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Helpdesk Research Report

Refugee return in protracted refugee situations

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Question

What refugee return initiatives have occurred in the Africa region? What lessons have been learnt from successful/sustainable return processes across the world, especially in relation to protracted refugee situations[1]?

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1. Overview

Voluntary repatriation/return is seen as one of the durable solutions to protracted refugee situations[2] (UNHCR, 2006, p. 129) and is the 'preferred' solution of the international community (Long, 2011, p. 1; Milner and Loescher, 2011, p. 17). Successful or **sustainable return processes require the reintegration of refugees** (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012, p. 3), which can be complicated by their protracted refugee experience and conditions in the country of origin. This rapid literature review maps refugee return

[1] UNHCR defines a protracted refugee situation (PRS) as one in which refugees have sought asylum in another country (or countries) and have since been displaced for five years or longer 'without immediate prospects for implementation of durable solutions' (in Long, 2011, p. 1). It is a situation in which 'refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo. Their lives may not be at risk, but their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile. A refugee in this situation is often unable to break free from enforced reliance on external assistance' (UNHCR, 2006, p. 106).

[2] the others being local integration in the country of first asylum or resettlement in a third country.

processes and initiatives to support them in cases of protracted refugee situations; and draws out lessons from successful/sustainable return processes after protracted refugee situations from the wider literature.

The literature uncovered by this rapid review is a mix of grey literature from agencies involved in supporting refugee return and journal articles presenting evidence about return processes. There is little information about the specifics of the initiatives to support return or the sustainability of return, although a recent report reviews the literature on refugee return to assess lessons for sustainability. While there are many lessons for sustainable return throughout the literature, they are not always presented in a systematic way. The literature does not engage with what impact the current crises will have for the success/sustainability of return in the ongoing protracted emergencies around the world. The literature considered in this review was largely gender-blind.

Evidence from the case studies indicates that **return is often protracted or cyclical**; it can be spontaneous or assisted; returns can happen rapidly or at a slower pace; and resolving protracted refugee caseloads often involves **resettlement and local integration, as well as return** to country of origin. **Security, access to adequate services, housing, and livelihood opportunities are key** to return.

Lessons for sustainable return include:

Lessons for initiatives prior to return

- Access to quality, trustworthy information is important for refugee decision making about return.
- Return programmes need to take into account conflict dynamics and the political economy.
- Establishing security, access to adequate services, housing, and livelihoods can be conducive to return as these are key for refugees.
- Treatment in host countries is not enough to 'push' refugees; the decision to stay or return is informed by a comparison of conditions in host countries and countries of origin.
- Access to livelihood assets, social networks, and opportunities in the country of origin can result in early return.
- Poverty both restrains and encourages return, with poorer refugees less likely to return and reintegrate sustainably.
- Local integration could equip refugees for sustainable return by giving them an ability to build up assets which can contribute to reintegration.
- Preparation for return while in exile can help refugees reintegrate.

Lessons for initiatives to support return

- Return can be staggered or cyclical; and mobility is a key strategy in its sustainability.
- Effective support for refugee return is demand driven.
- A comprehensive integrated approach between humanitarian, development, government and private sector actors is needed.
- Flexibility in funding can assist sustainable return.
- Return programmes need to account for increasing urbanisation, as many refugees prefer to settle in urban areas rather than in rural areas.

Lessons for initiatives to help reintegration

- Addressing land and other restitution and redress issues is important for livelihoods and sustainable return.
- Return processes should be integrated in wider development processes and assist whole communities.
- Ethnic and other forms of discrimination can impede sustainable return by making it impossible for some groups to return.

- Return programmes need to take into account the diverse experiences of refugees which impact on their prospects for sustainable return and reintegration.
- Women face particular challenges in return.

Lessons for initiatives to ensure long-term sustainability of refugee return

- Sustainability of return is weakened by politically driven planning which does not account for the needs of the refugees.
- Unsustainable return can have a negative impact on peacebuilding.

2. Refugee return initiatives – with a focus on Africa

Worldwide, there were 19.5 million refugees by the end of 2014, 45 per cent of whom were in a protracted displacement situations (Harild et al, 2015, p. viii). The past five years have seen consecutive increases in the number of refugees in Africa, measured at 3.7 million at the end of 2014, as a result of both new and protracted emergencies (UNHCR, 2015, p. 2). **Voluntary repatriation of refugees is at its lowest levels** since the 1980s (Harild et al, 2015, p. viii). In Africa, the number dropped from 168,000 in 2013 to 97,000 in 2014 (UNHCR, 2015, p. 12). Significant factors in the low rate of return were insecurity and conflict in countries of origin and an absence of socioeconomic support in areas of return as well as the lack of political will to resolve the root causes of displacement (UNHCR, 2015, p. 12, 17). The countries in Africa with the largest number of returns in 2014 were: the Democratic Republic of the Congo (25,200); Mali (21,000); Angola (14,300); Sudan (13,100); Côte d'Ivoire (12,400); and Rwanda (5,800) (UNCHR, 2015, p. 12).

In the last 20 years there have been large scale returns after protracted refugee situations in a number of different countries in Africa. A sample of these are profiled below, including Angola, Burundi, Liberia, Somalia, and South Sudan. Due to space and time constraints, the other refugee returns after protracted refugee situations in Africa, which include Mozambique, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda, amongst others, have not been profiled. One example is taken from outside the region: Afghanistan, a conflict-affected country which has seen waves of displacement and return.

Angola

There were an estimated 550,000-600,000 Angolan refugees as a result of the 1975-2002 civil war who settled in neighbouring countries, including Zambia, Namibia, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), South Africa, the Republic of Congo and Botswana (Harild et al, 2015, p. 70). Despite protracted exile and evidence that they were speedily and well integrated in their host countries, more than half had returned to Angola by the end of 2004, and between 75-80 per cent had returned by 2007. This was despite the fact that Angola was a devastated and unsafe country, with high levels of poverty and low levels of human development (Harild et al, 2015, p. 70).

Return factors and initiatives

Following the peace agreement in 2002, a tripartite agreements for the repatriation of the refugees was signed by the government of Angola, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the two countries hosting the majority of Angolan refugees, Zambia and the DRC, in March 2003 (Harild et al, 2015, p. 71). However, there were no reception centres to assist the returning refugees (Harild et al, 2015, p. 71). Many refugees did not wait for the formal UNHCR supported repatriation process, but started to return both spontaneously and rapidly, without assistance with identification, health and humanitarian assistance, transportation and other support for the return to their places of origin (Harild et al, 2015, p.

71). This placed them at considerable risk, as a result of lack of security, extortion and police harassment at crossing points, violence against women and girls, danger from mines and unexploded munitions, and the failure to provide identity documents for Angolan refugee children born in exile (Harild et al, 2015, p. 71). The 'speed and enthusiasm for return by the refugees outflanked institutional capacity to manage the process in a comprehensive way' (Harild et al, 2015, p. 28). Support for repatriation wound down by 2007, leaving at least 55,000 refugees who wanted to return but could not. In 2014, steps were taken to conclude the situation for Angolan refugees after 50 years of exile (UNHCR, 2015, p. 13). More than 14,000 former Angolan refugees were repatriated, mostly from the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Zambia, while others were supported to locally integrate (UNHCR, 2015, p. 13).

Lessons

Analysis by the World Bank suggests that the rapid, spontaneous return of Angolan refugees was partly as a result of their reliance on local information which helped them determine when it was safe to return (Harild et al, 2015, p. 24). They perceived an abundance of natural resources in the relatively, under-populated Angola, for hunting, fishing and foraging (Harild et al, 2015, p. 75). In addition, the continuous cross-border migration and mobility of Angolan refugees within Zambia following historical patterns, appears to have contributed towards both their return and local integration. Voluntary repatriation was regarded as a natural and gradual continuation of previous practices (Starup, 2014, p. 3; Harild et al, 2015, p. 75). Informal structures of authority and social relations, such as churches, local schools, traditional local mediators, and NGOs, helped in facilitating reintegration and longer term development (Harild et al, 2015, p. 76-77).

The Angola case challenges many of the commonly held assumptions and myths about refugees and returnees (Harild et al, 2015, p. 78). Although it should not suggest that refugees will always spontaneously return without external assistance and 'development' to areas of origin that have been devastated by war (Harild et al, 2015, p. 78). It indicates a need for a greater understanding about the local histories and socio-economic and cultural circumstances that condition exile and return, which should be incorporated into repatriation programmes (Harild et al, 2015, p. 78). Greater credence and awareness should be given to informal information channels and local sources of information within the refugee networks, which largely precipitated return (Harild et al, 2015, p. 80). More rapid mobilisation of development assistance 'would have greatly improved the experience of return and the process of reintegration' and there is a need for clear targeting criteria to include returning refugees and IDPs in community level projects, with robust monitoring arrangements (Harild et al, 2015, p. 80). Better engagement with informal structures of authority and social relations in returning communities can help support return and reintegration (Harild et al, 2015, p. 80).

