

University of KwaZulu-Natal

**REFUGEE REPATRIATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC RE-INTEGRATION OF
RETURNEES IN ERITREA (*THE CASE OF PROFERI PROGRAMME IN DIGE SUB-
ZONE*)**

Netsereab Ghebremichael Andom

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March 2004

Submitted in partial fulfilment for the Degree of Master of Social Science in Sociology,
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

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Date of Submission: Feb 4, 2004.

Dedication

Dedicated to all Eritrean heroes and heroines who sacrificed their lives defending their country's sovereignty and to all refugee repatriates who, against all odds, are always optimistic about their future lives back at "home."

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis, unless specifically indicated to the contrary, is my own original work.

Signature: _____

Date: 14-06-2004

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February, 2004

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to many individuals and institutions in preparing this dissertation for a reader. First, I would like to express my deep gratitude to my ex-supervisor Mr. Geoff Waters for his overall patience during the writing of the dissertation; Prof. Gerhard Maré (HoD) and Dr. Monique Marks for their scholastic guidance during the shaping and reshaping the thesis at its initial stage.

Special thanks goes the GoE (particularly the HRD office of the University of Asmara) for sponsoring my two years educational career in South Africa and covering all my expenses at the time of field research back at home. I would like to acknowledge them with heartfelt thanks once again.

I also would like to extend my gratitude to the ERREC (Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Commission) and the UNHCR (United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees) officials both in Asmara and Barentu for providing me with relevant statistical data and unreservedly sharing their information at the time of the interview. More thanks have to go to my respondents and focus group discussants at Tekreriet and Ad-Ibrihim. I appreciate their co-operation in the interview schedule and their live, frank, open, and insightful sharing of information during the focus group discussion I have had with them. In line with this, special thanks are also reserved for my anonymous interviewers (enumerators).

At last but by no means the least, I would like to take this opportunity to all thank my friends who always morally supported me and have been on my side during the critical time I have encountered when I was back home: the untimely departure of my father. Had it not been for them, their teachings about the secrets and meaning of life on earth, I would have terminated my study and this paper would not have reached the reader's hand. Thus special thanks are to Tesfai, Ghebremeskel and Anghesom for all their moral support and motivation.

The researcher.

Abstract

For decades UNHCR and refugee hosting governments have been looking for strategies to deal with the problem of mass exodus. Depending on the nature of the problem, various approaches have been exercised to address the problem of the displaced people. Recently, there has been a remarkable alteration of approaches in the way the international political community and refugee-hosting governments deal with forced migrants. Returning refugees to their “homes” has been the most favoured approach. Though voluntary repatriation as an “ideal” solution to the refugee problem has been exercised since the 1970s, it is with the end of the post-cold war era, circa 1991, that it came to be seen as the most desirable and preferred approach towards ending the plight of exiles (Winter, 1994:159; Rogers, 1992:1112; Toft, n.d:3). For a number of reasons, the 1990s have added more colour towards adopting this approach as the most preferred “durable solution.” To give more colour to voluntary repatriation as the best alternative strategy to refugee problems, the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata, has gone so far as to declare the 1992 to be “the first year in a decade of repatriation.” Since then, repatriation as a desirable approach and a viable solution to the world refugee problem has gained much prominence in the UN arena, refugee hosting countries and refugee generating countries (Allen, 1996; Chimni, 1999; Barnett, 2001).

This study discusses the issue of organised voluntary repatriation in a newly-born tiny African county, Eritrea. In brief, it examines the overall process of socio-economic rehabilitation, repatriation and re-integration of refugee returnees in selected returnee resettlement sites located in the Western lowlands of Eritrea. The study is descriptive-cum-analytic in its nature and has employed a *triangulation* approach in its data collection (namely, open- and semi-structured interview, focus group discussion and archival documents). The aim of the analysis is to understand refugee repatriation processes by exploring how participative the returnees were in the decision-making process of re-integration that enormously impacts in their lives back at ‘home.’ Post-repatriation social relationships between repatriates and ‘stayees/locals’ as well as returnees’ economic conditions are also scrupulously examined. By so doing, the study attempts to address the ‘research gap’ in refugee studies by shedding light regarding the complicated nature of refugee repatriation endeavour as a ‘durable solution.’

In investigating the socio-economic condition of Eritrean refugee returnees, the study looks at the dynamics of power-relations and variations in interests among various stakeholders (particularly between the returnees, the government of the refugees' origin and UNHCR) within the repatriation process. It asserts how home- and hosting governments as well as UNHCR operate as "technologies of power," that dictate the behaviour of their "clients." Eventually, the thesis calls for 'working with' rather than 'working for' or 'working to' the end-beneficiaries of the repatriation project that have great deal of impact in the livelihood of refugee returnees as end-beneficiaries of repatriation programs.

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CERA= Commission for Eritrean Relief Affairs
 COR = Commissioner Office for Refugees (Sudan)
 CRC= Counter-Refugee-Crisis
 DCs= Developing Countries.
 EHRD = Eritrean Human Resource Development
 ERA= Eritrean Relief Agency
 ERRRA = Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Agency
 ERREC = Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
 ELF = Eritrean Liberation Front
 EPLF = Eritrean People's Liberation Front (the governing party now identified as PFDJ-
 People's Front for Democracy and Justice).
 EXCOM= Executive Committee
 GoE= Government of Eritrea
 HRA= Refugee Hosting Area
 ICARA I/II= International Conference on Assistance to Refugees in Africa
 IDPs = Internally Displaced People
 IRP = Integrated Recovery Program
 Nfa = Nacfa which is Eritrea's currency. [N.B* Exchange rate at the time of repatriation in
 1995 was US \$ 1= 6.25 Birr. Birr is Ethiopia's currency in which Eritrea was using until it
 had its own note on May 1995).
 OECD= Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
 OAU = Organisation of African Unity.
 PGE= Provisional Government of Eritrea
 PROFERI= Program for Refugee Reintegration and the Rehabilitation of Resettlement Areas)
 PPP= PROFERI Pilot Project
 QIP = Quick Impact Projects
 RDC= Research and Documentation Centre
 RHA= Refugee Hosting Area
 SPLA= Sudan People's Liberation Army
 USA= United States of America
 USCR= United States Committee for Refugees
 UNDP = United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs
 UNHCR= United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF = United Nations Children's Fund

UNRISD = United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

WFP = World Food Program

ZO = Zoba Office

Chapter One:

REFUGEE REPATRIATION AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC RE-INTEGRATION OF RETURNEES IN ERITREA (*THE CASE OF PROFERI PROGRAMME IN DIGE SUB-ZONE*)

General Background

Eritrea is a newly independent nation located in the Horn of Africa. With a total population conservatively estimated at 3.5 million,¹ this country is “home” for nine ethnic groups² each with their distinct language and culture. Bordered by Ethiopia in the South, Djibouti in the East and Northwest by the Sudan republic, this tiny Northeast African country covers 121,144 sq. km and lies adjacent to the Red Sea. The country’s strategic location turned it into a history of continuous invasion and colonialism. For almost four centuries, the country has been under various ‘colonial overlords’: the Ottoman Turkish empire (1572-1882), Egyptian colony (1846-1875), Italian colony (1889-1941), British Military Administration (1941-1952), and lastly under Ethiopian federation followed by forced annexation (1952-1991)³ (Mehreteab, 2002: 10; Kibreab, 2002:55-56). Though one cannot expect something “good” from colonialists, comparatively speaking the Ethiopian colonisation was the worst thing that Eritreans faced in their history. The cost of the latter colonisation was very high. The 30 years war for independence that was fought with the Ethiopians has left deep marks on the country as the Ethiopian colonialists have deliberately destroyed the country’s physical infrastructure and human capital. Schools were damaged, water and electric utilities downgraded, and other social services were extremely deteriorated. The small- and medium-scale industries were either sold to neighbouring countries or relocated to Ethiopian cities (particularly to Addis Ababa). The leftovers turned out to be obsolete as they lacked spare parts. More saddening was the devastation of the agricultural sector (on which around 85% of the total population subsist) both by war-related destruction of forests and agricultural plantations as well as perennial drought and famine (USCR, 2001:9-10; Sorenson, 1994:69-70).

After independence, thus, the then PGE (Provisional Government of Eritrea) was confronted not only with reconstructing the physical infrastructure of the country but, more challengingly, with the demobilisation of ex-combatants, the rehabilitation of around 10,000 disabled ex-combatants of the EPLF, upward of 90,000 civilian and orphans of fallen combatants (Habte-Selassie, 1996:52; Mehreteab, 2002:11), as well as the repatriation of half

a million refugees (Farwell, 2001:45, ERREC, 1995:9). As ex-combatants' demobilisation was an immediate concern, the government was forced to look for a lasting solution to their situations. Assisted demobilisation was initiated in June-October 1993. Out of an estimated 95,000 soldiers some 26,000 and 22,000 combatants were demobilised in the first and second phase respectively. A further 6000 ex-fighters were progressively demobilised from 1995 onwards. Surprisingly, the Eritrean government took the sole responsibility for the social and economic reintegration of these ex-combatants with no external assistance (June, 1999; Mehreteab, 2002; Kibreab, 2002:56).

Another issue that the PGE had to address was the repatriation of some 420,000- 500,000 refugees from Sudan,⁴ the reintegration of another 70-80,000 spontaneous returnees as well as around 100,000 IDPs (Kibreab, et al., 2002b:7; Sorenson, 1994:71). In 1993, the GoE, after thorough consultation with the international donor community, initiated a comprehensive refugee repatriation program, known as PROFERI. In order to generate funds for this program, a pledging conference was organised jointly in Geneva in 1993 by the Eritrean government (through the then CERA and now EEREC), UNDP, and UNHCR. The Eritrean government requested from the UN agencies a total fund of US\$262.2 million, to be allocated for three consecutive phases of the repatriation program. Unfortunately, as the amount pledged to this huge program turned out to be only US \$32 million (just one eighth of the requested budget), CERA was forced to scale-down the program by initiating a PROFERI Pilot Phase (PPP) – the object of this study. The first phase of the organised Eritrean refugee repatriation program was implemented between November 1994 and June 1995 after a bi-partite agreement was signed between the state of Eritrea, the Sudan and UNHCR by way of negotiation (CERA, 1995).

More challenging is the recent “humanitarian crisis” that the country is facing after it slipped back into a full-scale war with Ethiopia in the 1998-2002 border conflict. This has resulted in 63,000 expellees⁵ and 700,000 IDPs⁶ (Kibreab, 1999). This gruesome inter-state conflict has also added to the social mix of the long-term refugee repatriation from the Sudan. More saddening is the fact that several of the returnees have been re-displaced because of this “senseless war,” returning some of them to another vicious cycle of human displacement.⁷ This border war and the consistent diplomatic conflicts between the Eritrean and Sudanese government have also hampered the successful implementation of the Eritrean refugee repatriation program as planned. The persistent rough political relations between the GoE and

the Sudanese counterpart which culminated in a breakdown of their diplomatic ties have frustrated numerous refugees. Hence, around 160,000 of these refugees were obliged to arrange their return without any external assistance. The very complexity of these overlapping political, social, and economic crises makes refugee repatriation in Eritrea more challenging (Kibreab, et al., 2002b:7; USCR, 2001:4).

With this as a general background, the next section is devoted to a brief review of the existing literature. This will summarise what academics and development consultants have to say about refugee repatriation programs as a whole and the Eritrean case in particular.

1.1 Literature Review:

An examination of the available literature relevant to this study reveals that it is still in its infant stage, under-researched, relatively thin and limited in scope. The available ones tend to be case-based and non-systematic. Indeed, Kibreab has correctly stated: “the state of refugee research in Africa (*in general and that of returnees in particular*) is lamentably poor” (quoted in Sorenson, 1994:175, my italics). Keen observers asserted that this problem could be attributed to a combination of either of the following reasons. First, there are inherent difficulties in studying returnees. Explicitly, the inadequacy of data availability about assisted returnees (though the problem is less severe when compared to those of spontaneous returnees) discourages research. Second, the fact that socio-economic implications of repatriation cannot be assessed adequately from a short-term perspective added another problem. Third, since most mass return movements occur in highly unstable situations (particularly in war-ravaged Africa), independent research is difficult or impossible to conduct. Fourth, the limited coverage of voluntary repatriation programs, whether spontaneous or official, in the media and academic writings up until the demise of the Cold War era could be linked to the nature of international thinking about repatriation programs. To be sure, it is widely hailed that with the end of the bi-polar era in world affairs, the strategic significance of refugees for creating political consensus and sources of diplomacy between the USSR-led communists and USA-led western capitalist countries began to fade away. Finally, some home government authorities of refugee returnees deny researchers access to pertinent documentation and hardly allow interviewing of returnees under the pretext of security matters (Allen and Morsink, 1994: 2; Rogge, 1994: 15; Bariaghaber, 1999:606-607).

Gordenker (1987: 62-63) has observed that the unsystematic nature of accumulated research on forced migration nourishes uncertainty. He further stated relatively few incidents have been studied in depth, and even these were approached from differing angles. According to Bariaghaber (1999:607), though repatriation endeavours are more frequent at present than in the past, and some have proceeded rather well, others have run into some difficulties. Rogge and Akol (1989:1987-191) also complained about the paucity of literature regarding repatriation programs particularly in terms of absence of data, lack of independent evaluations of the nature and successes and/or the resultant problems of repatriation exercises (both in Africa and elsewhere). They also stated that most refugee research appears to merely focus on current refugee issues, ignoring what happens to refugees after their repatriation. Hence, they stress a need to analyse the results of past repatriation exercises, and the problems inherent during repatriation processes.

It can be envisaged that refugees who return home (particularly those with some skills) from exile can contribute to the national reconstruction endeavour of war-protracted countries. However little is known about the role of repatriates in post-war nation building, more specifically their contribution towards national reconstruction and development (Sorenson, 1994:182). A prime example that presents the role of refugee returnees to their home country upon their repatriation is that of Akol's (1986) research about South Sudanese repatriates from Uganda and Zaire following the Addis-Ababa Accord in 1972. His comparative research analysis amongst the IDPs and repatriates in Yei area showed that returnees who were exposed to new methods of farming during their stay in exile have achieved significant economic prosperity and contributed to a substantial economic transformation and improved agricultural output upon their return than their fellow IDPs in the same area (Akol, 1986 mentioned in Rogge and Akol, 1989:195-196).

Moreover, notwithstanding that around 3.5 million refugees were believed to have been repatriated in Africa alone between 1971 and 1991 (Rogge, 1994), little has been said about what happened to them upon their repatriation (Zeager, 1998; Zeager and Bascom, 1996). Rogge (1994: 15) contended, "little emphasis is put forward about the socio-economic dimensions of repatriation or its human and psychological implications". In this line, Allen and Turton (1996:1) have aptly stated:

Until recently, however, little effort has been made to find out what happened to returnees after they arrived in their places of origin, or to assess the impact of mass return movements on local and national development.

Likewise, a prominent figure in the refugee studies was also quoted as saying: 'although voluntary repatriation has been proclaimed as ... the most desirable solution to a refugee situation, it has so far not been examined in any depth by experts or scholars' (Cole, in Allen and Morsink, 1994:1).

Suffice to say, most readers and leading researchers in refugee studies complained about the lack of literature on the socio-economic situation of returnees. Beginning from the 1990s, however, research findings covering refugee repatriation started appearing in periodicals and books. Some of these findings were commissioned papers from individuals with specialist knowledge of particular areas while others were consultant evaluation reports. Their findings and other non-academicians' voices and concerns (particularly those of relief/aid workers and repatriates' home governments) regarding repatriation practices became more pronounced in UNRISD's seminars held in Harare (March 1991), N'Djamena (February 1992) and Addis Ababa (September 1992) (Allen and Turton, 1996: 4).

According to Allen and Morsink (1994:2), the available literature on refugee repatriation, was thus slightly broader than Cole's 1985 report. They believe that the literature, by and large, focused on three main themes; *international law*, *political motivations* and *logistics*. The literature related to international law of refugee repatriation programs explored the principles guiding the international approach towards repatriation and was concerned with issues such as basic rights of refugees to return to their homeland, the mandatory responsibilities of international organisations, and the question of whether or not the UNHCR should continue to be involved in protecting and assisting refugees after their repatriation. Analysis of *political motivations* were particularly concerned with controversies surrounding specific population movements, such as the extent to which repatriation was in the interest of those promoting it rather than the refugees themselves. Finally, the *logistics*-related writings were essentially descriptive and had been concerned with the way particular repatriation programs had been funded and organised.

After coming 'back home', refugee returnees have to adjust to the environment that they left a long time ago. Some even have to start their life from scratch. That is why the issue of socio-economic integration of Eritrean refugee returnees has come to be the concern of considerable number of researchers including Habte-Silassie, Kibreab as well as Bascom (all in Allen, 1996), Sørensen (in Cernea and McDowell, 2000), Farewell (2001) and many others with little emphasis on the socio-economic situation of returnees. Both Habte-Silassie and Kibreab noted the willingness of Eritrean refugees to 'go home' and thus emphasised all the necessary preconditions that ought to be taken prior to the inauguration of official assisted repatriation programs. Both of them accentuated the need for financial assistance from the international community to facilitate the organised repatriation of Eritrean refugees. While the former emphasised the need for environmental consideration and political accommodation during repatriation planning (Habte-Silassie, 1996:50-52), the latter stressed the "ideational incongruence" and tensions that were prevalent between the representatives of the GoE and the international donor community in a conference held in Geneva in 1993. This squabble revolved around the mismatch between the GoE's proposal and requested budgets for rehabilitation program (including IDPs), and the UN's incompatible view of 'target groups' of repatriation program as well as the cold response from the international donor community. Kibreab concluded by saying: "it is the responsibility of the international community to help [Eritrean] refugees re-establish their lives in their homeland and failure to do so is tantamount to denial of their human right" (Kibreab, 1996: 64).

Using a case study of Eritrean Refugees at Wad el Hileau camp in Eastern Sudan, Bascom (1996) argued that Eritrean repatriation decisions reflect the motivation and mental preparedness of the prospective returnees to be active participants in the reconstruction and development of their home country. He underlined that it may be better to focus on revitalising the agricultural sector rather than on an "elaborate resettlement program" for Eritrean refugee returnees from Sudan. In a way, while there is no doubt about the majority of Eritrean refugees' choice in Sudan, to have assisted voluntarily repatriation, he emphasised the need to make the would-be returnees central actors in the decision-making process of the repatriation, reintegration and rehabilitation programs. This researcher also called for encouraging the returnees to resettle themselves rather than repatriating them in government selected sites. He pointed out three major advantages of this approach, namely, it helps to: 1) mitigate against tensions between 'stayees' and 'returnees'; 2) encourage returnees to marshal co-operative efforts and self-help projects on their own behalf; and, 3) 'dovetail' resettlement

programs together with the long-term imperative of rural, regional, and sector development (Bascom, 1996: 77-78). Bascom's insights seem to be well taken by the ERREC officials. The fact that the second phase of the PROFERI program is repatriating prospective returnees into areas of their own choice is a clear testimony of ERREC's institutional learning. Another step is also introduced that gives the returnee household cash assistance rather than re-stocking them which was allegedly against the majority's will in the case of PPP (PROFERI Pilot Project).

Some attempts towards investigating the socio-economic situation of the organised refugee returnees in Eritrea have also been conducted, though with a very shallow depth. For example, in 1995 ERREC conducted an evaluation of the agricultural component of PPP and pointed out the weaknesses and achievements of the program with more emphasis on the latter (ERREC, 1995). That same year, another group of researchers who conducted an evaluation of PPP and a donor/CERA workshop held in May 1995 judged it as an overall success and concluded the program as 'something to be commended' (Shields, N. et al., 1995; UNHCR, 1995; Gouma et al., 1995). All in all, most of the agencies involved in the pilot refugee repatriation program evaluated it as highly effective and "successful" (USCR, 2001:5).

More than anybody else, Kibreab has extensively studied Eritrean refugees (including those in other Northeast African countries) for almost two decades now. Since 1983, he diligently studied the Eritrean refugees in the Sudan, and painstakingly followed them after their repatriation. With regard to the Eritrean refugees, Kibreab's (1987, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2002) research investigation addresses the common experiences and challenges that they share during their stay in the host country – the Sudan – as well as after their return to Eritrea. Of particular significance in relation to my research investigation is Kibreab's (1999) recent article entitled: *The Consequence of Non-participatory Planning: lessons from a livestock provision project to returnees in Eritrea*. In this well documented analysis, he focused on the economic situation of the PPP returnees in Eritrea. Initially he found that there was variation between the planners' anticipation and the returnees' decision of choosing their resettlement sites, as well as a mismatch between planners' perception of returnee demands and the actual returnee preferences concerning the type of livestock they chose. In this evaluative study, he positively criticised ERREC and its UNHCR partner for their attempt to restock returnees by buying animals expecting that they will resume their pre-flight way of living. By doing so, he

attempted to convey the consequence of exercising a non-participatory approach of decision-making process in projects that have a direct bearing on its end beneficiaries. He contended the overall program employed non-participatory approach to planning which did not ‘tap into the knowledge and experiences of returnees.’ His research findings are testimony to the undesirable mismatch among the stakeholders in most aspects of the overall PPP and more specifically between the planners’ and policy-makers’ actions and returnees’ expectations, desires, felt needs and aspirations. In this article, Kibreab shows the failure of policy-makers and implementers of PPP to take into account the overall social transformations that the refugees have gone through during their long stay in Sudan. On the whole, his research findings clearly pronounce the need to make returnees active determinants of their destiny in the repatriation process. Nevertheless, though he attributes the failure of decision-makers’ and/or planners’ to include the participation of repatriates to the ill-informed work practice of the ERREC and UNCHR (putting some blame on COR to provide necessary data about the prospective returnees to the GoE), he slightly uncovers as to why these professed main actors prefer to ‘*work-for and to*’ rather than ‘*work with*’ the main beneficiaries of the program – the returnees.

Another study conducted by Sørensen (2000), analysed the experience of refugees and returnees at home and in exile. Using a case study from Eritrea’s returnee resettlement site at Alebu, the researcher has tried to show the financial or economic hardships that the returnees have had after their repatriation. This is, he maintains, notwithstanding their preservation of social cohesion, social fabric and the spirit of community co-operation systems among returnees is against all odds still alive. This researcher attributed the returnees’ social and human capital (networks, social claims, social relations, and associations) to many highly intertwined factors – namely to the returnees’ social and psychological make up, strong nationalism (more accurately what he called “political capital”) that was built up during their stay in exile, and their deeply rooted and long experience with survival strategies towards problems and the strong national influence cultivated by the EPPLF cadres in the Sudan camps (Sørensen, 2000: 200-201).

A different researcher from the school of social work studied the coping and psychological support habits among Eritrean youth refugee returnees (Farewell, 2001). However, her research findings mainly emphasised the experiences of psychosocial well-being of youths during their flight and how they have tried to cope with the war-induced traumatic

experiences both in the country of asylum and when they came 'back home.' She clearly spells out the role of family members, elders and teachers in imparting psychological support to youngsters, which in turn has substantially contributed to youngsters' psychosocial well-being. This researcher also touches on the socio-economic situation of the youth refugee returnees, particularly the material hardships encountered by the students who attended their secondary school classes in their settlement areas' nearby towns (more specifically at Tessenei).

However, one is struck in all these research investigations by how little attention is paid to the hard pressing experience of socio-economic reintegration of the returnees. Hardly has any researcher systematically investigated the economic and social dimension of returnees' reintegration process (and of course the intricacies inherent within it in a broader way). This is to say that there are questions that have not been adequately addressed, such as: Were the returnees really enabled to be economically self-sufficient such that they can contribute something worth mentioning in the reconstruction and development of the new country? Little is also known about how the already settled locals view the refugee returnees. Did the returnees encounter any socio-cultural shock that obstructed their reintegration? How did the returnees manage to cope with the new socio-cultural and economic milieu after their repatriation? On the whole, how well did the refugees manage to fully reintegrate with the stayees in their respective resettlement areas?

Overall, I found the researchers' findings limited in the following senses. Primarily, they do not reveal why the GoE, UNCHR and COR were not ready to make returnees active participants in the decision making process that affects the lives of the returnees. In my understanding, the investigators' research endeavours were incomplete in constructing the reality by examining it in relation to the home- and hosting-government's and perhaps UNHCR's behaviour, attitudes, practices, principles and policies. Secondly, the supposedly very few rich qualitative studies conducted among Eritrean refugee returnees hardly talk about the socio-economic situation of the returnees. Very few talk about the problems that the returnees have encountered in terms of attaining family and community economic self-sufficiency. Nor have they sufficiently articulated in a joint form whether there were any socio-cultural inconveniences and/or economic problems (if there were any at all) that returnees encountered after their repatriation to already home-government selected resettlement sites (save Kibreab, 1999b; 2002).

1.2 Introduction to Eritrean Refugees and IDPs

Post-conflict situations are some of the most testing episodes for war-torn countries in the developing world ranging from Africa to Asia to Latin America. Past grievances coupled with the pressing internal urgencies for the future needs, such as ex-combatants' demobilisation and refugee re-integration, not to mention the overall infrastructure reconstructions, make the situation more challenging (Allen, 1996; Mehreteab, 2002, Kibreab, 2002). While cessation of hostilities and provision of urgent relief assistance is one step forward in the long journey of peace and nation-building, many other issues remain ahead; particularly ensuring peace along with forward looking long-term plans for poverty alleviation and sustainable development makes the state of affairs of post-war not easy.

Though the number of refugees (including IDPs) is extremely small, constituting roughly 0.3% of the world population, and statistical data calculated and compiled by various agencies such as UNCR (2003) and USCR (2001) shows that the number of refugees is slightly decreasing both in the developing South and the developed North, the issue of forced migrants stands a great concern to members of the international community. With a slight slow down since mid-1990s, the issue of involuntary migration and hence that of refugees remains much more severe among developing countries of the South. Situated in what came to be identified as the "Arc of Crisis,"⁸ the Horn of African countries are believed to constitute the largest share of refugees. In 1992 alone Ethiopians (in which Eritrea was its colony until the latter broke from the former when it was liberated in 1991 and finally attained its de facto independence in 1993) formed 752, 400 (44.87%) of Africa's refugees (Bariaghaber, 1997: 29-31).

The 30-year quest for Eritrean independence from Ethiopia is estimated to have turned 400,000 to almost a million Eritreans into refugees (ERREC, 1994). According to reports from CERA⁹ (1992), the largest proportion of these stay in the Sudan and they constitute 42% of the total Eritrean refugees. In addition to that around 300,000 people have also fled the country to different industrialised countries and the Middle East (Mehreteab, 2002: 11). However, with the ending of the separatist war between Ethiopia and Eritrea in 1991, the massive number of Eritrean refugees is decreasing rapidly as many are returning 'home' either spontaneously or in an organised form.

All in all, so far about 200,000 Eritreans have voluntarily and spontaneously returned to their country of origin since July 2000 (Kibreab et al., 2002b:7; ERREC, 1997). No less than half, i.e., 70-88,000 are believed to have spontaneously returned to their country right after the independence of the country in 1991 (UNHCR Information Bulletin, 2003; Bariaghaber, 1999:607). Those who returned to their 'home' in organised form were repatriated under a programme identified as the PROFERI project. This repatriation project has been designed to consist of three phases that resumes for four consecutive years (though some obstacles still persist in the implementation process of the project as planned),¹⁰ and is expected to repatriate around 400,000 refugees who live in 48 different refugee camps of the Sudan republic. The prospective organised repatriates have been expected to return to nine resettlement sites located in four provinces, namely, Gash-Setit, Barka, Senhit and Sahel.¹¹ Majority of the repatriatees were expected to return in the Western lowland areas of Eritrea and envisaged to engage in agricultural activity (including livestock rearing). The first phase of the project is believed to have already repatriated 4500 refugee families (25,000 people) (ERREC, 1993; Kibreab, 2002a), and the program is continuing which is anticipated to end no later than next year (i.e., 2005).

Refugee resettlement, repatriation, rehabilitation and re-integration coupled with a myriad of other problems, however, are really pressing issues that often await the war-affected nation-states. This is aggravated by the obsolete infrastructure facilities and poor economic performance that war-protracted developing countries face. Eritrea, not exceptionally, is one of the Horn of Africa's countries that has faced such hard-hitting experiences.

No matter how tough and rough the case might be, the Eritrean government along with other partners has repatriated those who were refugees during the country's armed struggle for self-determination. Despite the fact that Eritreans have fled to many countries ranging from Africa to the Middle East, the United States, Europe and Canada 'in search of the cool ground' and a secure place, those who were refugees in the true sense of the concept and in number mainly remained in what is identified as Africa's most generous refugee hosting country - the Sudan. As such, while the government's refugee repatriation is a ground-breaking, huge project that also encompasses voluntary repatriation programmes perhaps even those who live elsewhere, for several reasons priority is given to those who were and are still residing in the Sudan refugee camps between two and four decades now (Kibreab, 1999).

1.3 Statement of the problem

Some scholars have described this millennium as the “Age of migration” (Castles and Miller, 1998) to capture the high rate of voluntary and forced mobility of people around the world. Involuntary migration of people has been a serious issue in Africa more so than other continents. As such, refugees, as forced migrants, have been the epicentre of social science investigation for decades now. However, the research on refugees consists mainly of feasibility studies done by consultants, mission reports, and internal reports which are not easily accessible to outsiders (Kibreab, 1987:279). Nonetheless, since the 1990s there have been a number of research findings with more emphasis on voluntary repatriation programs in Africa and elsewhere (Allen, 1996; Barnett, 2001). As a continuation of this line of ongoing research, my study will focus on the refugee returnees with the sole intent of trying to look at ‘what happens to ex-refugees after their repatriation.’

This study thus attempts to examine the overall socio-economic conditions of Eritrean refugee returnees in one of Eritrea’s “homelands” for displaced people, the Gash-Barka Zone¹². It deals with the challenges and prospects inherent within the country’s first experience in refugee repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration under the umbrella of the PPP since November 1994. The study will examine the efficacy of the programme in re-integrating the organised repatriates in selected resettlement sites. In this regard, the main subject matter of the study is to investigate what were the various stakeholders’ (i.e., the refugees’ government of origin, the hosting government, UNHCR, other UN agencies, organisations and that of the returnees) roles, duties, responsibilities and expectations during the repatriation and re-integration process? Was due regard given to the prospective returnees’ potentials, aspirations and needs, prior to the real implementation of the repatriation program?

Whilst the above research problems constitute the core of my study, in attempting to capture the socio-economic condition of the returnees to the ‘main stream’ of the Eritrean society, I have had some other key research questions in my mind. Included among them are:

- What is refugee reintegration? What does it entail?
- What are the challenges and prospects that home governments and other partners face during socio-economic re-integration of refugee returnees?

- Should returnees be active participants in the decision-making process of their ‘home-coming’? If so, to what extent and in what ways should their participation be ensured?
- Where do the various stakeholders’ roles and responsibilities articulate with and separate from the refugee repatriation process?
- Who were the main actors in the decision-making and implementation of Eritrea’s refugee repatriation and re-integration during the PROFERI project? Why?
- How effective/successful was the program for refugee reintegration in Eritrea?
- What are the challenges, constraints and prospects that are found ahead of refugee rehabilitation, repatriation, and re-integration programs in post-independence Eritrea?

In searching for sociological answers to the above-posed research problems, Weber’s legal rational authority and its attendant bureaucratic decision-making process will heavily inform the dissertation.

1.4 Research Hypothesis

This research project basically emanates from the researcher’s limited acquaintance with and observations about some returnees’ resettlement sites in Eritrea. The researcher’s intention is thus to investigate the aforesaid research question/problem with certain assumptions, values and beliefs. These are:

- 1) Any project pertaining to refugee repatriation and re-integration that excludes the full participation of the ‘end-beneficiaries’ of the programme is predisposed to loopholes, setbacks and failure – hence, subject to constructive criticism;
- 2) Economic re-integration of (Eritrean) refugee returnees from the Sudan Republic tends to be reasonably more difficult for the repatriates than their social re-integration; and
- 3) The attempts of the Eritrean government, UNCHR and other partners under the umbrella of PPP to repatriate returnees gave little consideration to the target groups’

overall realities – specifically, felt needs, desires, aspirations, experiences and knowledge.

In the end, I will examine and verify the validity of such gross assumptions by testing them against empirical findings. This will be done at the end portion of the dissertation, and more specifically, in the data analysis and interpretation section.

1.5 Objectives and Significance of the Study

As I have mentioned, African countries experience lots of pressure from the enormous refugee inflows. This problem chokes both the hosting societies and governments of the refugees' origin, in the latter case at the time of their repatriation. A considerable amount of literature is also produced as to how these forced migrants add actual or perceived problems to the already economically weak hosting governments of the developing world. However, very little is said about the hardships that governments of the refugees' origin face at the time of reintegrating returnees. Nor are there adequate research findings about the experiences and socio-economic conditions of the returnees. Indeed, after coming 'back home', refugee returnees have to adjust to the environment that they left a long time ago. Some even have to start their life from nothing. These issues are rarely covered in the research agenda of refugee studies.¹³ Moreover, the available literature hardly talks about the role of refugee returnees in the decision-making process during their voluntary repatriation. This thesis attempts to narrow down that 'research gap' by addressing the socio-economic repatriation and rehabilitation of Eritrean refugee returnees. Besides trying to examine the socio-economic relationship between the stayees and the returnees, it will uncover how "participative" the latter group were in the decision-making process of the repatriation program. In this way, the significance of the paper lies both in bridging the research gap and in documenting the socio-economic situation of refugee returnees simultaneously.

1.6 Research Methodology and Data Sources

This study is based on data obtained from both primary and secondary sources. While the primary data were collected for analysing the primary information, the secondary ones were collected as per necessity, either to substantiate the primary data and/or to have a full picture of the repatriation program.

Given the need for breadth and depth of the study, I have used several data collection methods in gathering all the necessary information. The following is a description of the sources of the data as well as the means and procedures used in collecting the data. A step-by-step and exhaustive procedure taken during the data collection is spelt out to just enhance the authenticity of the collected data. The rationale for selecting Dige sub-zone refugee resettlements as research areas will be dealt with in the next section – research site.

While the investigation is based on a case study, it employed various data collection techniques (or more appropriately what social researchers call a triangulation approach)¹⁴. As such, the main data collection techniques and sources of data of the study are faithful to the following:

a) Interviews

We, the researcher and his assistants, have conducted two kinds of interviews; open-ended and semi-structured. The former was conducted with officials who have direct contact with refugee returnees – government bodies and UNHR representatives – while the latter with some representatives of the population of my study. Primarily, I have conducted an open-ended and in-person interview with officials of ERREC and UNHCR representative in Eritrea. In each of these cases, the researcher conducted interviews with representatives from both national and administrative zone level and my interviewees totalled five in number. To be precise, the interviewees were one from ERREC central office and two others from the Gash-Barka zone branch as well as one from UNHCR country representative office and another extra one from the zonal branch office.

In order to ensure a favourable environment during the interview session all the necessary precautions and steps were taken. To avoid interruptions during interview, the most appropriate time for the interview programme was set out. As per the appointment with the interviewee, the researcher arrived on the specified time and place. For an obvious reason, I used a tape recorder during the interview. To put the interviewees at ease the researcher had amicably spoken about the purpose of the research and why he is compelled to use a tape recorder. In this way, he was in a position to record their responses only and only with their consent. Besides promising them to abide by the research ethics and integrity, the researcher

also assured them that he would keep their names anonymous. By doing so, he was able to collect pertinent information about the overall decision-making process regarding the refugee repatriation processes and the various problems that were encountered during the different phases of the project- starting from the planning to the implementation stage. The researcher was also able to extract significant information concerning the overall challenges, constraints and opportunities that were (and still are) encountered during and after the implementation of the PROFERI project. In this regard I have a feeling that the interviewees were candid and did not show any hesitation to share their experiences with the researcher.

Secondly, I have also employed semi-structured face-to-face interviews among a group of selected refugee returnees in my research sites. The researcher chose a randomly selected forty returnee household sample (twenty from each site) and conducted a semi-structured interview schedule among them. The household sample was drawn as follows: as there was no map for each of the settlement sites nor were the returnees' huts (houses) numbered, the researcher preferred to employ an available list of residents inhabiting the resettlement area. This was obtained from the local administrators (the lowest-tier of local government administration), which they often use for various purposes such as distribution of food rations. Upon thorough consultation with the local administrators and residents' committee, I have done all means and ways to avoid researcher's bias in selecting the sample frame using simple random sampling. The researcher was cautious enough not to include the locals (stayees) in the population sample.

As far as conducting the actual semi-structured interview is concerned, the researcher has followed a set of procedures not only to gain access to settlement sites but also to overcome constraints from potential "gatekeepers." Primarily, he prepared numerous letters of introduction and research permission from EHRD (Eritrean Human Resource Development) office in Asmara. As per the researcher's plan for visiting various governmental and non-governmental bodies, letters of introduction were prepared in such a way that it requested all concerned bodies to show their earnest cooperation with the researcher.

