni of supplying the RPF with arms and crack Ugandan troops in order to use it as a subterfuge invasion force on behalf of Uganda. The Kenyan article undoubtedly exaggerates the case, but it expresses the common fear among OAU nations of warrior refugee settlements, and the way these are manipulated in the complex gridlock of relations between African nations and the micro-national ethnic groupings that often overflow state boundaries. ■

### Ten-year Study Finds Refugees Adapting Successfully in Canada

Findings from a ten-year refugee resettlement study based on employment, health, mental health, use of social services, citizenship, and feelings about Canada of Southeast Asian "Boat People"—Chinese, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian refugees admitted to Canada between 1979 and 1981—contradict common stereotypes about refugees. Compared to the general population, the refugees have a lower unemployment rate, and lower use of social assistance. Of the former refugees, 99 percent have become Canadian citizens, and 95 percent feel that Canada is now their home. One in five former refugees has started his or her own business, often employing other Canadians.

This study was carried out by Dr. Morton Beiser of the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry and the University of Toronto, together with two colleagues at the University of British Columbia, Dr. Phyllis Johnson and Dr. Richard Nann.

Source: The Clarke Institute, University of Toronto news release, Sept. 26, 1994.

## Immigration and Refugee Board Convention Refugee Determination Division Claims Process Period: January 1, 1994 - June 30, 1994

### Regional Summary

	Ottawa/Atlantic	Quebec	Ontario	Prairies	B.C.	National
Claims heard to completion (includes cases before 1994)	966 ...	3,470 ...	6,478 .....	272 ...	667	11,853
Decisions rendered	1,044 ...	3,706 ...	7,512 .....	298 ...	737	13,297
Claims rejected	142 .....	902 ...	2,741 .....	76 ...	344 ...	4,205
Claims upheld	902 ...	2,804 ...	4,771 .....	222 ...	393 ...	9,092
Withdrawn/abandoned	157 .....	410 ...	1,198 .....	37 ...	299 ...	2,101
Decisions pending*	65 .....	334 ...	1,187 .....	22 ...	186 ...	1,794
Claims pending**	843 ...	4,846 ...	6,874 .....	231	1,701	14,495

\* Decisions pending include all claims heard to completion for which no decision had been rendered by the end of the reporting period.

\*\* Claims pending include all claims referred to the Convention Refugee Determination Division that have not been finalized (i.e., by a positive or negative decision or by withdrawal or abandonment) as of the end of the reporting period.

### Statistical Summary by Major Source Countries

Country of Alleged Persecution	Claims		Convention Refugee Status			Acceptance Rate (%)
	Heard to Completion	Withdrawn/Abandoned	Claims Decided	Yes	No	
1. Sri Lanka	1,834	100	1,999	1,762	237	88.1
2. Somalia	1,541	85	1,572	1,522	50	96.8
3. Iran	722	58	778	641	137	82.4
4. India	506	206	556	273	283	49.1
5. Israel	434	57	634	268	366	42.3
6. Bangladesh	358	48	391	259	132	66.2
7. China	305	39	352	147	205	41.8
8. Pakistan	302	88	383	233	150	60.8
9. Russia	297	38	398	251	147	63.1
10. Former Yugoslavia	294	194	317	249	68	78.5
11. Guatemala	275	57	268	151	117	56.3
12. Romania	246	33	275	142	133	51.6
13. Haiti	243	9	251	211	40	84.1
14. Afghanistan	241	15	243	220	23	90.5
15. Peru	218	11	224	171	53	76.3
16. Lebanon	196	47	258	138	120	53.5
17. Moldova	193	21	245	162	83	66.1
18. El Salvador	189	69	204	69	135	33.8
19. Zaire	184	6	179	164	15	91.6
20. Ukraine	175	43	232	134	98	57.8
21. Sudan	144	7	150	132	18	88.0
22. Former USSR	143	47	269	106	163	39.4
23. Algeria	131	28	138	103	35	74.6
24. Iraq	128	12	134	128	6	95.5
25. Ghana	123	63	129	34	95	26.4
<b>Top 25 countries</b>	<b>9,423</b>	<b>1,378</b>	<b>10,579</b>	<b>7,670</b>	<b>2,909</b>	<b>72.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,853</b>	<b>2,101</b>	<b>13,297</b>	<b>9,092</b>	<b>4,205</b>	<b>68.4</b>

Source: Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa; News release, September 9, 1994.

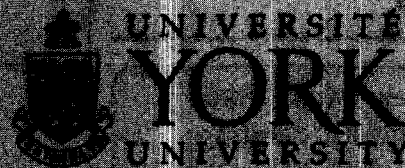
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*For further information and registration, please contact:*

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