Burundi

Two waves of conflict in 1972 and 1993 resulted in more than 570,000 Burundians residing in exile, the majority in Tanzania (Harild et al, 2015, p. 98). While initially welcoming, Tanzania became increasingly less open to refugees and pressed for their repatriation (Harild et al, 2015, p. 98; Thomson, 2009, p. 35). A peace agreement ending the conflict in Burundi was signed in 2000 and assisted repatriation started in 2002, which was facilitated by UNHCR in a joint initiative with the Burundian and Tanzanian government (Harild et al, 2015, p. 99). Around 500,000 refugees were estimated to have returned by 2011 (Harild et al, 2015, p. 99; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2014, p. 60). In 2007, only the 1972 caseload refugees were offered the option to naturalise (Harild et al, 2015, p. 100; Long, 2011, p. 9-10; Thomson, 2009, p. 35).

Return factors and initiatives

'Push' factors applied to get the remaining refugees to return included significant restrictions in income-generating opportunities, freedom of movement, and access to education facilities, sanitation, and water (Harild et al, 2015, p. 99). However these did not match the 'pull' factors in Burundi as refugees were reluctant to return due to the fear of insecurity and the prospect of not having access to land upon return (Harild et al, 2015, p. 99). In addition, some had been born in exile and many did not speak the language of Burundi (Harild et al, 2015, p. 99; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012, p. 18). Despite this, their refugee status was cancelled and from late 2012 into 2013, UNHCR facilitated their return, although many did not want to go (Harild et al, 2015, p. 99; IRRI, 2013, p. 4). Inadequate funding and the concentration of returns were blamed for preventing the implementation of comprehensive reintegration assistance programmes, particularly with regard to shelter for these returning refugees (Harild et al, 2015, p. 100).

UNHCR has tried to foster reintegration of refugees to ensure the sustainability of return by implementing housing or shelter programmes for landless returnees and providing cash grants (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2014, p. 63-64; IRRI, 2013, p. 5). These cash grants were intended to be used to assist people in creating sustainable livelihoods by buying land or other agricultural inputs, although the 1972 returnees primarily used the cash grant to meet basic needs (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2014, p. 64). Other organisations such as the World Food Programme and NGOs provided assistance in the form of food assistance, water and sanitation, etc. (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2014, p. 64). The Burundian government provided returnees with two years of free education and three (or in some cases six) months of health care (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012, p. 1).

Reintegration of refugees was 'challenging due to demographic pressure, poverty, unemployment, and lack of infrastructure' (Harild et al, 2015, p. 101). The 1972 refugees faced additional challenges regarding social and economic reintegration compared to the 1993 refugees (Harild et al, 2015, p. 102; Thomson, 2009, p. 36; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012, p. 1). Misleading information and unfounded expectations resulted in problems between returnees and stayees in Burundi, as the returnees expected to receive their ancestral land upon return, while the stayees were expecting that returnees would be accommodated on government land, nor did they know when the returnees were arriving (Harild et al, 2015, p. 102; Thomson, 2009, p. 36; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012, p. 20). This land issue remains a risk factor in terms of successful reintegration and peaceful cohabitation of returnees and stayees (Kirchhof, 2009, p. 36; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2014, p. 72; IRRI, 2013, p. 5; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012, p. 14). The dire socio-economic prospects in areas of return had led to questions about its sustainability and it is recommended that support targets communities at large and not just returnees (Kirchhof, 2009, p. 36).

One approach by the Burundian government and United Nations (UN) agencies to address reintegration challenges was the accommodation of landless returnees in Burundi's Rural Integrated Villages (VRIs) (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2014, p. 61; Harild et al, 2015, p. 102; Thomson, 2009, p. 36). The management of the VRIs is based on an inter-agency approach, which includes the Burundian Government, UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2014, p. 70). However, only nine VRIs accommodating around 250 households each had been established and those living in the VRIs were particularly likely to have negative perceptions of the reintegration process as a result of a lack of land, a sense of geographical remoteness, high levels of poverty, and a broader feeling of being marginalised and forgotten about by the government (Harild et al, 2015, p. 102; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2014, p. 62, 71-72). Greater, although still modest, satisfaction levels were found in a BMZ supported reintegration project,

which featured an inclusive and participatory planning process that engaged all categories of the population affected by the war (Harild et al, 2015, p. 102).

The return and reintegration of Burundian refugees after protracted displacement is seen as a success by many external actors (IRRI, 2013, p. 2; Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012, p. 10). However, a number of Burundian returnees are reported to have fled Burundi after return from Tanzania as a result of insecurity and harassment and have settled in Uganda (IRRI, 2013, p. 2, 6). The International Refugee Rights Initiative suggests that the policies which forced return from Tanzania 'may have only displaced it elsewhere in the region' (IRRI, 2013, p. 2). Recent insecurity in 2015 has resulted in thousands of refugees fleeing to Rwanda, Tanzania, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)[3].

Lessons

Analysis by the World Bank and UNHCR suggests that it is important for return interventions to recognise that 'different groups of returnees will face different constraints to reintegration depending on factors such as their length of stay in exile, challenges to reclaim property, access or lack thereof to social networks in the country of return, and differences between the educational systems accessed in exile and that in the country of return' (Harild et al, 2015, p. 104). Access to correct information is important for reducing conflict, which can be aided by making resettlement and reintegration programmes more comprehensive and participatory (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012, p. 20; Harild et al, 2015, p. 104). Land issues should be addressed in a coordinated way by the government and other actors (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012, p. 20). An integrated approach is essential to create communities for returnees (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012, p. 20). Development assistance can address some of the structural causes of the conflict which reduce the sustainability of return, although it must be consistent and sustained (Harild et al, 2015, p. 104). Poverty assessments should include disaggregated data on the conditions and specific challenges faced by returnees, while the impact of interventions on returnees should also be assessed (Harild et al, 2015, p. 105).

Liberia

The 1989-2003 Liberian civil war resulted in up to 750,000 refugees displaced across the region (Harild et al, 2015, p. 126). Returns occurred after the 1997 elections but were unsustainable as a result of the renewal of conflict in 1999, which also caused a massive new refugee exodus (UNHCR, 2006, p. 113). The majority of returns since the war ended have been spontaneous, while there were also a number of repatriation programmes (Harild et al, 2015, p. 126).

Return factors and initiatives

Between 2004 and 2007, UNHCR organised a large-scale repatriation promotion programme, including implementing community projects, for residual Liberians in the sub-region which had limited success as many were not prepared to return due to the precarious political and economic situation in Liberia (Harild et al, 2015, p. 126; UNHCR, 2006, p. 134; Omata, 2012, p. 267). In 2008, UNHCR launched another one-year repatriation programme with incentives for returnees from USD 50 to USD 100 (USD 50 for those below the age of 18) and about 10,000 refugees returned (Harild et al, 2015, p. 126; Omata, 2012, p. 268). A third

[3] Burundi refugees say there is no turning back as fears grow of reprisals at home, The Guardian, 19/5/15. Retrieved from: http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/may/19/burundi-refugees-rwanda-no-turning-back-fears-grow-reprisals

exercise occurred at the beginning of 2011, providing logistical support and repatriation grants from UNHCR (Harild et al, 2015, p. 126).

'Push' factors for return of Liberian refugees included a deterioration in living conditions as a result of exclusion from the formal economy, sharply reduced assistance, and a decrease in commercial activity as a result of the diminishing refugee population (Harild et al, 2015, p. 127). In addition there was persistent political pressure for repatriation from both the government and international refugee organisations and resistance to local integration, including from the refugees themselves (Harild et al, 2015, p. 127; Omata, 2012, p. 268). It was this combination of push factors, rather than improving conditions in the country of origin or organised repatriation programmes, which largely caused return (Harild et al, 2015, p. 127). Refugees, especially women, were reluctant to return as a result of potential insecurity after repatriation and lack of access to accommodation (Harild et al, 2015, p. 127). It was much easier for refugees from higher socio-economic groups to return than for those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds (Harild et al, 2015, p. 126; Omata, 2012). Many of the former had maintained a foothold in Liberia which facilitated their return (Harild et al, 2015, p. 126). Scepticism about the information provided by UNHCR also constrained return; while for a few the hope of third-country resettlement induced them to remain in exile (Harild et al, 2015, p. 127).