While the task of interviewing officials was relatively straight forward, filling in interview schedule in a research site was somewhat complex. Indeed it demands a set of pre-requisites to be fulfilled prior to the commencement of the actual data collection endeavour. In the former case all that is needed was just to go to the concerned (non-) governmental institution

with the necessary recommendation letter and arrange things. Whereas in the case of interview schedule, the researcher first went to zonal administration where the returnees reside. Subsequently, they in turn write another letter to the administrators of the sub-zone. Finally, the sub-zone office gave the researcher another letter to the settlement (interview-site) administrator who in turn arranged things for the commencement of the actual data collection. This time the settlement administrator called on the residents' committee for a short meeting to introduce the researcher and explain his purpose. In that short meeting both the settlement administrators and his co-workers were briefed about the purpose of the research and informed about the plan for conducting selected household interviews in their community. After determining the list of households selected to participate in the interview, the residents' committee was requested not only to inform the households under their locality but also to cooperate with the enumerators (interviewers) in indicating the exact location of prospective interviewees. In this way, the residents' committee played an indispensable role in the data collection process by informing and persuading their respective selected interviewees to cooperate in the study.

Though the researcher prepared the semi-structured interview schedule in one vernacular language – i.e., Tigrigna, he has employed four enumerators (more correctly interviewers) that can speak both Tigre and Tigrigna language. Two of them were Tigre and the other from Tigrigna ethnic group. I employed this method in order to overcome language barriers in collecting the needed data. The interviewers were competent enough in translating the interview schedule into either of the languages during the data collection process. After having taken one-day orientation and practice on how to carefully fill the interview schedule, they were sent to their respective subjects. Though the researcher was arranging focus group discussions and collecting other relevant information during that time, he supervised the interviewers' work at the end of each workday.

b) Focus Group Discussions ¹⁵

In order to relate the information I gathered from the respective governmental and non-governmental bodies using the interview method, I have conducted focus group discussions with a small purposely-selected group of returnees in both sites. Two focus group discussions were held in each of the sites. The size of the discussants was eight in number (constituting four males and four females for each). The discussants were selected upon thorough

consultation with the local administrators and the residents' committee. They were selected on a number of criteria. One, the discussant has to be good enough in expressing and articulating his/her ideas. Two, the participants have to represent the diverse socio-economic, religious and other factors of the returnees in their respective areas.

Based on the above spelt out criteria, discussants were identified and focus group discussion timetables arranged. After brief orientation of the "game", this time the researcher has moderated the focus group discussion himself. What the researcher did was he came up with some already set out questions (but very flexible ones) and allowed the discussants to reflect and share their ideas about them. The discussion questions were presented in Tigigna and Tigre at Tekreriet and Ad-Ibrihim respectively. Fortunately, the researcher can speak both of the languages that are commonly used in those localities. In this way focus group discussion, as a data collection method, allowed the researcher to have subjective and insider's perspective of the returnees. That is, it provided me with insights about the people's shared understandings of their everyday life after the repatriation process. By acting as moderator in the focus group discussion, the researcher was able to understand and capture the rich, diverse and yet complex experiences of the research subjects.

c) Archival Documents

Aside from the aforementioned sources of data, various governmental and non-governmental documents have been looked at with the intention of collecting relevant statistical data and textual information regarding refugee returnees. Primarily, statistical data from ERREC and UNHCR were uncovered. Secondly, the financial budget pledged and donated as well as the amount that was finally allotted to the project from the international community was also looked at (CERA/GoE, 1995). By doing so, I was able to find out the amount and extent of financial and material help that was provided to returnees. Thirdly, academic and non-academic research projects that were conducted about the refugee regime in Eritrea were also accessed both in ERREC mini-library and RDC (Research and Documentation Centre). In this regard some evaluation reports conducted by government bodies as well as consultants were uncovered.

Finally, information gathered via interview was transcribed and analysed. As far as responses gathered using semi-structured interview and those data collected from archives are

concerned, they were thoroughly interpreted, analysed and presented in various forms. Upon thorough data analysis and interpretation collected via triangulation, relevant textual information has been presented by quoting whereas the more quantitative ones are presented using various statistical forms (mainly using tabulation).

1.7 Research Site

This research project was conducted in a newly born tiny African country-Eritrea (see Figure 1.1 in appendix 1). Even though the country has prepared several resettlement sites for refugee returnees in four administrative zones – namely Gash-Setit, Barka, Senhit and Sahel (see Figure 1.2 in appendix 2), for a number of reasons, the researcher was only able to investigate two areas in western Eritrea located within the Gash-Barka zone. These are Tekreriet and Ad-Ibrihim (see Figure 1.3 in appendix 3). These settlement sites are located adjacent to Agordat-Sawa seasonal road, and are around 20 km and 35 km way from Agordat city respectively.

The reasons that prompted me to conduct research in this area were diverse. Primarily, the researcher's familiarity with some of resettlement areas in the Gash-Barka zone attracted him to conduct his research in that administrative zone. On top of the personal choice of the researcher, the fact that Gash-Barka is "home" for almost 80% of refugee returnees (Kibreab et al, 2002b: 6) added another reason for choosing that zone.

With regard to the specific selection of the research area (i.e., Tekreriet and Ad-Ibrahim) within the Gash-Barka zone, it was not a result of coincidence. The fact that Gash-Barka zone was one of the most adversely hit by the 1998-2000 Ethio-Eritrean border conflict has greatly impacted on the livelihood of most of refugee returnees in that zone. Indeed they have once again come into a violent cycle of the massive displacement due to the Ethiopian occupation. Thus as the socio-economic condition of the majority of the returnees of these region has been severely affected by 'externalities,' the researcher felt that in order to assess the PPP, sites that were not relatively hit by the border conflict ought to be chosen. Besides that statistical comparison of the number of households who returned within the Barka area indicated that the majority were resettled at the Dige sub-zone. On the whole, resettlement sites in the Dige sub-zone were found fitting to my research agenda. Once again, though this sub-zone consists of three resettlement areas (Tekreriet, Ad-Ibrahim and Mogoraib), it is only in the first two

areas that returnees were repatriated under the PPP. In this way the third site, i.e., Mogoraib was cancelled, as its returnees were mainly second phase repatriates, predominantly those of 2001-2002.

1.8 Scope of the Study: Limitations vs. Delimitations

This research project poses the question: who should decide project planning targeting repatriation programs? Can returnees really be what they are (or what they could be) only via programs designed by other people (the so-called experts)? How participative should returnees be as end-beneficiaries of programs that govern their fate? How healthy is the overall relationship between the returnees and the stayees in resettlement areas? In investigating the socio-economic condition of Eritrean refugee returnees, answers are searched for these questions, as puzzling as they are. Responses to such questions are searched for from the vantage point of *functionalist perspective*, *decision-making processes* and *power-knowledge discourse*. This attempt, I hope, will considerably be welcomed not only by academics who are interested in refugee studies but also to policy-makers and humanitarian agencies who, by the very nature of their work, have a direct link with such segments of a population.

Another positive side of this thesis lies in its employment of triangulation approach that has generated rich information on the socio-economic condition of the returnees. Very few research studies on repatriates have used several data collection techniques to construct the socio-economic situation of repatriates. This study generates informative findings using several data sources.

Furthermore, most of the research conducted among Eritrean refugee returnees seems to be biased and distorted as it often tries to look at the supposedly 'successful resettlement sites.' The researchers seem to have neglected considering some resettlement areas. This thesis will consider a resettlement area that was often neglected by social researchers and (non-) governmental project evaluators.

Yet this research project has certain limitations that the reader has to take into account a priori. Primarily, the fact that this research investigation is a case study in selected resettlement sites might not represent the socio-economic condition of all repatriates through

out the country. Secondly, as the perception, attitudes and experiences of hosting populations (stayees) in the resettlement sites were unfortunately not included during my data collection, it appears to have left a gap in the construction of the reality. That is, with hindsight I have come to know my investigation of the social and economic relationship between the locals and the returnees was one sided, mainly from the latter groups' standpoint (though this was a bit compensated by the insightful information I collected from the interviews with officials and focus group discussion). Moreover, because the population size of the study was very small, it becomes problematic to make swift generalisations from this study. Therefore, conclusions drawn from this finding should be viewed with caution.

Another limitation of study lies in the technical problems that were encountered during the data collection process, particularly conducting interview schedules with prospective respondents. Indeed there are considerable difficulties that one might confront conducting research in refugee resettlement sites. One of the problems that this researcher faced is the absence of accurate current statistical data regarding refugee returnees in the settlement areas. The other problem has to do with the technical problem that we encountered in filling our interview schedules. In some cases, there were some intrusions by either family members or neighbours at the time of interviewing household heads. Although we have tried to the best of our capacity to give privacy to respondents, in some occasions things were running far beyond our control. My worry in some of the data collected under such environment is that the respondents might not have been responding openly. That is, I have a feeling that in some cases they might have been giving distorted information either for fear of the nearby person or to just please him/her. Explicitly, they might have given us "rose tinted answers." Luckily, experienced social researchers tell us that the presence of other people with respondents during data collection can serve as a check mechanism whereby respondents become compelled to be honest and frank (Kibreab, 1987:288-289).

Finally, though this thesis attempts to evaluate repatriation program and the subsequent socio-economic re-integration of refugee returnees in Eritrea (of course using case study), some caveats have to be considered. The problem inherent in judging socio-economic re-integration is very difficult. I believe that the data generated therein can give some scientific clues but not accurate and conclusive findings per se.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

Students of refugee studies have not yet sharpened their concepts. As Hein (1993:43-44) correctly observed, research on refugees is accumulated with minimal conceptual elaboration and is full of contested concepts that researchers employ interchangeably. This researcher also faced some difficulty sharpening his concepts. Even then, while some terms will be defined and explained in detail in the next chapters, here are some basic operational definitions employed in this dissertation.

- *Refugees*: are defined as forced migrants who have been compelled to leave their country or habitual residence either for fear of persecution, or more broadly, to escape an immediate or perceived threat of violence from a conflict under way.
- *Internally Displaced People (IDPs)*: connotes a segment of involuntary migrants who are dislocated from their usual residence either due to man-made and/or natural calamities. They are a special category of forced migrants who are compelled to leave their homes taking a flight to another district or region within their home country. Displaced persons stay in certain temporary places under subsidiary forms of protection and help either from national governments and/or international agencies (including NGOs).

Note: While IDPs have been used as synonym for refugees, in legal terms they are not. Irrespective of the degree in which these types of population movements substantially overlap, legally they are not used interchangeably. As the former do not cross national borders, they do not qualify for formal refugee status nor are they under the direct mandate of the UNHCR (Malki, 1995:502).

- *Repatriation*: refers to the act of returning to one's country of origin. It is the physical return (or 'homecoming') of refugees and/or immigrants to their country of origin usually through the help of UNHCR and other agencies.
- *(Re-) integration*: following Bulcha (1988) and Harrell-Bond (1986) 're-integration' will mean the harmonious co-existence of returnees and stayees with positive interaction and solidarity sharing the same resources - both economic and social. Technically speaking, it aims at bringing the *status quo ante* by bringing refugees back into the social, economic and political fabric of their original community.

➤ *Re-settlement*: refers to the fresh start of life of refugee returnees in their country of origin.

Aside from the above-mentioned conceptual definitions, the reader should be aware that the researcher has intermittently used terms such as displaced people to represent the refugees, returnees, IDPs, and deportees. Such people are also referred to as forced or involuntary migrants in this thesis. The term ‘stayees’ and ‘locals’ are also employed interchangeably to differentiate them from the returnees. Eventually, in some cases the term ‘repatriate’ is employed to refer to the returnee population.

1.10 Structure of the Study (Outline of the Dissertation)

This dissertation consists of five chapters. It is organised as follows:

Chapter two is about the world refugee problem. After scrutinising the nature, kinds and causes of migration, it attempts to look at the legal definition “refugee”. The chapter will end with a brief presentation of historical background to the Eritrean mass exodus and refugeeism. Chapter three highlights approaches dealing with the world refugee problems. After making a thorough examination of the three major approaches employed by the international community in dealing with the forced migrants, some discussions on the pros and cons of the various strategies about refugee problem is presented. The reader will also have a bird’s-eye-view account of the first Eritrean refugee repatriation identified as the PPP. In this sub-section the evolution, aims and challenges of the project are examined. Chapter four deals with the theoretical framework of the study. This section discusses how various functionalist socio-cultural theories in the migration studies can help us reconstruct the reality of social re-integration of returnees. This will be followed by Weber’s legal-rational authority and its concomitant bureaucratic decision-making as well as knowledge-power discourse in project planning and implementation inherent within refugee repatriation and reintegration programs. This is meant to weigh how participative were the prospective returnees in planning, designing and implementation of the repatriation project. How state and non-state agencies operate as “technologies of power” both during and after repatriation programs will be scrutinised in the same section. By questioning ‘whose knowledge counts in project planning,’ it will call for “*consultative or participatory approach*” as the way forward to *people-centred development*. Finally, the data analysis and interpretation section will be

addressed in chapter five. After presenting the challenges, constraints and prospects of Eritrea refugee repatriation, the thesis will close by highlighting some brief conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter Two: World Refugee Problem

Introduction:

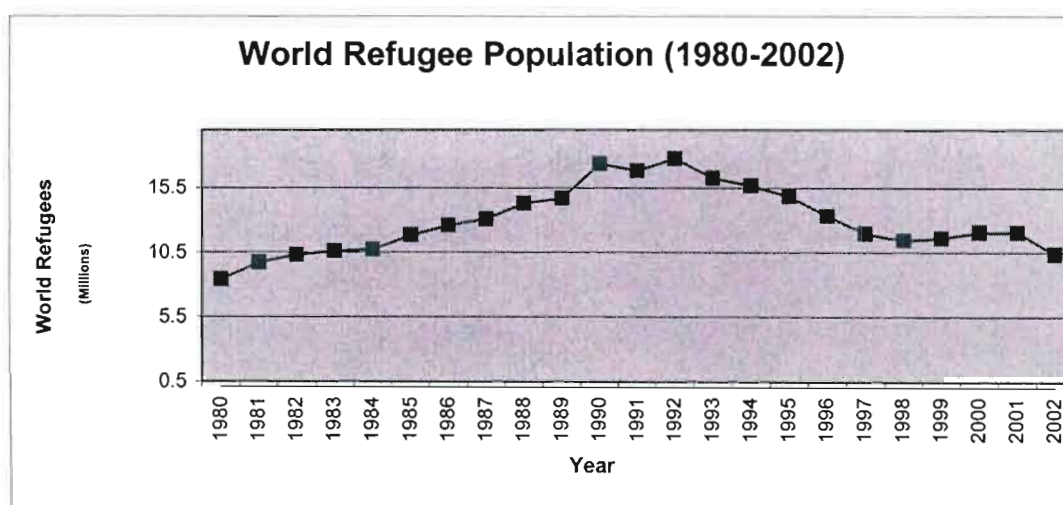
Historically humans have moved from one place to another for various reasons. International and internal migration, however, has particularly been centre stage in the 20th century, which in turn has paved the way in reshaping the contemporary world. These migrations have happened for both material and spiritual reasons and they do so both in bad and good times (Martin and Widgren, 1996). Some movements have been just in search of better pasture and fertile land for (agro-) pastoralists, whereas others were the result of inter/intra-state conflicts (EPLF, 1987:1).

Some population movements occurred to escape natural disasters (such as drought and famine, flood, earth quake) while others were in search of 'safe' havens from political persecution (perceived or actual threat). Still others become forced to become part of a Diaspora merely because of economic hardships in their home country. Mass flight for political reasons is also the most common source of forced migration often generating what some call "political refugees." Religious conflicts induced by political decisions also constituted another source of forced migration (Gordenker, 1987). Since the reasons that prompt mass exodus are as varied and complex as they are, they deserve special treatment. I will devote part of this chapter towards that end. Whatever might have been the causes and consequences of population migration, however, one thing is clear: the kind, proportion and degree of people's movement vary across history, time and space. Certainly, the commencement of transatlantic migration in the 20th century has particularly facilitated mass movement reaching its unprecedented level after the end of the two World Wars. These and other factors have turned the globe to witness rapid population movements both within and across national boundaries. That is why some writers have gone so far as to describe the current era as "the age of migration" (Miller and Castles, 1998).

In this "age of migration", we observe an unprecedented spatial and social displacement of people around the world (Malki, 1995:495-496). Among the world's migrants, forced non-economic migrants are increasing at a fast rate. Nowadays, millions of refugees of a "card-carrying second class sort", clumped in camps or towns, constitute a "poignant component" in countries of the developing South (Bakewell, 1999; Woldegabriel, 1996; Gordenker, 1987).

In the last two decades or so, the world has witnessed a startling rise in refugee populations,¹ reaching its climax in 1992 and then gently declining from then onwards (see Graph 3.1 below). USCR (2001), for example, estimated the number of world refugees in 1994 at 16 million, slightly above the UNHCR estimation (i.e., 15.7 million). Moreover, at the end of 2002 we have had upward of 10 million refugees worldwide and the number continually fluctuates. Frustrated by the negligible changes that the UN repatriation programs could bring in the overall world refugees, some have even gone to describe it as a “failing policy” (Toft, n.d).

Graph1: World Refugee Population (1980-2002)



Source: UNCR (2003)

Though all world regions have, in some ways, been affected by massive human displacement tragedy, either in producing or hosting this special class of migrants, the magnitude however differs substantially from one region to another. Indeed, many seasoned observers assert that the world’s migrant population is not evenly distributed throughout the globe; it is relatively concentrated in a few regions (Martin and Widgren, 1996:15-17). Many commentators believe Africa is often the number one continent that is often hit by the drastic population movements (Kibreab, 1987; Bariaghaber, 1999).

What is more worrisome about ‘the globe on the move’ is most scholars are pessimistic about what the future holds for international and internal migrants (be they forced or voluntary). They assert that in the coming decades of the new millennium, there will be no end in sight to the current wave of international migrants. Uneven population growth and disparities in job

opportunities among countries, in addition to civil strife and persecution, are likely to produce international migrants and refugees for the foreseeable future. Well into the 21st century, this problem will pose major challenges both to the sending and receiving countries (Martin and Widgren, 1996:2-3; Findley, 2001:29; Zlotnik, 2001:230-233). With a more pessimistic view, a prominent scholar on international organisations has stated:

While the number of refugees in a locality may wax and wane, the total estimates have remained remarkably stable for several years. Indeed, refugee populations seem likely to be a permanent feature of an international landscape already disfigured by the machinery of war (Gordenker, 1987:11).

Inherent in such projections is that despite the fact that the refugee regime survived the two World Wars and the 40 years of Cold War tensions, refugees and internal displacement of people whether due to civil strife, outright inter-state conflict and/or other natural disasters will continue to be with us all; hardly would they be abated shortly. Indeed, it is projected that the first decades of this millennium will witness the recurrence of human forced displacement, whether as a continuation of past antagonisms or the eruption of new ones (Martin and Widgren, 1996). The same seems to hold true even for economically motivated voluntary migrants given the fact that there continues to be unbridled economic disparity between the 'core' and the 'periphery', as we are told by dependency (world systems) theorists. Champions of the latter idea claim that the political economy of poverty and underdevelopment, which is 'the result of fundamental structural disorders in an integrated and interdependent world system' (Schultheis, 1989:13), is responsible for contemporary forced displacement. Hence, dependency theorists envisage that owing to declining standards of living and widespread hunger in the "developing" world, economic neo-colonialism will continue to perpetuate mass human movement from the poor South to the rich countries of the North. And the causes and consequences of such movement had and will continue to have economic, political, social and demographic dimensions for African countries (Adepoju, 1988: 34).

2.1 Refugees in Africa

In the past three decades Africa has witnessed unparalleled involuntary mass movement. Some have even equated 'refugees and Africa as synonymous,' and described Africa as 'a

continent on the move' (Schultheis, 1989) or as a "refugee continent" (Rogers, 1992:1117). For decades, forced migration of people in Africa accounted for the largest share of all international migration and constitutes an increasing share of current flows. For example, while in 1990 Africa had around 130 million lifetime migrants accounting for 20% of its total population (Findley, 2001:275), in January 1st 2003 the continent had around 3.3 million refugees (UNCR, 2003:4). Africa also witnessed one of the world's largest sudden massive flights of two million Rwandans within few months of 1994. Astonished by these refugee exoduses, typical of the African continent, Adelman and Sorenson (1994) have aptly stated:

In no other continent is there such vast suffering. In no other continent do we find greater generosity in the local assistance given to refugees by surrounding states.... In no other continent are the needs so vast and the capacity to assist so meagre (Adelman and Sorenson, 1994: iiiv).

While the phenomenon of refugeeism is not unique to Africa, what makes it distinct is that almost every country on the continent has at some time been either a producer or a destination for refugees, or both (Collins, 1996:11). Sub-Saharan Africa in general and the Horn of Africa in particular, more than any other region, have experienced a long history of (forced) migrations, resulting in an appalling magnitude of refugees. The reasons have been as varied as the specific experiences of the constituent countries, and include: social conflicts and natural disasters, forced relocation programs, inter-state and intra-state conflicts, aggression, and repression carried out by dictatorial regimes (Barton, 1984:20; Bulcha, 1988:15; Schultheis, 1989:10-11; EPLF, 1987:2; Hodges, 1984:5; Lassailly-Jacob, 1994:211). Therefore, Africa's refugee crisis, as one scholar put it, is "a symptom of the more general political, economic, ecological, and social crises with which the continent is gripped" (Kibreab, 1987:3). It is also a vivid indication of "institutional and structural failure in the modern African society and the world of which they are a part" (Schultheis, 1989:4).

According to Lassailly-Jacob (1994:211), in the late 1980s, one African migrant out of five was a refugee; and at least half of the world's refugees were located in Africa. Similarly, Winter (1994:163) also states between 1980 and 1989, the number of refugees in Africa increased by 25%, from 3.6 to 4.5 million. Though Africa has somehow reduced its mass refugee exodus for some time in the early 1990s, the disintegration of Siad Barre's regime in Somalia in the same period continues to produce large refugee population (estimated upward

to quarter to a million) migrating to neighbouring countries. Within the same region, again the civil war between the SPLA-led rebel forces in the South and the Northern-dominated Sudanese government has forced out an estimated 430,000 Sudanese people from their homes (UNHCR, 2003). These and many other similar human tragedies compounded within the continent still tend to trigger persistent mass flight in the continent. A glance at Table 3.1 below can testify to the skewed distribution of world refugees throughout the continents.

Table 3.1: Percentage of Distribution of the Number of Refugees by region, 1981-1996

Region of Asylum	Early 1981	Early 1985	Early 1990	Early 1995	Early 1999
Africa	44.6	28.0	30.9	46.6	28.5
Asia	27.7	47.7	45.6	34.6	41.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	2.4	3.7	8.1	0.7	0.6
North America and Oceania	14.5	13.1	9.4	4.7	5.7
Total Numbers (millions)	8.2	10.5	14.9	14.5	11.5

Source: Zlotnik, 2001:245

Within Africa itself there is a clear variation among the regions that constitute the continent; the hardest hit being the Great Lakes region and the Horn of Africa. The rest are relatively stable.² While West Africa had been known for its relative stability and few refugee outflows, as winds of political upheaval begun to blow around that region in the early 1990s, the trend has abruptly changed. The eruption of war in 1989 in Liberia and internal conflict within Sierra Leone in 1991 has altered the human stability that the region used to enjoy. These wars have produced a considerable number of refugees; at its inception in 1991 some 740, 000 Liberians and by 1997 around 800,000 in Sierra Leone. As of early 1999 the two countries had some 257,000 and 407,000 refugees respectively scattered around the neighbouring countries (Zlotnik, 2001:246-247).

Finally, given the existing socio- political and environmental situations, many seem to be very pessimistic about the future refugee trend in the developing world (Anthony, 1991; Schultheis, 1989; Toft, n.d). Zlotnik's (2001) observation is pertinent in this regard:

Although regional (*and international*) institutions, particularly in Africa, have become proactive in containing conflict and working toward the peaceful resolution of internal (*and inter-state*) disputes, success has been limited and population displacement or outright refugee outflows continue to be common. Over the medium-term future, therefore, involuntary migration will likely continue, especially in the contexts where the process of nation building is still at its early stage (Zlotnik, 2001:249-50, *my italics*).

Even if the future of African voluntary and forced migration seems to be gloomy, it does not imply that African governments and the international community are watching the situation from afar. In fact, the worries are so high that various conferences, seminars and discussions by many concerned authorities have been held and continue to do so in the search for mitigating this problem. In this regard, many underscore that a solution to refugee problems in Africa could only be within reach when the international community at large and African governments work hand in hand to address the root cause of the continent's refugee exodus (Kibreab, 1987:4-5). Similarly, others assert that in as much as the refugee problem is the result of internal situations of African countries, so too the international community is to be blamed in many respects for perpetuating the problem. Thus they are of the opinion that the root causes of the problem could be solved if and only if various authorities of "good will" genuinely work together towards that end (Zolberg, et al., 1986).

2.2 Migration in Africa: historical overview

In Africa, both voluntary and involuntary international and intra-national migration has been a common feature of the continent for too long. Many social scientists accentuate that the migration phenomenon in Africa can be better understood through the lens of political and historical evolution of African societies and the process of nation-building that the continent is passing through (Collin, 1996; Anthony, 1991; Ageeb, 1990; Rogge and Akol, 1989; Schultheis, 1989; Adepoju, 1988; Bulcha; 1988; Kibreab; 1987). Some writers explain African migration through the lens of colonialism and its lasting effect on the continent. In

doing so, they examine the continent's migration trends in the context of pre-colonialism, colonialism and post-colonialism. The following is a brief overview of those explanations:

2.2.1 Pre-colonial Movements

According to many scholars, large-scale movements have long been common in Africa (Adelman and Sorenson, 1994; Bulcha, 1988). As Bakewell (1999:13) correctly observed, "migration is a social norm and livelihood strategy among peoples throughout the continent, ranging from hunter-gatherers and nomadic pastoralists to shifting cultivators and labour migrants." Primordially involuntary population movements, declares Bulcha (1988), were caused by socio-historical dynamics internal to societies originating and located within the African continent.

Academics thus attribute African pre-colonial population movements to socio-political, cultural and ecological conditions of that time within the continent. Recurrent natural disasters, internecine warfare, and the search for farmland or colonisation in the form of territorial expansion played a significant role in mass displacement in several regions of Africa (Bulcha, 1988:18). Other population movements in the continent resulted from the nomadic way of life of people, trade activities and pilgrims. Prior to European contact, Africans have relocated themselves to maintain ecological balance, to seek more conducive environments and to achieve better conditions of living (Schultheis, 1989:3). Adepoju (1988:36) succinctly noted, "African population movement of the pre-colonial era was unstructured in its nature, occurred in groups, was not entirely international in the traditional sense, and the migrants were demographically undifferentiated." Such kinds of mass exodus were common in the continent with the inception of the inhumane slave trade around the middle of 15th century. With the advent of European mercantilism, millions of Africans were hunted down and transported to the Americas and the Caribbean to fill in the labour vacuum in the then European colonies. This has resulted not only in "forced exportation" of the able-bodied manpower of the continent, but more sadly to massive human displacement within it too.

2.2.2 Colonialism and Displacement:

While it would be undeniable that the early 20th century partition of contemporary African countries by European colonialists has brought some degree of temporary peace and stability up until their stay in their respective colonies, the very act of colonialism had both immediate and long-term negative consequences among Africans. In terms of its immediate effect, in the words of Winter (1994:160), “colonialism stunted and disfigured natural social evolution and imposed too many borders” which lumped various ethnic groups into “nationalities” without due consideration of their commonalities vs. differences. This had bred conflicts and mass human displacement (and continues to do so). The anti-colonial wars of the 1950s and 1960s also fuelled huge disruptions and population displacements in the continent.

Another colonial effect is that of transformation of African economies – acts that lead to the displacement of Africans from their homes in their search of labour either in the colonial plantations or mines (usually for both purposes) (Sorenson, 1994:176-77). Historical records show that the colonialists used various coercive measures and/or incentives, both explicitly and implicitly, to secure the quality and quantity of the human labour they demanded (Adepoju, 1988:36). The Bantustan or ethnic homeland policy of the Apartheid South Africa that has generated millions of internal displacees¹⁸ is a case in point. Anthony (1991) also mentions that the French direct rule in francophone Africa, the British indirect rule in Anglophone Africa and the paternalistic kind of colonial administration by the Germans, the Belgians and the Portuguese in central Africa, have created immature colonial state building in the continent which in turn brought about exclusionary politics, induced internal conflicts and refugee flight both during and immediately after the European colonial era (Anthony, 1991: 556-86).

2.2.3 Post-Colonial African Population Movements:

With regard to the long-term effect of colonialism on African population movement, some of the literature on African refugees emphasise that “yesterday’s colonial policies and the boundaries that they imposed are to be held responsible for today’s refugees” (Collins, 1996:14). That is, African refugee movements are mainly associated with continued warfare and political violence (Bariaghaber, 1997:28) that have a direct and indirect link with the colonialists’ acts and deeds in the continent. Accordingly, many writers underscore that

colonialism caused refugee flows of varying size at various phases in Africa's history. Primarily, as the conquest and partition of African land by the European colonialists gave little consideration to the social composition and ethnic structures, it has led to dislocation and incurable massive human displacement. Secondly, the rising tide of the struggle for independence in 1950s and 1960s caused massive refugee flows in many parts of the continent. In 1960s and 1970s this was followed by a series of conflicts between the colonial armies and the Africans who were calling for their independence (Bulcha, 1988; Collins 1996). Bulcha (1988:18-19) succinctly reiterates: "Decolonisation brought new and often powerful political conflicts into play and released older hostilities, thus creating mass displacements."

However, it should also be fair to acknowledge that aside from the direct impact of colonialists' acts on African population movements, other factors such as natural calamities, religious pilgrims, human mismanagement, population pressure and Africans' movement from one area to another area in search of fertile agricultural land as well as in search of water and pasture for livestock still persists contributing both to internal and cross national boundaries. Indeed, someone in a somewhat overstated stance maintained that many African refugees are not fleeing political persecution but are moving in response to environmental and/or economic pressure (Collins, 1996). The very disparity in economic development achieved between and within African countries also continues to incite people's movements.

That is why Collins (1996) has correctly stated that while we cannot completely dismiss the negative impact of colonialism as a contributing factor to African refugeeism, the application of the "colonial explanation" to such kinds of migration does not, in the end, shed much light on the real reasons for these migrations. Thus, following Kibreab (1985), he concludes the causes and solutions of refugee migrations in African lie in the complex social and economic implications manifest in every day life of the continent (Collins, 1996: 16).

2.3 Types of international migration

To understand the nature of migration and its causes, it is important first to distinguish between the various kinds of migrants in a broader sense of the concept. This is because various writers employ many concepts indiscriminately which often leads to some confusion and misunderstanding.

2.3.1 *Economic vs. Non-economic Migrants:*

According to Martin and Widgren (1996:7), migrants can be either of “economic” or “non-economic.” While the former are “voluntary” migrants who move from their country of origin mainly for better economic opportunities, the latter are involuntary migrants who are often forced to leave their country because of life threatening situations. For economic migrants the decision to migrate, as Kibreab (1987:24) believed, is based on the desire to positively improve one’s conditions of existence. They are voluntary migrants who exercise some degree of freedom of choice in moving to another location. Thus economic migrants (or “economic refugees” as some prefer to call them) are often in a better position to analyse existing politico-economic and environmental situations enabling them to make choices regarding when and where to go. Their flight is often not abrupt and panicking as they can prepare their departure by selling their assets, selecting their destination, and proceeding through ordinary means of transport.

Non-economic migrants, by contrast, are those forced migrants who flee their customary ‘home’ compelled by *political* (usually for fear of present or future lives because of deteriorating human rights in their home country) or *environmental* crises. As such non-economic migrants, unlike their counterparts, migrate on the desire to escape from drastically deteriorating conditions of existence (Kibreab, 1987:24). Most often they have little choice (some times not all) about who should flee, where to flee, when, how and who would help them get settled. While non-economic migrants as any other forced migrants seek economic opportunities, like voluntary economic migrants, such issues often tend to be of secondary concern. Often priority is given to a safe and secure place to stay. In this way, non-economic forced migrants tend to prefer adaptive and flexible solutions by maintaining family security on the one hand, and pursuing jobs and income to sustain their life, on the other hand.

Additionally, ‘non-economic’ migrants often tend to lack the resources and networks that are enjoyed by economic migrants. These factors could be attributed to a number of factors: the asylees’ legal status in the host country; xenophobic attitudes of host communities towards them; distance and sense of “otherness” between the non-economic forced migrant and the hosting community; unfair concealment of these segment of migrants in certain specified settlement areas with little freedom of movement and economic opportunities as well as the very non-economic migrants’ lack of money for financing new ventures or travel (Findley,

2001:286-287). International labour migrants such as “guest workers” and “transient workers” are good examples of economic migrants. Non-economic migrants might include IDPs, evacuees, and refugees, to mention a few.

2.3.2 Internal vs International Migrants

Other writers distinguish between internal and international migration as two distinct and independent phenomena (Adepoju, 1988). Conceptually, the former connotes the people’s movement without crossing national boundaries while the latter involves cross-country movement. Adepoju (1988:40-41) asserts internal/intra-national migration could be of either of the following nature: rural to rural, rural to urban, urban to rural, or urban to urban with the dominant migration stream in Africa and other developing world being directed towards the capital city.

Stern (1988:30-31), alternatively, believes that there exists an inverse relationship between the intensity of the internal and external migration in accordance with the opportunities existing inside and outside a nation-state. By that I suppose he is referring to a situation whereby, if people are able to meet their material and non-material needs within their country, there is a less likelihood for them to flee their homes and vice-versa. Likewise, Adepoju (1988) believes that international and internal voluntary migrations are complementary and indeed supplement each other. He argues that primarily, both derive from a complex of interrelated social and economic factors, with more weight on the migrant’s search for economic well-being. Secondly, from a policy perspective, development normally has the effect of initially stimulating both internal and international migration in the short run. Finally, what distinguishes involuntary movement of people from voluntary international and national migration is the fact that in the former political factors are more at play as resultant factors than economic inspirations (Adepoju, 1988: 38).

2.3.3 Voluntary vs. Involuntary Migrants

Still others prefer to distinguish migration as either voluntary or involuntary. To them, the former migrants are exclusively economic migrants who move based on their whim. The latter, in contrast, are non-economic forced migrants who leave their homes for reasons other than economic motivations. Indeed, it is “the reluctance to uproot oneself, and the absence of

positive original motivations to settle elsewhere, which characterise all refugee decisions and distinguish refugees (*as involuntary migrants*) from voluntary migrants” (Kunz, 1973 quoted in Bariaghaber, 1999: 603, emphasis added). Whilst refugees’ involuntary decision to migrate is often done hastily because of factors beyond their control, it would be a mistake to assume that they take the decision to seek asylum carelessly. It rather tends to be based on subjective and objective criteria of evaluation if the situation permits. Even then, forced migrants’ decision to seek asylum becomes worrisome because they are neither sure of the risks involved in their trek to asylum, nor of the attitude of the host society towards their presence. Other worries refugees have to come to terms with are objective and include the availability of aid, schools, medical care and opportunities for employment in exile (Bariaghaber, 1999:604).

While the circumstances of non-economic involuntary migrants’ flight may have been vastly different from those accompanying economic migrants, the forced migrants share many of the motives of voluntary migrants: establishing a new home, building a community, staying healthy, becoming economically self-sufficient. Unlike voluntary migrants, however, the forced migrants face an uphill battle in re-establishing their livelihood. Lastly, Findley (2001) concludes that the distinction between economic vs. non-economic as well as forced vs. voluntary migrant is often blurred in developing countries of the South owing to the complexities that are inherent in the factors that lead to international migration. The writer asserts that such situations are common because voluntary migrants can move precipitously in the face of a crop failure or localised crisis creating some kind of voluntary-forced migrants (Findley, 2001:275-299). As the zones enmeshed by persistent political upheavals are also those with economic or environmental crisis, they often tend to generate what some call ‘reactive’ migrants.³

All in all, it becomes imperative to recall Kelly’s conclusion: “How one defines *and conceives* a refugee implicitly *necessitates* an understanding of the determinants of international migration generally and in what way refugees are distinct from other migrants” (quoted in Schultheis, 1989:8, my italics). Since my concern is that of refugees, in the next section I will focus on examining the causal factors for refugeeism. But prior to examining the causes of refugee exodus, we shall first define ‘who a refugee is’ and look at different typologies of refugees.

2.4 Defining “Refugee”

It is now worth pausing to examine who is a “refugee” and in what sense does a refugee differ from the other kind of migrant. While refugee movement is part of a general population movement, refugees constitute a special category of migrants. Generally, refugees are those who flee human-made disasters. They are unique migrants who are forced to leave their homes because of political events in their country of origin. Unlike voluntary economic migrants, they move against their impulse for fear of the threatened consequences of staying in their homes. It is not in any way economic attractions of the neighbouring countries or relief aid therein per se that makes them migrate involuntarily. Rather it is the awesome uncertainty and insecurity that is prevailing in their country that ‘pushes’ them to flee. The creation of “refugees” – as the concept is now understood – is therefore political (Gordenker, 1987:12-13; Kibreab, 1987:5; Toft n.d:3; Hein, 1993:44; Malki, 1995:513).

2.4.1 Legal Definition of “Refugees”

Though the problem of refugees has existed since antiquity, nation-states began to deal with this disorderly involuntary mass exodus after World War I. The birth of the “refugee” as a special social category and the first attempt by the international community to deal with its problems was initially designed as a response to European political upheavals and its subsequent massive human dislocation of the two great European wars (Malki, 1995:497-498). Thus, though contemporary *international refugee regime* – the set of norms, laws and institutions, designed to protect and assist refugee who have crossed international border – dates back to the 1920s, it was established in the early post-World War II period and further developed thereafter (Rogers, 1992:1114)

According to Collins (1996:19), three important legal instruments, two from the UN and one from OAU govern the manner in which (African) refugees are governed, what assistance they are to receive and how they should be resettled. Though the 1951 UN Convention has been improved in the 1967 *UN Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, for the sake of convenience I will consider here the former document. Thus, in trying to look at how each organisation defined refugees and why, only one document from each respective organisation will be addressed here.

A. The United Nations Statute:

According to Kibreab (1987), on 3 December 1949, a decision was passed by the General Assembly to create a temporary and non-operational Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees to be operational as of 1951. The Statute of the Office was adopted on 14 December 1950 with two major mandates: to provide international protection of refugees, and to assist asylum countries and private organisations linked with refugees in their search for permanent solutions – mainly repatriation and assimilation – to the refugee problem (Schultheis, 1989:7). Art.1 (2) of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees thus defined a “refugee” as:

“...every person who, 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, ...” (quoted in Malki, 1995:501).

B. The 1969 ‘OAU Convention Governing to the Specific Aspects of the Problem of Refugees in Africa’:

African countries as the main bearers of forced mass dislocation due to the ongoing liberation struggles felt that there were some specifics to the problems of African refugees. They contended that these peculiarities were neither given room by the 1951 UN Convention nor explicitly addressed in its subsequent Protocol. Actually their claim was justifiable given the fact that it is problematic to define and classify refugees in Africa. This is merely because the causes for refugee exodus in Africa are so diverse and intermingled. Thus, in 1969 the OAU passed a regional supplementary convention known as the ‘OAU Convention Governing to the Specific Aspects of the Problems of Refugees in Africa’ reflecting the special problems in Africa. While this Convention acknowledges the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees, Art.1 (2) of the 1969 OAU’s sixth session tries to overcome the inherent restrictive nature of the definitions of the 1951 UN Convention by defining “refugee” as:

“Every person who, owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination, or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or whole of his country of origin

or nationality, is compelled to leave his place in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality”⁴ (quoted in Collins, 1996:23).

Whilst the 1969 OAU Convention affirms that “[t]he grant of asylum to refugees is a peaceful and humanitarian act and shall not be regarded as an unfriendly act by any Member States” (quoted in Rogers, 1992:1117), for political reasons it is not often straightforward and easy for an African forced migrant to get refugee status. If the diplomatic relations of the asylum country and that of the migrant’s home government are tense, the former tends to give refugee status easily to embarrass the latter and vice-versa.

At any rate, irrespective of the time and the perspectives that the above-mentioned two documents were produced, they share some commonalities. These are: 1) both documents set out to provide a near “universal” definition of refugees; 2) both the UN 1951 and the OAU 1969 Convention leave the determination of the status of the refugee to the discretion of the ‘contracting state’; 3) the right of refugees to determine how and when they should return home is clearly stated in both of the two documents;⁵ and, finally, each document has clauses that affect the status, basic rights and protection of every refugee (Collins, 1996:19).

Apart from that, the two conventions have received mild criticisms from scholars. Many commentators say that the 1951 UN definition suffers some defects. First, they charge that it was Euro-American centred and time bound (Rogers, 1992:1115-17). That is, they argue that as the definition used in the 1951 UN Convention emerged in a particular set of conditions, it was deliberately narrow in terms of standard of recognition and exclusionary in terms of expectations concerning future refugee flows. It erroneously viewed refugees as a one-time problem requiring a one-time solution. Indeed, during the resolution of the 1951 UN Convention, the refugee phenomenon was, by default, assumed to cease to exist after World War II. Secondly, the 1951 UN definition has a weakness that can be exploited when migrants have a less founded “...fear of persecution...” that allows them to be more easily excluded from official international recognition and its benefits,⁶ should a host nation wish to exclude them. To complicate the problem, some criticise the subjective phrase of “well-founded fear of being persecuted” (Schultheis, 1989:8). Thirdly, the definition used by the 1969 OAU African Refugee Convention only emphasises the narrowness of the concept defined earlier by the UN General Assembly. In this way, some argue that either of the approaches excludes some contemporary situations in which those affected believe their

existence to be threatened and consequently take flight. In that regard Schultheis criticised the UNHCR mandate for excluding three vulnerable groups: 1) the IDPs who are unprotected in their own country and providing protection only for those who crossed international boundary; 2) failing to consider victims of military operations and civil conflicts; and 3) individuals and groups who are systematically excluded from economic resources and political rights in their country (Schultheis, 1989: 9-10). Fourthly, while refugees in the sense of UN definitions result mainly from programmed actions deliberately taken by governments, the simultaneous or subsequent movement of broader categories of people who differ from refugees only in legal theory rather than their actual circumstances may be excluded from international concern (Gordenker, 1987:64). That is, the OAU Convention, like the UN Convention and Protocol does not provide recognition to IDPs though there has been slight adjustment to this position at the international level under the umbrella of “people of concern” (Collins, 1996:21).

Whilst both of these conventions are also charged with political and ideological tones in the formulation of the international refugee documents (Schulthein, 1989:7), relatively the definition of the 1969 OAU Convention has received wide admiration for its extended definition that goes well beyond the narrower reference of the 1951 UN Convention by including people who flee from war or disturbance and seek refuge outside their country. Moreover, the clause providing status for those fleeing events gravely disturbing public order, has provided Africans with the most liberal definition of ‘refugee’ in the world (Adelman and Sorenson, 1994: x).

2.5 Typologies of Refugees

The UN identifies four groups of refugees, namely: a) *statute refugees* – those people who became refugees before January 1951; b) *convention refugees (de jure)* – those refugees who are recognised by governments in conformity with the 1951 Convention; c) *mandate refugees* – refers to those who are recognised by the UNHCR alone in accordance with its mandates; and d) *asylum seekers* – are those people who have not yet been granted refugee status (UNHCR, 1995). Several writers underscore that there are some further distinctions within the broad category of persons identified as “refugees”. Following is a brief look at some of the common classifications of refugees.

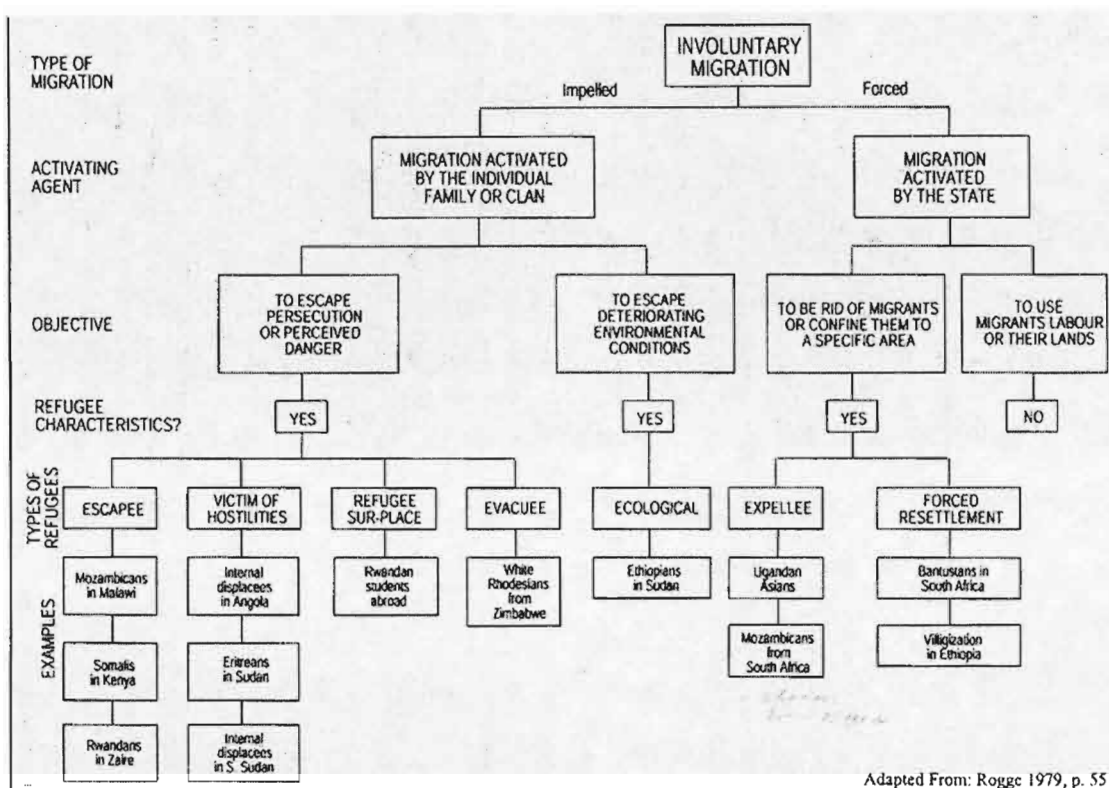
2.5.1 Rogge's (1979) Typology of (African) Refugees

According to Rogge (n.d), the diverse flight-inducing causal factors in Africa have created a wide array of 'refugees,' each of which possesses specific characteristics and have distinct needs with differing response strategies. He has identified seven groups of refugees or involuntary migrants, who possess distinct 'refugee like' characteristics. Following one of his undated paper, these are:

- 1) *Escapees*: anticipatory migrants who leave before a conflict directly embroils them;
- 2) *Victims of hostilities*: acute migrants who depart in the midst of a conflict;
- 3) *Refugee-sur-place*: migrants who become refugees after their departure because a changing political circumstances make their return dangerous;
- 4) *Evacuees*: migrants who depart after the event because they are unable to reconcile themselves with changing circumstances;
- 5) *Expellees*: migrants forced to move by the state;
- 6) *Ecological Refugees*: where the cause is natural rather than man-made disasters; and
- 7) *Forced Resettlement*: where the state compels people to relocate against their will within the national territory (Rogge, n.d: 7-8).

In more systematic and capturing way, Rogge (1979) has built an easy to understand typology of involuntary migrants. According to Collins (1996:17), Rogge derived his typology of (African) refugees based upon an examination of the activating agent for the refugee migration, the objective of the migration, and whether the migrants possess refugee characteristics. As shown in figure 2.1 in the next page, (Collins, 1996:18), Rogge initially identifies two classes of involuntary migration: *forced* and *impelled*.⁷ The former refers to involuntary migrants who are expelled from their area by an external force such as the government. Here the people have absolutely no personal choice in the decision-making of the migration. The latter, refers to involuntary migration whereby the migrants do retain some degree of choice regarding their possible flight. According to Collins (1996:17-19), most, but not all African refugees fall into the impelled category. Furthermore, in terms of their legal status, political refugees are more likely to obtain official international recognition than "ecological refugees."

Figure 2.1: Rogges' (1979) typology of (African) migrants



Source, Collins (1996)

Similarly, Astrid Suhke (1981) has devised another typology of refugee movements depending on an analysis of different forms of conflicts. Following Schultheis (1989:6) they are presented in table 2.2 on the next page.

2.5.2 Urban vs. Rural Refugees:

Chambers (1980) and Bulcha (1988) also distinguish between “urban” and “rural” refugees. Simply, while the former are those refugees who reside in urban areas, the latter refers to those in rural areas. Chambers (1988) maintains that though rural refugees may have originated in urban areas, and vice versa, the great majority of rural refugees are rural in origin. He further separated rural refugees into those in *organised settlements* or camps (what Bulcha, 1988:30, called systematic settlements) and those who are *self-settling*. Self-settled refugees (also identified as ‘spontaneous refugees’) in turn may be either *assisted* or *unassisted*. Based on his field research, Chambers (1980) concluded that many of the rural African refugees who are self-settled are probably worse off than has been commonly supposed. Moreover, he bitterly stated that self-settled rural refugees, though numerous, have

Table 2.2: Forms of conflicts and typologies of refugee movements

R. No	Forms of conflict	Examples of movement
1	Independence struggle	Algeria and Angola, and Eritrea in Ethiopia
2	Ethnic conflict, with autonomous and separatist dimension	Biafra in Nigeria
3	Internal ethnic conflict unrelated to separatist or autonomous struggles	Burundi, Rwanda
4	Class conflict	Kampuchea
5	Inter-elite power struggles	-
6	State terrorism	Haiti under Duvalier, some Latin American countries
7	International wars (e.g. World War II and the compounding struggles with external intervention)	Vietnam and Afghanistan

Source: Schultheis, 1989:6

generally been neglected by international, national and regional agencies that were mainly established to look after them. He attributes the situation of systematic ignorance about self-settled rural refugees to a number of highly intertwined factors, including: urban and elite biases, project biases, dry season biases, political and diplomatic factors, remoteness, low profile and political impotence of rural refugees (Chambers, 1980: 5-12).

2.5.3 Kunz's (1981) Classification of Refugees

Based on refugees' attitudes towards their displacement, Kunz (1981) identifies three distinct groups of refugees, namely: First, *majority-identified refugees*: those refugees whose opposition to political and social events at home is shared by their compatriots, both refugees and those who remain in home areas. As these refugees retain a strong attachment to both the feeling of homeland and to the people who did not flee, it can be said that they are more likely to be repatriated. According to Bariaghaber (1997:29), Africa's refugees are predominantly 'majority identified national refugees' who flee in massive numbers as a reaction to a situation which they perceive to be intolerable. These refugees hardly prefer to return home unless the causal factor is eliminated, however. The Eritrean refugees in Eastern Sudan fall in this category. Second, *events-related refugees*: refugees who have left their home areas because of active or latent discrimination against the group to which they belong. Frequently they retain little interest in what occurs in their former homes once they have left. As these are

people who have been subjected to discrimination and often – outright violence at their home country, their feelings towards returning home are jeopardised by the unsafe conditions that await them. Thus, their desire to repatriate can only be aroused providing there is substantial change at home. The 1994 Hutu-Tutsi ethnic conflict in Rwanda and Burundi and its subsequent mass displacement are good examples of events-related refugees. Third, *self-alienated refugees*: refugees who decide to leave their home country for a variety of individual reasons. They are people who feel alienated from their society by some personal philosophy. While this category constitutes a minor scale in the larger refugee picture and is more relevant to other areas of the world than to Africa, there are reported cases of this kind. For example, many of the refugees who fled South Africa to participate in the fight against apartheid are a case in point, as are the Jehovah's Witnesses who have been self-alienated in Malawi in the 1960s and 1970s (Collins, 1996:11-12).

2.6 Causes of World Refugeeism

That people migrate from one place to another for various reasons is an-all-too-common knowledge. While there is a general consensus among a number of scholars that indicate that at the heart of voluntary internal and international migration, *prima facie*, lies migrants' desire for economic well-being (Adepoju, 1998:37), the issue becomes more complex and intricate when it comes to analysing the causes of forced non-economic migration, i.e. refugees. Malki (1995:496) asserts that forced or involuntary population movements, while all displaced, are qualitatively diverse groups who find themselves in varying situations and predicaments owing to the intricate causal factors that engendered their movement. Hence, it is worth examining why people cross international borders and head for an alien land. The reasons are many and differ from person to person as well as whether the migrant leaves his/her homeland for a temporary or permanent asylum (Gordenker, 1987:62). Some writers try to present causes of migration in a general way with the intent of model construction while others give detailed or specific features in analysing migration-inducing factors.

2.6.1 Explanations of Forced Migration

According to Schultheis (1989) some researchers attribute forced displacement to one or more of the following: a) dissolution of a century of colonial rule; b) post-independent re-alignment of political and economic forces; c) misguided development policies; d)

bureaucratic ineptitude and corruption; and e) unfavourable climate and weather conditions. Others, namely economists and demographers, employ *equilibrium theory* to explain population movements. Its proponents hold the view that migrants make migration choices depending on a calculus of personal economic gain. Hence they view migrants as “opportunists” who make rational choices in their decision to migrate elsewhere (Schultheis, 1989:5).

E.F Kunz (1973) was another early theorist who systematically attempted to analyse general migration trends and the various forces acting on the migrant through the lens of what he called “push - pull” factors. Push factors refer to situations that compel people to migrate (usually without personal choice). As such they usually involve unplanned, forceful, and sometimes panicking population movements. Trends such as perceived or actual threat from inter/intra-state conflict, economic recession, drought and famine, and floods (what some came to call “environmental refugees”), and “development-induced dislocation” (such as relocation due to dam construction and/or government irrigation projects, and forced resettlement (such as villagization programs) constitute some of the push factors.

Pull factors, conversely, refer to migrant-attracting elements. They are factors that provide the migrant a *raison d'être* for resettling in a specific host society. These include factors such as good job offers, decent social services (such as education, health, and other facilities) and other opportunities that are prevalent in the would-be destination area of the migrant (Martin and Widgren, 1996: 7-10; Bariaghaber, 1999:602-603).

Following Kibreab (1987:24-25), Kuntz’s (1973) model could best be captured as follows:

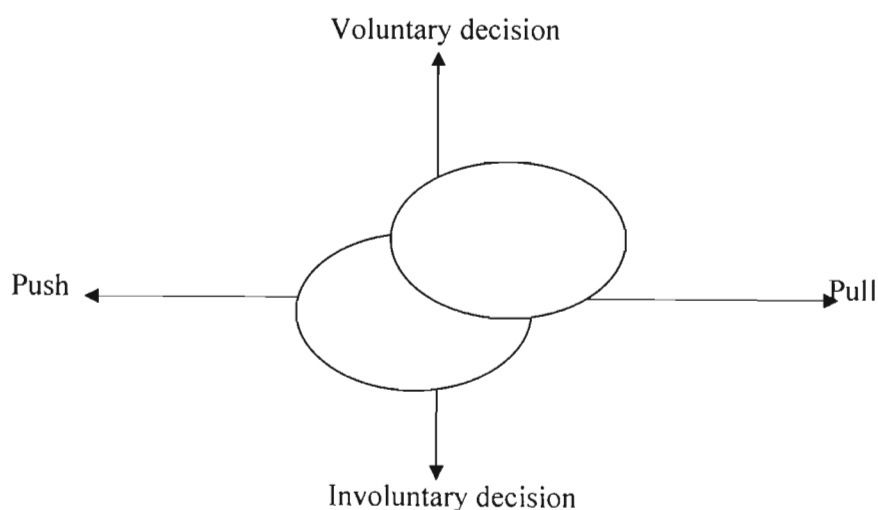


Figure 2.2: Pull-Push factors (Adapted from Kibreab, 1987:25).

Refugees fall within the third quadrant because their movement is more of involuntary forced flight that is often external to them. Whereas immigrants can fall in the first quadrant because their migration is basically voluntary and is based on a deliberate decision – that is, either ‘pulled’ by perceived or actual economic opportunities (sometimes by a more positive atmosphere in the destination area) or ‘pushed’ by lack of income generating opportunities (if the cause of migration is economic or social pressure).

Kunz (1973) modified his pull-push theoretical framework into a “kinetics model” in order to accommodate explanations of the dynamics of refugee situations (see Table 2.3 in the next page). This model takes into account both the motivational and kinetics aspects of population displacement (Bariaghaber, 1997:26-27).

Whilst ‘equilibrium theory’ and Kuntz’s ‘pull-push’ factors are helpful in explaining voluntary migration trends, Kibreab (1987) and Schultheis (1989) believe that such analytical tools are not adequate to enable us to discern and explain (African) refugee movements. This is because, Kibreab (1987:24) judged, the “pull factor” envisaged by these theories is either minimal or totally absent at the time of refugees’ decision making for flight. Schultheis (1989:6), on the other hand, contends that refugee flows are closely related to the world’s dominant political and economic systems and the polarisation of the world along East-West lines.

Table 2.3: Factors that determine migration

Factors encouraging migration			
Type of migration	Pull/demand	Network	Push/supply
Economic	Guest worker programs	Job information from employers, the media, compatriots	Unemployment/Under-employment
	Recruitment	Labour recruiters and smugglers	Low wage
	Company transfer		Economic repression
Non-economic	Family reunification, marriage	Transportation and communications	War (anti-colonial wars); Irredentism or secessionism; Political and religious persecution;
	Personal desires to live abroad	Communities of family and friends	Ecological disaster

Source: Martin and Widgren, 1996:8

Aside from Kuntz's pull-push factors, there is a third factor that contributes towards population migration – i.e., networking. Zlotnik (2001:217-218) asserts that although the genesis of international migration flows can often be traced to governmental and institutional actions and once such actions are established, international migration flows tend to develop their own momentum through the operation of migrant and institutional networks. Such migration net workings involve factors that enable prospective migrants to learn about opportunities “beyond their door-step” and to take advantage of them. Thus social networking has enabled many African refugees to search for a “green pasture” elsewhere and perpetuated their emigration trends.

Networking encompasses the exchange of information between people through various existing social or past built relationships. Prior to the introduction of strict screening and very recently the tough immigration rules in the West (particularly in USA and Europe), people have used information from their fellow men and women residing elsewhere about the positive opportunities in the Diaspora such that they can seize it for their betterment. Talking about the experience of African international (and possibly internal) economic migrants who wanted to migrate either to neighbouring countries or to the West, Adepoju (1988: 41) eloquently noted that:

In the absence of official channels of assistance, *African migrants* rely on the network of social relations comprised of friends, relatives, townsfolk to give the signal for migrating, providing accommodation on arrival and assist in securing employment (*italics added*).

Interestingly, inherent in such African fraternal assistance to their fellow men and women is the idea of retaining home community and considering their temporary dwellings as an extension of ‘home’ community. This tends to make emigration, unlike forced migration experienced by refugees, an extension of internal and international migration (Adepoju, 1988:42). Networking thus links communities of origin and destination, serving as channels for information and resources. Following Zlotnik (2001:229), often such linkages have been strengthened by the three major “revolutions” of our time: the communications revolution, the transportation revolution, and the human rights revolution. Definitely, these revolutionary advances, among many other pull-push factors, have immensely contributed to the rapid

population mobility that the century has witnessed. The low transportation costs and easier access to relevant information along with other pertinent factors tends to make migration simpler, easier, faster and accessible for voluntary economic migrants of the developing world.

It is said that networking is a good strategy exercised by most migrants of the South. Martin and Widgren (1996) believe that networking makes prospective migrants selective in terms of their potential destination area making them good strategists and non-random wanderers. Networking interacts with the push and pull factors by providing the information and a means necessary to move. Thus these three factors are intertwined though on an unequal basis, the importance of each factor being subject to change over time (Martin and Widgren, 1996:7-14).

Given that economic considerations are at the root of most international migration, the latter is influenced by the development in the world economy. Indeed, the rapidly changing dynamics of the world economy seriously impacts on the configuration of international migration flows (Zlotnik, 2001:228-229). For example, whenever countries score high levels of economic growth, they tend to encourage the inflow of various foreign labourers (usually from neighbouring countries) under various legal preconditions so as to cover labour demand in certain economic sectors. When countries face economic downturn, on the contrary, they tend to develop anti-foreigner sentiments⁸ accompanied by strict legal immigration policies. The defensive and restrictive idea of “fortress Europe”, that is implicitly reported as often raised by European statesmen and explicitly mentioned among their citizens, is a lucid example.⁹ At other times some countries even go so far as to foster or even impose repatriating foreign labourers who live in their lands.

Therefore, the interplay of internal and external forces along with a combination of socio-political, economic and natural factors is responsible for massive involuntary displacement of people across the globe (Bulcha, 1987: 19). Sorenson (1994:178) affirms: “Economic, environmental and political causes of refugee movements are interrelated in the African context.” As the history of mass dislocation in Eritrea that I will outline in the next section clearly testifies, this seems true with the latter factor having more weight in the Eritrean case. Moreover, as it is the case for economic migrants, refugee movements in the modern world too arise from a variety of causal factors and are often multi-dimensional. Some of these

refugeeism-inducing factors are isolated and others interconnected, some deeply rooted in history, others of recent origin. These causes may be intermingled and be responsible in varying degrees for particular refugee flows (Rogge, n.d: 6-7; Harrell-Bond, 1989:46).

Indeed while it was often believed that political events and natural hazards were considered as the prime refugee-inducing factors, they are now increasingly becoming blurred (Rogge and Akol, 1989:184). While such causes of refugee flight are complex and vary from region to region, Toft (n.d: 9-10) concludes, there is shift of flight caused by systematic state persecution to flight as a consequence of failing state. Malki (1995:196) further notes, "involuntary or forced movements of people are always only one aspect of much larger constellations of socio-political and cultural processes and practices." In any specific incident, different elements may wax and wane. Possibly the only generalisation, which comes close to covering every refugee incident is one, that points to actions undertaken by governments as the most likely source of causal factors (Gordenker, 1987:62).

War, particularly interstate-war due to ideological opposition or border conflict, has always been the prime causal factor for human forced displacement. Civil conflicts arising from either actual or attempted violent government change (using either revolutions or *coups d'état*); anti-colonial insurrections; insurrectionary social structure; lack of democracy accompanied by corruption, state terrorism (including assassination and torture), military dictatorship, brutal government (self-serving and repressive- or just incompetent-government) and ideological fanaticism; deliberate change of social structures (such as violent liquidation of elites or economic obsolescence) accompanied by internal turbulence, persecution, religious intolerance and political instability, also impel people from their home countries to seek safe haven elsewhere (Findley, 2001:276; Winter, 1994:160, Lassailly-Jacob, 1994:212; Sorenson, 1994:176-177; Ageeb, 1990:13; Godeneker, 1987:64-87; and Zolberg et al, 1986:155-163). In the case of intra-state conflict, the affected people may flee to safer areas located either within the national boundary ending as IDPs, or cross international boundaries predominantly those of a neighbouring country.

Finally, Kibreab (1987) argues that although wars, political persecution, and the violation of human rights are the major causes underlying the flight of refugees, flight is not just a physical reaction to the actual or perceived threat of violence or persecution. To him, whether people become refugees or stay in their country of origin is determined by an inter-play of

structural and socio-cultural factors. He maintains that the main reinforcing and countervailing factors in refugeeism appear to be *first*, the distance to possible country of asylum; *second*, the conditions of existence in the affected people's places of origin; and *third*, the perceived conditions of existence in a nearby country of asylum (Kibreab, 1987:15-16). To this end, he believes that whether or not people will decide to flee depends on a number of weighing factors: distance, potential impediments during flight, information about the would-be hosting country, historical contacts, cultural gap, and climatic differences. Based on these factors he concluded that border communities tend to have a higher likelihood to flee to neighbouring countries as compared to those compatriots who dwell in the inland areas. He convincingly shows why western and eastern lowlanders experienced refugee exodus compared to people from the highlands of Eritrea despite all having been exposed to the same human right violation, physical threat, and other flight-inducing factors.

2.7 Eritrean Refugee Flight and Mass Exodus: Historical Background

According to Stern (1988:29) human migrations, like all social phenomenon, are concrete social processes that are historically conditioned and, therefore, vary in time and space, not only in terms of their characteristics, but also in terms of their determinants and consequences. Thus to understand the factors that force the mass movement of people out of their homes, we need to look at its historical course and the meanings attributable to them. It is a wise academic exercise to examine the variables explaining a particular migration flow by asking when the migration begun, where and under what circumstances. It is only if we are able to do so that we can grasp the dynamics of forced population migration and its subsequent human sufferings. Doing so also helps us devise strategies to embark upon and stretch a humanitarian 'helping hand' towards forced migrants, both during their flight as well as upon their homecoming.

The EPLF (1987:2) believes that the root cause for the exile of Eritreans has its own peculiarities and specific explanations. By and large, it is inextricably linked with colonialism and Eritreans' struggle for self-determination. As such, it has a national political dimension. While Eritreans' mass flight has nothing to do with religious, racial, or ethnic persecution or conflict that is common among other Africans, it must be admitted that to some degree the last waves of the Eritrean refugees were as much by-products of natural disaster, particularly the severe drought and famine that hit most of the sub-Saharan countries between 1983-85,¹⁰

as they are the results of the Ethiopian *Dergue* regime. Needless to say, most Eritrean 'environmental refugees' predominantly attribute their forced flight to the heightened military actions of the then *Dergue* regime.

Naturally whenever people flee across national borders, they often move to the closest safe area. Often as border countries might relatively be in a better condition, refugees tend to pour into the nearest neighbouring country. This is the case for all Africans, Eritrea being no exception. Owing to the uninterrupted historical, ethnic, cultural and economic ties between the two fraternal people of Eritrea and the Sudan; the geographical proximity of the neighbouring countries; the hospitality, generosity, tolerance and political maturity of the Sudanese people towards their comrades at their time of crisis; and the relatively vibrant economy of the Sudan (at least up until 1980s) (EPLF, 1989:5), enormous numbers of Eritrean refugees opted for the Sudan as their "second home."

Refugee exodus from Eritrea dates back to the 1960s. Many writers have documented the arrival of successive waves of Eritrean refugees in the Sudan in the late 1960s, mid-1970s and early 1980s as conflict moved into different regions of Eritrea (Bariaghaber, 1997, 1999; Bascom, 1996:67; Ageeb, 1990; CERA, 1989; Kibreab, 1987:15).¹¹ All these writers emphasise that the main reason behind forced migration among Eritrean refugees was the successive political violence conducted by Ethiopian authorities against Eritrean civilians. As most western and eastern lowlanders were not able to tolerate the "destroy and desolate-campaigns" (Bascom, 1996) and the pacification campaigns¹² of the late 1960s and early 1970s carried out by the Ethiopian army, they were left with no choice but to flee the actual and perceived threat of that time. Following is a brief historical account of the waves of Eritrean refugee flight.

A. The First Wave – 1967

The end of 1960s was full of massive human forced dislocation for Eritreans. The Eritreans' exile took its first form when Emperor Haile-Selassie "began to unleash and intensify state terror to consolidate its colonial presence and pursued a policy of *denuding the land of its restive population*" (EPLF, 1987:3). As the Ethiopians deliberately began to target civilians and their means of subsistence, people from the western lowlands were unable to tolerate the severe violence, looting and destruction of that time. Thus the first wave of forced mass

exodus from western Eritrea entered the Sudan in the months from February to March of 1967. Most of these refugees were Moslem pastoralists (a few of them agro-pastoralists) of Beni-Amer, Maria and a few Saho ethnic groups. Statistical data from Sudan's COR and EPLF estimated the first arrivals to be about 7,000 and 10,000 people respectively (Kibreab, 1987:17-19; CERA, 1989: 2).

Ad-Ibrihim refugee returnees, my subjects of study, were among the first wave of migrants. According to written and oral historical accounts, they fled their homes in 1967 as the Ethiopians dispatched troops that killed around 42 people and burned their homes. This happened not in today's Ad-Ibrihim where my research site is located. Rather that human tragedy took place in the Ad-Ibrihim that was established in then Gash-Setit province by people who migrated in search food and pasture for their animals. Thus upon their repatriation the majority of victims of that atrocity decided to return to their original village where they now stay.

B. The Second Influx – 1969

Ethiopian authorities and their troops became more worried about the advance of the Eritrean secessionist movements by the end of 1960s. As the guerrilla activities intensified along the eastern lowland (where the armed struggle was born) and Eastern Akeleguzai province, Ethiopian military personnel increased its troops reaching two thirds of its total soldiers. These military men endangered the day-to-day activities of the civilians forcing them to leave their homes for fear of mass detentions and executions (CERA, 1989:2-3). This time the refugees were predominantly from Semhar and Di-ot in Eastern Akeleguzai. As these areas were subjected to infantry and military raids that killed a considerable number of civilians in April and May 1970, many people began to escape through various routes using various mechanisms. Predominantly these forced migrants were from the Saho ethnic groups (Kibreab, 1987:19).

C. The Third Wave – 1970

The third influxes of Eritrean refugees were mainly from the vicinity of Keren. When a village known as Oana was put to fire, many of its inhabitants were forced to flee. Those who asked protection by crossing to the Sudan were reported to have been few. However, the

village has been totally destroyed and a number of its inhabitants had been massacred by the Ethiopian troops as a continuation of their pacification campaign. An eyewitness¹ account has reported the situation as follows:

...a village in the immediate vicinity of Keren met its Song My. 460 corpses of women and children were counted when people from the neighbouring area after two days dared to enter the ruins to bury the dead (Knutsson, quoted in Kibreab, 1987:20).

Aside from that, ten other villages from the Keren vicinity were destroyed and thousands of people lost their properties. Thus people were forced either to evacuate to Keren or ask for safe haven to the Sudan republic (Kibreab, 1987:20).

D. Fleeing the Dergue: 1974-1975

With the overthrow of Emperor Haile-Selassie in 1974, the political situation in Eritrea worsened. The situation abruptly changed from bad to worse when power came into the hands of the Mengistu Hailemariam-led Provisional Military Council, commonly known as the *Dergue*. This was the time when most of the Eritrean towns and villages were liberated. Thus refugee flow was to some extent halted at that time. On February 15, 1975 the *Dergue* ordered a state of emergency in the whole country and pursued an intensified suppression of civilians in the uncontrolled cities, "garrotting youth with piano wire and levelling many villages through random aerial bombings" (EPLF, 1987:4).

On March 3, 1975 Um-Hajer, a town in the western part of Eritrea, was set in fire and consequently many of its inhabitants and the nearby dwellers were forced to 'flight in a blind panic' to the Sudan. The overall number of people who fled from those areas was estimated in May 1975 to have been around 40,000 (Kibreab, 1987:22).

E. Fifth Wave: 1977-1979

This group of refugees was basically the result of the intensive attack conducted by the ELF (Eritrean Liberation Front) to liberate some towns and cities against counter-offensive measures that were taken by the *Dergue* regime. Primarily, the war conducted in April 4 that ended up liberating Tesenei town on April 6, 1977 had massively displaced its settlers and

people who resided in its vicinity. Thus considerable numbers of dislocated people were to be looked after by the financially impoverished ELF, which in turn advised the people to cross to the Sudan after brief relief assistance to the victims of the war. According to Kibreab (1987:22-23), though their exact number is not known, the majority of these refugees were (semi-)urbanites who were informed to enter to Kassala on April 8, 1977.

Secondly, after many towns and cities fell in the hands of the ELF, Ethiopia undertook very aggressive attacks aided by USSR, Cuba and other allies not only to return the occupied places but also in its endeavour to eradicate what they called the “secessionists” forever. This foreign backed extensive military attack obviously began to turn to the advantage of Ethiopians, and they begun to re-capture some liberated areas. Particularly the July and August 1978 offensive resulted in the recapture of most of the towns and the withdrawal of the liberation movements from their cities and towns. This event resulted in creating 122,000 people homeless, some of whom had to cross into the Sudan. People from Um Hajer, Tessenei, Aligider, Goluj, and Haikota and to some extent Agordat, Barentu and the surrounding areas were hit by the counter-offensive (Kibreab, 1987: 23).

F. The Final Group: 1984-1985

Finally, on top of the ensuing cycles of reprisals and counter-reprisals that were forcing many Eritreans from their homes, ‘mother nature’ too began to contribute to the problem as if it was taking the side of the Ethiopian oppressors. In 1984-1985 Eritrea was hit by a severe perennial drought and famine (Bariaghaber, 1997:31-32; Ageeb, 1990:21-23; Kibreab, 1987:24). As livestock started dying in large numbers and people became acutely hungry, many rural lowlanders started to take off to the Sudan. According to the COR the last Eritrean refugee exodus amounted to around 165,000 in Wad-Sherifei Transit Centre alone (Ageeb, 1990: 21). This made the last round of Eritrean mass exodus in the country’s long war for independence.

Chapter Three: Analyses and Policies of the World Refugee Problem

The global refugee problem is at an important juncture. In the past, refugees were a temporary phenomenon. They came and went.... Now, however, they come and stay.... The world is tiring of this persistent emergency.... Many asylum countries are increasingly concerned that they may be left with a long-term presence and are pulling the welcome mat (W.R. Smyser, Former United Nations Deputy Higher Commissioner for Refugees, quoted in USCR, 1988:1).

Frankly, we need a lot more help than we have been getting. The reluctance of donors to support the work of UNHCR is short-sighted. If we cannot offer adequate protection and programmes for refugees, as well as some hope of durable solutions, refugee camps can become breeding grounds of despair. Desperate refugees often go on the move, falling prey to human smugglers and traffickers and fuelling criminal networks. Providing solutions for them halts rising crime, prevents new violence and can be crucial for global security. Thus, we must work together to find solutions for refugees (UN, 2003).