Efforts to reintegrate sustainably were hindered by the failure to provide continued support after repatriation and to support the different phases of return (Harild et al, 2015, p. 128). By the time the 2008 and 2009 returnees arrived, support was already being phased out and the government was unable to provide any meaningful integration support (Harild et al, 2015, p. 128; Omata, 2012, p. 276). A larger-scale development project, the Community Empowerment Project, supported by the World Bank, considered the needs of returning refugees, IDPs, and ex-combatants in the selection of beneficiary communities (Harild et al, 2015, p. 26). However, none of its monitoring indicators 'enabled either an assessment of whether the targeting succeeded in benefitting returnees and assisting their reintegration, or whether they were represented in the community based organisations (Harild et al, 2015, p. 128-129).

Lessons

Some returnees settled in relatively easily, while others experienced various hardships (Omata, 2012, p. 266). The ease of reintegration seemed to be largely influenced by their asset conditions in the country of origin, especially their access to social networks in Liberia (Omata, 2012, p. 266-267). Research indicates that those who could transfer their assets were better off than those whose livelihood means were embedded in the exile environment (Omata, 2012, p. 273).

Somalia

The conflict in Somalia has resulted in over a million Somali refugees across the region (Hammond, 2014, p. 55). The Somali refugee situation is characterised as a series of movements; first following the collapse of the Somali state in 1991; then a decade of relative stability from approximately 1996 to 2005; followed from 2006 by new waves of political violence and famine and accompanying displacement (Long, 2011, p. 5; Hammond, 2014, p. 56, 63). Therefore, there are Somali refugees who have been displaced for decades, as well as others who are relatively recent arrivals (Long, 2011, p. 5; Hammond, 2014, p. 55). During periods of relative calm, returns to some areas were possible (Hammond, 2014, p. 56).

Return factors and initiatives

Encouraged by improvements in security and wanting to escape the harshness of the camps in Ethiopia, an estimated 400,000 refugees returned on their own without assistance between 1991 and 94 as fighting

began to subside in Somaliland (Hammond, 2014, p. 59). A waning of donor support to camps in Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti in 1993, together with a modest improvement in security conditions inside Somalia and return of the rains, also encouraged some people to return to Somalia relatively quickly (Hammond, 2014, p. 60). Between 1992 and 1994, UNHCR carried out a Cross Border Operation into areas of southern Somalia in order to prepare for and facilitate return (Hammond, 2014, p. 60). This also involved 360 Quick Impact Projects[4] (QIPs) with a value of USD 7.9 million out of an overall budget for return and rehabilitation of USD 35.6 million (Hammond, 2014, p. 61). An estimated 170,000 (and above) people repatriated during this period, although some found return unsustainable and went back to Kenya (Hammond, 2014, p. 61). An evaluation of the Cross Border Operation found that it was limited by: i) the likelihood of deteriorating security conditions inside Somalia triggering fresh displacement; ii) the short-term impact of most of the QIPs meant they were unlikely to be sustained by local administrations or communities who were more concerned with their immediate survival, and iii) a lack of collaboration with other organisations with a mandate for rehabilitation and development, meaning that 'UNHCR in effect launched the project alone' (Hammond, 2014, p. 61).

Improvements in the security situation in the late 1990s in some parts of the county meant that there was a focus on the organised return of approximately 200,000 refugees from Ethiopia to Somaliland (Hammond, 2014, p. 62). UNHCR distributed cash grants, food assistance for a period of nine months and limited household items to returnees who were supported by the Somaliland Ministry of Rehabilitation, Reintegration and Reconstruction (MRRR) (Hammond, 2014, p. 62). In addition, their return was facilitated by provision of hundreds of QIPS between 1997 and 2005, many of which have been criticised for lack of sustainability and failing to make a difference in ensuring returnees' access to basic services and livelihoods (Hammond, 2014, p. 62). While most of those who returned to Somaliland did not re-emigrate, life after return was particularly challenging and many people who returned from refugee camps became internally displaced persons living in destitution in and around urban centres (Hammond, 2014, p. 62, 73). Fresh displacement occurred from 2007 onwards as a result of violence and famine, especially as humanitarian aid could not be provided in the famine hit areas under al-Shabaab control (Hammond, 2014, p. 63-64).

Recent return factors and initiatives

In 2012, a new government was elected and al-Shabaab lost control over the major urban areas in South Central Somalia, although it still controls large swathes of rural territory (Hammond, 2014, p. 65). Control of territory between the regions and the centre is contested, which makes it hard to promote governance, put in place the necessary services and ensure that relief and development organisations have access to support eventual large-scale return (Hammond, 2014, p. 65). Despite these challenges, the post-transition period has brought renewed optimism about the future of the country (Hammond, 2014, p. 65). Host governments have pushed for the acceleration of mass return of the refugees, partly in response to Al-Shabaab terrorist attacks on their territory (Hammond, 2014, p. 65). Possibly as a result of this renewed optimism, but also likely because of growing intolerance towards them and to the insecurity they have experienced in the refugee camps, many refugees are preparing for the possibility of some form of return (Hammond, 2014, p. 65). A report in 2013 found that 'many of the estimated 15,000 refugees who have returned from Kenya in the past year were prompted more by refugees' concern about insecurity in the camps than by optimism about the conditions facing them inside Somalia on their return' (Hammond, 2014, p. 69).

[4] Projects to support the reintegration of refugees, including rehabilitation of access roads, construction of schools along with teacher training and distribution of school kits and uniforms, primary and preventive health services, drinking water supply, and support for resumption of agriculture.

In December 2014, a pilot project to support the spontaneous repatriation of Somali refugees from Kenya was launched under the auspices of a tripartite agreement between the governments of Kenya and Somalia and UNHCR (UNHCR, 2015, p. 12; UNHCR, 2014). The intervention takes a phased approach and provides comprehensive assistance to Somali refugees in Kenya who spontaneously decide to return (UNHCR, 2014, p. 2). In the three pilot areas, assistance delivered by UNHCR will be complemented by an integrated community-based support through a joint effort by humanitarian, early recovery and development actors to increase access to effective and timely basic services and livelihood opportunities for returnees and their receiving communities (UNHCR, 2014, p. 2). UN partners have worked to provide education in key areas of potential return (UNHCR, 2015, p. 9).

Lessons

Continued insecurity and the absence of rule of law, basic services, and livelihood opportunities in some areas of Somalia have continued to discourage refugee returns (UNHCR, 2015, p. 3; Hammond, 2014, p. 73). One of the main obstacles to return is the availability of farmland (Hammond, 2014, p. 73). Accurate and consistent information on the timing of, and conditions and expectations for return are flagged as being an important part of return programmes (Yarnell and Thomas, 2014, p. 5). An assessment of the IDP programme in Somalia provides lessons for the refugee return programme and indicates that 'unless displaced Somalis can support themselves over the long term, returns may be short-lived' (Yarnell and Thomas, 2014, p. 5). In addition, solutions for returning refugees need to consider the large number of IDPs within Somalia to prevent returnees becoming displaced once more or being forced to compete with IDPs for meagre resources (Hammond, 2014, p. 71). The environmental depletion of the areas of return is a risk factor for sustainability and rural populations need to be provided with more resilient livelihoods (Yarnell and Thomas, 2014, p. 5). The IDP programme was also assessed as not being well-coordinated with longer-term humanitarian or development projects being implemented in areas targeted for return assistance, which hindered the sustainability of return (Yarnell and Thomas, 2014, p. 5-6). The effectiveness of any return and reintegration operation could be hampered by corruption around humanitarian aid and further insecurity could potentially be triggered (Hammond, 2014, p. 75).

Somali refugee resilience strategies of actively living in multiple locations means that 'it is likely to be necessary to provide some guarantees for potential returnees to be able to come and go for a time until they are well established and the security situation in the country stabilises' (Hammond, 2014, p. 72, 74).

South Sudan

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 ended more than five decades of war and paved the way for the establishment of South Sudan in July 2011 (Harild et al, 2015, p. 132). More than two million refugees are estimated to have returned during the CPA period, and in the lead-up to independence an additional 300,000 Southerners who had been living in the north returned to the south (Harild et al, 2015, p. 132). The vast majority of returns have been 'spontaneous' but between late 2005 and May 2010 UNHCR supported the voluntary return of more than 330,000 refugees and assisted voluntary returns have continued since then (Harild et al, 2015, p. 132).