Introduction

This chapter is devoted to looking at how the world political community deals with forced migrants. It will focus on the various strategies and approaches devised so far to address the world refugee problem. In so doing, the pros and cons of the approaches adopted by the international refugee regime are discussed.

The above quotes convey the concerns of the international refugee regime about the massive human displacement around the globe. According to Bakewell (1999), all world refugee problems share three major aspects that also inform how the world political community deals with them. These are: 1) the presence of refugees constitutes an aberration in the modern world; 2) at the heart of any refugee emergency the most urgent aspect of the 'refugee problem' is a humanitarian one; and 3) refugees are perceived as posing a threat to the society in which they settle (Bakewell, 1999:2-3).

The problem of (African) refugees is often understood as a temporary and transient one by the refugees themselves, their government of origin, the hosting society and the UN agencies. As such, the solution that is often thought of is naturally a temporary one (EPLF, 1987:6). Some of these response strategies adopted by hosting governments and UNHCR are "a product of well rationalised sets of priorities, where the refugees may even be integrated into broader

regional development objectives, while in other cases the policies are ad hoc at best, and capricious at worst” (Rogge, n.d.: 8-9). Based on such assumptions several local and international time-tested and experience-accumulated bureaucratic response strategies have been adopted to address world refugee problems. In order of their contemporary significance, these are:

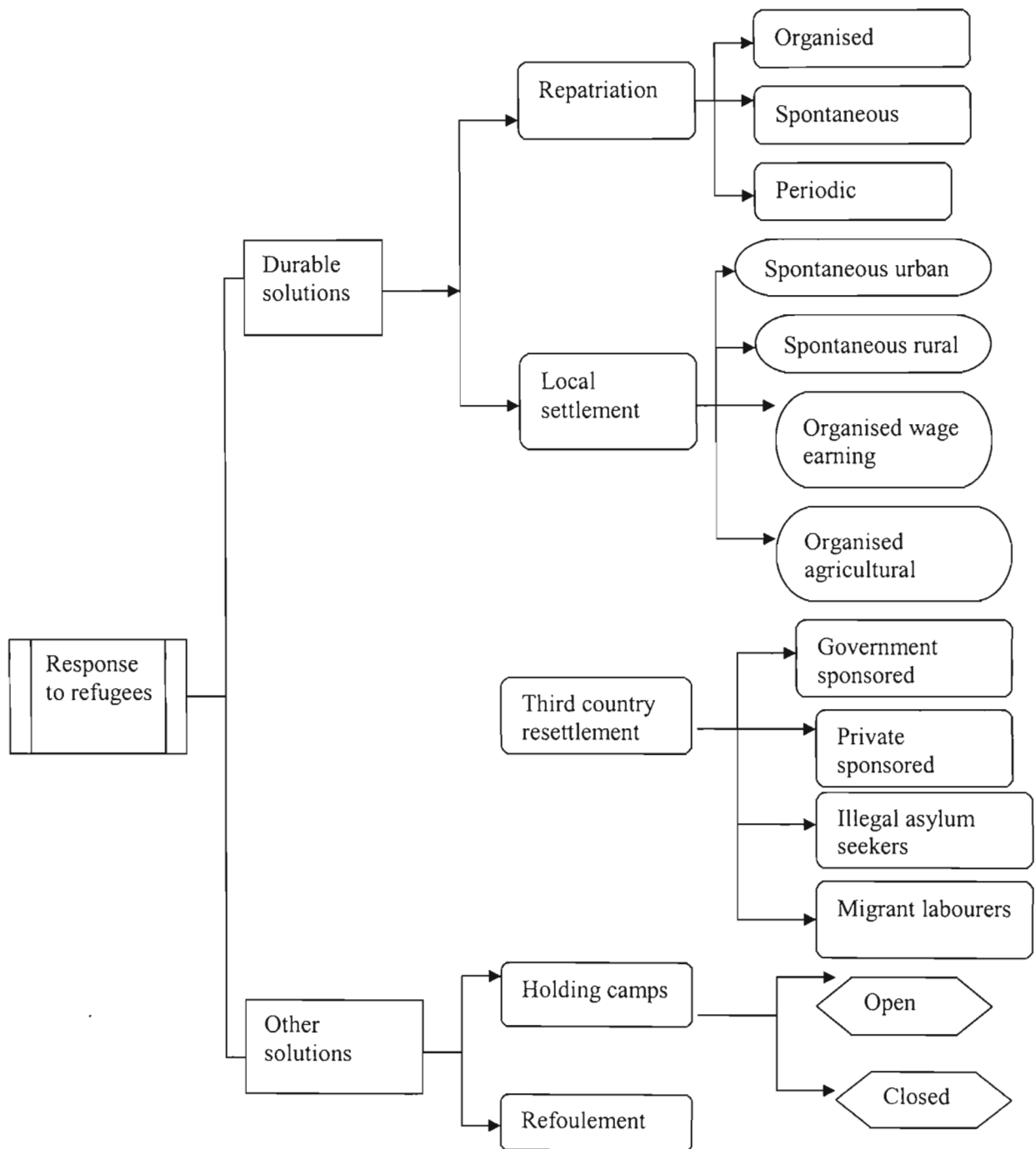
- 1) *Repatriation* – returning refugees to their home countries, presumably once the situation is safe for them;
- 2) *Local settlement* (integration in the first country of asylum) – helping refugees become established in their current country of asylum; and
- 3) *Third country resettlement* – finding another country to accept the refugees and help them to move there.

Though these are the three major approaches that are viewed both as the most desirable and preferable strategies by the international community to address the world refugee problem, as depicted in Figure 3.1 on the next page, there are also other minor strategies employed by hosting governments and the international community too. These are:

- 4) *Retention in ‘holding camps’* – involves long-term confinement of refugees to camps; and
- 5) *Refoulement* – involves forcible repatriation of refugees from an asylum country (Rogge, n.d.: 9; Koehn, 1994:97, Kuhlman, 1994:117-18, Sorenson, 1994:178; Bakewell, 1999, Chimni, 1999, Malki, 1995; Martin and Widgen, 1996:16; Rogge and Akol, 1989:186-187 and; Harell-Bond, 1989:42-43).

Such strategic international approaches to the refugee crisis, rest on concepts developed, reinterpreted and adapted by the dominant states with varying interests in different circumstances and at various times (Gordenker, 1987:16; Toft, n.d: 17; Chimni, 1999:17). The preferred and hence promoted solutions have been informed and shaped by the changing international climate of the 1990s (a renewed emphasis on human rights; broader concept of national security; and the profound political changes in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union) that has shifted the focus from the asylum and resettlement countries to the countries of origin (Rogers, 1992:1112-14).

Figure 3.1: Rogge's model showing various strategies for world refugee regime



Source: Rogge, n.d: 301

Following various students of refugee studies a thorough examination of what the humanitarian (UN) agencies call “durable solutions” is thus worth examining.

3.1 Repatriation

Repatriation is regarded as the most desirable and preferred solution to the plight of refugees. It can be either: 1) voluntary or involuntary (forced)¹; or 2) organised or spontaneous. These in turn form four types of repatriation: a) voluntary spontaneous (e.g., the return of Crimean Tatars from Siberia and Kazakhstan to the Crimea); b) voluntary organised (e.g., the 1999 repatriation of Kosovar Albanians to Kosovo, Eritreans from Eastern Sudan); c) involuntary organised (the long awaited but intentionally complicated and pressurised repatriation of Guatemalan refugees from Mexico in 1993,² the 1997 military round-up of Burundians in Tanzania which dictated refugees either to return to their country or relocate into a refugee camp);³ and d) involuntary spontaneous (e.g., the 1945-1948 ethnic Germans' flight from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe) (Toft, n.d:10-11).

In most developing countries, voluntary repatriation is considered as the preferred answer to the problem of forced displacement among receiving countries and the international community. Repatriation as an CRC (Counter Refugee Crisis) has become a preferred policy both by the UN, the interstate system's most powerful members and the refugees themselves (Toft, n.d: 1). It is thus the policy of the UN, OAU as well as of all African asylum countries that the optimum solution to every refugee crisis is informed voluntary repatriation. Article 34 of the 1951 UN and article 5 of the 1969 OAU Convention clearly explain their stand regarding repatriation as an approach to refugee problems (Bakewell, 1999:2). While the stand of hosting countries might differ in regard to repatriation issues, the majority prefer the returning of their 'guests.' The Sudan republic, for example, has a clearly spelt out policy – known as the Registration of Asylum Act of 1974 – regarding repatriation of refugees in its land.

Moreover, despite the dreadful circumstances that forced exiles out of their "homes", in almost all cases the refugees themselves also see repatriation as the most desired solution. Researchers have found out that 80-90% of IDPs and refugees often want to go home (Findley, 2001:293). Particularly African refugees, unlike their Southeast Asian counterparts, see themselves as temporary sojourners in their asylum state pending changing political circumstances at home that will make their return possible (Rogge, n.d: 10). In spite of their dislocation and dispossession, Findley (2001:293) declares, "they are often found to have a strong desire to reclaim their lands and homes, to assert their citizenship and membership in the community, and to be 'home' even if the physical home is destroyed." All in all,

repatriation is also considered as the optimum solution (both in terms of desirability and feasibility) to the world refugee problems by governments (host, donors and refugee country of origin), the international organisations, and to many academics (Koehn, 1994:97; Winter, 1994:164 and Sorenson, 1994:179).

All actors in the refugee regime thus expect large-scale returns and that is why UNHCR declared the 1990s as the “decade of repatriation” (Bakewell, 1999:1). It is assumed that once the root causes that prompt population movements are eliminated the affected populations ‘vote with their feet’ homewards in order to re-establish themselves in their former areas of origin or habitual residence. One researcher has estimated that between 1975 and 1991 approximately seven million refugees returned to their home country, spontaneously or in assisted repatriations (Stein 1992b mentioned in Rogers, 1992:1128). Furthermore, beginning from 1992, UNHR planned more repatriation operations for 21 countries, involving three million ‘target groups,’ at a cost estimated to be U.S \$405.5 million (Rogers, 1992:1128-1129).

There are many contested explanations as to why refugee repatriation programs have come to be vigorously advocated since the end of bi-polar era however. *Firstly*, repatriation is considered as both morally justified and relatively inexpensive. *Secondly*, repatriation has become the UN’s preferred policy basically owing to financial bottlenecks and so-called “donor fatigue.” There is considerable evidence to show that because of the concerns expressed by donors over the increasing costs of maintaining refugees and the economic slowdown both in the North and the South throughout the 1980s, the standards of assistance diminished everywhere. According to Winter (1994:163), in the 1980s UNHCR had, on a capital basis, only half the resources available to meet refugee needs than it did a decade earlier. This was accompanied by what one conference participant remarked as, “the inn keepers are tired!” (Rogers, 1992:1118) and want their guests to leave. Indeed, Winter (1994: 165) verifies: “the very end of Cold War competition that enabled repatriation has, in its demise, cost refugees the political priority they once had among many donor governments.” Consequently, refugees are believed to have lost the strategic political significance they used to enjoy during the bi-polar world politics. *Thirdly*, repatriation programs are pushed further partly because the developed North, for fear of being overwhelmed by asylum seekers, has made it increasingly difficult for refugees to settle in their territories. *Fourthly*, the economic and political pressure which refugees place on host governments led asylum countries to

develop a sentiment of 'we have sheltered our guests for too long' kind of mentality. *Fifthly*, considerable number of refugees do not want to put down roots in the host country because they feel they are temporary settlers. Finally, to a limited extent it was in the interest of the home governments for their refugees to come back home and participate in the national reconstruction of their war-torn countries. All these factors have contributed to the urgency of repatriation programs as a viable strategy (Bariaghaber, 1999:607; Lessailly-Jacob, 1994:220-221; Harrell-Bond, 1989:55-56).

According to some historical accounts, the widespread international approval of UNHCR's current policy of promoting repatriation came as a result of the July 1985 San Remo Round Table on Voluntary Repatriation, which was reportedly attended by government ministers, jurists and officials of Governments and intergovernmental organisations who were experts in refugee matters. Although the San Remo report emphasised that efforts to promote voluntary repatriation should not "weaken in any way the fundamental importance of not forcing refugees to return against their will, and that it did not deny thereby the necessity in *some situations* of settling refugees in another country, the view of the round table was that *international co-operation and solidarity should be directed, ... in favour of the solution of return*" (Coles, 1985 mentioned in Harrell-Bond, 1989:45). More strongly, one of the advocates of mass repatriation programs among the top officials of the higher commissioner for refugees in the late 1980s said:

In many of today's large-scale influxes, where entire communities or groups have fled, voluntary repatriation is the only realistic alternative to indefinite subsistence on charity. It is to this, therefore, that states must turn their attention first. The objective will be to promote a general improvement in the situation in the country of origin in order to create the necessary conditions for the voluntary return of refugees.... There can be no doubt that if part of the impressive amount of some one to three billion dollars made available annually by the international community for all types of humanitarian activities the world over were to be used for development aid with particular reference to creating conditions conducive to voluntary repatriation, this could indeed go a long way to making that solution feasible (Hock, 1986, quoted in Harrell-Bond, 1989:55).

No matter how desirous and preferred repatriation is considered by UNHCR officials, however, there is considerable debate among scholars whether post-1980s repatriation programs are voluntary in their nature or have been implemented under duress (Rogge, n.d; Barton, 1984)? Such controversies often crop up among scholars, politicians and activists about the whole project of repatriation as a preferred durable solution and around some of the already implemented repatriation exercises. Primarily, such controversies, as one observer pointed out, arise because “the line between encouragement and promotion of voluntary repatriation and pressure to repatriate may not always be a clear one” (Ruiz, 1987, quoted in Harrell-Bond, 1989:57). Resolutions of repatriation programs undeniably become so subtle that only few people could realise what has been decided behind the “closed office doors” of UNHCR and the hosting governments. There is evidence that shows that assistance becomes blocked or the amount of rations severely reduced in RHAs to facilitate repatriation programs. This belief, according to some critics, is based on the contentious assumption that refugees have been “pulled” out of their countries by relief, and that they can be “pulled” (or pushed) back home again if minimal assistance is transferred to the other side of the border (Ruiz mentioned in Harrell-Bond, 1989:62).

Secondly, some lament that involuntary repatriation programs are at times implemented without consultation with the refugees, and they regret this, saying it is against international laws, rights and entitlements of forced migrants. Such exercises are becoming more common, underscores Toft (n.d). This is testified by an UNHCR inter-office memorandum (No.5), as quoted in Harrell-Bond (1989:56), which states that in large-scale repatriations where it is “difficult or even impossible to establish the voluntary character of the repatriation on an individual basis,” it may be necessary to “work out special arrangements.” Such arrangements could be done in the presence of independent observers, concedes Harrell-Bond (1989). One may wonder and ask with whom these “special arrangements” should be held other than the refugee himself /herself and in whose interest are they to be arranged outside this domain. There is a real danger in such “special arrangements” that barely consider refugees’ interests. They might excessively or inappropriately be applied by the UN in the future jeopardising other alternative solutions (Toft, n.d: 18), and/or endangering the basic rights of refugees, at worst.

A fervent advocate of local integration, (Bakewell, 1999), criticises the view that voluntary repatriation is the optimum and often the only durable solution to refugees. He contends that

those who advocate this approach as a way to normality and an end to the refugee problem hardly know that in some societies cross border movement constitutes 'a way of life.' Nor do they understand how those who 'would-go-home' (their subjects) conceive of "home" and how it has changed since their exile. Using a case study of Angolan refugees in Zambia, he upholds the view that repatriation programs and its overall discourse is an external model framed without due regards to the concerns and needs of potential migrants. He also emphasises, "The dreams of going home may also be based on nostalgia for a past that cannot be recreated, and when return is practical it is not necessarily desirable" (Bakewell, 1999: 4-6). In any case, it seems clear that refugees are keen to return to their homes as soon as possible, but the fact that the majority make their own way, regardless of assistance offered by governments or international agencies, suggests that such policies have been developed with too little regard for refugees' motivations.

Harrell-Bond (1989) also attacks the whole exercise of voluntary repatriation from a number of angles: 1) he argues that while it is widely believed that the "the best solution for refugees is home," he questions whether this can ever be the case when conditions which led to exodus have not altered; 2) he questions the policy premises of promoting repatriation as unjustified because they have not been tested by independent researchers; 3) he remarks: "Although refugees are entitled to the right to return to their places of origin, ideally to their former homes, their villages, their land, usually such promises have not been guaranteed by UNHCR"; 4) he questions as to why repatriation as the preferred solution appeared to be very pronounced in the political agenda of the developed world only after the collapsed of the socialist system of the Eastern block. He affirms that the evidence suggests it is the perception of the donors (i.e. that assistance policies have failed) which led to the determination to eliminate the refugee "problem" through the promotion of voluntary repatriation. And, finally, he concludes that the development of policy to promote repatriation has not only been influenced by the concern over the ineffectiveness of approaches to assisting refugees in the poorest countries of the world. It was feared that the flow could not be contained and that Europe would be inundated. To him, repatriation could only be "voluntary" and "safe enough" if the refugee's home country is under "low intensity conflict." Therefore, he insists that as a matter of human justice refugees should have the choice either to remain in exile or to return to their homes *wherever* conditions are promising (Harrell-Bond, 1989: 43-52).

From a different angle, Harrell-Bond (1989:63) further considers the attempts of helping refugee-creating governments, irrespective of their human rights records, by anxious donor governments hoping to eliminate mass exodus as ineffective and at most flawed. He maintains the solution ought to lie on eliminating the root causes – the structural defects in the world economic system and arms race – that triggers massive human displacement. Others queue along this suggestion and maintain that however adequate, well-endowed and well-implemented international assistance programs are, as long as the root causes of deprivation and persecution are not resolved and genuine voluntary repatriation programs exercised, the socio-economic and psychological deprivation caused by flight will continue to affect the lives of many refugees (Bulcha, 1998; Gordenker, 1987; Kibreab, 1987). The leader of the Australian delegation to ICARA II, emphasising the need to deal with the root causes in order to find a reliable solution, has powerfully stated that,

The root causes of refugee flows are a major part of *the international aid and the generosity of the poor hosting countries*. A serious effort to understand and remove the causes is the necessary counterpart to responses after an exodus. There is little wisdom in treating only symptoms (quoted in Bulcha, 1988:22, my italics).

This is ‘easier said than done.’ In spite of the obvious relationship between root causes and durable solutions, it appears that little effort is being made by international organisations either at the global (UN) or regional (OAU) levels to challenge African refugee problem from this broader perspective.⁴

Another extreme critic of repatriation programs traces the historical shift in approach among the world political community towards refugees. Toft (n.d) affirms that while during the cold war refugees were seen as “diamonds”⁵ and hence the preferred approach was resettlement, the demise of the Cold War reversed this view where refugees came to be viewed as “locusts”⁶ that ought to be returned back ‘home’. Toft believes that since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of its network of alliances brought about massive flow of ‘unnecessary refugees’ to the capitalist OECD, the developed West opted for either pre-empting or mitigating their inflow to their lands. To him, the ‘decade of repatriation’ was a “decade of policy failure.” Toft, (n.d) made such accusations because he found out that after ‘the decade of repatriation’ the state of refugees worldwide did not bring huge change in the size of global refugee population at best, and was counter-productive at worst. He concludes,

“Although in some cases the policy of supporting voluntary repatriation is a good thing, the UN has come to rely too heavily on it, and its reliance may be encouraging a disturbing trend toward more involuntary or forced repatriations.” Toft arrived at such a conclusion as his research findings showed two alarming indicators: *one*, the total number of refugees has not dropped significantly since the 1990s, but has remained fairly constant and appears to rise; *two*, although the total number of civil wars has declined in recent years (after the announcement of the repatriation decade in the early 1990s), the number of refugees fleeing civil wars has actually increased (Toft, n.d: 12-14).

Chimni (1999) similarly traces the history of post-second World War durable solutions to the global refugee problem and divides them into two distinct phases: *phase one* (1945-1985), in this period though voluntary repatriation was accepted in principle as a preferred solution, resettlement was promoted in practice (both for political and economic interests of Western asylum countries).

In *phase two* which started in 1985, three practices came to dominate the world refugee regime. *First period* (1985-1993): in 1983 the General Assembly discussed the viability of repatriation as a policy, and then afterwards it was promoted as the durable solution. *Period two*, which begun in 1993, both voluntary and involuntary repatriations were exercised with the idea of “safe return”⁷ being the core principle in refugee studies discourse. Such an exercise that claims to be based on ‘objective evaluations of the refugee producing country’s situations’, contends Chimni, disenfranchises the refugee by shifting the decision of returning ‘home’ to be made by hosting governments and other international organisations leaving little room for the refugee to make sound ‘subjective evaluations’ about his/her repatriation. *Finally*, in 1996 these practices evolved into the doctrine of “imposed repatriation” by UNHR officials and the humanitarian aid community. Under such doctrine, unveils Chimni, refugees may be sent back to less than optimal conditions in their home country against their will (Chmini, 1999: 1-3). That is why many researchers, activists and informed citizens nowadays complain about politically motivated repatriation programs that are being implemented under implicit and explicit pressures on refugees. Lastly, it should be mentioned that the practices of ‘safe return’ and ‘imposed repatriation’ were meant as supplementary approaches but not as a substitute for the widely hailed voluntary repatriation programs that are enshrined at the international and regional refugee conventions.

Finally, notwithstanding that many refugee-creating governments of the South and the international donor community continue to regard repatriation as an ideal solution, Rogge and Akol (1989:193-197) reveal many of the pitfalls, frustration and social and economic costs associated with it. According to these writers these include: Primarily, the longer the returnees have been in exile, the greater is their acculturation to their host society. Considerable problems of readjustment arise, therefore, both for returnees and for the communities into which they return. I have reservations about such overgeneralizations, however. The commonality of “cultural elements” between the ‘guests’ and the hosting society as well as in what kinds of settlements the returnees were during their asylum do matter a lot in this regard.

Secondly, there are tremendous economic problems encountered by (prospective) repatriates. As refugees have often become self-reliant in their asylum states, it is questionable whether or not refugees prefer to ‘voluntarily’ repatriate. Still this is an arguable generalisation too. One could ask how about those who linger in camps for years, some even for decades, with little prospects of attaining economic self-sufficiency. Another problem occasionally encountered by refugees is that of the freedom of relocating their wealth and belongings during repatriation. While such problems might happen in some occasions, I believe that such kinds of problems can be ironed out during the repatriation tri-partite or bi- partite agreements among or between UNHCR, host government and refugees’ home government. Rogge and Akol (1989) also mention the tendency that returnees who were exposed and accustomed to well-serviced infrastructural and community services might experience a “marked regression in standard of living and economic opportunities” upon their repatriation. This too could be resolved through well-planned rehabilitation programs and generous financial support from the donor community geared to fill such a vacuum.

Another problem encountered to repatriates is of political nature. As refugees are often regarded as being politically hostile to the government of their home country, they might not be welcomed for fear of the opposition they may create. Even where refugees are not seen as potential political agitators or malcontents, they may not be welcomed home simply because of the additional costs and burdens they place upon the home government through their resettlement and rehabilitation services. In these two cases what is needed is political willingness and commitment from refugees’ home government to accommodate their ‘unfortunate citizens.’

3.1.1 Obstacles to repatriations:

Notwithstanding that most refugees and IDPs (80-90%) prefer to return 'home', return is an elusive goal rarely achieved by few forced migrants. Whilst right after the ending of the compelling situation that led to refugeeism, a 'home sweet home kind of sentiments' is usually a common observable fact among refugees, returning home (particularly as a voluntary move) is achieved by fewer than one in five.⁸ For those whose homes were completely destroyed, repatriation may be more a goal of the host country and UN agencies than those of the individual refugees. Harrell-Bond (1989:42) contends that it is likely that the longer a refugee remains in exile, the more difficult it will be to go home.

Other major obstacles to massive repatriation programs in Africa include: 1) the continuation of the regime responsible for creating conditions that provoked the decision to flee; 2) continuous or intermittent armed conflict and/or lack of resolution of the underlying bases for national and international struggle; 3) the absence of acceptable homeland-readaptation opportunities (Koehn, 1994:97-101); 4) unavailability of support, either from UNHCR or prospective returnees' home government, to cover transportation costs (Findley, 2001:292); and 5) the reluctance of countries of origin to receive back their refugee citizens. This latter reluctance, analysts allege, is mainly based upon economic plus political motivations. Since the rehabilitation of returning refugees in the devastated economy of war-torn countries such as those in Horn of Africa adds a heavy burden, they hesitate to return their refugees as soon as the refugee-inducing factor is non-existent. Such a trend is also compounded by questionable political leanings of the returning refugees, which become a concern to governments already facing massive internal dissent (Rogge, n.d: 11-12). Understandably, regardless of what assurances of safety are offered to prospective returnees, under such circumstances many refugees fear violence and persecution and become mistrustful of their home governments, ending up to adopt "wait-and-see-tactic" (Sorenson, 1994:179). Obviously such factors pose a blockage for many refugees making a safe and dignified return to their home far-off.

Therefore, one would be curious to uncover what ought to be done to overcome such obstacles and facilitate secure repatriation programs. Koehn (1994) believes that a durable and safe return of repatriates largely depends on the availability of protection measures. Following him, primarily, there must be independent verification that the requisite changes have actually

occurred in the refugees' country. The more such endeavour is accompanied by fact-finding visits to the country of origin by refugee representatives prior to commencement of official repatriation, the better. Secondly, it is necessary for the agencies involved in facilitating the return-migration process to evaluate and confirm the voluntary character of the decision to repatriate. Thirdly, the fundamental human rights (including returnees' freedom of expression and political participation) of the returning population must also be guaranteed. In line with this, UNHCR (and perhaps other NGOs) must be granted unhindered and long-term access to returnees to monitor the fulfilment of the hosting government's guarantees that have encouraged exiles to repatriate. Finally, the international donor community must provide considerable external resources to support reconstruction efforts and sustainable development projects that will meet the basic needs of the returning population (Koehn, 1994:105).

So far, it is still a challenging task to make every repatriation program successful, however. The following exigent factors that directly or indirectly prevent or forestall voluntary repatriation have been highlighted by researchers as the most common ones during such endeavours:

- Modest levels of destruction and moderate efforts to replace destroyed infrastructure and homes. Refugees often return to countries or areas in which peace is still fragile, if it has been reached at all. Even then, while it is suggested that refugees should not be pressurised to repatriate involuntarily, it is felt that opportunities for the return should also not be missed because sometimes refugees make it on their own spontaneously;
- The daunting challenge and poorly handled reconstruction of the devastated refugees' home regions or countries;
- For refugees returning to rural areas the issue of access to land becomes paramount;
- There are multiplicity of issues concerning human resources and needs of refugee returnees;
- Repatriations require a number of complex organisational issues that must be addressed;
- Demilitarisation and safety in the origin community – refugees' return depends initially on the transfer of active fighting among armed forces to other sites; alternatively, it may require a cession of violence, such as an end of aerial bombardment or infantry patrols, in the neighbourhoods of civilian populations; and
- Societal willingness and political commitment to accept the returnees and integrate them into the society (Findley, 2001: 293; Gordenker, 1987:64-65).

Koehn (1994:100) also suggests three appealing homeland-readaptation measures that ought to be arranged to promote successful refugee repatriation programs, namely: 1) responsiveness to the educational and social needs of children who may never have lived in their parents' country of birth; 2) involvement of refugees themselves in the planning and preparation of re-adaptation; and 3) the establishment of culturally sensitive and economically viable rehabilitation projects.

Finally, irrespective of the challenges that are inherent in returning refugees back home, repatriation as a durable approach by UN agencies, the interstate systems and the prospective returnees, has been the most preferred strategy to the refugee problem worldwide and appears to be so in the foreseeable future.

3.2 Local Settlement (Integration)

The second time-honoured most "durable solution" endorsed by UNHCR to address the world refugee problem is local settlement (integration) of the refugees in a hosting society. Hosting countries and UNHCR often employ this approach when conflicts and other displacement-inducing environments still persist in the refugees' 'homes' and the dates of repatriation are distant (Findley, 2001: 304; Bulcha, 1988:22). When some refugees are unable or unwilling to return for a variety of reasons during repatriation programs, scholars, such as Jacobsen (2001), strongly advocate adoption of local integration as the way forward.

Aside from those who maintain they would like to return 'home' as soon as the flight-inducing factors are over, many also wish to establish new lives as "normal" people' among the host society. Usually, since refugees are viewed as guests who were forced to leave their country by factors beyond their control, the hosting society assumes they will return to their 'homes' as soon as those factors are over. Initially, though such local belief has contributed a lot to the accommodation and assistance of refugees, the very view of the hosting society to the refugees as temporary guests⁹ did not contribute to an easy or quick integration of the refugees into the host community (Jacobsen, 2001:20-21).

According to Jacobsen (2001:6), "there are multiple groups of refugees at any one time ... and each group can be perceived by and settled in the host country in different ways." Based

on this assertion, he thus identifies three different types of settlements: *camps*, *organised settlements* and *self-settlements*. All these settlements are common among refugee hosting countries. As the camp settlement has some distinct characteristics as opposed to the other kinds of settlements, I will deal with the issue shortly (in section 3.4). Following Jacobsen (2001), here is a brief discussion of these kinds of settlements:

- 1) *Self-settlement* (also known as “dispersed/spontaneous or self-directed settlements”), occur when refugees settle among the local community without direct official (government or international) assistance. Self-settled refugees constitute by far the largest share as compared to the rest of the refugee population. Although there is a general assumption that those who blended themselves into the host community are less likely to be subjects of local resentment, they might suffer from security problems, which can be hidden from the oversight of those who would seek to protect them (Jacobsen, 2001:14-15).
- 2) *Assisted settlement*: this type of settlement is “intended to house refugees on temporary basis” and may take various forms depending whether the settlement is located in rural or urban area. In urban areas, refugees are often housed in mass shelters in public buildings or community building facilities such as schools, hostels, and barracks. Whilst such settlements might be created temporarily, there are times when they can turn into permanent ones if the situation is protracted (Jacobsen, 2001: 7).
- 3) *Local settlement* (also referred to as organised settlements): are “planned, segregated agricultural enclaves or villages created specifically for refugees, but which differ from camps in that the refugees are expected to become self-sufficient pending their repatriation” (Jacobsen, 2001:8). While organised settlements tend to be more permanent, at times its settlers can be moved away from areas where they pose much of a socio-economic burden or security threats or to improve the government’s control of refugees. Such settlements are not necessarily meant to facilitate local integration of refugees with the host community as some intend to just obstruct such endeavours. Generally, refugee settlers in such settlements have limited freedom of movements but have access to government provided agricultural land.

Finally, Jacobson (2001) warns not to conceive refugee settlements as fixed. Rather, he believes that they have to be seen as a fluid process in which “refugees settle in different situations, depending on when they arrived, the destiny of the refugee vs. the local population, their coping strategies, local socio-economic and security conditions, and the actions of local and national authorities” (Jacobsen, 2001: 9). Such fluidity, he insists, enables movement in and out by both the refugees and locals, which in turn has a tendency (and it often does) of mixing them together for purposes of trade, marriage, entertainment, and seasonal work. While these interpretations might have some truth in some other African refugee settlements, it is certainly very limited among the Horn of African refugees (particularly Eritrean and Ethiopian refugees in the Sudan).

According to Kibreab (1989), given the absence of burden-sharing, the economic problems, the inability of governments to provide essential goods and services to their own citizens, and the high population growth rates, the “most realistic” approach for African host countries is the local settlement option. He argued that refugees should be kept in spatially segregated sites where the cost of their subsistence could be met by “international refugee support systems.” He contended, “All other talk about integration is wishful thinking based on inadequate understanding of the economic, social and political realities of present day Africa” (Kibreab quoted in Jacobsen, 2001:15). Such observations might have some credibility with regard to the Horn of African refugees, but one has to be cautious as it might not be true in other regions.

Since settlement schemes have been seen as a uniquely African response to the refugee problem ever since the 1960s, a detailed scrutiny of this approach is worthwhile. One scholar found that from 1961 to 1987, more than 200 refugee settlements were opened in Africa, assisting some one million refugees in the Sudan, Zaire, Tanzania, Uganda, Burundi, Botswana, and Zambia (Stein and Clark, 1990 quoted in Lassailly-Jacob, 1994: 212).

There are two alternative policies for settling refugees in those kinds of settlement schemes during their stay in the first country of asylum. This can be done either by allowing the refugees to settle freely among the local populace, commonly called *spontaneous settlement* (self-settlement), or by creating special (urban or rural) settlement schemes for refugees by the host country in cooperation with UNHCR. In the latter case the settlements involve special settlement project arrangement and are identified as *organised settlements* (planned

settlement or settlements). Sometimes refugee hosting governments also employ a combination of these two methods. Kuhlman (1994:118) prefers to use '*self-settled refugees*' as opposed to 'spontaneous settlement' because he feels that there is little spontaneity in refugee movement, which tends to be governed by necessity rather than free choice. The dominant policy orientation of the UNHCR and some of the host countries is to achieve local integration through organised rural settlement (Bulcha, 1988:23-24).

Another approach applied to the refugee problem is *wage-earning settlements* where the objective is to achieve self-support through the refugees selling their labour. For example, Sudan has attempted to use the Eritrean refugee labour in its agricultural schemes ranging from the monolithic Gezira irrigation to numerous other small-mechanised farms with little success in the designed program. The fact that the refugees were not able to generate sufficient income from such seasonal labour and the little interest of agro-pastoralist based refugees in engaging in it, forced the Sudan to curtail such endeavours. Refugee agricultural schemes in Somalia too did not bring any fruit owing to the country's harsh climate and the settlements being located in the desert margin of the country. Thus, the endeavour aimed at making refugees self-sufficient did not bring much tangible results. It is reported that the local settlements in Somalia turned seemingly into 'holding camps' with settlers heavily dependent on food rations from the international aid regime (Rogge, n.d: 14-15).

Factors such as remoteness of refugee asylum area and inactive hosting governments' role in programming for refugees, among many others, have made many displaced people follow spontaneous settlement as an alternative solution to their problem (Rogge, n.d: 12-13). In spontaneous settlement, the refugees are offered permanent asylum and integration into the host society by the host government. Nominally, as set out in the international refugee conventions,¹⁰ local integration refers to the granting of full and permanent asylum, membership status and residency status, by the host government. It takes place through a process of legal, economic, social and cultural incorporation of refugees, culminating in the offer of citizenship whereby the refugees are entitled to enjoy 'refugee rights' in their asylum country (Jacobson, 2001:2). Practically, however, most refugees find it very hard to integrate themselves with the hosting society. That is why Rogge (n.d) cautions that it is misleading to equate local 'settlement' with local 'integration.' He says, "In much of Africa, and certainly in the Horn, local settlement does not usually lead to any significant integration in either an

economic or social sense". He contends that refugee local settlement programs are essentially designed to keep refugees in separate communities (Rogge, n.d: 12).

The spontaneous absorption view is based on the assumption of minimum interference from the host government or the UNHCR, either because self-settling refugees are expected to fend for themselves or because they are received by their kinfolk with hospitality. Many observers, however, are quick to point out the decrease of African hospitality making spontaneous absorption by hosting communities difficult and exposing a number of self-settled refugees to much social, economic and political vulnerability. This phenomenon was exacerbated by any of the following factors (or a combination of them): the depression of wages and the rise of food prices (including other essential commodities and services), deteriorating economic conditions, the rising rate of population growth, and the relative scarcity of land for cultivation (Bulcha, 1988:24). Consequently, self-settled refugees suffer from many disadvantages because of their lack of legal status. These include: subjection to travel restrictions; liability to be detained by police at any time; inability to obtain business licences from local authorities; and, because most do not have a work permit, they are liable to work at their employers' whims which makes them docile and cheap labourers (Kuhlman, 1994: 133).

In *organised settlement*, on the other hand, refugees are separately put in arranged settlements. Such planned settlements, whose architects are mainly a hosting government and the UNHCR, are designed on a set of rationalities. These include: 1) it is considered as the safest and least risk place for the "guests"; 2) to avoid security hazards in the asylum country and minimise producing a "warrior refugee community;"¹¹ 3) to obtain foreign aid by sheltering refugees in clearly visible and easily accessible areas to the international relief community; 4) to create a conducive environment for the final repatriation of the "guests"; and 5) most importantly, planned refugee settlements are created for making refugees economically self-sufficient and for their supposed "spill over effect" in the economy of the asylum country (Jacobsen, 2001; Findley, 2001; Blackwell, 2000; Collins, 1996; Lassailly-Jacob, 1994; Kuhlman, 1994; and Kibreab, 1987).

Other more doubtful justifications are also advanced. These include:

- Sometimes the refugees augment the numbers of a particular ethnic group in the host country, upsetting a precarious balance;

- In some host countries there is a fear that a large number of self-settled refugees could lead to increased crime;
- Settlements would permit the refugees to live in their own communities under their own leaders; and
- Governments want to keep refugees out of cities, where they would add up to urban problem (Kuhlman, 1994: 122-123).

But most of all, the underlying principle behind establishing planned refugee settlements is to minimise the burden of refugees on the hosting country and the donor community at large by making refugees economically self-supporting and upon raising their overall standard of living. Since the 1960s, agricultural schemes have been extensively established as a means of helping refugees to become self-sufficient through engaging in agricultural activities. In order to create socially and economically viable rural communities that foster refugees' self-reliance and even national development of the hosting country, organised settlements have entailed a planned and controlled transfer of refugee population towards underused or unused arable lands that should be exploited through agricultural intensification. To achieve those ends asylum countries in collaboration with UNHCR and NGOs (sometimes through tripartite agreements) provided refugees with arable land. Hosting governments provide staff and other necessary administrative inputs; physical and social infrastructural services are provided by the UNHCR and NGOs, and food rations by the WFP, particularly during the establishment period. 'Guest' settlers are allotted farms, tools, seeds and fertilisers, and are provided with technical assistance and expertise. The new schemes were also expected to develop new lands through reclamation, clearing, levelling or irrigation under the new agricultural intensification (Kibreab, 1987).

By engaging in agricultural activities the planned refugee settlers are envisaged to: 1) overcome the so-called "refugee dependency or welfare syndrome" that is assumed to hinder refugees' productive capacity. Its proponents held the view that if properly planned and being successful, settlement projects reduce the burden imposed on the local population, the host government and the international community; 2) become self-supporting and socially integrated through high infrastructure investments and improved agricultural programs; and 3) generate "spill over effects" at the regional level which create additional opportunities for both the refugees and the local population. That is, through the provision of capital for investment by international organisations, refugee settlements were expected to develop an

underdeveloped and neglected area that in turn contribute to the development of the region as a whole. In this regard many researchers still maintain that refugees can have a positive impact in the economic activity of the hosting area (Blackwell, 2000). In the words of Jacobsen (2001:16), “while self-settled and locally integrated refugees are likely to compete with locals for resources, they can have a multiplier effect, by expanding the capacity and productivity of the RHA economy.” The refugees’ role in boosting the economy, he explains, occurs for the following reasons:

- 1) Increased availability of new goods and services;
- 2) Market growth from an increased number of people means that goods are imported into the RHA by locals in both sending and host countries for trade; and
- 3) Economic activity on the part of self-settled refugees who engage in farming, fishing, or hire themselves for wage labour (Jacobsen, 2001: 16).

Though there are considerable reports about a successful integration of refugees in RHA culminating with grant of citizenship (e.g. in Botswana and Tanzania), not all such local integration and settlements have been socio-economically problem free (Rogge and Akol, 1989:186). And also the socio-economic impact of self-settled refugees on RHA is mixed and should not be oversimplified. Available field research findings so far show that it has either positive or negative impacts in some sectors of the local economy. Some might boost the economy while others might be mere “parasites” to the already strained economy (Jacobsen, 2001:16).

In Sudan, for example, Kibreab (1985) reported that in several cases refugees’ hard work contributed to an increase in food production and stimulated economic activity (mainly through planned refugee settlement programs of Eritreans or from elsewhere). A comparative study about refugee settlements in Botswana, the Sudan and Tanzania conducted by Rogge also found that there were different levels of success, but concluded that the impact of refugees was positive in all three cases (Rogge mentioned in Sorenson, 1994). According to Sorenson (1994:180), Rogge maintained that refugees have labour resources that can benefit the host country; that refugee settlements can bring new areas under cultivation; and remote regions into national development programs; and that providing services to refugees can lead to a general upgrading of rural facilities for all inhabitants of the region. In Rogge’s view, the

main constraints on the refugee-related development are the number of refugees and the limited land and resources (Rogge mentioned in Sorenson, 1994:180).

Therefore, while there is some truth in Kuhlman's (1994:127) findings that says it appears that the self-settled have a more secure livelihood than the refugees in settlements and in urban areas, the self-settled are better off compared to their planned rural refugee counterparts, most often refugees find it difficult to run their life owing to various barriers in their asylum country.

It is thus not possible to make a definitive conclusion as to which of the two major alternatives to settlement of refugees in Africa performs better in terms of the economic integration. Nevertheless, on the whole the prevailing evidence strongly suggest that: 1) the massive external intervention necessitated by the policy of organised settlements has – at least in the case of the Eritrean refugees in the Sudan – failed to make the refugees self-sufficient or even to make them better off than the self-settled; and 2) that it is not as effective in lessening the economic burden of refugees on the host country as had been thought, partly because the burden of the self-settled is not unmitigated, and partly because the cost of the organised settlements is substantial not only to the international community but to the host country as well (Kuhlman, 1994: 134-135).

Whereas even under present conditions economic integration among the self-settled appears to be better than in the organised settlements, appropriate policies could do much to improve it with regard to the economic situation of the refugees themselves and with regard to the burden they impose on the host country. At present, this integration is hampered by the restrictions imposed on refugees by the host country governments, and aid agencies appear to be less willing to share the burden where the self-settled are concerned. "If those institutional constraints could be overcome, and if host country governments could face their responsibilities more squarely, both the refugees and the host population would better off", says Kuhlman (1994: 135).

Although there are instances when international assistance has contributed to the economic betterment of refugees, most of the organised settlements have failed to promote economic self-sufficiency. This is mainly because the economies of hosting countries of the South have deteriorated over the last three decades, by rapid decline of agricultural production

compounded by natural disasters, increased costs of essential goods, serious problems in the social services, rising unemployment and widespread famine. In such situations refugee economic self-sufficiency is an illusion because, as Pitterman (1984) reported:

We cannot expect refugees to become economically self-sufficient in a vacuum....
[R]efugee settlements can prosper and refugees can contribute to the welfare of the host population only in so far as broader economic integration is fostered (Pitterman, quoted in Bulcha, 1988:24).

There is a growing consciousness regarding the relation between development and refugee problems. It is now widely acknowledged that local integration efforts cannot be effective unless they are carried out simultaneously with the economic and infrastructural development of the regions in question. Unfortunately the international donor community is often hesitant to push this issue forward (Bulcha, 1988:24).

Others have emphasised that despite enormous hosting governments' efforts and substantial international assistance not only to make organised refugee settlers economically self-supporting but also to contribute to national developments of their new country by producing surplus food and cash crops, agricultural settlement schemes have ended up with disappointing results (Lassailly-Jacob, 19994:210). An example can be presented that, in spite of the massive aid to settlements for Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in the Eastern Sudan, the refugees settled there are no better off – and frequently worse off – than self-settled refugees who survived largely without aid (Kuhlman, 1994: 129).

Some critics of Sudan's organised refugee agricultural schemes have pointed out that organised refugee settlement program did not fully achieve its objectives mainly because: (Eritrean) refugees were located in too marginal areas; the farm lands distributed to refugees were too small; the scheme was overcapitalised and easily ran into difficulty after withdrawal of external funders; had insufficient water; lacked the necessary commitment by the refugees to participate in the planned agricultural economy; were ineffectively managed; or, imposed assistance programs on the refugees rather than developed such programs with the cooperation of the refugees (Rogge, n.d: 13-14; Kibreab, 1987, CERA, 1989: 9).

Planners' failure to make a critical analysis and preparations for such settlements' size also pose certain problems. The fact that they often do not accurately study the human "carrying

capacity” of such settlements put planners into another trouble (Lassailly-Jacob, 1994:216). Nevertheless the same critics and some evaluators of these programs admit that several of Sudan’s schemes have succeeded in creating sufficient levels of self-reliance among the target groups culminating in a complete withdrawal of WFP feeding in numerous settlements.

There are a number of controversies among supporters and opponents of refugee solutions that revolve around the issue of self-settlement or settlement in organised camps. Betts (1981) suggested that the “social advantages of self-settlement far outweigh the material advantages of formal elements” (Betts, mentioned in Sorenson, 1994:184). Yet Chambers (1979) argues that spontaneous integration is a reassuring myth that absolves host governments and international donors of the responsibility to provide supports. Other researchers emphasise the development of “dependency or welfare syndrome” among planned settlement refugees because basic facilities are provided at the time of resettlement, for free. Lassailly-Jacob (1994:221) warns that the provision of free service inputs may foster dependence and paternalism, which inhibit the long-term viability of resettled communities.

More recently, other researchers have reported the ending of ‘traditional hospitality’ and its concomitant obstructions in facilitating local integration (Kibreab, 1985). African refugees (particularly spontaneous settlers) find themselves on an “unwelcome mat” beset with competition for land, jobs, and food. Increasingly, refugees are being left to the whim of their local hosts, who can exploit them for cheap labour or as a market for overpriced goods (Collins, 1996:29). Consequently, the lack of agricultural land for refugees in asylum countries and hosting governments’ choice to restrict their guest in confined areas has left refugees to hang around camps with no opportunities at all. Thus the contemporary situation has become gloomy for settled refugees.

Furthermore there are some other factors that inhibit and/or slow-down the smooth local integration of refugees into a hosting society. While the self-settlement process appears to work best for the refugees (and IDPs), it may not be feasible if the community is already saturated with these segments of the population. RHAs receiving enormous displacees experience stress to the existing social, economic, and physical structures, which in turn lead them not to welcome newcomers. Among the stresses that can cause a host community to force or ‘encourage’ migrants to go elsewhere are thus:

- 1) A sense that the forced migrant group upsets a delicate ethnic balance and threatens their own political stability;
- 2) Real and perceived security problems and heightened militarization of RHA's region;
- 3) Ecological degradation associated with the intense demands posed by the forced migrants for firewood, water, food;
- 4) The attitude and beliefs of both refugees and locals about the continued presence of the refugees in the RHA; and
- 5) Resources burdens – a recognition that the economic opportunities can't stretch to cover the immigrant groups. Thus, due to these factors, many refugees (or IDPs) may find themselves shunted to distant second destinations (Findley, 2001:294-295; Jacobsen, 2001:23).

Jacobsen (2001) mentions two additional factors that hinder local integration of refugees in Africa. During the 1980s African hosting governments lamented their economies' inability to absorb large flows of refugees. Since the 1990s the issue of security concerns came into the equation making local settlement and integration of 'fellow refugees' problematic (Jacobsen, 2001:12). Besides that, refugees' interest and willingness to integrate with the hosting community also matters. In sum, he thus highlights the major obstacles to integration as:

- 1) The real and perceived security threats that accompany refugees which prompt government authorities to keep refugees in camps where they can be monitored; and
- 2) Economic and environmental resource burdens (perceived or actual) which lead to resentment by locals, resistance to integration, and pressure on authorities to segregate refugees (Jacobsen, 2001: 23).

Kuhlman (1994) dismisses all such allegations put forward against refugees as invalid. He feels most of the charges are baseless and justifies each of his counter-arguments. For example, to him, the fear of alien criminals is inspired by xenophobia rather than by evidence; if there is higher delinquency among refugees, it is likely to be due to restrictions imposed on them to pursue legal economic activities. Thus pronouncing for a need to facilitate local integration of refugees, he recommends curtailing the costly setting up and maintaining settlements (Kuhlman, 1994:123).

Similarly, Jacobsen (2001:12-21) defies the accusations made against refugees in RHA since such problems are mainly reflections of the contemporary unsettled economic, political and social conditions of the hosting countries. He thus concludes: “The objections to local integration made by host governments and local people are not always backed by substance, but their perceived reality can result in policies against local integration or self-settlement, and local resentment towards refugees and resistance to their integration” (Jacobsen, 2001: 13).

Jacobsen (2001:10) insists that, at times, (self-settled) refugees’ absorption into local societies takes place in RHA forming what he calls *de facto integration*. According to him, refugees are said to be *de facto* integrated when they:

- Are not in physical danger (and do not live under the threat of *refoulement*);
- Are not confined to camps or settlements, and have the right to return to their home country;
- Are able to sustain livelihoods, through access to land or employment, and can support themselves and their families;
- Have access to education or vocational training, health facilities, and housing; and
- Are socially networked into the host community.

As a proponent of local integration of refugees to the host countries during exiles’ protracted situations, Jacobsen (2001) argues that there is no vision that refugees and assistance programs could be a development asset to countries of first asylum, or that they could promote human security. He attributes the failure of hosting governments to make use of this opportunity merely because they often see refugees as ‘guests and temporary newcomers.’ He believes that there is no need to make refugees dependent on international food aid as long as they can engage in agricultural and other income-generating activities in the host country through appropriate policies directed towards that end (Jacobsen, 2000: 3-4).

Governments have a large array of programmatic and policy tools that can help channel migration to areas and migrants to economic niches which are more likely to be mutually beneficial to the migrant and the host community (Findley, 2001:302). Hosting governments need to show up ‘migration-friendly’ policies and programs, and policies that are highly cherished by international agencies and the western donor communities. They also need to

work with their 'partner' sending countries to elaborate alternative plans for hosting migrants that will be better tailored to their economic situations. For example, rather than restricting entrants and sending others home, countries could channel immigrants towards zones needing seasonal or temporary labour, facilitating circular migrants rather than permanent workers.

To promote local integration, Jacobsen (2001) suggests the following policies and programs:

a) The host governments should:

- 1) Enable refugees to become self-sufficient by establishing conducive and genuine legal-administration procedures committed towards that end;
- 2) Give refugees access to land, other social services and employment opportunities that are available to nationals;
- 3) Allocate formal legal rights of residence to refugees; and
- 4) Facilitate and support refugees' economic productivity by planning broad programs along with UNHCR.

b) Development agencies should:

- 1) Encompass comprehensive, coordinated and concerted relief-development efforts by various key development agencies towards socio-economic integration of refugees into the host country; and
- 2) Engage (through thorough consultations and dialogue with programs of the hosting governments) in sectoral investments that are of great priority to both the refugees and the 'nationals' (Jacobsen, 2001: 24-28).

In short, whilst local settlement (integration) constitutes the second-largest alternative strategy towards addressing world refugee problems, it demands both huge resource injections (including financial and manpower) from the donor community and the asylum country as well as political willingness and commitments from hosting governments.

3.3 Settlement into a Third Country (Facilitated Resettlement)

The third solution to the refugee problem is resettlement in a third country. Owing to the meagre economic and unstable political conditions of countries of first asylum in the South, in the 1980s there had been a call from various statesmen, academics and activists that says the West too has to share the burden of world refugees. As a response to such calls, few

“fortunate” Third World refugees begun to find “another third home” in countries of the OECD. Particularly, UNHCR’s request to the Western governments to offer certain resettlement slots in their areas received a hearing ear. This recognition came as a result of the moral and political merits that are intrinsic to the program. Failure to positively respond to such calls by the industrialised countries, Koehn (1994) rightly reveals, would offer a strong justification for others to curtail their hospitality towards refugees. He says, “the world’s wealthiest nations cannot buy themselves out of a refugee settlement role through financial assistance to impoverished first-asylum countries” (Koehn, 1994: 105). Hence, it became imperative for Western governments to respond positively to the call, though very guardedly.

As a strategy, resettlement in a third-country has never been considered as a serious solution for Africa’s refugees. The West began officially to open their doors (but very cautiously) to accommodate African refugees only with the passage of the 1980s U.S Refugee Act. With the commencement of small annual quota for African refugees in 1980 by the USA, it was subsequently followed by Canada in 1982 and Australia in 1985. Some writers confirm that in 1990, only ten countries, namely the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand and six countries of Europe (four Nordic countries, the Netherlands and Switzerland), formally announced refugee resettlement quotas; and several Western European countries such as the U.K., France and Germany have resettled some refugees without a quota system (Martin and Widgren, 1996). Whereas these countries’ resettlement quotas are small, the Nordic countries are important partners for UNHCR in that they are particularly willing to resettle refugees who have difficult cases. The USA, despite being the first to welcome the new reception scheme, is believed to rank behind Australia, Canada, Sweden, and Denmark in its refugee-to-host population ratio. To make resettlement programs in third countries workable, some suggest that the scheme should be based on equitable distribution of the resettlement burden according to each receiving country’s population and should involve all industrialised countries, including Russia and Japan. This should also be based on a broad UNHR-administered quota system, their suggestion says (Rogers, 1992:1131; Rogge, and Akol, 1989:186-187).

Even if the ceiling quotas allotted to refugees of the developing countries are filled each year and have somewhat contributed to the sharing of the African refugee burden by the OECD governments, there is a contentious debate about the whole exercise that revolves around the scheme. Some argue that since the scheme has essentially favoured refugees from Southeast

Asian and some European countries, they appear to be biased and their impacts upon Africa's refugee population had been negligible (Rogge, n.d.: 15-16).

Resettlement in the second country of asylum has been a main solution for the post-war European refugees and recently for the Southeast Asian refugees (particularly Indo-Chinese people), but it has been either non-existent or exceptional for African refugees. When it comes to examining some of the contributions made through third country resettlement among Africans, people from the Horn of Africa have benefited more as compared to their African compatriots, according to some accounts. It is said that in the late 1980s well over three quarters of those resettled Africans in the western countries were mainly from that region (Martin and Widgren, 1996; Rogge, and Akol, 1989:187; Kibreab, 1987, 10- 11).

Nonetheless, this scheme has been heavily criticised by refugees' home governments (more strong opposition comes from political fronts), hosting governments, as well as the regional organisations such as OAU and others. Each one of these actors opposes third-country resettlement from various standpoints. Opposition groups of refugees' home governments often oppose such a program because it draws off the more valuable segments of their population – mainly the youth; hosting governments resent what it sees as too highly selective skimming-off of the most educated and skilled population who are often desperately needed on refugee settlements to assist with servicing the refugee population; and the OAU opposes it because such an endeavour perpetuates the refugee problem in the continent rather than reducing it and because such a program also takes refugees that are young educated people of the continent, whom their respective countries badly need (Rogge, n.d.: 15-16; Winter, 1994:164).

Apparently, given the recent post-September 11, 2001, stringent immigration policies that North American and Western European countries are applying, the slight contributions that this approach used to play in solving refugee problem of the developing South seems to be bleaker. Indeed it has already been heavily jeopardised. Therefore, given the overall size of the quotas for African resettlement, and the concomitant concerns and opposition to it, it is highly unlikely that resettlement will ever play the role in Africa that it has played to Southeast Asia.

In general, then, the option of resettling refugees from countries of first asylum to third countries appears the least desirable and/or unworkable and some have notionally dismissed the scheme based a number of justifications, namely: 1) it is costly; 2) it is politically inconvenient; 3) it appears to only divert refugee flows without attempting in a long-term reduction in total numbers; 4) it is an option available only to a fortunate minority of better-educated refugees; and 5) since the “West” has already been alarmed by the massive inflow of migrants to their lands, they will continue to undertake restrictive actions (Sorenson, 1994; Koehn, 1994; Winter, 1994: 164; Rogers, 1992: 1131; Harrell-Bond, 1989: 52-53; and Rogge and Akol, 1989:186-187).

Furthermore, western scholars and politicians tend to consider third country resettlement of refugees from the “South” altogether as no longer a reasonable option. They contend that it is expensive and there is scarce resource for it. Others substantiate their justifications by claiming that the social problems of integration are even more intractable than in the country of first asylum, where the cultural setting is often at least somewhat familiar to the refugees¹² (Rogge and Akol, 1989:187). Proponents of the latter idea, with ‘fortress Europe from “locust aliens” kind of attitude’, attempt to prevent refugees from seeking asylum in the West. They campaign for a new policy which they call *regionalisation*. The objective of this policy is to find “solutions” to the refugee problem within the region itself. The policy of regionalisation is, however, rationalised on other grounds, on the (untested) assumption that refugees will be able to adapt more easily to the culture of a neighbouring country than that of an industrialised society. Harrell-Bond (1989:50-54) furiously questions this program by arguing, “Where is the evidence?”

3.4 Other Solutions

There are other minor response strategies that hosting governments and the world community employ to address massive human displacements. These can be either ‘holding in camps’ or refoulement. The former involves long-term confinement of refugees to camps. It is a sub-category of assisted-settlement I have mentioned in section 3.2, and is often located in rural areas. What distinguishes a refugee camp from ‘settlement’ is that in the former refugees are almost totally dependent on food aid from the international donor community. Such camps are thus “purpose-built sites” usually made up of tents or flimsy huts, partly designed to attract foreign aid. For a number of reasons, such camps are often located close to border areas. One

reason why host governments and many relief agencies prefer camps, Jacobsen (2001: 8) maintains, is that in addition to making management of assistance easier, camps are seen as facilitating repatriation.

Finally, the least preferred response strategy to refugee problem is *refoulement*. This involves forcible repatriation of refugees from an asylum country. While this act is against the 1951 UN and the 1967 OAU Conventions, it is not uncommonly violated by some African governments. Sometimes some governments engage in military-like round ups and expel or return refugees against their wishes – a situation referred to as *refoulement*. While hosting governments do most of such acts unilaterally, at times it might be conducted in cooperation with UNHCR through tripartite agreements among UNHCR, hosting governments and the refugees' government of origin. Sadly enough such actions might be taken even if the situation that forced refugees to opt for exile still persists. For example, in 1979, many Khmer refugees were pushed back by Thai authorities (Rogge and Akol, 1989:186) and in 1980s Kenyans from Tanzania, Ethiopians and Eritreans from Djibouti, Ethiopians from Somalia, Burundi from Tanzania, and Mozambicans from Malawi, were reported to have been forcibly repatriated to their 'homes' (Harrell-Bond, 1989:42). The Asians' forced deportation from Id-Amin's Uganda as well as the more recent forcible expatriation of Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin from Ethiopia can also be considered as *refoulement*. Hence, there is need for the guarantors and protectors to make sure that refugee hosting governments abide by international rules and regulations that make refugees' residence in the asylum country both safe and secure.

3.5 The Burden of Refugees

According to Kibreab (1987:10), about 80% of African refugees are hosted by countries that are classified by the UN as the least developed. These countries, as is the case in the refugees' country of origin, also have severe economic and social crises caused by drought, epidemics, inadequate water supplies, food shortages, underdeveloped physical and social infrastructure, and severe shortages of foreign exchange due to declining productivity, the deteriorating terms of trade and the increasing external public debt and debt service payments. Due to these and many others, many refugee hosting governments find themselves in a critical position whereby they are unable to absorb the large injection of refugee populations in their labour force or to feed them.

Following the Malthusian view, many refugee-hosting Third World governments thus assume that the arrival of refugees en masse necessarily creates a chronic burden for the host population. Particularly in Africa such refugee influx is often viewed as threatening to the local economy and the environment, and creating social pressures in the RHAs. Specifically, many African asylum governments complain about the severe impact of refugees in their small-scale rain-fed agriculture whereby their guests are charged with “severely taxing” the limited natural resources and contributing to ecological degradation due to population pressure.

Complaints about the impact of refugee influxes on the fragile African environment¹² appear to have some truth. Deforestation and overgrazing are clearly visible by the absence of “green areas” near camps due to continuous cutting of trees for constructing houses, cooking, etc. Grievances about shortage of water supply, housing problems and pressure on education and health services in towns due to refugee influx are also reported. Bulcha (1988), for instance, has reported that in Eastern Sudan, refugees (including Eritreans and Ethiopians) were blamed for creating water shortages in 1982 and 1983 particularly in Kassala and other towns. Still others blame refugees as (perceived or actual) sources of political instability in the RHA (Sorenson, 1994:180-181).

Owing to such concerns, African refugee host governments have raised the above-mentioned matters in two international conferences known as ICARA I and II that took place in 1981 and 1984 respectively. In these conferences they called for greater burden-sharing by the industrialised countries too. Unfortunately, in both cases the response from the donor community was relatively inadequate (Bakewell, 1999:3; Rogers, 1992:1133). The unsatisfactory response of the international donor community to such appeals are tantamount to convey the change from ‘burden-sharing’ to ‘burden-shifting’ whereby African refugee problems have been conceived as an African problem that has to be redressed by Africans.

The general accusations that refugees are a burden to RHAs, however, turns out to be a highly complex matter that is very difficult to quantify. Determining the effects of refugee movements on host countries requires further research to accurately determine and quantify the positive or negative effects that refugees have on their host country (Sorenson, 1994:180). While some of the allegations might have some validity, Bakewell (1999:4) contends that it is

inaccurate to say that refugees necessarily constitute a net burden. Moreover, the effects of a mass influx of refugees are not straightforward and might differ by economic class and, in a plural society such as Sudan, also ethnicity (Kuhlman .1994:131).

3.6 Repatriation Experiences in Africa

Africa has a considerable history of repatriation. With the end of the bi-polar era, several long-standing conflicts found resolution and the ending of anti-colonial wars in Africa opened the opportunity for the returning of large numbers of ex-refugees to their “homes” (Harrell-Bond, 1989:55). Given that one of the major causes of refugee movements in Africa had been anti-colonial warfare, given that each of these wars has now been resolved and regions ‘pacified’ (not to mention the intra-state conflict that still grips the continent), and given that the host community see their residents as temporary and reluctant to grant refugee status to persons in need of protection who are not victims of individual persecution, considerable refugee voluntary or involuntary repatriation programs have been in order in the continent (Zlotnik, 2001:244; Rogge and Akol, 1989:187). The most powerful donor community, the UN and many “tired” host governments also feel that it is the right time for implementing repatriation programs and should not be missed out.

Voluntary repatriation in Africa, more than in any other region, is thus becoming the order of the day. More than five million refugees in Africa are known to have been repatriated since the early 1990s, and even though the number of spontaneous returnees is difficult to know, it is believed that it exceeds by far those of organized returnees. Such endeavours have been facilitated by cessation of conflicts, turmoil, and violence; the change of government or a declaration of amnesty to exiles in the refugees’ home country (Bulcha, 1988:21; Crisp, 2000); and sometimes from implicit pressure from the international refugee regime, particularly the UN agencies. Some of the successful repatriation undertakings coincided with the end of colonial rule in many African countries such as Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Angola, or white minority rule in the case of Zimbabwe.

The earliest known African successful voluntary repatriation, though with little assistance from UNHCR, took place amongst Algerians who fled during the country’s war of independence. Thereafter, in 1970s, UNHCR-coordinated refugee repatriation experiences became a methodical humanitarian exercise throughout the continent. After the Zambian

government declared amnesty to all exiles in 1979-1980, about 190,000 refugees voluntarily returned from neighbouring countries (Rogge and Akol, 1989:190-191).

In 1980, about 200,000-250,000 refugees returned to Zimbabwe following the Lancaster House Agreement. The Zimbabwean repatriation was unique in terms of its speed and the beneficiaries of the program. It is considered by many as the most successful exercise in that, for the first time, the US \$140 million worth UNHCR assistance has also incorporated the resettlement of 750,000 IDPs. After years of war and famine, a change of government in Ethiopia prompted the repatriation of nearly a million refugees, primarily from Djibouti, Somalia, and Sudan. In 1983 Ethiopia sought millions of dollars worth of aid for a repatriation program to return its citizens who had asked for asylum in Djibouti (Kibreab, 1987:10-11; Sorenson, 1994:179).

Over 43,000 Namibian refugees returned home after the country attained its independence in March 1990. Their repatriation was carried out by UNHCR in conjunction with the Council of Churches of Namibia and was largely acclaimed as being successful. Needless to say, Winter (1994:164-165), asserts that the Namibian repatriation was very costly (perhaps in terms of transporting returnees and setting services in their respected sites); and returnees received limited reintegration assistance.

Following the achievement of national independence by the former Portuguese colonies of Guinea Bissau, Angola, Mozambique in 1975, hundreds of thousands of refugees were also voluntarily repatriated to their countries of origin. For example, between 1992 and 1996, with the ending of 16-year old civil war in Mozambique, some two million Mozambican refugees returned to their country from Malawi, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Martin and Widgen, 1996:32). In 1996, 1,690,800 persons had been repatriated in ten countries: Angola, Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Rwanda, Somalia, and Togo. Most the returnees were from Rwanda which constituted the largest share of mass return. An exhaustive descriptive list of the continental repatriation exercise is beyond the call of the thesis. Finally, as the existing international refugee regime favours repatriation programs, it is more likely that there will be more returnees of forced migrants in the foreseeable future.

With very few exceptions (e.g. in Angola) voluntary repatriation in most African countries proved to be a durable solution. However, one has to be cautious that not all African refugees were completely voluntary as stipulated in 1951 UN and 1967 OAU Conventions. There are a number of examples of forced or coercive repatriations. For example, in 1982 the Djibouti government, owing to the refugees' 'unfriendly' relationship with the locals, opted for executing an involuntary repatriation of the Afar ethnic groups to Ethiopia. UNHCR too welcomed the supposedly forced repatriation. In 1986 the government of Djibouti, in collaboration with the Ethiopian government and UNHCR, carried out another widely criticised repatriation drive (Harrell-Bond, 1986; Sorenson, 1994; Barton, 1984; Hodges, 1984). According to Harrell-Bond (1989:43), "Although refugees are entitled to the right to return to their places of origin, ideally to their former homes, their villages, their land," programs which have been implemented, for example, in Ethiopia, have not been able to provide such guarantees.

At any rate, the voluntary repatriation programs that are prevalent in the continent testify to one thing: the African refugees' strong willingness to return to their homeland when the causes of their flight are eliminated. Explicitly, when 'the rain is over,' Africa's refugees become overwhelmed by 'home sweet home' sentiments! That is what happened to Eritrean refugees in the Sudan too. I will now turn to look at the organised voluntary repatriation programme in Eritrea – the PROFERI Project.

3.7 PROFERI Project: Eritrea's Refugee Repatriation Program

The deep aspirations of Eritrean refugees, like all human beings who cherish their nation and land, is to return to an independent homeland and live in peace and dignity without fear of oppression, terror, and persecution (EPLF, 1987).

As I have mentioned in the introduction section, after Eritrea achieved independence in 1993, the repatriation of its citizens became possible after contested negotiations among the three actors in the repatriation program, UNHCR, GoE, and the Sudanese government. While Eritrea and UNHCR made a joint appeal for an estimated U.S \$ 262 million to carry out a comprehensive return of refugees from the Sudan, only a dismal 13% of this amount was pledged. In view of the insufficiency of the funds, the GoE sought and obtained agreement from the UNHCR to implement a scaled-back program (Bariaghaber, 1999:611; Kibreab, 1999:138).

During the commencement of the repatriation of Eritrean refugees, there were two points of differentiation between the international donor community in general and UNHCR in particular against that of the Eritrean government. First, the latter insisted that repatriation programs ought be viewed as part and parcel of national recovery and reconstruction endeavour, and thus should also incorporate IDPs in rehabilitating and reintegrating the Eritrean society that were hit by the devastating and disintegrative liberation war. Second, the Eritrean government's 'National Execution Policy' of the overall PROFERI program. All potential donors allegedly did not accept these two firm stands and preconditions of the Eritrean government. In the first proposed precondition, donors and UNHCR did not welcome it because there was no single international agency to oversee such an endeavour and nor is it the UNHCR's mandate to address the issue of IDPs during repatriation programs. In the second premise donors contended that Eritrea has neither the experience nor the potential human resources to implement such a huge task. They also expressed their discontent for exclusion of NGOs who won the trust of the international donor community. These contested issues, perhaps among many others, are believed to have led to a sluggish response from the international donor community (Kibreab, 2002:63).

At any rate, out of the estimated 180,000 Eritreans who returned 'home' between 1989-1998, only 24,220 individuals (6386 households) were able to get assisted repatriation under PPP (ERREC, 1997). However, it is worth mentioning that PROFERI program has now restarted in 2001 after it has been stopped due to Eritrea and Sudan's stalled diplomatic relations.

The PPP, as an initial scheme, was designed to have nine components, namely: institutions and operations; repatriation and initial relief; shelter and housing; agriculture, livestock and afforestation; water supply and roads; health; education; evaluation and planning (CERA, 1995). Furthermore, the PPP had the following major objectives in its inauguration:

- To repatriate, resettle and reintegrate about 24,000 individual returnees (4,000 households) from the Sudan in nine government planned reintegration sites located in four provinces, namely, in Gash-Setit (Goluj and Fanco); in Barka (Keru, Duluk, Ad-Kukuy and Ad-Saidna); in Senhit (Hagaz, Hashishai and Halhal); and in Sahel (Etaru and Kemchewa);

- To provide returnees with basic means for restarting productive life, integrate into communities which are already in place, and provide them with basic services in water, health, and education;
- To strengthen the capacity of CERA and of the line ministries which participated in the planning and implementation of the PPP;
- To provide food aid up to one year or up to the returnees' first harvest or employment; and
- To provide CERA and the relevant line ministries with lessons and experience that would enable them to design and implement the subsequent phases of PPP effectively and efficiently. This was expected to raise donor confidence and consequently generate a positive response to funding of the subsequent phases (Kibreab, 1999:158-159).

Core to the strategy of the Eritrean repatriation program was to make the endeavour firmly rooted in and be linked with the overall rehabilitation and recovery of the society framed within the long-term national development plans of the war devastated country (CERA, 1995:21). Particularly its 're-integration policy' being based on the principle of creating economic and social capacities for the absorption in the areas of return, from which it has been anticipated that both returnees and locals will benefit (Kibreab, 2002:68). Once back in Eritrea, organised refugee returnees (as it is often done in other African refugee repatriation programs) were provided with resettlement assistance to enable them to (re)-construct their livelihood. More emphasis was given on making the returnees economically self-supporting and self-sufficient by ploughing two hectares of land allotted to each household and raising livestock.¹⁴ This decision was based on the assumption that the majority of returnees will return to their former way of livelihood which essentially constituted agriculture. This gross assumption was erroneous and unsubstantiated with accurate information.

According to (ERREC, 1994: 4), as spelt in the 'Plan of Operations for Pilot Project of PROFERI', the agricultural package of the scheme was designed to: 'Initiate agricultural rehabilitation activities that can provide and sustain livelihood for the returnees and the communities into which they are integrated.' Henceforth, a chunk of the PPP budget was allocated for purchasing livestock, seeds and fertilisers, hand tools, tractor hire, levelling of agricultural land and other operational costs (ERREC, 1995; Shields, et al., 1995). Another component of the program was the general rehabilitation of the areas to which refugees would

return with the implementation of Quick Impact Projects (QIP) aimed at re-establishing infrastructure such as clinics and schools (UNHCR, 1995).

Though PPP's returnees were uniformly expected to return to sites in Gash-Barka, Sahel, and Anseba regions, the majority chose five integration sites within the Gash-Barka sub-region mainly at Gergef, Tebeldia, Alebu and Tesssenei, according to the officials I interviewed. This unexpected concentration of returnees in some sites has created considerable strain and stress in community services that were planned for the sites (See Table 3.1 below). According to my interviewees, Tessenei town is very severely overcrowded by the inflow of returnees. Because of continuous choice of returnees of that site and its concomitant population pressure, government administrators have already warned that the site can no longer be a destination area for newcomers.

As it is clearly depicted in the table below there were mismatches between planners' preparedness to resettlement areas and returnees' final decision in choosing their destination areas. This discrepancy has compelled the planners to establish new re-settlement sites for repatriates. For example, two of my research sites were hurriedly established as a result of such unexpected returnee concentration in some sites.

Table 3.2: Discrepancy between Planners' Perceptions and Returnee Preference

PROFERI Pilot Project Population by Provinces			
Province	Planned Figures	Actual No. of families	Actual No. of individuals
Gash-Setit	1,000	5,108	19,531
Barka	1,500	847	3,084
Senhit	1000	174	713
Sahel	1,000	230	790
Others	0.000	27	102
Total	4,500	6,386	24,220

Source: ERREC, 1995.

To recapitulate, in this chapter we have dealt with the various time-tested approaches employed by the international community towards dealing with refugee problems. The pros and cons as well as the debates that surround within these strategies were also examined.

Finally, the chapter briefly addressed the first phase of Eritrean repatriation program, its plans, goals and the challenges encountered in the process. In the next chapter we will have a look at the theoretical framework of the research.

Chapter Four: Theoretical Framework

Uprooted, often powerless to influence his fate, torn between the hope of return, which makes him a perpetual wanderer, and the desire to integrate himself in the society which is sheltering him so as to become something other than a recipient of aid, an alien without protection other than that of the Higher Commissioner – valuable as it is – the refugee remains a fragile being, whose chances of self-development are cruelly jeopardised, even on the assumption – often theoretical – that his material needs would be looked after (L. Tindemans, President of ICARA II, July 1984, quoted in Kibreab, 1987:3).

I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented (Elie Wiesel, 1986 quoted in Shultheis, 1989:3).

Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss how I have constructed the process of socio-economic repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration of refugee returnees in Eritrea. To understand this complex reality in a sociological perspective, I have employed a multi-faceted approach, i.e., functionalist socio-cultural theories; Weber's rational-legal authority of decision-making; knowledge-power discourse in project planning and implementation; and game theories in repatriation programs.