Return factors and initiatives

UNHCR support involved registration of families for repatriation, transport back to South Sudan, and provision of rations for three months at the return location (Harild et al, 2015, p. 134). Often families are divided temporarily during return, with the male household head returning first in order to find a place to live and establish a livelihood before bringing the whole family back (Harild et al, 2015, p. 132). Some returnees have suffered secondary displacement since returning, as a result of a combination of factors

ranging from difficulties in accessing land to lack of livelihoods, infrastructure, water, schools and health services, or local conflict, even before the mass displacements as a result of the outbreak of conflict in December 2013 (Harild et al, 2015, p. 132, 140).

In Uganda, Sudanese refugees were supported through the Self-Reliance Strategy (SRS) for refugees which attempted to facilitate interim self-reliance without leading to permanent integration or citizenship (Starup, 2014, p. 2). It allowed Sudanese refugees relatively free access to education, health and other government-provided services; granted refugees the right to work and be economically independent; and encouraged refugees to engage in trade and business initiatives with host communities (Starup, 2014, p. 2). The SRS is assessed as having assisted in social cohesion in the host country, and showed that allowing people to engage in the local society in every way does not necessarily lead to local integration being the end solution, as large-scale repatriation occurred once the situation in South Sudan was conducive (Starup, 2014, p. 2).

The South Sudan government's initial expectation was that returnees would be welcomed back by their relatives, who would be responsible for resettling them, and the subsequent South Sudan Development Plan 2011-13 did not consider return and reintegration among the plan's crosscutting issues (Harild et al, 2015, p. 28). The focus on assisted return rather than reintegration resulted in 'a piecemeal approach to assistance with different agencies emphasising different interventions (e.g. service provision versus protection), and with few developing a longer-term and more holistic approach towards reinforcing the absorption capacity of communities' (Harild et al, 2015, p. 136).

Quick impact projects relating health and education in South Sudan were found to have sustainability risks since UNHCR do not cover recurrent costs, the Government lacked the capacity, and other partners were not willing to take this on (Harild et al, 2015, p. 23). Not enough attention was paid to livelihoods, especially of young people (Harild et al, 2015, p. 23, 136). The Local Government and Service Delivery Program (LGSDP), which became active in February 2014, is targeted at whole communities, including displaced persons and returnees (Harild et al, 2015, p. 24). It provides block grants for local development and supports an inclusive planning process for the use of these grants, while linking this process into wider local governance activities (Harild et al, 2015, p. 25). A complementary Safety Nets and Skills Development Project, that became effective in November 2014, will provide access to income opportunities and temporary employment for the poor and vulnerable (Harild et al, 2015, p. 25). Neither however, has any monitoring indicators providing disaggregated data on the extent to which returning IDPs and refugees are included as beneficiaries (Harild et al, 2015, p. 140).

Decisions to return were based on whether the three 'reintegration priorities', safety, livelihoods, and services, could best be achieved by returning, staying in exile, or by a temporary or permanent combination of the two (Haride et al, 2015, p. 133). Many refugees chose to forgo the free UNHCR assistance in order to 'minimise loss of livelihoods, ensure ongoing access to education for their children, allow for healthcare and other basic needs to be met, and create a contingency should war once more break out in South Sudan' (Harild et al, 2015, p. 134). A gradual process of return allowed them to plan ahead and minimise the risk to their families (Harild et al, 2015, p. 134). However pursuing such a strategy requires an extended family network, and not every refugee family is part of such a network (Harild et al, 2015, p. 135). Those without tend to use the official UNHCR repatriation process and were struggling more than those who had self-settled (Harild et al, 2015, p. 135).

Those returning had very different needs and experiences (Ensor, 2015, p. 9). Many returnees, especially the young, who have experienced urban living during their exile often do not want to return to rural life and agricultural work, which has resulted in the rapid growth of Sudan's cities and towns, and is likely to be preventing the return of refugees living in urban areas such as Khartoum (Harild et al, 2015, p. 135; Ensor, 2013, p. 53). However, South Sudan's urban areas are, at present, not able to absorb the large influx of people, which causes risks to sustainability and stability (Ensor, 2013, p. 10).

Lessons

World Bank analysis suggests that aid agencies need to support refugee return strategies which involve repatriation being a staggered process taking place over a considerable period of time (Harild et al, 2015, p. 140). Such strategies may involve multiple locations involving both the country of exile and return (Harild et al, 2015, p. 140). Assistance should focus on a few transformative programmes that can be done at scale in order to have impact and durability (Harild et al, 2015, p. 137). Aid agencies also need to have realistic expectations regarding the conflict mitigation impacts of operations, based on a through conflict analysis, but should aim to include conflict prevention and peacebuilding (Harild et al, 2015, p. 137, 140). Security priorities should be assessed and addressed in collaboration with local (state and county) authorities before it is attempted to address access to basic services (Harild et al, 2015, p. 137). Returnee interests need to be built into national protection policies and strategies (Harild et al, 2015, p. 137). Return and reintegration programming needs to better respond to the age- and gender-differentiated needs and aspirations of diverse migrant groups in order to provide an environment conducive to the sustainable return of the dissimilar groups of displaced South Sudanese (Ensor, 2013, p. 11). Land-related obstacles to return need to be addressed through formal and informal restitution mechanisms (Harild et al, 2015, p. 138). It is important for the monitoring of interventions to include indicators on the inclusion of and benefits to returning IDPs and refugees in operations that target communities and/or vulnerable sections of the population (Harild et al, 2015, p. 141). Planning for reintegration assistance needs to account for the needs of spontaneous returnees and those residing in urban areas (Harild et al, 2015, p. 141). Broader development interventions should support participatory community based processes (Harild et al, 2015, p. 141).

Outside of Africa[5]:

Afghanistan

Millions of refugees left Afghanistan from 1978 onwards as a result of the civil war, the Soviet invasion and the rise and fall of the Taliban, mainly hosted by neighbouring countries (Harild et al, 2015, p. 55; Özerdem and Sofizada, 2006, p. 80). Some 550,000 spontaneous and UN assisted refugees returned in 1989-1991 (Harild et al, 2015, p. 56). The collapse of the communist regime in April 1992 saw the rapid return of a further estimated 1.27 million refugees from Pakistan and another 287,000 from Iran (Harild et al, 2015, p. 56). However, fresh fighting saw new waves of refugees at the same time as others were returning to Afghanistan during Taliban rule (Harild et al, 2015, p. 56-57). The fall of the Taliban in late 2001 resulted in more spontaneous and assisted returns, but further refugees also left the country (Harild et al, 2015, p. 60).

[5] Other cases of return after protracted emergencies across the world include Guatemala, Cambodia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Iraq amongst others – due to time and space constraints, these cannot be mapped here.

Return factors and initiatives

In the 1990s, assistance to facilitate a sustainable return of refugees was provided by a large number of international and Afghan NGOs, with funding from the UN and other sources, including to areas outside of government control (Harild et al, 2015, p. 57, 66). Activities ranged from rehabilitation of agriculture, irrigation, and infrastructure, to health, education, and emergency relief (Harild et al, 2015, p. 57). However, NGOs and other organisations were not able to coordinate a balanced distribution of the available assistance in relation to needs in areas of return (Harild et al, 2015, p. 57; Özerdem and Sofizada, 2006, p. 92). In addition, the international response to return was 'constrained by (i) inadequate and delayed funding, and (ii) too much in-kind rather than cash funding which constrained response flexibility' (Harild et al, 2015, p. 66).

Support to return was more successful in stable areas, and where assistance was at the request of the returnees who often scouted ahead, than in areas of continuing instability and where there were issues over access to land (Harild et al, 2015, p. 58-59). Even in areas with lasting return, part of some families lived in exile as part of a diversified livelihood strategy (Harild et al, 2015, p. 59, 64; Stigter, 2006, p. 120). It is argued by some that this 'continued mobility could be a prerequisite for sustainable reintegration' (Stigter, 2006, p. 120).

Millions of Afghans returned from 2002 onwards, the majority of who had come back through the 'assisted voluntary repatriation' operation facilitated by UNHCR together with its government and agency partners (Özerdem and Sofizada, 2006, p. 81-82). Wider development support was provided by the National Solidarity Programme (NSP), which provides block grants to villages for local development with measures to facilitate the reintegration of returning refugees and IDPs; although there was little flexibility to assimilate influxes of returnees or IDPs once the block grant project cycle was initiated (Harild et al, 2015, p. 65-66). One evaluation found that 'NSP's 'whole-community approach' helped facilitate reintegration and general development within communities which benefited returnees and IDPs' (Harild et al, 2015, p. 66).

The volume of returns to Afghanistan 'posed considerable challenges to the absorption capacity of the country, calling into question the sustainability of return and reintegration' (Özerdem and Sofizada, 2006, p. 82). The return from 2002 onwards has been criticised for giving refugees misplaced expectations about the level of assistance they would receive upon their return, and UNHCR recommended that greater emphasis should be placed on the strengthening of developmental approaches, programmes, and resource mobilisation (Harild et al, 2015, p. 60; Steputat, 2004, p. 8). In addition, it is suggested that 'the Afghan case painfully demonstrates the problems with resolving protracted displacement where considerations other than refugee protection are at the heart of the activities of international actors and where the human security of refugees is in competition with national, regional and international security agendas' (Schmeidl, 2009, p. 20). As a result, the durability of the repatriation solution was not adequately considered and secondary displacement (returnees becoming IDPs) is common, due to insecurity, lack of rural livelihoods and land/property disputes (Schmeidl, 2009, p. 20; Özerdem and Sofizada, 2006, p. 81-88). The majority of returnees live in poverty and struggle for survival (Schmeidl, 2009, p. 20). Disappointed and frustrated returnees provide an easy recruitment pool for the insurgency in Afghanistan (Schmeidl, 2009, p. 20).

A profiling of Afghan refugees in Pakistan in 2011 found that the factors which would encourage return were 'improved security (37 per cent), employment opportunities (34 per cent), and access to housing (23 per cent)' (Harild et al, 2015, p. 60). Despite 'push' factors from host governments, and years of involvement by the international community with 'billions of dollars spent to stabilise and reconstruct Afghanistan, the three core issues of security, employment, and housing have not been addressed to an

extent that persuades the remaining refugees to return' (Harild et al, 2015, p. 61). Those who have been in exile for longer are less likely to return, as are those who have no land or cannot access the land they had before (Harild et al, 2015, p. 62). Rapid population growth has affected Afghanistan's ability to absorb its remaining refugees (Harild et al, 2015, p. 61).

Lessons

A World Bank assessment finds that 'rehabilitation and development assistance which is undertaken as area development, reflecting the needs in return areas, and undertaken in response to refugee demand with the involvement in planning by both the returnees and populations that remained in the return areas, can successfully support comprehensive and lasting return provided returnees view local security conditions as conducive and can access their property' (Harild et al, 2015, p. 67). Support after protracted displacement needs to go above the community level and develop non-farm employment opportunities and urban areas (Harild et al, 2015, p. 67). In addition, it needs to support refugee strategies, where repatriation is a staggered process that takes place over a considerable period of time, and may involve multiple locations (Harild et al, 2015, p. 67). Programmes need to be designed with an understanding of the different needs of Afghan refugees depending on the reasons for and circumstances of displacement, the length of time they have been displaced and the reasons why most refugees do not show a strong desire to return home (Schmeidl, 2009, p. 21). More attention needs to be paid to the absorptive capacity of the country (Schmeidl, 2009, p. 21).

3. Lessons learnt

Experiences from different protracted refugee situations provide a number of different lessons in relation to successful/sustainable return processes; although they also indicate that '**full repatriation is neither feasible nor desirable**' (Schmeidl, 2009, p. 21). The success or failure of repatriation depends on a number of key factors such as 'the willingness of refugees to go back home, the degree of physical and social disruption and community receptiveness in the country of origin, and the situation and level of integration in the host country' (Özerdem and Sofizada, 2006, p. 76). Sustainable return goes beyond physical relocation and requires successful reintegration. The record of international assistance in facilitating lasting return is very uneven, and a World Bank study suggests that 'overall the case studies indicate limited application of important lessons learned from earlier return situations' (Harild et al, 2015, p. 20).

Challenges to international assistance for sustainable return

Key issues affecting international assistance for lasting refugee return concern: the inability to address land rights and property restitution; the politically driven focus on repatriation which has diverted attention and funding from the reintegration of returnees; the need for planning that recognises the reality that both refugees in exile and returnees increasingly settle in urban environments; problems of coordination and donor alignment around reconstruction and reintegration strategies and the sometimes poor synchronisation of these programmes within the return process; short attention spans by the international community and governments that left support for reintegration incomplete; the problematical sustainability of some of the outputs of reconstruction and reintegration activities; and inadequate information to returnees on the conditions in areas of return and prospects for assistance (Harild et al, 2015, p. xiv).

Factors influencing returnee reintegration

Structural factors influencing returnee reintegration include 'the policies of the government of the country of return toward returnees, the receptiveness of the local government, the attitudes of the local

community toward returnees, and the number of people returning simultaneously' (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012, p. 4). Individual factors that can impact the reintegration experience include 'the duration of the time in exile, the conditions in exile, age, gender, if one is born in exile, and the social networks of the individual in the country of return' (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012, p. 4).

Trends of return movements in protracted refugee situations

Although peace agreements often provide the overall context for refugee return, actual return has mostly taken place to areas which were not peaceful or stable, or which were in a trajectory of overall post-conflict recovery (Harild et al, 2015, p. ix). In some cases, 'spontaneous' unassisted returns have preceded assisted voluntary return schemes (for example in Afghanistan, Angola, Liberia and South Sudan). The displacement of refugees has not always ended despite these subsequent assisted voluntary return schemes - often to the same areas, even when accompanied by reintegration assistance (Harild et al, 2015, p. ix). An increasing range of measures 'pushing' refugees to leave the host country can mean that such assisted voluntary return schemes have often partially or fully forfeited the 'voluntary' dimension of the return, and instead involved provision of logistical and other support to refugees who were reluctant to return (Harild et al, 2015, p. ix-x). This was most noticeably in the case with the Cambodian refugees, but also affected those from Bosnia and Herzegovina, some of the Burundian refugees in Tanzania, Liberian refugees in Ghana, and since the early nineties Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran (Harild et al, 2015, p. x).

Lessons for initiatives prior to return:

Access to quality, trustworthy information is important:

Having access to quality and trustworthy information is important for decision-making regarding voluntary return (Steputat, 2004, p. 8). For sustainable reintegration, information should be as accurate as possible to provide the best possible basis for decision-making, even though the accuracy of information may cause fewer refugees to return (Steputat, 2004, p. 8). There is some evidence that "go and see" operations of UNHCR and NGOs are fairly effective means of providing accurate information for refugees, which are likely to lead to a final decision to either to return, or to discard the possibility of returning 'home' and focus on integration instead, providing that this is a real option (Steputat, 2004, p. 9).

Return programmes need to take into account conflict dynamics and the political economy:

Successful return and reintegration programmes need to be carefully conceived and implemented, and based on up-to-date understandings of local conditions and people's perceptions (Ensor, 2013, p. 51). It is important for refugee return interventions to have an understanding of the political economy context and to engage with governments in return countries to address the constraints arising from these contexts in a long-term sustained and coordinated manner (Harild et al, 2015, p. 28; Starup, 2014, p. 5; Steputat, 2004, p. 13-14). Repatriation programmes also need to take into account their impact on local conflict dynamics or return may not be sustainable (Starup, 2014, p. 3).

Establishing security, access to adequate services, housing, and livelihoods can be conducive to return:

The four key conditions for return, which include security, access to adequate services, housing, and livelihood opportunities, may encourage but do not necessarily 'guarantee' that refugees return (Harild et al, 2015, p. x; Starup, 2014, p. 3). However, the lack of these conditions is assessed to be the reason that the protracted refugee displacement situations in Afghanistan, Iraq, South Sudan, and Somalia are unlikely to be resolved through voluntary repatriation (Harild et al, 2015, p. xi). International actors should support authorities in return countries to bring about conditions that meet refugee priorities in order to achieve durable return (Harild et al, 2015, p. xvi).

A research project amongst protracted refugees found that the insufficiency of programmes intended to improve their livelihoods when they returned meant that many had to leave again to find work (Brown and Mansfield, 2009, p. 16). Another report found that problems establishing sustainable livelihoods, especially in post-conflict environments, is the most serious problem for return and sustainable reintegration (Steputat, 2004, p. 12).

Treatment in host countries is not enough to 'push' refugees - the decision to stay or return is informed by a comparison of conditions:
Despite suggestions that a general deterioration of living conditions in countries of asylum may induce returns, research suggests that the decision to stay or return is informed by a comparison of conditions in exile and in the country of origin, which may mean that refugees attempt to remain in exile despite an increasing 'push' from host countries to leave (Harild et al, 2015, p. xi; Steputat, 2004, p. 5). Programmes should take into account that refugees are 'purposive actors' (Harild et al, 2015, p. xvi; Schmeidl, 2009, p. 21).