Following the systems functionalist school, it is assumed that once external factors that disrupt 'normal' community functioning cease to exist, the system will reverse itself resulting in equilibrium. Using a biological anatomical analogy, functionalists (such as Emile Durkheim, Talcot Parsons, Robert Merton, etc) view society as having social institutions geared towards maintaining the *status quo*. Such social institutions, they preach, can be maladjusted or/and disrupted for some time but will eventually reverse themselves to maintain the normal societal functioning. Socio-cultural theorists who follow this perspective would advocate that if endogenous and/or exogenous 'shocks' that lead to forced human displacement are terminated, then societal status quo, "homeostasis" as they call it, will emerge ensuing in displacees' social and economic normal functioning, hence re-integration.

Refugee repatriation programs, as a route to reverse the disrupted systems are, however, fraught with problems because they do not occur in a vacuum. Rather, they take place within bureaucratic plans, rules and regulations as well as a set of implementation procedures. In this

regard, I locate my theoretical framework within an intricate context of Max Weber's third ideal type legal-rational authority¹ of the entrenched bureaucracy (Weber, in Albrow, 1970; Beau, 1970); power-knowledge discourse (Lukes, 1998; Tandon, 1998; Roodt, 1996; Rahman, 1993; Rahnema, 1992; Smart, 1977); decision-making processes (Sabatier, 1998); as well as game theorists' "minimax strategy" among the various stakeholders of repatriation programs (Bariaghaber, 1999; Zeager, 1998). It is in the light of these frameworks that the PPP repatriation program in Eritrea in general and my case study in particular is constructed. Indeed, as Harrell-Bond (1989:42) has correctly observed the challenge of the study of repatriation requires coherent and integrated research strategies which incorporate the knowledge, methods, theories and concepts of varying approaches which can eventually give a holistic picture of the repatriation programs.

At first, according to Malki (1995:505), the UN organisations (together with other national and international aid and relief agencies, NGOs, charity groups, development agencies) and refugee hosting governments have played a decisive role in consolidating "the international refugee regime." Such state and international organisational exercise of the "international refugee regime" basically involves refugee problem management (both during refugees' stay in exile and during their repatriation) within certain bureaucratic procedures. By bureaucracy, we mean a set of complex hierarchical departments, agencies, commissions, and their staff with cautiously established and formalised statuses and roles that exists to help a system carry out its social task (Blau, 1970); in this case solving (if possible ending) the world refugee problem. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the cornucopia of themes covered within the studies that surround the concept of "bureaucracy" though.

Nevertheless, central to the idea of bureaucracy as a pervasive and ever growing feature of modern societies, is that it is arguably assumed important because it ensures precision, speed, reliability, clarity, efficiency, discipline, regularity/strictness, and continuity in state and supranational organisational performance and service delivery. As an inevitable process, it is created, propagated and valued in modern society because of its supposed rationality and effectiveness in carrying out certain tasks (Bannet and Finnemore, 1999:715; Albrow, 1970: 43-45). Such a pessimistic viewpoint is drawn from long-standing Weberian arguments about bureaucracy and is common among its succeeding sociological institutionalist approaches to the study of state and 'supra-state' organisational work.

While it is undeniable that *legal-rational authority* that is typical of bureaucrats and their bureaucratic works² have contributed immensely towards work performance and improved many people's lives, bureaucracy does not necessarily often facilitate program effectiveness and result in positive outcomes. Indeed, while Weber did not accentuate bureaucratic inefficiency and red-tape that constitute its negative aspect, he is said to have been sceptical about the increasing bureaucratic world of his time and "was well-attuned to the vices as well as the virtues of this new social form of authority" (Barnet and Finnemore, 1999:707-709; Albrow, 1970:45-46). His notion of bureaucracy as an "iron cage" and bureaucrats as "specialists without spirit" were testimony to the obverse of his admiration of bureaucratic form.

Therefore, contrary to the optimistic view of bureaucracy, policy-makers, constructivist academics and some realist lay-people have come to question the desirability of rigid bureaucracy too. They posed the following challenging questions: 1) was Weber's rational type of bureaucracy really as rational as he thought?; and 2) was the advance of rationalisation so certain? (Albrow, 1970:54). They came to assert that bureaucracy could obstruct the very rationality envisaged out of it; be ineffective, inefficient, repressive and unaccountable; and finally impede people from realising their potentials and/or achieving their goals (Chambers, 1997; Kottack, 1991). State and/or supranational organisations can do so either due to external pressures put on them or merely because of their internal "ritualised pathological behaviour" in carrying out their tasks (Barnet and Finnemore, 1999).

Following the lead of Merton's notion of the 'dysfunctional consequence of bureaucracy' (Merton, mentioned in Albrow, 1970: 55), Barnet and Finnemore (1999:699-700) powerfully argued, "the normative valuation on impersonal, generalised rules that defines bureaucracies can also make *organisations* obsessed with their own rules, and ultimately lead to inefficient, self-defeating behaviour." Bureaucrats who are inflexible owing to the presumed impersonal and rule-bound nature of their work, those who employ "coercive power", those whose hierarchical institutional structures involve a top-down approach to decision-making (as opposed to bottom-up or horizontal approach that calls for consultation to potential program beneficiaries) (Sabatier, 1998; Rahman, 1993; Rahnema, 1992), and those who follow the dogmatic nonsense "We know what is best for our target groups", have dysfunctional behaviour that enormously impedes people from achieving their desires, aspirations, potentials, etc (Kibreab, 1999:136; Monaheg, 1998; Chambers, 1997:63-66). As Blau

(1970:161) notes, this happens because “bureaucracy concentrates power in the hands of those who are in charge of bureaucratic apparatus” rendering “others” powerless and voiceless.

In development programs thus “autocratic paternalism” constitutes a major stumbling block for people (Botes and van Rensburg, 2000:42-43) and more so for refugees than for any other segment of a population. Certainly such actions have undermined refugee initiatives and created dependency (Sorenson, 1994:187) both during the refugees’ stay in an asylum country and possibly after their homecoming. In all these senses, because of its inappropriate deployment, we notice that the most powerful feature of our modern day bureaucracy has turned out to be its weakest side (Barnett and Finnemore, 1999:719-726).

Such bureaucratic weaknesses (particularly the problem of compliance to rules, inflexibility, failure to accommodate “others” ideas), as I will try to show using four unequal actors involved during repatriation programs, can emanate either from “the informal processes arising within the administrative structure or to conditions outside the organisation which determine the members’ orientations to the rules and the extent of their consequent implementation” (Albrow, 1970: 56). Hence, while there is a need to take into account these two elements to remedy bureaucratic irrationality and inefficiency, most often factors outside the bureaucratic rules appear to be neglected by most analysts.

But one may wonder and ask why do “ritualised pathological behaviours” that perpetuate bureaucratic inefficiency and irrationality happen, and can we overcome them? While there might be many competing explanations that contribute to bureaucratic dysfunctions, the state and supra-state (such as IOs) bureaucratic dysfunction in my case can be viewed from *power disparity* and competing *interest differentials* among the four actors within the repatriation “game.” To be sure, repatriation programs as bureaucratic decision-making social task and “political game” entails competing (often incompatible) interests among the constituent actors. Following the game theorists’ perspective, such “game” is full of manoeuvring and manipulations; involve player moves and interactions; and selection of strategies with specific consequences; all predicated on a desire to maximize individual player’s interests (Zeager, 1998).

It follows that, to me, often repatriation endeavours do not seem to be what they might assume it to be. Owing to power disparities among the repatriation actors (more power over others to impose their interests. In that equation, program beneficiaries) are the most disadvantaged social actors as they are viewed from three angles – i.e., their home government, the hosting society and the repatriation perspective, returnees can be seen as people “who have particular constraints placed upon them but use their own social skills and resources to subvert these constraints and bring about their preferred outcomes” (Bakewell, 1999:6).

Indeed, Harrell-Bond (1989) argues that “refugee,” as a concept and label, is essentially state-centred, which is created to serve the purposes and interests of states (perhaps ‘supra-state’ interests too). Essentially inherent within this conception of “refugee” is that they are the most powerless people, and that is why UNHCR (as a theoretically neutral UN agency) is there to represent their interests (Harrell-Bond, 1989:56-59). Furthermore, according to this conception, refugees are not only viewed as political and legal discursive entities but also as powerless actors that do not have to be consulted in decisions that will directly and dramatically affect them (Barnet and Finnemore, 1999:711). Consequently, despite two decades of calls for a participatory approach in refugee agency and relief-development management, refugees/returnees still remain at the margin in deciding their destiny through active input of their experiences, wisdom and knowledge (Bariaghaber, 1999: 605; Harrell-Bond, 1989:59). In as much as refugees are hardly consulted in the development of policies and programs that affect their life during their stay in asylum countries, so is also for returnees during and immediately after their repatriation. This time it is not because they are considered as non-citizens per se but decision-makers (from the home governments in conjunction with IOs like UNHCR) assume ‘what is best for them’ without little inclusion of the program beneficiaries’ inputs.

In essence, those who are the main actors in repatriation programs both from the refugees’ government of origin and UNHCR are seen as the driving force and ‘experts who know what is best to the prospective returnees.’ Most often their plans and actions are taken without due consultation and uncovering the skills, knowledge, and experiences of the “target groups” concerned (Kibreab, 1999: 136). In the case of refugees’ home governments, governments feel that returnees have to comply with the political and economic policy of their country of origin. And, by the very authority they hold, they feel that they have to devise mechanisms

not only towards channelling them into the “desired end” but also commanding returnees to comply with their proposed politico-economic strategies.

Conversely, though refugee home governments might genuinely want to make a participatory and consultative approach to decision-making in the domain of repatriation and socio-economic reintegration of their returnees, they face time constraints and pressures from donors who request things to be done as quickly as possible with concrete work reports being sent to them. They become compelled to take a fast and standardised procedure that facilitates their work. And so, the repatriation “process” takes over the final “product” of the overall envisaged endeavour.

During repatriation programs, UNHCR’s supposed mission as sole guarantor of refugee rights and safety, in contrast, tends to be “reduced to a technical operation to achieve an end which *is assumed to be in the interest of all – i.e., the refugees, the hosting government, home government and the international donor community at large*” (Bakewell, 1999:22, my italics). This reductionist view appears to emanate from the widely held view within the discourse of refugees – that asylees are a problem and as such their plight has to get a durable solution. Owing to the funding and political concerns that are inherent within the refugee problem, repatriation programs are pushed forward at a certain stage within a certain time and in a particular manner (Bakewell, 1999: 21-24). That is why organised voluntary repatriation programs, as Zieck has pointed out, involve “a body of *leges speciales*” constituted by the numerous bilateral and tripartite agreements entered into by UNHCR, the country of asylum, and the country of origin to regulate modalities of return (Zieck, quoted in Chimni, 1999:10).

Malki (1995:498-500), however, says that careful analysis of the documents and practices of the world refugee regime shows that refugees have not always been institutionally or discursively approached as an international humanitarian problem. She contends that the employment of various standardised mass refugee care and control mechanisms (such as in concentration camps, settlements and perhaps repatriation programs) and its overall administrative management of such displaced people through bureaucratic processes applies “technologies of power” by the most powerful over the weak, the dependent, the voiceless, hungry and hence the refugees and IDPs.

In line with this, what we often see in repatriation programs are decisions by authorities and leaderships followed by mere acceptance by the repatriates. This further suggests there is a need to question whether “authorities and leadership” always represent the interest of refugees because more often than not planning for repatriation appears to have no relevance in practice to the refugees and repatriates concerned (Bakewell, 1999:20). This emanates from the sheer fact of failure of state and supranational organisations to scrupulously consult the beneficiaries of programs and the non-participation of the target groups in the management of their affairs. Moreover, such problems, as I have already pointed out, are aggravated due to power disparity and interest incompatibility among the actors involved in repatriation programs.

Therefore, in as much as there are multiple actors (or stakeholders) in refugee hosting areas, each with varying interests in refugees, and varying degrees of power to block or enable local integration (Jacobsen, 2001:11), so too is it the case during refugee repatriation and their reintegration processes. Organised voluntary repatriation as UN’s preferred CRC (Counter-Refugee-Crisis) policy involves a set of key role players each one with some vested interests. For example, there is often a third party (either the UN or interested third state) which engages in facilitating the repatriation process either by paying the costs of physical return of refugees, or by pressuring or bribing the country of origin to accept its refugees, or both (Toft, n.d: 11). Among the stakeholders and their respective implicit or explicit interests during the repatriation and reintegration process of returnees would include, the stakeholders presented in table 4.1 in the next page.

To fulfil all these competing interests, repatriation programs turn into a highly politicised issue. They involve complicated negotiations between the origin and the host countries as well as donors, with the refugees themselves having little say in the matter. Particularly most often since the asylum countries and donor countries tend to have conflicting interests during repatriation programs, repatriation negotiations and its implementation phase become complicated. That is why Eritrean refugee repatriation, according to many observers, has not been an easy task (partly to Sudanese government’s handling of the matter and partly to others factors). For example, McSpadden (1999) thoroughly explains the negotiation convolutions that revolve around the repatriation of Eritrean refugees who stayed for up to three decades in the Sudan republic (McSpadden mentioned in Findley, 2001:291).

Table 4.1: Interests of Stakeholders in repatriation*

Key Stakeholders	Interests
Donors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ensure proper utilisation of repatriation assistance funds; ➤ Post-conflict reconstruction of war-protracted countries; ➤ Regional security and economic interests; ➤ Contribute towards the socio-economic integration of refugee returnees.
UNHCR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Facilitating ('voluntary') repatriation; ➤ Ensuring "safe and dignified" home returning process; ➤ Protection and insurance of returnees' rights; ➤ Commitment to and dependence on donors, and better use of funds during repatriation; ➤ Partially engage in the socio-economic integration of refugee returnees (through QIP).
NGOs (in refugees' home country or in the hosting country)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Surveillance of returnee protection and rights; ➤ Better use of funds for returnees; ➤ Participation in post-conflict reconstruction and ensuring their presence in returnees' home country; ➤ Competition with other NGOs; ➤ Participate in the socio-economic integration of refugee returnees.
Host Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Encourage repatriation (at times attempt to hinder such endeavours); ➤ Demand appreciation from refugees' home government (and if possible compensation for their hospitable care of the displaced people); ➤ Expect positive diplomatic relation with the refugees' government of origin.
Refugees' home governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Encourage repatriation (but under certain conditions); ➤ Pledge huge budgets for the socio-economic reintegration processes of returnees and reconstruction of their war-torn infrastructure.
Refugee returnees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Security and safety of their life after homecoming; ➤ Expect the protection of their rights (expression, political and religious); ➤ Expect easy and smooth socio-economic reintegration; ➤ Passionate to participate in the reconstruction and development of their country.

*N.B. This table is borrowed from Jacobsen's (2001) analysis of stakeholders in refugee local integration in the RHA. It has been slightly adjusted to match with my interpretation of various competing actors with varying degrees of power and interests during refugee repatriation programs.

Bariaghaber (1999) attributes the complexity of the matter to the number of actors involved in the process. Certainly since four primary actors – the UNHCR, the refugee's origin state,

the refugee host state and the individual refugee, have been involved in the Eritrean refugee repatriation, there were lots of capricious elements to come to terms.

Using the game theoretic approach to refugee repatriation, Bariaghaber (1999) and Zeager (1998) demonstrate the intricacies that are prevalent among these four actors in the repatriation “game.” They convincingly show how refugee repatriation endeavours become so complex because their execution depends on at least these four actors, each one of them with different and often conflicting interests. Following game theorists’ “minimax strategy” Bariaghaber (1999) claims, as the number of actors involved in a given area increase so does the likelihood of less-than-successful outcomes. That is, increases beyond two in the number of actors involved in a given issue area make decisions hard to come by and even harder to implement (Bariaghaber, 1999: 597-617).

Both Bariaghaber (1999) and Zeager (1998) also agree that UNCHR is the *bone fide* powerful player in the repatriation negotiation equation. While prospective returnees are the ones who become affected by the executed resolutions during the repatriation negotiation, most often they have little or no direct influence on the negotiations. As one put it, “Their coming and their staying are dictated not by their choice but by their needs. They are the victims of circumstances that they did not desire or create” (Smyser, 1987, quoted in Zeager, 1998: 368). At any rate, a brief examination of the unequal stakeholders in the PPP would include:

A. *The UNHCR*

Like most other repatriation programs, the home coming process of Eritrean refugees was done through UNHCR. Since there were irregular diplomatic relationships between the Sudanese government and the GoE in 1995-1996, PPP was mediated by UNHCR. According to the officials I interviewed, because of the political wrangle between Sudan and Eritrea, initially UNHCR commenced the project based on bi-partite agreements between the refugees’ home government vs. the Sudanese government. Whilst this procedure appeared to have been a diplomatic exercise rather than bringing practical solution to the plight of Eritrean refugees (Woldegabriel, 1996:91), UNHCR as a major actor and Eritrea as returnee receiving country decided to go-ahead with the repatriation program. And this has apparently put lots of pressure and work inconveniences on the Eritrean side.

Furthermore, unlike the usual practice whereby repatriation financial budget requests for refugee repatriation programs are raised and put into effect via UNHCR, in the PPP the task of fund-raising and implementation phase was done by the Eritrean government. Hence, despite the fact that there was a huge budgetary gap between what was required and what was pledged for repatriating Eritrean refugees from Sudan, the GoE and UNHCR decided to start the program with what they had at hand. As Bariaghaber (1999) noted, UNHCR's strategic decision was "constrained by the interests of the refugees' home government, hosting state, the individual refugee and its limited resources" (Bariaghaber, 1999: 609).

Owing to "donor fatigue" and tiresomeness of the "inn keepers" what was pronounced by UNHCR at that time was to go-ahead with the repatriation program. It opted to do so by grounding its rationales of responding quickly so as not to miss the opportunity. Thus 'to minimise humanitarian crises and interpret events in terms of the negative consequences of their delay or their inaction,' UNHCR preferred repatriating Eritrean refugees who were left in limbo for years after their country's independence. In a way, UNHCR acted to minimise its maximum losses, as measured in terms of the negative publicity that might arise due the lingering of Eritrean refugees in camps while they were still willing and ready to return 'home' (Bariaghaber, 1999:605).

The fact that the UNHCR lacks a clearly spelt out mandate with regard to reintegration of refugee returnees and that of a development program is not within its organisational domain posed another problem in the repatriation program. Moreover, since donors often want to micromanage the way in which their particular contribution is applied to the existing needs of returnees (Winter 1994:169), it rarely has the freedom to implement repatriation programs as it suits various repatriates returning to various socio-economic sites.

Understandably, dependent as it is on the states who are self-appointed "keepers of the human rights flame," watchdogs and critics of the standards of refugee conventions and who fund it, UNHCR did not act as neutral body with the necessary freedom of action to steadfastly represent the interests of refugees when these interests do not conform with those of the states supporting it. That is, whilst it was created to promote the interests and rights of refugees, UNHCR's financial dependence on voluntary contributions from others, its lack of relative autonomy to make fair decisions fearlessly, has also opened the organisation to "undue influence" from other stakeholders; placing it in the undesirable position of promoting the

interests of governments (donors, host and refugees' home governments). Accordingly, owing to its very mandate, financial constraints and unpredictability of resources for repatriation purposes, compounded by external influence particularly from the donor community, UNHCR lacked the capacity and power³ to superintend the social and economic reintegration of returnees into their home society (Harrell-Bond, 1989:44-62).

B. The Asylum Country

It is now widely recognised that refugees are sources of 'big business' for asylum countries (Rogge, n.d.: 16). Refugee hosting states try to make every possible payback from refugees' presence in their land both during their long stay and during their repatriation. In a word, host states' behaviour resembles what game theorists refer to as 'minimax' strategy. This strategy seeks to minimise losses even if this means abandoning the option of maximising benefits (Bariaghaber, 1999:605).

The 'minimax' strategy of the host states can be understood using an example of the Sudanese government's tactics during the Eritrean repatriation program. At the inception of Eritrean refugee repatriation program, Sudan's stand was not clear-cut. At times it felt that these long time asylees need to go home. At other times, its stand appeared to be ambivalent creating artificial roadblocks in the repatriation programs (Bariaghaber, 1999: 609-610). In the former case the Sudanese government was grounding its position based on allegations that the refugees were sources of political instability, cultural contamination, a heavy burden to the hosting society in terms of strains on social services and amenities as well as competitors to the already meagre job opportunities they can create each year for their citizens (Er and Karadawi, 1991). In the latter case, the Sudanese government tried to play the card of exploiting 'economic and political capital' using the Eritrean refugees as a means towards that end. Hence, Eritrean refugees were not only kept as hostages to be bailed out by the UNHCR, but to be used as political trump card to manipulate Eritrean policy in favour of the Sudan (Woldegabriel, 1996:89).

Aside from that, it is said that the already politically isolated and 'cash-poor' Sudanese government was seen to derail the repatriation program in two ways (Bariaghaber, 1999). First, there were rumours that the Sudanese government was insisting that the rehabilitation of the abandoned refugee settlements should be part and parcel of the repatriation program. As

such it was demanding a lion's share from the funds that were allocated for the repatriation of the Eritrean refugees. Furthermore, pending Sudan's diplomatic crisis with the West, it is believed that it was only able to get substantial amounts of foreign currency from donors in the name of relief to these refugees (Woldegabriel, 1996: 89). Obviously then one would expect Sudan's deeds were meant to sustain its hard currency inflow⁴ to its coffers in the name of refugee aid. It is not unsurprising to expect this kind of behaviour from hosting governments such as the Sudan given the fact they have used refugees as main sources of foreign exchange for a long time. What is more surprising is that refugee's home government and UNHCR should have predicted these roadblocks and made proper arrangements with the conflicting parties prior to rushing into repatriation commencement. That is, they could have made arrangements and plans in advance to help manage what could be a mammoth transition (Winter, 1994:168), and avoid a premature repatriation program.

Second, it is common to see refugees used as political tools. According to Bariaghaber (1999:603-604), in order to advance their national security interests and gain added leverage in their dealings with refugees' origin countries, host countries often give opposition groups access to refugee camps for personnel recruitment and may even arm refugees to help fuel political instability in their home countries. In no region, other than the Horn of Africa, is the deployment of refugees for gaining political capital against odd refugees' home governments apparently employed towards gaining diplomatic relations. Using the 'end justifies the means' tactic, the Sudanese government has reportedly been using Eritrean refugees for achieving diplomatic consensus with Asmara by cultivating them to have a grudge against the PFRDJ-controlled government (Kibreab, 2002a: 56-57).

These two hidden agendas, among many others, have severely hampered the repatriation program. Not only did it delay the implementation of the repatriation program but also made the Sudanese government not to cooperate with GoE and UNHCR representative in Eritrea in providing the necessary demographic and other statistical data as well as the prospective returnees' choice of their resettlement sites in Eritrea. The officials I interviewed informed me that the unavailability of such information at that time has negatively impacted on the implementation phase of the repatriation processes.

Sudan's strategy was essentially to make every effort to minimise its maximum losses and where possible maximising its benefits from the repatriation project. Though it would be

difficult to assess whether or not the Sudanese government's strategic behaviour of putting some preconditions during the bi-partite agreements as well as the closing and opening of its border with Eritrea during the commencement of the repatriation process was successful in terms of attaining what they were requiring from the two other actors, it definitely affected the planning and implementation phase negatively in Eritrea. At the end, it was the refugee returnees who were the victims of "power" and interest contentions among the two states and the UNHCR.

C. *The Refugees' Origin Country*

Initially, the GoE, despite its good intentions, was allegedly not ready to indulge itself into repatriating refugees in a 30 year devastated country. In as much as host governments fear refugees in being a threat to their national security, so it is also for home governments with regard to their refugee returnee citizens. Aside from the economic worries for rehabilitating and re-integrating Eritrean refugee returnees, there was a trivial national security element to the repatriation program. In the latter case, the government had more reason to fear some of the returnees of being ELF-sympathisers, or more generally, "fifth columnists," who can somehow disturb the newly born country (Bariaghaber, 1999, Woldegabriel, 1996). But then, since it appeared to the Eritrean government that the positive outcome far outweigh negative consequences (or perhaps due to external pressure), they opted to proceed to the implementation phase of the repatriation phase. But if that was to take place, the policy of GoE with regard to the issue area was to focus on rehabilitation assistance for the entire population (including IDPs) in order to make the large-scale spontaneous and organised repatriation more feasible and geared towards national reconstruction (CERA, 1995).

Thus to make that vision happen GoE requested a substantial amount of money from the international donor community. However, as the response was insignificant, they were compelled to repatriate some of the refugees using what they had at hand. Even then, as Bariaghaber (1999) asserted, the GoE's decision was strategic for a number of reasons: 1) by doing so it was reacting against the refugees' potential recruitment by the hosting government to engage in insurgency activities of their home government; 2) minimised the political costs of mistrust from its refugee citizens; 3) it was able to infuse limited foreign capital during the pilot phase and expected more would follow from the donors soon after; and 4) gained the faith from UN about what it upholds. Hence, "Eritrea's acceptance and implementation of the

PPP, when donors failed to provide comprehensive repatriation assistance might be considered as a decision made to maximise its interests” (Bariaghaber (1999:611-612).

Nevertheless, it would be undeniable that the acceptance of the program project without all the necessary financial and the required information about the beneficiaries of the programs has negatively affected their implementation phase and final outcome of the project. For example, as there was no information provided by the COR or UNHCR country representative in the Sudan on the returnee households’ choice of resettlement sites, some already decided to resettle in sites that either became strained by over accommodation of returnees (e.g. the Tessenei site) or the GoE was compelled to establish new ones (as are the two sites of my case study). The then head of the CERA, the late Gerense Kelati, whose institution was in charge of the coordination and reintegration of the repatriation program frankly said,

One of the problems we had was the lack of information from Sudan. We selected nine settlement sites, assuming people would go there. But so many destinations were chosen that CERA transport capacity was overstretched. In the future we should not repeat this kind of repatriation unless we have clear indications of destinations from the returnees (UNHCR, 1995).

However, it is not only CERA’s transport that was stretched. The lack of demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the returnee households from Sudan has also jeopardised the GoE’s proper planning about the newcomers, according to the officials I interviewed.

D. The Refugee Returnees

While I also agree with Bariaghaber’s conclusion that returnees too are strategic decision-makers during their repatriation (Bariaghaber,1999:612-614) in terms of analysing the ‘voluntariness’ of the program, their economic and political safety back at home, and returning of their personal property or wealth, and so on, I have a feeling that they are always provided little “space” by the major actors during the planning, designing, implementation and evaluation of the programs that affects their very livelihood in their home country. Because of the difference in “power relations,” they hardly get the necessary information about the resolutions passed “behind the closed doors” of the bureaucrats. Nor were PPP

returnees empowered enough to ask and press the bureaucrats about their right to know what is being decided, how it can affect their lives whether at home or in the asylum country.

For example, no matter how the government pre-arranged resettlement sites might have been well planned, the prospective returnees' involvement in the selection of sites, and preference of assistance packages was non-existent in the PPP. They were also excluded from the decision-making process regarding their preferences and how they can achieve family (perhaps by extension community) self-sufficiency. In the latter case, I am thinking of the restocking program applied to returnees. This is because, in the words of Scudder: "Big projects constituted development from above; they *were* superimposed by national and *international* agencies upon *returnees who have* virtually no say during the stages of feasibility studies, planning, and implementation" (Scudder quoted in Lassailly-Jacob, 1994:219, my italics). Thus, the very lack of participation by the beneficiaries of the project appears to have turned them to non-beneficiaries of the program that was designed to help them (Botes and van Rensburg, 2000).

The rigid and inflexible "punishment-centred bureaucracy"⁵ employed in the design and implementation of the livestock component of the PPP reportedly encouraged some innovative returnee household heads to devise escape routes from a situation they considered flawed and stifling. Some people cashed the grant by pretending to have bought animals in the market when in actual fact the animals were either their own or belonged to their relatives (Kibreab, 1999:156).

Finally, whilst for two decades researchers, relief-development workers and many informed citizens have recommended that displacees be given more autonomy and authority to govern themselves and control the development of their communities, such participation has been denied by the aid agencies who control assistance packages, obstructed by unhealthy politico-economic state interests among host and refugees' home governments as well as unnecessary contained donor interventions on how to "go through" a repatriation program. Thus, as any development initiative that does not foster end-beneficiary (target group) of a project initiative and responsibility is predisposed to failure, it is important that assistance of refugee returnees be structured to empower and enable them achieve economic self-sufficiency, rather than to foreclose it by excessive control and dependency (Findley, 2001:291-292). It is only when governments of origin, hosting governments as well as UN agencies (along with their satellite

NGOs whose concern is refugee issues) and Western donors who fund repatriation programs, are able to accommodate the needs, desires, aspirations, and potentials of returnees that repatriates could be seen as agents of their own fate and developments. It also follows that it would be a win-win situation and mutually beneficial to all the actors in the repatriation program to perform their business based on participatory and/or consultative approaches to decision-making. The more it is based on “consultative participation”, which recognises the needs, desires, and expectations of would-be repatriates, the less its failure and the more every actor will get satisfied with performance.

In summary, this chapter has emphasised the theoretical framework of the study. Bearing in mind the complexity of understanding repatriation programs and the tough task of their succeeding socio-economic reintegration of returnees, it adopted a multi-perspective from systems functionalist school; Max Weber’s third ideal type of legal-rational authority of the entrenched bureaucracy; power-knowledge discourse; decision-making processes; as well as game theorists’ “minimax strategy.” The next section, i.e., the final chapter, will deal with the challenges and constraints of repatriates’ socio-economic reintegration. After presenting and analysing data from my field sites with regard to this issue, conclusions drawn and recommendations will follow.

Chapter Five: Socio-economic Situation of Refugee Returnees in Dige Sub-zone

“We in the North can invest at least as much planning, diplomacy and resources in the rebuilding of fractured societies – in Africa and elsewhere – as we did in our interventions into the conflicts of the 1980s. If any one deserves to benefit from peace in the 1990s, it is the victims of the conflicts we have created in the last decade” (Winter, 1994:169).

“If yesterday’s repatriation is not to become tomorrow’s emergency, then the international community must show greater commitment to post-conflict rehabilitation ... our efforts can only be meaningful if they are placed in a larger framework of the national rehabilitation” (Mrs. Sadako Ogata, quoted in UNHCR, 1995).

Introduction

In this chapter I will look at what socio-economic re-integration of returnees is and how one can measure it. After that, using data generated using a triangulation approach, I will discuss the socio-economic situation of returnees in my research site. But before I turn to the findings, allow me to say a few words about what (re-)integration means and as to how one can gauge, if not accurately at least give some clue to, the socio-economic dimension of returnee (re-)integration.

5.1 What is Socio-economic (re-)integration?

The term “(re-)integration” is difficult to define. Nor is it easy to quantifiably measure it. This is because it covers many things, and as such one faces several problems in dealing with it. The other problem is that most of the literature about refugee ‘integration’ by academics (save Kibreab, 1996a, 1999, 2002; Zetter, 1998; Allen, 1996; and Allen and Morsink, 1994) and even the UNHCR focus on issues that surround asylees’ ‘integration’ into an alien socio-cultural, political and economic environment of hosting societies. For example, Mestheneos and Ioannidi’s (2002) study of refugees’ obstacles to integration in European member states; and Barnnes’ (2001) study of Vietnamese resettled refugees in Australia and their attachment to their original ‘home;’ and Bulcha’s (1988) study of Ethiopians in the Sudan, are cases in point to just mention a few.

The UNHCR, as pioneer in refugee integration projects conceives integration as “the process by which the refugee is assimilated into the social and economic life of a new national community” (UNCR, 1995:5). Since such conceptualisations are based on refugees’ integration patterns during their stay in exile, we find them unsatisfactory and rarely can they help us understand the peculiar social and economic patterns, situations and experiences of repatriates after their homecoming. Nor do such conceptualisations emphasise and precisely spell out as to how the processes of socio-economic re-integration of refugees or returnees shall be attained.

Seldom do researchers emphasise the challenges and constraints inherent in returnees’ reintegration endeavours after their repatriation. The problem of scientifically assessing returnee socio-economic (re-)integration patterns, as one attributed it, is also aggravated by the fact that, “There are no set formulas which can be introduced to produce ‘(re-)integration.’ There is only the hard slog of continually reassessing and reflecting on what worked and what didn’t, with some possible pointers for the future” (Stubbs, 1995:4). Therefore, following Stubbs (1995), what we often see in repatriation programs is inadequately conceptualised, poorly informed, inadequately negotiated, and ineffectively implemented returnee resettlement projects ending up in persistent impoverishment of repatriates and locals alike.

Framed from a position of refugees’ ‘integration’ into an asylum country, Kuhlman (1994) proposes that true returnee (re-)integration can be attained under the following *ideal* conditions:

- 1) If *returnees* are able to participate in the *local* community in ways commensurate with their skills;
- 2) If they attain a standard of living that satisfies culturally determined minimum requirements;¹
- 3) If the socio-cultural change they undergo permits them to adjust psychologically to their new situation *in their ‘home’*;
- 4) If standards of living and economic opportunities *of stayees* have not deteriorated due to the influx of *returnees* and the former do not resent the latter; and
- 5) If friction between the *stayees* and *returnees* is not worse than among the *local community prior to the coming of the latter* (Kuhlman, 1994:121, my italics).

By no means do these factors even help us accurately to measure the degree of socio-economic reintegration of returnees. Rather, as Kuhlman himself admits, they are meant to give us a yardstick for assessing progress and comparing the effect of alternative policies. While these ideal preconditions and factors contributing towards reintegration of returnees are necessary pointers, as I have already indicated in section 1.9 (page, 24), to be more precise, with slight modifications I will employ Barbara Harrell-Bond's definition which she defined (*re*)integration as:

... a situation in which *returnees* and *local* communities are able to co-exist, sharing the same resources – both economic and social – with no greater mutual conflict than that which exists within the community *where the former have resettled* (quoted in Stubbs, 1995:4 italics added).

Harrell-Bond's powerful resource-based definition conceives (re-)integration as a key element of repatriation planning and social policy, of decisions who gets what within resettlement sites. The definition's other powerful side lies in pointing out the harmony and co-existence of locals and returnees, without naïve conceptualisation of the stayees and returnees as conflict-free segments (Stubbs, 1995). Reintegration programs, in Bulcha's words, thus "imply a mutual 'live and let live' attitude based on tolerance of differences, solidarity and positive interaction" (Bulcha, 1986 in Kuhlman, 1994:119-120). This is not to suggest a harmonious equilibrium or a static balance between the two groups, however. As Bulcha (1986) and Harrell-Bond (1986) acknowledge it, conflict might be part of the stayee-returnee relationship perhaps owing to the pressure of the latter group over community services or other conflict-inducing circumstances.

From an economic stand point, "[re-]integration had to be understood asa process of equal opportunity, in an atmosphere of mutual trust *between returnees and locals*" (Mestheneos and Ioannidi, 2002: 306, my italics). It encompasses an "attempt of facilitating the sharing of resources – economic and social, an equalising of rights – political and territorial, ... between *returnees* and *the rest* of the members of a society *in a settlement area*" (Stubbs, 1995:4, my italics). Moreover, inherent within the whole project of repatriation and re-integration of returnees, as a policy and an exercise, is the idea of attaining economic self-sufficiency and achieving a minimum standard of living (Kuhlman, 1994:119). As an exercise, refugee repatriation and reintegration programs are ostensibly geared towards closing of 'relief

dependent camps' by making returnees economically 'vote on their own feet' without becoming a burden to their home governments in general and the host community in particular. That is, such programs aim at achieving returnees' economic self-sufficiency where they are not expected to depend on external assistance (though they may require aid for services such as education, health and water supplies).

Such economic self-sufficiency, according to many researchers, however is within reach when displaced people acquire an income (in cash or in kind), so that they do not need relief in the form of basic necessities. And this stage is said to be reached when returnees become self-reliant on staple food they produced using their own toil and by extension if they have surplus cash crops or income generating activities that allows them to meet their other basic needs (Lassailly-Jacob, 1994:214). This is called "family self-sufficiency." "Community self-sufficiency," on the other hand, is said to be achieved when there is a situation where returnees have reached a level of financing services themselves (whether through community work or through taxation) (Kuhlman, 1994:119). Speaking of refugees living in organised settlements, Rogge (1987:87) in this regard finds the term "self-sufficiency" implies "the subsequent attainment of complete independence from any form of external help, when refugees are not only self-reliant in their food production but are able to generate all their own infrastructural needs and requirements, so that settlements are fully self-contained units" (quoted by Lassailly-Jacob, 1994:213). No matter how attainable it is and under what time frame, that is all that is expected out of returnees after their repatriation as well.

Stein and Clark insist that any criteria of self-sufficiency are usually defined according to the general standard of living achieved by the host community: "self-sufficiency can be seen as including reaching the economic level and general standard of the local community and being integrated into the economic life of the area on a sustainable basis" (Stein and Clark, 1990 quoted in Lassailly-Jacob, 1994:213). However, self-sufficiency is a relative concept that is difficult to evaluate. Obviously, attaining absolute self-sufficiency among the often-poor refugee returnees in a short time period is also unlikely. Consequently, it seems to be that it would be impossible, at least in few years time, for refugee returnees in Eritrea to be completely independent from any formal assistance or subsidy. From an economic point of view it would thus seem absurd to claim that most of the returnees in the resettlement areas have been successfully re-integrated upon their home coming.