Access to livelihood assets, social networks, and opportunities in the country of origin can result in early return:
An analysis for the World Bank of the conditions that influence the decisions by refugees in protracted displacement regarding return to their home country found that for those who return first, access of refugee households to livelihood assets, social networks, and opportunities in the country of origin, together with the prospects for recovering these, is a key factor influencing their decisions regarding return (Harild et al, 2015, p. x).

Poverty both restrains and encourages return:
Poverty often constrains return, with those in poorer households often remaining in exile for longer; although in some cases it may be a driver of return, for example, in the case of Iraqi spontaneous return from Syria in the period 2007-2010 (Harild et al, 2015, p. 14). Fear of poverty in the country of origin can also make refugees reluctant to return (Long, 2011, p. 28).

Local integration could equip refugees for sustainable return by building up assets:
Research suggests that 'local integration does not necessarily work against the decision of refugees to repatriate, and that education, employment, and training in the country of asylum may help equip refugees to undertake sustainable return' (Harild et al, 2015, p. xi; Starup, 2014, p. 2; Steputat, 2004, p. 2). The extent to which life in exile enabled refugees to pursue livelihoods and build up assets can be critical for the ability to reintegrate and re-establish livelihoods upon return, as is the case for example for Liberian refugees returning from Ghana and some of the Cambodian refugees returning from Thailand (Harild et al, 2015, p. x; Steputat, 2004, p. 2, 7). Refugees with 'assets and skills who chose to return do so faster and reintegrate more sustainably than returnees who have lost or depleted their assets and have marginal or eroded capacities'; therefore it is beneficial if they can participate in the economy of the host country (Harild et al, 2015, p. xv). The case studies in the World Bank research suggest that opportunities for integration in the host country strengthen the ability of refugees to either stagger their return or geographically disperse family members to maximise access to livelihoods, services, or other priorities, until they deem conditions in the country of origin are conducive to return (Harild et al, 2015, p. xi).

Evidence gathered by the World Bank report indicates that 'even where large scale integration appears to have occurred, the vast majority of refugees may still return home if the conditions are right even after decades in exile' (Harild et al, 2015, p. xiii). Examples include, the Angolan refugees in Zambia, the large

numbers of Afghan refugees returning from Iran and Pakistan, and South Sudanese refugees returning from Sudan and Uganda (Harild et al, 2015, p. xiii). However, integration may also lead to a 'failure to return' (Harild et al, 2015, p. xiii).

Preparation for return while in exile can help refugees reintegrate:
Experience suggests that preparations for repatriation in host countries have contributed to sustainable return and governance (Long, 2011, p. 28). A research project amongst protracted refugees found that many felt unprepared for their lives in their country of origin as a result of the lack of preparation for sustainable return during their time in the host country (Brown and Mansfield, 2009, p. 15). Encouraging refugees to plan for their return and involving them in the process could contribute to the sustainability of the repatriation (Long, 20111, p. 29).

Lessons for initiatives to support return:

Return can be staggered or cyclical – with mobility as a key strategy in its sustainability:
Return is not necessarily a straightforward process and 'staggered' or 'cyclical' return is widespread (Harild et al, 2015, p. x; Long, 2011, p. 27; Steputat, 2004, p. 2). Displaced families or whole communities may divide themselves up before return, sending some members to explore conditions and establish whether there is a basis for a permanent return in the country or area of origin (Harild et al, 2015, p. x; Steputat, 2004, p. 2). Some family members may return first to establish livelihoods and housing, before the rest of the family joins them once these goals have been achieved (Harild et al, 2015, p. x; Long, 2011, p. 27). In other cases this is more permanent, with the 'dispersal of family members between exile and return locations to maximize access to livelihoods, services, or other priorities for family wellbeing in different locations at the same time' (Harild et al, 2015, p. x). In many situations such mobility and circular migration are key livelihood strategies, which can draw on transnational networks which predate the conflicts that caused the displacement (Harild et al, 2015, p. x; Starup, 2014, p. 3; Long, 2011, p. 12; Schmeidl, 2009, p. 21; Steputat, 2004). Research indicates that return 'appears to be most effective when it can be combined with other strategies such as continued transnational relocation or regional dual residence/citizenship (Long, 2011, p. 27). These combined strategies offer more secure and sustainable returns and help diffuse the risks involved in returning to a site of former persecution and violence (Long, 2011, p. 27).

Effective support is demand driven:
Operational lessons suggest that effective support for lasting refugee return involves: (i) 'demand driven community or area based projects that engage both returnees and stayees in participatory planning, and (ii) transformative programmes that can be delivered at scale in order to have impact and durability' (Harild et al, 2015, p. 24). One example of demand driven projects which assisted lasting return, comes from Afghanistan, where NGO projects undertaken in the early nineties assisted whole communities (Harild et al, 2015, p. 24). This allowed for a staggered return process, where men from the refugee communities left the camps to repair irrigation systems, plant crops, rebuild houses, and rehabilitate local roads and schools in their villages before the rest of their households returned (Harild et al, 2015, p. 24). The money they earned from the public works work provided an income to sustain households during the rehabilitation phase (Harild et al, 2015, p. 24).

A comprehensive integrated approach is needed:
When assessing condition for return, refugees look at multiple factors, including the access to livelihoods, land, employment and education, underscoring the importance of humanitarian and development actors working together to promote and implement comprehensive, integrated and long-term solutions to displacement (Starup, 2014, p. 5; UNHCR, 2006, p. 132; Long, 2011, p. 28; Steputat, 2004, p. 15).

For refugee return initiatives to be sustainable they need to be underpinned by enduring political and security measures, which require the sustained engagement of the humanitarian, peace, security and development agencies (UNHCR, 2006, p. 114). Comprehensive and durable return require related repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction processes that take place within an overarching framework of institutional collaboration between humanitarian, development, government and private sector actors (Harild et al, 2015, p. xv-xvi).

Flexibility in funding can assist sustainable return:
Flexibility in funding is very important for agencies to take advantage of windows of opportunity, such as in case of sudden, and surprisingly large, return movements (Steputat, 2004, p. 10). In addition, funding for reintegration assistance need to take into account that full reintegration can require years (Fransen and Kuschminder, 2012, p. 6).

Return programmes need to account for increasing urbanisation:
Those returning are more likely to settle in urban areas, even if they were originally from rural areas (Harild et al, 2015, p. xii-xiii; Starup, 2014, p. 6). Policies relating to return migration and repatriation must account for this increasing urbanisation and the continuing mobility of the population (Ensor, 2013, p. 53).

Lessons for initiatives to help reintegration:

Addressing land and other restitution and redress issues is important for sustainable return:
Addressing issues of housing, land and property rights and restitution is important as they may otherwise result in major impediments to solutions for return (Starup, 2015, p. 4-5). The ability to reclaim their land or obtain access to land elsewhere is central to the prospects of re-establishing livelihoods for refugees from rural areas. This appears to have been 'an incentive for both the substantial 'spontaneous' and assisted returns by Afghan refugees in the early nineties, by Angolan refugees from 2002 onwards, and by refugees returning after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005 to what became South Sudan' (Harild et al, 2015, p. x).

In some cases returnees have been offered reparations. Research looking at the cases of Guatemala, Bosnia and Mozambique indicates that concentrating on redress for returnees can, in some instances, 'detract attention from persistent obstacles to return and inadvertently generate new tensions that further complicate return and reintegration processes' (Bradley, 2013, p. 173). However, despite this, the provision of reparations was an important response to returnees' concerns, and helped to improve both relations between returnees and their state and quality of life in returnee communities (Bradley, 2013, p. 173). The clearest general lesson from the research is that effective reparations programmes for returnees are able to respond to local needs, concerns, conditions and constraints (Bradley, 2013, p. 175). Reparations can be especially important for encouraging the return of minority groups (Bradley, 2013, p. 177). Reparation programmes should be both timely and long-term so that those who are reluctant to return early can still benefit (Bradley, 2013, p. 181).

Return processes should be integrated in wider development processes and benefit whole communities:
Sustainable return needs the process to be beneficial for whole communities and not just individual returnees (Ensor, 2013, p. 53-54). Return processes should be viewed as a development and peace-building challenge rather than just focusing on mass physical movement (Long, 2011, p. 30). UNHCR uses a 4Rs concept of repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction to focus on improving the sustainability of repatriation by creating a conducive environment for sustainable return (UNHCR, 2006, p. 133). Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka are examples of the attempts to pursue the 4Rs framework

(Özerdem and Sofizada, 2006, p. 79). Support for lasting return requires interventions at both the macro level (security, transport, power, communication, urban planning and development, key services such as health, education and social safety nets, and strengthening of national capacities) and at the micro level, addressing the specific constraints to return for particular refugee groups (Harild et al, 2015, p. 30).