Socially, the process of re-integration involves “all sections of the community in minimising social distance, and facilitating communication and co-ordination, through creative negotiations which produce new social *and economic meanings*” (Stubbs, 1995:4, my italics). Of course inherent within it is a friendly stayee/local-returnee relationship based on respect and living in harmony.

Finally, bearing in mind the tremendous transformations the refugees undergo during their stay in exile, repatriation as a durable solution “involves more than a return to a place and a people; it is a process of (re-)creating a new ‘home’ and new conditions which fulfil promises and explorations of a secure and prosperous future” (Koehn, 1994:101). Thus, as Koehn himself realised, the challenges of reintegration projects require the same endeavour, as the creative solutions required in an asylum country. Owing to the material and non-material intricacies inherent within repatriation projects, it said that its success has been and probably will remain patchy.

5.2 How are we to measure re-integration?

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

As I have already pointed out in chapter one, in order to gain insights about the situation and degree of the socio-economic reintegration of returnees, interviews with officials, and focus group discussion and semi-structured interviews with repatriates were conducted. These methods allowed me to have a picture of the reintegration dynamics and the challenges inherent within the process. The findings and the *discussions* that follow herein are predominantly based on the information elicited from these sources. A few of the reflections presented here are also based on information gathered from personal interviews or observations in the field.

To begin with, a quick glimpse at the demographic characteristics of my respondents is worth mentioning. While 34 of the respondents are Muslims, Christians constitute six of the overall 40 respondents. In terms of ethnicity, the overwhelming majority of them – 32 respondents – are Tigre, and small portions of them constitute Tigrigna and Bilen (the latter two groups constituting only seven and one respectively). Concomitantly, the majority of the respondents were exiled from Gash and Barka area (35 respondents), while a minority of them are from

the then Senhit and Hamassien provinces (the latter comprising three and two respondents respectively).

As far as the cause of their displacement is concerned, the respondents rated continuous war and perennial drought and famine among their top flight-inducing factors. Killing of civilians and bombardment of their villages by the then Ethiopian troops were also mentioned as major factors that led the respondents to unwillingly opt for refuge to the Sudan. While forced military conscription is also mentioned as another causal factor, surprisingly enough none of the respondents mentioned getting better opportunities in asylum countries or relief aid as a driving force for their flight. This is not to indicate that the respondents were irrational planners at the time of their flight. It is rather explicable by the nature of their flight, which is presented in the table below:

Table 5.1: Respondents’ nature of flight to the Sudan

Nature of flight	Planned and well-thought/prepared	Unplanned but not panicking	Sudden and panicking	Total
Number of respondents	3	10	27	40
Percent (%)	7.5	25	67.5	100%

Parallel to this, many of my respondents (72.5%) mentioned that they did not have any information about their destination area prior to their flight. With regards to the final settlement area in the Sudan prior to their repatriation, it looks like this:

Table 5.2: Final settlement area in the Sudan

Settlement area (in asylum country)	Shegereab (camp I, II, and III)	Kerekora	Salmin	Dehema/Adingrar	Gedaref (and its vicinities)	Other*	Total
Number of respondents	13	8	6	3	5	5	40
Percentile	32.5	20	15	7.5	12.5	12.5	100%

* Others here include returnees from Kassala and other towns.

With the exception of those who were from Shegereab camps, the majority of the rest of my respondents mentioned having attained some income sources other than depending on food

aid. Particularly those who were from Umbrush, Samason, Kerekora, Salmin, Adingrar, Dehema and Gedaref (and its vicinities), reported having attained some degree of economic self-sufficiency during their stay in the asylum country – the Sudan – by engaging in mechanised agricultural activity and/or informal business activities.

In terms of the time duration the respondents (sample returnees) spent in the Sudan, the majority (67.5%) of them spent ≥ 21 years, (12.5%) stayed from 11 to 20 years, and a small proportion of them (20%) were harboured in the Sudan refugee camps or organised settlements for ≤ 10 years.

Finally, all my respondents' affirmed that their repatriation was voluntary in nature. Nonetheless, the returning process could have been accelerated by: 1) the deteriorating economic and political conditions in Sudan since 1987; 2) UNHCR's insistence on ending Eritrean refugee status; 3) xenophobic attitudes of the hosting communities towards their "guests"; and 4) the refugees' perceived or actual fear of their security at an alien land. Overall, the decision to return home after two to three decades settlement in exile was informed by what the Tigre adage says, as a discussant put it: "*Min shum ali, habey dib gerhetu.*" Its literal translation could be "it is better to be a monkey in ones own 'territory' rather than being a king in the others' homeland!"

Having said this, I will now turn to the actual finding and indicators of returnees' socio-economic re-integration. Although economic and social dimensions of reintegration in a resettlement area are highly interwoven, and hence difficult to differentiate, for the sake of convenience I have treated them separately. Following below is my findings and their associated interpretations:

5.2.1 The 'economic' dimension of re-integration:-Economic Conditions of Returnees in Dige Sub-zone: some empirical evidence

Following (Kuhlman, 1994:121) the 'economic' dimension of re-integration is conceived here as those aspects of social life that have to do with accomplishment of material welfare through the optimal allocation of resources that are scarce. In short, it encompasses the overall improvement and uplifting of the standard of living of returnees (and perhaps locals) in a resettlement area. Standard of living is here taken to mean not only income (in cash or kind)

from economic activities, but also access to amenities such as housing, public utilities, health services and education.

Initially, the whole PPP was designed to make returnees engage in agricultural activity. Believing that the majority of the then refugees were mainly from the western lowlands whose livelihood prior to displacement depended on agro-pastoralism, policy-makers felt that returnees should engage in agriculture (including animal husbandry) upon their return. Inherent within that intention was to speed up returnees' economic self-sufficiency that was informed by the country's committed self-reliance policy. And so, each returnee household was provided with two hectares of agricultural land and livestock distribution worth U.S \$420.

It was generally assumed by the PPP planners that once returnees resettled in the Gash-Barka zone and "work hard", then they will attain economic self-sufficiency soon. However, while that might somehow have been achieved somewhere in other parts of the region (if it really did at all), the field data I collected indicate that family and community self-sufficiency at Tekreriet and Ad-Ibrihim have yet to be achieved. This is even after each household in these 'agricultural land re-settlement sites' were given two hectares of agricultural land, two years free tractor services and considerable distribution of livestock. The problem of returnees' economic insufficiency, according the data I have at hand, could be attributed to:

- 1) *Erratic rainfall which often leads to crop failure:* Eritrea, like any other part of sub-Saharan Africa, lies in marginal rain-fall area. This puts the country into perennial drought where refugee returnees are victims. Re-settlement sites located in the Barka areas are more severely hit by this natural calamity than any other region. Located at an attitude of 200-500m above sea level, the two-resettlement sites get an annual rainfall rate of only 200-300 mm (Kibreab, 2002b). This sparse rainfall has often led to continuous failure of the rain-fed agricultural activities in the two-resettlement areas. This is testified to by the near total absence of agricultural harvest in the two research sites. For example, while 85.5% of my respondents' annual agricultural harvest ranges from 1-6 sacks, only one household replied they produced ≥ 7 sacks. This is extremely low to sustain a household of the population sample with average of four to six members. More saddening six respondents replied they haven't ever reaped an agricultural yield despite yearly ploughing of the two hectares allotted to them.

Not only were the returnees affected in their agricultural output since their arrival. The severe shortage of rainfall in those areas has also negatively impacted upon their allotted livestock. My findings show that for an average of 16 livestock (largely goats and sheep, and a few donkeys and camels or a combination of them) distributed to these sites' repatriates, on average only two livestock are alive.² Most of my respondents underscored that one of the factors that led to the loss of their livestock was scarcity of fodder and clean water. The other reasons were, death due to diseases, loss, selling during hard times, etc.

But, by and large, the discussants attribute the loss of these livestock to their "imposed" and untimely distribution (during dry season) with unfair price per livestock. They claimed the exercise as being "imposed" on them because they were not free to make use of that same amount of money for other purposes. Nor was the restocking program the choice of the majority of the returnees. The lengthy account of one discussant from a Tigrigna ethnic group below captures the issue satisfactorily:

From the very beginning we requested the government authorities to give us free alternative choices to make use of the allotted money. We told them that we have no children to look after these livestock...as they have to go to school. We were not committed to send our children to a 'way of life' we discarded long ago. Nor were we [i.e., men] interested in them because we left that "business" long ago.... In fact, as we found the restocking program contradictory with the education policy of our government that says "every child has to at least finish junior education level", we persuaded them to reconsider the forced restocking exercise.... A group of repatriates including me, for example, suggested to them if we can use it for establishing group-owned agricultural estate. They rejected this and all other alternatives we brought by merely saying 'this budget is just meant for restocking purposes.... If you are willing, you can make use of it.... Otherwise your money will be transferred into government bank account.' Confined to one and only one choice, we reluctantly bought the livestock to just end up not only with no alive goats or sheep left behind, but also to remain without even having their skins.... In few months they were all dead and thrown away.

Asked why they did not give alternative choices to repatriates during the restocking program of PPP, one ERREC official responded to me by saying: "Believing that the majority of the returnees were originally from the Ghash-Barka region, and inhabitants of that region are overwhelmingly agro-pastoralist, at that time we felt rapid economic self sufficiency could easily be attained by restocking the returnees. We also have had time constraint in implementing the pilot phase and prove it for our sponsors." Interestingly, inherent in the

interviewee's latter idea is that ERREC officials seem to have been pressurised to employ a standardised, quick and fast procedure during the implementation phase. At the end, what they were doing was to show their sponsors that they implemented the program neatly in a short period of time. Thus, they appeared capable of implementing any such project; and they were anticipating funds for repatriating the rest of the refugees in the Sudan. Therefore, the available evidence tends to show that the PPP in general and its restocking component in particular, were negatively affected due to the following factors:

- a) The complexities inherent in the repatriation program;
 - b) Lack of sufficient open-endedness, expertise and adaptable funding during the overall planning and implementation phase;
 - c) Weak and inflexible implementing institutions; and
 - d) Lack of genuine participation from program beneficiaries – the repatriates. Failure to consult on the needs, aspirations, desires, experiences, and skills of the repatriates during the planning, designing and implementation of the overall repatriation programs has negatively impacted on the final outcome of the envisaged program. Particularly since the re-stocking program, geared towards making returnees economically self-supportive, went against the request of some returnees, creating more dissatisfaction towards the implementing institution.
- 2) *Insufficient and "subsidiary" land allotment* for the returnees that provided the returnees two hectares of agricultural land irrespective of their family size. These small agricultural plots of land tends to produce very little crop yields, and do not give room for users to fallow it whenever they want to maintain soil fertility.

Concurrently, a sizeable number of returnees at Tekreriet resettlement site (roughly around 30 returnee households) were, according to an informant, being denied agricultural land that was promised to them as the basic right of every returnee in the tripartite agreement. The reason behind this phenomenon, according to an informant, is that these returnees were originally from the vicinities of Tekreriet and thus they were told to go to their former villages and request agricultural land and plough in their 'homelands' every summer. This is unreasonable and unfounded justification by the land distribution committee or whoever else decided it. Primarily, if it is not for a frustrating poor managerial decision, there is abundant "dry land" to be distributed. Secondly, these villages, (i.e., Ad Mohammed Wed-sheikh, Deret, Girjinay,

and Sorbet) are located at a distance of approximately four to six hours walk from the resettlement site with no transportation facilities to them. This renders the returnees unable to go and plough there every year. Thus the only alternative they are left with to sustain their life is either to go for good into those extremely rural areas and settle there, or else live at Tekreriet and struggle to survive by renting agricultural land and/or selling their labour in the employment starved areas (and, if available, at very cheap payments).

- 3) Though lots of capital investments (in terms of free tractor service for two to three years, fertiliser, etc) have been rendered to such resettlements sites (as elsewhere) both by UNHCR and the GoE, as soon as these services stopped the returnees were thwarted by lack of such tractor services. Hence sustainability of agricultural production was jeopardised with the withdrawal of these helpers 'creating some kind of dependent enclaves.'
- 4) *Low job opportunities* in the two sites and its vicinities seem to make the outlook for economic self-sufficiency even at household level very bleak. My focus group discussants lamented the unavailability of daily jobs whilst they are said to be located in nearby agricultural estates of the Barka River catchments. They attribute such a problem to the existing agricultural estates' economic bankruptcy and their inability to employ daily wage labourers. Perhaps the competition for the meagre employment opportunities available in the agricultural sector might also have resulted, to an extent, in some latent resentment of returnees by locals; and
- 5) *Absence of loans and credit systems* for establishing self-employment or whatever other means of income generating activities.

All these factors have seriously thwarted returnees' family and community economic self-sufficiency. Unless policy-makers make concerted efforts, we are liable to witness considerable inflow of returnees into nearby towns with concomitant undesirable results.

5.2.2 The 'Social' Dimension of Re-integration:

Success of reintegration programs does not merely depend on the attainment of economic self-sufficiency of returnees but is also largely governed by the returnees-stayees relationship in a resettlement area. Particularly, the relationship between these two groups in the post-war countries is very crucial in the reintegration equation. If stayees welcome returnees open-

heartedly, then we are liable to say there is some degree of reintegration (if not a complete and sufficient one). It is when both of them try to live based on harmony, respect, tolerance and the absence of jealousy or (counter-) accusations, that the process of nation-building can reap its fruits from returnees' contributions in the national reconstruction process.

It is often assumed that when refugees come home, they can easily be 'reintegrated' into their former communities. However, this assumption is refuted as too simplistic as there is no easy way for social reintegration endeavours. In the Eritrean case, Kibreab (2002:75-76) for instance argues that returnees do not easily and totally reintegrate themselves with stayee population for a number of reasons, namely: 1) both groups have changed tremendously over time; 2) large numbers of the returnees were born and grew up in exile and returned 'home' knowing little about the communities they resettle with; and 3) many of the communities that settle in a settlement area are also either immigrants who moved to the places concerned or were born or grew up after the flight of the refugees. However, he rightly admits that the locals and returnees live together in a sentiment of "brotherhood," mutual empathy and understanding of the sufferings both have endured during the struggle for Eritrean independence. While some of Kibreab's arguments appear to have some validity, they can easily be falsified. Particularly the first two assumptions beg me to question and counter-argue them. I will cast my doubts to such assumptions based on existing general knowledge and empirical evidence extracted from the field data.

Inherent within the idea of "war-torn society," according to Kibreab (2002:76), is a depiction of post-war communities whose social fabric is fragmented and its social relations conflict-laden and suspicion-ridden. More to the point, Harrell-Bond (1989:42) contends that given the dynamic nature of society as well as of individual personality, the re-integration of returnees into home society may be as complicated as the experiences of adjusting to a new culture while in asylum. However such swift generalisations seem to neglect the flexible adaptation of people to their environments and view refugees as if they are "confined" only to the asylum country. Indeed, according to Malki (1995:515), in many works of refugee studies, there is an implicit assumption that refugees become "torn loose" from their cultures, "uprooted" from their homes, they suffer from the loss of all contact to the life worlds they fled. To her, such assumptions are depictions as if the place the refugees left behind were no longer peopled. It also tends to conceive as if refugees do not make any contact or momentary visits to their kin and kith at 'home.' However, it is necessary to realize that refugees housed in neighbouring

countries often make temporary return to their original home country, either after the ending of the factor that drove them out or at times even when that factor is still there. Such temporary visits, as Findley (2001:294) correctly observed, 'allow forced migrants to assess the situation and determine realistically whether it is possible and desirable to return permanently to the original community or a nearby region.' It also eases their social re-integration endeavours.

Moreover, contrary to what many functionalist and sedentarist analytical writers' (such as Kuntz, 1981) view that refugees go into new, strange and axiomatically alien environments that supposedly makes them prone to loss of tradition, identity and culture, many refugees either keep these elements on their own endeavours or/and are often settled in communities with similar socio-cultural behaviours and characteristics. Thus portraying refugees' asylum countries as unfamiliar and a world-apart (Malki, 1995:508-509), in the case of African refugees, does not sound correct. Nor does refugees' elongated stay in exile automatically result in total loss of their socio-cultural norms and identity. For example, the Eastern Sudan and Western Eritrea share certain people such as the Beja, Elit and the Beni-Amer, who share a whole lot of commonalities in terms of language, religion and other 'cultural elements' (Habte-Selasie, 1996; Woldegabriel, 1996). So it appears that many African refugees, at least in the case of Eritrean refugees in Eastern Sudan, keep their socio-cultural practices, behaviours and identities which eventually often enable them socially to re-integrate themselves into the main stream of their (respective) society with relative ease.

The restricted movements and little socio-cultural and economic interactions the Eritrean refugees have had during their long stay in asylum country, would have also allowed them to preserve their culture and identity in no lesser degree, if not more than their fellow country men. I dared to say "more than" because these refugees and their children have been carefully "nurtured" by dedicated liberation fighters who worked and mobilised tirelessly to raise nationalistic consciousness and a unified identity of Eritreanness by freely infiltrating into the refugee camps. This factor is believed to constitute the major "social and political capital" of the post-independence Eritrean society (Kibreab, 2002; Sørensen, 2000). Therefore, available evidence generally unveils that neither all post-war societies are conflict-laden nor suspicion-ridden. Whether war tears or unifies societies depends on the nature and cause of the conflict (Kibreab, 2002). And whether exile makes forced migrants lose their cultural identity also depends on the kind of their settlement and their degree of integration in the host society.

Empirical data from the field site aimed at investigating the social relationship between stayees and returnees in both sites also reveals that their relationship tends to be positive and appears to be improving rapidly. The relationship between the returnee and locals is amazingly harmonious. While both focus group discussants and interview respondents underscored that they had a warm welcome from both the government of Eritrea and the general public at the time of their homecoming, 67% of the sample households described their reception by the locals in their resettlement sites as *friendly and congenial*; 11.5% as having some degree of *jealousy*; and the rest 12.5% described it as *neutral*. Particularly the discussants mentioned that they were warmly welcomed, and after their settlement, not only did they respect each other from afar, but also they visited each other during socio-cultural events such as marriage ceremonies, funeral services and so on (irrespective of their religious, ethnic, and other differences). The discussants also emphasised that locals' perception towards them is positive. This trend appeared to be more manifested among Ad-Ibrihim resettlers than those in at Tekreriet. This trend could perhaps be attributed to the stayees' and returnees' strong kinship relationships prior to their repatriation.

The warm welcome and positive and friendly stayee-returnee relationship can be explained from a number of angles. Firstly, it can be attributed to some of the returnees' affiliation with resettlement areas prior to their flight. For example, while 85% of the respondents replied they knew or at least have had some information about the resettlement area prior to their repatriation, only 15% have not heard about it. The desire to return to these settlement areas, according to my focus group discussants, was thus predominantly endorsed by their willingness to be in their original 'homelands' or around its vicinity. Another underlying factor for choosing these sites, according to the informants, was that they envisaged they get self-employment opportunities in the agricultural estates located in the Barka river catchment which is located a few kilometres adjacent to their present day settlements. One more contributing factor mentioned by the respondents in the selection of the already government-arranged resettlement area was the returnees' desire to be in settlements with people whom they stayed with in exile. All these factors have a bearing towards contributing positive social stayees-returnees relationships.

Secondly, Eritrean refugees' preservation of their "cultural elements" during their long stay in refugee camps or organised agricultural settlements in the Sudan cannot be underestimated as

it appears to have eased their social re-integration. Moreover, because of the fact that the ex-refugees maintained close links with their home communities, social re-integration seems to be not a serious issue. Data collected from the interview schedule reveals that despite the fact that the majority of the respondents had stayed for more than two to three decades (26 people ≥ 15 years, while the rest 14 people ≤ 14 years in the Sudan), strikingly 24 respondents reported of having visited their country of origin at least once during their exile. Only 16 respondents mentioned they never visited their 'home' prior to their repatriation. Therefore, the issue of a "reality check" prior to deciding to return home seems to have played a significant role in the social reintegration of returnees to the local communities.

Resettled communities also attempt to reduce stress by maintaining their social, economic, and cultural characteristics. As Scudder and Colson (1982) aptly put it: "in clinging to the familiar, relocatees attempt to move the shortest distance not only in space, to remain in contact with a familiar habitat, but also in terms of the psychological and socio-cultural context of their life" (Scudder and Colson, quoted by Lassailly-Jacob, 1994:220). To this I must add that returnees also make social networks with spontaneously returned refugees thus gaining some insights and experiences from them, hence easing their social re-integration endeavours.

Thirdly, as the government decided to allow returnees to settle in the community of their choice, many have returned to communities they know well, where they have revived previous networks and contacts in order to restore their livelihoods (Kibreab, 2002). This evidence might beg us to reconsider the general assumption that says 'the longer the time period of living in exile, the more the tendency for an exilee not to return and hence very difficult to re-integrate him/herself into the hosting society.'

Fourthly, many scholars have emphasised that return after a prolonged exile may, under some circumstances, be as traumatising as flight itself (Allen and Morsink, 1994; Rogge, 1994). This is because economic, social, cultural and political conditions at 'home' may be radically different from those that existed before. Attachment to the country of origin perhaps due to: 1) family ties with their fellow citizens; 2) persistent nationalistic feelings and their cultivation by liberation movements who freely address their fellows in the refugee camps; 3) refugees' detachment from the hosting society by their confinement to camps and Sudan's clear policy with regard to the non-integration of refugees;³ and 4) visits to 'home' (particularly to the

then liberated areas for socio-cultural ceremonies and festivities, to look after their properties left behind, and to some extent to see the progress of the liberation movement in the liberated areas) however appears to have made Eritrean returnees' social re-integration relatively unproblematic.

Finally, the social relationship among returnees and stayees could be one indicative factor for measuring the degree of experienced social reintegration of the former with the latter. Information elicited from various sources shows that there is little conflict between the two groups in both sites. Tensions and conflicts between stayee and returnee population is either limited or non-existent. Moreover, unlike in some African refugee situations, there were hardly any accusations of betrayal and portrayal of returnees as un-nationalistic and subsequent rejection (Kibreab, 2002, Malki, 1995). This is perhaps because, both groups, irrespective of their place of stay prior to the country's independence, have contributed enormous material and non-material belongings (including their precious lives) during the liberation struggle.

In terms of durability of the housing arrangements, however, any acute observer who visited these sites can easily identify who is a returnee (and from which camp/settlement of the Sudan) and who is a stayee. Nevertheless, returnees and stayees live cordially side by side benefiting mutually from the presence of one another. One can visualise this unusual trend, as Kibreab (2002:61-62) has eloquently, put it in "a web of relationships of exchange of goods and services as well as social interactions."

The mutual relationship between the stayees and returnees could be explained by the Eritrean government's 're-integration' policy which is based on the principle of creating economic and social capacities of the absorption in resettlement sites from which both returnees and locals may benefit. As a result of that policy, vision and action, the presence of returnees is often considered by locals as a resource rather than a burden and hence the latter have generally embraced rather than resented the resettlement of returnees settled in their villages or neighbourhoods (Kibreab, 2002:68). The provision and sharing of community services such as schools, education, health facilities, etc, as well as the booming of other public services such as the transportation system (a daily mini-bus transportation service at Tekreriet and occasional one at Ad-Ibrihim); grinding mills (three in the former and one in the latter);

an electricity service in one site (at Tekreriet) has also contributed to the building of positive and mutual relationship between the locals and the returnees.

Credit has also to be given to the often financially constrained UNHCR and GoE for expanding the community services and amenities. For example, both Tekreriet and Ad-Ibrihim have two hand pumping drills each and one extra solar water drill in the former; the establishment of up to junior level and an elementary school at Tekreriet and Ad-Ibrihim respectively; as well as the construction of one clinic for each of them. Since all these services that were absolutely non-existent prior to the commencement of returnees' settlement, they can be considered as "great blessing from God" to the locals (personal interview and my observation). I said "great blessing from God," because they have tremendously transformed the livelihood of local communities and changed the settlements from nomads' land to peri-urban type. Hence, as returnees have been 'harbingers of opportunities and prosperity' for the locals (Kibreab, 2002:69), it has enabled the facilitation of cordial relationships between returnees and stayees.

However, as horticultural land disputes are considered as major sources of conflict in other African countries, it was also a source of minor conflict in the two resettlement sites as well. There was trivial resistance by the stayee populations to the settlement of returnees in their lands due to fear of increased competition for arable and grazing-land, water, pasture, building materials, fuel wood, and access to other common property resources. Though one could insist that state land ownership has contributed to the alleviation of land-related conflicts among stayees and returnees in Eritrea (Kibreab, 2002), little consultation of locals during the resettlement program brought about undesirable minor discontent. At Tekreriet discussants highlighted that there has been slight contention among stayees and returnees particularly during agricultural land distribution to the new arrivals. And this slight discomfort could have been easily avoided had the locals been persuasively informed about the refugee repatriation and reintegration program in that site. Perhaps had the stayees were convincingly told about the inherent invaluable advantages of such a program to their overall livelihood, they could have even requested for more other "newcomers" to come and warmly accommodate them.

At Ad-Ibrihim, according to my discussants and informal informants, the main source of dispute emanated from an agricultural estate. According to the discussants, this estate was

established by the good will of the GoE to make repatriates economically self-sufficient. And so, by way of CERA, 190-returnee and stayee households were provided 35 hectares of agricultural land, 100,000.00 Nfa cash loan, and two water pumping motors. On top of that each member was made to contribute 500.00 Nfa. The intended agricultural land was cleared and various fruits and vegetables were grown under the auspice of CERA but completely controlled by the stakeholders. Unfortunately, when the people were about to reap their fruits, in the year 2000 a group of cattle herders intentionally destroyed the estate by letting their livestock enter there. The people who did so were identified, and the stakeholders of the estate (mainly returnees) opened a lawsuit at the zonal court. Though the court decided the transgressors had to compensate the victims (valued at 12,000.00 Nfa), they failed to comply with the decision and to compensate the stakeholders. Nor did the court put the offenders into jail (perhaps it felt the issue to be a community matter and to avoid undesirable tensions; it had to be sorted out by them). And the agricultural estate has been transferred from community ownership into private group shareholders (rich men from the same settlement). Though this conflict did not involve any form of physical violence, according to my informants, the uncompensated ex-shareholders are still complaining about the matter for three years now.

In a nutshell, following Kibreab (2002), the major reasons for the absence of major conflicts, and its concomitant harmonious co-existence of returnees and stayee in the two sites, could be attributed to:

- Economic benefits associated with the presence of returnees;
- Improved access to basic services and facilities such as schools, healthcare, and so on;
- State ownership of land and other renewable resources;⁴
- Protracted resistance against common external enemies; and
- Social changes experienced by returnees in exile manifested in development of trans-ethnic and trans-religious social networks (Kibreab, 2002:59-60).

In summary, various sources of information, elicited from the focus group discussion, officials interviewed and responses from the interview schedule reveal that returnees have little hardship adapting to the socio-cultural situations of the locals and re-integrating themselves with the stayees in their resettlement sites. This positively affirms what I initially hypothesised in section 1.4. That is, the information gathered discloses that socially, the returnees do not have a serious problem. However, owing to the factors mentioned in section

5.2.1, the returnees tend to have considerable difficulties attaining economic self-sufficiency. Many discussants even openly lamented about their deteriorating economic situations as compared to the one they had in the asylum country – the Sudan.

5.3 Conclusion and Recommendations

Refugee repatriation, rehabilitation and re-integration have to be seen as a process. Particularly in war-torn regions such as the Horn of Africa, refugee repatriation should be viewed as a means rather than an end in itself that essentially aims at ending the relentless dislocation of people. While returning refugees to their ‘homes’ could be seen as one step towards the reinvigoration of peace and stability in war-torn areas, it is a long way process to sustain it. This is because the steadfastness of this trend would easily be disrupted unless everlasting peace is ensured not only by uprooting the root causes of destabilisation in a certain region but more also by ensuring repatriates make a valuable contribution in the national reconstruction of their war-protracted areas. And to make returnees active participants in their committed national development, from the very outset of their repatriation and reintegration programs, they need to be listened, talked to, and financially, technically and morally supported to exploit their maximum energies and potentials. Most of all, they need to be viewed as capable human beings who often strive to attain family and community self-sufficiency. Thus what is needed from donors, home governments’ policy-makers and program implementers is to ‘working with’ them side by side rather than imposing on to them programs.

The dissertation presents the argument that whilst repatriation programs have become the most preferred and durable solution to DCs refugee problems, the social and economic re-integration dimension of repatriates remains a challenging process for the economically poor returnees’ home governments. As returnees have to start life from anew, making them economically self-sufficient and active participants in national reconstruction and development of their war-torn countries is thus to be seriously thought about.

More specifically, the information gathered using a triangulation approach in my research site indicates that whilst the returnees are optimists and often strive for new positive life aiming towards improving their livelihoods, they have a long way to go to be economically self-sufficient. Their livelihoods are reportedly “no better than that what they used to be in

the Sudan,” as one discussant put it. Thus what is needed during and after their repatriation process is progressive strategies from their governments of origin and other sympathisers. These strategies should be geared towards expanding the domain over which the returnees have choice, ‘first for their daily lives and then over their own futures’ (Findley, 2001:303).

Thus, from a strict economic point of view, PPP ought to be viewed as an unfinished project that requires concerted effort both from the government and the regional and international agencies operating in the domain of uplifting the economic situation of returnees. The successful reintegration of returnees and other IDPs does not occur automatically, but is remarkably dependent on the creation of social-economic capacity of absorption in areas of return. To be successful, such interventions should from the outset be planned developmental. In countries such as Eritrea where there are “massive humanitarian crises” due to continuous inter-state political instability and natural calamity, repatriation and reintegration programs have no moral, political or whatsoever justification to sideline other needy members. Hence the need for such programs to consider the situation of the entire population in the areas of return regardless of their status is beyond doubt. In post-conflict societies, such programs should also form an integral part of the overall strategies for national recovery and development (Kibreab, 2002:77). Therefore, the international donor community must provide considerable external resources to support reconstruction efforts and sustainable development projects that will meet the basic needs of the returning population and the needy stayees alike in a socio-culturally sensitive and economically viable way (Koehn, 1994:105). Over and above that such financial, material and whatsoever other supports should concur with the national and international poverty alleviation strategies that governments of the developing and developed world strive for.

To reiterate, as many scholars have already pointed out (Hein, 1993, Kibreab, 1985), refugee repatriations should be considered beyond immediate emergency relief works and be linked with development-oriented programs in the war protracted countries of the returnees’ ‘home.’ It should also address the needs of IDPs who have similar problems, if not worse, to refugee returnees. In this line, the new IRP (Integrated Recovery Programs) UN initiative that is dubbed as the 4R – Repatriation, Reintegration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction – must be worked out with genuine political will and generous economic support from the developed North as well as a boost from other international agencies to ensure its success in bringing about long-term sustainable development in the refugees’ home countries. Indeed, the idea of

generous economic support from the west to such programs might raise a “frightening spectre” to those who are pushing hard to reduce that burden. However, they need to recognise that failure to do so will only perpetuate the forced movement of desperate people which the international community cannot ignore.

To this end, this dissertation argues that the whole project of refugee returnees’ repatriation, rehabilitation and reintegration should be *people-centred*. It has to incorporate and be considerate enough to the needs, desires, potentials and experiences of prospective program beneficiaries – the returnees. By questioning ‘whose knowledge should count in refugee repatriation, rehabilitation and re-integration project planning?’ I call for “a *consultative or participatory approach*” as the way forward to *people-centred development*. That is, returnees as the main beneficiaries of a program should be thoroughly consulted and their fate should not totally be determined by those whom they think ‘know what is best for them.’ But this is not to suggest that policy-makers, developers and other stakeholders should wait for people to plan and design their programs. What it does mean is whenever they plan such projects, they should tap the felt needs, knowledge, wisdom, skills, and experiences and make prospective beneficiaries active participants in having inputs into their programs. Put it otherwise, the common saying that goes around “nothing for us without us” needs to be taken seriously as it calls for the involvement of people (as main beneficiaries of programs) in program planning, design, implementation and evaluation.

In terms of the returnees’ social situation, my findings show that the returnees-locals relationship in both sites is generally very positive and is improving rapidly. It is generally assumed that long time exiles tend to have a tough time reintegrating themselves to communities of their home country after their repatriation. While it would be undeniable that refugees undertake substantial transformations during their stay in exile, displacement should not be viewed, to borrow an eloquent expression from Kibreab (2002:75), as “a magic wand that wipes out previous identities and alliances.” Indeed, the refugee returnee situation is said to best be captured by the dicta “who we once were we always continue to be” and “who we were we will never quite be again” (Krulflod, 1992 quoted in Kibreab (2002:75).

5.3.1 Suggestions and Recommendations:

Following below are some suggestion and recommendations that ought to be considered during refugee repatriation, rehabilitation and re-integration programs. For the sake of convenience, I will categorise them into those that are related to the research field site and to the general literature.

A. Suggestions and Recommendations from the research field site:

- Small, medium and large-scale dams aimed at water conservation for animal husbandry, soil conservation and advanced motor-fed agricultural systems should be among the top priority of the Sub-zones development strategy;
- Owing to the returnees' lack of oxen for ploughing and their adaptation to mechanised agricultural system in exile, state subsidised tractor services should be available in the two resettlement sites;
- Skill training programs both at national government projects and/or NGOs (such as what GTZ used to do) ought to be provided to returnees. It should however be guided by a well-thought-out, locally-researched and development-based assistance program;
- Attention to skills development must be in occupations where there is a demand for the work or product, and for which refugees (especially women) are supported in developing their own businesses after training;
- Fair soft loans and credit schemes geared towards exploiting returnees' potentials and making them economically self-sufficient should be provided;
- Returnees should be left free from national service duties for at least three to five years to 're-construct' their livelihood by letting them attain some degree of economic family and community self-sufficiency;
- Water service problems in the two sites ought to get a lasting solution;
- As there is ample evidence elsewhere that shows a definite advantage of spontaneous settlement of returnees as against the large government – and UN agencies – sponsored settlement programs, the Eritrean government should opt for the former strategy in repatriating, rehabilitating and reintegrating its refugees;
- Assistance given during the post-flight stage should be offered in a developmental context, helping the displaced to find or create opportunities to generate income and build communities;

- Upon repatriation home governments, along with UN agencies, national and international NGOs, ought to provide a wide array of supportive services (such as loans, marketing assistance, housing construction assistance, information and assistance with networking) to returnees with the intent of making them economically self-sufficient. Such efforts should be endorsed further as it is only when family and community self-sufficiency of returnees is accomplished that we could dare to expect returnees' to play a role in their national reconstruction;
- (International) NGOs should actively participate in addressing the various needs of the Eritrean displaced populations (e.g. what the Oxfam has impressively done in constructing latrines for returnees in the Dige sub-zone);
- Given the fact that a sizeable proportion of the unrepatriated Eritrean refugees seem to be urban spontaneous settlers, all those who participate in the repatriation decision-making and implementation programs need to adopt urban-oriented repatriation and assistance strategies; and
- Special treatment should be designed and given to returnees that are dubbed as vulnerable groups, namely: the disabled and elderly groups, single-parent households, orphans, and female-headed households;
- Given the fact that the majority of the returnee population constitute women, female-headed house-holds, and many other socially disadvantaged groups, home governments as well as national, regional and international agencies should give a special focus towards these segments of the population. They should give them support mechanisms that enable them lead a self-supporting life. Upon thorough screening, these actors can arrange special job training programs that equip them with skills that can help them develop their own economic niches in accordance with demographic peculiarities and societal processes.