The core operational principles of development-led return include: keeping the wider conflict dynamics in mind when planning for return; demand driven planning for return which looks at the needs of returnees and stayees; multi-sectoral and comprehensive reconstruction and development assistance that considers rights to land, housing and other property, livelihoods, service delivery, private sector engagement, participatory local governance, and reconciliation. Groups with specific needs, or who are vulnerable, may also require particular targeted assistance (Harild et al, 2015, p. 33; Starup, 2014, p. 5; Brown and Mansfield, 2009, p. 17; Steputat, 2004, p 15).

Ethnic and other forms of discrimination can impede sustainable return:
Variations in local conditions such as ethnic discrimination and conflict can have an effect on return (Harild et al, 2015, p. x). When this happens at the national level, for example the confiscation of properties as part of a process of spatial segregation along ethnic and sectarian lines in countries such as Iraq and Bosnia and Herzegovina, it can critically block return and successful reintegration (Harild et al, 2015, p. x). The situation to which refugees are returning will have changed since it was their 'home', making return impossible for some groups as a result of an altering of the socio-political landscape (Harild et al, 2015, p. 29; IRRI, 2013, p. 10).

Return programmes need to take into account the diverse experiences of refugees:
Support for refugees' sustainable return and reintegration needs to take into account that they have different experiences, assets and capabilities (Omata, 2012, p. 278). Experience suggests that vulnerable returnees require more tailored assistance (Omata, 2012, p. 278).

A research project of return in South Sudan indicates that standardised approaches to refugee reintegration which fail to consider the high diversity of the returnee population are inadequate (Ensor, 2013, p. 50). Different migratory trajectories have resulted in very different experiences and, 'the language, professional skills and level of education acquired during displacement, the rural or urban environment in which the lives of refuses and IDPs took place, and their level of exposure to functioning cash economies all emerge as salient factors which, together with gender and age, are shaping returnees' needs and expectations as well as their ability to fulfil them' (Ensor, 2013, p. 50).

Women face particular challenges in return:
Women may 'face particular challenges both during displacement and regarding return since they generally have fewer opportunities, fewer resources, lower status, and less power and influence than men' (Harild et al, 2015, p. xi).

Lessons for initiatives to ensure long-term sustainability of refugee return:

Sustainability is weakened by politically driven planning:
Assisted voluntary return schemes impact on lasting return is weakened by politically driven return planning, which imposes an urgency on the return process that does not leave enough time, and often insufficient resources, to properly plan and implement reconstruction and reintegration activities in the countries of return (for example, Cambodia, South Sudan, and Bosnia and Herzegovina) (Harild et al, 2015,

p. 7; Steputat, 2004, p. 10). In addition, when such return is not really 'voluntary' as a result of the political context and the urgency this imposes on the return process, this also contributes to weakening lasting return (for example, Cambodian refugees from Thailand, many Burundian refugees from Tanzania, Liberian refugees from Ghana, and Bosnian refugees) (Harild et al, 2015, p. 8)

Findings from a study on Burundi show that 'pushing large-scale repatriation initiatives in the face of consistent opposition from the refugee population, and in the absence of viable and flexible alternatives, is not just misguided but ineffective' (IRRI, 2013, p. 10). Refugees will try to find their own solutions if they do not believe the options offered will secure their safety (IRRI, 2013, p. 10).

Unsustainable return can have a negative impact on peacebuilding:
Research from different contexts in Tanzania and Burundi suggests that early and unsustainable repatriation can have a negative impact on peacebuilding (Milner and Loescher, 2011, p. 6).

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About this report

5. Annex: Annotated bibliography

Sustainable refugee return: Triggers, constraints, and lessons addressing the development challenges of forced displacement

Harild, N., Christensen, A., & Zetter, R. (2015). Washington DC: The World Bank
http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/publications/sustainable-refugee-return-triggers-constraints-and-lessons-on-addressing-the-development-challenges-of-forced-displacement

There are an unprecedented worldwide displaced population of concern to UNHCR, with 45 per cent of refugees in a protracted displacement situation and a thirty year low in refugee return. What influences the decisions by refugees in protracted displacement regarding return to their home country - when, why, and by whom are decisions on return or other coping strategies made, and how are these decisions affected both by life in exile and by the situation in the country of origin? This study carries out a literature analysis of refugee decision-making regarding return, together with examination of eight country return cases - Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, Iraq, Liberia, and South Sudan.

Well thought out development actions that are responsive to the circumstances of specific displacement situations can contribute to the sustainable return and reintegration of the displaced people. Development and humanitarian actors, and governments of refugee origin and refugee hosting countries need to better take into consideration the development dimension of displacement and return, as well as the concerns and coping strategies of the refugees themselves both while in displacement and upon return in order to promote sustainable solutions.

The study examines the contexts that influence refugee decision making and identifies who returns first, who returns later, and who never returns, as well as the extent to which refugee decisions and return trends are affected by how they have been treated while in exile, and whether international assistance has facilitated lasting return. Forced displacement situations are likely to be protracted, and responses to

emergencies need to anticipate this. Since most forced displacement situations are protracted, refugees manage better if they have opportunities to enhance self-reliance through participation in the economy of the host country. Both displacement and return is increasingly to urban areas. Forced displacement situations often have broader regional impacts. Comprehensive and durable return require related repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation, and reconstruction processes that take place within an overarching framework of institutional collaboration between humanitarian, development, government and private sector actors. Refugees are 'purposive actors' and the decision to return is typically made after comparing information about conditions and prospects in the host country with those in the country of origin

The World Bank's engagement in eight different refugee return situations has resulted in five main lessons, highlighting critical areas where approaches to refugee return need to be reconsidered and strengthened:

- the reintegration of IDPs and returning refugees is not addressed in a consistent way in country strategy documents;
- implementation of strategies to promote integration mostly do not include clear targeting arrangements to ensure that IDPs or returnees are included among the beneficiaries or consulted about options;
- there has been a near universal absence of attention at both the country strategy and project levels to the outcomes that World Bank supported activities may have had for IDPs and returning refugees;
- there is a relatively short attention span to the development challenges of return and reintegration of the displaced, perhaps as a result of the absence of robust outcome monitoring on the extent to which World Bank activities did support sustainable reintegration of returning refugees and IDPs; and
- there is a need to consistently incorporate disaggregated data on displaced and returnees in poverty assessments.

Recent initiatives have also taken a more regional approach.

Permanent crises? Unlocking the protracted displacement of refugees and internally displaced persons

Long, K. (2011). Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford.
http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk/files/publications/policy-briefing-series/pb-unlocking-protracted-displacement-2011.pdf

Protracted displacements are by definition displacements for which there are 'no solutions in sight'. As a result the international community must search for new and innovative strategies to solve the problem – both the refugees' and IDPs' 'problem' of an absence of state protection and the inability to access the basic rights of citizenship; and states understanding of the problem in terms of the physical presence of unwanted foreign residents on their territory. Understanding these different approaches arguably helps to explain why the traditional 'durable solutions' framework has failed to provide solutions to so many crises of displacement. This paper considers how international actors should frame protracted displacements and the search for 'solutions' to such crises. It draws on the findings of three case studies (Central America during the 1980s and 1990s and contemporary displacements in Somalia and Iraq) as well as wider research on protracted refugee situations and the politics of refugee 'solutions'. Ensuring the quality of asylum, opening up migration routes and adopting a more flexible approach to residency and citizenship rights are all key to unlocking protracted displacements.

History, Overview, Trends and Issues in Major Somali Refugee Displacements in the Near Region (Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Yemen)

Hammond, L. (2014). *Bildhaan: An International Journal of Somali Studies*, 13, 55-79
http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/bildhaan/vol13/iss1/7

The conflict in Somalia has resulted in major displacement and displacement within and from Somalia is one of the longest-running crises in the world today. This paper provides an overview of the nature, trends and issues in Somali refugee displacement in the near region while also touching on the pertinent aspects of Somali refugee displacement in other parts of Africa, the Gulf and further afield. It looks at past actions in managing displacement and return in the region and the conditions facing the Somali refugees today. Host countries, and many refugees themselves, desire return to Somalia to occur. As a result of different needs of long-stayers versus newer arrivals, the uncertain fate of the property that many have left behind in Somalia, the precariousness of the current security and economic situation in the country and the size and heterogeneity of the refugee populations, varying solutions may have to be pursued for different groups and some situations may have more or fewer options than others. Decisions about when to initiate or facilitate repatriation, how to properly balance the requirements of return with those of national reconstruction, about meeting the needs of vulnerable IDP and local populations, and how best to promote post-return social integration will be exceedingly complex. As long as there is violence, conflict and serious abuses of human rights in Somalia, pressure to end the protracted refugee displacement should be balanced with ensuring that a protection space remains available for those who will continue to need it.

Displaced Youth's Role in Sustainable Return: Lessons from South Sudan

Ensor, M.O. (2013). IOM.
http://publications.iom.int/bookstore/free/MRS_47_6Nov.pdf

This report presents the findings of a research project on the reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) returning to South Sudan since the signing of the 2005 Peace Agreement. It focuses on the role played by displaced youth as they find themselves differentially situated vis-à-vis the various determinants of sustainable return and reintegration. Intergenerational tensions are resulting from many displaced youths' aspirations to a "modern" – often meaning urban – way of life perceived as incompatible with traditional livelihoods and social relations. In turn, these dynamics are impacting the way in which access to material assets, education, employment opportunities, political participation and other key resources is negotiated among displaced groups and those who stayed behind. Significant gender differences are also evident.

The post-conflict reintegration challenges remain considerable. There is evidence that the absorptive capacity of most receiving communities has already been overwhelmed beyond sustainable limits, causing concern and even tensions among local residents. A number of pressing issues require immediate attention including resolving the high levels of insecurity, strengthening the provision of services, supporting human and economic development, finding solutions to the complex land issue, and addressing the high levels of uncontrolled urbanisation in Juba and several other larger towns. Young people are experiencing the greatest difficulties as they struggle to (re)integrate into resource-poor rural lifestyles to which they are often unaccustomed. Limited educational and vocational training opportunities, lack of sports and entertainment facilities, and the isolation created by language barriers and inadequate infrastructure and transportation have combined to create a sense of alienation among some returning youngsters. Older girls and women also lament the loss of the greater opportunities available to them in exile, in contrast to what they perceive as the more constraining traditional social mores of conservative South Sudan. Young

returnees educated abroad have also introduced new skills and progressive attitudes to a country where both economic and social development were effectively halted for decades. Responding to the age- and gender-differentiated needs and aspirations of diverse migrant groups could create a more sustainable return.

Lessons Learned From Refugee Return Settlement Policies: A Case Study On Burundi's Rural Integrated Villages

Fransen, S., & Kuschminder, K. (2014). *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 33: 1, 59–76
http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/rsq/hdt023

Many returnees in Africa face challenges of (re-)gaining access to land and other assets that are a necessity for building sustainable livelihoods. A policy approach that has often been adopted to solve landlessness for returnees is the concept of villagisation. This article provides an in-depth analysis of Burundi's Rural Integrated Villages project, which has recently been implemented as an emergency approach to accommodate landless 1972 caseload refugees and other vulnerable populations. It is based on an extensive literature review and 30 in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. To date no villagisation policy has been successful in providing long-term, sustainable solutions for landless returnee populations. The VRIs were implemented using an inter-agency approach, the project was integrated with Burundi's long-term development goals and included a bottom-up approach in which local Governments were incorporated, elements which should have ensured its success. In practice, however, there were unintended consequences as a result of delayed donor funding, which led to essential services not being provided, a lack of local integration of the villages, problems with land tenure and agricultural production, and community disharmony.

Repatriation and Integration of Liberian Refugees from Ghana: the Importance of Personal Networks in the Country of Origin

Omata, N. (2012). Journal of Refugee Studies, 26:2, 265-282
http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fes023

Different refugees can have different experiences of return and reintegration. For a considerable number of Liberian repatriates, 'sustainable return' did not occur. This article examines the issues regarding the integration of Liberian refugees upon repatriation after their protracted exile in Ghana by means of in-depth case studies. Upon their arrival in Liberia, some settled in relatively easily whilst others faced various hardships. The process of integration experienced by these returnees, including the construction of new livelihoods, was largely influenced by their resource conditions in Liberia. In particular, their level of access to influential personal contacts in Liberia played a principal role in determining the degree of their integration. More attention should be paid to what happens to refugees upon their return to ensure the durability of the most ideal durable solution.

Sustainable reintegration to returning refugees in post-Taliban Afghanistan: land-related challenges

Özerdem, A., & Sofizada, A.H. (2006). *Conflict, Security & Development*, 6:1, 75-100
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14678800600590678

Resolving protracted displacement is a complex and pressing challenge. This is because of refugee needs not only while in exile, but also during their return home as the situation improves, ensuring their rights to

protection and sustaining their reintegration requirements. This article focuses on the return of refugees in post-war situations, using Afghanistan as a case study, and the challenges and complexities of ensuring a durable return and sustainable reintegration in the country of return. Land is one of the key obstacles to the sustainability of return and reintegration; while security, politics, disputes, restitution and livelihoods must also be considered. Land is a cross cutting element of a sustainable reintegration process in terms of livelihoods, food security, physical, legal and human rights protection of returnees. Failure to overcome the prevailing complexities because of landlessness and land-related insecurities will deter the sustainable reintegration of millions of returnees and, thus, the prospects for achieving the key and long-term objective of the 4Rs approach. There needs to be clear, well-formulated, strategic, legal and procedural safeguards and practices to address issues surrounding land.

Back to the land: the long-term challenges of refugee return and reintegration in Burundi

Fransen, S., & Kuschminder, K. (2012). (Research Paper No. 242). UNHCR.
http://www.unhcr.org/5040ad9e9.html

More than 500,000 refugees have returned to Burundi over the past decade. The reintegration of former refugees in Burundi is challenging due to structural problems of demographic pressure, poverty, unemployment, and a lack of infrastructure. In addition, the return of former refugees to Burundi puts additional pressure on the country's scarce resources such as land. However, there are no clear differences between returnees and the rest of the Burundian population in terms of assets such as land and housing and access to services such as healthcare and education. However, questions remain as to whether or not the repatriation and reintegration of specifically the 1972 returnees has been successful. This report provides an overview of the repatriation of Burundian refugees from Tanzania and analyses both the structural and individual factors that hinder the reintegration of mainly the 1972 returnees using a mixed methods approach. Lessons learned for sustainable return include the importance of good communication, land issues, and an integrated approach.

Dynamics of return and sustainable reintegration in a 'mobile livelihoods'-perspective

Steputat, F. (2004). (DIIS Working Paper, No. 2004:10). Leibniz Information Centre for Economics.
http://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/6674/uploads

The paper conducts a literature review of return and reintegration processes. Mobile livelihood patterns and capacities of displaced populations must be taken into account when donors and agencies plan and support such processes. 'Sustainable return' may involve continued mobility within and across borders. Local integration does not necessarily work against refugees' decision to repatriate. The conditions of security and livelihoods in origin and host countries, as well as: the possibility of accumulating portable assets before return (education, skills, capital, and social networks) in order to be able to make investments and develop resilient livelihoods upon return, and the possibility of re-entering the country of refuge if conditions in the country of origin deteriorate, and in order to be able to engage in networks and mobile livelihoods across borders, play into refugee decisions about return. Return is an 'iterative' process, which involves an ongoing comparison of conditions, trends and prospects for different individuals in the household in exile, at home and probably also in other sites.

'Sustainable reintegration' should not be identified with setting up of permanent residence in the place of origin. Rather, 'reintegration' will often imply that part of the returnees (re)engage in seasonal migration patterns within and beyond state borders. 4R (Return, Reintegration, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction) programmes should therefore recognise these dynamics and explore possibilities for supporting cross-border productive initiatives and activities before and after return. Programmes should also consider expanding the usual tripartite repatriation negotiations and agreements (between UNHCR, host government and home government) to incorporate local authorities at both sides of the border in planning and needs assessments in order to, if possible, infuse dynamism in transborder regions, if there is any potential for this. At a more general level, initiatives in support of return and reintegration should consider how general economic conditions could be improved through trade-agreements, renegotiation of debts and other post-conflict initiatives.

Protracted displacement

(2009). Forced Migration Review (Issue 33)
http://www.fmreview.org/FMRpdfs/FMR33/FMR33.pdf

Some two-thirds of displaced people in the world today are not in classic emergency situations but are trapped in protracted displacement, living in a state of extended yet temporary limbo away from home. Their needs may no longer be urgent but can be just as acute. There is an inevitable tension between planning sensibly for the long term and not creating a long-term situation that precludes their return home. This issue of Forced Migration Review focuses on different issues relating to protracted refugee situations around the world; looking at the 'solutions' – political, humanitarian and personal.