B. Suggestions and Recommendations from the Literature:

- The GoE, UNHCR and other partners should not engage in what is only politically expedient in terms of reintegrating refugee returnees. They should give room for listening to, consulting, engaging in dialogue, learning from prospective returnees during the over repatriation and reintegration program;
- To ensure genuine participation and improve refugee repatriation and reintegration project outcomes, policy reform requires:

- i. Authentic participation from program target groups- the returnees – which involves the ability to influence decisions;
 - ii. Decision-making criteria which move away from the purely economic to more dialogic consensual considerations;
 - iii. Recognition of resistance from “subjects” as a legitimate form of expression in the dialogue about development options;
 - iv. Development of the skills necessary for all parties to engage in open-ended negotiation as equal parties;
 - v. Repatriation should be designed with flexible choices, allowing people to mix and match options to their needs;
 - vi. Repatriation and re-integration projects should be designed flexibly so as to be able to adapt as unexpected developments occur, and in response to ongoing inputs by affected parties;
 - vii. A necessary range of skills among the implementing institutions, and sufficient funding to allow for flexibility should be a central feature of repatriation and reintegration programs;
 - viii. Resettlement and re-integration projects should match with the ongoing regional development initiatives for optimum efficiency and synergy.
- In repatriation programs, asylum governments need to show their genuine commitments that preclude unacceptable pressures on refugees to repatriate prematurely. That is, they have to make arrangements and plans in advance to help manage what could be a mammoth transition (Winter, 1994:168);
 - *Stabilise Through Development*: while the conflicts driving forced migrants are complex, economic disparities and conflicts over rights to resources play a role in sharpening hostilities. Thus, promotion of economic development is a long-term strategy to prevent both forced and voluntary migrations is imperative. Steps should also be taken in migrant-generating regions, countries and localities to increase protection from drought, and to develop mechanisms to maintain agricultural production too (Findley, 2001:299-300);
 - Given the fact that numerous Eritreans, located amongst and around refugee returnees, are also massively dislocated due to the Ethio-Eritrean 1998-2000 border war as well as hit by drought, there is a need for “redirection of assistance away from ‘refuge/returnees’ for the revitalisation of the regional economy as a whole and the larger community of which it is a part” (Bakewell, 1999:20);

- Repatriation programs in war-torn countries such as Eritrea should involve innovative models of assistance (such as extensive QIP and the recent 4Rs approach) that enhance reintegration; increased and sustained inter-agency cooperation; allocation of the necessary budget; inclusion of IDPs in such programs; and inclusion of repatriation areas in the national plans of development;
- As rural resettlement returnees cannot only afford to sustain their life by depending only on seasonal agriculture, “other income-generating activities should allow returnees to acquire basic items” (Lassailly-Jacob, 1994:218).
- It is widely acknowledged that the international refugee regime has been largely ineffective in dealing with the root causes of the world refugee problem (Koehn, 1994:105-106). It is thus high time for the international political community to proactively address the internal and external factors that cause mass human displacement in the developing countries prior to their occurrence. That is, they should genuinely work towards prevention-oriented approaches prior to the occurrence of such human tragedies;
- Establishing early warning systems in war-prone regions and taking all concerted actions based on existing signals could help concerned authorities prevent escalation of the conflict or anticipating mass displacements which can in turn help communities and organisations to act before the human suffering takes its toll. Thus linkage between alert and action needs to be in place so that governments, communities and organisations will be able to cope with potential or actual incidence of massive human disruption. Moreover, in regions where the rival groups seem to produce signs of impending and unavoidable displacement, emergency escape plans with all the necessary amenities should be drafted to identify locations where the displaced could go (Findley, 2001:300-302);
- It is possible that we learn a lot of lessons and experiences from creating settlements during the ex-refugees stay in organised settlements arranged by hosting governments and other agencies who work with dislocated people (Findley, 200:304). In countries like Eritrea, as rife with “complex humanitarian crises” due to man-made and natural factors as they are, these should include: supporting both the returnees and ‘stayees’ indiscriminately, particularly in terms of distribution of food rations and other social amenities. Home government’s and other external agencies’ ‘helping hand’ should try to avoid, in as much as possible, creating protected and

privileged groups of returnees at the expense of the 'locals.' Such kind of wise strategies will help 'trim down' jealousy between these two groups;

- If huge refugee repatriation programs are seen by the international donor community and the UNHCR as the most preferable and durable solution of CRC, if the international donor community and its institutions is really committed towards 'sustaining a reliable system' in the refugee producing countries, and if the subsequent returnees' successful and sustainable socio-economic reintegration of such programs is to be realised, then there is a need for Northern donors to offer large-scale "development aid" for the often war-protracted refugees' state of origin. Failure to do so would only result in perpetuating continuous politico-economic crisis, conflicts and unabated refugee outflows in the countries of the South;
- As long as the UNHCR and the international donor community firmly believe in voluntary repatriation as a viable and the most preferred approach to the refugee problem, they should make adequate financial arrangements prior to the commencement of voluntary repatriation and avoid disappointments during the actual implementation process;
- The home governments, UNHCR, UNDP and others will need to know more precisely what resources actually should be readily available (Winter, 1994:168-169) during and after the repatriation programme as well as how, where, when and why they will be allocated. Thus, there is need for a coordinated work that crosses specific mandates for all UN-bodies during the repatriation process;
- The GoE, UN agencies, and international and local NGOs should coordinate closely through the reintegration and reconstruction programs. They should address unforeseen needs flexibly (USCR, 20021:34);
- In order to overcome financial bottlenecks, (Winter, 1994:169) proposes that there should be a creation of a "Going Home Fund" or "Funding strategy" organised by UN that would overcome the deficiencies of the current approach. Such a fund must relate not only to the costs of the mechanics of repatriation but to the emergency aspects of reintegration as well; and
- International donors should commit to multiyear funding for reintegration refugee returnees and the reconstruction of their war devastated country. International agencies should also commit to multi-year projects (USCR, 20021:34).

Endnotes

Chapter one

¹ Despite several attempts to conduct a national census in post-independence Eritrea, the trials have turned in vain leaving the country without a reliable number of its population. One Ethiopian census conducted in 1984 has enumerated the Eritrean population to be 2.7m. As of mid-1999, another recent estimate done by the UN put the Eritrean population at 3,719,000 (Smith-Morris and Rake, 2003).

² The Eritrean population is roughly evenly divided between Tigrigna-speaking Christians, predominantly inhabiting the highland areas, and the Muslim communities dwelling in the western lowlands, northern highlands and east coast.

³ Unlike the other former Italian colonies, the post-World War II destiny of Eritrea was much contested by the then four big powers (USA, France, USSR and Great Britain). The failure to arrive at consensus regarding the future fate of the country by these super-powers brought the Eritrean issue into the agenda of the fourth session of the UN General Assembly. Even then, as the issue became hotly contested, the UN Resolution 390 A (v) of 1952 forcefully decided to federate Eritrea with Ethiopia for the sheer reason of USA's strategic interest in the region. Ten years later, the then Emperor Haile-Silassie openly federated Eritrea which added fuel to the already year-old armed struggle for Eritrea's self-determination. The 30 years quest for independence ended up victorious in May 24, 1991, the EPLF (now PFDJ) forming a Provisional Government for an interim period of two years. This long war led to massive displacement of Eritrean people, forcing them to flee their villages or hometowns either temporarily or permanently (Mehreteab, 2002: 10-1; EPLF, 1987:3; CERA, 1989:1-2). N.B* One has to be careful about the accuracy of these historical dates as there are slight differences used in various accounts.

⁴ The number of Eritrean refugees in Sudan has long been disputed. In 1994, the Sudanese governments COR estimated them at 600,000; the Eritrean Officials said that it stood at 430,000; and the USCR estimated in mid-1990s that the Eritrean refugees in Sudan totalled 380,000. By 1997, UNHCR reported that these refugees numbered 328,000. Such discrepancies are attributable to: differing statistical approaches; contrasting economic interests and spontaneous repatriation of refugees in post-independence Eritrea; and political sensitivity in enumerating refugees (USRC, 2001; Kibreab, et al., 2002b:5; Habte-Silassie, 1996:45-46).

⁵ With the eruption of war in May 1998, Ethiopia deported tens of thousands of Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin on the pretext of national security (Kibreab, 1999).

⁶ This massive internal displacement of border people has severely affected Gash-Barka and Debub zones (among others), which is the "home" for the majority of PROFERI repatriates. Sadly enough, the event has turned the returnees into another cycle of external assistance, this time under a new brand what the UN agencies call "people of concern."

⁷ The second phase of returnees' massive displacement has indeed turned the ex-refugees back to square one. Thus relief workers are now dealing with their problems by just differentiating them either as "old case load" or "new case-load."

⁸ According to Bariaghaber (1997:41), the phrase "Arc of Crisis" was coined by Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's national security advisor, to characterise the region that includes Kenya, the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, and as far as Pakistan. Again by Horn of Africa we are referring to Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, Somalia and Djibouti.

⁹ CERA was an indigenous organisation that was established before Eritrea's liberation and it used to operate among refugees in Sudan to prepare them for repatriation. By the end of 1995 CERA merged with the other Eritrean rehabilitation body, ERRA (Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Agency), which in turn both came to form a new organisation named ERREC – Eritrean Relief and Rehabilitation Commission. The latter is a new organisation that addresses the rehabilitations needs of refugees, demobilised fighters and other displaced people in an integrated approach (Sørensen, 2000).

¹⁰ Plans to return long-term Eritrean refugees have been repeatedly called off because the Sudanese government postponed implementation programs or found reasons to avoid fulfilling its obligations. According to USCR (2001), the motive for this foot-dragging appears to be economic – an effort to reap the benefits of continuing international aid programs for the refugee population in the Sudan.

¹¹ The Eritrean government re-structured its zonal administrative structure in 1995, which reduced the eight provinces inherited from colonial politico-administrative structure into six zones. Thus the names mentioned above were those of the former administrative structure.

¹² I portrayed Gash Barka as the homeland for displaced people for the sheer fact that refugee returnees, demobilised ex-combatants and more recently, internally displaced people, and deportees predominantly inhabit this administrative zone.

¹³ Though since the 1990s numerous articles have emerged in periodicals, most of them talk about the legal, logistical and the politics inherent in voluntary repatriation as an approach to dealing with the international refugee regime. Others tended to be more general and abstract (which they seem to be oriented towards theory/model construction – e.g. Kuhlman, 1991). Still other writings are predominantly consultants' evaluation reports that are not easily accessible to the general reader.

¹⁴ "Triangulation" refers to multiple forms of overlapping, diverse pieces of evidence and perspectives. As it involves a wide variety of evidences, as opposed to a single one, in constructing a reality, triangulation minimises researcher's bias. The greater the triangulation in the research design, the greater the confidence a researcher would have in his/her findings (Mouton and Babbie, 1998:275-77).

¹⁵ A focus group, according to Mouton and Babbie (1998), is a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research. It involves organised discussion with a selected group of individuals to gain information about their views and experiences of a topic Mouton and Babbie (1998:289-91). Though focus group research is not common, I found it to be an indispensable data collection technique in gaining insights into returnees' shared understanding of their repatriation process and post-repatriation every day life. In as much as

it helps draw respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and experiences about a certain social and economic condition, it is also a good source for evaluating activities of an already implemented program.

Chapter Two

¹ For more discussion in this regard one can refer to Zlotnik (2001:248-249). He presents good statistical data about the inequitable distribution of refugees among countries that make up the five regions of Africa.

² According to Schultheis, (1989:24), one NGO has conservatively estimated the number of people who were internally dislocated due to this project between 1960 to 1982 at 3.5 million.

³ "Reactive migrants" are migrants who migrate in response to various combinations of political, economic, environmental, social, and bio-psychological factors. The same observation is also made by Collins (1996). He states that since the line between political and economic repression can become blurred in the African context, many refugees could be (and are) classified as economic migrants. Still in other cases, ecological change can be a cause of mass migration (Findely, 2001: 17).

⁴ Basically, the 1969 OAU definition of 'refugee' intends to extend refugee status to persons fleeing colonial domination and anti-colonial warfare.

⁵ For example, in the context of repatriation, the UN statutes include two principles central to the refugee population in Africa. First, any refugee has the right to asylum in any nation-state that has ratified the Convention and the Protocol. Secondly, Article 33 of the convention declares the principle of *non-refoulement* which gives refugees the right not to be *refouled*, or returned to their country of origin against their will while their life might still be in danger. Likewise, article five of the OAU *Convention* spells out the durable solutions for refugees. The convention assumes that voluntary repatriation should be the ultimate solution for African refugees (Collins, 1996:20-21 and 23-24).

⁶ This has led some researchers to use a phrase 'de facto refugee' to indicate any person who has fled his/her homeland to another country, regardless of their legal status.

⁷ According to Collins (1996), Rogge derived the terms 'forced' and 'impelled' from the writings of Petersen (1958).

⁸ Students of international migrations have emphasised anti-foreigner sentiments that is rapidly mounting in many European countries, notably in Germany, in a milder way in the U.S, and elsewhere (Winter, 1994; Rogers, 1992; Harrell-Bond, 1989). Harrell-Bond (1989:66) argues the increasingly restrictive policies of OECD are attributable to racism and economic slowdown. According to Winter (1994:164), since many European countries do not have legal immigration programs, many illegal asylum seekers and refugees from the developing South often become victims of the anti-foreigner violence.

⁹ Indeed ever since the 1980s, many rich Western countries have started to defend themselves against immigration in what Nobel described as “arms against humanitarianism” and an “escalation of universal measures against refugees” (Nobel, quoted in Malki, 1995:503).

¹⁰ Reports from UN agencies showed that in 1985 famine in Africa put the lives of 30-35 million people in 20 African countries at critical risk. Consequently around 10 million people are believed to have abandoned their homes in search of food and water (Schultheis, 1989:10).

¹¹ Some writers trace Eritreans’ exile episode dating back to the 1950s (EPLF, 1987). They claim that the trend appeared first when many Eritreans began to show their objection (through petitions and appeals) to Haile-Selassie’s implementation of the Federal Act, and this was accompanied by deliberate harassment and persecution of those who opposed such an act. However, they are very quick to admit that their number was very few to account for a ‘political refugee’ waves.

¹² For example, during that period Ethiopian government used what came to be called as “Red Terror Campaign” that involved targeted executions and killings of alleged members and sympathisers of the ELF and EPLF. This turned Eritrea’s rural and urban areas into ruthless hotbeds of military activities that mainly aimed at frightening civilians and at the end ‘killing’ their national sentiments (Bariaghaber, 1997:37).

¹³ This heartbreaking massacre was not seen by the eyes of Western journalists as they were not around that area. It was exposed to the international community by a University of Stockholm based researcher who was conducting research in Eritrea at that time. Prof. Knutsson decided to interrupt his study and report such gruesome atrocities to Swedish newspapers. The writer has equated the *Oana* annihilation with Vietnamese mass murder committed by Americans.

Chapter Three

¹ Despite the fact that the principle of ‘voluntariness’ in repatriation is enshrined as a right of refugees in the 1951 and 1969 UN and OAU Conventions respectively, and re-affirmed in a Special Round Table on Voluntary Repatriation held in San Remo, Italy, in 1985 (Rogge and Akol, 1989:197), Toft (n.d:10) contends voluntariness is subject to interpretation. He says on some occasions “volunteering” to repatriate happens not because it is the choice of the refugees but because of implicit and explicit pressure from the hosting country and/or the relief community rendering the refugees without effective choice.

² Riess (2000) has reported that Guatemalan refugees in Mexico located in two areas – namely Chiapas and Yucatán peninsula – received quite distinct treatments from their asylum government. He says while for the latter there was little pressure for repatriation, the former were subjected to pressures to activate their return.

³ The “choices” given to these refugees by the Tanzanian government to either resettle in government determined sites or ‘go home’ was characterised as “unfortunate but understandable” (Bonaventure Rutina, mentioned in Chimni, 1999:11).

⁴ There are some holistic and successful attempts among Latin American countries however.

⁵ Starting from the 1950s until the end of East-West ideological and North-South economic bi-polar power, refugees were welcomed and viewed by the US and its allies as valuable assets for three major reasons: 1) they were relatively few in number; 2) relatively highly skilled and educated; and 3) valuable as intelligence and propaganda resources (Toft, n.d: 4).

⁶ The demise of the Cold War has changed every situation of the refugee equation, says Toft. Since the Post-Cold War refugees were not as valuable and of great political significance as their fellow-men, and the international political community (particularly OECD countries) opted for a new CRC policy- repatriation as the most desirable solution (Toft, n.d: 6).

⁷ The notion of “safe return,” according to Goodwin-Gill, “came to occupy an interim position between the refugee deciding to voluntarily go back home and other non-national who, having no claim to international protection, faces deportation or is otherwise required to leave” (Goodwin-Gill, quoted in Chimni, 1999:6).

⁸ This finding is based on Doland’s research on the Mozambique refugee repatriation program from South Africa (Chris Donald, quoted in Findley, 2001:293).

⁹ Jacobsen (2001), however, mentions that if patterns of mobility and prior migration were common, refugees are less likely to be viewed as temporary guests. Such a view facilitates the ‘new comers’ to move in and out as well as to stay for longer periods which in turn can end up in local integration. Still local integration could be realised if (among other factors) the locals do not have “fear of inundation.” That is unless locals are confident that there will be no more substantial new inflow of refugees with quite distinct culture from theirs, they do not rush to give a ‘green light’ for local integration (Jacobsen, 2001: 21).

¹⁰ According to Jacobsen (2001), Article 34 of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention calls for the host states to integrate refugees.

¹¹ To avoid the breeding of militant refugees in hosting countries who can engage in subversive actions against their country of origin, the 1969 OAU Convention prescribes that refugees be settled at a reasonable distance from the border (at least 50 kms away from the border). In compliance with this law and to safeguard their national security, African refugee hosting countries often put refugees in separate settlements.

¹² Adherents of this idea tend to contend that since most African refugees have a rural background, they would hardly cope with the cosmopolitan way of life of the presumed third country asylum. Others challenge this assumption by saying, ‘if it works for Southeast Asian refugees, why not for the Africans?’ (Harrell-Bond, 1989).

¹³ Local people often resent the impact that camp and self-settled refugees have on the hosting country’s environment. With greater severity in relation to the former, it would be undeniable that these refugees: 1) destroy fields and orchards; 2) damage plant cover and forests; 3)

contribute to water pollution and overburden water supply; and 4) overuse rangeland (particularly those who fled with their livestock) (Jacobsen, 2001:19).

¹⁴ The PPP agricultural component entitled each returnee household in a resettlement site to: (1) access to two hectares of agricultural land in combination with food for work for communal land clearing; (2) free tractor services for one year; (3) Free seeds; (4) hand tools; (5) agricultural extension services, including advice on environmental protection and pest control; (6) livestock of choice to a value of US \$420 (approximately 2,500 Ncfa); livestock vaccination services at the time of purchasing and free veterinary service during the first year (ERREC, 1995:7).

Chapter Four:

¹ Legal-rational authority is defined here as the modern form of authority that is based upon rules, regulations, and laws. In such authority, one who is in charge of a certain task(s) acts in accordance to with his/her duties as stipulated in codes of legal rules and regulations. In the Weberian context, 'rationality' seems to imply 'the appropriateness of means to ends', i.e., the clear conception and implementation of the kind of actions and mode of organisation to be followed with the view of attaining (organisational) efficiency. Again, by authority we are implying the exercise of command by someone (person or impersonal agency) to be followed by another. It involves unconditional willingness of a group of people to comply with and abide by a legitimate superior to impose on his/her will upon them. The other two ideal types of authority that Weber identified are traditional and charismatic. While in the former authority power depends on "eternal powers of tradition," in the latter it lies in the "sacred or outstanding characteristics" of the individual (Albrow, 1970: 40; Blau 1970: 147- 152).

² One has to be cautious, however, that not all officials are bureaucrats to Weber. To him, a typical bureaucratic official is an appointee to a social task. "No exercise of authority can be purely bureaucratic", he wrote, "i.e., purely through contractually engaged and appointed officials" (Weber quoted in Albrow, 1970:42).

³ However, others refute such assertions and contend that, irrespective of its dependency on international donor community, UNHCR has the power to work independently.

⁴ Woldegabriel (1996:89) conservatively estimated the amount of hard currency that the Sudanese government gets from the international donor community to be US \$15.2 million per annum.

⁵ I borrowed this concept from Gouldner (1955) who distinguished between "punishment-centred" bureaucracy" vs. "representative-bureaucracy" (Gouldner, quoted in Albrow, 1970: 56). The former involves "coercive power" that exercises a top-down approach to decision-making whereas the latter tends to have a bottom-up or horizontal decision-making process. I rendered the restocking program as "punishment- centred" because returnees were not only ruled out from making use of the money assistance from buying livestock, but also were clearly told by government implementing bodies that failure to do so will automatically result in transferring their money into the government's bank account.

Chapter Five

¹ Each culture has its own criteria of what constitutes an acceptable minimum standard of living. This is the only valid approach to a “poverty line” (Kuhlman, 1994:138).

² The data however shows those who either chose donkey and camel alone or in combination with other small livestock are relatively more successful than those who bought goats, sheep or a combination of them. That could perhaps be attributed to these pack-animals’ resistance to harsh condition of the Barka region.

³ There appear linkages, between refugees’ external experience and internal constructions. According to Barness (2001:396) there is a higher tendency for (forced) migrants who experience social, economic and political exclusion from the hosting society to re-define and re-construct their identity. Kibreab (1999: 399) found that “the propensity to maintain links with one’s homeland and to remain distinct from a host population is higher where host governments’ policies and local populations’ negative attitudes force refugees to ‘deny’ or hide their identities in pursuit of their daily life.

⁴ In 1994, the Eritrean Government issued a land law which vested ownership of all land and other renewable resources in the Government (Article 3(1) Legs.58/1994). This property right regime has been one of the key factors facilitating the integration of the returnees and averting tensions and conflicts in the rural areas where land, pasture, forest resources and water are scarce (Kibreab, 2002:73-74).

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Appendix 1

Figure 1 Political Map of Africa



Figure 1.1 Eritrea's location within the African political map

Source: Collins, S. 1996:x

Appendix 2

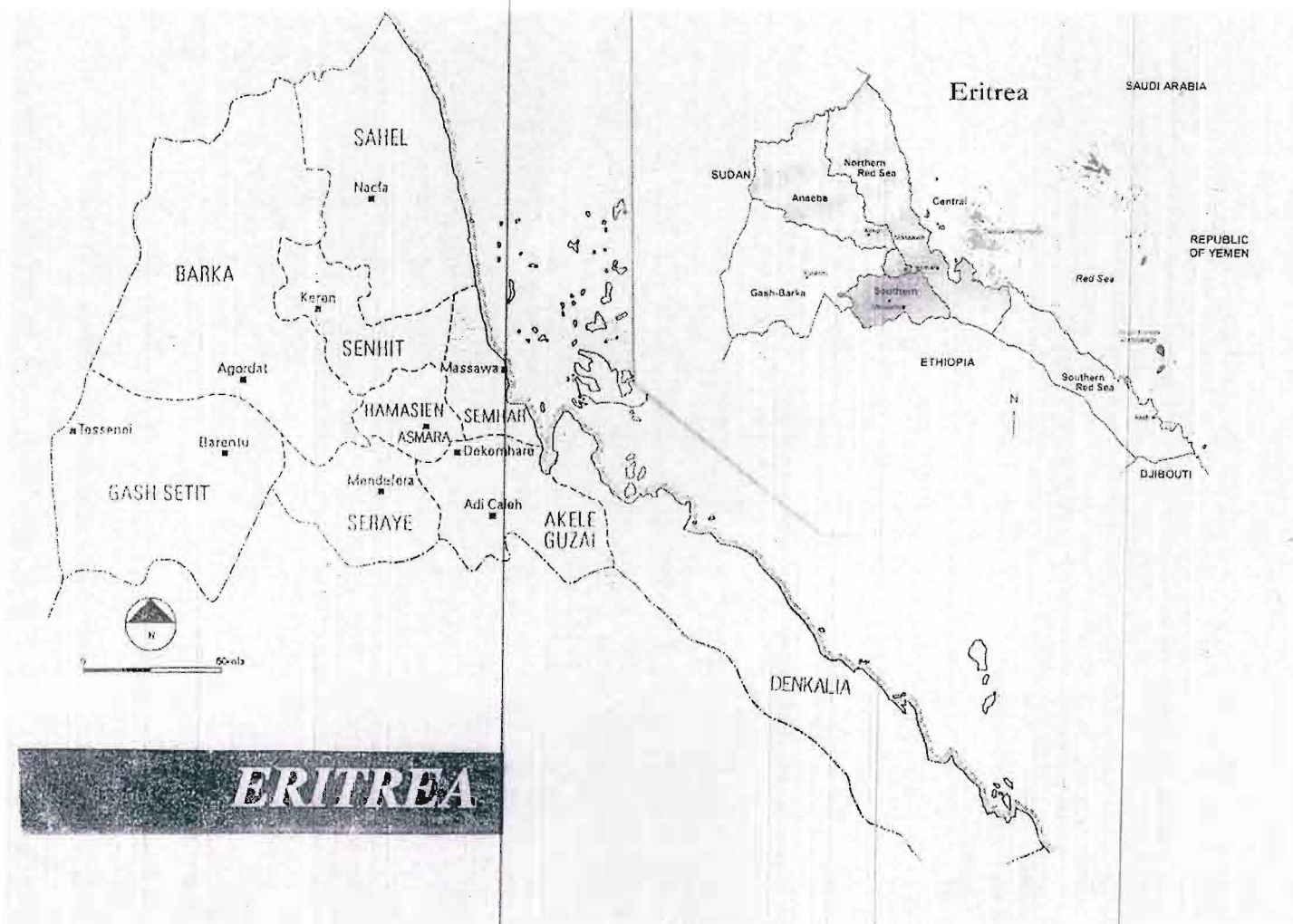
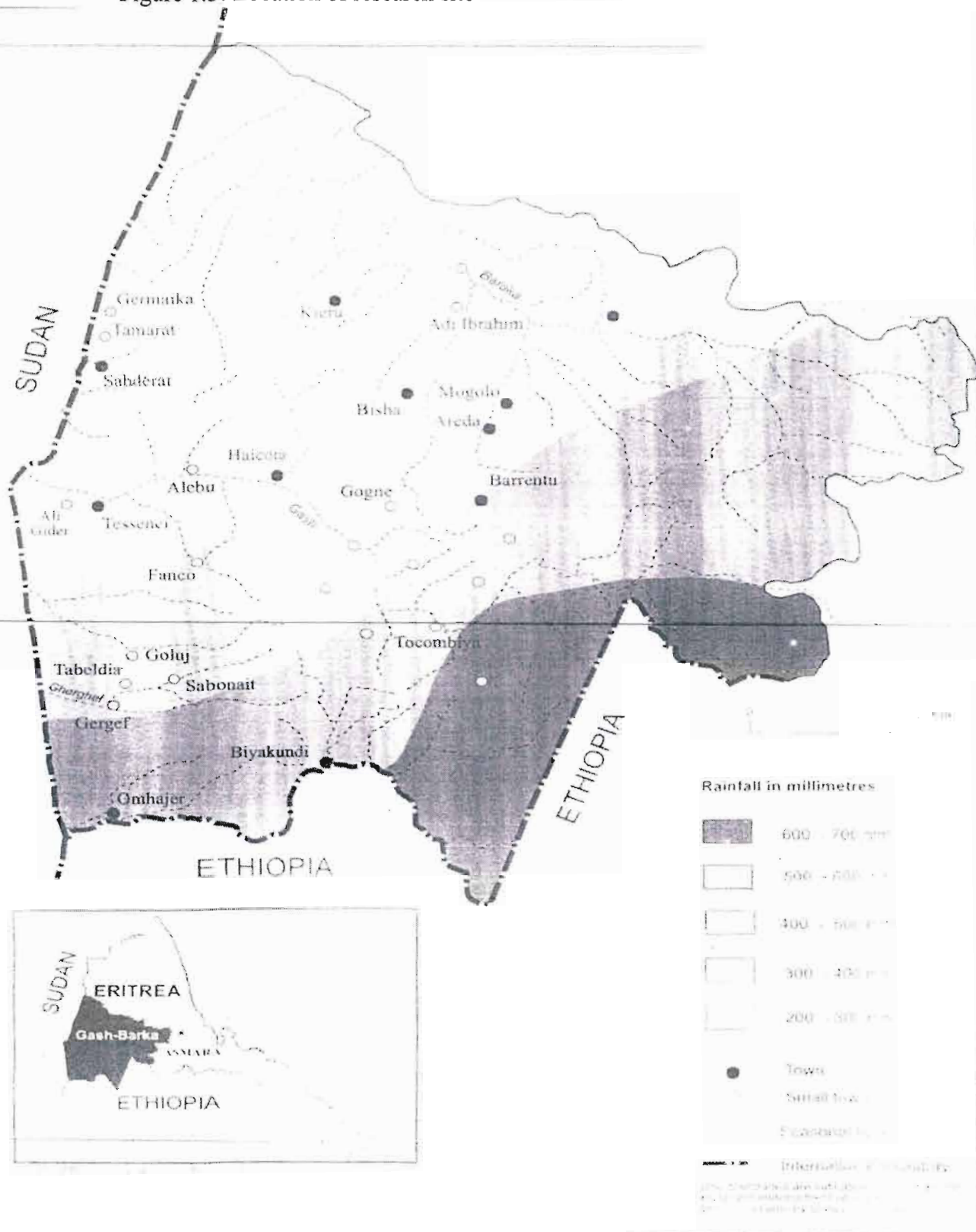


Figure 1.2 Eritrea's provinces (Left colonial administrative zones, top right current administrative zones).

Appendix 3

Figure 1.3: Location of research site



Source: Kibreab, G. and et al., (2002b)

Appendix 4

Table 3.1 Summary of returnee figures by year and mode of return

ITEM NO	YEAR	SPONTANEOUS RETURNEES	ORGANISED RETURNEES	TOTAL RETURNEES
1	1989-1995	141,170	24,220	165,390
2	1996	5,736	-	5,736
3	1997	8,601	-	8,601
4	1998	6,323	-	6,323
5	1999	1,508	-	1,508
6	2000	258	-	258
7	2001	-	20,514	20,514
8	2002	-	18,705	18,705
9	Total	163,596	63,439	227,035

Appendix 5

Semi-structured questionnaire

Cover Letter for my Close - ended and Focus Group Interview:

My name is Netsreab Ghebremichael. I am a post-graduate student at the University of Natal, Faculty of Human Sciences. I am conducting research regarding the **socio-economic re-integration of Eritrean refugee returnees**. This study is done as part of my study for the partial fulfilment of my masters degree. As such the purpose of the study is absolutely for academic purpose.

As I believe that you have a direct experience in the issue (either as repatriate or Implementer/decision maker of the program), you are better informed than any one else. Because of this, the researcher considers that your participation in this research can help him learn a lot from you. Needless to say, this study will remain unattainable without your genuine and full support in the data gathering process. So, I will be grateful and highly appreciate your cooperation if you lend me your precious time in sharing with me your responses to some of the questions I have. I hereby assure you that your name will be kept strictly confidential in my research report.

Eventually, let me remind that it is through such cooperative information sharing efforts that a worthwhile and profitable academic work (and perhaps much beyond that confined circle) can be accomplished.

Thank you in advance for your assistance. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

The researcher.

Introduction:

The main aim of this semi-structured interview schedule is to assess the socio-economic situation of PROFERI repatriates in Dige Sub-Zone. The study is meant for academic purpose and such the name of the respondent will remain anonymous. Thus I expect from the household representative to share with genuine information. I appreciate the precious time you are willing to spend with me.

I. Demographic and Socio-economic Characteristics of the Returnee Household

1. Family head: ☐ Man ☐ Woman
2. Marital Status: ☐ Married ☐ Single ☐ Divorced
☐ Separated ☐ Widowed ☐ Other(specify)_____
3. If you are married: a) How many children do you have (Family size/Total Number of the household members): _____
b) What is the occupation of the household head? (Please specify?) _____
4. What is your religion: ☐ Orthodox ☐ Protestant ☐ Catholic
☐ Islam ☐ Other/specify: _____
5. Ethnicity: ☐ Tigre ☐ Tigrigna ☐ Nara ☐ Bilen ☐ Other (Specify): _____
6. Household's geographical origin: _____

II. Causes of Flight From Country of Origin

7. When did you ask refuge to Sudan Republic? _____
8. Place of departure to the Sudan Republic (Place and Province): _____
9. How long did you stay in Sudan? ☐ 1-5 yrs ☐ 6-10 yrs ☐ 11-15 yrs ☐ 16-20yrs ☐ Above 20 yrs
10. Which place(s) did you stay while you were in the Sudan: _____
11. The major reason(s) that had forced the household to depart to Sudan was:
☐ Persistent drought and famine ☐ War ☐ To escape forced Ethiopian Military conscription ☐ To get better opportunities ☐ Other (Specify?): _____
12. Was your flight planned? ☐ Yes, plans and preparations before hand ☐ No, it was sudden but not in panic. ☐ Was in haste and panic.

13. Did you get information about the life of refugees in Sudan before you left your country? ☐ Yes. ☐ No.

14. Did you find life in the Sudan as you expected it? ☐ Yes it is as I expected it.
☐ No, it is better than what I expected ☐ No, it is not as easy as I thought
☐ No answer.

III. Homecoming and Repatriation Process

15. When did you come back home? (Month and year): _____

16. What were the main reason(s) that prompted you to repatriate?

17. On your arrival in Sudan, what was /were the most difficult problem/s encountered? ☐
Faced no difficulties ☐ Lack of subsistence. ☐ Shelter. ☐ Weather conditions ☐
Culture related problem ☐ Other / specify: _____

18. A. During your stay in Sudan as a refugee did you have any other means of subsistence or means of income other than food aid? ☐ Yes ☐ No

B. If yes please specify?: _____

19. What happened to your property (possessions) when you left the Sudan ? ☐
Have kept all of it ☐ Have kept part of it ☐ Sold and exchanged all of it
☐ Sold and exchanged part of it ☐ Other/Specify: _____

20. A. Prior to your repatriation, was there any of your family member who had visited "home?" _____

B. If yes, how many times? _____

21. Did you have had enough information about your home country prior to your repatriation? ☐ Yes. ☐ No.

22. Did you have had any knowledge about the place you chose to return?

☐ Yes ☐ No

23. Who selected it for you (i.e. the settlement site)? ☐ My spouse ☐ consulted to my relatives ☐ The Eritrean government ☐ Other/Specify: _____

24. How do you consider this repatriation area as a place to live? 1. Suitable as a temporary site. 2. Suitable as a permanent site. 3. Not suitable at all 4. Have no idea.

25. A. Are you willing to live the rest of your life in the place were you have been repatriated? ☐ Yes ☐ No

B. If your response is 'No,' what would be the prospective factors that would prompt you to migrate from the current resettlement area you are in? ☐ Lack of employment ☐ Harsh Climate

☐ Insufficient social services (Education, Health and other Infrastructure facilities)☐ Disagreements with the locals

☐ Poor agricultural productivity ☐ Because I am originally from this place I wouldn't prefer to migrate anymore

☐ Other (Please specify?): _____

26. Had you been given a second chance to re-select another resettlement area, where would you have chosen? _____

27. Was your repatriation: ☐ Voluntary ☐ Involuntary

28. During your repatriation process, did you have had any idea regarding your rights, duties and opportunities that you can be rendered (be it from your government of origin or other NGOs or CBOs)? ☐ Yes ☐ No

29. How did you come to this resettlement area?☐ My Own choice☐ Have no alternative and took the opportunity.☐ Was brought here by authorities ☐ Arrived here directly.
Other/specify: _____

30. A. Are there open conflicts between the returnees and the local population? ☐ Yes, almost always. Yes, often. ☐ Only occasionally. ☐ No conflicts.

B. If there are any conflicts, what do you think are the cause/s of these conflicts?☐ Cultural differences. ☐ Economic factors (e.g. Competition over scarce resources like land). ☐ Ethnic differences. ☐ Do not know. ☐ Other /specify.

C. Do these conflicts affect the resettlement? ☐ Yes. ☐ No. ☐ Have no idea.

D. How do they affect the resettlement? ☐ Cause material damage. ☐ Create feud☐ Create sense of insecurity among returnees.☐ Other/specify.

31. A. What did the household buy using the supposedly "cash assistance"? ☐ Goats and ship ☐ Cows/Oxen☐ Camel☐ Donkey ☐ Cash Money

☐ Mixed live stocks (Please Mention?):

☐ Other means (Please specify?): _____

B. If the household repatriated using livestock, can you tell me a bit about their current status (Fill in the table below)?

Type of livestock	Initial amount distributed	Dead	Sold	Lost	Current total amount
Goats and Sheep					
Cows/Oxen					
Camel					
Donkey					

32. The estimated annual harvest from your plot of farmland is:☐ 1-3 Sacs ☐ 4-6 Sacs ☐ 7-9 Sacs ☐ 10-12 Sacs ☐ Above12 Sacs

33. Is the product from the allotted plot of land sufficient to cover the needs of the household? ☐ Yes. ☐ No.
34. A. What is the approximate total monthly income of the household currently?

- B. Is the household's income sufficient to cover the cost of its subsistence? ☐ Yes.
☐ No.
- C. If no, how do the family manage to live? ☐ With some assistance from UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations ☐ With assistance from relatives/friends. ☐ Previous savings. ☐ Other/specify.
35. Comparing your current state of livelihood with that of exile, how would you evaluate it? ☐ Improved ☐ Remains the same ☐ Worsened ☐ Just optimists
36. Whom do you think have had the upper hand role in the overall decision-making processes regarding the repatriation process?

37. Do you think returnees' voices and concerns were heard and been given due consideration in the repatriation process? ☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Other (Please specify): _____
38. How are decisions affecting this settlement and its inhabitants made? (i.e. are the returnees involved or consulted?) ☐ Yes, always. ☐ Sometimes. ☐ Not at all.
39. If the returnees were able to participate in decision-making process, at what stage would they be involved? ☐ When their repatriation site is selected. ☐ In planning and implementation of the resettlement activities. ☐ Administration of resettlement site. ☐ Other/specify.
40. What do think should be done to improve the situation in this resettlement area?

41. Bearing in mind that there is a continuous repatriation process, what piece of experience and free advice would you share to:
- A. ERREC _____

- B. Returnees: _____

Thank you for your cooperation!